

13. Having been unable to plot the enemy movements with the radar echoes, I altered course to parallel with the enemy, speed 10 knots, thus comparing our speeds and in the meantime picking out the main target, which was rather difficult as the longest silhouette that could be seen was rather low and I was expecting something higher for that size of ship. After close scrutiny it was decided that the silhouette mentioned was the main target, but heavily laden, a three island ship. At approximately 0400 course was altered to port. Orders to attack the main target were shouted to M.T.B.s 204 and 231, who were in advanced single port cruising line, and the estimated speed of the enemy passed—9 knots.

14. The enemy convoy consisted of a big merchant vessel, 6 to 9 E or R-boats ahead, two coaster type vessels on the starboard quarter of the main target, and astern were 6 or more other trawler size vessels. The screen on the port side, being of no interest to us, was not observed properly. No outer screen was present on the starboard side. At 0403, I observed a bright flash and a dark smoke cloud just abaft the funnel of the main target and a distinct shock was felt in M.T.B. 202. Immediately afterwards a siren was heard.

15. The Commanding Officer of M.T.B. 202 had just fired his starboard torpedo and turned to port to disengage according to his instructions. Speed was increased—when very heavy gun and machine gun-fire was opened on us. Starshell was again used with great accuracy; apart from the usual starshell the enemy used floating luminous flares coming down ahead of us, and several grape-shots exploded fairly close ahead and to starboard. Although no hits were received enemy fire was extremely heavy and accurate, causing numerous near misses. Quite a lot of fire went just over.

16. At 0426 M.T.B. 202 was stopped and an investigation was carried out as to the cause of a misfire at the port torpedo tube. When this was cleared I ordered M.T.B. 202 at 0443 to close some lights and an occasional small searchlight which had been observed in the bearing where the action had taken place, to fire her second torpedo. After having closed in at varying speeds for reasons of wash I ordered M.T.B. 202 to stop at 0451, when radar range was 1,200 yards to the centre of activity, where three ships were lying stopped. I considered it unnecessary to reduce the range more as the targets were lying stopped and an outer screen of E or R-boats were circling slowly around them, only 700 yards away, and the attack might have been spoiled if sighted. After two disappointing attempts to fire the port torpedo I ordered M.T.B. 202 to return to harbour as it was obvious that the firing system was defective.

Conclusions.

17. Attack from inshore has been proved to be possible at this point of the enemy convoy route. Close co-operation with gunboats to create a diversion, strongly enough armed to fight off a pursuing enemy, again proved its value, particularly under circumstances like these where an attack from the inshore side can be made. The diversion created by the gunboats is of great value, partly because of the starshells fired at them silhouetting the enemy for the inshore attack. Against such a

heavy escort, however, it is too risky to do so for a long time. To get the same result as from starshell it would be of great value if the M.G.B.s could drop floating luminous flares to seaward in a case like this, not just abreast of the enemy, but starting from a mile or half a mile ahead; this making a line of flares which the enemy has to pass, giving the M.T.B.s a fair chance to attack. The possibility that the enemy expects an attack from inshore in this case is acceptable as they probably have no time in the confusion to divert their escorts to their inshore side.

(Signed) E. H. LARIVE,
Lieutenant, R. Neth. N.

ENCLOSURE 3 TO F.O.C. DOVER'S LETTER.

FROM ... Senior Officer, M.G.B.s.
DATE ... 29th September, 1943.
To ... Flag Officer Commanding, Dover.

I have the honour to submit the following report on the action on the night 26th/27th September by a combined Motor Torpedo Boat and Motor Gun Boat force on an escorted enemy convoy.

General Narrative.

2. Combined forces were stopped in position 090° Berck Buoy 1 mile at 0203. Owing to low visibility to shoreward and good visibility to seaward, forces moved 1½ miles inshore, stopping in position 100° Berck Buoy 2½ miles at 0250. Engines were cut, and M.G.B.117 set radar watch, while M.T.B.s kept hydrophone watch.

3. At 0306, some flashing from a blue light was observed, bearing south-west, and immediately afterwards one large vessel and several smaller could be seen. S.O. Force A was informed. At 0310, combined forces proceeded north-east at 12 knots, gradually increasing speed. At 0314, starshell were fired over the forces. It could not be seen whether they were fired by the convoy or from ashore, but it is probable that the convoy sighted our wakes.

4. The combined forces altered course north-west and increased speed. Force B altered course to port at 30 knots and engaged the leading enemy escort on opposite courses, opening fire at 0317. The enemy fire was believed to be from 4-inch and all calibres below. It was intense and mainly accurate, especially from the larger calibre guns. Many near misses were observed by all boats. The enemy starshell also were intense, but promiscuously placed. The blinding effect of the starshell and enemy tracer made it difficult to distinguish targets. M.G.B.117 observed the nearest escort to be almost stopped with a small fire aft, and her guns temporarily silenced. The Commanding Officer of M.G.B.117 assumed that this had been caused by the fire of M.G.B.108. M.G.B.117 engaged this target at a range of 300 yards, and observed several hits with Oerlikon shells.

5. At 0330, a 4-inch (?) shell missed M.G.B.108's port quarter by two yards, and the starboard engine stopped. M.G.B.s, who were in line ahead, disengaged to north-west and stopped at 0335 to investigate damage and casualties. The after Oerlikon gunner of M.G.B.108 was wounded and his place was taken by the radar operator. The other boats