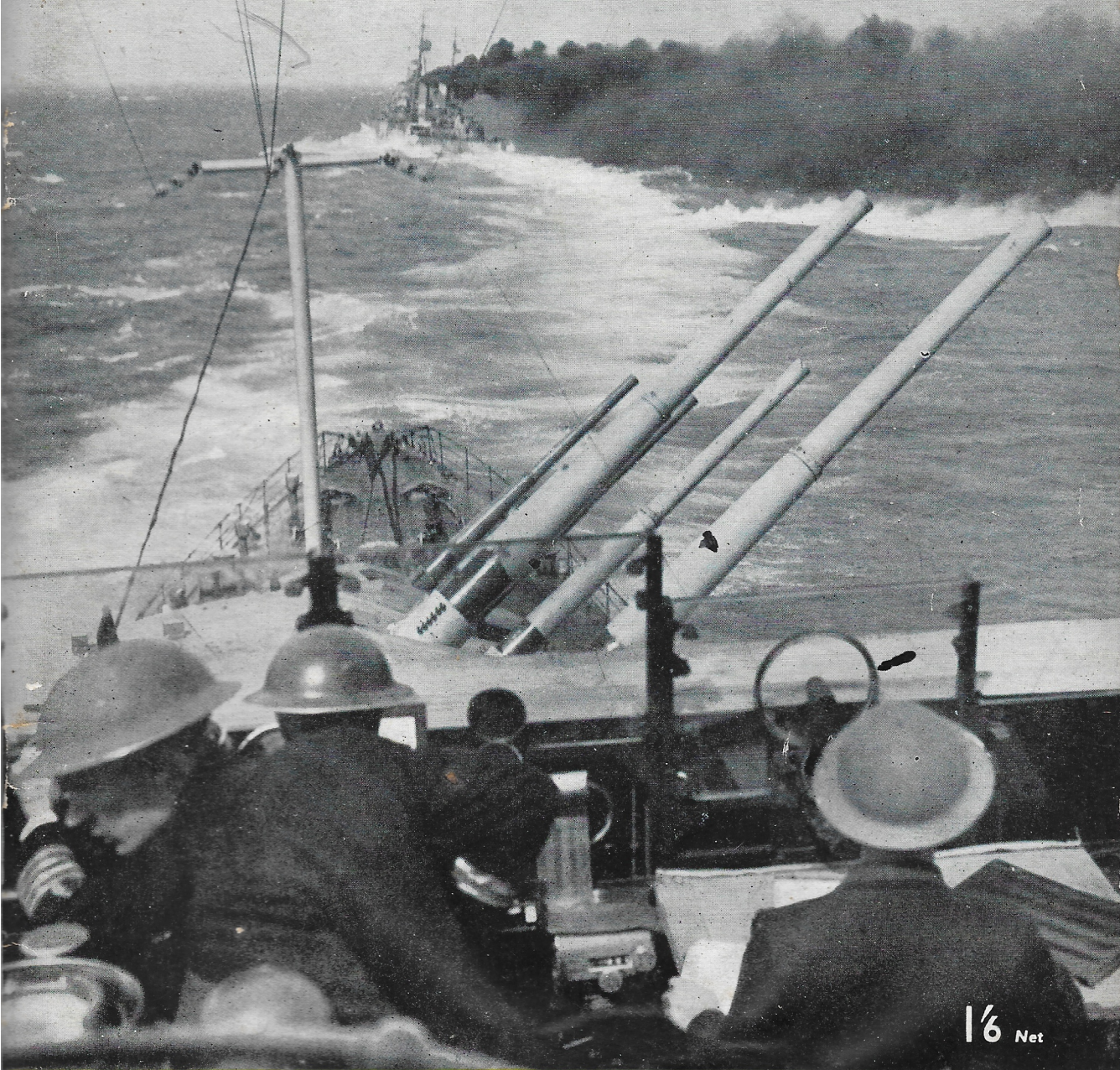


THE **MEDITERRANEAN** **FLEET** GREECE TO TRIPOLI



1/6 Net

THE ADMIRALTY ACCOUNT OF NAVAL OPERATIONS: APRIL 1941 to JANUARY 1943



THE CLAWS OF THE CRAB

This book continues the story of the Royal Navy begun in "East of Malta, West of Suez." It opens in April, 1941. The Italian Fleet was then greatly weakened by the losses inflicted at Taranto and Matapan, but this did not deter the Germans from proceeding with their plan to capture Suez and dominate the entire Mediterranean. During the next eighteen months the Navy, although never ceasing to attack the enemy supply lines to Libya, fought on the defensive and against heavy odds. The withdrawals from Greece and Crete, the supplying of the armies in the desert and of the besieged garrisons of Tobruk and Malta, were its main tasks in a situation which became steadily more serious until, in October, 1942, the Allied forces were strong enough to take the initiative and begin the advance that eventually drove the enemy from Africa. The story concludes in January, 1943, when Tripoli fell into our hands and the Navy again assumed command of the great supply route through the Mediterranean.

I. The Claws of the Crab

APRIL, 1941

ON 31ST MARCH, 1941, under their new commander, Rommel, the German and Italian armies counter-attacked in Cyrenaica. They moved forward in strength from a line west of El Agheila, to which they had been driven back by the advance of the Army of the Nile in its first offensive under General Wavell. The enemy had been reinforced through Tripoli. With its tanks and mechanised vehicles and highly trained infantry, the Afrika Korps had arrived upon the desert scene. The Army of the Nile had not been strengthened; in fact, it had been gravely weakened. The greater part of the British forces in Libya had been withdrawn, in fulfilment of a promise to meet the German armies menacing Greece. The Army of the Nile fell back step by step across the ground so recently won.

One by one the wreckage-littered harbours were relinquished. Benghazi went, then Derna and Bardia. The Inshore Squadron of the Mediterranean Fleet, formed to co-operate with the land forces, mined the harbours as it withdrew eastward, and wondered when it would see

them again. By 14th April, the enemy was back on the Egyptian frontier. Only the fortress of Tobruk held out. It had its back door open to the sea, and the Navy sustained it.

Simultaneously with their advance in Libya, on 6th April, the Germans invaded Yugoslavia and Greece without ultimatum or the declaration of war.

A glance at the map of the Mediterranean shows their strategy to be, on paper, exceedingly effective. Imagine Germany like a crab, sprawling over Central Europe, and thrusting out its claws to the southward. One is meant to scoop into Egypt through Italy and Libya, the other to penetrate through the Balkans and Greece. The Central and Eastern Mediterranean would be enveloped in this armoured clasp; the deadly pincers would meet at Suez. The British Army in Libya was already in retreat, and if the British and Greek Armies in Greece could be annihilated, nothing could keep those pincers apart, nothing except the British Fleet, continuing to hold command of the Mediterranean Sea.

The weak spot in the right-hand claw—the joint in its armour—was the short sea passage from Italy to Tripoli. But the light forces which would otherwise have harried the enemy convoys on this route were covering the passage of the British Army into Greece. Indeed, in order to hasten this operation, the cruisers themselves were acting as fast transports, making the dangerous passage past the Dodecanese during the dark hours.

