

Wilhelm Mohr

On World War II

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Wilhelm Mohr

On World War II

Dag Henriksen

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Picture on the front cover: Wilhelm Mohr during WWII. The Norwegian flag (left) and the flag of the Royal Air Force (RAF) (right) can be seen. The picture is from the personal archive of Wilhelm Mohr.

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Preface

Working on this book has truly been an honour. It has been a voyage into a period (WWII) that arguably is the historical period that has most shaped the Royal Norwegian Air Force (RNoAF). However, first and foremost, it has been a journey into the history of one of the most influential officers of the RNoAF, Lieutenant General (retired) Wilhelm Mohr.

In early December 2008, 91-year-old Wilhelm Mohr was standing in front of a Spitfire at the Norwegian Air Force Museum in Bodø, Norway, lecturing cadets from the RNoAF Academy. For two hours one could almost hear a needle drop as the cadets listened to Mohr describing his experiences during WWII. Later that night, the cadets and a handful of RNoAF generals – including Wilhelm Mohr – had dinner inside the museum. Above the table, suspended from the ceiling, was a Fokker CV – the aircraft type Mohr was flying when Germany attacked Norway on 9 April 1940 (although in April 1940, he flew a model dating from 1924). In fact, several of the aircraft Mohr had flown surrounded us, including a Spitfire, of which Mohr says: 'It was an admirable aircraft – loved by pilots as well as ground crews'.¹ After dinner, Wilhelm Mohr asked me if I was interested in some written material he had at the hotel where he was staying. Naturally, I was, so we took a taxi back to his hotel, where he then provided me with three of the five articles that make up the core of this small book.

The aim of this book is to provide a publication that adequately covers the writings on WWII by Lieutenant General (r) Wilhelm Mohr. By summarizing his thoughts I hope to not only contribute to expanding the understanding of the man and his influence during WWII, but also to provide some knowledge of and insight into perhaps the most fascinating part of RNoAF history.

¹ Wilhelm Mohr, telephone conversation with the author, 20 May 2009.

Four of the five articles in this book have previously been published in various books, booklets and articles. The first article, *The contribution of the Norwegian Air Forces*, was written for a colloquium that was held at Oxford University, 25–27 September 1991, on 'Anglo-Norwegian Relations during the Second World War'. It was first published in the book *Britain and Norway in the Second World War* (1995),² and later as an article in *Air Power History* (1997).³ The version in the present book is the original text prepared for the 1991 colloquium at Oxford University. The second article, *The ground crews' participation in the war on the Continent 1944/45*, was published by the Norwegian War Disabled Association in 1985, and was translated into English by the author.⁴ The third article, *Friends and allies: a wartime memoir* was published in a booklet titled *Britain & Norway: A Very Special Relationship*, which commemorated the state visit to Norway of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, 30 May – 1 June 2001.⁵ The fourth article, *9 April – From the past to the future*, is based on a lecture given by Lieutenant General (r) Wilhelm Mohr at a seminar titled 'The fight for freedom's place in Norwegian history', held in Oslo on 17 November 1997. It was later published by the Norwegian War Disabled Association in 1998, and was translated into English by the author.⁶ The fifth article, *An address to the Royal Norwegian Air Force Academy on the fiftieth anniversary of the Royal Norwegian*

2 Patrick Salmon (Ed.), *Britain and Norway in the Second World War* (London, Stationery Office Books (TSO): 1995), pp. 83–96. The article is reproduced with the permission of the Stationery Office Books (TSO) and under the terms of the Click-Use License.

3 Wilhelm Mohr, 'The Contribution of the Norwegian Air Forces', *Air Power History* 44 (1997), pp. 30–43.

4 Arve Lønnum, Ole Jacob Malm and Wilhelm Mohr, *I kamp for Norge. Flyvåpenets bakke-mannskaper på kontinentet 1944/45* (Oslo, A/S Teisen-Trykk: 1985 [Krigsinvalidforbundet]), pp. 27–36. The article is reproduced with the permission of the Norwegian War Disabled Association.

5 Maurice Fraser (Ed.) *Britain & Norway: A Very Special Relationship* (London, Agenda Publishing Limited: 2001), pp. 48–49. The article is reproduced with the permission of the British Embassy in Oslo. We have also sent a request for permission to Agenda Publishing Limited, the publisher of the booklet, but we have not succeeded in receiving confirmation that we may use the article.

6 Finn Pettersen (Ed.), *Fribetskampens plass i Norges historie* (Oslo, Haakon Arnesen A.S.:

Air Force, is the only article that has not previously been published. It was written in 1994, and was translated into English by the author.

It should be noted that all pictures and maps in the original texts have been removed – partly because of copyright issues, and partly because I have not had access to the pictures presented in these articles. All illustrations in this book – pictures, maps, reports – have been provided by the author. The text in the first article, *The contribution of the Norwegian Air Forces*, and the third article, *Friends and allies: a wartime memoir* has been kept in its original form without any modifications, as it was originally written in English. In the other three articles, which have been translated into English, I have tried to incorporate the formally correct terminology for aircraft and squadrons in the few places where there were any discrepancies. With one exception (footnote 31), all footnotes have been provided by the author in order to elaborate upon or explain events, individuals or issues that otherwise would make little sense to a non-Norwegian reader and, I fear, to many of the new generation of readers, regardless of their nationality.

Lieutenant General (r) Wilhelm Mohr has a somewhat sober nature, and for years he has been reluctant to emphasize his own role in WWII or his service in the RNoAF, neither on a personal level through a biography, nor in other written works. He decided early on not to write a book about his own experiences in WWII. He has, however, written a number of articles and lectures on the war, and I would argue that the five articles presented in this book form an adequate summing up of these texts.

The present contribution is not in any way a detailed academic analysis, narrative or collection of memoirs. Even so, by collecting and presenting texts, pictures, maps and transcripts of various Norwegian squadrons' historical war records during WWII, I hope this can be a small but valuable contribution to understanding the history of the RNoAF

1998), *Krigsinvaliden*, No. 1/1998, pp. 131–144. The article is reproduced with the permission of the Norwegian War Disabled Association.

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and the importance, contributions and service of Wilhelm Mohr – the man who in recent years has often and rightfully been described as 'the grand old man of the RNoAF'.⁷

Dag Henriksen
Trondheim, June 2009

⁷ Wilhelm Mohr commented on the term 'the grand old man of the RNoAF', which he felt was better suited to Major General Georg Jacob Falch Bull (1892–1977). According to Mohr, Bull was a Norwegian flight pioneer who had undertaken his flight training in France during the final year of WWI (1918). He was Commander of Nordenfeldske and Trøndelag Air Unit. Mohr first met him on an exercise in Trøndelag in 1937 and describes him as a very visible and passionate leader who treated all categories of personnel alike. During WWII he served at both the Norwegian Defence Forces HQ and the Department of Defence in London. After WWII he served as Commander of Air Command Østlandet. Bull retired in 1953. Thus, Wilhelm Mohr suggested, with a laugh, that he himself perhaps instead could be the 'grand old man of the *new* generation'. Wilhelm Mohr, telephone conversation with the author, 20 May 2009; Wilhelm Mohr, short biography of Major General Bull, accessible on <http://www.oslomilsamfund.no/Galleriet/Wordfiler-portr-biografi/Bull_Georg.doc> downloaded May 2009.

Foreword

The Royal Norwegian Air Force has a proud history, of which I have been privileged to have lived through a significant part.

From earlier times, Norway had both a Naval and an Army Air Force, and I witnessed their unification during WWII. During this period I saw the increasing role played by airpower in all military activity – a process that continues to be under constant development.

The basis of our future progress lies in the ability of dedicated, competent and well-trained personnel to master the demanding complexity of essential technology. During my tenure, I became increasingly concerned that – however well deserved – the experience of those good people involved in the war should not be regarded as the fount of all wisdom or provide the only guidelines for sound future development, nor would it represent adequate guidance or assistance towards the two other services and the national defence establishment as a whole.

Therefore, our Air Force Doctrine HFL 95-1 of 1969 must be seen in the light that adequate leadership should always benefit from the experience of a competent younger generation, well trained and provided with the most modern equipment on hand.

It is my hope that such considerations will prevail in the future.

Wilhelm Mohr
Lieutenant General (r)
Oslo, 20 May 2009

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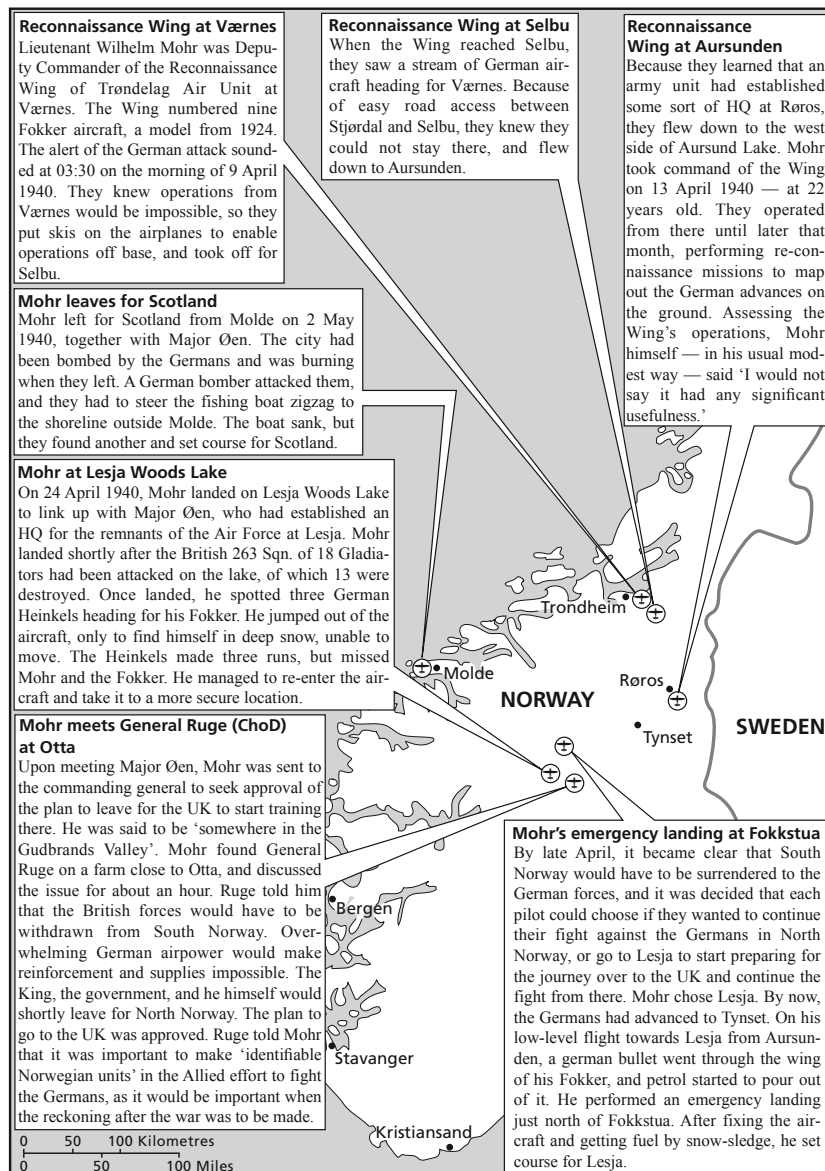


Figure 1: Map – Wilhelm Mohr, April 1940.

Biography of Wilhelm Mohr

Lieutenant General (r) Wilhelm Mohr was born in Bergen, Norway, in 1917. His interest in aviation came early. He entered service in the Army Air Arm in 1936 when he joined the Army Air Arm Flight School at Kjeller (1936–1937). He subsequently entered the Army Academy (1937–1939) to study engineering.⁸ Later, he received news that he had been offered a place at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Boston, but due to the situation in Europe, this could not be utilized. Mohr was posted to the Trøndelag Air Unit at Værnes in 1939, where he met his future wife, Jonna Melandsø. He was Deputy Commander of the Reconnaissance Wing⁹ in the Trøndelag Air Unit when Germany attacked Norway on 9 April 1940. This short biography will focus on Mohr's experiences during WWII.¹⁰

When the German attack alert sounded at 03:30 on the morning of 9 April 1940, it was obvious that operations from Værnes would be impossible. Consequently, skis were fitted to the airplanes to enable operations off base, and the Reconnaissance Wing took off for Selbu. Upon reaching Selbu, they saw a stream of German aircraft heading for Værnes. They therefore continued down to Aursunden because they

⁸ Wilhelm Mohr, telephone conversation with the author, 20 May 2009.

⁹ The Norwegian term 'Ving' is used in the original version, which transliterates as 'Wing'. The term 'Wing' is used in Mohr's original texts throughout this book, and I have therefore chosen to keep this term. However, given the size of the unit (nine Fokker aircraft), it would probably be more correct to use the term 'Squadron' when translating 'Ving' into English, or perhaps the more generic term 'Unit'.

¹⁰ This short biography is based on Wilhelm Mohr's own unpublished memoirs: *Wilhelm Mohr. Erindringer* [*Wilhelm Mohr. Recollections*], Oslo 27 June 2007. Historical details have been checked against the official history of the Royal Norwegian Air Force: Vera Henriksen (1994) *Luftforsvarets Historie. Bind 1. Fra opptakt til nederlag (juni 1912 – juni 1940)* [*The History of the Royal Norwegian Air Force. Volume 1. From the Beginning to Defeat (June 1912 – June 1940)*], Oslo: H. Aschehoug & Co (W. Nygaard); Vera Henriksen (1996) *Historie. Bind 2. Fem år i utlegd (juni 1940 – mai 1945)* [*The History of the Royal Norwegian Air Force. Volume 2. Five Years Abroad (June 1940 – May 1945)*], Oslo: H. Aschehoug & Co (W. Nygaard). Facts have also been checked against the *Norsk Biografisk Leksikon* [*Norwegian Biographical Encyclopedia*] (2003) Oslo: Kunnskapsforlaget, H. Aschehoug & Co (W. Nygaard) A/S and Gyldendal ASA, Volume 6, pp. 336–337. Finally, Wilhelm Mohr has himself read through and commented upon this biography.

had learned that an army unit had established some form of HQ at Røros. There, in the rather chaotic atmosphere of rumours and friction of war, Mohr took command of the Wing on 13 April, at the age of 22. They operated from there until later that month, performing reconnaissance missions to map out the German advances on the ground. Assessing the Wing's operations, Mohr himself – in his usual sober manner – said: 'I would not say it had any significant usefulness'.¹¹

By late April it had become clear that South Norway would have to be surrendered to the German forces, and it was decided that each pilot could choose whether they wanted to continue their fight against the Germans in North Norway, or go to Lesja to start preparing for the journey over to the UK and then continue the fight from there. Mohr chose Lesja. By then, the Germans had advanced to Tynset, and on Mohr's low-level flight towards Lesja from Aursunden, a German bullet went through the wing of his Fokker and petrol started to pour out, forcing Mohr to make an emergency landing just north of Fokkstua. After making necessary repairs to the aircraft and procuring fuel by sledge – he set course for Lesja. Mohr landed on Lesjaskogsvannet (Lesja Woods Lake) on 24 April, in order to link up with (then) Captain Bjarne Øen,¹² who had established an HQ for the remnants of the Norwegian Air Arm at Lesja. Mohr landed shortly after 18 Gladiators of the British 263 Squadron had been attacked on the lake, 13 of which were destroyed. Once landed, he spotted three German Heinkels heading for him and his Fokker. He jumped out of the aircraft, only to find himself in deep snow and unable to escape. The Heinkels made three

¹¹ Wilhelm Mohr, *Recollections*, unpublished memoirs, Oslo 27 June 2007, p. 32.

¹² Adolf Bjarne Øen (1898–1994) is one of the leading figures of the Royal Norwegian Air Force. He became the Inspector General of the Army Air Arm on 13 April 1940 – four days after Germany attacked Norway. He played a key role in building up the Norwegian Air Force in Britain during WWII, and later – as Chief of the RNoAF – in developing the RNoAF as a separate service after the War. Øen held a number of key positions in his career, and became Chief of Defence in 1963. *Norsk Biografisk Leksikon [The Norwegian Biographical Encyclopedia]* (2005) Oslo: Kunnskapsforlaget, H. Aschehoug & Co (W. Nygaard) A/S and Gyldendal ASA, Volume 10, pp. 92–93.

runs, but missed Mohr and the Fokker. Mohr managed to re-enter his aircraft and taxi it to a more secure location.

Upon meeting Captain Øen, Mohr was sent to the commanding general of the Norwegian Forces to seek approval for the plan to leave for the UK with a hopeful ambition to re-equip for later operations in North Norway. The General was said to be 'somewhere in Gudbrandsdalen'. Mohr found General Ruge on a farm close to Otta, and they both discussed the issue – and as Mohr points out: 'it was quite an experience for a 22-year-old lieutenant'.¹³ Ruge told him that the British forces would have to be withdrawn from South Norway. Overwhelming German airpower would make reinforcement and supplies impossible. The King, the government and he himself were shortly due to leave for North Norway. The plan to go to the UK was approved. Ruge told Mohr that it was important to make 'identifiable Norwegian units' in the Allied effort to fight the Germans, as it would be important when the reckoning after the war was to be made.

Mohr left for Scotland from Molde on 2 May 1940, together with Captain Øen and other personnel. The city had been bombed by the Germans and was burning when they left. A German bomber attacked them, and they had to steer a zigzag course in their fishing boat towards the shoreline outside Molde. Unfortunately, the boat sank, but they found another and set course for the UK.

Once in England, Mohr departed for the Norwegian training camp 'Little Norway' in Toronto, Canada. Mohr became the first flight instructor at the camp, educating personnel who wanted to establish Norwegian air units in the UK. He was also given the job as test pilot of the Curtiss and Douglas aircraft acquired from the Americans. He left Canada on 17 May 1941 – the national day of Norway – for operational duties in the UK, where the first Norwegian fighter squadron (331 (Norwegian) Sqn.) was about to be established (21 July 1941). Recognizing the need for experienced leadership when the second fighter squadron was to be established, Mohr was posted to Royal Air Force

¹³ Wilhelm Mohr, telephone conversation with the author, 20 May 2009.

615 Sqn. which was performing missions along the French coast. He was soon promoted to Flight Commander by the Royal Air Force because – as the promotion read – he had performed 'remarkably well in action'. In his usual manner, Mohr has commented on this reason for his promotion as follows: 'I had no sense of being any more «remarkable» than several others at the squadron.'¹⁴ Among other operations, Mohr participated in the attack on the battle cruisers *Gneisenau* and *Scharnhorst* at Brest harbour on 18 December 1941.

