

THE LIBERATION OF OSLO AND COPENHAGEN: A MIDSHIPMAN'S MEMOIR

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Introduction

I joined HMS *Devonshire*, a County-class cruiser in the Home Fleet, on 16 September 1944. For the next nine months we operated out of Scapa Flow, the naval base in the Orkneys north of Scotland which had been home to Jellicoe's Grand Fleet during World War I and harboured the main units of the Home Fleet throughout the second conflict. It was a bleak, uninviting collection of seventy-three islands—at low water—twenty-nine of them inhabited, mainly by fishermen and shepherds. Winters were generally miserable and the opportunities for recreation ashore limited. There was boat-pulling and sailing, weather permitting; an occasional game of field hockey on the naval sports ground; and perhaps a Saturday afternoon concert in the fleet canteen or a "tea dance" at the Wrennery. Otherwise, we entertained ourselves aboard: singsongs in the Gunroom; a Sunday night film in the Wardroom; deck hockey in the Dog Watches; and endless games of "liar's dice."

Our operations at sea were more harrowing, but only marginally more exciting, consisting mainly of attacks on German shore installations on the Norwegian coast. We rarely saw the coastline, however, for the strikes were carried out by aircraft flying from the escort carriers in the task force. At the same time, we had to be prepared for whatever counterattack the Germans might mount, and until *Tirpitz* was finally disabled on 12 November 1944, such a riposte might have been severe. That and the ever-present threat of submarines notwithstanding, for most of us these operations involved a large measure of boredom and discomfort.

Occasionally we left the Flow for other reasons. In September 1944 we went out into the mid-Atlantic to escort Winston Churchill, taking passage in RMS *Queen Mary*, back from the Québec Conference. Often we would go to sea to exercise with the fleet and fire our eight-inch guns at an uninhabited rock known as Stack Skerry or practise a night encounter exercise with supposedly hostile forces. Once we went across the Flow to give leave in Kirkwall, the main town and capital of the Orkneys, where Robert the Bruce is supposed to have had his encounter with the spider. Sometimes, albeit rarely, the ship went south to give leave in Rosyth or Devonport.

It was all very much part of wartime service: dreary, dull and devastating, with brief flashes of intense excitement. VE-Day brought an end to all that for us, and in the following pages I try to recount not only the events of the subsequent few weeks but also something of the tremendous spirit of buoyancy and adventure which we all experienced.

The Memoir

The war in Europe ended on 8 May 1945, and in the early evening of the following day HMS *Devonshire* steamed out of Scapa Flow and set course for Rosyth. This was to be the last time I

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was to see that fabled naval outpost, and the memory of our departure lingers in my mind. It had been a beautiful day: spring was just coming to the Orkneys; the days were lengthening significantly; and the weather was improving noticeably. I had done the last boat run into *Dunluce Castle*, the depot ship at Lyness. On the way back the sun was shining, a gentle breeze was blowing across the Flow and my heart was light. No one had told us what our final destination might be, but there had been rumours around the ship for days about a European assignment, and we had made some modest preparations for operations ashore.'

We were anchored below the Forth Bridge at Rosyth early the next morning and leave was granted to the Starboard Watch that afternoon. It was not until the following morning, when "Clear Lower Deck" was piped, that we were given the merest hint that we might be going to Norway.² We spent the rest of the afternoon preparing for sea, but it was only when we embarked two automobiles belonging to His Royal Highness, The Crown Prince of Norway, together with members of his staff, that our destination was clear. At 1510 we weighed and proceeded down the firth as Senior Officer of Operation Kingdom, the return of Crown Prince Olav to his native land. The Task Force consisted of *Devonshire*, the minelaying cruisers *Ariadne* and *Apollo* (the latter flying the Norwegian Royal Standard) and the destroyers *Iroquois*, *Savage*, *Campbell* and *Arendal*, a Norwegian-manned Hunt-class destroyer. We were bound for Oslo and the liberation of Norway.

The mine was now our greatest enemy, so the ships of the Task Force streamed paravanes on passing the Rosyth boom, even though we were following a channel being swept ahead of us by the Fortieth Minesweeping Flotilla.³ I kept watch as Assistant Air Defence Officer in the Air Defence Position with a couple of oerlikon mountings under my control to deal with any floating mines we might encounter. "The weather was beautiful," I wrote to my parents. "All the way across the sun beamed down on the sparkling waters, and at night you could see the phosphorescence in the wake."

