

CONVOY TO RUSSIA.

The largest convoy ever taken to Russia is feeling its way through the danger belt north of Scandinavia. This is the roof-of-the-world route which saw an Arctic Sea Battle between Nazi bombers, minelayers, packs of torpedodroppers, and submarines, and the strong escort of ships and planes which screened the great armada of freighters taking their precious cargoes to the relief of Russia. For about a week the savage enemy assault went on in an attempt to wipe out the staggering tonnage of weapons and supplies which even the Germans described as /"enough to equip an army". Aboard the convoy flagship SCYLLA, Lieutenant-Commander McKean keeps up a running commentary on the battle for the benefit of the ship's company. Down below the waterline Stokers and Engineers hear an account of the inferno that's going on, as a merciless fire is hurled against the attacking aircraft.

Flying the mast high the Germans were pumping out torpedoes from waves of aircraft coming down from their Northern bases. This is the steel-spattered hell through which British, American and Russian freighters went.

These gallant merchantmen didn't get through the attack without loss. A pillar of black smoke hangs motionless, marking the spot where one in the convoy gave its life for Russia.

An amazing feat of navigation was performed when two of the escort ships came alongside each other and were lashed together while travelling at speed. The minesweeper HARRIER was thus able to transfer survivors from a torpedoed freighter onto the Cruiser SCYLLA. The same thing was repeated later. A difficult feat in peace time, but with an icy wind blowing and the enemy overhead, it was a superhuman job.

When the convoy had passed the danger zone, the commander of the naval escort Rear-Admiral Burnett decided that the SCYLLA had better go on ahead with the survivors. This is how that cheerful Admiral was slung aboard the destroyer which was then to carry his flag.

So splendidly had his guarding warships dealt with the Luftwaffe's Fifth Air Fleet that none ventured out to attack on the homeward journey. Danger there was in plenty; lurking U boats had still to be fought, but the man who guarded the convoys sailed on and won.