

**GERMANY WANTS MARTINIQUE—**by ROSITA FORBES

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# THE WAR

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## GREEKS STORM ALBANIAN TOWN

Last week Greek troops drove the Italians out of the Albanian hill town of Erseka (also known as Ersek) and this is shown in the above sketch by a WAR WEEKLY artist. Defying dive-bombers, the Greeks have advanced all along the Pindus Front, chasing the invaders of their country back into Albania, and following to fight them there. By the capture of Erseka and Leskoviku, another Albanian town, the Greeks were able to use the important strategic road running through these towns for a fierce attack on Koritza from the South.

# THE WEEK'S WAR ON THE SEA!

By FRANCIS McMURTRIE

FOLLOWING the crippling of three Italian battleships and the sinking or disabling of two cruisers and two fleet auxiliaries by the Fleet Air Arm on the night of November 11-12, a bombing attack was delivered on Taranto by the R.A.F. on the night of November 13.

It was a clear moonlit night and as our aircraft flew in across the Gulf of Taranto, the warships in the harbour could be spotted without difficulty. An intense barrage was at once started by the anti-aircraft armaments of the ships and the batteries defending the port, but regardless of this, the attack was pressed home.

## Fires and Explosions

The eastern part of the dockyard in the inner harbour was well plastered with high explosive and incendiary bombs. At one time seven big fires were raging furiously and there was a succession of heavy explosions.

After one of the attacking aircraft had been on the homeward course for fifteen minutes, the whole of Taranto was suddenly lighted up by an immense flash, evidently produced by a particularly big explosion. Oil fuel tanks and the pens in the dockyard, in which destroyers were lying, were hit and fires started. One stick of high explosive bombs fell along the dockyard wall, where destroyers were lying.

THIS was not the only Italian port visited by British aircraft. Valona and Durazzo, in Albania, and Brindisi and Bari, on the opposite side of the Adriatic, all received heavy hits from bombs.

Not only was the landing jetty at Valona destroyed, but a munition dump was exploded, violent detonations continuing for twenty minutes. A large ship lying in the harbour was also bombed.

At Bari the oil refinery was ignited, a long tongue of flame ascending to the sky from it. Oil tanks at Brindisi were also bombed.

A further reconnaissance of the naval base at Taranto has established with certainty that three battleships were put out of action by the Fleet Air Arm attack already mentioned.

It could be seen that efforts were being made to save the battleship of the *Littorio* class, which had previously been observed to have her fore-castle submerged and a heavy list to starboard. Salvage vessels and other auxiliaries were lying alongside

this ship both to port and starboard, while nets had been stretched round her for protection against further torpedo attacks. Pumping was in progress and the bows of the ship had been raised, but she had developed a list to

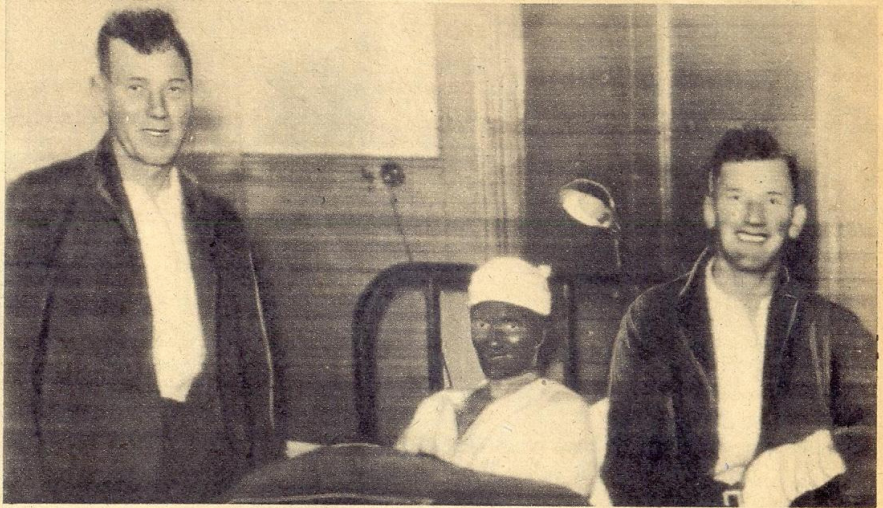
TWO battleships of the *Cavour* class were seen to be aground, one having been beached. An auxiliary vessel was lying alongside her and nets had been laid all round for her protection. The second ship of this type appeared to have been abandoned, for she was lying heeled over to starboard, with only the forward part of her upper works above water.

