

# *Invasion: Norway* Scenarios and Historical Commentary

## 17.0 Pre-Invasion and Invasion Turns

### 17.1 Pre-Invasion Turns

The April #2 and #3 turns are referred to as Pre-Invasion Turns, and the following special rules apply during them:

**17.1.1 Pre-Invasion Weather:** There are no Weather Segments during the Pre-Invasion turns. On the April #2 turn, the weather is automatically Cloudy in the Southern and Central section, and Foul in the Northern Section. On the April #3 turn, the weather is automatically Stormy in the Northern and Central sections, and Foul in the Southern section.

#### 17.1.2 Pre-Invasion Movement Restrictions

- a. No Norwegian units of any type (land, air, and sea) may move, intercept, or participate in any form of combat.
- b. No Allied or German units *of any type* may enter or attack any hex in Norway.
- c. Allied land units cannot move.
- d. German land units cannot move except by Naval Transport.
- e. Air units can only fly missions as a result of Air and Naval Interception during the Naval Segment.
- f. On the April #3 turn, the BC *Renown* and four DD points must move to the Northern Norwegian Sea zone, and one DD point must move to the Norwegian Leads zone. They cannot intercept on the April #3 turn.

**Design Note:** *These naval units are either laying minefields in Norwegian coastal waters or providing cover for the vessels that are.*

- g. Except for those listed in the preceding paragraph, no Allied naval units may move during any Allied Naval Movement Segment of a Pre-Invasion turn.

However, except as noted above, all Allied units *may Intercept* on the Pre-Invasion turns.

**17.1.3 Pre-Invasion Detection Modifier:** Add two (+2) to all Allied Naval Detection die rolls made in any zone of which even the smallest part appears on the Operational Map (not the Strategic Map). *This special rule also applies during the Invasion Turn.*

**Exception:** Add only one (+1) to the Allied Naval Detection die roll when attempting to detect a German naval unit belonging to the Export or Tanker Echelon [17.3].

## 17.2 The Invasion Turn

The April #4 turn is referred to as the Invasion Turn, and the following special rules apply during it.

### 17.2.1 Invasion Turn Movement Restrictions

- a. German APs and Tankers cannot enter Norwegian ports during the German Naval Movement Phase. However, during the Repair Segment, an AP or Tanker unit that is at sea may enter any friendly-controlled port in the bordering land zone and unload its cargo if so desired (assuming that there is unused Unloading Capacity remaining at the port). Coast Artillery Fire may be triggered.
- b. Allied AP points are the only *Allied* naval units that may perform Naval Transport on the Invasion Turn. Allied combat naval units cannot.
- c. There is no German Motorized Movement Phase on the Invasion Turn.

### 17.2.2 Invasion Turn Combat Rules Changes

- a. When resolving Naval Combat in a Port, all German naval units fire before any Allied naval units fire in the first round of Naval Combat. All damage

that is inflicted by their fire is applied immediately (i.e., before the Norwegian units fire).

- b. Whenever the German player attacks in Land Combat, the Defense Factors of all Norwegian land units are halved (retain fractions), and any Norwegian unit that suffers any adverse land combat result *automatically* retreats one hex (if the result did not already require a retreat).
- c. The Allied player must (if possible) apply all Combat Results inflicted upon Norwegian units in Land Combat in the form of Retreats. However, if the Combat Result dictates that a step must be lost, this requirement is observed as usual.

### 17.2.3 Invasion Turn Detection Modifiers

- a. Add two (+2) to all German Air Detection die rolls made in any land zone in Norway.
- b. Add two (+2) to all Allied Naval Detection die rolls made in any zone of which even the smallest part appears on the *Operational* Map.

**Exception:** Add only one (+1) to the Allied Naval Detection die roll when attempting to detect a German naval unit belonging to the Export or Tanker Echelon [17.3].

**17.2.4 German Supply on the Invasion Turn:** All German land units are automatically in supply throughout the entire Invasion Turn.

**17.2.5 Norwegian Alertness Checks:** When a group of German naval units triggers Coast Artillery Fire [9.1.1], the Allied player rolls a die for each coast artillery battery that is eligible to fire. If the result is 0-1, the battery fires normally; if the result is 2-7, the battery fires using half (rounded down) its printed Naval Attack Factor; and if the result is 8-9, the battery cannot fire at *that* naval group. A separate die roll is made for each *group* that triggers a particular battery's fire.

**17.2.6 Norwegian Surrender Checks:** During the German Naval Movement Phase, before the resolution of any Naval Combat in a Port, the Allied player rolls a die for *each* participating Norwegian naval unit. If the result is 3-7, the naval unit is eliminated; if the result is 8-9, it is immediately shifted to any friendly-controlled port within five hexes. On any other result, the naval unit participates in the combat normally.

**17.2.7 Quisling Treachery:** The German player may re-roll any three Alertness or Surrender Check or Land or Naval Combat die rolls *after* he has seen the result of the first roll. This rule represents treachery committed by supporters of the Norwegian fascist party headed by Vidkun Quisling.

## 17.3 The Export and Tanker

### Echelons

**Design Note:** *Having correctly assumed that the Royal Navy would prevent seaborne supplies from reaching their troops in western and northern Norway once the battle had begun, the Germans tried to ship supplies into these areas before the invasion began. Thus, in the early days of April, 1940, about a dozen German freighters and tankers began steaming north. Although the ships of the Export and Tanker Echelons sailed individually in the guise of neutral merchantmen and were supposed to reach their objectives before Norway's coastal waters became a war zone, all but a handful failed to reach their objectives; Most were either captured or sunk by Norwegian coast guard vessels.*

All seven German AP points that are in play on the April #2 turn comprise the Export Echelon; all five tankers (AOs) make up the Tanker Echelon. The following special rules apply to these naval units:

- They cannot move in or join groups until the April #5 turn. Thus, each AP point or Tanker must move individually on the Pre-Invasion and Invasion turns.
- AP units of the Export Echelon can only transport SPs, ASPs, and artillery batteries (normal, coastal, or mountain). They may not transport other land units of any type.

- The Allied player adds one (+1)—instead of two (+2)—to all Allied Naval Detection die rolls made against units of the Export and Tanker Echelons during the Pre-Invasion and Invasion turns.
- If a unit of the Export or Tanker Echelon is Detected while moving alone on the Invasion Turn or any Pre-Invasion turn, it is immediately eliminated (Naval Interception is neither possible nor necessary).

## 18.0 Scenarios

There are two main scenarios in **Invasion: Norway**. The Operation Weseruebung scenario covers the entire campaign, and the Operation Bueffel scenario portrays the German drive from Trondheim to Narvik. Each scenario may be played either with or without historical restrictions on naval operations. Because these restrictions limit players' naval options to such a great extent, we recommend that they be used only if you wish to learn why the Norwegian Campaign turned out as it did. Both scenarios are much more exciting and fun to play if the historical naval restrictions are not in force.

### 18.1 Operation Weseruebung

This scenario begins on the April #2 turn and ends on the June #3 turn.

**18.1.1 Norwegian Initial Setup:** Place all Norwegian units as indicated on the Norwegian Mobilization Display on the Operational Map. Place Norwegian breakdown units [15.3] aside for later use.