In January 1942, Mohr became Deputy Commander and Flight Commander of the second Norwegian fighter squadron (332 (N) Sqn.) at Catterick (England), and a few months later (April) he assumed command of the squadron. In June, 332 Squadron joined 331 Squadron at North Weald just north of London, which was equipped with Spitfire aircraft. Among various operations, Mohr took part in 'Dieppe Day' on 19 August 1942, when the two Squadrons were to provide air superiority in an effort to probe the German defences for the later invasion. 331 Squadron shot down six German aircraft and probably an additional three, while losing three of their own aircraft. 332 Squadron shot down eight German aircraft, and damaged several others, but lost two of their own aircraft. The results were better than those of any other Wing participating. Mohr was wounded when a bullet that had lost most of its energy went through his boot and ankle.¹⁵ Of the episode, Alf R. Bjercke writes in his book *Back-up of a Rich Life* that he noticed blood coming from a hole in Mohr's boot. He silently alerted the Squadron's doctor who came and told Mohr to take off his boot. He was ordered to take off his boot, and according to Bjercke, it was found to be 'filled with blood'. Mohr had to be ordered to the camp's medical facilities.¹⁶

Mohr was wounded later, on 31 July 1942, when a grenade fired by

14 Wilhelm Mohr, *Recollections*, unpublished memoirs, Oslo 27 June 2007, p. 44.

15 Wilhelm Mohr was awarded the British Distinguished Flying Cross and the Norwegian War Cross for his service on 'Dieppe-Day'.

16 Alf R. Bjercke, *Back-up av et rikt liv [Back-up of a Rich Life]* (Oslo, Andresen & Butenschøn: 2001), p. 120.

a German Focke Wulf hit the left cannon of his plane. He managed to stay airborne and crash landed at North Weald (Essex, England), but a grenade fragment had passed through his oxygen mask and cheek, removing one of his teeth.

On 27 November 1942 Wilhelm Mohr married Jonna Melandsø in London. After the German attack in April 1940, Jonna Melandsø had worked as an illegal courier but had had to escape from Norway to Sweden in the autumn of 1941. Upon arriving in Sweden, she then started to work as a secretary for the Norwegian Defence Attaché. She arrived in England one year later, where she was employed as a secretary for Hjalmar Riiser-Larsen¹⁷ in London (It should be noted that she later was nominated as godmother of 332 (N) Squadron).¹⁸ Bjarne Øen, the man that Mohr had travelled to Lesja to meet on 24 April 1940, was 'best man' at Mohr's wedding. Mohr and Jonna Melandsø were to have three children together.

In accordance with RAF tradition, upon fulfilling about 200 hours of operational flying, a pilot was taken out of operational duty for a period of time – a so-called 'rest'. When Mohr's time had come, he was ordered in as Head of Personnel at the Air Force Joint Headquarters. Mohr did not look forward to the assignment, but even so on 22 February 1943 he left 332 Squadron. The same day he learned that his brother, Conrad Mohr, had been killed in a flying accident at the Air Force's training camp 'Little Norway' in Canada.

By the autumn of 1943, it had become clear that the RAF wanted a Norwegian Wing to participate in a future Allied invasion. Accordingly, 331 and 332 Squadrons were combined into 132 (Norwegian) Airfield on 1 November 1943, and Mohr, whose 'rest' period was over by then, was ordered to be administrative leader of the Wing.

On D-Day, 6 June 1944, Mohr flew with the Wing in the morning, and has described the situation as follows:

¹⁷ Hjalmar Riiser-Larsen (1890–1965) became the first Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Norwegian Air Force, when the Army and Navy Air Arms were joined to form a separate service on 10 November 1944.

¹⁸ Wilhelm Mohr, telephone conversation with the author, 19 June 2009.

The impression stays overwhelming. It was like a page in history was turned ... What a sight. The ocean beneath us was filled with various ships, everyone heading south, war ships that bombarded in advance, amphibious ships on the beaches and on their way, merchant ships ready to supply all kinds of material. It struck me that if you needed to jump out of the aircraft at the time – chances were good you would land on a ship's deck.¹⁹

According to Wilhelm Mohr, they met no resistance in the air. The Allied struggle for air supremacy had been successful, and without that, no invasion could have taken place.²⁰ Subsequently, the Wing's role was altered from air-to-air to air-to-ground operations. The targets were German defences in the landing area, attacking all German movement in the area, and there were also interdict operations to stop German reinforcements. Soon, all ground personnel could be moved across the Channel, and operations continued as Allied ground forces consolidated their bridgeheads in the landing area. Starting at the B16 Airfield outside Caen, France, the Wing moved north-eastwards as the Allied front moved north-eastwards – into northern France, Belgium, the Netherlands and up to the German border.

While in Belgium, Mohr was informed that the Norwegian authorities in London had joined the Army and Navy Air Forces under one command as a separate service – effectively establishing the Royal Norwegian Air Force on 10 November 1944. Mohr thought it an important step forward, but comments that at the time it did not affect them much – the focus was set on providing an effective contribution to the Allied progress and everyday flying with the objective of attacking German forces.

The last airfield that the Wing operated from was Airfield B106 at Twente, close to the German border. The war was coming to an end. On Liberation Day, 8 May 1945, Mohr was in Antwerp, leading 132

¹⁹ Wilhelm Mohr, *Recollections*, unpublished memoirs, Oslo 27 June 2007, p. 71.

²⁰ Wilhelm Mohr, telephone conversation with the author, 20 May 2009.

(N) Wing's ground personnel car convoy from Airfield B106. Fourteen days later he was back home in Norway.²¹

After WWII, Mohr was aide-de-camp to King Haakon VII (1946-49). He played an important role in building up the newly-established Royal Norwegian Air Force (RNoAF), and served in various postings in the RNoAF in the 1950s – including three years in Washington as Norway's representative on NATO's Military Committee.²² Mohr became Chief of Staff of the Air Force in 1960. He became Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force in 1963, and among other things he played a key role in inducing the development of the first RNoAF doctrine after WWII in the late 1960s. In 1969 Lieutenant General Wilhelm Mohr became Deputy Commander in Chief of the Allied Forces Northern Europe, and later Director of the National Defence College in Oslo.

Upon retirement in 1975, he took up activities within natural resources management, including fish farming, which in those days was in its infancy.²³ Mohr became Head of the Norwegian Civil Aviation Accident Commission 1977–1989.²⁴

Lieutenant General Wilhelm Mohr has received a number of decorations for his military service, including the War Cross with Sword (Norway), The Order of St. Olav (Norway), The Distinguished Flying Cross (Britain), and The Legion of Merit (US).²⁵

Today, Lieutenant General Wilhelm Mohr lives in Oslo and regularly visits the RNoAF Academy in Trondheim, giving his reflections on WWII and the history of the RNoAF to the young cadets – and how these experiences might translate into wisdom for the challenges

21 On a personal note, Wilhelm Mohr and two friends were staying at a hotel in Hamburg together with the Canadian 7 Armoured Division when he learned that the Germans had signed the capitulation documents on 5 May 1945. Thus, as Mohr says: 'People have asked me where I was when the War ended. I tell them Hamburg'. Ibid, p. 81.

22 Wilhelm Mohr, telephone conversation with the author, 19 June 2009.

23 Ibid.

24 Wilhelm Mohr, telephone conversation with the author, 20 May 2009.

25 Wilhelm Mohr (1997) 'The Contributions of the Norwegian Air Forces in World War II', *Air Power History* 44 (1997), p. 32. *The Norwegian Biographical Encyclopedia* (2003) Oslo: Kunnskapsforlaget, H. Aschehoug & Co (W. Nygaard) A/S and Gyldendal ASA, Volume 6, p. 336.

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facing officers today and in the future. For his dedication towards the new generation of officers in general, and the cadets at the RNoAF Academy in particular, he was awarded the status of 'honorary cadet' by the Academy's cadets in 1999.



Picture from Aursunden in the middle of April 1940. Mobr had just assumed command of the Reconnaissance Wing, and managed to persuade a native Sami to have his flock of some three thousand reindeer to stamp the deep snow in preparation for the airfield the Wing would operate from.



Wilhelm Mobr at North Weald on 24 July 1942. That day Crown Prince Olav (later King Olav V) visited North Weald, and Wilhelm Mobr was promoted to the rank of Major.



Wilhelm Mohr (right) together with Helge Mehre (left) at North Weald in early summer 1942. Helge Mehre commanded 331 (N) Squadron from January to September 1942, was Wing Commander for 132 (N) Wing from May to August 1943, and Wing Commander for 132 (N) Airfield from November 1943 to August 1944 (and from February 1945 until the end of WWII). After the war he held a number of high positions, among them Commander of Air Command South Norway and later as Norway's representative in NATO's Military Committee.²⁶

²⁶ The *Norwegian Biographical Encyclopedia* (2003) Oslo: Kunnskapsforlaget, H. Aschehoug & Co (W. Nygaard) A/S and Gyldendal ASA, Volume 6, pp. 258–259, and Vera Henriksen (1996) *The History of the Royal Norwegian Air Force. Volume 2. Five Years Abroad (June 1940 – May 1945)*, Oslo: H. Aschehoug & Co (W. Nygaard) p. 559.



Wilhelm Mohr (right) together with Odd Bull (left) at Catterick. Mohr believes the picture was taken when 332 (N) Squadron was established in January 1942. Odd Bull participated in building up Camp 'Little Norway', and was later Commander for both 331 (N) and 332 (N) Squadrons during WWII. After the war he held a number of high positions, among them Commander of Air Command North Norway and later Chairman of the Cease Fire Commission in the Middle East, 1963–1970.²⁷

²⁷ The *Norwegian Biographical Encyclopedia* (2000) Oslo: Kunnskapsforlaget, H. Aschehoug & Co (W. Nygaard) A/S and Gyldendal ASA, Volume 2, pp. 82–83.



Wilhelm Mobr (standing, smoking pipe) together with the pilots of 332 (N) Squadron. Asked to comment on the picture, Mobr suggested the following subtext: '«The gang», our mascot «Mads», and our beloved Spitfire'



Wilhelm Mohr receives the Norwegian War Cross from King Haakon VII at North Weald on 5 September 1942. As a consequence of being wounded in his leg on 'Dieppe Day', he had to wear a slipper to conceal his plastered foot.



In the Operations Record Book for North Weald the following entry was made on 4 September 1942: '... The Norwegians were in high spirits, pending the visit of their King and Crown Prince who, accompanied by the Crown Princess and other high officials, are arriving tomorrow to present the NORWEGIAN WAR CROSS to MAJORS MAEHRE, MOHR and BIRKSTEAD'. This picture was taken after the award ceremony where His Majesty King Haakon VII of Norway had presented Majors Mehre, Mohr and Birksted with the Norwegian War Cross. From left: Major Helge Mehre, H.R.H. Crown Princess Märtha, H.M. King Haakon VII, Major Wilhelm Mohr, H.R.H. Crown Prince Olav, Major Kaj Birksted.



Wilhelm Mohr (left) together with Major Mehre (centre) and Major Birksted (right) after receiving the War Cross from King Haakon VII of Norway in September 1942. Mohr was 25 years old at the time.



From left: Lieutenant Colonel Helge Mebre, H.R.H. Crown Prince Olav, Major Wilhelm Mabr and Lieutenant Colonel Rolf Arne Berg studying 132 (N) Wing's stockpile of bombs at Grimbergen in 1944.

TABLE
INDIVIDUAL COMBAT REPORT.

Name of Pilot	Wilhelm Mohr	Squadron 332(N)
Operation	Dieppe Area	
Date	19.8.42.	A.
Squadron	332(N)	B.
Type of Aircraft	Spitfire VB	C.
Time of Combat	0645	D.
Place of Combat	Dieppe	E.
Weather	Fair Cloud at 15000	F.
Casualty to our Aircraft	A.	G.
Casualty to our personnel		H severely wounded in leg
Enemy casualty	-	J
Damage to ground targets		K

GENERAL REPORT (R) I flew as yellow 1. Short while after the Squadron arrived at Dieppe, a dogfight took place. I went in to attack a F.W.190 on port quarter, the range about 200 yards. I withheld the fire, closing to ca. 100 yds. and was just about to open fire on point blank, the a/c. taking no evasive action, as I was hit from behind, one bullet going into my right leg. The a/c. which had hit me fired from unexpected long range. I had seen it coming but did not expect him to start firing that early. I took a sharp left turn and got away. I continued in the area till the Sqdr. went home, taking part in several dogfights. I claim nothing.

Above is the 'individual combat report' by Wilhelm Mohr on 19. August 1942 – referred to as 'Dieppe Day'. Since the text is a bit blurred, the 'general report' is repeated below:

GENERAL REPORT (R) I flew as yellow 1. Short while after the Squadron arrived at Dieppe, a dogfight took place. I went in to attack a F.W. 190 [Focke-Wulf Fw 190] on port quarter, the range about 200 yards. I withheld the fire, closing to ca. 100 yds, and was just about to open fire on point blank, the a/c taking no evasive action, so I was hit from behind, one bullet going into my right leg. The a/c which had hit me fired from unexpected long range. I had seen it coming but did not expect him to start firing that early. I took a sharp left turn and got away. I continued in the area till the Sqdr. went home, taking part in several dogfights. I claim nothing.²⁸

Figure 2: 'Individual Combat Report' by Wilhelm Mohr – 'Dieppe Day', 19.08.1942

²⁸ Royal Air Force, Individual Combat Report, 19 August 1942, Major Wilhelm Mohr, 332 (N) Squadron, *Operations Record Book, Appendices*, Appendix 2, August 1942, p. 13. For the record, it should be noted that Wilhelm Mohr insisted on removing one Combat Report (when he was wounded on 31 July 1942) and was somewhat sceptical about including this Combat Report (Dieppe Day) because the missions were – as he put it – 'non-productive' regarding the enemy. However, Mohr allowed this Combat Report (Dieppe Day) to be presented in this book only because it 'indicates the way of life at the squadrons at that time'. Wilhelm Mohr, telephone conversation with the author, 20 May 2009.

PART I

The Contribution of the Norwegian Air Forces

By Wilhelm Mohr

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Summary

From a small nucleus of Servicemen that arrived in the UK after the war in Norway, the Navy and Army elements were soon enabled to establish a recruitment and training centre in Canada. Through this organisation flowed an increasing stream of aircrew and technicians to man newly-created Norwegian fighting units under the control of the Royal Air Force:

330 (N) and 333 (N) Squadrons in Coastal Command
331 (N) and 332 (N) Squadrons in Fighter Command
(later as 132 (N) Wing in the Second Tactical Air Force)
R(No)AF / 45 Group of Transportation Command.

In addition individual aircrew served in RAF squadrons of all commands, as well as in training elements and even staff assignments. A special unit alongside British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) provided transport for Norwegian personnel to and from Sweden.

In May 1945 the numbers totalled 505 officers and 2,133 NCOs OR. In addition there were 63 Norwegian WAAFs. The Norwegian Air Forces represented the second largest of the Allied Air Forces after Poland, established outside their own occupied country. Only after North Africa had been liberated did the French Air Force exceed that of Norway.

Total losses amounted to 278 aircrew members, which of combatting strength represents: 33 per cent of the pilots, 24 per cent of the navigators, 15 per cent of the wireless operators, 15 per cent of the air gunners and 13 per cent of the flight engineers. In addition some were wounded.

British decorations bestowed include 1 Knight Commander of The Most Honourable Order of the Bath (KCB), 1 Companion of The Most Honourable Order of the Bath (CB), 11 The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire – Officer (OBE), 12 The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire – Member (MBE), 7 Distinguished Service Order, 3 Distinguished Service Cross (DSC), 74 Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC), 15 Distinguished Flying Cross' with Bar, 1 Distinguished Fly-

ing Cross with 2 Bars, 3 Air Force Cross (AFC), 6 Distinguished Flying Medal (DFM), 1 Air Force Medal (AFM), 1 Distinguished Service Medal (DSM), 2 British Empire Medal (BEM) and 25 M in Ds.

PART I

The Early Endeavours

Before the war the Norwegian Army and Navy had their own air forces. The remnants from both these forces arrived in the UK while the hostilities were coming to an end and capitulation followed. At the outset the naval side numbered 17 pilots, navigators and technical personnel who brought with them four reconnaissance/torpedo seaplanes of type Heinkel 115, one of which was captured, and also a captured German Arado Ar 196. From the Army some 60 trained pilots were available, including 4 with civil engineering background, plus some 25 mechanics, radio and armament specialists.

Prior to the war the Norwegian Government had placed orders in the USA for the Army Air Force for a total of 36 Curtiss 75 (fighters), and 36 Douglas 8A (reconnaissance/bombers) and for the Naval Air Force 24 Northrop N3PB reconnaissance and mine laying aircraft (seaplanes). The delivery of the fighter aircraft had partly begun, though none was ready for use when the Germans attacked Norway. Five en route were in crates in Britain. The total order included spare engines and other equipment. These aircraft were all considered very modern and of high quality. The Army Air Force was in addition to receive from Italy 15 Caproni Ca 312 (bombers).

The contingent of personnel in Britain in the early summer of 1940 and the equipment that was under way formed the nucleus of a Norwegian air force that could continue the war outside the country. Meanwhile in Norway the war was still going on. It could no longer be sustained in South Norway, but the Norwegian Commander in Chief, General Otto Ruge, instructed Captain Bjarne Øen (the senior Army Air Force officer) to encourage trained personnel to go to the UK and seek whatever assistance might be available to re-establish fighter units for the Northern theatre.

I must insert a personal note, because it actually fell on me at the time to obtain and carry these instructions to Captain Øen. I recollect from the conversation with General Ruge that he expressed doubts whether North Norway could be held at all for the length of time required, but emphasised for reasons of future national interest the importance that any national contribution to the war, whatever it achieved, be clearly identifiable.

Early endeavours and discussions in London

At the beginning of the war the Norwegian legation in London had no military representation. In mid-April 1940 a post of Military and naval attaché was created, and a month later a Military and Naval Mission was established. This mission became the intermediary between the British authorities and the very meagre Norwegian military headquarters of that time. The British first made the offer of having Norwegian pilots trained by the RAF in the same manner as their own «Volunteer Reserves». These pilots were then to be deployed into units already serving in North Norway, or earmarked for that theatre. Five pilots commenced such training.

Meanwhile the members of the Norwegian Naval Air service who had arrived in the UK with their aircraft had established themselves as a unit. Efforts were made to have this unit carry out operations with or within the British Fleet Air Arm. This was soon deemed impractical, mainly because of the type of aircraft involved. The element was therefore assigned to the RAF Experimental Establishment at Helensburgh in Scotland, but was later disbanded (The aircraft were taken over by the RAF, and were flown by Norwegian crews in clandestine operations in North Africa, until destroyed by enemy air attacks on Malta).

Identifiable Norwegian Air Units?

Captain Øen and his small staff now addressed themselves to the possible establishment of identifiable Norwegian air units that would either cooperate with the RAF, or be contained within it. It was soon made

clear by the British that this was not feasible for a number of reasons: Norwegian equipment was not compatible with that of the RAF and furthermore depended on a cross-ocean supply line; no training facilities could be made available in the UK; and the looming war-threat to the UK set limits to such efforts. An alternative solution was then sought vis-à-vis the French. They possessed the Curtiss P 36 fighters in their inventory and were interested in the other types of Norwegian aircraft as well. However, developments in France made this solution impossible and by this time the campaign in Norway had come to an end. An inquiry was made by the British whether Norway would now let available pilots join British air units at the discretion of the British authorities. Pending a decision, the training that had already begun for the five pilots in the RAF was terminated.

The basis for these endeavours is set out in a Memorandum dated 17 June 1940 by Captain Bjarne Øen. In this Captain Øen say (my translation):

The arrangement now proposed by the British authorities must presumably be based on a voluntary acceptance by each pilot, but this may not be deemed a recommended solution to the Norwegian authorities. For the latter it must be considered of overriding importance to manifest towards the world and not least towards the people of Norway now under occupation, that the struggle be continued within a national framework. It is only in such perspective that our existence outside Norway can be justified. Seen from outside, nothing much will be gained by letting our people join individually within the Allied forces. It must be Norwegian units that can show our colours, and that will stand identifiable when victory comes and settlement takes place. The importance of this cannot be exaggerated and is deemed a necessity if we are to hope that the will of resistance shall be upheld by the people at home μ

Thus his view, as expressed, followed closely that set forth by General Ruge.

