

32. At Port Y, BEDOUIN at 0626, while leading the landing craft in towards the shore, intercepted the Norwegian ferry steamer MIRA flying the Norwegian flag and endeavoured to stop her by firing a shot across her bows. As this had no effect a second shot was fired into the fore part of the ship, but as the ship still did not stop effective fire was opened. One shot entered the ship below the funnel, steam poured from her and she lost way. BEDOUIN then left her to see the landing parties safely ashore. This done, BEDOUIN, acting in accordance with my instructions, returned to sink the MIRA. It was seen that she was being abandoned and, when this was completed and the rafts were clear, fire was opened. MIRA was very soon severely damaged and started to sink slowly.

33. I was subsequently informed by a military officer of one of the landing parties that the captain of the MIRA was forced at the pistol-point by a German officer on board to continue on his course, despite BEDOUIN'S warning shots. It is believed that this officer and 12 German soldiers who were also on board were later taken prisoner and brought back in QUEEN EMMA. It is feared that there were some casualties to Norwegian civilians as a result of BEDOUIN'S gunfire.

34. By 0840 it had become evident that the work of the landing parties at Port Y would shortly be completed. QUEEN EMMA, who had been lying off Port X, was accordingly directed to proceed to Port Y to commence re-embarkation of A.L.C.s.* This was completed at 1024 when QUEEN EMMA, with BEDOUIN, returned to Port X who had reported all tasks completed at 1011 and parties ready to re-embark.

35. By 1030 SOMALI was proceeding to cover the landing parties at Port A as LEGION had moved southward to investigate two trawlers which subsequently proved to be Norwegian puffers. During this passage, dense columns of heavy black smoke could be seen at Ports X and A rising to the tops of the surrounding mountains, a height of several thousand feet, sure evidence of the thoroughness with which the landing parties were carrying out their tasks of destruction.

36. At Port A the military completed their tasks successfully and LEGION was not called upon to give any support. Two German trawlers, the ANDO, 300 tons, and the GROTTO, 200 tons, which were the only enemy ships in the harbour, were sunk by the naval demolition party from H.M.S. RODNEY under the command of Lieutenant C. P. N. Wells-Cole, R.N. By the time SOMALI had arrived at 1100 re-embarkation of troops had already commenced.

37. At Port B, as at Port A, ESKIMO was not called upon to give any support to the landing parties, who completed their tasks successfully, nor was there any enemy shipping present against which she could take action.

38. SOMALI returned to Port X at 1200 to find re-embarkation in progress. The time required for this was increased by the large number of prisoners and volunteers to be embarked in QUEEN EMMA who sailed with 852 persons on board. By 1230, however, the last

landing craft had left the shore and at 1255 QUEEN EMMA reported that she was ready to proceed. At 1256 PRINCESS BEATRIX made a similar report from Port B.

39. SOMALI, BEDOUIN, TARTAR, and QUEEN EMMA proceeded to position C at 20 knots. LEGION, ESKIMO and PRINCESS BEATRIX joined company at 1330 and the whole force, in day cruising order, set course at best speed down Vestfjord. Columns of smoke were still rising from the burning oil tanks and plant and a heavy pall lay over the scene of the day's operations.

40. At 1530 as the force was passing Vaeroy, a German reconnaissance aircraft was sighted by BEDOUIN and was heard by the same ship to make a W/T report: BEDOUIN accordingly carried out jamming procedure. The aircraft flew at about 6,000 feet making full use of cloud cover and was engaged by ships' guns as opportunity offered. Although conditions appeared very favourable for a bombing attack none was made and the aircraft disappeared shortly after 1600. In view of this sighting, I made the W/T report of the successful completion of the operation at once, without waiting until the force was clear of the area.

41. At 1700 course was altered to the westward for position P which was reached at 0900 on 5th March, after which course was altered to the southward. Vice Admiral Commanding, 18th Cruiser Squadron, in EDINBURGH, with NIGERIA in company, were sighted at 1020 on 5th March and provided escort for the remainder of the passage.

42. It was known on the morning of 5th March that the Germans had announced that a raid had been made and I therefore considered it desirable to signal a brief report of the success of the operation as early as could be done with safety. Accordingly when the force was in position of approximately 64°00'N. 4°00'W and darkness was approaching W/T silence was broken for this purpose. Unfortunately signalling conditions were very unfavourable and it took much longer than had been anticipated to clear the message.

43. The wounded prisoners from the KREBS were accommodated in the sick bay, and my harbour cabin during the return passage. They received the greatest care and skilful attention from my Medical Officer, Surgeon Lieutenant M. G. Low, R.N.V.R., assisted by the sick bay staff, the Flotilla chaplain and the canteen manager. The Army other ranks also assisted. Two of the men were very seriously wounded and owe their lives to the skilled nursing they received. Similar good arrangements for the wounded were made in QUEEN EMMA.

44. The return passage was made without incident and Force "Rebel" arrived at Scapa at 1300 on 6th March.

45. After arrival prisoners and volunteers were disembarked from all ships, the wounded being discharged to H.M.H.S. AMARAPOORA.

General Remarks.

46. I was greatly impressed with the efficient handling and station-keeping of the troop carriers, particularly as they were both newly commissioned ships with no previous experience of working in formation. The lowering and hoisting of the landing craft during the operation was carried out in a most efficient manner.

Admiralty footnote —

* A L C — Assault Landing Craft.