

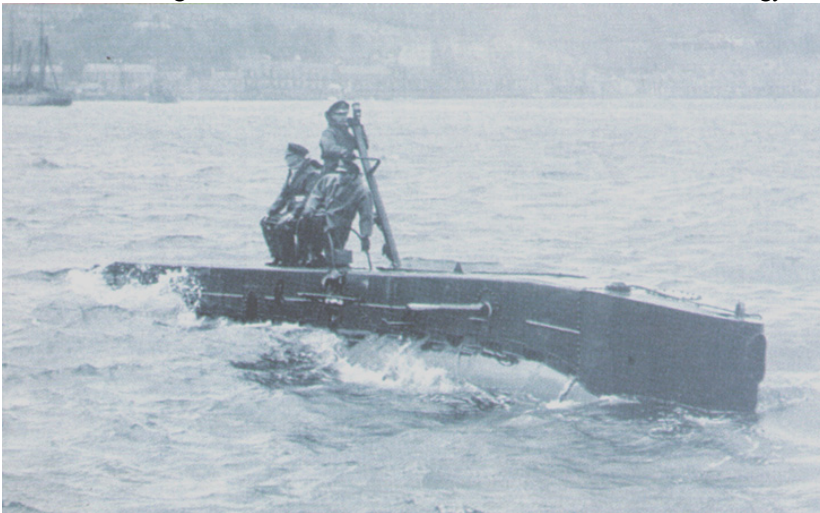
Bizarre, Fascinating, and Wacky World War I & II Secrets. World War Two's David and Goliath

The Old Testament story of David and Goliath is one of the best known and loved events in the Bible. Goliath was a giant Philistine champion who stood 9ft 9in tall. He wore a suit of armor weighing 200 pounds, plus metal leggings, and a metal helmet. He carried an iron spear, and the spear point alone weighed 25 pounds. David was a young shepherd lad, armed only with a sling and 5 stones. However, it took only one stone to kill the Giant. (I Samuel Chapter 17.)

Now, the pride of the Kriegsmarine (German Navy,) and Adolf Hitler himself is the Goliath of the sea. It is the biggest and most powerful battleship in the world. It is the "Tirpitz," which is 10 stories high, 828 feet long and 117 feet wide. Yet it can reach a maximum speed of 30.8 knots (36 mph,) which is very fast for a warship that huge. The armament is also very impressive: 8 each 15 inch guns, 12 5 inch guns, 16 4 inch antiaircraft guns, 16 37mm guns, 64 20mm machine guns, and 8 torpedo tubes. Also, 8 seaplanes, launched by catapult. The crew of the Tirpitz consisted of 60 officers, 80 warrant officers, 500 petty officers, 1,700 seamen. It is indeed a most impressive and beautiful battleship. It had a mate, the "Bismarck," which was sunk by British warships.

Now, later in the war, the Japanese Navy builds two battleships that are even larger, the Musashi and Yamato. They are armed with the largest guns ever mounted on a warship, 18.1 inch. Right now the Tirpitz is the scourge of the British Navy. It was sent to occupy Norway in January of 1942. There it is, an overwhelming menace to allied shipping. Just its presence there makes it impossible for British battleships and aircraft carriers needed in the Pacific to go there. The Tirpitz hides in one of the Norwegian fjords. (A fjord is a long, narrow arm of the sea, between two high, rocky cliffs. We would call it a bay.) Most of the fjords in this region are very desolate places. Ice and snow buries most of the land there,

but small green valleys are close to the water's edge. For 10 weeks the sun does not set, and for 10 weeks it does not rise. After the Tirpitz goes out on a raid, it always returns to the base through Altafjord. This is always an ice-free finger of the sea



about 29 miles long. At the end of this fjord is a much smaller body of water, called Kaafjord. This is the well hidden and well protected lair of the battleship Tirpitz. The warship backs in the dock and anchors there. As this region is first approached, the sea holds an intense mine field.

Next, huge anti-submarine nets fence off the sea entrance. When a German vessel needs entrance, a large gate is opened. Also, gun crew batteries on the shore keep 24 hour watch. Patrol boats with special radar and sonar devices patrol the harbor and German occupation troops constantly patrol the entire shore line. German fighter planes from a nearby base control the air space overhead. As soon as the Tirpitz drops anchor, 3 anti-torpedo nets, made of 9 inch steel grommets, are drawn around the warship. These nets are capable of stopping the largest torpedoes, traveling at 50 knots (56 mph.) All around the Tirpitz, snow covered hills of the fjord shoot up to great ragged heights. This made a natural defense that we (the allies) could not penetrate. Then finally, the Germans added one last defense to supplement all the others. In the surrounding cliffs and

mountains, they placed enough smoke-screening equipment to cover the entire fjord. These black-fog machines are manned all day long and on all moonlit nights. Admiral Oskur Kummertz is commander of all German units in the north. He

lives in a cabin onboard the Tirpitz. He shares a dining room with the ship's skipper, Captain Hans Meyer. The Admiral proudly boasts, "It is absolutely impossible for anyone or anything to attack our Tirpitz. And if they could, the battleship is "unsinkable." It has a special steel hull and has from 5 inches to 10 inches of armor plate." So the Admiral Kummertz spends most of his time wearing riding breeches and boots. He delights in riding his stallion along the shores of the fjord.

Now, this fjord is 400 miles north of the Arctic Circle and 450 miles North of Iceland. It is way up on the northern tip of Norway. While the southern tip is only 200 miles from England. The whole west side of Norway faces the Atlantic Ocean, over 1,000 miles, and these fjords run the entire length of the coast line. Then why did we pick this forlorn spot way up on the top of the world? Because it is only 50 miles from the allied convoy shipping lane to Russia.

