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R.A.F. NARRATIVE

II/117/4

THE CAMPAIGN IN NORWAY



April _____ June 1940

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PART I. A REVIEW OF THE CAMPAIGN
IN NORWAY.

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Many years will probably go by before a scientific and exhaustive history of the campaign in Norway can be written; for, if this is to be done, the records of the Norwegian Government and of the Norwegian army will have to be consulted; and it will also be necessary that the German operations in Norway shall have been described and explained. The documents that are now available do, however, make it possible to examine what was by us attempted in Norway, and to explain why the attempt was abandoned; but even this would be misleading unless the political sources of the campaign were first considered.

When war was declared, the three Scandinavian Governments were persuaded that the conduct they had followed in the last war was that which was most likely to save them from the dangers of the new one; and, as this conduct had been that they should consult together on all matters of common concern; that they should practice a common doctrine of neutral rights and duties; that they should maintain their traditional trade with both sets of belligerents; and, above all, that they should assist one another in times of shortage and scarcity, these principles were enunciated in a communique that was issued from Copenhagen on September 19th, and from Stockholm, (where the three kings had met together) on October 18th. The foreign ministers of the three countries explained the inner meaning of these proclamations in a number of conversations with our ministers: "the Scandinavian peoples" they said "were more inclined to Great Britain than to Germany, but everybody admired and feared the power and the excellence of the German army; and everybody was painfully impressed that Great Britain's ally, Poland, should

Text in
Monica Curtis
Op.Cit.
p.28.

F.O.tel.61
from Sweden
11.X.39.
and from
Norway
3.X.39.

have been so quickly conquered. The three governments were, therefore, determined to follow a strictly neutral course of conduct and not to be deflected from it by sentiment." Scandinavian neutrality was, subsequently, threatened by three movements of public affairs: two of these dangers came from the sources whence the Scandinavians had always expected that they would come; the war at sea and the blockade of Germany; the third danger was unexpected, and it arose thus.

In October, 1939, the Russian Government informed the Finnish authorities that they were not satisfied with the existing boundaries between the two countries. The Soviet authorities agreed that what they demanded should be made the matter of a negotiation; but the Finnish plenipotentiaries at once discovered that the negotiation was nominal only; that the Soviet authorities were determined to seize the large tracts of Finnish territories, and to garrison Finnish towns with Soviet soldiers; and that, if any part of their conditions were refused, they would obtain them by force of arms. The Russians were not, however, quite ready to attack Finland when they first presented their conditions, and they allowed the discussions upon them to be drawn out, until the end of November, when they attacked the Finns all along the frontier.

The Finns, however, made a better resistance than anybody had ever deemed possible; and Russia was expelled from the League, whose authorities invited all member states to assist the Finns if they were able to do so. This gave an impetus to plans that had for long been contemplated.

As has been shown, a project for seizing bases in Norway had been considered during the last war. This, however, was a consequence of the war at sea. During the twenty

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years of peace a new motive was added; for it then became evident that the loss of the Lorraine ore mines had made Germany very dependent upon Swedish ore (which was carried to German ports through Narvik and through Lulea), and it was realised that it would be a serious blow to Germany if the Narvik route could be blocked up. The subject was mentioned, though not closely examined, during the Anglo-French staff conversations of the year 1939. When, therefore, the Allied governments considered what assistance could be given to Finland, and how it could be sent there, the original plan of stopping the movement of Swedish ore became involved in a bigger plan for controlling the roads and railways of northern Sweden, and for using them as lines of communication and supply for an expeditionary force in Finland.

At the beginning of the year 1940, however, the Government was inclined to deal with the Narvik ore separately, and as a preliminary to the bigger project of bringing northern Scandinavia under our control. Such warnings as we thought proper to issue were, however, very ill received by the Swedish and Norwegian Governments, who refused to be party to any plan for turning the Swedish ore from the German to the British market, and made it clear that they would follow a strictly neutral course of conduct and would resist any attempt to make their countries a theatre of war.

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Meanwhile Germany's supplies of Swedish ore had been examined by the experts in Whitehall, and on 18th December, 1939, the Ministry of Economic Warfare reported to the Cabinet upon the matter. The substance of this report was that if Germany could be deprived of the 9,000,000 tons of iron ore that she imported annually from Sweden, the consequence might well be fatal to German industry and would have a profound

effect upon the duration of the war. The Cabinet, therefore, instructed the chief of the staffs committee to report upon "the military implications of a policy aimed at stopping the export of Swedish iron ore to Germany."

The orefields of Sweden are widely separated. The fields of Kiruna and Galivare are in the northern part of Sweden, near the Finnish border. A line of railway connects the mines to the port of Narvik, on the north, and to the port of Lulea, at the head of the gulf of Bothnia; for the iron ore is carried to these two places for shipment abroad. The country all round the minefields is lonely and lightly cultivated; for the long winter makes farming an unprofitable business. Indeed the northern and central provinces obtain a large part of their food supplies from southern Sweden. Few railways traverse northern and central Sweden: a central railway runs south from Galivare, and a coastal railway runs parallel to it. The traffic upon the central railway is very light: the coastal railway feeds the ports and is fairly busy during the summer.

The southern orefields of Grangesberg lie on the northern edge of the most populated part of Sweden: to the south of them, there is a flat, much cultivated country that is covered by a network of railways.

This great distance between the two orefields (550 miles) would of course be of serious consequence when any plan for occupying them is considered; but what was even more productive of difficulties was that as the Baltic was closed to us, so, we could only approach the Swedish orefields through the defiles in the Norwegian mountains. The magnificent railway system of southern Sweden, on the other hand, and the well equipped harbours of the Gulf of Bothnia are separated from Germany by an inland sea that is commanded by the German Navy. As with the ports and railways,

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so with the airfields; a fair number of aerodromes in the flat lands of southern Sweden and southern Norway are almost at Germany's door. Those accessible to us are situated along the Norwegian coast line round Bergen and Trondhjem; they are ill connected to one another by road or railway, and are separated from Sweden by a great chain of mountains. The deliberations on the matter took the following course.

First, the Chiefs of Staff found that any project for stopping Swedish exports of iron ore to Germany was so connected to economic matters that they were obliged to review the Ministry of Economic Warfare's figures afresh. After doing so they decided that all Swedish ore exports to Germany must be stopped for at least a year, if the consequences were to be fatal to Germany. The Chiefs of Staff first considered whether this could be effected by sabotage and decided that it could not. It followed, therefore, that Swedish exports of ore to Germany could only be stopped if Narvik and northern Sweden were occupied. The military implications of this were thus explained:-

"The attitude of Norway and Sweden has a very material bearing on the feasibility of British military operations in Scandinavia."

"A study of the communications in the north leads us to conclude that a military expedition inland from Narvik in the face of either Norwegian or Swedish operation is not a feasible operation. Our reasons are briefly as follows: Firstly, we should have to prepare for a landing, probably opposed, under severe climatic conditions, and without many of the existing port facilities, which might have been demolished. Secondly it would be a simple matter for the Norwegians or Swedes to make the railway running inland from Narvik unusable, either by the removal of rolling-stock or the cutting off of electric power, even if they did not demolish it (and the Norwegians are known to have mined the railway in six places). In these circumstances we should be faced with an advance across very difficult ground, against an enemy who knows the country and is used to the conditions. There is no road linking Narvik with Galiware and to build a road would be a difficult undertaking which would take time."

"Similar considerations apply to an expedition in southern Norway or southern Sweden, which we regard as equally impracticable in the face of Norwegian and Swedish opposition."

"We have also given some consideration to the possibility of military operations if the Norwegians and Swedes adopt a purely passive attitude, which they might do through fear of antagonising Germany. Under these conditions we could not count on the ready co-operation of port and railway authorities; and, although a military expedition might not be impossible, we feel that we should suffer such serious delays that the resulting loss of time would probably be decisive. For these reasons we are convinced that Norwegian and Swedish co-operation is essential, and the remainder of this paper is written on the assumption that the co-operation is obtained."

"Limitation of our commitment in Scandinavia."

We anticipate that part of the price of obtaining this co-operation may be the promise of substantial Allied military and air support in southern Sweden, which is the most highly developed and populated part of the country and also the area most vulnerable to German attack. Moreover, as we show later, operations in southern Scandinavia are desirable for purely military reasons, in order to obtain strategic cover for the more important operation in the north The point we wish to make here is that it may not be possible to confine our commitment in Scandinavia to a small expedition in the north."

The Chiefs of Staff now considered what forces would be necessary for the purpose, and decided that one or two divisions would suffice, provided always that they were specially trained and equipped. Their reasons were these:-

"Snow conditions persist in Lulea until the middle of April and, since it is vital to anticipate the Germans in that area, our initial force must be trained and equipped for movement on snow. Although French Alpin units might be suitable, Canada would probably be the best source on which to draw for personnel of the first contingent, since the employment of French troops would inevitably complicate maintenance problems. It is understood that a force of from 5,000 to 7,000 Canadians could probably be organised and despatched to reach Narvik in March. It is clear that a force of this size would be insufficient to prevent a German landing, oppose a German and Russian land advance and safeguard vulnerable points from parachute troops and saboteurs. Any of these threats may develop after April and additional forces will then be required."

"As regards the size of any subsequent contingents, the railway between Narvik and Lulea has sufficient capacity to support a force of some six divisions with a small air force component."

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"Since, however, the railway, which is the only line of communication inland might be cut by German air attack - a point we elaborate later - it would be essential to develop an advanced base in Sweden sufficient to render the force independent of regular supplies from Narvik. The building up of such an advanced base would necessarily limit the size of force that could be used. The capacity of Narvik to serve as a base port for the expedition is under investigation. In addition to Narvik, or in substitution for Narvik if the railway between Narvik and the mines was cut, use might also be made of Trondheim. The whole matter is essentially one for detailed administrative enquiry, but we think that with alternative lines of communication and the early creation of advanced depots we could safely employ and maintain one or two divisions in northern Sweden."

"The organisation of the ordinary British division would require considerable adaptation for employment in northern Sweden, even during the summer. Large quantities of mechanised transport would not be required and could not be maintained; a proportion of pack transport and mountain guns would be necessary; and mobile light car units, whose vehicles might be obtained locally, would be useful for reconnaissance down the Bothnian Coast."

The air forces that would be needed for the operations were then examined. It has been shown that the Chiefs of Staff only regarded the operation as feasible if it were undertaken with Norwegian and Swedish assistance. The help that these countries could give in the air was, however, far less substantial than the help that they could give on land; and, in any case, the task of the air component that would accompany the expedition would be to protect not merely the expedition, but the whole country that had been occupied. On this point, the Chiefs of Staff reported that such air forces as we could send would be insufficient; and that the Germans would certainly invade southern Scandinavia if we sent an isolated expedition to Narvik. They gave the following reasons:-

"The landing of British troops at Narvik would certainly become known at once to the Germans, and, owing to their inability to oppose them with land forces, we must anticipate that they would exert every possible means to impede their advance by air action. The Germans could not take effective air action from bases more than 600 miles distant, so that bases in Norway and Sweden and adequate fuel supplies of the right type would be essential. In Norway there are only three bases within 600 miles of Narvik; one of these is at Trondheim, where the landing ground is believed to be too small for the

operation of modern bomber types, and two are seaplane anchorages. In Sweden there are eight bases within this 600-mile range. Of these, five are within 400 miles and one, at Boden near Lulea, is only 200 miles distant from Narvik."

"If Russia succeeds in overrunning Finland, we cannot entirely reject the possibility that German squadrons might be based on the Finnish aerodrome of Kemi, at the head of the Gulf of Bothnia. This would not be possible, for climatic reasons alone, until the end of April."

"It is clear, therefore, that before Germany can strike effectively at our forces in the north, she must invade Norwegian and Swedish territory or operate her seaplanes from Norwegian territorial waters."

"Time Factor.

The German Air Force is not equipped for operating off snow. We need not, therefore, anticipate any serious attacks on the Narvik-Lulea line, other than from seaplanes operating in the Norwegian fjords, until the snow melts at the beginning of April. Bomber aircraft operating from Germany could, however, reach Trondheim."

"Apart from the snow factor, the start of German attacks against objectives in the north depends on the date of the German invasion of Sweden. If Germany has to overcome Swedish resistance in southern Sweden, she will not be able to form air bases in that country until she has established her position on land. There is no military reason, however, to prevent Germany invading southern Sweden during the winter and so ensuring that air bases are established in, say, the neighbourhood of Stockholm in time to enable air operations to be commenced against objectives on the Narvik line in April. It is doubtful, in the face of Swedish opposition and the existence of snow, whether an attempt to secure Boden aerodrome by air landing parties could be made before mid-April."

"If, however, Germany has not occupied Swedish territory before our landing at Narvik, our forces there will meet with no serious air threat until German land forces have reached the Stockholm area and established air installations in the vicinity. It is desirable for these reasons to take the fullest advantage of the railway in the initial stages."

"Scale of German Air Attacks.

The factor governing the scale of air attack which Germany could launch against the Narvik-Lulea line is the number of aerodromes within effective range and the number of seaplane tenders able to work on the Norwegian coast, and not the total number of aircraft that could be made available."

"Apart from Boden, which is within 200 miles of Narvik and adjacent to Lulea, the Germans could base about eight bomber squadrons on aerodromes within effective range of the Narvik-Lulea area."

"Possession of Boden and Kemi aerodromes.

The occupation of Kemi, and to a lesser extent of Boden, aerodromes would facilitate and increase the scale of any German air attacks in the Narvik-Lulea area. It will be important, therefore, to take very early measures to assist the Swedes and Finns in forestalling German attempts to seize these bases."

"Probable German air objectives.

The principal objectives open to German attack would be the railway, our base depots and shipping at Narvik, and any aerodromes we had occupied."

"The railway is both a profitable and vulnerable objective. It is mostly single line. Its track is accessible to low flying attacks in many places. Its electric power, which is conveyed by overhead wire, could be easily damaged. The importance of the line for the maintenance of the force has already been explained."

"The Germans, in fine weather, would be able to make frequent, possibly daily attacks, on this objective, and, in view of the small scale of A.A. defences which are likely to be available along the railway, we must be prepared for serious interruption to traffic."

"Enemy attacks could create severe dislocation at Narvik if we had no anti-aircraft defences. A reasonable scale of defence would, however, reduce bombing accuracy, and with proper dispersion on our part, it would require a high scale of German bombing effort to achieve any serious effect."

"We must, in addition, be prepared for effective attacks against any British air forces established in this area. Owing to the few aerodromes available, our squadrons and their own accessible reserve would be a profitable target."

"Factors affecting the Employment of British Air Forces on the Narvik-Lulea line.

Before assessing the extent of the threat of German air attack, it is necessary to examine the possibility of providing air support to our own forces."

"British air effort in this area is governed by the aerodrome situation. According to present information, there are only three possible aerodromes. Two of these are north-east of Narvik, 60 and 100 miles distant respectively. The other is at Boden, which is 25 miles north-west of Lulea. We possess no details of the first two and, since they are described as landing grounds, in reports, they may prove unsuitable for modern types of aircraft. Boden is a proper aerodrome, but is only large enough for certain types of fighter and army co-operation aircraft. It would seem, therefore, that our air effort from land aerodromes might be limited to these types of squadron. The possibility of obtaining additional aerodrome sites and using seaplane anchorages is being investigated."

"The above limitations will seriously restrict the air support we could afford to this operation. Even if the aerodromes north of Narvik prove suitable, we could not at these distances give useful fighter protection over vulnerable areas, and none of the aerodromes appears practicable for bombers. "

"The early establishment of an Army Co-operation squadron at Boden for reconnaissance work along the Bothnia Coast is, however, very desirable. In view of the likelihood of the railway to Narvik being interrupted the early accumulation of reserves at Boden for this Squadron would be essential."

"Conclusions as to German air threat to the Galivare area.

From the foregoing factors we are forced to the conclusion that Air Force units in the Narvik-Lulea area could do little to ensure the safety of a British force in northern Sweden. It is also necessary to assume that it will be possible for the German Air Force to cause perhaps very serious interruptions to the Narvik-Lulea railway by air action. It is essential, therefore, that an advanced base should be built up as soon as possible and that some methods of transport alternative to the railway be organised as a subsidiary means of maintaining the force. An examination is required to determine the use which could be made of water transport on Lake Tornetrask."

"It is possible, however, that the air threat may not develop immediately and since the time factor for the approach of a German land advance should allow us time to consolidate our position at Lulea we must endeavour to store reserves in that area sufficient to tide over interruptions in the operation of the railway. Once our forces have established and dispersed themselves between Galivare and Lulea, they should not present a vulnerable target to air attack. If we can offset the enemy threat to the rail communications by alternative methods of transport and provide for the A.A. defence of Narvik, enemy air action should not render the operation impracticable."

This part of the report, however, only dealt with the implications of stopping Germany's imports from the northern ore fields. There was another source of iron ore in the southern part of the country, at Grangsborg; the exports from this district went through Oxelosund, and, although they were far smaller than those of the northern fields, the Chiefs of Staff were satisfied that they, also, must be stopped if the loss to Germany was to be decisive.

With regard to this, the Chiefs of Staff were satisfied:

"That substantial military and air assistance in southern Sweden may well be the price that we shall

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have to pay for obtaining Norwegian and Swedish co-operation in the north. For if the Germans establish themselves in southern Sweden, and southern Norway, and set up air bases there, they might well make it impossible for us to maintain our forces in the northern part of the country. The whole of Sweden must, therefore, be held against a German invasion. We can see no role for a small British force in southern Sweden," ran the report. "A small force could not prevent a German landing or a subsequent advance inland."

The Chiefs of Staff now explained that this occupying of southern Sweden would be a heavier charge upon the Air Force than upon the Army. The military force would probably be able to hold a line from Oxelosund through Norrköping, lake Vetter and lake Vaner, with five divisions. This force, and the Swedish Army that would be assisting it, would, however, be supplied and maintained over three long and vulnerable lines of communications - one from Trondhjem, another from Aandalsnaes and a third from Bergen; the air forces allotted to the expedition would, therefore, have to be sufficiently strong and sufficiently numerous to protect these lines against bombing raids, and to support the Army's operations along the line of the lakes. The implications of this were examined in the following passages of the report:-

"The whole of southern Sweden and Norway is within effective bombing range of a large proportion of the German air striking force operating from bases in Germany. Trondheim is within the extreme range of the force, but German striking power would be much reduced. We must, however, expect a considerable threat to this base and to the railways leading inland from it. This threat would become more severe, and might ultimately imperil the security of the communications of our forces in southern Sweden, if the Germans succeeded in establishing air bases in southern Sweden."

"This applies even more strongly to the air threat which would develop if Germany secured the aerodromes in southern Norway referred to below. We must also anticipate that Germany may move into Denmark in order to secure the use of aerodromes in that country. Only two, in northern Denmark, would, however, be of value to her, and the additional threat from these bases would be acceptable."

"Role of British Air Force.

"Provided that our forces could reach southern Sweden before a German invasion, it might be possible for us to operate a total of about twelve squadrons. Six of

these squadrons might be bombers, three fighters, and three Army Co-operation. In this event, British bomber squadrons, operating intensively from Swedish aerodromes, could probably cause considerable dislocation to any German landing operations, but the period for which they could maintain their attack would depend largely on the extent to which the Germans had developed their fighter resources and the degree of security we had achieved at our own air bases in Sweden. If the Germans succeeded in establishing one or more air bases in Swedish soil, the maintenance of the British air effort would become increasingly difficult. In the event of a withdrawal it would be essential to render Swedish landing grounds and aerodromes unusable."

"If we did not succeed in obtaining a footing in the extreme south of Sweden before the Germans, our air support would be restricted by lack of aerodromes to about seven squadrons."

"German air targets.

"Apart from troops in the field, which should not offer much target, German air bombardment would probably be concentrated on the destruction of our aircraft and equipment on aerodromes and the railways maintaining our military and air forces in Sweden. The former would be a serious threat owing to the limited number of aerodromes and the impossibility of dispersal."

"There are four main lines from Trondheim and one from Bergen, through Oslo. Moreover, there is a network of lines in southern Sweden, and repair gangs and material should be readily available. The Bergen line, which is the closest to Germany, might, however, be seriously interrupted, and this fact, combined with the greater vulnerability of Bergen itself in comparison with Trondheim, would make it inadvisable to use the former as a main base."

"Conclusion on air operations.

There can be no doubt that the German air threat to Sweden is great and that we could do little to reduce it. On the other hand, we consider it a fair risk to operate Allied military forces on the scale envisaged, based on Trondheim and other Norwegian ports, though it may well become difficult to maintain those forces in their forward positions if the Germans have succeeded in establishing air forces in southern Norway and Sweden. "

"Air support for such an expedition could, however, only be provided at the expense of our Metropolitan Air Force. The allocation of fighter squadrons for operations in Sweden would be a particularly serious commitment, and we could, in fact, not afford more than a token protection to the land forces."

The Chiefs of Staff were, moreover, persuaded that the Germans would most probably retaliate by seizing naval and air bases in southern Norway (whatever they might do in southern

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Sweden), and with regard to this they reported:

"Strategic advantages to Germany of occupying bases in Norway.

Should the Germans succeed in establishing themselves in southern Norway, they would be well placed to:-

- (a) intensify their attack on our naval forces controlling the northern exit from the North Sea and against our naval bases. Scapa and the Shetlands are only 250 miles from Stavanger, as compared with nearly 500 miles from Germany.
- (b) keep part of our northern patrol under air observation and thus facilitate surface attack on those forces.
- (c) intensify their submarine warfare by refuelling and refreshing U-boats returning from patrol, thus saving the additional voyage to and from Germany.
- (d) dispute the control of any minefields we might lay in Norwegian waters, and even maintain a swept channel through the minefield for merchant shipping.
- (e) intensify their attack on our convoys from Norway.
- (f) bring any communications we had established via Trondheim under a greatly increased scale of air attack."

"German aircraft operating from Norwegian aerodromes would be the most serious air threat. This threat might be reduced for about six months by extensive damage to the aerodromes. This the Norwegians might be induced to undertake themselves, but the only certain way of ensuring the necessary damage would be to do it ourselves."

"As regards potential naval bases, we could not ensure their denial to the enemy without seizing and holding them ourselves."

"Necessity for, and method of, forestalling the enemy.