Until light forces could be spared to raid the lines of communication with Libya, it was left to the submarines, the R.A.F. and the Fleet Air Arm Swordfish at Malta to impede the passage of German and Italian reinforcements. But in spite of the steady sinking of transports, tankers, and supply ships, the enemy received enough reinforcements to compel the Army of the Nile to continue its retreat. It became necessary eventually for Peter to be robbed in order to pay Paul, and the 14th Destroyer Flotilla—the *Jervis*, *Janus*, *Nubian* and *Mohawk*—was detached from the forces in the Aegean and sent to Malta to harry the Axis convoys.

It wasted no time on arrival in dealing with the right-hand claw. On 15th April, a reconnaissance Swordfish reported a convoy of five merchant ships, escorted by three destroyers, bound for Tripoli. Under cover of rain and mist the four destroyers slipped out of harbour, and at 2 a.m. the *Jervis* sighted ships to the southward.

The weather had cleared: it was a moonlit night, and blowing freshly from the north-west. Captain Mack led his flotilla in line ahead round the rear of the convoy so that the targets would be silhouetted against the moon. From subsequent events it appears likely that the enemy was expecting to be joined by reinforcements. If the British destroyers were seen at all, there were no misgivings until the *Jervis* opened fire upon one of the escorting destroyers as she ranged abeam of her. She poured pom-pom and 4.7 inch into her for five minutes and left her sinking. The *Jervis* next engaged

another destroyer and battered her into silence. She then selected the rear merchant ship as her target. The *Nubian* followed suit, after which the *Janus* and the *Nubian* transferred their attention to the next ship in the line.

At this point another of the enemy destroyers was sighted by the *Mohawk*, rushing past her at high speed. The *Mohawk* engaged her for some minutes; then, seeing her stopped and on fire, followed the *Nubian* to the head of the line to attack the leading ship of the convoy which was still undamaged. This vessel showed unusual initiative in an attempt to ram the *Mohawk*, and as Commander Eaton altered course to avoid collision, his ship was struck by a torpedo. It was probably at this moment that another enemy destroyer, a new arrival, joined in the fight, unnoticed in the smoke of the mêlée. Although the *Mohawk*'s stern had been blown off by the explosion of the torpedo and the after part of the ship was under water, her foremost guns opened fire on the undamaged merchant ship and continued to engage her until she lay stopped, blazing fiercely. But for this gallant persistence, the leading ship in the convoy might have escaped.

In the meanwhile, the *Jervis* was engaging ships at ranges varying from 50 yards to a mile. She found herself at one moment showered with fragments of shells, as an ammunition ship in the convoy blew up with an enormous explosion. Smoke and flames leaped 2,000 feet into the darkness; the sea appeared to have turned into a boiling cauldron.

A big enemy destroyer at the head of the convoy showed fight and came at the *Jervis* as if intending to ram her; at the last moment, though, she altered course, passing too close to the *Jervis* to allow the 4.7-inch guns to be used. The *Jervis*, however, raked her with pom-pom and machine-gun fire and the *Janus* obligingly finished her off.

It was a wild scene upon which the moon looked down through drifting clouds. Smoke

poured from the burning wrecks, blown by the wind across a stormy sea that the conflagrations flecked wine red. Backwards and forwards through this billowing curtain ranged the destroyers. They hunted in couples, the Jervis and Janus, Nubian and—until she was torpedoed—the Mohawk. The white-hot flashes of their guns and bursting shells illuminated them momentarily to each other. The vivid light revealed the flying spray split by their bows, the ghostly superstructures and raking funnels, the clusters of staring human faces, each encircled by the brim of a shrapnel helmet, in the rear of pom-poms and machine-guns and torpedo tubes. Round all this chiaroscuro of fury curved the darkness, punctured and rent by the arcs of tracer bullets and by explosions.

Although most of the Mohawk's stern had

been blown away, the propellers were still there, and the undaunted engineering staff decided to attempt to get way on the ship.

They were engaged on this task when out of the smoke and darkness another torpedo struck the Mohawk, and she began to sink. When she was on her beam ends, with the after half submerged, her captain gave the order to abandon ship. The ship's company was presently picked up by the Jervis and the Nubian. One hundred and sixty-eight officers and men were saved, including the captain. "Roll out the barrel!" they sang lustily in chorus, guiding the rescuing destroyers through the darkness from one raft to another.

The bag for the night was three destroyers and five merchantmen. One of them was subsequently found ashore abandoned, in the

AID FOR GREECE. The cruiser Ajax lands men and equipment at the Piraeus, the port of Athens. They wait on the quayside ready to move north to meet the threat from the German armies assembling on the Greek and Yugoslav frontiers.



neighbourhood of Sfax on the Tunisian coast.

In his despatch dealing with the matter, the captain of the *Jervis* described the action as "the skirmish off Sfax."

Six days later, before the moment came for the Navy to pit itself against the inexorable advance of the German left-hand claw, the Commander-in-Chief decided to intensify the attempt to crack the right-hand one by bombarding Tripoli with the battle fleet. The bombardment was carried out early on the morning of 21st April from inside enemy minefields, flares being dropped and spotting carried out by aircraft from the aircraft-carrier *Formidable*. A raid by the R.A.F., in which 10 tons of bombs were dropped, preceded the bombardment. The Navy's guns then flung 530 tons of shells into the place. Numerous merchant ships and a destroyer were sunk in the harbour. Immense damage was done to buildings, power stations and sidings ashore. The operation took the fleet 900 miles from its base, within range of enemy airfields capable of releasing clouds of bombers and torpedo-carrying

aircraft against the bombarding squadron. It was an exploit of shrewdly calculated audacity.

The expected counter-attack from the air did not in fact materialise; nothing happened. There was almost a feeling of anticlimax on the bridge of the flagship as the fleet re-formed and steamed east again.

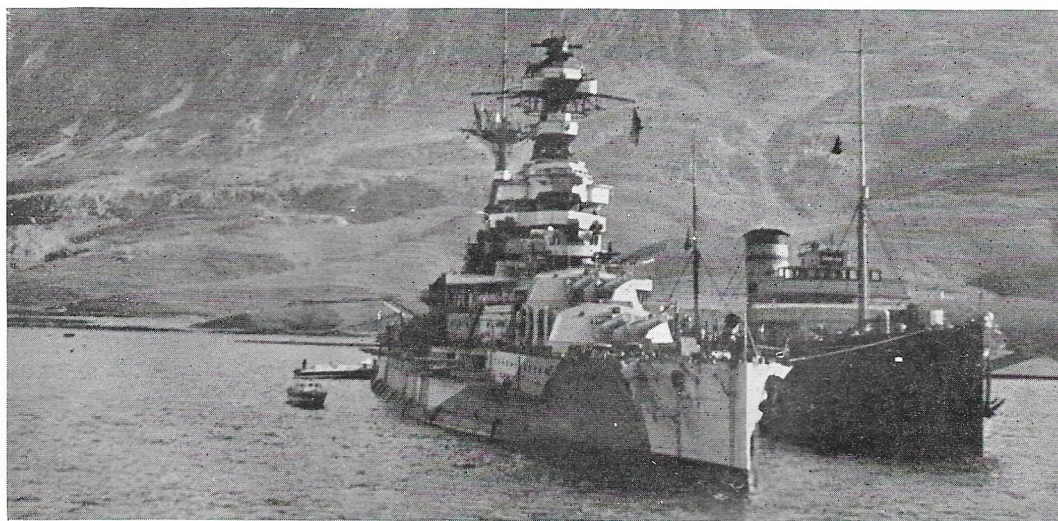
"Well," said the Commander-in-Chief to Commodore Edelsten, his Chief of Staff, "what shall we do now?"

