



SUPPLEMENT

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NORWAY CAMPAIGN, 1940.

The following Despatch was submitted to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty on the 17th July, 1940, by Admiral of the Fleet the Earl of Cork and Orrery, G.C.B., G.C.V.O., Flag Officer, Narvik.

Be pleased to lay before Their Lordships the following Report upon the recent operations in the Narvik Area of Northern Norway.

SECTION I.

PRELIMINARY STAGES.

1. On the afternoon of Wednesday, April 10th, I received a message that the First Sea Lord would like to see me and was informed by him that a combined expedition was to be sent to Narvik and that I was to go in charge of the Naval force, etc. I then accompanied him to a meeting of the Service Ministers and Chiefs of Staff where the whole matter was discussed.

On the same evening, I attended a further meeting in the First Sea Lord's room on the subject.

I was then informed that Captain L. E. H. Maund was to go as my Chief Staff Officer, the officer I had asked for not being available.

Captain Maund who was present at the meeting left by 'plane the same night for Scapa, there to join the SOUTHAMPTON, which ship was conveying Major-General P. J. Mackesy, C.B., D.S.O., M.C., appointed to command the Military force, to Harstad, in Vaagsfjord, selected as the Military Base.

On the afternoon of Thursday, April 11th, I saw the First Lord for a few minutes, and left the same night for Rosyth, accompanied by Commander A. G. V. Hubback and my personal staff—(Temporary) Paymaster-Captain

H. R. H. Vaughan, Secretary, and Lieutenant-Commander The Hon. D. C. Cairns, Flag Lieutenant and Signal Officer.

My impression on leaving London was quite clear that it was desired by H.M. Government to turn the enemy out of Narvik at the earliest possible moment and that I was to act with all promptitude in order to attain this result.

2. On April 12th, I embarked in H.M.S. AURORA and sailed at noon for the Narvik area. After an uneventful passage, Skjelfjord was reached at 2000, April 14th.

3. It had been the original intention to proceed to Harstad where, as already stated, the G.O.C. Troops was on passage, as was also the Military Convoy.

This destination was changed, however, on receipt of a signal from Vice-Admiral W. J. Whitworth, C.B., D.S.O., flying his flag in WARSPITE, in which ship he had carried out his successful raid on the German naval forces in Narvik Waters on April 13th.

4. In this message appeared this sentence:—

“ I am convinced that Narvik can be taken by direct assault now without fear of meeting serious opposition on landing. I consider that the main landing force need only be small but that it must have the support of Force B or one of similar composition . . . ”

5. In order to take immediate advantage of this situation, I made the following signal:—

“ AURORA and SOUTHAMPTON are to arrive at Skjelfjord by 2000 today, Sunday . . . ”

350 soldiers had been embarked in SOUTHAMPTON and it was hoped that during the night it might be possible to organise a landing force with these troops and seamen and

marines of WARSPITE, SOUTHAMPTON, AURORA, PENELOPE and disabled destroyers.

6. Owing, however, to the difficult W/T conditions peculiar to this region, the message was not received by the SOUTHAMPTON until too late to take action, and her whereabouts were not ascertained until communicated by Admiralty, from whence also was received a message in which appeared:—

"We think it imperative that you and General should be together and act together and that no attack should be made except in concert . . ."

7. The AURORA proceeded for Harstad, meeting the Troop Convoy carrying the 24th Brigade, etc., off the entrance to And Fiord and leading it into harbour on the morning of the 15th.

When approaching the anchorage with the Destroyers BRAZEN (Lieutenant-Commander Sir Michael Culme-Seymour, Bt.) and FEARLESS (Commander K. L. Harkness) acting as A/S screen, the latter obtained a contact with and both smartly engaged and sank U.49, the crew being rescued practically intact.

8. The Convoy was anchored in Bygden Fiord and disembarkation carried out at once.

This operation was subjected to an air attack the same afternoon, and again on April 16th but no damage was sustained.

The transports sailed for the U.K. in the early hours of April 17th.

9. The disembarkation was effected by use of Destroyers and large numbers of local craft (small steamers and motor fishing ketches called "puffers").

Later, in order to expedite matters, the PROTECTOR (Captain W. Y. la R. Beverley) was used, and thus began a career of extreme usefulness carried out with conspicuous zeal.

10. On April 15th, I met General Mackesy for the first time and was astonished to hear that not only was his force embarked as for a peaceful landing and consequently was unready for immediate operations but that the orders he had received, and given to him just prior to sailing, ruled out any idea of attempting an opposed landing. Thus the General and myself left the U.K. with diametrically opposite views as to what was required.

11. The arrangement of the remainder of my report is as follows:—

Section II. Proceedings from 15th April to 23rd May, together with an account of relations with the Norwegian Government.

Section III. A/A Protective Measures.

Section IV. The Development of the Base Defences.

Section V. A Summary of the Events in the Mosjoen-Mo-Bodo Area.

Section VI. The Final Operations for the Capture of Narvik.

Section VII. The Evacuation.

SECTION II

PROCEEDINGS FROM 15TH APRIL TO 23RD MAY TOGETHER WITH AN ACCOUNT OF RELATIONS WITH THE NORWEGIAN GOVERNMENT.

1. The use of Harstad—itsself on an island—as Military Headquarters and main point of disembarkation for military personnel and stores

meant that the Navy had a very large area to protect against submarines and aircraft, while at the same time maintaining offensive patrols to harass the enemy in the region of Narvik itself. A chart accompanies this report so that distances involved and the geographical lay-out of the campaign may be appreciated. The protection of Skjelfjord where the PENELOPE and other damaged ships lay, and had to be rendered seaworthy, was a commitment until 10th May.

2. The unloading of transports was a continual difficulty. There were but two wharves at Harstad and the average rate of discharge was 2 ships in 5 days. Disembarkation of personnel was done for the most part while ships were in Bygden anchorage and to facilitate this work PROTECTOR and destroyers had to be used. Large numbers of local craft were hired for this and other water transport purposes in the whole area of the operations but were not always reliable as, upon sound of an air raid warning, they scattered away into the fiords and took a considerable time to return afterwards. During the 8 weeks of the operations there were over 140 air raids in Harstad causing a considerable loss of time and work. A withdrawal of the warning system resulted in a strike among the Norwegian labourers and small craft men. The subject of A/A measures and protection is dealt with in a separate chapter of this report. In addition to the landing at Harstad, troops were put ashore at Salangen in Sagfiord on the 15th April and contact was made with Norwegian forces in that area. Advance southward was effected from both places; the Headquarters of the 24th Brigade being established at Bogen in Ofotfiord later.

3. Instead of attempting to take Narvik by assault it was decided for reasons that have been reported separately to carry out a bombardment in the hope that the nerve of the enemy already reported affected, might be so shattered thereby that he would surrender the town. The expected thaw had not come and the snow still lay everywhere several feet thick, rendering movement very difficult by any but experienced and specially equipped troops. The AURORA (Captain Louis Hamilton), was established as Senior Officer in Ofotfiord and with the ships under his orders maintained a steady and harassing pressure on the enemy. The bombardment took place on 24th April; EFFINGHAM (in which I was accompanied by General Mackesy and Brigadier Fraser), WARSPITE, AURORA, ENTERPRISE, ZULU taking part. The bitter weather conditions, heavy snowstorms and low visibility prevented any aerial activity on either side. Troops were carried in the VINDICTIVE in case the morale of the defenders should appear to be so affected as to give a promising opportunity to land. The climatic conditions were, however, entirely against any such undertaking and the low visibility entirely prevented any estimate of the effect achieved by the bombardment.

4. On the 25th April there was further heavy fall of snow and, as weather conditions compelled postponement of any direct attack on Narvik, attention was given to movements of troops designed to bring pressure on the enemy to the north and south of the Narvik peninsula. Ballangen on the south side of Vestfiord was occupied on the 26th. The first French troops were disembarked on the 28th; two Battalions

to Salangen in Sagfjord and one Battalion at Bogen. I discussed the position with the British and French Generals and the latter (General Bethouart) accompanied me in CODRINGTON to reconnoitre Narvik and Herjangs Fiord.

5. On the 29th April, two weeks after our arrival in the area, there appeared the first reliable signs of the long awaited thaw and I could look forward to the conduct of operations without the tremendous handicap of snow. On this day the A.L.C.s* and M.L.C.s* brought out in the EMPIRE ABILITY were disembarked and started a career of remarkable usefulness.

6. Affairs to the southward, in the Mosjoen, Mo and Bodo areas began to attract attention at this time. They form the subject of a separate chapter of this report.

7. On May 1st, I visited Ofofjord in EFFINGHAM and a bombardment was carried out by AURORA, RESOLUTION and EFFINGHAM partly in support of troops skirmishing in the Ankenes area. The thaw had now set in so certainly that I ordered plans to be prepared for a direct attack upon Narvik to be staged for May 8th but, for reasons reported separately, this never materialised.

8. On May 3rd, the French Foreign Legion (2 Battalions) and the Polish Brigade arrived and on May 5th Rear Admiral A. L. St. G. Lyster arrived and assumed control of the defences and development of the bases. On May 6th, the first 3.7 in. A.A. guns (8 in number) arrived.

9. Plans were now developed for a landing by the French at Bjervik. Originally intended for the night of 10th-11th May, this actually took place on the night of 12th-13th. The forces employed were the two Battalions of the Foreign Legion and the Military operations were conducted by General Bethouart who was with me in the EFFINGHAM, as was also Lieutenant-General C. J. E. Auchinleck who had just arrived from England. The night was cold with low clouds but, except for 2 hours of twilight, daylight lasted throughout. The troops were embarked off Ballangen, together with tanks.† After retiring to the westward to mislead the enemy, the Squadron turned and steamed for a position at the entrance to Herjangs Fiord where troops were placed in the boats from which they were to land. The actual landing was prefaced by an effective bombardment (EFFINGHAM, AURORA, RESOLUTION and Destroyers taking part), after which the 3 A.L.C.s and 2 M.L.C.s landed the first flight in most spirited fashion in face of an appreciable amount of rifle and machine-gun fire. The conduct of the soldiers of the Foreign Legion, their prompt movements and good training that was evident from their action, were much admired. The first flight and supports were followed by open boats towed by ships' power boats which landed their men without any untoward incident. The whole operation went off very well and at 0600 on the 13th General Bethouart and his staff landed. He informed me that he no longer required the support of H.M. Ships beyond those normally on patrol in that area.

* Admiralty footnote:—A.L.C.s and M.L.C.s—Minor Landing craft for landing troops and mechanized vehicles respectively.

† Admiralty footnote:—This was the first occasion on which tanks were landed in a combined operation.

10. Two Battalions of Polish troops marching from Bogen reinforced the Foreign Legion during the day. Enemy aircraft did not appear during the operation. The French were able to get into Oydejord almost at once.

11. At a conference on my return to Harstad on the 13th May, General Auchinleck informed me that he had received orders from the War Office that he was to assume command of all Military Forces forthwith.

12. The next military objective was to obtain control of Rombaks Fiord so as to prepare the way for a direct attack on Narvik from Oydejord. FAME (Commander P. N. Walter) conducted the Naval part of this work in most tireless and efficient manner.

13. An account of the actual final operations for the occupation of Narvik forms a separate chapter of this report.

14. Contact was maintained throughout the operation with the Norwegian High Command who were naturally very concerned about the withdrawal of troops from South Norway. The Norwegians realised that their forces were not properly armed for modern warfare and they made repeated requests for artillery, especially A/A, for the defence of Tromso and North Norway and also to equip the large number of coasting vessels upon whose movement up and down the coast depends the life of the country. These requests I passed on to the Admiralty for H.M. Government but the Norwegians, who seemed to imagine that immense reserves of guns and ammunition, etc., were readily available in England, could not understand why their requests were not immediately complied with. To ease matters I authorised the issue to them of all the war material, not required by the Army, taken in the captured German Transport ALSTER which was sent to Tromso on the 23rd April to discharge accordingly; to meet Article 39 of the Naval Discipline Act, the British Consul at Tromso was asked to watch the discharging and make an affidavit of goods handed over; a copy of this affidavit was sent to the Secretary of the Admiralty later.

15. Towards the end of the period under report it was possible, but only with the greatest difficulty and taking risks, to spare 4 heavy and 4 light A/A guns for the protection of Tromso.

16. On 16th May, I met Admiral Diesen, the Norwegian Naval Commander-in-Chief, and the same day also General Rugé, the Military Commander-in-Chief. Two days later, I was able to meet Sir Cecil Dormer, H.B.M. Minister to Norway, on his way to Tromso from England.

17. On 23rd May I went by Walrus aircraft to Storsteinnes and there met the British Minister, Sir Cecil Dormer, Colonel Pollock, British Military Liaison Officer, Admiral Boyes, Naval Attaché, and General Rugé, Norwegian Commander-in-Chief; the latter informed me he had been appointed in command of all the Norwegian Defence Forces.

18. From there, I proceeded in company with General Rugé and Colonel Pollock to visit His Majesty The King, whom I found living some miles out (1½ hours in car) in a fishing lodge, approached by a muddy path. The Crown Prince was with him. I spent about ½ hour

with His Majesty. He told me he knew what I had come about and that I was going to see his Ministers. The object of my visit was to obtain the authority of the Norwegian Government for (1) far more drastic control in the military areas over the civilian population and the innumerable small steamers and "puffers" navigating the fiords, etc., and upon which the life and communications of the people largely depended; (2) closer collaboration between Civil Government and British Military Authorities to make this control effective. Colonel Pollock had already discussed the subject with General Rugé, who was understanding and sympathetic and undertook to insist to the Government that action in this respect was essential. General Rugé left me to go to his Headquarters when I arrived at the King's residence.

19. On leaving His Majesty I drove back with Sir Cecil Dormer to Storsteines from where I flew to Tromsø and saw the Prime Minister, Ministers for Defence, and for Foreign Affairs. The three Ministers also were cordial and friendly, and promised that these matters should be closely gone into—and a Government representative sent to Harstad to arrange details. This conference was somewhat rudely put an end to by an air attack aimed at DEVONSHIRE in the harbour. They had only returned to Tromsø that day, and the attack that evening was unfortunate. I also saw Admiral Diesen on the subject of the control afloat who undertook to do everything necessary. Vice-Admiral Cunningham had already taken the matter up with him and accompanied me to this meeting. The Norwegian Ministers mentioned the need for A/A artillery and equipment for their troops and also the necessity of refitting their ships which they had understood the British authorities would be able to arrange. The Norwegian Ministers showed every intention of being helpful and anxious to continue the fight, but they were not unnaturally concerned about the unavoidable delay in meeting their requirements on these points.

SECTION III

ANTI-AIRCRAFT DEFENCE MEASURES

1. The enemy commenced attacks by air on the day that the first convoy arrived and continued throughout the period of the campaign. When, after the withdrawal of our forces from South Norway, enemy was able to develop air bases in Trondheim and other places the attacks greatly increased in intensity and frequency. Our fighter craft of the Fleet Air Arm and Royal Air Force, in those periods when they were available, wrought great havoc among the enemy and afforded a very welcome relief. From the earliest days the establishment of aerodromes was a major preoccupation, but at the beginning, the land all being covered by three or more feet of snow, the problem presented unusual difficulties. The Norwegian authorities reported Bardufoss as having been used by Gladiators. Lieutenant Francklin, R.N. (F.A.A.) organised much of the preliminary work in clearing this and also a suitable ground discovered at Skaanland, the latter having the advantage of being situated adjacent to the merchant shipping anchorage in Lavangs Fiord between Harstad and

Tjeldsundet passage. The thaw was late this year and it was the 30th April before I was sure it had commenced. The flying boat "Cabot" brought Wing Commander Atcherley to the area on the 4th May and he then took charge of the finding and development of aerodromes both to the north and to the south.

2. Heavy snowstorms and bad weather in the early period interfered with good work by the FURIOUS but her aircraft operated to their full capacity at every opportunity. She was recalled on April 23rd to re-equip, having then only eight aircraft fit for service. The urgent need for A/A artillery was emphasised in a telegram to the Admiralty on April 25th.

3. After the evacuation of Namsos and Aandalsnes, the enemy air attacks in the Narvik Vest Fiord and Vaags Fiord areas were intensified and the stationing of H.M. Ships with good A/A Batteries in each area where merchant ships were anchored or troops working became more than ever necessary. The enemy steadily developed the supplying and reinforcing of his troops in Narvik by means of troop carrying flying boats and by the method of parachutes. Minelaying was also frequently suspected but not actually proved until May 29th; when five enemy aircraft were seen to do so in Tjeldsundet. Sweepers investigated and four mines were exploded.

4. On April 30th, I was informed by the Admiralty that 48 3.7 in. H.A. Guns and 48 Bofors (making 60 in all with 12 already in the area) were to be sent, as A/A protection was of primary importance and two A/A Cruisers were also ordered to join me on completion of certain other operations. The next day, as if to emphasise the matter, the enemy obtained a direct hit on the building used for Naval accommodation in Harstad, fortunately killing only two ratings. At the same time they bombed the Hospital Ship ATLANTIS anchored wide away from all other ships and a Norwegian Hospital Ship, causing many casualties in the latter.

5. The lateness of the thaw caused a depressing delay in the preparation of aerodromes. I had hoped that Bardufoss would be ready by the 15th May, in which case Carriers with the necessary aircraft would have left England on the 11th May but on the 4th May I had to report that the snow was causing insuperable delays. Concerning the preparation and use of Bardufoss, considerable tact was necessary in dealing with the Norwegians, as they firmly wished to keep it under their control. The acceptance of Norwegian pilots and other air personnel for training in England did much to bring a convenient working arrangement into force.

6. The first 3.7 in. A/A Guns arrived in the area on the 6th May. Bofors Guns reached Bardufoss on the 7th. Four of the 3.7 in. Guns were in action at Harstad on the 9th and the other four were on their way to Bardufoss. Men bombed on shore could now begin to feel that they had some chance of hitting back; a psychological factor of considerable importance.