#### 18.1.2 Allied Initial Setup

**Scapa Flow:** BBs *Rodney* and *Valiant*; BCs *Repulse* and *Renown*; CA *Sheffield*; CLs *Penelope* and *Emile Bertin*; eight DD and one French DD points; and one Gladiator (carrier) and three Skua points

**Scotland (east):** KOYLI (146th Brigade), 1/4 Lincolns, 1/5 Leicesters, and 1/8 Sherwood Foresters Infantry Battalions; CAs *Devonshire*, *Berwick*, *York*, and *Glasgow*; CLs *Arethusa* and *Galatea*; three DD points; and one Blenheim 1F and three Hurricane points

**Scotland (west):** Hallamshire and 1st Scots Guards Infantry Battalions; CV *Furious*, BB *Warspite*, CL *Aurora*, two DD and five AP points; two Swordfish points

**Note:** Land and air units are recorded as being in the Scotland west and east sub-zones purely as a matter of convenience. They are, in fact, completely unaffected by sub-zone boundaries.

**England:** two Whitley, two Hampden, two Wellington, and two Blenheim points

#### 18.1.3 German Initial Setup

**Germany:**

- BCs *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*; PB *Lutzow*; CAs *Hipper* and *Blucher*; CLs *Koln*, *Konigsberg*, *Karlsruhe*, and *Emden*; GT *Bremse*; 1st and 2nd SB Flotillas; four DD points; three TB points; seven AP Points; and all five tankers
- 3rd Mountain, and 69th and 163rd Infantry Divisions (all units); 730th Artillery Battalion (3 batteries); 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Parachute Infantry Companies; and all four Coast Artillery Batteries
- One Fw-200, fifteen He-111, twenty-eight Ju-52, three Ju-87r, seven Ju-88a, one Ju-88C, one Ju-90, and two Me-110 points; and two He-59 and one Ju-52 seaplane points

#### Historical Naval Operations Restrictions

If you wish to play a strictly historical version of this scenario apply all of the restrictions listed below and set the Victory Point level to -30 at the beginning of play.

- German combat ships and DD points cannot load land units after the Invasion turn (which prevents them from performing Naval Transport after the first wave of the invasion goes ashore).
- Beginning on the April #5 turn, all German combat naval units except the 1st and 2nd SB Flotillas must return to port in Germany as quickly as possible (if need be taking sev

eral turns to do so). No German combat naval unit may perform Naval Interception on any turn during which it must move toward the Germany zone.

- No Allied or Norwegian naval unit may do anything that would trigger Coast Artillery Fire by a *fixed* enemy coast artillery battery.
- British land units cannot perform Amphibious Assaults under *any* circumstances.
- Only French and Norwegian land units that are using Landing Craft may perform Amphibious Assaults. Thus, eligible land units being transported by Allied and Norwegian combat naval units may never conduct Amphibious Assaults (and only a handful of those being carried by AP points will be able to do so).

## 18.2 Operation Bueffel

This scenario begins on the May #2 turn and ends at the end of the June #3 turn.

### 18.2.1 Norwegian Initial Setup

**Finnmark #5 Space:** II/14 Mountain Infantry Battalion

**Bardufoss (0203):** 16th Landsvern Battalion, Truck, and one Fokker point

**Hex 0403:** I/16 and II/16 Mountain Infantry Battalions, and I/12 Mountain Infantry and 3rd Mountain Artillery Battalions (both 1-step)

**Salangen (0404):** Alta and II/15 Mountain Infantry Battalions, and two Mountain Artillery Batteries

**Mosjoen (1913):** 14th Landsvern Battalion

**Hex 2113:** I/14th Mountain Infantry Battalion (1-step)

### 18.2.2 Allied Initial Setup

**Finnmark Zone (#1 Space):** CA *Glasgow* and one DD point

### Arctic Circle Sea Zone:

- 13th DBLE, 14th AT Co, and 342d Tank Co, embarked on 6 French AP points and escorted by one DD point. Polish (BPCP) Bde embarked on 6 AP points and one DD point.
- Four SPs and four ASPs embarked on 5 AP points and escorted by one French DD point.

**Western Norwegian Sea Zone:** 1st and 2nd Light Company Battalions embarked on two DD points

**Salangen (0404):** Scots Guards Infantry Battalion

**Harstad (0407):** Irish Guards Infantry Battalion, 203rd Artillery Battery, three SPs; CLs *Effingham*, *Enterprise*, and *Vindictive*, and two DD and one LC points

**Hex 0506:** 2nd GAAC Artillery Battalion, 12th and 14th BCA Infantry Battalions, and an SP

**Ballangen (0606):** South Wales Borderers and 6th BCA Infantry Battalions, an SP, and CL *Aurora*, and one DD and one LC points

**Scotland Zone (West):** CAs *Sheffield*, *Southampton*, *Birmingham* and *Manchester*, CLA *Calcutta*, and three DD and five AP points

**Scotland Zone (East):** one Blenheim 1F, one Gladiator, three Hurricane, and two Wellington points; and CAs *Birmingham*, *York*, and *Devonshire*, CL *Montcalm*, CLA *Carlisle*, and one Sloop, five AP and four DD points.

**England Zone:** two Hampden and two Whitley points

**Scapa Flow Zone:** two Swordfish and two Skua points and CV *Ark Royal*, CA *Berwick*, CLA *Cairo*, and two DD points

**Northern Norwegian Sea Zone:** four French AP (no cargo aboard), and one DD and one French DD points

### 18.2.3 German Initial Setup

**Hex 0504:** I/138th Mountain Infantry and Freytag Naval Battalions

**Elvegardsmoen (0505):** III/138th Mountain Infantry and Kothe Naval Battalions, and a Mountain Artillery Battery

**Hex 0604:** Berger Naval Battalion

**Narvik (0605):** II/138th Mountain Infantry and Erdmenger Naval Battalions

**Steinkjer (2717):** III/139th Mountain Infantry Battalion and II/112th Mountain Artillery Battalion (1-step), and an SP

**Hex 3017:** I/139th Mountain Infantry and I/112th Mountain Artillery Battalions

**Vaernes (3018):** II/136th and II/137th Mountain Infantry Battalions, and II/111th Mountain Artillery Battalion (1-step); and one Me-109, two Ju-88a, four He-111 and three Ju-87r points

**Trondheim (3019):** Coast Artillery Battery; and one AP and one He-59 points

**Stavanger (5132):** Coast Artillery Battery; and one Ju-88c, one Me-109, two Me-110, and three He-111 points

**Kjevik (5527):** two Me-109 points

**Oslo (4720):** one Ju-52 seaplane point

**Fornebu (4820):** four Ju-52 points

**Denmark Zone:** one Me-110 point

**Germany Zone:** one Do-26, one Ju-90, one Fw-200, and three He-111 points; and BCs *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, PB *Lutzow* (damaged), CA *Hipper*, CL *Koln*, and one DD and five AP points.

### 18.2.4 Special Rules

- The German player receives two Trucks as reinforcements on the May #3 turn.
- The German player has an unlimited number of SPs available at Trondheim, and an unlimited number of ASPs available at Vaernes airbase.
- CVs *Glorious* and *Furious*, one Skua and two Gladiator (carrier) points arrive as reinforcements on the May #4 turn.

All land hexes south and east of the line 2820/3019/3015 can only be entered by Naval Units and/or Air Units and are all controlled by Germany.

VPs cannot be gained/lost for failure to garrison cities/ports/airfields.

All hexes south/west of the line 2720/2717/2916 (inclusive) are controlled by Germany, all hexes north/east that don't contain German units are controlled by the Allies.

Delete Paragraph. Superseded by errata VP change for this scenario in section 18.2.

## 19.0 A-historical Variants

**Design Note:** *The variant rules let you see how the Norwegian Campaign might have turned out if certain crucial factors had been altered. All the variants described below have a sound historical basis, and many of them could easily have taken effect if the Allied and German high commands had chosen to commit larger forces in Norway.*

At the beginning of a scenario, the players decide whether they want to play with variants, and if so, each player decides which variants he will use. If a variant's description includes the code VP -#, subtract that value from the Victory Point Total when that variant is chosen. If a variant's description includes the code VP +#, add that value to the Victory Point Total when it is put into effect. Each player can use no more than three variants per scenario, and the total Victory Point value of all the variants chosen by a player cannot be greater than +40 or less than -40. All Victory Point adjustments are applied before play begins.

