

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO THE LOSS OF HMAS SYDNEY II

Before The Hon TRH Cole AO RFD QC

Held at residence of Mr Edmund Büttner
[REDACTED] Germany

Counsel Assisting: LEUT Matthew Tyson
LEUT Stephen Harper

On Wednesday, 9 July 2008
(Day 10)

27 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: This might be a good time to start the official
28 interview.

29

30 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Yes.

31

32 THE PRESIDENT: It's 9 July 2008 and I've come to the home
33 of Herr Edmund Büttner [REDACTED] which is about 70
34 kilometres from Düsseldorf.

35

36

37 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Today is 9 July 2008. We are at the house of Mr
38 Edmund Büttner [REDACTED] which is about 70km from Düsseldorf.

39

40 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Yes.

41

42 THE PRESIDENT: Herr Büttner, thank you for agreeing to see us,...

43

44 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Mr Büttner, thank you very much for seeing us
45 today.

46

47 THE PRESIDENT: ...and I am here to take evidence for the Commission of

1 Inquiry
2 into the battle between HMAS Sydney and the Kormoran,...

3
4 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: I am here to take evidence on behalf of the
5 Commission of Inquiry which looks into the battle between HMAS Sydney and
6 Kormoran.

7
8 THE PRESIDENT: ...and I understand you are prepared to affirm that the
9 evidence
10 you're going to give to me today is the truth.

11
12 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: I understand that you will be making your
13 statements under oath today.

14
15
16
17 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: I would like you to swear that what you will state
18 today is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

19
20 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Of course. That's understood.

21
22 <EDMUND BÜTTNER, affirmed:

23
24 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Thank you.

25
26
27 LEUT TYSON: Q. Good morning, Herr Büttner. My name is
28 Leut Matthew Tyson. I'm here with Herr Frank Thomas,
29 interpreter, and my colleague, Leut Stephen Harper.

30
31 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Good morning Mr Büttner. My name is Matthew Tyson.
32 I am here with our interpreter Frank Thomas and my colleague Mr Stephen
33 Harper.

34
35 LEUT TYSON: Q. Herr Büttner, can you confirm that we've shown you the
36 Instrument of Appointment dated 11 April 2008 signed by the
37 Chief of the Australian Defence Force?

38
39 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Mr Büttner, would you please confirm that we have
40 handed you the official Instrument of Appointment dated 11 April 2008 and
41 signed by the Chief of the Australian Defence Force?

42
43 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: This one here.

44
45 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Exactly.

46
47 A. Yes.

1

2 Q. Herr Büttner, can we begin by you telling us, please,
3 your full name?

4

5 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Can we please start the interview by asking you to
6 state your full name?

7

8 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Yes, sure. Edmund Otto Büttner.

9

10 A. Edmund Otto Büttner.

11

12 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: The second Christian name.

13

14

15 Q. And, sir, what is your date of birth?

16

17 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: [REDACTED]

18

19 A. [REDACTED]

20

21 Q. And, Herr Büttner, what is your current address?

22

23 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: What is your current address?

24

25 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: [REDACTED]

26 [REDACTED]

27

28 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: [REDACTED]

29

30 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Yes. [REDACTED]

31

32 A. [REDACTED]

33

34 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: [REDACTED]

35

36

37 Q. Now, sir, just before the outbreak of World War II,
38 what was your occupation?

39

40 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Before the outbreak of World War II, what was your
41 occupation?

42

43 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Painter, as an apprentice doing an apprenticeship.
44 Having served my apprenticeship, I did my skilled craftsman's examination
45 in (19)39. I left school in (19)35. And then in (19)39 I trained for four
46 years to become a painter, a house painter. And then I was recruited into
47 Work Service. I had wanted to join the Navy ... I went to ... the Police

1 used to do that in the those days. Nowadays the Army Recruitment Services
 2 would do this sort of thing. But in those days you had to go to the
 3 Police. And I was determined to join the Navy. I was already crazy about
 4 that as a boy. I absolutely wanted to join the Navy. So I twisted my
 5 father's arm. My mother was dead against it. She used to say ,water is
 6 not solid enough'. So I went down to a police station with my father.
 7 They said ,we have no need for anyone in the Navy at the moment. All
 8 positions are taken. We can't take any more people'. And so we went back
 9 home again. Four weeks later I was in the area again, I worked in Annen
 10 you see, so I dropped in to see if they are looking for people to join
 11 the Navy again. They said ,yes, you can sign up now'. So my father came
 12 along and I signed up and that's how I joined the National Work Service
 13 (RAD). It was Work Service (19)39. I was stationed at Altgruland here in
 14 the Sauerland area because during that time ... And then in (19)39 on 1
 15 October I was drafted into the Navy. I was sent to Braake in Oldenburg.
 16 Braake in Oldenburg is where the company recruits were (stationed).
 17 That's where I was trained in military exercises and as a soldier. When I
 18 was discharged, I was sent to Brunsbüttel KOG to the Flak Battery. We
 19 used to get these British bombers that would come and bomb the water
 20 gates along the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal which links the Baltic and the North
 21 Sea. I was in a battery full of elderly people there, many elderly
 22 soldiers who had served in World War I. There was a song they used to
 23 sing which was called ,Parolis Heimat Reservat Ruhn.' It was ... the end,
 24 we are going home now.

25

26 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: I would like to translate this.

27

28 A. Well, before World War II, I was a painter - that's
 29 what I learned. I did an apprenticeship at this time.
 30 I left school in 1935 and then later I was working for the
 31 work service, but it was my strong wish even as a young boy
 32 to become a member of the Navy, and in those days
 33 responsible for recruiting was the police. Today, that is
 34 different, but in those days it was the police's
 35 responsibility. So I went there with my dad - my mum was
 36 always against it. Anyway, I went there with my dad but
 37 then the police told me they don't have free places at the
 38 moment in the Navy so we went back home. About four weeks
 39 later I got a "yes" from the police, so I could become a
 40 member of the Navy, and then I was brought to Altgruland in
 41 the (inaudible) where I received basic training as a
 42 soldier. Later - well, in fact, I joined the Navy on
 43
 44 1 October 1939. Then I was brought to Brake in the region
 45 of Oldenberg. There was the recruits (inaudible) where we
 46 also learned basic things as a soldier, and after that
 47 I was transferred to Brunsbüttel near Kiel where I was at

1 the anti-aircraft gun - that was in the Kaiser Wilhelm
2 Channel. That's where all the British aeroplanes came over
3 and fired and there were already some very old soldiers
4 together with me, and they were from the First World War.

5

6 Q. Herr Büttner, in the Kormoran, which division were you
7 in; who was your division Commander?

8

9 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Who was your Division Commander on board Kormoran?

10

11 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: The Commander. That was von Goessel.

12

13 A. That was Mr von Goessel.

14

15 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Von Goessel was my Division Officer.

16

17

18 Q. And Herr Büttner, what were your duties on Kormoran;
19 what did you do on the ship?

20

21 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: What were your duties on board Kormoran?

22

23 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Well, I should tell you I got to the shipyard in
24 Hamburg and there we were ... and there we met our Commander ... he was
25 Detmers. He introduced himself as our Captain. The ship was there and it
26 was being converted. As for what was being remodelled, we didn't really
27 pay any attention. He had everyone line up. There were 20 or 30 men there
28 and there was our ship. We had no idea what kind of ship this was. He
29 shook everyone's hand, asked our name and age and where we were born and
30 where we lived. Well, I said I come from Witten. Our Commander shook my
31 hand and said 'Well, then we are practically neighbours. I come from
32 Witten too', said our Commander. The whole time we spent in Hamburg we
33 were instructed in building services but we didn't really have anything
34 to do with the ship. We didn't even go there. We did little in the way of
35 duties and being in Hamburg, we had a jolly good time since we were young
36 lads. And then we went on board. And on board we were assigned to the
37 Division. I was assigned to von Goessel, that's where I went. On board
38 they were also looking for someone to attend the Officers' Mess, a
39 Steward, and I remember Petty Officer Kobelt saying 'Would you like to do
40 that? Wouldn't you like to be a Steward in the Officers' Mess?' and I
41 said 'I don't mind. Yes, why not. I'll do it.' So they took me into the
42 Officers' Mess and I served their meals. Later on I left because I was a
43 painter after all and we painted our steamer in different colours. There
44 was painting that needed to be done. Most importantly, there were cannons
45 which we ... I was assigned to the Third Gun under Kobelt. I was on the
46 Third Gun here. Later on he ...

47

1 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Yes, I'll just translate this first.

2

3 A. I have to start like this. At the beginning we were
4 in the shipyard in Hamburg, and that's where Captain
5 Detmers introduced himself as being the captain. That's
6 also in the shipyard at Hamburg, that's where the whole
7 ship was converted, but I myself, I don't have any idea
8 what was really done to the ship. Anyway, when Captain
9 Detmers introduced himself, there were 20 to 30 men there
10 and he gave everybody a handshake and asked them for their
11 name and where they were from, and then, as I told him
12 I was from Witten, he said to me, "Oh, right, you're from
13 Witten. Then we are from the same region."

