

(but later promoted) and never served at sea again. He, Sablin, and the three other officers judged wanting in Riga were evicted from the party. Thirteen *Storozhevoy* officers and other crew members who had actively supported Sablin were given the equivalent of dishonourable discharges. Sablin and a 20-year-old conscript who had acted as his assistant were formally tried months later. The sailor spent eight years in Russian jails while Sablin, whose idealism impressed his KGB interrogator, was shot. His family were not informed of his fate for almost a year.

The Soviet regime suppressed information about the incident while denying that it could ever have happened. Eyewitness accounts tell of the repercussions within Soviet Frontal Aviation. Von Essen discusses changes to internal Swedish intelligence reporting procedures and how operating hours for analysts were increased.

The Hunt for the Storozhevoy is illustrated with clearly reproduced photographs and adequate maps. Colour plates of Soviet naval uniforms do not add to the story and are padding. This book is a careful account of an ill-fated attempt to initiate internal political reform in the USSR fifteen years before its collapse. Details about this episode remain obscure because official records are not available or were destroyed. Michael Fredholm von Essen's meticulous use of Swedish intelligence records in addition to Russian-language accounts that appeared years later make this as close to an authoritative record as possible.

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Matthew Willis and Jim Laurier (illustrator). *Royal Navy Torpedo-Bombers vs Axis Warships 1939-45*. Oxford, UK: Osprey Books, www.ospreypublishing.com, 2022. 80 pp., illustrations, maps, chronology, bibliography, index. US \$22.00; CDN \$29.00, paper; ISBN 978-1-47285-248-9.

During the Second World War, torpedo-carrying aircraft achieved remarkable results against shipping and warships as well as targeted strikes directly in naval anchorages. The increased air threat, in turn, evoked a counter response in more and heavier anti-aircraft armament provided onboard ships, to shoot down attacking planes before allowing them to get too close. Land-based maritime aircraft such as Coastal Command's Bristol Beaufort and Beaufighter, and flying boats like the Short Sunderland and Consolidated Catalina, were multi-role aircraft types pressed into offensive air operations over the sea. Only a handful of interwar navies possessed carriers capable of launching and retrieving aircraft on flight decks. Those practising the necessary tactics

included France, Great Britain, the United States, and Japan, although Germany and Italy aspired to gaining the capability with new building interrupted by the war. The main torpedo bombers seeing service in the wartime Royal Navy were the biplanes Fairey Swordfish and Albacore, and the monoplanes Barracuda and Grumman Avenger, obtained from the United States through Lend-Lease and assignment by the Combined Munitions Assignment Board. Matthew Willis, a frequent writer in aviation trade and historical journals, adds a contribution to the Osprey Duel series that pits dauntless Royal Navy aircrews and carrier torpedo aircraft against the surface units of the Kriegsmarine and Regia Marina, focusing primarily on the first three years of the war in European waters.

The highly illustrated book has an introduction, chronology, five main sections or chapters, a statistical analysis, and short concluding afterward followed by a list of further reading, websites, and Twitter feeds. Much of the commissioned colour artwork and drawings gracing the book, including the front cover, are by the American artist and illustrator Jim Laurier, an old hand from other Osprey Aviation series. Many original photographs come from Willis' own collection and are rare enough to be considered new. The discussion weaves the stories of the Royal Navy's air arm equipped with the obsolescent Swordfish and its replacements conducting active operations against large and smaller Axis warships with their anti-air defences in the waters off northern Europe and the Mediterranean. When France's Marine nationale built the fast battleships *Dunkerque* and *Strasbourg*, meant to hunt down and destroy cruisers with their forward-facing main guns, the German naval high command countered with construction of several commerce-raiding *panzerschiffe* (nicknamed pocket battleships), and two follow-on battlecruisers, *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*. The Italians likewise rebuilt and modernized older battleships and laid down bigger, 40,000-ton hulls of the *Littorio*-class boasting specialized underwater protection against torpedoes and improved secondary armaments, particularly anti-aircraft guns.

