

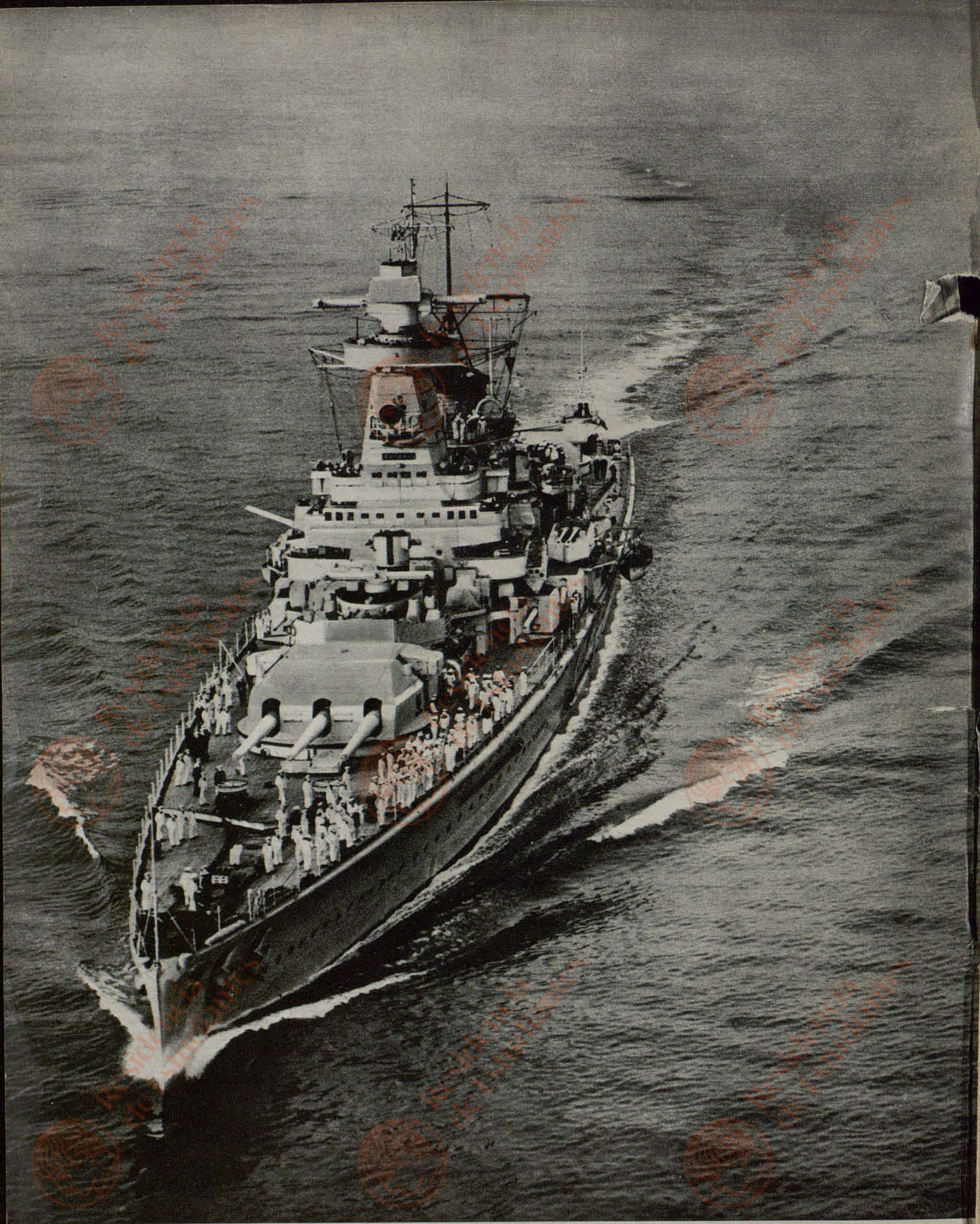
# THE BATTLE OF THE RIVER PLATE



The men who beat the "Graf Spee" march through London

PICTURE POST SPECIAL 6<sup>D</sup>





**THE NAZI SEA-RAIDER IN HER PRIDE :** The "Graf Spee" as Germans Dreamed of Her

The pride of a reconstituted Navy. Built to show what Nazi ingenuity could accomplish. Something utterly new in naval design. One of the world's first pocket battleships. Unrivalled as a commerce raider. Completed only in 1936, she was fast. Her engines gave her 26 knots. She was powerful as well. She carried six eleven-inch guns. Only three ships in the whole British Navy—so they said—could catch and sink her.



# THE BATTLE of the RIVER PLATE

No single event of the war has stirred the imagination like the hunting down and sinking of the "Graf Spee." No element was lacking to make this one of the great sea dramas—a tale that will be told as long as there are ships, and men to man them. From files and records this moving story has been written into a dramatic whole by James Hanley, well-known writer, who himself served many years before the mast.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13th, 1939. A clear morning and the line of light breaking on the horizon's rim. A circle of silent sea, unmindful of what will be spelt upon its surface with the growth of day. The grey shape moving, her engines throbbing. Ahead the wisp of smoke, the shadowy shape. The French ship *Formose*. Astern the eye is watchful, and below the sun upon decks and men's shadows dancing. Suddenly the eye is rewarded, a grey shape is seen. Whilst they wonder, the day breaks to words of steel. Bells ring, hands go to binoculars, men fall into set patterns upon decks.

The bugler sounds the clarion call "Action stations."

"It's the *Deutschland*!"

"No! It's the *Scheer*!"

"What matter, it's a Nazi."

So begins the action that thrilled the world.

The smoke-screen is laid and the helm hard over, the *Formose* is covered. The *Ajax* accepts the challenge. She closes in, taking the weight of the superior fire power of her opponent. There is order in disorder. The call has gone out for help. Behind the steel towers the arithmetics of power are read. Below, hands are steady at the gun's breech.

The storm breaks over their heads, the fight is on. The *Ajax* closing in, and shot for shot she carries the fight to her opponent. Co-ordination is perfect. Bridge, control tower, the guns are one. The *Ajax* shudders under the explosion, the air reeks, men stagger and fall. Others hold on. In the heat of the hour the coinage of worth is being struck. Power is naked now, the area of ocean reverberates to the crash and scream and roar.

The *Ajax* slews round, flames belch, from guns, broadside after broadside. Above the calm voice speaking down the tube, the cataract of sounds, the roar in the air. The control tower

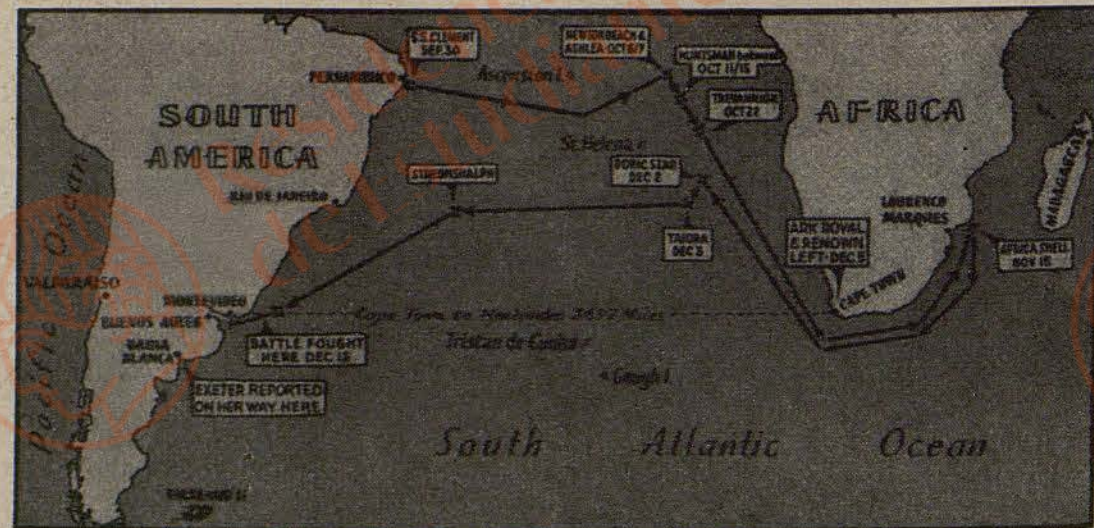


**HER WARTIME CAREER:** For the "Graf Spee" the Autumn Months are Easy and Successful

At sea since the war began, the "Graf Spee" had steered clear of possible engagements. Her task was the easier one—to inflict the greatest possible amount of damage on British commerce. From the "Graf Spee's" decks her crew watch the sinking of the merchant ship "Trevanian," one of her victims, as she cruises half-way round the world in search of prey.



## THE RAIDER'S VICTIMS:



A Chart of the "Graf Spee's" Progress with Dates and Positions for the Ships She Sunk

has been struck by an eleven-inch shell from her opponent.

Like enormous scarves the smoke-screens wreath the air, and through them men see the grey shape. See the name that looks cheap now, but sounded on men's tongues over a continent. Men smile with a knowledgeable air. The *Graf Spee*. Her name spelt destruction. Spelt for the world at six o'clock in the morning of December 13, at the moment when further spoilage was within sight. The token of surrender is no more, instead the bold ring of an ultimatum sounds upon her shuddering decks, and the voice that speaks comes across the centuries, old as freedom.

The captain of the *Ajax* is now at close quarters, and men are forgetful of the hour of relief. Naked power is answered by audacity and courage. The *Graf Spee* is retreating, the *Ajax* on her heels. It is a running fight now, the *Spee's* engines throb to the limit of their power, horizon's line a mere blur beneath the clouds of smoke. The *Ajax* ploughs on. Suddenly there is a shout. Two grey shapes are seen coming up.

The call for help is answered. They seem

to divine in an instant the shape of things, they give impetus to purpose. The area of smoke is greater, and behind the shields of science they turn and counter-turn, the helms seem under magic hands. Relentlessly they press the *Spee* nearer. The day grows, the fever of the hour heightened. The *Graf Spee* concentrates her main attention upon the *Exeter*, the fire is murderous. The *Exeter's* broadsides have severely shaken the supposedly invincible power of the *Spee*. The *Spee* is determined to put this ship out of action.

She must do this running, and she must watch too those other grey shapes, weaving their way in and out of the screens. Only the sea itself is silent and indifferent to the deluge of destruction. The voice is calm in the control tower, the orders come down to the guns, and men are deafened by the orgy of sound.

Through the glasses one sees the fury of the *Exeter* pressed home upon the *Graf Spee*. It supplies the urge to hope and puts the seal upon magnificence and vaunted power, for the *Spee* is speeding and endeavouring to haul out of the range of the concentrated fire of her opponents. A veer round and a final show of



British Merchant Seamen Taken Prisoner by the "Graf Spee"

The captains of the nine sunken ships, with 53 other officers and men, are taken on board the "Graf Spee" as her prisoners. There they remain week after week.

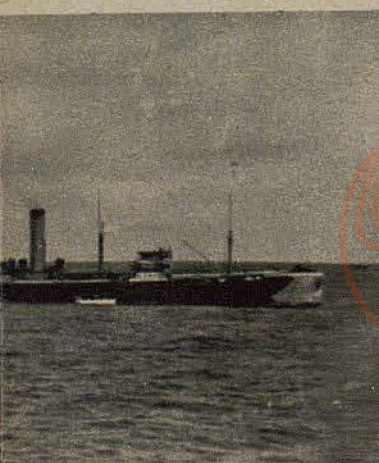
PICTURE POST SPECIAL

ALL SHE MEETS  
Ranging the seas far down to the Southward,  
From some she takes food, from others



The Ill-Fated "Altmark" Acts as  
From the British steamer "Huntsman,"  
ferred to the "Altmark," on left, which

FALLS AN EASY PREY: A Picture from the "Graf Spee's" Deck of a Sinking British Merchantman  
the "Graf Spee" falls in—one after the other—with nine British merchantmen. All are her victims. Some she sinks by gunfire. Some by torpedo. much-needed oil to run her turbines. Some of the crews she takes on board. Others are handed over to merchant ships acting as her tenders.



