

of the efficacy of their support under the conditions which prevailed.

23. H.M.S. CALPE'S appearance during most of this period must have resembled that of a Fleet Flagship on regatta day, as there were seldom less than from six to ten craft alongside. They came to transfer wounded, bring reports, or seek instructions, and their presence was rather an embarrassment to the Commanding Officer when he wished to manoeuvre to avoid gun fire. Lieutenant-Commander J. H. Wallace, R.N. remained imperturbable, however, throughout the operation, and by his coolness set an excellent example.

24. My general impression during this phase of the operation from the Naval point of view, was a feeling of inability to give the troops effective support. The military situation was completely obscure, and the large quantities of smoke drifting inshore made it impossible to see what was happening. On the other hand, had it not been for the smoke, it would have been impossible for the destroyers and landing craft to remain as close inshore as they did.

25. Immediately after the landings, the landing craft had withdrawn to seaward of the destroyers. This was in accordance with the instructions they had received in the event of their finding that the approaches to the beaches remained under heavy fire. It was this fact, more than anything else, that indicated to me from the outset that things ashore were not going according to plan.

At about 0900 H.M.S. GARTH reported that her ammunition was nearly exhausted. I accordingly ordered her to escort H.M.S. ALRESFORD who had a damaged L.C.T. in tow, and Nos. 10 and 11 Groups, whose tanks and troops the General had decided not to land, back to England. (My signal 0903 refers.)

26. By 0900 it had become clear to me that the troops ashore were in difficulties and were unlikely to gain possession of the East and West cliffs which dominated the main beaches. I learned later that even some of the buildings on the front were still in enemy hands. It was obvious therefore that the military situation was serious, and that it was becoming steadily more difficult for ships and craft to close the beaches. Accordingly I advised the General that the withdrawal should take place with as little further delay as possible, and should be confined to personnel. I considered that 1030 would be the earliest practicable time, as it was necessary to warn the Air Officer Commanding 11 Group and to pass instructions to the landing craft. The General agreed subject to confirmation nearer to time.

27. Accordingly Commander McClintock was summoned on board H.M.S. CALPE and it was decided that all A.L.Cs.* and M.L.Cs.* should be instructed to proceed into the same beaches as those on which they had originally landed and should ferry troops off on to L.C.Ts. who should remain about 1 mile from the shore. All possible support was to be given by destroyers and L.C.F.(L)s. (I considered it out of the question to send L.C.Ps. or L.C.Ts. inshore in view of the volume of enemy fire.)

28. To give effect to this plan, Commander McClintock proceeded in M.L. 187 and gave

necessary instructions to the landing craft, and a signal, similar to that later sent at 0950, save that the time for the withdrawal was given as 1030, was coded and prepared for despatch. Later on, however, the General informed me that he would prefer to wait until 1100. The signal thus amended was then despatched and Commander McClintock was informed of the later time. At about 1022, the destroyers were ordered to form on a line to bear 070° to 250° and to follow the landing craft in. All vessels suitably placed were instructed to make smoke. The wind was onshore and slightly from the west, and an effective screen of smoke prevented the landing craft from being fired upon until they were close inshore. Unfortunately the smoke also hid the beaches from the destroyers and it was very difficult to see what was going on, or to offer effective support by gun fire. Nevertheless, without the smoke it is doubtful whether any withdrawal would have been possible.

29. During these events, H.M.S. CALPE steered for the western end of Green Beach, as it was thought that no supporting fire would be necessary in this area, and both the Military Force Commander and the Air Liaison Officer were extremely averse to H.M.S. CALPE'S guns being fired on account of the risk to the special wireless apparatus that had been installed. Actually, however, it soon became apparent that the western cliff at the end of Green Beach was held by the enemy, and H.M.S. CALPE came under small arms and machine gun fire necessitating her opening the range. It is interesting to record that when subsequently both H.M.S. CALPE and H.M.S. FERNIE were obliged to open fire with their main armament, much of the wireless apparatus remained intact.

30. It soon became virtually impossible to know how the withdrawal was proceeding, but at about 1130 H.M.S. CALPE embarked two landing craft loads of troops, mostly wounded, from whom it was learned that there were still men waiting to come off at Green Beach. At about the same time the General asked for the ship to proceed to the main beaches and ascertain the position there. Accordingly M.L. 194 (Act. Lieut.-Commander W. Whitfield, R.N.R.) was hailed and instructed to round up the landing craft in the area and send them in again. At about the same time, a signal, originator unknown, was received to the effect that there were no more troops on Green Beach, and was immediately contradicted by my signal timed 1147. H.M.S. CALPE then proceeded off the main beaches and closed L.C.T. 9, to whom troops were then being transferred by landing craft. Some of these troops were embarked in H.M.S. CALPE in order to save time. Slightly later I closed A.L.Cs. 185 and 188, who had just come off from the main beach. Both gave it as their opinion that the conditions ashore precluded further evacuation.

31. At about 1220 a signal was received from Commander McClintock indicating that no further evacuation was feasible. However, the Military Force Commander asked that a further effort should be made and although I felt that this might well result in greater losses to troops already embarked, than in the embarkation of additional troops, I decided to give Commander McClintock discretion whether to make a further

* Admiralty footnote.—A.L.C. = Landing craft for assaulting troops. M.L.C. = Landing craft for mechanised vehicles.