Naval planning for the German invasion of Norway

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NAVAL PLANNING FOR THE GERMAN

INVASION OF NORWAY

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PREFACE

For certain elements within the highest echelons of the German Navy, planning for the possible, if not eventual, seizure of strategic bases in neutral Norway became imperative with the outbreak of World War II. Especially vital for the German war effort were the protection of Swedish iron ore shipments to the Third Reich from the Norwegian port of Narvik and the denial of preponderant influence, or physical control, over Norway to any rival power. Tempered by contemporaneous diplomatic and military events, these strategic problems found their expression in planning for a projected invasion of Norway.

How German naval planning was brought to fruition in Fall Weserübung is the central focus of this thesis. Its dual purpose, however, is to assess those factors which influenced the successive stages of German strategic planning concerning Norway from September 1939 to April 1940 and to evaluate the import of its final outcome.
INTRODUCTION

Examination of a large-scale, equidistant map of Northwestern Europe, the Greenland and Barents Seas, and the North Atlantic Ocean reveals not only the geographical position of Norway but also her strategic significance to a Hitlerian Germany excluded from the Belgian and French coasts during the winter of 1939-1940. World War I had demonstrated Great Britain's ability to sweep the seas free of German merchant shipping, to impede the egress of U-boats to the North Atlantic, and to restrict the German High Seas Fleet to the narrow confines of the North Sea by means of mine barrages and naval patrols in the English Channel and between the Shetland Islands and the southwestern coast of Norway. The former débouché was sealed off while the latter was finally closed late in 1918 when British pressure forced the Norwegian Government to complete the mine barrier by laying an anti-submarine minefield in its territorial waters off Karmøy. In order to achieve a degree of operational freedom after the beginning of World War II, the German Navy was compelled to break out from the geographical restrictions imposed by the British Isles' strategic position and the location of
their own ports as well as to obtain naval bases beyond the "wet triangle."

In 1929 Vice Admiral Wolfgang Wegener in Die Seestrategie des Weltkrieges had offered a solution to these problems arising from Germany's geographical situation. He asserted that the maintenance of unimpeded access to the high seas for merchant shipping must be the principal function of a German fleet. Defense of "the dead angle of a dead sea" had not achieved this objective in World War I; and he believed that even the occupation of the western coast of Denmark would not have secured it although greater utilization of the Skagerrak and Kattegat could have "decisively improved" Germany's strategic situation. Consequently, an occupation of the "'Norwegian position,'" Wegener averred, "'was certainly preferable'" since England could then no longer maintain the blockade-line from the Shetlands to Norway but must withdraw approximately to the line of the Shetlands-the Faeroes-Iceland. But this line was a net with very wide meshes.

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2 Friedrich Ruge, Der Seekrieg (Annapolis, Maryland: United States Naval Institute, 1965), 79. Hereafter cited as Ruge, Der Seekrieg.
The fresh wind from the ocean then already blew from afar into the stifling atmosphere of the hunger-blockade.'

He also concluded that this line would be difficult for Great Britain to defend because it would lie relatively near Norwegian bases "'but above all'" because Germany—through its occupation of Norway—would "'considerably outflank the English strategic position to the north.'"³

Even in 1939, however, Norway possessed few port facilities along her western littoral adequately developed and capable of handling German high seas units. Nevertheless, the Norwegian fjords offer innumerable deep-water refuges capable of sheltering the largest ocean-going vessels while the very nature of the glaciated, U-shaped fjords can provide defensive protection for warships. A protective screen of offshore islands, the Skjaergård, parallels much of the Norwegian coastline breaking the force of Atlantic storms and the prevailing westerly winds while simultaneously offering protection to coastwise shipping which ply the deep channels between the islands and the shore. Moreover, the Norwegian Current, an extension of the warm North Atlantic Drift, produces ice-free conditions even at Knivskjelodden on Magerøy, Norway's northernmost point (71° 11' North

³Quoted in Derry, Campaign, 16.
Latitude), and at Kirkenes in Eastern Finnmark. The spring and summer fogs produced by the Norwegian Current as well as prolonged cloudiness in summer and autumn provide excellent cover for operational and tactical deception and the potent exercise of inferior naval power. On the other hand, Norway's road and rail net was markedly deficient in 1939-1940, especially when considering the supplying of advanced bases; and her rail system scarcely reached beyond Trondheim.

Despite the natural protection afforded by the Skjaergård to ships traversing the deep coastal channels of the Indreled, or Inner Leads, they could offer only limited protection from enemy submarines or light surface vessels but none at all from air raids if Norway became a belligerent power or Great Britain could overawe her neutrality. Nevertheless, it should be noted that it was only 240 air miles from Stavanger to Scapa Flow, 435 from Kristiansand to Edinburgh, and 170 from Bergen to the Shetlands.

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4 Great Britain, Naval Intelligence Division, Norway (n. p.: January, 1942), 1. Hereafter cited as Naval Intelligence, Norway.

5 Ibid., passim. "Egersund" (Norway 1:100,000), Army Map Service, United States Army (Second edition, Washington, D. C., 1942). "Frøjen" (Norway 1:100,000), Army Map Service, United States Army (Washington, D. C., 1943). "Ervik" (Norway 1:100,000), Army Map Service,
Consequently, possession of Norway's 1,700 mile long coastline\(^6\) by the Third Reich would outflank British maritime defenses, parry the establishment of minefields and a blockade line from the Shetland Islands to Bergen, and free German naval forces and merchant marine from the danger of containment in a "land-locked" North Sea. Contrarily, a German occupation of Norway would produce

\(^6\) Including the perimeters of large islands and the major sinuosities of the coast, the shoreline is estimated to exceed 12,000 miles in length. See Axel C. Z. Sømme, ed., *A Geography of Norden* (Oslo: J. W. Cappelens forlag, 1960), 235. Hereafter cited as Sømme, Norden.
a strong British counteraction and necessitate the defense of the long Norwegian coastline against superior British naval power. The maintenance of strict neutrality by Norway, however, would provide the surest protection for German shipping threading its way through Norwegian territorial waters of the Indreled. An Allied occupation of Norway, on the other hand, could not be countenanced because it would disrupt German naval warfare, influence Sweden and thus endanger the German position in the Baltic Sea, and lead to the interdiction of Swedish iron ore shipments from the Norwegian port of Narvik.

The nexus of German interest in Norway, in point of fact, was this transshipment of high-grade, low phosphoric iron ore from the mines at Kiruna and Gällivare in the Swedish province of Norbotten by rail to the ice-free port of Narvik and thence south by ship down the "Iron Road" through the Inner Leads to the Skagerrak and Germany. As early as 1934 Adolf Hitler acknowledged the significance of the ore shipments. In a conversation with the Commander in Chief of the German Navy Erich Raeder and Reich Marshal Hermann Goering, when the Grand Admiral was seeking additional funds for naval construction, Hitler said that "he considered it vital that the Navy be increased as planned, as no war could be carried on if the Navy was not able to safeguard the ore imports from
Scandinavia."

Total German iron ore imports rose from 8,264,600 metric tons in 1934 to 20,620,900 in 1937 and 21,927,500 in 1938 while the imports during these same years from Norwegian and Swedish fields fluctuated from 529,100 to 509,700, to 1,118,100 metric tons and from 4,694,700 to 9,083,800 to 8,992,300 metric tons respectively. Norwegian iron ore was produced principally at Sydvaranger in Eastern Finnmark and shipped from Kirkenes; at scattered points along the northern coast including Fosdalen in Nord Trøndelag, Dunderland,

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8One metric ton is equivalent to 0.98421 long ton (Br.), 1.10231 short tons (U. S.), or 2,204.62 av. pounds. Charles D. Hodgman, ed., Handbook of Chemistry and Physics (Cleveland, 1963), 3332.

Elsfjord, and the Bogen-Fagernes-Liland grouping on the Ofotfjord, and opposite Tromsø; and in the southeast in the vicinity of Arendal.\textsuperscript{10} Production from these fields reached Germany by way of the Leads and the North Sea while ore from the main Swedish deposits at Kiruna and Gällivare in northern Norbotten was exported through Narvik, as previously mentioned, as well as through the port of Luleå at the head of the Gulf of Bothnia and then south by cargo vessel via the Gulf and the Baltic Sea to Germany. Luleå, however, was sealed shut by ice from mid-December to mid-May\textsuperscript{11} leaving Narvik the sole outlet. Ore from the smaller Bergslagen region in south-central Sweden (northeast of Lake Vänern) was exported from the Bothnian port of Gävle and the ice-free port of Oxelösund on the Baltic.\textsuperscript{12}

Ore from the north, however, moved in approximately equal quantities via the Baltic and the North Sea according to Paul Pleiger, Director General of the Vorstand of the Reichswerke Aktiengesellschaft für Erzbergbau und Eisenhütten "Hermann Goering", in a memorandum sent to

\textsuperscript{10} Naval Intelligence, \textit{Norway}, 239-242.

\textsuperscript{11} See particularly Figure 4.4, "Average Extension of Ice in the Baltic...," in Sömme, \textit{Norden}, 51; and also 52.

\textsuperscript{12} Gävle is not ice-free. \textit{Ibid.}
the Reich Ministry of Economics on February 16, 1938, seeking an increased capitalization of the "Hermann Goering Works." He went on to point out the "helpless dependence" of German manufacturers on supplies of Swedish iron ore:

In view of the different political constellations in Germany and the Nordic states, the Swedish ore shipments are of even greater importance. It is quite impossible to foresee today whether Sweden and Norway...would respect even sufficiently long-term delivery contracts, and in the event of war, for political reasons, would maintain or abruptly stop ore shipments to Germany.  

Moreover, Pleiger believed that the routes of ore delivery would be difficult to defend: either mines or the Russian Navy could close the Baltic to shipping; the North Sea route presented innumerable opportunities for attack and disruption; railroad routes across Sweden would be open to sabotage; and naval bombardment in exposed coastal areas would be an added danger, not only

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to the railroads but also to Norwegian mines.  

Confronted with this iron ore problem, Germany consumed over 33,000,000 metric tons of ore in 1938; but intensive utilization of small, scattered domestic deposits yielded only 11,145,000 metric tons of generally lean ore—about one-third of her "normal" requirements. With the outbreak of war in 1939, the Allied

14 *T W C*, XII, 522.

15 The major German iron ore deposits were located in the Dill, Lahn, and Sieg valleys, the Ilsede-Peine and Salzgitter districts, and east of the Rhine River south of the Ruhr. Smaller deposits were also found in Bavaria and the Vogelsberg. See Robert E. Dickinson, *Germany: A General and Regional Geography* (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1961), 237-244.

16 Senate, Hearings, 229. It averaged less than forty-five per cent after treatment.

17 Lorraine ore from France was of the minette type, low-grade, averaging slightly over thirty per cent iron and requiring concentration or mixing with rich ores before smelting. Thus, the 5,100,000 metric tons of French iron ore imported by Germany in 1938 actually possessed a metallic content roughly equivalent to 2,550,000 metric tons of Swedish ore which ranged in purity from 58 to 72 per cent iron. Rendered in the converse, disregarding the detractive factor of the high phosphorus content of French ores, *at least* 17,984,600 metric tons of French ore would have been required to equal the loss of Swedish ore alone. This must have been another reason for the stress placed upon the retention of the Swedish iron ore supply. Cf. Senate, Hearings, 229 and United States Tariff Commission, *Foreign Trade and Exchange Controls in Germany*, 215.
blockade cut Germany off from almost all of her foreign supplies of iron ore except those from Scandinavia resulting in an estimated yearly loss exceeding 9,500,000 metric tons. Consequently, the security and maintenance, if not the expansion, of the Scandinavian iron ore deliveries became a strategical imperative for the Third Reich.

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18 Derry, Campaign, 10.
CHAPTER I

BASES OR NEUTRALITY?

The arguments advanced by Vice Admiral Wegener remained viable in 1939, but his basic premise had been altered. Without a battle fleet adequate to challenge successfully Britain's control of the sea lanes, the protection of German merchant shipping beyond the confines of the Baltic Sea and the North Sea was doomed to failure; but the conduct of "tonnage war" against British commerce was based upon similar requirements. To mount and sustain a successful submarine offensive against British shipping was impossible, and the OKH was asked if the capture of French Atlantic ports could be anticipated. The High Command replied that even the acquisition of French Channel ports was uncertain. Obviously, a stalemate was anticipated in any land offensive against France.¹

¹Stefan T. Possony, "Decision Without Battle," United States Naval Institute Proceedings (Annapolis, Maryland: United States Naval Institute, 1946), LXXII, 762.
No strategic or operational plan had been prepared by Germany before the opening of World War II for the occupation of Norway; the initial stimulus came from Admiral Rolf Carls, Commanding Admiral, Baltic Sea Station and Naval Group East, in late September 1939. A year earlier while serving as Vice Admiral and Chief of the Fleet, Carls had recorded his "Opinion on the 'Draft Study of Naval Warfare against England'" in a top secret memorandum and had acknowledged his "full agreement" with its central theme. "If, according to the Fuehrer's decision," he stated, "Germany is to acquire a position as a world power she needs not only sufficient colonial possessions but also secure naval communications and secure access to the ocean [Norway]." He did not believe that this could be accomplished by peaceful means but would lead to a war "against 1/2 to 2/3 of the whole world." Undismayed by such an eventuality, Carls asserted and reiterated,

It can only be justified and have a chance of success if it is prepared economically as well as politically, and militarily, and waged with the aim of conquering for Germany an outlet to the ocean. 

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2TwC, X, 519-520—"The High Command Case" (Wilhelm von Leeb, et al.). His italics. See also NC A, VI, 828-829 and International Military Tribunal, Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal, Nuremberg, 14 November 1945—1 October 1946 (42 vols., Nuremberg: Secretariat of the Tribunal, under the jurisdiction of the Allied Control Authority for Germany, 1947-1949), III, 120-121. Hereafter cited as T M W C.
Grand Admiral Erich Raeder testified at Nuremberg that he had not concerned himself with the question of Norway until Admiral Carls telephoned him during the closing days of September 1939. Carls apprised him of a letter which he was sending to him that dealt with the danger of a British occupation of Norway. The letter discussed in general terms, according to Raeder, the disadvantages this would have for Germany, whether they should forestall it, and what disadvantages or advantages a German occupation of "the Norwegian Coast and the Norwegian bases...would have." The testimony of Vice Admiral Otto Schniewind, Chief of Staff of the Seekriegsleitung, that Raeder gave him not only the letter from Carls but also the assignment to investigate the questions with which Carls had dealt, corroborated Raeder's testimony. It was further buttressed by a memorandum containing the foregoing facts which Raeder had sent on January 10, 1944, to Admiral Kurt Assmann, the official German Naval Historian, for his personal use.  

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3 T M W C, XIV, 86.  
4 "Naval War Staff" or "Naval Operations Staff" are used synonymously for translating Seekriegsleitung. T M W C, X, 752. Hereafter also referred to as the SKL.  
5 T W C, X, 783.  
6 T M W C, XIV, 86.  
7 N C A, VI, 891-892.
In this memorandum to Assmann, Raeder noted that since he was of an identical opinion as Admiral Carls, he based some notes for a subsequent report to Hitler on Carls' letter. Raeder then described for Assmann the disadvantages, as he had viewed them at the time, which would arise for Germany following a British occupation of Norway—"control of the approaches to the Baltic, flanking of our naval operations and of our attacks on Britain, pressure on Sweden." He wrote that he had "mentioned" in his notes the advantages to be gained by occupying the coast of Norway—"outlet to the North Atlantic, no possibility of British minefields." Only bases and the littoral were under consideration. "I included Narvik," Raeder stated, "though Admiral Carls...hoped that Narvik might be excluded." He added parenthetically to Assmann, "At that time, we were able to use Murmansk and/or a special Russian base." No mention was made of the iron ore traffic. Apparently, either the Commander in Chief

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8 NCA, VI, 891-892.

9 Schniewind stated at Nuremberg: "A further trend of thought...in [Carls'] letter was that, under certain circumstances, we might gain possession of certain bases in Norway with Russian help or Russian pressure..." TWC, X, 783.

