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July 1986

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: DHD 3-3

by ALP for DHist NDHQ
Date: 31 JUL 1988

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20 Dec 41

DUPLICATE

The SPITZBERGEN Operation, August-September, 1941 (Special Expedition 111; Exercise "HEATHER"; Operation "GAUNTLET").



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Historical Section,
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Ottawa, C A N A D A.

CENTRAL REGISTRY Army	
CONF. 000.	
MAR 10 1942	
File	8864-5
Chgd. to	CH/1111 14
Referred to	

1. A further report is presented. This deals with the combined operation successfully completed in the SPITZBERGEN Archipelago in the Arctic Ocean, during August and September 1941, by a small mixed force of Canadian, British and Norwegian troops under the command of Brigadier A.E. POTTS, E.D., Officer Commanding 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade.
2. This is clearly an episode of unusual interest from a Canadian point of view; and while numerous documents relating to it will be available among the routine records, it seems well to compile at this time a fairly detailed summary of the operations, based not only on a study of the available documents but also on conversations with, and comments by, persons who participated in the enterprise. Such a summary will at least render the task of the Official Historian in this connection considerably easier, and should also ensure the recording of certain facts which might not otherwise be available to him.
3. It may be pointed out that (except for the work of Canadian engineer units on the defences of GIBRALTAR) this is the first occasion, since the withdrawal of 1 Cdn Inf Bde from France in June 1940, on which troops of the Canadian Army Overseas have engaged in an operation outside the United Kingdom.

PRELIMINARIES OF THE EXPEDITION: CONCEPTION,
PLAN, AND PREPARATION.

4. Examination of the secret file on the operation kept at H.Q., Cdn Corps (1/23/74 (G) ("Exercise Heather") (now deposited at C.M.H.Q.), and of the similar C.M.H.Q. file (3/CDN CORPS/3 - Operations Cdn Corps - Special Expedition No. 111), indicates that the Canadian military authorities first heard of the project for an enterprise in the SPITZBERGEN

(1)
area on 25 Jul 41. On this date the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (General Sir John DILL) had a conversation with General McNAUGHTON, in the course of which the C.I.G.S. offered the operation and the Corps Commander accepted it. On the same day an officer of S.D.1 (War Office) visited C.M.H.Q., saw the Senior Officer and showed an outline of the proposed task, which, it was explained, was to be under War Office control. The Senior Officer then consulted General McNAUGHTON, and it was decided that representatives of Cdn Corps and of C.M.H.Q. would attend a meeting on the matter scheduled to take place at the War Office on 26 Jul.

5. This meeting was attended by six Canadian officers, including Major-General PEARKES (G.O.C. 1 Cdn Div), Brigadier POTTS, and Brigadier MURCHIE (B.G.S., C.M.H.Q.), in addition to representatives of several War Office branches and of G.H.Q., Home Forces. The project was outlined, the available intelligence summarized, and the order of battle of the expedition discussed.

6. The proposal made at this time was for a considerably more ambitious enterprise than the one finally carried out. It was proposed that SPITZBERGEN should be occupied by a military force adequate to the protection against seaborne and airborne raids of a naval anchorage and refuelling base which it was proposed to establish there. It was intended that this force should be withdrawn at the end of four months, prior to the winter freeze-up, a governing factor being the circumstance that darkness would set in on 26 Oct. (2) It is hardly necessary to point out that these northern waters had acquired a new naval importance since the German attack on Russia on 22 Jun 41 and the British alliance with the Soviet.

7. The meeting was told that "general information concerning German activities was scanty" (Lt.-Col. H.A. YOUNG's memorandum of the meeting, 26 Jul 41, file 3/CDN CORPS/3); but evidence available indicated that the landing would be unopposed and preparations were being made on this basis. It was explained that "shipping was not available at the moment for an operation adequately prepared for an opposed landing".

8. A proposed order of battle had been drawn up (bearing the date 25 Jul 41). Including a Norwegian detachment, a Naval detachment, and a N.A.A.F.I. detachment, it comprised 18 units (later increased to 19 by the addition of a Canadian Field Cash Office). Of these, nine (excluding the three Allied or non-military units, just mentioned) were to be British, and the names of units were given: among them were one (103) Lt.A.A.Bty and its Workshop Sub-section, and two (3 and 4) Field Hospitals. The remaining five

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- 1 Major MURDOCH lent the writer a copy of the minutes of a "low-level" meeting on questions of administration and supply for Force 111, held at the War Office at 0945 hrs on this date (G.S.(P)/1116 (Q)/1).
 - 2 This date may not be accurate. Document referred to in footnote 1 notes that the force "will have to withdraw about the end of November".

units, comprising the major part of the force, which was to consist, in effect, of an infantry brigade (less one battalion) with attached units, were not definitely designated, and it was proposed that they should be furnished from Cdn Corps. They were the Headquarters of an infantry brigade; two infantry battalions; a brigade signal section; and a field company.

9. It was agreed at the meeting that the required units should be furnished by Cdn Corps, and in addition two field hospitals (replacing those proposed to come from British sources) and a detachment, Canadian Field Cash Office; the following units were designated for the purpose:

H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde
Field Coy R.C.E. to be provided from 3 Cdn Fd Coy
Bde Sig Sec to be provided from 2 Cdn Inf Bde
Sig Sec
Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
Edmonton Regiment
Two 50-bed Fd Hosps to be provided from 5 Cdn
Fd Amb and designated 21 and
22 Cdn Fd Hosps
Det Fd Cash Office to be provided by Cdn Pay Corps.

10. It is of interest to note the similarity between this order of battle and that of the force provided for service in NORWAY in April 1940, which never sailed (see my Report No. 15, and "G" War Diary of 1 Cdn Div for the month referred to). It will be recalled that one reason for selecting P.F.C.L.I. and Edmn. R. for Norway was the fact that they had a proportion of Scandinavians in their ranks. There was an element of poetic justice in choosing for the SPITZBERGEN task the units disappointed in 1940; though as it turned out the majority of the men included in Force 111 as originally constituted were destined to suffer another disappointment in this instance.

11. H.Q., Cdn Corps and C.M.H.Q. proceeded to make the detailed arrangements for the mobilization of the Canadian portion of the special force. During 29 and 30 Jul, however, doubts began to arise as to whether the force should proceed. On the latter date the Chiefs of Staff Committee met and decided that further information was necessary; in consequence a destroyer operating in the area was despatched to make a reconnaissance and report. In the meantime, the arrangements already made were allowed to stand. (Memo by Lt.-Col. YOUNG, 30 Jul 41, file 3/CDN CORPS/3.)

12. On 3 Aug C.M.H.Q. ascertained that there had been no further change in the situation. The War Office, however, had decided to add field artillery (eight 25-pdrs) to the force originally proposed. (Further memo by Lt.-Col. YOUNG, 3 Aug 41, 3/CDN CORPS/3.) It was decided that the artillery force should be furnished by 40 Fd Bty, R.C.A., a sub-unit of 11 Cdn Army Fd Regt. Actual gunner personnel was not to exceed 80 all ranks, for space on the single transport allotted to the expedition had to be carefully calculated.

13. On 4 Aug Brigadier Potts and other Canadian officers (including Major G. WALSH, O.C. 3 Cdn Fd Coy) attended another meeting at the War Office. The Chiefs of Staff Committee met simultaneously, and it was explained that consideration was being given to the possibility of the force, or a smaller one than that so far planned, proceeding to the islands, destroying the mines, and returning forthwith. The decision on this occasion, however, was that the expedition would proceed as originally planned; and on this basis further discussions took place on points of detail. By this period the mobilization of the units originally detailed for the force had been completed, the time fixed for their being in a state of readiness having been 0001 hrs on 4 Aug.

14. On 6 Aug at 1130 hrs the Corps Commander, accompanied by Brigadiers Murchie and Potts, attended a meeting of the Chiefs of Staff Committee. It was stated on this occasion that the Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet, was now, "on balance", opposed to carrying out Operation "Flaxman", the name given to the original scheme. (Extract from official minutes of meeting, in file 1/23/74 (G).) The Chief of the Air Staff (Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles PORTAL) discussed the danger of air attack upon SPITZBERGEN, pointing out that there would be only one Lt A.A. Bty available for defence. The following quotation is from General McNaughton's memorandum of the meeting, 8 Aug 41 (3/CDN CORPS/3) :

... He stated that the enemy could possibly mount an attack consisting of a maximum of sixty to one hundred bombers. The distance from available enemy air bases was some 350 miles or more; weather was now indifferent for flying and there was danger of icing up. He stated that, in consequence, the Air Staff did not consider that the danger was excessive. He inquired for the views of the Corps Commander.

3. The Corps Commander stated that in his view any air attack would be limited both by the considerations outlined by the C.A.S. and also by the unwillingness of the enemy to make a detachment from other and more important operations; he was of the opinion that the expedition should not be cancelled on account of the scale of air attack indicated. In his opinion, if the presence of the force caused the enemy to launch bombing attacks of the scale indicated, it would be worthwhile from our point of view as drawing off these attacks from places in which they could do far greater harm. He considered that once the expedition was ashore, that such attacks could be met by passive defence, by the use of dispersion and slit trenches. Brigadier Potts agreed with the views of the Corps Commander. The Corps Commander said that, until the expedition was ashore, the responsibility for air defence lay with the Naval authorities, who, no doubt, would provide defence on an adequate basis.

15. The Chief of the Air Staff, as Chairman, then stated that an appreciation had been received from the Admiral (Rear-Admiral VIAN) in charge of operations in the SPITZBERGEN area; this recommended that the expedition should be cancelled. The Corps Commander's views were again invited; and after reading the Admiral's despatch he observed that the Admiral did not appear to have a clear appreciation of the 'object' of the expedition, and that in consequence his observations lacked point. General McNaughton suggested that this matter "be cleared up with the Admiral" and that he be asked for a further appreciation.

16. The upshot was a decision that the expedition would not be despatched until the Committee had had an opportunity to hear further from the Admiral.

7. It was further decided that the movement of the troops to their port of embarkation should proceed and that if possible the troops would be embarked as arranged and would proceed to some suitable location where training in combined operations would be carried out. It was further decided that if embarkation was not possible the troops would be concentrated in Scotland until such time as a final decision as to their employment could be reached.

17. The enemy air bases referred to above are, of course, those established in Northern Norway; and the "other and more important operations" of the enemy to which the Corps Commander referred are presumably those in progress against Russia, which had led the Germans to reduce the scale of their air effort against the British Isles almost to insignificance.

18. A memorandum (3/CDN CORPS/3) by Major F.F.FULTON (T.L.O., Sigs, C.M.H.Q.) on a further meeting held at the War Office on the afternoon of the same day (26 Aug) indicates that GREEN BAY and ADVENT BAY (Gronfjord and Advent Fiord on the Admiralty chart) were being considered as alternative sites for the proposed anchorage, and that Admiral Vian, while advising against the whole project, considered the former preferable. Major Murdoch tells the writer that there had been an earlier basic controversy as between the ISFJORD and LOW SOUND.

MOVE TO INVERARAY

19. As a result of the interim decision of the Chiefs of Staff Committee (paragraph 16 above) the movement orders already issued to the units of 111 Force were carried out. These required the Canadian units to entrain on 5 and 6 Aug at stations adjacent to their quarters in the OXTED - LIMPSTFIELD area, and proceed to KING GEORGE V DOCK, GLASGOW, for embarkation (Movement Instruction "Alliance", 1/8/41, Appendix B: file 3/CDN CORPS/3.) The transport "Empress of Canada" (an ex-Canadian Pacific liner, and one of the ships of T.C.12, which brought the main body of 3 Cdn Div to this country - see Historical Officer's Report No. 43), and a store-ship, had been provided for the projected expedition. Embarkation upon the "Empress of Canada" began at 2200 hrs on 6 Aug and continued as trains arrived until completion at 0830 hrs on 7 Aug (Report of Major Fulton, 9 Aug 41,

3/CDN CORPS/3). Even with the ship seriously overcrowded, accommodation could not be found for the whole force; accordingly, 67 other ranks of 103 Lt. A.A. Bty were left behind. The "Empress" sailed from GLASGOW at 1300 hrs on 7 Aug, and after anchoring overnight at GOUROCK sailed thence at 0730 hrs on 8 Aug.

20. The ships' immediate destination was the Combined Training Centre at INVERARAY at the head of LOCH FYNE. In accordance with the decisions of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, it had been arranged, at the War Office meeting mentioned in para. 18, that the force should sail as originally planned, and should proceed to the C.T.C., where, in the absence of orders to proceed with the expedition, it would carry out training, including landing operations, until 15 Aug. To relieve the congestion on board the transport, about half the force was to be disembarked at INVERARAY and accommodated in hutments (Major Fulton's memo of 6 Aug 41, 3/CDN CORPS/3).

21. The Combined Training Centre, operated under the supervision of the Director of Combined Operations, (3) had the special function of training units of the various services in the conduct of combined operations, especially landings upon a coastline in possession of the enemy. An officer who lately returned to C.M.H.Q. after a short course there was much impressed with the realism and completeness of the training given. He observed that the only apparent weakness was the absence of R.A.F. co-operation. (The difficulty of obtaining air co-operation in training operations is a fairly common Army complaint.) The C.T.C. was, he stated, engaged upon a programme of training a succession of British brigades in combined operations.

22. The officers of the C.T.C. co-operated heartily in the case of Force 111, and in spite of the fact that they had had very short notice of its arrival proceeded to improvise an interesting and varied training programme. The first troops went ashore on 8 Aug. Mr. Ross MUNRO of the Canadian Press, who accompanied the Force from OXTED, notes in his diary under this date, "Impression growing that it really is a mere exercise, although some staunch dissenters who feel actual operation is near". The troops, including all but a very few officers, had of course been kept wholly in the dark about the project upon which they were engaged.

