

a despatch from Major-General Paris, reporting the proceedings of the Division round Antwerp from the 3rd to 9th October, with a view to its being considered by you and forwarded to the Army Council with your survey of the operations as a whole.

I am, etc.,

W. GRAHAM GREENE.

From Major-General A. Paris, C.B., Commanding Royal Naval Division, to the Secretary of the Admiralty. (Sub-enclosure in No. 1.)

31st October, 1914.

Regarding the operations round Antwerp from 3rd to 9th October, I have the honour to report as follows:—

The Brigade (2,200 all ranks) reached Antwerp during the night 3rd-4th October, and early on the 4th occupied, with the 7th Belgian Regiment, the trenches facing Lierre, with advanced post on the River Nethe, relieving some exhausted Belgian troops.

The outer forts on this front had already fallen and bombardment of the trenches was in progress. This increased in violence during the night and early morning of 5th October, when the advanced posts were driven in and the enemy effected a crossing of the river, which was not under fire from the trenches.

About midday the 7th Belgian Regiment was forced to retire, thus exposing my right flank. A vigorous counter-attack, gallantly led by Colonel Tierchon, 2nd Chasseurs, assisted by our aeroplanes, restored the position late in the afternoon.

Unfortunately, an attempt made by the Belgian troops during the night (5th-6th October) to drive the enemy across the river failed, and resulted in the evacuation of practically the whole of the Belgian trenches.

The few troops now capable of another counter-attack were unable to make any impression, and the position of the Marine Brigade became untenable.

The bombardment, too, was very violent, but the retirement of the Brigade was well carried out, and soon after midday (6th October) an intermediate position, which had been hastily prepared, was occupied.

The two Naval Brigades reached Antwerp during the night, 5th-6th October. The 1st Brigade moved out in the afternoon of 5th to assist the withdrawal to the main 2nd Line of Defence.

The retirement was carried out during the night, 6th-7th October, without opposition, and the Naval Division occupied the intervals between the forts on the 2nd Line of Defence.

The bombardment of the town, forts and trenches began at midnight, 7th-8th October, and continued with increasing intensity until the evacuation of the fortress.

As the water supply had been cut, no attempt could be made to subdue the flames, and soon 100 houses were burning. Fortunately, there was no wind, or the whole town and bridges must have been destroyed.

During the day (8th October) it appeared evident that the Belgian Army could not hold the forts any longer. About 5.30 p.m. I considered that if the Naval Division was to avoid disaster an imme-

diately retirement under cover of darkness was necessary. General De Guise, the Belgian Commander, was in complete agreement. He was most chivalrous and gallant, insisting on giving orders that the roads and bridges were to be cleared for the passage of the British troops.

The retirement began about 7.30 p.m., and was carried out under very difficult conditions.

The enemy were reported in force (a Division plus a Reserve Brigade) on our immediate line of retreat, rendering necessary a detour of 15 miles to the north.

All the roads were crowded with Belgian troops, refugees, herds of cattle, and all kinds of vehicles, making inter-communication a practical impossibility. Partly for these reasons, partly on account of fatigue, and partly from at present unexplained causes large numbers of the 1st Naval Brigade became detached, and I regret to say are either prisoners or interned in Holland.

Marching all night (8th to 9th October), one battalion of 1st Brigade, the 2nd Brigade and Royal Marine Brigade, less one battalion, entrained at St. Gillies Waes and effected their retreat without further incident.

The Battalion (Royal Marine Brigade) Rear Guard of the whole force, also entrained late in the afternoon together with many hundreds of refugees, but at Morbeke the line was cut, the engine derailed, and the enemy opened fire.

There was considerable confusion. It was dark and the agitation of the refugees made it difficult to pass any orders. However, the battalion behaved admirably, and succeeded in fighting its way through, but with a loss in fighting of more than half its number. They then marched another 10 miles to Selzaate and entrained there.

Colonel Seely and Colonel Bridges were not part of my command, but they rendered most skilful and helpful services during the evacuation.

The casualties are approximately—

1st Naval Brigade and 2nd Naval Brigade, 5 killed, 64 wounded, 2,040 missing.

Royal Marine Brigade, 23 killed, 103 wounded, 388 missing.

In conclusion, I would call your attention to the good services rendered by the following officers and men during the operations—

OFFICERS.

Staff—

Lieut.-Colonel A. H. Ollivant, R.A.

Major Richardson, N.Z. Staff Corps.

Fleet Surgeon E. J. Finch, R.N.

1st Brigade—

Lieutenant G. G. Grant, R.N.V.R.

Sub-Lieutenant C. O. F. Modin, R.N.V.R.

2nd Brigade—

Commodore O. Backhouse, R.N., Commanding Brigade.

Captain W. L. Maxwell, Brigade Major.

Sub-Lieutenant H. C. Hedderwick, R.N.V.R.

Royal Marine Brigade—

Lieut.-Colonel C. Mc.N. Parsons, R.M.L.I., in command most of the time.

Major A. H. French, R.M.L.I., 10th Battalion.

Lieutenant D. J. Gowney, R.M.L.I., 10th Battalion.