

2. Apart from submarine attack off the enemy coast, a more favourable disposition could be brought about only by inducing the enemy heavy ships to come further to the westward to deliver their attacks.

3. With this object, I proposed to the Admiralty that the convoy, on reaching the approximate longitude of 10° East, should turn back for twelve or eighteen hours, unless information showed that the enemy had not after all put to sea, or the weather was such as to prevent air shadowing. I hoped that this temporary turn back would either tempt the German heavy ships to pursue, or cause them to return to harbour, or compel them to cruise for an extended period among our submarines, nine of which were concentrated between Bear Island and the Norwegian coast. Three Russian submarines were also in this area.

4. The Admiralty did not approve of this plan but, after further discussion, issued instructions on 27th June which envisaged the possibility, under certain circumstances, of the convoy being temporarily turned back by the Admiralty, but not of this turn being timed to achieve the object I had in view. In the event, this question did not arise, as the enemy surface movements took place later than had been expected. The Admiralty instruction also stated, *inter alia*, that the safety of the convoy against surface attack to the westward of Bear Island must be met by our surface forces, and to the eastward of that meridian must depend on our submarines; and that the cruiser covering force was not intended to go east of Bear Island unless the convoy was threatened by the presence of a surface force which the cruiser force could fight, or in any case to go beyond 25° East.

#### *Diversionsary Operations*

5. In an attempt to divert the enemy surface and air forces, a dummy convoy, consisting of the 1st Minelaying Squadron and four colliers, and escorted by the SIRIUS, CURACOA, five destroyers and some trawlers, was assembled in Scapa Flow for a week and sailed two days after the convoy. It sailed westabout the Shetlands and then eastward to 1° East, hoping to attract the attention of the German air reconnaissance and simulate a raiding force bound for Southern Norway (Operation ES). The battlefleet sailed later the same day and adjusted its course to give the impression of covering the raiding force.

6. The only German reconnaissance of Scapa during the period of assembly apparently failed to notice this convoy, nor was it sighted on passage. The operation was therefore repeated on 1st July, but again without success.

#### *Q.P.13*

7. The westbound convoy sailed from Archangel on 26th June, some ships leaving Murmansk the next day to join. It consisted of 35 ships and was escorted by five destroyers, three corvettes, one anti-aircraft ship, three minesweepers, two trawlers and, as far as the Bear Island area, one submarine. It was sighted by enemy aircraft on 30th June and 2nd July; but once more the enemy's policy was to concentrate on the eastbound laden convoy, and Q.P.13 was not attacked.

8. The convoy was divided east of Iceland, one section proceeding direct to the

United Kingdom and the other to Hvalfjord, en route for America. This change of plan was ordered by the Admiralty when the convoy was already at sea. The officer who became Commodore of the Hvalfjord section was not therefore aware of the position of the minefield in the Denmark Strait nor of the danger of navigating in that area without accurate knowledge of his position. This section ran foul of the minefield and on 5th July the NIGER (Commander A. J. Cubison, R.N.) and five merchant ships were sunk; one other merchant ship was damaged. These were the only casualties suffered by the convoy.

#### *P.Q.17*

9. The eastbound convoy sailed from Hvalfjord on 27th June. In addition to 34 merchant ships, an oiler for the use of the escort and three rescue ships sailed in this convoy. The escort comprised six destroyers, four corvettes, three minesweepers, four trawlers, two anti-aircraft ships and two submarines.

10. The route was considerably longer than that for earlier convoys this year, for the ice allowed passage north of Bear Island and a considerable evasive detour in the Barents Sea; and all the convoy was bound for Archangel, recent heavy air raids having destroyed most of Murmansk.

11. Part of the convoy ran into drifting ice in thick weather in the Denmark Strait. Two merchant ships were damaged and had to return and the escort's oiler, the GREY RANGER, was also damaged: her speed reduced to eight knots and it was doubtful whether she could face heavy weather; it was therefore decided to transfer her to the fuelling position north-east of Jan Mayen (Force Q) in exchange for the ALDERSDALE.

12. The convoy was located by enemy aircraft and U-boats on 1st July, a little later than usual, and thereafter was shadowed continuously except for a few short intervals in fog. Though this fog was not permanent enough to prevent shadowing, it did decrease the number of air attacks. The first, by nine torpedo aircraft, took place late on 2nd July: it was unsuccessful and one aircraft was shot down. A solitary aircraft scored a torpedo hit on the morning of 4th July, the merchant ship later being sunk by our own forces; and there was an unsuccessful attack by six bombers in the evening. Later the same evening another attack, by twenty-five torpedo bombers, took place: two ships were sunk and one damaged, and at least four aircraft were shot down.

#### *Covering Forces*

13. Meanwhile the two covering forces were moving into position. The cruiser force, under the command of Rear Admiral Commanding, 1st Cruiser Squadron\*, left Seidisfjord during the night of 30th June/1st July and arrived in a covering position north of the convoy on 2nd July. It consisted of the LONDON, NORFOLK, WICHITA, TUSCALOOSA and three destroyers, of which two were American. They were not sighted by the enemy until late on 3rd July.

14. The heavy covering force, comprising the DUKE OF YORK (Commander-in-Chief),

*Admiralty footnote:—*

\* Rear Admiral L. H. K. Hamilton, D.S.O.