Den lange vej mod 9. april.

Historien om de fyrre år før den tyske operation mod Norge og Danmark i 1940.

The Long Cruise towards 9th April

English Summary of book to be published in Danish by the University Press of Southern Denmark 25th March 2010

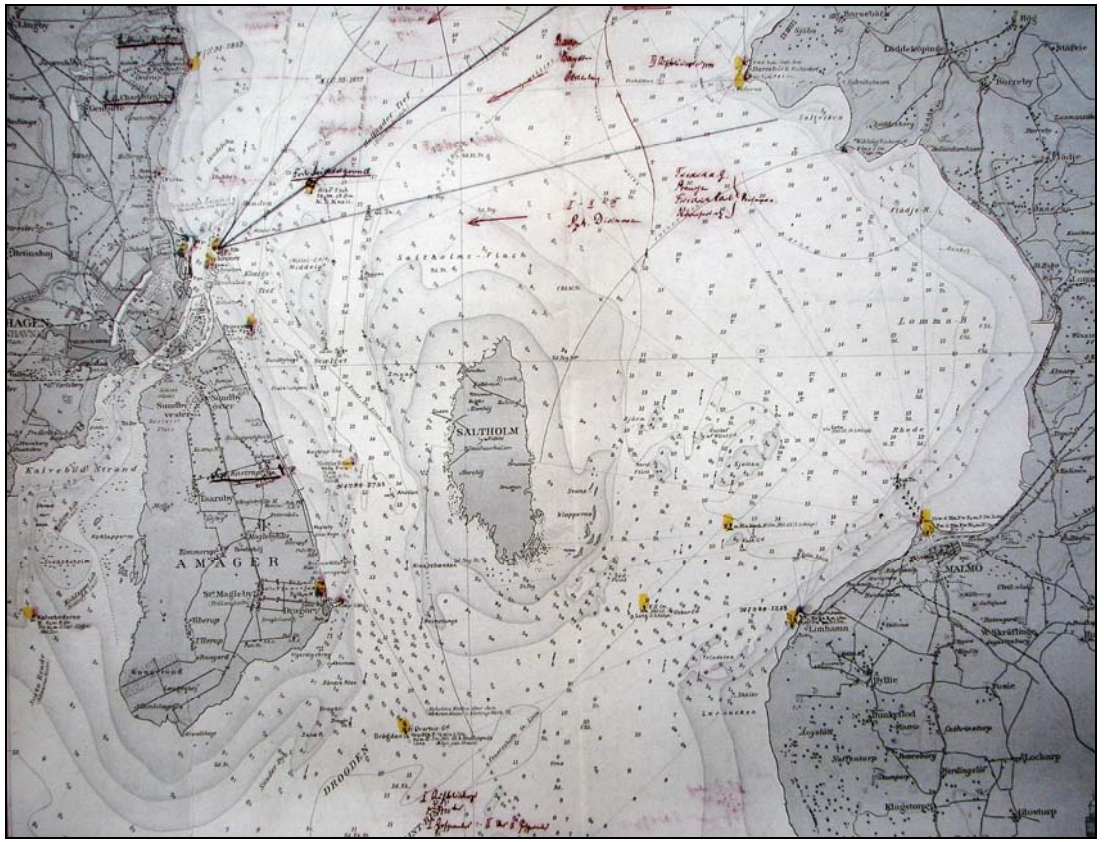


Chart from the 1898 plan showing the German main fleet close to bombardment positions in the Sound off Copenhagen.
(Bundesarchiv, Militärarchiv)

Operation Weserübung, the invasion of Norway and Denmark that started in the early morning of 9th April 1940, had only been prepared in detail during the preceding three months. However, the underlying urge to break out from the Baltic Sea via the northern exit of the North Sea into the Atlantic along the Norwegian coast was not driven by a sudden impulse. On the contrary it had developed gradually from seeds sown more than four decades earlier. In 1892 Wilhelm II had identified Tirpitz as the man who could expand the Kaiserliche Marine into a great navy that could both symbolise and promote the greatness and world position of his Empire. The Kiel Canal had been completed a few years later. It gave the new navy a protected route that would make a quick transit between the Baltic and North Seas possible and thus threaten both the North Sea lines of communication and the close flank of any foreign fleet entering the Baltic Sea.

The book has been inspired by Patrick Salmon's 'Scandinavia and the Great Powers 1890-1940' from 1997 that covers the same period. However, the present work has a different focus and more narrow purpose. It traces the growth and interaction of the different elements of the Kaiserliche Marine strategic mindset that made an operation like Weserübung close to inevitable. Its main subject is the field between on one side the ambition and developing plans of the Kaiserliche Marine and on the other the evolving response of the Royal Navy in the waters of Northern Europe. The competition between the two navies shaped a strategic framework for the security of Denmark and Norway that the governments and armed forces leaders of the two countries only comprehended in part and only during some periods. However, neither their politicians nor their militaries had ambitions to make their countries direct players in that great power competition, and neither government felt that their own small armed forces could significantly influence the fate of their country. The Norwegian and Danish land and naval forces and – later – their air elements were therefore controlled ever more closely by the governments, who sought to avoid confrontation with the Great Powers by policing their borders, coasts and territorial water leniently. Within that framework the book adds new facets and elements to the histories of the two Nordic States and of their involvement with the great powers, especially Great Britain.

First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill 1914 and 1939
(http://www.answers.com/topic/winston-churchill-large-image &
http://www.winstonisback.com/WinstonIsBackHomePage/4Big.html)

TWENTY YEARS AGO IS YESTERDAY

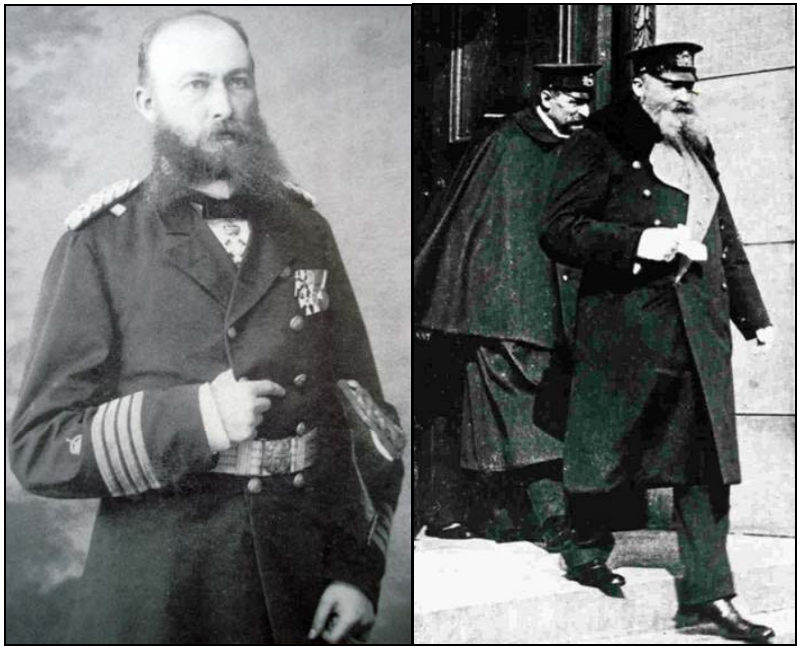
For politicians and career officers in their 50s or 60s, twenty years ago is seen as yesterday, when they had their formative first key positions. This is one of the reasons why the developments of the two last years of the Great War guided the interpretation of the events prior to and after the start of the new European war. This was the case in all the four involved countries. In Germany Admiral Erich Raeder and his navy were desperate to gain a more decisive role in the new war even if it came several years before the completion of his planned force. Since early in the previous war the intellectual elite among the naval officers had been debating how to improve the war effort and standing of the Fleet. Now they intended to test those theoretical concepts. In Britain Churchill, the returning First Lord of the Admiralty, was eagerly seeking inspiration for action in the aggressive plans that he had probably heard about from his friend, the 1917 chief planner, Commodore, later Admiral of the Fleet, Roger Keyes. Churchill was, however, kept in check by his First Sea Lord, Dudley Pound, who had then acted as Keyes' deputy and common sense brake. In Denmark, Peter Munch, Defence Minister during the previous war, now dominated the country's security policy as Minister of Foreign Affairs. Herluf Zahle, the key liaison in the 1917 confidential German-Danish discussion about the German Navy contingency plans for an occupation of parts of Denmark, had become Danish envoy to Berlin. Lieutenant General Erik With, who had led the pro-Allied Danish Army intelligence service during the first war only retired at the end of 1939 after having tried to rebuild the morale and professional focus of his service during a decade as Commanding General. In Norway the crucial element of continuity existed at the subordinate commanders' level. The new chief of air defence, Thomas Gulliksen, had received his air officer training in the UK in 1918. Two key actors in the April 1940 events, Rear Admiral Carsten Tank-Nielsen and Colonel Birger Kristian Eriksen, acted in the new crisis as they had learnt two decades earlier. Another link between the German and British 1940 preparations and earlier planning is the tendency of any military or naval operational planner to search the classified archive for usable, older studies and plans that may be employed as part of the basis for new planning. Direct copying is particularly relevant when time is short, as in the planning against Denmark.

