

The History of the Twentieth Century

Episode 356

“Happy Time”

Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

The sinking of the Bismarck underscored that the German Navy was never going to defeat the Royal Navy in surface warfare. The Kriegsmarine now had no choice but to turn to what had always been its greatest strength: submarine warfare.

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

[music: Opening War Theme]

Episode 356. Happy Time.

The last time we talked about the naval war in the Atlantic was episode 338. In that episode, I took you as far as the sinking of the German battleship *Bismarck* at the end of May, 1941, so that's where we'll pick up the story today.

Actually, let me back up a bit to January 25, 1941, to make note of an important development in Anglo-American military cooperation, during the period before the US was officially in the war. The British battleship HMS *King George V* arrived in the Chesapeake Bay after navigating perilous waters patrolled by the German battlecruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, to deliver Britain's new ambassador to the United States, the now-former Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax. Churchill believed Halifax would be useful in the effort to bring America into the war; he also wanted Halifax, a holdover from the Chamberlain government, out of his Cabinet. Anthony Eden would succeed him as foreign secretary.

Quite contrary to proper protocol, President Roosevelt took the Presidential yacht, *Potomac*, into the Chesapeake to welcome Halifax in person. Halifax did not make a good first impression with Americans; he began his new duties by going fox hunting in Virginia. Fox hunting was Halifax's favorite pastime, but this only reinforced the worst American stereotypes about British leaders, that they were silly, impractical aristocrats, concerned mostly with preserving the privileges of their class and expecting others to do their dirty work for them.

When HMS *King George V* returned to Britain, it brought along a team of American cryptanalysts with a valuable gift: a replica Purple cipher machine. Purple wasn't its color; *Purple* was the US codename for the Japanese diplomatic code. The Americans had cracked the code and were coming to Bletchley Park to share their success. Now the British too could read Japanese diplomatic messages, which proved very useful, beginning in June, when the British were able to read the message from Ambassador Ōshima in Berlin to the foreign ministry in Tokyo, alerting them that a German invasion of the Soviet Union was imminent.

The Americans don't seem to have gotten much in return. The cryptanalysts at Bletchley Park did not give them a replica Enigma machine or much insight into the process of decrypting Enigma. This was due to the British belief that American security was lax and that Americans could not be trusted with such sensitive information. They did give the Americans documents that laid out how Enigma worked and how the rotors were wired, though they did not share how they got this information.

This was the period German submariners called *Die glückliche Zeit*, "The Happy Time," when German U-boats and surface raiders were picking off alarming numbers of British merchant ships. In spring 1941, Germans were sinking some 600,000 tons of merchant shipping in the Atlantic every month. The combined shipbuilding capacities of the UK and Canada, plus US lend-lease support, amounted to barely 100,000 tons per month. US Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Harold Stark predicted that at this rate, the British might have to capitulate in another six months.

The Americans pitched in by lending 2,000,000 tons of shipping to the British and additionally, turning over some 600,000 tons of German, Italian, and Danish ships docked in American ports. The US opened its shipyards to Royal Navy warships in need of repairs, and assumed responsibility for ferrying lend-lease aircraft to the UK, which would ease the demand for merchant ships somewhat. One route would take the planes from the US to Brazil, then across the Atlantic at its narrowest point to Africa, then north to Britain. This required the cooperation of the Brazilian government and upgrades to airfields in and around the Brazilian city of Natal in the northeast of the country, on that bulge that juts out into the Atlantic Ocean. A second route would fly the planes from the US to Newfoundland to Greenland to Iceland and then on to Britain.

The British were not simply relying on American assistance to survive the U-boat threat. On March 4, a force of nearly 600 British and Norwegian commandos supported by the Royal Navy landed in the Lofoten Islands off the coast of northern Norway. They caught the Germans by surprise and sabotaged industrial facilities, sank ships, and captured hundreds of German and Norwegian prisoners, but all that was merely to cover the real purpose of the raid, to capture an Enigma machine. Commandos boarded a German armed fishing trawler, and the crew of 13 waged a stubborn but futile holding action while the ship's captain threw his Enigma machine overboard, just before he was shot and killed.

