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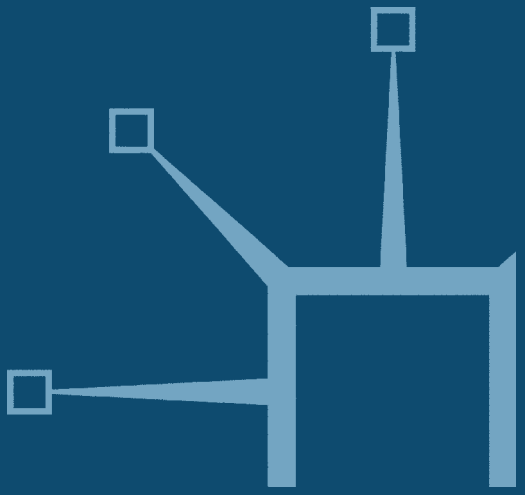
British Policy and Strategy towards Norway, 1941–45

Christopher Mann



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List of Abbreviations

ACAS (Ops)	Assistant Chief of the Air Staff (Operations)
ACAS (P)	Assistant Chief of the Air Staff (Policy)
ACNS (H)	Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff (Home)
ACO	Advisor on Combined Operations
ACOS	Admiral Commanding Orkney and Shetland
AD/E	SOE's Head of Operations in North West Europe
ALFN	Allied Land Forces Norway
AM	Air Marshal
ANCC	Anglo-Norwegian Collaboration Committee
ANCEF	Allied Naval Commander Expeditionary Force
AOC	Air Officer Commanding
AOC-in-C	Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief
AP 1	Air Planner grade 1
AVM	Air Vice Marshal
B-Org	Bedriftsorganisajon – Industrial Organisation
B1A	MI5 Section in charge of double agents
Bde	Brigade
BGS	Brigadier General Staff
Bn	Battalion
Brig	Brigadier
C-in-C	Commander-in-Chief
CA	Civil Affairs
CAP	Chief Air Planner
Capt	Captain
CAS	Chief of the Air Staff
CCO	Commodore/Chief of Combined Operations
CCS	Combined Chiefs of Staff
CD	Head of SOE
Cdo	Commando
Cdr	Commander

CET	Central European Time
CGM	Conspicuous Gallantry Medal
CGS	Chief of the General Staff
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial General Staff
CMP	Chief Military Planner
CNP	Chief Naval Planner
CNS	Chief of the Naval Staff
CO	Commanding Officer
COHQ	Combined Operations Headquarters
Col	Colonel
CONF	Combined Operations North Force
COS	Chiefs of Staff
COSSAC	Chief of Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander (Designate)
Coy	Company
CPC	Chairman of the Planning Committee
D/CD	Deputy Head of SOE
DCAS	Deputy Chief of the Air Staff
DCGS	Deputy Chief of the General Staff
DCO	Director of Combined Operations
DDCO	Deputy Director of Combined Operations
DK	Distriktskommandoer – District Commands
DKN	Distriktskommando Nord
DKØ	Distriktskommando Østlandet
DKT	Distriktskommando Trøndelag
DMI	Director of Military Intelligence
DMO	Director of Military Operations
DNI	Director of Naval Intelligence
DofOps (Tac)	Director of Operations (Tactical)
DofP	Director of Plans
DOD (H)	Director, Operations Division (Home)
DSC	Distinguished Service Cross
DSM	Distinguished Service Medal
DSO	Distinguished Service Order