### 19.1 German Variants

1. **U-Boat Torpedo Defects Resolved:** Whenever an Allied naval unit enters or leaves any land zone in Norway, the German player rolls a die. If the result is 0, a hit is inflicted on the naval unit. Subtract one (-1) from the U-Boat die roll if the naval unit is not Escorted. VP -25

**Design Note:** *Although large numbers of German U-Boats operated off Norway, they had virtually no effect upon the course of the campaign due to a series of crippling torpedo defects. Time after time, U-Boat commanders watched their well-executed attacks fail when their torpedoes either ran too deep, or blew up short of their targets because the powerful electromagnetic fields north of the Arctic Circle had prematurely fired their magnetic fuses.*

2. **Lighter Pre-Invasion Kriegsmarine Losses:** The German CLs *Leipzig* and *Nurnberg* are set up in the Germany zone at the beginning of play. VP -5
3. **Smaller Luftwaffe Commitment to the French Campaign:** Subtract three Ju-88 and nine He-111 points from the list of German air units that are supposed to be *withdrawn* from play on the May #1 turn. VP -15
4. **Additional Stukas:** The German player receives three Ju-87b Stuka points as Reinforcements on the April #6 turn and three more on the April #7 turn. However, three Ju-87b points Withdraw (see 15.3) on the May #1 turn. VP -20
5. **Lutzow Goes Commerce Raiding:** If the German PB *Lutzow* occupies the Shetlands, Western Norwegian Sea, Arctic Circle, or Bear Island sea zone, it may exit the Strategic Map (and thus "break out" into the Atlantic) by expending 1 Naval Movement Point. If it does so, the BCs *Repulse* and *Renown*, one CA, one CL, and two DD points automatically Withdraw [4.3] during the immediately following Allied Naval Movement Phase. If a battlecruiser (BC) has been damaged or sunk, the Allied player must (if possible) withdraw a battleship (BB) instead. VP -15

**Design Note:** *Historically, the Germans planned to have the Lutzow slip out into the Atlantic during the first days of the invasion in hopes that this would force the British to divert ships away from Norway to protect British convoy traffic. However, the plan had to be scrapped when cracks were discovered in the Lutzow's diesel engine mounts.*

6. **Soviets Aid German War Effort:** The German player may set up one Export or Tanker Echelon unit in port at Base Nord at the beginning of play. Furthermore, German naval units may enter and leave port in Base Nord whenever they wish throughout the scenario, although a maximum of only two ships and/or points may be there at any particular time. Allied units cannot attack German naval units located at Base Nord by any means. VP -10

**Design Note:** *During the fall of 1939, Stalin let the Germans establish a U-Boat supply facility known as Base Nord in a remote inlet west of Murmansk. This rule assumes that German surface combatants were allowed to use the base as well.*

### 19.2 Allied Variants

1. **Norwegian Emergency Mobilization:** All Norwegian land units that would normally mobilize on the Invasion Turn are set up at their mobilization centers instead. Each infantry regiment will still mobilize one battalion per turn as usual, beginning with the Invasion Turn. VP +30
2. **Norwegians on Alert:** Subtract two (-2) from all Surrender and Alertness Check die rolls made on the Invasion Turn. Furthermore, the Defense Factors of Norwegian land units are not halved when they are attacked on the Invasion Turn. VP +30
3. **Historical Reinforcements:** The British 147th Infantry Brigade (three infantry battalions) arrives as a reinforcement on the April #5 turn, and the French 11th GAAM (Group Autonome d'Artillerie de Montagne) arrives on the May #1 turn. VP +5

**Design Note:** *The 147th Brigade and the 11th GAAM were both supposed to have gone to Norway, but never did because of confusion regarding their mission and the looming disaster in France.*

4. **A-historical Reinforcements:** The 5th Scots Guards mountain infantry battalion and the four undesignated British artillery batteries are set up in the Scotland zone at the beginning of play. VP +15

**Design Note:** *The 5th Scots Guards was created in January 1940, when the Allies were planning to intervene in the Russo-Finnish Winter War, and brought together practically every reasonably competent skier in England. Because skiing was an exclusively upper-class sport in those days, 173 officers had to serve in the ranks as NCOs and enlisted men to bring the battalion up to strength. It was disbanded in mid-March after the Soviet juggernaut forced the Finns to sue for peace.*



5. **Fighter Command Committed in Norway:** The Allied player receives three Hurricane points as reinforcements on the April #6 turn. These Hurricanes may be transported to Norway by aircraft carrier. VP +10
6. **Bomber Command Fully Committed in Norway:** The Allied player sets up two Whitley, two Wellington, two Hampden, and two Blenheim points in the England zone *in addition* to those that are normally deployed there. He also sets up two Blenheim and two Blenheim 1F points in the Scotland zone *in addition* to those that are normally placed there. All rules concerning the replacement and withdrawal of British bomber units apply to these additional ones with full force. VP +20

**Design Note:** *Historically, the British wanted to preserve their bomber strength for the Battle of France that was bound to start as soon as the weather improved. Thus, Bomber Command issued orders that no more than half of any squadron's planes could fly missions on any given day. Naturally, this greatly hamstrung operations over Norway.*

## Historical Notes

by Kevin Bolan

When Hitler ordered the invasion of Poland in September 1939, he did so in the firm belief that France and Britain would not have the nerve to support their ally militarily—and he was therefore stunned when they both almost immediately declared war. Suddenly, what was supposed to have been a quick military solution of the “Polish Question” had grown into a new world war whose duration and outcome no one could predict.

Because only a few visionaries such as Guderian and Manstein believed that the French and British could be defeated in swift blitzkrieg campaign, most figures in the German high command expected that the new conflict would be a long, drawn-out, attritional struggle similar to World War I.

Both Hitler and Admiral Erich Raeder—commander of the German Navy (or Kriegsmarine)—took the latter view, and thus feared that a prolonged British naval blockade would eventually cripple Germany's war effort just as it had in 1918. Their solution was to mount a counter-blockade employing U-Boats that would starve the British into submission before the blockade of Germany could have a decisive effect. Because England (an island nation) is fundamentally more dependent upon maritime imports than Germany (a continental nation), this plan seemed reasonable enough. The only problem was that the strategy had already been tried in WW I—and failed.

Hitler hoped that a blockade of England would succeed this time because the U-Boats of 1939 were far more effective than those of 1917 and because their operations could be supplemented by air attacks on British shipping and ports. Raeder, on the other hand, remembered how much Allied control of the exits from the North Sea had restricted U-Boat operations against the sea lanes west of the British Isles in World War I; and he consequently believed that one more improvement was needed to ensure that the blockade would work the second time round—submarine bases in Norway.

U-Boats sailing from Norwegian ports would not have to run a gauntlet of British anti-submarine patrols in the narrows between Scotland and Norway and could stay in the shipping lanes longer because they would have less distance to go. Therefore, Raeder began agitating for an invasion of Norway as soon as it became clear in early October 1939 that the Allies were going to continue the war even after the conquest of Poland.

Raeder's proposal found little favor with Hitler, who at that time was engrossed with planning the invasion of France and the Low Countries, and who believed that U-Boat and air bases on the Belgian coast would be the vital prerequisite for mounting a successful “siege” of Great Britain. Hitler's disinterest in Norway persisted even after he had several meetings with Vidkun Quisling, leader of the small Norwegian fascist (National Union) party in mid-December 1939.

