

The Secretary
HMAS SYDNEY Mark II COMMISSION OF INQUIRY
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I offer the following as three pages of :-

NOTES ON WINTER'S TRANSLATION OF KORMORAN LOG

Ean McDonald

Ref B Winter translation "KORMORAN SCHIFF 41 War Diary Log"

Refer also to Glen Hielscher's Submission CORR.012.0267 R - (8/08/08)

On checking Glen Hielscher's plot of KORMORAN's tracks as shown in Barbara Winter's translation of that Log, I find it leading me to at least one amazingly blatant misplacement of position of KORMORAN during her voyages in the Indian Ocean.

Firstly to be charitable to Detmers I wondered whether there are mistakes in translation. That could depend on whether Winter worked from words or figures.

I have checked the period from 1st September to 7th September 1941 and plotted the tracks as to courses, speeds and day's runs stated by Winter.

If there is mistranslation it occurs in a number of places. Surely Winter was not that poor with her German translations.

The log on 1st September had KORMORAN steering course 265 degrees from a noon position at 3 50 N 82 42 E, altering just 5 degrees to 270 (West), for about half an hour, then 140 (South East) at 14 knots for seventeen hours ; that is approx 240 nMiles., then East for three hours, back to West for an hour, to 300 (NW) for an hour , then 290 for an hour, to a noon position on the 2nd , obviously incorrect, at 01 54 N 96 39 E (Note 96)

That has created confusion and considerable doubt to the correctness of the whole logging.

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If the translation is correct then from that could be deduced that Detmers was not above falsifying his own ship's log(an almost heinous crime amongst mariners) perhaps to cover some action of his own in his report to his superiors or to create an incorrect scenario that did not please him.

I plot the courses and runs from noon on the 1st and they sum up to give a noon position on the 2nd at 00 36N 84 48 E, a vast difference whichever other figure may be used

KORMORAN had moved West, then SE, then East, then West, then NW to 00 36N84 48 E. Certainly not 96 39 East as translated. Even a correction to 86 39 East shows a difference of about one hundred and thirty five nMiles. That mistake or miss record seems to have been Detmers' own. (the day's run of 349 nMiles (at 14.5 k) is acceptable.)

Back to Winter to the noon position on the 2nd at 1 54N 96 39 E (NOTE 96) That could occur only if the day's run was some 600 miles of Easting plus some 240 nMiles of Westing, a total of 840 nMiles. The Log showed 239 nMiles run.

Detmers was a well and long experienced navigator and had other expert advice by him if required. It could be charitable to think that perhaps he or his navigator was too careless at a time when they were trying to check a vessel moving South East in the area.

It could also have been a deliberate falsifying to avoid his being charged with harassing a neutral (American) vessel in open ocean. His excuse was that he thought it was an enemy Armed Merchant Cruiser and his instructions prevented him from deliberately engaging it.

The only record from noon on the 2nd is a course of 290 degrees for three and a half hours at 10.5 knots, then a change to 270 for twenty and a half hours at the same speed. That produces a noon position on the 3rd at about 01 10N 81 10E. whereas Winter has it at 01 54N 86 39 E, but note that that is similar in one direction to noon on the 2nd

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We must query whether that was corrected from 96 39 E to 86 39 E.
If not then it indicates a run of about 600 nMiles in 24 hours. Impossible.

Days onwards seem to plot reasonably on to the noon positions on the 16th /17th
when Winter shows a course of 330 degrees, but I plot it from noon to noon at
030 degrees.

In these cases we see what could appear to be poor translation and we could
deduce that Winter could have been similarly incorrect in other workings or
translations. However, again arises the question as to whether the record was in
words or figures that are less inclined to alter.

To further point to doubt as to Detmers' records I understand that other
researchers have uncovered similar examples of what seem to be falsifications
of his Log.

Further again, when it is known that Detmers was not above totally omitting any
note on his log to be sent to Germany or to report at any time to his superiors of
his advent into Gage roads off Fremantle on about the 12th November 41, it
becomes apparent that any statement by him must be treated with some
suspicion.

I also draw attention to Australian disregard of that advent as mentioned
elsewhere in my submissions .

Signed Ean McDonald.....