

embarkation staff or organisation a strong naval party was required to form up and embark the troops. Later, no difficulty was experienced when troops of fighting formations were encountered. Difficulty was experienced in controlling some French troops, whilst others were so rigidly bound by discipline and tradition that they would not embark except by complete formation under their own unit officers. In either case the rate of embarkation was much slower than with British troops.

#### 12. INITIATIVE SHOWN BY COMMANDING OFFICERS AND SUBORDINATE PERSONNEL.

A most satisfactory feature of the operation was the high degree of initiative shown by Commanding and Subordinate Officers of units operating off the coast, ranging from H.M. Destroyers to commandeered motor boats. The majority of officers and ratings in command were in situations requiring independent action in extremely difficult conditions. Often the easiest course was to be satisfied with work already achieved and to return to the United Kingdom with a final load of troops. The reverse action was invariably executed, namely, continued operation off the coast as long as there were both troops ashore to be evacuated and vessels offshore to receive them. If the craft in use was damaged or sunk the crew invariably seized some other boat to continue their efforts.

Unaware of the military situation ashore and often forced to move westward by bombardment from German artillery or even by rifle fire from advancing German forces, the majority of these boats, commanded often by stokers or "hostility only" seamen, had only one object in view, to lift from the beach any, and all troops, British or Allied, within sight of the water's edge.

On their return to the United Kingdom when asked to report their proceedings it was only in answer to direct enquiry that it would transpire that these young men had been subjected in many cases, to an unparalleled bombardment from the air. They appeared to consider that this was part of the day's work requiring no comment.

#### 13. LOSSES OF TROOPS AFTER EMBARKATION.

It is a distressing fact that many ships were sunk or damaged on the return voyage when laden with troops. But it is fortunate that in most of such cases the majority of troops were saved owing to the large volume of traffic that was coming and going between Dunkirk and the United Kingdom. Exceptions to this were due to the rapidity with which certain ships sank after having been bombed or torpedoed. Such cases are as follows:—

**WAKEFUL.** Torpedoed. Ship broke in half and only those on the upper deck were saved. About 600 troops were below.

**CRESTED EAGLE.** Was bombed and then beached in a burning condition. Only about 300 saved out of 600 on board.

**SKIPJACK.** 250-300 troops on board, most of whom, unfortunately, went down with the ship when she sank.

**WAVERLEY.** 600 troops were on board before ship was abandoned in sinking condition, but only 200-300 were picked up.

In all it is regretted that about 2,000 troops must have been lost through these and similar disasters on the return voyages to England.

#### 14. CO-OPERATION OF THE FRENCH NAVY.

French warships and other vessels were employed evacuating French troops from Dunkirk Harbour, and on the last three nights from the beach  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles eastward from Dunkirk. Details are given in Appendix IV.

#### 15. BASE ORGANISATION.

An operation of this magnitude involving the maintenance and movements of close on 900 vessels and boats could not have been conducted without the wholehearted and unceasing efforts of the base establishments at Dover and Ramsgate, as well as those at Sheerness and Harwich in the Nore Command. At all these places officers and men, Naval and civilian, laboured unceasingly throughout the Operation.

In particular I wish to acknowledge the great assistance received from the Commander-in-Chief, Nore, Admiral the Hon. Sir Reginald A. R. Plunkett-Erle-Drax, K.C.B., D.S.O., who in many cases anticipated my requests for assistance through his constant watch on the progress of the Operation.

The prompt and unfailing assistance afforded by the Chatham Depot in providing personnel for the numerous small craft, working parties and beach parties, was a feature essential to the successful outcome of the Operation.

The Naval Officer-in-Charge, Ramsgate, Captain W. R. Phillimore, R.N., by taking over the servicing and control of the great majority of the small craft of the inshore flotillas relieved Dover of an immense volume of work which it would otherwise have been impossible to handle.

It was also brought to my notice that at Harwich an exceptional Naval and Military system was in being for assisting those ships which called there to make a quick turn round, relieving the tired ships' companies of the work of cleaning and clearing their vessels.

#### 16. SERVICES OF STAFF, INCLUDING OFFICERS TEMPORARILY APPOINTED.

I was fortunate in having the services of Rear Admiral W. F. Wake-Walker, C.B., O.B.E., as Flag Officer afloat off Dunkirk, and Captain W. G. Tennant, C.B., M.V.O., as Senior Naval Officer, Dunkirk on shore. Admiral Wake-Walker was responsible for supervising the embarkation afloat and Captain Tennant for organising embarkation from the shore, keeping touch with the French Naval Authorities and the staff of the British Commander-in-Chief.

I cannot conclude this despatch without reference to the splendid work of my staff under the guidance of my Chief Staff Officer, Captain L. V. Morgan, C.B.E., M.V.O., D.S.C.

Augmented by additional officers, including both Army and Royal Air Force, especially appointed for the occasion, their task of organising and operating the large and varied collection of H.M. Ships continued without a pause day and night throughout the 10 days that the Operation lasted, and I can never testify adequately to the excellence of their work, upon the efficiency of which successful results depended.

Finally I would like to pay tribute to the valuable support and assistance which I received throughout the whole course of the evacuation from Vice Admiral Sir James Somerville, K.C.B., D.S.O., who was appointed to H.M.S. LYNX for special service in connection with