

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY PAMPHLET

NO. 20-271

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**THE GERMAN
NORTHERN THEATER
OF OPERATIONS
1940-1945**

**BY
EARL F. ZIEMKE**

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THE GERMAN

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EARL F. ZIEMKE

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Mil Msn (5)
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ADGRU (USAR) (1)

NG: State AG (3).

USAR: USAR Sch (2).

For explanation of abbreviations used, see AR 320-50.

FOREWORD

The Office of the Chief of Military History of the Department of the Army is currently preparing a series of studies on German military operations in World War II against forces other than those of the United States. In addition to the volumes already published dealing with Poland and the Balkans and the present volume on Norway and Finland, these monographs will cover German operations in Russia, France and the Low Countries. These campaign studies are being made available to the General Staff and to the Army schools and colleges as reference works. They will also prove of value to all who are interested in military affairs.

The German campaigns in Norway and Finland established landmarks in the evolution of military science even though they failed in the long run to influence the outcome of the war. In the invasion of Norway the Germans executed the first large-scale amphibious (in fact triphibious) operation of World War II. The subsequent German operations out of Finland provided the first, and still unique, instance of major military forces operating in the Arctic and created a precedent, at least, for the inclusion of that region, once considered almost totally inaccessible, in strategic considerations. In these respects the operations in the German Northern Theater have a direct association with concepts of warfare which have not yet reached their final stage of development and are, therefore, of current and possible future interest.

PREFACE

This volume describes two campaigns that the Germans conducted in their Northern Theater of Operations. The first they launched, on 9 April 1940, against Denmark and Norway. The second they conducted out of Finland in partnership with the Finns against the Soviet Union. The latter campaign began on 22 June 1941 and ended in the winter of 1944-45 after the Finnish Government had sued for peace.

The scene of these campaigns by the end of 1941 stretched from the North Sea to the Arctic Ocean and from Bergen on the west coast of Norway, to Petrozavodsk, the former capital of the Karelo-Finnish Soviet Socialist Republic. It faced east into the Soviet Union on a 700-mile-long front, and west on a 1,300-mile sea frontier. Hitler regarded this theater as the keystone of his empire, and, after 1941, maintained in it two armies totaling over a half million men.

In spite of its vast area and the effort and worry which Hitler lavished on it, the Northern Theater throughout most of the war constituted something of a military backwater. The major operations which took place in the theater were overshadowed by events on other fronts, and public attention focused on the theaters in which the strategically decisive operations were expected to take place. Remoteness, German security measures, and the Russians' well-known penchant for secrecy combined to keep information concerning the Northern Theater down to a mere trickle, much of that inaccurate. Since the war, through official and private publications, a great deal more has become known. The present volume is based in the main on the greatest remaining source of unexploited information, the captured German military and naval records. In addition a number of the participants on the German side have very generously contributed from their personal knowledge and experience.

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PART ONE
THE CAMPAIGNS IN NORWAY AND DENMARK

Chapter 1

The Background of German Operations in Norway and Denmark

The Scandinavian Dilemma

Once, in the Dark Ages, the Norsemen had been the terror of the European coasts, and their search for plunder had carried them east to Byzantium and into the interior of Russia. In the eleventh century Cnut the Great of Denmark ruled England and Norway. Later, for a time, the Danes united all of Scandinavia under their crown. Under Gustavus Adolphus, a military genius who created the world's first modern army, Sweden became a Great Power and brought the entire eastern shore of the Baltic Sea under its control.

By the nineteenth century those glories had dimmed and faded. Sweden lost Finland to the Russian Czar in 1809; and a few years later, as a consequence of its alliance with Napoleon, Denmark was forced to give up Norway which, until 1905, was joined to Sweden in an uneasy personal union under the Swedish king. With practical good sense, the Scandinavian countries then turned their energies to internal affairs and, except for a short war which Denmark lost to the German Confederation in 1866, resolutely avoided military entanglements. After the turn of the century they watched with growing concern as tension built up in Europe, and in December 1912 they formulated a set of rules for neutrality in an attempt to create a legal basis for the position they hoped to maintain in case of war.

For Scandinavia the most fateful aspect of the approaching conflict was the rising enmity between Great Britain and Germany. In a war between the great sea power and the great land power the Scandinavian states would occupy the middle ground, no comfortable spot for neutrals. Whatever course they took promised to be hazardous and might end in disaster.

In World War I it was still possible to strike a balance. The Norwegian and Swedish merchant fleets were pressed into Allied service.

On the other hand, the largest share of Swedish industrial production and of the iron ore from the Kiruna-Gällivare fields went to Germany, and German pressure forced Denmark to mine sections of the Great Belt to protect the German naval base at Kiel. In August 1918 the British compelled Norway to complete the North Sea minefield by mining the waters near Karmøy. Although the cost had been high, the Scandinavian countries emerged from the war more than ever convinced that neutrality had to be the major principle of their foreign policy.

On the eve of World War II it appeared that the pattern of 1914-18 might be repeated; but the Scandinavian position was only superficially the same: there had been important and dangerous changes. In Germany, the Nazi government was both daring and capricious, and militarily it was not tied down on the Continent as the Imperial government had been. The Germans had not forgotten the so-called "hunger blockade" of World War I nor the part Norway had played in it and might be forced to play again. The German Navy's poor showing during World War I still rankled, and a favorite theory was that the war at sea would have gone differently had the German Fleet been able to operate from bases outside the land-locked North Sea, bases, for instance, on the west coast of Norway. Most significant of all, as long as the Lorraine mines stayed in French hands, the German war machine was absolutely dependent on Swedish iron ore. During the warmer months the ore could be shipped through the Swedish port of Luleå on the Baltic Sea; but in winter, when ice closed the Baltic ports, the ore had to be loaded at Narvik on the Norwegian Atlantic coast. To reach Narvik in wartime the German ore ships had to use the Leads, the protected channel between the Norwegian coast and its tight fringe of offshore islands. Also, German blockade runners could take cover in the Leads and break out into the open ocean anywhere along the Norwegian coast. These were facts which had not escaped the Allies, particularly the British who were not prepared to take the offensive anywhere except at sea and saw in economic warfare a chance to avoid a second bloodletting on the scale of World War I.

On 1 September 1939 the German Foreign Ministry instructed its ministers in Norway, Sweden, and Finland to inform those governments "in clear, but decidedly friendly, terms" that Germany intended to respect their integrity—in so far as they maintained strict neutrality—but would not tolerate breaches of that neutrality by third parties. It had made a similar declaration to the Danish Government a week earlier. During the next week Ambassador Ulrich von Hassell visited the Scandinavian and Finnish capitals where he repeated the German assurances and warned the governments against accepting any restrictions imposed from the outside on their trade with Germany.¹ The

¹U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945* (Washington, 1956), Series D, Vol. VII, pp. 392, 396-98, 502, 522, 541.

German statements to the Scandinavian governments were essentially the same as those made to the other European neutrals at the same time. The British Government had already considered a more positive approach. A week before the outbreak of war the Foreign Office had proposed intimating to the Norwegian Government that a German attack on Norway would be regarded as tantamount to an attack on Great Britain. But the communication finally sent was watered down to a promise that the British would consider it in their interest to come to Norway's assistance if Norway incurred German reprisals by showing benevolence toward the Allies in the matter of the ore traffic.²

A Siege of Britain

In the third week of September 1939 the German conquest of Poland was nearly completed. The Russians were marching in from the east, and the remnants of the Polish Army were being wiped out at Warsaw, Modlin, and L'vov. Great Britain and France had declared war, but they displayed no inclination to take the offensive. Contrary to the widely held belief that Hitler was following a detailed war plan, the Germans themselves had no clear idea of what to do next. During a conference with Hitler on 23 September, Grossadmiral Erich Raeder, Commander in Chief, Navy, raised the question of measures to be adopted "in case" the war against Great Britain and France had to be fought to the finish. The possibility of unrestricted submarine warfare, to be proclaimed as "a siege of Britain," came under consideration; but Hitler had not yet made up his mind. He still hoped "to drive a wedge" between Great Britain and France.³

On 27 September, the day Warsaw and Modlin surrendered, Hitler called the commanders in chief of the three services to the Reich Chancellery and informed them that he intended to open an offensive in the west as soon as possible, certainly before the end of the year.⁴ The announcement, bombshell though it was, was received with some skepticism. It was not the first time Hitler had given too free a rein to his imagination; moreover, the prospects of peace with the Allies appeared good, and Hitler had committed himself to making an offer (which he did in the Reichstag speech of 6 October). Within two days the Army had mustered a half dozen compelling arguments against a campaign in the west, which it regarded as technically impossible before the turn of the year and unpromising, if not dangerous, at any time in the foreseeable future.⁵ The following weeks of doubt and uncertainty brought

² J. R. M. Butler, *Grand Strategy* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1957), Vol. II, p. 93.

³ *Fuehrer Conferences on Matters Dealing With the German Navy* (Washington, 1947) (hereafter cited as *Fuehrer Conferences*), 1939, p. 9.

⁴ Helmuth Greiner, *Die Feldzuege gegen die Westmaechte und im Norden*, pp. 1-10. MS # C-065d. OCMH.

⁵ Franz Halder, *Kriegstagebuch des Generalobersten Franz Halder* (hereafter cited as *Halder Diary*), Vol. II, p. 16. *War Diary, German Naval Staff, Operations Division, Part A* (Washington, 1948) (hereafter cited as *Naval War Diary*), Vol. 2, p. 40.

a flurry of estimates, proposals, and counterproposals from the Armed Forces High Command (*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*—OKW) and the service commands—Army High Command (*Oberkommando des Heeres*—OKH), Navy High Command (*Oberkommando der Kriegsmarine*—OKM), and Air Force High Command (*Oberkommando der Luftwaffe*—OKL).⁶

In a Naval Staff Conference on 2 October Raeder presented a list of three possibilities for future operations which he had received from the Chief, OKW:

1. Attempt a decision by operations on land in the west. Concentrate the entire armament industry and war economy on the Army and Air Force.

2. Attempt a decision by the “siege of Britain.” Concentrate efforts on the most speedy and large-scale expansion of the submarine arm and of the aircraft types required for warfare against Britain. On land: defense in the west.

3. Defense at sea and on land; delaying tactics.⁷

As Chief, Naval Staff, Raeder expressed the belief that the most effective means to accomplish the defeat of the main enemy, Great Britain, was the “siege of Britain,” and he ordered supporting considerations drawn up.⁸

Since, according to the generals, the future of land operations was doubtful, it looked as if the “siege of Britain” might move into the forefront of German strategy. While Raeder obviously welcomed such a development, he had to recognize that the Navy was far from ready to carry out the greatly expanded mission that would fall to it. In the first place, the Submarine Command had only 29 Atlantic-type U-boats.⁹ Secondly, the Navy was not in a favorable position to assume the offensive outside the North Sea. It had concluded, in the “Battle Instructions” of May 1939, that the English Channel would be completely blocked and that the British would spare no pains to close the northern route out of the North Sea, between the Shetland Islands and Norway.¹⁰ Resolution of the first problem, that of the submarines, was

⁶ The German abbreviations OKW, OKH, OKM, and OKL will be used throughout this study. The commanders in chief were Generaloberst Walter von Brauchitsch, Army; Grossadmiral Erich Raeder, Navy; and Generalfeldmarschall Hermann Goering, Air Force. The OKW, headed by the Chief, OKW, Generaloberst Wilhelm Keitel, was not organized as a true armed forces command but functioned mainly as a coordinating agency and personal military staff for Hitler, who in February 1938 had assumed command of the German Armed Forces as Supreme Commander (*Oberste Befehlshaber*). The most important of the several sections in the OKW was the Armed Forces Operations Staff (*Wehrmachtfuhrungsstab*) under Generalmajor Alfred Jodl, who in the course of the war became Hitler's closest military adviser.

⁷ *Naval War Diary*, Vol. 2, p. 9.

⁸ Raeder was both Commander in Chief, Navy, and Chief, Naval Staff.

⁹ *Naval War Diary*, Vol. 2, p. 19.

¹⁰ Battle Instructions for the Navy (Edition of May 1939), in *Fuehrer Directives and Other Top-Level Directives of the German Armed Forces, 1939–1941* (Washington, 1948), p. 25.

a matter of time; the second, how to achieve freedom of action outside the North Sea, Raeder turned to on 3 October. He told the Naval Staff that he believed it necessary to acquaint the Fuehrer with the considerations in extending the Navy's operational bases to the north. He asked the staff to determine whether German and Soviet diplomatic pressure could be used to acquire bases in Norway, or, if that were not possible, whether the bases could be taken by military force. The investigation was to include a selection of places in Norway which could be used as bases; estimates of the amount of construction needed; and an analysis of how the bases could be defended.¹¹

Raeder was thinking in terms of two bases, one at Narvik and the other at Trondheim. Admiral Rolf Carls, Commanding Admiral, Baltic Sea Station, thought a base at Narvik was not necessary, apparently because Germany already had the use of the Soviet arctic port of Murmansk.¹² (In mid-October 1939 Germany acquired a separate base, Base North, in Zapadnaya Litsa Bay on the Murman Coast.) Konteradmiral Karl Doenitz, Commanding Admiral, Submarines, considered both Narvik and Trondheim suitable as submarine bases and recommended that Trondheim be the main base and Narvik an auxiliary.¹³

On 5 October the Chief of Staff, Naval Staff, Vizeadmiral Otto Schniewind conferred with the Chief of Staff, Army, General der Artillerie Franz Halder on the question whether the proposed bases could be secured and defended. Schniewind pointed out that, if the war against Great Britain had to be fought to the finish, the Navy and Air Force would have to take responsibility for the main effort. He asked, first, whether it would be possible for the Army by operations in the direction of the Channel-Normandy-Brittany to create a broader base for submarine operations. This, Halder replied, was beyond the power of the Army. Asked whether the Army could take the areas in central and northern Norway which had been mentioned as sites for bases, Halder again gave a negative answer, citing the probable opposition of both Norway and Sweden, difficult terrain, bad communications, and long supply lines. He believed a thrust in the west (where he doubted that the coast could be reached at all) or in Norway would require concentration of the entire war industry on Army requirements and bring the submarine program to a halt. An extension of the base, in the direction of Jutland as far as Skagen, could be promised, he thought, but he doubted

¹¹ Trials of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal (Nuremberg, 1947) (hereafter cited as International Military Tribunal), Doc. 122-C.

¹² In a memorandum of 30 January 1944 Raeder stated that it was Carls who first called the importance of bases on the Norwegian coast to his attention. After the war, Raeder testified that Carls had also expressed concern over a British occupation of Norway. The naval records contain no evidence to support either of these contentions. International Military Tribunal, Vol. XIV, p. 99, and Doc. 066-C.

¹³ International Military Tribunal, Doc. 005-C.

whether the advantages to the Navy would outweigh the political and economic disadvantages of such an undertaking.¹⁴

In its own appraisal, set down on 9 October, the Naval Staff was far from enthusiastic. A base on the Norwegian coast, it conceded, would offer great advantages for the fleet which Germany planned to have after 1945; but until then only the submarines could use it profitably. Although a base, Trondheim, for instance, would undeniably be useful for submarine warfare, the length and vulnerability of its lines of communication to Germany would greatly reduce its value. Finally, to acquire such a base by a military operation would be difficult, and, even if political pressure were enough, serious political disadvantages, among them loss of the protection which Norwegian neutrality gave German shipping, would have to be taken into account.¹⁵

On the day the Naval Staff completed its study Hitler put the finishing touches on a lengthy political and military analysis in which he reaffirmed his intention to launch an offensive in the west. A major objective was to be to secure bases in Holland, Belgium, and—if possible—on the French coast from which the Navy and Air Force could operate against the British Isles.¹⁶ The next day (10 October) Raeder explained to Hitler that the conquest of the Belgian coast (at the time even Hitler believed this would be the limit of the advance) would be of no advantage for submarine warfare and then, mentioning Trondheim as a possibility, pointed out the advantages of bases on the Norwegian coast. Hitler replied that bases close to Britain were essential for the Air Force but agreed to take the question of Norway under consideration.¹⁷

Fuehrer Directive No. 6, issued on 9 October, placed the German main effort on land. In it Hitler called for an Army offensive on the northern flank of the Western Front, with the objectives of smashing large elements of the French and Allied armies and taking as much territory as possible in Holland, Belgium, and northern France to create favorable conditions for air and sea warfare against Great Britain and for defense of the Ruhr. The Air Force would support the Army operations, and the Navy would “make every effort to support the Army and Air Force directly or indirectly.”¹⁸ Of the three services, the Navy was given by far the least important mission. Its direct contribution was to consist of small operations, such as seizure of the West Frisian Islands; and it would give indirect support by employing the submarines and

¹⁴ *Naval War Diary*, Vol. 2, p. 39.

¹⁵ *OKM, SKL, Ueberlegungen zu Frage der Stuetzpunktgewinnung fuer die Nordsee-Kriegfuehrung*, 9.10.39.

¹⁶ *Denkschrift und Richtlinien ueber die Fuehrung des Krieges im Westen*, 9.10.39, in *OKM, Weisungen OKW (Fuehrer)*.

¹⁷ *Fuehrer Conferences*, 1939, pp. 13ff.

¹⁸ *Der Oberste Befehlshaber der Wehrmacht, OKW Nr. 172/39, WFA/L, Weisung Nr. 6 fuer die Kampfuehrung*, 9.10.39, in *OKM, Weisungen OKW (Fuehrer)*.

pocket battleships in warfare against Allied merchant shipping "until such time as the siege of Britain can be carried out."¹⁹

The Hitler-Quisling Talks, December 1939

After 10 October Hitler was preoccupied with his plans for the offensive in the west. He showed no further interest in the question of Norwegian bases; and Raeder for the time being did not return to it; but as the Navy prepared to intensify the war against merchant shipping its attention was increasingly drawn toward northern Europe and Norway in particular. If there was one area where Germany could hope to throttle British trade completely it was the Baltic Sea. The Navy had been active there since the outbreak of war but with less success than had been expected. One source of acute concern was the firm, almost hostile, attitude of Sweden which in October and November culminated in a series of running disputes, mostly over alleged Swedish attempts to stretch their neutral rights almost to the point of provocation. Another was the continuing traffic across Sweden to the Norwegian Atlantic ports of goods from the Baltic countries and Finland. The Navy considered it essential to stop that trade, which consisted mainly of lumber to be used as pit props in British coal mines. At the end of October Raeder ordered that submarines be stationed off the north coast of Norway, but the chances of their having any effect were small since it was impossible to determine where ships bound for Britain would depart from the Leads.²⁰

On 29 November Fuehrer Directive No. 9 brought the "siege of Britain" to the fore again. Declaring that the most effective way to accomplish the defeat of Great Britain was by paralyzing its economy, Hitler announced that, after the French and British armies had been annihilated in the field and parts of the Channel coast occupied, the German main effort would shift to naval and air warfare against the British economy.²¹ Discussing the projected economic warfare at a Fuehrer conference on 8 December, Raeder attempted once more to turn Hitler's attention toward Norway. He pointed out that transport via Sweden and Norway through Trondheim to Britain was very active and difficult to control. It was important, he declared, to occupy Norway; the northern countries could then be forced to route their exports to Germany.²²

In December Raeder acquired support from a new direction when he came into contact with Vidkun Quisling, leader of the Norwegian National Union Party (Nasjonal Samling)—a small and not very in-

¹⁹ *Naval War Diary*, Vol. 2, p. 70.

²⁰ *Naval War Diary*, Vols. 2 and 3 *passim*.

²¹ *Der Oberste Befehlshaber der Wehrmacht, OKW/WFA Nr. 215/39, Weisung Nr. 9, Richtlinien fuer die Kriegfuehrung gegen die feindliche Wirtschaft, 29.11.39, in OKM, Weisungen OKW (Fuehrer)*.

²² *Fuehrer Conferences, 1939*, p. 46.

fluent copy of the German Nazi Party. Quisling, who had served as Norwegian Minister of War in the early 1930's, claimed to have well-placed contacts in the Norwegian Government and Army. He was convinced that the Soviet Union was the greatest menace to Europe, and before the era of the Nazi-Soviet Pact he had advocated a German-Scandinavian-British bloc to stand off the Bolshevik threat.²³ Quisling's patron in Germany was Reichsleiter Alfred Rosenberg, head of the Foreign Political Office of the Nazi Party. On a visit to Berlin in June 1939, Quisling, talking to Rosenberg, had pictured Norway as split politically between the bourgeois parties—completely under the influence of Great Britain—and the Labor Party—engaged in transforming the country into a Soviet Socialist Republic. He had emphasized the strategic importance of Norway in a war between Germany and Great Britain and the advantages that would accrue to the power gaining control of the Norwegian coast.²⁴ On the assumption that the Norwegian question would be of great significance for air operations, Rosenberg had secured an interview for Quisling in the Air Ministry. Subsequently, in August 1939, a group of Quisling's followers had been given a short training course by the Rosenberg organization. In September the Air Ministry had indicated willingness to take over financial support of Quisling, but the decision had been postponed during the Polish Campaign. Further urging by Rosenberg had brought no results.²⁵

In December Quisling made a second trip to Berlin, where, at first, he found little encouragement. Rosenberg, who reported Quisling's presence to Hitler and briefly outlined his proposal to pave the way for a German occupation by establishing a pro-German government in Norway, was content with an explanation that "naturally" Hitler could not receive Quisling and a halfhearted promise to look into the matter further.²⁶ At the Foreign Ministry, Quisling's known antipathy for the Soviet Union gained him a cold reception. The officials he talked to there wanted only to bundle him off to Norway again as quickly as they could. But, on 11 December, Wiljam Hagelin, a Norwegian businessman who acted as Quisling's liaison man in Germany, introduced him to Raeder, who proved to be an interested listener. Leaving Russia somewhat in the background, Quisling chose as his theme the pro-British bias of the Norwegian Government and the danger of a British occupation. The Government, he claimed, had secretly agreed not to oppose a British invasion if Norway became involved in war with one

²³ U.S. Department of State. *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945* (Washington, 1954), Series D, Vol. VIII, p. 56.

²⁴ Rosenberg, *Die politische Vorbereitung der Norwegen-Aktion, 15 Juni 1940*. EAP 250-d-18-42/2. Reichsamtseleiter Scheidt, *Aktenvermerk fuer Reichsleiter Rosenberg. Betr: Besuch des ehem. Kriegsministers, Staatsrat Quisling, 14 Juni 1939*. EAP 250-d-18-42/4.

²⁵ Rosenberg, *Die politische Vorbereitung der Norwegen Aktion, 15 Juni 1940*. EAP 250-d-18-42/2.

²⁶ Hans-Guenther Seraphim, *Das politische Tagebuch Alfred Rosenbergs aus den Jahren 1934/35 und 1939/40* (Goettingen: Musterschmidt-Verlag, 1956), p. 91.

of the other Great Powers. The National Union Party, he said, wanted to forestall a British move by placing the necessary bases at the disposal of the German armed forces. In the coastal areas men in important positions had already been bought for that purpose, but the months of unproductive negotiations with Rosenberg demonstrated that a change in the German attitude was necessary.²⁷

What Quisling had to say fitted in neatly with a line of thought Raeder had recently been following. On 25 November he had told the Naval Staff that he saw a danger that, in the event of a German invasion of Holland, the British might make a surprise landing on the Norwegian coast and take possession of a base there. He had requested that further thought be given to the matter.²⁸

Reporting to Hitler on 12 December, Raeder gave an account of his meeting with Quisling and added a summary of his own and the Naval Staff's thinking on the subject of a British or German occupation of Norway. To permit the British to establish themselves in Norway, he said, would be intolerable because Sweden would then fall entirely under British influence, the war would be carried to the Baltic, and German naval warfare would be completely disrupted in the Atlantic and the North Sea. On the other hand, a German occupation of bases in Norway would provoke strong British countermeasures aimed at interdicting the transport of ore from Narvik. That eventually, Raeder admitted, would remain a weak spot; but he recommended that, if Hitler's impression of Quisling was favorable, the OKW be given permission to use him as a collaborator in preparing plans for an occupation of Norway either by peaceful means—that is, by German troops being called in—or by force.²⁹

During the next week Hitler saw Quisling twice. After the first meeting, on 14 December, he instructed the OKW to “investigate how one can take possession of Norway.”³⁰ At the second interview, on 18 December, as he had at the first, Hitler expressed a personal desire to preserve Norway's neutrality. But, he stated, if the enemy prepared to extend the war, he would be obliged to take countermeasures. He promised financial support for Quisling's party and gave control of political arrangements to Rosenberg. A special staff in the OKW was to handle military matters.³¹

²⁷ *Fuehrer Conferences*, 1939, p. 56.

²⁸ *Naval War Diary*, Vol. 3, p. 155.

²⁹ *Fuehrer Conferences*, 1939, p. 54.

³⁰ The date, 13 December, given in the *Jodl Diary*, is apparently in error. In the *Akten Raeder, ObdM, Heft I* at the bottom of a 13 December letter from Rosenberg, explaining that he could not take Quisling to see Hitler that day, Raeder noted, “14.XII.39. . . . Empfang von Q. und H. durch F. Raeder 14.XII.39.” *Tagebuch General Jodl (WFA)*, International Military Tribunal, Docs, 1809-PS and 1811-PS (unpublished documents in National Archives) (hereafter cited as *Jodl Diary*), 13 Dec 39.

³¹ Rosenberg, *Die politische Vorbereitung der Norwegen Aktion, 15 Juni 1940*. EAP 250-d-18-42/2.

Hitler's interest in Norway was sudden and, as was soon shown, still superficial, but events were conspiring to draw him closer to Raeder's point of view. In October Hitler had said that, barring completely unforeseen developments, the neutrality of the northern states could be assumed for the future.³² When he addressed the generals, on 23 November, his opinion had changed somewhat. He described Scandinavia as hostile to Germany because of Marxist influences "but neutral now."³³ At the end of November the Soviet attack on Finland had injected a new and potentially dangerous element into the situation. The Soviet aggression aroused immediate sympathy for Finland among the Allies and in the Scandinavian countries, but Germany, bound by the Nazi-Soviet Pact in which Finland had been declared outside the German sphere of interest, was forced to resort to strict neutrality. As a result, anti-German sentiment in Scandinavia, which had been growing since the start of the war, rose to avalanche proportions. It was this plus the fear that the Russian advance into northern Europe might not stop with Finland that brought Quisling to Berlin in December. For Germany the most serious consideration was that the Allies might use the Russo-Finnish conflict as an excuse to establish bases in Norway.³⁴

The First Planning Phase

Studie Nord

In his order to the OKW on 14 December, Hitler stipulated that the planning for Norway was to be kept within a very limited circle. That same day the Chief of Staff, Army, learned that a preventive operation in Norway which would also involve Denmark was being considered and ordered Army Intelligence to supply maps and information on the two countries.³⁵ In the OKW, Generalmajor Alfred Jodl, Chief of the Operations Staff, took the preliminary work in hand. Entries in the *Jodl Diary* indicate that he discussed the question of Norway with the Chief of Staff, Air Force, presumably on the assumption that the Air Force role would be predominant in any operation which might result. On 19 December he reported to Hitler, who ordered that control of the planning be kept in the hands of the OKW. The next day Jodl and Generaloberst Wilhelm Keitel, Chief, OKW, discussed the possibilities of reconnaissance in Norway and considered assigning missions to the air attachés, the *Abwehr* (OKW Intelligence), and the Reconnaissance Squadron "Rowel," a special purpose air unit that was supposed to be able to escape detection from the ground by flying at extremely high alti-

³² *Denkschrift und Richtlinien ueber die Fuehrung des Krieges im Westen, 9.10.39, in OKM, Weisungen OKW (Fuehrer)*.

³³ International Military Tribunal, Doc. 789-PS.

³⁴ Walther Hubatsch, *Die deutsche Besetzung von Daenemark und Norwegen 1940* (Goettingen: Musterschmidt-Verlag, 1952), pp. 11-13. *Fuehrer Conferences, 1939*, p. 56. *Naval War Diary, Vol. 4, p. 17*.

³⁵ *Jodl Diary, 13 Dec. 39. Halder Diary, Vol. III, p. 5.*

tudes.³⁶ Toward the end of the month, under the title *Studie Nord*, the Operations Staff, OKW, completed a rough summary of the main military and political issues relating to Norway. This Hitler ordered held in the OKW for the time being.³⁷

In the meantime the Rosenberg organization had also gone to work. Its first task was to overcome the objections of the Foreign Ministry, which held the purse strings, and arrange financial backing for Quisling. The Foreign Ministry and the Foreign Political Office of the Nazi Party were rivals of long standing. The case of Quisling and Norway was particularly touchy since it might involve a danger to Soviet-German friendship, which Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop regarded as his crowning achievement.³⁸ Eventually, after several weeks of negotiations, Rosenberg managed to secure an initial subvention of 200,000 gold marks to be paid out to Quisling in installments. It was planned also to supply him with quantities of readily convertible commodities, such as sugar and coal.

While he was in Berlin, Quisling had presented a plan for bringing the Germans into Norway by so-called "political" means. He proposed to send a detachment of picked men from among his followers to Germany for intensive military training. Later they would be attached as interpreters and guides to a special German force which would be transported to Oslo in coal ships. In the Norwegian capital, after the Germans and Quisling-men had captured the leading members of the government and taken possession of the administrative offices, Quisling would assume control and issue an official call for German troops.³⁹

After Quisling returned to Oslo, Rosenberg detailed Reichsamtsleiter Hans-Wilhelm Scheidt to act as go-between. In Oslo Scheidt found that the diplomats at the German Legation placed very little stock in the talk of a British invasion and wanted to steer clear of Quisling to avoid compromising themselves. The naval attaché, on the other hand, offered his assistance and soon became Scheidt's chief collaborator. From the outset the Germans thought Quisling's proposed *coup* involved too many chances for slip-ups; they preferred to see it mature slowly and diverted Quisling's efforts toward the gathering of political and military information. Most of the money from Germany went for propaganda and to support the National Union Party's weekly newspaper. Quisling's reports were sent to Rosenberg who passed them on to Hitler. Raeder kept in contact through the naval attaché; but the OKW remained indifferent and apparently neither asked Quisling's advice nor paid much attention to that which he volunteered.⁴⁰

³⁶ Jodl Diary, 18-20 Dec. 39.

³⁷ Halder Diary, Vol. III, p. 13.

³⁸ Rosenberg, *Die politische Vorbereitung der Norwegen Aktion, 15 Juni 1940* (Anlage 6, Schickedantz, Aktennotiz Norwegen, 22.12.39). EAP 250-d-18-42/2.

³⁹ Seraphim, *op. cit.* pp. 162 ff. Rosenberg, *Die politische Vorbereitung der Norwegen Aktion, 15 Juni 1940*. EAP 250-d-18-42/2.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

At the turn of the year everything about the Norwegian project was still vague. Reporting to Hitler, on 30 December, Raeder again declared that Norway must not be allowed to fall into British hands. He saw a danger that British volunteers "in disguise" might carry out a "cold" occupation and warned that it was necessary to be ready.⁴¹ That his feeling of urgency was not shared in other quarters was demonstrated two days later when Halder and Keitel agreed that it was in Germany's interest to keep Norway neutral and that a change in the German attitude would depend on whether or not Great Britain actually threatened the neutrality of Norway.⁴² On the other hand, Hitler's interest was increasing, but slowly, stimulated by rumors and newspaper talk of an Allied intervention in Finland. It is also possible that he had some knowledge of the British attempt on 6 January 1940 to secure an agreement permitting British naval forces to operate in Norwegian territorial waters. On 10 January, after a delay of almost two weeks, he released the OKW *Studie Nord* to the service high commands.

The Naval Staff, the only one of the service staffs at that time showing any inclination to concern itself with Norway, reviewed *Studie Nord* in a meeting on 13 January 1940. As summarized in the Naval Staff minutes, *Studie Nord* proceeded from the premise that Germany could not tolerate British control of the Norwegian area and that only a German occupation which would forestall the British could prevent such a development. Because of the Russo-Finnish war, according to the OKW, anti-German opinion was on the increase in Scandinavia, working to the benefit of Great Britain, and Norwegian resistance to a British invasion was hardly to be expected. The OKW believed that the British might use the German offensive in the west as an excuse to occupy Norway. *Studie Nord* directed that a special staff, headed by an Air Force general, be created to devise a plan of operations. The Navy was to supply the chief of staff, and the Army the operations officer.

During the review of *Studie Nord* the Naval Staff, with Raeder present, argued strongly against an operation in Norway. It did not believe a British invasion of Norway was imminent, and it considered a German occupation in the absence of any previous British action as strategically and economically dangerous. At the end, Raeder agreed that to preserve the *status quo* was the best solution, but he ordered the Naval Staff to initiate additional planning because the course of the war could not be predicted and it was necessary, on principle, to include the occupation of Norway in the Navy's preparations.⁴³

Between 14 and 19 January the Naval Staff worked out an expansion of *Studie Nord*. The mission it foresaw for the Navy was to support and, where necessary, execute troop landings at the major Norwegian ports from Oslo to Tromsø. Surprise was regarded as absolutely essen-

⁴¹ *Fuehrer Conferences*, 1939, p. 62.

⁴² *Halder Diary*, Vol. III, p. 13.

⁴³ *Naval War Dairy*, Vol. 5, pp. 62-64.

tial to the success of the operation. If surprise was achieved, no serious opposition was anticipated during the naval phase of the operation, at least not on the outbound trip. The Naval Staff regarded the Norwegian warships as "no threat, even to single German light units"; the only British ships which it thought needed to be taken into account were those that happened to be on patrol off Norway, possibly one or two cruisers. The Norwegian coastal fortifications, not manned in peacetime, were not expected to offer much opposition, but it was deemed necessary to capture them intact at the earliest possible moment in order to be able to fight off British counterattacks.

The assault force, the Naval Staff calculated, could consist of either the 22d Infantry Division (airborne) or a mountain division. Transportation would be provided by the 7th Air Division (the airborne and parachute troop command) and the Navy. The first possibility considered was to move the troops that did not go by air on merchant ships disguised as ore transports. If successful, this method would guarantee surprise, but it had disadvantages: the large number of ships required could not be assembled without attracting attention; they were slow and could not be protected; and it would be difficult to keep the troops concealed, particularly since the ships would have to pass through the Leads with Norwegian pilots aboard. A second possibility, sending the troops on warships, avoided all of these disadvantages but limited the number of troops and severely restricted the amounts of supplies and equipment that could be transported. The Naval Staff recommended a combination of the two, the first wave of troops moving by warship and a second wave of troops, supplies, and equipment following in merchant steamers.

The Naval Staff assumed that Denmark, Sweden, and the Soviet Union would be concerned in the operation in one way or another. It recommended acquisition of bases in Denmark, at the northern tip of Jutland in particular, as a means of approaching the Shetlands-Norway passage and of facilitating naval and air control of the Skagerrak. Possible objections from the Soviet Union were to be warded off by assurances to be given "without regard for actual intentions" that the northern Norwegian ports would be occupied only for the duration of the war. In the case of Sweden, it was "to be made absolutely clear that pro-German neutrality and complete fulfillment of all delivery obligations [of goods] is the sole road to preservation of its independence."⁴⁴

The Krancke Staff

During the first weeks of January 1940 Hitler's attention was still concentrated entirely on the plan for the offensive in the west which he hoped to put into execution before the end of the month. But because the weather predictions became increasingly less favorable after the

⁴⁴ *OKM, SKL, I Op., 73/40, Ueberlegungen Studie Nord, 19.1.40.*

middle of the month, Hitler, on 20 January, announced that the operation could probably not begin before March. It then became necessary to look at the Scandinavian situation in a new light, since the postponement of the German offensive might give the Allies time to intervene in the north.

On 23 January Hitler ordered *Studie Nord* recalled. The creation of a working staff in the OKL was to be canceled, and all further work was to be done in the OKW. In that order he killed two birds with one stone, placing the planning for an operation in Norway on a somewhat firmer basis and, at the same time, giving an example of the more stringent security procedures he had demanded after an incident earlier in the month which had resulted in some of the plans for the invasion in the west falling into Allied hands when an Air Force major made a forced landing on Belgian territory. On the 27th, in a letter to the commanders in chief of the Army, Navy, and Air Force, Keitel stated that henceforth work on *Studie Nord* would be carried out under Hitler's direct personal guidance and in closest conjunction with the over-all direction of the war. Keitel would take over supervision of the planning, and a working staff, which would provide a nucleus for the operations staff, would be formed in the OKW. Each of the services was to provide an officer suitable for operations work, who also, if possible, had training in organization and supply. The operation was assigned the code name WESERUEBUNG.⁴⁵

The staff for WESERUEBUNG assembled on 5 February, and was installed as a special section of the National Defense Branch, Operations Staff, OKW. Its senior officer was Captain Theodor Krancke, Commanding Officer of the cruiser *Scheer*. For the first time direct control of operational planning was taken out of the hands of the service commanders and vested in Hitler's personal staff, the OKW. This move, although justified by the character of the operation being planned, constituted a downgrading of the service commanders in chief and their staffs. It accounts, at least in part, for the violent Army and Air Force reactions several weeks later.

Although it was widely assumed later—after the failure of Allied counteroperations in Norway—that the Germans had laid their plans and had begun gathering intelligence well in advance, probably even before the outbreak of war, such was not the case. The Krancke staff began its work with very modest resources. German military experience afforded no precedent for the sort of operation contemplated, and the preliminary work of the OKW and Naval Staff provided little more than tentative points of departure for the operational planning. A certain amount of intelligence information on the Norwegian Army and military installations was available, which, while it was useful and later proved accurate,

⁴⁵ *Jodl Diary*, 23 Jan 40. *Halder Diary*, Vol. III, p. 28. International Military Tribunal, Doc. 063-C.

was not of decisive importance. For maps and general background information it was often necessary at first to rely on hydrographic charts, travel guides, tourist brochures, and other similar sources. The limitation of personnel imposed by the necessity for preserving secrecy was a further handicap. The Krancke staff in the approximately three weeks of its existence, nevertheless, produced a workable operations plan.

The Krancke Plan for the first time focused clearly on the technical and tactical aspects of the projected operation. As the Naval Staff had earlier, the Krancke staff based its plan on a division of Norway into six strategically important areas:

1. The region around Oslo Fiord.
2. The narrow coastal strip of southern Norway from Langesund to Stavanger.
3. Bergen and its environs.
4. The Trondheim region.
5. Narvik.
6. Tromsö and Finnmark.

To control those fairly small areas, which contained most of Norway's population, industry, and trade, was, in effect, to control the entire country. For that reason the Krancke staff proposed to execute simultaneous landings at Oslo, Kristiansand, Arendal, Stavanger, Bergen, Trondheim, and Narvik. Tromsö and Finnmark it regarded as being of no direct interest to Germany and significant only for the two airfields located near Tromsö. Capture of the seven ports was expected to entail a loss for the Norwegians of eight of their estimated sixteen regiments, nearly all of their artillery, and almost all of their airfields.

The operation was to be executed by a corps composed of the 22d Infantry Division (airborne), the 11th Motorized Rifle Brigade, one mountain division, and six reinforced infantry regiments. The troops for the landings were to be transported by a fleet of fast warships and by the 7th Air Division, which would provide eight transport groups and approximately five battalions of parachute troops for the first wave. Planes of the 7th Air Division would bring in the second wave, consisting of the main elements of the 22d Infantry Division, in three days. The remaining troops, the third and fourth waves, would arrive by ship on about the fifth day. Under the Krancke Plan, with the exception of the troops for Narvik and Trondheim where distance precluded airborne operations, half the troops were to be transported by air and half by sea. The Air Force was also to provide bomber and fighter support.

The Krancke staff believed that the occupation could be restricted to the seven main ports. It did not expect the Norwegian armed forces to show either the desire or the ability to offer effective resistance, and it thought that, after the landings, the German position could be consolidated by diplomatic means. The Norwegian Government would be assured of "as much independence as possible" in internal affairs. Its

armed forces, except for the troops on the Finnish border, would be reduced to cadre strength, and orders for mobilization would require the approval of the German commander. German troops would take over the fortresses and military supply depots.

To provide security for the supply lines from Germany, the Krancke staff proposed using the threat of a military occupation of Jutland to extract permission from the Danish Government for use of airfields in northern Jutland. To induce Sweden and the Soviet Union to remain neutral, they were to be assured that the occupation would be terminated at the end of the war and that Germany guaranteed the former boundaries of Norway. At a later date, the Krancke staff believed, it would be necessary to require from Sweden use of the Luleå-Narvik railroad for hauling supplies to Narvik.⁴⁶

The Decision to Occupy Norway

The Appointment of Falkenhorst

In mid-February the *Altmark* Incident gave the first real sense of urgency to the preparations for WESERUEBUNG. On 14 February the German tanker *Altmark*, with 300 captured British seamen from the commerce raider *Graf Spee* aboard, entered Norwegian territorial waters on its return trip to Germany. Despite strong misgivings the Norwegian Admiralty, which suspected the nature of the *Altmark's* "cargo," permitted the ship to proceed. On 16 February, when six British destroyers put in an appearance, the *Altmark*, escorted by two Norwegian torpedo boats, took refuge in Jössing Fiord near Egersund. Disregarding protests from the Norwegian naval craft, the British destroyer *Cossack* entered the fiord and, sending a party aboard the *Altmark*, took the prisoners off after a brief skirmish.

The deliberate action of the *Cossack* convinced Hitler that the British no longer intended to respect Norwegian neutrality, and on 19 February he demanded a speed-up in the planning for WESERUEBUNG. On Jodl's suggestion he decided to turn the operation over to a corps commander and his staff. The nomination fell to General der Infanterie Nikolaus von Falkenhorst, Commanding General, XXI Corps, who had acquired some experience in overseas operations during the German intervention in Finland in 1918.⁴⁷ Talking to Rosenberg the same day, Hitler decided that Quisling's plan for bringing his party to power in Norway should be dropped. The Quisling organization, he ordered, was to stand by for the eventuality that the British might force Germany to protect its routes to Norway.⁴⁸

At noon on 21 February Falkenhorst reported to Hitler and was given the mission of planning and, if it were to be executed, commanding the

⁴⁶OKW, WFA, Abt. III, Weisung an Oberbefehlshaber "Weseruebung," 26.2.40.

⁴⁷Jodl Diary, 19 Feb 40. Halder Diary, Vol. III, pp. 62, 64.

⁴⁸Seraphim, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

operation against Norway. The plan would have two objectives: to forestall the British by occupying the most important ports and localities, in particular the ore port of Narvik; and to take such firm control of the country that Norwegian resistance or collaboration with Great Britain would be impossible.⁴⁹ The next day, after Falkenhorst had reviewed the Krancke Plan and prepared a rough preliminary estimate of his own, Hitler confirmed the appointment. On 26 February a selected staff from Headquarters, XXI Corps, began work in Berlin.

The first major question concerned Denmark. Falkenhorst's staff decided not to rely on diplomatic pressure as the Krancke plan suggested and proposed, instead, a military occupation of Jutland which might have to be followed by an operation against Sjaelland if the Danish reaction were hostile. On 28 February Falkenhorst reported the change to Keitel and asked for a provisional corps headquarters and two divisions to conduct the operation in Denmark.

On the same day, 28 February, an even more important change, one which eventually made extensive revision of the Krancke Plan necessary, was introduced. Replying to a question whether it would be better to execute WESERUEBUNG before or after the offensive in the west (Operation GELB) which Hitler had raised two days earlier, Jodl proposed to prepare WESERUEBUNG in such a fashion that it could be executed independently of GELB in terms both of time and forces employed. All of the planning up to that time had assumed that WESERUEBUNG would have to come either before or after GELB since the parachute troops and transports of the 7th Air Division would be required for both operations. The OKW now decided to reduce the commitment of parachute troops for WESERUEBUNG to four companies and to hold back one airborne regiment of the 22d Infantry Division. These changes and that concerning Denmark Hitler approved on 29 February after he had established a landing at Copenhagen as an additional requirement.⁵⁰ Satisfied with the military plan, Hitler then called in Rosenberg and told him that there would be no attempt to enlist Quisling's active support in any form.⁵¹

The Fuehrer Directive

On 1 March, in the "Directive for Case WESERUEBUNG," Hitler established the general requirements for the operation and authorized the start of actual operational planning. The strategic objectives were to be to forestall a British intervention in Scandinavia and the Baltic Sea area, to provide security for the sources of Swedish iron ore, and to give the Navy and Air Forces advanced bases for attacks on the British

⁴⁹ *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Kriegstagebuch Nr. 1*, 20.2.40–8.4.40, 21 Feb 40. AOK 20 180/5.

⁵⁰ *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Kriegstagebuch Nr. 1*, 26–29 Feb 40. *Jodl Diary*, 28 and 29 Feb 40.

⁵¹ Seraphim, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

Isles. The idea of a "peaceful" occupation to provide armed protection for the neutrality of the Scandinavian countries was to be basic to the operation. Daring and surprise would be relied on rather than strength in terms of numbers of troops. WESERUEBUNG would consist of WESERUEBUNG NORD, the air- and sea-borne invasion of Norway, and WESERUEBUNG SUED, occupation of Jutland and Fuenen and landings on Sjaelland which could be expanded later if the Danes resisted. Charged with planning and executing WESERUEBUNG, Falkenhorst, as Commanding General, Group XXI, would be directly subordinate to Hitler.⁵² The forces to be employed would be requisitioned from the three services separately. The Air Force units for WESERUEBUNG would be under the tactical control of Group XXI, and independent employment of forces by the Air Force and Navy would be worked out in close collaboration with the Commanding General, Group XXI.⁵³

The appearance of the Fuehrer Directive promptly brought a wave of protests and objections from the Army and the Air Force. With the campaign in the west impending, neither wanted to divert forces to a subsidiary theater of operations. The Army had not altered the negative attitude toward the projected operation that Halder had expressed on 5 October 1939. Moreover, personal feelings were involved, since up to that time neither the OKH nor the OKL had been brought directly into the planning for WESERUEBUNG. Halder noted in his diary that as of 2 March 1940 Hitler had not "exchanged a single word" with the Commander in Chief, Army, on the subject of Norway. Above all, the Army objected to troop dispositions being made independently by the OKW.⁵⁴ The Air Force entered a protest against the subordination of Luftwaffe units to Group XXI and, on 4 March, secured a ruling from Hitler that all air units would be placed under X Air Corps, which would receive its orders, "based on the requirements of Group XXI," through the OKL. The Air Force also did not want to release the 22d Infantry Division and considered the demands on the 7th Air Division and other air units too high.⁵⁵

In contrast to the other two service staffs, the Naval Staff endorsed the Fuehrer Directive wholeheartedly. Meeting, on 2 March, to review the directive, it decided that the problem was no longer purely military but had "become a first class question of war economy and politics." Reversing the position it had taken in January, the Naval Staff concluded:

It is no longer solely a case of improving Germany's strategic position and gaining isolated military advantages or of weighing the pros and

⁵² In German military terminology "group" (*Gruppe*) was used to designate an intermediate unit, in this instance, between a corps and an army.

⁵³ *Der Fuehrer und Oberste Befehlshaber der Wehrmacht, WFA/Abt. L Nr. 22070/40, Weisung fuer "Fall Weseruebung," 1.3.40, in German High Level Directives, March-April 1940.*

⁵⁴ *Halder Diary, Vol. III, p. 64. Jodl Diary, 1 Mar 40.*

⁵⁵ *Jodl Diary, 3 and 4 Mar 40.*

cons of the possibility of executing WESERUEBUNG and of asserting military scruples, but for the Armed Forces it is a matter of accommodation at lightning speed to political conditions and necessities.

The Naval Staff recommended that Hitler be informed of the difficulties standing in the way of a successful execution of WESERUEBUNG and of the Navy's determination "to abandon all scruples and sweep aside the difficulties that arise by using all its forces."⁵⁶

On 3 March Hitler called for "the greatest speed" in preparing WESERUEBUNG. He saw a necessity to act quickly and with force in Norway and forbade delays on the part of the individual services. He wanted the forces for WESERUEBUNG assembled by 10 March and ready for the jump-off by the 13th so that a landing would be possible in northern Norway on approximately 17 March. He decided to execute WESERUEBUNG before GELB (the offensive in the west), leaving an interval of about three days between the operations.⁵⁷

On the afternoon of 5 March at the Reich Chancellery Falkenhorst and his chief of staff gave a progress report to Hitler and the three commanders in chief. Generalfeldmarschall Hermann Goering, angry and claiming he had been kept in the dark about the operation, condemned all the planning so far as worthless. After Goering had given vent to his feelings, Hitler explained that he expected an Allied intervention in Scandinavia under the guise of help for Finland in the near future. He insisted again on accelerating the work on WESERUEBUNG.

Two days later, after Falkenhorst had staged a private presentation at Karinhall to sooth Goering's ruffled feelings, WESERUEBUNG began to take concrete form. On 7 March Hitler signed a directive assigning the 3d Mountain Division, the 69th, 163d, 196th, and 181st Infantry Divisions, and the 11th Motorized Rifle Brigade for employment in Norway and the 170th, 198th, and 214th Infantry Divisions for Denmark. That disposition of forces he declared final and no longer subject to change. WESERUEBUNG and GELB were thereby completely divorced from each other.⁵⁸ The 7th Air Division and 22d Infantry Division were released for GELB. As a consequence, it was no longer possible to contemplate airborne and parachute landings on the scale which had been envisioned in the Krancke Plan.

Hitler's Decision

After 5 March the timing of WESERUEBUNG became the major concern at the highest command level. In a conference with Hitler on the 9th Raeder declared that prompt execution of WESERUEBUNG was urgent. The British, he maintained, had the opportunity of occupying

⁵⁶ *Naval War Diary*, Vol. 7, p. 10.

⁵⁷ *Halder Diary*, Vol. III, pp. 78, 81. *Jodl Diary*, 3 Mar 40.

⁵⁸ *OKW, WFA, Abt. L, Nr. 22082/40*, in *Anlagenband 1 zum K.T.B. 1, Anlagen 1-52*. AOK 20 E 180/7. *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Kriegstagebuch Nr. 1*, 5 Mar 40. *Jodl Diary*, 5 and 7 Mar 40.