The next forenoon we overtook the minesweeping flotilla and reduced speed to remain astern. All possible precautions were being taken for the safety of *Apollo's* royal passenger. In addition to the sweepers and our own paravanes, we had air cover all the way consisting of Sunderlands, Catalinas, Mosquitoes and Beaufighters. During the afternoon watch we sighted the coast of Norway; at 1930, just off the Naze, we stopped to pick up our pilots.



Figure 1: This was the first of hundreds of small craft which accompanied *Devonshire* up Oslo Fjord on Operation Kingdom.

Source: Photograph courtesy of H.J. Wade.

A German minesweeper wearing the naval ensign of the Third Reich and a white flag at the masthead came alongside to transfer pilots: a German to guide us through the minefields and a Norwegian familiar with local waters. The German sailors were well turned-out and properly fallen-in when they came alongside, in stark contrast to our ship's company lounging on the upper deck in their usual sea-going rig of coveralls. I remember seeing the German captain on the bridge conning his ship alongside. He was wearing a white cap to which I had thought only U-boat commanders were entitled. I remember, too, the petty officer in charge of the German forecandle giving an order to one of his men, who responded with more alacrity than dexterity and tripped as he tried to jump over the breakwater. I could not translate the tongue-lashing he received from his superior, but the poor lad's performance drew jeers from our hands. The other ships sent boats across to pick up their pilots, and of all of them only *ArendaFs* coxswain, the Norwegian, was armed. I also remember how seaman-like *Iroquois'* boat's crew looked as they scrambled up the lifelines on returning to their ship.

Just after dinner a small boat came out from Kristiansand to greet us. The seamanship of the crew was impressive, for we were some miles off the coast at the time and the boat was full of young people waving, cheering and showing a huge Norwegian flag. Almost the whole of the watch below lined the guardrails, and our lads threw cigarettes and chocolate down to the youngsters in the boat, the first of many to greet us that night. Some were still with us at midnight when I came on watch just as we were passing Kristiansand. "Its sparkling lights looked wonderful," I wrote, "after nothing but black-out."

The next day, Sunday, 13 May, we passed through the Skaggerak into Oslofjord where we were met again by people in small boats, many of which were decorated with fir boughs. "There were motor boats, canoes, kayaks, fishing boats, row boats, sail boats, every conceivable kind of craft that could move and float. They were all packed full of people waving, cheering, singing, shouting... Old men waved their hats, women handkerchiefs, partisans stood up and presented arms and boy scouts saluted." Our bakers had made extra bread that morning, and as the boats came alongside our sailors threw the white loaves down to the people in the boats. The jetties and landing places along the fjord were lined with people, and at every flagstaff a Norwegian flag was flying. We were saluted from shore so often that we stationed two signalmen aft to dip our ensign in return. Everything was very green, I wrote, "and the smell of the pine trees comes out to the ships."

Just off Kaholmen Island, where the fjord narrows to a passage less than nine hundred yards wide some eighteen miles below Oslo, we were reminded of other warships which had made the same voyage under very different circumstances. *Blicher* had formed part of the Nazi invasion force on 9 April 1940 when it was sunk by gunfire and torpedoes fired from Norwegian shore batteries. Our attention was drawn to the memorial erected by the Germans close to the spot. Of course, we were aware that *Devonshire* had also played a significant role during those dark days. She had evacuated His Majesty King Håkon, His Royal Highness Prince Olav and certain government, military and diplomatic officials from Tfofmo on 7 June 1940.⁴ It was therefore historically appropriate that *Devonshire* should have been chosen to accompany the first representative of the Norwegian Royal Family to return to his country. Indeed, there was some feeling in the Gunroom that the Crown Prince ought to have been given passage in our ship, but that decision, of course, was none of our business.

As we approached Oslo, ferries towing up to twenty boats each joined the throng of small craft accompanying us. Many of the passengers were shouting, "Kronprins! Kronprins!" or making some symbol to represent a crown. We pointed aft to *Apollo*, and off they went to greet their prince. About 1330 *Apollo* and *Ariadne* overtook us to lead the Task Force into harbour. We paraded a Royal Marine Guard and Band on the quarterdeck to salute as they passed, and we heard

for the first time that beautiful Norwegian anthem, *Ja vi elsker dette landet*, which we were to know by heart and in Norwegian before we left.

At 1400 we moored in Oslokels Reach, and as soon as the booms and ladders were out the Norwegians swarmed aboard from their small boats. Our sailors lavishly distributed candy, fruit, cigarettes, tea and coffee, all of which was received with a polite bow and a handshake from the boys and men and a curtsy from the girls and women, and we began to learn the meaning of "tusen takk" and "mange takk," the Norwegian equivalents of "many thanks," expressions which were to come in handy later when we in our turn experienced the hospitality of the Norwegian people.