23. Training began on 9 Aug, with the P.P.C.L.I. ashore and the Edmonton Regt practising boat landings and unloading. The next day the procedure was reversed, the Edmontons going on a stiff route march through the hills and the Patricias doing boat work. On 11 Aug the Edmontons carried out a landing and the Patricias did a route march. On this day Brigadier Potts and his Brigade Major (Major W.S. MURDOCH, SEAFORTH of C.) left for conferences in LONDON. Training continued in their absence, and speculation

3 On 25 Nov 41 Admiral of the Fleet Sir Roger KEYES stated in Parliament that his office as "Director of Commando Operations" had been abolished on 19 Oct, and implied that while he held it he had been hindered by the Chiefs of Staff Committee (The Times, 26 Nov 41).

likewise. (This paragraph based on Mr. Munro's notes. Details of the training programme may be found in War Diary of H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Bde.)

DISCUSSIONS IN LONDON

24. In the meantime, affairs in LONDON had hung fire. On 9 Aug Brigadier Murchie ascertained from the War Office that there was no final decision as yet and that Brigadier Potts was coming to a conference on Monday the 11th.

25. This conference duly took place and discussed certain modifications of the original plan. No final decision was reached that this plan should be cancelled, but it was indicated that if it was carried out it would be with considerable modifications. Brigadier Murchie's memorandum (11/8/41; 3/CDN CORPS/3) based upon information from Brigadier Potts, sketches the new scheme as follows:-

2. The new plan would consist of a smaller detachment, as outlined below, whose task would be to proceed to the area concerned and destroy the mines, etc., in that vicinity. This force will consist of:-

Detachment H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde	-	22 all ranks
Cdn Bde Signal Section	-	34 all ranks
One Cdn Inf. Coy	-	124 all ranks
One Cdn M.G. Detachment	-	42 all ranks
One Cdn Medical Detachment	-	14 all ranks
Detachment Motor Boat Coy.		
Detachment Kent Corps Troops	-	35 all ranks
Norwegian Detachment	-	25 all ranks.

The omission of a Field Company, R.C.E., from this list is probably accidental.

26. Essentially, this was the plan finally carried out. It may be noted that the M.G. Detachment had not been included in the original order of battle (above, para. 9), which had however provided that each of the infantry battalions would take 8 Medium M.Gs. as trench stores. In preference to this procedure, a detachment of a Canadian machine-gun battalion (The SASKATOON LIGHT INFANTRY (M.G.)) was added to the force (replacing an equivalent number of infantrymen) and had accompanied it from Southern England.

27. On 13 Aug Brigadiers Murchie and Potts attended a further conference at which the proposed modifications in the plan were discussed. These had previously been explained to the Corps Commander.

3. Brigadier Potts stated that in his opinion unless total destruction was carried out the expedition was not worth while. Further stated that it was considered by the Corps Commander that search should not be made for an object simply as an excuse to carry out the expedition.

(Memorandum by Brigadier Murchie,
13 Aug 41, 3/CDN CORPS/3).

It was explained that no final decision could be made

until all the Governments concerned (presumably those of Russia and Norway in particular) had considered the matter and given consent. When this had been obtained, Brigadier Potts would be summoned to a Chiefs of Staff meeting to receive his directive⁽⁴⁾

5. After further discussion Major Sinclair agreed that the Corps Commander should be put into the picture before it was finally decided to despatch the expedition. This action was considered essential in view of the Corps Commander's responsibility to Canadian Government.

28. On this same evening (13 Aug) Major-General ISMAY, Secretary of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, called General McNAUGHTON by telephone and told him that the revised project would be carried out "as soon as we hear from the other party (NORWAY)". The Corps Commander's memorandum of the conversation (14 Aug 41 : 3/CDN CORPS/3) continues as follows :

2. I asked General Ismay for a statement of the grounds on which the Chiefs of Staff Committee considered this project to be worthwhile and he replied that it would deprive the enemy of certain important coal supplies, wireless facilities and valuable meteorological information. He said that it would secure certain additional man-power for our own war effort (transfer of Norwegians to England), add to the man-power available to our ally (repatriation of Russians), and he said it was the considered judgement of the Chiefs of Staff Committee that the project had value politically, economically and militarily.

3. General Ismay suggested that I might wish to attend the meeting of the committee when the matter would be finally considered

29. The meeting of the Chiefs of Staff Committee took place on 16 Aug 41 at 1030 hrs. It was attended by the Corps Commander, accompanied by Brigadiers Murchie and Potts.

30. General Ismay explained that the Soviet Government and the Government of Norway, following a discussion at the Foreign Office, had given their full approval and support to the plan for the expedition as modified.

31. The Committee then considered a draft directive which had been prepared, and after considerable discussion agreed as follows (from Brigadier Murchie's memorandum, 3/CDN CORPS/3, 16 Aug 41) :

(4) Major MURDOCH explained to the writer on 5 Dec 41 that during this visit to LONDON Brigadier Potts had an opportunity of meeting Admiral VIAN and discussing the operation with him.

" The object of the operation is to ensure that the enemy can derive no benefit from the facilities and resources of _____."

" NOTE. Our policy in regard to _____ will be reviewed next spring. It may be that we shall desire to reoccupy the Island and work the mines ourselves. This should be borne in mind in determining the extent of the destruction necessary to ensure that the over riding object of the expedition is attained, namely, that the Germans get no advantage out of _____ between now and March, 1942."

" The operation will include the following:-

- (a) The landing of a force for the destruction where necessary (or the removal where applicable) of:-
 - (i) Coal mining facilities.
Stocks of free coal.
Transit facilities between
mines and wharves.
Harbour facilities.
 - (ii) Wireless Stations.
 - (iii) Meteorological Stations
wherever found.
- (b) The repatriation of all Russians to Archangel.
- (c) The removal to the United Kingdom of all Norwegians.

" On the completion of all measures shown at (a) and (b) above, the forces are to be withdrawn to the United Kingdom, bringing with them the Norwegian and any others not by then removed under (b) above."

32. The draft directive which the Committee had before it runs in part as follows (3/CDN CORPS/3) :

3. The enemy is not yet in occupation of the Islands, which we hope will still be unoccupied by the enemy when you arrive. In the event, however, of your finding enemy forces in occupation, you will report to the Naval Commander whether, in your opinion, you will be able to put your force ashore and carry out your task. It is fully realised that, if the enemy is established in the Islands in any strength, your force is not suitably equipped to effect a landing in face of opposition.

The final decision as to whether your force is to be landed will lie with the Naval Commander

6. The conduct of the expedition will, while at sea, be the responsibility of the Royal Navy. Operations ashore will be under your command.

7. Russian and Norwegian civil representatives of standing will accompany the expedition to convey the orders of their respective Governments for the destruction of mining facilities and the evacuation of settlements. A Norwegian Colonel, who has been nominated as Governor Designate of Spitzbergen, will accompany these representatives, and all dealings with the civilian population will be conducted through him. We do not anticipate any difficulty in co-operating with the civil authorities.

8. Should however any question arise, while your force is ashore, which affects the security of the forces under your command or the execution of your task, your decision will be paramount; except in that, should the Naval Commander consider it necessary to withdraw your Force before its task is complete, you will comply

33. The Committee considered it desirable that a highly qualified mining engineer should accompany the expedition, and the Corps Commander subsequently arranged that Captain Perry HALL, of 1 ~~Regt~~ Tunnelling Coy, R.C.E., an officer possessing the requisite qualifications, should join it.

DISCUSSION WITH THE DOMINION GOVERNMENT

34. After the meeting of the Committee, the Corps Commander proceeded to C.M.H.Q., where he drafted cable G.S. 1619 (a copy of which is attached to this Report as an Appendix) informing the Department of National Defence of the broad lines of the project.

35. The Corps Commander had already been in consultation with the Department on the principle involved in the utilization of Canadian forces in the enterprise, and he had in fact raised the general question before the SPITZBERGEN proposal was made. He had discussed it with the Hon. C.G. POWER, Minister of National Defence for Air, during the latter's recent visit to Britain; and still more recently it had been mentioned to the Hon. Ian MACKENZIE (Minister of Pensions and National Health), at a meeting at C.M.H.Q. on 22 Jul 41. At this meeting Generals McNaughton and Montague discussed a number of basic matters with Mr. Mackenzie just before he returned to Canada. Brigadier TURNER and the late Colonel Clyde SCOTT were also present. (Minutes of the meeting, G.S. War Diary of H.Q., Cdn Corps, July 1941; extract in C.M.H.Q. file 3/CDN CORPS/4 (Powers of Corps Commander relative to Move of Canadian Army outside U.K.). The following extract from Brigadier Turner's memorandum of the discussion is pertinent:

5. General McNaughton raised the question of his authority to use Canadian troops outside the U.K. stating that opportunities may arise for participation in the near future in operations of limited scope which depend for their success on the strictest secrecy; he said that the factors of time and secrecy make it undesirable that special requests be made to Canada from time to time for authority to participate. He emphasized that operations such as raids, etc., are normal patrol and protective activities of a beleaguered garrison.

36. General Montague then observed that a speech of the Minister of National Defence in Parliament in April 1941 seemed to indicate that the Government of Canada took the view that they alone could authorize any move outside England.

7. Hon. Ian Mackenzie expressed the opinion that the Minister's speech referred to was intended to cover moves to an entirely new theatre such as the Middle East and that it was not intended to restrict General McNaughton so far as operations on the continent in co-operation with British forces are concerned. Mr. Mackenzie went on to say that the Canadian public would welcome the participation of Canadian troops in the enterprises described by General McNaughton.

Mr. Mackenzie agreed to take the matter up with the Cabinet on his return to OTTAWA with a view to obtaining a clear statement of policy.

37. Before this could be done the SPITZBERGEN operation presented itself. While General McNaughton, in the light of the statement of the Canadian Prime Minister in Parliament on 13 Jun 41 ("We have made known to all the world that our forces overseas are ready to go, and that we are equally ready to have them go wherever their services may count for most"), had little doubt that the Dominion Government would approve participation, he felt it necessary to send the following cable on 26 Jul (GS 1458, CANMILITRY to IMMEDIATE DEFENSOR, for C.G.S. : 3/CDN CORPS/4):

Special question discussed with Hon. Ian Mackenzie and Col. Clyde Scott on 22 July and previously with Hon. C.G. Power has now arisen and requires immediate answer. Based on my discussion with Ministers Power and Mackenzie I am arranging to cooperate with War Office unless I am otherwise instructed.

38. On 31 Jul the C.G.S. despatched the following answer, which was received at C.M.H.Q. early on 1 Aug (GS 203, DEFENSOR to MOST IMMEDIATE CANMILITRY : 3/CDN CORPS/4) :

McNaughton from Crerar begins
Your GS 1458 War Committee of Cabinet has discussed with Messrs. Mackenzie and Power. Conclusion on special question referred to is as follows quote assuming project has received full consideration and approval of United Kingdom Government War Committee is quite prepared to have you act on your own judgment as to whether to cooperate and to what extent. In arriving at decision you will no doubt have regard to question as to whether prospects of success are sufficient to warrant risks involved which include not only personnel but possible encouragement to enemy if results negative or worse. We here not in a position to judge of above and other conflicting factors but prepared to leave decision to your judgment unquote.

39. To this General McNaughton replied in the following terms (GS 1513, CANMILITRY to DEFENSOR, dated 1 Aug 41, despatched 2 Aug) :

FOLLOWING FOR CRERAR FROM MCNAUGHTON BEGINS
Your GS 203 dated 31 July received STOP Any action taken from time to time will be strictly in accordance therewith STOP Full details will be reported whenever practicable having regard to secrecy essential to success of operations and safety troops involved ENDS

40. It should be noted in this connection that while the SPITZBERGEN operation was actually in progress the Prime Minister of Canada, who himself arrived in Britain on 20 Aug, made in public statements bearing on this matter. In the course of his visit to 1 Cdn Div on 26 Aug he said, as reported in The Times the next day, "... so far as the dispositions of the troops are concerned, the Canadian Government places no restriction whatever upon any decision that may be made, other than that the Government itself shall have an opportunity of knowing what is contemplated and an opportunity of expressing views" (cf. Historical Officer's Report No. 47, Appendix "A").

41. For the sake of completeness it should be observed that more recently there have been further developments in this matter. On 26 Oct 41 the Minister of National Defence, then in the United Kingdom (see Historical Officer's Report No. 52) despatched to the Hon. C.G. POWER, who was administering the Department in his absence, cable GS. 2322, which ran:

Reference your GS. 203 of 31 July discussion with McNaughton indicates urgent need of generalizing special authority given in this case to cover future minor projects of similar and temporary nature. These activities now regarded by U.K. Government as normal extension of duties formations in this country and plans for these minor operations are responsibility of C.-in-C. Home Forces. Extreme need secrecy argues against prior submission each case of such plans to Governmental authority. Recommend War Committee of Cabinet now forward McNaughton general authority to act in such cases subject to his own judgement. He will notify Minister by most secret means in general terms prior to event where practicable. You are familiar with matter from your discussions here. Please treat as urgent. ENDS.

42. On 31 Oct 41 the V.C.G.S. (Brigadier, now Major-General, K. STUART) cabled General McNaughton as follows (GS 284) :

For McNaughton from Stuart your GS 2322 from Ralston to Power. War Committee has approved generalizing special authority given our GS 203 of 31 July to cover minor projects of similar and temporary nature. This cable based on verbal information from Secretary War Committee. Will confirm when minutes of meeting received.

On 1 Nov official confirmation was given by cable GS. 286.

43. The care which the Corps Commander took to satisfy himself of the propriety of the SPITZBERGEN operation is fully apparent in the extracts given in preceding paragraphs.

44. After assuring himself that the arrangements relating to Russian and Norwegian representatives were satisfactory, Brigadier Potts left LONDON on the night of 16 Aug to rejoin his command at GLASGOW.

DEPARTURE OF THE EXPEDITION

45. In the meantime it had become known at INVERARAY that the original project (whose actual nature was still a mystery to the men and most of the officers of the force) had been cancelled in favour of a smaller enterprise, and that only a fraction of the force would now proceed. Mr. Munro noted in his diary under 13 Aug, "Edmtn & Engineers chosen - great disappointment everywhere. 3rd time for infantry - Norway, France & Heather." (The operation had so far been known as Exercise "HEATHER".)