PREVIOUS STUDIES TOO INFLUENCED BY KNOWLEDGE OF LATER EVENTS

Previous studies have to a large extent been guided by the historian's knowledge about what actually happened. The Allies won the Great War much easier than expected. German will to continue fighting and suffering collapsed quickly in a reaction to Ludendorff's mismanagement of both operations and economy. It only took the three autumn months of 1918, and that development made it all too easy to ignore that this outcome was far from certain from late 1917 to summer 1918, the period when warfare deepened towards being total and spread to Northern Europe from the traditional battlefields of Eastern and Western Europe. Uncertainty about the outcome combined with the critical situation led both the Allies and Germany to plan for interventions into and to pressure the neutral states; yet after the Great War naval historians considered this to be less than gentlemanly, and probably therefore ignored such actions and plans in their writing of the official histories and later works. This book endeavours to approach the situation as it was seen and planned for at the time, and which due to the continuity of persons and thought explains the planning and actual operations in the following war.

GERMAN PREPARATIONS UNTIL 1905

The initial German preparations against Denmark in the late 1800s were limited to a joint Navy-Army reconnaissance of the nearly completed construction work on the new Copenhagen Fortress and relevant sea-landing places on Zealand in the summer of 1892. The result of the trip was the understanding that the least demanding way of subjugating Denmark was by a pre-mobilised naval interdiction of all transports to Zealand combined with coup landings as close as possible to the political centre of the capital, and with the added threat of bombardment by heavy naval artillery from ships in the Sound to northeast of Copenhagen harbour. That German concept was not original. It was merely an adaptation of the successful British operations in 1801 and 1807. The reconnaissance was developed into a formal planning study only in 1897-98, after the opening of the Kiel Canal and identification of the British Navy as the main future opponent of the Kaiserliche Marine. During the following couple of years, the planning changed focus. It became clear to the German Army that even if it was possible to land near Copenhagen before Denmark had its mobilised army concentrated in Zealand, the landed forces would be cut off on the arrival of superior Royal Navy forces in Danish waters, and thus be unable to redeploy for other use. At the moment British forces landed north of the German-Danish border in Jutland, they could move south to cut the Kiel Canal with the support of the Danish Army units left in the Jutland peninsula. This insight meant that the focus of the German offensive planning against Denmark within the framework of a war with England moved from a focus on Copenhagen towards the occupation of parts of Jutland.

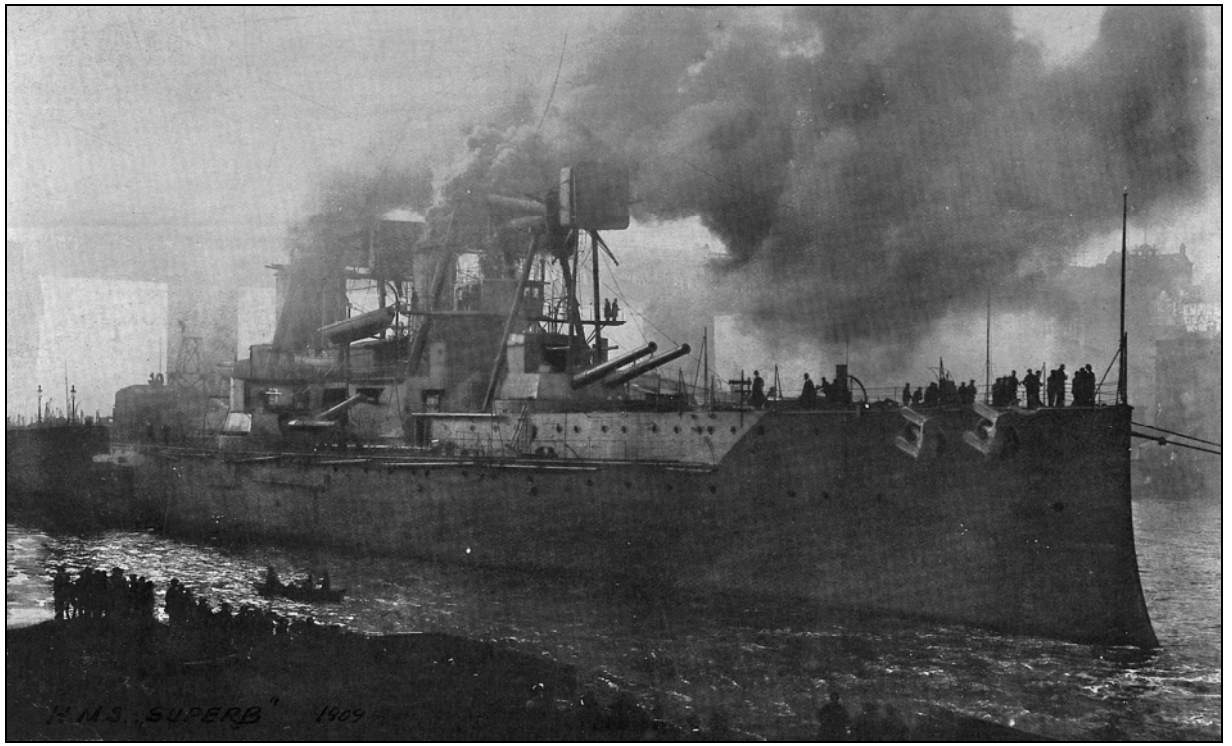


Alfred von Tirpitz as navy Captain around 1890 and Grand Admiral in 1915
(Michael Epkenhans: Tirpitz. Architect of the German High Seas Fleet. 2008 & http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_von_Tirpitz)

FROM EARLY 1905 TO THE WAR

Late in 1904 it became clear to the German Army General Staff under Albert von Schlieffen that a war with Great Britain alone was unlikely. The increasing co-operation within the 'Entente Cordiale' meant that France would have to be fought at the same time. When he presented his plan for the occupation of Denmark in February 1905, its troop requirements convinced Wilhelm II that operations against Jutland had

to be deferred because they conflicted with the needed troop level against France. The Kaiserliche Marine that had forced von Schlieffen to develop and present his plan thereafter had to accept that Denmark would remain neutral and that the potential of the Kattegat-Skagerrak route to the North Sea had to be left unexploited in the hands of neutral Danes. The Kiel Canal would have to suffice as the only main transit route between Tirpitz' preferred theatre of operations in the Southern half of the North Sea and the bases and shipyards in the German Baltic ports. This limitation became a serious handicap for the Kaiserliche Marine from 1907 because the Royal Navy had introduced a larger and far more powerful class of battle ships during the previous year which the Germans yet had to copy. The 'Dreadnought'-revolution meant that the new and most powerful German ships had to transit via the Skagerrak until the Kiel Canal expansion was completed in the summer of 1914.



The new Dreadnought HMS SUPERB in summer 1909. (Danish Naval Library)

The operational disadvantage that followed from the decision to leave Denmark alone was not universally accepted. In 1913 admiral Henning von Holzendorff, the commander of the German main fleet, the High Seas Fleet, had to resign because he had argued and underlined by exercises that the navy had to be free to use the Skagerrak approach in order to be able to meet the Royal Navy effectively. During the months when Tirpitz and the Kaiser got rid of von Holzendorff the Royal Navy changed its operational concept for war against Germany. A new 'Distant Blockade' idea had been developed by a small group of young, reform minded officers from the newly established Admiralty War Staff and the Naval War College. Their new concept had been accepted after alternatives had been tested in exercises.

The new British blockade deployment made Tirpitz's operational concept fundamentally obsolete. His navy had planned to attack the vulnerable ships of the blockade line and thereafter defeat the weakened Royal Navy North Sea fleet in battle. Von Holtzendorff's suggested use of the Skagerrak would have been a suitable answer to the intermediate idea of an 'Observation Blockade' in the middle of the North Sea tested by the Royal Navy in 1912, but even if the Kaiserliche Marine had gained forward naval bases in Jutland it would not have helped much as the eastern end of the blockade line was off the Norwegian west coast. Some Norwegians and German diplomats in Norway perceived before the war that the south-western part of the Scandinavian peninsula was gaining in strategic importance, but it was probably only the then First Sea Lord, the often prescient John Fisher, who suspected as early as 1907 that Norway would become important.

In Denmark the defence debate in the years before the war was dominated more by political and service ideology than by a constructive strategy debate. The liberal political majority and the Navy had agreed in principle in 1908 that priority should be given to the creation of a naval neutrality defence buffer against a British use of Denmark against Germany. It should reduce the risk of Germany doing so itself. One may say that the concept reflected the Strategic situation and requirements from 1905 to 1916. The Army and political right rejected such an idea as defeatist and immoral and wanted to deter or meet a German operation mirrored on the English 1807-combination. If Germany attacked Copenhagen, defence should be continued until the British arrived after some weeks. If they did not come, at least national honour had been satisfied. That strategy mirrored German preparations as they had been until 1904. The social-liberal ('Radical') party that governed the country from mid-1913 with social democratic support considered military resistance to any major great power violation of Danish neutrality both futile and harmful. Forming government, the party had accepted to administer the 1909 Defence Laws that had been built on the first concept, the neutrality defence. The party agreed with other European liberals that international war was unlikely, and expected to change the armed forces merely to its neutrality symbol model in the near future. After the war broke out without Denmark getting involved, the government used the growing critical reaction to the defence burden to move public opinion towards accepting its 'anti-militaristic' view that any defence capability beyond the symbolic marking of own territory were unnecessary and futile, and possibly provocative and dangerous.

During the international crisis that followed the First Balkan War from the autumn of 1912 Tirpitz had successfully convinced Wilhelm II and the army leaders that his service was not yet ready for war. The Kiel Canal and the Heligoland naval base were still under construction. In July 1914 the Kaiserliche Marine still hoped to avoid war with England. It was unaware that the army war plan depended on a march through

Belgium, an action naval officers understood would bring England into the war. However, by then the expanded Canal was open and the island base ready, and the force ratio in number of new battleships was better in the immediate future than it would become later when the British capital ships under construction had entered service.

