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W.P.(39)145 also Paper No. C.O.S.(39)141.

Central War Room,
9th December, 1939.
WEEKLY RÉSUMÉ
(No. 14)
of the
NAVAL, MILITARY AND AIR SITUATION
12 noon November 30th to
12 noon December 7th
1939

Central War Room,
December 8, 1939
TO BE KEPT UNDER LOCK AND KEY.

It is requested that special care may be taken to ensure the secrecy of this document.

WEEKLY RÉSUMÉ
(No. 14)

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NAVAL, MILITARY AND AIR SITUATION

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Central War Room,
December 8, 1939
General Review.

The search for the German warships which sank H.M.S. Rawalpindi did not result in any contact. The Fleet has resumed more normal dispositions, the Northern patrol of Cruisers and Armed Merchant Cruisers has been re-established and convoys are sailing to and from Norway.

2. Casualties due to enemy mining off the East Coast continue, but have not increased, and the flow of trade has been maintained. Good progress has been made in the evolution of a suitable form of sweep for the magnetic mine.

3. The Admiral Scheer has reappeared in the South Atlantic and has attacked, and presumably sunk, two British ships about 600 miles south-eastward of St. Helena. A strong hunting group is working in the area.

4. The severe gales encountered during the past two weeks have caused some damage to units of our light forces, particularly destroyers, and the proportion of these temporarily out of action is considerably above the average.

Home Waters.

5. The greater part of the Fleet returned to their bases on the 1st December for fuel after their operations in search of the ships which sank H.M.S. Rawalpindi. Armed Merchant Cruisers took up their positions on the Northern Patrol on the 2nd December, strong forces being disposed in support of them, and for covering the Norwegian Convoys.

6. The increase in the number of Armed Merchant cruisers available has relieved the pressure on the 7th and 11th Cruiser Squadrons, composed of old C. and D. class cruisers, and allowed of necessary refits being undertaken. Submarine patrols are being maintained off the German, Dutch and Norwegian Coasts. Two-thirds of our available submarines are now operating in the North Sea.

7. H.M. Submarine Triad, whose diving rudders were damaged on the 27th November, was placed on the slip at Stavanger on the 1st December. She sailed on completion of repairs the following day, and arrived at Rosyth early on the 4th December.

8. H.M. Destroyer Jersey was torpedoed at 2 A.M., the 7th December whilst on patrol with H.M. Destroyer Jackal about 50 miles East of the Humber. The Jersey was hit aft and her torpedo tubes blown overboard; fire broke out afterwards but was extinguished and H.M.S. Juno succeeded in towing the Jersey to the Humber where she arrived at 5 P.M. on the 7th December. Preliminary reports give the casualties as 2 officers and 8 ratings killed; 40 ratings wounded. The enemy submarine was attacked by Juno and Jackal without definite result.

9. H.M. Trawler Washington (under charter for look-out duties) was sunk by a mine off Yarmouth on the 6th December; out of a crew of 9 there was only one survivor.

10. H.M. Submarine Snapper, on patrol in the North Sea on the 3rd December, was attacked by an aircraft whilst on the surface, but was not damaged.

11. There are definite indications that U-Boats have used, and may still be using, deserted bays in the south of Ireland. A destroyer has investigated, but with no result.

Foreign Waters.

12. In addition to the indications of the reappearance of the Admiral Scheer in the South Atlantic, to which reference was made in paragraph 3 above, the Dutch vessel Mafria reported being stopped by that ship about 500 miles E. of Durban on the 16th November. It would have been practicable for the Admiral Scheer to make the passage between the two positions at economical speed during the period which elapsed between the incidents. At the time of the first attack two hunting groups of our ships were to the southward of...
CAPETOWN. They immediately refuelled and proceeded to sweep in the South Atlantic.

The reported activity of German merchant vessels in South American ports, several of which have been stated to be preparing to sail, may possibly be connected with the Admiral Scheer's movements.

13. The German S.S. *Watusi* (9,521 tons), which had been at Mozambique since the outbreak of war, sailed on the 22nd November, and was sighted by an aircraft patrol 60 miles south of Cape Point on the morning of the 2nd December. She was set on fire and scuttled by her crew. The crew of 155 with 42 passengers, including 16 women and children, took to the boats and were picked up by H.M.S. *Sussex* and landed at Simonstown.

14. Off the East Coast of South America H.M.S. *Ajax* intercepted the German S.S. *Ussurukan* (7,834 tons) on the 5th December, S.E. of Cape Corrientes. She had sailed from Montevideo with a cargo of wool on the 4th December. Her crew opened her sea cocks, but she did not sink until early on the 6th December. *Ajax* rescued the crew of 23 officers and 84 men, and later transferred them to H.M.S. *Cumberland*, which is taking them to the Falkland Isles. There are already 140 German prisoners there whom it is hoped to move elsewhere.

Protection of British Seaborne Trade.

