

marines of WARSPITE, SOUTHAMPTON, AURORA, PENELOPE and disabled destroyers.

6. Owing, however, to the difficult W/T conditions peculiar to this region, the message was not received by the SOUTHAMPTON until too late to take action, and her whereabouts were not ascertained until communicated by Admiralty, from whence also was received a message in which appeared:—

"We think it imperative that you and General should be together and act together and that no attack should be made except in concert . . ."

7. The AURORA proceeded for Harstad, meeting the Troop Convoy carrying the 24th Brigade, etc., off the entrance to And Fiord and leading it into harbour on the morning of the 15th.

When approaching the anchorage with the Destroyers BRAZEN (Lieutenant-Commander Sir Michael Culme-Seymour, Bt.) and FEARLESS (Commander K. L. Harkness) acting as A/S screen, the latter obtained a contact with and both smartly engaged and sank U.49, the crew being rescued practically intact.

8. The Convoy was anchored in Bygden Fiord and disembarkation carried out at once.

This operation was subjected to an air attack the same afternoon, and again on April 16th but no damage was sustained.

The transports sailed for the U.K. in the early hours of April 17th.

9. The disembarkation was effected by use of Destroyers and large numbers of local craft (small steamers and motor fishing ketches called "puffers").

Later, in order to expedite matters, the PROTECTOR (Captain W. Y. la R. Beverley) was used, and thus began a career of extreme usefulness carried out with conspicuous zeal.

10. On April 15th, I met General Mackesy for the first time and was astonished to hear that not only was his force embarked as for a peaceful landing and consequently was unready for immediate operations but that the orders he had received, and given to him just prior to sailing, ruled out any idea of attempting an opposed landing. Thus the General and myself left the U.K. with diametrically opposite views as to what was required.

11. The arrangement of the remainder of my report is as follows:—

Section II. Proceedings from 15th April to 23rd May, together with an account of relations with the Norwegian Government.

Section III. A/A Protective Measures.

Section IV. The Development of the Base Defences.

Section V. A Summary of the Events in the Mosjoen-Mo-Bodo Area.

Section VI. The Final Operations for the Capture of Narvik.

Section VII. The Evacuation.

SECTION II

PROCEEDINGS FROM 15TH APRIL TO 23RD MAY TOGETHER WITH AN ACCOUNT OF RELATIONS WITH THE NORWEGIAN GOVERNMENT.

1. The use of Harstad—itsself on an island—as Military Headquarters and main point of disembarkation for military personnel and stores

meant that the Navy had a very large area to protect against submarines and aircraft, while at the same time maintaining offensive patrols to harass the enemy in the region of Narvik itself. A chart accompanies this report so that distances involved and the geographical lay-out of the campaign may be appreciated. The protection of Skjelfiord where the PENELOPE and other damaged ships lay, and had to be rendered seaworthy, was a commitment until 10th May.

2. The unloading of transports was a continual difficulty. There were but two wharves at Harstad and the average rate of discharge was 2 ships in 5 days. Disembarkation of personnel was done for the most part while ships were in Bygden anchorage and to facilitate this work PROTECTOR and destroyers had to be used. Large numbers of local craft were hired for this and other water transport purposes in the whole area of the operations but were not always reliable as, upon sound of an air raid warning, they scattered away into the fiords and took a considerable time to return afterwards. During the 8 weeks of the operations there were over 140 air raids in Harstad causing a considerable loss of time and work. A withdrawal of the warning system resulted in a strike among the Norwegian labourers and small craft men. The subject of A/A measures and protection is dealt with in a separate chapter of this report. In addition to the landing at Harstad, troops were put ashore at Salangen in Sagfiord on the 15th April and contact was made with Norwegian forces in that area. Advance southward was effected from both places; the Headquarters of the 24th Brigade being established at Bogen in Ofotfiord later.

3. Instead of attempting to take Narvik by assault it was decided for reasons that have been reported separately to carry out a bombardment in the hope that the nerve of the enemy already reported affected, might be so shattered thereby that he would surrender the town. The expected thaw had not come and the snow still lay everywhere several feet thick, rendering movement very difficult by any but experienced and specially equipped troops. The AURORA (Captain Louis Hamilton), was established as Senior Officer in Ofotfiord and with the ships under his orders maintained a steady and harassing pressure on the enemy. The bombardment took place on 24th April; EFFINGHAM (in which I was accompanied by General Mackesy and Brigadier Fraser), WARSPITE, AURORA, ENTERPRISE, ZULU taking part. The bitter weather conditions, heavy snowstorms and low visibility prevented any aerial activity on either side. Troops were carried in the VINDICTIVE in case the morale of the defenders should appear to be so affected as to give a promising opportunity to land. The climatic conditions were, however, entirely against any such undertaking and the low visibility entirely prevented any estimate of the effect achieved by the bombardment.

4. On the 25th April there was further heavy fall of snow and, as weather conditions compelled postponement of any direct attack on Narvik, attention was given to movements of troops designed to bring pressure on the enemy to the north and south of the Narvik peninsula. Ballangen on the south side of Vestfiord was occupied on the 26th. The first French troops were disembarked on the 28th; two Battalions