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THE CAMPAIGN AND BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR

DECLASSIFIED IAW DOD MEMO OF 3 MAY 1972, SUBJ:
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Naval War College
Newport, R.I.
1 September, 1937

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THE CAMPAIGN AND BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR

Slide 1. How they fought in days of old.

This complex campaign commenced with the departure of the French Fleet, under Villeneuve, from Toulon for the West Indies, on 29 March 1805, and terminated with the defeat of the French and Spanish Fleet ^{by British lead by} ~~under~~ Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar, 21 October 1805. It belongs to an age that is past. The ships engaged, their ordnance, gunnery, propulsion and communication ^{facilities} are antiquated from the present day viewpoint but the human element then, as now, was the all important factor and you will find in the campaign many instances of gallantry, decision of character, initiative, loyalty and devotion to duty which are worthy of study. You will further note that victory came to those forces which displayed the foregoing attributes, lead by efficient ~~and kindly~~ sailormen. These leaders were constantly training themselves and their commands for the fulfillment of the mission of the Fleet by the Study of past and probable future tactics and strategy, in other words employing the tools, as then existing, in accordance with Sound Military Decision. Furthermore the victorious Fleet was trained on Blue Water.

Before proceeding to narrate the high lights of the campaign it is advisable to sum up briefly the situation as existing in March 1805. War existed between England and France with Spain and Holland allied with the latter.

Slide 2. March 1805.

The warring sea forces were disposed as follows:-

Cornwallis (British) off Brest watching French squadron under Ganteaume.

Calder (British) off Ferrol watching French squadron under Gourdon and Spanish under Grandallana.

Orde (British) off Cadiz watching Spanish under Gravina.

Nelson (British) off Toulon watching French under Villeneuve.

A French squadron under Missiessy which had sailed from Rochefort in February, eluding the British, temporarily absent from station off that place on account of bad weather, was operating in the West Indies. To protect British possessions in the West Indies against this French Squadron Cornwallis had sent a British Squadron under Cochrane. At this point it is wise to consider Napoleon's plans for the French Fleet. His original plan was for the Toulon squadron to evade Nelson then join the Rochefort squadron and these combined forces to sweep around the British off Brest and rush the English Channel. The British Forces were disposed to obtain information of any French movements, then affect a junction of forces and intercept ^{the} French prior to their arrival in ^{the} vicinity of England. In January Napoleon formulated a new plan which involved the Rochefort and Toulon Forces proceeding to the West Indies damaging the British then returning in Spring to operate against the British Force off Ferrol, the French Brest Force to operate against Ireland. Napoleon thus hoped to scatter the British Forces. This second plan was placed in effect but only the Rochefort Force, under Missiessy

left port. Villeneuve's force managed to leave Toulon but on encountering heavy weather the poorly trained crews were unable to handle the ships and they put back.

Napoleon on learning that the Toulon force had not sailed issued another plan which was - the Brest Force to proceed to Ferrol destroy the British Squadron (under Calder) stationed there, call out the French squadron from Ferrol and then the two to proceed to the West Indies and join up there with the Toulon and Rochefort forces. After cleaning up in the West Indies the French squadrons were to return to Boulogne.

This plan contained a proviso that if the Brest Force did not arrive in the West Indies in ~~the~~ 40 days the Toulon Force (Villeneuve) was to return to Cadiz and await further orders. At this point it may be stated that Napoleon was apparently not familiar with the handling of Fleets and naval warfare. And that the orders he issued to the French Fleets indicate this. For example his order to the Brest Force was "Get to sea without any action" well knowing a British squadron was blockading that port. The Brest Force got underway and stood out but on sighting the British, returned to port and there they remained and in consequence thereof the Ferrol Force remained in port also. The net results of the plans and orders issued by Napoleon at this time, which called for a movement of the entire French and Spanish Navies, were that only the Toulon Force under Villeneuve augmented by the Cadiz Force under Gravina put to sea and to further complicate matters

the French Force under Missiessy which had sailed under a previous plan was not aware of a change in plan. At the time set for sortie ^{of all the Allied Forces} to be followed by a junction of these ^{Forces} Fleets we find the Toulon Force leaving the Mediterranean for the West Indies, the Rochefort Force enroute West Indies to France and unaware of location or destination of former force and the Brest and Ferrol Forces at anchor in their respective harbors with evidently no intention of putting to sea. A good example of the results which may be expected from poor coordination, failure to obtain and disseminate vital information and ill conceived or improperly worded plans and orders.

We will now take up the narrative from Villeneuve's departure from Toulon.

Slide 2 April 1805

On 4 April Nelson learned from his frigates, the Phoebe and Active stationed off Toulon that Villeneuve had put to Sea. Nelson's ships of the line, having previously been cruising in an area to cover Spain, the Balearics and Sardinia, were in Palmas for provisions and water. The frigates trailed Villeneuve as long as possible then broke off to advise Nelson. Upon receipt of this information Nelson proceeded to a position South of Sardinia then retired towards Palermo and formed his frigates in a scouting line Sardinia to Tunis thus

barring the way to Naples, Sicily and Egypt. (In 1803 the French had occupied the whole of Italy and it was continually in Nelson's mind that ultimately Napoleon would again endeavor to seize Egypt or strengthen his position in Italy for further land operations or to get control of the Mediterranean.) While Nelson is awaiting further information we will follow Villeneuve, who on 1 April, received word from a Neutral that Nelson was in Palmas. Villeneuve arrived off Cartagena 6 April and invited Salcedo with six Spanish ships in that port to join him, but Salcedo was not ready for sea and Villeneuve not desiring to wait for him ~~to get ammunition aboard~~, continued towards the straits.

