

SINKING OF "GALATEA" : RESCUE

OPERATIONS IN PITCH DARKNESS

Alexandria, January 10

Details can now be disclosed of how H.M.S. Galatea, after fighting off persistent air attacks for seven hours was eventually sunk by a lone U-boat, the commander of which pushed home an attack under cover of darkness.

Alexander Massy Anderson, Reuter's special naval correspondent with the Fleet went down with the ship.

H.M.S. Galatea, one of Britain's fast light cruisers was torpedoed and sunk off Alexandria by a lone Nazi submarine which apparently had been trailing a squadron of cruisers and destroyers for some time. H.M.S. Galatea was last in line. The squadron were steaming east towards their base after a routine patrol off the coast of Libya.

For seven hours before the torpedo attack which occurred at midnight on the night of December 15, Massy Anderson had stood on the bridge of Galatea and watched formations of enemy high and low dive bombers, torpedo carrying planes making desperately fierce assaults in an effort to sink her.

During daylight, also, there were two submarine alarms but no U-boats were seen.

These combined attacks started at ten in the morning and continued almost incessantly until five in the afternoon. Massy Anderson had written his story of the dive bombing attacks and had retired to the Commander's cabin towards eleven o'clock.

A few minutes before midnight a young marine sentry awakened Anderson and told him that the ship's gunners had been ordered "First Degree of Readiness" expecting action.

Fully clothed and wearing a ship's lifebelt, Anderson dashed out on the portside quarterdeck and was racing towards the bridge when three torpedoes struck Galatea, aft, amidships and forward on the port side in lightning succession, mightily shaking the ship into the air.

Sunk in Three Minutes

Anderson somehow managed to reach the starboard side of the quarterdeck as Galatea, listing heavily suddenly rolled over on her portside with a terrific splash.

She sunk in less than three minutes, disappearing in a huge patch of oil and an eddy of foam.

In this last tragic moment, Anderson was seen near the starboard deck railing, uninjured, standing erect his lifebelt apparently inflated. He was shouting something over his shoulder to one of the ship's officers.

Sailors started to leap into the sea abandoning the sinking vessel. Two destroyers managed to save

more than 120 of Galatea's complement of 600 or more men.

Rescue operations which were carried on until dawn were rendered very difficult on account of the pitch-black wilderness of the night and the very choppy seas. Adding to this poignant sea drama, faint cries of "help, help" were heard but the destroyers were unable to use their searchlights fearing further submarine attacks.

Massy Anderson, who had acted as naval correspondent with the Mediterranean fleet for eighteen months, was not seen again. One survivor picked up after six hours in the water believes he saw Anderson jump into the sea. But he was not certain. Although a strong swimmer Massy Anderson must have gone down with Galatea in her final plunge.

Captain E.W.B. Sim the commander of Galatea and the last to leave the ship is also missing. They've gone, these men with many other gallant heroes in faithful devotion to duty. But down the pages of history their names will remain immortal. (Reuter)