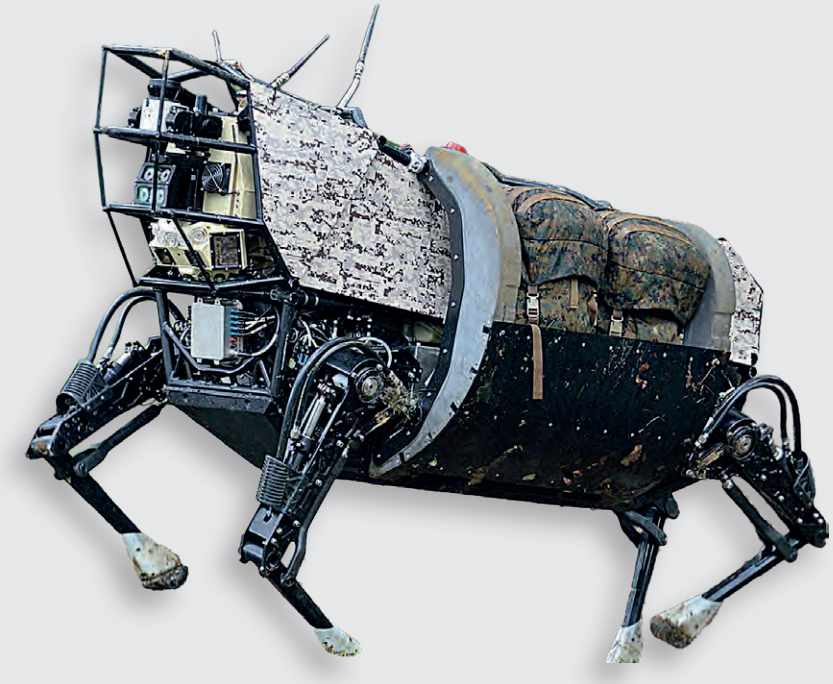
NUOVA ANTOLOGIA MILITARE
RIVISTA INTERDISCIPLINARE DELLA SOCIETÀ ITALIANA DI STORIA MILITARE

N. 3
2022

Fascicolo 12. Novembre 2022

Storia Militare Contemporanea

a cura di
PIERO CIMBOLLI SPAGNESI



Società Italiana di Storia Militare

Nuova Antologia Militare
Rivista interdisciplinare della Società Italiana di Storia Militare
Periodico telematico open-access annuale (www.nam-sism.org)
Registrazione del Tribunale Ordinario di Roma n. 06 del 30 Gennaio 2020

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Gruppo Editoriale Tab Srl -Viale Manzoni 24/c - 00185 Roma
www.tabedizioni.it

ISSN: 2704-9795

ISBN Fascicolo 978-88-9295-585-1

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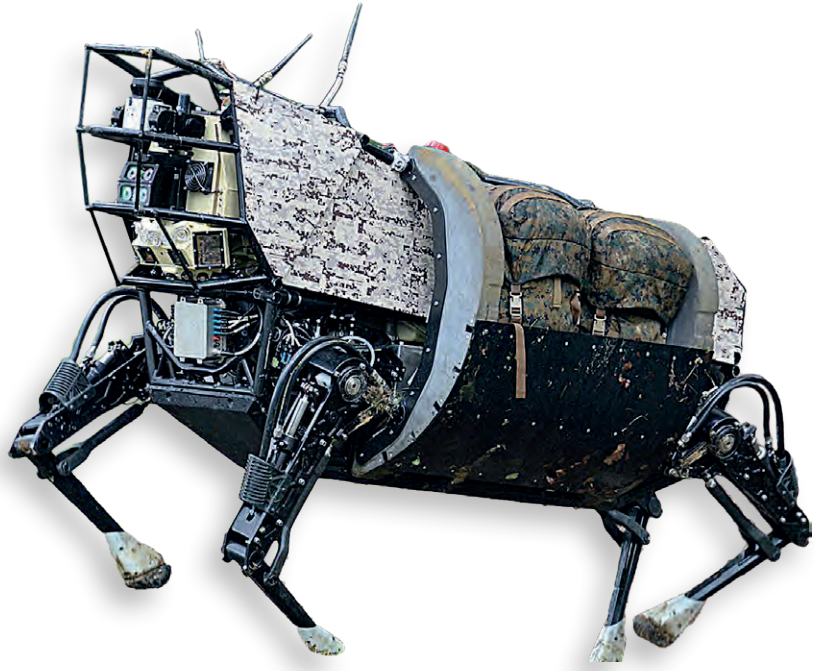

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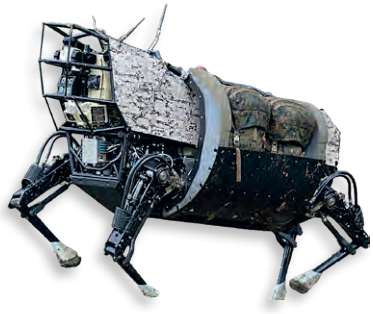

Legged Squad Support System robot prototype, 2021, DARPA image.
Tactical Technology Office, Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency,
U.S. Department of Defense, 2012 (wikipedia commons)

German Plans for an Invasion of Sweden in 1943: A Serious Endeavour?

By Paolo Pozzato and Martin Samuels

Abstract. Controversy continues to surround German plans to invade Sweden in 1943, whether these were a training exercise or a serious preparation. This article examines the operational approach proposed for the invasion, considers repeated British plans for an invasion of Norway as well as the deception operations designed to give the appearance of an invasion, and explores the perception of OKW. Finally, it assesses the opposing forces. It concludes Hitler's obsession with Norway, matched by Churchill's, led to the retention of significant occupation forces, but these would have been insufficient to deliver the planned invasion.

Keywords: 25th Panzer Division, Operation Jupiter, Adolf von Schell, Rudolph Bamler, Operation Solo

On 26 June 1946, *Krasnaya Zvezda* (Red Star), the official journal of the Soviet Ministry of Defence, published an article revealing for the first time that the German Army had in 1943 developed plans for an invasion of neutral Sweden. These claims carried considerable authority since their author was Generalleutnant Rudolph Bamler – a prisoner of the Soviet Union in 1946, between May 1942 and April 1944 he had been chief of staff to Generaloberst Nikolaus von Falkenhorst, commander of the German occupation forces in Norway (Armee Oberkommando Norwegen) and so had played a central role in the development of the plans he described. The importance of these revelations is shown by the fact that much of Bamler's article appeared in Swedish translation just a week after its initial Soviet publication.[1] Furthermore, in December of the same year, its military sections were issued in English translation, in the official journal of the United States Army: *Military Review*.[2] In due

1 Ernst Jungstedt, "'Polarräven': En Tysk Anfallsplan Mot Sverige Under Andra Världskriget', in *Krigshistoriska Studier: Tillägnade Olof Ribbing*, ed. by Krigshistorika Avdelning (Stockholm: Lundquist, 1950), pp. 97-112 (p. 97).

2 [Rudolph Bamler], 'German Plans for the Invasion of Sweden: Operation "Polar Fox"', *Military Review*, 26 (December 1946), pp. 77-82.

NAM, Anno 3 – n. 12
DOI: 10.36158/978889295585111
Novembre 2022

course, a German translation was also produced.[3]

From the start, however, there were doubts about Bamler's account. The timing of its publication, combined with the fact it had been printed in an official Soviet journal and that the Swedish translation had then appeared in a communist periodical, gave pause for thought. It might be felt too convenient that these claims had emerged at a time when the challenges of fully eliminating Naziism and establishing a future European order were of central political concern, and when the Soviet Union had a strong interest in how these matters were concluded in Scandinavia. In addition, aspects of the plan as presented by Bamler raised questions. That an invasion plan had been developed was, of itself, no surprise. After all, one of the core functions of the general staff of any nation, especially one at war, is to prepare operational plans for the most diverse of scenarios, and this was a task at which the German General Staff had long excelled. This was especially the case in the context of the middle phases of the Second World War, when the continuous shifting of the political scenarios that Hitler conceived had required a constant process of operational reorientation by the military planners. Rather, doubts centred on the question of whether the proposed operation set out in Bamler's article would have been feasible, both from a purely military perspective and in terms of the wider political context. These misgivings were increased when it was noted that the codename Bamler gave for the supposed invasion plan, Polarfuchs (Polar Fox), had already been used in July 1941.[4]

Bamler's article certainly generated considerable debate in the period immediately after it appeared. In part, this was because it seemed to contradict Falkenhorst, who during his interrogation in September 1945 had stated explicitly, 'I am at any time prepared to take my oath that, with regard to Sweden, there was never an intention to attack.'[5] As such, the article prompted a series of responses exploring various aspects of the supposed operation, though these came to contrasting conclusions regarding its veracity and feasibility.[6] Even the subsequent emergence

3 Walther Hubatsch, *Unruhe des Nordens* (Göttingen: Musterschmidt, 1956), pp. 206-225.

4 Earl F. Ziemke, *The German Northern Theater of Operations 1940-1945*, Department of the Army Pamphlet 20-271 (Washington: 1959), pp. 157-167, reprinted (with different pagination) as *Hitler's Forgotten Armies: Combat in Norway and Finland*, ed. by Bob Carruthers (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2013).

