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## The Miracle of Dunkirk

Frank Uhlig Jr.

Walter Lord

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pack tactics which, contrary to popular belief, were not coordinated. He also traces the changing success rate, as maritime patrol aircraft gained the ascendancy, against the earlier types of U-boats. He makes clear how frightening it is to contemplate what might have been the outcome, had the revolutionary German-type XXI (similar to today's Soviet W class) been introduced just a few months earlier.

US Navy submarine operations are addressed primarily in the Pacific campaign, describing the severe problems encountered at the outset. The author is somewhat critical of the US dependence upon intelligence and its predisposition towards naval targets. He suggests that it was not until a policy change in 1944, to attack all Japanese shipping, that the course of events really changed and led to the final success of the submarine force and the rapid ending of the war in the Pacific.

The chapter on Soviet submarines is most interesting and is partly based on the experiences of some British submariners who served with the Russian Navy at that time. The constant presence at sea of the political commissars and the frequent sea riding of divisional commanders are commented upon before concluding that the sum of Soviet submarine achievements was not impressive.

The subjects of midget submarines and Special Operations are covered in two fascinating chapters prior to the final chapter entitled: "An All Round Look." In this the author offers some important conclusions

that can be related to today's submarine operations. From these the following have been extracted as particularly noteworthy:

- Men and morale are more important than machinery and materials.
- Unrealistic peacetime exercises can breed the wrong type of commanding officer.
- Weapons and systems must be realistically tested and evaluated in peacetime.

In summary, a well-written, entertaining and interesting book that is illustrated with some unique photographs and anecdotes. It gives the nonsubmariner a worthwhile insight into the submarine operations of WW II and of the men who died, or lived to tell the tale. For the submarine specialist, this unique book is a "must," both for light relief and for serious reflection upon the direction in which we are heading as well as for the lessons we should learn from the past.

B. A. NEEDHAM  
Commander, Royal Navy

Lord, Walter. *The Miracle of Dunkirk*.  
New York: Viking Press, 1982.  
323pp. \$17.95

In wartime, navies often find themselves doing important things for which they have not prepared themselves. For example for years on end in the Vietnamese War the US Navy, a loud proclaimer of its own mobility, fought an aerial bombing campaign from one spot on the map. Simultaneously the same "blue-water" navy conducted a vigorous

riverine patrol far from the sea. In the first world war the Germans and Austro-Hungarians fought major campaigns with U-boats while the Allies fought equally large campaigns against them, tasks not envisioned by navies on neither side. And in the first two years of the second world war the Allied navies were busily engaged in rescuing beaten armies. In fact, there was nothing more characteristic of the work of the Allied navies in the early years of that war than their efforts to save soldiers in trouble. In and off Norway, Dunkirk, the Biscay ports, mainland Greece, and Crete, the British navy chief among all others sacrificed many of its ships and people so armies could be saved. The same could be said of the Soviet navy in the Baltic and Black seas in the first year of "The Great Patriotic War."

The best known of all these brave efforts, and the symbol of all the rest, was Dunkirk. Walter Lord's *The Miracle of Dunkirk* tells the story of that great achievement when over a third of a million British and French soldiers, caught between the German army and the deep blue sea, were pulled out of the trap. Lord spends more time on the beaches and in the boats than he does in the headquarters. He is short on statistics and long on stories. As much as anyone could, he makes plain to those of us who were not there what it was like to have been a French soldier, a British sailor, or a German bomber pilot. Of them all, only the German air force, almost totally unopposed

by Allied fighters or anti-aircraft guns, could be said to have had an easy time. Their most potent foes were fog and darkness.

This is a book as much for those concerned about the future as for those chiefly interested in the past. Such people should find no comfort in it, for despite a well conducted withdrawal by the Allied armies there are too many stories of units disintegrating under unexpected pressure, especially rear-area units; of officers deserting their men; of soldiers who had lost the bonds of discipline and unit cohesion turning into looters; and of the most self-dedicated taking care of themselves at the expense of others.

It is also the story of three allied armies (Belgium's was the third) becoming distrustful of one another and behaving in a manner reflecting their own national interest rather than that of an alliance, which was crumbling about them. It was not only soldiers becoming distrustful of soldiers under another flag, but also soldiers feeling betrayed by their own air force which seemingly had vanished and by their own navy which appeared content to let them perish in the sand. While false of course, it was the perception of those on the spot.

