Operation Paul – the Fleet Air Arm attack on Luleå in 1940

Peter Hore

Had Operation Paul, the Royal Navy's plan for an attack on Luleå, taken place as it was intended in 1940, it might have brought Sweden into the Second World War against the Allies, which could have soured Anglo-Swedish relations for years to come. Today Operation Paul is little known, either to British or to Swedish readers. The British Naval Staff History *Naval Operations of the Campaign in Norway* (1946)[1] sets out the aims of the campaign in April to June 1940 as stopping the export of Swedish iron ore from Narvik to Germany, and denying use of the Norwegian coast to the German navy, yet it makes no mention of Operation Paul, the Royal Navy's plan to attack the port of Luleå in neutral Sweden.

The British official history *The Campaign in Norway* (1952), in discussing the strategic context of the campaign, highlights three concerns: the perceived dependence of the German war machine on Swedish iron ore; British uncertainty whether Russia or Germany (who in 1940 were allies) would drive on from their respective advances in Norway and Finland to Luleå; and doubts about the efficacy of Swedish neutrality and Swedish reactions to the plight of her Scandinavian neighbours which were descri-

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bed as "less than Quixotic". *The Campaign in Norway* does not mention Operation Paul by name but refers in passing to a plan by Churchill to "bottle up Luleå".[2] On this subject Captain S. W. Roskill's official history, *War At Sea* (1960), is silent. The subject is dealt with in passing in Peter C. Smith's book on the Royal Navy's first fighter-divebomber, the Sea Skua.[3]

The only lengthy treatment of Operation Paul is contained within Thomas Munch-Petersen's *The Strategy of the Phoney War* (1981), which is regrettably not well-known in Britain or Sweden. In light of the discovery of further papers about Operation Paul, including some signals (which are rare survivors from wartime years) in the National Archives at Kew, and of a copy of the operation order for 'Paul' in the Admiralty Library in Portsmouth, this paper re-examines and re-interprets Munch-Petersen's findings, takes some of the tactical issues into account, and assesses the place in history of Operation Paul, the Fleet Air Arm planned raid on Luleå.[4]

British war planning in 1940

The interdiction of Swedish iron ore exports to Germany was first addressed by the British War Cabinet on Saturday 16 December 1939. It thereafter dominated British strategic and political policy towards Norway and Sweden. The Joint Planning Sub Committee (JPSC) of the British Chiefs of Staff agreed that sabotage was the method to be used to halt iron ore exports, but that if sabotage failed, then naval action should be considered.[5] The naval action was not specified. Two Saturdays later, on 30 December 1939, the JPSC considered a draft report, which appears not to have survived in the British National Archives at Kew, when "after a long meeting and considerable amendments, it was agreed to approve the draft report [in favour of sabotage] and submit it to the Cheifs of Staff."[6]

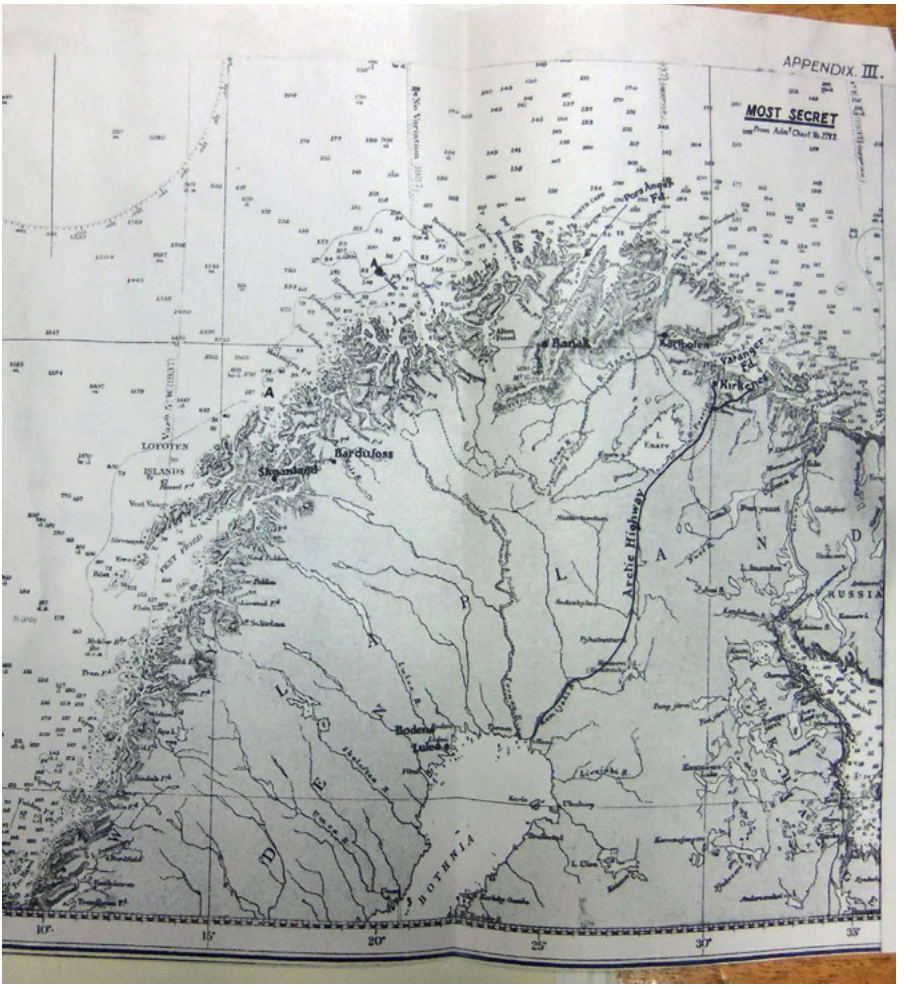
It is important to understand the context in which the JPSC and the Chiefs of Staff met in London in the early months of the 1940. Following the Germany invasion of Poland in September 1939, there was no significant land offensive until the German invasion of Denmark and Norway in April 1940. These early months were known by the British as the Phoney War, or the *drôle de guerre* in French. When the Germans feinted

northwards, Britain and France sent an expeditionary force to help the Norwegians. However, Germany's Blitzkrieg in the west and the Battle for France in May and June 1940 compelled the Allies to withdraw from Norway, and the Norwegian government to seek exile in London. The Norwegian Campaign subsequently ended with the occupation of all of Norway by Germany. The campaign lasted 62 days from 9 April to 10 June 1940, making Norway the western nation which withstood a German invasion for the longest time.