Slide 3. Sir John Orde.

It will be remembered that five British ships under Orde were stationed off Cadiz. Orde was unaware of the proximity of Villeneuve but as the latter approached he was sighted by a British ship which immediately made for the British Admiral and succeeded in warning him. Orde was taking stores at the time, but he immediately cast off his stores ships and formed his line for battle. Villeneuve did not elect to fight, in spite of the fact that his force was at least twice as large as Orde's, his only object was to make Cadiz Bay.

Slide 4. Gravina.

On 9 April the French anchored outside Cadiz, signalled Gravina to join up with his seven Spanish and one French ship, and about five hours later the combined squadrons stood out to the south-westward, with the Spaniards straggling well in the rear.

Slide 6 April 10-18, 1805

The movement of Villeneuve through the Straits had also been noted by Kerr in the Fishgard refitting at Gibraltar. He immediately sent a brig to notify Nelson and getting his own ship ready he left Gibraltar on 10 April to follow Villeneuve, but being unable to find him Kerr headed north to warn Calder (off Ferrol) and Gardner (off Brest) believing Villeneuve's destination was the Channel.

On 10 April the straggling ^{Allied Fleet was} Spaniards were sighted, headed to westward by the Beagle, one of Ordes frigates, who kept them in sight until 12 April then headed towards Cape St. Vincent to notify Orde. Enroute the Beagle spoke ~~to~~ an American merchantman coming from westward and received information that five ships of the line had been passed to westward. Beagle being unable to locate Orde by 18 April proceeded to Ferrol to notify Calder, enroute she spoke ~~to~~ a British ship which passed the word to Calder and the Beagle proceeded to Plymouth arriving 30 April and on 2 May made her intelligence report to Lord Barham in the Admiralty. In the meantime the Fishgard, from Gibraltar, was also headed north with the news that Villeneuve had passed through the straits. The Admiralty received this report on 25 April and the Beagle's definite report on 2 May.

Note the initiative, decision and promptness displayed by the British captains in obtaining and disseminating vital

intelligence. Orde in the meantime had been cruising around in the area off St. Vincent and not receiving any word ^{of} from Villeneuve's whereabouts he assumed the latter had headed North and consequently Orde took his battle squadron to the British strategical concentration point off Brest, leaving his cruisers to watch off Cadiz and the Straits.

Slide 6. Nelson.

Slide 7. The Victory as she was.

We will now return to Nelson in the Mediterranean.

Slide 8. April 10 - May 10.

On 10 April Nelson received word that a British military expedition was on its way to the Mediterranean. This was a small contingent on its way to Malta where they would be ready for service in Southern Italy under a Russian General. Russia in order to thwart Napoleon's ambitious dreams of European Empire had asked England's co-operation in checking the French advance in the Mediterranean. Knowing the ease with which Napoleon had obtained intelligence of British plans, Nelson deduced that Villeneuve had probably gone West, to cut off this expedition. Still in the absence of any definite information he did not like to leave open the pathway to the East, therefore, he resolved to start Westward sending two frigates to look into Toulon and shaping his own course to ensure that Villeneuve had not doubled back upon Naples. On 15 April he learned from a neutral that

Villeneuve had been seen nine days before entering the Straits so he decided to start for Gibraltar but he took the precaution to leave cruisers behind to cover the routes to Sardinia, Sicily and Egypt. On 19 April the brig from Gibraltar gave Nelson the first definite news that Villeneuve had passed ^{through} the Straits. Nelson at this time estimated that Villeneuve's destination was the English Channel and resolved to proceed north from Gibraltar. However, upon arriving there he received information which lead him to believe that Villeneuve was headed for the West Indies, he therefore put to sea and to quote from his diary "If I hear nothing I shall go to the West Indies." On 10 May receiving word from a British ^{merchantman} ~~neutral~~ that Villeneuve had not been sighted to the northward Nelson definitely decided to head for the West Indies and sent a fast sloop to the Barbadoes to announce that he was coming. It is to be noted that Nelson's station was in the Mediterranean opposed to the French squadron based on Toulon. It was constantly in his mind that Napoleon intended to threaten Egypt and/or Italy. Nelson did not intend to leave the Mediterranean until Villeneuve was accounted for and the Mediterranean was safe for British shipping. As soon as sufficient information was received to indicate that the enemy had vacated that area Nelson decided to go after him forewith whether it was the Channel or West Indies. His objective was the enemy Fleet, to contain it if it remained

in port, to destroy it if it ^{put} took to sea. About this time the French Squadron, under Missiessy, which had sailed from Rochefort in January for the West Indies and was still operating under Napoleon's first plan, subsequently changed twice, appeared about 500 miles West of Ferrol. Calder figured that if Missiessy was returning to Rochefort he would make his land fall at Cape Ortigal and moved his squadron to intercept him. Missiessy however stood straight in and arrived at Rochefort unopposed. - We will now see what Villeneuve was doing

Slide 9. Taking of Diamond Rock.

