

as the weather at Gibraltar was unsuitable. Shore-based A/S aircraft took over protection from 0700 5th November.

14. During the passage the convoy was frequently exercised in emergency turns and in changing from one cruising disposition to another. Outstanding in these exercises was the Polish BATTERY leading the fifth column, who was consistently handled with the precision and skill of a well trained naval unit. All ships carried out functioning trials of their A.A. weapons in preparation for the air attacks we expected in the Mediterranean.

15. The convoy should have rendezvoused with the destroyers ESCAPEDE, ISAAC SWEERS and MARNE in position 45° 50' N., 26° 08' W. at 0800 G.M.T. on 31st October. These destroyers had sailed from Ponta Delgada on 29th October and were joining as additional escort. Owing to the incorrect receipt of a cypher message, the rendezvous was, however, missed, and ROTHER was detached a.m. 31st to look for them but was unsuccessful. At 1815 on 1st November, H.M. Ships CLEVELAND, ALBRIGHTON and ESKDALE were sighted northbound to join K.M.S. 2 and they reported having seen ESCAPEDE earlier in the day steering south-east. ISAAC SWEERS and ESCAPEDE eventually joined the screen at 1200 on 2nd November, and MARNE at 0800 on 3rd November.

16. At 1830 3rd November, H.M.S. SHEFFIELD was detached and proceeded ahead independently to Gibraltar. Her fuelling of escorts had throughout been conducted most energetically under difficult conditions due to the following swell. On the passage out, escorts were fuelled from SHEFFIELD and ORBITA.

17. From 0930 4th November, the convoy was re-disposed preparatory to the Oran section parting company. At 1150 on 4th November in position 36° 13' N., 13° 07' W., H.M. Ships JAMAICA, VERITY, WISHART, VELOX, WESTCOTT, ACHATES and ANTELOPE joined as additional escorts for K.M.F.O. 1 and K.M.F.A. 1; and at 1400 K.M.F.O. 1 proceeded independently under Commodore T. H. Troubridge, R.N., flying his Flag in H.M.S. LARGS. After re-disposing the screen K.M.F.A. 1's course was set for 093°, speed 12 knots.

18. At 0730 5th November, the A.A. ships PALOMARES and POZARICA and the destroyer AMAZON joined from Gibraltar. Dutch Ship ISAAC SWEERS was detached at 0745 to join Force "H" which had been sighted 10 miles to the northward at 0720. The 0800 position of convoy K.M.F.A. 1 was 36° 07' N., 09° 09' W.

19. A merchant ship bearing 110°, 7 miles sighted at 0925 5th November proved to be the Vichien CAUDEBEC, bound for Casablanca with a cargo of wood. WIVERN was ordered to close her and to place an armed guard on board to take her to Gibraltar. Our prize.

20. From 1600 to 1630 5th November, the convoy was formed into Cruising Order No. 24 for passage of the Straits. This was in three columns led by KEREN, BULOLO and KARANJA in that order from port to starboard column.

21. At 1830 on 5th November, ROYAL ULSTERMAN, ROYAL SCOTSMAN, ULSTER MONARCH and LEINSTER left

the convoy for Gibraltar. They were escorted by SPIREA and JONQUIL who had joined from Gibraltar at 1700 for this purpose.

22. The passage of the Straits was uneventful. Several unidentified vessels on a westerly course were passed when the convoy was abeam Cape Spartel at 2245, but no action was taken.

23. At 0230 6th November, BROKE, MALCOLM, VANOC and WRESTLER joined the screen as reliefs for AMAZON, ACHATES, ANTELOPE and WIVERN, who proceeded into Gibraltar.

From passage of Straits to Assault.

24. At 0925 on 6th November, the convoy, being ahead of time, was turned back on its course to 275° by emergency turns. This course was continued until 1010 when course was altered back to 080°.

25. At this time Force "H" and K.M.S.A. 1 were in sight against the Spanish coast to the westward. SHEFFIELD and supporting force had been sighted at 0900 to the eastward.

26. At 1045 6th November, the screen was augmented by the arrival of ACUTE, ALGERINE, ALARM, ALBACORE, CADMUS, SPEEDWELL, HUSSAR, BLYSKAWICA, WILTON, LAMERTON and WHEATLAND, whilst IBIS, ENCHANTRESS, CLARE, BROKE, MALCOLM, WRESTLER and VANOC were detached to join K.M.S.A. 1.

27. At 1230 6th November, the Spanish fishing vessel JESUS DEI GRAN was sighted to the south-east. I ordered LAMERTON to board her and to send her under armed guard to Gibraltar. The crew were apparently very friendly and in no way resented this interruption of their peaceful occupation.

28. At 1415 6th November, the first enemy aircraft to be seen passed over the convoy from south to north. It was identified as a German reconnaissance Ju.88. One salvo was fired by POZARICA but with no apparent effect.

29. Additional and most welcome escorts joined K.M.F.A. 1 at 1430 from K.M.S.A. 1. They were BRAMHAM, BICESTER, COWDRAY and ZETLAND, all of whom were to play an important part in the later operations.

30. At 1500, the convoy was again turned back on its course to 277° and this course was held until 1600 when it was altered back to 086°.

31. At 1630, another German Ju.88 reconnaissance plane was to the south of the convoy steering east. Information was received at this time that a large naval formation had been reported by German aircraft off Cape Gata.

32. The night of the 6th November passed quietly until at 0520 (received 0535), H.M.S. TYNWALD reported low-flying aircraft bearing 010°, closing. At 0535, two guns or explosions were heard from the port side of the convoy and several H.A. bursts were also observed. Two emergency turns of 45° were made at 0553, making the final course for the convoy 016°.

33. At 0630, Captain C. D. Edgar, U.S.N., S.N.O.L.(C)*, in U.S.S. SAMUEL CHASE, reported that an underwater explosion had

Admiralty footnote:—

* S.N.O.L.(C).—Senior Naval Officer Landing (C Sector).