5 Jungstedt, 'Polarräven', p. 106.

6 See Hubatsch, *Unruhe*, pp. 211-212 and Jungstedt, ‚Polarräven', pp. 105-112.

of original German documents setting out an actual invasion plan (Operative Studie Schweden (Operation Study: Sweden))[7] was not sufficient to bring the debate to a conclusion. Indeed, seventy-five years later, still no consensus has been achieved in the literature. On the one hand, there are those who agree with Walther Hubatsch that the whole thing was nothing more than a theoretical exercise, valid at best as a training tool.[8] Conversely, others, such as Jan Linder, believe Hitler was indeed intending to put the plan into execution and was only deterred following the failure of Operation Citadel at the battle of Kursk in July 1942.[9]

Swedish Premier Per Albin Hansson (1885-1946), Encyclopedia *Sveriges styresmän* 1937, wikipedia commons

Despite the political and military importance of a potential German invasion of Sweden, underlined by the continuing debate on the issue in the Swedish literature,[10] it is noticeable that the topic (after initial interest in the 1950s)[11] has been almost entirely absent from works on Scandinavia in the Second World War by authors writing in German and English.[12] By contrast, there has been extensive exploration of the various

7 United States National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), T312/1061: Item 62905 – AOK 20, Ia, 'Operative Studie Schweden' (31 March 1943).

8 Hubatsch, *Unruhe*, p. 214.

9 Jan Linder, *Krigsfall Sverige! Tysklands anfallsplan not Sverige 1943* (Stockholm: Bokens, 2006), p. 93.

10 See especially Kent Zetterberg, 'Svensk säkerhetspolitik 1943: En balansakt på slak lina mellan de krigförande', in *Nya Fronter? 1943 – Spändväntan*, ed. by Bo Hugemark (Stockholm: Probus, 2002), pp. 13-117, and Linder, *Krigsfall Sverige!*

11 See Ziemke, *Northern Theater*, pp. 252-264, and Hubatsch, *Unruhe*, 206-225.

12 The only specific reference to the invasion plans in a recent work in English appears to be a brief discussion in John Gilmour, *Sweden, the Swastika and Stalin: The Swedish Experi-*

British plans (including deception operations) for an invasion of Norway, though with little or no reference to the German invasion of Sweden this might have precipitated.[13] This article therefore not only seeks to bring this largely forgotten (outside Sweden) aspect of the Second World War to greater attention in the English-speaking world, but also attempts to bring together consideration of all three perspectives (Swedish, German, and British), in order to provide a fuller picture of the context within which Bamler and his planners were operating and hence a deeper understanding of the intent that lay behind their work.

Operation Study: Sweden

At the end of December 1942, Bamler received a telegram instructing him to attend a conference at the headquarters of the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW) at Rastenburg in East Prussia. This was a dark period for German military fortunes. During the previous few weeks, the Western Allies had landed forces in French North Africa (Operation Torch), the British Eighth Army had defeated Erwin Rommel's forces at El Alamein (Operation Supercharge), and Soviet forces had encircled the German Sixth Army at Stalingrad (Operation Uranus). There was surely a possibility that the ring might be completed by an offensive in Scandinavia.

On arrival at OKW, Balmer received brief oral instructions from Generaloberst Alfred Jodl, chief of the operations staff, to draw up plans for an offensive against Sweden, to be presented within eight weeks.[14] It seems little came of this conversation, since on 5 February OKW concluded the forces in Norway would need to receive instructions to prepare for the potential entry of Sweden into the war, and it was only on 10 February that Bamler ordered Generalleutnant Adolf von Schell, commander of 25th Panzer Division, to develop such a plan. The operation was to be based on a scenario where Allied forces had landed in northern Norway and then crossed the Swedish border, advancing towards Kiruna and its vital iron ore deposits. In addition, it was assumed Allied airborne forces would have

ence in the Second World War (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 2011), pp. 229-230.

13 For example, in Christopher Mann, *British Policy and Strategy towards Norway, 1941-45* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

14 Jungstedt, 'Polarräven', p. 98, and Hubatsch, *Unruhe*, p. 206.

seized airfields in southern Sweden. The German operations were to be 'conceived with the greatest daring', on the basis the Swedish armed forces would not offer unified resistance. Schell could call on his own division, two infantry divisions, and strong air support.[15]

Schell was a highly experienced officer and a sound choice for this task. Having served during the First World War as an infantry company commander and then staff officer, mainly on the Eastern Front, he was one of the select cadre of officers retained by the tiny Reichswehr. Following general staff training, Hauptmann Schell was in 1930 sent to attend the United States Army's Infantry School at Fort Benning. There he became friends with its assistant commandant, Lieutenant-Colonel George C. Marshall. Marshall was at that time seeking to generate publications that would modernise his army's approach and he seized upon his German student's extensive combat experience, encouraging Schell to give lectures to his fellow students and to the faculty. These were then published as a collected volume.[16] After postings as a lecturer in tactics and to OKW, in 1938 Schell was promoted to the rank of Oberst and appointed Inspector of Army Motorisation, a role he held until September 1942, having in the meantime been progressively promoted to Generalleutnant. In January 1943, he was posted to Norway, as commander of the newly forming 25th Panzer Division. Jörg Muth has suggested this appointment was a demotion, resulting from bitter clashes with Heinz Guderian, as his rank would have merited command of a corps, but the fact Schell was almost immediately given the task of developing a corps-level operation plan against Sweden may indicate he had been specifically chosen by OKW for this challenging task. After the war, his time at Fort Benning paid an unexpected dividend, as there is some evidence Marshall intervened to prevent Schell being handed to the Soviet Union for trial as a war criminal.[17]

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15 Ziemke, *Northern Theater*, pp. 253-254. [Look in NARA records for originals]

16 Captain Adolf von Schell, *Battle Leadership* (Fort Benning, GA: Benning Herald, 1933). The book remains in print through recent edition.

17 Jörg Muth, *Command Culture: Officer Education in the U.P. Army and the German Armed Forces, 1901-1940, and the Consequences for World War II* (Denton, TX: University of North Texas, 2011), pp. 142-145. See also Zetterberg, 'Svensk säkerhetspolitik 1943', p. 57. It should be remembered, after all, that the invasion of Norway was one of the plans most seriously considered by Brig. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower at the time head of the War Plans Division, which in March 1942 was reorganized to become the Operations Division (OPD): Lieut. Col. Albert N. Garland, Howard McGraw Smyth, assisted by Martin

Schell duly delivered his plan, 'Operation Study: Sweden', on 31 March.[18] Given Bamler's guidance that the resistance of the Swedish armed forces was to be largely discounted, it was geographic considerations that most concerned him. An offensive into Sweden, especially from Norway, would almost inevitably be channelled along the main communications routes. As such, the broad-front attacks coupled with outflanking manoeuvres that had marked the sensational German victories on the Eastern Front in the summer of 1941 would not be possible. Under the very different conditions his troops would face in Sweden, Schell concluded it would be necessary to break through the enemy defences, rather than outflank them, as would normally have been the favoured German technique. This would require relatively small combat groups, supported by massive use of armoured vehicles (not only tanks, but also self-propelled guns and armoured artillery) and combat engineers. These groups would have to force their way through one defensive barrier after another,[19] a process that would require prolonged action, to be continued day and night without interruption. Even in the best of circumstances, this would inevitably result in significant losses among the units employed, especially of the armoured vehicles operating at the forefront of the attacks. It would therefore be necessary to deploy a series of groups of this type in depth, each successively able to take over from the group ahead, once those troops had exhausted their operational capacity, in order to maintain the momentum of the action.

Based on the nature of these operations, Schell indicated the need to train the attacking forces in movements and night attacks along the roads, including ensuring each group knew how to independently undertake mine clearance operations. Maintaining the supply of the entire complex of armoured formations would be critical. Schell was clear this would require efforts to ensure the availability of fast boats to cross the numerous lakes, while Norwegian civilians and Russian prisoners would be required as labour to immediately restore roads damaged by the retreating Swedish defenders.

In his 1946 article, Balmer claimed AOK Norway intended to place its

Blumenson, *Sicily and The Surrender of Italy*, (Center of Military History United States Army, Washington D.C. 1993) p. 3

18 T312/1061: Item 62905.

19 Operative Studie "Schweden", p. 3. For a detailed map, showing the attack routes set out in Schell's plan, see Ziemke, *Northern Theater*, p. 259 (Map 20).

