

1987

North Atlantic Run: The Royal Canadian Navy and the Battle for the Convoys

Lawrence Carroll Allin

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Recommended Citation

Allin, Lawrence Carroll (1987) "North Atlantic Run: The Royal Canadian Navy and the Battle for the Convoys," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 40 : No. 3 , Article 27.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol40/iss3/27>

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helicopter crewmembers who arrived on-scene shortly after three bombs hit the destroyer H.M.S. *Coventry*. "*Coventry* had her hull upturned and was on fire. I was horrified. I had been in the Navy eighteen years and had never seen anything like that before." Nor have any of the students currently at the Naval War College. It is important that they be reminded that a war at sea is more than skillfully planned ship maneuvers, aircraft operations and moving symbols on cathode ray tubes. Ships get sunk, even fighting ships that have been handled with skill for days or weeks, as had *Coventry*.

The final third of *Operation Corporate* is taken up with the details of the ground campaign that led to the surrender of the Argentines at Port Stanley to a force of British Royal Marines and Army forces numbering about one-half their size. Middlebrook's careful and very thorough presentation of every aspect of this ground operation emphasizes that the successful conduct of the land phase of maritime campaign is crucial to achieving strategic objectives. In today's world of integrated warfare, seagoing officers must understand every aspect of a maritime campaign, including the plan for maneuver ashore.

Middlebrook concedes in his introduction that "a fuller description of the Argentinian side may one day be possible," but he was not given the access he needed to provide it in the first edition of this book. There are other books on the Falklands war

which discuss more fully such specific aspects of the war as the initial crisis, the political/diplomatic maneuvers, and the air war. But for the reader who wants to gain a complete, reasonably balanced picture of the conduct of all of the military operations, this book is a very useful start.

TIM SOMES
Captain, U.S. Navy

Milner, Marc. *North Atlantic Run: The Royal Canadian Navy and the Battle for the Convoys*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1985, 326pp. \$21.95

During World War II the Royal Canadian Navy became a convoy-escort force and did the job poorly, so Marc Milner tells us. The Canadians consistently lost their destroyers, corvettes, and frigates, as well as the merchantmen, their crews and the critical supplies they carried. They continued to lose men, ships, and cargoes until after the critical months of the Battle of the Atlantic, April and May of 1943.

Relying heavily on primary sources, Milner, perhaps unknowingly, reveals four reasons for the Canadians' failure to achieve what had to be a miracle. First, they were subservient, poor cousins to the Royal Navy of Great Britain. This condition seeped into all of the crevices and crannies in the miniscule RCN establishment. Its worst effects were psychological.

The psychological reason for the Canadians' failure was their subservience to the "gun club" mentality of

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the Royal Navy. The British, hence the Canadians, thought they would fight surface actions against Axis raiders with guns. This led the Canadians to acquire heavy "Tribal"-class destroyers under the absurd assumption that "several [Tribals] acting in concert posed a credible threat to a lone battleship." The many-gunned Tribals absorbed dockyard space, resources, and manpower badly needed by the depth-charge-throwing escort fleet which the Canadian Navy became.

When the operations of the U-boat made it clear that the war in Europe would be decided in the Atlantic, the Canadians' second problem arose—expansion. Canadian industry had to learn to repair and build vessels while the RCN grew to 50 times its prewar strength. This expansion, as Milner points out, created an almost endless and insuperable set of problems. That the Canadians did as well as they did is truly remarkable.

The third problem, Milner avers, was the RCN's difficulty in obtaining radar sets and radar operators for its escorts. The critical equipment did not come quickly enough nor in adequate quantity to let the Canadians do a proper job.

Lack of training for the men, crews and escort groups contributed to the fourth and most difficult problem which Milner recounts. Training from that of the highest staff officer to that of the lowest seaman had to be done with little time, few facilities, and hardly any ships. Inadequate doctrine, poor

ized training and sheer weight of numbers almost pooped the Royal Canadian Navy during this period.

Unfortunately, Milner fails to put the Canadians' magnificent effort into a global perspective. He fails to show clearly the linkages between the Canadian, British, and American efforts in the war against the submarine. And too many words are devoted to the internal politics of the RCN during the war. The work's organization makes for occasional heavy going.

The problems and issues of which Milner writes, the questions he raises, and the still-remaining need for the Atlantic nations to understand submarine warfare, make his book valuable. As part of a growing body of excellent Canadian oceanic scholarship, Milner's work will, whatever its faults, stand as a classic for serious naval scholarship.

LAWRENCE CARROLL ALLIN
The University of Maine

Baker, A.D. III, ed. *Combat Fleets of the World 1986/1987: Their Ships, Aircraft, and Armament*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1986. 764pp. \$91.50

Brauzzi, Alfredo et al. *Almanaco Navale*. Genoa, Italy: The Istituto Idrografico Della Marina, 1986. 999pp.

Both of these yearbooks, *Combat Fleets 1986/1987* and *Almanaco Navale 1986*, are impressive compendiums of current world naval fleet information. *Combat Fleets*, an English