

FFF into Sector FDD—which was left vacant by SEANYMPH—so that she should be closer at hand if required.

98. SCEPTRE received my signal referred to in paragraph 96 at 1203 22nd September, and at once set course for the patrol as ordered. At the time of receipt SCEPTRE found herself to have been set some 15 miles to the eastward of her patrol area, and this delayed her arrival in her new patrol position just sufficiently to make her miss sighting LUTZOW on her passage south.

99. STUBBORN had also experienced a set. At 0813Z on 22nd September she found herself inside the declared mined area, having been set 13 miles, 117°, in 24 hours. The S.T.U.* was operated but no contacts were gained, and STUBBORN regained safer waters.

100. The P.R. of the Alten area on the 22nd September failed.

23rd September onwards

101. Four submarines were now left to patrol off Alten Fiord for the recovery of X-craft, and I signalled ordering THRASHER to cover the two westernmost recovery sectors (FAA and FBB), TRUCULENT to cover Sector FDD and Sector FEE west of 22° East, and SYRTIS Sector FEE east of 22° East and Sector FFF. STUBBORN continued in Sector FCC.

102. These four submarines patrolled without incident on the 23rd, 24th, 25th and 26th September, encountering no A/S or air activity. This would appear to be a clear indication that the enemy were unaware how the X-craft had been transported or how they had made the passage.

103. Senior British Naval Officer, North Russia has stated in a monthly report of proceedings that there was an enemy air raid on Polyarnoe on the 24th September, apparently directed against the submarine base. This may have been in connection with Operation "Source", and it is considered not unlikely that the enemy thought the X-craft were operated from Kola Inlet.

Recovery of X-craft

104. X-craft who were able to withdraw after the attack were to endeavour to contact a submarine patrolling in one of the sectors off Alten Fiord. If unable to make contact, they were to make for one of the bays off the north coast of Soroy, which, circumstances permitting, would be closed and examined by certain of the patrolling submarines on the nights of the 27th/28th and 28th/29th September.

105. Submarines were ordered by signal on 25th September that if no contact had been made with X-craft by daylight on the 27th September, they were to assume patrol as follows: SYRTIS in Sector FFF, TRUCULENT in Sector FEE and STUBBORN in Sector FDD. These submarines were then to act in accordance with the orders for recovery.

106. SYRTIS closed the coast off Soroy during daylight on the 27th September and at 1835Z surfaced between Bondoy Island and Store Kamoy. At 2149Z she sighted and spoke TRUCULENT, who was also searching for X-craft in the vicinity of Bondoy, and, then proceeded into Finn Fiord. Sighting nothing,

SYRTIS withdrew and patrolled to seaward during the day of the 28th September. That night she again searched Finn Fiord and the islands of Bondoy and Store Kamoy. When by 0215Z on the 29th September nothing had been sighted, SYRTIS withdrew to seaward and set course to return to base.

107. Similarly TRUCULENT closed Staalet Point and Presten Leads at 1822Z on the 27th September. Nothing was sighted, and she passed through the Bondoy-Kamoy passage, speaking SYRTIS at 2151Z. The following night TRUCULENT again closed Staalet Point to within 2½ miles, but the weather was so bad that it was considered that it would have been impossible to have recovered any X-craft or her crew. At 2030Z on the 28th September TRUCULENT withdrew to return to base.

108. However, the recovery plans were fruitful in the case of STUBBORN. She had set course to close O Fiord at 2200Z on the 27th September, and by 0055Z on the 28th had closed to within half a mile of the entrance to the Fiord. Here she sighted "X"s—the pre-arranged identification signal for X-craft—being made on a blue lamp. A few minutes later X.10 closed and, STUBBORN being short of towing gear after her outward passage, an extemporised tow was passed. By 0150Z on the 28th September X.10 was in tow and both withdrew to seaward.

109. STUBBORN had still not covered Sandfiord which was on her beat, and during the day she attempted to communicate with TRUCULENT, to request her to cover Sandfiord that night: but she failed to get in touch. However, the weather, wind force 6 from the west and sea and swell 5-6,* decided STUBBORN against attempting to close the land once more: it might have meant losing X.10: and at 0600Z on the 29th September STUBBORN with X.10 in tow proceeded by the route ordered to return to base at slow speed.

110. It seems unlikely that any other X-craft were able to withdraw after the attack, and the recovery of the sole survivor must be regarded as a fine piece of seamanship on the part of the Commanding Officer, H.M.S. STUBBORN. The Commanding Officers of TRUCULENT and SYRTIS also made close approaches to an unknown coast in darkness and in bad weather to try to locate any missing X-craft. They withdrew their submarines safely to seaward in accordance with their orders when they had satisfied themselves that a proper search had been carried out.

111. As a further alternative should they not be recovered from the vicinity of Soroy, Commanding Officers of X-craft had the opportunity to proceed to Kola Inlet. Here the Senior British Naval Officer, North Russia, maintained a minesweeper on patrol off the entrance from the 25th September until the 3rd October to intercept any X-craft who had decided on this course. However, no X-craft arrived.

The Return Passage.

112. THRASHER, TRUCULENT, SYRTIS and STUBBORN—the latter with X.10 in tow—proceeded a.m. on the 29th September to

Admiralty footnote—

* Wind force 6—strong breeze (21-26 m.p.h.).
Sea and swell 5-6—very rough to high sea.

Admiralty footnote—

* S T U—a form of asdic.