

landing craft from Red beach, having been brought close to Blue beach in *H.M.S. Royal Ulsterman*. 2 South Lancashire Regiment was in floating service in *M.V. Sobieski*, and about 500 men with no vehicles could be landed from her by using all available R boats (fast naval motor boats carrying about 18 men) and other unarmoured landing craft, which were not used in the initial assault. Any men or vehicles above these numbers had to come in the second and later trips of landing craft, which had to return the eight or ten miles to the anchorage to reload. It had been hoped that the assault ships could close the beaches as soon as the Courrier Bay batteries were in our hands. Unfortunately the large number of enemy mines between the convoy anchorage and the beaches prevented this starting until 0750 hours, although the success signal was received from 5 Commando at 0615 hours. The remaining mines, however, still kept these ships several miles from Blue beach, which by this time was the only practicable beach. During the morning a strong wind rose blowing from N.E., raising a heavy chop, which slowed up the flat bowed landing craft and drenched the occupants with heavy spray. The combination of these circumstances seriously delayed the progress of the landing. It had been hoped to complete the landing of 29 Independent Brigade personnel by about 0900 hrs.; in the event this was not achieved until about 1100 hrs.; similarly their vehicles were not complete until about midnight, instead of 1800 hrs. as had been hoped.

H.M.S. Bachaquero.

22. Difficulty and delay experienced in finding a suitable beach for *Bachaquero* was a severe set back to the progress of landing vehicles. She had been loaded with 19 Field Battery of 9 Field Regiment (17 Infantry Brigade Group) on a reduced scale of transport and with carriers and load carrying vehicles, a total of 54 vehicles and guns. It was hoped to beach her sometime about 0900 hrs. in the vicinity of Blue beach, or at least on some beach whence exit could be made to the main axis of advance. Unfortunately a reef off Blue beach prevented her approach; her movements were seriously hampered by the numerous mines; and a suitable beach for her could not be found in the Ambararata Bay area. She was therefore ordered, in the afternoon, to beach in Courrier Bay.

She made several attempts and in one of them two quads and two guns were man-handled ashore and up a most difficult beach by men of the 19 Field Battery working up to their necks in the water. Finally just before dark, she was brought in on the rising tide at full speed and reached a depth of water in which she could discharge her vehicles rapidly. This was not the end of the disappointments. In spite of vigorous reconnaissance, no practical route could be found from the Courrier Bay area to the main axis of advance. The battery was therefore ordered into action on the Andrakaka Peninsula, but carriers of 2 Royal Scots Fusiliers and some of the 15 cwt. eventually during D2 found a way through and rejoined their units on the main axis.

Disembarkation of 17 Infantry Brigade.

23. The personnel of 17 Infantry Brigade Group in *S.S. Oronsay* and *Duchess of Atholl* arrived in the anchorage shortly before 1100 hours and, as the situation then seemed to be going remarkably well, were ordered to land in accordance with the pre-arranged provisional landing table. This commenced at 1115 hours although vehicles did not start until midnight. 2 Royal Scots Fusiliers, the first battalion to land, took over the beach area, and also found one detached company for the Red beach area, thus freeing the last of the 29 Independent Brigade and 5 Commando from the beaches. This battalion was followed by working parties for the beach areas provided from the first reinforcements of 17 Infantry Brigade.

It was agreed with S.N.O.L. that landing should stop between dark and moonlight (1800 hours to 2230 hours), to prevent damage to landing craft and to rest their crews and the docks operating company. The landing of the remainder of 17 Infantry Brigade then continued and companies commenced the march forward as they got ashore and formed up.

Landing and Assumption of Control by Force Commander.

24. I had embarked in *H.M.S. Ramillies* for the passage to Diego Suarez, expecting to be sent by destroyer to *H.M.S. Keren*, in which ship were S.N.O.L. and the majority of my H.Q., by about 0900 hours on D1, when it was expected that the first troops of 17 Infantry Brigade would land. In view of the delay in disembarkation, I decided to remain with the Combined Commander until 1230 hours. Unfortunately, by this time, the sea had risen and made transfer to a destroyer impossible until a lee had been found. The result was that I did not arrive in the *Keren* until 1530 hours. Rear Admiral Syfret was always prepared to put me ashore at any time, and the lateness of my arrival in the *Keren* was entirely my own fault. I failed to appreciate the time lag required for:—

(a) Movement of the *Ramillies* to calm water.

(b) Transfer to a destroyer in a sea boat.

(c) The destroyer trip to the *Keren*.

Once there I examined available information; landed, reaching Blue beach 1700 hours; and started in a carrier for H.Q. 29 Independent Brigade. The carrier however broke down and, although I later boarded another vehicle, with the A.D.M.S., I failed to reach 29 Independent Brigade H.Q. in the dark. The G.S.O.I., however, got through on a motor cycle and returned with a first class situation report. On receipt of this I returned to the Beach Signal Station. There I met Brigadier Tarleton and instructed him to get his brigade as it landed, forward along the road so that he would be able to assist 29 Independent Brigade as early as possible on D2. I finally returned to the *Keren* where I was able to get good signal communication to the *Ramillies* and the aircraft carriers and hoped to get some communication to 29 Independent Brigade. I arranged to land at first light on D2. At this time and indeed throughout the operation, we were suffering for the heavy cuts which had been made in H.Q. and signals to increase the number of fighting troops and vehicles.