In London, between 30 April and 10 June 1940, for example, there were over one hundred meetings of the JPSC and the Chiefs of Staff where the subjects discussed included, inter alia, the withdrawal of British and French forces from Norway, the possibility of an air- or seaborne attack on the United Kingdom, the roles of Greece and of Eire, British support for Afghanistan against a Soviet invasion, the defence of Aruba and Curacao and their oil supplies, the seizure of Crete and of Iceland, the possibility of a coup in Portugal, the occupation of "certain Atlantic islands" (i.e. the Azores), the construction by the US of aerodromes and naval bases in British colonies, the withdrawal of British battalions from Palestine, offensive operations (i.e. the setting up of the Special Operations Executive), the reinforcement of the defences of the Channel Islands, and British strategy "in the event of a certain eventuality", which was a euphemism for the fall of France, and finally the possibility of defending a bridgehead in Brittany.[7] The British Empire was at war on a world scale.

Churchill's aggressive attitude

Winston Churchill was appointed First Lord of the Admiralty, i.e. political head of the Royal Navy, at the beginning of the Second World War, just as he had been at the start of the First World War. This news was announced to the Fleet by a signal, which simply said, "Winston is back". One of the schemes which the ever-aggressive Churchill advocated was Operation Wilfred, the mining of Norwegian waters to stop iron ore shipments from Narvik, but this was forestalled by the German invasion of Norway. When British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain resigned and Winston Chur-

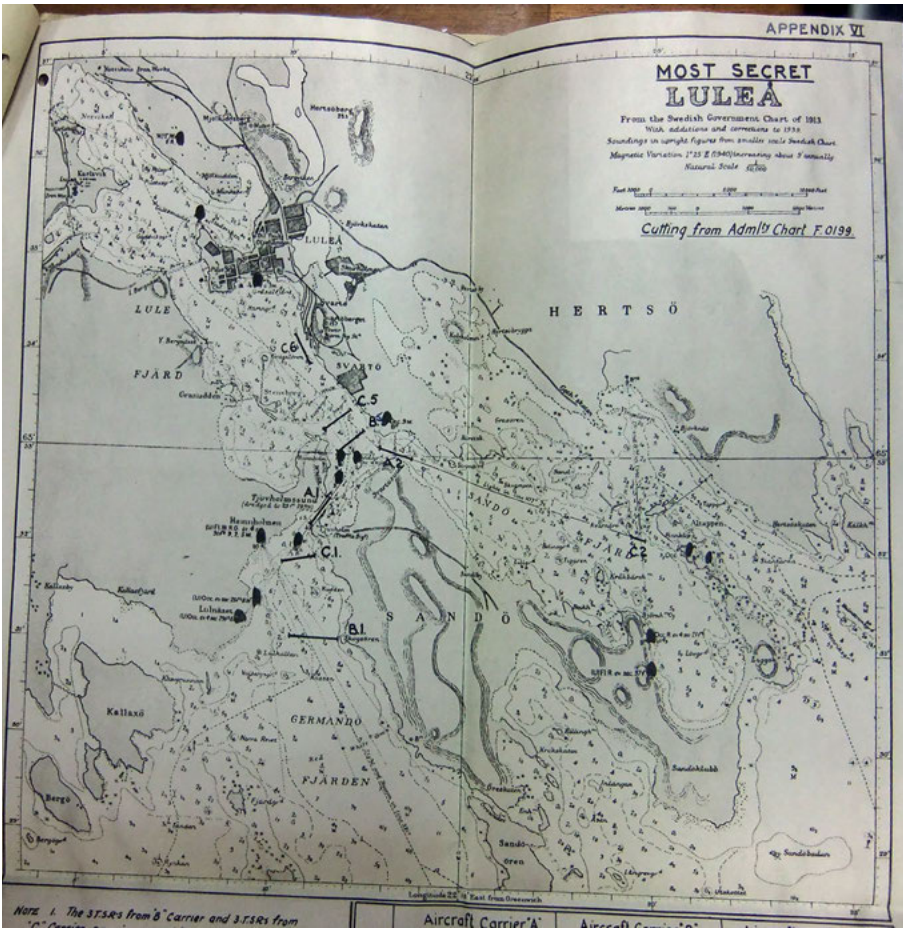


Appendix to the operation order for 'Paul' showing the German-held airfields, the northern Norwegian fjords where the carriers might have launched their aircraft, and the Arctic highway.

chill succeeded him as Prime Minster on 10 May 1940, Churchill began to goad his admirals and generals into action. In one note dated 6 June, written to Major General Hastings Ismay,[8] a note which Hastings tabled for the Chiefs of Staff, Churchill wrote: "We have to get out of our minds that the Channel ports and the country between are enemy territory [...] I look to the Joint Chiefs of Staff to propose me measures for a vigorous, enterprising and ceaseless offensive against the whole German occupied coastline." The whole note was couched in Churchillian prose and called for "a trail of dead Germans".[9]

Operation Paul

The next reference to Swedish iron ore and the first reference to Operation Paul by name came on 12 May 1940, when the Chiefs of Staff gave the JPSC terms of reference to consider "the strategic implications of carrying out Operation Paul in the present conditions": these do not appear to have survived.[10] One reaction by the JPSC, at their meeting two days later, was that the occupation of the aerodrome at Karlboten, some 35 English miles from Kirkenes, "may be essential to this operation". Kirkenes was itself of considerable economic and some military importance, connecting with the Arctic highway between Petsamo and the Gulf of Bothnia, and used for the export of some million tons of iron ore annually from Sydvaranger, ten miles to the south of the port. If held, urged the Norwegians, it could be used to maintain trade between the United Kingdom and Norway, Sweden and Finland.[11] However, also on 14 May, Churchill gave instructions for Operation Paul to be put into effect within three weeks.[12] Four days later Captain C. S. Daniel RN,[13] the Navy's Director of Plans, reported that the detailed plan for Operation Paul had not yet been completed by the naval staff though a number of amendments had been received from the War Office and the Air Ministry. The plan was also given a number, JP (40)164.[14]