The dawn was coming. Astern, a pall of smoke and dust tinged with the glow of fires mounting to the zenith marked the accomplishment of what they had set out to do.

"Let's have a cup of coffee," suggested the Chief of Staff. "All right," agreed the Admiral. He was in all things the man of action, but he hadn't thought of coffee. "And I will make it."

The fleet returned to Alexandria with the loss of one Fulmar. There was no other casualty. The *Formidable's* Fulmars accounted for ten enemy aircraft, mostly shadowers, on the passage.

Meanwhile, things were not going well



QUIET BEFORE STORM AT SUDA. The battleship *Barham* is oiling in Suda Bay from the tanker secured alongside. In Greece the Army was falling back. On 16th April the decision to withdraw was taken, and the Mediterranean Fleet prepared for the difficult operation.

for the Allies in Greece. The Germans had probably massed 250,000 men in Bulgaria for the invasion of Thrace. Other mechanised hordes were pouring through Yugoslavia, through the Monastir gap and the valley of the Vardar, supported by bombers which by sheer numerical superiority blasted a way for the tanks pouring south. A thin Greek and British line stretched from the snows of the Albanian frontier eastward and south-eastward to Mount Olympus and the sea: by 14th April they were fighting a rearguard action as they withdrew to the Thermopylae position. On the 15th, Rear-Admiral H. T. Baillie-Grohman, C.B., D.S.O., O.B.E., went to Athens to take stock of a situation that had already assumed grave possibilities.

On 16th April, the Naval, Military and Air Force Commanders-in-Chief met in conference on board Admiral Cunningham's flagship. The decision was taken to withdraw the troops from Greece. The collapse of Yugoslavia and the overwhelming of the Greek left wing, the inadequacy of the air forces to meet the ceaselessly reinforced bombing onslaught, the lack of good supply ports since the destruction of the Piraeus—all these factors contributed to make this resolve inevitable.

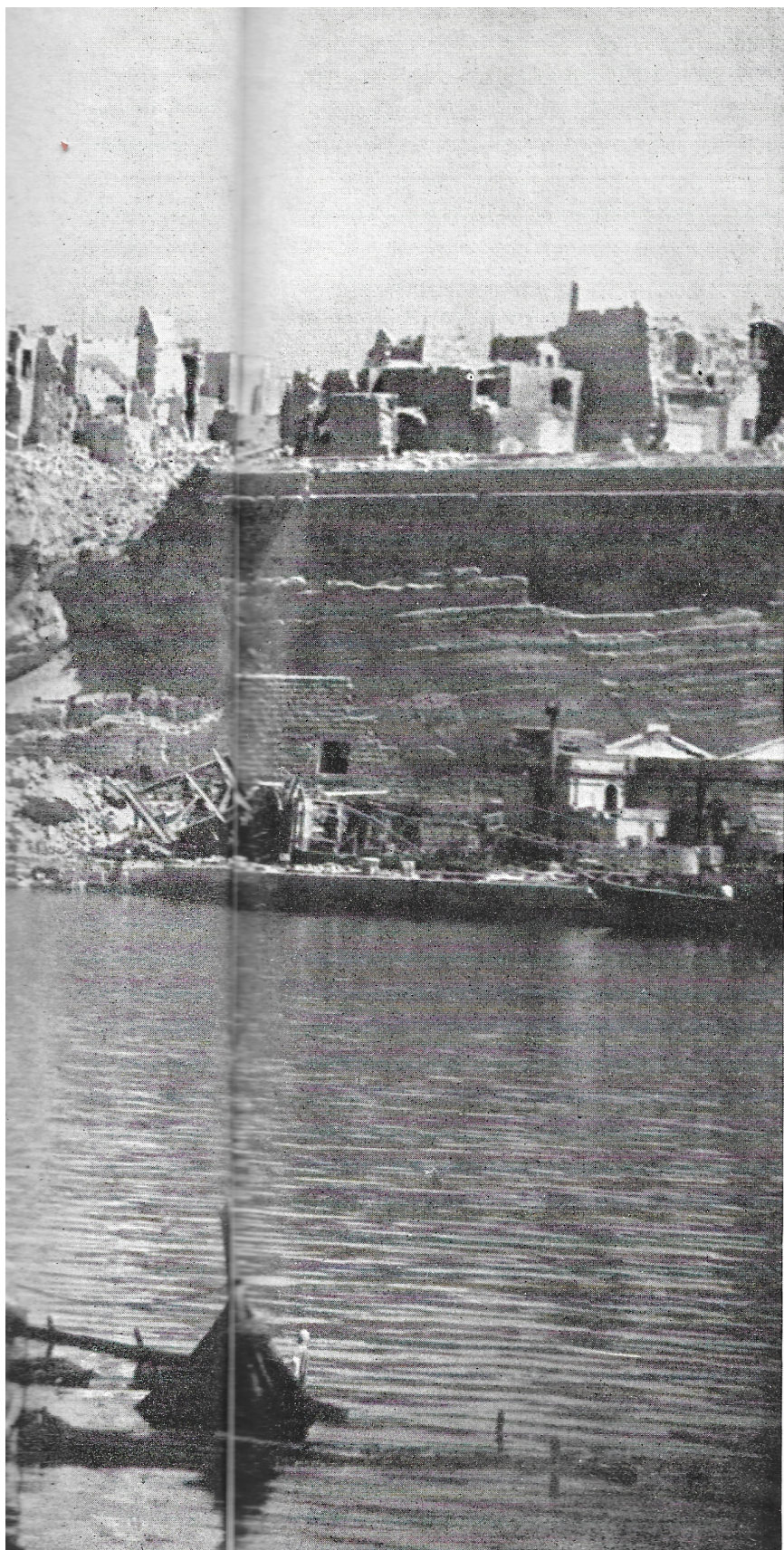
The operation, one of the most intricate and difficult ever undertaken by land and sea forces, required swift organisation and inter-service planning. It was ultimately decided to commence the evacuation on 28th April. But the Army was now falling back under a practically unopposed and continuous air attack. On 21st April, the Greek Army in the Epirus capitulated. The date for the evacuation was moved forward to the night of the 24th. The momentum of the German mechanised advance was such that it was evident that the entire embarkation would have to be carried out within the next three or four days. Estimates of numbers to be withdrawn varied; most were in the region of 50,000.