15. During the period under review 422 British and 29 Allied and 8 Neutral vessels have been convoyed on eight routes, bringing the total of ships convoyed up to 4,291. Eight ships have now been lost when in convoy, a percentage of \( \frac{1}{4} \) of 1 per cent.

16. The following forces have been employed on close escort duty during the week:

- 1 Battleship,
- 5 Cruisers,
- 5 Armed Merchant Cruisers,
- 44 Destroyers,
- 13 Escort Vessels, and
- 2 Submarines,

in addition to 6 French contre-torpilleurs and 2 submarines.

17. The difficulties of night convoy work have resulted in 3 losses. The S.S. *Chancellor* (4,607 tons) and S.S. *Manchester Regiment* (5,889 tons) sank after collision to the eastward of Halifax, and the S.S. *Hamsterley* (2,160 tons) was sunk by collision off Great Yarmouth.

H.M.S. *Fowey*, an escort vessel, also suffered damage due to collision when escorting a Sierra Leone convoy.

18. A large and important convoy of 30 ships from Halifax (Nova Scotia) arrived safely at home ports during the week. The ocean escort for this convoy had to leave it unattended for a period in the West Atlantic to join in the search for German warships. Two outward Norwegian convoys and one homeward, comprising 32 ships, have sailed during the week.

Anti-Submarine Operations.

19. The submarine sunk by H.M.S. *Kingston* on 29th November was U. 35 (500 tons).

20. During the week under review 10 attacks have been carried out by destroyers and anti-submarine trawlers and 4 attacks were made by aircraft. No definitely successful attacks have been reported. A heavy explosion 4 miles north-west of Cape Grisnez was reported early on the 4th December, and it is possible this may have been caused by the U-boat which was attacked by H.M.S. *Vega* on the morning of the 3rd December, south of the Needles, attempting to pass through the Dover barrage. There has been no positive evidence, such as wreckage, &c., to confirm this possibility, but a damaged U-boat, escorted by two destroyers, was reported 4 miles off the Texel early on the 7th December by Dutch fishermen, homeward bound; an aircraft sent to investigate this report sighted nothing.

[20451]
21. A British deep minefield has been laid on a line East of the Tongue Light Vessel (Thames Approaches).

German Fleet Intelligence.

22. An unknown enemy unit was located by directional wireless near Murmansk on the 30th November, and it is possible that it may have been one of the ships concerned in the sinking of H.M.S. Rawalpindi.

23. A German minelayer was mined south of Langeland Island in the Baltic on the 4th December with the reported loss of 26 lives, and a ship resembling the gunnery training-ship Brummer (2,410 tons) is credibly reported as being towed into Emden (North Sea Coast) in a damaged condition on the same day.

24. A U-boat has patrolled during the week between Rattray Head and the Firth of Forth, and a patrol line of 3 submarines was known to have been in operation between the Shetlands and Norway on the 20th November, when U-35 was destroyed.

An estimate of the position of enemy submarines on the 7th December was as follows:

1 in the Western end of the English Channel.
1 off the Norfolk Coast.
1 west of Gibraltar.

There is a further report that seven submarines may be leaving Germany on the 9th December.

German Mine Laying.

25. Further mines have been dropped from aeroplanes in the Humber and Thames areas. During the night of the 5th-6th December aircraft were particularly active.

The extinction of navigational lights reported in last week's Résumé appears to have been effective, since patrol craft report that aircraft made the fullest use of the very few lights still burning, and, moreover, several mines have been dropped in positions from which they can be recovered with comparative ease. Steps have been taken to reduce the number of lights to a minimum and special precautions are taken with those left burning.

26. Mines have been found off Loch Ewe and in the Clyde approaches. A moored mine was picked up by a fisherman off Cromarty Firth. Considerable activity of German minelayers north of the Skaw is reported. It has also been reported that German submarines have been laying mines outside territorial waters in the vicinity of Stadlandet (Latitude 62° N.), Norway.

A completely new type of mine, probably German, was washed up on the Dutch Coast.

British Mine Sweeping.

27. Experiments are being pressed forward with various sweeps and detecting devices for use with magnetic mines. At least nine different devices are being investigated, several of which have already given practical proof of being capable of exploding mines.

German Attack on Seaborne Trade.

U-Boat attack.

28. During the period under review, two British and four neutral merchant ships have been sunk by submarines.

The details are as follows:

S.S. Eskdene (3,829 tons), cargo, timber; torpedoed after becoming detached from Norwegian Convoy due to bad weather (or possibly mined) East of Montrose on the 2nd December. Ship was abandoned and whole crew of 20 picked up by Norwegian S.S. Hild some 50 miles to the South-Eastward of the scene of attack, after 13 hours in boats. There were no casualties. Ship did not sink, and was
subsequently located on the 6th December. At time of going to press, it is hoped that tugs will be able to tow her into the Tyne.

S.S. *Navasota* (8,795 tons), in ballast. Torpedoed and sunk 50 miles S.W. of Cape Clear, Ireland, while in convoy. One killed, 45 survivors. This ship was defensively armed.