Inactive pilots show signs of restlessness

Naturally – and Captain Øen makes the same point – the group of inactive pilots in London at the time were becoming frustrated and impatient. Their main wish was to get into the RAF and take their share in the war as soon as possible.

Captain Øen concluded that, as France had now capitulated, Canada offered the only opportunity for Norway to establish a training base in order to raise identifiable Norwegian air units. Such a solution was to be preferred.

The Government of Norway was by this time established in London. Captain Øen's proposal, supported by the Army Command, was approved on 19 June. A similar arrangement for the training and furnishing of naval air units was also approved. An aide memoire reflecting this view was submitted to the British Government on 10 July 1940,

UK renders support. Camp «Little Norway» takes shape.

It is fair to assume that the Norwegian proposal was not accepted by the British without reluctance. At the time the British wanted as many pilots as they could muster. Poles, Czechs, Belgians and Dutch were already in service. They did, however, acquiesce, whereupon the British Air Ministry gave the plan its full support.

All efforts were now focused on setting up a joint training establishment in Canada. This became known as «Little Norway». Rapid progress was made. The camp was erected adjacent to the Island Airport in the harbour area of Toronto. Elementary training aircraft of the type Fairchild PT-19 and then PT-26 Cornell were acquired, and the operational aircraft on order, mentioned earlier, were delivered. The camp was inaugurated on 10 November 1940. Personnel at that time numbered about 300. Most of the student pilots had escaped from Norway via the UK or via Sweden and Russia (Siberia and the Pacific). Many of the technical trainees were selected from the Merchant Marine and they

Wilhelm Mohr. On World War II

were indeed to become the backbone of the future Royal Norwegian Air Force. The clear objective was undoubtedly to bring fighting units forward at the earliest possible time.



Aerial photo of Camp «Little Norway» at Toronto. The airfield is outside the picture (to the left). To the right, behind the row of buildings, part of the Maple Leaf Baseball stadium can be seen.

The Norwegian joint training establishment in Canada, known as Camp «Little Norway», was inaugurated on 10 November 1940 at Toronto Island Airport. Due to increasing activity the training establishment outgrew the facilities at Toronto and the training establishment moved to Muskoka Airport in North Ontario at the end of 1942.



Fresh pilots ready for the journey overseas from Camp «Little Norway».



Fairchild PT-26 Cornell coming in to land at Toronto. The aircraft has not yet had Norwegian insignia applied. A Curtiss H75A-8 Hawk and a Douglas 8-A can also be seen.



Ole Reistad took command of Camp «Little Norway» on 31 January 1941. Here he briefs pilots at Camp «Little Norway» in spring/summer 1941. From left: Alf Widerberg, Tarald Weisteen, Ole Reistad, Thor Wærner, Ingard Knudsen, Arne Austeen (KIA 4 May 45), Eiliv Strømme (KIA 11 Oct 42), Jon Tvedte, Rolf Tradin (KIA 30 May 43), Christian Fredrik Jean-Hansen (KIA 29 Aug 43).

PART II

The Deliberations for Further Goals

Creation of a joint Air Forces HQ in London. Purpose of Norwegian forces. British doubts about Norwegian attitude. The planning proceeds.

In the meantime a joint HQ of the Army and Naval Air Force elements was formed in London, presenting itself as the «Royal Norwegian Air Forces HQ» within the Norwegian Armed Forces structure. This was a practical measure for the benefit of its single Royal Air Force counterpart, the Air Ministry. It functioned as an amalgamation of the two elements into one single Service authority, although the organisational ratification of this change was not carried out until much later.

This development did not signify that the RAAF HQ was independently free to deal with its corresponding British authority (The same applies to the Navy and Army). Some background information seems appropriate here.

There is little doubt that the British regarded Norway as an Allied nation. Our merchant fleet had already made an essential contribution to the war effort. Yet we provided no fighting elements. The Norwegian Government on foreign soil must undoubtedly have felt its position of uncertainty and weakness, not least in regard to the occupied population left behind. Thus its first stumbling efforts may well have left the British uncertain whether a lingering attitude of ingrained Norwegian neutralism still prevailed.

While these matters were deliberated on a political level, the established Norwegian Defence Staff increasingly asserted its position as a joint military planning authority. In accordance with Government ambitions this pertained to acquiring national influence and participation in allied operations directed towards Norway, and in particular to the coordinating of forces outside Norway with resistance movements within the country. The overriding aim was to have maximum influence in the process that could bring about the liberation of Norway.

The Governmental Agreement of 28 May 1941.

Although the practical issues of establishing Norwegian Armed Forces in Britain had already been set in motion, the formal Governmental Agreement to regulate the relationship was not drawn up until 28 May 1941. This was signed by Mr. Anthony Eden and Mr. Trygve Lie, the newly appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs succeeding Mr. Halvdan Koht.

The gist of the Agreement lies in the formulation of Article 1, which reflects the unified policy mentioned above:

The Norwegian Armed Forces in the United Kingdom shall be used either for the defence of the United Kingdom or for the purpose of regaining Norway. They shall be organised and employed under British Command as the Armed Forces of the Kingdom of Norway allied with the United Kingdom.

Thus the policy prevailed though by nature the Air Forces (and the Navy) came to acquire more freedom in its exercise than the Army. The question of command and control represented no specific problem, at least not for units of the Air Forces.

The Agreement with some Appendices further regulates the question of command and control and jurisdiction, as related to the Air Forces. This, plus certain notes on the economic aspects, is set out in Enclosures 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Progress in Canada

Recruitment. The opening of training facilities within the Royal Canadian Air Force under the Empire Air Training Scheme (later named the Commonwealth Air Training Plan).

Norwegian recruits continued to flock to the training centre in Canada from all over the world. Even some Danes joined. The elementary training was followed up by practice on the available Curtiss, Douglas and Northrop aircraft. Soon arrangements were made through the RCAF to participate in the Empire Air Training Scheme, which then

opened for Service Flying Training at Moose Jaw in Saskatchewan and Medicine Hat in Alberta. Norwegian instructors were provided in both places. The general Reconnaissance Course was made available for pilots and navigators, as well as courses for other aircrew categories as required.

Basic technical training was done by our self while specialist application on type or function as required would follow in the UK. As a finishing touch Norwegian pilots were given advanced flying training on the Curtiss and Douglas before going overseas.

As the volume of flying training increased, it became practical to move the camp to Muskota, about 100 miles north of Toronto. This was in May 1943. Recruitment of volunteer Norwegians and basic air force training continued here until the «Farewell to Canada» ceremony took place on 16 February 1945. Training was then transferred to the UK. The reason for the transfer was the cost of the establishment, which on average had a strength of 700 persons; and latterly most of the recruits were refugee Norwegians brought across to the UK from Sweden. At that time facilities for training were made available at RAF Station Winkleigh in North Devon.

PART III The Operational Elements

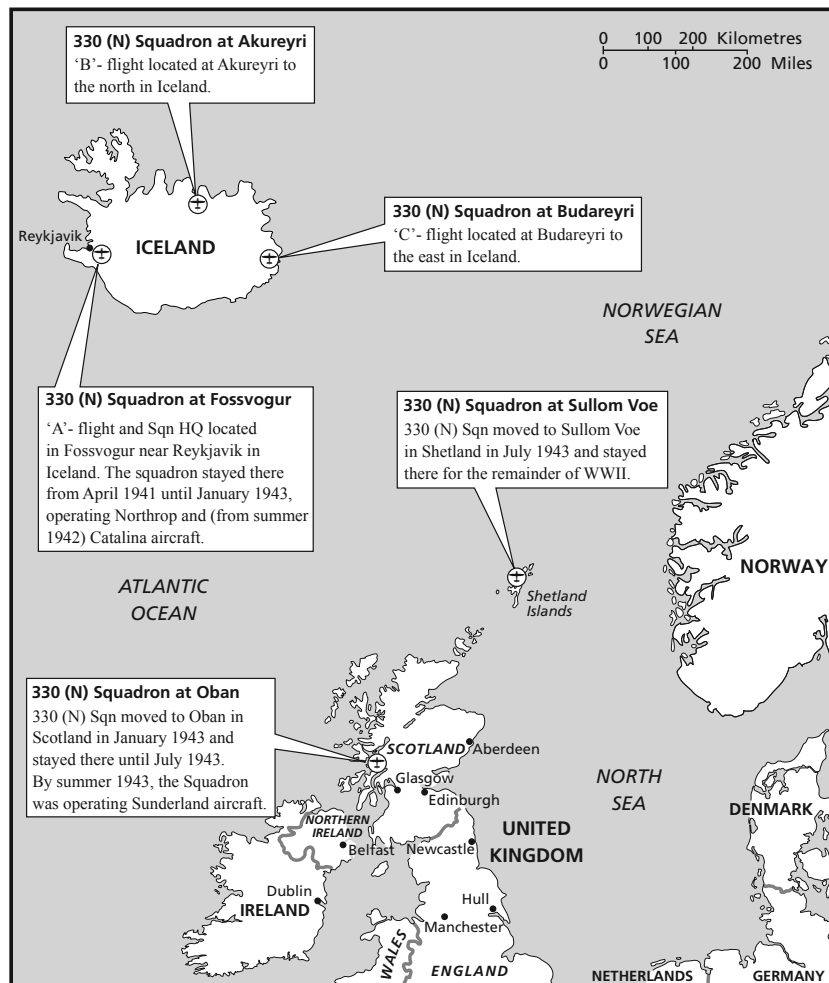


Figure 3: Map – 330 (Norwegian) Squadron, Coastal Command

The stage is set.

Because of the occupation of Norway, the strategic importance of the Northern waters and regions to the Battle of the Atlantic was highly accentuated. Even before North Norway fell, British forces had occupied Iceland and placed army and air forces there for its protection and to carry out sea and air operations.

The last six months of 1940 had seen very large losses inflicted by the German submarines on merchant shipping and the threat seemed ever increasing. In addition the cruiser «Scheer» was active, shortly after followed by the «Hipper». Soon the battleships «Scharnhorst» and «Gneisenau» were expected to play their part.

In late 1940 discussions between the Commander of the joint Norwegian Air Forces HQ in London and the Air Ministry highlighted the value of using our 18 available Northrop seaplanes in support of the Coastal Command activities in Icelandic waters. The tasks would be maritime reconnaissance, control and search, anti-submarine operation, convoy escort, transport and any other defence support needed for Iceland proper that might arise.

The Northrop was a patrol aircraft on floats, single engine, speed 160 mph with endurance up to 7 hours. It had 4 wing-mounted machineguns and 2 free, one for the navigator and one for the telegraphist. It could carry 3 depth charges weighing up to a total of 1,200 pounds.

The first contingent of the squadron arrived in Iceland from the UK on 12 April 1941, followed some months later by personnel from «Little Norway». This brought the strength to about 200. At that time the aircraft were transported by ship and, although 41 ships were sunk in the Atlantic that month, they all arrived safely. The formidable task of assembling the aircraft from crates and bringing them into use must be recorded. On 23 June 1941, 330 became the first operational Norwegian squadron established outside the country. It also became the largest of the Allied air units stationed in Iceland.

As only one airfield existed on the island (by Reykjavik), it was found opportune to have the seaplane squadron split into three parts: «A» flight to remain in Fossvagur near Reykjavik, which was also the site

of the squadron HQ; «B» flight to be located at Akureyri to the north, and «C» flight at Budareyri on the east coast. «C» flight in particular suffered from extreme weather conditions as well as the difficulties of the surrounding steep and mountainous terrain.

From the beginning 330 (N) sqdn concentrated primarily on the Battle of the Atlantic. After the Soviet Union had come into the war in July 1941, the defence of convoys to and from Murmansk made Iceland even more important. «B» and «C» flights were well situated to combat German air reconnaissance that would alert their submarines, and to do extensive escort duties. «A» and «B» flights could cover the Denmark Strait in particular for the same purpose and were also able to attack surface ships and submarines heading for the Atlantic. By the end of 1941, 330 Squadron numbered a total of 309 persons, 25 of whom were British who were in the main to cater for communications and intelligence.

The Northrop aircraft stood up remarkably well under the most severe conditions of Icelandic climate and winter darkness, though it soon became evident from the tasks allotted that longer range and better armoury were required, and that two engines, de-icing equipment and better navigation facilities would be most desirable. Therefore in June 1942 Coastal Command provided two Consolidated Catalina for the squadron on loan, and by July-August a further three were added. These were also required because by this time the Northrop strength had been reduced by losses to 13. The personnel strength of the squadron was adjusted accordingly.

In mid-1942, after about a year of operations the squadron on Iceland had accomplished about 7,500 flying hours, and conducted 246 submarine searches, 379 convoy escorts, 250 reconnaissance flights and 18 ambulance flights. 15 submarines were detected and forced to submerge; 9 were attacked of which 7 sustained damages. 8 reconnaissance aircraft were engaged and damaged. The squadron's losses amounted to 10 Northrops and 2 Catalinas, with altogether 21 aircrew personnel.

Not only were the aircrew's operational tasks affected by the extreme hazards of the weather. It also posed exceedingly harsh conditions for

the aircraft servicing personnel, who to a large extent had to work outside on small tenders day and night. In both respects the squadron received full credit from the RAF.

DATE	AIRCRAFT Type & Number	CREW	DUTY	TIME		DETAILS OF SORTIE OR FLIGHT
				Up	Down	
27th.	NORTHROP 3 PB A/330	Cdr. HELGENSEN " DEVOLD " T. HANSEN	Pilot Observer W/O	1010	1458	A/S- sweep. Airborne 1010 - waterborne 1458. Commenced search 1051 through: N.63 00 W.21 30, N.60 10 W.13 05. At 1209 hrs. psn. N.61 33 W.17 15 sighted conning- tower of U/boat about 1/2 mile ahead and slightly to port of a/c, course approx. 120°T. - a/c flying at 900'. A/c altered course to approx. 045°T and dived to about 50' attempting to release stick of 3 D/C. D/C did not release. S/M then completely submerged and a/c continued circling spot. 1232 started square-search. 1248 psn. N.63 30 - W.17 20 sighted S/M periscope 1/2 mile ahead on course approx. 225°T. A/c then flying at 750'. A/c dived to 50' and during dive opened fire with 3 M/G. At 50' released 3 D/C by emergency release. Periscope not visible when D/C released. D/C fell 4-6 sec. after and about 60' ahead of point where periscope was last seen. Sea rough, no oil or air-bubbles seen. A/c continued circling area and dropped sea-marker. Nothing further seen. A/c remained in vicinity until 1330 hrs. and then set course for base. Weather psn. N.61 30 W.17 20 at 1300 hrs. Visibility: 20 miles. Clouds: 5/10 St.Cu. at 1000'. W/V: 090/15 kts. Sea: Rough. Weather: Fine.

Above is the «Operational Record Book» for 330 (N) Squadron on 27. August 1941, as an example of one of the key tasks for the squadron – A/S sweep. Since the text is a bit blurred, the text is repeated below:

A/S-sweep.

Airborne 1010 – waterborne 1458. Commenced search 1051 through: N. 6300 W. 2130, N. 6010 W. 1305. At 1209 hrs. psn. N. 6133 W. 1715 sighted conning tower of U/boat about ½ mile ahead and slightly to port of a/c, course approx. 120°T. – a/c flying at 900'. A/c altered course to approx. 045°T. and dived to about 50' attempting to release stick of 3 D/C [Depth Charges]. D/C did not release. S/M [submarine] then completely submerged and a/c continued circling spot. 1232 started square search. 1248 psn. N. 6330 – W. 1720 sighted S/M periscope 1/2 mile ahead on course approx. 225°T. A/c then flying at 750'. A/c dived to 50' and during dive opened fire with 3 M/G. At 50' released 3 D/C by emergency release. Periscope not visible when D/C released. D/C fell 4-6 sec. after and about 60' ahead of point where periscope was last seen. Sea rough, no oil or air-bubbles seen. A/c continued circling area and dropped search marker. Nothing further seen. A/c remained in vicinity until 1330 hrs. and then set course for base.

Weather psn. N. 6130 W. 1720 at 1300 hrs.

Visibility: 20 miles.

Clouds: 5/10 St.Cu. at 1000'.

W/V: 090/15 kts.

Sea: Rough.

Weather: Fine.²⁹

Figure 4: 'Operations Record Book', 330 (Norwegian) Squadron – A/S sweep, 27.08.1941

²⁹ Royal Air Force, Detail of work carried out, 27.08.1941, 330 (Norwegian) Squadron, *Operations Record Book*, August, p. 7.

As the struggle for the Atlantic progressed, the USA had increasingly extended its support with bases for escort groups and aircraft. Eventually this included Iceland. Thus the Coastal Command there was relieved and at the end of 1942, it was decided that 330 Squadron should move to Oban in Scotland. It would now come under 15 Group Command and be equipped with Sunderlands. This big 4-engined flying boat fully equipped required a crew of 10. In January 1943 the squadron departed from Iceland, leaving a contingent of Northrops for a time at Budareyri to guard the east coast.

After intensive training the first operations from Oban were carried out on 20 April, thus bringing the squadron back into the Battle of the Atlantic, which was now at its peak. The squadron still supported the anti-submarine operations generally. However, the distance to areas further north was deemed too long and impractical. The stay at Oban was therefore short and the next base was Sullom Voe in Shetland. By 14 July the whole squadron of 13 aircraft was in place and could start operations, now under 18 Group Command. It welcomed the opportunity to operate towards and along the Norwegian coast. The extended range of the Sunderlands allowed the Murmansk convoys to be escorted far to the north and east in the Arctic Ocean. Such missions could be both demanding and tedious, but they formed a critical part of the ships' protection against submarine attacks.

The weather in Shetland could be as harsh as that experienced in Iceland. Though better facilities existed in the harbour, «gale-crews» often had to be kept on board the big flying boats to avoid disaster.

Results and losses

330 Squadron remained at Sullom Voe until the end of the war. With its Sunderlands it accomplished over 12,000 flying hours, and conducted 655 submarine searches, over 50 convoy escorts and 22 different rescue tasks. 15 submarines were seen, of which 2 were sunk and 4 damaged. 2 German aircraft were damaged. 4 of the squadron's aircraft were lost with a total of 46 persons. These figures are in addition to the Squadron's accomplishments in Iceland, described earlier. In total the squadron lost 16 aircraft with 63 persons.



The first N-3PB production airframe during test period at Lake Elsinore, California. 330 (N) Squadron was the first operational Norwegian squadron within the Royal Air Force. It became operational on 23 June 1941 – equipped with 18 Northrop N-3PB seaplanes.



Northrop N-3PB GS-V. The photograph is probably taken at Akureyri, Iceland



In June 1942, Coastal Command provided 330 (N) Squadron with two Consolidated Catalina Mk.IIIa amphibians, and by July–August an additional three were added. By the end of 1942, it was decided that 330 (N) Squadron should move to Oban in Scotland, and would be equipped with Sunderland flying boats.