Despite Quisling's warnings that pro-Ally forces in the Norwegian government had promised that there would be no resistance to a British occupation of the country (which was not true), Hitler rejected the idea of taking preemptive action, although he did instruct the Armed Forces High Command (OKW) to begin developing contingency plans in case the Allies extended the war into Norway.

As it happened, the Allies were in fact planning to extend the war into Scandinavia, and believed that the Soviet invasion of Finland in November 1939 had given them an excellent opportunity to do so. For, although practically the whole world was appalled by the attack on Finland—and was thrilled by the tiny country's amazing victories against the Communist juggernaut in the first phase of the Winter War—Germany refused to condemn the Soviet Union (which had been its nominal ally since the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact in August 1939).

As a result, anti-German sentiment in Norway and Sweden (which was already strong) grew exponentially in the winter of 1939-1940. This led the French and British governments to hope that these nations would not resist Allied military units that entered their territory for the ostensible purpose of going to the aid of the Finns. The most direct overland route to Finland followed the line of a railroad that began in the Norwegian port of Narvik and ran across the width of Sweden from the west.

The reason the Allies were interested in controlling the wastes of northern Scandinavia was that the aforementioned railroad had been constructed for the sole purpose of transporting ore from the rich Swedish iron mines around Gallivare and Kiruna to the port facilities of Narvik. A steady flow of Swedish iron was vital for the German arms industry at this stage in the war, and during the winter months it could only reach Germany by way of Narvik because the Gulf of Bothnia froze over and the north-south Swedish railroad net didn't have sufficient capacity to take up the slack.

Thus, as long as Norway remained neutral, German freighters could deliver Swedish iron ore from Narvik in complete safety so long as they stayed inside Norwegian terri-

torial waters. If the Allies could cut off this traffic under the pretext of crossing into Finland, they would gain a major strategic objective on the cheap without even having to fight for it.

Winston Churchill, who was, at that point, the First Lord of the Admiralty, was the single most vocal advocate of the Scandinavian venture—and the only major figure in the French and British governments who favored going ahead with it even if the Norwegians and Swedes were likely to resist. Largely, though not exclusively, as a result of his prodding, the Allies began making preparations for the operation in February 1940.

The plan that was eventually produced was predicated upon the notion that the Norwegians and Swedes would be shamed into cooperation by a public appeal for Allied assistance that would be made by the Finns in mid-March. The landing at Narvik, which was to follow hard upon the heels of the Finnish request, would be covered from the south by small contingents of British troops that were to secure the ports of Namsos, Trondheim, and Bergen.

Yet, even as the troops were being marshalled, it became increasingly clear that the Swedes and Norwegians were not going to welcome them ashore with open arms. Indeed, the two governments gave every indication that they were wholeheartedly opposed to the thinly-disguised scheme.

Because the Allies were deathly afraid of alienating the United States by invading neutral nations, the unfavorable attitude of the Scandinavian governments forced them to start rethinking the whole business. Ironically, at the same time as the French and British started to have second thoughts about the Norwegian adventure, the Germans concluded that the Allied threat to their sources of Swedish iron had become so great that they would have to invade Norway in order to forestall it. The event which finally changed Hitler's mind was the *Altmark* Incident of February 16, 1940.

The *Altmark* was a German freighter that had operated as a supply ship for the pocket battleship *Graf Spee* before it was sunk off the coast of Uruguay on December 17, 1939. The *Altmark*, however, escaped and

headed for home carrying 300 British sailors who had been taken prisoner when their ships were captured by the *Graf Spee*. Although the British warned that the *Altmark* was violating Norway's neutrality by transporting prisoners of war through its territorial waters, the Norwegians chose not to search the ship for fear of antagonizing Germany.

Churchill, who believed that one breach of neutrality deserved another, sent the destroyer *Cossack* into Norwegian waters to intercept the *Altmark* and free the prisoners—which it promptly did without meeting any resistance from a nearby Norwegian patrol boat. The incident turned into a major propaganda victory for the British because most neutral nations felt that their action was justified, but Hitler viewed it as proof positive that Norway would not resist Allied occupation—and therefore threw German preparations for invasion into high gear.

On March 13, 1940, Finland was finally forced to admit defeat and accept Stalin's decidedly harsh terms for restoring peace. Logically, this development should have caused the Allies to drop their grandiose scheme, but it was not to be. Although his plan to cut off the flow of iron ore at its source had been frustrated, Churchill hoped to do the next best thing laying minefields in Norwegian territorial waters that would force German shipping out into international waters, where it could be intercepted by Allied naval forces. Although technically a violation of Norway's sovereignty, the mining would be far less provocative than an outright invasion and would appear a reasonable response to Germany's cynical exploitation of Norwegian neutrality that had been revealed by the *Altmark* affair.

Because *Operation Wilfred* would almost certainly provoke a Nazi invasion, Allied troops were to stand in readiness to occupy Narvik, Bergen, and Trondheim as soon as the Germans had brought Norway into the war. It has been suggested by some historians that Churchill and his supporters in the Royal Navy were counting on this reaction because it would finally give them a good excuse to get their hands on Narvik.

The Allies saw little risk in this plan because they felt certain that the mighty Royal Navy would be prevent the tiny Kriegsmarine from landing troops along Norway's western coast, which meant that any German attempt to capture Narvik would face the nigh impossible task of advancing up the entire length of the country through more than a thousand miles of extremely rugged Arctic terrain.

For the same reason, the Allied ground forces earmarked for Norway amounted to barely three weak light infantry divisions with practically no tanks, artillery, antitank guns, or motorized transport. The air units that were to accompany the expedition were even less adequate, amounting to just three fighter and two bomber squadrons.

The Germans, on the other hand, planned to use five divisions—each with its full complement of vehicles and heavy weapons—in the invasion of Norway (which had been code-named *Operation Weseruebung*), and had allocated one parachute, three heavy antiaircraft, and two heavy artillery battalions plus a strong, three-company battalion of light tanks to support the infantry formations. The disparity in strength would be even greater in the air, because the Germans planned to commit over a thousand aircraft in Norway: 290 medium bombers; 40 dive bombers; 100 fighters; 70 reconnaissance planes; and more than 500 air transports (mostly Ju-52s).

However, although the vast German superiority in airpower would eventually prove to be the decisive factor in shaping the outcome of the Norwegian Campaign, the most important (and surprising) feature of *Operation Weseruebung*'s first phase was the mission assigned to the Kriegsmarine. Knowing full well that the Royal Navy would crush any attempt to land ground forces along Norway's west coast using slow troop transports, German planners decided to use practically every operational combat vessel in the Germany Navy to carry the assault troops of the first wave. By taking advantage of their high speed, the combat ships would avoid British patrols and make surprise landings in all of Norway's major port (including Narvik, Trondheim, and Bergen) before the Allies caught on to what was happening. The invasion force was organized as follows:

**Group 1:** Ten destroyers would carry the 139th Mountain Regiment of the 3rd Mountain Division to Narvik. They would be escorted to their objective by the battlecruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, and Group 2 would sail in concert with them until the latitude of Trondheim was reached.

**Group 2:** The heavy cruiser *Hipper* and four destroyers would carry two battalions of the 138th Mountain Regiment to Trondheim.

**Group 3:** The light cruisers *Koln* and *Konigsberg*, the gunnery-training ship *Bremse*, two torpedo boats (really small destroyers), and the 1st S-Boat Flotilla would carry two battalions of the 69th Division's 159th Infantry Regiment to Bergen.

