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San Cirilo



The 12,000 ton motor vessel **San Cirilo** Captain J.Thomson of The Eagle Oil Company with a cargo of refined oil from Abadan, was routed to Colombo from where she encountered the enemy both at sea and in the harbour, Colombo was no health resort, and the tropical Indian Ocean was no pleasure cruise for shipping at this time of war, she encountered the enemy both at sea and in the harbour.

On the 19 May orders to proceed to Melbourne and Hobart Australia were received. Two days out in position 380 miles south of Ceylon **San Cirilo** was hit by a torpedo fired, at short range and was hit on the starboard side at the pump-room enveloping the ship in a column of sea-water and benzine, the submarine satisfied she was sinking sheered off and was not seen. The inflammable cargo did not ignite, the ship was stopped, damage assessed and Captain Thomson proceeded underway and headed back for Colombo. The submarine now identified Japanese surfaced on the starboard quarter, the crew of the four-inch gun crew were given the bearing, the escaping petrol and gas covering a wide area of sea made it dangerous to open fire. A Catalina flying boat appeared in the afternoon and three navy destroyers escorted **San Cirilo** back to Colombo.

Easter Sunday 5 April shortly after dawn the shipping and docks of Colombo were attacked by seventy-five Japanese bombers operating from carriers in the Bay Of Bengal. British fighter pilots, A.A Gunners and every available warship and merchant navy ship opened fire. Easter Day became an inferno of bursting bombs and high explosive shells the Japanese had attempted to stage another Pearl Harbour a third of their force was shot down in flames. This was the first and last time they ever came over in force to raid Ceylon.