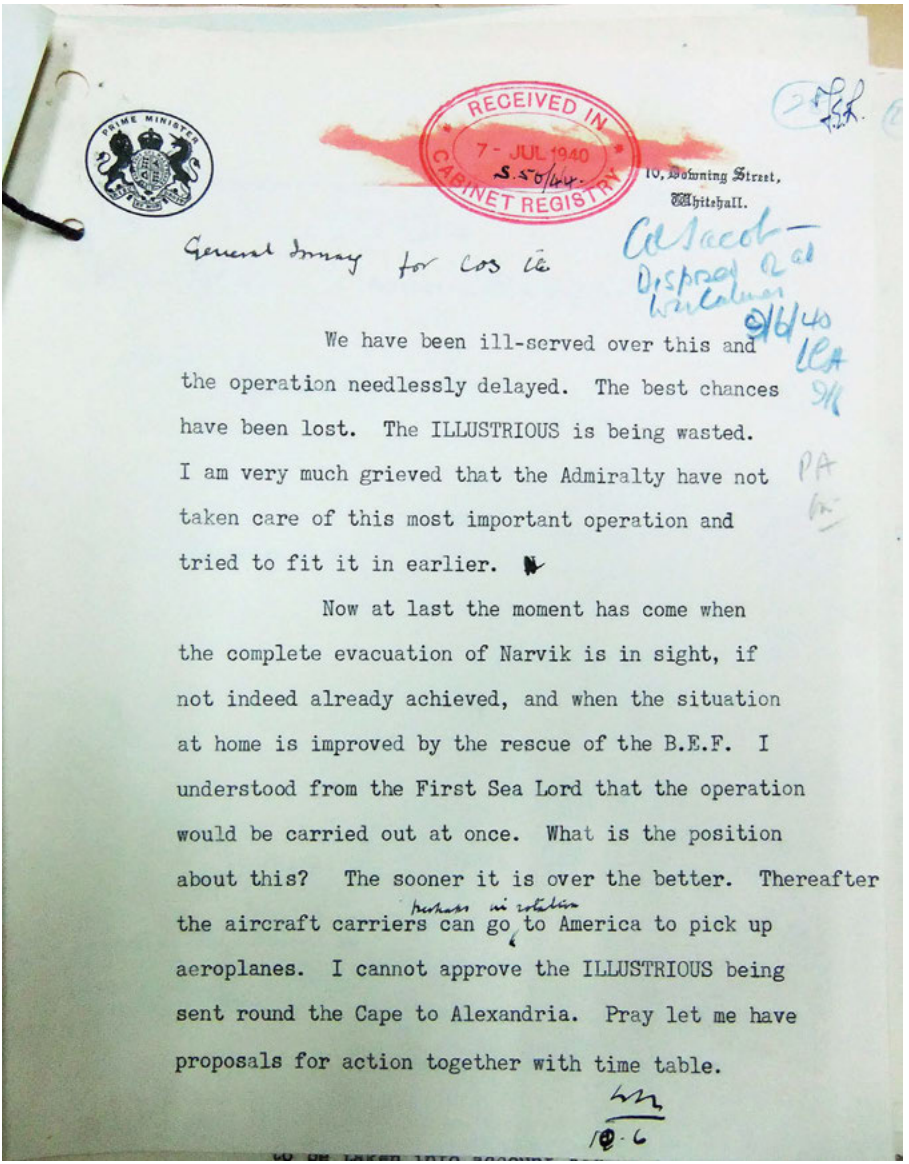
A chart, "From the Swedish government chart of 1913 with additions and corrections to 1939", showing the planned minefields to be laid off Luleå.

Meanwhile on 21 and 22 May 1940, the JPSC and the Chiefs of Staff reviewed the military implications of complete withdrawal from Norway, and the objectives of operations at Narvik. These were, first, the denial of iron ore exports via Norway to Germany, and, second, interference with the export of iron ore from Luleå, in neutral Sweden, to Germany. The first objective would be obtained by the fighting around Narvik, while the second depended "upon the active co-operation of the Swedes, a condition which is unlikely to be fulfilled".[15] The Chiefs of Staff noted, as an argument against withdrawal, that "Operation Paul will almost certainly be impracticable after we withdraw from Narvik […] the only possible aerodrome would be at Karlboten […] and the chances of our being able to operate from there once the Germans were in Narvik would be very remote." Nevertheless, Lord Cork,[16] the commander-in-chief of the Anglo-French expeditionary force, was told of the decision to evacuate Norway "in due course", but first Narvik must be captured and the port and transit faculties destroyed "and at least a portion of the railway [to] thus deny the export of iron ore to Germany."[17]

If the terms of reference for the planners have not survived (see 12 May), the five-page report by the JPSC certainly has, and this was circulated on 23 May 1940.[18] There can be no doubt that the impetus behind Operation Paul was the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, who wrote to Ismay on 24 May:

> Before Narvik is evacuated, it is essential that the largest possible number of mines should be laid in the approaches to Lulea (sic). Let a plan be prepared for laying mines by flights from aircraft-carriers. The evacuation would, I presume be covered not only with Gladiators at Bardufoss, but by Skuas from the carriers. From this point of view it would be regrettable if our only armoured carrier, *Illustrious*, should be absent at Dakar.[19]

Ismay replied the same day with an advance copy of the JPSC's revised plan for the attack on Luleå.[20] It was not until the next day, 24 May 1940, that the plan, still in draft, was agreed by the JPSC and forwarded to the Chiefs of Staff for their approval.[21] While the plan was being considered,


PRIME MINISTER

RECEIVED IN CABINET REGISTRY
7 - JUL 1940
S.50/44

10, Downing Street,
Whitehall.

General Ismay for COS Ctee

We have been ill-served over this and the operation needlessly delayed. The best chances have been lost. The ILLUSTRIOUS is being wasted. I am very much grieved that the Admiralty have not taken care of this most important operation and tried to fit it in earlier.

Now at last the moment has come when the complete evacuation of Narvik is in sight, if not indeed already achieved, and when the situation at home is improved by the rescue of the B.E.F. I understood from the First Sea Lord that the operation would be carried out at once. What is the position about this? The sooner it is over the better. Thereafter the aircraft carriers can go (pushes in rotation) to America to pick up aeroplanes. I cannot approve the ILLUSTRIOUS being sent round the Cape to Alexandria. Pray let me have proposals for action together with time table.

W.S.C.
1.6.