10 NCA, VI, 892.
of the German Navy was thinking largely in strictly military terms; or the acquisition of the iron ore ports and the Leads was so obvious an advantage in face of the posited situation (i.e., a British takeover) that it did not have to be enumerated. Raeder's inclusion of Narvik probably belies the former alternative, however, although Carls evidently was more concerned with the purely military realities and chose to ignore the economic. Norwegian and Swedish ore loomed so large in Germany's war-making potential that it seems illusory to believe that it was totally disregarded.  

On October 3, 1939, Grand Admiral Raeder, acting in his capacity as Chief of the Naval War Staff, notified the SKL that he thought the Führer should be told as soon as possible about their views concerning "the possibilities of extending the operational base to the North." He asked them in a questionnaire to ascertain if combined Russian and German pressure could be used to obtain bases in Norway "with the aim of improving fundamentally our

11 Indeed, in the months immediately preceding the war, Raeder and his staff had discussed the Scandinavian ore question and had decided that it would be best to "keep Norway neutral" since the German Navy could not hope to defend Norway's long coastline. See Anthony Martienssen, *Hitler and His Admirals* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1948), 43.
strategic and operational position." In addition, they were to determine what sites should be considered as bases, whether the bases could be seized by force if that were necessary, what their defensive requirements would be, and the degree of existing harbor developments. Interjecting the comment that the Flag Officer of U-boats, Rear Admiral Karl Dönitz, considered such Norwegian harbors "extremely useful as equipment—and supply—bases for Atlantic U-boats to call at temporarily," Raeder then concluded his questionnaire by asking the Naval War Staff to determine "what decisive advantage would exist for the conduct of the War at sea in gaining a base in North Denmark e.g. Skagen"—a question reminiscent of Admiral Wegener's concern with the offensive potential inherent in the full utilization of the Skagerrak and Kattegat.13

In response to Raeder's questions, the Chief of Staff of the SKL submitted a wary appraisal. Certain profits might accrue to Germany from the seizure of Norwegian bases, according to the SKL; but militarily considered, they were questionable when equated with the danger involved: namely, the cessation of coastal

12 NCA, VI, 928.
13 Supra, 2.
commerce because of British naval superiority once Norway had become a theater of war. Consequently, the Naval War Staff concluded that a continuation of Norway's neutrality, rigidly respected by all parties concerned, would be the preferred solution.14

In his memorandum to Admiral Assmann, Raeder noted his disagreement with the SKL's doubts concerning obtaining Norwegian bases.15 Yet, according to his own and the corroborating testimony of Schniewind, Raeder evidently subscribed to the War Staff's view favoring the continuance of Norway's neutrality: "It was entirely clear to me," Raeder testified after the war, "that the best possible solution for us would be that Norway should maintain a steadfast neutrality..."16

On October 10, before the close of a general situation conference, the Grand Admiral broached the subject of Norway with Adolf Hitler.17 Synthesizing his

14 T W C, X, 783-785.
15 N C A, VI, 891-892.
16 T M W C, XIV, 87-88. No direct evidence available refutes his statement. See also T W C, X, 786-787.
17 Raeder stated at Nuremberg that reports received through the offices of Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, head of the OKW's Intelligence Service, of British intentions to occupy bases in Norway prompted him to request this conference with Hitler. T M W C, XIV, 85. Similar reports were received from Lieutenant Commander Richard Schreiber,
notes from Admiral Carls' letter and the views of the Naval Operations Staff, he presented his foregoing conclusion and set forth the dangers involved in Britain procuring bases in Norway. Once lodged there, and especially in southern Norway, the Allies would be able to dominate the approaches to the Baltic Sea, outflank naval movements from the Elbe and Weser rivers and from the Helgoland Bight, imperil the passage to the North Atlantic, endanger reconnaissance flights over the North Sea and air attacks on England, terminate ore exports from Narvik, and exert intensive political pressure on Sweden resulting in the obstruction or stopping of ore shipments. The possibility existed that they might even venture "to attack and destroy the ore deposits at Lulea [sic], or to seize them."^18

Naval Attache in Oslo. Ibid., 308. See also T W C, X, 784.

Until this time, Adolf Hitler saw no threat from the Allies. In his "Memorandum and Directives for Conduct of the War in the West," issued from Berlin on October 9, 1939, he declared: "Provided no completely unforeseen factors appear, their [the Nordic states'] neutrality is...to be assumed. The continuation of German trade with these countries appears possible even in a war of long duration." N C A, VII, 803.

^18 T M W C, XIV, 88.
These perils might in themselves become deciding factors in the outcome of the war, the Grand Admiral believed; but he directed Hitler's attention to corresponding dangers in a German seizure of Norwegian territory. British naval action during and after any German occupation would attempt to hamper the ore traffic while a struggle might continue which the Third Reich, with its "inadequate supply of surface vessels," could not deal with in the long run. Therefore, he did not propose acquisition of bases or an occupation of Norway.  

In his 1944 memorandum to the Naval Historian Assmann, however, Raeder did state that he had "mentioned" in his notes on Carls' letter the advantages of occupying the Norwegian coast. Since these notes were used as a partial basis for his presentation to Hitler, it would be reasonable to assume that Raeder told Hitler about them. This was not admitted by Raeder at Nuremberg, nor in the supporting testimony of Vice Admiral Otto Schniewind; and the question of Narvik was likewise passed over without any interrogation. In addition, for the first time, the dangers inherent in the iron ore dilemma were clearly presented to Hitler by the Commander

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Admiral Raeder's original questions concerning Norwegian bases had also been submitted to Rear Admiral Karl Dönitz; but his reply was not received by Raeder until shortly after his conference with the Führer on

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Two rather contradictory statements were made by Raeder with reference to Hitler's response at the October 10 conference: first, in 1944, "The Führer saw at once the significance of the Norwegian problem; he asked me to leave the notes and stated that he wished to consider the question himself." (N C A, VI, 892.); and last, at Nuremberg, "The question was very far from his mind, for he knew very little about matters of naval warfare. ...He said that he would deal with this question and that I should leave the notes with him...so that he might use them as a basis for his deliberations on this problem." (T M W C, XIV, 90.).

The latter statement was ironical in view of the fact that Hitler, in his "Memorandum and Directives for Conduct of the War in the West," issued the previous day (October 9), declared:

The U-boat, can, even today, if ruthlessly employed, be an extraordinary threat to England. The weakness of German U-boat warfare lies in the great distances to the scenes of action, in the extraordinary danger attached to these journeys and in the continuous threat to their home bases. That England has not, for the moment, laid the great minefield, as in the World War, between Norway and the Shetland Isles is possibly connected—provided the will to wage war exists at all—with a shortage of necessary barrage materials. But, if the war lasts long, an increasing difficulty to our U-boats must be reckoned with in the use of these only remaining inward and outward routes. The creation of U-boat strongpoints outside these constricted home bases would lead to an enormous increase in the striking power of this arm. N C A, VII, 806.

Where else could these be envisaged but in France and/or Norway?
October 10, 1939.\textsuperscript{21} Decidedly in favor of a military takeover of bases in Norway, Dönitz incisively catalogued the points at issue and advised the establishment of bases at Narvik and Trondheim: a "position outside the Shetlands-Norway Straits," "freedom from ice," and "rail communications" were the three considerations for any Norwegian base; and only these two possessed them. Common advantages also possessed by both ports were various approach channels which were deep and difficult to mine, locations along the fjords which could not be shelled from the ocean, and "protected areas directly in front of the harbor for exercises and entry." Additional advantages possessed by Trondheim were its southern location offering close contact with Germany; more favorable climatic conditions, and shorter distance to the Atlantic sea lanes (The reverse of these were among Narvik's disadvantages as set forth by Dönitz.); "basins...suitable for U-boats"; and industrial establishments and shipyards capable of constructing the required facilities for a base. Trondheim's only drawback was the short distance to British air bases, but the greater distance to Narvik was in its favor. On the other hand, Narvik had little industrial development, no basins, and rail connections only

\textsuperscript{21}T M W C, XIV, 86.
with the Gulf of Bothnia. Thus, Dönitz decided that Trondheim was the more favorable site for a base; and he proposed that it be established as a supply and repair point with the necessary defensive protection and accommodations for submarine crews. Narvik should be made a refueling center, Dönitz concluded.²²

This assessment makes manifest the military value of Trondheim and Narvik as naval bases for the German Navy; but equally obvious is Dönitz's failure to evaluate Raeder's question, "Can bases be gained by military force against Norway's will...?"²³ Dönitz's interest in expansion northward along the Norwegian littoral apparently overlooked or chose to dispense with so vital a problem taking for granted that Germany would be successful. Moreover, the purely naval question advanced by Raeder of what advantages might be gained by Germany in taking a base in northern Denmark likewise failed to be examined. While political rationalizations for the proposed acquisitions in Norway were not within the purview of his reply to Raeder, it is significant that not even the naval rationale for such a move was assayed by Rear Admiral Dönitz; and he also did not respond to the enjoiner to

²² N C A, VI, 815-816.
²³ Ibid., 928.
consider the possibility of acquiring bases through joint Russo-German pressure on Norway.

No evidence can be found indicating that any specifics like those detailed by Dönitz were touched upon in the conference between Hitler and Raeder on October 10. It would be interesting to know what, if any, influence Dönitz's views would have had on Hitler's concern with Norway. The naval transcript of the conference closes with only the brief notation:

The Commander in Chief, Navy points out how important it would be for submarine warfare to obtain bases on the Norwegian coast, e. g., Trondheim, with the help of Russian pressure. The Fuehrer will consider this matter.  

The above excerpt reveals Grand Admiral Raeder's interest in acquiring bases by peaceful means while, at the same time, he sought to encourage the extension of mutual military and political engagements with the Soviet Union. An entry in a file kept by the OKM shows that on September 23, 1939, the head of the German Navy "for the first time" raised the question with Hitler of Soviet co-operation in ceding submarines to Germany, equipping

auxiliary cruisers at Murmansk, and permitting German warships to call at Russian ports.  

The Führer stressed caution in any negotiations with the Russians; nevertheless, certain naval privileges were procured. On October 10, Admiral Raeder reported to Hitler the outfitting of auxiliary cruisers in the Soviet Union, including one at Murmansk, and that the offer of a base on the bay east of Murmansk was going to be investigated. Beyond this, Hitler would countenance no further involvement with the Soviet Union in naval negotiations. During the same conference, Hitler rejected, "for political reasons, the proposal to construct submarines in Russia, or to buy them from her." This intransigence lay athwart Raeder's desire to secure combined Russian-German pressure to overawe Norway. Six days later, however, the Commander in Chief of the German Navy was able to report to the Führer that the Russians had placed at their disposal a "well-situated base west of Murmansk." The next day (October 17) preparations were in progress for this "Base North."  

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25 N C A, VI, 978. See also Fuehrer Conferences, 1939, 10.
26 Ibid., 13.
28 Ibid., VI, 976.
Although a detailed memorandum had been drafted on October 15 expressing the OKM's desire to intensify naval warfare culminating in a "siege from the sea" against Great Britain, it failed to mention Norwegian bases. In reporting to Adolf Hitler on October 23, 1939, Admiral Raeder read another, brief memorandum which incorporated the salient points of economic warfare and called for driving home to neutral nations that

they can never emerge from this war as laughing victors in the face of an economically destroyed or weakened Germany. This is a war of the entire European economic area, and in this war the fate of all the neutral states of Europe, especially the Scandinavian and Baltic states is inextricably linked to the fate of Germany...

Hitler agreed and held that "pressure on the northern countries is easiest to exert."

By November 1, Raeder was able to record that German submarine warfare had been intensified "as much as possible" and only the proclamation of a "state of siege

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29 I. e., "completely ruthless prosecution of... economic war." N C A, VIII, 558. Although given to the Führer during the October 16 naval conference, the memorandum was not officially distributed until November 3, 1939. Führer Conferences, 1939, 21. N C A, VIII, 546.

30 Führer Conferences, 1939, 27.

31 Ibid., 22.
against England" was lacking which would permit the torpedoing of neutral ships without warning after their home governments had been notified concerning this declaration. In reply to a question raised during his conference with Hitler and General Wilhelm Keitel on November 10 whether the declaration should be made in conjunction with the opening of a land offensive in the West in order to divert hostile attention, Raeder suggested that it be delayed while other means of intensification were undertaken by the Navy: first, the sinking without warning of enemy passenger vessels; and similar action later against neutral vessels carrying contraband which would create essentially the same conditions as proclaiming a "state of siege." Hitler agreed but added the proviso that such sinkings only follow the announcement of the names of the ships involved and the statement that they were being utilized as troop transports and auxiliary cruisers. The proclamation and action against neutral vessels would be considered when a change in neutral attitude occurred. The episode which had just

32 Fuehrer Conferences, 1939, 33.
33 Ibid., 35-37.
concluded concerning the City of Flint\textsuperscript{34} undoubtedly influenced the Führer's decision and drew attention to the "security" of Norden and of Norway in particular.

During the conference, Hitler queried Raeder about naval requirements for bases along the Belgian-Dutch coast

\textsuperscript{34}The U. S. s.s. City of Flint, partly laden with contraband, was intercepted by the German pocket battleship Deutschland (later renamed the Lützow) on October 9 in the North Atlantic; and a prize crew was placed on board. Twelve days later, she put in at the Norwegian port of Tromsø ostensibly to replenish her water supply and then proceeded to the Russian port of Murmansk which she entered on October 23 only to be detained and to have her prize crew interned by the Soviets. Despite demands by the United States for her restoration to American sovereignty, the Soviet Union released the German prize crew and ordered the City of Flint to leave Murmansk on October 26. Departing the next day, the City of Flint returned to Tromsø where she was granted permission to use Norwegian territorial waters en route to Germany. Reaching Haugesund, she put into port without just cause or permission, was immediately seized by Norwegian naval authorities, and turned over to her American crew on November 4 in spite of German protests. The German Government was left to speculate whether or not British and French influence had contributed to the outcome; but it seems to have been an independent Norwegian response to an obvious, although debated, violation of her neutrality. In his November 10 naval conference, Hitler agreed with Admiral Raeder that the case of the City of Flint had been "mismanaged" and the ship should be permitted to return home unmolested. Fuehrer Conferences, 1939, 36. Winston S. Churchill, The Gathering Storm (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948), 431 and 461. Hereafter cited as Churchill, Gathering Storm. Anthony Martienssen, Hitler and His Admirals, 44. Max Beloff, The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia, 1929-1941 (2 vols., London: Oxford University Press, 1963), II, 295. Hereafter cited as Beloff, Foreign Policy.
only to be informed that they would be too close to the English coast and therefore unsuitable as submarine bases. Not included in the reports of Fuehrer Conferences on Matters Dealing With the German Navy for 1939, the entry in a file on Russo-German affairs from the archives of the German Naval High Command for the November 10 conference noted:

Fuehrer rejects purchase of Russian submarines again, since he is convinced, that the Russian ships are in bad condition, and that the Russians 'should not see any weakness with us.'

Twice rebuffed concerning submarine purchases, Raeder apparently also discarded his hope of securing forward bases in Norway with Russian diplomatic support; and when the question of Norwegian bases was again raised (December 8, 1939), no mention was made of Russian assistance.

The OKM's attention in the meantime shifted to the Baltic Sea where the desired control over neutral shipping and the interdiction of British commerce had met with less success than had been anticipated. Another cause of concern was the continuing transshipment of goods (chiefly pit props for British collieries and lumber) by rail

35 N C A, VI, 980. Fuehrer Conferences, 1939, 36.
36 Ibid., 46.
across Sweden and Norway from Finland and the Baltic
States which the German Navy considered essential and
should be kept from reaching the Allies. Maritime traffic
between Allied ports and Trondheim, western terminus of
the trans-Scandinavian rail route, as well as normal
trade between Scandinavia and Great Britain, however, was
difficult to prevent since merchant vessels could easily
depart from Norwegian territorial waters through the
Skjærgård at numerous points along the coast. Moreover,
Sweden's firm insistence that belligerent powers respect
her neutral rights, especially with regard to her terri­
torial waters, gave protection to shipping in the Baltic
and led to a series of disputes with Germany.37

Swedish naval units had made attacks "on German
naval forces engaged in the war against merchant shipping
in the Sound and the Aland Sea," the Commander in Chief
of the German Navy reported to the Reich Chancellor on
November 22, 1939. Hitler was in favor of reciprocating
with "drastic measures," but no direct action was taken.38
In fact, three days later during a naval situation confer­
ence, the head of the OKM explained: "Northern states

37 Fuehrer Conferences, 1939, 35-46.
38 Ibid., 39-41.
under the pressure of Germany/Russia neutral." A sketch found in the Fuehrer Conferences, dated November 25, states:

The socialistic parliamentary governments in these Scandinavian countries are in themselves enemies of National Socialism. If Germany's situation deteriorates, their attitude may be expected to alter.