The navy was in no position to block the slide into war that Tirpitz did not seek and had thought would have been deterred by the British government's respect for the large Kaiserliche Marine. As the war began the fleet mobilised in its North Sea bases and readied to wear down forces deployed by the Royal Navy within its reach. Command of the very limited forces left in the Baltic to defend the Kiel Bight against the Russians and any British forces sent through the Danish Straits was given to the Kaiser's younger brother, Grand Admiral Prince Heinrich of Prussia. It happened in spite of the general recognition of his very limited abilities as commander. With war against Britain imminent he moved to protect his main base by deploying minelayers to create a barrier at the southern end of the Great Belt. At the same time he tasked the Foreign Office to request the Danes to mine the strait further north against both belligerents. Not knowing that the German note wasn't backed by force, the Danes complied.

THE TWO FIRST WAR YEARS

The Danish Commanding Admiral made certain that the actual execution of the government's decision created an effective barrier against any Royal Navy attempt to break through the Belt at the same time as the Kaiserliche Marine was allowed a high degree of freedom of action. During the following months the lighthouses and lightships in the Kattegat not already connected with the Naval HQ by land lines were equipped with radio telegraph equipment. It created a good capability to warn if the Royal Navy approached. Half the naval combat forces were deployed to the Great Belt and ordered to defend the Danish mine fields against any passage attempts. The order was upheld in spite of the resistance of the Danish King, most of the government and the detached squadron commander. A small mine field in the Little Belt was placed in a way that might create a symbolic obstacle to a completely unlikely British attempt to pass, leaving the deep channel free for the High Seas Fleet to use both as an open sally port into the Kattegat and a possible bolt hole for elements of the German fleet blocked from using the direct route back to the North Sea bases after a battle. The deep entry channel to the Danish North Sea port of Esbjerg close to the German border was prepared blocked by a small controlled mine field.

While Denmark was influenced by the demands from a belligerent from the first day of the naval war between Britain and Germany, Norway was initially only exposed to Royal Navy patrols looking for clandestine German U-boat bases on the remote and mostly unpopulated parts of the deeply indented and rocky coastline. After some weeks it became clear that no such bases existed and the only operations close to Norway in the first months of the war were the British blockade inspections off the western coast. As Denmark, Norway mobilised the navy and part of the army in early August. The small and medium size vessels of the navy had been distributed as neutrality enforcing patrols to harbours along the coast. The army manned the defences of the larger towns and the coastal forts and batteries covering the long fiord approaches to those towns. Only a Swedish entry into the war on the side of the Central Powers - in line with Swedish elite sympathies - could lead to serious defence problems. The commander of the Russian Baltic Fleet, Nicolai von

Essen, who expected a Swedish entry, did start a cruise against Gotland. It was stopped in time, and the most powerful Nordic state stayed neutral to the benefit of all. The first major event in Norway was the sudden arrival of the German auxiliary cruiser BERLIN in Trondheim on the 17th November. It passed the coastal batteries covering the narrow approaches in darkness without being observed. The awkward event led to an improvement of coastal artillery alertness and combat standards that lasted until 1940 as some of those who learnt from the event in 1914 were still around a quarter of a century later. Thereafter the war drew nearer as the declarations of the North Sea as a 'Military Area' by the British and a few months later as a 'War Zone' by Germany took effect. One result of the new threats to shipping became the ever closer co-operation between the three Nordic neutrals that started with the symbolic meeting of the kings in Malmö 18th-19th December 1914.

During the first two years of the war a decisive battle between the German and British main battle fleets remained a possibility, however, the very limited area surveillance capabilities of the time combined with careful handling of both fleets ensured that the Battle of Jutland on 31st May-1st June 1916 became the only major engagement. Due to luck and better night fighting preparations the Germans slipped through the British force during the dark hours; yet the battle remained indecisive in spite of the heavy losses of the British battle cruiser force. The structural or procedural weaknesses of the British ships that had led to the immediate destruction of three capital ships could only reinforce the already existing caution among the Grand Fleet admirals, David Beatty included. No risks should be taken in the future without a massive superiority in number of ships. The success of the blockade depended on the continued intact, superior battle fleet to back it up. The High Seas Fleet commander, Reinhard Scheer, also realised that it would be too risky to expose his force to the risk of destruction in another major engagement. Keeping the British out of the Baltic Sea depended on the combination of the Kiel Canal and the survival of a strong battle 'Fleet in being'. The only future major fleet contribution to German victory against the Western Powers would have to come from the U-boats.

The central role that the submarines would come to play in the naval and trade war came as a surprise to most, including the three Nordic neutrals. It would be the submarine warfare of the belligerents that resulted in the main challenges to their neutrality and welfare during the conflict. The first incident came when one of the three British patrol submarines trying to enter the Baltic Sea through the Sound in October 1914 attempted to torpedo a Danish submarine mistaking it for a German U-boat. The two British submarines that succeeded in joining the Russian Baltic Fleet were to be reinforced by another four in August-September 1915. One of these stranded off the island of Saltholm in Danish territorial water. There it was destroyed by German torpedo boats, the most serious violation of Danish neutrality up till that date.

The flotilla of five British boats operating from Russian bases sank or damaged a number of German Baltic Fleet vessels, and combined with the effective Russian use of mine warfare it limited the naval support to German land operations on the Baltic coast. The main effect of the submarines, however, was against the iron ore transports along the Swedish coast, forcing these vessels into territorial waters and the Swedish Navy to protect the traffic. In order to contain the threat, in late November 1915 Sweden banned the transit or presence of the belligerent submarines in its territorial waters. Thereby they were

denied the right of innocent passage through neutral waters granted by international law.

The risk that additional British submarines would follow led Germany to try to block the channel between Denmark and Sweden used by the boats with mines and anti-submarine nets late September and November 1915. Such a barrier had been considered in 1914, but rejected because the anti-submarine barrier technologies had been considered immature. Thereafter German pressure grew on both Sweden and Denmark to mine the territorial waters between the German barriers and their coasts. During spring 1916 additional German barriers were established in the Sound and new obstacles were established at the south end of the Great Belt and off the German Baltic coast. During the same period criticism of the Danish neutrality policy line in both France and Germany led the Danish Navy to block the last possible routes for submarines in the Sound by laying a new minefield and arming and improving an existing second. This happened as an independent action without informing the Germans. During the winter and spring 1916 the Germans built up their naval force south of the Sound barrier by adding a pre-Dreadnought battleship as command ship and a hydroplane tender for tactical reconnaissance.

The German minefields and growing supporting naval force were seen by the Danish Army as a serious new bombardment and coup-landing threat against Copenhagen and the coastal flank of the new forward 'Tune-position' then in the early phase of construction. During the summer 1916 the British deliberately planted a false rumour that the Royal Navy would follow-up the Jutland Battle with an attempt to break into the Baltic Sea, and this reinforced the concerns of the Danish generals to a near panic level. Without his government's knowledge the Chief of General Staff approached the British Embassy to get assistance. The subsequent staffing of the request in the Admiralty and War Office in London led to the conclusion that nothing could be done to help the unfortunate kingdom if Germany made up her mind to bombard or invade.

The false rumour was meant to expose a Danish officer in London suspected to be a German spy. The only time during the first half of the war where the Royal Navy professional leadership may seriously have considered the option of breaking into the Baltic was the half year from late 1914 till May 1915 when Churchill had recalled John Fisher to the post of First Sea Lord. The crash-building of his 'Armada' of shallow water combatants and landing craft would have given the Royal Navy the specialist 'second fleet' required for such an enterprise. However after the Dardanelles adventure, the risks of a Baltic operation were clear. The disaster drained the aggressive naïve optimism required for such an operation and it consumed a fair part of the purpose-built vessels. Both leaders that might have initiated it – Fisher and Churchill – became early casualties. The fact that Churchill could not wait for the completion of construction before action and glory proved good for Denmark.

From the beginning of the war the Royal Navy pressed for a tighter blockade of the enemy, however the Foreign Office had resisted applying the pressure on the neutrals necessary to make them limit or stop their exports to Germany. With the U.S. having a natural dominating position among the neutral states and thus indirectly shielding their trade and shipping interests, such a line combined legality and fairness with prudence. But by late February 1916 the pressure led to the establishment of a cabinet post of Minister of Blockade. Robert Cecil, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for

Foreign Affairs, was appointed. The energetic Cecil continued to manage the blockade in the Lloyd George War Cabinet, and effectively tightened it. Two local tough advocates of forcing the Nordic States to stop their export to Germany of everything that could help the enemy sustaining its war did so from the Norwegian capital, Kristiania. The British envoy to Norway, Mansfeldt Findlay, and the naval attaché to all three Nordic States, captain (RN) Montague Consett, worked as an effective team to force not only their host country, but all the three Nordic states to stop exporting to Germany. The new envoy to Copenhagen, Ralph Paget, simply followed the London line, while the envoy to Stockholm, Esme Howard, resisted applying any pressure against Sweden that would affect the ability to use northern Sweden for transit of supplies to sustain the faltering Russian war effort.