Bad luck, but although the machine was gone, the commandos seized the two spare rotors and the tables of daily rotor settings for the next month. This information, along with what was gleaned from the capture of *U-110*, which I told you about in episode 340, was sufficient to allow Bletchley Park to decrypt all German Navy messages for a while and get a better understanding of how the Kriegsmarine used Enigma and what sorts of messages were typical, which boosted the effort to crack the naval version of Enigma, which you'll recall was the one the codebreakers had the most trouble with. By May 1941, Alan Turing and his colleagues at Bletchley Park had solved the problem and were able to read German Navy messages.

That was the same month *Bismarck* was sunk. The loss of this mighty battleship, the pride of the German Navy and of German engineering, was a blow to the German war effort, not to mention painfully embarrassing. You'll recall that Adolf Hitler responded to this loss by ordering an end to raids in the Atlantic Ocean by surface ships.

Finally, at long last, and belatedly, Hitler and his naval commanders reached the conclusion they should have reached a year or more ago: that Germany's best option in the effort to blockade Britain was not a small number of expensive surface ships, but rather large numbers of cheap and easy to produce U-boats. This would mark a major turning point in the Battle of the Atlantic.

Large numbers of U-boats was exactly what the German U-boat commander, Admiral Karl Dönitz, had been recommending all along. The U-boats had been sinking impressive numbers of British merchant ships with relatively few boats. In the early months of 1941, there were often no more than six U-boats on patrol in the North Atlantic at any one time. Dönitz told his superiors that if he could have 100 U-boats on patrol at any given time, he could choke off British overseas trade entirely. To reach this number would require a total fleet of around 300 U-boats.

Meanwhile, the British were improving their anti-submarine procedures. The Royal Navy came to understand that, perhaps counter-intuitively, smaller numbers of larger convoys were safer than larger numbers of smaller convoys, since the chances of a U-boat finding a convoy were no greater for a large one than a small one.

The British organized regular convoys, sorted into fast and slow convoys, depending on the capabilities of the cargo ships, and protected by escorts at a ratio ideally of one escort per ten ships. In June 1941, for the first time, a convoy from Canada to Britain was escorted along its entire voyage. Royal Canadian Navy destroyers covered the first third of the journey, the middle third would be escorted by Royal Navy ships operating from Iceland, and the final third by Royal Navy ships based in Britain. Frustrated in the North Atlantic, Dönitz began assigning his U-boats farther south, into the waters between Brazil and West Africa, where the already-stretched Royal Navy had fewer escorts.

In April, the German merchant raider *Atlantis* sank the Egyptian passenger liner *Zamzam*, as it was making its way from New York to Egypt. Sensing an opportunity to whip up another *Lusitania*, or at least win some American sympathy, the Royal Navy announced the sinking and

the fact that there were 196 Americans aboard, who were “presumed lost.” The Navy called public attention to the fact that these Americans were on their way to Egypt because they had volunteered to serve as ambulance drivers.

The RN succeeded in making this a big news story in the United States. The New York *World-Telegram* ran an incendiary banner headline that read: 196 AMERICANS FEARED LOST WITH EGYPTIAN MERCY SHIP.

The German government quickly countered with an announcement that yes, *Atlantis* had sunk *Zamzam*, but only after taking aboard all 340 of its passengers and their baggage and delivering them all safely to France. Not another *Lusitania* after all.

In May, *U-69* was assigned to mine the port of Takoradi in the British colony Gold Coast. Along the way, the submarine encountered a freighter lit up by night, which implied it was from a neutral nation, although the possibility that it was some kind of British U-boat trap could not be ruled out. The U-boat hailed the freighter by signal lamp and demanded it identify itself. The answer that came back: *Robin Moor*.