On 14 May Villeneuve and Gravina arrived at Martinique. Nothing was done for two weeks. Villeneuve was finally persuaded to proceed against Diamond Rock which fell after a gallant resistance against heavy odds. This rock had been occupied early in 1804 by 120 officers and men from the British ship Centaur. Five guns had been mounted and it had been formally commissioned as His Majesty's Sloop-of-war Diamond Rock. From the outset, the rock had been a thorn in the side of the French because Lieutenant Maurier, who commanded it, continually harassed French trade both by boat expeditions and by fire from mounted guns. When Napoleon learned that Missiessy had left the West Indies without taking steps to capture the Rock he said, "I choked with indignation when I read he had not taken the Diamond. That rock will be an eternal monument of shame to ^{his} ~~this~~ expedition".

Slide 10 West Indies May - July

On 3 June Villeneuve, at Martinique, received orders from Napoleon, transmitted by two French ships of the line which had slipped out of Rochefort, to wait in the West Indies 35 days longer. The idea being that Ganteaume, at Brest, was to break out and join Villeneuve. If Ganteaume did not show up within 35 days Villeneuve was to proceed to Ferrol join the French and Spanish squadrons, under Gourdon and Grandallana, at that place, and then this combination to join Ganteaume off Brest. Villeneuve thought that such a delay was unwarranted due to lack of stores and decided to disregard Napoleon's orders. On 5 June he started for France with his entire force of 20 ships of the line, standing to the westward of Dominica and Guadeloupe and passing out of the Caribbean near Antigua. The day before Villeneuve sailed, for home, from Martinique, Nelson arrived in Barbadoes where he was joined by Cochrane with two ships bringing his total force to twelve as opposed to Villeneuve's 20. Nelson upon arrival in the Barbadoes received information from the British garrison at St. Lucia that the Allied Fleet had passed there going south during the night of 28 May. Nelson dared not ignore the possibility that the French were attacking Trinidad, an important British base, so he sailed for that place at once. Off Tobago he received further false information to the effect that the French had been sighted off

the Island of St. Vincent shortly before headed south, so there was nothing for him to do but keep on to Trinidad. In the words of Nelson "This false information caused him to make a move which was a source of regret and disappointment to him to the day of his death". On 7 June Nelson arrived at Trinidad and finding no enemy there he started north immediately. On 9 June, for the first time, he got accurate information that Villeneuve has passed Dominica on the 6th headed North. On 12 June Nelson arrived off Antigua and received information which lead him to believe that Villeneuve had left the West Indies so he detached one of his brigs with despatches to inform the Admiralty that Villeneuve was on his way back and that he, Nelson, was going to pursue. On 13 June Nelson received a report from the British man-of-war Netley. This vessel had been escorting a large British convoy which had assembled off Antigua for the homeward voyage. Villeneuve while off Antigua had encountered this convoy - The Netley on sighting Villeneuve's Fleet ordered the merchantmen to scatter and Netley endeavored to trail the French. Upon being driven off by French frigates the Netley immediately sailed to inform Nelson. Villeneuve captured some of the British merchantmen and from them obtained information of Nelson's arrival in Barbadoes, this information evidently caused Villeneuve to head for Europe on 10 June. It is interesting to note that Nelson had not sighted Villeneuve in the West Indies, and that his momentuous decision that Villeneuve was heading for Europe was based on two mea-

ger reports which placed the French Fleet off Antigua. It is highly probable that Nelson in making this decision had carefully weighed the psychologic factors of his enemy, that is the Allied squadron did not desire to give battle. Note: that Nelson, immediately upon estimating that Villeneuve had sailed for Europe and making his decision to follow, despatches one of his fastest ships to advise the British Admiralty of the situation and his intentions. Also note that the captain of a British man-o-war, the Netley on escort duty, upon encountering the enemy Fleet realizes that he cannot protect his convoy against such odds so he orders them to scatter and he immediately selects a new and proper ^{task} ~~mission~~, to obtain vital information for the Commander of the British Force operating in that area. Thus we see Nelson leaving the West Indies, one week behind of and still in pursuit of Villeneuve.

Slide 1: Admiral Cochrane

Nelson left Cochrane behind with one ship, the Northumberland, to look out for the West Indies. Needless to say Cochrane was alarmed as he had no definite information that the enemy had left that area. It was not until about 14 July that he received a report that Villeneuve's Fleet had been sighted steering a course which indicated they were headed for the Bay of Biscay. On the same date two ships of the line joined Cochrane having been sent out, to reinforce Nelson, from Admiral Collingwood's force, which was stationed off

Cadiz. Cochrane believing that Nelson was headed for Gibraltar and that Villeneuve might be headed for the Bay of Biscay to fall on the British Squadron off Brest immediately directed the two ships which had just arrived to return to Europe with a message to the Admiralty. "Every line of battleship that can be spared from ^{here} ~~hence~~ may be wanted in the Channel." Cochrane's decision to send two of his three ships to the more probable theatre of future operations while there still existed a possibility that part of the enemy Fleet might still be in the West Indies is an indication of this officer's fortitude, and appreciation of the ultimate objective.