Swedish S.S. *Rudolf* (2,119 tons), cargo, coal, torpedoed (or possibly mined) and sunk 30 miles North-East of St. Abbs Head. This ship was not in convoy. Fourteen survivors saved by *Firefly* and trawler *Cardew*. 9 missing.

Norwegian S.S. *Arcturus* (1,277 tons). Not in convoy. Torpedoed (or mined) and sunk off East Coast of Scotland: position uncertain. Eight of crew were saved by Danish S.S. *Year*; nine are missing.

Norwegian S.S. *Britta* (6,214 tons), tanker in ballast, torpedoed and sunk 50 miles South-West of Lands End. Twenty-five survivors were picked up by a Belgian Trawler: 6 missing. Not in convoy.


During October 70 per cent. of the attacks carried out by submarines were made by torpedo, the remainder being by gunfire. In November only 33 per cent. were torpedo attacks. Torpedo attacks were the more effective, showing about 80 per cent. success as against 60 per cent. success for gunfire.

In October, of the 16 ships sunk, 4 were defensively armed, and of the 7 that escaped, 3 were armed. In November none of the 12 sunk was armed, but 4 of the 6 that escaped were armed.

**Mining.**

30. German mining activities have accounted for 3 British and 6 neutral ships. Of these, 3 were mined in the Approaches to the Thames, 3 on the East Coast of England, and the remainder in other home waters.

The details are as follows:

**S.S. Daltryan** (4,558 tons), cargo phosphates, mined and sunk off Tongue Light Vessel in Approaches to Thames. Pilot and whole crew of 38 were rescued.

**S.S. San Calisto** (8,010 tons), tanker, in ballast, mined and sunk off Tongue Light Vessel while in convoy on passage from Hull to Curacao. Out of crew of 48, 2 were killed, 5 missing and 6 wounded.

**S.S. Horsted** (1,670 tons), in ballast. Mined (possibly torpedoed) and sunk 10 miles East of WitherNSEA, while in convoy. Three of crew were killed, 5 missing; 18 survivors.

Norwegian S.S. *Realit* (3,083 tons), tanker, 11,402 tons of oil, mined and sunk 25 miles North-East of Mouth of Humber, while on passage from Kirkwall to Thames Haven with naval armed guard on board. The third mate was lost; 54 survivors (2 wounded) landed at Cromer. Two naval officers and guard and pilot taken by trawler *Loch Esk* to Yarmouth. Two Naval ratings were wounded.

**French S.S. Mercator** (4,260 tons), general cargo, on passage from Buenos Aires to Helsinki via Leith. Mined (possibly torpedoed) and sunk South-East of Buchan Ness. Chief Officer, his wife and crew of 33 landed; 1 missing.

**Dorset Star** (10,086 tons), cargo—general and refrigerated, which sailed from Capetown on the 28th November for Freetown, reported being
gunned by battleship in a position 600 miles East-South-East of ST. HELENA in the afternoon of the 2nd December. She must be presumed to have been sunk.

An unknown ship (possibly S.S. Tafelberg, 13,640 tons, oil refinery, which left ARUBA, DUTCH WEST INDIES for CAPE TOWN on the 16th November)—reported from a position about 170 miles South-West of that in which Doric Star was attacked, that she was being “gunned by the ADMIRAL SCHEER” at 5 A.M. on the 3rd December. Nothing further has been heard of this ship.

32. The following ships which were reported as overdue in the Résunés dated the 3rd November and the 10th November must now be regarded as losses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Tonnage</th>
<th>Cargo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashlea</td>
<td>4,222</td>
<td>Sugar (7,115 tons)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newton Beek</td>
<td>4,931</td>
<td>Maize (7,080 tons)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huntsman</td>
<td>8,196</td>
<td>Indian produce and general.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trevanion</td>
<td>5,299</td>
<td>Zinc concentrates (8,697 tons)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All these ships are missing in the SOUTH ATLANTIC: it is possible that they have been sunk by the Admiral Scheer.

33. The losses by enemy action up to the present time amount to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ships</th>
<th>Gross Tonnage.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By submarine</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>249,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mine</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>64,409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raider</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20,887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause unknown</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overdue : Presumed sunk</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22,368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>91</td>
<td>357,945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allied (other than British)—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Submarine</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>49,516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mine</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6,065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>55,581</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Submarine</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>50,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mine</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>122,813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raider</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explosion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>176,355</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Giving a total of 152 ships of 589,881 gross tons.

34. The average rate of sinkings per week for 13 weeks of war is 11.6 ships per week and approximately 44,700 tons, as compared with 104 ships of 206,000 tons per week during the peak period in April 1917.

For British shipping the average weekly loss of tonnage is just under 24,000 tons for the present war, which may be compared with the average weekly loss throughout the last war of 35,000 tons.

35. Charts showing comparative monthly tonnage losses 1939 and 1914–18, combined British, Allied and neutral shipping losses from the start of hostilities, and the British weekly shipping losses are appended.