An early example of one of Winston Churchill's 'prayers' in which he urged the Chiefs of Staff, through his representative General Ismay, to expedite the attack on Luleå.

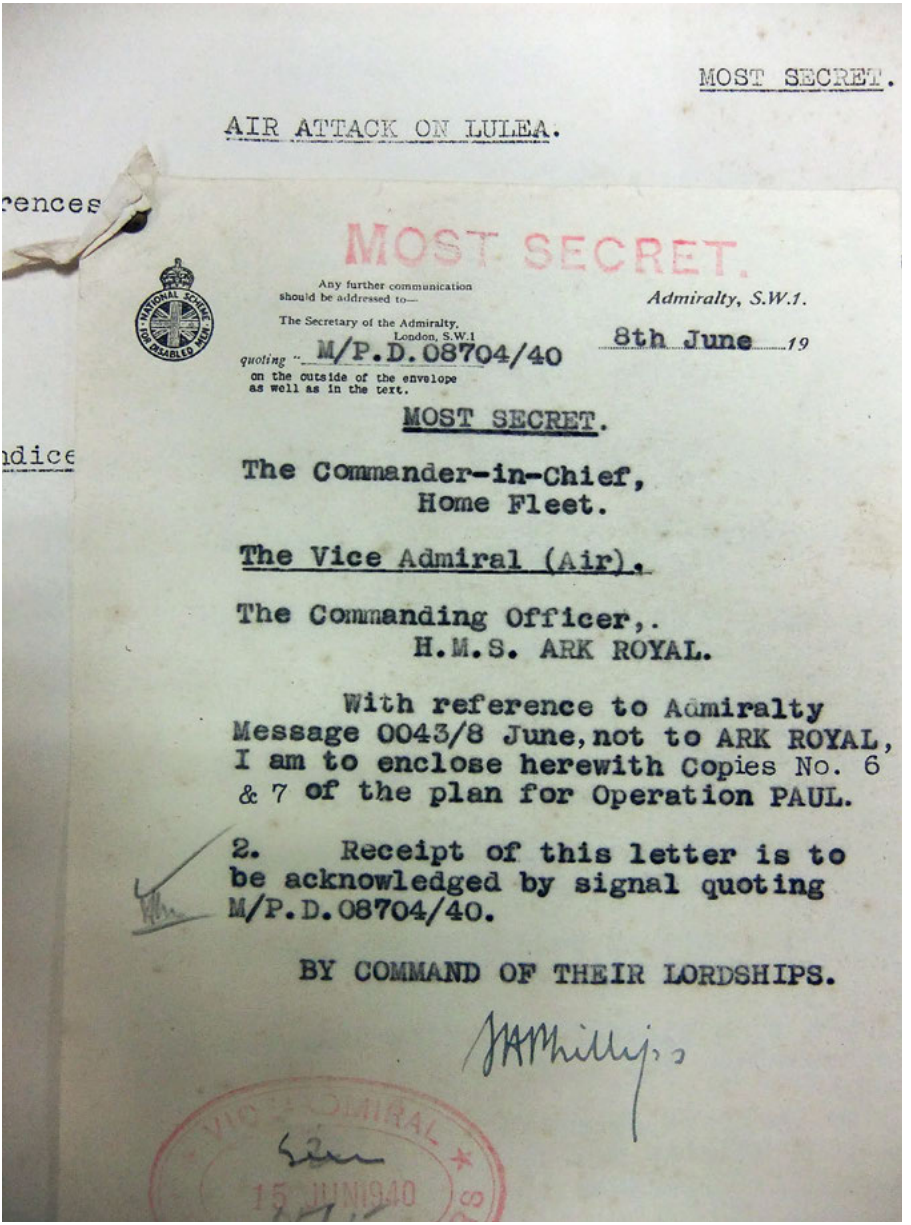
the JPSC rehearsed the military arguments for withdrawing from Norway, put quite simply: "The retention of Narvik will impose a perpetual drain on our naval and air forces."[22] There was, however, concern over large oil stocks in Norway falling into German hands, and orders were given to destroy them.[23] There were other concerns about denying Norwegian-mined metals such as molybdenum, nickel, ferro-chrome, ferro-manganese to the Germans. The Inter Service Project Board was given the task of sabotaging these.[24]

Dunkirk and the Battle for France

There was, however, a hiatus in the execution of Operation Paul – between 27 May and 4 June 1940 over 330 000 British, French and other Allied troops and civilians were evacuated from the beaches of Dunkirk. What Churchill had called "a colossal military disaster" was turned by the Royal Navy and the little ships of Dunkirk into a "miracle of deliverance". Nevertheless, Churchill grew impatient about the Norway situation and on 3 June 1940 demanded of Ismay: "Is there any danger of the so-called Mowinkle (sic) plan preventing the planting of mines in the approaches to Lulea (sic)? This operation called Paul is indispensable. Make sure we do not find ourselves prevented by any neutrality agreement."[25] The reply on 5 June was very disagreeable to Churchill:

> Under the Mowinckel plan, an armistice in Northern Norway would be negotiated under the aegis of the Swedish governme-nt.[26] The precise terms of the armistice are not specified, but it is understood that the proposal is that Allied and enemy forces should both withdraw from Northern Norway, which would then be regarded as neutrality territory. It would appear that we could hardly agree to such a plan, and then shortly after violate the neutrality of the area by carrying out Operation Paul.[27]

The same note stated that a land aerodrome would be necessary for Operation Paul.



MOST SECRET.

AIR ATTACK ON LULEA.

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ndice

MOST SECRET.

Any further communication should be addressed to—
The Secretary of the Admiralty,
London, S.W.1

Admiralty, S.W.1.

8th June 19

quoting " M/P.D.08704/40
on the outside of the envelope as well as in the text.

MOST SECRET.

The Commander-in-Chief,
Home Fleet.

The Vice Admiral (Air).

The Commanding Officer,.
H.M.S. ARK ROYAL.

With reference to Admiralty Message 0043/8 June, not to ARK ROYAL, I am to enclose herewith Copies No. 6 & 7 of the plan for Operation PAUL.

2. Receipt of this letter is to be acknowledged by signal quoting M/P.D.08704/40.

BY COMMAND OF THEIR LORDSHIPS.

