

64. Information from Montevideo was to the effect that GRAF SPEE was still repairing damage, having obtained assistance from the shore, and had provisioned. It was reported as unlikely that she would sail that night; on the other hand, once again I did not feel able to rely on such an optimistic report.

65. I signalled the following appreciation to ships in company timed 1615/16th December—

"My object Destruction necessitates keeping my force together. My Appreciation. Rely on getting his time of sailing and initial course from shore. For subsequent movements rely on CUMBERLAND'S aircraft reconnaissance reports.

"Enemy's courses of Action. (a) North of English Bank. (b) Between English and Rouen Banks. (c) Between Rouen Bank and San Antonio. (d) Double back on any track. My Course of Action. I rule out fighting him off Whistle Buoy as being politically impossible. Until the dawn phase I want to keep the advantage of light and from this it follows that I must keep to the east and move to intercept him from area to area depending on time and information. My Plan. To keep within reach of intercepting him north of English Bank moving south or doubling back as information comes in. Tactical. I must keep CUMBERLAND so placed that she will not have her fire masked initially, and therefore I will work in divisions 8 cables apart with ACHILLES in close order astern of AJAX.

"After action commences, divisions have complete freedom of action. CUMBERLAND'S aircraft is to be flown off as soon as news is received of enemy's sailing."

66. The British ship DUNSTER GRANGE was sailed from Montevideo at 1700 and a further period before GRAF SPEE could be allowed to sail was claimed. It was, however, reported that she had made very rapid progress with her repairs, and might break out at any moment.

67. The difficulty of intercepting GRAF SPEE who had so many courses of action open to her will, I feel sure, be realised. It was in the dog watches of this evening that I received the Naval Secretary's signal 1717/16th December informing me from the First Lord of the Admiralty of the honours so graciously bestowed by His Majesty the King on myself, Captain W. E. Parry, Captain C. H. L. Woodhouse and Captain F. S. Bell, and also that I had been promoted to Rear Admiral to date 13th December. This was a most stimulating tonic to us all and I took steps to pass it on to H.M. Ships under my command, emphasising the share of all concerned in the honours which their senior officers had received.

68. The squadron spent the night patrolling on a north and south line five miles to the east of the English Bank Light Buoy. OLYNTHUS proceeded to sea with order to be at the Rouen Bank by 1000 the next morning if GRAF SPEE had not broken out.

*Sunday, 17th December.*

69. I ordered ACHILLES who was getting low in fuel, to oil from OLYNTHUS off the Rouen Bank during the forenoon. AJAX and CUMBERLAND acted as look-outs at visibility

distance during the operation. The squadron then cruised in company off the south-east of the English Bank, remaining concentrated throughout the afternoon and ready again to take up the same night patrol as on the previous night.

70. It was reported that GRAF SPEE had landed all her borrowed welding apparatus during this forenoon. We all expected that she would break out at any moment. I would like to place on record the fact that at this stage the most cheerful optimism pervaded all ships in spite of the fact that this was the fifth night of waiting for the enemy.

71. At 1540 I received a signal that GRAF SPEE was transferring between 300 and 400 men to the German ship TACOMA lying close to her in the ante-port. At 1720, a further report stated that over 700 men with their baggage and some provisions had now been transferred, and that there were indications that GRAF SPEE intended to scuttle herself.

Shortly after this GRAF SPEE was reported as weighing.

72. I immediately altered course to close the Whistle Buoy, and increased to 25 knots. AJAX'S aircraft was flown off and ordered to proceed towards Montevideo and report the position of GRAF SPEE and also TACOMA.

GRAF SPEE left harbour at 1815 and proceeded slowly to the westward. TACOMA also weighed, and followed her out of harbour.

73. I ordered my squadron to assume the First Degree of Readiness, in case GRAF SPEE intended re-transferring her crew from TACOMA outside the harbour, or intended to break out with or without her surplus crew.

74. AJAX aircraft reported sighting GRAF SPEE in a position in shallow water some six miles south-west of Montevideo. At 2054 the aircraft signalled: "GRAF SPEE has blown herself up."

75. The squadron carried on towards Montevideo, proceeding north of the English Bank, AJAX and ACHILLES cheering ship as they passed each other.

76. Once again Captain Woodhouse and Lieutenant Lewin made an excellent recovery of AJAX's aircraft, this time under almost dark conditions.

Navigation lights were then switched on and the squadron steamed past the Whistle Buoy within about four miles of the wreck of the GRAF SPEE. It was now dark, and she was ablaze from end to end, flames reaching almost as high as the top of her control tower, a magnificent and most cheering sight.

#### REMARKS BY REAR ADMIRAL COMMANDING SOUTH AMERICA DIVISION.

##### *Appreciation of conduct of Commanding Officers and Ships' Companies.*

77. I have the greatest pleasure in informing you of the very high standard of efficiency and courage that was displayed by all officers and men throughout the five days of the operation under review.

78. Captain W. E. Parry, Royal Navy, of H.M.S. ACHILLES; Captain C. H. L. Woodhouse, Royal Navy, of H.M.S. AJAX; and Captain F. S. Bell, Royal Navy, of H.M.S. EXETER, all handled their ships in a most efficient and resolute manner.