Rear-Admiral Baillie-Grohman was placed

in charge of the embarkation operations in Greece. Major-General E. C. Weston, Royal Marines, sent to establish a Royal Marine unit at Suda Bay, found himself senior officer ashore and took command of all British forces in Crete. Vice-Admiral H. D. Pridham-Wippell, C.V.O., Second-in-Command, Mediterranean Fleet, with his light forces based on Suda Bay, commanded operations afloat. All available cruisers and destroyers were sent into the Aegean to act under his orders. The Greek Admiralty offered all of the Greek Fleet to the British Commander-in-Chief at Alexandria, to operate as he saw fit; he accepted the offer, welcoming it.

At this sombre moment in the north, the situation looking westward from Alexandria appeared reasonably stable. Tobruk, though heavily bombed, had been reinforced with tanks by the Inshore Squadron and was holding out bravely. A daily average of 400 tons of stores was being unloaded. The little gunboats Aphis and Ladybird, everlastingly bombed, were maintaining their support of the Army's flank. The cruiser Gloucester had been sent to Malta to support the 14th Flotilla in its convoy raids, which had just resulted in the sinking of a 4,000-ton transport. Under cover of Force H at Gibraltar, reinforcements for the Fleet—the cruiser Dido, the minelayer Abdiel and five destroyers—were coming through the Western Mediterranean. The Ark Royal was carrying more Hurricanes to Malta. The submarine Regent, having entered the Gulf of Kotor to embark the British Minister to Yugoslavia, found it in enemy hands and escaped, after a dive-bombing attack, by diving and navigating the gulf submerged.

Such were the principal events crowding those fateful hours. The right claw of the crab was stopped on the frontier. Nothing more could be done in the west. The left-hand claw was penetrating Greece ever more deeply; and in the Aegean the Navy set its face towards the appointed task.



11. The Storm Breaks on Malta

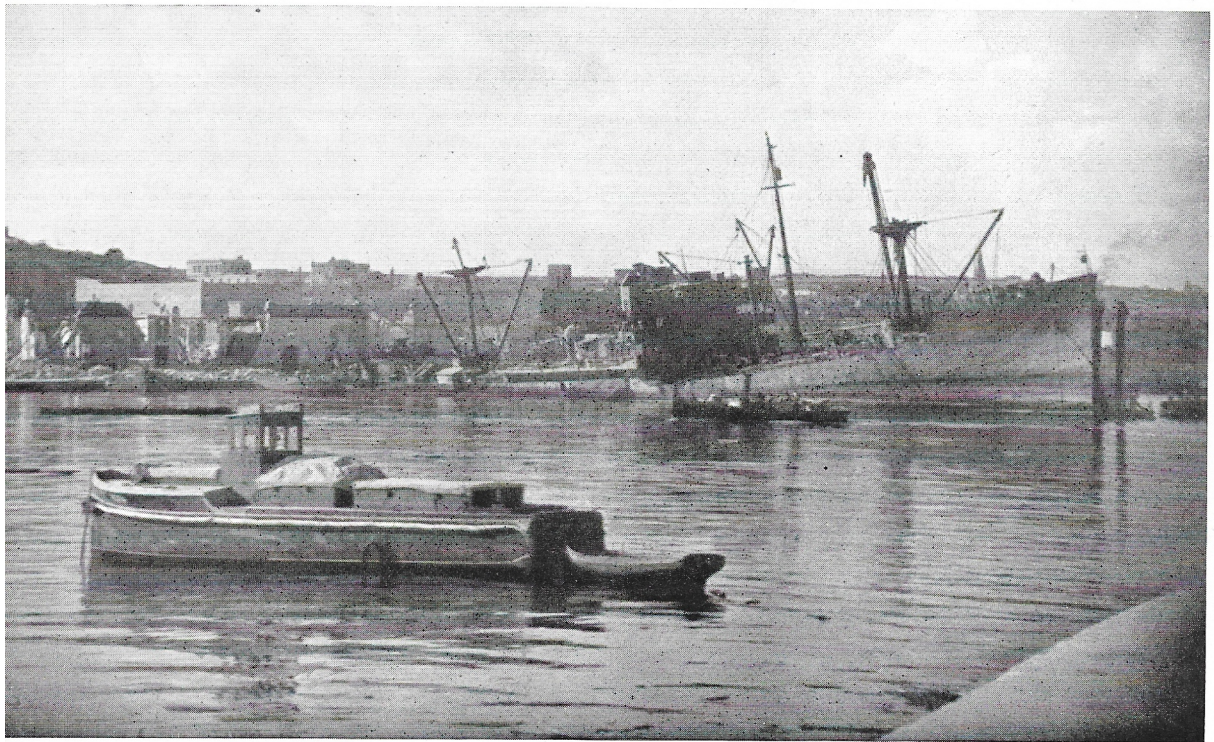
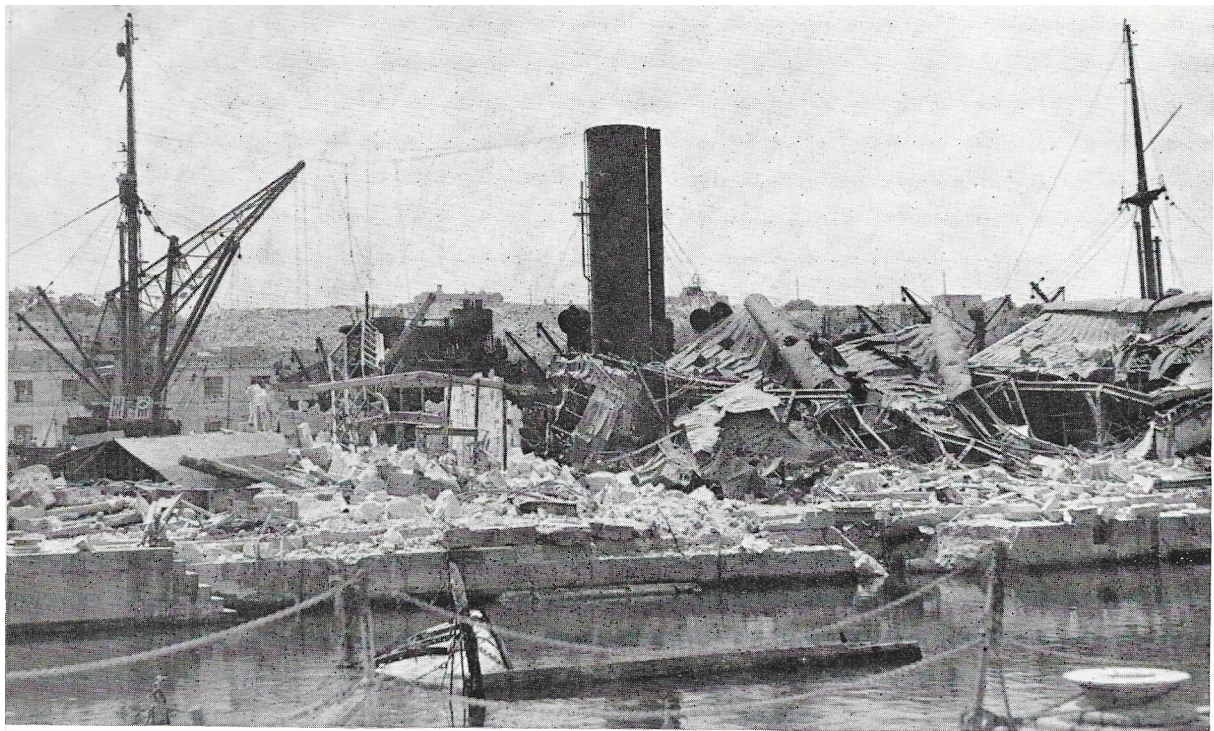
JANUARY—MAY, 1942