Herein lay an additional danger for the Scandinavian ore shipments. Consequently, the conclusion was reached that without military commitments in the East,

for the first time in fifty years a war on one front is possible. If Germany takes a defensive attitude, her situation will gradually deteriorate not only from the military point of view but also in foreign policy. Victory can be achieved by offensive action alone.

Offensive action followed, but it was not taken by Germany. On November 30, 1939, the Soviet Union invaded Finland, introducing a complicating strain into Russo-German relations as well as arousing German fears that Allied assistance to the Finns (which would have had to pass through Norway and Sweden) would be the convenient pretext for seizing Narvik, Luleä, and even the Kiruna-Gällivare ore fields. This, of course, would

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39 N C A, VI, 980.

40 Fuehrer Conferences, 1939, 43-44.

41 Their concern was well-founded. See Churchill, Gathering Storm, 533-589 and especially 542-548. Beloff, Foreign Policy, 304-308.
simultaneously cut the iron ore traffic to Germany and strategically outflank her on the north.
A CAUTIOUS APPROACH

The Russo-Finnish War greatly magnified the strategic importance of the Scandinavian Peninsula while Germany's adherence to strict neutrality, both out of self-interest and because of her commitment in the Nazi-Soviet Pact, contributed to the rise of anti-German feeling in Norway and Sweden. Their fear of Germany was matched by fear of a Russian invasion of northern Scandinavia which aroused anxiety concerning consequential British countermeasures. Despite their peoples' sympathy for the Finnish cause, the Norwegian and Swedish governments held to neutrality as the only recourse in their attempt to avoid involvement in the wars which surrounded them while at the same time attempting to provide what assistance they could without provoking the ire of either Germany or Russia.¹

Lieutenant Commander Richard Schreiber, Naval Attache in Oslo, kept Grand Admiral Raeder informed of these developments, including rumors that the Allies were planning landings in Norway. Raeder told Hitler on December 8, 1939, "Transport via Sweden and Norway over Trondheim to England is extremely active;" and he avowed, "It is important to occupy Norway."  

For Germans at the time, Erich Raeder later wrote in his memoirs, "the conclusion was inescapable that the dispatch of Allied troops through these two neutral countries would end in some of them being left there, and air bases being set up, and a whole new front built up there against Germany."  

By January 1940, the rising current of pro-Finnish sentiment, especially in France, enhanced the probability that more positive steps than previously would be taken by the

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2 N C A, VI, 892. TWG, X, 786. Fuehrer Conferences, 1939, 46. In his "Discussion Points" prepared for this conference, Raeder declared: "Sweden's attitude is very unsatisfactory. The German barrage in the Sound has been extended as far as the three mile limit against the will of Sweden. There is still heavy traffic in Falsterbo Channel.... In spite of Swedish assurances to the contrary, the Swedish mine field laid in the Quarken and Aland Sea must be regarded as a purely anti-German measure directed at complicating Germany's war against merchant shipping. A protest has been made to the Swedish Government." Ibid., 51.

Allies to aid Finland; and newspapers were even printing rumors of the impending departure of Allied aid for Finland.  

Meanwhile, Raeder found support for his proposals regarding Norway from an unexpected source—Vidkun Quisling. The Grand Admiral did not know the former Norwegian Minister of War and leader of the small, pro-Nazi National Union Party in Norway; but at the request of Reichsleiter Alfred Rosenberg, head of the Foreign Affairs Office of the NSDAP, he granted an interview to Quisling and Wiljam Hagelin, a Norwegian businessman who was Quisling's chief representative in Germany, on December 11, 1939. Quisling confirmed reports of increasing anti-German feeling in Norway, fear of Russian pressure, the Norwegian Government's pro-British bias, and rumors of a fast-approaching British occupation of Norway which had been received from Schreiber and Admiral Canaris. According to Quisling, the Norwegian Government and its foreign policy were "controlled by the well-known Jew Hambro" who, with the assistance of British agents, was


attempting to "bring Norway under British influence or into complete dependence."^6 He alleged, moreover, that the Norwegian Government had signed a secret treaty with Great Britain which gave their consent to a British invasion if Norway became involved in a war with another great power and that a landing was planned near Stavanger with Kristiansand as the possible center for British forces in Norway. Quisling and Hagelin then outlined their alternative plan which amounted to nothing less than a bloodless coup to forestall a British takeover and to deliver Norwegian bases into the hands of German troops. "Months of negotiations" with Rosenberg had been unproductive due to the "incompetency of accredited diplomats," they said; and they had come in order to establish "clear-cut relations with Germany for the future." Therefore, they wanted to arrange conferences to discuss "combined action, transfer of troops to Oslo, etc., and the possible laying of protective minefields." Raeder agreed to bring the matter to Hitler's attention.\(^7\)

Summarizing Quisling's rambling interview the following day for the Führer, the Grand Admiral said that


\(^7\)Fuehrer Conferences, 1939, 56-57.
he had "made a reliable impression"; but Raeder warned
Hitler that caution was advisable in dealing with
Quisling since it was "impossible to know with such offers
how much the people concerned wish to further their own
party schemes and how important German interests are to
them." He re-emphasized that Norway had to be denied to
the British or its occupation by them would prove decisive
in the war. Again Hitler agreed that a British occupation
was "unacceptable." Raeder then added another warning:

German occupation of Norwegian coastal
bases would naturally occasion strong
British countermeasures for the purpose
of interrupting the transport of ore
from Narvik. ...the German Navy [was]
not yet prepared to cope with this for
any length of time.®

But he added a minimizing footnote to his warning: "In
the event of occupation this is a weak spot." 9

Hitler evidently was interested because he wanted
to question Rosenberg about Quisling before speaking with
the latter in person. Raeder was quick to take advantage
Hitler's interest in Quisling; and having fulfilled his
responsibility to warn his Supreme Commander of the

® Fuehrer Conferences, 1939, 54. D G F P, VIII,

9 Fuehrer Conferences, 1939, 54. My italics.
dangers involved in any Norwegian undertaking, he proposed that

If the Führer is favorably impressed, the Armed Forces High Command be permitted to make plans with Q. Quisling for preparing and executing the occupation either:

a. by friendly methods, i. e., the German Armed Forces are called upon by Norway, or
b. by force.  

The Führer did not discuss this proposal; but on December 14, 1939, he conferred with Quisling, Hagelin, and Raeder. Quisling certainly must have impressed

Führer Conferences, 1939, 54-55. D G F P, VIII, 520. N C A, VI, 884-885. This quotation is followed by the notation "(Führer agrees) ink note" in N C A, VI, 885. "Marginal note in handwriting at (b): 'The Führer agrees.'" is a footnote found in D G F P, VIII, 520. This was not included in the Führer Conferences and clearly was appended later to the official record.

A note added to the SKL's War Diary contains the statement: "12 December 1939. Reception of Q. Quisling and H. Hagelin by the Führer." T W C, X, 752. See also N C A, VII, 1106. The editors of the N C A, however, clearly indicate in VIII, 519-520, that Hitler and Quisling met twice and both times after December 13, the date given in General Alfred Jodl's diary for the first meeting. The second date which they give is December 18, and the first presumably was on December 14. Raeder's memorandum to the Naval Historian Assmann on January 10, 1944, definitely states that the meeting referred to in the text above was held on December 14. This is supported by Derry, Campaign, 17. On the other hand, Rosenberg stated categorically that Hitler and Quisling conferred on the 16th and 18th. N C A, III, 22. See also ibid., 33, and Raeder, My Life, 305. Thus, there probably were three meetings between December 14 and 18. Raeder incidentally confirmed this conclusion in testimony at Nuremberg. See T M W C, XIV, 95.
Hitler because later the same afternoon the Führer ordered preparations to be made by the OKW for a Norwegian action. According to General Alfred Jodl, Chief of the OKW's Operations Staff, however, these "investigations on how to seize Nor way" were ordered by Hitler to be "conducted by a very restricted staff group." The "strictest secrecy" was to be observed by them. "Until that moment," Raeder later recalled, the Naval War Staff had taken no part in the development of the Norwegian question, and, even then, they were somewhat skeptical about it. The preparations, which were undertaken by Kpt.z.S. Krancke in the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces, were founded, however, on a memorandum of the Naval War Staff.

Hitler conferred again privately with Hagelin and Quisling on December 16 and 18 with regard to Norway. The account submitted to the Deputy of the Führer on December 13 [sic], 1939, quoted in D G F P, VIII, 520, footnote 2. See Walther Hubatsch, Die deutsche Besetzung von Dänemark und Norwegen 1940 (Göttingen: "Muster-schmidt" Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 1952), 380. Hereafter cited as Hubatsch, Die deutsche Besetzung. 

14 N C A, III, 34.
15 Kapitän zur See—Captain.
16 N C A, VI, 892.
June 17, 1940, entitled "The Political Preparation of the Norway Action," contains the only existing record of these interviews; and though prepared by the NSDAP's Foreign Affairs Office for the purpose of magnifying the role of its head, Reichsleiter Rosenberg, it conforms substantively with Hitler's hesitation to undertake other commitments in the face of repeated postponements in the execution of Fall Gelb, not to speak of the immediate crisis over the fate of the Graf Spee. It relates that Hitler "emphasized repeatedly that the most preferable attitude of Norway as well as all of Scandinavia would be one of complete neutrality." It was not his intention

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18 "Case Yellow"—code name for the invasion of France and the Low Countries which was implemented on May 10, 1940.


20 N C A, III, 22.
to involve other states by expanding the war, the account continued; but if the enemy made preparations to enlarge the war in order "to further throttle and threaten the Greater German Reich then...he would be obliged to arm against such steps."\(^{21}\)

This vague commitment offered Quisling little comfort; but to gain a hold on Quisling, Hitler then promised to support financially his "pan-germanic" party and efforts to combat increased Allied propaganda. Subsidies were to be handled by the Foreign Office while liaison with Quisling was to be maintained by an agent from Rosenberg's office, Hans-Wilhelm Scheidt, who was subordinated to the Naval Attaché in Oslo. Political oversight was vested in Reichsleiter Rosenberg. All military matters were entrusted to a special staff in the OKW.\(^{22}\)

Hitler clearly was not going to be stampeded into any abrupt action against Norway; and in spite of his sudden interest, he temporized. The German Minister in Norway Curt Bräuer, in the meantime, had reported from


\(^{22}\)N C A, III, 22 and 33-34.
Oslo: "The Norwegian Government is surely determined to remain neutral." The people's attitude toward Germany was deteriorating, however; and the conviction that Russia would seek aggrandizement in northern Norway once she had realized her Finnish ambitions was growing in proportion to the intensification of the Russo-Finnish War. The government had to respond in some degree to its citizens' wishes, he wrote; therefore, it permitted privately equipped volunteers, other than commissioned officers, to go to Finland's assistance although recruiting *per se* was forbidden. To anticipate the creation of a political separatist movement in northern Norway, Communist sympathizers among army personnel in the region had been replaced; and it was widely held, Bräuer pointed out, that Britain would not remain idle if confronted by a Russian move but would attempt to forestall them "by occupying, for instance, the port of Tromsø." Yet, Great Britain probably would not be concerned if this did occur "for it would bring her nearer to the consummation of a wish expressed even a year before the war; namely, to make of Norway, 'one big Gibraltar'..." In addition, he said that the military authorities were of the opinion that nothing should be done to hinder foreign nationals arriving as civilians
from assembling in Norway for service in Finland as volunteers. This, Bräuer emphasized in closing, should be accorded "particular attention" by Germany. 23

Reasons were not lacking, therefore, for pessimism in Germany concerning the course of future developments in Norway. Nevertheless, Hitler remained unwilling to commit the Third Reich to any offensive action and thereby jeopardize the iron ore shipments from Scandinavia.

23 D G F P, VIII, 539-541. N C A, III, 22 and 33-34. Fuehrer Conferences, 1939, 54-55. Raeder had, in fact, told Quisling during their conversation on December 11 that it would be impossible to undertake "any measures from 11 December until 10 January, first because the time was too short and secondly because it was winter." T M W C, XIV, 93.
CHAPTER III

INITIAL PLANNING AND THE NORWEGIAN QUESTION

Instructions to the OKW on December 14, 1939, from Adolf Hitler had ordered a small staff group to start planning for a Norwegian action. \(^1\) Since the problems involved in any campaign in Scandinavia would necessitate the employment of strong components from each of the three services, the responsibility for planning was logically assigned to the OKW and its Operations Staff; but remembering earlier command difficulties experienced by the OKW's Operations Staff with its limited size and possibly prompted by the conviction that the Luftwaffe would have the heaviest burden in any Norwegian operation, General Jodl transmitted Hitler's orders "against all established practice" directly to Captain Freiherr Speck von Sternberg, Senior Air Officer in the National Defense

\(^1\) Supra, 38-39.
Section of the OKW's Operations Staff, thereby bypassing Colonel Walter Warlimont, the head of Section L, who was von Sternberg's immediate superior.  

The same day that planning was ordered, the Chief of the Army General Staff, Colonel General Franz Halder noted in his diary that a combined naval-army action against Norway was also to include Denmark.  

Raeder testified at Nuremberg that he had let the question of Denmark remain open in his reports to Hitler supposing that after the occupation of the Norwegian coast the English influence in Denmark could be completely eliminated in such wise that the intelligence service there could not cause any more harm and the Danish Government would comply with the demands of the German High Command without function [friction?].  

"However," Raeder related, "the Fuehrer decided to occupy Denmark at the same time."  

A rationale from the point of view of the Commander in Chief of the German Navy for not including Denmark in any northern operation is here clearly revealed; but while his above statements cannot be verified from available sources, whether the blame

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4 N C A, IV, 105.
which he placed on Hitler for the inclusion of Denmark is veracious or not is less important than the clear indication which is given that Denmark figured in the planning for a Norwegian undertaking from its inception.

On December 18, 1939, Jodl discussed the Norwegian question with General Hans Jeschonnek, Chief of Staff of the Luftwaffe, and asked how it should "be handled further"; but Hitler told him the next day that "Case Norway" was not to be permitted to leave the hands of the OKW. This ended the possibility of Luftwaffe control, and Jodl became directly involved himself on the twentieth with the question of military reconnaissance in Norway. No mention was made of Quisling; and preliminary plans drafted by Section L of the OKW's Operations Staff, entitled Studie Nord, were completed by the end of December without his assistance. At Raeder's request, the Naval High Command undertook a similar study; but it was treated as a mere routine exercise.

"It is essential that Norway does not fall into British hands," Raeder reiterated to Hitler and General Keitel on December 30; and he expressed his fear of an

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5Hubatsch, Die deutsche Besetzung, 380—Jodl's Diary, December 18, 1939.

6Ibid.

"unobtrusive occupation of Norway" by "volunteers from Britain, in disguise." Consequently, he asserted that Germany had to be prepared to take immediate action if such an exigency occurred.8

Norway's strategic position and importance to the German war economy alone demanded vigilance; but the Grand Admiral's fear of a military coup by British soldiers traveling through Norway as volunteers for the Russo-Finnish War and his belief that "serious resistance in Norway, and probably also in Sweden, is not to be expected" together are incredible, especially in view of Ambassador Bräuer's report from Oslo to the German Foreign Ministry on January 3, 1940: "I vouch for the Norwegian Government's determination today to remain neutral. I believe I can vouch for my ability to give prompt notice if this attitude should undergo any change." He was careful to point out, however, that its determination "could be undermined through assistance given in the Russo-Finnish conflict, but it cannot be seriously impaired by any British proposal to Norway that England be granted bases on the Norwegian coast." This would be resisted by the people and their government, he insisted; and he did not concur with the calamitous outcome which

8 Fuehrer Conferences, 1939, 62.
Raeder envisaged if volunteers were to proceed to Finland via Norway. "It wants to remain master in its own house," he said, "and considers strict neutrality as Norway's only effective armament." Bräuer added, almost as an afterthought, the warning: "The situation would naturally change if Russia were to undertake measures against Norway or Sweden."  

