

## **U-Boats in the Royal Canadian Navy 1945 to 1947**

by

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*“U-Boat U-889 in position 43.35N, 51.36W” (101951Z May 1945)*

*“From German U-Boat U-190 - position 42.35N, 43.05W” (111001Z May 1945) (1)*

So state the entries in the Admiralty War Diary in London on 10 and 11 May 1945 when, after the German capitulation on 8 May 1945, two Type IXC/40 740 ton U-Boats (*U-190* and *U-889*) surrendered at sea to units of the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN). The latter on 10 May and the former on 11 May.

The RCN had made no separate arrangements for the surrender of any U-Boats in the western North Atlantic in May 1945, preferring instead to follow the procedures set out by the Admiralty and the Royal Navy's Commander-in-Chief Western Approaches. The RCN had nevertheless specified two surrender points in the waters controlled by the Commander-in-Chief of the Canadian Northwest Atlantic area (C-in-C, CNA), one to the east of St John's, Newfoundland and one to the south of Halifax, Nova Scotia, as it was expected that several of the U-Boats still at sea might head for Canada rather than either the USA or UK, a sentiment that was reflected in a report in the Ottawa Journal on 7 May, which said:

*U-Boats in the area are likely to give themselves up at eastern ports rather than make the long trip back to Europe. (2)*

In the event, neither of the two U-Boats sailed directly to either of these surrender points or to any Canadian ports, but instead they were intercepted at sea by RCN warships.

### **Surrender of U-889**

The first of the two to surrender was *U-889*, which was sighted by a Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) Liberator aircraft on 10 May whilst the U-Boat was on the surface and flying the black flag of surrender some 250 miles south-east of the Flemish Cap, an area of shallow waters in the North Atlantic which is itself about 350 miles east of Newfoundland.

The nearly-new *U-889* had sailed from Kristiansand in Norway on 5 April on its 1<sup>st</sup> wartime patrol with orders to undertake weather reporting duties in the mid-North Atlantic and with instructions not to make any attacks. However, the latter instructions were subsequently changed, and the U-Boat was instead ordered to hunt and attack Allied shipping between New York and Cape Hatteras in North Carolina, USA.

Because of difficulties with wireless transmissions in early May 1945, which also affected a number of other surrendering U-Boats, it is unclear whether or not *U-889*'s CO, Kapitänleutnant Friedrich Braeucker, ever sent his initial 'position, course, speed' (PCS) surrender message especially as, according to the crew in their initial interrogation, it was not

until 10 May that *U-889* received the Allied orders which required it to surface and fly a black flag indicating its surrender.

At 1920Z on 10 May, and after its initial sighting by the Liberator, *U-889* was intercepted by four RCN warships of the Canadian Western Local Escort Group W-6, the minesweepers HMCS *Oshawa* and HMCS *Rockcliffe* and the corvettes HMCS *Dunvegan* and HMCS *Saskatoon*, whilst still some 175 miles south-east of Newfoundland. Poor weather made it impossible to board the U-Boat, so *Oshawa* closed to loud hailer distance and passed instructions to the U-Boat in German, ordering it to head for Bay Bulls in Newfoundland escorted by the four RCN warships.

However, at 2300Z on 10 May these orders were changed. *Oshawa* and *Saskatoon* were detached for return to St John's, and *Rockcliffe* and *Dunvegan* were instead instructed to escort *U-889* to Shelburne in south-west Nova Scotia. Later on the next day, the escort duties were taken over by the frigates HMCS *Buckingham* and HMCS *Inch Arran* of the 28<sup>th</sup> Escort Group after the C-in-C, CNA had sent a message at 110310Z saying:

*Relieve HMC ships Dunvegan and Rockcliffe and escort U-889 to Shelburne, NS. Boarding party is to be put on board U-889 if weather conditions permit and all possible precautions are to be taken to prevent scuttling. Report PCS. (1)*

To which the CO of *Buckingham* responded at 112203Z:

*My PCS at 2200Z [is] 43.53N, 57.07 W, 261 degrees, 11 knots. Escorting U-889. Not boarded. Weather unsuitable. (1)*

After a 2-day transit to Nova Scotia, *U-889* was eventually boarded on 13 May, and the formal surrender ceremony took place at the Whistle Buoy whilst the U-Boat was some seven miles south of the entrance to Shelburne harbour, details of which were reported in the Halifax Herald on 14 May:

*Under an overcast threatening sky a twelve-man boarding party of the Royal Canadian Navy, accompanied by Captain G R Miles, Chief of Staff to the Commander-in-Chief of the Canadian Northwest Atlantic, and a squad of RN submarine technicians, climbed onto the defeated enemy vessel and a few seconds later the White Ensign was hoisted at the undersea raider's flagstaff to officially mark the taking over of the craft. (3)*

Similarly, on 14 May the Ottawa Journal reported, in the highly-charged and emotive language of the day, that:

*One of Germany's underseas demons of destruction lay harmless in Shelburne Harbour today. (4)*

### **Surrender of U-190**

The much older *U-190* had left Kristiansand on 21 February on its 6<sup>th</sup> wartime patrol en route to its operational area off Nova Scotia and the east coast of the USA. On 16 April, whilst operating close to the approaches to Halifax harbour, *U-190* fired a torpedo at the

minesweeper HMCS *Esquimalt*, which was the last Canadian warship to be lost in the war. The torpedo exploded on the RCN ship's starboard side causing her to sink in less than four minutes, and there were only 26 survivors from her 60-strong crew.

On 29 April, with all its torpedoes expended, *U-190* began to make its way home to Norway, but because of wireless reception difficulties it was almost in mid-Atlantic some 500 miles east of Newfoundland's Cape Race before the first clear German surrender orders were received. The U-Boat's CO, Oberleutnant zur See Hans-Edwin Reith, responded by sending the required PCS messages in the early hours of the morning on 11 May to the US Navy in New York and Boston, as well as to the RCN maritime wireless station at Cape Race.

An RCAF Liberator was sent to investigate, and at 111205Z the C-in-C, CNA sent a message to the Senior Officer of the Canadian Western Local Escort Group C-9 saying:

*Detach two units forthwith to proceed [at] best speed to intercept U-190 reported in 42.35N, 43.06W about 1000Z/11<sup>th</sup>. Report names [of] units detached. (1)*

As a result, the frigate HMCS *Victoriaville* and the corvette HMCS *Thorlock* were ordered to the scene of *U-190*'s surrender, and at 1805Z the C-in-C CNA sent a further message saying:

*U-190 PCS 1500Z/11 43.30N, 41.35W, 300 degrees, 8.5 knots. Join and escort to Bay Bulls. Boarding party to be put on board U-190 if weather permits, and all possible precautions are to be taken to prevent scuttling. (1)*

In response, *Victoriaville* reported at 2320Z that *U-190* had been contacted and that the Admiral's instructions had been carried out. *Thorlock*'s boarding party, led by Lt R O Blackford, RCNVR, went aboard *U-190* at 2340Z on 11 May, and HMCS *Victoriaville*'s boarding party, led by Lt F S Burbidge, RCNVR, went aboard the U-Boat an hour later at 0040Z on 12 May. After that, all except 13 members of the German crew were transferred to the two RCN warships, and a short time later whilst on board *Victoriaville* the U-Boat's CO signed the formal surrender document in the presence of the frigate's captain, Lt Cdr L A Hickey, RCNR.

At that stage, the three vessels were still well to the east of Cape Race, so at 0200Z with *U-190* under the command of Lt Burbidge and flying the White Ensign they set course for Bay Bulls with armed sentries on *U-190*'s bridge and in the torpedo control room, the main control room and the engine room. It was not until two days later at 0630Z on 14 May that they arrived at Bay Bulls, just south of St John's on the east coast of Newfoundland where, as recorded in the report of the Senior Naval Officer Bay Bulls, Lt Cdr E Randell, RCNR:

*Lt M Wood, RNVR with Boarding Party boarded the submarine outside the entrance and escorted by MLs [motor launches] 085 and 098 secured at the Eastern Entrance trot buoy.*

*[The] Prisoners of War on HMCS Victoriaville and HMCS Thorlock and on U-190 were transferred to HMCS Prestonian, which sailed for Canada [at] 1200Z on 14<sup>th</sup>.*

*When prisoners were removed the U-190 was moved and secured to two buoys off Boom Defence Jetty and Lt Wood with his party commenced examination and*

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*overhaul. A guard was supplied from St John's with Lt Sweeney in charge. De-storing was carried on during the time U-190 was at the buoys. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> U-190 was removed and secured to the Naval Jetty. (5)*

Almost immediately after U-190's arrival at Bay Bulls, the inevitable post-war bureaucrats began to exercise their craft. First, on 17 May the National Secretary for Customs wrote to the CO of the Central Victualling Depot at HM Dockyard, St John's wanting to know what the RCN had done with the liquor removed from U-190, viz:

*The Collector of Customs at Bay Bulls informs us that certain liquors were transferred from the German U-Boat recently brought into Bay Bulls by the Royal Canadian Navy. Permission was granted for this to be done but the goods were transferred to St John's before a list could be taken and I would be very grateful, therefore, if you could supply me with a detailed list of the liquors obtained from the U-Boat and transferred to your Headquarters. (5)*

Second, on 18 May the Base Naval Health Officer at St John's, who had inspected U-190 on 16 May, complained that contrary to International Quarantine Regulations he had not been able to examine the POWs as a precautionary measure against the possible introduction of diseases such as typhus fever and smallpox. His report said that:

*In so far as could be ascertained from this survey there was no visible evidence of infestation. The ship, however, was found to be in a definitely unsanitary state, presumably due in some measure to an exceptionally long period at sea, of which time she probably remained submerged for many days before her capture. (5)*

What did the man expect? Perhaps he had forgotten that only 10 days previously his country had been at war with Germany.

The Surgeon Lt. Cdr's report went on to say:

*In order to prevent the spread of any possible infection, the following precautionary measures are now being carried out:*

*(a) Bacteriological analysis of the submarine's fresh water supply.*

*(b) Disinfestation of the ship's galley and all living quarters.*

*(c) Precautionary delousing treatment of clothing stores by the use of DDT insecticide. (5)*

The third element of hassle related to the loss of kit and personal items from the U-Boat and its crew which caused the crew of *Victoriaville* to be searched by shore patrol officers on three separate occasions, all with negative results. This was the cause of considerable concern to the frigate's CO and, after *Victoriaville* arrived in St John, NB, he sent a memo to the Naval Officer in Charge on 23 May in which he suggested that, instead, the latter should perhaps search the crews of the other vessels involved, *Thorlock* and *Prestonian*, as well as the various shore authorities involved in the surrender of U-190 stating that:

*It is requested that Naval Service Headquarters be informed of the circumstances surrounding [the] loss of articles from U-190. The feeling in this ship is that unnecessary reflection has been put on us due to the fact that:*

- (1) Our boarding party was mustered on the quarterdeck of HMCS Prestonian and searched by shore authorities before returning on board from U-190.*
- (2) They were subjected to a second search after arrival in St John's Newfoundland at the request of Captain (D): both with negative results.*
- (3) On arrival at Saint John, NB, we were boarded by shore patrol officers and ratings with orders from Naval Service Headquarters to search the entire ship and ship's company. This third search was carried out with negative results.*

*In view of the fact that considerable gear is missing from U-190 and our ship has been subjected to three searches with negative results it is suggested that the shore Authorities connected with U-190 be similarly subjected to an intensive search. (5)*

### **Transfer of U-190 and U-889 to Halifax**

The two Type XIC/40 U-Boats were in very different states of maintenance when they arrived at their surrender ports. *U-190* had been commissioned in September 1942, and was very war-weary at the end of its 6<sup>th</sup> patrol, whilst *U-889* had been commissioned in August 1944 and was only just over a month into its 1<sup>st</sup> patrol. Also, the latter was equipped with the most up-to-date German U-Boat technology, including the latest acoustic torpedo system and a 'Zwiebel' experimental hydrophone array, as well as carrying six intact T-5 GNAT (German Navy Acoustic Torpedo) torpedoes which were designed to home-in onto a target's noise signature.

The RCN was naturally very keen to take early advantage of its unexpected possession of the two U-Boats. To this end, *U-190* was commissioned (back-dated to 14 May) at the end of May as HMC S/M *U-190*, and *U-889* was commissioned (again back-dated to 14 May) at the end of June as HMC S/M *U-889*, initially with joint Canadian and British crews, as the RCN did not at that stage have its own Submarine Branch.

*U-889* was transferred from Shelburne to the RCN's major naval base at Halifax on 23 May, with Lt B Collins, RN, as its CO, where it was handed over to the Naval Research Establishment (NRE) for detailed inspection, testing and trials.

After its surrender, *U-190* was deemed to be too unseaworthy for early transfer to Halifax and instead, with Lt M Wood as its CO, it was moved the short distance from Bay Bulls to the RCN naval base at St John's on 3 June. The transfer was however no covert affair, with the U-Boat, under its own power, being escorted by the minesweeper HMCS *Red Deer*, six Fairmile motor launches and the Royal Navy rescue tug HMS *Tenacity*.