14

15 Then later, as the ship was converted in Hamburg,
16 I didn't see much of the ship. We just did a little bit of
17 service on the ship but didn't have much to do, so we
18 rather had some quite amusement in Hamburg - we were young
19 boys, you know. Then later, when we started on board, we
20 were divided into the several divisions.

21

22 That was when Mr Kobelt, he was (inaudible) I think -
23 he was a petty officer - asked me whether I wouldn't want
24 to become a Steward in the mess of the petty officers.
25 I said yes. And then from that point on that was - well,
26 the first time this was my job on board on Kormoran, so
27 I gave them the food as a Steward in the mess of the petty
28 officers.

29

30 Then later one of my duties was also to paint the
31 ship, as I did an apprenticeship as a painter, and we had
32 to repaint the ship a number of times, and then I was also
33 at the Third Gun serving under Mr Kobelt.

34

35

36 Q. Sir, I want to go through now to November 1941.

37

38 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Let me go back to 11 November 1941.

39

40 Q. Can you describe what paint work, what colour was Kormoran at
41 that time?

42

43 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Can you describe what Kormoran was painted like at
44 the time? What colour was she?

45

46 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Well, she was painted a greyish brown. Like that, grey-
47 brown...

1

2 A. Well, it was a grey and brown kind of colour, more or
3 less as can be seen on this painting.

4

5 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: There were maritime painters in Hamburg ... he painted
6 it (based on) accounts ... I can't remember who it was. We had the
7 opportunity to buy it from him and then we framed it and then I have
8 these pictures ... the others in captivity ... this was the man from the
9 Company Recruits there on the left ...

10

11 A. Well, it's just about the painting - it was done by a painter in
12 Hamburg
13 and they were able to buy this after the war.

14

15 Q. Herr Büttner, in November 1941, do you know whether
16 Kormoran was painted as any particular ship?

17

18 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: In November (19)41, do you know if the paint on
19 Kormoran resembled that of any other particular ship?

20

21 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: I wouldn't know. I have ... no, not that I know of.

22

23 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Well now, it was his ...

24

25 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: No, I couldn't tell you. I don't know.

26

27 A. No, not as far as I know. I can't tell; I don't know.

28

29 Q. I want to take you now, sir, to 19 November 1941, and
30 I'm going to ask you a series of questions about events on
31 that afternoon and that evening.

32

33 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: I would now like to take you back to the actual
34 day, 19 November 1941 and I am going to ask you a series of questions
35 (about this day).

36

37 Q. There are going to be quite a few small questions, and if we can
38 just go through
39 them step by step, that will be very useful to the Commission.

40

41 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: There will be a lot of small, short questions and
42 it would be very helpful if we could go through them step by step.

43

44 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Yes, sure.

45

46 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: So (let's keep it) short and to the point.

47

1 Q. Sir, the first question: on the afternoon of
2 19 November 1941, do you remember the alarm ringing on that
3 afternoon?

4 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: So the first question. On the afternoon of 19
5 November 1941, did you hear the alarm ring?

6
7 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Well, I couldn't tell you any more. I don't really
8 remember it all that well. Anyway, it started something like this. I was
9 just a little shitty-pants then. We had to suddenly line up and went to
10 the guns. You had to go to your guns and they announced that we were up
11 against an enemy ship. I don't really know what else to say. What can I
12 say? I don't know ... We went to the battle station, to our gun ...

13
14 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: We'll get to that later.

15
16 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: I see.

17
18 A. Well, I cannot really remember, because I was just
19 very small in the hierarchy there, at the lowest part, and
20 I can only remember that the order was given that we had to
21 go to our battle stations and then I had to go to my gun,
22 and this alarm was transmitted through the whole ship.

23
24 THE PRESIDENT: Q. Your battle station was at No. 3 gun,
25 was it?

26
27 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Your battle station was the Third Gun?

28
29 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: The Third Gun, yes.

30
31 A. Yes.

32
33 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: The Third Gun, yes.

34
35
36
37 LEUT TYSON: Q. Now, sir, do you remember who was in
38 charge of that gun?

39
40 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Do you know who the Gun Commander of that gun was?

41
42 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Gun Commander Kobelt.

43
44 A. That was Mr Kobelt.

45
46 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Yes, this one here, Petty Officer Kobelt. He was ...

47

1

2 Q. And the No. 3 gun, that was a 15-centimetre gun, was
3 it?

4

5 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Yes 15cm. They were something like this. The shells
6 were about this ...

7

8 A. The shells were about this size.

9

10 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: And after that the were ... first ... oh yes ...

11

12

13 Q. Now, sir, was there any camouflage or disguise on that
14 gun?

15

16 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Was the gun you manned camouflaged?

17

18 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: No no. There was just this thing. From outside you
19 couldn't see anything. That's for sure. The gun was here and then the
20 covers were removed hydraulically ... in combat the hydraulics were
21 lowered and then everything was ready.

22

23 A. Well, it wasn't really camouflaged - well, you
24 couldn't see it from the outside, that's for sure, ...

25

26 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Have a look here. This was my gun, here in the ...

27

28 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Excuse me. May I just translate the other part?

29

30 A. ...because during the - they were lowered - of course, then when the
31 flaps were lowered by this hydraulic system, then one would
32 be able to see the guns from the outside, but they were not
33 in a strict sense camouflaged.

34

35

36 THE INTERPRETER: From the top I think he means you would
37 see them.

38

39 LEUT TYSON: Q. Sir, I just want to show you a diagram
40 of Kormoran, and would you be so kind as to mark where your
41 battle station was on 19 November 1941.

42

43 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: I have a drawing of Kormoran here. May I ask you to
44 mark on this drawing where your battle station was on 19 November 1941?

45

46 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: It was ... this was the First Gun. The Second Gun was
47 on the other side. This is where the Third Gun was and this is where the

1 Fourth Gun was. And this is the back where the torpedo cannons were. I
2 had nothing to do with that. Others did that. I don't know about that.
3 During the battle with Sydney the covers were lowered and then ... she
4 completely ... I have no idea how that happened that she didn't ...

5

6 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: We'll get to that later.

7

8 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Yes. Sure.

9

10 A. Well, can I show it to you here on this painting?
11 That's the gun where I was, that was No. 1, and then on the
12 other side we had No. 2. Amidships we had No. 3 and then
13 at the end there was gun No. 4. Those were all the guns
14 but then in the aft section there were also the torpedo
15 tubes, but I didn't see them at all, so I don't really know
16 but I have to say when the flaps went down then you could
17 see our guns.

18

19 THE PRESIDENT: Can you mark it on that diagram?

20

21 LEUT TYSON: On that diagram, can you mark it?

22

23 THE PRESIDENT: Just mark No. 3.

24

25 LEUT TYSON: Q. Just mark No. 3, the gun where you were
26 at, sir.

27

28 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Can you mark that exactly on there. I'll give you a
29 pen or ...

30

31 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Where am I supposed to mark it?

32

33 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Where you stood, where your battle station was.

34

35 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Here in the front was the ...

36

37 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Gun Number Three where you were. May be some kind
38 of overview, perhaps that might work better?

39

40 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: ... Number Three. Yes, that was here. That must have been
41 the front.

42

43 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Make a squiggle or a cross there.

44

45 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: The Third Gun was in the front. We used to practise on
46 the cannon and there was this handle on the closing mechanism... these
47 cannons were ancient, from World War I and they came from Silesia and

1 Schleswig Holstein. There was paint on them which (came off) as soon as
2 we had fired a few shots in the battle against Sydney. The cannons heated
3 up ...

4

5 A. Yes, you know, we had these very old guns, they were
6 from the First World War. They come from Silesia or
7 Prussia, from the east, and they had been used many times.
8 The colour on them was so thick, about 1 centimetre
9 I should say for the tape.

10

11 THE PRESIDENT: The paint?

12

13 THE INTERPRETER: Yes, 1 centimetre thick of paint.

14

15 THE WITNESS: And when we shot this, paint came off, as
16 the tubes were hot.

17

18 THE PRESIDENT: Can I have the drawing, please? I'll reinforce the
19 cross...

20

21 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: I'll make this cross a bit clearer.

22

23 THE PRESIDENT: ...and I shall mark the document marked by
24 Herr Büttner as exhibit 24.

25

26 EXHIBIT #24 DOCUMENT MARKED BY HERR BÜTTNER.

27

28

29 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: This will be Exhibit No 24, the drawing which Mr
30 Büttner marked with a cross.

31

32 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: There was a narrow space in the front and there was a
33 gun in there.

34

35 THE WITNESS: There was something like a hatch and that's
36 where the gun was in.

37

38 LEUT TYSON: Q. Now, sir, when you reached that battle
39 station, that position on the No. 3 gun, did you have any

40

41 opportunity to see the warship that had been spotted by
42 Kormoran's lookout?