**Group 4:** The light cruiser *Karlsruhe*, three torpedo boats, and the 2nd S-Boat Flotilla would transport a battalion of the 163rd Division's 310th Infantry Regiment for the attack upon Kristiansand.

**Group 5:** The pocket battleship *Lutzow*, the heavy cruiser *Blucher*, the light cruiser *Emden*, and three torpedo boats were to carry two battalions of the 163rd Division's 307th Infantry Regiment and one battalion of the 138th Mountain Infantry Regiment to capture Oslo and Horten.

The amphibious assault against Oslo would be supported by airlanded troops that would be flown into Fornebu airport after it was taken by two companies of German paratroops. A third parachute company was likewise to capture the large military airbase at Sola so that infantrymen of the 69th Division's 193rd Regiment could be air-lifted in to conquer the nearby city of Stavanger.

A half-dozen waves of sea-transported reinforcements were to follow the first assault troops to Norway, but none would sail to any port north and west of Kristiansand so as to escape the wrath of the aroused Royal Navy. Thus, in order to supply their isolated garrisons at Narvik, Trondheim, Bergen, and Stavanger until they were relieved by other troops advancing overland from the South, the Germans planned to slip about a dozen ships carrying supplies

and aviation fuel (i.e., the Export and Tanker Echelons) into these ports before the invasion began.

This plan was bold to the point of recklessness, scattering the weak forces of the first wave all over the map in isolated packets and sending Germany's entire surface fleet into harm's way. Yet, if the gamble paid off, the Germans would secure every important port, airbase, and communications hub in Norway at the very beginning of the campaign, totally upsetting the Allies' expectations of a swift and easy victory. Furthermore, it was expected that the shock would be so great, and the effect of losing all of their major cities would so impede mobilization, that the Norwegians would offer no prolonged resistance to the German coup.

*Operation Wilfred* was scheduled for the night of April 8, 1940, when a force consisting of a dozen destroyers escorted by the battlecruiser *Renown* would lay a minefield in the Vestfjord off Narvik. Anticipating some kind of quick German response, the main body of the Royal Navy's Home Fleet was on alert at Scapa Flow, while the four heavy cruisers of the 1st Cruiser Squadron stood ready to in eastern Scotland to lift four territorial (i.e., reservist) infantry battalions of the 146th and 148th Brigades to Norway. At the port of Greenock in western Scotland, the 146th Brigade's third infantry battalion, and the elite, all-regular 24th Guards Infantry Brigade were preparing to board a convoy of troop transports as soon as word came of a German attack on Norway.

The British would not have long to wait for the expected German riposte, because, by a strange twist of fate, *Operation Weseruebung* was scheduled to start at dawn on April 9—just a few hours after *Operation Wilfred*. Thus the speed and scale of the German "response" (which, in fact, had nothing to do with the minelaying operation) would come as something of a shock to the British, even though they were fully expecting that Norway would be invaded.

However, what would surprise them most of all was that the invasion included assaults against ports on the western coast of Norway mounted by troops carried on the major surface combatants of the German Navy. The Royal Navy would never dream of sending its precious ships into narrow

fjords where they would be appallingly vulnerable to enemy coast artillery batteries and minefields.

Thus, when air reconnaissance spotted the *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau*, *Hipper*, and fourteen destroyers a hundred miles west of Trondheim on the afternoon of April 8, the British didn't know quite what to make of it. Their best guess was that the force was supposed to protect the movement of German troopships up the coast of Norway by forming a screen to the west, but there was also a strong suspicion that the destroyers were escorting the three heavy ships to a point from which they could break out into the Atlantic and begin commerce-raiding operations (as they had already tried before).

Churchill was electrified by the opportunity of destroying the bulk of the enemy fleet and immediately ordered the entire Home Fleet to set out in pursuit. Indeed, he was so caught up in the moment that he impulsively scrapped the plan to hold ground forces in readiness for Norway by ordering the 1st Cruiser Squadron to hastily debark its troops and join in the chase. The cruisers and destroyers that were supposed to have escorted the troopship convoy from Greenock were also ordered to sea as swiftly as possible.

Yet, despite the massive scale of the British naval movements, the night of April 8–April 9 passed without any contact between the opposing forces. The Royal Navy's failure to catch the Germans could, in large part, be attributed to bad weather conditions, because a major front that had moved into the Norwegian Sea the day before sparked a major storm that brought towering sea, gale force winds, and drastically reduced visibility.

However, an equally important factor was that the British ships were searching too far to the west, where they expected the Germans to be heading either for a breakout into the Atlantic or to screen non-combatant vessels sailing along the coast. Instead, the German ships were heading east toward Narvik, Trondheim, and Bergen. Group 2, which encountered and sank the destroyer *Gloworm* (though not until after it had rammed and lightly damaged the *Hipper*), was the only one that met any British naval opposition before reaching its objective.

The most risky part of *Operation Weserübung* was safely past now that the Royal Navy had missed its chance to intercept the first wave, but the next phase—the simultaneous surprise attack on all of Norway's major ports and population centers—would have been only slightly less perilous if the Norwegian military had been mobilized and on the alert. Fortunately for the Germans, Norway's armed forces were neither mentally nor physically prepared for war.

Although British diplomats had warned it to expect a German invasion, the Norwegian government acted slowly on the information because it suspected that it might be part of a ploy designed to force Norway into the war on the Allied side. Thus, it did not issue an alert until the night of April 8 (which was far too late) and chose to send out mobilization notices to reservists through the mail instead of taking the "provocative" step of announcing an immediate, emergency mobilization by telephone and radio.

The result that Norwegian resistance to the Germans was hesitant and uneven. In most places the stunned and bewildered garrisons quickly retreated from the cities after putting up only token resistance. The coast artillery batteries generally put up a better fight. Those at Bergen damaged both the *Konigsberg* and *Bremse*, and the Oscarborg fortress sank the *Blucher* and forced the German force slated to attack Oslo to land near Moss instead.

Nonetheless, the capital fell later that same day to a small force of airlanded and parachute troops that had captured Fornebu airport after some initial confusion, and the airborne *coup de main* against Stavanger also succeeded. The only part of the German plan that failed outright was the effort to slip the "Trojan Horses" of the Export and Tanker Echelons into the west coast ports; of the dozen or so ships involved, less than a third reached their appointed objectives.

Fate was decidedly less kind to the Germans in the next phase of the campaign. For, while the Kriegsmarine had lost only one major unit (the *Blucher*) during the actual invasion, no less than thirteen more would be sunk or severely damaged over the following four days. On April 10, the damaged *Konigsberg* gained the unenviable distinction of being the first major combat

vessel ever sunk by aircraft when it was attacked in Bergen by British Skua dive bombers flying at extreme range from Hatson Field in the Orkney Islands (i.e., Scapa Flow). The *Karlsruhe* had been sunk off Kristiansand by a British submarine the day before, and the *Lutzow* had its stern, propellers, and rudders blown off by a submarine-launched torpedo on April 11 (it was towed back to Germany, but remained out of action for more than a year).

However, the most painful losses were suffered at Narvik, where the departure of Group 1's ten destroyers back to Germany had to be delayed due to refuelling problems. The opportunity was seized upon by Captain Warburton-Lee, commander of the British 2nd Destroyer Flotilla, who boldly led his four ships into the Ofotfjord on the morning of April 10 under the cover of a raging blizzard and took the much larger German destroyer force completely by surprise. Commodore Bonte, the German group commander, died in his sleep when his flagship and one other destroyer were sunk with torpedoes while sitting motionless at anchor.

Two more German destroyers were crippled before the rest of the group turned the tables on Warburton-Lee, who was killed during a close-range melee that left only one of his original four ships fully operational (one had been sunk, one crippled, and one heavily damaged).