"Graf Spee's" Tender  
foreground, men are trans-  
ferred to the "Doric Star,"



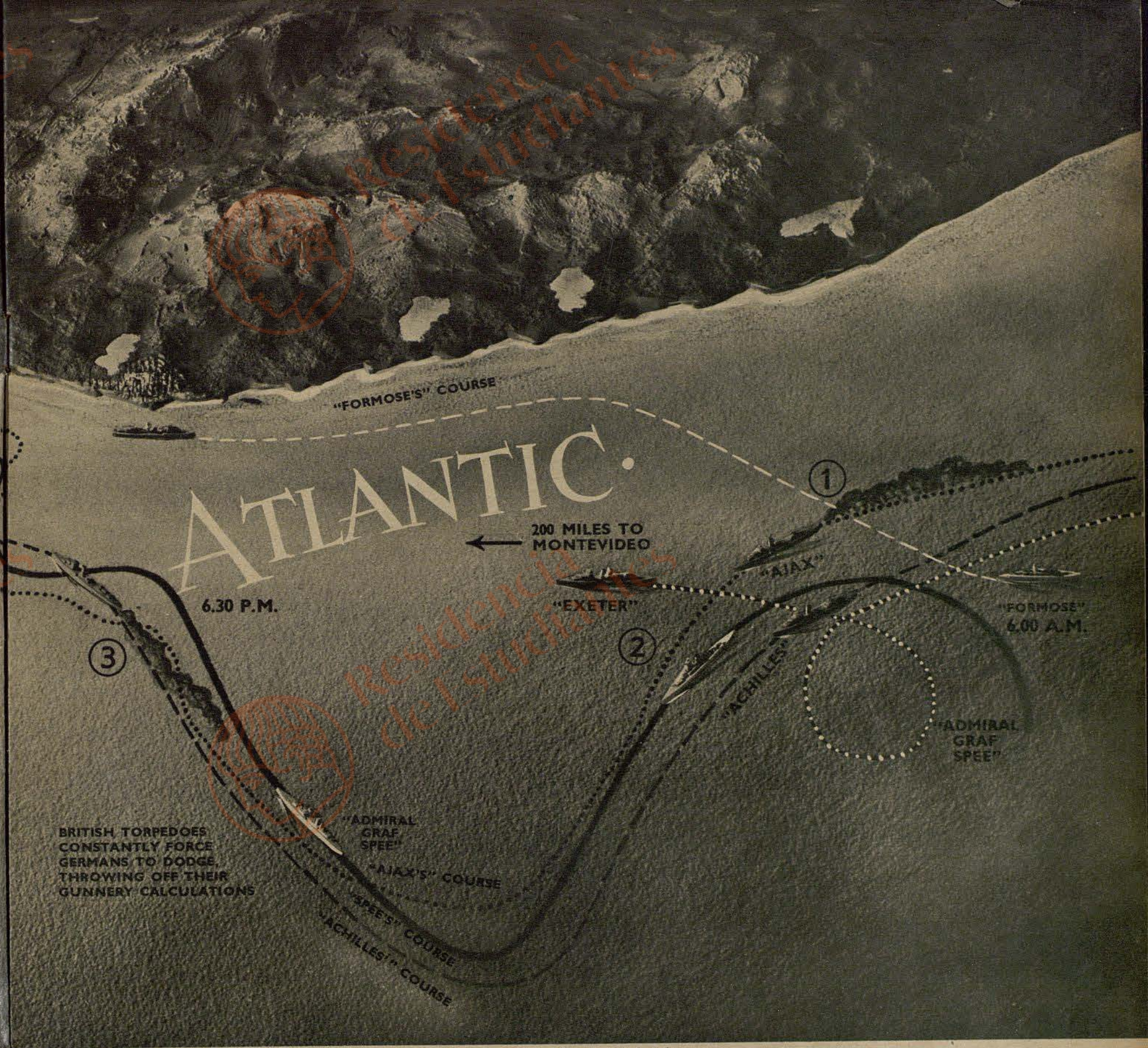
The Destruction of a Handsome British Liner  
A torpedo full amidships blows up the British liner  
"Doric Star," homeward bound with a cargo of meat.

THE BATTLE OF THE RIVER PLATE



The Last of the "Ashlea"  
One of the "Graf Spee's" first victims, caught early  
in October before she turned south round Africa.





defiance, a full broadside for the *Exeter*. The *Exeter* trembles under the blow like a living thing. The broadside has completely knocked a turret out of action. She is out of the action, but she has spent herself well, and reluctantly she drops back for the *Achilles* and the *Ajax* to continue the action that will strip all of pride and worth from a stronger opponent.

The *Spee* speeds on, battered, her bark and bite gone, and a dread that hung like a pall over the seas is nearing its end. The screen that hides her is the screen of fear. The *Ajax* and *Achilles* press on. The hour is eventful. Through the binoculars they can see the battered upperworks of their opponent. She is heading for the land. She shudders still under the harassing fire of her pursuers.

Afternoon draws in, and away ahead men see Punta Del Este, that juts far out to sea. Soon the sun will set. Suddenly the course is altered. The *Ajax* and the *Achilles* have turned towards the shore. The shadow of

the land is free, but not for the *Graf Spee*. She must stand silhouetted against the light of the eastern sky, hold there, shuddering, battered, clothed in dereliction.

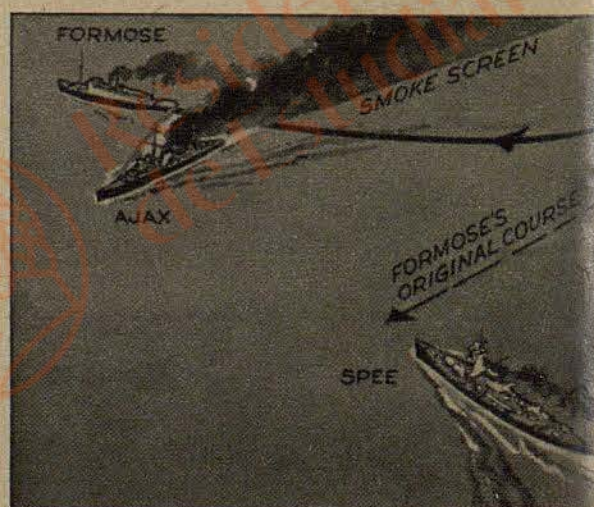
There is no sanctuary, never will be again. That hour is over when furtively she skulked like a wraith round bay and headland, beyond the reach of challenge, a marauder soiling the long tradition of the sea. Caught now and held by those with but half her power. The shadows deepen. *Ajax* and *Achilles* hug the land, they have now the full measure of the *Graf Spee*. But there is still no shelter for her, no escape. An angry salvo, twenty minutes of wild and erratic firing, shots carrying nothing beyond the weight of futility.

The *Exeter* is far astern now and out of the fight, but the thoughts of those aboard wander far beyond the steel boundaries of their ship. Men look on the havoc of decks, some sing. The hour is very full for them.

Within the shadows *Ajax* and *Achilles* watch the *Spee* forced to alter her course

#### HOW THE BATTLE

A running 16-hour fight. Three smaller, cover of darkness in a

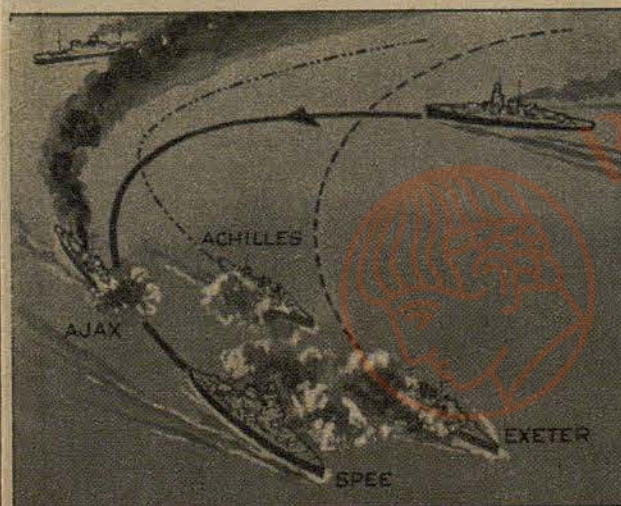


1 The bait ("Formose") runs off as the fast cruiser "Ajax" lays a smoke screen across her wake to cover her flight.

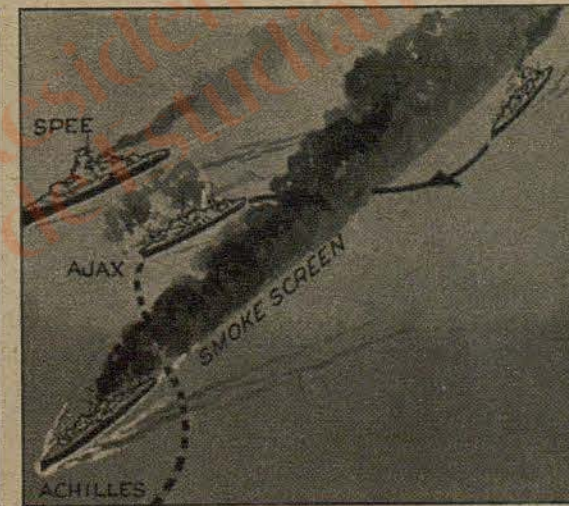
#### WAS FOUGHT: A Chart of the Action From Early Morning Till Nearly Midnight

lighter vessels on the heels of one. Daring seamanship once more successful. The "Graf Spee" driven off the seas—forced to seek refuge under neutral harbour. From this she was to emerge only on her last and shortest voyage. Numbers refer to small pictures below.

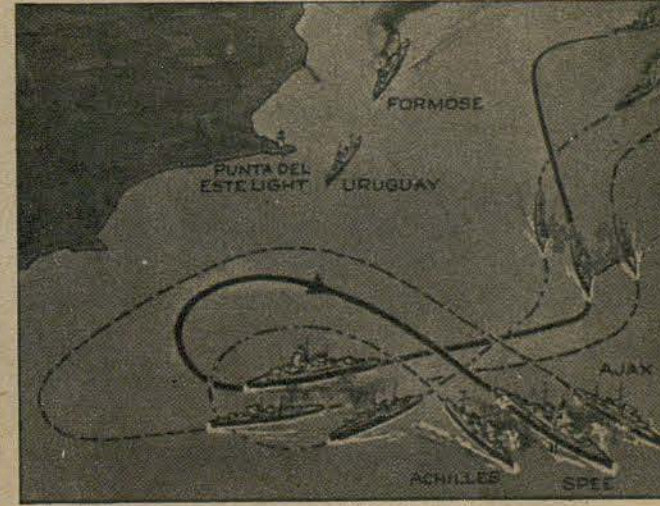
With acknowledgments to the American magazine "Life."



2 "Exeter" takes "Spee's" 11-in. salvos, "Achilles" fires 6-in. salvos, while "Ajax" on "Spee's" stern pounds away.



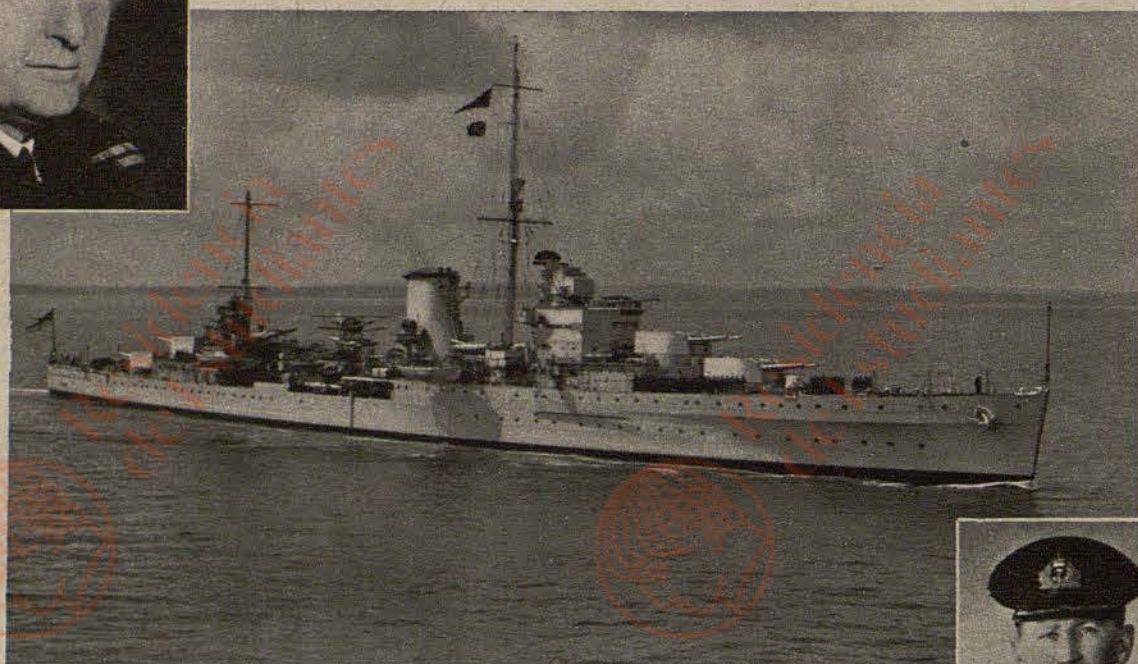
3 One cruiser lays smoke screen, gives other the "Spee's" position. Then the second darts out and blazes away.



4 Near Uruguayan shore, British get west of "Spee," silhouetting her against sky and hiding themselves in the shadow of land.

