

My instructions, as I understood them, were to capture Trondheim, and I decided that the first step towards this end must be to stop the German advance from Oslo, and then to plan a deliberate combined operation for the capture of Trondheim itself.

I record below a narrative of the operations which took place and the various decisions arrived at as the turn of events required. I have purposely kept this report as short as possible, fuller details on subjects which may require consideration will be forwarded separately to the War Office.

2. In accordance with my instructions I assumed direct control of operations on 22nd April. In view of the fact that my Headquarters were still in the process of forming and were not in a position to operate as such, orders were issued by my Staff in collaboration with the Staff of the War Office. This unusual and difficult position was made workable by the co-operation and assistance not only of the Military Operations Directorate but also of the numerous War Office branches which were necessarily consulted and whose aid was invoked during the period of operations.

Briefly, the situation in Southern Norway when I assumed command was as follows:—

In the area South of Trondheim Brigadier H. de R. Morgan with the 148th Infantry Brigade (1/5 Leicesters and 8 Foresters) was in the Lillehammer area South of Dombås in touch with Norwegian troops. The ship carrying Brigadier Morgan's first-line transport had been sunk. He was therefore bereft of essential fighting equipment, including anti-tank guns. In the Namsos area, North of Trondheim Major-General Carton de Wiart had under his command Brigadier C. G. Phillips' 146th Infantry Brigade (4 Lincolns, 1/4 K.O.Y.L.I., and Hallams) and one demi-brigade of Chasseurs Alpins commanded by General Audet. The 146th Infantry Brigade was in contact with German forces near Verdalen, 45 miles North-East of Trondheim. The Chasseurs Alpins were in the vicinity of Namsos.

Major-General B. C. T. Paget had been selected to command the British forces operating South of Trondheim, and on this day he was handed my instructions, a copy of which is attached to this report at Appendix "A." Accompanying him to assume control of the Base Area of Åndalsnes and to make a plan for its development as a base were Brigadier D. McA. Hogg, D.A. and Q.M.G. of Force Headquarters, and Brigadier D. J. R. Richards as Air Defence Commander to plan the air defence of the Base Area.

During this day news was received that the 146th Infantry Brigade had been attacked on the previous day, the 21st April, by enemy landed from a cruiser and destroyers, and that Steinkjer had been heavily bombed. The base at Namsos was now being regularly bombed and General Carton de Wiart reported that the maintenance of his force in this area was becoming difficult and that, unless some respite from the enemy bombing could be gained, it might well become impossible. Bombing of Åndalsnes was also taking place and considerable damage had been done. Arrangements were then made with the Royal Air Force to land Gladiators on a frozen lake at Lesjaskog, between Åndalsnes and Dombås, as soon as the

necessary maintenance personnel could be landed. The support provided by the Royal Navy consisted of fighters from H.M.S. "Ark Royal" and "Glorious," which were to operate over the ports, and torpedo bombers, which were to attack the enemy aerodromes in the neighbourhood of Trondheim and his ships in that harbour. Anti-aircraft cruisers and sloops were also allotted to give protection to the Base Areas.

3. On the 23rd, General Paget and his staff with Brigadier Hogg and Brigadier Richards left for Norway. During this day news was received from General Carton de Wiart that Brigadier Phillips had succeeded in extricating the 146th Infantry Brigade which, supported by the French, was occupying a position covering Namsos and Bangsund.

On this day too British troops on the Southern Sector had withdrawn as the result of heavy enemy attacks to hold a line South of Tretten, and behind them an effort was being made to re-organise Norwegian troops in the sector. During the whole of this day and the next both Base Areas were continually bombed, as were forward troops and the communications between them and the Base.

4. On the evening of the 24th, the 263rd Fighter Squadron, R.A.F. (18 Gladiators) was flown ashore on Lake Lesjaskog. It was however immediately spotted by the enemy who commenced bombing next morning and continued it throughout the day. It is understood that, in spite of valiant efforts by the pilots and ground staff, but few of them were able to take off, and were quite insufficient to hold off the innumerable enemy bombers who attacked the aerodrome continuously.

5. On the 25th April, I was directed by the Chiefs of Staff to submit an appreciation on the situation in Norway. As it appeared to me then, the possibility of landing further troops or of maintaining the troops then ashore depended entirely on our being able to obtain control of the situation in the air. In my appreciation I stated this fact and gave it as my opinion that should adequate air support be available I had no reason to suppose that we could not hold our existing positions against the Germans, and at a later date eject them from Trondheim. Without it I had little doubt that any further operations would become impossible and that we should be compelled to evacuate our forces from Southern and Central Norway. I further stated that should evacuation be decided upon it would have to be done at short notice and that all necessary plans for this operation must therefore be made without delay. I requested that the Inter-Service Planning Staffs should be directed to make the necessary preparations forthwith. I was not aware when this appreciation was written that the attempt to establish the Gladiators ashore had failed.

During this day, the 148th Infantry Brigade was withdrawn to Otta and it became evident that the 15th Infantry Brigade, which had sailed under General Paget's orders, part on 22nd and part on 24th April, would be required to hold Dombås and Opdal if the process of putting further troops ashore in the Åndalsnes area was to be contemplated. Instructions to this effect were sent to General Paget in amplification of his original instructions in Appendix