

27th May, one by RODNEY's torpedo, and the subsequent heavy pounding by gunfire. At the end of this she was in a sinking condition, and the final torpedoes from DORSETSHIRE only hastened her end. A few casualties and slight damage from splinters were incurred in SHEFFIELD and the destroyers of the Fourth Destroyer Flotilla during the night of 26th/27th May; there were no casualties or damage to any of our ships during the subsequent day action.

89. In KING GEORGE V W/T transmission on power on certain wavelengths interfered with reception on R.D.F. For this reason I was unable during the action to keep the Admiralty fully informed of its progress, especially in view of the fact that I had been warned to expect heavy attack by enemy aircraft, and I did not wish to risk being fixed by D/F. The BISMARCK's sinking was reported as soon as it was known and a description of the engagement was deferred until it was practicable to transmit a long signal by wireless. This limitation applies in some degree to all ships and will have to be borne in mind in the future.

#### *Return of the Fleet.*

90. KING GEORGE V and RODNEY with COSSACK, SIKH and ZULU, proceeded to the northward, DORSETSHIRE and MAORI rejoined at 1230, and the screen was augmented by JUPITER during the afternoon. Nine further destroyers had joined by 1600 the following day. Several signals were received on 28th May, indicating that air attacks on the fleet were impending, but only four enemy aircraft appeared. One of these bombed the screen without effect, while another jettisoned its solitary bomb on being attacked by a Blenheim fighter. MASHONA and TARTAR, 100 miles to the southward, were heavily attacked, MASHONA being sunk at noon, with the loss of one officer and 45 ratings; TARTAR shot down one of the attacking aircraft. PIORUN underwent six attacks by aircraft on her way back to Plymouth; all were driven off by gunfire.

91. RODNEY, screened by MAORI, SIKH and COLUMBIA (Lieutenant-Commander Somerville W. Davis), was detached to the Clyde at 1700; DORSETSHIRE was detached to the Tyne at 2316; KING GEORGE V was delayed by fog, but eventually anchored in Loch Ewe at 1230 on 29th May. GALATEA (Rear-Admiral Commanding, Second Cruiser Squadron), AURORA and PRINCE OF WALES arrived at Hvalfiord on 27th May; EDINBURGH (Commodore Commanding, Eighteenth Cruiser Squadron) arrived at Londonderry on 28th May and NORFOLK (Rear-Admiral Commanding, First Cruiser Squadron) at the Clyde on 29th May; Force "H" returned to Gibraltar.

#### *Conduct of Officers and Men.*

92. Although it was no more than I expected, the co-operation, skill and understanding displayed by all forces during this prolonged chase gave me the utmost satisfaction. Flag and Commanding Officers of detached units invariably took the action I would have wished, before or without receiving instructions from me. The conduct of all officers and men of

the Fleet which I have the honour to command was in accordance with the traditions of the Service. Force "H" was handled with conspicuous skill throughout the operation by Vice-Admiral Sir James F. Somerville, K.C.B., D.S.O., and contributed a vital share in its successful conclusion.

#### *Supply of Information and Disposition of Forces.*

93. The accuracy of the enemy information supplied by the Admiralty and the speed with which it was passed were remarkable, and the balance struck between information and instructions passed to the forces out of visual touch with me was ideal. The disposition of Force "H," RODNEY and the other forces placed at my disposal, completed my own dispositions and enabled me to avoid breaking W/T silence at a time when this was particularly important.

(Signed) JACK C. TOVEY,

*Admiral.*

*Commander-in-Chief,  
Home Fleet.*

*H.M.S. RENOWN,*

*4th June, 1941.*

*To: The Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet.*

The following report of the operations culminating in the destruction of the German battleship BISMARCK is forwarded in accordance with Admiralty message 0032 of 28th May, 1941.

#### *25th May.*

2. At 0330 on Sunday, 25th May, Force "H" was in position  $39^{\circ} 35' N. 14^{\circ} 10' W.$ , steering  $310^{\circ}$  at 24 knots. At this time instructions were received to steer to intercept BISMARCK from the southward. The enemy had last been located in position  $56^{\circ} 30' N. 36^{\circ} 00' W.$  at 0306 when SUFFOLK lost touch. The existing course and speed was therefore maintained.

3. At 0400 instructions were received that destroyers should be sent back to Gibraltar before it became necessary to fuel them, as Force "H" might be required for extended operations. The three screening destroyers were therefore detached at 0900 with instructions to transmit two signals when 150 miles clear, one informing the Admiralty of the position, course and speed of Force "H" at 0730, and the other requesting Commander-in-Chief, Plymouth, to keep me fully informed of the results of Brest reconnaissance.

4. At 1100, when in position  $41^{\circ} 30' N. 17^{\circ} 10' W.$ , orders were received for Force "H" to act on the assumption that the enemy had turned towards Brest at 0300/25. Course was therefore altered to  $360^{\circ}$ .

5. At 1215 Force "H" altered course to  $345^{\circ}$  to reach the initial position for an air search a.m./26 based on the assumption that the enemy's maximum speed of advance was not more than 25 knots. It was my intention to carry out, if necessary, three searches of the area across the Bay of Biscay allowing for the enemy making a substantial detour to the southward. The first search was designed to cover enemy speeds of 25 to 21 knots, the second 21