

# SIMON BOLIVAR

## REPORT OF TOTAL LOSS, CASUALTY, &c.

No. 33678 in R. B. Wreck Book, p. 91/39

Date of writing this report 4th January 1940

Vessel's Name *Steel S.S. "Simon Bolivar"* of *Amsterdam* Tons {Gross 8309  
Net 5027Built at *Rotterdam* When *1927* 3 Casualty notice sent to Owner *1/12/39* Owner's reply *27/12/39*Owner's Name *Noninklijke Nederlandsche Stoomv. Maats.*Address *Postbus 209, Amsterdam, C.*Case previously before  
Classing Committee.

Date

Last Minute

Particulars of Classification.

*P100A1*  
*with freeboard*  
*1,39*  
*SS. No 2-35*

*MC 1,35*  
*BS 1,39*  
*TS 1,39 CL*  
*Fitted for oil fuel*  
*327 FR. above 150°*

Date of Casualty *18th November, 1939.*

Précis of particulars of Casualty This vessel is reported to have been struck by two mines, one on each side, off the east coast on the 18th November, 1939.

She was lifted by the bows and sank rapidly.

The Owners concur.

## SOURCE OF INFORMATION.

### DUTCH LINER MINED

### "UTTER DISREGARD OF HUMANITY"

### ITALIAN SHIP A VICTIM

The Dutch liner *Simon Bolivar* (8,309 tons), outward bound from Holland to the West Indies, with about 400 people on board, including many women and children, struck a German mine in the North Sea on Saturday and sank. The provisional casualty list is—

Known Dead	Missing	Survivors
1 British 7 others	12 British 98 others	48 British 214 others
Total 8	130	262

The 262 survivors, of whom 140 were members of the crew, were landed on Saturday night at Harwich. Many were badly injured. Some were removed to local hospitals and the others who were able to travel were brought by train to London, where a number received treatment at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, while others who were uninjured were accommodated in hotels.

A provisional list of survivors issued by the owners' London agents last night states that of the 82 passengers who went from London to Holland to embark 50 have been accounted for, including one who is dead. The list gives the names of 132 survivors who are now in London, 14 who are at Colchester, 17 who are at Dovercourt, and 49 at Harwich, a total of 212. In addition to the 48 British survivors, there are about 150 Dutch and 140 members of Germans, Spaniards, Poles, Swiss, and a Columbian. The 140 landed at Harwich included 100 men, three women, a girl, and a boy who was identified as that of

Suggested Record

Date of Committee

Committee's Minute

SUNK - WAR LOSS 11,39

JAN 5 1940

Sunk - War Loss 11,39

5c.0.38.

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An official statement from the Admiralty read:—

The mining of the Dutch passenger ship *Simon Bolivar* off the East Coast of England is a further example of the utter disregard of international law and the dictates of humanity shown by the present German Government. The mines were laid without any notification in the channel followed by merchant shipping both British and neutral, and there is no doubt that they were laid for the specific purpose of destroying such shipping.

#### NO DOUBT ABOUT MINE

Some survivors expressed the view that the liner had been torpedoed. In official circles in London yesterday it was stated that there was no doubt that the vessel had been struck by a German mine. There are no British mines in the vicinity where the vessel was struck. It is hardly common sense to imagine that a maritime nation should illegally lay mines in channels extensively used by its own shipping.

British mines, it was explained, are laid in accordance with international law. When British vessels lay mines the mine sinks below the surface, because of the sinker attached to it by a chain. Inside the cylinder of the mine is a piston, to which a spring is attached, and the piston is pulled down against the spring of the mooring. If the mooring is broken as a result of the mine being bucketed about in heavy weather, or as the result of a minesweeper cutting through it, the spring works and pushes the plunger up. This action automatically means that the mine cannot be exploded. All British mines are like this. The moment that they are parted from their moorings they are automatically rendered safe. This is not so with all German mines.

#### SECOND EXPLOSION

It appears that the sudden explosion lifted the bows of the ship out of the water, and she began to sink immediately. Destroyers and other vessels were soon on the scene. Captain H. Voorspuij, the master of the liner, was killed on the bridge. The chief officer was rescued.

Boats were lowered on the starboard side. An attempt was made to lower boats on the port side, but the ship had canted and there was some difficulty in doing so. There was a second violent explosion some little time after the first, and shortly afterwards the ship capsized. Officers of the ship stated that the vessel was struck on the port and starboard sides, which suggested that the damage was caused by mines. It was believed that the mines had been put down overnight.

### "Simon Bolivar" Mined in North Sea

#### A HEAVY LOSS OF LIFE

#### Other Ships Mined in Vicinity

The Dutch liner *Simon Bolivar*, of 8309 tons gross, was mined and sunk in the North Sea about 20 miles outside an East Coast port on Saturday, with, it is feared, the loss of 140 lives. There were two explosions. Two other vessels, which have since made port, were also damaged by mines within a quarter of a mile of the position where the Dutch liner was struck. They were standing close by when the *Simon Bolivar* approached.

The *Simon Bolivar*, which was owned by the N.V. Koninklijke Nederlandsche Stoomboot Maats., Amsterdam, had left Amsterdam on Friday for Paramaribo, Dutch Guiana, with, according to the owners, a passenger list of 230 and a crew of 170. Two hundred and sixty survivors were landed at an East Coast port on Saturday night, of which 140 were members of the crew. Many of the survivors were badly injured and doctors and ambulances awaited their arrival. It is stated that the master, Captain H. Voorspuij was killed by the explosion, but that the chief officer and chief engineer are among the survivors.

#### ADMIRALTY STATEMENT

The following official Admiralty statement was issued:—

"The mining of the Dutch passenger ship *Simon Bolivar* off the East Coast of England is a further example of the utter disregard of international law and the dictates of humanity shown by the present German Government. The mines were laid without any notification in the channel followed by merchant shipping both British and neutral, and there is no doubt that they were laid for the specific purpose of destroying such shipping."

Of the survivors landed on the East Coast, it was learned that 32 were immediately taken to hospital. Seventeen were taken to one and the remainder to another hospital about 20 miles away. Most of the survivors were brought to London. Many were suffering from shock and some had minor injuries. Others were black with oil, and many men wearing seamen's shirts and rough trousers looked more like stokers than passengers. Ambulance coaches took 107 survivors who were either injured, suffering from shock, or covered with oil to hospital in London. They included Dutch, British, Norwegians and Germans.

The Dutch Minister and members of the Legation interviewed officers of the vessel at a London hotel. There were people of many nationalities aboard the ship, including refugees from Germany. Nine of them were among the survivors who arrived in London. Officers of the ship stated that the vessel was struck on the port and starboard side which suggested that the damage was caused by mines. It was believed that the minefield must have been put down overnight.