BATTLECRUISER GNEISENAU

Gneisenau

Basic characteristics of Gneisenau (Generally rounded off)
Builder Deutsche Werke, Kiel
Laid down May 6, 1935
Launched December 8 1936.
Commissioned, May 21 1938
771' long, 98'wide with a draft of 32'
31,100 tons standard displacement, 38,000 tons full
side armor 13,78”, deck 6.11”
Shaft horsepower service overload, 151,893 for 30.7 knots
125,000 SHP normal maximum for 28 knots
Fuel, 5,610 tons. Range, 8,400 miles at 19 knots.
2 rudders and 3 propellers (15,75').
Crew 1,669 (56 officers/1613enlisted)
Armament: nine 283MM (11.1 inch) in three triple turrets
12 150MM guns, 14 105MM heavy AA guns, 16 37MM AA and 16 20MM AA. The AA was steadily increased as the war progressed. 2 radar sets were initially carried and these were upgraded as new equipment became available.

Classified as battleships by the Germans, in accordance with naval treaties, the allies called the Gneisenau and her sister ship Scharnhorst battlecruisers because their smaller main guns were inferior to battleship guns and they could not defeat the armor of a battleship as the sinking of the Scharnhorst demonstrated in North Cape battle. Despite their shortcomings, these two mavericks would be a thorn in the side of the Royal navy. They sank the aircraft carrier HMS Glorious and 2 destroyers as well as an armed merchant cruiser and 22 merchant ships and sorely embarrassed the British by running through the channel to return to Germany in 1942.

Unfortunately for Gneisenau, she was bombed in a Germany dry-dock and because her stay was to be such a short one, Admiral Raeder ordered her ammunition not to be unloaded for the repair. A lucky hit exploded the forward magazine and badly damaged the ship.

It was decided rather than repair her; she would be converted to her originally intended armament of 3 twin 15inch gun turrets (a three quarter Bismarck!). Here 3 guns from turret Anton were sent to Holland while the entire turret Bruno and Caesar were installed in Norway as coast defense (They were still there a few years ago, now??).

While still under reconstruction work was halted and the ship was scuttled at the war's end as a block ship and later scrapped. Hitler has become upset at a naval battle lost on December 31, 1942 and decided to scrap the fleet. While this was partially rescinded,