Slide 12 July 7-22, 1805

In the meantime the brig, which had been pushing on to England with Nelson's dispatches sighted Villeneuve's Squadron on 19 June some 900 miles north of Antigua. After trailing to ascertain course and composition the brig pushed on, arrived Plymouth 7 July and on 9 July Nelson's despatches and the more recent information obtained were delivered to Lord Barham, First Lord of the Admiralty.

Slide 13 Barham

The news that Villeneuve was proceeding towards the European coast called for immediate action. It is stated that within one half hour after the receipt of the above information Lord Barham had made his decision which was in brief

Calder's Squadron to be reinforced by the Rochefort Squadron. Then the Squadrons under Calder and Cornwallis to search to south and west. The Cadiz area to be left to Nelson.

Slide 12 July 7-22, 1805

Within three hours the following order was issued to Cornwallis - "You are hereby required and directed to strengthen the squadron off Ferrol under the orders of Vice Admiral Calder with the ships off Rochefort and to instruct the Vice Admiral to proceed without loss of time off Cape Finisterre, from whence he is to cruise for the enemy to the distance of 30 or 40 leagues to the westward for the space of six or eight days. You are further directed to stretch with the fleet under your immediate command about the same distance to the southwestward and for the same space of time, at the expiration of which the several squadrons are to return to their respective stations."

In accordance with the above bold plan Stirling raised the Rochefort blockade and joined Calder on 15 July. (The French Admiral Allemand who had relieved Missiessy in command of Rocheforte Force observing the British leave stood out under orders to join Villeneuve but did not make contact.)

^{Calder's}
~~This~~ force then commenced its sweep to the westward. Cornwallis began his sweep to the south and west. These changes in the British dispositions left Brest uncovered except for six

ships which Cornwallis had left behind. The English Channel was thus open, but Ganteaume at Brest refused to leave port although he had orders from Napoleon to attempt an entrance of the channel the moment he saw a chance. He did not believe Napoleon's plans for employment of the Fleet were feasible and so stated.

Calder, after he was joined by Stirling, had 15 ships of the line and 4 frigates. He stood down to a point off Cape Finisterre and here received word that indicated to him that Villemeuve must be near at hand. On 22 July, his advance ships made out and reported Villeneuve's Fleet to the Southwest, the precise spot which Lord Barham had forecast.

Slide 14. Calder engaging the French.

In the engagement which followed, Calder captured two ships and inflicted on Villeneuve three times the damage he himself sustained, but he permitted Villemeuve to escape. It is probable, in view of the inefficiency of the French-Spanish Fleet, that had Calder pressed the action a sweeping victory for the British would have resulted. When the news of Villeneuve's escape reached England popular outcry to which Lord Barham and the Admiralty subscribed demanded the court martial of Calder for "Not having done his utmost to renew the said engagement and to take and destroy every ship of the enemy." The personal courage of Calder has never been questioned and it appears that his failure to pursue Villeneuve was due to an improper conception of his mission. That is he considered the prevention of the junction of the Ferrol Force with Villeneuve was paramount

and therefore permitted the action to be broken off in order to cover Ferrol. Lord Barham's plan had considered this contingency but unfortunately Calder did not know of the plan upon which his orders were based. Calder's conception was that in handling his force he should always consider defending England against invasion. He evidently did not realize that Britain was now accustomed to Nelson's methods of attack and that ^{his immediate objective was} ~~the mission of the British Navy~~ was the destruction of the enemy fleet.

Slide 15 July 22 August 15

Villeneuve, with some of his ships badly battered, after escaping to the southward gave up the idea of making Ferrol and resolved to head for Cadiz but the wind and sea increased so he decided to run for Vigo, arriving there unmolested 28 July. He sent word to Gourdon, at Coruna, to join him but the latter replied it was impossible due to the presence of the British Squadron, under Calder off that port. Villeneuve therefore decided to risk another action and on 31 July put to sea to join Gourdon at Ferrol. Favored by a strong southwest wind he stood to the northward close in ashore and arrived at Coruna without firing a shot. The strong S.W. wind had blown Calder well to leeward of Ferrol. We will now return to Nelson who was headed for Cape St. Vincent believing that Villeneuve, on leaving the West Indies, was bound for Cadiz. On 17 July Nelson arrived off the Cape but learning nothing of Villeneuve

proceeded inside the Straits, to Tetuan to replenish his stores. It was his intention to take station off the Straits and await developments, but on 22 July he received word through a Lisbon newspaper which convinced him that Villeneuve was making for the Bay of Biscay. He immediately got his squadron underway and headed North. He was forced to stand well to the Westward on account of the prevailing winds and receiving no information enroute he joined Cornwallis off Brest on 15 August.

In the meantime Calder and Stirling, in accordance with tradition, had fallen back on the Channel. The old maxim was "When in doubt, make sure of the mouth of the Channel". When Nelson joined up off Brest he was ordered home, in his flagship the Victory for a rest. He had not set foot on shore nor been outside the Victory for two years. On 14 August Allemand, who had slipped out of Rochefort with his five ships on 15 July and since that time had been wandering around from one assigned rendezvous to another without making contact with any other French Force and fortunately for him just missing superior British Forces on several occasions decided to run to Vigo where he arrived without mishap.

