

## **Sink the Bismarck (1960)**

(Kenneth More and Dana Wynter, et al)

The story of the Bismarck and Prinz Eugen, two strong Battleships of the German Kriegsmarine/Nazi fleet against the Royal Navy in WW2; the former mentioned was the largest battleship of the proud German fleet with superior armour and speed.

Watch the official trailer here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5fTQ9Hjluc>

She was located by Spitfire reconnaissance plane in Scandinavia; where the Royal Navy sent her ships to intercept, concerned the Bismarck would run amok in open waters of the North Atlantic. (Operation Rheinübung was her task of destroying Merchant Ships).

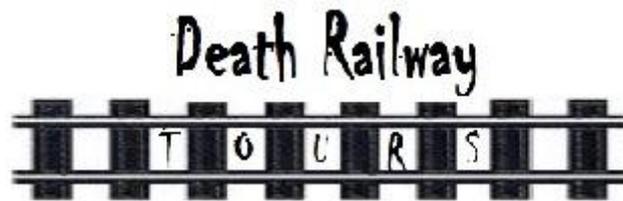
Royal Navy HQ (depicted well in the film with Kenneth More and beautiful Dana Wynter) make the critical and tactical decisions that are then relayed to the ships in the straits. Bismarck is lost in the fog by subsequent aerial recon where UK HQ have to make an educated guess what channel she will depart via. They send British ships to cover the four possibilities. She was located in the Denmark Strait by HMS Suffolk. HMS Hood and the Prince of Wales locate the Bismarck where they engage in the Battle of the Denmark Strait. Hood is destroyed with 1,419 men<sup>1</sup> (only 3 survivors); and then Bismarck and the Prince of Wales go toe to toe the latter receiving seven direct hits (four from the Bismarck and three from Eugen).



Bismarck in 1940.

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<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia



An interesting link between the Battle of the Denmark Strait and the Death Railway is that the Prince of Wales was later sent by Churchill to Singapore to bolster the 'Impregnable Fortress' where the Prince was subsequently sunk off Kuantan with her sister ship (also in the hunt for the Bismarck) HMS Repulse by the Nippon Fleet. Many hands from the Prince of Wales subsequently became prisoners of war – we visit one of the lads from the Prince of Wales in Chungkai War Cemetery – he died of Polyavitaminosis and malaria.

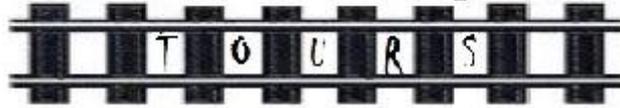
The film is quite dated in terms of its battle scenes and action but it seems to flow in a semi-documentary type way with historical links to actual events. Sink the Bismarck is an old classic with tensions expressed by all Ship Captains and players involved; including those commanders and officers back at Royal Navy HQ – the use of miniatures is obvious when the movie battle scenes take place and by today's standards are a little bit 'Thunderbirds'. Still a good flick for its time.

The Bismarck was located in 1989 by Robert Ballard. Whilst a tactical win for the Germans; the Bismarck was damaged and sought dry dock – reducing her operational capability – a win for the Royal Navy. She was sunk three days later after the action with HMS Hood and the Prince of Wales. RIP to all sailors from all those ships including the ones who later would become prisoners of the Japanese.

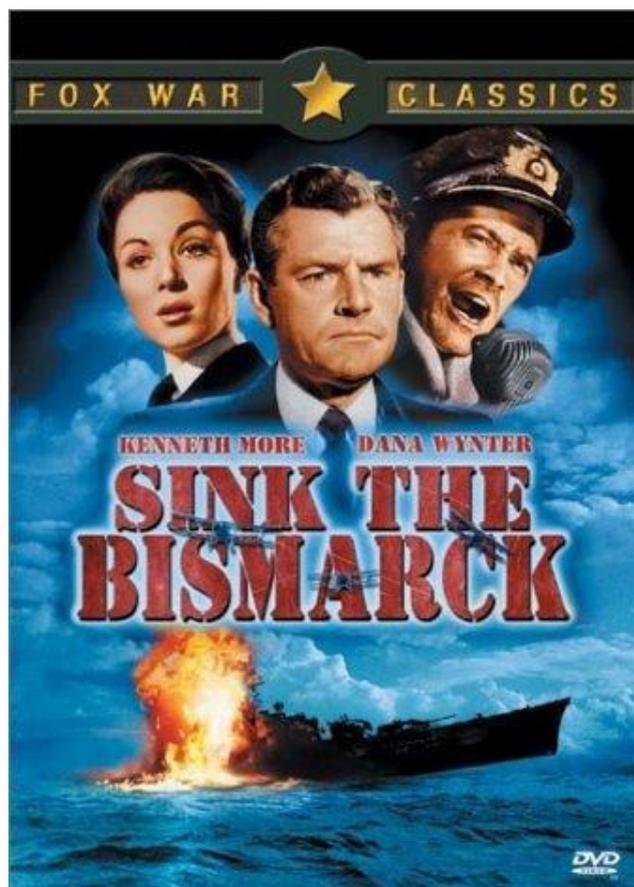
A few tid bits on the film:

- Esmond Knight, who plays the captain of the HMS Prince of Wales, actually served as an officer on board her and was injured during the battle.
- The opening shows actual newsreel footage of the Bismarck when it was launched in Hamburg, Germany, in 1939.
- Dana Wynter, the actress who plays Officer Anne Davis, was actually born in Berlin as Dagmar Winter.
- Bismarck's anti-aircraft guns never managed to shoot down a single British plane (the film depicts the battleship shooting down several), though it did score some hits.
- The characterization of Admiral Gunther Lütjens in this movie is wildly inaccurate. He is shown as a zealot, a fanatic, denying reality until the end. In fact, Lütjens was a thoughtful, even morose figure - some survivors claimed that his tendency for fatalism damaged their morale. Absurdly, on screen the Admiral tells his men to "remember you are Nazis!" Lütjens was not a Nazi (very much the opposite, to the extent that he famously refused to perform the Nazi salute for Hitler before the Bismarck set sail), nor were the vast majority of his officers and crew.

# Death Railway



| Career<br>(Nazi Germany) |    |
|--------------------------|---|
| Namesake:                | Otto von Bismarck   |
| Builder:                 | Blohm & Voss, Hamburg   |
| Laid down:               | 1 July 1936   |
| Launched:                | 14 February 1939  |
| Commissioned:            | 24 August 1940  |
| Honors and awards:       | 3 times mentioned in the <i>Wehrmachtbericht</i>  |
| Fate:                    | Scuttled following incapacitating battle damage, 27 May 1941 in the North Atlantic<br> <a href="#">48°10'N 16°12'W</a> |



The movie flyer.

References:

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0054310/> and Wikipedia