7. The ARK ROYAL joined and was able to commence operations from a position at sea well to the northward on the 6th May and the presence of her fighter aircraft had an immediate and most noticeable effect upon the enemy's freedom of attack.

8. On the 12th May, I was informed that in view of the situation elsewhere no Fighter or A/A reinforcements beyond those already promised could be provided. It was now expected that Bardufoss aerodrome would be ready by the 19th and I accordingly requested that GLORIOUS and FURIOUS, bringing Fighter aircraft already promised, should be within 200 miles of the Lofoten Islands by that day ready to fly the machines off as soon as they could be received.

9. Every effort was now being concentrated on preparation of the Bardufoss and Skaanland aerodromes, even operations taking second place in importance. At the same time, the mounting of A/A guns was being pressed on. The speedy and efficient work of Lieutenant-Colonel H. R. Lambert, D.S.C., R.M., and his men of the *M.N.B.D.O. in mounting guns under difficult conditions merit the highest praise. Group Captain Moore, R.A.F., who commanded the Air Component was most assiduous in the aerodrome development.

10. On May 17th, I was again informed of the effect of the Western Front situation on the Narvik Force; the message from Chiefs of Staff, stating that my Fighter Force would be limited to one squadron of Gladiators and one of Hurricanes and the A/A artillery to 48 Heavy and 60 Light Guns.

11. GLORIOUS and FURIOUS arrived off the coast on the 18th and 701 Squadron of Walruses flew off and arrived at Harstad, where they remained based until the final evacuation, doing most useful work—ferrying, maintaining communications and daily reconnaissances, ending with a well planned bombing attack on Solfolla most efficiently carried out. Commander R. S. D. Armour, R.N., who was in command of the Fleet Air Arm, is much to be commended.

12. On the 21st of May, 263 Gladiator Squadron was flown ashore at Bardufoss from FURIOUS, 16 machines landed but unfortunately 2, and 1 Swordfish were lost. GLORIOUS had had to return to U.K. on account of shortage of fuel. ARK ROYAL also left for U.K. on 21st May.

13. On May 22nd in reply to a question from the Admiralty concerning possible substitution of Gladiators for Hurricanes, I stated that unless the Admiralty was prepared to provide and maintain a sufficient Air Force in this area, including a Squadron of Bombers, it was my opinion that the whole policy should be reconsidered.

14. On May 26th, the GLORIOUS was back and flew off 46 Hurricane Squadron. The first flight landed at Skaanland and the remainder at Bardufoss from which aerodrome both Squadrons worked for the remainder of the time, taking heavy toll of the enemy whenever they had opportunity. Unfortunately, however, they were upon occasion fogbound at their aerodrome, which gave the enemy working from the South opportunities he was not slow to take. Owing to the distance little could be done to give fighter protection to the troops in the Bodo area. Two Gladiators in that area did, however, destroy 4 of the enemy in one flight before the Bodo aerodrome was completely destroyed.

*Admiralty footnote:—M.N.B.D.O.—Mobile Naval Base Defence Organisation.

SECTION IV.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BASE DEFENCES.

1. A preliminary telegram asking for Guns for fixed defences and for harbour defence *Asdics was sent on 22nd April and on the 28th April the Admiralty stated that the M.N.B.D.O. would be sent to mount guns and asked for site prospecting to be carried out. As a result, the following proposals were made to the Admiralty on the 1st May:—

2. The Main Naval Base to be in Tjeldsundet with a large ship anchorage to the west of Holsflva, other ships in Lavangsfjord and west of Skaanland: advanced anchorages at Bogen and Ballangen. A minefield extending $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles 310° from Baroen Light on Baroy Island. 6 in. Battery south of Lodingen Church. 4.7 in. Battery north of Kvitnes. 12 pdr. Battery on west side of Tjeldsundet one mile south of Staksvollholm. Further batteries are considered desirable for south and north ends of Tjeldsundet. Minefields N.E. and south of Steinvaer. Harbour defence Asdics off S.W. corner of Baroy Island and Rotvaer Island with control station off Lodingen. Port War Signal Station on Rotvaer Island. B.I Indicator Net and Gate west of Staksvollholm. Indicator Net or Mines at northern entrance to Tjeldsundet from Taakeboen beacon to Hella.

3. On the 27th and 28th May, (fictitious) minefields were declared N.E. and S. of Steinvaer Island in Vaagsfjord and between Rotvaer Island and Baroy Island in Vestfjord.

Rear-Admiral Lyster, appointed on the 29th April, arrived by air and assumed command of the Defences and their development on 5th May.

4. M.L.Cs. arrived on the 25th April and (both M.L.Cs., A.L.Cs. on the 29th. These craft, though not always reliable mechanically, were most useful in the heavy work of transporting gear and arms in the development of the Base Defences. The MASHOBRA arrived on 10th May and the work of the Royal Marine fortress unit under Lieutenant-Colonel H. R. Lambert, D.S.C., R.M., merited the highest praise. I have mentioned this also in the chapter of this Report covering the subject of A/A.

5. A scheme for minelaying by Destroyers to be sent from England was prepared but for special reasons was abandoned. Attention was also given to the matter of using a supply of some 200 Norwegian Mines at Tromso but before effective work could be done on this the operations came to an end.

6. From first to last, the maintenance of Destroyers and Trawler patrols to provide effective protection at entrances to all fiords in use as anchorages was a matter of primary importance and, whenever Walrus aircraft were available, air searches were made.

7. The final plan for the defences was as follows:—

INNER DEFENCES.

A. HARSTAD:

A/S Defence of Harstad Harbour is only fully possible against close range attacks. Long range attacks can only be guarded against by

*Admiralty footnote:—Asdics—Anti-Submarine detectin device

H.M. Ships keeping pointed in the direction from which attack is expected.

(1) *Northern Entrance*. Closed by A/T Baffle.

(2) *Eastern Side*. Covered by line of B.I Indicator Net outside from Maagoy to Harstad Light.

(3) *Southern Entrance*. Covered by mine-loop if possible.

(4) *Patrol*. One A/S small craft, and for watching Indicator Net.

(5) *Examination Service*. Armed Trawlers.

B. TJELDSUNDET ANCHORAGE AND BASE—NORTHERN END:

(1) *TAAKEBOEN BEACON to HELLA*. Shallow mines. Bottom is unsuitable for nets; any S/M attempting to get in would have to be shallow owing to navigational difficulties.

(2) *TAAKEBOEN to STEGHOLM*. 4-cable wide channel, 70 to 80 fathoms deep. Deep mines or mine loop.

(3) *Patrol*. One A/S small craft.

(4) *4.7-inch L.A. Battery*. $\frac{3}{4}$ mile north of Langkvitneset.

(5) *12-Pdr. Battery*. At Langkvitneset.

(6) *A/B Boom*. At Langkvitneset.

C. TJELDSUNDET ANCHORAGE AND BASE SOUTHERN END:

(1) *RAMSUNDET*. A/B Boom and Light Battery (further reconnaissance required).

(2) *STAKSVOLLHOLM Net*. B.I Indicator Net and Gate $\frac{1}{2}$ mile south of Island.

(3) *12-Pdr. Battery on STAKSVOLLHOLM ISLAND*.

(4) *A/B Boom by STAKSVOLLHOLM Island*.

(5) *Mine Loop*. Possibly in Southern Tjeldsundet.

(6) *Patrol*. Vessel with D.Cs. watching Net.

D. BALLANGEN.

A/S Vessel on patrol outside when required.

E. NARVIK—Awaiting capture.

No defences suggested at present.

F. TROMSO—N.E. APPROACHES.

(1) *GROTSUNDET*. Closed with deep and shallow mines from small island with light off Sjurnes to south shore. This will leave a narrow channel close to north shore for local craft and probably warships up to and including Cruisers.

(2) *KVALSUNDET*. Shallow mines, but few will be necessary, owing to its existing navigational difficulties.

(3) *Patrols*. Armed patrol vessel to control channel by Sjurnes. Patrol at inner end of Kvalsundet would be desirable.

G. TROMSO—S.E. APPROACHES.

(1) *RYOY ISLAND*. Narrows controlled by a light battery on the Island and A/S Patrol craft. Deep mines might also be laid if no A/S vessel was available.

OUTER DEFENCES.

A. TROMSO—S. APPROACH TO TROMSO AND N. APPROACH TO VAAGS FIORD VIA GI SUND.

(1) *MALANGEN FIORDS*. H.D.A.s between Lokvik and Boenoes. Also a heavy battery (reconnaissance required). A/S Patrol. Local protection would be necessary for these defences.

(2) *Patrol*. Less effective but simpler alternative would be patrol of 2 A/S Destroyers.

(3) *GI SUND*. Norwegian patrol vessels watching narrows where S/M must pass at shallow depth.

B. VAAGS FIORD—N.E. APPROACH.

One destroyer off Tranoy Fiord, for general patrol duties in Vaags Fiord and backing up of other patrols.

C. VAAGS FIORD—N. APPROACH.

(1) *SANDSOY to LEMMINGVOER*. Fiord to be closed on this line with deep and shallow mines.

(2) *Patrol*. One destroyer inside mine-field.

D. VAAGS FIORD—W. APPROACH—TOPSUNDET.

(1) *H.D.A.s*. Western End.

(2) *Mine Loop*. Possibly.

(3) *6-inch or 4.7 inch Battery* at Western end.

(4) *12-Pdr. Battery and A/B Boom* at Eastern end.

(5) *Patrols*. One A/S small craft behind H.D.A.s and one standby. Detailed reconnaissance is required for all Topsundet defences.

E. TJELDSUNDET SOUTH and OFOT FIORD.

(1) *H.D.A.s*. Between Rotvaer and Baroy.

(2) *Deep Mines*. $\frac{1}{4}$ mile each side just inside H.D.A.s.

(3) *Shallow Mines*. Three lines $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles long approximately: 310° from S.W. point of Baroy. (Navigation buoy S.W. of Rotvaer.)

(4) *Open Channel*. North of Rotvaer Island for small local craft. Controlled by small armed vessel at inner end.

(5) *6-inch Battery* at Lodingen.

(6) There is a possibility of effectively locating another 6-inch Battery in unfinished Norwegian emplacements at Ramnes but a further reconnaissance is required.

(7) *Patrols*. Two A/S small craft with H.D.A.s. One destroyer between Baroy and Ramsundet.

8. Of the foregoing, the patrols were established early and worked regularly. None of the guns were actually mounted but the sites had been prepared. All the preparatory planning work for the mining had been done. The B.I Indicator Net had been laid south of Staksvollholm but both ends still required completing to the shore and the gate had not been laid. A B.I Net, originally intended for Narvik,

was laid in Skjelfjord early in the proceedings for the protection of the *PENELOPE*. The A/T Boom lay had been started in Harstad Northern Entrance but not completed. At the evacuation all nets were sunk and all traces were removed.

9. The A/S Air Patrols, when the necessary Walrus Aircraft were available, were carried out outside a circle 27 miles radius centred about the points 68 35 N 17 10 E. The various outer surface A/S Patrols being situated on the circumference of this circle. The sectors, centred in Harstad Harbour being:—

X. Between 060° and 300° to a depth of 40 miles.

Y. Between 300° and 245° to a depth of 50 miles.

Z. Between 245° and 225° to a depth of 100 miles.

Q. Between 225° and 190° to a depth of 80 miles.

10. After the sinking of U.49 on 15th April, no contacts with enemy submarines were made throughout the remainder of the operations, though many reports of them being sighted in the vicinity were received. An Irish Guardsman fishing at Bogen landed a used Escape Apparatus belonging to U.64.

11. Five enemy aircraft were seen on the 29th May, apparently laying mines in Tjeldsundet South Channel, and in the subsequent sweeping operations 4 mines were exploded, 2 by non-magnetic sweep and 2, later, by magnetic.

SECTION V.

A SUMMARY OF THE EVENTS IN THE MOSJOEN—MO—BODO AREA.

1. On the 29th April, I received a message from C.I.G.S. informing me that it was essential that the Head of Saltfjord should be occupied to ensure that there should be no chance of Germans arriving by parachute. The telegram indicated that a force to occupy the area would be leaving U.K. immediately. A destroyer was sent forthwith and was followed by a detachment of the Scots Guards, 150 strong. The destroyer reported no Germans or shipping of any sort in the vicinity.

2. On the 1st May an order was received from the Admiralty to send a destroyer to Mo to prevent an enemy landing and the excellent proposal was made by the Admiralty to Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet, that a Division of Destroyers should be established to patrol the coast from Namsos North to prevent the movement of every troopship/s by sea. This unfortunately never materialised.

3. Preparations for the embarkation in U.K. of Independent Companies of troops for Mo and Mosjoen were made known to me by signal, and I also received information that 2 Flying-Boats were coming out to reconnoitre aerodromes in the Bodo area. Their life was short. They were caught and put out of action on the water by enemy aircraft on the 4th May.

4. On May 4th, I came to the conclusion that it was time that policy and responsibility in the Bodo area was defined and I accordingly addressed the following message to the Admiralty:

“ Request I may be informed of the general policy regarding Bodo, Mo and Mosjoen. It

seems most important to hold in force the Mo road leading north. From Admiralty messages it appears the forces being sent are hardly adequate for this purpose and with such weak detachments in the air another naval commitment comes into being. These areas do not, I presume, come under Narvik. Are there any other allied forces to the south of me.”

5. The Admiralty reply received next day was to the effect that it was not possible to maintain large forces in face of enemy air superiority well in advance of established fighter aerodromes and that Bodo was the only place south of Narvik where such could be established. That small parties only would be maintained at Mo and Mosjoen with the object of obstructing enemy advance and to prevent landings by sea and air. On the 7th May I learned that all Independent Companies operating in Northern Norway would come under Narvik Command and I was given details of their disposition under Colonel Gubbins. Anxiety was expressed by the Norwegian Commander-in-Chief as to the potential aerodromes in Bodo, Mosjoen area.

6. On the 7th and 8th the enemy advance north began to make itself felt. A French detachment at Mosjoen first reported the enemy 100 miles to the south and on the 8th I heard that Mosjoen was about to be evacuated. On the 9th the Germans were 10 miles off Mosjoen and Brigadier Gubbins reported that there was great concern amongst the Norwegians about the continued enemy advance and that he would withdraw gradually to Mo and eventually to Bodo.

7. I suggested to the Admiralty on the 7th that, if the Division of Destroyers they had originally proposed could not be provided, 2 Destroyers might be added to my force and I would manage the patrol, but on the 10th the Admiralty required me to reduce my Destroyer force by 4 vessels on account of the need for concentration in the southern part of the North Sea. On the same day, the Admiralty informed me it was essential to hold Bodo for the present.

8. On the evening of the 10th May, the enemy were successful in landing a force of 650 men at Hemnes near Mo partly from a coasting steamer which came north with aerial escort. Intelligence concerning the movements of this vessel reached me unfortunately too late for her to be intercepted by *CALCUTTA* and *ZULU* who were sent for the purpose. *CALCUTTA* sank the steamer at Hemnes an hour and a half after she had got alongside. Reinforcements with light A.A. guns were embarked in *ENTERPRISE* for passage to Mo.

9. Wing-Commander Atcherley who had visited the area reported to Air Ministry and Admiralty by W/T on the advanced state of preparedness of the aerodrome at Mo and its great value to the enemy should it fall into their hands.

10. Mosjoen was evacuated, equipment being abandoned, on the 12th May. *ENTERPRISE* accompanied by *CAIRO* landed reinforcements at Mo on the 12th and other reinforcements had reached Bodo on the 11th. The enemy was now subjecting Mo to heavy air attacks and at the same time I was informed that while no fighter or A.A. reinforcements beyond those already authorised could be expected, forces at Bodo must be supplied from the Narvik area.

11. On the 13th, it was decided to add the Irish Guards to the Bodo force and the Headquarters of the 24th Brigade. They embarked in the s.s. CHROBRY which had brought 3 Tanks from England for the Bodo Force. While on passage with STORK and WOLVERINE as escort the CHROBRY was bombed and set on fire, the four senior officers of the Battalion being killed. The troops were saved and brought back to Harstad but their equipment was lost. It was then decided to send the South Wales Borderers in the EFFINGHAM but she grounded and became a total loss during the night 17th-18th. The troops were brought back to Harstad in EFFINGHAM's Escort, COVENTRY, CAIRO, MATABELE and ECHO, while the greater part of the Military Stores, with 4 Bren Carriers out of 10 were salvaged in Local Craft and landed at Bodo. EFFINGHAM was finally destroyed by torpedo.

12. During the next few days the troops after being re-equipped at Harstad were taken to Bodo by Destroyers, but news from that area was of the continual advance of the enemy.

13. On the 18th Colonel Trappes-Lomax of the Scots Guards reported withdrawing from Mo.

14. On the 21st General Auchinleck informed me that he was proposing to appoint Colonel Gubbins in command of the 24th Brigade and Independent Companies, that is, of all forces in the Bodo area. With this I fully agreed. Brigadier Fraser had had to be invalided on account of a wound received earlier when reconnoitring at Ankenes in the Narvik area.

15. Enemy air power in the Bodo area steadily increased and with corresponding harassing effect upon our forces. Only on one occasion was it possible to hit back and then (on the 27th May) 2 Gladiators brought down 4 enemy aircraft.

16. A trawler force, to work in the Bodo area, arrived at Skjelfjord from England on the 18th May under the command of Lieutenant-Commander (acting Commander) W. R. Fell, R.N. These vessels not being suitable for the work, Commander Fell organised a force of local vessels and took them south on the 24th May where they performed remarkable work and were almost continuously in action for seven days.

17. A telegram was received on the 24th May from the Chiefs of Staff ordering the evacuation of the whole of our forces from North Norway. Plans to reinforce Bodo were then abandoned and instructions were sent to Brigadier Gubbins to be prepared to evacuate.