43

44 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: When you went to your battle station at the Third
45 Gun, were you able to see the enemy warship there? From there?

46

47 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: We couldn't ... we just got to the cannon ... we

1 couldn't see anything ... we only ... I couldn't tell you. We had no idea
2 what was going on. It was really just a case of alarm, everyone to the
3 cannon and then the camouflage hadn't been removed yet. So you couldn't
4 see anything.

5

6 A. Well, I couldn't see anything, because we were all
7 there - when the alarm rang, we all went to our battle
8 stations, I went to my gun, but as the disguise hadn't been
9 removed at that point, we couldn't see anything.

10

11 Q. What was your job at the gun?

12

13 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: What was your task at the gun?

14

15 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: The closing part. You know, these were old guns. There
16 was this lever. First of all you would put a shell in there, then a
17 cartridge went in behind that. The Gun Commander sat on the right and the
18 (man who told us) the elevation, he was on the right or left. Anyway, the
19 First and Second Gun Commanders and I were crew members located in the
20 back ... We fetched the shells and cartridges. Our routine was this: a
21 shell first, then a cartridge after it. And then the order came from
22 above to 'Fire' and then we shot. When a shot was fired, we would then
23 keep reloading as before. Put in a shell followed by ... What actually
24 happened there, we couldn't see. I mean, we just kept shooting. What else
25 could we do?

26

27 A. I was at the lever. There was, you know, how these
28 guns work, you have to put in a shell and then later you
29 put in the cartridge after this. Then, on the left of the
30 gun, there was the First Gun Commander, on the right side
31 of the gun there was the Second Gun Commander, and they
32 were responsible for setting the elevation and the
33 direction of the gun and how they work is that you put in
34 one shell plus one cartridge, and that's what I did, and
35 then came the order to fire. That's when we fired. And
36 after that we had to do all this again.

37

38 THE PRESIDENT: Q. So his task was to put the shell in
39 the gun; is that right?

40

41 (Discussion in German between interpreter and witness)

42

43 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: So your task appears to have been to load shells
44 into the guns?

45

46 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Yes, yes. I was closing part too. Whoever happened to
47 be around, did the closing part. We practised all that. Some inserted and

1 the others ... we practised all that ... for sure.

2

3 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: I'll have to ask you to clarify this. This 'closing
4 part', what exactly is that? I still haven't figured out (what that
5 means). Can you help me picture this?

6

7 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: (This person) is in the back with the shell. The
8 cartridge is about this long and when the cartridge was inserted, then
9 the lever would be pulled around and then it was covered.

10

11 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: So by 'closing part' you mean a lever with which
12 you push this shut?

13

14 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: The closing part is a lever which was turned around and
15 then the thing was shut. There was nothing else we needed to do. Control
16 Centre ordered us to fire and then the thing ...

17

18 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: May I ...

19

20

21 THE WITNESS: Well, yes, I was responsible for loading the
22 gun and I was responsible for moving this lever that would
23 close the gun at the end.

24

25 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: A vintage model.

26

27 THE WITNESS: It's a very old model from the First World War.

28

29 (In German - not translated).

30

31 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Old cannons. They had already suffered the impact of
32 200 to 300 prior shots ... they were fitted in Hamburg in the shipyard.
33 We didn't ...

34

35

36 THE PRESIDENT: If he could just listen to our questions
37 and answer the questions.

38

39 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Can we please concentrate on the questions a bit so
40 that we make a bit of progress.

41

42 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Yes. Sure.

43

44

45 LEUT TYSON: Q. I just want to go through it step by step.

46

47 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: We would like to take it step by step so that we

1 are not dealing with too much at a time.

2

3 LEUT TYSON: Q. Now, sir, after you reached your battle station but
4 before any firing broke out, what were you doing in that
5 period?

6

7 (Discussion in German between interpreter and witness)

8

9 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Looking at the time when you were already at your
10 battle station but before the battle proper began, what did you do at
11 that time?

12

13 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Through the Commander I later ... the second Steward
14 got sick and so the Commander said to me since we were both from Witten
15 and were virtually neighbours and he said if I was interested in working
16 as a Steward at the Officers' Mess since I had earlier

17

18 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Excuse me. When you were at your battle station on
19 this day, 19 November, what did you do during this time until the battle
20 started?

21

22 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: I couldn't tell you any more. I can't remember. Where I
23 was, I couldn't tell you any more. In the mornings I would have had work
24 to do at the Officers' Mess. When I finished the meals and in between I
25 would have had some free time. I probably sat on deck or read. I don't
26 know. I couldn't tell you any more. I don't know.

27

28

29 THE INTERPRETER: Well, I'll just say what he said.

30

31 THE WITNESS: Later I became the second Steward, because
32 the first Steward became sick, and then Mr Detmers, the
33 captain of our ship, told me, "Well, you are also from
34 Witten, from the same region that I'm from. You'll be

35

36 the Steward now."

37

38 THE INTERPRETER: Then at that point I asked Mr Büttner
39 again what he was doing exactly in this period between
40 reaching the battle station and when the firing started,
41 and then he said he didn't know. However, then later he
42 said - I continue now what he said.

43

44 THE WITNESS: Well, I was serving dinner and in the
45 meantime I had free time, spare time, so maybe I was
46 reading.

47

1 LEUT TYSON: Q. Sir, do you remember at any time before
2 the firing started whether there were any signal flags
3 flying on Kormoran? Did you see any signal flags flying
4 from her deck, from her masts?

5
6 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Do you remember whether before the fire started any
7 signal flags were being hoisted on board Kormoran or were they hoisted
8 already? Do you remember?

9
10 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: I didn't see that.

11
12 A. No, I hadn't seen that.

13
14 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: I didn't see that.

15
16
17 Q. Do you also remember, before the firing started were
18 there any messages over the ship loud speakers, or did you
19 hear anything from the bridge?

20
21 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Can you remember if before the battle any orders
22 were given or news were announced via the ship's loudspeakers?

23
24 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Yes, there were. They announced that there was an enemy
25 ship. They did announce that. But who announced it I don't know. It must
26 have come from the Control Centre upstairs. That's all I know.

27
28 A. Yes, there was one message that came through, and that
29 was that an enemy ship was sighted. Who sent this message,
30 I don't know. It must have come from the director's
31 control unit, but who exactly it was, I don't know.

32
33 Q. Herr Büttner, do you know what flags were flying on
34 Kormoran's masts at this time?

35
36 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Do you know what flag was on Kormoran's mast at
37 that time?

38
39 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: No, I don't know. I couldn't tell you.

40
41 A. No, I don't know.

42
43 Q. Now, I want to actually go to when the firing starts.

44
45 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: We would now like to move to the point where the
46 battle actually started.

47

1 Q. Do you remember how long you were at the battle station
2 before the firing started?

3

4 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Do you know how long you had been at your battle
5 station before the fire ...

6

7 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: May be half an hour. We couldn't see much. We just
8 waited for orders from above.

9

10 A. Well, maybe half an hour we were there at our gun and
11 couldn't see much. We just waited for the orders from the bridge.

12

13 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: When the alarm sounded, we immediately went to our
14 battle station and got our ... one person did this, the other did that,
15 you do the closing part today, you do the cartridges, they used to come
16 up on the elevator.

17

18 A. Well, when the alarm rang, we immediately went to
19 our battle station and then we did whatever the task was.
20 When we did operated at this level, the other one loaded
21 the shells into the gun. As you might know, they were
22 delivered by an elevator, and that's what we did.

23

24 Q. You mentioned an order from the bridge. What was the
25 order from the bridge?

26

27 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: You said that you waited for orders. What were the
28 orders?

29

30 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Fire. Fire. Fire, shoot of course.

31

32 A. Later there was the order "Fire, start shooting."
33 That's clear.

34

35 Q. Did you get the order from Mr Kobelt, or did you
36 actually hear it on a loud speaker from the bridge?

37

38
39 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Did you receive this order from Mr Kobelt or did
40 you hear it via the loudspeakers from the Bridge?

41

42 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: No, it was announced on the loudspeaker. The Gun
43 Commander, Kobelt, he was sitting on the right and the Second Gun
44 Commander, Haase, he drowned. He wasn't rescued.

45

46 A. It came over the loud speakers and then on the right
47 of the gun there was the Commander of the gun, Mr Kobelt.

1 He sat on the right. On the left sat Mr Haase, who was the
2 other person operating the gun. He later drowned,
3 however - he died.

4

5 Q. So you heard an order over the loud speakers "Fire".

6

7 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: So you heard the order to fire over the
8 loudspeaker?

9

10 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Yes, yes, yes, yes.

11

12 A. Yes.

13

14 Q. Was there any order about camouflage at all - anything
15 said about that?

16

17 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Were there any orders concerning the disguise of
18 Sydney (sic)?

