

by dense fog. During the nights 30th/1st and 1st/2nd evacuation was successfully carried out from Åndalsnes. On 1st May thick fog off Namsos prevented the ships entering the harbour. The whole evacuation of Namsos was however successfully carried out on the night of the 2nd/3rd, the last ship leaving at 0220 hours, and a total of 5,400 having been embarked during that night, an operation for which the greatest credit is due to the Naval forces employed.

11. During the whole of the 3rd the convoy was continually bombed on its passage across the North Sea. It has been reported to me that one German aeroplane continually shadowed it whilst relays of bombers came up, presumably directed by the shadowing aeroplane. That the losses were not heavier than they were is evidence of remarkable luck. The presence of some long range fighters during the day would have been invaluable, but none were available owing to question of range.

PART II.

OPERATIONS AT NAM SOS.

12. On 14th April Major-General Carton de Wiart was informed by the War Office that it had been decided to land an allied expedition in Central Norway, and that the operation was to be carried out independently of the landings already begun in the Narvik area.

13. Major-General Carton de Wiart was given written instructions (Appendix "C") on 14th April appointing him in command of the Allied forces being despatched to Central Norway, and his role was defined as "to secure the Trondheim area." He was informed that the Royal Navy were making preliminary landings in the Namsos area with landing parties about 300 strong in all, in order to seize and hold points at which disembarkation of Allied forces might subsequently take place.

The written instructions suggested the initial landing of army formations should be in the Namsos area and that this should be carried out by 146th and 148th Infantry Brigades and Chasseurs Alpins, after the Royal Navy had cleared the Trondheim fjord of German vessels.

It must be mentioned here that at the time these instructions were issued 146th Infantry Brigade was at sea with orders to land in the Narvik area; that 148th Infantry Brigade (less one battalion) was diverted to Åndalsnes; that 147th Infantry Brigade never sailed from the United Kingdom.

14. On the evening of 15th April General Carton de Wiart, with a junior staff officer, arrived at Namsos in a flying boat to confer with the naval landing parties who had already established a footing there. The flying boat and the destroyer "Somali" lying in the Namsen Fjord were repeatedly attacked by German aircraft with bombs and machine-gun fire, and General Carton de Wiart's staff officer was wounded. Meanwhile 146th Infantry Brigade had been ordered, while at sea, to go to Namsos instead of Narvik, but it was evident that the landing of these troops direct from transports was not a feasible operation at Namsos, and that they would have to be transferred to destroyers at Lillesjone and then taken to Namsos on two successive days.

15. On 16th April the first battalion arrived and were disposed to cover Namsos and

Bangsund, the remainder of 146th Infantry Brigade getting ashore during the 17th April. By the 19th April, this brigade having moved Southward from Namsos, was disposed as follows:—

Advanced Brigade Headquarters at Steinkjer.

One battalion—about Steinkjer.

One battalion—in the area South of Steinkjer including Verdal and Stiklestad.

One battalion—in the area North of Steinkjer including Bangsund.

These dispositions gave General Carton de Wiart control of the roads and railways leading Northwards from Trondheim, and placed him in a favourable position to co-operate with any direct attack on Trondheim which might be developed from seaward.

16. During the night of 19th/20th April the 5th Demi-Brigade of Chasseurs Alpins arrived in Namsos under General Audet, but with the indifferent port facilities there it was impossible to clear the two small jetties during the hours of darkness. Consequently on the following morning the large quantity of supplies, munitions and stores lying at the jetties was spotted by enemy aircraft, and for two hours the quay, station and western half of Namsos town were heavily bombed. The station and most of the town were destroyed, and one of the two jetties was badly damaged.

The French Demi-Brigade was put into billets and bivouacs close round Namsos, and, while they were settling in, General Carton de Wiart visited the headquarters of 146th Infantry Brigade at Steinkjer and met there the commander of the local Norwegian forces. So far no British troops had been in contact with German land forces.

17. At about 0600 hours on 21st April an enemy detachment of some 400 men landed at Kirkenesvaag and began to advance on Sandvollan and Strømmen. Other German landings were carried out at Hylla and Trones-tangen, and an attack was directed on Verdal. The enemy land forces were supported by war-ships operating in the Trondheim fiord.

These German landings presented a serious threat to the flank and rear of 146th Infantry Brigade who were severely hampered by having no artillery and by their inability to move anywhere off the roads on account of the deep snow.

During the afternoon of 21st April enemy aircraft were also active; Steinkjer was bombed and reduced to a flaming mass of ruins, and the roads from Steinkjer to Verdal and Stiklestad were machine-gunned and bombed.

18. In view of these events and the inability of the British infantry to operate off the roads, General Carton de Wiart decided to withdraw 146th Infantry Brigade into a position north of Steinkjer where its flanks could not be threatened, and issued orders to that effect.

During the withdrawal a German destroyer was very active with its gun fire, and enemy mortar and light artillery fire was directed upon the British battalions. In addition 4 Lincolns were attacked about Steinkjer by German ski troops and had somewhat heavy casualties. By 24th April the Brigade was established in its new position north of Steinkjer, having carried out the withdrawal in very trying conditions.