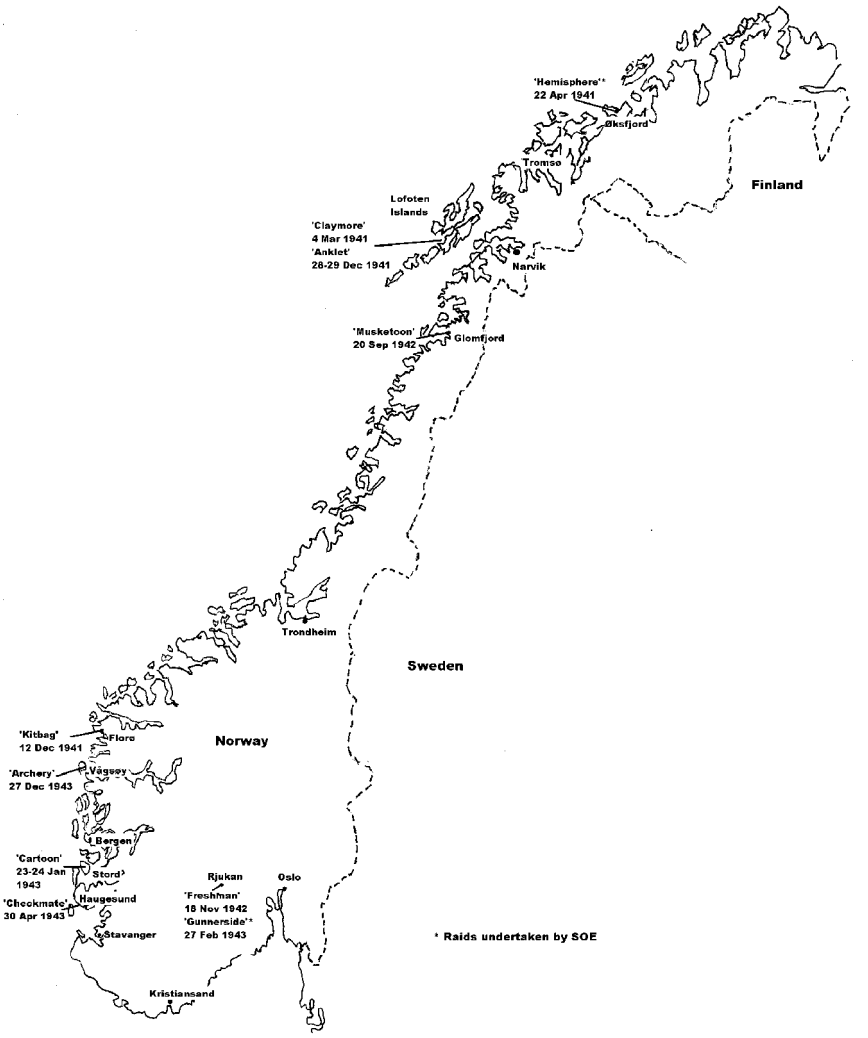
DTTSD	Directorate of Tactics, Torpedoes and Staff Duties
EPS	Executive Planning Section
EXFOR	Expeditionary Force
FAA	Fleet Air Arm
FDE	Fighting Destroyer Escort
FFK	Flygevåpenenes Felleskommando – Norwegian Air Force Command
FHW	Fremde Heere West – Army High Command Foreign Armies West
Flt Lt	Flight Lieutenant
Flt Sgt	Flight Sergeant
FO	Flag Officer
FO	Foreign Office
FO	Forsvarets Overkommando – Norwegian High Command
FO IV	FO Department IV – responsible for Norwegian cooperation with SOE and Milorg
FOIC	Flag Officer In Command
FOPS	Future Operational Planning Section
G/C	Group Captain
GAF	German Air Force
Gen	General
Gestapo	Geheime Staatspolizei – Secret State Police
GHQ	General Headquarters
GOC	General Officer Commanding
GOC-in-C	General Officer Commanding-in-Chief
GSO 1	General Staff Officer grade 1
GSO 2	General Staff Officer grade 2
HAE	Hirden Alarmen Heter – Hird Alarm Units
HMCS	His Majesty's Canadian Ship
HMG	His Majesty's Government
HMS	His Majesty's Ship
HOK	Hærens Overkommando – Norwegian Army High Command
IA	Inter-Allied
ISSB	Inter-Services Security Board

ISTD	Inter-Services Topological Department
IWM	Imperial War Museum
JPS	Joint Planning Staff
JSM	Joint Staff Mission
LCI (L)	Landing Craft Infantry (Large)
LCI (S)	Landing Craft Infantry (Small)
LCM	Landing Craft Mechanised
LCS	London Controlling Section
LHCMA	Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College, London
LR	Long Range
Lt	Lieutenant
Lt-Col	Lieutenant-Colonel
Lt-Gen	Lieutenant-General
Maj	Major
Maj-Gen	Major-General
MAP	Ministry of Air Production
MEW	Ministry of Economic Warfare
MI5	Military Intelligence 5 – Home Security
MI6	Military Intelligence 6 – Foreign Intelligence
MI9	Military Intelligence 9 – Escape and Evasion
MILO	Military Intelligence Liaison Officer
Milorg	Militærorginasjonen – The Military Organisation
MO 1 (SP)	Military Operations 1 (Special Projects) [Cover name for SOE]
MO 3	Military Operations 3 – Office of the Director of Military Operations
MOD	Minister of Defence
MRP 2	Military Raid Planner grade 2
MRP 4	Military Raid Planner grade 4
MRP 5	Military Raid Planner grade 5
MTB	Motor Torpedo Boat
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NCO	Non Commissioned Officer
NHM	Norges Hjemmefrontmuseum – The Norwegian Resistance Museum

