

37. By this time Force C was nearly out of H.A. ammunition and both forces were withdrawing to the south westward. Course was altered to the southward at 1830 and to the eastward at 2100. At 1700 FIJI, who had KANDAHAR and KINGSTON in company, reported her position as 305° Cape Elaphonisi 24 miles, steering 175° at 27 knots. This position was 30 miles due east from Forces A1 and C, who were then steering 215°.

38. At 1845 FIJI, who had survived some 20 bombing attacks by aircraft formations during the past four hours, fell a victim to a single M.E.109. This machine flew out of the clouds in a shallow dive and dropped its bomb very close to the port side, amidships. The ship took up a 25° list and soon came to a stop with her engines crippled. Half an hour later another single machine dropped three bombs which landed over "A" boiler room. The list soon increased to 30° and at 2015 the ship rolled right over. KANDAHAR and KINGSTON lowered boats and rafts and withdrew to avoid almost certain damage from air attack. They returned after dark to pick up more men and finally succeeded in rescuing a total of 523. They had been subjected to no less than 22 air attacks between 1445 and 1920 and were now getting short of fuel. At 2245 they proceeded at 15 knots to join C.S.15.

39. At 1928 C.S.7 learned from KANDAHAR that FIJI was sinking. C.S.7 immediately ordered D.10, who was to join him on the following day, to proceed with VOYAGER and VENDETTA to FIJI's position. At 2030, in accordance with instructions received from the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, C.S.7 detached DECOY and HERO to the south coast of Crete to embark the King of Greece.

40. During the day the casualties to ships had been, two cruisers and one destroyer sunk, with two battleships and two cruisers damaged. The only casualties to enemy aircraft which could be claimed with certainty amounted to two shot down, six probably shot down and five damaged. It is probable that enemy losses in aircraft were greater than this.

41. Captain (D), Fifth Destroyer Flotilla, in KELLY, with KASHMIR, KIPLING, KELVIN and JACKAL had left Malta at 2130/21st May and joined C.S.7 at 1600/22nd. At 2030/22nd KELLY, KASHMIR and KIPLING were detached to look for survivors from FIJI and half an hour later, KELVIN and JACKAL were sent to try and pick up any of GLOUCESTER's crew who could be found. C.S.7 however, subsequently ordered the search to be abandoned and sent the 5th D.F. to patrol inside Kissamo and Canea Bays. On arrival at the Anti Kithera Channel, KIPLING developed a steering defect and D.5 ordered her to join C.S.7. Continuing into Canea Bay, KELLY and KASHMIR encountered a troop-carrying caique, which they damaged badly by gunfire. These two ships then carried out a short bombardment of Maleme. Whilst withdrawing they encountered another caique which they engaged and set on fire. KELVIN and JACKAL were detached to investigate some lights which the Naval Officer-in-Charge, Suda, had reported being seen in Canea Bay. These proved to be shore lights so KELVIN and

JACKAL withdrew independently and informed the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean by signal (KELVIN's signal timed 0300C of 23rd May).

42. Force E (D.14 in JERVIS with ILEX, NIZAM and HAVOCK) patrolled off Heraklion during the night 22nd/23rd May without incident and then withdrew to Alexandria. During the afternoon the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, gave orders for AJAX and ORION, who were returning with R.A.D. to Alexandria, to join D.14 about 80 miles south west of Kaso. The intention was for this force to cover Heraklion during the night 22nd/23rd May. R.A.D. detached these two ships at 1730/22nd when about 150 miles from the Kaso Strait. In the meantime, the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean had ordered D.14 to pass the Kaso Strait at 2100/22nd (the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean's signal timed 1312 of 22nd May). AJAX, realising that she could not possibly join D.14 in time, decided to rejoin R.A.D. and informed the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean accordingly (AJAX's signal timed 1843 of 22nd May).

43. At Alexandria, GLENROY embarked 900 men of the Queens Royal Regiment, the Headquarters of the 16th Infantry Brigade and 18 vehicles. She sailed for Tymbaki p.m. 22nd May escorted by COVENTRY, AUCKLAND and FLAMINGO. JAGUAR and DEFENDER, after embarking ammunition urgently required by the Army, left Alexandria to join Force A1 and then proceed so as to arrive Suda during the night 23rd/24th May.

44. Minefields were successfully laid by ABDIEL between Cephalonia and Levkas and by RORQUAL in the Gulf of Salonika.

45. Meanwhile, in Crete, the enemy was concentrating on the Maleme area, where his troop carriers continued to arrive and depart on 22nd May at the rate of more than 20 per hour. A plan to counter attack Maleme had to be abandoned and our troops commenced to withdraw to a new line.

46. At 2230/22nd May a "Most Immediate" message was received from C.S.7 reporting the loss of GLOUCESTER and FIJI and giving the ammunition situation in the battleships and destroyers. It appeared from this signal that the battleships had run right out of pom pom ammunition. The Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, accordingly decided to withdraw all forces to Alexandria (the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean's signal timed 0408 of 23rd May).

23rd May, 1941.

47. The naval position at daylight on 23rd May was as follows:—

(a) At 0408 the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, had ordered all forces to withdraw to Alexandria, with the exception of GLENROY and escort.

(b) Forces A1 and C, about 25 miles apart, were joining each other and returning to Alexandria. KANDAHAR and KINGSTON were joining Force C.

(c) D.5 in KELLY, with KASHMIR and KIPLING had just cleared Canea Bay and was returning to Alexandria. KELVIN and