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REPORT NO. 74

HISTORICAL OFFICER

CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

Further Material on the SPITSBERGEN  
Operation, August-September, 1941.



1. This Report presents material on the SPITSBERGEN operation of August and September, 1941, further to that collected in Report No. 56.

NAVAL COMMANDER'S REPORT

2. The most important item here presented is a copy of the Report on the operation prepared by the Naval Commander, Rear-Admiral P.L. (now Sir Philip) VIAN, D.S.O. This copy was made from a carbon copy in possession of the War Office.
3. Also presented is a copy of the Report addressed to Admiral Vian by Captain W.G. AGNEW of H.M.S. "Aurora", who was senior naval officer at SPITSBERGEN on 26 Aug - 1 Sep 41, during the absence of Admiral Vian on the voyage to the WHITE SEA. This forms Appendix V to the Admiral's own Report. Of the total of seven Appendices, two (III and VII) were not present in the War Office copy; three (I, II, IV) were already available to the Canadian Official Historian elsewhere; and one (VI) seemed scarcely of sufficient interest to justify copying it, the more so as the time available was short.
4. It will be noted that Admiral Vian's Report is dated 4 Sep 41 - the day following the departure of the Force from SPITSBERGEN, and previous to his own enterprise against enemy naval forces which resulted in the destruction of the "Bremse" and other German vessels.
5. Admiral Vian's Report adds materially to the facts collected in Report No. 56 on the naval aspects of the operation, particularly on points of detail. Some of the more important additions should be noted here :
  - (a) There is valuable material on the prizes taken, names of vessels being given. The interpretation in footnote 14 to Report No. 56 is confirmed. The prizes actually obtained in the course of this visit to SPITSBERGEN were evidently three colliers, INGERTO, NANDI and MUNIN, laden; one tug, ISBJORN; two sealing vessels, POLARIC and SVALBARD; one whaling vessel, ANGHE. It is important to note the ingenious work,



in this connection, of Lieutenant TAMBER of the Royal Norwegian Navy, whom Admiral Vian on his previous visit had left at SPITSBERGEN in the capacity of Military Governor. (Admiral Vian's Report, para. 5).

(b) There is further useful material on the voyage to the WHITE SEA, on events there, and the return voyage to SPITSBERGEN. (Admiral Vian's Report, paras. 9 - 21).

(c) Captain Agnew's Report provides additional material on the evacuation of outlying Norwegian settlements, and particularly the measures taken for picking up individual trappers.

(d) In general, these Reports make available most useful additional material on the details of naval movements, and the Official Historian will probably be well advised to use them as his primary source for this portion of his narrative. Comparison with Report No. 56 reveals no very serious discrepancies, but Admiral Vian states that the squadron entered GREEN BAY at 0800 hrs on 25 Aug, not 0700 as stated in Report No. 56, para. 57, on the less certain authority of Mr. Ross MUNRO. Captain Agnew's Report modifies the account of the evacuation of the Norwegian settlements given in Report No. 56, paras. 82 ff., in certain particulars: e.g., "Aurora" went from SVEAGRUVA to ADVENT BAY (not BARENTSBURG) and arrived there not "on 31 Aug" but at 1900 hrs on 30 Aug.

6. Admiral Vian's Report has been copied quite literally, including such obvious slips as "Grenfjord" for "Gronfjord" (para. 21) and "The" for "This" at the foot of the first page.

#### FREE FRENCH MATERIAL

7. Reference is made in Appendix "C" (below) to a book by Lieutenant BRILHAC of the Free French forces entitled "Pour Combattre Avec De Gaulle". A chapter of this book (which has not yet been published) was kindly made available to the writer by Free French Headquarters in LONDON in connection with the article "The Canadians at Spitsbergen", and extracts from it are included in that article. It has not been thought necessary to copy the whole chapter, as it adds little in the way of factual material to that already collected, and will presumably be available in print in due time. Its interest is less factual than "atmospheric". Incidentally, Brigadier POTTS' name invariably appears in it as "Pods".

8. It is worth noting that the Free French party are frequently referred to in M. Brilhac's manuscript as "les cent quatre-vingt-six". As Free French Headquarters presumably have the best means of determining the numbers of this party, and as M. Brilhac was himself a member of it, it may be taken that its total strength was 186, not 192 as stated in Admiral Vian's Report (para. 19) and in Report No. 56 (para. 87).