19

20 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Yes, 'Remove Disguise' and then we started to shoot.
21 The order from upstairs was always 'Shoot'.

22

23 A. Well, I don't know, but yeah, of course, to remove the
24 disguise, this order was given, and later then to fire.

25

26 Q. After the order to fire was given, how long after that
27 order did it take before your gun was actually able to
28 fire?

29

30 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: After the order to fire was given, how long did it
31 take before your gun fired off the first shot?

32

33 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: It happened very fast really. Naturally. When this
34 order came, 'Fire', the Gun Commander, Kobelt, had a kind of whistle in
35 his mouth – this was called 'mouth firing' – and when he got the order,
36 he had to blow into it and then the shot fired. Once you had fired off a
37 whole heap of shots, the Number Two who sat on the left pulled the lever
38 and then the shot went off. When mouth firing failed, the Number Two
39 received orders via telephone receiver. Both Haase and Kobelt received
40 orders that way. They both had receivers. We didn't get the orders they
41 got because we were shooters.

42

43 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: May I ...

44

45 A. Well, it was very, very fast indeed. The First Gun
46 Commander, Mr Kobelt, he had what looked a bit like a
47 whistle what he had in his mouth and he had to blow in this

1 and then the gun would fire, and No. 2, the Second Gun
2 Commander, Mr Haase, he had a lever to fire the gun, and
3 this was for those moments when this mouthpiece for firing
4 the gun was out of order, and the orders that were given
5 were only received by Mr Haase and Mr Kobelt, because they
6 were the ones who had headphones on. We ourselves didn't
7 hear them. We were responsible for loading the guns.

8

9 THE PRESIDENT: Q. So he did not hear himself an order
10 to fire, but he received that order from Mr Kobelt?

11

12 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: So you did not hear the order to fire yourself but
13 you heard it from Mr Kobelt.

14

15 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: We had nothing to do. We called out 'finished' and then
16 he ...

17

18 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: The order to fire.

19

20 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: We didn't get that. Kobelt got that of course. He was
21 the Gun Commander.

22

23 A. Yes, the gun Commander received this order; we didn't.

24

25 Q. So I'm clear about it, he heard over the loud speaker
26 system an order to decamouflage; is that right?

27

28 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: But the order to remove the camouflage came over
29 the loudspeakers. Is that right?

30

31 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: I couldn't tell you exactly. All I remember was the
32 order 'Remove Disguise' and so we did remove the disguise. As for how and
33 where it came from ...

34

35 A. Well, I cannot really say that suddenly there was this
36 thing to remove the disguise. Where it actually came from,
37 I cannot remember.

38

39 Q. Who was it who did remove the disguise around his gun?

40

41 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Who was it that actually removed the disguise at
42 your gun?

43

44 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Well, the Gun Commander. The Gun Commander did that.
45 The order was 'Remove Disguise' and then he just pressed this thing. The
46 thing was hydraulic. That's what the Gun Commander did.

47

1 A. Well, it was the gun Commander. When there was the
2 order given to remove the disguise, he just had to push a
3 button and then the disguise would remove hydraulically.

4

5 LEUT TYSON: Q. When your gun started to fire, had some
6 of Kormoran's other guns already started to fire? Did they
7 fire just before your gun, or did all the guns fire at the

8

9 same time?

10

11 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: When your gun started firing, had other guns
12 already shot volleys or shots at that time?

13

14 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: ... the ones on that side fired at the same time I
15 think but I am not exactly sure any more. After all, we did not see
16 anything. We only (worked) our gun. We did not see the others.

17

18 A. I think they fired all at the same time, but I'm not
19 so sure about it because I was working at my gun and we
20 couldn't see the other guns, but I think they were shooting
21 at the same time, all of them.

22

23 Q. When the disguise was removed from the No. 3 gun, did
24 you then have to slightly readjust the gun either for
25 lateral movement or for elevation?

26

27 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: When the disguise was removed at your 15cm gun, did
28 you have to readjust the elevation angle or the pitch angle?

29

30 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Yes, of course that all needs setting. It all came from
31 Control Centre upstairs, the exact ... the direction and everything like
32 how many degrees to the left or right. After all, we couldn't see that.
33 That came from Control Centre. That's the Control Centre where Skeries
34 was. He was there and our ... he was our Officer who was responsible for
35 the cannons. It says so in this book too, this book about Kormoran.

36

37 A. Yes, certainly, these came from the director's control
38 unit. They gave us the measures and degrees - that's like
39 typical seamen speak. And they came from Mr Skeries, who
40 was the officer for the artillery, as it is also written in
41 this book.

42

43 Q. So once the firing had started during the battle, was
44 the gun always adjusting its position?

45

46 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: During the battle, was the setting of the guns
47 constantly reset or adjusted?

1

2 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: The Gun Commander, Kobelt, did that. He worked it out.
3 He knew exactly the degree he wanted to aim ... I don't know. There were
4 these crosshairs that he worked it out with precisely. One was for the
5 side focus and the other was ... I don't know whether Kobelt used it for
6 elevation focus and side focus ... It was crosshairs anyway. One was for
7 the side and one worked out the elevation.

8 A. Well, that was done by the gun Commander, Mr Kobelt.

9 In fact, he was responsible for setting up the gun and it
10 was done, as far as I know, but I'm not so sure about it.

11 However, there was a - what do you call this, this cross
12 you have on it?

13

14 THE PRESIDENT: Cross-hairs.

15

16 THE WITNESS: Cross-hairs, yes. You have these
17 cross-hairs where you have the elevation and the site where
18 you have to point at, but I don't know which one did
19 Kobelt - whether he was responsible for the elevation or
20 for the direction, but they received these orders.

21

22 LEUT TYSON: Q. Do you know how far away Sydney was from
23 Kormoran when this firing began?

24

25 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Do you know ...

26

27

28 THE PRESIDENT: Q. When the camouflage was dropped,
29 could you see the Sydney or not?

30

31 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: When the disguise was removed, could you see Sydney
32 then?

33

34 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Yes, of course we could see the ship then and the first
35 shots hit her immediately ... the first shots hit right away.

36

37 A. Yes, we could see Sydney and then the first shots we
38 fired at her hit her immediately.

39

40 LEUT TYSON: Q. And when you saw Sydney when the
41 camouflage was down, do you know how far away Sydney was
42 from Kormoran?

43

44 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Do you know how far away Sydney was from Kormoran
45 when the disguise was removed?

46

47 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Maybe 1000, 2000m, about 1000 ... I can't tell you

1 exactly.

2

3 A. Well, it must have been 1,000 and 2,000 metres.

4 I cannot really tell exactly how much it was.

5

6 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: We heard later when we were in captivity that they said
7 the Commander of Sydney had underestimated us.

8

9 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: We will get to that later.

10

11

12 THE INTERPRETER: I'll just translate it for the sake of
13 the tape.

14

15 THE WITNESS: Later, as a prisoner of war, they told us
16 that the Commander of Sydney must have underestimated
17 something there.

18

19 LEUT TYSON: Q. Sir, when you first saw Sydney, can you
20 tell us what you saw? Describe what you saw, please.

21

22 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Could you describe for us perhaps what you saw when
23 you first saw Sydney? (Could you) describe it in detail?

24

25 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: You could see that there was a ship, that she was a
26 warship. We saw immediately that she was a warship. They announced it via
27 those things up the control panel too that we were dealing with a
28 warship. And now let's get the hell out of here.

29

30 A. Of course we saw immediately that there was a warship,
31 that's all we saw, and then it was also transmitted from
32 the bridge or from the director's control unit that there
33 is a battleship and that we have to see how we get out of
34 this situation.

35

36 Q. When you saw Sydney, did you see her main Gun Turrets?

37

38 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Yes and Sydney was shooting. Oh yes, she ...

39

40 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Excuse me. When you saw Sydney, could you see the
41 Gun Turrets of Sydney?

42

43 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: No, we did not see the guns.

44

45 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: (The question was) whether you saw the Gun Turrets
46 of Sydney?

47

1 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: No. We could not see them.

2

3 A. No, we couldn't see them.

4

5 (Discussion in German between interpreter and witness)

6

7 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: We only saw later on when there was a lull in combat
8 that Sydney was on fire.

9

10 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: That was much later, much later. We want to go step
11 by step, very slowly, okay ...

12

13 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Yes, yes, yes. I understand.

14

15 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: But when the covers came off at your (battle
16 station), the disguise(came off), you did not see the Gun Turrets?

17

18 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: No, no. We did not see that at all. We did not know
19 what this thing was.

20

21

22 THE WITNESS: No, we didn't see the turrets of Sydney.

23

24 LEUT TYSON: Q. Could you see any activity on Sydney's
25 decks?

26

27 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Were you able to observe any activities on the deck
28 of Sydney?

29

30 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: No, we were not. (As I explained) we were at the guns.
31 We could not see from there.

32

33

34 A. No, I haven't seen any. We were there at the gun.

35

36 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: We just kept loading and shooting. We just kept at her.

