

The preliminary report of interrogation, of the 36 survivors from SCHARNHORST is referred for information.

2. It is emphasised that this report has been prepared solely from the evidence of the prisoners whose quality was not high and whose memories of the engagement were very confused; it should therefore be treated with reserve.

3. A separate copy is circulating, to ACNS(W) and ACNS(A) on entry and Staff Departments. Another copy is circulating in N.I.D. and copies have been sent to F.O.(S) and Commander in Chief, Home Fleet.

for DIRECTOR OF NAVAL INTELLIGENCE
16.1.1944

NID.1/PW

It is suggested that some of the lessons which may be taken from SCHARNHORST's experience are:-

- (1) On first going to sea after embarking a new Admiral and staff a flagship is apt to suffer from lack of intimate understanding between Admiral and Captain.
- (2) Although, most heavy ships have an organisation for getting the crews of A.A. guns under cover during a surface action in which there is no apparent chance of them taking part, it is a great risk to put it into force because it cannot be cancelled easily. It is generally better for them to lie down at their guns.
- (3) It is not clear whether SCHARNHORST was fitted with Radar for the main armament but evidently she was not for the secondary armament which "could not fire at shadows".
- (4) In the encounter last year between a German force and Russian convoy escort, the importance was of all round Radar search being maintained after action was joined to prevent surprise by another force. It appears that SCHARNHORST was not warned by Radar of DUKE OF YORK'S approach.
- (5) DUKE OF YORK opened fire after illuminating the SCHARNHORST with starshell. The 5.25 inch starshell has a long range and gives considerable advantage to the K.G.V. class over ships with shorter starshell range.

Parts IV and V read as though the men had been primed with stories making light of past mishaps.

Bombing at La Pallice
Channel dash
An internal explosion
Spitzbergen raid
and Operation Source are covered.

R K Dickson [?]
for Director of Plans
24th January, 1944

HSW/MGD

The enclosed report from C. In C. Home Fleet contains information obtained from Prisoners of War from SCHARNHORST sunk on December 26th, 1943.

2. It must be emphasised that the information is not confirmed.
3. Another copy is being circulated to Staff Departments And A.C.N.S. (A) and (W).¹

¹ A second copy has the alternate paragraph 3: "Another copy is being circulated to D.O.D.(H), D. of P., A.C.N.S.(H), V.C.N.S., 1st Sea Lord and 1st Lord." That copy has a handwritten annotation: "Noted. No mention is made of any torpedo attack by Jamaica. The presumption is that the ship had sunk before Jamaica arrived." Signature, A de Salis [?] D.T.M. 17.1.44.

INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM PRISONERS OF WAR EX SCHARNHORST

The following information was vouchsafed by prisoners during conversation:-

"Ship carried an Admiral - Rear Admiral Bey, who had Joined shortly before the operation.

The Captain - Kapitan Zur See Hintz - previously Captain of the HIPPER had joined recently and was taking the ship to sea for her first operation under his command.

The ship carried 3 aircraft and was fitted with triple torpedo-tubes either side amidships. She did not fire torpedoes during the action. 40 Midshipmen were carried onboard.

The ship's company were warned on leaving harbour that they were likely to encounter two or three enemy cruisers screening the convoy. The general impression among the prisoners appeared to be that either they would destroy the convoy or would themselves be sunk and several of them did not expect to return.

SCHARNHORST was accompanied by five destroyers, which were sent on ahead early on the 26th to contact and shadow the convoy. They had just reported contact by firing Verey's lights or a similar light signal when SCHARNHORST was engaged by enemy gunfire and shortly afterwards hit in the crow's nest. She sustained several casualties and retired intending to return to the convoy. No further contact was made with the destroyers and prisoners were curious to know what had happened to them. The general impression seemed to be that the destroyers were returning to the scene of action when H.M. destroyers were picking up prisoners and caused our ships to retire with so few survivors.

It appears that the ship - if she did detect DUKE OF YORK by radar before the latter opened fire - was unaware that she was a battleship and did not expect to encounter one. SCHARNHORST's radar does not seem to have been very effective as even after DUKE OF YORK had opened fire they had difficulty in identifying her on the scan because of the number of small echoes round her.

Matrosenobergefreiter Helmut Boekhoff, who was stationed in the crow's nest in direct communication with the bridge by head-set, was kept informed of the radar situation. He appreciated, as did two other prisoners that our radar must have been considerably superior.

A hit was scored about 1800 by DUKE OF YORK in the region of 'Y' turret ("Caesar" Turm), - Matrose Gerhardt Lobin was under the impression that about this time a hit had been obtained in the region of the screws as he felt the stern of the ship thrust upwards and thereafter noticed on his speed indicator a reduction from 29 to 22 knots. During this first action there was also a hit right for'ard. which carried away an anchor and one on the bridge which caused a fire. There were many near-misses, mostly astern and many splashes were observed in the ship's wake and a considerable amount of shrapnel was in the air. A hit was observed on DUKE OF YORK's mast. As H.M. destroyers went in to attack with torpedoes SCHARNHORST picked up seven echoes by radar, which she at first thought were her own destroyers.

During the second engagement SCHARNHORST was hit repeatedly causing extensive fires and casualties, but prisoners seemed to be of the opinion that no salvoes penetrated lower than two decks, and that the armour belt was not pierced by shell-fire.