Ashore, the same experience was repeated. We were mobbed on the streets by people wanting to talk to us in English, a language which had been prohibited for some five years. Others spoke Norwegian or used just a friendly sign-language. We quickly distributed the few treasures we had been able to carry with us, and we were given coins and flags and flowers in return for our autographs. Photographs of the Royal Family were exhibited in almost every shop window, and each display formed a centre of considerable interest to the Norwegians. It was a vast holiday crowd. Women and girls in national costume or summer frocks, blond, freckled boys in shorts, students of all ages wearing their black, tasselled student caps and sailors from the British, Canadian and Norwegian ships of the Task Force all mingled in one happy crowd of holiday-makers. Yet there was a grimmer side as well. The British airborne troops, Norwegian police, some Swedish-trained Norwegian soldiers and partisans, who were also part of the throng, were all armed with rifles or tommy-guns slung over their shoulders, and the Germans, who were still to be seen on the streets, wore pistols in their belts. The crowd, however, had little time for the former conquerors that day and they were largely ignored by liberators and liberated alike.



Figure 2: Members of the Norwegian Home Front and British airborne troops—all armed—were well represented.

Source: See figure 1.

I had gone ashore with a messmate whose family had Norwegian connections.⁵ We were unable to find the aunt for whom he was looking, but on our way back to the ship we met a Norwegian family—mother, father and two sons—all wearing their student caps (the parents, we learned later, were celebrating not only the liberation but also their silver anniversary as students). "Good day," they said in perfect English. "Welcome to Norway. What can we do for you?" This was the beginning of a friendship which was to last for many years, and the Klingenbergs were gracious hosts.⁶ They took us home where we toasted the liberation with *aquavit* and were taught the appropriate responses. We saw their garden, entirely converted to vegetables, and were shown, on a hillside behind their house, the former residence of the infamous Vidkun Quisling.⁷ "He used to drive in an armoured car," our host told us, "but now the Crown Prince will drive alone."

It did not take long for word to get around the neighbourhood that the Klingenbergs were entertaining two of their liberators. Children began to arrive at the door to shake our hands and greet us in their best English. While the boys welcomed us with what seemed a rather stiff formality, the girls, much less reserved and much to our delight, felt that an embrace and a kiss were far more appropriate to the occasion.

We stayed in Oslo until 18 May and were busy every minute of those few days. Of course, we did our normal harbour watchkeeping. We ran boats, and although they were not allowed to bring off Norwegian visitors, the latter were nevertheless welcomed if they came in their own boats, and midshipmen were often detailed off to show them around the ship. We had time ashore as well when we visited our new-found friends, and one night were their guests at the Chat Noir Theatre, where the two teen-age Klingenbergs gave us a simultaneous translation of the proceedings with such ease that we were able to laugh at the jokes along with the rest of the audience. We did our share of sightseeing through what was then a rather unkempt city; we saw a few bomb craters and the damage to what had been Gestapo Headquarters; but we were not allowed even to approach the imposing Akershus Castle, a medieval fort and palace overlooking the fjord and harbour, which had been used for the past five years as a prison by the Gestapo and would serve a similarly grim purpose under Norwegian control for a while yet.

The Norwegian National Day, which marks Norway's secession from Sweden in 1905, is celebrated on 17 May, but it had not been a public occasion since the beginning of the occupation in 1940. Consequently, it was observed with great enthusiasm this year. Almost all the public services closed for at least part of the day to permit attendance at the parade, which consisted of units from all the Home Front formations accompanied by bands and what must have been all the school children in Oslo. Cheering crowds lined Karl Johan Street all the way up to the gates of the Royal Palace, where the marchers were greeted by the Crown Prince, and those of us who were fortunate enough to get ashore that day shared enthusiastically in the celebrations which even a steady drizzle could not dampen. At night the harbour was alive with lights, for the ships were illuminated and their searchlights created cross-hatch patterns in the dark sky.

