

close off the Kaso or Scarpanto Straits ready to act on any enemy reports which might be received, retiring to the south-eastward by day.

13. H.M. Ships SIRIUS, PENELOPE, FAULKNOR and FURY (Lieutenant-Commander T. F. Taylor, R.N.) entered the Aegean on the night of 6th/7th October when reconnaissance indicated that enemy reinforcements were arriving from the westward, and assisted by an enemy report from H.M. Submarine UNRULY (Lieutenant J. P. Fyfe, R.N.) received at 0630 on 7th, they located and sank an enemy convoy consisting of an ammunition ship, an armed trawler and six landing craft. This encounter delayed the retirement of our force, which was attacked in daylight in the Scarpanto Strait by J.U.88s and 87s, H.M.S. PENELOPE being hit by an unexploded bomb and her speed reduced to 23 knots. (The destruction of this convoy probably prevented the enemy from making an immediate assault on Leros.)

14. A force under H.M.S. CARLISLE (Captain H. F. Nalder, R.N.) carried out a sweep on the nights of 7th/8th and 8th/9th October to intercept any further enemy forces attempting to reach the Dodecanese from the Piraeus. No sightings were made and at 1215 on 9th October, when the force was proceeding south through Scarpanto Strait, it was heavily attacked by J.U. 87s and although the escorting Lightnings shot down 15 enemy aircraft and ships accounted for three more, H.M.S. PANTHER (Lieutenant-Commander Viscount Jocelyn, R.N.) was hit and sunk and H.M.S. CARLISLE was hit aft and was towed to Alexandria by ROCKWOOD.

15. It now became apparent that our forces could not enter the Aegean to intercept enemy shipping and be clear again by daylight, and that further attempts would lead to unacceptable losses, more especially as the Lightning Squadrons were withdrawn to the Central Mediterranean. Accordingly the policy was adopted of operating destroyers only as an anti-invasion force, and using cruisers to provide A.A. and fighter direction during approach and retirement from the Aegean and for operations in such areas they could reach during the night.

16. The loss of Kos airfields, besides finally destroying our hopes of fighter cover for our surface forces, greatly increased the difficulties of supply as it prevented the passage and unloading of merchant ships and heavy lift ships which were urgently required to provide heavy A.A. defences and to improve the transport situation in Leros. The capture of Rhodes became increasingly important for the continuation of our operations.

17. On 9th October, a meeting was held at Tunis, attended by General Eisenhower, the First Sea Lord (Admiral of the Fleet Sir Andrew B. Cunningham, Bt., G.C.B., D.S.O.) and all Commanders-in-Chief in the Mediterranean and Middle East, including the Commander-in-Chief, Levant, Admiral Sir John H. D. Cunningham, K.C.B., M.V.O., to consider the situation, and it was finally decided that our resources would not allow us to mount Operation "Accolade", but that we should try to hold Leros and Samos as long as supplies could be maintained.

PHASE III.

We build up Leros and Samos whilst the Germans prepare to invade.

12th October-5th November.

18. On their return from Tunis, the Commanders-in-Chief, Middle East, at a meeting presided over by the Foreign Secretary and attended by the First Sea Lord, confirmed the decision to hold Leros and Samos, using all means in their power to do so, and at the same time decided that it would be impossible to recapture Kos with the forces at their disposal. Approval was given for the use of four Italian submarines (ZOEAL, ATROPO, CORRIDONI, MENOTTI) and H.M. Submarines SEVERN (Lieutenant-Commander A. N. G. Campbell, R.N.) and RORQUAL (Lieutenant-Commander L. W. Napier, D.S.O., R.N.) to assist in running supplies. Preparations were made to run a vessel of the Turkish ferry type through to Leros with heavy vehicles during the November non-moon period. This latter venture was subsequently abandoned.

19. On 14th October, Vice-Admiral Sir Algernon U. Willis, K.C.B., D.S.O. relieved Admiral Sir John H. D. Cunningham, K.C.B., M.V.O. as Commander-in-Chief, Levant.

20. Intelligence now suggested that the enemy would stage an invasion of Leros from Kos and Kalymnos with the 4,000 troops believed to be already there, as soon as he could transfer additional shipping and landing craft from the Piraeus. Our surface forces were therefore employed in conjunction with air reconnaissance and striking forces, to prevent the arrival of such shipping. A striking force was kept almost continuously available in the area, which was employed on anti-shipping patrols, bombardments of ports and harbours in Kos and Kalymnos islands. It was hoped by a display of activity to induce the enemy to believe we were capable of exerting greater naval strength in the area than was actually the case.

21. Reports at noon on 15th October showed an enemy convoy of two merchant ships and two landing craft off Naxos proceeding to the eastward and H.M. Ships BELVOIR (Lieutenant J. F. D. Bush, D.S.C., R.N.) and BEAUFORT (Lieutenant-Commander Sir Standish O'G. Roche, Bt., D.S.O.) were ordered to intercept and destroy it. They were reported and heavily attacked by J.U. 88s and J.U. 87s though fortunately without incurring damage, and the convoy was diverted to the northward, thereby evading our force who had to withdraw to the southward due to lack of fuel. H.M. Ships PHEOBE (Captain C. P. Frend, R.N.), FAULKNOR (Captain M. S. Thomas, D.S.O., R.N.) and FURY who entered the Aegean at dark, continued to search, but made no sighting and had to withdraw from the Aegean before daylight. At 1300B on 16th October, H.M. Submarine TORBAY (Lieutenant R. J. Clutterbuck, R.N.) sighted the convoy to the northward of Levitha and sank one of the merchant ships. During the night of the 16th/17th, H.M.S. HURSLEY (Lieutenant-Commander W. J. P. Church, D.S.O., D.S.C., R.N.) and H.M.S. MIAOULIS (Commander E. Boudouris, R.H.N.) searched Kos roads and the east side of Kalymnos, setting a small merchant ship on fire in Port Vathi, sinking an E-boat and a landing craft and setting a sloop