Bräuer's report is buttressed by another from Prince Viktor zu Wied, German Minister in Sweden, on January 9 wherein he apprised the German Foreign Ministry that the Swedish Foreign Minister Christian Günther had officially informed him:

Sweden was prepared energetically, and, if necessary, by force of arms to repel any attempts of the Western Powers to establish bases in Sweden or to transport British or French troops through Swedish territory.

This prohibition was also extended to all shipments of Allied war materiel to Finland although not to Finnish-owned supplies; but Günther had stated that "practically no war material for Finland had been shipped in transit so far." Thus, Raeder's fears regarding Norway's "demise" appear quite illusory in the light of reports from knowledgeable German observers in Scandinavia. What is perhaps more telling is the fact that Hitler did not

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10. Ibid., 633-634.
11. Ibid.
respond during their December 30 conference to his Grand
Admiral's representation over Norway.¹²

General Halder, in fact, concurred with Bräuer's
evaluation and in a conversation with Keitel on New Year's
Day held that Norway and Sweden were "strictly neutral."
Maintenance of Norwegian neutrality was in Germany's
interest; but if England were to threaten that neutrality,
they likewise agreed that their policy toward Norway would
have to change. Quisling was dismissed by the Chief of
the Army General Staff as an individual whom Rosenberg
had procured and who "had no one behind him."¹³

Section L had submitted Studie Nord to Hitler
before the turn of the year, and he had it temporarily
frozen in the OKW by forbidding its distribution to the
High Commands of the services. At the beginning of 1940,
another "exhaustive" examination of the entire Norwegian
question was made by "responsible experts" in the OKM at
the request of the Commander in Chief. According to
Vice Admiral Schniewind, their conclusions were sent to
the OKW where he thought they probably reached the staff
dealing with Norway. When Hitler released Studie Nord

¹²Fuehrer Conferences, 1939, 62-65.
¹³Halder, Diary, 149-150.
to the armed forces on January 10 and it was received by
the SKL, they found that it was "an exposition of the
whole Norwegian problem, approximately along the same
lines as it was regarded by the Naval War Staff."\textsuperscript{14}

\textbf{Studie Nord}, the first review of German
"operational possibilities in the northern area," was
based upon the conviction that the presence of British
forces in Norway would be "intolerable for German
strategy" and could be forestalled only by a prior German
seizure. Considered during a situation discussion on
January 13, 1940, and included in the \textit{War Diary} of the
Naval War Staff, \textbf{Studie Nord} recognized that the Russo-
Finnish conflict was producing a growing enmity for
Germany in the Nordic countries which would redound to
Britain's advantage if she were to stage an occupation of
Norway. A German attack on France would probably be used
by Great Britain as the signal for entering Norway; and
if this were attempted, the OKW felt that resistance by
the Norwegians could scarcely be anticipated.\textsuperscript{15} The

Halder, \textit{Diary}, 155.

\textsuperscript{15}T M W C, XXXIV, 181-182. The belief that Britain
might try to seize Norway when Germany attacked in the
West was sound. Winston Churchill, the First Lord of the
British Admiralty, expressed two days later the same
desire for action in Scandinavia if such an eventuality
were to arise. See Churchill, \textit{Gathering Storm}, 555.
subsequent handling of the study on Hitler's orders was entrusted to a "working staff" under the command of a general of the Luftwaffe who would be in charge of any eventual operation. Its chief of staff was to be from the Navy, and its operations officer from the Army.\textsuperscript{16}

The SKL's \textit{War Diary} also reveals the divergency which had arisen between Raeder's views and those of his War Staff. The Grand Admiral remained convinced that Great Britain "\textit{planned the seizure of Norway within the foreseeable future} for the complete prevention of any German importations from the Norwegian-Swedish area and for the complete hindering of the German conduct of war on the ocean and the North Sea." The government and a large part of the people would be in "considerable, quiet agreement" with such British action because of their hostile attitude toward Germany. Furthermore, the Chief of the SKL asserted, this had been corroborated by reports which he had received; and it was his opinion that an occupation of Norway would result in extreme British pressure on Sweden to minimize her commercial transactions with Germany and to force her, if possible, into joining with the Allies against the Third Reich.

\textsuperscript{16}T M W C, XXXIV, 181-182.
Thus, he concluded, a British seizure of Norway "would be decisive in the war." 17

"In partial contrast to the opinion of the Chief of the SKL," its War Diary recorded, "the Operations Division of the SKL does not believe in the probability of a soon approaching seizure of Norway by England." Expressing doubt whether Britain had the strength to make such a move, the Operations Division contended that if undertaken, it would entail exceedingly high risks—placing Britain in a "strong and extremely undesirable opposition to Russia" and evoking the strongest response from Germany, namely, "an immediate widening of the German operational base into Denmark and, if necessary, into Sweden" which would seriously threaten any British action in southern Norway. A rapid German thrust into Sweden, moreover, could effectively anticipate and transcend any British pressure in that direction from Norway; and it seemed "relatively improbable that Britain could free sufficient forces for employment in Norway to offset this threat from Germany." 18

On the other hand, if there were no danger of a British invasion, the Operations Staff was convinced

17 T M W C, XXXIV, 183. See also Raeder, My Life, 305-306.

that

an occupation of Norway by Germany would be strategically and economically a dangerous undertaking since after a German seizure of Norway the security of neutral, Norwegian territorial waters would be abolished and because of the still inferior naval power of Germany at the present, the maintenance of the German ore importation from the Norwegian area which is especially vital in the winter months and the important sea connections with Base North and to and from overseas could no longer be assured. 19

Raeder readily acknowledged the accuracy of this latter view; and he expressed his conviction that "the most favorable solution would doubtlessly be the preservation of the status quo" and the "maintenance of the strictest neutrality by Norway" since this would allow the continued use of her territorial waters without the danger of interruption by Great Britain. 20 On January 23, 1940, however, Hitler recalled Studie Nord, abandoned the principle of a combined working staff under the leadership of a Luftwaffe general, and once again directed that all future planning was to be handled "only in the OKW." The next day Jodl noted in his diary the "formation of Staff N" [North]. 21

19 T M W C, XXXIV, 184-185.
20 Ibid., 185.
21 Hubatsch, Die deutsche Besetzung, 381.
Near the conclusion of Admiral Raeder's report to the Führer on January 26, the official naval record discloses that Hitler remained confident that Norway and Sweden were still "determined to maintain strict neutrality" in spite of the fact that Winston Churchill had made a radio appeal to the Scandinavian countries on January 20 asking them, in essence, to join with the Allies. Bräuer had reported on January 24 the hostile Norwegian reaction to Churchill's speech as well as about the connivance Norway desired from Germany in explaining the sinking of three ships within her territorial waters in order to sustain the façade of impartial neutrality and obviate any British action against Norway.

\[22\] G F P, VIII, 695-696.

\[23\] The loss of the Thomas Walton and the Deptford (British) and the Garaufalia (Greek) had evoked from the British Government severe protests and the threat that if there were any repetitions of the sinkings, Great Britain would also send her naval forces into Norwegian waters. The Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs Halvdan Koht informed Bräuer that the Norwegian Government had replied "in the sharpest manner conceivable," had stated that no proof of German naval activity in their waters had yet been uncovered but a request for an explanation would be made to the German Government, and had denied the legality of Britain's threat while closing "with the statement that any use of force within the boundaries of Norwegian sovereignty would be countered with force by Norway to the limit of her powers." Koht appealed to Bräuer requesting "some sort of reply as quickly as possible" from Germany which could be published by Norway, stating that they were "not at all concerned with the nature of the reply, just so it was satisfactory to the extent that Norway could point out that the three incidents
In this context, Raeder openly expressed his concern to Hitler over the fact that the German Foreign Ministry had asked Sweden to mine her own territorial waters. Although Sweden had rejected the request, Raeder feared that Great Britain would make the same demand of Norway once she learned that Germany had been exerting pressure on Sweden. He also cautioned that only "the presence of heavy German ships [i.e., battleships] prevents the British from launching attacks with light forces against our ore traffic from Narvik." 24

Once again, Raeder chose to evade the evidence of Norway's determination to retain her neutrality against...
any intervention and instead emphasized the danger of British action. Hoping to play upon Hitler's emotions and possibly to establish a "priority on worry" since the offensive in the West had been postponed on January 20 until the spring, Raeder sought to center Hitler's attention on the fear of an interruption of the Scandinavian ore traffic, if not of an Allied occupation of Norwegian bases.

The Chief of the OKW Keitel issued a top secret directive on January 27 to the commanders in chief of the three services which began:

The Fuehrer and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces desires that work on the Study 'N' be continued under his personal and immediate influence and in closest collaboration with the conduct of the war as a whole. For these reasons the Fuehrer has ordered me to take charge of the further preparations.25

Therefore, Keitel ordered a working staff to be established within the OKW which would provide the "nucleus of the future operations staff;" and each of the three services was requested to supply an officer suitable as an operations officer and also trained, if possible, in handling organization and logistical problems. There were also to be an intelligence officer appointed, a transport expert, a signal communications officer, and an

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25 N C A, VI, 883.
officer to handle "general questions of territorial administration" on the working staff. Henceforth, all preparations were placed under the code name "Weserübung."  

Hitler's wish to exercise close personal supervision over any undertaking and the necessity of integrating an amphibious operation of the magnitude required to seize Norway into overall strategic planning were two plausible reasons for these organizational and command changes. Another may have been the desire to provide greater flexibility, as well as to reduce friction and to avoid as far as possible the tendency for inter-service rivalry in combined operations, by simplifying the staff structure and by granting co-equal representation to the services on a staff within the OKW. The responsibility for planning was thereby shifted from the service commands under the leadership of one of their own number [i.e., a Luftwaffe general] to an operations officer representing each staff who could maintain liaison with his respective branch. Other reasons, indicated by Walter Warlimont, were: Hitler's decision to utilize the organizational changes as the easiest means by which to cut short Luftwaffe aspirations aroused by Jodl's premature contacts with von Sternberg and Jeschonnek;  

26 "Weser Exercise." *N C A*, VI, 883.  
27 *Supra*, 44-46.
also Hitler's conviction that he himself possessed the best qualifications for commanding such a difficult operation as Weserübung and that the Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe Hermann Goering and his General Staff were not adequately trained for planning this undertaking; and his realization that the Navy rather than the Luftwaffe would bear the major responsibility for its execution. Obviously, the OKM which was concerned primarily with naval affairs could not command a combined operation; nor would it transfer control over its forces to the Luftwaffe—hence the combined staff headed by Hitler and Keitel within the OKW.

General Keitel's directive of January 27, 1940, forms the transition between the theoretical evaluation of a Norwegian operation and the commencement of actual preparations for the undertaking. It represents, moreover, the shift from efforts on the part of Raeder to convince Hitler and to encourage his commitment in support of a Norwegian venture—to the acceptance of the necessity for positive action if danger threatened and to concomitant decisive preparations being set in motion in the OKW: but Hitler still had not committed himself to executing an invasion.

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28 Warlimont, Headquarters, 70-71.

29 See Derry, Campaign, 17-18.
CHAPTER IV

A "SPECIAL STAFF" AND THE

ALTMARK INCIDENT

On January 30, 1940, Captain Theodor Krancke, commander of the cruiser *Admiral Scheer*, was appointed by General Keitel as the ranking officer on the "special staff" for *Weserübung* which also included Luftwaffe Colonel Knaus and Army Lieutenant Colonel von Tippelskirch. Keitel told them that their task was to "prepare the operational plans for the contingency of an occupation of Norway."¹ On February 5 when the "special staff" first met to begin work and received its official instructions, the representative of the Luftwaffe was not present, indicating Goering's displeasure at Hitler's refusal to place a Luftwaffe officer in command of the "special staff"; and for the first few days, work proceeded with only the naval and army officers present.²

¹ *T W C*, X, 777.

The Chief of the OKW had informed Krancke and his colleague that a German occupation of Norway had to be considered as a probable result if intelligence reports like those already received indicating enemy preparations for a similar operation were to increase. If an enemy occupation of Norway did occur, it would not only severely threaten the ore shipments "so urgent for the war" but also pose a "decisive danger to the Reich defense."

Therefore, Keitel emphasized, it was imperative to forestall the Allies; but this would be successful "only if the preliminary work remained absolutely secret."

"Complete surprise" was the "prerequisite for success" because of German naval inferiority; and "no one," Keitel stated emphatically, "with the exception of a precisely defined number of officers in the OKW and the three High Commands, was to know anything about this kind of work." 3

Secrecy was considered so essential that for the first time, according to General Jodl, an operation was prepared without the collaboration of the Army General Staff. 4

The "special staff" worked in close association with Colonel Warlimont's Section L in the OKW to which it directed all requests for data, aerial reconnaissance, or special assistance. Since the German General Staff had

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3 TW C, X, 779.

4 Ibid., 755.
never studied Scandinavia and even maps could not be secured, the staff had only "generalized considerations" from Studie Nord and three memoranda from the respective High Commands of the services with which to begin. Of the latter, the one from the High Command of the Navy alone proved useful; and only by late February 1940 were maps produced from tour guides, travel maps, hydrographic charts, and other related materials. Additional reports continued to arrive via Section L concerning the activities of British naval officers, dressed as civilians, in Norway's west coast ports and of general staff officers from France traveling in Norway.\(^5\)

The issue of Norwegian neutrality was again raised on February 16, 1940, when a British destroyer flotilla, led by Captain Philip Vian in the H. M. S. Cossack, intercepted the German tanker Altmark in territorial waters along the southwestern coast of Norway. After successfully eluding Allied air and sea patrols on her return from the South Atlantic where she had served as an auxiliary supply vessel for the Graf Spee and had taken aboard three hundred captured British seamen, the Altmark was first sighted on February 14 after passing through the Denmark Strait and reaching Norwegian territorial waters near Trondheim. Under orders to proceed without

\(^5\) TWG, X, 777-780 and 790-791. Warlimont, Headquarters, 70.
halting, the vessel nevertheless took refuge in Jøssing Fjord when one of the British destroyers attempted to stop her. Two Norwegian torpedo boats guarded the vessel and successfully protested the attempt by the two destroyers to board her. The Norwegians explained that the Altmark had been examined, found to be unarmed, and given permission to continue to Germany via Norwegian territorial waters whereupon the destroyers withdrew.

When the Admiralty heard about this, Winston Churchill with the backing of the British Foreign Office ordered Captain Vian to board the Altmark and free the prisoners unless the Norwegians agreed to escort the ship jointly to Bergen with a British-Norwegian guard on board. During the evening of February 16, the Cossack entered Jøssing Fjord; and disregarding protests from the Norwegians, Vian carried out his orders in contravention of international law. Six German sailors were killed in the ensuing encounter and six wounded, but the torpedo boats did not attempt to defend Norway's neutral rights. The British seamen were freed, and the Cossack departed for the Firth of Forth. 

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6 D G F P, VIII, 700.

The Norwegian Government submitted a vehement protest to Great Britain over this violation of its territorial rights, but Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain justified his country's action on the grounds of humanity and prior complicity of the Norwegian Government in breaking international law by allowing its territorial waters to be used by a German "'warship'" for the express "'purpose of escaping capture on the high seas and of conveying British prisoners to a German prison camp.'" The Norwegian Government was, in Churchill's subsequent opinion, "quivering under the German terror and exploiting our forbearance." Recalling the case of the _City of Flint_, this breach of neutrality and the passivity of the Norwegian warships "justified German misgivings as to whether Norway was ready to defend her neutrality as keenly against Great Britain as she had done against Germany." The warning was there for all to see, or so it seemed, that the Leads would not remain a safe passageway in the future; and it also appeared entirely possible that Great Britain would

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8Quoted in Churchill, _Gathering Storm_, 564.
9Ibid.
10_Supra_, 27-28.
11Ruge, _Der Seekrieg_, 82.
now occupy Norwegian bases if they could be secured without fighting. Indeed, the Altmark incident, Raeder contends in his memoirs, "proved without a doubt that Norway was completely helpless to maintain its neutrality even if the Norwegian Government wished to do so, which obviously not all authorities did."\textsuperscript{12}

No wonder Adolf Hitler reacted in anger when he was informed of the incident. Admiral Voss was present; and he later recalled, "'The British attack on the Altmark proved decisive, in its effect on Hitler—it was the "fuse" that touched off the Norwegian offensive.'"\textsuperscript{13} Hitler reasoned that if Britain would violate Norway's neutrality for the sake of a group of imprisoned British seamen, how much more likely would she be to cut off the vital iron ore supplies from Narvik and Kirkenes. He quickly became convinced that an invasion would have to be carried out if for no other reason than to beat the British at their own game.\textsuperscript{14}

Hitler equally precipitantly dispelled previous hesitations which he had harbored, and on February 19 he

\textsuperscript{12} Raeder, \textit{My Life}, 306.

