

How U.S. Won U-Boat War

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THE TENTH FLEET. By
Ladislav Farago. Obolensky.
366 pp. \$6.50.

TWENTY-ONE years ago this week, Viceadmiral Doenitz, Befehlshaber der U-Boat, was in Berlin setting in motion the beginnings of what was to be the worst defeat the United States Navy has ever suffered. It was a defeat, strangely enough, which the general public and even many of the professional military do not realize we suffered.

On Jan. 11, 1942, "U-Hardeggen," the German U-boat 127 commanded by Kapitänleutnant Hardeggen, fired the first torpedo in the submarine campaign in American waters that was to delay the invasion of Europe for at least a full year. Before the end of 1942 the U-boats in American areas of strategic responsibility had sunk more than 1000 merchant ships—almost one-half of all the ships lost by all the Allies in the entire war.

WHAT DID this mean? For one thing, it meant that the Allies were losing the war. For another it meant that to the bottom of the sea had gone an amount of war material equivalent to the damage of one million air-bombing sorties made on our factories. Gasoline, coffee and sugar rationing in the United States was another result. By June, 1942, even the ultimate victory of the Allies seemed in jeopardy.

What damage had we done to the Germans? By December, 1942, United States forces had sunk only 16 U-boats. This was fewer U-boats than the Germans were producing in 20 days!

Who was responsible for this bitter defeat? Congress, and ultimately the American people, for starving the armed forces of money, men and ships in the lean inter-war years? Yes. The American public for refusing to black-out the beach amusement parks and resort hotels? Yes, but only because a timid government in Washington refused to disclose the critical nature of the struggle taking place within sight of those beaches and resorts. The armed services for continuing bitter peacetime doctrinal and jurisdictional disputes? Yes. The Navy for failing to prepare for this threat and for an over-emphasis on preparing for a Jutland-like decisive battle in the Pacific? Yes, yes, and amen.

LADISLAV FARAGO had detailed the story of those bitter days of defeat, but basically the Tenth Fleet is the story of the centralized anti-submarine organization that Adm. King established in May, 1943, to ensure the defeat of the German U-boats. The Tenth Fleet was the strangest fleet that ever existed. No carriers, no battleships or cruisers, no destroyers or submarines—in fact the Tenth Fleet had not one single ship—just a few hundred people in two build-

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ings in Washington. This fleet was set up to take control over American anti-submarine warfare, to intermesh the scattered elements of both operations and intelligence and to coordinate United States and British operations and tactics.

Farago was attached to the Tenth Fleet staff and in his book advances the thesis that the Tenth Fleet was in major part responsible for the U. S. Navy's share in erasing the U-boat menace. The author gives due credit to the British and Canadians, first for containing and then subjugating the U-boats. Fair enough, for the U. S. Navy, involved in the Pacific war against Japan, sank less than one-fourth of the 781 German U-boats that were lost in World War II. Even if Farago's assessment is somewhat partisan, he has shown how the Tenth Fleet was a successful and unprece-

dent fusion of brain and brawn.

IF HE HAD stopped here, the author would have given us a readable and highly analytical history of one of the least known phases of World War II. Farago has gone on. In his final chapter, "The Impenitent Cycle," he contends that the U. S. Navy today is woefully deficient in anti-submarine warfare.

Germany started the war with 57 submarines; today the Soviet Union has up to 450. Furthermore, the German U-boats' most effective weapon was the 10,000-yard torpedo with some 400 pounds of conventional explosive. Today submarines can carry and launch nuclear guided missiles with a range of several thousand miles.

Far more controversial and yet extremely thought-provoking, is the author's assessment of our present anti-submarine defenses and his contention that, "The Tenth Fleet, through its organizational and operational experience in World War II provides a pattern of defense; the premise on which this country's defenses should be developed today."

