



SUPPLEMENT TO The London Gazette

Of TUESDAY, the 21st of MAY, 1946

Published by Authority

Registered as a newspaper

WEDNESDAY, 22 MAY, 1946

The War Office,
May, 1946.

OPERATIONS OF THE BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE, FRANCE FROM 12TH JUNE, 1940 TO 19TH JUNE, 1940.

The following Despatch was submitted to the Secretary of State for War on 22nd June, 1940, by Lieutenant-General Sir ALAN BROOKE, K.C.B., D.S.O. Commanding II Corps, British Expeditionary Force, France.

I have the honour to report that, in accordance with the Instructions of 10th June, 1940, received by me from the Secretary of State for War, I duly left Southampton by ship at 1400 hours on 12th June, and reached Cherbourg at 2130 hours the same evening.

For reasons connected with local French orders, it was not possible to disembark until 0030 hours on 13th June, when Brigadier G. Thorpe (Base Commandant) came out to the ship in a tug and took me ashore with my staff.

2. At 0800 hours 13th June I left Cherbourg by car, and reached Le Mans at 1400 hours after a journey much hampered by the crowds of refugees on the roads.

There I was met by Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Karslake, Major-General P. de Fonblanque, G.O.C., Lines of Communication Troops, and Brigadier J. G. des R. Swayne. I at once took command of all British troops in France from General Karslake. I instructed him to return to England, which he did by plane that afternoon.

3. At 1500 hours I left Le Mans with Brigadier Swayne for an interview with General Weygand and, after a journey of some 170 miles, reached the Headquarters of No. 1 Mission* (Major-General Sir Richard Howard-Vyse) at 2000 hours that evening.

General Weygand was away at a Cabinet meeting, but, on his return, he sent a mes-

sage to say that he would see me at 0830 hours on 14th June.

4. I had left my staff at Le Mans to get in touch with the situation as it was known by General Karslake and Major-General de Fonblanque. The general inference of the enemy's intention seemed to be that, after crossing the Seine south of Rouen, the bulk of the troops engaged would move South in order to encircle Paris.

The situation on the front that evening, so far as it was known, was that the Tenth French Army, which included the 157th Infantry Brigade of the 52nd Division, Armoured Division (less one Brigade) and Beauman Force*, was holding a line from the sea West of the Seine to Neubourg and thence to Conches. Between the Southern flank of the 157th Infantry Brigade and Damville, there was a gap of some 8 miles, which was only lightly held by elements of the 3rd D.L.M. South of this area the Army of Paris was supposed to be holding a line from Dreux to Bonnacourt on the Seine, but there was no confirmation that this Army was actually in position.

14th June.

5. At 0830 hours I saw General Weygand. He spoke most frankly and explained the situation to me. He said that the French Army was no longer capable of organised resistance, that it had now broken up into four groups—

* The Beauman Division was an improvised formation which on 13th June, was organised as follows:—

" B " Bde.—Formed of personnel from auxiliary military Pioneer Corps.

" C " Bde.—Formed of personnel from infantry base depots.

4 Provisional Battalion—Formed from reinforcement personnel.

" E " Anti-tank Regiment (improvised).

" E " Field Battery (improvised).

212 Army Troops Company, Royal Engineers.

213 Army Troops Company, Royal Engineers.

* No. 1 Mission, under Major-General Sir Richard Howard-Vyse, represented British interests at the French Army Headquarters (Chief of Staff, General Weygand) in Paris.