

# The Forgotten Army

*The Norwegian Army-in-exile 1940-1945*

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All of us who, by the game of destiny, would become the main actors during the war years will someday be brought before the court of history. This verdict of history is unlikely to be the same as the one we are inclined to render today. The picture of what has happened in these years is incomplete and will continue to be so, but out of all this obscurity rises today and will always rise the image of men who had their own time's and will have the future's esteem and love.

— Otto Ruge at the funeral of Carl Gustav Fleischer, 23 October 1945<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "General Fleischers siste ferd", *Arbeiderbladet*, 24 October 1945 (my translation).

# Summary

Having been forced to leave Norway in early June 1940, Norwegian authorities decided to continue the fight against the Germans from the UK. The policy the Government settled on, however, was to contribute to the war effort primarily by making use of the naval and air forces at its disposal. Meanwhile, the Army would be given a low priority, barely having reached a size of 4,000 by the end of the war.

This thesis looks at the decisions and factors that influenced the creation, organisation and employment of the Norwegian Army-in-exile. The questions it seeks to answer is why the Army remained numerically small in size, why it was barely used in combat operations and whether this was a continuation of Norwegian defence policy in the interwar years. Attempting to answer these questions involved studies into the archives of key Norwegian civil and military authorities and individuals.

The thesis argues that the Army, for the duration of the war, was intended to be used solely for the liberation of Norway and that the priority it received, therefore, was closely linked to the Government's preferred approach to the liberation at any given point. Further, it shows that the limitations on the Army both in terms of its size and employment was largely the result of the Government's fear of alienating the Norwegian people at home and of losing public support. Finally, the thesis argues that while the Army was given a low priority even before the war, the causality that led to that outcome was not the same during the war as it was prior to it.

# Preface

For the last couple of months, the COVID-19 crisis has been an ever-present force in the lives of us all, affecting how we interact and communicate with each other, our economy and not least our mental health. So too has it left its mark on this thesis. Although lockdown may, on the surface, seem like the perfect time to write a master's thesis with fewer commitments and distractions, it has presented significant and unforeseen challenges.

From the time I started planning this thesis over a year ago, it had always been my intention to base it primarily on archival research. With my topic being the Norwegian Army-in-exile in the UK during the Second World War, it seemed natural to include not only Norwegian perspectives but also those of the British as Norwegians authorities, in many ways, were reliant upon their support. I had, therefore, planned a research trip to the British National Archives in Kew in the middle of March. However, the week before I was supposed to leave the COVID-19 crisis hit Norway in earnest. Due to the uncertainty of the situation, including the possibility of being unable to return to Norway for some time, I was forced to cancel the trip at the last minute. Subsequently, the British perspective, which I had hoped would be a significant contribution to the field in question, has largely had to be omitted.

On 13 March, the Norwegian National Archives also closed its doors and has, as of the time of writing, yet to reopen. While I was able to do a fair bit of work prior to the closure and had secured digital copies of many of the documents I expected would be of interest, being unable to get hold of materials as they appeared in my research affected not only the progress and, I believe, the quality of the end product, but also my motivation. While working on this thesis, therefore, proved more challenging than I had expected, it was also an interesting and educational experience.

Finally, I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Olav Njølstad for providing not only guidance and correction but also encouragement during these trying times. While our interaction, for the most part, ended up being limited to emails, I appreciate that you were willing to take time out of your, I imagine, busy schedule to help me through this thesis.

Malik Christoffer Olsen  
Halden, 8 May 2020

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## List of Abbreviations

AA	Anti-aircraft
AAB	Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (The Norwegian Labour Movement Archives and Library)
AT	Anti-tank
BOAC	British Overseas Airways Corporation
Brig N	Den Norske Brigade (The Norwegian Brigade)
C-in-C	Commander in Chief
CMH	United States Army Center of Military History
COSSAC	Chief of Staff to Supreme Allied Commander
DKF	Distriktskommando Finnmark (Regional Command Finnmark)
FFK	Flyvåpnenes Felleskommando (Norwegian Air Force Command)
FO	Forsvarets Overkommando (Norwegian High Command)
FSAN	Forsvarets sanitet (Norwegian Armed Forces Joint Medical Services)
HMS	His Majesty's Ship (UK)
HNoMS	His Norwegian Majesty's Ship
HOK	Hærens Overkommando (Norwegian Army Command)
IWM	Imperial War Museum
JPS	Joint Planning Staff
Lt. Col.	Lieutenant Colonel
Lt. Gen.	Lieutenant General
Maj. Gen.	Major General
Milorg	Militærorganisasjonen
MOD	Norwegian Ministry of Defence
NMM	Den Norske Militærmisjon (The Norwegian Military Mission)
NORIC 1	Norwegian Independent Company No. 1
ORs	Other ranks
PM	Pro memoria
RA	Riksarkivet (The National Archives of Norway)
ScotCo	Scottish Command

SHAEF	Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force
SOE	Special Operations Executive
SOK	Sjøforsvarets Overkommando (Norwegian Naval Command)
TGB/HSØ	Treningsgruppe for befal ved Hærens skole og øvingsavdeling (Training unit for officers at the Norwegian Army School Branch)
TNA	The National Archives (UK)
WO	War Office



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# Introduction

Some years ago, I spent the summer with my family in Venice. To pass the time at the beach, I had brought a book that I had come across at a Salvation Army thrift shop a couple of years earlier. Written by Ivar Stamnes and titled *I panservogn fra Caen til Bryssel* (In an Armoured Car from Caen to Brussels), the book was the author's memoirs from his time fighting in Northern France and Belgium during the Second World War. In the preface to the book, Stamnes writes that he was among sixteen Norwegian Army officers who, in command of British units, were lucky enough to be deployed to the Continent.<sup>2</sup> Having visited the beaches of Normandy and seen how the Norwegian flag is flown all over the region to this day, it suddenly struck me how seldom I had seen references to the Norwegian Army taking part in the campaign, and really how little I had heard of the Army at all.

Upon leaving Northern Norway in early June 1940, Norwegian authorities did state their intent to continue the fight from abroad. A Norwegian Army-in-exile was, therefore, raised in the UK. This Army did, however, remain small in size and barely saw any action during the five years it existed. This raises several questions: Why was the Army-in-exile so small, why was it not employed further and was this a continuation of Norwegian defence policy prior to the war? This thesis will attempt to answer these questions and in doing so, will look what challenges faced those responsible for rebuilding the Army, what tasks it was intended to be used for and, perhaps most importantly, the decisions and policies made by the Norwegian Government concerning the Army, the liberation and the Norwegian contribution to the war effort.

While the Norwegian experiences of the Second World War make up a sizeable and important part of the Norwegian collective memory, the focus in both popular culture and public education tends to be on the Norwegian campaign (9 April to 10 June 1940) and the exploits of the Norwegian resistance and the Norwegian section of the Special Operations

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<sup>2</sup> Stamnes, *I panservogn fra Caen til Bryssel*, 9. The exact number of Norwegian officers who were allowed to take part in Operation Overlord is somewhat disputed. In some sources, such as Skogrand, *Alliert i krig og fred*, vol. 4, *Norsk Forsvarshistorie*, 60; and Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 90, the number used is fifteen, while Berg, *Krigsskolen i London 1942-43*, 57; and Stamnes state that there were sixteen.

Executive (SOE). Meanwhile, the Norwegian Armed Forces in the UK have largely been forgotten.

Almost thirty years after the war, Erik Aanensen wrote in the preface to his book that “As far as I am aware, no account has ever been published about the free army contingent in Scotland”.<sup>3</sup> Since then, a couple of books and articles have been written on the topic, most by former members of the Army-in-exile. The majority of these, including Aanensen’s, are, therefore, not particularly academic but can best be described as memoirs set against a historical backdrop. The exception, and what is undoubtedly the most influential and commonly cited book on the topic, is the one written by Eystein Fjærli. While Fjærli too did serve in the Army during the war, his personal experiences do not feature in the book. Instead, it was created through research at Norwegian and British archives and follows the chronological evolution of the Army-in-exile from the appointment of a Norwegian Military Representative in London in April 1940 to the dissolution of the Norwegian Brigade in October 1945. The book also contains a sizeable collection of appendices which includes transcripts of key documents, organisational charts, maps and descriptions of the different units and elements that comprised the Army.

Among non-Norwegian authors, Christopher Mann is one of the only, if not the only contributor. While Mann has written a book on British policy towards Norway during the war, its focus is primarily on naval cooperation and combined operations against the Norwegian coast. Where the Army enters the picture is with regard to possible scenarios for the liberation of Norway, and their eventual participation in operations in Finnmark from November 1944 onwards. Mann has also contributed chapters on the Norwegian Armed Forces in exile in Conway and Gotovitch’s book on European exile communities in Britain, as well as on specifically the Army in Bennett and Latawski. Both of these, however, are rather short and can only be said to provide an overview of their respective topics.

More broadly, the Army-in-exile has featured to varying degrees in a number of works on the Norwegian war effort more generally. For this thesis, and likely for the field at large, the most important of these has been Olav Riste’s two-volume work on the actions of the Norwegian Government during the war. Written to provide an overview of Norwegian

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<sup>3</sup> Aanensen, *Når vi kommer inn fra havet*, 9 (my translation).

wartime military policy and to function as a framework for future specialised studies the work is concerned primarily with the role of Norway within the military alliance.<sup>4</sup>

Kjetil Skogrand's contribution to the five-volume series on Norwegian defence history should also be mentioned in this category. While far from as in-depth as Riste, Skogrand does an excellent job of presenting and explaining the challenges that Norwegian authorities faced when rebuilding the Armed Forces abroad.

### Defining the Army-in-exile

For the duration of the war, the Norwegian Army-in-exile amounted to Norwegian Army Command (*Hærens overkommando*, HOK) and what from March 1941 became known as the Norwegian Brigade (Brig N). While some smaller elements would be established separate from it, such as a commando unit, this brigade would; for all intents and purposes, become synonymous with the Army-in-exile. By the end of the war, the Army had only just about reached a size of 4,000, and even then only when including the some 466 women who served as, among other things, secretaries, typists, nurses, mechanics and drivers.<sup>5</sup> Besides the actual Army, however, two armylike organisations were created outside Norway during the war.

The first was the unit that in July 1941 was designated as Norwegian Independent Company No. 1 (NORIC 1), better known in Norway as *Kompani Linge*. This unit was formed under British command by the SOE and would in 1941 take part in multiple raids on the Norwegian coast alongside British Commandos. Later in the war, the some 250 men who made up NORIC 1 at any given time would primarily be used in sabotage operations and as support for the Norwegian resistance.<sup>6</sup> Despite much of its personnel having been drawn from the regular Army, NORIC 1 was never part of the Army-in-exile, a relationship that, for some time, was unclear not only to the men of the unit but even to HOK.<sup>7</sup> When NORIC 1 eventually was transferred to Norwegian command in the winter of 1942-43, it was placed under Norwegian High Command (*Forsvarets Overkommando*; FO).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Riste, *1940-1942: Prøvetid*, vol. 1, "London-regjeringa", 9-10.

<sup>5</sup> Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia*, 274; and Fjærli, "Regjeringens policy angående anvendelsen av Den Norske Brigade i Storbritannia", 212.

<sup>6</sup> Jensen, Ratvik and Ulstein, *Kompani Linge*, vol. 1, 23-32.

<sup>7</sup> HOK PM titled "om specialavdelingen "Linge"", 10 December 1941, PA-1389, Series F, Box 5, Folder 1, Carl Gustav Fleischer archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>8</sup> Jensen, Ratvik and Ulstein, *Kompani Linge*, vol. 1, 30.

The second organisation was what would become known as the Norwegian police troops in Sweden. Despite Sweden officially being neutral, from the summer of 1943 Norwegian refugees in the country were conscripted initially to what was given the name *Rikspoliti* (National Constabulary) and later to a significantly larger formation known as *Reservepoliti* (Auxiliary Police). While their designations seems to imply that these were police units, they were in reality vaguely disguised military units equipped not only with rifles and submachine guns but also anti-tank cannons and mortars. While not as well trained as the Army in the UK, the organisation in Sweden was more than three times its size at the end of the war, totalling some 13,000 men. It was, however, never under the command of HOK and hence not part of the Army-in-exile.<sup>9</sup>

A final distinction that should be made concerns the Air Force. Prior to the Second World War, it is not really possible to talk of a Norwegian Air Force but rather two Norwegian air forces; one under the command of the Army and one part of the Navy. Following the Norwegian authorities departure from Norway, these were still considered two separate entities but were placed under a joint command, Norwegian Air Force Command (*Flyvåpnenes Felleskommando*; FFK). Only in November of 1944 did these officially become a separate branch of the Norwegian Armed Forces.<sup>10</sup> Despite this, the organisation under the command of FFK is routinely referred to as a branch and used in the singular, i.e. Air Force, in official correspondence. It is, therefore, treated as a separate branch here.

### The military as an object of study

In traditional studies of war, the military has often been treated as an autonomous system, separate from society at large. Here, the action of military leaders and the importance of individual events have tended to be discussed on a tactical and strategic level without paying noticeable regard to the economic, political and technological factors that influenced them. This tradition was challenged in the 1970s by the so-called War and Society School in the UK and the milieu around *Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt* (Military History Research

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<sup>9</sup> Dahl, "Frigjøringen av Finnmark", 582; and Skogrand, *Alliert i krig og fred*, vol. 4, *Norsk Forsvarshistorie*, 92-97. For an in-depth look at the history of the Norwegian police troops in Sweden see: Ørvik, *Norsk militær i Sverige 1943-1945*.

<sup>10</sup> Order in Council no. 309, 10 November 1944, S-1001, Series Ac, Box 125, Secretariat to the Government archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

Office) in West-Germany. They no longer saw the military as separate but rather as reflections of their respective societies.<sup>11</sup>

As Norwegian historians Rolf Hobson and Tom Kristiansen argue, rather than replace the traditional perspective, German historians separated the study of *Militärgeschichte* (military history) from the specialised fields of *Kriegsgeschichte* (war history) and *Wehrgeschichte* (defence history). While *Kriegsgeschichte* can be said to analyse war on a strategic, operational and tactical level and *Wehrgeschichte* focuses on changes made to the military in peacetime, *Militärgeschichte* looks at the military within the broader societal context and includes economic, political and social factors on both a national and international level.<sup>12</sup>

Being interested in the policies and decision that guided the creation, organisation and employment of the Army-in-exile, which despite the extraordinary circumstances Norwegian authorities found themselves in were still influenced by at least political and economic factors, this thesis can be said to be closest to the latter of the three. It does, however, include an element of *Wehrgeschichte*, specifically in Chapter 1 which concerns Norwegian defence policy in the interwar years.

#### Source material and method

Methodologically, this thesis belongs to the field of international history. Traditionally, international history has been characterised by primarily being concerned with state actors and the relations between states, including trade, diplomacy, and war. However, in the last couple of decades, what exactly is or is not to be included under the banner of international history has been a topic of great contention. So much so that it has become not uncommon for historians to talk about a “new international history”. This version of international history incorporates perspectives from, among others, the fields of cultural and social history and in so doing include non-state actors, thereby stretching the definition of the term international history so far that it ends up being almost indistinguishable from the field of transnational history.<sup>13</sup> This thesis, however, adheres to a more traditional understanding of the term so much so that it is probably correct to assign it to the sub-field of international history known as diplomatic history.

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<sup>11</sup> Hobson and Kristiansen, “Militærmakt, krig og historie”, 6-8.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>13</sup> Finney, “Introduction: what is international history”, 2, 9.

Diplomatic history arose in the 19th century and is, in essence, the study of statecraft. It is the history of states and their representatives; be it politicians, diplomats, or military leaders. Its primary interest is to discover how foreign policy is created, and in extension its consequences, preferably by making use of archival material. Up until at least the Second World War, this can be said to have been the dominant form of history writing.<sup>14</sup>

In practical terms, this means that this thesis is the result of research into the archives of the Norwegian civil and military authorities during the war, as well as the personal archives of central political and military personalities.<sup>15</sup> This work involved going through well over one-hundred boxes and several thousand documents of different types, including personal letters, organisational charts, reports, orders, PMs, and minutes of meetings, to mention a few.

Most of the catalogues for the archives of interest to this thesis had been digitised and hence usually could be browsed online down to the level of folder name. However, there was one noticeable exception. The wartime archive of the Norwegian Ministry of Defence, which unsurprisingly is immensely relevant for the topic in question, had yet to receive this treatment. The reason for this was that the structure and references used in the original paper copy was a complete mess meaning it would take an inordinately long time to have it digitised. Nevertheless, by making use of that very paper copy, I was ultimately able to navigate my way through and get hold of the boxes of interest.

Determining when a document was written, by who and when relevant to whom it was addressed was only rarely an issue as this information usually was readily available on the documents themselves. Studying the sources did, however, require a comprehensive understanding of how the Norwegian military and civil organisations were structured at any given time as well as familiarity with both British and Norwegian military parlance and the abbreviations used for different organisations.

As the organisation of the Norwegian Army-in-exile became influenced by the British, an issue I ran into with some frequency was to determine whether the designations used for specific military units in official correspondence and documents was meant to

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<sup>14</sup> Finney, "Introduction: what is international history", 1, 5-6.

<sup>15</sup> In Norwegian, the word *arkiv*, which translates to archive, is used not only for the institution that houses primary sources but also for what in English-speaking countries would be called collection, fonds, archive group or record group. The anglicised version of this term is, therefore, used throughout this thesis when referring to Norwegian institutions.

denote the Norwegian or British meaning of that term as these often did not correspond perfectly. For instance, late in the war, two anti-aircraft (AA) artillery units were established. In Norwegian, these were designated as battalions. However, their size equated to what the British would have called batteries.<sup>16</sup> Another example is the use of the Norwegian word *tropp*, which should translate to either a British platoon in the infantry or a troop in the cavalry. Despite this, the word regularly seems to have been used to denote any form of military unit beneath the level of company. I have, to the best of my ability, sought to make use of the designations as they are presented in English-language primary sources.

Following the war, a commission of inquiry was established. Its mandate was “to examine the conditions of Parliament, the Government, the Supreme Court, the Administrative Council, and the civilian and military authorities before and after 9 April 1940.”<sup>17</sup> In other words, it was to review the actions of, among others, the Government and the military leadership leading up to and during the war. The report that resulted, and its appendices, was published in three volumes and remains one of the most comprehensive insights available. Of equal, if not greater interest to this thesis are the explanations given to the Commission by members of the Government as these are in the form of answers to a number of questions posed concerning specific events and decisions.

The archival sources have been supplemented with different types of published material, such as the diaries, memoirs and post-war reflections of military and political personalities. In addition, a number of books and articles have been used to construct the thesis’ framework.

## Research questions and theory

As previously mentioned, there are three main questions this thesis seeks to answer. These are why the Army-in-exile was so small, why it saw so little action and whether this can be said to have been a continuation of Norwegian defence policy in the interwar years.

I will argue that the small size and the lack of employment of the Army-in-exile was the product of the Norwegian Government's preferred line for the war in general and the liberation in particular. This approach, as well as most of, if not all the major decisions made regarding the Army, were in turn influenced by the Government’s fear of losing support from

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<sup>16</sup> Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 205.

<sup>17</sup> Parliament of Norway, *Undersøkelseskommissjonen av 1945*, vol. 1, preface (my translation).



the Norwegian people at home. Together, this resulted not only in the Army being given a low priority but also in a number of actions that could have strengthened the Army without compromising the war effort more generally not being taken.

As a sub-question regarding the lack of employment, I will attempt to answer why Brig N did not take part in the Allied campaign on the Continent in the summer and autumn of 1944. While, as we shall see, other factors likely were decisive, the small size of the Army has been used to explain the decision to keep Brig N in the UK.<sup>18</sup> I will, however, argue that on a practical level it was not the size of the Army per se that was the problem, but rather the way its operational units were organised, equipped and trained.

Finally, concerning possible links to Norwegian pre-war defence policy, I will argue that while the Army was given a low priority even before the war, the causality for this was not the same as the one that led to it receiving a low priority during the war.

## Structure

In order to convey a sense of progression and to show how the positions and actions of the actors influenced future events and decisions, this thesis is structured chronologically.

Chapter 1 looks at Norwegian defence policy prior to the Second World War in order to determine what factors led to the state of the Army at the time of the German attack in April 1940. In the conclusion, this will be used to say something about whether these were the same factors that influenced the deprioritisation of the Army while in exile.

Chapter 2 treats the period of the Norwegian campaign. Here the focus is on the decisions made by the Norwegian Government while in Northern Norway, which influenced the creation and size of the Army-in-exile. Specifically, this concerns the choice of military advisor; the person who would eventually be responsible for rebuilding the Army, and what was done to secure personnel for the Army upon leaving Norway.

Chapter 3, which I have chosen to title the era of Fleischer, begins with the arrival of the Norwegian authorities in the UK in June 1940 and ends with the re-establishment of Norwegian High Command in February 1942. This period is characterised by significant disagreement between HOK and the Government with regard to how the war was to be

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<sup>18</sup> Some examples include: Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 15; Holmås, "Den norske Brigade i Skottland", 26; and Skogrand, *Alliert i krig og fred*, vol. 4, *Norsk Forsvarshistorie*, 89-90.

fought, including how to go about liberating Norway, and in extension what priority the Army was to be given.

Chapter 4 concerns how the Norwegian authorities' approach to the liberation changed with the reorganisation of the military organisation in the winter of 1941-42. Here we will look at the plans made by Norwegian High Command for the liberation and how the Army was reorganised for that purpose. This chapter will also show how poor cooperation resulted in these, for the most part, not being in line with Allied plans for Norway during that period.

Chapter 5 treats the employment, or lack thereof, of the Army following the invasion of the Continent in June 1944. The primary question that will be answered is why the Norwegian Government chose to keep Brig N in the UK and not allow it, or a significant part of it, to take part in the campaign.

# Chapter 1: Norwegian Defence Policy Prior to the Second World War

Despite having existed as an entity for over a millennium, Norway in 1940 was still a recently independent state having broken out of a personal union with Sweden in 1905. While this process ended up being a peaceful one, many, at least at the time, considered the strengthening of the Armed Forces to have played an important role in making sure that was the case.<sup>19</sup> Soon after, with the increased international tensions stemming from the First World War, the Norwegian Army saw a significant increase in funding. By 1940, however, it was considered by some to be not only the least modern army in Europe with regard to equipment and strategy but also the poorest trained. While it was common in other European countries for the length of conscripted military service to range between one and three years, in Norway, military service amounted to a mere eighty-four days.<sup>20</sup>

The state of the Army was the result of a combination of factors. However, the most prominent seems to have been a prevalent pacifist sentiment among Norwegian politicians who, in the wake of the First World War, were optimistic towards the prospect of a future where conflicts could be resolved through the use of non-violent means.

## 1.1 Ruge and Fleischer

During the Norwegian campaign in 1940, two Norwegian Generals would rise to prominence: Otto Ruge (1882-1961) and Carl Gustav Fleischer (1883-1942). Prior to the Second World War, they can be said to have represented two different approaches to Norwegian military strategy, something that would not only influence their relationship but also their relationship to the Norwegian Government.

Fleischer was a proponent of what might be described as an aggressive defensive strategy. As a result of most of Norway's important centres being located along the coast or border, he believed it would not be practically possible to carry out what in Norwegian military vernacular is known as *oppholdene strid*; an orderly retreat to delay the advance of the invaders for the time necessary to mobilise the forces required to stop them. Instead,

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<sup>19</sup> Berg, *Profesjon, union, nasjon*, vol. 2, *Norsk Forsvarshistorie*, 298-299, 304.

<sup>20</sup> Høgevold, *Hvem sviktet?*, 50-51; and Ruge, "Vårt nøytralitetsvern i den nuværende situasjon".

Fleischer considered the best option to be a counter-offensive aimed at pushing through the enemy line and forcing them back over the border or into the sea. To have any hope of achieving this goal, the Army, and indeed the Armed Forces as a whole, had to be strengthened. However, following the First World War, there did not appear to be any significant threats to Norway. Hence the sentiment that was dominant among Norwegian politicians in the interwar years was one of demilitarisation and wanting to reduce military spending.<sup>21</sup>

If Fleischer was an idealist who placed the capability of the Norwegian Army above all other concerns, Ruge was a realist. While he agreed, in principle, that the Army had to be ready to react to any threat at any time, he understood that maintaining an army capable of doing so without there being a credible and immediate threat was unacceptable from a political point of view. Further, he considered it to be unproductive for the military leadership to keep demanding what they perceived to be necessary to maintain the appropriate levels with regard to quality and quantity. Instead, he argued, they had to make the best out of what they realistically could expect to get.<sup>22</sup> These different stances would become apparent in the reorganisation processes that the Army underwent during the 1920s and 1930s. While Fleischer's influence would be limited as he primarily interacted with the processes in his capacity as a member of the General Staff, Ruge would play a more active and prominent role.

## 1.2 The Organisational Plan for the Armed Forces of 1927

During and in the years immediately following the First World War, the budget for the Norwegian Army had seen a sharp rise from about 16,6 million NOK in 1913-14 to a peak of 43,7 million in 1920-21 (Figure 1). In the interwar period, the *Storting* (the Norwegian Parliament) would two times, in 1927 and 1933, decide to reorganise the Armed Forces to reduce military spending.

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<sup>21</sup> Hovland, *Storhet og fall*, 37-38, 40.

<sup>22</sup> Hovland, *Storhet og fall*, 41-42; Ruge, *Felttoget*, 213; and Ørvik, *Solidaritet eller nøytralitet?*, 184.