Ltn. Gen. Andrew McNaughton (1887-1966), commander Canadian Forces in Britain (Wikipedia)

main effort (designated Operation I) from the area east of Trondheim, through Östersund towards Sundsvall and the Gulf of Bothnia. This would require six divisions, including two armoured and one motorised. The intent was clear: the Swedish defensive deployment needed to be disrupted and the industrial north of the country, which held the strategic mines at Kiruna, had to be isolated from any intervention by the main mass of the Swedish army. Once Schell's spearheads had reached the Gulf of Bothnia, there was the potential to link with possible landings of German reinforcements from Finland. A series of subsidiary actions would be required to support this effort, especially if it was a question of dealing with forces deployed by both the Western Allies and the Soviet Union in concert. In this situation, a concentric attack from Finland (Haparanda) and Norway (Narvik), by a division and a reinforced infantry regiment respectively, would have sought to further isolate Kiruna. A division would be landed at Soderhamn to prevent any influx of enemy troops along the coast and airborne forces would be used to seize Kiruna itself and Östersund, to prevent the establishment of further defensive positions by the Swedish forces as they retreated. Once these objectives were achieved and the occupation consolidated, an infantry division would push south along the coast, while the armoured corps would advance directly towards Stockholm, to support and complete efforts to pin the

main Swedish forces, which would be implemented by a second group of units.

A secondary set of actions was designated as Operation II. This involved two groups. The first, using two infantry divisions, would advance from Oslo aiming at Carlstad. The aim was not to reach Stockholm itself, which was too strongly defended and protected, but rather to pin the main body of Swedish forces. In the meantime, a second group, comprising three infantry divisions, would push south-west through the area to the north of Lake Vänern, with the aim of occupying Gothenburg and thus excluding any possible intervention by the (British) Royal Navy sailing from the North Sea. It was assumed any such action by the British would be promptly identified by the active vigilance of the Kriegsmarine. Demonstration actions by the forces present in Denmark and a series of deception actions, including phantom landing operations, would prevent the transfer of the Swedish forces deployed in Malmo to support the defence of Gothenburg. Since the forces required for the two elements of Schell's plan, totalling around a dozen divisions, would be beyond the strength of the formations already deployed for the occupation of Norway, Bamler noted it would be necessary for the required reinforcements to be disguised as replacements for units worn out on the Eastern Front.[20]

While the outlines of the plan were clear from Bamler's original article, it is through consideration of the documents Schell submitted for Operation Study: Sweden that it becomes possible to enter into the details of the intended offensive, and grasp the thinking behind his approach, and hence the articulation of the operation as a whole.

As has been noted, Operation I was centred on a thrust towards Östersund. Since there were only two main routes leading from the Norwegian border into the critical zone to be occupied in Sweden, Schell envisaged the articulation of two groups, each comprising a strengthened regiment. One would advance along the railway line, while the other pushed down the road to its north, towards Järpen. A third regiment would operate as reserve and replacement force. The assault would be preceded by a combat drop of a paratroop battalion with the task, crucial given the narrowness of the operational front, of attacking Järpen from the east. Should they encounter greater difficulties or resolute resistance, the par-

20 [Bamler], 'German Plans', pp. 80-81. For the forces proposed by OKW for operations in Scandinavia, see Hubatsch, *Unruhe*, pp. 220-221.

atroopers needed at minimum to keep open the Yueran Straits, 12 km east of the Matmar border defences. Once they had seized Järpen, and thus ensured a safe landing area, a further two battalions (paratroopers or airlanding infantry) would be deployed, with the task of securing Östersund airport until the main force relieved them. Control of the airport was essential, as this determined whether the attacking force could be supplied. Having in this way obtained complete dominance over the critical zone, these forces would then have been free to advance eastwards. In addition to the main infantry forces, which in total amounted to the equivalent of a division, plus the airborne infantry, Schell calculated this part of the offensive would require a *Pionier* (combat engineer) battalion with bridging equipment, as well as one or two road construction units. Further, given that the whole operation was entirely dependent on Schell's forces being able to move freely, it was necessary for the Germans to achieve total air superiority. There was therefore a need for Luftwaffe support in the form of aerial reconnaissance, a squadron of Stuka dive bombers, and another of fighters.[21]

The second route of advance set out by Schell led from the Norwegian area of Røros to Sveg, which was to the south of the complex lake system at the centre of which lay Östersund. The intelligence available to the Germans indicated this second road was less strongly guarded than the route to the north. The distance to be travelled was, however, greater and therefore required the use of several combat groups, one behind the other. Once the critical zone (corresponding to the Klövajö region) was reached, various possibilities opened up to this second force. That said, Schell also considered whether it would be worth committing a second panzer division to this thrust. The greater fighting power provided by such a formation would have enabled Schell to aim more directly and quickly on Sundsvall and the Gulf of Bothnia, thus connecting quickly with the first group. Alternatively, this stronger force could move to the north, if its support was needed to repel any attempt by the Western Allies to threaten Östersund. As Schell noted:

Upon reaching the Östersund lakes region, the foundations will have been laid for the execution of the assigned task, because to the west of this area there are no roads and railways available that run from north to south for the Anglo-American forces that might have broken through, nor are there any south to north routes for

21 Operative Studie "Schweden", p. 5.

the Swedish defensive forces around Stockholm or Lake Vänern.[22]

The reference to a potential advance by a British/American landing force is critical. Clearly, any intervention by the Western Allies had the potential to seriously complicate the situation, especially if this were to threaten the flank of the German penetration. Schell therefore set out a requirement not only for accurate information through aerial reconnaissance, but also the direct bombing of all important road and rail junctions. He also argued a landing from Finland at Örnsköldsvik, in which Finnish forces might have cooperated, would guarantee strong support for the operation and, by denying this important junction to the Western Allies, severely limit their freedom of movement. Although he did not believe there was any likelihood of rapid intervention northward by the Swedish forces stationed around the capital and to its south, he nonetheless advised that direct pressure be placed on Stockholm, as well as landings from Denmark on Karlskrona and Gothenburg (Operation II).[23]

Having set out the form of the operation to invade Sweden, Schell quantified the minimum number of formations required: two panzer divisions (or else one panzer and one motorised), two infantry divisions plus a brigade, and an army corps headquarters. In addition, *Pioniere* (combat engineers), paratroopers and airlanding troops would be required. This essentially covered the striking force for Operation I. Schell was clear that, in his view, these forces would be sufficient to parry the feared Allied invasion. They would not, however, be adequate to complete a full-scale invasion and ongoing occupation of the country. This was not considered an issue, as Falkenhorst was satisfied the planned operation would be enough to obtain the Swedish surrender. Even if resistance did continue, a range of options were open to the invading forces, based on posing a direct threat to Stockholm from whichever of the penetrations had secured the most favourable position, whether from the north (Upsala) by the armoured corps, from the west by reinforcing the second group and moving around both sides of Lake Vänern, or by cutting off the city with an operation to the south-east to rapidly occupy the southern part of the country, forcing the Swedish units deployed there to surrender.

Bamler noted the proposed date for the start of the operation remained vague.

22 Operative Studie “Schweden”, p. 7.

23 Operative Studie “Schweden”, p. 5.

In late April 1943, the analysis by AOK Norway suggested it might be launched in July or August. Conversely, when he was summoned to Berchtesgarten at the end of May to discuss the plans with Jodl's deputy, Generalleutnant Walter Warlimont, it was suggested it would be better to delay the operation until the arrival of winter, and with it the freezing of the many lakes and rivers, as this would mean they no longer presented significant obstacles to movement. Bamler noted he strongly rejected this suggestion, due to the impossibility of armoured forces operating in the mountainous terrain under these conditions.[24] Given that the core planning assumption was that the operation would only be launched in response to British landings in northern Norway (even if it had the potential to be undertaken proactively), this uncertainty over its timing is perhaps less surprising than might at first appear. This also removes the apparent contradiction between Falkenhorst's statement that there was no intention to attack Sweden and the existence of plans for precisely such an invasion – the whole operation was developed on the assumption it would be required as a response to Sweden having already joined the Western Allies, rather than as a proactive intervention.

In the event, however, the whole operation was put on the shelf, as on 21 August, Schell received orders that 25th Panzer Division was to be redeployed to France, to counter the threat of an Allied invasion across the English Channel. By early September, the bulk of the division was in the vicinity of Lille.[25] Despite Falkenhorst's repeated requests, it was never replaced.[26] Without a panzer division to form the core of the offensive, the German forces in Scandinavia were simply too weak to contemplate an invasion of Sweden. Whatever the course of events from that point onwards, Schell's plan would not be executed.