Norway and Sweden under the pretext of sending troops to aid the Finns. Such an occupation would result in loss of the Swedish iron ore and could be decisive against Germany. He characterized WESERUEBUNG as contradicting all the principles of naval warfare since Germany not only did not have naval supremacy but would have to carry out the operation in the face of a vastly superior British Fleet; still, he predicted, success would be attained if surprise were achieved.⁵⁹

On 12 March, as news of progress in the Soviet-Finnish peace conference spurred the Allies on to last-minute offers of assistance for Finland, Hitler ordered a speed-up in the German preparations and instructed Group XXI to include an emergency action in its calculations.⁶⁰ The Navy had canceled all other naval operations on 4 March and on that day began holding submarines in port for WESERUEBUNG. On the 11th, long-range submarines were dispatched to the main ports on the Norwegian west coast where they were to combat Allied invasion forces or, according to the circumstances, support WESERUEBUNG.⁶¹

The peace treaty between Russia and Finland signed in Moscow on the night of 12 March created an entirely new situation. British submarines were observed concentrated off the Skagerrak on the 13th; and an intercepted radio message setting 14 March as the deadline for loading transports indicated that an Allied operation was getting under way; but another message, intercepted on the 15th, ordering the submarines to disperse, revealed that the peace had disrupted the Allied plan.⁶² On the German side, ice in the Baltic Sea prevented the assembly and loading of the warships and transports for WESERUEBUNG.⁶³ The peace deprived both the Germans and the Allies of the means for justifying an invasion of Norway in world opinion; and Hitler, on 13 March, ordered the planning continued "without excessive haste and without endangering secrecy."⁶⁴

The OKW concluded that, with their pretext gone, the Allies would not attempt to take the offensive in Norway for the time being. Hitler was inclined to agree, but he believed that the British would not abandon their strategic aim of cutting off the German ore imports and, to accomplish that, would begin by invading Norwegian territorial waters. He thought the Allies, later, might still go so far as to occupy bases and ports in Norway. In his opinion the Scandinavian area had become a decisive sphere of interest for both belligerents and would remain "a permanent seat of unrest"; therefore, he considered WESERUEBUNG still

⁵⁹ *Fuehrer Conferences, 1940-I*, p. 20.

⁶⁰ *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Kriegstagebuch Nr. 1*, 12 Mar 40.

⁶¹ International Military Tribunal, Doc. 2265-NOKW. *Naval War Diary*, Vol. 7, p. 63.

⁶² *Fuehrer Conferences, 1940-I*, p. 22. *Naval War Diary*, Vol. 7, p. 100.

⁶³ *Naval War Diary*, Vol. 7, p. 75.

⁶⁴ *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Kriegstagebuch Nr. 1*, 13 Mar 40.

necessary and reaffirmed his intention to carry out the operation shortly before GELB.⁶⁵

Jodl and Raeder concurred fully in Hitler's reasoning, but other officers in the small circle associated with WESERUEBUNG began to have doubts. Jodl's deputy suggested that, since Operation GELB could be expected to tie down the British and French ground and air forces for a long time, WESERUEBUNG could be dropped.⁶⁶ Similar thoughts had, apparently, started taking root in Falkenhorst's staff. Jodl complained that Falkenhorst's "three chiefs" (Krancke and the Air Force representative on the Krancke staff had been attached as naval and air chiefs of staff) were starting to worry about things that did not concern them and that Krancke saw more drawbacks than advantages in WESERUEBUNG.⁶⁷

It seems that even Hitler, despite his expressed determination, would have preferred at least a temporary postponement. But the time for decision had come. From the point of view of the Navy an early execution was imperative because all other naval operations had been brought to a standstill by WESERUEBUNG and because after 15 April the nights in the northern latitudes would become too short to afford proper cover for the naval forces. Reporting to Hitler on 26 March, Raeder declared that, although there was no need to anticipate a British landing in Norway in the immediate future, he believed Germany would have to face the question of carrying out WESERUEBUNG sooner or later. He advised that it be done as soon as possible. Hitler agreed and promised to set the date for some time in the period of the next new moon, which would begin on 7 April.⁶⁸

On 1 April Hitler conducted a detailed review of the WESERUEBUNG plan. After he had heard reports from Falkenhorst, the senior naval and air officers, and the commanders of the landing teams, he gave his approval and closed the meeting with a short address. He told the officers that the days until the occupation was completed would impose on him the greatest nervous strain of his life, but he was confident of victory since the history of warfare demonstrated that well and carefully prepared operations usually succeeded with relatively small losses. The British were trying to cut Germany off from its sources of raw materials by disrupting the sea lanes along the Norwegian coast and intended, further, to assume the role of a "policeman" in Scandinavia and to occupy Norway. This he could not tolerate under any circumstances. It was high time Germany provided itself with secure routes out into the world and did not allow every new generation to be subjected to British pressure. That was the fated struggle of the German

⁶⁵ *Naval War Diary*, Vol. 7, p. 96.

⁶⁶ Walter Warlimont, *Gutachten zu der Kriegstagebuch-Ausarbeitung OKW/WFSt, "Der noerdliche Kriegsschauplatz,"* p. 10. MS # C-0991. OCMH.

⁶⁷ *Jodl Diary*, 28 Mar 40.

⁶⁸ *Fuehrer Conferences, 1940-I*, p. 22. *Naval War Diary*, Vol. 7, p. 161.

people, and he was not the man to evade necessary decisions or battles.⁶⁹

On the next day, 2 April, having been assured by the Commanders in Chief, Air Force and Navy, that flying conditions were expected to be satisfactory and ice would not impede naval movements in the Baltic, Hitler designated 9 April as WESER Day and 0515 as WESER Time.⁷⁰

Allied Objectives and Intentions

An Allied staff paper of April 1939 on "broad strategic policy" recognized that in the first phase of a war with Germany economic warfare would be the only effective Allied offensive weapon.⁷¹ In the light of this and the World War I experience in blockading Germany, Norway inevitably assumed a special importance for the Allies as soon as war broke out. Before mid-September 1939 the British Government had made its first attempt to secure from Norway a "sympathetic" interpretation of its rights as a neutral.⁷² Winston Churchill, as First Lord of the Admiralty, was already engaged in devising more active measures. On 12 September he submitted his plan CATHERINE for sending naval forces through the straits leading into the Baltic Sea to gain control of those waters and to stop the Swedish ore traffic; but since it involved extensive alteration of several battleships to give them greater protection against aerial bombs, it could not be put into effect at an early date. At the end of the month he suggested mining Norwegian territorial waters to cut the ore route from Narvik. In December he renewed his efforts to obtain consent for the mining of the Leads but could not obtain a decision for action.⁷³

During the early months of the war there was a strong tendency in the Allied camp to base hopes on the weakness of Germany in terms of strategic natural resources, with the result that Norway and the Swedish ore began to loom very large in Allied thinking. Late in November the British Ministry of Economic Warfare expressed the view that, cut off from the Swedish ore supply, Germany could not continue the war for more than twelve months and, deprived of the supply which passed through Narvik, would suffer "acute industrial embarrassment."⁷⁴ (On the other hand, Admiral Raeder believed that Germany could stand the loss of from two and a half to three and a half million tons of ore per year which came via Narvik and that, by storing ore in Sweden during the winter for summer shipment, it could probably reduce the annual loss

⁶⁹ Gruppe XXI, Ia, Notiz fuer das Kriegstagebuch, 1.4.40, in Anlagenband 1 zum K.T.B. I, Anlagen 1-52. AOK 20 E 180/7.

⁷⁰ Gruppe XXI, Ia, Kriegstagebuch Nr. 1, 2 Apr 40.

⁷¹ Butler, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

⁷² T. K. Derry, *The Campaign in Norway* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1952), p. 9.

⁷³ Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948), Vol. I, p. 112.

⁷⁴ Derry, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

to about one million tons.)⁷⁵ Subsequent Allied planning centered on the decisive significance of the Swedish ore, often to the extent of not recognizing all of the difficulties of securing and holding both Narvik and the Kiruna-Gällivare mines against the determined German counteraction such a move would undoubtedly produce.

At the end of November the Soviet attack on Finland created new possibilities for the Allies by arousing a hope that the Scandinavian countries, out of sympathy for Finland and on the ground of their obligations as members of the League of Nations, might permit Allied troops sent to aid the Finns to cross their territory. Such an undertaking could be made to include the occupation of Narvik and Kiruna-Gällivare almost automatically, since the Narvik-Luleå railroad provided the most direct route to Finland. The French Government went so far as to think of establishing a major theater of war in Scandinavia to draw the main action away from the Franco-German frontier. However, on 19 December, when the French Premier Edouard Daladier proposed the dispatch of an expeditionary force to Finland, he met opposition from the British, who were fearful of provoking a breach with the Soviet Union.⁷⁶

When the early successes of the Finns made it appear that the Red Army would be a weak adversary, French enthusiasm for a second front in Scandinavia grew. After Marshal Mannerheim on 29 January appealed for support, the Supreme War Council of the Allies decided to send an expedition timed for mid-March. The French wanted to blockade Murmansk and attempt landings in the Pechenga region and talked of simultaneous operations in the Caucasus in addition to the occupation of parts of Norway and Sweden.⁷⁷ The British plan, which was adopted, was more modest and, while ostensibly intended to bring Allied troops to the Finnish front, laid its main emphasis on operations in northern Norway and Sweden. The main striking force was to land at Narvik and advance along the railroad to its eastern terminus at Luleå, occupying Kiruna and Gällivare along the way. By late April two Allied brigades were to be established along that line. Another Allied brigade would then be sent on to Finland. A secondary force of five British Territorial battalions was to occupy Trondheim, Bergen, and Stavanger to provide defensive bases in southern Norway. Stavanger would be held only long enough to destroy its airfield, while Trondheim was to become the major base in the south and the port of debarkation for Allied troops sent into southern and central Sweden to meet the expected German counterattack. Eventually the British intended to put as many as 100,000 men in the field, and the French 50,000.⁷⁸

The Allied effort moved slowly, and massive Soviet offensives in February rapidly wore down the Finnish resistance. The execution

⁷⁵ *Fuehrer Conferences*, 1940, I, 16-18.

⁷⁶ Carl Gustaf Mannerheim, *Erinnerungen* (Zurich: Atlantis Verlag, 1952), p. 403.

⁷⁷ International Military Tribunal, Doc. 83—Raeder.

⁷⁸ Derry, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

of the Allied plan, meanwhile, remained contingent on the willingness of the Norwegian and Swedish Governments to grant rights of transit to the Allied troops. A Finnish request to that effect was turned down on 27 February, and another by the British and French Governments was refused on 3 March. By that time the Finns had decided to open peace negotiations. On 9 March the Finnish Ministers in Paris and London were told that, if the Finns issued a call for help, the Allies would come to their aid with all possible speed. The Allies promised delivery of a hundred bombers within two weeks, but the dispatch of troops still remained dependent on the attitude of Sweden and Norway. On the same day, 9 March, Marshal Mannerheim, who regarded the Allied proposal as too uncertain, gave his government categorical advice to conclude peace.⁷⁹

At the last minute, on 12 March, still hoping for an appeal from the Finns, the Allies decided, at the suggestion of the French, to attempt a semipeaceable invasion of Scandinavia. Assuming that the recent diplomatic responses of the Norwegian and Swedish Governments ran counter to public opinion in those countries, they proposed to "test on the Norwegian beaches the firmness of the opposition." A landing was to be made at Narvik; if it succeeded, it would be followed by one at Trondheim. Forces for Bergen and Stavanger were to be held ready. The objectives were to take Narvik, the railroad, and the Swedish ore fields; but the landing and the advance into Norway and Sweden were to take place only if they could be accomplished without serious fighting. The troops were not to fight their way through either Norway or Sweden and were not to use force except "as an ultimate measure of self-defense."⁸⁰ The treaty which Finland signed in Moscow on the night of the 12th ended the Allied hopes. The troops which had been assembled in England were released to other assignments.

On 21 March Paul Reynaud became the head of a French Government committed to a more aggressive prosecution of the war, and a week later, at a meeting of the Supreme War Council, the Scandinavian question again came under consideration.⁸¹ The new Allied undertaking was to consist of two separate but related operations, WILFRED and PLAN R 4. WILFRED involved the laying of two minefields in Norwegian waters, one in the approaches to the Vest Fiord north of Bodø and the other between Ålesund and Bergen, with the pretended laying of a third near Molde. The laying of the minefields was to be justified in notes delivered to Norway and Sweden several days in advance protesting those nations' inability to protect their neutrality. The supposition was that WILFRED would provoke a German counteraction, and PLAN R 4 was to become effective the moment the Germans landed in Norway "or showed they intended to do so." Narvik and the railroad

⁷⁹ Mannerheim, *op. cit.*, pp. 380-87.

⁸⁰ Butler, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

⁸¹ International Military Tribunal, Doc. 83—Raeder.

to the Swedish border were the principal objectives. The port was to be occupied by one infantry brigade and an antiaircraft battery, with the total strength to be built up eventually to 18,000 men. One battalion, in a transport escorted by two cruisers, was to sail within a few hours after the mines had been laid. Five battalions were to be employed in occupying Trondheim and Bergen and in raiding Stavanger to destroy the Sola airfield. The battalions at Trondheim and Bergen would later be reinforced by the troops from Stavanger if the movement could be managed, but otherwise they were cast on their own resources. The success of the plan depended heavily on the assumption that the Norwegians would not offer resistance, and, strangely, the possibility of a strong German reaction was left almost entirely out of account.⁸²

The execution of WILFRED and PLAN R 4 was at first tied to Operation ROYAL MARINE, a British proposal for sowing fluvial mines in the Rhine, to which the French objected on the ground that it would provoke German bombing of French factories. WILFRED had been scheduled for 5 April, but it was not until that date that the British Government agreed to carry out the Norwegian operations independently of ROYAL MARINE.⁸³ As a result, the mines were not laid until the morning of 8 April, at which time the German ships for WESERUEBUNG were already advancing up the Norwegian coast. When it became known on the morning of the 8th that the German Fleet, which aircraft had sighted on the previous day, was at sea in the vicinity of Norway, the minelaying force was withdrawn, PLAN R 4 was abandoned, and the British Fleet was ordered to sea in an attempt to intercept the German naval force.⁸⁴

⁸² Derry, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁸³ Churchill, *op. cit.*, pp. 508-10, and 575-83. International Military Tribunal, Doc. 83—Raeder.

⁸⁴ Derry, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26.

Chapter 2

The Plan WESERUEBUNG

The Problem

Given the risks and limitations imposed by British naval superiority, the chief task in the German planning for the occupation of Norway was to devise a scheme of operations suited to the peculiarities of the Norwegian geography. From the first the German planning centered on one feature of the country which stood out above all the others, namely, that the population and economic life were concentrated along the coast or in valleys cutting inland from the coast and that settlement was not contiguous but further concentrated in nodes relatively isolated from one another, the largest of them around Oslo, Bergen, and Trondheim.

Oslo was by far the most important. It was not only the political capital and largest city but was situated in the heart of the dominant agricultural and industrial region and was the hub of the railroad network fanning out to Trondheim, Åndalsnes, Bergen, and the cities of the south coast. Its location in the southeastern corner of the country off the narrow waters of the Skagerrak made it easily accessible from the German-controlled Baltic Sea and placed it beyond the reach of the British Navy. In the south the Danish peninsula of Jutland was virtually a land bridge from Germany to Oslo and the Norwegian south coast. Bergen, the second largest city, was strategically significant for its location close to the British Isles. Trondheim, the medieval capital of Norway, ranked next to Oslo as a center of economic activity. It dominated the land and coastal sea routes from the south into the Norwegian Arctic regions. For the Germans, it was an indispensable steppingstone to Narvik. Of the Norwegian Atlantic ports, it offered the most promise as a naval base. Also important as ports were Tromsø, Stavanger, Kristiansand, and Haugesund and, militarily at least, Bodø, Namsos, and Åndalsnes. Two of these had to be included in the German planning: Stavanger for its air base and Kristiansand because of its strategic position on the Norwegian south coast. In the case of the others the risks of leaving them open had to be weighed against the necessity to husband the limited shipping which the Navy could provide, and, in the end, they were all omitted.

The scattering and isolation of the principal centers were not accidental but were imposed by the nature of the terrain. The cities occupied the few relatively low-lying and hospitable areas of a country in which one half of the land lay at altitudes over 2,000 feet and mountains rose abruptly out of the sea all along the coast. Interior communications were poorly developed because of the expense of building roads and railroads which required hundreds of tunnels and bridges. The sea afforded the most dependable and expeditious routes of communication.

Tactically, the best solution, as the Germans quickly concluded, was to take as many of the main centers as possible in the first assault and establish contact between them later. Its correctness was confirmed by the known condition and dispositions of the Norwegian Army. The Army, a victim of years of neglect, could, as a consequence of the recent crisis, be expected to have reached approximately its authorized peacetime strength of 19,000 men, about one-fifth of full mobilization. Its six divisions (in wartime field brigades) were assigned as follows: 1st Division—Halden, 2d Division—Oslo, 3d Division—Kristiansand, 4th Division—Bergen, 5th Division—Trondheim, and 6th Division—Harstad. If Oslo, Kristiansand, Bergen, and Trondheim were taken simultaneously, it could be expected that five of the six Norwegian divisions would either be knocked out immediately or seriously crippled.

The Navy

Operation WESERUEBUNG was acutely vulnerable during its naval phase since the German Navy, even with all of its available ships committed, was no match for the British Navy. A British intervention while the ships were at sea could have resulted in both failure of the operation and annihilation of the Navy. Consequently, from the beginning, the planning had laid heavy emphasis on surprise. To achieve surprise, speed and accurate timing were essential. It was therefore decided to transport the assault troops to Norway on warships.

To execute the operation, a so-called Warship Echelon of 11 groups was organized as follows:

Group 1 (Narvik): the battleships *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* with 10 destroyers (2,000 troops).

Group 2 (Trondheim): the cruiser *Hipper* and 4 destroyers (1,700 troops).

Group 3 (Bergen): the cruisers *Koeln* and *Koenigsberg*, the service ships *Bremse* and *Karl Peters*, 3 torpedo boats, 5 motor torpedo boats (1,900 troops).

Group 4 (Kristiansand—Arendal): the cruiser *Karlsruhe*, the special service ship *Tsingtau*, 3 torpedo boats, and 7 motor torpedo boats (1,100 troops).

Group 5 (Oslo): the cruisers *Bluecher*, *Luetzow*, *Emden*, 3 torpedo boats, 2 armed whaling boats, and 8 minesweepers (2,000 troops).

Group 6 (Egersund): 4 minesweepers (150 troops).

Group 7 (Korsör and Nyborg): (1,990 troops).

Group 8 (Copenhagen): (1,000 troops).

Group 9 (Middelfart): (400 troops).

Group 10 (Esbjerg): (no troops).

Group 11 (Tyborön): (no troops).

Groups 7 to 11 consisted of the World War I battleship *Schleswig-Holstein* (to provide artillery support for the landing at Korsör) and miscellaneous minesweepers, submarine chasers, merchant ships, tugs, and picket boats.

Groups 1 and 2 were to proceed together to the vicinity of Trondheim escorted by the *Scharnhorst* and the *Gneisenau*, which carried no troops. Group 2 would then maneuver at sea until W Time, while Group 1 continued north to Narvik. After passing the latitude of Trondheim, the *Gneisenau* and the *Scharnhorst* would set a northwesterly course away from the coast to divert British naval units in the area. The *Luetzow* was at first scheduled to join Group 2 and, after taking troops to Trondheim, to break out into the Atlantic on a raiding mission, but when engine trouble developed at the last minute the cruiser had to be transferred to the Oslo Group.¹

The warships could not carry heavy equipment or large quantities of supplies for the troops, and the destroyers would exhaust their fuel loads on the trips to Narvik and Trondheim. To meet these problems and because it was expected that the British would intercept all ships moving north along the west coast of Norway after W Day, the Tanker Echelon and the Export Echelon (*Ausfuhrstaffel*) were created. Their ships, disguised as ordinary merchant vessels, were to put in at Norwegian ports before the arrival of the warships. The Tanker Echelon was made up of eight ships, two for Narvik and one for Trondheim to reach port before W Day, the rest to dock at Oslo, Bergen, Stavanger, and Kristiansand on W Day. The Export Echelon, carrying military equipment and supplies, consisted of seven ships, three for Narvik, three for Trondheim, and one for Stavanger.²

The Krancke staff had proposed that the merchant ships leave Germany after the warships and reach their destinations approximately five days after the landings. But Group XXI saw very little likelihood of any German ships being able to make port on the west coast of Norway after W Day and returned to the device of stationing the merchant ships

¹ Kurt Assmann, *Deutsche Schicksalsjahre* (Wiesbaden: Eberhard Brockhaus, 1950), p. 134. Hubatsch, *op. cit.*, pp. 44, 96–98. *Verbindungsstab Marine*, B. Nr. 130, *Seetransportuebersicht nach dem Stande vom 22.3.40*, in *Gruppe XXI, Anlagenband 4 zum Ktb. Nr. 1, Anlage 55*. AOK 20 E 180/9b.

² *Verbindungsstab Marine*, B. Nr. 130, *loc. cit.* Assmann *Schicksalsjahre*, p. 135.

in Norwegian ports before W Day, which the Naval Staff had rejected as too dangerous in its original work on *Studie Nord*. The Navy protested that this method of operation jeopardized the secrecy of the operation.³ To meet the Navy's objections, OKW ordered that none of the ships in the Export and Tanker Echelons were to depart before W minus 6 days. As a result, the danger of a breach of secrecy still existed, and most of the ships, after minor delays, did not have enough time to reach their destinations.⁴

The main troop and supply movement was to be carried out by eight sea transport echelons. The 1st Sea Transport Echelon, timed to reach port on W Day, was made up of 15 ships going to Oslo, Kristiansand, Bergen, and Stavanger. All succeeding echelons were to unload at Oslo. The 1st Sea Transport Echelon also aroused misgivings in the naval command since its ships, which would be at sea before the ships of the Warship Echelon, carried troops in uniform. To preserve secrecy, the 1st Sea Transport Echelon was given the code designation OSTPREUSSEN STAFFEL, and the ships' captains were given orders to proceed to East Prussia, ostensibly to relieve pressure on the railroads. Not until after they had put to sea were they given instructions concerning their actual destinations.⁵ The 2d Sea Transport Echelon (11 ships) and the 3d (13 ships) were to dock at Oslo on W plus 2 and W plus 6 days, respectively. The 4th to 8th Echelons would arrive between W plus 8 and W plus 12 days, using the returned ships of the first three echelons.⁶

For the Navy, the most dangerous part of the operation, as Raeder saw it, was the return of the warships. He was confident that the landings could be executed successfully if surprise were achieved, but he believed that thereafter the ships along the west and north coasts of Norway would be exposed to attack by superior British forces. Raeder wanted the ships of the Narvik and Trondheim groups to rejoin the *Scharnhorst* and the *Gneisenau* as quickly as possible for a combined breakthrough to their home ports, while those at and south of Bergen were to return independently using the cover of the coasts as far as possible.⁷ That intention met with opposition from Hitler, the OKW, and the OKL, all of whom wanted ships left at the ports, particularly at Narvik and Trondheim, to furnish artillery and antiaircraft support and to bolster the morale of the troops. Raeder, on the other hand, defended the viewpoint that not one destroyer, let alone a cruiser, could be left behind at Narvik or Trondheim at a time when the fate of the German Navy was hanging in the balance.⁸ The question was debated until

³ *Naval War Diary*, Vol. 8, pp. 18, 20.

⁴ Assmann, *Schicksalsjahre*, p. 136.

⁵ *Naval War Diary*, Vol. 8, p. 53. General der Infanterie a.D. Erich Buschenhagen, Comments on Part I, *The German Northern Theater of Operations, 1940-1945*, 7 Jun 56.

⁶ *Verbindungsstabmarine*, B. Nr. 130, loc. cit.

⁷ *Fuehrer Conferences*, 1940, I, p. 20.

⁸ *Ibid.*

2 April, when Hitler declared that he personally did not approve of the decision to withdraw the ships immediately but did not want to interfere too strongly in matters pertaining purely to naval warfare.⁹

Barring accidents, only the submarines were to engage enemy naval forces. Operation HARTMUT by the submarines was planned to provide protection for the surface ships during the transport phase and to provide defense against enemy naval action at the beachheads. In all, 28 submarines were to be stationed off Narvik, Trondheim, Bergen, Stavanger, in the vicinity of the Orkney and Shetland islands, and west of the Skagerrak. Some of the units for Narvik and Trondheim had left port as early as 11 March. The main force departed between 31 March and 6 April.¹⁰

Group XXI

The Command Organization

The Norwegian campaign, depending for its successful execution equally on each of the three services, was the first German armed forces operation. In the "Directive for Case WESERUEBUNG" of 1 March 1940 the staff of Group XXI was made directly subordinate to Hitler. The staff operated within the OKW, receiving its instructions from Hitler and from the OKW. The Chief of the Operations Staff, OKW, General Jodl, and under him the National Defense Branch headed by Col. Walter Warlimont participated in the planning and acted as a coordinating agency in cases where the requirements of Group XXI involved demands on one or another of the services.¹¹

A unified command, at least of the air and ground forces, was projected at the start; but, after Air Force protests resulted in the Air Force's retaining tactical control of its units employed in WESERUEBUNG, Falkenhorst remained in actual command only of the ground forces. The OKL and the OKM conducted their own planning independently in collaboration with Group XXI and assigned operational control to separate commands. The Air Force and Navy representatives of the Krancke staff remained with the staff of Group XXI, where they maintained liaison with their respective services. Command of the air units was given to X Air Corps under Generalleutenant Hans Geissler. For the Navy, the Naval Staff did the planning, aided by the staffs which would command the operations at sea, Naval Group West (North Sea and the Atlantic coast of Norway) and Naval Group East (Baltic Sea, Kattegat, and Skagerrak).¹²

The planning and direction of operations in Denmark were assigned to the staff of the XXXI Corps under General der Flieger Leonhard

⁹ Jodl Diary, 2 Apr 40.

¹⁰ International Military Tribunal, Doc. 151-C. Hubatsch, *op. cit.*, p. 47. Assmann, *Schicksalsjahre.*, p. 134.

¹¹ International Military Tribunal, Docs. 174-C and 3520-NOKW.

¹² Jodl Diary, 3 Mar 40. International Military Tribunal, Doc. 2265-NOKW.

Kaupisch. The XXXI Corps was to be directly subordinate to Group XXI until W plus 3 days, when it would revert to the control of OKH.¹³

To maintain liaison after the landings, the Heimatstab Nord (Home Staff North) was created. It consisted of one officer from each of the services and was attached to the OKW, where it functioned as a link between Group XXI and OKW. Its principal mission immediately after the landings was to supervise and regulate the sea transport movements for WESERUEBUNG NORD.¹⁴

For the operation itself, a three-way division of command was evolved. Falkenhorst commanded the ground troops. With respect to his opposite numbers in the Navy and Air Force he ranked as "the first among equals," but he had no direct authority over units of the other two services. The Navy appointed a Commanding Admiral, Norway, and Plenipotentiary of the Commander in Chief, Navy, with his headquarters in Oslo; an Admiral of the Norwegian South Coast at Kristiansand, who had under him the port commanders at Oslo and Kristiansand; and an Admiral of the Norwegian West Coast at Bergen, with the port commanders at Stavanger, Bergen, Trondheim, and Narvik under him.¹⁵ The X Air Corps had exclusive control of air operations, and General Halder noted in his diary in mid-April that Falkenhorst did not have control of a single plane.¹⁶ In the course of the campaign a Luftgaukommando (territorial ground command of the Air Force) was formed, and then on 12 April the Fifth Air Force under Generaloberst Erhard Milch was installed to assume control of both the Luftgaukommando and the Air Corps.¹⁷

The three-way division of command functions was particularly in evidence at the time of the initial landings. During the transport phases the Navy had full command at all levels at sea and the Air Force in the air. For substantial changes in the plan the agreement of Group XXI was to be obtained. During the landings command passed to the senior Army officer at each beachhead, whose demands for naval and air support were to be met "as far as possible." At the individual beachheads the commanding officer of the Army units was responsible for ground operations and security; the Navy appointed a port commander to take charge of the seaward defenses; and, where air units were available, the senior Air Force officer became responsible for air security. One of the three, usually the senior officer present, was designated armed forces commander. In emergencies he was empowered

¹³ Halder Diary, Vol. III, 101.

¹⁴ Gruppe XXI, Ia, 191/40, *Dienstanweisung fuer den "Heimatstab Nord,"* in Anlagenband 1 zum Ktb Nr. 1, Anlagen 1-52, 20.2.-8.4.40. AOK 20 E 180/7.

¹⁵ Gruppe XXI, Ia, Nr. 71/40, in Anlagenband 2 zum K.T.B. Nr. 1, Anlage 53. AOK E 180/8. WBN, Ia, Nr. 1394/41, *Erfahrungsbericht ueber Aufgaben des W.B., 19.4.41,* in Anlage zu AOK Norwegen Ia, Nr. 2179/44. AOK 20 53295.

¹⁶ Halder Diary, Vol. III, 118.

¹⁷ Ulrich O. E. Kessler, *The Role of the Luftwaffe in the Campaign in Norway, 1940,* p. 8. MS # B-485. OCMH.

to issue orders to all three services within his district; on the whole it was assumed that each would receive his orders through his own command channels.¹⁸

The peculiarities of the command organization, which were in part a result of interservice jealousy, were to a large extent dictated by the German lack of experience in combined operations. The OKW was organized to coordinate rather than to command, and Falkenhorst had no substantial experience in directing either air or naval operations. The final report on experiences of the campaign submitted by Group XXI states:

That the commands and troop contingents of the three armed forces branches worked together almost without friction cannot be credited to purposeful organization of the commanding staff. It was, instead, entirely an achievement of the personalities involved who knew how to cooperate closely in order to overcome the inadequacies of organization.¹⁹

The Ground Forces, Norway

“Operations Order No. 1 for the Occupation of Norway,” based on Hitler’s directive of 1 March, was issued by Group XXI on 5 March. It was concerned with the landings and consolidation of the beachheads. Two possibilities were envisioned: (1) peaceful occupation could be achieved; (2) the landings and occupation would have to be carried out by force. If the first possibility materialized, the Norwegian Government was to be assured of extensive respect for its internal sovereignty, and the Norwegian troops were to be treated tactfully. If resistance was encountered, the landings were to be forced by all possible means, the beachheads secured, and nearby training centers of the Norwegian Army occupied. The complete destruction of the Norwegian Army was not considered possible as an immediate objective because of the size of the country and difficulty of the terrain, but it was believed that the localities selected for landings comprised the majority of the places which needed to be taken in order to prevent an effective mobilization and assembly of Norwegian forces and to control the country in general. The landing teams were to attempt operations against forces in the interior only if they could be conducted without impairing the defense of the beachheads. Attempted Allied landings were to be fought off, but unnecessary losses were to be avoided. If the enemy proved superior, the troops were to withdraw inland until a counterattack could be launched.²⁰

¹⁸ *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Anlage zu Ia Nr. 82/40, Unterstellungsverhaeltnisse bei “Weseruebung Nord,” in Anlagenband 1 zum KTB Nr. 1, Anlagen 1-52, 20.2-8.4.40. AOK 20 E 180/7.*

¹⁹ *Gruppe XXI, Ia, in Erfahrungsberichte der Gruppe XXI von 30.7.40. AOK 20 E 279/15.*

²⁰ *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Nr. 20/40, Operationsbefehl fuer die Besetzung Norwegens Nr. 1, in Anlagenband zum Ktb, Nr. 1, Anlagen 1-52. AOK 20 E 180/7.*

For Norway six divisions were assigned: the 3d Mountain Division (two infantry regiments) and the 69th, 163d, 181st, 196th, and 214th Infantry Divisions. The 3d Mountain Division had seen some action in the Polish campaign; the rest were newly formed divisions. In addition, Group XXI was given four batteries of 10-cm. guns, two batteries of 15-cm. guns, one tank company with Mark I and II tanks (the Mark I mounted two machine guns, the Mark II a 2-cm. gun), two companies of railroad construction troops and one communications battalion.²¹ The Air Force supplied three parachute companies and three antiaircraft battalions, which remained under the command of X Air Corps.²² In terms of numbers the German and Norwegian divisions were equally matched, but the Norwegian divisions, for the most part, existed only on paper.

Landings were to be made at Narvik, Trondheim, Bergen, Kristiansand, and Oslo, and landing parties of one company each sent ashore at Egersund and Arendal to take possession of the cable stations. Stavanger was to be taken in an airborne operation.²³ The size of the initial sea-borne landing force, 8,850 men, was determined by the available shipping space since the assault troops had to be moved in fast warships. No major reinforcement of the landing teams at the beachheads was contemplated until contact could be established overland with Oslo, where the main force was to debark—16,700 men (in addition to the 2,000 landed on W day) to be brought in by three sea transport echelons during the first week, and another 40,000 to be transported in shuttle movements thereafter.²⁴ An additional 8,000 troops were to be transported by air within three days.²⁵

The first operations order was followed in March by a series of detailed orders for each of the landing teams. Separate plans were drawn up for taking the coastal fortifications on the fiords, since the passing of these fortifications was expected to be a critical point in the operation, and alternate landing sites were selected for use in the event that the coastal batteries could not be taken. The projected execution of WESERUEBUNG NORD after the landings was outlined in "Operations Order No. 2," which Group XXI issued on 2 April.

In the final plan Oslo was to be taken by elements of the 163d Infantry Division, two battalions brought in on warships and two battalions arriving by air transport after two companies of parachute troops

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Gen. Kdo. X Fl. K., Ia, Nr. 10058, 73, 89, 90, and 91/50, in Gruppe XXI, Anlagenband 3 zum Ktb, Nr. 1, Anlage 54. AOK 20 E 180/9a.*

²³ *Gruppe XXI, Ia, 20/40, loc. cit.*

²⁴ *Verbindungsstab Marine, B. Nr. 130, Seetransportuebersicht nach dem Stande von 22.3.40, in Gruppe XXI, Anlagenband 5 zum Ktb. Nr. 1, Anlage 56. AOK 20 E 180/10. Kurt Assmann, The German Campaign in Norway. Origin of the Plan, Execution of the Operation, and Measures Against Allied Counter-attack (London: Naval Staff, Admiralty, 1948), p. 13.*

²⁵ *Gruppe XXI, Ia, (2) Nr. 200/40, in Anlagenband 5 zum Ktb. Nr. 1, Anlage 56. AOK 20 E 180/10.*

had secured Fornebu Airfield. A reinforced battalion of the 163d would execute the landing at Kristiansand, and the division bicycle troops would take Arendal. The force at Kristiansand was to be brought up to regimental strength by the arrival at about noon on W Day of ships carrying two more battalions. As soon as troops became available at Oslo the 163d Division was to secure the rail line Oslo-Bergen as far as Hönefoss and the line Oslo-Kristiansand as far as Kongsberg.²⁶

The 69th Infantry Division was to occupy the Norwegian west coast from Nordford (one hundred miles north of Bergen) to Egersund. Two battalions would land at Bergen, two by air at Stavanger (a third reaching Stavanger by air on W plus 1 day), and the division bicycle troop at Egersund. The remaining units of the 69th Division were to arrive at Oslo on W plus 2 and 3 days and proceed by rail to Bergen.

Trondheim was to be taken by two battalions of the 138th Regiment of the 3d Mountain Division. Its 139th Regiment and the division headquarters would land at Narvik, where they were to gain control of the railroad to the Swedish border and, later, occupy Tromsö and Harstad, the headquarters of the Norwegian 6th Division. A strong detachment was to be kept in readiness to occupy the iron mines at Kiruna in Sweden. The battalions at Trondheim and the units scheduled to follow via Oslo would be sent to Narvik when the situation permitted.

The 196th Infantry Division, upon reaching Oslo on W plus 2 days, was to create conditions for an advance by rail to Trondheim and Ändalsnes, taking and holding Lillehammer, Hamar, and Elverum north of Oslo with two regiments. The third regiment was to proceed by rail to Ändalsnes as soon as possible, and the first two regiments were to be relieved on W plus 7 days to move northward to Trondheim. From Trondheim, a regiment would advance northward to occupy Steinkjer, Grong, Namsos, and Mosjöen. The mission of the division would then be to hold the northwest coast of Norway from the 66th parallel (in the vicinity of Mosjöen) to Ålesund and to secure the interior to the Swedish border.

The 181st Infantry Division, after debarking at Oslo on W plus 6 days, was to mop up the Norwegian forces east and southeast of Oslo; the first available troops would take Fredrikstad, Sarpsborg, and Halden southeast of Oslo. One regiment would relieve the units of the 163d Division holding the area Kjeller-Lilleström, and a reinforced battalion would advance to Kongsvinger near the Swedish border. Taking advantage of the Glommen Line (fortifications which the Norwegians had built before World War I along the Glommen River), the division

²⁶ *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Nr. 194/40, Operationsbefehl Nr. 2, Weisungen fuer die Besetzung Norwegens nach durchgefuehrter Landung, in Anlagenband 1 zum Ktb. Nr. 1, Anlagen 1-52, 20.2-4.8.40. AOK 20 E 180/7. Gruppe XXI, Ia, Anlage 77, Kartenband zum Ktb. 1. AOK 20 E 180/23. Hubatsch, op. cit., pp. 85, 86.*

would prepare to stand off any attempted Swedish intervention. Another regiment would relieve the units of the 196th Division in the Lillehammer–Hamar–Elverum area.

The 214th Infantry Division would reach Oslo on W plus 8 days. It was to provide security for the southwest coast from the Bömola Fiord (north of Stavanger) to the Söndeled Fiord (northeast of Arendal). The mass of the division would be concentrated in the Stavanger area. The 214th Division would relieve units of the 163d Division at Kristiansand and of the 69th Division at Stavanger.

At the completion of the operation the distribution of forces would be as follows: the 181st Division east of Oslo and in the zone along the Swedish border, the 163d Division in Oslo and holding the zone immediately west of Oslo from the mouth of the Oslo Fiord to Hamar, the 214th Division holding the area Stavanger–Kristiansand–Arendal, the 69th Division at Bergen, the 196th Division in the zone Åndalsnes–Trondheim–Mosjøen, and the 3d Mountain Division holding the Narvik–Tromsø area.²⁷

The Ground Forces, Denmark

Group XXI issued "Operations Order No. 1 for the Occupation of Denmark" on 20 March, and the plan for WESERUEBUNG SUED was worked out in detail in "Corps Order No. 3" which the XXXI Corps completed on 21 March. The XXXI Corps, organized to take advantage of the ideal terrain conditions in Denmark for operations by mobile troops, was to be composed of the 170th (one regiment on trucks) and 198th Infantry Divisions, the 11th Motorized Rifle Brigade (with Mark I and II tanks), three motorized machine gun battalions, two batteries of heavy artillery (10-cm.), two companies of tanks (Mark I and II), and three armored trains. The Air Force supplied a company of parachute troops, a motorcycle company from the "General Goering" Regiment, and two battalions of antiaircraft guns.

The 170th Division and the 11th Motorized Rifle Brigade were to take Jutland in an advance northward from the German-Danish border. The principal objective of the operations in Jutland (in fact, the principal objective of WESERUEBUNG SUED) was Aalborg, at the northern tip of the Peninsula. Its two airfields were to be taken on W plus 2 hours by a parachute platoon and an airborne battalion. The 11th Motorized Rifle Brigade, supported on its left by the motorized regiment of the 170th Division, was to advance rapidly along the west side of the peninsula, reaching Aalborg on W Day. The remaining regiments of the 170th Division were to break any resistance which might be offered along the border or in the south and reach Aalborg, Frederikshaven, and Skagen on W plus 1 or W plus 2 days. Three reinforced companies

²⁷ *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Nr. 194/40, loc. cit. Gruppe XXI, Ia, Anlagen 77 and 78, Kartenband zum Ktb. 1. AOK 20 E 180/23.*

of the 170th Division were to go by sea from Kiel to Middelfart, landing at W Hour to secure the bridge across the Little Belt and subsequently advancing across Fuenen to Nyborg. On the west coast of Jutland, light naval forces were to land at Esbjerg and Tyborön.

The mission of the 198th Infantry Division was to occupy Sjaelland. One battalion was to land at Copenhagen; the division staff and a reinforced battalion were to land at Korsör on the west coast of Sjaelland and advance overland to Copenhagen; and one company would land at Nyborg to secure the crossing of the Great Belt. A battalion with an armored train, transported by train ferry from Warnemuende, was to land at Gedser and advance northward to Copenhagen across Falster via the bridge at Vordingborg, which was to be taken in advance by a parachute company (less one platoon).²⁸

The Air Force

The X Air Corps, which had operated against British merchant shipping and naval forces, was reinforced with a variety of types of air units for WESERUEBUNG. Its principal units were the 4th, 26th, and 30th Bombardment Wings.²⁹ The 26th Bombardment Wing had one group of the 100th Bombardment Wing attached. Attached to the 30th Bombardment Wing were one dive bomber group, two twin-engine fighter groups, one single-engine fighter group, one coastal reconnaissance and naval support group, and two long-range reconnaissance squadrons.³⁰ Under the Transport Chief (Land) the corps had seven groups of three- and four-engine transports and the 1st Special Purpose Transport Wing (*Kampfgeschwader z.b.V. 1*) for airborne and parachute operations. Under the Transport Chief (Sea) it had the 108th Special Purpose Transport Wing (seaplane transports) and three air-traffic safety ships.³¹ The number of aircraft of various types employed was approximately as follows:³²

²⁸ *Gruppe XXI, Ia, 126/40, Operationsbefehl fuer die Besetzung von Daenemark, Nr. 1, in Anlagenband 1 zum Ktb. Nr. 1, Anlagen 1-52, 20.2-8.4.40. AOK 20 E 180/7. Hoeheres Kommando z.b.V. XXXI, Ia, Nr. 123/40, Korpsbefehl Nr. 3, in Befehlshaber der deutschen Truppen in Daenemark, Besetzung Daenemarks am 9. u. 10.4.40. XXXI AOK E 290/2. Gruppe XXI, Ia, Anlage 84, Kartenband zum Ktb, 1. AOK 20 E 180/23.*

²⁹ A wing (*Geschwader*) totaled about 100 aircraft organized into three groups. The group (*gruppe*), totaling about 27 aircraft, was organized into three squadrons (*Staffeln*) of 9 planes each.

³⁰ Assmann, *Schicksalsjahre.*, p. 136. Hubatsch, *op. cit.*, p. 415. *Generalkommando X Fl. K., Ia, B. Nr. 10053/40, Operationsbefehl fuer das X Fliegerkorps am Wesertag, in Gruppe XXI, Anlagenband 3, zum Ktb. Nr. 1, Anlage 54. AOK 20 E 180/9a.*

³¹ Hubatsch *op. cit.*, p. 415. *Generalkommando des X Fl. K., Ia., Nr. 10056/40, Weisungen fuer den Transportchef (Land) fuer die Weseruebung and Nr. 10057/40, Weisungen fuer den Transportchef (Sea) fuer die Weseruebung, in Gruppe XXI, Anlagenband 3 zum Ktb. Nr. 1, Anlage 54. AOK 20 E 180/9a.*

³² *The Rise and Fall of the German Air Force*, Great Britain, Air Ministry Pamphlet No. 248 (1948), p. 59.

Total	1,000
Bombers.....	290
Dive bombers.....	40
Single-engine fighters.....	30
Twin-engine fighters.....	70
Long-range reconnaissance.....	40
Coastal	30
Transports.....	500

The "Operations Order for the X Air Corps on WESER Day," together with detailed orders for the subordinate units, was issued on 20 March. The main bomber force, one wing plus two groups (less two squadrons), was to be held in readiness at German bases to combat British naval forces. One squadron was to land at Stavanger on W Day and operate against British naval forces from there. The remaining bombers were to stage aerial demonstrations over Norway and Denmark. Two groups were to demonstrate over Oslo (one squadron landing at Oslo as soon as Fornebu Airfield had been taken and thereafter becoming available for support of the ground troops), one group in the zone Kristiansand-Bergen, one squadron over Stavanger, one group over Copenhagen, and one group in support of the advance of the ground troops through Jutland. The units staging demonstrations were to be prepared to support the landings, by force if necessary, and had the additional missions of leaflet dropping and observation of the progress of ground operations. The dive bomber group was to transfer two squadrons to Aalborg on the morning of W Day and one squadron to Stavanger that afternoon. It would operate against British naval forces. One twin-engine fighter group, less 15 planes, after supporting the airborne operation at Aalborg, was to land there and assume responsibility for the protection of air-transport movements between Aalborg, Stavanger, and Oslo. Three flights (*Schwaerme*), of five twin-engine fighters each, were to support the landings at Oslo, Stavanger, and Copenhagen. Those at Oslo and Stavanger would land there; that over Copenhagen would land at Aalborg. The other twin-engine fighter flight would provide fighter cover for the bombers over Copenhagen and, after supporting the further operations of the 4th Bombardment Wing, proceed to Aalborg. The single-engine fighter group would support the taking of Esbjerg by ground troops and land either at Esbjerg or Oksbøl, thereafter taking over the defense of the Danish west coast. It was intended to transfer the dive bombers and fighters employed in Jutland to Norway on W plus 1.³³

³³ *Generalkommando des X Fl. K., Ia, Nr. 10053/40, loc. cit. Generalkommando des X Fl. K., Ia, Nr. 10064/40 Befehl fuer den Einsatz des Kampfgeschwaders 26 am Wesertag; Nr. 10054/40, Befehl fuer den Einsatz des Kampfgeschwaders 4-am Wesertag; Nr. 10054/40, Befehl fuer den Einsatz des Kampfgeschwaders 30 am Wesertag; Nr. 10055/40, Befehl fuer den Einsatz der I./Stukageschwader 1 am Wesertag; Nr. 10052/40, Befehl fuer den Einsatz der I./ZG 76 am Wesertag; Nr. 10051/40, Befehl fuer den Einsatz der LI./JG 77 ab Wesertag, in Gruppe XXI, Anlagenband 3 zum Ktb. Nr. 1, Anlage 54. AOK 20 E 180/9a.*

The Transport Chief (Land) was to employ seven groups in transport movements to Oslo, Stavanger, and Aalborg and the special purpose wing in the airborne and parachute operations. The Transport Chief (Sea) was to station air-traffic safety ships at Trondheim and Bergen on W Day, to transport troops to Bergen on W Day, and to begin moving troops and supplies to Trondheim and Narvik on W plus 1. The two squadrons of long-range reconnaissance planes were to reconnoiter over the North Sea beginning on W minus 1 day (one squadron) and to observe the progress of the landing on W Day. The coastal reconnaissance and naval support group was to move two squadrons to Trondheim and one to Bergen on W Day, where they would assume responsibility for reconnaissance off the Norwegian coast.³⁴

Political Planning

To preserve secrecy, participation of civilian offices in the planning for WESERUEBUNG was prohibited, and political preparations were handled within the National Defense Branch of the Operations Staff, OKW, where the economic, administrative, and diplomatic measures were formulated in advance, to be transmitted to the appropriate agencies for execution at the proper time. The major political objective was to dissuade the Norwegian and Danish Governments from armed resistance and to persuade them to tolerate the German occupation. For their acquiescence, the governments were to be offered extensive retention of their internal sovereignty and economic aid. Their foreign political sovereignty was to be circumscribed. The initial demands were not to go beyond those necessary for the success of the operation in order to make their acceptance easy and on the assumption that more far-reaching demands could be put through without difficulty after the Wehrmacht had control. The troop commanders at the beachheads were to attempt to reach agreements with local governmental units before directives from the central authorities could arrive, and at the beginning of the operation the populations and armed forces were to be subjected to an intensive campaign of radio and leaflet propaganda calculated to arouse the impression that it was in the national interest not to resist the German forces.³⁵

To protect the landward flank, strict neutrality was to be required of Sweden with assurances that Swedish warships would not operate outside the three-mile limit in the Kattegat, the Sound, and along the

³⁴ *Generalkommando des X Fl. K., Ia, Nr. 10056/40 and 10057/40, loc. cit.; Generalkommando X Fl. K., Ia, Nr. 10072/40, Befehl fuer den Einsatz der Aufklaerungsstaffel (F) 1.122 waehrend der Weseruebung; Nr. 10071/40, Befehl fuer den Einsatz der I./F 120 am Wesertag; Nr. 10077/40, Befehl fuer den Einsatz der Kuestenfliegergruppe 506 waehrend der Weseruebung, in Gruppe XXI, Anlagenband 3 zum Ktb. I, Anlage 54. AOK 20 E 180/9a.*

³⁵ [OKW,WFA], *Abt. L, Nr. 22076/40, Vortragsnotiz; Nr. 22074/40; Nr. /40, Besondere Anordnungen fuer politische und Verwaltungsmassnahmen bei "Fall Weseruebung," in Chefsachen Gruppe IV, Mappe "Weseruebung."* OKW/213.

south coast for the duration of the German operation. Subsequent demands, it was thought, might include control of the Swedish overseas cable connections and use of the Swedish railroads to transport German troops and supplies.³⁶ Admiral Raeder at one point thought it might also be useful to offer Tromsö and the northern tip of Norway to the Soviet Union, but Hitler did not want the Russians so near.³⁷

The diplomatic moves were to be made simultaneously with the troop landings in order to preserve the element of surprise and to place the Danish and Norwegian Governments under the greatest possible pressure. At approximately 0500 on 9 April Dr. Curt Braeuer and Cecil von Renthe-Fink, the Ministers in Oslo and Copenhagen, as Plenipotentiaries of the German Reich would inform the governments of the German action and demand immediate submission. If the terms were accepted, the plenipotentiaries would remain to keep the governments under surveillance, and deputies would be assigned for the same purpose to the ministries. Since Braeuer and Renthe-Fink would have very short advance notice of the impending operation, Generalmajor Kurt Himer, Chief of Staff, XXXI Corps, and Lt. Col. Hartwig Pohlman, Operations Officer, Group XXI, were assigned to advise and assist them as Plenipotentiaries of the Wehrmacht. Two days before the operation, Himer and Pohlman would proceed to Copenhagen and Oslo in civilian clothes, their uniforms going as courier luggage. They were to perform a last-minute reconnaissance and at 2300 on 8 April were to brief the Ministers on their part in the forthcoming operation. They also carried sets of prearranged radio code letters to be used in informing Group XXI and the landing parties of the decisions made by the Danish and Norwegian Governments.³⁸ On 3 April the Chief of Staff, OKW, General Keitel, informed von Ribbentrop that the military occupation of Denmark and Norway had been in preparation under orders from Hitler for a long time and that the OKW had had ample opportunity to investigate all the questions relating to the operation.³⁹ In effect, all that remained for the Foreign Ministry was to execute the OKW plan.

³⁶ [OKW/WFA], *Abt, L, Nr. 22076/40, Politische Forderungen an die schwedische Regierung*, in *Chefsachen Gruppe IV, Mappe: "Weseruebung."* OKW/213.

³⁷ *Fuehrer Conferences*, I, 1940, p. 21.

³⁸ International Military Tribunal, Doc. 3596-PS.

³⁹ International Military Tribunal, Doc. 629-D.

