

BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC

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Title: Sailor Parade.

Tracks: Carnival Overture..The Archers...North-west Mounted.

Isos: 352..462..586.

Lines: Stagg.

Voice: do.

Out on the ocean approaches to this island Britain's great merchant navy runs the counter-blockade. With re-doubled intensity Germany strikes this winter at the life-line of world freedom, the British Mercantile Marine.

Stationed at West Coast bases Sunderland flyingboats take more and more share of the fight against enemy raiders. Every possible effort is being made to lessen the average of 300-thousand tons of shipping lately sunk by Germany every month.

Bombs are the flyingboat's chief weapon against submarines, but in this war the danger comes not only from U-boats - bombers are taking heavy toll. That is why Sunderlands are the most heavily armed aircraft in the Service. Each dawn the great flying-boats start their patrol, head out for the Atlantic.

Soon the last outposts of this island are left behind. A far greater peril than rocks now menaces our ships. For sight of a periscope on the wind-lashed waves, for sight of a bomber in the wintry sky, the Sunderlands are on watch every second of the patrol. Seven men, sometimes more, are at their different posts, the gunner ready to rout the Nazis if their planes appear. Germany, basing her bombers and U-boats on the West Coast of France, holds powerful trump cards in the war on shipping.

At the appointed spot the convoy is already assembled as the flyingboats arrive. It was largely the convoy system that defeated the Kaiser's U-boats. Hitler, aided by bombers and holding the French ports, is sinking many of our ships before they get to the rendezvous.

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When the last ship has reported, flyingboats and escorting destroyers give the word to get under way for a straight run, homeward bound. Some of the men go aft. There's a smell of cooking and the explanation's not far to seek. In summer, the men are often 18 hours in the air.

(3 Scenes Without Voice)

See and air escorts bring the convoy to safety. Her patrol ended the Sunderland returns to her base.

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attle Of The Atlantic ...continued.

In a few minutes the crew will be having a welcome leg stretch on shore.

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The pilots have one more duty before they knock off - to report. Did they see submarines, bombers? Did all the merchant ships report at the rendezvous? Systematic questioning yields information invaluable to the intelligence-service, keeping check on the enemy's campaign.

Meanwhile the ships have come safely to port. Britain does not pretend that losses are not serious but in the worst month yet, the tonnage lost was far less than the 900-thousand tons sunk in the worst month of the last war. The planes and munitions come in great quantities. Extra rations for Christmas was a thing unheard of in the Great War.

These old guns, good scrap metal, came from St. Helena. We'll put new ones there for Hit and Muss.

Preparing for outward voyages the merchant captains attend a meeting, where naval and mercantile marine officers detail the convoy's course, speed, disposition and rendezvous. Essentially individualists in peace the captains line up in war as if they'd been a lifetime in the navy.

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Out in the docks ships are loading up. Exports are now more important than ever, providing the cash to pay for the food and munitions to keep us going in war.

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Punctually the well organised convoy sets sail - flyingboats in increasing numbers escorting it far over the Atlantic.

No losses daunt the mercantile marine. By day a strong fleet of flyingboats, plus destroyers make the ships all but immune from attack. By night the navy brings new methods into play. Now that the shortest day is behind us we may expect the Sunderlands to play a decisive part in sweeping enemy raiders from sea and sky.

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