"Once the Germans are established it would require a major operation to dislodge them. Hence it would be essential to forestall them. Small forces, augmented by strong detachments of engineers, should be able to ensure extensive damage to the existing aerodromes, and the communications leading towards them, on the landward side."

"Given Norwegian collaboration, and provided we were able to forestall the Germans, it should be possible to land, and maintain small forces by sea, at Trondheim, Bergen and Stavanger. Once established, our control of sea communications should be sufficient to prevent any sustained seaborne attack on them, but they would have to be sufficiently strong to deal with airborne or seaborne raids."

"A small force could probably be conveyed by sea to Christiansund also, but the exposed position of that place would probably render its subsequent maintenance by sea too difficult. We think, however, that it could be maintained overland from a base further north."

"Oslo is a different proposition. A small force could not be taken there by sea, although it might be flown in. The operation is an important one for study by our Service Staffs. As Oslo is the Capital, it is to be hoped that it would be adequately defended by the Norwegians, and it is possible that they could be relied on to prevent the two existing aerodromes from falling into German hands."

On the whole matter, the Chiefs of Staff reported:

"It must be realised that to embark on an offensive in Scandinavia in the spring of 1940, represents a fundamental change in our policy. Up to date that policy has been to remain on the defensive on land and in the air, while our armaments are increased. The plan under review, however, would enable us to initiate in March, offensive operations which might well prove decisive. The opportunity is a great one and we see no prospect of an equal chance being afforded us elsewhere. We consider that the strategy of operating in Scandinavia is sound, provided vital Allied points elsewhere are secure. Those points are the front in France, which we think can be held, and Great Britain and our sea-borne trade. The consequences of a major offensive against Great Britain cannot be predicted with any more certainty now than when our existing policy was adopted and our air defences are still far short of our requirements. The policy under review, therefore, must involve some risk. Nevertheless, in view of the possibility of obtaining decisive results we think this risk can be accepted."

"We accordingly recommend the adoption of a policy aimed at stopping the export of Swedish iron ore to Germany, provided that Scandinavian co-operation is first obtained."

"There is a final consideration, which is not strictly within our terms of reference but which we think the War Cabinet should have before them."

"This report is based on the assumption that we hold the initiative. Moreover, we assume that it would suit the German book that we should not take action in Scandinavia and that the status quo should be maintained."

"If, however, Germany became suspicious that we intended to act, they might attempt to forestall us. Our hand would then be forced and it would be a race against time."

"The only course open to us would be to hamper and delay the German invasion of Scandinavia by submarine forces operating in the Baltic and by landing a small, hastily improvised, force at Narvik with the object of picketing the Narvik railway, seizing the aerodrome at Boden, and destroying the port facilities at Lulea."

"This force would not be trained and equipped for active operations in northern Scandinavia in winter, but it would be capable of the above limited tasks until reinforced

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by an adequately equipped and properly prepared expedition."

It will be seen that the whole of this first report started from the assumption that the capture of Galivare and Grangesburg ore fields was only a feasible operation if the Swedes and Norwegians allowed us to enter the country. The Scandinavian Governments were, therefore, approached again, during February, but their reception of anything that we proposed was as uncompromising as ever. The two Governments shewed moreover that they were acting in the closest concert; for a speech by the Norwegian Foreign Minister, Doctor Koht, was followed by speeches of exactly the same substance from the political managers in Sweden. They were determined, they said, to keep the naval war from their own waters; to sign no trading agreement with one set of belligerents that would excite the resentments of the other; and, in the matter of pure domestic exports, such as iron ore, they intended to adhere to a rule which we ourselves had done much to establish; That whatever quantity had been exported to a neighbouring Power when it was at peace, should be exported to that country, when it was at war. The most that the Scandinavian countries could be made to promise on this matter of iron ore was therefore that they would not increase their exports to Germany during war; and that they would maintain their war trade to both sets of belligerents at the figure that it had been at before war began. Seeing, therefore, that it was so unlikely that the Scandinavians would assist us to occupy a large part of their country, the War Cabinet invited the Chiefs of Staff to report upon seizing and holding the Galivare ore fields if the Norwegians and the Swedes resisted us. The Chiefs of Staff reported that Scandinavian opposition would make the whole project impossible of execution:

"The first phase in these operations," ran this second report, "would be to capture the port of Narvik and, unless

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we achieved complete surprise, the landing would be opposed."

"Nevertheless, in spite of casualties and delay we have little doubt that we should overcome Norwegian opposition and capture the port."

"The real difficulties, however, would only begin when the force commenced its advance from Narvik. To reach Galivare the expedition would have to undertake a 150 mile advance over some of the most difficult country in Europe. The only line of communication inland from Narvik is one electrified railway with many tunnels and running through precipitous country. Great masses of rock overhang the line which is a single track throughout most of its length. The Norwegians and Swedes could easily deny its use to us by:-

- (i) removing rolling stock.
- (ii) cutting off the electric power; or
- (iii) demolishing the line, which has already been mined in six places on Norwegian territory."

"If they were to do so, we should be faced with the formidable task not only of repairing the damage but also of landing locomotives and rolling stock at Narvik, where the port facilities might have been destroyed. The only alternative would be to construct a first-class mountain road from Narvik to Galivare. This would be an enormous undertaking and could not possibly be completed in time to forestall the Germans at the mines."

"Nor would that be the end of our troubles. Even if we were able to establish a line of communication, its protection and maintenance in hostile territory would be a source of serious embarrassment and would add greatly to the size of the commitment in northern Scandinavia. "

"From the foregoing it would be seen that our chances of reaching Galivare before next winter sets in would be extremely remote if we were faced with a hostile Norway and Sweden; and we could not hope to forestall the Germans in a race for the northern orefields if the latter landed near Iulea."

"If German troops and aircraft reinforce the Scandinavian forces opposing us, as they well might in the circumstances, we have no hesitation in saying that we should be courting complete failure."

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The War Cabinet now considered a further report upon the preparation that would have to be made if the project were to be persisted in and agreed, "That the service departments should be authorised to purchase stores and clothing, but that no shipping was to be taken up without reference to the War Cabinet."

Meanwhile, however, the French High Command communicated

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their views upon the Scandinavian project, and the Chiefs of Staff, while they were only instructed to report upon the instructions that would have to be given, if the project were to be executed, considered it right to go beyond the terms of reference that had thus been given them, and to report upon intervention in Scandinavia as a whole.

The Chiefs of Staff now considered that Germany would, probably, take measures to assure her supplies of iron ore and oil, before she attacked the Allies upon the Western Front; that is, she might attempt to seize the Galivare iron deposits as soon as the Baltic was free of ice, and might then turn to the south-east for oil.

"In other words we must make preparation for operations both in Scandinavia, and for maintaining a defensive front in support of our Turkish Ally. It is not, of course, suggested that the Allies could operate substantial forces in both areas simultaneously; but neither is it considered that Germany could take the offensive in both places at the same time."

The Chiefs of Staff, therefore, reported, that, by intervening in Sweden, we should wrest the initiative from Germany, but they again insisted (and on this the French High Command agreed with them) that the Scandinavian Governments must collaborate in the enterprise.

"The plans which we describe later, on this report, are contingent upon this co-operation being obtained. How this should be done is, of course, outside our province."

With regard to the operation itself, it was to be remembered that Lulea might be opened to shipping on about April 26th; so, as this port was to be captured from Narvik, the northern force must be ready to disembark on March 20th. This gave an interval of only 50 days between the time when the Chiefs of Staff paper was being considered and the time when every preparation was to be completed; in the meantime the following points called for consideration:

"The German air threat to Scandinavia.

There is, however, a point to which it is desired to invite particular attention. The air defences of Norway and Sweden are totally inadequate to meet the overwhelming scale of air attack which Germany could bring to bear on these countries and in particular on the cities of southern Sweden, including Stockholm. It seems likely, therefore, that the Swedish and Norwegian Governments would not be prepared to expose themselves to the danger of such attack, unless we could give them categorical assurances of substantial assistance to meet it."

"So far as direct assistance is concerned, the air forces which we could send to southern Scandinavia would, owing to lack of operational facilities in southern Sweden and Norway, be limited to two fighter squadrons, two bomber squadrons and one Army Co-operation squadron. This force, even with the addition of four heavy bomber squadrons based on aerodromes in the United Kingdom, would be unlikely to satisfy the Swedish and Norwegian Governments."

"There remains the question of indirect assistance. As to this, we invite attention to the possibility of making a public declaration in advance that if Germany 'took the gloves off' and initiated bombing in Scandinavia that led to destruction of civilian life and property as she did in Poland, we should immediately retaliate on Germany."

"It may be that an assurance of this kind would be demanded by the Swedes and Norwegians as an indispensable condition of their co-operation. "

"As for the expedition itself, the operations to which it would be committed would be these:"

"Northern Sweden

- (i) A force would be landed at Narvik, with the role of moving up the Narvik-Galivare-Lulea railway in order to occupy the Galivare ore fields and secure, and if necessary destroy the port of Lulea in the event of a major German landing when the ice breaks in the Baltic. "

"Southern Sweden and Norway.

- (ii) As an inducement we might have to offer to secure the co-operation of the Swedes, and in order to assist them against the German attack which would in all probability result from our seizure of the Galivare ore fields, land and air forces would be sent to central and southern Sweden. Their role would be to co-operate with the Swedish forces in resisting an invasion from the south, and in opposing any German attempt at a landing on the east coast as the ice receded. The possibility of submarine operations against German sea communications in the Baltic is being examined. If practicable, these would clearly form a most important element in the plan of campaign."

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"(iii) As a preliminary to the despatch of this force, bases would have to be obtained at Trondheim and Namsos. It would also be necessary to deny to the Germans Bergen and Stavanger, which has a good aerodrome."

"Bergen might be required as a subsidiary base for ourselves, and its retention would also have the advantage of securing the eastern end of the northern mine barrage. We should, therefore, remain in occupation of this port."

"At Stavanger our object would be to secure the aerodrome in case it was required for our own aircraft, and also to prepare it for demolition, in order to deny its use to the German air forces. Once the demolition, if this became necessary, has been carried out, the force landed there could be withdrawn and absorbed in the main forces operating in south Sweden. Any attempt by the Germans to re-establish the aerodrome could be impeded and probably prevented by air action."

"The above operations must be considered as part of the main operations in Sweden."

"Forces Required.

The forces required for these operations are as follows:-

"Naval.

Up to 40 destroyers will be required continuously for close escort duties during the time while the main forces are being transported to Scandinavia - a period of about two months. In addition, protection of the convoys will become the principal preoccupation of the Home Fleet throughout the operation. Some 25 trawlers and patrol craft will be needed for the local naval defence of the base ports."

"Military

- (i) North Sweden. For the seizure of Galivare and Lulea, an initial force of two brigades would be needed. Any reinforcements required for this force will be found from the main Allied Army operating in central and southern Sweden."
- (ii) Southern Sweden. The maximum force which could be maintained through the bases at Trondheim and Namsos is about five Allied divisions. We should be prepared to send a force of this size to co-operate with the Swedes."

"The first flight would be -

- (a) an infantry brigade of regular troops, made mobile with M/T, who would land at Trondheim and Namsos; and
- (b) detachments of infantry and Royal Engineers to secure Bergen and Stavanger."

"This first flight would be followed by the remainder of a corps of three divisions, a proportion of which should be regulars, in view of the mobile type of operations in which

they might be engaged. The third echelon would be a second corps of two divisions."

"Air.

- (i) North Sweden. If an aerodrome is available, one fighter squadron (from A.D.G.B.) and one Army Co-operation flight (to be newly raised).
- (ii) South Sweden. Two fighter squadrons and two bomber squadrons from the Metropolitan Air Force and one Army Co-operation squadron, together with the necessary supplies for an advanced operational base for four heavy bomber squadrons which would operate from the United Kingdom.
- (iii) The special co-operation of Coastal Command will be required for reconnaissance and escort duties during the expedition."

"The total shipping involved amounts to some 20 passenger liners and 380,000 D.W. tons of other shipping for the initial movement, which would take about two months. Subsequently some 60,000 D.W. tons of shipping would be permanently taken up for maintenance."

It will be seen, therefore, that whenever intervention in Scandinavia had been urged, the Air Staff had explained, with great elaboration, that the communications upon which the whole expedition would depend might well be endangered by attacks from the German Luftwaffe.

Meanwhile, however, a new reason for occupying northern Scandinavia had been added to the old. The Finns, who had been attacked by the Russians in early November were reporting that they were hard pressed, and that they would be obliged to submit to the Russians if they were not assisted. During the preceding weeks, the seizing of the Galivare ore fields had been examined and discussed as an operation in itself; but the connection between it and the campaign in Finland had never been lost sight of; and this cry of distress from the Finns gave a sharp impetus to the plan that was then maturing. The project of intervening in Scandinavia was, therefore, laid before the Supreme Council of the Allies early in February, and was by them approved; on February 7th, the War Cabinet authorised the Service Departments "To go full out with all preparations, and

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to be ready by March 20, including operations for Finland."

The first project was much altered by this decision: the operation as originally conceived was that the Allies should enter northern Sweden and Norway, with the consent of the Scandinavian Governments; that they should protect the occupied parts against raids and dislocation; strengthen the Swedish Army against a German invasion; and, by these measures, turn Swedish ore from the German to the British market. The project was now that we should send a force into Finland, and hold the principal ports of Norway so securely that the lines of communication of the forces operating in Finland should be safe. The first purpose of the expedition, viz: the stoppage of the German supplies of Swedish ore was as well secured by the second project as it would have been by the first, but the implications of the plans differed, and, in any case, the second project called for far more embracing measures in the air than the first, and the Air Staff made the following observations upon it:-

"Trondheim is within the extreme range of about 1,300 long range bombers and 120 coastal aircraft and a limited number of bombers could also be operated from aerodromes in southern Norway, considerably closer to Trondheim. It has been calculated that the scale of attack on the base and the line of communication might amount to something in the nature of 100 tons a day in the initial stage, with a considerable increase if the enemy were established on aerodromes in southern Norway."

"We were inclined to think that the above assumption - as to the scale of attack - possibly may be an over estimate Nevertheless, the fact must be faced that the scale of attack which we must be prepared to endure will be very heavy indeed. It must be borne in mind that in the initial stages we shall be able to present no opposition whatever - except such air defence as the Norwegians and the Swedes may be able to afford with their very limited resources on the assumption that they are engaged actively on our side. The force landing at Trondheim includes one heavy and one light regiment of A.A. artillery and a local balloon barrage. There will be no fighters available in the initial stages and subsequently only one Gladiator and two Blenheim squadrons of which the former may have to be detached to the north. "

It was to be remembered moreover, that this severe attack would be directed against a line of communications that would

have to be maintained at all costs.

"We have now to rely upon Trondheim as a base port for two purposes:

- (a) for the forces operating in central Sweden (we have recognised that, in the worst case, these forces may fail to give effective aid to the Swedes),
- (b) for the transport of forces destined for Finland. "

"Unless the capacity of the Narvik-Lulea line proves more satisfactory than the present information indicates, the subsequent maintenance of the forces destined for Finland may also have to be based in Trondheim. Thus if the scale of enemy attack is such as to stop the efficient working of Trondheim and its forward communications, we may be unable to despatch forces to Finland or to maintain them."

This, moreover, was not all. If the Germans succeeded in occupying southern Sweden, without, however, expelling us from the northern part, the Ministry of Economic Warfare estimated that some 3,000,000 Swedes, and a great part of the Swedish Army would have to be equipped, and at least partially fed, by the Allies; and, that, if this were to be done, some 50,000 tons of goods would have to be dealt with, monthly, at Trondheim, the very port that would be subjected to the severest attack that the Luftwaffe could direct against it:

"The more nearly a port and railway system are working to their maximum capacity, the more serious will be the results of any interruption such as may result from a heavy scale of air attack."

The report was thus concluded:

"Finally we should, perhaps, draw attention to the fact that the new factor introduced by the Ministry of Economic Warfare...combined with the scale of enemy air attack on the base and line of communication must effectively dispose of any idea that we could send strong reinforcements into Sweden and build up a battle front, held by Allied land and air forces, sufficient to withstand indefinitely, the scale of land and air attack that Germany could bring against it."

These warnings, which were almost all drafted by Air Commodore Slessor, were endorsed by the Joint Planning Subcommittee and considered by the Chiefs of Staff on February 14th;

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it was recognised that the warnings of the Air Staff were well founded; indeed, the Chiefs of Staff expressly endorsed the final paragraphs of the report (February 15th).

There was, moreover, another, and even more serious implication to this plan of intervening in Scandinavia, and of opening up a new theatre there. Since the war began, our Air Force had been operating against fortified harbours, air bases, and ships of war; and had refrained from bombing any target if it was surrounded by residential areas, or dwelling places, no matter how legitimate an attack upon it might be. The Germans had observed a similar code, and we had every reason to adhere to it, as it was patent that the Germans, with their larger Air Force, could do far more damage to our cities, our workshops and our industries than we could do to theirs. Whether this code should continue to be observed, and at what point it would be to our advantage to initiate a more drastic and embracing practice were, indeed, questions that were being examined between ourselves and the French. For we could not decide how our bomber forces were to be employed during the spring campaign, until both sides were in agreement, not merely on matters of principle, but on their practical application. Now it seemed to the Air Staff that the operations in Scandinavia might well force us to abandon the practices that we had hitherto observed before we wished to do so. Their observations ran thus:-

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"The Air Staff have no wish to play the machinery of negotiation or to go back upon their recommendations. It is, however, their duty to ensure that Ministers are fully aware of the possible consequences ... of the policy we have conditionally adopted in respect to Scandinavia. "

"We are deliberately adopting a course of action which may well open up full air war. At the same time, we are sending to Scandinavia, as a token force, 3 out of our 34 mobilizable fighter squadrons in the U.K. This will leave us, ~~for~~ the protection of our sea borne trade only 504 mobilizable fighters out of a requirement of 848 - and even that requirement was set before we had to undertake certain added commitments which have arisen since the war. In addition, by undertaking preparations for the Scandinavian

expedition, we have already retarded the formation of additional fighter squadrons, notably the four Blenheim fighter squadrons for trade protection in the North Sea."

"It is true that action in Scandinavia will represent a diversion for the German force. But they could probably allot to operations in Scandinavia, a force at least as strong as they used in Poland and still have left a sufficient force to undertake large scale air attacks upon our North Sea shipping and ports."

"Finally we may have to open the unrestricted air war against Germany with a bomber force, already small, still more reduced by the allotment of 6 squadrons to operations in Sweden."

These objections were not considered sufficient to justify any halt in the preparations that were then being made, and measures were taken to collect the following forces:

The Narvik force was to consist of about two brigades; and a demi-brigade of Chasseurs Alpains.

The air forces for northern Scandinavia were to consist of one Army Co-operation flight and one fighter squadron. 416 flight (Hawkinge) and 263 Squadron (Filton) were detailed. They were to land at Trondheim and were to operate from Kemi and Boden aerodromes.

In southern Norway 1 British battalion was to be landed at Trondheim, 2 at Bergen and 2 at Stavanger. No air forces were allotted to these troops.

Three divisions were to operate in southern Sweden, and were to be supported by two Blenheim fighter, two Blenheim bomber and one Army Co-operation squadron. The whole of this force was not then collected and only the following squadrons were under orders to prepare for foreign service.

No. 15 Squadron (Blenheims)	Wyton.
40 Squadron (Blenheims)	Wyton.
23 (fighter) Squadron.	Wittering.
604 (fighter) Squadron.	Northolt.

The Finnish force was to consist of a demi-brigade of Chasseurs Alpains, and two battalions of the French Foreign Legion. They were to move into the country as soon as a base had been secured in the Gulf of Bothnia. No air forces were to accompany

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this expedition; but the Air Force squadrons in northern and southern Scandinavia might be diverted into Finland if circumstances allowed.

During these long preliminaries, the Staffs of the three Services had never modified their first condition: that operations in Scandinavia were only feasible if our forces entered Norway and Sweden with the good will of the Scandinavian Governments. Indeed, they had recently been instructed to examine this matter again and to report on what could be effected if we landed without the Scandinavians' consent and if the Norwegians and the Swedes resisted us. The report, which was prepared by the Joint Committee, repeated all that had previously been said. After making an estimate of the forces that the Germans would despatch as soon as the first shots were fired in Sweden and Norway; and after again shewing that the German Air Force would attack and imperil our system of communications, the report concluded:

"Without Scandinavian co-operation we cannot hope to forestall the Germans in a race for Galivare. If the Scandinavians opposed us actively they would certainly be reinforced by the Germans and we should be courting complete failure."

To this first condition, that the Scandinavians must assist us, the Service Staffs now thought to add another which was that the consent of the Scandinavian powers must be obtained by March 11th, as it was essential to success that the expedition should forestall any ⁽¹⁾ move that the Germans might make.

See C.O.S.
49S
21st Feb.
See C.O.S.
40(243) S
and 40 (245)S.

(1) The time table thought essential by the Staff was:

5th March: Forces for Bergen, Stavanger and Trondheim to be ready.
5th-12th March: Negotiations with Norway and Sweden.
12th March: 1st ships of the expedition sail.
12th March: Personnel ships sail.
26th March: Later date on which the store ships of the expedition could safely sail.

How this consent should be obtained was a matter upon which there was little agreement.

In the first place, the Naval Staff wished to send out a minelaying expedition against Narvik, and to block up the southern approaches to the harbour.⁽¹⁾ They wished to do this independently of any expedition that might be undertaken elsewhere, and claimed that it would, probably, provoke the Germans to do something retaliatory, and that this would give us an excuse for intervening in Scandinavia. The French Government also wished to act at once and urged us to seize a number of ports in Norway. Their reasons were; that it was unlikely that the Swedes would ever agree that Allied troops should pass through Sweden to operate in Finland; but, that if the British Government seized some Norwegian harbours by way of retaliating upon the country for allowing the German auxiliary Altmarm to pass through Norwegian waters all would be different. On hearing that the Allied troops were established in Norway, the Swedes would, "Have the certainty that the Allies could afford it immediate and efficacious assistance; would feel safe against German pressure, and, would allow the Allies to enter the country."