Our most impressive contribution to these festivities was by all counts the children's party we held on the afternoon of 18 May, just prior to our departure.⁸ About 1500 children ranging in age from five to twelve years attended. Many of them had waited for hours on the jetty at Honorbrygge to ensure their place at the appointed time. When the boats finally brought them off at 1400 they were welcomed over the side of a warship transformed into an amusement park. There were slides and swings, clowns and contests, merry-go-rounds and music. The sailors' ingenuity had created a fantasyland for the young visitors out of a ship and her weapons of war. The Royal Marine Band played on the quarterdeck and shared its instruments with many an aspiring musician. One small girl, perched astride the bandmaster's shoulders, demonstrated her talent with his baton. The diver's suit with its built-in telephone was a great attraction. The airplane ride down a jackstay rigged from the Air Defence Position to the forecastle was a thrill reserved for those over six. Of

course, there was food too, for what is a party without food, and the children were offered ice cream and cake and tea and white bread and jam, and when they finally left the ship they took with them a bar of chocolate each. Even after we had unmoored and begun our passage down the fjord at 1915, in company with *Savage* and *Iroquois*, I fully expected that at least one of our visitors would be discovered still exploring some remote cubbyhole, but the ship's company had been dedicated and careful hosts, and the Master-at-Arms had done his job thoroughly.



Figure 3: Captain G.M.B. Langley, OBE, RN, accepts a bouquet from the children who came aboard HMS *Devonshire* for a children's party in Oslo, 18 May 1945. The Officer of the Watch, Lieutenant "Sharkey" Ward, the Commander's Messenger and the Side Party, Able Seamen Byron and Wigfield can be seen in the background.

Source: Courtesy of the author.



Figure 4: Some of *Devonshire's* guests enjoy tea on the upper deck during the children's party in Oslo, 18 May 1945.

Source: Courtesy of the author.

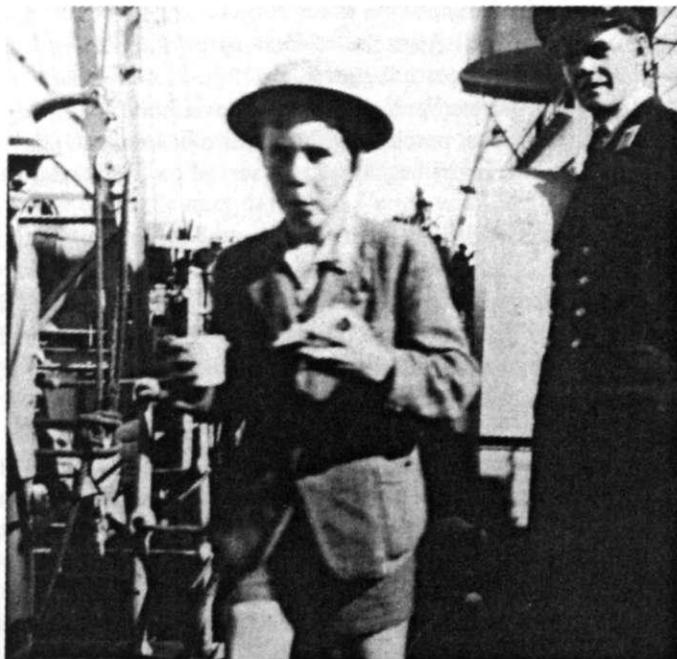


Figure 5: Tin hats, tea and tarts.

Source: See figure 1.

We made an uneventful passage down the fjord during the night. The next morning, escorted by a flotilla of Swedish ships (since we were technically in Swedish waters) we passed through the Sound which separates the Danish Island of Zealand from Sweden. My journal entries and letters home suggest that I was impressed with the contrast between the rocky, pine-covered slopes of Oslofjord and the flat contours of the Danish coast. There was a delicate beauty to this coastline with its neat farms, bluffs and windmills—the first I had ever seen.

It was late afternoon when we made our approach to the harbour of Copenhagen. Several ships were at anchor outside the wall, mostly German light warships and merchantmen. Tugs nudged us into our berth alongside the wall at Langelinie Promenade, where we found ourselves in company with *Birmingham*, *Dido*, *Zephyr* and *Zest*. Two famous German ships were there also; the cruisers *Niirnberg* and *Prinz Eugen* were alongside in the dockyard, together with two Red Cross vessels and several merchantmen. Our berth was the most pleasant I had so far experienced. Not only were we isolated from the noise and confusion typical of dockyards the world over, but we were on the edge of a beautiful park, and a few yards astern of us, sitting coyly on her rock just offshore, was *Den Lille Havfrue*, the famed Copenhagen Mermaid.

We found Copenhagen something of a contrast to Oslo, where we had been among the first of the liberating forces to arrive. The Danes had been liberated for a few weeks now. The euphoria of the liberation was beginning to wear off, and allied sailors, soldiers and airmen were no longer novelties on the streets. That does not mean to say we were not made welcome, but the holiday was clearly over and reconstruction had begun. We made good use of our free time seeing the sights, enjoying the parks and admiring the monuments. Indeed, my letters home bear testimony

to my impression that Copenhagen was a city of green space and statues, with the Little Mermaid holding pride of place among the latter.

