

RECONNAISSANCE IN FORCE

NO one, least of all her own company, would call the U.S.S. Atka a graceful ship. She looks as muscle-bound as an Olympic weight-lifter. Above the waterline, her bows are bluff and bull-nosed; below, her stem curves back sharply to allow her to ride up on pack-ice and break through by sheer weight. Her broad beam encloses great trimming-tanks to port and starboard, by which she can be rolled sharply from side to side to break through enclosing flows. Her sides curve and bulge so that—at a pinch—she will rise on to the ice, like Nansen's Fram, if the lateral pressure becomes too severe, and this curve produces an inboard sheer in the sides (a "tumblehome" seamen would call it) which accentuates her general air of tubbiness.

But, of course, it wasn't her homely silhouette that brought the press, the photographers, the newsreel men, the NZBS tape-recorders (and *The Listener*) out bright and early on New Year's morning to watch her amble up a phenomenally placid Wellington Harbour

to her berth at Clyde Quay. The Atka might lack beauty, but she had other attractions. She had brains—as heavy a concentration of them as one would be likely to encounter hereabouts outside a plenary session of the Association for the Advancement of Science.

The advancement of science was, in fact, the prime reason for her voyage—would be the sole concern of a substantial number of her company for some months ahead—and was, in part at least, the reason why reporters found it expedient to be on the job early on the morning after New Year's Eve. Science, as every newspaperman now knows, is news, and even with Statham and Tyson in full cry at Melbourne, science was still worth a headline.

On that first morning, however, the wardroom press conference was only a preliminary canter—a gathering of first impressions. Its main purpose was to enable reporters to meet Service and civilian scientists on board and to arrange for further meetings.

So *The Listener* paid a second visit to the Atka and with the help of Paul A. Humphrey, who represents the U.S.

National Academy of Sciences on board, learned something more specific of the ship's mission and met some of the scientific specialists.

Besides representing the Academy of Sciences, Mr. Humphrey is also the Expedition representative for the International Geophysical Year—a projected period of more than usually close collaboration between scientists and scientific bodies in many countries throughout the world.

It was to prepare for the major United States contribution to that international exchange of knowledge that the Atka was travelling south to Antarctica. She was, in fact, the advance guard of an advance guard—a reconnaissance in force. Beyond the usual observation of the heavens and the earth and the waters under the earth, which would be carried out by the physicists and meteorologists, the geologists and map-makers and oceanographers, the Atka would also make the preliminary surveys of the area in which the main expedition would later be established. Mr. Humphrey, who is from the U.S. Weather Bureau, will, for example, be studying surface and upper air conditions, but he will also explore sites for large-scale research bases.

When the Atka's preliminary reconnaissance is completed, a second group will travel south (towards the end of this year) to establish the bases, and the expedition pro-



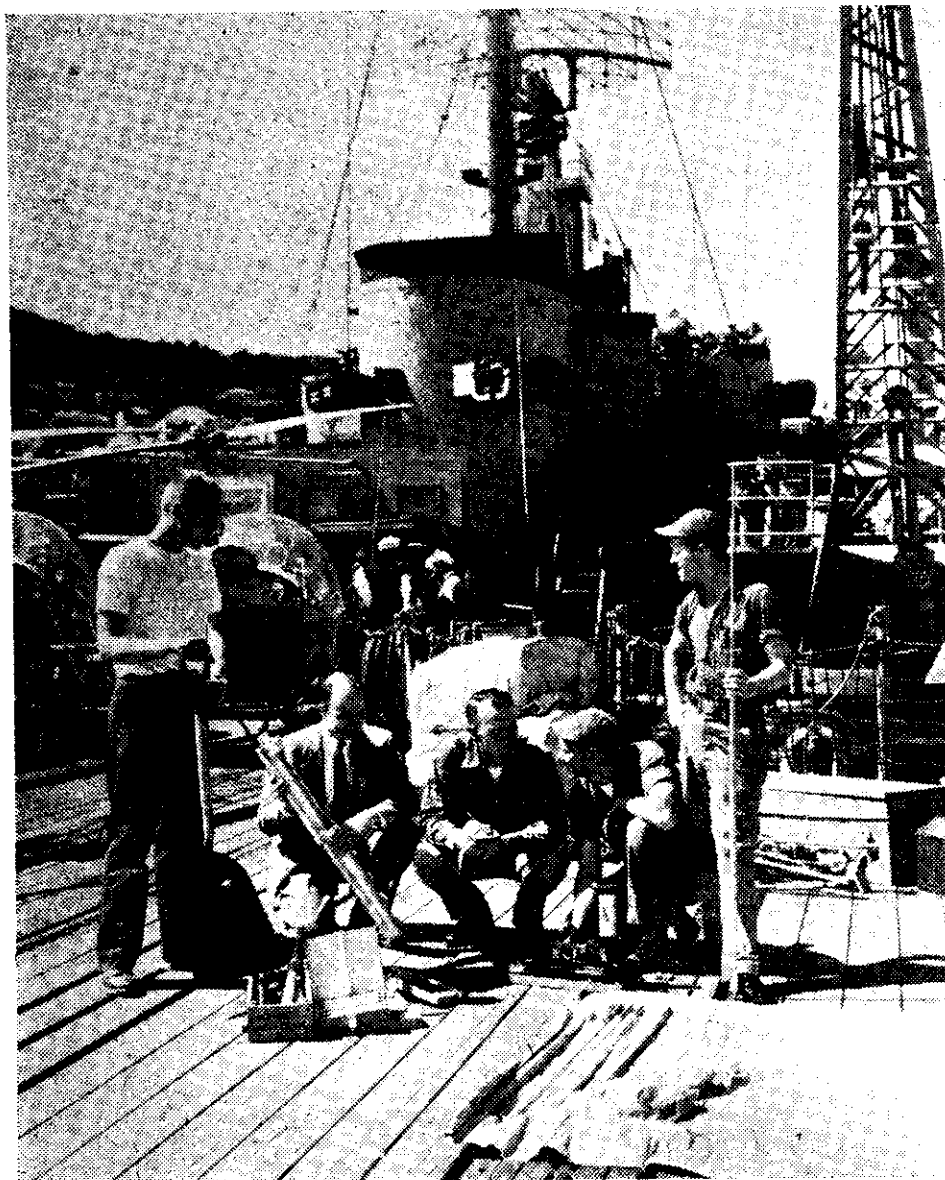
COMMANDER GLEN JACOBSEN,
Master of the Atka

per will leave the United States in 1956 so that the main body of scientists can be installed in good time for the opening of the World Geophysical Year on July 1, 1957. Observations in a multiplicity of scientific fields will go on continuously for 12 months thereafter.

Cryologically Speaking . . .

Even on the Atka there are specialists of a type not encountered here before. To those New Zealanders who have had

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ON BOARD THE ATKA: At left, demonstrating cryology equipment on the flight deck are G. R. Toney, U.S. Weather Bureau, Paul A. Humphrey, representative of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, E. H. Moser, U.S. Navy, and two Seabees who will work with the cryologists, C. M. Myers and R. L. Stuart. In the background is one of the helicopters on board, while above it is the Atka's low level radar equipment. Right: Dr. Keith B. Fenton, cosmic ray physicist, inspects the equipment, formerly installed on the Canadian icebreaker Labrador