

45. The Commander-in-Chief in WARSPITE, with VALIANT, GLOUCESTER, JERVIS, JANUS, GREYHOUND, DIAMOND VOYAGER, HERO and DEFENDER, proceeded to Alexandria.

46. Vice-Admiral, Light Forces, 7th Cruiser Squadron, YORK, MOHAWK, GRIFFIN and Force X then all proceeded to Suda Bay to fuel.

Convoy "Excess" arrived at Piraeus at 1200.

Monday, 13th January, 1941.

47. At 0230 ORION and PERTH arrived at Piraeus and embarked passengers from Convoy "Excess", sailing again for Malta at 0600. Vice-Admiral, Light Forces informed the Vice-Admiral, Malta that their route would be through the Kithera Channel, north of the Medina Bank, through position 33° 30' N., 14° 10' E., and requested fighter protection.

48. Air reconnaissance.

Naples—2 cruisers, 3 destroyers.

Two convoys in positions 37° 39' N., 11° 44' E., and 35° 02' N., 11° 46' E. No. 830 Squadron was not despatched from Malta to attack owing to an adverse weather report.

Tuesday, 14th January, 1941.

49. ORION and PERTH arrived at Malta a.m. Owing to machinery defects PERTH remained at Malta and ORION sailed with BONAVENTURE and JAGUAR. The latter two ships were brought to Alexandria to reduce the concentration of ships subject to air attack in Malta.

Wednesday, 15th January, 1941.

50. Rear-Admiral, 1st Battle Squadron, with Force X, made a rendezvous with Vice-Admiral, Light Forces in ORION, with BONAVENTURE and JAGUAR, and proceeded to Suda Bay.

OPERATION "SUBSTANCE"

The following Despatch was submitted to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty on the 4th August, 1941 by Vice-Admiral Sir James F. Somerville, K.C.B., D.S.O., Flag Officer Commanding, Force H.

H.M.S. NELSON,

4th August, 1941.

REPORT ON OPERATION "SUBSTANCE"

Be pleased to lay before Their Lordships the following report on Operation "Substance,"* which includes the covering of Convoy M.G.1† from Malta to Gibraltar.

2. On the 3rd July, the Admiralty notified the authorities concerned the names of the ships taking part in the operation. These were: LEINSTER (personnel ship), MELBOURNE STAR, SYDNEY STAR, CITY OF PRETORIA, PORT CHALMERS, DURHAM and DEUCALION (M.T. ships‡). Ocean Escorts: NELSON, MANCHESTER,

AURORA, ARETHUSA with 3 destroyers of the 4th Destroyer Flotilla and 3 destroyers* from the Home Fleet. S.S. PASTEUR would convey to Gibraltar the personnel not already embarked in H.M. and M.T. ships, for subsequent transfer to H.M. Ships together with naval and military details for Gibraltar.

3. On the 8th July, the Admiralty issued certain decisions† and instructions. These were as follows:—

(a) M.G.1 was to proceed by the westward route.

(b) The order of importance of the three objects of the operation was to be taken as

(i) The safe arrival of Convoy "Substance" at Malta.

(ii) The subsequent safe return to Gibraltar of the warships forming the escorting forces.

(iii) The safe arrival at Gibraltar of M.G.1.

(c) In view of the above it would not be possible to provide close escort for M.G.1 and it was preferable for this convoy to leave Malta on D.3.‡

(d) The advantage claimed for sailing M.G.1 on D.3 with the subsequent dispersal was that the enemy would be presented with a multiplicity of targets.

(e) It was essential for warships to carry troops, and an additional carrier would not be available.

I was instructed, after consultation with Vice-Admiral, Malta, to issue detailed orders for the whole operation.

4. On the 9th July, the Vice-Admiral Commanding, North Atlantic Station asked for as many additional flying-boats as possible to be made available at Gibraltar from p.m. D.—4 to D.3 in order to provide cover for the operation.

5. Special instructions were issued by me on the 10th July to conceal the object of the operation.

6. On the 8th July, I had asked Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean if arrangements could be made for the following submarine dispositions:—

(a) 2 off Naples.

(b) 1 off Palermo.

(c) 2 in southern approaches to Messina.

(d) 1 off Marittimo.

(e) 1 off Cagliari.

Of these, (a) and (e) could be provided from the Western Mediterranean.

Admiralty footnotes.

* Subsequently reduced by one destroyer

† The reference to "decisions" concerns previous discussions between the Admiralty, Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, Flag Officer Commanding, Force H and Vice-Admiral, Malta on the planning of this operation

‡ The calendar date on which an operation is to be carried out is often not fixed until the last moment. For this reason, as well as for reasons of security, it was at this time customary, in writing advance orders, to designate the day on which the operation was to start as "D 1", and the second and subsequent days as "D 2", "D 3", etc.

It is now more usual to refer to the starting day as "D. day", subsequent days "D + 1", "D + 2" and the days preceding it as "D - 1", "D - 2", etc.

Admiralty footnotes

* "Substance"—a convoy from U.K. to Malta via Straits of Gibraltar.

† M.G.1—a convoy of 7 empty M.T. ships.

‡ M.T. ships—Military Transports