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## Back from the Deep: The Strange Story of the Sister Subs Squalus and Sculpin

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thorough examination of the limited existing sources (the French naval archives having been weakened by losses in the course of World War II).

At the end of the Spanish war, the strategic position of each state remained much as it had been before the eruption of Spanish troubles into the international dynamics of Europe. Neither navy learned tactical or operational lessons from the experience. Bargoni, for example, demonstrates the failure of Italian submarine materiel and tactics in the Spanish war, the implications of which were not absorbed. The main lesson to France was strategic and political—whatever success the democracies achieved in forcing Mussolini to back down and the Italian navy to stay its hand came only by confronting Italian rampages at sea with determination and force, with the close collaboration of Britain and France and their naval forces. It is a pity that Britain did not absorb the same lesson.

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LaVO, Carl. *Back from the Deep: The Strange Story of the Sister Subs Squalus and Sculpin*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1994. 244pp. \$27.95  
*Back from the Deep* is a fast-paced, well written story that will appeal to submariners and general readers alike. It traces the intertwined histories of two of the original "fleet boats," USS *Squalus* (SS 192) and USS *Sculpin* (SS 191), beginning with their commissioning within months of each other in the same shipyard. When *Squalus* sank

during sea trials, *Sculpin* played a major role in its salvage. Years later, *Sculpin* was sunk by a Japanese destroyer, and *Squalus* (renamed *Sailfish*) sank the aircraft carrier that was transporting *Sculpin*'s survivors to Japan, killing twenty-two.

The author begins the story with descriptions of the types of men who volunteered for submarine duty in the 1930s and what their training was like; he also explains the difficulties suffered by the U.S. submarine force early in World War II, and the cruel treatment of captured Allied soldiers and sailors in Japanese prisoner of war camps. After reading this book, the reader will gain a renewed appreciation for the sacrifices made by these men.

Carl LaVO is a journalist whose work has appeared in the U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* and the Institute's *Naval History*. LaVO relies largely on interviews with those who served in both submarines. Readers will experience the thrill of the hunt from a submariner's point of view, tasting the fear of being trapped in a thin, metal tube under hundreds of feet of water, surrounded by depth charge explosions. Although there are the occasional minor technical inaccuracies and non-standard abbreviations for enlisted ratings, they do not detract from the book. So if one is interested in reading a well written, true adventure story, I recommend *Back from the Deep*. LaVO tells a good story.

However, this work possesses merit beyond its mere entertainment value. Thoughtful readers will reflect on how a single materiel failure caused *Squalus* to sink, and they will gain added appreciation for the backup systems designed into today's

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boats. A lack of standard procedures and the absence of a system for collecting and distributing lessons learned contributed significantly to the severity of *Squalus's* casualty—facts which should be seriously considered by every professional officer. Stories of sacrifices like that of Captain John P. Cromwell—a Medal of Honor recipient who chose to go to the bottom with *Sculpin* rather than risk revealing what he knew, if captured, about the impending invasion of the Gilbert Islands—are always inspiring.

Finally, one gains an understanding of the conditions that have helped to shape the current organizational submarine culture: its strict (some would say rigid) adherence to approved procedure, its occasional difficulty in working with other naval forces (let alone other branches of the armed forces), and its awkwardness in the public spotlight. Even after fifty years, World War II still remains an extremely important influence on submariners. Their dedication to secrecy and independent operations applied just as well to the Cold War as it did in the Second World War. Hence, until recently, U.S. submariners were acculturated to take pride in their separateness and insularity, and to revel in their ability to accomplish important missions completely on their own. However, as times change, different demands are being made on the force, and knowing where it came from can help one to understand where it must go. This book contributes to that understanding.

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Malia, Martin. *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917–1991*. New York: The Free Press, 1994. 575pp. \$24.95

Only with the Soviet Union firmly consigned to history, Martin Malia contends, can its history be viewed with objectivity. While it still existed, the USSR evoked such passionate political views that any treatment of its history or politics often shed more light on the one doing the interpreting than on the subject under review. The reason for this, Malia observes, is that for seventy years the Soviet Union, alone of all states, claimed to be “the sole model of the good society, the gold standard of human affairs, and the perfect polity at the end of history.” The fact that this claim was at the same time both widely subscribed to and also the most monstrous lie of the modern age made historical interpretation contentious and short on dispassion. Malia hopes with this present work to provide the requisite objectivity and thereby, it is implied, put to rest quarrels between historians of the Soviet phenomenon.

In this latter goal, Malia unfortunately will fail. His treatment of the Soviet historical record points to one basic, underlying cause for the Soviet crackup. Simply put, the USSR died of socialism, and its demise was inevitable, because the logic of the socialist path chosen by Lenin and the Bolsheviks doomed the Soviet experiment from the beginning. Socialists, naturally, will not like this book. For his part, Malia considers it amazing that socialism as an idea survives the demise of the USSR, and he has little patience for its continuing adherents.