Figure 1: Norwegian defence budget from 1905 to 1940

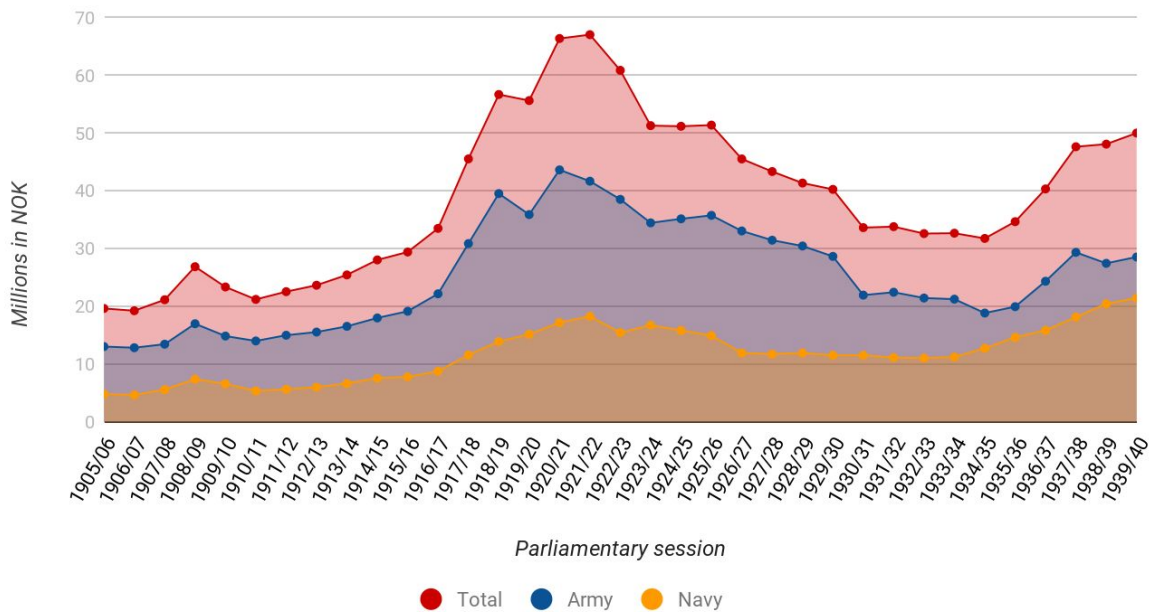


Figure 1. Shows the total Norwegian defence budget for each parliamentary session in the period between 1905 and 1939/40 as well as the Norwegian Army and Navy’s share. The peak in 1908/09 is due to this session, for some reason, spanning one year and three months. The numbers do not include any extra funding granted to the Ministry of Defence, the Army or Navy in any given year and are not adjusted for inflation. Sources: For the period 1905/06 to 1909/10, the numbers are taken from “Økonomisk og finansiell statistikk”, appendix to Proposition to the Storting no. 1 (1911), 27; for 1910/11 to 1913/14, from “Økonomisk og finansiell statistikk”, appendix to Proposition to the Storting no. 1 (1914), 26; for 1914/15 to 1918/19, from “Økonomisk og finansiell statistikk”, appendix to Proposition to the Storting no. 1 (1919), 22; for 1919/20 to 1922/23 from “Økonomisk og finansiell statistikk”, appendix to Proposition to the Storting no. 1 (1924), 22; for 1929/30 to 1933/34 from Proposition to the Storting no. 1 (1935), 89; and for 1934/35 to 1939/40 from Proposition to the Storting no. 1 (1939), 86. For the years 1923/24 to 1928/29 the numbers are taken individually from the results presented to the Storting in the National Budget the following year.

As early as 1920, a defence commission had been established to look into the organisation, training and funding of the Armed Forces, as well as the possibility of dissolving them altogether. While this commission decided against disarmament, it did propose lowering the budget for the Army to 34,5 million NOK. By the time the Ministry of Defence (MOD) presented the findings of the commission as well as its own proposal to the Storting in 1926, the normal budget for the army had already reached a yearly figure of 35,5 million. Based on the findings of the commission, as well as statements made by members of the military leadership, the MOD found the state of the Army to be unsatisfactory, and proposed that its size be reduced, whilst the quality and length of training be increased. They also insisted that the budget be lowered even further to 30,5 million, claiming it to be “Necessary with regard to our country's economic ability” as well as “Defensible considering

the changing international conditions.”<sup>23</sup> Among these changes were the establishment of the League of Nations, recent bilateral agreements between Norway and Sweden, Denmark and Finland, and not least the Locarno Treaties of 1925, for which Charles Gates Dawes, Austen J. Chamberlain, Aristide Briand, and Gustav Stresemann would receive the Nobel Peace Prize in 1926.<sup>24</sup>

As part of the planning process for the reorganisation of the Army, Commanding General Johan Christopher Ræder requested that the General Staff form a commission to look into which changes would have to be made to achieve the budget goals set by both the Defence Commission of 1920 and the MOD. Among its members was then Captain Fleischer. In their recommendation, the General Staff Commission stated that they did not consider the changes to international relations to be sufficient guarantees as to justify weakening the operational effectiveness of the Army to the degree that the proposed cuts would require.<sup>25</sup>

Whilst Ruge was not part of the General Staff Commission he had worked with both the Defence Commission of 1920 and Minister of Defence Rolf Jacobsen on Proposition to the Storting no. 33 (1926), specifically on how to restructure the officer corps.<sup>26</sup> In a PM to the General Staff dated 5 March 1926, the day after the General Staff Commission had been formed, Ruge writes that “If the General Staff insists on basing its proposal on the Defense Commission's normal budget, the work is wasted. It is certainly useless to submit a proposal that cannot be reduced to about the same price as the Ministry's proposal.”<sup>27</sup>

In the Organisational Plan for the Armed Forces approved by the Storting in 1927 (*Forsvarsordningen av 1927*), the budget for the Army, not including additional expenses associated with the transition period, was set at 27,6 million NOK. This represented an even bigger budget cut than those proposed by both the Defence Commission of 1920 and the MOD a year prior. These cuts were to be achieved by downsizing the officer corps from about 3,700 to 2,540 as well as reducing the number of days conscripts would receive

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<sup>23</sup> Proposition to the Storting no. 33 (1926), 1-3, 6-7 (my translation).

<sup>24</sup> Norwegian Nobel Committee, “Aarsberetning fra Det Norske Stortings Nobelkomité for 1926”, 1-2; and Proposition to the Storting no. 33 (1926), 2-3. Dawes and Chamberlain received the prize for 1925, as it had not been awarded the year prior due to the Norwegian Nobel Committee deeming no candidate suitable.

<sup>25</sup> Proposal from the General Staff Commission of 1926, RAFA-3021, Series D13, Box 270, Norwegian General Staff archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>26</sup> Ruge, *Felttoget*, 213.

<sup>27</sup> PM from Ruge to the General Staff, 5 March 1926, RAFA-3021, Series D13, Box 277, Norwegian General Staff archive, RA, Oslo, Norway (my translation).

training from 144 to 108. The plan also showed that over the next twelve years, the Army should expect to see further cuts in favour of the Navy.<sup>28</sup>

### 1.3 The Organisational Plan for the Armed Forces of 1933

Even before the Organisational Plan of 1927 went into effect on 1 January 1930, plans for yet another reorganisation of the Armed Forces involving further cuts were starting to form.

While working on the National Budget for 1929/30, Rolf Thommesen, representative of the Free-minded Liberal Party (*Frisinnede Venstre*) and member of the budget commission for 1929, stated that he thought the defence budget should be brought down to a total of 30 million NOK with two-thirds going to the Navy and one-third to the Army. This he considered to be sufficient to maintain an appropriately sized navy while reducing the Army to a minimum.<sup>29</sup>

On 7 March 1929 the MOD requested that Commanding General and Commanding Admiral formulate proposals as to how their respective branches could be organised to conform to a budget of 30 million NOK given three possible allocation models:

- a) 18-20 million for the Army and 10-12 million for the Navy.
- b) 15 million for the Army and 15 million for the Navy.
- c) 10 million for the Army and 20 million for the Navy.<sup>30</sup>

In his report to the Storting, Commanding General Theodor Holtfodt, while warning against further cuts in funding for the Army, writes that in the case of war “The longer we can manage ourselves, the more valuable we become as an ally, the more respect we get from an opponent. What matters to us is that we maintain defences that make it unprofitable to attack us.”<sup>31</sup> This Holtfodt did not believe to be possible if option B or C were to be adopted. In those cases, he states, the Army would have to be replaced by a military, or perhaps even civilian, guard corps (*vaktkorps*) to be able to assert the country's neutrality in accordance

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<sup>28</sup> Holmboe, “Norsk forsvarspolitikk før 9. april 1940”, 10; and Proposition to the Storting no. 60 (1927), 2-3.

<sup>29</sup> Holmboe, “Norsk forsvarspolitikk før 9. april 1940”, 10-11.

<sup>30</sup> The MOD to Commanding General, 7 March 1929, RAFA-3021, Series D13, Box 277, Norwegian General Staff archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>31</sup> Holtfodt, *Kommanderende Generals utredning*, 8 (my translation).

with Convention V of the Hague Convention of 1907. However, with a budget of only 10-15 million NOK, Holtfodt considered even such a solution to be:

“a ridiculous fiction that neither satisfies the requirements set in international law concerning guarding our neutrality nor solves the financial difficulties of the country through the savings thus envisaged. It all becomes a sacrifice on the altar of the idealistic pacifists on the one hand, and to the extremist defence nihilists on the other. The only thing that one can predict with certainty is that Norway becomes the shuttlecock in the other powers’ game.”<sup>32</sup>

Since 1910, it had been the responsibility of Commanding General and Commanding Admiral to make sure that the state of their respective branches were such as to be able to accomplish the tasks they had been given. Meanwhile, it was the politicians who decide what those tasks should be. When conditions became such that the Armed Forces no longer could accomplish those tasks, for instance, due to a change in threat or insufficient funding, the military leadership was to inform the political leaders who in turn were to make the necessary changes. With the Organisational Plan of 1927, this was changed, and from November 1930 onwards it would be the politicians who would be responsible for the state of the Armed Forces. Hence, while the military previously had been able to influence Norwegian defence policy through their recommendations and requests, this was no longer the case after 1930.<sup>33</sup>

Despite the opinions of both Holtfodt and his immediate successor, Ivar Bauck, Colonel Kristian Laake was instructed by the Government to develop further plans for how the Army could be structured to fit a budget of approximately 17 million NOK with a total defence budget of 32 million.<sup>34</sup> When Bauck then was forced to retire due to having reached the upper age limit in 1931, Laake was appointed to the position of Commanding General. It should be mentioned that his appointment was highly controversial. Politically Laake was affiliated with the Liberal Party (*Venstre*) who were in Government at the time. Hence his appointment was considered by many, both those

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<sup>32</sup> Holtfodt, *Kommanderende Generals utredning*, 60-69 (my translation).

<sup>33</sup> Ørvik, *Solidaritet eller nøytralitet?*, 198-199, 202-203.

<sup>34</sup> Bauck, Letter to the MOD, 8 December 1930, appendix no. 1 to Proposition to the Storting no. 57 (1931).



on the conservative side of politics as well as the General Staff and the officer corps more generally, to be politically motivated with the aim of silencing dissenting voices within the Army.<sup>35</sup>

As his advisor in matters relating to the new budget, Laake appointed then Major Ruge. It seems clear that the two men understood the political realities of the situation they found themselves in. Laake writes in his proposal that with regard to the current international situation, the military authorities have to defer to the assessment made by the Government.<sup>36</sup> That is not to say that Laake and Ruge necessarily agreed with the Government's assessment, but that they understood the futility of challenging it. Instead of arguing for the funding necessary to maintain an army capable of asserting Norwegian sovereignty, they made it clear to the decision-makers that it would not be possible under the proposed budget to maintain an army of the size and quality that they envisaged. Further, such a budget would necessitate what they called a “foresighted foreign policy leadership” (*forutseende utenriksledelse*).<sup>37</sup> This was a concept not unlike the British ten-year rule, which stated that military spending should be regulated under the assumption that “the British empire will not be engaged in any great war during the next ten years”.<sup>38</sup> In the case of Norway, this meant that if military funding was to be kept low, it would be the country’s politicians’ responsibility to give the Armed Forces ample notice and funding if they were to be ready for a potential future conflict.<sup>39</sup>

Advising Laake was not the only part Ruge played in the process that created the Organisational Plan of 1933. In addition to in his capacity as a member (and from 1933 Chief) of the General Staff, he also functioned as secretary to the military committee of the Storting. This meant he had three somewhat different arenas in which to assert influence. Ruge, having made his own assessments of the international situation, advocated for an increase in funding for the Navy and air forces at the expense of the Army. While threats to Norway, historically, had come from its neighbours and hence the country's defences had been concentrated along the border with Sweden, the

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<sup>35</sup> Lindbäck-Larsen, *Veien til katastrofen*, 57-58; and Roscher Nielsen, *Tappenstrek*, 75.

<sup>36</sup> Laake, Letter to the MOD, 1 May 1931, appendix no.2 to Proposition to the Storting no. 57 (1931), 73.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>38</sup> Ferris, “Treasury Control, the Ten Year Rule and British Service Policies, 1919-1924”, 861.

<sup>39</sup> Holmboe, “Norsk forsvarspolitik før 9. april 1940”, 28-29; Høgevold, *Hvem sviktet?*, 39; Laake, Letter to the MOD, 1 May 1931, appendix no.2 to Proposition to the Storting no. 57 (1931); and Ruge, *Felttoget*, 213-214.

situation, both politically and technologically, had changed considerably since the dissolution of the union in 1905. This included the introduction of aircraft and submarines as weapons of war as well as the idea that future threats were likely to come from Britain or the Continent. From this Ruge deduced that in the case Norway was to be dragged into a future conflict, the objective of the attacker would likely be to secure naval bases for operations into the North Sea. Hence it was the southern and western parts of the country that would be of primary interest and the Navy and air forces who were the ones likely to be in a position to challenge the attacker. Meanwhile, the Army was to become a small but mobile and well-trained force.<sup>40</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Ruge's stance and his contributions to the Organisational Plan of 1933 did not sit well with certain elements of the Army, among them Fleischer, who considered him to be disloyal.<sup>41</sup> The matter was not helped by Ruge being appointed Chief of the General Staff in 1933.

In the proposal presented to the Storting in 1933 by then Minister of Defence for the Farmer's Party (*Bondepartiet*), Vidkun Quisling, the defence budget was increased somewhat to 34 million NOK with the Army receiving 18,75 million and the Navy, which under the new organisational plan also included the coastal artillery, receiving 15,25 million. In the case of the Army, these cuts were to be achieved largely in the same manner as had been done under the Organisational Plan of 1927, by downsizing the officer corps from 2,540 to 1,570 and reducing the training for conscripts from 108 days to eighty-four.<sup>42</sup>

#### 1.4 The role of the Labour Party in shaping Norwegian defence policy

Between 1925 and 1933, the period in which the two organisational plans were created, Norway had numerous changes in government. While the Liberal Party sat in three separate periods under Johan Ludwig Mowinckel, both the Conservative Party in coalition with the Free-minded Liberal Party and the Farmer's Party had their stints in power. Despite this, and against the advice of the country's military experts, the

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<sup>40</sup> Ruge, *Felttoget*, 213-215; Skodvin, "Otto Ruge - ein historisk person", 341-343; Ørvik, *Solidaritet eller nøytralitet?*, 186-187, 191-192; and Ørvik, *Vern eller vakt?*, 334.

<sup>41</sup> Hovland, *Storhet og fall*, 46-47; Lahlum, *Oscar Torp*, 190; and Roscher Nielsen, *Tappenstrek*, 75.

<sup>42</sup> Holmboe, "Norsk forsvarspolitik før 9. april 1940", 28; Høgevoll, *Hvem sviktet?*, 50-51; and Proposition to the Storting no. 6 (1933), 5, 16, 114-116.

dominant political mood remained to reduce military spending.<sup>43</sup> Throughout this period, however, the party that garnered the most votes was the Labour Party (*Arbeiderpartiet*), whose first attempt in government in 1928 had ended in a vote of no confidence after less than three weeks.<sup>44</sup>

With regard to defence policy, the Labour Party had since its formation worked towards full disarmament. Adhering to the socialist ideology, the party believed the Armed Forces to be a tool for the bourgeoisie to help keep the working class in line. These, therefore, had to be dismantled and replaced by what they called a *vaktvern* which they intended to be a non-military organisation with tasks more closely resembling those of the police.<sup>45</sup>

While the party did not hold government positions during the period of the reorganisation processes, it still contributed to the cuts in the defence budget by routinely voting for the lowest available option.<sup>46</sup> However, soon after the Labour Party came to power with Johan Nygaardsvold in 1935, there seems to have been a gradual change in the party's position with regard to defence policy. In its 1936 program, while the party still advocated for a *vaktvern*, it no longer stated the extent of its tasks. Similarly, while they still opposed rearmament, there was no mention of outright disarmament.<sup>47</sup> The changing international situation, with both sides of the Spanish Civil War receiving some form of support from the great powers of Europe and with the annexation of Austria by Germany in the spring of 1938, brought an increase in military spending under the Labour Government. However, rather than being brought about by a change in policy or conviction, increased funding appears to have been considered a compromise the Labour Party had to make if it were to remain in government.<sup>48</sup>

While military spending did increase under the Government of Nygaardsvold, by 1940 the budget for the Army had only just about reached pre-1930 levels, at circa 29 million NOK. The total defence budget, however, was about 10 million more compared to the yearly totals of that period. This discrepancy was the result of the

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<sup>43</sup> Holmboe, "Norsk forsvarspolitikk før 9. april 1940", 28; and Høgevold, *Hvem sviktet?*, 38-39.

<sup>44</sup> Store norske leksikon, s.v. "Christopher Hornsrud". 26.02.20. [https://snl.no/Christopher\\_Hornsrud](https://snl.no/Christopher_Hornsrud)

<sup>45</sup> Gerhardsen, *Unge år*, 300; Norwegian Labour Party, "Det Norske Arbeiderpartis arbeidsprogram 1933"; and Norwegian Labour Party, "Det Norske Arbeiderpartis prinsipielle program 1933".

<sup>46</sup> Holmboe, "Norsk forsvarspolitikk før 9. april 1940", 28.

<sup>47</sup> Gerhardsen, *Unge år*, 300; and Norwegian Labour Party, "Arbeidsprogrammet 1936".

<sup>48</sup> Svendsen, *Halvdan Koht: Veien mot framtiden*, 239-240.

aforementioned increase in funding for the Navy, which was set to receive 20,7 million something that, without adjusting for inflation, was its largest budget ever.<sup>49</sup>

## 1.5 Conclusion

Norway had managed to remain neutral throughout what some have called “the war to end all wars”.<sup>50</sup> The establishment of the League of Nations and the signing of several treaties in the 1920s resulted in a belief in a future where international disputes could be settled peacefully through negotiation and arbitration becoming widespread among Norwegian parliamentary politicians. So too did the belief in disarmament.

Since the dissolution of the union in 1905, relations with Sweden, who had been on the opposing side in nearly every war Norway had fought as far back as the 16th century, had improved significantly. With no discernable threat against the country, maintaining a sizeable military was considered neither necessary nor politically or economically acceptable. While the Storting ultimately decided against the complete dissolution of the Armed Forces, which the Labour Party would continue to advocate for well into the 1930s, the result was a drastic decrease in military spending throughout the 1920s.

Although the budget cuts affected the Armed Forces as a whole, the two organisational plans developed in the interwar period clearly showed a shift away from the Army in favour of strengthening the Navy. This shift was brought about due in part to technological innovation and in part the diminished threat posed by Sweden, both of which pointed towards any potential threat to Norway coming from across the sea. The budget cuts and the favouring of the Navy were highly criticised by two subsequent commanding generals, the General Staff and the Army officer corps, neither of whom believed the international situation to be such as to warrant weakening the Army further. The appointment of Laake as Commanding General and later Ruge as Chief of the General Staff can, therefore, be seen as representing a significant muzzling of the Army in matters relating to Norwegian defence policy. Rather than challenge the Government’s decisions, Laake and Ruge would largely acquiesce, making the best out

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<sup>49</sup> Proposition to the Storting no. 1 (1939), 34-38.

<sup>50</sup> While often attributed to Woodrow Wilson, the term likely originated with H. G. Wells’ *The War That Will End War* (1914).

of what they could get while being frank about what the politicians should expect in return.

By the end of the 1930s, the major nations of Europe would once again be at war. This time around, Norway would not succeed in remaining neutral and, as we shall see in the following chapter, the country's politicians would fail to provide the Armed Forces with the necessary instructions, equipment and manpower in time to face the might of Nazi Germany.

# Chapter 2: The Norwegian Campaign

9 April to 10 June 1940

While Europe had been at war for over half a year by the time of the German attack on Norway on 9 April 1940, the Norwegian Army had yet to be mobilised. As the country's politicians hoped to remain neutral, only a neutrality guard (*nøytralitetsvakt*); a small force meant to assert Norwegian neutrality in case the warring parties encroached onto Norwegian territory, was in active service. In Northern Norway, these numbered about 7,110 and in the south 8,220.<sup>51</sup> Despite the Army being unprepared and ill-equipped, it would take two months for all of Norway to fall into enemy hands.

When Norwegian authorities eventually decided to leave Norway and go into exile in the UK, Maj. Gen. Carl Gustav Fleischer was ordered to follow and to be responsible for creating what would become the Norwegian Army-in-exile. However, the actions and decisions made in the last couple of weeks of the Norwegian campaign would not only lay the foundation for this Army, or perhaps rather fail to do so, but also influence the relationship between Fleischer and the Government.

## 2.1 The state of the Norwegian Army in 1940

Due to the anti-militaristic sentiment that had dominated Norwegian politics throughout the 1920s and early 1930s and the resulting cuts in the defence budget, the Norwegian Army had largely been unable to keep up with the advances made in military technology. While the homegrown Krag Jørgensen rifle might have been top of its class at the time of its introduction, even being taken into service by the US Army, almost fifty years had passed since then.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, the designs of most of the Army's other weapons, such as its pistols, machine guns and artillery, stemmed from the First World War or earlier.

While the Panzer Is and IIs making up the bulk of the German armoured element during the Norwegian campaign were already considered obsolete by international standards,

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<sup>51</sup> "Personellstyrke ved nøytralitetsvernoppsetningene av Hæren 9/4 1940", RAFA-2017, Series Yc, Box 168, Folder 1, Norwegian Armed Forces Military History Department archive, RA, Oslo, Norway. The number in the South includes 950 men from the Norwegian Army Air Service.

<sup>52</sup> Hanevik, *Norske militærgeværer etter 1867*, 112

they were up against an opponent lacking not only armoured vehicles of its own but also dedicated anti-tank (AT) weapons. The Norwegian “armoured division” in 1940 amounted to a couple of armoured Chevrolet trucks each fitted with a 57mm cannon and some machine guns, an armoured Morris truck, as well as Norway’s only real tank, “real” being a generous description, a Swedish manufactured Landsverk L-120 fitted with a single machine gun.<sup>53</sup>

The inferior state of the Army, however, stretched beyond equipment and materiel. As mentioned in the previous chapter, military service had been cut from a less than ideal 144 days prior to adopting the Organisational Plan of 1927, all the way down to eighty-four days. While the Army, on paper, had maintained its structure with six divisions, when mobilised according to the Organisational Plan of 1933 these represented nothing more than glorified brigades.<sup>54</sup> Bauck was, therefore, likely more prophetic than he would have wanted when he in 1930 had written that the proposed changes would “not give us an army but some loosely composed smaller units of questionable quality. It is to delude oneself to think that from these elements one can mobilise divisions that can immediately be sent against a trained opponent.”

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Due to the sinking of *Blücher*, the flagship of the German task force that was to seize Oslo, the Norwegian Government, the Storting and the King and his family managed to escape capture, fleeing inland. On 11 April General Laake was forced to step down due to the defeatism and general sense of futility that government representatives were met by when visiting Norwegian Army Command. In his place, Ruge was appointed to Commanding General and given the rank of major general. Ruge would organise Norwegian resistance in Southern Norway, later supported by the Allies. By the end of April, however, the decision had been made to abandon Southern Norway and to continue the fight in the North where conditions were better.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Jensen, *Kavaleriet i Norge 1200-1994*, 508-510. The Norwegian L-120 was given several nicknames including “*Rikstanken*”, “*Norgestanken*” and “*Kongstanken*”, all of which play on the dual meaning of the word “*tanken*” in Norwegian, which can be translated into English as both “*tank*” and “*thought*”.

<sup>54</sup> Proposition to the Storting no. 6 (1933), 20-21.

<sup>55</sup> Bauck, Letter to the MOD, 8 December 1930, appendix no. 1 to Proposition to the Storting no. 57 (1931), 69 (my translation).

<sup>56</sup> Kristiansen, *Otto Ruge: Hærføreren*, 57-58, 71; Roscher Nielsen, *Tappenstrek*, 116-117; and Ruge, *Felttoget*, 23, 25, 32.

## 2.2 New front - different battle

The King, the Government, and Ruge all arrived in Tromsø within the first couple of days of May.<sup>57</sup> As the military authorities already present in Northern Norway seemed to be in control of the situation, Ruge decided that he would not involve himself directly in supervising the defence effort in the region. Instead, HOK was to play a purely administrative role, setting up new units and overseeing the supply of weapons and equipment. However, this arrangement would prove to be short-lived. According to Ruge, he changed his mind due to the poor lines of communication that existed in the region in combination with the Allies having issues understanding the Norwegian chain of command. By Order in Council of 18 May 1940, Ruge consolidated the Navy under his command turning what was previously Norwegian Army Command into Norwegian High Command. Furthermore, he placed the regional commands of Eastern and Western Finnmark directly under himself. These had, up until this point, been under the command of General Fleischer who was relegated to a tactical command overseeing operations around Narvik and in Helgeland.<sup>58</sup>

Fleischer did not appreciate losing command of the theatre of Northern Norway. He vigorously opposed the proposed changes to the organisation and relationship between the civil and military authorities in the region that he and County Governor of Troms, Hans J. Gabrielsen, had created in a letter to the MOD dated 17 May. Going through the proper channels, this meant the letter had to pass through HOK/FO and Ruge where it was stopped.<sup>59</sup> In a personal letter on 23 May, Ruge explained to Fleischer how his position had been a product of necessity due to Northern Norway being cut off from HOK and the Government in the South. Now that they had arrived in the North, this was no longer the case, and this, in addition to the reorganisation of the Armed Forces under FO, made changes to the command structure necessary. Ruge also cautioned Fleischer against making his grievances known to the Government as he feared these were motivated not by military concerns or expedience, but rather by personal concerns.<sup>60</sup> Fleischer did not heed Ruge's advice and contacted

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<sup>57</sup> Ruge, *Felttoget*, 121, 125.

<sup>58</sup> FO to Fleischer, 28 May 1940, PA-1389, Series F, Box 2, Folder 2, Carl Gustav Fleischer archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; Kristiansen, *Otto Ruge: Hærføreren*, 79-80; Order in Council no. 64, 18 May 1940 S-1001, Series Ac, Box 122, Secretariat to the Government archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and Ruge, *Felttoget*, 127-128, 130, 144.

<sup>59</sup> Hovland, *Storhet og fall*, 180-181.

<sup>60</sup> Ruge to Fleischer, 23 May 1940, PA-1389, Series F, Box 2, Folder 2, Carl Gustav Fleischer archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.