The proposal was, thus criticised in the Plans Division of the Air Ministry:-

"This is a proposal that we should invade Norway in order to persuade Sweden to send assistance to Finland ... In paragraph 4, it is said, one factor only can have any chance of modifying the position of the Swedish Government and that is the certainty that the Allies are in a position to afford it immediate and efficacious assistance against Germany. There is, and can be, no such certainty. The whole of the southern half of Sweden, including the capital, and all the most important cities are within range of a German bomber force of 2,000 aircraft ... How do the French imagine that we can protect them against these threats ? "

(1) This proposal was not a new one; for it had been urged, at intervals by the Admiralty, since the closing months of the previous year. It was, however, brought up again, at about this time, and was pressed with great insistence.

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The French proposal was not agreed to. The project of laying mines in Norwegian waters was laid over, but not rejected outright; and it was decided to get the consent of the Scandinavian Governments by diplomacy. A special envoy (Brigadier Ling) was sent to Finland, and was instructed to persuade the Finns to issue an appeal for help; having received this appeal, our Government would press the Scandinavian Governments to allow us to pass troops through their countries; when this consent was given, the forces that were then being assembled would occupy Norway and Sweden and bring the two countries under our control. The whole force was fully mobilized and ready to move by midnight February 25/26; the Commanders of the forces for Narvik, Finland and the ports in southern Norway had by then visited the War Office and had received their instructions.

Progress
Report
Week ending
28th Feb.

F.O.
93 Dipp to
Stockholm
70 Dipp to
Oslo
1st Mar.
1940.

On March 2nd our Ministers at Stockholm and Oslo carried out their instructions. They asked that two brigades should be allowed to land at Trondheim and Narvik on March 20th, and that the Norwegians and the Swedes should assist their passage into Finland. This force would subsequently be increased to a division: three fighter squadrons; one bomber squadron and one Army Co-operation squadron would be set apart for operations in northern Norway and Sweden. Our ministers also informed the two Scandinavian Governments that the Allies were prepared to assist them, with strong forces, if the Germans threatened them; and that Bergen, Stavanger and Trondheim would be secured four days after consent had been given. Our Ministers were also informed (but were instructed not to divulge) that we proposed to hold the southern and western parts of Norway with five battalions; and that we would send three divisions and a brigade into southern Sweden.

Tels. 97 &
99 Dipp from
Stockholm
2nd & 3rd
March.

The Norwegian and Swedish Governments answered all this by saying, that, if they accepted these proposals, they would turn their countries into a theatre of war without saving the Finns. Indeed, when the Swedish Minister for foreign affairs rejected our proposals he said "that the Allies were more interested in using Scandinavia as a battle ground for their war against Germany than in saving the Finns - "

C.O.S.
40 (262) S.

When this refusal was received, the Service Staffs were again instructed to report whether the expedition could be persisted in, notwithstanding that the Scandinavian Governments refused to sanction it. Again the Chiefs of Staff reported that nothing should be attempted in these circumstances. Even though the Norwegians and Swedes did not actively resist us, they could still bring the whole project to ruin by removing the rolling stock from their railways and cutting off electric power from the towns and railways. "We are still of the opinion," the report concluded, "that Swedish and Norwegian co-operation is essential if we are to have any chance of forestalling the Germans in the Lulea Galivare area."

See A.M.
Tel. P840
18.III.40.

At this time it was suspected that the Finns were on the point of surrender, and a few days later, this was confirmed. The Finns accepted all the Russian conditions and the Peace Treaty between the two countries was signed on March 13th. The Government at once gave orders that the expedition to Scandinavia was to be dispersed. The following Air Force units were then ready to sail, and they were all involved in the order.

See S.3633.

<u>Unit.</u>	<u>Assembly Station.</u>
935 Balloon Squadron	Cardiff
263 (Fighter) Squadron.	Filton
R.A.F. Component Headquarters	Benson
15 (Bomber) Squadron	Wyton
40 (Bomber) Squadron	Wyton

(Contd.)

(Contd.) - 29 -

<u>Unit.</u>	<u>Assembly Station.</u>
23 (Fighter) Squadron	Wittering
604 (Fighter) Squadron	Northolt
416 Army Co-operation Flight	Hawkinge
16 Army Co-operation Squadron	Hawkinge
50 Servicing Flight	Cranfield
51 Servicing Flight	Cranfield
10 Observer Screen	Cranfield
400 Communication Flight	Hendon
3 Base Area	Uxbridge
12 Port Detachment	Uxbridge
150 Maintenance Unit	Henlow
20 A.S.P.	Henlow
3 M.R.S.	Halton
68 Fighter Wing Headquarters	Wittering
3 Transportable W/T Unit	Hendon
20 A.S.P.	Henlow
11 R. and S. Section	Henlow
12 R. and S. Section	Henlow

When the Scandinavian Governments thus brought our plans for succouring Finland to nothing, it was felt that our influence over the smaller Powers of Europe would fall very low unless something were done to raise it; and it seemed as though the best way of effecting this was to revive our original plans against the Galivare ore fields. Only one part of that plan was, however, executable: we might seize Narvik, but to advance into the Swedish ore fields from the port of Narvik was now out of the question; for it was inconceivable that the Swedes would allow it to be done.

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The French, however, argued with great insistence that we could not abandon the whole matter, and urged that we should establish naval control of Norwegian waters and enforce it by seizing certain strategic points in Norway. These proposals were in harmony with a plan that the Naval Staff had been entertaining since the contents of the Russo-Finnish Treaty had become known. For, in a Paper that was circulated to the War Cabinet on March 14th, the First Lord argued, that the Russians had secured such advantages by the cessions that had been forced upon the Finns, that they could threaten both northern Norway and northern Sweden; and

that we might soon expect them to demand the right to set up bases on the ice free ports of Narvik, Petsamo and Murmansk.

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"Even though we cannot proclaim that we are going to help Finland at this juncture", the report concluded, "circumstances may soon arise where we shall have to do so. Moreover, we can at least take our stand on the principles of the covenant and declare that we shall take all steps to stop supplies from members of the League to the German aggressor, as a start, we are going to Narvik."

This project was a considerable departure from the previous ones, in that the stoppage of ore supplies to Germany could not possibly be effected by it, and it had been regarded as axiomatic, in all previous discussions on the subject, that only a complete and prolonged stoppage of all Swedish supplies of iron ore would justify intervention in Scandinavia. The French authorities, who realised that this was the weakness of any operation that was directed solely against Narvik, urged, however, that the British should mine the harbour of Lulea from the air, and so block up both ends of the ore route. They undertook to assist us with seven sea-planes that could each carry a load of 2,000 kilogrammes. The Air Staff's objections to this latter plan were strong; for they foresaw that we could not stop the movement of ore ships from Lulea by performing sporadic acts of war against the harbour; that if we did so we should provoke the Swedes to opposition; and that they could easily bring the operation to nothing by stationing the fighter squadrons near the harbour.

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Their strongest objection was, moreover, that we might quite well provoke unrestricted air warfare, and all its consequences - the bombing of London and of the industrial midlands - by an unsuccessful expedition against a neutral harbour. "If we are going to start air action leading to loss of civil life", wrote Air Commodore Slessor, "let us start with civilians in Germany, and not with Scandinavians in a Neutral port."

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After a protracted discussion between the French and British Staff, it was agreed that the Supreme War Council of the Allies must consider the project and decide. The plan, and its diplomatic preliminaries were, therefore, laid before the Supreme Council on March 28th, and were by them approved; and the following preparations were at once taken in hand.

After notes had been presented to the Norwegian and Swedish Governments, mines were to be laid in the approaches to Narvik and the Westfjord. When the mining was completed, a brigade of three battalions, and a French contingent were to be landed at Narvik: they were to secure the port, and advance up the railway to the Swedish frontier. Two British battalions were then to be landed at Stavanger, two battalions were to land at Bergen and one at Trondheim. These forces were "To forestall the Germans at those places" and to make all preparations for destroying Stavanger aerodrome. With regard to air forces, it was decided that none should accompany the expedition in the first instance; but, that, if the Narvik force did, later on, find occasion to move on to Galivare, then, an Army Co-operation flight, and a fighter squadron might have to be sent.

On April 5th our Ministers at Stockholm and Oslo presented identical notes to the Norwegian and Swedish Governments. In these notes it was stated:

"That the Allies were now persuaded that the German Government was not allowing the Scandinavian Governments the freedom in the management of their affairs which they were entitled to enjoy. This being so, the Allied Governments could no longer acquiesce in a state of affairs that allowed Germany to draw resources from Sweden and Norway that were vital to her prosecution of the war; and to enjoy facilities in those countries which placed the Allies at a dangerous disadvantage. The Allied Governments, therefore, felt it incumbent upon themselves to notify the Scandinavian Governments that they would assert and defend certain vital interest by all the measures that they thought necessary for the purpose. These vital interests were: that if Finland were again attacked, the Allies would not tolerate that Norway and Sweden should debar them from giving the Finns such assistance as they

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F.O. tels.
109 to Oslo
131 to
Stockholm
4.IV.40.

thought proper to be given; that if Norway or Sweden concluded an exclusive political agreement with Germany, the Allies would regard it as an agreement directed against themselves, notwithstanding that its ostensible purpose were to give aid to the Finns; that, if the Soviet Government attempted to obtain a footing on Norway's Atlantic seaboard the Allies would consider that their vital interests were endangered, and; that the Allies would not allow the course of the war to be influenced against them by advantages that Germany was deriving from Sweden and Norway, and that they would take whatever measures were most proper to prevent Germany from obtaining those resources and facilities."

General
Mackesey's
papers.

When this note was presented, the troops allotted to the expedition were embarking: the embarkations continued on the two days following (April 6th, 7th). On April 7th, Major General Mackesey, who was to command the expedition, went aboard H.M.S. Aurora; the Navy laid minefields in the positions that had been selected, and, on the following morning, the Allied Governments announced what they had done.

They stated:

For full text
see Norway and
the war, by
Monica Curtis,
pp. 43 et seq.

"The German Government were prosecuting their campaign at sea with great barbarity; and that, while the Germans professed only to attack Neutral vessels that were on their way to England, they were, in fact, sinking Neutral ships that were on their way from one Neutral port to another. Norwegian ships had been repeatedly sunk by these savage proceedings; yet the German Government insisted that their own trading vessels should enjoy the protection of Norwegian waters: that they should be allowed to carry iron ore from Narvik to Germany, and that Norwegian warships should escort them. This being so, the Allied Governments could no longer tolerate a state of affairs in which the German Government disregarded any rule of international comity that was **burdensome** to them, and insisted upon a strict observance of all rules that were to their advantage; and as the right to retaliate upon an enemy that disregarded the law of Nations was universally admitted, so, the Allied Governments had determined to make it impossible for Germany to draw upon the resources of Norway without let or hindrance. In consequence of this, the Allies declared that they had mined the Vestfjord, and that they had placed two minefields between Kristiansand and Bergen."

The expeditionary force was to have sailed on the evening of this same day (April 8th); but the reports that were received during the day, from our patrols shewed that heavy German units were at sea, and the first convoys were,

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in consequence held in harbour. During the night news came in that the Germans had themselves invaded Norway and had forestalled us. It will be necessary at this point to see what warnings we had received that this was impending.

The preliminary movements and the distribution of an enemy's forces are, as a rule, the best indication that an operation is intended. In this particular case, the distribution of the German Army, and of the Luftwaffe made it permissible to infer that the Germans intended to start the spring campaign by invading Belgium and Holland; but they did not allow any certain inference to be drawn about what the Germans intended to do in Scandinavia. The bulk of the German Army - 89 infantry divisions, 4 armoured divisions, and 4 mountain divisions - was massed on the Western Front; and our intelligence division were certain, from the positions where bridges were being built, and from other subsidiary indications that the next move would be made in the valley of the lower Rhine. Six divisions were stationed on the Baltic coast; but their presence there only proved that an invasion of Scandinavia was possible and not that it was intended.

The distribution of the Luftwaffe can only be studied from a map (q.v.), and it would be tedious to say more about it than this; That the distribution of the bomber, fighter and Army Co-operation Gruppen was complementary to the distribution of the Army divisions. The main fighter forces were massed along the lower and the middle Rhine; behind the fighters, the bomber and dive bomber Gruppen were deployed on a long quadrilateral, whose northern side lay between Wilhelmshaven and Hamburg and whose southern side passed through Stuttgart, Ulm and Munich. In addition to this, a chain of double engine fighter, bomber, and dive bomber Gruppen ran eastwards, from Oldenburg to east Prussia; and the coastal Gruppen were massed on the Schleswig

coast, near Sylt, and in the Baltic, round Kiel. Like the Army divisions on the Baltic coast, the Luftwaffe squadrons in this northern chain of stations could obviously be used for an invasion of Norway; but nothing indicated that they would be: for they were not reinforced during the months when the Allies were maturing their projects against the Norwegian harbours.

See Director
of Plans papers
passim.

It was, therefore, certain only that the German Armies would attack France through Belgium and Holland, when the campaigning season arrived; and it must always be remembered that during the first months of the year 1940, the Air Staff was principally engaged in preparing plans, and in concerting measures with the French, for meeting an onslaught that would be delivered with forces that were greatly superior to our own. This was the preoccupation of those days, and whatever was projected, or decided, in regard to Norway was determined by what had previously been determined with regard to France.

There was thus no general indication that the Germans intended to invade Norway: the particular indications were stronger, and deserve to be closely examined.

First, the Scandinavian Ministers were all aware that we desired to establish bases on their coasts, and were convinced that our protests about the Narvik ore trade, and our proposals for succouring Finland were intended to advance our designs. When the project of mining Norwegian waters was first communicated to the Scandinavian Governments, the Swedish

F.O. Tels.
from Oslo;
14.1.40.

Secretary General asked "whether we had not enough small countries on our consciences already?" and King Haakon enquired, "Was Norway's neutrality to be violated for a trade in iron ore that she was entitled to pursue?" Simultaneously the Svenska

F.O. Tel.
from Stock-
holm 5 Saving.
18.1.40.

Dagblad published a long article, explaining that our plans for assisting Finland were, actually, plans for securing bases on the eastern side of the North Sea. Later, when British Naval forces

- 35 -

F.O.Tels. entered Josing fjord and released the British prisoners that
 71, 75 from were being carried in the German auxiliary cruiser Altmark, the
 Stockholm 21.II.40 and Swedish and Norwegian press were much disturbed that the
 20 Saving from Stock- Swedish and Norwegian press were much disturbed that the
 holm 23.II.40. British newspapers had suppressed every syllable of the
 Norwegian case, which was:

"That the Altmark was a German war vessel; that, as such, she was entitled to pass through Norwegian waters without being searched; that Great Britain had always upheld the rule of law which allowed belligerent war vessels to pass through territorial waters of a Neutral Power; and that, as for the prisoners that were on board the Altmark, British text books of law maintained that prisoners on board a man of war need not be released if the war vessel entered the territorial waters of a Neutral Power, because the war vessel still had an extra territorial status. (1).

All this, said the Scandinavian editors, was suppressed and ignored in Great Britain in order that the British people might be made to think that the Norwegian Government were allowing the territorial waters of the country to be used for improper purposes; and that our plan for seizing bases might be thought to be a plan for policing the coast and for enforcing the law of Nations.

Tel.105 Dipp.
 from Stockholm
 6.III.40.

A few weeks later, our Minister warned the Government at Whitehall, that all that we proposed to do in Scandinavia was, "more or less common property", and that our plans for seizing bases, in Norway were being widely canvassed. In his speeches on March 15th, Dr. Koht stated "That the western powers would have secured some advantages by keeping the war in Finland going and by dragging in Norway and Sweden." In his speech of April 6th the Norwegian Foreign Minister referred to British plans for enterprises within Norwegian territories. Quotations could be multiplied; and it is, in fact, not too strong to say that if the German authorities had been guided only by what the Norwegian press were publishing about our intentions, they would have been sufficiently well informed about our designs to lay plans for forestalling them. Actually, the German diplomats

(1) See Oppenheim, International Law. 6th edition Vol. II para. 345.

in Norway and Sweden had ample means of testing the truth of what was being canvassed in the Scandinavian press; for it is never possible to keep a long negotiation so secret that only the negotiating parties know of it. It was, therefore, certainly to be inferred that the Germans had fully penetrated our intentions, and were preparing to thwart us.

It must be added, however, that the Germans concealed their plans very skilfully; for the positive indications that an operation against Norway was impending were only discernable at the last moment, and even then they were not strong. On

March 17th, the German authorities circulated the code word 'Spannung': this was an order that all forces should be brought to the greatest possible readiness; and it now seems probable that it was issued as a first preliminary to the operation against Norway: at the time, it was taken to imply that the expected attack against Holland and Belgium was impending.

Fairly late in March, the Swedish Staff learned that the Germans were collecting shipping in the Baltic; that they were preparing to invade Norway; and that the pretext would be that the British were preparing to seize the Norwegian harbours.

An officer on the Staff of the Swedish Defence Ministry reported this to our Minister in Oslo who communicated it on March 26th. Five days later, our Minister made a digest of a report that the newspaper Stockholms Tidningen had just received from its office in Berlin; it ran thus:

"In circles in close touch with German Government it is declared that in course of the past twenty-four hours developments which are fraught with immense danger for Neutrals and particularly for Scandinavian countries have set in. They themselves do not seem to realise the dangers of situation. But they would perhaps grasp the situation if they considered determination of Western Powers to stop export of iron ore to Germany at any price, in conjunction with fact that Germany is dependent on this export of iron ore in order to carry on war at all. The English 'policing' of Scandinavia, the British fleet controlling the Cattegat and neutral waters through which Germany obtains her supplies from the north, where will all this lead? The moment when Germany will find herself constrained to protect her vital

Air Ministry
War Room
Summary 269.

See Army
Quarterly
Vol. XLIII.
No. 2.
Article VIII.

F.O. 140 Dipp.
from Stockholm
26.III.40.

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interest by all means at her command is approaching nearer than people realise. That Western Powers have only decided to disregard neutrality of Scandinavian countries according to maxim 'he who is not for us is against us' is now considered to have been demonstrated."

Tel. 28 Saving
from Oslo
30.III.40.

On March 30th, German aircraft reconnoitred Oslo, Bergen, Hardanger Fjord and Kristiansand, Two days later, our

Minister in Stockholm was informed, that the Swedish authorities now knew that about 200,000 tons of shipping had been lying at

Tel. 155 Dipp.
from Stockholm
2.IV.40.

Stettin and Swinemunde, for the past week, and that troops were embarked; and that the object was believed to be to deliver a counter stroke, in the event of a British attack upon Narvik, or some other Norwegian harbour. The Swedish official who informed our Minister of this added, that they did not believe that the force would be used for invading Scandinavia. Nevertheless, when the Swedish Minister in

Tel. 161 Dipp
from Stockholm

Berlin asked why these troops and ships were being collected in the Baltic, no answer was given him.

Some further indications were detected by the aircraft that were patrolling the Bight and the North Sea; but these indications were fragmentary; for the major movements of the invasion started from the Baltic ports, and were thus out of reach of our patrols. Nevertheless, on April 6th (which appears to be the day when preparations for the expedition first began) the bomber squadrons in the Bight and the photographic reconnaissance aircraft sighted a concentration of Naval vessels in Wilhelmshaven; a large Naval vessel off Heligoland, on a northerly course, and a convoy of 50 vessels, 100 miles W. by N. of Borkum. (1) During the night, aircraft from 38 and 45 Squadrons reported "That there was much traffic on the motor roads between Hamburg and Lubeck and between Sedberge and Lubeck." (2) On the following day,

See II H/a75
April 6th.
See 3 Group
Ops. Record
Book.

(1) It is doubtful whether this convoy was connected with the operations against Norway; it was on a westerly course when sighted.

(2) 38 Squadron, Wellingtons, stationed at Marham (3 Group); 75 Squadron (New Zealand), Wellingtons, stationed at Feltwell (3 Group).

signs of German movement continued to be reported: at

Operations
Record Book.
21, 107 sqns.

0805 hours an aircraft from 220 Squadron sighted six destroyers and an escort of eight aircraft steering N. by W. from a position 18 miles N.W.N. of Heligoland;⁽¹⁾ at 1325 hours aircraft from 21 and 107 Squadrons sighted a battle cruiser, a pocket battleship, two cruisers and ten destroyers steering north from a position 76 miles N.W. by $\frac{1}{2}$ W. from Heligoland.⁽²⁾

During the afternoon, 12 aircraft from 9 and 115 Squadrons searched the Heligoland Bight;⁽³⁾ at 1525 hours they were attacked by a force of Me. 110's and two of them were shot

Air Ministry
War Room
Summary.

down. The wireless interception service reported at the end of the day that twenty or more German aircraft had been

W/T Intelli-
gence Summary
No. 218.

operating from Wangeroog and Westerland, and that they had been sweeping the northern part of the North Sea between the

Daily Summary
of Naval Events
No. 216.

Shetland islands and Norway. As a consequence of all this, the ships that were carrying the first echelons of the expeditionary force to Norway were ordered to remain in harbour.⁽⁴⁾

Air Ministry
War Room
Summary
No. 265.

On April 8th, which was the second day of the German operation, six aircraft from 110 Squadron reconnoitred the Bight and saw nothing unusual: the weather was, however, foggy and rainy, and at times the pilots could only see 500 yards ahead of them. Further north, a Sunderland from 204 Squadron sighted one battle cruiser, two Leipzigs and two destroyers in Lat. 64° of 'N 6° ; 25'E at 1400 hours. The Admiralty learned, moreover, that a German battleship, two Köln class cruisers and a force of destroyers were passing

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- (1) 220 Squadron, Hudsons, stationed at Thornaby. (18, coastal Group).
 - (2) 21 Squadron, Blenheims, stationed at Watton (2 Group); 107 Squadron stationed at Wattisham (2 Group).
 - (3) 9 Squadron, Wellingtons, stationed at Honington (3 Group), 115 Squadron, Wellingtons, stationed at Marham (3 Group).
 - (4) For reconnaissance flights performed during the days April 6/8 see Appendix.

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R.A.F. W/T
Intelligence
Service
report end-
ing midnight
8th April.