Prisoners appeared to agree that SCHARNHORST was hit by eight torpedoes in all - of the first hits one was in a boiler room and two hit aft causing extensive flooding as her water-tight doors were not closed. After five hits however she was still making good 22 knots and the Captain broadcast that they would get away with it. ("Wir Schaffen es") 3 minutes after the last 3 torpedo hits, which struck in quick succession, SCHARNHORST sank by heeling over to starboard. They were all of the opinion that without the torpedo hits; the ship could not have been sunk. Much admiration was expressed for the destroyers who pressed home their attack, firing their guns all the time, with great bravery in face of concentrated fire from SCHARNHORST's total armament.

Several of the prisoners were struck by the small number of W/T, compartments etc., in DUKE OF YORK compared with SCHARNHORST and were of the opinion that this ship could not have stood up to as many torpedo hits. Matrose Gunter Lorke states he saw a submarine on the surface on the port side towards the end of the action.

Other items of interest which came up in conversation were that of the three midget submarines which penetrated to Kaafjord in September; one damaged TIRPITZ the other two were bombed and destroyed, but several survivors including one officer of Lieutenant Commander's rank were taken on board TIRPITZ. As far as the prisoners knew, she had been patched up and was ready for sea again. SCHARNHORST was in company at the time but proceeded to Langfjord when the attack began.

2. It is emphasized that the above information was obtained during friendly conversation with the prisoners, the only direct questions asked being in accordance with C.B.3074, paragraph 42.

(Sgd) W STEVENSON
LIEUTENANT, R.N.V.R.
ACTING INTERPRETER, GERMAN.

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE INTERROGATION OF SURVIVORS FROM THE
GERMAN BATTLESHIP "SCHARNHORST"; SUNK BY UNITS OF THE HOME
FLEET OFF THE NORTH CAPE AT 1940 ON 26th DECEMBER, 1943.

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I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

The German battleship "SCHARNHORST", under the command of Captain HINTZE, and flying the flag of Rear Admiral Erich BEY, Admiral Commanding Destroyers, was sunk by units of the Home Fleet off the North Cape at 1940 on 26th December, 1943.

"SCHARNHORST" had left her anchorage at Langfjord at 1900 the previous day, accompanied by three destroyers, with the intention of attacking an Allied convoy bound for Russia. Two attempts to close the convoy were made on 26th December at about 0930 and 1200, but both were beaten off by H.M. Ships "NORFOLK", "BELFAST" and "SHEFFIELD".

At some time between 0700 and 0800 on 26th December, "SCHARNHORST" seems to have detached her destroyer screen to shadow and if possible attack the convoy. No sighting report has been received concerning these destroyers, and their whereabouts during the whole of the action remains a mystery.

"SCHARNHORST" retired to the south after the second engagement, shadowed by the three British cruisers, which had been joined before the second action by H.M. Destroyers "MUSKETEER", "MATCHLESS", "OPPORTUNE" and "VIRAGO".

At 1630, "SCHARNHORST" was brought to action by H.M.S. "DUKE OF YORK", which had been coming up from the south-west in company with H.M. Cruiser "JAMAICA", H.M. Destroyers "SAVAGE", "SCORPION" and "SAUMAREZ" and H.Nor.M. Destroyer "STORD".

After a ??? hit by D of Y a determined torpedo attack by the "S" class destroyers at 1850 further slowed down the "SCHARNHORST" (just when it appeared likely that her superior speed would enable her to escape,) and she was sunk at 1940 after sustaining heavy gunfire from H.M.S. "DUKE OF YORK" and as a result of a second torpedo attack in which H.M. Ships "BELFAST", "JAMAICA", "MATCHLESS", "MUSKETEER", "OPPORTUNE" and "VIRAGO" took part. H.M.S. "SCORPION" picked up 30 survivors and H.M.S. "MATCHLESS" six.

Contrary to expectations, the survivors, all of whom were ratings, presented a front of tough, courteous security-consciousness, and evidence of high morale, which, combined with their meagre and limited knowledge, has provided interrogators with a difficult problem.

It was unfortunate that, owing to the time which elapsed between capture and arrival in the interrogation centre, and owing to the transfer from the destroyers to 'Duke of York', prisoners apparently received sufficient information on the action from the British point of view to colour their own version and to make the extraction of an accurate parallel account rather more difficult.

The fact that all but four of the survivors were below decks or under cover during practically the whole of the action has proved a major drawback. Most of the remainder were unable to distinguish between the explosion of the torpedoes, the impact of the heavy shells and the firing of their own heavy armament. To many of them, the order to prepare to abandon ship came as a surprise, as they had no idea that "SCHARNHORST" had been damaged to that extent.

Almost to a man, the survivors ascribe the sinking to the effect of the torpedo attacks, and contend that their ship would never have been sunk by gunfire alone. None of them can provide a coherent narrative of the sequence of events after the first torpedo attack by the "S" Class destroyers, but it seems to be the general consensus [sic] of opinion that the destroyers would never have got near enough to attack if it had not been for dissension amongst the "SCHARNHORST" officers and muddled and inept handling of the secondary armament.

The crews of the 4.1" HA/LA guns apparently received the order to take cover when the action with H.M.S. "DUKE OF YORK" began, and this order was never rescinded. Survivors contend that if these guns had been brought to bear on the destroyers, the vital torpedo attack could never have been made.

