

By this time the 1 K.O.Y.L.I. from 15th Brigade had arrived from Åndalsnes and on 24th April reached Otta with orders to occupy a position behind the Norwegians about Kvam.

During the above period 148th Brigade suffered about 700 casualties, while only two combatant officers were left with the Leicesters and four with the Foresters.

37. In the instructions issued to Major-General Paget by Lieutenant-General Massy on 22nd April (Appendix A) he was given the task of co-operating with the Norwegian Army in preventing the Northward advance of the German Army based in Southern Norway, and at the same time in safeguarding his left and rear against attack by the German forces in Trondheim and parachute landed detachments on his Line of Communications of over 100 miles.

38. On arrival at Åndalsnes on the evening of 25th April, General Paget went forward by car to meet the Commander-in-Chief of the Norwegian Army, General Ruge, who, with a staff of about six officers, was then in a small farm house on the hillside 10 miles South of Dombås. General Paget had been told en route by the British Minister, whom he saw at the Park Royal, Åndalsnes, that General Ruge was the only man who could keep the Norwegian forces in the field, and this would certainly appear to have been the case. General Ruge was gravely concerned about the smallness of the British forces and the fact that he was not fully aware of our plans. He said that his own troops were exhausted in trying to hold up the German advance from the South pending the arrival of British reinforcements, and that they could fight no more until they had been thoroughly rested, re-organised and re-equipped.

General Paget came to the conclusion that this was right, and that he could look for very little support from these troops. He asked, however, that Norwegian ski detachments should be used to protect the flanks on the high ground as he had no means of doing this himself, and General Ruge promised that they would do so and would operate under British command. General Ruge then said, and later confirmed in writing, that General Paget was to be entirely responsible for the Gudbrandsdal valley, and also for the protection of the railway from Dombås as far North as Opdal (40 miles North of Dombås).

During the following day all other Norwegian troops were withdrawn from the area South of Dombås down the Gudbrandsdal valley towards Åndalsnes.

39. 1 K.O.Y.L.I. were thus the most forward Allied troops and were holding a position across the valley at Kvam with 1 Y. & L. in a supporting position some two miles in rear about Sjøa. 1 Green Howards moved up from Åndalsnes to Dombås by train joining the remnants of 148th Infantry Brigade in that place.

By 1600 hrs. it was obvious that 1 K.O.Y.L.I. could not maintain their front much longer. They had held the Kvam position for nearly 48 hours, in spite of repeated enemy attacks, and were constantly subjected to enemy artillery fire, air bombing and low flying machine gun fire. Brigadier Kent Lemon was therefore ordered to withdraw 1 K.O.Y.L.I. on the night

of 26th/27th April by motor transport to Dombås through 1 Y. & L. This latter battalion was to remain in its present position, reinforced by one company Green Howards (sent up in motor transport from Dombås), and thus cover the preparation of a strong position just South of Otta.

The situation on the left flank was causing some anxiety, as the enemy were reported to have reached Alvdal in the Østerdalen valley. There were only small detachments of Norwegian troops at Foldal and Hjerkin. Hence it was possible for the enemy to develop a threat against the Lines of Communications by way of Foldal, Hjerkin, Dombås. Brigadier Morgan was, therefore, placed in command of the troops in Dombås to organise the defence of the village with his own force (400 strong but short of officers and weapons) and one company of the Green Howards, who were given the task of blocking the Hjerkin road.

The remainder of the Green Howards was then moved by train at night to Otta to occupy a position South of the village as a firm base in rear of 1 Y. & L.

During the withdrawal of 1 K.O.Y.L.I. several minor demolitions were successfully carried out.

40. General Paget's object at this stage was still to stop the enemy. He judged that he could not expect his forward troops to withstand the enemy for more than 48 hours in any one position without any form of artillery and air support. Planning was therefore directed to delaying the enemy as much as possible so as to give time for the arrival of artillery and air support. When this should arrive little difficulty was anticipated in stopping the enemy.

41. The withdrawal of 1 K.O.Y.L.I. was successfully carried out, and 1 Y. & L. held the Sjøa position throughout the day. The enemy had been slow in following up and did not press his attack for the time being, contenting himself with air and ground bombardment.

1 Green Howards organised the Otta position for defence, and the preparation of Dombås defences was continued. Owing to the rocky nature of the ground it was seldom possible to dig and concealment from air was essential.

During the morning a report from the French Military Attaché again indicated enemy action from the direction Foldal-Hjerkin. General Ruge was confident in the ability of his detachment to hold off any such threats; but General Paget judged that a reconnaissance was desirable in case it became necessary to reinforce the Norwegian troops. Unfortunately a breakdown in motor transport limited this reconnaissance to the vicinity of Dombås.

42. Throughout the day the need for reconnaissance aircraft was acute, not only for normal tasks, but also to confirm or deny the many alarmist reports received.

At a conference with General Ruge earlier in the day it was agreed that the Otta position was a strong one, on which there should be a good chance of holding the enemy until the arrival of guns from the base.

General Ruge requested that the Otta position should be held until a Norwegian detachment, which had been isolated in the hills West of Tretten, could be withdrawn by the roads leading into the Gudbrandsdal in the area Otta-Sel. To this General Paget replied that he would be prepared, with the situation as it