46. During the night 13-14 Aug, the "Empress of Canada" brought the troops back to GLASGOW, and they disembarked on the morning of the 14th. The major part of the force returned by rail to their former quarters in Southern England; the fortunate few who were to continue were quartered on shore, the officers being billeted at the Grand Hotel. During Saturday, 16 Aug, the men remained ashore and addressed themselves to enjoyment. The following day, after a march to the docks through heavy rain, the force re-embarked on the "Empress of Canada", which was now adequate to transport all the personnel and stores of the reduced expedition.

47. An order of battle of the force as now finally constituted is attached as Appendix "A". The Edmonton Regiment had the honour of supplying the infantry component. The regiment's C.O. (Lt.-Col. E.B. WILSON) pointed out to the writer on 9 Sep that this was appropriate, for this unit claims to be the most northerly infantry regiment in the Empire, and "D" Coy, which was chosen for this duty, is the most northerly company, recruited in the main from the PEACE RIVER region. One platoon of "C" Coy was also included in the force, for duty on the "Empress of Canada". The whole detachment of the Saskatoon Light Infantry (M.G.) (84 all ranks) included in the original force was allowed to proceed to SPITZBERGEN, and not merely half of it as proposed on 11 Aug (above, para.25). It will be noted that the total Canadian strength of the force was 29 officers and 498 other ranks, and that the whole military force under Brigadier Potts' command amounted to 46 officers and 599 other ranks.

48. On the morning of 18 Aug the "Empress" sailed from KING GEORGE V DOCK and dropped down to GREENOCK, where she anchored until 0100 hrs on 19 Aug. She then passed out down the CLYDE in darkness and made her way through the NORTH CHANNEL into the ATLANTIC, escorted by the old aircraft-carrier "Argus" and three destroyers. On the events of this day, and of the voyage generally, attention is directed to Mr. Munro's diary, a transcript of which is attached as an Appendix.

49. During 19 Aug Brigadier Potts held a conference at which he revealed the broad lines of the expedition to his senior officers, though without actually mentioning the name SPITZBERGEN. On the evening of the same day the naval vessels which had so far accompanied the "Empress" left her, and she joined the squadron which was to escort her to SPITZBERGEN. This consisted of the new 8,000-ton cruiser "Nigeria" (flag of Rear-Admiral P.L. VIAN, D.S.O.), the 5,200-ton cruiser "Aurora", and the destroyers "Anthony", "Antelope" and "Icarus".

50. On the morning of 21 Aug the squadron, which was known to the Navy as "Force A", arrived in the naval anchorage of HVALFJORD, ICELAND (now occupied jointly by British and United States forces). American naval forces present included the powerful reconditioned battleship "New Mexico" (which must have been withdrawn from the Pacific at a relatively recent date). American naval officers paid a formal visit to the "Empress of Canada", which is recorded in the official cinema films.

51. While at HVALFJORD Brigadier Potts conferred with Admiral Vian on board "Nigeria", and detailed plans for the operation (now called Operation GAUNTLET) were drawn up. The squadron sailed again at 2100 hrs on 21 Aug, after refuelling, and made towards SPITZBERGEN by a route lying east of JAN MAYEN.

52. On the evening of 22 Aug a ship's concert was held on the "Empress". Just before this concert, Brigadier Potts, having already taken the officers into his confidence, announced to the "other ranks" of the force their destination and the nature of their mission. The announcement was received with loud cheering.

53. On 24 Aug Brigadier Potts issued a Special Order of the Day, which again outlined the object of the expedition, reminded his men of their very special responsibilities, and impressed upon them the fact that "A great deal has to be done in a comparatively short space of time, and each individual will be required to work hard and for long hours." (Text of the Order, file 1/23/74(G), and in War Diaries of units of the Force).

54. On this date the squadron was some 60 or 70 miles west of KAP LINNE, SPITZBERGEN,⁽⁵⁾ searching these misty seas for a flotilla composed of four naval trawlers ("Elm", "Hazel", "Van-Oost" and "Sealyham") escorting the oiler "Oligarch", with which it was to rendezvous at 78°N., 9°30' E. (names from Admiral Vian's Memorandum No. 26/0190, 21 Aug 41 : file 1/23/74(G); confirmed by Major MURDOCH). It was necessary to maintain wireless silence; but two aircraft were sent up from "Nigeria" to locate these vessels and the junction with them was successfully effected early in the evening. The whole force now steamed towards SPITZBERGEN with a view to making a landing the next morning. Final conferences on the "Empress" put the finishing touches to the military plans of operation, and the landing parties prepared to play their role.

(5) Contrary to the suggestion in Mr. Munro's diary for this date, the squadron was never near BEAR ISLAND (information from Major MURDOCH, and note position of rendezvous).

55. Before the large ships approached the land, two Walrus aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm from "Nigeria" reconnoitred the ISFJORD, the great inlet on the island of VEST SPITSBERGEN on which the most important settlements on the archipelago are (or rather were) located. No enemy activity was discerned, and the squadron closed in, "Icarus", steaming at her best speed, some distance in advance.

OPERATIONS IN SPITZBERGEN

56. The first landing was effected about 0430 hrs on 25 Aug by men of the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals commanded by Lieut. M.H.F. WEBBER and accompanied by Norwegians. This party (totalling 5 R.C.C.S. personnel and 4 Norwegians) had been transferred to "Icarus" at HVALFJORD with the object of effecting the most rapid possible seizure of the wireless station at KAP LINNE on the south side of the mouth of the ISFJORD (see map). The party went ashore in one of the destroyer's boats, well armed and prepared for trouble. No resistance was encountered, however, and the Norwegians manning the station co-operated with Mr. Webber and his men in a most friendly manner. On receiving intelligence from "Icarus" that all was well, the remainder of the squadron entered the ISFJORD.

57. OCCUPATION OF BARENTSBURG. About 0700 hrs the large ships of the squadron steamed into GREEN BAY, and passing the Russian mining village of BARENTSBURG to port, dropped anchor near the head of the Bay. (Except where Norwegian names are anglicized, the spelling of proper names used in the present Report is that of the re-printed Admiralty Chart which served the expedition for a map, and of which a copy is attached.)

58. About 1000 hrs Brigadier Potts, accompanied by the representative of the Russian Embassy in London, and interpreters, went ashore at BARENTSBURG. He landed with his staff in one motor boat, while a second behind brought an armed escort of the EDMONTON REGIMENT commanded by Major W.G. BURY. By this time it seemed clear that there would be no opposition, for the jetty was crowded with unarmed and interested civilians. Major Bury remarked in my hearing on 9 Sep 41 that he was glad of the absence of resistance, for an opposed landing on this steep and rugged coast would have been a most difficult operation.

59. Brigadier Potts himself was first ashore, and was greeted by the Russian dignitaries of the place, the first of whom "shook hands bowing formally as if he were being presented at Buckingham Palace" (Mr. Munro's Canadian Press cable 9 Sep 41). The Brigadier was then conducted up a long flight of wooden steps to the communal centre of BARENTSBURG, a large building which appears prominently in the official photographs. This structure provided feeding and laundering facilities for the whole community, as well as public offices. Here, while Major Bury's men stood formed in the street outside, Brigadier Potts discussed the projected evacuation with the resident Russian Consul and the Russian representative from LONDON, and agreement was reached without difficulty.

60. Although SPITZBERGEN is a colony of Norway,

it is evident that the Russian community enjoyed special rights there; they were permitted to maintain their own communal institutions and the Red Flag was prominently displayed at BARENTSBURG; and the majority of the population of the colony were, in fact, Russians.

61. The arrival of the expedition was no surprise to the Russian community, who had been apprised of it in advance by wireless from LENINGRAD (information from Major Murdoch, 9 Sep 41) and already had their evacuation arrangements well advanced. They were extremely glad to see the Canadian troops and were apparently in general equally glad to return to Russia. Among the Norwegian population there was (at least in the beginning) rather less enthusiasm for the evacuation. These people, Major Murdoch explained to me, had gone to SPITZBERGEN of their own free will (which he believed was not so true of the Russians); the war had so far troubled them little; and they were content with things as they were. However, when the situation was explained to them by the Norwegian official representatives they were reconciled to the need for evacuation.

62. OCCUPATION OF OTHER ISFJORD SETTLEMENTS. While one detachment under Major Bury landed at BARENTSBURG, others, in accordance with orders previously issued (see Force 111, Operation Instruction No. 1 (22 Aug 41) and Appendices and Amendment, Appendix "B" to Brigadier Potts' report, file 1/23/74(G), went on by water to the other settlements, Russian and Norwegian, on ISFJORD, having transferred to smaller vessels from the "Empress of Canada" after she came to anchor. One party commanded by Capt. R.B.L. THOMPSON (SASK. L.I.(M.G.)) proceeded in "Icarus" to LONGYEARBY on ADVENT BAY, the chief Norwegian settlement in the islands. This party, including Major A.R. PRAN, the Norwegian Military Governor, who accompanied it, amounted to 6 officers and 85 other ranks (Capt. THOMPSON's report, Appendix "G" to Brigadier Potts' report). Here again the wireless station was taken over at once by a mixed party of R.C.C.S. and Norwegians, and the town was occupied without difficulty or opposition.

63. A smaller party commanded by Capt. E.H.C. LOUDON (INTELLIGENCE CORPS (British)) and consisting of men of the ROYAL ENGINEERS and the EDMONTON REGT was taken by "Elm" to GRUMANTBY, on the south shore of the ISFJORD; and a similar party under Lieut. H.W.SMITH, EDMONTON REGT, went to PYRAMIDEN (near MT. PYRAMID, at the head of the ISFJORD) in "Aurora". Both of these places were Russian mining settlements; and at both the demolition of mining facilities, destruction of free coal and evacuation of the Russian population were undertaken immediately. From GRUMANTBY, 638 persons were evacuated, and from PYRAMIDEN, 99 persons. These were brought down the ISFJORD by "Aurora", "Icarus" and "Elm", and embarked on "Empress of Canada" during the night of 25-26 Aug. (See reports of Capt. Loudon and Lieut. Smith, Appendices "E" and "F" respectively to Brigadier Potts' report; statistics on PYRAMIDEN from report of BARENTSBURG party, Appendix "D" to same.) At GRUMANTBY, unfortunately, fire broke out in the course of demolition operations, and "the town, composed of wooden buildings,was completely destroyed". (Report of C.R.E., Force 111, Appendix "L" to same). (6)

- 6 Two independent witnesses have told the writer that the destruction of GRUMANTBY was not accidental, but resulted from a misunderstanding concerning orders. The Navy, Mr. Munro states, shelled the village.

64. EVACUATION OF RUSSIANS. The first great task confronting the expedition, once the settlements on ISFJORD had been effectively occupied and it had been determined that no German forces were present and no resistance was to be apprehended, was the complete evacuation of the Russian population of the islands. The Russians were to be removed to ARCHANGEL on the "Empress of Canada", which would then return to SPITZBERGEN to embark the Norwegian population and carry Force 111 back to the United Kingdom.

65. 26 Aug was a day of remarkably hard work for the troops at BARENTSBURG, for the Russians had much personal baggage and communal property to embark, and the Canadians helped them with this heavy task in addition to landing the remaining military stores. Mr. Munro, in a cable sent to the Canadian Press on 11 Sep, described the scene: "... When I climbed on the dock the whole population of the town (1400) seemed to be down on the small jetty piling up their baggage in great confused heaps. Boxes, bundles, suitcases and carryalls overflowed on the beach. By the amount of baggage we might have been evacuating a metropolis."⁽⁷⁾

66. The difficulty of the day's work was enhanced by language troubles; only a very few of the Canadian soldiers had any knowledge of Russian, the Russians were innocent of English, and there were few interpreters. In spite of all obstacles, however, good humour was maintained almost universally, and by evening the whole Russian population of SPITZBERGEN was aboard the "Empress of Canada". This result - in the circumstances a triumph of speed - had been achieved only by using destroyers to supplement small craft in carrying people and goods from the jetty to the transport. "The skipper of a destroyer who has taken his ship through some of the fiercest naval engagements of the war looked over his ship, turned to me and said 'Good Lord, I'm in the ferry business now. I wonder what they'll be using destroyers for next!' (Mr. Munro's despatch of 11 Sep, as above.)

67. RUSSIAN COMPLAINT OF DIFFICULTIES. While the expedition was still in the Arctic an official complaint was made in LONDON by the Soviet Ambassador, who told the Foreign Office that the Soviet Consul in SPITZBERGEN had reported that the men of the British force were not behaving especially well, and that in particular Soviet citizens were being refused permission to take their personal belongings with them on board ship. As a result, a communication was made by the Admiralty to the Naval Commander of the expedition, who replied in two words: "Quite untrue". The Ambassador's complaint was made on 27 Aug, by telephone, and Admiral Vian's message was received on the evening of 28 Aug (copies of documents, 3/CDN CORPS/3).

7 Expanded from the portmanteau "telegraphese" of Mr. Munro's message as sent. Mr. Munro sent a succession of despatches, giving more and more details as the censorship relating to the expedition, strict at first, was gradually relaxed.

68. On the last day of August the Admiralty received from Admiral Vian the following signal (evidently despatched from ARCHANGEL), which is here transcribed exactly from a copy furnished C.M.H.Q. :

MOST SECRET M E S S A G E IN 1759A/29/August
From S.O. Force A. Date 31.8.41.
Recd. 1245.

NAVAL CYPHER D BY W/T & T/P.

Addressed Admiralty.

AIDAC.

Your 1940A 27.

(i) 2175 Russians now being disgorged from womb of GFKQ (EMPRESS OF CANADA) each with own baggage. To be disembarked also there are 200 tons repetition tons of communal property (2 corrupt groups) SPIRIT was delayed 7 hours.

(ii) Army reports only discourtesy was on part of Russian Consul who with (?friends) was carried on board dead drunk.

(iii) Today Consul in presence of Admiral Dolini and self expressed himself fully satisfied with all arrangements.

1759A/29.

69. On the basis of Mr. Munro's despatch of 11 Sep, his diary (see Appendix), the report of Major C.A.H.B. BLAKE, British Military Intelligence Liaison Officer with the force, and what Major MURDOCH told me on 9 Sep, the actual facts are as follows. The trouble, such as it was, was all caused by the Russian Consul, who apparently disliked the idea of much Soviet government property at the mines being left behind or destroyed, and encouraged his people to refuse to be separated from their baggage when embarking. (The Ambassador requested the Foreign Office on 27 Aug to see that "so far as shipping space allowed, the most valuable machinery of the coal mines should be brought away and delivered to the mainland". This was no small request, but actually a great deal of valuable machinery was crated and brought to Britain.)