18. On May 28 the enemy with a force of 30 aeroplanes bombed the town of Bodo, which to a greater extent than most Norwegian towns was built of stone, until it was reduced to complete ruin.

19. The evacuation of Bodo was successfully accomplished on the 29th and 31st, 1,000 men being taken direct to U.K. in VINDICTIVE and the remainder brought to Harstad in Destroyers and small craft.

SECTION VI.

THE FINAL OPERATIONS FOR THE CAPTURE OF NARVIK.

1. The landing effected by the two battalions of the Foreign Legion at Bjerkvik on the

12th/13th May, in addition to establishing contact with French troops working south, had as its object the occupation of the Oydejord Peninsula, and the northern shore of Rombaks Fiord. This was held by some to be a necessary prelude to any direct attack upon Narvik itself, allowing, as it would, of the positioning of field artillery on the peninsula to support such an attack. As soon as the necessary area had been occupied and, with the assistance of H.M.S. FAME, the northern shore of Rombaks Fiord had been cleared and occupied as far as Lilleljerget, General Bethouart felt himself ready for the next stage, for which he had prepared his plan, i.e., the capture of Narvik. Commander Hubback was attached to the French Staff for this purpose; his success in this work in connection with Bjervik had been much appreciated by the French Command. My general direction to him was that he was to do everything to further the project and to promise that all possible naval support would be forthcoming. He carried out this work admirably. It was decided that the attack would take place on May 23rd/24th or on the first favourable opportunity after that date. This was the earliest date it was estimated the M.L.Cs. could be released from what, at the moment, was the all important work of preparing Bardufoss and Skaanland Aerodromes for the reception of Hurricanes and Gladiators. The conditions that were required to form a favourable opportunity were held to be either—

(a) Such weather conditions as were likely to largely reduce or abolish any danger of air attack; or

(b) The ability to provide efficient fighter protection overhead.

2. The weather, towards the date mentioned, turned fine and seemed settled and with the impending arrival of the Hurricanes on the 26th/27th it was eventually decided that the operation should take place on the 27th/28th and that date was adhered to.

3. The plan, in so far as the naval operations were concerned, is forwarded separately and, except in one or two minor details, it was adhered to.

4. The ships that took part were CAIRO (Flag), SOUTHAMPTON (R.A.18), COVENTRY (C.S.20) and the Destroyers WHIRLIND, FAME, HAVELOCK, WALKER and FIRE Drake.

5. The plan is open to criticism in details—its great merit, however, was in that it was the plan of those who had to carry it out. The weak point in the plan was that owing to the paucity of transport available—a less bold man than General Bethouart might well have made this an excuse for inaction—it was necessary to leave the First Flight of 290 men unsupported for an unduly long time as the timetable in the plan indicates. Owing to the hard work to which the M.L.Cs. had been subjected in transporting guns and plant and stores of all sorts required for the completion of the aerodromes at Bardufoss and Skaanland and the sinking of one during an air raid, only two of these vessels were available—and one of these was only capable of about three knots. The A.L.Cs. similarly were reduced from four to three, one of them having been burnt out. An attempt was made to supplement the means of transport by using the two picket boats of

MASHOBRA. These boats were, however, reported as unfit for action—a common complaint among all power boats during the expedition but perhaps excusable in this particular case, seeing the hard work the **MASHOBRA** had recently carried out.

It had been decided to land the French troops of the First Flight on a small beach east of Orneset.

The actual attack upon Narvik was to be supported by a Polish advance on the Ankenes Peninsula in the direction of Beisford, through which ran the one road affording a line of retreat to the enemy.

6. The operation began at the appointed time of 2340 on May 27th. My Flag was flying in the **CAIRO**, the **CURLEW** in which I had intended it to be worn having been sunk the previous afternoon. General Auchinleck and General Bethouart accompanied me. The ships proceeded independently to their stations, effort being made to conceal the intention of concentrating off Narvik until as late as possible. The bombardment preceding the landing by ships' fire and that of 75 mm. battery ashore was effective and the troops landed from the **A.L.C.s** and **M.L.C.s** without meeting the serious resistance so many had thought inevitable. The landing took place practically at one point, the training of the soldiers enabling them, as at Bjervik, to open out and obtain cover without apparent difficulty. The subsequent transportation of troops was carried out as fast as the limited means available allowed, local craft being used to a limited extent in the later stages. Two tanks were landed at Taraldvik from **M.L.C.s** but when ashore found the sand and mud too soft and were immobilised for some time. By soon after midnight, a battalion of the Foreign Legion and one of the Norwegian Infantry (the Narvik Battalion) with two tanks were ashore and had made good progress. The first detachment of the second Battalion of the Legion had been landed, and the remainder were being embarked and ferried across. A considerable rifle and machine-gun fire could be heard which marked the development of a counter-attack by the enemy which, however, was held by the French troops.

7. At 0420, the enemy aircraft put in their first appearance, some determined dive bombing attacks being made upon the ships. This was followed up in quick succession by high and dive bombing attacks, lasting from 0420-0626, the former by aircraft working singly and in formation. Ships for a considerable time escaped damage but only by manoeuvring at high speed in such a way as would have seriously reduced the effectiveness of bombardment and covering fire had the attack been delivered earlier. The success of these attacks, however, was largely due to the unfortunate fact that our fighters, most conspicuous and assiduous in the patrol work until 0400, were after that time fogbound on the Bardufoss Aerodrome, some 50 miles distant from the scene of battle. At 0620, **CAIRO** was hit by two light bombs of a pattern which fell all round her. One hit was just abaft "B" mounting, penetrating the deck and bursting among the supply party; the other hit the starboard .5 machine gun just abaft the signal deck, setting fire to the ammunition and gear in the vicinity of the gun. As a result, 8 were killed and 25 wounded. Of **CAIRO's** arma-

ment, only one mounting remained fully effective, two being out of action owing to the dangerous prematures being caused by the state of the guns owing to continuous firing. The ship also had considerable superficial damage to contend with and, incidentally, smartly dealt with by her fire and repair parties. I therefore determined to send her away and called a destroyer alongside to take off General Bethouart and Staff. It was also my intention to shift my Flag to **STORK**.

8. I had previously asked General Bethouart to let me know when he was satisfied that his troops were established and could dispense with naval aid, so that the number of ships in a confined area could be reduced. Before leaving the ship, General Bethouart told me that he was quite satisfied and that if he were allowed to retain two destroyers that was all he asked for. On this, I ordered **C.S. 20** in **COVENTRY** and 2 destroyers to remain in support of the French forces and the remainder of the ships to withdraw to the westward.

9. After repelling the German counter-attack, the French continued their advance throughout the day and after a few somewhat doubtful messages had been received reports became reassuring until, by a message timed 2200, General Bethouart reported that Narvik, Fagernes and Forneset were in his hands, together with some 200 prisoners, a number subsequently increased to between 350-400.

10. The attack of the Poles on Ankenes had, after an initial setback, progressed well—a result largely due to the support received by the fire of the **SOUTHAMPTON** which was gratefully acknowledged.

11. That the carrying-out of this operation proved more simple than had been expected does not in my view detract in any degree from the credit due to General Bethouart for the soldierly way he had undertaken and carried out this attack, following that of Bjervik. He was good enough to give much credit to the naval assistance he had received. That, however, would always have been forthcoming to any force that had attempted the task.

SECTION VII.

THE EVACUATION.

1. On the night of 24/25th May, orders were received for the evacuation of Northern Norway and were contained in following message:—

" Naval Message to F.O., Narvik, from Admiralty.

Following from Chiefs of Staff.

His Majesty's Government has decided your forces are to evacuate Northern Norway at earliest moment. Reason for this is that the troops, ships, guns and certain equipment are urgently required for defence of United Kingdom. We understand from military point of view, evacuation operations will be facilitated if enemy forces are largely destroyed or captured. Moreover, destruction of railways and Narvik port facilities make its capture highly desirable.

Nevertheless, speed of evacuations once begun should be of primary consideration in order to limit duration maximum naval efforts.

2 Officers will be sent at once from United Kingdom to concert Evacuation plans with

you and General Auchinleck. Evacuation of all equipment, vehicles and stores will clearly take too long. Following are required to be evacuated in order of importance from point of view of defence of United Kingdom—(a) Personnel; (b) Light A/A Guns and Ammunition; (c) 25-pounders; (d) Heavy A/A Guns and Ammunition.

Tactical conditions must rule but so far as they permit plans should be framed accordingly.

Norwegian Government have not repetition not yet been informed."

2. The following morning, I discussed the matter with General Auchinleck, and it was agreed that safety of the force made secrecy vital, and the information must only be imparted to those Senior Officers it was imperative should know it.

3. The position of the French troops, acting in conjunction with the Norwegian troops, and in actual contact with the enemy in the Gratangen district presented difficulties—as to a lesser degree did that of our own troops in a similar position in the Bodo area. That position, however, showed signs of liquidating itself. In the Ankenes peninsula also, Polish troops were pressing East in the face of enemy resistance, towards Beisfjord. It was evident that, in view of the wide area from which troops had to be evacuated, under different circumstances, the withdrawal might prove difficult more particularly in view of the increasing scale of air attack to which the whole district was being subjected. Secrecy and celerity were both called for. It was apparent that a considerable number of A/A guns would have to be abandoned, guns which had only just been installed after much labour. As, however, A/A protection must be provided to the last this loss was inevitable.

4. On May 26th, I invited General Bethouart to my house to meet General Auchinleck, and he was then told of the forthcoming evacuation. From every point of view, it seemed essential he should know. The news was received with characteristic calm, though one point upon which he was insistent was that for reasons of national honour he could not abandon the Norwegian Army he had been working with, in the lurch on the field of battle. The whole question was discussed and it was agreed that pressure on the enemy must be kept up until the last, that the attack on Narvik which had originally been fixed for the night 24th-25th but postponed 48 hours, must go on, and that this operation would of itself be the best possible way of concealing our intentions from the enemy.

5. An outline plan for the evacuation was forwarded to the Chiefs of Staff at their request.

6. It was planned that the work should be done at night—this in view of diminishing the risk of air attack as far as possible. True, it was light all night but experience had shown the night hours were a quiet time as a rule as regards air raids. The whole operation was planned to occupy five periods of ferrying. This was agreed to and was the plan followed. The dates were, however, subsequently postponed 48 hours. The measures taken to ensure secrecy worked well, so many plausible reasons were available to explain the movements of troops that for some days no suspicion was aroused.

7. Information was received that the ARK ROYAL and GLORIOUS would be in the area between the dates named for the provision of fighter protection and the retrieving of any aircraft possible.

8. The situation in the Bodo district had been causing anxiety owing to the growing pressure of enemy forces, and the reinforcement of the 24th Brigade—now intact in that area—had been in contemplation. This idea was necessarily abandoned in the face of impending evacuation, and evacuation was ordered. This was necessary as Brigadier Gubbins had reported he must retire not later than June 1st unless reinforced.

9. The nights of May 29th, 30th and 31st were selected for this evacuation, which was carried out by destroyers. On the first night some 1,000 troops were ferried to the VINDICTIVE in the offing, which ship conveyed them direct to Scapa. On the two subsequent nights, the troops were brought back to the Harstad area in the destroyers which had embarked them. It was decided that the Norwegian Government should be informed as soon as possible that the decision had been taken by the Allies to evacuate North Norway. The decision to do this was communicated to H.M. Government. I therefore invited Sir Cecil Dormer to Harstad for a conference on June 1st, the following day, and suggested Colonel Pollock should accompany him. This officer—in his capacity as Liaison Officer—had proved most helpful. Sir Cecil was informed of the position, and a copy of the following message given to him.

" IMMEDIATE.

To: F.O., Narvik, From: Admiralty.

Following from Foreign Office.

When Sir C. Dormer arrives Harstad you should explain the situation to him and ask him to speak to King of Norway and Minister of Defence, Colonel Ljungberg in the following sense.

H.M. Government and French Government have reviewed general position in light of recent events in Belgium and Northern France. Owing to additional strain on their resources and to necessity to defend Great Britain as well as France from invasion it is not repetition not possible for Allies to supply sufficient defence against German attack, particularly air attack, on North Norway. What has just happened at Bodo, where you have been obliged to order evacuation at short notice, is an example of what must happen elsewhere if this defence cannot be provided: and dangers of air attacks to civilian population have already been emphasised by Norwegian Government themselves. In any case restoration of Norwegian independence depends upon capacity of British Empire and France to resist present attack on them, and if this purpose is to be achieved all available Allied forces will in present circumstances be required.

Allied Governments are accordingly obliged to make arrangements for early withdrawal of their forces from Norway and will be prepared in doing so to bring away the King of Norway, Norwegian Government and as many Norwegian troops as may wish to come to the United Kingdom and continue the fight with the Allies on other battlefields.

It might be worth while to suggest to Norwegian Government, if they think there is any chance of reaching an agreement on "Mowinckel Plan," we should see no repetition no objection to their attempting this. They themselves will of course realise any hint to Germans that we had decided on evacuation would destroy any chance they may have of reaching an agreement. But evidently time for this is very short and our evacuation plan cannot be delayed."

10. The whole matter was then discussed between Sir Cecil, General Auchinleck, Colonel Pollock and myself upon the basis of this message. It was agreed that Sir Cecil Dormer on his return to Tromso should interview privately certain Ministers, and that he should suggest the revival of the "Mowinckel Plan," as proposed in the Foreign Office Message quoted above: that the King should be told the following morning, June 2nd, and the Cabinet officially informed later in the day. Subsequently, I was told by letter that the conversations had gone off well and that, after his talk with the Foreign Minister, the latter—who already had a meeting arranged in Stockholm for the 3rd—drafted a telegram to his Swedish colleague on the subject of the "Mowinckel Plan," which draft he allowed Sir Cecil to alter as he wished. Colonel Pollock on the same day gave the information to General Ruge. Vice-Admiral Cunningham was also informed and entrusted with making arrangements for the passage of the King, Government and others who might wish to evacuate should the negotiations break down. Sir Cecil Dormer asked that there should be a delay of a day or two in order to give time for the negotiations. After ascertaining that this would entail no harmful consequences to arrangements already made, I agreed to a delay of 24 hours. The first night of evacuation was, therefore, fixed as June 3rd-4th. Naturally, at first, there was a feeling of soreness and disillusionment among the Norwegians on learning of the evacuation but on the whole the decision was received as being inevitable under the circumstances and every help was given to facilitate the withdrawal.

11. I wrote to Admiral Diesen expressing the hope that he would send all his ships to the U.K. or assure me that they should not fall into German hands. The following most satisfactory answer was received:—

" 6th June, 1940. "

" My Lord:

My very best thanks for your kind letter. It has been a great pleasure for me to meet you, my Lord, and so many officers of the grand British Navy. As a Norwegian, I can only present my thanks for all it has done.

I am preparing all the ships that may be of any use for going to the Shetlands.

You may rest assured about the submarines as well as of the rest. What cannot be evacuated will be destroyed.

To you personally, my Lord, I send my very best wishes for the future of both our countries. God bless them!

In the hope of a au revoir,

Yours very sincerely,

(Sgd.) N. DIESEN."

The Naval Attaché, Rear-Admiral Boyes, also had the matter in hand.

12. The evacuation proceeded according to plan on the dates named. On 5 successive nights, troops to the numbers of 4,700, 4,900, 5,100, 5,200 and on the fifth the last and most difficult 4,600, without any untoward incident. The work was almost entirely carried out by destroyers working under the orders of Captain E. B. K. Stevens, D.S.C., Captain (D), 9th Destroyer Flotilla, in H.M.S. HAVELOCK. The presence of this energetic and capable officer ensured the programme being carried out punctually and efficiently. The destroyers were working almost continuously and, as always, rose to the occasion. Rear-Admiral Commanding 20th Cruiser Squadron was in direct charge of the transports at rendezvous and responsible for the embarkation. Up to the end, air protection was afforded by the R.A.F. and F.A.A. working in co-operation and to a programme. Owing, however, to the weather conditions that prevailed through the 5 days, low clouds and rain, the enemy air action was weak and spasmodic. Dive bombing attacks were, however, delivered upon STORK and VETERAN in Ofot Fiord during the afternoon of the 7th but the enemy did not appear to have noticed anything unusual, for no special effort was made that evening. The last men to be embarked in the Transports were the Ground Staff of the Bardufoss aerodrome. The Gladiators had been embarked in GLORIOUS but it was feared that the 8 Hurricanes that remained efficient would have to be abandoned and destroyed. The courageous action of the pilots in volunteering to fly their machines on to the flying deck of GLORIOUS and of Group-Captain Moore in allowing it to be done resulted in all 8 being safely got away—an achievement which deserved a better fate than that which befell the gallant men who had carried it out successfully.

13. The actual sailing of the various Convoys carrying the whole expedition to the U.K. was as follows:—

Group 1.

MONARCH OF BERMUDA. BATTERY. SOBIESKI. FRANCONIA. LANCASTRIA. GEORGIC.

} With VINDICTIVE.

Group 2.

ORONSAY. ORMONDE. ARANDORA STAR. ROYAL ULSTERMAN. ULSTER PRINCE. ULSTER MONARCH. DUCHESS OF YORK.

} With COVENTRY (C.S.20). SOUTHAMPTON (R.A.18). HAVELOCK (D.9). FAME. FIRE Drake. BEAGLE. DELIGHT.

VANDYCK should have been with this Group but failed to make the rendezvous.

Storeships (Slow Convoy left Harstad 2200/7 June).

BLACKHEATH. OLIGARCH. HARMATTAN. CROMARTY FIRTH. THESEUS. ACRITY. COXWOLD. CONCH.

} With STORK, ARROW, and 10 Trawlers.

CAMPBELL, WALTER, ELLESMERE and THIRLMERE were sent to find and escort vessels coming from Tromsø, viz., OIL PIONEER, YERMOUNT, ARBROATH (A.S.I.S.), NYAKOA (A.S.I.S.), and some Norwegian Vessels.

