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## BATTLE OF THE JAVA SEA, 27TH FEBRUARY, 1942

*The following Despatch was submitted to the Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet on the 17th March, 1942, by Commodore J. A. COLLINS, C.B., R.A.N., Commodore Commanding China Force.*

REPORT BY COMMODORE COMMANDING CHINA FORCE.

17th March, 1942.

1. Attached brief account of the naval action off Sourabaya on 27th February is based on:—

(a) A written report of the action by the Captain of PERTH compiled from his own report notes on the forenoon of 28th February and handed to Commodore Commanding China Force at Batavia on PERTH's arrival at that port. This was only a rough initial report.

(b) Report from senior surviving officer of JUPITER.

(c) Report from senior surviving officer of ELECTRA.

(d) Informal conversation with Captain of PERTH and HOUSTON during the afternoon of 28th February at Batavia. No track charts or plots are available and this report is necessarily incomplete.

2. The Eastern Striking Force was formed at Sourabaya\* on 26th February under the command of Admiral Doorman in DE RUYTER. It consisted of:—

### Cruisers:

DE RUYTER (Flagship) and JAVA (Dutch), EXETER (British), HOUSTON (U.S.), PERTH (Australian).

### Admiralty footnote:—

\* A Western Striking Force, under the command of Commodore J. A. Collins, R.A.N., and composed of "D" class cruisers and "S" class destroyers of the Royal Navy, was based at Batavia.

### Destroyers:

ELECTRA, ENCOUNTER and JUPITER (British), KORTENAER and WITTE DE WITT (Dutch), EDWARDS, ALDEN, FORD and PAUL JONES (U.S.).

3. This force proceeded to sea 1830/26th\* and steered to the Eastward along the North coast of Madura Island until 0100/27th, then to the Westward until 0930/27th. Nothing was sighted during the night. The force was shadowed by enemy aircraft from 0855/27th until it entered the Sourabaya swept channel at 1330/27th, but was only attacked twice by single aircraft.

4. At 1427 an enemy report was received of a convoy in the vicinity of Bawean Island. The striking force reversed its course and proceeded to intercept.

5. At 1614 enemy forces were sighted consisting of two 8 in. cruisers, Nachi class, preceded by two 6 in. cruisers of Sendai class and 13 destroyers in two groups. The order of battle of the Allied cruisers was DE RUYTER, EXETER, HOUSTON, PERTH and JAVA, speed 26 knots. They were preceded by a screen of the 3 British destroyers and followed by the Dutch and U.S. destroyers.

At 1616 enemy 8 in. cruisers opened fire at a range of 30,000 yards on EXETER and HOUSTON. DE RUYTER led round and action was engaged on parallel courses at a range of 26 to 28,000 yards, at which ranges only our 8 in. cruisers could reply. The enemy's gunfire was extremely accurate; the average spread was estimated at 150 yards for elevation, firing 10-gun salvos.

6. The rear enemy destroyer flotilla moved in to attack soon after action was joined. One destroyer was hit by gunfire from PERTH and the flotilla retired behind smoke.

### Admiralty footnote:—

\* Times quoted in this report are in local, i.e., Java time which is G.M.T. + 7½ hours.

7. At 1707, enemy destroyers, probably of the leading flotilla, delivered a long range torpedo attack. At 1714 EXETER received a hit from an 8 in. shell in one boiler room and turned away, reducing to slow speed which later was increased to 15 knots. DE RUYTER held her course for a short time, but the remaining cruisers turned away after EXETER. DE RUYTER then conformed and American destroyers assisted to screen EXETER with smoke and the Allied line was thrown into considerable confusion. About 1715 Japanese torpedoes reached the Allied line; KORTENAER was struck by a torpedo in the engine room and sank.

8. By 1725 the Allied cruiser line (except EXETER) had been straightened again on a N.E. course but was partially screened from the enemy by smoke. EXETER was retiring to Sourabaya on course 150° at 15 knots. At this moment Admiral Doorman ordered the British destroyers to counter-attack.

9. ELECTRA, ENCOUNTER and JUPITER were widely separated and proceeded to attack independently.

ELECTRA led through the smoke in the direction of the enemy and on clearing it sighted an enemy unit of 3 heavy destroyers on opposite courses going into the smoke, range about 6,000 yards. ELECTRA engaged and claims four hits on the leading ship, but as the unit disappeared into the smoke a shell struck ELECTRA in No. 2 boiler room and shattered the boiler. Steam was lost and ELECTRA stopped. Shortly after, a single enemy heavy destroyer emerged from the smoke and the engagement continued, ELECTRA firing in local control with all bridge communication dead. ELECTRA was repeatedly hit and her guns silenced one by one. When only Y gun remained in action the order to "abandon ship" was given. ELECTRA sank about 1800.

10. JUPITER on emerging through the smoke sighted two enemy destroyers which were engaged for a short period before they disappeared. No further target being in sight JUPITER returned to the Allied cruisers where she was joined by ENCOUNTER. ENCOUNTER attacked through a clearing in the smoke, but no details or results of the attack are known.

11. From 1725 to 1745 the cruiser forces were screened from each other by smoke. Japanese gunfire through the smoke, presumably controlled by radar, is reported as accurate. Japanese aircraft were employed on spotting throughout the action.

12. At 1745 Allied cruisers emerged from smoke on opposite course to the enemy 8 in. cruisers at ranges down to 21,000 yards. The action continued spasmodically until 1812, several hits being claimed on the enemy cruisers.

At 1812, the enemy cruisers turned away under cover of smoke, the rear ship heavily on fire aft. When the smoke cleared PERTH states "target appeared to be stopped, the bow rose in the air then seemed to settle back. We then lost sight of her, whether because she sank or whether the light failed I do not know."

By 1830 no enemy forces were in sight.

#### Night Action.

13. In gathering darkness DE RUYTER continued to lead the cruisers to the N.E. and Northward presumably in an attempt to work

round the enemy forces and reach the convoy. At 1927 four ships were sighted to the Westward and engaged for a few minutes at 9,000 yards range; simultaneously Allied force was illuminated by enemy aircraft flares. PERTH turned away to avoid suspected torpedoes; the remainder of the force conformed.

14. It seems probable that Admiral Doorman decided it was impracticable to work round the enemy to the Northward and that better results might be achieved by getting between him and the Java coast and working round to the Southward, for about 1945 he altered course to 170°. This course was continued until about 2035 when ships reached very shallow water near Kodok Point to the West of Sourabaya Strait. DE RUYTER then turned to the Westward keeping about four miles from the coast.