MALTA WAS THE FOX gnawing into the vitals of Italy. It was Malta from which the British submarines slid out to take their toll of the Tripoli convoys; Malta that sent the Swordfish and Wellingtons to swoop on the tankers and ammunition ships whose cargoes were the very life of the dwindling Italian empire; Malta whose destroyers struck in the darkness and passed on unscathed, leaving death behind them.

But if Malta were eliminated then there could be no stopping supplies to Rommel. Then there would be no stopping Rommel—Egypt, Suez, even perhaps India, to join hands there with Japan. It must all have looked feasible from a railway siding on the Brenner Pass.

The plan, as it gradually unfolded itself before Maltese eyes, reddened with limestone dust and lack of sleep, was simple enough. Based on overwhelming air superiority with practically unlimited replacements, it aimed first of all at eliminating the island's airfields and fighter opposition; then it was to be the turn of the dockyard and submarine base, the shipping and essential services of the harbours; then would come the destruction of all stores, barracks and communications; and, lastly, the mining of all approaches to the island so that no one could come to the island's succour. This programme, nicely rounded off, would then have put paid to Malta.

During December, 1941, January, 1942 (when Vice-Admiral Sir Ralph Leatham,



THE DESTRUCTION GROWS. In the dockyard, rapidly becoming a waste of rubble and twisted girders, the merchant vessel *Troilus*, *above*, is seen in dry dock, the wharf beside her reduced to wreckage. *Below*, the *Pampas* has sunk at her moorings after a heavy air attack.

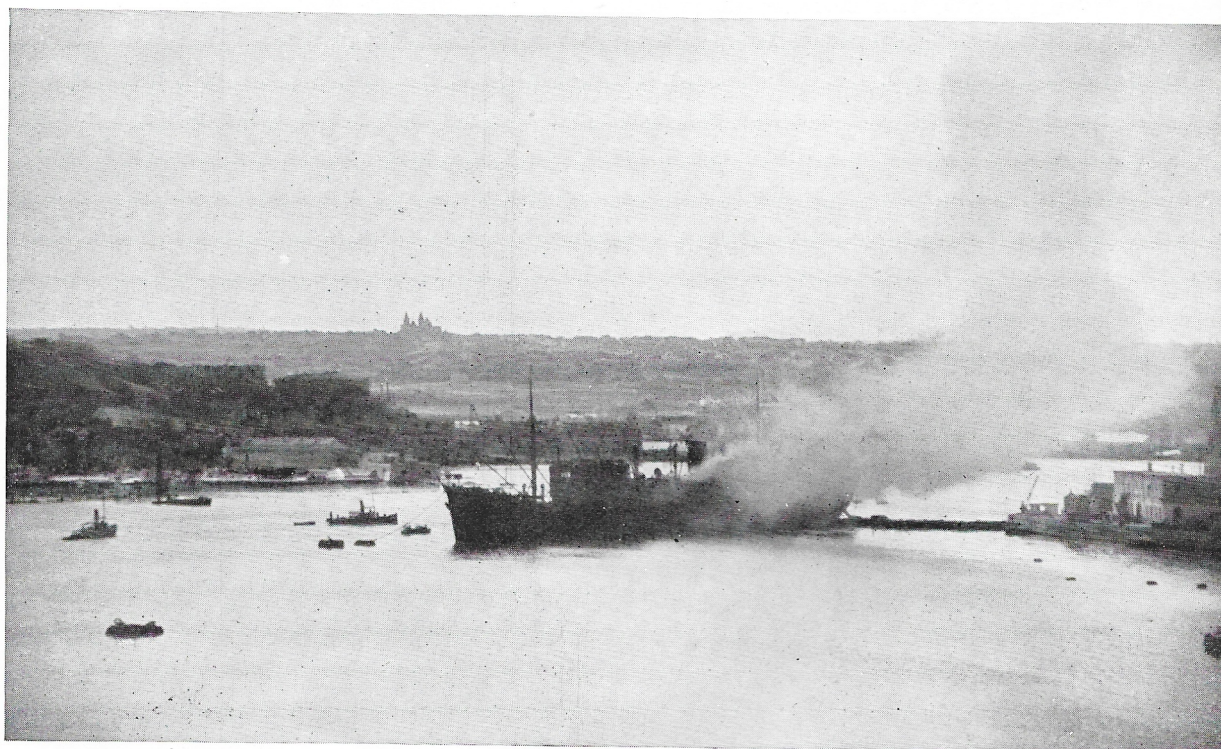
K.C.B., relieved Vice-Admiral W. T. R. Ford, K.B.E., C.B., as Vice-Admiral, Malta), and February, the incessant raids gradually increased in savagery. It was as if the Axis forces were themselves incredulous that the small island could endure the punishment they thought at first would suffice to batter it into oblivion.

The airfields became untenable by bombers, but a few naval Albacores and Swordfish continued to dodge their way into the air over craters and unexploded bombs, and by superhuman efforts a tiny striking force kept up the attacks on Rommel's supplies. The submarines, stoically accepting the conditions, their living quarters a focus of every raid, their boats and resting crews compelled to spend daylight hours at the bottom of the harbour, grimly stuck it out, and continued to wage ferocious warfare against their accustomed targets.

Strained to their limits, the patched and battered Hurricanes hit back with the fury of desperation; they even contrived fighter support for a small convoy that got in during January with ammunition. But the attempt to get another small convoy through in February had to be abandoned.

Admiral Vian was sent to make another attempt in March. He fell in with the Italian fleet plus the Luftwaffe, but by brilliant handling of his forces contrived not only to extricate his convoy of four ships from destruction, but to inflict considerable damage on the enemy. His flagship, the *Naiad*, had been sunk by a U-boat earlier in the month, and he now flew his flag in the *Cleopatra*. His force was further strengthened by the anti-aircraft cruiser *Carlisle*, and by the *Penelope* from Malta with the *Lively* in attendance.