14. I did not consider that sailing of the 1st Group without escort as mentioned in Admiralty 1801/27 was justifiable and had originally intended to retain the ships at sea in charge of VINDICTIVE, in which ship 1,000 troops had been embarked until the whole were ready. On receipt, however, of Admiralty F.O.N.177, I resolved to sail the group under escort of VINDICTIVE if adequate protection was obtainable further south. This being guaranteed by C.-in-C., Home Fleet, the 1801/6 and 1506/5 Groups sailed for the Clyde on June 7th at 0300.

15. The RANEN (Commander Sir Geoffrey Congreve), who had been actively employed during the evacuation period delaying the enemy advance up the coast from Bodo, was sent on the night of the 7th, accompanied by NORTHERN GEM, to destroy the Oil Tanks at Svolve. This successful exploit ended with a most spirited engagement, on his part, with the enemy.

16. Vice-Admiral Commanding First Cruiser Squadron was in charge of the Tromsø Convoy. H.M.S. DEVONSHIRE, his flagship, conveyed the Royal and Diplomatic parties, the Norwegian Government and other notables who wished to be evacuated.

17. Prior to final evacuation, the forepart of MASHOBRA, the stern of which was under water, was blown up, the OLEANDER was sunk, disabled Trawlers destroyed and an attempt was made to tow away the A.L.Cs. but finally they and the M.L.Cs. were scuttled.

18. The whole of the Convoy (2nd Group) were clear of Andfjord by 2300/8th, the rear being brought up by the A/S Trawlers and Minesweepers. As they proceeded, they were shadowed by an enemy aircraft. After seeing these clear in SOUTHAMPTON, I ordered that ship to join the Convoy of which Rear-Admiral Vivian in COVENTRY had been placed in charge.

19. For the evacuation, I flew my Flag in the SOUTHAMPTON and was accompanied in that ship on the return voyage by Generals Auchinleck and Bethouart.

20. Being clear of Norwegian waters and operations therefore coming under Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet, I hauled down my Flag at midnight on June 8th but directed that SOUTHAMPTON was to remain with the Convoy for passage home in view of the liveliness taking place in the North Sea. This passage was uneventful.

21. The success of the evacuation and the smoothness with which the arrangements worked was in great measure due to the unremitting work and attention of all the Staff Officers engaged upon it but primarily to those of the following Officers to whom I particularly wish to call attention. They are:—

Brigadier J. A. H. Gammell, Military Chief Staff Officer.

Captain L. E. H. Maund, Naval Chief Staff Officer.

Commander A. G. V. Hubback, Staff Officer Operations.

The latter conducted the withdrawal of the French and Polish troops that were engaged with the enemy during the concluding phase.

22. The order for evacuation, and the compliance therewith, brought this combined operation to a close—at a moment when, as a result of seven weeks' hard work, the Force seemed to be getting firmly established. To attain this result many and great difficulties had had to be overcome, due to the peculiar hydrographical and geographical conditions, but more particularly to the severe climatic vagaries, all of which were more easily realised on the spot than they could be under totally different conditions elsewhere.

23. The landing of guns, vehicles, and stores of all sorts with a minimum of facilities for doing so, imposed great efforts on all of the three Services taking part in this work.

24. Possibly, the outstanding combined effort of this sort was the preparation of the aerodromes. The initial clearing of the ground, under three to four feet of snow when work began, the water transport and landing on open beaches of all impedimenta, the positioning of the guns for defence, after much work had been expended on preparing miles of indifferent roads under "thaw" conditions to take heavy traffic called for and produced great and continued exertions from all three Services. In this as in all other activities co-operation was close and cordial—more particularly so in the later stages of the campaign. This is equally true as regards relations between the Norwegians and the various nationalities of the Allied Force. Excellent and helpful relations prevailed. I have elsewhere placed on record my appreciation of the valuable services rendered by General Bethouart. As already mentioned initially there was no means of retaliation for interference caused by enemy air attack. The Fleet Air Arm, however, did all that was possible—to the gallantry and activity displayed by that branch of the Service I desire to pay tribute.

25. The Royal Air Force when they began to arrive quickly made their efficiency and courageous skill felt—their advent was very welcome. One Officer of this Service especially attracted me by his zeal, energy, initiative and resource—Wing Commander Atcherley, upon whom fell the initial work of selection and preparation of aerodromes prior to the arrival of Group Captain Moore to the value of whose services I have already alluded.

26. Of the Army, I feel constrained to call attention to Brigadier J. A. H. Gammell—an Officer of obviously great ability whose personality contributed largely to the harmonious relations previously referred to and Colonel A. A. B. Dowler, who, in his capacity as General Staff Officer, was at Military Headquarters during the whole period of the expedition, during which his quiet efficiency and tact were of the greatest assistance—especially through one difficult period.

27. I particularly desire to mention Captain Louis Hamilton, R.N., H.M.S. AURORA, who proved himself a fine, active leader, and an Officer who could be relied upon to obtain the best results under any conditions. His sound views on all operational matters were a great help and support to me, his desire to harass and distress the enemy never eased up.

28. Captain L. E. H. Maund acted as my Chief Staff Officer; he was assiduous and untiring in his work and in all administrative matters of the greatest help. To him can be given much of the credit for successful evacuation.

29. Finally, I must express my gratitude to Lieutenant-General C. J. E. Auchinleck in whom I could not wish for a better colleague. His sound and soldierly views on all subjects were of great assistance and support and the period of our service together will for me always be a pleasant memory.

(Signed) CORK & ORRERY,
Admiral of the Fleet.

APPENDIX "A".

REPORT ON OPERATIONS IN NORTHERN NORWAY.

14th April to 13th May, 1940.

The following Report was submitted to the Secretary of State for War on 15th May, 1940, by Major-General P. J. Mackesy, C.B., D.S.O., M.C.

Harstad, 15th May, 1940.

SIR,

I have the honour to report that I handed over command of this Force to Lieutenant-General C. J. E. Auchinleck, C.B., C.S.I., D.S.O., O.B.E., at 1830 hours on the 13th May. I submit the following brief report to the Secretary of State for War of events up to that time.

2. I arrived in the Narvik area, actually in Vaags Fjord, in *H.M.S. Southampton* at daylight on the 14th April. I was accompanied by a small staff and had on board two companies of the 1st Bn. The Scots Guards and some details.

3. Having first ascertained that Harstad was not in enemy occupation and having obtained some information from local officials at that place, I proceeded to obtain touch with the 6th Norwegian Division under Major-General Fleischer, whose headquarters proved to be in the Bardu area. The two companies 1st Bn. The Scots Guards were landed at Salangs-Verket and Sjoveien on the Sag Fjord during the afternoon and were put in touch with elements of the 6th Norwegian Division. This early contact and the subsequent co-operation of this detachment with our Allies had an important effect upon the spirit and determination of the Allied Forces.

4. During the 14th April and the following days all available information pointed to Narvik itself being strongly held and to the fact that the naval action of the 13th April had by no means demoralized the garrison as a whole. The probability was that the garrison had in fact been increased by nearly 1,000 good fighting men from the sunken German ships: this was fully confirmed by subsequent intelligence reports. My troops had been embarked for a peaceful landing at a friendly and organized port and could not be ready for active operations for some days. I decided therefore to disembark the Force at Harstad and to establish my base there also in the first instance.

5. Disembarkation at Harstad was carried out under great difficulty. Transports had to lie at considerable distances—10 miles and more—from the harbour and signal communication between ship and shore was impossible. Air attacks, against which my force had no defence, complicated the operation. However disembarkation of the first flight of the force was completed on the evening of 16th April.

6. Although nobody without personal experience of Arctic winter conditions can possibly picture the climatic difficulties we experienced in the early days, a word or two of description may not be out of place. The country was covered by snow up to 4 feet and more in depth. Even at sea level there were several feet of snow. Blizzards, heavy snow storms, bitter winds and very low night temperatures were normal. Indeed until the middle of May even those magnificent mountain soldiers, the French Chasseurs Alpins, suffered severely from frost bite and snow blindness. Troops who were not equipped with and skilled in the use of skis or snow shoes were absolutely incapable of operating tactically at all. I had no such troops at my disposal when I first landed. Shelter from the weather was of vital importance.

7. It soon became certain that the enemy held Narvik in considerable strength. All the existing defences had been handed over intact by the Norwegian garrison. A personal reconnaissance convinced me that topography favoured the defence and that an opposed landing was quite out of the question so long as the deep snow and existing weather conditions persisted and so long as my force lacked landing craft, tanks, adequate artillery support, adequate anti-aircraft defence and air co-operation. The problem was, of course, not merely one of landing, but one of carrying out a subsequent advance of several miles; yet, owing to the configuration of the ground, not even during the first mile could support be given by ships' guns.

I decided therefore that my first objective must be to secure the Oijord and Ankenes peninsulas, North and South of Narvik, from which in due course observed artillery fire could be brought to bear on the enemy defences. Both these peninsulas were held by the enemy.

With this in view I moved the 1st Bn. The Irish Guards to the Bogen area and (at a later date) the 2nd Bn. The South Wales Borderers to Ballangen. The detachment of the 1st Bn. The Scots Guards, under Major L. Graham, M.C., which I had landed in the Sag Fjord on 14th April, moved forward to co-operate with the 6th Norwegian Division in the Forsbakken area. The state of the roads, lying under 2 to 4 feet of snow and ice, and the impossibility of moving across country without skis, prevented further progress by these forces for the time being.

8. On the 20th April Admiral of the Fleet the Earl of Cork and Orrery was placed in sole command of the operations. It may however be convenient to have on record a brief summary of the subsequent operations from an army point of view. On 24th April a naval bombardment of the Narvik defences was carried out with the object of making the enemy surrender. The 1st Bn. The Irish Guards, embarked in one of H.M. Ships, were held

ready to land and occupy the town in the event of such surrender. Other troops were at short notice to follow the Irish Guards. The bombardment, however, did not achieve the result hoped for by the naval commander. Subsequent reports indicated that the defences were not seriously impaired, though some casualties were inflicted upon the enemy.

9. My hopes of prosecuting the land operations more vigorously were raised by the arrival on the 28th April of General Bethouart with a Demi-Brigade of Chasseurs Alpins. Two battalions of these were directed to advance, in co-operation with Norwegian forces, from the Gratangen area to Bjerkvik at the head of Herjangen Fjord. One battalion co-operated with the South Wales Borderers on the Ankenes peninsula where the latter had been landed without opposition although counter-attacked later.

Even those first class troops, the Chasseurs Alpins, trained as they are, to snow conditions, found themselves very seriously hampered, indeed almost immobilized, by the soft deep snow. Their small proportion of ski troops in each battalion and a lack of snow shoes for the remainder proved serious handicaps. They suffered severely from frost bite and snow blindness. The troops in the front line were subjected to continual low-flying air attacks against which, owing to the state of the ground, they could not adequately protect themselves either by digging or by dispersion. (Later when I was enabled to allocate a small number of light anti-aircraft guns to the French troops, the effect was excellent.) Nevertheless they made some progress and took no little toll of the enemy.

10. On 29th April I was ordered to send troops to Bodo. I accordingly despatched one company of the 1st Bn. the Scots Guards. A few days later developments at and South of Mosjoen were brought prominently to my notice by the serious effects they were having upon our Norwegian Allies, and I soon found myself concerned with two fronts—the Narvik area in the East and Mosjoen and Mo in the South. For the reasons indicated in paragraph 12 below, the Southern front caused me increasingly greater concern.

11. The arrival of a Demi-Brigade of the Foreign Legion and of a Polish Brigade, coupled with gradually improving weather conditions and an accession of much needed equipment (notably anti-aircraft artillery, a very limited number of landing craft and a French company of light tanks) facilitated the undertaking of more active operations on the Narvik front. On 8th May I instructed General Bethouart to clear up the Gratangen-Bjerkvik area and to establish artillery on the Oijord peninsula. He was then to explore the possibility of moving through the mountains against the strong German concentration in the Hundalen area East of Narvik. At the same time I instructed the 24th (Guards) Brigade (with one battalion of Chasseurs Alpins under command) to hold the Northern end of the Ankenes peninsula firmly and to advance on Beisfjord as soon as weather conditions should permit. At 0100 hours 13th May, accordingly, General Bethouart landed the Demi-Brigade of the Foreign Legion at Bjerkvik. The landing was preceded by a naval bombardment. An enemy machine-gun on the left flank was knocked out by a destroyer's

guns. At this point three light tanks from motor landing craft and about 120 infantry from assault landing craft (followed by infantry from ships' boats) were able to land with little loss and so to work their way round the head of the Fjord to deal with the remaining machine-guns, on the beaches, which had not been affected by the naval bombardment. Distant machine guns were still in action when the second battalion landed on the East shore about 2 hours later.

The operation was entirely successful. Without the use of tanks and armoured landing craft it might very easily have ended in a costly failure. It was fortunate indeed that low clouds prevented hostile air attack during the landing.

Touch was made with the force operating from Gratangen. The Oijord peninsula was seized. The stage was now set for the capture of Narvik.

12. Meanwhile the situation in the South was causing me some concern. Continued German advances in that area were having most serious results upon our Norwegian Allies and, indeed seemed likely to result in the withdrawal of all Norwegian support from the Allied forces. I considered that the time had come to stop these enemy advances and I welcomed Lord Cork's suggestion on 9th May that troops should be despatched with that object. I had been in constant touch with Colonel Gubbins and two companies of Scissors Force at Mosjoen and with one company of that Force, under Major May, at Mo. After the abandonment of Mosjoen I decided that energetic measures must be taken and accordingly sent the 1st Bn. the Scots Guards (less one company already at Bodo), with field and anti-aircraft guns, to Mo. Mo was doubly important as being the terminus of the most northerly road into Sweden and as covering the Norwegian aerodrome a few miles to the North. Should this aerodrome fall into the hands of the enemy it would afford him just that extra stepping stone he needed to bring further air forces into action in the Narvik area.

This detachment arrived at Mo at 0400 hours 12th May without loss. Colonel Gubbins with his two companies from Mosjoen had meanwhile withdrawn to Bodo.

At the same time I instituted arrangements for reinforcing the detachment at Mo with Headquarters 24th (Guards) Brigade and 1st Bn. The Irish Guards. Before these arrangements were completed and put into effect (they were subsequently modified) I handed over command to my successor.

13. It will be apparent from the preceding paragraphs that the period of my command was perforce chiefly one of reconnaissance and planning and of carrying out such initial offensive operations as the climatic conditions and the gradual building up of my force to a reasonable fighting organisation permitted. At the same time the task of setting the administrative organisation on a sound basis fitted to deal with projected operations and with future expansion made tremendous calls upon the initiative and powers of improvisation of my staff, all under Arctic conditions of great, though decreasing, severity. Subsidiary bases were established at Skaanland on Sandet Fjord and in Ballangen south of the Ofot Fjord.

14. I wish to place on record my deep appreciation of the co-operation and assistance

afforded by the Royal Navy at all times to the troops under my command. Without that help it would have been impossible to make any progress. The Royal Navy carried and escorted the Allied troops and, pending the arrival of anti-aircraft guns, took over the duties of anti-aircraft protection under the most difficult circumstances. The naval staff, particularly Captain Maund, R.N., and Commander Hubback, R.N., worked in intimate and unflagging co-operation with my own staff: I owe these officers a deep debt of gratitude for their ever close and cordial assistance.

15. Relations with the French were most happy throughout. The loyalty and efficiency displayed by General Bethouart were of the highest order. It was a very great pleasure to be so closely associated with so fine an officer.

16. Major-General Fleischer and the troops of the 6th Norwegian Division under his command co-operated at all times willingly and effectively with the Allied forces. Without that co-operation the British and French troops engaged on the mainland would have been faced with a number of additional difficulties.

17. The period of planning and of consultations with the Royal Navy and with the Allied Forces threw a great strain and weight of responsibility upon my General Staff. The establishment of a base and the supply and movement of troops with limited and difficult means of transportation made equally heavy demands upon my Administrative Staff and Services. All these demands were met in a most praiseworthy manner. All concerned displayed powers of improvisation of the highest order.

18. I would draw special attention to the fine work of my General Staff Officer (First Grade), Colonel A. B. Dowler and of my A.A. and Q.M.G., Colonel J. F. W. Allen, M.C. These officers were faced with unusual problems and responsibilities. They dealt with them all in a truly admirable manner.

19. That I once commanded an Allied Force containing such fine troops, British, French and Polish alike, will for ever remain a source of great pride to me.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

P. J. Mackesy,

Major-General.

APPENDIX " B "

REPORT ON OPERATIONS IN NORTHERN NORWAY.

13th May to 8th June, 1940.

The following report was submitted to the Secretary of State for War on 19th June, 1940, by Lieutenant-General C. J. E. Auchinleck, C.B., C.S.I., D.S.O., O.B.E.

Receipt of Instructions.

1. On the evening of 28th April I was summoned by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (General Sir E. Ironside) to the War Office and informed by him that I, with part of the 4th Corps Staff, would be required to go to Narvik in the immediate future. I returned to

my headquarters at Alresford and arranged for an advanced headquarters to be established in the War Office.

2. For the next week, my staff were fully employed collecting and collating information concerning Northern Norway and the existing situation in that theatre.

In this task they received every possible assistance from the staff of the different departments and branches of the War Office.

3. On the 6th May, I received my instructions from the Secretary of State for War. These instructions were to the effect:—

(a) That the object of His Majesty's Government was to secure and maintain a base in Northern Norway from which it would be possible:—

- i. To deny iron ore supplies to Germany via Narvik.
- ii. To interfere with ore supplies to Germany from Lulea in Sweden.
- iii. To preserve a part of Norway as a seat of Government for the Norwegian King and Government.

