

4 July-5 July

four thousand yards from the destroyer, on the convoy's starboard bow. They were not far from another destroyer, *Ledbury*. Captain Moon saw four German airmen climbing out into a rubber dinghy, and the bomber sank soon after. Commander Broome later made a nonchalant signal to the Americans in *Wainwright*: 'Thank you for your great support and congratulations on your anti-aircraft fire which impressed us all, and definitely left packing room for one in a German hangar.'

The sight of the ditched Heinkel seemed to have weakened the resolution of the remaining crews attacking PQ.17 from the starboard flank. The whole of this group's action was over within two minutes, and all the aircraft had jettisoned their torpedoes while still up to a mile from *Wainwright*. Before the bow attack was over, the second attack had begun from the convoy's starboard quarter, led by Lieutenant Hennemann, a *Staffel* commander who only a few weeks before had received a personal letter of commendation from Göring for having sunk 50,000 tons of Allied shipping.

On the starboard quarter there was no US destroyer standing boldly out to meet the attack, and it was here that the British tactics of closing up in face of air attack showed their unsuitability for torpedo attacks. Nine of the torpedo-bombers were able to press their attack to well within torpedo range. At 6,000 yards five turned off to port and the remaining four came straight in.

The noise now was terrific. The merchant ships were firing every defensive weapon they had, including 'pig-trough' rocket-launchers, parachute-and-cable rockets, Holman projectors, 4-inch guns, Bofors, machine-guns, Brownings, Oerlikons and Lewis guns. Two of the Heinkels headed straight for the American merchant ship *Bellingham*, and at 1,500 yards her guns opened fire. The after plane veered to port and dropped two torpedoes; the *William Hooper's* forward .50-calibre machine-guns opened up, scoring several hits on the plane, which was probably Eicke's. Its port engine began to smoke. A third Heinkel raced in, making a straight and level run, and dropped its torpedoes some five hundred yards away; the green-bodied weapons jumped once, then slid below the surface. The bomber continued for the ship, making straight for its wheelhouse; the ship fired off all her rockets at the German, but by then it was too late. As her Armed Guard officer looked back to where the