British Invasion Plans

It is necessary to consider whether Schell's labours were directed towards an end that might have been required in earnest. If there was no realistic need or expectation for such an operation, then any efforts devoted to developing a plan for

24 Jungstedt, 'Polarräven', p. 104, and Hubatsch, *Unruhe*, pp. 209-210.

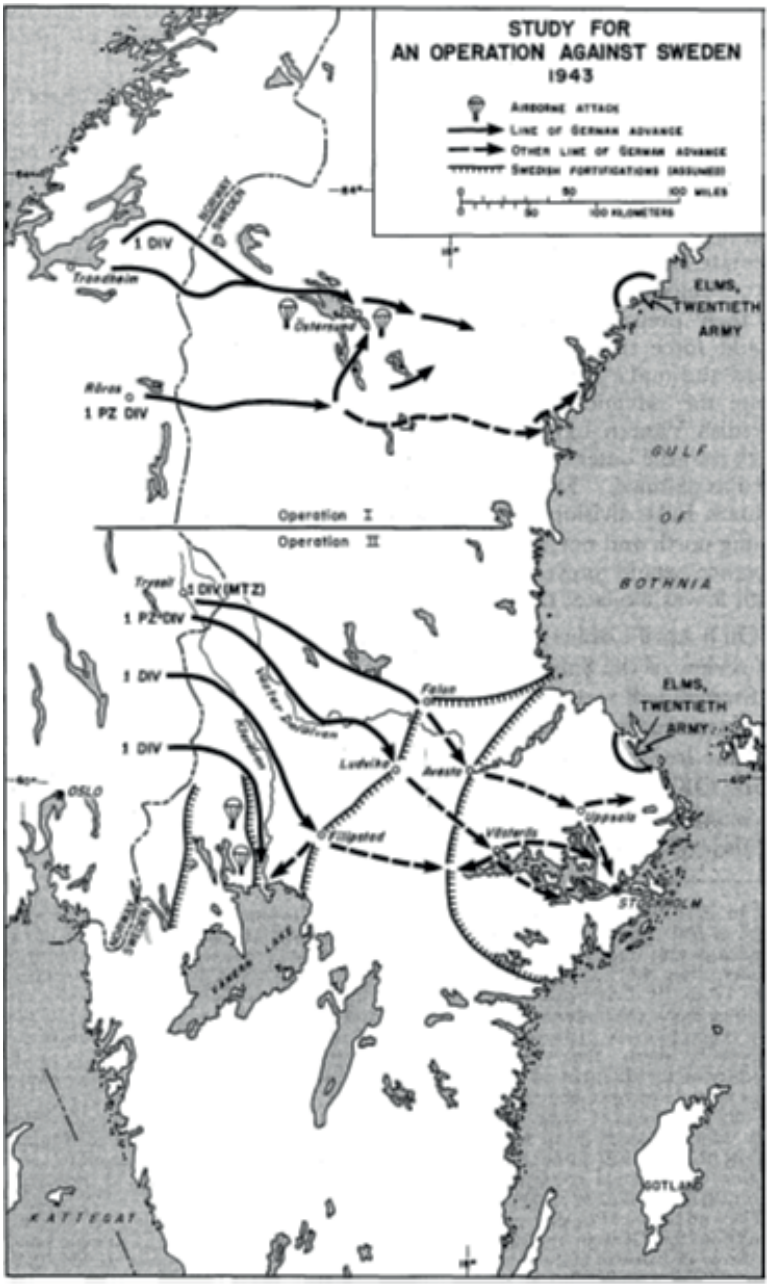
25 Zetterberg, 'Svensk säkerhetspolitik 1943', pp. 73-74.

26 Klaus-Jügen Müller, 'A German Perspective on Allied Deception Operations in the Second World War' in *Strategic and Operational Deception in the Second World War*, ed. by Michael I. Handel (London: Cass, 1987), pp. 301-326 (320).

undertaking it could at most be no more than an insurance policy, giving credence to Hubatsch's conclusion this was simply a staff training exercise, a means for Schell to train 25th Panzer Division as it formed, thereby converting a disparate group of units into an efficient combat formation.

Whether there was need or expectation that Schell's plan might have to be implemented is in fact two separate questions: first, whether the British were actually planning an invasion of Norway and/or Sweden, and, second, whether OKW genuinely believed such an invasion was a realistic possibility, based on its intelligence gathering and appreciation of the situation. In addressing this second question, consideration must be given to the deception efforts made by the British to persuade the Germans they were indeed preparing landings in Norway. It is important, however, to recognise that the two questions are separate – the British might have been planning an invasion the Germans did not suspect, and OKW might have been convinced the British were going to invade even if they had no intention of actually doing so.

Starting with the first question, Christopher Mann has recently demonstrated Churchill was indeed long determined the Western Allies should undertake landings in Norway. As early as April 1941, Churchill pushed the Joint Planning Staff into an initial consideration of such an initiative. The following month, he ensured this outline was developed into a fuller study, under the codename Operation Dynamite. Contrary to his expectations, this analysis dismissed the proposal on the basis the strategic gains would be minimal, yet the practical challenges substantial. Undaunted, and eager to make maximum offensive use of the growing military forces stationed in Britain, Churchill tried again in September 1941, demanding a plan for seizing Trondheim and opening up communications with Sweden. Once again, the analysis, now codenamed Operation Ajax, highlighted the minimal benefit of such an offensive and the high risks involved, not least based on the assessment the Swedish armed forces lacked the necessary fighting power. Once more, Churchill dismissed these objections and instructed General Sir Alan Brooke, Commander-in-Chief of Home Forces, to produce a plan at high speed, yet detailed 'to the last button'. Brooke's frustrated assessment was that this task would 'entail a great deal of wasted work on the part of many busy people', so it is unsurprising that, supported by his peers in the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force, this effort again concluded the operation was extremely risky and of limited benefit. Despite a two-hour cross-examination by a



3 «Study for an Operation Against Sweden», from Earl. F. Ziemke, *The German Northern Theatre of Operations 1940-1945*, Department of the Army Pamphlet, No. 20-271, Washington, 1959, Map 20, p. 259.

hostile Churchill, Brooke was not to be moved and, at last and with ill-concealed frustration, Churchill finally accepted Ajax was dead.[27]

Yet Churchill had not given up. In May 1942, he suggested it would be better to invade Norway (an 'alternative plan for which I always hankered')[28] than launch a cross-Channel assault (Operation Sledgehammer), and sought support for this view from President Franklin Roosevelt.[29] However, the assessment of what was now dubbed Operation Jupiter continued to be highly negative – there was no significant strategic value from operations in Scandinavia and the risks involved were unacceptable. Indeed, it is reported that the planners regarded their work on Jupiter as 'mere window dressing'.[30] To Churchill's frustration, even Vice-Admiral Louis Mountbatten, his personal choice as chief of Combined Operations, regarded the whole idea as 'impracticable' and urged its abandonment. Having fought for his scheme for six weeks,[31] Churchill was not willing to accede even to the unanimous assessment of his military advisers. In July, therefore, he tried a different tack, asking Lieutenant-General Andrew McNaughton, commander of Canadian forces in Britain, to develop a plan for Operation Jupiter. The result of applying fresh eyes to the problem was, once more, an assessment that no more than local successes might be achieved and the chances of 'a military disaster of the highest magnitude' were too great. Churchill nonetheless continued to favour the idea and in September dismissed McNaughton's concerns as exaggerated. Instead, he invited the unfortunate general to join him at Chequers (the Prime Minister's official country residence) and there subjected him to 'a ghastly weekend' during which McNaughton was 'kept up till all hours of the morning', with Churchill's constant arguments in favour of a Norway expedition leaving the Canadian 'dumbfounded'. In the end, however, the Canadian government put the nail in Jupiter's coffin when, at McNaughton's request, it formally

27 Mann, *British Policy*, pp. 67-74.

28 Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War – Vol. IV: The Hinge of Fate* (London: Cassell, 1951), p. 289.

29 Dorothy Baden-Powell, *Operation Jupiter: SOE's Secret War in Norway* (London: Hale, 1982), pp. 157-159.

30 H.P. Willmott, 'Operation Jupiter and Possible Landings in Norway', in *Britain and Norway in the Second World War*, ed. by Patrick Salmon (London: HMSO, 1995), pp. 97-118 (p. 101).

31 Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, p. 313.

refused to allow his troops to be used for the operation.[32] Curiously, SOE appears to have believed that McNaughton was 'very enthusiastic about the project' and so began to launch raids in the belief that the invasion would soon follow, only being informed in October that it had been 'postponed'.[33]

But Churchill was still not entirely done.[34] In February 1943, he again proposed Jupiter as an alternative to Sledgehammer, though this came to nothing because the invasion of Sicily (Operation Husky) absorbed all the available resources. And in July, he suggested Jupiter as a reserve operation, should Operation Overlord (the cross-Channel invasion of Normandy planned for the summer of 1944) be delayed. Yet again, however, his military advisers were adamant the probability of an invasion of Norway being successful was minimal, not least because 'the chances of Sweden entering the war in any circumstances are extremely remote'. Repeating his tactics for a third time, Churchill circumvented the Chiefs of Staff and instructed Lieutenant-General Sir Frederick Morgan, Chief of Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander (Designate), to review the options. History continued to repeat itself when, in September, Morgan reported an invasion of Norway was beyond the resources available to the Western Allies, and any further planning for it would risk undermining Overlord. Finally, Churchill admitted defeat.[35]

Two key points stand out from this prolonged cycle of planning. First, the British military commanders were consistently clear there was no strategic benefit of any kind to be gained from an Allied invasion of Norway or Sweden. Indeed, Churchill himself was never able to express any clear rationale for his proposal, with Brooke noting, 'The only reason he ever gave was that Hitler had unrolled the map of Europe starting with Norway, and he would start rolling it up again from Norway.'[36] It has subsequently been suggested that Churchill, desper-

32 Mann, *British Policy*, pp. 76-84.

33 Baden-Powell, *Operation Jupiter*, pp. 159-160 and 174-175.

34 Churchill also envisaged a left hook after the Allied jab with the right: a new expedition to Norway which would eliminate Axis aerial interference with the convoys to Russia and bring visible evidence to the Soviet Government that the Western Powers were waging war against the German: Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate*, pp. 569-571.

