

35. At 1900 the Force withdrew to the northward. No attempt was made by the enemy to locate the Force or to attack it. I had previously arranged for a Walrus aircraft from SUFFOLK to be available for picking up any survivors, but the only reports of aircraft down were from FURIOUS. Two of her crews were known to be in the water in position 260 degs. Heinasaari 6 miles, but as this was only five miles off the shore and a long way from my position it would have entailed fighter protection and remaining for several hours longer near the flying-off position. I did not therefore consider it justifiable to send the Walrus in.

31st July.

36. The activity of the destroyers off Tana Fiord had made me suspicious that they might be using Smalfjord as an anchorage for supply ships or other such vessels. As this might form a possible target for a second attack I arranged for a Fulmar with its distinguishing marks erased as far as possible to reconnoitre this fiord during the night. Accordingly at 0316 on the 31st July one Fulmar was flown off from VICTORIOUS. This Fulmar returned at 0455 and reported that she had found four twin-engined aircraft patrolling off the entrance and had not therefore been able to reconnoitre the fiord. Five minutes after this Fulmar returned the Squadron ran into thick fog.

37. FURIOUS's fuel situation at this time made it necessary for her to return immediately, as she would have little more than 500 tons on arrival at Seidisfiord and had no margin for possible loss of fuel due to damage. I accordingly arranged to complete VICTORIOUS as far as possible with aircraft from FURIOUS. Owing to the fog this could not be commenced until 1215 when it cleared sufficiently to enable the operation to proceed.

38. Whilst transfer was in progress the Force was sighted by a Dornier 18. At about 1300 FURIOUS flew off two Hurricanes which shot it down, but not before it had had time to make a report of our presence. As the whole Force was then steering west in company I was not unduly disturbed as I wanted the enemy to think that the Force was returning together.

39. Transfer of aircraft was completed at 1530 and course was then altered to 305 degs., i.e., to the northward, in order to get further away from the coast and avoid observation by the enemy. At 1633 a report of another aircraft was received, and fighters were again flown off, but saw nothing and returned. This report of aircraft, I am sure, was false, and due to an inoffensive skua gull.

1st August.

40. The course of 305 degs. was held until 0001 on the 1st August, when FURIOUS* was detached in a position 40 miles north-east of Bear Island. This was to be followed by another signal in naval cypher to Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet, on H/F from such a position as to give the impression that she was proceeding towards the Faeroes. This second signal would be made using a naval general call sign, requesting that my delivery group

Admiralty footnote :-

* FURIOUS with SUFFOLK and Destroyers returned to base in advance of the remainder, reaching Seidisfiord at 0830 on 3rd August.

be included in certain signals on H.D. broadcast. The object of these signals was to deceive the enemy into thinking that the whole Force was on its way back and thus to disguise my continued presence in the area. The making of these signals was governed by the proviso that they were only to be made in conditions of low visibility, since they were liable to lead to FURIOUS being found by aircraft in which case the whose ruse would have been exposed. This in fact occurred and she was sighted four hours after making the first signal. It is probable therefore that the enemy had a shrewd suspicion that I was still about.

41. On parting with FURIOUS I remained to the north-north-east of Bear Island and oiled destroyers during the course of the 1st August. I did not consider in any case that an attack was possible on this day as the chance of surprise did not arise until sufficient time had elapsed for us to have left the area.

42. I had asked VICTORIOUS to prepare plans for possible operations against Tromso, Hammerfest, Tana Fiord, Honningsvaag or shipping along the coast and I wished very much that I was in VICTORIOUS at this time so as to be able to discuss the project at first hand. The Captain of the VICTORIOUS informed me that he had an urgent letter to send over and I decided to visit him instead. I accordingly transferred to INGLEFIELD by DEVONSHIRE's crane, and intended to board VICTORIOUS in a similar manner. Unfortunately INGLEFIELD appeared to be sucked in towards VICTORIOUS and fouled one of her gantries, which smashed INGLEFIELD's .5 machine gun. I therefore abandoned the project and exchanged letters with the Captain of the VICTORIOUS.

2nd August.

43. DEVONSHIRE oiled the three destroyers, giving them 200 tons each, and the whole operation took 13 hours. The Force then proceeded to a suitable position from which the attack on Tromso might be made, passing 40 miles north of Bear Island at 0342 on the 2nd August. Visibility was good and Bear Island was clearly visible.

44. At 1033 on 2nd August a signal was received from Force "A" addressed to TARTAR reporting that they were being shadowed by aircraft. At that time Force "A" was 138 degs., 148 miles distant from Force "P" and on a similar course. VICTORIOUS stated that fighter support could be given from a distance of 50 miles, and I accordingly informed Force "A" of this fact and of my position, course and speed, by W/T using low power.

45. Force "A", which had previously been steering to the south, altered course to the north at 1245, on receipt of my signal and reported that they were still being shadowed. I followed suit with Force "P" and turned in towards Force "A" so that at 1352 I was 50 miles away. Force "A" were also informed of the fighter wave so that they could direct them. Two Fulmars were flown off at 1335 just as Force "A" reported that they were not wanted, and almost at the same time VICTORIOUS reported aircraft two miles away by R.D.F. and a doubtful sighting. Two more aircraft were flown off for the protection