Slide 16. August 12-30

On 13 August Villeheuve and Gourdon sailed from Coruna (Ferrol) in accordance with Napoleon's scheme which called for these forces joining Ganteaume off Brest. History relates

that Villeneuve left port in a very depressed state of mind and that he doubted his ability to join up with the Brest force. He expected to encounter Calder off Coruna and as usual to have felt that Nelson was also just over the horizon. He started to the northward but on sighting a strange sail he went about and stood to the westward keeping Coruna under his lee. The sail he sighted was the British frigate Iris which trailed him until driven off. Shortly afterwards the Iris fell in with another frigate the Naiad which had also contacted the French Fleet. The two British captains held a conference and decided that the French movement indicated Cadiz as their destination, therefore the Naiad proceeded to inform Cornwallis, off Brest and the Iris to warn Collingwood, off Cadiz. On 20 August the Naiad fell in with Calder's squadron which was enroute from Brest to Ferrol, in accordance with Cornwallis' orders, and informed the Admiral that Villeneuve had left Coruna and was at sea. On 21 August Calder contacted another British vessel and obtained information that the force of 5 French ships under Allemand had put into Vigo. Calder now estimated that Villeneuve was proceeding south to pick up Allemand so he proceeded south sending some fast frigates ahead to look into Vigo. From one of these he learned that Allemand had left Vigo about 18 August and was heading north. Calder now on 22 August had information that Allemand with 5 ships was, 4 days previously, at sea and headed north. He also had information that Villeneuve

was at sea and when last seen was headed Westward. His previous decision had been to chase Villeneuve and the question now arose as to whether the latter intended going North or South. He analyzed his major information reports, decided that in spite of Allemand proceeding North, Villeneuve was making for Cadiz and boldly decided to head for that place, arriving about 30 August. Meanwhile Villeneuve had proceeded Westward until 15 August then changed course to the Southward and arrived Cadiz 20 August. He was sighted about 14 August by the British Frigate Dragon. The Captain of this vessel played a trick which may have influenced Villeneuve's future movements. He boarded a merchantman that was in the vicinity and advised the master that the British Frigate was part of a fleet of 25^{of the} line and to increase the impression, signals were made to an imaginary Admiral in the distance. Shortly afterwards a French Frigate boarded the Dane. This false information given the French coupled with the stormy northeasterly weather may have considerably influenced Villeneuve's decision to turn about under cover of darkness that night and head for Cardiz.

Slide 17. Blackwood.

The Iris, standing south with information for Collingwood that Villeneuve was out, fell in, on 16 August, with the Euryalus commanded by Blackwood the most famous cruiser captain of this campaign. Blackwood realizing that information of Villeneuve's movements was vital and that a single ship could not properly

do the job decided to accept the responsibility of modifying the Iris' orders. He therefore sent what information he had to Lisbon and then proceed with the Euryalus and Iris to a position off Cape St. Vincent. Arriving there 18 August he learned from a Danish ship that there was a large fleet to the westward, working towards him. He then sent the Iris to carry the news to Cornwallis and England while he contacted and trailed Villeneuve.

Slide 16 August 12-30

He was repeatedly driven off but refused to be licked until he obtained definite information. This information was not obtained in time to warn Collingwood who as we remember was off Cadiz. Fortunately for Collingwood, Villeneuve was apparently **only** interested in making Cadiz and had no intention of attacking the British squadron. Collingwood with his 8 ships could not afford to engage the combined French and Spanish force of about 34 so he kept clear until Villeneuve entered Cadiz. Then Collingwood resumed his station off that port, sent word to the British consul at Lisbon that Villeneuve and Gravina were in Cadiz and also notified the British ships in Cartagena. Bickerton immediately sent his ships to join Collingwood. When Calder arrived off Cadiz on 30 August the British Squadron in that area consisted of about 29 as opposed to the 27 French and 7 Spanish in Cadiz and 6 Spanish in Cartagena.

We will return for a moment to Blackwood in the Euryalus, who had contacted Villeneuve off Cape St. Vincent and was trailing. When he had obtained sufficient information and found that it was impossible for him to get through to warn Collingwood he immediately set all sail for England arriving off the Needles 1 September. He left his ship outside the Solent, went ashore, hired a chaise and four, and galloped for London to transmit his information to the Admiralty. Enroute he acquainted Nelson, who was home on leave, with the situation.

~~Slide 19. Depend upon it, Blackwood.~~

Shortly afterwards Nelson was informed by the Admiralty, that he was to resume his command, that is take command of the force assigned to handle Villeneuve.

~~Slide 10. Nelson leaving Portsmouth.~~

After consultation with the Admiralty and when his flagship, the Victory, was ready for sea Nelson sailed from Portsmouth on 14 September accompanied by Blackwood's frigate the Euryalus. Off Plymouth he picked up two more ships. Due to head winds and foul weather Nelson with his 4 ships did not join up with the main body of 29 ships, about 15 miles off Cadiz, until the afternoon of 28 September. Nelson had taken the precaution to send word ahead to Collingwood to forego a salute in his honor as he wished to keep Villeneuve in ignorance of his arrival and of the reinforcements he brought.