35 Mann, *British Policy*, pp. 84-87.

36 Field Marshal Lord Alanbrooke, *War Diaries, 193901945*, ed. by Alex Danchev and Daniel Todman (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2001), p. 187.

ate to have successful actions to which he could point as evidence Britain was not defeated, simply chose Norway on the basis its long coastline allowed the option of operations that looked impressive but in fact carried little risk.[37] Second, despite his ongoing enthusiasm for the idea and repeated attempts to circumvent the Chiefs of Staff, Churchill did ultimately listen to his military advisers. Operations Dynamite, Ajax and Jupiter never moved beyond the stage of theoretical consideration. Mann's summary was that this grudging willingness of Churchill to accept professional advice (having tested it to the limit) was 'of war-winning significance'.[38]

Although the British military planners never had any intention of undertaking major operations in Norway or Sweden, they saw every reason to persuade OKW such initiatives were very much on their agenda, as a means to divert Germany's resources away from those theatres where genuine operations were intended. This was the case from the very start of formal British deception efforts, when Colonel Oliver Stanley was appointed Controlling Officer of the new Future Operational Planning Section in October 1941. Believing no operations were planned for Norway, Stanley focused his attention there, developing a proposal for a fictional assault on Stavanger to be supposedly launched during April 1942 (Operation Hardboiled). He arranged for the Royal Marine Division in Scotland to undertake training in opposed landings and mountain warfare, tasks clearly relevant to operations in Norway, in the hope the Germans would draw the desired conclusions. The scheme was not a success, being initially met with hostility from some senior British commanders on the grounds it was an ungentlemanly distraction from more important matters, and then abandoned when the marines were suddenly reassigned for active service elsewhere. Frustrated at his lack of impact, Stanley resigned in May 1942.[39]

In July 1942, Stanley's replacement, Lieutenant-Colonel John Bevan, whose unit was renamed the London Controlling Section and moved from Home Forces to the Chiefs of Staff, was tasked with preparing deception measures to distract from the intended British/American invasion of north-west Africa (Operation Torch). Bevan's team decided to centre their efforts on creating the impression

37 Willmott, 'Operation Jupiter', p. 118.

38 Mann, *British Policy*, p. 89.

39 Mann, *British Policy*, pp. 126-129.

the invasion preparations were focused on Norway. This initiative was code-named Operation Solo One, in the hope the similarity to Oslo might give a hint as to its target. It was centred on the suggestion the invasion would be undertaken by the Canadian forces currently in Britain. This was unintentionally ironic, since McNaughton was at that very time resisting Churchill's pressure to send them there for real. Unlike Operation Jupiter, the Solo deception plan was implemented and continued until the Torch landings took place in November.[40]

Following the success of Torch, deception measures based on a threatened invasion of Norway continued to play a key role in the thinking of the Western Allies, with Morgan developing Operation Tindall during June/July 1943 (once again, in parallel with his rejecting Jupiter). As with Stanley's plans eighteen months before, this was based on a supposed landing at Stavanger, to be undertaken during September. To give the deception additional impact, the intention was to then purportedly postpone the operation until November, thereby extending the period during which it might distract the Germans. In the event, however, minimal forces could be diverted from actual operations in order to provide the necessary activity to attract German attention.[41] By this time, the transfer of Schell's 25th Panzer Division to France meant any scope for a German invasion of Sweden in response to British landings in Norway had disappeared. As such, the British deception measures after this date fall outside the scope of this article, though it should be noted such activities (Operation Fortitude North) continued until well after the Normandy landings in June 1944.[42]

In short, it is clear that, despite Churchill's ongoing desire for such an operation, there was never any actual threat of Allied landings in Norway/Sweden. The circumstances in which Schell's plan for a counter-invasion of Sweden might be required would therefore never arise. However, the British also went to considerable lengths to persuade the German high command such landings were very much a possibility. It is therefore necessary to look at 'the other side of the hill' and consider the perspective of OKW.

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40 Mann, *British Policy*, pp. 131-135, Charles Cruikshank, *Deception in World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1979), pp. 35-36 & 40-42, and Michael Howard, *British Intelligence in the Second World War: Vol. 5 – Strategic Deception* (London: HMSO, 1990), pp. 56 & 59.

41 Mann, *British Policy*, pp. 135-138.

42 Mann, *British Policy*, pp. 139-147.

In 1940, Germany saw no benefit from attacking and occupying Sweden. In contrast to Norway, whose coasts granted the Kriegsmarine free access to the North Atlantic and control of the Arctic convoy routes to Russian ports, and also in distinction from Finland, which was directly engaged in confrontation with the Soviet Union, the continued existence of a neutral Sweden offered several advantages. Excluded from trade with the United Kingdom by default of the wider situation, Sweden could not help but instead supply to the German market its production of both iron ore and ball-bearings.[43] This last was of particular importance, as in due course ball-bearings were famously to be identified by the air strategists of the United States Army Air Force as a vital 'choke point': it was erroneously suggested disrupting the supply of this fundamental component, notably by means of precision daylight bombing the industrial hub of Schweinfurt in Germany, would paralyze the entire Nazi industrial production.[44] In addition to these material benefits, the Swedish diplomatic service, traditionally considered pro-German, offered the potential (to some extent realised in practice) of providing a vital channel through which the Nazi state might circumvent the barriers created by the conflict.

These benefits from occupying Norway were such that the British raid on the Lofoten islands on 4 March 1941 caused significant concern to OKW, maintained until the end of the war.[45] This was reflected in Hitler's directive of 7 April to Falkenhorst, stating efforts in Norway should be directed towards deterring potential 'serious landing operations' by the British during the summer. As Klaus-Jügen Müller has shown, during the spring of 1941 the reinforcement of the German occupation forces in Norway (from seven divisions to between eleven and thirteen, a strength broadly maintained until 1945) was driven by these strategic concerns, rather than by the British deception operations in 1941 (Hardboiled) and 1942 (Solo One). The decisions to form 25th Panzer Division and improve road links between Norway and Finland were made prior to Solo One, so cannot have been triggered by that deception operation, notwithstanding

43 For a comprehensive examination of the economic ties between Sweden and Nazi Germany, see Christian Leitz, *Nazi Germany and Neutral Europe During the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University, 2000), pp. 49-84.

44 Malcolm Gladwell, *Bomber Mafia* (Torino: UTET, 2021), p. 57.

45 *Germany and the Second World War: Vol. VIII – The Eastern Front 1943-1944*, ed. by Karl-Heinz Frieser (Oxford: Clarendon, 2017), p. 1000.

Cruikshank's claims that the operation 'did have some effect'[46] and Howard's that it 'fully achieved its object'.[47] Similarly, the suggestion by Dorothy Baden-Powell, who was involved in the Special Operations Executive (SOE)'s actions in support of Jupiter, appears to be incorrect in her claim that these deception operations had caused Hitler to move a quarter of a million additional troops to Norway during the first half of 1942 and then convinced him right until October 1943 that the invasion was about to be launched.[48] Indeed, there seems to be no evidence the Germans were even aware of any of those deception operations. In fact, the more important factor seems to have been the actual raids undertaken by the British and the frequent misidentification by the Kriegsmarine of British convoys to Murmansk as invasion armadas.[49]

Colonel General Nikolaus von Falkenhorst (1885-1968) (Wikipedia)

During 1942, German worries about the security of their position in Norway had also increased due to changes in the attitude of Sweden. Although the Swedish authorities had been positively disposed towards Germany during the early part of the war, this shifted month by month, as key individuals became increasingly alienated by the actions undertaken during the Nazi occupation of Norway, and as they came to recognise the likely outcome of the wider war, though this remains a highly-contested topic in the academic literature.[50] This may be exem-

46 Cruikshank, *Deception*, p. 47.

47 Howard, *British Intelligence*, p. 59.

48 Baden-Powell, *Operation Jupiter*, pp. 159 and 175.

49 Müller, 'German Perspective', pp. 316-319.

50 For analyses of post-war narratives about Sweden's stance with regard to Nazi Germany, see Johan Östling, 'The Rise and Fall of Small-State Realism: Sweden and the Second

plified in the writings of Ragnar Kumlin, head of the Political Department of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In March 1942, even while Leningrad lay under siege, he concluded Germany was no longer able to beat Russia, whose war potential it had underestimated. In his opinion, the Germans were now doomed to defeat, while the Soviet Union would only increase in power, such that not even the Western Allies would be able to compete with it.[51] Proof of this change in national thinking came during 1943. First, the Swedish government began to be much more open with the British about joint efforts to establish the post-war arrangements on shared terms.[52] Then, in July, the Swedish government notified Berlin it would no longer allow the transit of German military forces across its territory as they moved between Norway and Finland. Then, from the end of the year, constant violations of Sweden's southern airspace by Allied bombers on the way to attack targets in Germany aroused only weak and perfunctory protests from Stockholm politicians.