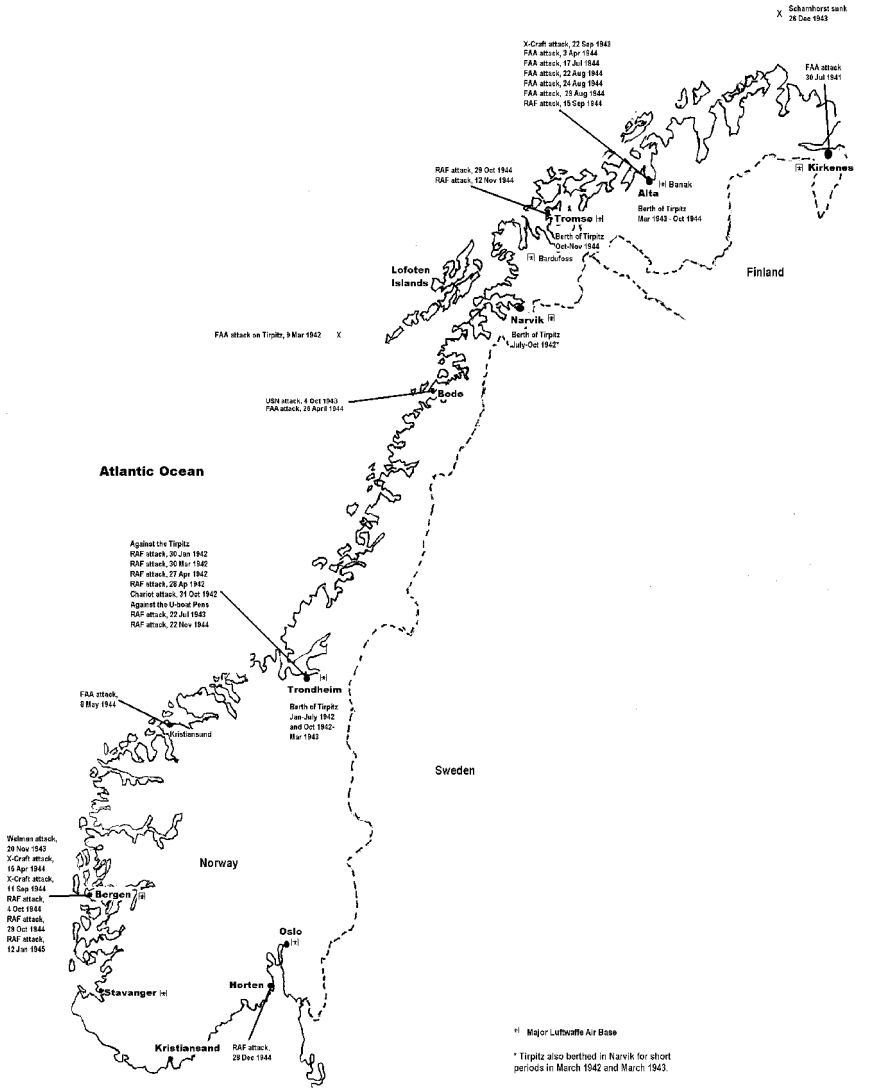
NIC 1	Norwegian Independent Company 1
NID	Naval Intelligence Division
NMM	Den Norske Militærmisjon – The Norwegian Military Mission
NMMR	Norwegian Military Mission to the USSR
NORIC 1	Norwegian Independent Company 1
NRK	Norsk Rikskringkasting – Norwegian Broadcasting Company
NS	Nasjonal Samling – National Unification
OBE	Order of the British Empire
OC	Officer Commanding
OIC	Operational Intelligence Centre
OKW	Overkommando der Wehrmacht – German Armed Forces High Command
OSS	Office for Strategic Studies
OTU	Operational Training Units
PM	Prime Minister
PoW	Prisoner of War
PR	Photo Reconnaissance
PRO	Public Record Office
PRU	Photo Reconnaissance Unit
PWE	Political Warfare Executive
Q/G-4	Quartermaster Divisional Staff
RA	Riksarkivet
RA	Rear Admiral
RAEC	Rear Admiral Escort Carriers
RAF	Royal Air Force
RANVR	Royal Australian Naval Volunteer Reserve
RCAF	Royal Canadian Air Force
RCN	Royal Canadian Navy
RE	Royal Engineers
RM	Royal Marine
RN	Royal Navy
RNN	Royal Norwegian Navy
RNorN	Royal Norwegian Navy
RNR	Royal Naval Reserve

RNVR	Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve
S/L	Squadron Leader
SA	Sturmabteilungen – Storm Detatchment
SAC	Supreme Allied Commander
SAS	Special Air Service
SASO	Senior Air Staff Officer
SCAEF	Supreme Commander Allied Expeditionary Force
SCOFOR	Scottish Force
ScotCo	Scottish Command
SF	Special Forces
SFHQ	Special Forces Headquarters
Sgt	Sergeant
SHAEF	Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force
SIPO	Sicherheitspolitzei – Security Police
SIS	Secret Intelligence Service
SL	Sentralledelsen – Central Leadership
SNO	Senior Naval Officer
SO 2	Special Operations branch 2 for active operations
SOE	Special Operations Executive
SOK	Sjøforsvarets Overkommando – Norwegian Naval Command
SS	Special Service
SS	Schutzstaffeln – Protection Squad
STS	Special Training School
TAF	Tactical Air Force
TNA	The National Archives
USAAF	United States Army Air Force
USN	United States Navy
USNR	United States Naval Reserve
VA	Vice Admiral
VCAS	Vice Chief of the Air Staff
VCCO	Vice Chief of Combined Operations
VCIGS	Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff
VCNS	Vice Chief of the Naval Staff
VCOS	Vice Chiefs of Staff

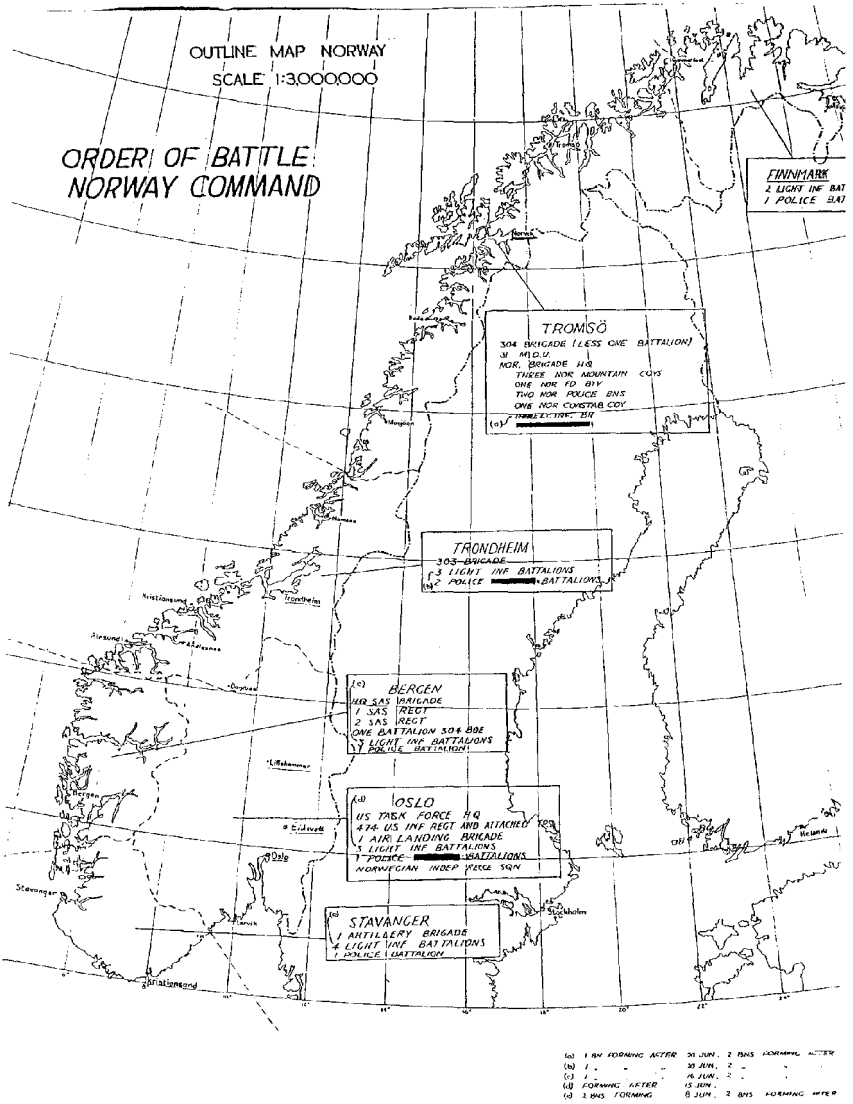
VE	Victory in Europe
VP	Vestige Party
W/Cdr	Wing Commander
W/T	Wireless Telegraphy
WO	War Office
WSC	Winston Spencer Churchill