\textsuperscript{13} Quoted in B. H. Liddell Hart, \textit{The German Generals Talk} (New York: Berkley Publishing Corporation, 1958), 34.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 33-34. \textit{T W C}, X, 780.
insisted strenuously upon the swift preparation of Weserübung and ordered General Jodl to fit out steamships and to place units in readiness. Actual experience had belied prior reasoning with regard to the effectiveness of the Krancke staff for Jodl had found that Krancke's "special staff' formed no better basis or framework for an effective command organization than did the OKW Operations Staff itself." Therefore, he concluded that the rapid implementation of the Führer's wishes "could only be achieved by a properly organized headquarters provided with all the necessary resources for exercising command." Hitler approved his suggestion that a commanding general with his corps staff be appointed to control the operation. A corps headquarters was the lowest feasible level of command organization which could be in charge of this work, and the OKW decided to secure it without informing the High Command of the Army about Hitler's intentions.

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15 Jodl's Diary, N C A, IV, 385.
16 Warlimont, Headquarters, 71-72.
17 Jodl's Diary, N C A, IV, 385.
18 Warlimont, Headquarters, 72.
CHAPTER V

THE APPOINTMENT OF FALKENHORST

General Wilhelm Keitel suggested to Adolf Hitler on February 20, 1940, that General Nikolaus von Falkenhorst, Commanding General of the XXI Corps, be appointed to command the Norwegian operation since he had had overseas experience in Finland at the close of World War I. The Central Department for Personnel Questions of the Army General Staff was simply informed that Hitler wanted to talk with General von Falkenhorst. A telegram immediately summoned Falkenhorst to Berlin; and the next day at 11 A. M., he was interviewed by Hitler in the Reich Chancellery and charged with the conduct of operations against Norway and Denmark.¹

During his interrogation at Nuremberg, Falkenhorst recounted this interview with Hitler in the presence of Keitel and Jodl as well as describing his subsequent role

in Weserübung:

I entered the room and I was made to sit down on a chair. Then I had to tell the Fuehrer about the operations in Finland in 1918. That is, how the transportation had worked out, our cooperation with the Navy, and so on. 

The reasons for the occupation of Norway, given by Hitler, were three: (1) the preclusion of "strategic outflanking by England" which would lead them to attack the undefended Baltic coast and to strike into the heart of Germany thereby breaking "the spine" of both Eastern and Western fronts; (2) obtaining "freedom of operations for the German Navy from the Bay of Wilhelmshaven;" and (3) the protection of overseas imports, "especially ores from Norway," traversing the Norwegian Leads. Twice Hitler emphasized that Norway was "important for the conduct of the war, necessary for the conduct of the war, and decisive in the conduct of the war." 

Five divisions were to be placed at Falkenhorst's disposal by the OKH; and since "the thing had been worked out during the winter," he was told that only the large harbors and the adjacent towns were to be considered in any landings. Hitler then stated that the operation was not to be "directed against the Norwegian people" and

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that "it was his intention to occupy only the coasts of Norway and Denmark."\textsuperscript{4}

Falkenhorst was dismissed but ordered to return at 5 P. M. that afternoon with an outline of how he planned to utilize the five divisions and what his "working program" would be. Then, Falkenhorst related at Nuremberg,

I...went to town and bought a Baedeker, a travel guide, in order to find out just what Norway was like. ...I had no idea about the whole thing. ...I didn't even know what I was facing.\textsuperscript{5}

He went to his hotel to read the Baedeker and to ponder the disposition of the five divisions. At 5 P. M. he returned to the Reich Chancellery and reported to Hitler. After they had discussed the problem briefly and decided that the nature of Norwegian harbors demanded the commitment of the divisions to Oslo, Stavanger, Bergen, Trondheim, and Narvik respectively, the Führer "insisted on absolute secrecy" in order that the Allies would remain ignorant of German intentions. Consequently, Falkenhorst was enjoined to transfer to Berlin only those members of his corps staff who would be absolutely required for preparing the operation. Hitler told

\textsuperscript{4}N\ C\ A, Supp. B, 1537-1538.

\textsuperscript{5}Ibid., 1538.
Falkenhorst that he should "hurry up" his work since "things were very urgent" and then dismissed him.⁶

Either General Fritz Fromm, Commander of the Replacement Army, or Colonel Hans von Greiffenberg, Chief of the OKH's Operations Section, both of whom were present on February 21, presumably was responsible for first transmitting to the Army Chief of Staff details about Weserübung and the results of these discussions.⁷

General Franz Halder noted in his war diary that the Seventh Air Division, the Twenty-second Infantry Division, two divisions with assault equipment, one regiment of the First Mountain Division, the Eleventh Rifle Brigade reinforced with tanks, and a selection of commanding officers had been marked out for the coming operation and that other forces had to be placed in readiness because the Luftwaffe demanded the occupation of Denmark.⁸ Keitel and Jodl bypassed the OKH and consulted directly with Fromm concerning the choice of units. He advised that

⁷ Jodl's Diary, N C A, IV, 385-386. See also Halder, Diary, 204. Halder cited "Heusinger" (Lieutenant Colonel Adolf Heusinger, a department chief within the Operations Section of the OKH) as his source of information regarding Weserübung. Thus, Greiffenberg was the more likely intermediary.
⁸ Halder, Diary, 204.
only those supplied with German equipment should be employed. Halder transcribed the reason given for this deliberate neglect of the established chain of command: "Headquarters XXI shall be subordinated to the OKW in order to avoid difficulties owing to the Luftwaffe." He also noted that Weserübung was scheduled to take place "shortly after the offensive in the West has come to a certain conclusion. Then, however, as fast as possible."  

The Commander in Chief of the German Navy reported to the Führer on February 23, and Hitler questioned him about the possibility of maintaining iron ore shipments from Narvik after Norway had been occupied. Raeder evidently was interested in applying the brakes to Hitler's pressing desire at the moment for action. He stressed:

> The best thing for maintaining this traffic as well as for the situation in general is the maintenance of Norwegian neutrality.  

What Germany must not permit, however, was a British occupation of Norway since it "could not be undone" and would result in the "cessation of all ore supplies from Sweden."

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9 Jodl's Diary, N C A, IV, 385.  
10 Halder, Diary, 204.  
11 My italics. Fuehrer Conferences, 1940, I, 14.
It seemed as if Raeder were advocating an invasion only in case of demonstrated imperative necessity; and he again warned that occupying Norway "would cause the ore traffic...to be completely suspended at least for a time, since the protection of sea traffic is very difficult even along the inter-island route..." But he tempered his wariness with impelling observations which could encourage offensive operations:

However only about 2,500,000 to 3,500,000 tons per year would be lost, while if the British occupied Norway, all supplies would be cut off. If Germany occupies Norway, she can also exert heavy pressure on Sweden, which would then be obliged to meet all our demands.\(^{12}\)

A discussion of technical problems followed, and Raeder directed attention to the difficulty in synchronizing the occupation of northern Norway by naval transports with the occupation of the southern areas by air. He thought that sea transportation should be by naval store ships or steamers which could average "about 20 knots;" and he proposed that the supply ships and possibly the troop carriers also should go to Base North first since they would be closer to northern Norwegian ports at the commencement of the invasion. Hitler

\(^{12}\)Fuehrer Conferences, 1940, I, 14.
indicated that the OKW would be instructed to examine these problems. 13

A memorandum, sent the day before Raeder's conference with Hitler from the War Economy and Armaments Division of the OKW to the OKM and included as "Annex 2" in the naval record of the February 23 conference, sheds light on the recurring anxiety manifested whenever the possibility of an interruption of the Norwegian ore traffic was broached, as well as on Raeder's unexpected concern that an invasion of Norway should not be undertaken unnecessarily. It stated that in 1940 Norway was committed to deliver to Germany 1,200,000 tons of iron ore "poor in phosphorus, mainly via Kirkenes." 14

An agreement between Germany and Sweden had specified, the annex continued, that ten million tons of iron ore would be delivered to the former during 1940, but Swedish authorities had told Germany that it would be necessary to ship two to three million tons via Narvik. 15 If Germany could arrange for the storage of

13 Fuehrer Conferences, 1940, I, 14.

14 Ibid., 18-19.

15 Since the beginning of the war, Norway had made the following iron ore deliveries to Germany:
"September 80,000 tons
October 27,000 tons
November 21,000 tons
December 73,000 tons
January 40,000 tons."  Fuehrer
iron ore during the winter while the Bothnian ports were frozen shut, the annex's authors decided that Sweden could ship "via Lulea up to: 6,000,000 tons" and "via Oxeloesund at least: 3,000,000 tons" leaving one million tons or less to be shipped via Narvik; but they had learned that Germany could not depend on receiving nine million tons or more through the Bothnian ports during 1940 because

1. Owing to unfavorable weather conditions shipments from Lulea will begin later than usual....
2. Accumulated stocks do not exceed normal figures.
3. The ore railroad Lulea-Narvik will have to carry the additional load of supplies for Finland.16

Hence deliveries via Narvik would have to be maintained throughout 1940 in order to supply the differential as well as the normal complement of ore from Sweden; and this information from the War Economy and Armaments Division of the OKW probably contributed to Raeder's apparent desire to avoid launching an unnecessary operation against Norway.

Conferences, 1940, I, 18-19.
Swedish ore deliveries were as follows:
"September 590,000 tons
October 795,000 tons
November 873,000 tons
December ca. 661,000 tons (including 118,000 t. via Narvik)
January 490,000 tons (including 260,000 t. via Narvik)."

Ibid.

16 Fuhrer Conferences, 1940, I, 18-19.
On February 24 picked members of General Nikolaus von Falkenhorst's headquarters staff arrived in Berlin and began work.\textsuperscript{17} The "special staff" in the OKW for Norwegian planning headed by Captain Theodor Krancke was incorporated into the Staff Falkenhorst, and Krancke not only provided the link with prior naval planning but also continued to maintain direct contact with the SKL while serving as Chief of Staff for the Navy with the Staff Falkenhorst. From this point forward, however, the Navy's role in planning was directly linked and generally subordinated to Staff Falkenhorst except for Raeder's conferences with Hitler. Krancke remained the only direct channel to the Staff for presentation of naval views concerning the operation. In addition, Section L headed by Warlimont worked closely with Falkenhorst's staff; and Warlimont served as "a kind of deputy chief of staff" under Falkenhorst.\textsuperscript{18}

Between February 21 when the Führer interviewed Falkenhorst and February 24 when members of his corps staff arrived in Berlin, Hitler "demanded the immediate submission of the operational plans." Falkenhorst, to

\textsuperscript{17} Jodl's Diary, \textit{N C A}, IV, 387.

comply, submitted the plan on which he was working although it did not meet with his own approval. Hitler approved it nevertheless. In the weeks which followed, the detailed elaboration of WesertÜbung was thus carried out by the Staff Falkenhorst.\(^{19}\)

General von Falkenhorst exercised an independent command directly subordinate to the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, but his staff had to rely on Section L for decisions about questions which were not settled between Falkenhorst and Hitler. Moreover, Section L was responsible for determining the sources of troops or materiel required for the invasion and for rendering decisions when differences arose between the services. Falkenhorst's staff also had to take into consideration occasional suggestions made by Hitler, Jodl, or Section L regarding their preparations.\(^{20}\) Thus, there arose the anomalous situation wherein the Supreme Commander of the German Armed Forces exercising his personal control placed what essentially was an Army corps headquarters in charge of a combined operation and simultaneously excluded the OKH and its Operations Staff from the chain of command and any control over the decisions of one of

\(^{19}\) T W C, X, 778.

\(^{20}\) Ibid., 755 and 778.
its own components while the corps headquarters could utilize as needed other, even superior, elements within the German Army. 21

On February 26, General von Falkenhorst, accompanied by his Chief of Staff Colonel Erich Buschenhagen, met with Halder, reported on Wesertübung, and demanded mountain troops for the invasion. Halder, in turn, requested information concerning the number of troops required, the proposed assembly area, and their disposition which Falkenhorst promised to supply before officially requesting their deployment. The same day Hitler raised the question with General Jodl whether it would be better to have Wesertübung precede or follow Fall Gelb; and on February 28 Jodl proposed, first to Keitel and later to Hitler, that the two operations be so organized that they could be carried out independently of each other.

Hitler agreed fully with Jodl's proposal if it could be arranged. Jodl explained the new basis for further preparations to Falkenhorst when he gave a progress report the same afternoon. Four parachute companies, two mountain divisions, the Twenty-second Infantry Division except for the Sixteenth Infantry Regiment, and two other

21 See Warlimont, Headquarters, 72-73.
divisions were to be employed against Norway. One region­al defense division, a corps headquarters, one police division, and an infantry division were to be allocated for Denmark; but Jodl had not decided whether to commit the reinforced Eleventh Rifle Brigade against Denmark first and then transfer it to Norway or to assign it directly to the Norwegian invasion group.

The report presented the next day by Falkenhorst together with Krancke, Buschenhagen, and Knaus proved to be very satisfactory to Hitler; and he immediately approved the new dispositions. Nevertheless, the Führer wanted an imposing army group in Copenhagen as well as a careful study made of exactly how individual coastal batteries were to be neutralized by assault detachments. Hitler then directed Warlimont to execute the requisite order for the impending operation. It was to be sent at once to the three branches of the armed forces; and at Jodl's suggestion, it was also decided that transport ships should be fitted out immediately.22

CHAPTER VI

HITLER'S DIRECTIVE

The formal "Directive for 'Fall Weserübung'" was issued by Adolf Hitler on March 1, 1940, through the National Defense Section of the OKW's Operations Staff to the commanders in chief of the three armed services.¹ Utilizing the plan drawn up by Falkenhorst and his staff and just approved by the Führer, General Jodl composed the original draft of the directive which Warlimont's section then "'put in final form'" and Hitler signed.² It delineated the procedures to be followed as well as the rationale and the strategic and tactical objectives of the operation:

The development of the situation in Scandinavia requires the making of all


preparations for the occupation of Denmark and Norway by a part of the Wehrmacht (Fall Weserübung). This operation should prevent British encroachment on Scandinavia and the Baltic. Further it should guarantee our ore base in Sweden and give our Navy and Luftwaffe a wider start-line against Britain.\(^3\)

The Navy and the Luftwaffe were charged with protecting the operation "within the limits of their capabilities" against counterattacks by British air and naval forces. Since Germany's political and military strength so far transcended that of the Scandinavian countries, the force used against Denmark and Norway was to be "kept as small as possible;" but this "numerical weakness" was to be offset "by daring actions and surprise execution." German forces were to do their "utmost" in order to give the appearance of "a peaceful occupation" whose object was to protect militarily Scandinavian neutrality. "Corresponding demands" would be sent to the governments involved when the operation began; but, the directive continued, "if necessary, naval and air demonstrations will provide the necessary emphasis." Yet, if resistance were encountered, "all military means" would be employed to smash it.\(^4\)

\(^3\)^D G F P, VIII, 831.

\(^4\)^Ibid.
Hitler reaffirmed General von Falkenhorst's assignment both to prepare and to conduct Weserübung under his direct supervision. The combined forces were named "Group XXI" and made a separate command. They could not be used in any other operational theater. The directive also ordered that Falkenhorst's staff be brought up to strength by additions from all three armed services and that those Luftwaffe components detailed for Weserübung were to function tactically under the control of Group XXI. When the latter had completed their duties, they would return to the Luftwaffe's control. Employment of other air and naval forces which remained under their respective branches' direct command would be by mutual agreement with General von Falkenhorst. The individual branches of the armed services, however, were to administer and to supply the units which they had contributed, subject to the orders of the Commanding General, Group XXI.5

"The crossing of the Danish border and the landings in Norway must take place simultaneously," Hitler's directive ordered; and he emphasized that Weserübung had to be "prepared as quickly as possible" so that Germany could respond immediately if the Allies seized the initiative. The overriding factor in the entire operation

5D G F P, VIII, 831-832.
was that the Allies and the Scandinavian countries alike "should be taken by surprise." Both leaders and troops were to be misled about the real objectives of the operation and only informed after the invasion vessels had put to sea. Weserübung was divided into Weserübung Süd—the occupation of Denmark—and Weserübung Nord—the occupation of Norway.  