There was no *Robin Moor* listed in Lloyd’s Register, which made the U-boat captain suspicious. He got even more suspicious when dawn came and he could see the name *Exmoor* painted on its stern. He demanded that the ship explain itself. Its captain came over to the submarine on a boat with his ship’s identification papers and manifest. The ship had recently been purchased by an American company and its name changed, he explained.

The U-boat captain claimed he saw the word “guns” on the ship’s manifest. Neutral ships carrying military equipment were permissible targets under international law, so the U-boat captain ordered the crew of *Robin Moor* and its eight passengers to evacuate by lifeboat and sank it, making *Robin Moor* the first American ship sunk by a U-boat since the beginning of the war. This was also in direct violation of his orders, which were not to attack any American ship.

The passengers and crew were left at sea in their lifeboats, which were well stocked with supplies. Even so, they were adrift at sea for more than two weeks before they were rescued. The Roosevelt Administration condemned Germany for the sinking, ordered all German and Italian consulates in the United States closed, and froze German assets in the US.

Despite this blunder, U-boat patrols in West African waters otherwise were racking up impressive victories. From March to May, a total of eight U-boats were responsible for 72 ships sunk, a total of 388,000 tons, which helped make up for the tighter convoys in the North Atlantic.

[music: Holst, “Uranus” from *The Planets*.]

Once Bletchley Park had cracked the Naval Enigma codes, the British Admiralty could read the radio traffic between Germany and its U-boats and knew the positions of almost every one of

them. But what to do with this information? If squadrons of Royal Navy destroyers suddenly and simultaneously attacked every boat in the North Atlantic, that would tip off the Germans that the British had cracked Enigma.

Something subtler was required. The Admiralty had two tricks up their sleeves. The first was simply redirecting convoys away from areas where a U-boat was patrolling. The other was to sink the German resupply ships that refueled U-boats at sea and thus allowed them greater range and more time at sea. When the British began picking off these ships, it limited German U-boat operations; in particular, it meant Dönitz had to suspend those highly successful patrols off West Africa.

The spate of attacks on resupply ships surprised the Kriegsmarine, but they attributed this to radar. The Germans were well aware that the British had better radar, including ship-borne equipment that could detect an enemy surface ship far beyond the range of visual contact, so maybe that was it.

Strange it was too, that those convoys from Canada to Britain suddenly disappeared. The Germans suspected they'd been rerouted to the far north, past Labrador and Greenland and even sent a U-boat up there to investigate the possibility, but the boat found nothing.

The numbers of ships sunk began to plunge. It was the end of Happy Time. Dönitz suspected the enemy was getting information about the deployment of the U-boat picket lines somehow, so he introduced a different plan, under which the U-boats would patrol in grids, so there would be no gaps a convoy might slip through. The numbers of sinkings began to rise once more.

Still, the British had other weapons at their disposal. One was huff-duff, the system that could identify where a radio signal originated. The Germans were familiar with triangulation as a means of locating a radio transmitter, but triangulation took time, so U-boats were instructed to reply to messages from Germany with very brief transmissions: "Yes," meaning, "I will follow that order," or "No," meaning the U-boat was not able to follow that order for one reason or another.

What the Germans didn't know was that huff-duff worked almost instantly, and even these short transmissions were enough to pinpoint the boat's location.

Then there were aircraft. Coastal Command was the third arm of the RAF, besides Fighter Command and Bomber Command, but it was treated like an unloved stepsister. Bomber Command was constantly calling for more bombers and promising if it had them, it alone could force German capitulation, and usually it was Coastal Command who were forced to provide them.