By late 1942, with the Allies now making important advances in Russia, the Western Desert and North Africa, there was every reason for OKW to believe this shift in Swedish policy raised the prospect these operations might be complemented by landings in Scandinavia. Even a limited landing force might seize the iron ore mines of Kiruna and Gällivare. This was of considerable significance, as these represented one of the few constant supplies of raw material to German industry and their loss would have further aggravated a production shortage already disturbing in the spring of 1942. Not even the establishment of the *Reichsvereinigung Eisen* (RVE) (Reich Association for Iron) on 29 May 1942, under the direction of long-time industrialist Hermann Röchling, could seriously remedy this threat.[53] Nor would the position have been any less serious had an

World War', in *Nordic Narratives of the Second World War: National Historiographies Revisited*, ed. by Henrik Stenius, Mirja Österberg & Johan Östling (Lund: Nordic Academic, 2008), pp. 127-148, and also Paul A. Levine, 'Swedish Neutrality During the Second World War: Tactical Success or Moral Compromise?', in *European Neutrals and Non-Beliigerents During the Second World War*, ed. by Neville Wylie (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2002), pp. 304-330.

51 Göran Andolf, 'Die Einschätzung der Wehrmacht aus schwedischer Sicht', in *Wehrmacht. Mythos und Realität*, ed. by Rolf-Dieter Müller and Hans-Erich Volkmann (Munich: Oldenburg, 1999), pp. 147-171 (pp. 151-152).

52 Peter Ludlow, 'Britain and Northern Europe, 1940-1945', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 4 (1979), 123-162 (p. 151).

53 Klaus Reinhardt, *Die Wende vor Moskau. Das Scheitern der Strategie Hitlers im Winter*

Allied landing targeted southern Sweden, as this would have interrupted German connections with Norway.[54]

On 16 November 1942, therefore, Hitler declared that, for the coming spring, he regarded 'unqualified security in the Northern Area' to be more important even than a major offensive in Russia. In January 1943, he told Admiral Erich Raeder, commander-in-chief of the Kriegsmarine, that recent reports had convinced him Great Britain and the United States of America were bent on attacking northern Norway to bring about a decisive turn in the course of the war. He furthermore claimed to have positive proof Sweden had been promised Narvik and the ore deposits at Pechenga, and would therefore participate on the side of the Western Allies.[55] This generated a situation Müller described as 'inverted perception'. At the start of the year, although there was no deception operation underway at that time, though there were further raids, OKW's existing strategic concerns caused it to despatch additional artillery and troops to defend the Norwegian coast-line. Yet in the autumn, when Operation Tindall was in full swing, the German military authorities concluded there were no indications of enemy operations against Norway in the near future. OKW's perception that the greater risk lay from a cross-Channel invasion led, as we have seen, to the transfer of 25th Panzer Division to France in August, thereby removing Falkenhorst's ability to intervene in Sweden should the Allies undertake serious landings. Indeed, the British themselves considered Tindall had 'completely failed to interest the enemy'.[56]

In summary, although it is clear that the British had no intention of launching an invasion, Hitler and OKW were equally convinced that such an invasion was a very real possibility. This was, however, not a product of the extensive British deception measures designed to suggest such an invasion was being prepared. In short, the deception operations throughout the period from 1941 through to 1943 appear to have had no impact on OKW's thinking. The British raids, by contrast, did affect German thinking, but this was not part of the deception programme. However, the Germans' own faulty appreciation of the situation led to Norway

1941/42 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlag Anstalt, 1972), pp. 285-286.

54 Hubatsch, *Unruhe*, p. 213.

55 Ziemke, *Northern Theater*, pp. 214 and 218, Carlgren, *Swedish Foreign Policy*, p. 128, and Linder, *Krigsfall Sverige!*, p. 99.

56 Müller, 'German Perspective', pp. 319-321.

remaining a priority in OKW's mind until the summer of 1943. It therefore seems reasonable to conclude the orders given to Bamler reflected a genuine concern regarding Allied intervention in Norway/Sweden, and hence the planning done by Schell was for an operation that might have been implemented in practice, rather than simply a training exercise, as Hubatsch had suggested.

The Swedish Defences

If it is accepted that Schell's plan was drawn up in the serious belief that it might be required in practice, it is necessary to consider whether the German forces available for the invasion were sufficient. In particular, given these plans were based on the belief the Swedish forces would offer only limited resistance, it is necessary to examine whether this assessment was accurate.

The disposition of the Swedish forces reflected a prevailing concern for the defence of Stockholm. At least four divisions were deployed along the northern shore of Lake Vänern, with the obvious task of blocking any thrust route from Oslo, the shortest and most direct route to threaten Stockholm. The main reserve was deployed to the east of the capital, at a strength estimated by the German intelligence service of approximately five divisions. Two other divisions were deployed to the north, to protect the 'distant' mining centre of Kiruna. Arranged as a curtain between these two groups, straddling a potential thrust from Trondheim, there were two or three other divisions, centred on Östersund. The southern part of the country, along the Gothenburg-Varnamo-Malmo line, was defended by a further substantial cluster of units, which the Germans believed amounted to three or four divisions. A final division was allocated to garrison the islands and control the Baltic. There were also units for coastal defence and other motorised formations that would have been aggregated to one of the main groups.

As has been noted, the German invasion force would have been centred on 25th Panzer Division. Activated in Norway early in 1942, progress in bringing it up to strength had been slow. Even a year later, in March 1943, its tank establishment consisted for the most part only of obsolete German Mark IIs (7 vehicles) and French Hotchkiss (40) and Suoma (15) tanks. Although its ration strength was 11,000 men, its actual strength was probably somewhat lower. Its effectiveness as a combat force was questionable. By contrast, over the following few months, the division was completely reequipped: by June, it had received

well over 1000 trucks and other vehicles, and its ration strength now stood at 21,000 men. Although still retaining its original assortment of obsolete tanks, these had been joined by 41 Mark IIIs, 16 Mark IVs, and 15 self-propelled assault guns,[57] rendering the formation substantially more powerful.

Ltn. Gen. Adolf von Schell (1893-1967) in March 1940 (Wikipedia)

Despite this increase in fighting power, it was clearly impossible for a single panzer division to overcome the Swedish forces. Schell believed his strike forces would require two panzer divisions (or one panzer and one motorised) and two infantry divisions. These formations would be supported by others, which would pin the Swedish defences and occupy the territory seized, leading to an overall requirement Bamler estimated at a dozen divisions. When he reviewed Schell's plan in May 1943, Warlimont suggested this might well be beyond what could be deployed to Norway, yet Falkenhorst reiterated this was the minimum necessary to ensure the success of the enterprise.

Nor was it possible to make use of the dozen or so divisions already deployed in Norway. Apart from their being largely composed of low-grade static infantry units, which made them unsuitable for the quick breakthrough action planned by Schell, which required the spirit and dynamism shown during the first two years of the war, their use would have risked disturbing scenarios of Allied landings directly on the Norwegian coasts. The memory of the battle of Narvik (the so-called Plan R4 in the context of the British Operation Wilfred) and the risks taken by

57 Ziemke, *Northern Theater*, pp. 255n39 and 262.

Colonel Windisch's men were still too vivid to be dismissed lightly.[58] Falkenhorst was therefore clear the forces already under his command were fully required for coastal defence – indeed, since December 1942, he had already requested an increase in his ration strength of twelve thousand men, as well as a further three infantry divisions as a means to give his coastal positions greater depth.[59]

It would therefore seem the gulf between the forces required for Schell's plan and those actually available in Norway was so great, and so difficult to bridge, that Hubatsch was right to suggest its feasibility was highly questionable. Further, even had OKW provided the additional requested forces, it must be doubted whether the logistics infrastructure in Norway would have allowed them to be adequately supplied. In that sense, Hubatsch was probably correct in believing the whole exercise was utopian[60] - although Schell's plan was not a mere training exercise but was developed for a genuinely feared scenario, its execution was now beyond Germany's capabilities.