Anholt island, in the Kattegat at 1500 hours, and that the Blücher and two other cruisers were to the north east of the Skaw at 1815 hours. While these Naval movements were being executed a number of aircraft from Kampfgeschwader 26 (Lubeck) were sweeping the northern part of the North Sea, and units from other formations in north western Germany were patrolling the Frisian islands. Between 2000 and 2200 hours Soapa Flow was attacked three times by small detachments of long range bombers. (1) at 2315 hours, rather more than an hour after the last attack was delivered, seven German ships were off the south western corner of Norway on a westerly course.

These various reports sufficed to shew that German Naval units were on the move; but they in no way justified the inference that Scandinavia was being invaded. The convoys of our own expeditionary force were, therefore, kept in harbour during the 8th and 9th, and strong reconnaissance patrols were sent out over the North Sea. Nothing more than this was judged necessary on the information that was then available.

Translation
from Norwegian
White Book on
Norway and
the war p.49-
R.A.F. Wireless
Intelligence
Service.
Summary No.219.

As we know only this about the preliminary movements of the German forces, it is not possible to say how each detachment of the invading Army was composed, or what were its movements. The early hours of April 9th seem, however, to have been the decisive moment in the German plan, for, at midnight four German warships appeared at the entrance to Oslo Fjord and engaged the forts of Boerne and Rauer; at 0200 hours, five warships appeared off Bergen, and engaged the forts; at 0330 hours, two warships entered Trondhjem. As daylight came up, the Luftwaffe supported the invasion; eighteen detachments, drawn presumably, from Kampfgeschwadern 4, 26 and 27, and

(1) Six on the first occasion; three on the second; and three on the third. (Air Ministry War Room Summary 265). No damage was done.

controlled from the stations of Lubeck, Oldenburg, Utersen, Husum, Westerland, Rendsburg, List and Nordeney operated; the task assigned to some (though not to all) of them was to attack Druback, Feste, Akershus, Horton and Hameln in Oslo Fjord. Narvik, Kristiansand and Egersund appear to have been occupied, at about the same time, by detachments of troops that were escorted by light Naval forces.

See Army
Quarterly
Vol. XLIII
No. 2 Art. 8.

The landings in Norway were synchronised, carefully, with the invasion of Denmark. At about midnight on April 8, a mass of German troops was assembled on the Danish frontier; four hours later, the Germans crossed the frontier at Abenraa; simultaneously (0430 hours or thereabouts) a Naval force and some transports appeared off Middlefahrt, in the Danish

Air Ministry
War Room
Summary No. 265.
Norway and
the War. pp. 49
et seq.

island of Fünen. Copenhagen was occupied at about the same time; for at 0500 hours German troops were marching through the town. Four o'clock in the morning appears to have been the moment when all these attacks were to be in full swing; for it was then that the German Minister called at the Norwegian Foreign Office, and presented the Norwegian Minister with a memorandum, in which the German Government invited the Norwegian authorities to order their forces to stop fighting, and to arrange for a peaceful and bloodless reception of the German forces in the country. After he had presented this note, the German Minister explained that the German forces had orders to complete the occupation of certain towns by 0900 hours. The Norwegian Government and the King moved to Elverum soon afterwards.

Air Ministry
War Room
Summary
No. 265.

The reports that were received in London during the night served to show that Norway was being invaded from first light to dusk. On April 9th, therefore, the squadrons in 18 Group, and the bomber squadrons that were temporarily attached to the Group made twenty flights over the Norwegian

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coast; and from their reports and the reports that were received from Naval sources ⁽¹⁾ the authorities in Whitehall discovered that matters were in this posture:

Narvik was occupied and about half a dozen destroyers were in the roadstead.

Alesund was occupied.

Trondhjem was occupied and there were cruisers, destroyers, and transports in the roadstead.

Bergen was occupied; and a German cruiser was alongside the dock. ²

Egersund was occupied.

Christiansund was occupied and a cruiser was stationed there.

Oslo was occupied and there was a Naval force at anchor in the Fjord.

All Denmark was in German hands.

As the most important aerodromes in Norway were near the occupied harbours, it was assumed that they, also, were occupied; Fornebu and Stavanger were, indeed, reported to be in German hands by the evening of the 9th, and when it was learned how quickly the invasion was being carried out, and that town after town was falling into the German hands, the British Government urged the Norwegian authorities to destroy Stavanger aerodrome before the Germans seized it. The Norwegian Chief of Staff

Air Ministry
War Room
Summary
No. 266.

F.O.Tels.
Norway
April 9th.

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- (1) The Truant engaged a Koln class cruiser and 3 destroyers off Kristiansand on the evening of the 9th. British Naval vessels reconnoitred Narvik in force at dawn on the 10th; the Renown engaged two armoured ships in Lat. 67° : 22 'N. Long. 9° 34'E at 0340 hours on the 10th. The Fleet Air Arm reconnoitred Bergen on the 10th.
 - (2) The German cruiser - the Königsberg - was hit and damaged by the Wellingtons of 115 Squadron. She was sunk the following day by Skuas of the Fleet Air Arm. The Germans were raising and salving her three years later.

answered that it was then too late.

During the following day, (April 10) the German Minister, Dr. Brauer, met the King of Norway at Elverum, and then informed him that the stipulations in the note that had been presented on the previous day were no longer deemed sufficient; and that the Germans now insisted that a Norwegian Government of their own selection should be appointed. This was refused, and at 2000 hours the German Minister was told that the Norwegians would resist for as long as they could. Throughout the day, the Germans tightened their grip upon the two countries: a considerable force of bombers and fighters occupied the aerodromes at Stavanger and Aalborg; thirteen detachments of bombers that were controlled from the same stations as on the day previous operated over the country, and a fairly strong force raided Scapa Flow at 2100 hours. Indeed, a message that was intercepted towards nightfall was a curious illustration of how rapidly and methodically the Germans were working: it was from a Commanding Officer in Germany who enquired rather fretfully whether the teleprinter at Kristiansand was then working - he evidently thought that it was high time it should be.

F.O.Tels.
April 9th.

Soon after the first news of the invasion came in, the British and French Governments assured the Norwegian authorities that they would assist them; and it fell to the Chiefs of Staffs Committee and the Joint Planning Committee to consider what assistance could most properly be given. Troops were already embarked for an expedition against Norway; so that the task was to see how these forces should be used. On this point the representations of the Norwegian authorities were of great weight, and they urged, with the utmost insistence, that everything should be subordinated to the recapture of Trondhjem; for this, when done, would enable the King, the Cabinet and the Storting to re-establish themselves in the centre of the country, and to

F.O.Tels.205,
208. Dipp.
from Stock-
holm,
13.IV.40.

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F.O.Tel.234
Dipp.from
Stockholm,
13.IV.40.

G.O.S.(40)
81.

rule it from there. The Norwegian authorities considered, moreover, that Trondhjem could be recovered, if forces were rapidly despatched, as they did not consider that the German hold on the southern part of the country was by any means secure. Two plans for the recovery of Trondhjem were considered; the first was that it should be taken by a direct assault; the second, that it should be isolated and carried later. The plan of attacking Trondhjem direct was certainly urged by many experienced officers; but the objections to it were serious, and the Chiefs of Staff reported against it on the following grounds: The bombardment of Trondhjem would be an essential part of the operation, and this was likely to be ill received and much misrepresented; the Home Fleet would be concentrated off Trondhjem for a considerable time, and would be severely attacked by the German Luftwaffe; no photographic reconnaissances had been made of Trondhjem, and the landings would, in consequence, be planned from such guidance as could be obtained from maps and charts; finally, "There had not been time to make the detailed and meticulous preparation that was necessary." The alternative plan promised equally good results with less risk. The Germans had occupied the chief ports in the country, and were holding the terminals of the railways that connect Oslo to the towns on the west coast. The communications from Oslo to Bergen, Trondhjem, and Stavanger were, however, temporarily blocked by the Norwegian Army, which was assembling in the central part of the country. If, therefore, the Norwegians could be so reinforced that the Germans could not drive them from their positions, the isolated German garrison in Trondhjem could be expelled by an attack from the north. This plan, which was strongly recommended by the Allied missions that had been sent to Sweden was, in fact, adopted, and the orders that were despatched to the Commanders of the expeditionary force were: that the 146th brigade, and a French demi brigade should land at Namsos; that they should

secure it as a base of operations; and that they should then advance on Trondhjem through Steinkjaer and Skojn: the 148th brigade, (less one battalion) was to land at Aandalsnaes; advance up the Romsdal; block the German advance at Dombas, and then operate against Trondhjem, with such reinforcements as would then have been sent. The expedition against Narvik, which had been the major part of the original plan was entrusted to the 24th brigade, and to a French force of chasseurs alpins which was to follow them. The Commander of the brigade was ordered to secure a base at Harstad; and to concert measures for recovering Narvik, with the local Norwegian Commander.

F.O. tels. 93
Dipp. and 70
Dipp to
Stockholm and
Oslo,
March 1st.

It remained to settle what air operations were most proper to the circumstances that then obtained. When the plans for bringing Norway under our control were first considered, the air staff had thought that three fighter squadrons, two bomber squadrons, one Army Co-operation squadron and one Army Co-operation flight, might, eventually, be allotted to operations in Norway. It had, however, always been assumed that these squadrons would be sent gradually; for the Naval Staff had assured the Air Staff that Scandinavia could only be conquered after prolonged fighting; and that the capture of Oslo Fjord would, alone, take two months. Whenever the Air Staff had contemplated operations in Norway, it had, therefore, been axiomatic, that nothing would be done until the British and Norwegian staffs had conferred together; and that all the Norwegian aerodromes and Air Force stations should be at our disposal. This was no longer the case; for the principal Norwegian aerodromes were now all in German hands; the original plan of operations was thus converted into a simpler (but extremely pressing) matter: Where should the fighter squadrons that were ready be sent, and from what temporary bases should they operate, in order that they might support and cover the Army's operations? On this matter, it was

Directorate
of Plans,
War Serials
383, 384.

W.P. (40) 70
and C.O.S.
(40) 255S

Document No. 1.
Part III.

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decided to await the recommendations of the Air Force officer who was sent to Norway to inspect the theatre. It was realised, that, inasmuch as the despatch of the fighter squadrons was thus postponed, so, the military forces at Aandalsnaes and Namsos would be defenceless against the enemy's Air Force for some time to come. It was, however, deemed essential that an expeditionary force should be landed, without delay, upon Norwegian soil, to stiffen the Norwegian resistance, and above all, to prove to the Norwegians and the Swedes that Allied assistance was not a mere form of words.

This decision only imposed delay upon the fighter squadrons that were to accompany the Army: the bomber squadrons, and as many of the coastal squadrons as could be spared, were to act at once, and were to bomb the aerodromes that the Luftwaffe had occupied, and were to attack the German communications whenever an opportunity offered, by raiding any convoy that we knew to be on a voyage to Norway, and by mining the entrances to the German bases (See Part II document 6). These were the immediate decisions: there were, however, other matters that influenced the first inception, and the subsequent conduct, of the operations in Norway. When all the relevant reports had been considered, the Intelligence Staffs estimated that the Germans were employing three divisions for their operations in Norway: the Air Staff's wireless intelligence service reported that the Luftwaffe had allotted about ten long range bomber squadrons, a bomber reconnaissance Gruppe (three squadrons) three squadrons of double engined fighters; and three Army Co-operation squadrons to the invasion. The divisions that were invading Norway, and the Luftwaffe formations that were assisting the Army, had, however, all been stationed in northern Germany for some time past: the armies that were massed on the French and Belgian frontiers had not, therefore, been drawn upon, or

Bomber Command
Operations
Record Book
App. 370.

War Office
Intelligence
Summary No. 34.

Air Ministry
Weekly Intelli-
gence Summary
32 and A.M.
Daily Intelli-
gence Summary
X35.

in any way weakened, by the operations in Norway; and the onslaught that we were expecting on the Western Front was still just as threatening, just as imminent.⁽¹⁾ We were not, therefore, free to divert any of the forces that we were maintaining in the west, and the Air Staff could only apply this restraining rule in the following manner: inasmuch as our regular fighter squadrons could not be employed in Norway unless they were sent to the country and based there, it followed that only a small detachment could be spared. As for the bomber squadrons, it had been arranged that the entire bomber force should be used to delay the German advance into Holland and Belgium: the employment of bomber squadrons in Norway was, therefore, subject to this limiting condition, that they could only engage upon operations that could be stopped at a moment's notice. No matter how quickly our Armies advanced, and no matter what aerodromes they recovered from the enemy, there could thus be no thought of stationing bomber squadrons in Norway; for our whole Bomber Command was, at this time, only twenty-three squadrons strong: whereas the enemy had between 110 and 120 long range bomber squadrons at his disposal. The squadrons in the Coastal Command were also engaged upon operations that could not be abandoned for operations in Norway: the whole of 15 Group was required for escorting the convoys in the Western Approaches and the Irish Sea; 16 Group and 18 Group were employed in escorting the coast-wise convoys (which was all the more necessary to be done in that the east coast convoys could now be raided from Norway),

Air Ministry
Daily State
Returns.

(1)

The formations from which the German Air Forces were drawn were: Kampfgeschwadern: 26 (Lubeck and Perleberg); 30 (Oldenburg and Perleberg); 4 (recently called up from central Germany and stationed on the northern coast); 100 recently put into service and stationed in the north; bomber reconnaissance Gruppe 122 Wunstorf and Utersen; Zerstörer Geschwader 1, Utersen and Nordholz; 3rd Gruppe of Lehr 2 (Army Co-op. Henschel 126), Fritzlar.

and in carrying out routine sweeps in the North Sea. (1)
 The squadrons in 18 Group were to a certain extent available, in that the sweeps and patrols that they were then conducting in the North Sea could be extended to the Norwegian coast. As far as the Air Staff were concerned, therefore, the German Luftwaffe were operating some 200 aircraft in Norway and Denmark from aerodromes inside those two countries; whereas we could only engage our twenty-three bomber squadrons and a few coastal squadrons from 16 and 18 Groups upon brief, spasmodic operations, that could be carried out from stations that were separated from Norway by the whole width of the North Sea.

Bomber Command
 Operations
 Record Book
 App. B.370.

The bomber squadrons executed their first raid on April 11th, when Stavanger was bombed after dark by 115 Squadron (Wellingtons, Marham, 3 Group); while 22 Whitleys from 10, 51, 102 and 77 Squadrons (4 Group) swept the belts and the Kattegat, from Kiel to Oslo. The squadrons in 5 Group (Hampdens) carried out most of the mining operations: the ports selected for the first expeditions (April 20/21) were Elbe, Kiel, the Little Belt and Lubeck. Thereafter, and for as long as the campaign lasted, these operations were carried out night by night, with such variations as the circumstances demanded. (See Part VI documents 1, 2).

No.254
 Squadron
 Operations
 Record Book.

Stavanger was now strongly held by a large force of double engined fighters and long range bombers; the forces on Vaernes aerodrome (near Trondhjem) were not yet ascertained.

Air Ministry
 Daily War
 Room Summary
 April 11.

(1) Coastal Command squadrons were thus employed during March. Reconnaissance 1818 hours; anti-submarine patrols 2606 hours; other patrols 172 hours; convoy 4543 hours. The groups contained the following stations: 15 Group (H.Q.Devonport) Pembroke Dock: 1 Sunderland Squadron. Carew Oheriton: 1 flight of Ansons (217 Squadron), Mount Batten; 1 Sunderland Squadron; St. Eval, 1 Anson Squadron, Hooton Park, 1 flight of Ansons, Aldergrove, 1 Anson Squadron. 16 Group (H.Q.Chatham) Birchem Newton: 1 Anson and 1 Blenheim Squadron. Detling, 1 Anson Squadron; North Coates, 1 Beaufort Squadron; Thorney Island, 1 Anson and 1 Beaufort Squadron. 18 Group (H.Q.Pitreavie Castle) Dyce: 1 Anson Squadron. Invergordon: 1 Sunderland Squadron; Leuchars: 2 Hudson Squadrons; Sullom Voel Stranraer, and 1 Sunderland Squadron; Sumburgh Head (Shetlands) 1 Blenheim Squadron, Thornaby: 1 Hudson; 1 Anson Squadron; Wick, 1 Hudson Squadron.

The enemy were, however, still controlling their Norwegian operations from stations in north Germany and Schleswig.

The elements of two divisions had been allotted to the Norwegian expedition, and on April 14th, a party of marines landed at Namsos; they were followed by the headquarters of the 146th brigade, by three infantry battalions and by the Royal Engineers that were allotted to the expedition.⁽¹⁾ On the day following, the 24th brigade, and the 3rd light A.A. battery landed at Harstad, the base of operations in the Narvik area. The Commanding Officer of the expedition, General Mackesey, was at once convinced that Narvik could not be taken by an immediate attack against the peninsula upon which it stood; and as the operations against that place followed a course of their own; and as they were only pressed to an issue after the operations against Trondhjem were over, it will be convenient to describe them separately.

Topographical
Handbook of Norway
M.I.2. and
Norway Pilot
Part III
(Admiralty Pub-
licity pp. 79,
80).

Namsos, whence the main thrust against Trondhjem was to be made, is a small town (3,600 inhabitants) at the head of a long fjord; the harbour works consist of one quay and of a slip where medium sized vessels can be hauled up; a certain amount of wood pulp was shipped from the harbour in peace time, but the traffic of the port is small when compared with that of Bergen or Trondhjem. Nevertheless, the troops

General Carton
de Wiart's
report.

were pushed forward so rapidly, and their stores were cleared so quickly that the enemy detected no signs of the landing. The brigade moved into the Steinkjaer area, and prepared to make a dash on Trondhjem.

W/T Intelli-
gence Report
ending 2359
hours April
17.

When this landing at Namsos was being carried out, the enemy appear to have been reinforcing their northern garrisons

(1) The 4th Lincs; the Hallams, and the 1/4 battalion of the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry.

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with air borne troops: the Luftwaffe were indeed fast settling down in the country; for we now ascertained that their squadrons were thus distributed (April 17th).

Air Ministry
Joint Intelligence
Committee
Summary No.4.

Vaernes (near Trondhjem).	3 squadrons of dive bombers (Ju.87's)
	3 squadrons of long range bombers (He. 111's)
	3 squadrons of twin engined bombers (Me. 110's)
	1 squadron of coastal reconnaissance machines (He. 115's)
Kristiansand.	3 squadrons of single engine fighters (Me. 109's)
Oslo Kjeller.	4 squadrons of long range bombers (He.111's and Ju.88's)
Oslo Fornebu.	3 squadrons of long range bombers (He. 111's and Ju.88's).
	1 squadron of coastal reconnaissance machines.

In addition, 3 squadrons of dive bombers were believed to be at Oslo-Kjeller; 3 squadrons of Army Co-operation machines were operating from bases that were altered, from day to day; and between 250 and 300 transport aircraft were making trips between north Germany, Denmark and Norway.

Norway Pilot
Part II.p.544.

Aandalsnaes, where the second wing of the expeditionary force was to be landed, is little more than a hamlet at the head of Romsdalsfjord: in peace time the place was a tourist centre; and visitors, who were making the round trip of Norway, often disembarked there and went on by train to Oslo. The harbour works were, therefore, constructed for the receiving and discharging of this passenger traffic, and for the loading and unloading of a few coastal steamers: they consisted of a quay, which was so small that if a steamer with five hatches lay alongside it, only three hatches could be worked at one time; of an electric crane, which could no longer be worked as the electricity had been cut off from the

Captain
Maxwell
Hyslop's
Letter of
Proceedings.

town; and of a jetty with a frontage of about 60 feet. In peace time 700 tons could be loaded and discharged from the harbour every twenty-four hours; in the circumstances then

General Paget's
report on
Operations
at Aandalsnaes.

prevailing, ships could only be loaded and unloaded during darkness; and this set in at ten o'clock at night, and ended at four o'clock in the morning. The whole place has been built upon one of those small expanses of flat land that are to be found at the mouths of rivers; for the Rauma comes out of the mountain valley, just above the settlement; and the town of Aandalsnaes, and the village of Veblungsnes stand astride the mouth. The flat land upon which the houses stand is small, and is restricted, on all sides, by steep, savage mountains. Molde, which was also a tourist centre, is about 25 miles away, and its harbour works are better than those of Aandalsnaes; for they consist of a wharf, to which Norwegian mail steamers could make fast, and of a fair sized jetty; luggers with diesel engines and a few passenger ferry steamers could be used for transporting goods from Molde to Aandalsnaes.

See C.I.G.S. tele-
gram to General
Morgan April
17th. 2217 and
F.O. tels.
from Norway for
14th April.

On April 17th, a party of marines were put ashore at Aandalsnaes; the 148th brigade disembarked on the following night, and at once pressed on towards Dombaas. Our authorities were still hopeful that Dombaas would be seized

See also Tels.
205 from
Stockholm,
12th April;
220 from
Stockholm,
13th April;
238 Dipp.
14th April
from Stock-
holm.

and held; but the Norwegian Commander-in-Chief was despondent, and said, from the beginning, that he did not hope for a good issue, as his men were already fighting with their bare fists. The Capital and the principal towns were, indeed, in the enemy's hands, and a large part of the Norwegian Army's stores, arms and equipment were lost; moreover, as the chief points in the country's telephone and telegraph system were also under German control, it was difficult to send out the messages and orders that regulate a general mobilisation; the assembling of the Army was, therefore,

little but the congregating together of a mass of unarmed men (who were soon half famished) in the ice bound valleys that split the mountain chain between Oslo and Trondhjem.

Report of
Air Officer
attached to
Norwegian
High Command
S.5301.

The Norwegian Air Force was in an even worse case; most of the aircraft, the stores and the plant had been based on Trondhjem and Oslo, and were, therefore, lost. The few machines that were left - 12 Gladiators, a Caproni bomber, and a few two seater Fokkers - were collected at Lake Vangsmjosa: "They flew rarely", our Liaison Officer reported, "but did occasionally make reconnaissance flights to determine enemy positions for the C.-in-C.'s information. As there were only a few hundred gallons of aviation spirit - no bombs - and as the sky was never empty of patrolling Heinkels, there was little incentive to take the air."

