

and troop carrying companies were allotted to Corps in such a way as to complete the move in 90 hours.

At the same time 44th Division was to march to an area north-west of Audenarde, with a view to organising the defence of the Escaut in this area.

Movement in the first phase was to be continuous by day and night. The French had decided to restrict the movements of their main bodies to the hours of darkness, but I judged the time factor to be of paramount importance and accepted the risk that our air support might be insufficient to prevent enemy interference with the move. Events proved that the risk was justifiable.

In the second period, to be completed by the end of the sixth day, 48th Division (Major-General A. F. A. N. Thorne) and 4th Division (Major-General D. G. Johnson, V.C.) were to move by march route and motor transport into 1st and 2nd Corps reserve respectively, while 1st Army Tank Brigade consisting of two battalions was to move chiefly by rail into 1st Corps area.

The third period was to be completed by the tenth day, and included the movement of 50th Division to 2nd Corps reserve, while 4th Division moved into the line on the right of 3rd Division.

The fourth period included the forward movement of 3rd Corps. 5th Division (Major-General H. E. Franklyn) was to move to positions in G.H.Q. reserve, along the river Dendre, north and south of Grammont; 42nd and 44th Divisions to the line of the river Escaut around Tournai and to the south of Audenarde respectively, to organise bridgehead positions pending orders for a further advance.

Detailed instructions had also been issued for the preparation of defences on the three river lines of the Dyle, Dendre and Escaut, as also for the necessary demolitions and inundations. Special arrangements had been made for the control of traffic, including refugees for whom routes had been allotted; definite bodies of troops were detailed for these tasks.

The Belgian Anti-Tank obstacle

17. Late in April and early in May, I received reports regarding the siting of the Belgian anti-tank obstacle; it appeared that, without informing either the French High Command or myself, they had sited the obstacle much further to the east than had originally been planned, namely on the line Namur-Perwez-Louvain: furthermore the obstacle was not as yet by any means completed. The matter was discussed with General Georges.

On the British front, the river Dyle was so far superior as an anti-tank obstacle to any artificial work further east which the Belgians might be preparing that I had no hesitation in urging adherence to the existing plan for the defence of the Dyle position.

On the front of the French 1st Army the situation was different: the absence of a natural obstacle forced them to rely on that prepared by the Belgians. To clear the matter up, information was demanded as to the true site of the artificial obstacle. These negotiations were begun through our Military Attaché on 8th May, but they were not destined to be concluded.

OPERATIONS—FIRST PHASE

(10th–16th MAY)

Belgium calls on Allies for assistance: advance to the River Dyle by British and French Armies: the Belgian anti-tank obstacle is found to be sited further forward than had been expected. The enemy penetrates the front of French 9th Army and crosses the Meuse. Action by Royal Air Force. General Billotte appointed to co-ordinate action of British, French and Belgians. The Dutch lay down their arms.

10th May—The enemy invades Holland and Belgium.

18. The tension which had been increasing during April had lessened somewhat during the early days of May; during this period I had received reports of enemy activity from several sources of varying degrees of reliability, culminating in a report from the Hague, but it was not until the night of 9th–10th May that information was received of exceptional activity on the frontiers of Luxembourg, Belgium and Holland. The weather was set fair, and with the exception of some heavy thunderstorms which had no effect on operations, remained so to the end of the month. At about 4.30 a.m. on 10th May, enemy aircraft appeared over my headquarters at Arras and bombs were dropped on aerodromes in the neighbourhood and on a number of towns including Doullens and Abbeville. At 5.30 a.m., a message was received from my mission with General Georges ordering "Alertes 1, 2 and 3," namely, instant readiness to move into Belgium. I at once sought, and obtained, the release of the 5th Division from War Office reserve, and henceforward it was employed under my orders. At about 6.15 a.m. I received instructions to put Plan D into effect.

It was ascertained that 12th Royal Lancers could be ready to cross the frontier at 1 p.m., and accordingly I laid down this time as zero hour.

At 1 p.m. I opened my command post at Wahagnies, midway between Douai and Lille.

1st and 2nd Corps experienced some delay in moving, due largely to the fact that owing to the short notice received, preliminary moves of transport had not taken place; apart from this, moves on this day proceeded according to plan; very little interference was experienced either from enemy aircraft or refugees and 12th Lancers reached the Dyle unopposed at 10.30 p.m.

The French armies on our right and left were reported as advancing on time.

The Belgian population received the allied armies in the most cordial manner, and in particular the leading troops were loudly cheered.

Operations between 11th and 15th May.

19. On 11th May, enemy air action increased somewhat, but did not interfere with the forward movement of troops, and during the afternoon and evening, the leading infantry brigades reached the Dyle, refugee traffic being handled successfully. The original arrangements, of which the Belgian Government were aware, included the use by the B.E.F. of roads passing through the northern and southern outskirts of Brussels, but not through the centre of the city. A series of requests was however received to discontinue the use of these roads on the ground that Brussels had been