Slide 19 Nelson explaining his plan

The next morning, 29 September, on his 47th birthday, Nelson received his flag officers and captains and laid before them and explained his battle plan, which will be briefly discussed later.

Before Nelson left England he had been intrusted with the unpleasant mission of communicating to Admiral Calder the dissatisfaction of the Government with his conduct of the engagement of 22 July. Calder immediately asked for an inquiry, as he had been expected to do, and therefore Nelson was compelled to send him home. Although Nelson had continually preached the doctrine that numbers only can annihilate and although he felt the need of every ship to execute his ^{task} mission of destroying the Allied Fleet his respect for the feelings of a gallant seaman was so great that he sent Calder home in his flagship, the Prince of Wales, a 90 gun ship. In detaching one of his strongest units Nelson took a course which was indefensible from a military stand point. However, his kindness of heart is indicated in his message to the Admiralty quote "I trust that I shall be considered to have done right as a man, and to a brother officer in affliction."

To return to Villeneuve it will be remembered that in August a British Expeditionary Force of 6,000 troops under General Craig had landed in Malta to cooperate with Russia in operations against Napoleon's forces in Italy.

Napoleon, at the time, scoffed at this expedition stating; "These plans of continental operations based on detachments of a few thousand men are the plans of pygmies".

But in September Napoleon, knowing that Villeneuve had reached Cadiz which removed the possibility of his joining up with the French squadron in Brest definitely gave up the idea of invading England, and his thoughts turned to the Mediterranean. On 14 September Napoleon directed Villeneuve to sail from Cadiz at first favorable opportunity, to make for Cartagena and pick up the Spanish squadron based there then proceed to Naples and disembark his troops. After which he was to remain off Naples to intercept the British Expeditionary Force from Malta and to damage the enemy in any other way possible. At the same time Napoleon decided that Villeneuve should be superseded by a more vigorous officer and ordered Admiral Rosily to proceed to Cadiz and take over command, but Villeneuve was not aware of this.

It is interesting to note Villeneuve's reaction upon receipt of Napoleon's orders to put to sea. Although, due to the British dispositions off Cadiz, he could not see anything beyond the in-shore squadron of cruisers, it is evident that he felt that Nelson was in the vicinity and his dread of Nelson was uppermost in his mind. Villeneuve called a council of war to which he submitted the Emperor's orders. A storm of protest immediately arose in which the French and Spanish exchanged recriminations.

The vote of the council resulted in a decision to remain at anchor. However, on 18 October Villeneuve received word that Admiral Rosily had arrived in Madrid and evidently surmising the reason therefore, Villeneuve without consulting anyone made the general signal for the Allied Fleet to prepare to weigh and at 0600 19 October 1805 the combined French and Spanish Fleet commenced to leave Cadiz.

Slide 22 Situation October 1-13 1-13

When Nelson took over command of the Fleet off Cadiz his mission was the protection of trade in the Mediterranean and ~~which~~ included cooperation with the British Expeditionary Force in their attack on Italy. The British Prime Minister, Pitt, considered that containing the enemy Fleet would suffice. Nelson felt that his mission could best be fulfilled by the destruction of the Cadiz Fleet and he bent his efforts towards enticing Villeneuve out in order to destroy him. In addition to this primary task Nelson deduced that the 6 Spanish ships in Cartagena must be contained to prevent their interference with British commerce in the Mediterranean and also the possibility of their reinforcing the Cadiz Fleet. His first step was a redistribution of forces. Rear Admiral Louis who was close in to the entrance with 5 of the line was recalled to the battle line and his place taken by Blackwood with his frigates. Nelson did not approve of a close blockade as he wanted Villeneuve to come out and furthermore an inshore position was particularly dan-

gerous for a squadron of heavy ships in a westerly squall. On 2 October, Louis, with 5 ships was ordered to the Straits to watch Cartagena and escort a convoy. On 13 October the British Fleet was reinforced by 5 of the line from England.

Slide 21 October 14-19

Nelson's dispositions for watching Cadiz were as follows: battle line about 50 miles off shore outside the range of visibility of shore signal stations, ^{To prevent from obtaining} ~~to deny~~ the enemy information of strength and position of British Fleet and to prevent ~~his~~ ^{the} heavy ships being driven through the straits or close to Cadiz in event of a westerly gale and to be in position to intercept the Brest Squadron. His cruisers (frigates) inshore, and midway between his battle line and cruisers a squadron of 74 gun ships. At this time of the year the prevailing winds, in good weather, were an off shore land breeze at night, and fresh westerly, on shore breeze in the morning. This made it probable that the French Fleet would leave port at night and stand through the straits with the morning breeze. For this reason Nelson arranged special night signals for use of his inshore observation squadron so that he would be informed promptly in case the enemy stood out at night and be able to head for the Straits and intercept him.