Coastal Command could fly patrols from Britain or Iceland or Nova Scotia, which could help escort convoys or hunt for U-boats with their on-board radar sets. When a U-boat was found, a

plane could attack the U-boat with air-dropped depth charges. Trouble was, in 1940 and 1941, Coastal Command's record was poor. The planes frequently got lost. They flew too high to make optimal use of their onboard radar. More than half the time, the U-boat spotted the plane first and dove underwater, and when these planes did drop depth charges, they seldom succeeded in damaging the enemy.

New planes helped, including the American Catalinas and B-24 bombers, both of which had longer ranges and could carry greater loads than British planes. As was the case with bombers, British scientists did statistical analyses that helped identify ways to improve Coastal Command's disappointing record. The undersides of Coastal Command planes were painted white to make them harder to see from below. The planes were given larger numbers of smaller depth charges set to explode at more shallow depths, which helped insure at least some damage to the U-boat.

On June 22, with its U-boat campaign struggling and its bombing campaign over Britain suspended, Germany invaded the Soviet Union. The British had doubts over how long the Red Army could hold them back, but even so, it was clear the Germans would not be attempting an invasion of Great Britain at least not until the USSR was defeated. This allowed the Royal Navy to transfer destroyers from patrols in the English Channel to beef up convoy escorts in the Atlantic.

Two and a half weeks later, on July 9, the United States took over the occupation of Iceland from the British. The Americans were worried about provoking a German military response, so they made sure to deliver a large number of troops to Iceland quickly, and not ordinary Army conscripts, but trained and experienced US Marines, the object being to put a German invasion of Iceland out of reach before the Germans had time to think of it.

Admiral Ernest King, commander of the US Atlantic Fleet, annoyed the British Admiralty by insisting that transports carrying those Marines to Iceland be heavily escorted. In the last war, the US had transported millions of soldiers to Europe and had not lost a single one of them to a U-boat attack. King was determined to equal that accomplishment in the present war.

Iceland would become a crucial base for British and American ships and planes. Two weeks after the American occupation of Iceland, the US Navy began what would be called the Denmark Straits Patrol, based in Iceland and consisting of the aircraft carrier USS *Wasp* and three battleships, along with cruiser and destroyer escorts. The three battleships were originally the older *New York*, *Texas*, and *Arkansas*, until newer battleships could be brought in from the Pacific Fleet: *Idaho*, *New Mexico*, and *Mississippi*. And here is the reason why there were only older battleships at Pearl Harbor on the day of the Japanese attack.

The Denmark Straits Patrol would watch for U-boats or any further German surface raiders from Germany attempting to slip into the Atlantic, or for any of the German ships docked on the Atlantic coast of France, such as *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau*, or *Prinz Eugen*, attempting to circle

through the Denmark Strait to return to Germany. The US was neutral, of course, so if the Patrol spotted any German vessels, the Americans would not attack; they would, however, report the sighting to the Royal Navy.

The American patrol freed up British capital ships from this duty, so they could be assigned elsewhere. Among the ships reassigned were the aircraft carrier HMS *Indomitable* and the battleships *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*, all sent to Singapore to reinforce the Far Eastern Fleet. As you know, the two battleships would arrive on the scene just days before the Japanese declared war.

The Kriegsmarine was infuriated by these American patrols, which they saw as flouting the laws of sea warfare. The U-boat chief, Admiral Karl Dönitz, appealed to his superior Admiral Erich Raeder, commander-in-chief of the German Navy, for permission to attack the American ships. Raeder in turn took the request to Adolf Hitler, but Hitler refused. He told Raeder that the Wehrmacht would need another one to two months to complete the campaign in the East and that it was vital to avoid hostilities with the USA until then. After Russia was defeated, things would be different. The Luftwaffe would be free to return to the West and the fall of Russia would dampen the enthusiasm of those brazen Americans.

Speaking of the campaign in the East, it too had a naval component. The German navy was supreme in the Baltic Sea, but there was the Soviet Red Banner Fleet, stationed at Leningrad, which included two old battleships, three cruisers, 47 destroyers, and some 70 submarines. The Germans weren't too worried about the surface ships, but the submarines gave them pause, while the Soviet side was wary of German surface ships bombarding Leningrad in support of Army Group North's campaign to take the city.

