

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

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

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

General Remarks on Administration 13-24 May.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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