

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

18. From there, I proceeded in company with General Rugé and Colonel Pollock to visit His Majesty The King, whom I found living some miles out (1½ hours in car) in a fishing lodge, approached by a muddy path. The Crown Prince was with him. I spent about ¾ hour