70. When the embarkation had almost been completed on 26 Aug, it was discovered that the last group of Russians were making difficulties and refusing to embark, the consul encouraging them in this attitude. There was a minor altercation on the jetty. "The Russians wouldn't budge away from their luggage and waved and shouted when officers implored them to move aboard a destroyer. A miner who had imbibed too freely slugged a Canadian soldier over the head with a balalaika. The instrument splintered on the Canadian's steel helmet. The soldier just laughed." (Mr. Munro's despatch.) Brigadier Potts came ashore and (to quote Mr. Munro again) dealt with the situation

"diplomatically". In this case, the weapons of diplomacy were alcoholic. Majors Murdoch and Blake succeeded by these means in reducing the consul to a more acquiescent - or, at least, more quiescent - condition. The remainder of the Russian community was embarked without great difficulty (though the consul himself required more than a little assistance); and a very hard day's work was over.⁽⁸⁾

71. Every participant to whom I have spoken confirms that the general relationship between the Canadians and the Russians was thoroughly friendly; indeed, the troops were almost embarrassed by the kindness with which they were received, and by the gifts of cigarettes, candy and miscellaneous souvenirs which were pressed upon them.

72. About midnight (26-27 Aug) the "Empress" sailed for ARCHANGEL, carrying approximately 2,000 Russians⁽⁹⁾ (the whole Russian population of SPITZBERGEN) and their motley property. She was escorted by the flagship "Nigeria" and the three destroyers. "Aurora" remained at SPITZBERGEN to protect the expedition and assist in the liquidation of the more remote settlements. The Canadian troops took over the town of BARENTSBURG and began preparations for the necessary demolitions.

73. A part of the Canadian force made the voyage to ARCHANGEL: the platoon of "C" Company, EDMONTON REGT, which had been brought for the special purpose of performing protective duties on board the "Empress", a party of machine-gunners of the SASKATOON LIGHT INFANTRY (M.G.), and a medical detachment.

74. DEMOLITIONS. With the Russians gone, demolitions in the BARENTSBURG area began on 27 Aug. On this day the disused wireless station nearby, at FINNESHAMN, on the east side of GREEN BAY, was destroyed by a detachment of 3 Fd Coy R.C.E. Capt. WILSON had landed here even before Brigadier POTTS went ashore. The stations at KAP LINNE and LONGYEARBY, having been in active operation, were kept at work throughout the ten days of the occupation.

8 Major Blake's report (Appendix "J" to report of Brig. Potts) gives further details but treats the subject delicately. It does, however, mention that when Major Blake went to see the Consul the latter "had a bottle of Caucasian brandy beside him", and that before the episode was over he had "finished a further 2 bottles of Caucasian champagne and half a bottle of Caucasian Madeira and passed out". "The Consul was carried aboard on a stretcher covered by a sheet so that his own people should not know what had happened to him". Mr. Munro told me (15 Oct 41) that the stretcher-bearers were Russians, a precaution taken to obviate any allegation that force had been used. Capt. W.H.T. Wilson told me (8 Dec 41) that the only actual force was applied by a tired trawler-skipper who moved the last twenty Russians aboard by firing six revolver shots past one man's head.

9 The total given in Appendix "D" to Brigadier Potts' report is 1955 persons, including 326 women and 72 children. Appendix "K" states the number embarked as 1969. And see para. 66, above.

75. From this time forward, destruction of mining facilities and of coal-dumps and fuel-oil stocks proceeded. Fires were started in the coal-dumps at many points by the free use of oil and petrol, and incendiary bombs were also employed. It appears that a total of 450,000 tons of free coal was destroyed in SPITZBERGEN by these means. Major Walsh's report lists 370,000 tons, and does not definitely state that a further 80,000 tons, stored at the Old Mine at BARENTSBURG, was also fired. The War Diary of the R.C.E. Detachment notes that on 25 Aug it was decided not to burn this latter pile on account of imperilling the town. On 3 Sep, however, the detachment of Kent Corps Tps R.E. was sent ashore at BARENTSBURG from the "Empress" to make certain that demolitions were complete; and this Detachment's War Diary (photostat at Canadian Records Office, ACTON) states that "The coal dump, 150,000 tons was well alight ...". The 150,000 tons is evidently a round-figure total for the 60,000 tons at the New Mine and the 80,000 at the Old Mine (Major Walsh's report). It seems clear that after the town had been destroyed by accidental fire it was decided to burn the Old Mine pile also. This interpretation is confirmed by Major Murdoch. The procedure followed, and many of the more spectacular episodes of demolition, are well illustrated in the cinema films taken by Captain TENNYSON-D'EYNCOURT, of the (British) Army Film Unit, who accompanied the expedition.
76. A complete technical account of the demolitions effected lies beyond the scope of this report. Such an account will be found appended to the War Diary of Serial No. 20113 (R.C.E. Detachment), Force 111. Here only the briefest summary will be attempted, on the basis of this "Technical Report", and the report of Major Walsh, C.R.E., Force 111 (Appendix "L" to report of Brigadier Potts).
77. Among the measures taken at BARENTSBURG were the demolition of a heavy crane, the trestles, frogs and switches of the narrow-gauge railway, the hoisting machinery at the New Mine, and four motor boats. Further damage was done by accidental fire. Numerous stores and spare parts were removed. It is stated that the New Mine, which is situated below sea level, would flood as soon as pumping ceased.
78. At LONGYEARBY, the serial tramways for transportation of coal from the three mines situated here were disabled, the motors were removed from each turbine in the power plant, and the wireless station was demolished. Major Walsh considers that at least six months' work would be required to restore the mines to working order.
79. These demolitions at LONGYEARBY were not carried out without considerable verbal opposition from the Norwegians. These people had hoped for a British occupation of the archipelago, and the news of the projected evacuation and demolitions was a shock to them. At a meeting at LONGYEARBY on 26 Aug the mine manager, one SVERDRUP, objected hotly to this programme, although the demolitions here were to be limited to putting transporter machinery out of action and destroying free coal. Brigadier Potts was obliged to overrule these objections. For a time it was proposed to leave Norwegian care and maintenance parties behind, but ultimately the military and naval commanders agreed upon complete evacuation. Major A.S.T. GODFREY, R.E., who wrote the minutes of the LONGYEARBY conferences on these matters, was decidedly

suspicious of Sverdrup's motives (Appendix "G 1" to Brigadier Potts' report).

80. At GRUMANTBY and PYRAMIDEN mine adits and surface plant were destroyed by explosives; at the former, the conveyor belt and jetty were destroyed, and at the latter essential parts of the power plant were removed. Similar measures were taken at NY ALESUND, where the power plant of a new mine was destroyed, wireless masts were felled, and a motor boat and lighters disposed of. Some minor immobilizations were carried out at SVEAGRUVA.

81. At LONGYEARBY about 50,000 gallons of fuel oil and petrol were poured into the sea; and at BARENTSBURG the oil stocks, "consisting of approximately 225,000 gallons of all types of oil, petrol, and grease", were destroyed by fire. This blaze was most spectacular. "Exploding barrels were seen to a height of about 250 feet and were thrown out from the pile flaming to a distance of from 350 to 400 feet" (Technical Report).

82. EVACUATION OF NORWEGIAN SETTLEMENTS. During the absence of the "Empress of Canada", outlying Norwegian settlements were evacuated and necessary demolitions carried out by expeditions transported by "Aurora". Early in the morning of 28 Aug a landing was made at NY ALESUND on KING'S BAY (KONGSFJORD), an inlet lying some 60 miles north of the ISFJORD. Demolitions were carried out, and coal-piles fired. After disembarking the demolition party, "Aurora" sailed northwards to pick up trappers living in isolated places. She returned about 2300 hours on the 28th and the Norwegian population (79 persons) was taken on board. At midnight the Norwegian flag was hauled down after being saluted by a military guard, and "Aurora" sailed again about 0130 hrs on 29 Aug, the whole proceeding having occupied less than twenty-four hours. The military force employed here was largely R.E. (This para. based on Appendix "H" of Brigadier Potts' report, on information supplied by Major Murdoch, and on "Secret Dope Sheet" of the Army Film Unit relating to the expedition. Comparison with other sources where available indicates that these latter notes, presumably made by Captain D'Eyncourt at the time, are usually to be relied upon.)

83. On the morning of 29 Aug a small detachment was put ashore at SVEAGRUVA, another Norwegian settlement (at the head of LOW SOUND, south of the ISFJORD) to effect demolitions and evacuate the small population (36 persons). These tasks were completed by 1600 hours. "Aurora" then returned to BARENTSBURG. (Appendix "I" to Brigadier Potts' report and Dope Sheet.)

84. The chief Norwegian settlement, as already noted, was LONGYEARBY or LONGYEAR CITY on ADVENT BAY, further up the ISFJORD than GREEN BAY. Here the Canadian sappers had been at work for some time past preparing demolitions, Major G. WALSH, O.C. 3 Cdn Fd Coy, having proceeded thither on 27 Aug to supervise the work. This "clean and neat Norwegian town" appealed to the Canadians much more than the Russian settlements. By the Norwegians the village was called LONGYEARBYEN.

85. On 31 Aug "Aurora", having on board Brigadier Potts, who had accompanied the NY ALESUND and SVEAGRUVA expeditions, put in at LONGYEARBY. It was Sunday, and the day was celebrated with a modest touch of ceremonial. A naval and military church parade was held, the troops

marching to the settlement's little wooden church led by "Aurora's" Marine band. Brigadier Potts, accompanied by Captain W.G. AGNEW of "Aurora" (10) and Major PRAN, took the salute. These scenes are well recorded in Captain D'Eyncourt's films.

86. On 1 Sep, while "Aurora" still lay in ADVENT BAY, Brigadier Potts visited BARENTSBURG by air and found that an accidental fire had broken out there. (11) This fire destroyed a considerable part of the town in the region of the power station (its effects are to be seen in the cinema films) and made it necessary to evacuate the troops from BARENTSBURG forthwith. (Appendix "D" to Brigadier Potts' report). A court of inquiry assembled on board "Empress of Canada" on 5 Sep could not discover the cause of this fire, but believed it to have been due to spontaneous combustion or to delayed ignition by a spark (Proceedings of the court, Appendix "D 1" to Brigadier Potts' report).

87. At 2230 hrs on 1 Sep the "Empress of Canada" again dropped anchor in GREEN BAY, having successfully completed her mission to the WHITE SEA. She had anchored some distance from ARCHANGEL at 1200 hrs on 29 Aug, and discharged her Russian passengers to a Russian vessel the same day. On 30 Aug she embarked 192 Free French Military personnel, 14 of whom were officers (this figure from signal in para.101 below, confirmed by the War Diary of medical detachment on board "Empress"; Appendix "K" to Brigadier Potts' report gives total as 191). These men had escaped to Russia from German prison camps, and were now en route to England to join the forces of General De GAULLE. On the return to SPITZBERGEN they provided a working party to assist with the loading of stores, and in the cinema films this party is seen labouring cheerfully. The excellence of their morale made a deep impression on the Canadians. While in Russian waters the "Empress" also embarked four officers and one other rank of the British Military Mission to Russia. She sailed again for GREEN BAY on 30 Aug and arrived there after an uneventful passage. (Report of Major A.S. DONALD, EDMN R., O.C. Troops on board, Appendix "K" to Brigadier Potts' report; see also Medical Det. War Diary.)

88. The Norwegians, the whole remaining population of SPITZBERGEN, were now concentrated at LONGYEARBY: a total (according to Captain Thompson's report, which does not quite agree with the signal in para.101 below) of 799 persons, including those from KING'S BAY and SVEAGRUVA and 12 trappers, who had been picked up individually along the inlets. During 2 Sep these people were embarked on naval vessels and transferred to the "Empress", while the demolitions which had been prepared here were undertaken.

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10. Since these events took place, Captain Agnew and his ship have more than once distinguished themselves in the Mediterranean, notably in the total destruction of an enemy convoy on 9 Nov 41. (The Times, 10 Nov 41)
 11. This is the proper sequence of events, not as given in Film Unit Dope Sheet for this date. Correction by Major Murdoch.

89. SIGNALS OPERATIONS. A special word must be said at this point of the activities of the Signals detachment with the Force. The occupation of the wireless stations has already been referred to. The two chief stations in the islands were those at KAP LINNE and LONGYEARBY, both of which were in touch with the German-controlled station at TROMSO in Norway. There were also Russian stations at BARENTSBURG and GRUMANTBY (both of which the Russians themselves dismantled before their departure) in addition to a Norwegian station at KING'S BAY, working only to LONGYEARBY, which made its final transmission at 0800 hrs on 28 Aug before being dismantled. At SVEAGRUVA there was receiving equipment only.

90. Thanks to the loyal and efficient co-operation of Norwegian operators, whose work is highly praised by the Canadian officers, it was possible to continue normal transmissions to TROMSO with a view to concealing from the enemy the fact that anything unusual was taking place in SPITZBERGEN. This was done with, apparently, complete success. Capt. W.H. WILSON, O.C. Sigs, Force 111, explained to the writer on 8 Dec 41 that there were, of course, limits to the extent to which the meteorological data sent out from KAP LINNE could be falsified without arousing enemy suspicions. It was, however, desirable to discourage German air reconnaissance, and the fact that local fog was a fairly common phenomenon in SPITZBERGEN enabled something to be done in this way. As soon as Lt. WEBBER's men took possession at KAP LINNE, that station began to report fog conditions, and this was continued until after the departure of the "Empress" for ARCHANGEL. On the return of the "Empress" and her escort, and until the final departure of the force from SPITZBERGEN, the same procedure was followed. KAP LINNE's last transmission was made at 1800 hrs on 3 Sep, after which the station was put out of action, much W/T and meteorological equipment being carried away. At LONGYEARBY, a rear party including 2 O.R., R.C.C.S., and a Norwegian operator and a power plant engineer (as well as one officer and 9 O.R., R.C.E.) was left behind on the withdrawal of the main body of troops, which took place at 2200 hrs on 2 Sep. The rear party sent out the last transmission at 2000 hrs on 3 Sep (without receiving an acknowledgment from TROMSO) before dismantling the station and power house and embarking on "Anthony" at 2330 hrs. This party never re-embarked on the "Empress", but returned to Britain in "Anthony", which took them to SCAPA FLO.