Chapter 3

The Landings

WESERUEBUNG Begins

The ships of the Export Echelon were loaded and ready at Hamburg on 22 March, and three ships for Narvik departed on W minus 6 days (3 April) as did the first ship of the Tanker Echelon. The warship groups for Norway loaded at Wesermuende, Cuxhaven, Swinemuende, and Wilhelmshaven on the night of W minus 3 days, Groups 1 and 2 getting under way at midnight that night. By that time most of the ships of the 1st Sea Transport Echelon, which had begun to depart at 0400 on W minus 3 days, were already at sea. The time after which the operation could no longer be canceled was set at 1500 on W minus 3 days.¹

As the day of the landings approached, the preservation of secrecy became increasingly urgent and at the same time more difficult. The circle of those who knew about the operation was kept to a minimum. An elaborate security system was devised, and troop movements were disguised as maneuvers with details left behind in the empty billets to carry on all the standard routines. The assembly of large numbers of troops and ships at the Baltic and North Sea ports presented a definite risk, but the greatest danger came in the interval between the sailing of the first ships on W minus 6 days and the landings. The Naval Staff, which, it will be remembered, objected to the dispatch of transports ahead of the warship groups, believed it would be an extraordinary stroke of luck if the transport fleet managed to pass through the entrances to the Kattegat and Skagerrak without incident and without giving the enemy warning.²

The German luck was to hold. On 2 April the Swedish Minister in Berlin attempted to question the German State Secretary in the Foreign Ministry concerning rumors of troop and transport concentrations in the port of Stettin. That same day the Swedish Naval Attaché reported

¹ *Verbindungsstab Marine, Nr. 130, Seetransportuebersicht nach dem Stande von 22.3.40.*, in *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Anlagenband zum Ktb. Nr. 1, Anlage 56*. AOK 20 E 180/10.

² *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Erfahrungsbericht*, in *Erfahrungsberichte der Gruppe XXI von 30.7.40*. AOK 20 E 279/15. *Naval War Diary*, Vol. 8, p. 41.

he had been told that the Germans had prepared an operation to forestall a British landing in Norway. On the 4th the Netherlands Military Attaché received information concerning WESERUEBUNG and GELB from an anti-Nazi German intelligence officer in the OKW. The information was passed on to the Danish and Norwegian ministers, but the Danish Military Attaché thought it might be a plant by the OKW; and neither the Danish nor the Norwegian Government was greatly impressed by the information. The Norwegian Foreign Minister thought an attack unlikely because of British command of the sea.

On 6 April, although a report reached London through Copenhagen that the Germans planned to land a division conveyed in ten ships at Narvik on the 8th, the British did not believe that the Germans could anticipate British forces so far north. They thought that, at best, the Germans might forestall them at Stavanger or possibly involve them in a race for Bergen or Trondheim; and the report was evaluated as of doubtful value, possibly only a move in the war of nerves.³

In Germany, for the period 7 to 9 April, all the foreign military attachés were invited to an inspection of the West Wall. On the evening of the 5th, Goering invited the diplomatic corps in Berlin to the premiere of the motion picture "Baptism of Fire," which showed the destructive effects of German aerial bombardment on Polish cities. The picture was shown that same evening at the German legation in Oslo.⁴

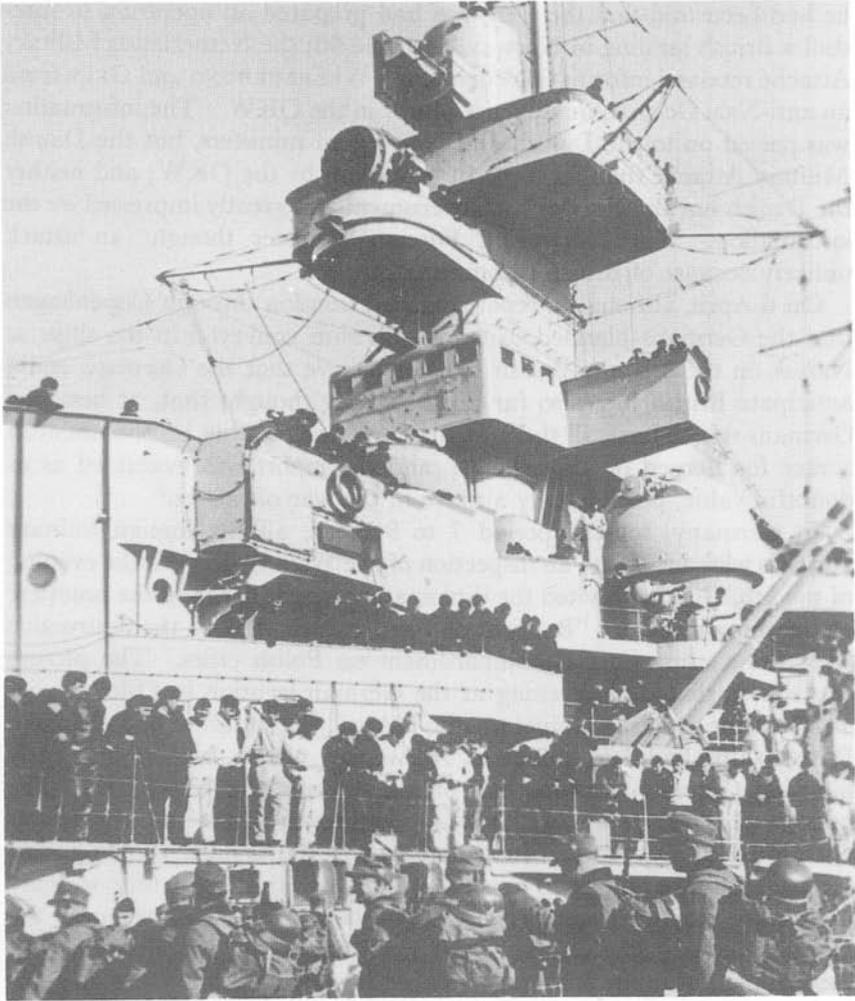
When the Danish Cabinet met on 8 April, the situation had changed. British ships had laid mines in Norwegian waters, and in the early morning German warships had passed through the Great Belt. The passage of the ships apparently was taken to mean that the threat was not aimed at Denmark. In the afternoon the Danish General Staff received information that a column of German troops fifty to sixty miles long was on route between Rendsburg and Flensburg near the Danish border. The General Staff wanted to order mobilization; but the Cabinet, at a late sitting, influenced by news that the German ships had passed the northern tip of Jutland, refused. At 1800 the Cabinet decided to take limited action: it declared a state of alarm for southern Jutland and a lesser state of readiness for the rest of the country.⁵

On 1 April the Norwegian Minister, in a report to his government, had mentioned that Germany might take certain measures to prevent British interference with the ore shipments from Narvik, but he believed the troop embarkations at Stettin did not concern Norway. Reporting on the information obtained through the Netherlands Legation on 4 April, he thought the operation was probably aimed at the west coast of Jutland to secure air and naval bases there. On the 7th, information reached Oslo that a fleet of fifteen to twenty transports had left Stettin

³ International Military Tribunal, Doc. 3955-NG. Hubatsch, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-38. Derry, *op. cit.*, pp. 22, 28.

⁴ Hubatsch, *op. cit.*, pp. 138, 151.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 140.



Mountain troops boarding the cruiser Hipper.

during the night of 5 April on a westerly course. Not much importance was attached to the report; it was assumed that, since nothing further had been heard, the ships had gone through the Kiel Canal into the North Sea. Early on the 8th the British mining of the West Fiord was reported, and at 0700 the French and British Ministers submitted the justificatory notes. After that reports came in from Berlin and Copenhagen that German troop transports and warships of all classes were at sea on a northerly course. At 1400 the British Admiralty informed the Norwegian Minister in London that German ships had been sighted in the North Sea on the 7th and off the Norwegian coast early on the 8th. The Admiralty believed their most likely destination was Narvik,

and they could be expected to arrive there shortly before midnight on the 8th. The report reached Oslo at 1900. During the afternoon the ship *Rio de Janeiro* of the 1st Sea Transport Echelon was sunk off Lillesand; and the survivors, many of them in uniform, said they were on the way to Bergen to aid the Norwegians. The Norwegian commanding admiral was not convinced that the transports were actually intended for Norway. Later in the afternoon a sighting of the warships of the Oslo group was reported; yet, by the evening of the 8th the Government had not reached a decision to order mobilization. At 1820 the Norwegian Admiralty Staff ordered increased preparedness of the coastal forts, but mines were only to be laid in the fiords on further orders. The length of time which passed before the danger was taken seriously is indicated by the fact that the chief communications officer of the Norwegian Admiralty Staff was a guest of the German Air Attaché on the night of the 8th and was not called away until 2330. At 0100 on the 9th, orders were given to lay mines on the line Rauøy-Bolarne in the Oslo Fiord, but the order could not be carried out because the German ships had already passed. At 0053 the forts at Rauøy and Bolarne reported that they were in action, and at 0158 a blackout was ordered in Oslo. The Government, meeting in the foreign ministry, at 0230 ordered the mobilization of four divisions and designated 11 April as the first mobilization day.⁶

After the campaign the German Navy assigned an officer to search the records of the Norwegian Admiralty for evidence of collaboration with the British. He found none. He concluded that WESERUEBUNG had taken the Admiralty Staff completely by surprise and that, as far as could be determined, it had received no reports from either Norwegian or foreign sources informing it of the nature or time of the operation. Only two warnings had reached Oslo. The first, on the night of 7 April, came from the pilot station at Kopervik where the German steamer *Skagerrak* had anchored with provision cases marked "Wehrmacht" aboard. The second, on the afternoon of the 8th, was a report that the *Rio de Janeiro* had had 100 German soldiers aboard. Neither aroused any particular concern.⁷ This investigation supported observations which the German Naval Attaché made on the scene. On 8 April, as he noted in his diary, he at first believed that the sinking of the *Rio de Janeiro* had given the operation away; but later in the day he observed "reliable signs" that the Admiralty had not been alerted. On the afternoon of the 9th he concluded that neither the Norwegian Government nor the Admiralty knew of the impending invasion until late on the night of 8 April. He had been in constant contact with people who would have known if it had been otherwise.⁸

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 153-57. *AOK Norwegen, O. Qu., Qu. 2, Bericht Freg. Kpt. Niedener über Durchsicht des beim Norwegischen Admiralstab gefundenen Materials.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Marineattaché Norwegen, Kriegstagebuch, Nov. 39-Mai. 40, 8 and 9 Apr. 40.*

In the German command, tension increased after the departure of the warship echelons. The Naval Staff believed, on the 6th, that, although it could not be expected that the other side was completely in the dark about WESERUEBUNG, there were no definite indications of the Allies' having discerned the German strategic plan and, at least, there was no awareness of the great extent of the operation. Since the Allies appeared about to take steps themselves, they would probably expect the German action to take the form of a counterblow to their own operations. The Naval Staff, nevertheless, believed the greatest haste was necessary and thought that 9 April was the latest possible date for the landings. On the 8th, intercepted radio messages indicated that the British had identified Warship Groups 1 and 2, but it was assumed that the Admiralty would probably expect a breakthrough into the Atlantic by a pocket battleship rather than draw conclusions regarding WESERUEBUNG.⁹

On the morning of the 8th, German Army intelligence reported WESERUEBUNG proceeding according to plan, and the impression was that the enemy as yet knew nothing.¹⁰ The Naval Staff believed the German plans had not yet become known, though it expected the increased traffic through the entrances to the Baltic to attract attention. As the day wore on, tension grew. Early reports disclosed that the ships of the Export Echelon were stalled off the Norwegian coast by inability to obtain pilots; and later in the day, after news of the sinking of the *Rio de Janeiro* arrived, the Naval Staff believed the element of surprise had been lost and engagements were to be expected at all points.¹¹ But events were to prove that the Germans still had the advantage of their enemies' indecision.

Narvik and Trondheim

At 0300 on 7 April Warship Groups 1 and 2 assembled north of Schillig Roads and at 0510 steamed into the North Sea.¹² At 0950 British reconnaissance aircraft sighted the ships heading north and at 1330 twelve Blenheim bombers attacked but without success. The British reaction was slow. Nearly seven hours had elapsed before Admiral Sir Charles Forbes, Commander in Chief of the Home Fleet, sailed from Scapa with two battleships, a battle cruiser, two cruisers, and ten destroyers. An hour later the 2d Cruiser Squadron (two cruisers and eleven destroyers) left Rosyth to join Forbes. Believing the German ships were attempting a breakout into the Atlantic, the British

⁹ *Naval War Diary*, Vol. 8, pp. 40, 50.

¹⁰ *Halder Diary*, Vol. III, p. 105.

¹¹ *Naval War Diary*, Vol. 8, pp. 60, 61.

¹² Unless otherwise noted, this section is based on the following: Assmann, *Schicksalsjahre*, pp. 137-44; Assmann, *Campaign in Norway*, pp. 19-24; Derry, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-33; Hubatsch, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-77; and S. W. Roskill, *The War at Sea 1939-1945, Vol. I, The Defensive* (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1954), pp. 157-67.

forces took a northeasterly course, trailing behind the German warship groups—which passed through the Shetlands–Bergen narrows during the night—and leaving the central North Sea uncovered.

During the night the wind increased, making it difficult for the German destroyers to maintain twenty-six knots' speed in the heavy seas and creating a constant danger of collision for the ships traveling in close formation. By the morning of the 8th the force was badly scattered, and contact with several of the destroyers had been lost. At 0900 one of the stragglers, the destroyer *Berndt von Arnim*, met the British destroyer *Glowworm* which had fallen behind the destroyer force assigned to mine the approaches to the West Fiord. The *Glowworm* engaged the *von Arnim* in a running fight that lasted until 1024 when the *Glowworm* sank after ramming the *Hipper*, which had been ordered back to aid the *von Arnim*. The encounter with the *Glowworm* took place at about the latitude of Trondheim, and shortly thereafter the *Hipper* with its four destroyers, was detached to carry out its mission at Trondheim. The *Gneisenau* and the *Scharnhorst* stayed with the remaining ten destroyers about halfway to the West Fiord and then veered off northwestward to provide offshore cover. At 2100, in a heavy gale and with visibility poor, the destroyers reached the mouth of the West Fiord.

On 8 April it began to appear to the British that the Germans had an operation under way against Norway after all; still, the Home Fleet continued to steam northward throughout the day, leaving the way clear for other German warship groups moving up from the south. The battle cruiser *Renown*, which after escorting the minelaying force to the West Fiord was standing off the Lofotens, was ordered to set a course to head off German ships approaching Narvik. At the same time, the destroyers patrolling the minefield in the West Fiord were ordered to leave their stations and join the *Renown*, a move which resulted in leaving the entrance to the West Fiord unguarded. At 1430 a British flying boat sighted the *Hipper* and its destroyers on a westerly course. The *Hipper* was merely maneuvering until the time for the run in to Trondheim, but the information confused Admiral Forbes who altered course from northeast to north and then to northwest in an effort to intercept. By evening Forbes had decided that the force ahead of him was moving to Narvik while other strong German forces were probably at sea to the south in the Kattegat and Skagerrak. He sent a battle cruiser, a cruiser, and several destroyers north to assist the *Renown*, and he himself turned south with the main force at 2000.

High winds and heavy seas impeded the movement of the ships of both sides throughout the night of the 8th. The *Gneisenau* and the *Scharnhorst* had to reduce speed to seven knots. At dawn on the 9th off the Lofotens the *Gneisenau's* radar picked up a ship to the west which was shortly afterward revealed to be the *Renown*. The ships opened fire at about 0500, and almost immediately hits wrecked the

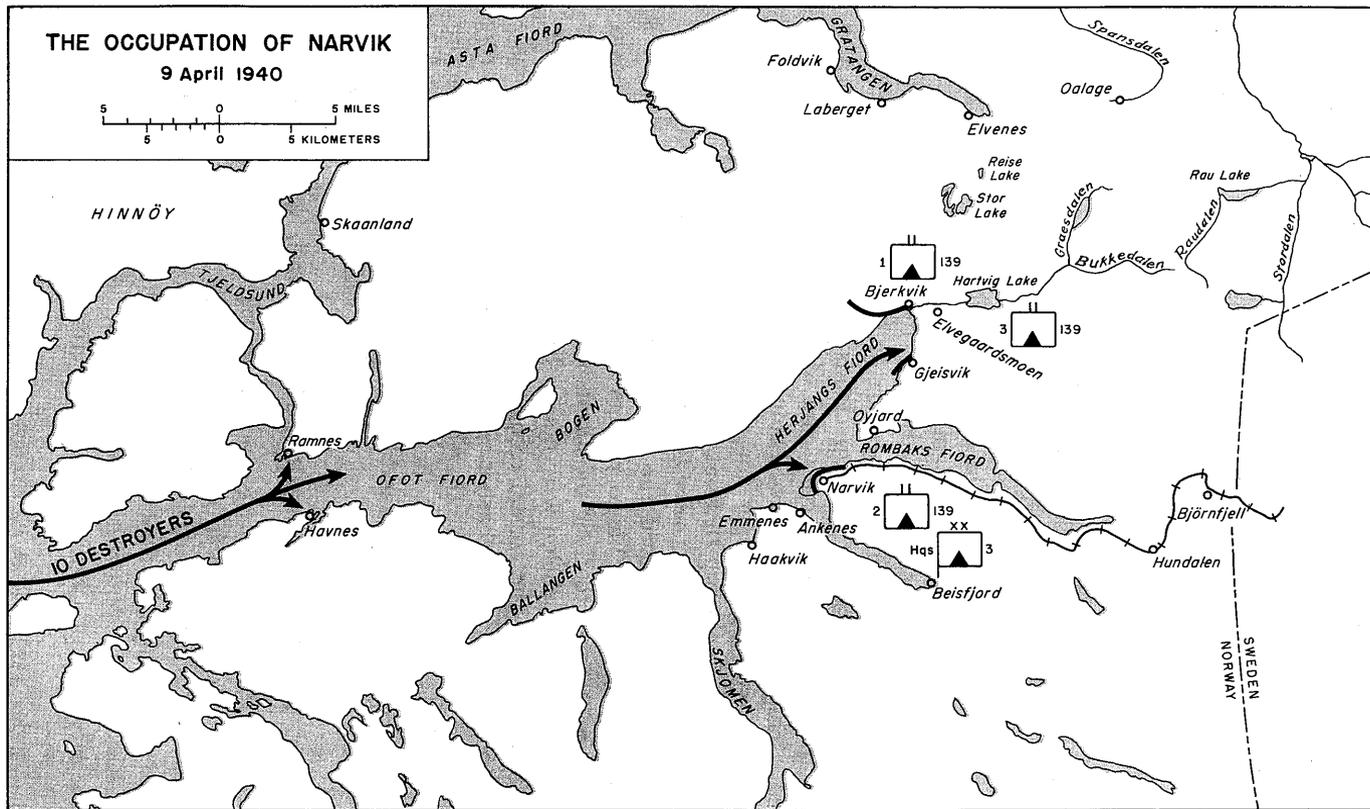
artillery control system of the *Gneisenau* and put her forward turret out of action. The *Gneisenau* and the *Scharnhorst* attempted to break off the action at 0528, but sporadic contact was maintained until 0700, as the *Renown* undertook a pursuit through heavy seas and rain squalls. The Germans missed a good chance to destroy the battle cruiser, which was supported only by eight destroyers unable to maintain high speed in the rough water. Gun flashes from the destroyers misled the German commander into believing other heavy ships were present.

At 2200 on the 8th nine destroyers of the Narvik group stood off the southern tip of the Lofotens. The *Erich Giese* had fallen about three hours behind. Shortly before midnight, as the ships passed into the lee of the Lofotens, the sea became more calm, and at 0400 the destroyers passed Barøy at the mouth of the Ofot Fiord where one remained behind on picket duty. Forty minutes later two more destroyers stopped to land assault groups for the capture of the supposed coastal forts at Ramnes and Havnes. At the head of the fiord, three destroyers were dispatched to land troops which were to take the Norwegian Army depot at Elvegaardsmoen on the Herjangs Fiord (eight miles north of Narvik), while the remaining three proceeded to Narvik. The latter, approaching Narvik, encountered the Norwegian coastal defense ship *Eidsvold*, which refused to surrender and was sunk by a torpedo salvo. In the harbor the *Berndt von Arnim* was fired on by the *Norge*, a sister ship of the *Eidsvold*, which was then also sunk in a torpedo attack.

The landings were accomplished without further incidents. Seasickness had been a problem throughout the voyage, but the few hours of quiet sailing before landing had given the troops time to recover. At Elvegaardsmoen the Norwegian troops were taken completely by surprise, and substantial stocks of supplies, which were later to prove extremely useful, were captured. At Narvik, Generalmajor Eduard Dietl, Commanding General, 3d Mountain Division, went ashore with the first troops and, at a meeting with the colonel commanding the troops in the city, demanded an immediate surrender. The commandant, who apparently was pro-German—Quisling had claimed him as one of his supporters—but who also was in no position to conduct a successful defense, complied. At 0810 Dietl reported that Narvik was in German hands. In the confusion immediately following the landing, a major, with 250 Norwegian troops, managed to withdraw eastward unnoticed.¹³

Despite the successful occupation of the city, the German position was precarious. Of the few guns and mortars which could be carried on the destroyers, a number were lost during the stormy passage. More serious still, the ships in the Export Echelon failed to arrive. On the morning of 9 April only the tanker *Jan Wellem* was in port at Narvik: it

¹³ 3. Geb. Div., Ia, K.T.B. Narvik, 6.4.40–10.6.40, pp. 2, 3. 3. Geb. Div. W 1689/a,b. Gerda-Luise Dietl and Kurt Herrmann, *General Dietl* (Munich: Muenchner Buchverlag, 1951), pp. 60–68.



C. Booth

Map 1

had sailed from the German base on the Russian Arctic coast. Of the remaining four ships one was forced to put in at Bergen, and the other three were sunk or had to be scuttled to avoid capture. The almost total loss of Dietl's equipment and supplies was to have fateful consequences for the destroyers since they had arrived at Narvik with their fuel bunkers nearly empty. A further element of danger became known in the evening when the two companies which landed to take the forts at Ramnes and Havnes arrived in Narvik and reported that no forts existed, only a few partly completed blockhouses. The Germans had counted on using the forts for defense against a British attack from the sea.¹⁴

Warship Group 2, after standing off the Norwegian coast throughout the day of the 8th, at 0030 on the 9th steamed in toward Trondheim at high speed. A picket boat signaled to the ships once but took no further action. At 0400, with the *Hipper* leading, they turned into the inner fiord and passed the searchlight batteries of the Brettingnes forts at 25 knots. The *Hipper* had already gone by Hysnes, farther up the fiord, when the battery there opened fire on the destroyers. One salvo from the *Hipper's* guns threw up clouds of smoke and dust which spoiled the aim of the shore guns, and with that the danger zone was passed. Three destroyers stayed behind to land troops for the assault on the forts while the *Hipper* and the remaining destroyer proceeded to Trondheim, anchoring there at 0525.

The troops encountered no resistance in the city, and the regimental commander quickly secured the cooperation of the local authorities although it was not possible to prevent numbers of men from leaving the city in response to their mobilization orders. As at Narvik, the ships of the Export Echelon were not on hand. During the day, fourteen float planes of the coastal reconnaissance group (Kuestenfliegergruppe 506) landed in the harbor. Most of them were damaged during the landing, and in any case they could not be put into operation for lack of gasoline. By nightfall the city had been secured, but the batteries at Brettingnes, Hysnes, and Agdenes and the airfield at Vaernes still were in Norwegian hands.

Bergen, Stavanger, Egersund, Kristiansand, and Arendal

The *Koeln*, the *Koenigsberg*, and the *Bremse* of Group 3 (Bergen) left Wilhelmshaven at 0040 on 8 April.¹⁵ The advance of Group 3 was expected to be particularly dangerous since Bergen, which could be reached from Scapa in eight to nine hours sailing time, was the most likely first objective of a British counterattack. At 1700 Group 3 came within sixty miles of a British force of two cruisers and fifteen destroyers,

¹⁴ 3. *Geb. Div.*, *K.T.B. Narvik*, *loc. cit.*, p. 3.

¹⁵ Unless otherwise noted this section is based on Hubatsch, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-86; Assmann, *Schicksalsjahre*, pp. 144-46; and Assmann, *Campaign in Norway*, pp. 29-32.

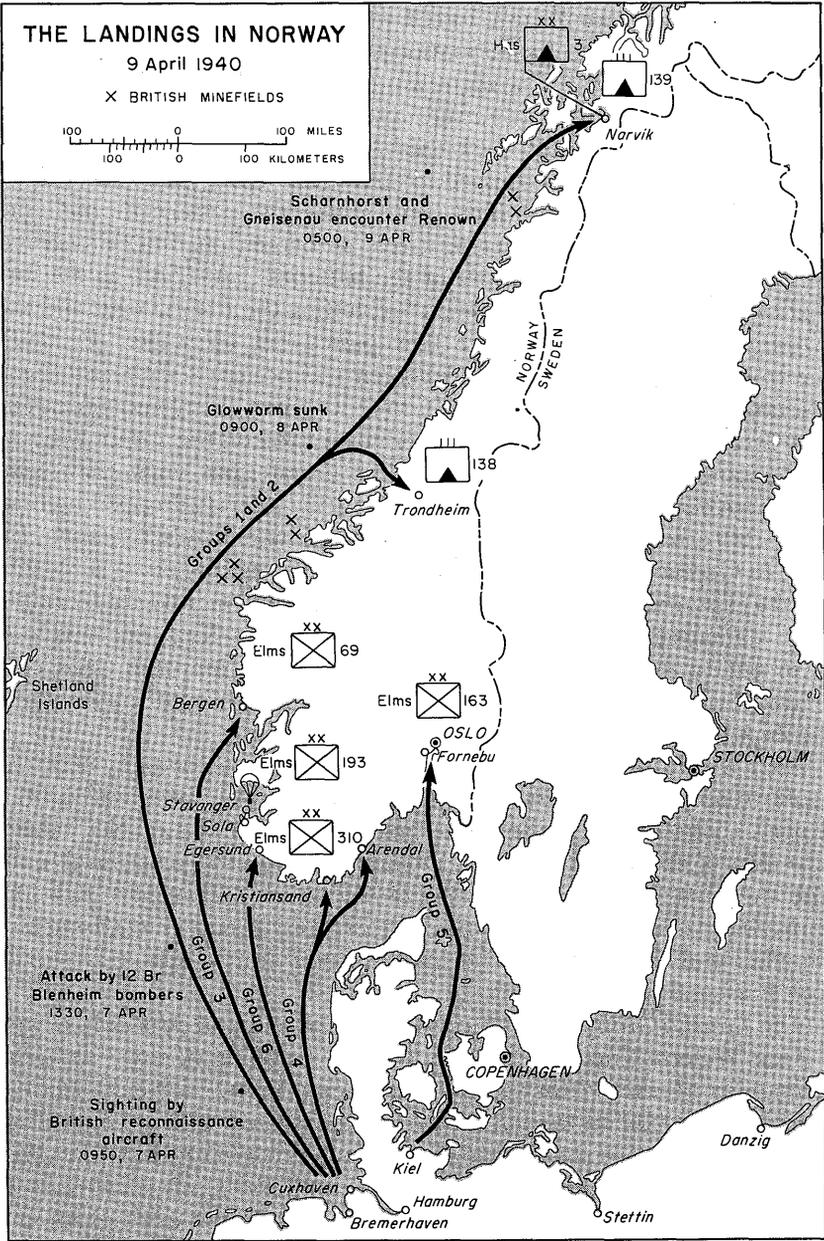
but at that time the British forces were still all steering northward.

At 0040 on the 9th the formation set an easterly course for the approach to Kors Fiord. The night was clear, and the Norwegian coastal lights were extinguished. Passing up the fiord the ships replied to signals from patrol vessels in English. Reaching the entrance to By Fiord at 0430, the group stopped to disembark troops for the assault on the batteries at Kvarven which commanded the passage through the fiord; but the ships, in order to arrive at Bergen on time, proceeded without waiting for the capture of the batteries. At 0515, as the formation passed, the batteries opened fire, hitting the *Bremse* once and the *Koenigsberg* three times before they passed out of range. By 0620 the troops had disembarked, and Bergen was occupied with only slight resistance in the city. At 0700 four German bombers appeared. Shortly afterward the battery at Sandviken fired on the *Koeln* lying at anchor, and anti-aircraft guns fired on the aircraft; but, when the *Koeln* and the *Koenigsberg* returned the fire and the aircraft dropped bombs, the forts ceased fire. At 0930 the Kvarven and Sandviken batteries were in German hands. The task of Group 3 was completed by 1100; but the captured batteries were not yet ready for action; and the *Koenigsberg*, damaged by the fire from the batteries at Kvarven, was not fit to put to sea. During the day, three German seaplane transports arrived bringing troops, and at 1930 twelve British bombers attacked the ships but failed to score any hits.¹⁶

After a dive-bombing attack and the landing of a company of parachute troops, two infantry battalions brought in by air occupied Stavanger. The airfield at Sola, the best in Norway, was quickly taken. The ship of the Export Echelon intended for Stavanger was sunk outside the port, but the three ships of the 1st Sea Transport Echelon arrived on time during the morning bringing troop reinforcements, supplies, and equipment. The minesweepers and troops of Group 6 took Egersund without trouble.

The ships of Group 4 (destined for Kristiansand and Arendal) began leaving Wesermuende at 0500 on 8 April, traveling in three separate formations adjusted to the speeds of the various units. When the group assembled at 0030 on the 9th the torpedo boat *Greif* with its troops had already set a course for Arendal, where it accomplished the landing without resistance but was delayed by fog until 0900. At 0345 Group 4 lay outside the fiord at Kristiansand, but could not attempt an entrance because of heavy fog. At 0600, when visibility improved, the moment of surprise had been lost, and a Norwegian aircraft had sighted the ships. Twenty minutes later the formation attempted to enter the fiord but was forced to retire under the cover of smoke after encountering fire from the batteries at Odderøy. It undertook a second ap-

¹⁶ Gruppe XXI, Ia, *Durchschlaege von Abschriften eines Teils der Anlagen zum K.T.B. 2-3, 9.4.40-10.5.40.* AOK 20 E 288/1.



Map 2

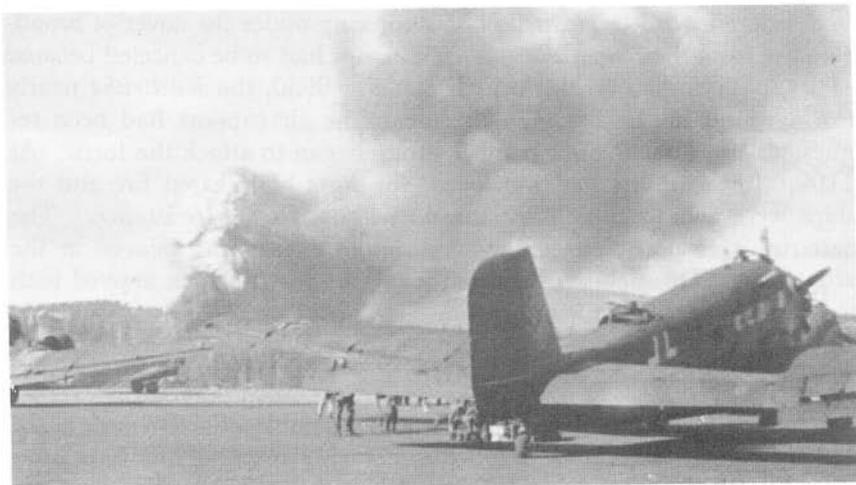
proach at 0655 after five German planes had bombed the batteries at Odderöy and Gleodden. The attempt failed, and the ships again had to withdraw under the cover of smoke. Both times the ships had approached in line, which meant that only the forward turrets of the *Karlsruhe* could be brought to bear. At 0750 a different approach

was ordered, with the torpedo boats entering under the cover of broadside fire from the *Karlsruhe*. That attempt had to be canceled because of fog. Trying to break through alone at 0930, the *Karlsruhe* nearly ran aground in the fog. In the meantime air support had been requested, and after 0930 a bomber group began to attack the forts. At 1100, after visibility had improved, the forts had ceased fire and the ships were able to enter Kristiansand without further resistance. The batteries were occupied before noon, and the city was secured in the afternoon. Three ships of the 1st Sea Transport Echelon arrived with troops and supplies in the afternoon.

Oslo

Group 5 loaded at Swinemuende and assembled on the evening of 7 April in Kiel Bay.¹⁷ At 0300 the following morning the formation passed northward through the Great Belt and by 1900 had reached the latitude of Skagen at the tip of the Jutland Peninsula. Shortly after midnight it approached the entrance to the Oslo Fiord where the Norwegian patrol boat *Pol III*, an armed whaler, raised the alarm before being sunk by gunfire from one of the torpedo boats. Farther in, the island forts at Rauøy and Bolarne turned on their searchlights and attempted to engage the German ships, but without success because of fog. After dispatching several of the smaller vessels to land troops for the capture of the forts and the Norwegian naval base at Horten, the formation advanced up the fiord. At 0440 the ships had reached the narrows at Dröbak, about ten miles from Oslo, with the *Bluecher* in the lead, and approached the Oscarsborg fort at twelve knots in a heavy haze which reduced visibility. Since no activity could be observed in the direction of the fort (its searchlights could not be operated because the boilers of the steam generators were being cleaned), the group commander apparently assumed there would be no further resistance and a rapid advance to Oslo would be possible. When the *Bluecher* came within range, the 280-mm. guns at Oscarsborg opened fire, as did the batteries at Kaholm and Dröbak. The first hits caused severe damage, starting fires and putting the steering gear out of action; and as the ship, steering with her engines, passed Kaholm she was struck by two torpedoes from the battery there. Within three or four minutes the *Bluecher* had passed out of range, but the fires could not be brought under control, and an explosion in one of the magazines sealed her fate. At 0700 the commanding officer ordered the ship abandoned. A half hour later she capsized and sank. It was ironical that Germany's newest heavy cruiser was sunk by the guns (Krupp model 1905) of a fort built during the Crimean War and torpedoes manufactured at the turn of the

¹⁷ Unless otherwise noted this section is based on Assmann, *Campaign in Norway*, pp. 33-35; Derry, *op. cit.*, pp. 35, 36; and Hubatsch, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-93.



JU 52 transports, Fornebu Airfield, 9 April 1940.

century by an Austrian firm in Fiume.¹⁸ The sinking entailed a heavy loss of men, including most of the staff of the 163d Infantry Division.

After the loss of the *Bluecher* command of Group 5 passed to the commanding officer of the *Luetzow*, who withdrew the rest of the ships and decided to land troops at Sonsbukten for an attack on the defenses at Dröbak from land and from the sea. During the day waves of bombers and dive bombers attacked the outer forts and Horten, which also continued to offer resistance. Dröbak was occupied at 1900, but negotiations for the surrender of Kaholm were protracted until the morning of 10 April when the ships were able to pass through the narrows, reaching Oslo at 1145.

In Oslo on the morning of the 9th heavy fog and antiaircraft artillery fire delayed the planned landing of parachute and airborne troops. It was only after bombers had been committed that the first infantry assault troops could land. At 0838, more than three hours after the planned time, the transports began to land. Even then sheer luck was all that made the landings possible. Because of fog, the X Air Corps had ordered all the planes to land at Aalborg in Denmark. Those carrying parachute troops had turned back, but the first transport group carrying elements of one infantry battalion had ignored the order because it was subordinate to the Transport Chief (Land), not the X Air Corps. About noon, five additional companies of infantry were brought in followed by two parachute companies. With these forces Oslo was occupied.¹⁹

¹⁸ *Gruppe XXI, Ia, "Uebersetzung: Die Seeschlacht von Oscarsburg am 9.4.1940, Unterredung mit dem norweg. Lt. Bonsak," in Bluecher Erlebnisberichte. AOK 20 E 279/2.*

¹⁹ Oberst a. D. Greffrath, "Der Norwegen-Feldzug 1940." USAF Historical Division, Wiesbaden.

The Return of the Warships

Throughout the night of 8 April the British main force steamed south, reaching a point somewhat below the latitude of Bergen on the morning of the 9th.²⁰ By that time reports were coming in of enemy landings at Norwegian ports. At 1130 Forbes detached four cruisers and seven destroyers to attack the German ships at Bergen, but the Admiralty canceled the attack in the belief that the coastal forts were already in German hands. At noon Forbes turned north again, coming under heavy German air attack during the afternoon. The display of German air superiority led Forbes to the conclusion that the southern area would have to be left to submarines and land-based aircraft. Joined early on the 10th by the aircraft carrier *Furious*, Forbes continued northward intending to launch an air attack on Trondheim.

Meanwhile, the British 2d Destroyer Flotilla (five destroyers), which had been part of the minelaying force for Narvik, entered the West Fiord at 1600 on the 9th. The following morning, at dawn in a snow storm, taking five German destroyers by surprise in the harbor at Narvik, it sank two and damaged the rest. Passing out of the Ofot Fiord the 2d Destroyer Flotilla was itself attacked by five German destroyers which had been anchored in the Herjangs and Ballangen Fiords. In the ensuing action one British destroyer was sunk, one beached, and one badly damaged.

The German destroyers had been unable to leave on the night of the 9th as had been planned because of delays in refueling; and the dawn attack was a complete surprise to the German force, since, owing to unclear orders, the destroyer on patrol had left its post shortly before the British destroyers arrived. Apparently, too, the German commander relied heavily on the four submarines posted in the fiord. The submarines, however, were unable to operate effectively because of poor visibility and torpedo failures. The incidence of torpedo failures was to hamper German submarine operations severely throughout the Norwegian campaign. It was believed that magnetic conditions in the Norwegian area affected the magnetic fuses, but the conventional torpedoes scarcely functioned better.

At 2200 on 10 April the *Hipper* left Trondheim accompanied by one destroyer which later had to turn back because of heavy seas. During the night the *Hipper* narrowly missed the force of Admiral Forbes, who was advancing for the air attack on Trondheim, an attack that eighteen torpedo bombers carried out the next morning without success. The *Scharnhorst* and the *Gneisenau* had continued northwestward after the encounter with the *Renown* until, on the 10th in the vicinity of Jan Mayen Island, they altered course southward for the return to their

²⁰ Unless otherwise noted this section is based on Assmann, *Campaign in Norway*, pp. 37-48; Hubatsch, *op. cit.*, Derry, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-53; and Roskill, *op. cit.*, pp. 171-78.

home base. Knowing from intercepted radio traffic that the British forces were concentrating in the zone from Trondheim to the Lofotens they executed a sweeping arc to the west, passing close to the Shetland Islands during the night of the 11th. At 0830 on the 12th they made contact with the *Hipper*, and at 2000 the ships entered the Jade docking at Wilhelmshaven. Two of the destroyers returned from Trondheim on 14 April, one on 10 May, and the last on 10 June.

After the attack on Trondheim failed, Admiral Forbes continued northward and arrived off the Lofotens during the afternoon of 12 April to cover and support the attack on the enemy ships at Narvik with aircraft from the *Furious*. On orders from the Admiralty the battleship *Warspite* and nine destroyers were committed in the final attack. Early on the morning of the 13th the formation advanced up the West Fiord. The first success was obtained by the *Warspite's* reconnaissance plane, which bombed and sank a German submarine while scouting ahead of the force. Two German destroyers stationed halfway up the Ofot Fiord gave a warning of the British approach. One of them was sunk where it lay at anchor. It had been damaged in the battle on 10 April and was being used as a floating gun and torpedo battery. The other escaped toward Narvik ahead of the British ships. It and the remaining six destroyers of the German flotilla engaged the British from 1300 to 1400 just outside the Narvik harbor and then, having exhausted their ammunition, retired into the Rombaks and Herjangs Fiords where some were beached and others sunk. The ten lost destroyers comprised half the total destroyer strength of the German Navy, but most of the crews were saved and formed a valuable reinforcement for General Dietl's small force in Narvik.

The return of the ships from the southern ports was carried out with varying degrees of success. At Bergen the *Koenigsberg* and the *Bremse*, damaged during the landings, were not fit to put to sea on the 9th, and the *Karl Peters*, with the motor torpedo boats, was to remain behind according to plan. The *Koeln*, with an escort of two torpedo boats, setting out on the night of the 9th, was sighted by British planes, but, after taking cover in a small fiord until the following day, was able to proceed, arriving safely at Wilhelmshaven at 1700 on the 11th. On the 10th, when British land-based bombers attacked Bergen, the *Koenigsberg* received two direct hits, capsized, and sank. The *Karlsruhe*, leaving Kristiansand with three torpedo boats on the night of the 9th, was torpedoed just outside the harbor and later had to be sunk by her own escorts. At Oslo the military situation did not permit the return of all the warships, and only the *Luetzow*, still scheduled for a raiding mission in the Atlantic, was ordered to return at once. The *Luetzow* put out from Horten on the evening of the 10th. Early the following morning, while traveling at high speed off the Swedish coast, the *Luetzow* was hit

by a torpedo from a British submarine which blew off both screws and the rudder, and the ship had to be towed to Kiel.

The cost to the German Navy of the Norwegian operation ran high. It lost one heavy cruiser, two light cruisers, ten destroyers, and had three other cruisers damaged. In addition, the gunnery training ship *Brummer* was sunk on 15 April while on convoy duty. Part of this loss could be credited to the fact that the British had stationed sixteen submarines along the German approach routes through the Skagerrak and Kattegat during their own preparation for WILFRED and PLAN R 4.

Supply and Troop Transport

Of the seven ships in the Export Echelon, none arrived on time; four were sunk; one was captured; one of those for Narvik put in at Bergen on 11 April where British aircraft sank it while unloading; and one arrived at Trondheim on 13 April.²¹ Of the four tankers for Narvik and Trondheim, one, the *Jan Wellem* (Narvik), reached port, and three were sunk. The loss, as has been seen, proved serious for the warships at those ports. The *Hipper*, forced to start the trip back without refueling, arrived at Wilhelmshaven with only enough fuel for two and one half hours' steaming. The four tankers for Oslo, Stavanger, and Bergen reached port on time.

The 1st Sea Transport Echelon (15 ships), its ships traveling singly, lost three ships. Another was torpedoed but could be taken in tow. The 2d Sea Transport Echelon (11 ships), traveling in convoy, lost two ships; and the 3d Transport Echelon lost one. The remaining five echelons made their runs without losses; but the submarine menace continued; and German antisubmarine measures, particularly during the first few weeks, proved singularly ineffective.²² After the sinking of two ships in the 2d Sea Transport Echelon, which resulted in a loss of 900 troops, the Naval Staff ordered that troops were no longer to be carried on slow transports but only on fast small vessels or warships. Thenceforth the troops were routed to Frederikshaven on Jutland and from there taken to south Norwegian ports in small ships. After a while, the number of troops transported by this means was stepped up to 3,000 a day, and in the period from the middle of April to the middle of June 42,000 men were transported without losses. A similar arrangement was made for the transportation of provisions, ammunition, and equipment from Skagen to southern Norway in small boats in order to relieve the pressure on the transports. From the beginning of the Norwegian campaign to 15 June 1940 a total of 270 ships and 100 trawlers (excluding warships) carried 107,581 officers and men, 16,102 horses, 20,339 vehicles, and 109,400 tons of supplies. Twenty-one ships were lost.

²¹ Unless otherwise noted this section is based on Assmann, *Campaign in Norway*, pp. 48-51 and Hubatsch, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-34.

²² *Naval War Diary*, Vol. 8, p. 142.

After it became known that the Export Echelon was a failure, Hitler on 10 April ordered that the use of submarines as transports be investigated. Between 12 and 16 April three submarines, each carrying about fifty tons of ammunition and supplies, were dispatched to Narvik but, because of the uncertainty of the situation in the north, were re-routed to Trondheim. On 27 April another three boats were sent to Trondheim with aviation gasoline and aerial bombs. During the Norwegian operation the submarines carried out a total of eight transport missions.

The Air Force also played an important role in the movement of troops and matériel to Norway, especially in the crucial early weeks of the operation. In 582 transport aircraft, 21 battalions, 9 division and regimental staffs, and a number of mountain artillery batteries were moved, plus naval personnel and equipment and air force ground personnel and equipment. It was estimated that the air transport units flew 13,018 missions, carrying a total of 29,280 men and 2,376 tons of supplies.²³

Diplomatic and Political Moves

Arriving at the foreign ministry shortly after 0500 on 9 April, the German Minister found the Norwegian Foreign Minister waiting for him. The Cabinet had been in session at the Foreign Ministry throughout the night, and the German demands were quickly presented and as quickly rejected. At 0550 Pohlman, the Military Plenipotentiary, reported to Group XXI that the Norwegian Government had declared, "We will not submit. The battle is already in progress."²⁴ An hour and a half later he telegraphed that there were still no warships at Oslo and no aircraft over the city.²⁵ While Braeuer and Pohlman awaited the arrival of their troops, the Norwegian royal family, the Cabinet, and most of the members of Parliament were able to leave the capital in a special train which took them to Hamar 70 miles inland. Later in the day the Government moved to Elverum, 50 miles from the Swedish border, where, during the night, German parachute troops made an unsuccessful attempt to capture the king.²⁶

The departure of the government left the capital in a state of confusion, and the civilian population began to evacuate the city. Shortly after noon Braeuer issued an appeal to the government to stop the resistance and attempted through radio broadcasts to bring the evacuation to a halt.²⁷ The most serious consequence of the government's leaving

²³ Oberst a.D. Greffrath, "Der Norwegen-Feldzug 1940." Hubatsch, *op. cit.*, p. 378.

²⁴ Pohlman/Braeuer, Nr. 487 an das Auswaertige Amt, An Gruppe XXI, 9. April, in Gruppe XXI, Doppelstuecke, Durchschlaege von Abschriften eines Teiles der Anlagen zum Ktb. 2-3. AOK 20 E 288/1.

²⁵ Pohlman/Braeuer, Nr. 490, 9. April, 0720, An Auswaertiges Amt fuer Gruppe XXI, in Gruppe XXI, Doppelstuecke, *loc. cit.*

²⁶ Derry, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

²⁷ Telefonische Meldung des Deutschen Gesandten in Oslo an das Ministerbuero von 15.10 Uhr bis 15.30 Uhr, 9. April 1940, in Gruppe XXI, Doppelstuecke, *loc. cit.*

was that it gave Quisling a chance to come forward with a cabinet of his own, which he did promptly on 9 April. The question of what to do with Quisling had not been decided in advance. The Germans knew that he had no popular support; and, in any event, the principal objective of Group XXI was to achieve a peaceful settlement with the existing Norwegian Government as quickly as possible. But once he had managed to appear on the scene, he received the backing of Rosenberg and Hitler, and thereafter the negotiations included a demand that the king accept a government under Quisling.

On the afternoon of the 9th the Norwegian Government agreed to reopen negotiations, and the king received Braeuer on the following day. Braeuer believed there was a strong desire to reach a settlement, but the king refused to permit Quisling to form a government. Later the Foreign Minister informed Braeuer that the resistance would continue "as far as possible."²⁸ After a German air attack on 11 April the Royal Headquarters was moved north and, in the course of April, was transferred to Tromsø. Braeuer made several further attempts through intermediaries to reopen conversations. On the 14th, through the Bishop of Oslo, he stated his willingness to drop Quisling; but the Norwegian Foreign Minister, by then convinced that a successful Allied counterattack would be launched, refused to enter into negotiations.²⁹ Several days later Braeuer, who had been saddled with most of the blame for the failure of the negotiations, was recalled. Admiral Raeder, for one, believed that a more determined and energetic man would have taken immediate steps to arrest the government at any cost.³⁰ Hitler had, in fact, ordered on 2 April that the kings of Norway and Denmark were under no circumstances to be permitted to leave their countries and were to be placed under guard in their residences; but it is difficult to imagine how Braeuer could have arrested the government with the forces at his disposal on the morning of 9 April.³¹

That Quisling, who was regarded as a traitor, could not form a viable government was apparent immediately. Braeuer reported that the rising unrest in the occupied areas could be traced less to the German occupation than to general opposition to Quisling. As a consequence, in an attempt to establish some sort of governing authority without completely abandoning Quisling, the so-called Administrative Council was formed on 15 April. It came into being as a result of negotiations between Braeuer and the Chief Justice of the Norwegian Supreme Court, Paal Berg. Consisting of men prominent in business and public affairs, it was to take charge of internal administration of the occupied

²⁸ *Telephonischer Bericht vom Gesandten Braeuer, Oslo an das Buero des Reichsaussenministers, 10. April 1940, 2230 Uhr, in Gruppe XXI, Doppelstuecke, loc. cit.*

²⁹ Hubatsch, *op. cit.*, pp. 162-64.

³⁰ *Fuehrer Conferences*, p. 42.

³¹ *OKW, WFA, Abt. L, Nr. 22125/40, Betr., Besetzung von Daenemark und Norwegen, in Gruppe XXI, Ia, Anlagenband 1 zum Ktb. Nr. 1, Anlagen 1-52, 20.2-8.2.1940. AOK 20 E 180/7.*



Bandsmen emplaning for Oslo, 9 April 1940.

areas, but it did not constitute a government and did not regard itself as such. Quisling, not included in the Administrative Council, was assigned a post as commissioner for demobilization. His puppet government thus terminated after an existence of less than a week.³²

On 19 April Hitler informed Falkenhorst that a state of war existed between Norway and Germany and that the Administrative Council had no political rights or authority. He gave Falkenhorst full authority to take all the measures necessary for the rapid conquest and pacification of the country. Severity was recommended.³³ On the same day Hitler appointed Joseph Terboven, an old-line Nazi Party official, as Reichskommissar for the Occupied Norwegian Territories and in a decree of 24 April gave him the supreme governmental power in the civilian sector.³⁴ The latter decision ran directly counter to the accepted Ger-

³² Braeuer, *Fernschreiben nach Berlin fuer Reichsminister* [draft telegram], 14 April, in *Gruppe XXI, Anlagenband 3 zum K.T.B. Nr. 2.u.3., 13.4.-18.4.40*. AOK 20 E 279/3. Halvdan Koht, *Norway Neutral and Invaded* (New York, 1941), pp. 131ff. U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945* (Washington, 1956), Series D, Vol. IX, pp. 161, 168-72, and 195-97.

³³ *Der Fuehrer und Oberste Befehlshaber der Wehrmacht, OKW, Nr. 104/40, 19.4.40*, in *Gruppe XXI, Anlagenband 4 zum K.T.B. Nr. 2.u.3., 19.4.40-23.4.40*. AOK 20 E 279/4.

³⁴ Between the dismissal of Braeuer and the appointment of Terboven Gauleiter Alfred Frauenfeld held the position of Reich Plenipotentiary for a few days. After a quick look at the confused situation in Norway, Frauenfeld decided to return to the quiet of his German Gau.

man doctrine that, in a zone of operations, the commanding general of an army exercised the executive power as long as operations were in progress; and it paved the way for an endless series of disputes between the German military and civilian authorities in Norway.