The enemy came south in two separate



A CONVOY SURVIVOR IS HIT. The s.s. Talabot, seen on fire, was one of two ships from a convoy of four to make harbour in March, 1942. She was bombed and sunk soon after arrival in Grand Harbour, but being berthed in shallow water she settled only a few feet, and much of her cargo was saved.

forces, the first one consisting of one 8-inch and three 6-inch cruisers, and the second of the battleship *Littorio*, two 8-inch, and three 6-inch cruisers. The *Littorio* had apparently out-steamed her destroyers in her haste to intercept the British convoy.

Very much in brief, Admiral Vian's plan was to intervene a smoke curtain between the raiders and the convoy and to attack with torpedoes under cover of the smoke should the enemy attempt to break through in pursuit.

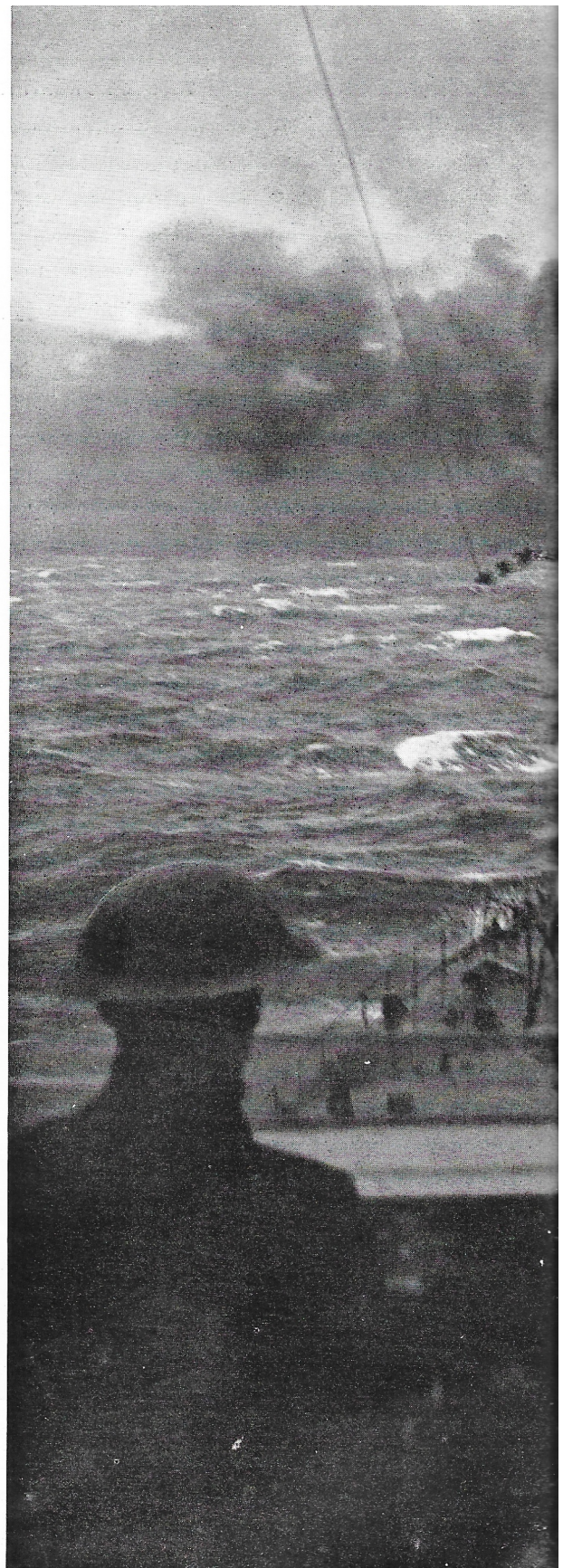
Favoured by a strong south-easterly wind, this plan, brilliantly executed, enabled him to drive off the first enemy force, but while he had gone off with his cruisers in search of two damaged enemy ships, the unsuspected battleship contingent bore down on the convoy.

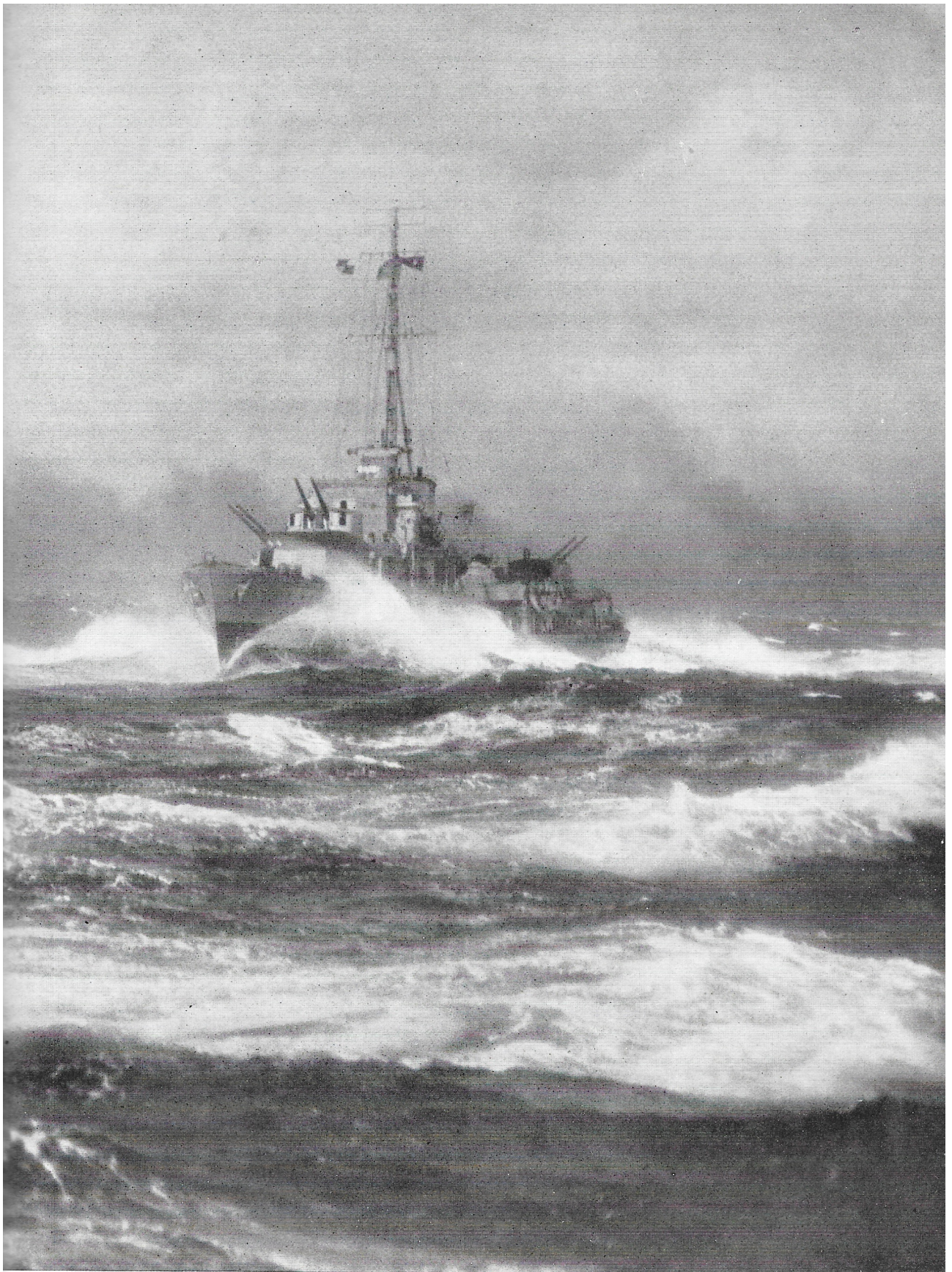
The *Sikh*, *Havock*, *Lively* and *Hero* proceeded to attack with gun and torpedo. Although straddled continuously by 15-inch shells, one of which hit but did not disable the *Lively*, they succeeded in holding off the threat to the convoy until the cruisers returned.