91. The deception appears to have been complete, for when the Force was well out to sea on its homeward voyage TROMSO was heard calling SPITZBERGEN strongly and inquiring what was wrong.

92. The Norwegian operators had been co-operating with the Royal Navy since the first reconnaissance of SPITZBERGEN by naval vessels, some three weeks before the arrival of the expedition.

93. The preceding paragraphs are based upon Brigadier Potts' own covering letter to his report; upon the report of O.C. Sigs., Force 111 (Appendix "N" to Brigadier Potts' report amplified and to some extent corrected by the interview with Capt. Wilson mentioned above; upon the War Diary of R.C.E. detachment, Force 111 (especially useful for LONGYEARBY); upon Captain Thompson's LONGYEARBY report; and upon information from Mr. Munro.

94. FINAL EVACUATION OF SPITZBERGEN. About 2300 hrs on 3 Sep (12) the "Empress", having re-embarked the military force, sailed with her naval escort from GREEN BAY. Moving out to sea in the Arctic twilight, she passed the remains of BARENTSBURG with its great coal-piles blazing brightly; and as she turned towards the open ocean the fires lit nine days before at GRUMANTBY, up the ISFJORD, could be clearly seen.

95. The ten-day sojourn in SPITZBERGEN had been a change for the Canadian troops, but certainly not a rest. Throughout the period they worked in shifts, four hours on duty, four hours off; and the work was heavy. Throughout the occupation, thanks to the "midnight sun", it was never wholly dark; though the cinema films make it clear that towards the end of the time the nights were growing darker. (13) In these conditions it was difficult to keep track of the passage of time; and on 9 Sep one officer of the force told the writer that the occupation had lasted eight days, while another said nine. The documents indicate that the actual time from the first landing until the "Empress" weighed anchor for the return voyage was ten days less five to six hours.

96. Although the men of the expedition had been issued with special cold-weather kit, and the cinema record shows them wearing it on watch and at anti-aircraft drill on board the "Empress", the weather was not especially cold during the stay at SPITZBERGEN, and the men worked without heavy outer garments.

97. There were no fatal casualties to the expedition, and the only serious injury was to one man who was struck by a flying fragment during demolition work. This man, B.97225, Sapper P.H.J. RILLEY, R.C.E., was successfully treated by the R.C.A.M.C. detachment with the Force, and at last reports was well on the way to recovery.

98. No account can be attempted here of the work of the R.C.A.M.C. detachment. It provided medical parties for BARENTSBURG and LONGYEARBY, as well as one permanently on board the "Empress of Canada". The detachment's War Diary includes full details of the work of all three parties. It also throws considerable light on the activities of the Force generally, and has been drawn upon to this end in the present Report.

99. Every effort was made, as indicated above, to ensure that the evacuation of SPITZBERGEN was complete, and so far as known every human creature was removed. The domestic animals were slaughtered. At BARENTSBURG a Canadian N.C.O. charged with the business of killing and cutting up cattle became known (Major BURY told me) as "The Butcher of BARENTSBURG". The rear party at LONGYEARBY shot seven horses before embarking.

12. This time is given in the War Diary of Medical Detachment, Force 111.

13. Brigadier Potts mentioned at the ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY on 24 Nov 41 that the films greatly exaggerated the darkness.

100. In the course of the operation the naval forces captured three (14) Norwegian coal-carrying vessels working for the enemy, and on 26 Aug "Aurora" escorted them out of GREEN BAY on their first night's voyage to England, with small parties of Norwegian soldiers on board. The presence of these colliers suggests the embarrassment to the enemy likely to result from the expedition.

THE HOMEWARD VOYAGE

101. The voyage back to GLASGOW was uneventful, and no calls were made en route. The ship's company on the "Empress of Canada" was in the last degree mixed, and it may be worth while to transcribe the signal with which one of the destroyers announced to the Admiralty the expedition's return to British waters, a copy of which was passed to Canadian Military Headquarters by the War Office :

Recd. 7.9.41
Handed to M.O.8
N.D. Officer 2155 hrs

Received by 'phone from Duty Captain, Admiralty,
at the War Room.

From: Destroyer "ICARUS".

To: Admiralty (?).

Your 1038 "EMPRESS OF CANADA" due arrive GREENOCK sometime tonight. Has on board :-

Norwegians.	570 men.
	140 women
	55 children
Russians	3
French	14 Officers
	178 O.Rs.
German. (15)	1
Force 111.	52 Officers
	620 O.Rs.
	150 Tons Stores
Norwegian Stores and Baggage	500 Tons
Russian Stores.	25 Tons
Also Team of 15 sled Dogs.	

Brigadier Potts and Major Pran request War Office (3 groups undecypherable) and Army may be notified.

(Distribution omitted)

The War Office,
(M.O.8),
7.9.41

-
14. Film Unit Dope Sheet says four, but this is apparently erroneous, though a local tug was also brought back, and another ship had been taken in prize on Admiral Vian's previous visit. Major PRAI told the writer on 3 Nov 41 that three Norwegian soldiers were put aboard each of three ships as a "military crew". Admiral Vian's report is not at present available for consultation.
15. Presumably the one German subject, "20 years on island", mentioned in Capt. Thompson's LONGYEARBY report.

102. On 6 Sep the two cruisers "Aurora" and "Nigeria" parted company with the "Empress". They were bound for an enterprise against enemy naval forces in Norwegian waters. The enterprise was successful, resulting in an engagement in which, as reported in the press a few days later, the German gunboat "Bremse" and other vessels were sunk (The Times, 15 Sep 41). This episode added to the reputation won by Admiral Vian as captain of the "Cossack" in the "Altmark" affair of 1940, and in the operations against the "Bismarck" (May, 1941), which earned him a second bar to his D.S.O. (Information from Mr. Munro, who tells me that the enterprise was known in advance to some Canadian officers who were on board one of the cruisers at the time when it was described to the ship's company over the public-address system.)

103. For some further facts concerning the voyage, attention is directed to Mr. Munro's diary (Appendix). The cinema record of the expedition includes a number of scenes taken on board, showing the friendly fraternization which took place between the various groups of passengers, military and civilian.

104. As indicated in Mr. Munro's diary, the "Empress" re-entered the CLYDE on the night of 7-8 Sep. According to the Medical Detachment's War Diary, she dropped anchor at GOUROCK at 2300 hrs. On the afternoon of 8 Sep the Canadian units disembarked and entrained for the stations in southern England from which they had been absent for more than a month.

SECURITY PRECAUTIONS AND PUBLICITY

105. Every possible precaution was taken to preserve secrecy concerning the departure of the expedition and in particular its objective. The movement was treated as an exercise, and the General Report for Cdn Corps for the week ending 9 Aug 41 states, "2 Cdn Inf Bde less Seaforth of C departed for Scotland on 6 Aug to participate in exercise HEATHER". The succeeding week's Report notes, "2 Cdn Inf Bde Group less details has returned from exercise HEATHER". Knowledge of the project was restricted at Canadian Military Headquarters to a very small group of officers; and the actual word "SPITZBERGEN" was placed on the secret file relating to it only on 16 Aug, when Ottawa was apprised by cable of the force's destination. This file (3/CDN CORPS/3) was of course marked "Most Secret" and kept in the Intelligence safe. After the expedition had returned, the writer asked a number of officers at C.M.H.Q. none of whom had had any direct connection with arranging the operation, whether they had known what was contemplated. Most of them had known that a force had moved; but none of them had known its destination.

106. A special aspect was that presented by the return to their old stations of that large portion of the force which went to INVERARAY but which was not taken to SPITZBERGEN. This was simplified however by the fact (para. 22 above) that the officers and men had no knowledge of what had been intended; and though some individuals talked their talking, in these circumstances, could do little harm. One public-spirited civilian came to C.M.H.Q. and reported a soldier of the P.P.C.L.I. who had been heard declaring that an expedition to which he was attached had returned to Britain after getting within sight of the coast of HOLLAND.

107. During this stage, newspapers in Britain and Canada published an account written by Mr. Munro of how "a brigade group" of Canadians had "slipped quietly away from

its Southern England camp", travelled to "a special training territory", and there carried out "a strenuous week of secret training in coast assault tactics" (Evening Standard, LONDON, 21 Aug 41; Daily Telegraph, 22 Aug 41). This timely bit of publicity may have done something towards suppressing undesirable discussion.

108. On the whole, it would appear that the secret, in its essentials, was very successfully kept.

109. Before the return of the expedition to Britain, careful consideration was given to the question of publicity concerning it. On 3 Sep the War Office pointed out that three courses appeared possible: (a) Strict secrecy; (b) Let the story leak out gradually; (c) Full publicity. General McNaughton was consulted and favoured (c); and the Chiefs of Staff Committee concurred. On 6 Sep 41 a meeting of departmental representatives was held at the War Cabinet Offices to draft a communiqué; Major C.R. ARCHIBALD, R.C.A. (G.S.O.2 (Ops) at H.Q. Cdn Corps), represented Canada. This communiqué, which made no mention of the strength of the force employed, of whether or not any portion of it had been left in occupation of SPITZBERGEN, or of the evacuation of the Russian population, was cabled to the Department of National Defence the same day (CANMILITRY to DEFENSOR, GS 1826) and simultaneously released in Britain and Canada at 1930 hrs Eastern Daylight Saving Time on 8 Sep. With the concurrence of the War Office, the Canadian version included a statement of the "territorial affiliations" of the Canadian units which had participated. (Documents in 3/CDN CORPS/3. For text of Canadian communiqué, and Mr. Munro's first cable on the expedition, see Gazette, Nontreal, 9 Sep 41.)

GENERAL

110. The Force had carried out its mission with complete success. The enemy had not succeeded in interfering with it or even in discovering its presence; and not a man had been lost from any cause. The satisfaction of the British authorities with this result is reflected in the personal letter written by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff to General McNaughton, and in the official communication expressing the appreciation of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, copies of which are attached to this Report as Appendices.

111. The strategic value of the expedition can scarcely be adequately estimated at the present moment; it will be seen in a truer perspective after the conclusion of hostilities. The force employed was small and its object limited; this was, in fact, a minor operation whose importance could easily be exaggerated; but it achieved to the full all the results whose prospect had led the Chiefs of Staff to regard it as a valuable undertaking (above, para. 28).

112. There is, however, another aspect of the matter, and one on which it may not be improper to say a word at this moment. The employment of a Canadian force on a distant and adventurous enterprise of this type, following a period of many months during which the great and growing force of Canadian troops in the United Kingdom had had no chance of action, was well calculated to have a very useful effect upon

morale. The writer feels confident that it has in fact had such an effect, and that the Canadian troops in general are hoping for the opportunity to participate in further operations of this or a similar type. In this connection, the report of the Field Censors (Home) on Canadian military mail examined during the period 15-28 Sep 41 has some interest :

In general the morale is very good...The chief grumble is the one regarding inaction, and this is a constant one. Episodes like the Spitzbergen raid help to cheer the men up somewhat, but at the same time make them more anxious for similar action, especially those units which did not participate. Any kind of action, such as manoeuvres, and the practical application of knowledge gained in training, appears to give them encouragement, e.g. one man writes: "... the day the Canadians get orders to go into action, they will cheer so loud that you will hear it in Canada."

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

113. This operation is unusually well documented, and the Official Historian will have at his disposal a very large mass of material concerning it. The files maintained at H.Q. Cdn Corps and at C.M.H.Q. on the subject (above, para.4) are both very important collections of material. The War Diary of H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde for the operation is in a sense a collective Diary for the Force, the appendices being particularly valuable (see Appendix "J"). The sub-units of the Force, however, also submitted Diaries. These have not all been utilized in the present Report, but the two first to be received (from the R.C.E. and R.C.A.M.C. detachments) are both very useful and have contributed materially. A photostat copy has been obtained of the Diary of the Detachment Kent Corps Troops, R.E. This has also been used. It is perhaps fortunate that the Edmonton Regiment, which played such an important part in this operation, maintains one of the best War Diaries in the Canadian Army Overseas.

114. A great deal of photographic material is also available. The cinema film record is of high quality and considerable interest, an historical document in the most definite sense. At the present time a "Lavender" or master print of the uncut film is in the hands of the Public Relations Officer, C.M.H.Q., and arrangements are to be made, I understand, for sending a negative of it to Canada. In addition, many still prints have been made from this film. Pte. FENWICK, the photographer employed at H.Q. Cdn Corps (see Historical Officer's Report No. 20) accompanied the expedition and took a large number of still pictures.

115. The despatches sent by Mr. Munro to the Canadian Press, and published in many Canadian newspapers on 9 Sep 41 and succeeding days, have special value as the work of an eye-witness.

116. The Appendices to the present Report consist in the main of copies of a number of short documents which have a special bearing upon the narrative or which might not otherwise be preserved. The writer has not attempted to make copies of all the basic documents. This would be a very large task, while moreover such documents as Brigadier Potts report with its numerous appendices, and the War Diaries of the units concerned, exist in several copies and are sure of

preservation through routine procedure.

COMMENTS BY PARTICIPANTS

117. This Report was submitted in draft to Lieutenant-General A.G.L. McNAUGHTON, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., for his comments. On 15 Nov 41 it was returned by Major N.E. RODGER (Cdn Liaison, Cdn Corps) with the following comment :

1. At General McNaughton's request, I return herewith the Report on the Spitzbergen operation prepared by Major Stacey. General McNaughton has no comments on the report other than to offer his compliments on the completeness of this account.

2. He concurs in Major Stacey asking Brig. Potts for his comments direct.

118. Accordingly, the draft was handed to Brigadier POTTS, at present commanding 1 Cdn Div. On 5 Dec 41 the writer visited H.Q. 1 Cdn Div by invitation and received the draft back with a considerable number of comments by Brigadier Potts and Major MURDOCH (B.M., Force 111, and now G.S.O.2, 1 Cdn Div). He had a considerable conversation with Major Murdoch and a brief one with Brigadier Potts, and their comments and suggestions are incorporated in the report as now presented.

