

a "get away" well to the eastward and landed on at 0230.

(vii) *Skelton-Perkins.*

Task: Dropping Flares.

Approach course was similar to Hamilton-Weekes except that the flares were dropped south-east of the harbour. Eight flares were dropped at between 6,500 feet and 5,000 feet, set to burn 3,000 feet lower. Bombs were dropped near the oil storage depot, but it is not considered that hits had been secured. Anti-aircraft fire similar to that of Hamilton-Weekes was experienced, some of the bursts during the dive bomb attack being particularly close.

The aircraft landed on at 0200.

(viii) *Clifford-Going.*

Task: Bombing Cruisers and Destroyers in Mar Piccolo (See Plan 1).

This aircraft started $\frac{1}{2}$ hour late as stated in paragraph 10 and arrived at Taranto when the second attack was already in progress. The aircraft came in over the land about 5 miles east of the harbour entrance, and steered straight over the dockyard to the far side of the Mar Piccolo.

Turning to port a dive bombing attack was made from 2,500 feet along the line of cruisers and destroyers from west to east. A stick of 250-lb. S.A.P. bombs was dropped across the cruisers. The pilot then turned north across the Mar Piccolo, later swinging to starboard and returning over the mainland and out to sea about 5 miles eastward of the harbour entrance.

A large fire in one of the battleships was seen to be raging for over 5 minutes.

Anti-aircraft fire was experienced the whole time the aircraft was over the land, the pom-pom fire being particularly intense during the bombing attack.

Aircraft landed on at 0250.

19. All aircraft, except the two missing, were landed on by 0250, and the Force rejoined the Commander-in-Chief at 0730.

20. It is noteworthy that the enemy did not use the searchlights at all during either of the attacks.

RESULTS OF THE ATTACKS.

21. The only information so far available of the results of the attacks are in Vice Admiral, Malta's 2031-12 and 2345-12, as follows:—

To:—C. in C., From:—V.A.M.
(R) R.A.A.
F.O.H.
Admiralty.

Have examined Taranto photographs carefully and until enlarged I do not wish unduly to raise your hopes but definitely appears that:—

(a) One LITTORIO class is down by the bows with forecastle awash and a heavy list to starboard. Numerous auxiliaries alongside.

(b) One CAVOUR class beached opposite entrance to graving dock under construction. Stern including "Y" turret is under water. Ship is heavily listed to starboard.

(c) Inner harbour: 2 cruisers are listed to starboard and are surrounded by oil fuel.

(d) Two auxiliaries off commercial basin appear to have stern under water.

2. Hearty congratulations on a great effort. Our small contribution to-day one Macchi 200 and one Corpse.

T.O.O. 2031—12th November.

To:—C. in C. From:—V.A.M.
(R) Admiralty,
R.A.A.
F.O.H.

My 2031-12. The stem only of northern CAVOUR class battleship shows on photograph but by fix from entrance of Passagio Piccolo which also just shows the bows is in about 4 fathoms. There is oil round the stem and it seems certain the ship has been beached. The remaining one LITTORIO and two CAVOUR class battleships appear undamaged.

T.O.O. 2345—12th November.

Royal Air Force Co-operation.

22. The excellent photographic reconnaissance promoted by the Royal Air Force was a most important factor in the success of this operation. The accurate meteorological forecast from Malta was also most useful.

Repetition.

23. It was proposed to repeat the operation on the following night and a Striking Force of 15 aircraft comprising 6 torpedo aircraft, 7 dive bombers and 2 flare droppers was prepared, but the operation was cancelled owing to the unfavourable weather report.

General Remarks.

24. Duplex Pistol.

There was considerable debate as to the wisdom of using Duplex pistols in such constricted waters. It was decided to run off 100 yards of the safety range and the battery resistance was removed to ensure that the torpedoes would remain dangerous on completion of their run.

The decision to use them was indeed fortunate as the results could not have been obtained by any other weapon.

To those whose faith in this weapon has remained unshaken the greatest honour is due and their faith has been amply justified by 3 battleships being either sunk or crippled by 9—or possibly 11—18 inch torpedoes.

25. Spirit in which the attack was made.

This attack was carried out under somewhat difficult conditions. Owing to the heavy Fleet programme no rehearsals had been possible. Aircraft from H.M.S. EAGLE were embarked the day before leaving harbour and had had no previous experience of landing on H.M.S. ILLUSTRIOUS deck or of our controlled landing and the use of the barrier. A third obstacle was presented by the discovery that our petrol was contaminated, three Swordfish being lost on the preceding days from this cause. In spite of this the zeal and enthusiasm of everyone to carry out this great enterprise was unabated and it is impossible to praise too highly those who in these comparatively slow machines made studied and accurate attacks in the midst of intense anti-aircraft fire.

26. The Fleet Air Arm.

Although the proper function of the Fleet Air Arm may perhaps be the operation of aircraft