Minister of Defence Birger Ljungberg. However, his objections were ultimately rejected with Fleischer later writing that Ruge “dealt with the Division’s subsequent correspondence in a way that was unsatisfactory to the Division.”<sup>61</sup>

On 17 May, the Norwegian national day, Fleischer spoke to the population of Norway through the radio. In his speech he criticised the country’s politicians for having weakened the Armed Forces in the years prior to the war, calling it a systematic degradation of the country’s defensive capabilities, and stating that “Our military defeat has been prepared by ourselves”.<sup>62</sup> While there was nothing revolutionary about this statement, many considered it inappropriate for a military commander to criticise his country’s Government in a time of war, and no less on the National Day.<sup>63</sup>

### 2.3 6th Division’s letter

At a meeting in Tromsø on 4 June, Fleischer got two surprising messages. The first was that the Allies intended to withdraw their forces from Norway. The second was that it had been decided that the King, the Crown Prince and the Government were to follow them if the plan to establish a demarcation line in Northern Norway failed. To Fleischer, there appeared to be only two options available: demobilisation or capitulation. The latter of the two was not, to him, a real option as he considered bringing such humiliation upon his men, who had fought valiantly and as the first in dealing with the Germans, victoriously, to be unimaginable.<sup>64</sup>

At the request of his chief of staff Odd Lindbäck-Larsen, Fleischer allowed a recommendation from the Division to the King to be written. This recommendation urged the King and the Government to stay in Norway and to seek to establish an armistice with the Germans and bring an end to the hostilities. If the Germans would not accept such a solution, the Army was to cross the border into Sweden and Finland rather than be forced to capitulate. Further, the document stated that:

“The Division cautions against the lawful Government leaving the country. The lawful Norwegian state has thus ceased to exist. If so, it has to be expected that a

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<sup>61</sup> Fleischer, *Efterlatte papirer*, 46 (my translation).

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 139 (my translation).

<sup>63</sup> Hovland, *Storhet og fall*, 198-199; and Kristiansen, *Otto Ruge: Hærføreren*, 105.

<sup>64</sup> Fleischer, *Efterlatte papirer*, 60-61; and Hambro, “General Fleischers tragedie”, 6.

new government will soon be established - not legally rooted in the Constitution, but probably forced by necessity.”<sup>65</sup>

This letter was presented to Ljungberg and Minister of Foreign Affairs Halvdan Koht at a meeting the following day. About the meeting, Fleischer would later write that after the foreign minister had presented the situation as it stood “it was obvious that the letter was not based on the options available. [...] I therefore asked that the letter not be forwarded.”<sup>66</sup> What Fleischer was told at this meeting which made him reconsider his position is somewhat unclear. It might be that this was simply new information concerning the prospects of establishing a demarcation line in Northern Norway or the unlikelihood of achieving a peace along the lines proposed in the recommendation from the Division. While Fleischer would go on to write that he believed the matter to have been settled there and then and that both the ministers agreed with him that the letter was not to be forwarded, it was read and discussed at a meeting of the Government on 6 June.<sup>67</sup> Recalling this episode fifteen years later, Trygve Lie, Minister of Provisioning in 1940, wrote that:

“After the Prime Minister had read the letter, we agreed that the General’s thinking was somewhat unclear. He obviously did not know what had happened in the South while he had been fighting in Northern Norway. He could not be adequately informed about the Elverum Authorisation and the Storting’s decision.”<sup>68</sup>

What was disclosed to Fleischer during the meeting on 5 June might, therefore, have been the contents of the Elverum Authorisation (*Elverumsfullmakten*). This was the authorisation given by the Storting to the Government during its last session at Elverum on 9 April, granting them emergency powers for the duration of the war. This authorisation would be instrumental in providing legitimacy for the Government of Nygaardsvold when it eventually had to move to the United Kingdom.

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<sup>65</sup> Fleischer, *Efterlatte papirer*, 65-66 (my translation).

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 68 (my translation).

<sup>67</sup> Minutes of meeting of the Norwegian Government, 6 June 1940, S-1005, Series Aa, Box 1, Office of the Prime Minister archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>68</sup> Lie, *Leve eller dø*, 234 (my translation).

## 2.4 The second choice

Even before being informed of the Allied withdrawal or deciding to leave Norway, the Government had begun preparations to continue the fight from abroad. The Norwegian Military Representative to London had established a conscription office and instructed all Norwegian males in the UK between the ages of 21 and 35 and eligible for military service to have themselves registered.<sup>69</sup>

As it became apparent to the Government that remaining in Norway was no longer a viable option, they had to decide who they wanted to follow them to the UK and to lead the fight from there. Having been recently appointed to Commander-in-Chief Norwegian Forces, Ruge appeared to be the obvious choice.<sup>70</sup> The Government's decision was presented to Ruge on 5 June. However, Ruge categorically refused to comply, stating that if he were seen fleeing again, as he considered himself to have done in the case of Southern Norway, his reputation would be irreversibly damaged. In an attempt to make a case beyond that of maintaining his pride and reputation, he expressed to members of the Government that if this were to happen, it would be an easy task for enemy propaganda to sideline him for the remainder of the war, hence making him unsuitable for the job they had in mind. Instead, he proposed that General Fleischer should accompany them in his place as he was the only Norwegian general who had fought the Germans with a significant degree of success. Hence, his reputation would be less easily smeared.<sup>71</sup>

This request was initially declined. However, Ruge sent individuals to lobby on his behalf from different segments of the civilian population as well as the military.<sup>72</sup> Over the next couple of days, Ruge also seems to have been insinuating to members of the Government that leaving Fleischer in Norway was a dangerous proposition, reportedly telling Lie that "General Fleischer should not be left behind as he was very bitter towards our allies. A bitterness that could lead General Fleischer down the wrong path later."<sup>73</sup> Similarly, he told

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<sup>69</sup> Fleischer, *Efterlatte papirer*, 79.

<sup>70</sup> Lie, *Leve eller dø*, 233.

<sup>71</sup> Kristiansen, *Otto Ruge: Hærføreren*, 116.

<sup>72</sup> Nygaardsvold, *Norge i Krig: 9. april - 7. Juni 1940*, 186; and Ruge, *Felttoget*, 181, 184.

<sup>73</sup> Trygve Lie's explanation to the Commission of Inquiry of 1945, 2 April 1947, Series Db, Box 13, Folder 1, Commission of Inquiry of 1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway (my translation).

Koht that “he was afraid that if Fleischer stayed and was made a prisoner of war, he could help the Germans speak ill of the English.”<sup>74</sup>

As a result of Ruge’s campaign, the Government decided to reverse its decision on 7 June. Ruge was to remain in Norway to oversee the capitulation while Fleischer was to follow the King and the Government to the UK in the capacity of military advisor. The same day Fleischer was called to Tromsø where he was given the news and told that he would be departing with HNoMS *Fridtjof Nansen* the following day. While he would have preferred to stay with his division, Fleischer dutifully complied with the Government’s decision.<sup>75</sup>

## 2.5 The question of transferring army personnel to the UK

Nygaardsvold writes in his report on the actions taken by the Norwegian Government during the war regarding the Norwegian authorities’ departure from Norway that “It was therefore decided that General Fleischer and his staff should accompany us over to the UK. Following repeated requests from our side, permission was granted for about 70 Norwegian civilian and military persons to be transported on *Devonshire*.”<sup>76</sup> From Nygaardsvold’s statement, it is easy to assume that Fleischer left Norway with a staff. This was not the case.

In one of the conversations Fleischer had had with Ljungberg, he had been told that if he were to be chosen to go to the UK, he would be able to bring his wife as well an aide and his wife. However, when Fleischer and his aide, Lieutenant Henrik Sofus Skougaard, arrived at the docks in Tromsø, they were told by Commanding Admiral Henry Diesen that there was no room for Mrs Skougaard. Fleischer attempted to convince Koht, the last remaining member of the Government in Norway, of the arrangement he had made with Ljungberg, but to no avail. With Skougaard not wanting to leave his wife behind, Fleischer allowed him to stay. He would later write that he could not help but feel that he, both personally and as a representative of the Army, had been disrespectfully treated on this occasion by Diesen and Koht as a number of politicians and other civilians were able to bring their wives.<sup>77</sup>

It is somewhat unclear whether the situation Fleischer ended up in was the result of a deliberate decision from the side of the Government not to bring army personnel with them over to the UK, or whether it was the unintended result of poor planning, communication, and

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<sup>74</sup> Koht, *Frå Skanse til Skanse*, 173 (my translation).

<sup>75</sup> Fleischer, *Efterlatte papirer*, 74.

<sup>76</sup> Nygaardsvold, *Beretning om Den norske Regjerings virksomhet*, 18 (my translation).

<sup>77</sup> Borgersrud, “Militære Veivalg 1940-45”, 171-172; and Fleischer, *Efterlatte papirer*, 69, 74-75.

being unable to make the necessary arrangements within the time available. It is not impossible that establishing an army abroad was considered to be, at least initially, nothing more than a necessary formality, as Article 41 of the Norwegian Constitution states that the King can not be “absent from the realm unless commanding in the field”.<sup>78</sup>

After the war, Ljungberg would state that he had considered it to be the responsibility of the general who was to follow the Government; be it Ruge or Fleischer, to bring the necessary staff and to order officers of the Army to the UK. However, the conclusion that the Commission of Inquiry of 1945 reached was that if Norwegian authorities had wanted to bring a significant number of officers to the UK, such an order would have had to come from the Government and not FO.<sup>79</sup>

The minutes of a meeting of the Government on the morning of 3 June states that “It was decided that if the Government had to leave the country, it was to bring with it what remained of our navy, but no more soldiers than those who volunteer.”<sup>80</sup> To the Commission after the war, Nygaardsvold would state that this decision was the result of both the lack of available transports and the need to keep the departure of the Norwegian authorities and the Allies a secret for as long as possible.<sup>81</sup> However, the British did extend an offer to transport 3,000 individuals, both civilian and military, over to the UK, an offer which was rejected by both the Government and Ruge. Lie, who was among those who wanted to accept the British offer, would later state that it certainly would have been possible to find 3,000 available men to bring over, as volunteers had been arriving in Northern Norway from all over the country through Finland.<sup>82</sup> The real issue, therefore, was likely the Government’s fear of being perceived as ordering men into service and the effect this could have had on public opinion of the Government.

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<sup>78</sup> The Constitution of the Kingdom of Norway, Article 41, 17 May 1814.

<https://lovdata.no/dokument/NLE/lov/1814-05-17?q=grunnloven>

<sup>79</sup> Parliament of Norway, “Innstilling VI: Regjeringen Nygaardsvolds virksomhet fra 7. juni 1940 til 25. juni 1945”, 56, in *Undersøkelseskommissjonen av 1945*, vol. 1.

<sup>80</sup> Minutes of meeting of the Norwegian Government, 3 June 1940, S-1005, Series Aa, Box 1, Office of the Prime Minister archive, RA, Oslo, Norway (my translation).

<sup>81</sup> Johan Nygaardsvold’s explanation to the Commission of Inquiry of 1945, 10 February 1947, 1-2, Series Db, Box 22, Commission of Inquiry of 1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and Parliament of Norway, “Innstilling VI: Regjeringen Nygaardsvolds virksomhet fra 7. juni 1940 til 25. juni 1945”, 54-55, in *Undersøkelseskommissjonen av 1945*, vol. 1.

<sup>82</sup> Parliament of Norway, “Innstilling VI: Regjeringen Nygaardsvolds virksomhet fra 7. juni 1940 til 25. juni 1945”, 54-56, in *Undersøkelseskommissjonen av 1945*, vol. 1; and Trygve Lie’s explanation to the Commission of Inquiry of 1945, 2 April 1947, 3, Series Db, Box 13, Folder 1, Commission of Inquiry of 1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

Fleischer left Norway on 8 June 1940 without even an aide and much less a staff. While some thirty Army officers were brought over to the UK with the Government, nearly all of them, if not all, belonged to the Norwegian Army Air Service.<sup>83</sup>

## 2.6 Conclusion

The Norwegian Army in April 1940 was in no way prepared to take on the German *Wehrmacht*. However, through a combination of luck and individual resolve on the part of key military and political actors, Norwegian authorities managed to escape capture, eventually making their way to Northern Norway.

As opposed to how the situation had been in the South, in Northern Norway 6th Division under Fleischer supported by British, French and Polish troops, was waging a successful campaign against the German forces in the area around Narvik. By the end of May, it looked as if the Germans would be forced to cross the border over into Sweden. However, the situation in France led the Allies to withdraw their forces, in turn prompting Norwegian authorities to make the decision to leave Norway and go into exile in the UK.

Probably as a result of having had his hands full fighting the war rather than keeping up to date with news from the South, and hence being unfamiliar with the content of the Elverum Authorisation, Fleischer and his chief of staff penned a letter to the King cautioning Norwegian authorities against leaving the country and asking that they instead seek to engage in peace negotiations with the Germans. As will be touched upon in the next chapter, it can be argued that it was this document and the accusations levelled at Fleischer in conjunction with its eventual publication, that would lead to him being ousted from his position as C-in-C of the Army-in-exile and to him deciding to take his own life.

Despite 6th Division's letter and despite undoubtedly preferring Ruge, Fleischer was eventually ordered to follow the Government to the UK where it would fall to him to rebuild the Norwegian Army. His task would be an arduous one. Even before leaving Northern Norway, the Government showed that it had little interest in creating an Army abroad, with seemingly political considerations rather than practical or logistical ones leading to the decision not to bring members of the Army to the UK; or at least to not order them or make arrangement for their transportation there. As we shall see, this attitude persisted even after

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<sup>83</sup> Parliament of Norway, "Innstilling VI: Regjeringen Nygaardsvolds virksomhet fra 7. juni 1940 til 25. juni 1945", 56, in *Undersøkelseskommissjonen av 1945*, vol. 1.

the Government arrived in the UK where the Army would be deprioritised at every turn in favour of strengthening the Navy, Air Force and Merchant Fleet.

# Chapter 3: The Era of Fleischer

June 1940 to February 1942

During the war, the Norwegian people at home believed the Army-in-exile to be a sizeable force. In his report on his time in the UK written in April 1942, Fleischer states that they, at the time, expected it to be 10-15,000 men. The reality, however, was that the Army by the end of the war had only just about reached a size of 4,000.<sup>84</sup> While an army of 15,000 might have been well outside the realm of what is to be considered reasonable, it could undoubtedly have been bigger had the political willingness been present.

We will in this chapter look at some of the challenges that faced those responsible for rebuilding the Army in the UK and the decisions made by the Norwegian Government which limited it in both size and operational scope. Underlying these issues, we will find that there existed a fundamental difference of opinion between Norwegian Army Command and the Government concerning how to go about liberating Norway and what role the Army would play in that process.

## 3.1 Norwegian Reception Camp, Dumfries

In early June, a Norwegian Reception Camp was established in the Scottish town of Dumfries. The group that was gathered there consisted primarily of whalers on their way back home from the Antarctic, as well as a number of Norwegians residing outside of Norway who had volunteered for service.<sup>85</sup> By the time Fleischer arrived in mid-June, this force numbered about 850 and was lodged at Troqueer Mills.<sup>86</sup> Members of the Norwegian Government who visited the camp in October described the conditions as far from satisfactory. While some had to live in tents due to there not being enough space for everyone inside the mill itself, those to whom the Government representatives spoke who was in this

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<sup>84</sup> Fleischer, *Efterlatte papirer*, 122; Hansteen's additions to the report on FO's actions during the war, RAFA-2017, Series Yf, Box 211, Norwegian Armed Forces Military History Department archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and Zeiner-Gundersen, "Innledning", 9.

<sup>85</sup> Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 20-21.

<sup>86</sup> Riste, *1940-1942: Prøvetid*, vol. 1, "London-regjeringa", 27.



predicament stated that they preferred this to staying at the old, damp, drafty and rat-infested factory.<sup>87</sup>

The state of the facilities was not the only pressing issue in Dumfries during the summer of 1940. While the unit had been supplied with British uniforms within a couple of weeks, it would be months before it in its entirety had been armed. For a period, fifty old Krag-Jørgensen rifles brought over from Norway was all the unit had. These were circulated throughout the unit giving everyone a chance to get some knowledge regarding how to handle a weapon. Training was also hampered by the lack of appropriate facilities and firing ranges as well as officers qualified to lead the men in training.<sup>88</sup> While there, on paper, seemed to be a sufficient number of officers, circa sixty of them were older Norwegian's living abroad who had been given the rank of second lieutenants to be used as liaisons with French and British units during the battle for Norway. These had, by and large, little to no formal military training, and hence were given administrative positions.<sup>89</sup>

It would prove a challenge to maintain order and discipline in these early days. As sailors, the men were accustomed to a different sort of regiment while at sea. Many of them had joined the Army because they thought that it would be the fastest way to get into the fight and to return home. However, after the surrender of Norway, they quickly realised that this was unlikely to happen any time soon, prompting some to react with anger and frustration at the prospect of not getting to see their loved ones. Having just returned from long stretches at sea, many of them also had considerable amounts of money at their disposal; money that inevitably was spent on women and alcohol.<sup>90</sup>

While a camp bank was established in an attempt to stop the soldiers from wasting their money, this did not succeed in getting rid of the problem.<sup>91</sup> According to a British report from November 1940, the relative wealth of the Norwegians compared to the local Scots caused significant tensions. Not only did the Norwegians' economy annoy local farmers, but

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<sup>87</sup> Hauge, *Skotsk jord og norsk himmel*, 12-14; Konow, "Den norske brigade i Skottland", 2-3; and "Melding vedrørende besøk i den norske militære treningsleir i Dumfries - Oktober 1940", 5 November 1940, 2, S-1005, Series M, Box 8, Office of the Prime Minister archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>88</sup> Christophersen et al., "Vår militære innsats utenfor Norge", 470; and Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 21-22.

<sup>89</sup> PM from HOK, 23 October 1940, 2-3, S-1005, Series M, Box 7, Office of the Prime Minister archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and Pran, "Orientering om oppbyggingen av Hæren i U.K. 1940-1941", 2.

<sup>90</sup> Aanensen, "En kort beretning om Hærens Øvelsesavdeling i Dumfries", 8; Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 22; and Hauge, *Skotsk jord og norsk himmel*, 14-15, 18.

<sup>91</sup> Aanensen, "En kort beretning om Hærens Øvelsesavdeling i Dumfries", 15-16; and Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 22.

the resulting wealth of Dumfries annoyed the surrounding towns.<sup>92</sup> Further, rivalry with other troops stationed in the area as well as locals over women often resulted in scuffles and fights breaking out.<sup>93</sup>

The immorality and indecency that derived from the excessive consumption of alcohol among Norwegian troops led to the town's Presbyterian congregation writing a letter to the Secretary of State for Scotland asking that legislation be put in place to alleviate the problem. While almost every account on the topic of the camp in Dumfries mentions the prevalence of drunkenness, the aforementioned report concluded that the levels were not significantly higher than those in any other town with a large gathering of troops.<sup>94</sup>

### 3.2 The way forward

During the initial phase in Britain, it quickly became evident that there were significant differences in opinion between HOK and the Government concerning how and to what extent Norway was to contribute to the Allied war effort. Fleischer, as head of the Army-in-exile, advocated for making use of all available reserves and any means necessary to have a force ready for operations aimed at liberating Norway. The Government, on the other hand, were more apprehensive, seemingly dreading having to make decisions that could potentially alienate them from the Norwegian public at home or weaken the legitimacy of the administration.<sup>95</sup>

Fleischer presented his plan for the Army in a PM to the Ministry of Defence on 21 June 1940. He reckoned that by making use of conscription in the same way as would have been done in Norway, the Army's share of the estimated 4-5,000 Norwegians liable for conscription in Britain would equate to a force of about 2,500. This formation was to be trained, initially, for tasks relating to the defence of Britain. However, it should later be equipped and trained for operations in Norway and form the backbone of the army that was expected to be raised during the liberation. Concerning Norwegian participation in operations

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<sup>92</sup> Major Sir Thomas Cook's report to the Director General of Welfare, 23 November 1940, 1-3, S-1005, Series M, Box 8, Office of the Prime Minister archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>93</sup> Bennington, IWM interview, 19092, reel 1.

<sup>94</sup> Major Sir Thomas Cook's report to the Director General of Welfare, 23 November 1940, 1-3, S-1005, Series M, Box 8, Office of the Prime Minister archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>95</sup> Lahlum, *Oscar Torp*, 191-192; PM from HOK, 28 June 1940, S-1005, Series M, Box 7, Office of the Prime Minister archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and Riste, *1940-1942: Prøvetid*, vol. 1, "London-regjeringa", 35.

outside of Norway, Fleischer writes that if this meant that the Government did not have a force ready to be deployed to Norway at a moments notice, this should be opposed.<sup>96</sup>

On 29 June 1940, Fleischer and his chief of staff, Captain Aage Rosenquist Pran, met with representatives of the War Office (WO), Director of Military Operations Maj. Gen. Richard Henry Dewing and Assistant Chief Imperial General Staff, Maj. Gen. Arthur Percival. The objective of this meeting from the British side was to gauge whether the Norwegian Government intended to continue fighting the Germans in an active capacity, to which Fleischer answered in the affirmative. Concerning the distribution of weapons, Fleischer was told that there was a severe shortage due to the British Army having been forced to leave behind a significant amount of its equipment during its retreat from France. The Norwegian Army would be given the same priority as other British Army and Local Defence Volunteer (later renamed the Home Guard) units. However, if they were willing to let their units be used in raids on the Norwegian coast, WO might be able to accord them priority. Fleischer was positive to such an arrangement and was taken to meet with General Alan Bourne, Director of Combined Operations. Bourne asked whether it would be possible to establish two Norwegian Independent Companies, each made up of about 230 men, to be used for operations in Norway. Once again, Fleischer stated that he was generally positive to this and that he expected the units to be ready within two months of receiving the necessary weapons and equipment.<sup>97</sup>

Fleischer conveyed the content of his meeting at the War Office to Minister of Defence Ljungberg on 1 July, asking that the Government give its support to the proposed arrangements as well as to the introduction of general conscription of all eligible Norwegian males living in Britain to secure the necessary personnel.<sup>98</sup> The matter was discussed at a meeting of the Government the following day in which opinions were divided. Prime Minister Nygaardsvold and Minister of Church and Education Nils Hjelmtveit maintained that military service should remain voluntary. Not only do they seem to have feared that making use of Norwegian laws concerning conscription while residing outside the country's borders was unlawful, but also that forcing Norwegians into military service at this point,

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<sup>96</sup> PM from HOK to the MOD, 21 June 1940, S-1005, Series M, Box 7, Office of the Prime Minister archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>97</sup> PM concerning meeting at WO, 29 June 1940, PA-1832, Series Fd, Box 10, Olav Riste archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>98</sup> Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 23-24.

having just fled the country, would result in a political backlash. Further, they objected to Norwegian forces being used in raids against Norway, as these were likely to lead to German reprisals against the local population.<sup>99</sup>

The Government's decision, and what would for all intents and purposes be Norway's military policy up until May of 1941, is spelt out in its Aide Memoire of 10 July 1940. It states that "It is the intention of the Norwegian Government to continue the fight outside Norway in collaboration with our allies and so far as our means will permit until final victory."<sup>100</sup> Concerning the Army, it says that the Government plans to register those eligible for military service between the ages of 21 and 45, with the intention, at some unspecified point in the future, of enlisting those deemed fit between the ages of 21 and 35. This army, which it estimates to be between three and four thousand, was to be used in defence of Britain or "join possible expeditionary forces for the purpose of regaining Norway, or complete other tasks towards the same end."<sup>101</sup> The wording of this sentence is interesting as it is ambiguous enough as to not rule out the possibility of the Army being employed outside of the UK and Norway.

As Riste points out, the policy presented in the Aide Memoire was, in reality, a rejection of Fleischer's plan and the arrangements he had made with WO. By deciding not to make use of conscription, the Government showed that it did not consider strengthening the Army to be an urgent matter. In this process, we might also find the earliest signs of the Army not being given priority by the Government while in the UK.<sup>102</sup>

To the Commission of Inquiry after the war, both Lie and Koht would claim that they arrived at the decision not to enact general conscription due to the problem of securing weapons and materiel for the Army.<sup>103</sup> However, as this issue could itself have been solved by the Government lending support to the arrangements Fleischer had made with WO, what ultimately hindered the expansion of the Army was not the supply of equipment or the

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<sup>99</sup> Lahlum, *Oscar Torp*, 192; Lie, *Med England i ildlinjen*, 57-58; Minutes of meeting of the Norwegian Government, 2 July 1940, S-1005, Series Aa, Box 1, Office of the Prime Minister archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and Riste, *1940-1942: Prøvetid*, vol. 1, "London-regjeringa", 30-31.

<sup>100</sup> Aide Memoire from the Norwegian Government, 10 July 1940, in Riste, *1940-1942: Prøvetid*, vol. 1, "London-regjeringa", 230.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Riste, *1940-1942: Prøvetid*, vol. 1, "London-regjeringa", 31.

<sup>103</sup> Halvdan Koht's explanation to the Commission of Inquiry of 1945, 22 November 1946, 1, PA-0258, Series Fa, Box 9, Folder 7, Halvdan Koht archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and Trygve Lie's explanation to the Commission of Inquiry of 1945, 2 April 1947, 7, Series Db, Box 13, Folder 1, Commission of Inquiry of 1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

availability of personnel, but rather the Government's unwillingness to make the necessary arrangements due to fears of political backlash and reprisals.

Fleischer had clearly been informed of the Government's position prior to the Aide Memoire being sent out, as he, during a meeting with Brigadier Witts, Area Commander, Glasgow Area on 8 July asked that the Army-in-exile be used for purposes of Home Defence to which Witts replied that "the Norwegian Forces at once could participate in wood-cutting".

<sup>104</sup> The Government's decision did not only prevent the Army from procuring the weapons and equipment it sorely needed but also forced Fleischer to reduce its expected size as his calculations presupposed conscription and a distribution between the different branches in line with Norway's pre-war conscription policy.<sup>105</sup> After repeated requests, WO agreed to supply weapons and equipment for a unit of 1,200 in August. However, as we shall see, it would prove a challenge to reach even this number.<sup>106</sup>

### 3.3 Nortraship

It is not surprising that Fleischer, as an army officer, believed that the Army would be essential to the Norwegian war effort and that his initial plan had been in line with the statement made jointly by the King and the Government upon leaving Norway, which said that the country was to continue the fight from abroad with all the forces at her disposal.<sup>107</sup> As we have seen, the Government of Nygaardsvold, or at least elements of it, did not agree with Fleischer concerning the urgency of creating an army for the liberation of Norway. What then was the Government's plans going forward?

Soon after the German attack on Norway, the Government had decided to commandeer all ships of the Norwegian Merchant Fleet. At the time this was the world's fourth-largest, with the third-largest fleet of tankers. When placed under national control, these were incorporated into what would become the world largest shipping company, Nortraship.

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<sup>104</sup> HOK to Brigadier Witts, 8 July 1940, RAFA-2062, Box 2590, Folder 300, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>105</sup> PM from HOK, 28 June 1940, S-1005, Series M, Box 7, Office of the Prime Minister archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and Pran, "Orientering om oppbyggingen av Hæren i U.K. 1940-1941", 3.

