



SUPPLEMENT

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THE ATTACK ON ST. NAZAIRE, 1942.

The following Despatch was submitted to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty on the 13th April, 1942, by Admiral of the Fleet Sir CHARLES M. FORBES, G.C.B., D.S.O., Commander-in-Chief, Plymouth.

*Plymouth Command,
13th April, 1942.*

I regard the attack on St. Nazaire on the 28th March, 1942, the report of which is herewith forwarded for the information of Their Lordships, as more difficult than that on Zeebrugge, as a large weakly-armed force had to make an undetected passage of over 400 miles to the scene of action at an average speed of 11½ knots, through an area usually covered by the enemy's air reconnaissances. The success of the attack reflects great credit on all who took part, but chiefly on Commander R. E. D. Ryder, Royal Navy, who displayed, not only during the operation, but in the preparations beforehand, outstanding qualities of leadership, ingenuity and determination.

2. The manner in which he bluffed his way past the defences of the Loire to within a mile of the objective was admirable and was carefully worked out beforehand.

3. Results of the Operation.

(a) The principal object of the attack was achieved, as the large lock capable of taking the TIRPITZ should be out of action for a considerable time. The outer caisson was destroyed by the blowing up of H.M.S. CAMPBELTOWN, and the demolition parties destroyed the pumping station and the operating mechanism of the outer and inner caissons. Commander Ryder speaks very

highly of the speed with which these military demolitions were carried out.

(b) The demolition of other port facilities including the possible destruction of the caisson at the Old Entrance.

Subsidiary results were:—

(c) The killing of a considerable number of Germans, partly by their own fire.

(d) The certain damage, and probable sinking of, a U-boat by H.M.S. TYNEDALE.

(e) The destruction of a number of enemy aircraft by H.M.S. BROCKLESBY, M.L.S. and aircraft of No. 19 Group, R.A.F.

(f) The probable diversion of troops and armament to Biscay ports.

(g) The moral effect on the enemy of an attack on one of his principal bases.

4. *Losses.* Our naval losses amounted to 34 officers and 157 ratings killed or missing out of a total of 62 officers and 291 ratings who sailed from England. A considerable number of these are likely to be prisoners of war. Of the 18 coastal craft employed, ten were sunk by enemy action, one was destroyed by our own forces as it was unable to make the return journey, three were destroyed by our own forces by order of the Commanding Officer of H.M.S. CLEVELAND, as he considered they were unable to make the return journey (a decision with which I do not agree), and four returned safely but damaged. Taking into consideration the extreme vulnerability of the coastal craft, neither the losses in men or material can be considered as excessive for the results achieved.

The losses in Commando troops, 34 officers and 178 other ranks out of 44 officers and 224 other ranks, were high, but again it is hoped that a number have survived as prisoners of war.