37

38 A. No, we just loaded and fired as much as possible.

39

40 Q. How long did you look at Sydney for?

41

42 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: How long did you look at Sydney at all
43 approximately?

44

45 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: (We observed) how she burnt in the end. She was ablaze
46 and we (screamed) ,hurray'. You can imagine what it was like.

47

1 A. Well, later when she was burning I saw her and then we
2 went on the (inaudible). Well, you can imagine --

3

4 Q. We'll just go back. When you first saw Sydney, are
5 you able to explain, perhaps using the models, the relative
6 position of the two ships, where they were in relation to
7 each other?

8

9 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: When you first saw Sydney, could you explain with
10 the help of the models, what the relative position of the two ships was
11 in relation to each other?

12

13 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: I couldn't say any more. In any case we could ...

14

15 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Take this ...

16

17 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Look. Listen, it is better for me to explain. We could
18 shoot to both sides. We could. We could shoot starboard and portside
19 because we ... then this cover went down and these Guns here, One and
20 Two, they could only shoot on one side and we, the Third and Fourth Guns,
21 we could shoot on both sides. We could ... turned and then we were able
22 to shoot to both sides.

23

24 A. Well, we were able to shoot at both sides - guns No. 3
25 and 4, we were able to shoot at both sides. Only guns 1
26 and 2 could only shoot at one side.

27

28 Q. But, sir, what I'm asking is: at the beginning when
29 the firing started, when the camouflage came down and you
30 first saw Sydney, at that moment can you please tell us the
31 relative position of the two ships?

32

33 (Discussion in German between interpreter and witness)

34

35 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Thank you. But I would like to come back to my
36 question: when the disguise came down, at that particular moment, what
37 was the position of Sydney relative to Kormoran? What was the position of
38 the ships towards one another? That was my question.

39

40 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Something like this. They were ... the Commander said
41 he had to ... the closer he can get, the better we can ... with the
42 torpedo cannons.

43

44 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: No, no. The moment you first saw this, what was it
45 like at that particular moment? Can you tell us?

46

47 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Like this ...

1
2 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: That means when you opened up the hatches, Sydney
3 was starboard side of Kormoran, was on fire?
4
5 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Yes, was on what's-it-called. No, we removed the
6 disguise earlier.
7
8 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Sure, I understand that. And the moment you removed
9 the disguise, where was Sydney?
10
11 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: She was positioned something like this ... I came ...
12 whether it was 1000m or 2000m, I can't ... there she lay in front of us.
13
14 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Can ... maybe something like this? If you could
15 show us here ...
16
17 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Yes, you could say that's about right. The auxiliary
18 cruiser like so and that's where Sydney was approximately, opposite us.
19 But she ... look, we ... on this side, that's where our gun was and
20 that's where we shot.
21
22
23 THE INTERPRETER: I had to explain to Mr Büttner a couple
24 of times what this question was about really until he
25 finally showed the relative position according to his
26
27 opinion. After having said a number of times that it was
28 more or less the same as on the picture on the wall, he
29 finally then showed us the position with the models.
30
31 LEUT TYSON: Q. And, sir, so you're saying that the two
32 ships - you showed with the model that the two ships were
33 parallel to each other at the time the firing began.
34
35 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: That means you have illustrated that the two ships
36 were positioned parallel to each other when the battle began.
37
38 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: A bit to the front, offset a bit, something like this.
39
40 A. Well, it was not completely parallel –
41
42 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: It's not really possible any more to tell how exactly
43 they were. But in any case we were opposite each other like this.
44
45 A. - it was more or less like that. Yeah, we were more or less abeam,
46 but you
47 cannot say today anymore exactly what it was like.

1

2 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: They shot but all their shells passed a long way over
3 us. We did not suffer any hit. Nothing.

4

5 A. Their shells didn't hit us; they went over us.

6

7 Q. And I should also note just for the video, unless it's
8 clear, that the picture that's been referred to is the
9 picture of the engagement between Kormoran and Sydney that
10 appears on the cover of Tom Frame's book about this
11 encounter.

12

13 THE PRESIDENT: Q. Was No. 3 gun on the port side or the
14 starboard side?

15

16 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Gun Number Three, was that starboard or portside?

17

18 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Midship and it could shoot from both sides. It could be
19 turned here. In the middle that was ... at the Third and Fourth Guns.

20

21 A. It was in the centre of the ship and it could fire to
22 both directions, both sides, third and Fourth Guns they
23 were able to do this.

24

25 LEUT TYSON: Q. Now, apart from Kormoran using her guns,
26 were her torpedoes ever used in this battle? Did you see
27 whether her torpedoes were used?

28

29 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Apart from the guns, could you see with your own
30 eyes if Kormoran's torpedoes were deployed in this battle too?

31

32 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: No, we couldn't. Our comrades told us later on that
33 they fired them off. We talked about that in captivity. That's when they
34 told us that two torpedoes hit, hit Sydney that is.

35

36 A. No, I didn't see it myself. I was told later at the ...

37

38 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: I did not see any of that.

39

40 A. ... prisoner of war time, my comrades told me that there were
41 two torpedoes fired from Kormoran.

42

43 Q. Do you remember how long the No. 3 gun fired for? .

44

45 (Discussion in German between interpreter and witness)

46

47 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Can you remember how long the Number Three Gun

1 fired for approximately? How long did it go on for?

2

3 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: I don't know. We fired about 30 or 40 shots, 20,30 ...
4 I couldn't tell you exactly.

5

6 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: And how long did it take in terms of time?

7

8 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Well, the routine was this. The order 'Fire' came from
9 the top, then he blew this whistle and then we shot. How often we did
10 this ...

11

12 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: No, no, I mean time-wise. How long did the gun
13 shoot for, as far as time was concerned?

14

15 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: I don't know exactly. We didn't watch the time.

16

17

18 THE WITNESS: Well, I think we fired between 20 and 30
19 shots.

20

21 THE INTERPRETER: Then I asked Mr Büttner, "No, could you
22 please explain the time?" And then he said, "I don't know,
23 the orders came from the director control unit to fire."
24 Then I asked him again about the exact timing of this and
25 then he said, "Well, I don't know. We didn't look at our
26 watches those days."

27

28 THE PRESIDENT: Q. Did the No. 3 gun fire at the Sydney
29 both to port and to starboard?

30

31

32 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Did Gun Number Three shoot at Sydney from both
33 sides of Kormoran? At times to portside, at times to starboard?

34

35 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: No, I think only on one side.

36

37 A. No, I don't think so. I think it was only to one
38 side.

39

40 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: I think (they) only shot on one side.

41

42

43 THE PRESIDENT: Q. Which side?

44

45 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Which side did you shoot at?

46

47 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: I can't remember. I couldn't say. I can't remember.

1 It's such a long time ago.

2

3 A. I don't know which side. I can't remember. It's such
4 a long time ago.

5

6 LEUT TYSON: Q. Herr Büttner, this position of the two
7 ships at the start of the battle, did that position ever
8 change? Did the relative position of the ships change
9 after the firing had started and was going for some time?

10

11 (Discussion in German between interpreter and witness)

12

13 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: The position of the two ships you just pointed out
14 to us, did that ever change during the course of the battle or
15 afterwards?

16

17 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: No. We didn't see how Sydney started to ... how she
18 burnt.

19

20 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: But then the position was still like this,
21 parallel?

22

23 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: And it stayed that way, the way it was. She moved down
24 ...

25

26 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: And after the battle?

27

28 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: I beg your pardon?

29

30 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: And after the battle, was it still like that, the
31 same position?

32

33 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Yes, we cheered.

34

35 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: No, the position of Sydney, what was it after the
36 battle?

37

38 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Yes, she might have even been somewhere like this. We
39 stopped shooting. And as she was burning, we were already celebrating our
40 victory. We were going to celebrate. And out of the blue we copped a shot
41 from behind, here. We had a plane on board with this petrol tank and
42 Sydney fired again and suddenly hit the plane's petrol tank. And what a
43 hit it was. There were 10, maybe five or whatever it was. It was a small
44 hit anyway. And petrol splashed about and with all the paint, our ship
45 started to burn. We had this Arado plane. Its wings retracted like so and
46 there were these swimmers. And the plane was let into the water by means
47 of big cranes. These were the big cranes. But none of this worked. And

1 suddenly the order came from above to abandon ship. It was a case of
2 everyone having to save their skins.

