

# NARVIK'S BLOODY HELL

HITLER NEEDED IRON ORE FROM SWEDEN. UNFORTUNATELY FOR NORWAY,  
THE PORT CITY OF NARVIK WAS ESSENTIAL TO HIS AMBITIONS

BY KELLY BELL

At 4:15 am on the morning of 8 April 1940 just offshore from the Norwegian port of Narvik, lookouts on the coastal defense ship HNoMS *Eidsvold* sighted the lead vessel of an approaching German task force. Although the Norwegians did not know it, this was the start of Hitler's Operation *Weserübung*, the invasion of their country.

*Eidsvold* was somewhat of an antique. She was completed during 1899 by Armstrong Whitworth at Newcastle on Tyne. Built as part

of the general rearmament of the time period, she and sister ship *Norge* formed the backbone for the Royal Norwegian Navy for just over 40 years. Considered quite powerful for their time, the ships each had two 8.26 inch guns as main armament.

However, both vessels were soon outclassed by the new Dreadnought-battleships. *Norge* and *Eidsvold* were armored to do battle with similar types of warships and they had six-inches of Krupp cemented armor in the belt with nine-inches of the same armor on her two turrets. They were the largest vessels in the Royal Norwegian Navy and weighed in at 4233 tons each while carrying crews of up to 270 men.



Aboard the *Eidsvold*, Capt. Odd Isaachsen Willoch immediately realized the Germans were up to no good and sprang into action to defend Narvik. However, he would pay for his patriotism with his life.

Powerless to defend themselves, the citizens of Narvik woke up to this terrifying sight of Allied and Axis warships. The Germans, initially, hoped to persuade the Norwegians that they were in the harbor on a "peaceful mission as friends." In the end, both the Germans and British shelled the civilian population.