

The H.M.S. "Sydney" v The "Bismarck"

as related by 2nd Doctor HUBBIN after his repatriation. Taken from "VOLKISCHER BEOBSACHTER"

13th AUG. 1944.

The afternoon of 19th November found us 130 knots west of Shark Bay W.A. Towards 4 P.M. the not unfamiliar alarm siren was sounded. Every man automatically donned his life-belt and hurried up to his action station. Soon the noise of the ship indicated "Full Speed Ahead" At first "Starboard" was called, before smoke columns were sighted. Soon the Kommandant's report went through the ship — "It's a cruiser". We therefore stood before a far superior opponent. Every man knew it was to be or not to be. The Kommandant, a gaunt, freezing figure on the bridge gave out his orders with iron calm. His plan was clear from the first. He reached everything which in a quiet hour he had layed out in the event of such an occasion.

The opponent was sighted and came into a close distance, and lay parallel on the starboard. We laid under concealment (still disguised as a merchant man). When the opponent asked for the secret signal the Kommandant was obliged to confess to him his guard colours. This reply was a surprise to the Australian Cruiser

Simultaneously the German War Flag was hoisted, changing a harmless appearing merchant ship into a warship, and with lightning speed our concealed artillery opened up. The first salvo obtained direct hits on the artillery control tower, the bridge also received repeated hits. Both front turrets were put out of use. Likewise the "Sydney's" aircraft was blown up. The opponent sent out a volley but lay too far off and it went overhead. Though well aimed fire our light board ~~guns~~ weapons it was impossible for the "Sydney" to use its torpedoes. We were able to score a direct hit with a torpedo in the front end of the vessel, which tore a great hole in its side, thus reducing its speed. As a result of our fire the "Sydney" could only retaliate with single shots from its third and fourth turrets. It then scored three direct hits on us, unfortunately putting out of use the fire fighting apparatus. Soon an extensive fire spread through the engine room and up through the deck housing. During the course of battle the "Sydney" tried to ram us from behind but it was frustrated by accurate artillery fire

She then turned to port and fired a fan of four torpedoes at us. All the missiles passed close to our ship.

The battle ended at the beginning of twilight. The Sydney disappeared over the horizon towards 6 P.M. burning amidships with occasional explosions. Towards 11 P.M. a final flash was observed. It is presumed that this fracture indicates the foundering of the "Famous Sydney"; famed through its acts of daring and bravery in the Mediterranean.

Statements of the Bosnian Artillery officer, show that over 400 shots were fired at the "Sydney" scoring from 180 to 200 hits, apart from the torpedo damage. It is known that these hits were below the waterline as well as above. Our Artillery men fired with speed never before attained and with great enthusiasm. In consequence of ~~one~~ hits in our engine room, and spreading fires the ship became ~~an~~ unmanoeuvrable.

Shortly after midnight the Kommandant

ordered the abandonment of the ship, the Captain and the Artillery men leaving in the last boat, after having laid explosive charges in the ship. Ten minutes later with a powerful explosion, a giant pillar of fire, the ship was torn asunder. Our proud Commodore sank in a few minutes, stern first into the deep Indian Ocean. Eighty Comrades were taken from us by the Ship.

The remainder of the crew after all conceivable adventures during 6-8 days in a lifeboat were obliged to endure captivity in Australia.

For the Editor

NB = This is a "German" report, naturally prejudiced but never the less an attempt to describe one of the actions of the Sydney. It may not be true and on the other hand it may be. Take it for what it is worth. I have the original cutting should anyone wish to inspect it.

