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INTELLIGENCE IN RECENT PUBLIC LITERATURE

THE TENTH FLEET. By *Ladislav Farago*. (New York: Ivan Obolensky. 1962. Pp. 366. \$6.50.)

This is the best comprehensive account of U.S. antisubmarine operations in World War II that has come to this reviewer's attention,¹ putting many aspects of them into print for the first time. It is based upon meticulous research into a wide range of source material, including U.S. Navy and captured German Admiralty documents and records, and just about everything that has been published on the subject.² The main criticism that can be directed at the book arises from the author's dramatic compulsions, the most annoying of which is to portray the good guys as supermen and the bad guys as villains. As one of the good guys remarked on reading the book, "My friends are going to feel damn embarrassed for me and my enemies are going to say, 'Why, that SOB must have written it himself.'"

The total unpreparedness of the United States for operations against the German submarines was quite apparent when Admiral Doenitz began his American offensive with only five of them in January 1942. In just ten days of action, beginning with the sinking on 11 January of the British freighter *Cyclops* 160 miles south of Nova Scotia, these five U-boats destroyed twenty-five ships of about 200,000 tons. Not a single U-boat was as much as shaken by a stray depth charge. By May 1943, U-boats had operated in the Western

¹ Reviewer Knowles was in effect the Tenth Fleet's chief of intelligence and is the number two hero of Farago's hero-oriented book.

² A glaring if peripheral exception is *The Secret Capture* (London, 1959) by S. W. Roskill (whose other writings Farago frequently cites and admiringly quotes) which tells of the Royal Navy's 1941 boarding and capture of the U 110. After describing the U.S. capture of the U 505 in 1944 and mentioning the earlier captures of one British and one Italian submarine, Farago writes, "From early in the war, boarding parties were established in all the Royal Navy's antisubmarine ships . . . But no effort was ever made to actually board a disabled U-boat . . ."

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Atlantic for seventeen months with virtual impunity, sinking more than seven million gross tons of shipping.

It was no wonder that Admiral King was worried. In his hard look at the problem he conceived the idea of centralizing antisubmarine warfare at Cominch (Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet) Headquarters, having in mind, according to the author, four major considerations:

(1) Antisubmarine warfare needed a commander of the highest rank, whose prestige and influence would be paramount and who could make his decisions prevail.

(2) The organization he had in mind would have no ships of its own, but would have recourse to every vessel of the United States Navy with inherent and explicit power to commandeer whatever forces when and where needed for antisubmarine operations.

(3) It had to be a small organization with assured and easy access to any and all agencies of the Navy, and especially to the various existing intelligence services and their resources.

(4) It had to have the status of a fleet, partly to simplify its personnel and administrative structure in a headquarters-type organization, partly to function along operational lines, and mainly to be able to use the channels of fleet communications.

It was an inspired and fortunate decision that Admiral King chose to wear a third hat as Commander, Tenth Fleet, in addition to those he wore as Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet, and as Chief of Naval Operations. Although he seldom exercised personally the functions of this command, his name lent it the authority it needed. Rear Admiral Francis S. Low, as Chief of Staff in the new organization, in fact ran the show and imbued the Tenth Fleet with his own high standards of performance and conduct.

The Tenth Fleet was formally established on 20 May 1943. In the previous eighteen months American forces had sunk only thirty-six U-boats, but by the end of 1943, when the Tenth Fleet was six months old, our sinkings totalled one hundred and one. With respect to ship losses, between January and June 1943 the U-boats sank 229 ships of 1.5 million gross tons, but during the following six months the sinkings dropped to sixty-six ships of about one-third million gross tons.

The outstanding feature of the Tenth Fleet was that intelligence and operations were completely welded. Looking back

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after an interim of some twenty years, this reviewer does not recall a single operation that was laid on without full review and use of all intelligence factors. In most cases it was intelligence that initiated the operations. We were fortunate in having direct and immediate access to all sources of information affecting the Battle of the Atlantic, from the high-frequency direction-finder bearings on the latest U-boat transmission to the most detailed interrogation reports on recently captured U-boat crew members. We were working closely with the British and exchanged estimates several times daily. Intelligence was never so vital nor so well used.

The efforts of thousands of unsung heroes went into every move in that amazing chess game which to its players seemed to have no beginning and no ending. Round the clock, day in and day out, for more than three years—nearly six years for our British colleagues—the ebb and flow of the battle continued. Just when we thought we had the U-boats on the run they would come back hard with some improved device or tactic that would give them a new lease on life to start the cycle anew. Even at war's end the Germans still had 336 of them, and deliveries from new construction were exceeding twenty per month. These were the new prefabricated Types XXI and XXIII, equipped with a greatly improved telescopic snorkel and capable of high surface and underwater speeds to outflank any but the fastest escorts.

Shortly after the close of the European War this reviewer visited the various German submarine building yards. The one that impressed him most was at Bremerhaven, housed in a huge, monolithic concrete complex and capable of turning out a completed, ready-to-run, 1,200-ton Type XXI boat every other day. Even direct hits with the heaviest block-buster (and several such hits had been scored) could not penetrate the 20-foot-thick reinforced concrete overhead. It was fortunate that these U-boats developed a series of teething troubles, including badly vibrating periscopes, before they could be put on war patrols. Actually only one finally set out, and it did not reach its operating area before the German surrender. Had the war lasted another six months the onslaught of these radically improved submarines could well have changed the whole balance of sea power in the Atlantic.

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In an Epilogue Mr. Farago makes an impassioned case for an all-out effort in the present U.S. antisubmarine program, pointing out that a few Soviet Polaris-type submarines could mount a devastating attack on the United States. He notes that even at their peak of efficiency the American defenses could not prevent the World-War-II-vintage U-boats from penetrating to our Atlantic seaboard on the eve of Germany's surrender, and he emphasizes how far greater is the problem of finding and killing a nuclear-powered submarine equipped with 1500-mile missiles. He pleads for a Tenth-Fleet-type organization to bring together under single management the whole U.S. antisubmarine development effort now scattered among semiautonomous bureaus in the Navy Department and elsewhere.

The Tenth Fleet was indeed a unique organization well suited to its time and place in history. In this reviewer's opinion, however, it is not the answer to today's problems. It was primarily a war operations activity, tuned to the fast-changing situation in the Atlantic and bringing intelligence, research, and development into close rapport with operations.

In the Tenth Fleet the intelligence input to the command problem was greatly assisted by the extensive use of radio by the German U-boats. Literally every convoy sighting and ship sinking on their part required a report to the BdU headquarters, which directed all wolf-pack attacks by remote control. This radio traffic was monitored by several score of Allied high-frequency direction-finder stations located on the periphery of the North and South Atlantic. As refinements were made during the course of the war, fixes of considerable accuracy were achieved. The efficiency of the HF/DF nets and their communications linkage frequently enabled operating forces to receive the locations of a U-boat within an hour after it had signalled.

It is not to be anticipated that the Soviet Navy will be so cooperative or so talkative. The task of intelligence in the next Battle of the Atlantic will have to be borne in large measure by the operating forces. To locate a modern nuclear-powered submarine in a very large and very deep ocean is unbe-

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Hevably complex and difficult. The solution we seek is not the Tenth Fleet, ever so gallant a part though she once played.

—Kenneth A. Knowles