Both Captain HINTZE and Rear-Admiral BEY are said to have shot themselves on the bridge after giving the order to abandon ship. No officer above the rank of Lieutenant-Commander was seen in the water by survivors.

II. DETAILS OF "SCHARNHORST"

- (i) Building Yard: Kriegsmarinewerft, Wilhelmshaven.
- (ii) Tonnage: No survivor has yet mentioned any tonnage above the declared standard tonnage of 26,000 tons.
- (iii) Length: 236 m. (774 feet).
- (iv) Beam: 30.5 m. (100 feet).
- (v) Speed: Speed gauges were calibrated up to 28 knots, but survivors state that a maximum speed of 33 knots could be attained.
- (vi) Complement: Normally 1,903 officers and men. An additional 50 men and 40 cadets joined the ship shortly before the last sortie. The men were to replace ratings who were due to go on leave.
- (vii) Armament: Nine 280 mm. (11") guns in triple turrets, two forward and one aft.
- Eight 150 mm. (5.9") guns in twin turrets, one turret on each side on deck abreast the bridge, and one turret on each side on deck abreast the after director platform.
- Four 150 mm. (5.9") guns in single mountings, two on each side on deck amidships.
- Sixteen 105 mm. (4.1") HA/LA guns in twin mountings, three mountings on each side on the midships platform, one mounting on the centre line on the platform forward of the bridge and one mounting on the centre line on the after director platform.
- Eighteen 37 mm. (1.46") A.A. guns in twin mountings: four mountings on the after director platform; two on the platform forward of the bridge, one on each side on deck abreast "B" 11" turret, and one on the platform below the Admiral's bridge.
- Six 20 mm. (0.79") quadruple A.A. guns and twelve single 20 mm. guns in positions yet to be ascertained.
- Two triple torpedo tubes, one on each side on deck.
- The possibility of tri-axial mountings is being investigated. At present it seems as if only the director sights were stabilized.
- (viii) Aircraft: Three Arado aircraft carried; two in a hangar abaft the funnel, and one on the catapult.
- These were manned by G.A.F. personnel.
- (ix) Lay-out: The only notable alterations to the N.I.D. plan dated April, 1940, were as follows:
- The aircraft catapult on the after 11" turret and the after crane had been removed.
- The space between the mast and the funnel was occupied by the large hangar for the Arado aircraft.
- The bow had been lengthened by 8 m. (26.24 feet).²
- The ship was divided into 21 compartments by watertight transverse bulkheads, numbered from aft.
- The six decks were called, from top to bottom:

² The extended 'Atlantic bow' was installed after sea trials in early 1939 revealed a dangerous tendency to ship excessive water, and was complete by November 1939 (Wikipedia).

III LAST SORTIE AND SINKING OF "SCHARNHORST".

The ship's company in "SCHARNHORST" had spent a cheerful and relaxed Christmas Day at their anchorage in Langfjord and were looking forward to another day of slackened discipline on 26th December. A large quantity of Christmas comforts had arrived and most of them had already opened their parcels of extra cigarettes and sweets. Captain's rounds had been an informal affair, with more attention paid to the comfort and well-being of the crew than to the usual insistence on neatness and efficiency. If the Commanding Officer considered that any man had less than the usual share of cigarettes he gave instructions for an additional issue to make up the deficiency.

Disillusionment came at 1300 when the ship's loud-speakers blared the order to prepare for sea at three hours' notice. The order was repeated at 1500 and at 1700 the order came "Prepare to weigh". From then until 1900 there was a pause and during this period Rear-Admiral Bey, Admiral Commanding Destroyers, came on board with his staff of 30. He was taking the place of Rear-Admiral Kummetz, who was on leave at the time.

At 1900 they weighed anchor and proceeded down Langfjord in company with three destroyers, Z 28, Z 31 and Z 34. The starboard watch was at action stations and the guns' crews were called on to the quarterdeck, where they were told that "SCHARNHORST" was putting to sea to attack an Allied convoy of about 20 ships, escorted by three cruisers and destroyers

The port watch then proceeded to clean ship and remove a large number of sacks of potatoes which were encumbering the gangways. They had been taken on board before Christmas and had not been dealt with over the holiday.

At midnight the port watch went to action stations and at 0400 they got two hours sleep. At 0600 they had breakfast and at 0700 went to action stations where they were joined by the starboard watch at 0800. Both watches remained at action stations until the ship was sunk.

Between 0700 and 0800 the three destroyers parted company, apparently with orders to contact and shadow the convoy. They seem to have taken no part in any of the subsequent actions and their whereabouts during the day remain a complete mystery.

(N.I.D. Note: At 0400 the dispositions of British forces in the Bear Island area were as follows:

Convoy JW 55B was in position 73° 31' N., 18° 54' E., steering 070° at 8 knots. Nineteen merchant ships escorted by H.M. Ships "ONSLow", "ONSLAUGHT", "HAIDA", "IROQUOIS", "ORWELL", "HURON", "SCOURGE", "IMPULSIVE" and "GLEANER" and the following ships belonging to the Western Approaches Command: "WHITEHALL", "WRESTLER", "HONEYSUCKLE" and "OXLIP". This escort had also been reinforced by the following four destroyers detached from Convoy R.A. 55A: "MUSKETEER", "OPPORTUNE", "VIRAGO" and "MATCHLESS".)