It was reported by one of the pilots undertaking the reconnaissance that four shapes could be seen under water off the entrance to the graving dock, in the inner harbour. Presumably, these were the sunken hulls of the two cruisers and two fleet auxiliaries which were torpedoed.

During the period immediately before and after this successful attack, several blows were struck by the Fleet Air Arm against the Italian Air Force. Four enemy aircraft were destroyed and one damaged during November 8, 9 and 10; two Cant 501 machines and one Cant 506 were shot down by Fulmar aircraft while attempting to shadow the fleet, the third plane being seen to fall in flames; and on November 13 a Cant 501 was damaged and chased away from the vicinity of the fleet by Fulmars of the Fleet Air Arm.

ITS success at Taranto has directed public attention to the Fleet Air Arm, whose activities have hitherto been

## FLEET AIR ARM'S GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT



You have read the gallant story of the "Jervis Bay"—how this armed merchant cruiser, though out-ranged and out-gunned by the German raider, and blazing furiously, fought to the end to give her convoy of 38 ships a chance of getting away. Through her sacrifice, nearly all the ships in the convoy escaped unharmed. Above are some of the "Jervis Bay" survivors, seen in hospital in a Canadian port. They are, left to right, J. Eggleston of Hull, Dan Bain of Wick, Scotland, and Sam Patience of Inverness, Scotland. On the right is the late Acting Captain Edward Stephen Fogarty Fegen, who has been awarded the V.C. (See page 1420 for eye witness story.)

### H.M.S. JERVIS BAY: Nov. 5, 1940

Sir Richard Grenville calling in the fading sunset light,  
In the harbours where the good ships go:  
"Ho, my masters, make ye ready to acclaim the gallant fight  
Of a little ship against a mighty foe.  
'Tis a merchant liner-cruiser with a convoy in her keep  
(O ye bravest in this harbour, give her room!)  
See, the shepherd flings her life away to save her scattered sheep  
As she steams to meet the raider—and her doom!"  
So they waited in the harbour till at last the firing died,  
And the flames had ceased to leap across the sea;  
Then a battered ship came limping, blackened, weary, full of pride,  
Home to anchor in the haven of the free.  
All the harbour rang with shouting from the ships of long ago,  
As she passed them on her slow and painful way:  
With *Revenge* and *Rawalpindi* standing by to cheer her on,  
While Sir Richard signalled: "Welcome, Jervis Bay!"  
KATHLEEN SIMMONDS (in the "Daily Telegraph").



somewhat overlooked. In the Norwegian campaign in particular the part played by the Fleet Air Arm was a leading one, though the great superiority in numbers of the *Luftwaffe* prevented any striking success being achieved.

Aircraft from *H.M.S. Ark Royal*, *Furious* and *Glorious* were incessantly engaged in operations of one kind and another throughout the day and night. These included torpedo attacks on German ships and a bombing onslaught on the *Scharnhorst* by 15 Skuas, in which at least two hits were obtained.

In this period the aircraft carriers kept at a distance of approximately 90 miles from the Norwegian coast. Although several bombing attacks were made on them, they sustained no damage from this cause; but the *Glorious*, while evacuating the last Fleet Air Arm detachments from North Norway in June, was surprised at sea by heavy German forces and sunk.

Apart from this loss and that of the *Courageous*, torpedoed in the first month of the war while engaged on anti-submarine patrol in the western approaches to the Channel, our aircraft carriers have been singularly successful in all their operations.

H.M.S. *Ark Royal*, which until the completion of *H.M.S. Illustrious*, was our most modern carrier, was sent off to the South Atlantic and right round the Cape of Good Hope in company with the battle cruiser *Renown*, while the search for the *Admiral Graf Spee* was being prosecuted.

In the Mediterranean the value of our aircraft carriers has been fully proved. From the moment Italy entered the war, aircraft from the *Eagle* delivered torpedo attacks against units of the Italian Navy at sea, as well as in harbour at Tobruk and Augusta.