The Occupation of Denmark

The operations of the XXXI Corps in Denmark were destined to go entirely according to plan. Moving up from their assembly areas in north Germany the 11th Motorized Rifle Brigade and the 170th Infantry Division bivouacked during the night of 8 April along the road Schleswig-Flensburg. Elements of the 198th Division transferred to Warnemuende, Travemuende, and Kiel so that they could begin embarkation on the night of 7 April.³⁵

At 0515 on the morning of the 9th, the 11th Motorized Rifle Brigade and the 170th Infantry Division crossed the border on a broad front with the weight of the attack directed northward from Tondern and Flensburg. The weak Danish forces at the border were not capable of staging serious resistance, and German tanks quickly broke the few pockets of resistance which developed. To prevent the destruction of bridges near the border, special small units had been sent in before W Hour. At 0730 a parachute platoon and a battalion of the 69th Infantry Division transported by air took possession of the airfields at Aalborg. By 0800 the Danish Army had halted its resistance, and German forces were able to advance northward unimpeded, with elements of the 11th Motorized Rifle Brigade reaching Aalborg during the course of the day. At 1100 Group 10, composed mostly of minesweepers, put in at Esbjerg to be followed the next morning by Group 11, which landed at Tyborön. The Danish railways were taken over intact, with the result that rail contact with Aalborg could be established on the 9th.³⁶

The ships of Group 7 loaded at Kiel. The staff of the 198th Infantry Division and a reinforced infantry battalion were embarked aboard the *Schleswig-Holstein* and two merchant steamers for the landing at Korsör, while a torpedo boat and two minesweepers took aboard the company for Nyborg. Before dawn on the morning of the 9th, as the formation passed through the Great Belt, the *Schleswig-Holstein* ran aground and had to be left behind. The landings were accomplished without opposition, and beachheads were quickly established. The force at Korsör was increased during the morning when merchant ships brought in

³⁵ Hubatsch, *op. cit.*, pp. 93ff.

³⁶ *Befehlshaber der deutschen Truppen in Daenemark (Hoeheres Kommando XXXI), Ia, Nr. 279/40, Bericht ueber die Besetzung Daenemarks am 9. und 10.4.40, und die dabei gemachten Erfahrungen, in Befehlshaber der deutschen Truppen in Daenemark, Besetzung Daenemarks am 9. u. 10.4.40, Abt. Ia und Ic. XXXI AK E 290/2. Hubatsch, op. cit., pp. 94, 96.*

a reinforced infantry regiment; by 1300, elements had crossed Sjaelland and were in Copenhagen. On the west coast of Fuenen, Group 9 (a merchant steamer and a number of small craft) had landed a battalion at Middelfart at 0630 to secure the bridge across the Little Belt. Farther south a battalion crossed from Warnemuende to Gedser aboard two train ferries and advanced northward across Falster to Vordingborg where, with the assistance of a parachute company, it had established a secure bridgehead by 0730. On the afternoon of the 9th XXXI Corps ordered the occupation of Bornholm off the Swedish south coast—an operation which was carried out by one battalion on the following day.³⁷

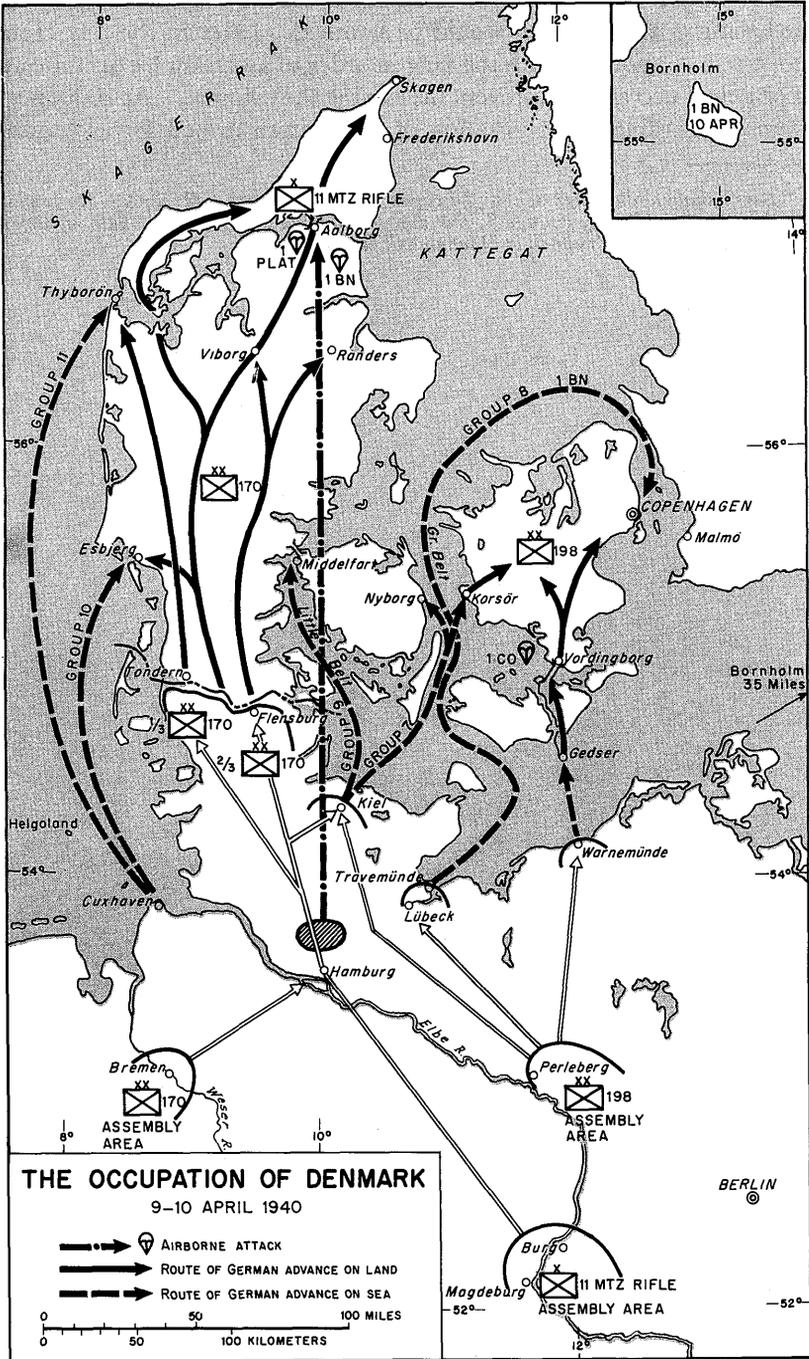
The mission of Group 8, consisting of the motorship *Hansestadt Danzig* carrying an infantry battalion and escorted by an icebreaker and two picket boats, was predominantly political and psychological. Hitler had ordered the landing of a “representative” force at Copenhagen to give emphasis to the diplomatic negotiations. Falkenhorst proposed having the battalion march into the city to the accompaniment of band music; but Kaupisch decided, instead, to stage an assault on the Citadel, the old fortress overlooking the harbor, and take the guards regiment quartered there prisoner.³⁸ On 4 April the major in command of the landing force had traveled to Copenhagen in civilian clothes, where he scouted the landing possibilities and was shown through the Citadel by a Danish sergeant. The landing, on 9 April, was accomplished without a hitch. The fort at the entrance to the harbor brought the ships under its searchlights but could not fire even a warning shot because of grease in the gun barrels. At 0735 the German commander reported the Citadel occupied without resistance.³⁹

At 2300 on 8 April Minister von Renthe-Fink received his instructions from General Himer who had arrived in Copenhagen in civilian clothes on the 7th accompanied by a legation secretary from the Foreign Ministry. In coded messages to the XXXI Corps, Himer on the 8th reported the harbor ice-free and confirmed the fact that the weak point of the Citadel was at its southeast corner. On the morning of the 9th, for an hour after the landing, he was able to keep open a direct telephone connection to the headquarters of the XXXI Corps at Hamburg and give a running account of the capture of the Citadel and the progress of negotiations. The Danish Government capitulated at 0720, after Himer, to speed up the deliberations of the Ministerial Council, had

³⁷ 198. Inf. Div., Abt. Ia, Bericht ueber die Besetzung der daenischen Inseln Seeland, Fuenen, Falster und Bornholm durch die 198. Inf. Division am 9. und 10.4.40; Infanterie Regiment 308, Bericht ueber die Unternehmung der Abteilung Oberstleutnant Schultz gegen Seeland/Daenemark, in Hoeh. Kdo. z.b.V. XXXI, Sammelakte ueber die Besetzung Daenemarks, 9.4.–31.4.1940. XXXI AK E 290/1.

³⁸ Unternehmen Daenemark (am 9. April 1940), in Hoeh. Kdo. z.b.V., Sammelakte, loc. cit.

³⁹ Major Glein, Kommandeur I./I.R. 308, Bericht ueber die Landung in Kopenhagen und Besetzung der dortigen Zitadelle am 9.4.40, in Hoeh. Kdo. z.b.V., XXXI, Sammelakte, loc. cit. Hubatsch, op. cit., p. 98.



Map 3

told Renthe-Fink to inform it that, unless an immediate decision were forthcoming, Copenhagen would be bombed. Later in the day Himer requested an audience with the king in order to ascertain his attitude and to be able if necessary to prevent his leaving the country. At 1000, negotiations regarding demobilization of the Danish armed forces began.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ *Befehlshaber der Deutschen Truppen in Daenemark (Hoeheres Kommando XXXI), Ia Nr. 279/40, Anlage 2, Die diplomatische Aktion am 9.4.1940, in Befehlshaber der deutschen Truppen in Daenemark, loc. cit.*

Chapter 4

Operations in Southern and Central Norway

The Command Crisis

By the fourth day Operation WESERUEBUNG had entered a new phase. The enemy had reacted, isolating the regiment at Narvik; and it took no clairvoyance to envision similar developments at Trondheim or Bergen. The WESERUEBUNG plan had failed to achieve its most important objective, a Norwegian surrender that would give Group XXI control of the interior lines of communication needed to link up its landing teams. A strategy conference at Fuehrer Headquarters on 13 April decided that, if the situation in Norway deteriorated badly, the issue would not be forced there; instead the attack in the west would be launched within eight or ten days to draw off Allied pressure.¹ The weather, which continued cold and rainy, reduced the chances of applying that solution. Confronted for the first time with a possible defeat, Hitler panicked.

On the afternoon of 13 April, with results of the final British attack on the destroyers not yet known in Berlin, Hitler ordered Dietl to defend Narvik under all circumstances, but a day later he became convinced that the situation at Narvik was hopeless. On the 14th he disclosed his belief that Narvik could not be held to the Commander in Chief, Army, Generaloberst Walter von Brauchitsch, and "in a state of frightful agitation" proposed ordering Dietl to give up Narvik and withdraw southward overland.² The next day, after the OKH expressed opposition to the projected evacuation of Narvik, General Jodl, Chief of the Operations Staff, OKW, explained that the question of complete evacuation had not yet been decided, but the city of Narvik could not be held, and the troops were to be withdrawn into the mountains.³

Two days later Hitler insisted that Dietl's force either be ordered to withdraw into Sweden or be evacuated by air. Jodl maintained that a withdrawal into Sweden was "impossible," and that an air evacuation would save only part of the troops, result in a heavy loss of

¹ *Halder Diary*, Vol. III, p. 113.

² *3. Geb. Div., K.T.B. Narvik*, p. 6. *Halder Diary*, Vol. III, p. 113. *Jodl Diary*, 14 Apr 40.

³ *Halder Diary*, Vol. III, p. 114.

planes, and shatter the morale of the Narvik force. In any case, Germany did not have enough long-range aircraft to execute the evacuation. Jodl also opposed Hitler's earlier intention of instructing Dietl to withdraw southward and brought in a professor with expert knowledge of Norway to prove that the terrain south of Narvik was impassable even for mountain troops.⁴

Nevertheless, on the afternoon of the 17th, the Operations Staff, OKW, without being previously consulted, received for transmittal an order signed by Hitler giving Dietl discretionary authority to withdraw his force into Sweden and be interned. The OKH feared that execution of the order would impair the morale of the entire Army; therefore, to counteract it, Brauchitsch dispatched a message to Dietl, congratulating him on his recent promotion to Generalleutnant and expressing "the conviction" that he would "defend Narvik even against a superior enemy."⁵ In the OKW the Hitler order was held up long enough for Jodl to argue the case with Hitler once more. By evening Jodl was able to get Hitler's signature on a new order instructing Dietl to hold Narvik as long as possible and then to withdraw along the railroad into the interior. The possibility that picked troops might withdraw southward was left for further investigation.⁶

The achievement of a more rational and determined attitude with regard to the situation at Narvik did not end the crisis; and Jodl, on 19 April, complained of incipient chaos in the high-level conduct of the Norwegian operation. Goering was demanding stronger action against the population and attempted to create an impression that guerrilla warfare and sabotage were widespread in Norway. He complained, too, that the Navy was leaving the burden of troop transportation to the Air Force. The appointment of Terboven as Reichskommissar for Norway also aroused misgivings in the OKW, which doubted whether his authority could be sufficiently circumscribed to preclude interference in military affairs and saw in his appointment a shift toward repression in civilian affairs. The OKW, having no interest in fighting an extended campaign against the Norwegians, wanted to avoid stirring up either active or passive resistance.⁷

Meanwhile, Allied landings in the vicinity of Trondheim had provided a new cause for concern. The British Chiefs of Staff, having first considered a direct attack on the city, came gradually to favor an envelopment from the north and south as less risky. On 14 April a British naval party went ashore at Namsos. Two days later a British brigade, diverted from the force for Narvik, followed, and on the 19th

⁴ *Jodl Diary*, 17 Apr 40.

⁵ Generaloberst a.D. Franz Halder, Comments on Part I, *The German Northern Theater of Operations 1940-1945*, 12 Nov 56. 3. *Geb. Div., K.T.B. Narvik*, p. 9. *Halder Diary*, Vol. III, p. 117.

⁶ 3. *Geb. Div., K.T.B. Narvik*, pp. 9, 10, 13. *Jodl Diary* 17, 18 Apr 40. Dietl, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

⁷ *Jodl Diary*, 19, 20 Apr 40.

three French battalions landed. At Åndalsnes, south of Trondheim, a British brigade debarked on 18 April, following a naval party which had landed a day earlier. On the 19th the Allies had a total of 8,000 men ashore at Namsos and Åndalsnes.⁸

The Allied threat to Trondheim threw Hitler into a renewed state of agitation. On 21 April the slow progress of the advance north from Oslo led him to cancel transfer of the 11th Motorized Brigade to Norway and to substitute the 2d Mountain Division. A day later he proposed using the liners *Bremen* and *Europa* to transport a division to Trondheim but reluctantly gave way after Raeder protested that the entire fleet would be needed to escort the ships and that the probable outcome would be the loss of both transports and the fleet. Several days later, to the dismay of the OKH, which saw its best troops being sluiced off to Norway while the campaign against France was in the offing, Hitler ordered the 1st Mountain Division readied for transport to Norway. Before that division could be dispatched, Group XXI had established land contact between Oslo and Trondheim, and the Allied evacuation had begun.⁹

The Advance Northward from Oslo

The Breakout

For the Germans Oslo was the key to the occupation of Norway.¹⁰ Once the city was firmly in their hands they had a secure base, reasonably safe lines of communication back to Germany, and access to the important routes through the interior of the country. Although none of those was ever in doubt, the Oslo landing, quite aside from its being the most costly and the least successful of the landings in Norway, seriously affected the whole further course of the campaign. The WESERUEBUNG plan had been devised to exploit the effects of shock, which was expected to give the German forces command of the situation at all points and to throw the Norwegians into confusion. At Oslo it failed. The overwhelming attack which was supposed to paralyze the Norwegian Government and people came in dribbles. While the Norwegians had time to think, the Germans themselves were thrown off balance temporarily. They recovered fast, but in the interval the quick victory they had gambled on had slipped out of their grasp.

In Oslo on the night of 9 April Group XXI had seven companies of infantry and two parachute companies. The next morning, as elements

⁸ Derry, *op. cit.*, pp. 68ff. Butler, *op. cit.*, pp. 136ff.

⁹ Jodl Diary, 23, 29 Apr 40. *Fuehrer Conferences*, 1940, I, p. 38.

¹⁰ In this section extensive use has been made of two articles, "*Die Kämpfe um die Landverbindung nach Drontheim im April 1940*," Teil I and Teil II, which appeared as parts of the three-part series "*Aus dem Feldzug in Norwegen*" published in Nos. 2, 3, and 4, *Jahrgang* 1941, of the *Militärwissenschaftliche Rundschau* by the German Army General Staff.

of the 163d Division arrived and the airlift resumed, Group XXI considered dispatching a battalion to Bergen and another to Trondheim by rail, but it was too late for that. The Norwegian 1st and 2d Divisions were mobilizing near Oslo, and the Norwegians, both people and government, were displaying more determination than had been anticipated. As he waited another two days for the 1st and 2d Sea Transport Echelons to bring in the main forces of the 163d and 196th Divisions, Falkenhorst decided to proceed more cautiously than the WESERUEBUNG plan originally intended. He made it his first order of business to establish a secure foothold at Oslo and gain access to the main interior lines of communication.¹¹

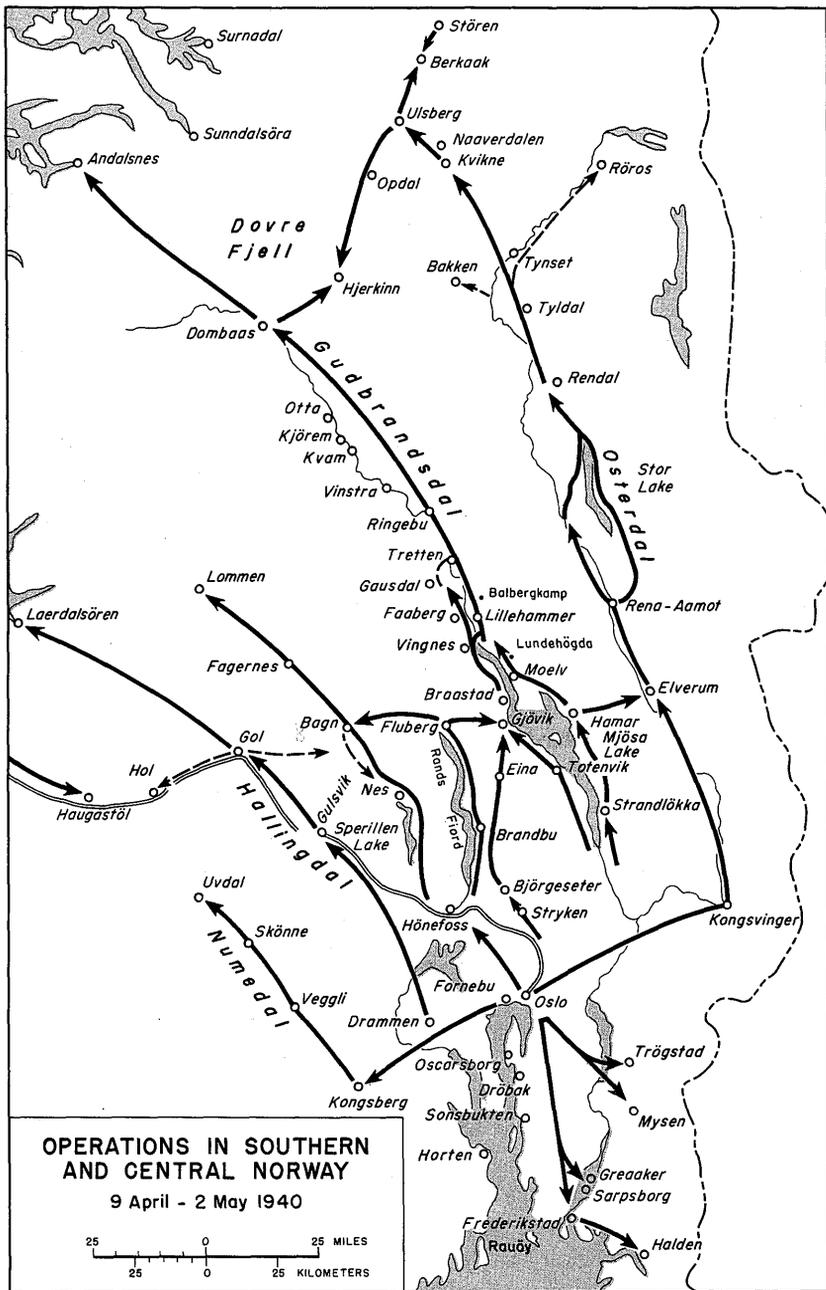
On 12 and 13 April Group XXI issued orders setting in motion an advance southeast of Oslo to the Swedish border and thrusts northward, northwestward, and westward from Oslo to take possession of the rail connections to Trondheim, Bergen, and Kristiansand. The 196th Division, assigned the sector east of Oslo, was to send two battalions southward to secure Fredrikstad, Sarpsborg, and Halden, a regiment (less one battalion) eastward to Kongsvinger, and a battalion (at the outset) northward in the direction of Hamar. The 163d Division, operating in and west of Oslo, was to provide security troops for the city, occupy the junction of the Bergen railroad at Hønefoss, and advance along the Kristiansand railline as far as Kongsberg.¹² To give the enemy as little time as possible for assembly, the striking forces were motorized, mostly by improvisation in requisitioned vehicles. As was to become characteristic of the Norwegian campaign, the divisions operated not as units but in tactical groupings which themselves varied greatly in size and composition and were subject almost daily to changes in strength as elements were detached or new troops arrived.

The advance went smoothly in all directions. Units of the 196th Division took Fredrikstad and Sarpsborg on 13 April and occupied Halden and the border fortresses at Trøgstad, Mysen, and Greaaaker on 14 April. Within three days the entire southeastern tip of Norway, important for its road and railroad connections with Sweden, was in German hands. One thousand Norwegian troops were captured, and 3,000, including the commanding general of the Norwegian 1st Division, were forced across the Swedish border.¹³ On the east a unit advanced toward Kongsvinger, and in the north motorized troops and a mountain battalion going by rail reached the southern tip of Mjösa Lake via Eidsvoll. On the 12th, elements of the 163d Division took Kongsberg,

¹¹ *Gruppe XXI, Taegliche Meldungen der Gruppe XXI an OKW, 9.4.40-14.6.40*, pp. 2-14. AOK 20 E 278/3a.

¹² *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Operationsbefehl fuer die Besetzung von Suednorwegen, 12.4.1940*, in *Anlagenband 1 zum Ktb. Nr. 2 u.3, 8.4.-18.4.40*. AOK 20 E 279/1. *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Operationsbefehl fuer die Fortsetzung der Saeuberung Suednorwegens, 13.4.1940*, in *Anlagenband 3 zum Ktb. Nr. 2 u. 3, 13.4.-18.4.40*. AOK 20 E 279/3.

¹³ *Gruppe XXI, Taegliche Meldungen, loc. cit.*, pp. 14-16. Derry, *op. cit.*, p. 101.



Map 4

where the Norwegian 3d Infantry Regiment surrendered a day later; and on the morning of the 14th Hönefoss was taken.¹⁴ With this, the major points in the immediate area of Oslo were secured, and the stage was set for more extensive operations into the interior.

¹⁴ *Gruppe XXI, Taegliche Meldungen, loc. cit., pp. 15-18.*



Improvised Armored Train

On 14 April elements of Group XXI were in position to strike toward the entrances to the Österdal and the Gudbrandsdal, the valley approach routes through the mountains to Trondheim. The Österdal opens in the south at Kongsvinger, and the Mjøsa Lake lies astride the southern entrance to the Gudbrandsdal. In the Gudbrandsdal a road and railroad run to Åndalsnes, connecting with the Trondheim railroad at Dombaas. To complete the conquest of Norway south of Trondheim the Germans had to take these two valleys. On 13 April Group XXI began moving in a number of mobile units to aid the advance: the remainder (two companies) of Panzer Battalion 40, the 4th, 13th, and 14th Motorized Machine Gun Battalions, and a motorized battalion of the "General Goering" Regiment.¹⁵

The Germans' advance toward the entrances to the valleys was bringing them into the area in which the new Norwegian Commander in Chief, Generalmajor Otto Ruge, intended to stage his main effort. The last-minute appointment of Ruge, on 11 April, to replace Generalmajor Kristian Laake, who retired because of age, epitomized the condition of the Norwegian Army. Despite the six-months'-old war on the mainland and the recent conflict in Finland, very little had been done to strengthen and modernize the Army. Up to the day the Germans landed, and even afterward, Norwegian opinion at all levels was strongly influenced, on the one hand, by a conviction that war was futile and, on the other, by a single-minded, almost complacent, dedi-

¹⁵ *Der Chef des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht, WFA, Abt. L, Nr. 753/40, 13.4.40, in Anlagenband 3 zum Ktb. Nr. 2 u. 3, 13.4.-18.4.40. AOK 20 E 279/3.*

cation to the principle of neutrality. Even though the recent crises, particularly that in Finland, had brought a partial transition from near-total unpreparedness, the Army was still in no wise on a war footing. It had no tanks or antitank weapons, and the Army Air Force had a total of 41 combat aircraft.¹⁶ On 9 April the coastal forts at Oslo, Kristiansand, Bergen, and Trondheim were manned at about one-third of full strength.¹⁷ The only sizable increase in the Army's field forces was in the far north. There the 6th Division had 7,100 men stationed at and north of Narvik, most of them in the zone along the Finnish border north of Tromsø. The remaining five divisions had a total strength of 8,220 men. To those were added 950 men in the Army Air Force, 1,800 in air defense, and 300 security guards.¹⁸ By the time mobilization began, much of the Army's supplies and equipment and the key centers of telephone and telegraph communications were in German hands.

When General Ruge arrived at the Army headquarters, then located in Rena in the Österdal, on the morning of 11 April, he had effective command of only one unit, the 2d Division, which was mobilizing north of Oslo. The Germans had already captured the supply depots closest to Oslo and were bombing the others as they located them. The division had almost no artillery, and the mobilization was hampered by snarled communications and contradictory orders being issued from the German-controlled capital. Ruge knew that an offensive or even a stationary defense was out of the question, but he had a hope that the Allies would bring effective aid quickly. He also knew that the Trondheim area offered the best possibilities for an Allied counteroperation; therefore, he decided not to risk pitched battles but to attempt to slow up the German northward advance enough to preserve for the Allied forces a favorable field for operations against Trondheim and access to the routes by which southern Norway could be reconquered. The 2d Division would begin the resistance along a line stretching roughly from the southern tip of Rands Fiord to the mouth of the Österdal.¹⁹

On 14 April the OKW, worried by an Air Force report that British destroyers were in the harbor at Åndalsnes, ordered Group XXI to speed up the advance, using all the means at its disposal to take possession of the railroad Oslo–Hamar–Dombaas as far as Åndalsnes and, secondarily, to Trondheim. Hitler personally ordered parachute troops committed immediately to take the railroad junction at Dombaas.²⁰

¹⁶ OKH, *GenStdH, Kriegswissenschaftlichen Abt.*, maps and charts for a study entitled *Die Eroberung Norwegens und die Besetzung Daenemarks*, Chart "Die Wehrmacht Norwegens am 9.4.1940." AOK 20 85517.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, chart "Norwegens Kuestenbefestigungen am 9.4.1940 frueh."

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, chart "Die Wehrmacht Norwegens am 9.4.1940."

¹⁹ O. Munthe-Kass, *Krigen I Norge 1940* (Oslo: Gyldenal Norsk Forlag, 1955), Bind I, pp. 17–20, 127, 131, 143. W. Brandt, *Krieg in Norwegen* (Zurich: Europa Verlag, 1942), pp. 62–67.

²⁰ *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Nr. 266/40, OKW, WFA, Nr. 88/40, 14.4.40*, in *Anlagenband 3 zum Ktb. Nr. 2 u. 3.13.4.–18.4.40*. AOK 20 E 279/3.

The X Air Corps landed one parachute company at Dombaas that same day, only to learn afterward that Goering thought the Air Force was already carrying too much of the burden in Norway and refused to supply any more troops. The company at Dombaas, isolated in enemy territory, had to surrender five days later.²¹ Still trying for a quick solution, Group XXI planned a second airborne operation for 16 April. Its object was to bypass the Norwegian defenses in the Rands Fiord–Mjösä Lake area. A battalion of infantry and a company of parachute troops were to be landed on the ice at the northern end of Mjösä Lake and, after taking Lillehammer, were to advance up the Gudbrandsdal to Dombaas. That operation had to be canceled because the Air Force claimed “technical difficulties.”²²

While the last attempts to achieve a quick breakthrough to Trondheim were still in progress, Group XXI began positioning its forces for an advance to the north. On 14 April the 196th Division already had one column pushing east toward Kongsvinger and another at the southern tip of Mjösä Lake. On the same day a motorized battalion of the 163d Division began reconnoitering northward between Rands Fiord and Mjösä Lake.²³ When it became involved in heavy fighting with Norwegian troops defending a barricade of felled trees south of Stryken, a newly arrived regiment of the 181st Division was moved up in support.

On 15 April the 163d Division halted its advance along the Bergen railroad and began to push northward in the area between the Sperillen and Mjösä Lakes. The division formed three columns: the regiment on the right advancing from Stryken in the direction of Gjövik, two battalions in the center moving from Hönefoss along the eastern shore of Rands Fiord toward Fluberg, and two battalions on the left moving along the east shore of Sperillen Lake toward Bagn. The battalions in the center had a company of light tanks, and the battalions on the left, two tanks. As tanks and motorized forces became available they were assigned to all the forces in the northward advance, where they proved extremely valuable since the Norwegians had no tanks of their own nor any effective antitank weapons. On the 16th the right column of the 163d Division reached Björgeseter; that in the center reached the southern tip of Rands Fiord; and that on the left reached nearly to Skagnes at the northern end of Sperillen Lake.

In the sector of the 196th Division a three-pronged advance was also developing. Two battalions took Kongsvinger on the 16th, opening the

²¹ *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Nr. 284/40, Lage in Norwegen, 18.4.40, in Anlagenband 4 zum Ktb. Nr. 2 u. 3, 19.4.–23.4.40. AOK 20 E 279/4.*

²² *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Nr. 270/40, Befehl fuer Luftlandung bei Lillehammer, 16.4.40, in Anlagenband 3 zum Ktb. Nr. 2 u. 3, 13.4.–18.4.40. AOK 20 E 279/3. Gruppe XXI, Ia, Nr. 270/40, 16.4.40, in Anlagenband 3 zum Ktb. 2 u. 3, 13.4.–18.4.40. AOK 20 E 279/3.*

²³ *Gruppe XXIa, Ia, Nr. 265/40. Operationsbefehl, 14.4.40, in Anlagenband 3 zum Ktb. Nr. 2 u. 3, 13.4.–18.4.40. AOK 20 E 279/3.*



Infantry advancing north of Oslo.

way to the Österdal and gaining control of the railroad to Sweden. Two columns, each in battalion strength, were advancing along the east and west shores of Mjøsa Lake. One had reached Totenvik on the west shore, but heavy resistance at Strandlökka held up the other.

From the southern tip of Rands Fiord to Kongsvinger the German units reported meeting stubborn resistance as they encountered the Norwegian 2d Division's defensive line. The terrain was becoming mountainous, and deep snow made movement off the roads nearly impossible.²⁴ It had been spring in Oslo, but in the highlands away from the coast winter would continue unbroken for another month or more.

On 16 April Group XXI, estimating the Norwegian strength at 15,000 men, ordered all groups to continue the advance northward and, with the exception of the battalions in the Österdal which were to proceed toward Elverum, to converge on Lillehammer at the mouth of the Gudbrandsdal. The 163d Division, which at the time had four regiments, two of its own and one each from the 69th and 181st Divisions, received the additional mission of providing security forces for the areas southeast and southwest of Oslo.²⁵ The OKL assigned one bomber group on the 17th to support the northward advance of Group XXI. Most of the planes continued to operate from German bases; but a squadron at the disposal of Group XXI at Oslo at least partly solved the problems raised by the separate command of the air forces.²⁶

²⁴ *Gruppe XXI, Tägliches Meldungen, loc. cit.*, pp. 23–25.

²⁵ *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Nr. 272/40, Operationsbefehl zur Vernichtung der norweg. Kraefstgruppe im Raum beiderseits des Mjøsa Sees, 16.4.40, in Anlagenband 3 zum Ktb. 2 u. 3, 13.4.–18.4.40. AOK 20 E 279/3.*

²⁶ *Der Chef des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht, OKW, WFA, Abt. L, Nr. 8–6/40, an Gruppe XXI, 17.4.40, in Anlagenband 3 zum Ktb. 2 u. 3, 14.4.–18.4.40. AOK 20 E 279/3.*

In the sector of the 196th Division, the battalion on the left flank along the west shore of Mjösa Lake was reinforced by the motorized battalion from Stryken and transferred to the command of the 163d Division. On the 17th, to break the resistance of the Norwegians at Strandlökka, a battalion sent up from Oslo crossed the thawing ice of Mjösa Lake from the west shore to attack the defenses from the rear. The Norwegian troops were forced to withdraw in haste, and, delayed only by roadblocks and demolished bridges, the Germans were able to take Hamar on the night of the 18th. From Hamar a battalion crossed into the Österdal to take Elverum, where, on the 20th, it met the force moving up from Kongsvinger. With that, the force in the Österdal reached full regimental strength. Two battalions remaining at Hamar (an additional battalion had been committed by the 18th) were joined by a motorized machine gun battalion. The regiment in the Österdal met strong resistance south of Rena-Aamot, which it took on the 21st. The force advancing northward from Hamar reached Moelv on the 19th but was then held up for two days by strong positions on the Lundehögda (dominating heights north of Moelv). In the fighting at the Lundehögda British troops appeared in action for the first time but could not influence the course of events. On the night of the 21st, in a daring advance, the motorized machine gun battalion took Lillehammer.

In the sector of the 163d Division the two battalions (joined by a third on the 18th) advancing along the west shore of Mjösa Lake took Gjøvik on the 21st and made contact there that same day with the regiment which had been advancing via Stryken, Brandbu, and Eina.²⁷ The column on the east shore of Rands Fiord reached Fluberg on the 19th and turned eastward toward Gjøvik on the 20th, making contact in the vicinity of Vardal with forces from Gjøvik maneuvering to outflank enemy resistance on the heights at Braastad. The battalions on the far left flank reached Bagn on the 19th but encountered strong resistance and could not turn east toward Fluberg as ordered because of threats to their rear and flanks; consequently, they withdrew, leaving a security forces at Nes, and moved to Fluberg via Hönefoss and the east shore of Rands Fiord.

As the fighting moved into the Norwegian highlands the German ground tactics were forced into a uniform pattern by the nature of the terrain and the weather. Deep snow and steep valley slopes restricted movement to the roads. Taking advantage of those conditions, the Norwegians based their defense on a series of roadblocks and barricades supported by flanking fire from the heights. The German answer, which proved highly effective, was to employ reinforced infantry spearheads organized in order of march as follows: one or two tanks, two trucks carrying engineers and equipment, an infantry company with heavy weapons organized into assault detachments, a platoon of artillery,

²⁷ *Gruppe XXI, Taegliche Meldungen, loc. cit.*, 36.

a relief infantry company, relief engineers and artillery. In action the technique was to bring a roadblock under heavy frontal fire while ski troops attempted to work their way around the defenders' flanks. Against strongly held positions small assault detachments were committed under heavy covering fire in an effort to break the line at several places.

To Trondheim

With the capture of Lillehammer and Rena-Aamot Group XXI had completed the conquest of the Oslo region, the heartland of Norway; but its advance units were still 200 miles from Trondheim, and the valley defiles of the Gudbrandsdal and the Österdal favored the defense. In the Gudbrandsdal newly arrived British forces had to be taken into account. The British 148th Brigade, which landed at Åndalsnes on 18 April, had intended to develop an attack on Trondheim; but the speed of the German advance from the south forced it to turn into the Gudbrandsdal to support the Norwegians. Five days later the 15th Brigade landed and also moved into the Gudbrandsdal, bringing the total of British troops to between five and six thousand. While the appearance of British troops worried Hitler, the British from the start had their own troubles, not the least of which was the lack of a satisfactory base. Åndalsnes was a small fishing port which larger ships visited only during the summer tourist season. Its dock facilities were completely inadequate for handling heavy military equipment, and it was located well within range of the German Air Force.²⁸

On 21 April Hitler assigned the establishment of land contact between Oslo and Trondheim as the main mission of Group XXI. Operations against Åndalsnes were to be postponed for the time being.²⁹ On the same day Group XXI prepared for the next phase of the offensive. It withdrew the 163d Division from the northward advance and turned it west via Bagn toward the Sogne Fiord to protect the left flank. The regiment of the 181st Division, which had been attached to the 163d Division, was to continue its advance along the west shore of Mjösa Lake and come under the command of the 196th Division on reaching the north end of the lake.³⁰ The reinforced 196th Division, advancing in two columns, one in the Gudbrandsdal and the other in the Österdal, would carry out the advance to Trondheim.

On 22 April elements of the 196th Division advanced out of Lillehammer into the Gudbrandsdal, bypassing the Balbergkamp, a height commanding the entrance to the valley, and forcing the defending British and Norwegian troops into a hasty retreat. On the following day the British and Norwegians attempted a stand at Tretten, where

²⁸ Derry, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-74, 77, 104, 105, 119, 138, 143.

²⁹ *Der Fuehrer und Oberste Befehlshaber der Wehrmacht OKW, WFA, Nr. 106/40, in Gruppe XXI, Anlagenband 4 zum Ktb. 2 u. 3, 19.4.-23.4.40. AOK 20 279/4.*

³⁰ *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Nr. 285/40, Operationsbefehl fuer die 163. Division ab 21.4.40, in Anlagenband 4 zum Ktb. 2 u 3, 19.4.-23.4.40. AOK 20 E 279/4.*



Infantrymen taking cover behind a Mark I tank.

the valley bends and narrows to a gorge; but the troops were nearly exhausted, and the British antitank rifles failed to penetrate the German tanks which broke through the main positions along the road and cut off the defenders' forward units. For the British 148th Brigade, the action at Tretten was a disaster. A large number of its troops, including a battalion commander and other officers, were taken prisoner. At the end of the day, what was left of the brigade had to seek refuge 45 miles to the rear in one of the tributary valleys of the Gudbrandsdal.³¹ At midnight on 24 April German troops entered Vinstra, halfway between Lillehammer and Dombaas.

In the light of the victory at Tretten and the rapid advance in the Gudbrandsdal, Group XXI no longer saw a need to concentrate first on reaching Trondheim. On 24 April, it ordered the 196th Division to continue its drive via Dombaas to Åndalsnes and complete the destruction of the British forces. The troops in the Österdal were to carry on the advance to Trondheim. The enemy was to be allowed no respite and no opportunity to establish new defensive positions. Henceforth, the tactical groupings were designated by the names of their commanders, Group Pellengahr (Generalleutnant Richard Pellengahr, Commanding General, 196th Division) in the Gudbrandsdal and Group Fischer (Colonel Hermann Fischer, Commanding Officer, 340th Infantry Regiment) in the Österdal. Group Fischer, transferred to the direct command of Group XXI, was composed (on 23 April) of three

³¹ Derry, *op. cit.*, pp. 110–12.

infantry battalions, two artillery battalions, one engineer battalion, two motorized companies of the "General Goering" Regiment, one motorized machine gun company, and two platoons of tanks. Group Pellengahr (on 26 April) consisted of seven infantry battalions, a motorized machine gun battalion (less one company), two artillery battalions, a company of engineers, and a platoon of tanks.⁸²

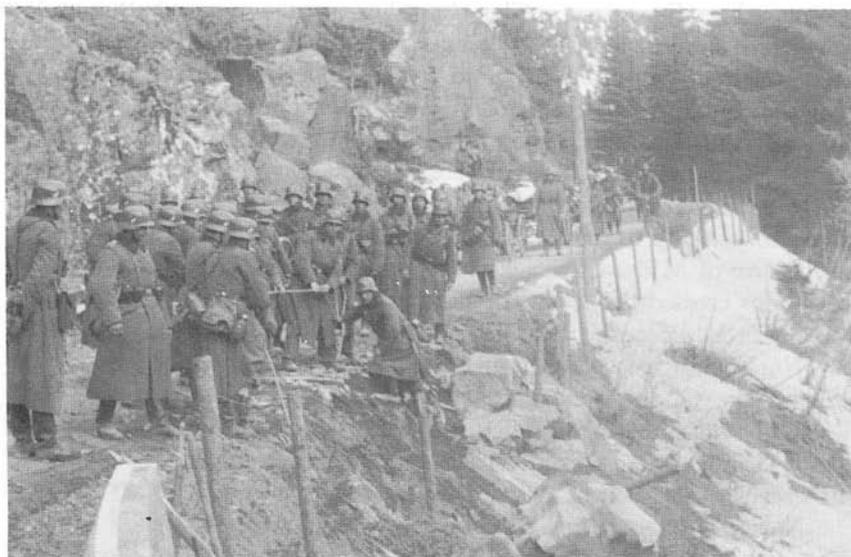
On 22 April, south of the Gudbrandsdal, the regiment of the 163d Division moving up to join Group Pellengahr pushed past Braastad on the west shore of Mjösa Lake. Encountering artillery fire at Faaberg, two battalions crossed the ice at the northern tip of the lake to Lillehammer on the 24th while one battalion pushed into the Gausdal, threw back the Norwegian troops defending the valley, and on the following day entered the Gudbrandsdal at Tretten. Several days later the 163d Division sent a battalion northward into the Gausdal from Vingnes while Group Pellengahr diverted a detachment including tanks and motorcycle troops southwestward from Tretten. Together they trapped the Norwegian troops in the Gausdal and on 29 April forced the surrender of 250 officers and 3,500 men of the Norwegian 2d Division.

On 23 April at Rena-Aamot in the Österdal, Group Fischer formed its newly arrived tank and motorized troops into a motorized advance detachment. While the mass of the group, held up by demolished bridges, remained at Rena-Aamot, the motorized detachment pushed along the east and west shores of Stor Lake reaching the northern end of the lake on the 24th. As the main force of Group Fischer followed along the eastern shore of the lake, the motorized detachment continued northward throughout the night, reaching Tynset the following morning. There a small reconnaissance party was sent east along the railroad to Röros. Part of the detachment remained in Tynset while part proceeded to Kvikne, arriving there on the same day. Meanwhile, the main force had arrived at Rendal.⁸³

Group Pellengahr, moving out from Vinstra on the morning of 25 April, encountered renewed resistance at Kvam. There, at a sharp bend in the valley, the newly arrived British 15th Brigade had established a battalion in strong positions with antitank guns which were able to deal with the German armor. But this time Group Pellengahr had reached its full strength and, except for an artillery battalion held up at the mouth of the Gausdal, was echeloned in depth from Kvam to Ringebu. The fighting continued at Kvam until the night of the 26th as the German infantry attacked and attempted to work its way around

⁸² *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Nr. 288/40, Operationsbefehl, 24.4.40, in Anlagenband 5 zum Ktb. Nr. 2. u. 3, 24.4.-30.4.40. AOK 20 E 279/5. 196. I.D., Gliederung der 196. Division, Stand 26.4.40 and Gruppe XXI, Anlage zur Lagenkarte der Gruppe XXI vom 27.4.40, in Anlagenband 19 zum Ktb. 2 u. 3, Kriegsgliederungen, 15.4.-25.4.40. AOK 20 E 279/19.*

⁸³ *v. Burstin Hauptmann u. Komp.-Chef in der Panzer-Abteilung z.b.V. 40, Bericht ueber den Einsatz der Mot. Voraus-Abteilung bei der Kampfgruppe Fischer im Norwegen Feldzug vom 23.4.40-6.5.50, pp. 1-16. 2. Geb. Div. 8358/1.*



German troops clearing fallen rocks placed as a roadblock.

the British left flank with the support of aircraft and artillery. During the night, the British troops withdrew, having placed a battalion three miles to the rear to hold a narrow spot in the valley near Kjörem while positions were to be prepared farther to the rear at Otta. The British held at Kjörem until nightfall the next day.

On the morning of the 28th the German troops encountered a British battalion in strong positions flanked by steep valley slopes at Otta. Infantry attacks, with tanks, artillery, and air support, and attempts to outflank the British positions failed during the day. In the course of the fighting, evacuation of the Åndalsnes beachhead had been ordered, and the German troops entered Otta the next morning to find the town abandoned.

The British decision to evacuate had been precipitated by German bombing of Åndalsnes and the subsidiary port of Molde on the 26th which rendered both ports practically useless. On the 28th a British battalion established positions south of Dombaas to hold the town while the force from Otta withdrew to Åndalsnes. There, during the afternoon of the 30th, it held off German infantry, advancing without its tanks and artillery which were delayed by a demolished bridge, until nightfall. At midnight the British left Dombaas for Åndalsnes by train. At 2330 on the 30th, naval units began the evacuation from Åndalsnes, which had been subjected to numerous heavy air attacks since the 26th. The evacuation was completed in the early hours of 2 May. Meanwhile, Group Pellengahr brought its rear echelons from Otta to Dombaas by rail, but the destroyed rail and road bridges west of Dombaas forced

the forward elements to advance to Åndalsnes on foot. The first German troops reached Åndalsnes in the afternoon of 2 May.³⁴

On 27 April the motorized advance detachment of Group Fischer in the Österdal met heavy resistance at Naaverdalen. After the Norwegian positions had been subjected to air bombardment, the Germans occupied the town during the night. During the day, the main force had moved up to Tynset and Tyldal and sent out small units on the flanks to Røros and Bakken. The next morning the motorized detachment moved into Ulsberg and turned northward toward Berkaak where, shortly before noon on the 30th, it made contact with an advance party of 181st Division troops moving southward from Trondheim. With that, the land contact Oslo-Trondheim was established.³⁵ On 1 May the undamaged railroad running southward from Ulsberg via Opdal to Dombaas could be used to establish contact between Group Pellingahr and Group Fischer. From Opdal a detachment was sent westward to Sunndalsöra where it reached the coast on the 2d; and on 3 May the remainder of the Norwegian 2d Division (123 officers and 2,500 men), trapped between Sundalsöra and Åndalsnes on the snow-covered Dovre Fjell, surrendered.³⁶

Operations at Trondheim

On 10 April the landing team at Trondheim held the city and the batteries at the entrance to the fiord and had taken the airfield at Vaernes, 20 miles east of the city, without fighting.³⁷

Mobilization of the Norwegian 5th Brigade was in large part frustrated by the capture of its supply depot and most of its artillery in Trondheim. By the 11th the airfield could accommodate transports and bombers, and on the following day seven dive bombers were based there. On the 13th a battalion of infantry was brought in by air, and the arrival of the steamer *Levante* of the Export Echelon with anti-aircraft guns, 100-mm. guns, ammunition, and gasoline brought some improvement in the supply situation.³⁸

Trondheim ranked next to Oslo as a political center. Located at the terminus of the railroads from Oslo and a rail line to Sweden it was strategically important for the control of central and northern Norway. To the Germans it was particularly important for air communications with Narvik. It was also, next to Narvik, the most promising target for an Allied counterthrust. The immediate German concern, then, was defense against an attack from the sea. For that purpose they manned

³⁴ Derry, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-28, 130, 134, 136, 138.

³⁵ v. Burstin Hauptmann u. Komp.-Chef in der Panzer-Abteilung z.b.V. 40, *Bericht, loc. cit.*, pp. 16-26.

³⁶ v. Burstin Hauptmann u. Komp.-Chef in der Panzer-Abteilung z.b.V. 40, *Bericht loc. cit.*, pp. 25-28. Gruppe XXI, *Tägliche Meldungen, loc. cit.*, pp. 65-69.

³⁷ In this section extensive use has been made of the article "Von Drontheim bis Namsos," Teil III of the series "Aus dem Feldzug in Norwegen" (see footnote 10).

³⁸ Gruppe XXI, *Tägliche Meldungen, loc. cit.*, pp. 7-17.

the captured coastal guns and kept the main body of the landing force available in the city.

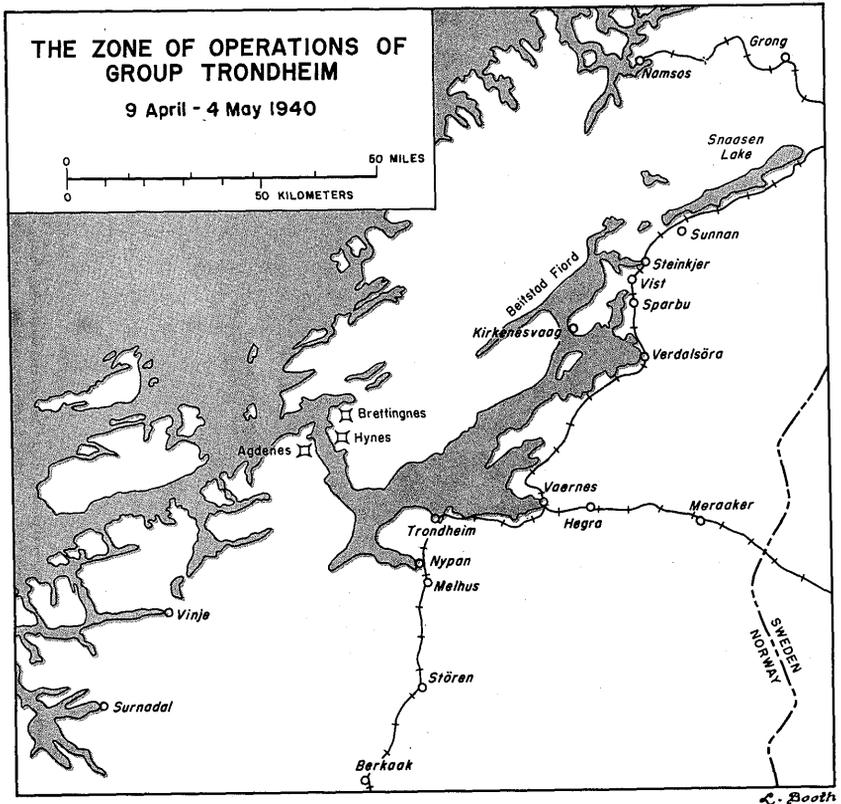
The prospect of Allied landings at Namsos and Åndalsnes posed an acute threat to the German force at Trondheim. On the 14th, when air reconnaissance mistakenly reported a British landing at Åndalsnes, the OKW informed Group XXI that its most important mission was to establish a secure beachhead at Trondheim and to smash the British landing. Hitler ordered, "with greatest emphasis," that Trondheim was to be reinforced by air; and instructed the Navy to shift the weight of its submarine operations to the area before and on either side of Trondheim.³⁹ Orders of the OKW and Group XXI set a twofold mission for Group Trondheim: to occupy Steinkjer and to capture the railroad running east out of Trondheim to the Swedish border. Steinkjer, located fifty miles north of Trondheim on a six-mile wide isthmus between the Beitstad Fiord and Snaasen Lake, controlled access to the Trondheim area from the north. The railroad was an important objective because the Germans believed at the time that they could secure permission to use the Swedish railroads for military transport. As soon as troops became available the northward advance was to be continued to Grong and Namsos. In place of the 196th Division, which was committed in the advance northward from Oslo, the staff and elements of the 181st Division (eventually two regiments) were to be transported to Trondheim by air from Oslo.⁴⁰

With persistent bad weather delaying the air transport operations, Group Trondheim first decided to stage a limited offensive along the railroad to Sweden with the one battalion it had received. The advance began on the 15th with air support and an improvised armored train. By nightfall the following day the railroad up to the border was in German hands. A small but stubbornly defended fort at Hegra could not be taken and subsequently held out until 5 May.