Map 1 Combined operations: The Norwegian Raids (1941–43)



Map 2 Operations against the Kriegsmarine in Norway (1941–45)



Map 3 Order of Battle Norway Command (June 1945), TNA, WO 106/1983, GON 73, 10 June 1945

1
Introduction

On the night of 8 June 1940, the last British, French and Polish forces withdrew from Narvik in northern Norway. Major General Otto Ruge, the Norwegian Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C), surrendered to General Eduard Dietl, commanding German forces in the Narvik area, the following day. On 10 June, an armistice was declared in northern Norway, ending a disastrous campaign in which the British had been soundly defeated. Four-and-a-half years later, on 27 December 1945, British troops left Norway once again. This time they were the remainder of the Anglo-American force which, in concert with Norwegian units, had liberated Norway in the wake of the German capitulation in May 1945. Norway's invasion and subsequent occupation forced Britain to reassess her relationship with Norway, a country largely on the periphery of the main theatres of the Second World War. This occurred at all levels of political and military decision making, from the grand strategic concerns of the prime minister, Winston Churchill, and the British Chiefs of Staff, the professional heads of the services, to the tactical problems of the airmen of Royal Air Force squadrons, sailors of destroyer and Motor Torpedo Boat (MTB) flotillas and the troops of the Army and Royal Marine Commandos operating in some of Europe's harshest conditions. Policy and strategy were discussed, plans were made and sometimes implemented but more often rejected. Often these discussions involved Britain's allies, major partners such as the United States and the USSR and, of course, the Norwegian Government-in-Exile. Operations were launched, some succeeded, some failed, and lives were lost. Some, such as operations against the German surface fleet, much of which was based in Norway, the Arctic Convoys and the raid on the heavy water facility at Vemork, near Rjukan in central Norway, were of genuine strategic, even grand strategic importance. Others, such as the some of the smaller Commando raids, were of little more than local tactical significance. Yet considered as a whole, British policy towards Norway was an important element of overall British strategy in the Second World War as it directly impacted on two key British concerns: the need to defeat the German Navy and secure the country's

maritime supply lines, and where and how British land forces were going to return to the European mainland.

That Norway came to take up such a surprising amount of the British military establishment's attention between 1940 and 1945 was due to Norway briefly becoming the centre of attention in the unusual strategic situation of the early months of the Second World War. Historically, Scandinavia had seen plenty of conflict, but Norway had been at peace since the end of the Napoleonic Wars. There had been a moment of tension with Sweden in 1905 when Norway had gained her independence, but the country's policy of neutrality served her well in the First World War. Norway, like the other Scandinavian countries, put her trust in the newly formed League of Nations for security in the 1920s and 1930s. Yet when the League proved ineffective in the face of Japanese, Italian and German aggression, Norway did not look seriously to her own defences; the Labour Party Government that dominated the 1930s chose to spend its money elsewhere. So Norway restated her neutrality and hoped, as in 1914–18, the coming storm would not break upon her. Unfortunately that was not to be the case.

Among the most important post-First World War analyses of Germany's High Seas Fleet's failure, and one of the few books on naval strategy read by the leader of Nazi Germany, Adolf Hitler, was Vice Admiral Wolfgang Wegener's *The Sea Strategy of the World War*, published in 1929.[1] Wegener criticised the German Fleet's acceptance of its restriction to the southern part of the North Sea by the British imposition of a Scotland to Bergen blockade line. Norway had made the Royal Navy's task easier by a sympathetic policy towards Britain.[2] Wegener claimed that Germany had made a fatal mistake in not occupying Norway during the conflict, and so breaking the blockade and gaining important strategic bases.