<sup>106</sup> HOK to the MOD, 2 August 1940, RAFA-1923, Series D, Box 30, Folder 293, The Norwegian Military Attaché to London archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>107</sup> Hambro, *7 Juni - 9. April - 7 Juni: Historiske dokumenter*, 167.

The Norwegian Government expected this to be their primary contribution to the allied war effort. Not only was this a way to assure that Norway remained a respected belligerent, it also provided the Government with a source of income with which to fight the war.<sup>108</sup> Further, having funds of their own, both through Nortraship and the Norwegian gold reserve which had been brought over from Norway, helped make sure that they did not become entirely dependent on the British in this regard.<sup>109</sup> The effect of this decision was that the Navy and Merchant Fleet would be given priority for the limited pool of personnel that existed in Britain, including those already being trained in Dumfries.

### 3.4 Distribution of personnel

The distribution of personnel between the different branches of the Armed Forces and the Merchant Fleet remained a contentious issue throughout the war. However, it quickly became evident that it was the Army that would be given the lowest priority. The matter was not helped by the Government initially deciding not to enact general conscription or their apprehension with regard to organising the transfer of Army personnel and volunteers from Sweden.

From July onward HOK received multiple requests from the Navy through the MOD regarding the transfer of men from the camp in Dumfries to the Navy. Extensively these were needed to man vessels given to the Norwegian Navy on condition that they supply the crews.<sup>110</sup> At the time it was estimated to be some 6,000 whalers in allied harbours. While many of these would be pressed into service during the war, either being conscripted into the Navy or be exempted in order to serve aboard ships of the Merchant Fleet, in the summer of 1940, the Government seems to have considered it to be easier to take those already known to be sailors in Dumfries rather than making an effort to registering and transport those available elsewhere.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Thowsen, *Nortraship: Profitt og patriotisme*, 5, 91.

<sup>109</sup> Mann, "The Norwegian Army-in-Exile", 48; Minutes of meeting of the Norwegian Government, 5 November 1940, S-1005, Series Aa, Box 1, Office of the Prime Minister archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and Skogrand, *Alliert i krig og fred*, vol. 4, *Norsk Forsvarshistorie*, 60.

<sup>110</sup> Norwegian Ministry of Defence, "Orientering om Rekruttering til de vepnete styrker i tiden 10/6.1940 - 1/7.1943", October 1943, 3, RAFA-6543, Series Fa, Box 1, Folder 3, 1st Mountain Company/1st Battalion archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and Parliament of Norway, "Departementenes meldinger: IV Forsvarsdepartementet", 7, in *Undersøkelseskommissjonen av 1945*, vol. 2.

<sup>111</sup> Fleischer, *Efterlatte papirer*, 80-81, 99; Norwegian Ministry of Defence, "Orientering om Rekruttering til de vepnete styrker i tiden 10/6.1940 - 1/7.1943", October 1943, 6-7, RAFA-6543, Series Fa, Box 1, Folder 3, 1st Mountain Company/1st Battalion archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and

The Norwegian Navy was not the only ones in need of men with prior seafaring experience. In August the British Admiralty asked that men be transferred from the Norwegian forces to the Royal Navy.<sup>112</sup> Unsurprisingly, Fleischer considered it unwise, if not unlawful, for the Government to accept Norwegian personnel serving in the armed forces of a foreign power. It was of the utmost importance that these continued to serve under the Norwegian flag as this was not only the best way to assure that the Norwegian contribution to the war effort was recognised but as it also provided a boost to the morale of non-combatants.

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Despite Fleischer's objections, it was decided to give those who wanted to join the Royal Navy the opportunity to do so. Many decided to accept the offer, and yet others were actively recruited by Norwegian naval officers offering them promotions and better pay.<sup>114</sup> As a large portion of the men were sailors by trade who had joined the Army to fight back against the Germans, this was not surprising. At this point it had become apparent that the Army-in-exile likely would be relegated to the defence of Britain for the foreseeable future, a prospect which many of those used to a life at sea dreaded. It would prove difficult for HOK to retain those who wanted to be transferred to service elsewhere. The men had joined the Army of their own volition, and as conscription had yet to be introduced, these argued that the Army did not have the power to force them to stay against their will.<sup>115</sup>

It should be emphasised that Fleischer's frustration did not stem from Norwegian sailors being assigned to serve with the Norwegian Navy or hired by the Merchant Fleet rather than serving in the Army. Beyond the issue of allowing Norwegians to serve in the Royal Navy, the problem was that large numbers were being taken from among those already being trained by the Army without HOK having been given a say in the matter. This meant that the work that was being done to make the Army into an effective fighting force constantly faced setbacks as it took time not only for replacements to arrive, but also to train

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Parliament of Norway, "Departementenes meldinger: IV Forsvarsdepartementet", 8, in *Undersøkelleskommisjonen av 1945*, vol. 2.

<sup>112</sup> WO to the Norwegian Military Attaché to London, 14 August 1940, RAFA-1923, Series D, Box 30, Folder 293, The Norwegian Military Attaché to London archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>113</sup> HOK to the MOD, 2 August 1940, RAFA-1923, Series D, Box 30, Folder 293, The Norwegian Military Attaché to London archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and PM from HOK, 26 September 1940, RAFA-1923, Series D, Box 30, Folder 293, The Norwegian Military Attaché to London archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>114</sup> Aanensen, *Når vi kommer inn fra havet*, 84; Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 31; and Fleischer, *Efterlatte papirer*, 98-99.

<sup>115</sup> Skogrand, *Alliert i krig og fred*, vol. 4, *Norsk Forsvarshistorie*, 56.

them. Besides, those being taken were usually the youngest and strongest, meaning that the Army was left with, essentially, second rate personnel.<sup>116</sup>

On 10 October 1940 Fleischer sent a letter to Ljungberg inquiring about the verity of certain rumours brought back by officers returning from leave in London. These rumours, which supposedly originated with people close to the Government, alleged that it considered the existence of the Army to be a pro forma necessity and that the camp in Dumfries was to be used as a depot for personnel for the Norwegian and British navies.<sup>117</sup> Meeting with the Government the following week Fleischer was told by Ljungberg that “It was on the seas and in the air that we could make our contribution as an ally with England, and it was only in this way that we could help regain Norway.”<sup>118</sup> Hence the position of the Government was that it was the Navy, Air force, and above all else, the Merchant Fleet that would be Norway’s contributions to the war effort, and that the Army would have to tolerate the prevailing situation concerning the distribution and transfers of personnel.<sup>119</sup>

The number of transfers was reduced when WO got involved in the autumn of 1940, declaring that any future transfers had to be approved by British authorities and introducing guidelines regulating the conditions under which transfers could be carried out. WO also reminded Norwegian authorities that if the Army was reduced further, it would be in danger of losing not only future allocations of weapons and equipment but also the material it had already been given.<sup>120</sup> By the end of 1940, the Norwegian and British navies had each received about 160 men from the Army.<sup>121</sup> However, the most extreme request was yet to come.

In the spring of 1941, Norwegian Naval Command (*Sjøforsvarets Overkommando*; SOK) asked that 1,500 men be trained to serve as machine-gunners aboard vessels of the

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<sup>116</sup> Aanensen, *Når vi kommer inn fra havet*, 85; Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 31-32; Fleischer, *Efterlatte papirer*, 99-100; and Skogrand, *Alliert i krig og fred*, vol. 4, *Norsk Forsvarshistorie*, 60-62.

<sup>117</sup> Fleischer to Ljungberg, 10 October 1940, PA-1389, Series F, Box 5, Folder 1, Carl Gustav Fleischer archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>118</sup> Minutes of meeting of the Norwegian Government, 15 October 1940, S-1005, Series Aa, Box 1, Office of the Prime Minister archive, RA, Oslo, Norway (my translation).

<sup>119</sup> Halvdan Koht’s explanation to the Commission of Inquiry of 1945, 22 November 1946, 3, PA-0258, Series Fa, Box 9, Folder 7, Halvdan Koht archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and Trygve Lie’s explanation to the Commission of Inquiry of 1945, 2 April 1947, 7-8, Series Db, Box 13, Folder 1, Commission of Inquiry of 1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>120</sup> Fleischer, *Efterlatte papirer*, 100-102.

<sup>121</sup> Parliament of Norway, “Departementenes meldinger: IV Forsvarsdepartementet”, 7, in *Undersøkelseskommissjonen av 1945*, vol. 2.



Merchant Fleet. SOK argued that as the Merchant Fleet was Norway's primary contribution to the war effort, every step necessary should be taken to defend it. Seeing as the Navy and Air Force were already doing their part in this regard by defending it against submarine and aerial attacks, the men should predominantly be taken from the Army. As the Army was unlikely to be needed in the foreseeable future, SOK warned the Government against maintaining what they called a "fictitious army" at the expense of a "real Merchant Fleet".<sup>122</sup>

Fifteen hundred men were more or less equivalent to the entirety of the Army at the time, meaning that if SOK got things the way it wanted the Army-in-exile would practically cease to exist. Unsurprisingly HOK objected to the proposal, instead offering to provide the Navy with instructors. However, so too did the British Army Council.<sup>123</sup>

The Council had, in conjunction with a request in April of 320 men from the Army to the Navy, implored that "the Norwegian Government should fix definitely an establishment for the Norwegian Army which will not be depleted by any future transfers to other services."<sup>124</sup> To this, the Norwegian Government had agreed and responded that as soon as SOK had managed to organise depot units of its own, it would create a fixed distribution of personnel between the different branches. At the time, it was more or less left to the conscripts to choose which branch they wanted to serve in. Almost exactly a year would pass from the Council's request to the introduction by Norwegian authorities of a distribution policy where sailors and fishermen were allocated to the Navy and Merchant Fleet and the rest to the Army and Airforce at a ratio of three to one.<sup>125</sup>

When the transfer of machine-gunners was put to the Council, they wrote that "large transfers of Norwegian Army personnel to the Royal Norwegian Navy would have a demoralising and serious effect on the training and efficiency of the Army Contingents".<sup>126</sup> While it is somewhat unclear exactly what position the Norwegian Government took with

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<sup>122</sup> "Innstilling vedrørende utdannelsen av maskingeværskyttene til Handelsmarinen", RAFA-1923, Series D, Box 30, Folder 293, The Norwegian Military Attaché to London archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and PM from SOK, 12 July 1941, RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1006, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway (my translation).

<sup>123</sup> Fleischer, *Efterlatte papirer*, 111-112.

<sup>124</sup> WO to the MOD, 27 April 1941, RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1006, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>125</sup> HOK to the MOD, 10 October 1941, S-1005, Series M, Box 8, Office of the Prime Minister archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and Norwegian Ministry of Defence, "Orientering om Rekruttering til de vepnete styrker i tiden 10/6.1940 - 1/7.1943", October 1943, 7, 9-10, RAFA-6543, Series Fa, Box 1, Folder 3, 1st Mountain Company/1st Battalion archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>126</sup> WO to the MOD, 30 June 1941, RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1006, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

regard to SOK's request as it is not mentioned in any of the minutes of their meetings in this period, the matter seems to have died away after Henry Diesen was replaced as Commanding Admiral by Elias Corneliussen in August 1941.<sup>127</sup>

The last major transfer of personnel from the Army would be in June 1942 when fifty men were needed to man a Hunt-class destroyer.<sup>128</sup> On this occasion, however, Norwegian authorities made it clear that there were to be no further mass transfers, only individuals in special cases.<sup>129</sup> By the end of the war, the number of men transferred from the Army was 963 distributed as follows:

British Navy	160
Norwegian Navy	260
Air Force	165
Merchant Fleet	329
Whaling	49 <sup>130</sup>

### 3.5 Personnel from outside the UK

During the battle for Southern Norway, Maj. Gen. Carl Johan Erichsen, commander of the Norwegian 1st Division, decided to order his men over into Sweden rather than capitulate to the Germans. This meant that in the summer of 1940 the Norwegian Army had some 4,200 men detained in Sweden.<sup>131</sup> Fleischer hoped that this division, or at least a number of its officers, could be transferred to Britain.<sup>132</sup> Transporting the entire division seems to have been quickly ruled out by the Government in part due to the costs and practical challenges

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<sup>127</sup> Fleischer, *Efterlatte papirer*, 112; Parliament of Norway, "Innstilling VI: Regjeringen Nygaardsvolds virksomhet fra 7. juni 1940 til 25. juni 1945", 72, in *Undersøkelseskommissjonen av 1945*, vol. 1; and Riste, "London-regjeringa", vol. 2, 65-66.

<sup>128</sup> The MOD to FO, 10 June 1942, RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1006, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>129</sup> FO to the MOD, 16 June 1942, RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1006, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and The MOD to FO, 16 June 1942, RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1006, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>130</sup> "Redegjøring om de landmilitære styrkers oppbygging og krigsinnsats utenfor Norges grenser", part A, 25, RAFA-2062, Box 2821, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway. In addition came the men who served with NORIC 1, some of which were eventually transferred back to the Army.

<sup>131</sup> Parliament of Norway, "Innstilling VI: Regjeringen Nygaardsvolds virksomhet fra 7. juni 1940 til 25. juni 1945", 60, in *Undersøkelseskommissjonen av 1945*, vol. 1.

<sup>132</sup> Fleischer, *Efterlatte papirer*, 89.

associated with such an endeavour, and in part due to legality concerns. In a letter dated 24 June, the MOD requested that those officers in Sweden willing to do so under the age of 45 and with education from the Norwegian Military Academy make their way to Britain to function as instructors at the camp in Dumfries.<sup>133</sup> As for the rest:

“This is the Government's stance: We do not know to what extent or how long the internment will be maintained by Sweden. If the interned soldiers are given the opportunity to return to Norway, they should make use of it. Under the current political conditions, it is no use to retain 4-5,000 Norwegian soldiers in Sweden.”

<sup>134</sup>

On 12 July Swedish authorities decided to end the internment, with most of the Division having been returned to Norway by the end of the month. According to international law, those who did not want to return had the right to remain in detention. However, Swedish authorities stated that these would be treated as civilians and would have to apply for residence permits to stay. Having protested the decision to no avail, the Norwegian Government wrote to the Norwegian Legation in Sweden that they would take the financial responsibility for all government officials who decided to follow them.<sup>135</sup> In October, another message was sent to the Legation presenting the officers there with three choices: travel to Canada or Britain at the Government's expense, remain in Sweden or return to Norway.<sup>136</sup> In other words, the message seemed to imply that they were free to do as they wished, which prompted some of them to question whether they were actually wanted in the UK. The officers would undoubtedly have preferred to be given a clear order in this instance as the Legation replied that the apparent change in policy from July had put some of them in a difficult position. Koht answered that it had not been the intention of the Government to change its policy but

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<sup>133</sup> Johan Nygaardsvold's explanation to the Commission of Inquiry of 1945, 10 February 1947, 5, Series Db, Box 22, Commission of Inquiry of 1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and The MOD to the Norwegian Legation in Stockholm, 24 June 1940, RAFA-2062, Box 2766, Folder 1192, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>134</sup> The MOD to the Norwegian Legation in Stockholm, 3 July 1940, RAFA-2062, Box 2766, Folder 1192, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway (my translation).

<sup>135</sup> Parliament of Norway, "Innstilling VI: Regjeringen Nygaardsvolds virksomhet fra 7. juni 1940 til 25. juni 1945", 60, in *Undersøkelseskommissjonen av 1945*, vol. 1.

<sup>136</sup> The MOD to the Norwegian Legation in Stockholm, 30 October 1940, RAFA-2062, Box 2766, Folder 1192, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

that they knew that they did not have any way to stop those who wanted to return to Norway from doing so.<sup>137</sup>

Volunteers, both with and without prior military experience, continued to arrive in Sweden and Finland throughout the summer and autumn of 1940. During the previously mentioned meeting of the Government on 15 October, Koht referenced several messages from Stockholm and Helsinki which stated that some 200 Norwegian youths were gathered there requesting funds to organise transport across Siberia and eventually to Britain. In this instance, it was agreed to postpone making a decision on the matter due to the associated costs and possible difficulties acquiring the necessary visas.<sup>138</sup>

In the autumn of 1940, the Norwegian Government did start making arrangements for a connection by air between Sweden and the UK. After some initial problems securing aircraft, two Lockheed Model 18 Lodestars began operating between Stockholm and Leuchars, Scotland under the guise of being commercial British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) flights in August 1941. By the end of the war, *Stockholmsruten*, as the connection became known, had grown to twelve aircraft and carried some 3,300 Norwegian and British passenger.<sup>139</sup>

### 3.6 Establishing policies

As previously mentioned, the Government had opposed the introduction of general conscription in July 1940. While this decision seems to have been guided by political considerations, concerns had also been raised about the legality of making use of Norwegian laws outside of Norway. Further, in a meeting with representatives of the British Government in October, Norwegian representatives expressed concerns that Norwegian general conscription would be met by opposition from the British, as had been the case when the Dutch had introduced conscription earlier that same year. These problems, however, had been solved with the passing of the Allied Forces Act in August.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Parliament of Norway, "Innstilling VI: Regjeringen Nygaardsvolds virksomhet fra 7. juni 1940 til 25. juni 1945", 61, in *Undersøkelseskommissjonen av 1945*, vol. 1; and Riste, *1940-1942: Prøvetid*, vol. 1, "London-regjeringa", 36.

<sup>138</sup> Minutes of meeting of the Norwegian Government, 15 October 1940, S-1005, Series Aa, Box 1, Office of the Prime Minister archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and Parliament of Norway, "Innstilling VI: Regjeringen Nygaardsvolds virksomhet fra 7. juni 1940 til 25. juni 1945", 62, in *Undersøkelseskommissjonen av 1945*, vol. 1.

<sup>139</sup> Henriksen, *Fem år i utlegd*, vol. 2, *Luffforsvarets historie*, 331-333, 340.

<sup>140</sup> Halvdan Koht's explanation to the Commission of Inquiry of 1945, 22 November 1946, 1, PA-0258, Series Fa, Box 9, Folder 7, Halvdan Koht archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and Minutes of meeting

By Order in Council dated 13 December 1940 it was declared that “All male Norwegian nationals residing abroad are, after conscription, liable to serve in the Norwegian armed forces from the year they attain the age of 18 until they attain the age of 55.”<sup>141</sup> While this, in theory, included all male Norwegians anywhere within the age limits, in practice it would initially only apply to those in the UK due to issues enforcing such a provision.<sup>142</sup> In April 1941, it was decided that those employed by the Merchant Fleet or serving with the Royal Navy would be exempted; an arrangement later expanded to include those “who have not previously been at sea, but who are deemed fit by the Conscription Board to serve with the Merchant Fleet”.<sup>143</sup> In November 1941, Norwegian conscription policy was also made applicable to Norwegians living outside of the United Kingdom, particularly those in the US and Canada.<sup>144</sup> While initial conscription would focus primarily on the young, as the war progressed and the need arose all those within the age limits would eventually be called up for service.<sup>145</sup>

In the proposal compiled by the War Office in cooperation with HOK in November 1940, and later approved by the MOD, the Norwegian Army in Britain was initially to be organised as a small brigade of about 2,400. This formation was to include, in addition to the necessary command and support elements, two infantry battalions, a machine gun company, and a field artillery battery. Other than being better fleshed out, this organisational plan was more or less the same as the one Fleisher had advocated for in June. It was not until the beginning of 1942, well after the unit in Dumfries had officially been organised into Brig N on 15 March 1941, that this target was met.<sup>146</sup>

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between representatives of the Governments of Britain and Norway, 28 October 1940, RAFA-2017, Series Yf, Box 210, Norwegian Armed Forces Military History Department archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>141</sup> English translation of Order in Council no. 168, 13 December 1940, RAFA-2017, Series Yf, Box 210, Norwegian Armed Forces Military History Department archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>142</sup> Skogrand, *Alliert i krig og fred*, vol. 4, *Norsk Forsvarshistorie*, 57.

<sup>143</sup> Order in Council no. 50, 4 April 1941, S-1001, Series Ac, Box 122, Secretariat to the Government archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and Order in Council no. 182, 12 December 1941, S-1001, Series Ac, Box 122, Secretariat to the Government archive, RA, Oslo, Norway (my translation).

<sup>144</sup> Order in Council no. 176, 28 November 1941, S-1001, Series Ac, Box 122, Secretariat to the Government archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and Riste, *1940-1942: Prøvetid*, vol. 1, “*London-regjeringa*”, 36-37, 39.

<sup>145</sup> Parliament of Norway, “Departementenes meldinger: IV Forsvarsdepartementet”, 8, in *Undersøkelseskommisjonen av 1945*, vol. 2.

<sup>146</sup> “Organisasjon, utrustning og oppøving av våre landmilitære styrker utenfor Norge i tiden inntil desember 1941”, 9, RAFA-2062, Box 2885, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; PM from HOK to the MOD, 21 June 1940, S-1005, Series M, Box 7, Office of the Prime Minister archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and Pran, “Orientering om oppbyggingen av Hæren i U.K. 1940-1941”, 2.

On 28 May 1941, an Anglo-Norwegian military agreement was signed into effect by Trygve Lie and the British Minister of Foreign Affairs Anthony Eden. It stated that Norway and the United Kingdom agreed to “prosecute the war to a successful conclusion” to re-establish “the freedom and independence of Norway through its complete liberation from German domination.”<sup>147</sup> Concerning the employment of Norwegian forces, Article 1 says that:

“The Norwegian Armed Forces in the United Kingdom (comprising Land, Sea and Air Forces) shall be employed either for the defence of the United Kingdom or for the purpose of regaining Norway. They shall be organised and employed under British command, in its character as the Allied High Command, as the Armed Forces of the Kingdom of Norway allied with the United Kingdom.”<sup>148</sup>

This seems to be more or less a continuation of the policy of employment that the Norwegian Government had followed since the summer of 1940. What is somewhat misleading about this article is how it makes it seem as if the Army, Navy and Air Force are all to be limited to service relating to the defence of Britain or the regaining of Norway. While Article 3 and 4 talks of the Navy and Air Force respectively being employed together with their British counterparts, Article 2, concerning the Army, simply states that “The Norwegian Land Forces shall be reconstituted in the United Kingdom”.<sup>149</sup> As would become apparent when requests were sent to the Ministry of Defence concerning Brig N being deployed to France and the Low Countries in the summer of 1944, the aforementioned restriction on the employment of the Armed Forces, in reality, would only affect the Army.<sup>150</sup>

The enactment of general conscription and the formalisation of the Anglo-Norwegian alliance were likely directly linked to Koth being replaced by Lie as Minister of Foreign Affairs around that time. Despite having been dragged into the war,

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<sup>147</sup> Military agreement between the governments of Norway and the United Kingdom, 28 May 1941, S-6443, Sub Archive 2, Series Dc, Box 215, Folder 3, Norwegian Consulate General in Montréal archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., Article 1.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., Article 2, Article 3, Article 4.

<sup>150</sup> Concept for decision from the MOD to FO, 26 August 1944, PA-1832, Series Fd, Box 9, Folder 1, Olav Riste archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

Koht appeared reluctant to let go of the pre-war policy of neutrality and the idea of Norway not growing too attached to any of the major warring powers. Koht was heavily criticised by other members of the Government who believed that they had already picked a side in the conflict. By not committing fully to the British, they ran the risk of not being included in decisions relating to Norway and of Norwegian interests not being respected during the settlement at the end of the war.<sup>151</sup>

### 3.7 Norwegian Army units outside the UK

In addition to the main force in Scotland, the Norwegian Army also had a number of smaller contingents stationed elsewhere at different points in the war. In August 1940, a unit was formed on Iceland at the initiative of Lieutenant Karl Hjelvik. At its peak, what would be designated Norwegian Company, Iceland, consisted of 107 men who, in addition to conducting patrols, would function as instructors in skiing and winter warfare for the British, and later American, forces on the island. The Company would also be responsible for a contingent of fifteen manning the weather station on the island of Jan Mayen. Norwegian Company, Iceland was dissolved in the summer of 1944, and the men transferred to Scotland.

<sup>152</sup>

In August 1941, the population of Svalbard, consisting primarily of Norwegians and Soviets, were evacuated. In order to resume coal mining and to stop a German attempt at establishing an airbase on the island, several expeditions were sent beginning in the spring of 1942. The garrison eventually grew to a force of 172, most from the Norwegian Army, armed with three 10cm cannons (the old armament from the destroyer HNoMS *Sleipner*), four 40mm Bofors AA guns and four 20mm Oerlikon cannons. On 8 September 1943, the garrison came under attack by a German naval force consisting of the battleships *Tirpitz* and *Scharnhorst* supported by nine destroyers carrying a landing force of 600. Despite retreating to pre-prepared positions in the mountains, the force's losses amounted to six dead and forty-one captured. While a garrison would be maintained on Svalbard for the duration of the war, its size would be permanently reduced following the incident.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Skogrand, *Alliert i krig og fred*, vol. 4, *Norsk Forsvarshistorie*, 62-63.

<sup>152</sup> Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 36-37, 211-212.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 220-227.

### 3.8 Reorganising the Norwegian military organisation

While Norway and Britain were allies, that did not mean that information flowed freely between the two. In March of 1941, the British had conducted a commando raid on the Norwegian Lofoten Islands. While the raid was considered a success, it did result in severe reprisals against the local population with houses being burned to the ground and some one-hundred people being arrested.<sup>154</sup> Lie and Ljungberg seems to have been the only members of the Norwegian Government informed of the raid as the British expected that others would oppose the venture.<sup>155</sup> Unsurprisingly, Norwegian authorities had issues with this as they expect to be included in the planning and decision-making process of any operation against Norway to safeguard Norwegian interests. However, poor relations with the British was not the only issue as a raid on Øksfjord was planned and carried out by SOK in collaboration with the Admiralty in April without the Norwegian Government having been informed<sup>156</sup>

As Minister of Defence, Ljungberg was usually the one blamed for the problems and failures of the Norwegian military organisation. A year after having arrived in Britain, the MOD still appeared disorganised and unable to lead the Norwegian war effort. In dealing with the British, Ljungberg was seen by many as too weak and unable to assert Norwegian interests and demands.<sup>157</sup> In addition to these complaints, certain elements of the Norwegian resistance movement, most prominently the group known as *Kretsen*, demanded that Ljungberg be replaced. Their discontent likely did not stem from the prevailing situation in Britain, but rather from Ljungberg's inaction prior to the German invasion of Norway.<sup>158</sup>

By the summer of 1941, it had become apparent to Nygaardsvold that changes had to be made to the Norwegian military organisation including the MOD, both in terms of organisation and leadership. He would later write to Ljungberg that in order for change to come about and to be included in the planning of operations in Norway they

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<sup>154</sup> *Norsk krigsleksikon*, s.v. "Svolværraidet".

