

of my three Corps. Lieut.-Generals Sir Alan Brooke, M. G. H. Barker and Sir Ronald Adam, Bart. The sudden turn of events on 17th May threw a violent and unexpected strain on the Commander, Lines of Communication Area (the late Major-General P. de Fonblanque), and I wish to record my sincere appreciation of his good and devoted work during the time that he was serving under my command.

Finally, I desire to express my thanks and good wishes to all those officers in the French Army whose duties brought them into contact with the British Expeditionary Force, and whose goodwill, understanding and personal friendship did so much to foster the good relations which existed between the two armies.

Honours and Awards.

73. I am submitting separately the names of officers and other ranks whom I wish to recommend for reward or to bring to your notice for gallant or distinguished service.

I have the honour to be

Sir,

Your Obedient Servant,

GORT,

General,

Commander-in-Chief,

British Expeditionary Force.

APPENDIX TO SECOND DESPATCH OF C.-IN-C., B.E.F.

OPERATIONS OF 1ST CORPS FROM 6 P.M. ON 31ST MAY TO MIDNIGHT 2ND/3RD JUNE, 1940

Major-General Hon. H. R. L. G. Alexander, on taking over command of 1st Corps, handed over command of the 1st Division to Brigadier M. B. Beckwith-Smith. He then proceeded to Dunkirk to see Admiral Abrial, who informed him that he intended to hold the perimeter till all the troops were embarked. A French Corps on the right was to hold the sector from Gravelines to Bergues (Gravelines however had not apparently been in French hands for some days) and a mixed French and British Corps under command of Major-General Alexander was to hold a line from Bergues to Les Moeres, and thence to the sea.

Major-General Alexander at once told the Admiral and General Fagalde that in his view this plan did not take account of the true naval and military situation which was serious and deteriorating rapidly. The fighting condition of the troops was now such that prolonged resistance was out of the question and the present front could not in his opinion be maintained after the night 1st/2nd June: furthermore the line to be held was so close to the beach and to Dunkirk that the enemy might soon stop all further evacuation by short range artillery fire. He gave the same opinion to the Secretary of State and received a reply that the British force should be withdrawn as rapidly as possible on a basis of equal numbers of British and French continuing to be embarked from that time onward. This he showed to Admiral Abrial and General Fagalde informing them that he would hold the sector allotted to him till midnight 1st/2nd June and then withdraw under cover of darkness. They agreed that in the circumstances no other plan was feasible.

The naval situation had by now grown worse, and the Channel from Dunkirk was under direct

artillery fire. It was therefore evident that the force could not be evacuated completely on the night 1st/2nd June. Major-General Alexander therefore agreed on a modified plan with Admiral Abrial and General Fagalde at 8 a.m. on 1st June. He arranged to hold his present line till midnight 1st/2nd June; thus he would cover Dunkirk and so enable the French to evacuate as many of their troops as possible. He would then withdraw to a bridgehead round Dunkirk with all available anti-aircraft and anti-tank guns and such troops as had not yet embarked.

During the 1st June, heavy enemy attacks developed on the British sector, supported by bombing and artillery fire. The garrison of Bergues (1st Loyals) were forced to withdraw to the line of the canal north of the town, and to the west, 46th Division, 126th Infantry Brigade of 42nd Division and 1st Division were forced back north of the canal for about 1,000 yards. 50th Division had also to meet enemy penetration from the east, but by nightfall on 1st June the enemy advance had been checked on a line Bergues-Uxem-Ghyvelde, thence due east to the frontier and along the frontier defences to the sea.

Embarkation was temporarily stopped at 3 a.m. on 2nd June to prevent casualties in daylight; by that time there remained in the Dunkirk area about 3,000 men of various artillery and infantry units, with seven anti-aircraft guns and twelve anti-tank guns. They held the outskirts of Dunkirk throughout 2nd June with little interference save heavy shelling and bombing of the beaches.

By midnight on 2nd/3rd June, all the remaining British troops had been embarked. Major-General Alexander, with the Senior Naval Officer (Captain W. G. Tennant, R.N.) made a tour of the beaches and harbour in a motor boat and on being satisfied that no British troops were left on shore, they themselves left for England.

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