When the Second World War eventually broke out, Grand Admiral Erich Raeder, commander-in-chief of the Kriegsmarine, the German Navy, felt somewhat betrayed. He noted on 3 September 1939 that 'Today the war against France and England broke out, the war which according to the Führer's previous assertions, we had no need to expect before about 1944'. The German Navy was far below its projected 1944 level and Raeder lamented that 'it was no way adequately equipped for the great struggle with Great Britain' and that the 'surface forces ... are so inferior in number and strength to those of the British Fleet … that they can do no more than show that they know how to die gallantly'.[3] The British Royal Navy once again sought to impose its blockade, but Raeder had no intention of repeating mistakes of the First World War and his thoughts soon turned to Norway. On 10 October 1939 he recommended to Hitler that it would greatly benefit the submarine war to seize bases on the Norwegian coast.[4] Hitler rejected Raeder's proposal.

On 8 December Raeder once again stated the importance of occupying Norway, to no avail. Therefore, when Nazi theorist Alfred Rosenberg

suggested Raeder talk to his Norwegian protégé Vidkun Quisling, an extreme right-wing politician, Raeder accepted. He met Quisling on 11 December and was interested enough to discuss the conversation with Hitler the next day.[5] Hitler subsequently met Quisling on 14 December. Quisling outlined his fears of a British violation of Norwegian neutrality, to which Hitler responded that he would:

> … land in Norway with six, eight, twelve divisions, and even more if necessary, to beat the British to the post. He was much in favour of Norwegian neutrality.... But if ever he detected the slightest British intention of entering Norway, he would intervene in good time.[6]

Hitler ordered a study of a possible occupation of Norway the next day. However, this was probably intended as a theoretical exercise, as Hitler again told Quisling four days later that he preferred a neutral Norway.

Norway might well have remained so had not it been for the ironic coincidence that Britain too was seriously considering the violation of her neutrality. In the impotent inactivity of the Phoney War, Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, cast around for opportunities to take the war offensively to the Germans.[7] The Soviet invasion of Finland on 30 November 1939 and the surprisingly strong Finnish resistance appeared to provide Churchill with just such a possibility. By December, intervention on behalf of the Finns was seriously being considered by the British. However, succour for the Finns was essentially an excuse to seize Sweden's northern iron ore mines and prevent the ore which provided over half Germany's vital ore imports reaching Germany.[8] Britain's key allies, the French, were particularly enthusiastic, being anxious to fight the war as far away from France as possible. Planning progressed throughout the early months of 1940. The plan involved an Anglo-French landing at Narvik and passage through Sweden. To have any chance of success, whatever the dangers of war with the Soviet Union, the Allies required Swedish and Norwegian acquiescence to this gross violation of their neutrality. It was not forthcoming. Even so, the British and French were determined to go ahead and were only diverted from almost certain disaster by the Finnish capitulation on 13 March. However, the plan did not die there. Churchill remained determined to solve the conundrum of Swedish ore supplies which came through Norway to Narvik and then passed southwards by sea to Germany within Norwegian coastal waters. To force the German ore ships out into open sea, where they might be prey to the Royal Navy, he advocated the mining of Norwegian territorial waters. The Admiralty was authorised to mine the Leads on 8 April. Churchill named the operation 'Wilfred' 'because by itself it was so small and innocent'.[9] This 'innocent' act was overshadowed by a preemptive German invasion.

Much had changed in Berlin's rather benevolent attitude towards neutral Norway since December 1939. An operational plan was largely complete by

mid-February, although Hitler remained uninterested as he felt that nothing should distract the Wehrmacht, the German army, from the forthcoming battle in the west with France and Britain. This changed overnight with the Royal Navy's boarding of the German pocket battleship *Graf Spee*'s supply ship, the *Altmark*, and the liberation of 303 Allied merchant seamen held on board in Jøssingfjord, Norway on 14 February 1940.[10] Hitler was thrown into a rage and Raeder noted: 'The event threw a whole new light on the matter for it showed that the Oslo government was no longer capable of enforcing its neutrality'.[11] Planning became more serious and General Nikolaus von Falkenhorst was appointed commander of the German operation, code named Weserübung. On 1 March, preparations began and on 1 April Hitler declared himself happy with the plan and set the date for invasion as 9 April. Thus as considerable Royal Navy units set out on 8 April to carry out Operation 'Wilfred', the German invasion fleet had already sailed. The British Admiralty soon received confirmation of large-scale German naval movements but mistook them for an attempted German breakout into the Atlantic. The Royal Navy, including those ships guarding the minefields outside Narvik, moved north away from Norway to counter this, thus making the German task considerably easier.[12]

The Germans achieved a remarkable measure of surprise and the Norwegians were caught 'both mentally and physically unprepared'. On the night of 8–9 April the Norwegian Cabinet met, well aware that foreign ships were entering Norwegian territory. Yet they failed to issue the order for immediate and general mobilisation. Thus, what limited resistance the Germans met was improvised and inadequate.[13] This was further hampered by the general unprepared state of the Norwegian armed forces and the obsolete and obsolescent nature of much of their equipment.[14] The Norwegians had placed their faith in the Royal Navy and, like the British, believed that the Germans could never invade Norway in the face of British naval superiority. There were, however, the occasional Norwegian successes. The defenders of Oscarborg Fortress in Oslofjord managed to sink the German cruiser *Blücher*, which had on board the German command staff destined for Oslo. This allowed the Norwegian king, Haakon VII, and his Government to escape from Oslo and provide a focus for continued resistance.