(Convoy R.A. 55A was in approximate position 74° 42' N., 05° 27' E., steering 267° at 8 knots. Twenty-two merchant ships escorted by H.M. Ships "MILNE", "METEOR", "ASHANTI", "ATHABASKAN" and "SEAGULL", with the following ships from Western Approaches Command: "BEAGLE", "WESTCOTT", "DIANELLA", "POPPY" and "ACANTHUS".)

(Force I was in approximate position 73° 52' N., 27° 12' E., steering 235° at 18 knots and consisted of H.M. Ships "BELFAST", "NORFOLK" and "SHEFFIELD".)

(Force 2 was in position 71° 07' N., 10° 48' E., steering 080° at 24 knots and consisted of H.M. Ships "DUKE OF YORK", "JAMAICA", "SAVAGE", "SAUMAREZ" and "SCORPION" and H.Nor.M.S. "STORD")

(As J.W. 55B had been consistently shadowed and reported by aircraft and U-boats throughout its passage, it was appreciated that "SCHARNHORST", which had been

reported as being at sea at 0339 would make for this convoy rather than for R.A. 55A which was apparently undetected. At 0628 the course of Convoy J.W. 55B was altered to 045° and Force I was ordered to close the convoy for mutual protection.)

At about 0900 three "Shadows" were reported ahead and almost immediately fire was opened by "SCHARNHORST" with main and secondary armament on what were soon identified as three heavy cruisers. The action lasted about ten minutes before the "SCHARNHORST" turned away.

During this period either the crow's nest or the bridge port director received a hit. The crow's nest was damaged and one officer and one rating severely injured. It is also possible that another shell hit the forecastle without causing any damage.

(N.I.D. Note: At 0921, with the cruisers on a line of bearing 160, "SHEFFIELD" reported the enemy in sight at 13000 yards, bearing 222. Three minutes later "BELFAST" opened fire with starshell. "NORFOLK" had to drop back to clear "BELFAST's" range, but by 0925 all Force I were engaging the enemy. At 0929 cruisers altered course to 265. "NORFOLK" claimed a hit with her second or third salvo).

(The enemy turned to the southward and the range opened rapidly. Force I altered round to 105 at 0936 and back to 170 ten minutes later, but by then the range had opened to 24000 yards and the enemy was steering 150 at 30 knots.)

(At 0955 Force I altered to a similar course and almost at once the enemy altered round to the north-east, apparently trying to work round to the northward of the convoy. "SCHARNHORST" had a 4-6 knot superiority in speed and Force I finally altered round to 325 at 1014 in order to get between "SCHARNHORST" and the convoy. Five minutes later contact with the enemy was lost at 32000 yards when he was steering north-east at about 28 knots. Force I retired on the convoy and was joined at 1024 by H.M. Ships "MUSKETEER", "MATCHLESS", "OPPORTUNE" and "VIRAGO".)

Shortly after the first engagement with the convoy escort a signal was received in "SCHARNHORST" from Admiral Doenitz which is variously reported by survivors as: "I rely on your fighting spirit. You must attack the convoy even if heavy units are behind it".³ Another version, or perhaps another signal, read "Attack and destroy the convoy to alleviate your comrades struggling on the Eastern Front". The signals were read over the loud-speaker system.

At about 1215, "SCHARNHORST" was again in contact with the British cruisers. A hit was claimed on one cruiser and survivors stated that one shell hit "SCHARNHORST" on the port side between the after twin 105mm. and the after main turret without exploding.⁴ The British cruisers' fire was described as unpleasantly accurate, with a large number of shell bursts within 50 yards of the ship, filling the air with fragments.

(N.I.D. Note; At 1200 Force I was in position 74° 11' N., 22° 18' E., steering 045° at 18 knots. Four minutes later "BELFAST" obtained a Radar contact at 29000 yards. "SCHARNHORST" was estimated to be steering 240 at about 20 knots. Action was joined at ranges from 4½ to 8 miles, during which the enemy's speed increased from 20 to 28 knots and his course altered round from west to south.)

(At 1233 "NORFOLK" was hit aft. 'X' turret was put out of action and 'X' magazine flooded. One officer and six ratings were killed and five ratings seriously wounded. About the same time a salvo fell close to "SHEFFIELD" and several pieces of shell "up to football size" came inboard. By 1241 the enemy was steering 110 at 28 knots and Force I checked fire and continued to shadow the "SCHARNHORST".)

After this second engagement with the British cruisers, the "SCHARNHORST" seems to have given up all idea of attacking the convoy and relative calm settled

³ Interesting. Raeder was normally very protective of his capital ships but by this time had been replaced by Dönitz, a U-Boat man who needed to prove to Hitler that his surface fleet was good for something.

⁴ Underlined by hand.

down on board. Several survivors described how they had taken advantage of the lull to doze off and the sudden sounding of the alarm signal shortly after 1600 caught most of them by surprise.

The report of "Schweres Mündungsfeuer" (Heavy gun flashes) from a completely new direction and the sight of a column of water from a near miss ahead caused a rude awakening, but it is not clear at what time the ship's company learnt that they were in combat with a British heavy unit, and they seem to have been under the impression for some time that they only had to deal with cruisers.

Several survivors contend that the 20mm. guns went into action and shot down a number of starshells at this and later stages of the action.

