

on fire in Port Akti. This was a very spirited close range action. On the following night H.M. Ships J E R V I S (Captain J. S. Crawford, D.S.O., R.N.) and PENN (Lieutenant-Commander J. H. Swain, D.S.O., R.N.) bombarded Port Kalymnos and set a merchant ship in the harbour on fire. This was evidently the second ship of the enemy convoy.

22. The above enemy losses, with the addition of the damage of four F-lighters on the 18th and 20th by Mitchell aircraft of the U.S.A.A.F. and Beaufighter aircraft of the R.A.F. and torpedoing of a 600 ton merchant ship and a lighter by motor torpedo boats on the night 19th/20th, reduced the chances of the enemy being in a position to invade Leros for the time being and our naval forces then concentrated on the reinforcement and supply of Leros and Samos during the non-moon period.

23. The supply of the garrison at Leros had by this time (18th October) become unsatisfactory. An organisation was being set up for supply by caique through Casteloriso and through Samos, but owing to various difficulties, only very small quantities of supplies had so far reached Leros by either of these methods, though supplies to Samos were going well. Some supplies were being put into Leros by air, but this was falling off owing to shortage of transport aircraft. Supply by submarine could not start for a week and these would only provide a proportion of the tonnage needed to maintain the garrison, much less build up a reserve. The situation was complicated by the fact that the reinforcement of the garrison of Leros, which then consisted of one battalion and one company of infantry plus various details making about 1,200 in all, was dependent to a considerable extent on the creation of a regular supply service.

24. In these circumstances—at any rate temporarily until the caique service and submarines got going—it was decided that the Navy would have to undertake the supply of Leros with destroyers by night. This proved arduous and trying work for the destroyers who were constantly shadowed and attacked by enemy aircraft during their approach and withdrawal from the island. That the destroyers avoided damage in harbour was due primarily to the careful organisation and good judgment of the Senior British Naval Officer, Aegean (Acting Captain E. H. B. Baker, R.N.) who, by varying the timing of the visits and the unloading ports and by reducing the time of discharge to a minimum, was able on most occasions to frustrate the enemy efforts to locate and bomb our ships whilst they were unloading.

25. During the period 16th to 30th October, the following reinforcements were put into Leros:—

<i>By Surface Craft:—</i>	<i>By Submarine:—</i>
950 men,	17 men,
290 tons of stores,	255 tons of stores,
6 guns,	12 guns,
11 jeeps,	1 jeep.
11 trailers;	

26. As a result of a visit to Leros of senior Army Staff Officers from General Headquarters, Middle East, policy was reviewed by the three Commanders-in-Chief on the 30th October. It was then decided still further to reinforce the island, which the Army considered needed some 1,200-1,300 more troops and additional

guns and equipment to make it reasonably tactically secure and capable of beating off an attempt at invasion by the enemy. This was all the more necessary in view not only of the difficulty of intercepting an assault across the very short distances from the harbours and bays of Kos and Kalymnos islands and the quantity of minefields in the area, but also because of the approach of winter and the strain on the destroyers, for owing to losses, the distance from Alexandria, and other factors, it was becoming increasingly difficult to maintain a striking force constantly in the area.

27. Every possible means was utilised for passing in these reinforcements, destroyers, submarines, M.L.s, M.G.B.s, M.M.S.s, B.Y.M.S.,* caiques and schooners, and between 31st October and 7th November, the following were put into Leros:—

<i>By Surface Craft:—</i>	<i>By Submarine:—</i>
1,280 men,	33 tons of stores.
180 tons of stores,	
14 jeeps,	
1 trailer;	

28. During this period of build up no contact was made with enemy forces, though our ships carried out occasional bombardments of enemy ports whilst entering and leaving the Aegean. We were unfortunate in that three destroyers were mined to the eastward of Kalymnos, H.M. Ships HURWORTH (Commander R. H. Wright, D.S.C., R.N.) and ECLIPSE were sunk and H.H.M.S. ADRIAS had her bows blown off. On board H.M.S. ECLIPSE were some 200 military reinforcements for Leros among whom casualties were heavy. Although subject to a considerable weight of air attack both by day and night no ships were sunk by this method, though H.M. Ships SIRIUS and AURORA were both hit and damaged seriously and H.M.S. BELVOIR sustained minor damage from an unexploded bomb.

29. During the last week of October there were clear indications of the mounting of a major assault force in the Piraeus. To overcome the shortage of landing craft, thirteen 60 ft. powered lighters of the I-boat class arrived by rail from the north. Simultaneously a group of three escort vessels of U-J type were sailed from Piraeus to the Cyclades. The loading of several merchant vessels with munitions, guns and supplies suggested preparations for a follow-up convoy.

30. It was not clear if the assault was intended for Samos or Leros, but a series of heavy air raids suggested the former. The sinking of a 1,200 ton eastbound merchant vessel off Anaphi by H.M. Submarine UNSPARING on 29th October made it probable that the operation would be postponed, and this impression was confirmed by the return of a 2,000 ton merchant vessel from Syra to Piraeus on 1st November.

PHASE IV.

Invasion of Leros—3rd November to 16th November.

31. On 3rd November, landing craft and escorts were in Lavrion and agents reported they were carrying out landing exercises. Photographic reconnaissance on 4th November

Admiralty footnote:—

* M.L.—Motor Launch; M.G.B.—Motor Gun Boat; M.M.S.—Motor Minesweeper; B.Y.M.S.—British Yacht Minesweeper.