In the end, neither side took offensive action. The Soviets mined the entrance to the Gulf of Finland to keep the Germans out; the Germans mined the entrance to the Gulf of Finland to keep the Soviets in.

Unfortunately for Admiral Dönitz though, U-boat training exercises, which had hitherto been conducted in the Baltic, had to be relocated to the Norwegian coast. Hitler believed that the British commando raid on the Lofoten Islands last March was the prelude to an invasion, so he wanted a greater German naval presence in Norwegian waters. But what was that to be? *Tirpitz*, *Bismarck*'s sister ship, was not yet ready. The two pocket battleships, *Lützow* and *Admiral Scheer*, were getting overhauls, and *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* were stuck in France, unable to return to Germany and being regularly bombed by the RAF.

Since little in the way of surface ships was available, the U-boats were assigned the job of patrolling Norwegian waters, and their training program went along with them. Reconnaissance submarines monitored the British naval base at Scapa Flow for any ships headed toward Norway. When the British began shipping military aid to the Soviet Union via Archangel, some U-boats

were ordered to attack these convoys. Others were sent to patrol the Arctic waters near Archangel and Murmansk.

Dönitz absolutely hated these decisions. The training program was moved from the nearby German coast to distant Norway and worse, just as the numbers of U-boats on patrol in the Atlantic had increased into the 20s and 30s, suddenly they were being taken away. Germany's best hope for defeating Britain was to attack its imports, Dönitz argued. This was the U-boats' principal task and one that no other service branch could execute, as opposed to the war with Russia, which would be won or lost on land. U-boats could do little to affect the outcome there.

Yes, the Happy Time was definitely over. In the second half of 1941, U-boats seldom found convoys, and hundreds of merchant ships were crossing the Atlantic each month unharmed.

In late August, Dönitz received intelligence that a large convoy was headed for Britain and would skirt the southern shore of Iceland along the way. Though Icelandic waters were dangerous, Dönitz decided to go all out on this one: no fewer than 16 U-boats would be sent to intercept the convoy.

One of the 16 was the brand new *U-570*, which had only been commissioned on May 15 and had been rushed through training and sea trials to get it into service quickly. During training, there had been an incident when the sighting of a British plane forced the submarine to dive. Its hull scraped the bottom and damaged the boat's hydrophones—underwater listening devices the German Navy used to track surface ships and sometimes to communicate with other U-boats.

The new training station in Norway had no one qualified to repair the hydrophones, so the boat went to sea without them on the morning of August 24. Of the 43 members of the crew, only four had previous experience on a U-boat patrol. The night before their departure, the crew had partied in Trondheim, and on that morning, most of them were hung over.

The boat had other mechanical problems besides the damaged hydrophones, including engines that weren't tuned properly, torpedoes that weren't stowed correctly, and a torpedo tube that was leaking seawater. The seas were rough and many in the inexperienced crew became seasick. Since the deck of a U-boat can only accommodate a few people at a time, sailors were forced to vomit into buckets inside the sub. Soon the air reeked of it. Anyone who wasn't already ill got sick from the smell.

August 27 found *U-570* eighty miles south of Iceland, searching for that convoy. That morning the captain ordered the boat to submerge for a few hours to give the crew a break from the endlessly churning waves. Then he raised the boat to search for the convoy.

The boat surfaced and the captain went topside to have a look around. He immediately heard the sound of an approaching aircraft and ordered a crash dive. The aircraft was an RAF Lockheed Hudson, based in Iceland, part of Coastal Command, and it had found the U-boat with its radar.

The plane flew over U-570 and dropped depth charges. Two of them exploded just meters from the boat, one on either side.