The purpose of the move was to facilitate essential initial repairs, as well as the cleaning and repainting of *U-190*. The U-Boat was quickly taken in hand by the staff at St John's and it was ready for surface sea trials on 12 June. It was then made available for visits by US Army personnel on 13 June, by RCAF personnel on 14 June and by Canadian Army personnel on 15 June. There was no time to allow the general public or even any RCN personnel to go

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onboard so, as a compromise, *U-190* was moved to Harvey's No. 2 Wharf in St John's harbour and the public were allowed onto the wharf during the afternoon of Sunday 17 June to view the U-Boat. After these visits were complete, the (by then) HMC S/M *U-190* was transferred to Halifax on 21 June, this time escorted by the frigate HMCS *Hallowell*, where it arrived on 23 June, exactly one month later than *U-889*.

Despite their transfer to the main RCN naval base at Halifax, the futures of both U-Boats were in doubt because the three wartime Allies (UK, USA and USSR) were determined to ensure that all elements of the German Navy were eliminated just as soon as possible after the end of the war, and especially that all the surviving U-Boats should be sunk. Nevertheless, whilst awaiting the Allied decisions about the future of the U-Boats that had surrendered, the RCN was determined to take advantage of what, at that stage, was very much its temporary ownership of *U-190* and *U-889*.

### **Initial NRE Trials with *U-889***

Of the two Type IXC/40 U-Boats, as *U-889* was in the best condition and equipped with the latest German technology, it was the focus of most Canadian interest and attention from the very beginning of the post-war period and, under the aegis of the NRE, a series of trials were undertaken in the Halifax area over a period of seven weeks from 1 June to 27 July 1945. The RCN lost no time whatsoever in making the necessary arrangements for these trials, with a request from the C-in-C, CNA to the Air Officer Commanding- in-Chief, Eastern Air Command on 23 May saying:

*Ex German submarine U-889 is being brought to Halifax on 23 May in order that certain trials may be carried out by the Naval Research Establishment. Your co-operation is requested in these trials which will require the use of aircraft. (6)*

However even then there was a recognition that the use of *U-889* was likely to be temporary as, when the Canadian Naval Service Headquarters formally agreed on 26 June that *U-889* should be commissioned, it was with the caveat that it should be for the period of the trials only.

The purposes of the various trials are set out in NRE Report PHx-59 dated 7 November 1945, being to determine the following points:

- a. The diving qualities of the U-Boat*
- b. The operation of the schnorkel*
- c. Speed and turning trials*
- d. The anti-radar qualities of the coating on the schnorkel*
- e. The performance of the GSR [German Search Radar] and the Tunis Radar Detection gear*
- f. The performance of the German Hohentweil Radar*
- g. The H.E. of the submarine when schnorkeling*
- h. The performance of the Balkon and the Zweibel listening gear (7)*

The hydrophone (listening gear) trials were conducted in conjunction with *U-190* in mid-July after its mini-refit, as both U-Boats were fitted with the standard but older, 'Balkon' listening apparatus with its 48 hydrophones, whereas *U-889* was also fitted with a 'Zwiebel' array,

with its 15 hydrophones, which was a trial fit designed for use in the more modern U-Boats whilst they were underway when either using their schnorkel or when just submerged. (8)

The NRE trials did not however take place without a certain amount of excitement, as is described in the informal history of the Research Establishment, viz:

*The new Captain [Lt B Collins, RN] and crew of U-889 were eager to dive her so that trials of her unusual equipment could be carried out. After learning the handling of the controls, they did a series of practice dives in the shallow waters of Eastern Passage, where they felt they could not get into too much trouble. First attempts demonstrated great difficulty in maintaining a horizontal position, and the wide, flat deck of the U-Boat made her much harder to handle than her rounded British counterparts. First the screws and then the bow appeared above water as the crew struggled for control, which they finally achieved.*

*In order to test the directional qualities of the [Zwiebel] array it was necessary that the bow be submerged, while in order to maintain communication we wanted the control tower above the water surface and open. This arrangement required a delicate balancing operation in the ship's trim. On the first attempt, something went wrong and she settled to the bottom of Bedford Basin. Immediate attempts to return to the surface, blowing the tanks and even using the engines, were fruitless – we were stuck in the mud. We relaxed for half an hour and tried again. This time the ship came loose and we popped to the surface. On the next attempt, the ship was provided with the required trim, and we carried on with our measurements.*

