

comparatively easy prey for enemy aircraft. Three M.T. ships were hit by bombs and sunk. The remaining five M.T. ships reached Malta.

30. That these five ships did make their goal is a magnificent tribute to the resolution shown by all concerned, and a special word of praise is due to the gallant Master of the OHIO (Captain D. W. Mason), to PENN (Lieutenant-Commander J. H. Swain, R.N.), LEDBURY (Lieutenant-Commander R. P. Hill, R.N.) and BRAMHAM (Lieutenant E. F. Baines, R.N.), to the Malta Local Forces, and to the Royal Air Force based on Malta.

31. Having turned over his charges to the Malta Escort Force, Rear-Admiral Commanding, 10th Cruiser Squadron with Force X less H.M. Ships PENN, LEDBURY and BRAMHAM withdrew at 1600/D.4.

32. H.M.S. NIGERIA and three Hunts had already started back, as had H.M. Ships ESKIMO and SOMALI who had been sent by Rear-Admiral Commanding, 10th Cruiser Squadron to help H.M.S. MANCHESTER. H.M.S. TARTAR, who had sunk H.M.S. FORESIGHT at 0955/D.4, was also on her way back to Gibraltar.

33. Throughout D.4 Force Z continued to the westward, apparently unobserved by the enemy, turning to the eastward at 2300/D.4, when H.M. Ships RODNEY and INDOMITABLE with 5 destroyers were detached to Gibraltar.

#### *D.5 (14th August).*

34. During D.5 I was uncertain of the position of Force X and how it was faring, though from intercepted manœuvring and radar reporting signals, it was clear that they were being subjected to air attacks to the west of Galita Island. In fact they were undergoing severe attention from the enemy's air forces but fortunately they came through unharmed.

35. With the object of being near at hand if support was required, Force Z cruised to the northward of Algiers until about 1500/D.5, when I was relieved to receive a signal from Rear-Admiral Commanding, 10th Cruiser Squadron, giving his noon position, course and speed as  $37^{\circ} 21' N.$ ,  $06^{\circ} 27' E.$ , 272°, 20 knots. Course of Force Z was then set to make contact.

36. An Albacore was sent to establish a visual link with Force X and at 1800/D.5 Force Z and Force X met and the combined forces withdrew to Gibraltar, arriving at 1800/D.6.

37. Of the remainder of the forces at sea, H.M.S. FURIOUS and screen arrived Gibraltar at 1900/D.3, H.M. Ships NIGERIA, TARTAR and 3 Hunts at 0010/D.6, and H.M. Ships ESKIMO and SOMALI at 0530/D.6.

38. Force R cruised in the western basin until it was certain that they would not be required to fuel Force X, when they were ordered to return to Gibraltar, arriving a.m./D.7.

39. H.M. Ships PENN, LEDBURY and BRAMHAM arrived at Malta with S.S. OHIO at 0755/D.6. They sailed for Gibraltar at 2030/D.9 and arrived there at 0715 on 21st August.

40. During the return passage of H.M.S. FURIOUS from Operation "Bellows," H.M.S. WOLVERINE, one of her escort, detected, rammed and sank a U-Boat\* in position  $37^{\circ} 18' N.$ ,  $01^{\circ} 55' E.$  at 0050/D.3. There were no survivors. H.M.S. WOLVERINE severely damaged her bows and was escorted part of the way back to Gibraltar by H.M.S. MALCOLM, who later reinforced H.M.S. NIGERIA's screen.

41. H.M.S. NIGERIA was shadowed continuously on D.4 and was attacked by three torpedo bomber aircraft at 1515. She successfully combed the tracks and was not further molested by aircraft.

When 5 miles south of Alboran, at 1644/D.5, she avoided torpedoes fired by a U-Boat. Prior to this attack her screen had been reinforced by four Western Approaches destroyers despatched by Vice-Admiral Commanding, North Atlantic.

42. H.M. Ships ESKIMO and SOMALI were attacked by a JU.88 and a torpedo bomber aircraft when west of Galita p.m. on D.4, and a near miss on H.M.S. SOMALI caused her to lose steam and stop for five minutes.

43. Force Y sailed from Malta at 2030/D.1. Though aircraft flew over them on D.2, their Italian deck markings seemed to nonplus the enemy's observers. Off Cape Bon on the night of D.2, Force Y encountered and was fired on by a darkened Vichy minesweeper and on D.3 was shadowed occasionally by single aircraft who remained mystified. No incident occurred subsequent to noon on D.3 and the force arrived safely at Gibraltar at 1000/D.5.

#### *General Remarks.*

44. *Planning and assembly.*—It was a great advantage that the planning could be done at the Admiralty for the following reasons:—

(a) Early decisions could be obtained and questions answered, thus saving signals.

(b) Communications were better and there was less chance of loss of security.

(c) General views on policy could be obtained.

(d) Experts in all branches were readily available.

(e) The advice and help of the Naval Staff was always at hand.

45. Assembling and sailing of ships at Scapa Flow not only enabled me to discuss the operation with the majority of Commanding Officers of ships taking part, but also gave many advantages from the security point of view. The use of a telephone, fitted with a scrambler, was invaluable as it enabled many points of detail to be cleared up, up to the moment of sailing. I am sure that the decision to bring NELSON and RODNEY from Freetown to Scapa was fully justified.

It was some disadvantage from the co-operation point of view that INDOMITABLE and EAGLE and their attendant ships should have had to start from Freetown and Gibraltar respectively; from the security point of view, however, this was probably advantageous.

#### *Admiralty footnote :*

\* This was the Italian submarine DAGABUR. Her destruction on this occasion has been confirmed.