

Thursday, 24th April. D.1 Day.

21. Embarkation from the area east of Athens and Nauplia on the night 24th/25th was satisfactory, 10,200 personnel being embarked. Unfortunately, at Nauplia, ULSTER PRINCE grounded across the fairway, thus denying the use of the wharves to destroyers on succeeding nights. ULSTER PRINCE's quota of troops was taken off by PHOEBE. This embarkation was greatly assisted by ten caiques under the command of Lieut. Commander Carr, R.N.R., and again on the night 26th/27th.

22. H.M. King George and some members of the Greek Government left Athens for Crete in a flying boat. This was not announced until some days later.*

23. A large Greek yacht, the HELLAS, arrived unexpectedly in Piraeus harbour, reporting that she could steam 18 knots and take 1,000 passengers. She was instructed to sail after dark, loading to take place as late as possible. About 500 of the British community (mostly Maltese and Cypriots) decided to leave in this ship and walking cases from an Australian hospital were sent on board. About 1900 the HELLAS was dive bombed in the harbour and hit by two bombs, which set fire to the ship and jetty alongside. Colonel Renton, who was on board at the time, considers that four to five hundred people must have lost their lives and he believes the only gangway to the shore was destroyed. There were no hoses working on board at all and none from the jetty until nearly an hour afterwards.

24. One W/T set and one set of cypher books were sent in a lorry in the charge of a cypher officer to establish itself at new H.Q. near Myli to which we expected to move on Friday or Saturday. Owing to the inexperience of the W/T rating in charge the assistance of a skilled R.A.F. operator or technical officer was requested, and promised from Argos. This aerodrome was, however, bombed and completely disorganised this day and no assistance was forthcoming. This, and the fact that the set had become damaged in transit over bad roads, resulted in a failure of communications during the night 24th/25th, while H.Q. were moving from Athens to Myli.

25. Captain Clark-Hall, R.N. (D.S.T.O. Greece) was directed by me to proceed to Kalamata to assist in the embarkation at that port. He was fully in the picture as regards our plans, so far as they were formed, and was an especially suitable officer as he recently had experience of embarking troops at Le Havre and other ports in France where there were quays.

Friday, 25th April. D.2 Day

26. At 1930 the Joint Planning Staff and I left Athens bound for the new H.Q. with General Wilson at Myli, in the Morea. This change in H.Q. was made at the last possible moment to maintain the advantage of good W/T communications at Athens as long as possible. A second W/T set together with a signal and cypher staff followed in a convoy of lorries and cars in charge of my Signal Officer.

Admiralty footnote :—

* Like many other Heads of States whose countries were overrun by the enemy, the King of Greece deemed it his duty to go where he could most effectively aid the Allies in the prosecution of the war.

27. On our way, we stopped at P beach in the Megara area and saw the organisation behind the beaches for the embarkation, the transports and escort arriving just as we left.

Arrangements made appeared to be excellent. We passed over the Corinth Canal at 0030 Friday, 26th April, the German parachute troops arriving at dawn a few hours later.

28. During this day, ULSTER PRINCE, on shore at Nauplia, was heavily bombed and became a total loss.

29. On this night (25th/26th April), 5,700 troops were embarked from the Megara area (P beach) in spite of the losses of the transport S.S. PENNLAND on the way north, and of one of the two L.C.T. which had arrived in this area. Seven caiques under the command of Commander Michell assisted. It is believed that about 500, many of them wounded, were left on shore after waiting four days near the beach. This was due to the facts that they were to be embarked last, and that the L.C.T. fouled her propeller with a wire on her last trip (the other engine already being out of action). It is not yet known whether the wounded were taken off from another beach, and to what extent the caiques were able to assist.

Saturday, 26th April. D.3 Day

30. At 0530 we arrived at the new H.Q. near Myli. These were established in an olive grove in order to obtain cover from enemy dive-bombers. This was very necessary, as for some days the enemy had had complete air superiority, and I believe I am correct in saying that after 23rd April not one British plane left the ground in Greece (mainland) in support of our troops or ships. This is of course in no way whatever intended as a criticism of the R.A.F., whose pilots, hopelessly outnumbered, fought most gallantly to the end, but it is intended to emphasise our complete inferiority in the air at this time.

31. Besides myself and staff, Brigadier Galloway and Group Captain Pelly, the following had arrived here during the night:—

General Sir H. Maitland Wilson, and staff.

Major-General T. G. G. Heywood, Head of the British Military Mission and other members of the Mission.

Rear Admiral C. E. Turle, Naval Attaché, Athens, and staff.

Brigadier A. G. Salisbury Jones, of the British Military Mission.

Prince Peter of Greece.

The Greek Minister of the Interior.

Admiral Sakellariou (ex Minister of Navy, and ex Vice-Premier during the last days).

Three other Greek Ministers or Members of Household.

A destroyer had been asked for to take this party off from Myli at 2200, but no confirmation had been received that she was arriving. A flying boat was also expected at the same time as the destroyer, but if the weather was at all bad, she would not have been able to land, the bay not being sheltered from the south.

32. On arrival at Myli, every endeavour was made to re-open communications which had been broken during our move. Owing to continual presence of enemy aircraft overhead, it was necessary to site all sets under trees. This, and the fact that H.Q. was in a valley, rendered