FP536 was the last of the 14 Catalina Mk.III that were used by the Royal Air Force, and is probably the same aircraft that was named «Mjølner» when it arrived at 330 (N) Squadron. The picture is most likely taken at Leuchars in April 1942, before it was transferred to Iceland.



Sunderland Mk.V with registration code WH-R, photographed in 1945.

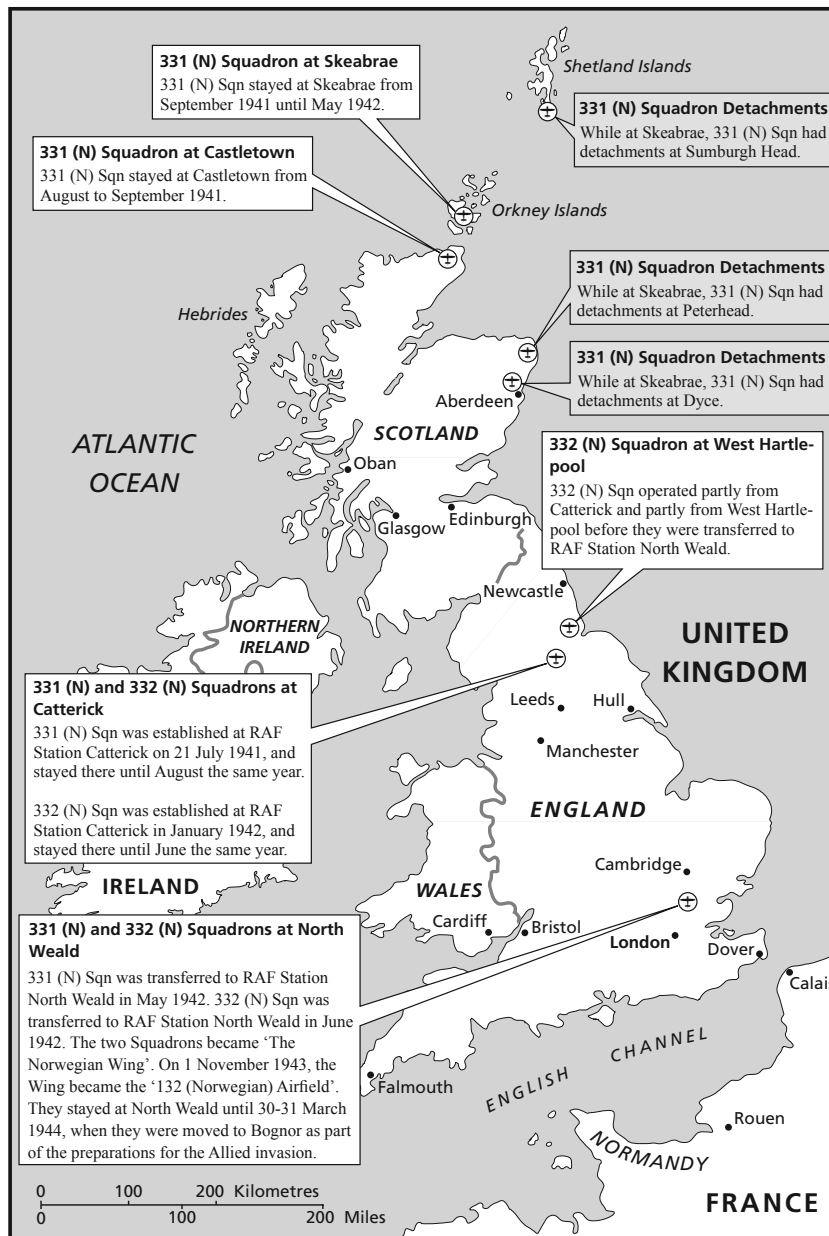


Figure 5: Map – 331 (N) and 332 (N) Squadrons, Fighter Command

The birth of the 2 Norwegian Fighter Squadrons

By spring 1941 the training in Canada of pilots and ground crew had reached the stage that a first fighter squadron could be transferred and stationed in the United Kingdom. On 21 July 1941 331 Squadron was established at RAF Station Catterick under 12 Group, Fighter Command.

In September of the same year another contingent of ground crew was transferred, which together with pilots, some of whom had already seen service in Fighter Command, made up the second squadron. This became 332 (N) Squadron, established on 21 January 1942 also at Catterick.

Before 332 arrived, 331 had been moved first to the northern base of Castletown (North Scotland) and then to Skeabrae (Orkneys). On 4 May 1942 it was transferred south to RAF Station North Weald, by Epping, under 11 Group of Fighter Command. On 19 June 332 followed, and for the rest of the war the two Norwegian squadrons operated together.

331 Squadron in the North

331 (N) Squadron was equipped at the outset with Hawker Hurricane Mark I and shortly after obtained Mark II B. It became operational while at Castletown (North Scotland) on 10 September with the primary task of providing air defence for the naval base at Scapa Flow. It also offered general convoy protection in adjacent coastal waters. To accommodate this task better the squadron was soon moved to Skeabrae – a «difficult» and harsh airfield where single engine operations were made more difficult by the darkness during winter and the frequent strong winds and icing conditions. Clouds unfortunately often let the enemy hide before intercepts could be accomplished. To improve coverage the squadron used to hold detachments at Sumburgh Head (Shetlands), Dyce and Peterhead (North Scotland).

In November 1941 Spitfire II A's replaced the Hurricanes and, as the serviceability of the squadron's aircraft had proved to be high, these were again changed for factory-new Spitfire VB's with 20 mm can-

nons. This was done before the squadron was ordered south to North Weald.

332 Squadron in Yorkshire

332 (N) Squadron at Catterick began using Spitfire II and then, like 331, changed to Spitfire VB. The squadron did mostly convoy protection and occasional air defence interceptions, partly operating out of West Hartlepool. Here the first success and the first loss were registered before the squadron joined 331 at North Weald on 19 June.

Once the Battle of Britain August-October 1940 and the Blitz September 1940 – May 1941 were over, Fighter Command turned to offensive strategy, in cooperation with Bomber Command which so far had represented the offensive part of RAF operations. Soon the US 8 Air Force joined in with its day operations. Germany and the Luftwaffe were not to be given peace at any time.

In general the task of the air offensive was to cause damage to the German war potential; in particular to cause losses to the Luftwaffe and tie up its forces in Western Europe thus relieving the Eastern Front now that Germany had attacked USSR. Simultaneously it was to cause damage to the industries of France, Belgium and Holland that worked for Germany and to the communications in these countries that supported the German war effort.

These Allied offensive operations were considered a most welcome and important encouragement to the people of Britain after the ordeals of the German attacks.

Bombers attacking targets on the Continent and Germany proper needed protection. An invasion of the Continent would require theatre air superiority.

The Norwegian Wing in Fighter Command.

In the following section the two squadrons – the «Norwegian Wing» or just «The Norwegians» as they were often called within the Royal Air Force – are dealt with as an entity.

Statistics pertaining to the Norwegian Wing in 11 Group are satisfying. From a total of 69 fighter squadrons in South England at the time they show:

- The best record of serviceable aircraft
- The highest number of flying hours, both in operations and training
- The lowest number of accidents per month and per flying hour.

In addition, soon after their arrival, the Norwegians were placed best or among the best in numbers of German aircraft shot down and damaged per month.³⁰

The RAF expressed its recognition by placing the squadrons among the first to receive upgraded aircraft and equipment as such became available, for example the fitting of giro gun sights.

Naturally the success of the squadrons was given due recognition by the Norwegian military and political authorities in London. But it was also recognised that the present operations, apart from air defence, standing patrols and convoy protection i.e. all the offensive tasks, did not conform to the Governmental Agreement of 28 May 1941, referred to earlier.

This divergency in employment became all the more evident when the RAF urged that the fighter squadrons be included in the Tactical Air Force, which was in preparation prior to the invasion of the Continent (Operation Overlord). The Tactical Air Force was to comprise the major part of Fighter Command squadrons together with squadrons

³⁰ For instance, when summing up 1943, 331 Squadron was placed at the top of the list among the 69 squadrons within 11 Group, Fighter Command when it came to approved 'claims', with their 68 downed enemy aircraft, 15 probably downed, and 42 damaged. They were also at the top when the fewest own losses in relation to number of downed enemy aircraft were counted. 332 Squadron was listed sixth, with their 36 downed enemy aircraft, 10 ½ probably downed, and 33 damaged. Vera Henriksen (1996) *The History of the Royal Norwegian Air Force. Volume 2. Five Years Abroad (June 1940 – May 1945)*, Oslo: H. Aschehoug & Co (W. Nygaard) (In Norwegian: *Luftforsvarets Historie. Bind 2. Fem år i utlegd (juni 1940 – mai 1945)*), p. 248.

from No. 2 Group of Bomber Command. The Norwegian Wing would form part of 84 Group linked to the 1st Canadian Army.

At this time the Norwegian Air Forces HQ was preparing for a third fighter squadron to be part of the existing wing. This must be judged in the context of the central Norwegian joint defence planning. The Government had ambitions of establishing forces that could join with forces being raised in Sweden. It was hoped that these would unite with the resistance groups in Norway and form a national contingent to liberate the country. This force would require air elements. In this respect the British authorities gave very little hope that any outside forces might be diverted from the main Allied task that lay ahead. On the Norwegian side the hope was nourished that the Fighter Wing of three squadrons could be equipped with Mustangs, which had a greater range than Spitfires and could be deployed from a base in Scotland.

Although the above is known, it has not been possible to document the discussions that must have taken place between the Norwegian Defence Staff, the Norwegian Air Forces HQ and the Air Ministry on this issue; an issue which must be considered rather unrealistic in view of the urgent priority for long-range escorts for the day bombers over Germany. There has been recorded, however, in regard to the Norwegian Wing in the Tactical Air Force, a calculation made by the Air Ministry that pilot losses in the invasion and the months ahead would considerably exceed those experienced so far. The approximately 750 ground crew would likewise be exposed. This led to an alternative proposal by Norway that the third squadron, in accordance with the Government's Agreement, be established as part of the air defence forces in the UK. In the end the Air Ministry proposal for the Norwegian Wing prevailed, apparently accepted without any expressions to the contrary except that the question of a third Fighter Squadron was deferred.

The Norwegian concurrence must be deemed pragmatic as well as tolerant, though hardly popular in all of the national policy-making circles. It departed from the original Government Agreement yet there no longer existed a threat towards Britain. It is of interest to note that the name of Norway in regard to «Overlord» is not to be found. The

Wing received the decision to be part of the Tactical Air Force enthusiastically while regretting that an additional squadron was not formed.³¹

One effect of the curtailed build-up was a gradual surplus of new pilots who were frustrated by being kept out of action. Eventually they were assigned to the Wing from where to some extent seasoned pilots were made available for other RAF squadrons.

Operations on the Continent.

In preparation for the invasion the Tactical Wing, called in the beginning No. 132 (N) Airfield, was established on 1 November 1943. It formed an independent fully mobile unit, containing all the elements necessary to serve the deployed squadrons. In March 1944 it was enlarged by the addition of RAF 66 Squadron, which was supported mainly by Norwegian servicing crews. Some British Signal and Intelligence elements were also added. 132 (N) Airfield thus comprised about 70 per cent Norwegian and 30 per cent British personnel, and a joint command structure was established. Before the invasion two RAF Regiment squadrons were attached for the purpose of local air and ground defence. The Airfield was made mobile with some 280 vehicles of different kinds used for salvage, servicing, flying control, medical and cookhouse facilities etc.

In July 1944 an additional RAF Squadron, No. 127, joined the 132 (N) Airfield, now termed 132 (N) Wing. The events and the variety of operations of the campaign into Europe are beyond this paper. The route began at Funtington (UK), crossed the Channel to the first airfield B 16 north of Caen on 20 August, then to B 33 Campneusville, B 57 Lille, B 60 Grimbergen (near Bruxelles), B 79 Woensdrecht (in Holland) where the Dutch squadron 322 joined the Wing, B 85 Schijndel near

³¹ The question of the third Norwegian squadron was reopened in the autumn of 1944, but due to the progress of the war it did not materialize (this is the only footnote provided by Wilhelm Mohr. All other footnotes in this book have been inserted by the author).

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S'Hertogenbosch, and finally B 106 Twente in North-East Holland. The last day of operations was 21 April 1945. The two squadrons were then withdrawn from 2 ATAF, and leaving all equipment behind was transferred to 11 Group Fighter Command in preparation for possible deployment in Norway. On 4 May the Germans capitulated, but the situation as regards Norway remained uncertain until 7 May. By then the servicing of the Wing was on the move towards the UK where it was re-equipped. 36 Spitfires crossed to Norway from Dyce on 22 May; the ground personnel with their equipment followed by sea.

R.A.F. Form 500		OPERATIONS RECORD BOOK		Page
See instructions on use of this form in K.R. and A.C.I. para. 139, and War Manual Pt. II, Chapter IX, and also in R.A.F. Order Book		of (Unit or Formation) 332 (N) Squadron		No. of pages used for d
Place	Date	Time	Summary of Events	SECRET
Bognor, Regis.	1.6.1944		No operations.	
"	2.6.1944		332 Squadron, led by W/O Berg, took off from base at 1624 hours to sweep the road Amble-Neufchâtel-Mayens and attacked military rail-road transports. They crossed French coast at 12,000 ft. at 1625 hours. Failing to find a suitable target on the road one section attacked alternative targets, a Hobell target, approximately 20 miles S/W of Dieppe. 3 bomb hits were observed in target area but no details could be seen. The rest of the squadron attacked a convoy consisting of 8 H/V near Vots. At least one direct hit or near miss was observed. As usual no enemy fighters were seen, but intense light flak was experienced from Neu-Châtel. After these attacks the squadron crossed out S. of Dieppe and all aircraft returned safely at 1750 hours.	
"	3.6.1944		The squadron, led by Major Christie, who had to return owing to radio trouble, took off from base at 1320 hours, crossed the French coast in 3 sections at alt at 12,000 ft. This day's sweep and railway traffic were both (single H.R. cars and ramp lorries) were attacked with good results. The squadron crossed out French coast at Belleville and Cayeux at 11,000 ft. and landed safely at base 1750 hours.	
"	4.6.1944		No operations.	
"	5.6.1944		No operations.	
"	6.6.1944		On this first invasion day of Europe 332 Squadron made 4 patrol flights over the channel and the battle fields of Northern France. At 0715 hours the squadron took off on the first patrol flight, led by Major Christie. They returned safely at 0920 hours. 2nd flight was led by Major Christie too. They took off at 1215 hours and returned at 1420 hours. On the third flight Major Christie led, but due to trouble with the drop tank he had to return after 15 min. and Capt. Ryg took over. They had taken off at 1630 hours and landed at 1810 hours. The 4th flight was led by W/C Berg. They took off at 2040 hours and returned at 2245. During these 4 patrols they met no enemy fighter opposition and almost no flak was experienced. Weather was 5-8/10ths cloud and visibility good. Landing barges and ships streaming to and from the French coast were clearly seen, as well as the landing operations, which seemed not to encounter much opposition. One destroyer, presumably American, was observed in sinking condition while rescue work was going on.	

Above is the «Operational Record Book» for 332 (N) Squadron on 6. June 1944 – «D-Day». Since the text is a bit blurred, the text is repeated below:

On this first invasion day of Europe 332 Squadron made 4 Patrol flights over the channel and the battle fields of Northern France. At 0715 hours the squadron took off on the first patrol flight, led by Major Christie. They returned safely at 0920 hours. 2nd flight was led by Major Christie too. They took off at 1215 hours and returned at 1420 hours. On the third flight Major Christie led, but due to trouble with the drop tank he had to return after 15 min. and Capt. Ryg took over. They had taken off at 1630 hours and landed at 1810 hours. The 4th flight was led by W/C Berg. They took off at 2040 hours and returned at 2245. During these 4 patrols they met no enemy fighter opposition and almost no flak was experienced. Weather was 5-8/10ths cloud and visibility good. Landing barges and ships streaming to and from the French coast were clearly seen, as well as the landing operations, which seemed not to encounter much opposition. One destroyer, presumably American, was observed in sinking condition while rescue work was going on.³²

Figure 6: 'Operations Record Book', 332 (N) Squadron – D-Day, 06.06.1944

³² Royal Air Force, Summary of events, 06.06.1944, 332 (N) Squadron, *Operations Record Book*, June 1944, p. 1.

Results and losses.

To sum up, 331 and 332 Squadrons of the Norwegian Wing within Fighter Command and 2nd Tactical Air Force are credited by the RAF with 180 ½ enemy aircraft destroyed, 25 ½ probably destroyed and 123 damaged. They are otherwise credited with 381 motor vehicles, 62 locomotives, 70 rail wagons, 13 tanks, 134 motorcycles, buses and staff cars, 20 armoured cars, 96 armoured rail wagons, 132 horse-drawn vehicles, 45 trailers, 5 tractors, 8 troop-transport vehicles, 6 petrol tankers, 68 lorries, 21 barges, 10 other boats and 1 ammunition depot.

The losses in operations were 72 killed, 11 held as prisoners of war (1 repatriated). 2 were shot trying to escape – and as a point of interest 2 of the 3 from the Big Escape that succeeded were from the Norwegian Wing.



2nd Lt Jens Müller from 331 (N) Squadron next to Hawker Hurricane BD734/ FN-D «Odin» at Skeabrae on the Orkney Islands.

331 (N) Squadron was initially equipped with Hawker Hurricane Mk. I, and shortly after obtained Mk.IIb. In November 1941 Spitfire Mk.IIa replaced the Hurricanes and, as the serviceability of the Squadron's aircraft had proved to be high, these were again replaced with factory-new Spitfire Mk.Vb's with 20 mm cannons. This was done before the Squadron was posted south to North Weald.



331 (N) Squadron with Spitfire Mk.Vb photographed at Catterick during a stop over underway to North Weald on 5 May 1942.



On 16 August 1943 the Norwegian Fighter Squadrons shot down the 100th enemy aircraft. The pilot was Captain Svein Heglund (331 (N) Squadron), who also was credited with the 99th and 101st enemy aircraft. To commemorate the occasion, Captain Heglund was presented with a pewter dish and a bottle of aquavit. Heglund had 16 confirmed kills, 5 probable kills and 6 damaged enemy aircraft in WWII – which put him on the top of the list of Norwegian fighter pilots' claims during WWII.



Pilots from 332 (N) Sqn checking a map in front of their Spitfire Mk.IXc aircraft. BS249/AH-R can be clearly identified.



Maintenance of Spitfire Mk.IXc MA755/FN-W at North Weald.



Figure 7: Map – 333 (N) Squadron, Coastal Command

The Catalinas

In accordance with Norwegian ambitions a unit of seaplanes was desired to operate along the coastlines and in the fiords, transporting personnel, picking up saboteurs, doing reconnaissance, and making attacks on shipping and submarines. The idea was supported by Coastal Command, but was initially held back by the Air Ministry until 8 February 1942 when the «Norwegian Detachment» of RAF 210 Squadron was based at Woodhaven by the Firth of Tay near Dundee. The element operated Catalina flying boats. After a year of operations and in recognition of its valuable special operations, the detachment was singled out on 1 January 1943 as a separate 1477 (Norwegian) Flight. It consisted of 3 Catalinas with Norwegian aircrew and servicing personnel.