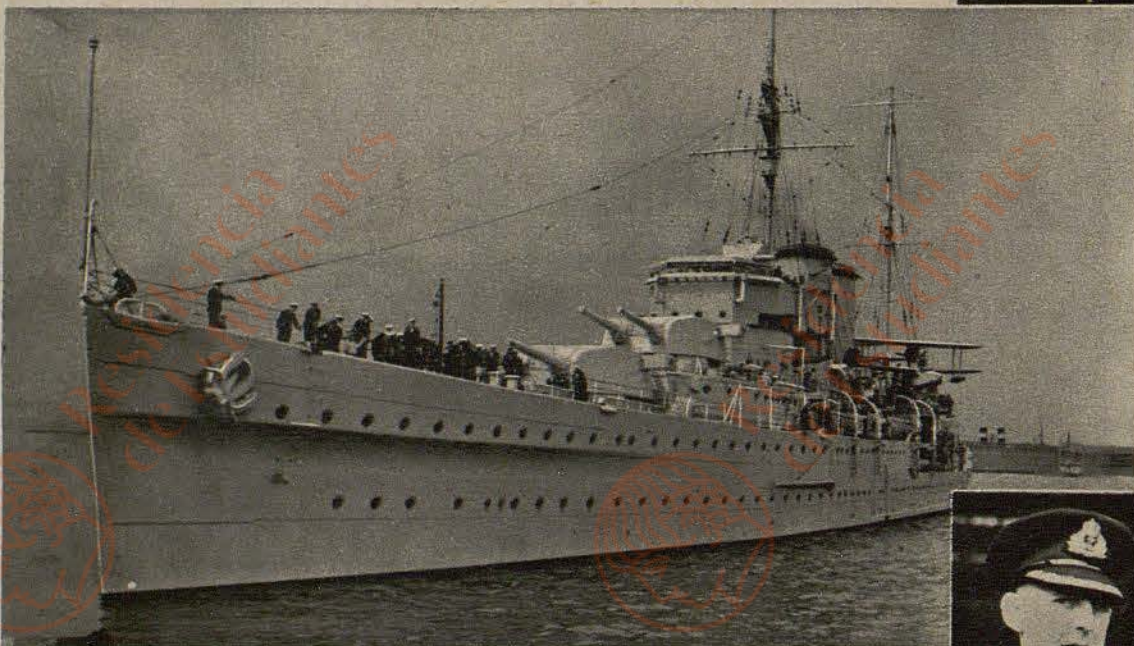
#### THE BATTLE OF THE RIVER PLATE





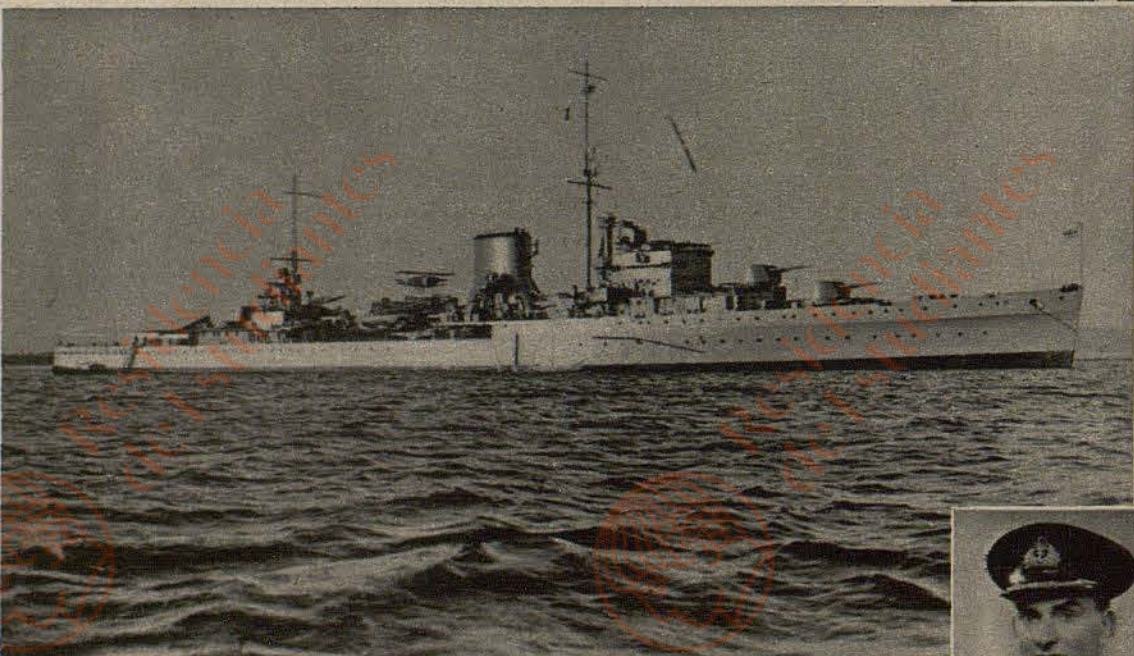
### THE THREE PARTNERS IN THE ACTION: H.M.S. "Ajax"

The 7,000-ton cruiser from which Commodore H. H. Harwood (above, left) commands the squadron. Her captain is Captain C. H. L. Woodhouse (inset, right).



### The Ship That Suffers Most Damage: H.M.S. "Exeter"

An 8,300-ton ship, launched in 1929, the "Exeter" has a speed of 32 knots. She is armed with six 8-inch guns. Her captain is Captain F. S. Bell (right).



### From the New Zealand Squadron: H.M.S. "Achilles"

A 7,000-ton cruiser, launched in 1932. She is armed with eight 6-inch guns and has a speed of 32.5 knots. Her captain is Captain W. E. Parry (right).



away from the harbour in which she thought she might find shelter. *Ajax* and *Achilles* pursue relentlessly, the *Graf Spee* is nothing more than a buffeted target for the cruisers, hours are added to her uncertainty.

At last darkness falls and she dares alter her course again, heading in the direction of Montevideo. Thus the battle of the Plate—but only the framework of an epic.

The *Ajax* was the first to suffer from the eleven-inch guns of the *Graf Spee*. In the heat of the battle the individual goes down and is momentarily lost. But when the air clears, when the roar and racket have died away, the individual rises to the surface again, and the acts and courage of men rise like brave songs from out the chaos and confusion.

An eleven-inch shell strikes the *Ajax's* turret, the air reeks and trembles under the force of the explosion. A marine by the name of Russel, emerges from the cloud, staggering from man to man, encouraging them, himself caught up in the fury and stress. The left forearm is blown clean away, the right arm shattered, but carried along on the impetus of his own courage, he refuses all aid until the battle is over. Later he dies from his wounds.

One, a shipwright, is suddenly knocked down by the explosion of a shell. A compartment is filled with smoke and flame. The lights are out. But he staggers towards the scene, his own voice lost in the babble of louder voices, the signal of temporary bewilderment. He remains cool, collected, and directs the repair parties in their work. A long tradition upholds them, it is like a shield in the moment of madness, and courage closes down the door against despair and defeat.

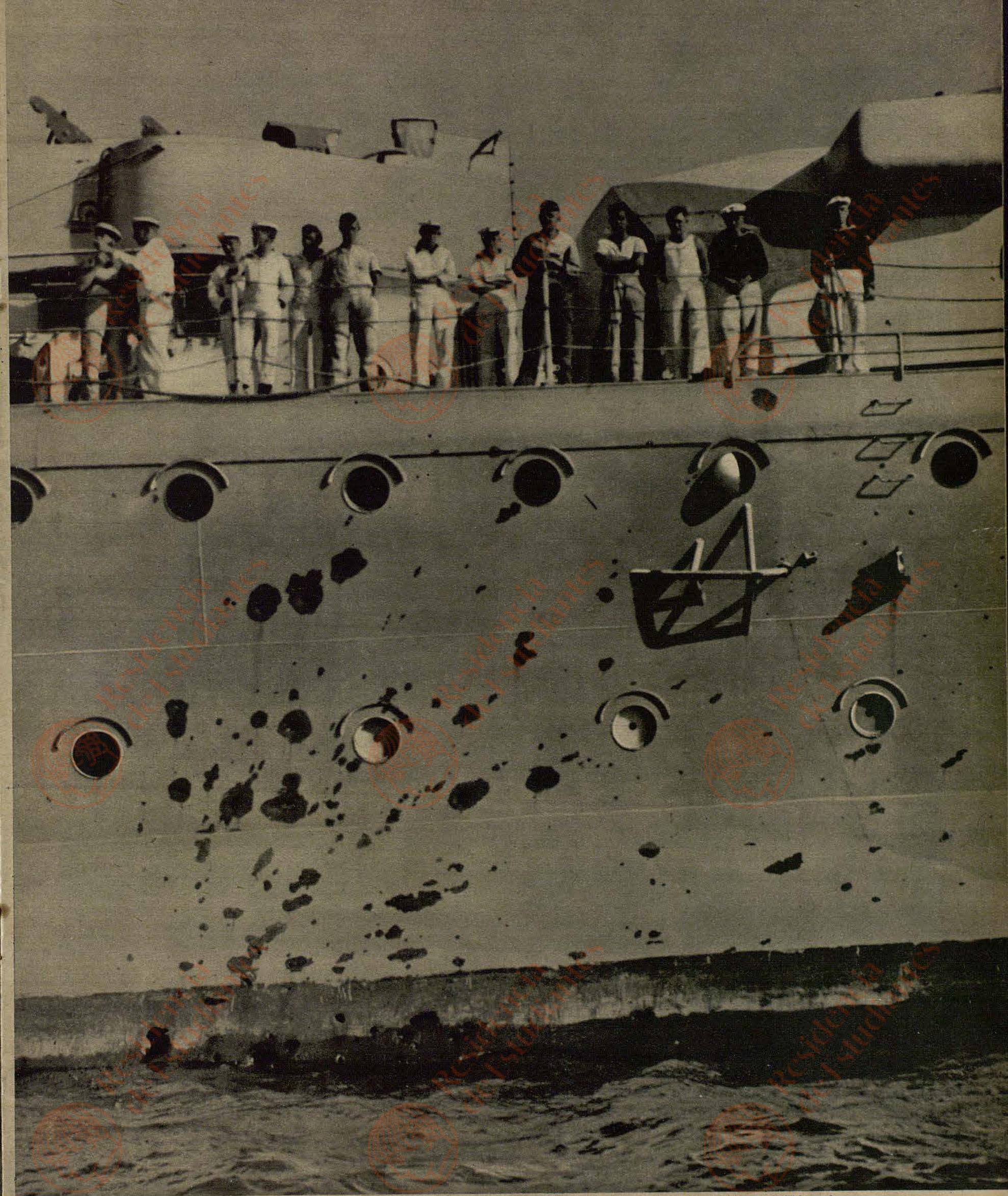
The *Exeter's* decks are strewn with debris. Men can hardly see each other through the clouds of smoke. Shell after shell from the *Spee* strikes home, but men stand under the blows, calm at the guns, unhurried below in the maze of steam, the clock's hands racing, and astern the screws threshing water, the while she darts in and out among the ever-spreading smoke-screens.

The *Exeter* takes the brunt of it, and her crew are equal to the occasion. The Marines' barracks are ablaze, but one by the name of Dos runs fire-hoses towards them. Calm, resourceful, he fights another fire over the lower steering position. He tends the wounded. Deafened, blinded, he carries on. Another shell strikes, and then another. The *Exeter* gives one continuous shudder, the decks are a welter of rushing bodies and flying splinters.

A mere boy is standing in his position in the gun director tower when a shower of splinters rain upon it. Men are killed and wounded around him, but his nerve remains. Calmly, despite the carnage and destruction about him, he carries on with his duty, continuing to pass on what available information there is to the guns. The reports come through and he repeats them for the information of the gunnery officer.

Inside his steel prison of the director tower he feels the periodic tremblings below him, and somewhere, beyond the radius of the roars and cries he sees patches of sky, flame-lit. The uproar increases. And to port in the *Ajax* the same uproar, the same dizzying, spinning world, the ship broadside on to the *Graf Spee*, her hundredth broadside already shaping the future of the day. The innocent and the experienced eye are one.



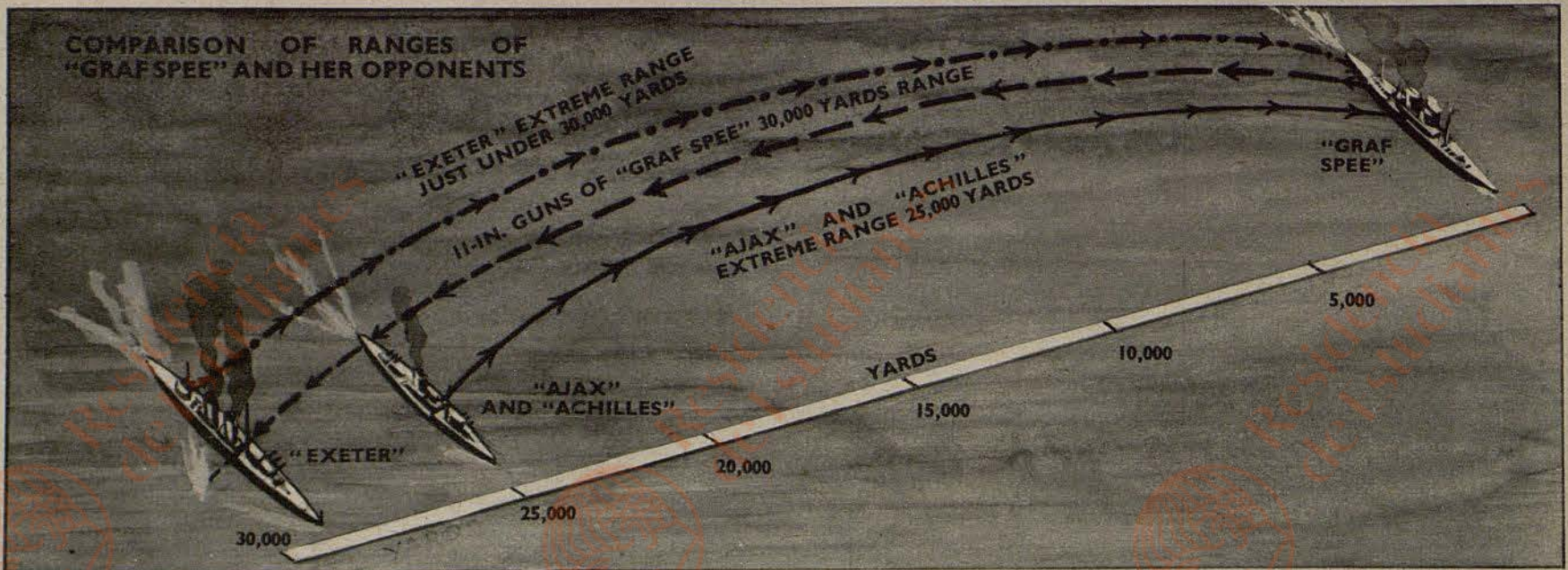


**AND THE RESULTS OF THE BRITISH GUNNERY: The "Graf Spee" Holed Near the Waterline**

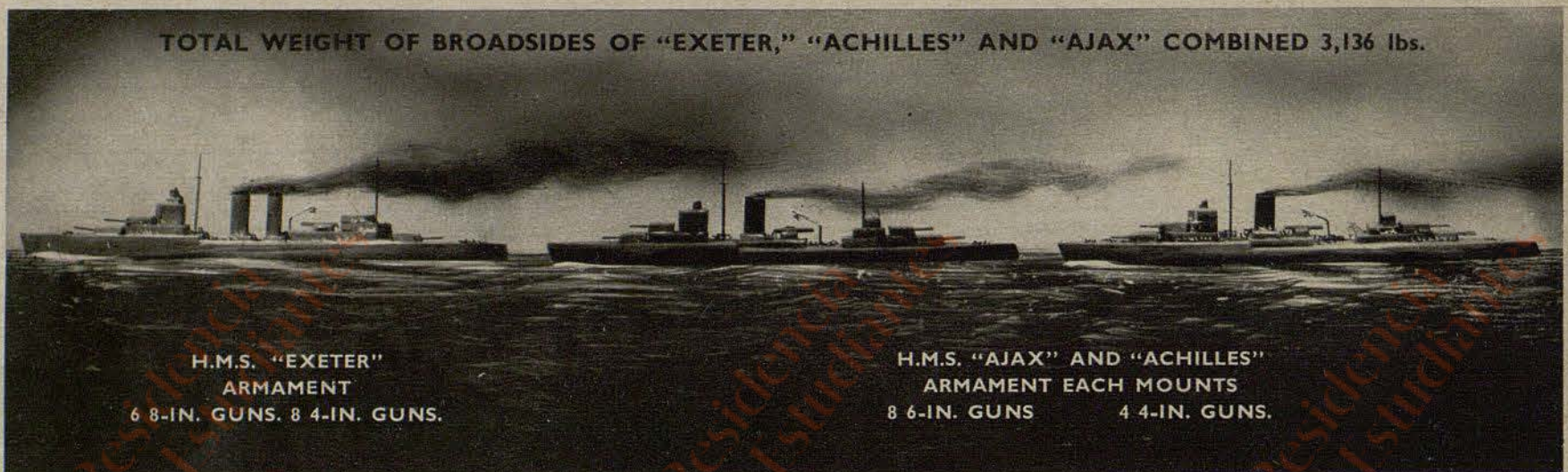
Not all the black marks are holes. Some are scars where shell splinters have scuffed the paint from the armour plate. Even so, the picture is a testimonial to British marksmanship. The "Graf Spee" has a combined broadside of 4,708 pounds. The three British cruisers have a total combined broadside of 3,136 pounds. Yet they inflicted the heavier damage.