In the meantime, Allied landings were in progress at Namsos, 127 miles north of Trondheim. On 14 April a naval party of about 350 sailors and marines landed from two cruisers, followed on the 16th by the British 146th Brigade and on the 19th by the French 5th Demi-brigade of Chasseurs Alps. The Allied force totaled about 6,000 men, and the Norwegian troops in the vicinity, according to German estimates which were probably high, totaled another 6,000—these opposed to a German strength of about 4,000 men on 21 April and 9,500 on 30 April. Allied units, rapidly expanding their beachhead, reached Grong—the railroad junction east of Namsos—and Steinkjer on the 17th but did not

³⁹ *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Nr. 266/40, OKW, WFA, Nr. 88/40, 14.4.40, in Anlagenband Nr. 3 zum Ktb. 2 u. 3, 13.4.–18.4.40. AOK 20 E 279/3.*

⁴⁰ *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Nr. 268/40, Befehl fuer Operation in Raum um Drontheim, 15.4.40; OKW, L, Nr. 276/40, and Gruppe XXI, 14.4.40; and OKW, an Gruppe XXI, 16.4.40, in Gruppe XXI, Anlagenband 3 zum Ktb. 2 u. 3, 13.4.–18.4.40. AOK 20 E 279/3.*



Map 5

attempt to develop an attack against the German forces to the south.⁴¹

On 18 and 21 April Hitler established the closing of the isthmus at Steinkjer as the chief mission of Group Trondheim, and instructed Group XXI and the Air Force to move reinforcements to Trondheim as rapidly as possible.⁴² On the afternoon of the 20th Generalmajor Kurt Woytasch, commanding officer of the 181st Division, took command of Group Trondheim and ordered an advance on Steinkjer to begin the following morning. At the time, the total forces available at Trondheim consisted of five and one-half infantry battalions, parts of two batteries of mountain artillery, and a company of engineers. That the British had reached the Steinkjer area was not yet known.

On the morning of the 21st, elements of a mountain battalion landed from a destroyer at Kirknesvaag about 15 miles southwest of Steinkjer. To take the road and railroad bridges at Verdalssöra, a torpedo boat landed one infantry company north of the town while a company with a

⁴¹ Derry, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-88.

⁴² OKW, WFA, Nr. 102/40, Betr: *Norwegen*, 18.4.40; *Der Fuehrer und Oberstebefehlshaber der Wehrmacht*, OKW, WFA, Nr. 106/40, and *Gruppe XXI*, 21.4.40, in *Anlagenband 4 zum Ktb. 2 u. 3*, 19.4.-23.4.40. AOK 20 E 279/4.



Infantrymen trudging up a snow-covered slope. Soldier resting, left foreground, carries an M.G. 34 light machine gun.

battery of mountain artillery advanced northward by rail from Trondheim. After about three hours of house-to-house fighting in a blinding snowstorm, the Germans took the town. The railroad bridge had been blown up, but the road bridge was intact.⁴³

The British had established their main defensive position at Vist, about four miles south of Steinkjer. The Germans advanced on that town with a battalion moving along the shore of Beitstad Fiord and a company along the road running northward from Verdalsöra. On the morning of the 21st advance elements of the battalion from Kirknesvaag reached Vist, but the main force, depending on requisitioned vehicles, could not be brought up until nightfall. Both Vist and Steinkjer were brought under air attack. On the main road the Germans had advanced nearly to Sparbu, halfway between Verdalsöra and Vist, and at the end of the day the British were intending to withdraw northward behind Steinkjer. The next day, after fighting at Vist and Sparbu, the British at night withdrew north of Steinkjer. By the evening of the 24th, Group Trondheim had full control of the isthmus from Steinkjer to Sunnan.⁴⁴

The British troops were not to go into action again. Bombing on the 20th and 21st had destroyed the base at Namsos, and on the 23d evacuation was being discussed. The Germans, for their part, had no

⁴³ *Gruppe Detmold, Ia, Lagenmeldung fuer die Zeit vom 20.4.1600 Uhr bis 21.4.1700 Uhr, 21.4.40 in Anlagenband 4 zum Ktb. Nr. 2 u. 3, 19.4.-23.4.40. AOK 20 E 279/4.*

⁴⁴ Derry, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-95.

intention for the time being of advancing beyond Steinkjer where their positions could be regarded as exposed so long as the Snaasen Lake remained frozen and the route along the south shore of the lake remained open to the enemy. At the end of the month the French and Norwegian units planned an offensive, but it did not materialize.⁴⁵

On 26 April, the isthmus at Steinkjer firmly in its hands and its total strength up to seven infantry battalions and six batteries of artillery including the captured Norwegians guns, Group Trondheim ordered a push southward to meet the columns advancing from Oslo. It had taken the bridges at Nypan and Melhus, ten miles south of the city, on 22 April. Late on the night of the 27th a battalion pushing south along the railroad entered Stören, at the junction of the lines from the Gudbrandsdal and the Österdal. Three days later it made contact with elements of Group Fischer at Berkaak. Meanwhile, a battalion sent out on the 27th to secure the west flank had by the 30th pushed reconnaissance parties through to Vinje and Surnadal without encountering enemy forces.

On 1 May Group Trondheim consisted of nine infantry battalions, a battalion of engineers, and eight batteries of artillery.⁴⁶ Destroyed bridges still prevented large-scale overland transport movements from Oslo. A battalion of the 2d Mountain Division was ordered flown from Denmark to Trondheim on the 1st, and on the 3d Group XXI ordered the regiment of the 181st Division and the mountain battalion attached to Group Pellengahr dispatched to Trondheim as soon as road conditions permitted.⁴⁷

The OKW on 2 May established destruction of the enemy forces in the Namsos area as the chief mission of Group XXI. It was to execute the operation as soon as sufficient troops were on hand, but if the enemy showed signs of withdrawing it was to carry it out immediately.⁴⁸ A day later, after reports that Namsos was being evacuated had come in, the immediate attack, to begin on the 4th, was ordered. Group Trondheim was authorized to employ all of its available forces.⁴⁹

On the afternoon of the 3d, Group Trondheim sent out reconnaissance forces, each in battalion strength, toward Namsos and Grong. The battalion going by way of the main road reached Namsos, where the last Allied troops had embarked early on the morning of the 3d, at 1730 on the 4th. During the night 100 officers and 1,950 men of the Norwegian 5th Brigade surrendered.

⁴⁵ Derry, *op. cit.*, pp. 95ff.

⁴⁶ *Gruppe Trondheim, Ia, Lagenbericht, 1.5.40, in Anlagenband 6 zum Ktb. 2 u. 3, 1.5.-8.5.40. AOK 20 E 279/6.*

⁴⁷ *OKW, L, an Gruppe XXI, 30.4.40, in Anlagenband 5 zum Ktb. 2 u. 3, 24.4.-20.4.40. AOK 20 E 279/5. Gruppe XXI, Ia, lfd Nr. 65, an 196 I.D., 3.5.40, in Anlagenband 6 zum Ktb. 2 u. 3, 1.5.-8.5.40. AOK 20 E 279/6.*

⁴⁸ *OKW, WFA, Abt. L. Nr. 960/40, an Gruppe XXI, 4.5.40, in Anlagenband 6 zum Ktb. 2 u. 3, 1.5.-8.5.40. AOK 20 E 279/6.*

⁴⁹ *Gruppe XXI, Ia, lfd Nr. 67, an Gruppe Drontheim, 3.5.40, in Anlagenband 6 zum Ktb. 2 u. 3, 1.5.40-8.5.40. AOK 20 E 279/6.*

Bergen, Stavanger, Kristiansand

At Bergen immediately after the landing, the 69th Infantry Division (one regiment) found itself exposed to possible attack by British forces from the sea and by the Norwegian 4th Brigade, which was able to complete its mobilization at Voss, 45 miles northeast of the city. It therefore had to limit itself for the time being to providing security for the beachhead. On 15 April the regiment of the 69th Division which had landed at Stavanger began transferring to Bergen by air and sea; two battalions made the shift in the first week.

On 17 April the 69th Division sent out security forces ten miles east of Bergen and began reconnaissance in the direction of Voss, but it encountered resistance and reported that it could not advance farther with the troops at hand. In fact, without the knowledge of the Germans, the main body of the Norwegian 4th Brigade was, on the 18th, ordered eastward away from Voss. After a reconnaissance in force directed against Voss on 21 April the division concluded that an overland attack was not possible without seriously weakening the seaward defenses and that, for an attack through the Hardanger Fiord, the cooperation of naval units was necessary. On the basis of information from the population the division estimated the Norwegian strength at 20,000 men. Group XXI, replying that it believed there was no immediate serious threat from the sea and that the estimate of Norwegian strength was exaggerated, ordered the division to attack as soon as possible.⁵⁰

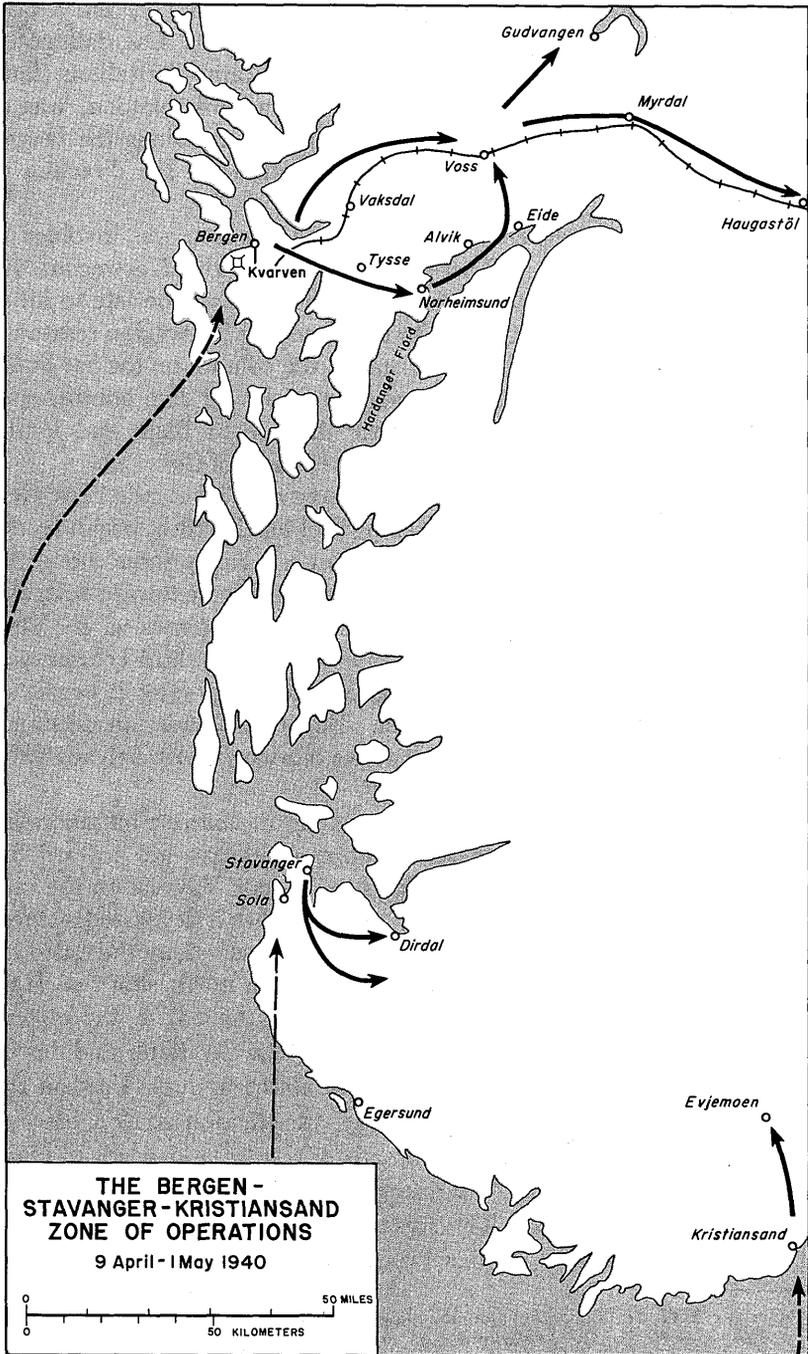
Their weak hold on Bergen worried the Germans, and the long stretch of open coast north of the city gave them added cause for concern since the Allies might take advantage of it to strike into the flank of the German advance from Oslo to Trondheim. Hitler thought the danger great enough to justify risking another sortie into the Atlantic. He wanted to send approximately a division of troops to Bergen aboard five fast steamers with a heavy naval escort. The OKW announced that intention to Group XXI on 23 April, but canceled it three days later.⁵¹

In a more practical vein, Group XXI, on 21 April, diverted the 163d Division from the advance north of Oslo and gave it the missions of mopping up in the Rands Fiord-Mjøsa Lake zone, advancing via Bagn to the Sogne Fiord to prevent Allied landings, and making contact with the 69th Division in the Bergen area.⁵² Two days later Group XXI ordered the division to develop the attack in two columns: one, con-

⁵⁰ *Bergen, Ia, an Oldenburg, 21.4.40, in Gruppe XXI, Durchschlaege von Abschrift eines Teiles der Anlagen zum Ktb., 2 u. 3, 9.4.-10.5.40. AOK 20 E 288/1. von Falkenhorst an General Tittel, Bergen, 21.4.40, in Anlagenband 4 zum Ktb 2 u. 3, 19.4.-23.4.40. AOK 20 E 279/4.*

⁵¹ *Chef OKW, WFA, Abt. L, Nr. 868/40, an Gruppe XXI, 23.4.40, in Anlagenband 4 zum Ktb. Nr. 2 u. 3, 19.4.-23.4.40. AOK 20 E 279/4. Jodi Diary, 23, 26 Apr 40.*

⁵² *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Nr. 285/40, Operationsbefehl fuer die 163. Division ab 21.4.40, in Anlagenband 4 zum Ktb. 2 u. 3, 19.4.-23.4.40. AOK 20 E 279/4.*



Map 6

sisting of four infantry battalions, a battalion of artillery, and a tank company, was to proceed via Bagn and Fagernes to Laerdalsöra on Sogne Fiord while the other, composed of two infantry battalions (later three battalions), a battery of artillery, and a tank platoon, was to advance from Drammen through the Hallingdal and along the Bergen railroad as far as Gol and from there to continue in the direction of Laerdalsöra.⁵³

By 25 April the right column of the 163d Division was involved in heavy fighting at Bagn. There it encountered the Norwegian 4th Brigade which had moved east from Voss but arrived too late to influence the fighting north of Oslo. On the same day Norwegian resistance and a demolished tunnel at Gulsvik stalled the column on the left in the Hallingdal. After two days, greatly aided by strong dive bomber support, the Germans, on the 27th, broke through at Bagn and in the Hallingdal, where they advanced to within 12 miles of Gol.

The Norwegians did not succeed in making another stand. The German column in the Hallingdal, reaching Gol on the 28th, began reconnaissance in the direction of Fagernes, sent a security force along the railroad toward Hol, and continued with its main force toward Laerdalsöra. The column on the right passed through Fagernes on the 29th and reached Lommen the next day. On 28 April a third column was formed at Kongsberg on the left flank, and two days later it began an advance through the Numedal to Hol. Effective Norwegian resistance ceased on 1 May with the surrender of the Norwegian 4th Brigade (300 officers and 3,200 men) near Lommen.⁵⁴

At Bergen the 69th Division had, on 23 April, sent one battalion out of the city along the railroad and another southeastward toward the Hardanger Fiord. The next day the division took Vaksdal on the railroad and Norheimsund on the Fiord. On the 25th it developed a three-pronged attack on Voss. Two companies advanced along the railroad; four companies pushed northeastward from the north shore of Hardanger Fiord near Alvik; and three companies landed at the eastern end of Hardanger Fiord at Eide to attack from the flank and rear.⁵⁵ The attack made rapid progress, and the Germans took Voss on the morning of the 26th. On the same day, the division issued orders to continue the advance along the railroad to Myrdal and north to Gudvangen on the Sogne Fiord.⁵⁶ On the 28th fighting began at the three-mile long Myrdal tunnel. The surrender of the Norwegian troops at Myrdal on 1 May ended organized resistance in the 69th Division sector,

⁵³ *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Vorbefehl fuer die Bildung und den Einsatz der Kampfgruppe Ritzmann, 23.4.40, in Anlagenband 4 zum Ktb. 2 u. 3., 19.4.-23.4.40. AOK 20 E 279/4.*

⁵⁴ *Gruppe XXI, Taegliche Meldungen, pp. 45-68.*

⁵⁵ *69. Division, Abt. Ia, Divisionsbefehl fuer Angriff auf Voss-Bomoen, 24.4.40, in Anlagenband 5 zum Ktb. 2 u. 3, 24.4.-30.4.40. AOK 20 E 279/5.*

⁵⁶ *69. Division, Abt. Ia, Gefechtsbericht ueber Einnahme Voss-Bomoen, 27.4.40, in Anlagenband 5 zum KTB. Nr. 2 u. 3, 24.4.40. AOK 20 E 279/5.*



Mark II tank and infantry column in central Norway.

and the division made contact with elements of the 163d Division on the railroad the next day.⁵⁷

At Stavanger, after the landings, the immediate concern was with defense against a possible British landing. The airfield at Sola lay closer to the British Isles than any other German airbase and so was both a threat and an inviting target. In the first days after the landing, the beachhead was subjected to repeated air attacks, and on 17 April British cruisers shelled the airfield, doing heavy damage. On the same day troops of the 214th Division arrived by air to replace elements of the 69th Division, which were then transferred to Bergen. Orders issued on 21 April gave the 214th Division responsibility for the defense of the south coast including Stavanger and Kristiansand.⁵⁸ On the 20th elements of the 214th Division opened an attack against a Norwegian force south of the city, and on the 23d at Dirdal 50 officers and 1,250 men of the Norwegian 2d and 8th Infantry Regiments surrendered. On the 21st a motorized patrol, escorting gasoline tank trucks which had been dispatched from Oslo a week before, was able to reach Stavanger.⁵⁹

At Kristiansand a northward advance was begun on 13 April. After dive bombers were committed at Evjemoen, the training center of the Norwegian 3d Division, Norwegian resistance collapsed, and on the 15th the commanding general offered to negotiate a surrender. Dur-

⁵⁷ *Gruppe XXI, Taegliche Meldungen*, pp. 58–65.

⁵⁸ *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Nr. 286/40, Befehl fuer den Einsatz der 214. Division in Suedwestnorwegen, 21.4.40*, in *Anlagenband 4 zum Ktb. 2 u. 3, 19.4.–23.4.40*. AOK 20 E 279/4.

⁵⁹ *Gruppe XXI, Taegliche Meldungen*, pp. 16, 35.

ing the following days 240 officers and 2,900 men of the division surrendered.⁶⁰

In a little more than three weeks, Group XXI had taken possession of southern and central Norway north to Grong and Namsos. It had smashed the main forces of the Norwegian Army and had defeated two strong Allied landing teams. But that was merely the prelude. In the far north, at Narvik, the crucial battle of the campaign was just beginning.

⁶⁰ Hubatsch, *op. cit.*, p. 207. *Gruppe XXI, Taegliche Meldungen*, pp. 19, 53.

Chapter 5

Operations in Northern Norway

The Siege of Narvik

Narvik was the grand prize of the Norwegian campaign. The British conviction that, come what might, Narvik would fall to them had been the first premise of all the Allied plans concerning Scandinavia. How deep that conviction was and how painful it was to give up were demonstrated when Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain told the House of Commons twelve hours after the German landing that it was "very possible" to believe a mistake had been made in transmitting the report and, consequently, the place in question might not be Narvik at all but Larvik, a small town on the coast south of Oslo.¹ For Germans to take the rest of Norway and lose Narvik was, in effect, to lose the campaign.

Were it not for the single-track Lapland Railroad, which threads its way out of the city eastward to the Swedish ore fields, Narvik would easily have ranked among the least desirable pieces of real estate in the world. The city occupies a small area of comparatively level land at the tip of a stubby peninsula flanked on the north by the Rombaks Fiord and on the south by the Beis Fiord. The railroad follows the south shore of the Rombaks Fiord along a narrow shelf, interspersed with numerous tunnels, cut into the solid rock of the mountains which slope sharply down to the water line on both sides of the peninsula. Away from the city and railroad the arctic wilderness stretches in all directions, a tangle of hills, depressions, and irregularly shaped plateaus frequently topped by peaks reaching heights of four thousand feet and more. In winter the landscape is white except on steep slopes where the wind, blowing the snow away, exposes the bare rock underneath; in summer it is gray with narrow fringes of green along the shores of the fiords where stunted birches grow near the water and grass and mosses cover the banks to elevations of several hundred feet.

In the second week of April 1940 winter still held Narvik tightly in its grip. The snow was three to four feet deep in the city and along the shore. In the inland valleys it had accumulated to depths of eight feet and more. During the coming weeks the blizzards and later the cold

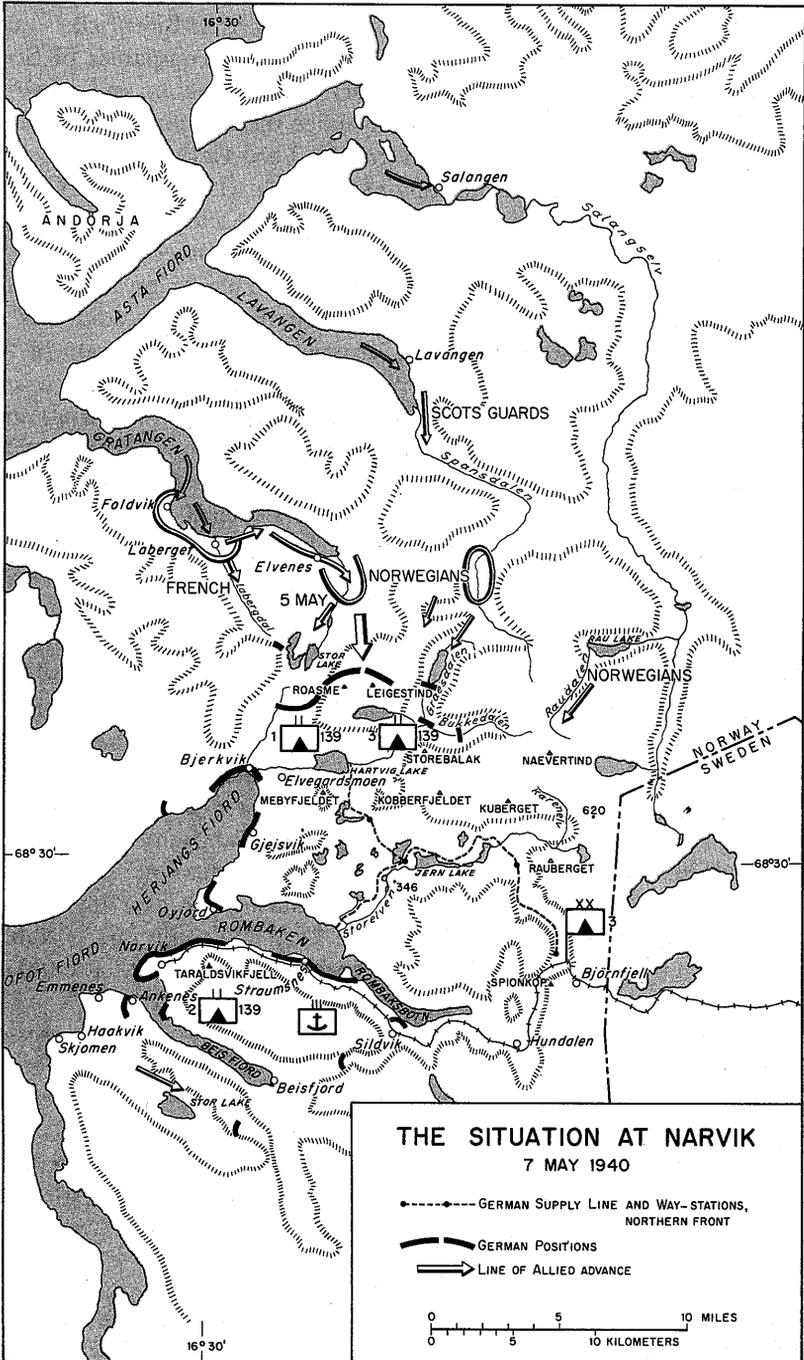
¹ Derry, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

spring rains were to create onerous conditions for combat; but the hardships were all in the future as the 3d Mountain Division troops marched into the prosperous, modern city which in recent years had even acquired a reputation as a winter resort. The division headquarters was set up in the top three floors of the Hotel Royal, the best of several hotels in town.

On 14 April, after the sinking of the last destroyers, Dietl had at his disposal 4,600 men, 2,600 of them members of the destroyer crews armed with Norwegian weapons from stocks captured at Elvegaardsmoen. Two battalions of mountain troops were established 17 miles north of Narvik along the line Laberget-Elvenes-Oalage. The remaining battalion took up positions in Narvik, and a company held Ankenes on the south shore of the Beis Fiord. The naval personnel were deployed along the north and east shores of the Herjangs Fiord, in Narvik, and along the railroad, which the Germans occupied up to the Swedish border on the 16th after minor skirmishes with small parties of Norwegian troops. On the 14th ten Ju 52's, which landed on the ice of Hartvig Lake, brought in a battery of mountain artillery, but four days later Hitler ordered that no new forces were to be committed.²

The only supplies immediately available at Narvik were those from the captured depot at Elvegaardsmoen and those which could be salvaged from the *Jan Wellem*. Two days after the landing the German Government began negotiating for permission to use the Swedish railways, and on 26 April the first train carrying rations, medical supplies, and a number of radio technicians arrived. Although repeatedly pressed, the Swedish Government did not permit the transport of ammunition but later allowed some shipments of clothing and ski equipment. In addition, 230 specialists of various kinds were brought in via Sweden in the course of the campaign. All of the ammunition and substantial quantities of rations and other supplies had to be delivered by air drops. Sea planes could land occasionally in defiance of the patrolling British warships, but after the ice on the Hartvig Lake began to thaw, which occurred before the ten Ju 52's mentioned above were able to take off, the landing of other aircraft was impossible. As the campaign progressed it developed that the difficulties of moving supplies within the 3d Mountain Division zone were almost as great as those encountered in bringing them in from outside. The divisional supply base was established at Björn fjell just west of the Swedish border, and the railroad could be used only as far as Hundalen. From there supplies for Narvik had to be carried 15 miles along the railroad right of way which was constantly exposed to shelling from British warships. After the ferry which operated between Narvik and Öyjord on the north shore

² *Chef OKW, WFA, Nr. 102/40, an Gruppe XXI, 18.4.40, in Anlagenband 3 zum Ktb. Nr. 2 u. 3, 13.4.-18.4.40. AOK 20 E 279/3. Gruppe XXI, Tägliches Meldungen, loc. cit., p. 19. 3. Geb. Div. K.T.B. Narvik, loc. cit., p. 8.*



J. Schwaben

Map 7

of Rombaks Fiord was sunk on 20 April, supplies for the troops north of Narvik had to be carried over the mountains from Björn fjell.³

On 14 April the British advance party of two companies of Scots Guards arrived off Narvik in the cruiser *Southampton* and joined a naval force of cruisers and destroyers under the command of Admiral of the Fleet the Earl of Cork and Orrery. Lord Cork wanted to stage a landing at Narvik on the morning of the 15th with 350 Scots Guards and 200 sailors and marines but abandoned the idea after the Army commander, Major General P. J. Mackesy, raised objections. On the 16th Mackesy rejected a second proposal for a landing on the grounds of need to land his weapons, deep snow on the beaches, and lack of knowledge of the condition of the Germans. By the afternoon of the 17th both the Admiralty and the War Office were pressing for an immediate assault, but the general continued to have misgivings and favored, instead, an attempt to induce the Germans to surrender by means of a naval bombardment.⁴ On the morning of the 24th a battleship, two cruisers, and half a dozen destroyers shelled Narvik for three hours. At first the Germans expected a landing, and Dietl informed Group XXI that, if the city could not be held, he intended to fall back eastward along the railroad. In the end, the only tangible result of the bombardment was that Dietl decided to shift the nonessential troops out of the city and, at the urging of his staff, moved his command post to Sildvik, a railroad station near the eastern end of the Rombaks Fiord.⁵

Winston Churchill has charged Mackesy with a dilatoriness not warranted by the circumstances; on the other hand, Derry, the official British historian, is inclined to see a considerable amount of justification in the general's determination to avoid the risks of an immediate landing and develop, instead, a deliberate and scientific campaign. In view of present knowledge it seems that a landing during the first days would have had a good chance of success since Dietl had only one battalion of mountain troops in Narvik to oppose two British battalions at hand on the 15th and an additional battalion which arrived on the 16th.⁶ The two German battalions stationed north of the city could not have crossed the Rombaks Fiord to enter into the fighting. Of the destroyer crews about 1,000 were being held at Hundalen, and there is no indication that many of the remainder were in Narvik or even organized and ready for combat. The opinion of the 3d Mountain Division at the end of the campaign was that in the first weeks the Allies far overestimated the German strength.⁷

³ 3. *Geb. Div., Ib, Bericht ueber die Erfahrungen auf dem Gebiet der Versorgung waehrend des Einsatzes in Norwegen, 7.7.40, in Erfahrungsberichte der Divisionen.* AOK 20 E 279/16.

⁴ Derry, *op. cit.*, pp. 146-55.

⁵ *Gruppe XXI, Taegliche Meldungen, loc. cit.*, p. 42. Dietl, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

⁶ Derry, *op. cit.*, pp. 148, 153.

⁷ 3. *Geb. Div., Ia, Erfahrungsbericht, in Erfahrungsberichte der Divisionen, 16.7.40.* AOK 20 E 279/16.

While the possibilities of a landing were being debated, the British force established its main base and headquarters at Harstad on Hinnøy Island, already the headquarters of the Norwegian 6th Division; and the three British battalions were distributed at several points on the mainland but not in position to make contact with the Germans. The Norwegians had four battalions north of the German positions in the Elvenes area. General Mackesy planned a two-pronged drive from the north to take Öyjord and cut the railroad at Hundalen and an advance along the south shore of Ofot Fiord to Ankenes as the initial phase of his advance to Narvik.⁸

On the 24th, in the first land action of the campaign, the four Norwegian battalions attacking at Gratangen near Elvenes were repulsed and lost the better part of one battalion. The arrival on the same day of three battalions of French Chasseurs Alpins enabled Mackesy to begin developing his attack. One of the French battalions landed on the 28th in Gratangen Fiord for an advance southeastward through the Labergdal. Meanwhile, the strength of the Norwegian force had been increased, and it was organized into two brigades, one with three battalions and a mountain battery and the other with two battalions, a mountain battery, and a motorized battery. The latter, reinforced by two French companies, took up the advance from Elvenes to Bjerkvik while the former worked its way eastward into the mountains to attack on the German right flank along the Swedish border. The advance was not rapid and by 10 May had covered only five miles. South of Narvik on 29 April a British battalion, replaced several days later by one of the French mountain battalions, landed west of Haakvik to attack Ankenes. There too, the attack made little progress.⁹

On 5 May, when Dietl's force returned to the command of Group XXI after having been under the immediate command of the OKW since 15 April, the 3d Mountain Division reported that the main threat north of Narvik was seen as coming from the Norwegian brigade on the right flank. It could turn westward and cut off the two German battalions or drive straight to the south to the railroad at Björn fjell, but because of the slow and methodical character of the Norwegian operations Dietl was not greatly concerned. The additional danger of an Allied landing in the Herjangs Fiord was foreseen. Narvik was being held by a mountain battalion and approximately three naval companies while one mountain company defended Ankenes. The railroad, which provided the only route from Narvik to the rear, was held by naval personnel but was exposed day and night to fire from enemy destroyers which used their heavy guns against anything that moved along the railroad. In Narvik the Germans had blown up the piers and other installations necessary for the shipment of ore so that the city could be

⁸ Derry, *op. cit.*, pp. 154-56.

⁹ Derry, *op. cit.*, pp. 157-59.

evacuated on short notice. The impression at Dietl's headquarters was that the Allied force would not undertake a major operation against the city itself until they had completed their preparations down to the last detail and probably not until the snow had melted and the condition of the terrain had become more favorable.¹⁰ Dietl intended to hold his advanced positions in the north and at Narvik as long as possible because of the difficulty of organizing a defense in the mountains to the rear.¹¹ On 6 May, however, in the light of the developing enemy attack, Group XXI viewed the position of the Narvik force as critical; and on the 8th after the loss of the Leigestind and Roasme, two commanding heights east of the Elvenes-Bjerkvik road, Dietl reported that he could hold his new positions to the rear only if reinforcements were forthcoming and if the Air Force gave strong support.¹²

In early May the build-up of the Allied force continued. Two battalions of the French Foreign Legion arrived on the 6th and a Polish brigade of four battalions on the 9th. Lord Cork had at his disposal, in addition to cruisers and destroyers, a battleship and an aircraft carrier. With five anti-aircraft batteries at hand and six more due to follow, the troops investing Narvik were not as helpless in the face of German air power as the forces at Namsos and Åndalsnes had been. Nevertheless, in good weather they had to contend with several air raids a day. The first substantial German success came on 4 May with the sinking of the Polish destroyer *Grom*. Before the end of the month, the Germans had sunk the anti-aircraft cruiser *Curlew* and the transport *Chrobry* and damaged a number of ships, among them the battleship *Resolution*.¹³

The next step in the Allied plan was to stage a landing at the northern end of the Herjangs Fiord which would be coupled with a renewed French and Norwegian thrust south from the Elvenes area. The Norwegian brigade operating along the Swedish border would maintain its pressure on the German right flank. The landing, to be executed by two battalions of the Foreign Legion and five light tanks, was timed for midnight on the 13th after a preliminary bombardment by a battleship, two cruisers, and five destroyers.¹⁴

At the German headquarters the appearance of the warships was correctly taken to indicate a landing in the Herjangs Fiord, where the only force which could be committed was the weak naval battalion already stationed at Bjerkvik and along the east shore. The possibility of a landing at Narvik was also taken into account; and the question of abandoning the city without fight arose; but Dietl decided that, although possession of the city had no decisive military significance, he

¹⁰ *Gruppe XXI, Chief, Lfd. Nr. 8, Auszug aus einem Bericht der Gruppe Narvik von 5.5.40, in Anlagenband 12 zum Ktb. Nr. 2 u. 3.9.5.-19.5.40.* AOK 20 E 279/12.

¹¹ *3. Geb. Div., K.T.B., Narvik, loc. cit., p. 27.*

¹² *Gruppe XXI, Tägliches Meldungen, loc. cit., pp. 80, 88.*

¹³ Derry, *op. cit.*, pp. 192, 206.

¹⁴ Derry, *op. cit.*, pp. 196-99.

would have to resist for the sake of troop morale and to deny the Allies a cheap victory out of which they could make propaganda.

At Bjerkvik, where the French troops went ashore at about 0200 on 13 May, the naval battalion, badly shaken by the bombardment, gave ground quickly, abandoning most of its machine guns in the process. A small screening force of mountain troops thrown into the area west of Hartvig Lake managed to delay the enemy advance temporarily but could not prevent his taking Elvegaardsmoen. On the Bjerkvik–Öyjord road a naval company abandoned its positions before coming under fire, thereby opening the route by which French troops occupied Öyjord before the end of the day. During the morning Dietl ordered the mountain battalions to draw back to a line from the Mebyfjeldet to the Storebalak, but it was doubtful whether the line could be established or held because of the threat deep in the almost undefended left flank at Öyjord. Fortunately for the Germans, the Allies could not effect a junction of their forces on the Elvenes–Bjerkvik road until the afternoon of the 14th. This gave the mountain troops time to withdraw southeastward. On the German right flank the Norwegian brigade began an advance which was to make good progress during the following days.¹⁵

On the evening of the 13th, Group XXI informed the OKW that the situation at Narvik was critical. Dietl reported that for even part of his troops to retreat southward toward Bodö was out of the question because of their exhausted condition. He intended, if the enemy offensive continued, to give up Narvik and hold a bridgehead on the railroad; but the prerequisite for that undertaking was speedy reinforcement of the front north of Narvik; otherwise, there was no other possibility than to cross the border into Sweden. Group XXI, reporting to the OKW, requested permission for Dietl to take his troops into Sweden in case enemy action made it necessary.¹⁶

By the night of 13 May all that was left for the Germans at Narvik was to fight for time, on the slim chance that a miracle might yet spare them the disgrace of having to take refuge in Sweden. The German offensive against the Low Countries and France had started three days earlier, but it was too early to predict its effect, if any, on the Allied operation at Narvik. On 4 May Group XXI had started the 2d Mountain Division on the long march northward from the Trondheim area. The division had made surprisingly good progress, but it was still 180 miles south of Narvik. Group XXI was almost helpless; the most it could do was send some reinforcements, not enough to turn the tide or, for that matter, even to keep the resistance alive much longer.

After the first wave of panic had subsided, Falkenhorst, on 15 May, asked Hitler for a parachute battalion to be sent to Narvik. To justify the request, he argued that the operations of the 2d Mountain Division

¹⁵ *3. Geb. Div., K.T.B. Narvik, loc. cit.*, pp. 38–40. Derry *op. cit.*, p. 199.

¹⁶ *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Nr. 2/40, an OKW, Abt. L. 13.5.40, in Anlagenband 12 zum Ktb. 2 u. 3, 9.5.–19.5.40. AOK 20 E 279/12.*

north of Trondheim would become a mere waste of strength if Narvik were given up and that it was necessary to hold a beachhead in the north as long as possible for political and prestige reasons and to tie down Allied land and sea forces.¹⁷ On the 14th, Group XXI had sent a token reinforcement of 66 parachute troops—all it could muster in Norway. During the remainder of the month and in the first week of June a parachute battalion and two mountain companies which had been given brief parachute training were dropped at Narvik. The reinforcements totaled about 1,050 men, including 160 specialists who arrived by train.¹⁸

While the pressure for reinforcements was greatest, Group XXI, through a misunderstanding, was making arrangements for evacuation of the destroyer crews via Sweden. Partly because the end was believed near in Narvik and partly because Dietl, after the events of 13 May, had described the naval personnel as “useless for combat and a danger to our troops,” permission was secured from Sweden on the 19th for the crews to be evacuated as shipwrecked sailors. During the following weeks Group XXI persistently urged the evacuation while Dietl, who in the meantime had changed his mind, argued that the sailors were indispensable for the movement of supplies within the division zone.¹⁹

On the 15th the 3d Mountain Division viewed its situation as becoming increasingly doubtful because of the threat to the northern front. It saw the only possibility of improvement in effective air support directed against the land and sea targets. Dietl also reported that unless reinforcements were made available immediately he would be compelled to allow his troops in the north to fall back, which would inevitably lead to the loss of Narvik.²⁰ Two days later the situation on the right flank along the Swedish border was still completely confused, with the Norwegians pushing across the tactically important Kuberg Plateau and enemy pressure continuing strong all along the front. South of Narvik, where three Polish battalions replaced the French and British battalions in the Ankenes area on 16 May, defense was becoming increasingly difficult.

On the 21st, judging that an Allied breakthrough was possible at any moment, Dietl decided to withdraw his north front and take up positions in a shortened line. The withdrawal was executed the next day, and the line was anchored near the Swedish border 7 miles north of the Björn fjell and on the Rombaks Fiord 12 miles west of the Björn fjell.²¹

¹⁷ v. Falkenhorst, *an Fuehrerhauptquartier, Generaloberst Keitel, 15.5.40*, in *Anlagenband 12 zum Ktb. 2 u. 3, 9.5.–19.5.40*. AOK 20 E 279/12.

¹⁸ 3. Geb. Div., *K.T.B. Narvik, loc. cit., passim*.

¹⁹ Dietl, *an Gruppe XXI, 15.5.40*, in *Anlagenband 7 zum Ktb. 2 u. 3, 9.5.–16.5.40*. AOK 20 E 279/7. *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Nr. 595/40 and Nr. 673/40, an Oberst Buschenhagen, Drontheim, 18 and 19.5.40*, in *Anlagenband 8 zum Ktb. Nr. 2 u. 3, 17.5.–26.5.40*. AOK 20 E 279/8.

²⁰ 3. Geb. Div., *K.T.B. Narvik, loc. cit.*, p. 42. *Dietl an Gruppe XXI, 15.5.40*, in *Anlagenband 7 zum Ktb. Nr. 2 u. 3, 9.5.40*. AOK 20 E 279/7.

²¹ 3. Geb. Div., *K.T.B. Narvik, loc. cit.*, pp. 42, 44, 45, 48.

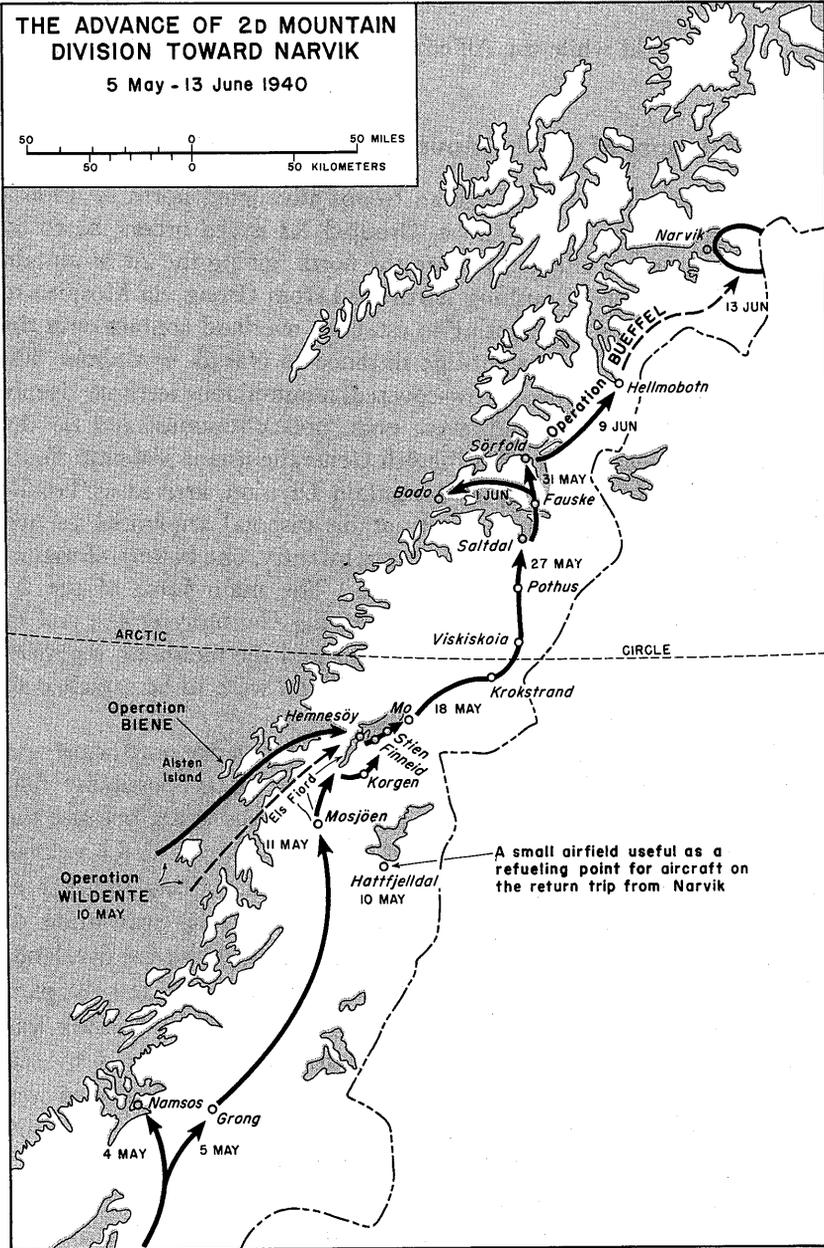
The new line held while the Allied command prepared the final assault on Narvik.

The Advance of the 2d Mountain Division Toward Narvik

On 4 May, the day the German troops advancing north of Trondheim reached Grong and Namsos, Group XXI issued orders, based on an estimate of weak enemy forces to the north, giving the 2d Mountain Division the mission of pushing northward from Grong via Mosjøen to Bodö and from there attempting to establish overland contact with the force at Narvik. The straight-line distance to Narvik was about 300 miles through thinly settled, snow-covered, mountainous territory deeply cut by the fiords. The roads were poor, not continuous, and for the last 85 miles nonexistent. On the 4th Generalleutnant Valentin Feurstein, Commanding General, 2d Mountain Division, arrived at Trondheim where the troops immediately at his disposal amounted to two battalions plus one company of mountain infantry, one battery of mountain artillery, and an engineer platoon. The main force of the 2d Mountain Division, which had begun leaving Germany at the end of April, was still in transit. Motorized units and the mountain regiment which had executed the landing at Trondheim were to be attached to Feurstein's force as they became available.²²

On the Allied side the prospect of a German advance northward was regarded with the strongest misgivings because of the possibility that reinforcements could be brought to Narvik but, above all, because the reach of the German Air Force would be extended toward the vulnerable Allied bases in the north. The intention was to delay and, if possible, stall the German advance. At the time of the evacuation of Namsos it had been proposed that part of the force withdraw overland, fighting a rearguard action between Grong and Mosjøen; but the plan was dropped after the command at Namsos insisted that the terrain was impassable. Instead, 100 Chasseurs Alpins were transferred by sea from Namsos to Mosjøen. The Allied plan as it finally developed was to create centers of resistance at Mosjøen, and Bodö, and, since the operations at Åndalsnes and Namsos had demonstrated the dangers of committing large forces without air protection, it was decided to employ only small, self-sufficient units. Beginning in mid-April, five Independent Companies of 20 officers and 270 men each had been created. They were expected to live off the country and engage the cooperation of the local population in guerilla warfare. Brought from England, two companies landed at Mosjøen replacing the Chasseurs Alpins; one landed at Mo and two at Bodö, where they joined a company of Scots

²² *Gruppe XXI, Ia, an Kdr. 2. Geb. Div., 6.5.40 (muendlich 4.5.1700)*, in *Anlagenband 6 zum KTB. 2 u. 3, 1.4.-8.5.40. AOK 20 E 279/6.*



Map 8

Guards sent from the Narvik area. The Norwegian troops at hand amounted to one reserve battalion and one battalion which was withdrawing from Grong to Mosjøen.²³

Starting from Grong on 5 May the German mountain troops covered nearly 90 miles in four days over terrain which the British command

²³ Derry, *op. cit.*, pp. 166, 168, 177-79. Roskill, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

at Namsos had judged to be impassable. On the morning of the 10th British and Norwegian troops staged brief resistance 10 miles south of Mosjøen and then withdrew to positions beyond the town with the intention of fighting a series of delaying actions between Mosjøen and Mo. That afternoon the Germans executed operation WILDENTE. Aboard the coastal steamer *Nord Norge* a company was taken from Trondheim to the Hemnesøy Peninsula in the fiord at Mo. Seaplanes brought in another half company. The landing was a success despite the fact that it was contested at the quay by British troops and that the steamer was sunk by two British destroyers which appeared on the scene. The operation apparently was dictated mainly by the peculiarities of the geography of northern Norway. The road north from Mosjøen ended at Elsfjorden on the Els Fiord, and the Hemnesøy Peninsula dominated the water route to Mo. A road via Korgen and Finneid to Mo was separated from the Mosjøen–Elsfjorden road by a high ridge and was dominated at Finneid by the Hemnesøy. WILDENTE opened the route to Mo for the Germans, but it also came as a calamity for the British companies at Mosjøen since it cut their route of retreat and ended all plans for contesting the ground north of Mosjøen to Mo. The British abandoned their positions and were evacuated by ship to Bodø while the Norwegian battalion, which was forced to abandon most of its equipment, retreated overland to Mo,²⁴ where the British managed to hold open the road through Finneid past the Hemnesøy Peninsula just long enough for the battalion to pass through.

On the 11th the German column entered Mosjøen and received orders to advance as quickly as possible to Hemnesøy. By the 15th the Germans were in Elsfjorden; and, while an attempt was made to improvise a ferry for transport to Finneid, three and a half companies worked their way across the mountains from Elsfjorden to Korgen and thence along the road to Finneid. The British, in the meantime, had brought three companies of Scots Guards to Mo in addition to the Independent Company already there and had established a strong defensive position at Stien, eight miles northeast of Finneid. After assembling their forces at Finneid on the 16th and 17th, the Germans went over to the attack on the afternoon of the 17th. Finding the British position protected by a small river, the Germans marched eastward and attacked the left flank while parachute troops were dropped to develop a secondary flank attack. The fighting continued throughout the short night, and the British began to fall back about 0200. During the night the British units

²⁴ *Holzinger, Hauptman 1./138, Gefechtsbericht des Unternehmens Wildente vom 8.4.1940 2230 bis zum 15.5.1940 1900 Uhr, 17.5.40 and Rudolf, Oberleutnant 7./138, Gefechtsbericht des Unternehmens "Wildente" vom 10.5. 1600 Uhr bis 11.5. 0300 Uhr, in Anlagenband 13 zum Ktb. 2 u. 3, 20.5.–31.5.40. AOK 20 E 279/13. Gruppe XXI, Taegliche Meldungen, loc. cit., p. 92. Derry, op. cit., pp. 180–82.*



Waiting to attack, German troops fighting in mountainous terrain take cover behind a rock.

received orders to retire north of Mo, and at 2000 on the 18th the Germans occupied the town.²⁵

To hold Bodö and the territory north of Mo, the British had two infantry battalions, four Independent Companies, and two batteries of artillery at Bodö and a battalion of Scots Guards (brought up to strength by reinforcements from Bodö) and an Independent Company in the vicinity of Mo, a total of about 4,500 men. Of Norwegian troops, there were approximately a battalion in the Mo area and a battalion (transferred from Bardufoss) at Bodö.²⁶ The German force under General Feurstein, which changed almost daily as new elements arrived, on 15 May consisted of six battalions of mountain infantry, four batteries of artillery, a divisional reconnaissance battalion, an engineer battalion, a company of motorcycle troops, a bicycle squadron, a mortar battery, and a platoon of tanks. The German troops probably totaled about 6,000 men, but not all were committed in the assault.²⁷

The Scots Guards fought the first delaying action north of Mo in the vicinity of Krokstrand. The Independent Company had been taken out of action and withdrawn northward, and reinforcements were slow in arriving because of delays in assembling the forces at Bodö occasioned by the sinking of a transport and the grounding of a cruiser carrying

²⁵ 2. Geb. Div., *Bericht ueber das Vorgehen der Gruppe Sorko von Elsfjorden nach Mo und die Gefechte bei Stien und Andfiskaanen, 19.5.40*, in *Anlagenband 12 zum Ktb. 2 u. 3, 9.5.–19.5.40*. AOK 20 E 279/12. Derry, *op. cit.*, pp. 182–86.

