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PATHE GAZETTE: 42/68.

MALTA CONVOY BATTLE

Eastward across the Mediterranean and Malta bound, the convoy which recently fought its way to the George Cross Island, sailed under the protecting guns of British battleships, cruisers, aircraft carriers and destroyers, squadrons of fighters flew high above cargo ships and escorts. Over fifty ships in a column five miles wide. A night armada hurrying to the island fortress. Early in the action the aircraft carrier H.M.S. Eagle was torpedoed. Fortunately, the casualties were not heavy. The wounded were brought ashore shortly after the great vessel sank. Her loss was a severe blow. After being issued with clean clothing and feeling a lot more comfortable the survivors attend the pay parade. Each man has some shore leave coming to him and for that they'll need a bit of dough. That's right sailor you can't trick the Paymaster. Yes, these are the men of the gallant old Eagle, God Bless 'em! Now for the newsreel story of the three-day battle at sea. The whole operation is under the charge of Vice Admiral Sybrit? From the first moment the signals of approaching trouble were exchanged, the men leapt to their action stations and with their anti-crash gear and helmets the gun crews fought off attack after attack. The sky and sea in bomb alley was patterned with shell and bomb bursts. The water boiled like molten lava and the sky became pot marked with acrid powder fumes and flying steel. Out of the sky came Stuka dive bombers. As Commander Kimmings told us "The Gerry's were sending in their First Eleven". J.U.88s, torpedo droppers and bombers hurl themselves at the freighters sailing stubbornly forward through a boiling sea while their escort ships fought with every gun. Destroyers were always slipping about and shaking the convoy with depth charges. U-boats were being fought as well. In this hell of sea sixty-six German aircraft were accounted for by our gunners and fighter pilots.

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Bloodshot and weary eyes can be seen as dusk fell, there was rarely a peaceful moment. For hour after hour the gunners pumped streams of tracers at the constantly attacking aircraft. Shipping casualties were being sustained amongst the escort vessels and cargo ships. In these brilliant excursions into a land blocked sea, ringed on all sides by the enemy, losses are bound to occur. But Malta must and will be supplied. This is how it's done. The night afforded little rest. U-boats became more daring. Bombers had still to be fought and through it all the merchantmen ploughed their way towards Malta. The morning hours saw the scenes to fill the heart. Battle-scarred ships, gunners weary by hours of fighting snatch a few minutes rest as the island coastline loomed on the horizon. Another Malta convoy was coming in. Rear Admiral Burroughs who commanded the light forces and close escort went aboard H.M.S. Nelson to visit Vice Admiral Sybrit at the close of operations. Britain salutes these gallant men. The men of the Malta convoy are at prayer, giving thanks to God for a safe deliverance from the perils which face those who serve at sea.