3

4

5 THE WITNESS: Well, we were already celebrating our
6 victory.

7

8 THE INTERPRETER: Sorry, I have to remember, what was your
9 original question?

10

11 LEUT TYSON: Q. My question was, you described the
12 relative position of the two ships.

13

14 THE PRESIDENT: Did the relative position of the ships
15 ever change?

16

17 LEUT TYSON: Q. Did that change after the firing had
18 started?

19

20 THE PRESIDENT: And the answer?

21

22 THE INTERPRETER: The answer was: no, it hasn't changed.

23 It was like it is there seen on the picture and the Sydney
24 was there and it caught fire and then I asked Mr Büttner
25 again, "Do you mean this is the relative state there in
26 this position?" He said, "Yes." Then I asked him again if
27 after the battle it was also the same position. Then he
28 said, "We were already celebrating our victory. Then we
29 received a shot in the back, which hit our petrol tank
30 there where the aeroplanes were. We had two Arado
31 aeroplanes where you could swing their wings open and could
32 close them. They were up period and lowered with the
33 derricks of the ship. You could put them in the water
34 using these derricks. However, we never used these
35 aeroplanes because they didn't work very well. However, we
36 received this hit in the petrol tank. That's why our ship
37 caught fire."

38

39 THE PRESIDENT: Do we need to change the tape? .

40

41 LEUT HARPER: We do.

42

43 THE PRESIDENT: We'll just take a short break.

44

45 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: We will have to interrupt here briefly because the
46 cassettes need changing.

47

1

2 SHORT ADJOURNMENT

3

4 THE PRESIDENT: We'll now resume the interview.

5

6 LEUT TYSON: Q. Now, just before the tape stopped, you
7 described how Sydney, you said, hit Kormoran in the back
8 after your gun crew had already started to celebrate.
9 After you were hit in the back like that, did Kormoran then
10 recommence firing at Sydney?

11

12 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Before we were interrupted and had to change
13 cassettes you said that Kormoran was hit in the stern by Sydney. Can you
14 remember if Kormoran resumed firing at Sydney after this?

15

16 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: I don't know. I couldn't say. In any event fire ceased.
17 I don't believe anyone shot any more. They were on fire and so were we.
18 What was the point in shooting any more? Nothing happened after that. And
19 this thing here, our ... they were ... they went ...

20

21 A. Well, I think we didn't do any more shooting. I'm not
22 quite sure about it, but I don't think we continued firing,
23 because Sydney was burning and that's when it stopped.

24

25 Q. Did you see Sydney at that stage of the battle?

26

27 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Could you see Sydney at that stage of the battle,
28 with your own eyes?

29

30 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Sure. We looked across there from time to time. You
31 could see that she was a warship and not a merchant ship. That was quite
32 apparent.

33

34 A. Yes, we looked at her every now and then and of course
35 it was a battleship and not a merchant ship, that was quite
36 obvious.

37

38 Q. And when you looked at her at this stage after she had
39 hit in the back and hit the hatches where the Arado was,
40 what can you tell us, what did you see? Please describe
41 what you saw of Sydney.

42

43 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: After Sydney hit the hatch with the Arado plane,
44 what could you see on board Sydney?

45

46 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: We did not see anything any more ... it looked just
47 like that.

1

2 A. Well, we didn't see anything - just how it was in the
3 picture.

4

5 Q. How far away from Kormoran was Sydney?

6

7 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: How far away from Kormoran was Sydney at that
8 point?

9

10 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: About a kilometer.

11

12 A. More or less 1 kilometre.

13

14 Q. Was she damaged at all? Was there any smoke or fire?

15

16 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Was she damaged or ... was Sydney damaged?

17

18 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: She burnt ... she burnt, she was ablaze, like that. The
19 smoke was horrendous.

20

21 A. It was burning and a lot of smoke and there was fire
22 everywhere.

23

24 THE PRESIDENT: Q. Was Sydney stationary or moving?

25

26 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Was Sydney still moving at this stage or was she
27 stationary?

28

29 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: I don't know. I couldn't tell. She was certainly on
30 fire and we did not really pay too much attention any more. We just ...

31

32 A. She was burning and we didn't look after that
33 anymore - didn't look at her anymore. We were just in a
34 hooray mood, as we thought we had won the battle.

35

36 LEUT TYSON: Q. I just want now to ask you some
37 questions about Sydney's gunfire.

38

39 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: I would now like to ask you some questions
40 concerning the artillery that came from Sydney.

41

42 LEUT TYSON: Q. Now, going back to the start of the battle when
43 Kormoran first fired on Sydney,

44

45 when was it that Sydney began firing on Kormoran?

46

47 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: We are therefore going right back to the start of

1 the battle. When was it that Sydney returned the fire of Kormoran? How
2 long did it take?

3

4 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Oh, I couldn't tell you any more. I couldn't say any
5 more. We talked about it later on in captivity but I don't really
6 remember how it all really went.

7

8 A. We talked about it later, as prisoners of war, how it
9 really was, how long it took. I don't really know.

10

11 Q. Did Sydney's guns cause any damage to the part of the
12 Kormoran where you were during the fighting?

13

14 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Did Sydney's guns cause any damage to the area
15 where your battle station was?

16

17 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: No, no, no. Later on (the people) who were up on the
18 Bridge and were able to see told us (about it). At the guns we couldn't

19 ...

20

21 A. No, we couldn't see anything. Later they told us the
22 ones on the bridge were able to see something.

23

24 Q. No, but I'm just talking about damage. In the part of
25 Kormoran where you were, was there any damage in that part
26 of the ship or in your gun crew from Sydney's guns?

27

28 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Was there any damage to the part of the ship you
29 were in, where your battle station was or at the gun you attended? Was
30 there any damage as a result of fire from Sydney?

31

32 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: No, no, nothing in our area. Nothing at all.

33

34 A. No.

35

36 Q. At the end of the battle, can you describe what damage
37 Kormoran had suffered as a result of the battle with
38 Sydney.

39

40 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: When the battle was over, can you describe what
41 damage Kormoran sustained as a result of the battle?

42

43 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: She was burning too in the back. So it was a case of
44 clear the boats, the lifeboats, we have to get off. And I ducked down a
45 deck to get cigarettes. And who do I see? Captain Haase, our Second Gun
46 Commander. We always just called him ,Captain'. He is sitting there on
47 his bed. He was always a bit (strange). And I said ,Come on, Captain, we

1 have to get into the boats, the lifeboats'. And he said 'Leave me alone'
2 and drowned. He stayed below deck. I picked up my cigarettes and went
3 upstairs and I still ... by now they had put out all the boats.

4

5 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: We'll get to that later. Let me translate first.

6

7 A. Well, as I said before, it was burning in the aft
8 section and then we went to the lifeboats, but I went again
9 under deck to get my cigarettes and I found that Mr Haase,
10 the Second Gun Commander - we called him captain by the way
11 all the time - he was sitting down there on his bed, and
12 I said to him, "Well, get out of here. We have to go into
13 the lifeboats." And he just said, "Well, leave me alone,
14 I want to stay here," and in fact he drowned together with
15 the ship.

16

17 Q. Do you remember the order that told you to go into the
18 lifeboat?

19

20 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Do you still remember the exact order that told you
21 to get to the lifeboats?

22

23 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Yes, sure. It came down from up there. (It said) we had
24 to get out. We didn't really know our ship and how it all worked. Later
25 on our Stoker told me that our foam extinguisher was located precisely
26 where the shell hit. If our foam extinguisher had been operational, we
27 could have put the fire out. But the foam extinguisher was damaged, it
28 was destroyed by a shot ... I didn't understand how the ship was
29 constructed but I guess you have to imagine something like this: this was
30 the foam extinguisher and there was nothing that could be done. It was
31 broken. They were going to try but it was to no avail.

32

33 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: May I just translate this first. Otherwise we'll
34 lose bits.

35

36 A. Well, it came from up above and that was when we
37 received the order to get out, but as our stoker said, the
38 fire-extinguishing system did not work anymore. If this
39 had worked, then we would have been able to extinguish the
40 whole fire. However, I did not know the ship very well. I
41 don't know what really happened there, but it looks like
42 this fire-extinguishing system was also hit at the same
43 time when the petrol tank was hit and - yeah.

44

45 THE PRESIDENT: Q. Was the Kormoran still moving
46 forward, or was it stationary?

47

1 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Was Kormoran still moving ahead at this stage or
2 was she stationary?

3

4 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: She was standing still. Was finished.

5

6 A. It was stationary. It couldn't move anymore.

7

8 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: There was only one thing left to do and that was ,get
9 out and into the lifeboats'.

10

11 A. Then was only said, "Abandon ship, get into the lifeboats."

12

13 LEUT TYSON: Q. How did you get into a lifeboat? Did
14 you go down a ladder or did you jump overboard?

15

16 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: How did you get into the lifeboat? Did you climb
17 down a ladder or did you just jump over board?

18

19 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: I jumped down. That was it. The others had solid boats,
20 lifeboats, solid boats. I ended up in an inflatable. There were 26 of us.

