

defects, to put to sea and to fly off two sorties of four Hurricanes each to reinforce ARGUS. One of these sorties was unable to locate ARGUS and returned to AVENGER.

87. The slow assault convoy hove in sight at 0547 and closed the L.S.I.s. At 0614, AWATEA and escort were sighted. The S.N.O., Commander P. Stubbs, R.N., had decided to abandon the assault on Djidjelli because of the swell, which was causing heavy surf on the beaches. AWATEA carried R.A.F. stores, maintenance personnel, and petrol, it having been the intention to operate R.A.F. fighters from Djidjelli aerodrome by noon at the latest to provide cover. This decision was to have far reaching effects.

88. In the meantime, friendly signals had been received from the coastguard station, and at 0540 ships were invited to enter. At 0702, BRAMHAM was ordered by the Naval Commander to enter the port and to find out the French intentions. At about the same time, Rear-Admiral Commanding, 10th Cruiser Squadron ordered WILTON to carry out a similar mission.

89. At 0720, the Naval Commander decided to hoist all craft and close the harbour. Commander Thery and the Military Commander of Bougie boarded WILTON at 0800. As a result of the ensuing interview, KARANJA, CATHAY, MARNIX and AWATEA were anchored in Bougie Bay at 1000. The M.T. ships of the slow convoy anchored soon afterwards.

90. At 1140, Rear-Admiral Commanding, 10th C.S. received my order for Force "O" to withdraw to the westward. SHEFFIELD therefore closed ARGUS and her screen and withdrew as ordered. Fighter protection of shipping ceased at 1200. R.A.F. fighters were to have flown on to Djidjelli aerodrome during the forenoon of the 11th, but when the news of the failure to land petrol and stores at Djidjelli reached Algiers, their departure was delayed until the following day.

91. At 1345, the shipping in the bay was attacked by five S.M. 79 torpedo bombers. One was shot down, one probably destroyed, and two were damaged. There was no damage to ships.

92. During the afternoon the M.T. ships URLANA, GLENFINLAS and STANHILL entered harbour. Unloading of personnel from KARANJA, CATHAY, AWATEA and MARNIX continued from the bay.

93. At 1305, BLYSKAWICA and BRAMHAM sailed for Algiers, where they arrived at 1740. They were required to escort STRATHNAVER to Bougie.

94. At 1625, AWATEA had finished unloading R.A.F. personnel, stores and petrol, and sailed for Algiers with H.M.S. BICESTER and H.M.S. WILTON as escorts.

95. At 1640, a very heavy dusk air attack by about 30 Ju. 88s developed. This was followed by a T/B attack by He. 111 aircraft. One T/B was shot down.

96. S.S. AWATEA was hit by four bombs, one bomb causing a fire in No. 2 hold and others flooding the engine-room, causing a list of 40°. PENSTEMON, detached from A/S patrol by S.N.O., immediately proceeded alongside. Later BICESTER proceeded alongside

too, but efforts to extinguish the fire were abortive and the ship was abandoned. About 300 survivors were taken off by PENSTEMON, 26 others were rescued from 1 lifeboat by BICESTER, and 3 boat loads by MULL. The ship sank by 2300 in deep water.

97. H.M.S. ROBERTS was hit by two bombs. One of these exploded in the issue room and one on the sloping side armour. Boiler room fans were put out of action and the inner and outer bilges on the port side flooded, but otherwise the ship's fighting efficiency was not impaired.

98. CATHAY was hit by one bomb in the galley, which did not explode, and had some near misses. She still had 1,200 troops on board. All the available landing craft were sent over and the majority of the soldiers landed. The ship was abandoned by all. At 2315, a fire started. This took hold and the ship burned all night.

99. As CATHAY was known to have depth charges on board, KARANJA and MARNIX shifted berth. MARNIX anchored off Cap Aokas outside the A/S patrol.

100. The vital petrol for the fighters at Djidjelli had been landed from AWATEA before 1630, but as the AWATEA carried no M.T. (except a few Bren-gun carriers which were appropriated by the 5th Buffs) and as the M.T. ships had not yet been unloaded, the R.A.F. Servicing Commandos had no transport to take it to the aerodrome. It was not until 2030 that the S.N.O. ex AWATEA, Lieutenant R. H. H. Webber, R.N., who had taken over Beach Master in control of landing craft at the Eastern Boat Slip was asked by the M.L.O.,* Major Jordan, if the Navy would undertake the transportation of petrol to the aerodrome as there was no army transport available, priority one having been allocated to the 5th Buffs. Lieutenant Webber then volunteered to take the petrol, stores and R.A.F. Commandos by landing craft at dawn the next day.

101. At 0445 12th November, H.M.S. TYNWALD weighed anchor in readiness for the expected dawn air attack. Thirty minutes later, two violent explosions occurred and the ship settled down in seven fathoms of water. The ship was abandoned and survivors were picked up by boats from ROBERTS and SAMPHIRE. The cause of the explosion is not known, but it is thought to be mines laid by aircraft as flares were dropped over the harbour at 0205.

102. At dawn (0540), a small sharp air attack was delivered by a number of Ju. 88s from low cloud. KARANJA was hit by at least two bombs. An oil fuel fire immediately broke out and the amidships portion burst into flames.

103. The fire spread very rapidly. Survivors from CATHAY and some military personnel lowered the lifeboats without orders. The ship's company of KARANJA behaved in an exemplary fashion, salvaging some Oerlikon guns and ammunition, and eventually abandoning ship at 0830 when nothing further could be done. The ship was empty except for some petrol.

Admiralty footnote:—

* M.L.O.—Military Landing Officer.