15. At about 2100 in position 06° 45.2' S., 112° 05.5' E. a violent explosion occurred in JUPITER who was following astern of JAVA, the rear cruiser. The explosion, attributed by JUPITER to a torpedo, occurred on the starboard side abreast the forward bulkhead of the engine room and immobilised the ship. No signs of a submarine or of torpedo tracks were sighted from JUPITER who remained unmolested until she sank four hours later. A large number of survivors landed on the North coast of Java from ship's boats and Carley-floats. The weather at time of sinking was—with East force 2, sky and visibility b-7 miles, sea and swell 21.\*

16. From 2150 onwards the Allied cruiser force was continuously shadowed and frequently illuminated by aircraft dropping flares. All alterations of course were signalled by dropping flares, and occasionally by lines of floating calcium flares placed across the track of the ships. Under these conditions a surprise attack on the enemy convoy seemed out of the question.

17. At 2330 contact was made with two cruisers on the port beam of the Allied force which was then steering to the Northward, though its exact position is not known. Range was about 9,000 yards. Enemy opened fire followed by PERTH; the enemy fire was extremely accurate but very slow. PERTH claimed that two or three salvos hit, then star shell falling short concealed the target. One enemy shell hit DE RUYTER on the quarter-deck and DE RUYTER turned 90° away, remaining cruisers conforming.

18. When the line was half way round this turn a violent explosion occurred in the after part of JAVA and she stopped heavily on fire. She was not under gunfire at the time. At about the same moment DE RUYTER, who had completed the 90° turn, also blew up with an appalling explosion and settled aft heavily on fire.† PERTH avoided the blazing wreck by the use of full port rudder and one engine. HOUSTON headed out to starboard.

19. Admiral Doorman's verbal orders to his force before sailing had been that any ship disabled "must be left to the mercy of the enemy" to quote his own words. The Allied force now consisted only of PERTH and

#### Admiralty footnotes:—

\* Wind force 2—light air to light breeze, 1-6 m.p.h.; sky b—less than  $\frac{1}{8}$ ths cloud; sea and swell 21—practically calm.

† Both Dutch cruisers were sunk by torpedo fire from the NACHI and HAGURO (Japanese 5th Cruiser Division).

HOUSTON, the latter with very little ammunition and her after turret out of action from previous bombing. No destroyers remained in company.\*

No further reconnaissance reports of the enemy convoy had been received since night-fall. The Allied cruisers were under continual air observation and illumination by flares. To continue the action was clearly hopeless and PERTH had no hesitation in deciding to withdraw the remnants of the striking force. HOUSTON was ordered to follow and course was shaped at high speed for Tanjong Priok.

20. The withdrawal was not opposed by enemy surface forces. HOUSTON and PERTH were located by enemy reconnaissance aircraft a.m. 28th when within 60 miles of Priok. In response to a "Help" call from PERTH, fighter aircraft were sent out from Batavia and escorted the cruisers in; no air attack developed on them. They arrived at Priok at 1330.

21. It should be noted that throughout this action the Allied forces suffered from communication difficulties. The force as a whole had never acted before as a tactical unit. Visual signalling was restricted to simple signals in English by flashing lamp in Morse Code. British Liaison Officers with small signal staffs were on board DE RUYTER and JAVA, but it had not been practicable to adopt a common system of flag signalling.

(Signed) J. A. COLLINS,

*Commodore Commanding China Force.*

#### ENCLOSURE 1.

REPORT BY C.O., H.M.A.S. PERTH.

*Action Narrative—Day and Night Action Off Sourabaya, 27th February, 1942.*

(All times zone - 7½.)

At about 1425 the Striking Force was approaching the minefields off Sourabaya. Squadron consisted of DE RUYTER (Flag), EXETER, HOUSTON, PERTH, JAVA, ELECTRA, ENCOUNTER, JUPITER, two Dutch destroyers and four U.S. destroyers. The force was returning from an abortive sweep carried out the night before.

2. At 1427 a message was received giving the position of the convoy in the vicinity of Bawean Island.

DE RUYTER immediately turned 180° and led the force off to intercept. British destroyers were spread ahead, Dutch on the port quarter and U.S. destroyers astern. The order of the cruisers was as in paragraph 1. HOUSTON's after turret was out of action due to a previous bombing attack.

3. At 1550, squadron was on course 315°, 24 knots. At 1614 an enemy cruiser was sighted on starboard bow. Speed was increased to 26 knots. Enemy now appeared as two 8 in. cruisers (Natai class) and ahead of them was

one cruiser (Zintu class) and six destroyers (Asashio class). At 1616 the enemy 8 in. cruisers opened fire at a range of 30,000 yards directing their fire mostly on EXETER and HOUSTON. ZINTU opened fire about the same time on ELECTRA, at 1617 EXETER opened fire, HOUSTON at 1618.

4. DE RUYTER led round about 20° to port and range of 8 in. cruisers remained at about 26,000 to 28,000 yards for some time. PERTH could not open fire as the range was outside extreme, but at about 1625 PERTH opened fire on the right-hand destroyers (the destroyers appeared to be moving in preparatory to attack). The second salvo hit, but immediately this destroyer and the others made smoke and retired behind a very effective screen with the cruisers. Several "follow up" salvos were fired into the smoke.

5. DE RUYTER now led round to starboard. Enemy long range fire was extremely accurate, mostly pitching very close short or over. The spread was incredibly small, never more than 150 yards for elevation and much less for line. They were ten-gun salvos with extremely small splashes.

Enemy aircraft were overhead the whole time, no doubt spotting.

6. At 1635 DE RUYTER led towards the enemy on course 267°. About this time the rear enemy cruiser was evidently hit in the boiler room as she emitted very large clouds of black smoke for some time, but continued firing. As the smoke cleared one enemy destroyer was seen to be on fire, and PERTH now came under a very accurate fire from the rear cruiser for a long period. The other cruiser was firing straight at EXETER and HOUSTON. PERTH was straddled several times and the salvos rarely fell less than one cable over or short. Every effort was made in handling the ship to estimate the correction the enemy would use.

7. The rear enemy cruiser was now on fire. PERTH was still out of range of enemy cruisers and I found a long period of being "Aunt Sally" very trying without being able to return the fire. (Range was still over 26,000 yards.) The Dutch cruisers all this while were firing occasionally. At 1700 enemy cruisers checked fire. At 1702, the leading enemy cruiser appeared to be hit aft but both cruisers opened fire again. At 1707 the enemy destroyers delivered a long range torpedo attack and Allied cruisers had to turn away to let torpedoes comb the line. Allied cruisers ceased fire. Enemy still firing but shots falling short. At 1714 EXETER stopped and reported hit in boiler room. She shortly proceeded at 15 knots and I closed her and screened her with funnel smoke and all available smoke floats. While doing this the Admiral made "All ships follow me" but I continued to smoke screen EXETER and reported her damage to the Admiral who told me by V/S\* to follow him, when I proceeded to do so.