(b) That the forces assembled for this purpose were under the command of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Cork and Orrery; the Military Commander Major-General Mackesy being subordinate to him, and that this system of unified command was to remain in being until such time as His Majesty's Government decided to terminate it and revert to the usual system of having independent commanders of the sea and land forces.

(c) That I was appointed G.O.C.-in-C. designate of the Anglo-French land forces and of the British Air Component in the theatre of Operations.

(d) That I was to proceed to the area with an officer detailed by the Chief of the Air Staff and in conjunction with the Earl of Cork and Orrery, report for the information of the Chiefs of Staff, the forces required to attain the objects outlined in sub-paragraph (a), and the area which should be occupied.

(e) That I was to consider the possibility of shipping any iron ore now at Narvik to the United Kingdom, and of resuming a supply of iron ore from Swedish mines at Gallivare, and to report on the feasibility and desirability of repairing the railway from Narvik to the Swedish frontier.

4. I received also an instruction from General Sir John Dill, Vice-Chief of the Imperial General Staff, to the effect that it was the intention of the C.I.G.S. that I should take over command of the Anglo-French forces when His Majesty's Government decided to end the system of unified command, but that, if on arrival in the Narvik area, local conditions appeared to me to necessitate the step, I was to assume command of the Anglo-French troops, placing myself under Admiral of the Fleet Lord Cork and Orrery.

5. Before leaving London I appreciated the situation in Northern Norway in the light of such information as was available on the spot, and informed the C.I.G.S. that in my view, the implications of the objects given to me were:—

(a) The establishment of aerodromes necessary for the effective operation of an air component. These would include one at

Bardu Foss, another in the neighbourhood of Harstad and probably a third further south possibly at Bodo, with the necessary complement of anti-aircraft artillery.

(b) The protection of the naval anchorage which could be defended economically against surface, under water and land attack, and around which ground anti-aircraft defences could be installed.

(c) The selection and occupation of an area which could be adequately defended against sea, land and air attack and within which suitable base installations could be developed to supply a force of approximately three divisions through the port of Narvik and the railway to Lulea.

I estimated that this area would have to include not only an area South of Narvik at least as far as the Tysfjord (40 miles South of Narvik) but also an area East of Narvik along the frontier. Further, that the Northern portion of the area would have to include Hatten which lies 80 miles North of Narvik at the head of the Lyngen Fjord and covers the approaches to Tromsø.

6. I submitted also to the C.I.G.S. a provisional estimate of the forces which I considered would be required. These in general, apart from air forces and troops required for administrative purposes, amounted to twelve infantry battalions, one or two machine gun battalions, a divisional cavalry regiment (mechanised) with a due proportion of artillery and engineer units.

In conjunction with the technical experts available in the War Office, I estimated the requirements in anti-aircraft artillery at 144 3.7 guns and 112 Bofors Light Guns.

Departure for and arrival in Norway.

7. I embarked with an advanced headquarters staff at Leith in the Polish liner *Chrobry* on the 7th May and landed, after an uneventful voyage at Harstad on the 11th May.

8. Lord Cork was away in his flagship at Skaanland when I landed, but I met Major-General Mackesy and his General Staff Officer, Colonel Dowler, at once, and learned the situation from them. Hearing that a landing operation by the French contingent was about to take place near Bjerkvik at the head of Herjangs Fjord, and that Lord Cork was to direct the operation in person, I at once went to Skaanland with my Brigadier General Staff, Brigadier Gammell, and met Lord Cork.

I explained my position to Lord Cork, and with his approval, remained in *H.M.S. Effingham* with him. Neither General Mackesy nor any member of his staff was present on the Flagship, though General Bethouart, Commanding the French Contingent and his staff embarked just after myself and remained aboard throughout the operation.

9. The landing took place under a heavy bombardment from the guns of the Fleet in cold and cloudy weather in the early hours of the 13th May, and, in spite of the fact that there was now continuous daylight throughout the twenty-four hours and appreciable opposition from enemy machine guns on shore, was completely successful. The enemy was ejected from the area North and East of Herjangs Fjord and the French landing parties not only effected a junction with their own troops advancing from

the North from the direction of Gratangen but also cleared the country down to Oijord immediately across the Rombaks Fjord from Narvik.

Although I was present in the capacity of a spectator only, I am constrained to express my admiration for the way in which the whole operation was conceived and effected by all concerned. I was particularly struck by the business like efficiency of the French Foreign Legion which carried out the landing. That the landing was not interfered with by enemy aircraft was almost certainly due to the fortunate weather conditions prevailing at the time. At this period, there were no land based aircraft available in Norway with which to counter enemy air attacks and a bombing raid might well have turned the operation from a success into a failure.

10. I returned with Lord Cork to Harstad in *H.M.S. Effingham*, arriving on the afternoon of the 13th May.

Assumption of Command.

11. Immediately *H.M.S. Effingham* reached Harstad, Brigadier Fraser, Commander of the 24th Guards Brigade, came on board with Colonel Dowler of the General Staff, to discuss plans for operations in the Mo and Bodo areas with Lord Cork. Owing to ill health, Major-General Mackesy was not present.

12. With the concurrence of Lord Cork I listened to the ensuing discussion which centred round the question whether reinforcements already embarked at Skaanland should be sent to Bodo or to Mo, where an advanced detachment consisting of 1st Battalion Scots Guards and some "Independent Companies" had already been landed under heavy enemy air attack. At this conference I told Lord Cork that, in accordance with my instructions from the War Office, I proposed to assume command of all military forces forthwith.

13. I then gave verbal orders to Brigadier Fraser that he was to proceed at once with 1st Battalion Irish Guards and other troops to Bodo and not to Mo, and that he was to hold Bodo permanently, and Mo, for as long as he could. These orders were subsequently confirmed in writing.

14. On landing from *H.M.S. Effingham* I at once informed Major-General Mackesy that I had assumed command. Throughout my dealings with Major-General Mackesy I found him uniformly helpful and informative. In fact, many of my subsequent actions were based on information and advice received from him.

Situation on 13th May, 1940.

15. Briefly the dispositions, on the 13th-14th May, were:—

(a) In the Narvik area:—

- i. One battalion Chasseurs Alpins and the 2nd Battalion South Wales Borderers on the Ankenes Peninsula in touch with enemy detachments, but not yet in possession of Ankenes itself.
- ii. The enemy still in possession of Narvik and the whole peninsula on which it stands.
- iii. Two battalions of the Foreign Legion and one battalion of the Polish

Contingent holding the area Bjerkvik-Oijord, and in contact with the enemy to the Eastward.

- iv. One battalion Chasseurs Alpains to the North of the Foreign Legion, having advanced from the direction of Gratangen, and in contact with enemy elements about Hartvigvand.
- v. The Norwegian 6th Division (5 bns. of infantry and a few mountain guns) under General Fleischer to the North and East of the Chasseurs Alpains and in touch with the enemy in the Graesdalen valley and to the East of it.
- vi. A battalion Chasseurs Alpains near Gratangen.
- vii. A Polish battalion near Harstad and another at Ballangen on the south shore of Ofot Fjord and a third at Salangen.

(b) In the Mo-Bodo area dispositions were:—

- i. 1st Battalion Scots Guards less one company and one Independent Company at Mo and in contact with enemy forces which had landed on the Hemnes Peninsula 20 miles south of Mo. This force was under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Trappes-Lomax, Scots Guards, and included also one troop 203rd Field Battery (four 24-pdr. guns) and one troop 55th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment (four Bofors guns).
- ii. In the Bodo area, one company Scots Guards and three "independent" companies.
- iii. En route to Bodo in *M.V. Chrobry* the 1st Battalion Irish Guards, H.Q. 24th Guards Brigade and detachments of the 230th Field Company, R.E., and 137th Field Ambulance.
- iv. Brigadier Fraser proceeded ahead of *Chrobry* in *H.M.S. Somali* to Mo, visiting Bodo on the way. At Mo, news of the bombing of *M.V. Chrobry* was received, and *H.M.S. Somali* at once left to render assistance. On the way, however, *Somali* was bombed and had to return to Scapa. Later Brigadier Fraser succeeded in transferring to *H.M.S. Curlew* and arrived back at Harstad. It was evident that he had not recovered from a wound received at Ankenes, and it was therefore necessary to convene a medical board. The Board found that he was unfit and he had unfortunately to return to U.K.

16. The force was maintained through the Base Area which had been established from the outset at Harstad, the forward delivery to Units and Formations in contact being made by locally procured water transport to Fjord Head, where approximately 10 days' reserve supplies, etc., were held.

Inland Water Transport was thus the main agency for forward maintenance. Yet, although a study of the map would have shown that this was so, no provision had been made to send with the Force at the outset the necessary personnel to organize and operate Inland Water Transport in the way that railway units are sent to operate railways in a theatre where the railway is the main transport agency.

17. The policy of the War Office and the French Co-ordinating Staff in London by which the French maintenance system was to be welded into the British system and controlled by Force H.Q. had not been fully realised.

This was necessary as the items of supply common to both and all reserves of ammunition and fighting equipment were to be held in a common Base Area, whilst Force Headquarters were to be responsible also for forward maintenance.

In actual fact the French had been permitted to commence the establishment of a separate Base Area at Ballangen, and provided with water transport under their own control. As the French Administrative Staff was very small, and had at its disposal only a few issuers and checkers, and no personnel for handling stores, there was a great delay in dealing with their store ships; in fact 5 had remained near their Base Area only partially unloaded for 16 days or more.

18. The reserve of supplies, ammunition and general stores was low for the whole force, this situation being aggravated by the fact that the French had not arrived with 60 days' supplies as had been arranged. Motor Transport repair facilities and spares were almost non-existent.

19. At Harstad itself, the number of quays available for unloading ships was sufficient for the amount of stores going through the Base Port at that time, but the facilities for clearing and holding the stores up to the scale of reserves to be held, was quite inadequate. The port had not sufficient accommodation for the number of personnel required to be accommodated in the Base Area, nor were there storage facilities available in sufficient quantity or in dispersed areas.

The Medical plan for the evacuation of Allied casualties through British Medical Units back to the Base was working efficiently, but the number of beds available in the General Hospital at Harstad was inadequate, as only approximately 500 beds were available in three buildings.

General survey of events during the period.

20. The principal military activities during the period under review were the attempt to stabilise the position on our Southern front in the region of Mo and Bodo, the establishment in the theatre of war of land-based aircraft, the organisation of a base and its protection against attack from the Air.

These activities are dealt with separately in subsequent paragraphs. Other events of interest are described briefly in the following paragraphs.

21. Throughout the period the enemy was active in the air and carried out numerous attacks of varying intensity and duration against H.M. Ships and other vessels in the area. Attacks on ships and other craft in the Ofot Fjord and off Narvik were of daily occurrence, and several attacks were made on Harstad itself and on shipping in the harbour. On May 20th enemy bombers succeeded in setting light to an oil tank at Harstad and two oil tankers moored in the vicinity were also set on fire and burned out. On the whole, however, except for the damage to shipping which was considerable, little harm was caused to Harstad by these attacks and casualties were few. The

effect on the morale of the troops and civil population, however, was considerable.

22. In spite of arrangements made for co-operation with local military and civil authorities by Major-General Mackesy and his staff prior to my arrival, the relations between the Allied Forces in Norway and the Norwegian authorities, civil and military, had never been regularised through the proper diplomatic channels, and co-operation with such Norwegian forces as remained in being was not made easier by this omission to place matters on a proper political footing. On the 16th May, however, I had a cordial and satisfactory interview at my Headquarters with General Rugé, Commander-in-Chief of the Norwegian army, and General Fleischer, Commander 6th Norwegian Division, acting in close co-operation with the French forces to the North of the Rombaks Fjord.

The Norwegian Generals were insistent on the need for preventing Mo and Bodo falling into the hands of the enemy and stressed their desire to pass from the defensive to the offensive and recapture Mosjoen. I explained the Allied situation to them fully.

On 15th May Colonel R. C. G. Pollock, M.C., Head of a Military Mission sent out to assist my Headquarters to maintain close relations with the Norwegian Government, reported to me and was informed of the situation before he left for Tromso.

Sir Cecil Dormer, British Minister in Norway, also arrived from the United Kingdom and discussed the situation with Lord Cork and myself before proceeding to take up his post with the King and Government of Norway. The opportunity was taken of impressing on him the urgent need of a closer control of the civil population in militarily occupied areas.

On 23rd May Lord Cork flew to Tromso and discussed the general situation with the King and members of the Government. As a result of these activities relations with the Norwegian authorities began to assume a more businesslike and realistic aspect, particularly in respect of the necessary provision of facilities for the establishment of a base at Tromso. These the Norwegians were reluctant to concede on the grounds that our presence there would expose the town to enemy air attack; in fact, they went so far as to stipulate that unless we provided adequate anti-aircraft artillery protection in the area, base facilities could not be provided.

With the help of Colonel Pollock these objections were eventually overcome, but part of my already inadequate allotment of anti-aircraft artillery had to be diverted to Tromso as the War Office could not spare any for this purpose.

23. On the 16th May I completed and despatched the Report to the Chiefs of Staff called for in my original Instructions from the Secretary of State for War. The Report was to the effect that provided the situation generally remained unchanged it should be possible to maintain the integrity of Northern Norway with the forces outlined below, and, as well, develop a limited offensive so as to deny the landing ground at Mosjoen to the enemy.

FORCES REQUIRED.

(a) *Sea.*

Four cruisers.
Six destroyers.
Four escort vessels.

Twelve anti-submarine trawlers.
Two submarines.
Auxiliary vessels as at present.

(b) *Land.*

One Divisional Cavalry Regt.
One Squadron Armoured Cars.
One Mounted Infantry Unit (Lovat's Scouts).
Five Batteries Field Artillery.
Two Batteries Medium Howitzers.
Thirteen Batteries (104 guns) Heavy Anti-Aircraft Artillery.
Eight Batteries (96 guns) Light Anti-Aircraft Artillery.
Five Companies Engineers.
Seventeen Infantry Battalions.
One Machine Gun Battalion.

(c) *Air.*

Two Squadrons Hurricane Fighters.
One Bomber Squadron.
One Army-Co-operation Squadron.

I also pointed out, that the first object, namely, the denial of iron ore to Germany through Narvik, seemed already to have been achieved by the destruction of the facilities at the port, partly by the Germans themselves and partly by naval bombardment; secondly, that the interference with the supply of ore to Germany through Lulea did not seem to be a practical proposition unless the active and full co-operation of the Swedish armed forces could be assured; and that therefore the third object, namely, the maintenance of the integrity of Northern Norway seemed to be the only one of the three that required immediate consideration.

The need for Tromso as a base port in addition to Harstad was also indicated, as was the urgency of arriving at some adequate arrangement with the Norwegian Government so as to ensure the efficient control of the civil population in the theatre of operations and the desirability of placing all the armed forces in Norway under a single Commander-in-Chief.

The interdependence from a strategical point of view of Bodo, Narvik and Tromso, and the impossibility of treating the defence of any one of them as an isolated problem was also pointed out, as was the potential threat involved in the present defenceless state of the landing grounds in Northern Norway at Laxelvn and elsewhere.

24. Throughout the period I was in constant touch with Lord Cork from whom as Commander-in-Chief I received my general instructions. On 16th May Lord Cork established his Headquarters ashore, and a joint Navy and Army Operational Office was set up at Force Headquarters in Harstad. Co-operation was greatly facilitated by these measures.

25. During this period General Bethouart perfected his plans for the achievement of the objects assigned to him by me, and his troops, assisted by the Norwegians under the Command of General Fleischer on the eastern flank, continued steadily to press back the Germans North of the Rombaks Fjord and South of the Beis Fjord in circumstances of considerable difficulty of terrain and maintenance.

26. On 17th May a telegram was received from the Chiefs of Staff to the effect that, owing to events in France and Belgium, my Force would be limited to 12 French and 3 British Battalions, with ten independent companies with proportionate artillery, engineers and services,

48 heavy and 60 light anti-aircraft guns, one Hurricane Squadron, one Gladiator Squadron and, possibly, one Army Co-operation Flight. The telegram also stated that only the first object, namely, the denial of iron ore supplies to Germany through Narvik, and the third, the preservation of the integrity of Northern Norway, could be accomplished at present, but that the possession of a base in Narvik might make the second object, namely, the interference of ore supplies to Germany through Lulea, possible in time. The telegram concluded by requesting my views as to the retention of Narvik in these circumstances.

27. On 21st May, after consultation with Lord Cork and Group Captain Moore, R.A.F., I sent a reply to the effect that my considered opinion was that the land forces suggested by His Majesty's Government might be sufficient with certain small additions, that the provision of anti-aircraft artillery was unlikely to be adequate should the enemy make heavy air attacks and that I adhered to my original estimate of the minimum air forces required, namely, two Hurricane Fighter Squadrons, one bomber Squadron and one Army Co-operation Squadron.

28. Throughout this period the installation of such anti-aircraft artillery as had been made available for the force, namely, 48 heavy and 58 light anti-aircraft guns, was pushed forward with skill and energy by Brigadier Rossiter, Commanding the Anti-Aircraft Defences. Except at Harstad itself the disembarkation of these guns had to be carried out by transferring them into motor landing craft and then ferrying them ashore. The extremely mountainous nature of the country increased the difficulty of finding suitable positions for the guns, and the indented character of the coast complicated the maintenance of isolated detachments. In spite of these obstacles the establishment of the anti-aircraft artillery was effected with commendable speed and efficiency and materially added to the security of the Force and its bases.

The allotment of the limited guns available was made on the principle that it was only possible to give a minimum degree of protection to really vital areas and that smaller and less important areas must go without.

On 20th May I decided that the best disposition of these guns would be:—

Situation	Heavy Guns	Light Guns
Bardu Foss	8 (16)	12 (24)
Harstad and Skaanland	24 (48)	18 (36)
Bodo	8 (16)	12 (12)
Tromso	8 (24)	16 (24)
	<u>48 (104)</u>	<u>58 (96)</u>

The figures in brackets show the number of guns considered necessary to give really adequate protection to each area.

