

ALLIES' SHIP LOSSES CUT BELOW 1 IN 1,000

Submarine Toll of Atlantic Merchant Convoys at Low Point in 2d Half of 1943

1942 CASUALTIES HALVED

But Alexander in Report to Commons Warns Germans Will Intensify Sea War

By Cable to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

LONDON, March 7—Losses of Allied merchant ships in Atlantic convoys caused by enemy submarines declined in the second half of last year to less than one in a thousand, it was disclosed today by First Lord of the Admiralty Albert V. Alexander in a speech introducing naval estimates in the House of Commons.

"In 1941 one ship was lost out of every 181 that sailed," said Mr. Alexander; "in 1942, one out of every 233; in 1943, one out of every 344. The losses in these convoys during the second half of last year were less than one in a thousand."

The total of sinkings in 1943 was below Britain's most optimistic hopes at the beginning of last year. The loss of officers and men of the merchant navy was roughly half of what it was in 1942.

The British naval chief warned against relaxation, however, saying there might still be periods when losses would mount again.

"The Germans have probably at least as many U-boats now as at the beginning of 1943," he said. "In the early months of last year production of U-boats exceeded kills and in recent months U-boats have often sought to avoid destruction by avoiding action."

"The bombing of U-boat building centers has certainly reduced the rate of output, but there is not the slightest evidence that the enemy has in any way abandoned his intention to cripple our sea communications if he possibly can."

Acoustic Torpedo Unveiled

On the contrary, said Mr. Alexander, the Germans were still trying intensely to improve their U-boats and had greatly increased their anti-aircraft firepower. They also had put a new acoustic torpedo into service, he remarked.

Further developments were to be expected, he observed, saying, "Recently the Germans seem to be trying to develop tactics based upon the increased use of very long-range aircraft acting in cooperation with U-boats."

Mr. Alexander said that the building of more concrete shelters in U-boat operational bases indicated that Grand Admiral Karl Doenitz intended to expand the German submarine campaign.

"It can therefore be regarded as certain," he warned, "that he will try and try again to stage a comeback and his efforts may be more sustained than that made in September. We must also expect that U-boats will, as at present, seek to expand their efforts in far-distant waters such as the Indian Ocean."

Three Big Days of 1943

Mr. Alexander set March 20, when the battle against the submarines began to turn in the Allies' favor, as one of the three great dates in Britain's naval history in 1943. The others were Sept. 11, when major units of the Italian fleet anchored under the guns of Malta, and Dec. 26, when vessels of the home fleet destroyed the German battleship Scharnhorst.

Of the Navy as a whole, said Mr. Alexander, the British fleet is now stronger in relation to the enemy than at any time since the fall of France. This despite heavy losses such as the sinking of thirteen British warships on Russian convoy duty and losses in the Mediterranean since the beginning of the Sicilian campaign of two cruisers, one minesweeper, ten destroyers, two submarines and ten minor war vessels.

The British Navy meanwhile is increasing its activities in the Pacific and looking beyond the European actions to the time when it will descend with full force on the Japanese.

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