

" A." The situation at Namsos did not materially alter during this or the following day, though bombing of this port and Åndalsnes continued. Both towns had been completely destroyed, and as the nights were getting shorter, the amount of unloading which could be undertaken was becoming progressively less.

6. During 26th April the situation at Namsos did not materially alter. From reports received from the South however it became increasingly obvious that in the face of artillery and mortar fire and incessant bombing, to none of which the Allied troops could effectively reply, the German advance could not be stopped. General Paget stated it as his opinion that his troops could not endure for more than four days unless adequate air support was forthcoming. During the whole of this day the bombing of Åndalsnes and Namsos continued and the possibility of these ports being rendered inoperative as bases had to be faced. During the afternoon I became aware of the previous day's failure of the Gladiators to operate from a shorebased aerodrome, and it then became evident to me that the chances of our getting any air support which would enable us in any way to compete with the German air menace had practically vanished. I was convinced that evacuation would therefore be necessary. I reported my views verbally to the C.I.G.S. who informed me that the Chiefs of Staff had that morning been considering the possibility of re-instituting a modified operation for the direct attack on Trondheim, and had come to the conclusion that it would take some ten days to mount. I understood from him that, in view of the situation, the Chiefs of Staff were not prepared to recommend this course to the Government as they doubted, as I did, whether the forces in Southern Norway could hold on long enough to enable the operation to be put into effect.

7. Accordingly next morning, 27th April, I wrote an appreciation of the situation which convinced me that evacuation was necessary and that there were two main ways of doing it. In the first case, as we had few stores and little heavy equipment ashore we might, by means of a rapid evacuation of personnel only, cut our losses to the lowest level. In the second, by continuing to send anti-aircraft guns and artillery, and possibly subsequently further infantry, we might be able to hold the position for some time longer. This however would undoubtedly involve the loss of large quantities of valuable material and certainly heavy casualties in personnel. The period could not be sufficient to allow of any direct attack on Trondheim being planned and mounted. In my opinion the correct solution was a rapid withdrawal with the object of reducing our losses to the lowest possible figure.

That evening I was sent for to report to the Military Co-ordinating Committee. My report was in terms similar to those I have stated above and the Committee agreed that the evacuation was to take place and approved instructions (App. " B ") given to me for the purpose. To relieve the pressure on General Paget's force the Air Ministry were requested to attack with bombers the Germans in the Gudbrandsdal valley and their communications, but this was found impossible.

8. During the 28th, plans for the evacuation were concerted with Admiralty representatives and orders were issued to both General Carton de Wiart and General Paget as to how the evacuation was to be carried out. The evacuation of the French was commenced on the night of the 28th/29th and arrangements were made for the evacuation of the remaining troops from Namsos to be completed on the nights of the 1st/2nd and 2nd/3rd May. Plans for the evacuation of Åndalsnes were for the evacuation to be carried out on two nights, 1st/2nd, and 2nd/3rd May, but the plan was made sufficiently elastic so that if necessary the process of evacuation from this latter port could be put forward 24 hours. It had been planned when the force was evacuated from Namsos that a rearguard should fall back by land to Mosjoen retiring in the face of the enemy, and that in the meantime a party should be sent by sea to ensure holding the latter port against enemy troops landed by parachute from the air, and orders to this effect were issued. General Carton de Wiart opposed this plan on the grounds that owing to lack of petrol and transport and more important still, the fact that the road during the thaw was practically impassable, the operation would be likely to end in disaster.

Subsequent telegrams did not induce him to alter his view and even the passage by the land route of a small party of French Chasseurs was by him deemed impossible. My final wire on this subject was to the effect that if in the opinion of General Audet the retirement of a small rearguard of French Chasseurs by the land route was impossible, this operation was not to take place. It was evident that, if French Chasseurs could not retire along this route, the Germans could not advance along it. In the event no withdrawal by land did take place, though this was an error as the Germans have since made full use of this route, and have advanced so rapidly along it that our troops in Mosjoen have not had time to get properly established and it is more than likely that we shall not be able to hold the place.

9. During the 29th the situation on the Namsos front did not alter. Forces operating to the southward were withdrawn to a position 3 miles south of Dombås which position General Paget proposed to hold until the night of the 30th/1st to cover the evacuation. On this day owing to urgent representations from Åndalsnes it was decided to make the dates of evacuation from this port the nights of 30th/1st and 1st/2nd and the necessary arrangements for shipping were made accordingly. Further requests that long range bombers should be directed against the enemy troops and his Lines of Communication were made to the Air Ministry who were, however, as far as I am aware, unable to comply with them. During the day however Blenheim fighters were despatched to the area and their presence resulted in the immediate disappearance of enemy bombers for the period during which the Blenheims were able to remain over the area.

10. In the early hours of the 30th April a party of 340 personnel, mostly wounded, were embarked on H.M.S. Fleetwood from Åndalsnes and at 1900 hours H.M.S. Janus embarked 100 men and two Bofors guns at Namsos and conveyed them during the night to Mosjoen, where they arrived on 2nd May having been delayed