

JIM DALRYMPLE reports on a bid for gold

Let her rest in peace — survivors

SOMEWHERE deep inside the hull of this doomed warship is believed to be a fortune in gold bullion.

And today, 38 years after this dramatic picture was taken, the gold — worth around £75 million — is wanted by two governments and three salvage companies.

But entombed with the gold are the bones of some 70 British sailors — and last night their surviving comrades said:

'Leave this ship alone. It is a war grave and no amount of gold is worth disturbing it.'

This photograph of the 12,000 ton Devonport-based cruiser HMS Edinburgh has never been published before. It was taken just hours before she

was scuttled by the Royal Navy.

She lies wallowing in the freezing arctic waters with her stern blown off, some 200 miles off Murmansk, after days of devastating action by German warships and aircraft. The remains of the ship are now 1,000 feet down on the bottom of the Barents Sea — and whether the gold is still there is anybody's guess.

At a meeting of the Edinburgh survivors association in Cheshire it was decided to inform the Ministry of Defence that they do not want the ship interfered with.

The association's secretary, Mr. Bill Daly, said: 'I had letters and telegrams from about 200 sur-

vivors and from the families of chaps who have since died.

'And an overwhelming majority, around 80 per cent, were quite adamant that the ship should remain as a war grave and be left in peace.'

'It's a decision I welcome. I wouldn't like the grave of a close relative to be messed around, and our comrades who are entombed in that ship are entitled to the same protection and respect.'

Russians

'I don't care about the gold. Anyway, don't you think the Russians would have done something about the stuff? The ship's been lying off their coast for 38 years —

they know about the gold.

'Do you really think they haven't been out there quietly to get it? That's always assuming that it was not buried under tons of silt.'

'I think our association's decision will stop any further British salvage interest. The Ministry of Defence have made it quite clear they would listen to us and respect our wishes.'

But Mr. Daly's views were not supported by another Edinburgh survivor, Mr. Pat Hughes, of Wensum Close, Reynolds Park, Plymouth.

Mr. Hughes is now the resident electrical and mechanical engineer at the site of

the new Plymouth Civic Theatre.

He said: 'I say they should be allowed to go ahead and get the gold.'

'I actually saw the gold being carried on board in Murmansk Bay in 1942.'

Enemy

'A Russian tender came out and they began loading these little boxes, tons of it, into the midships section of the ship.'

'It was the least of our worries. All we wanted to do was get

home alive through waters crawling with enemy ships and patrolled by their aircraft.

'We didn't make it and a lot of us had to spend a long time in a Russian camp.'

If the salvage attempt does go ahead it will have to be before the end of October.

The freezing waters of the Barents Sea would kill any diver in the winter months.

And it will be a grizzly task for these men because the 5+ metric tonnes of gold is contained in the part of the ship where most of the bodies are thought to be.

EXHAUSTS AND