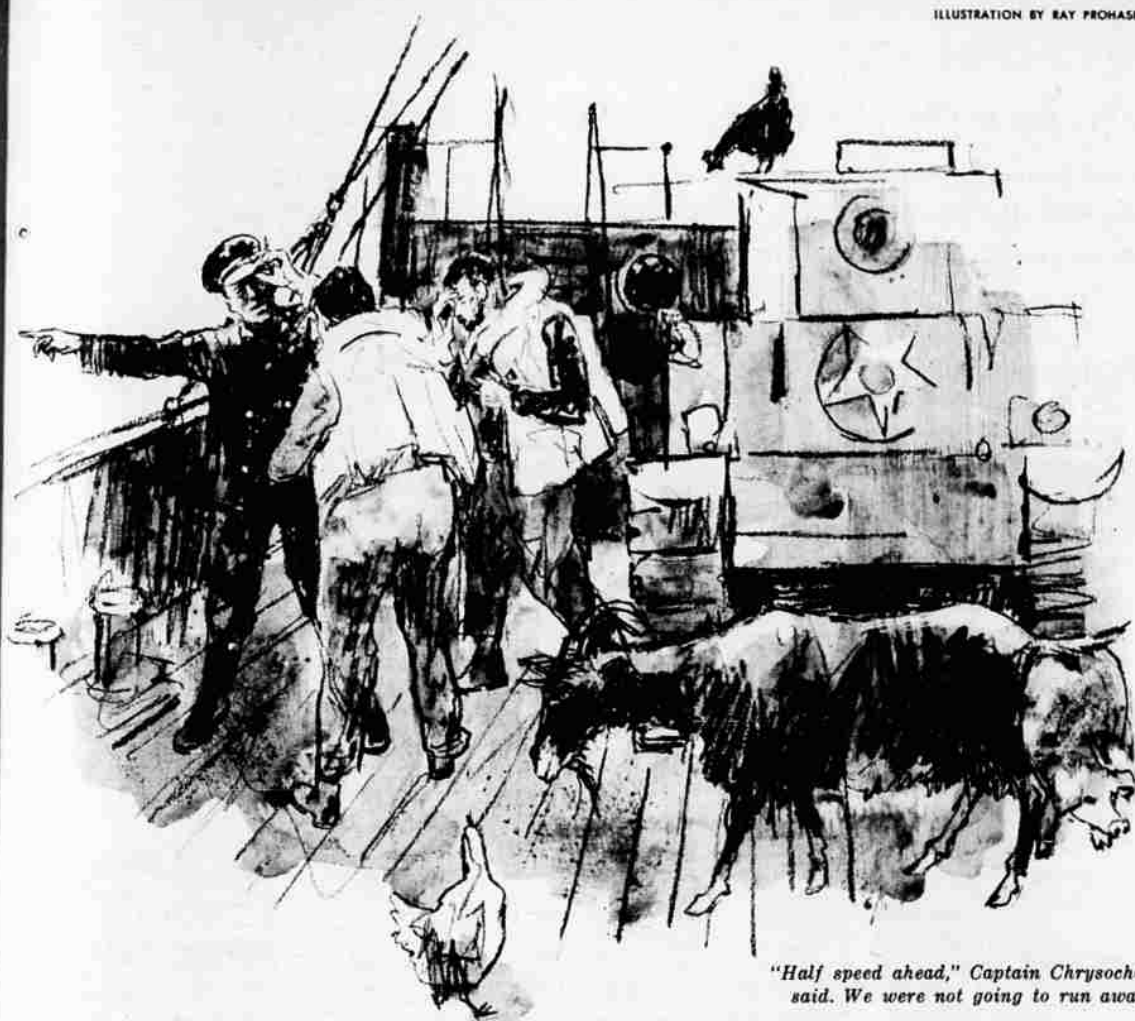




"Half speed ahead," Captain Chrysochos said. We were not going to run away.

carnage. Crates floated in the water all round us. Empty life rafts, wooden ladders, life belts, spars, ropes, bunting, cardboard boxes. The sunken ship must have been carrying a cargo of flour, because we were cutting through a sea of fermenting flour which popped and bubbled almost as high as the deck. Whatever happened it had happened only a few hours earlier—and so quickly the ship had not even been able to send out a distress signal.

The one mute message offered by this terrible scene of disaster was *run for it!* Get out as fast as you can, strain the old engines to the limit, and pray for nightfall.

Captain Chrysochos' aplomb had momentarily deserted him. His face was gray under his olive skin. I had known him to be a brave man. Now I was to know him as a great humanitarian. "Half speed ahead," he said.

WE WERE NOT going to run away. We were going to stay out and look for survivors. A ship bell clanged, and we heard the engine slow. There was no noise in the ship, none of the bedlam of excitable argument that made service in the Greek Merchant Marine so stimulating. Every man not on duty below was at the rail, or up a ladder, looking outward. Looking for survivors in that sea of floating rubble was like searching for a pea in a field. We churned through flour and plywood, while somewhere not far away underwater, a U-boat darted, gorged with success but still eager for more.

All at once I knew what I was fighting for and that the question I had asked myself for years was answered. It was not the captain's courage that inspired me. Courage comes easily in wartime, and without a wider morality it means nothing. No nation fought with more fanatical

courage than Nazi Germany. No, the captain was demonstrating the supreme virtue of a humanitarianism that Hitler could not match but only fear.

Men motivated by a spirit of selflessness and concern for humanity had a moral superiority which Nazism and Communism had to crush by terrorism—or succumb to it. I have benefited in my later career from many selfless deeds of kindness. I can't recall myself performing any significant deeds of the same kind, but ever since that day in mid-Atlantic at mid-point of the war, I have been aware of the vital need for it in our morality.

Not until it was dark, after several hours of searching, did the captain give up. There were no survivors. But he had proved that he was prepared to die in defense of his respect for humanity.

He ordered full speed ahead, and a week later we steamed into Loch Ewe. The flour that caked the *Aghia Marina's* hull made us look more ramshackle than ever. Scores of ships rode at anchor, carrying the flags of the free world. We could see sailors stampeding to the rails of their ships to witness this grotesque apparition. They pointed out our livestock to their mates and quivered with mirth. We did not care.

Our ship had its own nobility now, and we shared it. In the years that have passed, the lesson in selflessness that Captain Giorgios Chrysochos showed us has not dimmed. Even in the face of disaster, he would not abandon his fellow men.

I am happy to report that Chrysochos survived the war and prospered. The *Aghia Marina*, too, was still afloat when the war ended, and in overdue course steamed to some knacker's yard for brave old ships.

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