However, by the time the surviving British limped off the scene, only four German destroyers were left intact. All eight of the remaining Kriegsmarine vessels (counting cripples and operational ships) were sunk on May 13 when a force of nine British destroyers accompanied by the battleship *Warspite* launched a second attack.

The crippling losses suffered by the Kriegsmarine in the days immediately following the invasion largely offset the success of the German surprise attack and threw Hitler into the first of his many famous fits of depression. To further complicate matters, the Norwegian armed forces stubbornly continued to resist, confounding expectations that their morale would be irrevocably shattered by the conquest of all their country's major population centers. Much to the Germans' surprise, the small Norwegian units that had retreated out of the

cities did not begin fade away, but instead became the rallying points for rapidly mobilizing reservists and thousands of patriotic volunteers.

Only in the area between Kristiansand and Oslo did Norwegian resistance collapse outright after the Germans captured Kongsberg and forced the surrender of the Norwegian 3rd Infantry Regiment on April 12. However, Lieutenant Otto Hannevig (a merchant marine officer serving as a volunteer) refused to surrender and escaped into the mountains with about twenty like-minded men—and several truckloads of weapons. Within a week, he had rallied over 500 Norwegian diehards and set about fortifying the area between the towns of Vinjesvingen and Haukeligrend.

Hannevig's ambushes proved so effective at wiping out German patrols that the Germans concluded the entire 7th Infantry Regiment was present and refrained from launching a major attack against the area until early May, when every other pocket of resistance in southern Norway had been eliminated.

The bulk of the Norwegian Army lay in the area north of Oslo, where the 2nd Division (with most of the 4th, 5th, and 6th Regiments, and a miscellany of *ad hoc* volunteer units under command) defended the Osterdal and Gudbrandsdal valleys running toward Trondheim, while elements of the 4th Division's 9th and 10th Regiments blocked the mountain routes to Bergen.

Although the Norwegians were reasonably strong in numbers, and often showed good fighting spirit, their improvised formations were no match for the German 163rd and 196th Divisions, which possessed far more mobility and firepower and had the decisive advantage of effective air support.

After April 13, the Germans also had a sizeable number of tanks—against which the Norwegians had no defense whatsoever. Taking full advantage of their superiority, the Germans drove the 2nd Division back some 80 miles to the entrances of the Gudbrandsdal and Osterdal by April 20.

While the Norwegians were fighting their valiant but losing battle north of Oslo, the French and British were feverishly working to develop plans to address the com-



pletely unexpected situation that had been created by the German seizure of Narvik, Trondheim, and Bergen. Instead of being able simply to occupy the west coast ports without a fight, the Allies were now confronted with the unwelcome challenge of having to take them by force.

The obvious solution would have been to seize them by amphibious assault, but this was an option that most British commanders rejected out of hand because of the disastrous example of the ill-fated Gallipoli Campaign of World War I. The Royal Navy recalled how Turkish coast artillery and mines had taken a heavy toll of its ships in the constricted waters of the Straits of the Dardanelles, and the Army still shuddered at the memory of how its troops had been butchered as they tried to fight their way ashore over open beaches against a dug-in infantry defense.

Thus, despite the weakness of the isolated German force at Narvik, the Allies chose to retake the town by means of a leisurely overland siege (*Operation Rupert*) that would be conducted in concert with the Norwegian 6th Division. The first Allied ground troops to reach the area belonged to the 24th Guards Brigade, which began landing at Harstad on April 15.

Because the Allies remained myopically focused on the objective of shutting off the flow of Swedish iron ore, they initially planned to concentrate their forces in the Narvik area to virtual exclusion of the rest of Norway. However, it soon dawned upon them that any bridgehead in the Narvik area would be insecure unless they also held Trondheim, whose extensive port and airbase facilities, and commanding central position, made it the key to central and northern Norway.

Because it was such a vital position, proposals for a direct assault upon Trondheim (*Operation Hammer*) were given more serious consideration than had been the case at Narvik, but they were ultimately torpedoed by the Royal Navy's refusal to risk its ships against the captured coast artillery batteries that the Germans had guarding the entrance to Trondheimfjord.

The alternative that was eventually decided upon was to mount an overland pincer attack upon the city from the north and south.

A joint Franco-British formation known as Mauriceforce (the 148th Brigade and the 5th Demi-Brigade de Chasseurs Alpins mountain troops) would land at Namsos and thrust southward, while the all-British Sickelforce (15th and 148th Brigades) would go ashore at Andalesnes and strike north. Although both forces were lacking in tanks, artillery, and other heavy weapons, it was expected that they would have relatively little trouble in mopping up the two weak battalions of the 138th Mountain Regiment that were initially the only German troops available to put up a defense.

What the Allies had not counted on, however, was the Germans' ability to reinforce the Trondheim garrison by airlift. For, even as the 146th and 148th Brigades were making their landings on April 16 and April 18 (respectively), a steady stream of Ju-52s were droning up from Fornebu with troops of the German 181st Infantry Division.

The Allies were also surprised by the blistering pace of the German thrust north of Oslo, because they had expected that the rugged, snow-shrouded terrain would hold the Nazi advance to a snail's pace. Because it would do little good to advance on Trondheim while leaving his supply line exposed to a rapid German thrust towards Dombås, the commander of the 148th Brigade decided to deviate from his orders and rushed his troops south to reinforce the Norwegian 2nd Division.

The gesture was a valiant one, but it led to the destruction of the 148th Brigade in a series of battles fought between Lillehammer and Tretten from the 21st to the 23rd of April. There were many reasons for this outcome, including intense aerial bombing, poor coordination with the Norwegians, and the generally low level of training of the British territorial soldiers; but the most decisive factor was unquestionably the Germans' overwhelming superiority in firepower.

Because the 148th had no weapons heavier than machineguns and mortars (and nothing but smoke shells for the latter), the Germans would simply deploy their artillery just beyond small arms range and blast away at the Allied troops over open sights. Then the tanks—to which the British had no answer—would be sent in while German mountain troops outflanked the defensive

line by climbing the steep sides of the valley. This was a pattern that would be repeated time after time during the campaign.

The destruction of the 148th Brigade was only one of a series of disasters that were suffered by the Allies in the fourth week of April. First of all, the offensive against Trondheim was defeated before it ever really began. As we have seen, the southern prong of the Allied pincers that was supposed to have closed on the city was diverted in the Gudbrandsdal, leaving only the troops landed at Namsos to continue the attack.

However, while the 146th Brigade was waiting for the 5th Chasseurs Alpins Demi-Brigade to come on line at Vist, the enemy seized the initiative on April 21 by launching an overland attack, which was supported by an amphibious assault that put troops ashore behind the British. The 146th managed to make its escape back to Steinkjer, but the battle had just about permanently dashed any hopes that Trondheim was going to be taken by Mauriceforce.

Worse yet, as soon as they learned of the Allied landings at Namsos and Andalesnes, the Germans threw their entire bomber force (which had grown to almost 400 planes) against Namsos and Andalesnes and literally wiped them off the map in a series of large incendiary raids. Wharfs, railroad facilities, telephone offices, warehouses, and fuel depots were all consumed in the massive conflagrations—effectively destroying both Mauriceforce's and Sickelforce's supply bases.

British fighters operating from carriers off the coast tried to contest air superiority over central Norway, but were far too few in number to make any real difference. An attempt to give Sickelforce some dedicated air cover by basing the RAF's 263rd Squadron on the frozen surface of Lake Lesjaskog to the southeast of Andalesnes fared even worse when all of the unit's planes were destroyed in less than half a day on April 25.