Before entirely writing off Schell's plan, however, it must be noted one of its core assumptions was that resistance from the Swedish armed forces would be negligible, such that the invasion would mainly have to contend with those logistical challenges. And the first two years of the war had provided numerous examples to suggest such challenges might appear greater in prospect than they proved to be in reality, in the context of a rapid collapse in morale on the part of the enemy resulting from the sudden and paralyzing nature of the first attack, supported by active propaganda insisting on the futility of further resistance.

In July 1941, OKW asked the Swedish government to authorise the transit of the German 163rd Infantry Division, which had landed in Oslo, for use against the Soviet Union.[61] After some significant soul-searching, the request was agreed to.[62] The trains carrying the troops were escorted by Swedish officers, who noted

58 Rolan Kaltenegger, *Generaloberst Dietl: Der Held von Narvik -Eine Biographie* (Munich: Universitas, 1990), pp. 315-316, and Walter A. Schwarz, *Generalmajor a.D. Alois Windisch: Ein Soldatenleben (1892-1958). Mt Meletta/Narvik* (Klagenfurt: Österreichische Gesellschaft für Ordenskunde, 1996), pp. 94ff. See also Hubatsch, *Unruhe*, p. 215.

59 Ziemke, *Northern Theater*, p. 213.

60 Hubatsch, *Unruhe*, pp. 215 & 221.

61 Andolf, 'Einschätzung', p. 147.

62 W.M. Carlgren, *Swedish Foreign Policy During the Second World War*, trans. by Arthur Spencer (London: Benn, 1977), pp. 115-116.

in their reports the substantially positive attitude of the population – with the exception of a few isolated voices of protest, the dominant atmosphere was one of friendly welcome. Indeed, there were wishes for a 'good trip' and at some stations the German soldiers were offered fruit and chocolate by the locals. They themselves had not failed to contrast this attitude with the hostile reception they had received in occupied Norway.[63] In turn, the German units had left a very positive impression on the Swedish military observers: excellent discipline, fearless respect for superiors, prompt execution of orders. This judgement was amply confirmed during study trips the Germans subsequently invited Swedish officers to undertake in occupied Belgium and France.[64] This was a perfectly-oiled war machine. But it was a machine the Swedish authorities were able to keep under close surveillance right from the start.

From April 1940, the German military authorities had sought permission to make use of Swedish telegraph lines for communications between Germany, Norway and Finland, requests to which the Swedish authorities readily gave consent. Quite apart from any wider political considerations, there was a very practical reason for this – as with the Enigma machine, the Germans had placed excessive confidence in the security of their communications and their codes did not long withstand the acumen of the Swedish mathematicians assigned to break them. Inevitably, these telegrams contained important information about the deployment of German units on the Swedish borders and regarding the overall course of the conflict. The decrypted texts thus offered the Swedish government the possibility of accurately and promptly monitoring any possible German military threat. It was not until 1942 that the German command began to suspect the Swedish willingness to convey their communications traffic might hide specific interests in this regard. Thereafter, steps were taken to limit the information of a sensitive nature included in messages passing through Swedish wires. In the meantime, however, the Swedish supreme command had secured a series of new information channels. These included not only the Norwegian and Danish resistance movements, but also the growing number of refugees from surrounding countries who were received with increasing readiness by the Swedish govern-

63 Andolf, 'Einschätzung', p. 148.

64 See the reports of General Archibald Douglas, Colonel Carl August Ehrensvärd, and the Swedish military attaché to Berlin, Colonel Curt Juhlin-Dannfelt, referenced in Andolf, 'Einschätzung', pp. 149-150.

ment in response to the mounting difficulties encountered by the German troops in the various theatres of war. As such, the location of German units in Norway and Finland was never a secret throughout the conflict. In addition, the Swedish embassy in Berlin provided a steady stream of intelligence from reliable sources regarding German intentions.[65] It can therefore be assumed that even the preparations for Schell's Operation Study may not have gone unnoticed. As such, from the outset this would have eliminated the possibility of Falkenhorst achieving the surprise, and consequent impact on morale and willingness to resist, he so clearly regarded as an essential prerequisite to success.

If the force-multiplier of surprise was unlikely to be achieved, it is necessary to consider what resistance Schell's forces might have encountered. Perhaps placing too much reliance on the pro-German sympathies and conservative (if not overtly fascist) political orientation of key figures in the Swedish administration and important political circles (not unlike what Italian commanders believed on the eve of the attack on Greece in 1940), Falkenhorst was convinced the country would capitulate before the decisive battle for the capital.[66] Interviewed after the war, Schell stated Falkenhorst had made clear he should develop his plan 'on the assumption the Swedish armed forces would not provide unified resistance and their military leaders would not act in accordance with the decision of their government'.[67] The German commanders therefore discounted both the ongoing operational evolution of the Swedish armed forces (see below) and the fortifications and other border defences constructed under the orders of Major-General Alex Rappe. As late as mid-1942, the German high command estimated the Swedish forces would be capable of resisting a German offensive for little more than a fortnight. Although the German military attaché in Stockholm suggested a more conservative assessment, even he thought resistance would last only for some three months.

These assessments of the comparative weakness of the Swedish forces were not made in the absence of evidence. From January 1943, the military attaché in Stockholm provided prompt updates on both the establishment of the fortifications and the steps being taken to strengthen the capabilities of the Swedish

65 Carlgren, *Swedish Foreign Policy*, p. 127.

66 [Bamler], 'German Plans', p. 80.

67 Oberstleutnant H.R. Kurz, 'Eine deutsche Operationsstudie gegen Schweden aus dem Jahr 1943', *Allgemeine schweizerische Militärzeitschrift*, 127 (1961), 363-364 (p. 364).

armed forces.[68] Equally, the Germans had clear estimates of the strength of the forces that might be deployed against them, estimating an initial deployment of ten mobile brigades, increasing to twenty-four following mobilisation.[69] The fighting spirit of those forces, however, was judged to be low,[70] even if it was recognised the defenders, fighting on their own ground and endowed with traditional skill in firearms, might sometimes offer fierce resistance, and might be contrasted favourably with the recognised inferiority of German troops in the Nordic conditions, especially compared to the superior capabilities demonstrated by the Finns.[71] Nonetheless, the German commanders anticipated these innate advantages were outweighed by the Swedes' lack of combat experience, limited armoured forces and heavy artillery, and the weakness of their air forces and anti-aircraft defence.[72]

This negative assessment of the Swedish willingness and ability to resist must be contrasted with the evidence presented by John Gilmour regarding changes in the military capability of the Swedish armed forces. It is certainly true that, in the early stages of the Second World War, these did not represent a major obstacle, such that they would have posed little serious risk to the Wehrmacht. However, in the years since then, the Swedish navy, air force and ground forces had all awakened from the lethargy characteristic of the years preceding the conflict and had tried to significantly increase their reaction capacities. Particular attention had been devoted to key aspects, such as fighting in forested areas and the guerrilla operations in zones behind an enemy invasion force, leading to the development of capabilities previously lacking. These improvements were reflected in the measures put in place by the Swedish high command to ensure their troops would continue to resist any invasion, even should the national command arrangements be eliminated. Further, it should be noted that, by 1943, most pro-German officers within the Swedish forces had been replaced by others more oriented towards the Western Allies. According to Gilmour, 'The greatest change was, however, in domestic design and manufacture: large civilian manufacturers such as Husqvarna,

68 Hubatsch, *Unruhe*, p. 222.

69 Operative Studie Schweden, p. 3, and [Bamler], 'German Plans', p. 78.

70 Linder, Krigsfall Sverige!, pp. 123-124.

71 General Dr Erfurth, *Warfare in the Far North* (Historical Division, US Army, MS T24), p. 5.

72 [Bamler], 'German Plans', p. 78.

Ericsson and Volvo had all become significant suppliers of military equipment comprising tanks, armoured vehicles and terrain vehicles often based on foreign designs. AB Bofors continued to increase its output of artillery, supplemented by German deliveries.'[73] This sense of a willingness and expectation to maintain resistance is expressed clearly in the description of wartime life based on individual accounts presented by Hans Dahlberg,[74] and underlined by the intervention of Gustavo Adolfo, who commissioned Colonel Ehrensvärd to write a book explaining to the general population why they needed to defend themselves from an invasion, and how to do so in practice.[75] It certainly appears that the Swedish government was less concerned at the risk of invasion than it was focused on the need to adopt a harder line with Germany, in order to strengthen ties with the Western Allies. One consequence of this was the mobilisation of three hundred thousand reservists in August 1943, as a means to deter any temptation on Hitler's part to respond to the invasion of Sicily by launching his own invasion of Sweden.[76]

As one example of the changes in Swedish military capability, it should be noted the Germans took it for granted Luftwaffe Luftflotte 5 would enjoy total control of the air. At the start of the war, it was certainly true the Swedish air force was of little account. Its doctrine placed priority on bombers rather than the fighters required for air superiority, and it deployed little more than a hundred aircraft, mainly obsolete models.[77] Although a mission, under Gunnar Hägglöf, was despatched to the United States in 1939, with the intention of securing more modern aeroplanes (and ships), orders placed for 300 aircraft were never fulfilled. Only Italy was able to provide equipment, amounting to 216 aircraft and 180 engines.[78] Although they discounted the threat from the Swedish air force, the Germans remained very concerned at the potential for the Allies to deploy substantial air assets of their own to the Swedish airfields. This would have allowed them to interdict the German motorised columns, which would have been forced to travel along single-track roads in the narrow valleys of Sweden. Although somewhat

73 Gilmour, *Sweden, the Swastika and Stalin*, pp. 209-218 & 226.

74 Hans Dahlberg, *I Sverige under 2:a världskriget* (Stockholm: Fakta, 1983), pp. 82-102.

75 Linder, *Krigsfall Sverige!*,p. 89.

76 Carlgren, *Swedish Foreign Policy*, pp. 140 and 153.

77 Gilmour, *Sweden, the Swastika and Stalin*, p. 210.

78 Gösta Norrbohm and Bertil Skogsberg, *Att Flyga* är *Att Leva. Flygvapnet 1926-1976* (Höganäs: Bra Böcker, 1975), pp. 77 ff.

