

Swedish protection. In view of the probability of heavy enemy air attacks on Harstad I agreed to this postponement with great reluctance.

82. The Norwegian high command was informed by its Government of the impending evacuation and after a very natural display of great disappointment, continued to co-operate loyally to the end, although they might with some justification, have decided to lay down their arms at once and so gravely prejudice our withdrawal. It was a trying period for all concerned, throughout which Colonel Pollock, head of the Military Mission at Tromsø, was of the greatest assistance to Lord Cork and myself; in spite of everything he managed to maintain cordial relations with the Norwegian authorities to the last.

83. Bodo having been evacuated there was a distinct though not perhaps grave, danger that the enemy working up the coast might appear on the south shores of the Ofot and Vest Fjords and embarrass our withdrawal from there; all craft carrying French troops from the Narvik-Ankenes area had to pass through the Tjelsundet Fjord past Harstad and beyond before re-embarkation into transports could take place. There was also a risk that enemy detachments, sea or air borne, might effect a landing on the long indented coast line of Hinnoy Island on which Harstad stands and directly interfere with our main embarkation centre.

To counter these possible dangers, patrols by warships and aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm and by motorised troops on the island of Hanoy, were organised and maintained throughout the evacuation period.

The telephonic communications with Bodo and the south were also forcibly severed, much to the annoyance of the local Norwegian authorities who had no understanding of the needs of war.

In actual fact the Germans did work up the coast as fast as they could in the face of interference by the Navy, but only succeeded in reaching the neighbourhood of Ballangen with a few parachutists on the final evening of the evacuation.

The weather throughout the evacuation period (June 3rd to 8th) remained generally overcast and dull. I can only assume that it was to this factor and to the genuine fear which our fighter aircraft had succeeded in inspiring in the German bombers that the embarkation of some 27,000 men was carried out with practically no interference from the air.

It was lucky that this was so, as a well directed attack on the quays at Harstad or the beaches round Narvik might have had a very serious effect on the completion of the programme. As it was, the embarkation proper was carried out without a casualty, though there were losses from enemy air attacks during the period.

84. My instructions from the C.I.G.S. were to the effect that the primary object was to save and bring away personnel, and that the salvage of arms, equipment and stores was a secondary object. With this in view I gave orders that if necessary all anti-aircraft artillery was to be kept in action till the last moment and that all fighter aircraft were to be kept in operation till the last man was evacuated and then destroyed.

In actual fact, owing to the inactivity of the enemy it was found possible to save anti-aircraft guns and to fly all the aircraft on to the aircraft carrier *Glorious*, which was, however, unfortunately sunk later by enemy warships on her way to Scapa Flow.

85. My chief preoccupation from the tactical point of view was the disengagement, withdrawal and embarkation from open beaches into fishing boats, re-embarkation into destroyers and final embarkation into transports at sea, of the French troops in contact with the enemy round Narvik. This was most carefully and successfully effected by General Bethouart ably assisted by Commander Hubback, R.N., to both of whom great credit is due.

86. The personnel who had already been sent to Tromsø in connection with the organization of a base and the installation of anti-aircraft artillery at that place, together with the members of the military mission, the King and the Government were evacuated in *H.M.S. Devonshire* under arrangements made by Lord Cork and the authorities on the spot.

The anti-aircraft guns (4 heavy and 4 light) were handed over to General Rugé, Commander-in-Chief of the Norwegian Army.

87. The entire process of embarkation, whether from beaches or quays, in fishing boats, destroyers or directly into transport went with the greatest smoothness and celerity and reflects the greatest possible credit on all concerned. The morale and cheerfulness of the troops remained high throughout, although their destination was not known to them until they were actually on the high seas so well was the secret kept.

88. The French Chasseurs furnished the final rear-guard round Harstad but the actual rear party round the quays was found by the Royal Engineers and Military Police. There was no disorder or unpleasantness of any kind.

Evacuation of Personnel.

89. The problem was examined in conjunction with the Navy after an estimate had been made of the numbers to be evacuated, and the probable dispositions at the time of breaking contact. As a result of this the F.O. Narvik sent an agreed wire to the Admiralty outlining the suggested proposals for evacuation. This was agreed to and a sufficient number of large liners was despatched from the United Kingdom together with three store ships and one horse ship. The time taken for us to evacuate the personnel was five days.

90. In the case of Harstad parties embarked direct on to destroyers, whilst at Skaanland and in the Narvik and Sorreisa areas embarkation was by means of "puffer" from land to destroyers lying off. The destroyers then proceeded approximately 70 miles to rendezvous where they loaded direct to liners, three of which were filled at a time. These in turn moved to anchorages in the Fjords awaiting orders for the forming of the main convoy, which was done during the night 7th/8th June. At each embarkation place, alternative points for embarkation were selected in case of bombing, whilst a reserve of "puffer" craft was held at each locality to meet all probable eventualities. These craft were formed into small fleets with an Army officer in charge, and two British O.Rs. on board each ship.