

44. The first indication that the unexpected was about to happen came at 2129 when ANTHONY's signal timed 2115 was received reporting she had accomplished her task successfully. This was a fine achievement brilliantly carried out, and, in my opinion, was the principal and direct cause of the enemy's collapse. The attack by 17th and 29th Brigades commenced at 2030 hours. A success signal from the town showed that the Marines had landed. 17th Brigade secured their objective which was about 1800 yards beyond the main enemy position at 2300 hours and fired their success signals. The two battalions of the 29th Brigade were then ordered forward and pushed right through to the main town of Antsirane with little or no opposition and reached the main harbour. The Commando were unable to find boats so could not assist.

45. I had decided that RAMILLIES and screen would not join the carriers during the night D.2/D.3 as the latter were carrying out night flying operations to support the attack on Antsirane.

D.3.

At 0313/D.3 I received a message from the General telling me he would like all available air and ship support at 0900 when the 29th Brigade would assault Oranjia Peninsula. From this, it was obvious that the night attack had succeeded. I therefore proceeded with RAMILLIES and screen to join DEVONSHIRE and HERMIONE to the Eastward of the Oranjia Peninsula at daylight in readiness to bombard.

At 0400 a situation report was received confirming the capture of Antsirane.

46. During the night a report was received that GENISTA had attacked a contact to the North-West of Nosi Hara and about 0700 signals were received from ILLUSTRIOUS aircraft that she had sunk a submarine. This subsequently proved to be LE HEROS from whom survivors were picked up in position 12° 03' S. 49° E.

47. At 0723, Headquarters 121 Force asked me to postpone bombardment until 1000. I instructed RAMILLIES, DEVONSHIRE, HERMIONE and LIGHTNING accordingly, and detailed their respective targets.

At 0945 Headquarters 121 Force gave me some details of the intended assault including the furthest on position of our troops at 1200. The main assault would not commence till noon, but I was asked to commence a preliminary bombardment as soon as possible after 1000 unless I heard that the ultimatum had been accepted.

At 0950 I was asked to postpone the bombardment until 1030 and at 1006 I was asked to postpone action until further orders as chances of surrender appeared good.

48. I was tired of these delays which were keeping the Fleet steaming up and down in dangerous waters, consequently I informed the General that I intended to commence a 15 minutes' bombardment to encourage the enemy to surrender.

At 1040 RAMILLIES, HERMIONE and LIGHTNING commenced a bombardment of Oranjia Peninsula, but "Cease Fire" was ordered 10 minutes later on receipt of a message from Headquarters 121 Force that Oranjia Peninsula had surrendered.

49. DEVONSHIRE, PANTHER and ACTIVE were then detached to screen the carriers.

14th M/S Flotilla swept the channel, entered the Bay and searched the harbour.

On receipt of signal that no mines had been found, RAMILLIES, HERMIONE, LIGHTNING and PALADIN proceeded into Diego Suarez Bay, anchoring at 1730.

50. The slow convoy sailed from Courrier Bay at 1600/D.3 and the fast convoy at 0500/D.4.

D.4.

Both convoys entered harbour on D.4 and anchored in Scotch Bay.

51. INDOMITABLE and screen also entered harbour on D.4, INDOMITABLE being attacked off the entrance by a submarine which was afterwards destroyed by ACTIVE. Her destruction was subsequently confirmed by a Vichy report, which gave her name as the MONGE.

ILLUSTRIOUS, DEVONSHIRE and screen remained at sea to provide A/S and fighter protection, entering harbour on D.5.

Surrender Negotiations.

52. At 0920 on Friday, 8th May, in answer to my summons, the following French Officers appeared on board H.M.S. RAMILLIES:—

Colonel Claerebout, Officer Commanding Defences, Diego Suarez,

Capitaine de Vaisseau Maerten, Naval Officer-in-Charge, Madagascar,

Capitaine de Vaisseau Simon, ex Commanding Officer of French Sloop D'ENTRE-CASTEAUX;

and were received by me in my cabin.

I informed them that since they had not accepted my summons to surrender, British forces under my command had been compelled to take Diego Suarez by force. I intended to ensure that it did not fall into the hands of our enemies and I asked for the co-operation of the French authorities in this task. I stated that the terms of British occupation would be communicated later.

The French Officers then left the ship.

53. At 1100 I held a conference in the Residency at Antsirane, with General Sturges and our respective staffs, to convey to the French authorities the terms of surrender.

54. The following were present:—

Rear-Admiral E. N. Syfret, C.B., Commander-in-Chief,

Major-General R. G. Sturges, C.B., R.M., Military Commander,

Brigadier F. W. Festing, Assault Commander,

Brigadier M. S. Lush, Chief Political Officer,

Captain J. M. Howson, R.N., Chief of Staff to Commander-in-Chief,

Colonel Melville, South African Air Force;

Colonel Claerebout, Officer Commanding Defences, Diego Suarez,

Capitaine de Vaisseau Maerten, Naval Officer-in-Charge, Madagascar,

Colonel Rouves, Commanding Infantry Regiment,

M. Bourguine, Administrateur-Maire of Diego Suarez.