Slide 22 October 19, 0600 to October 20 noon

On 19 October 0600 the combined French and Spanish Fleet commenced to leave Cadiz. The movement was noted by the Sirius,

the British frigate closest inshore who immediately communicated with Blackwood in the Euryalus. Blackwood passed the word on to Captain Duff who was in command of the supporting squadron of the four 74 gun ships who in turn relayed it to Nelson. In passing it may be noted that Captain Duff, in the Mars, together with his two sons, ages 12 and 15 years, were killed in the battle of Trafalgar. Blackwood also sent a sloop to Nelson's flagship, the Victory, to confirm the news and also another to warn Admiral Louis, who was enroute to Cartagena escorting a convoy. As soon as Nelson, at 0930, received the first word that the enemy was coming out he immediately made signal for "General Chase Southeast" followed by "Prepare for Battle", and set his fleet in motion towards the Straits of Gibraltar. This was in accordance with his announced plans to cut the enemy off from the Mediterranean and in addition to permit Admiral Louis to join up. The latter, however, was unable to join until some days after the battle. Owing to the falling wind but twelve of the Allied ships got clear of Cadiz on the 19th. and these stood to the Northward, trailed by two of Blackwood's cruisers, the remaining British cruisers staying on their observation stations. The remainder of Villeneuve's force put to sea on the 20th and by the afternoon the combined fleet was standing to the Westward to gain an offing for entering the Straits.

Slide 23. Nelson in Cabin.

Silde 24 Nelson coming on deck.

On the morning of the 20th Nelson found himself off the entrance to the Straits with neither Admiral Louis' force or the enemy in sight. In order to provide against being forced into the Straits by the S.W. wind he changed to a northwesterly course. At 0700 he received word from one of Blackwood's cruisers that the enemy was to the Northward and in the afternoon Blackwood arrived with definite information of the enemy.

Slide 24 Oct. 20 Noon to Oct. 21 Noon

Throughout the night Nelson was kept informed, by signal lights and guns from the frigates and linking ships of the enemy movements. At daylight 21 October the two Fleets sighted each other. They were in nearly parallel columns, the British Fleet heading to the northward and the Allied Fleet about 11 miles to the eastward on a southerly course. The wind had dropped to a light westerly breeze which had much to do with the somewhat scattered and disordered formations of both fleets.

Nelson's battle plan was very briefly as follows -- Quote "Thinking it almost impossible to bring a fleet of forty sail of the line into line of battle in variable winds thick weather and the circumstances which must occur, without such a loss of time that the opportunity would probably be lost ~~of~~ bringing the enemy to battle in such a manner as to make the business decisive, I have made up my mind to place the fleet in two lines of sixteen ships each with an advanced squadron of eight of the fastest sailing two decked ships which will always make, if wanted, a line of twenty four sail, on which-ever line

the Commander in Chief may direct. The second in command will after my intentions are made known to him have the entire direction of his line to make the attack upon the enemy and to follow up the blow until they are captured or destroyed. I will probably make the second in command a signal to lead through about the twelfth ship from the enemy rear. My line will lead through about the center and the advanced squadron to cut two, three or four ships ahead of their center. The whole impression of the British Fleet must be to overpower that part of the enemy which includes their Commander in Chief, who will be about in the center. This plan will leave a part (van) of the enemy line untouched but it will be some time before they can perform a maneuver to attack any part of the British Fleet engaged or to succor their own ships. I look with confidence to a victory Before the van of the enemy could succor their rear and then the British Fleet would most of them be ready to receive the enemy van or to pursue them should they endeavor to make off. I will endeavor to take care that the movements of the second in command are as little interrupted as possible and will take care of the remainder of the enemy not engaged by the second in command. The second in command will, in all possible things, direct the movements of his line. Captains are to look to their particular line as their rallying points. But in case signals can neither be seen or perfectly understood no captain can do very wrong if he places his ship alongside that of an enemy". unquote.

This was a bold offensive plan which rightfully assumed British superiority in moral, gunnery and seamanship.

Nelson deduced that Villeneuve would form his Fleet for battle in a long extended column of about 46 ships. He further considered that under the prevailing conditions he could not personally maneuver his 40 ships in a column formation without sacrificing time and time to him was vital as he did not wish to give Villeneuve any chance to escape.

Slide 26 Noon Oct. 21, 1805

Therefore Nelson subdivided his Fleet into three parts and assigned appropriate tasks. Sixteen ships lead by Collingwood, in the Royal Sovereign, were to break through and engage about the twelve rear ships of the enemy. Sixteen ships lead by Nelson, in the Victory, were to break through about the center of the line and the 8 fast ships were to hit the enemy about four ships ahead of the center. By this means Nelson hoped to concentrate on and overpower the enemy rear before the enemy van could get into action, after which he intended to go after the enemy van. It was a bold plan fraught with danger in that should the enemy concentrate on the divided British columns the latter ^{might} ~~could~~ have been defeated in detail. Nelson would probably not have risked such tactics on an efficient adversary. In this case, however, he banked on the superior moral, seamanship and gunnery of the British, and on the initiative, judgment and decision of character of his Admirals and Captains. He also had rightfully estimated his enemies' strength and weakness factors and probable courses of

action. Success attended the aggressive British plan as demonstrated by the following brief summary of the Battle of Trafalgar.