In addition, there were demands for anti-aircraft artillery to protect French troops in the forward areas round Narvik, at Lodingen at the mouth of Tjelsundet Fjord to protect the coast and naval anti-submarine defences there, to cover the R.D.F. stations to be installed in the Lofoten Islands and elsewhere, and also for the protection of a third landing ground under preparation at Elvenes, near Salangen.

In actual fact these proposed dispositions did not materialize and the distribution of anti-aircraft artillery at the end of May was:—

Situation	Heavy Guns	Light Guns
Bardu Foss	12	12
Sorreisa	—	2
Elvenes	—	4
Tromso	4	4
Harstad	12	5
Skaanland	15	10
Ballangen	—	4
Ankenes	—	4
Bjerkvik	—	4
Bodo	—	2
Loaded for Bodo	4	4
With the Navy ...	—	1

(Protecting French forward troops)
(Two lost at Mo)
(in a "Q" Ship)

The despatch of the guns to Tromso was in response to a Norwegian demand for protection as already recounted.

29. On 24th May telegraphic instructions were received from the Chiefs of Staff that Northern Norway was to be evacuated as soon as possible.

The Reinforcement of Bodo.

30. The security of the vital base area round Harstad was essential to ensure the success of the operations and was now threatened by the rapid Northward advance of the enemy from Mosjoen. It was necessary, therefore, to check this advance, and it appeared to me that it was essential to hold the port of Bodo so as to ensure adequate depth in the defence and because it was the only port available for use as an advanced base which still remained to us, Mo being already threatened by enemy forces in its immediate proximity. I therefore decided that an adequate force must be established in the area.

I determined to transfer the British Contingent to that area and to use the French Contingent, helped by the Norwegian Army, to continue the pressure on the enemy in the Narvik area. I issued instructions to this effect to General Bethouart on 14th May and gave him as his task the destruction of the enemy forces in that area and the capture of Narvik.

31. It has already been mentioned that the 1st Battalion, Irish Guards, and other troops sailed from Harstad on 14th May in the *Chrobry*. The ship was attacked and set on fire by German aircraft when nearing Bodo. Six officers of the Irish Guards were killed, but nearly all the troops were saved by H.M. Ships *Stork* and *Wolverine*, whose complements showed the greatest courage and resource in the work of rescue, and were brought back to Harstad having lost practically the whole of their equipment.

Realizing the urgency of the situation at Mo, I then arranged to send the 2nd Battalion, South Wales Borderers, to Bodo as soon as they could be relieved at Ankenes by a French Battalion. This unit left for Bodo in *H.M.S. Effingham* on 17th May. When *Effingham* was within an hour's steaming of Bodo she struck an uncharted rock and eventually became a total loss. The South Wales Borderers and other troops on board were

rescued by the Navy without loss of life, but with the loss of much of their equipment, though the Navy by the most strenuous exertions managed to save much of it, including even some Bren gun carriers, which was taken to Bodo in a small craft. A duplicate consignment of stores and ammunition was at once despatched to Bodo in small Norwegian fishing boats ("puffers").

I also appointed Colonel Gubbins to the command of the troops in the Bodo-Mo area in place of Brigadier Fraser, who, as already mentioned, had proceeded to Scapa Flow in *H.M.S. Somali*.

32. On 15th May as the enemy had outflanked the Scots Guards in their positions, South of Mo, Brigadier Gubbins ordered them to withdraw.

On the next day this detachment, which was commanded by Lieut.-Colonel Trappes-Lomax of the Scots Guards, evacuated Mo under pressure. Brigadier Gubbins went to Mo to acquaint himself personally with the situation, and asked for the support of fighter aircraft, of which there were none to be had, excepting those in the carriers of the Fleet Air Arm which could not be made available at that time.

On the same day I despatched the Headquarters of the 24th Guards Brigade (for the third time) and half the South Wales Borderers in destroyers to Bodo which they reached safely on 20th May. They were followed on 21st May by two Companies of the Irish Guards in "puffers", the journey by "puffer" taking about 24 hours against nine by destroyers.

Two more Companies of the Irish Guards arrived the same day at Bodo in destroyers, accompanied by Colonel Dowler of the General Staff, sent by me to make personal contact with Brigadier Gubbins.

The troops at Bodo were bombed that day by enemy aircraft.

Brigadier Gubbins had now at his disposal the three Battalions of the 24th Guards Brigade, three independent companies, one troop of Field artillery and one troop of Bofors guns; and seemed satisfied with the situation for the moment. There is no doubt, however, that the retardation of the reinforcement of the force by the sinkings of the *Chrobry* and *H.M.S. Effingham* had adversely affected the chances of stopping the enemy in the narrow defile North of Mo.

Enemy air attacks on the long and attenuated line of communications of the Scots Guards at Messingletten were causing anxiety to Brigadier Gubbins, who was also in urgent need of small armed vessels to prevent enemy landings at will in his rear. He informed me that he considered the enemy's comparative freedom to move troops by sea the most serious feature of the situation.

33. On 23rd May I formed the troops in the area into "BODOFORCE" under Brigadier Gubbins and amalgamated his Staff with that of the 24th Guards Brigade.

Brigadier Gubbins asked for reinforcements of infantry, field and anti-aircraft artillery and mechanical transport. Arrangements were made to embark these at Harstad, except as regards the infantry, it being my intention to send him three more independent companies which were due to arrive from England on 30th May. A

Company of 25 millimetre French anti-tank guns, borrowed from General Bethouart were also embarked for Bodo.

34. On 23rd May reasonably reliable information was received of the concentration in the Mo-Mosjoen area of about 4,000 Germans with tanks and artillery. This day the Scots Guards withdrew from their position and Brigadier Gubbins decided to relieve them by the Irish Guards. On 24th May the Scots Guards withdrew under orders from Brigadier Gubbins towards Rognan.

On 24th May intimation of His Majesty's Government's intention to evacuate Northern Norway was received, and I at once sent Colonel Dowler of the General Staff to acquaint Brigadier Gubbins of the new situation and to concert with him plans for the early withdrawal of all his troops from Bodo.

35. The operations for the stabilization of the position in the Bodo area were marked throughout by an unrelenting pressure on the enemy's part, both on the ground and in the air, and by a steady resistance by our troops, handicapped as they were by an almost complete absence of any support in the air or any means of hitting back at their enemy.

The evacuation of our troops from Bodo is described in paragraphs 72 to 79.

36. The reinforcement of Bodo and the maintenance of troops in that area, caused certain administrative difficulties.

The *Chrobry* conveying the Irish Guards to Bodo having been sunk, the Irish Guards returned to Harstad by destroyer and had to be completely re-equipped, even down to personal clothing of Officers and men. There were sufficient reserves in the Base to carry out 75 per cent. of this re-equipping, with the exception of certain items of personal clothing which were not available.

After *H.M.S. Effingham* conveying the South Wales Borderers to Bodo had been sunk the South Wales Borderers returned to Harstad minus their equipment—although much was salvaged from the *Effingham* subsequently. This Battalion had to be re-equipped almost completely as they were required at once. Reserve stocks were not sufficient to allow of this and equipment had to be withdrawn from Base Units. Even then the Battalion could not be completed with all items. The chief deficiencies were Mortars, Signalling equipment, Web equipment, Revolvers, Field Glasses, Compasses and Bren guns (these were, however, made up from other sources).

There were considerable difficulties in supplying "BODOFORCE". Destroyers could take personnel but very small quantities of stores. Puffers could take stores but no guns or vehicles, and had to have guards on board. Even then the reliability of the civilian crews was doubtful. There was only one coastal steamer which was capable of carrying guns and vehicles and this was in constant demand in the Harstad area. Any boat larger than a puffer had to proceed with Naval escort, which was not always available at the time required. This problem of supplying "BODOFORCE" was never solved satisfactorily before the evacuation.

The Establishment of the Air Component.

37. On 13th May the Germans had a powerful air force in Southern Norway and several excellent air bases from which to operate it. We,

on the other hand, had not a single aerodrome or landing ground fit for use. The enemy thus had complete mastery in the air, except on the somewhat rare occasions when the Fleet Air Arm were able to intervene with carrier-borne aircraft. The vigour and daring of the pilots of the Fleet Air Arm when they were able to engage the enemy earned the admiration of the whole Force, but even their strenuous efforts could not compensate for the absence of land based aircraft owing to the unavoidable relative weakness of performance of carrier-borne aircraft.

38. Shortly before Group Capt. Moore, R.A.F., who had been selected to command the Air Component, and I arrived in the theatre of operations, an energetic and inspiring start in the selection and preparation of possible landing grounds had been made by Wing Comd. Atcherley, R.A.F., who carried out this difficult task with great energy and perseverance.

Group Capt. Moore pushed on the work with the utmost determination and was ably assisted by Brigadier Pyne, my Chief Engineer. The work of preparation was hampered by much of the country being still under deep snow, making it impossible to determine whether expanses of a reasonable size and flatness would prove suitable for landing grounds in respect of their surfaces. The mountainous nature of the country forced upon us the selection and development of the most unlikely sites, of which that at Skaanland was an example. Few laymen would have thought it possible that this site could possibly be made into a landing ground for Hurricane fighter aircraft.

39. The need for some support in the air for both the sea and land forces was urgent, particularly for H.M. Ships which were suffering heavily from the daily and almost continuous attacks made on them in the narrow waters round Narvik by the thoroughly efficient enemy bomber aircraft. Nevertheless, Group Capt. Moore rightly, in my opinion, resisted all pressure to induce him to call for the aircraft to be sent before he was quite satisfied that the landing grounds could be said to be reasonably ready to receive them.

The existing landing ground at Bardu Foss, 50 miles north of Narvik, was selected to be the main air base and work to make it fit for fighters was pressed on with the utmost energy and in face of considerable difficulties, not the least of which was the conditioning of the road to it from Sorreisa at which place all stores, vehicles and equipment had to be disembarked from the ships in landing craft.

The preparation of the new landing ground at Skaanland also presented great difficulties and even the laying of a specially prepared mat brought out from the United Kingdom failed to overcome the softness of the surface caused by the peaty nature of the soil.

Another possible site was found at Elvenes near Salangen, north-east of Harstad, and was put in hand as an alternative landing ground, while work was also commenced at Elvegaard, near Bjerkvik, as soon as the enemy had been ejected from this area by the successful French landing on 13th May.

The possibility of operating aircraft from Lakelvn on Forsanger Fjord, east of Hammerfest was also considered as there is an excellent

landing ground there capable of taking two squadrons and relatively free of snow, but it was too far from the scene of active operations.

40. Eventually the first Squadron of Gladiator Fighters flew off one of the aircraft carriers on the 21st May and was safely established at Bardu Foss, with the loss of two aircraft from crashes into the mountain side in bad weather. Just before their arrival anti-aircraft artillery, heavy and light, had been installed at Bardu Foss after much labour and energy had been expended in their disembarkation and subsequent transport by road from the sea. The importance of giving this one and only aerodrome the maximum degree of protection against air attack was so great that its defence was given priority over all other needs. Twelve heavy and sixteen light anti-aircraft guns were installed there.

It was not until 26th May, that is two days after the orders to evacuate Norway had been received, that it was possible to receive the second squadron, consisting of Hurricane fighters, at Skaanland. Even then, this landing ground proved unequal to the weight of these aircraft and they too had to be operated from Bardu Foss which remained the sole landing ground in regular use until the final evacuation.

41. At the cost of a great amount of skill and energy on the part of Wing Commander Maxton, R.A.F., an advanced landing ground was got ready at Bodo and used with great effect by our aircraft in support of the troops in that area until it was so heavily bombed by enemy aircraft as to be unusable without extensive repairs.

42. Once established, the R.A.F. soon proved their superiority over the enemy bombers and fighters, and I have no doubt that the comparative immunity from air attack enjoyed by the forces during the later phases of the campaign was due to the severe losses inflicted by our aircraft on those of the enemy. The effect on the morale of the force as a whole of their vigorous and successful operations was most marked.

In general terms, my instructions to Group Capt. Moore for the employment of his fighter aircraft were:—

(a) To protect from hostile air attack the following:—

- (i) The Naval anchorage at Skauland and its approaches.
- (ii) The base at Harstad.
- (iii) Allied sea and land forces in contact with the enemy.
- (iv) Airfields occupied by the R.A.F.

(b) The primary aim of fighter aircraft should be to destroy enemy aircraft approaching the areas to be protected.

(c) To co-operate closely with the land forces operating against the enemy when required.

Organization of the Base.

43. A Maintenance Project had been prepared by my Administrative Staff whilst waiting in London before we sailed. This envisaged the creation of a main Base Area at Skaanland with a Hospital Area at Harstad, and personnel on the coast road running South. Skaanland would have come under the same A.A. protection as the Naval Anchorage.

44. Previous to my arrival, owing to the poor result of a reconnaissance of the Skaanland Area, a representative party of the Services had proceeded to Tromso with a view to investigating what facilities existed there. They had reported that provided assistance was forthcoming from the Norwegian authorities, Tromso was suitable for the handling and storage of large quantities of stores, and could probably provide sufficient accommodation for the General Hospital, but that labour was scarce. Immediately on arrival the D.A. & Q.M.G. visited the Skaanland Area after having seen the facilities available at Harstad, and reported to me that Skaanland could not be developed as a Base Area before the arrival of the winter snows owing to the large amount of constructional work on unsuitable ground that would be necessary. It was therefore decided to send a further reconnaissance to Tromso with a view to establishing a Base Sub-Area there to include the General Hospital, Supply Depot, Ordnance Depot, and certain reserves, the remainder of the base facilities being located at Harstad with an Ammunition Depot at Fjeldal near Skaanland.

45. This layout was about to be implemented when it was decided that the operations were not to be proceeded with.

46. During the period Harstad was being bombed from the air, i.e. up to the end of the third week in May, certain dispersion of stores at Harstad was made by increasing the reserves held forward and moving certain Base stocks into the surrounding countryside.

General Remarks on Administration 13-24 May.

47. As will be seen from paragraph 16, the weak link in the administrative system was the locally procured Inland Water Transport which the Navy and Army had improvised. It was weak because the crafts were owner-driven Diesel engine fishing craft of 10 to 50 tons and also because of the lack of adequate control or organization. In consequence, though willing workers, the personnel could not be relied upon, whilst the distances to be covered were great. All immediately procurable craft ("puffers") and seven small coastal steamers, two of which were used as Hospital Carriers, were located at Harstad and in the vicinity of the forward Field Supply Depots.

48. Owing to the lack of control, the crews and Dock Labourers at one time stood down during the period of the bombing attacks on Harstad. It was decided that the Army should take over the running of Inland Water Transport, and procure British personnel from home for this purpose. In the meanwhile, the Navy would continue to run it under Force Headquarters through the A.D.Tn. with certain Army personnel placed on board to ensure a measure of availability of the crafts themselves, together with their personnel.

49. Great difficulties were experienced in the handling of heavy equipment and stores at places other than Harstad, as there was no means of putting them ashore except by Motor Landing Craft. These were few in number and were also required for tactical operations. In consequence the establishment of A.A. Guns in position and the creation and stocking of aerodromes at Bardu Foss and Skaanland were seriously delayed. Labour for the creation of the aerodromes and for working in the Base

installations was procurable and generally worked well, though it would not have been sufficient to maintain the roads and assist on a large scale scheme of hutting.

50. It was soon realised that a comprehensive scheme for the control of the civil population and that certain evacuations in the Base and forward areas would be required for security reasons. An added reason was to ensure that maximum use could be made of existing accommodation for the housing of personnel and stores during the coming winter in order to reduce the hutting programme to a minimum. Negotiations were going on with this in view when operations ceased.

General Survey of Events during the Period from 25th May to 2nd June 1940.

51. The principal military operations during this period were the capture of Narvik and the evacuation of Bodo. These are described in subsequent paragraphs.

52. During the period our fighter aircraft were exceedingly active and caused heavy casualties to the enemy. As already mentioned, the Hurricane fighter squadron arrived on 26 May, and, after an abortive attempt to base it on Skaanland, was finally located at Bardu Foss with the Gladiator squadron.

Enemy activity in the air was increasingly evident at the commencement of the period under review and there were several heavy raids on Harstad, Bardu Foss, Skaanland and Bodo, the newly-prepared landing ground at the last-named place being so badly cratered as to be unusable.

As a result of these attacks *H.M.Ss. Southampton* and *Cairo* were damaged and sustained a number of casualties in personnel, while on 26 May *H.M.S. Curlew* was hit by a bomb at Skaanland and became a total loss. On 29 May the *Mashobra*, mobile base ship, had to be beached as the result of bombing attacks and also became a total loss.

Towards the end of the period enemy air activity was less noticeable, presumably owing to the activity of our fighters and the prevalence of low clouds and mist.

53. Throughout this period close touch was kept with Colonel Pollock, Head of the Mission at Tromso, and much valuable information regarding the trend of Norwegian politics and opinion was obtained from him.

54. On 29th May, after consultation with General Bethouart and myself, Lord Cork telegraphed to the Chiefs of Staff requesting that the decision, as to how and when the intention to evacuate Norway was to be communicated to the Norwegian Government and military commanders, should be left to him, otherwise the tactical situation might be gravely compromised to the detriment, not only of our troops, but also the Norwegian troops.

On the same day information received from Colonel Pollock at Tromso indicated that owing to the evacuation of Bodo, the Norwegian Government were greatly disturbed and might possibly ask for a separate armistice regardless of the military situation.

I received an urgent request from General Fleischer on 30th May to reconsider the decision to evacuate Bodo and for protection of his troops in that area. In actual fact, all Norwegian troops withdrew from the neighbourhood of Bodo without loss and escorted by a destroyer.

