

CAMPBELL, WALTER, ELLESMERE and THIRLMERE were sent to find and escort vessels coming from Tromsø, viz., OIL PIONEER, YERMOUNT, ARBROATH (A.S.I.S.), NYAKOA (A.S.I.S.), and some Norwegian Vessels.

14. I did not consider that sailing of the 1st Group without escort as mentioned in Admiralty 1801/27 was justifiable and had originally intended to retain the ships at sea in charge of VINDICTIVE, in which ship 1,000 troops had been embarked until the whole were ready. On receipt, however, of Admiralty F.O.N.177, I resolved to sail the group under escort of VINDICTIVE if adequate protection was obtainable further south. This being guaranteed by C-in-C., Home Fleet, the 1801/6 and 1506/5 Groups sailed for the Clyde on June 7th at 0300.

15. The RANEN (Commander Sir Geoffrey Congreve), who had been actively employed during the evacuation period delaying the enemy advance up the coast from Bodo, was sent on the night of the 7th, accompanied by NORTHERN GEM, to destroy the Oil Tanks at Svolvær. This successful exploit ended with a most spirited engagement, on his part, with the enemy.

16. Vice-Admiral Commanding First Cruiser Squadron was in charge of the Tromsø Convoy. H.M.S. DEVONSHIRE, his flagship, conveyed the Royal and Diplomatic parties, the Norwegian Government and other notables who wished to be evacuated.

17. Prior to final evacuation, the forepart of MASHOBRA, the stern of which was under water, was blown up, the OLEANDER was sunk, disabled Trawlers destroyed and an attempt was made to tow away the A.L.Cs. but finally they and the M.L.Cs. were scuttled.

18. The whole of the Convoy (2nd Group) were clear of Andfjord by 2300/8th, the rear being brought up by the A/S Trawlers and Minesweepers. As they proceeded, they were shadowed by an enemy aircraft. After seeing these clear in SOUTHAMPTON, I ordered that ship to join the Convoy of which Rear-Admiral Vivian in COVENTRY had been placed in charge.

19. For the evacuation, I flew my Flag in the SOUTHAMPTON and was accompanied in that ship on the return voyage by Generals Auchinleck and Bethouart.

20. Being clear of Norwegian waters and operations therefore coming under Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet, I hauled down my Flag at midnight on June 8th but directed that SOUTHAMPTON was to remain with the Convoy for passage home in view of the liveliness taking place in the North Sea. This passage was uneventful.

21. The success of the evacuation and the smoothness with which the arrangements worked was in great measure due to the unremitting work and attention of all the Staff Officers engaged upon it but primarily to those of the following Officers to whom I particularly wish to call attention. They are:—

Brigadier J. A. H. Gammell, Military Chief Staff Officer.

Captain L. E. H. Maund, Naval Chief Staff Officer.

Commander A. G. V. Hubback, Staff Officer Operations.

The latter conducted the withdrawal of the French and Polish troops that were engaged with the enemy during the concluding phase.

22. The order for evacuation, and the compliance therewith, brought this combined operation to a close—at a moment when, as a result of seven weeks' hard work, the Force seemed to be getting firmly established. To attain this result many and great difficulties had had to be overcome, due to the peculiar hydrographical and geographical conditions, but more particularly to the severe climatic vagaries, all of which were more easily realised on the spot than they could be under totally different conditions elsewhere.

23. The landing of guns, vehicles, and stores of all sorts with a minimum of facilities for doing so, imposed great efforts on all of the three Services taking part in this work.

24. Possibly, the outstanding combined effort of this sort was the preparation of the aerodromes. The initial clearing of the ground, under three to four feet of snow when work began, the water transport and landing on open beaches of all impedimenta, the positioning of the guns for defence, after much work had been expended on preparing miles of indifferent roads under "thaw" conditions to take heavy traffic called for and produced great and continued exertions from all three Services. In this as in all other activities co-operation was close and cordial—more particularly so in the later stages of the campaign. This is equally true as regards relations between the Norwegians and the various nationalities of the Allied Force. Excellent and helpful relations prevailed. I have elsewhere placed on record my appreciation of the valuable services rendered by General Bethouart. As already mentioned initially there was no means of retaliation for interference caused by enemy air attack. The Fleet Air Arm, however, did all that was possible—to the gallantry and activity displayed by that branch of the Service I desire to pay tribute.

25. The Royal Air Force when they began to arrive quickly made their efficiency and courageous skill felt—their advent was very welcome. One Officer of this Service especially attracted me by his zeal, energy, initiative and resource—Wing Commander Atcherley, upon whom fell the initial work of selection and preparation of aerodromes prior to the arrival of Group Captain Moore to the value of whose services I have already alluded.

26. Of the Army, I feel constrained to call attention to Brigadier J. A. H. Gammell—an Officer of obviously great ability whose personality contributed largely to the harmonious relations previously referred to and Colonel A. A. B. Dowler, who, in his capacity as General Staff Officer, was at Military Headquarters during the whole period of the expedition, during which his quiet efficiency and tact were of the greatest assistance—especially through one difficult period.

27. I particularly desire to mention Captain Louis Hamilton, R.N., H.M.S. AURORA, who proved himself a fine, active leader, and an Officer who could be relied upon to obtain the best results under any conditions. His sound views on all operational matters were a great help and support to me, his desire to harass and distress the enemy never eased up.