And then there was the food! After the restrictions of rationing in wartime Britain, the abundance of dairy products was almost unbelievable. Of course, Denmark is the dairyland of Europe and we ought not to have been surprised at the ready availability of milk, cream, butter and eggs. Still, I recall that one of my first purchases ashore was a dozen fresh eggs which I carefully carried back to the ship in a brown paper bag. I had two served on fried bread for breakfast every morning for the next six days.

At the same time, of course, there were reminders of the war and the occupation on all sides. While dairy products might have been plentiful, coal was not. Consequently, electricity was carefully rationed, and the city seemed to close down shortly after dark. I visited the famous Tivoli Gardens, but could only guess at the impressive fairyland they had once been and were to become again when supplies of electricity returned to normal. There was a shortage of cigarettes, too, yet by now it was not a case of sharing but of barter. A packet of cigarettes for which we paid something like ten cents was worth about \$2.50, and we were frequently offered jewelry or other valuables in exchange. The most moving remnants of the occupation, however, were the little bouquets of flowers which one saw here and there withering on the pavements. Each marked a spot where a member of the Resistance had been shot down by the Gestapo. The custom had begun as a form of protest during the occupation and was being maintained in these weeks of the liberation as a tribute.

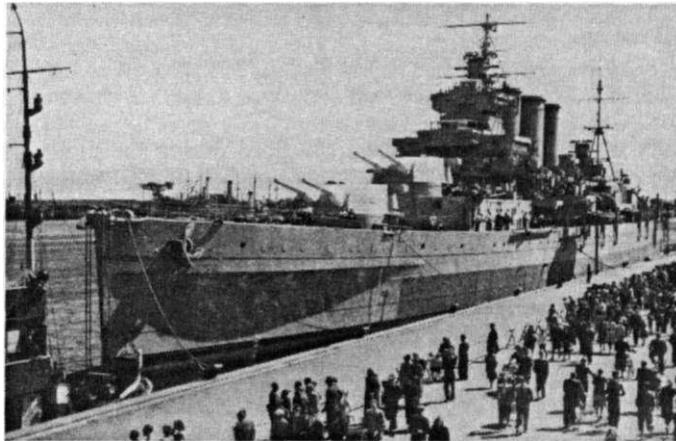


Figure 6: The tug secured just forward of *Devonshire* embarked the Royal Marines and a detachment from the Danish underground in their unsuccessful pursuit of fleeing Nazi officials and sympathizers.

Source: Photograph courtesy of I.A. Macpherson.

Although we took every opportunity to get ashore and enjoy the sights and sounds of Copenhagen, all the ships' companies were aware that we were involved in more than a peacetime exercise of showing the flag. Normal harbour routine governed our lives, of course, but the peculiar circumstances of our presence in this place at this time resulted in a variety of interesting and sometimes exciting diversions. After Divisions on Sunday, 20 May, when we held a Service of Thanksgiving for Victory, our Royal Marines carried out a routine patrol of the dockyard while our boats were sent away on various harbour patrols. The next day it was more of the same. Our boats were sent to patrol among some abandoned German lighters, ostensibly to prevent looting

of their stores. There was excitement that afternoon, too, when word was received that one of the Red Cross vessels in the dockyard had put to sea without authorization and with certain Gestapo officials aboard. We hastily manned a German sea-going tug, which had previously been requisitioned as a tender and, reinforced by armed paratroopers and members of the Danish Resistance, put to sea in pursuit.⁹ The chase was eventually abandoned, but by that time Royal Air Force aircraft were in the air shadowing the fugitive.

As Midshipman of the Watch on the quarterdeck for most of that day I had been a bystander, but my turn came the next day when I went with our Royal Marines on their regular dockyard patrol.¹⁰ These patrols had been established simply to make our presence felt throughout the dockyard, which was being used as a holding area for German personnel about to be repatriated. There were warships there as well, of course, and each had an armed sentry stationed at the brow, every one of whom punctiliously saluted as the patrol passed. The ships' companies, it seemed, were well organized and disciplined, but the soldiers were another matter. I have no idea how many there were, but I guessed their ages ranged from sixteen to sixty, and it looked to me as though many could remember vividly events following the abdication of the Kaiser in 1918. They were a ragged lot, hollow-eyed and subdued, and we had no trouble with any of them.