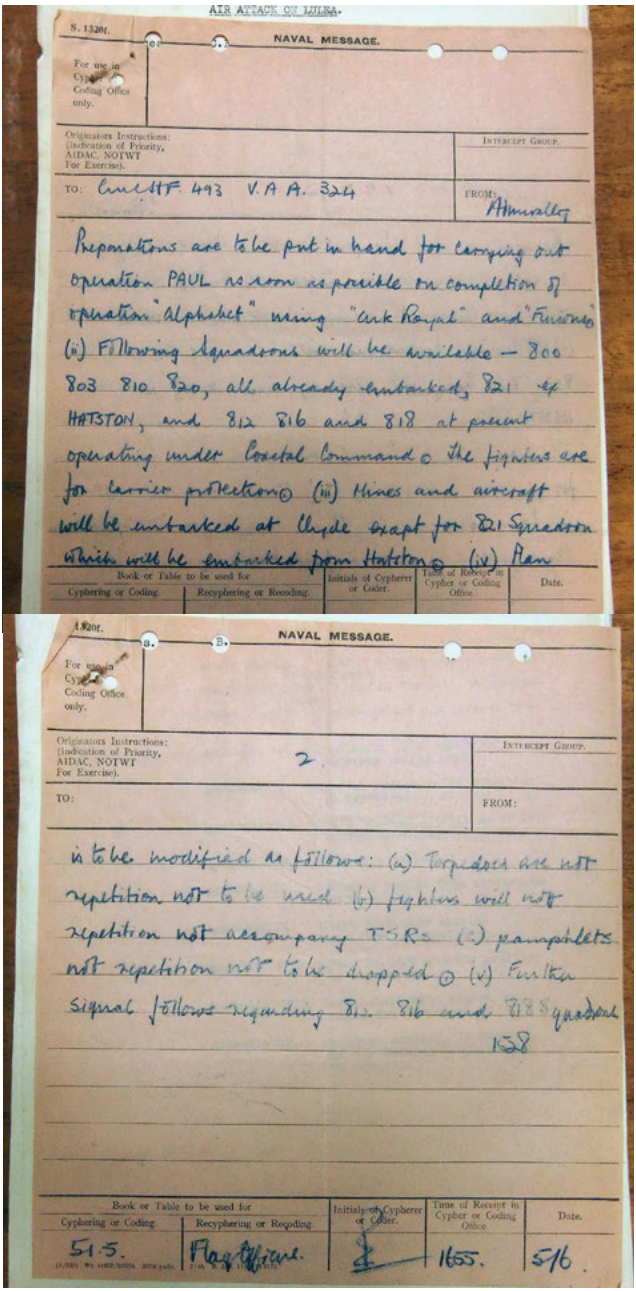
VICE ADMIRAL
15 JUN 1940

The first page of the operation order for 'Paul' (with the second page showing underneath). This written order did not reach HMS Ark Royal until a week later and a précis was sent by signal.

The First Sea Lord, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Dudley Pound, was determined to prove that 'Paul' was possible without land bases. He told the Chiefs of Staff, also on 5 June, that 60 Swordfish torpedo-bombers had been modified by fitting them with long range tanks. These long-range tanks should in theory have given a range of 600 miles, and six aircraft had taken part in a long range endurance trial, flying 520 miles from Hatston in the Orkney Islands to lay mines in the Stavanger area. The surprising result was that lubricating oil, not fuel, was the limiting parameter: two aircraft, with old engines, had run dry, their engines seized, and crash-landed after five and six hours flight respectively, but the remaining four had returned safely to Hatston.[28]

The First Sea Lord concluded that the maximum range at which they should be asked to lay their mines was 250 miles, and given this distance from Luleå, they could be launched and recovered from an aircraft carrier either off the Lofoten Islands or in the latitude of 65°50' North off the coast of Norway, i.e. somewhere near Bodø and Vestfjord. This would be risky once the Germans had established fighters and bombers at Bodø, Skaanland and Bardufoss. He told his fellow members of Chiefs of Staff that operating at extreme range he was prepared for a minimum of losses of 25 percent or 15 aircraft and their crews, and more if the carriers had been damaged or sunk while waiting for their aircraft to return. Clearly, the greatest risk was on the return flight, risking lubricating failure and headwinds in the face of an alerted enemy. As an alternative, he suggested, the Chiefs of Staff should accept the loss of 15 aircraft: if they could do this, then he proposed sending 15 aircraft from a position on the Norwegian coast, and for the aircraft, after attacking Luleå, to intern themselves in Finland.

A third option would be to operate torpedo planes in flights of two and three from Petsamo to maintain patrols against ships at sea in the Gulf of Bothnia. There were two routes for the aircraft. One was to attack Luleå from the north-west, flying over the mountains and following the Gällivare-Luleå railway, the second was to launch in Porsangerfjord or Varangerfjord in northern Norway, "the latter being more suitable as there is more



AIR ATTACK ON TIRPA.

S. 1320t.

NAVAL MESSAGE.

For use in Cypher or Coding Office only.

Originators Instructions: (Indication of Priority, AIDAC, NOTWT For Exercise).

INTERCEPT GROUP.

TO: CinCHF 493 V.A.A. 324

FROM: Admiralty

Preparations are to be put in hand for carrying out operation PAUL as soon as possible on completion of operation "Alphabet" using "Ark Royal" and "Furious". (ii) Following squadrons will be available — 800 803 810 820, all already embarked, 821 ex HATSTON, and 812 816 and 818 at present operating under Coastal Command. The fighters are for carrier protection. (iii) Mines and aircraft will be embarked at Clyde except for 821 Squadron which will be embarked from Hatston. (iv) Plan

Book or Table to be used for		Initials of Cypherer or Coder.	Time of Receipt in Cypher or Coding Office	Date.
Cyphering or Coding.	Recyphering or Recoding.			

S.1320t.

NAVAL MESSAGE.

For use in Cypher or Coding Office only.

Originators Instructions: (Indication of Priority, AIDAC, NOTWT For Exercise).

2.

INTERCEPT GROUP.

TO:

FROM:

is to be modified as follows: (a) Torpedoes are not repetition not to be used (b) fighters will not repetition not accompany T.S.R.s (c) pamphlets not repetition not to be dropped. (v) Further signal follows regarding 812, 816 and 818 squadrons

158

Book or Table to be used for		Initials of Cypherer or Coder.	Time of Receipt in Cypher or Coding Office	Date.
Cyphering or Coding.	Recyphering or Recoding.			
515.	Flag Officer.		1655.	5/6.

