

Undersea War Grim, Costly; Germans Lose

(By United Press)
Nazi Adm. Karl Doenitz's U-boats opened the battle of the Atlantic directly after the invasion of Britain failed to come off. The island that would not bow to threats or bombs now was to be starved out of the war.

From the beginning the undersea war was a grim one, with no quarter given. The newly-won French Atlantic ports—Brest, Lorient, St. Nazaire—gave Donitz an initial advantage by providing ideal U-boat bases within easy reach of his prey. From these protected ports, the German raiders slipped through the British blockade almost nightly during the summer and fall of 1940 to

lurk along allied shipping routes. Far more deadly than the pigboats of World War I, they exacted a toll surpassing the worst allied fear. The British, unable to find immediate reply, suffered severe and steadily mounting losses to their vitally needed imported goods. By the end of August, her shipping losses had reached an average of 70,000 tons each week. Then the admiralty stopped publishing the figures, forewarning of still worse to come.

Surface Raiders Assist
Enemy surface raiders also ranged the ocean, attacking merchant vessels and avoiding action with allied warcraft. They were not always successful in this latter; witness the fate of the pocket-battleship Admiral Graf Spee, run to cover by the British cruisers Exeter and Ajax and scuttled off Montevideo harbor in December, 1940. But still the assault developed month after month, and each month added an estimated 10 brand new U-boats to Adm. Doenitz's fleet.

In America, a determination took shape to smash the menace and give Britain all help short of

war to make it stick. Passage of the lend lease bill in late 1940 and the swapping of 50 coverage destroyers for new Atlantic bases gave concrete evidence of this resolve. There was no doubt America actively was taking sides.

This American feeling was stiffened further in May, 1941, with the sinking of the U. S. merchantman Robin Moor. To assure better protection for our ships, American troops occupied Greenland the next month and Iceland shortly afterward.

In September, the nation was put only one step away from actual war when President Roosevelt ordered the U. S. navy to shoot on sight any vessel interfering with American ships. The order was prompted by the sinking of the destroyer Greer off Iceland that month.

Switch to U. S. Shores
But even this threat had little influence on the Germans. A U-boat torpedoed the U. S. destroyer Kearny on Oct. 15 and another sank the destroyer Reuben James two weeks later.

Surprisingly, when America finally did enter the war in De-

Soviet Russia Ruins Hitler's Empire Dream

(By United Press)
Soviet Russia had been staggered by the initial German onslaught in June, 1941. By November the Nazi tide had swept 1,000 miles to the east. Russia's foremost cities were either encircled or already in German hands. Then, just as the outside world expected the soviets to crumble, something happened. Unsuspected Russian reserves of men and arms combined with the bitterest winter in 150 years to upset Hitler's plans.

It had been no mean feat of lo-

gistics for der Fuehrer to hurl some 20 panzer divisions into the far-flung fray in June. In December, with the roads clogging with ice and snow, to move up the infantry needed for the clinching blow was more than he could swing. And now he faced a revived and confident foe to boot.

The Russians seized the offensive abruptly early in December. Their impact rivaled that of the opening German drive. All along the 2,000-mile front their resurgent forces met success.

From east of Rostov, Marshal Semyon Timoshenko's army slammed back into the Sea of Azov city less than a week after the Nazis entered its streets.

Hitler Takes Command
On the Crimea, Sevastopol's long-beleaguered garrison mounted a counter-thrust that re-took Balaklava, where the storied Light Brigade rode into the jaws of death. Russian paratroopers landed behind the Germans' peninsular lines.

In the central Ukraine, red columns encircled ruined Kharkov and swept back to the skeleton city of Dnepropetrovsk on the great Dnepr bend.

Before Moscow, Marshal Semyon Budenny's armies rolled back the enemy on both flanks, seized Moshaisk—starting point of Hitler's abortive October drive—and probed on toward the Latvian border.

Even the miles-thick ring of steel about Leningrad was partially cut by a Soviet spearhead pushing deep into the Valdai hills below the ancient capital.

Tactically admitting the setback, Hitler assumed personal command of the German army. Officially, Berlin complained of the "fearful cold." It had reason. Everywhere the Russians were making the most of the Germans' inexperience at waging war over freezing snow-covered terrain.

Russians Sweep Westward
Mounting their troops on skis, their artillery on sleighs and painting their tanks white, the Russians outflanked and annihilated the stranded Nazis by the thousands. The rutted snow became littered with the battered hulks of abandoned materiel.

By March, the serried front showed Soviet pockets thrown about a score of German bases. While the main red armies swept westward to menace the main Nazi supply lines from the reich, towns and rail junctions as far as 150 miles west of the maximum Nazi penetration were falling to the flying red troops.