119. Brigadier J.C. MURCHIE, B.G.S., C.M.H.Q., also read the draft.

120. On 8 Dec 41 Capt. W.H.T. WILSON, R.C.C.S., O.C. Sigs, Force 111, called at C.M.H.Q. and read the portions of the draft dealing with Signals operations. He made a number of corrections and suggestions, all of which have been incorporated. He also carefully checked the marked map which is presented as an Appendix.

121. Mr. Ross MUNRO has read large portions of the draft and has given much useful information generally.

122. On 9 Sep 41, immediately after the return of the Force, the writer was present when officers and men who had participated were interviewed by the Press. On this occasion he had a conversation with Major Murdoch.

123. On 24 Nov 41 Brigadier Potts presented a commentary on the Army Film Unit SPITZBERGEN film (a somewhat censored version) at a meeting of the ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY in LONDON. The writer was present on this occasion also.

C.P. Stacey
(C.P. Stacey) Major,
Historical Officer, (S.D.2),
CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS.

ORDER OF BATTLEFORCE 111Note

This Order of Battle has been compiled from several sources. It is based in general upon the Order which forms Appendix "A" to the "Outline Plan and Maintenance Project" for the Force (War Office, 13 Aug 41), as amended. The Canadian strength figures derive from the embarkation returns for units and details, found in file 1/23/74(G). They have been checked against all other available sources, and are believed to be accurate. Figures based on disembarkation returns must be used with care, as they sometimes do not allow for the rear party from LONGYEARBY (para. 90, above) which did not return on the "Empress of Canada".

Strengths and names of officers for British units are based upon War Office letter M.O.2a/B.M/2047 of 31 Oct 41 (Director of Military Operations and Plans to Senior Officer, C.M.H.Q.), and have been checked against documents available at Canadian Records, ACTON, and in files 1/23/74(G) and 3/CDN CORPS/3.

Norwegian figures derive from Appendix "A" to the "Outline Plan and Maintenance Project". Their accuracy was confirmed by Major PRAN in a telephone conversation on 3 Nov 41. He mentioned that three Norwegian soldiers were embarked as a "military crew" on each of the three vessels taken in prize at SPITZBERGEN (para. 100, above). Major Pran himself, as Norwegian Military Governor, is not included in this Order of Battle.

Officer strength for H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde includes one civilian, Mr. Ross MUNRO (Canadian Press). Three British officers and three other ranks shown under Bde H.Q. in embarkation returns have been transferred to the British section of this Order of Battle. Major H.C.SMITH is a Canadian serving in the British Army.

A total of 31 other ranks of 1 Maritime A.A.Bty, R.A., are indicated as manning the Bofors guns on the "Empress of Britain"; but as they do not appear in any official Order of Battle, or in the War Office letter of 31 Oct 41, they are not included here. They were presumably regarded as a part of the crew of the "Empress".

Major A.S.T.GODFREY, R.E., who is mentioned in some documents, was not a member of Force 111, but a Military Liaison Officer with Admiral VIAN.

ORDER OF BATTLE, FORCE 111

Unit	Strength		Senior Officer present
	Officers	Other Ranks	
<u>Canadian:-</u>			
H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde	5	12	Brig. A.E. POTTS, E.D.
Sig Sec 2 Cdn Inf Bde	2	32	Capt. W.H.T. WILSON
3 Fd Coy, R.C.E.	5	191	Major G. WALSH
EDMONTON REGIMENT ("D" Coy plus one pl "C" Coy)	6	153	Major W.G. BURY
SASKATOON LIGHT INFANTRY (M.G.) (Composite detachment)	4	80	Capt. G.F.P. BRADBROOKE
Detachment R.C.A.M.C. (from 5 Cdn Fd Amb)	3	23	Lt.-Col. C.H. PLAYFAIR
"X" Cdn Fd Cash Office, R.C.A.P.C.	1	2	Capt. R.R. DAVIDSON
"Empress of Canada" Ship's Staff (from EDMONTON REGT)	2	5	Major A.S. DONALD
Capt. P. HALL, R.C.E.	<u>1</u>	<u>-</u>	
	29	498	
<u>British:-</u>			
Det. Kent Corps Tps R.E.	4	31	Major S.W. GREEN
Det. 992 Docks Op. Coy R.E.	1	18	Capt. L.J. BECK
Det. "B" Sec 1 Motor Boat Coy R.A.S.C.	1	19	2/Lt. M.W. JENKS
Det. 60 D.I.D. (Detail Issue Depot) R.A.S.C.	-	6	-----
"D" Fd Cash Office, R.A.P.C.	1	2	Capt. J.M. BAXTER
R.E. (Movement Control) att'd Bde H.Q.	-	3	-----
Intelligence Corps	3	-	Major C.A.H.B. BLAKE
Army Film Unit	1	-	Capt. TENNYSON- D'EYNCOURT
Major H.C. SMITH, Liaison Offr.	1	-	
Capt. E.W. PROCTOR, R.E.	1	-	
Major A.W. SALMON, R.A.S.C.	<u>1</u>	<u>-</u>	
	14	79	
<u>Norwegian:-</u>			
Det. Norwegian Infantry	<u>3</u>	<u>22</u>	Capt. AUBERT
TOTAL	46	599	

From Canmilitary

To Defensor

D: 16 Aug 41.

Tel. No. GS 1619

Following for Crerar from McNaughton MOST SECRET begins.
Joint Naval and Military expedition arranged to proceed to destination reported separately with object of denying coal, radio and meteorological facilities to enemy during winter 1941/42. Expedition will (a) destroy existing stocks coal (b) paralyze mining facilities (c) destroy radio stations (d) evacuate Russian and Norwegian miners and other inhabitants, and (e) then withdraw.

Canadian co-operation personally requested by C I G S General Sir John Dill. Military Commander Brigadier Potts with selected detachments numbering approximately 600 in all of whom about 100 are British specialists and 25 Norwegians and Russians. Project has been recommended

<u>Time of Origin</u>	by Chiefs of Staff Committee and has approval and full
1305	support Norwegian and Russian Governments. I have satisfied
<u>Time Received</u>	myself that plans are appropriate and Brigadier Potts
<u>Distribution</u>	agrees. Progress of expedition will be reported to
Copy :	you as fully and promptly as circumstances permit.

1 -Cipher Office & return BGS Emphasize need for utmost secrecy. Copy of this message is
2)-High Comm- being given to Massey and Hon. Angus MacDonald. ENDS.
issioner

3)-Gen. McNaughton

4)-Hon. Angus MacDonald. CIPHER OFFICE TO BE DISPATCHED BY CABLE IN CIPHER

(Sgd.) J.C. Murchie

Brigadier G.S.

PERSONAL AND OFFICIAL LETTERS ON
THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THE
SPITZBERGEN OPERATION.

I. Chief of the Imperial General Staff to G.O.C., Canadian Corps.

Telephone, Whitehall 9400
Chief of the Imperial General Staff
CIGS/DO/153.

War Office,
Whitehall,
London, S.W.1.

10th September, 1941.

My dear Andy

I want to convey to you and through you to those under your command who took part recently in the Spitzbergen operation, my appreciation of the manner in which this operation was carried out. The whole operation calls for nothing but praise, and I hear from all sides that your men were just grand.

My heartiest congratulations to you all.

Yours ever

(Sgd.) Jack Dill.

Lt.-General A.G.L. McNaughton,
CB., CMG., DSO.,
Commander,
Canadian Corps,
HOME FORCES.

II. G.O.C., Canadian Corps, to C.I.G.S. in reply to above.

1/23/74 (G)

Headquarters,
Canadian Corps,
Home Forces,
11 September, 1941.

Dear Jack,

This is just a line to acknowledge your letter of 10 September, 1941, and to thank you for your kind words in connection with the part taken by Brigadier Potts and the men under his command in the expedition to Spitzbergen, which has just been satisfactorily completed.

In selecting Brigadier Potts for the command of this detachment of the Canadian Corps, both General Pearkes and I had every confidence that he would discharge his responsibilities to the satisfaction of all concerned, and I am very happy that this has been so.

With best wishes.

Very sincerely yours,

(Sgd.)

(A.G.L. McNaughton)

General Sir John G. Dill, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.,
Chief of the Imperial General Staff,
War Office,
Whitehall,
S. W. 1.

III. From the Asst. Under-Secretary of State, War Office, to
Senior Officer, Canadian Military Headquarters.

The War Office,
London, S.W.1.

SECRET

19th September, 1941.

0157/1161 (M.O.8).

Sir,

I am commanded by the Army Council to inform you that the Chiefs of Staff at their 323rd Meeting on 15th September, 1941, considered a Memorandum by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, summarising the report of the Military Commander on the Spitzbergen Operation.

The Committee took note of the report and expressed their appreciation of the way in which the operation had been carried out. I am to request that you will make this expression of their opinion known to Brigadier A.E. Potts, who was in command of the troops during the operation.

I am,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(Sgd.) G.W. Lambert.

The Senior Officer,
Canadian Military Headquarters,
2, Cockspur Street,
London, S.W.1.

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THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THE
SPITZBERGEN OPERATION.

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1/23/74 (G)

Headquarters,
Canadian Corps,
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11 September, 1941.

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[Copy]

MOST SECRET

H.M.S. "Nigeria".

18th August, 1941.

No. 20/0190.
MEMORANDUM.OPERATION "GAUNTLET".GENERAL ORDERS.

All times are B.S.T.

1. Forces Taking Part.Force "A".

"Nigeria" (Flag Officer Commanding, Force "A")
 - 2 Walrus Aircraft.
 "Aurora"
 "Icarus" (Senior Officer Destroyers).
 "Antelope"
 "Anthony"

Empress of Canada. (Brigadier Potts, and 500 Troops)."Oligarch".A/S Trawlers.

"Elm" (Senior Officer).
 "Hazel"
 "Sealyham"
 "Van-Oost"

2. Object.

To ensure that the enemy can derive no benefit from the facilities and resources of Spitzbergen.

- i.e. (a). Destruction (or removal) of Coal Mining facilities.
 Stocks of free coal.
 Transit facilities
 between Mines and Wharves.
 Harbour facilities.
 W/T stations at Kap
 Linne, Barentsburg,
 Finneshamn, Ny
 Alesund and Longyearby
 Meteorological Station
 anywhere.

(b). Repatriation of all Russians to Archangel.

(c). Removal to U.K. of all Norwegians.

The execution of (a) will be undertaken by the military forces, unless opposition is encountered, when naval assistance will be provided.

3. Lettered Positions Established.

AA 78°N; 9°30'E

OPERATION "GAUNTLET"

(Flag Officer Commanding, Force "A"'s No. 20/0190 dated 18th August, 1941).

3. Lettered Positions Established.

AA	78°N; 9°30'E.
BB	71°N; 7°W.
CC	75°30'N; 42°E.
DD	69°N; 43°E.
EE	70°N; 6°W.
Z	270° Cape Kanin 40 miles.

4. Intended Movements. "Oligarch" and 4 A/S Trawlers sail from Hvalfjord through 70°32'N; 8°20'W, to rendezvous with Force "A" in position AA at 1000 on Sunday 24th August.
S.S. "Empress of Canada" sails from the Clyde to rendezvous with Force "A" in Position 000 Butt of Lewis 15 miles at 2100 on Tuesday 19th August.

1500 Tuesday 19th August. Force "A" sails from Scapa.

2100 Tuesday 19th August. Force "A" and "Empress of Canada" rendezvous as above.

A.M. THURSDAY 21st August. Force "A" and "Empress of Canada" arrive at Hvalfjord. Force "A" fuels.

P.M. Thursday 21st August. Force "A" and "Empress of Canada" sail from Hvalfjord, west of Iceland, through position BB (East of Jan Mayen) to Position AA.

1000 Sunday 24th August. Force "A" and "Empress of Canada" rendezvous with "Oligarch" and 4 A/S Trawlers at Position AA, proceeding thence to Gronfjord.

P.M. Sunday 24th August. Combined Force arrives at Isfjord.

P.M. Sunday 24th August to P.M. Tuesday 26th August.) - Troops will be disembarked from "Empress of Canada" in Trawlers and Destroyers, and Russian inhabitants will be embarked.
All ships (except "Empress of Canada") will refuel.
Destroyers and Trawlers will be required for A/S protection of the anchorage.
Detailed orders for this phase of the operation will be issued separately.

P.M. Tuesday 26th August. "Nigeria", "Empress of Canada" and Destroyers sail for Archangel passing through Positions CC, DD, and Z.

1600 Thursday 28th August. "Nigeria", "Empress of Canada" and Destroyers arrive at DD. Russian Forces may be met at any time after this.

0800 Friday 29th August. "Nigeria", "Empress of Canada" and Destroyers arrive at North Dvina Light Vessel at entrance to Archangel Channel.

"Nigeria" and

OPERATION "GAUNTLET"

(Flag Officer Commanding, Force "A"'s No. 20/0190 dated 18th August, 1941.)

"Nigeria" and "Empress of Canada" will remain in this vicinity whilst Russians are disembarked either in a Russian ship or in the Destroyers. Two Destroyers will proceed to Archangel to oil one from "Nigeria", or at Archangel according to circumstances.

P.M. Saturday 30th August. "Nigeria", "Empress of Canada" and Destroyers sail for Spitzbergen by similar route as on outward passage.

A.M. Tuesday 2nd September. "Nigeria", "Empress of Canada" and Destroyers arrive at Isfjord, Spitzbergen.

P.M. Tuesday 26th August until) - During this period "Aurora" and two
A.M. Tuesday 2nd September) Trawlers will remain at Spitzbergen to co-operate with the military forces. Orders for "Aurora" will be issued separately. "Oligarch" with escort of two A/S Trawlers will be sailed to the Westward, and will return to Isfjord on 2nd September, or as ordered.

A.M. Tuesday 2nd September until) - Norwegian inhabitants and Army Ranks will
A.M. Thursday 4th September.) be embarked in "Empress of Canada". All ships (except "Empress of Canada") will fuel from "Oligarch".