The Mosquitos

Ever since autumn 1940 the Norwegian Air Forces HQ had pressed for the capability to attack targets along the Norwegian coast and inside Norway. The opportunity came when Coastal Command supported the use of Norwegian aircrew for such tasks. In April 1943 five Mosquitos were made available on loan, plus additional aircraft for training purposes. On the addition of another Mosquito, a separate flight was formed alongside that of the Catalina flight.

By 10 May 1943 the two flights became the 333 (Norwegian) Squadron, operationally under No. 18 Group of Coastal Command. The Mosquito operating base was RAF Station Leuchars, while the Catalinas remained at Woodhaven. The squadron strength was 30 officers, 70 quartermasters, and 150 rated personnel including 11 women.

Both flights were very active. The Catalinas provided a valuable means of communications to and from Norway. They also carried out anti-submarine operations, as did 330 and other Coastal Command squadrons, in the sea area between the Faeroe Islands and Iceland, called «Rosengarten» by the Germans. Because of the performance of the Mosquitos and the use of surprise, various new tasks were made possible. It became evident, however, that the required training for conversion to the Mosquito had been based rather too much on Norwegian

impatience and overconfidence and British trust. Although there was some initial success, undue losses caused Coastal Command to enforce a temporary non-operational status for intensive training purposes. The results were encouraging and by mid-November 1943 the flight was again made operational.

The time that followed was mainly devoted to reconnaissance along the Norwegian coast, attacking German aircraft and ships, and searching for submarines that to a large extent depended on the North Sea. After the invasion on the Continent, some Coastal Command aircraft that had previously been employed in the Bay of Biscay and the English Channel were transferred to 18 Group Banff and Gallachy for strike operations against German ships along the Norwegian coast. The Norwegian Mosquitos were then deployed to Banff to assist this RAF strike force, either as «outriders» for target search and identification, or as a guiding element for the strike itself. On such operations the crew's intimate knowledge of geography and conditions proved to be most valuable.

In early 1945 the Air Ministry proposed that the two flights of the squadron be formed as two independent squadrons, but this was not carried out while the war was in progress.

333 squadron («A» and «B» flights) was credited by the RAF with 4 submarines sunk, 8 damaged, 18 German aircraft destroyed and 2 damaged. It performed 22 special missions to Norway and North Russia. 28 members of the aircrew were lost, and 4 taken prisoner.

12	Mosquito	2/Lt. T. Colvard	Fighters to	1300	1835	44 Mosquitoes with 12 Mustangs S/C from Peterhead at 1318
		G/A O. Bakken	Banff Wing on			At 1415 in posn. 5725N 0410E 1 M/V in ballast bearing 360T
	Mosquito	2/Lt. J. W. L. [unclear]	A/S patrol in	1300	1835	6 miles Co. 330T painted white, believed to be neutral. At 1442 in posn. 5645N 1130E turned North, no sighting due to bad weather. At 1647 in posn. 5740N 0602E formation attacked by Me 109, up to 8 E/A seen. G/333 flying at 200 ft. saw Vic of 3 Me109 which turned in to STB behind wing. G/333 followed in curve of pursuit and attacked one of the Me's firing two bursts from 150 to 75 yds scoring strikes and setting E/A on fire. E/A did tight turn and dived towards sea and was last seen at 200 ft. still diving on N. course and emitting much black smoke. At the end of combat G.F/333 turned back to escort damaged Mustang but unable to contact due to bad vis. One Me109 destroyed, no damage to A/C or crew. Vis, very hazy, nil cloud, W/V nil, sea calm.
	F	Sgt. S. Rogstrom	Skagerak			
	Mosquito	F/Lt. E. Colightly		1300	1835	
	E	Sgt. H. Skansen				

Above is the «Operational Record Book» for 333 (N) Squadron on 12. March 1945, as an example of one of the key tasks for the squadron – A/S patrols. Since the text is a bit blurred, the text is repeated below:

44 Mosquitoes with 12 Mustangs S/C from Peterhead at 1318.
 At 1415 in posn. 5725N 0410E 1 M/V in ballast bearing 360T. 6 miles Ca. 330T painted white, believed to be neutral. At 1542 in posn. 5645N 1130E turned North, no sighting due to bad weather. At 1647 in posn. 5740N 0602E formation attacked by Me 109 [Messerchmitt Bf 109, also called Me 109], up to 8 E/A seen. G/333 flying at 200 ft. saw Vic of 3 Me 109 which turned in to STB behind wing. G/333 followed in curve of pursuit and attacked one of the Me's firing two bursts from 150 to 75 yds scoring strikes and setting E/A on fire. E/A did tight turn and dived towards sea and was last seen at 200 ft. still diving on N. course and emitting much black smoke. At the end of combat G.F/333 turned back to escort damaged Mustang but unable to contact due to bad vis. One Me 109 destroyed, no damage to A/C or crew.
 Vis, very hazy, nil cloud, W/V nil, sea calm.³³

Figure 8: 'Operations Record Book', 333 (N) Squadron – A/S patrol in Skagerak, 12.03.1945

33 Royal Air Force, Detail of work carried out, 12.03.1945, 333 (N) Squadron, Flight Banff, *Operations Record Book*, March 1945, p. 4.



*Catalina Mk.I FP121/Z «Jøssing» from 333 (N) Sqn.
Since February 1942, Norwegian Catalinas operated as «Norwegian Detachment Woodhaven»,
as part of RAF 210 Sqn. On 1 February 1943, they became the 1447 (Norwegian) Flight. On
10 May 1943, the unit at Woodhaven became A-flight of 333 (Norwegian) Squadron. 333 (N)
Squadron's B-flight was established on 10 May 1943, operating Mosquitos. They stayed there
until September 1944. 333 (N) Squadron's B-flight was deployed to Banff to assist this RAF
strike force in September 1944. They stayed there for the rest of World War II.*



Mosquito Mk.II, DZ700/H, 333 (N) Sqn. B-flight at Leuchars in the summer of 1943. In the background two Beaufighter Mk.II aircraft can be seen. These Beaufighters were used by the Squadron as trainers.

R(No)AF / 45 Group, Transport Command.

The RAF had established its ferry Command (later named Transport Command) in July 1941 at Dorval Airport in Montreal, Canada. The task was primarily to freight 2 and 4-engined aircraft from Canada/USA to theatres of war on a worldwide basis.

In late 1941 four Norwegian pilots formed a unit that in time came to number about 40 persons. The unit was termed «R(No)AF / 45 Group». Experienced pilots, navigators, wireless operators, mechanics, instructors, meteorologists and air traffic controllers made up the personnel. Many pilots and aircrew members served in the unit during periods of rest from other operational flying.

In the beginning of 1942 the aircraft commonly ferried were the Hudson, Lodestar and Venturas. The usual route taken was Gander or Goose Bay, Greenland, Iceland and Prestwick. Some B-24 Liberators went by Gander and Prestwick to the Far East. B-25 Mitchells, A-20

Bostons and B-26 Marylands were added, also C-47 Dakotas, Catalina PBYS, Lancasters, and Mosquitos.

Altogether 690 aircraft were delivered overseas that had either a Norwegian crew or had individual Norwegian members as part of the crew.

The losses amounted to five persons.

Of the occupied countries only Poland was more strongly represented in Transport Command than Norway.

Norwegians serving in British units.

Bomber Command.

Aircrew members of the Norwegian Air Forces were admitted into Bomber Command from October 1942. Throughout the war 60 Norwegians flew on 4-engined aircraft («heavies»). Of these 22 became Captains (skippers). The crew otherwise were generally a mixture of British, Commonwealth and Norwegian personnel. 9 of the 22 skippers completed the full «operational tour» of 30. Two made one tour as navigators and then another tour as pilot/skippers. After the full tour two became Flight Commanders (one on the Pathfinder Force). One was skipper on the Mitchell 2-engine bomber of RAF 180 Squadron (Two Group), and became Flight Commander.

Losses amounted to 13 of the skippers and 29 of the other crewmembers. In addition five were taken prisoner of war.

Within the framework of Bomber Command, the «Special Duties» consisted of two squadrons of RAF Bomber Command operating out of Tempsford. The task was to serve the underground forces in occupied countries either by airdropping personnel and supplies, or delivering or picking up agents.

One Norwegian served as skipper and Flight Commander in 161 Squadron after a full tour in Bomber Command. Another, with a Norwegian navigator, completed a tour on drop-service with Halifax, then continued on delivery and pick-up service with Lysander, mainly into France.

Fighter Command.

Many Norwegian pilots and navigators served at various periods in different RAF Fighter Squadrons. Three of these were given the function of Wing leaders («Wingco/flying»). Four became Squadron Commanders and two Flight Commanders. In total Norwegians in British squadrons of Fighter Command have been accredited with 58 aircraft destroyed, 4 probably destroyed, 17 damaged plus a variety of ground targets engaged.

In addition a number of Norwegian pilots in the course of service with RAF in Fighter Command held temporary positions in gunnery weapon training units and even duties in operational staff.

Notably the RAF No. 604 and the 85 Mosquito night fighter squadrons had attracted many Norwegian aircrew members. These squadrons were at first part of the air defence force of Southern England. Prior to the invasion the squadrons were transferred to Bomber Command with the primary task of night intruder, to offer protection to the bomber stream and to attack selected targets in Germany or enemy-held territory. Altogether fifteen Norwegian aircrew members followed 85 squadron. As a small intermezzo the squadron was brought back into Fighter Command; Norwegian aircrews accounted for eleven flying bombs.

The «Stockholm Element».

This contingent was a separate Norwegian war effort in an area of prime national interest. It is recorded in this report although, while assistance was rendered by operational control, it was not subordinated to any of the RAF Commands.

Air transport was required between the UK and Sweden because of the great number of refugees. By January 1941 2,851 such refugees were registered. After Germany attacked Russia, this avenue of escape was no longer available. At the same time the demands on the Norwegian forces in the UK were ever increasing.

After some endeavours to establish a separate arrangement, an agreement was reached by which BOAC allowed two Norwegian aircraft and

crew to operate within its route concession between Stockholm and Leuchars. The arrangement began in the summer of 1941 although the final Anglo-Norwegian Governmental Agreement was first reached in midsummer 1942. Formally the Norwegian aircraft «belonged» to BOAC and carried BOAC registration. The crew in BOAC uniform were paid by the company on a refund basis and carried British passports.

The Norwegian contingent was strengthened by 4 Lockheed Lodestars provided by the Norwegian government. Then 3 BOAC Lockheed Hudsons were added. However, as German defence became increasingly alerted to the activity and more effective, the Air Ministry in the spring of 1943 restricted the traffic to couriers for essential missions, using Mosquitos only. The passenger figures from Stockholm to Scotland by that time were in 1941 – 141; in 1942 – 559; in 1943 – 533.

The Norwegian authorities found, however, that transport flights for recruitment purposes were of such importance that another arrangement was essential. This was felt particularly by the Air Force, which had already made arrangements to select candidates for pilot training from refugees in Stockholm. In October 1943 an arrangement was established by which Norway would, independently but still within the BOAC structure, maintain the route to Stockholm using the Lockheed Lodestars. The British still provided airport and operating services out of Leuchars.

This proved to be an effective arrangement and the traffic increased considerably. The number of passengers between Stockholm and Scotland is registered as 962 in 1944, and 1,114 until 7 May 1945. In the last year of the war the Norwegian Air Force acquired under lend-lease 10 Douglas C 47 Dakotas, but these were just introduced when hostilities ceased. During the war 3,309 passengers were transported to the UK using the Stockholm route. The losses amounted to 11 aircrew and 18 passengers.

It is of interest to note that the Norwegian urge for transport for recruitment purposes, strongly supported by the British Foreign Secretary Mr Anthony Eden, led to an American offer of assistance. This

operation using 4-engined Liberators transported 1,576 persons who had already been earmarked in Sweden for service in the Norwegian forces in the UK.

Closing Remarks

A summary of this paper is set out in the opening paragraphs.

Operational command by the RAF provided an effective and harmonious structure in which Norwegian fighting units and individuals could fulfil their aspirations, together with members of other Allied forces. It was marked by a friendly spirit, fairness and recognition of merit, appreciated by flying and ground crew alike. In the higher echelons of control – Norwegian Air Forces HQ in London and the Air Ministry – relations were sometimes more difficult, because political considerations, joint military planning and economic questions could complicate the use of Norwegian forces within the overall Allied war aims. Frank and open discussions, helped in my view by the generous attitude of the RAF, maintained a constructive atmosphere for solving any problems that arose. In this the traditionally close ties between our two countries may have played their part, as certainly did the performance of our fighting elements.

In a message to the Norwegian Air Force at the end of the war the RAF Air Council finished

... when your aircrews return to their own land, they will carry with them the good wishes and warm friendship of the Royal Air Force who earnestly hope that the links which have bound our two air forces in adversity and war will be maintained and developed in peace.

It is noted that it was not only the common cause and the sharing that had cemented our air forces. For the Norwegians in exile the RAF stations became their true home. This again led many close and lasting

links to be forged between the local population and our personnel of all categories and ranks.

A sign of the relationship from our side may be judged by the large volume of membership of all branches held by the Norwegian branch of the Royal Air Force Association.

The Royal Norwegian Air Force in its post war structure owes a great deal to the example and traditions demonstrated by the Royal Air Force during the war.

Enclosure 1

*AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED
KINGDOM AND THE ROYAL NORWEGIAN GOVERNMENT
CONCERNING THE ORGANISATION AND EMPLOYMENT
OF THE NORWEGIAN ARMED FORCES IN THE
UNITED KINGDOM.*

The Government of Norway and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland,

Affirming their determination to prosecute the war to a successful conclusion,

Agreeing that one of the objects of the war is the re-establishment of the freedom and independence of Norway through its complete liberation from German domination,

Recognising the importance in their common interest of maintaining the armed forces of Norway, and

Desiring to establish the principles on which those forces will be organised for co-operation with the Allied Armed Forces,

have agreed as follows:

Article 1.

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.

Article 2 concerns Land Forces.

Article 3 concerns the Norwegian Navy.

Article 4.

Units of the Norwegian Air Forces shall be organised to operate with the British Air Force as provided in Appendix III of the present Agreement.

Article 5.

Jurisdiction over the personnel of the Norwegian Armed Forces shall be exercised in accordance with the provisions of Appendix IV of the present Agreement.

Article 6.

- (1) The Norwegian Armed Forces shall be equipped, paid and maintained at the expense of the Norwegian Government.
- (2) Subject to any specific condition to the contrary in the Appendices of the Present Agreement, any costs incurred by the British authorities in connection with the application of the present Agreement shall on demand be reimbursed by the Norwegian Government to the Government of the United Kingdom.

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In witness whereof the undersigned, duly authorized for this purpose by their respective Governments, have signed the present Agreement and have affixed thereto their seals.

Done in duplicate in London the 28th day of May, 1941, in the English language. A Norwegian text shall subsequently be agreed upon between the contracting Governments, and both texts shall then be equally authentic.

(L.S.) Trygve Lie
(L.S.) Anthony Eden

Enclosure 2

Appendix III

RELATING TO THE NORWEGIAN AIR FORCES

Article 1.

Certain units of the Norwegian Air Forces shall be attached to the British Air Force and shall act under the operational control of the British Air Force authorities.

Article 2.

These units of the Norwegian Air Forces shall operate under the Norwegian flag and shall be manned by Norwegian personnel. The Norwegian authorities shall be responsible for maintaining and replacing the personnel of these units, as necessary. The British authorities shall render all possible assistance in the mobilisation and training of the personnel of the Norwegian Air Forces.

Article 3.

- (1) The internal administration of all Norwegian air units and their personnel shall remain the responsibility of the Norwegian authorities, but units attached to the British Air Force and placed under the operational control of the British Air Force authorities shall act under the orders of the British Commanders of the formation to which they are attached.
- (2) The detailed conditions of service of Norwegian Air personnel employed with the British Air Force shall be arranged by direct discussion between the appropriate Norwegian authorities and the British Air Ministry.

Article 4.

At the request of the Norwegian authorities or the commanders of Norwegian air-units, the British Air Force authorities shall make all necessary arrangements for the supply and maintenance of these units of the Norwegian Air Forces and of their aircraft.

Enclosure 3

Appendix IV

**RELATING TO JURISDICTION
OVER MEMBERS OF THE NORWEGIAN ARMED FORCES**

Article 1.

Subject to the provisions of Articles 2, 3 and 4 below, jurisdiction in matters of discipline and internal administration over members of the Norwegian Land, Sea and Air Forces in the United Kingdom shall be exercised in accordance with Norwegian military law, and offences against discipline shall be tried and punished accordingly by the Norwegian Service courts and authorities.

Article 2.

Personnel of the Norwegian Air Forces serving with the British Air Force, whether in Norwegian units or individually, shall be subject to British Air Force discipline and British Air Force law as if they were commissioned or enlisted in the British Air Force, so long as they are serving with a unit of the British Air Force or with a unit of the Norwegian Air Force stationed at a British Air Force Station. They shall also be subject to the approved military law for the Norwegian forces, when not serving with a unit of the British Air Force or at a British Air Force Station. Where an Air Force court is constituted for the trial of an officer or airman of the Norwegian Air Forces serving with the British Air Force for an offence against British Air Force law, it shall consist of an equal number of British and Norwegian officers, with, in addition, a British officer as President of the Court.

Article 3.

The offences of murder, manslaughter and rape shall be tried only by the Civil Courts of the United Kingdom.

Article 4.

Acts or omissions constituting offences against the law of the United Kingdom other than murder, manslaughter and rape will be liable to be tried by the Civil Courts of the United Kingdom.

Article 5.

In the case of any offence coming under Articles 3 or 4 above, the facts shall be reported without delay, in accordance with arrangements to be made between the Norwegian and British Authorities, by the responsible Authorities of the Norwegian Force concerned to the appropriate authority in the United Kingdom unless the offender is already in the custody of the civil authorities.

Article 6.

Where a member of the Norwegian Armed Forces is to be tried by a Civil Court of the United Kingdom, the responsible authority of the Norwegian Force concerned shall give such facilities to the appropriate civil authorities in the United Kingdom as may be necessary for the purpose of providing for the trial.

Article 7.

When members of the Norwegian Land, Sea and Air Forces are serving in any territory outside the United Kingdom which is under the authority of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom the expression «United Kingdom» shall, in relation to those members, mean that territory.

Article 8.

Any offence or act of omission committed by any member of the Norwegian Armed Forces on board a warship flying the Norwegian Flag is excluded from the scope of Articles 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the present Appendix.

Enclosure 4

NOTE ON THE ECONOMIC AGREEMENT

The economic agreement made as a result of the main agreement stated among other things that the Norwegian squadrons furnished with British equipment became Norwegian property. These were paid outright £180,000 per squadron. The sum included aircraft, unit equipment and other special equipment required.

Norway further paid an annual fee of £520,000 per squadron, later reduced to £420,000 per squadron, towards the obligation of the United Kingdom to hold the Norwegian squadrons in first-class condition at

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all times. This included the replacement of lost aircraft, repairs to damaged aircraft and other squadron material, spare parts, service and maintenance of aircraft, transport, billeting and messing of personnel, fuel, weapons, ammunition etc. plus training of air and ground personnel as required.

The expenses for the 132. (N) Wing were covered by British authorities.

All salaries to personnel were paid by Norway in accordance with the national scale.

