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## Simnia

The Anglo Saxon Tanker **Simnia** master Captain J.R. Anderson realised that the suspicious vessel jamming his radio but not visible as it was below the horizon and steaming fast on a converging course was a German Battleship the 'Gneisenau', the first warning came when the seascape was illuminated by gunfire. When the German hove in sight, and **Simnia** with no defensive means at his disposal was doomed, four direct hits on the tanker killed four crew members, and seriously wounded the messroom boy, also injuring the Chief Engineer. Another direct hit damaged the steering gear. Captain Anderson decided to stop engines and made the appropriate signal. Fuel to the main engine was shut off by the valve on the boat deck, and instructing engineers and firemen to leave their posts below, the three remaining lifeboats and rafts were launched. So severe were the injuries to the messroom boy that he could not be moved, further attention was given to him by the officers. Almost with his last breath the young victim begged to be left, he was concerned lest the lives of others left aboard, should be sacrificed by delay in leaving the ship.

Several more HE shells burst near the stricken tanker, as the boats were clearing, one remained close as Captain Anderson and a few others remained on board. The battleship ceased fire, hove to, and ordered the lifeboats alongside. The Captain was taken aboard the Raider and greeted by the German officers who cheerfully remarked "Have no worry Captain. For you the war is over. England 'Kaput' in three months." The Captain replied "That's what you think. You Germans will get it in the neck again for starting this war, like you did for starting the last one." The prisoners were ordered below,, over a hundred rounds were fired into the tanker and all knew **Simnia** had sunk when firing ceased.

On the following day the Germans claimed to have sunk fourteen Allied Merchant ships, it is certain that the losses were considerable. At each encounter prisoners were taken below. In the early hours of the first Sunday, well over a hundred rounds were fired from the main armament and no captives were taken, the inference being that the merchant ship being attacked had offered a gallant but futile resistance, and in consequence had been destroyed with the loss of all hands.

Bleak indeed was the month of March for British prestige when the 'Gneisenau' and her sistership 'Scharnhorst' were rampaging on the high seas, two German tankers one the 'Altmark', from which British merchant seamen had been previously rescued by the Royal Navy in Joessing Fjord, were used to refuel the raiders. Transfer of prisoners was made as supplies were running low on the raiders, Captain Anderson, Captain Shotton and six other Master Mariners of ships that had been sunk, were kept aboard the Battleships which proceeded to Brest, arrogantly flying pennants for the number of Allied ships claimed to have been sunk or captured. The experiences of these Merchant Navy Master Mariners can only be explained, after being landed were housed in filthy stables, taken to Germany in cattle trucks and interned in the infamous Marlag and Milag prison camp at Westertimke.

Financial allotments were made to dependents, and were continued by the Anglo-Saxon and Eagle Oil companies, pending the payments of the War Detention Allowance from the Ministry of Pensions, also every effort was

made to ameliorate the anxiety and distress of relatives, in such cases where the Companies sea-going staff members were concerned. One of the very few Shipping Companies to follow this practice.

*Singapore, Dutch East Indies, (now Indonesia.)*

Late in 1941 the war assumed world wide proportions, Japan became a belligerent on 7 December 1941 by the savage attack on the United States Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor Honolulu. December 41 and 1942 saw the Japanese pour over South-Eastern Asia and the Islands of the Pacific. In a spectacular manner they swept through Hong Kong, the Philipines, British North Borneo and Malaya.