

THE MARCH OF WAR

THE BATTLE OF THE SEVEN SEAS

Since the publication of our detailed article "The Battle of Tons" in our issue of August/September 1942, we have brought regular reports on the course of this battle extending over all the seas of the world; and we have always attempted to unearth the actual facts from the mass of contradictory and largely tendentious items of news. Since our last review in June 1943, this battle has entered upon a new phase, which is analyzed in the following pages.

Unless otherwise stated, all tonnage figures represent gross registered tons.—K.M.

FOR many months now the whole world has been wondering about the U-boat war. Since April 1943, U-boat activity has taken a sudden downward turn as compared with previous results. Have the Allies really found an answer to the German U-boat, to Admiral Dönitz's tactics and strategy? The reply to this question, given by both camps, is that the Allies have developed new technical methods of defense which have caused the German Admiralty to recall a large part of their submarine fleet until effective countermethods have been devised.

It appears that the two most important of the new Allied devices are an improved electric submarine-detector and the mass protection of convoys by naval and air forces (including blimps and helicopters which are able to move slowly with the convoys). Salvage vessels also regularly accompany convoys on the high seas now. Moreover, stokers on Allied ships have undergone a special training, and fuel is carefully selected to avoid the forming of heavy smoke which gives away the ships' position.

The protection of the convoys is no longer undertaken chiefly by destroyers and corvettes but by planes based either on coastal airfields or, where this is not possible, on convoy aircraft carriers, which are converted cruisers or merchantmen equipped with a flying deck. The aircraft carrier sails in the center of the convoy, and its planes observe the surface of the sea from a great height. Not only do they report U-boats to the convoying destroyers: they also attack them with bombs and machine guns. The fight against the combined destroyer-airplane protection of the convoys requires entirely new tactics and the utmost in training on the part of the U-boats.

U-BOAT LOSSES

Allied leaders have recently made very confident statements on the destruction of German submarines. Thus, in his speech in the House of Commons early in June 1943, Churchill said that during May the destruction of U-boats had for the first time surpassed the number of boats newly put into service; and the navy correspondent of the *Daily Express* reported on June 21 that in May and June 50 U-boats had been sunk. During the whole war, he claimed, 250 Axis U-boats had been destroyed, which must amount to about one quarter or one third of the new production. We recall that in 1942 the First Lord of the British Admiralty declared that no less than 500 German U-boats had been sent to the bottom of the sea. Apparently the Allies have no idea as to how many U-boats they really have destroyed.

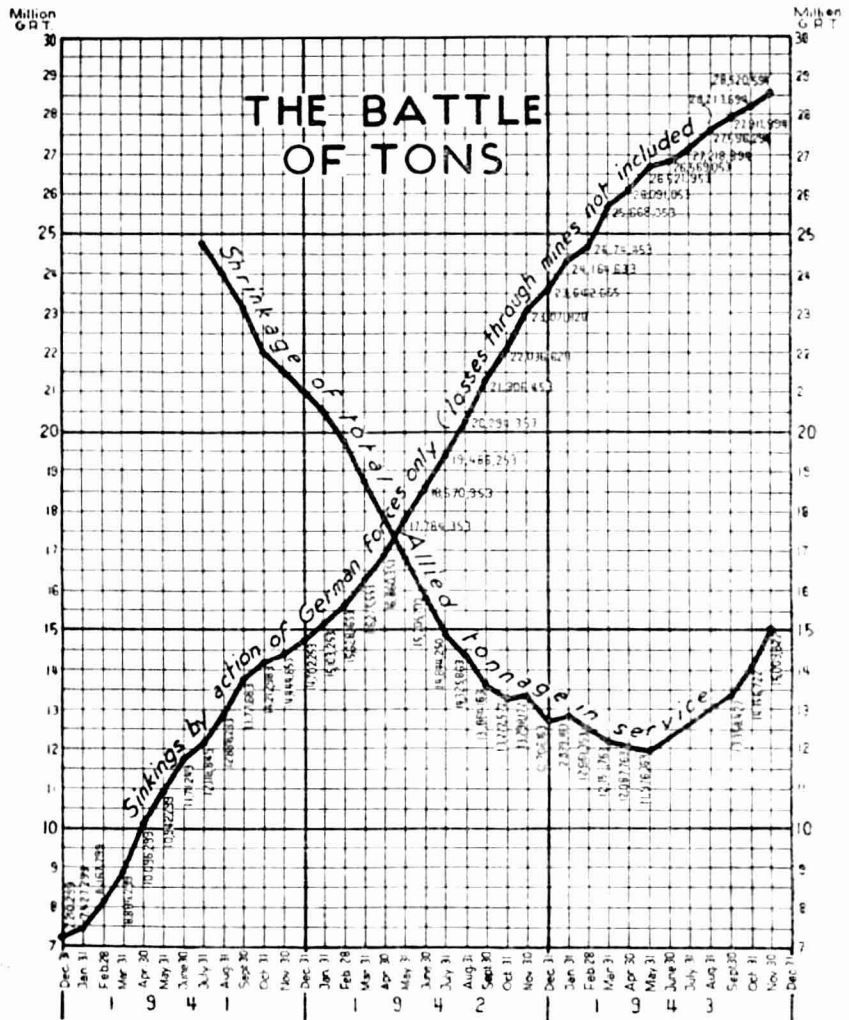
According to a Rome report of October 22, 1943, Admiral Legnani stated in a radio broadcast that Italy had lost 84 U-boats during this war. This would mean that in 36 months of war she lost a monthly average of 2.33 boats. The German losses during the Great War amounted to 185 boats lost in action, while seven were interned in neutral ports. The monthly average was thus 3.63. At the rate of her Great War losses, Germany would have lost in the present war a total of 180 U-boats up to the end of October 1943. During the Great War, the heaviest losses occurred in the mine barrages laid in the Channel and the North Sea and by means of decoy ships, which need not be taken into account in this war. Consequently, there is no reason why the German losses should be higher now. This all the more so since the modern U-boat is much better adapted for its job than those of the years 1914/18.