The famous 14th Flotilla, the *Kelvin*, *Kipling*, *Kingston* and *Legion* led by the veteran *Jervis*, with the cruiser flagship *Cleopatra* and the *Euryalus* in support, then went in to attack with torpedoes. The *Littorio* was hit by a torpedo and by the cruisers' gunfire, and a cruiser was seriously damaged: they had no stomach for more, and the whole force then retreated. Before they reached their base the submarine *Urge* picked off the damaged cruiser.

Under ceaseless air attacks and in the teeth of a gale the convoy made its way to Malta. One of the four ships was sunk when only ten miles south of the island, and another, the *Breconshire*, was hit when

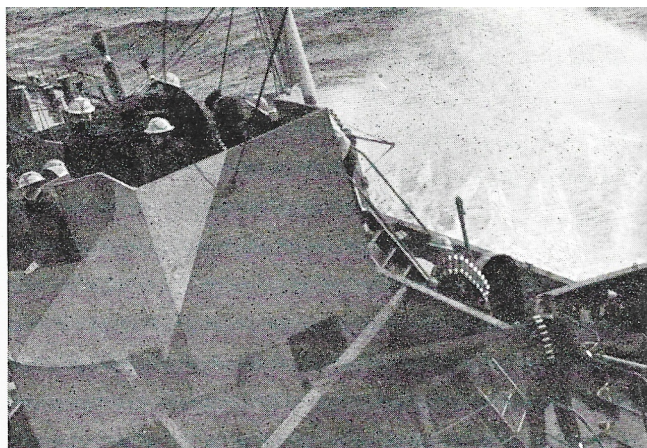
SCREEN FOR THE CONVOY. The cruiser *Cleopatra*, ahead, lays a smoke screen as enemy cruisers approach, while the *Euryalus* trains her guns ready to open fire. The convoy, which included the *Breconshire*, was bound for Malta in March, 1942, escorted by a small force of cruisers and destroyers. This photograph and those on the following three pages cover the action.



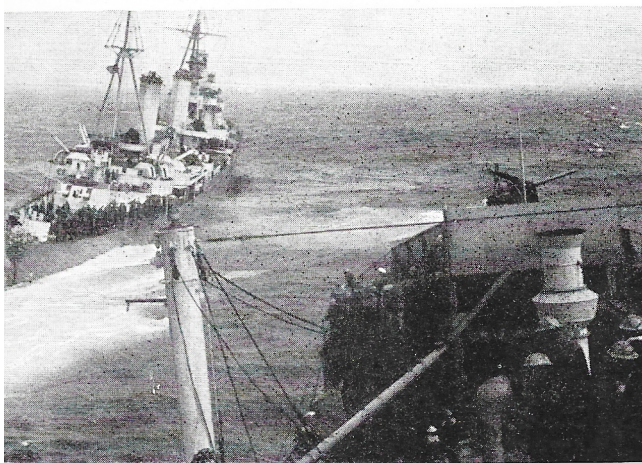




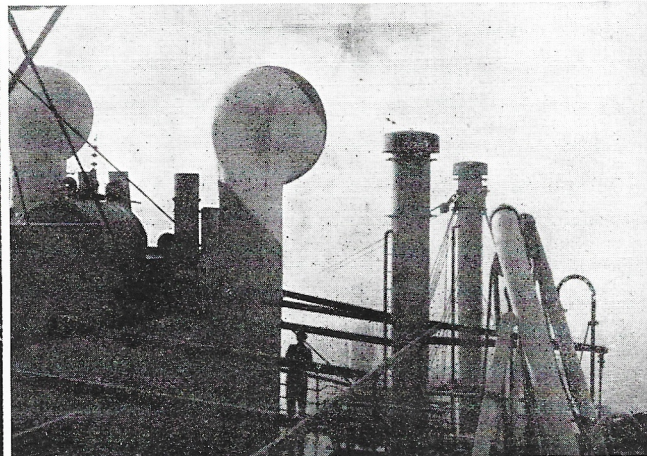
1. THE LAST RUN OF THE BRECONSHIRE.
As the enemy approaches the convoy, the forward gun crews of the supply ship Breconshire stand by.



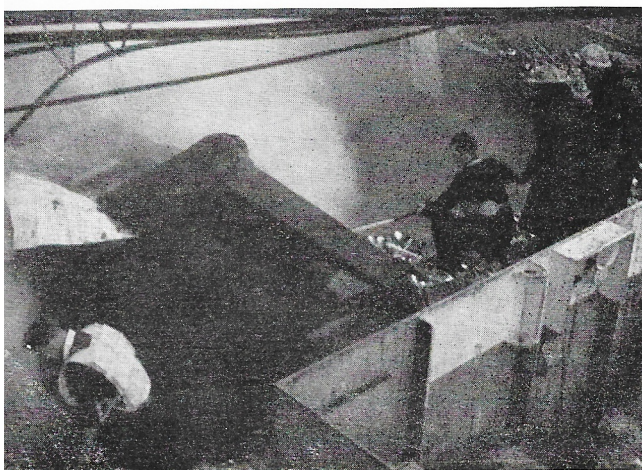
2. The anti-aircraft guns, which have been constantly in action during ceaseless air attacks, are re-ammunitioned while the ship battles on towards Malta in a gale.



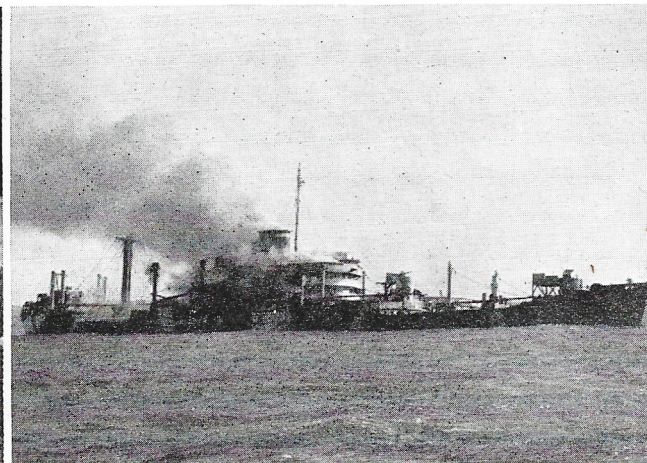
3. As the ship approaches the island she is struck by a bomb and seriously damaged. In bad weather the cruiser Penelope manoeuvres to pass across a towing wire.