<sup>155</sup> Lie, *Med England i ildlinjen*, 284-285; and Riste, *Utefront*, vol. 7, *Norge i Krig*, 61.

<sup>156</sup> Riste, *1940-1942: Prøvetid*, vol. 1, "London-regjeringa", 118.

<sup>157</sup> Nygaardsvold, *Norge i Krig: 9. april - 7. Juni 1940*, 92; and Trygve Lie's explanation to the Commission of Inquiry of 1945, 2 April 1947, 10, Series Db, Box 13, Folder 1, Commission of Inquiry of 1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>158</sup> Riste, *1940-1942: Prøvetid*, vol. 1, "London-regjeringa", 156.



would have to gain the trust of the British, something that could “only be achieved by introducing new men into the leadership of our military forces.”<sup>159</sup> To this end, Ljungberg was sent on vacation in September. Although he would return briefly and not be officially replaced until March the following year, Oscar Torp would effectively replace him as Minister of Defence from then on.<sup>160</sup>

At the time Torp was given control of the MOD, the Soviet Union had entered the war on the side of the Allies, drastically increasing the possibility of Norway once again becoming a theatre of war. The Norwegian Government suspected that the British were planning a joint operation with the Soviets to liberate Northern-Norway. However, as previously mentioned, Anglo-Norwegian cooperation had not been sufficiently developed at this point. The problems within the MOD had seemingly led to the British losing confidence in Norwegian authorities. Not only did this concern their efficiency, but also their ability to maintain secrecy as well as doubts concerning their fighting spirit. All of these factors combined made it unlikely that Norwegian authorities would be included in the British planning of operations in Norway as things stood.<sup>161</sup>

The switch from Ljungberg to Torp represented a significant change in direction for the Norwegian war policy. Unlike his predecessor, who seemingly believed that the Norwegian Armed Forces were doing their part towards liberating Norway by supporting the Allied war effort more broadly, Torp would opt for a more involved and direct approach. He considered it to be the primary task of the Norwegian military organisation to prepare for the eventual liberation.<sup>162</sup>

Inquiring HOK, SOK and FFK about what plans existed, he found that they, knowing that British involvement would be a prerequisite for any future operation in Norway, had not produced any plans of their own. However, it was HOK who had

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<sup>159</sup> Nygaardsvold to Ljungberg, 27 January 1942, S-1005, Series M, Box 7, Office of the Prime Minister archive, RA, Oslo, Norway (my translation).

<sup>160</sup> Johan Nygaardsvold's explanation to the Commission of Inquiry of 1945, 10 February 1947, 5, Series Db, Box 22, Commission of Inquiry of 1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; Nygaardsvold, *Beretning om Den norske Regjerings virksomhet*, 21; and Riste, *1940-1942: Prøvetid*, vol. 1, “*London-regjeringa*”, 156-157, 162.

<sup>161</sup> Fjærli, “Regjeringens policy angående anvendelsen av Den Norske Brigade i Storbritannia”, 213; Lie, *Med England i ildlinjen*, 286-287; PM from the MOD, 6 November 1941, RAFA-2062, Box 2575, Folder 235, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; Riste, *1940-1942: Prøvetid*, vol. 1, “*London-regjeringa*”, 171-172, 176-177; and Skogrand, *Alliert i krig og fred*, vol. 4, *Norsk Forsvarshistorie*, 67-68.

<sup>162</sup> Torp to Frihagen, 4 March 1942, ARK-1394, Series D, Box 1, Folder 27, Oscar Torp archive, AAB, Oslo, Norway.

shown the most interest. Fleischer knew that an increased focus on the recapture of Norway would mean a prioritisation of the Army as they were likely to be the ones in the thick of it. He had, therefore, since early 1941 asked that the pre-war Defence Council (*Forsvarsrådet*) be reconvened to coordinate the war effort between the different civil and military authorities. Although he had managed to get the Council to meet once in May, little had resulted from this meeting. Fleischer seems to have expected that the task of planning and leading operations in Norway would fall on HOK and proposed to Torp that coordination with the Navy and Air Force be managed either through re-establishing FO or by attaching officers from the other branches to HOK.<sup>163</sup> From the side of the British, however, it was expressed that it would be preferable if a unified command entity, set above HOK, SOK and FFK, were established.<sup>164</sup>

### 3.9 Re-establishing Norwegian High Command

While multiple possible organisational structures were taken under consideration during the winter of 1941-42, it was ultimately decided to re-establish Norwegian High Command.<sup>165</sup> In addition to coordinating cooperation between the different branches of the Armed Forces and with the British, FO would be responsible for creating and maintaining plans for operations in Norway. These would include not only the Norwegian forces in the UK and Canada but also the Norwegian resistance movement. This underground army was expected to be instrumental in the recapture of Norway by carrying out sabotage and intelligence gathering mission, and also by providing Norwegian authorities with personnel with which to form new army formations as different parts of the country were liberated.<sup>166</sup>

With the decision to re-establish FO followed the need to appoint a new C-in-C Norwegian Forces. Torp met with General Fleischer, Admiral Corneliussen and Admiral Riiser-Larsen on 4 February 1942 to discuss the matter. Both Fleischer and

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<sup>163</sup> Parliament of Norway, "Innstilling VI: Regjeringen Nygaardsvolds virksomhet fra 7. juni 1940 til 25. juni 1945", 80, in *Undersøkelseskommissjonen av 1945*, vol. 1; and Riste, *1940-1942: Prøvetid*, vol. 1, "London-regjeringa", 158-159.

<sup>164</sup> Trygve Lie's explanation to the Commission of Inquiry of 1945, 2 April 1947, 10, Series Db, Box 13, Folder 1, Commission of Inquiry of 1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>165</sup> Riste, *1940-1942: Prøvetid*, vol. 1, "London-regjeringa", 164-171, 180.

<sup>166</sup> Parliament of Norway, "Innstilling VI: Regjeringen Nygaardsvolds virksomhet fra 7. juni 1940 til 25. juni 1945", 82, in *Undersøkelseskommissjonen av 1945*, vol. 1; PM from the MOD, 6 November 1941, RAFA-2062, Box 2575, Folder 235, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and Riste, *1940-1942: Prøvetid*, vol. 1, "London-regjeringa", 165-166.

Corneliussen lamented the fact that the Government had not reached out to them to allow them to present their views prior to the decision to re-establish FO having been made. While Corneliussen expressed further opposition, Fleischer stated that while he had concerns regarding the practicalities, he agreed in principle to the re-establishment. As FO's primary task would be the recapture of Norway, Fleischer expected the person in charge to be an army officer, to which Torp agreed. Although he was not opposed to taking on the task himself, Fleischer expressed concerns regarding the fact that he was Corneliussen's junior. Simultaneously, however, he made it clear that if a junior army officer were to be appointed to the position ahead of him, he would consider it a sign of no confidence and he would subsequently have to reconsider his position at HOK.<sup>167</sup>

While he had not made it known to the three heads of the Norwegian forces, Torp seems early on to have decided upon appointing a person who had not previously been in contact with the British and hence could represent a breath of fresh air to Anglo-Norwegian relations.<sup>168</sup> In fact, by the time of the meeting on 4 February he had already offered the position to three men.

The first was Captain Bjørn Christophersen who had become Torp's closest associate at the Ministry of Defence and who had played a leading role in the reorganisation process.<sup>169</sup> Christophersen rejected the offer as he knew that objections would be raised if Torp appointed a mere captain to the position of C-in-C Norwegian Forces. Seemingly at the advice of Christophersen, Torp then offered the position to Lt. Col. Johan Beichmann. Beichmann was considered an appropriate candidate as he had the necessary formal education, had worked with the resistance movement in Norway and had recently arrived in Britain. However, he too declined the offer as he did not consider himself fit to lead such a large and important venture, as well as due to concerns about the wellbeing of his family as he had been released on parole by the Germans per Convention IV, Article 10 of the Hague Convention.<sup>170</sup> The choice subsequently fell on Major Wilhelm von Tangen Hansteen who was appointed by Order

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<sup>167</sup> Minutes of meeting between HOK, SOK, FFK and the MOD, 4 Februar 1942, RAFA-2062, Box 2575, Folder 235, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>168</sup> Parliament of Norway, "Innstilling VI: Regjeringen Nygaardsvolds virksomhet fra 7. juni 1940 til 25. juni 1945", 81, in *Undersøkelseskommissjonen av 1945*, vol. 1.

<sup>169</sup> PM from the MOD, 6 November 1941, RAFA-2062, Box 2575, Folder 235, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>170</sup> Hovland, *Storhet og fall*, 355; and Riste, *1940-1942: Prøvetid*, vol. 1, "London-regjeringa", 181.

in Council on 6 February 1942 and given the rank of major general, with Bjørn Christophersen, now a colonel, as his chief of staff.<sup>171</sup>

### 3.10 The tragedy of Fleischer

The traditions of the Norwegian officer corps were deeply rooted in the ideas of seniority and acting in accordance with proper procedure. It, therefore, came as a surprise to many when Fleischer was surpassed for the role of C-in-C Norwegian Forces by a largely unknown major twelve years his junior.<sup>172</sup> Fleischer seems to have settled on the letter of 4 June 1940 advising the King and Government not to leave Norway, as being the reason for his predicament. As he had not been informed about his imminent departure when he was ordered to Tromsø on 7 June, Fleischer had not brought with him the copy of this letter that existed in 6th Divisions archive.<sup>173</sup> This copy was discovered in the summer of 1941 and subsequently published in Nazi-controlled Norwegian newspapers.<sup>174</sup> Fleischer seems to have believed that this had weakened his reputation internationally as well as in the eyes of the public at home and the Government, and eventually been responsible for their decision not to offer him the position.

While Lie later admitted to Fleischer's position having been weakened following the publications, he maintained that it did not influence the Government's choice of C-in-C.<sup>175</sup> After the war, several reasons were given as to why Fleischer was never seriously considered for the job. Foremost of these was the desire to find someone younger and more dynamic to organise cooperation between Norway and the United Kingdom. While Fleischer was seen as an outstanding military professional, he was considered too rigid and unable to adapt, being described by Koht, among others, as

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<sup>171</sup> Order in Council no. 12 and 13, 6 February 1942, S-1001, Series Ac, Box 122, Secretariat to the Government archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and Torp to Hansteen, 30 January 1942, RAFA-2062, Box 2575, Folder 235, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>172</sup> Skogrand, *Alliert i krig og fred*, vol. 4, *Norsk Forsvarshistorie*, 66.

<sup>173</sup> Fleischer to King Haakon VII, 10 February 1942, RAFA-2062, Box 2575, Folder 235, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; Hambro, "General Fleischers tragedie", 16; and Riste, *1940-1942: Prøvetid*, vol. 1, "London-regjeringa", 171, 181, 183.

<sup>174</sup> "Da general Fleischer advarte ekskongen og Nygaardsvold-regjeringen mot å forlate landet", *Aftenposten*, 11 August 1941.

<sup>175</sup> Trygve Lie's explanation to the Commission of Inquiry of 1945, 2 April 1947, 10-11, Series Db, Box 13, Folder 1, Commission of Inquiry of 1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

unable to understand the political realities of any given situation.<sup>176</sup> While the letter might not have been the deciding factor for the Government's decision, it certainly did not help the strained relationship between Fleischer and the Government.<sup>177</sup> Fleischer's repeated objections to transfers, requests for prioritisation and general disagreement with the Government's preferred line, must undoubtedly have led to bad blood between the two.

Following his resignation from HOK, Fleischer was appointed commander of the Norwegian forces in Canada. The position would prove to be a more or less fictional one as plans to establish a Norwegian army in Canada did not come to fruition. Hence the only Norwegian forces there were those stationed at the Air Force's training base "Little Norway". In November he was reassigned to the position of Norwegian Military Attaché to Washington, DC, a position usually reserved for officers well beneath his rank and stature.<sup>178</sup>

In letters to his wife in what would be the final days of his life, Fleischer contemplates the decisions he had made, times when he had erred or acted foolishly, and lamented that his opponents had proved to be smarter than him.<sup>179</sup> On 18 December 1942, the decision was made to award Fleischer Norway's highest military honour, the War Cross with Sword (*Krigskorset med sverd*).<sup>180</sup> He would never receive the news. Fleischer died the following day, at age 58, having shot himself through the heart. The fear of losing his honour had become too heavy a burden to bear. He left a short note for his wife ending in the words "*Døm meg mildt*" (Judge me mildly).<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Halvdan Koht's explanation to the Commission of Inquiry of 1945, 22 November 1946, 3-4, PA-0258, Series Fa, Box 9, Folder 7, Halvdan Koht archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; Johan Nygaardsvold's explanation to the Commission of Inquiry of 1945, 10 February 1947, 6, Series Db, Box 22, Commission of Inquiry of 1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.; Lie, *Leve eller dø*, 233; and Trygve Lie's explanation to the Commission of Inquiry of 1945, 2 April 1947, 10-11, Series Db, Box 13, Folder 1, Commission of Inquiry of 1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>177</sup> Lahlum, *Oscar Torp*, 191; and Skogrand, *Alliert i krig og fred*, vol. 4, *Norsk Forsvarshistorie*, 67.

<sup>178</sup> Hambro, "General Fleischers tragedie", 14; "Organisasjon, utrustning og oppøving av våre landmilitære styrker utenfor Norge i tiden inntil desember 1941", 8-9, RAFA-2062, Box 2885, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; Parliament of Norway, "Innstilling VI: Regjeringen Nygaardsvolds virksomhet fra 7. juni 1940 til 25. juni 1945", 85, in *Undersøkelseskommissjonen av 1945*, vol. 1; and Trygve Lie's explanation to the Commission of Inquiry of 1945, 2 April 1947, 12, Series Db, Box 13, Folder 1, Commission of Inquiry of 1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>179</sup> Toni Fleischer's transcript of Carl Gustav Fleischer's letters from Canada, PA-1389, Series F, Box 1, Folder 8, Carl Gustav Fleischer archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>180</sup> Order in Council no. 275, 18 December 1942, S-1001, Series Ac, Box 122, Secretariat to the Government archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>181</sup> General Fleischer's suicide note to Toni Fleischer, 19 December 1942, PA-1389, Series F, Box 1, Folder 5, Carl Gustav Fleischer archive, RA, Oslo, Norway (my translation).

### 3.11 Conclusion

The defining aspect of the period treated in this chapter, what might be called the establishment phase, can be said to have been the clear difference of opinion between Fleischer and the Norwegian Government with regard to what form the Norwegian war effort should take. While Fleischer was in favour of a complete mobilisation of the resources and means available to prepare for an active liberation of Norway, the Government opted for a more passive approach as it believed that the best way it could contribute was through the use of its sizeable Merchant Fleet. This policy resulted in the Army receiving a low prioritisation and largely being used to provide the Navy, Merchant Fleet and even the British with personnel as many of those who had volunteered for the Army in the spring and early summer were fishermen and sailors by trade.

While Fleischer might have been unable to appreciate the political and legal challenges associated with building up a military force outside Norway, political considerations no doubt were a significant factor for the Government's initial decision not to enact conscription or allow Norwegian forces to be used in raids on Norway. As would continue to be the case for the duration of the war, the Government was extremely careful in making sure that its policies and actions did not affect the approval and support it received from the Norwegian public at home.

When the Government eventually found itself forced to change its policy and seek to establish better relations with the British in the winter of 1941-42, the reorganisation of the Norwegian military organisation that followed pushed the one person who had argued for such a change since the summer of 1940 out into the cold. For one and a half years, Fleischer did what he could to raise an army for the liberation of Norway. However, as Carl Joachim Hambro, President of the Storting in 1940, would write after the war: "General Fleischer was given the task of creating a Norwegian army - without soldiers, without officers, without materiel - without support, without understanding - and constantly opposed, passively perhaps more than actively, by [the] Ministry of Defence".<sup>182</sup>

While the Merchant Fleet would continue to be Norway most important contribution to the Allied war effort, the Army would be given a somewhat higher prioritisation over the next couple of years. However, as we shall see in the next chapter, rather than a fighting force

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<sup>182</sup> Hambro, "General Fleischer tragedie", 3 (my translation).

in its own right, the Army would be reorganised to take on command and support roles during a potential Allied invasion of Norway.

# Chapter 4: Reorganisation and Preparation

February 1942 to May 1944

The re-establishment of Norwegian High Command and Oscar Torp taking the helm at the Ministry of Defence represented a significant change in policy for the Norwegian Government. While they previously seem to have been content with the thought of Norway being liberated following the final victory over Germany, and thereby avoid Norway once again becoming a battleground, with Torp this was changed to a more involved approach. Necessitated by the perceived increased possibility from late 1941 onwards of Britain and the Soviet Union conducting operations in Norway, Norwegian authorities scrambled to make sure that they would be included in the planning, decision-making process and execution of any operation on Norwegian soil.

This process would involve a significant reorganisation of the Army in order for it to conform to the role FO had envisioned for it. Rather than taking part in combat operations themselves, they were to provide support for Allied forces and the Norwegian resistance movement. Inadequate cooperation and communication between Allied and Norwegian authorities, however, resulted in the two having widely different ambitions as to how Norway was to be liberated for most of the period treated in this chapter.

## 4.1 The Norwegian Brigade

The Organisational plan devised by HOK and WO in the autumn of 1940 had called for the establishment of a small Norwegian brigade. Despite this initial war establishment comprising only 2,250 men, the unit was to include all the weapons and elements of a larger formation to be able to operate independently; what in Norwegian military vernacular would have been designated a combined brigade (*kombinert brigade*). This meant that the unit was to be made up of:



- Brigade Headquarters
- Two infantry battalions each with four rifle companies
- One field artillery battery of four guns
- One machine gun company with three platoons of four guns
- One engineer section
- One signal section
- One reconnaissance unit
- One supply train
- One field ambulance company
- One field cash office <sup>183</sup>

On 15 March 1941, the main bulk of the Norwegian Army-in-exile was officially organised into the Norwegian Brigade and placed under the command of Colonel Oscar Strugstad.<sup>184</sup> By the end of the year, however, the unit had yet to reach the size and structure outlined in WO's plan, only comprising brigade headquarters, one infantry battalion, a machine gun company, a field artillery battery and a training unit.<sup>185</sup>

#### 4.2 Why reorganise?

Within his first month as C-in-C Norwegian Forces, Hansteen had outlined the capacity in which he intended for Brig N to be used, and how it was to be reorganised to better correspond to this role. As the basis for his proposal, Hansteen put forth some observations, writing that it is considered evident:

“that the limited strength of our forces will not allow of independent Norwegian operations during the reconquest even if the invasion is launched, for a start, only against one particular district, that, as far as possible, Norwegian units should be found in all districts where Allied forces are in action, and that the Norwegian support of the Allied forces will be the most effective in the achievement of such

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<sup>183</sup> War Office, “Proposed establishment for Norwegian land forces in the United Kingdom”, 14 November 1940, in Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 131.

<sup>184</sup> Holmås, “Den norske Brigade i Skottland”, 18.

<sup>185</sup> “Organisasjon, utrustning og oppøving av våre landmilitære styrker utenfor Norge i tiden inntil desember 1941”, 10, RAFA-2062, Box 2885, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

tasks for the performance of which the Norwegian soldier has particular advantages owing to his knowledge of Norwegian geographical conditions and his bonds with the population. [...] It should be borne in mind that the main body of the Norwegian fighting strength is found in the Home front. The value of this asset can be considerably increased through support from our fighting forces here.”<sup>186</sup>

FO believed that to be included, and further; to be influential, in the planning of a potential Allied operation in Norway, they would have to prove that there were certain tasks and roles that Norwegian personnel and formations, due to their connection to the local population and prior experience operating in the Norwegian terrain and climate, were inherently better suited for compared to their respective Allied counterparts.<sup>187</sup> Hansteen, therefore, proposed that the forces in the UK should be trained and organised to be used primarily for support and liaison tasks, with small operational units taking on the role of “shock-troops”; conducting reconnaissance missions and operations behind enemy lines. Further, regional commands should be set up and tasked with establishing new formations in Norway during the liberation and coordinate between Norwegian civil and military authorities and the Allied contribution.<sup>188</sup>

### 4.3 Operational units

While a major aspect of the reorganisation would be to train a sufficient number of officers for liaison duty, the regional commands and support for the resistance movement, the process would also entail significant changes to the structure of Brig N’s operational units for them to better conform to their new role. In place of the two previously planned infantry battalions, Hansteen envisioned a number of large independent companies.<sup>189</sup> Rather than there being a separate machine gun company, signal unit and engineer section, these were to be

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<sup>186</sup> “Training of the Norwegian Land Forces in U.K.”, 28 February 1942, 2, RAFA-2017, Series Yf, Box 211, Norwegian Armed Forces Military History Department archive, RA, Oslo, Norway (emphasis in original).

<sup>187</sup> Skogrand, *Alliert i krig og fred*, vol. 4, *Norsk Forsvarshistorie*, 67-68.

<sup>188</sup> “Training of the Norwegian Land Forces in U.K.”, 28 February 1942, 2-4, RAFA-2017, Series Yf, Box 211, Norwegian Armed Forces Military History Department archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-5.

incorporated into the companies themselves, essentially making each of them a battalion in miniature with:

- Three rifle platoons
- One heavy fire support platoon with machine guns and mortars
- One combined engineer and signal platoon
- One supply train <sup>190</sup>

In his response to FO in April, Maj. Gen. Johan Beichmann, who had been appointed to the position of Commanding General following Fleischer's resignation, strongly advocated for maintaining the existing organisation of Brig N as it provided the Army with the framework for a larger formation in the future. In addition to the general mood within Brig N being opposed to a move away from the Brigade's current war establishment, a couple of assumptions seem to have informed Beichmann's recommendation. While FO's proposed organisation was predicated on the scenario of a full-scale invasion of Norway with the aim of liberating the country in its entirety, Beichmann considered other contingencies to be equally, if not more likely. Included among these was the prospect of smaller operations aimed at liberating parts of the country, a potential civil war in the event of a sudden German capitulation and even the possibility of the Norwegian Army taking part in an Allied invasion of the Continent.<sup>191</sup>

As general conscription had been made applicable to Norwegians outside of Britain in November of 1941, Beichmann expected to receive a significant number of recruits from the US and Canada in the near future, hopefully bringing Brig N's strength up to a full brigade. However, as the US did not allow its citizens to volunteer for service in the forces of a foreign power, nor for a foreign power to conscript its citizens residing in the country, the US did not prove to be the fresh pasture HOK had hoped. With regard to Canada, most Norwegians residing there were either elderly or sailors, meaning those fit for service generally went on to serve with the Navy or Merchant Fleet.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 56-57.

<sup>191</sup> Holmås, "Den norske Brigade i Skottland", 22; and Riste, *1940-1942: Prøvetid*, vol. 1, "London-regjeringa", 202.

<sup>192</sup> Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 57-58; and "Organisasjon, utrustning og oppøving av våre landmilitære styrker utenfor Norge i tiden inntil desember 1941", 20, RAFA-2062, Box 2885, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

FO's proposal, essentially, relegated the Army to support tasks during an invasion of Norway, and thereby put an end to any ambitions HOK might have had about the Army becoming a numerically sizeable operational force in the future. Further, the changes to its structure made it difficult for Brig N to be used independently either in Norway or during a potential Allied invasion of the Continent.<sup>193</sup>

We now know, with the benefit of hindsight, that some of the scenarios Beichmann foresaw eventually would become reality. However, HOK's objections did not significantly affect FO's decision to reorganise the Army. As Riste points out, operations in Norway to achieve anything less than the total liberation of the country was simply not part of FO's plan as it relied on the involvement of the Norwegian resistance movement which could only be committed to the battle once.<sup>194</sup> Discussions through the spring of 1942, therefore, centred on the specifics of the reorganisation rather than the reorganisation itself.

With large parts of Norway being dominated by mountainous terrain, FO expected Allied forces, who were likely to be highly dependent on motorised transport, to struggle to advance along the country's valleys without the support of units operating off-road. To Hansteen, this was the capacity in which the operational units of the Norwegian Army could make their most valuable contribution to the Allied invasion force. It was, therefore, decided that Brig N's independent companies were to be trained for mountain warfare and designated as mountain companies (*bergkompanier*).<sup>195</sup> Following this decision, the question of transport was heatedly discussed. While HOK insisted that the companies be issued with both horsedrawn and motorised transport, FO maintained that horses were sufficient for the tasks envisioned for the units.<sup>196</sup> Hansteen also intended for an element of Brig N's field artillery battery to be reequipped with mountain guns to operate as support for the companies.<sup>197</sup> In addition to the units specialised for mountain warfare, a paratrooper company and an AA/AT unit were to be formed. The reconnaissance unit, often referred to as the carrier-platoon due to their use of tracked Universal Carriers, would remain more or less unchanged.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Skogrand, *Alliert i krig og fred*, vol. 4, *Norsk Forsvarshistorie*, 87.

<sup>194</sup> Riste, *1940-1942: Prøvetid*, vol. 1, "London-regjeringa", 202.

<sup>195</sup> PM from FO, 9 June 1942, RAFA-2062, Box 2590, Folder 300, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>196</sup> HOK to Brig N, 23 June 1942, 2, RAFA-2062, Box 2590, Folder 300, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>197</sup> PM from FO, 9 June 1942, RAFA-2062, Box 2590, Folder 300, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>198</sup> HOK to Brig N, 23 June 1942, 2, RAFA-2062, Box 2590, Folder 300, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway. The AA/AT unit did not come into existence until the

Brig N was informed of its imminent reorganisation by HOK on 23 June 1942, with the official directives being delivered a month later.<sup>199</sup> Originally, HOK and FO intended for four mountain companies to be established, with one being at full strength (260 men) and the others remaining somewhat reduced until the necessary personnel could be secured. During the reorganisation process, however, FO had been approached by WO who asked that a number of men be made available for a Norwegian contingent to an inter-allied commando unit. As two troops of 4th Company, 1st Battalion had attended a shock-troop course in June, it was decided that these were to form the backbone of what would become No. 5 Troop, 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando, supplemented by volunteers handpicked by the unit's commander Captain Rolf Hauge. As a result, the number of mountain companies was reduced with the remaining personnel from 4th Company being distributed among the three other.<sup>200</sup> The plans for a mountain artillery battery ultimately had to be abandoned due to both the models available, the American 75mm pack howitzer and the British 3.7-inch mountain howitzer, having been designed to be used with mules and consequently not being suited for transport on horseback.<sup>201</sup>

During the winter of 1941-42, Brig N had been attached to and trained with the British 51st (Highland) Division. However, in April during the reorganisation, Brig N was attached to 52nd (Lowland) Division which had been earmarked for operations in Norway. The division would be trained for mountain warfare and would over the next couple of years work closely with Brig N in preparation for the liberation.<sup>202</sup>

#### 4.4 Milorg and regional commands

FO considered it to be of the utmost importance that Norwegian units were present in every region where the Allied invasion force was in action.<sup>203</sup> This was the primary reason for the transition from battalions to independent companies, as these could be attached to Allied

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winter of 1944-45 when the men of a coastal artillery unit were reorganised into a light and a heavy AA battery in preparation for the liberation.

