

at 0845 and DEVONSHIRE proceeded to the South to join HERMIONE off the entrance to the harbour about 1000.

47. Consideration had to be given to the employment and subsequent recovery of the Walrus aircraft. It was most desirable to use my own observer for the bombardment and it was most undesirable to leave the Walrus on the catapult when the ship went into action. After an exchange of signals with the Rear-Admiral Aircraft Carriers and ILLUSTRIOUS it was decided to catapult the Walrus before opening fire and land it in Ambararata Bay where it could run up on the beach and remain until an opportunity offered for its recovery in calm water. The weather on the Eastern side of the island was consistently unfavourable for a recovery at sea. While ashore the crew were joined by other Fleet Air Arm personnel from force landed aircraft and communication was maintained by W/T.

48. DEVONSHIRE arrived in position 10 miles East of Oranjia Point by 1000 to find HERMIONE in action with the coast defences. She informed me that the Headquarters of the 29th Independent Brigade had asked for a general strafe of the peninsula, that No. 1 battery was not firing but that a new battery had opened up and that the maximum range was 18,000 yards.

49. HERMIONE was getting very short of suitable ammunition for bombardment and DEVONSHIRE had none to waste. I knew that the centre of resistance was South of Antsirane and it seemed probable that the Oranjia Peninsula would capitulate as soon as Antsirane fell. In the circumstances it appeared undesirable to damage the batteries unless they came into action against our own troops advancing towards the Oranjia Peninsula, since we would require these batteries for the defence of the port as soon as it passed into our possession.

50. Arrangements were made therefore for one cruiser to maintain her position within range and in readiness for instant action while the other stood off to seaward. The area of operations was limited and made the ships an easy target for submarine attack unless a high speed and zigzag were maintained. HERMIONE had already spent over 24 hours in the area so the extent of the "pitch" would be obvious to the submarine. Four ships of the 14th Minesweeping Flotilla who were waiting off the entrance to sweep the passage in were instructed to carry out an A/S sweep of the area.

51. DEVONSHIRE carried out registration shoots between 1125 and 1300 on Nos. 1 and 2 batteries, Mamelon Vert and the new position reported by HERMIONE. The object was to exercise the gunnery control team in preparation for more serious work later if called for. It was found that accurate indirect fire was impossible in the weather conditions and with the speed and zigzag in use, mainly owing to the wander of the gyro compass. With the sun high in the sky visibility deteriorated in the target area and made direct fire impossible. It was decided that if a call for fire came, the firing would be carried out at slow speed and on as straight a course as enemy opposition would permit. Two conspicuous trees at Mamelon Vert which had been used as aiming marks on this occasion were subsequently cut down by the French.

52. HERMIONE took over between 1300 and 1600, after which DEVONSHIRE took over until dark. The Walrus landed at 1345 after which air observation was maintained by Swordfish from ILLUSTRIOUS until 1700.

53. During the afternoon dispositions were made for the night, and the Senior Officer, 14th Minesweeping Flotilla, was instructed to remain North of a line  $115^{\circ}$  from Cape Amber during dark hours in order to avoid any possibility of a clash between friendly forces during the night. At 1720 HERMIONE took station astern and as darkness fell the two cruisers withdrew to the Eastward.

54. At 1754 your signal stating that a destroyer with 50 Marines would be proceeding into Diego Suarez was received from HERMIONE. This signal had been missed in DEVONSHIRE and was only discovered by chance, but fortunately both cruisers were in a position to give support when required. At 1749 your amplifying signal was received ordering cruisers to support ANTHONY in any way possible. An effort to inform ANTHONY of my intentions, without giving anything away or causing her to answer on W/T, failed.

55. ANTHONY was due to enter the pass at 2010. It was planned to be in a position five miles  $090^{\circ}$  from Oranjia Light House at that time and to bombard the searchlights when they were switched on. A strong Westerly set was experienced, and a turn of  $360^{\circ}$  had to be made in order not to be early. It was obviously imperative that the cruisers should not be sighted until ANTHONY was in, for otherwise the whole "game" would be given away.

56. At 1957 a position  $080^{\circ} 6\frac{1}{2}$  miles from the lighthouse was reached, and course was altered to starboard to  $347^{\circ}$ . At 2008 course was altered to  $257^{\circ}$  and when HERMIONE was round, to  $167^{\circ}$ . The idea was to have at least one of the cruisers with guns bearing all the time. At 2023, while still on the Southerly course, a searchlight on Oranjia Point was switched on across the entrance, and an object was seen in the beam which might have been ANTHONY so fire was immediately opened with 4 gun salvos of 8 inch. With the arrival of the second salvo the searchlight went out and was not seen again.

57. DEVONSHIRE and HERMIONE continued to patrol across the entrance until 2050 but nothing more was seen. At this time ANTHONY's future movements were not known and it was thought possible that she might go round into English Bay under cover of Andrakaka which was in our hands. Course was altered to seaward for a short time, but at 2109 gunflashes and tracer were sighted which were presumed to be ANTHONY fighting her way out. Fire could not be opened, for there was not point of aim, and the possibility of damaging ANTHONY could not be accepted. At 2128 ANTHONY's report that she was clear was received, so DEVONSHIRE altered course to the Eastward and later to the South East. At 0130 course was altered to  $320^{\circ}$  to close the entrance at dawn.

*Thursday, 7th May.*

58. Your intentions to bombard Oranjia Peninsula were received at 0415. I therefore continued to the North Westward to join your