The explosions rocked the U-boat violently. It lost lights and electrical power and rolled more than 90 degrees before righting itself again. The crew was in a state of panic. Crew stationed aft reported that seawater had entered the boat and gotten into the batteries, which was extremely dangerous, as it would react with the chemicals to produce chlorine gas.

The entire crew rushed forward, closing a watertight door behind them and shutting off the ventilating system to keep the gas from reaching them.

The captain attempted to get underway and dive deeper, using the batteries, but there was no power. The explosion had broken some of the fuses in the electrical system. This could have been fixed easily, but it required returning to the aft section, which no one was willing to do.

The captain decided they would all die if the boat remained submerged, so he gave the order to surface and told the crew to prepare to abandon ship. When the boat reached the surface, the crew went topside. The captain threw overboard his Enigma machine, the codebooks, and other sensitive documents, as he was supposed to do.

The crew of the aircraft saw the U-boat crew come topside and assumed the Germans had surfaced in order to use the boat's anti-aircraft gun against them, so they strafed the boat three times before the pilot noticed one of the Germans was waving a white T-shirt, signaling surrender.

For the first time in history, a naval vessel was captured by an aircraft, only...how is this supposed to work, anyway?

The aircraft circled the U-boat, watching carefully for any sign of hostility, while its crew radioed for assistance. Two other anti-submarine aircraft answered the call; these planes carried full loads of depth charges and were prepared to attack the U-boat if necessary.

Aboard *U-570*, they still believed the aft section of the boat was full of chlorine gas, which meant that diving would be impossible. The captain didn't have his code equipment anymore, so he sent a radio message in the clear requesting help. One other boat, *U-82*, attempted to answer the call, but gave up after seeing the three planes circling the location.

The Royal Navy was practically salivating over the prospect of capturing a U-boat intact and ordered every ship in the vicinity to converge on the site, including a British destroyer, HMS *Burwell*, a Canadian destroyer, HMCS *Niagara*, and four smaller British trawlers. The nearest of these ships, the trawler HMS *Northern Chief*, didn't reach the scene until dusk. Its captain, having been ordered to prevent the Germans from scuttling their boat by any means, signaled them and warned "If you make any attempt to scuttle, I will not save anyone and will fire on

your rafts..." The German captain replied, "I cannot scuttle or abandon. Save us tomorrow, please."

It was a dark and stormy night. The restless waves rocked the U-boat, further immiserating the crew. By dawn, the other five ships had joined *Northern Chief*. The British destroyer captain assumed command and began to devise a plan. If they attempted to evacuate the crew, the Germans would surely scuttle the boat as they departed, so he ordered the Germans to remain on the boat while he tried to figure this out.

Meanwhile, a Norwegian-crewed anti-submarine plane came by and, apparently not impressed with the fact that six Allied warships were nearby, bombed the U-boat until the British commander managed to contact the crew by radio and ask them to stop. The Norwegians asked if they could please bomb the Germans some more. Just a little bit? The British commander said no, and they left, disappointed.

The attack by the Norwegians understandably left the German crew suspicious of Allied intentions. The British tried to throw them a tow line, but the Germans were reluctant to take it until a British machine gun opened up on them, injuring five of the German crew. They got the message and fastened the tow line to the stern of their boat.

The German captain asked if the British would take their wounded, at least. The British commander agreed and accepted a German raft, but it seems that three of the U-boat's four officers came over along with the wounded. The reason is not clear. It may have been miscommunication, or perhaps cowardice. Needless to say, the one junior officer who remained and the rest of the crew were not happy about this development.

The Canadian destroyer, HMCS *Niagara*, then brought over the rest of the German crew. Whether this was pursuant to orders from the British commander or whether the Canadians were acting on their own initiative is unclear.

Still, the German crew made no attempt to scuttle their boat and the British commander was able to bring *U-570* safely back to Iceland, a major accomplishment given the rough seas. The arrival of an intact U-boat was big news and hard to keep secret, especially since quite a few Americans already knew about it, so the RN chose to go public and reap the propaganda benefit.