On 1st June Sir Cecil Dormer, H.M. Minister in Norway, and Colonel Pollock flew from Tromsø and discussed His Majesty's Government's instructions regarding the procedure to be adopted towards the Norwegian Government with Lord Cork and myself and then returned by air to Tromsø.

On 2nd June a telegram from Sir Cecil Dormer urging postponement of the commencement of the evacuation for twenty-four hours to enable the Norwegian Government to get into touch with the Swedish Government was received. Lord Cork discussed the suggestion with me, with General Bethouart present, and, as a result, the postponement was agreed to.

55. In order to make it easier for the Norwegian troops to extricate themselves when the French finally withdrew from the neighbourhood of Narvik, I wrote to General Fleischer on 2nd June asking him to withdraw his battalion in Narvik to North of Rombaks Fjord.

The Capture of Narvik.

56. After the successful landing near Bjerkvik and the subsequent operations which resulted in the clearing of the Oijord Peninsula and the North shore of the Rombaks Fjord as far East as Lilleberget, General Bethouart continued, in accordance with my instructions, to perfect his plans for the capture of Narvik. Until the ground North of the Eastern entrance of the Rombaks Fjord had been cleared an assault on Narvik would have had to be launched on difficult beaches which were believed to be strongly defended by machine guns. Furthermore, such an operation could not have come as a surprise, since the ships and landing craft would have had to be marshalled in Ofot Fjord in daylight in full view of the enemy.

57. Our hold on the Northern shore of Rombaks Fjord widened the front on which the attack could be launched and permitted it to be supported by French field artillery, established North of Oijord. The first echelon of attackers, with the necessary landing craft could now be assembled secretly under cover of Oijordneset point and emerge thence less than a mile from their objective behind the bombarding ships of the Royal Navy.

58. After careful reconnaissance, General Bethouart decided to land the first flight at a beach East of Orneset, and subsequently to transfer a total of three battalions, including a Norwegian battalion, across the Rombaks Fjord from Oijord by motor landing craft. When established ashore, this force, having first blocked the approach of enemy reinforcements from Sildvik by securing a strong position astride the railway, was to advance across the Peninsula and take the town from the rear.

59. The assault on Narvik was to be accompanied by an attack towards Beisfjord by the Polish troops established on the Ankenes Peninsula, with the objects of containing enemy troops in that area, and of threatening the enemy's line of retreat from Narvik by the road running along the North shore of the Beisfjord.

60. The landing operation was rendered particularly hazardous by the scarcity of landing craft which, owing to enemy action and mechanical breakdown, had been reduced to three assault landing craft and two motor landing craft. This meant that the number of

men in the first landing party had to be reduced to 290, the numerical weakness of which caused considerable anxiety both to General Bethouart and myself.

61. The operation was originally intended to take place on the night 24/25th May, but at a conference with General Bethouart on 23rd May I came to the conclusion that unless the weather was very propitious it would be an unjustifiable risk to undertake it with the support of only one fighter squadron of aircraft, in view of the strength and efficiency of the enemy bombers. I decided therefore that it should be postponed until after the arrival of the Hurricane fighter squadron which was due on 27th May. Lord Cork agreed with this decision.

62. After taking this decision the news of the intention of His Majesty's Government to evacuate Northern Norway was received, and it became necessary to consider whether the operation was to be proceeded with or not. After consulting General Bethouart, I recommended to Lord Cork that it should be carried out as intended on the night of 27/28th May. In doing so I considered that, apart from the desirability of making sure whether the facilities for shipping ore from Narvik had in fact been destroyed as thoroughly as had been reported, the chances that a successful attack would do much to conceal our intention to evacuate the country in the immediate future would outweigh the possible disadvantages involved in extending our commitments by establishing troops in close contact with the enemy on the Narvik Peninsula, where his main force was thought to be located.

63. The operations were timed to begin at 2340 hours on 27th May when three cruisers and five destroyers steamed into position in the mouth of the Rombaks Fjord and commenced their bombardment. Admiral Lord Cork flew his flag in *H.M.S. Cairo* in which ship I accompanied him, together with General Bethouart and his Staff. *H.M.S. Southampton* was detached to work at the mouth of Narvik Harbour to afford support to the Polish troops on the Ankenes Peninsula. The Naval bombardment on the Narvik Peninsula was on a wide front, the targets selected being the mouths of the tunnels of the railway and other suspected machine gun and artillery positions. The fire of the guns of the ships and the French field artillery was heavy and accurate, but close support of the attacking troops was hampered throughout by the broken nature of the terrain and the difficulty of accurate observation in the birch scrub which covered the lower slopes of the hills.

64. The initial landing was hardly opposed and was accomplished with little loss, the first contingent of troops quickly being successfully established on shore. The subsequent movement of troops across the Rombaks Fjord was hampered for short periods by a small gun firing from further to the East on the South shore. This gun caused some casualties, but was soon silenced by Naval gun fire, and by 0330 hours one battalion of the Foreign Legion and the Narvik battalion of the Norwegian Army were ashore on the Peninsula.

65. While this operation was in progress, the enemy launched a strong counter attack from

the East, and the forward troops had to fight hard for a time to maintain their positions; this forward movement by the enemy enabled him to bring the landing beach under fire for an appreciable period during which Commandant Paris, Chief of Staff to General Bethouart, was killed in a landing craft. The counter attack was beaten off, and the advance inland resumed. Two French tanks were also ferried across in motor landing craft and landed successfully, but unfortunately they were bogged on the beach and played no part in the operation for the capture of the town.

66. Arrangements had been made for a continuous patrol to be flown by our two squadrons of fighter aircraft over the area throughout the operation. This was carried out from 1915 hours on 27th May until 1615 hours on 29th May with the one brief enforced interval mentioned below. No enemy aircraft appeared in the area until about 0500 hours, a circumstance which seems to show that the operation came as a surprise to the enemy. Unfortunately just about this time our own aircraft became fogbound on Bardu Foss aerodrome, 50 miles to the North and could no longer protect the ships and troops. From 0500 hours to 0700 hours numerous enemy aircraft, often flying in formation, made repeated bombing attacks upon H.M. Ships round Narvik and on the troops on shore. By this time, however, the task of the ships had been substantially completed, and, by constant manoeuvring, they succeeded in avoiding serious damage, though the flagship, *H.M.S. Cairo*, was hit by two bombs and lost 30 men killed and wounded. The casualties to the landing forces from bombing amounted to only one small craft loaded with ammunition.

67. Once the initial landing had succeeded the progress of General Bethouart's troops was steady and continuous. From reports subsequently received it appears that the enemy withdrew in considerable haste eastwards along the Beisfjord, and by 2200 hours the whole Peninsula west of a line from Fagernes to Forsneset was in French hands, together with some 200 prisoners.

68. After an initial set-back the Polish troops also pressed forward along the Ankenes Peninsula and established themselves on high ground overlooking Beisford.

69. Thus ended an operation which, in my opinion, reflects great credit on the judgment and pertinacity of General Bethouart and on the fighting qualities of his troops. Reconnaissance after the capture of the town revealed the full difficulties of landing on the beaches close to the town and the wisdom of the plan finally adopted. Though he knew of the decision to evacuate Norway before the operation started, General Bethouart persevered with his plan and the vigour with which the advance eastwards was pressed after the capture of the town drove the enemy back on to his main position covering Sildvik and Hundalen, thus making it difficult for him to attempt a counter-attack against Narvik at short notice; this enabled the subsequent evacuation to be carried out under more favourable tactical conditions than at one time seemed likely.

70. Nevertheless, it is my considered opinion that the operation was carried out with the barest margin of safety, and for this reason

might well have resulted in failure. Not only had the strength of the first echelon to be put ashore to be limited to 290 men, but this small force had to maintain itself unsupported for forty-five minutes. Had the enemy been able to launch an immediate counter attack the result might have been disastrous. It must always, in my opinion, be unwise to embark on operations of this character unless landing craft are available to land a first flight of adequate strength, and, in addition, provide an adequate floating reserve to meet unforeseen contingencies. Moreover, the absence of bomber aircraft deprived the attack of one of the most effective means of repulsing an enemy counter attack, as has already been mentioned the broken and intricate nature of the ground prevented accurate observation by the supporting ships and artillery. The risk, however, was, in my opinion, worth taking, and, as things turned out, was justified.

71. I wish particularly to commend the work of Commander Hubback, R.N., of the Naval Staff, upon whom rested practically the whole responsibility for the co-ordination of the Naval share in the operation with that of the French troops. It is no exaggeration to say that the success of the operation was largely due to his unremitting application to the work in hand, and his excellent judgment and sound common-sense. The work of the Naval officers and ratings who manned the landing craft and supervised the difficult task of embarkation and disembarkation on open beaches, often under fire, was, in my opinion, magnificent and deserving of the highest praise.

The evacuation of Bodo.

72. Prior to the receipt of instructions from His Majesty's Government to evacuate Northern Norway, it had been my intention to use every means to reinforce the troops in the Bodo area. I had already in mind a plan to send down a battalion of Chasseurs Alpin, in order to have troops specially trained in mountain warfare to oppose the advance of the German infantry which was being carried out with great skill and vigour. Once the decision to evacuate Norway had been made however, it was obvious that the evacuation of the troops from Bodo must be carried out as promptly as possible, as I had already received reports from Brigadier Gubbins that, without further reinforcements, he was doubtful whether he could hold on for more than a few days.

73. On receipt of the instructions for evacuation from the Chiefs of Staff I therefore immediately despatched Colonel Dowler, my G.S.O.I, to Bodo in a destroyer, which was conveying the last company of the South Wales Borderers to join the rest of its battalion, to concert plans with Brigadier Gubbins for the withdrawal of his force.

74. In view of the heavy and repeated air attacks which were being made upon the town, docks and aerodrome at Bodo, it was decided in consultation with Lord Cork, that evacuation by destroyers provided the best chance of evacuating personnel without serious loss. This decision meant abandoning the few wheeled vehicles and guns with the force, but in view of my instructions that the first consideration was to save personnel, and also in view of the fact that no suitable ship for embarking wheeled vehicles and stores was immediately available, no other course was practicable.

75. Arrangements were therefore made to send two destroyers to embark 500 men each at 2300 hrs. 29th May and three destroyers on each of the two succeeding nights 30th and 31st May, to embark two further parties of 1,500 men each. Early on 26th May when the orders to prepare for the evacuation reached Brigadier Gubbins, the main position held by his Force was some 40 miles from Bodo, in the neighbourhood of Fauske.

Orders were issued by Brigadier Gubbins for two Independent Companies and administrative details to concentrate at Bodo at once and for the withdrawal from the position north of Fauske to start next day.

76. The general plan was that the 1st Bn. Irish Guards and three Independent Companies, which were all under the command of Lt.-Col. Stockwell, should withdraw from the position held north of Fauske and pass through the Scots Guards who were to be placed in position on a neck of land between the sea and a lake near Hopen.

Having passed through the Scots Guards the Irish Guards and the Independent Companies were to move straight to Bodo and embark.

The third battalion of the 24th Guards Brigade, namely the 2nd Bn. The South Wales Borderers, was to be placed in position across the Bodo peninsula further to the west astride Lake Soloi.

The withdrawal of the Irish Guards and the Independent Companies was carried out without interference from the enemy's land forces, though the rear party passed through the Hopen position less than an hour before the enemy's advanced troops, consisting of cyclists and machine guns, made contact with the Scots Guards.

The enemy were at once engaged and the bridge at Hopen was destroyed. This checked the pursuit and the Germans made no movement during the next day.

During the withdrawal on the last night the enemy again followed up with cyclists and machine guns, but no serious pressure developed and no delay occurred.

One company from the Scots Guards and one company from the South Wales Borderers with four 25-pr. guns were placed in position some 4 kilometres east of the town and formed the final rearguards. These companies withdrew to the quay without difficulty by previously reconnoitred routes.

77. During the three days covering the period of the re-embarkation several bombing attacks were carried out by the enemy on Bodo and its vicinity, but during none of the three periods when the actual embarkation of troops was in progress was there any interference from enemy aircraft in spite of the fact that there was continual daylight. This was probably due to unfavourable flying conditions during the first two days. On the last day however, the weather cleared.

The times chosen were round about midnight when enemy air activity was normally at its lowest.

Fortunately the quay at Bodo had not suffered from enemy air attacks and this enabled destroyers to go alongside without difficulty. The embarkations were carried through with great rapidity, 500 men of one battalion embarking with their kits in less than ten minutes.

78. The swiftness and efficiency with which the evacuation was carried out reflects great credit on Brigadier Gubbins and his staff. The destroyers of the Royal Navy were very well handled and carried out the programme laid down to the minute. Four 25-pr. guns, four Bofors guns, and three Bren carriers which had been salvaged from *H.M.S. Effingham* had to be abandoned together with such material as could not be moved by the men, but some wireless sets and all the arms and equipment, including Bren guns and anti-tank rifles, which could be carried by the men, were brought away.

79. The first echelon to be embarked were transferred at sea from the destroyers to *H.M.S. Vindictive* and conveyed direct to the United Kingdom. Owing to the fact that transports for the second and third echelons had not arrived in time to admit of their direct transshipment, the troops comprised in these were landed at Borkenes to the east of Harstad and re-embarked later as part of the general evacuation programme.

General considerations in the evacuation of Norway.

80. As mentioned already His Majesty's Government's orders to evacuate Northern Norway were received by Lord Cork and communicated at once by him to me. The information was passed on by me to a few selected senior staff officers. General Bethouart was informed by me in Lord Cork's presence.

The news was not imparted to my heads of services or to junior staff officers until May 29th. In the meanwhile, though many steps were taken in preparation for evacuation, such as the loading of arms and stores in ships and the embarkation of certain personnel, the deception was maintained and fostered by all possible means that these activities were concerned with the reinforcement of Bodo, the establishment of the Tromsø base or the occupation of Hammerfest and the landing ground in the far North. Thanks to the loyalty and discretion of those concerned, the secret was well kept, and even those who might have suspected were kept constantly confused by conflicting rumours and bogus instructions sedulously circulated by those staff officers in the know.

81. The successful French operations round Narvik resulted in there being three Polish battalions in the area Ankenes-Beisford in touch with the enemy north east of the latter place. East of Narvik the Foreign Legion had made steady progress toward Sildvik and had met with increasing enemy resistance. A Norwegian battalion was in Narvik. On the north shore of the Rombaks Fjord a battalion of Chasseurs was in close touch with German outposts opposite Stromsnes, while General Fleischer's 6th Norwegian Division (5 battalions) were holding from the left of the Chasseurs to the Swedish frontier north of Bjornefjell, also in touch with the enemy.

General Bethouart was particularly anxious that the withdrawal of his troops should not compromise or endanger the Norwegian troops in his sector. The original programme of evacuation was timed to begin on the night 2nd/3rd June, but was postponed 24 hours at the urgent request of Sir Cecil Dormer in order to enable the Norwegian Government to try to implement the so called "Mowinkel Plan" through the Swedish Government and so ensure that Narvik should become a neutral area under

Swedish protection. In view of the probability of heavy enemy air attacks on Harstad I agreed to this postponement with great reluctance.

82. The Norwegian high command was informed by its Government of the impending evacuation and after a very natural display of great disappointment, continued to co-operate loyally to the end, although they might with some justification, have decided to lay down their arms at once and so gravely prejudice our withdrawal. It was a trying period for all concerned, throughout which Colonel Pollock, head of the Military Mission at Tromsø, was of the greatest assistance to Lord Cork and myself; in spite of everything he managed to maintain cordial relations with the Norwegian authorities to the last.

83. Bodo having been evacuated there was a distinct though not perhaps grave, danger that the enemy working up the coast might appear on the south shores of the Ofot and Vest Fjords and embarrass our withdrawal from there; all craft carrying French troops from the Narvik-Ankenes area had to pass through the Tjelsundet Fjord past Harstad and beyond before re-embarkation into transports could take place. There was also a risk that enemy detachments, sea or air borne, might effect a landing on the long indented coast line of Hinnoy Island on which Harstad stands and directly interfere with our main embarkation centre.

To counter these possible dangers, patrols by warships and aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm and by motorised troops on the island of Hanoy, were organised and maintained throughout the evacuation period.

The telephonic communications with Bodo and the south were also forcibly severed, much to the annoyance of the local Norwegian authorities who had no understanding of the needs of war.

In actual fact the Germans did work up the coast as fast as they could in the face of interference by the Navy, but only succeeded in reaching the neighbourhood of Ballangen with a few parachutists on the final evening of the evacuation.

The weather throughout the evacuation period (June 3rd to 8th) remained generally overcast and dull. I can only assume that it was to this factor and to the genuine fear which our fighter aircraft had succeeded in inspiring in the German bombers that the embarkation of some 27,000 men was carried out with practically no interference from the air.

It was lucky that this was so, as a well directed attack on the quays at Harstad or the beaches round Narvik might have had a very serious effect on the completion of the programme. As it was, the embarkation proper was carried out without a casualty, though there were losses from enemy air attacks during the period.

84. My instructions from the C.I.G.S. were to the effect that the primary object was to save and bring away personnel, and that the salvage of arms, equipment and stores was a secondary object. With this in view I gave orders that if necessary all anti-aircraft artillery was to be kept in action till the last moment and that all fighter aircraft were to be kept in operation till the last man was evacuated and then destroyed.

In actual fact, owing to the inactivity of the enemy it was found possible to save anti-aircraft guns and to fly all the aircraft on to the aircraft carrier *Glorious*, which was, however, unfortunately sunk later by enemy warships on her way to Scapa Flow.

85. My chief preoccupation from the tactical point of view was the disengagement, withdrawal and embarkation from open beaches into fishing boats, re-embarkation into destroyers and final embarkation into transports at sea, of the French troops in contact with the enemy round Narvik. This was most carefully and successfully effected by General Bethouart ably assisted by Commander Hubback, R.N., to both of whom great credit is due.

