

ARK ROYAL AGAIN Still Attacking Italians

THE Nazis took a strong dislike to Britain's 25,000-ton aircraft-carrier Ark Royal, soon after the war began, and sank her many times by radio. Italy, on entering the war, joined in the story and her wireless, too, sank the Ark Royal on its own. Unfortunately for the Italians—as those at Cagliari and Genoa know too well—the Ark Royal is very much afloat. Her recent exploits in the Mediterranean were described by Lieut.-Commander Thomas Woodroffe recently from the BBC.

On October 10, 1939, a Nazi airman called Francke was promoted to First Lieutenant in the Luftwaffe and decorated with the Iron Cross, First Class, by Marshal Goering. There was a ceremony, doubtless healths were drunk, and Field-Marshal Goering made a bombastic speech. This all occurred because Francke had sunk the Ark Royal with a thousand-pound bomb. The Ark Royal at this time was one of our latest aircraft-carriers, some 25,000 tons displacement, a complement of something like 1,500 men, and she carried 60 aircraft. You remember how after that the German wireless went on and on with their claims that the Ark Royal had been sunk.

Then one day the American Attaché, Captain Kirk, on a visit to a northern port, had lunch on board an aircraft-carrier, the Ark Royal. He reported to the Naval authorities in Washington that he had lunched on board the Ark Royal, but still Lord Haw-Haw claimed almost nightly that the aircraft-carrier had been sunk.

The next thing we heard about her was that she turned up at Rio de Janeiro about the time the Graf Spee was sunk. She was in there oiling. After that she berthed at Cape Town in December, and although she arrived unexpectedly, Cape Town, as usual, entertained her officers and ship's company with the hospitality that anyone who has been on the Cape Station will know was almost as strenuous for the guests as the war at sea.

During the time she was operating in the Atlantic she steamed 75,000 miles—that is as far as three times round the earth at the Equator. In December of last year alone she steamed 11,000 miles. Her aeroplanes searched an area of five million square miles—that is an area one-and-a-half times the size of the whole of Europe. During this period she captured one of the most valuable prizes of the war, and when Mr. Churchill announced this fact he said: "We should be quite content to engage the entire German Navy using only the vessels which at one time and another they have declared they have destroyed." Her movements from the beginning of 1940 until Italy entered the war are still hidden from us, but you can take it that she was not idle, and the Italian broadcasts in March spoke openly of "the Ark Royal—a modern ship of the British Navy which was bombed and sunk by German propaganda."

When Italy entered the war, this attitude on the part of the Italians did not last long because, copying the fashion of their masters, their wireless started sinking the Ark Royal on its own.



CREWS of the submarines of the Royal Navy, who spend most of their time under water in enemy territory, receive artificial sunlight treatment on returning to their base

On July 10 the Hood and the Ark Royal carried out a sweep on the Western Mediterranean; they met no surface craft but they were continually bombed. There were no casualties to our personnel and there was no danger to this force, but four of the enemy aircraft which attacked it were destroyed and seven others damaged. In spite of that the Italians claimed direct hits on both ships; they said that fire had broken out on board the Hood and the Ark Royal had been severely damaged.

And now the Ark Royal has popped up again. About the middle of November she carried out a successful reconnaissance eastwards along the Mediterranean without encountering any enemy surface craft. She and her escorts cruised for a long time in waters which the Italians claim no enemy ship can sail. In the course of this sweep they carried out a heavy air raid on Cagliari airfield in Sardinia. If you look at the map and see how close and tucked in to the mainland Sardinia is, you would think that any force venturing anywhere near it would be immediately overwhelmed by not only bombers from the mainland but the main body of the Italian Fleet itself.

Finally, the Ark Royal was reported to be part of the squadron which bombed Genoa on February 9.

RADIO KEEPS WAR HUMAN Request Programmes From The BBC

ALTHOUGH so many of our modern inventions, such as the aeroplane, have turned warfare into a merciless slaughter of innocents as well as fighting men, there is one which brings a human touch into present-day conflicts," writes W. Wilkinson in the "Portsmouth Evening News." "Radio telephony is an all-important war weapon, but it is also serving to bridge the thousands of miles between some of our Forces and their loved ones at home."

In campaigns of long ago, wives and sweethearts parted with their menfolk realising that they would be months and even years without word of them. In the Great War the field card was invented, and, though received with joy since it meant that the sender was then still alive, it was a most unsatisfying and impersonal greeting for those longing to get a proper letter.

In this Great War it is possible for anyone to get in touch with a man in the Forces, whether he be in Iceland or the Far East, through the medium of the radio. "Request" programmes by the BBC (similar to the personal messages in the N.Z. feature "With the Boys Overseas") are popular both among men of the British Isles and those from Dominions and Colonies now serving in England.

Cynics May Sneer

The idea was started when the British Expeditionary Force went to France. Fathers, mothers, wives and sweethearts went to the microphone to give a message. One I remember vividly was in the simple words of a working man telling his 20-year-old son to "finish the job we started." His son, and all the other sons of Britain, did not get the chance then, but opportunity will come again.

Those left at home now, while seldom able to give a message personally on the radio, can take advantage of the several programmes of requests in which they can ask for a certain gramophone record to be played. Cynics may sneer when they hear a tenderly-worded greeting followed by the request, "Whose Little

What's It Are You?" or some other such effort by our modern composers of dance music, but many of these numbers do convey a sentimental message in simple words. Often the chosen piece has mutual associations. You can imagine, for instance, a Navy wife in Portsmouth and her husband thousands of miles away on the high seas being drawn together for a minute or so in a way impossible by letter.

Probably the best man at this type of programme is Sandy Macpherson, the BBC organist. He has a quiet voice, and his modest, unassuming manner is apparent in his every word. Sandy succeeds in conveying a deep sincerity which I am sure he feels.

Canadian Candour

Members of the Empire Forces are not quite so reticent as many of us over here about making public their radio *billet doux*. Mr. Wilkinson went on, and one Canadian soldier I heard brought a long list of loving messages not only from his comrades, but from the officers of his unit as well. He rattled them off in the short time at his disposal with a rapidity that made his listeners gasp.

In not a few cases the announcer's aid is sought in patching up a broken romance. Where is the girl who can resist a message from her former sweetheart, and the record, "Just One More Chance to Prove it's You Alone I Care For"?

One of the most moving messages ever broadcast in this kind of programme was from a man in the R.A.F. to his sister and her husband, who had obviously drifted apart. The poignancy of the occasion lay in the fact that the R.A.F. man had been killed on active service before the message and request could be given, but it was the wish of the family that they should be included. So were heard the words from the dead—an appeal to "make it up" and remember their little son. I cannot recall the song accompanying the request, but I do remember that it was in keeping with the occasion.

Cables Go Astray

One request revealed something greatly amiss at the Post Office. A London woman had cabled regularly to her husband in the Middle East only to receive more and more urgent messages, "No reply to my cables—what's wrong?" Eventually she sought the aid of the BBC through a request programme, and had word transmitted by this means. Nevertheless the necessity should not have arisen. The desperate anxiety of that man at the apparent silence from his home in London can well be imagined.

These broadcasts contain much humour as well as sadness. Many a smile must have been caused by one message to a man in the Navy. It ran something like this: "I am thinking of you always, dear, and praying for your safety—did the gloves fit?"

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