36. The following table shows the losses, and entrances and clearances grouped according to localities. Three points emerge from a study of it. First, that the traffic through the Western Approaches is increasing; second, the totals
of shipping tonnage remain steady, in spite of the hazards. and, third, that the percentage of loss has steadily decreased:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>September 1939</th>
<th>October 1939</th>
<th>November 1939</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of Vessels</td>
<td>Gross tonnage in 1,000 tons</td>
<td>No. of Vessels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Entrances and Clearances</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Approaches ...</td>
<td>652</td>
<td>4,450</td>
<td>883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Ports ...</td>
<td>4,015</td>
<td>9,538</td>
<td>4,321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Losses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Approaches ...</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Ports ...</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage losses to Entrances and Clearances</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Approaches ...</td>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>3-0</td>
<td>1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Ports ...</td>
<td>1-0</td>
<td>1-8</td>
<td>0-4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Economic Warfare.**

**British Contraband Control.**

37. The following figures give an indication of the volume of traffic handled by the Control Service since the outbreak of War and the decline in the German imports:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Ships</th>
<th>Amount of Cargo Seized</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First four weeks</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>289,456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second four weeks</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>111,622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third four weeks</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>61,707</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

38. Cargo seized in prize during the week totals 13,700 tons, of which the main items are: ores and metals, 4,750 tons; petroleum products, 40 tons; foodstuffs and beverages, 4,100 tons; cotton, 500 tons; hides and skins, 1,750 tons; timber, 850 tons. With the imposition of control of German exports, the volume of traffic will be considerably increased, and two new control stations are being established at Falmouth and Invergordon.

**German Contraband Control.**

39. Details received from unofficial sources by no means correspond with German official pronouncements, and it is difficult to state any exact figures.

Of ships known to have been dealt with, the great majority belong to Baltic nations, and out of 30 ships quoted there is only one non-Baltic—a Greek. On the other hand, there are reliable reports that there were 80 neutral ships at Kiel alone—40 Swedish, 27 Finnish and 13 Norwegian.

**MILITARY SITUATION.**

**Western Front.**

**British Troops in France.**

40. A British brigade, with one machine-gun company, one field company and one field ambulance attached, is now on the Saar front with forward troops holding a sector of the front line north-east of Metz. Certain French troops in the sector have been placed under the brigade commander. It is intended that British infantry brigade groups shall go in succession to the Saar front up to the 25th February, each group doing a tour of duty of about one week in reserve and two weeks in the line.

**Operations.**

41. The Germans have been active on the Rhine-Moselle front where they have staged several local attacks, which have been successfully repulsed, mainly
by the action of the French artillery. These attacks have usually been carried out by Stosstruppen, or storm troops; the men being carefully picked from volunteers and liberally rewarded with decorations and leave. Patrolling has also been active on the Saar front, especially between the Moselle and Nied valleys.

The enemy has continued work on his defences on the Upper Rhine and Moselle-Rhine fronts throughout the week; also on the extension of the Siegfried Line northwards. The latter extension is said to have been completed up to Dusseldorf, and to be intended eventually to reach as far north as Emmerich.

German Troop Movement.

42. Although there have been press reports of troop movements from the Western Front towards Slovakia and the Hungarian frontier, no decrease in the number of divisions on the Western Front has been confirmed. It may be of interest, therefore, to analyse the gradual increase of German forces on the Western Front from the period immediately before the outbreak of war to the present date.

Thirteen divisions were stationed on, or near, Germany's western frontier in peace, and these were increased to about twenty on the outbreak of war with Poland. By the 10th September additional reserve and Landwehr divisions had been moved up, presumably with a view to countering a possible French offensive, and the number of divisions had reached thirty-two. About the 21st September the enemy began to transfer troops from Eastern to Western Germany, and by the end of the month the movement had reached considerable proportions. On the 30th September it was estimated that there were forty-two divisions on the Western Front, and that about half of them were in the Rhein-Moselle sector, while a considerable number had started to assemble in the Aachen Area.

Throughout October and the first ten days of November troop movements westwards continued, and by the 11th November the number of divisions opposite the Dutch and Belgian frontiers had increased considerably, and included the bulk of the mechanised forces. Since that date, however, there has been little change in the situation except for the withdrawal, probably for service in Poland, of several reserve and Landwehr divisions and their replacement by active formations.

At the moment, between ninety-three and ninety-seven divisions are believed to be on the Western Front. These are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armoured divisions</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motorized</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infantry (active)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(mountain)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(frontier)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(reserve)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Landwehr)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

plus from seven to eleven divisions whose type is not known.

The distribution of these divisions has remained practically unchanged since the middle of November, when rumours of a German advance through Holland and Belgium were circulating freely. Divisions in the front line between the Rhine and Moselle, i.e., in the area where there is contact between the two sides, have been relieved at intervals and of the ten identified divisions now holding this line only two are active divisions.

German Anti-Aircraft Formations.