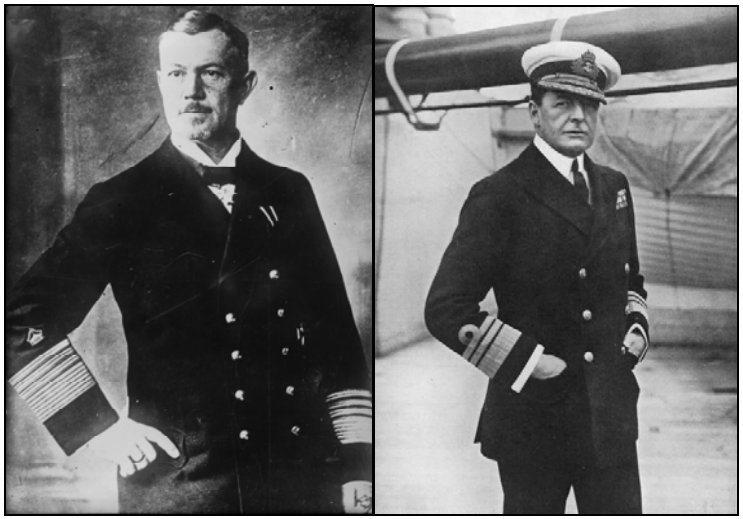
The trade war intensified with increasing blockade pressure in the autumn of 1916. Norway was requested to end the export of copper ore and fish to Germany. The framework for convincing the Norwegians became an intensified German U-boat effort starting in September. The first unrestricted U-boat campaign in 1915 had been limited by the low number of available submarines and by the attention paid to the U.S. reaction. The latter led to its termination in the autumn of that same year. However, one year later, when the renewed unrestricted U-boat effort was awaiting an improvement of the situation on land, a group of High Seas Fleet U-boats were deployed off North Norway to cut Western assistance to Russia. Their effort quickly resulted in the loss of a significant number of Norwegian ships. Public pressure forced the government to react. The response was a declaration that copied the Swedish example and banned submarine presence in Norwegian waters. The Germans rightly argued that the ban was directed against them (as the Swedish had been against allied submarines in the Baltic) and applied diplomatic pressure. The Norwegian leaders could not broadcast the information that the accompanying directives to the naval units ruled out the use of force to impose the ban.

The tense situation led the Norwegians to improvise air defence against raids by airships and to ask the allies to supply guns and aircraft for an air defence of South Norway. The highly inflammable wooden towns and important industries were within reach of the Zeppelin airships of the German Navy. Some of the exposed industries were key suppliers of nitrate products to the allied and especially French ammunition industry, making the British authorities open to using both the carrot - a security guarantee and offer of support - and the stick - the threat of cutting the vital coal supplies - to get the wanted Norwegian concessions. The copper ore export ended, however selling a fixed amount of fish to Germany became part of the January 1917 deal that ended the acute tension created by the Norwegian submarine ban. The other part was an adjustment of the declaration to permit U-boat presence in situations of emergency.

Both in Germany and Britain the naval officers outside the central authorities (the Admiralstab and Admiralty) were frustrated and critical of the enforced passivity of the main fleets in the North Sea. The open promotion of alternatives, however, came earlier in the Kaiserliche Marine than in Britain, probably because the exasperating situation was created by the British decision to move the northern main blockade line to a place where it could not be worn down by the surprise attacks, a decision in which some of the most independent-minded of the younger naval officers had played a part.

The reaction in Germany came from the group of mature elite officers serving as captains of capital ships or as leading staff officers of fleets and squadrons. Their analysis and advice varied in focus. Wolfgang

Wegener, the 1st Admiralty Staff Officer of the 1st Battle Squadron wrote a series of analytic memoranda during 1915 based on his developing understanding that naval operations had to be seen as offensive or defensive relative to own and enemy sea lines of communication, not in relation to the main enemy fleet. In order to force the enemy to fight on its terms, the German Navy had to direct its operations at achieving a widening of its operational base. This should be accomplished by getting control of Denmark or other potential North Sea base areas as Holland, Southern Norway and the Faroe Islands. The more senior Adolf von Trotha who served as chief of staff of the High Seas Fleet during the Battle of Jutland was critical of what he considered Wegener's defeatism. He emphasised the need to take risks in offensive action, but he did accept the requirement to gain a wider base of operations in Denmark and beyond. The senior officers of the battle cruiser force under Franz von Hipper had reacted even earlier. As Wegener did later, they understood a few months after the start of the war that operations should be directed against the British sea lines of communication. They realised that one of the new fast and powerful battle cruisers of their force would be an ideal tool for such an effort. The battle cruiser officers also understood that forward bases outside the German Bight were important to enhance the possibilities of operating in the Atlantic against allied shipping. The concept totally convinced Hipper's chief of staff, Wegener's contemporary and family friend, Erich Raeder. The Royal Navy was aware of the risk of such battle cruiser operations and sought ways of countering them without reducing its own Grand Fleet battle cruiser force by permanent detachments. The seriousness of the threat from surface raiders had been highlighted by the damage done during the epic cruise of the light cruiser EMDEN as well as by the Maximilian Count von Spee's East Asia Squadron main force before it was found by luck and sunk at the Falklands on 8th December 1914. Spee's armoured cruisers SMS SCHARNHORST and GNEISENAU had been far slower and less powerful than the latest German battle cruisers. In the autumn of 1916, after the Battle of Jutland, both the High Seas and Baltic Fleet commanders had been convinced that bases in Jutland should be included in the German North Sea basis when and if possible.



The opposed fleet commanders Reinhard Scheer and David Beatty both learned prudence at Jutland (http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f6/Admiral_Scheer.jpg & http://www.gwpda.org/photos/bin19/imag1827.jpg)

THE BELLIGERENTS LOOK NORTH AS THE WAR ESCALATES

The possibility to develop that option arose when in August 1916 neutral Romania entered the war against the Central Powers to grab parts of Hungary. That followed after an extremely difficult summer

for the German army. The offensive at Verdun had failed. The Russian Brusilov-offensive starting early in June had come close to defeating the Austrians. They had to be reinforced with German troops to avert a collapse. The allied offensive on the Somme had initially been contained, but it continued in the following months and was consuming the few available troop reserves at an alarming rate.

The Kaiserliche Marine had made clear that the defeat of Britain required an unrestricted U-boat offensive using the now large force of much improved submarines. Such a campaign might press neutrals dependent on shipborne trade to enter the war on allied side. Denmark and the Netherlands that bordered on Germany could deploy land forces large enough to be significant in the current critical situation. When the new army leadership of Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff took over in August as the result of the crisis, Romania's action had underlined how opportunistically the neutrals might act. They authorised naval contingency planning against Denmark and the Netherlands, and committed the army to support the navy's operation with the very limited amount of troops that might be available in spite of the requirements of the main fronts. They underlined that until the Romanian offensive had been contained and defeated, the land forces in Schleswig-Holstein had to prepare to meet a combined British-Danish offensive in the now urgently constructed defensive position south of the border in North Schleswig. Any German offensive deployment north of the line Esbjerg-Fredericia was considered too risky and beyond the capability of the available troops. The situation that was to trigger operations against Denmark was a threatening or an actual arrival of a British naval force in Danish waters that might be linked to a government change in Copenhagen. If Germany got the necessary warning, the crisis period would be used to put pressure on the Danish public and government by clandestine mining of the Kattegat and Zeppelin flights over a capital city that was considered to be without any real air defences. The initial preparatory act against Denmark would be the cutting of the telegraph cables connecting the country with the outside world and linking the different parts of the country. At the same time mining of Danish territorial waters would start. A diplomatic note delivered would require Denmark to clarify if she would choose to remain neutral while permitting German use of her territory and waters. If she rejected the offer, the country should be considered an enemy and forced to comply by the destruction or capture of her navy, by a naval and air bombardment of the capital and by naval bombardment of other coastal towns. The attacks on Copenhagen as well as German naval presence in the Great Belt and Kattegat should also prevent the Danish army from moving troops to Jutland. A large mine barrier would be laid in northern Kattegat and the waters south of Funen and Zealand would be mined to block any Royal Navy use. The freedom to plan for operations against Denmark led the naval planners to forget both the limitations of the authorised setting – a British move – and the extremely limited army commitment. The involved planners of the Admiralstab and Baltic and High Seas Fleets discussed which part of Denmark to take in which sequence and the tendency was to plan for pre-emption rather than the reaction to Royal Navy operations.

However, by the time in December 1916 when the plan – 'Fall J' ('J' for 'Jutland') – had been signed by Wilhelm II, Romania had been thoroughly defeated. In the eyes of the German army leaders the period of weakness that might have tempted Britain and the neutrals was over. The U-boat campaign could start, and even if this led to a Danish or Dutch reaction, forces would be available to meet them. At the same time Ludendorff's focus had started to move north. Within the framework of the diplomatic crisis with Norway following its initial

unlimited ban on submarine presence and transit in its waters, the German Navy was tasked to study its options if that country joined the enemy.

At the same time the Royal Navy started preparations for the use of Kristiansand as a base for light forces, if Norway was attacked or chose to join the allies. The British naval attaché, Consett, had realised that Stavanger was a suitable place for a larger allied base. In the Foreign Office his promotion of the idea had led to him being seen as a dangerous nuisance, but his position was soon to get important support. The Norwegian Commanding Admiral, Frederick Dawes, had come to the same conclusion earlier in the war and had had the approaches to Stavanger surveyed for mine barriers.