8. At 1715 an Allied destroyer (I think ELECTRA) suddenly blew up close ahead of me,† having, I think, been struck in the engine room by a torpedo. She capsized and

#### *Admiralty footnote —*

\* The U.S. destroyers delivered torpedo attacks on the Japanese cruisers at 1814 and 1819 in which they fired all their torpedoes. At 2100, owing to their fuel supply running low and lack of torpedoes, their Senior Officer withdrew them to Sourabaya to refuel and obtain new torpedoes, thus anticipating a signal to do so made half an hour later by Rear Admiral Doorman.

#### *Admiralty footnotes —*

\* V/S—visual signal

† The destroyer in question was the Dutch KORTENAER.

dived under in a few seconds, then broke in halves, the two ends floating for some time. At 1718 PERTH's pom-poms opened fire at a reported periscope. By 1721 some of our destroyers were screening EXETER with smoke and others apparently attacking through the smoke. EXETER was steering 130° having been ordered to Sourabaya and PERTH trying to drive off spotting aircraft.

9. At 1725 Allied cruisers were led by the Admiral between EXETER and the enemy, presumably to draw their fire. Anyway, it did this and gave EXETER a breathing space and a chance to get out of the area. At 1729, DE RUYTER led away to the Southward; enemy cruisers were still firing very accurately. At 1745, Allied cruisers were again in single line ahead (except EXETER) and emerged from the smoke screen on opposite course to the enemy 8 in. cruisers. (Enemy in sight were now the three cruisers and only five destroyers.)

Whilst passing behind the smoke screen after circling EXETER, I was under a very accurate 8 in. fire continuously, although obviously the enemy could not see me. It was presumably radar control. At 1750 EXETER fired one salvo. At 1752 the enemy destroyers once more moved into attack and PERTH was firing on destroyers as they came into view in gaps in the smoke screen; the destroyers also peppered me for some minutes. At 1810 no Allied cruisers were firing, but there were several destroyer duels going on.

10. At 1812 our destroyers retired, and I found myself on opposite course to the two 8 in. cruisers at a range of 21,000 yards and engaged the right-hand ship. After getting in for line, the target was found and several rapid salvos got in on the target, two of which hit, and one of which caused a very big explosion aft in the target with volumes of bright lava-like emissions and a pink smoke. Both enemy cruisers then retired behind this smoke and a funnel smoke screen. When the smoke cleared away our target appeared to be stopped, the bow rose in the air and then seemed to settle back. We then lost sight of her, whether because she sank or whether the light failed I do not know.

11. During this engagement, HOUSTON was engaged with the left-hand cruiser, JAVA and DE RUYTER were both firing at something. HOUSTON reported to me that she had very little 8 in. ammunition left and I informed the Admiral. By 1830 no enemy were in sight and DE RUYTER led our forces off to the North-east, and subsequently (presumably) as requisite to try and work round the enemy escort and get at the convoy. Speed 22 knots.

12. At 1927 I sighted four ships on the port beam and reported them. The range was about 9,000 yards, and about the same time, what I thought was a star shell but which was an aircraft flare, burst on our disengaged side and I opened fire at 1933 with main armament first, then tried star shell, but these fell short. HOUSTON also opened fire; I saw a row of explosions in one ship, but thinking these might be torpedo fire, I turned away, and all ships followed motions. JUPITER (on the port bow) moved in probably to counter-attack but there was no gunfire.

13. Cruisers then formed up again in line ahead and were led on various courses by DE RUYTER to intercept. We seemed to drop a couple of destroyers in this last move. The search went on without event (except that we appeared to get into very shallow water). About 2100, whilst still in shallow water, one of the American destroyers blew up with a tremendous explosion and sank. At 2150, another aircraft flare appeared overhead and shortly afterwards a line of about 6 brilliant calcium flares in the water straddled our line at right angles. This happened every time we steered a new course and it was soon obvious that our every move in the moonlight was being reported, not only by W/T but also by this excellent visual means. The enemy's dispositions of his forces must have been ridiculously easy. At 2217, we passed through a very large number of survivors. They did not seem to be English, but may have been either Japanese or Dutch. I do not yet know if any Dutch ships were sunk.

14. At 2230, I sighted two cruisers on the port beam. HOUSTON reported them at the same moment. They were a long way off but one of them fired a salvo shortly after I sighted. I immediately opened a heavy fire on him and both cruisers opened up on us. This fire was extremely accurate again but very slow. Two of my salvos at least, and possibly three, struck home (we were spotting by moonlight). The same ship opened up with a stream of star shell and obliterated the target as they fell short. One enemy shell hit DE RUYTER on the quarterdeck, DE RUYTER turned 90° away and I followed as I thought he may have seen torpedoes. Whilst the line was halfway round this turn, the whole of JAVA's after-part blew up and she stopped heavily on fire. She was not under gunfire at that time, so the explosion may have been due to a wandering fire or a torpedo. I suspect we were led over a submarine for almost at the same moment, although she had completed her 90° turn, DE RUYTER blew up with an appalling explosion and settled aft heavily on fire. I just managed to miss her by the use of full helm and one engine stopped. HOUSTON headed out to starboard. By now the American destroyers had been detached to Batavia to refuel, and all other destroyers had disappeared, possibly due to the frequent 90° turns done by DE RUYTER. The Admiral's verbal instructions had been that any ship disabled must be left "to the mercy of the enemy," to use his own words. I left DE RUYTER and JAVA, took HOUSTON under my orders, made a feint to the Southeast then turned direct to Batavia at high speed.

15. I had now under my orders one undamaged 6 in. cruiser, one 8 in. cruiser with very little ammunition and no guns aft. I had no destroyers. The force was subjected throughout the day and night operations to the most superbly organised air reconnaissance. I was opposed by six cruisers, one of them possibly sunk, and twelve destroyers. By means of their air reconnaissance they had already played cat and mouse with the main striking force and I saw no prospect of getting at the enemy (their movements had not reached me since dark, and even then the several reports at the same time all gave different courses).

16. It was fairly certain that the enemy had at least one submarine operating directly with him, and he had ample destroyers to interpose between the convoy and my approach—well advertised as I knew it would be.