The Royal Air Force had no more planes to spare for Norway because it was hoarding its resources for the decisive campaign that was about to begin in France and the Low Countries. Yet, even if more aircraft had been available, there would have been no-

where to base them because the Germans had captured practically every airfield in the country within the few days of the invasion. Thus, without any real fighter opposition to worry about the Luftwaffe's bombers had a field day blasting front-line positions, striking at ships in the fjords, pouncing on anything that moved in the valleys, and frustrating all attempts to repair the ports or stockpile supplies ashore.

By April 26 the Allies recognize their position in central Norway was hopeless on account of the overwhelming German air superiority and decided to evacuate their ground troops from both Andalesnes and Namsos before any further losses were suffered.

To cover the re-embarkation at Andalesnes, which would be slowed by the devastated port facilities, the British 15th Infantry Brigade fought series of delaying actions in the Gudbrandsdal between April 26th and 28th. Although it suffered significant casualties, the 15th Brigade avoided the unhappy fate of the 148th because it consisted entirely of pre-war regular troops—and it possessed an organic antitank company that largely negated the effectiveness of the heretofore unstoppable German tanks.

Indeed, with its advantages, the 15th Brigade managed to give the Germans a bloody nose on several occasions, an achievement that paid its dividends when it came time for the unit to break off and head to Andalesnes for evacuation. Because the Germans were now advancing more slowly and cautiously, the brigade was able to make a clean get-away. Although it hardly made up for the loss of central Norway, the impressive performance of the 15th Brigade at least meant that this stage of the campaign ended on a fairly high note for the Allies.

The Allied withdrawal, which was completed on May 3, brought about the collapse of the few remaining pockets of Norwegian resistance in the southern half of the country. Realizing that further resistance would ultimately be futile without some hope of outside assistance, the commanders of the isolated units that were still in the field either surrendered or ordered their men to disperse to their homes.

Among the last to submit was the redoubtable Lieutenant Hannevig. When German troops gingerly advanced into the Vinjesvingen area to secure the surrender of what they took to be an entire regiment of enemy troops, they found only Hannevig and about a dozen other Norwegian soldiers guarding several times their number of German prisoners (the rest of his volunteer unit had already dispersed).

When hostilities in southern and central Norway ended at the beginning of May, the main focus of the campaign naturally shifted from Trondheim to Narvik. At that time, the situation in and around Narvik remained pretty much the same as it had been at the middle of April because both British and French troops had proven incapable of attacking overland in the extremely rugged mountainous terrain that predominated in the area. The problem was that practically none of the Allied infantrymen knew how to ski, which was an absolute prerequisite for winter operations north of the Arctic Circle. Even the French 27th Demi-Brigade de Chasseurs Alpins, although technically a mountain unit, had barely fifty trained skiers in each of its three battalions.

Although denied any meaningful Allied support, the Norwegian 6th Division went ahead and began attacking on its own in the last week of April. Progress was very slow on account of the fierce resistance offered by the elite troops of the German 139th Mountain Infantry Regiment, but the Norwegians stubbornly kept attacking day after day, and week after week, gradually wearing enemy strength down by means of a slow, meatgrinder offensive.

The German situation at Narvik was plainly starting to deteriorate and would quickly become desperate if the Allies ever overcame their phobia against launching amphibious assaults. Thus, the whole second half of the Norwegian Campaign boiled down to the question of whether the Germans could push a relief column through to Narvik before it inevitably succumbed to the Allied siege.

At first glance, German prospects did not look good. To drive from Trondheim to Narvik they would have to push across almost 400 miles of forbidding, arctic terrain just as the spring thaw was turning the

roads into rivers of mud. Furthermore, although this region is hundreds of miles long, it is rarely more than forty miles wide, and the only north-south road is frequently broken by ferries.

In short, the terrain was admirably suited for the defense, and its shape meant that the western flank of the German advance would be dangerously exposed to the Royal Navy, which could slow the thrust by interdicting its line of supply and perhaps halt it outright by conducting amphibious landings along the coast behind it.

Unfortunately for the Allied cause, the Royal Navy's ingrained reluctance to operate in restricted waters had, if anything, grown even stronger since the start of the campaign, because its ships had proven vulnerable to air attack when they were caught in narrow fjords where opportunities for high-speed evasive action were limited. Thus, in the second half of Norwegian Campaign, the British would once again fail to take advantage of the one form of military power in which they had a decisive advantage over the Germans.

Likewise, the Allies also repeated the mistake of assuming that bad terrain alone would suffice to prevent a rapid enemy advance. Even a quick glance at the map will reveal that if the Allies wanted to defend northern Norway, they should have used Mauriceforce to defend the road from Grong to Mosjoen instead of evacuating it from Namsos, but proposals to do just that were rejected in the belief that the thawed-out road was impassable. Thus, the only Allied land forces that were to be used to contest the German advance were five small Independent Companies.

The Independent Companies, which would eventually evolve into the much-vaunted Commandos, were supposed to be experts at waging unconventional and irregular tactics; but far too little time had passed since their creation in mid-April for the 200-man strong units to gain any real proficiency in these unfamiliar forms of warfare. Nonetheless, when the first two Independent Companies were landed at Mosjoen on May 8, their orders were to avoid major battles and instead to slow and eventually halt the Germans by launching guerrilla attacks against the flanks and rear of the enemy thrust.

This was a worthy plan that could well have succeeded in other circumstances, but the newborn Independent Companies lacked the experience and tactical proficiency necessary to make it work. They also lacked the requisite mobility to maneuver off-road in northern Norway because their personnel did not know how to ski.

Indeed, far from threatening the enemy's flanks and rear, the Independent Companies would find it extremely difficult to prevent the enemy from attacking their own, because the formation that the Germans chose to spearhead their drive north was the elite 2nd Mountain Division—which was manned exclusively by expert skiers recruited from the Carinthia region of eastern Austria.

The 2nd Mountain proved that the road north of Grong was indeed passable by covering most of the distance to Mosjoen in just a few days. Despite this impressive achievement, the Germans feared that their advance would stall at Elsfjord, where the road north was broken by a ten-mile long ferry. Thus, even as the column that had pushed overland was battling against the 4th and 5th Independent Companies south of Mosjoen on May 10, the Germans launched an amphibious assault against Hemnesberget with a mountain infantry company and a mountain battery that sailed up from Trondheim on a captured Norwegian passenger vessel.

This audacious gamble paid off handsomely because the German landing thoroughly disorganizing the Allied defense of the region around Mo, even though the Scots Guards Battalion of the 24th Guards Brigade had just arrived to back up the Independent Companies. It was, in fact, a brilliant example of the exact kind of operation that the British could have performed if they could only have shaken off the "Gallipoli Syndrome."

The rest of the campaign south of Narvik precisely followed the pattern that had been set in the Gudbrandsdal. The three battalions of the 24th Guards Brigade were fed in one at a time in a brave effort to stem the tide, but they inevitably failed in the face of the enemy's overwhelming superiority in numbers, heavy weaponry, and most significant of all, airpower.

The new British supply base at Bodo was, like its predecessors at Andalsnes and Namsos, quickly wiped off the map by incendiary bombs, while an attempt to base Gladiator fighters out of an improvised airfield near the town failed because of the thaw and constant German air raids.

Once again the Allies were forced to admit the futility of continuing to fight under such unfavorable circumstances and decided to abandon the area rather than suffer additional casualties to no good purpose. The last British troops were evacuated from what little was left of Bodo on May 31st.