*Shortly after this, a message was received from the Flag Officer Submarines [stating] that under no circumstances were these submarines to be dived. (9)*

The latter instruction was perhaps not unexpected as, on 18 June the NRE had been asked to explain (in writing) by Halifax Dockyard's clearly very wary Captain (D) just why any diving trials were thought to be necessary. The response from NRE on 19 June was that:

*With reference to your [query] re diving trials of U-889, it is submitted that the following submerged trials are necessary to complete the information required relative to this ship.*

- 1. Practice diving on schnorkel in preparation for anti-radar trials and general report on schnorkeling.*
- 2. Listening trials with hydrophone in bow of submarine, requiring submarine to do a static bottom dive.*
- 3. Anti-radar trials on periscope and schnorkel.*
- 4. Trials of submarine's own radar equipment on schnorkel.*
- 5. Turning trials when submerged to determine turning radius of submarine. (6)*

There was also a plan for *U-889* to undertake trials with the GNAT acoustic torpedoes which it had been carrying when it surrendered, but these were postponed until later in the year, albeit that they were expected to be complete by the end of November.

### **Public Exhibition Tours**

Almost immediately after the war was over, and before the ink was hardly dry on the formal surrender documents of *U-190* and *U-889*, there was groundswell of public interest in the two U-Boats amongst the general population in the maritime cities and ports in eastern Canada, which had obviously been heightened by the sensational newspaper headlines at the time of their surrender as well as the surrenders elsewhere. Indeed, pressure to exhibit one or both of the two U-Boats actually began as early as 14 May with the receipt of a letter by the RCN's Chief of Naval Staff from Mr R C Stevenson of Montréal, who was the Co-Coordinator of Sea Cadet Activities for the Naval Services, saying that:

*In confirmation of our conversation, I would like to suggest that a captured German submarine be brought up the St Lawrence River, through to the Great Lakes, being put on exhibition at various ports, starting with Quebec, Three Rivers and Montreal, and carrying on to other suitable ports. I understand from newspaper reports that a precedent has been set in England by the exhibition of a German submarine.*

*I would further suggest that the submarine be accompanied by an escort of one or two corvettes, preferably those ships and crews who have been responsible for the sinking of submarines. (10)*

It was quite true that similar tours were either taking place or being planned in both the UK and the USA, where a small number of the surrendered U-Boats would be sailed to the cities, ports and harbours which had been involved in the war against the U-Boats, and where the local populations were keen to see examples of the (hated) German weapon that had put their countries under such pressure for the previous five years.

Unfortunately Mr Stevenson's suggestion initially fell on stony ground, with a pessimistic response from the RCN on 24 May saying:

*I should like to explain to you just what the present position is regarding captured German submarines for exhibition purposes.*

*Both in the United Kingdom and the United States, the circumstances making possible the immediate availability of such vessels for public inspection are much more favourable by reason of the fact that many more of them are held in their ports than is the case in Canada. They are in a position to withhold a requisite number for experimental purposes and release others for exhibition, while in this country the opposite is the case.*

*The one or two U-Boats in the custody of the Canadian authorities are required for study and trials by the Royal Canadian Navy and arrangements in this respect are rapidly being carried out. How long it will take to complete this most necessary programme, it is impossible at this moment to say. (10)*

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Nevertheless, whilst the need for trials was clearly paramount for valid operational reasons, the RCN relented in late June and it was decided that both *U-190* and *U-889* would undertake exhibition cruises after the completion of the initial technical inspections and any urgent trials, with the Minutes of the 297<sup>th</sup> Naval Staff Meeting on 3 July recording that:

*In a submission dated 25 June, C-in-C CNA requests consideration of a proposed tour schedule for U-190 and U-889. The object of the proposed tour is to permit the general public to see an enemy submarine and a typical anti-submarine ship of the Royal Canadian Navy.*

*It was pointed out that the RN has established a precedent for such a tour by putting captured German U-Boats on display in England. (10)*

The official object of the tours was to permit the general public to see an enemy submarine together with a typical anti-submarine ship of the RCN, the two opponents in the Battle of the Atlantic. It was envisaged that at each port the two ships would be secured separately alongside a convenient jetty where the public could be admitted to view them both but, if only one berth was available, the submarine would be berthed on the inside in order to make access easier.