I had therefore no hesitation in withdrawing what remained of the striking force and ordering them to the pre-arranged rendezvous after night action—Tanjong Priok.

(Signed) H. M. L. WALLER,

*Captain, R.A.N.*

#### ENCLOSURE 2.

H.M.S. ELECTRA—REPORT OF ACTION 27TH FEBRUARY, 1942, BY SENIOR SURVIVING OFFICER.

No attempt is made in this narrative to plot the course of action. It is assumed that better details have been forwarded by the cruiser force. Any courses, speeds or times are approximate as my action station was O.O.Q.\* on the torpedo tubes.

2. At about 1520, Striking Force received an enemy report that two cruisers and five destroyers were 20 miles West of Bawean Island. Striking Force was then inside Sourabaya swept channel, but turned Northwards. ELECTRA took station 4 miles ahead of cruisers with JUPITER and ENCOUNTER on port and starboard beam, 5 miles.

3. About 1600 enemy was sighted ahead on the starboard bow and action was joined. ELECTRA appeared to be acting as flank marking ship, and was engaged by the enemy force at once; I assume that enemy destroyers only were firing at us at a range of 14,000 yards. The first and second salvos were straddles, and correct for line, falling roughly in line with the tubes. No hits were obtained however. Enemy then turned 90° to starboard and we turned on parallel course. Salvos continued to fall close, but missing astern, short and over. This was undoubtedly due to the magnificent handling of the ship by the Captain; Commander C. W. May, R.N. About 1640 the enemy turned away to the North and the Allied force gave chase. This left the destroyers out of range for a while but the cruisers carried on the action.

4. About 1700, we appeared to run into a superior force and the Allied force turned 180° to the Southward. From my position, the enemy appeared to have at least two heavy cruisers or battleships, and several cruisers or destroyers. This is only a personal estimate, and it is realised that from deck level, with all the smoke and confusion of battle, that this estimate may well be inaccurate.

5. About 1715, EXETER was hit. She appeared to maintain speed but was having trouble with steering. Destroyers then made smoke.

6. At 1730, ELECTRA was ordered to counter-attack. Smoke was very thick and visibility in a very large area was reduced to about half a mile, although it is probable that the bridge personnel could see over the smoke.

As we cleared the smoke, an enemy unit consisting of three heavy destroyers was sighted on opposite courses going into the smoke. Range about 6,000 yards. We immediately

engaged and claimed hits from four salvos on the leading ship. ELECTRA did not fire torpedoes. Conditions seemed fairly favourable from the tubes, but as we were still in communication with the bridge, I thought we were going for bigger game.

8. As the enemy unit disappeared into the smoke, a lucky shell hit us in number 2 boiler room, port side. This shattered the boiler and carried away telemotor pipes from the steering gear. Steam dropped and in spite of the efforts of the engine room staff, steam was lost. This was in a large measure due to the fact that water ran from No. 3 boiler to the damaged one. ELECTRA then stopped, with a slight list to port, and the order was given "Prepare to abandon ship."

9. Shortly after, a single enemy heavy destroyer emerged from the smoke. We engaged immediately, the guns firing in local control, as all communication with the bridge was dead. A single fast destroyer is a pretty poor target from a stopped ship, but it was worth a chance. The enemy commenced hitting with the second salvo, silencing our guns one by one and causing heavy fires forward and an increased list to port. With only Y gun left firing, the order was given "Abandon ship." The injured men were put in the first whaler, the only boat left whole. The whaler had about 25 men on board when it left the ship. Nos. 4 and 5 Carley-floats were got away and I saw another broken float drift by.

10. Everybody appeared to have left the ship that could do so, except Leading Steward Gretton who came to ask what we should do with two wounded on the quarterdeck. With Gretton's aid, I put them into the water, one with a Kinsbie lifebuoy, and the other with a grating. Both appeared to be making for a Carley-float.

11. The enemy was still firing, having closed so that he could use his pom-poms. About this time, a shell fell among the men in the water. I then went round with Gretton, throwing floatable things in the water amongst them, two ammunition boxes, smoke floats and a T.S.D.S. float.

12. The ship then sighed, listed heavily to port and down by the bows. There were no live men left in the after part of the ship, so I took Gretton and left.

13. Once clear of the ship, I saw someone, presumably the Captain, come to the starboard side of the bridge and wave to the men in the water who cheered lustily. The Captain then appeared to leave by the port side.

14. The ELECTRA then settled more sleepily, turned over and slowly sank until her screws and about six feet of the quarterdeck were showing.

15. She remained in this position for some time before finally sinking slowly out of sight, about 1800.

16. In the nature of things, casualties on board were very high. The ELECTRA and her ship's company stood up to the punishment in the best traditional manner. She was a grand ship, and I am proud to have served in her with such a fine crowd of men.

(Signed) T. J. CAIN,

*Gunner (T).*

*Admiralty footnote —*

\* O.O.Q.—Officer of Quarters.

## APPENDIX.

*The following Despatch was submitted to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty on the 1st October, 1945, by Captain O. L. GORDON, M.V.O., R.N.*

## U.S.S. GOSPER.

*At sea.*

*1st October, 1945.*

I have the honour to submit the following report on the circumstances and actions which occurred between 25th February, 1942, and 1st March, 1942, culminating in the loss of H.M.S. EXETER under my command on the latter date. More than three and a half years has elapsed since the events covered by this report took place, but the essential points were recorded within three weeks of that time and have been most carefully preserved throughout my captivity by such devices as concealment in a large empty shaving cream tube and similar subterfuges, causing me considerable concern during frequent searches by the Japanese.

2. Since all records were lost when H.M.S. EXETER was sunk, detailed accuracy in such matters as times, courses, etc., cannot be guaranteed but I am confident that the report gives as accurate a picture as it is possible to present in such circumstances. All times given are zone - 7½.

3. In accordance with orders received from the Commodore Commanding China Force (C.C.C.F.), EXETER with PERTH, ELECTRA, JUPITER, and ENCOUNTER in company sailed from Batavia at 1600, 25th February, 1942, for Sourabaya, with instructions that on arrival this force was to be under the orders of Rear Admiral Doorman, Eskadier Commandant (E.C.). The passage was without incident except for the location by radar of a large formation of enemy aircraft heading for Sourabaya, which information was passed to Sourabaya by signal.

4. On arrival at the entrance to Sourabaya minefields at about 1230/26, destroyers under the orders of ELECTRA were ordered to proceed ahead and on arrival to pass a fuel requirement signal to E.C. ELECTRA and EXETER embarked pilots inside the minefields and the latter with PERTH in company anchored at Sourabaya at about 1600.