Later the *Ark Royal's* aircraft attacked the French battleship *Dunkerque* at Oran,

and her sister ship, the *Strasbourg*, during her flight to Toulon, inflicting damage in both cases.

## ATLANTIC RAIDER DEPRIVED OF HER SUPPLIES

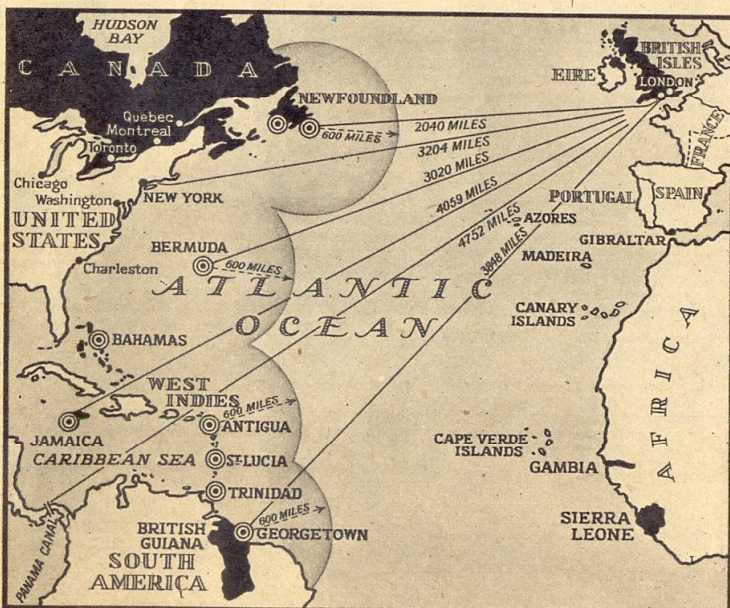
IN last week's issue was told the story of the gallant end of the armed merchant cruiser *Jervis Bay*; she steered straight for the German raider which attacked a British convoy in mid-Atlantic on November 5, and engaged the enemy as long as a gun could be fired, in spite of the hopeless odds.

Particulars have since been received of the way in which 34 out of the 37 merchant vessels in the convoy (the 38th ship had dropped astern, out of sight), utilised the breathing space thus afforded to make good their escape. Although it has been possible to interview only a few of the masters of the merchantmen concerned, it is clear that the whole episode proves the very close co-operation which exists between the Royal and Merchant Navies.

## A Chance Encounter

Ships sunk by the raider numbered four, totalling 25,453 tons gross. Altogether the convoy represented about 220,000 tons of shipping, so this is a very poor result from the raider's point of view.

It seems to have been quite a chance encounter between the raider and the convoy, which sighted each other at 6 p.m. Greenwich mean time (equal to 7 p.m. British summer time). The enemy appeared on the port beam, the distance being variously estimated at from 7 to 10 miles. Immediately the Commodore of the convoy, Rear-Admiral H. B. Maltby, who was in the *Cornish City*, signalled all ships to alter course to starboard, away from the enemy. Soon after this the raider opened fire, his first salvo landing right



America is considering further means of giving aid to Britain. One proposal is that the American neutrality zone might be extended 600 miles beyond the bases which the U.S. have acquired from Britain in Newfoundland, Bermuda and the West Indies. This proposal would bring about a strengthening of the U.S. patrols in these areas and as the map shows, would reduce the patrolling by British warships in these regions, releasing them for service nearer home.

in the midst of the convoy without hitting a single ship.

SEVERAL of the merchant vessels in the port column, as well as the escort vessel *Jervis Bay*, returned the fire. One master is certain that he scored a couple of hits, though this it is impossible to confirm. A further signal then came from the Commodore, instructing the convoy to scatter at the best speed of each ship.

While carrying out this order, the vessels dropped smoke floats, producing a most effective screen. This undoubtedly aided their escape, there being a light south-westerly wind, which drew the screen in the right direction. Weather was fine and clear, with an extreme degree of visibility, all in favour of the raider.

**They Dodged the Foe**

After sinking the *Jervis Bay*, which occupied some time, in spite of the disparity of force between the two ships, the enemy proceeded to seek fresh victims, but the masters of the merchant ships, by skilful manoeuvring and the maximum use of smoke screens, contrived to keep at a distance from the foe.