However, by the end of the morning of 9 April, Bergen, Kristiansand, Stavanger, Trondheim and Narvik were all in German hands. In Oslo the Germans took a little longer to secure the city, having been seriously hampered by the loss of the *Blücher.* They were rapidly reinforced from both air and sea and by 13 April began to advance along three axes, east, north and west from Oslo. The new Norwegian C-in-C, Major General Otto Ruge, strove to contain the enemy along the southern coast with his limited resources and to conduct a gradual withdrawal northwards, slowly enough to allow the orderly mobilisation of Norwegian forces in the interior and the arrival of Anglo-French help.

The British had pledged Norway armed assistance on 9 April. That assistance, however, was poorly organised and slow to react. The Royal Navy proved indecisive outside Bergen and Trondheim on that afternoon, the Admiralty cancelling projected attacks on both until the two German battlecruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* were located. This was in stark contrast to the actions of Captain Bernard Warburton-Lee, who led his destroyer flotilla into Narvikfjord on 10 April and fought a mutually destructive battle with the German destroyers in the vicinity. The Germans lost two destroyers and seven transport ships; Warburton-Lee also lost two destroyers as well as his own life. Three days later the battleship HMS *Warspite* and seven more British destroyers sailed into the fjord and sank the seven remaining German destroyers. Admiral of the Fleet Lord Cork and Orrery, the naval commander at Narvik, advocated an immediate landing against the disheartened Germans defending the port. However, Major General Pierse Mackesy, the military commander, who was in the midst of landing 24th Brigade at the Norwegian-held town of Harstad, north of Narvik, refused due to the poor organisation and equipment of his troops.

In central Norway there still appeared to be hope if the German advance were held in the mountain passes north of Oslo and Trondheim were recaptured. The initial British plan was to assault Trondheim as soon as possible. As preliminaries to the attack, landings were made at Namsos, north of Trondheim, on 16–17 April, and at Åndalsnes, to the port's south, on 18 April. However, on 19 April the British Chiefs of Staff decided that a direct assault down Trondheimfjord would be far too hazardous for the Royal Navy. Indeed, British ships were already having a particularly torrid time in the 'narrow seas' off the Norwegian coast, inside the range of German land-based bombers. Therefore, they decided to reinforce the forces at Namsos and Åndalsnes and develop a twin pincer attack on Trondheim from the north and south. However, this strategy rapidly collapsed as the German offensive gained momentum. The British troops were largely Territorials and were poorly equipped; this situation was not helped by the hurried loading of the transport ships which meant vital supplies and weapons were mislaid or left behind. Major General Adrian Carton de Wiart, commanding the Central Norwegian Expeditionary Force, described the situation at Namsos in his memoirs. Among his better quality troops were French Chasseurs Alpins who

> would have been ideal for the job in hand, but ironically they lacked one or two essentials, which made them completely useless to us. I had wanted to move them forward but General Audet [their commander] regretted they had no means of transport, as their mules had not turned up. Then I suggested that his ski-troops might move forward, but it was found that they were lacking some essential straps for their skis, without which they were unable to move.

However, it was not all problems, de Wiart noted, because as 'far as planes, guns and cars went, I had no trouble at all, for we had none'.[15] The distances the troops had to travel were long and the snow clogged movement. The move south from Namsos was hampered by small German landings behind the British advance. The force landed at Åndalsnes, commanded by Major General Bernard Paget, soon became enmeshed in defensive action against the Germans pushing out from Oslo, and thus had to abandon any hope of swinging north against Trondheim. In the face of German air superiority and tactical dominance on the ground, the British commanders in the south recommended immediate evacuation. This was approved on the evening of 27 April. General Ruge protested but was ignored. Even so, his demoralised and exhausted troops covered the British evacuation which was completed on 1–2 May. The remaining Norwegian forces in south and central Norway surrendered the following day.

In the north, however, the situation was somewhat different. The British had achieved complete naval dominance, being largely out of reach of German air power. They had established British, French and Polish troops ashore around the German occupied port of Narvik and the RAF had managed to operate fighter squadrons from Bardufoss airfield. Together with the Norwegian 6th Division, the only Norwegian divisional formation to fully mobilise, they prepared to assault Narvik. The opening of the German offensive against France and Belgium on 10 May, however, forced the British and French to reassess their commitment to Norway. On 23 May, as the situation in France worsened, the British War Cabinet discussed a Chiefs of Staff report recommending that Narvik be captured prior to a total evacuation of Norway. The new British prime minister, Winston Churchill, agreed and on 25 May the COS instructed Lieutenant General Claude Auchinleck, commanding the North Western Expeditionary Force in place of the dilatory Mackesy, to evacuate northern Norway as quickly as possible. However, they ordered him to attack Narvik to cover the safe withdrawal of Allied forces and to deny future iron ore exports to Germany by damaging Narvik's port facilities. Covered by Royal Naval gunfire, French, Norwegian and Polish troops captured Narvik on 28 May. The British and French withdrew 11 days later on 8 June. The following day, Major General Ruge surrendered to General Eduard Dietl, commander of German forces in the area.[16] The night before, King Haakon and his Government left Tromsø bound for exile in Britain aboard the cruiser HMS *Devonshire*.

The British lost almost 4,500 men. Of these, 1500 were aboard the aircraft carrier HMS *Glorious* and her two destroyer escorts which were sunk by the German battlecruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*. To this must be added 500 men lost by the French and Poles and 1,800 Norwegians. German causalities were higher at about 5,000.[17] They also lost 242 aircraft – a third of them transport aircraft – in comparison to 112 lost by the RAF. However, it was in terms of warships that the cost of the German victory became truly

significant. The Kriegsmarine lost three cruisers, ten destroyers and four U-boats, and *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisnau* suffered serious damage.[18] By the end of the campaign, the Kriegsmarine had only one heavy and two light crusiers and four destroyers fit for action.[19] British losses were of a similar scale – one aircraft carrier, three crusiers and eight destroyers – but this could be easily absorbed by the Royal Navy. For the far smaller Kriegsmarine, Norway was a campaign from which its surface fleet never fully recovered.

