

Perception vs. Reality

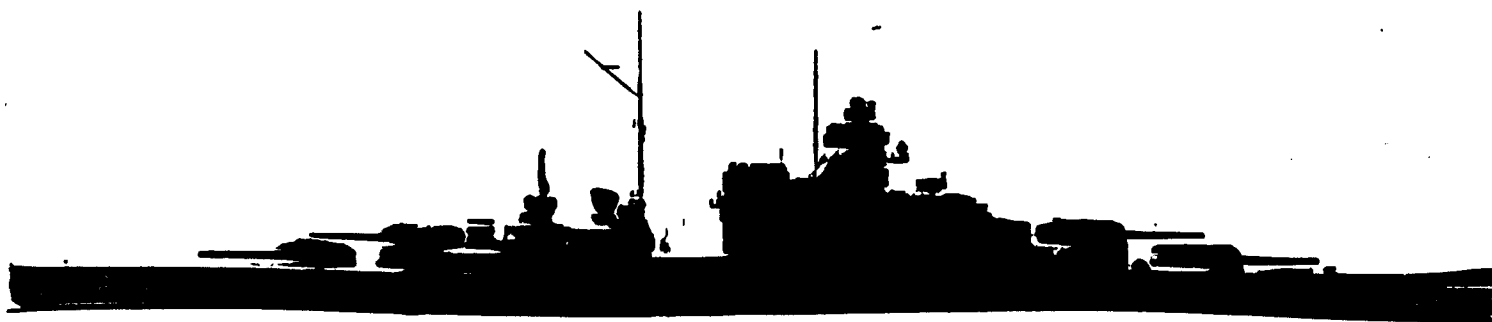
The silhouettes of the German battleship Bismarck and the British cruiser Sheffield are quite different. The length and displacement of the ships

<u>Ship</u>	<u>Length</u>	<u>Displacement</u>
Bismarck	800 ft.	42,000 tons
Sheffield	591 ft.	9,000 tons

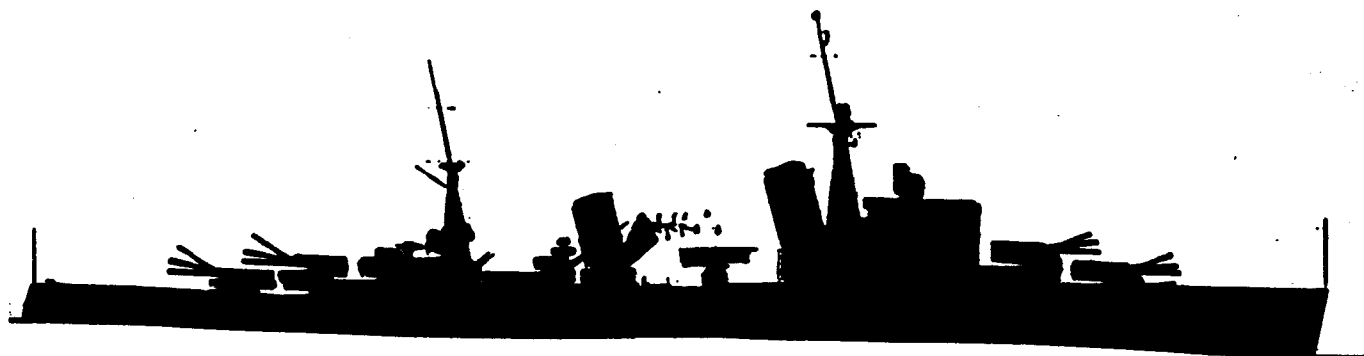
Yet the British pilots from the Ark Royal who sailed with the Sheffield for weeks and were briefed in detail about their target, the Bismarck, attacked the Sheffield on their mission to attack the Bismarck.

How could this happen? When a ship is by itself on the water without a comparative reference, it is not possible to tell the size of the ship with any degree of accuracy. A small ship that is near appears larger than a large ship that is far away.