At 0406, on 21 October, Nelson signalled the British Fleet, which was then in column headed to Northward, to "bear up". Nelson, in the Victory, at once changed course to head for the enemy. Collingwood, in the Royal Sovereign, did the same and the ships of the two divisions followed in the wakes of their leaders as best they could under the restrictions imposed by the light wind. Eleven ships followed Nelson and fourteen Collingwood. Thus the two columns steered East about a mile apart, Nelson heading North of the enemies' center. When Villeneuve, whose fleet was in an irregular column about eleven miles to the Eastward and headed South, saw ^{Nelson's} ~~their~~ movement he executed a ripple movement from the rear evidently with the idea of keeping Cadiz, which lay 20 miles to the North and East under his lee. This evolution was started at 0700, but due to the light wind, was not completed until about 1000. This move on the part of Villeneuve enabled Nelson to more fully fulfill the provisions of his battle plan than would have been the case if Villeneuve had held to his Southerly course. The British Fleet pushed on with all sails set. The reversal of course by the Allied Fleet in the light wind resulted in a long crescent shaped formation concave to the approaching British columns. The crescent was not intentional, but had its possibilities as they existed been utilized, would have afforded two advantages to the Allied Fleet. It would have permitted a con-

vergent fire to be directed against the approaching British columns and since the wings of the crescent were to the westward, the extreme van and rear of the Allied line could have supported the center. Except for the concentrated fire poured into the Victory and Royal Sovereign, leaders of British columns, at the time of initial contact, neither of the above advantages were utilized and Nelson stood in on a course approximately normal to the Allied battle line probably counting on creating confusion and figuring that neither the French nor Spanish would sense an advantage early enough to apply it. We may judge why Nelson was willing to approach in such a hazardous formation by harking back to his utterance in the Baltic some years before quote "Close with a Frenchman but out-maneuver a Russian". Nelson having disposed his fleet as he desired and having previously issued and explained his battle plan felt that no more orders were necessary. In fact he only made two more signals.

Slide 27 Hoisting the Famous Signal

Shortly before the Royal Sovereign came under fire of the French rear, Nelson, to use his own words "Amused the fleet with a signal" and hoisted "England expects that every man will do his duty." He followed this with a signal "close action."

At noon Collingwood, in the Royal Sovereign, came under fire and during the next thirty minutes was engaged with about

five allied ships, but in the melee some of the allied ships fired into each other, and by this time other British ships came into action.

At 1220 Nelson, in the Victory, came under fire and shortly afterwards she was fired on by about seven French ships but their aim was at the rigging and sails, as was the French custom, instead of the hull. About 1300 the Victory arrived at a position close to the stern of Villeneuve's flagship and raked him with a broadside of 50 guns, killing about 400 men. The Victory then went on and ranged alongside another French ship.

Slide 28 Nelson wounded.

In the battle that followed Nelson fell, picked off by a sharpshooter.

Slide 29 Death of Nelson.

He was carried below and died three hours later.

Slide 30 Victory breaking the line.

By about 1400 the majority of British ships had gotten into action which resulted in a series of individual melees with the British ships attacking eagerly but still staying in supporting distance of each other and concentrating on their section of the enemy line. The movements of Collingwood's and Nelson's squadrons had divided the enemy line into three parts. Collingwood had broken through the enemy formation, engaged and concentrated on the rear twelve ships.

Nelson had broken through between the van and center divisions, concentrating on the center causing Villeneuve to surrender and isolating the van. When the battle commenced the Allied van division made no attempt to engage but stood on and it was not until Villeneuve, just before hauling down his flag, made them a signal to come under fire that they came about. These ten ships then came about and stood south towards the battle area five passing on each side of the engaged battle lines, but they did not close and 5 were later captured off Cape Ortegal. Nelson's assumption, in his battle plan, that the enemy van would not come to Villeneuve's assistance in time to prevent the latter's defeat was 100 percent correct. Nelson's estimate of the poor moral of the Allied fleet was also correct for during the engagement the Spanish Admiral, Gravina, with eleven ships forsook the French line and made off to Cadiz. In regard to gunnery the French opened fire at long ranges, the point of aim being the masts and yards in order to destroy the maneuvering power of the enemy. As one Frenchman remarked, at long ranges our shots fell short in the water among the fishes and at short ranges the shots went high in the air among the seagulls. The British, on the other hand, conserved their ammunition for short ranges, point of aim the gun decks. If the shots were short they might do underwater damage; if over, damage to weather decks and rigging.

Slide 30. Battle of Trafalgar - Position of
Fleets at 4:30 P.M.

The battle raged at its fiercest from 1300 to 1500. By 1700 eighteen of the French ships had been taken and most of the fighting stopped. During the night a gale broke and blew violently from the West for two days. Four of the prizes were destroyed, four foundered at sea or were wrecked off the coast. In four others the crews were released during the storm and they recaptured their ships. Therefore only four were gotten into port by the British. However, on 24 October, one of the Spanish ships which had escaped was captured by the British and another Spanish and two French went ashore off Cadiz. The eleven remaining allied ships which had run from the battle for Cadiz were closely blockaded in that port by Collingwood. When Spain, in 1808, rose against Napoleon these eleven ships in Cadiz, which included 5 French, were lost to France. Thus, in the end, Villeneuve's Fleet was totally annihilated.

Slide 32. Victory towed into Gibraltar.

After the battle of Trafalgar Nelson's flagship, the Victory, was towed into Gibraltar and in December this vessel carried his body home.

In the words of Mahan, "The coincidence of his death with the moment of complete success has impressed upon that superb battle a stamp of finalty, an immortality of fame, which even its own grandeur could scarcely have marred". He needed and left no successor"