43. A re-grouping of German anti-aircraft formations evidently took place during October. The object of the re-distribution seems to have been to concentrate the maximum gun power in Luftverteidigungszonen-West (Western Air Defence Zone) and the industrial regions close behind it. Western and north-western Germany, more particularly the Ruhr and the Mainz-Frankfurt-Main zones, have been strongly reinforced from the east. This re-distribution may
well have left the towns and factories of Eastern Germany with far less protection than formerly. In fact, one report states that, in Eastern Germany, only Berlin and Stettin retain their full pre-war defences.

44. The Germans are mounting light anti-aircraft guns on open trucks attached to trains, presumably for the close protection of rolling-stock, railway lines and bridges. They are also mounting heavy anti-aircraft guns and predictors in a similar manner, thus increasing mobility and saving petrol. According to a semi-official German paper, these heavy anti-aircraft guns, mounted on railway trucks, are particularly useful for the defence of large towns where a close network of railway lines enables them to reach their positions quickly. According to another article in the same paper, there exist well-defined schemes for defending Berlin from night attacks by means of barrage fire (Plaufeuert).

Sweden.

45. Sweden views the Russian invasion of Finland with intense anxiety. Many classes of public opinion, including, it is believed, the General Staff, are in favour of immediate intervention. The Government, however, have been informed that interference would be viewed unfavourably in Berlin, and are held back by fear of Germany. Meanwhile, many volunteers have been enlisted for service in Finland, help has been given in preparing the defences of the Aaland Islands and a considerable amount of war material has been supplied. The country is apparently determined to maintain an attitude at least as helpful as this, even if it entails incurring the displeasure of both Russia and Germany.

A further fifteen classes of men have been called up for home defence and will probably be used mainly to strengthen the garrisons in the north.

Italy.

46. As a result of recent reductions, the strength of the Metropolitan army is unlikely to exceed 600,000 to 700,000 men this winter. Similar reductions are, however, improbable in Italian overseas possessions which cannot be brought up to war establishment so quickly. Isolated and unconfirmed reports mention the return of troops from the Dodecanese and some 6,000 men have been repatriated from Libya, but the former may have been replaced by drafts from Italy and the Libyan garrison is still not less than three-quarters of its war establishment.

One infantry division has returned from Albania to Italy, which leaves a corps of three infantry, one armoured and one Alpini divisions in the former country.

Operations in Italian East Africa have been confined to cleaning up rebels in certain districts and no extensive punitive measures have been undertaken.

Far East.

Military Operations.

47. Reports regarding military operations in the Nanning area of Kwangsi are conflicting; both sides claim successes. A likely explanation is that Japanese detachments, which have advanced northwards of Nanning, are being harassed by Chinese forces. Nevertheless, the Japanese have succeeded in their original purpose of severing road communications with Indo-China and are now in a position to use Nanning as an advanced air base for bombing operations against communications in South-West China.

Anglo-Japanese relations.

48. There is a slight improvement in the situation at Tientsin, and Japanese official quarters in Tokyo have indicated their desire to clear up the Tientsin problem, possibly as a preliminary to a general improvement in Anglo-Japanese relations.

Reinforcements from India.

49. Four animal transport companies leave India for France on the 9th December. These companies include a total of over 1,700 men, 2,000 mules
and 500 carts. They will be followed at a later date by 600 mules, which are destined for the two animal transport companies now being formed in Cyprus from Cypriot personnel.

The 16th-5th Lancers are due to leave India on the 12th December for the United Kingdom without relief. When they leave, there will be only two British cavalry regiments remaining in India.

**AIR SITUATION.**

**German Air Force.**

**Bomber Force.**

50. The German bomber force has not carried out any offensive operations. Recent identifications indicate that some further units have moved westwards, but it is probable that these moves took place prior to the past week. It is believed that only one bomber formation (about eighty aircraft) remains in South-East Germany, i.e., in the Prague area. The gradual strategic redistribution of the force for operations in the west appears to be nearing completion.

**Coastal Operations.**

51. German coastal aircraft, engaged on North Sea reconnaissances and minelaying, have continued to operate. On a number of occasions aircraft were reported off the Thames Estuary, Cromer, the Humber, and the Firth of Forth. There was particular activity on the 6th, when several aircraft approached the East Coast before daylight, two flying inland, one towards Sheffield, the other near Norwich. Early in the morning a Heinkel 115 crashed on the beach at Sheringham. Later the same day, a number of individual aircraft were plotted off the Orkneys.

52. The special reconnaissance aircraft based at Munster have maintained their daily flights over the North Sea, presumably mainly for meteorological observations. The aircraft brought down off Alnwick on the 26th November belonged to this unit.

A new reconnaissance unit has been formed from flying personnel previously belonging to the Deutsche Luft Hansa fleet. This unit is at the disposal of the German High Command and is temporarily based at Jever.

53. Two new coastal squadrons have been identified. This increase and the large amount of training in Coastal types, which is in progress in the Baltic, is probably explained by the heavy strain which has fallen on the German Coastal units in the first months of the war, and the shortage of trained personnel in this branch.