## COMPARATIVE STRENGTHS OF BOTH SIDES IN THE BATTLE:



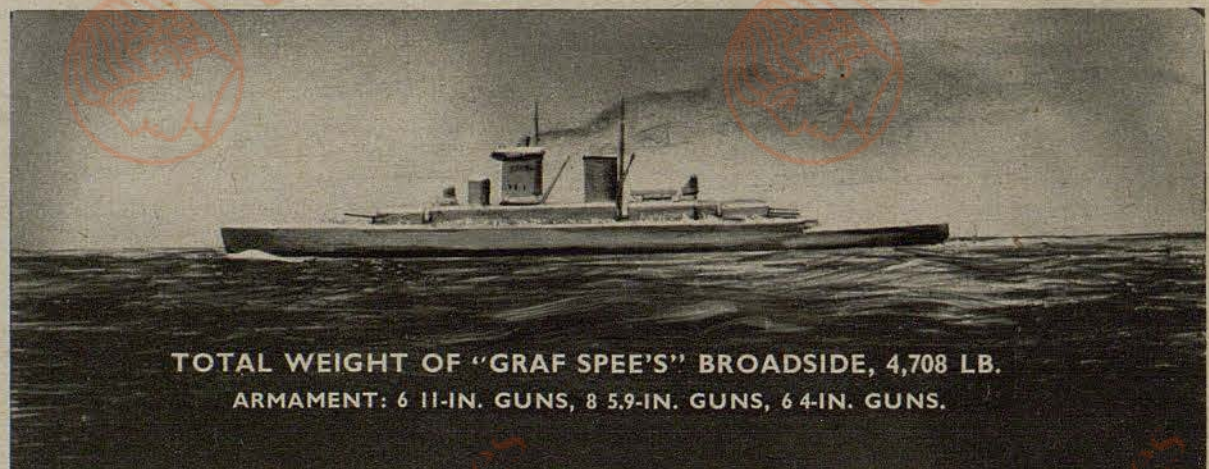
How the 11-inch guns of the "Graf Spee" outrange those of the British cruisers.



The three British cruisers silhouetted as an enemy might see them.



Comparative weight of ship's heaviest shells.



The trim, compact outline of the recently launched "Graf Spee."

The decks of the *Ajax* are almost invisible beneath the clouds of smoke, the very air hums, fugitive cries, disjointed words are tossed in the air. Behind the guns men sweat, yet the hands of purpose are cool.

On the bridge of the *Achilles* a lieutenant handles his ship like a master. Men are struck and wounded at his side, fall, stagger about, but with great resource he continues to communicate the course of the action. His words travel to the lower conning tower, and are broadcast about the decks, and lower still to the roots of power in the ship—where the air is tense and men are lost amidst the forest of shining wheels taking the thud and impact and tremble of an action they cannot see.

Inexorably the *Achilles* is pressing home,

in support of the *Ajax*. They have determined the hour for their opponent. The end is very near now. Past the tensed groups huddled about guns, others drag by, their power spent, cabin and barracks are choked with men, but none has lost his nerve, and with tired eyes they watch the precision and coolness of doctors and orderlies. Lights dim, flames lick about clean-moving hoists, a veritable rabble of sounds crescendoes towards and floods cabins and hoists, barracks and chambers.

Unseen, one moves towards the flames now threatening the very arsenal of the *Achilles'* power, quietly, unperturbed, he puts them out, says good-bye to his overcoat, and then is gone again. So the individual act, the seen and the unseen, builds up and towards the victory they are now determined upon.

The two ships are now hot upon the heels of the *Graf Spee*, who speeds towards refuge, spent, defeated, her engines full cut at the zenith of their power. She is nearing her haven, darkness, the security that daylight could not give.

From the shore, where now streaming thousands watch, the pattern is different. For fourteen hours they have been watching, by turns bewildered, by turns amazed and thrilled. The ships have heaved before them, veered, dropped back, sped forward, turned about, palled by smoke and flame. The ships are alive. They are convulsions within the bright circle of sun and silent sea. The ears of the world are tuned upon a stretch of sea, a thousand different pictures are conjured up in the mind.

What is spent upon this sea is now spelt





#### AFTER THE FIGHT: The "Graf Spee's" Captain in Harbour at Montevideo

*The fight is over. His ship has come into harbour. She has steamed in under cover of darkness, with all her lights out. Her arrival is flashed all over the world. At once a diplomatic battle begins. The British want her to leave. Nazi diplomats struggle to prolong her stay beyond the period of 24 hours allowed by the Hague Convention. On account of damage Uruguayan Government finally prolongs the time to 72 hours.*

upon the rolling presses of the papers of the world, upon wires from continent to continent. Aeroplanes zoom overhead, and hungry eyes look out. The roar of engines is only the parallel uproar of the battle below. The steady hand, the cool eye, the meritorious act, the courage is too far below for them to see. There are only the spinning webs of fire, the quick-turning ships.

And upon the shore itself the thousands grow and watch, whilst lightning-words spin from country to country; the embassies of the world hum; the rolling presses spill the hot words upon paper.

But within welter and confusion of the steel worlds themselves lay the substance and shape of hours that are only understood by those who have lived nearest to them.

One, shaken by the terrific explosions of shells, his face covered with blood, seeing the havoc of their work on the forecastle messdeck through a haze of smoke, sets about improvising stretchers for the wounded, moves from compartment to compartment, examining the damage, and later plugs the gaping holes of the upper deck. One soaked in petrol, sees his crippled aircraft above, held there by a fallen stay. Climbing up he removes it and frees her for jettisoning. From her the petrol is already pouring, the world about shakes under the terrible raking of fire, for a moment he seems lost, then suddenly man and craft are

free. A stoicism that shades Aurelius binds man and man.

Aboard the *Exeter* a sick bay attendant, by the name of Pope, is returning from the fore part of the sick bay, bottles of morphine sulphate solution in his hands. A shell bursts and he is flung violently to the ground. That end of the bay is perforated, the scattered glass of the bottles lies about him. A strong smell is in his nostrils, he is partly choked. Later he comes to, partly invisible behind the smoke and fumes.

He sees the shattered bottles, calmly drags himself to his feet and makes the journey back through the now flooded bay. He carries in his person an invincible optimism. Quiet determination has not shaded a natural cheeriness. Chaos and carnage are all about, but the will is cool, the stature of the man grows with the hour.

Below the decks of the *Exeter*, an eleven inch shell explodes and the air is filled with dense and deadly fumes, the clouds of escaping steam. Through it emerges a stoker, who has been ordered away from the damaged control switchboard, and now blindly he drags his way through the wrecked flat and finally makes contact with the main switchboard, so that communication is established once more with the engine-room artificer in the for'ard dynamo room. Bat-like he gropes his way through the reeking atmosphere—and

then returns by way of the upper deck, leading his party back into the shattered and acrid-smelling flat.

Self is eliminated. There is only the worth in him that weaves its way towards others. High-flying aeroplanes, excited crowds, covering the shores ahead, cannot see these things, the courageous act, the quiet determination. They wait for the end. The beginning, the endurance of the battle is beyond sight and understanding. They look out and down upon something that dazzles and excites, but they do not hear the words spoken by simple men. They see the bright pattern, but not that which shapes it. The light is fading, the crowds begin to melt away, some remain, the gamut of excitement not yet full run for them. Darkness descends. The ships lose their hard shape, become shadowy shapes, the sky streaks periodically with a tongue of flame.

Warding the defeated, *Ajax* and *Achilles* press on. The smashed upper works of the *Graf Spee* spell the destructive and deadly accurate fire of the cruisers. With the covering darkness, tension grows. The world waits, wondering. And whilst they wait, men are busy and working in the light of fires. The bays are full. Men drag themselves from shattered turrets, smashed flats and barracks.

The decks are being cleared, debris flung overboard, damage inspected, wounds bound,





### THE WOUNDED: In the Harbour of Montevideo the "Graf Spee" Unloads Her Dead and Injured

Their ship is badly battered. Of her crew of 900, 36 have been killed and 60 wounded. They are brought ashore, while efforts are made to refit the ship. A propaganda story is put about that some of the wounded are suffering from the effects of mustard-gas. Independent medical evidence refutes it.



### The "Graf Spee's" Dead Await Their Burial

In coffins covered with the Nazi naval flags lie the bodies of the "Graf Spee's" dead—the men for whom the war is over. For most of them this was their first taste of battle.

those who have gone under laid tenderly aside, their high moments over. Two hundred broadsides from the *Exeter*, an avalanche of fire from the *Ajax* and *Achilles*.

All eyes are watching the *Graf Spee*.

"What will she do? Will she seek refuge in neutral waters?"

"Stay in"? "Stay out?"

She has got the shelter now. Slowly she limps in, secure in calmer waters. Men question each other, wondering. Will she come out and finish it? The world wonders too. At the mouth of the Plate *Ajax* and *Achilles* wait. The end is not yet. Half a battle is no battle.

A voice speaks across a whole century of tradition and seals the fact. They will wait with a greater patience than the world waits.

The morning had been bright, the sea brilliant under the sun, and none had known the shape and meaning the day would take.

*Achilles* and *Ajax* relax in the cool, the stress and strain for the moment stilled. The two ships appear like hoods at the river's mouth.

Slowly the light grows. Suddenly the light is upon decks and upon the shore, and the *Graf Spee* is in. Stricken and defeated, she stands in the harbour, and only the tattered edges of her power remain. The upper





#### *Those Who Will Never Fight Again are Carried to the Cemetery*

*They were nearly all young men. Many of them were not yet twenty. They had grown up under Nazi control and discipline. They knew little of life. They had seen little of the world—and now it is too late for them to see or learn. They are the victims of the hatred and lust for power of a single man.*

structures are torn and smashed, *Graf Spee* is a gaping, defeated thing.

With the full morning, the crowds appear again, surge towards the harbour. Through the night, bells have been ringing in the Chancelleries of the world. The world does not wait long for news.

The respite of seventy-two hours shrinks. Another twenty-two hours of grace for the *Spee* and then she must turn and go. But her Commander has not yet drunk to the full his cup of humiliation. She has glided slowly to the quay, there is a feverish cluster of officials, the gangway is down, and suddenly another secret is revealed to the world.

From out of her darkened rooms and holds there emerges a stream of tattered and derelict men, and now the world knows them for British merchant sailors imprisoned below the decks of the *Spee*, and as they come slowly down the gangway, blinking in the bright light after weeks of darkness, there is the remembrance of the victorious cruisers to obliterate for the time being their own dark moments, the weeks of captivity. The battle had raged over them. Each thud that shook the *Spee* was like a winged word to them, hidden below in the holds.

They are on the quay. By virtue of the



#### *The British Captains Bring a Wreath to Lay*

*Skippers of the British merchantmen sunk by the "Graf Spee." With them is Captain Langsdorff. Nazi propagandists cannot keep their hands even off this friendly gesture. They invent a story that the British seamen spat on the German wreaths. . . .*





#### PREPARED FOR SUICIDE: She Moves Out on Her Last Voyage

A dramatic moment. The whole world is watching. Comes the news: "The 'Graf Spee' is moving out." She has left the inner harbour, reached the outer. Now she stops. Small boats around her stern take off her captain and skeleton crew. In the background is her tender, the "Tacoma."

law, they are once more free men. Captain Langsdorff watches them go, a smile hides his feelings as his eyes glimpse his battered upperworks, his smashed bridge and galley, see the gaping holes here and there. He is fair, complimentary. The devilry of modern war has not severed a link with a tradition as old as the rhythm of the sea itself. They go, his wounded and dead go, but he has few words for those remaining.

"I am beat," he says. "No, I am not yet beat." He sits alone in his room now, unmindful of the fact that overnight he has become the centre of the world.

The world's tongues wag. What will the *Graf Spee* do? Aboard the *Ajax* and *Achilles*, aboard the *Exeter* it is the same question. What will the *Graf Spee* do?

Soon the world will know. Captain Langsdorff goes ashore, smiling behind the bitterness of defeat, ignoring the crowds. But the crowds stare and wonder. The dead will be buried, and the wounded tended. He is met by officials, whisked off to his Embassy. Behind closed doors talk goes on, whilst the pulse of the world beats faster.

It is noon now, and the sun beats down hot and strong upon the harbour. The grey thing seems lost in such a host of bright colourings.

Langsdorff's smile has gone. He returns to his ship. He knows, and the world knows. The hours are shortening. Is there a way out?