(N.I.D. Note: Force 2, which had been receiving continuous reports of "SCHARNHORST's" course and speed from Force I made Radar contact with the enemy at 1617 at a range of 45500 yards, bearing 020. At 1637 the destroyers were ordered to take up the most advantageous position for torpedo firing, having been formed in sub-divisions on either bow after H.M.S. "DUKE OF YORK" obtained the Radar contact.)

(At 1632 the range was 29700 yards and the enemy appeared to be zig-zagging on a mean course of 160. At 1642 the enemy seemed to alter slightly to port. At 1650 "DUKE OF YORK" illuminated the enemy with starshell and opened fire with her main armament.)

A shell from one of the first salvos of this new opponent struck the "SCHARNHORST" in the starboard tween deck of compartment 13 about two feet above the waterline, making a breach about half a yard in diameter, Another hit shortly after 1700 put 'A' turret out of action.

A garbled account from some survivors indicates that charges in 'A' magazine started to burn and that a certain proportion of charges in 'B' magazine were also rendered useless. The fire was got under control without serious damage ensuing, but 'A' turret took no further part in the action.

When the action with "DUKE OF YORK" commenced, the order came through from the bridge "Flak in Deckung" (Anti-aircraft guns' crews take cover) which meant that only a skeleton crew remained at the 105mm. guns to take messages and the remainder took cover. The full scope of this order has yet to be ascertained, as it seems that one or two of the 105mm. mountings certainly took part in the action towards the end, although in local firing only and probably as the result of individual initiative.

The handling of the secondary armament seems to have been inept and muddled. Survivors describe fierce arguments between the first and second gunnery officers, Korvettenkapitaen Brodenbreuker and Kapitaenleutnant Wieting. At one point Wieting ordered the 150mm. port mountings to load starshells and the order was countermanded, the crews being ordered to unload and reload with armour-piercing shells.

(N.I.D. Note: "SCHARNHORST" turned east almost immediately after the first salvos from "DUKE OF YORK" had the range steadily opened owing to her superior speed. About 1820 "SCHARNHORST" ceased firing when the range was just over 20000 yards and the "DUKE OF YORK" ceased at 1824 when the range had opened to 21400 yards.)

No chronological account of the ensuing action has been, or is likely to be obtained from survivors. The first torpedo attack seems to have over-awed them by its determination and results, blotting out any clear remembrance of other events from their minds.

It was "about 1830" when "Shadows" were reported on either beam of the "SCHARNHORST". One officer is said to have asked for clearer identification "as he

could not fire on shadows" However, as more than one survivor plaintively remarked, "the shadows were tangible enough to fire torpedoes at us".

The crew seems to have been aghast at the relentless attack carried out by what turned out to be four destroyers. Coming in to about 1800 yards or less, they fired full salvos of torpedoes. The hydrophones gave due warning of the attack and "SCHARNHORST" took violent avoiding action, but there were too many torpedoes coming from too many angles and at least three hits were scored.

During this attack, the 105mm. Guns' crews seem to have remained under cover, a fact which has caused much bitter comment amongst survivors. They contend that if they had received the order to fire, the destroyers would never have been able to break through the barrage and come near enough to fire their torpedoes accurately.

One of the torpedo hits seems to have put one of the boilers out of action and one shaft apparently stopped. It picked up again for about ten minutes, shortly before the "SCHARNHORST" sank and then stopped once more. The speed dropped to about 22 knots and does not seem to have risen above this figure again.

Another torpedo hit apparently pierced Compartment 3 aft and flooded compartments 1, 2 and 3. The watertight doors had to be closed on the 25 men inside.

(N.I.D. Note: The Force 2 destroyers had been slowly gaining on "SCHARNHORST" and at 1840 were at 10000 yards, closing rapidly, two on either beam. "SCHARNHORST" had opened fire on them at about 1830. Soon afterwards, the destroyers themselves opened fire at about 7000 yards and at 1850 the enemy, illuminated by starshell, was seen to alter course to the southwards, placing "SAVAGE" and "SAUMAREZ" in an excellent position on her starboard bow and "SCORPION" and "STORD" a little to the southward on her port bow. The two sub-divisions turned in at once and attacked from both sides, closing the range in both cases to 1800 yards before firing.)

At 1915, the report over over the loud-speakers, "heavy unit astern is overhauling us", and from this point on only fragmentary accounts can be obtained from survivors of the course of the action.

(N.I.D. Note: During the destroyer attacks, Force 2 closed the enemy rapidly and as the destroyers withdrew to the east "DUKE OF YORK" and "JAMAICA" re-engaged at 1901 at a range of 10400 yards, the enemy by then having altered course to the southward. Hits were immediately scored, the enemy continuing to fire at the retiring destroyers.)

(After five minutes, when the "SCHARNHORST" had been repeatedly hit, and fires and flashes from exploding ammunition [sic] were flaring up, she shifted her secondary armament fire to "DUKE OF YORK" at a range of 8000 yards. During this second engagement, she apparently engaged Force 2 sporadically with only part of her main armament)

The majority of the prisoners were stationed under cover or below decks and were apparently unable to distinguish between the explosion of the torpedo hits, the impact of heavy shells and the detonation of their own heavy guns.