Wartime signal logs have not survived, but this signal for the preparatory order for Operation Paul was found in an Admiralty file and lists the eight Fleet Air Arm squadron which were to have taken part in the large scale version of the operation.

searoom", and fly over Finnish territory to attack Luleå from seaward and out of the sun. Precisely which plan to adopt would depend on any border which was agreed under the Mowinckel plan between southern and northern Norway, and the terms of an armistice. First Sea Lord would plan on "a full scale and carry this out if the conditions at the item are sufficiently favourable."[29] At full scale the attack on Luleå would involve three carriers, *Ark Royal*, *Glorious* and *Furious* and 78 Swordfish TSR carrying a mix of bombs, torpedoes and mines. Air cover would be provided by twelve Sea Gladiator[30] fighters and 17 Skua fighter-bombers.[31] Neither the Gladiators nor the Skuas had the necessary range to accompany the Swordfish to their target and would presumably have been used in an air defence role over the carriers.[32]

The Foreign Office view

Amongst the political considerations were "unfavourable reactions in the United States", but there was no mention of the effect upon Swedish public opinion. Among the advantages listed were that the plan offered one of the few chances "at the moment" of striking an offensive blow at Germany and, rather perversely, the possibility of a German invasion of Sweden leading to Swedish resistance "although we do not think this likely." The disadvantages were the political reaction in Finland, Russia, Sweden, and the USA which "would probably be adverse". Torpedo attacks on ships in the Gulf of Bothnia were preferable to attacks on shipping alongside in Luleå and also preferable to mining in the waters off the port. The loss of 15 aircraft was small but certain, the economic results were small, and the political results incalculable but adverse. H-hour would be at 0500 on the chosen day. However, the JPSC was "unable to recommend either of the alternative methods of carrying out Operation Paul".[33]

At 10.30 am on 6 June 1940 the Chiefs of Staff Committee was attended by the First Sea Lord, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Dudley Pound. He told his fellow chiefs that Operation Paul as originally intended was now impracticable, and the Chiefs of Staff instructed the JPSC "in consultation with the FO to examine alterative plans having particular regard to the

effect that the operation might have on the Mowinkle (sic) Plan" and "having particular regard to the effect that the operation might have from the political point of view".[34] Pound did not tell the Chiefs of Staff that he had already given a preparatory order for Operation Paul.[35]

The operation order

On 7 June 1940, the Chiefs of Staff secretariat wrote to the Foreign Office, enclosing an advance copy of a post-dated memorandum by the First Sea Lord. In the memorandum he explained briefly the plan for mine-laying in the Gulf of Bothnia and, as a subsidiary operation, for torpedo attacks on ore-carrying ships. There were two questions which he would raise orally: first, whether the political implications could be accepted; and, second, whether the Gulf of Bothnia should be declared a dangerous area? The intention was that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should come to the meeting with an informed opinion.[36] The noon meeting of the Chiefs of Staff on 8 June 1940 opened with the grim news that the evacuation of Narvik had been completed at 11 am that morning. When the Chiefs of Staff duly considered the report by the JPSC on Operation Paul, and their conclusion that they could not recommend it, the First Sea Lord retorted that they were too late. Their report had been overtaken by events, and the preliminary order had been given to the Commander-in-Chief Home Fleet. Pound was prepared to concede that the War Cabinet, due to meet soon in plenary, should have an opportunity to consider the operation, and meanwhile the Foreign Office should be consulted as to the political repercussions of such an attack.[37] In fact, the preparatory order – if this is what Pound meant by "preliminary order" – had been given on 5 June, to be carried "as soon as possible after the completion of Alphabet".[38] Pound had already given an executive order in the early hours of 8 June, saying that the operation would be carried on a reduced scale using one carrier, *Ark Royal*, and 18 Swordfish of 810 and 820 Naval Air Squadrons. The written operation order was signed into being on 8 June, though there was no way this could reach Vice Admiral (Air) or *Ark Royal* as they were at sea off Norway.

Signal logs of that time have not, generally, been kept, but the preparatory, the executive signal and an amending signal are rare survivals to be found spread between papers in the collection of the Admiralty Library and a file at Kew which belonged to the War Office.[39] Commander-in-Chief Home Fleet was told that the greatest importance was attached to Operation Paul, but in view of the risk to any carriers if they waited off the Norwegian coast, the operation was to be carried out, not at full scale, but using 18 aircraft and a single aircraft carrier. HMS *Ark Royal* would launch these aircraft, armed with mines, off Vestfjord and then retire to the westward "at full speed". The aircraft after laying their mines would land in the sea [i.e. ditch] off the coast of Norway where small craft were to be in attendance. Hedging his bets, First Sea Lord had added to the preliminary signal: "If Vice Admiral (Air) considers that *Ark Royal* can maintain her position for aircraft to land on he should amend these orders." This prompted an entry in the Naval War Diary, directly referencing the Admiralty signal 0043/8, that "Recent experiences in Norway do not support suggestion that carrier should operate close to the coast".[40] Later that day, at 2033/8, the detailed orders for Operation Paul were amended by signal.[41]

The carrier *Glorious* and her escorts, the destroyers *Acasta* and *Ardent* were sunk in an encounter with the German battle-cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* on the evening of 8 June 1940, but this did not affect planning for Operation Paul. At 5 pm on 9 June 1940, the Chiefs of Staff again considered Operation Paul. The JPSC having already advised against it, Captain Daniel reminded the Chiefs that the order had already been given for Operation Paul. Daniel noted that the operation could not have taken place any earlier because Luleå was only then clear of ice and open to navigation. The Chiefs of Staff took note that the First Sea Lord intended to seek authority of the War Cabinet at its meeting later that evening before he gave the final order for carrying out the operation.[42] At 7 pm 9 June 1940, the First Lord of the Admiralty,[43] the First Sea Lord and the Prime Minister met to discuss Operation Paul. The First Sea Lord put his questions (see 7 June) orally, explaining that it was normal practise to give notice before mining an area. Churchill was adamant: there should be no

prior announcement, minelaying should be accompanied by torpedo attacks against iron ore ships, and "if these attacks resulted in sinking neutral ships, we could express our regret in suitable terms." Operation Paul was now fully approved.[44]

