

91. Troops in contact in the Narvik area were embarked on the last day into six destroyers under the control of Commander Hubback, R.N., who supervised with the assistance of certain British officers, the embarkation of the 2,500 French troops.

Losses and Casualties.

92. The total losses apart from Naval and Air Force casualties, incurred during the period 13th May-8th June were approximately 235 all ranks killed, 535 wounded and 200 missing.

Of the above French casualties amounted to 170 killed and 360 wounded and missing.

Conclusion—Lessons of the Operations.

93. The predominant factor in the recent operations has been the effect of air power. In the operations which culminated in the evacuation of Bodo the enemy had complete initiative in the air, and used it, first, to support his troops:—

- (a) By low-flying attacks.
- (b) By bombing.
- (c) By surprise landings of troops by parachute and from seaplanes.
- (d) By supplying his advanced detachments by air.

And secondly, to deny us the use of sea communications in the narrow coastal waters in the theatre of operations.

94. The actual casualties caused to troops on the ground by low-flying attacks were few, but the moral effect of continuous machine-gunning from the air was considerable. Further, the enemy made repeated use of low-flying attacks with machine guns in replacement of artillery to cover the movement of his troops. Troops in forward positions subjected to this form of attack are forced to ground, and, until they have learned by experience its comparative innocuousness, are apt not to keep constant watch on the enemy. Thus the enemy were enabled on many occasions to carry out forward and outflanking movements with impunity.

The second effect of low-flying attacks was the partial paralysis of headquarters and the consequent interruption in the exercise of command.

Thirdly, low-flying attacks against transport moving along narrow roads seriously interfered with supply, though this was never completely interrupted.

95. Bombing was not effective against personnel deployed in the open, but this again interfered with the functioning of headquarters and the movement of supplies.

The enemy's use of aircraft in these two methods of offence was obviously most closely co-ordinated with the action of his forward troops, and showed a very high degree of co-operation between his Air Force and his Army, particularly in view of the fact that his aerodromes were distant from the actual fighting.

96. Surprise landings from aircraft had far-reaching effects owing to the ability they conferred on the enemy to outflank positions or take them in the rear.

The action on the Hemnes Peninsula, South of Mo, provides an outstanding example of these tactics. The sequence of this action was first bombing and low-flying attacks on our troops holding the position. These attacks were

followed almost immediately by landings from seaplanes in two places on each flank of the peninsula. Once these landings had been secured they were promptly reinforced by small coastal steamers and further reinforcements were brought up to the outflanking detachments by seaplanes on succeeding days. In addition, seaplanes were used to ferry troops for further outflanking movements. Bicycles, mortars and motor cycles were carried in the seaplanes for this purpose.

The possibility of the enemy carrying out such outflanking movements caused continuous dispersion of the troops trying to hold defensive positions during the withdrawal and prevented sufficient concentration to enable any of the positions selected to be held successfully.

97. The enemy's ability to supply detachments by air enabled him to neglect or overcome many of the obstacles put in his way by demolitions.

The outstanding example of the supply by air is the maintenance of the German detachments in the Narvik area. In this area his troops to the number of three or four thousand have been successfully supplied by air for many weeks, partly by seaplanes landed on the Beisfjord, partly by aircraft landed on frozen lakes or small landing grounds, and partly by the dropping of containers attached to parachutes.

From the reports received, the enemy operating in the mountainous country 12 to 15 miles North of Narvik were plentifully supplied with all their requirements. A large number of cardboard containers were found in Narvik, and it is reported that large quantities of perishable foodstuffs, such as vegetables, eggs and butter from Denmark, were successfully dropped in Narvik from the air.

98. As regards the control of sea communications, the enemy's supremacy in the air made the use inshore of naval vessels of the type co-operating with this force highly dangerous and uneconomical. Though it might have been possible to use high speed coastal motor boats armed with small guns to prevent movement of enemy craft in these waters, the use of trawlers, owing to their extreme vulnerability to air attack, was not considered practicable. On the other hand, the inshore waterways were used at will by the Germans, who constantly employed local boats and steamers to ferry their troops about thus entailing more dispersion of the defending forces on land.

In an attempt to send considerable reinforcements and wheeled vehicles to Bodo, the Polish steamer *Chrobry* was sunk before she reached port. The unloading of large supply ships which, owing to the limited facilities available, would have taken many hours, had to be ruled out as impracticable and reinforcements to Bodo could therefore be sent only by destroyer or by small local craft. Thus the provision of adequate reinforcements in guns and vehicles was made extremely difficult.

99. The second main factor which has affected the operations in this theatre has been training. It has been brought out that for operations of this nature thoroughly trained soldiers only are of any real value, and that every officer and man must be physically hard and fit.