A.M. Thursday 4th September. "Nigeria", "Aurora", "Empress of Canada" and Destroyers sail from Spitzbergen through Position EE. "Oligarch" and Trawlers sail for Hvalfjord (or as ordered).

A.M. Sunday 7th September. "Nigeria", "Aurora", "Empress of Canada" and Destroyers arrive Scapa (unless another destination is ordered).

5. Intelligence.

(A). Spitzbergen. The enemy is not yet in occupation of the Islands. It is possible that occupation may have been effected by the time the Force arrives, in that event U-Boats may be operating in the area for defensive purposes, and mines laid.

(B). Enemy Naval Forces. The following are operating between Petsamo and Tromso:-

"Bremse".
Four 5-inch gun destroyers.
About 7 U-Boats.
4 Jaguar class Torpedo Boats.
A.A. Trawlers.
Local fishing craft armed with torpedoes.
Main units are not in these waters (vide W.I.R. 73).

(C). Enemy Air Forces.

Petsamo. 6 Twin Engine Fighters.

Kirkenes. 13 Bomber Reconnaissance.

20 Single Engine Fighters.....

OPERATION "GAUNTLET"
(Flag Officer Commanding, Force "A"'s No. 20/0190 dated 18th August, 1941).

	20 Single Engine Fighters.
	10 Twin Engine Fighters.
	30 Dive Bombers.
	60 Long Range Bombers.
Banak. (70°04'N 24°58'E).	

<u>Alta.</u>	Number not known.
Bardufoss.	36 Dive Bombers. 9 Bomber Reconnaissance.
Tromso.	Seaplanes and Flying Boats.

There are numerous Seaplane stations along the coast.

(D). Archangel. Detailed information will be issued separately to ships concerned.

6. Other British Forces.

(A). Operation "Dervish". Convoy of 6 ships escorted by 3 Destroyers 3 Fleet Minesweepers and 4 A/S Trawlers.

"Dervish" sails from Hvalfjord on 20th August through Positions:-

W - 72°N; 10°W.
F - 74°23'N; 9°30'E. (1200 on 25th August).
X - 75°N; 15°E. (26th August).
Y - 75°N; 40°E.
Z - 270° Cape Kanin 40 miles.

thence to Kem arriving about 1st September. These dates are approximate.

(B). Operation "Strength".

Force "L" - One Cruiser.
"Argus".
3 Destroyers.

sail from Scapa about 28th August and operate off Murmansk coast about 5th September.

(C). Force "M".

"Devonshire".
"Suffolk".
"Victorious".
3 Destroyers
will be covering operations "Dervish" and "Strength".

(D). Oiler "Aldersdale". Will sail in company with Convoy "Dervish" as far as Position X: will then be detached as necessary for fuelling Forces "M" and "L": may proceed to Spitzbergen.

7. Russian Forces.

Arrangements are being made for Russian Surface and Air Forces to keep to the Southward of Latitude 73°N during the period of these operations.

Russian Submarines.....

OPERATION "GAUNTLET".
(Flag Officer Commanding, Force "A" No. 20/0190 dated 18th August, 1941).

Russian Submarines will not be operating in the area through which "Gauntlet" will pass.

It is expected that Russian Surface and Air Forces will be met South of Position DD.

Silhouettes of Russian Aircraft will be supplied to ships concerned.

8. Communications.

- (A). External Communications in accordance with communication orders for Operations "EG", "Dervish", "Strength" and "Gauntlet", and C.-in-C. H.F., message timed 2004A of 18th August, 1941. (Copy attached).*
- (B). Internal Communications. Fleet W/T organisation will be kept throughout the operation.
- (C). W/T Guards. W/T Guards will be kept in Force "A", and also by "Aurora" when detached at Spitzbergen, as follows :-

Broadcast HD.
210 Kc/s.
Rugby 16 Kc/s.
1570 Kc/s.
500 Kc/s.
4740 Kc/s when Rugby is not transmitting on 16 Kc/s in a routine period.

(Signed) PHILIP VIAN

REAR ADMIRAL COMMANDING,
FORCE "A".

DISTRIBUTION.

The Commanding Officers, H.M. Ships:-

"NIGERIA"
"AURORA"
"ICARUS"
"ANTELOPE"
"ANTHONY".

(Copies to :-

The Secretary of the Admiralty. (No. 1/20/0190)
The Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet.
The Rear Admiral Commanding, First Cruiser Squadron.
Brigadier Potts.)

*[Omitted]

The above document was transcribed from a copy
sent by Major W.S. MURDOCH.

C.S.

DIARY O.C. R.A.S.C.FORCE 1117 Aug. 41.

0800 Arrived Glasgow.
 1130 Embarked H.M.T. Empress of Canada.
 1330 Left Glasgow.
 1600 Arrived Gourock.

I travelled up to Glasgow with B Sec. No. 1 Motor Boat Coy, under 2/Lt. Jenks. On board I met Capt. Medley, O.C. 60 D.I.D.

I had already received instructions from War Office that the bulk of the rations, P.O.L. etc. were on the store ship 'XI' the G1098 and extra maintenance stores of B Sec. No. 1 Motor Boat Coy were on H.I.

Brigadier Potts, Commanding the Force, called a conference of all unit and detachment commanders, and explained that our ultimate destination would not be divulged, but that on the 8 Aug. we were proceeding to INVERARY for a short stay.

8 Aug. 41.

0700 Left Gourock.
 1100 Arrived Inverary.

A part of the Force was sent ashore to a camp. Ship's boats towed by Motor Boats were used. During the six days at INVERARY No. 60 D.I.D. carried out a route march, and received training in rowing and boat handling. B Sec. No. 1 Motor Boat Coy were fully employed in towing duties, routine transport duties, and maintenance.

See Appendix "A".

14 Aug. 41.

0600 Arrived Glasgow.

Unloading of ship commenced. Of the original R.A.S.C. on board only 1 Officer and 19 O.R.s. of B Sec. No. 1 Motor Boat Coy and 6 O.R.s. of the D.I.D. remained.

We had been told that the size of the Force was to be reduced and that none of the stores from 'XI' would be available for the new expedition. This meant that unless some more stores were sent I should be without any D.I.D. technical equipment. Information had been received that the duration of our stay at the final destination would probably not exceed 10 days. This depended however on the safe return to this destination of the H.M.T. H.I. to re-embark the force.

I therefore wished to be prepared for a longer period and intended to be able to issue fresh bread and a full scale ration for as long as possible. I had been told that no fresh meat would be available locally.

On Saturday, 16 Aug., I telephoned Major Wrathall, S.T.6, regarding equipment, and I was told that sufficient was being despatched to me.

On Sunday morning, 17 Aug., I could find no D.I.D. equipment in the various sheds of the Dock except some Aldershot oven parts in the bulk R.A.O.C. stores. I was informed that the ship would be sailing that night, and therefore, took steps to obtain what I considered to be essential equipment. At 1230 hours, after some delay, I was able to obtain Major Heywood on the telephone (S.T.6) who gave me authority to obtain what I could at GLASGOW. In the meanwhile, my clerks were examining the shipping advice and delivery notes for any trace of D.I.D. equipment; a few items only could be found.

The following items were therefore obtained from C.O.O. Sterling, D.A.D.O.S. Glasgow, and from O.C. 18 Fd Bakery R.A.S.C. on 17 Aug. 41:-

See Appendix "B".

/18 Aug. 41.

Diary O.C. RASC continued:

18 Aug. 41.

0730 Left Glasgow.
0930 Arrived Gourock.
1900 Left Gourock.

On leaving Glasgow I was informed that it was thought that various items of Supply stores had been pilfered, and cases broken open. This may have occurred during the first loading, i.e. 5, 6, and 7 Aug., or during the reloading 15, 16 and 17 Aug. Stevedores had been found in possession of issue cigarettes; empty rum cases and bottles had been seen floating down the Clyde.

19 Aug. 41.

20 Aug. 41.

21 Aug. 41.

22 Aug. 41.

I was instructed by Bde H.Q. to sort my stores. The 6 men of the D.I.D. commenced checking stores in the holds, and the det. of the Motor Boat Coy commenced a thorough overhaul, cleaning and painting the four motor boats, which had been reloaded. 6 had been left behind.

The checking, and sorting, and restowing of stores was a very slow and arduous procedure. Many broken cases were found, chiefly rum, tobacco, cigarettes, lime juice. Other commodities were also missing. The rum, tobacco and cigarettes were put in the specie room.

During our 12 hours stay in Iceland on 21 Aug. the Commander of the Force decided to purchase 55,000 cigarettes from H.M.S. 'HEKLA' in order to replace partly the cigarettes that had been stolen. They were paid for by the Staff Paymaster, Captain Baxter, R.A.P.C.

The following shews the state of the stores as on 22 Aug. 41.

See appendix 'C'.

23 Aug. 41.

24 Aug. 41.

Preparations were made for arrival and unloading at the destination. Supplies for the various detachments were issued in accordance with instructions received from Bde H.Q.

25 Aug. 41.

0800 Arrived GRONFJORD, SPITZBERGEN.

1030 Commenced unloading.

Composite rations and bread from the ship were issued for consumption by the men ashore. However, the majority of the Officers and men were able to obtain hot meals in the Russian Communal Dining Room at BARENTSBURG. The S.M.O. was seen lunching there and therefore the quality of the food was not doubted.

I carried out a reconnaissance of the local resources, found large quantities of P.O.L., cattle, pigs, and Russian foodstuffs. Unfortunately the P.O.L. were in dumps some distance from the town with no means of getting the barrels any closer. Towards the end of the period a tractor was operated by the R.C.E. and a few barrels of Petrol and Kerosin were transported to the town on a sledge. I found a very efficient bakery in operation.

26 Aug. 41.

Several small motor craft and two lighters were taken over; the det. of the Motor Boat Sec. commenced work on these which could not be made to start.

See Appendix 'D'.

The bulk of the supplies, which had all been unloaded in case the H.1 did not return, were stacked in a large shed on the wharf, together with other stores. P.O.L. and coke were stacked on the beach, about 20 yards from the jetty. The petrol for the M.L.C.

/was left

Page 3.

Diary O.C. RASC continued:

was left in one of the scows alongside the jetty to facilitate rapid reloading on the H.1 on its return. The remainder of the supplies were taken up a very steep hill to a warehouse, which was thereafter used as the D.I.D. Sufficient bulk supplies had not been received in the D.I.D. however to make a bulk issue for consumption on Wednesday, 27 Aug, and so composite rations were again issued, together with rum and coffee.

27 Aug. 41.

The Russian bakery was thoroughly cleaned by a fatigue party under the direction of Cpl. Brain, R.A.S.C., the baker. He commenced baking and was able to make his first issue of bread before breakfast on 28 Aug. Some pigs were killed by an amateur butcher attached to the D.I.D. from the R.C.E. and pork was issued for consumption on 28 Aug together with fresh milk obtained from the very fine milch cows.

Full rations were issued for consumption on the remaining days - the diet included fresh pork, beef, and veal, Russian cheese, fresh milk, sultanas, and bread.

1 Sep. 41.

0630 Fire Alarm.

The town was on fire on the southern side and the south west wind caused it to spread rapidly through the wooden buildings. Buildings were evacuated, stores salvaged, and the fire was fought till about 1600 hours when it was decided to evacuate the town completely and proceed by trawler to LONGYEARBY.

2 Sep 41.

0630 Re-embarked on H.1 in GRONFJORD.

continued loading stores, including much salvaged Russian foodstuffs (sultanas, coffee, cheese, pork, beef).

3 Sep. 41.

Continued loading of H.1. Russian motor launches could not be taken so were destroyed.

2300 H.1. sailed from GRONFJORD.

5 Sep. 41.

Spent day trying to find and sort unit equipment in the holds.

7 Sep. 41.

1000 hrs. Church Parade.

(Sgd) A.W. SALMON Major
RASC

[Appendices omitted]

The above document is transcribed from a copy lent
by Major W.S. MURDOCH.

C.B.S.

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SECRET

REPORT No. 56

APPENDICES

DUPLICATE

[Copy]
[Translation]

APPENDIX "F"

14

Embassy Plenipotentiary of the
U.S.S.R. in Great Britain.

London, 16 Aug. 1941.

TO ALL SOVIET CITIZENS IN SPITSBERGEN

A decision has been taken by the Government of the U.S.S.R. to evacuate immediately all Soviet citizens from Spitsbergen to Archangel. The British Government have undertaken the task of transporting Soviet citizens from Spitsbergen to Archangel on an English ship under convoy of English warships. I request therefore that from the receipt of this instruction all Soviet citizens prepare themselves immediately for evacuation and embark on the English ship for Archangel. Further I request them in all matters concerning the evacuation to follow the instructions of the commander of the British Squadron, Admiral Vian.

U.S.S.R. Ambassador in Great Britain.

(Sgd) I. MAISKY.

The above document is transcribed from a copy lent by
Major W.S. MURDOCH, who also possesses a copy in
the original Russian.

C.B.S.

DIARY KEPT BY MR ROSS MUNRO, CANADIAN PRESS,
OF OPERATIONS OF FORCE 111

(Transcript)

.....

The portions relating to events previous to the actual departure for SPITZBERGEN are omitted.

. . .

Arctic Force Detail Diary.

Mon. Aug. 18

Sail ex George V dock in a.m. & anchor off Greenock. Brig. Potts aboard again.
Anchored until 1 a.m. Tues.

Tues. Aug. 19

Sail down Clyde in darkness, joined by 3 destroyers, "Argus" aircraft carrier with Hurricanes and some Cdn pilots. Coastal Command bombers patrol us as we move northwest.

Brig. Potts holds conference at which reveals we going to a northern Island under Norwegian sovereignty to incapacitate coal mine operations until Spring & to take off 1,800 Russians & 800 Norwegians. Russians to be taken to Archangel. Norwegian detachment & Norge governor with us. Big job for Sappers. Navy will join us later & plans drawn up in detail.

Gunnery practice - Bofors & M.G.

Huge convoy passes inside Hebrides - nearly 80 cargo ships & destroyers, stretching horizon to horizon. Heading for Iceland & to arrive 0900 hrs, Aug. 21.