The attack on Luleå is imminent

Luleå in neutral Sweden could expect an air raid by aircraft launched from British ships in the Norwegian Sea at any moment. Nevertheless, Churchill was angry, and overnight on 10 June 1940 he wrote:

> We have been ill-served over this and the operation is needlessly delayed. The best chances have been lost. The *Illustrious* is being wasted. I am very much grieved that the Admiralty have not taken care of this most important operation and tried to fit it in earlier.
>
> Now at last moment has come when the complete evacuation of Narvik is in sight, if not indeed already achieved, and when the situation at home is improved by the rescue of the BEF. I understood from the First Sea Lord that the operation would be carried out at once. What is the position about this? The sooner it is over the better. Thereafter the carriers can go perhaps in rotation to America to pick up aeroplanes. I cannot approve the *Illustrious* being sent round the Cape to Alexandria. Pray let me have proposals for action together with time table.[45]

When Churchill awoke the next morning, Luleå had been saved by events elsewhere. On the Western Front, the German army had broken through and the French government was about to declare Paris an open city, and in the Mediterranean the Italian government had declared war on Britain and France. The Germans had captured more iron ore resources in the Lorraine basin than Britain was likely to interdict in the Norwegian leads or in the Gulf of Bothnia. The very shores of Britain were now threatened by invasion. On 16 June, having returned to Scapa Flow, and having received the printed copy of the operation order for Paul, the Commander-in-Chief Home Fleet was working up another plan to attack

Luleå. This time he proposed to launch 18 aircraft from a position 60 miles north-north-east of Tanafjord. The distance to the target meant that all 18 aircraft would be sacrificed either by landing in Sweden or Finland. Finland seemed preferable "in view of the nature of the operation". The commander-in-chief ended his signal: "Request instructions whether operation is to proceed."[46]

There is no further reference to Operation Paul on any file in the National Archives at Kew or in the Admiralty Library. It appears that everyone else was preoccupied by the invasion threat, like Air Commodore J. C. Slessor, who was in a defeatist mood and who proposed in the JPSC on 16 June that a nucleus staff representing essential government departments should be sent to Canada to organise and plan the next stage of the war as "in the course of the next few days we might in the United Kingdom become so closely involved in operations [that] planning would be difficult".[47]

Would Operation Paul have succeeded?

As they were to show a few weeks later, the British were certainly ruthless enough to carry out Operation Paul. Then, on 3 July 1940, the Royal Navy bombarded the French fleet, at its berths in Mers-el-Kebir, North Africa, to stop it from falling into German hands. Over 1 200 Frenchmen died and a battleship was sunk: France and Britain were not at war and until a week or so before had been allies against the Germans. The bombardment of Mers-el-Kebir poisoned Anglo-French naval relations for half a century and more. Operation Paul was certainly practicable as the Doolittle raid was to show on 18 April 1942 when US Army bombers were launched from the USS *Hornet* to attack the Japanese mainland and, with insufficient fuel to return to *Hornet*, flew on to land in China. Operation Paul would also have been effective, as the British were to show during Operation Judgement, when Swordfish torpedo-bombers attacked the Italian fleet at its anchorage in Taranto on the night 11/12 November 1940. At full scale, Operation Paul would have used three carriers and almost four times more aircraft (78) than were used during the Battle of Taranto (21) against a heavily defended Italian harbour, and at reduced scale would have used only a few

less aircraft (18 or 15) against an unalerted and poorly defended Swedish port.

The attack on Taranto is widely held to mark the rise of power of naval aviation over the big guns of battleships. According to Admiral Cunningham, "Taranto should be remembered forever as having shown once and for all that in the Fleet Air Arm the Navy has its most devastating weapon."[48] Taranto is also supposed to have inspired the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. Operation Paul had many of the characteristics of Taranto, Pearl Harbour and the Doolittle Raid. Had the attack on Luleå taken place, there is little doubt that it would have succeeded, at whatever cost to the British, and it would deserve entry into the pantheon of naval warfare. However, for all that Anglo-Swedish naval relations are warm today, perhaps, like Anglo-French relations after Mers-el-Kebir, the Luleå raid would have had a lasting effect upon Anglo-Swedish relations. And in 1940 it might have brought Sweden into the war against the Allies.

Sammanfattning

Operation Paul var en plan som utarbetades i maj-juni 1940 på brittisk sida med syftet att genomföra ett anfall på Luleå i det neutrala Sverige. Målet med planen var att stoppa exporten av svensk järnmalm till Hitlers tyska rike där Luleå fungerade som en viktig utskeppningshamn. Planen är föga känd och har sällan studerats av historiker. Studien bygger på dokument från den brittiska regeringen, och på protokoll från möten med försvarsstabschefer och den gemensamma planeringsstaben samt ett överlevande exemplar av själva operationsplanen, som författaren nyligen hittade i Amiralitetets bibliotek i Portsmouth. I artikeln beskrivs bakgrunden till Operation Paul, hur nära det var att anfallet genomfördes, samt vilken effekt det skulle kunna ha fått. Samtidigt med planeringen av operationen våren 1940, kollapsade den brittiska och franska gemensamma strategin rörande försvaret av Norge och när den rastlöse och ambitiösa Winston Churchill bytte jobb från First Lord of the Admiralty till premiärminister var hans mål att stoppa Hitlers framfart på alla fronter. Han stöddes av First Sea Lord, amiralen Sir Dudley Pound, och båda två visade stort

förtroende för det brittiska marinflygets förmåga att genomföra anfallet och de var beredda att acceptera stora förluster för att slå ut fartyg och anläggningar i Luleås hamn. Anfallet kunde mycket väl ha lett till Sveriges inträde i andra världskriget som krigförande part. Författaren bedömer att Operation Paul, som skulle ha skett med minst 100 flygplan, var en operation i paritet med de brittiska attackerna på franska Mers-el-Kebir och det italienska Taranto 1940, samt liknade de anfall som japanerna genomförde mot Pearl Harbor i december 1941, och amerikanerna mot Tokyo i april 1942.