We were due to sail on 24 May and preparations began in earnest the day before when *Savage* and *Iroquois* came alongside to take on fuel. There was time for one more run ashore, however, and two of us were fortunate to have been invited to a party sponsored by the Danish Underground.¹¹ It was held in what I was told was the former Chinese Embassy, and according to the programme—a huge affair plastered from floor to ceiling of one wall—which greeted us on our arrival, was scheduled to last all night. There was dining, dancing and drinking, interspersed with a variety of entertainment, including a mock Gestapo "raid." A couple of Danes dressed as German soldiers burst in, forced their way across to our table and demanded to see our identity cards. Our subsequent "arrest" caused great hilarity among our hosts, at least some of whom may at one time have experienced the real thing.¹² Unfortunately, we had to make an early departure, for we were under sailing orders, and I was on duty early the next morning, but it had been a splendid evening.

We had learned earlier that *Devonshire's* next mission was to escort the two German cruisers, *Prinz Eugen* and *Nürnberg*, from Copenhagen to Wilhelmshaven. The older of the two, *Nürnberg*, was a light cruiser of 6000 tons displacement. Completed in 1935, it was armed with nine 5.9-inch guns, eight 3.5-inch and eight three-pounder anti-aircraft guns, as well as twelve twenty-one-inch torpedo tubes in triple mountings. The cruiser had a complement of 656, a speed of thirty-two knots, and carried a catapult and two aircraft.

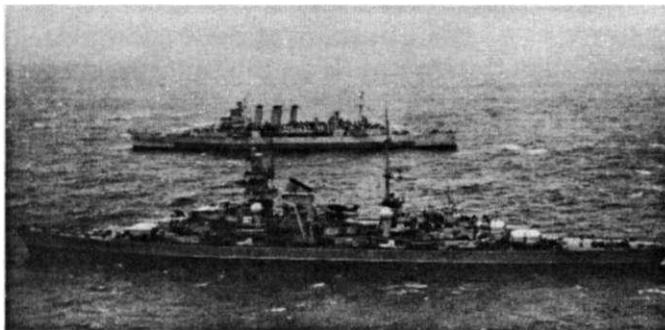


Figure 7: Devonshire escorted Prinz Eugen and Nuernberg from Copenhagen to Wilhelmshaven, 24-26 May 1945. This photograph was taken just before we parted company. The German vessels were escorted into harbour by HMCS Iroquois and HMS Savage.

Source: Courtesy of the author.

Prinz Eugen had a notable wartime career. A heavy cruiser with a reported displacement of 10,000 tons and a speed of thirty-two knots, it had been commissioned in August 1940 with a complement reported at 830. Her armament included eight eight-inch guns in twin turrets, twelve 4.1-inch anti-aircraft guns, a number of lighter weapons and twelve twenty-one-inch torpedo tubes in triple mountings. In addition, it carried four catapult-launched aircraft.¹³ In May 1941 *Prinz Eugen* had accompanied *Bismarck* into the Atlantic, where they engaged *Hood* and *Prince of Wales*, sinking the former and forcing the latter to disengage. It had subsequently made its way to Brest, where it remained until the night of 11-12 February 1942 when, in company with *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisnau*, it eluded the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force in the famous "Channel Dash" and proceeded into Norwegian waters. Throughout the winter of 1944-1945 *Prinz Eugen* was in the Baltic covering German troop withdrawals on the Eastern Front before surrendering to the British in Copenhagen in May. Now it was one of only two major war vessels of Hitler's navy to have surrendered intact and was to be taken to Wilhelmshaven for decommissioning.¹⁴

During the forenoon of 24 May the Captains of *Prinz Eugen* and *Niirnberg* repaired on board *Devonshire* to receive their sailing orders. They were met at the gangway with the usual courtesies—Royal Marine drummers sounded the "Alert," boatswain's mates piped them over the side and the Commander escorted them below to the Captain's Cabin.¹⁵ Then at 1145 we slipped and proceeded out of Copenhagen harbour in company with *Dido*, *Iroquois*, *Savage* and our two charges.¹⁶ On clearing harbour the main and secondary armament (the eight-inch and four-inch guns) were closed up at defence stations, and the lighter anti-aircraft armament at a lesser degree of readiness. Under an overcast sky with occasional showers we began our passage back through the Sound and down the west coast of Denmark.

Steaming in line ahead, we followed the swept channels throughout the night and next day at speeds varying from eighteen to twenty-four knots, with the destroyers occasionally taking station abeam *Prinz Eugen*. At 0800 on 26 May we parted company with the two Germans while three Liberators circled just below the thick haze. *Iroquois* and *Savage* took over the escort into Wilhelmshaven, while *Devonshire* with *Dido* astern set a northerly course for Rosyth. This little episode was in no way comparable to the surrender of the Italians at Malta, when Cunningham had signalled the Admiralty that the Italian fleet was now lying "under the guns" of the fortress. Nor could it match the stage-managed drama a generation earlier when the Kaiser's High Seas Fleet steamed into oblivion with Beatty's Grand Fleet disposed in column on either beam. Still, this was a moment in British naval history, and I was part of it.