In Evening aircraft carrier & 3 destroyers leave us (A/C Jim Walker of Edmtn) & we are joined by 3 destroyers & 2 cruisers.

Aug. 20 Wednesday.

Head steadily NW for Iceland where will refuel. Cruiser on ack ack practice in a.m. with 4" guns. Aircraft patrols overhead. We are going to Spitzbergen Island and on to Russia.

Stand 4 hours watch on bridge during day.

Smoker in evening on sugn of Brigadier.

Aug. 21, Thursday

Arrive Iceland abt 9 a.m. Br. & American warships there. U.S. air patrol.

Visit Nigeria in p.m. See New Mexico battleship sail.

Aug. 22 - Friday

Leave n. tip of Iceland in morning lite. Sea smooth but patched with fog thruout day. Fighting a slight head cold & dodge 2-hr bridge watch at night.

Brig. holds conf. for officers & then tells all plans to men b4 ship's concert at nite.

Aug. 23, Saturday

Continue to move ahead at 20 knots thru calm sea & fog. OC's conf. held & detailed plans discussed.

Plan to send Fenwick with Norwegians to Advent Bay. I will remain with Brig. at Barentsburg until Russians aboard Empress.

Aug. 24 Sunday

Convoy circles north of Bear Island, seeking trawlers & oil tanker. Aircraft takes off Nigeria to search sea. Early in evening, other ships sighted & the whole convoy together. Stores ready & men armed, ready for landing. Final conferences wind up plans of operations.

Aug. 25, Monday

Steam up Green Bay at 7 a.m. & by 10 a.m. Brig. lands protected by detachment of infantry under Maj. Bill Bury. Conference held with Russians, who prepare to leave.

Spend day ashore & return to E of C for supper & sleep.

Tues. Aug. 26

Return to shore in launch. Evacuation continues all day long & is only completed (Russian) by evening. But this is record time.

Consul refuses to leave & B.M. & Maj. Tony Blake get him drunk & he staggers on to a trawler - last man aboard - supported by 2 husky Russ officials. Cdns take over town completely & plans laid for demolitions.

- - - -

One of most fantastic days I've ever been thru. Empress & Nigeria & 3 destroyers sail at midnight.

Wedn. Aug. 27

Demolitions start at Barentsburg. Lt. Nuttall & sapper subsection go by motor boat to radio station down Green Bay & with three charges, totalling 40 blocks of gun cotton, topple the radio towers, both 300 feet high.

Then demolitions carried out in a coal mine.

Maj. Walsh goes to Longyear City to start demolitions & fires there.

Thurs. Aug. 28

Demolitions & fires continued. 150,000 tons coal fired down Bay & 75,000 gallons fuel oil destroyed. Demolitions attempted in mine buildings & mine set ablaze. Brot under control by sappers but still smoldering.

Friday Aug 29

Go from Berentzberg to Svalbard by motor boat in 3½ hour journey. Pass Grumant Bay, blazing & smoking like Chicago fire. Move into clean & neat Norwegian town.

Sat. Aug 30

Spend day looking over town, defence posts & learning of operations generally. Preparations made for fires & demolitions.

Sun. Aug 31

Attend church service in a.m. Brig. Captain of Aurora, sailors, soldiers, (Cdn. & Norwegian) & Marine band march from jetty to church, decorated with Union Jack, White Ensign & Norwegian flag. Brig. takes salute.

In p.m. fly with Lieut. David Kirk of Fleet Air Arm in Walrus flying boat to Barentsburg.

Shoot roll of film & come back by air in an hour.

Mon. Sept 1

Turn out first copy of "Spitzbergen Arctic News". Hear that Barentsburg blazing. Expect E. of C. tomorrow.

Tues. Sept 2

E. of C. at Barentsburg & loading starts. Norwegians all leave Svalbard & prep. made for fires & demolitions.

During nite cover 150,000-ton coal fire & the big blasts. No get to bed till 6 a.m.

Wedn Sept 3

2nd anniversary of the war. Leave Svalbard aboard destroyer "Icarus" at 11 a.m. & sail to Barentsburg to board the Empress.

French troops aboard & 900 Norwegians.

Four weeks today expd. left Oxted camps.

Sail at midnight & pass blazing Barentsburg. Can see Grumantby burning down Isfjord.

Thurs. Sept 4

Calm seas as flotilla speeds south. Learn we are going direct & some talk we'll put in to Scapa where I could get my story away to London.

Fri. Sept 5

Still heading S. & I estimate we're not far off Norwegian Coast. Some officers think we mite be making another raid. It sounds ridiculous with all these civilians aboard.

Sat. Sept 6

Cruisers Aurora & Nigeria leave us. Sunderland flying boat & a Beaufighter spot us. We begin to feel safe again.

The Faroe islands appear in mist off starboard bow.

During evening we are in Br. waters & can see green & brown hospitable shores of Scotland. Tremendous elation aboard.

Learn we are going direct to Glasgow. Two destroyers replaced by two others ex Scapa. Anthony continues with us.

Sun. Sept 7

Move down W. coast Scotland & go into Clyde at night. Anchor at 2 a.m.

Mon. Sept 8

Troops leave ship at 2 p.m. & return to camps in S. England.

SECRETARMY FILM UNIT.
SECRET DOPE SHEET.

No. 6/8/41/WDE.

Cameraman Capt d'Eyncourt.

Story: Evacuation of Spitzbergen and
Demolition of Mines.

Length 5100

Location: Spitzbergen.

Unit, Brigade, Div. Composite Force (111)
under 2nd Canadian Brigade (1st C.D.M.)

Force 11 consisted in the main of personnel of the following
Units:

49th Edmonton Regiment.
3rd Field Coy. R.C.E.
R.C.A.M.C.
Signals S.C.I.B.
59th Sask, L.I.
992 Dock operating Coy.
B sect. Motor boat Coy.
D.I.D. R.A.S.C.
Norwegian detachment.
Detachment of Kent Corps. R.E.

Vessels:

H.M.S. Nigeria. H.M.S. Aurora (cruisers)

3 Destroyers
2 armed trawlers.
1 oiler

H.M.T.S. Empress of Canada.
Motor boats, M.L.C. etc.

Total Army
personnel 690

Expedition at sea under command of Rear Admiral Vian, and
on land Brigadier Potts.

Left George V. docks (finally) 18.8.41 at approximately
07.00 hours.

Object of Expedition: To evacuate Russians to Russia, dis-
able mines for six months and bring back Norwegians to England
leaving the islands uninhabited and useless to the Enemy.

8.8.41.

Canadians and other troops embarking on Empress of Canada
at George V Dock, Glasgow, (for first intended sortie). Equipment
loaded.

18.8.41.

On Empress of Canada during journey to Spitzbergen via Iceland
various scenes on board including firing practice, A.A. duty and
general look-out etc., mustering for boat drill.

21.8.41.

In Iceland American Naval Officers came on board to pay
formal visit. They leave in their cutter flying "stars and stripes"

(Bad light).

24.8.41.

Various shots on board ship as Spitzbergen is approached. Men begin to wear extra heavy coats; cold increases. Reconnaissance planes leave cruiser Nigeria to search for trawlers and oiler which are to be contacted (without the use of wireless) at a given place and time.

25.8.41. Barentsburg (Green harbour).

The Brigadier together with the representative of the Russian Government and his immediate staff, set off from Empress of Canada in motor boat followed by his armed escort in another. A $\frac{5}{4}$ hour run down Fford brings the boats to Barentsburg in Green Harbour. This is the Russian mining settlement of approximately 1500 people.

The Brigadier is the first to land and is greeted cordially and immediately taken (up a long flight of wooden steps) to the Civic centre of the community. This is a large building which contains offices as well as communal eating halls, kitchens, etc., His escort remain outside while he discusses the evacuation of populace.

Meanwhile stores and equipment is handed from M.L.C. the Russians helping most willingly in all this work.

The people show great interest in the soldiers. More are landed from trawlers.

This footage covers all these activities.

26.8.41.

The Russian evacuation begins. They bring their belongings and pile them on jetty. Often they are helped down the hill from the little town by Canadian soldiers.

The Russians are taken on board a destroyer which in turn brings them to the Empress of Canada anchored up the Fford. (Green Harbour).

The Aurora escorts 4 captured coaling vessels out of Green harbour on first night's journey to England.

27.8.41. Barentsburg.

Shots of Walrus landing and other incidentale.

Wireless masts destroyed. This work carried out by Royal Canadian Engineers.

28.8.41. Kingsfford (New Alesund)

A small party (Chiefly R.E.) landed at this Norwegian mining settlement from the Cruiser Aurora at approximately 0630 hours. There were no formalities and after having breakfast ashore at the North Pole Hotel, the work of demolition started. This and firing the coal piles lasted until midnight, when a small ceremony took place of the Norwegian flag being lowered for the last time. The Brigadier and ship's Captain standing at the salute.

After taking on board the inhabitants, the Aurora left Kingsfford about 0130 hours on 29.8.41. The evacuation and demolition work having been done within the 24 hours.

3.

29.8.41.

A small detachment is put ashore at 0630 hours to affect demolitions and evacuate the few Norwegians. This is accomplished by 1600 hours.

A few shots to cover this uneventful episode.

30.8.41. Barentsburg.

Returning to the above for one day, a few short sequences in the town and on Jetty. Also on Aurora.

31.8.41. Longyearby (Advent Fford)

Aurora puts into this fford, where the Royal Canadian Engineers have been working for the past few days.

Being Sunday there is a little ceremonial Church parade and a March past the Brigadier.

The M.L.C. loading stores at the Jetty.

Men's teas.

1.9.41. Barentsburg. Burning.

News reached the Brigadier on H.M.S. Aurora at Longyearby that the town of Barentsburg was on fire and that our Troops (the only occupants now) would have to be hastily evacuated.

The Walrus seaplane was sent out to investigate and shots of the burning town were obtained from it.

2.9.41. Barentsburg.

Various shots of the fires burning at the above, showing the wreckage of the power station and other damage.

A working party of free French come ashore to help with the loading of stores. They also served and prepared lunch on the beach for themselves and officers.

Various other incidentals.

Note. These free French (180 officers and men) were brought from Russia when the Empress of Canada returned the Russians to Archangel.

3.9.41. Barentsburg.

Before finally leaving the last piece of demolition they were to light the petrol stores and fire the huge coal dumps.

Shots showing how the fires are started in the coal dumps, and others of the petrol burning.

Silhouette shots leaving Green Harbour on the Empress of Canada taken near midnight.

4.9.41. On Empress of Canada.

Various incidental shots depicting the life on the homeward journey on board.

They show the very mixed company, Canadian and English soldiers, Norwegian soldiers and civilians, Free French Naval and A.A. personnel etc., Shots of the free French.

As in 45 and 47 including Norwegian soldiers and Norwegian civilians.

A CANADIAN SOLDIER'S DIARY OF THE
SPITZBERGEN EXPEDITION

(Source : C.M.H.Q. file 10/SMITH, F.H./3 (SMITH,
F.H. Pte. M-16468.))

1. It may be worth while to note that routine disciplinary processes have resulted in the preservation of a Canadian soldier's diary of this expedition, put into the post in the shape of a letter to his family. The letter was opened by the censorship and as it broke every conceivable security regulation, mentioning locations, giving the names of naval vessels, etc., etc., action was taken against the soldier, who received 28 days' field punishment and forfeited 28 days' pay. A copy of the letter was placed on his personal file at C.M.H.Q. and is not without interest.

2. The letter serves to indicate that the troops had found out that their destination was SPITZBERGEN before they were officially informed. The soldier writes under date 21 Aug : "As yet they haven't told us where we are going or what we are going to do. We know for sure where we are going, we found out from the crew. We are headed for Spitzbergen."

3. The author was a member of the EDMONTON REGT party stationed at LONGYEARBY. His notes throw some light on the life of the troops during the occupation - particularly on questions of food and drink - and indicate the lively interest which they took in the task on which they were engaged, and particularly the pleasure they derived from their trips on destroyers on the ISFJORD. He writes on 7 Sep:

On this trip we have made history. No other military expedition has ever gone so far north. We weren't far from the Pole. Its as far North as I ever want to go.

4. His remarks on the homeward voyage may be worth quoting :

We have had a very uneventful voyage. We have been zig-sagging all the way ... I am getting tired of this boat. They used to feed us good, but the grub has been rotten lately.

The sea sure has been quiet on this voyage. I was on submarine look-out last night. It sure was nice out. I was up on the bridge, it wasn't very cold and there was a full moon. A person could see for miles.

5. The diary suggests friendly relations with and sympathy for the Norwegian population. On 1 Sep he writes, "The people here are busy packing up ... I feel sorry for them having to leave their homes." And on 3 Sep, with reference to the evacuation the previous day :

The people, I sure felt sorry for them. They were lined up the whole day. They didn't leave until just before us. I didn't mind waiting around. In the army you get used to it. Those people never experienced anything like that before. They sure were glad to get aboard.

NOTES ON WAR DIARY OF H.Q. 2nd
CANADIAN INFANTRY BRIGADE FOR
SPITZBERGEN EXPEDITION

1. The War Diary of H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde for this operation (para. 113, above) is a very useful Diary which should be read with care before an attempt is made to prepare a full historical narrative of the expedition. There are a few obvious slips in the text, e.g., the reference to the first landing at KAP LINNE is inaccurate. The Diary includes in addition to a lengthy narrative text a very full set of documentary appendices. Most of these are found in other Diaries or in the files on the operation, but there are exceptions.
2. One Appendix, the Intelligence reports furnished on SPITZBERGEN before the departure of the Force, is not found in any other source examined.
3. Another Appendix is composed of complete Nominal Rolls of the various detachments of the Force - e.g., that for KAP LINNE, that for LONGYEARBY, etc., etc.
4. A copy of the "Spitzbergen Polar Post", the typewritten newspaper produced by Mr. MUNRO at Longyearby, and referred to (though by another name) in his Diary (Appendix "D" above) under date 1 Sep, is also included. A Canadian Press despatch filed by Mr. Munro on 9 Sep remarks that the paper kept the members of the Force abreast of the news of the world - for one day. "It had a circulation of 100 but must have been seen by practically the whole force."