It is only natura that early in 1943 the U-boats should have suffered some losses until they were fully aware of the new weapons on the Allied side; but Admiral Dönitz is not likely to have left his U-boats exposed long enough for them to suffer grave losses. From the somewhat abrupt halt of the great submarine offensive last spring, one might rather conclude that he started withdrawing them as soon as it became clear that the new Allied tactics required new counterdevices.

According to German reports, far-reaching decentralization has resulted in submarine production not having been interfered with by the Allied air bombardments of coastal towns. Toward the end of November, Admiral Dönitz and Minister of Armaments Speer were reported to have taken part in

trial runs of newly equipped submarines. Moreover, Admiral Dönitz has predicted that German science will keep up with the advance of the Allies and that the German U-boats will reappear on the high seas with new fighting methods and new weapons more devastating than ever before.

The Allies do not seem to doubt this. Early in September, Colonel Knox, US Secretary of the Navy, declared: "We have by no means disposed of the submarine menace, and attacks will be made on Allied merchantmen as sure as the sun will rise." On October 4, the *Washington Post* gave some details on a new magnetic torpedo used by German U-boats. On October 9, the US Office of War Information released a joint statement by President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill pointing to the



The curve showing sinkings does not include Allied losses inflicted by the Japanese and Italian armed forces.

The second curve showing the total tonnage available to the Allies each month reveals that in only eight out of the 51 months since the start of the war have Allied replacements of tonnage exceeded their losses.

fact that on September 19, after a four-months' lull in the North Atlantic, a pack of at least 15 German U-boats had attacked a west-bound convoy and sunk three escort vessels. The statement went on to say: "This resumption of pack tactics is evidence of the enemy's intention to spare no efforts to turn the tide of the U-boat war, and the utmost exertion and vigilance will be required before its menace is finally removed."

In view of the fact that this statement was issued shortly before the Moscow Conference, the alarm expressed in it was perhaps somewhat exaggerated in order to impress the Soviets. Indeed, we are inclined to believe that it will be some time before the submarines are again fully at work. It takes time to refit all the vessels and to give the crews the required new training before the boats may be sent out again. The isolated but successful attacks recently announced by the German High Command are, therefore, to our mind not yet the start of a new offensive but rather an indication of trial action.

TABLE I
Sinkings of Allied Merchant Tonnage

	By Germany		By Japan		By Italy	
	Ships	Tons	Ships	Tons	Ships	Tons
Up to April 30, '43	—	26,001,053	—	2,443,000	—	2,128,184
May 1943	76	430,000	16	143,400	4	28,000
June ..	31	148,000	7	53,000	9	99,000
July ..	94	550,241	×	×	16	143,000
Aug. ..	70	377,000	11	40,000	10	92,000
Sept. ..	55	315,700	×	×	×	×
Oct. ..	50	301,700	×	×	×	×
Nov. ..	38	306,900	×	×	×	×
Total to Nov. 30, '43		28,520,594		2,679,400		2,490,184

Grand total (incomplete): 33,690,178 tons
× no figures available

While the German High Command regularly issues figures of sinkings for each month, Japan and Italy have published their figures at irregular intervals and incompletely. But this does not mean that Japan has been idle since August 1943. According to official announcements collected by us, 74 transports were sunk during this time. No tonnage figures were announced, but most of the transports were designated as having been large. Hence about one million tons may have to be added to the grand total calculated above.