We made an easy passage overnight to Rosyth and anchored in Berth B6 in the early afternoon of 27 May, with *Dido* close by. Leave was given and, it being a Sunday, the ship "piped down."¹⁷ For the next five days the hands were employed cleaning and painting in preparation for our next trip to Norway, this time to carry King Håkon VII back to his kingdom. In the Gunroom we were still of the firm opinion that, in view of the historic precedent, he ought to take passage with us, but *Norfolk* was the flagship of the First Cruiser Squadron, and that settled the matter.

At 1400 on 5 June the Norwegian Royal Standard was broken out aboard *Norfolk* and the Flag Officer Commanding the First Cruiser Squadron transferred his flag to *Devonshire*.TM Shortly afterwards the Task Force weighed and proceeded down the firth. As *Norfolk* steamed to its position at the head of the column, all the ships' companies manned the guardrails and cheered while the Norwegian Royal Family observed the evolution from under the protection of *Norfolk's* quarterdeck awning. Once outside the boom, paravanes were streamed and *Devonshire*, as principal escort, assumed the lead position in case, as the Commander put it, "we had to bump any mines out of the way." *Onslow*, *Obdurate*, *Orwell* and *Stord*, a Norwegian destroyer, took station astern.

The weather this time was not as pleasant as it had been when we had escorted the Crown Prince. The sea was relatively calm, but the sky was overcast, and rain fell for most of the passage

across the North Sea. Our light armament was again closed up to deal with floating mines, if necessary, and once again I kept watch in the Air Defence Position. At 2030 we encountered a flotilla of six U-boats being escorted from Wilhelmshaven to the United Kingdom by two frigates. They passed close on our port side, and we had a good look at these formidable vessels. Then, on the evening of the next day we met the first of the Norwegian boats which, as on our earlier visit, we were to encounter all the way up the fjord to Oslo.

Norfolk led the column as we passed up Oslofjord on the morning of 7 June. About 1000 His Royal Highness The Crown Prince came out in his barge to greet his father on *Norfolk's* quarterdeck, and then the procession of warships and small craft resumed its majestic progress up the fjord. When we had moored again in Osløkels Reach about an hour later, a swarm of boats immediately surrounded *Norfolk*, the people singing, shouting and cheering for their sovereign. Many waved flags and some even fired rockets. Somehow the Royal Family managed to make their way ashore through this mass of small boats and an equally overwhelming press of their subjects waiting to greet them on the jetty. With the Royal Navy's sense of the historical fitness of things, they had returned five years almost to the hour after their flight from Tromsø in 1940.

Ashore, we were received as old friends and experienced something of a repetition of our earlier visit. The city was in a turmoil of excitement: shops and offices had closed; public transportation had stopped; the telephone system was at best uncertain. Platforms and bleachers had been built at vantage points throughout the city, the buildings and storefronts were decorated with banners and patriotic slogans and at night Karl Johan Street was ablaze with torches burning from platforms erected on the lamp standards. The King spent the best part of the afternoon on the balcony of the palace responding to the welcome extended by the people of Oslo.

We did notice a few subtle differences from our first visit, however. There were fewer Germans to be seen on the streets, fewer armed men, and the trade in cigarettes had become just as brisk as in Copenhagen. We were told, too, that supplies of food were now reaching Oslo from Sweden and Denmark, but even so, our gifts of tea, coffee, bread and chocolate were gratefully received by our Norwegian friends.

As before, the Royal Navy played its part in the celebrations. The ships were opened to visitors daily in rotation, and ship visiting was a popular afternoon pastime. *Devonshire* held an "at home" on the afternoons of 10 and 11 June, so arranged in order to give both Starboard and Port Watches an equal opportunity to entertain their friends. Since the party was by invitation only, patrols were established on the jetty to control the influx, and infinite patience had to be displayed in turning away those who had "forgotten" their invitations. Once aboard, there was dancing on the upper deck in the space between the torpedo tubes to the music of the Royal Marine Band, and tea was served in the messdecks. The Gunroom officers were also allowed to invite guests, and most of us naturally took that opportunity to repay the hospitality we had enjoyed ashore. Our guests seemed overwhelmed at the sight of the white bread and jam offered at tea time by the Gunroom pantry. The officers entertained on the quarterdeck the second evening. The awning was spread, and the quarterdeck gaily decorated with coloured lights and bunting. Again the Royal Marine Band provided music for dancing, and supper was taken with hosts in the Wardroom, Gunroom or Warrant Officers' Mess. It was a grand occasion.