In the Norwegian undertaking Group XXI was ordered to execute by surprise the amphibious seizure of the leading seaports. Yet, the responsibility for preparing and then transporting the landing troops was transferred to the Navy's direct control by Hitler's directive; and the meager naval forces were also enjoined to provide escort protection for the transportation of reserves and supplies to Norway as well as to convey the additional forces required as the operation progressed. The added burden of providing for the rapid establishment of coastal defenses in Norway was also placed upon the Navy by Hitler. The Luftwaffe, on the other hand, was specifically ordered with regard to Norway only to "ensure air defense" and to utilize Norwegian air bases for attacks on Great Britain after the occupation had been completed.  

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7. Ibid., 832-833.
Group XXI was then instructed to report its progress regularly to the OKW and to inform them of "the shortest necessary space of time between the issue of the order for Wesertäubung and its execution..."

Finally, the code names to be used were "Wesertag—the day of the operation" and "Weserzeit—the hour of the operation."^8

Thus, Grand Admiral Raeder's, Rear Admiral Dönitz's, and Admiral Carls' desire for Norwegian bases received explicit sanction from the Führer. The same general, strategic reasons, in addition to the question of protecting the ore route, were used by him to justify an invasion of Norway as Raeder had first advanced in early October 1939.\(^9\) Raeder's "extending the operational base to the North,"\(^10\) had been translated into Hitler's "a wider start-line against Britain."\(^11\) It should be recognized, as Raeder was very careful to point out in his memoirs, that "no definite order was given to implement the plans, nor was any time set for the operation to begin;"\(^12\) but

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\(^8\) D G F F, VIII, 833.
\(^9\) Ibid.
\(^10\) N C A, VI, 928.
\(^11\) D G F F, VIII, 831.
\(^12\) Raeder, My Life, 307. See also T M W C, IV, 433.
the implicit doubt injected by Raeder whether the invasion would have been carried out must be countered by the realization that the momentum which by this time had been created with the preparations for Weserübung would have been hard to reverse, especially in view of Hitler's fear of British action which Raeder had contributed so much to arouse.

During the afternoon of March 1, Krancke conferred with the SKL concerning Weserübung; but Halder noted in his war diary that Falkenhorst had not kept his promise to inform the OKH about military requirements before requesting troops. The OKW ordered the Army to release a corps command, one mountain division, four other divisions, two motorized reconnaissance detachments, and ten medium batteries for Weserübung. Fury erupted in the OKH over these transfers, and the Army consulted with Keitel. Jodl personally met with Jeschonnek; but he bowed to Luftwaffe wishes and reduced the aircraft requirements. No protests and no discussion of requests with the Navy were recorded. Krancke testified after the war that "the Naval War Staff, like myself, was aware of the fact that this operation would signify the complete

13 Jodl's Diary, N C A, IV, 388.
commitment of the navy." 14

With reference to Jodl's troop assignments made on February 28, 15 a later entry in Halder's diary for March 1 suggested that Luftwaffe General Leonhard Kaupisch and part of his headquarters (XXXI Corps) be assigned to Weserübung. The SS-Death's Head Division would replace Jodl's police division as well as the two motorized reconnaissance detachments just requested plus a motorized engineer detachment and a mechanized transport regiment. Hitler vetoed this proposal. He wanted a "simple division" instead. The Eleventh Motorized Rifle Brigade which would be ready by March 5 would also be committed along with the Third Mountain Division, two-thirds of the Twenty-second Division, and the Sixty-ninth, 212th, and 196th divisions. A later notice from the Reich Chancellery, however, informed Halder that Hitler wanted the Twenty-second Division left for Fall Gelb. 16

The Commander in Chief of the Army, Walter von Brauchitsch, met with Keitel on March 2, and they settled

15 Supra, 76-77.
16 Halder, Diary, 216.
the question of troops. Brauchitsch pointed out that fully twenty per cent of the Army's reserves were involved in Weserübung. "No word" about the invasion, Halder wrote in his diary, "has been exchanged between the Führer and the Commander in Chief of the Army. That must be written down for military history." 17

Field Marshal Goering, however, was not reticent in his views. He raged at Keitel, and then went to see Hitler during the afternoon of March 2 about the Luftwaffe assignments. Consequently, after further consultations with the Luftwaffe and the Army, the OKW submitted new and somewhat lower requirements; but the Navy and the Army were forced to take up the slack. Meeting the same day with its Chief, the SKL discussed organizational problems connected with the invasion force. The SKL and its Chief of Staff Otto Schniewind underlined the fact that the difficulties to be met in any invasion of Norway demanded the "total commitment of the entire navy." "The problem," they asserted, "has now far exceeded the purely military field, and has become a political and war economic question of the first order." 18

17 Halder, Diary, 204 and 207. Jodl's Diary, N C A, IV, 388-389.
18 War Diary of the Naval War Staff, March 2, in T W C, X, 765.
The Naval War Staff had completely reversed its field, but it refused to subscribe to the strategic reasoning advanced by Raeder and Hitler. Instead, the SKL averred:

'It is no longer a question of improving the strategic position of Germany and of obtaining isolated military advantages, or of considering the pros and cons of the possibilities of carrying out the 'Weser Exercise,' and of voicing military misgivings, but a problem of how the armed forces should act with lightning speed in accordance with the political developments and necessities."

Their consensus was not sustained; but the die, as far as the Navy as a whole was concerned, had been cast.

On the political side of the question, Ambassador Bräuer in Oslo remained convinced that Norway was dedicated to a strictly neutral role and the exercise of unconditional sovereignty over her own territorial waters. He based his conviction on the Norwegian fear that a British invasion would result in both a German response and a Russian seizure of northern Norway. Another substantive reason for his belief was the attitude assumed by the Norwegian and Swedish governments and their definite refusal on February 27 to entertain Finland's

\[\text{\textsuperscript{19}}\text{War Diary of the Naval War Staff, March 2, in TW C, X, 765.}\]
request for the granting of transit rights so that she could receive Allied troops. Bräuer recognized though that in case of a violation of Norway's neutrality, "the only thing she can do to defend herself is protest." This admission surely was not very palatable to the Third Reich, and it offered additional cause for concern. Bräuer also revealed that on a number of occasions since the Altmark incident British planes had been reported flying over Norwegian coastal waters. 20

General von Brauchitsch decided on March 2 to allocate the army troops between the Danish and Norwegian undertakings. The Third Mountain Division, the 196th Reserve Division, six medium batteries for coastal defense, and other specialized detachments as well as the Sixty-ninth Division, designated for Oslo, were detailed for Wesertäbung Nord. General Kaupisch's command headquarters for the Danish invasion and the Luftwaffe central headquarters for the entire operation were to be located in Hamburg, Falkenhorst's at Lübeck, and the Naval Headquarters at Wesermünde. 21

21 Halder, Diary, 217-218.
On March 3, an appeal by Great Britain and France to Norway and Sweden for troop transit privileges was rejected; and Hitler expressed his belief in the "necessity of prompt and strong action in Norway..." "Rapid acceleration" was required. 22 Hitler also demanded that the transportation of troops for the operation should commence immediately. They were to be conveyed to training areas by March 7, and assembly was to be completed by March 10. The forces were to be prepared for departure by March 13 so that a landing would be possible in the most northern regions of Norway by approximately March 17. Finally, Hitler decided to begin Weserübung "several days" before Fall Gelb. 23

Although Hitler had ordered that there were to be no delays by any of the armed services, Goering refused to acquiesce to the subordination of Luftwaffe units to Falkenhorst's Group XXI. After speaking with Jeschonnek on March 4, Jodl conceded the issue. Another alteration in Hitler's directive for Weserübung was thus secured as Jodl, on behalf of the OKW, forfeited the tactical control over air units vested in Group XXI. All Luftwaffe forces were to be controlled by the Tenth Air Corps at

22 Jodl's Diary, N C A, IV, 389.
23 Ibid. Halder, Diary, 218.
Hamburg. Any possibility of centralized direction of any type over air forces was effectively removed from Falkenhorst's hands by the stipulation that the Tenth Air Corps was to receive its orders only through the OKL "upon demand" of Group XXI.  

The original concept of a separate command for Weserübung under General von Falkenhorst was completely sacrificed to what essentially were three distinct commands controlled by the OKW with Falkenhorst functioning primarily as the army commander. That afternoon General Karl Bodenschatz complained that Field Marshal Goering had been excluded from Weserübung while 110 other Luftwaffe officers had already been consulted. Jodl admitted the "error," and a conference of the three commanders in chief with Hitler was scheduled for the following day.  

The SKL's staff members presented Raeder with an "urgent oral transmission" from the OKW during a situation conference on March 4 in which they had been told that Adolf Hitler had ordered them to finish all preparations

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24 Jodl's Diary, N C A, IV, 389.

25 In the German Armed Forces once Army officers boarded a naval vessel, they relinquished their "command jurisdiction" to the Navy. See N C A, Supp. B, 1541. The distinct command function of the Navy had already been established by Hitler in his directive for Weserübung. Supra, 78-82. D G F P, VIII, 832.

for Weserübung. In fact, all planning for the operation was to be completed "by March 10 (.), so that as from that date the Fuehrer could order the beginning of the action with a preparatory period of 4 days." Raeder and the SKL agreed that this demand of "the political leadership" had to be met. The "present political situation, which makes an early military intervention by the Western Powers in favor of Finland appear possible in the immediate future" was the reason given for the six day limit.  

Intervention in the Russo-Finnish War, the entire SKL held, would have to be considered solely as a "pretext" used by the British in order to secure their "real strategic aim": severing of ore shipments, application of the most severe pressure on Sweden to terminate all deliveries to Germany, and the creation of another theatre of war thereby "relieving the pressure of the German offensive in the West." The circumscribed interval assigned required "an unreserved concentration of all forces of the navy on this one task," and the SKL called off all other approaching operations and held in port those submarines which were preparing to sail.  

The conference between the three commanders in chief of the armed forces and Hitler convened at 3 P. M.

\[27\text{TWC, X, 765.}\]
\[28\text{Ibid., 765-766.}\]
on March 5, and Field Marshal Goering vented "his spleen" over the failure to have been consulted concerning Weserübung. "He dominates the discussion," Jodl recalled, "and tries to prove that all previous preparations are good for nothing." The result? Increased forces were allocated for the seizure of Narvik and six divisions in total for Norway which exceeded not only the original commitment for the entire operation but also the requests for troops made by the OKW which Jeschonnek and Brauchitsch had previously succeeded in scaling down. Warships were to remain in the Norwegian harbors. A foothold was to be obtained in Copenhagen at the outset of the operation, but the taking of Kristiansand was initially to be postponed. 29

29 Jodl's Diary, N C A, IV, 390.
CHAPTER VII

NAVAL PLANNING

Grand Admiral Erich Raeder in his capacity as Chief of the SKL issued the Naval Directive for Fall Wesertübung on March 6, 1940, to the Commanding Admirals of the Naval Group Command East, Naval Group Command West, and the Fleet, who exercised operational control over all ships at sea. It rehearsed in large measure both the content and import of Hitler's directive of March 1, 1940; but it included those changes which had been agreed upon in the intervening days. Only points of clarification and tactical instructions require repeating here.

The date for executing Wesertübung depended on the weather but "above all upon the political situation," according to Raeder. "Weser Hour" had not been determined because the possibility existed that air units would not have received enough training for night and blind flying by "Weser Day" and would, therefore, require clear, daytime flying conditions for the whole journey.
Naval forces in the operation were ordered to fly the British White Ensign until disembarkation had begun at Norwegian and Danish objectives. "In order to increase the element of surprise, and because of information on hand that the Norwegian Armed Forces are ordered not to resist a British invasion by force of arms," the single exception to this rule would be the Narvik contingent. The reason given by the Naval Directive was that the military commander at Narvik, Colonel Sunlo, was pro-German.

Colonel Konrad Sunlo was a follower of Vidkun Quisling and as early as December 1939 had conveyed his pro-Nazi convictions to German leaders. See Fuehrer Conferences, 1939, 58-59. He was also one of the few Norwegians who supposedly were willing to support actively Quisling's plans for a coup d'état. The German military leadership, however, "considered Rosenberg a crank" and refused to sanction Quisling's project. See Louis de Jong, German Fifth Column, 170-171 and 174 for a refutation of Sunlo's treasonous role. Wiljam Hagelin served as the contact between Quisling and Vice Admiral Otto Schniewind, Chief of Staff of the SKL, supplying the Navy with information concerning Quisling's plans, Norwegian political affairs, and military questions which the SKL "passed on to the OKW." Statement appended to the December 12, 1939, entry in the "War Diary of the C-in-C of the Navy," N C A, VII, 1106-1107. Hitler informed Rosenberg on February 19 and again on February 29, 1940, that he was willing to continue giving Quisling financial support, but "he no longer favoured the 'political plan of the Norwegians.'" Quoted in Louis de Jong, German Fifth Column, 171. This terminated any real consideration of military assistance from within Norway except for the reference to Sunlo in Raeder's directive to the Navy.
and would not try to keep warships flying the German flag from entering the harbor.\(^2\)

In Norway, Raeder ordered naval and air transport groups to effect surprise landings at Narvik, Trondheim, Bergen, Kristiansand, Arendal, and Oslo. "Maximum Camouflage" was ordered for all naval units. The embarkation of troops and the departure of vessels were to take place at night and in localities where the activity would not be observed even if this meant anchoring off the coast to await the beginning of the operation. Provision was also to be made for the fastest "possible transfer of antiaircraft artillery to southern Norway (Oslo, Stavanger, Bergen)."\(^3\)

The Naval Directive stated that Wesertlbung hinged on "the quick bringing forward of the first wave of occupation by formations of the navy;" and its "successful execution" depended largely "upon the initiative and determined will of the leaders of these formations." Their weakness had to be compensated for "by bold action and surprise execution;" and Raeder ended his directive with the conclusion, "The success of the operation means a decisive step in the further war against England."\(^4\)

\(^2\) T W C, X, 767-768.
\(^3\) Ibid., 768-769.
\(^4\) Ibid., 769.
In the Navy's opinion "considerable risks" would be associated particularly with any movements to Trondheim and Narvik. It was manifest that the "long flank march very near the British coast could...easily lead to serious setbacks" in the face of British naval strength. Raeder, the SKL, and the operational commanders considered the Norwegian undertaking "very risky"; and Raeder served notice to Hitler that he had to expect "the possible complete loss of the fleet" or, if they were successful, "the loss of about 30 percent of the forces used."

From the beginning to the end of the planning phase of the Norwegian undertaking, the opinions held by the members of the SKL were usually divided because many of them believed that the risks involved "were not in a proper proportion to the prospects of success." It would mean, in fact, "gambling with the entire German fleet." Therefore, Jodl asserted in testimony after the war, launching this invasion had to be based on "really reliable information that Norway was threatened by actual danger." For this reason, too, "Weser Day" had not been fixed; and it was why Jodl had proposed its complete divorcement from Fall Gelb.