Then, late in April, the offensive ended as suddenly as it had begun. An ominous lull descended on the battle lines while the earth hardened and dried under the warm spring sun. Rumors spread that the armies of the reich were massing once more. Hitler was reported marshaling his armor for a decisive all-out summer campaign.

The attack lived up to advance billing when it came, late in June. It soon was apparent Hitler was throwing the major part of his forces into his 1942 bid for victory. But this time he made no attempt to strike on all fronts simultaneously. This time the major blow was to the south, and

the objective was—oil.

Between the jaws of a giant pincers drive, the Nazis aimed to obtain oil for themselves and to keep oil from Russia. One powerful force was to strike east, seize the Volga river city of Stalingrad and block that great river highway over which four-fifths of Russia's oil flowed north from

the Caucasus to Soviet armies, factories and farms.

Strike for Oil Fields
The other was to drive south into the Caucasus itself, the huge fertile isthmus linking middle Europe with eastern Asia. Its objectives were the Maikop oil fields, 150 miles below Rostov, and the much richer Grozny,

Batum and Baku fields on the other side of the 20,000-foot Caucasus mountains.

Actually, the first German triumph of the summer, though striking, had little direct bearing on the main goal. It came on July 2, when Gen. Erich von Manstein's troops finally suc-

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ember, 1941, the submarine situation took a drastic turn for the worse. U. S. warships were drawn to the Pacific and the U-boats, seeing their chance, switched their attack to this end of the Atlantic routes. With growing boldness and frightening success, they began to attack the allied convoys at their ports of origin.

By this time, the U-boat war, started as an offensive tactic, had become more than that for the Germans. The United Nations were organizing now and were marshaling their forces to smash the axis. The Atlantic had become the main artery for a flood of men and supplies not only for Britain but for her fighting allies there, in Russia, and in the Mediterranean theater. Even the Far Eastern land front was supported via the south Atlantic routes.

Thus Hitler's U-boat assault had turned into a desperate defensive fight for survival. He had to win it to stave off Germany's doom.

Hunt in 'Wolf-Packs'
By the spring of 1942, he seemed to be doing just that. His undersea raiders, hunting in "wolf-packs" of from 10 to 15, were disrupting convoys and sinking freighters without effective opposition from the foggy coast of Newfoundland to the Bulge of Brazil. Armed with the latest lethal torpedoes and able to stay out for six weeks without refueling, an estimated 400 U-boats cruised the Atlantic lanes. All summer and fall they blasted an average of two allied merchant vessels every day. Often first word of a sinking would come from a pathetic handful of survivors picked up after tossing for weeks on a lifeboat or raft.

As a counter-measure, Washington dimmed out the U. S. Atlantic coast, including New York City, where night lights had silhouetted coastwise shipping, but the move seemed to have little effect. By November, shipping losses were exceeding the combined replacement capacity of the allies. Then there was a lull for a few months, but by February, 1943, America's lines to the war zones were so nearly severed, she was threatened with losing the war without even opening a fighting front.

In March and April, the situation was no better with hints of darker prospects. The allies, it appeared, had no effective answer to the submarine.

Then, in May, without fanfare or warning, the break came. The balance swung and then tipped altogether in favor of the allies. Sinkings dropped off sharply and then almost ceased. At the time there was no official explanation. Then the general facts leaked out. What had happened was that the allied commands, particularly the U. S. navy, quietly had developed highly-secret, vastly-improved anti-submarine techniques.

Step Up Plane Protection
These techniques, it appeared, comprised a number of closely-synchronized measures. Tightly-knit convoys and dozens of small aircraft carriers were involved, along with the new destroyer escorts, fast enough to catch the subs and heavily enough gunned to destroy them. Radar played a significant role, it was reported, and a newly-developed long-range aerial patrol from both shores and mid-ocean stepping-stone bases completed the picture.

In any event, from May to August, 1943, more than 4,000 allied vessels crossed the Atlantic with a total loss of only one-half of one per cent. The raiders, armed with more and better anti-aircraft guns, made a final brief comeback late in August, but from then on their attacks were increasingly feeble and more often than not fatal for the undersea craft. As Doenitz's first-line crews and commanders were lost, the remainder of the U-boat fleet seemed to lose both its boldness and its skill. By October, 1943, British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden felt able to announce that the U-boat menace was not only held, but whipped for good.

The British home fleet, meanwhile, had won its battle of constant vigilance to keep the enemy's surface warcraft in port. Its unfolding alertness never permitted the German battleships to become a factor in the war. The few who managed to slip out to sea met fates reminiscent of the Graf Spee. The German battleship Bismarck got out in May, 1941, but was surprised off Greenland and sunk off the coast of France after a four-day running battle. Then Scharnhorst was caught and sunk off the North Cape in December, 1943, 22 months after she escaped up the English channel with her sister ship the Gneisenau.

ON THE MOVE . . .

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