The U-boat campaign that started in February hit the British sea lines as hard as the chief of the German Admiralstab, Henning von Holtzendorff had expected. In April the sunken tonnage even surpassed the monthly level he had predicted would be required to force Britain to give up in a few months. However, the German admiral both underestimated the resilience of his enemy and the Royal Navy's ability to adapt its tactics. After the U-boat campaign in February 1917, the British immediately began experiments with convoying and escorting the shipping of two crucial routes. One was the transport of coal to France, necessary because the French coal mines were in German hands. The other exposed and essential traffic was on the route between the west coast of Norway and Scotland. It was used for the import of Swedish iron ore and wood to be used as props in coal mines and allied trenches, Danish food products, Norwegian fish and nitrate, etc.

In April 1917 these first experiments with escort and convoy size and tactics in response to the U-boat threat had been completed, and appropriate standard procedures been introduced. It was not foreseen at this time that the convoys might be attacked by surface combatants. The main obstacle for the universal adoption of convoys was the limited number of destroyers. It was clearly the best escort vessel, but the only available large Royal Navy pools of destroyers were the flotillas of the Grand Fleet screening elements needed for protection and warning when the capital ships or cruisers moved or operated. Moving destroyer flotillas to convoy work would increase the risks during main fleet operations. The deployment of American destroyers to the Western approaches of the British Islands immediately after the U.S. entry into the war in April was thus the first significant contribution to the eventual allied victory as it helped to find a usable balance between the requirements.

In March 1917, as it was clear that the U.S. entry was imminent, the Norwegian Commanding Admiral found that it was evident that the soon-to-join U.S. Battle Fleet should be used as a detached force in the North Sea, making it possible to press the Kaiserliche Marine further and probably defeat it. Early that month Rear Admiral Dawes underlined to captain Consett that the best base for the U.S. Battle Fleet would be at Stavanger. The admiral considered an American presence more politically acceptable than a British, because of the higher level of certainty that it would end with the war. The admiral's statement was immediately passed on to London by Findlay, and the view continued to influence British policy towards the U.S. in relation to naval actions in Norwegian waters throughout the Great War. The U.S. Navy would later agree that Stavanger was a suitable operational base for the battle ships it actually did deploy to the North Sea. However, thereafter other battleships used to escort troop transports and some were based in Ireland ready to give protection against any German battle cruiser raids threatening the Atlantic convoys. New, oil

fired battle ships that remained at home bases after the coal burners were sent across the Atlantic could balance the newest Dreadnoughts of the Imperial Japanese Navy. Initially it was considered prudent even if Japan was now a formal ally.

The combination of U-boat campaign effects and American entry as an independent belligerent on the allied side created additional pressure on the neutrals. Massive ship losses resulting from the former led to a requirement to gain direct control of large neutral merchant navies like the Norwegian. The American departure from the neutral group meant that the allied blockade no longer had to be limited by considerations to the U.S. In addition American exports of oil and cereals to the remaining neutrals could now be used as pressure tools, forcing them to participate loyally in the still tightening blockade. With or without Rear Admiral Dawes' contribution, the American decision led to rumours that Norway would accept an Allied naval base.

From April to June 1917 the German-Norwegian relations that had been eased by the trade agreement and the adjusted submarine ban before the start of the U-boat campaign moved from difficult to worse. German U-boat commanders acted with brutal arrogance and a German naval diplomatic courier was caught with bombs for ships sabotage in his luggage. The rumours about allied base plans reached Ludendorff. In fact the Norwegian government had then prudently rejected both a British proposal for formal staff talks and the sending of air service personnel to Norway to prepare the British support for the creation of a Norwegian air defence system. The latter was left to a British naval aviator who passed Norway on the way home after a forced landing off the Jutland coast. As a response to the new crisis the Admiralstab decided to develop the naval study of a war with Norway into a complete contingency plan, 'Fall N'. That plan came to assume the activation of 'Fall J', the occupation of part of Denmark. Any German operation against the Scandinavian Peninsular depended on bases in Denmark. The threatening collapse of the Swedish pro-German, right-wing government had earlier in the spring led to an Admiralstab study of a war against a Sweden allied with the enemy. The study had underlined that German operations in such a war required bases in Jutland. The planning against Norway not only assumed the immediate execution of 'Fall J', it also led to the development of that plan according to naval territorial aspirations. The new strategic framework combined with the less critical resource situation of the army was probably the reason why Ludendorff now accepted a troop contribution that would make the occupation of both Jutland and Funen possible. The linking of 'Fall J' to a campaign against Norway also increased the relevance of the operation to the High Seas Fleet. Until summer 1917 the air commander of that fleet had successfully resisted the detachment of its aircraft to participate in the operation against Denmark. Now both Wilhelmshaven and Berlin accepted the requirement as sensible.

In December 1916 David Lloyd George had become British Prime Minister on a promise to energise his country's war effort. To fulfil that commitment he considered it necessary to get direct control of both land and naval strategy. The power over land operations still rested with the Chief of Imperial General Staff, William Robertson, who acted in close support of Douglas Haig, the commander of the British Expeditionary Force in France. John Jellicoe had arrived to his new post as First Sea Lord from the command of the Home Fleets just one week before Lloyd George formed his government. Lloyd George's efforts to achieve direct control over the services came to influence the situation of Denmark and Norway to a very significant degree.

Lloyd George's chance to increase control came first with the Navy as the effectiveness of the U-boat campaign proved that the existing ways of the service were wholly insufficient to contain the losses and build replacement tonnage. Parts of the press criticised the service for its too defensive blockade strategy. The public criticism was supported by both the twice retired John Fisher and Winston Churchill. When America joined the Allies, the U. S. Navy – with President Wilson in support - joined the chorus of censure, influenced by a shallow reading of the just deceased Alfred Thayer Mahan's - their national naval theorist's - recommendations of a decisive battle. Inside the Royal Navy, the small circle of academically minded, critical officers around Herbert Richmond argued for reforms. Such reforms should include the development of the Admiralty War Staff by adding a planning element looking at offensive additions to the existing strategy. Richmond and his closest associate Kenneth Dewar had played a role in the adoption of the Distant Blockade strategy in the months before the war, however their independent open minded and arrogantly voiced critical attitude had led to postings far away from influence. Now they sought and got direct access to the Prime Minister to advice him that the Navy needed new leaders and a real planning staff. John Jellicoe and the leader of the war staff, Henry Oliver, resisted. In May, however, the war staff was reorganised into a proper Naval Staff with Jellicoe as Chief and Oliver as deputy. In mid-May, Dewar was posted to the Operations Division of the new staff, and from then on he worked to demonstrate the need for further staff development. In order to make naval construction more effective, the civilian railway manager Eric Geddes was appointed Navy Controller in charge of all ship building. Geddes had proven his efficiency by reorganising the British Army rear area logistics in France. In July, Lloyd George made Geddes First Lord of the Admiralty, replacing Edward Carson who had been a staunch supporter of Jellicoe. The independent critical voice of the Winston Churchill-John Fisher combination was stopped by giving Churchill the post of Minister of Munitions, a government post outside the War Cabinet. Geddes' support of Dewar meant that Jellicoe failed in an attempt to dispatch the critical officer to the Indian Ocean, and from July to September the admiral was forced to accept the establishment of a Planning Division in his staff with the mission to look at offensive supplements to the blockade strategy. The ambitious Roger Keyes, the officer who had initiated the deployment of submarines to the Baltic in the autumn of 1914, was appointed Plans Director by his friend Rosslyn Wemyss, the new Deputy First Sea Lord. The use of Keyes was against the best judgement of Jellicoe, who considered the young rear admiral unsuitable for the post. Wemyss had been selected on the advice of the Richmond group. However, Jellicoe limited Wemyss' influence by ordering that Keyes was directly subordinated to Henry Oliver.

In September 1917 the allied navies met to discuss different options to meet the U-boat threat in a more effective way. They could either combine their pools of obsolete larger vessels and use them to block the channels to the U-boat bases, or reinforce the blockade lines in the English Channel and the northern approach to the North Sea between Scotland and Norway with patrolled mine barriers. The first option had been recommended by some of the critics. The second idea was opposed by the then Grand Fleet commander, David Beatty, who argued that the required immense number of mines could be used more effectively in the German Bight and the Kattegat and that a Northern Barrier would limit his fleet's freedom of movement. The main obstacle to the mine field option was, however, that the deep water mine required for the centre part of the northern barrier was not available. It had to be fully developed and thereafter produced in vast numbers. Both options would involve Denmark or Norway to

become effective. Placing block ships outside the North Sea and Flanders U-boat bases would make the Germans use routes through the Danish Straits as an alternative. The gap between the eastern end of a North Sea Barrier and the Norwegian coast would have to be closed and patrolled.

Jellicoe preferred the barrier option as the least risky, and as the U.S. Navy accepted the mine development and production challenge as its major contribution to the anti-U-boat campaign that option was chosen in spite of the long period it would take before it would become effective.

During the same period Lloyd George had attempted to establish war cabinet authority over army operations in France. He wanted to avoid more massive casualties like those suffered during the drawn-out Somme offensive in 1916. Large offensives had to be conducted by allies like the Italians until enough Americans had arrived to shoulder the main burden. However, the army did get cabinet approval for a limited offensive in Flanders aimed at capturing the effective German U-boat bases here. The operation started at the end of July. Haig, however, did not limit the offensive, and in spite of nearly impossible terrain and weather conditions, he aimed at a break-through or the destruction of the German army by attrition. London had lost effective control of the battle that lasted into November. The sequence of events could not avoid hardening Lloyd George's determination to gain control of the army. He started to look for a more flexible replacement of Robertson, and early October 1917 he had contacted the most promising candidate, General Henry Wilson, for advice about how to proceed with the war.