5. Instructions were received for ships to be ready to sail at 1800, which prohibited cruisers from completing with fuel since no oilers were available and time was insufficient to proceed to oiling berths inside a basin. Destroyers also experienced difficulty in obtaining fuel but all eventually fuelled though some were unable to complete to full stowage.

6. Rear Admiral Doorman had called a meeting of Commanding Officers for 1700 but no information of this was received until nearly that time when the British Liaison Officer attached to DE RUYTER arrived on board EXETER. As a result the Commanding Officer of PERTH and myself were very late in joining this meeting, and only arrived at the risk of our lives in the fastest and most dangerous motor car ride through traffic that we had ever experienced.

7. The instructions at this meeting were necessarily brief and consisted only in Rear Admiral Doorman's intentions regarding:—

(a) Order of leaving harbour.

(b) Cruising formation and destroyer screening.

(c) Patrol area and movements to cover this area to best advantage, based on meagre information available of a large enemy convoy Southwest of the Celebes and steering in a Southwesterly direction.

(d) Method of attack if enemy forces, and in particular an enemy convoy, were met.

(e) Subsequent destination in the absence of other information—

(i) If no enemy were sighted.

(ii) If action was joined and ships or units became separated.

(f) Night Recognition Signals.

8. The Allied force consisted of:—

## Cruisers:

DE RUYTER (Flag),  
EXETER,  
HOUSTON,  
PERTH,  
JAVA,

in the order of ships as formed at sea.

## Destroyers:

British—ELECTRA (Commander May),  
JUPITER, ENCOUNTER;

American—JOHN D. EDWARDS  
(Commander Binford), ALDEN,  
PAUL JONES, JOHN D. FORD;

Dutch—DE WITT, KORTENAER.

9. This force sailed from Sourabaya at 1900/26. After clearing the minefields the force assumed the cruising order previously arranged, namely, cruisers in single line, British and Dutch destroyers screening ahead, and U.S. destroyers forming a separate unit astern. Rear Admiral Doorman's reason for stationing the U.S. destroyers astern was due to their inferior gun and superior torpedo armament. The cruising order of the force was in reality designed for a night encounter with an enemy convoy, when it was the Admiral's intention that cruisers and British and Dutch destroyers should engage enemy escort forces, at the same time endeavouring to circle the convoy, while the primary duty of the U.S. destroyers was to sink the troop ships comprising the convoy. Course was first set to the Eastward (085 degrees) to intercept any attempted landing on Madura Island and was reversed at 0100/27 to 270 degrees.

10. The night of 26th/27th passed without incident, the EXETER being at the first degree of readiness throughout. Shortly after daylight enemy reconnaissance aircraft located the force and during the forenoon minor bombing attacks were experienced, mostly by single aircraft, and without damage to the Allied force. At about 1030/27, when some 60 odd miles to the Westward of Sourabaya, course was reversed and the Admiral signalled his intention, in the absence of further information, of anchoring inside the minefields off Sourabaya and repeating the previous patrol that night.

11. At about 1415 when the Allied force was entering the minefields through the Western channel, the Admiral led round 180 degrees and signalled that information had been received of an enemy force of two cruisers and six destroyers some 90 miles to the Northward steering South at high speed, which force he intended to engage. Later reports showed that the large enemy convoy previously referred to was remaining in position some 10 miles West of Bawean Island.

12. The Allied force, still retaining the previous cruising order, steered 350 degrees at 20 knots to intercept.

13. At approximately 1610 masts were sighted to the Northward. These proved to be two four-funnel Sendai class cruisers, each leading a flotilla (or division) of six Asashio type destroyers. At this time these were the only enemy ships in sight. Speed was increased until subsequently the action was fought at about 27 knots.

14. Weather conditions were:—wind N.E. force 1-2, sea 10, one tenth cloud, visibility extreme.

15. At about 1620 the leading cruiser opened fire apparently at ELECTRA, the starboard wing destroyer of our screen. The main armament reporting that this cruiser was now within gun range, EXETER opened fire at approximately 27,000 yards, this being outside DE RUYTER's extreme range. After some 12 salvos from A and B turrets had been fired, when it appeared that straddle range had been obtained, the target cruiser turned away under smoke. Fire was then shifted to the second four-funnel cruiser. It was about this time, or shortly before, that further masts were sighted to the N.N.E. and some distance in rear of the cruisers and destroyers previously referred to. These proved to belong to two cruisers of the Ashigara or Atago classes. The above mentioned enemy ships, namely, two Ashigara or Atago class cruisers, two Sendai class cruisers, and 12 Asashio class destroyers composed the enemy force during daylight on 27th February as far as could be seen from EXETER, although officers from HOUSTON and PERTH subsequently stated that six or more enemy cruisers were present.

16. The second four-funnel cruiser engaged turned away under smoke after about 10 salvos and was momentarily re-engaged when again seen clear of her own smoke after having made a turn of some 180 degrees. The hitting range of this cruiser was quickly found and I am convinced that hits were obtained, particularly as she was last seen disappearing in a thick high column of smoke and only one four-funnel cruiser was seen subsequently.

17. Target was then shifted to the rear (right-hand) of the two 8-inch cruisers previously referred to. The reason for selection of the rear and not the leading cruiser was the fact that HOUSTON next astern of EXETER, was already engaging the leading cruiser and, in view of the difficulties of signalling together with the time that would be lost during the change over, it was considered better to accept the situation as it was found and engage the right-hand ship although this meant crossing fire with HOUSTON.

18. At first difficulty was experienced in identifying our own splashes until it was realised that HOUSTON was using brown splashes. Fire was opened at extreme range and the first splashes were not seen. This together with difficulties already referred to, made it some time before range was established, in all about 15 salvos. Shortly after this a hit was observed by myself, other officers on the bridge and several members of the Director Control Tower's crew including the Gunnery Officer, in the vicinity of her lower bridge structure. Almost immediately afterwards she turned away under smoke.

19. While engaging this cruiser it appeared that the enemy fire was concentrated on EXETER who was eventually straddled and sustained either a hit or a near miss underwater well aft. This had the apparent effect of lifting the whole ship in a most remarkable manner. Subsequently some after underwater compartments were found to be flooded. A few minutes later a shell, passing through S.2 four-inch gun shield, entered B boiler room causing casualties at S.2 mounting and in this boiler room. The opinion was formed on subsequent examination that this shell did not detonate but exploded on entering a boiler, since the base-plate complete and a large portion of the nose were recovered. (Similar failure of some enemy shells to detonate was experienced by other Allied ships.) Six out of the eight boilers were put out of action with the following main results:—

(i) Deafening escape of steam through the waste steam pipe.

