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Jürgen Rohwer, with special assistance from Gerhard Hümmelchen and Thomas Weis, **Chronology of the War at Sea 1939–1945: The Naval History of World War Two**, Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2005. 532 pages, indexes, cloth.

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For more than four decades, German naval historian Jürgen Rohwer has been crafting valuable compendia of naval events during World War II. *Chronology of the War at Sea 1939–1945: The Naval History of World War Two* is Rohwer's latest volume. It is a revised and expanded English language third edition of the naval chronology (*Chronik des Seekrieges 1939–1945*) that he and Gerhard Hümmelchen initially drafted. It was published in West Germany in 1968 by Gerhard Stalling Verlag. The chronology was first released in an English translation in two separate volumes by Arco Publishing Company, Inc. in 1972 and 1974, respectively. The second revised edition of this book was published in the United States in a large-format, single volume by Naval Institute Press in 1992.

For readers interested in using such a compendium, the greatest value of the work lies in the knowledge that the facts presented are as accurate as the author can make them. In this regard, Rohwer's chronology strives with great success to attain this ideal. As a side-by-side comparison of the English editions demonstrates, each successive edition is an improvement on its predecessor, both in terms of increased coverage of naval actions and greater accuracy in the details presented. The text of the Naval Institute Press 2005 edition, for example, is sixty-seven pages longer than that of the 1992 edition.

Over the years that he has been compiling and updating this naval chronology, Jürgen Rohwer has relied upon an expanding collection of authoritative reference sources to provide him with needed facts. For this edition, the new material has been drawn largely from books published since the early 1990s. For new information on the wartime German Navy (*Kriegsmarine*) he relied heavily upon the sixty-eight-volume series *Kriegstagebuch der Seekriegsleitung 1939–1945*, which was finally completed in 1997, and on Erich Gröner's eight-volume study *Die deutschen Kriegsschiffe 1815–1945*. For new material relating to the U.S. Navy he drew primarily from my Naval Historical Center colleague Robert J. Cressman's superior study *The Official Chronology of the U.S. Navy in World War II*—a book marred only by the Naval Institute Press production staff's inexplicable decision to publish the book without indexes—that was released in 2000. And for new information on the wartime Soviet Fleet (*Voенно-Морской Флот*), among other things, he drew upon the monthly articles on Soviet World War II naval

operations published between 1991 and 1995 in the Russian naval journal *Morskoi sbornik* (Rohwer [2005], vii).

The best way of demonstrating the improvements evident in this new edition of the *Chronology of the War at Sea 1939–1945* is to look at several randomly-selected chronological entries in the book and compare them with the identical entries from the 1992 edition. For example, the entry dated **29 April–20 May** [1940] **Norway** in the new edition furnishes the reader with a corrected date for the torpedoing of the German torpedo boat *Möwe* (8 May vs. 9 May); it supplies the name of the commanding officer of the British submarine *Seal*; and provides the identity of the German submarine-chaser—*UJ 126*—to which *Seal* eventually was forced to surrender (Rohwer [2005], 22 / Rohwer and Hümmelchen [1992], 18). Similarly, the entry dated **16 February–18 March** [1942] **Western Atlantic** in the new edition revises the sinking and damage figures caused by U-boats in that period: *U 67* sinks two ships of 17,903 tons and damages one other of 3,177 tons (not sinking one ship of 8,436 tons and damaging two of 12,210 tons); *U 502* sinks five ships totaling 25,398 tons (not 25,232 tons); and *U 161* torpedoes four ships totaling 29,317 tons (not 30,511 tons) (Rohwer [2005], 145 / Rohwer and Hümmelchen [1992], 124). In the same manner, the entry dated **17 April–4 May** [1944] **Black Sea** in the 2005 edition provides both corrections to the earlier account and additional material: Soviet submarine *L-6* is destroyed, probably by the German submarine-chaser *UJ 115/Rosita* (not by *UJ 104*); the merchantman *Ossag* sinks after unsuccessful attacks by Soviet submarines *M-35* and *A-5* and scuttling attempts by German motor minesweeper *R 207* (not “after being finished off” by *M-35* and *R 207*); and on 3 May the Soviet submarines *A-5* and *M-62* unsuccessfully attack two convoys, while on the following day Soviet submarine *M-111* misses a convoy in which the transport *Tisza* is steaming (Rohwer [2005], 319 / Rohwer and Hümmelchen [1992], 272). For many other entries in the most recent edition of the book, Rohwer supplies additional information that puts the naval activities in question into better historical context for the reader.

In addition to the many corrected entries that are present in this new edition of *Chronology of the War at Sea 1939–1945*, Rohwer has added new entries to provide information on the naval war heretofore absent from the compendium. These range from single-sentence entries—such as the **28 April** [1944] **General** entry on the death of U.S. Navy Secretary Frank Knox (Rohwer [2005], 321), and the **18 July** [1944] **Japan** entry on the resignation of Japanese Prime Minister General Tōjō Hideki (Rohwer [2005], 343)—to entries of several sentences in length that supply new material on naval activities during different periods of the war in such varied areas of the globe as the Philippines, the Aegean Sea, the Southwest Pacific, the Mediterranean Sea, Norway, and the Indian Ocean (see Rohwer [2005], 146, 321, 330, 334, 342, and 403, respectively).

Given the substantial detail present in the book’s numerous chronological entries and the overall length of its text, indexes constitute for the reader a vital aspect of its accessibility. Fortunately, the book is well served with a multitude of indexes, including individual ones for warships, merchant ships, personnel, convoys, operations, U-boat “wolf packs” and patrol lines, and mine fields and mine barrages. Given these exceptionally useful indexes, even a non-specialist reader should be able to locate quickly any particular fact mentioned in the Rohwer’s book.

During the past four decades, the editions of Jürgen Rohwer’s compendium on the World War II naval war have increased in value for naval historians and interested readers alike. Given its

substantially expanded and corrected text, this new edition of *Chronology of the War at Sea 1939–1945* should serve as an important research tool for many more years to come.



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