21 So it was a big inflatable. We inflated it and got in. I only just

22 managed to find a space. What's his name, my colleague, he is deceased

23 now, I met my wife through him, he called out ,Eddie, there is room left

24 in there'. So off into the boat and then we sat there, 26 men to a rubber

25 boat. The best thing was the pump which was a foot pump made of leather

26 had disintegrated as a result of the salt water to an extent that we

27 couldn't top up the air. And we sat in this boat for six days. We spent

28 six days in this lifeboat. Whenever a wave hit, the raft would bend to

29 both sides with 26 men in it. There was a colleague who had a jug of

30 water. Heaven only knows where he got that from but anyway, there were

31 three litres of water in it. So we used it to moisten our lips. For six

32 days we had nothing to eat. There was nothing to eat and nothing to

33 drink. Not a sip to drink. All we could do was moisten our lips a little

34 bit. And we sat there exposed to the sun ...

35 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Excuse me. May I just translate this?

36

37 A. Well, I jumped into the water. As you might know,

38 there were fixed boats, but I went to a rubber boat - there

39

40 were 26 men in there. First of all, they had to be pumped

41 up and I could only find one place that was left for me.

42 There wasn't much space left in this rubber boat.

43 (Inaudible), he was a friend of mine, said - no, a friend

44 of mine through whom I also met my wife later told me to

45 get - "(inaudible), that's my nickname, get in the boat,

46 here's a little bit of space left for you." And then we

47 had these pumps - you would operate them with your feet.

1 We were six days in the boat all together and during the
2 six days, as these pumps were made out of leather, this
3 leather was eaten by the sea water, it was destroyed this
4 leather, so we couldn't get the water out of the rubber
5 boats anymore or pump up the boat anymore - I don't know.

6
7 Anyway, whenever there was a wave coming over the
8 boat, the boat itself was bending towards its sides. All
9 together we had one can of water with us - it contained
10 3 litres of water, and so we weren't allowed to drink any
11 water, we just used it to moisturise our lips, and we were
12 six days in this boat and didn't have any food or anything.
13 We just had these 3 litres of water.

14
15 LEUT TYSON: Q. Who was the most senior person in charge
16 of your lifeboat - in that lifeboat?

17
18 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Who was the leading officer or the highest ranking
19 person in your inflatable?

20
21 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: There were no officers in the inflatable.

22
23 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: And who had the highest rank there?

24
25 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: We were quite a mixed bunch. There were stokers,
26 sailors, everyone all thrown together. Everyone just rushed into the boat
27 to get a spot and then off we went.

28
29 A. Well, we didn't have any officers on board. There
30 were stokers, there were just seamen - all together we just
31 got into the boat and we saw, too, the fact whether we had
32 space or not, and that was it.

33
34 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: We had no boats ... we were pretty much the last ones
35 to get off. The other boats, the big wooden ones, they were all full
36 already. We were the last ones to jump in and get into the boat. We were
37 drenched. So we got into the boat and off we went.

38
39 A. All the other boats, the fixed boats, the wooden boats, they had
40 already gone
41 already - we were one of the last boats to leave the ship
42 and so we just jumped in there and went away with this
43 boat.

44
45 Q. During the period when the firing between Kormoran and
46 Sydney stopped and before you got into the lifeboat, did
47 you see what Captain Detmers was doing at all during that

1 period?

2

3 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: During this period between the end of the battle
4 and getting into the lifeboat, did you see what Captain Detmers was
5 doing?

6

7 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: No, no, no, no. We sat below at the guns.

8

9 A. No, no, no, I was just down there (unclear -
10 simultaneous speakers).

11

12 Q. Now, after you were picked up in the lifeboat, do you
13 remember when you were interrogated?

14

15 (Discussion in German between interpreter and witness)

16

17 THE WITNESS: (In German - not translated).

18

19 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Later when you were picked up in the lifeboat, do
20 you remember being interrogated in Australia?

21

22 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Listen, I've got to tell you quite a story. Listen, we
23 were moving along and all of a sudden ...

24

25 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Can we concentrate on answering the question
26 please?

27

28 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Yes, yes.

29

30 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Do you remember being interrogated at the time?

31 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Yes, that's what I wanted to tell you. I was just about
32 to tell you. Listen. This is what happened. This Rolf Pranger sat next to
33 me and suddenly he said 'Ed, look, there's a factory'. We had quite a few
34 people who had been drinking sea water and had started going cuckoo. So I
35 said 'Rolf, now you are starting to go round the bend too'. But I looked
36 up and suddenly I see four chimneys. It was Aquitania.

37

38

39

40 THE PRESIDENT: Q. No, the question was: do you remember
41 being interrogated?

42

43 (Discussion in German between interpreter and witness)

44

45 THE WITNESS: (In German - not translated)

46

47 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: The question was, however, whether or not you

1 remember being interrogated?

2

3 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Yes, I'll get to that too. We were (picked up) by
4 Aquitania. They let down a ladder. The boat drifted towards it as they
5 let down the ladder. So now we wanted to get up there. But the first
6 person who tried to get up, fell straight down. So then they threw down a
7 rope which we tied around our stomachs and bit by bit they pulled us up,
8 all 26 of us. And none of us spoke any English ...

9

10 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Excuse me. That is also not ... We asked if you can
11 remember being interrogated. This is not about Aquitania.

12

13 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: I was just going to get to that. I am only coming to
14 that now. So now we get on board. They only spoke English, we only spoke
15 German. None of us spoke any English. They started asking questions in
16 English and we didn't know what to do. We just said we have been involved
17 in a battle. They didn't understand. And suddenly someone dressed in
18 black, really dirty, came along and he said ,yes, I speak a little bit of
19 German'. They had got him out of the engine room when we said we were
20 Germans. Then they probably ... him on board and he came out of the
21 engine room. He worked as a stoker down in the engine room and he came
22 out and said ,I speak a little bit of German'. And then he interrogated
23 us. He wanted to know what sort of ship we were from. I said we were Ship
24 41, that's to say Kormoran, and we had been in battle with Sydney and so
25 that was it ... and it was all quite honest ...

26

27 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: May I just translate this?

28

29 THE INTERPRETER: Well, I reminded Mr Büttner a couple of
30 times to answer the question as well as Mr Cole. I'm not
31 going to translate all of this, because I think the last
32 one will be enough. He just said, "When we were brought on
33 board of the Aquitania, we didn't speak any English and
34 they didn't speak any German. However, we were
35 interrogated but we didn't say - we just said that there
36 was a battle and nothing else. In fact, they brought up a
37 person coming down from the engine room - he was black and
38 very dirty, so he must have worked in the engines room, and
39 he said, 'Well, I do speak a bit of German,' and he seemed
40 to - and I told him - that was my interrogation. I told
41 him that we were on the Kormoran and a battle took place
42 with the Sydney and that's all what I said in this
43 interrogation."

44

45 LEUT TYSON: Q. Herr Büttner, do you remember in your
46 interrogation making a reference to the action taking place
47 at 5 miles?

1
2 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Can you remember saying during this interrogation
3 that five miles away a battle took place?
4
5 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: We said we (did battle) with this ship. Which one we
6 didn't know. They said it was a warship and we didn't know anything more
7 than that. We didn't know at all that it was Sydney ...
8
9 A. Well, we didn't know it was Sydney - we just said,
10 yeah, in 5 miles, that was something, then there was
11 something, and there wasn't 5 miles and we didn't know that
12 it was Sydney that was the battleship how we learned.
13
14 Q. But the reference to --
15
16 THE PRESIDENT: Leave it.
17
18 LEUT TYSON: Q. I just want to go back to Mr Haase. Was
19 he injured in the battle with Sydney on the No. 3 gun?
20
21 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: I just want to go back to the battle. Was Haase
22 injured in battle?
23
24 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: No, no, no. I don't know, he tends to have these
25 episodes. He disappeared as the battle ended. Again my Haase had
26 disappeared. As I came below deck he sat down there so defeated he didn't
27 want to go on ... When we were in captivity in Australia and met up with
28 everyone, we said 'where is Haase?' He didn't come along. He stayed on
29 his bed, on his bunk and drowned. We lost two people.
30
31 A. No. No, he was not injured during the battle, but
32 what the problem with him was that I think he was strange.
33 As I said before, I met him again when I went under deck to
34 get my cigarettes, and he was sitting on his berth and he
35 was very, very depressed, and it was always the same with
36 him after a battle. He just left the gun and was depressed
37 for some reason. Then later, as prisoners of war and we
38 all met again there, I asked everybody where's the person
39 we called captain, Mr Haase, but he wasn't there, so
40 I think he just remained there seated on his berth and
41
42 drowned together with Kormoran.
43
44 LEUT TYSON: Mr President, I was going to move on to a
45 final set of topics. Did you have anything to ask
46 Herr Büttner?
47

1 THE PRESIDENT: No, I don't, thank you.

2

3 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Mr President. I would like to move on to the final
4 set of topics. Did you want to ask any further questions? No.

5

6

7 LEUT TYSON: Q. Herr Büttner, I just want to deal with a
8 final topic. As you know, there have been many theories
9 about what happened in this battle between Sydney and
10 Kormoran and there have been many books and articles written about this
11 encounter.