Afternoon and then the evening. A feverish activity upon the *Spee*, men swarming about her works, the sounds of hammers and welders, the endeavours to hide the things that gape, to tend to the appalling damage. Evening grows, and men work faster, endeavouring to make order from disorder. Strange feelings spread. The work is momentarily held up. There is a feeling of disgust amongst the workers, and news spreads, only adding weight to the sense of humiliation and defeat.

Captain Langsdorff paces his cabin. The approaching hour, the decision to be taken overwhelm, increase, the growing bitterness. Courage is not unknown to him, he values it in others, but somewhere at the pit of his reasoning there lies a question he cannot answer. It rests with one to whom he must now speak. Time is drawing near. He had better return to the shore.

He leaves the ship behind, is speeding now towards the Embassy. His stay is short, and he proceeds to his hotel. What can he do? The world wishes it knew, but it has not long to wait.

Only a few hours to go, and they have in them the substance of nightmare, but empty of hope. He knows that at the river's mouth there wait for him those who were two days ago indifferent to his superior power. The tables are completely turned. For him hours are fast dwindling.

Knowing courage, he can go out and finish the thing. That would be the only road, the traditional road. But he might seek the succour of the country that yesterday was thrilled and is now disgusted. He knows that power is gathering beyond the harbour. And on the other side of the world, another knows, and now will make his decision.

Captain Langsdorff is on the 'phone, crossing half a world. He is speaking to the man upon whom the decision will rest. There is no reasoning, no explanation, no examination or

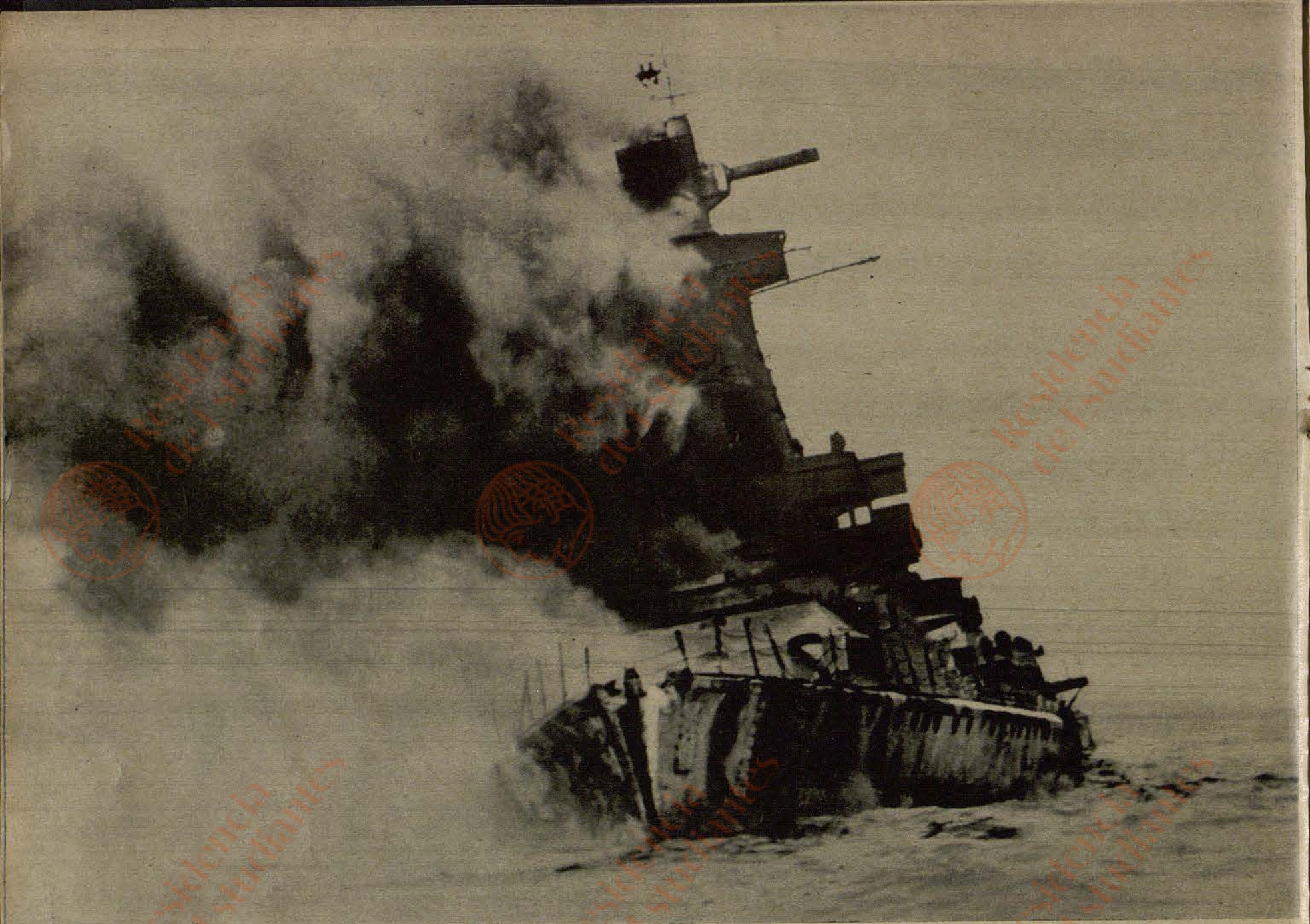


## THE GRIM END OF THE "GRAF SPEE": DESTROYED, BUT NOT IN BATTLE



Driven Off the Seas by British Cruisers, the "Graf Spee" is Blown Up By Hitler's Personal Orders  
A tragic, ignominious suicide. Soon to be followed by another tragedy. Against the supposed wishes of her Captain, trained in the traditions of the sea, the "Graf Spee" avoids battle. She is blown up in the outer harbour of Montevideo, right in the lane used by shipping—to become a nuisance to navigation, and a grim reminder of her builders' shattered hopes.





### THE BONFIRE ON THE RIVER PLATE: The "Graf Spee" As She Lies Ablaze

Shortly before half-past seven the huge crowds standing on the shore in the gathering twilight have heard a terrible explosion. Then great tongues of flame are seen to spurt up from the pocket battleship. The explosives have done their work.

consideration. The man is above all reasoning, a law unto himself—Hitler.

Across half the world, a single screech. *Scuttle the ship!* But what of honour, his ship's honour, the honour of the Navy? This is the answer: "My honour is the honour of the Navy. I decide."

Langsdorff reels under the blow. It is like a dirty smear upon all that he ever valued, a smear from an enormous hand. Scuttle his ship. An insult. And at the mouth of the Plate, the undefeated, waiting.

The hour has come. Already shore and quays are packed with people, excited by the moment of departure. The world sits by its radio sets. Nameless voices record every move in this drama, that will soon be tragedy.

Langsdorff boards his ship. He calls his officers about him, and gives his orders. Only the pressing minutes serve to cloud out the astonishment. Men pour out of the ship. The job is not done, she will go out as derelict as she entered.

The gangways are drawn up, a cluster of light bobs about in the darkness, the river itself glimmers darkly under the glow. The throb of engines is heard, cries fore and aft bite into the darkness, and a quiet voice announces that it is the end of the tether. But he talks to himself, unheard by others. It is six-thirty in the evening, the day is December 17.

Tenders prance about, making dark water dance. Slowly the grey shape veers away, and

an exclamation from the gathered crowds goes up into the darkness. Bells ring across the world.

The *Graf Spee* is moving out. The *Ajax* and *Achilles* know too, bear up in readiness.

She is gradually clearing the quay, her nose pointed towards the river mouth. The world itself seems to rock under the words.

"The *Graf Spee* is moving out."

Where precisely, they do not know, except the few who at one man's behest must drink the last drop from a bitter cup. Surrounded by men, by all the teeming life of the harbour, bathed in the limelight turned on him by an excited world, he nevertheless is alone and lonely, cut off, isolated.

The *Spee* moves slowly up the river. Her engines have settled down into a steady rhythm, the tugs prance, a ship blows—but it has no meaning for those aboard the *Graf Spee*.

She is well into the river now. In the *Ajax* and *Achilles* men are at action stations, and somewhere beyond the horizon itself others are looming up to be in at the end.

But now the *Graf Spee* has stopped in mid-river, a launch at her stern bobs about in the wake of disturbed water, shoots round to port, moves up close to midships. The throb of engines is dying down. The mystery deepens. Will she suddenly turn and seek the succour of the harbour and so surrender? Will she suddenly push out and surprise with fresh tactics?

The presses of the world are held for the words that will close the history of a day.

The *Graf Spee* has stopped dead in mid-river, and now dark forms can be seen climbing over her rails and disappearing into the waiting launch. Captain Langsdorff, too, climbs the rail and is clear of his ship. The launch goes astern, dragging the connecting cable, unseen from the shore. A dark form moves forward in the launch and leaning over, presses a switch at his hand, and adds a page to history.

The whole harbour seems to tremble under the series of explosions. The wealth and power of yesterday goes up in flame and smoke, the grey shape festered about by nothing but ignominy, towering for a moment, and then crumbling, broken, shattered, and shaking, flames leaping up to the night sky.

It is worse than surrender, worse than defeat. Captain Langsdorff knows, and the smear can never be wiped from his person. Reason is made comical and fantastic in a moment, a screech across an ocean, a roar in the darkness, a sheet of flame shooting skywards, and then another roar and another belch of flame. The *Spee* silhouetted against it, and the shape of something worse than surrender and defeat is about her.

The reverberations of these explosions circle the world. And at the river's mouth men know that the battle is over. They, too, can see the shape of that vaunted power. An insult upon captain and ship. The heavy boot and the rough hand dragging and tramping

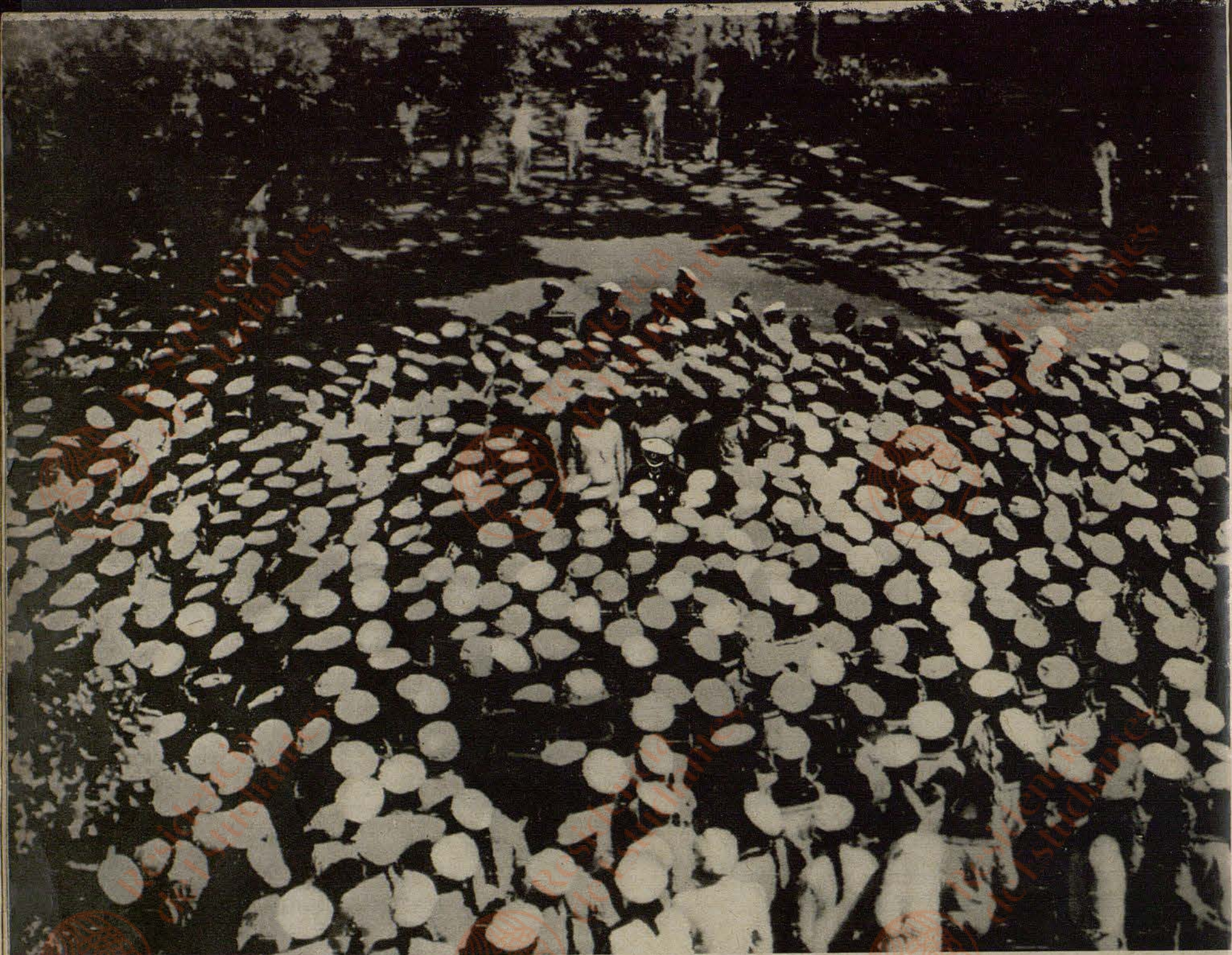




**AN AERIAL PICTURE OF THE LAST STAGE BUT ONE: The "Graf Spee" Goes Up in Smoke**

As the smouldering ship settles in the water, planes circle overhead, round a pillar of smoke a mile in height. Some carry news-cameramen. American business-men have attempted to charter others. The pride of the German navy has become a curiosity for sightseers.





### THE VANQUISHED SAYS FAREWELL: Captain Langsdorff's Last Words to His Men

In the grounds of the Argentine naval arsenal at Buenos Aires, Captain Langsdorff makes his farewell speech to his crew in private on December 19. For reporters who crowd round him afterwards, he says: "Tell them to return to-morrow. I'll have a big story ready then."



