

2. I should like to record here the magnificent spirit of my officers and ship's company throughout their ordeal. Cases occurred of men having to be ordered to leave their guns to save themselves as the ship was actually turning over.

3. Should Their Lordships think fit I am ready for a further seagoing command.

4. As I am regrettably the senior surviving officer I am preparing a report of the operation and the loss of the ships PRINCE OF WALES and REPULSE. I would only wish to state here that I was in entire agreement with every action taken by the Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet, with the information that was then, as far as I knew, available to him. REPULSE was attacked constantly between 1110 and 1233 on the 10th December by H.L.B. and T/B attacks. Altogether she received one bomb hit, several near misses and four or five torpedoes. I was successful in the early attacks in combing the tracks of at least 15 torpedoes but in a later attack when committed to comb one attack another lot came close in on my beam and hit.

5. Shortly after this the ship was torpedoed aft and the rudder jammed; this was followed by attacks coming from all directions, when she suffered two or three further hits. I then knew that she could not survive, and ordered all up from below, and to cast loose Carley floats.

6. The ship remained afloat about six minutes after this and it is fortunate that the number above mentioned were rescued.

7. Lastly I think you should know that the attacks were pressed home by the Japanese with great determination and efficiency—the H.L.B. attacks in close formation at 10,000 feet were remarkably accurate. Large numbers of aircraft, possibly over 50, must have been employed. The torpedoes ran very straight and shallow and showed a distinct track.

8. I understand that Captain L. H. Bell of H.M.S. PRINCE OF WALES has given you a preliminary report of the loss of that ship.

9. The Destroyers ELECTRA, EXPRESS and VAMPIRE were handled most skilfully and I cannot say enough for the rescue work and care of survivors that they showed.

FURTHER REPORT BY CAPTAIN W. G. TENNANT, C.B., M.V.O., R.N.

1. At about 1230 Monday, 8th December, I was called to a meeting on board PRINCE OF WALES with the Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet, at which were present the Chief of Staff, the Captain of the Fleet, the Captain of the PRINCE OF WALES and some Staff Officers. The Commander-in-Chief described the intended operation which was broadly to make a raid on the Japanese communications to Kota Bharu, Singgora and Pattani.

2. PRINCE OF WALES, REPULSE, and four Destroyers sailed from Naval Base at 1730 and passed the boom at 1830. The Commander-in-Chief decided that in view of possible mine-fields it was necessary to pass to the eastward of Anamba Islands before turning to the northward.

Tuesday, 9th December.

3. Constant low clouds and heavy rain storms continued until about 1645 and with the exception of an unconfirmed report of sighting of aircraft by VAMPIRE at about 0630 there was no other reason to suppose that the Force had been sighted. However, at about 1645 the sky cleared considerably and the Force was very soon being shadowed by at least three aircraft. One Catalina was seen at about this time. During this period the course of the Force was north so that the enemy had still no knowledge of our intention to turn in towards Kota Bharu. At 1900 the course was altered to north west and speed increased to 26 knots. TENEDOS was ordered to return to base at about this time. At about 2000 I received a signal from the Commander-in-Chief that he had decided to keep the Destroyers in company and to cancel the operation in view of the fact that the whereabouts of the Force was actually known to the enemy; it would therefore be improbable that we should meet any convoy in the morning, and the enemy would have at least twelve hours to concentrate his airforce to attack us. At about 2030 the course was altered to south eastwards, I believe with the intention of shaking off the shadowers, and later to 150° speed being reduced to 20 knots to conserve the destroyers' oil. Later at approximately midnight course was altered to 245° and speed increased to 24 knots; this after signals received reporting an enemy landing at Kuantan. It was understood to be the Commander-in-Chief's intention to be off the coast at daylight in this vicinity. The remainder of the night passed without incident.

Wednesday, 10th December.

4. At about 0630 to 0700 an enemy reconnaissance aircraft appeared. The Force continued steering to the coast and PRINCE OF WALES flew off one aircraft and carried out a reconnaissance of it. Later EXPRESS was also sent in to investigate ashore. The Force passed down inside the seven fathom shoal which lies immediately to the eastward of Kuantan at approximately ten miles from the coast. When EXPRESS rejoined at about 0845 on reaching the northern end of the seven fathom patch, course was altered to the eastward at about 0935. I suggested to the Commander-in-Chief that REPULSE'S aircraft should carry out A/S patrol for two hours and then fly direct to Singapore then only about 140 miles distant. When approaching Kuantan at dawn a small tug with four barges was sighted at 0514. It was thought that they might conceivably be motor landing craft and I signalled to the Commander-in-Chief that we might profitably examine them on our return, with which he agreed. At about 1015 the Commander-in-Chief signalled first degree of H.A. readiness.* REPULSE R D F. shortly after picked up enemy aircraft bearing 220 degrees approximately. The aircraft were first sighted at about 1100; the Commander-in-Chief had the Force manoeuvred by blue pennant and the Capital ships were now in quarter line formation.

5. I am now about to describe the various phases of the air attacks which finally caused

Admiralty footnote —

* H.A. readiness—readiness of High Angle anti-aircraft guns.