4. She manages to crawl into a small bay just to the southward of the Grand Harbour, Malta. Here she is again attacked and hit by a bomb which sets her on fire.



5. The crew of the Breconshire fight the flames which have broken out in the afterhold, but in spite of their efforts the fire begins to spread slowly through the ship.



6. The fire becomes out of control and the ship sinks. Being berthed in shallow water she settles only a few feet, and many tons of oil fuel and cargo are saved.

almost home. In tow of the tugs *Ancient* and *Robust*, she crawled into a bay to the southward of the Grand Harbour, but was again hit and sank, with her invaluable cargo of oil fuel. The fight put up by the *Breconshire* on the last of her many arduous passages with stores to Malta was characteristic of the stalwart determination of her commanding officer, Captain C. A. G. Hutchison, R.N. The other two ships made the harbour and started unloading. They were soon holed as a result of mass bombing attacks, but, being berthed in shallow water, settled only a few feet. Sailors and soldiers, with divers in the flooded holds, working night and day regardless of bombs, saved much of the badly needed cargo and many precious tons of oil fuel from the *Breconshire*.

Admiral Leatham was compelled to admit that there was no longer any possibility of operating a surface striking force. The dockyard was a waste of rubble and twisted girders, and there was hardly any oil fuel left. Submarines from Alexandria—the *Parthian*, *Regent*, *Rorqual*, *Porpoise*, *Cachalot*—continued to worm their way through the minefields with aviation spirit and ammunition for the *Spitfires*; but the larger calibre ammunition reserves had dwindled alarmingly. He therefore concentrated on the task of enabling what valuable ships survived to get clear before their inevitable destruction. The *Carlisle* and four destroyers sailed for Alexandria. The *Aurora* and an attendant Hunt class destroyer, the *Avon Vale*, were got safely to Gibraltar. The *Havock* grounded off the Tunisian coast on her way to Gibraltar and was destroyed by her ship's company, who were interned by the French. The *Penelope* was caught in dock, the bull's eye in the centre of the bomber's target.

She went into dock flooded to main deck level and with her hull and keel crumpled by the concussion of near-misses. Throughout the period of repairs, her guns were hardly ever silent—indeed the barrels be-

came dangerously worn but there was no time to renew them. The coping stones of the dock around her were reduced to powder, the list of casualties grew daily longer, she was hit again and again by splinters, but with the gallant help of dockyard officials, her company fought and laboured at the repairs. The dock gates were holed and leaking badly, so that the devoted workers were often submerged to their armpits; and then, when the task was all but complete, a bomb put the pumping machinery out of action and the water rose to 21 feet. Another six inches would have taken the ship off the blocks and spelt disaster, but the pumps were repaired in the nick of time and the water mastered. They got her out at last, leaking and scarred and filthy, and on the eve of her departure the last raid of the day took place. The gunnery officer was killed, the captain wounded, all her high-angle ammunition exhausted. It seemed impossible that she could be reammunitioned and sail in time to round Cape Bon in the sanctuary of darkness. But Captain Nicholl and his *Penelope* had been through too much together to be beaten then by circumstances. Half an hour before the time limit for her departure, she sailed, bristling like a hedgehog with the wooden pegs which plugged her sides, with the prayers of all who had helped her and now watched her go to safety.

By the end of April the enemy, with every justification, must have congratulated himself that the first part of his programme was accomplished. He had dropped on the island in that month alone 6,730 tons of bombs. The reinforcements of 70 *Spitfires* brought in by the carrier *Eagle* and the U.S. carrier *Wasp* were all damaged and unserviceable within three days of their arrival. The Luftwaffe then turned their attention to secondary targets. Nothing was too small to merit attention, from a bicycle shed to a casualty clearing hut. But Malta, at last rocking on the ropes, was not quite out. On 9th May, more *Spitfires* arrived and were up

and fighting within a few minutes of landing. As each wave of bombers came over with its attendant fighters, it was met by an even larger concentration of Spitfires. Few bombers got back to receive their medals that day. The Luftwaffe was frustrated almost as Mussolini was about to start counting Malta out. On 10th May, the minelayer *Welshman* steamed into harbour under an umbrella of Spitfires with sorely-needed ammunition. Massed daylight bombing came to an abrupt stop. Malta would rise to her feet again.

12. The Mediterranean's Darkest Hour

JUNE, 1942

WE MUST NOW TURN BACK, first to see what had been happening in Africa during the ordeal of Malta from January to May, 1942, then to record the disasters of June, when the British hold on the Eastern Mediterranean was shaken as never before and was only maintained by a hair's breadth.

With the surrender of the Halfaya garrison on 17th January, Egypt and Cyrenaica had been cleared of Axis forces except for those that reached El Agheila in their retreat. But on 21st January the enemy regained the offensive at El Agheila and in eight days re-entered Benghazi, and began driving eastward along the coast. Step by step the Eighth Army was forced back in an endless series of attacks and counter-attacks to fortified positions west and south of Tobruk, where for a while the enemy was held.

On 1st April, Admiral Cunningham, who

had been Naval Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean since the outbreak of war, handed over his Command. He was needed elsewhere. When it was announced that he was going to Washington none knew that he was presently to be called upon to direct and lead the Navy in an amphibious operation that was destined to change the whole face of the war.

On his departure he took leave of the remnant of the fleet that had served him so well and truly through the years of victory and set-backs. His words were signalled to men who had fought in merchant ships and battleships, in submarines and *Albacores* and *Swordfish*, in cruisers and captured schooners, in destroyers, trawlers, tugs, landing craft, motor launches and torpedo boats: men who had fought with every weapon and beaten the enemy from the Adriatic to the Gulf of Sirte, from Matapan to Benghazi, Crete to Mersa Matruh; doughty seamen who were only alive because they shot straight and their faith never failed. Brave company.

You will understand, one and all, the deep regret . . . They understood. He reminded them they were masters of the enemy in every branch of naval warfare, whether in the air, in submarine warfare or surface fighting. They knew it.

The enemy knows we are his master on the sea, and we must strain every nerve to keep our standard of fighting so high that that lesson never fails to be borne in at him. They needed no reminder.

We have not at times as large forces as we would like to carry the war to the enemy's front door. This will not always be so, and I look forward to the day when the Mediterranean Fleet will sweep the sea clear and re-establish our age-old control of this waterway so vital to the British Empire. I am confident that that day is not far distant. . . . Brave words. None knew that when this day came it was he who was destined again to be the Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean.

Until his successor arrived in May, Admiral