**Honour to the Lost Leader:** After the "Graf Spee's" Commander has Shot Himself On December 20 Captain Langsdorff is found dead, revolver in hand, in his room at the naval barracks in Buenos Aires. Overcome with shame at Hitler's orders, he has shot himself.

over ages of tradition.

There will be no fight now.

Men think of her captain, and some have plumbed his feelings. They have watched, their ears deafened to the series of explosions, the death-rattles of the *Spee*.

Meanwhile, the launch moves astern, veers round and makes for the harbour, then suddenly stops. The crowds surge backwards and forwards, the peak of excitement and thrill has been reached. They watch the men transferred to another launch, but they do not notice them—their eyes seek out the lone figure, one apart from the rest, with unseeing eyes. Once only he turns to look at the mangled shape blocking the river.

The launch moves off quickly, and soon is lost to sight. Not only ship, but crew are broken. Part of the *Spee's* complement proceed towards Buenos Aires, surrounding their commander, yet somehow miles away from him. There is a void, the mystery of which cannot be answered by curiosity or the upsurging of feelings.

Captain Langsdorff is alone. The occasional smile is forced, the one fugitive spurt of jocularity completely false. For him there is not even the bones of a future and he knows it. And wisely he holds his tongue.



There are things to be done, the job is not yet ended.

Buenos Aires shows up, the launch chugs towards the quay. Officials rush here and there, the hour seems tense again. The air is full of accusation and protest. The men watch the commander go, watch him bewildered, wondering.

In his room he is hidden, and now he can reflect. The frenzy and bitter words of protest seem spun from some few mad moments. In the quiet of his room, he can allow all thoughts to cool, and maybe now reflect at ease upon the history of the past hours. The sum total of his manhood has been reached, and not by one cubit can he add to it. Unspoken words spring to his tongue, he knows them well, they form in his mind, he can read them. "The ship is the man." Words spoken across centuries and as old as the sea. By no effort could he be stretched further upon the rack of despair. Humiliation is full home.

And if the ship is the man, then the man is the ship. Like a tiny glimmer of light shooting up suddenly in the darkness of his mind, he sees the way out. It is the only way.

He sees his men once more. Then in the night he wraps himself about in a flag, and puts a bullet in his brain.

The world has not ceased to be stirred. This is the last and greatest shock, and once again the presses of the world carry their load of words to the ever-hungry and curious.

"A brave man." "Only thing he could do!" "He had to do it." "He was a fine sailor." Words toss in the air.

But somewhere in the quiet backwaters, men look at each other. They cannot speak as yet. The drama of the thing has been too much for them. Yet across the waters there goes the sympathy of those schooled in the ways of the sea. They have been robbed of the fight, they can see the enormous toppling hulk of the great ship of yesterday, and now there is nothing more to be done. One task is ended and another begins.

Time to clean up, get things ship-shape again, set the course once more, continue the untiring watching of bay and headland, of far-stretching seas. History is not written only in ignominy and curling scarves of smoke that now rise slowly from the depths of the *Graf Spee* and float out to sea. She lies there like some enormous beast of steel, inert, power drained from her, and somewhere the hands of her crew have lost their power too. Lost also the guiding hand of Captain Langsdorff.

*Continued on page 22*

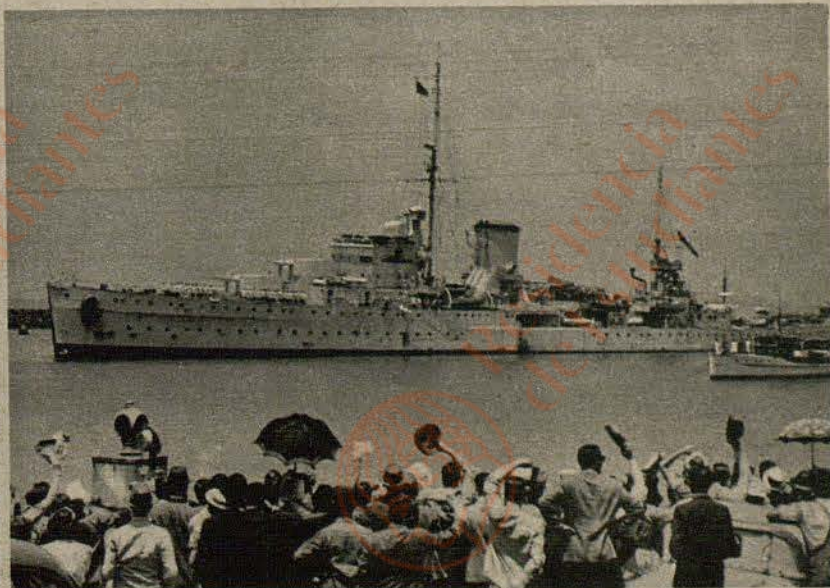


**THE VICTOR AT THE MICROPHONE:** Rear-Admiral Harwood at a Reception Meantime, in Montevideo, officers and men of the British cruisers are fêted. At a special reception in the Parque Hotel, Commodore H. Harwood comes to the microphone—he has already been promoted Rear-Admiral. Many of his officers and men receive special promotion and awards.



*The British Honour a Uruguayan Hero*

In the Plaza Independencia at Montevideo crowds have gathered to see Rear-Admiral Harwood lay a wreath on the monument of Uruguay's national hero, General Artigas.



*Buenos Aires Welcomes the "Achilles"*

Least damaged of the three British cruisers who took part in the fight is the "Achilles." She has four men dead, three wounded.





**A PICTURE THAT TELLS THE STORY TO THE WORLD: The "Admiral Graf Spee" Sinks Beneath the Waters of the Estuary of the River Plate**

The end of the "Graf Spee's" last, inglorious journey. At ten minutes past five (local time) on this afternoon of Sunday, December 17, 1939, the pocket battleship has weighed anchor. At 7.25 she has scuttled herself five miles out of Montevideo. By a quarter past eight the greater part of her hull has vanished beneath the waves. The news flies round the world—a fillip to British prestige and a shattering blow to German naval pride.





### THE "AJAX" COMES HOME: A West Ham Welcome

All the flags are up in Durban Road, West Ham, when it is known that Leonard Pittman, of the "Ajax" crew, is on his way home, after two years' absence, and a victory of which all West Ham is proud.



### The Kiss That He'd Had Coming to Him

At Plymouth there have been speeches of welcome. Cheering crowds, feting, clapping and mobbing. But better than all these has been the first sight of his wife on the platform of a London station.

In the quiet of an afternoon the *Graf Spee's* dead were buried, and now her commander follows, but not before the final insult has been hurled. For the same screeching voice announces to the world that her dead have been insulted by the British sailors; but it is

lost on those who at this hour of the day know best what to think.

The excitement is over, the aeroplanes of the curious have flown off, and the thousands have faded away. The excitement and thrill is over, normality is returning over a continent,

over which the eyes of the world have watched in these past few days.

Away beyond the mouth of the Plate the victors, too, are now waiting to enter. Quietly, without fuss, they make for the harbours of Montevideo and Buenos Aires. Men line their decks, smile towards the now cheering crowds. It is the thing due to those who have so patiently waited, and now, unrewarded ply towards the quays, their own wounded and dead to be attended to, the things that must be done in victory or defeat.

Later, the men pour out into the bright sunlight, drowned by the cheers, shy and embarrassed by too pressing attentions, whirled from one end of the city to the other. And coming up the Plate they had stood and stared at the shattered hulk that lay there. The battle of the Plate was over for the world, but not for the companies of men who some weeks later moved out and set their head for home.

The tumult has died down, but is not forgotten.

Men talk of things done in the heat of the battle, words of praise ring out. One talks of the chances taken, another of quiet bravery, yet another of the unbelievable courage of a boy receiving his baptism of fire. The battle is re-shaped in their thoughts. In odd moments they look back, visioning themselves in the heat of the hour, and in the sober minutes quite unable to believe it all. For some it is like a stupendous dream. And some are quiet, their words few, but these are most shy. The days lengthen, mile is added to mile, and they are drawing nearer to something that eclipses all the glory and courage and magnificence. They are nearing home.



### The People of Plymouth have been Waiting to Greet Them

January 31st. The "Ajax" steams in. A fervent handshake from Alderman Modley, the Deputy Lord Mayor of Plymouth, to Captain C. H. L. Woodhouse, commander of the "Ajax."





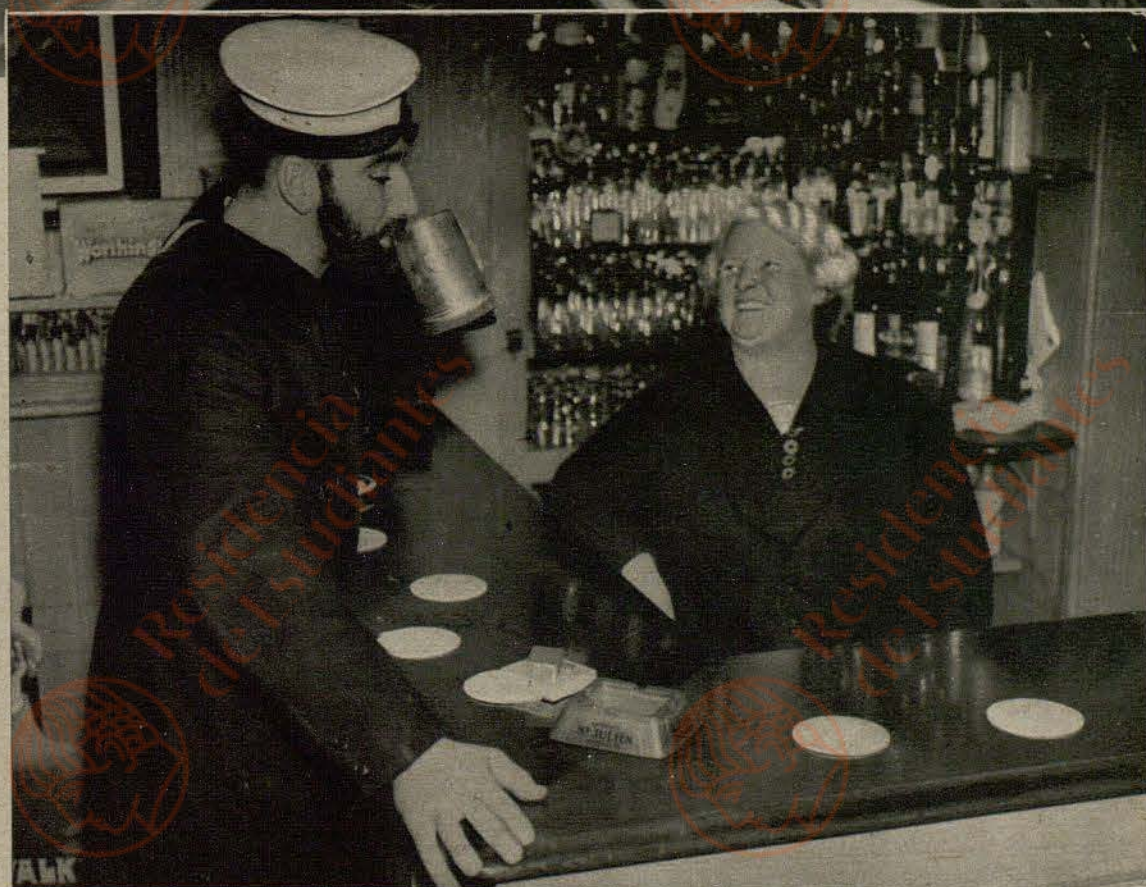
*After Two Years, a Stoker Sees His Child*  
Stoker Jim Gibson gets back home. Not before it's time, either. For there's important work for him to do: his three-year-old daughter's rocking-horse to mend.

They know that the story of the fight must be retold all over again, and somehow it has the dread of ordeal in it. Instead they think of the long task done, and known faces peering up from the quay. They draw nearer to the English days. And suddenly, without realising it, they are home.

A grey afternoon, an English day, and out from the mist there emerges the *Ajax*, carrying about her the true story of her ordeal, speaking more clearly than any written words. And as the ship draws nearer and nearer to the quay, the grey quiet air of this English afternoon is broken by cheering, and rows of smiling faces look down towards the quay.

