

DEPTH BOMBS SHAKE U-BATS.

British Skipper Describes Sensations Experienced on Sub.

London, July 15.—Sensations experienced in a German submarine while depth bombs were being discharged overhead were described recently by a British merchant ship captain who was a prisoner for 15 days aboard a u-boat.

In an interview the English commander, captured by the Germans after his vessel had been torpedoed, related how the depth bombs shook the undersea boat and created consternation among the sailors. In one instance the faces of the Germans became white with fear and all stood trembling after the first shot, which was not near enough to destroy the submersible. All were expecting a second discharge.

The English commander reached his native land after having been imprisoned for months at Bradenburg, where, he said, he and other ship officers at times had been harnessed to carts which were used to haul mail and packages from the postoffice to the prisoners' camp.

Seven vessels were torpedoed by the Germans while the British captain was aboard the u-boat. Previously the English officer had been in command of a merchant vessel which had also met its fate at the hands of a submarine crew.

"On the third day after I had been taken prisoner," said the captain, "just after the midday meal, I gathered that the submarine was about to carry out an attack on a convoy which had just been sighted. The u-boat approached submerged for some distance and torpedoed a large steamer. Our whereabouts apparently were detected, I was told, by an allied light cruiser, for we dived rapidly to a great depth.

"Hardly had the submarine reached an even keel when we heard and felt a tremendous explosion which caused the u-boat to vibrate from stem to stern. It was a depth charge from the cruiser.

"The effect on the cruiser was evident. All stood trembling with faces blanched with fear, not attempting to speak, expecting a second charge, the result of which might mean the destruction of the boat and without the slightest chance for us to escape.

"There is no doubt in my mind of the mental attitude of the crew, for it was not the first experience of the men with a depth charge, and they had learned from others in the service what terrible weapons depth bombs were in the hands of skillful seamen.

"For some moments we waited; engines were stopped and all means were taken to prevent giving indication of our position. Minutes seemed like hours in such a situation. I'll admit that I was turning over in my mind whether I should see my family again. No additional explosions took place, however, and after remaining some 18 fathoms deep for a long period we continued our voyage.

"A few days later we had another experience with depth charges, or 'wasser bomben,' as the German sailors call them. A sailing vessel had just been sunk by shell fire when two allied destroyers were sighted, and down we went. By the microphones the propellers could be heard, and as the vessels came nearer and nearer we in the submarine could hear the thudding quite distinctly. To and fro the destroyers went searching for us. Evidently they picked up a clue, for there were two explosions heard, but not so near as that from the cruiser, but quite close enough to cause the submarine to tremble and then roll about as though in a heavy sea."

Prison camp conditions in Germany were described by the British captain as being deplorable.

"Although we were merchant ship captains imprisoned at Bradenburg, we were made to suffer various indignities," he said.

"We were compelled to harness ourselves to carts which we had to draw through the streets to the station or postoffice in order to fetch our parcels and any commodities to camp. It was at this camp also that I saw 300 Russian soldiers working, all of whom were in the last stages of tuberculosis. The poor fellows could not get enough to eat, and they would eagerly scrape discarded tin cans in the hope of finding particles of food. I have even seen German soldiers do the same thing. We were glad to search the cinder paths at any opportunity in anticipation of finding bits of coke or coal with which to cook our food."

The captain said his ship was torpedoed without warning and that after he and all his men were afloat in lifeboats the submarine appeared on the surface and he was taken prisoner, the mates and seamen being permitted to start in the direction of land. Describing the submarine the British captain said:

"She was a fairly large craft, of

recent numbering, having three torpedo tubes, two in the bow and one aft, and carried ten torpedoes. She was also armed with a gun for shell fire just forward of the conning tower.

"My first meal aboard the u-boat consisted of a stew made with stringy meat, probably horseflesh, supplemented by small portions of sausage with black bread. As the voyage progressed this bread became mildewed and uneatable, and then some bread of lighter color, which had been kept in hermetically sealed receptacles, was served, but were more unpalatable than the black bread. The coffee was made of burned barley and acorns. The commander and officers of the u-boat fared as the lower ratings, but were able to supplement their allowances with tinned ham and other canned food."

As the submarine was forced to keep below the water's surface a great deal of the time life aboard the submarine was anything but pleasant.

"The boat sweated and all spare clothing became saturated with moisture, while the atmosphere often became foul and breathing difficult," he asserted. "While we were submerged the crew would start the gramophone. That machine supplied the music which was played triumphantly when the u-boat got another victim. Really the sinking of an innocent merchantman caused the crew as much joy as if the members had sunk a warship."

"One night there was more than the usual amount of rejoicing and the gramophone's liveliest airs were played. The Germans had torpedoed an oil tanker which, according to the commander, sank in 30 seconds. I could not help wondering at the mentality of men who could rejoice at such a thing, knowing that without giving them the slightest chance of defending themselves or escaping they had sent innocent sailors to their deaths.

"The next day we seemed to be out of the track of steamers and I went into the conning tower and saw the officers amusing themselves by shooting gulls or empty bottles.

"By this time the submarine evidently had reached the extreme outward point of her voyage, and we started on our return trip to Helgoland. Three Norwegian ships were stopped for the purpose of obtaining fresh food. Soon after this there was much excitement when it was ascertained that there was a British submarine in our vicinity. By listening the crew could hear the enemy submarine, and the Germans feared she was going to attack us. We submerged and eventually dodged the British vessel.

"The u-boat was equipped with powerful wireless apparatus and each evening, providing the weather and other conditions were favorable, the German commander remained on the water's surface in wireless communication with his base."

The British captain finally arrived in Helgoland, and afterward was transferred to Brandenburg. Eventually he was taken to Switzerland and released, reaching England on June 15.

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MRS. LINA DOWLING NEAL,
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