

were no signs of the crew. This convinced me that the ship had been partially abandoned, probably as a result of INDOMITABLE's air attack, and fire was ceased.

34. At 0857 intercepted F.O.O.2's signal to PAKENHAM urgently requiring bombarding ship. LIGHTNING was detailed and proceeded to a position close to Red Beach at 0926, opening fire at 0953.

35. As soon as the shoot at the sloop D'ENTRECASTEAUX had been completed, LAFOREY proceeded inshore to bombard to support LIGHTNING, being ready at 1026, 3 cables from the shore off Red Beach.

36. At 1033 F.O.O.2 indicated the bombarding areas, reported position of own troops and suggested air spotting.

37. From map references own troops appeared very close, and at 1101 LAFOREY opened fire with single-gun salvos to see if F.O.O.2 could observe fall of shot. 7 rounds were fired but none seen. LIGHTNING was also in action until 1055 when F.O.C. Force "F"'s signal 1044 ordering her to cease fire was received.

38. At 1124 I asked F.O.O.2 whether I could go on, and told him that the last series had been fired 1500 yards North of own troops. At 1130 F.O.O.2 informed me that it was impossible for own troops to approach certain areas owing to strong points of enemy batteries and machine-gun posts. LAFOREY continued bombarding but no fall of shot was reported and it was obvious that F.O.O.2 could not see the fire but that own troops were not being endangered while the enemy lines of communication were being attacked. During this period 3 series of five 2-gun salvos at 2 minute intervals firing 30 in all were carried out. Fire was checked at 1208.

39. At 1159 F.O.O.2 asked for duplication by LIGHTNING and was informed that 6-gun salvos could be fired and duplicated, and that either series could be repeated, or rapid unseen fire for effect could be commenced. F.O.O.2 asked for a repetition of the series and this request confirmed that own troops were all right. LAFOREY continued with 2-gun salvos until 1221 when LIGHTNING was ready to fire broadsides of 4 to 6 guns at target. LAFOREY then increased to 4- to 6-gun salvos at target. 38 rounds were fired by LAFOREY with LIGHTNING joining in until 1233 when fire was checked.

40. None of this fire was observed by F.O.O.2 but it has since been learnt that it proved most helpful to a company of the 2nd Battalion South Lancashire Regiment who had infiltrated behind the enemy's lines and seized the wireless station, being practically surrounded. This was extremely fortunate.

41. In the meantime I had asked ILLUSTRIOUS for a spotting aircraft, and had sent my B.L.O.* and one officer to Windsor Castle O.P. to see if they could distinguish the position of the enemy batteries in action against own troops. At 1327 touch was lost with F.O.O.2 who informed me that he was changing his battery.

42. Windsor Castle O.P. was manned at 1330 and the observer reported that the battle area

was obscured by smoke. 8 single rounds were fired at a safe range but accurate observation was impossible from this position.

43. At 1440 touch was obtained with the spotting aircraft from ILLUSTRIOUS but no target could be identified for some time, but at 1527 the aircraft ordered "Open Fire," and one round was fired, reported as 100 yards over.

44. At 1530 9 bombing aircraft were seen going in to attack, and the spotting aircraft was informed that fire would not be continued until this was completed.

45. At 1618, after the bombers had retired, the spotting aircraft called for fire on a gun battery. This was engaged from 1618 to 1705, firing 58 rounds from A and B turrets, when a signal was received from F.O.O.2 relayed by PAKENHAM, to "stop firing—moving." This had been transmitted at 1637. The spotting aircraft was then told to return to the carrier. Spotting had been carried out most efficiently with excellent communication.

46. This aircraft had originally been asked for at 1034, and, while it is fully realised that four hours was not a long time under the circumstances, had a spotting aircraft been kept available for destroyers the Army could have been helped more effectively much earlier.

47. Anchor was weighed at 0210/7th and LAFOREY proceeded through the minefield to hunt for a submarine reported by GENISTA as ordered by F.O.C. Force "F" and Captain (D), 12th Destroyer Flotilla.

48. At 0537 while off Nosi Hara received an aircraft's signal passed by Captain (D), 12th D.F.—"Survivors of submarine struggling in the water." There was some difficulty in establishing the position in which the submarine had been sunk, and when it was seen that PAKENHAM and one corvette were closing the right spot LAFOREY returned to the anchorage to provide A.A. protection.

49. LAFOREY proceeded for A/S patrol off the main entrance at 1800, closing JASMINE aground on Nosi Fati shoal at 2100; finding she had got off, A/S patrol was resumed until 0500/8th.

50. LAFOREY then escorted the fast convoy from the anchorage to Diego Suarez, entering harbour at 1500.

51. The bearing and enthusiasm of the Ship's Company over a long period of Action Stations was most satisfactory, and the fact that only one misfire (in Director) was experienced in a total of 297 rounds fired proved that the material of the ship had been maintained in first class condition. In general, all departments carried out arduous duties without a hitch. In particular, I would mention the Engine-room Department who met the constant calls on the engines in very trying conditions of heat most efficiently.

52. I should like to stress the very useful work and fine co-operation carried out by Captain B. Clark, the Royal Artillery, the Bombardment Liaison Officer attached to LAFOREY.

(Signed) R. M. J. HUTTON,

Captain (D),

Nineteenth Destroyer Flotilla.

Admiralty footnote —

* B.L.O. = Bombardment Liaison Officer