The story afloat was as bitter as that ashore. Destroyers sped to the rescue but they were armed chiefly to fight surface ships and submarines, enemies not often present. Against aircraft, which were all too present, they were able to defend neither themselves nor any other ship. One

destroyer after another, filled with troops who thought at last they were safe, went down in the narrow sea between Britain and France, or crawled back to port horribly mauled. Excursion boats, tugs, dredges, yachts, admirals' barges, channel ferries, fishing craft, and so on, were drafted and crossed the narrow sea, many without even a compass. They were manned by their own crews, or by pick-up assortments, often self-chosen, of naval people and civilians.

Many of these boats and small ships reached the beaches and moles where the soldiers waited, got them off, and returned for more. Others never completed even their first voyage. Several boat crews, consisting of men with long records of courage and self-sacrifice, eventually had enough and refused to make another voyage across the channel. Some merchant ships, too, refused another run. And the problem wasn't confined just to the civilians. One of the destroyers, after several bad experiences, "was ordered to remain in Dover harbor."

How could things be worse? Yet, when it was over the Royal Navy, assisted by countless merchant mariners and other civilians, had rescued the British Expeditionary Force and a sizable part of the French army as well, 338,000 officers and men altogether, according to Mr. Lord. Surely, there must have been heroes to accomplish all that.

There were. One was Vice Admiral Bertram Ramsay, a man who before the war had been fired by

his commander-in-chief. It was Ramsay who directed the whole business. Another was Captain William G. Tennant, who was in charge of the shore end of the evacuation at Dunkirk, and a third was Commander John Clouston, pier master at Dunkirk who perished in the final effort to save more men. Mostly, it was ordinary men ashore and afloat who kept trying until they could do no more and some who kept on going even after that.

Nowadays when people speculate about the "next" war, there is some talk about the Soviets getting to the Channel in ten days. Should the Soviets be that successful they will be pushing several armies, or the wreckage of those armies, ahead of them. And these armies could have even larger rear-area components than those of 1940. But unlike the BEF of 1940, they will be burdened by their wives and children and by some portion of a million or more tourists and expatriates.

In the meantime we sail destroyers and frigates each of which has space enough to hold hundreds of soldiers or civilians, but whose draft would keep them from approaching any shallow beach and whose armament all too closely resembles that of their British forebears forty-three years ago.

To be sure, we have amphibious ships and craft, something absent from the navies of 1940, and we have aircraft carriers, too. Have we thought about how we might employ these ships and craft in such an event as Dunkirk? Have we war gamed it?

Have we practiced it? Have we armed them so they would have a chance to do their jobs? Perhaps the answers to these questions are all "yes." But if the answers are not "yes" we ought at least to start on these things. The armies won't insist that it be done, and, in fact, might resent it. It will upset the diplomats and politicians, and the news media as well. But if we think about war, then we really should think about it, shouldn't we? Walter Lord's book is a good starting point.

FRANK UHLIG, JR.  
*Naval War College Review*

Guderian, Heinz. *Panzer Leader*.  
Translated by Constantine Fitzgibbon. Washington: Zenger Publishing Co., 1979. 528pp. \$15

Manstein, Erich von. *Lost Victories*.  
Edited and translated by Anthony G. Powell. Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1982. 574pp. \$18.95

Why would two publishers choose this time to reissue the memoirs of two German officers of World War II fame? The answer that the books are military classics that have been out of print for some time begs the question. So does the answer that the publishers anticipate a market for the books. Possibly a less obvious answer to the question lies in the similarities between the conditions which faced Field Marshal von Manstein and General Guderian during World War II and the conditions that may well face American commanders in some future global war. Both authors fought the Soviets.

In today's world and one of the predictable future, a global war would certainly find Americans fighting the Soviets. After initial successes on the Eastern Front, both authors were involved in the prolonged German delaying action that ended only with the final collapse of Germany. In the initial stages of a Nato war in Europe, American commanders undoubtedly will find themselves involved in a retrograde operation until reinforcements can arrive. Finally, both authors were masters of what today has become known as maneuver warfare. Eventually, however, both commanders found their ability to conduct this style of warfare restricted by orders from Adolf Hitler forbidding them to give up territory.

Most American commanders would like to practice some form of maneuver warfare but find themselves constrained by Allied political leaders who understandably do not want to trade their nations' territory for the time and space needed to conduct the fluid style of defense advocated by Guderian and von Manstein. *Panzer Leader* and *Lost Victories* shed more than enough light on these current military issues to justify both their reputations as modern military classics and, I hope, the publishers' expectations of turning a profit.

Von Manstein and Guderian were similar to each other in many respects. Both came from Prussian military families and began their careers as infantry officers. Both served in World War I and remained as part of the 100,000-man *Reichswehr* following