However, the following hits are known to have been scored, although their order is unknown:

1. On the forward port 150 mm. twin turret, putting the gun and the ammunition hoist out of action.
2. On the aircraft hangar, destroying both planes and causing a fierce fire, which was apparently put out in about ten minutes.
3. On the forward 105 mm. mounting on the starboard side.
4. On the starboard side near the funnel.
5. In the tween deck on the port side in Compartment 10.
6. In the battery deck on the port side in Compartment 9.

7. On the forward starboard 150 mm. turret, immediately prior to final torpedo attack.
8. The starboard after single 150 mm. gun.
9. On one quadruple 20 mm. mounting on the starboard side which flew through the air and crashed on the deck.

'B' turret also seems to have been hit and one survivor gave a graphic account of how the ventilating system failed and the whole turret filled with choking smoke every time the breeches were opened. This, combined with the motion of the ship in heavy weather rendered nearly every man in the turret violently seasick and their only alleviation came when the ship zig-zagged, blocking the turret's line on the target. They were then able to cease fire and obtain a short respite to clear the air. This turret ceased firing some minutes before the "SCHARNHORST" sank.

'Y' turret continued firing practically to the end and used up nearly all the ammunition in 'Y' magazine, after firing over 60 full salvos.

One survivor described how most of the guns' crews on the port side seemed to be dead shortly before the last torpedo attack was made and the deck was littered with dead bodies being washed overboard.

Although survivors insist that no shells penetrated the armoured deck, a large number penetrated the decks above it and exploded on contact with the armour, causing frightful havoc. Compartments were described as full of mangled bodies and swilling with sea water.

Just before this last torpedo attack, Captain Hintze came to the microphone himself and said, "I shake you all by the hand for the last time. I have sent this signal to the Fuehrer: 'We shall fight to the last shell'. "SCHARNHORST" onwards". Shortly afterwards a further announcement stated that the Commander had taken over the ship. Survivors state that Captain Hintze and Admiral Bey shot themselves on the bridge.

A few minutes before the end, the order came through to carry out the first part of "Manoeuvre 'V'", which consisted of shutting certain watertight doors to ensure that the ship sank more slowly and enable more members of the crew to make their escape.

When the second torpedo attack came, resistance was practically at an end. Most survivors have no idea what type of ship fired the fatal torpedoes, although one prisoner described how he had seen a destroyer firing a salvo of three, all of which hit.

There was a pause, while the "SCHARNHORST" took on a list to starboard and the order was given to prepare to abandon ship., and carry out the second part of "Manoeuvre 'V'", which required the destruction of secret files and equipment. Then one more torpedo explosion on the starboard side, the seventh or eighth, "SCHARNHORST" heeled over and sank almost immediately. The watch of one of the survivors stopped at 1940 and he thinks he jumped into the water at this moment.

Abandon ship drill seems to have been most rudimentary, None of the survivors seems to have had an abandon ship station. Lifebelts were not worn and were only put on at the last moment [sic] if they could be found. One survivor described how two or three of the cadets attempted to jump into the water from the bridge but misjudged the list and crashed to the deck.

Survivors state that "SCHARNHORST" was designed to withstand, theoretically, fourteen torpedo hits without being sunk. They ascribe the loss of the ship to the fact that nearly all the hits were on the starboard side. They insist also that "SCHARNHORST" was sunk by torpedoes and that "DUKE OF YORK" would never have succeeded in sinking her by gunfire alone.

(N.I.D. Note: At 1920 "JAMAICA" and "BELFAST" were told to finish off the enemy with torpedoes. "BELFAST" closed first to 6600 yards, firing three torpedoes to starboard at 1926 and claiming one hit. She then altered round to fire her port tubes, but owing to the melee of ships and fire round the target, sheered off to the southward to await a more favourable opportunity.)

("JAMAICA" followed "BELFAST" in and at 1935 fired three torpedoes at a range of 6000 yards, no hits being claimed. The whole of the target area was obscured by dense smoke when "JAMAICA" on the starboard of the enemy turned in and delivered her second torpedo attack at about 1939 at 5500 yards. She claimed two possible hits.)

(While "JAMAICA" was attacking on "SCHARNHORST's" starboard side, "MUSKETEER", "MATCHLESS", "OPPORTUNE" and "VIRAGO" who had been slowly gaining bearing on the enemy to the northward turned in to attack in two sub-divisions on the port side. Between 1932 and 1934 all destroyers except "MATCHLESS" fired torpedoes and claimed hits. "MATCHLESS", when about to fire, was struck by an unusually large wave. She hauled round to attack again, but before she could do so "SCHARNHORST" had sunk.)

("BELFAST" also again approached to fire her remaining torpedoes, illuminating the area by starshell, but by this time "SCHARNHORST" had sunk.)

("BELFAST", "NORFOLK" and several destroyers then searched the area until 2040, "SCORPION" picked up 30 survivors and "MATCHLESS" six.)

IV. PREVIOUS HISTORY OF "SCHARNHORST".

No survivor has yet referred to activities prior to the winter of 1940/41, nor is any account yet to hand of the action during which "RAWALPINDI" was sunk or of "SCHARNHORST"'s commerce-raiding activities in the Atlantic during 1940.

