

75. Arrangements were therefore made to send two destroyers to embark 500 men each at 2300 hrs. 29th May and three destroyers on each of the two succeeding nights 30th and 31st May, to embark two further parties of 1,500 men each. Early on 26th May when the orders to prepare for the evacuation reached Brigadier Gubbins, the main position held by his Force was some 40 miles from Bodo, in the neighbourhood of Fauske.

Orders were issued by Brigadier Gubbins for two Independent Companies and administrative details to concentrate at Bodo at once and for the withdrawal from the position north of Fauske to start next day.

76. The general plan was that the 1st Bn. Irish Guards and three Independent Companies, which were all under the command of Lt.-Col. Stockwell, should withdraw from the position held north of Fauske and pass through the Scots Guards who were to be placed in position on a neck of land between the sea and a lake near Hopen.

Having passed through the Scots Guards the Irish Guards and the Independent Companies were to move straight to Bodo and embark.

The third battalion of the 24th Guards Brigade, namely the 2nd Bn. The South Wales Borderers, was to be placed in position across the Bodo peninsula further to the west astride Lake Soloi.

The withdrawal of the Irish Guards and the Independent Companies was carried out without interference from the enemy's land forces, though the rear party passed through the Hopen position less than an hour before the enemy's advanced troops, consisting of cyclists and machine guns, made contact with the Scots Guards.

The enemy were at once engaged and the bridge at Hopen was destroyed. This checked the pursuit and the Germans made no movement during the next day.

During the withdrawal on the last night the enemy again followed up with cyclists and machine guns, but no serious pressure developed and no delay occurred.

One company from the Scots Guards and one company from the South Wales Borderers with four 25-pr. guns were placed in position some 4 kilometres east of the town and formed the final rearguards. These companies withdrew to the quay without difficulty by previously reconnoitred routes.

77. During the three days covering the period of the re-embarkation several bombing attacks were carried out by the enemy on Bodo and its vicinity, but during none of the three periods when the actual embarkation of troops was in progress was there any interference from enemy aircraft in spite of the fact that there was continual daylight. This was probably due to unfavourable flying conditions during the first two days. On the last day however, the weather cleared.

The times chosen were round about midnight when enemy air activity was normally at its lowest.

Fortunately the quay at Bodo had not suffered from enemy air attacks and this enabled destroyers to go alongside without difficulty. The embarkations were carried through with great rapidity, 500 men of one battalion embarking with their kits in less than ten minutes.

78. The swiftness and efficiency with which the evacuation was carried out reflects great credit on Brigadier Gubbins and his staff. The destroyers of the Royal Navy were very well handled and carried out the programme laid down to the minute. Four 25-pr. guns, four Bofors guns, and three Bren carriers which had been salvaged from *H.M.S. Effingham* had to be abandoned together with such material as could not be moved by the men, but some wireless sets and all the arms and equipment, including Bren guns and anti-tank rifles, which could be carried by the men, were brought away.

79. The first echelon to be embarked were transferred at sea from the destroyers to *H.M.S. Vindictive* and conveyed direct to the United Kingdom. Owing to the fact that transports for the second and third echelons had not arrived in time to admit of their direct transshipment, the troops comprised in these were landed at Borkenes to the east of Harstad and re-embarked later as part of the general evacuation programme.

#### *General considerations in the evacuation of Norway.*

80. As mentioned already His Majesty's Government's orders to evacuate Northern Norway were received by Lord Cork and communicated at once by him to me. The information was passed on by me to a few selected senior staff officers. General Bethouart was informed by me in Lord Cork's presence.

The news was not imparted to my heads of services or to junior staff officers until May 29th. In the meanwhile, though many steps were taken in preparation for evacuation, such as the loading of arms and stores in ships and the embarkation of certain personnel, the deception was maintained and fostered by all possible means that these activities were concerned with the reinforcement of Bodo, the establishment of the Tromsø base or the occupation of Hammerfest and the landing ground in the far North. Thanks to the loyalty and discretion of those concerned, the secret was well kept, and even those who might have suspected were kept constantly confused by conflicting rumours and bogus instructions sedulously circulated by those staff officers in the know.

81. The successful French operations round Narvik resulted in there being three Polish battalions in the area Ankenes-Beisford in touch with the enemy north east of the latter place. East of Narvik the Foreign Legion had made steady progress toward Sildvik and had met with increasing enemy resistance. A Norwegian battalion was in Narvik. On the north shore of the Rombaks Fjord a battalion of Chasseurs was in close touch with German outposts opposite Stromsnes, while General Fleischer's 6th Norwegian Division (5 battalions) were holding from the left of the Chasseurs to the Swedish frontier north of Bjornefjell, also in touch with the enemy.

General Bethouart was particularly anxious that the withdrawal of his troops should not compromise or endanger the Norwegian troops in his sector. The original programme of evacuation was timed to begin on the night 2nd/3rd June, but was postponed 24 hours at the urgent request of Sir Cecil Dormer in order to enable the Norwegian Government to try to implement the so called "Mowinkel Plan" through the Swedish Government and so ensure that Narvik should become a neutral area under