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5 T W C, X, 793-794.
6 T M W C, XIV, 310-311.
7 T W C, X, 794.
8 T M W C, XV, 376-377.
The SKL had agreed, however, that the decision lay with Adolf Hitler and that they would have to forego their apprehensions and endeavor to make the invasion a success if it were ordered. The alternative before them was to maintain the fundamental conditions of secrecy and surprise or meet with a total defeat; but since the SKL had issued and was issuing the necessary orders, based on Hitler's directive and Raeder's directive and commands, to subordinate naval agencies, the danger of exposure was increased many times.⁹

General Franz Halder's outline of the Führer's "aimless and haphazard" report concerning the current political situation on March 6, 1940, reveals one point of striking importance—Hitler had decided to invade Denmark and Norway. France and Great Britain had demanded transit rights from Norway and Sweden for troops to be sent to Finland. He repeated to Halder that all preparations had to be completed by March 10. March 15 was designated as "Weser Day." Three days later, Hitler hoped to launch his major offensive in the West. He then requested from Halder flamethrowers for use against fortified batteries at Narvik and Bergen and more than the six medium batteries which had been assigned to the invasion force.¹⁰

¹⁰Halder, Diary, 221.
The Sixth-ninth Infantry and the Third Mountain divisions possessed the requisite flamethrowers, and this helped to determine their deployment. Three fifteen centimeter batteries of Turkish origin could be activated by Warlimont, Greiffenberg reported to Halder; but they could not be supplied with prime movers and would have to be manned by the Navy. The 198th and 181st Infantry divisions had been assigned to Denmark and Norway respectively. 11

General von Falkenhorst met with Field Marshal Goering on March 7, and the distribution of forces was stabilized. Hitler then signed a directive embodying the final troop deployments and establishing that henceforth nothing was to be changed. The Sixty-ninth, 163rd, 181st, and 196th Infantry divisions and the Third Mountain Division were assigned to Norway and the 170th, 198th, and 214th Infantry divisions to Denmark. 12

On March 9, Grand Admiral Raeder discussed the forthcoming undertaking with his Supreme Commander and once again set forth his opinion that the occupation of Norway by the British could have a decisive effect

11 Halder, Diary, 221-222.
against Germany, since then Sweden might also be drawn into the war against Germany and all the ore supplies from Sweden would cease.

Consequently, he concluded that the operation was "urgent" because

The British now have the desired opportunity, under the pretext of supporting the Finns, to send troop transports through Norway and Sweden and therefore to occupy those countries if they wish.

Indeed, the introduction to the Grand Admiral's review of Weserübung for Adolf Hitler offers one of the most precise and explicit expositions not only of his strategic conceptions of the Norwegian operation but also of the justification for undertaking such a venture:

The Commander in Chief, Navy feels it his duty...to present to the Fuehrer a clear picture of the naval operation. The operation itself is contrary to all principles in the theory of naval warfare. According to this theory, it could be carried out by us only if we had naval supremacy. We do not have this; on the contrary, we are carrying out the operation in the face of the vastly superior British Fleet. In spite of this the Commander in Chief, Navy believes that, provided surprise is complete, our troops can and will successfully be transported to Norway. On many occasions in the history of war those very operations have been successful which went against all the principles of warfare, provided they were carried out by surprise. 13

13 Fuehrer Conferences, 1940, I, 20.
The crucial moment in all the landings, Raeder went on to say, would be the time when they passed the coastal defenses on entering the harbors; but he believed that surprise would again be efficacious. He did not think that the Norwegians would decide to fire in time "if they decide to do so at all." Since the British Home Fleet had recently been operating out of Scapa Flow, the greatest danger for the German vessels would be "the return voyage."  

"Light naval units" would act as a screening and diversionary force for the convoys, according to Raeder; but the battleships, the heavy cruiser Admiral Hipper, and "all destroyers from Narvik and Trondheim" had to unite in a concerted effort to break through the British forces. No thought was given to an attempt to elude them. The "small cruisers and special service ships" from Bergen south had to break through down the coast with the Lützow's assistance. "Not one destroyer may be left behind," Raeder stressed emphatically controverting Hitler's decision of March 5, "let alone a cruiser (the Hipper) either in Narvik or in Trondheim, at a time when the fate of the German Fleet is hanging in the balance."

\[14\] Führer Conferences, 1940, I, 20.
\[15\] Ibid.
As protective measures, Raeder planned to station submarines along possible approach routes for the British Fleet, at Narvik, and along the Norwegian coast and to lay aerial mines in Scapa Flow with the hope of damaging some capital ships and possibly forcing their withdrawal to the Faeroes; but he stressed that the Navy also had to have the "strongest cooperation" from the Luftwaffe.  

In order to foster the impression that "some consideration" had been shown for the Soviet Union's interests, Raeder suggested telling the Russians after the occupation that Tromsø had been left unoccupied. "Better, the Russians sit in 'Tromsoe' than the English," Raeder declared. Hitler did not like the idea of the Russians being "so near" and held that Tromsø would have to be occupied, too.

The "virus" of Raeder's strategic thought and influence had thoroughly infected Hitler convincing him of the crucial value of the Scandinavian theater to the war economy and military defense of the Third Reich. Indeed, by this time, Hitler was irrevocably committed to "his" operation; and it was no longer a question of aims, but solely of means.

16 Fuehrer Conferences, 1940, I, 20.
17 Ibid., 21.
18 N C A, VI, 982.
19 Fuehrer Conferences, 1940, I, 21.
CHAPTER VIII

WESERÜBUNG NORD

Events soon conspired to effect a delay in Weserübung. As early as March 5, General Halder had noted that a peace feeler had passed between the Soviet Union and Finland; but two days earlier, Wipert von Blücher, the German Minister in Helsinki, had learned that negotiations had been carried on "for several days" between the Russian and Finnish governments "through the mediation of the Swedish Foreign Minister." He notified the German Foreign Ministry that "the negotiations were progressing favorably and at such a pace that their conclusion might be a matter of days."¹

In the meantime, reports of increased Allied activity aimed at an occupation of Norwegian ports had heightened anxiety in the Führer's headquarters which was

¹D G F P, VIII, 848. See also ibid., 881-882. Halder, Diary, 220.
mirrored in the frenzied pace of preparations for Wesertübung. They had even led the German Navy to prepare a list of "countermeasures, including the invasion of South Norway, to be taken 'on receipt of the first intelligence of any British landing in northern or western Norway.'"\(^2\)

March 15 had been set as the day for the beginning of the German operation; but on March 10, Jodl observed, "The news about the Finnish-Russian negotiations are very favorable from a political point of view." He obviously meant the fact that Russia and Finland were nearing agreement; and he related, "The French press rages about it because they consider it necessary to cut Germany off from the Swedish ores." Yet, he remarked,

In a military way, the situation is disturbing for us, because, if peace should be concluded soon, the motivation for the prepared action of the group Falkenhorst will be difficult.\(^3\)

Here is proof that Wesertübung had ceased to be viewed as a preventive undertaking but had assumed an independent validity of its own irrespective of the actual military needs of Germany. Jodl's concern clearly was not about whether they would or would not have to execute

\(^2\)Quoted in Derry, Campaign, 23.

\(^3\)Jodl's Diary, N C A, IV, 391. Halder, Diary, 221.
Weserübung but with the existence of an impelling reason which would permit them to take action. If, in the end, the Norwegian operation and Germany's strategic requirements did partially coincide, this still does not detract from the fact that the rational framework had already shifted to a new locus leaving to the diplomatic realm the responsibility of justifying a fait accompli.

On March 11, the date of the invasion was put off until March 20; and the transports for Weserübung were ordered to set sail "about March 17." The information received concerning enemy activities included reports from Lieutenant Commander Richard Schreiber as well as from Hagelin and Quisling that British and French intelligence agents and military attachés were investigating Norwegian harbors and bridges. The German radio monitoring service provided "objective confirmation" of these reports which came from some sources about whom "one might have held some doubts;" and the radio intercepts, "particularly in the Norwegian matter, confirmed that... movements from the British coast, northern Scottish ports, were being planned and prepared." Undoubtedly, the progress of the Russo-Finnish War and the fear of an

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4 Halder, Diary, 227.
imminent British assault on Norway help to explain the intensity of Hitler's demand for immediate action. ⁶

Finland signed a Treaty of Peace with the Soviet Union on March 12, 1940, depriving both the Allies and the Third Reich of any excuse for occupying Norway. This Jodl clearly recognized at the same time he recorded that everything was prepared for action but would have to be postponed for one or two days past March 20 because of "unfavorable ice conditions." ⁷

The Naval War Staff similarly issued a directive to naval commanders on March 12 dealing with "Alternate Landing Points in Norway" which exposed the overriding concern that the British might still beat them to Norway. If a "fundamental change" occurred after the beginning of the operation, the SKL and Group XXI together would issue orders for "evasive tactics." If Great Britain landed troops first in western and northern Norway, German invasion groups were to proceed "as far north as possible" in order to secure southern Norway. Kristiansand, Bergen, Trondheim, and Narvik were given code names as alternate landing points for other than their own invasion groups in order to prepare for this eventuality. Oslo also received a code name in case the Oslo Fjord were "completely blocked;" but its invasion force was then to debark in

⁶ T W C, X, 795-796.
⁷ Jodl's Diary, N C A, IV, 392. Beloff, Foreign Policy, 310.
Larvik and Sanderfjord and proceed overland to Oslo. If "such strong local resistance" were encountered that seizing coastal fortifications seemed "hopeless," the ranking naval commander in charge of each amphibious operation was empowered to determine whether to run the gauntlet of fire from the coastal batteries without having overpowered them or to shift his forces to an alternate landing point.  

"Fuehrer does not yet give order for 'W'. He is still looking for some justification," General Jodl wrote on March 13. The sense of urgency lessened somewhat although an Allied occupation seemed imminent; but starting on March 10, the OKM had begun stationing submarines off the principal Norwegian ports to counter any invasion attempt. By March 13, British submarines had converged off the Skagerrak; and an intercepted radio telegraph communication had given March 14 as the time limit for fitting out transport forces. Fifteen to sixteen British submarines continued their surveillance in the North Sea on March 14. Jodl doubted if they signified that an Allied invasion force was on its way to Norway; but on March 15, a number of French officers were reported to have arrived in Bergen. The next day tension

\[ T W C, X, 769-770. \]
was still high in Berlin in anticipation of a British move, but Jodl discounted others' anxiety because the British had withdrawn seven of their submarines.  

Hitler had "not yet decided how to justify the Weser exercise," Jodl entered in his diary on March 14. And Grand Admiral Raeder shifted ground expressing doubt whether it was "still important to play at preventive war in Norway." Evidently, the Commander in Chief of the German Navy was no longer too worried about the possibility of the Allies violating Norwegian neutrality at this juncture, and he questioned if it would not be better to proceed with Fall Gelb before Weserübung. Walter Warlimont stressed his conviction that they could now abandon their designs in the North because their attack in the West would absorb all available Allied troops relieving Germany of any worry about Norway. Jodl, however, recognized the danger that Great Britain would, in that event, immediately seize "a foothold in Narvik, because we would have started with neutrality violation" in the West.

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10 Jodl's Diary, N C A, IV, 392.
11 Warlimont, Headquarters, 68.
12 Jodl's Diary, N C A, IV, 392.
It seems that Hitler was influenced enough by this new mood of caution to declare: "'To carry out a decision of this kind I need absolutely reliable information with which I can really justify this decision before the world and prove that it was necessary.'" As a result, the German Intelligence Service was kept busy in the effort to ascertain precisely the validity of the reports from Norway. At the same time, it was decided in the OKW that Fall Gelb would have to take place seven days after Weserübung while the possibility of calling off the attack on Norway would exist until three days before its supposed starting date.

The final plan for Weserübung Nord envisaged the simultaneous establishment of bridgeheads at the leading Norwegian harbors with the aim of securing a peaceful occupation of Norway. If this failed, the initial German invasion force was to paralyze the Norwegian Army's power of resistance by seizing its major dispositions which were located in close proximity to Norway's maritime centers; but its topography precluded any hope of completely destroying its army if the Norwegian Government chose to oppose the occupation. The primary task of the

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14 Haider, Diary, 229.
landing teams was to defend the bridgeheads against all counterattacks until additional troops and heavy weapons could be brought in overland from the major port of debarkation, Oslo; but if confronted by superior offensive strength, they were to withdraw inland in intact fighting order to await reinforcements. If, on the other hand, resistance were such that offensive operations would not detract from their primary duty, they were to move inland seizing the meager lines of communication and linking up with forces pushing out from Oslo.

The appearance of the predominant British Fleet would spell the destruction of the German Navy which was wholly committed to the operation. Hence success depended basically on surprise; and since timing, speed, secrecy, deception, and concentration of force (mass) are essential elements of surprise, Hitler decided that the first wave of 7,850 assault troops was to be transported in warships rather than slower troop carriers or cargo vessels. This would decrease the time at sea for the troops and the danger of discovery, but it would severely restrict the individual vessel's fighting capacity on the outward voyage. Since all German vessels were liable to be sunk after the first landings on "Weser Day," Group XXI undertook over the protests of the Navy to dispatch, disguised as merchant vessels, a Tanker Echelon and an
Export Echelon carrying arms and supplies on W minus six days. They were to enter port before the first wave of warships.

Of the Tanker Echelon, two ships assigned to Narvik and one to Trondheim were to dock before "Weser Day;" one each destined for Bergen, Stavanger, Kristiansand, and Oslo were to arrive on W Day. Narvik (three ships), Trondheim (two), and Stavanger (one) were the destinations for the Export Echelon. This compromised security and secrecy; but the staggered departure of fifteen vessels of the First Sea Transport Echelon carrying troops in uniform and timed to reach harbor on W Day was almost inviting trouble. Their destinations were Oslo, Kristiansand, Stavanger, and Bergen. The Second and Third Sea Transport echelons were to reach Oslo on the second and sixth day, respectively, after the invasion while the remaining five echelons would use the returning ships for their cargoes and troops.

The warships and assault forces for Norway were assigned by groups and destinations as follows:

**Group I:** ten destroyers with 2,000 mountain troops. Narvik.

**Group II:** Admiral Hipper and four destroyers; 700 troops. Trondheim.
Group III: Köln and Königsberg (light cruisers), Bremse and Karl Peters (special service ships), eight torpedo and motor torpedo boats; 1,900 troops. Bergen.

Group IV: Karlsruhe (light cruiser), Tsingtau (special service ship), ten torpedo and motor torpedo boats; 1,100 troops. Kristiansand and Arendal.

Group V: Blücher (heavy cruiser), Lützow (pocket battleship), Emden (light cruiser), three torpedo boats, eight mine sweepers, two armed whalers; 2,000 troops. Oslo.

Group VI: Four minesweepers; 150 troops. Egersund.

The battleships Scharnhorst and Gneisenau were to serve as the covering force for Groups I and II as far north as Trondheim where they would sail northwest into the Arctic to draw off the British Fleet. Group II was to remain at sea waiting for the invasion hour while Group I traveled northward to Narvik. Embarkation ports were scattered from Stettin and Swinemünde to Wesermünde. As an additional precautionary measure, the German Navy planned to mine the Skagerrak's western approaches; and in relation to the Navy, the Luftwaffe was to provide air cover when required and to attack all British naval forces approaching Norway. 15

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CHAPTER IX

THE FINAL PHASE

After a brief pause, the pace quickened rapidly. Enemy intelligence activity in Norway, which had never diminished following the termination of the Russo-Finnish War, increased after March 20 according to German reports. Allied radio messages intercepted by the German Intelligence Service presented an alarming picture; and it appeared as if their worst fears might quickly be realized through an Allied movement into Norway. Yet, there seems to have been no inclination on General Halder's part to question the delay imposed on Weserübung by Hitler and the shifting of primary interest to action against France although he did note that the 214th Infantry Division, scheduled to be sent as the sixth and final division for Norway, had shifted to Frankfurt on the Oder.¹

¹Halder, Diary, 230-233. TWC, X, 780-781 and 796-797.
Complete agreement had not been reached even at this late date among the command staffs involved in the preparations for Norway. The Luftwaffe, in fact, "did not approach with particular enthusiasm this task in the work of which not the Air Force, but the not so well liked Navy, had the leading part." Objections were raised by General von Falkenhorst to the "long interval" left between the deployment of the naval assault groups beyond the harbor entrances in Norway on W Day and the completion of diplomatic efforts to obtain the acquiescence of the Norwegian Government to an occupation by Germany. Hitler refused to permit negotiations to be begun at an earlier time on the grounds that appeals for assistance would be sent to the Allies. It also would have allowed time for the Norwegian Government to alert its coastal defenses. The German plenipotentiaries were to emphasize, even to exaggerate, in their representations to Oslo and Copenhagen the military measures which were being taken.