To these actual sinkings must be added further tonnage reductions in the Allied

camp originating from other sources. Of course, the figures given below in Table II are only approximate.

TABLE II
Allied Tonnage Temporarily or Permanently Out of Service

	<i>Tons</i>
Ships permanently under repair ..	2,500,000
Losses through mines	2,500,000
Ships seized by German armed forces only, as per official announcement of April 1941	2,000,000
Ordinary hazards and depreciation in 51 months of war	2,000,000
Total	9,000,000
Total sinkings as per Table I	33,690,178
Grand total of tonnage lost or temporarily out of service up to November 30, 1943	42,690,178

REPAIRS

Table II needs some explanatory remarks. Hitherto our figures for tonnage under repair, for losses through mines, and for losses through ordinary hazards, have been based on our estimate made at the end of July 1942 (see August/September 1942 issue). Sixteen months having passed since then, a revision of those figures has appeared necessary to us, and we have increased them by 500,000, 500,000 and 200,000 tons respectively.

As to the tonnage permanently under repair, our figure of 2,500,000 tons seems a very conservative one. According to a report from Stockholm dated August 18, 1943, this figure includes only repairs due to German submarine action (i.e., not those due to German Luftwaffe action or to action by the Japanese and Italian forces) and vessels tied up in British dockyards (i.e., excluding USA dockyards and those in other parts of the world open to the Allies). Nor does this figure include the ordinary repairs which every ship has to undergo from time to time. Much higher figures have frequently been mentioned by Anglo-American official sources and commentators during the last year. During the last six months in particular, the total of ships damaged by military action was extremely high, owing to the various landing operations on the part of the Anglo-American forces. According to the German High Command, the number of ships and the aggregate tonnage heavily damaged by the German armed forces were as follows:

TABLE III

Allied Ships Damaged by the German Armed Forces in 1943

	Ships	Tons
June	51	250,000
July	220	1,026,000
August	125	580,000
September	133	600,000
October	45	270,000
November	27	176,000

Ships damaged but not observed by the German forces, as well as ships damaged by mines and by the Japanese and Italian forces, should be added to the above figures. Moreover, many of the heavily damaged ships may never have reached port. The total Allied tonnage damaged by the Axis during the first eleven months of 1943 is estimated by Berlin at over 5 million tons.

A comparison with Great War figures seems also to justify our figure of 2,500,000 tons. In his book *The Crisis of the Naval War*, Admiral Jellicoe says that the number of vessels which completed repairs during August 1917 was 382, with a tonnage of 1,183,000 tons, and that in November it was 542, with a tonnage of 1,509,000 tons. In addition to this there were 326 ships in August and 350 in November awaiting repairs. The Admiral estimated the total of ships under repair every year to have been between 3,600 and 4,000.

MINES AND OTHER HAZARDS

During the 51 months of the Great War the German Admiralty estimated the losses inflicted on enemy shipping and ships in enemy service through mine warfare to have been 3,700,000 tons. After the war it was ascertained that this estimate was too high. Hence our figure of 2,500,000 tons for 50 months of warfare, i.e., an average of 50,000 tons a month, representing about 65 per cent of the losses estimated by the German Admiralty for the Great War, would appear to be well within reason. As a matter of fact, a German commentator, Admiral Brueninghaus, quoted in *The Shanghai Times* of June 14, has estimated the Allied losses from mines at more than 3 million tons.

Our estimate of 2 million tons of shipping lost through ordinary hazards and depreciation likewise seems conservative. It amounts to 1.625 per cent per annum of the 39 million tons (ships of over 1,000 tons) the Allies started with in 1939, and 2.375 per cent per annum of the average tonnage

available to the Allies during the four years of war. Although vessels are kept in service longer during war time, ordinary hazards are increased by the fact that ships must travel at night without navigation lights, must avoid the use of wireless, etc.

REPLACEMENTS

We do not intend to take our readers over the long, tortuous road we have again traversed in our endeavor to appraise the actual Allied replacements of tonnage—one of the most controversial topics in the present war. On the basis of all information available, including data published in neutral European newspapers of recent date—neutral, with a good dose of Anglo-American sympathies—we have, since our last survey of the Battle of Tons, raised our estimate of monthly Allied replacements from 600,000 tons to 1,100,000 tons as from June 1943. Thus we assume that replacements by new constructions in all Allied countries up to the end of November 1943 amount to 18,700,000 gross registered tons (corresponding to about 27,000,000 dead-weight tons).