PART II

**The Ground Crews' Participation
in the War on the Continent 1944/45**

By Wilhelm Mohr

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The Air Force's participation in the fighting on the Continent 1944/45

132 (N) Wing consisting of fighter Squadrons 331 (N) and 332 (N), had found its place and rhythm at the North Weald airbase just north-east of London. This base had become a home for the personnel, and they thrived there. Within the British Air Force [RAF] and the Fighter Command to whom they belonged for their operational efforts, the squadrons were renowned for the professional standards of their technical personnel, and their ability to adjust and show initiative. The Norwegian authorities therefore considered it an honour when the British Air Force [RAF] wanted the Norwegian squadrons as participants during the invasion. However, there were a number of issues to take into consideration, partly due to the established military agreement with regard to Norwegian military efforts outside Norway. In Article One of the Agreement, it is stated: 'The Norwegian forces ... shall be used either to defend the United Kingdom or to re-conquer Norway'. Another consideration was of a somewhat more practical and pressing nature. In order to maintain the squadrons' fighting ability as far as pilots were concerned, there was the question of whether the Norwegians would be able to replace their personnel in accordance with what allied calculations deemed necessary. For pilots, the British Air Force [RAF] anticipated significantly higher losses than operations thus far had caused. Yet also with regard to the ground crews, losses had to be faced, and due to the insecurity of war such losses might have resulted in a sudden and drastic reduction of the force. For this reason, it was decided to drop the planned third Norwegian fighter squadron. This was unfortunate, but the Government's decision to allow the Norwegian Wing to participate in the invasion was met with enthusiasm and anticipation by the personnel.

For the two Squadrons, still at North Weald, it became a very busy period. The air operations continued and amounted primarily to participation in the collective air offensive aimed at destroying the German Air Force [Luftwaffe]. However, at the same time, the Squadrons

were to go through organizational and structural changes. Mobility and flexibility were the keywords. A tactical Wing HQ was established at the same time as the Squadrons were made smaller and streamlined for full mobility through air lines of communications. Ground personnel were separated and technical maintenance was centralized under the Wing, even though some elements were kept by the original Squadrons. Even so, the technical section was to continue to support any flying operation where circumstances required the use of the airfield.

The Norwegian personnel of various professions and disciplines numbered approximately 500 at this point in time. Yet one more British fighter squadron, No. 66, was attached to the Wing. A ground element for this squadron was built up mainly of Norwegian personnel, and this was to be a part of the Wing's centralized maintenance system. In addition, the British provided two special mobile communication units to maintain lines of communication within the Allied system, provide cipher services, and so forth. In the same manner, the British Air Force provided two squadrons for the low defence [Base Defence] of the airfield.

The whole Wing was to be made mobile. All workshops, control units, kitchens, mess halls, field hospitals, etc., had to be able to be moved by trucks or special vehicles, of which petrol-, fire- and crane trucks used to remove wreckage from the runway were among the heaviest. A huge programme to teach the personnel to drive and operate in convoys was established. The various types of cars were far from the easiest to handle. After a while, the Wing received 350 cars.

Quartering was to be in tents. A minimum of field equipment, such as simple woollen blankets, was distributed to each person. Attention was focused on how to operate under the field conditions, setting up camp, hygiene arrangements, physical adjustment, and also discipline, such as shooting exercises, the handling of mines, camouflage routines, training in self-defence, and fieldwork, in order to improve one's own level of protection. Hazardous working conditions would have been an inevitable result of a flight line under these circumstances.

Flying operations continued undiminished. In addition, the tasks and targets caused increased damage to the aircraft, for instance as a result of the low flying attacks on the German V-1 launchers along the Channel coastline, heavily defended as it was by anti-aircraft artillery. For the technical personnel, this represented a challenge that by far exceeded any shift arrangement.

The Wing left North Weald on 31 March 1944. The original Squadrons were flown to the landing strip at Bognor on the south coast. The remainder of the Wing's personnel travelled via country roads, divided into two groups, one front echelon that left in advance in order to receive the aircraft, and one rear echelon to enable the aircraft to leave. The personnel travelled separately by car together with their own crew and equipment, with various special vehicles tucked into the convoy where they were needed.

Clearly, the invasion was approaching. For the squadrons, the primary task was to ensure air superiority in the invasion phase. Still, the air defence tasks were not to be forgotten, as it was of paramount importance that the enormous force projection on the south coast was not discovered. Accordingly, it was necessary to operate under field conditions at an enormous tempo. No one was permitted to take leave any more.

Equipment and personnel were undoubtedly up to the task, but even so continued adjustments and training were important. Initiative and inventiveness proved to be of the utmost significance, and this was true from the top leadership down to each man. Subsequently, confirmation was received of the solid underlying recruitment basis that the Air Force had been fortunate enough to establish from the very beginning, incorporating whalers and mature, experienced sailors. This had been proved previously during the establishment of units in Canada, Iceland, the Shetlands, Woodhaven, and the fighter squadrons, and stiffened morale when insecurity and tension increased.

The invasion started whilst the Norwegian Wing was at Bognor. The thunder from transport aircraft with paratroopers and gliders dragging behind could be heard throughout the night of 5 June. It was like a carpet of aircraft, but still the silhouettes of single aircraft could be seen

against the clear night sky. In this serious situation the Wing waited to be transferred while a landing strip was being prepared. At a ceremony the next morning, no field priest could have experienced more attentive Norwegians.

The strain thus far had been significant work pressure, often with lack of sufficient sleep. There were sporadic German attacks here and there, but the Wing's airfield had not yet come under attack. The increased tension could probably best be recognized by increased concentration and silence, even among those who normally were outspoken and lively. This was mixed with anticipation and the inspiration of being allowed to participate in the forthcoming events.

Even from the initial phase of the invasion, the Norwegian aircraft stretched their area of operations deep into northern France, although the ground crews could not be transferred to the Continent until 16 August. Then, vehicles and equipment were phased through the gathering area, shipped in on amphibious ships and transferred over the Channel. Before the transfer, the Wing had moved several times, from Bognor to Tangmere and then from there to Funtington, all in southern England. These movements naturally represented a burden in themselves, but at the same time they represented something close to a drill. During the movements the squadrons needed both to operate constantly and be ensured of the necessary technical support.

The transfer to the Continent was delayed due to German resistance at the city of Caen. This was because the Wing's allocated airstrip B16 lay just north of the city. Finally the ground crews were underway, and the journey itself provided the personnel with a much-needed breathing space, although it was not without drama, as mines were still a real threat. This may have been witnessed with their own eyes as a large cargo vessel went down in the immediate vicinity of the troops. Uncertainty of a different nature related to their final destination. Caen had been taken on 9 July after 450 heavy bombers had been put to work, but the German 21st Panzer Division and parts of the 12th SS Panzer still represented a threat. We knew that the Canadian forces were still consolidating in the area. The Wing needed to be prepared for self-defence and base defence.

For those who have not experienced driving off landing vessels and a 'beach commander's' unchallenged authority in assembling and redirecting vehicles, the situation is hard to explain. The activity on the beaches, as well as on the big harbour bridges (Mulberry Harbours), was still so intense that capacity was exploited to breaking point. The 'slogan' was 'get out of the way, but stay on the route and roads, because mine-clearing stops on the side of the road'. Along the route were infinite numbers of various forms of transport and supplies, and after a while there was increased movement of units that manoeuvred towards the combat area.

The ground crews established themselves on airstrip B16 on 22 August, at the same time as the engineer troops finished the runway and evacuation flights with the wounded left for England. There was still sporadic shooting in the area, but units were clearing the area and life was beginning to return to normal in two nearby villages. The Wing prepared to receive the squadrons, and operations continued after their arrival.

It is rather strange to think of how quickly operations restarted, despite all the movement that still had to be done on roads with white markings. Cleared areas were marked in the same way, and ground crews had to make their own foxholes. The Wing had been repaid for its preparations and training. The system worked, and there was no doubt that the morale and spirit were solid and uplifting factors for each man, even though the various enterprises were spread and the tasks were different and many-faceted.

Still, it was not the actions of war alone that marked the Wing's stay at B16. In his book *Spitfire*, General Helge Mehre writes:

The weather changed from burning heat to rain and fog, runway conditions just as fast from intense dust to slippery mud. If an aircraft ended up outside its tracks, it was inevitably stuck. The dust problem was so interfering that one had to put on 'desert filters' on the engines' air inlets, like they used in North Africa. Cars without four-wheel-drive were useless outside asphalt or 'tracked roads'. When possible, the tent quarters were placed in woods and [on] high ground. In the mess tents one had to lay wooden boards and rough sacking as flooring. The tables were covered

with sheets, and as well as conditions allowed, all food had to be covered due to enormous swarms of flies. There was a dreadful stench from poorly-buried corpses without grave crosses or other markings (fallen Germans, while the Canadians and Polish had taken care of their own) in several places within the camp area.

It was not allowed to drink un-boiled water. The apple trees were full of ³³⁴ripe fruit, sour cider-apples, destined for apple lemonade and calvados. But many 'had' to taste it. A dysentery-like disease went like an epidemic through the entire bridgehead, and created unbelievable discomfort for each personnel and tragicomic situations for many who did not make it to a certain place.

General Mehre's sobriety should be well-known.

The Norwegian 132 (N) Wing's further journey passed through northern France, through Lille to Brussels in Belgium, on to Antwerp in the Dutch province of Holland, along the Maas' southern shores, over Eindhoven and a piece of German territory at Emmerick, until it reached its final destination of Enschede. The corresponding airfields and names included B33 Campneusville (Lissieux), B39 St. Druer and thereafter B57 Lille, and B60 Grimbergen outside Brussels (see Figure 9). Although it was only one month since the Wing had left B16, the advances had gone quickly as the personnel had become very professional.

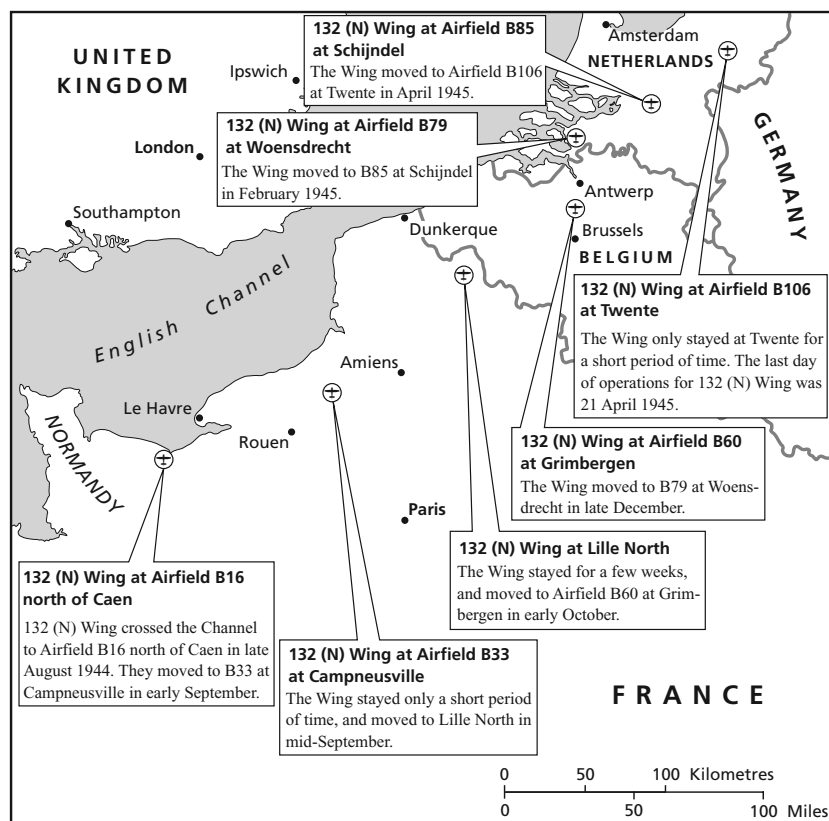


Figure 9: Map – 132 (N) Wing on the Continent 1944–45³⁴

³⁴ In the original text (p. 32), Lieutenant General Wilhelm Mohr used a map taken from Major General Helge Mehre's book *Spitfire*. The map presented here has been prepared especially for this book by Chris Robinson.

After the Allied breakthrough in Normandy, the German divisions were beaten towards an unorganized escape through the Falaise-Argentan area. The aircraft relentlessly hunted for vehicles and attacked any movement, bombed bridges and concentrations of forces. It became a complete rout with enormous losses of life, equipment and prisoners. The pilots reported being able to smell the battlefield at an altitude of several thousand feet. However, there were still groups that had managed to escape, and who might have been desperate, ambitious, or had Germany as their goal. In addition, there were still panzer elements that could not be accounted for.

However, the advance could not wait, and the Wing with its front- and rear echelons had to proceed accordingly. In that way protection became somewhat more or less a matter of chance, even though the convoys in themselves offered a sense of security. Also, there were other movements underway and various strong points had been established, although not everyone could benefit from these. It was only natural that the units had to be split up, because certain damaged aircraft needed to be left behind. The various ground crews had to wait until they were ready, and then they had to drive and navigate along partly damaged roads, towards what would hopefully be the next airstrip. Taking a wrong turn into the desolate French landscape was part of the job. During night-time, when lights were off, one had to hide with one's weapons at the ready. At the same time there was a lot of other activity, and under such conditions sounds and movement from one's own forces could be just as frightening as those made by the enemy. Despite the circumstances, all of the ground crews came through because they had wanted to come through.

The food could be encountered as unpleasant after a while, especially regarding bully beef, biscuits and tea. While bully beef [corned beef] is undoubtedly nutritious, it had its own way of ending up in a thick masse, despite the well-intentioned cooks' best efforts at introducing variety. The biscuits, which were hard, regularly ended up as some sort of mixture in the tea, and hence problems with teeth and sore gums were not uncommon. In time, given that fresh water and milk were non-existent, a bowl of soup was really the only thing one could look forward to.

After their experiences at B16, the personnel were apprehensive about eating fruit and vegetables.

After B57 at Lille, the situation improved significantly. The city itself and the opportunity to meet its population were a source of encouragement. The diet became more varied, even though the basis for it remained. Everything influenced vitality and mood. At B60, which was located at Grimbergen close to Brussels, the situation was the same, but by then October had arrived with autumn rain and increasing cold.

I doubt that there was anyone who could match the Norwegian ground crews in terms of initiative and inventiveness to improve the situation. The eight-man tents came without flooring, leaks were inevitable, and mud from outside soon became part of the mattresses. B60 Grimbergen was a mud pit, and laundry, drying and personal hygiene became a problem of significant dimensions. Despite this, the strangest washing arrangements were invented, some even with ingenious mechanisms for heating. After a while the tents were furnished with various formwork, such as wooden boards for flooring. Some types of oven were constructed to be fuelled by waste oil, as this was the most natural and, in some respects, the most accessible energy source.

The common slogan was 'those who help themselves ...', and the approach worked. When one was able to shake off the cold at dawn, a smile was not far away. On occasions, one was able to make a short visit to Brussels. Regardless, the aircraft received the necessary maintenance, rockets were fitted, and bombs and ammunition loaded. In a sense, the difficulties were made up for by the results and advances. Also, the aircraft could reach targets in Germany proper. This signified that the war had to end soon, but it was not to go quite as smoothly as everyone had hoped.

The German Ardennes offensive started on 16 December and they advanced rapidly towards Brussels from the south. The German offensive benefitted from poor weather that significantly limited Allied air support for its own defence forces. Information about a large gathering of German aircraft arrived, which required increased alertness. The Allied leadership believed, however, that the Ardennes offensive could be wound up and continued the pressure eastwards.

On 21 December, the Wing was ordered to another airfield, B79 near Woensdrecht in Holland. At the beginning it was difficult to start all over again in terms of the 'comfort specialities' which the season called for, and by then periods of snowfall had become common. In addition, another challenge arose. The Wing had hardly arrived, when rumours spread of a large German force gathering on the north side of the river Maas. Supposedly, this included paratroopers and SS special forces. The Allied defence forces in the area were very limited, so the Wing's own anti-aircraft artillery unit was assigned to the front along the river.

The day before Christmas, 23 December, the Wing received orders to be on the alert and establish full readiness. This included, for instance, having access to weapons at all times, sleeping with one's clothes on, all vehicles being ready and loaded to the extent possible, storage rooms prepared to be destroyed, and so forth. Yet at the same time, flying operations were to be upheld. A quotation from General Mehre's account may serve to give some insight into the situation:

This readiness created a strange atmosphere, especially for those who were preparing for the Christmas celebration. The chaplain and his closest aides received word to continue their arrangements, and thereby a situation rose which most people will probably remember: Christmas dinner with Norwegian food, Christmas presents and singing as they processed around the decorated Christmas tree, but it has hardly previously been done singing 'Wonderful is the Earth', 'Peace on Earth', with guns over their shoulders and pistols on their hips.

To put this quotation in a wider context, it should be borne in mind that the crew was a hardened group. First and foremost, they did their job, took hardships as they came, and weighed the threats carefully. They worked together, but could also spend time together. This represents qualities that mostly say something about the crew themselves. Still, the characteristics of this enterprise were that the aircraft were dispersed on the airfield, and the working environment was equally dispersed and vulnerable. This could have given a sense of isolation and despair. Therefore, the strain was more an issue based on personal premises than originating from being part of an organized and armed fighting force.

The reason for the ordered readiness was real enough. If the German Ardennes offensive continued as promisingly as it had started, an additional three German divisions were assembled north of the Maas and the Rhine, ready to advance towards Antwerp. In addition, the German Air Force [Luftwaffe] was not without claws. On 1 January 1945 Allied airfields were attacked by no fewer than 900 aircraft. Strangely, the Wing escaped from these attacks in remarkably good shape, largely due to effective camouflage. The previous base at Grimbergen received its share of the attacks, which led to a German message claiming that all Norwegian aircraft had been destroyed with a high number of casualties and wounded.

B79 also became a concern for another reason, as the German V-1 was primarily aimed at the Allied possibility of receiving logistic support through Antwerp. The later V-2 could also be seen on the horizon. This did not affect the Wing since it went straight up, but it was dreadful to think of the devastation in London. On the other hand, the V-1, with its characteristic and piercing serrated pulse, which suddenly stopped, and flew straight over the airfield. During night-time all one could do was to count and hope, and there was little comfort in telling oneself that the real target was Antwerp. After a while, the V-1 line of fire over our heads became rather unbearable, and also irrational. It was necessary to bring the V-1 down before it reached Antwerp, but at the same time impose defence limitations due to the airfield, damage to aircraft, and so forth.

On 20 February the next airstrip at B85 Schjindel was ready. Although arriving there was a relief, new problems arose. A short while after arrival, British forces directed their attack against the Möhne Dam. After this, the river rose to a level that flooded the tents, messes, and runway. However, that episode also turned out well ultimately. At Schjindel the Dutch 332 Squadron was also [in addition to the British No. 66 fighter squadron] attached to the Norwegian Wing.

The direction of the war became clear. The Ardennes offensive had led to a counter-offensive, in which American forces simultaneously had crossed the Rhine. Despite huge losses, British, American and Canadian

forces established themselves in the Maas-Rhine area further north. The operations thus continued with undiminished force, even though it was just a matter of time before Germany was forced to capitulate. Intense flying operations were performed, with heavy losses, while the ground crew contributed with all the professionalism and discipline that marks a well-tuned apparatus.