25th Panzer Division logos (Andrei Nacu, common wikimedia, public domain)

reassured by the shortage of aviation fuel in Sweden, Bamler nonetheless regarded it as a priority to occupy the main Swedish airfields at the very start of the invasion, through use of airborne landings.[79] By mid-1943, however, the Luftwaffe had more and more difficulty in securing air superiority, even in the relatively 'protected' situation of a country already squeezed by two German occupations (or rather by one occupation, of Norway, and an ally, Finland, though that country was becoming less and less reliable in 1943). Indeed, the Chief of Staff of Luftflotte 5, Generalmajor Andreas Nielsen, doubted whether it would be possible to find the number of aircraft required in order to support Schell's ground forces.[80]

Conclusions

In the evaluation of the seriousness or otherwise of German aggressive intentions towards Sweden in 1943, it must therefore be concluded that this was mostly the sin of scarce consideration of the international situation by OKW. In particular, Schell's plan not only demonstrates the seriousness of the commitment to carry out an authentic repeat of the 1940 campaign against Norway, but even more how the idea itself was born from the perception of the threat of Allied landings in northern Norway, followed by advances into Sweden, and was justified only by this. If it never came to the point, or if any estimated date was regularly evaded, this was precisely due to the change in the international situation. Although it can be seriously doubted whether, even without the disastrous outcome of the battle of Kursk

79 [Bamler], 'German Plans', p. 78.
80 Hubatsch, *Unruhe*, p. 209.

in July 1943 and the rapid worsening of the situation in the Mediterranean following the invasion of Sicily (Operation Husky) in that same month, the Wehrmacht would have been able to deploy all the necessary forces and above all to guarantee the indispensable control of the skies, there is no doubt these developments definitively compromised its realisation.[81] Together of course with the awareness that not even the Western Allies were in a position to manage the landing in Sicily and the invasion of northern Sweden at the same time.

The onerous preparation of 25th Panzer Division, which was only later deployed elsewhere, demonstrates how Schell's 'Operation Study: Sweden' was by no means a mere exercise from the green baize tables of the General Staff. At the same time, the political objective of controlling Sweden, a country increasingly unmarking itself from subjection to the Nazi project, always remained subordinate to the most pressing military situation. This is why H.R. Kurz's thesis that Schell's operation was intended as a 'preventative' action, justified as an 'indirect' attack on the plans of the Western Allies, does not seem convincing.[82] Until the end of the war, a neutral Sweden benefited Germany more than an occupied Sweden. Not even the need for a new German success capable of restoring confidence in the Finnish army and a government, which were increasingly pessimistic about the possibility of a positive outcome for Germany, could justify a war effort now hardly sustainable.

In conclusion, having brought together the difference perspectives and sources, it is suggested that both of the views predominating in the literature to date are incorrect. On the one hand, OKW's pressing concerns regarding potential landings in Scandinavia by the Western Allies meant the plans developed under Bamler's oversight were a genuine preparation for a potential operation, rather than simply conceptual exercises for an implausible action. Conversely, even under the most optimistic assumptions regarding the Swedish forces' supposed lack of will to resist such an attack, the German formations available for the proposed invasion were simply insufficient to carry out the tasks assigned to them. As such, this article sheds new light on the relationship between Germany and neutral Sweden during the conflict and underlines the limits the Wehrmacht had already reached by this mid-point of the war – the tide had turned and there were

81 Gilmour, *Sweden, the Swastika and Stalin*, p. 219.

82 Kurz, 'deutsche Operationsstudie', p. 364.

many who could sense it, even if they might not feel able to say it aloud.

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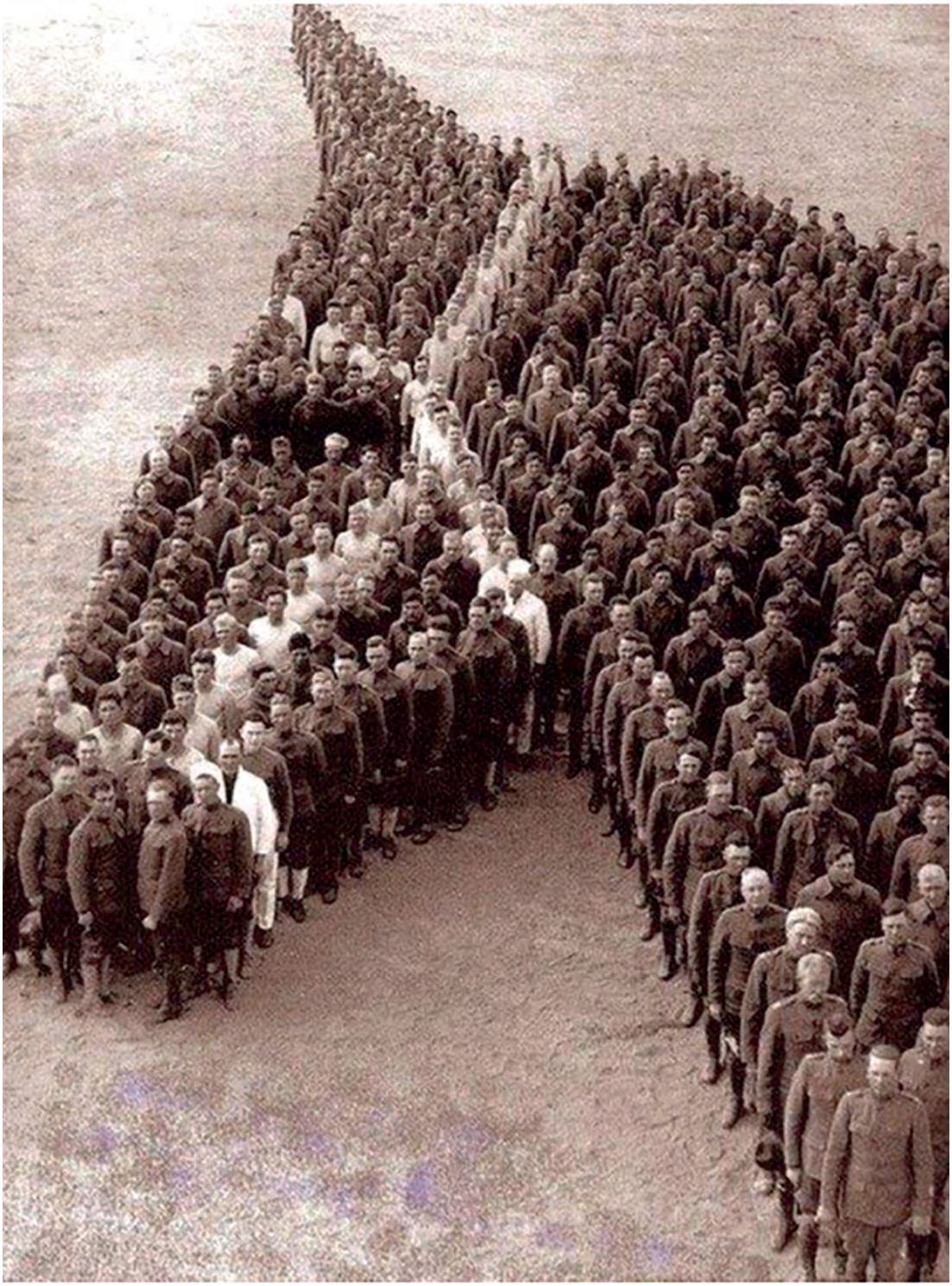

650 Officers and Enlisted Men of Auxiliary Remount Depot N° 326 Camp Cody, N. M., In a Symbolic Head Pose of "The Devil", Saddle Horse ridden by Maj. Frank Brewer, remount commander / Photo by Almeron Newman, *Rear 115 N. Gold* Ave., Deming, N.M..(1919) Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA

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