Although our analysis is concerned only with merchant tonnage, there is one factor that must not be overlooked here. Exceptionally high naval losses necessarily reflect unfavorably on the building of merchantmen; for, in order to overcome a dangerous shortage of men-of-war, priority is sure to be given to the building of these latter in the way of material, skilled labor, equipment, etc.

TABLE IV

Allied Naval Losses from June 5 to December 3, 1943

(according to official Japanese and German figures)

	Sunk Damaged		Sunk Damaged	
	by Japanese forces		by German forces	
Battleships	5	4	0	3
Cruisers	30	13	6	35
Aircraft Carriers	11	6	0	0
Destroyers	30	11	55	48
Motor Torpedoboats	0	0	41	33
Submarines	22	0	5	4

These extremely high Allied losses due chiefly to their large-scale landing operations in the Pacific and the Mediterranean cannot but interfere with the replacement program of merchant tonnage.

THE MEDITERRANEAN

Since our last analysis of the shipping situation, great changes have taken place in the Mediterranean. The House of Savoy and its accomplices handed over the Italian Navy and merchant marine—as far as the ships were not seized or sunk by German forces—to the Anglo-Americans. But more important than the Allies' gain in tonnage is the fact that, owing to their stronger position in the Mediterranean, the Anglo-Americans can now largely dispense with the detour around Africa which hampered their efforts when Rommel's army stood in Libya and Egypt. There can be no doubt that the Anglo-Americans have derived great advantages from these changes. On the other hand, the Allied hope that the Mediterranean would now be proof against submarine attacks has been dispelled by the German High Command's announcements on October 5 that German submarines in the Mediterranean sank seven ships, totaling 59,000 tons and one destroyer, out of a convoy near the North African coast; on October 21, another seven ships totaling 54,000 tons; and on November 6, thirteen transports totaling 140,000 tons.

Undaunted by Badoglio's treason, Germany has been forming a small, efficient navy in the Mediterranean which includes German U-boats and fast motor torpedo-boats as well as all the Italian corvettes, destroyers, U-boats, and motor torpedo-boats which voluntarily joined the German forces or were captured by them. In addition to this, the German Navy has taken over all the French naval units lying in Toulon and partly sunk in November 1942. The major part of the lighter vessels are back in service, while the French battleships *Dunkerque* and *Strasbourg*, a few heavy cruisers, and an aircraft carrier, as well as the Italian battleships *Cavour* and *Impero* and some modern Italian cruisers, will soon be ready for action.

Aside from the fact that the Luftwaffe can strike with great effectiveness at ship concentrations in Italian waters, the advantages of the shorter passage through the Mediterranean are probably largely offset by the need of supplying the great number of forces now landed in that area. It has been claimed that the opening of the Mediterranean route equals a gain of about 2 million tons of shipping. On the other hand, from a report emanating from RAF Headquarters and dated May 31, 1943, we learn

that the provisioning of one soldier requires no less than 18 gross registered tons a year. If this figure is correct, it means that the new demands made on shipping by the landings in southern Europe considerably surpass the tonnage saved owing to the opening of the Mediterranean.

THE BALANCE

Adding our estimate of 18,700,000 tons of replacements to the 39 million tons of Allied shipping in 1939, we reach a grand total of 57,700,000 tons at the Allies' disposal up to November 30, 1943. Subtracting from this the sinkings and other shipping losses sustained by the Allies since September 3, 1939, which we have estimated at 42,690,178 tons, we arrive at a balance of about 15 million tons in favor of the Allies on November 30, 1943, counting only ships with a tonnage of over 1,000 tons. (The way in which we arrived at the figure of 39 million gross registered tons of ships of over 1,000 tons in Allied service—including the USA but excluding Soviet Russia—is explained in our issue of August/September 1942.) This figure is to the best of our knowledge as close to reality as it is possible to get with the information here. On the whole, it tallies with serious Allied estimates.

In our last report on the Battle of Tons we spoke of the "scissors" of sinkings and replacements in Allied shipping. Since June 1943 the Allies have been able to close the "scissors" and, for the time being, even to reverse the former trend. Their total available tonnage has risen from an all-time-low of about 12 million tons to some 15 million tons. But the Battle of Tons is a constant struggle between production and destruction, between Axis offensive and Allied defensive. Ups and downs are part of this struggle; and while Germany had the upper hand for 43 months, the Allies have had the advantage for eight months.

In spite of the help given them by French and Italian traitors, the Allied forces have made slow progress in their North African and Italian campaigns. They have still not established a real "second front" but are instead trying to destroy Germany from the air. All this shows that the almost 34 million Allied tons sunk by Axis forces represent so heavy a blow that a reprieve of a few months has been not able fundamentally to alter the shipping situation.