B106 at Twente in the north-east of the Netherlands was to be the Wing's last airfield. Traffic was organized so that the convoy route partly went through German areas. Naturally, this was a significant encouragement. Troublesome thoughts undoubtedly began to surface for large numbers of the personnel: What would happen when Germany capitulated? What about Norway? In what manner would the journey home be performed? Would German forces entrench themselves?

Thoughts of home had been vital on many occasions. They evolved around a number of issues, many focussed on personal issues that had been suppressed due to preoccupation with work, risks and advances. Still, they were tiresome thoughts. Yet despite all, one was happy to have been able to contribute during the war, but when it was over, then what? Such thoughts started to recur more frequently: Would there be fighting in Norway, and if so, what would that mean for those back home?

The authorities in London had been concerned by the above-mentioned issues, too. They had to focus especially on the role that Norwegian forces would play if the German forces were to entrench themselves. The results of the Government's considerations were preparations that involved the Wing. The last day of operations for the two Norwegian squadrons on the Continent was 21 April.

Thereafter followed a transfer of command and a separation of the two other squadrons, the British 66 and the Dutch 322, that had joined the Norwegian force. The Squadrons and the Norwegian ground crews were able to begin their journey as early as 24 April, and the Wing was back in England on 26 April 1945. More than eight months had passed since the transfer to the fighting zone and the Continent. A long winter lay between the embarkation and the transfer back to England.



132 (N) Wing's equipment on its way to Normandy.



Cleaning the weapons was an important maintenance task. Hans Olai Elveness with the cleaning rod, and Johansen seated under the aircraft. Asked to comment the picture, Mabr labelled it 'getting ready'.

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PART III

Friends and Allies: A Wartime Memoir

By Wilhelm Mohr

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War in Europe had been raging for six months when the German attack on Norway was launched on 9 April 1940. Admittedly, it was an imaginative and bold enterprise. The potential of air power demonstrated itself. Norwegian forces were unable to repel the invasion, nor could British expeditionary forces, aided by French and Polish forces, maintain their positions given the looming threat in Europe. The campaign lasted until 7 June, when evacuation from North Norway took place.

It should be noted that there were more British than Norwegian soldiers killed during the 1940 Norway campaign, and the French and Polish forces also suffered losses. Added to this were the significant losses of merchant and naval sailors at sea – notably the aircraft carrier *HMS Glorious* with a ship's company of about 1,500 all ranks, only 39 of whom survived. In addition, there was a Royal Air Force squadron of Hurricanes on board that had previously so gallantly operated from Bardufoss, and on evacuation had managed, so conspicuously, to land all its aircraft on the carrier.

In Britain, the War brought Churchill to the helm. The nation braced itself for whatever the future might bring.

For Norway, the War was not over. *HMS Devonshire* had safely taken both HM King Haakon and his government to Britain, as well as the remnants of trained naval and air force personnel, now impatiently hoping for any available opportunity to play their part in the war effort.

At this time northern France was overrun. German forces were poised for the invasion of Britain. I am reminded here of Churchill's words, 'that crisis is the moment of opportunity'. These words were as encouraging to us as Norwegians as they were to all the British.

The Norwegian ambition was clearly to establish an identifiable national contribution to the War effort as quickly as possible. To this end the Norwegian Merchant Fleet was already operating with a significant number of modern ships with good capacity, of which the tanker fleet, in particular, filled an essential requirement. After training in Canada, Norwegian naval and air force units were rapidly formed and

deployed respectively to Royal Navy and Royal Air Force operational control. In addition, elements of the Army were gathered in Scotland, to support the growing resistance movement within occupied Norway. Norway truly became an ally to Britain.

We can claim, with some pride, that the income from our merchant fleet funded our share of the War effort. However, at the same time we must recognise our good fortune that, during the period when Britain stood alone, the battle of Britain had been won with no invasion taking place.

My own luck was to be part of 'the Norsees' within Fighter Command. This comprised of two squadrons, 331 and 332, totalling about 300 pilots and ground crew. Besides our training camp 'Little Norway' in Canada, we also had two squadrons in Coastal Command and numerous crews in Bomber Command and ferry Command, as well as crews on the ferry link to Sweden under the auspices of the civil airline BAOC.

I was in my early twenties at the time, but vividly recall when, in May 1942, the two fighter squadrons were moved from Scotland and the north of England to RAF Station North Weald near Epping. There we were to meet our Wing Leader-to-be, David Scott-Malden, a classics scholar from Winchester and King's College and now proven in combat from the Battle of Britain. He had been in part responsible for getting us south and knew what was in store for us. It was he who really coached us in the ways of the RAF and introduced us to the realms of aerial combat that were to follow.

The Station Commander at one time, Douglas A. G. Morris (or 'Zulu' as we called him) later gave an account of our association:

The Norsees were possibly the easiest of all Allies to handle. Their sense of humour – or sense of the ridiculous – and their reaction to any form of pomposity was easily understood and accepted. They all spoke more or less fluent English, and when British and Norwegians were together it was only by the different insignias on our uniform that strangers could tell us apart (from Laddie Lucas's Wings of War, 1985).

On this latter point of language and acceptance, I may add that we soon learned the value of a small 'Sir' at the end of crucial sentences.

Whilst the RAF Station was our true home, we also got a feeling for the strengths and character of individuals in the local population. We benefited from the consideration and appreciative spirit carried forward from the time when Churchill would offer 'nothing but blood, tears and sweat'. As part of the Royal Air Force we were readily accepted and treated as equals. I am confident that my fellow compatriots in the navy and the Army had similar experiences.

This feeling of integration was brought home to me directly one evening at our local pub in Epping, when a stranger just came up to me, undid his lucky 'grout' from his wristband and gave it to me saying that I needed it more than he did. Then he just made off, probably to avoid the embarrassment of my protesting or of the offer of thanks.

We had an unflinching faith in the RAF's leadership. We had the best of equipment and training and we shared real comradeship. We were indeed a privileged group. Despite all the losses we suffered, the opportunity of being useful gave us deep inner satisfaction.

By the time of the Allied invasion, the RAF was keen for us to participate. As a result, a Norwegian Tactical Wing was formed, fully mobile and counting about 750 personnel of all branches and ranks. We felt trusted. We also felt, modestly, as is the Norwegian way (!), that we had accounted for ourselves.

From 'D' Day through the fighting and moving forward to the Dutch-German border when the War came to an end on 8 June 1945, the relationship between the RAF and the 'Norses' had only deepened. The equality, consideration and recognition of the merits shown at all times to us by the RAF was appreciated by our aircrews and ground crews alike.

Our eventual return to Norway was an endless joy. HMS Devonshire returned to Oslo with the King exactly five years to the day after leaving. Norway was a reunited nation, though conditions and circumstances had kept us apart for those five years. Now followed the task of

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rebuilding the nation. Normal life regained its stride. New generations have followed on, It is therefore important that we Norwegians should remember that Britain stood up at the crucial time and that it was the Allied victory that brought us our country back. But we had participated – and we should be thankful for that.

PART IV

9 April – From the Past to the Future

By Wilhelm Mohr

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How can I really do justice to a subject such as this?

To the situation we faced on 9 April 1940?

To the final result that brought us our freedom back?

To the many who did not get to experience this freedom?

To those lessons that prevailed, or which perhaps have not prevailed clearly enough?

Of course, I cannot. But then again, I am not a historian. Of course, I will be subjective. I *choose* to be subjective.

I need to place myself and provide an overall picture. In the winter of 1939/1940 I was Deputy Commander of the Reconnaissance Wing of Trøndelag Air Unit, a lieutenant, 22 years old, and had just finished basic Flying School and the Army Academy. We were at Værnes. The Wing numbered nine Fokker aircraft, a model dating from 1924. Poland had been occupied, and we were patrolling along the Norwegian coast and territorial waters – in many ways a demanding job with a single engine and the instruments of those days, and given local Norwegian winter conditions. However, controlling the shipping was important and we were a determined crew. The situation in Europe became gradually worse and involved repercussions for us as well – brought into focus by the *Altmark* case.

Were we scared? Not really. Fearful, perhaps, if our thoughts went in that direction. The thought of actual war seemed too unreal. Yet the war did come, on the night of 9 April 1940. The first task was to change our aircraft wheels to skis, and then we flew up to Selbu and thereafter to Aursunden near Røros, while German aircraft flew over us in a steady stream to where we had come from. The Fokkers were not much to put up a fight with. The Gladiators at Fornebu were different – they were fighter aircraft, and the Wing there put up a good fight.

The flood of rumours was enormous, and already during the same night Quisling broadcasted his recommendation on the radio. We heard little from our own side and it was difficult to receive meaningful contact. I had to take over the Wing as early as the third day. We did

some flying – with German aircraft constantly over and around us. With the benefit of hindsight, I would have to characterize the usefulness of our flying as doubtful. On top of that, we had problems with our supply of petrol and our aircraft sinking into the rotten snow. Everything did not go exactly as planned, but our motivation at least could hardly have been better.

I will not go deeper into the war in South Norway as I experienced it, other than to say that there was a series of events and we did the best we could. The result was a group of us in a fishing boat on our way to Scotland, and the city of Molde was burning as we left.

We know that the war went better in North Norway. They had had more time and to some extent had managed to gather forces. The situation showed that the Norwegian soldier in his own territory was far from inferior. Also at sea, and even our Fokkers up there made useful contributions. However, our fate was sealed when the Germans managed to bring their airpower into the area. It made the supply situation intolerable for the British, even though another priority surfaced. Namely, Norwegian volunteer labour helped the Germans to expand the airfield at Værnes for this purpose – while fighting was still ongoing. This, too, was an element of Norway at war. Incidentally, more British than Norwegian troops fell on Norwegian soil during the war in Norway. The French and Polish also had their figures.

How could it have happened that we allowed ourselves to be conquered by approximately 11,000 troops, brought forward in the first phase? This was a disgrace, and a self-inflicted disgrace too, because it should not have happened and it did not need to have happened. In his book, General Ruge claims that if we had been prepared we could have thrown the enemy back to sea. Ruge is clear and to the point in arguing that we were not prepared. We now know that in their attack plan the Germans were ready to abort their attack if they were to lose their element of surprise, yet we provided no such grounds.

We do not escape history even though it might be familiar enough. It has so many lessons to provide that we have to live with a certain

element of repetition. Guttorm Hansen³⁵ once said that *'it was a fear of committing ourselves – we thought we could steer clear – we were still people living on the outskirts, despite the experiences with the losses of the Merchant Fleet during WWI. In a way the reality of the world had not yet become our reality'*. Nordahl Grieg³⁶ states: *'we built upon peace almost in defiance'*. He idealizes us. Rather, it could be argued that, with closed eyes and switched off senses, *we clung to peace as almost in defiance*.

I am not one of those who blame the Labour Party for all that happened leading up to 9 April. We have a society, such as it is, and that was the case back then as well, but it should not have got off too easily either. The consequences were too grave for that, and many of our lessons learned are bound to this particular phase.

The inter-war period had seen a social development of our society that I do understand. There had been high unemployment rates for a significant period of time. The Labour Party's representatives had been elected on a platform of economic crisis and social politics, and not because of defence matters or foreign policy credentials. The downsizing of our Defence Forces was a declared policy, and the *Mot Dag* movement was influential. Scepticism towards everything military, and towards officers in particular, was deep. There was a perception that funding defence-related objectives was not only non-productive and unnecessary, but also stood in direct contrast to the broader development of our society that would bring hope for the future. There was a prevailing sense that this view had support from the majority of the elected members of Parliament. So the way for such a political agenda was clear when the Labour Party took office in 1935, but we should be aware that the huge downsizing of the Armed Forces came in the years 1932 and 1934, during the Mowinckel- and Hundseid administrations

³⁵ Guttorm Hansen was an author, and also a Labour Party member of the Norwegian Parliament. He was *Stortingspresident* (President of the Norwegian Parliament) 1973–1981.

³⁶ Johan Nordahl Brun Grieg (1902–1943) was a famous Norwegian journalist, author and poet. He was granted the possibility to join an Allied bombing mission in late 1943, and was subsequently killed during this mission when the Germans shot down his Lancaster over Berlin on 2 December 1943.

– with the precondition of reversing the process should warnings from the continent come as a product of 'a foreseeable foreign policy'.

There was a line of thinking throughout this period that the leadership of our Defence Forces lacked influence, and there was no desire that it should have any. For instance, the Defence Council, which had been established as part of the downsizing process, had been activated for the last time in 1937, and thereafter closed down. A joint Intelligence Service, an initiative from the Defence Forces to, among other things, enable strategic warning, received no support. There were voices against this political line, but no particular initiatives from any individual political party.

It should be noted that with the responsibility of government, a desire to modify the Labour Party's single-minded anti-military attitude gradually surfaced. Characteristically, this happened in the younger segments of the Party, who were less disposed to the fortified attitude that the military was the protective tool of the middle classes. However, with all the inherent political heritage involved, this was far from a light-hearted operation. With regard to Foreign Minister Koht's statements in Parliament, while they could be clear and disquieting enough for action, he often added positives that were easy to focus on, and it is a very human characteristic to grasp a glimpse of the coming dawn, rather than acknowledge the gravity of an ever-creeping darkness. I will not pursue this issue any further, tempting though it undoubtedly may be. Quite simply, the Government felt it could master such situations that arose by political means alone. Thus, the crisis management was as it was, and war came.

However, there are a couple of features from this time that I want to point out because they focus on what was said and not said under the particular circumstances or, worse still, were never even considered. Yet, I consider these features to be important. This is because it is strange to observe how little reaction the very visible growth of national socialist forces seemed to generate with our elected Members of Parliament at the time. It is true that voices of resentment and engagement had arisen within the population, particularly within radical movements, with regard to the civil war in Spain, for instance. However, in

our domestic political debate the war was simply narrowed down to a power struggle between the Great Powers, which it was better to stay out of. One did not appear to even glance towards a conclusion either – as if a winning side with democratic ideals as opposed to a totalitarian rule was of little significance to us. This may suggest a lack of character in the matter, or perhaps a kind of cowardice. After all, we knew England and they knew us, so that was 'tolerable', but we needed to be careful with Germany. The political position of neutrality had got us through last time [i.e. WWI], when we had benefited from indirect protection. This time, we also had the League of Nations to lean on.

The second issue is of a different character, and is related to the nature of politics versus what is really in the deeper interests of a society. Again, it feels strange to observe the political debate and the distinct lack of understanding of what one was willing to put our young people through if, despite everything, our society needed to call on them. I want to emphasize this point, as this is the issue I am least inclined to forgive our then nation's political leadership. Other parties must also shoulder their part of this burden.

When it comes to the war in Norway, I do not share the unconditional sense of the Government's greatness that has been expressed elsewhere. When, early in the morning of 9 April 1940, Foreign Minister Koht dismissed the German envoy, and the Government did their part accordingly, a healthy national response was displayed. Unfortunately, this was not followed up in a manner that our Defence Forces needed, because is it not the case that the Defence Forces are subservient to the political will? The fact that the people were also forgotten and Quisling had his chance is a separate matter.

The sinking of *Blucher* at Oscarsborg [just south of Oslo], which provided room to manoeuvre, and the efforts of C. J. Hambro, both ensured the element of choice. The fact that the situation was debated within the political circles, by then at Hamar, was only natural. This was the moment when Nygårdsvold realized his perceived reality had been shattered, felt the gravity of a failed policy, and wished to be relieved of further governmental duties. It was, however, the Government that late at night in Elverum recommended that the Parliament conduct

negotiations with the Germans, and suggested a three-man body for that purpose. The Government received Parliament's backing. It also received the so-called 'Elverum's-Authority'.³⁷

On 10 April the armed skirmishes at Midtskogen [close to Elverum, north of Oslo] had yet again provided the Government with a breathing space. Once again, the German ultimatum to surrender was received, but that time also with the provision that Quisling should be installed as Head of the Government. The Government responded negatively, which was somewhat remarkable in a situation that was continually deteriorating. The natural reflex of the first 'no' was no longer the case. Much had already been lost and there was little hope. Was it an instinct from the inner depths that prevailed? At the same time, the attitude of the King seems unequivocal – notably his role within constitutional limitations, and how, by his unique leadership, he still managed to exercise his influence. There is greatness over the decision that was to have such widespread consequences. Hence, we do not need to forget what sound attitudes and actions could have spared the nation. I will leave it at that. In any case, it was, to quote Stephan Zweig, 'History's eternal moment'. Our history's eternal moment.

On a personal level, I came to England, where gradually more Norwegian personnel gathered with time. Our hope was to receive new material and go to North Norway. This soon turned out to be impossible. The Government and a defence leadership established themselves in London. The attitude was somewhat reactive, as the future appeared uncertain: What if Germany were to win? The Navy experienced a 'No' to participating with fitted vessels for the evacuation at Dunkerque. The Royal Air Force needed pilots for the looming showdown. On our part, a training camp was established in Canada. When we left it felt like we were taking the water buckets with us while the barn was almost

³⁷ In Norwegian: 'Elverumsfullmakten'. With the Prime Minister, the Government and members of the Norwegian Parliament trying to escape the German attack on 9 April 1940, *Elverumsfullmakten* was an authority that empowered the Government to act on behalf of Parliament until Parliament was able to convene once again. The Norwegian Parliament did not formally convene until after WWII.

on fire. At least, this was the case for the pilots of my age; the English will have to express their own reaction themselves. A Norwegian military agreement with Great Britain was first established on 26 May 1941, when Trygve Lie took over as Foreign Minister. Much came out of the so-called 'Camp Little Norway', by the way. It became a beacon of recruitment and in an admirable tempo we had our four Norwegian Squadrons established and put into operational duty in Iceland, Scotland and southern England. Yet what would have happened if the Royal Air Force had not won the Battle of Britain?

For my part, I ended up in one of the two Norwegian fighter squadrons. These were put under the operational command of the RAF, and it was a privileged group that was given the opportunity to retaliate against the enemy. There was no uncertainty or doubt; we had top material and we had ourselves. The tasks and usefulness gave deep satisfaction, whereas the gratitude towards allied friends is trivial. The latter took losses too, for their own sake and for ours.

Is it strange, then, that it is the contrast between this and the experiences from Norway that is the most glaringly obvious? The War could have shown many positive sides at home, even impressive ones during the least favourable conditions. Yet there were also some aspects that were anything but good. For instance the work on Værnes airfield already mentioned, and later the notions of 'the cooperative line'³⁸ at home in Norway, in its various forms and shapes, and also the presidency that wanted to remove the King, and so forth – it was not easy. As previously mentioned, even in England we experienced Norwegian political hesitation, and the less contact with this environment the better. The King, yes, but that was about it. And therefore the King's loyalty to the Government was both admired and respected. What would the Norwegian foothold have been like without him?

However, this did not preclude us from seeing positive sides as well. The Merchant Fleet was followed with respect and admiration, and

³⁸ In Norwegian: '*samarbeidslinjen*'.

we were able to witness our own growth, and similarly for the Navy. We were both flexible forces that were provided with room to grow. The Army became more immobile, but it had its groups operating on the domestic front. Particularly encouraging were messages of a growing upsurge in morale back home in Norway, rooted in the population itself, and also of the physical resistance that was gradually growing. This gave respect and hope for the future – to the extent that we actually thought of a future. It gave a growing sense of recognition towards the leadership of the Home Front and the Government in their common work for a united liberation process. Everything was fine as long as we were able to continue our work where we were, and fortunately we were given the opportunity to participate in the Allied invasion on the Continent.