(ii) Initial reduction of speed to 11 knots with a subsequent maximum of 15 to 16 knots.

(iii) Temporary failure of the High Power system putting the main armament out of action.

20. EXETER started to haul out of the line gradually to port simultaneously with the development of a torpedo attack by the enemy destroyers led by the one remaining four-funnel cruiser. The Admiral now led round to port to an approximately reciprocal course presumably as an avoiding action. The remaining cruisers of the Allied squadron turned short and reformed astern of the Admiral. At this point ELECTRA made a lone and very gallant counter-attack, JUPITER and VINCOUNT also engaging enemy destroyers while covering EXETER's turn by smoke. Later information indicated that ELECTRA was last seen stopped and still in action with enemy destroyers. It is believed that the attacking destroyers fired their torpedoes at a range of about 8 to 10,000 yards. Torpedoes were seen approaching, one exploding in the water and another hitting and blowing up the Dutch destroyer KORTENAER, whose back was broken and who remained afloat for some minutes with bow and stern only showing. It was during this period that EXETER's main armament was lined up and made ready for action.

21. While the enemy torpedo attack was developing and after EXETER had turned to a Southerly course, the main armament engaged the four-funnel cruiser leading the attack, the four-inch armament also being engaged with enemy destroyers. This cruiser turned away under smoke immediately straddle range was



found and the results of our fire could not be observed. Shortly after this a single enemy destroyer offered a favourable target through the smoke at 9,000 yards, but fire had to be withheld as our own destroyers were in the line of fire.

22. When DE RUYTER passed ahead after reversing course, the Admiral enquired by signal as to damage sustained and was informed that, as the result of a boiler room hit, speed was reduced to a maximum of 15 knots, this reply being repeated to PERTH. The Admiral then ordered EXETER to proceed to Sourabaya.

23. Shortly after this, when EXETER had dropped considerably astern, a single enemy 8-inch cruiser was seen to the Northward and fine on the port quarter closing EXETER. Fire was at once opened with Y turret and course altered to open "A" arcs.\* The range was about 16,000 yards and after a few salvos the enemy turned away to the Northwards under smoke.

24. By this time the remainder of the Allied squadron, which, with the exception of the KORTENAER, appeared to have suffered little if any damage, was steering to the Eastward firing intermittently and EXETER gradually shaped course for Sourabaya. Light was failing and the time must have been about 1830. When almost dark the Dutch destroyer DE WITT, then about 5 miles to the Eastward, signalled on shaded lamp that she would lead EXETER through the Sourabaya minefields.

The only other incident during the return to Sourabaya was the sighting of star shell some distance away to the Northwest. EXETER anchored in Sourabaya roads just before midnight and proceeded to a berth alongside at the Naval Base at 0700/28.

25. The following are general remarks on the action:—

(i) The total period that EXETER was in action was about two hours, but a detailed timetable of events cannot be given since all records were lost when the ship was sunk on 1st March. As a result, this report may tend to give a misleading conception of the interval between the various episodes of the action, e.g., between being hit in B boiler room and engaging the four-funnel cruiser leading the torpedo attack, there was sufficient time to restore the High Power, check main armament receivers and verify ammunition remaining.

(ii) This action demonstrated in a very marked manner the difficulty of working with a heterogeneous squadron composed of ships of different nationalities, all of whose methods, but in particular those of signalling and fire distribution, differ from our own and with whom there had been no opportunity of even the briefest discussion on such matters.

(iii) It was clear that the Dutch cruisers were outranged for most of the daylight action and their splashes only made spotting more difficult for the remainder.

(iv) The enemy made use of a number of spotting aircraft; these were engaged as

opportunity presented. It was unfortunate that EXETER's Walrus aircraft was unserviceable as the result of blast damage sustained during frequent enemy air attacks.

(v) During the action an attack was made on the enemy cruisers by land-based bombers from Sourabaya, and several bomb splashes were observed. The enemy appeared to be unaffected by this attack. About the time that the Allied squadron reversed course and when the enemy torpedo attack had developed, the four American destroyers previously stationed astern fired torpedoes. It was not clear what was their target but the majority of these torpedoes were seen to be running on the surface in the direction of the Japanese destroyers.

26. Enemy air raids were continuous throughout daylight of 28th February. The funeral of those killed in action took place with full naval honours at 1700, every assistance being given by the Dutch Navy, all local naval authorities being represented.

#### 27. Results of action.

*Four-funnel Sendai class cruiser referred to in para. 16.*

(a) Some survivors of HOUSTON and PERTH stated that an enemy cruiser, believed to have been under fire from EXETER, was seen to sink stern first. It is possible that this may have been the cruiser referred to in para. 16.

(b) While at Macassar P.O.W. Camp the Navigating Officer of the first Sendai class cruiser engaged by EXETER visited the camp. He was friendly and spoke good English. In the course of conversation he stated that while his ship had not been hit, EXETER's splashes had been so close that water from them fell on the bridge. When asked what happened to the second 6-inch cruiser he did not reply and quickly changed the subject.

#### 8-inch cruisers.

(a) As stated in para. 18 this cruiser was seen to have been hit and only one 8-inch cruiser was sighted from EXETER during the remainder of the day action.

(b) After return to Sourabaya information was received that aircraft had reported a Japanese 8-inch cruiser on fire.

#### Other reports.

According to surviving officers of HOUSTON and PERTH hits were obtained by HOUSTON on the leading enemy 8-inch cruiser, and an enemy destroyer was sunk during the torpedo attack.

28. EXETER sailed from Sourabaya at 1900, 28th February, 1942, in compliance with a signal received from C.C.C.F., which directed EXETER, ENCOUNTER and POPE to sail at dark proceeding as follows:—

20 miles to the Eastward from Sourabaya Northern entrance, thence Northward to pass Eastward of Bawean Island, thence North-westward and Westward and through Sunda Strait to Colombo.

29. The Netherlands destroyer DE WITT was also directed at the last minute to accompany me. When I sailed it was understood that she would follow at about 2100 joining me shortly after midnight. Anticipated courses and speeds were accordingly given to the Navigating

*Admiralty footnote:—*

\* "A" arcs—the arcs on which all guns of a ship's main armament will bear, thus allowing them to fire simultaneously at the enemy.



Officer of DE WITT, but she did not join and no information was received as to whether or not she ever left Sourabaya.

