

For Thurs
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Blood Baths at Sea

by

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"The most gruesome bloodbath in history" is promised by Nazi Germany unless her peace terms are immediately accepted. No one doubts the willingness of Hitler and aides to inflict that horror on Europe, but on the sea, at least, can he do it?

The Kaiser's U-boat navy set a very high mark in gruesome bloodbaths on the sea, highlighted by the shrieks of innocent men and women passengers on the sinking Lusitania; the moans of helpless wounded going down on ruthlessly torpedoed hospital ships; the agonized groans of merchant seamen shelled to death by U-boat guns; the cries of drowning thousands when within sixty minutes the armored cruisers Hogue, Cressy and Aboukir went to the bottom, all victims of the U-9. With torpedoes, guns, mines and bombs, the Kaiser's lieutenants set an all time high for sudden death at sea, both in numbers killed and in the fiendishly horrible manner of their killing.

Granted the desire to do better and the elimination of even such weakening scruples as the Kaiser and his ministers occasionally showed, can Hitler and the Nazi technique of utter ruthlessness improve on the Kaiser's record for mass murder on the oceans from 1914 to 1918?

U-boats depend mainly for their effectiveness on their ability to make themselves invisible at will by submerging and so unnoticed and unsuspected, to creep close enough to a ship to fire against her underwater hull a torpedo. It is not necessary here to dwell on the effects of 500 pounds of TNT exploded against a ship's side. The results are sufficiently devastating.

Were this all there is to it, Adolph Hitler would be in excellent position to make good the Nazi boast, for he started this war with some sixty-six U-boats as against the Kaiser's initial fleet of only twenty-eight. On numbers alone, he should be able at least to double the quantity of blood in which his predecessor bathed the sea. But unfortunately for this ambition, that is not all there is to it. To do a really effective job in rolline up a respectable number of deaths, it is necessary for the U-boat not only to get in its torpedo but also to get away unscathed, to get away with the morale of its crew unshaken, so that when the next helpless merchantman shows up on the horizon, she also can be attacked and sunk without fear and without hesitation.

No method has yet been found or is in prospect which can with certainty be relied on to stop a determined U-boat commander from getting in a submerged shot when he is lucky enough to be within torpedo range. The case of Britain's aircraft carrier, *Gourageous*, proves that, and if more proof were needed, the Royal Oak sinking last week supplied it. But the means do exist now to make it reasonably certain that the U-boat which discloses her position by firing a torpedo in the vicinity of a destroyer, may not get away unscathed and with undamaged morale to make another attack on anything.

Hitler is up against a far tougher situation with his U-boats than was the Kaiser, and if, as appears certain, he fails to match let alone excel, the Kaiser's record for murder on the seas, it should not unreasonably be held against the man. For while the U-boat, with which he must work, has changed but little in the twenty-one years since Kaiser Wilhelm II failed and fled from Germany, the means of defense against it in the hands of his opponents, between sound detection

and depth bombs, have improved amazingly.

Depth bombs, which did not exist at all when the Kaiser's U-boats were doing some of their best work, are now available in huge quantities to wreck the peace of mind and the chances of escape of any U-boat which discloses its position near destroyers convoying merchant ships or warships. Depth bombs (in slang terms "asheans") are simple corrugated steel cylinders loaded with 300 pounds of TNT and dirt cheap as compared with torpedoes-- a few days work and a few hundred dollars each as against the \$10,000 and the months of highly skilled mechanical labor required to turn out a torpedo and its intricate internal machinery. And a hail of depth bombs, exploding beneath the sea about a U-boat as it seeks to swim away after an attack, if they do not destroy the U-boat, are certain to so shatter the morale of its crew by their terrible concussions that that crew is unlikely again to take their vessel within range of another destroyer laden down with those deadly asheans.

Between asheans and the convoy system which gathers merchantmen into squadrons protected by circling destroyers fitted out with modern detection apparatus, the business of sinking merchantmen becomes far more hazardous to the U-boats than in late World War. Some ships, including warships, will certainly be sunk against any defense, no matter how good, but the U-boat toll exacted while it is being done is going to be far higher than ever before. Hitler's U-boats cannot work with the immunity from attack that characterized Germany's initial efforts in this field. Not again, to the figure of nearly 200 a month and to the total of nearly 4000 vessels during unrestricted U-boat warfare, will we see torpedoed ships going to the bottom. So far, Hitler's record of some 60 ships sunk in over a month and a half under the most favorable conditions to him, is puny alongside what the Kaiser's

U-boat's did.

In the face of an increasing defense and poorer weather at sea for U-boat cruising as winter comes, Hitler's chances of doing a better job of bathing the seas in blood are very poor indeed. It is considerably more likely, with better offensive methods against submarines, that the bottom of the ocean will be paved with a larger number of the shattered wrecks of Hitler's U-boats than ever the Kaiser lost.