By this time, the Air Ministry had made a final determination about the fighter squadron that was to be attached to the Army. The decision had been delayed, because, the selection of a suitable base for the squadron, in a rugged, mountainous country where landing grounds are difficult to find, was a matter that could not be settled until an Air Force officer had inspected every possible site and had recommended the most suitable. The Air Staff now had before them the reports of Squadron Leader Whitney-Straight, who had been sent to Norway as Liaison Officer to the Norwegian High Command: the choice, obviously, lay between Lake Vangsmjosa, which lies to the west of the Gudbrandsdal (see map), and Lake Lesjeskogen, which is in the northern part of the valley, and about forty miles from Aandalsnaes. Squadron Leader Whitney-Straight considered that Lake Vangsmjosa was the better of the two places and strongly recommended it: two squadrons of any type of aircraft could have operated from it very easily; it was free of snow; it was connected by road to Aardals Fjord,

where stores and equipment could have been landed and handled; and it was being used as a sort of emergency base by the Norwegian Air Force. Squadron Leader Whitney-Straight never swerved from his conviction that this would have been the best base for the Gladiator squadron, and all that happened later, strengthened him in his opinion. Nevertheless, the Air Staff refused to send the fighter squadron to Lake Vangsmjosa for the following reasons: Our troops were only blocking the Gudbrandsdal, and, until the operations against Trondhjem were successfully completed, it was not intended that they should extend the zone of their operations. Lake Vangsmjosa was not, therefore, covered by our troops, indeed, as the road that runs along the valley where the lake is situated leads straight towards Oslo, the whole place was open to a German advance, and was without protection against it. Furthermore the Air Staff were now receiving the most serious reports that the Luftwaffe were bombing the Norwegians round Lillehammer without opposition; and that the damage being done to the road and railway behind the Norwegian position was so severe that the entire line of communication to Aandalsnaes might shortly be compromised. As this danger, (and it threatened the whole scheme of operations) was developing so fast, it was of the last importance that the squadron should be so based that it would automatically mitigate the attacks that were being delivered upon everything that moved along the valley road. A squadron that was operating from Vangsmjosa could not hope to do this; for the lake is fifty-five miles from the nearest point in the Gudbrandsdal, and is separated from it by a chain of high mountains; and by a cluster of great glaciers that is called the Jotun Fjord. For these reasons, the Air Staff decided that the squadron should be sent to Lesjeskogen, a long lake, about a thousand yards wide in its broadest part, and within a stone's

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throw of the road and railway that run up the valley. Every other place that could have been used as a landing ground was either too close to the enemy (and so liable to be overrun if the enemy's troops made headway), or too far from the Army's headquarters.

General Carton
de Wiart's
Report.

On the 19th April parties of the 148th brigade passed through Dombaas, and General Audet landed the 5th French demi brigade at Namsos. This second landing was not so well concealed as the first; for General Audet brought with him 4,000 troops, and a large quantity of material, and it was not possible to clear this quickly from the small jetties that were available. Even if this could have been done, the stores could not have been hidden, and insofar as the Germans were fully aware by the 19th that Namsos was being used as an Allied base, they were liable to destruction from the air.

When General Audet had thus brought his troops ashore, all was ready for executing the first part of the plan - the blocking of the German advance up the Gudbrandsdal, and the re-capture of Trondhjem - and affairs were in this posture. Since the order to attack the Norwegian aerodromes was first given, Stavanger had been bombed thirteen times, Trondhjem three times, and Kristiansand twice. (See Part VI, document 1). These operations were being performed in spite of great difficulties. The first of these, (and the pilots considered that it was of grave prejudice to them) was that as no preparations had been made to operate over Norway, so, the aircraft captains and the crews lacked all those things that had been thought essential to good bombing: the maps and charts that are most useful for the approach; the large scale target maps and photographs that are studied before the squadron takes off, and which are explained by the Squadron Commander and the Intelligence Officer; for instead of this, the pilots were often crossing the North Sea, and looking for the targets that

See No. 9
Squadron Ops.
Record Book.

had been allotted to them with nothing better to guide them than a sheet from an extremely small scale map, and a tracing from the town plans in Baedeker's guide to Norway. As a consequence, a considerable number of bombers did not attack their targets because they could not find them. The second adverse influence was the weather. As our bombers were operating without fighter escort, over a country where the enemy had stationed about six squadrons of fighters of the latest type, they were ordered to attack their targets, if they had cloud cover, but not otherwise. This often obliged the pilots to turn back; for the weather over Norway was frequently, fine and clear: As for the clouds that were deemed indispensable to every operation, they were generally accompanied by foul weather: moreover, the whole country was still deep in snow, and the lakes were frozen; the upper air was, in consequence, bitterly cold, and when clouds gathered, they were laden with snow, freezing drizzle and hail. In addition, the weather in the North Sea was wet, foggy and changeable; and great gales accompanied by rain and sleet frequently swept across it; so that the pilots had to cross, and re-cross this zone of treacherous weather, with worse charts and feebler navigational aids than they had ever before been provided with. A considerable proportion of the raids against the German bases in Norway were much weakened by these adverse circumstances; and by April 20th, the list of frustrated raids stood thus:

On April 11th, six Hampdens from 61 Squadron took off for Kristiansand; but returned, as there was no cloud cover.

On April 15th, twelve Whitleys from 10 and 102 Squadrons took off to attack Stavanger; one could not find the target; two returned with inter-communication trouble; one returned with engine trouble; one misunderstood a Syko message and came back.

On April 16th, two Whitleys from 51 Squadron tried to

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reconnoitre the aerodrome at Oslo, but could not find it.

On April 17th, eight Whitleys from 77 Squadron tried to attack Trondhjem; not one of them found it.

On April 18th, seven Whitleys from 58 and 10 Squadrons attempted to reconnoitre Oslo Fjord; the whole Fjord was so misty, that they saw nothing.

On April 18th, six Blenheims from 107 Squadron took off for Stavanger; five returned, as there was no cloud cover; the sixth was not seen again.

On April 19th, six Blenheims from 107 Squadron took off for Stavanger; but returned, because there was no cloud cover.

On April 20th, three Wellingtons from 149 Squadron took off for Aalborg; one could not find it. (1)

Report on
A.A. defence
Sickle Force.

The German Air Forces, on the other hand, were very favourably situated; for they were near the points at which their Army was operating, and as they were not impeded by fighter squadrons or by A.A. fire, they were able to identify their targets at leisure and to bomb them carefully and methodically. During the first week of the invasion, the German bombers dealt with the Norwegian Army, which was then divided into four groups: the first and the most important, was in the valleys to the north of Oslo, and was trying to hold a line between Elverum on the east and Dokka on the west; the second group was holding Voss, and was striving to prevent German garrison in Bergen from advancing along the Bergen-Honefoss railway; the third group was facing the Germans that were in Trondhjem; and was trying to block a southerly advance by holding Storen; the fourth group was to the east of Trondhjem,

II H5 1d
Message from
British
representative
with Norweg-
ian C-in-C
1050/17
April. 14th
Inf. Brig. int.
Summary 1800
hours.
19.IV.40.

(1) 10 Squadron - Dishforth (4 Group); 102 Squadron - Driffield (4 Group) 77 Squadron - Driffield (4 Group); 51 Squadron - Dishforth (4 Group) 58 Squadron - Linton-on-Ouse (4 Group); 61 Squadron - Hemswell (5 Group) 107 Squadron - Wattisham (2 Group); 149 Squadron - Mildenhall (3 Group). For full details of thwarted, or frustrated raids and reconnaissance, see Appendix.

in the Stordal. Each of these positions was attacked by the German bombers, from the first days of the invasion: few details of the German operations are at present available; and we know, only, that the Norwegians were much discouraged by the continual bombing; for their artillery, (if they had any) did not even inconvenience the German bombers, who were often flying two hundred feet above their heads.

War Room
Daily Summary.
April 15th.

146th
Infantry
Brigade. War
Diary.

On April 15th, the Germans turned their attention to our bases and bombed Namsos: a pilot of a Sunderland from 228 Squadron was flying over the place at the time, and he reported that the bombing was well done. On the day following, Namsos was bombed again, while our troops were disembarking; some damage was done, but the place was still usable as a base; for General Audet disembarked his demi-brigade during the night 19/20. On April 20th, the German Air Force

168th Light
A.A. battery.
War Diary

Commanders directed a large proportion of their available bombers against Namsos: the raids went on all day, with short intervals between them, and by nightfall, the town, the railway station, and all the rolling stock were either ruined by bombs or gutted by fires: the headquarters of the

C.O.H.M.S.
Nubian Report
of proceedings file
S.4528.

146th brigade, which was in an almshouse on the side of a hill, was about the only building that escaped. When the Commanding Officer of the Nubian brought his ship into Namsos Fjord, he: "observed a red flare in the sky, which was realised to be a big fire. When the town came into view the sight was remarkable: the whole place was a mass of flames, from end to end, and the glare upon the snows of the surrounding mountains made an unforgettable spectacle." Aandalsnaes was bombed, but not so severely.

146th Inf.
Bd. H. Q.
diary.

On the following day, (April 21st) the German air squadrons delivered their heaviest attack upon Steinkjaer, which was now the central point of the 146th brigade's operations;

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168th Light
A.A. battery
War Diary.

the enemy's raids began at about noon, and went on all day; by nightfall the whole town was blazing; the road bridge over the river that runs into Beitstad Fjord was severely damaged; the railway bridge, being made of iron, was still standing, but its wooden floor was burning fiercely. (1)

Also, the Norwegians, who were still trying to block the southern end of the Gudbrandsdal, near Lake Mjosen, were, on this day, attacked and routed, before the 148th brigade could reach them; the Norwegian forces then poured back upon our brigade, threw it into disorder, and both forces retired up the valley.

146th Inf.
Brigade
War Diary

The enemy must have learned from his reconnaissance planes that the bridges at Steinkjaer were not completely destroyed; for on April 22nd, the bombers again made a great effort against the place, and by nightfall, the road bridge and the railway bridge were finally demolished. Aandalsnaes was also bombed; but here the enemy was, for the time being, directing his attacks more against the shipping and the warships than against the town and harbour. One of these attacks was, however, remarkably successful, for H.M.S. Pelican, was hit: the Naval personnel of the base was carried in her, and half of them became casualties. Apart from any damage that was subsequently done to the harbour works, this gravely prejudiced the working of the base.

This bombing of Namsos and Steinkjaer made a deep impression upon General Carton de Wiart, who had landed on the 16th, to take charge of the operations that were being conducted from that place. He had, therefore, watched the steady intensification of the enemy's attacks, and was now compelled to contemplate the approaching consequences, Namsos

(1) A train was run across it later.

C.O. H.M.S.
Nubian report
of proceed-
ings file
S.4528.

was already so badly disabled that no more transports could be allowed into the harbour; and this, in itself, put the Army that was to be fed and supplied through the port, in jeopardy. The General was, however, now thinking not of expelling the Germans from Trondhjem (for which he no longer hoped); but of withdrawing his forces altogether. He was, at the time, arranging to withdraw the 146th brigade towards Namsos; for it had just been defeated in the peninsula that lies to the west of the Bergen Fjord. The enemy's attacks; the destruction caused by them; and the plain fact that the Army, and the bases from which the Army was operating, were defenceless against the German Luftwaffe made him doubtful whether he would, much longer, have a base to retire on or a road along which he could retire. "I have ordered Phillips" (the Commander of the 146th brigade) "to retire by the Steinkjaer-Namsos road" he reported; "but if the enemy discover this, everything on this road will be destroyed.....When I get them back to Namsos, there is cover nowhere for them."

General
Carton de
Wiart to
C.I.G.S.
22nd April.

From Gen. Carton
de Wiart to
C.I.G.S.
23.IV.40.

Snow fell on the day following and there was thus a lull, though a short one, in the bombing of the town. General Carton de Wiart inspected the troops that had been driven out of Inderøy and confirmed the appreciation that he had made

General Carton
de Wiart's
despatch.

on the day before: the enemy's bombing was likely to get worse, and evacuation might be necessary. The Government were not prepared to sanction this; but they ordered the General to act on the defensive; he, therefore, made arrangements for withdrawing his troops towards Namsos, and for taking up a position round Nandalseidet.

Information
supplied by the
Military
Branch.

Further south, in the Gudbrandsdal, the 148th brigade and as many of the Norwegian troops as could be rallied made a stand at Tre Hen, and were defeated; thereafter, the Germans drove them up the valley, and the Norwegians were either

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dispersed or captured. The whole valley would, indeed, have been open to the Germans but for the arrival of the 15th brigade, whose first two battalions reached Aandalsnaes late on the same night, and at once marched on Kvam.

It was, moreover, on this same day (April 23rd) that the advanced party of the air contingent, which had arrived late overnight, went forward to Lake Lesjekogen and there made arrangements for receiving the Squadron. Their difficulties were great: the stores that had been put ashore at Aandalsnass had been hastily collected and hastily loaded, not a box was labelled, so that each consignment of stores had to be opened, to ascertain its contents, before it could be sent to the Lake. As no military transport was available, lorries and horse sleighs had to be collected, and as all the lorries and sleighs that could be found, were insufficient to carry the stores, a careful selection had to be made and only the essential articles sent forward. While this was being done, the enemy bombers attacked the harbour several times: it would seem, however, as though they were still directing their attacks more against the shipping than against the harbour, for the cruiser Curaçao was hit, and the jetty escaped.⁽¹⁾ Nevertheless, the delays consequent upon the bombing were cumulative; for this work was being done at a small town where all the equipment was lacking that is used in big harbours to quicken up loading, unloading and sorting; and in a place where such few facilities as could be found were deteriorating after every raid that was delivered. By midday, however, the stores that were not immediately needed were hauled away into the woods nearby;

Director of
Operations
War Diary.

(1) See W/T Intelligence Summary 233. A large proportion of intercepted signals referred to attacks on shipping. See also narrative of Seaman Force attached to Primrose Force, file S. 4528.

the essential stores, and the servicing flight left for the Lake, which was reached in the course of the afternoon.

Some preparatory work had been done on the Lake; but the place was still ill suited to serve as the base of a fighter squadron: the nearest houses were two miles away; the prepared runway was separated from the shore by half a mile of thick snow, and the stores that were accumulating on the shore could only be taken to the runway on horse drawn sledges: feeding and tending the horses would, in itself, have been a tedious and difficult business; for the whole country was deep in snow, and forage was only to be obtained in the scattered farmsteads on the mountainsides.

Report from
C.O. H.M.S.
Hood. S.4528.

Nevertheless, after working for most of the night and for all the day following, the Lake was made as ready as it could be; two guns from a battery of Oerlikons (Royal Navy) arrived under the charge of Sub-Lieutenant Goodale; fuel and ammunition were laid along the runway, in small dumps and every tin, jug or container that could be used when the machines were refuelling was collected in one place. For it had at once been perceived that the refuelling and starting of the machines was not going to be easy; only two refuelling troughs had been despatched; and the starter trolley could not be used, as the batteries were uncharged, and no acid had been sent with them. At 1800 hours, 263 Squadron (18 Gladiators) arrived at the Lake; ⁽¹⁾ matters were in this posture when they did so.

Bomber
Command Ops.
Record Book.
April. App.
C.41.

The plan of bombing the aerodromes from which the enemy was conducting his operations was being executed without interruption; since the campaign began, Stavanger had been attacked 18 times, Aalborg 10 times; Trondhjem and Lake

(1) They were brought across the North Sea in the Glorious, and reached Aandalsnaes on the 24th. They took off from the Glorious's deck, and were escorted to the Lake by Skuas of the Fleet Air Arm.

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See W/T
Intelli-
gence
Summaries
passim.
In partic-
ular Nos.
233,236.

Jansvannet (where the enemy had established a temporary base) 4 times; Kristiansand twice; and Oslo Kjeller, and Oslo Fornebu, 3 times. (For details see Part VI document I). As far as our intelligence service could tell, however, the damage done by these raids had not reduced the number of machines that the Germans could operate during the day, nor had it interfered with the movement of transport aircraft between north Germany, Denmark and Norway.

War Office
Intelligence
Summaries Nos.
34,35,36,37.

The second part of the general plan, that is the mining of the German embarkation ports, had been executed whenever the weather permitted; and although this may have made the reinforcing of the German Army in Norway a more costly operation than it would otherwise have been, it had not checked the flow of reinforcements into the country. The German Army of occupation had indeed grown thus: On the 9th April, the War Office (experts) estimated that there were about 35,000 German troops in Norway and Denmark; on April 18th they considered that the original force of two to three divisions had been swelled to six divisions; on April 25th the estimate was eleven divisions.

The 168th
Light A.A.
battery War
Diary.

The state of affairs at the two Army bases was serious: Namsos was practically demolished and the 146th brigade had been defeated in the peninsula to the west of the Bergen Fjord, and was reassembling between Beitstad Fjord and Snaasen vik. Aandalsnaes had not, at this time, suffered as severely as Namsos; nevertheless, the place was still being bombed regularly, day by day, and the A.A. Commanders held out no hope of any alleviation, as the defence consisted of light A.A. guns only, and the enemy was now bombing, quite accurately, without coming within range. In Gudbrandsdal, to the south of the Lake where our Gladiators were stationed, the 15th brigade was taking up a position at

Kvan; the 148th brigade had retired, beaten, into a side valley, the Heidalen.

It is manifest from all this, that although 263 Squadron had been sent to Norway to operate with the Army, it was, in point of fact needed urgently for the protection of the bases as well. The Commanding Officer was, however, doubtful whether he could satisfactorily perform a single one of the duties assigned to him. As he flew towards Lake Lesjekogen he saw how severely the road and railway in the valley had been bombed; and this, combined with what he had seen on the day previous, shewed him how difficult it was going to be even to maintain his supplies from base. Moreover, the Squadron was, itself, ill provided; for it was short of equipment and of spare parts and of all the apparatus that is needed for rapid refuelling: worse than this, there was only one trained armourer in the whole ground staff, so that this one man was responsible for maintaining 72 Browning guns, in circumstances so difficult that twice the normal staff of armourers would not have been excessive. As for the Lake itself, a runway had certainly been cleared; but the heaped up snow on either side of it melted during the day, and the ice of the runway, being half covered by the trickling water from the snow heaps, was an ill surface. Moreover, as there was no means of lighting a flare path, landing after dusk was likely to be extremely dangerous and productive of accidents. Finally, the Lake was defenceless against parachute troops; and Captain Uwin, the Norwegian Liaison Officer, reported that the enemy were using them with great resolution.

Report on the activities of 263 Squadron.

"Parachute troops had been dropped in large numbers, and the methods employed, by German officers in shooting German troops, who were unwilling, or frightened, to leave the aircraft, clearly shewed the worth of our enemies."

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Report on
the activities of
263 Squadron
para. 6.

After holding a conference with his own officers, with Squadron Leader Whitney-Straight and with Captain Uwin, the Squadron Commander decided that "little operations could be undertaken, and that the squadron aircraft must be used solely for the defence of its very existence." Nevertheless, he undertook to patrol the Army's position, near Kvan, as often as he could; for it was represented to him that the Navy at base, and the Army facing the Germans further up the valley had now been bombed for fourteen days on end, and that it was a matter of great urgency to give them visible proof that help had, at last, arrived. During this day (April 24) the Germans flew high above the Lake, and reconnoitred it. Aandalsnaes was bombed again, but not severely, and the enemy approached the 15th brigade's position at Kvan.

Ibid, para. 5.

168 Lt. A. A.
battery War
Diary.

The night was bitterly cold; the carburettors and aircraft controls were frozen stiff when daylight came up, and as no starter batteries had been provided, the engines were difficult to start. Two aircraft did, however, get off the ground, just before 0500 hours, and patrolled the base, which was bombed soon afterwards, by a single aircraft.

The enemy were evidently ordered to prevent the Squadron from assisting the 15th brigade and the Norwegians, further south; for just when battle was joined in the valley, near Kvan, the enemy's bombers methodically attacked the Lake. They approached in vics. of three, but broke their formation as they came up to the target, and bombed and machine gunned the Lake from a variety of heights. The ground staff now took shelter in the trees, and, although their officers and the sergeants remained in the open, starting engines, refuelling and rearming the machines, and although Sub-Lieutenant Goodal and his men fought their guns dauntlessly (notwithstanding that the Germans aimed at them all day, and with great care), the

airmen were unmoved by the example that was thus given to them and crouched in the woods. Had the squadron been able to take off, in strength, the aerodrome might have been defended, but even this was impossible, for it took an hour, to an hour and a half, to refuel and rearm a single machine. The Gladiators were, therefore, bombed and set alight, or disabled by blast, while they were on the ground, awaiting fuel; by noon, ten aircraft were unusable, and one was half buried in the soft snow near by, where a sergeant pilot had made a forced landing. Notwithstanding these difficulties, two sections took off during the forenoon, one patrolled the base, the other patrolled the battle zone at Kvam; the pilots above the Lake were repeatedly in action, and they believed, on good grounds, that they shot down two Heinkels, and a seaplane. The squadrons that were attacking the Lake were drawn from Kampfgeschwader 30; and were controlled from Tønning and Husum. For the first time since the campaign began, our wireless intelligence service intercepted the message: "Look out enemy fighter planes", from one of the German squadrons that were operating over Norway.

The enemy's attacks continued without intermission, and the Squadron Commander and his officers continued to refuel and rearm the dwindling squadron, while the bombs burst all round them, and to take off in the machines that had thus been got ready. Forty operational flights were executed in the course of the day, and the pilots engaged thirty-seven separate enemy planes. During the afternoon Ju. 88's attacked the Lake for the first time. Flight Lieutenant Mills was just coming to land, when the enemy approached; he at once climbed again and engaged them, and found that the Ju. 88's were more dangerous than the Heinkels, which had been attacking up to then, for he was outmanoeuvred, and his machine was damaged by gunfire; nevertheless, he fought on, until his engine stopped, for lack of petrol, after which he forced landed; almost as

Report on the activities of 263 Squadron para. 263 to 267.

W/T Intelligence Summary 235.

Report of Air Officer attached to Norwegian High Command. S. 5301.

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he did so, a Heinkel 111 approached the aerodrome, and destroyed his aircraft. The Lake was by now fast becoming unusable; for the runway was nearly destroyed by the bombing; the belted ammunition was exhausted, and the pilots were taking off unarmed, and were approaching the enemy's bombers as though they were about to attack, in the hope that the enemy might, thereby, be made to swerve from their course, and their bomb aimers might be distracted.