Falkenhorst was able to lay before Hitler on March 20 the news that all preparations for Weserübung were finished, including final questions about logistics and the loading of troop transports. Nevertheless,

\[2\] NCA, IV, 105.

\[3\] Jodl's Diary, NCA, IV, 394.
harking back a week to British threats to Norwegian neutrality and German iron ore imports, the Chief of the Operations Section of the SKL, Rear Admiral Kurt Fricke, remained steadfastly opposed to a northern venture and went so far as to assert on March 22:

"An examination of the question as to whether a mass encroachment by the English into the Norwegian territorial waters was so immediately imminent that it might represent a danger to present German shipping produces the opinion that this is not to be expected at the present time. The ore transports are to be continued, as no losses have yet occurred."\(^4\)

Fricke disagreed with Raeder concerning the entire question. He thought that the British should be permitted to invade Norway and then be driven out by a German counterattack through southern Norway and Sweden. Raeder totally rejected his subordinate's view as "a completely distorted idea."\(^5\) It is true that this would have required Germany's commitment on a new front operating against an entrenched foe in rugged mountain terrain ill-supplied with means of communication, while the enemy could be supplied by sea across waters which were under its own direct control. Raeder apparently "forgot" in his dismissal of this alternate conception that the existing

\(^5\)*T M W C*, XIV, 188.
naval plans envisioned opening the very front to which he was opposed—albeit, on the supposition that Germans would constitute the occupying force which would have to be dislodged.

The question of exact timing now assumed paramount importance; and although the decision of if-and-when to carry out *Weserübung* was a political question of the highest order, the determination of the date and time had to be based on calculations made by the Navy. Lengthening days in Central and Northern Norway under the influence of the approaching Arctic summer would endanger any surprise attack after the middle of April. In addition, because it would be the last day when some Northern Lights would precede the dawn along the Norwegian coast, April 8 was chosen for the start of the operation. Navy meteorologists determined that between 5:15 and 5:30 A.M. would be the most propitious time for entering the harbors since it would be dark until 5:15 but almost daylight after 5:30 due to the strong midnight sun, especially at Narvik. Assault teams sent ashore in motorboats would have to seize the coast defenses all within this fifteen minute period. Ice in the Baltic Sea turned out to be a delaying factor; and when some ships sustained propeller damage from ice, the date of the operation was put off one day.

The Navy and Falkenhorst as Commanding General of Group XXI
approved these arrangements, and together they submitted them to Hitler who likewise approved their determinations. Everything agreed, incidentally, "with all the desires of the Navy."^6

On March 24 and 25, the British began to interfere with German merchant shipping in Norwegian and Danish territorial waters and even went so far as to fire on them, according to Jodl. The following day Hitler discussed the deadline for the pending operation; but Jodl remarked, "Fuehrer sticks to it: first Weser exercise..."^7 Fall Gelb would follow in four or five days. The necessity of dark nights to cover naval movements was noted during the conference; but since the new moon would be on April 7, this posed no problem. Moreover, the continuation of winter weather conditions along the Norwegian coast—fog and resulting low visibility together with the low pressure storm cells—would be to the advantage of the German forces.^

In spite of Britain's fresh encroachments on Norwegian neutrality, Raeder announced to Hitler during this conference on March 26, "In my opinion the danger of


^7 Jodl's Diary, N C A, IV, 394. See also D G F P, IX, 35.

a British landing in Norway is no longer acute at present." He thought that Great Britain would continue her infringements of neutral waters in the attempt to cut the flow of ore from Narvik and Kirkenes, however, and that she would try to create incidents which would give her an excuse for taking action against Norway. Thus, the immediate danger of a British invasion disappeared from among Raeder's repertory of reasons for invading Norway. The argument of necessity, based on the elemental fact of the changing of the seasons on which success depended, took its place. Raeder asserted categorically to Hitler:

Sooner or later Germany will be faced with the necessity of carrying out operation 'Weserübung'. Therefore it is advisable to do so as soon as possible, by 15 April at the latest, since after that date the nights are too short.  

Yet, continued postponement would be dangerous if the operation were eventually ordered; and in the naval view, something had to be done soon because delay was hindering the operational effectiveness of the Navy by tying up practically all of their major, active surface craft in port and the submarines stationed off Norwegian harbors

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9Fuehrer Conferences, 1940, I, 22. See also War Diary of the Naval War Staff, March 26, in TW C, X, 766.
could hold their positions for only two or three more weeks. Raeder advocated the immediate laying of aerial mines in connection with Wesertübung to help relieve some of the pressure from the British Navy without receiving the Führer's consent. Hitler wanted "to think it over some more" before ordering Wesertübung to commence although he had already given his approval to the starting date. The next day Hitler told Halder that he wanted it to begin on either April 9 or 10.

A German submarine, the U-21, went aground near Lindesnaes, Norway, on March 27 and was interned by Norwegian authorities. Ambassador Bräuer reported the next day from Oslo that the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Halvdan Koht, had informed him, while discussing the U-21, that the English appeared to be interested in provoking Germany into taking hostile action against Norway so that they could be free to enter Norwegian waters without shouldering the responsibility for violating their neutrality without just cause. "The future will show whether Foreign Minister Koht sees things entirely correctly," Bräuer telegraphed. "It definitely

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11 Halder, Diary, 237.
appears," he went on,

as I have frequently pointed out, that the English have no intention of landing, but that they want to disturb shipping in Norwegian territorial waters, perhaps, as Koht thinks, in order to provoke Germany.

It was also possible that a repetition of the previous week's attacks by the British on German ore shipping in Norwegian waters would become increasingly regular and intense, but Bräuer still believed that "the firm intention of Norway to maintain her neutrality and to insure that Norway's neutrality rules are respected can be accepted as a fact." The Norwegian Government had also issued an order to fire to their antiaircraft crews and Navy. Great Britain had been informed of this, Bräuer explained, when the Norwegian representatives in London had officially protested to His Majesty's Government on March 25 against their violation of Norwegian sovereignty by attacking German shipping in Norwegian waters.13

The same day on which this communique arrived in Berlin, General Jodl revealed that dissenting voices in the Navy and Group XXI remained unconvinced. "Individual naval officers seem to be lukewarm concerning the Weser

12This was incorrect. British strategic planning continued apace with the German in March 1940. For an accurate assessment, see Churchill, Gathering Storm, 531-660 and Derry, Campaign, 9-16 and 21-24.

exercise and need stimulus," wrote Jodl; and "the three
chiefs of Falkenhorst's staff are also pondering
matters, which are none of their business. Krancke sees
more disadvantages than advantages." "In the evening,"
Jodl related, "the Fuehrer steps into the map room and
explains sharply that he will not be content with the Navy
again quitting the Norwegian ports right away." The
warships were to stay in the harbors of Narvik, Trondheim,
and Oslo in order to avoid a "bad impression on ground
forces" and to assist in setting up defense batteries.¹⁴

This was contrary to Raeder's wishes but in line
with the decisions reached during Hitler's March 5 confer-
ence. During a private conversation about this issue,
Hitler repeated his views to the Grand Admiral on why the
ships had to be retained. Raeder recited the reasons
against it which he had already made very clear on repeated
occasions: the destroyers could be trapped in the fjord
at Narvik by a superior naval force and annihilated; the
troops could seek protection on land, and steamers would be
supplying them with the necessary heavy weapons; neither
Narvik nor Trondheim possessed anchorages protected against
submarines; immediate withdrawal was the only feasible solu-
tion if the warships were not to be caught by superior
British forces. Faced with these arguments, Hitler gave in

¹⁴Jodl's Diary, N C A, IV, 395. Fuehrer
Conferences, 1940, I, 29.
but only as far as Narvik was concerned. Raeder agreed to investigate the question of Trondheim again.\footnote{Fuehrer Conferences, 1940, I, 29.}

In the general conference with Keitel and Jodl on March 29, Raeder asked Hitler for a definitive decision on the laying of aerial mines. Goering had agreed to lay them the night before but arbitrarily and without explanation had cancelled the order for them and all other mine-laying operations connected with Weserübung. Mining Scapa Flow was an integral part of the operation, Raeder held; and Hitler said that he would take care of the matter with Goering personally. As another precautionary measure, the Commander in Chief of the Navy suggested that the question of the U-21's internment should not be pushed too strongly with Norway in order to deprive Great Britain of any excuse to act.\footnote{Ibid., 28.} In other words, Raeder was implicitly admitting that Germany did not have to fear a British invasion as long as she maintained a correct attitude toward Norway. His old saw of an impending British seizure of Norwegian bases had flown out the window.

General von Falkenhorst and all other commanding officers taking part in Weserübung discussed the operation with Hitler in minute detail on April 1 from 11 A. M. to 7 P. M. Goering remained sulking in his mental tent and displayed little interest in the discussions. Brauchitsch failed to participate at all. On April 2, 1940, Goering,
Falkenhorst, and Raeder again met with Hitler and confirmed that all preparations had been completed. Obstinate to the end, Goering raised objections to the rapid retreat of German war vessels from Norwegian harbors. Raeder had won his case. Hitler expressed equal disapproval but said that he did "not want to intervene too much in an exclusive concern of naval warfare." The ships were allowed to withdraw immediately.\(^\text{17}\)

All deliberations concerning the operation were terminated. The Führer and Supreme Commander of the German Armed Forces Adolf Hitler then issued a personal directive with the code words ordering the execution of Weserübung at 5:15 A.M. on April 9, 1940.\(^\text{18}\)

\[\begin{align*}
\text{\textit{Jodl's Diary, NCA, IV, 396.}} \\
\text{\textit{Ibid., 395-396. NCA, Supp. B, 1542-1543.}} \\
\end{align*}\]
Varying assessments characterize the outcome of Germany's successful occupation of Norway between April 9 and June 10, 1940, against Norwegian resistance and an Allied counteroffensive. They range from Franz Halder's conclusion that "the Norwegian affair" was one of "Hitler's strategic achievements" which "as a whole must be booked to the credit side"\(^1\) and F. H. Hinsley's that "Hitler's strategy up to the fall of France was...not merely defensible; it was, in all the circumstances, eminently sound and correct" and "also eminently successful"\(^2\)—to the view that if not a strategic failure, the occupation of Norway was at least "a grave strategic error."\(^3\)


\(^3\)Stefan T. Possony, "Decision Without Battle," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings* (Annapolis, Maryland: United States Naval Institute, 1946), LXXII, 764.
As a leading, Norwegian military theoretician recently pointed out, physical control of Scandinavia was not of primary concern to Germany. Denying such control, or even preponderant influence, to another foreign power was.

Laying aside questions of responsibility and guilt, and ends versus means, as well as the attempt to define the point at which an officer's duty to acquaint his commander with an impending danger and the necessity for offensive action passes into unbounded desire for territorial and/or military aggrandizement, the fact remains that Raeder's advocacy of a northern operation, augmented by the very real danger of an Allied intervention in Norden, prompted Hitler to undertake preparations for Weserübung. Hopefully, the preceding pages have tempered T. K. Derry's conclusion that "Hitler himself regarded the operation primarily as a preventive measure." Reference has to be made only to Hitler's search for a means of justifying the operation after the cessation of the Russo-Finnish War, his acceptance of

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5 Derry, *Campaign*, 17.
Raeder's views expressed to him on March 26, and his decision to execute Weserübung in order to convey something of his aggressive, though cautious, mood. The official British announcement on April 8, 1940, of hostile moves taken against Norwegian neutrality, the laying of a minefield north of Bodø at the mouth of Vestfjord at 4:30 A. M., and information captured later of the planned Allied occupation of Norway\(^6\) verified Raeder's early concern as well as the correctness, in the eyes of Hitler at least, of the course which Raeder had first proposed, then pursued, and had finally seen translated into action. Whatever may be the final judgment of history regarding Weserübung, it will be forced to acknowledge the positive leadership of this man despite his occasional vacillation both in its conception and fulfillment.

This was the only major operation conducted by the Armed Forces of the Third Reich which was not conceived in Hitler's fertile mind, and it laid bare his failure as a "Great Captain" foreshadowing later command crises.\(^7\)

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\(6\) German Foreign Office, *Britain's Designs on Norway: Documents Concerning the Anglo-French Policy of Extending the War* (New York: German Library of Information, 1940).

\(7\) Hitler panicked when the issue was in doubt at Narvik. See Jodl's Diary, *N C A*, IV, 398-404 and Warlimont, *Headquarters*, 76-80.
Weserübung also demonstrated for the first time in combat that a land-based air force possessing air superiority could nullify naval superiority and that troops could be effectively transported by air to the most forward battle areas.

The operation thus vindicated Raeder's and the German Navy's reliance on surprise combined with military initiative and airpower, in lieu of supremacy at sea. To this was added the leaven of luck. That Weserübung achieved political, strategic, and tactical surprise is beyond doubt; and the gains for Germany were immense. Great Britain and France were excluded from Scandinavia; the iron ore supplies were safeguarded; the Baltic Sea was secured; what Hitler called "a wider start-line against Britain" was obtained; and Germany had broken the constricting bonds of the British naval blockade. It was, however, a tactical naval defeat; but one which Raeder and the Navy had anticipated. To Raeder and Jodl, moreover, the loss seemed a small price to pay in return for the advantages and security which had been obtained.

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8 Germany lost the heavy cruiser Blücher, two light cruisers, ten destroyers, six submarines, and several smaller vessels. Two battleships (Scharnhorst and Gneisenau), one heavy and one light cruiser, and the pocket battleship Lützow were damaged.
Although Germany's overall tactical success in Norway is unquestioned, a definitive conclusion regarding the strategic import of *Weserübung* remains elusive. The "key" to the German invasion is to be found in the transshipment of Swedish iron ore via Narvik and the Leads to Germany. Danger to this vital traffic found expression throughout the planning for *Weserübung* in the desire to safeguard these imports as well as to forestall any British takeover. Nevertheless, when he concluded that the operation was "a grave strategic error," Stefan T. Possony totally disregarded this critical factor in his analysis.\(^9\) The economic exploitation of Norway during the remainder of the war, however, was subordinate in value to the securing of Swedish ore. Another factor, the impact on neutral opinion of the seeming invincibility of German arms, was forgotten after the stupendous German victories in France and the Low Countries.

These were, of course, in the future; and even the most sanguine optimists in the German Armed Forces during April 1940 scarcely anticipated the magnitude and rapidity of their later success. Thus, the contentions that Germany should have welcomed a dispersal of Allied strength into Scandinavia and that the Allies could

subsequently have been thrown out or would have evacuated Norway benefit from hindsight and seem overdrawn in the military planning context of early 1940 which could not ignore the fact of Germany's unprotected northern flank and the disparity in naval power. One is equally free to speculate whether *Fall Gelb* would have been carried out if Great Britain and France had previously occupied Norway with increasing strength and, if it had taken place on schedule, whether *Fall Gelb* would have succeeded as it did with German forces diverted to protect their northern areas and presumably also sent into Norway and Sweden.

Forsaking such reveries, the victories in the West opened up new air and naval bases which correspondingly diminished the strategic value of Norwegian bases for Germany although the northern outlet to the Atlantic Ocean remained important and Norway provided bases from which to attack Allied convoys to Murmansk. Naval engagements during the invasion of Norway, however, left Germany with only four destroyers, two light cruisers, and one heavy cruiser undamaged—a force which "was no factor in the supreme issue of the invasion of Britain."\(^{10}\)

On the other hand, *Weserübung* so extended the sweep of German power that Great Britain's defensive capabilities

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\(^{10}\)Churchill, *Gathering Storm*, 657.
were severely taxed; and Hitler could have recouped the diminution of his Navy by securing the French Fleet for the Third Reich. By the very threat inherent in its geographical position, Norway multiplied the remaining potentiality of the German Navy; and the presence of German capital ships and other units in Norwegian waters created the strategically important factor of a "fleet in being" outflanking Britain's defenses in the north. Yet, the naval losses which WeserÜbung had incurred not only eliminated the German Navy from participation in Fall Gelb but also prevented Germany from capitalizing effectively on the strategic and geographic position which had been won for her. Herein lies the element of failure in the long-term strategic significance of WeserÜbung.

Military planning does not benefit from an Oracle at Delphi. Consequently, the risks taken and the resultant losses do not detract from the absolute strategic value of Norway. In the final analysis, it offered the advantage of an extended front from which to deploy for a simulated invasion of Great Britain and to stage whatever diversionary moves might be feasible, thereby compounding the problems of defense for a badly battered Britain.

That Weserübung resulted in a diminution of the German Navy's striking power was, however, only the verso side of a very negotiable coin. Weserübung was, in fine, both a strategic and tactical victory and a strategic miscalculation—those who throw the iron dice can afford very few mistakes.
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