<sup>199</sup> Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 59; and HOK to Brig N, 23 June 1942, RAFA-2062, Box 2590, Folder 300, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>200</sup> Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 186-187; Haga, *Klar til storm*, 24; and Konow, "Den norske brigade i Skottland", 6.

<sup>201</sup> Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 304.

<sup>202</sup> Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 54, 60-61; and Fjærli, "Den norske Hær i Storbritannia under krigen", 271.

<sup>203</sup> "Training of the Norwegian Land Forces in U.K.", 28 February 1942, 2, RAFA-2017, Series Yf, Box 211, Norwegian Armed Forces Military History Department archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

formations spread throughout the country. While the units were important in a symbolic capacity, their contribution to combat operations would largely be limited to support and liaison roles. Meanwhile, FO expected to draw its main force from the Norwegian resistance movement.

The Norwegian resistance movement known as *Milorg*, with the group known as *Rådet* at its head, had been officially recognised as a part of the Norwegian military organisation by the Defence Council on 20 November 1941. The telegram bringing the news to Rådet stated that “Anyone engaged with military preparations for the struggle for freedom in Norway is encouraged to loyally submit to the organisation [Milorg]. They should consider themselves as being under military command.”<sup>204</sup> For a brief time, Milorg was under the command of HOK. However, following the re-establishment of FO in February of 1942, this was changed with the task of coordinating the efforts of the resistance eventually being relegated to the section of FO known as FO IV.<sup>205</sup> At the time of the reorganisation of the Army-in-exile, FO estimated that the resistance was able to call upon 25,000 men. However, the groups lacked both instructors and the necessary weapons and equipment to be used effectively.<sup>206</sup>

While it was likely to be numerically the largest, the resistance was not the only force FO planned to make use of during an invasion of Norway. As parts of the country were liberated, FO expected to be inundated by requests from volunteers demanding to be allowed to do their part. The responsibility for organising these into new units would be one of the tasks for which a number of regional commands were to be established.<sup>207</sup> Guidelines further clarifying the functions of the regional commands were provided to HOK by FO in March of 1943 and stated that they were to:

- “(a) mediate and control the utilisation of Norwegian resources for military purposes,
- (b) mediate cooperation between Allied military authorities and the Norwegian Civil Administration,

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<sup>204</sup> Parliament of Norway, *Regjeringen og hjemmefronten under krigen*, 77 (my translation).

<sup>205</sup> Grimnes, *Hjemmefrontens ledelse*, 225, 228.

<sup>206</sup> “Training of the Norwegian Land Forces in U.K.”, 28 February 1942, 3, RAFA-2017, Series Yf, Box 211, Norwegian Armed Forces Military History Department archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

- (c) provide conscripts to all branches of the Armed Forces [...],
- (d) direct the establishment of Norwegian land-based military forces, including any military labour units,
- (e) issue to the population the necessary regulations and orders from the military with regard to order and safety.”<sup>208</sup>

To provide instructors for the resistance as well as staffs for the regional commands, the Norwegian Army-in-exile would have to train and maintain a sizeable cadre of officers in preparation for the invasion. To this end, HOK instructed Brig N to gather officers that were not employed elsewhere in a separate training unit under the Army’s School Branch (known as TGB/HSØ) where they were to be given “specialist training of various kinds to increase each individual's military effectiveness and to make them as versatile and useful as possible.”

<sup>209</sup>

Over the next couple of years, the ratio of officers to other ranks (ORs), i.e. non-commissioned officers and privates, changed drastically (Figure 2). On 1 January 1942, just prior to the reorganisation, the number of officers in the Army was 197 while ORs totalled 2,180. Brig N’s 1941 war establishment included 116 officers and 2,138 ORs, meaning that even if we account for those needed outside the Brigade itself (HOK, army hospital etc.), the Army had a small surplus of officers even at this point.<sup>210</sup> Over the next two years, however, the number of ORs remained unchanged, while the number of officers more than tripled. It is not until the spring of 1944 that we can see a significant increase in ORs resulting from Operation Balder; an American led endeavour which transferred 1,576 Norwegians of military age from Sweden to the UK, 556 of whom would end up in the Army.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> FO to HOK, “Norsk landmilitær virksomhet under operasjoner i Norge”, March 1942, in Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 252 (my translation).

<sup>209</sup> HOK to Brig N, 1 June 1943, 4, RAFA-2062, Box 2590, Folder 300, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway (my translation).

<sup>210</sup> War Office, “Proposed establishment for Norwegian land forces in the United Kingdom”, 14 November 1940, in Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 131.

<sup>211</sup> Henriksen, *Fem år i utlegd*, vol. 2, *Lufforsvarets historie*, 344.

Figure 2: Officers and other ranks in the Norwegian Army-in-exile, 1942 to 1944

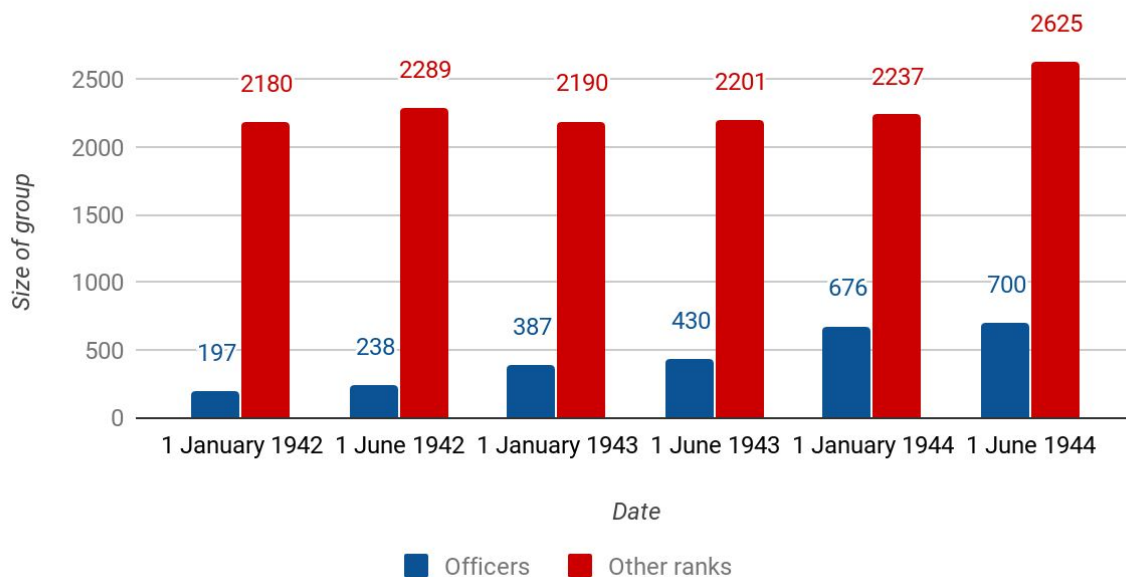


Figure 2. The distribution between officers and other ranks in the Norwegian Army-in-exile every six months between January 1942 and June 1944. Source: All numbers are taken from Fjærli, “Regjeringens policy angående anvendelsen av Den Norske Brigade i Storbritannia”, 212.

#### 4.5 The Royal Norwegian Military College and service with British units

While well-educated officers had been in high demand during the Army’s initial phase in Britain, by the autumn of 1942 the situation had been turned on its head. As the result of transfers from Norway and education at British courses, a significant number of surplus officers at the platoon level (the rank of second lieutenant) began to form. Despite this, HOK declined a request from WO in late 1942 asking that these be allowed to temporarily serve with British formations which had suffered severe losses in North Africa. Most of the officers in question would eventually be organised in TGB/HSØ.<sup>212</sup>

Around the same time as the British request, in October 1942, the Royal Norwegian Military College was established in London. Here seventy-four candidates, divided into an upper and a lower section, were given a one-year course which included classes in German, administration, topography and armoured warfare. After having graduated, many of them were given command of British units as the Army-in-exile was unable to employ them all. While most were withdrawn leading up to Operation Overlord, in accordance with both

<sup>212</sup> Berg, *Krigsskolen i London 1942-43*, 9-10; Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 69-70, 178; and Konow, “Den norske brigade i Skottland”, 14.



Norwegian and British policy, fifteen were, at the requests of their respective commanding officers, allowed to remain with their units provided that they could be withdrawn at any time.<sup>213</sup>

#### 4.6 Anglo-Norwegian relations

As treated in the previous chapter, the primary motivation for making changes to the Norwegian military organisation had been to improve Anglo-Norwegian relations and make sure that Norwegian authorities were included in the planning of operations in Norway. To that end, Torp had requested that a joint Anglo-Norwegian planning committee be established on 2 January 1942. The request came at a time when planning and coordination of the Allied war effort was very much up in the air following the entry of the US into the war after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The British were initially somewhat reluctant to agree to Torp's request due to concerns that other governments-in-exile might demand similar arrangements if word got out. However, due to political considerations, they found it difficult to decline the request outright. After having conferred with the Foreign Office, Maj. Gen. Hastings Ismay wrote to Torp that the British welcomed the establishment of a Norwegian planning committee to cooperate with the British Joint Planning Staff (JPS) in matters concerning the recapture of Norway and that while it would not be necessary to arrange regular meetings between the two, it would be of great value for them to get to know each other.<sup>214</sup>

A Norwegian contingent, headed by newly appointed FO Chief of Staff Bjørn Christophersen, met with members of the JPS on 26 February. During the meeting which lasted barely half an hour, it was revealed that although the British had developed plans for operations in both Northern and Southern Norway, logistics did not allow for these to be carried out in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, they asked that the Norwegians give their remarks on the plans. As for the Norwegians, Christophersen explained why Norwegian authorities were interested in establishing a joint Anglo-Norwegian planning committee and gave a presentation on how they intended for the Norwegian forces in the UK to be organised

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<sup>213</sup> Berg, *Krigsskolen i London 1942-43*, 14-15, 17, 39, 57; Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 91; Hansteen's memorandum, 21 August 1944, 1, RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1011, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and Stamnes, *I panservogn fra Caen til Bryssel*, 9.

<sup>214</sup> Mann, "The Norwegian Army-in-Exile", 47; Riste, *1940-1942: Prøvetid*, vol. 1, "London-regjeringa", 197-199; and Skogrand, *Alliert i krig og fred*, vol. 4, *Norsk Forsvarshistorie*, 68.

for them to be used as support for the resistance and the Allies during a potential invasion of Norway.<sup>215</sup>

To the British, the meeting on 26 February seems to have been nothing more than a gesture of good faith, with Ismay later writing that it was meant to keep the Norwegians in good spirits and not as an avenue for joint Anglo-Norwegian planning. It is indicative of this sentiment that the meeting would be the only official meeting to take place between the two committees. Further, the plans the Norwegians had been asked to comment on had been compiled in the summer of 1941 and were likely obsolete by the spring of 1942 due to the course the war had taken. Nevertheless, the meeting had succeeded in establishing a line of communication between FO and the JPS. Through this channel, several Norwegian plans and organisational schemes were presented to the British, including how FO intended to make use of the resistance, their forces in the UK and its plans for regional commands. While the British did humour the Norwegians for some time, it soon became apparent to FO that they had no intentions of putting any plans into action prior to an Allied strategy for the liberation of Europe having been drawn up.<sup>216</sup>

#### 4.7 COSSAC's plans for operations in Norway

At the Casablanca Conference in January of 1943, it had been decided to establish a combined Anglo-American staff. Chief of Staff to Supreme Allied Commander (COSSAC), as the organisation would become known, was to be responsible for the planning and execution of Allied operations in North-Western Europe with the aim of launching a cross-channel invasion (Operation Overlord) as early in 1944 as possible.<sup>217</sup> Although this geographical area included the territories of many of the governments-in-exile in the UK, COSSAC's directive stated that due to security concerns "The Allied Military Staffs (other than British and American) will not be brought into the planning at present."<sup>218</sup> Not only were they not to be included in the planning, but the very existence of COSSAC itself was to be kept secret for as long as possible.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Riste, *1940-1942: Prøvetid*, vol. 1, "London-regjeringa", 199-200.

<sup>216</sup> Riste, *1940-1942: Prøvetid*, vol. 1, "London-regjeringa", 153-154, 200-201; and Skogrand, *Alliert i krig og fred*, vol. 4, *Norsk Forsvarshistorie*, 69.

<sup>217</sup> Pogue, *The Supreme Command*, 103.

<sup>218</sup> SHAEF, "History of COSSAC", May 1944, 4, File no. 8-3.6A CA, Historical Manuscript Collection, CMH, Washington, DC, US.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

In preparation for the invasion, COSSAC had been instructed to plan “An elaborate camouflage and deception scheme extending over the whole summer with a view to pinning the enemy in the west and keeping alive the expectation of large scale cross-channel operations in 1943.”<sup>220</sup> The result was Operation Cockade; a series of diversionary operations designed to alleviate pressure on Allied forces in Italy as well as the Soviets to the east. The part of the operation known as Operation Tindall aimed to tie up German troops in Norway by threatening an attack on the area around the city of Stavanger by Allied forces in Scotland. To reinforce the perception of such an invasion being imminent, several divisions, including 52nd (Lowland) Division, conducted manoeuvres in Scotland. The operation was eventually deemed a failure as it was unable to elicit reactions from the Germans to indicate that the ruse had been successful.<sup>221</sup>

By the summer of 1943, the tide of the war seemed to turn in favour of the Allies. The Soviets had, at a high cost in terms of human lives, come victorious from the battle of Stalingrad and were pushing the Germans westward, Axis forces had been defeated in North Africa, and following the fall of Mussolini and the success of Operation Husky, Italy surrendered unconditionally in early September. While the primary task of COSSAC was to prepare for an invasion of the Continent in 1944, their directives also instructed them to prepare plans for “a return to the Continent in the event of German disintegration at any time from now onwards with whatever forces may be available at the time”.<sup>222</sup> Such an eventuality Allied authorities believed to be imminent in August of 1943. Subsequently, it was made a priority for COSSAC to create contingency plans for a number of possible scenarios.<sup>223</sup>

Three variants of what would become known as Operation Rankin were prepared: In Case A, the strength and morale of German forces had been weakened to such an extent that it would be possible to launch an invasion along the lines of Overlord earlier than planned. Case B treated a German withdrawal, either fully or partially, from the occupied territories, and Case C the complete collapse of Germany itself.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> SHAEF, "History of COSSAC", May 1944, 3, File no. 8-3.6A CA, Historical Manuscript Collection, CMH, Washington, DC, US.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 17, 20-21.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>223</sup> SHAEF, "History of COSSAC", May 1944, 21-22, File no. 8-3.6A CA, Historical Manuscript Collection, CMH, Washington, DC, US; and Pogue, *The Supreme Command*, 104-105.

<sup>224</sup> SHAEF, "History of COSSAC", May 1944, 5, File no. 8-3.6A CA, Historical Manuscript Collection, CMH, Washington, DC, US.

Since the reorganisation of the Norwegian military organisation, all plans and preparations made by Norwegian authorities for the liberation of Norway had been predicated on an invasion of the country in the face of heavy German resistance. However, at some point prior to the autumn of 1943, Allied authorities seem to have decided that operations in Norway under such conditions were no longer an option. Further, in the case of both Overlord and its alternative Rankin Case A, Norway lay far out of the path that was to be taken by the Allied invasion force. The decision was therefore made that Norway was to be liberated following the final German surrender and that plans for its liberation were to be in line with the conditions presented in Rankin Case C and possibly Case B.<sup>225</sup>

#### 4.8 The liaison service

By August 1943, planning for Rankin and Overlord had reached the point where the governments-in-exile in the UK had to be included in the planning to provide information on the conditions and facilities in their respective countries.<sup>226</sup> However, as operations in Norway were no longer considered a priority by the Allies, COSSAC intended to transfer responsibility for the planning of operations in Norway to Scottish Command (ScotCo) and Lt. Gen. Sir Andrew Thorne. This change was signalled by COSSAC to Christophersen on 13 September 1943, with official confirmation being delivered in November. On this occasion, WO asked that FO appoint a committee to coordinate with ScotCo in matters relating to the liberation of Norway. The result was the creation of the Norwegian Military Mission (*Den Norske Militærmisjon*; NMM) under the command of Maj. Gen. Oscar Strugstad.<sup>227</sup> While NMM was to be involved in the planning of operations in Norway, with Strugstad even being given authorisation to act on behalf of FO in certain matters, its primary function would be to provide liaisons to Allied formations and staffs during operations.<sup>228</sup>

The development of a liaison service was highlighted as one of the most vital tasks for the Norwegian military organisation during its reorganisation. The reason for this was not only to provide support for Allied formations, but also to safeguard Norwegian interest

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<sup>225</sup> Fjærli, "Den norske Hær i Storbritannia under krigen", 276; and Mann, *British Policy and Strategy Towards Norway, 1941-45*, 172.

<sup>226</sup> SHAEF, "History of COSSAC", May 1944, 7, File no. 8-3.6A CA, Historical Manuscript Collection, CMH, Washington, DC, US.

<sup>227</sup> Mann, *British Policy and Strategy Towards Norway, 1941-45*, 172; and Parliament of Norway, "Departementenes meldinger: IV Forsvarsdepartementet", 87, in *Undersøkelleskommisjonen av 1945*, vol. 2; and Skogrand, *Alliert i krig og fred*, vol. 4, *Norsk Forsvarshistorie*, 69.

<sup>228</sup> Fjærli, "Den norske Hær i Storbritannia under krigen", 276.

during operations in Norway. In 1940, Norwegian authorities had had the country's established military and civil administrations to rely on in this regard, in addition to a numerical majority in terms of military personnel. During future operations in Norway, neither was likely to be the case, and it would take time for a functioning Norwegian military administration to be established. In the meantime, the liaison service was to be the Norwegian authorities' representatives and be responsible for communication between the local civil administration, likely in a state of turmoil, and the Allied military authorities.<sup>229</sup>

Hansteen had estimated early on in the reorganisation process that in the case of an invasion as many as 120-140 liaison officers would be needed per Allied division and that two to three Allied divisions would be needed for the recapture of a single Norwegian region. Even if this number was reduced to a more reasonable fifty per division, this still meant that several hundred liaisons had to be trained.<sup>230</sup>

At the time of NMM's appointment, a number of Norwegian officers had already received liaison training as part of Brig N's attachment to 52nd (Lowland) Division.<sup>231</sup> While another group of military personnel would be trained for liaison duty in TGB/HSØ, a large segment would ultimately be drawn from the Norwegian civil administration.<sup>232</sup>

#### 4.9 Rankin (Norway) and the question of Northern Norway

When the Norwegians eventually were informed of the Allied plans for the liberation of Norway in December of 1943, they were far from impressed. According to the plan, which was based on the Rankin C scenario, no Allied forces were to be deployed to Northern Norway. To the Norwegian Government, and especially Minister of Foreign Affairs Trygve Lie, this was unacceptable. They considered it essential that British and American troops be present in Northern Norway to deter Soviet incursion on Norwegian territory. Further, Norwegian authorities considered the force the Allies intended to make use of to be too small,

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<sup>229</sup> Parliament of Norway, "Departementenes meldinger: IV Forsvarsdepartementet", 177-178, in *Undersøkelleskommisjonen av 1945*, vol. 2; and "Virksomhet utenfor Norges grenser: 1940-1945", 18, RAFA-2017, Series Yf, Box 212, Folder 1, Norwegian Armed Forces Military History Department archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>230</sup> Fjærli, "Den norske Hær i Storbritannia under krigen", 276; and "Training of the Norwegian Land Forces in U.K.", 28 February 1942, 3, RAFA-2017, Series Yf, Box 211, Norwegian Armed Forces Military History Department archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>231</sup> Mann, *British Policy and Strategy Towards Norway, 1941-45*, 172.

<sup>232</sup> Skogrand, *Alliert i krig og fred*, vol. 4, *Norsk Forsvarshistorie*, 87.

only comprising one British division and one American infantry regiment, likely totalling just north of 20,000 men.<sup>233</sup>

Hansteen and Strugstad informed Lt. Gen. Frederick Morgan, head of COSSAC, of the Norwegian authorities concerns during a meeting on 11 January 1944. With regard to the question of Northern Norway, Morgan agreed that this was a serious issue and promised to discuss the matter with ScotCo. As for the planned size of the Allied force, Morgan replied that any plan had to be based on the forces that the Allies could expect to have at their disposal in the UK at any given time. When Hansteen later inquired about what plans were in place for a liberation of Norway under the conditions of Rankin A, Morgan told him that no plans existed for this scenario relating to Norway. However, concerning the Rankin C plan, which the Norwegians were to develop further in cooperation with ScotCo, this plan did, in practice, also cover the eventuality of Rankin B.<sup>234</sup>

As more information regarding ScotCo's plans were disclosed to the Norwegians through the winter and early spring of 1944, Norwegian authorities maintained that Northern Norway had to be included in the plan. This matter was becoming ever more pressing due to the situation on the Soviet front with Finland, which seemed to open up the possibility of Northern Norway being liberated by the Soviets while the Germans still controlled the southern part of the country. Fears that the Soviets might put forth territorial demands similar to those placed on Poland earlier that same year caused the MOD to inquire of the British Foreign Office regarding what agreements existed between the three major Allies with regard to the operational responsibility for Norway. The answer Lie got from the head of Northern Department, Christopher Warner, was that, as far as he was aware, Norway was considered an Anglo-American area of operations. He did, however, promise to personally bring the matter before Anthony Eden, to which Lie then asked that it be clarified whether there was anything in the agreement which prevented Soviet troops from taking part in a campaign in Norway.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 94-95; Mann, *British Policy and Strategy Towards Norway, 1941-45*, 173; and Riste, *1942-1945: Veggen Heim*, vol. 2, "London-regjeringa", 154-155.

<sup>234</sup> Mann, *British Policy and Strategy Towards Norway, 1941-45*, 175; Riste, *1942-1945: Veggen Heim*, vol. 2, "London-regjeringa", 155; and COSSAC, Memorandum concerning meeting with FO, 12 January 1944, WO 229, Box 30, Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force and 21 Army Group Microfilms, TNA, Kew, London, United Kingdom.

<sup>235</sup> Riste, *1942-1945: Veggen Heim*, vol. 2, "London-regjeringa", 156, 163.

The reason Lie wanted to know whether it would be possible for Soviet troops to take part in operations in Norway was that Norwegian authorities were considering reaching out to the Soviets to come to an agreement regarding the liberation of Northern Norway prior to them entering the country. Such an agreement, however, had to be along the same lines as the Anglo-Norwegian jurisdiction agreement which had been in the works since early 1943. While the Soviets had expressed that they considered Norway to be the responsibility of the British, in reality, no official document or agreement existed to that effect. After some deliberation, Norwegian authorities signed three almost identical agreements with the British, Americans and Soviets on 16 May 1944.<sup>236</sup> The gist of the agreements was that the Allied commanders were to be the country's highest authority during the initial phase of the liberation and should have Norwegian liaisons and advisors attached to their staffs. As the situation allowed for it, however, control over the civil administration should eventually be transferred back to the Norwegian Government.<sup>237</sup>

#### 4.10 Conclusion

In the autumn and winter of 1941-42, British and Soviet authorities discussed several possible operations against Norway.<sup>238</sup> While these ultimately did not go beyond the initial planning stages, fears of being left out prompted the Norwegian Government to change its approach to how Norway was to be liberated and to seek to establish better relations with the British.<sup>239</sup> In addition to re-establishing FO and making changes to the MOD, this involved a significant reorganisation of the Army-in-exile.

Prior to the reorganisation, the Army, while small, was organised as a traditional brigade meaning it could be used as a standalone force in combat operations alongside Allied formations. With the reorganisation, however, the Army was transformed from a fighting force itself, to a support and command organisation. While FO would be responsible for planning operations and coordinating with the resistance, the Army would provide the men and materiel when the time came to put those plans into action. This change in purpose

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<sup>236</sup> Mann, *British Policy and Strategy Towards Norway, 1941-45*, 178; and Riste, *1942-1945: Veggen Heim*, vol. 2, "London-regjeringa", 164-171.

<sup>237</sup> Lie, *Hjemover*, 122, 130.

<sup>238</sup> Mann, *British Policy and Strategy Towards Norway, 1941-45*, 68-76.

<sup>239</sup> Skogrand, *Alliert i krig og fred*, vol. 4, *Norsk Forsvarshistorie*, 68.

becomes particularly apparent when looking at how the ratio of officers to ORs changed over the period.

The scenario that FO and the Norwegian Government would plan for from the spring of 1942 was a full-scale liberation of Norway against a German force both willing and able to put up an organised defence. While the British might have entertained thoughts of an operation along those lines in the winter of 1941 and to a lesser degree into the spring of 1942, the course of the war appears to have put such plans on hold until an Allied grand strategy for the war in Europe had been decided. Poor communication from the side of the Allies; as seen in COSSAC's directive often purposefully so, made it hard for the Norwegian planners to adjust to these changes. By the autumn of 1943, however, the Allies had decided that Norway was to be liberated following the final German surrender and relegated planning for operations in Norway to ScotCo.

While a good working relationship would form between ScotCo and Norwegian authorities, it soon became apparent that Norway was placed far down the list of priorities for the Allies, with only a small force being held in reserve for a possible liberation. In the wake of the Allied invasion of Normandy in June 1944, however, the situation would become even more desperate as these formations were deployed to the Continent, leaving ScotCo with very little at its disposal other than the Norwegian forces in the UK who themselves demanded to be put into action.



# Chapter 5: Employment and Homecoming

June 1944 to October 1945

In his speech at the Norwegian Brigade's last parade on 29 October 1945, King Haakon VII called the formation "the best-trained army formation the country had ever had".<sup>240</sup> While this statement no doubt was meant to be commendatory, the King's choice of words was also highly appropriate as the formation hardly did anything but train during the nearly five years it was in the UK. Emotions reached a fever pitch in the summer of 1944, when the men of Brig N demanded to be allowed to take part in the Allied advance towards Germany which followed the D-Day landings.

While some would be allowed to prove themselves on the Continent and during the liberation of Northern Norway, the majority of the Brigade would return home never having fired a shot in anger. This chapter will attempt to explain why that was the case by looking at what considerations informed the Government's decision to keep Brig N in reserve in the summer of 1944 as well as the different scenarios that were being considered for the liberation in the final months of the war.