David Beatty and his Grand Fleet did not wait for the unwanted Northern Barrier to intensify his offensive operations against the U-boats. During the late summer of 1917 he combined new anti-U-boat mining in the German Bight of the routes from the U-boat bases to their patrol areas with British submarine presence meant to lure the U-boats to dive into the mines. 'Sweeps' by light cruisers and destroyers were launched to counter the German mine sweeping effort directed at keeping the U-boat routes open . The battle cruiser force deployed in support of the light forces ready to meet any heavy German units used to defend the mine clearing. To make the 'sweeps' effective, Beatty ordered that German vessels should be pursued and destroyed, even if they tried to escape via neutral – Danish – waters. On the morning of 2nd September this led to the worst British violation of Danish neutrality when a destroyer flotilla attacked a couple of U-boats and their escorting trawler-minesweepers on the way home following the route along the Jutland coast. The U-boats dived and escaped, but the escorting trawlers tried to avoid destruction by beaching close to the small coastal settlement of Bjerregaard. As directed by Beatty, the destroyers pursued into Danish waters and destroyed the trawlers by gunfire, a large number of shells exploding among the houses. The British success very soon led to the planning of a similar sweep into Kattegat that had not previously been reached by allied surface operations. The suggestion to 'sweep' Kattegat had originally come from the naval attaché, Consett, who thought that such an operation would reinforce Scandinavian ability to stand up to German pressure. By then Beatty had experienced the awkward problems resulting from the violation of neutral waters and ordered that these should be respected. The Kattegat sweep was initially planned for late September, but postponed due to bad weather. The ships departed for the operation on 23rd October, but only to be recalled to their bases. The next day the sweep was cancelled, probably in order to make the units available for a different type of operation into the same Danish waters.

By mid-October, the general allied situation had deteriorated in different ways. On 17th October two German light cruisers attacked and destroyed most of one of the Scandinavian convoys as well as its escorts off Bergen. Nine neutral merchant ships were lost, only the three allied ships had been out of sight and got away. As already mentioned, the escorts had not been organised to counter surface attacks or considered a proper response if such an attack did take place. The two cruisers got away unobserved, the Royal Navy was humiliated and came under public attack in Norway. This attack and another successful attack on other convoys of the Scandinavian trade on 12th December by large destroyers meant that Beatty was directed to use light forces supported by heavy ships defensively in the protection of the Scandinavian convoys. It had to be expected that the Germans would use battle cruisers in future attacks.

The German war leaders on 6th December 1916 at the Supreme Army Command in Belgium, the photo marking the Bavarian King's visit. Henning von Holtzendorff keeping some distance from the rest. (Wolfram Pyta. Hindenburg. Herrschaft zwischen Hohenzollern und Hitler. 2007)

DENMARK BETWEEN RUSSIAN DECAY AND ITALIAN COLLAPSE

Ever since autumn 1916 the situation in Russia had worsened. In March 1917 the old regime had collapsed and the Tsar abdicated, leading to a hope among the western allies that the new popular leaders would be able to energise its contribution to the war. However, the offensive started by the defence minister, Alexander Kerensky, in July, collapsed quickly and accelerated the disintegration of the armed forces. The process was catalysed by the Bolshevik promises of land and peace, used by Lenin since his return in April. On 9th September the army commander Lavr Kornilov's attempt to contain

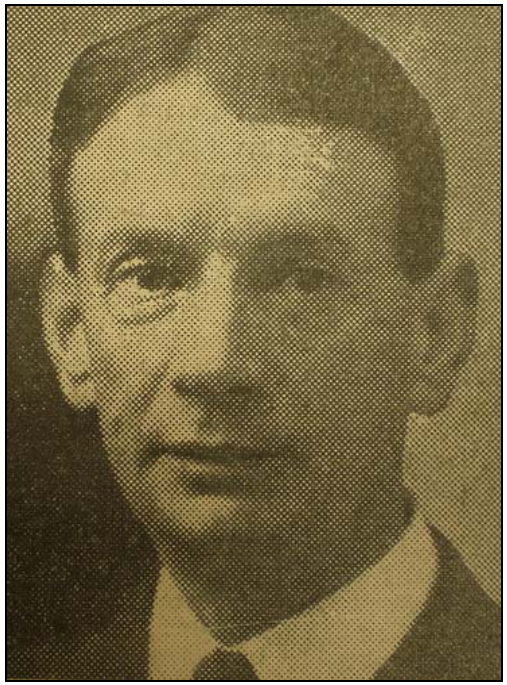
the Bolsheviks collapsed, helped by Kerensky's lack of understanding and support.

1st September the German Army had broken through the Russian front on the Dvina river east of Riga and thereafter advanced up the Riga Gulf coast. The army and navy thereafter agreed to capture the Estonian Islands Øsel, Moon and Dagø that blocked the access to that gulf by a combined operation. The operation started on 12th October. Four days later the main island Øsel was in German hands and the capture of the other islands had begun. On the 17th the Russian Baltic Fleet with its British submarines failed in an attempt to stop the German offensive and withdrew from the area. The critical development led Kerensky to ask the British ambassador, George Buchanan, for a Royal Navy operation into the Baltic Sea to make the heavy Kaiserliche Marine units withdraw to the west. The request was discussed by the British War Cabinet on the 19th. It rejected a full Royal Navy entry through the Danish straits as impossible, as it would require the capture and defence of Funen and still have a too vulnerable line of support to the home bases. Also, the presence of battle squadrons in the Baltic would expose Britain to Kaiserliche Marine counter action in the North Sea.

The decision to reject a massive, deep and long lasting operation was not the final response, however. The British Navy had co-operated closely with the Russian Navy throughout the war, especially in code breaking and other intelligence. The planners of the Naval Staff therefore looked at less ambitious options for assistance that were presented to Jellicoe on the 23rd October. The First Sea Lord agreed that a massive, time limited raid through the Great Belt with cruisers and destroyers from the Grand Fleet and Harwich Force was - just - possible. After having opened the Femern Belt, a force of new submarines would continue to reinforce the British submarine flotilla of the Russian Fleet. Some fast British battleships should deploy in support of the raid, but they should not operate further south than the Kattegat. The main force of the Grand Fleet would cruise in the North Sea ready to counter a German attempt to cut the retreat of the raiding force. The Plans Division Director, Roger Keyes, was to command the task force. The light forces already on the way from Scotland to do the Kattegat 'sweep' were recalled in the evening of the 23rd, probably to be used in the larger operation and in order to maintain surprise. This was the closest to a serious Royal Navy operation in Danish waters during the war, an operation that would almost certainly have triggered a German occupation of Jutland.

However, the preparations for the raid were cancelled by Jellicoe or Oliver on the 30th October. While the planners worked, the events had moved the focus of the decision-makers from the chronic crisis of Russia that was probably beyond help anyway to the unexpected and acutely critical situation in Italy. The Central Powers had started their offensive on the Italian front on the 24th, and a break-through came quickly. On the morning of the 27th October William Robertson made the serious tactical error to argue against sending assistance in a letter to Lloyd George. The Prime Minister immediately used the mistake. He forced the Chief of General Staff to comply, and thereafter maintained control over the replacement of Robertson with Wilson in February 1918. The next day's War Cabinet meetings concentrated entirely on the Italian crisis. Any possible chances of a positive discussion of assistance to Russia was undermined by the British press suggesting that the German troops used in Italy might have been available due to lack of activity on the Eastern Front. We will never know if the War Cabinet would have agreed to the Baltic Sea raid if events in Italy had not intervened.

The planners led by Keyes did not give up immediately. On the 2nd November a plan was ready for a smaller raid in the Sound aimed at sinking the old German battleship and hydroplane tender in Køge Bight with aircraft and small motor torpedo boats. However, this plan became irrelevant on the very same day. Probably inspired by a wish of the Russian naval attaché in London, the Kattegat sweep delayed on 23rd October and cancelled the following day had been rescheduled and carried out by a force of light cruisers and destroyers. The British ships had reached Kattegat in the early hours. A German auxiliary cruiser and some trawlers were sunk. The sweep led to a very nervous reaction in the local German naval headquarters. It had not received the warning from their Copenhagen envoy that he been promised to get from the Danish Navy. The result was that von Holtzendorff decided that the navy would not let 'Fall J' implementation depend on a Danish warning.



Admiral Roger Keyes a few years later.
(http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3005/3017263757_1ac1585845.jpg)

THE FOCUS MOVES TO THE WESTERN FRONT, NORWAY AND FINALLY INTO THE BALTIC SEA

Immediately after the Admiralty planners had had to stop their work on operations against the Danish Straits, they moved on to consider raids on the German U-boat bases in Flanders. When Keyes left for Channel command at the end of 1917, he had the necessary plans and one of the planners with him. The old cruiser HMS VINDICTIVE used as block ship during the Zeebrugge raid on the night 22nd-23rd April 1918

got a Victoria Cross. It was commanded by the former Admiralty planner. His admiral was ennobled as Baron of Zeebrugge instead of as Baron of the Great Belt.

