

# The Ship That Died of Shame

THERE was once a ship—M.G.B. 1087. We hear her put to sea in the opening scene of Nicholas Monsarrat's *The Ship that Died of Shame*, and we hear her Captain, Bill Randall, tell of his deep and personal feeling for the ship. Then he says: "Not that I believe ships really live; they don't have souls and they don't have wills of their own..." That is what he says in the beginning, but before long he begins to waver and in the end we, the listeners, are asked to consider our verdict very carefully.

The ship in the story was a motor gunboat during the war, one of a group known officially as Coastal Forces, and unofficially as "the Beat-up Boys." She was about one hundred feet in length and of 5000 horse-power. She was armed with depth-charges, six Oerlikons, eight smaller machine-guns and two six-pounders. Her total complement was twenty-four. She used to dash across the Channel, shooting at everything she might meet, from mines and aircraft to trawlers or a steam-locomotive coming out of a tunnel on the coast.

Six years after the war M.G.B. 1087's Captain (Norman Wooland), now



TREVOR HOWARD  
One of the Beat-up Boys

unemployed, meets his former First Lieutenant (Trevor Howard) and reluctantly agrees to join him in a smuggling venture. Randall's decision is greatly influenced by the knowledge that their old M.G.B. can be acquired, and he becomes deeply incriminated before he realises that their activities have been unscrupulously extended. But the ship apparently has her own inexorable way of dealing with the shameful uses to which she is put.

*The Ship that Died of Shame* was dramatised for radio by Captain (E) Kenneth Langmaid, D.S.C., R.N. It will be heard in *ZB Sunday Showcase* at 9.35 p.m. on Sunday, February 27.

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