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The U-Boat Peril: An Anti-Submarine Commander's Story

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The relationship between a service's view of its past, its access to the past in a useful form, and the fate of that service in contemporary struggles for force structure form the backdrop for the original appearance of *The Far Distant Ships*, giving shape to its content and style. It has value as an essential document in modern naval history and remains the best introduction into exploits of a major Allied navy. It is a good read in its own right. In short, this is an essential part of any naval or Second World War library and, therefore, a most welcome reprint.

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Whinney, Reginald. *The U-Boat Peril: An Anti-Submarine Commander's Story*. New York: Sterling, 1986. 160pp. \$17.95

After the war, Winston Churchill wrote that the only thing that ever frightened him was the U-boat peril. As commanding officer of a long-range ASW escort—an 1,100-ton converted destroyer from the previous war—Bob Whinney was in the middle of defeating that peril. His account of World War Two ASW is well worth the read for it is full of technical detail as well as a strong sense of what it was like to chase submarines at short ranges from an open bridge in the North Atlantic. Practitioners of modern ASW might well read his account

to see where we began and how far we have come.

Before the war, gunnery and gunners reigned supreme in the Royal Navy. Perhaps they were planning to get Jutland right the next time. Antisubmarine warfare was very far down the totem pole. Officers who had the foresight to get into it before the war, as Whinney did, found that they were not on a fast track to recognition and promotion. Even as the war in the Atlantic became an ASW campaign, many of the older regular officers simply were not interested. Whinney relates the tale of one senior escort commander who, when taken to the remarkable ASW tactical simulator in Scotland, left after a few minutes, saying to Whinney: "if we find a submarine, you take care of it." The vital business of convoy protection and ASW became the province of small ships, a few determined regulars and a large number of wartime Reserve officers. Considering how little initial support they had from the "real" navy, they did quite well.

Whinney joined the Navy at a time when naval training and service were vastly different from what we now know. His account of life at Dartmouth Naval College will seem medieval to the modern reader. His descriptions of life in the prewar navy, where athletics and a good seat on a polo pony were the road to advancement, may leave the reader wondering if that was not a pleasanter and more civilized, if less professional, world than the one we now know.

After a number of shore staff ASW jobs in the early part of the war, Whinney got command of H.M.S. *Wanderer* in March 1943. His detailed and technical descriptions of surface ASW in the North Atlantic are worth reading. Sonar was effective only in an active mode and most detections were made at one or two thousand yards. With no target depth information, attack consisted of running down on the anticipated position of the submarine and dropping large amounts of explosive set to go off at the best-guess depth. It seems to have been a nervy business requiring considerable shrewdness, skill and aggression on the part of the destroyer skipper. Whinney was good at it for he sank three submarines in 18 months—well above the average.

For historians of this period, Whinney includes a good number of personal observations on the characters and abilities of several senior naval officers. He also shows the emergence in small ASW ships of the crucial roles played by the highly skilled technical crew members such as the sonar and radar people. Finally, he includes a touching account of a German Jewish refugee serving in such a capacity in his ship.

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Richardson, Horst Fuchs, comp. *Sieg Heil! War Letters of Tank Gunner Karl Fuchs, 1937-1941*. Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1987. 171pp. \$25

Karl Fuchs was a tank commander and later a platoon leader in the 25th Panzer Regiment, 7th Panzer Division of the 39th Panzer Corps, and as such took part in heavy fighting in the Soviet Union beginning on 22 June 1941; he was killed near Klin on 21 November 1941 during Army Group Center's drive to encircle Moscow from the North. Born in 1917, Fuchs belonged to that generation in which males had but one chance in three to survive beyond the year 1945.

Fuchs' letters, which span his career from entry into the Nazi Labor Service in 1937 to his death near Moscow four years later, are mainly to his parents and to his recent bride, Mädi; they were never intended as a diary or a journal. Their publication is due to the efforts of the son whom Karl Fuchs never saw, Horst Fuchs Richardson, professor of German at Colorado College. Dennis Showalter, professor of history at the same school, has added historical comments, a conclusion, and explanatory footnotes to the letters, thereby enhancing their value by placing them in historical context.

As Showalter states, Karl Fuchs embraced the Third Reich neither from "opportunistic self-interest nor nihilistic delight in destruction, but out of hopes for a better future." Fuchs was a Protestant from the small town of Rosstal near Nürnberg; he is depicted as romantic, as an idealist of the Right. His was not a critical, probing mind. He accepted Hitler and Nazism unquestioningly.

One or two examples from the letters must suffice to impart their