All this time dusk was thickening, so these tactics met with considerable success. Fortunately, the moon was obscured by cloud, enabling the majority of the ships to evade observation. In this they were greatly helped by the splendid work of the engine-room and stokehold staffs, the utmost speed being made by every vessel.

One master stated that he got 12½ knots out of a 9-knot ship, his deck hands being below helping the stokers to fire the furnaces.

NO account of the attack would be complete without reference to the great courage shown by the Swedish master and crew of the motorship *Stureholm*. Although well on their way to safety, they deliberately turned back and picked up 65 survivors of the *Jervis Bay*, a most gallant action, in keeping with the best traditions of the sea.

Thus the heroism of the captain and ship's company of the *Jervis Bay*, combined with the skilful execution of orders by the masters of the merchantmen, extricated the bulk of the convoy from what appeared to be a desperate situation.

There is some reason to suspect that the enemy raider may be running short of supplies. Recent movements of enemy merchant vessels, which had long remained idle in Mexican and South American ports, give colour to this belief.

Unofficial reports, which require confirmation, assert that the German steamer

*Heligoland*, which left Barranquilla, in the Republic of Colombia, not long ago, has been intercepted by a British warship in the Caribbean Sea and is a total loss. Possibly she has scuttled herself, like so many other enemy merchantmen.

On November 15 four Hamburg-America liners, which had for a long time been lying in the port of Tampico, Mexico, made a hurried departure under cover of darkness, sailing with their lights extinguished and their boats slung outboard. Their names were *Orinoco*, 9,660 tons; *Rhein*, 6,049 tons; *Idarwald*, 5,033 tons; and *Phrygia*, 4,137 tons. All were motorships except the last-named, a steamer.

Next day all were back in Tampico except the *Phrygia*, which could be seen on fire three miles from the mouth of the Panuco River. The *Orinoco* had to be towed into port, her engines having broken down.

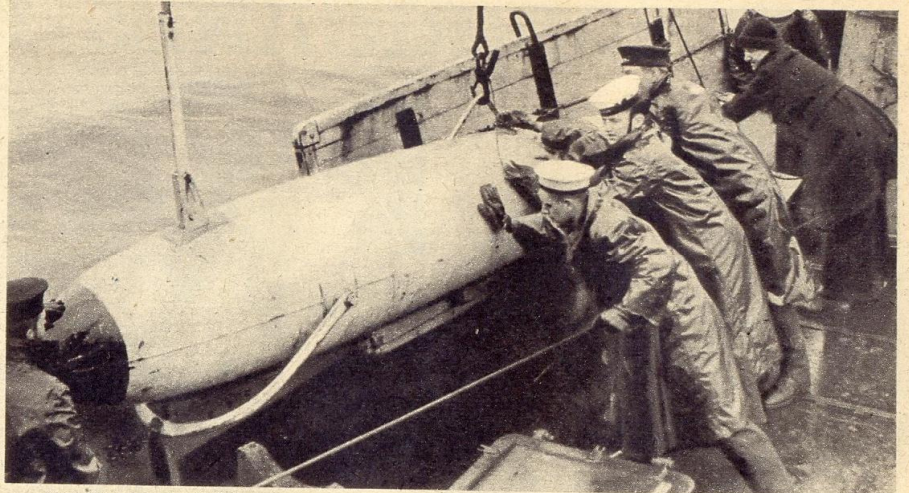
It has been suggested that this may have been due to sabotage on the part of her crew, who did not wish to return to Germany nor to run the risk of being captured by a British cruiser. At any rate, the *Phrygia* was set on fire by the orders of her master, who thought he was in sight of British men-of-war.

IN fact, the Germans were deluded by their own apprehensions. Three U.S. destroyers happened to be exchanging signals in code with a British cargo steamer, the *Olivebank*, which was awaiting an escort. To the alarmed Germans, these signals were taken to be orders for an attack to be made on them, so they turned tail.

So for the time being the raider looks like being denied any fresh supplies from this particular source.

