

5. *Surprise.* For success, surprise was essential. The unseen passage to the Loire was due partly to favourable weather conditions, which helped to prevent the force being detected from the air, and partly to careful routeing to keep the force out of the tracks of Zenits\* and reconnaissance flights by the enemy. It was also due to the almost certain sinking of a U-boat at 0815 on 27th March by H.M.S. TYNE-DALE. Surprise in the final approach was, as pointed out in paragraph 2, due to the methods employed by Commander Ryder to deceive the enemy.

It was also fortunate that there were no patrols covering the approach over the mud flats.

That surprise was not complete was principally due to the noise of the M.L.s' engines (which, on a still night, are clearly audible three miles away) and to the inability of our bomber aircraft to locate their targets in the difficult weather conditions. Though the bombers (for whose services I had asked) fulfilled a useful purpose by helping to drown with their engines the noise of the M.L.s' approach, their presence overhead ensured that every A.A. gun in the neighbourhood was manned and ready to open fire at any moment. Whilst the air activity covered the approach of the seaborne forces, it thus meant that these guns, unimpeded by falling bombs, were able to concentrate their fire on the M.L.s once the alarm was given.

6. *Fatigue.* Thanks to the fine weather and probably also to the stimulus provided by the prospect of attacking the enemy, there were no reports of fatigue being observed among the naval forces before the attack.

Those officers and men who returned in the coastal craft arrived in very good heart, but reaction followed in about 24 hours and they would not have been fit for further operations for some days.

7. *Fitting out of H.M.S. CAMPBELTOWN.* The work done by Devonport dockyard was admirably quick and efficient. I have requested the Admiral Superintendent to convey my appreciation to all concerned.

8. *Co-operation with Aircraft of Coastal Command.* Although not referred to in the report, aircraft of 19 Group, R.A.F. did much useful work in covering the withdrawal of the forces from St. Nazaire. 20 sorties occupying 105 flying hours were carried out during which 1 H.E.III and 2 H.E.II5 were encountered, and 1 enemy aircraft was destroyed. A/S sweeps in the Bay of Biscay were also carried out during the outward passage of the force; these were arranged because such sweeps are the normal procedure in suitable weather, and they provided a measure of security for our surface forces without arousing enemy suspicions.

9. *Conclusion.* There is little in this report about the admirable work ashore of the Commando troops because unfortunately none who took part has returned to tell the tale; nor is

there any officer from H.M.S. CAMPBELTOWN to give the full story of her gallant exploit.

Results must be the silent witnesses of their achievements.

(Signed) C. M. FORBES,  
Admiral of the Fleet,  
Commander-in-Chief.

ENCLOSURE.

10th A/S Striking Force.

1st April, 1942.

I have the honour to submit the following report of proceedings for Operation "Chariot" from the time of sailing at 1400 on 26th March, 1942 until joined by H.M.S. CLEVELAND and H.M.S. BROCKLESBY at 0906 on 28th March, 1942.

(Signed) R. E. D. RYDER,  
Commander, R.N.,  
Senior Officer,  
10th A/S Striking Force.

#### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE OPERATION.

Briefly this operation constituted a frontal attack by a small force of unarmoured vessels on the heavily defended port of St. Nazaire. To a greater extent than possibly ever before did we rely on the element of surprise. In this and in many other features the raid resembled that of the Zeebrugge raid of the last war; we had however certain disadvantages. Our force was smaller, we were more liable to detection from the air and by R.D.F.\* which was to our disadvantage, also Zeebrugge had direct access from the open sea whereas we had to go into a river mouth, and finally the tremendous development in close range rapid firing weapons constituted a formidable threat to our wooden craft carrying petrol. These factors, then, had to be faced in drawing up the naval and military plan for the attack.

2. The principal object of this raid was the destruction of the large entrance lock to the Penhoet basin, the secondary object was to render tidal the basins containing the submarine pens. The plan in brief, was for the CAMPBELTOWN to ram the outer lock gate, for the troops from No. 2 Commando to scramble ashore over her bow and then, having started a delay action fuse, to scuttle the CAMPBELTOWN so that she would blow up with 3 tons of high explosive some 2½ hours later and so demolish the gate. In addition to this, landings were to be made from M.L.s at the Old Mole and in the Old Entrance. Landings therefore were planned at three points, and the landing parties were to carry out an extensive programme of demolitions on the dock entrances and lock working machinery.

3. It was agreed by the Force Commanders that the CAMPBELTOWN being the main unit should receive prime consideration in all matters. Light craft were, in fact, to lead her in and give her full supporting fire. The possible alternative that CAMPBELTOWN, a steel ship, should bear the brunt of the fire while the light craft came in under her shelter was discussed but rejected. In our minds and in our plans, therefore, we envisaged sacrificing, if necessary, everything in order to get the CAMPBELTOWN in.

\* Admiralty footnote: Zenits—Enemy aircraft flights to obtain daily meteorological data.

\* Admiralty footnote: R.D.F.—Radar.