The diary of her movements subsequent to her arrival in Brest in February, 1941, is roughly as follows:

Feb. 1941 - Feb. 1942	:	In Brest and La Pallice.
Feb. 1942	:	The Channel dash with "GNEISENAU" and "PRINZ EUGEN".
Feb. - March 1942	:	In dock at Kiel.
March 1942 - Feb. 1943	:	In the Baltic, chiefly at Gdynia.
8th March 1943	:	Arrived in Narvik.
18th March 1943	:	Arrived in Langfjord.
April 1943	:	One patrol to Bear Island.
Sept. 1943	:	Spitzbergen raid with "TIRPITZ".

Air attacks in Brest and La Pallice:

Survivors told one story of a ruse which was employed by the Germans in Brest to divert the attention of British bombers.

It seems that two old merchant ships were welded together and had their beam artificially [sic] widened with baulks of timber. Anti-aircraft guns were mounted on deck, and the superstructure built up in a tolerable imitation of the "SCHARNHORST".

Whenever the air-raid alarm was sounded, this hulk was towed up and down in the harbour with its anti-aircraft guns firing furiously to provide verisimilitude. The hulk was damaged on various occasions, and apparently suffered more from inclement weather than from air attacks. The upper decks were always being patched up and repaired.

During these aircraft attacks, "SCHARNHORST" only opened fire in case of absolute necessity, and it seems to have suffered hardly any damage, although on one occasion a huge boulder was hurled on board from the dockside. On another occasion the torpedo store was hit by a bomb and blew up with an enormous explosion.

Particular attention was paid during these raids to any sign of Fifth Column activity round the harbour and the "ADMIRAL HIPPER" had orders to fire on any lights being shown from houses with her 37 mm. and 20 mm. guns.

While exercising at sea from La Pallice at some time during the summer of 1941, "SCHARNHORST" was attacked by aircraft, and a stick of five large bombs fell just to starboard. Two of these apparently hit and tore an enormous hole in Compartment 9 through which "SCHARNHORST" shipped 1,000 tons of water. In spite of a considerable list, she managed to make 27 knots on the way back to La Pallice.

The Channel Dash.

Survivors' chief recollections of the Channel dash with "GNEISENAU" and "PRINZ EUGEN" in February 1942 were the tremendous blind barrage put up against the attacking "Swordfish" aircraft, and the hitting of two mines.

None of the "Swordfish" torpedoes apparently scored a hit, but the mine explosions seem to have caused considerable perturbation.

The mines apparently exploded under Compartments 15 and 6, and "SCHARNHORST" came to a dead stop. The crew started looking round for their life-jackets, firmly convinced that the end had come.

The destroyer, Z.29 (Captain BEY, later Rear-Admiral BEY, who went down with the "SCHARNHORST") came alongside and took off Admiral CILIAX and his staff. They later had to transfer to another destroyer when Z.29 was damaged by a shell hit.

The remainder of the force had proceeded ahead, but the "SCHARNHORST" ship's company soon came to their senses and, finding that their ship was practically undamaged, proceeded at 28 knots and caught up the rest of the force again.

Activities in the Baltic.

"SCHARNHORST" was apparently in dock in Kiel for two months after the Channel dash, and during this time received slight damage during one air raid.

Accounts of the ensuing twelve months in the Baltic are fragmentary and consist chiefly of minor disasters. During the year she rammed a U-boat (this was probably U.523, which has since been sunk), lost one of her aircraft, fouled one of her screws with a buoy, and ran aground off Hela.

Explosion on board in Langfjord.

An account, which has yet be confirmed and amplified, has been given by one survivor, of an explosion which occurred on board "SCHARNHORST" about May 1943.

It seems that stores of some kind were being taken on board when there was a violent explosion in the tween deck in the vicinity of "Y" turret. An immediate panic ensued, and "Y" magazine was flooded as a precautionary measure.

Seventeen men were killed, and this survivor says that the scene below decks was indescribable, the compartment in question being nothing but a mass of severed pipes, decapitated heads and odd limbs.

Sabotage was suspected and all the officers sallied forth with revolvers to carry out a general hue and cry in the neighbourhood, Next-of-kin of the dead men were informed that the men had fallen in action with the enemy.

The Spitzbergen Raid.

This raid, carried out in September, 1943, with the "TIRPITZ" and nine destroyers, was apparently regarded as a picnic from start to finish. Each of the destroyers had a landing party of about 100 soldiers on board.

The force approached Spitzbergen flying the British flag, and intercepted a signal from the Spitzbergen W/T station stating that British warships were entering harbour. During the action the reply was intercepted, stating that the message had not been understood and asking for a repeat.⁵

Before opening fire the German flag was hoisted and the "SCHARNHORST" entered the harbour preceded by six destroyers. The other three destroyers stayed outside the harbour with "TIRPITZ".

The destroyers and "SCHARNHORST" with her secondary armament fired at everything within sight, paying particular attention to the W/T station and the Meteorological station, and the guns seem to have got in some useful target practice. However, Z.33, one of Germany's newest destroyers, received a hit on the forward twin 150 mm. turret, and had subsequently to be taken in tow.

⁵

This sentence sidlined by hand in green, with the query "In cipher?"

V. MIDGET SUBMARINE ATTACK ON "TIRPITZ" IN KAAFJORD.

Although most of the "SCHARNHORST" survivors professed abysmal ignorance of the attack by British midget submarines on the "TIRPITZ" in Kaafjord on 22nd September, 1943, one survivor had actually been on board at the time, and provided most of the following information.