We left Oslo at 0930 the next morning in company with *Norfolk*, *Onslow*, *Obdurate*, *Orwell* and *Stord*, boatswain's calls shrilling and bugles sounding as salutes were exchanged. *Devonshire's* Scandinavian visit was over. It had been an exhilarating experience for all of us after the long, dreary months of isolation in Scapa Flow and the tedious routine of operations in the Atlantic. There were few among us who would forget those remarkable days when victory was followed by liberation and peace returned to a war-torn and occupied Europe. Nor did Oslo forget HMS *Devonshire*. A brass plaque in the City Hall today acknowledges the role it played at the

beginning and end of Norway's ordeal and the close links forged between two countries by the ship's companies who sailed in it in defeat and victory.

NOTES

- * C.B. Koester was born in Regina, Saskatchewan, and educated at the Royal Canadian Naval College and the Universities of Saskatchewan and Alberta where he gained a doctorate in History. He taught Canadian history at the University of Regina, served as Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan and later as Clerk of the House of Commons, and in 1989 was appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada.
1. Unless otherwise noted, this account is based upon entries in the journal which I was required to keep as a midshipman and on my letters home, particularly a letter to my parents dated 14 May 1945.
 2. "Clear Lower Deck" is an order for all hands to muster on the upper deck for a special purpose, such as to hoist a boat or, as in this case, to be addressed by the Captain.
 3. The paravane was a minesweeping device fitted to the forefoot to offer a degree of protection to individual ships.
 4. The entry in *Devonshire's Log* for 7 June 1940 reads: "2000: Embarkation of H.M. King of Norway, H.R.H Prince Olaf, & their Equerries; Norge Prime Minister & Government Officials, Officers & men of the Norge Air Force (24), Political refugees (16), Diplomatic Corps (8), H.M. Mission to Norway (11), French ditto (10), Officers & men of British Army (52 & 290), Stores & personal baggage."
 5. J.S. Hertzberg. He later became a gunnery specialist
 6. Mr. and Mrs. H.F. Klingenberg and their sons, Rolf and Halfdan, of Bygdey, Oslo.
 7. The German commissioner for Norway appointed Quisling as "Minister-President" of a puppet regime on 1 February 1942. He quickly abolished the Norwegian constitution and made himself a virtual dictator.
 8. I have supplemented my basic sources by reference to *Aftenposten* (Oslo), 19 May 1945, "Norway's Largest Children's Party on Board the Cruiser *Devonshire* Yesterday" (a free translation initialled R.M.P. and dated 27/5/45). Instructor Lieutenant R.M. Pounder, RN, was *Devonshire's* Meteorological Officer.
 9. I was later to meet one of these Danes by sheer accident in Canada when, as a university student, I was working at a summer job on the pipeline near Edmonton.
 10. The patrol was under the command of Lieutenant F.D.M. "Lefty" Warn, R.M. He later became Military Secretary to the Commandant General Royal Marines in the rank of full colonel.
 11. My running-mate on this occasion was R.C. "Bob" MacLean of St. Boniface, Manitoba. He later became a naval aviator.
 12. The episode was photographed, and the photograph published in a Danish magazine, a copy of which reached my Norwegian friends, the Klingenbergs, who sent it on to me.
 13. Details of these two vessels are to be found in *Jane's Fighting Ships, 1944-45* (London, 1945).
 14. After decommissioning, *Prinz Eugen* was given to the United States as part of war reparations and used as a target for the atomic bomb tests at Bikini Atoll in July 1946.
 15. The designation "drummer" when referring to the ship's buglers derives from an earlier period when drums were used to pass certain orders throughout the ship, for example, to call the ship's company to action stations on the order "Beat to Quarters!" Later, Boy Marines were enlisted as bandsmen and were expected to become proficient on both the drum and the bugle, but the old term remained in active use.
 16. *Devonshire* had sent what in Nelson's day would have been called a "prize crew" aboard *Prinz Eugen*, consisting of an officer and a handful of Royal Marines and signalmen. The prize officer was Lieutenant Douglas Kirkhope, RNVR. Unfortunately, I was never clear on his duties or whether he spoke German, nor did I have an opportunity to share with him later any of his experiences aboard *Prinz Eugen*.
 17. This was the normal harbour routine for a Sunday afternoon.
 18. Vice-Admiral Sir Rhoderick Robert McGrigor, KCB, DSO, RN.