30. By 1500/28 from examination it appeared probable that two boilers in B boiler room could be got ready for steaming by about 2300/28, but that satisfactory performance of these boilers would be dependent on power trial at sea. Rear Admiral Palliser\* was informed accordingly by telephone from Dutch Naval Headquarters. With two boilers EXETER's maximum speed was 15 to 16 knots; with four boilers it was hoped to obtain 24 knots, but 23 knots was the maximum that could be maintained subsequently.

31. The first part of the night 28th February/1st March passed without incident. Weather conditions were as follows:—wind E.N.E., force 2, sea 20, cloud two tenths, full moon. After clearing Sourabaya minefields the destroyers were ordered to take up screening diagram Number 2A and shortly before midnight steam was available in the two additional boilers. Speed was increased by steps to 23 knots, the maximum capacity of the four boilers. It may be well to remark here that all four serviceable boilers were on the starboard side, two in each boiler room. No unit system was possible and all four boilers had therefore to be cross connected. Course was altered to 000 degrees at midnight to pass some 25 miles East of Bawean Island and at 0200 to 345 degrees.

32. It had been intended to alter course to 290 degrees at 0400, but shortly before this, three ships, two large and one smaller, were sighted to the Westward in the light of the setting moon, distant about 10 miles, steering to the S.S.W., to pass Westward of Bawean Island. These appeared to be two merchant ships escorted by a cruiser or destroyer. From my orders and routeing I had no doubt in my mind that my object was evasion in this attempt to clear the Java Sea, and accordingly I turned away stern on to avoid being sighted, then worked round to the Northward and resumed course 345 degrees at about 0430. Subsequently course was altered to 290 degrees at 0600 and 280 degrees at 0700. No enemy air or surface forces were sighted at daylight and visibility was extreme.

33. At about 0750 the crow's nest lookout reported the masts of two ships nearly right ahead. These were identified as the topmasts of warships, cruisers or larger, steering to the N.N.E. Course was immediately reversed and it was thought possible that, with the advantage of light, EXETER had not been sighted. This hope was short lived as the enemy ships were seen to turn towards though still well hull down. An enemy report was therefore made and repeated but no acknowledgment was received. This turn towards by the enemy cruisers was brief and may possibly have been for the purpose of flying off aircraft, as they resumed their Northerly course and were soon out of sight. EXETER worked gradually to the Southward and Westward through East finally steering 260 degrees. In spite of failure to receive acknowledgment of the enemy report

I decided against further repetition, since avoidance of disclosure of movements by D/F\* seemed of greater importance than any possible advantage to be gained by continuing to make this report. For some time it appeared that evasion had been achieved since no enemy forces were sighted, although it was subsequently stated by the Japanese that their cruisers, as these ships proved to be, had flown off reconnaissance aircraft. There was however no indication of this on the radar screen nor was any aircraft sighted until action was subsequently joined.

34. It was not until about 0935 that the topmasts of two large cruisers were sighted bearing about 170 degrees steering to the Westward. Course was immediately altered to 320 degrees with a view to possible evasion, but these cruisers also were seen to turn towards. Very shortly after this an enemy ship, at first thought to be a 6-inch gun cruiser, was sighted ahead steering directly towards. This ship proved to be a large destroyer. It was engaged by EXETER and destroyers at ranges between 20,000 and 14,000 yards, but on being engaged turned away to the Westward under smoke. Almost simultaneously two more large cruisers were sighted bearing approximately 330 degrees and these at once turned towards. All four cruisers proved to be ten-gun 8-inch cruisers of the Ashigara or Atago classes and one is believed to have been the flagship ASHIGARA. Course was immediately altered to the Eastward (090 degrees), destroyers conforming.

35. EXETER's speed at this time was 23 knots on four out of the eight boilers, but shortly afterwards the Engineer Officer reported that he believed that steam could be raised in one more boiler in B boiler room, and this boiler could be connected in about an hour. Orders were given for this to be done and the extra boiler was connected in less than that time. From then (about 1055) a speed of 25 knots was maintained and before the end the ship was steaming at 26 knots. This and the repair work after the action on 27th February reflects much credit on the Engine Room Department.

36. The enemy cruisers to the Northwest were the first to open fire at long range, their fire being immediately returned by EXETER. It was most unfortunate that at the start of this action the fire control table was damaged and put out of action by a failure in the enemy travel drive. Until this damage was realised salvos fell appreciably out for line and during the remainder of the action a clock and Dumaresq had to be used while repairs were attempted.

37. An enemy report was made when it was seen that evasion was no longer possible and two other reports were made subsequently during the action.

38. The ensuing action is difficult to describe in detail with no records available. The general trend of the action was Easterly with course varying between about 070 degrees and 110 degrees as alterations were made to avoid straddling or to open "A" arcs. The enemy

*Admiralty footnote:—*

\* Rear Admiral A. F. E. Palliser was Chief of Staff to Vice Admiral Helfrich

*Admiralty footnote —*

\* D/F—direction finding.

cruisers were disposed in pairs, one pair approximately abeam to starboard and the other on the port quarter. They closed gradually to a range of about 18,000 yards and then appeared to maintain this distance. Later five destroyers (Asashio class), which had not been in sight when action was joined, appeared from the Southwest and drew ahead, passing on the starboard beam at a range of about 14,000 yards shortly before EXETER was hit in A boiler room.

39. About the time that the enemy cruisers found the range, POPE made smoke without receiving an order to do so. ENCOUNTER followed suit and, conditions for smoke being good, the resulting smoke screens were decidedly effective. Firing on both sides was necessarily intermittent, targets being engaged by EXETER whenever seen clear of smoke, and it was seldom that it was possible to spot on more than four to five salvos.

40. A review of the situation at about 1100 was not encouraging. It was known that no support from surface forces could be expected, and it was believed that the Allied air forces would be fully employed against the Japanese invaders. EXETER's maximum speed was 25 knots with about 20 per cent. of main armament ammunition remaining. ENCOUNTER had fired all torpedoes in the action on 27th February. Consideration was given to a reversal of course, but no advantage could be seen, while such action would have given the enemy cruisers and destroyers a very decided position of torpedo advantage. I considered that the best policy was to continue to the Eastward and to conserve ammunition by continuing to engage the enemy on either side when clear of smoke in the hope of reducing the odds by crippling one or more of the enemy cruisers. About this time two slight rain squalls to the Eastward gave rise to the hope that others of greater intensity might be met and used to advantage. This was not the case, but POPE did make use of rain squalls later, after EXETER and ENCOUNTER had been sunk, in her endeavour to work round to the North and West.