Notes

[1] Confidential Book 3305(2) 1946, Battle Summary No 17, *Naval Operations of the Campaign of Norway April-June 1940*, (now published under the same name by Frank Cass, London, 2000), pp. 2-3.
[2] T K Derry, *History of the Second World War: The Campaign in Norway* (HMSO, London, 1952), p. 173.
[3] Peter C Smith, *Skua! The Royal Navy's Dive-bomber* (Pen & Sword, Barnsley, Yorks, 2006), pp. 138-140 and 190.
[4] Thomas Munch-Petersen, *The Strategy of Phoney War: Britain, Sweden and the Iron Ore Question 1939-1940* (Militärhistoriska Förlaget, Stockholm, 1981), pp. 211-239.
[5] The National Archives, Kew: CAB 84/1 ff 37 and 38: Minutes and memoranda of the War Cabinet and Cabinet: Joint Planning Committee, later Joint Planning Staff, and Sub-committees. All subsequent references to 'CAB' are papers at Kew.
[6] CAB 106/1159 Summary of War Cabinet conclusions on Scandinavia and Finland.
[7] CAB 84/14 Memoranda nos 180-233; and CAB 84/14 f 160.
[8] Later General Lord Ismay KG, GCB, CH, DSO, PC (1887-1965), known as 'Pug', Churchill's personal chief staff officer and closest military adviser.
[9] CAB 84/14 ff 159-160.
[10] CAB 84/13 f 125 Memoranda nos 131-179.
[11] The National Archives, Kew WO 106/1873, Correspondence and papers of the Directorate of Military Operations and Military Intelligence, Operation Paul. All subsequent references to 'WO' are papers at Kew.
[12] CAB 84/13 f 134.

[13] Later Admiral Sir Charles Saumarez Daniel KCB CBE DSO.
[14] CAB 84/2 f 113 Minutes and memoranda of the War Cabinet and Cabinet: Joint Planning Committee, later Joint Planning Staff, and Sub-committees.
[15] CAB 84/14 f 24.
[16] Admiral of the Fleet William Henry Dudley Boyle, 12th Earl of Cork, 12th Earl of Orrery GCB GCVO (1873-1967), known as 'Ginger' Boyle.
[17] CAB 84/14 f 26.
[18] CAB 84/13 ff 134-138.
[19] CAB 21/1471 Cabinet Office file, *Operation Paul: minelaying in the Gulf of Bothnia*. WSC to General Ismay 24 May 1940.
[20] CAB 84/13 ff 134-138. See also 21/1471.
[21] CAB 84/2 f 117.
[22] CAB 80/12 f 43 War Cabinet and Cabinet: Cheifs of Staff Committee: Memoranda.
[23] CAB 80/12 f 50.
[24] CAB 84/13 ff 85-86 and ff 42-144. The ISPB was an early incarnation of the Special Operations Executive.
[25] CAB 21/1471 WSC to General Ismay 3 June 1940.
[26] As Swedish readers will know, the short-lived Mowinckel plan, named after its initiator, the Norwegian shipping magnate and former Prime Minister, Johan Ludwig Mowinckel, was to create a demarcation line between the Germans and Norwegian in Northern Norway, part of the plan was for Swedish troops to occupy Narvik. Churchill hated the idea, Hitler ignored it.
[27] CAB 21/1471 Comment on Operation Paul COS(40)386 and COS(40)375 unknown initials dated 5 June 1940.
[28] The Swordfish was a single-engine biplane designated a Torpedo Spotter Reconnaissance or TSR: designed in the late 1930s it became the maid-of-all-work of the Fleet Air Arm and hence its nickname 'Stringbag'. The orders for Operation Paul gave it a range of 720 miles with 167 gallons of fuel in its tanks plus an internal tank holding 65 gallons in the rear cockpit. This gave in theory an endurance of 7 hours 40 minutes at, a very precise, 92 ½ knots.
[29] CAB 80/12 minutes of COS(40)498 on 5 June 1940.
[30] The Sea Gladiator was a British-built biplane fighter and the last biplane fighter to be built for the RAF and FAA. It was exported to a number of countries in the 1930s and Gladiators of the Royal Swedish Air Force were thought to provide the defences of Luleå.

[31] The Skua was the Royal Navy's first single-wing, two-seater aircraft which attempted to combine the roles of dive-bomber and a fighter. It was ineffective as a fighter and even as a dive-bomber, despite being the first aircraft to sink a warship, it was soon withdrawn from service.
[32] Admiralty Library: NHB collection M/PD 08704/40 of 8 June 1940 to CinC Home Fleet, Vice Admiral (Air) and CO HMS *Ark Royal* 'Most Secret'.
[33] CAB 80-/12 ff176-178 report by the JPSC COS(40)458 5 June 1940.
[34] CAB 84/2 f 132; and WO 106/1873 minutes of the JPSC. See also COS(40)222.
[35] Admiralty Library: NHB collection Admiralty signal 1655/5 June 1940.
[36] CAB 21/1471 L C Hollis to L Collier 7 June 1904 covering a memorandum by the First Sea Lord dated 8 June 1940.
[37] CAB 79/4 f 298.
[38] Alphabet was the codename for the evacuation of Narvik.
[39] WO 106/1873 contains another, rare survival, Admiralty signal 0043/8 June 1940.
[40] Admiralty Library: Naval War Diary 21 May to 18 September 1940, p2, 6 June 1940 *Operational Paul* [the page is dated 6 June but refers to a signal dated 0043/8 June and so seems to have been misplaced or misdated in the war diary]
[41] Admiralty Library: NHB collection Admiralty signal 2033/8 June 1940.
[42] CAB 79/4 f 301 174th meeting 9 June 1940.
[43] Churchill had been succeeded by A. V. Alexander (1885-1965).
[44] CAB 65/13/32 War Cabinet; and Cabinet: Minutes: Confidential Annex to WM (40) 154.
[45] CAB 21/1471 WSC to Ismay 10 June 1940. Churchill was wrong on two counts: Narvik had already been evacuated, and HMS *Illustrious* was not yet operational. HMS *Illustrious* was only commissioned on 26 May and had not been worked-up. It was intended to do this off Dakar, but this was changed when France fell, and she went to the West Indies, before deploying to the Eastern Mediterranean via the Cape of Good Hope.
[46] WO 106/1873 CinC Home Fleet signal 1253/16 June 1940. This signal is another rare survival.
[47] CAB 84/15/14 Invasion of the United Kingdom: directive to Commander-in-Chief, Home Forces.
[48] Michael Simpson, *A Life of Admiral of the Fleet Andrew Cunningham. A Twentieth-Century Naval Leader* (Routledge, London, 2004), p. 74.