**30 MORE AMERICAN DESTROYERS MAY BE RELEASED**

ACCORDING to the American Press, it is believed in Washington that an offer by the United States to Britain of 30 more over-age destroyers is imminent. It is suggested that this is a far more practical method of aiding this



Clad in oilskins—"slickers" they call them—these sailors aboard a Royal Canadian Navy minesweeper are bringing aboard the paravane. This is a device used in sweeping channels clear of enemy mines.

country to resist the Axis onslaught than merely to sell us ships and munitions.

Of course, there is no doubt that such a gift would be very welcome just now. Although the transfer of 50 destroyers in September has brought the total number available for immediate service up to about 230, many more could be used with advantage in convoy and patrol work.

If, therefore, it should prove that the United States Navy can spare a further batch of these vessels, it would be gratifying. But until a sufficient number of new destroyers have been delivered to take their places in the U.S. Fleet, it is a little doubtful whether any more can be spared just yet.

**WHAT IS THE FRENCH FLEET DOING?**

PERSISTENT reports were in circulation recently to the effect that the ships of the French Navy, which had been lying at Toulon since the surrender of France in June, were about to leave for an unknown destination, if indeed they had not already sailed.

There was a distinct inclination to connect these reports with recent developments in Indo-China; but it seems highly improbable that there is any connection.

Any French naval force at the disposal of the Vichy Government would be so far inferior in strength to the Japanese Navy

that its presence in Indo-Chinese waters could not possibly affect the situation there. Moreover, the only routes by which it would proceed to the Far East would be by way of the Suez Canal, or the Strait of Gibraltar, through either of which passage could only be made with the consent of the British Government.

Similar objection might be taken to the theory that the ships are being sent to Libreville or Port Gentil, in French Equatorial Africa, both of which have recently been occupied by General de Gaulle's troops.

It is, of course, possible, though somewhat unlikely, that the Vichy Government may have plucked up enough courage to defy its German task-masters to the extent of transferring its warships to a North African port, where they will be out of reach of seizure.

A more plausible explanation is that the reports originated from some proposed movement of the French warships at Casablanca or Dakar. But whatever the truth may be, it is certain that the Royal Navy may be relied upon to preserve a watchful attitude in view of the attempt made in October to interfere with General de Gaulle's African enterprise.

Francis McMurtrie will deal with further developments in the War on the Sea in next Friday's WAR WEEKLY.

**WE'RE GETTING 46 FLYING FORTRESSES FROM AMERICA**

BRITAIN is to have 46 four-engined Flying Fortress bombers from the U.S.A.—we may already have some of them by the time you read this.

In announcing that the U.S. High Command had already given up to Britain 26 of these brand new machines which were awaiting delivery to the U.S. Army, Gen. George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff, said: "Britain is supposed to have taken delivery of some of them last Saturday." Deliveries, he added, would be completed by the end of November.

A further 20 machines now in process of assembly at the Boeing Company's Seattle plant were the subject of negotiations which were well advanced, and delivery of these would be completed by March 1.

These 20 bombers are being equipped with America's secret Sperry bomb-sight which is credited with being able to drop a bomb "into a barrel from 10,000 feet."

In return for the Flying Fortresses the British Government is releasing sufficient engines to equip 41 machines of the same type for the U.S. Army.

The 46 planes which are coming to Britain are an improvement on the original Boeing 22-ton Flying Fortress which was claimed to have an effective range of about 3,000 miles—from London to Tripoli in Africa and back—and a speed of about 250 miles an hour. It could carry more than five tons of bombs and ammunition on a trip of 2,000 miles.

The performance figures of the improved Flying Fortress, which have a cleaned-up external design and a special super-charging system for giving greater engine power at heights above 20,000 feet, have not been revealed.



Many new types of planes are now in use by the ever-expanding Fleet Air Arm. This Fleet Air Officer is entering the cockpit of one of the "old faithfuls" of the Service—a Walrus. This type is used now for spotting and reconnaissance duties. It carries a crew of three and has a range of about 600 miles.



As this map shows, Italian Somaliland is very vulnerable to attack from the sea, and to air attack from nearby British territory. Last week British light naval forces bombarded Mogadishu, the chief port and seat of the Government of Italian Somaliland. Previously the South African Air Force had raided the port and destroyed large quantities of military stores.