MRM CASE - TORREY CANYON

When to use: After Authority & Assertiveness/Management Style
Messages: Briefings, A&A balance, C&R, hazardous thoughts (later refer to hidden pressure, State of the Ship), lack of a Short Term Strategy

This happened in 1966 when the world was different. In particular the steering system is no longer used, surprise surprise. However the use of dialogue gives you a feeling for what it may have been like. The case study does illustrate many MRM messages.

1. How was the Authority/Assertiveness balance between Bonfiglio (1st officer) and Captain Rugiati? Not great, the discussion about changing course was alarming. However generally they did get on well and Rugiati was a very experienced and respected master.

2. Did they communicate concepts on board? No the Captain made all the decisions and only conveyed some of them to the officers. They had little idea about the commercial pressure to take the direct route to the east of the Scillies.

3. What was the Power Distance like on board? Clearly large between the captain and his men. Coccio the inexperienced third officer was clearly in need of training and more guidance.

4. Were cultural factors relevant? Possibly, but probably not.

5. Were briefings conducted? Not really. In particular there was no Short Term Strategy briefing about the difficult passage near the Scillies.

6. The cargo shifting problem was not dealt with by a Short Term Strategy although they clearly paid a great deal of attention to it. Too much?

7. What is interesting is the commercial pressure to get to Milford Haven. We'll deal with this later in Judgment & Decision Making under the subject of hidden pressure.

8. Challenge & Response was a problem. When was it inadequate?

“Our Response”:
We think the chain of events that ultimately lead to the grounding of the Torrey Canyon off the Scilly Isles is a very interesting one and one from which one could draw a lot of useful experience, especially if you look at it from a management point of view. So let's enter the bridge and do just that!

0400: 1. Off Bonfiglio is coming on watch and everything seems quite normal. The next thing of importance to happen would be the sighting of the Scillies. This sighting was in the mind of Bonfiglio evidently delayed and he became concerned.

0600: Still no contact with the Scillies and Bonfiglio’s concern is now of the degree, that he finds it necessary to contact the Master, who is at sleep in his cabin. Judging from the Master’s answer
he never noticed any note of concern in the message just received from the bridge and did not ask for further details.

0630: At last! The Scillies appear on the radar screen - but in the wrong place! Without consulting the Master Bonfiglio orders a change of course to get the vessel back on the original track. Then, when steady on the new course, he calls the Master and informs him of what has happened.

We understand very well Bonfiglio`s way of thinking: In his mind he made up an order of priority and nr 1 was to bring the vessel back on the track its Master had originally laid down. Nr 2 was to inform the Master of his actions. First the safety of the ship and then initiate some sort of short term strategy. And the first building-stone in that strategy was to wake up the Master and let him take over.

Now, the call from the bridge to the Master was a typical challenge and the response to it was certainly more intense, than Bonfiglio had expected. We know nothing about Mr Rugiati`s morning temper, but it is our opinion, that a man in his position should have enough self-control to realise that getting mad or annoyed in a situation like this can only lead to a negative change of the State of the Ship. We are not sure of the reason for the Master`s anger - maybe he had too high an authority to let somebody else give the order of a course change or maybe his reaction mirrored a lack of trust in his subordinates? Whatever, in this case we think his anger was uncalled for. Instead we would have liked to see him start a professional communication with his 1.Off. regarding the pros and cons of a course change vs. passing the Scillies to the starboard.

In the time span from the Master`s appearance on the bridge until 0800, he and Mr Bonfiglio were busy calculating how to comply with minimum draft to enter Milford Haven. This was a stressor and as such also an increase of the Master`s workload. It also took away some of the two officers attention from the progress of the vessel.

0800: Bonfiglio left the bridge with no hard feelings and the Master with a draft problem. After passing abeam the Scillies a turn to port was required to clear the Seven Stones reef. This turn, however, was delayed due to the presence of fishing vessels, which of course increased the Master`s stress and workload and so did the failure of 3rd.Off. Coccio to supply the Master with correct position fixes.

0840: With less than a mile to the nearest rock the State of the Ship changed from concerned (+2) to a feeling of alarm and even danger (+3). “Hard port” was ordered and then -without checking that the vessel was turning- the Master returned to the chart room.

0850: We know from the report what happened then and so do all environmentalists all over the world.

What - if?? In chronological order:
-Had the Master discussed the passage of the Scillies with Mr Bonfiglio, he MAY have reverted to the original plan and passed to the starboard of the islands.

-Had the Master noticed his being under stress, he MIGHT have delegated the work on the bridge, e.g. the draft calculations to somebody else and instead concentrated on the navigation of the vessel.
- Had the Master concentrated on the immediate navigation of the vessel, he MIGHT have diagnosed the reason for the rudder not reacting to the steering wheel inputs.

Resource management may be hard to handle, but it certainly is a help to know, that there is such a concept.

It is a well known fact that in most accidents a lack of proper management is a major reason. This should be a reminder to us, that with management understanding comes good professionalism.

**Summary:**
- Communication: No closed loop
- Challenge & response: Not done or not the right way
- Authority & assertiveness: No balance
- Management style: A low Tiger
- STS: NIL on navigation
- Workload: Hidden pressure
- State of the Ship:
  - Capt: -1, -2, -3, +3
  - 3 off: +1, +2, +1, +2, -1
  - Helmsman: +1, +2, +3