Thus, after Ministerial approval, and with the proviso that approximately 10 days would be required for the NRE-led torpedo trials at Halifax after its exhibition tour was complete, *U-889* was selected to visit a number of cities and towns on the north, west and south coasts of western Nova Scotia in the second half of August. Now with Lt E A D Holmes, RNVR, as her CO, the U-Boat's tour began in Halifax on 10 August, and after 4 days there, where it was visited by over 10,000 people, and escorted by the frigate HMCS *Joliette*, *U-889* visited Saint John and St Andrews in New Brunswick, as well as Digby, Cornwallis, Yarmouth, Shelburne, Liverpool and Lunenburg in Nova Scotia, before returning to Halifax on 5 September. (11)

There is no doubt that the tour was very successful and that *U-889* and *Joliette* were well received everywhere they visited. There was however one sour note when, on 10 September the Minister of National Defence received a letter from a resident of St.Eustache sur le Lac, Québec, saying:

*I have to give you notice that my wife, whilst visiting captured German submarine U-889 in the harbour at St Andrews, NB, on Monday 3 September 1945, fell on board as a result of a dangerous step between two compartments not being protected by lighting or personal guard to give warning of any kind.*

*As a result of this fall my wife has sustained a crack of the right scapula and severe abrasions and bruises, one of which on the left thigh, covers an area at this date of sixteen inches in length and nine inches in width.*

*We feel that these injuries are due directly and entirely to the lack of protection at a very dangerous point and that the Crown should be liable for all expenses and damage incurred, particulars of which will be submitted to you in due course, when the full result of the injury is known and the needed treatment completed. (12)*

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Clearly, today's world-wide mania for litigation has long-dated roots, but there is no evidence in the LAC's surviving RCN files as to what then transpired.

Similarly, after spending time in the naval dockyard at Halifax on a mini-refit between 23 June and 18 July and then conducting some limited trials *U-190*, escorted by the frigate HMCS *Thetford Mines*, and now with Lt D N Pope, RNR, as her CO, undertook an exhibition tour of the ports and communities along the St Lawrence River and in the Gulf of St Lawrence, arriving at Montréal on 27 July for an extended visit which attracted some 30,000 visitors, and then making short visits to Three Rivers (now Trois Rivières), Québec City, Gaspé, Campbellton, Chatham and Charlottetown (on Prince Edward Island), as well as Pictou and Sydney in Nova Scotia, before arriving back in Halifax on 7 September. (13)

Despite the general success of *U-190*'s tour, there was one incident which put Lt Pope under a certain amount of personal pressure. This occurred after he had organised some minor local repairs to his U-Boat whilst it was berthed at Three Rivers on 11 August and then needed the work to be paid for, an unusual situation that was not well received by the naval staff in Halifax. The problem came to light on 12 August, when *U-190*'s CO advised Captain (D) that:

*The enclosed bills of Messers Germaine and Frere Ltd cover a small repair to a fairing plate on the waterline amidships. This plate became loose whilst underway, its holding down bolts shearing off, thus becoming buckled by the pressure of the sea water exerted on the inner side. The repairs carried out were to straighten one quarter inch plate about 5 feet square and weld [it] back into position. (6)*

The initial reaction from the Fleet Engineering Officer (FEO) was not good, with him saying:

*This is definitely not approved practice. Suggest asking the CO if approval for this work was obtained from any local NOIC and if not, if repairs were of such an urgent nature that it could not wait until arrival at a Naval Dockyard. Otherwise CO will get stung for the bill unless Capt (D) can recommend payment. Bill with recommendation one way or the other should go to [the] C-in-C. (6)*

Fortunately in the end common sense prevailed, and after the FEO had said that he considered the CO to have acted in the best interests of the Service, Captain (D) wrote to the C-in-C advising:

*Submitted herewith is [a] bill covering repair of steel plate in HMC S/M *U-190* at Three Rivers, PQ, on 11 August 1945. It is considered that the action of the Commanding Officer in having [the] work carried out without the consent of a Naval Authority was justified, and payment is therefore recommended. (6)*

### **RCN Plans for the U-Boats**

Even before the two public exhibition tours had been completed and any decisions had been taken by the Allies concerning the future of all the U-Boats that had surrendered, the RCN's thoughts about the future location and possible use of *U-190* and *U-889* began to develop,

with Captain A F Peers, RCN, the CO of the NRE advising the C-in-C, CNA on 1 September that:

*U-889 will be required here for acoustic torpedo running until about the end of October, dependent considerably on weather conditions, as these trials will have to be carried out at night in Halifax Approaches.*

