

44. SHEFFIELD made her last enemy report at 2140. At this time BISMARCK turned and fired six accurate 15-in. salvos at SHEFFIELD at a range of 9 miles. The latter turned away at full speed and made smoke but suffered a few casualties and superficial damage from splinters. These casualties consisted of 1 killed, 2 dangerously wounded who have since died, two seriously and six slightly wounded. All were ratings. After this SHEFFIELD lost touch but at 2142 sighted Captain (D), 4th Destroyer Flotilla, in COSSACK with 3 other destroyers closing the enemy and signalled the last observed bearing and distance of BISMARCK.

45. At 2251 ZULU made a contact and reported the enemy steering 110°. From this time onwards Captain (D), 4th Destroyer Flotilla and his destroyers maintained contact, reporting the enemy's course as 110°, 060°, 340° and finally by midnight 310° into the sea. Rear-Admiral Commanding, 18th Cruiser Squadron in EDINBURGH was sighted to the westward at 2315.

46. Just before midnight a signal was received from Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet, giving his position, course and speed at 2215 as 49° 10' N. 15° 29' W., 170°, 21 knots, with RODNEY in company. Shortly afterwards Rear-Admiral Commanding, 18th Cruiser Squadron, reported his position, course and speed as 48° 32' N. 15° 22' W., 025°, 13 knots, that he had no fuel left for shadowing and was proceeding to Londonderry.

47. At 2345 I informed Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet, of my position (48° 42' N. 15° 17' W.), that no further T/B attack was possible that evening and that I intended turning west for a short distance to keep clear of him. Shortly afterwards I received his intentions to engage from the westward at dawn and directions that RENOWN and ARK ROYAL were to keep not less than 20 miles to the southward of BISMARCK. Course and speed was adjusted during the night to comply.

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48. At 0036 ARK ROYAL reported that after being torpedoed, BISMARCK made two complete circles and reduced speed. I informed Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet, accordingly at 0046.

49. It was evident the Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet, was in some doubt regarding the position of BISMARCK. I therefore reported to him at 0112 that the estimated bearing and distance of the enemy from me at 2345 was 165° 41 miles.

50. The situation at this time was as follows. RENOWN and ARK ROYAL some 40 miles to the northward of BISMARCK, working round to the west to reach a position to the southward; Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet, proceeding southward to engage at dawn; and Rear-Admiral Commanding, 1st Cruiser Squadron, working round to the north-east. DORSETSHIRE who had left S.L. 74 at 0930/26 in position 44° 08' N. 24° 50' W. was closing from the south-west. SHEFFIELD's position was not known exactly but assumed to be in vicinity of BISMARCK and to the westward of the latter.

51. At 0115 a flash was seen bearing 152°, followed four minutes later by heavy gun flashes. Course was altered to 210° to keep clear to the westward. During the middle watch the destroyers carried out attacks, and signals were received between 0202 and 0210 stating that ZULU, MAORI and COSSACK had attacked, the last two claiming one hit each. MAORI added that there was an extensive fire on the forecastle.

52. At 0210, Rear-Admiral Commanding, 1st Cruiser Squadron, reported his intention to keep to the northward and flank mark for KING GEORGE V and RODNEY. At 0301 DORSETSHIRE reported her position, course and speed which indicated she would cross some 10 to 15 miles ahead of RENOWN.

53. The destroyers were instructed by Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet, that after all attacks were completed they were to fire starshell every half hour to indicate the position of the enemy, whose course and speed was now reported as 310°, 8 knots.

54. During the night Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet, experienced difficulty in making destroyers transmit their call signs on M/F\* in order that D/F bearings could be obtained. Many D/F bearings obtained proved to be inaccurate and caused considerable doubt as to the exact position of the enemy.

55. At 0335 I informed Commander-in-Chief of my position and reported starshell had been seen bearing 100°, and that an aircraft would be flown off ARK ROYAL at 0500 to spot for KING GEORGE V.

56. At 0610 I ordered SHEFFIELD who had signalled her position at 0500 to obtain and pass a D/F bearing of MAORI who was in touch with the enemy. The third class bearing of 118° which she gave put BISMARCK further south than her previously estimated position.

57. At dawn visibility was low, and after consultation with ARK ROYAL I decided to delay flying off the striking force as there was a serious risk of mistaking friend for foe and I was in considerable doubt as to the position of KING GEORGE V and RODNEY. Having informed the Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet, that the striking force would arrive at 0715, I later informed him that the attack was postponed on account of low visibility, and later still that I had cancelled the attack on account of the difficulty of identifying our own ships in the existing visibility. I was satisfied that until the situation clarified it was undesirable to fly off the striking force.

58. While these signals were being passed the destroyers' reports of the position of the BISMARCK suggested she might be as much as 60 miles to the northward of RENOWN. Course was therefore altered to the northward, and at 0810 after ARK ROYAL had struck down her aircraft as it was impossible in existing weather conditions to keep them ranged, MAORI was sighted to the northward. MAORI reported the enemy as being 009° distant 11 miles from her and thereby only 17 miles from RENOWN. The latest estimate previous to this report placed BISMARCK 40 miles from

*Admiralty footnote—*

\* M/F—medium frequency.