Meanwhile, however, Squadron Leader Donaldson (who had also engaged a Junkers on a failing petrol supply) had landed his machine in a small valley, near Aandalsnaes, which had been notified to him as an alternative landing ground. The place is called Setnesmoen; normally it was a Norwegian camp, and it was then guarded by two platoons of marines: given time, the parade ground could have been made into a tolerable one-way landing ground, and Squadron Leader Whitney-Straight had done some preliminary work upon it. As soon as Squadron Leader Donaldson had satisfied himself that Setnesmoen could be used by what was left of his squadron, he sent a message to Lesjekogen that all aircraft that were no longer serviceable were to be wrecked and burned; and that the remainder of the squadron, were to move to the new landing ground. By this time, thirteen aircraft had been half or wholly wrecked, by the continual bombing and machine gunning. The four aircraft that were still serviceable took off, soon after the message was received, and the pilots, the ground staff, and petrol and the ammunition were brought to Setnesmoen by midnight. In the valley, near Kvam, the Germans attacked the 15th brigade all day; by nightfall our troops were still holding their positions.

Report of
R. M. detach-
ment during
period of
duty in Norway.
S. 4528.

Naval Officer in charge Aandalsnaes. Throughout the day, the enemy bombed Aandalsnaes and Molde; not many machines were sent over the place, and the Naval proceedings.

Naval Officer
in charge
Aandalsnaes.
Report of
proceedings.

Officer in charge of the base noticed that the attacks were delivered, mainly, against shipping in the Fjord, and that they were very accurate. Three of the ferry steamers that were being used for carrying men and stores between Molde and Aandalsnaes were sunk, and this was very damaging to the working of the base; for Molde was now being used as a place of disembarkation and the loss of the ferry steamers lowered the quantities of goods that could be transported. Nevertheless the place was still just usable, when the day's bombing was over. Skuas from the Ark Royal attacked Trondhjem during the day, and also maintained a patrol over Namsos, which was certainly not much bombed; General Carton de Wiart reported that the patrol gave great relief.

War Cabinet
Room, Weekly
Résumé 35.
Daily Summary
of Naval events.
234.

Meanwhile, General Paget had arrived to take command of the two bridges that were operating in the Gudbrandsdal; and, in the evening, he conferred with the officers of the Squadron: the state of affairs then was that the 15th brigade was still holding its ground; and that the 148th brigade was coming out of the Hedalen, and was retiring on Dombaas. Knowing that he was going to be attacked next day, the General was anxious that the enemy's communications in the valley should be attacked by heavy bombers: his request was transmitted to the Air Ministry, and was, by them, refused, as the distance was too great. It was, therefore, arranged that the Gladiators should patrol between Aandalsnaes and the landing ground, and that one aircraft should watch the line between Dombaas and Otta, and should report all troop movements to the force headquarters. The Squadron was now only five aircraft strong, and this was all that could be done.

The following day, April 26th, was the Squadron's last day as an operating force: the programme that had been agreed to the night before was duly carried out: the Gladiator that was detailed for the Dombaas patrol made a forced landing near

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Dombaas, and by nightfall, three others were unserviceable, owing to engine trouble. There could be no thought of repairing them, in the circumstances; and in any case, food was running short; for rations had only been sent for the servicing flight; the eighteen pilots of the Squadron had eaten up a large part of them; and no supplies were to be obtained on the spot. Wing Commander Keens, therefore, decided to send the Gladiator pilots to England by the first available vessel. The officers of the Squadron believed that they had shot down six enemy planes, during their brief period of service in Norway.

At Kvam, the Germans again attacked, and the Luftwaffe supported the Army's operations by bombing Aandalsnaes. The bombardment was perhaps the severest that had been delivered; the town was completely destroyed; the fires raged unchecked, for water and the power to pump it failed; huge quantities of Army stores and 200,000 rounds of small arm ammunition were lost in the blaze; and the wooden quays were demolished. At Molde, the wireless set could no longer be used, as all the electric power was gone. More than this, all those local vessels that were so needed for carrying supplies between Molde and Aandalsnaes now abandoned the whole locality. "From this day onwards", the Naval Officer in charge reported, "it became impossible to obtain any water transport in the Fjord during daylight."

Naval Officer
in charge.
Aandalsnaes
file S.4528.

Before these attacks were over, the senior Naval and Military Officers at the port held a conference, and were agreed that it was now only a matter of time before no stores or men could be landed at the port; and that it was endangering the Army to delay evacuation.

"With all the wooden quays destroyed", writes the Naval Officer in charge of the base, "the area surrounding the single concrete quay devastated by fire, the roads pitted by bomb craters, disintegrated by the combined effect of heavy traffic and melting snow,

the recurrent damage to the railway, the machine gunning of road traffic, all made it patent to those on the spot that it was only a question of time for the port activities to diminish to such an extent that the line of communication could not be maintained."

The continuous bombing was, moreover, exposing the harbour, and the whole expedition to a new danger: the harbour was defended against submarines by trawlers and patrol vessels that were fitted with submarine detectors; the losses among these craft were rising; and it was becoming progressively difficult to coal them and to keep a sufficient number on their stations; the attacks from the air were thus opening the harbour to attacks from beneath the water; for the officer in charge of the anti-submarine defence was persuaded that "Unless command of the air is obtained the use of the trawler type A/S craft is impracticable" danger of attack by submarines was the more urgent in that Molde Fjord can be entered by two deep water channels, which are difficult to watch over their whole length.

Finally, the officers present were by now aware that even steady troops and experienced officers lose all their spirit, if they are subjected to continuous bombardment from the air. Evidence on this point makes painful, but impressive reading: Squadron Leader Whitney-Straight summed it up very fairly when he reported:

"The effect of concentrated bombing upon British Officers and men was most interesting. To begin with, the braver ones made an attempt to carry on with their work, despite the bombs. This was soon abandoned, and all ranks took to the woods and cellars as soon as the aircraft approached..... I would say that the average man can stand no more than one week's bombing, as experienced at Aandalsnaes, before his nerves are affected."

The conference of officers was thus unanimous that evacuation must be begun at once; and Brigadier Hogg, who was the senior officer present reported this to the War Office, and asked for their consent. The King of Norway and his

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Cabinet Ministers, who were now assembled at Molde, appear to have agreed; for M. Hambro, the President of the Storting, told our Minister at Stockholm that Aandalsnaes was no longer fit to be used as a base of operations. It was known, in Whitehall, that matters were going ill with the expedition; for, in addition to the daily reports that the communications upon which the Army depended were deteriorating, the Intelligence Staffs of the Air Ministry and the War Office had before them a collection of evidence that the Germans were reinforcing the troops in Norway as they pleased, and that nothing that we had done had even checked the flow of transports and supply ships. On the day when Brigadier Hogg's report was being considered we learned, through Swedish sources, that some 120 transports, with a gross tonnage of 500,000 had entered Oslo since April 6th. This, moreover, was only one link in a long and consistent chain of evidence. Permission to evacuate was, therefore, given on April 27th, and preparations for it were at once taken in hand. The evacuation itself was effected at Aandalsnaes on the nights of April 30/May 1st and May 1/2nd; at Namsos, the entire expeditionary force was withdrawn on the night May 2/3.

As 263 Squadron was destroyed before the evacuation began, and as the Air Ministry decided not to send Hurricanes to Setnesmoen, (although they were urged to do so), the R.A.F. could not directly assist the evacuation. The Air Ministry did, however, order that as much indirect assistance as possible should be given, and directed Bomber Command to make light attacks upon Stavanger, Aalborg and Fornebu, until one day before evacuation began, and to attack them, for the two nights following, at full strength; so that it is of some interest to examine the execution of this order, and to see whether it influenced such operations as the German Luftwaffe

Norway.
Intelligence.
34/3/13.

Minutes of
V.C.A.S.
Conference.

carried out against Namsos and Aandalsnaes while the evacuation was in progress.

On April 28th, which was the day when the preparations to evacuate were begun, the Luftaffe attacked both Namsos and Aandalsnaes; and all observers report that the bombing lasted all day. In the Aandalsnaes area, the town itself, the ships in the harbour, the town of Molde, and the camp at Setnesmoen were all bombed and hit. What little was left of Aandalsnaes was set on fire or destroyed by blast, although the main jetty was still usable by nightfall; in the harbour, ~~one~~ trawler ~~was sunk~~ and another was driven ashore. At Molde the bombers came low, did enormous damage to the town, and hit the dump of aviation spirit, which was, in consequence, burned out. The Army huts at Setnesmoen were hit and destroyed; and all the Norwegian Army stores that were in them were set alight. This destruction at Setnesmoen, and the simultaneous loss of the aviation spirit at Molde, was of grave consequence for the following reason.

As has been said, the 15th brigade held their position at Kvam on the 26th; but as the troops only did so with great difficulty, as the enemy were advancing so quickly in the Osterdal that they would soon be able to enter the Gudbrandsdal in General Paget's rear, the brigade was ordered to retreat, and to organise two defensive positions, one at Kjotam, another at Otta. The troops retreated on the two nights following; but as the enemy planes were observing our movements without being disturbed or even interfered with, our rear guards were severely pressed and shaken during the second night of the retreat. On the 28th, therefore, after General Paget had learned that the whole expedition was to be withdrawn to England; and after he had discussed with the Norwegian Commander-in-Chief how this could be done without exposing what

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Director
of
Operations
War Diary.

was left of the Norwegian Army to destruction, he represented, in a telegram to Whitehall, that the Army might not be able to extricate itself, unless something were done to slow down the enemy's advance up the valley; and requested that the enemy's communications to the south of Kvam be bombed while the retreat and the evacuation were in progress. The only way of effecting this was to send a squadron of Blenheims to Setnesmoen; and this would have been done, or at all events attempted, if Setnesmoen had been left alone: actually, the bombing and the destruction of the place made the project impossible, and it was abandoned.

On April 29th, the bombing of both the bases continued: there was now so little left to be destroyed that the reports of the destruction that was done are not so specific as the reports of earlier bombings: the enemy's attacks, were, however, continued all day, at both Namsos and Aandalsnaes (from which it may be concluded that the number of bombers that were engaged was not diminished); and the following damage was done: Molde was set alight, from end to end; the eastern part of the main quay was burned, and, for a number of hours, all the roads that lead into the town were impassable, owing to the fires that raged on either side of them. The enemy also discovered that Verblungsnes was being used as a military establishment, and bombed it; actually, the R.A.F. had established their headquarters in the place; the building was set alight, and all the equipment that had been collected in it was destroyed. The first of the troops were, however, withdrawn from Aandalsnaes, during the night following upon this bombardment.

On the day following, April 30th, Namsos was attacked and bombed, and H.M.S. Bittern was sunk; but the reports available state nothing about the length or the severity of the

attacks. At Aandalsnaes the bombing appears to have been as severe, and as continuous, as it had been on the day before: it was not continued after dark, and 2,000 men were embarked during the night. It was, however, during this day that the Air Ministry's order became operative that the aerodromes from which the Luftwaffe were operating against Norway were to be bombed with every available aircraft. On the night of April 30th, and during the following day, Stavanger was therefore bombed by thirty-one aircraft; during the night April 30th fourteen aircraft attacked Oslo Fornebu. (For details see Part VI document 1). If then, this bombing of Stavanger and Fornebu did influence the enemy's operations, it did so by obliging them to relax their exertions against Aandalsnaes and Namsos during the days and nights when their bases were being attacked, with regard to this the following facts and statements give guidance.

C.O. Auckland
Letter of
Proceedings
in 54528.

On the following day - May 1st - Aandalsnaes was certainly bombed; but in the only report that we have of the bombing, it is spoken of as intermittent during the day, and severe between 1620 and 1800 hours. Another report states: "At both ports (i.e. Aandalsnaes and Molde), we had a quiet afternoon." This sounds as though there was a relaxation; but Brigadier Hogg entered in his diary that "there was bombing all day", which suggests the opposite. The enemy's attacks certainly ceased after nightfall; and this night of 1/2 May was the second and final night of the evacuation at Aandalsnaes: rather more than 2,000 men were embarked without interruption during the dark hours. The relaxation at Aandalsnaes was thus only partial: at Namsos, there was certainly less bombing; for the A.A. brigade headquarters reported: "Recees a comparatively quiet afternoon!"; and the Hallams made a similar report.

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May 1/2 was the second day when the Air Ministry's order was operative and it was thus executed: Stavanger was bombed by fifteen aircraft from 10 and 107 Squadrons; Fornebu by six aircraft from 77 and 102 Squadrons, and Aalborg by five aircraft from 44 and 50 Squadrons. If this bombing gave relief to the base, it did so during the day and night following; and the officers at Namsos did certainly consider that there was a relaxation during May 2nd; for the A.A. brigade entered in their diary, "that there were no further enemy attacks, and that they were thankful for it." The Hallams diary contained the significant entry, "Quiet." This, combined with some reports that considerable damage was done at Fornebu and Stavanger, made it look as though the indirect assistance that the R.A.F. rendered during the critical days of the evacuation did contribute to the success of the operation and certainly the enemy relaxed their attacks upon Namsos and Aandalsnaes at a moment when they might have been expected to press them; for on May 2nd, that is on the afternoon when our officers were preparing to evacuate Namsos (and when the disturbance of a severe attacks would have been most felt), the British Prime Minister intimated publicly, that we were withdrawing from Norway!

This announcement, and the evacuation at Aandalsnaes, (which the enemy must have ascertained during May 1st) made the Luftwaffe watchful for shipping and for convoys. Their reconnaissance machines detected the convoy that was carrying the Namsos force; and it was repeatedly attacked between 0800 and 1000 hours on May 3rd. The French destroyer Bison and the British destroyer Afridi were sunk, before the convoy got clear.

THE OPERATIONS AGAINST NARVIK.

The first British landings in the Narvik area were simultaneous with the landings further south; but the attack upon Trondhjem, the advance, and the subsequent retreat in the Gudbrandsdal, did not influence the course of operations in the northern part of Norway, and the reason why this was so will be understood if the situation of Narvik is considered. Narvik is a Norwegian town, but it is cut off from the more populous part of the country by line upon line of natural barriers: the north-going road from Trondhjem stops at Sorfolla; and this place is separated from Narvik by a succession of jagged inlets and high mountains. Ofot Fjord, on which the town of Narvik stands, is an indentation with many hundred similar indentations to the north and south of it; for the northern coast of Norway is beyond all description harsh and savage. A valley, with many lakes in it, runs eastward from Ofot Fjord; and this valley and the open sea are natural approaches to the place; for it is isolated on the south by a high wall of naked mountains; and on the north by another mass of mountains, which can, it is true, be traversed by a road that runs from Bjerkevik to Bardufoss and thence to Tromso. The railway that ends at Narvik runs through a cleft in the mountains; and only twenty miles of the line are in Norwegian territory: indeed, a traveller who wished to visit the town by railway would make all, or nearly all, his journey through Sweden.

Narvik was originally a fishermans' hamlet; and the fishermen who first settled there probably selected the peninsula upon which the town is built, because its sides are not quite so abrupt and rugged as the sides of the neighbouring ones, and because there is a little flat land (where boats can be careened) at the outer point. After being a fishermans' settlement for many centuries, Narvik

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became a place of some importance when the Swedes opened up the iron fields at Gallivare and Karuna. These districts lie to the east and south east of that cleft in the mountain ranges through which Narvik is approached on its landward side; so, as large heavy cargoes are more cheaply transported by sea than by land, and as the fjords round Narvik do not freeze during the winter, it was found convenient and profitable to carry large quantities of the ore over the railway to Narvik, and to load it on to the freighters at the quayside. In order to deal with this traffic, the commercial magnates of Norway either built or persuaded the Storting to build, a fairly large and well equipped harbour, where between three and six thousand tons of ore, and about three hundred and fifty tons of coal could be handled daily. Since their first capture of the town, the Germans had occupied the peninsula upon which it stands, the northern side of the Rombaks Fjord, and the road between Bjerkvik and Gratangen. The Norwegian forces were to the north of them on the roads between Lavangen and Elvenes; and between Lund and Bardu; the Norwegian Commanders headquarters were at Bardu.

On the 15th April, the 24th Guards brigade, (Brigadier Frazer) landed at Harstad, on the island of Hinoy. There is a certain amount of industrial plant and a good harbour at Harstad; for a number of canning factories, and a herring meal and fish oil industry have been set up there, and a considerable volume of traffic can be handled at the quays. Hinoy is the biggest island of the archipelago that lies to the west of Ofot Fjord and Narvik; like the mainland, the island is deeply indented, mountainous and forbidding. The Narvik district can be approached from Harstad by a fairly good coastal road (see map). It is true that the road is interrupted by the Tjeld Sund, but a steam ferry connects the ends of the island and the mainland roads.

After reconnoitring the whole district, and the

See War
Office Hand-
book. Nor-
way Topo-
graphy.

German positions in particular, General Mackesey (who commanded the force) was persuaded that Narvik could be recovered; but only by prolonged operations. The old British rule of combined operations, that the senior Admiral shall command at sea and the senior General on land was, however, now suspended, and Admiral Lord Cork and Orrery was Supreme Commander of the expedition. This officer violently contested the General's opinions, and it was only because the best informed officers on the Naval Staff were on the General's side, that the Admiral was deterred from embarking upon his own projects.

On April 27th, three battalions of chasseurs alpins (General Bethouard) joined the expedition: they made Ballangen their base of operations, and put out parties on the northern side of the fjord, at Lenvik. On the following day, both Generals met in conference. The French General's views were identical with those of his British colleague: Narvik could not be reduced by the operations that the Admiral was then burning to embark upon: a bombardment from the sea (which was to be directed indiscriminately upon the Norwegian population and the German garrison), and a wild rush against the German fortified positions round the town: if, however, the Germans could be driven from the northern shore of Rombaks Fjord; if artillery could be established at its extreme end (Oijord); and if, simultaneously, Allied troops could clear the Ankenes peninsula, and advance to the head of the Beisfjord, it would be possible to land on the southern side of the Rombaks Fjord and to drive the enemy off the peninsula, towards Hunddalen. These objects could be best attained if a strong French contingent moved by sea to Salangen, joined hands with the Norwegians further east and then marched on Bjerkvik and Oijord. The corresponding movements on the southern side of Rombaks Fjord were to be undertaken by the British.

While the Generals were concerting this plan, they learned that the operations round Trondhjem and in the

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Gudbrandsdal were going ill; and that the southern part of Norway was to be abandoned. The ground that was occupied by our troops round Narvik was now our only foothold in the country; and we had become the Norwegian Government's last line of defence against the Germans; for King Haakon and the Cabinet were now in Tromsø. On the other hand, Narvik is so isolated that it made very little difference to the plan that the Generals were now agreed upon that all southern Norway was in German hands. When he communicated the news, the C.I.G.S. did, however, order that a force should be sent south to protect the aerodromes at Bodo: a company of Scots Guards was detached on the day following.

It was originally intended that the air component to this Norwegian expeditionary force should be thus constituted.

File
S5301.

No. 4 Base Area.

No. 10 Servicing Flight.

No. 263 Fighter Squadron (Gladiators).

No. 46 Fighter Squadron (Hurricanes).

No. 501 Fighter Squadron.

No. 40 Bomber Squadron (Blenheims).

No. 416 Army Co-operation Flight.

No. 11 Radio and Signal Section.

No. 11 Observers Screen.

No. 3, 201, 202, 247 Transportable Radio Units.

No. 20 Air Stores Park.

No. 3 Medical Receiving Station.

No. 1 M.T. Company.

No. 1 P.A.C. Unit.

No. 21 Wing (Air Information).

No. 935 Balloon Section.

This force was, however, still forming at Uxbridge when the squadron number 263 was destroyed at Lesjekogen; and the ill news from that place, and the evacuation of Namsos and

Aandalsnaes delayed the despatch of the remaining units still further. Nevertheless, it was patent, by the end of April, that this air component would operate with the northern expeditionary force at Narvik, and the following preparations had been made for its reception.

Two officers - Wing Commander Atcherley and Squadron Leader Bell - reached Harstad at the end of April, and after flying over the whole zone of operations, decided that the fighter squadrons that were to be attached to the air component could most suitably be operated from the Norwegian aerodromes at Bardufoss, and from the landing ground at Skaanland. Laksely was selected as the best site for the bomber squadron: this aerodrome is at the head of the Forsanger Fjord; and it well illustrates how difficult it was to find suitable bases, and what obstacles had to be overcome before any operations in the air could be undertaken, that no other site could be found for the bomber squadron. In the south the aerodrome at Bodo was chosen as a base. These places were, however, only suitable in that they could be converted into workable aerodromes: all of them (except Laksely) were covered with several feet of snow; the ground beneath the snow was frozen to a depth of three feet or more, and as the soil on all these places was peaty and soft, the whole surface became spongy (and remained so for weeks) after the thaw set in: the time for this was, moreover, fast approaching. No operations could be undertaken from any place, therefore, until large drains had been cut and a better surface laid along the runways; over and above this, unless dispersal bays with good protection against blast, air raid shelters, and accommodation that should give some security against bombing could be constructed, a disaster similar to the disaster at Lesjekogen Lake was virtually certain. Wing Commander Atcherley put this work in hand at Bardufoss and Laksely; Squadron Leader Bell at Skaanland, and Flight Lieutenant Masterman at Bodo.

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The air component was still being collected, and 263 squadron was still being reconstituted, at the beginning of May.

While these preparations were being pushed forward, the Germans were taking such measures as were proper for making the best use of the advantages that they already enjoyed. Of the aerodromes that were in their possession, Vaernes was the most central, and the one from which operations in northern Norway could most conveniently be undertaken: great enlargements of the aerodrome were, therefore, taken in hand, and the forces that were there stationed in mid April were strengthened by a squadron of long range bombers and a Gruppe of single engined fighters (Me. 109's).

War Cabinet
(40) III

It was, moreover, impossible that we should deliver such attacks against Trondhjem - Vaernes as we had delivered against Stavanger; for the place is 460 miles from the Shetlands and 760 miles from the Yorkshire coast: such bombers as could reach the neighbourhood had therefore no time to search for the aerodrome, which was not easy to find at the best of times. In any case it was now fully admitted that these attacks upon aerodromes were not giving good results, as the heaviest, and the best delivered attack against the aerodromes in southern Norway had rarely reduced the number of aeroplanes that operated from them on the following day.

At the beginning of May we estimated that the German

Joint Intel- Air Forces in Norway were thus distributed:

Intelligence Com-
mittee papers.
German Order
of battle.
4.V.40.