In return for these sacrifices, Germany secured the Scandinavian minerals and control of the Narvik iron ore route which had so concerned both them and the British. Raeder gained the bases that he had wanted, thus loosening Britain's control of the Atlantic approaches and making imposition of a British blockade far harder. Once the Arctic Convoys to Russia began, those bases would prove particularly useful. In return, Norway had to be garrisoned, which proved to be a serious drain on Wehrmacht resources as Hitler believed Norway was the 'zone of destiny'. This meant that the Norwegian coast line had to be well protected against a British invasion with large numbers of troops, fortifications and ships.

The British had been soundly defeated. However, the losses had been reasonably light, the sinking of HMS *Glorious* accepted. In return, Britain gained Winston Churchill as prime minister. This was somewhat ironic because Churchill, as first lord of the admiralty, had been the most enthusiastic exponent of Britain's disastrous intervention in Scandinavia. Indeed, at the start of the House of Commons debate concerning Neville Chamberlain's competence to run a modern 'total war' occasioned by the campaign, Churchill claimed that 'I take complete responsibility for everything that has been done at the Admiralty, and I take my full share of the burden'.[20] Although Chamberlain managed to achieve a majority in the vote at the end of the debate on 8 May 1940, he could no longer command cross-party support. He was replaced by Churchill on 10 May, the day the German offensive in the West opened. Only a disaster on the scale of the Norwegian Campaign could have brought Chamberlain down. Yet once the Battle of France opened in earnest, the members of the House of Commons would never have risked precipitating a political crisis and, to quote François Kersaudy, author of one the best histories of the Norwegian Campaign, 'no one can possibly say what would have happened if Neville Chamberlain had remained Prime Minister of Great Britain in the summer of 1940'.[21] Therefore, it is arguable that Britain gained more from the Norwegian Campaign and Churchill would maintain a remarkable fascination with Norway throughout the rest of the war. Indeed, he would ensure that Norway kept an important place in British strategy even when many of his military advisers would have preferred to ignore it.

Quite apart from the Norwegian Campaign's role in bringing Churchill to power, it would also cast a considerable shadow over all British policy that followed. The campaign was the first clash on land between British and

French armies and their German opponents. It provided an excellent case study of coalition warfare and, more significantly, inter-service cooperation (or lack of it) when it came to the British. This was because Norway was the first truly tri-service campaign – including the first operational use of air-borne forces – waged on land, sea and in the air. Air power played a decisive role in the fighting on the ground, and demonstrated the vulnerability of naval vessels in the face of sustained air attack. So, understandably, it is the only part of Norway's war between 1940 and 1945 that is well covered by English language publications.[22]

Aside from 1940, there is much less. The most important English language work on Anglo–Norwegian dealings in the Second World War is 1995's *Britain and Norway in the Second World War* edited by Patrick Salmon.[23] It is made up of the collected papers of the 1991 colloquium on the subject held at St Antony's College, Oxford, attended by both historians and veterans, which provided 'a mixture of historical analysis and personal experience'. However, it is not a detailed examination of British military policy towards Norway, more something 'in the nature of an overview' of various aspects of the two countries' relationship.[24] In Norwegian, Olav Riste's two-volume history of the Norwegian Government-in-Exile's period in Britain – *London-Regjeringa*, I, *1940–1942: Prøvetid* and II, *1942–1945: Vegen Heim* – remains the definitive work on Anglo–Norwegian relations in the Second World War.[25] On the related issue of the Exile Government's armed forces, there have been a number of chapters in books examining the wider experience of Europe's exiled governments and militaries.[26]

Otherwise, there are a number of works on Vidkun Quisling, a collection of translated essays in the wider *Scandinavia During the Second World War* edited by Henrik Nissen, a popular history on the German campaigns in Scandinavia, and two short general accounts on the Resistance and the war in general, published under an initiative by the Norwegian Foreign Office to bring these aspects of Norwegian history to a wider audience.[27] All these works are a useful starting point for any wider study. Only the activities of the Norwegian Resistance and the role of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) in Norway have provoked much interest. A number of memoirs are available.[28] There is slightly more plentiful literature, both histories and memoirs, available in Norwegian.[29] There are also two specialised studies of the SOE – including Charles Cruickshank's official history: *SOE in Scandinavia* – although both are disappointing.[30] This has been rectified in recent scholarship by Ian Herrington on SOE's Norwegian Section, although this important work remains unpublished.[31] That said, the most famous action of SOE's Norwegian Section – the raid on the heavy water production for the German atomic bomb project at Vemork near Rjukan – has provoked a small sub-genre of literature and has even been the subject of a Hollywood film.[32] Some of the other Commando raids have prompted similar studies.[33]

So nowhere has British service policy towards Norway been tackled as a whole. Aspects of it have appeared in other more general histories, particularly concerning the Commandos and Royal Navy.[34] These do not, however, place Norway within a coherent narrative, nor do they trace the specific development of policy towards Norway as a location for operations. Thus, by examining the formation and implementation of that policy, this book provides a clear and detailed picture of the place of Norway within British strategy. The main emphasis is on Norway's place in the thinking of the Army's and particularly the Royal Navy, and the central role it played in development of the Combined Operations organisation. This has been explored in a thematic manner, taking the stories of Combined Operations, the Royal Naval campaign around Norway's coast, the Army's planning for reconquest of the country and the various deception operations through from tentative early operations, to the end of the war. All, of course, are interrelated, but it is more coherent to follow each thread rather than attempt to interweave them chronologically.