The end was crowned with victory. Our homecoming is impossible to describe – a meeting with forces that in their own way had made their sacrifices for freedom, a meeting with a society matured in respect and in confidence in the role of the individual in a common destiny, and so many, many other things. Yet from this atmosphere of victory we should also remember that:

- It was not we who gave us our country back. It was the Allied victory that brought us that, but we participated and should be grateful for that.
- It was not we who led the liberation process. It was the Allied strategy that ensured that, but we played our role and should be grateful for that too.

At this point I must allow myself to go beyond the period of war and the lessons learned from occupation. What lessons have been learned? It is only reasonable, I guess, that I limit myself to the business of the Defence Forces.

None of us abroad had thought that the Government would escape a legal inquiry. This is not to say that we wanted it, but merely that it was something natural and inevitable. That Nygårdsvold and Koht would fail court marshals was not an unlikely scenario at the time. As

we now know, Parliament chose not to indict the Government. In C. J. Hambro's words: '*they did the best they could. In that lies their excuse, and in that lies their sentence*'. The issue at hand was quite simply that the Government, as far as the general population was concerned, had gradually contributed adequately; it was a time to stop looking back and a time to look forward. In any case, the liberation seemed to unplug a sense of 'go ahead' spirit and optimism that called upon formidable forces. The Labour Party was able to stay at the helm. There was plenty to do, but everything was run down, and it may be useful to remember the Marshall Plan aid that helped us through the initial hardships.

The Armed Forces received their share of attention, despite the fact that few could envision a conflict situation in the near future. Perhaps a degree of guilty conscience contributed to this, but also the fact that the Armed Forces acquired an authoritative political leadership. Further, our recent experiences had fortified recognition of the Armed Forces' stature and roots in our society. The sense of an overall unity among the political and military leadership structure was strengthened, among other things through a common intelligence service. We became familiar with the concept of 'total defence',³⁹ with its elements of society's readiness for crisis and war, and in that way assisted in a more thorough and lengthy political decision-making process. We were able to keep our system of conscription. We gained our Home Guard and various defence-supportive organizations, such as Folk og Forsvar, Kvinners Frivillige Beredskap, Norges Forsvarsforening, and Norges Lotteforbund.

However, the sense of the 'cloudless sky' or 'we do not have any enemies' did not last for long. Soon, the tense situation following the Soviet Union's march into Czechoslovakia arose. Norway picked up the ties woven during WWII and joined the Western defence organisation NATO. We had our very own Royal Resolution of 10 June 1949: 'Directives for military personnel and military commanders if an armed

³⁹ In Norwegian: '*Totalforsvar*'.

attack on Norway occurs⁴⁰ – known as 'The Poster on the Wall'⁴¹. This was an unusually important document that expressed confidence and related directly to the situation that paralysed our Defence Forces in the initial critical moments of 9 April. Also, we had our alert laws – no one can claim that we did not wake up and try to learn from our hard-earned, and still fresh, experiences.

I do not want to pursue the further development, or enter the current security- and defence policy debate. We have a solid Defence Force. Lessons and experiences have been learned and implemented fairly well. Yet when it comes to rooting our Defence Forces in broader society we no longer appear to have sufficient focus. This is particularly related to our concern for what we might ask from our troops. I have previously noted that this responsibility failed in the period before WWII, but was then equally corrected after the War. Since then time has elapsed, and the world continues to change and offer both possibilities and responsibilities which we all seem to benefit from. We find new participants in our political arena, with ideas and aspirations, and ambitions. But also participants that are distanced from those clear lessons we have learned, with little personal understanding of the true reality and nature of war. This is the nature of things.

The demand for a conscript system is built upon the Defence Force's duty to protect land and people. It is as simple as that, and the mutuality in that relationship is self-evident. It is our young people that we call upon. Since the War, the term 'the expanded security concept'⁴² has emerged, with the Defence Forces as 'a security policy instrument'.⁴³ In today's situation we see our conscripts being sent to places under conditions that can be as unclear to them and their leaders as they are for those who send them: peace keeping, or perhaps peace enforcing operations – do we recognise the difference? The question is not about

40 In Norwegian: '*Direktiver for militære befalingsmenn og militære sjefer ved væpnet angrep på Norge*'.

41 In Norwegian: '*Plakaten på Væggen*'.

42 In Norwegian: '*Det utvidede sikkerhetsbegrep*'.

43 In Norwegian: '*Et sikkerhetspolitisk instrument*'.

loyalty, and I am not saying that we should not contribute in this manner, which one day might also benefit ourselves. We want the individuals to volunteer – if we can say how voluntary such decisions are in a coherent group. The question becomes how society's deeper interests can be reconciled with what we wish and hope for, politically – whether we want it first and foremost, and if so, whether this responsibility has been made sufficiently explicit for each individual, for the Defence Forces altogether, and not least for those family and friends who watch their loved ones being sent abroad. These are fundamental questions that we cannot afford to let go unanswered. It is in the interests of our society in its broadest sense, and very much a relevant topic that should be debated more than ever before. Further, if this is the case, it is a disturbing sign that security and defence policy were apparently of such distinct subordinate interest during the last elections. This was also the case before the War ...

It is not my intention to end on a pessimistic note. The events of 9 April made clear what the *Fatherland* really means. If I were to apportion any glory to those times, I would give it to the many who, despite all uncertainty, found their real selves, and mobilized with everything that involves – not stemming from an order or a sense of duty, but as an answer to an inner obligation. I will not let this happen. The same reaction will undoubtedly be seen again, and when it does, let us ensure that reasonable conditions are given, both for the task that is expected to be met, as well as for those individuals called to fulfil it.

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PART V

**An address to the Royal Norwegian Air Force
Academy on the fifty-year anniversary of the
Royal Norwegian Air Force**

By Wilhelm Mohr

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First of all, I would like to thank you for the invitation here today, and at the same time thank you for pointing towards one of us elderly to mark our service's fifty-year anniversary. We appreciate immensely that in your efforts to prepare for the future, wish and muster the will to bring the past with you.

The Royal Resolution of 10 November 1944 begins in a direct manner: 'Until Stortinget [Parliament] chooses to decide otherwise, the Air Force is established as the third armed service, in which, among others, today's Army and Naval Air Arm units, personnel and materiel of all kinds are included'.

Among other things, it states later on: 'When planning and developing the new service, in close cooperation with the authorities of the Navy and Army, one shall develop air units that can meet the necessary demands of naval and land warfare'.

Other amendments in the Resolution have less interest here, but a work program to see the process through was set as a precondition. As a matter of fact, I myself have searched for Stortingets [Parliament's] follow-up on this Resolution, which was provisional as were other governmental issues during World War II. I have not found anything that concerns this issue, which we can conclude means that there was consensus, in other words that Stortinget [Parliament] supported the decision. Thus, we can consider 10 November 1944 as a rightful birthday. And that is why we are gathered here today.

Well, a birth signifies a step in an evolution. A step from an eventful, if not a particularly easy past. That given, I can only say that we experienced its pregnancy during the war as quite easy. One could say that it gradually developed itself almost automatically. If not, we presumably would still have had a separate Army and Naval Air Arm. But suddenly the circumstances had provided us with a new start signal and a new track for running. We got our training camp in Toronto, as the torch of recruitment it became, and where joint efforts created the foundation for further education. The process of further refining the fighting skills was performed within the Royal Air Force, which already embraced

our flying efforts, whether this included operations over the sea or over land. To master the air arena had proved not only a precondition – but an absolute – in order to survive, which the Battle of Britain so clearly had proven. Also, the other services had recognized the potential of the airplane in terms of its ability to wage war. Our own organization had risen to become mature fruit.

So, there we were after the war, with a new service, all in all brought forward by new servicemen, whether they were flying or ground personnel. Well-seasoned personnel and equally conscious. Some will say too conscious to adjust to the rebuilding of the national defence forces that we faced.

I believe it is appropriate that we remember the many, very many, that never returned home. Much could be said with regard to each individual's vitality, courage and will – so nicely woven into the fellowship by the words of Nordahl Grieg on the service memorial in Oslo: 'Above the kingdom of the dead the air is so inviolably pure. It would be to breach a friendship if you were to mention a single one'.⁴⁴

I also believe we should remember the Royal Air Force. This splendid organization that offered us trust and led us forward; which we rightfully can regard as godparents to the circumstances we hereby celebrates.

And with this I could say thank you for your attention, say some nice words on how clever you are and what the service expects of you – congratulate you and offer you good luck. But you all took a chance by inviting me. To stop here would hardly be particularly adequate.

Because, if we are to talk about the service fifty years ago, we do not escape the past I barely touched upon previously. Not because I believe that time deserves any particular attention in military terms. Nor will I say that this period, in military terms, added any values which we can benefit from today. Still, it makes a part of our history.

⁴⁴ The poem in Norwegian: 'Over de dødes rike står luften ukrenkelig ren. Det vilde være å bryte et vennskap hvis du vilde nevne en'. From the poem 'Viggo Hansteen', by Nordahl Grieg.

There was the beginning. It was the time of fumbling when most nation's navies and armies had their eyes on this innovative instrument. Could it be used to their advantage, and if so – how? The land forces quickly used it for reconnaissance and communications in its simplest form, and likewise for the Navy in order to expand the power of its artillery: In Norway we were actually quite early in exploiting the field of torpedoes.

We should not underestimate these efforts. They should be viewed with the perspective of that time, and there was much uncertainty. The airplane was still the 'apparatus' of which it has been said, 'its natural condition was to be unserviceable, although with knowledge, wisdom and effort could be brought into the air if only for a short period at a time'.⁴⁵ Also, there was the defence political situation at the time, when limited resources almost invited to protectionist compartmental thinking. But let us not be too hard on the past.

That is not the reason why I focus on the pre-war period. It is only to be aware of the enthusiasts that were there. Enthusiasts from the very beginning, when flying did not require any other meaning than adventure, courage and also the ambition of human imagination to master and exploit the new arena in the air that had offered itself. Think about it: suddenly this opportunity arose after being earthbound throughout history until then.

In this way the enthusiasts separated themselves from those more conformist, perhaps best expressed by Bernhard Shaw: 'You see things as they are and ask why? But I dream things that never were and ask why not?'

There was no shortage of dreams, and from the perspective of our Defence Forces, we can well include the pioneers we know from polar research and the service of science.

It should hardly come as a surprise that from the enthusiasts a notion of independence gradually matured. A form of independence towards

⁴⁵ In Norwegian: 'hvis naturlig tilstand var å være tjenestedyktig, dog kunne det med kunnen, kløkt og strev bli brakt i luften om enn bare for kortere tid ad gangen'.

the skies in the same way the Army had towards territory and the Navy at sea.

Independence not only in terms of mastering the craftsmanship of flying and all technical assistance of the like. But also independence in terms of thinking on how to organize and use airpower. It was on the basis of this – in 1936, while shimmers of clouds were gathering on the horizon – that Colonel Ruge,⁴⁶ then Army Chief-of-Staff, could develop a plan for establishing a united Air Force. The lack of an Air Force felt pressing – an Air Force where airplanes and ground-based air defence would supplement each other, with an integrated surveillance service. But the plan from Colonel Ruge went much further than that. For the first time one could see a clear strategic thought of how a united Air Force could be organized and used. Not only could an Air Force be used as point and regional defence, but also for reconnaissance and the inherent offensive ability to strike the enemy's base area and invasion targets.

The enthusiasts had influenced this process. There were critical voices, of course. Conformist attitudes will always be on the alert. But when this suggestion of a unified Air Force was stopped it was probably more due to the heavy expenditure this would include, together with the societal and security policy development at the time, when hopeful trust and political manoeuvring to ensure our nations security held a higher currency than to meet the demands of our Defence Forces. When some time later, one rather extraordinarily decided to buy aircraft – it was too late.

In retrospect, we must allow ourselves to reflect upon what role and impact German airpower had on the attack on Norway 9 April 1940. We know the effect on Poland, but considering the distance to Norway, and with the build-up and organization Ruge's air plan contained, it is at least my perception that the entire German enterprise would have been

⁴⁶ Refers to Otto Ruge, who Mohr later met for one hour close to Otta when Ruge had become the Commanding General for the Norwegian Defence Forces, and who shortly thereafter was appointed Norwegian Chief of Defence.

perceived by the Germans themselves to be too extensive and risky to even have been started in the first place. We also know that confronted with the German airpower, the British naval forces – and with that the forces set to help us – had to withdraw, first in South Norway and later in the North.

I also feel we should cover the period after the War. There we were, as a unified service, fortified, tested and reputable. Reputable externally by the results during the war which everyone could see, but also internally, with all the complex contributions performed during that very endeavour.

It is not for me to repeat the evolution of the Air Force. After the sensations of liberation and demobilization, the Iron Curtain descended, and with that a wild race of weapons aids, infrastructure, alert measures, and such. Our service was certainly provided room to manoeuvre, with the strength of our youth and a technology that kept exceeding its perceived boundaries. In addition to fighter aircraft for air defence and their tactical use, maritime aircraft were added with increasingly autonomous roles. Helicopters forced themselves into various military and civil societal tasks. Our transport capacity grew to an entirely new dimension. Rocket defence was established, and with that the Light Air Defence. Innovative electronics kept pushing their limits and opened new perspectives.

Oh, how we rode in that race. Who could expect that our growth would continue without tension within the defence community? Is this not always the case when technological innovations hit a new market? I will not say more on this other than acknowledging that the other two services received us in a manner that primarily signifies trust. We should give them credit for that. At the same time we should acknowledge the commitments that follow this. I will also give credit to the Defence Research Institute. Their contribution to our and all joint planning in this period can not be exaggerated.

When all this is said, there is one tribute in particular that lies close to my heart on this occasion. For the growth we have seen has also another dimension. It is the continuation of the technical foundation built up during the war. How lucky we were back then, when we really

started from scratch, but already from the beginning were able to recruit a core of motivated and mature servicemen. Mostly they came from the maritime environment, from the merchant fleet or the fleet of whalers that came to Scotland, but not home. They were usually a bit older and more experienced. They bore with them a natural authority. They became the core of servicemen within the technical branch in Iceland, Shetland, Woodhaven, North Weald and on the Continent – what would we have done without them?

Many decided to continue within our service after the war, to contribute their part in shaping new personnel crews during our rapid growth. To preserve the culture we hold so dear. A culture of competence and of responsibility for all individuals involved. A culture to trust. Yes, these individuals have been with us for many years. Whether they are still alive or not, let us send them our thoughts.

So, what will the future look like for our service as we are passing this fifty year milestone in our history? In a time with no imminent threat, with certain attitudes that bear some resemblance to the attitudes before WWII. It is a concern. But in total – and this issue has many sides – the Air Force has come out of this rather well. This is also the conclusion if we look into the future – and it signifies an evolution that hardly has come to an end. Because we can safely presume that airpower will continue to increase its influence. Other and new tasks will surface, as well as tasks perceived to be outside the core focus. This will include both aircraft and helicopters, and who can tell how future missiles will place themselves in this picture, offering new forms of usability.

Where does all this lead us? It is not for me to point out any directions. You are in a better place to do that, who orientate yourselves from the world that is, and not like me who tends to orientate from the world that was. In any case, we should allow ourselves to look back on our past with pride. A fine service. Also a humane service, because even though it provides variations in tasks, risk and rewards, it emphasizes even more the demands for mutual understanding, respect and trust. A 'wholly' mechanism. I guess you have to be within the service in order to fully comprehend the contents of this form of discipline. But like all mech-

anisms it demands nurturing and care. Each of you probably feel the responsibility – but allow me still on this occasion to narrow this down to one word: quality. Continued undisputable quality, for ourselves, but also clearly visible within the Defence Forces as a whole, within our society, for our Allied friends. Whatever the future may hold, quality will always create a safe route. Quality is also a goal in itself – a key to inspiration and job satisfaction – and thereby contributing to safety.

This being said, the remaining part is what I most want to say to you here at the Air Force Academy. The enthusiasts. Take good care of your enthusiasm and what it stands for, curiosity, inspiration and the creative. I pointed to the enthusiasts before the War. How lucky we were during the War. We were able to recruit personnel with a broad variety of backgrounds, all with motivation from within themselves, who produced results whatever the job threw at them, who stood for attitudes and conduct we could not live without. The enthusiasts are a gift to each and everyone.

My first message therefore goes to the Academy: Let the attending officers learn what they need, let them develop and unfold – and use them – but do not tame them too much. Free enthusiasts. It is from them this service will acquire its resilience.

My second message goes to each of you, as you grow into this service. Or perhaps it is rather an experience in life which has given me joy and usefulness, and I therefore want to share with you. It came to me as learning from a slightly older RAF officer – well known to us Norwegians – as we stood together on an airfield in Holland at the end of the war. What would come after the war? Our thoughts could wander into so many subjects. He was a 'regular', and I remember well what he said: if you stay in this service there will always be challenges to you personally, from the elements, from the technical apparatus, from technology itself with innovations that will introduce themselves. And you will deal with young people who are competent. That will be inspiring. Then this advice came in addition. Remember, he said, if you stay and with time will deal with these people, procedures or such – ask yourself what you yourself thought in a similar situation

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when you were their age. That has been a useful exercise, I can assure you.

With this I wish each of you good luck. One more thing: believe me, it is a good feeling to have a profession that is useful to your country. Let us all wish our service the best of luck for the future.

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⁴⁷ The Norwegian book series is called the 'Spitfire saga'. The series is planned with five, possibly six, volumes, to which Lieutenant General (r) Wilhelm Mohr has contributed substantially, according to Guhnfeldt.

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The maps in figures 1,3,5,7 and 9 are produced by Chris Robinson.

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Photo

Complete photo credits for old pictures, such as the ones in this publication, are often difficult to pinpoint accurately. Indeed, in most cases in this book, the actual photographer is unknown.

Wilhelm Mohr: p. 21 (above), p. 21 (below), p. 22, p. 23, p. 24, p. 25, p. 26 (above), p. 26 (below), p. 27, p. 60 (above), p. 93 (above), p. 93 (below).

In addition to his manuscripts, Wilhelm Mohr has made a number of pictures from his personal archive available for review and use in this publication.

Per Einar Jensen: p. 37 (above), p. 37 (below), p. 67.

Throughout a number of years Per Einar Jansen has collected a considerable number of pictures of the Royal Norwegian Air Force's aircraft. His collection has been made available for review and use by the author.

KFF: p. 38 (above), p. 38 (below), p. 48 (above), p. 48 (below), p. 49 (below), p. 59 (above), p. 60 (below), p. 61, p. 66.

KFF is the acronym for Kjeller Flyhistoriske Forening (Kjeller Aviation Historical Society) and holds a substantial photo archive, from which these photos have been made available.

Nils Mathisrud: p. 49 (above)

Nils Mathisrud is an aviation historian who has collected documentation for a substantial period of time. In addition to acting as a 'liaison' between the author and KFF, Mathisrud has made available pictures from his personal collection.

RNoAF: p. 59 (below)

Official photographs from the Royal Norwegian Air Force (RNoAF) have been – and continue to be – an important part of the documentation of the history of the Royal Norwegian Air Force, and this picture has been made available for this publication.