At about 0900, a small submarine was sighted on the surface on "TIRPITZ"'s port beam. There was an immediate alarm and hand grenades were thrown. The submarine dived at once and was either abandoned by the crew under water, or came to the surface and was abandoned, sinking immediately. Four survivors were seen in the water.

They were hauled aboard the "TIRPITZ" and seem to have shown a desire to wander over to the starboard side "and kept looking at their watches". The "SCHARNHORST" prisoner says they were husky fellows, wearing leather jackets with no visible signs of rank. He thought three were British and one Norwegian.

After they had been on board a minute or two there was a loud explosion, and the "TIRPITZ" heaved about five feet out of the water before settling down again. The four survivors "looked surprised and shook their heads" as if in disappointment, and were taken below, where they were given hot coffee and schnapps and were apparently questioned by English-speaking officers on Admiral KUMMETZ' staff.

"TIRPITZ" apparently sustained two hits, one forward and one aft. There was a water entry aft, and an escape of oil forward, and part of the generating plant was put out of action. The "SCHARNHORST" survivor expressed the opinion that the "TIRPITZ" would have to return to Germany for extensive repairs.

The explosions caused great commotion in the Fjord, with much patrol boat activity and firing of depth charges. Two further confirmed sinkings of midget submarines were reported, one just outside the inner A/S net off the north bank of Kaafjord and one opposite the small river Smornes.

The "SCHARNHORST" prisoner understood that the submarines had followed a freighter through the nets, and states that every time a vessel comes through now, a few depth charges are dropped astern of it in case of trouble.

Ever since the attack, "SCHARNHORST", which was lying behind an island at the entrance to Langfjord when the attack took place, and "TIRPITZ", have an anti-submarine patrol of two boats circling them clockwise and anti-clockwise during the night. 42 men are employed as look-outs, and the hydrophones are constantly manned

{ATTACHMENT TO 2nd Copy}

It appears that SCHARNHORST's warning radar was either inefficient or had been damaged during the cruiser action as it is clear that the encounter with DUKE OF YORK was unexpected.

2. The bearing discrimination of the Gunnery Radar seems to have been of a poor order, since difficulty was apparently experienced in distinguishing DUKE OF YORK's echo from surrounding echoes of her escort.

3. It is noted that a large proportion of the near misses are reported as astern during the 1st phase when DUKE OF YORK was engaging in blind fire. As SCHARNHORST was retiring on a zig-zag course these may have been caused by line errors, or by range errors - depending on the actual course of SCHARNHORST at the time they were observed.

4. It is noted in this report that prisoners were under the impression that neither the armoured deck nor the side armour were pierced.

5. There seems little doubt that the armoured deck was not pierced.

6. The armoured deck was apparently at the same level as in BISMARCK and it seems likely that the side armour would be arranged in a similar manner to that illustrated in C.B.04039 Add. No. 2 for BISMARCK.

7. In view of the considerable number of bursts on or near the armoured deck referred to in other interrogation reports, and of the small angle of descent at the ranges in use, it seems possible that the vertical armour was, in fact, penetrated.

C.M.P. 146
H.A.K.

DIRECTOR OF GUNNERY & ANTI-AIRCRAFT WARFARE
January, 1944

WRITE ONLY IN THIS COLUMN

1. Concur with D.G.D. paras. 1 and 2. From information at present available on types of sets likely to have been fitted in Scharnhorst poor discrimination in range and bearing, as compared with Type 273QR and to a lesser degree with Type 284, would be in accordance with expectations.
2. That German ratings should have realised their own Radar inferiority merely from the course of the action is remarkable.
3. D.R.E. will comment in greater detail when C. In C. H.F.'s full report is received by him.

P S ???les
DIRECTOR OF RADIO EQUIPMENT
28TH February 1944

{Handwritten}

The description in para. 1.8 of the hit aft, followed by the reduction in indicated speed from 29 to 22 knots is interesting. Had it not been for this lucky hit the SCHARNHORST could very probably have got away.

2. The Captain's broadcast to the effect that he expected to get clear away was previously reported as having been made before the ship had been hit by any torpedoes - a much more probable statement.

*?? Salter [?]
for DTSS [?]
10.iii.44*

Noted.

2. Detailed comment on the technical aspects of this engagement cannot be made until the results of the full interrogation of prisoners are available but the following remarks are considered justified by the information in the enclosure.

3. The action was fought almost entirely at ranges below 20,000 yards. There was therefore a small chance of the 3¼" armour deck of SCHARNHORST being defeated.

The combination of range and inclination was favourable to the 13" lower belt until the closing stages of the action.

D.G.D.'s remarks in paras. 4 - 7 are concurred in.

4. Re paras. 1.8 and 1.10 of enclosure, C.in C's report (M.01881/44) makes it clear that there was an appreciable reduction in speed prior to the first torpedo attack, presumably the result of DUKE OF YORK's gun-fire. C.in C. assessed the number of hits in the first torpedo attack as four and this is stated to have "almost stopped" SCHARNHORST.

5. The remarks as to watertight subdivision are not considered reliable from what is known of SCHARNHORST's construction (N.I.D.04443/43). It is presumed that survivors saw little of DUKE OF YORK.

6. D.N.C. would be interested in any other results of the interrogations.

?? Shepheard [?]

DNC

12 MAR 1944

Noted.

H C Hogger [?]

for ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF.

March, 1944.