For the Royal Navy, therefore, the importance that their German opponents, the Kriegsmarine, placed upon the possession of Norwegian bases ensured that its attention rarely wavered from Norway. The unexpectedly rapid fall of France lessened Norway's importance somewhat as the French west-coast ports provided the Kriegsmarine with direct access to the Atlantic. However, three events in 1941 led to Norway resuming her importance in British naval strategy: (a) Hitler suspended surface raiding by the Kriegsmarine following the loss of the battleship *Bismarck*; (b) British Commandos raided the Lofoten Islands in March and again in December; and (c) the British began convoying supplies to the Soviet Union via the Arctic Sea. Hitler, considering Norway the 'zone of destiny', heavily reinforced Norway and sent most of his surface fleet there to protect against a feared British invasion and to attack the convoys. The need to counter this threat to the Arctic Convoys and to guard against a much feared breakout into the Atlantic, shaped Royal Naval, and more specifically Home Fleet, strategy for the next two years. Although the German surface threat had been largely neutralised with the crippling of the *Tirpitz* and the sinking of the *Scharnhorst* by the end of 1943, the Royal Navy and, at the Navy's behest, the RAF continued to try and sink the damaged battleship. Furthermore, the substantial German merchant fleet in Norwegian waters led to a carrier, MTB and RAF Coastal Command offensive against Norwegian coastal traffic.[35] The importance and role of the later Arctic Convoys shifted within the context of the Battle of the Atlantic and in the war against the German U-boats. Indeed, in the final year or so of the war, the emphasis in their operations shifted from the defensive to the offensive.

Norway was vital to the development of the Combined Operations organisation. and was the only place in North West Europe where the Commandos could operate on a large scale in 1941. The benefits of the early raids against

Norway with regard to training and development of combined operational techniques was crucial. However, this led to a problematic relationship with the Norwegian Government-in-Exile due to the resulting German reprisals and the British authorities' rather cavalier use of Norwegian forces. By 1944, however, operations in Norway were overshadowed by preparations for 'Overlord', the invasion of Normandy. The development of smaller-scale raiding techniques is examined and their contribution to the Allied cause assessed in Chapter 5.

Like Hitler, Britain's Prime Minister Winston Churchill had a curious obsession with Norway. He had become prime minister in the wake of the 1940 Norwegian Campaign and was keen for British forces to return to the place of their ignominious defeat. Churchill's desire to 'unroll the Nazi map from the top' led to the preparation of three major plans for an invasion of Norway between 1941 and 1943. There were also numerous smaller appreciations made, including one by Lieutenant General Frederick Morgan, who was supposed to be working on 'Overlord' at the time. These proposals were fought to a standstill by senior British military authorities.

Closely related to this were the strategic deception schemes aimed at convincing the Germans that the British did indeed intend to return to Norway. Given the British military establishment's reluctance to countenance a full-scale invasion and the fact that Norway was a conceivable target for troops and resources assembled in Britain, Norway proved to be a remarkably popular site for Britain's deception planners. Norway, as was the case with the Combined Operations organisation, was very useful for the development of deception techniques, particularly with regard to Norway's role within the 'Fortitude' deception plan covering 'Overlord'.

When Norway was finally rejected as a location for an Anglo-American invasion, there remained a requirement to plan for a return to Norway against no or extremely limited German resistance, as an adjunct to more important operations on the Continent. This was the first time that the Norwegian authorities were seriously involved in Anglo-American planning. Allied planning tended to ignore the Norwegian province of Finnmark, in the extreme north of Norway. However, as the Germans withdrew south, a Norwegian-dominated Allied expedition was launched into the area in late 1944. After the Allied victory, the actual liberation of the bulk of the country took place and there followed a six-and-a-half month Allied military presence in Norway. The largely British force was faced with the problems of disarming and repatriating some undefeated 350,000 Germans and more than 75,000 Allied Prisoners of War (POWs) and displaced persons. This was a major test of the military, diplomatic and administrative skills of General Sir Andrew Thorne, the commander of the Allied forces. The liberation was, in the words of the Norwegian Resistance leader Jens Christian Hauge, 'something of a miracle'.[36]

So this book places Norway within the context of British strategy as a whole, particularly with regard to the country's as a location for British

operations. It analyses the various elements of British policy from the very highest political, diplomatic and military strategy, through to the tactical concerns of British, and often Norwegian forces, operating in, above and off the coast of German-occupied Norway. It identifies the Army and Royal Air Force's relative disinterest in operations in Norway and examines the importance of Norway to the Royal Navy and the Combined Operations organisation. The progress of diplomatic negotiation and military planning and discussion, which took place before operations were launched or vetoed, is analysed, and an examination is made of whether the British resources expended on operations against Norway were adequately used. It therefore provides a study of the process of military and political decision making and the influence on British policy of outside factors such as foreign governments, and, in particular, the Norwegian Government-in-Exile in London. It is also a case study of Great Power–Minor Power relations in the Second World War, and examines the value of waging war on the periphery compared to the American desire for a decisive campaign on the European mainland. Looking at the remarkable British preoccupation with Norway, it is clear that the expenditure of such limited resources, with the exception of the Royal Navy, was worthwhile and paid high dividends in terms of the massive German military presence in Norway at the expense of more important theatres.