86. The personnel who had already been sent to Tromsø in connection with the organization of a base and the installation of anti-aircraft artillery at that place, together with the members of the military mission, the King and the Government were evacuated in *H.M.S. Devonshire* under arrangements made by Lord Cork and the authorities on the spot.

The anti-aircraft guns (4 heavy and 4 light) were handed over to General Rugé, Commander-in-Chief of the Norwegian Army.

87. The entire process of embarkation, whether from beaches or quays, in fishing boats, destroyers or directly into transport went with the greatest smoothness and celerity and reflects the greatest possible credit on all concerned. The morale and cheerfulness of the troops remained high throughout, although their destination was not known to them until they were actually on the high seas so well was the secret kept.

88. The French Chasseurs furnished the final rear-guard round Harstad but the actual rear party round the quays was found by the Royal Engineers and Military Police. There was no disorder or unpleasantness of any kind.

Evacuation of Personnel.

89. The problem was examined in conjunction with the Navy after an estimate had been made of the numbers to be evacuated, and the probable dispositions at the time of breaking contact. As a result of this the F.O. Narvik sent an agreed wire to the Admiralty outlining the suggested proposals for evacuation. This was agreed to and a sufficient number of large liners was despatched from the United Kingdom together with three store ships and one horse ship. The time taken for us to evacuate the personnel was five days.

90. In the case of Harstad parties embarked direct on to destroyers, whilst at Skaanland and in the Narvik and Sorreisa areas embarkation was by means of "puffer" from land to destroyers lying off. The destroyers then proceeded approximately 70 miles to rendezvous where they loaded direct to liners, three of which were filled at a time. These in turn moved to anchorages in the Fjords awaiting orders for the forming of the main convoy, which was done during the night 7th/8th June. At each embarkation place, alternative points for embarkation were selected in case of bombing, whilst a reserve of "puffer" craft was held at each locality to meet all probable eventualities. These craft were formed into small fleets with an Army officer in charge, and two British O.Rs. on board each ship.

91. Troops in contact in the Narvik area were embarked on the last day into six destroyers under the control of Commander Hubback, R.N., who supervised with the assistance of certain British officers, the embarkation of the 2,500 French troops.

Losses and Casualties.

92. The total losses apart from Naval and Air Force casualties, incurred during the period 13th May-8th June were approximately 235 all ranks killed, 535 wounded and 200 missing.

Of the above French casualties amounted to 170 killed and 360 wounded and missing.

Conclusion—Lessons of the Operations.

93. The predominant factor in the recent operations has been the effect of air power. In the operations which culminated in the evacuation of Bodo the enemy had complete initiative in the air, and used it, first, to support his troops:—

(a) By low-flying attacks.

(b) By bombing.

(c) By surprise landings of troops by parachute and from seaplanes.

(d) By supplying his advanced detachments by air.

And secondly, to deny us the use of sea communications in the narrow coastal waters in the theatre of operations.

94. The actual casualties caused to troops on the ground by low-flying attacks were few, but the moral effect of continuous machine-gunning from the air was considerable. Further, the enemy made repeated use of low-flying attacks with machine guns in replacement of artillery to cover the movement of his troops. Troops in forward positions subjected to this form of attack are forced to ground, and, until they have learned by experience its comparative innocuousness, are apt not to keep constant watch on the enemy. Thus the enemy were enabled on many occasions to carry out forward and outflanking movements with impunity.

The second effect of low-flying attacks was the partial paralysis of headquarters and the consequent interruption in the exercise of command.

Thirdly, low-flying attacks against transport moving along narrow roads seriously interfered with supply, though this was never completely interrupted.

95. Bombing was not effective against personnel deployed in the open, but this again interfered with the functioning of headquarters and the movement of supplies.

The enemy's use of aircraft in these two methods of offence was obviously most closely co-ordinated with the action of his forward troops, and showed a very high degree of co-operation between his Air Force and his Army, particularly in view of the fact that his aerodromes were distant from the actual fighting.

96. Surprise landings from aircraft had far-reaching effects owing to the ability they conferred on the enemy to outflank positions or take them in the rear.

The action on the Hemnes Peninsula, South of Mo, provides an outstanding example of these tactics. The sequence of this action was first bombing and low-flying attacks on our troops holding the position. These attacks were

followed almost immediately by landings from seaplanes in two places on each flank of the peninsula. Once these landings had been secured they were promptly reinforced by small coastal steamers and further reinforcements were brought up to the outflanking detachments by seaplanes on succeeding days. In addition, seaplanes were used to ferry troops for further outflanking movements. Bicycles, mortars and motor cycles were carried in the seaplanes for this purpose.

The possibility of the enemy carrying out such outflanking movements caused continuous dispersion of the troops trying to hold defensive positions during the withdrawal and prevented sufficient concentration to enable any of the positions selected to be held successfully.

97. The enemy's ability to supply detachments by air enabled him to neglect or overcome many of the obstacles put in his way by demolitions.

The outstanding example of the supply by air is the maintenance of the German detachments in the Narvik area. In this area his troops to the number of three or four thousand have been successfully supplied by air for many weeks, partly by seaplanes landed on the Beisfjord, partly by aircraft landed on frozen lakes or small landing grounds, and partly by the dropping of containers attached to parachutes.

From the reports received, the enemy operating in the mountainous country 12 to 15 miles North of Narvik were plentifully supplied with all their requirements. A large number of cardboard containers were found in Narvik, and it is reported that large quantities of perishable foodstuffs, such as vegetables, eggs and butter from Denmark, were successfully dropped in Narvik from the air.

98. As regards the control of sea communications, the enemy's supremacy in the air made the use inshore of naval vessels of the type co-operating with this force highly dangerous and uneconomical. Though it might have been possible to use high speed coastal motor boats armed with small guns to prevent movement of enemy craft in these waters, the use of trawlers, owing to their extreme vulnerability to air attack, was not considered practicable. On the other hand, the inshore waterways were used at will by the Germans, who constantly employed local boats and steamers to ferry their troops about thus entailing more dispersion of the defending forces on land.

In an attempt to send considerable reinforcements and wheeled vehicles to Bodo, the Polish steamer *Chrobry* was sunk before she reached port. The unloading of large supply ships which, owing to the limited facilities available, would have taken many hours, had to be ruled out as impracticable and reinforcements to Bodo could therefore be sent only by destroyer or by small local craft. Thus the provision of adequate reinforcements in guns and vehicles was made extremely difficult.

99. The second main factor which has affected the operations in this theatre has been training. It has been brought out that for operations of this nature thoroughly trained soldiers only are of any real value, and that every officer and man must be physically hard and fit.

The first need is for troops trained to move freely over hilly country and physically fit to carry the "soldier's load" for long periods under active service conditions. The enemy appeared to be superior to our troops in this respect, and his mobility and powers of endurance were remarkable. In this connection I wish to record my opinion that the "soldier's load" is still far too great.

The second need is a proper appreciation of the value of ground and the willingness to quit valleys and get up on to high ground with confidence and determination.

The third need is the vital necessity for initiative and self-reliance on the part of subordinate commanders, and the necessity for teaching them that a weak threat to a flank can be ignored and need not be a menace entailing general retirement.

100. As regards equipment, the following lessons emerged:—

(a) The need for an automatic weapon capable of producing sustained and accurate fire at long ranges, that is the medium machine gun. The lack of such a weapon was severely felt, and the Bren gun was not adequate to perform many of the fire tasks which it was called upon to undertake. The Germans continually employed overhead fire from long range automatic weapons.

(b) The Bren gun tripod was found too heavy to move about over the hills for the "independent companies" which had no special transport for it. In such theatres as this, pack transport for this purpose would seem essential. "Tommy" guns were invaluable, and were successfully used by the enemy.

(c) The two inch mortar was found to be effective, but should have been supplied with a greater proportion of H.E. bombs. The German mortar, which appeared to have a range of about 1,500 yards, was reported as being not particularly successful as the shell seemed to have very little killing power, possibly due to over-fragmentation.

(d) Bicycles. The Germans made extensive use of these for their advanced guards, and the mobility thus achieved was remarkable.

(e) Three Bren gun carriers of one of the battalions proved of great value, particularly in assisting the withdrawal of rear parties.

(f) 25 pounder field guns proved efficient and were found to be more manoeuvrable than was expected. No difficulties of crest clearance were reported.

(g) Signal equipment. The Marconi sets supplied to the Independent Companies were useless. They were too heavy to be carried, and had insufficient range. No. 18 set as used on the frontier of India, would have been more suitable. No. 11 set proved most useful, and also the Lucas signalling lamp. Personnel were insufficiently trained to get the best value out of heliographs.

101. The Arctic boots were reported in all cases too big. Boots two sizes only above the normal are needed to ensure a correct fit.

Skis are essential for operations in snow, but the men must be really well trained and specially selected. Only a portion of a unit, however, need be fitted with skis if the remainder are equipped with snow shoes. The battle dress and leather jerkin proved most serviceable, but

a proportion only of fur-lined coats, sufficient for guards and sentries, need have been issued.

It is considered that gas masks and steel helmets need not usually be worn in operations of this nature.

In country such as this, some form of pack transport is essential to ensure full mobility. The Germans made considerable use of impressed ponies, and also of Norwegians impressed as porters.

102. Such demolitions as were carried out had surprisingly little result in stopping the enemy even though effected with complete thoroughness. It is believed that the Germans made extensive use of improvised rafts and rubber boats to cross rivers and narrow fjords. In fact the enemy's thoroughness and foresight in providing everything required for fighting were extraordinary.

103. Co-operation with the Navy in the landing operations carried out by the French Army has been close and effective, but the operations have been handicapped to a marked degree by lack of suitable equipment.

For the landing in the Herjangs Fjord on the 13th of May only four Assault Landing Craft and two Motor Landing Craft were available, and many of the troops had to be taken ashore in open boats.

Thanks to the weakness of the enemy's resistance at the points selected for landing and the skill and determination with which the operation was carried out it was successful, but had the resistance proved to be more serious the results might well have been very different.

Again, the plans for the landing on the peninsula North of Narvik had continually to be changed and postponed owing to the lack of proper landing craft, particularly of Motor Landing Craft which were required to land tanks. These Motor Landing Craft were also in constant demand for the vital task of landing heavy anti-aircraft guns for the protection of the base area.

The landing at Narvik was also successful thanks to the most effective co-operation of the Royal Navy, the excellent support given by the guns of H.M. Ships and the skill and determination of General Bethouart's troops, but with the facilities available the transfer of three battalions across a narrow fjord some 1,500 yards wide took over seven hours, and the strength of the first flight had to be limited to 300 men.

The landing of such a small advanced party on a hostile shore entailed considerable risk, and in view of the likelihood of such operations having to be repeated in other theatres of war it is urgently necessary that an ample supply of modern landing craft should be provided without further delay. It is unfair to expect any troops to undertake such hazardous operations with such inadequate means.

104. The control of the civil population in a war zone is always a matter of great difficulty and particularly so in an Allied country, and it was found almost impossible to impose any restrictions upon the movement of civilians by land or water or upon telephone and telegraphic communication.

There have been therefore ample opportunities for the enemy to obtain military information from agents or to organize sabotage. Had the campaign been continued it would have been

essential to obtain full powers from the Norwegian authorities to put security measures into force, but it is doubtful whether these measures would have been effective had they been carried out through the Civil Authorities, which is the ideal method. It is probable that a complete Military Government would have had to be set up unless the civil population had been completely evacuated from all areas in close military occupation. Again, had sustained air attack been directed against towns such as Harstad, civil resources could not have met the demands for hospital accommodation, food, light and sanitation which would have resulted.

It is recommended, therefore, that full weight should be given to these considerations when planning a campaign of this nature, and that a definite policy of evacuation or military control of all civilian activities in the theatre of war should be insisted upon from the outset.

105. The Force relied mainly upon local hired craft, such as Diesel-engined fishing boats, and small steamers, for the distribution by water of food, ammunition and stores of all kinds. This system proved very unsatisfactory, and at one time, after comparatively light bombing of the base area, threatened to break down completely owing to the defection of the civilian crews, even though military guards were placed on board. It is unreasonable to expect civilian hired personnel to incur the risks inseparable from such work under heavy air attack, and the replacement of these civilians by skilled and enlisted personnel subject to military law and discipline would have become inevitable.

In any future expedition of this nature, this important subject must receive full consideration before the expedition is launched and adequate provision of suitable craft, including fast motor-boats for inter-communication and control, together with trained crews must be made.

106. In conclusion, the first general lesson to be drawn is that to commit troops to a campaign in which they cannot be provided with adequate air support is to court disaster.

The second lesson is that no useful purpose can be served by sending troops to operate in an undeveloped and wild country such as Norway unless they have been thoroughly trained for their task and their fighting equipment well thought out and methodically prepared in advance. Improvisation in either of these respects can lead only to failure. Our preparation and provision for ensuring the comfort of the troops were magnificent, too good perhaps; it was in respect of fighting equipment that we compared unfavourably with the enemy.

107. As will be seen from what has previously been stated in this report, the two outstanding difficulties from the administrative point of view, were, first, shortage of administrative transportation and movement control staffs, and, secondly, the entire lack of any organization to operate what was, perforce, the main transportation agency, namely, inland water transport. In the main, although the role of the force since its inception had been changed several times, its composition remained substantially as originally designed.

The first difficulty, except in respect of movement control staff, was to some extent overcome on my arrival by the additional administrative and transportation staff that I brought with me.

Pending the arrival of personnel and staff of the Inland Water Transport organization, the steps taken to set up some form of organization were as follows:—

On his arrival the Assistant Director of Transportation took over the control of the improvised organization which had previously operated the Inland Water Transport fleet. A part of the railway operating company was used on its arrival to form the nucleus of an inland water transport organization. All craft were numbered, organized into fleets, and their movements recorded. The captain of each craft was given written orders each time he was detailed for duty, and a system of leave for "puffer" crews was started, otherwise they would not work for more than a limited period. One soldier was placed on board each "puffer" and most of the steamers were manned by naval crews.

During the evacuation the armed guard in each "puffer" was increased to two, and each fleet was placed under the command of an army officer.

Even with this amount of control it was difficult to prevent the "puffer" crews absenting themselves with their craft, especially after a bombing attack, and the Inland Water Transport situation remained precarious up to the end.

Summary.

108. I trust it will be clear from this report that although my command in Norway lasted for about four weeks only, the problems which my staff officers and the troops under my command had to face were complex and unusual. That they were solved and, so far as lay in their power, solved successfully, is, I submit, the best tribute I can offer to those who served under me.

109. In the strategical and tactical sphere, the outlook changed rapidly from a situation in which I had every hope of receiving the forces and resources for which I had asked to enable me to maintain the integrity of Northern Norway, recapture Narvik and assume the offensive against the enemy to the southward, to one in which it appeared as if the Force would have to fight hard to retain a fringe of the coast round Narvik and Harstad with inadequate support in the shape of ships, artillery and aircraft. This phase again quickly gave place to the final problem of complete withdrawal from Norway in the face of increasing enemy pressure on the sea, in the air and on the ground.

I fully realise that these changes were inevitable and essential, and I mention them only to stress the efficiency and loyalty with which every one in the Force responded to what must have been to those not in the possession of inside knowledge, a bewildering and possibly disheartening succession of changes of plan on the part of the higher command.

110. Co-operation between the three services and within the Force itself was excellent throughout, which is perhaps remarkable considering the very mixed composition of the Force.

111. I have already had occasion to mention certain individuals by name, but I desire

specially to bring to notice the services of the following officers:—

Captain L. E. H. Maund, R.N. and Commander G. Hubback, R.N. were closely associated with the operations and planning side of my headquarters throughout the operations, and rendered invaluable assistance to me and my staff and to the troops, British and French.

Group Captain M. Moore, O.B.E., R.A.F., commanded the air component and it is due very largely to his energy, determination and tactical ability, first that it so quickly and decisively gained superiority over the enemy air forces.

I cannot speak too highly of this officer's services.

Brigadier C. McV. Gubbins, D.S.O. commanded the forces round Bodo in most difficult circumstances with the greatest skill and determination, and it was largely due to his devoted efforts that a premature withdrawal, which might have seriously compromised the whole campaign, did not occur in this area.

Brigadier J. A. H. Gammell, D.S.O., M.C. acted throughout as my Brigadier General Staff and Chief Staff Officer with marked success. His energy, determination and devotion to duty were remarkable, and the success of the operations was due in no small measure to his untiring efforts.

Brigadier R. M. Wootten, M.C. as my chief administrative staff officer, bore practically the entire burden of responsibility for coping with the many and varied problems to which the rapid changes of policy gave rise. The results of his work speak for themselves and, in my opinion, stamp him as an officer of outstanding ability and firmness of character.

112. I need not again mention the services of General Bethouart, commanding the Franco-Polish Expeditionary Force, as their outstanding nature should be evident from the accounts of the operations conducted by him. I would, however, like to bring to notice, the work of Major D. A. W. Watney, O.B.E., liaison officer with General Bethouart, whose fluent knowledge of French and sound tactical sense, added to his quick understanding and engaging personality, were largely responsible for the cordial and constant co-operation which obtained between my headquarters, French headquarters, and the Royal Navy.

113. I have to acknowledge the close and un-failing support I received, often in very difficult circumstances, from the following Norwegian officers:—

General Rugé. Commander-in-Chief,
Norwegian Army.

General Fleischer. Commander, 6th
Norwegian Division.

Colonel H. Finne. Liaison Officer at my
Headquarters.

114. Finally, I wish to record my deep sense of gratitude to the Commander-in-Chief, Admiral of the Fleet the Earl of Cork and Orrery, G.C.B., G.C.V.O., under whom I served throughout the campaign, for his quick understanding of the problems before me, his un-failing consideration, and the generous and ready help which he gave me on all occasions, thereby making it possible for me to carry out my task.

C. J. E. AUCHINLECK.

*Lieutenant-General,
General Officer Commanding-in-Chief,
Norwegian Expeditionary Force.*

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