**Operations by the German Air Force over France.**

54. German operations over France during the week were restricted for the most part to short reconnaissance flights over the Rhine and Saar fronts. On the 1st and 3rd December, however, flights were carried out over the Pas-de-Calais and the northern zone, and on the latter date a more extensive reconnaissance was conducted over districts in Burgundy and Champagne, covering Chalons-sur-Marne and the district north of Dijon and penetrating as far west as Montargis.

55. On the 23rd November, an enemy long reconnaissance aircraft was brought down near Metz and the pilot’s instructions were secured. These showed that he had been told to reconnoitre the area Cambrai—Valenciennes—Maubeuge, including the Forest de Mormal, and that he was to note what places were occupied, at what points French and British fighter units and anti-aircraft defences were located, and whether any large transport movements, any detraining of troops or unloading of material were in progress. Attention was to be paid to the smallest details.

The pilot was informed in his instructions that the British Army was thought to be concentrated in the Calais—Amiens area. He was told that in no circumstances was he to violate Belgian or Dutch neutrality, and that he was to photograph any interesting objectives.
Royal Air Force Operations.

Bomber Command.

**Attack on Enemy Warships at Heligoland.**

56. On the 3rd December, shortly before noon, twenty-four Wellington aircraft, engaged on a reconnaissance in force into the HELIGOLAND BIGHT, located a number of enemy warships lying off HELIGOLAND. The aircraft proceeded to attack in sections of three and dropped thirty-nine 500-lb., semi-armour-piercing bombs from heights between 7,000 to 10,000 feet. One of the larger ships appeared to be hit by three bombs, and one of the smaller was closely straddled, if not actually hit by two bombs. Cloud prevented accurate observation of other attacks. Photographs were taken, but, owing to weather conditions, only indifferent results were obtained. From the depth of water in which it appears that the ships were lying it is probable that the majority of the vessels were destroyers; but it may well be that the enemy gunnery training ship Brummer, which was towed into EMSEND in a damaged condition on the 4th, was among those hit. Heavy and fairly accurate A.A. fire was encountered. Our aircraft observed about twenty enemy fighters which seemed reluctant to attack; seven or eight aircraft followed the returning bomber formation without attempting to close. Only in one instance does a serious attack appear to have been made by a M.E. 109, which, it is thought, was shot down. Two British aircraft were hit by A.A. fire, but all returned safely to their bases.

**Sweeps for Enemy Surface Vessels at Sea.**

57. On the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th December a bomber force carried out sweeps from the EAST COAST to TERSCHELLING, thence north to a position 80 miles west of SYLT and back to their base.

58. A Striking Force has continued to be held in readiness at advanced bases in Scotland to operate against the Deutschland or other important units of the German Navy located in northern waters.

**Reconnaissance over Germany.**

59. Two Whitley aircraft left this country on the 6th December on a night reconnaissance over North-West Germany. They dropped leaflets over Hamburg and Bremen. Anti-aircraft fire was intense, but neither aircraft was hit.

Coastal Command Operations.

60. Intensive patrols and searches continued during the week. On the 3rd December, a Sunderland was despatched on a special search for a suspected enemy unit 75 miles south of Iceland; and on the 1st December and 2nd December, special searches were carried out over the North Sea to locate certain unidentified surface units which had been reported.

61. Four attacks were made by aircraft on submarines during the week. On the 1st December, a London dropped one 250-lb. bomb on a submarine 30 miles N.W. of DUNCANSBY HEAD (N.E. Scotland) without known result. On the 3rd December an Anson on patrol in the North Sea dropped one 100-lb. bomb on a submarine on the surface. The pilot reported that he had secured a direct hit on the conning tower. On the 5th December, two attacks were made, one by a Hudson 123 miles east of KINNAIRD HEAD, and the other by an Anson 50 miles S.E. of JERSEY (Isle of Man).

62. There were three encounters between Coastal Command and enemy aircraft. On the 3rd an Anson engaged one of a formation of six Dorniers, 50 miles N.W. of Texel without result. On the 6th December a Dornier 18 and a Dornier 26 were attacked 115 miles west of Lierzen and 80 miles north of TERSCHELLING respectively. In each case the engagement was inconclusive although both aircraft were seen to be hit. One of our aircraft was slightly damaged.

Air escorts were maintained over convoys. In at least two cases the escorting aircraft were able to reassemble ships which had become scattered in bad visibility.
Fighter Command.

Defence against mine-dropping.

63. Further measures have been taken to strengthen the air defences of estuaries where enemy mines have been dropped. Light anti-aircraft guns are being mounted in pairs on paddle vessels in the Thames, and water-borne searchlights are being provided to extend the illuminated zone in the estuary. Balloons are already flying from barges in the estuaries of the Thames and Tyne, and at Harwich. The Observer Corps and anti-aircraft and searchlight personnel are cooperating with Naval units in plotting the positions of mines which are seen to fall from enemy aircraft. From the 4th December a standing patrol by fighters has been maintained during the hours of daylight between Clacton and the North Foreland with the object of intercepting hostile aircraft approaching to lay mines.