When British intelligence officers boarded *U-570* to study it, they had to deal with a boat that reeked of vomit, diarrhea, and diesel oil. The Germans had thrown their Enigma materials overboard and smashed the boat's most sensitive equipment, but it was structurally sound. The British discovered that the chlorine scare was a false alarm. There was nothing wrong with the batteries. A calmer, more experienced, better led crew could have escaped.

The boat was brought back to England for closer study. Even the Americans were allowed a peek inside. The British marveled at some of the German technology, including the boat's sturdy hull,

capable of diving far deeper than the Royal Navy had assumed. German hydrophone technology was far beyond what the British had, as was the boat's fire control system. But the biggest marvel, as far as the Allies were concerned, was the periscope seat, designed to rotate as the periscope rotated, which allowed the German captain to remain seated while using it. Why hadn't we thought of that?

The biggest problem with German U-boat design, as far as the British were concerned, was its blatant disregard for the comfort of the crew. German U-boats were overcrowded. They were short on water, bunks, and proper food storage, and generally unpleasant to serve aboard.

I imagine many of you are already familiar with the 1981 German film, *Das Boot*, directed by Wolfgang Petersen, which depicts the patrol of a fictionalized version of German U-boat *U-96* in the autumn of 1941. If you haven't seen it, I encourage you to check it out. Not only is it one of the greatest war movies ever made, but it presents an honest and visceral depiction of the hardships of life aboard a U-boat. The man who commanded the real *U-96* during the war was a consultant on the film.

The British used their new knowledge of the interior of a U-boat to build mockups, which were in turn used to train boarding parties on how to seize and secure a U-boat, rescue the Enigma machine, and prevent its scuttling.

British investigators put the boat through a thorough regimen of testing, during which they issued dozens of charts, graphs, and tables documenting every aspect of the boat's capabilities, for the use of Allied anti-submarine forces.

Afterward, the boat was commissioned in the Royal Navy and rather cheekily given the name *HMS Graph*, a reference to all the graphs and other data study of the boat had produced.

We'll have to stop there for today. I thank you for listening, and I'd especially like to thank Kathleen for her kind donation, and thank you to Thomas for becoming a patron of the podcast. Donors and patrons like Kathleen and Thomas help cover the costs of making this show, which in turn keeps the podcast available free for everyone, so my thanks to them and to all of you who have pitched in and helped out. If you'd like to become a patron or make a donation, you are most welcome; just visit the website, historyofthetwentiethcentury.com and click on the PayPal or Patreon buttons.

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Next week is a bye week for the podcast, but I hope you'll join me in two weeks' time, here on the *History of the Twentieth Century*, as we return at last to the land war in Europe and North Africa. The Soviets counterattack in the East, the British counterattack in Africa, and the new allies, the UK, the US, and the USSR size each other up. No Retreat, in two weeks' time, here, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and one more thing. Speaking of films about German U-boats, some of you might also be familiar with the 2000 American film *U-571*, directed by Jonathan Mostow. This film is a fictionalized version of the capture of a German U-boat, though it takes a serious historical liberty by depicting Americans, not British, capturing a naval Enigma machine.

In fact, more than a dozen naval Enigma machines were captured by Allied naval forces in the course of the war, including one by the US Navy and one by the Royal Canadian Navy; both of those incidents took place in 1944, by which time the Allies had already cracked the naval Enigma codes. It was the earlier instances, including the capture of *U-110* in 1941, that provided the information needed to crack the naval version of Enigma, and these were all achieved by the Royal Navy. The filmmakers changed the heroes of the story to Americans, apparently for commercial reasons.

This change did not go down well in the UK, where the film was condemned as an “affront” to British sailors and an attempt to “rewrite history.”

[music: Closing War Theme]