

Cook, large, serene, cheerful, full of compassion and benevolence for the thin shades around him.

On our way back to the maindeck we noticed (in the various cabins we passed) that the choice of pin-ups is much the same with sailors the whole world over, whatever may be the language of the captions. But on the Ob rural scenes were also popular—an understandable choice when one thinks of where the ship spends her time, in a desolation of ice, rock, snow and sea, where men must sicken for a blade of grass.

From the wharftide, the Ob looked powerful, and compact despite her size. The raked stem cut back sharply at the forefoot and the bow-plating showed exterior reinforcing to meet the shock of ice. The stern-counter, with the deep notch typical of such vessels, was heavily fendered with steel mesh and in places faced with protecting timber.

Above it, stretching the full width of the stern, was the platform used by the ship's helicopters. One could see the difficulty that even aircraft of that kind must have to land in anything but serene weather on such a confined space. And one remembered that no matter how great the technical advantages of the modern explorer, the same old-fashioned qualities of courage and resourcefulness are needed to utilise those advantages fully.

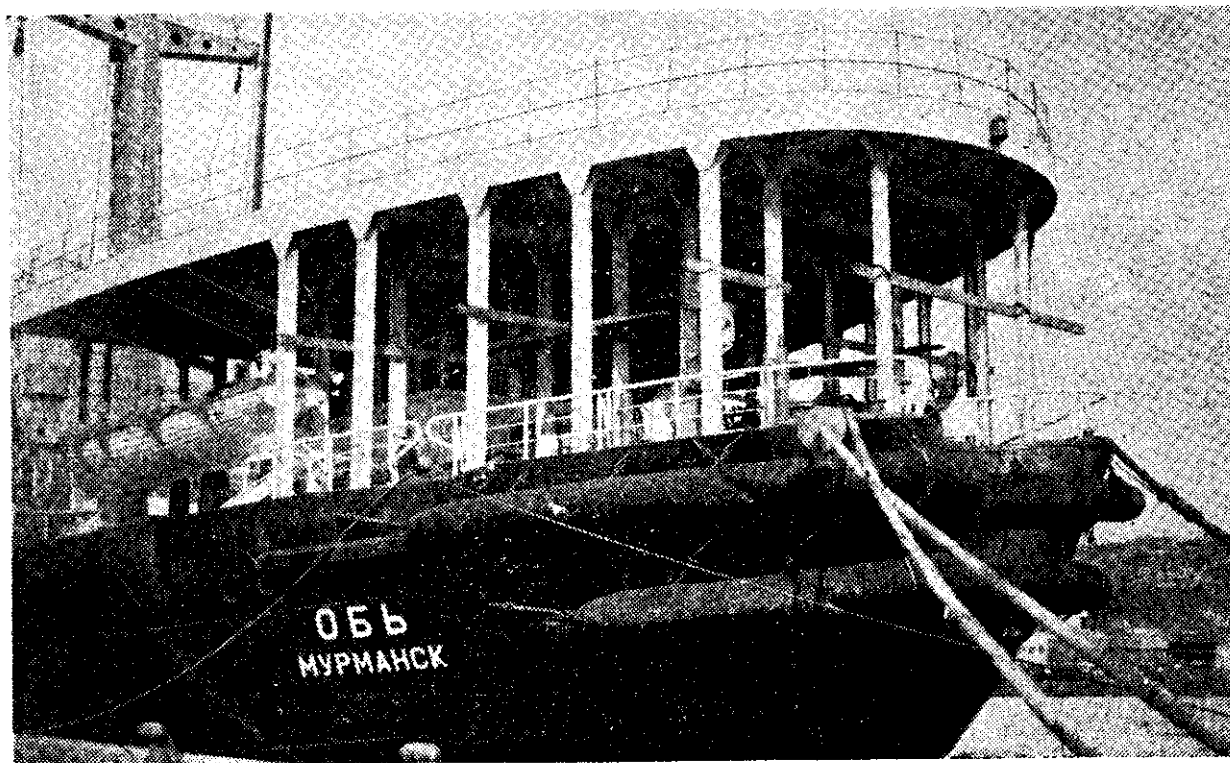
But from the wharf it was still difficult to sum up a general impression. It is a truism perhaps, but a ship at rest has a different personality for the casual observer than it has for the crew. And no matter how much one knows of the sea every ship is an enigma till one has been with her where she belongs, and no ship belongs by the confining land. Joseph Conrad said of the sea that it was "uncertain, arbitrary, featureless, and violent, inane in its serenity, and stupid in its wrath." So it is not to the sea that the sailor gives his allegiance and love, but to the well-found ship whose power is the measure of his freedom.



ABOVE: Before the Ob left Wellington the NZBS recorded for the BBC interviews with the Commander and the chief scientist on board. From left, Denis Edwards (technician), Douglas Smith (talks officer), Captain I. A. Man and Professor V. G. Kort. RIGHT: Even the most dedicated explorers must eat. BELOW: The heavily-fendered stern and the helicopter landing-platform.



N.P.S. photographs



N.Z. LISTENER, APRIL 27, 1956

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Reminiscences and photos of early schooldays will be welcomed by the Secretary, who guarantees their safe return.