Enemy Aircraft.

64. Eighty-two day and night patrols were despatched in connexion with the activities of enemy aircraft off the East Coast. Three interceptions have resulted. On the afternoon of the 30th November, Spitfires engaged what is believed to have been a Heinkel 111 near Markinch (Fife). Engagement was difficult owing to cloud, and only one burst was fired before the enemy escaped. About 11 A.M. on the 7th December a flight of 603 Squadron attacked two Heinikels, 40 miles off North Berwick. The third contact occurred 5 miles from the coast of Arbroath, when flights of 603 and 72 Squadrons attacked seven Heinikels 111 shortly after midday.

Royal Air Force in France.

R.A.F. Component of Field Force.

65. A reconnaissance of N.W. Germany was carried out by a single Blenheim aircraft on the 3rd December. The task was a photographic reconnaissance from Erkenz to Cleves and visual reconnaissance for pontoon bridges across the Rhine. A trench and fortification system between Schwabenberg and Weberg was reported, but no pontoon bridges were observed and there was no unusual rail activity.

Advanced Air Striking Force.

66. Certain squadrons of this force have started to re-equip with "Blenheim IV" aircraft in substitution for "Battles." A number of fighter patrols were despatched during the week, but no engagements were reported.

Release of Leaflets by Balloon.

67. On the night of the 2nd-3rd December a hundred balloons were released carrying leaflets. They are estimated to have penetrated about 440 miles into Germany and scattered their leaflets in the Brunn area. On the night of the 4th-5th December, and evening of the 5th, a total of sixty-four balloons were released carrying leaflets which should have dropped to the south of Prague around Tabor and in the Prague-Pilsen areas.

French Air Force Operations.

68. Weather conditions prohibited all reconnaissance activity over German territory on the 29th and 30th November and on the 1st and 5th December. Reconnaissance flights were undertaken on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th December over the district north of Basle and the right bank of the Rhine, and on the night of the 3rd-4th December over the Saar Valley. No unusual activity was observed on any of these flights.
RUSSO-FINNISH HOSTILITIES.

Situation at Sea.

69. The Russian Baltic Fleet, consisting of two battleships and five modern cruisers, is greatly superior to the two small coast defence ships of Finland. In light craft the Russians have seven modern destroyers and twenty of older types, as against the seven motor torpedo boats and several gunboats, minelaying and minesweeping craft of the Finnish Navy. Russia also has fifty-four submarines, of which twenty-three are small ones of 180 tons, to Finland’s five, one of which is a midget on Lake Ladoga. The Finns are, however, natural seamen and can be expected to handle their ships with skill and energy, although they have no officers of real war experience. In the last few years, under the guidance of a British Naval Adviser, the Finnish Navy has made considerable progress and may be considered reasonably efficient.

The efficiency of the Soviet Baltic Fleet is limited by the inexperience of its officers. Recent purges have removed over half of the Flag Officers and captains and a high proportion of the remainder. Those who remain are men of little education and lack officer-like qualities. The submarine service is, however, considered reasonably efficient.

70. The Finns have anticipated that the Russians may endeavour to effect a large-scale landing either near Hamina (between Helsinki and the Russian Frontier) or on the Hangö Isthmus. To safeguard themselves, they have established an efficient system of intelligence, coast-watching and aerial reconnaissance, and have fortified all vulnerable points along their southern coast. A minefield, containing both deep and shallow mines, has also been laid along the southern coast. The Finns intend to use submarines and aircraft against attacking warships and transports, and it is thought that their coast defence vessels, which are heavily armed and armoured and of shallow draught, will act in support of the minelayers and coast defence batteries among the numerous skerries with which the coast abounds. The fortification of the Aaland Islands may have been started too late to prevent the Russians cutting the Finnish lines of supply across the Gulf of Bothnia to Sweden. Interference by Russian light surface forces or submarines is certainly possible.

71. Naval operations have so far been slight and do not appear to have led to any engagements between the naval forces. A Russian squadron consisting of the new cruiser Kirov and three destroyers appeared off Hangö on the 1st December and engaged the fortress on the Island of Russaro. The heavy 12-inch batteries replied and the Kirov is said to have retired after fifteen minutes, possibly having been hit. It is reliably reported that one of the destroyers was sunk and one damaged. There is no confirmation that the town of Hangö itself has been bombarded, and it is thought that such an operation, in the face of heavy shore batteries flanking the approach, would be impracticable. The Fisherman’s Peninsula in the north and all the Finnish Islands in the Gulf of Finland are believed to have been occupied by the Russians.

72. It is considered unlikely that the Baltic Fleet will expose itself to any great risk. Intensive air attack will probably precede any future bombardment or landing, while a determined submarine campaign will be used to cut off Finnish supplies.

The Copenhagen broadcast announces that the Soviet Commissars have declared a blockade of Finnish waters inside the Baltic. Foreign ships will not be interfered with if they leave before noon on the 9th December.

