



SUPPLEMENT TO The London Gazette

Of TUESDAY, the 15th of JULY, 1947

Published by Authority

Registered as a newspaper

THURSDAY, 17 JULY, 1947

THE EVACUATION OF THE ALLIED ARMIES FROM DUNKIRK AND NEIGHBOURING BEACHES.

The following despatch was submitted to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty on the 18th June, 1940, by Vice-Admiral Sir Bertram H. Ramsay, K.C.B., M.V.O., Flag Officer Commanding, Dover.

*Office of
The Flag Officer Commanding,
Dover.*

18th June, 1940.

Be pleased to lay before Their Lordships the following report on Operation "Dynamo", namely the evacuation of the Allied Armies from Dunkirk and neighbouring beaches between 26th May and 4th June, 1940. The report takes the form of this covering letter, together with detailed narrative and appendices.

2. THE POLICY AND THE PROGRESS OF THE EVACUATION.

During the course of the operation some 330,000 troops* reached safety in England after being evacuated from Dunkirk, and from the beach stretching 10 miles eastward from the entrance to Dunkirk Harbour. To those on the French coast, when in the early stages anything up to 50,000 troops were waiting to embark on a 10 mile sea front, the presence of perhaps 20 small warships off shore, and 200 small boats spread along the length of coast at any given moment, must have appeared as a feeble effort to tackle this great task. Furthermore, it was impossible to adjust the arrival of ships, either at Dunkirk or opposite the beaches,

to synchronise with the ebb and flow of the troop concentrations.

Broadly speaking, for the first 5 days of the movement, had more beaching craft been available to ferry from the beach to offshore vessels, it would have been possible to have evacuated a greater number. For the last 3 to 4 days, however, when the main bulk of the B.E.F. had already been evacuated, the rate of lifting was governed by the availability of the troops during the limited hours evacuation was possible.

3. Throughout the operation one of the greatest difficulties was the ever changing situation presented. Within 24 hours of the start, the operation took the shape of a forlorn hope to rescue the maximum number, say up to 45,000 before the whole force was to be overwhelmed by the enemy.

Next, the military situation became more stable, and it appeared that some three to four days would be available to complete evacuation of the B.E.F., estimated at some 175,000. During this stage evacuation by British resources of French troops was introduced, some 25,000 being mentioned.

During the course of the fifth day (30th May) a tentative decision to lift the rearguard of the B.E.F. off the beaches at a definite time, viz. 0130 on 1st June, was reached. Twenty-four hours later this plan was altered by military considerations, involving an extension of the period of evacuation. At the same time, the Naval authority was definitely committed to provide for the evacuation of French forces, then mentioned as about 40,000/50,000.

Later, the French number rose and 150,000 or more was quoted. Finally no agreement could be reached with the French as to an, termination of the operation which threatened

* Admiralty footnote: About one-quarter of these troops were carried in ships manned by the Merchant Navy