²⁶ Derry, *op. cit.*, pp. 187–92 and 214–15. Roskill, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

²⁷ *Gruppe XXI, Kraefteeinsatz bei 2. Geb. Div. amd 10.5., 14.5.40 and Gruppe XXI, Bis 15.5. sind Gruppe Feurstein angefuehrt, 15.5.50*, in *Anlagenband 19 zum Ktb. Nr. 2 u. 3, Kriegsgliederungen 15.4.–25.5.40*. AOK 20 E 279/19.

troops. The positions at Krokstrand could only be held for a matter of hours, and on the 23d a fresh Independent Company attempted a new stand at Viskiskoia. It, too, failed the next afternoon when the Germans developed a flank attack which drove back the Independent Company. The Scots Guards and other units were then ordered to withdraw as fresh troops had occupied positions farther north at Pothus. There an infantry battalion and two Independent Companies with some Norwegian troops managed to hold from the morning of the 25th until 1900 on the 26th. At Pothus for the first time the British troops had the support of two fighter aircraft operating from a newly constructed airstrip at Bodö.²⁸

On 25 May, while the fighting was in progress at Pothus, the immediate evacuation of Bodö was ordered. The Allies had decided a day earlier to close out their operation against Narvik and therefore saw no need to continue tying down the 2d Mountain Division.²⁹ In a week, the British units, with the Germans close behind, fell back to Bodö, completing the evacuation on 31 May.³⁰ At Fauske the German force split. One column pushed westward toward Bodö while the other continued the northward advance toward Sörfold. The Germans entered Bodö on the morning of 1 June and reached Sörfold on the following day.³¹ At Sörfold the forward elements of the 2d Mountain Division were still 85 miles from Narvik, and from there north the route lay through a sparsely settled, pathless mountain wilderness.

Defeat and Victory

On 24 May the Allied Command in London decided that, because of the disastrous situation in France where the battle around Dunkerque was entering its final stage, the Narvik operation would have to be halted but that the city was to be captured first in order to cover the evacuation and ensure destruction of the port.³² The final assault, originally planned for the 21st, was postponed until the 27th, largely to gain the advantage of land-based air support from the airfield at Bardufoss which came into use on the 21st and where, finally, two squadrons of fighters and a squadron of naval amphibians were based. The attack, preceded by a cruiser and destroyer bombardment, was to be launched straight across the Rombaks Fiord from Öyjord, a distance of about one mile. It would be carried out by two battalions of the Foreign Legion and one Norwegian battalion supported by two tanks and the fire of three batteries of artillery stationed at Öyjord. Simultaneously the Polish battalions would launch thrusts against Ankenes and toward the

²⁸ Derry, *op. cit.*, pp. 189–92.

²⁹ Roskill, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

³⁰ Derry, *op. cit.*, pp. 213–15.

³¹ *Gruppe XXI, Tägliches Meldungen*, *loc. cit.*, pp. 134–40.

³² Churchill, Vol. I, p. 652.

Polish thrust toward the head of the fiord was held up long enough to prevent the cutting off of the troops withdrawing from Narvik. At night the Poles made contact with elements of the Foreign Legion in Beisfiord Village, but by then the Germans had taken up positions to the north and east.

Although the first German reports mentioned Allied tanks in the attack on Narvik, it appears that both of the tanks became bogged down on the beach and were not brought into action. On the morning of the 28th German dive bombers damaged the antiaircraft cruiser *Cairo*, and during the succeeding days German aircraft bombed the Allied bases at Harstad and Skaanland and brought Narvik under heavy air attack.³⁴

After the Allied troops had taken Narvik they pushed eastward along the railroad where they had the benefit of supporting fire from warships in the fiord. On the 30th they began developing a secondary attack from the south where a force in approximately battalion strength moved northeastward across the base of the Narvik Peninsula, endangering Sildvik on the railroad and threatening to cut off all the German troops farther west. Although Dietl averted that danger by throwing a company of parachute troops into the area, there still remained the possibility that the Allies might try a similar flanking movement farther east. By the 30th Dietl's stocks of rations and ammunition were rapidly dwindling since bad weather had (for three days) prevented supply flights. The supply situation was to become worse as the bad weather persisted.

The next morning the Norwegians resumed their attack on the right flank of the northern front, where the relative quiet of the past few days had facilitated the German withdrawal from Narvik. After the attack increased in strength throughout the day, forcing the Germans off the height (Hill 620) which had formed the eastern anchor of their line, Dietl decided to withdraw to a shorter line in order to make some reserves available which might be used to stem the threat in the north were it to continue to develop. On 1 June he drew the left flank of the northern front back to the western slope of the Rauberget and pulled the front on the Narvik Peninsula back about a mile, making possible the formation of one company of reserves for each battalion. With minor changes that line was to hold until the end of the campaign.³⁵

On 30 May Group XXI informed Dietl that Hitler had decided the Narvik force was to be supported by all possible means. While awaiting the support, which would become effective in five or six days, Dietl was to hold out as best he could, giving up the railroad if necessary. Hitler had ordered the OKL to make strong elements of the 7th Air Division available. They were to be committed in conjunction with a

³⁴ 3. *Geb. Div.*, *K.T.B. Narvik*, *loc. cit.*, pp. 55–58. Derry *op. cit.*, pp. 209–11 and 217. Dietl, *op. cit.*, pp. 161–68. *Gruppe XXI*, *Taegliche Meldungen*, *loc. cit.*, p. 130.

³⁵ 3. *Geb. Div.*, *Taegliche Meldungen*, *loc. cit.*, pp. 158–64.

planned naval operation off the north coast of Norway (Operation JUNO. See pp. 104–108 below).³⁶

The Air Force had for two weeks past displayed increasing reluctance to participate in the reinforcement of Narvik. On 16 May Hitler had ordered Goering to provide gliders for the transport of troops to Narvik. Group XXI readied 600 mountain troops; but, after successive delays, Goering on the 29th ordered all the gliders held at Aalborg. A Hitler decision on the following day reduced the number of gliders made available to six, and those were not committed.³⁷ The newly promised reinforcements, it was decided by 4 June, were to consist of two parachute battalions, a total of 1,800 men, to be brought in over a period of a week. On 5 June Group XXI promised an additional 1,000 mountain troops with parachute training in the near future. None of the intended reinforcements were delivered before the end of the campaign.³⁸

At the beginning of June the OKW planned a new operation for the relief of Narvik under the cover-name NAUMBURG. On 4 June it informed Group XXI that the intention was to land a strong force in the Lyngen Fiord, 90 miles north of Narvik, and from there to drive southward to attack the rear of the enemy at Narvik. Simultaneously the Air Force would take the airfield at Bardufoss, about 60 miles north of Narvik, and use it to support the advance. The OKH would furnish about 6,000 troops and a dozen tanks to be transported from Germany in the fast liners *Bremen* and *Europa*.³⁹ Both Group XXI and the Navy believed the operation could succeed, but the Navy thought that the two liners, after being escorted to the landing area by warships left at Trondheim following Operation JUNO, could not be brought back to Germany but would either have to be abandoned or sent to Base North on the Soviet arctic coast.⁴⁰ On 7 June the OKW was planning to execute the operation about 14 days later.⁴¹

Of the German schemes for bringing aid to Narvik, the one which came closest to fruition was Operation BUEFFEL, conducted by the 2d Mountain Division. In the last week of May the division had assembled a picked force of 2,500 of its best mountaineers, men who could be ex-

³⁶ *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Nr. 1056/40, an Gruppe Narvik, 31.5.40* and *OKW, WFA, L, an Gruppe XXI, 31.5.40, in Anlagenband 13 zum Ktb. 2 u. 3, 20.5.–31.5.40*. AOK 20 E 279/13. *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Nr. 1040/40, an Gruppe Narvik, 30.5.40, in Anlagenband 10 zum Ktb. Nr. 2 u. 3, 27.5.–4.6.40*. AOK 20 E 279/10.

³⁷ *OKW, Abt. L. Nr. 0037/40, an Gruppe XXI, 17.5.40, in Anlagenband 8 zum Ktb. Nr. 2 u. 3, 17.5.–26.5.40*. AOK 20 E 279/8. *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Nr. 1021/40, an Chef OKW, 29.5.40* and *OKW, Abt. L, an Gruppe XXI, 30.5.40, in Anlagenband 10 zum Ktb. 2 u. 2, 27.5.–4.6.40*. AOK 20 E 279/10.

³⁸ *Gruppe XXI, an Gruppe Narvik, 5.6.40, in Anlagenband 14 zum Ktb., 2 u. 3, 1.6.–14.6.40*. AOK 20 E 279/14.

³⁹ *Gruppe XXI, Ia, Nr. 284/40, Fuehrerweisung vom 5.6.40, in Gruppe XXI-Drontheim, Unternehmen "Naumburg."* AOK 20 D 279/28.

⁴⁰ *Fuehrer Conferences, 1940, I, p. 52.*

⁴¹ *OKW, Heimatstab Nord, Ia, Aktennotiz ueber Ferngespraech Oberst d. G. Warlimont-Major i. G. v. Tippelskirch am 7 Juni 1940, in Gruppe XXI-Drontheim, Unternehmen "Naumburg."* AOK 20 E 279/28.

pected to make the final arduous march to Narvik and on arrival be capable of engaging in combat. The march, expected to take ten days, began at Sörfold on 2 June and continued according to schedule as the troops pushed onward in rain, snow, and fog through mud and melting snow. The terrain ruled out the use of either pack animals or vehicles, and supply was entirely by air drop. Heavy weapons and ammunition were to be dropped shortly before the detachment reached Narvik. On 9 June, after the Allies evacuated Narvik, the advance halted slightly short of the halfway point at Hellmobotn. A token force in platoon strength continued on to Narvik where it arrived on the 13th. In his final report the commanding officer stated that, without doubt, had the situation required it, the entire detachment could have completed the march and been capable of going into combat.⁴²

While the Germans prepared measures for the relief of Narvik, the main concern of the Allied command was to keep the evacuation of its 24,500 men secret until the convoys were at sea. Some supplies, including guns and tanks, were shipped out before the end of May; and the first group of troopships loaded 15,000 men on the 4th, 5th, and 6th of June and sailed on the 7th. The second group took aboard most of the remaining troops on the 7th and 8th and left its rendezvous area on the morning of the 9th. The rear guard at Harstad went aboard the cruiser *Southhampton* at 0900 on the 8th.⁴³

At the last minute the Norwegian Government, which had been kept in the dark about the evacuation until late on 1 June, attempted to salvage at least a remnant of its territory by diplomatic means. As early as mid-April there had, apparently at German instigation, been talk of neutralizing Narvik. At the end of the month the project became known as the Mowinckel Plan after the former Norwegian Prime Minister L. Mowinckel suggested it to the Swedish Foreign Minister in Stockholm. The Swedes took it up but got no encouragement from the belligerents until after 1 June when, with the evacuation impending, the Norwegians approached the Swedish Government. The Germans, despite their desperate position at Narvik, accorded the matter dilatory treatment. After the Swedish Minister directly proposed the neutralization of Narvik in a conference on 4 June the State Secretary in the German Foreign Ministry deduced that the Allies were about to evacuate, but the OKW apparently did not share that impression. As late as 7 June the OKW was busy planning Operation NAUMBURG, which could not have been executed before the last week of the month.⁴⁴

⁴² 2. Geb. Div., Ia., Nr. 66/40, an Gruppe XXI, Ia. 18.6.40 and Gruppe Obstlt. v. Hengl, Bericht ueber das Unternehmen Bueffel, 15.6.40, in Anlagenband 15 zum Ktb. Nr. 2 u. 3, Erfahrungsberichte d. Gruppe XXI. AOK 20 E 279/15.

⁴³ Derry *op. cit.*, pp. 218–21.

⁴⁴ Derry, *op. cit.*, pp. 173–76. Hubatsch, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

During the first week of June Dietl's sole objective was to hold a bridgehead along the Swedish border, no matter how limited, until reinforcements could be brought in and the relief operation had time to take effect. His stocks of ammunition were running low. Almost continuous bad weather after the end of May prevented air supply and imposed hardships on his troops who had no shelter in their new positions, but it hampered Allied operations as well, with the result that the front remained relatively quiet. The Allied evacuation came as a surprise and was not discovered until about 1700 on June 8th. Thereafter the Germans quickly reoccupied Narvik. On the following day the Norwegian Command signed an armistice which ended the fighting in Norway.⁴⁵

After the armistice the Germans quickly established a firm hold on northern Norway. In mid-May, to support the advance of the 2d Mountain Division, they had begun opening a sea route north of Trondheim. Several small Norwegian bases on the coast and on offshore islands were occupied, and at the end of the month the 181st Division began Operation BIENE, directed against a British communications and intelligence center on Alsten Island.⁴⁶ By 8 June the coastal waters were open to German shipping as far north as Fauske, and at the middle of the month the cruiser *Nuernberg* and two steamers transported the second infantry regiment and the artillery regiment of the 3d Mountain Division to Narvik and Tromsø.⁴⁷

Operation JUNO

By mid-May the German warships damaged in the April operations had been repaired. The *Scharnhorst*, the *Hipper*, and the *Nuernberg* were on training cruises in the Baltic, and the *Gneisenau* was scheduled for a shakedown cruise at the end of the month. On 16 May the Naval Staff decided that, at the beginning of June, the battleships and cruisers could start operating in the sea area between Norway and the Shetlands and northward as a diversion and to create difficulties for Allied supply movements. During the following days a wide divergence of opinion developed between the Naval Staff on the one hand and the operating commands, Naval Group West and Fleet Command, on the other. The operating commands wanted to conserve their forces and believed the chances of success too small to warrant risking the few German heavy ships in operations in and beyond the Shetlands-Norway passage. But Admiral Raeder and the Naval Staff, probably believing

⁴⁵ 3. Geb. Div., K.T.B. Narvik, loc. cit., pp. 63-74. Gruppe XXI, Ia, an OKW, L, 9.6.40, in Anlagenband 14 zum Ktb. 2 u. 3, 1.6.-14.6.40. AOK 20 E 279/14.

⁴⁶ Gruppe XXI, Abt. Ia, Nr. 178/40, Operationsbefehl, 25.5.40, in Anlagenband 9 zum Ktb. 2 u. 3., 17.5.-25.5.40. AOK 20 E 279/9.

⁴⁷ Gruppe XXI, Ia, Nr. 354/40, Befehl fuer Transport der Restteile 3. Geb. Division nach Nordnorwegen, 13.6.40, in Anlagenband 14 zum Ktb. 2 u. 3, 1.6.-14.6.40. AOK 20 E 279/14.

the war was drawing to a close, insisted on adopting aggressive methods to prove the worth of the Navy and assure its future development.⁴⁸

On 21 May Raeder informed Hitler that the *Scharnhorst* and the *Hipper* would be ready for new missions on about 27 May and that the *Gneisenau* would be ready at the beginning of June. His plan was for the ships to operate in the northern North Sea and the Arctic Ocean to relieve the German land operations in northern Norway and to defend the Skagerrak and southern Norway by threatening communications between the British Isles and Norway. Operations using Trondheim as a base were to be begun later.⁴⁹ He also ordered the possibility of again using submarines in the Narvik area investigated, but the Commanding Admiral, Submarines, strongly advised against it since the brightness of the nights and the enemy's favorable opportunities for patrol indicated only slight prospects of success.⁵⁰

On 24 May, with the situation at Narvik deteriorating rapidly, the Naval Staff dropped its plans for harassing the Allies' supply lines and began to consider means of bringing direct relief to the force at Narvik. It concluded that the situation at sea was favorable and that a sortie into West Fiord as far as Narvik or into Vaags Fiord as far as Harstad was entirely feasible. On the following day it ordered Naval Group West to plan an operation along those lines and time it as early as possible, sometime after June 2. Group XXI would designate promising shore targets. On the 27th Hitler added the mission of opening and protecting a coastal supply line for the 2d Mountain Division in the Trondheim-Mo-Bodö area.⁵¹

The order for the operation, to be carried out under the code name JUNO by the battleships *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, the cruiser *Hipper*, and four destroyers, was issued on 29 May. The first and main assignment was a surprise penetration into And Fiord and Vaags Fiord to Harstad and destruction of the bases, transports, and warships found there. If reconnaissance reports showed that a sortie into West Fiord and Ofot Fiord, possibly as far as Narvik, appeared to offer better prospects of success, that was to be carried out as the main assignment. The additional task, protection of supply transport from Trondheim to Bodö, could be carried out either simultaneously with the main assignment or after its execution. Trondheim was to be used as a base. The Naval Staff indicated that it was thinking not only of a single strike against a specific target but also of continuing operations which would be carried out over a longer period.⁵² The order as delivered to the Commanding Admiral, Fleet, Admiral Wilhelm Marschall, set specific missions; but in a verbal discussion with Marschall on 31 May Raeder

⁴⁸ *Naval War Diary*, Vol. 9, pp. 119, 141, 153, 190.

⁴⁹ *Fuehrer Conferences*, 1940, I, p. 50.

⁵⁰ *Naval War Diary*, Vol. 9, p. 201.

⁵¹ *Naval War Diary*, Vol. 9, pp. 218-19 and 237.

⁵² *Naval War Diary*, Vol. 9, pp. 275ff.

couched the requirements in more general terms, which may have been the cause of a serious divergence of views regarding execution of the operation which later developed between the Commanding Admiral, Fleet, and the Naval Staff.⁵³

At 0800 on 4 June the warships steamed out of Kiel. Four supply ships had been dispatched under minesweeper escort to Trondheim; and two tankers, from which the warships would refuel at sea, were on route to the rendezvous points in north Norwegian waters. A day earlier observations of lively transport traffic toward Narvik had led the Naval Staff to surmise that the Allies were building up their strength at Narvik in order to gain a victory there to counterbalance the defeat in Flanders.⁵⁴ On the 6th the Germans estimated the British naval forces in the north Norwegian area at 2 battleships, 1 aircraft carrier, 4 cruisers, and 15 destroyers. (Actually Lord Cork's force for the evacuation amounted only to 2 aircraft carriers, 3 cruisers, and 10 destroyers.)⁵⁵ With no other intelligence or reconnaissance reports at his disposal, Admiral Marschall decided on the 6th to time his attack on Harstad for the night of the 8/9th.⁵⁶ On the evening of the 6th the warships met the tanker *Dithmarschen* at a position halfway between Norway and Iceland and began refueling operations which lasted for 24 hours.

On the night of the 7th, the refueling completed, Marschall assembled his commanders at a conference aboard the flagship. In the morning air reconnaissance had spotted a convoy steaming southward from Narvik. A second message, received during the conference, reported three more groups of ships at sea. From the westward movement of the ships Marschall concluded that the British were evacuating Narvik and decided that the convoys offered valuable targets.⁵⁷ Naval Group West and the Naval Staff had not drawn the same conclusion and on being informed at 0500 on the 8th of Marschall's intention to attack the convoys instructed him that his main assignment was still to strike at Harstad. An attack on the convoys by the *Hipper* and the destroyers was left to his discretion, although it was believed that such a move would reveal the presence of the warships prematurely.⁵⁸

Meanwhile, at 0600, the warships had come across the tanker *Oil Pioneer* and the trawler *Juniper* and had sunk both before they could transmit radio signals. Throughout the morning the search for the convoys continued, and the *Scharnhorst* and the *Hipper* launched their planes. These reported a convoy consisting of a cruiser and a merchant ship to the south and an armed merchant ship and a hospital ship to the north. The *Hipper* set a course to intercept the merchant ship while

⁵³ Assmann, *Campaign in Norway*, p. 70.

⁵⁴ *Naval War Diary*, Vol. 10, p. 20.

⁵⁵ Assmann, *Campaign in Norway*, p. 71. Roskill, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

⁵⁶ Derry, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

⁵⁷ Assmann, *Campaign in Norway*, pp. 71ff.

⁵⁸ *Naval War Diary*, Vol. 10, p. 68.

the battleships began a search for the convoy. The merchant ship, which proved to be the troop transport *Orama*, traveling empty except for 100 German prisoners, was sunk and its last radio signals were successfully jammed. The hospital ship *Atlantis* was not attacked. Observing the regulations, it did not transmit a report; therefore, the presence of the German ships was not revealed until 24 hours later when the *Atlantis* gave a visual message to the battleship *Valiant*.

Shortly after 1300 Marschall released the *Hipper* and the four destroyers to Trondheim for refueling and to take over the task of opening a route for Army supplies along the coast from Trondheim to Bodö. At about the same time Marschall decided to abandon the search for the convoy and to proceed with the battleships into the Harstad-Tromsö area where radio intercepts indicated the presence of two British aircraft carriers. At 1645 the masthead of a warship was sighted which on closer approach was identified as a large aircraft carrier, the *Glorious*, escorted by two destroyers, later identified as the *Ardent* and the *Acasta*. The *Glorious*, proceeding to Scapa independently because it was short of fuel, had no security patrols in the air. The German ships opened fire three quarters of an hour later, and the first shells put an end to attempts to arm and launch the carrier's torpedo bombers. In an action lasting about an hour and a half the Germans sank the carrier and both destroyers; but, shortly before the end, the *Acasta*, the last to go down, secured a torpedo hit aft on the *Scharnhorst* which put the after turret out of action and flooded two engine rooms. Again the British ships failed to give the alarm. Messages from the *Glorious* were jammed, and neither of the destroyers attempted to use its radio, with the result that the first news of the battle came on the afternoon of the following day when the German claims were broadcast.⁵⁹

With the damage to the *Scharnhorst* reported as serious and her speed reduced to 20 knots, Marschall broke off the operation and intended to steer for home immediately but Naval Group West ordered him to put into Trondheim instead, where the ships arrived on the afternoon of the 9th. The first action reports brought expressions of satisfaction from the Naval Staff which dispatched the cruiser *Nuernberg* to join the operation; but on the 9th Marschall's conduct of the operation was subjected to severe criticism. The Naval Staff, apparently still not aware that the Allied evacuation had ended on the night of 8-9 June, maintained that the admiral should have adhered to the plan to attack Harstad and that the encounter with the *Glorious* was a piece of pure luck. In the belief that the evacuation was still in progress it ordered Marschall, on the afternoon of the 9th, to resume operations as soon as possible, if necessary with the *Gneisenau* alone. The next morning Marschall put to sea with the *Gneisenau*, the *Hipper*, and the destroyers

⁵⁹ Assmann, *Campaign in Norway*, pp. 72-73.

but returned to Trondheim that night on instructions from Naval Group West.

During the succeeding days the Naval Staff, which continued to urge aggressive action while the admiral wanted to conserve his limited forces, became increasingly critical of the inactivity of the Fleet. Finally, Marschall requested relief on the grounds of illness, which occasioned further delays until 20 June when the new Commanding Admiral, Viceadmiral Guenther Luetjens, sailed at 1600 with the *Gneisenau*, the *Hipper*, and one destroyer for a thrust into northern waters and the Iceland area. Seven hours later the *Gneisenau* was hit by a torpedo from a British submarine, whereupon the ships put back into Trondheim. With both of its battleships damaged (the *Scharnhorst* had started home on the 20th) the Naval Staff regarded its hopes for operations in the northern waters as completely frustrated. After temporary repairs had been made, the *Gneisenau* with the *Hipper*, the *Nuernberg*, and the destroyers returned to Kiel on 28 July.⁶⁰

While JUNO was still in progress the OKW had ordered conversion of the liners *Bremen* and *Europa* as troopships completed with the intention of using them in a projected occupation of Iceland, to be executed under the code name IKARUS. The Naval Staff saw no advantages in the occupation since Germany could not control the sea around Iceland and use of the island as a naval base was out of the question; but it believed the operation, although risky, was technically possible if it were timed for after September, when the period of longer nights set in. The damage the *Scharnhorst* and the *Gneisenau* had suffered off Norway, however, reduced the prospects of an early execution, and IKARUS was shelved as a more ambitious undertaking, the invasion of England, came to the fore.⁶¹

⁶⁰ *Naval War Diary*, Vol. 10, pp. 68–69, 77, 78, 103, 116, 171, 182–83. Hubatsch, *op. cit.*, pp. 241ff.

⁶¹ *Fuehrer Conferences*, 1940, I, pp. 55, 60. *Naval War Diary*, Vol. 10, pp. 103, 153.

Chapter 6

The Campaign in Norway—Summary

In comparison with the expenditures of men and matériel which became commonplace later in the war the Norwegian campaign was minor. It cost Germany 1,317 killed, 1,604 wounded, and 2,375 lost at sea or otherwise missing. The British lost 1,896 men in ground fighting and upwards of 2,500 more at sea. The Norwegian losses numbered 1,335 men and those of the French and Poles 530. The campaign cost the German Air Force 127 combat aircraft as opposed to 87 Allied planes according to German estimates, which do not include the 25 planes which went down with the aircraft carrier *Glorious*. In the fighting at sea Germany sacrificed 1 heavy and 2 light cruisers, 10 destroyers, 1 torpedo boat, 6 submarines, and 15 small craft. The British lost 1 aircraft carrier, 1 cruiser, 1 antiaircraft cruiser, 7 destroyers, and 4 submarines while the French and Poles lost 1 destroyer and 1 submarine each.¹ Of the losses the only ones of major significance were those sustained by the German Navy. It had lost the new heavy cruiser *Bluecher*; and at the end of June, after the *Scharnhorst* and the *Gneisenau* had been damaged, Germany had only 1 heavy cruiser, 2 light cruisers, and 4 destroyers fit for action. In the anxious days of the summer of 1940 this was a source of some comfort to the British. Winston Churchill has described it as a "fact of major importance potentially affecting the whole future of the war."² On the other hand, the Norwegian campaign constituted the high point in the German Navy's exploitation of its surface forces.

As an isolated military operation the German occupation of Norway was an outstanding success. Carried out in the teeth of vastly superior British sea power, it was, as Hitler said, "not only bold, but one of the sauciest undertakings in the history of modern warfare."³ Well planned and skillfully executed, it showed the Wehrmacht at its best; nevertheless, some of the faults which were later to contribute greatly to the German defeat were already present, although not yet prominent enough to in-

¹ *Die Berichte des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht, 1 September 1939 bis 31 Dezember 1940* (Berlin, 1941), p. 247. Derry, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

² Churchill, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 657.

³ *Gruppe XXI, Notiz fuer das Kriegstagebuch, 1.4.40*, in *Anlagenband 1 zum K.T.B. Nr. 1, Anlagen 1-52, 2.20.-18.4.40*. AOK 20 E 180/7.

fluence the outcome of the campaign. For success the operation depended heavily on daring and surprise combined with lack of preparedness and indecision on the part of the enemy. Those elements won campaigns but were not enough to win the war. The campaign also revealed two serious defects in Hitler's personal leadership: his tendency to lose his nerve in a crisis and his persistent meddling in the details of operations.

To some extent WESERUEBUNG gave evidence of Hitler's fatal weakness, his inability to keep his commitments within the bounds of his resources. Most German authorities still contend that Germany's strategic interests in Scandinavia and the existence of Allied intentions to open an offensive there created a compelling necessity for German action; but two who qualify as experts of the first rank have concluded that WESERUEBUNG was not the sole solution for Germany and probably not the best. General der Artillerie a.D. Walter Warlimont has pointed out that even if the Allies had been able to establish themselves in Norway they would have been forced to relinquish their hold there once the invasion of France started and that, if it were still necessary, the occupation of Norway could have been accomplished much more cheaply after the campaign in France.⁴ Professor Walther Hubatsch in his history of the Norwegian campaign reaches essentially the same conclusion and adds the observation that Germany "undoubtedly" had the strength at that time to force the Allies back out of Scandinavia. He observes, also, that in Scandinavia the Allies would have had to contend with opposition from the Soviet Union as well as Germany.⁵ These views find further support in the official British historian's statement that "given the political situation of 1939-40 British intervention in some form was inevitable; and given the paucity of our then resources in men and arms, a more or less calamitous issue from it was likewise inevitable."⁶ Of course, the clock cannot be set back, and the function of history is not to speculate on what might have been; still, although the contentions of Warlimont and Hubatsch may benefit from hindsight, they reflect a strong body of opinion which existed in the German Command at the time and which, in essence, opposed the then growing tendency to plunge in with a full-scale offensive at any point which was or might be threatened. It needs also to be pointed out in this connection that the counter-argument, namely, that Germany acted out of compulsion, rests in large part on the reading of a cause and effect relationship into a coincidence.

To return to the firmer ground of tangible gains, WESERUEBUNG brought Germany control of its supply line for Swedish iron ore (later also for Finnish nickel), a number of new naval and air bases, and some other economic advantages, mostly minor, such as the local production

⁴ Walter Warlimont, *Gutachten zu der Kriegstagebuch-Ausarbeitung OKW/WFSt "Der noerdliche Kriegssachauplatz,"* p. 19. MS # C-099 p. 1. OCMH.

⁵ Hubatsch, *op. cit.*, pp. 261ff.

⁶ Derry, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

of Norwegian metals and ores. The naval and air bases somewhat improved the German position with respect to the British Isles, increased the chances to break out into the Atlantic with raiders, and later made possible air and sea attacks on the Allied Murmansk convoys. A decisive improvement, particularly in the naval situation, was not achieved. Germany could still be shut off from the open sea, and for the Navy the losses in ships sustained during WESERUEBUNG offset the advantages gained in the bases.

From the point of view of military operations two features of the Norwegian campaign stand out: (1) it was the first joint operation involving all three branches of the armed forces, and (2) it proved that, under certain circumstances, superior air power could be used to neutralize superior sea power.

As an armed forces operation, the campaign revealed that neither side had developed a command organization suited to the direction of large-scale joint operations. On the German side a projected armed forces command gave way at an early stage to independent service commands coordinated at the highest level by Hitler and the OKW and depending at the tactical level on cooperation between the individual commanders. The British had to cope with a divided command of their own forces plus the frictions, disagreements, and suspicions which arose out of the effort to conduct combined operations involving Norwegian, French, and Polish contingents. On the whole, the Germans managed to achieve the greater degree of coordination, partly, no doubt, because the difficulties they faced were fewer.

The power of the German Air Force was dramatically demonstrated when, on 18 April, the cruiser *Suffolk*, which had shelled the airfield at Stavanger, returned to Scapa Flow with her quarter-deck awash after being subjected to seven hours of almost continuous air attacks.⁷ A week earlier Admiral Forbes had decided to leave the waters around southern Norway mostly to submarines because of German air superiority.⁸ That decision had virtually assured the safety of the Germans' supply line from their home base. While the Luftwaffe was not able to carry out its strategic mission to the extent of preventing enemy landings in Norway, it was effective in keeping the Allies from establishing secure bases and contributed greatly toward forcing their subsequent withdrawal. The tactical support of ground troops could be carried out unopposed and, hence, was very successful, although, particularly at Narvik, it was one of the sources of friction between the Army, which wanted close support of its troops, and the Air Force, which wanted to concentrate on the more rewarding targets at sea.

One aspect of the Norwegian campaign which seemed to have great importance at the time was the appearance of the so-called Fifth Col-

⁷ Derry, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

⁸ Roskill, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

umn. The name "Quisling" eventually became a generic term applied to that species of traitor who made himself a willing tool of the invader. The Fifth Column, long regarded as one of the Nazis' most effective weapons, was, in fact, a negligible factor in the campaign. The idea of boring from within may have appealed to Hitler and Rosenberg, but the preservation of secrecy alone forbade its being incorporated into the military plan. Quisling was from the first a source of political embarrassment and a military liability in that he contributed greatly to the failure of the intended "peaceful" occupation. Probably the chief significance of the Fifth Column in Norway and elsewhere was that it was a phantasm which could be blown up beyond any relationship to reality in the minds of a people caught in a disastrous war for which they were not prepared either militarily or psychologically.

PART TWO

OPERATIONS IN FINLAND

Chapter 7

Plans and Preparations

The Change of Course in German-Finnish Relations

The Winter War of 1939–1940 left Finland independent but teetering on the brink of disaster. Its economy, already shattered by the war, had to bear the strain of 400,000 refugees from territory annexed by the Soviet Union. Strategically, the peace treaty created favorable conditions for a new Soviet attack. In the south the border was pushed northwestward, away from the Karelian Isthmus and Lake Ladoga where the Finns had been able to put up their strongest resistance during the war. The acquisition of Salla and some territory around it gave the Soviet Union an entering wedge for a drive across the waist of Finland to the head of the Gulf of Bothnia; and the railroad which Finland was forced under the treaty to build from Kemiyärvi to Salla (Kuolayärvi)—while the Soviet Union completed a stretch from Salla to Kandalaksha on the Murmansk Railroad—would facilitate either Soviet military operations or an economic penetration of northern Finland. In the far north possession of the western half of the Rybachiy Peninsula enabled Soviet forces to dominate the entrance to Pechenga, while, in the south, occupation of Hanko gave the Russians a naval base and a strong beachhead in the heart of Finland west of Helsinki.¹ The German occupation of Norway completed the physical isolation of Finland by putting an end to such modest prospects of Western intervention as had existed during the Winter War, and the fall of France brought political isolation as well by making Germany the dominant power on the Continent and Great Britain a suppliant for the favor of Stalin.

In June 1940, while the Allies were going down to defeat in Norway and France, the Soviet Union, setting to work to gather in its share of

¹ *Der russisch-finnische Krieg, Anlagenband zum T.B. AOK Norwegen, Ic.* AOK 20594/15.

the spoils, occupied Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia and subjected Finland to renewed pressure. It began early in the month with a demand for the return of all property, both public and private, which the Finns had removed from Hanko before the Soviet occupation. That was followed by a demand for either Soviet control of the nickel mining concession at Pechenga or operation of the mining company in partnership with Finland. Pechenga, where a Canadian firm held the concession, had been left to Finland after the Winter War solely out of regard for a British reaction, which in June no longer had to be feared. In July Soviet insistence on demilitarization of the Åland Islands and the right to send trains across Finnish territory to Hanko increased the tension. Finland submitted with regard to the property and demilitarization questions and agreed to negotiate on the remaining two demands.²

Meanwhile, the Finns, thus threatened, began to pin their hopes on the then seemingly remote possibility that help might yet be secured from Germany. On 4 July the Finnish Foreign Minister told the German Minister that sentiment friendly to Germany was developing in the population in "avalanche proportions" and that efforts were underway to form a government oriented exclusively toward Berlin. Public opinion, he said, was influenced strongly by the idea that Finland with the aid of German arms could, in a few months, recover the territories lost to Russia. The German Minister replied that he would regard as objectionable the formation of a government onesidedly favorable to Germany since Germany intended to respect its agreements with Russia; it would be preferable, he suggested, to form a government which cooperated with Germany secretly while outwardly maintaining an attitude of reserve. Two days later he was admonished from Berlin to avoid such statements as the last because they might arouse "false hopes."³

Nevertheless, two occurrences during the summer were to result in a radical change of the official German attitude toward Finland. In July the I.G. Farben concern contracted for 60 percent of the Pechenga nickel ore production, thus assuring Germany of an adequate supply of that strategic metal and giving Germany an interest in the preservation of Finland. Even more important for Finland—and the world—Hitler at the end of July ordered planning begun for a campaign against the Soviet Union.⁴ Naturally, Finland came under consideration as a potential ally.

German interest in the Pechenga ore became apparent in the plans and military dispositions affecting Finland that the Germans initiated in August. At the end of July the Soviet Union ushered in a new period

² Mannerheim, *op. cit.*, pp. 422-24.

³ Bluecher tel. to Foreign Ministry, No. 398, 4 July 1940 and Woermann to Bluecher, No. 310, 6 July. U. S. Department of State, German Foreign Ministry Records, B 19/B003639.

⁴ Helmuth Greiner, *Das Unternehmen "Barbarossa,"* p. 12. MS # C-065i. OCMH.

of crisis in Eastern Europe with the occupation of Bessarabia. Communist demonstrations in Helsinki and a Russian charge that the Finns were attempting to suppress the Soviet-supported Association for Peace and Friendship With the Soviet Union, which had been founded in Finland after the Winter War, appeared to indicate that Finland's turn was next. German intelligence concluded that the Soviet Union would begin military operations against Finland in mid-August.⁵ On 13 August Hitler ordered a strengthening of the land, sea, and air forces in the northernmost parts of Norway. The 2d Mountain Division was to be shifted from Trondheim to the Kirkenes area. For the event of a Soviet attack on Finland he gave the Mountain Corps Norway (the 2d and 3d Mountain Divisions under the command of General Dietl, formed in June 1940) and the 2d Mountain Division the task of preparing, under the cover-name *RENNTIER*, an operation which had as its objectives the speedy occupation of Pechenga and the nickel mines at Kolosyoki and defense of the northern Norwegian fiords against possible landings.⁶

The first open sign of a shift in German policy toward Finland came on 18 August when Lt. Col. Joseph Veltjens, as Goering's personal emissary, made contact with Finland's Marshal Mannerheim and secured permission for the transport of German Air Force supplies and personnel across Finnish territory from the head of the Gulf of Bothnia to Kirkenes. Simultaneously representing Goering in his capacity as director of the German Four Year Plan, Veltjens also secured an option on the nickel mining concession at Pechenga. The Air Force move was followed on 22 September by a transit agreement covering supplies of all the armed services and in November by a transport arrangement for troops returning on furlough to Germany from northern Norway.⁷ In conjunction with the transit agreements and as a result of a favorable report on the Finnish Army which Hitler received from the German Military Attaché in Helsinki, Germany undertook to supply arms to the Finns.⁸ The shipments began in August when Germany released stocks of military equipment and supplies originally destined for Finland which had been impounded during the occupation of Norway.⁹

To the Government of the Soviet Union the German Foreign Ministry explained the transit agreements as a temporary aid in strengthening the Norwegian defenses against a British attack. The Soviet Govern-

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 12. *Halder Diary*, Vol. IV, p. 137. Helmuth Greiner, *Aufzeichnungen ueber die Lagebesprechungen bei der Abteilung Landesverteidigung vom 8 August 1940 bis zum 25 Juni 1941*, p. 8. MS # C-065i. OCMH.

⁶ *OKW, WFSt, Abt. L, Nr. 33230/40, Norwegen, 16.8.40 and Geb. Korps Norwegen, Chefs Nr. 82/40, "Renn-tier," 7.9.40, in Gruppe XXI, "Renn-tier," 16.8-7.9.40. AOK 20 20844/1. MS # C-065i, p. 13.*

⁷ MS # C-065i, p. 14. Mannerheim, *op. cit.*, pp. 425-27. *Heimatstab Nord des W. B. Norwegen, Nr. 3229/40, Urlaubervertransport durch Finnland, 24.11.1940, in Taetigkeitsberichte der Gruppe XXI, November 1940. AOK 20 12564/1.*

⁸ *Halder Diary*, Vol. IV, p. 149, 153, 158.

⁹ Wipert von Bluecher, *Gesandter zwischen Diktatur und Demokratie* (Wiesbaden: Limes Verlag, 1951), p. 198.

ment accepted the explanation without comment but did not long conceal its growing suspicion. On 1 November Anastas I. Mikoyan, Peoples Commissar for Foreign Trade, complained that the Germans were unwilling to deliver war matériel to the Soviet Union, yet were making deliveries to Finland and other countries.¹⁰ In Finland the agreements brought new hope. Marshal Mannerheim, in his memoirs, stated that but for the transit agreements Finland would have fallen victim to the Soviet Union during the fall of 1940.¹¹

The extent of Soviet concern over the new German-Finnish relationship became clear at the time of the visit of Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav M. Molotov to Berlin in mid-November. Molotov stated that the Nazi-Soviet Pact of the previous year could be regarded as fulfilled, except for one point, namely, Finland. The Finnish question was still unsolved, and he asked Hitler to tell him whether the Nazi-Soviet Pact, as far as it concerned Finland, was still in force; the Soviet Government could find no grounds for a change. Hitler replied that Germany had no political interest in Finland but needed the deliveries of Finnish nickel and lumber and, above all, did not want a new conflict in the Baltic Sea area. He painted a picture of Swedish involvement and British, or even United States, intervention. A Baltic conflict, he declared, would place a heavy strain on German-Russian relations and on the great collaboration planned for the future.

Molotov asked for withdrawal of German troops from Finland, a promise that Germany would not support Finnish anti-Soviet demonstrations, and, above all, concurrence in the Soviet desire to proceed with a settlement of the Finnish question in keeping with the 1939 treaty. The settlement, he implied, could be carried out without war as had those involving Bessarabia and the Baltic States. Sidetracking the discussion, the German Foreign Minister, Ribbentrop, replied that there was actually no reason for making an issue of the Finnish question. Strategically, the peace treaty with Finland met all of Russia's wishes, and whatever disturbances had arisen as a result of the German troop movements would subside as soon as the transports ended. Hitler added that both sides agreed in principle that Finland belonged in the Russian sphere of influence and thereupon dismissed the problem as purely theoretical.¹² Actually, in this conference, which marked the beginning of the end of German-Soviet collaboration, nothing was less theoretical; Hitler warned the Russians to stay out of Finland, and the warning, however grudgingly, was heeded.

The Molotov visit to Berlin produced a mild crisis in German-Finnish relations. The Finns became apprehensive over the possibility that the Germans and Russians might have gotten together to engineer another

¹⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-1941* (Washington, 1948), pp. 188, 198, 202, 204, 217.

¹¹ Mannerheim, *op. cit.*, p. 427.

¹² *Nazi-Soviet Relations*, pp. 217-47.

division of the spoils in Eastern Europe; their anxiety in that respect was heightened by a misunderstanding regarding the German option on the nickel mining concession. The Finnish Government had assumed that Germany, in defense of its option, would make itself a third party to the negotiations with Russia on that matter and so deflect some of the pressure from Finland; consequently, the Finns were thoroughly dismayed when, as the Russians began pushing their claims in October, the German Government declared that it had no interest in the ownership of the mines. Actually, the German Foreign Office did not learn until the end of October that an option existed and then found that its hands were tied since it had assured the Russians in July that Germany's interest in the mines did not go beyond securing enough of the ore output to meet German requirements.¹³

On 23 November, to allay the misgivings of the Finns, Veltjens went to Helsinki a second time. He was instructed to say that nothing had been decided during the Molotov visit which made it necessary for Finland to adopt an "unnecessarily yielding" attitude in its negotiations with the Soviet Union. The German refusal to enter into the negotiations concerning the mining concession, he was to explain, meant only that Germany regarded the decision as one which was entirely up to Finland—to the extent of also recognizing Finland's right to keep the concession for itself if it so desired. To bolster the Finns' confidence, he was instructed to say the Russians were aware that Germany in the existing situation regarded new "complications" in the north as undesirable.¹⁴ Several days later the German Minister in Helsinki was told to use the same words of encouragement in his talks with members of the Finnish Government and to add that it was believed the Soviet Government would keep the German attitude in mind in the future conduct of its relations with Finland.¹⁵

The Russians' dissatisfaction with the outcome of the Berlin talks was underscored on 26 November when Molotov informed the German Ambassador in Moscow that the Soviet Union would join the Three Power Pact (one of the matters discussed in Berlin) provided certain conditions were met. First on the list was "that the German troops be immediately withdrawn from Finland, which under the compact of 1939 belongs to the Soviet Union's sphere of influence." The Soviet Union promised "to ensure peaceful relations with Finland" and to protect German economic interests there.¹⁶ In the succeeding months the Germans avoided giving a direct reply, and at the end of March 1941 Ribbentrop told the Japanese Foreign Minister that Germany

¹³ *Weiszaecker, Aufzeichnung*, 30 Oct 40. U.S. Department of State, German Foreign Ministry Records, B 19/B003819-21.

¹⁴ *Wiehl, an deutsche Botschaft Moskau, W 5394*, 24 Nov 40. U.S. Department of State, German Foreign Ministry Records, B 19/B003881.

¹⁵ *Ribbentrop, an Gesandtschaft Helsinki, Nr. 29, 29.11.40*. U.S. Department of State, German Foreign Ministry Records, B 19/B003889.

¹⁶ *Nazi-Soviet Relations*, p. 258.

would not attempt to bring the Soviet Union into the pact "for some time" since the Russians had set conditions which were irreconcilable with the German point of view, particularly concerning Finland and Turkey (Molotov had also asked that Russia be given control of the Dardanelles).¹⁷

In December 1940 German and Soviet attention was drawn to Finland by the Finish presidential election. For the Finns the chief consideration was to elect a man acceptable to Germany, and early in the month the German Foreign Ministry decided to support the candidature of T. M. Kivimaki, then Finnish Minister in Berlin. Subsequently, the Soviet Union informed the Finnish Government that the election of certain individuals, among them Kivimaki, would be regarded "as not serving the interests of Soviet-Finnish relations."¹⁸ On learning of the Soviet move the Germans decided against encouraging the Finns to elect a candidate whom the Russians opposed and switched their support to Risto Ryti, whom they suspected of being pro-British but who was considered preferable to a weak compromise candidate.¹⁹ At the end of the month Ryti was elected and subsequently held office until 1 August 1944.

At the New Year's reception for the diplomatic corps in Berlin the Finnish Minister greeted the German Secretary of State in the Foreign Office, Ernst von Weizsaecker, with the statement that in his homeland people were now more calm since they believed that in a future conflict with Russia they could not stand alone. Weizsaecker replied that the Russians were certainly taking into account the German desire for no new unrest in the north.²⁰ As the new year began, however, it was soon revealed that Finland had not yet entirely weathered the storm.

In mid-January the Russians renewed their demand for the mining concession and threatened, if an agreement were not reached quickly, "to bring order into the situation by the application of certain means."²¹ For a time it appeared that Germany would either have to intervene openly or to advise the Finns to give in, but the Foreign Ministry decided, instead, to encourage the Finns secretly and give them indirect help in staving off a showdown by muddying the waters of the negotiations with various demands for guarantees with respect to delivery of the ore contracted for by Germany. Those tactics succeeded, and, although the Russians angrily broke off the negotiations before the end of the month and stopped their exports to Finland, an open breach did not follow.

¹⁷ *Nazi-Soviet Relations*, p. 304.

¹⁸ *U. St. S. Pol., Dg. Pol., Nr. 710, 4.12.40. Schmidt, Notiz fuer RAM, 12.12.40.* U.S. Department of State, German Foreign Ministry Records, B 19/B003913.

¹⁹ *Weizsaecker, an Gesandtschaft Helsinki, fuer Gesandten, Nr. 737, 17.12.40.* U.S. Department of State, German Foreign Ministry Records, B 19/B003918.

²⁰ *Weizsaecker, No. 925, 31.12.40.* U.S. Department of State, German Foreign Ministry Records, B 19/B003945.

²¹ *Wiehl, Aufzeichnung, 19.1.41.* U.S. Department of State, German Foreign Ministry Records, B 19/B003955.

Hitler indicated in his meeting with Mussolini at the Berghof on 18–20 January that, if necessary, Germany would have gone further in supporting Finland. The Russians, he said, had agreed to let Germany have the necessary nickel supplies but would not hold to their agreement any longer than suited them; therefore, he could not permit further Soviet encroachments in Finland.²²

In February, when another crisis appeared to be in the making, the Finns attempted, through the military attachés, to secure direct German diplomatic support; but the Foreign Ministry on 19 February informed the OKW that the negotiations between Finland and Russia were being followed closely and that there was no danger of the Russians' using force.²³ In March the Russians again broke off the negotiations briefly, but their tendency in the spring of 1941, as they came into serious conflict with Germany in the Balkans, was to relax the pressure on Finland; and in April the Soviet Minister in Helsinki was replaced by a more tactful and moderate diplomat.

The winter of 1940–1941 also saw the establishment of contact between the Finnish and German general staffs. In December Kenraalimajuri Paavo Talvela conferred with Goering and Halder, and in January the Finnish Chief of Staff, Kenraaliluutnantti Erik Heinrichs, went to Berlin. At the end of February Col. Erich Buschenhagen, Chief of Staff, Army of Norway (Group XXI, redesignated in December 1940), visited Helsinki and toured northern Finland. Those meetings, which will be discussed in more detail later, dealt with "hypothetical" cases. As far as can be determined, no commitments were made on either side; still, they provided the Germans with information useful in their planning for an invasion of the Soviet Union and the Finns with more than a hint that they could expect to be drawn into collaboration with Germany.

In the spring, as a result of a little comedy of errors, the German-Finnish *rapprochement* was given additional concrete expression. Late in February SS-Brigadefuehrer Gottlob Berger informed the German Foreign Ministry that 700 Finns had applied at the Legation in Helsinki for enlistment in the SS and that Reichsfuehrer-SS Heinrich Himmler had given permission for their acceptance. On 1 March Berger announced that he intended in the next day or two to send a doctor to Helsinki to begin the physical examinations. Since no word of these intentions had been mentioned to the Finns, the Foreign Ministry asked Berger to postpone action while it hustled the Finnish Minister in Berlin off to Helsinki to get the opinion of his Government.²⁴ In the meantime, an inquiry to the Helsinki Legation brought the somewhat startled reply

²² MS # C-065i, p. 81.

²³ MS # C-065k, pp. 216, 221, 230, 231.

²⁴ *St. S., U.S. S. Pol., Pol. VI 806, 22.2.41 and Grundherr, Aufzeichnung, 1.3.41.* U.S. Department of State, German Foreign Ministry Records, B 19/B004040 and B 19/B004047.

that the number of men who had applied was not 700 but less than two dozen, and they wanted to join the Army, not the SS. A check with Berger then revealed that his information had come from a Swedish citizen who had since been jailed in Sweden and had destroyed his alleged list of 700 names.²⁵ By the time these facts were established the Finnish Minister had returned with the information that his Government and Mannerheim were "basically friendly" to the idea of recruiting a Finnish unit for service in Germany and believed it would revive the feeling of military association which had existed between the two countries in the past. They preferred the creation of a unit similar to the 27th Royal Prussian Jaeger Battalion, which during World War I had served as the cradle of the Finnish officer corps and had given the country all of its ranking officers except Mannerheim and one or two others who served in the Czarist Russian Army. But they had no particular objection to the SS as long as the Finns were given status separate from that of the collaborator units which the SS was then recruiting in the occupied countries.²⁶ The German Foreign Ministry, for its part, was reluctant to embark on a project which would give open evidence of German-Finnish collaboration. At the same time, it was forced to save face for the SS. During the remainder of March it worked out an agreement whereby the Finns undertook to recruit about 1,000 men through an ostensibly private committee. The recruiting was completed in two months, and the battalion subsequently formed served in the SS-Panzer Grenadier Division "Wiking" on the Eastern Front, mostly in the Ukraine, until July 1943 when it returned to Finland and was disbanded.²⁷

In the last months before the appointed time for reckoning with the Soviet Union one of the German concerns was to keep the friendship with Finland from ripening too rapidly. For the Germans a fairly nebulous relationship was advantageous. The Finns, on the other hand, not having the Germans' knowledge of the course which events were likely to take in the near future, did not attempt to disguise their desire to slip under the German wing formally and openly if necessary. On 2 April the Finnish Foreign Minister, Rolf Witting, told the German Minister that the Russo-Finnish War had revealed Finland's inability to stand alone against its large neighbor. The Swedish assistance had proved insufficient, and help from Great Britain (in the future) was out of the question. The generally accepted opinion in Finland, he stated, was that the only country which could give Finland real protection

²⁵ *Gesandtschaft Helsinki, Nr. 153, 11.3.41.* and *Grundherr, Fernschreiben an Sonderzug Heinrich, 14.3.41.* U.S. Department of State, German Foreign Ministry Records, B 19/B004068 and B004075.

²⁶ *Grundherr, Aufzeichnung, Pol. VI 1181, 17.3.41.* U.S. Department of State, German Foreign Ministry Records, B 19/B004088.