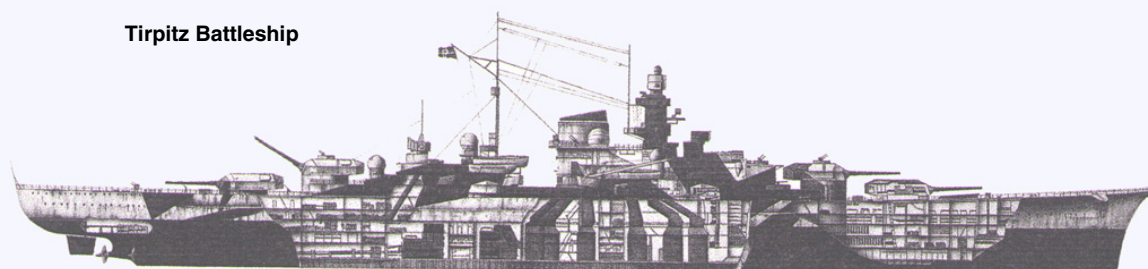
Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of England, declared disdainfully, the greatest sin-

gle act to restore balance of Naval power would be the sinking or even the crippling of the Admiral Von Tirpitz. No other target is comparable to it. The entire Naval situation throughout the world would be altered. The whole strategy of the war at this period turns to this ship, which is holding four times the number of British capital ships paralyzed, to say nothing of the two new American battleships retained in the Atlantic. "I regard the matter as of the highest urgency and importance!" says

Churchill. Before the Tirpitz moved up into the North Norwegian fjord, British bombers attacked it in five raids. But, they were not able to even damage the giant warship. Finally, in desperation, the plans for the x-craft, a British midget submarine, is hatched. Some 1,200 miles from the Tirpitz, in Loch Cairnbawn, Scotland, training begins for the mission. (Code name Operation Source.) Six midget subs are readied, plus six full size submarines, for the tiny subs will

ning tower, only a hatch at each end. It had only one small periscope, this made the top almost flat. So, when it surfaced, it was very hard to detect. The mini-sub had a crew of just four men, but no guns or torpedoes. On both sides, one depth charge was fastened, each weighing 4,400 pounds. They were contoured to look like part of the sub. The depth charges could be set to explode and be released from the inside of the sub. Therefore, an x-craft was indeed a mighty mini-submarine. The submariners training with it quipped, they are indeed a very little fish with a very big bang.

Due to mechanical problems, foul weather, and the snapping of towing cables, the mission, Operation Source, seemed jinxed. Finally, x-craft 6 Piker II Lt. Donald Cameron Skipper, and x-craft 7 Pdinichthys Lt. Godfrey Place Skipper, slipped into the lair of battleship Tirpitz. At 8:12 AM on September 22, 1942, the depth charges from both mini-subs explode. The blast is so powerful, it lifts the two main 15 inch gun turrets, weighing 30,000 pounds each, up off their barbettes. They are heavy cylinders that cause the turrets to rotate. All three drive shafts and the port (left) rudder are severely damaged.



Tirpitz Battleship

have to be towed on their eight day journey. A standard submarine is 370 feet long and 27 feet wide. It is armed with a 5 inch gun and a 40mm anti-aircraft gun. It also carries 24 torpedoes, loaded with 1,000 pounds of TNT. The x-craft submarine is certainly a mini-sub, it is 51 feet long and almost 6 feet wide. It is divided into four rooms. First, is a wet and dry room, with a hatch for a diver to go outside and then return. Next is the battery room, amidships is the control room. Then last is the diesel engine room. The x-craft had no con-

A hole is blown in the stern (tail end) big as a barn door. But there are enough watertight compartments to keep the warship from sinking completely. However, it sure does squat on the tail end. The whole ship is filled with disorder and riotous uproar... especially when the ship's tank holding the entire supply of beer is ruptured. This causes everyone nearby to be covered with foam. Even the foam fire extinguishers are ruptured, causing more free foam. Steam pipes and water pipes are twisted with more ruptures. Many of the electri-



by Cecil Owen

cal circuits have shorted out, so there is very little light. The Admiral Von Tirpitz battleship, Hitler's pride and joy, is bloody well in deep trouble. Witnesses later swear that the force of the explosion blew the whole warship seven feet up into the air.

The x-craft crewmen are very disappointed because they were unable to sink the giant German battleship. But, they still accomplished the mission, for it was out of the war for good. Two years later it was moved to a berth off Haakoy Island, near Tromso, Norway and on November 12, 1944, 32 British bombers attack the Tirpitz and sank it with 12,000 pound "Tallboy" bombs. As it sinks, it turns bottoms up so rapidly that 1,000 German sailors are entombed. As a final indignity, the Tirpitz lay in its capsized state for over 15 years, and with some of the bodies of the crewmen inside. The ship was slowly cut for scrap, which was not completed until 1957. All six x-craft midget subs were sunk. Nine crewmen were killed and six survived as prisoners of war. X-6 Piker II

and X-7 Pdinichthys time their depth charges to give ample time to escape, but both become entangled in the Tirpitz anti-torpedo nets. So they are too close to the explosions and are crippled by the huge shock wave. Lt. Place and Lt. Cameron both survived a German prisoner of war concentration camp. Later, they are awarded the Victoria Cross medal for their bravery. The British Admiralty declared "Operation Source" will surely go down in history as one of the most courageous acts of all times. Truly this was a "David and Goliath Operation."

Sources:

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