

23/8/41 - No. 7

~~NOT FOR PUBLICATION BEFORE 0030 SUNDAY AUGUST 24, 1941~~

CONVOY THE PREMIER REVIEWED

MID-OCEAN DRAMA

The story of a dramatic and unexpected review of a convoy in mid-ocean by the Prime Minister from the deck of the battleship Prince of Wales, was told by a woman passenger who has arrived in London.

"We fooled the Nazis" she declared exultantly.

"We were the convoy inspected in mid-ocean by Mr. Winston Churchill from the battleship Prince of Wales in the most epoch making review of British and Allied shipping in history.

Like a Pleasure Cruise

"We put safely in at our various destinations after a voyage more like a pleasure cruise than one of the biggest deliveries of American arms and food Britain has ever received.

"Several men and women of American birth witnessed the Prime Minister's dramatic and completely unexpected review of the convoy. They were among the passengers aboard a twenty year old passenger vessel, the flagship of the convoy. She carried the Commodore of the convoy whose signalmen flashed directions hourly by day from her bridge to the columns of heavily loaded British, Free Dutch and Free Norwegian tankers and freighters.

Prince of Wales arrives

"The Prince of Wales overhauled the convoy in a brilliant blue and white choppy sea in sparkling sunshine.

"Here and there a little tanker, loaded to her marks, pitched like a swingboat at Coney Island, but the flagship rode steadily as a rock. Afternoon sunbaskers were just being driven indoors by the evening wind: tea was over and bath hour was in full swing for the children aboard.

"Somebody said more ships seemed to be joining us, heading our way from the horizon astern. People with binoculars spotted destroyers and the dim enormous shadow of a ship rising over the skyline.

"A rumour, said to originate on the bridge, swept round the decks and through the ship. It was Churchill's battleship coming up. Nobody really believed it.

A Mountain of Steel

"A moment later, a destroyer, gloriously slick and graceful, charged through the columns to our starboard at twenty knots or more, throwing a colossal 'V' of white spray off her bows. As she passed through our front line, the Prince of Wales entered in the rear. She was a mountain of steel and the meaning of the phrase 'Bristling with guns' hit a good many men and women on the ship for the first time.

"The battleship's great guns dipped and swung as she passed up the convoy and the crews tested them out for the night.

A Message

"A bright white lamp from her bridge flashed a message for the Commodore:

/Please

'Please steer a steady course while we are passing back through the lines.'

"She ran up a brave row of twelve signal flags  
'Churchill W A Y,' spelled out our signalman  
'Churchill wishes you a pleasant voyage.'

"Then we knew, definitely, with an immeasurable ripple of excitement that swept from the bridge to the galley, that the Prime Minister was way over there on the Prince of Wales, witnessing our magnificent cavalcade in action.

#### Congratulations.

"The battleships signal light was busy again  
'To Commodore from First Sea Lord: Congratulations on good station keeping in your convoy.'  
"The Commodore flashed back  
'Very many thanks for your kind message which is much appreciated and this is entirely due to whole co-operation of ships in convoy. Hope to remain intact to reach home. Best of luck and good wishes.'

#### A Victory Parade.

"Suddenly an inspiration blessed the Commodore's Chief Yeoman of Signals. With his Chief's delighted approval he raised the flags that mean:  
'Following letter to be read alphabetically.'  
"Then a single flag, bearing a diagonal scarlet cross on a white ground, soared and joined the rest:

#### 'V for Victory'

"The warship on our starboard side took her cue and an identical, brilliant row of red, white and blue flags fluttered from her bridge. One by one, every ship in the convoy set the V flag flying and the pageantry of this mid-ocean tryst of naval and merchant shipping was complete.

#### A Gay Trip.

"Gaiety was the keynote of the voyage. Four days out from America, Royal Canadian Air Force aboard a warship flashed a message to our passengers, whose sunbathing and deck tennis activities evidently had kept the R.C.A.F. binoculars busy -- 'The officers of the R.C.A.F. aboard your escort regret that the beautiful and charming ladies cannot be present at a cocktail party tomorrow afternoon.'

Later, when land came into sight, one of our lean little escorting destroyers drew back starboard and turning her loudspeakers full on to us, swung out martial music.

"Even the Commodore ran his colossal jobs clad in navy flannel blazer of the Royal Naval Reserve and blue sneakers and apologised that he must 'go play ships' when the convoy needed rearranging.

#### The Passengers.

"Among those on board were six young Americans out to fly Spitfires and Hurricanes for Britain with the American Eagles, including a professional parachute jumper and crop duster known all over the Southwest, with 150 jumps to his credit, a large number of American girls married to English men who had taken their children to safety in the U.S. and were returning to join their husbands and conversely, a two year old baby boy coming back to England after visiting his grandparents in the States.

#### MINISTRY OF INFORMATION.

Note Not for Publication. The names of some of the passengers may be obtained from Room 8, Ministry of Information.