

as has already been stated, it had been intended in the first instance to embark from Megara, and subsequently from the Peloponnese. The latter project had to be abandoned when the Corinth Canal was seized by the enemy.

*Monday, 28th April.*

43. Reconnaissance aircraft were over the beach on which we were established early, followed by dive bombers who made a series of heavy attacks on some craft about three-quarters of a mile distant immediately the other side of the hill behind our beach and invisible to us. It subsequently turned out that the object of their attack was L.C.T. 5 from Nauplia, which had left that beach on Sunday morning, laid up for the day and proceeded to Monemvasia on Sunday night, arriving at daylight Monday, with 600 Australians on board. The Australians had been landed at Monemvasia at dawn and took cover with the N.Z. Division, but the L.C.T. was seen and bombed shortly afterwards. The L.C.T., though she replied vigorously at first, was soon on fire, and there was a constant series of ammunition explosions from her during the day. The fire on board prevented her being boarded to effect her complete destruction. There were no casualties.

44. The above incident left the L.C.A. as practically the only means for embarking the N.Z. Division this night, and it was most fortunate they were not seen and bombed, also that the C.O. GLENEARN had the foresight to send them to Monemvasia, as they could not have made Nauplia in time, after this ship had been bombed.

45. After dark, I proceeded with all L.C.A. to the embarkation point at Monemvasia, where I met General Freyberg in his H.Q. near the beach at 2130. At this time, I had received no confirmation that ships were arriving, and also did not know whether they would be transports or H.M. Ships. Furthermore, it was doubtful whether my signal regarding the actual embarkation points had been received by the ships concerned, or not; the bay is a large one. At 2230 no ships had arrived, so I despatched Lieut.-Cdr. Robertson in a L.C.A. to endeavour to get in touch beyond Monemvasia Island which hid the beaches from seaward. He soon contacted the destroyers, which were actually on their way in, and I proceeded on board GRIFFIN and led her close to the North Jetty, leaving Lieut.-Cdr. Robertson in the ISIS to go to the South Jetty.

46. The embarkation which took place mainly from the causeway connecting the Island to the mainland, began at 2350 and was completed by 0300/29, 3,800 men being embarked. General Freyberg and I saw the beaches cleared and went on board AJAX at 0300/29. Two caiques were employed on this night under the command of Lieut. Cumberlege, R.N.R., and Lieut.-Cdr. Hook, R.N. (Retd.) and did excellent work.

47. The whole embarkation was remarkably well carried out from five different points. The Army organisation in rear of the beaches and the discipline of the troops were magnificent; especially considering that they had been fighting a rearguard action for some weeks, from Salonika almost to Cape Matapan. AJAX

and destroyers all closed well in to the jetties, and the organisation for embarking the troops in the ships was excellent. The fact that we had at this time collected extra signalmen and so had good communication with the ships, much accelerated the whole operation. The young officers in the L.C.A. handled their craft very well.

48. I had arranged with the Commanding Officers of AJAX and GRIFFIN to place charges in the L.C.A. so as to destroy them before departure. The charges were placed in each craft, and the C.O. AJAX gave the order for their destruction. However, at this time, fires on shore caused by burning M.T. lit up the ships in the bay, and the C.O. AJAX decided he could not wait to complete the destruction. The lights on shore had been bright for some time, and with the danger of submarines I considered he was correct to leave at once. One submarine had been depth charged on the way to the beaches. One or two L.C.A. were destroyed by the destroyer HOTSPUR, but four or five were left afloat.

49. During the same night it had been intended to embark approximately 8,000 personnel from Kalamata. This operation was, however, frustrated, as on the arrival of the ships off the entrance to the harbour, it was reported that the harbour was in the possession of the enemy, and also the harbour had been mined. Some of our troops were collected in an area to the south-east of the harbour, but in view of the close proximity of the enemy and the absence of landing craft (which had not been provided as it had been intended to use the wharves in the harbour) it was not possible to embark more than a very few of these troops. Ships withdrew at about 0230/29, leaving a total of approximately 4,000 British and 2,000 Palestinian and Cypriot troops, together with 1,500 Yugoslav refugees, on shore.

50. As first hand information as to what actually happened at Kalamata this night will be reported by those directly concerned, I do not propose to enlarge on the matter here, but from information from military sources which has already come to hand the facts of the case appear to be briefly as follows. The Germans entered the town at about 1600 with a force consisting of a number of infantry and two medium guns. They were counter-attacked and driven from the harbour by 2300 with a loss of 140 prisoners and one gun. Unfortunately, the naval embarkation officer, Capt. Clark-Hall, and his signalman, had been captured by the Germans on their first entry, and as he was the only naval officer present ashore, this doubtless had a bad effect on communication between the troops ashore and the ships. There is no evidence to show that ships were ever informed that the enemy had been driven out of the town.

*Tuesday, 29th April.*

51. I arrived at Suda Bay in AJAX at 0800 and reported with General Freyberg to General Sir Maitland Wilson at his H.Q. This night destroyers were sent to Kalamata with the object of bringing off any troops that could be embarked from the beaches in the vicinity, but this only resulted in about 120 officers and men being recovered.