Yet, as far as the German could tell, their rapid advance north of Trondheim had not been fast enough, because by the time the 2nd Mountain Division reached Bodo, the Allies had already taken Narvik and pinned the German garrison up against the border with Sweden. If the garrison was forced to retreat across the border and accept internment by the Swedes, Nazi Germany would suffer a major blow to its prestige, shattering the image of invincibility that was being created by its triumphs in France and Belgium. Worst of all, there were 80 miles of the most rugged and inhospitable terrain in all of Norway yet to cross before the 2nd Mountain could come to the rescue, because the area between Bodo and Narvik was a roadless, unpopulated wilderness of mountains and glaciers.

The situation looked very different from the Allied perspective, which was increasingly colored by the disastrous events on the Continent that would soon lead to the fall of France. By the end of May, over half of the Allied naval forces in the Norwegian theater of operations had been withdrawn to participate in *Operation Dynamo*—the evacuation from Dunkirk—and the French ground forces were also due to withdraw because every available soldier was needed back in France.

Because the whole logic behind it had been based upon the assumption that the "real war" on the Western Front would be a slow, attritional affair lasting at least several years, the Narvik operation no longer made sense now that the strategic situation had changed so dramatically. Thus, determined to save precious forces for the defense of their respective homelands, the

French and British high commands made the decision to abandon northern Norway even before the campaign fighting around Bodo came to a close. However, they also decided that, as a parting gesture, they would capture Narvik and demolish its port installations before pulling out—a move that would at least delay the resumption of the Swedish iron ore trade for some time.

The absence of any German coastal defenses meant that one of the two main stumbling blocks for Allied amphibious operations—the Royal Navy's fears about sending its ships against coast artillery—was not operative in the Narvik region. The British Army, however, continued to resist any proposal to assault defended beaches, which meant that its troops deployed around Narvik were virtually useless because they could not attack overland.

Fortunately, the French commander, General Bethouart, was not so close-minded, and he eventually concluded that the risks involved in a seaborne assault were worth taking if that was the only practical means of attacking. Thus it was that the first of many Allied amphibious operation of World War II was launched by the naturally adventurous troops of the famous 13th Foreign Legion Demi-Brigade on May 13, 1940.

The target of the attack was not Narvik itself but the town of Elvegardsmoen, which contained a major mobilization depot. Despite many predictions of disaster, the operation (which also involved Norwegian troops attacking by land from the north) worked like a charm, as the weak German defense was quickly routed at little cost to the attackers. Buoyed by their largely-unexpected success, the Allied commanders began planning to attack Narvik itself as soon as British fighters were installed at Bardufoss airfield to give the operation some modicum of air cover.

The re-equipped 263rd Squadron—which was thirsting to get revenge for the debacle at Lake Lesjaskog—flew into Bardufoss from the carrier *Glorious* on May 21 and was joined by the 46th Squadron with its more modern Hurricanes five days later. For the first time in the entire campaign the Allies had a significant number of fighters operational in Norway, flying from

a reasonably well-equipped and -defended base whose runway wasn't going to melt away.

Although they were still too few to secure air superiority over the region, the British fighters at least managed to prevent the Allied supply base at Harstad from going the way of Namsos, Andalesnes, and Bodo. Unfortunately, this achievement came so late in the day that the only real advantage that the Allies derived from it was that their impending evacuation would not be seriously interfered with by the Luftwaffe.

The amphibious assault on Narvik was launched on May 28, just two days after the last Hurricanes landed at Bardufoss. British troops were once again significantly absent from the attacking force, which included Polish, Foreign Legion, and even Norwegian units. Some heavy losses were suffered by the first wave of troops to go ashore, but on the whole the operation went very well, proving the doomsayers wrong for the second time in the space of just two weeks.

General Erich Dietl, commander of the German 3rd Mountain Division, pulled his remaining men back into a hedgehog around the ore railroad and grimly waited for the final attack that he knew would force him to retreat into Sweden. He was naturally amazed, therefore, when instead of attacking, the French and British began to retreat on June 4th. For, after having taken Narvik and thoroughly demolished its port and railroad facilities, the Allies were now determined to pull their forces out of Norway as quickly as possible.

This sudden about-face had a devastating impact on the morale of the Norwegian 6th Division, which had not been informed about Allied plans and had been anticipating a triumphant conclusion to its hard-fought campaign around Narvik. Feeling abandoned and betrayed, the 6th Division began falling back toward Tromsø in hopes of making a prolonged defense of the province of Finnmark, but the impracticality of this plan soon became obvious as additional German troops began pouring into the north. On June 9, the day after the last Allied troops were lifted out of Harstad, the men of the 6th Division laid down their arms and began dispersing to their homes.

Their undignified exit from northern Norway would have seemed a fitting end to a campaign that had been nothing but one long embarrassment for the French and British, but the Allies still had one more disaster yet to go. For, even as the first troop convoys were setting out for England from Harstad, a German naval force consisting of the battlecruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, the cruiser *Hipper*, and four destroyers was already steaming toward the area.

*Operation Juno*, as this German foray was named, had been devised in mid-May as a desperate means of rendering assistance to General Dietl's hard-pressed troops at Narvik. The plan was for the German ships to mount a surprise attack upon the crucial supply base Harstad, and it was with this objective in mind that the battlecruiser force set sail on June 4. Thus, it was a matter of sheer coincidence that the Germans found themselves perfectly positioned to interfere with the Allied evacuation—of which they were completely unaware.

The Allies, for their part, had grown complacent after two months of undisturbed naval operations in the Norwegian Sea, and the last thing they expected was that the Kriegsmarine would risk its few remaining heavy ships after having suffered such heavy losses in the first half of April. The result was that the carrier *Glorious* and its two escorting destroyers were caught while sailing home independently and were quickly sunk in a hopelessly uneven battle. The only consolation for the Royal Navy was that the destroyer *Acasta* managed to hit the *Scharnhorst* with its last torpedo just before being sunk.

This one lucky hit undoubtedly saved the British from a much larger disaster because, when the German force broke off to shepherd the damaged *Scharnhorst* into Trondheim, it was barely two hours steaming away from a British convoy of fifteen slow freighters and troop ships that was protected solely by the light cruiser *Vindictive*. Further revenge was exacted when the submarine *Clyde* torpedoed, but did not sink, the *Gneisenau* while it was slipping back to Germany on June 20.

## Afterward

The irony of the Norwegian Campaign is that both sides expected a long, attritional war in which the question of whether the Germans had access to Swedish iron ore and Norwegian submarine bases would be of decisive importance. Instead, the war on the Continent lasted barely six weeks after the Germans invaded the Low Countries on May 10, 1940. The surrender of France on June 22 gave Hitler access to sources of iron ore and to Atlantic submarine bases that were in both cases unquestionably superior to those available in Scandinavia.

Seen from this perspective, the German victory in Norway looks hollow indeed, because the Kriegsmarine lost about half of its surface fleet in securing a region that turned out to be of only marginal strategic importance.

The British, although embarrassed by their poor showing, were put at no major strategic advantage by their defeat in Norway, and *their* naval losses were much more easily sustained.

One could, therefore, reasonably argue that the Norwegian Campaign was a disguised strategic defeat for Germany because it effectively took the Kriegsmarine off the table at the very time that it might have proven decisive by enabling Hitler to conquer England when it was at its weakest in the months immediately following the fall of France. Instead, the Kriegsmarine was so weakened by its losses in Norway that *Operation Sealion*, the proposed invasion of Great Britain, never really got off the ground.

The longer-term consequences of the Norwegian Campaign were also highly unfavorable for Third Reich, because Hitler became so convinced of the necessity to prevent the Allies from retaking the country that he eventually committed fifteen precious divisions to guard it—and he kept most of them there until the very end of the war, even though they were desperately needed to defend Germany itself.