²⁷ *Bluecher, Nr. 193, 24.3.41* and *Bluecher, Nr. 204, 29.3.41.* U.S. Department of State, German Foreign Ministry Records, B 19/B004098 and B 19/B004105. Mannerheim, *op. cit.*, p. 433.

against the Soviet Union was Germany.²⁸ This consideration, he indicated, was the determining element in his policy. Several weeks earlier he had hinted that in connection with the recruiting for the SS "Finland might be able to march into the Three Power Pact." To keep the conversation from proceeding any further along that line the German Minister had changed the subject.²⁹ That Witting's suggestion was not taken up redounded in the long run to Finland's advantage since in a few months the country was to find its position as an independent cobelligerent preferable to that of a German ally.

As it was, Witting did not have long to wait for the culmination of his policy. On 28 May Minister Karl Schnurre, Hitler's personal envoy, called on the Finnish President and, after telling him that the existing tension between Germany and Russia could lead to war, asked that one or several Finnish military experts be sent to Germany to be informed on the situation.³⁰ A hypothetical tone was to be maintained for a while yet, but as the Finnish military delegation explained for Salzburg on 24 May no one could doubt that the stage was being set for the final act.

Planning for Combined Operations

The BARBAROSSA Directive (The Strategic Plan)

In conferences with his military advisors on 21 and 31 July 1940 Hitler set in motion the planning for an operation against the Soviet Union.³¹ Whether Finland could be used as an ally, he said, remained to be seen. (His own estimation of Finland remained low until 22 August when a report on the Finnish Army from the Military Attaché in Helsinki induced him to reverse his opinion.) One of the political objectives he foresaw was an expansion of Finland to the White Sea.³²

From the outset it was clear that Finland offered, at the most, three operational possibilities: an attack on the Murmansk Railroad, the occupation of Pechenga, and an attack across the southeastern border into the Russian right flank. Generalmajor Erich Marcks, author of the first (5 August) plan of operations submitted to the OKH after the July conferences, recognized the significance of the Murmansk Railroad as a link between Great Britain and the Soviet Union. But Marcks envisioned a heavy concentration of German forces in the central and southern sectors, leaving northern Russia, Leningrad, and—therefore—

²⁸ *Gesandtschaft Helsinki, Tgb. Nr. 58/41, Politik des finnischen Aussenministers, 2.4.41.* U.S. Department of State, German Foreign Ministry Records, E 295447/1.

²⁹ *Gesandtschaft Helsinki, Nr. 153, 11.3.41.* U.S. Department of State, German Foreign Ministry Documents, B 19/B004068.

³⁰ Mannerheim, *op. cit.*, p. 434.

³¹ For a more detailed account of the planning for the attack on Russia see Department of the Army Pamphlet No. 20-261a, *The German Campaign in Russia, Planning and Operations (1940-1942)*.

³² *Halder Diary*, Vol. IV, pp. 128, 149.

Finland out of the first and main assault phase of the campaign. He recommended postponing the decision on whether or not to make a bid for Finnish participation in the form of an attack on the Murmansk Railroad to a later stage of the operation.³³ The second possibility, the occupation of Pechenga, was placed firmly on the German agenda in mid-August, when Hitler ordered planning begun for Operation RENN-TIER. The third possibility came under consideration in a plan which the National Defense Branch, OKW, submitted to the OKW operations chief, Jodl, on 19 September. The OKW planners proposed a stronger northward thrust by the German Army and, consequently, a larger role for Finland. All available German and Finnish forces were to be massed on the southeastern border of Finland for an attack either across the Isthmus of Karelia toward Leningrad or east of Lake Ladoga toward Tikhvin. The intention was to assist the advance of the German northern army group toward Leningrad.³⁴ That plan possessed the advantage of tying the operations out of Finland in with the German main effort, but it was impaired by political and transportation difficulties which would prevent concentration of German troops in southern Finland prior to the attack.

At a conference with Hitler on 5 December Brauchitsch and Halder presented a preliminary plan, based on the staff work which had been done thus far, for a campaign in Russia. Hitler approved it, and on the following day Jodl instructed the National Defense Branch to prepare a directive on that basis. From the record of the conference, which is incomplete, it can only be determined that Hitler indicated the participation of Finland was to be counted on, and mention was made of sending one division by rail from Narvik across Sweden to operate in conjunction with the 2d Mountain Division in northern Finland.³⁵ A more complete statement of the plan, as it existed at that time, is contained in the record of a conference on 7 December between Halder and Falkenhorst. Preparations were to be made for an offensive by four divisions from Norway, one division going overland to Pechenga, another proceeding to Finland by rail from Narvik, and two divisions crossing Sweden by rail from central Norway. The force, as appears from a conference a week later between Halder and Buschenhagen, was to launch two attacks, one in the north in the Pechenga area and the other farther south in the vicinity of Salla.³⁶

³³ AOK 18, *Abt. Ia. Nr. 167/40, Operationsentwurf Ost, 5.8.40, in Vorbereitungen, Aufmarsch Ost I.* AOK 18 17562/8.

³⁴ Gotthard Heinrici, *Der Feldzug in Russland, Ueberblick ueber die Jahre 1941-1942*, p. 65. MS # T-6 (Neufassung). OCMH.

³⁵ Helmuth Greiner, *Entwurfe zum Kriegstagebuch des Wehrmachtfuehrungsstabes (Abteilung Landesverteidigung) vom 1.12.1940-24.3.1941*, pp. 29-34. MS # C-065k. OCMH. *Halder Diary*, Vol. V, p. 51. The entry in the *Halder Diary* can be read as "two mountain divisions," but in the light of other evidence it appears that "the 2d Mountain Division" is the correct reading.

³⁶ *Halder Diary*, Vol. V, pp. 54, 60.

On 18 December Hitler signed Directive No. 21, the strategic plan for Operation BARBAROSSA. The directive, which the OKW issued as the basis for operational planning by the services, reads as follows regarding operations in Finland:

II. *Prospective Allies and their Mission*

Romania's and Finland's active participation in the war against Soviet Russia is to be anticipated; they will provide contingents on either wing of our ground forces.

In due course the Armed Forces High Command will approach these two countries and make arrangements as to the manner in which their military contingents will be placed under German command at the time of their intervention.

Finland will cover the concentration of the German Force North (elements of Group XXI) which will be transferred from Norway, and the Finnish troops will operate in conjunction with this force. Moreover, Finland will have to neutralize Hanko.

It may be assumed that, by the start of the campaign at the latest, there will be a possibility of using the Swedish railroads and highways for the transfer of the German Force North.

III. *The Campaign Plans*

During the Russian Campaign, Group XXI will continue to consider the protection of Norway as its primary mission. Any excess forces available beyond the scope of this mission will be committed primarily in the north (Mountain Corps) to secure the Petsamo region and its ore mines as well as the highway connecting Petsamo with Oulu (Arctic Highway). Together with Finnish contingents these forces will subsequently thrust toward the Murmansk Railway in an attempt to prevent supplies from reaching the Murmansk area by land.

Whether an operation by a stronger German force—consisting of two to three divisions which would jump off from the region around and south of Rovaniemi—can be executed, will depend on Sweden's willingness to make its railroads available for such a concentration of German units.

The bulk of the Finnish Army will coordinate its operations with the advance of the German north wing. Its principal mission will be to tie down the maximum Russian forces by an attack west of or on both sides of Lake Ladoga and to seize Hanko.³⁷

In short, Directive No. 21 provided for the occupation and defense of Pechenga, essentially Operation RENNTIER; thrusts toward Murmansk and the railroad as had been suggested in the Marcks Plan, only using German troops; and an operation similar to that which the National Defense Branch had proposed to be executed by the Finns along their southern border. It should be noted that at this stage Murmansk, as far as the Germans were concerned, by no means had the strategic importance it was later to attain. In the light of the German expect-

³⁷ *I.M.T.*, Doc. 446-PS.

tation of victory within three to four months—too short a time for significant aid to come to the Soviet Union through Murmansk—the operation against that port was an unnecessary diversion of forces. That it was planned at all seems to be traceable to Hitler's particular, almost fearful, concern for areas where the British might establish even a temporary foothold.

The presence of the Finnish General Talvela in Berlin in mid-December raises the possibility of Finnish participation in the formulation of Directive No. 21. From the existing evidence, it appears that the visit was largely, though—at least from the German point of view—not entirely, coincidental. Talvela's mission was to maintain the personal contact between Mannerheim and Goering which Veltjens had established in his two trips to Helsinki. In talks with Goering and Halder he described the Finnish political and military situation and, in particular, attempted to enlist German support for a political union of Finland and Sweden. The idea of a Swedish-Finnish union ran counter to Hitler's intention of keeping the northern European states dependent on Germany; Goering, therefore, stated that Germany was interested in Finland only as an independent nation, not as a Swedish province. That matters of more positive interest to Germany were at least touched on is indicated in Halder's request for information regarding the time the Finns would need to mobilize—"inconspicuously"—for an attack toward the southeast.³⁸

The Army of Norway Staff Study SILBERFUCHS

At the end of December, on the basis of the oral instructions given to Falkenhorst and Buschenhagen, the Army of Norway understood its task as a broadening of the theoretical preparations already underway for *RENNTIER*. The considerations were to take into account a force expanded to approximately four divisions and a thrust through to the White Sea in the vicinity of Kandalaksha for the purpose of cutting off and taking possession of the Kola Peninsula.³⁹ On 16 January 1941 von Brauchitsch, in addition, instructed Falkenhorst to prepare a study which would include a German-Finnish advance southeastward into the Lake Ladoga–Lake Onega–White Sea area and proposals with respect to command and supply arrangements.⁴⁰

On 27 January the Army of Norway completed the requested study under the cover-name *SILBERFUCHS*. The main burden of the attack

³⁸ *Aufzeichnung, Ministerialdirektor Wehl, Nr. 15/40, an Herrn Reichsaussenminister, 20.12.1940.* U.S. Department of State, German Foreign Ministry Records, B 19/B003932. *Halder Diary*, Vol. V, p. 62.

³⁹ *AOK Norwegen, Taetigkeitsbericht des Armeee-Oberkommandos Norwegen, Abt. Ia in der Zeit vom 1.12.–31.12.40, in Taetigkeitsberichte des Armeee-Oberkommandos Norwegen, Dez. 1940.* AOK 20 12564/2.

⁴⁰ *A.O.K. Norwegen, Taetigkeitsbericht des Armeee-Oberkommandos Norwegen, Abt. Ia in der Zeit vom 1.1.–31.1.41, in Taetigkeitsberichte des Armeee-Oberkommandos Norwegen, Jan. 1940.* AOK 20 12564/3. *Halder Diary*, Vol. V, p. 73.

would fall on the Finnish Army which would have to provide security for the south coast including the Åland Islands, defend its border northwest of Lake Ladoga with relatively weak forces, and mass its main force for an attack east of Lake Ladoga toward the Svir River. The main German attack would be directed along the railroad Rovaniemi-Salla-Kandalaksha to the White Sea to cut off the Russian forces on the Kola Peninsula. The forces employed would be the XXXVI Corps, composed of two infantry divisions and the SS-Kampfgruppe "Nord," and the Finnish III Corps, with at least two divisions.⁴¹ SS-Kampfgruppe "Nord," reinforced by a machine gun battalion, an artillery battalion, an antitank battalion, one or two companies of engineers (all motorized), and a battalion of tanks, was to provide mobile advanced security for the assembly of the infantry divisions. Part of the Finnish troops would be used for a secondary attack from Suomussalmi via Ukhta toward Kem. On reaching the Murmansk Railroad at Kandalaksha part of the German force would turn north and, in collaboration with one reinforced mountain division advancing on Murmansk from Pechenga, destroy the Russian units on the Kola Peninsula and take possession of Murmansk and Polyarnyy. The mass of the German force, if possible linking up with the Finns advancing toward Kem, would push southward behind the eastern wing of the Finnish Army. Future operations, either east or west of Lake Onega, were to be determined later.

The operation depended on Sweden's permitting the use of its territory for troop and supply transports. The Army of Norway would supply all of the German units, leaving about five divisions for the defense of Norway; construction, supply, and communications troops and a large number of horse-drawn and motor vehicles would have to be furnished from Germany. The Finns were expected to claim the overall command since their troops would be in the majority.⁴²

The Army Operation Order

At the end of January the OKH implemented Directive No. 21 with an operation order, the *Aufmarschanweisung* BARBAROSSA, which Hitler approved on 3 February. In that order the defense of Norway remained the most important task of the Army of Norway. Forces in excess of those needed in Norway could be used in Finland, where, until the Finns entered the war, the mission would be to secure the Pechenga region. After the Finns entered the war one of two courses would be pursued. The first was identical with the Army of Norway SILBERFUCHS proposal: a drive to Kandalaksha by two or three German divisions with attached Finnish contingents, destruction of the Russian forces on the Kola

⁴¹ The Finnish corps designation used here is that of 15 June 1941 when the V Corps became the III Corps.

⁴² *A.O.K. Norwegen, Ia, Nr. 3/41, Studie ueber Operationsabsicht "Silberfuchs," 27.1.41, in "Silberfuchs" Bd. I, 10.1.-8.5.41. AOK 20 20844/4.*

Peninsula in collaboration with German troops advancing on Murmansk from Pechenga, and a shift of the German main force southward to aid the operations of the Finnish Army. The second was an alternative in the event that Sweden refused to permit troop movements across its territory. In that case only one attack would be launched—from Pechenga eastward, with the objective of taking Polyarnyy, Murmansk, and the railroad.

The mission of the Finnish Army would be to take Hanko, cover the deployment of German forces in northern Finland, and—at the latest, when German Army Group North crossed the Dvina River—begin an offensive on both sides of Lake Ladoga with the weight of the attack, if possible, east of the lake.⁴³ The original Finnish preference, apparently, was for a limited operation west of Lake Ladoga to recover the strategically and economically valuable territory on the Isthmus of Karelia which had been lost to Russia in the Winter War. The Germans, on the other hand, wanted a sweep around the eastern shore of the lake to cut off Leningrad by a junction of the Finnish Army with the Army Group North in the Volkhov–Tikhvin area.

The statement of the Finnish mission was based on a conversation Halder had had on 30 January with the Finnish Chief of Staff, General Heinrichs, who brought an answer to the question Halder had asked Talvela a month earlier (Finland could mobilize “quietly” but not without attracting some attention) and added the information that the Finns would be able to attack with five divisions west of Lake Ladoga, three divisions east of Lake Ladoga, and two divisions against Hanko. The Finnish participation in the planning, again, was indirect. Hitler ordered on 3 February that Finland and the other potential allies could be approached only after it was no longer possible to disguise the German intentions.⁴⁴

On 11 February the OKH informed the Army of Norway that only part of the rear area personnel and vehicles requested in its SILBERFUCHS study could be supplied and that the SS-Kampfgruppe “Nord” was not to be used in the projected operation.⁴⁵ Taking those limitations into account, the Army of Norway was to investigate and report on the possibility of executing its operation in accordance with the OKH *Aufmarschanweisung*.⁴⁶ The Army of Norway replied that the occupation of Pechenga could be carried out quickly at any time, but the destruction of the Russian forces defending Murmansk could not be accomplished

⁴³ OKH, *GenStdH, Op. Abt. (IN), Nr. 050/41, Aufmarschanweisung “Barbarossa,” 31.1.41, in AOK Norwegen, Ia, Aufmarschanweisung “Barbarossa,” 31.1.–23.7.41. AOK 20 20844/3.*

⁴⁴ OKW, *WFSt, 44089, Besprechung ueber Fall “Barbarossa” und “Sonnenblume,” 3.2.41, (no folder title). OKW/1938. Halder Diary, Vol. V, p. 85.*

⁴⁵ The SS-Kampfgruppe “Nord” was composed of the 6th and 7th SS Death’s-Head Regiments. It was a police unit and had just begun military training; however, it was the only unit in the Army of Norway command which was motorized.

⁴⁶ OKH, *GenStdH, Op. Abt. (IN), Nr. 150/41, an A.O.K. Norwegen, 11.2.41, in “Silberfuchs” Bd. I, 10.1.–8.5.41. AOK 20 20844/4.*

unless Sweden permitted full use of its territory for troop and supply movements. An operation from Pechenga alone was not possible because a strong force could not be assembled in the far north and the operational possibilities, in any case, were poor. The Army of Norway proposed to go ahead along the lines suggested in its *SILBERFUCHS* study, but, because of the limitations on rear area personnel and vehicles, it would no longer be able to plan a turn south in support of the Finnish Army. Operations directed toward the south could not be contemplated until a base of supply had been created at Kandalaksha.⁴⁷ On 2 March the OKH accepted the Army of Norway proposal as a basis for further planning.⁴⁸

At the end of February Colonel Buschenhagen, Chief of Staff, Army of Norway, renewed contact with the Finnish General Staff in Helsinki and toured northern Finland. Buschenhagen, who emphasized that all the considerations were purely theoretical and no conclusions should be drawn, learned that the Finns regarded Pechenga as too remote to be defended with the forces at their command but would welcome and support German operations there. They anticipated, as had been the case in the Winter War, a Russian thrust via Kandalaksha and Salla aimed at cutting the route to Sweden and would greatly appreciate German assistance in that area. They believed they could cover the assembly of the German force in the Rovaniemi-Salla area and had one to two divisions of III Corps available for the purpose. Their war aims were limited: they wanted to win back what had been lost in the Winter War and might go as far as the line Lake Ladoga-Lake Onega-White Sea, but beyond that they had no aspirations.⁴⁹

The Revised Army Operation Order

Early in March the British Navy inadvertently ushered in a new stage in the planning. On the morning of 4 March, two British cruisers and five destroyers appeared off Svolveer in the Lofotens. After shelling the town and sinking several ships in the harbor, they sent a landing party ashore which took about 200 German merchant seamen and 20 soldiers prisoner. A number of Norwegian civilians went along with the British voluntarily.⁵⁰

Although the raid had no military importance it aroused in Hitler's mind an overwhelming concern for the defense of Norway, which led him, at a conference on 12 March, to reappraise the situation in the

⁴⁷ *A.O.K. Norwegen, Ia, Nr. 10/40, an OKH, GenStdH, Op. Abt., 13.2.41, in "Silberfuchs" Bd. I, 10.1.-8.5.41. AOK 20 20844/4.*

⁴⁸ *OKH, GenStdH, Op. Abt. (IN), Nr. 188/41, an A.O.K. Norwegen, 2.3.41, in "Silberfuchs" Bd. I, 10.1.-8.5.41. AOK 20 20844/4.*

⁴⁹ *Deutsche Gesandtschaft, Der Militaerattaché, Helsingfors, 22.2.41, (no folder title). H 27/43.*

⁵⁰ *W. B. Norwegen, Ia, Nr. 710/41, Bericht ueber die Vorgaenge in Svolveer am 4.3.1941, in Taetigkeitsberichte des AOK Norwegen fuer Monat Maerz 1941. AOK 20 12564/5.*

Scandinavian area. The British, he declared, if they wanted a chance at victory, would have to take the offensive when the campaign against the Soviet Union began. Norway, because of its long, broken coastline and poor internal lines of communication, was their best target. They would probably attempt numerous small raids which might, however, evolve into a major operation; therefore, the paramount task of the Army of Norway was to provide airtight security for Norway. The Norwegian defenses were to be strengthened by 160 batteries of artillery suitable for coastal defense and one to two garrison divisions, and it would no longer be possible to release nearly 40 percent of the forces in Norway for BARBAROSSA. Since the attitude of Sweden in the transit question appeared doubtful, other possibilities with respect to assembly and designation of objectives for the operation would have to be investigated.⁵¹

After the conference the OKH revised the *Aufmarschanweisung* BARBAROSSA in the light of the new requirements stated by Hitler. The defensive mission in Norway was stressed: the additional batteries for coastal defense were to be emplaced by mid-May, and existing troop strength was not only not to be reduced by withdrawals for BARBAROSSA but actually to be increased in the Kirkenes–Narvik area. As for the offensive mission, Pechenga was to be occupied and defended at the time BARBAROSSA began—under certain circumstances (a Soviet attack on Finland) even earlier. Murmansk was to be hemmed in but occupied only in the further course of operations, if sufficient forces were available; the operation against Murmansk was thereby reduced somewhat in scope and its execution made tentative.⁵²

One of the further consequences of the Svolvaer raid was that Falkenhorst, who as Armed Forces Commander, Norway, was subordinate to the OKW but as Commanding General, Army of Norway, was tactically subordinate to the OKH, was placed under the command of the OKW in both capacities. That left the Army of Norway under the OKW in Norway and under the OKH with respect to its participation in BARBAROSSA, a situation which was remedied later in the month by giving the OKW control of planning and operations in Finland.⁵³

The Army of Norway Operation Orders

During March the Army of Norway virtually suspended planning while awaiting clarification of its mission. In the course of the month the concentration of the 2d Mountain Division in the area around Kirkenes for RENNTIER began; and the first elements of SS-Kampfgruppe

⁵¹ *Ausführungen des Fuehrers auf dem Berghof am 12.3.1941 zur Lage, in AOK Norwegen, Ia, Chefsachen allgemein, 21.9.40–1.5.42. AOK 20 35641.*

⁵² *OKH, GenStdH, Op. Abt. (IN), Nr. 050/41, Aufmarschanweisung "Barbarossa," 21.1.41, in A.O.K. Norwegen, Ia, Aufmarschanweisung "Barbarossa," 31.1.–23.7.41. AOK 20 20844/3.*

⁵³ *Chef OKW, Nr. 44266/41, Abschrift von Fernschreiben, 5.3.41 (no folder title). OKW/175. Halder Diary, Vol. VI, p. 29.*

“Nord” were readied for transport, allegedly as replacements, via Sweden to northern Norway, where it was to assemble near Kirkenes. From there it could proceed southward through Finland along the Arctic Ocean Highway avoiding the use of Swedish territory in the assembly for BARBAROSSA. The Kampfgruppe had to be reincluded in the operation because, as the only major motorized force available to the Army of Norway, it alone was capable of making the long overland march from Kirkenes to Rovaniemi.⁵⁴

On 7 April an OKW directive implementing the revised *Aufmarschanweisung* provided a basis for resumption of the planning. The reinforced 2d Mountain Division was to be held ready for the occupation of Pechenga, but with a proviso that the forces defending the Narvik-Kirkenes sector not be reduced below 18 battalions. Whether, after security had been provided for the northern Norwegian coast and Pechenga, enough strength could be mustered for a thrust to Polyarnny to close Kola Bay depended on a number of conditions which could not be foreseen, but the necessary preparations were to be made and as many troops as possible assembled. The operation to cut off Murmansk from the south would have Kandalaksha Bay as its first objective; its further conduct would depend on the situation. For the assembly the Swedish railroads would presumably not be available; therefore, the OKW would dispatch one infantry division by sea to Finland, while the Army of Norway sent the XXXVI Corps Headquarters and attached elements, also by sea, from Norway. If Sweden granted transit rights after the start of BARBAROSSA, an additional division would be dispatched from southern Norway. The over-all command of operations out of Finland would be offered to Mannerheim.⁵⁵

On 17 April the Army of Norway submitted its plan of operations to the OKW and on the 18th and 20th issued operation orders to the Mountain Corps Norway and the XXXVI Corps. The enemy strength was estimated at five infantry divisions and one or two weak armored units. (In the intelligence conferences at the OKW on 5 and 6 June the distribution of enemy forces was estimated as follows: one division in the Murmansk area, one division at Salla, one—possibly a second—division at Kandalaksha, one division in the vicinity of Kem, and one division—possibly two—at Arkhangel'sk.)⁵⁶

The Mountain Corps Norway was given a defensive mission and two offensive missions. As Commander in the Polar Region, the Commanding General, Mountain Corps Norway, Dietl, was responsible

⁵⁴ A.O.K. *Norwegen, Taetigkeitsbericht des Armeekorps Norwegen, Abt. Ia in der Zeit vom 1.3.-31.3.41.* in *Taetigkeitsberichte des Armeekorps Norwegen, Maerz 1941.* AOK 20 12564/5.

⁵⁵ OKW, *WfSt, Abt. L (I Op.). Nr. 44355/41, Weisung an den Wehrmachtsbefehlshaber Norwegen ueber seine Aufgaben im Fall "Barbarossa," 7.4.41,* (no folder title). OKW 1838.

⁵⁶ A.O.K. *Norwegen, Abt. Ic, Nr. 110/41, Ic Besprechung beim OKW v. 5.6.-6.6.41,* in *"Silberfuchs" Bd. II, 4.5.-18.6.41.* AOK 20 20844/5.

for the defense of Norway north of Narvik. For that task he had, aside from naval units and coastal artillery, the 199th Infantry Division, the 9th SS-Regiment, three machine gun battalions, a police battalion, and (proposed) a bicycle battalion—essentially the 18 battalions Hitler demanded. The first of the offensive missions, Operation RENNTIER, was to be prepared in such a manner that Pechenga could be occupied at any time, at the latest three days after receipt of an appropriate order. The second, under the code name PLATINFUCHS, would be launched either after RENNTIER or directly from Norway, in which case it would include the occupation of Pechenga. It would take the form of an advance along the arctic coast to Port Vladimir and Polyarnyy with the objective of closing Kola Bay above Murmansk. Whether Kola Bay could then be crossed and Murmansk occupied would depend on the situation and terrain conditions found on reaching Polyarnyy. The forces to be employed were the 2d and 3d Mountain Divisions, a communications battalion, a construction battalion, an anti-aircraft battalion (less 2 batteries), two batteries of 105-mm. guns, and a *Nebelwerfer* (rocket launcher) battery.⁵⁷

The XXXVI Corps was to execute the main German attack, the operation against Kandalaksha, code-named POLARFUCHS. The corps would consist of the 169th Infantry Division, SS-Kampfgruppe "Nord," the Finnish 6th Division (detached from the Finnish III Corps), two battalions of tanks, two motorized artillery battalions, two construction battalions, a bridge-construction battalion, a heavy weapons battalion, a communications battalion, two batteries of anti-aircraft artillery, and a *Nebelwerfer* battery. After assembling its forces east of Rovaniemi, the XXXVI Corps would direct the weight of its attack along the road Rovaniemi-Kandalaksha, enveloping and reducing the Russian border strong point at Salla and then pressing on to Kandalaksha. Once Kandalaksha was taken it would become necessary to provide security against an attack from the south, push northward along the railroad, and take Murmansk in conjunction with the operations of the Mountain Corps Norway.

Because of uncertainty concerning the scale of Finnish participation, the April order to the XXXVI Corps was in part tentative. The Army of Norway proposed a secondary attack, probably by the Finnish 6th Division to be launched from Kuusamo, 65 miles south of Salla, via Kesten'ga to Loukhi on the Murmansk railroad and reconnaissance via Ukhta toward Kem.⁵⁸ The Commanding General, XXXVI Corps, General der Kavallerie Hans Feige, tentatively suggested employing his main force in the southern attack in order to strike northward behind Salla at Kayrala, where the Salla-Kandalaksha road passed be-

⁵⁷ A.O.K. *Norwegen, Ia, Nr. 14/41, Operationsanweisung fuer das Geb. Korps Norwegen, 18.4.41*, in "*Silberfuchs*," Bd. I, 10.1.-8.5.41. AOK 20 20844/4.

⁵⁸ A.O.K. *Norwegen, Ia, Nr. 53/41, Operationsanweisung fuer das Hoehere Kommando XXXVI, 20.4.41*, in "*Silberfuchs*," Bd. I, 10.1.-8.5.41. AOK 20 20844/4.

tween two lakes and over a line of commanding hills, and at the crossing of the Tuntsa River. Such a maneuver, he thought, would deny the Russians the possibility of executing a defense in depth; but he was aware that the road and terrain conditions spoke against a sweeping envelopment.⁵⁹

On June 11, after the Finnish participation had been made final, the Army of Norway issued a supplement to its April order and an operation order for the Finnish III Corps which would be attached to the German forces. The III Corps (one division plus border guards, the second division being attached to the XXXVI Corps) would provide offensive flank security south of the XXXVI Corps zone. It would attack from the vicinity of Suomussalmi via Ukhta toward Kem with its main force and send a secondary force from Ukhta via Kesten'ga to Loukhi. The Finnish 6th Division advance from the vicinity of Kuusamo, instead of being directed toward Loukhi, would be turned north-eastward behind Salla toward the Tuntsa River near Allakurtti. Both the XXXVI Corps and the III Corps were to come under the command of Headquarters, Army of Norway, which would be established at Rovaniemi to direct Operation SILBERFUCHS—all German and Finnish operations out of Finland north of the line Oulu–Belomorsk.⁶⁰

The roles of the Navy and Air Force in Operation SILBERFUCHS were to be limited. The Navy even expected to have to halt supply shipping along the arctic coast until Russian naval supremacy in the Arctic Ocean could be overcome. It saw the occupation of Polyarnyy and Murmansk as the most likely means of reducing the effectiveness of Russian and possible British naval operations. For that reason Admiral Raeder had insisted from the first on the occupation of Murmansk as one of the Navy's primary requirements.⁶¹ The Fifth Air Force (Norway) retained about 200 combat planes for its primary mission, the defense of Norway, and made the following available for SILBERFUCHS:

Long-range reconnaissance-----	one flight-----	3
Dive Bombers-----	one group-----	30
Bombers-----	one squadron-----	10
Fighters-----	one squadron-----	10
Reconnaissance planes attached to AOK Norway-----		7
Total-----		60

⁵⁹ Hoeheres Kommando z. b. V. XXXVI, *Der Befehlshaber, Ia*, 510/41, in "Silberfuchs" Bd. I, 10.1.–8.5.41. AOK 20 20844/4.

⁶⁰ A.O.K. Norwegen, *Ia*, Nr. 148/41, *Operationsanweisung fuer das V. finnische Aermee-Korps*, 10.6.41, in "Silberfuchs" Bd. II, 4.5.–18.6.41. AOK 20 20844/5. A.O.K. Norwegen, *Ia*, Nr. 53/41, *Operationsanweisung Hoeh. Kdo. XXXVI.*, 11.6.41, in "Silberfuchs" Bd. I, 10.1.–8.5.41. AOK 20 20844/4. A.O.K. Norwegen, *Ia*, *Kriegstagebuch*, 3.6.41–13.1.42, 2 Jul 41. AOK 20 35198/1.

⁶¹ Admiral Norwegen, *B Nr. 20, Vorgang: 1 Skl. I op. 262/41 v. 6.3.41, Betrifft: Fall "Barbarossa,"* 25.3.41, in "Silberfuchs" Bd. I, 10.1.–8.5.41. AOK 20 20844/4. *Die Seekriegsleitung und die Vorgeschichte des Feldzuges gegen Russland*, pp. 22, 25. H 22/439.

That modest force was to operate against Soviet naval units in the Arctic Ocean, provide close support for the Army of Norway, and carry out a variety of other missions including destruction of the port facilities at Polyarnyy and Murmansk, interdiction of troop movements on the Murmansk Railroad, destruction of Soviet air installations, and destruction of locks in the Baltic-White Sea Canal (which the Navy insisted on to prevent the transfer of Soviet light naval units from the Baltic to the White Sea).⁶²

The German-Finnish Conversations, May-June 1941

On 25 May the OKW opened three days of conferences with a Finnish military delegation headed by General Heinrichs and including the chiefs of operations, mobilization, supply, and the chief of staff of the Finnish Navy. In his opening remarks Jodl depicted the forthcoming attack on the Soviet Union as a preventive operation. Germany, he said, had a friendly treaty relationship with the Soviet Union which was economically advantageous; opposed to that was an unprovoked Soviet concentration of forces on the German border which was forcing Germany to take appropriate countermeasures. Germany intended to clarify the situation through political channels in the immediate future. If that were to prove impossible, a military solution would almost certainly become necessary in order not to allow the Soviet Union to choose its own time.⁶³ The course of the war could be predicted with certainty: participation of many small states in a crusade against Bolshevism and, especially, the superiority of the German armed forces would, after certain territories had been taken, reduce the Soviet Union to military impotence. The Soviet collapse would come earliest in the north. The chief task of the Finns, Jodl explained, would be to tie down Russian forces in the Lake Ladoga area. A bloody breakthrough battle was not demanded since the Soviet front would collapse of itself as German Army Group North advanced.

On the following day Halder took a different tack and asked for the creation of a strong striking force which could attack either east or west of Lake Ladoga depending on the development of the situation. He anticipated that the Finnish attack would begin about 14 days after the Germans launched BARBAROSSA. After the conference the OKW explained that Jodl had only set forth the minimum expectation. The Finns, for their part, indicated that the Lake Ladoga area was of greatest interest to them; therefore, they would not confine themselves to waiting but would attack.

⁶² *Luftflottenkommando 5, Fuehrungsabteilung Ia, Br. Nr. 88/41, Weisung fuer den Kampf im Falle "Barbarossa," 12.6.41, in "Silberfuchs" Bd. II, 4.5.-81.6.41. AOK 20 20844/5.*

⁶³ This preventive war argument was revived by the defense at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials. It does not appear to have been used in 1941 as anything more than a convenient excuse.

The Finns wanted to concentrate all of their strength on the Lake Ladoga front and argued against detaching a corps to participate in the German advance toward Kandalaksha. For the same reason they wanted the Germans to assume responsibility for the reduction of Hanko. Those questions, along with others relating to the exact direction of the Finnish main effort and the time of mobilization, were left undecided for the time being. Since the military delegation lacked authority to make any commitments—but Heinrichs pointed out that its presence indicated the Finnish position—the conversations were adjourned to 3 June, when they were to be resumed in Helsinki.⁶⁴

In the meeting of 25 May Jodl stated that Falkenhorst would command in northern and central Finland (SILBERFUCHS) and Marshal Mannerheim would command in the south on the Ladoga front. Mannerheim would be in direct touch with the OKH. This represented a departure from the earlier German intention, expressed as late as 28 April in a preliminary plan for the conversations with the Finns, to offer the over-all command in Finland to Mannerheim.⁶⁵ The reasons for the decision to institute separate commands in Finland are not clear. One, probably, was the desire of the OKW to command in an active theater. Another might have been the fact that Mannerheim could be brought into the planning only at a very late stage, too late for him to assume command at the start of the campaign. That possibility is to some extent supported by Mannerheim's statement that late in June 1941—after operations had begun—he was tentatively approached on the subject of assuming full command in Finland.⁶⁶ In any case, as far as the success of Operation SILBERFUCHS was concerned, the division of command was not serious, since the operation was, as Halder characterized it, merely an "expedition" not fundamentally related either to BARBAROSSA or to the Finnish operations in the south. What was serious was that the Germans, when they established independent German and Finnish commands, compounded their more basic error of failing to bring Mannerheim under their direct control by preliminary agreement and so lost all hope of keeping him in hand and laid themselves open to the dangers of coalition warfare.

According to Clausewitz the worst possible situation is that in which two independent commanders find themselves operating in the same theater of war. Why the Germans fell into that trap is not easily dis-

⁶⁴ OKW, WFSt, Abt. L. (I Op.), Nr. 44793/31, Protokoll ueber die Besprechung mit den Vertretern der finnischen Wehrmacht am 25.5.41 in Salzburg, 25.5.41, OKW, Abt. Ausland, Nr. 183/41, 28.5.41; and Buschenhagen, Lfd. Nr. 51/41, 28.5.41, an AOK Norwegen, in "Silberfuchs" Bd. II, 4.5.-18.6.41. AOK 20 20844/5. OKH, GenStdH, Op. Abt. (IN), Nr. 991/41, Protokoll ueber die deutsch-finnischen Besprechungen am 26.5.41, in Chefsachen Fremde Heere Ost, Bd. I. H 3/1.

⁶⁵ OKW, Abt. L, Nr. 44594/41, Vorschlag fuer die Vorbereitung der Besprechungen ueber Beteiligung Finnlands am Unternehmen "Barbarossa," 28.4.41, (no folder title). OKW/1938.

⁶⁶ Mannerheim, *op. cit.*, p. 450.

covered. In Directive No. 21 the OKW was given the task of approaching Finland and Romania and arranging "the manner in which their military contingents will be placed under German command at the time of their intervention"; but there is no indication of an attempt at any time to carry out the order with respect to Finland. Probably in the prevailing optimism of 1941 it was not thought possible that a situation could develop which would undermine the Finns' will to collaborate; moreover, for a short, victorious campaign in which Finland, after all, was only expected to stage a diversion on the outer flank, a tight integration of the Finnish forces was not necessary and could entail unwanted obligations with respect to reinforcements and supplies.

When the talks resumed on 3 June Colonels Buschenhagen and Eberhard Kinzel, representing the OKW and the OKH respectively, found the Finnish General Staff prepared to accept the German May proposals. The Finnish main force would be assembled in such a manner that, depending on the wishes of the OKH, an attack could be launched either east or west of Lake Ladoga on five days' notice. The attack east of the lake, which the Finns recognized as the most advantageous militarily, would be opened by a force of five infantry divisions and a mixed infantry and cavalry division. Up to seven additional divisions were to be employed later as they became available. Heinrichs warned that it would be wrong to expect too much of the Finnish Army. The Svir River was the objective, but it could be reached only under exceedingly favorable circumstances.

The III Corps (two divisions) and the Pechenga Detachment (three companies and a battery of artillery) would be attached to the Army of Norway. The Finns undertook to occupy the Åland Islands and seal off Hanko, but they wanted the attack on Hanko to be executed by a German division brought in from Norway.

For the event that Germany and the Soviet Union reached a peaceful settlement Finland wanted a guaranty of its independence, if possible with its old boundaries, and economic assistance. Also in the political sphere, Heinrichs cautioned that any attempt to install a "Quisling-type" government in Finland would put an immediate end to the German-Finnish collaboration.⁶⁷

On 14 June, three days before the Finnish general mobilization began, the President of Finland and the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Parliament approved the military arrangements.⁶⁸ On the following day the Finns submitted an urgent request that, before ordering the mobilization, they be given either an assurance that war would ensue

⁶⁷ A.O.K. Norwegen, *Der Chef des Generalstabes, Nr. 140/41, Ergebnis der deutsch-finnischen Besprechungen in Helsinki, 3.-5.6.1941*, in "Silberfuchs," Bd. II, 4.5.-18.6.41. AOK 20 20844/5. *Fremde Heere Ost, Chef, Nr. 74/41, Protokoll ueber die Besprechungen in Finnland vom 3.-6. Juni 1941*, in *Chefsachen Fremde Heere Ost, Bd. I. H 3/1*.

⁶⁸ *Mil. Att., Nr. 78/41, fuer OKW Fuehrungsamt, 15.6.41*, in *Chefsachen, Bd. 1941. H 27/43*.



Commanding General, Army of Norway, Generaloberst Nikolaus von Falkenhorst, right, walking through the woods with Generalmajor Erich Buschenhagen, left, and Kenraaliluutnantti Paal Oesterman. (Photo taken after 1 August 1941, when Buschenhagen was promoted to Generalmajor.)

or a binding promise that, in the event of a peaceful settlement, the political desires they had stated earlier would be met. In reply Keitel authorized the Military Attaché to state that "the demands and conditions raised by Finland concerning the measures to be taken are to be regarded as fulfilled."⁶⁹ The general mobilization was ordered on 17 June.

Colonel Buschenhagen, accompanied by General der Infanterie Waldemar Erfurth, returned to Helsinki by plane on the afternoon of 13 June. Two days later Buschenhagen established the Headquarters, Army of Norway in Finland, at Rovaniemi, and control of the Finnish III Corps passed to the Army of Norway. In order to avoid attracting Russian attention Falkenhorst remained in Norway another week, arriving in Rovaniemi on 21 June. Thereafter the Army of Norway maintained two headquarters more than a thousand miles apart. The greater part of its staff remained in Norway, and supplementary staff sections were improvised for the direction of operations out of Finland. General Erfurth as Chief, Liaison Staff North, was attached to Mannerheim's headquarters as the representative of the OKW and the OKH in Finland. At the request of the Finns a Finnish general officer had also been assigned to the OKH.

⁶⁹ OKW, WFSt, an Abt. Ausl., 15.6.41, (no folder title). OKW/1972 Buschenhagen, an OKW fuer Gen. Jodl, 15.6.41, in Chefsachen, Bd. 1941. H 27/43.

The two questions still to be settled were those regarding the exact time and place of the Finnish attack. Apparently they had been left undecided not because of the scruples of the Finns but because the Germans did not want to reveal the starting date for their own operations against the Soviet Union and because the OKH desired a slight delay in order to be able to time the Finnish attack properly in relation to the progress of the German Army Group North. On 16 June Erfurth informed the OKH that General Heinrichs, on instructions from Mannerheim, had asked that the Finnish main operation not begin until two or three days after the start of SILBERFUCHS because, as Erfurth wrote, "The Finns want to create the impression among their own people and people's representatives of being drawn in by the course of events."⁷⁰ The OKH replied that the timing of the Finnish operation would depend on the development of the battle on the German front, but the Finnish request would be kept in mind.⁷¹

When the German armies marched into Russia on 22 June Finland declared its neutrality, which it maintained officially until the night of 25 June. After severe Soviet air attacks on the cities of southern Finland on the 25th, the Premier informed a secret session of Parliament that the nation, having been attacked, was proceeding to defend itself with all means, and was, therefore, at war.⁷² On the previous night with German operations in the Soviet Union going according to schedule, the OKH had made its decision regarding the location of the Finnish attack and had instructed Erfurth to tell the Finns that they were to prepare for an operation east of Lake Ladoga by at least six divisions with the weight of the attack on the left and the objective set at a distance. Five days later the Finns submitted a plan of attack which fulfilled the German requirements. On 4 July with the Army Group North drawing up to the Dvina River, the last major natural obstacle before Leningrad, and no serious resistance anticipated, Halder decided that the time had come to set the date for the Finnish attack. Taking into account the Finns' desire for five to seven days' advance notice, the first day of operations was to be 10 July.⁷³

⁷⁰ Erfurth, an OKH Attache Abteilung, fuer GenStdH, Op. Abt., 16.6.41, in Chefsachen Bd. 1941. H 27/43.

⁷¹ OKH, Att. Abt. (z.b.V.), GenStdH, 130/41, an den deutschen Militaerattaché in Helsingfors, in Chefsachen Bd. 1941. H 27/43.

⁷² On 24 June Finland had agreed to permit German aircraft to take off from Finnish territory for operations against the Soviet Union and to permit ground reconnaissance by the Army of Norway units across the Finnish-Soviet border as of midnight that day. Verbindungsstab Nord, Ia 77/41, an A.O.K. Norwegen, Bef. St. Finnland, in A.O.K. Norwegen, K.T.B., Anlagenband 1. AOK 20 19070/2.

⁷³ Halder Diary, Vol. VI, pp. 144, 156, 175, 189.

Chapter 8

Operation SILBERFUCHS (II)

Concentration of Forces

The concentration of the Army of Norway forces for SILBERFUCHS was itself an undertaking of major proportions. In the far north, the Mountain Corps Norway had to move the 3d Mountain Division from Narvik to Kirkenes and bring in from southern Norway the 199th Infantry Division and the staff of the 702d Infantry Division plus miscellaneous units amounting to several battalions. The 2d Mountain Division was already in the Kirkenes area. At the same time the SS-Kampfgruppe "Nord," coming through Sweden, had to be transported from Narvik to Kirkenes. The sea afforded the only practicable means of transportation since Reichsstrasse 50, completed from Narvik to Kirkenes in the fall of 1940, at first could not be kept clear of snow and in June was rendered useless by the thaw. The road south of Narvik was blocked in numerous places by ice in the ferry crossings of the fiords.¹ Transfer of the 199th Infantry Division and the staff of the 702d Infantry Division was completed at the end of May; but the last elements of the 3d Mountain Division did not reach their assembly area south of Kirkenes until 17 June; and assembly of the SS-Kampfgruppe was completed on 6 June, barely in time to begin the march southward through Finland along the Arctic Ocean Highway to Rovaniemi on the 7th.²

The assault force of the Mountain Corps Norway (the 2d and 3d Mountain Divisions plus service troops) numbered 27,500 men.³ For its supplies the Mountain Corps Norway was to draw on a one year's stockpile which Hitler, in the fall of 1940, had ordered accumulated in Norway. Supplies were to be brought into the zone of operations by ship as far as possible; in emergencies they were to come overland from Narvik via Reichsstrasse 50.⁴

¹ AOK Norwegen, *Taetigkeitsbericht des Armeekorps-Oberkommandos Norwegen, Abt. Ia in der Zeit vom 1.5.-31.5.1941*, in *Taetigkeitsberichte des Armeekorps-Oberkommando Norwegen, Mai 1941*. AOK 20 12564/7.

² *Generalkommando Gebirgskorps Norwegen, Ia, Taetigkeitsbericht fuer Monat Juni 1941, 1.7.1941*. AOK 20 14030/3.

³ AOK Norwegen, *O. Qu., Qu. 1, "Silberfuchs," 9.5.41*, in *"Silberfuchs" Bd. II, 4.5.-18.6.41*. AOK 20 20844/5.

⁴ AOK Norwegen *O. Qu., Qu. 1, Nr. 326/41, Besondere Anordnungen fuer die Versorgung zum Operationsbefehl fuer das Geb. Korps Norwegen, 13.5.41*, in *g. Kdos. Chefsache Gebirgskorps Norwegen Ia/Ost, 19.5.-23.12.41*. AOK 20 26373/1.

Transfer of the main force of the XXXVI Corps to Finland was accomplished in two sea transport operations: BLAUFUCHS 1 (169th Division, 20,000 men, from Stettin to Oulu) and BLAUFUCHS 2 (Headquarters, XXXVI Corps, and corps troops, 10,600 men, Oslo to Oulu). The first ships sailed on 5 June, and operations were completed on 14 June. The 8,000 men of the SS-Kampfgruppe reached Rovaniemi on 10 June. These troop movements were carried out under the guise of a relief operation for northern Norway; and the XXXVI Corps was ordered not to turn eastward from the line Oulu–Rovaniemi–Arctic Ocean Highway until 18 June, the date on which it was considered no longer possible to conceal the forthcoming attack on Russia. With its movement thus restricted it became impossible for the XXXVI Corps to draw up to the Finnish eastern border in time to open an offensive on 22 June, BARBAROSSA Day. The XXXVI Corps, exclusive of attached Finnish units, totaled 40,600 troops. The corps was initially provided with rations for three months, ammunition for two to three months, and motor fuel for two months. The management of supplies for Finland as well as Norway was in the hands of the Heimatstab Nord, renamed, in June 1941, Heimatstab Uebersee.⁵

For the defense of Norway, the Army of Norway retained seven divisions organized into the LXX Corps (three divisions, headquarters in Oslo), the XXXIII Corps (two divisions, headquarters at Trondheim), and the Territorial Staff of the Mountain Corps Norway (two divisions, headquarters at Alta).⁶ It had also 160 batteries of army coastal artillery, 56 batteries of naval coastal artillery, 6 police battalions, an SS-Regiment, and 3 motorized machine gun battalions. The troops in Norway numbered about 150,000.⁷ In conjunction with the concentration of forces for the attack on Russia the units in Norway were assigned to Operation HARPUNE NORD, an elaborately staged deception intended to make it appear that the invasion of England was next on the German timetable. In Norway, Denmark, and France (HARPUNE SUED) the Germans went through the motions of preparing an amphibious attack on England timed for about 1 August 1941.⁸

⁵ OKW, Wfst, Abt. L. (I Op.), Anlage 1, Zeitplan "Barbarossa," 5.6.41; OKW, Wfst, Abt. L. (I Op.). Nr. 44803/41, an W.B. Norwegen, 26.5.41; AOK Norwegen, O. Qu. Qu. 1, 6/41, "Silberfuchs," in "Silberfuchs" Bd. II, 4.5.-18.6.41. AOK 20 20844/5. AOK Norwegen O. Qu., Qu. 1, Nr. 326/41, Besondere Anordnungen fuer die Versorgung zum Operationsbefehl "Polarfuchs" (Hoeh. Kdo. XXXVI), 14.5.41, in g. kdos, Chefsache Gebirgskorps Norwegen, Ia/Ost, 19.5.-23.12.41. AOK 20 26373/1. 169. I.D., Fuehrungsabt, in Kriegstagebuch Nr. 2, Teil I, 1.6.-9.9.41, 6, 7, 11 June 1941. 169 I.D. 20291/2.

⁶ On 28 June the Territorial Staff was detached from the Mountain Corps Norway and made directly subordinate to the Army of Norway, Headquarters Oslo. Henceforth it was designated as Provisional Corps "Nagy."

⁷ OKH, GenStabH, Org. Abt., Sicherungskraefte Norwegen (geplanter Stand vom 1.6.41), 8.5.41. H 1/381b.

⁸ AOK Norwegen, Ia, Nr. 6/41, Operationsbefehl Nr. 1 fuer die Vorbereitung der Unternehmung "Harpune," in Taetigkeitsberichte fuer Monat Mai. AOK 20 12564/7.

On 22 June, when the German armies in the south crossed the Soviet frontier, the Mountain Corps Norway, unopposed, executed RENNTIER with the 2d Mountain Division taking up positions in the Liinahamari-Pechenga area and the 3d Mountain Division along a line extending farther south to the vicinity of Luostari.⁹ On the same day the Army of Norway ordered the attack across the Finnish-Russian border to be begun on 29 June by the Mountain Corps Norway, on 1 July at 0200 by the Finnish III Corps, and on 1 July 1600 by the XXXVI Corps.¹⁰ Staggered timing was employed for the purpose of making air support available for the initial assault in each corps sector. The aircraft had to shift from their main bases at Kirkenes and Banak to Rovaniemi for missions in the XXXVI Corps area. Beginning on 23 June they flew missions against Murmansk and Salla. The Russians retaliated with attacks on Pechenga, Kemiyärvi, and Rovaniemi.

On 23 June negotiations for the transit of one division across Sweden from southern Norway to Finland began in Stockholm. The Swedish Government gave its consent two days later, and OKW ordered the 163d Infantry Division to begin moving out of Oslo on the 26th. The division was replaced in Norway by the 710th Infantry Division from Germany. Contrary to the earlier intention of committing the 163d Division at Hanko, the OKW ordered it attached immediately to the Finnish Army as Mannerheim's reserve for operations in the Lake Ladoga area.¹¹

The concentration of German forces in northern Finland clearly revealed the serious and in most respects insuperable problems with respect to its communications lines which would confront Army of Norway in the forthcoming campaign. From its main base in Norway the army had four tenuous routes of access to Finland: (1) The sea route around the northern tip of Norway to Kirkenes and Pechenga. It could not be protected against British or Russian naval attack and at the entrance to Pechenga harbor passed within range of Russian artillery on the Rybatchiy Peninsula. (2) Reichsstrasse 50 from Narvik to Kirkenes. In 1941 the road did not have an all-weather surface, and the snow removal techniques were inadequate. (3) The land routes, road (one) and railroad, through Sweden. For the use of these, permission, which was granted more and more reluctantly after June 1941, had to be secured from the Swedish Government. (4) The sea route through the Baltic. While the Baltic Sea was relatively safe for shipping, the Finnish ports at the head of the Gulf of Bothnia had low capacities and were icebound during four to five months of the year;

⁹ *Saturn Geier, Ia, Nr. 409/41, Morgenmeldung 22.6.41 and Saturn Geier, Ia, Nr. 418/41, Morgenmeldung 25.6.41, in Geb. Korps Norwegen, Ia, Taetigkeitsbericht fuer Monat Juni 1941, 1.7.41. AOK 20 14030/3.*

¹⁰ *AOK Norwegen, Abt. Ia, Nr. 111/41, Armeebefehl, 22.6.41 in g.kdos. Chefsache Gebirgskorps Norwegen, Ia/Ost, 19.5-23.12.41. AOK 20 26373/1.*

¹¹ *AOK Norwegen, Befehlsstelle Finnland, Ia, Kriegstagebuch, 3.6.41-13.1.42. (hereafter referred to as A.O.K. Norwegen, K.T.B.) 23-30 June. AOK 20 35198/1.*

moreover, Germany lacked the merchant vessels to maintain simultaneous traffic to Norway, the arctic ports, and in the Baltic.

