

"Torpedoes approaching, they will pass ahead of you." I decided, however, not to take any chances, and altered course to 180 degrees, engaging the enemy on the starboard side, with the range closing rapidly. So as to blank ACHILLES' fire for as short a time as possible, I directed her by signal to pass under the stern of AJAX.

35. At 0732 GRAF SPEE turned away to the west, making much smoke and zigzagging to throw out the First Division's gunfire, which, particularly from ACHILLES, appeared to be very accurate at this stage. AJAX was also making very good use of her three available guns. GRAF SPEE altered to the south-west at 0736, and again brought all guns to bear on the First Division.

36. By 0738 the range was down to 8,000 yards. At this time I received a report that AJAX had only 20 per cent. of ammunition left and had only three guns in action, as one of the hoists had failed in "B" turret and "X" and "Y" turrets were both out of action.

GRAF SPEE'S shooting was still very accurate and she did not appear to have suffered much damage.

I therefore decided to break off the day action and try and close in again after dark. Accordingly at 0740 AJAX and ACHILLES turned away to the east under cover of smoke.

37. One of GRAF SPEE'S last salvos brought down AJAX'S main top mast and destroyed all her aerials. Jury aerials were, however, soon rigged.

38. It subsequently transpired that the report of shortage of ammunition in AJAX referred only to "A" turret, which had been firing continuously for 81 minutes, but this was not realised at the time.

39. GRAF SPEE made no attempt to follow, but steadied on a course of about 270 degrees, proceeding at about 22 knots on a course direct for the River Plate.

40. After opening the range under smoke for six minutes, I again turned the First Division to the westward and ordered ACHILLES to shadow in Sector "A", on the enemy's starboard quarter, and AJAX in Sector "B", on his port quarter. The range at this time being about 15 miles.

41. The general trend of GRAF SPEE'S retreat at this stage was about 255 degrees. His very conspicuous control tower made it an easy matter to shadow him at long range in the excellent visibility prevailing.

At 0807, as AJAX'S aerials were still down, I ordered ACHILLES to broadcast GRAF SPEE'S position, course and speed to all British merchant ships. A similar message was broadcast every hour from AJAX until the end of the chase. I also passed this information to Admiralty at 1017 and 1700.

42. At 0912, AJAX recovered her aircraft, the operation being excellently performed under difficult conditions by Captain C. H. L. Woodhouse, and the pilot of the aircraft, Lieutenant E. D. G. Lewin, Royal Navy, and shadowing was resumed.

43. At 0946 I ordered CUMBERLAND, then at the Falkland Islands, to close the Plate at

full speed. She left at 1200, on the initiative of her Commanding Officer, Captain W. H. G. Fallowfield, Royal Navy, who had by then only received very jumbled messages. On receipt of my signal she at once increased to full speed.

At 1005 ACHILLES over-estimating the enemy's speed had closed to 23,000 yards. GRAF SPEE thereupon altered course and fired two three gun salvos at ACHILLES; the first was very short, but the second fell close alongside. She appeared to wait for the first salvo to fall before firing the second.

ACHILLES turned away at full speed under smoke and resumed shadowing at longer range.

44. At 1104 a merchant ship was sighted close to GRAF SPEE. She was stopped and was blowing off steam. A few minutes later the following W/T signal was received on 500 k/cs: AJAX (pre-war call sign) from GRAF SPEE—"please pick up lifeboats of English steamer."

On coming up with the merchant ship she turned out to be the British S.S. SHAKESPEARE. All her boats were hoisted, and in response to my signals she reported that she was quite all right and did not require any assistance. By this time she was moving out to the southern flank.

At 1105 I received a signal from EXETER who reported that all her turrets were out of action and that she was flooded forward up to No. 14 bulkhead but could still do 18 knots. I ordered her to proceed to the Falkland Islands at whatever speed was possible without straining her bulkheads. She later reported that one gun of "Y" turret could be fired in local control.

At 1347 I informed the British Naval Attache, Buenos Aires, that GRAF SPEE was heading direct for the Plate.

45. At 1543 ACHILLES signalled "Enemy in sight 297", and later reported "Suspected 8 inch cruiser." However, at 1559, she negatived the report, and the ship sighted was subsequently identified as S.S. DELANE, whose streamlined funnel gave her a similar appearance to a "Blucher" at very long range.

46. Shadowing continued without incident until 1915, when GRAF SPEE altered course and fired two salvos at AJAX who immediately turned away under smoke. The first salvo fell short and in line, the second in AJAX'S wake as she turned. The range at this time was about 26,000 yards.

47. It now appeared that GRAF SPEE intended to enter the Plate, and at 1902 I ordered ACHILLES to follow her if she went west of Lobos, while AJAX would proceed south of the English Bank in case she doubled back that way. I also directed ACHILLES to take every advantage of territorial waters while shadowing. My instructions were perfectly carried out by Captain W. E. Parry who took ACHILLES inside Lobos Island and close to the Uruguayan coast.

48. Just after sunset GRAF SPEE fired three salvos at ACHILLES, the third being very close. ACHILLES replied with five salvos and appeared to straddle. ACHILLES at this time was just clear of Punta Negra.