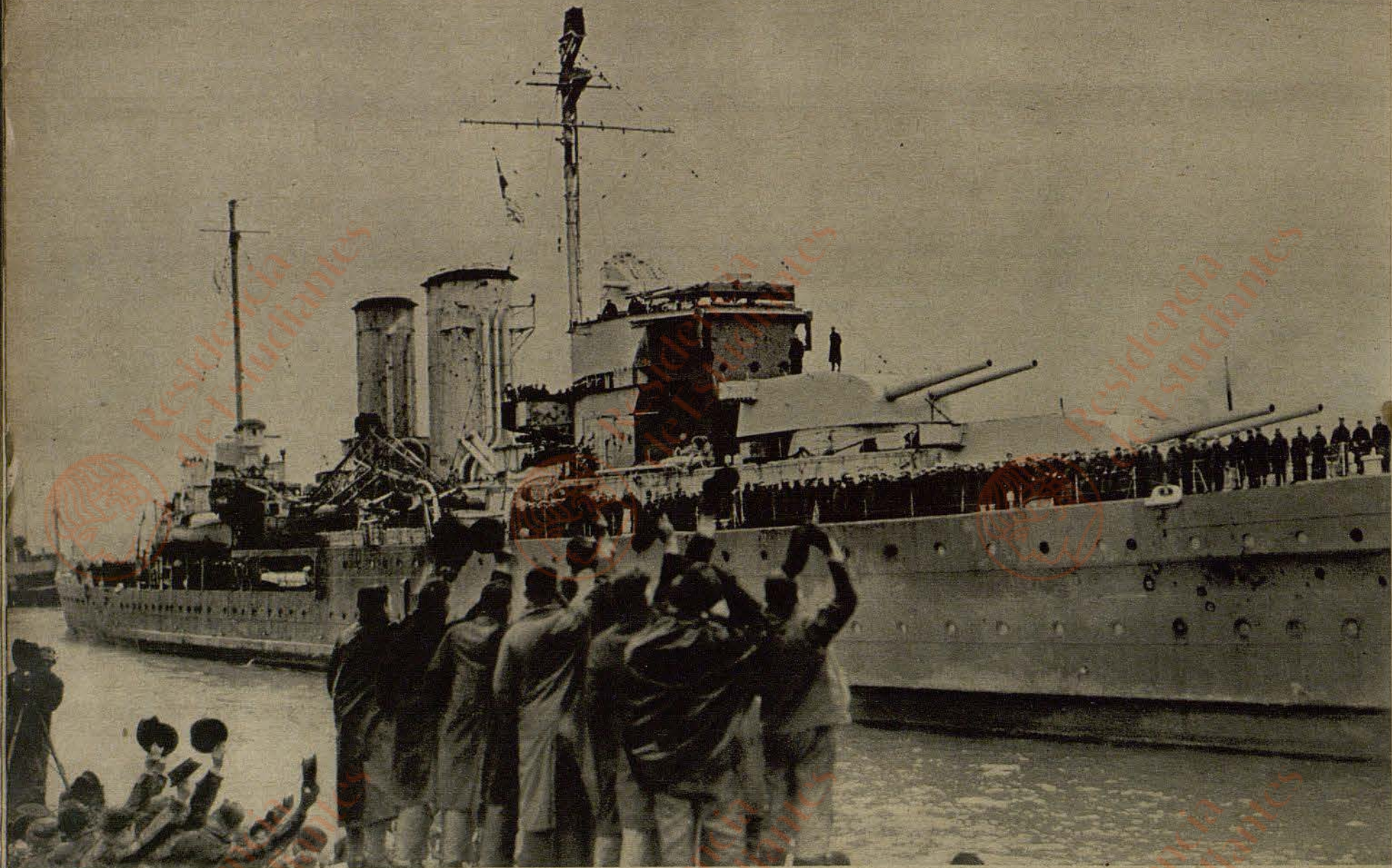
The battle seems far off now, the faces speak up to them, making vivid the memories of more quiet and ordinary days. The ship has reached the quay. The gangways are up, and in a minute or two the men are streaming down. The heat of embraces and handshakes, the smiles, all this seems greater than the heat of battle. Eyes look up, devouring the faces of long absent menfolk. Under the shy but smiling faces the hearts swell.

Then, a few days later, her partner in victory, the *Exeter*, noses her way into her



*A Sailor Has His First Pint on the House*  
The same old pub. The same old landlady. The same beer. Nothing has changed since he was last here two years ago. Except that there's a war on. And the "Graf Spee" has been sunk.





### THE EXETER COMES HOME: Crowds Throng the Quayside to Cheer Her In

Two months after the battle, still bearing the scars of the "Graf Spee's" shells, the "Exeter" comes to her home port, Plymouth. Sirens shriek and a great crowd cheers as she reaches her berth. She has been away for nearly three years.

home port. The same cheers and smiling faces. But in a few hours they have vanished, dwindled away so quietly and unnoticed, taken to buses and to trains, all wending homewards.

The *Achilles*, too, has turned her head for home—her home, the New Zealand which

provided so many of that gallant crew.

But the ordeal is not yet over. The men of the *Exeter* and the *Ajax* must march on London, must march before admiring eyes, and receive the praise that is their due.

They move out from hamlet and village,

across town and city, board trains and buses, but they cannot escape the continuous flow of admiration that pursues them. They hide their caps, the clue to identification. They try to foil all acknowledgement of their victory. Their feet are unsure upon the land, they



### A Handshake for the Officers . . .

Mr. Winston Churchill greets officers of the "Exeter" on the quarterdeck when he welcomes the cruiser into Plymouth.



### . . . And a Cheer for the First Lord

Captain Bell (centre) leads the cheers for Mr. Winston Churchill after he has inspected the "Exeter," congratulated her officers and crew.





**THE MAN WHO PLANS AND THE MAN WHO FIGHTS:** Winston Churchill and Captain Bell of the "Exeter"  
The First Lord with the Commander of the "Exeter" (right), one of the outstanding figures in the battle of the Plate. Wounded, his bridge shot away, Captain Bell steered "Exeter" with a boat's compass from the after-steering position, fought on till all guns but one were out of action.





#### THE FIRST TASTE OF LEAVE: Men of the "Exeter" Come Ashore

*They have had a long spell of service. They have sailed many thousands of miles. They have fought a battle that will go down in the annals of the sea. Now they are home. And all is well.*

tread warily, they wonder what all this excitement is really about. In the dark corners of trains and buses they think of those who did not return with them.

The trains and buses are nearing London now. The final ordeal is at hand. They will be equal to this, but will breathe sighs of relief when all is over. Their true place is in the quiet backwaters of differing seas. The land bewilders, but not so much as the rounds of cheers that strike like hail upon their ears as train and bus reach the end of their journey.

Crowds gather again, press inwards, the men feel smothered, they smile and laugh, it is all so very exciting, but in some ways it will be better when it is all over, the crowds and cheers left far behind. Officers and men press together as the throng increases, cars and buses stop, crowds collect at corners, from houses and shops people come out, watch them pass by. It looks like rain.

Later the sky clears, and without fuss the men line up in formation and set off to join their comrades. All London is out, all London abandons itself to the great occasion. Least excited are the lines of marching men. "I'm

a bit scared," says one. "Glad when it's all over," says another, thinking of the moment to come, confused by the deafening cheers, somehow lost amidst the forests of buildings, watching the traffic give way to their ringing steps.

The march is at an end, the men are lined up for review. They look right ahead, seemingly over the heads of the still swelling crowds. A hush passes down the long line. Drawing themselves up, they now stare out, sphinx-like, quite cool in the heat of the occasion, and men look at each other out of the corners of eyes. Away to the right they can hear the hubbub of voices, the broken fragments of conversation, hear a sudden laugh. Glad when it is all over. It is rather bewildering.

Somebody is talking in whispers. The whispers cease. This is the greatest ordeal of all. Imprisoned by the crowds, surrounded by the tall buildings, they stand, not seeing, not listening, waiting for the final, the great moment to be over. Their praises are being sung, a name floats into the air, they recognise it, past things are re-lived for a moment or



*The Ship's Mascot Comes Ashore Too*

*First down the gang-plank when the "Exeter" reaches Plymouth is the ship's cat.*





### *But There Are Some Who Will Never Come Home*

*Jean Russel with the medal won by her father, Marine Russel, presented to her mother by the King. Mortally wounded by a shell, Russel walked about the deck, encouraging his shipmates.*

two. The reward for bravery, for the elimination of self, for tact and courage, for indifference to danger. A decoration pinned on by the King, a smile, a handshake.

More names are being called, more men smile, shaking hands, then, as sphinx-like as before, stare ahead. Time seems to move too slowly now. It is like a dream, all this cheering, this excitement. It will be nice when the order is given to about turn and march. March away quickly from the lime-light, back into the anonymous regions that seem most proper to simple sailors.

"Hungry?"

"Me? I should bloomin' well think so."

"Won't be long now. Hardly seen anything of my old missus yet."

"Somebody says there's roast duck."

"Shan't mind, all the same to me. I'm always hungry."

Snippets of subdued conversation float about, unheard by the crowds.

Somewhere, unseen, a band is playing. Thoughts float back to the bright morning of the Plate, and the grey shape that broke the day with challenge she had made too soon.

The fugitive excitements of it all, the frenzies and delight of snatched moments of a South American afternoon have become dim in the memory. The job is done, nothing to do now but get home and sleep it off.

"Didn't know my bloomin' kid after nearly two and a half years."

"Molly knows me, though."

"All this goes to your head, mate? Don't you think so?"

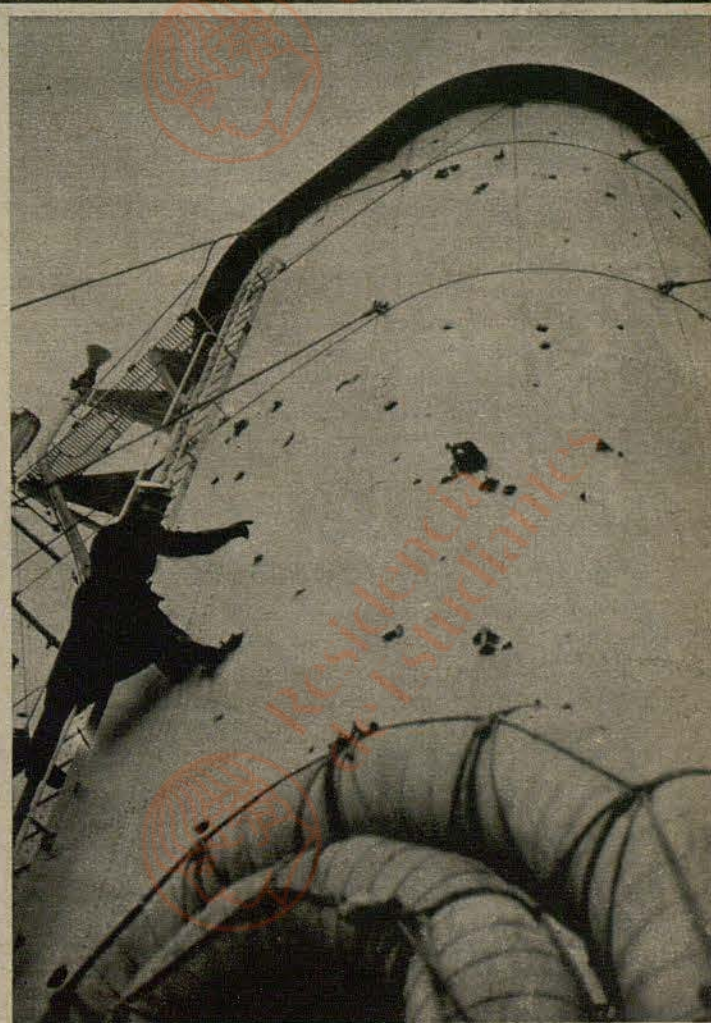
The crowd stand still and admiring, their eyes move from man to man, from line to line, and many pictures are forming in their minds. They see the faces looking out at them, but the whole of the story will never be written upon the faces of such modest men, nor will the tongue run loose, for there will be no unguarded moments. So the crowd can stare on, the dread has died down.

"'Twasn't half so bad as I thought," says one.

"What a bloomin' crowd of people," says another.

Suddenly, the air rings to an order. The lines swing round, signal for more and louder

*(Continued on page 30)*



### *The Marks of a Great Fight*

*"You have come home with your honours gathered and your duty done," says the First Lord.*





**BEFORE THE TRIUMPHAL MARCH:** Men of the "Ajax" and "Exeter" are Inspected by the King  
In the world's most impressive setting, the Horse Guards' Parade in the heart of London, the King inspects some of the sailors who helped to beat the "Graf Spee." Following him, on the left, is the Duke of Kent.



**The Scene on Horse Guards' Parade**  
Not since the days of peace have such crowds gathered in London. Never in peace-time could there be such a sight.



**Those Who Have Come to Pay Tribute**  
A king, a prince, a prime minister, an admiral. The saga of the Battle of the River Plate has stirred the admiring wonder of every Briton.





**FOR SERVICES RENDERED: A Kingly Handshake for an Officer of the "Exeter"**

Before the march to the Guildhall, the King decorates officers and men from the two ships' companies, talks to many of them. Hears what they have to tell.





### THE KING AND QUEEN WITH THEIR PEOPLE: A Picture that Sums Up the British Democracy

*The King presents medals to heroes of the "Ajax" and "Exeter." Then he and the Queen walk over to a little group. Widows of men killed in the battle, wives of men wounded. They shake hands and chat. A little boy in the background fumbles with his cap. The Prime Minister and First Lord look on. No lines of soldiers, no armed guards, no secrecy, no fear.*

cheers, and slowly the men move off, glory forgotten at thoughts of lunch, and the crowds follow behind them, singing, shouting and laughing, cheering again and again. A wonderful day. The men step out, talk and laugh as they go, and soon the massive portals of the Guildhall are within sight. No end of the cheers, no end of smiling faces, whole seas of them. But shelter at last, and now quietly they file away to their different tables, sit down. The ordeal is over.

"Told you it was roast duck."

"Beer's good, better than that rotten American stuff, believe me."

"Have a cigar. Two for three-halfpence to-day."

The air is full of conversation, here and there an excited shout. Some are quiet and getting on with their lunch with a quiet and determined earnestness. Not long to go now, and then they can scatter and hide themselves. The day has been too much for them, they are

not used to such orgies of praise. It was only a job after all, tough whilst it lasted, but a job.

"Going to sleep the bloomin' clock round to-morrow, mate."

"Don't sleep your brains away then, even if you didn't lose them when that third shell struck amidships."

"Smell the smoke."

"Hard lines on old —"

"He was a good chap."

"I'd like to get out of it now. Enough's as good as a feast for me."

The air resounds to the clatter of cutlery, a continuous bubble of conversation is going on, circling the tables, the room is thickening with smoke.

"See they've altered the blinkin' trains since I was last home."

"I got to get a bus and a train, then another train and another bus. What about that?"

"Call it lucky, mate."

"Ssh! Somebody going to speak, mate."

They hear several speeches, but now comes the one to crown them all. It is Winston Churchill speaking:—

"The brunt of the war has fallen upon the sailormen and upon their comrades of the Coastal Command of the R.A.F., and we have lost nearly 3,000 lives in a hard, unrelenting struggle which goes on night and day and is going on now without a moment's respite.

"The brilliant sea-fight which Admiral Harwood conceived, and which those who are here executed, takes its place in our Naval annals, and I might add that, in a dark, cold winter, it warmed the cockles of the British heart.