12

13 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: I would now like to move on to the final set of
14 topics of this Inquiry. This is about questions which, as I am sure you
15 realise, have arisen from the many books, articles etc which have been
16 written about Kormoran and the encounter of Kormoran and Sydney. This is
17 what the questions will partly be about.

18

19 LEUT TYSON: Q. The Commission wants to give
20 you as an eye witness an opportunity to address some of the main
21 theories.

22

23 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: The Commission of Inquiry would like to give you as
24 eye witness the opportunity to express your opinion of some of the
25 theories presented in some of these books and so on.

26

27 LEUT TYSON: Q. One theory is that a Japanese U-boat or
28 Japanese submarine fired at Sydney and was working with Kormoran.

29

30 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: One theory suggests that a Japanese submarine
31 collaborated with Kormoran and sank Sydney. What do you think of that?

32

33 LEUT TYSON: Q. Do you agree or disagree? Did you see a
34 Japanese submarine?

35

36 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: That's news to me. No, no. That's not true. We were on
37 our own. There was no Japanese u-boat around.

38

39 A. No, no; we were alone. There was no Japanese U-boat.
40 It's the first time today that I hear this.

41

42 Q. Another theory suggests that Kormoran was cooperating
43 with a German U-boat or another Naval unit - do you agree
44 or disagree with that - in the sinking of Sydney?

45

46 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Another theory is that Kormoran worked alongside a
47 German submarine or another German vessel ...

1

2 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: No, we were entirely on our own.

3

4 A. No, no, we were completely alone.

5

6 Q. And, finally, there's a serious allegation made that
7 some survivors of Sydney were in the water and that they
8 were shot by members of Kormoran's crew.

9

10 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: A fairly serious allegation would suggest that
11 survivors of Sydney who were swimming in the water were shot by crew
12 members of Kormoran while in the water.

13

14 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: No, no. That's not true. No, no, no, that's not true. I
15 did not see nor hear a single shot.

16

17 A. No, that's absolutely not true. I didn't see any
18 shoot - I didn't see anything. Nothing like that happened.

19

20 Q. Did you ever see any survivors of Sydney at all in the
21 water?

22

23 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Did you see any survivors of Sydney in the water at
24 all?

25

26 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: No, we didn't see anything like that. No, no, no. We
27 did not see anyone any more. We drifted off with the waves. Our ship
28 burnt steadily and sank and we were just glad to be sitting in the life
29 boat. No, there was nothing else there.

30

31 A. No, there was nothing like that. Well, the Sydney
32 drifted away. Our ship slowly burnt down from the fire and
33 we were just there in our lifeboats and that's it. We
34 didn't see any survivors of Sydney.

35

36

37 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Now I'll tell you another anecdote. When we were on
38 board Aquitania, we were interrogated and everything was written down. We
39 didn't go to Melbourne. We went the back way via Hobart and then on to
40 Sydney. We were put up in an area of garden plots, the 26 of us. And we
41 didn't know anything about our other comrades. There were just the 26 of
42 us there. And along came an interpreter, Mr Moon, a Jew. A Jew came and
43 sounded a bit Jiddish too. He said that ... and said 'What did you do on
44 board? Did you shoot?' I said to him 'Of course I shot. I was at the
45 cannon and then I worked as Steward in the Officers' Mess. The Commander
46 had asked me if I wanted to work as Steward in the Officers' Mess. So I
47 said 'Yes, of course I'll do that'. It meant that I didn't have to do any

1 seamen's duties. All I had to do was get the meals for the officers. We
2 spent about a week in this area of allotments. It was an area of garden
3 plots near Sydney. All of a sudden this truck pulls up and asks 'Is there
4 someone here by the name of Büttner?' The guy from the engine room had
5 written down all our names. He said 'Is there a Mr Büttner here?' 'Yes',
6 I said, 'right here, here'. 'Yes', he said 'come with me'. So I went
7 along and suddenly he tells me to get into this truck. There were three
8 men sitting in there with sidearms set on edge, three men with sidearms
9 set on edge and so I sat there behind the driver's seat. I am thinking
10 'oh, my God, what's going to happen now?' But the Jew Meier, he said
11 nothing. He didn't come along either. He had said earlier they are going
12 to get picked up. I said 'Where to?' 'I don't know. I can't say'. And
13 then we got into the truck ...

14

15 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Excuse me. I want to translate this.

16

17 A. Can I tell something about the Aquitania and the
18 interrogation. We were not brought via Hobart to Sydney
19 but we were brought to Melbourne - no, we were brought to
20 Sydney via Hobart into a little colony. We didn't know
21 anything about our comrades. Then there was this Jewish
22 interpreter, Mr Meier, also speak like a Jew. Yeah, he had
23 this Jewish accent and he asked me whether I shot and
24 I said, "Yes, of course, I was at the cannon, but then

25

26 later became the Steward in the petty officers mess. Of
27 course I didn't have to do any seamen's work then, so it
28 was pretty good for me. Then later we were again at this
29 colony about a week. Then this truck came up and somebody
30 said from the truck - no, somebody said - not from the
31 truck - somebody said "Mr Büttner", because the guy in the
32 engine room had written down all our names, and somebody
33 said to me, "Mr Büttner, come with us." And then I was in
34 this truck surrounded by on one side three men, three men
35 on the other side - they were all carrying guns - and this
36 Jew, Mr Meier, hadn't told them anything, because he was
37 not on the truck.

38

39 THE INTERPRETER: And that's when I asked Mr Büttner to
40 stop, and let me please translate it first.

41

42 LEUT TYSON: Mr President, they are the questions on
43 behalf of counsel assisting.

44

45

46 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Mr President, they are the questions on behalf of
47 counsel assisting.

1

2 THE PRESIDENT: Yes, very well. I have no further
3 questions. Herr Büttner, thank you very much indeed for
4 giving us the advantage of –

5

6 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: Can I just finish telling you what I was going to ...

7

8 A. May I tell the story until the end?

9

10 THE PRESIDENT: Yes, if it's of any relevance.

11

12 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: So now we drove down to Sydney Harbour, where the Opera
13 House is now. We drove through there, through the harbour and got to a
14 building and the soldiers ... I had to get out. They led me into a room.
15 There was somebody sitting there. He must have been an Admiral, a high-
16 ranking Navy Officer. He was highly decorated with all this tinsel ...
17 whatever it was ... and then he said to me, correctly in German, he said
18 ‚Are you Mr Büttner?’ I said ‚Yes’. ‚Yes’, he said ‚do you know that I
19 went to Germany for Naval exercises in the Baltic last year? I met the
20 Supreme Command of your Navy when I was there’. And then he said ‚do you
21 smoke?’ He offered me a cigarette and later he gave me the whole packet.
22 He even shook my hand and then he just asked ‚I have no further
23 questions’. He said ‚I just want you to tell me the name of your
24 Commander and give me some idea of what happened’. I told him about
25 events of the battle. And in the meantime we have heard that it was
26 Kormoran. Then he said good-bye again and then he said ‚Alright. You can
27 go now’. He gave me the packet of cigarettes and I went on my way.

28

29 A. Well, I just want to finish this story. I was put on
30 this truck and then we went through the harbour of Sydney
31 there where today you can find the opera. At the end we
32 stopped at a large building and the soldiers told me to get
33 out of the truck and I was brought to one room and opposite
34 me sat obviously a very high Commander or an admiral even -
35 anyway, a very high Navy officer, because he wore lots of
36 gold on his shoulders. I don't know what your ranks are in
37 the Australian Navy, but he must have been quite a high
38 ranked person, and he addressed me in perfect German,
39 because then he told me the year before he had a manoeuvre
40 in the Baltic Sea and he had met our superior chief of the
41 Navy, Dr Reider I think is his name, and then he offered me
42 a cigarette and later he even gave me the whole cigarette
43 box. He gave me his hand and he told me, "Well, all I want
44 to know of you is the name of your Commander and tell me
45 more or less about how it was during the battle."

46

47 That's what I told him, and that was only when I came

1 to know that it was the Sydney we had sunk.

2

3 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: He spoke perfect German. No accent at all.

4

5 A. He spoke excellent German (unclear - simultaneous speakers) uniform.

6

7 BÜTTNER [GERMAN]: I know that he was with the Navy ... and he really only
8 wanted to know the name of our Captain and then he said 'Last autumn I
9 was invited to attend Naval exercises in the Baltic Sea by the German
10 Navy, before the war'.

11

12 A. He told me that this admiral, or who ever this rank was, he

13

14 told me that I just have to say the name of my captain and
15 that the year before he was in the Baltic Sea during the
16 autumn manoeuvres there.

17

18 THE PRESIDENT: All right. Thank you very much indeed.

19

20 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Thank you very much, Mr Büttner.

21

22 That concludes the interview. Thank you for your
23 assistance.

24

25 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: This concludes the interview. Thank you very much
26 for your help.

27

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29 THE INQUIRY ADJOURNED ACCORDINGLY

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