

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

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

Norwegian Government have not repetition not yet been informed."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"IMMEDIATE.

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

Following from Foreign Office.

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

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

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