*Recommended that U-889 be allocated to Canada for experimental purposes with a view to eventual scrapping. When all running trials are completed, we would like to take out all her special equipment such as listening gear, radar, etc, before she is disposed of.*

*U-190 is an older boat, built in 1942, and would not be much good as an operational boat. Recommended that she be made available for transfer to any other Navy, or alternatively that she be scrapped in Canada after removal of any special fittings that we wish to keep for experimental or reference purposes. (12)*

Shortly after this, on 20 September, and once the two public exhibition tours had been completed, it had become obvious that *U-190* was in such a poor state that it was unlikely to be of much further use to the RCN. Captain E F Adams, the CO of HMCS *Stadacona*, the shore base at Halifax, therefore spelt out his instructions for the administration of the two U-Boats:

*The following arrangements for the administration of HMC ex-German submarines U-889 and U-190 are to go into effect as from 21 September 1945, consequent upon the reduction of U-190 to Care and Maintenance status.*

*Lieutenant E A D Holmes, RNVR, Commanding Officer HMC S/M U-889 will assume the duties of Senior Submarine Officer [S S/MO] of the flotilla, and be in general charge.*

*A Duty Submarine Officer of the Day will be detailed by the S S/M O in rotation from flotilla officers, and will be responsible to him for both boats during non-working hours. Rounds are to be carried out by the Duty Submarine Officer during silent hours at sufficiently frequent times to ensure the safety of the boats.*

*Duty watches are to be detailed by individual boats, U-889 making up any deficiencies for U-190. These will be detailed for 24 hour periods, and are to sleep on board at night.*

*During working hours, each crew will normally work in their own boats, but for special work beyond U-190's capacity, U-889 is to provide the necessary additional hands, subject to her own requirements.*

*The Senior Submarine Officer is to issue such additional orders as may be required to put these orders into effect, and as may be required for administration of the flotilla, forwarding copies to the Captain, *Stadacona*, and the Officer in Charge, Naval Research Establishment for information. (6)*

## **The October 1945 Engineering Review**

The RCN then conducted a comprehensive engineering study of the two U-Boats and on 20 October 1945 the Commanding Officer Atlantic Coast (COAC), Commodore C R H Taylor, RCN, submitted a report to the Naval Board in the Department of National Defence in Ottawa setting out his views about the status and future disposition of *U-190* and *U-889*, viz:

*The present status of these submarines is as follows:*

- (a) U-889. In good operational condition except for the auxiliary diesel air compressor. The main electric air compressor still being in good shape. Manned with three RCNVR s/m-trained officers, 7 RCN ratings, 16 RCNVR ratings and 7 RN ratings. The RCN and RCNVR ratings are now sufficiently trained to operate the boat on the surface for Torpedo Trials purposes.*
- (b) U-190. Due to a bad earth on her starboard main motor, this boat is not in operational condition, as it cannot be used. She is an old boat (1942) and, with other defects present, would take considerable work to bring into operational state. Manned with one RNVR s/m-trained officer, 2 RCN and 8 RCNVR ratings on a maintenance basis. (14)*

However, not only were the futures of the two U-Boats dependent on their serviceability status, but they were also dependent on the forthcoming Allied decisions about their future, on the availability of trained crews, as well as the RCN's desire to undertake the planned trials with the German acoustic torpedoes which had been captured on board *U-889*.

As far as the crews were concerned, there was a great deal of pressure, not only to demobilise the RCN wartime volunteers who, after 4 to 5 years' service, were understandably keen to return to their civilian occupations and careers, but also the Royal Navy officers and ratings on secondment to the RCN wanted to return to the UK as soon as possible. This was therefore a major factor to be taken into account in the decision about the RCN's use of the two U-Boats.

## **Initial Acoustic Torpedo Trials**

Despite the on-going uncertainty about the long-term future of both U-Boats, especially doubts about the retention of *U-889* and *U-190*'s serviceability the RCN, having acquired the former's acoustic torpedoes, was loath to forgo the opportunity to conduct trials and evaluation work likely to assist with the RCN's ongoing development of appropriate countermeasures, called Canadian Anti-Acoustic Torpedo (CAT) gear, which had started in 1943. This was a noise-maker towed behind warships to act as a decoy for the acoustic torpedoes, and which might be needed for possible use in any future expansion of the RCN's submarine fleet.