Trondhjem, Vaernes:	1 squadron of long range bombers (He. 111)
	3 squadrons of dive bombers (Ju. 87's).
	3 squadrons of single seater fighters (Me. 109's)
Stavanger,	3 squadrons of long range bombers (He. 111's)
	3 squadrons of double engined fighters (Me. 110's).
	1 squadron of coastal units (He. 115's).
Kristiansand.	3 squadrons of single seater fighters. (Me. 109's).

Oslo Fornebu. 7 squadrons of bombers
(He. 111's, Ju. 88's and Ju. 87's))
1 squadron of bomber reconnaissance
machines (He. 111's).
3 squadrons of Army Co-operation
machines (Do. 17 and Hs. 126))
1 squadron of coastal units (type
doubtful).

In addition, some 100 aircraft of the coastal type were believed to be operating in the fjords. The German squadrons were still being operated mainly from stations in Schleswig and Denmark, although Stavanger was occasionally used as a control station.

On May 3rd, the zone of operations was enlarged by orders from the War Office, who informed the Flag Officer at Narvik that it was thought important that the north going road from Trondhjem should be blocked against a German advance; and that Bodo should be reinforced: two independent companies were, therefore, being sent to Mosjoen; one to Mo; and two to Bodo. During the week following the French troops made the movements preparatory to the attack on Narvik: the battalions that had been detached to Salangen and the Norwegian troops in that area moved southwards towards Bjerkvik, and cleared the mountains on either side of the road; the troops of the Foreign Legion prepared to attack Bjerkvik. On May 9th, the Polish brigade of four battalions arrived at Harstad; and the independent companies that the War Office were sending out reached Mosjoen and Bodo. The Germans began to press us in this southern part of the theatre; and General Mackesoy reinforced the independent companies by despatching the remainder of the Scots Guards. (May 11th). Meanwhile, the Germans opened their long expected attack on the Western Front; and this at once influenced the course of operations in northern Norway.

This great onslaught presented those responsible for the conduct of the war with the difficulty that regularly appears

when a British war plan is being devised: we were engaging an enemy who was considerably more powerful than we were in the main theatre of war; and we were engaging him, simultaneously in a secondary theatre, what forces were to be allotted to each, and what conduct were they to follow? If Narvik had been occupied, and if the Germans had been expelled from northern Norway, before the onslaught in the west began, the difficulty of giving the problem a good solution would not have been so great; and this

Appendices to
Narratives
prepared by
military
Branch of
Historical
Section.

is probably why the First Lord (with the memories of Gallipoli, Salonica, Palestine and Mesopotamia, making him anxious for the future) several times urged that something quick and violent should be attempted: for on April 17th he stated that the proposals for prolonged operations round Narvik involved a "damaging deadlock, and the immobilisation of one of our best brigades:" three days later he wired that it was "highly desirable, both for political and military reasons, that there should be no delay in the capture of Narvik;" and on May 3rd, the First Lord sent a personal message to Lord Cork and Orrery in which he said that "every day that Narvik remained untaken imperilled the whole enterprise."

As it had been patent, for some time past, that Narvik would not be in our hands when the attack on the Low Countries began, the Government had been considering what forces could be spared for the enterprise, and what forces could subsequently be allowed to remain in northern Norway, before the Germans actually opened their attack. On May 6th, therefore, Lieutenant-General Auchinleck was instructed to go to Norway, and to report what forces would be needed to preserve a part of Norway as a seat of government for the Norwegian King and Government; to prevent the Germans from obtaining iron ore through Narvik; and to interfere as much as could be, with the ore route from Lulea to Germany. This matter was still unsettled on May 10th; for General Auchinleck only arrived on the day following; but

War Cabinet
paper Hist.
(C) 1
Appendix A.

everybody concerned in the operations, and the officers of the air component in particular, must, from now onwards, have grasped that forces would be allotted to them very sparingly: they, were presumably, reminded of this fairly frequently; for thenceforward, the daily news was of enemy victories, and of Allied disasters.

The immediate consequence to the air operations in Norway was that all the indirect assistance that the bomber squadrons had been giving, by bombing Stavanger, Aalborg, Fornebu, and Vaernes now ceased; for the bombers automatically began to execute the plan that the French and British had been devising for months past. It is a matter of speculation whether the indirect support that had been given by the bomber squadron materially impeded the German operations in Norway: if it did, the Germans were now free of the nuisance; for such assistance as was, henceforward, given by the squadrons of Coastal Command was not comparable to the assistance that had previously been given by the bombers.

Group Captain Moore, the senior officer of the air component arrived at Harstad with General Auchinleck; he was accompanied by some, but by no means all, the units that were allotted to the air component. The Army authorities at Harstad did not, however, know that an R.A.F. contingent was on its way; and the movement control parties (being surprised by its arrival) were unable to unload and distribute the Air Force stores and equipment as quickly as was needed if they were to be made safe against air attack. The personnel of the base area, therefore, dealt with the baggage and equipment; and, in order that the work at Skaanland aerodrome should be pressed forward, a large part of the base personnel were turned into an aerodrome construction party, and sent there. When these arrangements were completed, Group Captain Moore reported that neither Bardufoss nor Skaanland aerodromes could be made ready before

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Cypher tele-grams X5194 and from rear Admiral Narvik to Admiralty 12.V.40 and X4966 from Flag officer in charge Narvik to Admiralty 12.V.40 and cypher tele-gram X5209 from Admiralty to F.O. Narvik 12.V.40. Box II.H5.1d.

May 22nd; the bomber squadrons aerodrome, on the Porsanger Fjord could, however, be used at once. After considering this report, the Admiralty and the Air Ministry ruled that the aerodrome on the Porsanger Fjord was not to be used; and that the fighter squadrons were to wait until Bardufoss and Skaanland were ready to receive them.

During the next week (May 11th/18th) the enemy moved northwards from Trondhjem and pressed our troops out of Mosjoen and Mo. The Mosjoen position was taken in rear by airborne troops that were landed on the Hemes peninsula, and by a landing force that was carried up the fjord in a transport. Our troops were extricated by sea and taken to Bodo; and as a German advance in this area threatened the position at Bodo, General Mackesoy ordered substantial reinforcements to be sent south, (the Guards Brigade, less the 2nd South Wales Borderers, a troop of field artillery, a troop of light A.A. artillery and a field company). This turned out ill; for the transport that was carrying the Irish Guards was attacked from the air and sunk; and the cruiser Effingham struck a rock and became a total loss while she was carrying another battalion to Bodo. The Scots Guards were driven out of Mo on the 18th and began their retreat up the valley towards Saltfjord. The enemy's air forces assisted in these operations, but we know nothing about the units that were engaged or about the manner in which they were employed. The Scots Guards - one of the finest regiments in the British Army - reported that it disheartened everybody, that enemy planes inspected every position that was occupied, without let or hindrance; and the men always felt that this loaded the dice heavily against them. Brigadier Gubbins, who commanded in the Mo-Bodo area, said that he could have held the Germans if he had been able to fight them in the air. This was impossible, as Bodo airfield was not then ready.

Cypher tel.
X5323 to
Admiralty
from F.O.
Narvik
24.V.40.

In the Narvik area, matters went better, for here two battalions of the Foreign Legion landed at Bjerkvik, expelled the Germans from it, and so cleared the northern side of the Rombaks Fjord as far as Traeldal.

See Cypher
Message X5937
of 15.V.40.
Norway Policy
and Plans
II H5 1d.

General Auchinleck had now consulted with the Norwegian Generals Ruge and Fleischer, and despatched the report that he had been ordered to prepare:

"The Germans had destroyed so much in the port of Narvik, and the Navy's bombardments had destroyed so much more that no iron ore was likely to be shipped to Germany for many months: interfering with the shipments of ore from Lulea was not feasible, unless the Swedish authorities themselves assisted and this was not likely: to carry Narvik and to hold it as a seat of government for the King, the Cabinet and the Storting was therefore the only task that the expeditionary force in Norway was now called upon to perform. If it was to be done, the area Bodo Harstad Skaanland must be held; and of these positions Bodo was extremely important, for if it fell into the enemy hands, and if the Luftwaffe could operate from it, the anchorage at Harstad, and all the depots in the Narvik zone would be untenable."

The General, therefore, reported

"that he would need seventeen battalions, with a suitable proportion of artillery engineers, and armoured troops; 104 A. A. guns of 3.7" calibre; 96 Bofors guns; two Hurricane squadrons, one Blenheim squadron, and one Army Co-operation squadron."

When this report was received in London, the news from the Western Front was of the worst: the Dutch Army was utterly overthrown, and had capitulated; the French Armies on the Meuse were routed; and the Belgian Armies were being driven from one position to another. While the Chiefs of the Staffs Committee considered General Auchinleck's report, Brussels was abandoned: the reply to it was, therefore, that the French and British Staffs could allot twelve French and British battalions; ten independent companies, forty-eight heavy and sixty light A.A. guns; one Hurricane, one Gladiator squadron, and possibly an Army Co-operation flight to the expedition but no more. To this the General answered that he might be able to perform the task that had been given him with the twelve battalions that were now allowed him; but that the allowance of anti-

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aircraft artillery and air squadrons would be insufficient if the enemy attacked the bases and aerodromes in northern Norway, as appeared probable. The General particularly deplored the reduction in the Air Forces of his Command and said, that he could not patrol the base areas and fleet anchorages with fewer than two Hurricane squadrons; that he could only meet the enemy's attack in the air, if he were given some bombers; and that, unless he could meet it, the whole force (which was already discouraged by the enemy's air attacks) would become quite disheartened. If the enemy attacked, therefore, General Auchinleck could not hold himself responsible for the safety of the force; and the evacuation of northern Norway would be the only solution. The Chiefs of Staff Committee, to whom the matter was referred recommended evacuation.

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"Our present operations in Norway" ran the report "do not constitute a profitable military detachment. It is true that the Germans have 11 divisions in the country and that we have the equivalent of only $1\frac{1}{2}$ divisions. But the Germans employed their forces to overcome southern Norway, and there is no reason for them to look up large forces in Norway merely because we are at Narvik. Moreover, the air forces that the Germans had stationed in Norway could operate against the United Kingdom, and were not in any sense diverted from the main theatre. And furthermore the expedition to Norway was absorbing forces that would be better employed elsewhere. The naval forces in the Narvik zone now numbered:"

"3 Aircraft carriers.
2 Anti-aircraft cruisers.
4 cruisers (one of them a modern, 8" cruiser)
15 destroyers.
2 sloops."

"In addition to this, 43 heavy and 60 light A.A. guns were needed for the defence of the aerodrome and of the base, and this was a heavy burden; for these guns were much needed for the defence of the United Kingdom. The two squadrons at Bardufoss would not suffice to defend the base or the town of Narvik, if it were severely attacked, and it was not going to be easy to maintain even these two squadrons in Norway: their losses would be high; Hurricanes could not be spared; Gladiators were no longer being manufactured and very few of these aircraft were to be found in the aircraft storage units."

"As against this it was not to be disguised that there were substantial reasons for remaining in Norway: discredit would attach to us if we abandoned the Norwegians altogether; moreover, if we captured Narvik, and held

it, certain quantities of timber, iron-ore and high grade steel would be assured to us. The reasons for holding on could not, however, have the same weight as the reasons for withdrawing: the campaign in France was going ill; and the advance of the German armies was endangering Great Britain and France: The security of France and of the United Kingdom is essential; the retention of northern Norway is not."

The Chiefs of Staff therefore recommended that our forces should be withdrawn after Narvik had been captured and after the harbour and its installations had been made unusable.

The abandoning of the whole enterprise was, therefore, virtually decided before the squadrons arrived; for this report was being prepared on May 21st; and 263 squadron arrived in the Furious on the same day. The state of affairs was then this:-

Bardufoss was ready to receive the Gladiators, in that two run ways, eighteen dispersal bays, with taxiing lanes to them, an underground operations room, and a number of places where officers and men could rest and sleep had been prepared. The operations room was, however, still little better than a rude excavation; and the accommodation that was ready was insufficient for all, as a number of officers and men were compelled to build wooden wigwams for themselves as soon as they arrived. The aerodrome was defended by eight heavy and twelve light A.A. guns: the distribution of anti-aircraft artillery over the whole area was:

for Harstad and Skaanland, twenty-four heavy and eighteen light guns.

for Bodo, eight heavy and twelve light guns.

for Tromso, eight heavy and sixteen light guns.

The aerodrome was supplied through Sorreisa; the road between the two places was bad; and communication between the two places might have been severed for long periods, as no spare parts, and no puncture repair outfits had been sent with the R.A.F. lorries. The Army authorities supplied what was needed, and communications, though difficult, were always maintained.

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Two lines of observer posts were nearly set up: one in the Bodo-Fauske districts, the other in the Lofoten Islands; but much remained to be done before the observer screen was in full working order. In the first place, it was not realised that the Norwegians were maintaining a well selected chain of observer posts along the whole coast from Velfjord (lat. 65°: 30' N. long. 12°: 20' E) to Tromso; and that what was needed from us was not a British observer screen imposed upon the Norwegian one; but the supplying of such additional wireless equipment as would improve the Norwegian system. Secondly, the equipment that was supplied to the observer screen was by no means the most suitable to the work in hand: the pack set (R.1082 T.1083) was far too weak to send messages across the high iron bound mountains of Norway; for the accumulators did not give the necessary power, and the wave meter was accurate only on the lower frequencies. Thirdly, as no arrangements had been made for housing, or feeding, or paying, the men of the observer screen; as no transport had been allowed to the Commanding Officer, and as the Norwegians had none to lend, the preliminaries of settling in the posts were much drawn out. Nevertheless, when the squadron arrived at Bardufoss, those difficulties had been so far overcome that the Norwegian observer screen and our own were reporting enemy movements to the air component's headquarters at Harstad, with a delay that varied from two to ten minutes.

It had been intended that the observer screen should be supplemented by R.D.F. stations in the Bodo and Svolvaer districts; but the officers who had been sent to find suitable sites had found that the Norwegian coast was ill suited to the purpose. The establishing of R.D.F. stations on the coast of Norway was not, in itself, impossible; but long trials and experiments would have been necessary before a good chain of

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posts could have been set up.

When the Gladiators took off from the carrier, the weather was thick and foul, and the squadron at once suffered loss; for two aircraft struck a mountain side, and both were wrecked. The task that was allotted to the squadron was that patrols should be maintained over the base and the Fleet anchorage; and this was done from May 22nd until our troops were withdrawn. The highest number of sorties in a day was fifty-five: the lowest, seventeen; on every day when our aircraft was patrolling, enemy planes were met and fought. The consequence of these operations must be examined separately.

During the five days that followed upon the squadrons arrival, the Germans pressed their operations in the southern area. On May 25th the Irish Guards were severely engaged at Pothus to the south of Saltdals fjord, and they reported that the enemy's superiority in the air was deciding the issue of every action that they fought: as Bodo landing ground was now ready,

three Gladiators were sent there on the following day (May 26th).

The pilots found, when they arrived, that the runway was dangerous: the building of a wooden runway, 900 feet long, was immediately taken in hand, and it was completed by midnight. The Gladiators took off on the day following and fought a number of actions in the Bodo district. The Irish Guards, who were retiring from Pothus, were not so severely attacked by aircraft as they had been previously; but this was probably because the enemy sent all their available squadrons against Bodo itself. The enemy's attacks began at 0745 hours, when twelve Ju. 87's and four Me. 110's attacked the landing ground and the town; two Gladiators were put out of action, and some damage was done to the town. In the afternoon, the attacks were begun again, and they were pressed with the greatest energy. The aerodrome and the runway were wrecked beyond repair; in the town, the 25 pounder ammunition, the food and the petrol dumps were all destroyed,

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and the place itself was reduced to ashes. Of the three Gladiators that had tried to stem the onslaught, one escaped and reached Bardufoss.

The northern part of the theatre was now reinforced by the Hurricane squadron (No.46) which arrived in the Glorious on the 26th. It was originally intended that this squadron should be based on Skaanland; but the first two aircraft that landed there tipped on to their noses, and it was realised that more work would have to be done on the runway. The rest of the squadron were sent on to Bardufoss, and were ordered to patrol the base and the Rombaks Fjord.

By this time, the French were ready to make the final attack on Narvik. The plan was that the troops on the northern side of the Rombaks Fjord should be carried in boats to the southern side, and should land under cover of the guns that had been established at Oijord: simultaneously, the Poles on the Ankanes peninsula were to clear Beisfjord and then to pass on to the north east and north. These operations were begun at 0300 hours on May 28: they continued all day and were successful; for by 2200 hours, the French troops were in Narvik; the Poles were in Beisfjord; and the German garrison were driven towards Hunddalen. The squadrons patrolled the battle area during the day; it was never possible to keep more than three machines in the air at one time; and to do this, forty-two operational flights were made by 263 squadron and fifty-three by 46 squadron. Three engagements were fought during the course of the day.

As soon as these operations were completed, the evacuation of northern Norway was begun; for the Government had already ordered it. For the matter had again been referred to a special committee, who found no reason to modify the recommendations that had already been made by the Chiefs of Staff. They reported:

"that we were not able to provide the forces that the

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Commander-in-Chief thought necessary for the defence of Narvik; and, that inasmuch as we could not provide them, the Germans could make our position in northern Norway untenable. In so grave a state of affairs as then prevailed, it was highly important that we should reduce our commitments in secondary theatres, and assemble every available destroyer, fighter squadron and anti-aircraft battery for the defence of the United Kingdom; that the forces detached to Narvik would not remain at the figure fixed by General Auchinleck; that the providing of them would be a drain upon the Air Force and upon the Navy; and finally, that our expedition to northern Norway had not obliged the Germans to disperse their forces more than we had dispersed ours."

This report was accepted by the Chiefs of Staff and by the Government, and the decision to evacuate was ratified by the Supreme War Council. It was, indeed, patent that we could no longer spare a man or a gun, far less a squadron of fighters, for a secondary theatre of war, when disasters were accumulating so fast in the principal one. Since May 17th when General Auchinleck had received the Government's ruling upon the forces that could be spared for northern Norway, the journal of misfortunes had been: that the German Armies had reached the Channel ports and had captured Boulogne; that they had overrun more of northern France than they had taken in the last war, that the British Army, separated from the French and the Belgian, was retiring upon the small, inadequate port of Dunkirk and upon the open coast on either side of it. On the day when Narvik was captured, the Belgian Army surrendered. In addition to all this the reports from our Ambassador at Rome left but little doubt that the Italians would declare war against us; and the Government were, at this moment, making what preparations could be made for a war in the Mediterranean.

Bodo was the first place to be evacuated; the bombing of the place had not destroyed the pier; and the withdrawal, which was begun on the night of May 29th, was completed by the night of May 31st. The enemy did not interfere with it. In the north, the withdrawal had to be carried out in such a manner that the Norwegian forces that we were abandoning should not at once be overwhelmed and destroyed. It was, on this account, carried out very gradually, and lasted for five days and nights

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(June 3rd/8th). The greater part of the R.A.F. headquarters at Harstad was taken away on the second day of the evacuation. The evacuation of the aerodromes was carried out in this manner. The Norwegians were now very bitter at the misfortunes that our policy had brought upon them; at the ruin and destruction that had overtaken any town that had harboured our troops, and at the calamities that had befallen any Norwegian forces that had depended upon us for aid; it was, therefore, important that the abandoning of the aerodromes should be concealed from them to the last. In order to deceive the Norwegians, we invented a story that the fighter squadrons were to be moved to Skaanland; that two bomber squadrons were to be based at Bardufoss; and that the movement of stores and of aircraft (which could not be concealed) were consequent upon this arrangement. The two squadrons patrolled the Narvik area until June 7th; the aircraft were flown to the Glorious on the day following. After the last aircraft had taken off; the destruction of Bardufoss was begun. The official report runs thus:

"The aerodrome was destroyed by blowing craters in it with dynamite, on a diagonal pattern. The work of demolition was commenced at 0030 hours on the 8th June, and by 0245 hours, 120 craters were blown about one and a half metres in diameter by one metre deep:"

five hundred metres of runway number one was left, for the use of some Norwegian Fokker bombers. On the following morning, the Norwegians continued and completed the work of destruction. Misfortune overtook the two squadrons; for, some time on June 8th, the Glorious, which was carrying them, fell in with a German pocket battleship, and was sunk. Two of the officers who had embarked in the carrier were picked up days later, upon rafts; the remainder perished.

TABLE 1. ENEMY'S AIR OPERATIONS IN THE NARVIK AREA BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF THE FIGHTER SQUADRONS.

<u>DATE.</u>	<u>DEFENCE OF AREA.</u>	<u>ENEMY'S OPERATIONS.</u>
1.V.40.	Defence of Harstad Skaanland area	No enemy air raids.
2.V.40.	consisted of: one section 193rd (3 rd , 7) A.A. battery Kannebogen (Harstad area).	1430 hours, raid of Harstad, Grand Hotel hit and badly damaged.
3.V.40.	" Sollia (Harstad area).	1300 hours, air raid on Harstad from a high altitude: 5 bombs only.
4.V.40.	two " (en route for Bardu foss) Sorreisa. 3rd Lt. A.A. battery - less 1 1/2 troops, Skaanland. one troop of 3rd Lt. A.A. battery Salangen. one troop of 164th Lt. A.A. battery Skaanland.	1100 hours, air raid on Harstad, from 12,000 feet: H.M.S. Effingham attacked and missed. Thereafter continuous raiding in the Skaanland Harstad area up to 2300 hours. Polish destroyer Grom hit and sunk.
5.V.40.	<u>55th Lt. A.A. regiment.</u> 163 Lt. A.A. battery Harstad. one troop of 164 Lt. A.A. battery Harstad. 165 Lt. A.A. battery (less one troop) Ballangen. one troop 165 Lt. A.A. battery) 164 Lt. A.A. battery, less two troops) Liland.	Air raids on Harstad and Skaanland at 1020, 1500 and 1800 hours. The fleet planes Cabot and Caribou driven ashore, and destroyed.
6.V.40.	Skua patrol over Harstad from 1800 hours.	No air raids in the Harstad/Skaanland zone.
7.V.40.	Skua patrol from 1100 hours.	No air raids.
8.V.40.		1445 to 1830 hours Harstad continuously raided; bombing and machine gunning.