Aside from being less vulnerable, the army's lines of communication inside Finland were no better. It had one single-track railroad running along the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia from Oulu to Kemi and thence north to Rovaniemi and Kemiyärvi with a connecting line to the Swedish border east of Tornio. Rolling stock was scarce, and, because the Finnish railroads were built to the Russian gauge, German equipment could not be supplied immediately. For the same reason rail shipments from Sweden had to be transloaded at the border. Since the Finnish engines burned wood, their hauling capacity was low, and it required 70 to 80 trains to move one German division. On the average, the Army of Norway could count on no more than three trains a day from Oulu to Rovaniemi. The road net in northern Finland was thin. Few of the roads could be called improved even in a relative sense, and very few of the bridges were capable of carrying heavy military equipment. In the north, the Arctic Ocean Highway was the sole link between Rovaniemi and Pechenga. As such it was of major importance to Army of Norway operations in Finland, but it, too, had been built to meet the limited requirements of Finnish internal traffic. As a supply route its usefulness was marginal, since, on the 600-mile round trip from Rovaniemi to Pechenga, trucks nearly consumed the weight of their payloads in gasoline.¹²

PLATINFUCHS (Operations of Mountain Corps Norway)

Harsh climate and forbidding terrain were the distinguishing features of the Mountain Corps Norway zone of operations. At Pechenga Bay the influence of the Gulf Stream is still strong enough to permit a lush summer vegetation—grasses, bushes, and a few trees—near the bay and along the Pechenga River valley. East of Pechenga the coast is bare; the rock surface is gouged and molded into a wild jumble of rises and depressions; giant boulders, rocks, and gravel supply the texture of the landscape. In the valleys, many of which have no outlets, the melting snows have formed hundreds of lakes. This belt of rocky tundra varies in width from less than ten miles near Pechenga to 25 or 30 miles in the vicinity of Kola Bay where the effect of the Gulf Stream rapidly diminishes, although it keeps the bay and the port of Murmansk open throughout the year. Inland the tundra gradually shades off into the coniferous forests of the taiga. The winter, which on this inhospitable coast lasts from October to May, is a succession of arctic storms and blizzards; but the temperature (low -13° Fahrenheit) does not reach the extremes frequently recorded farther south (-45° in southern Lapland and -40° in Karelia and southern Finland). The summer brings

¹² General der Infanterie a.D. Erich Buschenhagen, Comments on Part II of *The German Northern Theater of Operations, 1940-1945*, May 1957.

an average of 40 days with a mean temperature over 50°. Even though the daytime temperature occasionally rises into the 80's, on the heights and in protected spots in the valleys patches of snow and ice often last through the summer. In summer, winds off the ocean drive in banks of fog which blanket the coast for periods ranging from a few hours to weeks at a time.

After completing Operation RENNTIER on 22 June, the Mountain Corps Norway assembled its two divisions (each consisting of two rifle regiments and a regiment of artillery) along the Arctic Ocean Highway. The objective of the ensuing Operation PLATINFUCHS (as stated in the corps order), scheduled to begin on 29 June, was Murmansk, 56 miles east of the Soviet Finnish border. Dietl intended to strike with the 2d Mountain Division along the coast via Titovka, Bol'shaya Zapadnaya Litsa, and Ura Guba to Polyarnyy near the mouth of Kola Bay and with the 3d Mountain Division southeastward via Motovka to Murmansk. For the purpose the 2d Mountain Division was assembled around Pechenga while the 3d Mountain Division took up positions in the vicinity of Luostari.

The objective of the first phase of PLATINFUCHS was the line Motovka–Bol'shaya Zapadnaya Litsa. On its left flank the 2d Mountain Division was to commit one regiment which, after sealing off the neck of the Rybatchiy Peninsula with one battalion, would thrust south-eastward through Titovka to Bol'shaya Zapadnaya Litsa. The main force of the division, one reinforced regiment, was to strike southeastward from Pechenga to the road Titovka–Bol'shaya Zapadnaya Litsa, running just east of the Zapadnaya Litsa River. The 3d Mountain Division, with one regiment in the assault, would attack past Chapr Lake toward Motovka. Fifty-five miles farther south the Finnish "Ivalo" Battalion (Pechenga Detachment) would stage a diversionary attack north of the Lutto River to tie down Soviet forces in the vicinity of Ristikent.¹³

To the Litsa River

At 0300 on 29 June the attack began without air support in a heavy morning fog. Within three hours the 3d Mountain Division was ferrying troops across the Titovka, and the units of the 2d Mountain Division had reported good progress. Before noon the entire situation was changed by a discovery that the roads shown on the maps between the Titovka River valley and Motovka and from Motovka to Bol'shaya Zapadnaya Litsa did not exist. The Mountain Corps Norway, concluding that it could not supply two divisions moving on parallel courses

¹³ *Gen. Kdo. Gebirgskorps Norwegen, Ia, Nr. 98/41, Befehl fuer die Bereitstellung und den Angriff des Geb. Korps Norwegen am 29.6.–25.6.41, in Gebirgskorps Norwegen, K.T.B. I. Anlagenband I. XIX AK 15085/2.*

over pathless tundra, immediately stopped the advance of the 3d Mountain Division, ordering its main force to pull back to the Arctic Ocean Highway and move into the Pechenga area behind the 2d Mountain Division. Of the one regiment already on the Titovka River, two battalions were ordered to proceed northward along the river valley into the 2d Mountain Division zone while one battalion executed a sweeping arc northeastward to make contact with the right flank regiment of the 2d Mountain Division on a road connecting the Titovka and Litsa Rivers about five miles inland from the coast. That road proved hardly worthy of the name although it was the northern segment of the main route to Kola Bay.¹⁴

Before the end of the first day's fighting, the terrain, bad maps, and unsatisfactory aerial reconnaissance had forced the Mountain Corps Norway to revise its plan of operations. While the 3d Mountain Division assembled behind the right wing of the 2d Mountain Division, the right regiment of the latter supported by a battalion of the 3d Mountain Division would push down the road to the Litsa bridge, seven miles southwest of Bol'shaya Zapadnaya Litsa. The bridge and the road from there to Kola Bay, at least, offered a new operational possibility since they had not been positively identified before the operation began.¹⁵

On the 30th the left flank regiment of the 2d Mountain Division took Titovka with one battalion, but its remaining two battalions were tied down in heavy fighting at the neck of the Rybatchiy Peninsula where the Russians landed reinforcements on the eastern shore in the vicinity of Kutovaya, supporting the landings with destroyer fire. The right flank regiment pushed a battalion through to the west bank of the Litsa River on the following day, while fighting continued around Kutovaya. It was becoming clear that the task facing the Mountain Corps Norway was more difficult than had been anticipated. In the Murmansk region the Russians had two full divisions, of which two regiments were digging in to hold the Litsa River line.¹⁶ Another regiment with at least one battalion of artillery was identified on the Rybatchiy Peninsula. Contrary to the original German assumption, these were no mediocre units; ably led, they fought with skill and determination; and they had the advantage of air superiority, since the Fifth Air Force, already inferior in numbers, was forced to shift its operations back and forth between the Mountain Corps area and that of the XXXVI Corps in the south. In addition, the German attack, thrown off balance by initial errors with regard to the location of roads, was slowed down by

¹⁴ *Gebirgskorps Norwegen, Ia, Kriegstagebuch Russland 1, 19.6.-31.12.41* (hereafter referred to as G.K.N., K.T.B. 1.), 29 Jun 41. XIX AK 15085/1.

¹⁵ *Gen. Kdo. Gebirgskorps Norwegen, Nr. 140/41, Korpsbefehl fuer die Fortsetzung der Operationen nach Osten, 29.6.41*, in *Gebirgskorps Norwegen Ia, Kriegstagebuch Russland 1, Anlagenband 1*. XIX AK 15085/2.

¹⁶ The 14th and 52d Rifle Divisions of the Fourteenth Army, which with approximately six and one-half divisions was holding the sector from Murmansk to Belomorsk.



Tundra in the Pechenga-Litsa River area.

exceptionally difficult terrain. It was found that even mountain troops could not move at a rate exceeding one kilometer per hour.¹⁷

By 4 July the Rybatchiy Peninsula was sealed off, but two battalions, rather than one as originally intended, were required to hold the line. On the same day one company succeeded in crossing the Litsa east of Bol'shaya Zapadnaya Litsa. Meanwhile, the Mountain Corps Norway planned an attack across the river for 6 July. The 2d Mountain Division moved up to the west bank of the river from Bol'shaya Zapadnaya Litsa to the Litsa bridge, while the 3d Mountain Division took up positions at and south of the bridge. The main thrust was to be at the bridge and southeastward along the road. The 2d Mountain Division would commit a regiment north of the bridge and the 3d Mountain Division a regiment south of the bridge. After the river had been crossed the attack was to proceed along the road.¹⁸

Although hampered by the terrain—the 3d Mountain Division was able to get only one battalion in position on the river—the attack was launched as planned on the morning of the 6th because the 2d Mountain Division assembly area was exposed to enemy artillery fire. In the face of determined resistance the attack did not get rolling until late in the

¹⁷ Gen. Kdo. Gebirgskorps Norwegen, Ia, Nr. 300/41, *Erfahrungsbericht ueber den bisherigen Osteinsatz im Eismeergebiet, 12.12.41* (folder). AOK 20 36037/2. A.O.K. 20 Ic, *Feindlage 3.7.41*, in A.O.K. 20 Ic, *Anlagen zum K.T.B. I*. AOK 20 25353/1. G.K.N., K.T.B. I, 1 Jul 41.

¹⁸ Gen. Kdo. Gebirgskorps Norwegen, Ia, 156/41, *Befehl fuer Bereitstellung und Angriff des Geb. Korps ueber die Liza am 6.7.41*, in *Gebirgskorps Norwegen, Ia, Kriegstagebuch Russland I, Anlagenband 1*. XIX AK 15085/2. G.K.N., K.T.B. I, 4 Jul 41.

day, and at the end of the day the 2d Mountain Division had only one battalion across the river while the 3d Mountain Division had established two battalions in a bridgehead slightly more than a mile wide. In the meantime, two Soviet transports, escorted by two destroyers and a cruiser, had steamed to the head of Litsa Bay, landing a battalion on the north shore and another on the south shore, forcing the 2d Mountain Division to screen the left flank of the corps with one battalion. Shortly before midnight the corps chief of staff informed Army of Norway Headquarters that, with Russian landings in progress, the flank of the corps was endangered and operations across the Litsa could not be continued. The troops east of the Litsa held their positions on the 7th, but after beating off strong counterattacks during the night they were ordered back to the west bank on the following morning. Reporting on the situation to the Army of Norway Dietl demanded increased air support and stated that he could not proceed without reinforcements of at least a regiment and, preferably, a division.¹⁹

While the Mountain Corps Norway was engaged on the Litsa, Hitler became preoccupied with his old fear of a British landing and demanded a strengthening of the security forces around Pechenga. The Navy undertook to station a flotilla of five destroyers at Kirkenes, and the Mountain Corps Norway detached an infantry battalion and three batteries of artillery to form a mobile defense force. The necessity to provide forces for defense of Pechenga, the line on the Rybatchiy Peninsula, and flank defense between Titovka and Bol'shaya Zapadnaya Litsa was draining the strength of Dietl's corps. On 7 July the OKW ordered the Army of Norway to transfer some troops from the XXXVI Corps and to explore the possibility of getting Finnish troops as a means of enabling Dietl to reassemble his assault force. The Army of Norway furnished a motorized machine gun battalion, and on 9 July prevailed upon Mannerheim to release the Finnish 14th Regiment, less one battalion, for employment in the Pechenga area.²⁰

Stalemate on the Litsa

After his troops had withdrawn behind the Litsa Dietl's first intention was to launch the 3d Mountain Division in a second attack at the bridge and along the road. Whether the attack could be carried out was doubtful from the first since supplies for the division had to be brought up by pack mules, of which, owing to losses through exhaustion, barely enough were available to transport rations, not to mention ammunition. The plan had to be dropped entirely on 10 July after a dispatch rider carrying orders for the attack missed a regimental headquarters near Kutovaya

¹⁹ G.K.N., K.T.B. 1, 7 and 8 Jul 41.

²⁰ OKW, WFSt, Abt. L. (I Op.), Nr. 441165/41, an A.O.K. Norwegen, Bef. St. Finnland, 7.7.41, in A.O.K. Norwegen, K.T.B., Anlagenband 1. AOK 20 19070/2. G.K.N., K.T.B. 1, 4-8 Jul 41. A.O.K. Norwegen, K.T.B., 8 Jul 41.

nd drove his motorcycle into the Russian lines. Two days later Dietl shifted the weight of the attack to the left flank of the corps. There the 2d Mountain Division was to attack eastward from the vicinity of Bol'shaya Zapadnaya Litsa to the chain of lakes lying in a rough arc about six miles behind the river. It would then turn south in the rear of the Soviet forces defending the river's west bank to create favorable conditions for an attack at the bridge by the 3d Mountain Division. With one division advancing west of the road and the other east of it the corps then intended to push seven miles south of the bridge to where the road passed through the narrows between Kuirk Lake and an unnamed lake to the west which the Germans called Traun Lake.²¹ This was no sweeping envelopment of the type the Germans usually favored but an operation tailored to the limitations imposed by arctic terrain, where infantry, at best, moved slowly and its supplies slower still.

At the end of the first day of operations, 13 July, the 2d Mountain Division, with seven battalions across the Litsa east of Bol'shaya Zapadnaya Litsa, gained about two miles. On the following day enemy resistance became noticeably stronger, and Russian ships were again observed landing troops on the north shore of Litsa Bay. With shipping movements and landings reported at several points along the Motovskiy and Litsa Bays, the Chief of Staff, Mountain Corps Norway, concluded on the morning of the 15th that operations would have to be halted until the threat to the left flank had been eliminated. The attack continued throughout the day, penetrating the chain of lakes at one point, but the prospects were not good. On the 16th the Russians threw strong counterattacks against the bridgehead from the south and southeast and attacked along the line sealing off the Rybatchiy Peninsula. The supply situation was deteriorating rapidly in the bridgehead and in the 3d Mountain Division zone as well since the division had a regiment, which it had formerly depended on for hauling supplies, committed in the bridgehead. At noon the next day corps told the Army of Norway it could no longer continue the advance toward Murmansk; it intended to reduce the size of the bridgehead in order to gain enough troops to mop up the Russian forces which had landed north of Litsa Bay. Dietl believed he could not resume his offensive unless he received at least one additional division.²²

On the 18th, the 2d Mountain Division drew its troops on the bridgehead back to a line extending from a waterfall three and one-half miles south of Bol'shaya Zapadnaya Litsa to the shore of Litsa Bay two miles east of the settlement. The 3d Mountain Division established a line on the west bank of the river from the waterfall to a point two and one-half miles south of the bridge. With Soviet troops already ashore

²¹ *Gen. Kdo. Gebirgskorps Norwegen, Ia, Nr. 165/41, Befehl fuer erneuten Angriff des Gebirgskorps ueber die Liza, 17.7.41, in Gebirgskorps Norwegen, K.T.B. 1, Anlagenband 1. XIX AK 15085/2.*

²² *G.K.N., K.T.B. 1, 13-18 Jul 41. A.O.K. Norwegen K.T.B., 17 and 18 Jul 41.*

north of Litsa Bay and landings reported on the south shore of Titovka Bay, the corps faced a prospect of defending an almost continuous front 36 miles long from the western shore of the Rybatchiy Peninsula through Titovka and Bol'shaya Zapadnaya Litsa to the right flank of the 3d Mountain Division on the Litsa.²³

On the 21st Dietl conferred with Falkenhorst, Buschenhagen, and the Commanding Admiral, Norway. They agreed that, with winter weather expected to set in within eight to ten weeks, the Mountain Corps could not be left where it was; it would either have to push through to Murmansk or pull back into Finland. The Navy, although two submarines were to be stationed at Kirkenes in addition to the five destroyers, could not promise to accomplish much against Soviet movements by sea because of the distances involved and the Russians' naval superiority. Falkenhorst thought it would be possible to scrape together an equivalent of three regiments quickly in Norway, but there Hitler's strictures against weakening the Norwegian defenses, particularly in the north, still stood.²⁴

Two days later the Army of Norway informed Dietl that he could have two battalions from Norway and ordered him to resume the offensive. Taking stock of his forces Dietl found that both of his divisions had one regiment already seriously run down; three battalions were tied down on the northern flank between Titovka and Bol'shaya Zapadnaya Litsa and were barely holding the enemy; and the 2d Mountain Division, fighting off repeated heavy attacks on the bridgehead, had proposed withdrawing behind the Litsa. On the 24th he told army that with two fresh battalions he could only undertake to clean out the right flank north of Litsa Bay.²⁵

On the same day, at the request of the OKW, the Army of Norway undertook to review the situation of its three corps. The OKW proposed that if the operations of the XXXVI Corps and the Finnish III Corps did not look promising it be considered whether the XXXVI Corps attack could be canceled and forces shifted north to reinforce the Mountain Corps and enable it to take Murmansk. The Army of Norway replied that the Finnish III Corps operation appeared to offer the best chance of cutting the Murmansk Railroad at an early date. The prospects of the XXXVI Corps did not look good, but if it went over to the defensive the Russians would be able to draw out troops to throw against either the Finnish III Corps or the Mountain Corps Norway. The Mountain Corps, the Army of Norway believed, could still reach

²³ *Gen. Kdo. Gebirgskorps Norwegen, Ia, Nr. 180/41, Befehl fuer vorlaeufige Abwehr an der Liza, 18.7.41, in Gebirgskorps Norwegen, K.T.B. 1, Anlagenband 1. XIX AK 15085/2.*

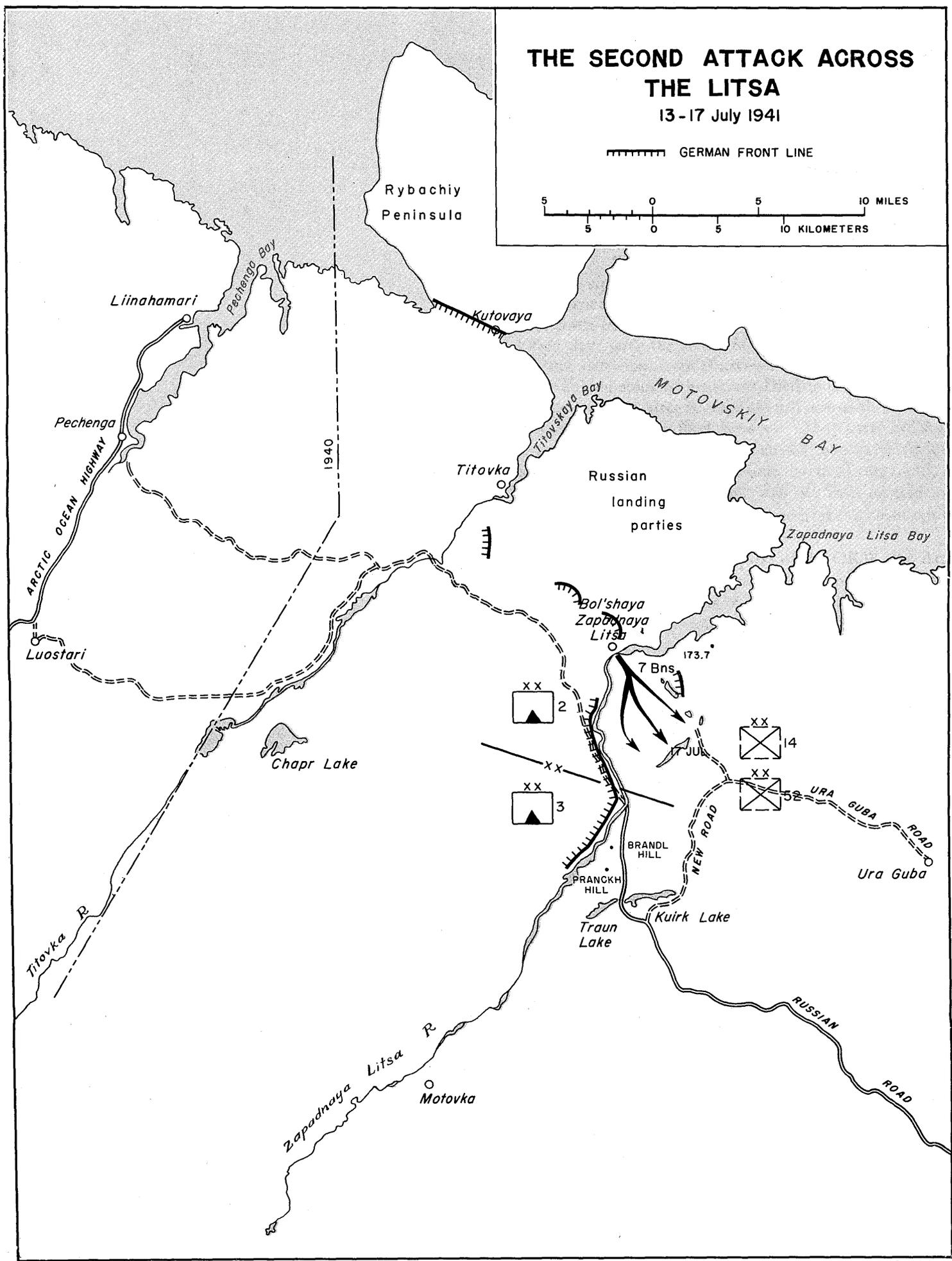
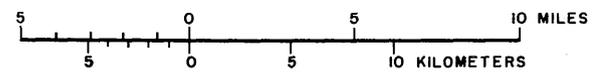
²⁴ *AOK Norwegen Ia, Nr. 231/41, an OKW, WFSt, Abt. L, in Silberfuchs Bd. III, 12.6.41-10.1.42. AOK 20 20844/6. A.O.K. Norwegen K.T.B., 21 Jul 41.*

²⁵ *G.K.N., K.T.B. 1, 23 and 24 Jul 41. A.O.K. Norwegen K.T.B., 23 Jul 41.*

THE SECOND ATTACK ACROSS THE LITSA

13 - 17 July 1941

GERMAN FRONT LINE



Map 11

R. Booth

Murmansk if an additional mountain division were brought in within four weeks.²⁶

During the last week of July Russian pressure continued strong, particularly against the bridgehead; and on the 30th British carrier-based aircraft bombed and strafed Liinahamari and Pechenga.²⁷ The Mountain Corps Norway, meanwhile, brought four battalions into position for a push northeastward from the line Titovka–Bol'shaya Zapadnaya Litsa. The attack, which began on 2 August, progressed rapidly since the Russians had made the mistake of spreading their two battalions thinly along a ten-mile front. By the 5th one battalion had been wiped out and the other, after suffering heavy losses, evacuated to the south shore of Litsa Bay. The threat to the corps flank had been eliminated; and with that the fury of the Russian attacks along the Litsa also abated, indicating that the Russians were shifting to the defensive.²⁸

On 30 July Hitler ordered the 6th Mountain Division transferred to the Mountain Corps Norway, but the division was in Greece and at best could not make the move before the second half of September.²⁹ The Army of Norway, noting that early signs of autumn had already appeared in northern Finland, believed quick action was necessary and asked for at least two regiments from Norway to get the Mountain Corps in motion before the 6th Mountain Division arrived. This request Hitler refused on 5 August, maintaining that there would still be time in September to reopen the attack. But a week later, after General-major Walter Warlimont, Chief of the National Defense Branch, OKW, had investigated the situation of the Mountain Corps Norway on the spot, Hitler changed his mind and permitted the 388th Infantry Regiment and the 9th SS-Infantry Regiment to be withdrawn from Norway so that the Mountain Corps could resume its advance.³⁰

During the rest of August, while the two fresh regiments were being brought up, the Mountain Corps Norway planned a new attack across the Litsa with the objective of creating favorable conditions for a rapid drive toward Murmansk after the 6th Mountain Division arrived. Dietl proposed essentially to repeat the pattern of the last July attack: the

²⁶ OKW, Wfst, Abt. L (I Op.), Nr. 441255/41, an A.O.K. Norwegen, Bef. St. Finnland 24.7.41 and A.O.K. Norwegen, Bef. St. Finnland, Ia, Nr. 44/41, Lagebeurteilung vom 24.7., in A.O.K. Norwegen, K.T.B. Anlagenband 1. AOK 20 19070/2.

²⁷ In July the Finnish "Ivalo" Battalion had advanced to within 12 miles of Ristikent. After a number of small but sharp engagements with the Russians it fell back at the end of the month to the Akka river near the Finnish-Soviet border and thereafter engaged chiefly in patrol activity. The battalion had accomplished its mission of tying down Soviet forces southeast of Murmansk. *Batl. Ivalo, Abschrift von Funkspruch Nr. 153, [I.1.42], in Gebirgskorps Norwegen, Kriegstagebuch Russland 1, Anlagenband 2, XIX AK 15085/4.*

²⁸ G.K.N., K.T.B. 1, 25 Jul–5 Aug 41.

²⁹ OKW, Wfst, Abt. L (I Op.) Nr. 441298/41, an A.O.K. Norwegen, 31.7.41, in *Silberfuchs Bd. III, 16.6.41–10.1.42.* AOK 20 20844/6.

³⁰ OKW, Wfst, Abt. L (I Op.). Nr. 441325/41, an AOK Norwegen Bef. St. Finnland, 5.8.41, and OKW, Wfst, Abt. L (I Op.). Nr. 441375/41, an AOK Norwegen, Bef. St. Finnland, 13.8.41, in *Silberfuchs Bd. III, 16.6.41–10.1.42.* AOK 20 20844/6. A.O.K. Norwegen, K.T.B., 5 and 12 Aug 41.

3d Mountain Division would attack frontally across the river while the 2d Mountain Division pushed south from the bridgehead in the rear of the Russian positions. The objective would be to inflict heavy losses and soften up the enemy rather than to gain ground. The Army of Norway, on the other hand, proposed a thrust directed around the Russian flank from the right flank of the 3d Mountain Division. The thinking at army headquarters was based on experiences of the XXXVI Corps and the 163d Division which had shown the Russians in prepared positions to be particularly insensitive to frontal attacks—invariably they sat tight, forcing the attacking troops to chew through the positions one by one. Against this Dietl argued that, in an arctic wilderness of bare rock hilltops and swampy valleys, envelopments could not gain momentum and quickly bogged down. Taking into account the disadvantages of both courses, the Army of Norway still preferred an envelopment. The final decision came on 25 August when the Commanding General, 3d Mountain Division, concluded that recent improvements in the Russian positions had reduced the prospects for success of a frontal attack and that he could shift his main force several miles farther south for a thrust around the enemy flank.³¹

The Last Attempt

Planning for the new attack centered on three roads: the Russian Road (road names are those used by the Germans), which was the main road to Kola Bay and had been the objective of the July operations of the 3d Mountain Division; the New Road, which branched off from the Russian Road seven miles south of the Litsa Bridge in the narrows between Kuirk and Traun Lakes and ran northward about ten miles to a junction with the Ura Guba Road; and the Ura Guba Road—over most of its length not much more than a path—which after joining the New Road ran up to the positions facing the 2d Mountain Division bridgehead. These roads were the supply routes for the Soviet front on the Litsa. What was perhaps even more important for German operations, the New Road, in particular, if it could be reached, provided a route of march behind the Russian lines.

The Mountain Corps intended to mass two regiments, one mountain regiment and the 9th SS-Regiment, on the left flank of the 2d Mountain Division in the bridgehead, push due east for about two miles, and then swing south behind the chain of lakes to the junction of the Ura Guba and New Roads. The 3d Mountain Division would assemble two regiments south of its right flank for a thrust around the Russian left to the fork of the Russian and New Roads and northward along the New Road until it made contact with the 2d Mountain Division

³¹ *Gen. Kdo. Gebirgskorps Norwegen, Ia, Besuch des Kd. Generals im Raume der 3. Geb. Div. am 24.7.41, in Kriegstagebuch Russland 1, Anlagenband 2. XIX AK 15085/4. G.K.N., K.T.B. 1, 14, 18, 19, 22, and 25 Aug 41. A.O.K. Norwegen, K.T.B., 18 and 22 Aug 41.*

near the junction with the Ura Guba Road. With one regiment, the attached 388th Infantry Regiment, the 3d Mountain Division would launch a secondary attack frontally across the Litsa to take two prominent heights, Pranckh Hill and Brandl Hill, two miles south of the bridge. Having taken the heights, which were the anchor of the Soviet left flank, the regiment would continue east and join the advance along the New Road. The attack was to begin on 8 September.³²

As the Mountain Corps Norway completed its preparations an ominous new development was already exerting influence on the potential outcome of the operation. On 30 August, off the Norwegian north coast, a Russian submarine sank two transports carrying replacements for the Mountain Corps Norway. Seeing the handwriting on the wall, the Army of Norway immediately ordered Dietl to be prepared to carry out his advance on Murmansk without awaiting the arrival of the entire 6th Mountain Division, part of which was scheduled to go by sea. That the division would be seriously delayed became obvious on 7 September when British naval vessels attacked a convoy carrying troops in the vicinity of North Cape. The transports managed to hide in a fiord, but their escort, the artillery training ship *Bremse*, was sunk.³³

Even without regard to doubts concerning the timely arrival of the 6th Mountain Division, the assessment of the forthcoming Mountain Corps Norway operation was strongly pessimistic. On 4 September at army headquarters Buschenhagen informed Jodl, operations chief of the OKW, that the attack was regarded as particularly difficult and that whether Murmansk could be reached before winter depended on the results of the first few days. The army already thought it might be better to use the 6th Mountain Division in the advance on Kandalaksha were it not for Hitler's express desire to take Murmansk as soon as possible. On the following day Dietl told Jodl that, even if the impending attack and subsequent advance on Murmansk were completely successful, it would hardly be possible to reach the west shore of Kola Bay before winter set in (early October). He doubted whether the forces at hand, including the 6th Mountain Division, would be sufficient to accomplish a crossing to the east shore and occupy Murmansk. Moreover, even if the corps reached Murmansk, it could not hope to bring in supplies during the winter either overland from Pechenga or by sea; therefore, the railroad north from Kandalaksha would have to be taken and put into operation if Murmansk were to be held. That the railroad could be secured was entirely uncertain. Jodl could only suggest that the projected attack be carried out leaving the questions whether to continue on to

³² *Gen. Kdo. Gebirgskorps Norwegen, Ia, Nr. 185/41, Befehl zum Angriff des Korps am 6.9., 1.8.41, in Kriegstagebuch Russland 1, Anlagenband 1. XIX AK 15085/2. Gen. Kdo. Gebirgskorps Norwegen, Ia, Lagenkarten 20.u.25., 18.8. u. 7.9.41 in Kriegstagebuch Russland 1, Anlagenband 3. XIX AK 15085/5. G.K.N., K.T.B. 1, 27 Aug and 5 Sep 41.*

³³ *G.K.N., K.T.B. 1, 31 Aug 41. A.O.K. Norwegen, K.T.B., 30 and 31 Aug, 7 Sep 41.*

Murmansk, hold the line reached, or fall back into Finland for Hitler to decide after its conclusion.³⁴

After jumping off as scheduled on 8 September, the divisions by afternoon reported good progress on both flanks. The 2d Mountain Division had broken out of the bridgehead with its left-flank units and had taken Hill 173.7 from which its attack was to swing south. At the same time the right flank regiment of the 3d Mountain Division had pushed to within a mile and a half of the Kuirk Lake narrows.

The 388th Infantry Regiment's attack across the Litsa, however, had failed completely. Two battalions of the regiment crossed the river and made rapid progress up the slopes of Pranchh Hill and Brandl Hill, but, as soon as the artillery preparation lifted, the Russians began to fire from positions which had been bypassed in the hasty advance. Two companies moving up in column formation were caught in fire from both sides. By early afternoon their situation was desperate, and the regimental commander asked permission to pull his troops back behind the river as the only means of avoiding complete destruction of his regiment, which had already suffered 60 percent losses in one battalion. Late in the day the regiment withdrew to the left bank of the Litsa. How good a chance had been lost became clear after it was learned that a large number of Russian troops had been bivouacked in the open behind the two hills.

The danger of a too rapid advance by inexperienced troops was demonstrated for a second time that day in the 2d Mountain Division sector. Two battalions of the 9th SS-Regiment staged a quick sweep which carried them over and beyond Hill 173.7, but later, when bypassed Russians opened fire in the rear and those in front counterattacked with mortar and artillery support, the SS-men broke and ran. One battalion commander left the field, and the other recovered control of his troops only after the 2d Mountain Division had committed mountain troops to regain the lost ground.³⁵

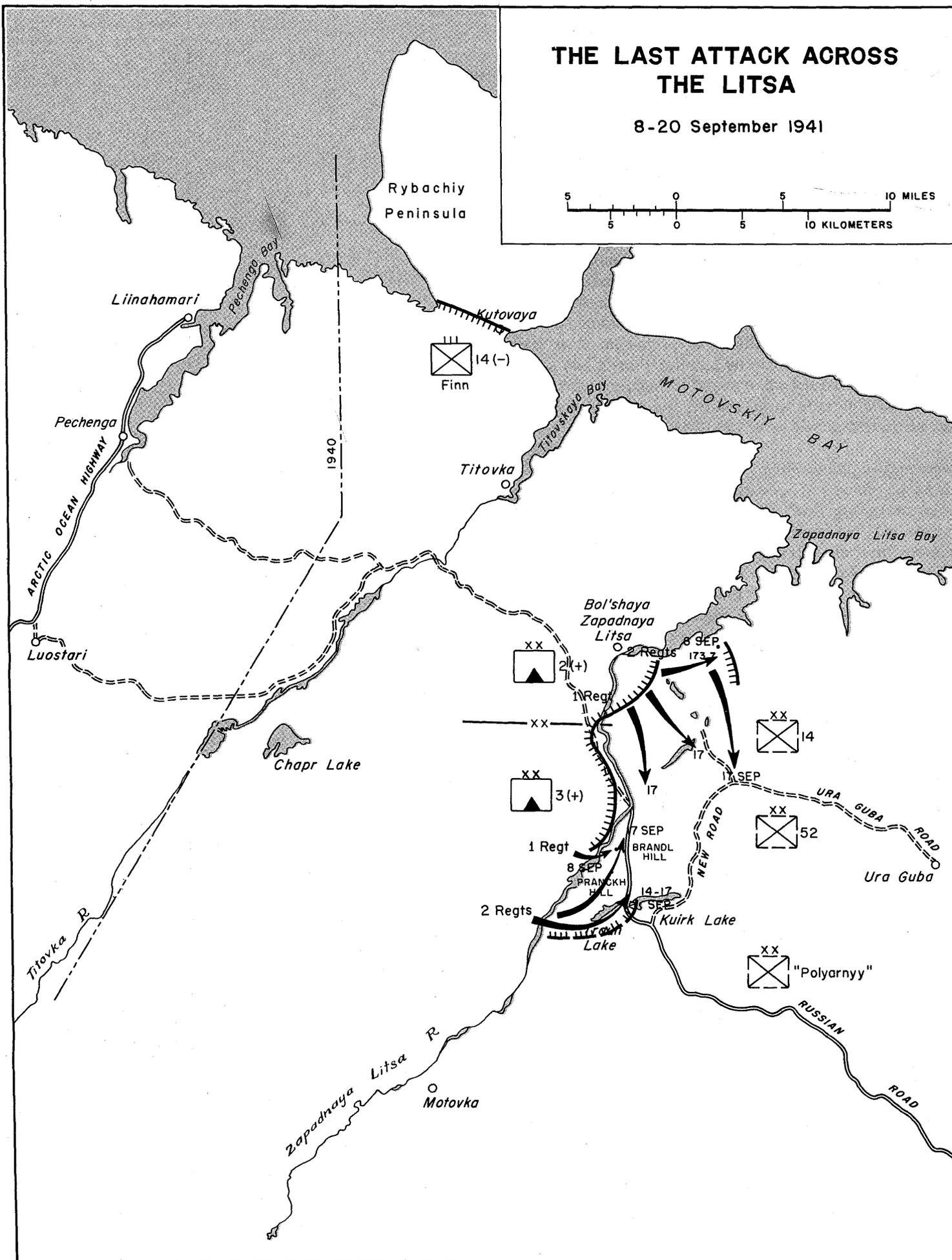
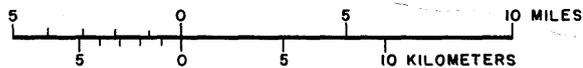
On the second day, after the 2d Mountain Division had managed to push about three miles to the south, the Russians tied it down in heavy counterattacks. With one regiment in the assault and one in reserve and holding the flanks, the 3d Mountain Division advanced to within 300 yards of the Russian Road–New Road fork but there ran into prepared positions, held by approximately a regiment, and had to halt while it brought up artillery and supplies. On the 10th, while Russian counterattacks tied down both divisions, the 3d Mountain Division estimated it would need another 24 hours to bring up supplies. Early the next morning Falkenhorst was on the phone wanting to know the reason

³⁴ *G.K.N., K.T.B. 1*, 5 Sep 41. *A.O.K. Norwegen, K.T.B.*, 4 Sep 41.

³⁵ *Gen. Kdo. Gebirgskorps Norwegen, Ia, Besuch des Kd. Generals im Raum der 3. Geb. Div., 10.9.41*, and *Besprechung Kd. General mit Gen. Mjr. Schlemmer am Div. Gef. Stand, 11.9.41*, in *Kriegstagebuch Russland 1, Anlagenband 2*. XIX AK 15085/4. *G.K.N., K.T.B. 1*, 8 and 10 Sep 41.

THE LAST ATTACK ACROSS THE LITSA

8-20 September 1941





Engineer using jackhammer to break up rocks for the construction of positions on the Litsa River front.

for the delay. Dietl replied that under existing terrain conditions all movement and preparation was slow and time consuming.

On the 12th the 2d Mountain Division resumed its attack southward gaining about a mile, most of which it lost again during the night when the Russians counterattacked. Still not ready, the 3d Mountain Division set its attack for the 13th and then had to postpone it for another twenty-four hours when the Russians attacked just as the division was about to jump off. Ammunition was running low in both divisions since pack animals were the only form of transport to the forward positions, and they could carry only about enough to sustain defensive operations. On the 14th the 3d Mountain Division threw both of its regiments into the attack and at nightfall had possession of the lake narrows; but by then the strain of fighting for a week in cold, rainy weather was telling on both divisions, and for the next two days they limited themselves to local attacks and patrol activity.³⁶

As the Mountain Corps operation proceeded at a desultory pace developments elsewhere were deciding its outcome. After the loss of two freighters off the north coast of Norway on 12 and 13 September, the Army of Norway learned on the 13th that all shipping to ports east of North Cape had been halted. On the same day the supply officer of

³⁶ G.K.N., K.T.B. 1, 8-16 Sep 41.

the Mountain Corps Norway reported that the ammunition on hand amounted to about one and one-half basic loads; there were enough rations to last until the end of September; and the motor fuel stored at Pechenga was enough for nine days with another nine days' supply at Kirkenes.³⁷

The Army of Norway, concluding that the arrival of the 6th Mountain Division would increase the supply difficulties of the Mountain Corps and that the prospects of taking Murmansk were not good in any case, proposed to divert the division to the attack on Kandalaksha. Hitler, however, in a conference with Falkenhorst at Fuehrer Headquarters on the 15th, decided that, although the intention of reaching Murmansk in the current year would have to be abandoned, the attack in progress should be allowed to run its course while the 6th Mountain Division moved up and prepared to relieve the 2d and 3d Mountain Divisions. The 6th Mountain Division would hold the line during the winter and be in a favorable position to resume the drive on Murmansk in the spring.³⁸

After Falkenhorst's visit to Fuehrer Headquarters, Hitler and Jodl proposed that the Navy employ its battleships to clear the sea lanes around the arctic coast of Norway. Raeder refused to do so, arguing that the enemy could always muster superior forces against battleships used on defensive missions.³⁹ The Germans assumed that the British had found their weak spot and were making a determined effort to block the arctic sea route. From the British side the situation was viewed quite differently. On 23 July, in response to Russian calls for help, the Admiralty had sent out a token force of two aircraft carriers, two cruisers, and six destroyers. At the end of the month the aircraft raided Kirkenes, Pechenga, and Liinahamari; but, since the losses of planes were high and no shipping was encountered at sea, the operation was deemed unprofitable and the force returned to Scapa. A second force of two cruisers and two destroyers sailed on 19 August to evacuate the inhabitants of Spitzbergen and destroy the coal mines. The cruisers of that force on their way home encountered and sank the *Bremse*. At the end of August two cruisers and an aircraft carrier escorted an old carrier and a freighter loaded with fighter planes to Arkhangel'sk. On the return trip in early September they sank one freighter off Norway, but this result was regarded as hardly justifying the effort expended. A greater danger to German shipping in September came from 11 submarines which the Russians had stationed off the north Norwegian coast. Nevertheless, in assessing the situation on 14 September Falkenhorst concluded that, while the submarine threat could be reduced by

³⁷ *Gen. Kdo. Gebirgskorps Norwegen, Ia, Vortrag des Quartiermeisters beim Chef des Stabes ueber die Versorgungslage am 13.9.41*, in *Kriegstagebuch Russland 1, Anlagenband 2*. XIX AK 15085/4.

³⁸ *A.O.K. Norwegen, K.T.B.*, 13, 15, and 17 Sep 41.

³⁹ *Fuehrer Conferences*, 1941, II, pp. 34 and 51ff.

reinforcing the subchaser and escort forces, the British surface vessels posed an insuperable problem. The British, intent mainly on the political objective of giving the Russians a visible show of support, had accomplished more than they knew.⁴⁰

On 18 September Dietl and the army chief of staff decided that the Mountain Corps offensive would have to be halted. It was not producing the desired results; and the prospects looked poor since the Russians, in addition to replacing the losses of their two divisions at the front, had, according to intelligence reports received during the last two or three days, succeeded in creating a third division, the so-called "Polyarnyy" Division, composed of sailors, prisoners, and labor camp inmates. Above all, the attack would have to be stopped because of the supply situation. Buschenhagen again raised the possibility of using the 6th Mountain Division in the operation against Kandalaksha, but Dietl replied that his corps was completely worn out and would not get through the winter unless it were relieved.⁴¹

In the meantime the Mountain Corps Norway offensive was approaching the point of collapse. On 17 September the 3d Mountain Division took Pranckh Hill and Brandl Hill in an attack from the south. On the same day, a new Russian regiment was reported approaching the southern flank of the division. After fighting off heavy Russian counterattacks on the 18th, the Commanding General, 3d Mountain Division, on the following morning informed corps headquarters that the Russians had brought up reinforcements: two regiments of the "Polyarnyy" Division had been identified on the division front. The Russians were attacking continuously, and losses were mounting hourly. The long front, extending in a salient from the Litsa to the lake narrows and back to the Litsa again in the vicinity of Pranckh and Brandl Hills, could only be thinly held. In fact, the division commander could not guarantee that it could be held at all. To avoid complete destruction of his division, he requested permission to withdraw to the west bank of the river. Although the situation was perhaps not as serious as he thought, since the regiments of the "Polyarnyy" Division had no more than a total strength of 1,000 men each, that was not known at the time; and Dietl at noon reluctantly agreed to let the division withdraw.⁴²

By the morning of the 24th the 3d Mountain Division held only Pranckh Hill and Brandl Hill east of the river, and those were given up two days later. On the 21st the Army of Norway canceled the offensive, with the exception that the 2d Mountain Division operations were to continue as far as was necessary to acquire good defensive positions for

⁴⁰ *A.O.K. Norwegen, Bef. St. Finnland, Ia, Nr. 64/41, Beurteilung der Lage am 14.9.41, in Silberfuchs, Br. III, 12.6.41-10.1.42. AOK 20 20844/6. Roskill, op. cit., pp. 488-90 and 493.*

⁴¹ *A.O.K. Norwegen, Bef. St. Finnland, Abt. Ic, Az. D 11, Nr. 1438/41, Feindlage vom 18.9.-2.10.41, in A.O.K. Norwegen, Ic, Anlagen zum K.T.B. 1. AOK 20 25353/1. G.K.N., K.T.B. 1, 18 Sep 41. A.O.K. Norwegen, K.T.B., 18 Sep 41.*

⁴² *G.K.N., K.T.B. 1, 17-19 Sep 41.*

the winter. Two days later a Fuehrer Directive confirmed the army order. In the directive Hitler raised the question whether it might still be possible to occupy the western half of the Rybatchiy Peninsula before winter. Both army and corps answered that, while such an undertaking might remove the danger of Russian artillery fire in the entrance to the harbor at Pechenga, it would also lengthen the front and should not be attempted. Thereafter the Mountain Corps Norway settled down to constructing winter positions. In mid-October the 6th Mountain Division moved up to take over the line while the 2d Mountain Division withdrew to the vicinity of Pechenga and the 3d Mountain Division, which had been in the arctic since April 1940, moved into southern Finland on the first stage of its return to Germany.

The decision to transfer the 3d Mountain Division out of Finland was made without reference to the demands of the tactical situation and was completely determined by political considerations. In the general decline of morale which followed the setbacks suffered during the summer campaign the division was particularly affected. One of the then current rumors had it that the 3d Mountain Division was being kept in the arctic as part of a plot to exterminate the Austrians. (Most of the division personnel was Austrian.) Finally, one of the soldiers who was a Nazi Party member complained to the party authorities; and, since there were at the same time signs of unrest in the Austrian provinces, the matter was taken through party channels to Hitler, who ordered the division transferred.⁴³

Summary

In a two and one-half months' campaign, at a cost of 10,290 casualties, the Mountain Corps Norway had advanced about 15 miles. With respect to the attainment of its objective, Murmansk, it was not appreciably better off at the end of the campaign than it had been at the beginning. Operation PLATINFUCHS had misfired.

PLATINFUCHS could be said to have run its course by 17 July when Dietl reported that with the forces at its disposal the Mountain Corps Norway could no longer execute its mission. The failure of the operation to a certain extent resulted logically from the terms under which it was conceived. Because of Hitler's insistence on maintaining the defenses of Norway at full strength, the force for PLATINFUCHS had been determined by what could be spared in Norway and not by the requirements of the operation. For that reason expectations concerning the outcome of PLATINFUCHS had remained vague. The Army of Norway set Polyarnny as a definite objective and left the occupation of Murmansk

⁴³ General der Infanterie a.D. Erich Buschenhagen, Comments on Part II of *The German Northern Theater of Operations, 1940-1945*, May 1957. *G.K.N., K.T.B. I*, 24-26 and 29 Sep 41; 13 and 25 Oct 41. *A.O.K. Norwegen, K.T.B.*, 23, 24, and 29 Sep 41; 18 Nov 41.

for a later decision, which corresponded approximately to Hitler's instructions that Murmansk was to be hemmed in and occupied in the further course of operations if sufficient forces were available. The OKW directive of 7 April was completely indefinite, stating only that it remained to be seen whether enough strength could be mustered for a thrust to Polyarnny after security had been provided for northern Norway and Pechenga. On 15 May, after Dietl had reported that expert opinion in the Scandinavian countries considered the terrain between Pechenga and Murmansk completely unsuitable for military operations in summer, Jodl had replied that all the difficulties were known to the OKW, that only the occupation of Pechenga was desired as a certainty, and that anything beyond that would be considered a gift.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, it had been assumed that the occupation of Murmansk would be a likely outcome of PLATINFUCHS and that, in any event, the Mountain Corps Norway would be master of the situation militarily. No one anticipated that the corps would be fought to a standstill before it had achieved a position which could be considered even remotely promising. This error resulted from a false appraisal of the enemy and the terrain. Contrary to expectations, the Russians fought with skill and determination, proving themselves to be masters in the construction of defensive positions and nerveless in the tenacity with which they held their ground. Moreover, not even Dietl, despite his warning to Jodl, was fully aware of the extent to which the terrain would influence operations by braking the momentum of even limited attacks and by affording an endless succession of excellent defensive positions. Added to this was faulty knowledge of the local geography. One road which had been counted on for use was nonexistent, and the other was hardly more than a path west of the Litsa, a state of affairs made doubly serious by the fact that the Russians had a sea route and a reasonably good road from Kola Bay to the Litsa.

The second and final phase of the Mountain Corps Norway operations was primarily an attempt to revive PLATINFUCHS by building the strength of the corps up to a level commensurate with the requirements of its mission, which Hitler then for the first time definitely made the capture of Murmansk. It failed when the closing of the sea route around northern Norway delayed the arrival of the 6th Mountain Division and brought the Mountain Corps to the verge of paralysis. The two roads, Reichsstrasse 50 from Narvik (400 miles) and the Arctic Ocean Highway from Rovaniemi (300 miles), were both of very limited capacity. The Russians, on the other hand, had the Murmansk Railroad which they were able to use to bring up replacements and to begin creating a

⁴⁴ *Gen. Kdo. Gebirgskorps Norwegen, Ia, Sonderanlage zum Taetigkeitsbericht April, Mai, Juni 1941*, in *Gebirgskorps Norwegen, Kriegstagebuch Russland 1, Anlagenband 30, XIX AK 15085/33*.

new division.⁴⁵ The collapse of the Mountain Corps supply line, however, did not take place before the corps, employing two fresh—if not first-rate—regiments, had been stopped dead in its tracks for a third time by the Russian line on the Litsa. Dietl himself concluded that the Russians, drawing on their seemingly inexhaustible manpower reserves and exploiting the highly favorable terrain for a defense in depth, would have prevented his breaking through to Murmansk even with the 6th Mountain Division.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ In September 1941 Hitler ordered his construction chief, Dr. Fritz Todt, to build a narrow gauge railroad from Rovaniemi to Pechenga using Russian prisoners of war as labor. The project was first postponed because of the impossibility of laying a roadbed over arctic ground in winter and was then dropped when it was learned that the railroad would have to be built all the way from the Gulf of Bothnia because the Finnish line below Rovaniemi did not have the capacity to sustain a new line in the north. Instead, the Germans began building a road from the Porsanger Fiord in Norway to Ivalo on the Arctic Ocean Highway. It was to play an important part in the 1944 withdrawal from Finland.

⁴⁶ Letter Dietl to Jodl 23 Sep 41 in Dietl, *op. cit.*, pp. 231ff.