"But it is not only in the few glittering hours, glittering, deadly hours of action, which rivet all eyes—it is not only in those hours that the strain falls upon the Navy. Far more does it fall in the weeks and months of ceaseless trial and vigilance on the stormy, icy seas, dark and

*Continued on page 36*





*The Most Human Episode of the Day: The Girl Who Doesn't Look at the Queen*

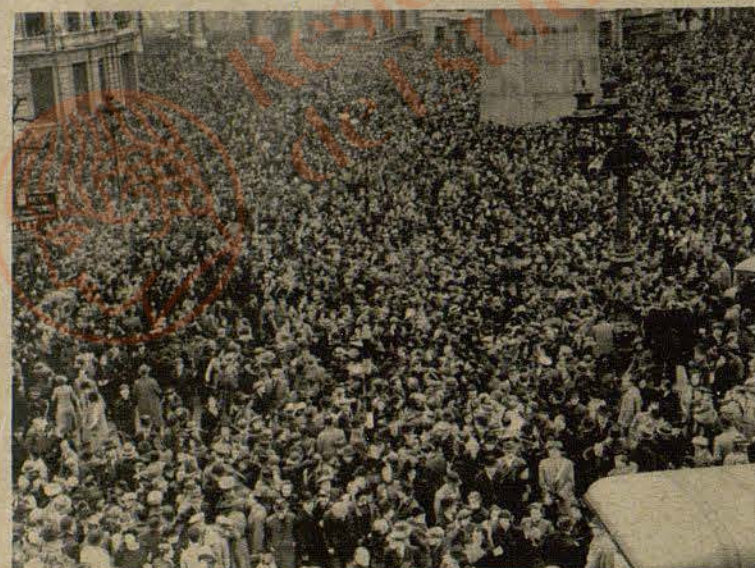
*Her mother has just received a medal from the King, won by her father, a brave man whom she will never see again. She has been presented to the Queen. But she doesn't know that the Queen is holding her hand and the King is only a few feet away. She is looking at the parade ground, where there are bands and uniforms.*



# THE VICTORY MARCH



Trafalgar Square. . . And the Shadow of Nelson  
The procession from the "Ajax" and "Exeter" on its way to  
the Guildhall after the investiture by the King.



Crowds Fill the Streets

No thrills in the war to compare with the Battle of the Plate.  
And few chances before now to cheer its heroes.  
(Below) Cheers for Capt. Woodhouse of the "Ajax."



## THE GREATEST DAY OF THEIR LIVES:

A splash of pageantry in the drabness of war. A day for pride



February 23, 1940. Cheered, Filmed, Photographed, Men of the "Ajax" and "Exeter" March Through the City  
and good cheer. A day for packed streets as 760 officers and men from both cruisers march to the Guildhall, where the Lord Mayor of London is their host.





*The People They Were Fighting For . . .*

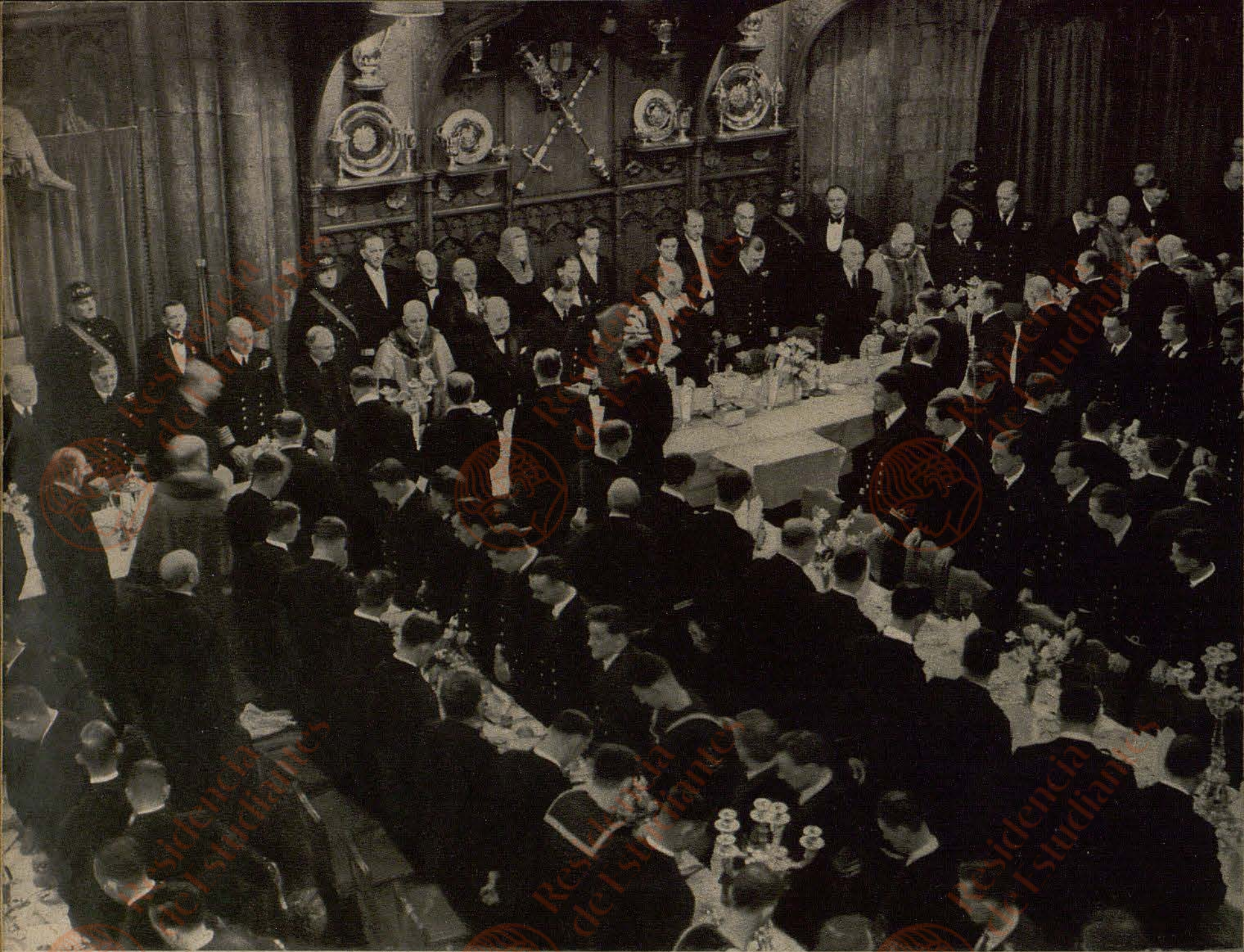
*They cheer because it was a great victory. Because it is a fine parade. Because these are brave men. Because they feel these men were fighting for them—the women and children of Britain.*





... And the Men Who Led the Battle  
 Captain Woodhouse, H.M.S. "Ajax" (left) and Captain Bell, H.M.S. "Exeter," in the Victory March to the Guildhall. Their skill and courage brought their men and ships to victory.





### THE CITY'S TRIBUTE: The Scene at the Guildhall Lunch

The Lord Mayor, at the centre of the top table, is host to the officers and men after the Victory March. On his left are Captain Bell and Sir Samuel Hoare, on his right Captain Woodhouse and Mr. Winston Churchill, whose speech was the big event of the lunch.



### The City Corporation are Their Guard of Honour

Bluejackets of the "Ajax" and "Exeter" pass into the Guildhall for the Lord Mayor's lunch. Dignitaries of the City of London are proud to form a guard of honour for them.

foggy nights, when at any moment there may leap from the waves death and destruction with a sullen roar.

"There is the task which you were discharging and which your comrades are discharging. There was the task from which, in a sense, the fierce action was almost a relief.

"It will be a comfort and encouragement to the whole Navy, to the flotillas of the Grand Fleet, to the hunting groups, to the mine-sweepers, and to the warships and auxiliaries, now about 1,700 in number and rapidly rising—it will be a comfort to all of them that the Lord Mayor of the City of London should have wished to show, so heartily, approval of the way the Royal Navy is carrying on and is going to carry on, until not only the cargoes by which we live, but the high purpose we have in hand are all brought safely into port. . . ."

And now he is speaking to those in his audience who are not sailors.

"You must remember that for one stroke that goes home—the one clutch that grips the raider—there are many that miss their mark on the broad ocean. For every success there are many disappointments. You must never forget that the dangers that are seen are only a small part of those that are warded off by care and foresight and therefore pass unnoticed. . . ."





**The Man Whose Speech Thrilled the Bluejackets Signs Their Autograph Books**  
When the lunch is over, seamen of the "Ajax" and "Exeter" crowd round Winston Churchill, ask for his autograph. They will remember his words. They will treasure his signature. They have met the man behind the Navy.



## FOOTNOTE TO THE STORY: THE RESCUE OF THE "SPEE'S" PRISONERS



**THE "ALTMARK":** The Pilots Locate Her

Members of an R.A.F. Coastal Command patrol study a map of Norwegian waters. Later they spot the "Altmark" from the air.



**A Destroyer Races to the Rescue**

H.M.S. "Cossack" (farthest from camera) enters Norwegian territorial waters on February 17, acting under Admiralty orders.



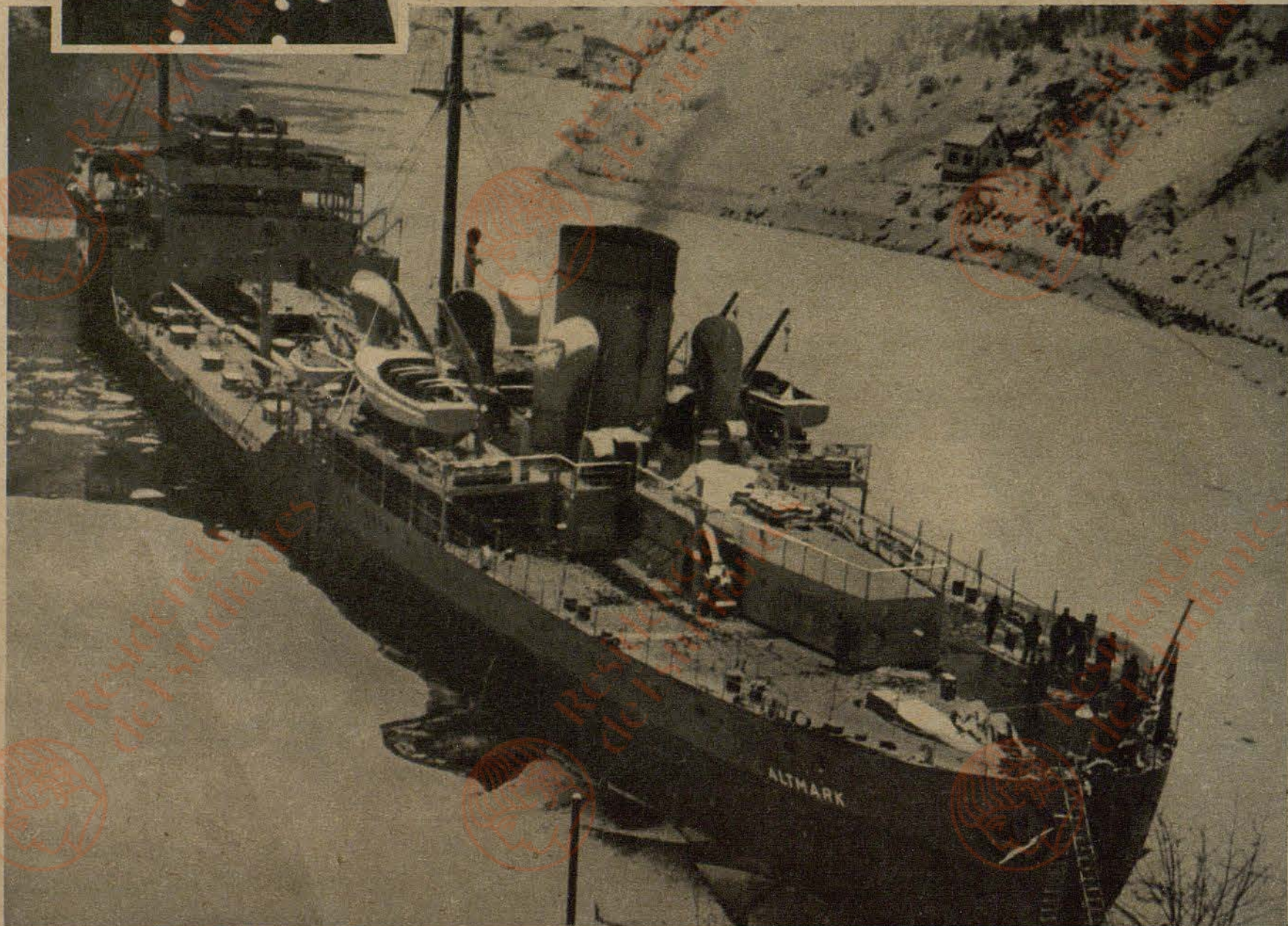
He turns again to the men who fought the Battle of the River Plate:—

"Warriors of the past may look down, as Nelson's memorial looks down upon us now, without any feeling that the island race has lost its daring or that the examples they set in bygone centuries have faded as the generations have succeeded one another.

"To the glorious action of the Plate there has recently been added an epilogue—the rescue last week by the *Cossack* and her flotilla under the noses of the enemy, and

amid the tangles of one-sided neutrality—the rescue of British captives taken from the sunken German raider—your friend, the one you sunk.

"Their rescue, at the very moment when those unhappy men were about to be delivered over to indefinite German bondage, proves that the long arm of British sea power can be stretched out, not only for foes, but also for faithful friends. And to Nelson's immortal signal of 135 years ago: 'England expects that every man will do his duty'—



The "Graf Spee's" Private Prison Ship, the "Altmark," is Driven Aground in a Norwegian Fjord

The commander of the "Cossack" (Captain Philip Vian, above) knows that the "Altmark" holds 300 British seamen, taken from ships sunk by the "Graf Spee." He manoeuvres alongside, and a boarding party stands by. The "Altmark" attempts to ram the "Cossack," in doing so, runs aground.