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TABLE 1. (Continued) ENEMY'S AIR OPERATIONS IN THE NARVIK AREA BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF THE FIGHTER SQUADRONS.

<u>DATE.</u>	<u>DEFENCE OF AREA.</u>	<u>ENEMY'S OPERATIONS.</u>
9.V.40 to 13.V.40.		Not much enemy activity in the Harstad Skaanland area.
14.V.40.	4 guns from the 256th A.A. battery put into action in the Harstad area.	
15.V.40.		Air attacks on Harstad and Skaanland: shipping aimed at, but unsuccessfully.
16.V.40.		Small number of planes made low altitude attack at 1900 hours no damage.
17.V.40.		French demi-brigade H.Q. dive bombed for 35 minutes and destroyed, 2310 hours - Salangen area.
18.V.40.		French force H.Q. bombed during the attack on Bjerkvik. Balangen attacked from the air.
19.V.40.		Not much air activity in Harstad Skaanland area.
20.V.40.	4 Lt. A.A. guns of the 167th Lt. A.A. battery put into position at Sorreisa.	Air raids on Ballangen.
21.V.40.	8, 3" 7 A.A. guns of the 193rd A.A. battery in action at Bardufoss.	Air raid on shipping and aerodrome at Skaanland - 3 planes no damage.
	4, 3" 7 A.A. guns of the 152nd A.A. battery in position at Skaanland.	Air raid on Harstad, main petrol tanks hit and destroyed.

TABLE 2. ENEMY'S AIR OPERATIONS IN THE NARVIK AREA, AFTER THE ARRIVAL OF THE FIGHTER SQUADRONS.

<u>NO. OF SORTIES.</u>	<u>NO. OF COMBATS.</u>	<u>OWN LOSSES.</u>	<u>ALTERATIONS IN A.A. DEFENCE.</u>	<u>DATE.</u>	<u>ENEMY'S OPERATIONS.</u>
54	3	1	4 guns of the 151st A.A. battery added to defence of Skaanland.	22.V.40.	1220-1250 hours. Rombaks fjord bombed by ten aircraft 1840-2000 hours. Elvenes, Gratangen, and Norwegian front line troops bombed: quay at Gratangen set alight. Elvenes in flames.
40	3	2		23.V.40.	1430-1630 hours air attacks on Harstad.
38	6	1	4 guns of the 153rd A.A. battery added to the defence of Harstad.	24.V.40.	Attack on Ballangen, gun of the 165th Lt. A.A. battery hit.
36	5	2		25.V.40.	1130 Severe attack on Harstad, lasting 1½ hours.
50	15	1	One troop of 167 Lt. A.A. battery moved out of the area to Tromso.	26.V.40.	1425-1530 hours severe attack on the fleet anchorage at Harstad and Skaanland. A/A cruiser Curlew sunk at Skaanland; H.M.S. Southampton damaged at Harstad.
32	11	3	4 guns of the 153rd A.A. battery moved to Bodo.	27.V.40.	No air attacks in the Harstad area; one plane dropped bombs in the Narvik area. Bodo severely attacked.
95	3	Nil		28.V.40.	0400-0600 hours. attacks in the battle zone near Narvik. H.M.S. Cairo bombed and hit. 1130 hours H.M.S. Coventry attacked at Skaanland. 1317-1340 hours. bombing attacks on the French battle positions in the Rombaks fjord. 1700 hours French positions in the Narvik area bombed.
84	8	1	156th A.A. battery, less two sections moved towards Tromso.	29.V.40.	1530 hours attack on Harstad: not much damage; also attack on trawlers at Skaanland. 1930 hours, twenty aircraft in the Skaanland area: road to Liland blocked for some hours. 2030 attacks on shipping in the Narvik area.

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TABLE 2. (Continued). ENEMY'S AIR OPERATIONS IN THE NARVIK AREA, AFTER THE ARRIVAL OF THE FIGHTER SQUADRON.

<u>NO. OF SORTIES.</u>	<u>NO. OF COMBATS.</u>	<u>OWN LOSSES.</u>	<u>ALTERATIONS IN A. A. DEFENCE.</u>	<u>DATE.</u>	<u>ENEMY'S OPERATIONS.</u>
27	8	3		30.V.40.	Very little enemy raiding in the Harstad Skaanland area.
21	NIL	NIL		31.V.40.	Little enemy activity; but the weather was thick, only 46 squadron took off.
75	24	3	1 troop 167th Lt. A.A. battery moved from Salangen to Bardufoss.	2.VI.40.	1200 to 1300 hours attacks on naval vessels in the Narvik area.
6	NIL	NIL		3.VI.40.	Little enemy activity; but the weather was foul, only 46 squadron took off.
11				4.VI.40.	do. do. do.
9				5.VI.40.	do. do. do.
16				6.VI.40.	do. do. do.
about 50	12	2		7.VI.40.	do. do. do.

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We have still to determine how the operations of the fighter squadrons influenced the enemy's operations and the course of the campaign: and with regard to this, we must first review the difficulties under which the squadrons operated. As conceived, the plan of operations was that a fully equipped wireless and observer screen (six posts in the Bodo Fauske district, and nine in the Lofoten Islands) should report enemy movements early enough for the Squadron Commanders to make intercepting dispositions. This might have been possible, later, when the Norwegian observer screen had been supplemented by a chain of R.D.F. stations; but the only system of communication that could be devised, with the time and the means available, was that reports of approaching aircraft should be telephoned to Lodingen, and re-telephoned from there to Harstad and Bardufoss. As it was quite impossible to send up intercepting flights, until communications were enlarged and improved, the squadrons were compelled to maintain standing patrols, and what is more, to maintain them in very adverse circumstances. The northern patrol area was at the head of Solberg Fjord; the southern patrol zone was at Ballangen, nearly 100 miles away; the western areas were at Lodingen and Harstad, and the eastern ones at Gratangen and Rombaks Fjord. Aircraft in one area could not be moved to another, while they were on patrol, because the high mountains made all communication between ground and air impossible. Finally, the Norwegian observer screen, although it was on the whole, well sited, did not detect all the approaching raids; for the high mountains and the deep intervening valleys restricted the view of the best placed observer posts. The consequence was that the enemy's bombers were often in sight before the pilots had taken off. To sum up, therefore, the squadrons were compelled to operate by standing patrols, which is of all methods the most fatiguing, and the most wasteful; and the pilots were often obliged to climb to ten and even to twelve thousand

File S.5301.
Report of
11 Observer
Screen.

See combat
reports for
263 squadron
27.V.40.

feet, in the very presence of the enemy that they had taken off to engage.

Operations
Record Books.
263 and 46
squadrons.

The actual achievements of the squadrons were these: No. 263 squadron operated on twelve days, executed 389 flights, and engaged the enemy in 69 combats: No. 46 squadron operated on twelve days, executed 249 flights and engaged the enemy in 26 combats: most of the engagements were in the Narvik - Harstad area (see map). As for the enemy's losses, the pilots believed that they shot down thirty-seven enemy planes between May 21st and the date of the evacuation: of these twenty-six enemy planes were claimed by 263 squadron, and eleven by 46 squadron. (For the tactics employed by each squadron see Part V, Document 20): but as estimates of an enemy's loss have never, in all history, corresponded to an enemy's actual loss, it would be unscientific to imagine that estimates of losses in air warfare are a departure from this general rule. We shall not, therefore, know how many planes the enemy lost, during their operations against Narvik, until they declare them in an official document that can be relied upon. However, as eleven squadrons of bombers were then stationed in Norway, a total loss of 37 planes would only have absorbed the reserve aircraft (three per Staffel) and would not have reduced the numbers of aircraft that the Commanders of the Luftwaffe could allot to any particular target.

The most natural way of assessing the squadrons achievement is to compare the operations that the enemy executed before the squadrons arrived (see table 1) with the operations that they performed thereafter (see table 2); but, when this is done, the comparison reveals nothing striking. For it is clear that the enemy's raids against Harstad, Skaanland, and the Fleet anchorage were as frequent, and as strenuously delivered, after the squadrons

had arrived, as they were before. Indeed, it can be inferred that the Luftwaffe attacked the Narvik area most vigorously during the period May 22nd - June 3rd; for, although no war diary or document gives the particulars that one would like to have learned, several entries imply that the attacks on the 26th and the 29th May were the severest that were experienced. As for the lull in the enemy's operations, between June 3rd and June 7th, this was clearly due to the weather (see table 2).

If, however, the particulars of the enemy's operations are ignored, and if the known facts are considered in a general way, we get a more satisfactory result; for when the enemy's operations against Aandalsnes and Namsos are compared with their operations against Narvik, we have, on the one hand, a record of military targets that are carefully and methodically destroyed, and, on the other, the record of a harbour that was, throughout, a workable base of operations for the Army and the Fleet. The difference between the two, (and it is a notable difference) must be attributed, in large measure, to the A.A. batteries, and to the fighter squadrons.

The contribution of the fighter squadrons would appear to have been most substantial on June 2nd; for they were, on that day, so heavily engaged that they fought twenty-four actions and made seventy-five sorties. The documentary records of the day's fighting show that the enemy intended to make a severe attack upon the base, and upon the anchorage; for the combat reports speak of a group of twelve long range bombers, flying together, and each approaching group was followed by another, for an hour on end: the bombers and dive bombers were at 4,000 and 5,000 feet, (which implies that they intended to bomb the place methodically); and Mb. 110's were present as a protection for the bombers. These forces were stubbornly engaged from their first appearance to the time of their withdrawal; their attack was harmless; and the conduct of our

pilots made a deep impression upon the Army. Those who were present, (and who were best able to judge what relief this gave to the troops) were much moved by the exploit; and at the end of the day, General Auclinleck expressed his admiration in a handsome message of thanks.

Due weight must, however, be given to everything that may have increased or diminished the severity of the enemy's attacks upon Harstad and Skaanland; and it seems fairly certain that the enemy could not, at this time, operate as strongly against Narvik as he had against Namsos and Aandalsnaes; for these places are within easy reach of Vaernes (where the enemy concentrated as many squadrons as the place would hold); and Aandalsnaes can be operated against from Oslo Fornebu and Stavanger. Narvik, is, however, 600 miles from Oslo Fornebu, and even further from Stavanger, and this obliged the Germans to operate against it from Trondhjem Vaernes. Realising, from the beginning, that the aerodrome at Trondhjem would be their great base of operations, the Germans were working hard to increase its capacity; and several additional squadrons were in fact stationed at Vaernes at the beginning of May. Nevertheless, after allowance has been made for all this, it is safe to say that the attacks on Narvik could not have been as frequent, or as severe, as the attacks on Namsos, Aandalsnaes and Bodo. It is, thus, only possible to say about the squadron's achievement, that it was a contribution to a substantial result - that of maintaining Harstad and Skaanland as workable bases of operations, for so long as the operations in northern Norway were persisted in.

From everything that precedes, it is clear that the operations against Narvik only resemble the operations against Trondhjem in that they were executed in the same country, Norway. If northern Norway was successfully protected against fatal damage by two fighter squadrons (which were operating at great disadvantage) and by an insufficient number of A. A. batteries,

See Box
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it is reasonable to suppose that it could have been defended against any attempt that the Germans might have made to re-take it, if General Auchinleck had been given the forces that he asked for viz: seventeen battalions, two hundred A.A. guns, and five R.A.F. squadrons. Indeed, it would appear as though more air forces than General Auchinleck asked for could have been based on northern Norway, if arrangements had been made for preparing all the sites that could have been used for aerodromes. These arrangements would have to have been more carefully thought out than those actually made; but there would have been nothing impossible in the task or the preparation for it.

The operations against Narvik were thus in a fair way to be successful, when the disasters in France made it impossible for us to persist in them any longer. The operations against Trondhjem, on the other hand, were unsuccessful: we landed a considerable body of troops at Aandalnaess and Namsos; and we withdrew them a fortnight later because we could no longer maintain them in the field.

The reasons for this were that the ports upon which the Army depended were at the mercy of the enemy's Air Force and that the Commanders and pilots of the Luftwaffe made them unusable. It cannot, however, be said that this was unforeseen. For whenever intervention in Scandinavia had been considered, the Air Staff had reported that any expedition in those countries would be endangered by the attacks that the German Air Force could deliver against its long and exposed communications. It must be remembered, moreover, that when the Air Staff examined the implications of operating at Narvik, or in southern Norway, or in Sweden, they always assumed that the British expedition to Scandinavia would be accompanied by some air forces. The expedition that actually sailed for Trondhjem was accompanied by none; so that the dangers anticipated by the Air Staff were increased prop-

ortionately. The destruction of Namsos and Aandalsnaes, and the consequences to the communications upon which the Army depended were thus disasters that were foreseen; and this gives the operation in Norway a special interest; for it is very rare in war that dangers that have been anticipated correspond so exactly to the dangers that eventuate.

The Army officers, moreover, doubted whether forces large enough, and well equipped enough for the work in hand could ever have been maintained from such a port as Aandalsnaes, and over such a road and such a railway as connected Aandalsnaes to the centre of the country. On this point General Paget wrote thus:

"It has become the habit of the British Army in recent years to assume that what the General Staff consider to be politically or operationally desirable is administratively possible. No greater or more dangerous fallacy could exist. In the case of the ANDALSNES expedition it appears to have been assumed that the port of ANDALSNES and the line of communication running forward therefrom was capable of maintaining the force which it was considered operationally desirable to disembark there. As far as can be ascertained no attempt to verify this assumption was made although opportunity to do so existed. There seems to have been no adequate reason why a technical reconnaissance should not have accompanied 148 Inf Bde which, divorced from any responsibility for the maintenance of that force, might have reported upon the administrative capacity of the port and the line of communication"

"The port of ANDALSNES probably has a peace time capacity of some 700 tons per 24 hours using ships derricks for lifts beyond the capacity of the single crane, but ships of the DELIUS class berthed alongside can only work three out of five hatches at a time owing to the restricted length of quay."

"Similarly the theoretical capacity of the railways, despite its technical limitations and peculiarities, is more than adequate to deal with the traffic which the port can handle. But these figures have little application in practice if it is open to the enemy, as in fact it was, to interrupt both the traffic through the port and along the railway at will and free from any form of retaliation."

"A fair estimate of the capacity of the port is to say that it could be precariously worked for some 4 to 5 hours out of the 24 thus reducing the tonnage handled to about 100 tons per day. This figure, however, assumes that skilled labour is available to deal with the ships and that the tonnage, when unloaded, is not destroyed by enemy air action. The skilled labour was not available. The enemy could destroy what he liked, only

having to press home his attack in the face of a weak A.A. defence."

"As far as the railway was concerned the position was even less satisfactory, for here, over by far the greater part of the line, the enemy was faced by no defences of any nature and could destroy as he pleased. The lower limit of the practical capacity of the railway was therefore what the enemy chose to make it. Fortunately instead of concentrating the efforts of his Air Force to destroy a few vital points of the railway system he was inclined to sprinkle several sectors of the line, and thereby did not achieve complete destruction anywhere."

"There was only one single road with no laterals opening from it which could be put to any useful purpose. Throughout its length it did not exceed 18 feet in width and was considerably narrower in many stretches. The surface was stone dust, water-bound and the foundation, judged from a number of bomb craters in various parts, did not exceed 8 inches to 1 foot of natural unpacked stones set in earth which rapidly became thick mud when thawed out. On each side of the road was an open drainage cut about 18 inches wide by two feet deep packed, originally, with frozen snow. Wherever the thaw had started these ditches became vehicle traps of great efficiency. The melting snow gave way leaving the vehicle ditched to the axle. Over considerable stretches of the road abandoned Norwegian vehicles averaged 10 to 17 to the mile."

"The local view was that in peace the road had to be used with extreme care during the thaw over a period of from 7 to 14 days according to the season. It could not survive the heavy and erratic traffic of war. In addition the road suffered from all the disabilities due to enemy air action which could have applied to the railway had the enemy so wished. Over considerable sectors road and railway lay within 50 yards of each other, or less....."

"My considered view in the light of experience remains that which I expressed to the D.Q.M.G. before I embarked. It is that the possibility of maintaining any force through the single port of ANDALSNES depended primarily upon whether or not local air superiority could be established and maintained. To that view I would add that, since the necessary degree of air superiority could scarcely be expected to exist throughout the whole length of the line of communication, and since that line was peculiarly vulnerable to both air action and to seasonal changes, the ANDALSNES project was not administratively practicable. Operationally, therefore, it was doomed to failure."

Again, it would seem as though the base at Aandalsnaes would not have been so defenceless, and so easily destroyed, during the critical days of the expedition, if better preparations had been made for protecting it. Brigadier Richards, the senior officer of the A.A. forces in Aandalsnaes dealt with

this in the following words.

"I cannot too strongly urge that before a force of this size is committed to working from a given base along a specified L of C, a senior A.A. Commander should be despatched to ascertain by personal reconnaissance whether it is possible even with sufficient A.A. guns to establish an efficient A.A. Defence. In the case of AANDALSNAES no experienced A.A. officer would have recommended its adoption as a base."

"The attacks on AANDALSNAES were carried out by HEINKEL bombers flying 200/240 m.p.h. at heights varying from 8,000 to 16,000 feet. Taking a height of 10,000 feet as an average in order to obtain an eight gun density (a very low figure) it would have been necessary to find two four gun or four two gun positions which could pick up any such target at between 12,000 and 13,000 yards. Owing to the ground and the existence of the fiord, such positions simply did not exist."

"The situation in the L of C which ran mainly through a deep and narrow gorge was even worse. There was no obligation on the German airman to show himself to the guns until he was just ready to do his "run up" which is too late. The German pilots fully realised this and made use of the high ground behind AANDALSNAES to conceal their time of approach from the A.A. ships."

"Assuming that in spite of an A.A. recommendation NOT to use this base, it had been decided to operate from it, it became a vital necessity to get the strongest possible A.A. defence into action before any appreciable quantity of troops and stores arrived. This would have meant:-

- (a) "early arrival of the A.A. Commander, his staff and his means of transport."
- (b) "early shipment of mobile guns and ammunition, both heavy and light."
- (c) "their being so disposed upon the ships that they could within the very short hours of darkness available be off loaded and got into action."

"The latter point is important. Not only do guns not in action and visible in the open risk being cutted before they ever fire, but unless ships can not only be off loaded but be got clear of the narrow waters before the bombers arrive they are certain to be attacked and probably sunk."

"What actually happened was this:-

"A small defence against low flying aircraft consisting of:
4 Bofors.
6 - 2 pdr. MK II (Marines).
8 - Oerlikon (Royal Navy).

was got into position early and had practically stopped low flying attacks on the post before my arrival - But such a defence is useless unless combined with H.A.A. guns: and the enemy merely flew out of range. The gun teams were subjected to hours of bombing to which they could make no reply: and their moral suffered accordingly...."

"The exercise of any sort of effective command was rendered almost impossible by the complete absence of

staff, transport, maps or communications of any sort. My first intention was to go forward after I had seen the base defences established to find out how matters were going at the front: but this was impossible. No cars were available and where one could be collected it was invariably required for sending some of the staff up to see General Paget on more important liaison duties. Even the warnings of the arrival of friendly aircraft had to be taken to the gun positions on foot either by an officer or a runner, often with very little time to spare....."

General Carton de Wiart had the same opinions upon Namsos as General Paget had upon Aandalsnaes, and he wrote thus about it:

"NAMSOS it is estimated, owing to the limited hours of darkness during which work could be carried out, could have discharged 240 tons in 24 hours at most."

"The port had been served by a railway leading via GRONG to SNAASA and TRONDHJEM. In the early days troops and stores were moved by this means but owing to enemy air action the use of the railway became impossible. Little damage was actually done it by the sporadic attacks made, except the station in NAMSOS itself which was totally destroyed. The potentialities for damage in the shape of vulnerable bridges were however vast."

"NAMSOS is served by two roads. The better one leads nearly due South to STINKSAER but crosses the NAMSEN FIORD. immediately East of NAMSOS by a long and vulnerable bridge. Few facilities for the establishment of base depots were possible along this road which, in any case, would have been undesirable owing to the dangerous bottle-neck provided by the bridge. "

"East of NAMSOS there appeared to be suitable country as far as GRONG. The road, however, was narrow and poor and would have required great initial and continued labour to have kept it open to the necessary traffic. At the time the force was there the whole area was covered in two feet of snow and any attempt to clear this for either depots or Air Force landing grounds would have brought instant retaliation."

"The actual state of the force may be stated briefly. "

"Docks. Hopelessly congested and one quay partly usable. Fit only for one small ship at a time. "

"Supplies. Adequate up to about May 7th but scattered over the country in small dumps. Steps to bake bread and organise the purchase of local resources of milk and fresh vegetables were undertaken. "

"Petrol. 1000 gallons approximately. "

"Transport. 15 trucks brought with the 146 M. T. Brigade and a number of Norwegian lorries. There was absolutely no means of maintenance. As

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no M. T. drivers had accompanied the Brigade
unreliable Norwegian drivers had to be employed..."

"The project for the landing at NAMSOS appears to have violated nearly all the conditions for the success of such an operation which have been thought out in Staff exercises since the last war."

"No appreciation giving full weight to the Administrative problems was reduced."

"The Administrative Staff which was to implement the plan had no opportunity to study the problem beforehand and was gravely handicapped by no arrangements being made for a reconnaissance party in advance and for sound administrative arrangements to be made from the start."

"No protection was arranged for the base installation."

"The load of ships was unsuited to the type of campaign and the composition of some of the units wrong, e.g. only 3-ton lorries were sent and units were separated from their equipment which was loaded in M.T. ships. The Staff on shore must have ample warning and a detailed knowledge of exactly what each ship arrives contains and exactly how it is loaded. Only then can proper arrangements for its reception and the disposal of its contents be made...."

From these quotations it will be seen, that, even though the campaign in Norway had been fought by forces on the ground, with no air forces intervening to assist or hamper them, a British Army that was based on Namsos and Aandalsnaes would have operated at great disadvantage against a German Army that was based on Oslo. For the flow of British reinforcements and supplies could never have reached the front in the same volume, or at the same rate, as the German. When the poor harbours, the narrow roads and the inadequate railways, upon which the British Army depended, were attacked and ruined by the German Luftwaffe, disaster followed as a natural consequence.

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