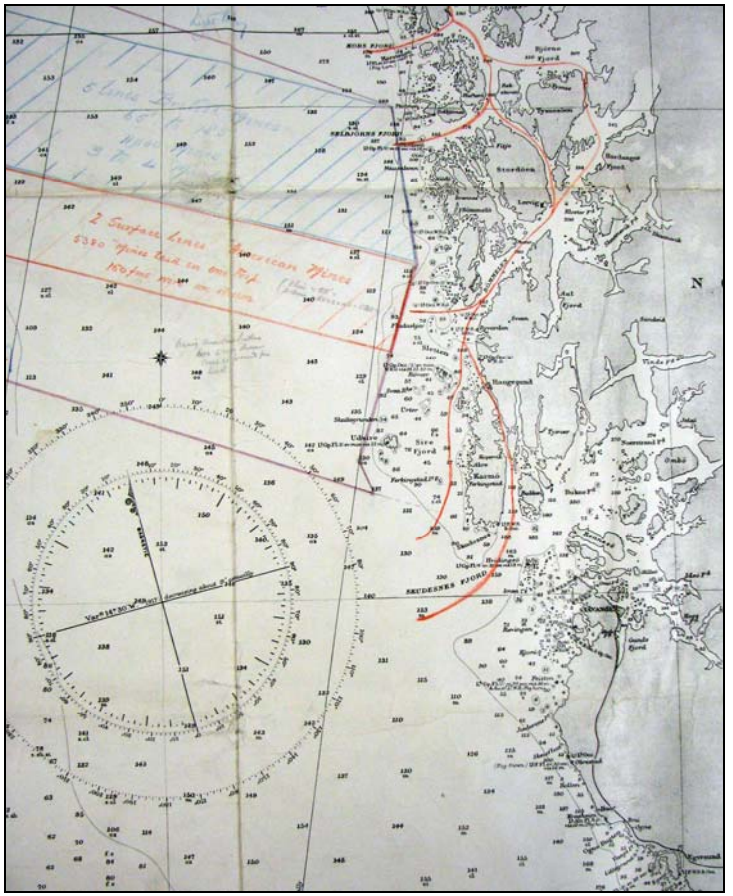
The 1917 summer and early autumn had been used to develop consensus in the British leadership about the policy towards the North European neutrals. The navy had been looking positively at Norway joining the allies. The army resisted, unwilling to find the necessary resources for supporting Norwegian defences. The committee established to consider the issue sided with the army, but the critical events of October-December meant that the navy could launch a campaign to change the attitude of the establishment. Planning for the future the Navy Staff focused on the Stavanger base. It was now seen and presented in support of patrolling and defending the eastern end of the Northern Barrier against both surface and submarine forces. This new framework convinced the American Navy to send four coal fired battleships to join the Grand Fleet in December. During the following months detailed planning and preparations for the establishment of the large base took place, now with British Army support and participation. If necessary, the Stavanger base should be taken without any warning to Norway. Action no longer depended on the enemy actions or the wish of the neutral.

The collapse of Russia meant that the German Army could transfer a large number of troops to the Western Front early enough to be ready for a final and expected decisive offensive here before the American forces were strong enough to influence the outcome. On 21st March the first offensive had an impressive start, breaking deep into British defences. Two weeks earlier the German envoy to Kristiania, Paul von Hintze, provoked a Norwegian government note on 9th March to all the envoys of the belligerent states confirming Norwegian neutrality and the will to defend Norway against all violations. It also announced that it was happy to note that no one had asked for a base so far/up until that time. The brilliant and astute Hintze, a former rear admiral, had hinted that the new beneficial Norwegian trade agreement with the U.S. was linked to the right to establish a base. During the rest of the month the allied envoys debated how to respond to the awkward note. It is logical to link the very well informed Hintze's action to the imminent start of the offensive, even if he is unlikely to have had information about details. A logical naval power response to a Western Front crisis would be a strategic level, indirect countermove in Scandinavia.

The second phase of the German offensive started in Flanders on 9th April. The initial success forced the Royal Navy to consider what to do, if the allies lost control of the north coast of France. Without informing the French, it therefore planned for the blocking or destruction of the harbours on the coast, and it began an analysis of the landing operation against the Estonian Islands to find out to what extent the Germans were able to conduct sea landing operations. In the final instance it had to consider how to continue the war together with the U.S. if the Western Front collapsed completely.

The German naval leadership, the High Seas Fleet Commander and the Chief of the Admiralstab, also started to consider possible future options when it met in the army headquarters in Spa immediately after the start of the offensives, even if the admirals were handicapped by not being included in the planning of the land operations. They agreed that operations against Denmark could thereafter be started on German initiative, not only as a reaction to Royal Navy moves. The implementation of 'Fall J' should be guided purely by the requirements of naval strategy. The Allies had been worried that the High Seas Fleet

should be deployed in the Channel in support of the land offensive, however the totally separated strategies of the army and navy ruled out such a possibility. When the High Seas Fleet came out in late April, it tried to repeat the previous successes against the Scandinavian convoys on a massive scale, using the battle cruisers. Due to bad luck, the powerful ships found nothing but empty sea. If they had met a convoy and its support as well as the light cruiser squadron deployed in support, the results might have been one of the worst disasters for the Royal Navy during the war, something that would have underlined the requirement to use the Stavanger base plan just being completed.



Spring 1918 Admiralty Plans Division Chart showing the eastern end of the Northern Barrage and the Stavanger area. (The National Archives of the United Kingdom)

In later summer 1918 the Northern Barrier was close to completion, after the Americans had solved the technical and production problems related to their deep sea 'antenna'-mine. Pressure on the Norwegians to mine the gap between the eastern end of the barrier and the coast mounted. If necessary the British considered laying the mines themselves, but the War Cabinet decided against issuing a time limit for a Norwegian reaction. The Norwegian government was aware that its mining might provoke a war with Germany. However, in September it became increasingly clear that the end of German resistance was near, so the risk to Norway decreased. On 29th September the Norwegian government warned that mining would start on 7th October. On 2nd November admiral Dawes recommended that the new directive issued to navy units patrolling the remaining channel bypassing the Norwegian field should specify that any submarine attempts to pass should be met by force (elsewhere in Norwegian waters nothing was to be changed). One week later, two days before the end of the war, the foreign minister endorsed the new directive.

Shortly after the end of the war, the Royal Navy entered the Baltic, using Copenhagen as its intermediate base. The object was to stabilise the strategic gains produced by the collapse of Russia as well as by the continued German presence and operations in the newly independent Baltic States and Finland. Their independence should be safeguarded by letting the German troops stay until they could be replaced by national troops of the new states. The fact that the Aaland Islands were given to Finland in spite of the clear wish of the islanders indicates the motive behind the Royal Navy effort. During the intervention Finnish territory close to Petrograd had served as a forward base, and the U.K. remained a sponsor of Finnish defence in the following years. The support of the smaller, littoral states kept the naval power of competing great powers away from the coast. It is most likely that the motive behind the intervention in the Baltic from 1918 onwards was geostrategic rather than idealistic support of self-determination. The very independent actions of the cruiser admirals in local charge of the intervention reinforce that impression.

THE POST-WAR PERIOD

An official history of the Danish armed forces during the neutrality guard period 1914-19 was edited by a commission with the historian Peter Munch in the chair. It was published in 1922. The social-liberal Munch, who had been defence minister from 1913 to 1920, was in his normal conscientious, selective way thus writing and editing the history of his own time in office. As in his later memoirs, he did not include the full truth, only the information that could help his nation forward towards a better future. In his history the strategic link between Denmark and Norway and likely common fate in any future conflict was ignored. It was left out even if it had become evident to both the government and army and navy leadership in 1917. Munch's reason for this omission might have been that the discussion of the link might have revealed the secret and very controversial interaction between the German envoy and the Danish Foreign Office. The service chiefs may have considered the link to Norway a unique case related to the special conditions of the second part of the Great War. Their reading of history and personal experience would have led them to consider the great power strategic interests in the Straits the constant main framework for Danish security and defence. When this official history was written, the Royal Navy operated in the Baltic, a fact that must have appeared to the generals and admirals to underline that nothing had really changed. Even in the 1930's, after the publication of Wegener's book, after the accelerating construction of a new German navy and after the 1935 German-British naval agreement, there was no general Danish recognition of the strategic link between Jutland

and Southern and Western Norway. It was ignored that these parts of the two countries had become increasingly interlinked by rail, road and harbour infrastructure during the interwar period, a development that had been foreseen by the British military and naval attachés in 1918. A better appreciation of the linkage and new strategic situation only came late in the 1930s, and it was then a result of the Norwegian and Danish army general staffs' understanding of the increased importance of air power. Even then, when the air infrastructure was developed by the construction of civilian airports at Aalborg, Kristiansand and Stavanger, the understanding of change was limited to implications for the defence of own state.

Erich Raeder became chief of the Reichmarine in the autumn of 1928 and dominated the service during the rest of the period considered here. He immediately started applying the lessons he and his elite large ship officers' part of the service had drawn from the operations of the Kaiserliche Marine during the war. They guided both ship construction and the education of the elite cadre. He had concluded that the U-boat war would never have become decisive, because it could not break the blockade or gain control of the Atlantic sea communication lines. To accomplish this, the navy needed fast and powerful, long range, surface combatants, and naval strategy had to be based on an understanding of the limitations and requirements of geography. This combination of insights guided Raeder's policy choices through the 1930s, as Hitler's takeover in 1933 and the naval agreement with Britain in 1935 led to a still more beneficial framework for the reconstruction of his service.

