

Naval War College Review

Volume 49
Number 2 *Spring*

Article 25

1996

"L'impegno navale italiano durante la guerra civile spagnola, 1936-1939" and "La Marine française et la guerre civile d'Espagne, 1936-1939"

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Recommended Citation

Frank, Willard C. Jr.; Bargoni, Franco; and de Lachadenede, Rene Sabatier (1996) ""L'impegno navale italiano durante la guerra civile spagnola, 1936-1939" and "La Marine française et la guerre civile d'Espagne, 1936-1939," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 49 : No. 2 , Article 25.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol49/iss2/25>

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given to engineer combat units prior to the landings. (One of these maps is a copy of that used by Berger during his unit's assault on Utah.)

The first part of the book rehashes the origin of the cross-Channel attack but pays particular attention to the evolution of the engineer forces. The remainder focuses on the operation itself.

In 1943 Adolph Hitler gave the directive to construct an "Atlantic Wall" to prevent Allied landings along the French coast. Expecting an invasion at high tide, Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, commander of the German Army Group B, also constructed obstacles in the tidal zones along the beaches. He erected timber poles tipped with teller mines, fabricated steel structures known as Belgian gates, and hedgehogs to destroy any craft that landed. Allied planners, however, scheduled the invasion for the short interval between low and high tide, therefore exposing Rommel's beach obstacles.

The engineers at Omaha suffered the same problems as their infantry counterparts despite their meticulous planning. Because engineers were among the first units to land, they spent days on the leading landing vessels in the rough waters of the English Channel. They arrived behind schedule and often landed in the wrong place because of strong currents and general confusion, and also they faced stronger resistance than expected from the German forces and suffered high casualties. The engineers were also hampered by infantrymen who could not move forward but instead fought to survive in the tidal area, sometimes using Rommel's timber poles for cover. Of those

lanes that the engineers did clear, the marker-buoys were swept away by the current during high tide and were thus rendered useless. However, despite these hurdles, the engineers managed to neutralize the mines, enabling landing craft to off load closer to shore.

On Utah Beach the assault force had a much easier time. First, the beach area was wider, and the combat teams had more time between low and high tide to clear away obstacles. Second, opposition was also lighter, and engineer teams were able to clear wide areas that enabled infantry and armor units to secure the beachhead.

This book includes several useful appendices, sketches of the beach obstacles, lists of participating engineering units, and descriptions and pictures of the monuments to the soldiers that dot the American beaches in France.

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Bargoni, Franco. *L'impegno navale italiano durante la guerra civile spagnola, 1936-1939*.

Rome: Ufficio Storico della Marina Militare, 1992. 503pp. 30,000 lire

Sabatier de Lachadenede, René. *La Marine française et la guerre civile d'Espagne, 1936-1939*. Vincennes, Fr.: Service historique de la Marine, 1993. 539pp. 130 francs.

These two fine examples of straightforward, descriptive history based on official records depict in full detail the range of roles of navies as instruments of policy in that murky world of international relations between war and peace that was the Spanish Civil War.

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Each book is an acute counterpoint to the other, for they represent the stories of states and navies that were arrayed as intense adversaries of each other in the years leading up to World War II.

In the early months of the Spanish conflict, the Italian and French navies cooperated in evacuating thousands of stranded foreigners and endangered Spaniards caught in the crossfire of that unhappy land. Soon, however, the missions of these navies sharply diverged, as their respective political aims clashed.

Benito Mussolini's political ambition drove Italy to intervene with extensive military support for General Francisco Franco's Nationalist Spain, in the hope that political and strategic concessions would weaken France and Britain in the Mediterranean and expand Italian power to fill the Mediterranean and beyond. On behalf of these aims, the Italian navy convoyed troops and supplies to Spain, helped construct and operate naval bases from which to wage war on the Spanish Republic, patrolled the sea lanes to gather intelligence on Spanish and foreign merchant traffic supplying the Republic, engaged in clandestine war by submarines and surface ships against the merchant traffic of the Republic and its Soviet allies, carried out joint and combined offensive operations, operated an advisory and liaison mission with the Nationalist navy, and deceptively participated in international peacekeeping patrols against the very activities the Italian navy was responsible for perpetrating.

The French navy, alarmed by such threatening actions in the strategically vital western Mediterranean, maintained a heavy presence in Spanish seas,

and especially wherever Italian warships were in evidence. It engaged in international patrols to curtail arms supply to the warring factions and to defend neutral shipping against "unknown pirate" (Italian) naval forces ravaging the sea lanes of the Mediterranean, and it endeavored to build vital staff and operational relations with the British navy. Britain was the ally necessary to the French policy of deterring the Axis in Europe, and also to the naval strategy of Admiral François Darlan to command the Mediterranean in war as a preliminary to an offensive from the south, in league with eastern allies, into the heartland of the Axis. Were it not for the appeasement policies of the democracies and for Italian naval caution, the two navies might well have openly clashed before the 1939 war.

Both authors derive much of their fascination with the subject from having been eyewitnesses to the events. Each sailed the turbulent seas of the Spanish Civil War, Vice Admiral Sabatier de Lachadenede as a young officer and Dr. Bargoni as a cadet. Bargoni writes almost exclusively on the operational level, while Sabatier de Lachadenede ranges into the political and strategic. Each book is a product of the author's familiarity with the naval archive of his country and was published by his navy's historical office. Unfortunately, neither author has assimilated materials from other nations, depriving these books of valuable context and leading to numerous errors in Sabatier de Lachadenede's study. Sabatier de Lachadenede has nevertheless attained a remarkable achievement, demonstrating skill in writing a fine history through a

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