A section dedicated to technical aspects furnishes details on the development of the British aircraft, the air-launched 18-inch Mk. XII torpedo directed by line of sight of the pilot or later, by analogue computer directors, protection provided by design features in the Axis warships such as the Pugliese System of shock-absorbing cylinders, and gun armaments in heavy, medium, and light varieties, with notable differences in rates of fire, loading, and reliability. The Germans and Italians each had standard 37 mm guns in powered mounts that compared with those available from foreign sources such as the Swedish Bofors 40 mm, and the smaller caliber Oerlikon 20 mm, capable of firing high explosive shells from a single manually sighted mount. The British and Americans eventually adopted those foreign armament

designs for manufacture in their own countries. The Royal Navy aggressively leveraged its available carriers and aircraft in the Mediterranean to maintain Great Britain's strategic position until forced to withdraw them in 1941; the *Formidable* barely escaping the attention of Luftwaffe dive bombers intent on sinking her. The next section is devoted to the place of torpedo-bomber air crews in the Fleet Air Arm, their composition, recruitment, and training, and the specialized training of German sailors in anti-aircraft gunnery along with their Italian counterparts. Shaded text boxes give additional information on Vice Admiral Arthur Lumley Lyster and Grand Admiral Erich Raeder as reflecting fleet developments touching upon carrier aviation in their respective navies. Germany's lone aircraft carrier, *Graf Zeppelin*, was never finished and made operational, while limited dockyard and industrial capacity in Italy delayed conversion of two aircraft carriers, *Sparviero* and *Aquila*. Both Axis countries, however, effectively employed dedicated land-based aircraft in maritime roles to exert sea denial in surrounding sea areas, particularly in the Mediterranean.

The combat section focuses on Swordfish and Albacore squadron operations during the ill-fated Norwegian campaign; in the Mediterranean, covering torpedo attacks on ships lying at the Vichy French anchorage at Mers el-Kébir and the defended main Italian naval base at Taranto in 1940; engagement with the Italian fleet at Cape Matapan; and running down and sinking the German battleship *Bismarck* in the North Atlantic as she was trying to reach Occupied France. When surprise was obtained and pre-planning and training sufficient, British attacks with the slow and low-flying torpedo bomber aircraft recorded marked success out of proportion to the forces committed. The nighttime Taranto operation (foreshadowing the surprise Japanese attack on the American naval anchorage at Pearl Harbor), in particular, hobbled the Italian navy and restricted its activities with a number of sunk and damaged warships. On other occasions, British aircraft and aircrews suffered terribly when confronting strong and determined air defences that caused high losses. Meeting high-performance land-based fighters in the air was almost suicidal, as demonstrated by the half-baked British reaction to the Channel Dash of German warships back to Germany. The aim, however, was to slow down or cripple a warship so that fleet surface units or submarines could intervene in a battle. The *Bismarck* chase proved this point. Swordfish flying at extreme range and displaying a great deal of courage managed to damage the battleship's rudder and aggravated earlier repaired battle damage. The resulting flooding caused a consequent decrease in speed sufficient for Home Fleet surface units to catch up for a conventional gun battle. Diagrams of typical attack profiles and descriptions by Willis highlight the torpedo attack tactics deployed against single warships, and where those were followed and deviated from.

This book provides a great deal of information in a small package on a

very specialized topic, both in terms of torpedo bombing methods and anti-aircraft capabilities aboard Second World War warships and the personnel who manned them. It should be consulted in conjunction with Jean-Denis Lepage's *Torpedo Bombers 1900-1950* (TNM/LMN 32 no. 1 (Winter 2022): 98-101) for technical details and wider context. The torpedo bomber, as a type, was already in decline well before the end of the war. Like Lepage's technical reference source, *Royal Navy Torpedo-Bombers vs Axis Warships* draws upon considerable research, but does not reference sources in notes or footnotes. This book in the growing Osprey Duel series list is recommended for readers interested in Second World War naval operations involving the British, German, and Italian navies, particularly in the Mediterranean. It will also appeal to researchers and scale modelers seeking background and technical details in easily understandable language.

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