

It should be noted that in spite of (b) the rate of embarkation had, in fact, come up to expectations, and if other circumstances had permitted it would have been possible to adhere to the original plan of lifting the final 4,000 B.E.F. off the beaches between 0130 and 0300 1st June.

*Saturday, 1st June.*

62. Two Hospital Carriers which had sailed the previous evening returned shortly after dawn. Only one had succeeded in entering Dunkirk Harbour, the other had laid off four hours under heavy fire and returned to Dover. Four personnel vessels failed to enter Dunkirk during the night, but succeeded in the early hours of the morning. One of these, the PRAGUE, was bombed and severely damaged half-way across on the return journey, but succeeded in making the Downs with the assistance of tugs, where troops transferred to other ships particularly A/S trawlers LADY PHILOMENA and OLVINA. The supply of personnel vessels was maintained throughout the day, not without a series of setbacks caused by 3 ships failing to sail and by 2 being turned back when on passage by French Destroyers owing to heavy bombing and shelling of the approaches to Dunkirk. Of those that operated during the 24 hours, 1 was sunk, 2 damaged by bombs and shell-fire and 1 by collision.

63. During the middle watch it transpired that no further troops were attempting to evacuate from La Panne off which were stationed one paddle minesweeper, a fleet sweeper and two destroyers, probably due to the heavy shelling from German guns eastward, and later information was received that the troops were marching from La Panne through Bray towards Dunkirk. Accordingly, during the night the Rear Admiral, Dover, instructed all small craft to move west, with boats in tow, towards Dunkirk, and the Vice Admiral directed all ships under orders for La Panne to other positions further west, concentrating the main effort on the beach immediately east of Dunkirk.

To a request from Dunkirk for Hospital Ships, the Vice Admiral replied at 0715 that the large ship berths alongside at Dunkirk must be occupied by personnel ships and the wounded that could conveniently be embarked should go with personnel. This direction was in accordance with the Government policy previously communicated to the Vice Admiral.

64. Soon after dawn enemy aircraft were active and heavy bombing and machine gun attacks developed at 0500 over the whole area from Dunkirk to La Panne. A second series of attacks commenced at 0830 and lasted until 0900, during which time nearly every ship off the coast was subjected to intensive bombing and machine gunning, formations of 30 and 40 machines being noted. During this attack BASILISK was put out of action off La Panne and later sank while struggling home. KEITH, SALAMANDER and SKIPJACK, who were moving westward along the coast as the Bray and La Panne beaches had been emptied, were heavily bombed, the former was hit and set on fire and the latter sank. KEITH was abandoned and finally sank. Nearly all troops on board KEITH and the crews of both vessels were rescued by other ships. A third attack started over Dunkirk, extending well out along

Route X, and occurred between 1000 and 1040, to be again resumed at noon. After that there was a lull until 1550, when another attack was delivered on Dunkirk Harbour and all shipping therein for over half an hour. At 1800 the Vice Admiral received the following signal from Dunkirk: "Things are getting very hot for ships; over 100 bombers on ships here since 0530, many casualties. Have directed that no ships sail during daylight. Evacuation by transports therefore ceases at 0300. If perimeter holds will complete evacuation to-morrow, Sunday night, including most French. General concurs." The sense of this message was passed on to Rear Admiral, Dover, off the coast.

65. In addition to the heavy scale of air attack during the afternoon the sea traffic was very seriously interrupted by artillery fire brought to bear on Route X near No. 5 buoy. The fire appeared to be accurate and it is believed some French ships were sunk. Two French destroyers in the vicinity stopped British ships approaching from England on X Route short of this point, and it became evident that a very serious threat to daylight evacuation was in being. Meantime, the toll of casualties of ships during the day was mounting, particularly amongst the destroyers and shortly after midday the Commander-in-Chief, Nore, called the attention of the Admiralty to this, suggesting the discontinuation of the use of destroyers by day off the French coast. The summarisation of all these incidents led to the Admiralty directing the Vice Admiral, Dover, to suspend evacuation from Dunkirk at 0700, Sunday 2nd June, and for it to be resumed the following night or from 1730/2, depending upon the circumstances. From the above it will be seen that there were to be no ships proceeding to Dunkirk between 0700/2 and 1730/2. The above Admiralty directions crossed a message from the Vice Admiral stating that all ships had been ordered to withdraw from Dunkirk before daylight the following day, owing to the heavy casualties to shipping.

66. In spite of enemy action more than 60,000 troops were landed in the United Kingdom during the 24 hours, thanks to the unremitting determination of Naval vessels who all executed a succession of round trips, interrupted only by necessary refuelling and who accounted for 70 per cent. of this total. The majority of the surviving vessels had been operating ceaselessly for at least five days, and officers and men were approaching a condition of complete exhaustion.

67. As for personnel ships, steps were taken to place on board each a Naval Lieutenant Commander or Commander to advise the Master, and ten seamen to assist in handling the wires in going alongside under fire. By this means it was hoped not only to ensure the timely sailing of these essential ships, but also to eliminate the occasions when these vessels had remained outside Dunkirk Harbour to await a quiet opportunity to enter.

68. Early in the forenoon a number of Senior Officers were despatched from Dover in fast motor boats to round up all stray motor boats in the Downs and along the routes, and direct them back in the evening to the beach stretching 1½ miles eastward of Dunkirk, and a second large flight of tugs with lifeboats was prepared at Ramsgate to send over for what was hoped to be a final effort off the beach. In addition