

(d) Steering gear was affected and the ship was never again under complete control, N.U.C. Balls* being hoisted at 1210

(e) The warning telephone system failed.

(f) Power failed at both after groups of 5.25 inch guns and P 1 turret jammed in training: power failed at P.2.

5. A further torpedo bomber attack developed on the starboard side at 1220. Three minutes later the ship was hit by two torpedoes, one at the stern and the other in the after part of the ship, starboard side. At 1224½ the ship was hit by a torpedo abreast B turret on the starboard side. Amongst other results "A" propeller shaft became jammed, the list was gradually reduced, and the ship settled appreciably.

6 At 1241 fire was opened with remaining 5.25 inch guns, namely S.1., S.2 and P.1, and pom-poms, at a high level bombing formation of eight aircraft. Three minutes later the ship was straddled and a hit sustained on the catapult deck. The armoured deck was not pierced. Near misses may have caused further damage.

7. Soon after this attack H.M.S. EXPRESS closed and came alongside the starboard side of the quarterdeck. Orders were given by the Captain to disembark wounded and those not required to fight the ship. Finally, the order to abandon ship was passed.

8. As much detailed evidence as possible is being taken.

9. I wish to record that H.M.S. EXPRESS was magnificently handled, remaining alongside until the last possible moment.

10. The officers and ratings whom I saw displayed great courage and steadiness.

11. H.M.S. PRINCE OF WALES heeled over quickly to port and sank at about 1320.

(Signed) A. G. SKIPWITH,
Lieutenant Commander, R.N.

APPENDIX I.

*Air Headquarters Far East,
Singapore.*

12th December, 1941.

Sir,

I have the honour to forward herewith a report made by Flt./Lt. Vigors, temporarily commanding 453 Squadron, who took his squadron over to provide fighter cover to H.M. Ships PRINCE OF WALES and REPULSE.

The tributes paid by Flt./Lt. Vigors to the magnificent conduct of the officers and men of the PRINCE OF WALES and REPULSE are tributes which the whole of the personnel under my command would like to join in.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(Signed) C. PULFORD.

*Air Vice-Marshal, Commanding,
Royal Air Force, Far East.*

*The Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet,
H.M. Naval Base,
Singapore.*

Admiralty footnote :—

* N.U.C. Balls—"not under control" signal.

*R.A.A.F. Station,
Sembawang.*

11.12.41.

To:—*Commander-in-Chief, Far Eastern Fleet.*

SIR,

I had the privilege to be the first aircraft to reach the crews of the PRINCE OF WALES and the REPULSE after they had been sunk. I say the privilege, for during the next hour while I flew around low over them, I witnessed a show of that indomitable spirit for which the Royal Navy is so famous. I have seen a show of spirit in this war over Dunkirk, during the "Battle of Britain," and in the London night raids, but never before have I seen anything comparable with what I saw yesterday. I passed over thousands who had been through an ordeal the greatness of which they alone can understand, for it is impossible to pass on one's feelings in disaster to others.

Even to an eye so inexperienced as mine it was obvious that the three destroyers were going to take hours to pick up those hundreds of men clinging to bits of wreckage, and swimming around in the filthy oily water. Above all this, the threat of another bombing and machine-gun attack was imminent. Every one of those men must have realised that. Yet as I flew around, every man waved and put his thumb up as I flew over him.

After an hour, lack of petrol forced me to leave, but during that hour I had seen many men in dire danger waving, cheering and joking as if they were holiday-makers at Brighton waving at a low flying aircraft. It shook me for here was something above human nature. I take off my hat to them, for in them I saw the spirit which wins wars.

I apologise for taking up your valuable time, but I thought you should know of the incredible conduct of your men.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(Signed) T. A. VIGORS,
Flt./Lt., O.C. 453 Squadron.

APPENDIX II.

*Operational Signals made, by
Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet,
on 9th December, 1941.*

TO: Force Z FROM: C.-in-C., E.F.

Besides a minor landing at Kota Bharu which was not followed, landings have been made between Pattani and Singgora and a major landing 90 miles north of Singgora.

2. Little is known of enemy naval forces in the vicinity. It is believed that KONGO is the only capital ship likely to be met. Three Atago type, one Kako type, and two Zintu type cruisers have been reported. A number of destroyers possibly of fleet type are likely to be met.

3. My object is to surprise and sink transports and enemy warships before air attack can develop. Objective chosen will depend on air reconnaissance. Intend to arrive objective after sunrise to-morrow 10th. If an opportunity to bring KONGO to action occurs this is to take precedence over all other action.

4. Subject to Commanding Officer's freedom of manoeuvre in an emergency Force Z will