A report has been received that the German S.S. Oliva (1,308 tons) arrived at Mantyluoto on the Finnish coast of the Gulf of Bothnia, having been seriously damaged by three shots from a Russian submarine on the 6th December at Uro in the entrance to the Gulf.

Situation on Land and in the Air.

73. Finland’s strength lies in the natural difficulties of the country rather than in her army of nine weak divisions, which has only recently started to replace its out-of-date artillery and is still short of tanks and aircraft. Russia, on the other hand, has an almost inexhaustible supply of man-power and equipment, her main difficulty being to get her forces to the scene of action, and to maintain them once they are there.

The shortest route to the populated and industrial area of South Finland is by the Karelian Isthmus, where the Soviet are reported to have from four to
seven divisions. They would, however, have no difficulty in bringing larger forces up through LENINGRAD whenever they wished. The Soviet have also been attacking in some strength to the north of Lake Ladoga and have reached the general line SALTHILL—SUGAARVI. Probably the main object of this thrust is to outflank the Finnish position in the Isthmus.

All the Soviet troops operating between Lake Ladoga and the Arctic Ocean depend for their maintenance upon the single-line railway which runs from LENINGRAD to MURMANSK at a distance varying from fifty to a hundred miles from the frontier. That line, which should be capable of maintaining between six and eight divisions, is supplemented in the south by a road which runs from LENINGRAD through PETROZAVODSK to REROLI. A limited number of roads run westwards from the railway to the frontier, and there are equally few running from east to west on the Finnish side. By the use of these roads Russian forces have already made their appearance near SUOMUSALMI and at KUOLAJARVI, further north, where the Murmansk railway passes closest to the frontier.

In the extreme north Russian forces have occupied the Finnish portion of the Fisherman's (RIBACHI) Peninsula and bitter fighting has been taking place at PETSAMO. Apart from the extreme cold and the almost perpetual darkness at this time of the year, Russian troops in this area are better placed than those further south. Not only is there a good road from MURMANSK to PETSAMO, but both ports are ice-free, so that the Soviet can move reinforcements and supplies by sea; and the cliffs are so rocky that it is difficult for the Finns to employ artillery against them. The Soviet’s immediate objectives in this area are likely to be PETSAMO, which already appears to have changed hands more than once, and the nickel mines at SALTHILL. Once this area is passed the Russians will be faced with very great maintenance difficulties owing to the short hours of daylight, the extreme cold and the lack of cover from the biting winds.

How long the Finns can resist is difficult to foretell. In the north they are helped by the difficulties of the country and the distance of the Soviet troops from their railheads. Moreover, the Finns are better fighters in the snow than the Russians and they are likely to destroy all available shelter as they withdraw. In the centre the Finns are, again, helped by the length and paucity of the Russian road communications and the thick woods which make it difficult for the enemy to deploy. It is in the south that they are likely to have most difficulty in holding out, for communications are simpler and, if the lakes are frozen hard, the Russians will find it easier to bring their great superiority in tanks and artillery to bear.

Probably, however, the Finns are at the greatest disadvantage in the air. Although they have already claimed considerable successes against Soviet aircraft, there are immense numbers of the latter available. If the weather is favourable, and the Russian ability to hit targets is greater than it appears to be, an intensive bombing of Finnish towns, factories and communications may have a decisive effect, even if the army itself is well protected from air attack by natural cover. There is still a possibility that a combination of climate, terrain and Russian inefficiency will result in a deadlock; but the odds against the Finns are very great, and it is hard to see how the Russians can fail to win if they press on as their prestige will probably demand.

74. Details of air raids carried out by Russian forces on the 30th November are believed to be as follows:—

**Helsinki.**—Four raids, in the course of which five bombs were dropped on the aerodrome without much effect. Incendiary bombs were also dropped.

The seaplane station at Santahamina, near Helsinki, was set on fire.

**Vipuri.**—Incendiary bombs were dropped and fires were caused.

**Kotka.**—No damage.

**Imatra.**—Unsuccessful attempt to destroy power station.

**Enso** (near Imatra)—Hospital damaged.

**Lahdi.**—Slight damage.

**Hangö.**—Three air raids. The third caused a number of civilian casualties.

75. Sixteen to twenty Russian aircraft are reported to have been brought down, four by Bulldogs, seven by Fokkers, the remainder by gunfire. The Finns are reported to have lost two aircraft. Apart from air raids, the principal air activity is stated to have been on the Isthmus Front and near IMATRA.
BRITISH SHIPPING LOSSES, WEEKLY TONNAGE FIGURES

THOUSANDS OF TONS

WEEKS OF WAR

Sunk by Surface Raider Sunk by Mine Cause uncertain Sunk by Submarine

M.S. (1.01 Dec 1939)
SHIPPING LOSSES BY ENEMY ACTION.
BRITISH, ALLIED & NEUTRAL.

Submarine Mines Cause uncertain Surface Raider

THOUSANDS OF TONS

WEEKS OF WAR

Dec 19