Dudley Pound as commodore with Keyes in the Mediterranean in 1921and as First Sea Lord in 1939
(Robin Brodhurst: Churchill's Anchor. The Biography of Admiral of the Fleet Sir Dudley Pound OM, GCB, GCVO. 2000)

TOWARDS AND INTO THE NEW WAR

Immediately after taking over the navy in 1928 he ensured that the war planning archives were used in the 1929 course for the future naval staff officers. Even if the study framework was aimed at being as politically correct as possible (e.g. by assuming respect for Danish neutrality and avoiding the discussion of war against Britain), the use of the documents of the developing 'Fall J' made certain that the students gained insight into the requirements of naval operations in Kattegat and across the Skagerrak. With his emphasis on discretion it is no surprise that Raeder acted with anger and condemnation when Wegener openly argued for operations against Denmark and Norway

in his book published that same year. Raeder maintained the accepted framework of a war against the combination of Poland and France until Hitler recognised in 1937 that Britain would eventually resist Germany's expansion. From 1938 onwards the naval construction programme aimed at creating both a balanced fleet that could challenge the Royal Navy in the North Sea and another force of long range surface combatants that could operate against the Atlantic lines of communication. The latter would depend on routes made available in the Channel or along the Norwegian coast. These long range raiders would be supported by purpose-built logistic support ships (like the ALTMARK).

For the Kriegsmarine, the war with Britain came at least three years early. It forced Raeder to realise that he had to concentrate on building U-boats after all. He spent the first couple of war months considering how his totally unfinished surface fleet could contribute actively to victory over Britain. His Kriegsmarine could not endure the repetition of the frustrating, humiliating and destructive passivity of the previous war. He could not leave the fighting to the army and the young, arrogant air force. In December the Quisling visit made it possible to convince Hitler to accept the risky path to a central role for the navy already identified by Raeder. It was possible to use the Fuehrer's wish to undermine the hitherto dominating control of operation exercised by the army by supporting the role of the joint services headquarters, the OKW.

As the Royal Navy remained far more powerful than the German, it was essential to take the initiative and use surprise and dynamic, brutal action to the maximum degree. If the British were allowed to move first, there was no chance of success. This is why Raeder had to insist on the execution of Weserübung even if the end of the Winter War and the registered reduction of allied preparations had removed the justification and political framework of the operation. The German Air Force had to be used as much as possible to compensate for German naval weakness. This meant that air requirements had to be given a central role in the planning, which meant that the capture of Jutland had to be an essential part of the operation.

When Churchill joined Chamberlain's War Cabinet as First Lord of the Admiralty on 3rd September 1939, he immediately sought inspiration in the aggressive planning that had been conducted by the Planning Division from the autumn of 1917 onwards. He wanted to prepare a force that could enter the Baltic and support submarine operations there, he wanted to conduct raids with motor torpedo boats, and he was willing if necessary to reinforce the effectiveness of the blockade by operations in Norwegian territorial waters. As in late 1916, the Norwegians could be informed that they would be assisted if attacked. However, his more risky ideas like the Baltic entry operation were countered effectively by his First Sea Lord, Dudley Pound, who knew the same planning from his time as Keyes' deputy in 1917 and Director of the Operations Division in 1918. The admirals knew the dynamic, aggressive and untraditional ways of their minister from 1914-15 and managed to harness his energy.

Erich Raeder in 1928.
(http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bundesarchiv_Bild_146-1987-080-30A,_Erich_Raeder.jpg)

NORWAY BETWEEN RAEDER AND CHURCHILL

During the previous war, the British Army had resisted any large-scale commitment to Norway that might draw forces from the decisive front in France. In this new war, the army was not yet prepared for a massive continental commitment and looked with relative favour on operations in Scandinavia, probably because they were likely to be less demanding. Early 1940 it was not the armed services who hesitated, it was the British political leaders. They still hoped to avoid an escalation to the total confrontation of 1917-18 and by showing constraint they hoped to keep the possibility of a negotiated settlement open. Churchill's War Cabinet colleagues did not share his understanding that the new conflict had to be considered a direct continuation of the old one, with the main changes being the capabilities of air power, the character of the enemy regime and the unfortunate fact that the U.S. was not yet an ally. However, even with America neutral, Churchill sought its President's approval of his planned violations of Norwegian neutrality.

The Norwegian and Danish governments misread the situation in a fundamental way. They had exaggerated views of what could be accomplished by a strictly neutral line supplemented by discrete adaptation to British/German interests. In their selective memory this was how they had avoided disaster in the previous war. They had convinced themselves that a geostrategic analysis - and the organisation of defence on the basis of any such analysis - was irrelevant for small neutral states. Their proven ability to balance between the combatants would work together with the self-evident morality of neutrality to keep them safe. Both army general staffs had by the late 1930s combined their reading of Wegener with an understanding of the modern air power, but hoped vainly that they would get time and resources to build a defence that could deter a limited German occupation attempt. Both navies tended to underestimate the air threat against surface ships operating close to shore. This led the Norwegian navy to exaggerate the possibility of

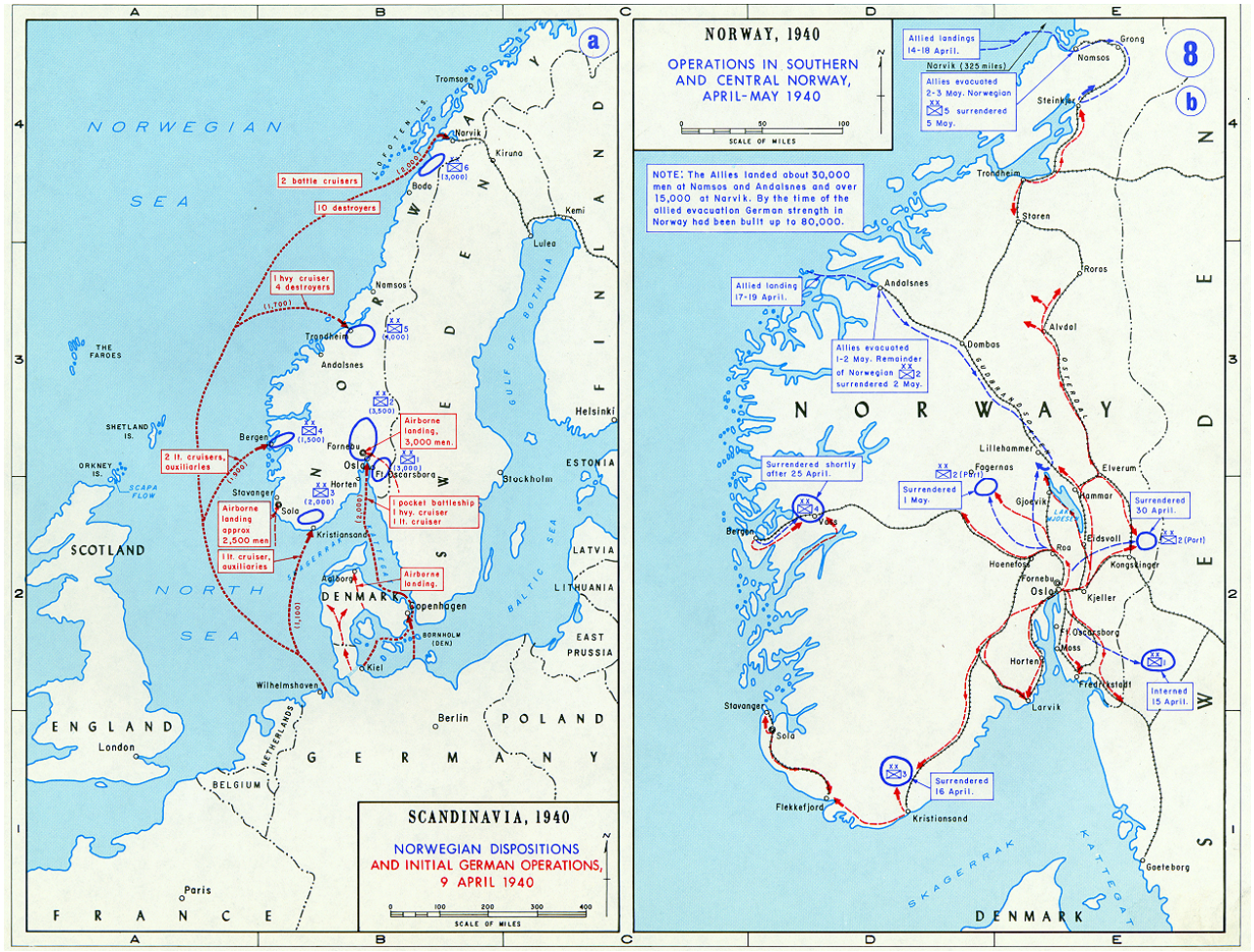
British support and the Danish navy (like Churchill) to consider a British entry attempt a possibility.

When the attack came on the morning of 9th April, the invasion of Jutland was a technically updated 'Fall J', summer 1917 version-operation. However, the very late addition of Zealand with Copenhagen in Weserübung Süd meant that the planners had to seek inspiration in Schlieffen's planning from February 1905 and earlier.

There was not enough time for intelligence collection and major changes. Norway was different as 'Fall N' did not include landings. However, by carrying out the operation as a surprise assault on a very wide front, maximum room was allowed for adaptation to friction like the loss of the BLÜCHER and for local initiative to use the weakness of the defender, something that had been the tactically decisive German military strength since 1915.

Den lange vej mod 9. april.

Historien om de fyrre år før den tyske operation mod Norge og Danmark i 1940.



The operation.
(http://historicalresources.files.wordpress.com/2008/09/norway.jpg)