Bismarck



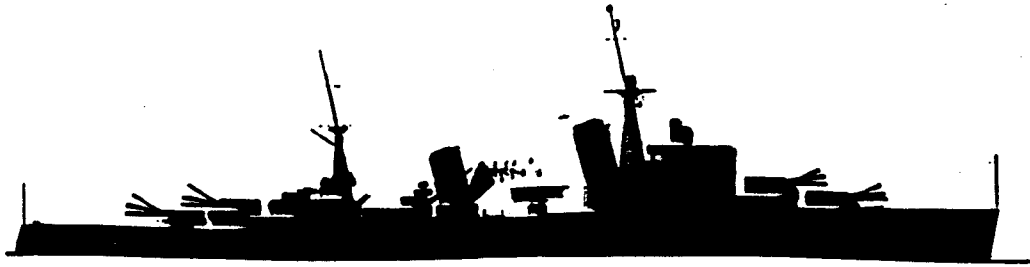
Sheffield



Bismarck far away



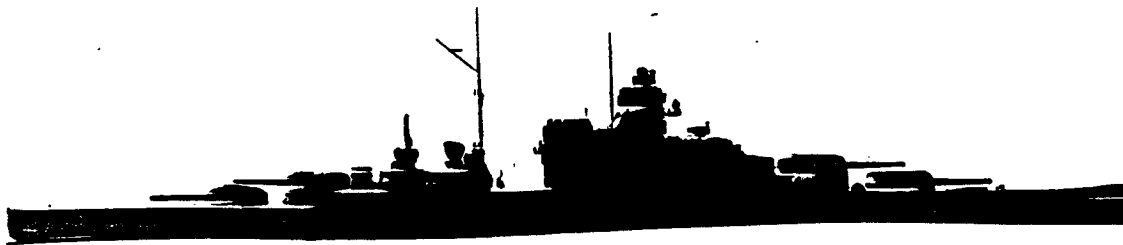
Sheffield near



Sheffield far away



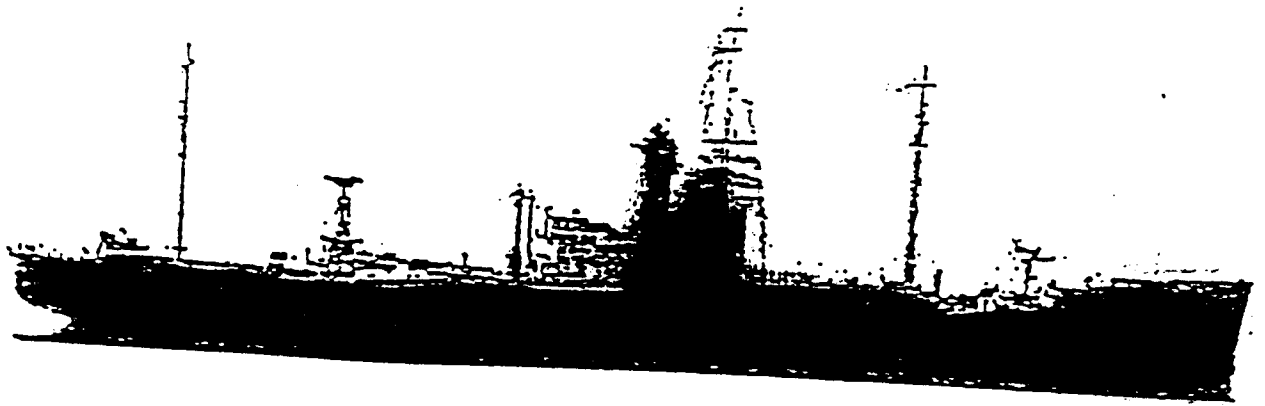
Bismarck near



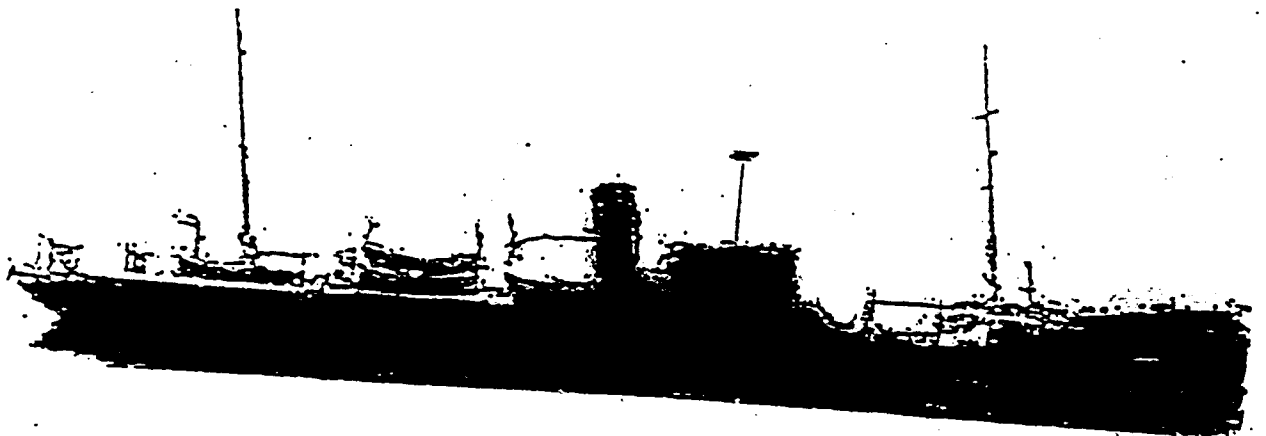
The situation is the same with the Liberty and the El Quseir. The length and displacement of the ships:

<u>Ship</u>	<u>Length</u>	<u>Displacement</u>
Liberty	455 ft.	10,860 tons
El Quseir	275 ft.	2,640 tons

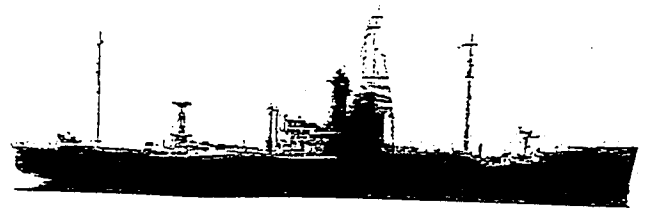
Liberty



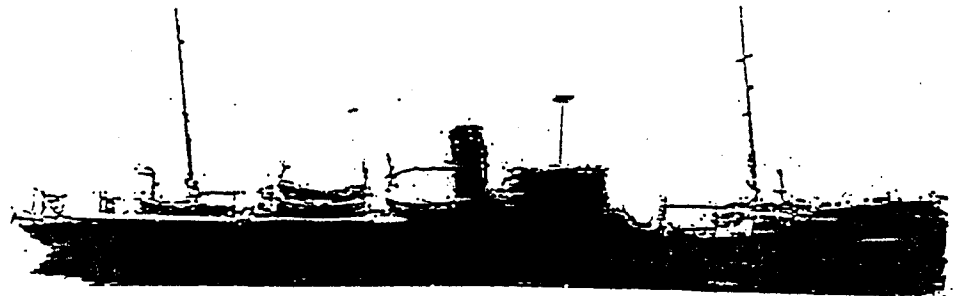
El Quseir



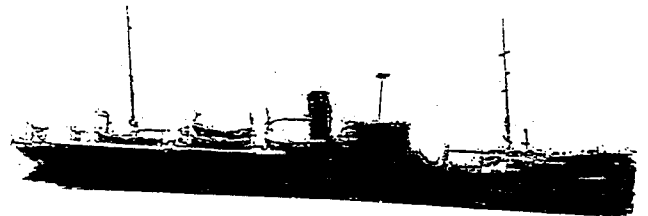
Liberty far away



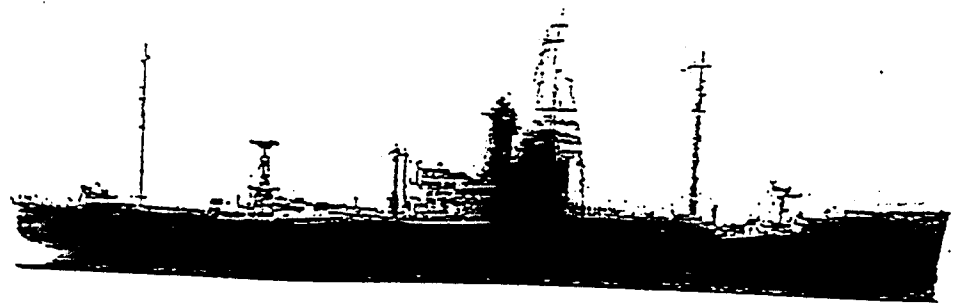
El Quseir near



El Quseir far away



Liberty near



For numerous examples of misidentifications of ships at sea, read *The Liberty Incident*, Chapter 7, "Friendly Fire Kills." In particular note how experienced Egyptian pilots identified 10,000 ton tankers as 50,000 ton air craft carriers (p.81).