## 5.1 New C-in-C Norwegian Forces

By Order in Council of 30 June 1944, Norwegian Crown Prince Olav was made C-in-C Norwegian Forces with Hansteen as his second-in-command.<sup>241</sup> Attempts had been made at multiple occasions to include the Crown Prince in a significant capacity during the reconquest of Norway. The rationale for this appears to have been multifaceted. Externally, making Olav the figurehead of the liberating force would help highlight the contribution of the Norwegian Armed Forces in exile to the Norwegian people, and hopefully ease tensions, political or otherwise, that might have emerged during the transition period. As for internally, Torp seems to have hoped that the appointment would lead to an increase in cooperation

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<sup>240</sup> Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 105 (my translation).

<sup>241</sup> Order in Council no. 179, 30 June 1944, S-1001, Series Ac, Box 124, Secretariat to the Government archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

between the different branches of the Armed Forces, among whom there still was a significant amount of bickering and conflict.<sup>242</sup>

## 5.2 The question of Brig N and the Continent

Soon after the invasion of Normandy, 52nd (Lowland) Division was sent to Southern England to prepare for deployment to the Continent. The transfer of the formation, which Brig N had been attached to and trained with for over two years, was a significant blow to the Brigade's morale. The men had on multiple occasions asked to be allowed to participate in combat operations, be it in North Africa, Italy or elsewhere. However, by stressing the importance of maintaining Brig N in a state of readiness for operations in Norway, Norwegian authorities had been able to keep the men in relatively good spirits, knowing that they had a role to play. With the imminent deployment of the formation which had been intended to be Brig N's companion, the prospect of operations in Norway seemed to have diminished drastically, prompting many to question whether they would ever see combat.<sup>243</sup>

The frustration of Brig N's personnel manifested itself as letters to the MOD from each of the Brigade's mountain companies as well as its operations staff on 12 and 13 August 1944.<sup>244</sup> At the core of the letters was the desire to follow 52nd Division to the Continent. While aware of the restrictions written into the military agreement of 1941 limiting their use to "the defence of the United Kingdom or for the purpose of regaining Norway"<sup>245</sup>, they all believed that this policy should no longer apply as the reason for holding them back had always been to be ready for the invasion of Norway. However, it seemed apparent at this point in the war that the liberation of Norway would not come about as a result of a battle in Norway but rather a battle for Norway; one fought on the Continent. Further, the policy, the wording of which implied that the restrictions were to apply equally to all branches, in reality

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<sup>242</sup> Riste, *Utefront*, vol. 7, *Norge i Krig*, 180-181; and Skogrand, *Alliert i krig og fred*, vol. 4, *Norsk Forsvarshistorie*, 101.

<sup>243</sup> Holmås, "Den norske Brigade i Skottland", 26; PM from HOK, 16 August 1944, 1-3, RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1011, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and Report from 2nd Mountain Company to Brig N, 9 July 1944, RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1011, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>244</sup> Similar letters were also sent directly to King Haakon VII who, unsurprisingly, replied that he agreed with the Government's decision.

<sup>245</sup> Military agreement between the governments of Norway and the United Kingdom, 28 May 1941, Article 1, S-6443, Sub Archive 2, Series Dc, Box 215, Folder 3, Norwegian Consulate General in Montréal archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

only affected the Army, with both the Navy and the Air Force having taken part in Operation Overlord.<sup>246</sup>

Throughout Brig N, there seems to have been an overwhelming fear of missing out and returning home without having been given a chance to hit back against the Germans. While the promise of an eventual outlet, i.e. the invasion of Norway, had helped keep feelings in check, with the transfer of 52nd Division feelings of hopelessness and negativity overcame many. The effect on the morale and mental wellbeing of the men was such that the Brigade's medical officers, Captain Torstein Dale and Captain Jon Myhre, sent a letter to the head of the Norwegian Armed Forces Joint Medical Services. In it, they expressed their concerns about the consequences that the diminished prospect of active service had on the men.<sup>247</sup> The matter was not helped by the sentiment present among the local population in Scotland, who believed that the Norwegians were to do their part at the frontlines. Remarks to that effect resulted in a number of fights breaking out and led to the men of Brig N dreading to leave the camp out of shame and the fear of being harassed.<sup>248</sup>

Brig N's letters prompted HOK to issue a PM on 16 August 1944. In the PM, HOK asked the Government to consider revising its policy and come to a decision concerning whether or not fifty Norwegian liaison officers attached to 52nd Division should be allowed to follow the division to the Continent as per the request of Lt. Gen. Thorne and ScotCo.<sup>249</sup> While assurances had been made orally that these could quickly be withdrawn in the event they were to be needed in Norway, HOK feared that the Brigade's personnel would "hardly be able to see the difference between sending (and being able to bring back) - some

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<sup>246</sup> 1st Mountain Company to the MOD, 12 August 1944, RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1011, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; 2nd Mountain Company to the MOD, 12 August 1944, RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1011, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; 3rd Mountain Company to the MOD, 13 August 1944, RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1011, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; Brig N's operations staff to the MOD, 12 August 1944, RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1011, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and Skogrand, *Alliert i krig og fred*, vol. 4, *Norsk Forsvarshistorie*, 84.

<sup>247</sup> Aanensen, *Når vi kommer inn fra havet*, 130-131; Dale and Myhre to FSAN, 22 August 1944 RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1011, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and 3rd Mountain Company to the MOD, 13 August 1944, RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1011, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>248</sup> Dale and Myhre to FSAN, 22 August 1944, RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1011, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; 1st Mountain Company to the MOD, 12 August 1944, RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1011, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and Report from 2nd Mountain Company to Brig N, 9 July 1944, RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1011, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>249</sup> PM from HOK, 16 August 1944, 3-4, RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1011, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

individuals [...] and units with all their equipment”.<sup>250</sup> Hence they would interpret such an arrangement as a change to the Government’s policy, leading to further demands of active participation. If approval were to be given, they would have to obtain a written assurance from Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) and possibly even ask that an arrangement be made, on the same conditions, allowing other units to be deployed to the frontline for a limited period.<sup>251</sup>

On the same day as HOK issued its PM, FO ordered NMM to inquire of its Dutch and Belgian counterparts as to what policies and restriction they had in place with regard to the employment of their armies. Both the Dutch Princess Irene Brigade and the Belgian Piron Brigade, which were comparable to Brig N in size, had recently been deployed to France. In NMM’s reply the following day, Strugstad writes that neither the Belgians nor the Dutch had general restrictions governing where their formations could be employed, as long as their use had been cleared with the respective country’s authorities. Further, no reservations had been made for either of the formations prior to them being deployed to France. The Dutch official Strugstad had been in contact with had even stated that they considered it impossible for the Princess Irene Brigade to return home without first having been given an opportunity to prove itself on the frontline; a sentiment identical to the one present among the personnel of Brig N.

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While the Dutch and Belgian formations were comparable to Brig N in size, at about 2,000 men each in August 1944, they were organised quite differently. Consisting primarily of motorised infantry companies; in the case of the Piron Brigade supported by a significant armoured element of some eighty-two armoured cars and trucks, they were trained and equipped for operations in the relatively flat and open landscape of Northern France and the Low Countries.<sup>253</sup> As for Brig N, the majority of its operational units, most prominently its three mountain companies, still used horses as their primary mode of transport, lacked the necessary AA and AT capabilities and were organised in such a way that they could not be easily incorporated into British formations.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> PM from HOK, 16 August 1944, 4-5, RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1011, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway (my translation).

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>252</sup> Strugstad to FO, 17 August 1944, RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1011, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>253</sup> De Vos, “The Reconstruction of Belgian Military Forces in Britain”, 94-95.

<sup>254</sup> PM from HOK, 16 August 1944, 5-6, RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1011, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

On 21 August 1944, Hansteen issued a memorandum examining the challenges and benefits of letting Norwegian army units participate in combat operations on the Continent. He concluded that while there were factors in favour of such an arrangement, such as officers gaining experience that could benefit the Army post-war and the bolstering of moral, deploying entire units would mean running the risk of these not only being unavailable for the liberation of Norway, but of them being reduced to such a degree that they could no longer be effective. Hansteen was, however, open to letting the fifty or so liaisons take part, as these would be spread throughout 52nd Division, meaning they were less likely to suffer significant losses, and as they could be easily withdrawn should the need arise.<sup>255</sup>

The matter was finally discussed at a meeting of the Government on 22 August 1944, in which Torp proposed that the liaisons should be allowed to take part. However, as the minutes of the meeting state, “while no definitive decision was made, it can be said that opinions were highly divided.”<sup>256</sup>

Later that day, Trygve Lie had been invited to lunch by Anthony Eden together with his French, Dutch, Belgian and Luxembourg colleagues. At some point in their conversation, after having described the general mood present among Norwegian army personnel, Lie asked those gathered openly about their thoughts regarding Norwegian participation in the campaign in France. Eden answered that Norwegian troops had to be reserved for operations in Norway, to which the others agreed. Lie went on to say that, as far as he was aware, ScotCo had requested that Norwegian troops be allowed to remain with 52nd Division and that while ScotCo’s primary interest had been the liaisons attached to that division, as he understood it, the request also covered other regular units from Brig N.<sup>257</sup> This last part, however, appears to have come about as the result of a misunderstanding. During the Government’s meeting that morning, Torp had relayed the request made by General Thorne regarding the liaisons being allowed to remain with the division. To this, he had added that while ScotCo had made no requests regarding the rest of Brig N, he assumed that Thorne would not be opposed to such an arrangement if they were to make the offer. However,

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<sup>255</sup> Hansteen’s memorandum, 21 August 1944, RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1011, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>256</sup> Minutes of meeting of the Norwegian Government, 22 August 1944, S-1005, Series Aa, Box 3, Office of the Prime Minister archive, RA, Oslo, Norway (my translation).

<sup>257</sup> Note by Trygve Lie, 24 August 1944, RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1011, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway

Torp's assumption was quickly proven wrong, with ScotCo requesting that the Norwegian Army-in-exile remain in Britain to be available for operations in Norway.<sup>258</sup>

The Government's decision was sent to FO through the MOD on 30 August 1944. It stated that they considered it necessary to maintain:

“that our operational units remain reserved for direct participation in the reacquisition of Norway or the defence of the UK, but that the liaison officers serving with the aforementioned British division should be allowed to follow this division in the case it is deployed to France, provided that they can be withdrawn at short notice”.<sup>259</sup>

To justify its decision, the MOD referred to the restrictions written into the military agreement of 1941 which gave Norwegian authorities the right to reserve the use of its forces vis-à-vis the British. While the same restrictions did apply to all branches of the Norwegian Armed Forces, due to the nature of their service, it had been necessary to interpret the agreement with certain adaptations as far as it related to the Navy and Air Force. However, as stated later in the document, the real reason for not letting Brig N be employed on the Continent was not the military agreement, as it almost certainly would have been possible for Norwegian units to take part in the campaign had Norwegian authorities wanted to do so. The Government's real concern was that the units would not be available for the liberation of Norway, either because they could not be withdrawn in time for such an eventuality or as a result of the units (which were small and almost exclusively made up of infantry) having been decimated or suffered unsustainable losses. If Norwegian units were to be deployed, strict restrictions would have had to be placed on them, largely defeating the purpose of committing them in the first place.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Torp to Lie, 30 August 1944, RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1011, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>259</sup> HOK's announcement of the Government's decision concerning employment on the Continent, 1 September 1944, 1, RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1011, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway (my translation).

<sup>260</sup> Concept for decision from the MOD to FO, 26 August 1944, PA-1832, Series Fd, Box 9, Folder 1, Olav Riste archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; HOK's announcement of the Government's decision, 1 September 1944, 1-3, RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1011, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and Wilhelm von Tangen Hansteen's explanation to the Commission of Inquiry of 1945, 28 December 1946, Series Db, Box 7, Commission of Inquiry of 1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

The Government also claimed that the decision was in line with reports coming from Norway, which stated that the people there expected the Norwegian forces to come to their aid and not be occupied fighting a war on the Continent which many considered to be a conflict between Europe's major powers and only tangentially related to the war at home.<sup>261</sup> While the Dutch and Belgians could be considered to be en route to their own countries when they were deployed to France, the same could be said of the Norwegians. If the Germans got word that Norwegian units had been deployed to the Continent, they might consider it as evidence of there being no plans for an Allied attack on Norway in the foreseeable future, allowing them to move troops from Norway to other parts of Europe. Similarly, the Norwegian people would no doubt come to the same conclusions, something that, in turn, could affect their morale and opinion of the Norwegian authorities abroad. By Norwegian forces remaining in the UK, the threat against Norway was, at least to some degree, maintained and so to the belief among the Norwegian people that liberation was at hand.<sup>262</sup>

### 5.3 The Norwegian Army's contribution to the fighting on the Continent

In addition to the fifteen graduates from the Norwegian Military Academy serving with various British units mentioned in the previous chapter, and about fifty liaisons with 52nd Division, the only members of the Army-in-exile who would eventually be deployed to the Continent were those in No. 5 Troop, 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando. While an exact number has proven hard to come by, this unit likely consisted of about ninety men at the time who, while under British command, technically were still part of the Norwegian Army. The unit landed at Arromanches on 27 September and was taken to a staging area near the Belgian city of Brügge. At the beginning of November, they took part in the attack on Walcheren and was later employed mainly in the Netherlands.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> HOK's announcement of the Government's decision concerning employment on the Continent, 1 September 1944, 2-3, RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1011, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and Riste, *1942-1945: Veggen Heim*, vol. 2, "London-regjeringa", 24-25.

<sup>262</sup> HOK's announcement of the Government's decision concerning employment on the Continent, 1 September 1944, 3, RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1011, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>263</sup> Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 190; and Haga, *Klar til storm*, 23, 98-99.

As all available forces would be needed for the liberation of Norway, these would all be recalled prior to the final German capitulation, taking on roles as instructors and liaisons and providing personnel for the regional commands.<sup>264</sup>

#### 5.4 Another reorganisation?

In the autumn of 1943, elements of Brig N took part in the manoeuvre Goliath II. During the manoeuvre, the mountain companies were initially employed as FO had intended with each of the companies being attached to a different brigade of 52nd Division. Later in the exercise, however, the companies would operate as a single unit. For this they proved unsuited, as they not only lacked the necessary AA and AT support to be effective in this capacity but also, as the British umpires stated in their report, tended to operate too independently. In the wake of Goliath II, FO, therefore, asked that HOK produce guidelines for the use of the mountain companies to be distributed to the parties concerned. In addition to outlining how FO had intended for them to be used, the guidelines were to include how the companies could be employed as a cohesive unit together with other elements of the Brigade.<sup>265</sup>

As treated extensively in the previous chapter, the very reason Hansteen had wanted Brig N's battalions reorganised into independent mountain companies were for them to operate individually alongside Allied formations. However, their unique organisation, which both HOK and the leadership of the Brigade had been opposed to, made them poorly suited for use as a regular brigade. Nevertheless, the final paragraph of the guidelines issued by HOK in January of 1944 states that:

“The Mountain Companies - and other Norwegian Units in U.K. - can of course also be handled as one force under a Norwegian Brigade H.Q. if this should prove desirable under certain circumstances. The Mountain Companies should then be regarded and handled in a similar manner to battalions in an ordinary Brigade.”<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> Berg, *Krigsskolen i London 1942-43*, 61; Frøystad, *Fra hesterygg til stridsvogn*, 198-199; Haga, *Klar til storm*, 169; and HOK to NMM, 29 November 1944, RAFA-2062, Box 2536, Folder 70, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway. The liaisons were recalled in late November 1944, the Military Academy graduates around Christmas 1944-45 and No. 5 Troop, 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando in early February 1945.

<sup>265</sup> Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 76, 85.

<sup>266</sup> HOK, “Some points re Norwegian Independent Mountains Coys”, 20 January 1944, in Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 155-158.



Likely due to the same considerations that had been present during the reorganisation, supported by repeatedly not being given tasks corresponding to their specialised training during manoeuvres, the idea of the mountain companies was still unpopular among the Brigade's leadership in the summer of 1944. In the ever more likely event of Norway being liberated following the final German surrender, fast and mobile units; which mountain companies reliant on horses most certainly were not, would be needed to control the country. At the request of Brig N, HOK, therefore, asked FO to be allowed to reorganise the mountain companies into motorised battalions, an arrangement ScotCo had previously expressed its support for, and further, that an armoured reconnaissance squadron and possibly even a Norwegian tank troop be established.<sup>267</sup>

The carrier platoon, which had had survive the reorganisation of 1942, had been disbanded upon returning from Svalbard in December 1943. The men had been transferred to 2nd Mountain Company, the paratrooper company and Norwegian Company, Iceland, the latter of which was itself disbanded in early summer of 1944. This, and the addition of some 400 new arrivals from Sweden as part of Operation Balder, meant that HOK had a significant number of personnel at its disposal, some of which had previously been trained in reconnaissance and knew how to operate Universal Carriers. To HOK, this, therefore, appeared to be the perfect time to establish a new reconnaissance unit with the men from the old carrier platoon at its core, supplemented with personnel from Norwegian Company, Iceland as well as some number of new recruits.<sup>268</sup>

In the exchange that followed HOK's request, FO maintained that the mountain companies should remain as they were, as a reorganisation would not only be detrimental to the morale of the men but also involved running the risk of the units not being ready for deployment to Norway at short notice.<sup>269</sup> FO did, however, acknowledge the need for mobile units and agreed to the establishment of an independent reconnaissance squadron as well as a motorised transport unit to replace the horses of the mountain companies. Concerning the creation of a Norwegian tank troop, FO set as a prerequisite for talks with WO that this unit

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<sup>267</sup> Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 85-87; HOK to the Norwegian Military Attaché to London, 5 September 1944, RAFA-2062, Box 2590, Folder 300, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and PM from HOK, 16 August 1944, 6, RAFA-2062, Box 2737, Folder 1011, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>268</sup> Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 147; HOK to Brig N, 5 September 1944, RAFA-2062, Box 2590, Folder 300, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and Holmås, "Motorisert oppklaringseskadrons historie", 169.

<sup>269</sup> Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 87-88.

in no way should delay or impede the establishment of the reconnaissance unit.<sup>270</sup> While it is unclear whether or not the question of a Norwegian tank troop was ever posed to WO, what is clear is that no such unit ever materialised. However, the plans for the transport unit and reconnaissance squadron were approved by WO, with the latter becoming a force of approximately 270 men issued with seven Daimler “Dingo” Scout Cars, nine Daimler Armoured Cars and twenty-odd Universal Carriers.<sup>271</sup>

## 5.5 The liberation of Finnmark

In the evening of 18 October 1944, Norway’s ambassador to Moscow Rolf Andvord was informed by the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs Vyacheslav Molotov that the Red Army planned to move into Norway in the near future and that the Soviet Government had agreed to a request which the Norwegian Government had sent in March of that year regarding the participation of Norwegian troops. What Andvord was not told, however, was that the Petsamo-Kirkenes Offensive had already begun and that troops of the Soviet 14th Army had crossed the border into Norway earlier that day. It would be a week before the Norwegian Government was informed, at which point the Soviets had already liberated the town of Kirkenes.<sup>272</sup>

Lie presented the contents of Andvord’s conversation with Molotov to the other members of the Government in their meeting on 20 October. During this meeting, it was decided to make arrangements for a Norwegian military mission as well as an element of Brig N to be sent to Petsamo.<sup>273</sup> After having conferred with the British, an order was issued

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<sup>270</sup> FO to HOK, 9 September 1944, RAFA-2062, Box 2590, Folder 300, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; HOK to Brig N, 5 September 1944, RAFA-2062, Box 2590, Folder 300, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and HOK to the Norwegian Military Attaché to London, 5 September 1944, RAFA-2062, Box 2590, Folder 300, Norwegian Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>271</sup> Christophersen et al., “Vår militære innsats utenfor Norge”, 749-750; Holmås, “Motorisert oppklaringseskadrons historie”, 170; and “Virksomhet utenfor Norges grenser: 1940-1945”, 17-18, RAFA-2017, Series Yf, Box 212, Folder 1, Norwegian Armed Forces Military History Department archive, RA, Oslo, Norway. Christophersen et al. state that the unit had twenty-seven Universal Carriers while Holmås says that there were twenty-three.

<sup>272</sup> Fløtten, *Festung Kirkenes*, 85, 100-101; Minutes of meeting of the Norwegian Government, 14 March 1944, S-1005, Series Aa, Box 3, Office of the Prime Minister archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; Minutes of meeting of the Norwegian Government, 20 October 1944, S-1005, Series Aa, Box 3, Office of the Prime Minister archive, RA, Oslo, Norway; and Minutes of meeting of the Norwegian Government, 26 October 1944, S-1005, Series Aa, Box 3, Office of the Prime Minister archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>273</sup> Minutes of meeting of the Norwegian Government, 20 October 1944, S-1005, Series Aa, Box 3, Office of the Prime Minister archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

on the 25th to that effect. The operation was codenamed Crofter while the Norwegian contribution was given the designation Force 138. The force was to consist of a military mission, including Area Command Finnmark, under the command of Colonel Arne Dagfin Dahl, 2nd Mountain Company, Brig N under the command of Major Sturla Rognstad and an area naval command under Commander Erling Hostvedt.<sup>274</sup>

Most of Force 138 departed from Greenock aboard HMS *Berwick* on 30 October. Due to logistical constraints, 2nd Mountain Company was forced to leave both their horses and vehicles behind and was reduced to 208 men. Upon arrival in Murmansk on 6 November, the Company was placed under the command of the Soviet 114th Rifle Division. Having rested for a couple of days, the men were transported to Petsamo by boat and from there by truck across the border, reaching Kirkenes on the 11th.<sup>275</sup>

By the time 2nd Mountain Company had been made operational, Soviet forces had already reached what would become their foremost position at the village of Rustefjelbma on the river Tana. Meanwhile, the German 20th Mountain Army continued its retreat along Highway 50 (now part of E6) towards Lyngen in accordance with Operation Nordlicht while making use of scorched-earth tactics, burning houses, destroying infrastructure such as bridges, roads and telephone-wires and evacuating the local population. The Company was brought to the frontline and relieved the Soviets stationed at Rustefjelbma on 27 November. From there, they would conduct reconnaissance missions along the highway to make contact with the German rearguard and, when possible, disrupt their attempts at laying waste to the area.<sup>276</sup>

From the time Force 138 arrived in Finnmark, the Soviets pushed for a more substantial Norwegian contribution to be sent to the area. In early 1945, to both please the Soviets and hopefully dissuade them from sending their forces further into Norway, the Norwegian Government made plans to have the rest of Brig N as well as elements from the Norwegian Navy and Air Force sent to Finnmark. However, due to a number of political and

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<sup>274</sup> Dahl, "Frigjøringen av Finnmark", 570.

<sup>275</sup> Christophersen et al., "Vår militære innsats utenfor Norge", 766; Dahl, *Nord-Norges forsvar fra vikingtiden til i dag*, 115-116; Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 96-97; and Holmås and Huitfeldt, "2. kompanis historie", 78. The plan had been for the military mission to be transferred to Murmansk by air. However, due in part to weather conditions and in part issues securing visas, the mission ultimately had to be transported aboard two British destroyers, thereby arriving a couple of days later than the rest of Force 138.

<sup>276</sup> Gamst, *Finnmark under hakekorset*, 188-193; and Holmås and Huitfeldt, "2. kompanis historie", 78.

logistical concerns, approval for a revised version of the plan would not come from SHAEF before 8 May, at which point it was, for obvious reasons, no longer relevant.<sup>277</sup>

On 6 February 1945, command of 2nd Mountain Company was transferred from the Soviet 114th Rifle Division to Regional Command Finnmark (*Distriktskommando Finnmark*; DKF), formerly Area Command Finnmark. DKF had since arriving in Northern Norway and with the help of a cadre of army officers transferred from the UK, worked to establish new army units from among the local population. The result was a battalion of nearly 800 by the end of the war. In addition, DKF received one battalion *Reservepoliti* and two companies *Rikspoliti* from the Norwegian police troops in Sweden in January as well as some other elements later in the spring, totalling 1,310 men according to their war establishment. This meant that by the end of the war, DKF would be in command of some 2,735 men, a force the size of a small brigade.<sup>278</sup>

## 5.6 Preparing for the endgame

As previously mentioned, it was COSSAC's, and later SHAEF's, intention that the liberation of Norway was to follow the final German surrender. The plan that had started out as Rankin C (Norway) and eventually would become Apostle, therefore, presumed a scenario where German forces in Norway did not put up a fight and hence only a relatively small Allied force would be needed to round up and disarm the approximately 350,000 Germans in the country. The formations that were intended to make up Force 134, as it was designated, were 52nd (Lowland) Division, an American infantry regiment reinforced by the "Norwegian" US 99th Infantry Battalion and Brig N. Apart from Brig N, however, these were all engaged on the Continent in the autumn and winter of 1944. In place of 52nd Division, Thorne was promised the British 1st Airborne Division. However, as this formation had been decimated at Arnhem in September during the failed Operation Market Garden, it would not be operational before May of 1945, and even then in a reduced capacity.<sup>279</sup>

Due to the lack of formations available to them, ScotCo began to show an interest in how not only Brig N but also the Norwegian resistance movement and the Norwegian police

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<sup>277</sup> Riste, *1942-1945: Veggen Heim*, vol. 2, "London-regjeringa", 214-222.

<sup>278</sup> Dahl, "Frigjøringen av Finnmark", 583, 586, 591; Dahl, *Nord-Norges forsvar fra vikingtiden til i dag*, 125-132; and Ørvik, *Norsk militær i Sverige 1943-1945*, 252.

<sup>279</sup> Hart, "The Forgotten Liberator", 246; Riste, *1942-1945: Veggen Heim*, vol. 2, "London-regjeringa", 155; and Thorne, *Fredsgeneralen*, trans. Nøkleby, 25, 29-30.

troops in Sweden could be employed during a potential liberation. At one point in the autumn of 1944, Thorne even considered the possibility of the initial liberation being undertaken by Norwegian forces alone, an arrangement which would have relied heavily on Milorg to maintain order and control.<sup>280</sup>

While the conditions under which the Allied planners hoped to carry out the liberation of Norway were those of Rankin case C (Apostle I), they had also made provisions for a return under the conditions of Rankin case B; a German withdrawal from the country (Apostle II). In either case, they expected that the liberating force would encounter little, if any, resistance. Hence, no plans existed to cover less favourable scenarios such as individual German formations refusing to lay down their arms or the possibility of Norway remaining a German stronghold even after the fall of Germany itself.<sup>281</sup>

The fear of a *Festung Norwegen* seems to have taken hold of both Norwegian authorities and Allied planners in early 1945. As the Allies did not have available to them the necessary formations for a liberation in the face of organised German resistance, attempts were made to involve the hitherto neutral Swedes. In early February, the Norwegian Government was in contact with Swedish authorities to gauge whether they would be willing to put pressure on Germany, possibly under the threat of military force, to bring an end to their destruction of Norway. The Swedish response on this occasion was non-committal with them wanting to wait and see how the situation developed.<sup>282</sup> On 12 April, however, a message was sent from the Norwegian to the Swedish Government requesting that they mobilise their army for it to be ready to intervene in Norway following the German surrender. Citing fears of contributing to an escalation of German brutalities if they were to mobilise their forces and threaten an attack, the Swedes quickly rejected the request.<sup>283</sup>

Around the same time as the Norwegian Government's request, SHAEF was considering plans for an attack through Sweden making use of both Swedish forces, the

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<sup>280</sup> Riste, *1942-1945: Veggen Heim*, vol. 2, "London-regjeringa", 240. The section treating the lack of formations available to General Thorne in Riste is titled "Generalen utan soldatar" which translates to "The general without soldiers".