41. The action continued much as previously described. Neither EXETER nor destroyers had yet been hit but now, despite the use of smoke (from funnel and smoke floats), salvos were falling close and snaking was necessary to avoid being hit. At one time it was seen that a number of EXETER's salvos straddled the leading enemy cruiser on the starboard beam, but with smoke interference it was impossible to say if hits were obtained. A torpedo target at long range was presented by the two enemy cruisers on the port quarter at about 1100. As the enemy were making no attempt to close the range and so provide a better target, the port tubes were fired. No hits were obtained, the target ships taking avoiding action by alteration of course.

42. The five enemy destroyers were by this time nearly abeam to starboard and just within effective range of EXETER's four-inch armament, which engaged them, as did the 8-inch armament when other targets were obscured by smoke. ENCOUNTER and POPE engaged the two leading destroyers. EXETER engaged the third destroyer which was hit and dropped out of line.

43. Throughout the action the enemy had spotting aircraft up consisting of single float seaplanes and one large type monoplane was also seen. These were engaged by EXETER's A.A. armament as opportunity offered.

44. It was at about 1120 that EXETER received a vital hit in A boiler room which started a large fire necessitating immediate and complete evacuation of this boiler room. Steam pressure dropped rapidly to 170 lbs./sq. in. and then more slowly until the main engines had to be stopped. All power in the ship failed shortly afterwards, and with it the whole of the main armament and also the secondary armament control.

45. It was at this time, as EXETER was losing way and ENCOUNTER and POPE drew ahead, that the enemy fire became really effective. EXETER was being repeatedly straddled and hit. To sum up, the situation was as follows:—

(a) Main engines stopped and all power in the ship failed or failing (one dynamo was kept running until steam also failed to this).

(b) Main armament and control out of action.

(c) Secondary armament control out of action.

(d) "A" boiler room on fire, with the after bulkhead of the four-inch magazine situated four feet from this boiler room necessitating the flooding of this magazine.

(e) Port torpedo tubes fired and no target available for starboard tubes.

(f) Fire had broken out in the officers' quarters aft.

(g) Enemy cruisers straddling and hitting from long range and enemy destroyers drawing ahead and now barely within secondary armament range.

46. There was now no possibility of saving the ship, and to ensure that she should not fall into the hands of the enemy the order was given to sink the ship and a few minutes later (estimated at about 1135), to abandon ship. This was carried out in an orderly manner but, with the failure of power, no boom boats could be got out. All rafts, float-a-nets and available woodwork were thrown overboard and good use was subsequently made of these. As a result of her final speed of 26 knots the ship still had slight headway when abandoned and without doubt this was instrumental in reducing casualties, since the water around the ship was alive with splashes from the enemy gunfire. The ship was evidently leaking oil fuel considerably, which, with a slight lop, made conditions in the water decidedly unpleasant at first.

47. About the time that abandoning was completed, the ship, which had already settled appreciably with a list to port, heeled further to port to a considerable angle. Some ten minutes later a very heavy explosion was observed starboard side amidships, the column of water from this explosion being higher than the masts. This is believed to have been the result of a torpedo hit, probably fired by an enemy destroyer. The ship quickly righted, rolled over to starboard and sank at about 1150 in some 30 fathoms in very approximate position 04 degrees 38 minutes South, 112 degrees 28 minutes East.

48. When EXETER was hit and started to lose way ENCOUNTER and POPE drew rapidly ahead, still engaging the enemy destroyers. They had ceased making smoke and when last seen were a considerable distance ahead. No report from the Commanding Officer of U.S.S. POPE is available, but in conversation with him I understood that his ship was chased by the enemy cruisers but drew away from them taking advantage of rain squalls. He endeavoured to work round to the North and West until repeatedly attacked by high level and dive bombers, which latter eventually succeeded in putting the ship out of action, necessitating her abandonment at about 1330.

49. Throughout this final action both ENCOUNTER and POPE were well handled and well fought. Their effective smoke laying was undoubtedly of great value.

50. Some 400 survivors of EXETER were picked up after about one hour in the water by two Japanese destroyers, which then left the scene of the action on an Easterly course. The remaining survivors were indeed fortunate to be picked up after about 24 hours in the water by a Japanese destroyer working in company with a cruiser or cruisers, the majority of survivors being subsequently transferred to the Dutch hospital ship OP-TEN-NOORT, then in Japanese hands. Three days later this ship proceeded to Macassar where all prisoners on board her were transferred on 10th March to the Dutch military barracks which had been turned into a P.O.W. camp.

#### 51. General Remarks.

(i) No signals were intercepted from PERTH or HOUSTON to indicate the presence of Japanese surface forces in the vicinity of Sunda Strait, nor was any information concerning enemy forces received after sailing from Sourabaya p.m. 28th February.

(ii) As stated in para. 33 no acknowledgment was obtained of the enemy report made and repeated about 0800/1. The following extract from a note written after release from Japan by the C.P.O. Telegraphist in charge of EXETER's W/T Department, may throw some light on the difficulties of enemy reporting in this area at this time.

"Four messages were transmitted, after being coded, by the P.O. Telegraphist in the Remote Control Office on the wave frequency used by ship to shore, H.M.S. ANKING and an Australian station (name uncertain but may have been Port Moresby, I cannot recall). No receipt was received from the above station who was calling H.M.S. ANKING, the W/T guardship at Batavia, who had proceeded to sea thus taking away the link with Batavia. Remote Control Office reported "No receipt" so the last two messages were also broadcast on the Indian Ocean station wave on the "I" method wave frequency used by Colombo, Bombay and Aden. We abandoned ship immediately after their transmission but it is almost certain that they were received by one of the three stations."

#### 52. Results of action.

(i) *Destroyer mentioned in para. 34.*—The Gunnery Officer of U.S.S. POPE, which was stationed on the starboard bow of EXETER, informed me that on board POPE they felt certain that this enemy destroyer was hit. This was not seen in EXETER as the destroyer was enveloped in smoke but POPE was in a better position to see after the enemy's turn away under smoke.

(ii) *Destroyer mentioned in para. 42.*—The hit on this destroyer was made by EXETER's main armament. Her ultimate fate was not seen because of smoke, but a Japanese officer subsequently stated that this destroyer's stern was blown off killing 70 men.

(iii) *Damage to enemy aircraft.*—From a statement by a Japanese officer on board one of the cruisers to which survivors were initially transferred, EXETER's A.A. armament shot down one aircraft and damaged another. The latter with tail damage was shown to the Director Gunner of EXETER.

It is understood that both ENCOUNTER and POPE claimed hits on the enemy destroyers but no doubt these will be made in their separate reports.

(Signed) O. L. GORDON,  
Captain, R.N.

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