<sup>281</sup> Eriksen and Halvorsen, *Frigjøring*, vol. 8, *Norge i krig*, 116; Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 95; and Riste, *1942-1945: Veggen Heim*, vol. 2, "London-regjeringa", 242.

<sup>282</sup> Riste, *1942-1945: Veggen Heim*, vol. 2, "London-regjeringa", 247-248, 251.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, 255-259. While political considerations likely were a determining factor in the Swedish rejection of the Norwegian request to mobilise, there is also evidence that rather than a Swedish mobilisation directly leading to an increase in German destruction, the Swedes believed that such a mobilisation would bolster the confidence of the Norwegian resistance movement, making them act rashly and lead to the same outcome.

Norwegian Police troops in Sweden as well as whatever formations the Allies could spare. The plan was presented to the Swedes on 30 April and was immediately accepted. However, before the necessary arrangements could be made, Germany surrendered.<sup>284</sup>

### 5.7 The return to Norway

While the Allies had been planning the return to Norway for two years, uncertainty with regard to continued German resistance, what forces ScotCo would have at its disposal and how these were to be transported to Norway, made it so that these constantly had to be changed. Barely a week before the German surrender, General Thorne was told that the three Special Air Service regiments which were supposed to make up the Allied vanguard force for the liberation (Operation Doomsday) were needed on the Continent. In their place, he was to receive a brigade from the recently operational 1st Airborne Division. A revised version of Operation Doomsday, therefore, was not ready until 7 May.<sup>285</sup>

As a result of the uncertainty and constant changes, the return to Norway would eventually involve quite a bit of improvisation, with units being transferred as transports became available. The first of what would, by the middle of June, be 30,000 Allied troops, were landed in Oslo and Stavanger by air on 9 May 1945. Among them were Brig N's paratrooper company. That same day, the Norwegian police troops in Sweden crossed the border together with a number of instructors from the Army-in-exile and the regional commands for Northern, Eastern and Central Norway. These had been transferred to Sweden in April to be ready to go into action immediately after the German surrender. As for the remainder of Brig N, the reconnaissance squadron arrived in Oslo on 17 May while the two remaining mountain companies arrived in Tromsø on the 26th.<sup>286</sup>

Upon arriving in Norway, the mountain companies and the other elements of Brig N were distributed throughout the counties of Nordland and Troms where their main task would be to keep control of the some 150,000 Germans and 50,000 ex-prisoners of war in the area. However, there was also a politically motivated reason for the majority of Brig N to be stationed in the northern part of the country, which was that they were to function as a buffer

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<sup>284</sup> Hart, "The Forgotten Liberator", 246; and Riste, *1942-1945: Veggen Heim*, vol. 2, "London-regjeringa", 261-265.

<sup>285</sup> Riste, *1942-1945: Veggen Heim*, vol. 2, "London-regjeringa", 268-269.

<sup>286</sup> Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 98, 100-101; Riste, *1942-1945: Veggen Heim*, vol. 2, "London-regjeringa", 268, 271; and Skogrand, *Alliert i krig og fred*, vol. 4, *Norsk Forsvarshistorie*, 104-105.

between the Western Allies to the south and the Soviets to the north.<sup>287</sup> Problems arose, however, when the Soviets claimed that the Germans in the area were not under control. Fearing that the Soviets might send troops to “aid us with the disarming of the Germans in the area”<sup>288</sup>, General Thorne quickly had the British 304th Infantry Brigade rerouted to Tromsø where its commander, Brigadier F. W. Sandars, replaced the Norwegian Colonel Otto Hjersing Munthe-Kaas as Zone Commander.<sup>289</sup>

Despite the fears of the Norwegian Government and the Allied planners, the German surrender and the return of Allied forces to Norway was mostly uneventful. By the end of the year, only a handful of both Germans and Allied personnel would remain in the county. Having completed their tasks, the Norwegian Brigade was brought to Oslo where it was disbanded in late October 1945. What had, for some, been five years filled predominantly with training and waiting, had finally come to an end.<sup>290</sup>

## 5.8 Conclusion

In the preface to his 1982 book, Fjærli writes that in addition to the sixty-odd Norwegian officers serving with British units in the autumn of 1944 only three units of the Norwegian Army-in-exile were in direct contact with the enemy during the war. These were the garrison on Svalbard, 2nd Mountain Company and No. 5 Troop, 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando, in total approximately 600 men.<sup>291</sup> As for the rest, their experiences during the war might be best described, as one individual put it, as “sitting on my arse in Scotland and going on manoeuvres”.<sup>292</sup>

While there seems to have been an opportunity for employment in the autumn of 1944 had Norwegian authorities wanted to do so, there were good reasons not to. Foremost of these was the fear of the units being unavailable for or unable to take part in the liberation of Norway. While maintaining the impression of a possible Allied attack on Norway to keep German troops in the country was cited as a reason to keep Brig N in the UK, political

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<sup>287</sup> Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 103-105; Konow, “Den norske brigade i Skottland”, 12; and Riste, *1942-1945: Veggen Heim*, vol. 2, “London-regjeringa”, 233.

<sup>288</sup> Thorne, *Fredsgeneralen*, trans. Nøkleby, 48 (my translation).

<sup>289</sup> Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 101; Riste, *1942-1945: Veggen Heim*, vol. 2, “London-regjeringa”, 234-235.

<sup>290</sup> Holmås, “Den norske Brigade i Skottland”, 28.

<sup>291</sup> Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 15.

<sup>292</sup> Mann, “The Norwegian Army-in-Exile”, 42.

considerations, i.e. the opinion of the Norwegian people at home, once again appears to have played a significant role in the decision.

It is difficult to fault the Norwegian Government for wanting to hold Brig N in reserve under the conditions that prevailed in the autumn and winter of 1944, especially as it was one of the only formations at ScotCo's disposal for the liberation of Norway. Simultaneously, it is easy to understand why the men of the Brigade demanded to be deployed to the Continent. They had trained for a specific task, some for four years at that point, only to have any chance of putting that training into action seemingly swept out from underneath them. While this was not the fault of Norwegian authorities per se, from the time of the reorganisation in 1942 they had clearly intended for the Army to play a support role and for its operational units to be mostly symbolic. This, in addition to the fact that the restrictions on the Army had been in effect since the Aide Memoire of 10 July 1940, makes it hard to believe that the Government would ever have allowed Brig N, or significant parts of it, to take part in operations on the Continent under any conditions.



# Conclusion

Of the three branches of the Norwegian Armed Forces in exile during the Second World War, the Army was undoubtedly the one that was given the lowest priority and saw the least action. It is even possible to argue that among the armies of the governments-in-exile in the UK, the Norwegian was the only one not to contribute in a significant capacity to combat operations in Europe or North Africa.<sup>293</sup> So why was that the case?

From early on, if not prior to arriving in the UK, the Norwegian Government adopted what can be described as a passive policy with regard to the liberation of Norway. Seemingly content with the idea of Norway being liberated following the final victory over Germany, it was in no rush to rebuild the Army, instead choosing to contribute to the war more broadly by making use of the Navy, Air Force and most importantly the Merchant Fleet.

Besides the Merchant Fleet which would be used to transport sorely needed supplies to the UK while also providing the Norwegian Government with a source of income, it is not difficult to see why Norwegian authorities chose to use the limited pool of personnel at its disposal to strengthen the Navy and Air Force. As Skogrand argues, while the Army relied heavily on infantry to make up the bulk of its fighting force, the Navy and Air Force could compensate for the lack of personnel by making use of technology and equipment. Further, in a war involving armies in the millions, a Norwegian army formation could easily get lost in the crowd, so to speak, while naval and air forces would be more easily recognisable.<sup>294</sup> In simple terms, the impact of 150 men manning a destroyer in the Navy was considered greater than them making up a company in the Army. While this might explain the prioritisation of the Navy and Air Force in the early phase of the war, it does not explain some of the decision relating to the Army and the supply of personnel that the Norwegian Government made in the summer and autumn of 1940.

Even before leaving Northern Norway, the Government made at least two decisions which proved that it had no intention of, or interest in, building up a sizeable Army abroad. The first was the decision not to order Army personnel to follow them to the UK. In addition

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<sup>293</sup> It is certainly possible to argue that the contribution of Luxembourg was not “significant”, only making up a single artillery battery, some eighty men, of the Belgian Piron Brigade. See: Gaul, “The Luxembourg Army”.

<sup>294</sup> Skogrand, *Alliert i krig og fred*, vol. 4, *Norsk Forsvarshistorie*, 60.

to the men being needed to cover the departure of the Norwegian authorities and the Allies, the justification Nygaardsvold would later give was that there were no transports available. The second decision was to decline the offer from the British to arrange transport for 3,000 individuals. Here it is easy to see how one could have helped solve the other. Rather than practical or logistical considerations, the real concern of the Government appears to have been the effect that ordering a large group of Norwegian to the UK could have had on its already weak position vis-à-vis the Norwegian people. This does, however, still leave the question of why they did not accept the British offer if only to bring those who volunteered. Even if conditions had been such that they had only been able to scrape together a couple of hundred men, these would still have made a significant difference to the Army-in-exile early on, especially if some of them had been officers with proper military education.

Despite having been forced to leave the country without a staff or even an aide, Fleischer still believed that Norwegian authorities had been sincere when they had stated that they intended to continue the fight from abroad making use of all available means. He must, therefore, have been somewhat surprised when the Government decided not to agree to the arrangements he had made during his visit to WO, nor his request for general conscription.

Once again, the Government's relationship to the Norwegian people at home seems to have played a significant role in these decisions. Raids were likely to result in reprisals. The Government would, therefore, oppose such ventures for the duration of the war. As to the question of conscription, some concerns were raised as to the legality of making use of the existing laws outside of Norway. However, here, similarly to the decision not to order Army personnel to follow upon leaving the country, the Government feared it would be perceived as forcing Norwegians into active participation in the war at a time when its position was weak. This reasoning also goes far in explaining why little was done to transfer the men and even officers of 1st Division to the UK, although here too legal or at least practical considerations were a factor.

The rejection of Fleischer's requests placed the Army in a state of limbo. While the Government's Aide Memoire of 10 July 1940 stated its intent to call up Norwegians in the UK for military service and to build an Army of 3-4,000 for the liberation of Norway, for the time being, it was content with continuing mandatory registration. Despite conscription being in effect from December 1940 onwards, the low supply of new recruits combined with low prioritisation and the aforementioned transfers of personnel to service elsewhere, led to the

Army seeing barely any increase in size during its first year in the UK (Figure 3). Only in the autumn of 1941, with the establishment of *Stockholmsruten*, a decrease in transfers and the looming reorganisation of the Norwegian military organisation, did this change.

Figure 3: Size of the Norwegian Army-in-exile

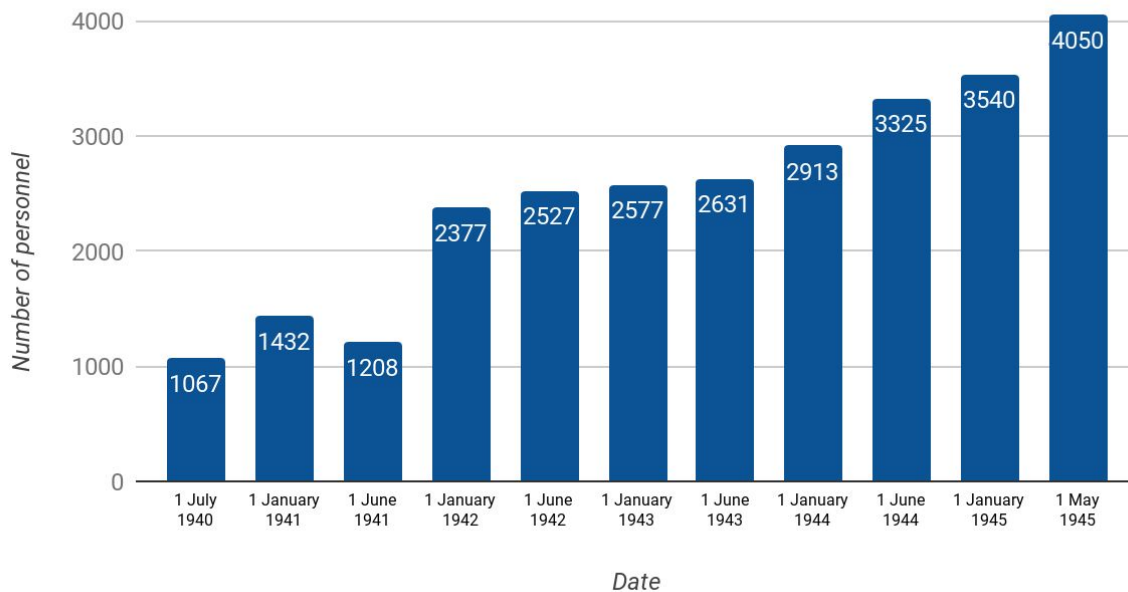


Figure 3. The size of the Army-in-exile every six months. The numbers include those still undergoing training as well as women serving in the Army. Source: All numbers are taken from Fjærli, “Regjeringens policy angående anvendelsen av Den Norske Brigade i Storbritannia”, 212.

The turning point for the Army-in-exile was the change in the Government's approach to the liberation of Norway which was brought about by the prospect of British and Soviet operations on Norwegian soil in the autumn of 1941. At this point in the war, Anglo-Norwegian cooperation had been poorly developed, and Norwegian authorities feared they would not be included in such an operation and hence be unable to assert Norwegian interests. This belief was perpetuated by the lack of information in connection with British raids on the coast of Norway earlier that year. While the official reason given then was secrecy and security concerns, the British stood to gain little from involving the Norwegians and likely expected elements within the Government to disapprove of such raids, as they would later do.

In an attempt to establish better relations with the British and hopefully get involved in operations in Norway, several changes were made to the Norwegian military organisation in the winter of 1941-42. Among these was the re-establishment of FO, an attempt at

establishing a joint Anglo-Norwegian planning committee as well as an increased focus on and a reorganisation of the Army-in-exile to take on support and liaisons roles for the Allied force and prove the value of Norwegian involvement. This reorganisation, and the change in the Government's approach to the liberation that was central to it, was closely related to Torp replacing Ljungberg as Minister of Defence.

About the decision of who was to lead FO, Torp would later write to Anders Frihagen, the Government's representative in Stockholm, that he had wanted new men with a fresh perspective; "People who fully understood that we had come to England to build up a military force to be used for war, that our mission here was as far as it was in our power to prepare to wage war to take our country back."<sup>295</sup> From the time the Government arrived in the UK, Fleischer had been the foremost proponent of actively pursuing and preparing for the liberation of Norway. He, therefore, appeared to many, including himself, to be the obvious choice for C-in-C Norwegian Forces and to lead preparations for the return to Norway.

After the war, the Commission of Inquiry would conclude that objective considerations alone had informed the Government's decision to appoint an unknown major to the position of C-in-C rather than the not only highest ranking Norwegian army officer in the UK but also the only one to enjoy international recognition.<sup>296</sup> Some, most prominently Torkel Hovland, have gone far in the direction of claiming there to have been a conspiracy against Fleischer and that the Government of Nygaardsvold considered him to be a threat to their political aspirations and even attempted to erase him from the collective consciousness after the war.<sup>297</sup> While Hovland goes too far in his accusations, political, or at least personal, considerations did play a role in the decision, with Lie later admitting that while they considered Fleischer to be an excellent military professional "his political attitude - which should not be decisive for a government's choice of supreme military commander - probably exerted its influence on our assessment of him."<sup>298</sup> He had not been their first choice in June of 1940, when the decision of who was to follow the Government was taken, and they

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<sup>295</sup> Torp to Frihagen, 4 March 1942, ARK-1394, Series D, Box 1, Folder 27, Oscar Torp archive, AAB, Oslo, Norway (my translation).

<sup>296</sup> Parliament of Norway, "Innstilling VI: Regjeringen Nygaardsvolds virksomhet fra 7. juni 1940 til 25. juni 1945", 82-85, in *Undersøkelseskommisjonen av 1945*, vol. 1. For a further elaboration of the reasons given as well as the defence for Fleischer see: Judge Carl Johan Seckman Fleischer's explanation to the Commission of Inquiry of 1945, 2 June 1947, S-1566, Series Db, Box 7, Commission of Inquiry of 1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>297</sup> For critiques of Hovland see: Lahlum, *Oscar Torp*, 194-203; and Skogrand, "Historien om det som burde ha skjedd".

<sup>298</sup> Lie, *Leve eller dø*, 233 (my translation).

undoubtedly found him difficult to cooperate with during their time in the UK as he advocated for an altogether different approach to the war than the one they had settled on. While the Government's approach grew significantly closer to that of Fleischer in the winter of 1941-42, by then, it was too late.

During the reorganisation process, it had been realised that the small Norwegian Army-in-exile would be able to contribute little of value to the Allies during a possible liberation. The main bulk of the Norwegian force was, therefore, to be drawn from the Norwegian resistance movement. While Brig N would retain an operational element, rather than a regular brigade these were to take the form of independent companies specially trained to operate as off-road support for Allied formations. However, their limited size and number meant that these units would be a mostly symbolic contribution. Meanwhile, the Army's primary role would be to function as a support and command organisation; providing liaisons to Allied formations and staffs, instructors for the resistance, cadres for new units that were to be formed in Norway and staffs for the regional commands. This shift can be seen in how the ratio between officers and ORs changes from the beginning of 1942 onwards.

Due to the reliance on Milorg, the plans and preparations made by Norwegian authorities for the liberation up until the summer of 1944 were almost exclusively for one scenario; a full-scale attack on Norway with the intent of remaining in the country and liberating it in its entirety. Within this period, however, Allied plans for operations in Norway changed multiple times, eventually settling upon Norway being liberated after Germany's fall in early autumn of 1943. Despite the attempts made at developing better cooperation with British (later Allied) planners, Norwegian's authorities largely failed to gain insight into what these were at any given time, with the Allies deliberately avoiding involving the minor nations in their plans for as long as possible. Only with responsibility for operations in Norway being transferred to ScotCo did this change.

Following the Casablanca Conference, Allied efforts were focused on the eventual invasion of mainland Europe scheduled for 1944. When this invasion finally became a reality in the summer of that year, it would draw on most of the resources available to the Allies in Europe, which included the formations meant for Norway. With the likelihood of operation in Norway drastically decreased, the units of Brig N requested to be sent to the Continent. However, their requests were ultimately denied. While the justification given included references to the Anglo-Norwegian military agreement of 1941, the primary concern of the

Norwegian Government was that Norwegian units would not be available for the liberation, either being occupied elsewhere or having been decimated.

While there were good reasons to allow Brig N, or parts of it, to take part in operations on the Continent, the reasons against ultimately weighed heavier. Despite it being highly unlikely that the Western Allies could have carried out a liberation of Norway in the autumn or winter of 1944 under anything other than the most favourable of conditions, maintaining the threat of such an invasion was seen as important not only strategically; i.e. to keep German forces in Norway, but also politically to bolster the morale of the Norwegian people and avoid damaging public opinion of the Government.

Even if we disregard the strategic and political considerations altogether and focus solely on the practical aspect, the Army-in-exile was not particularly well suited for employment on the Continent. In this regard, it is usually size that has been brought up as the primary issue. While it would be wrong to label such a statement as being untrue, rather than size itself it appears that the real issue was the way the Army was organised and how its operational units were trained and equipped, as Dutch and Belgian formations of comparable size took part in the campaign.<sup>299</sup>

At the time, the operational units of the Norwegian Army-in-exile; those actually meant to be used in combat operations, amounted to the three mountain companies (each of 260 men), the paratrooper company (160) and a small field artillery battalion (200), a total of roughly 1,150 men.<sup>300</sup> In addition to this came about ninety men under British command in No. 5 Troop, 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando, a roughly equal number from the recently dissolved company on Iceland as well as some support elements.

Employment of Norwegian units on the Continent would have had to be done in one of two ways; either by attaching them to Allied formations or by combining them into a formation of their own. While it would have been possible for the paratrooper company and the artillery battalion to follow British units as these were organised according to British war establishments and had been attached to 1st Airborne Division and 186th Field Regiment Royal Artillery respectively, the mountain companies were another matter entirely.<sup>301</sup> Due to

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<sup>299</sup> It should be mentioned that Belgian authorities had voiced similar concerns to those of the Norwegian Government. See: De Vos, "The Reconstruction of Belgian Military Forces in Britain", 94.

<sup>300</sup> "Redegjøring om de landmilitære styrkers oppbygging og krigsinnsats utenfor Norges grenser", part A, 23, RAFA-2062, Box 2821, Ministry of Defence 1940-1945 archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>301</sup> Fjærli, *Den norske hær i Storbritannia 1940-1945*, 150, 171. As the only unit in Brig N, the paratrooper company had been exempted from the restrictions written into the 1941 agreement.

their unique organisation, these could not be easily incorporated into British formations. They also lacked motorised transport, AA/AT capabilities and were trained for a particular role which they, in the flat and open landscape of Northern France and the Netherlands, were unlikely to be used in. As experiences from multiple training exercises and manoeuvres had shown, the companies were also not able to operate effectively together.

Therefore, while it would have been possible to gather enough men for a formation similar to those employed by the Dutch and Belgian's by drawing from among those in the training unit, it is highly unlikely that these could have been combined into an effective fighting formation without first being given additional training and equipment as well as a new structure. These changes were more or less those HOK requested around the time the Government issued its decision.

The reason why the Army-in-exile remained small in size and limited in its operational scope was that from the beginning the Norwegian Government had settled on a policy for the war in which the Army was needed for only one task; the liberation. As this was but a distant prospect in the summer of 1940, the Army was given a low priority. This fact became especially apparent with regard to the distribution of personnel from the small pool available to Norwegian authorities in the UK. While several opportunities did present themselves that could have helped rectify this issue, the fear of alienating the Norwegian people caused the Government to choose not to make use of them. This consideration would influence most of, if not all, the major decisions made by the Norwegian Government regarding the Army-in-exile, from not bringing Army personnel with them over to the UK in the summer of 1940 up until Brig N not being deployed to the Continent in 1944. That is not to say that this was the only or even always the primary consideration as practical, legal and strategic concerns did factor into the equation at different points.

While the Aide Memoire of 10 July might have left a small opportunity, intentionally or not, for Norwegian Army units to be used outside Norway and the UK, with the Anglo-Norwegian military agreement of 28 May 1941, even this small loophole was closed. With the reorganisation in the spring of 1942, Brig N was transformed from being a regular, if small, Brigade which could have been employed alongside Allied formations, to a support

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However, despite the British wanting for it remain with 1st Airborne Division when it eventually was deployed, the unit was recalled in April 1944.

and command organisation for the liberation. In addition to resulting in an unproportionately large number of officers in the Army, this change also involved specialising its main operational component in such a way that it likely could not, or at least should not, have been deployed to the Continent in the summer of 1944, even if there had not been other factors at play. When the liberation did not come about in the way FO had been preparing for, this resulted in the majority of the men in the Army never being given a chance to take part in combat operations.

So can the deprioritisation of the Army-in-exile be said to have been a continuation of a trend within Norwegian defence policy of the interwar years? On the surface, it might appear that the answer is yes, as even before the war the Armed Forces were small and the Army was being given a gradually lower priority in relation to the Navy. However, the factors that led to those conditions and outcomes were quite different before and during the war.

Pre-war, the size and state of the Army was the result of both cuts in overall military spending, as well as a response to changes in threat and technological development. The cuts in funding were made due to an overwhelming belief among Norwegian parliamentary politicians in nations being able to settle their differences peacefully following the First World War as well as a general lack of threat to the country. Meanwhile, the gradual shift away from the Army in favour of the Navy that can be seen in this period resulted from the belief that if an attack were to be made on Norway, it would not come from Sweden but rather from across the sea. This belief was also influenced by the addition of new weapons of war, most prominently aircraft.

During the war, however, the small size and the low priority granted to the Army, especially in the first couple of years, stemmed from the Government's approach to the liberation of Norway as well as the limited pool of personnel available. Not only was the Army not needed until the liberation but compared to the contribution that the limited number of men could represent in the Navy and to a lesser degree in the Air Force, the value and impact of a Norwegian army formation was considered to be insignificant.

Therefore, while the conditions and the outcome of those conditions were similar before and during the war, the respective causes were different. This, however, does not necessarily mean that the Government's choice to focus on the Merchant Fleet rather than the Armed Forces was not connected to anti-militarism within Norwegian pre-war politics and



especially the Labour Party; further studies would be needed to determine whether that was the case, but rather that there was little to no connection between the deprioritisation of the Army prior to the war and during it.

Following the war, Beichmann was asked by FO to evaluate the Norwegian Army-in-exile's contribution to the war effort. He concluded that the Army's main contribution had been as a "force in being" and that while those who had served in combat operations had performed admirably, the Army's primary function had been to be prepared to take on specialised tasks during potential operations in Norway.<sup>302</sup> The Norwegian newspaper in London, *Norsk Tidend*, summarised the accomplishments of the three branches of the Norwegian Armed Forces as well as the Merchant Fleet in its last issue on 23 May 1945. The article concerning the Army stated that:

"No one has had a more ungrateful task than our soldiers up in Scotland - our Army on free soil outside Norway's borders. The core of the Army was made up of the guys who signed up first - and because of how the war developed were not allowed to take part in Norway's liberation in the way they had dreamt of. Therefore, the Army should not be forgotten. Behind the monotonous round of everyday life, with exercises, training and drills - always with one goal in mind - young Norwegians in the king's service have done their duty to the fatherland as expected."<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> Beichmann to FO, "Verdien av innsatsen fra norsk side for krigføringen", 9 November 1945, 4, RAFA-2915, Series Fa, Box 1, Folder 3, Norwegian Army Command wartime archive, RA, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>303</sup> "Norges innsats - Hæren", *Norsk Tidend*, 23 May 1945 (my translation).

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