Unfortunately two of *U-889*'s six GNAT torpedoes had been lost in a huge ammunition explosion on the North and South jetties of the naval magazine at the Bedford Basin in Halifax Harbour on 18/19 July 1945. This was the second time that Halifax had experienced a major naval-related explosion. The first had occurred in WW1 when, on the morning of 6 December 1917 two ships collided in The Narrows between the Inner and Outer Harbour, one

of which was loaded with TNT and other volatile cargo. The resulting explosion flattened one and a half square miles of Halifax, almost 2,000 people were killed and 9,000 people were injured. This second explosion was caused by a fire which started on the South jetty at 1840 on the evening of 18 July which quickly spread to the North jetty, both of which were overloaded with badly-stored surplus ammunition and other explosives which had been hastily off-loaded from naval vessels which were being de-commissioned either temporarily or permanently. However, on this occasion, there was only one fatality, as well as far less damage to Halifax itself. The two U-Boats were moored in Bedford Basin at the time and, though they were unaffected by the explosion itself, the incident was recorded in *U-190's Deck Log* for 18 July:

*1842: Violent explosion in Bedford Basin*

*2000: All ships ordered to slip and proceed to Outer Harbour*

*2115: Slipped and proceeding to anchorage*

*2322: Anchored Georges Island (15)*

Luckily, the four remaining GNAT torpedoes were undamaged and thus available for the NRE trials after the explosive had been steamed-out and the warheads had been instrumented for running and other investigations. However, whilst the torpedo trials had always been expected to take place during the second half of September and that *U-889* would not therefore be required after they had been completed, the Bedford Magazine explosion caused a two month delay in getting the warheads steamed out and fitted for the running trials. This was therefore the cause of considerable concern as to whether or not the necessary engineering work would be complete before the onset of poor winter weather, possibly leading to the trials having to be postponed until May 1946. This was because the trials, which needed to be completed at night, would require calm weather and at least 2 miles' visibility.

In the light of this new situation, the CO of the NRE, Captain Peers, wrote a comprehensive review on 18 October which revealed that either *U-889* needed to be retained by the RCN for an extended period or that the planned CAT trials would need to be completed by the US Navy. Captain Peers' opinion was that, in view of the work already completed, the full scale trials should still go ahead, but that they should be postponed until the spring of 1946 when all four of the re-worked torpedo heads would be available and when maximum use could be made of nights suitable for the running trials. In particular, his report recommended that:

*Bearing in mind that at present the RCN is in the lead of both the RN and the USN in respect to knowledge of the acoustic torpedo and possible counter-measures:*

- a. U-889 be retained in commission as at present in order to complete the acoustic torpedo trials.*
- b. The USN be informed of the latest developments in acoustic torpedo investigation, and if possible the trials be done at a suitable USN port, east coast ports' winter weather being unsuitable.*

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*c. Alternatively postpone trials until next spring at Halifax. (16)*

### **Future Possible RCN Use of U-190 and U-889**

In view of the state of the two U-Boats, Commodore Taylor's almost simultaneous engineering report to the Naval Board on 20 October, which had been written before it became clear that U-889 was unlikely to remain in RCN custody much after the end of 1945, had also included a number of detailed recommendations about their future use, saying:

*It is recommended that U-190, being unfit for further service, be disposed of at an early date, after removal of certain equipment required by [the] Naval Research Establishment.*

*Disposal of U-889 is contingent upon policy considerations whether the RCN should carry out the complete trials to establish acoustic torpedo performance against a CAT, or turn the preliminary information over to [the] RN and USN for the final running trials. In any case, on completion of the confirming Bedford Basin trials [the] RN and USN should be informed of this new development.*

*It is considered improbable that the running trials can be completed at Halifax before unfavourable weather conditions set in and, to complete them before [the] demobilisation of the RCNVR ratings will require that they be carried out at a US base, say New London or Bermuda.*

*It is therefore recommended that, unless prestige considerations require [the] RCN to complete these trials, that U-889 be reduced to C&M at Halifax. The RCNVR officers and ratings can then be demobilised and RN ratings returned to UK. In the event that it is found necessary to carry out running trials next spring, she could then be re-commissioned. (14)*

### **Allied Tripartite Naval Commission Proposals**

Meanwhile intensive talks had been underway at Potsdam in the outskirts of Berlin between the three wartime Allies concerning the future of the surviving German naval vessels, including the 150 or so U-Boats that had surrendered.

The result of these high-level political discussions had been the production of the Proceedings (Minutes) of the Potsdam Heads of State Conference [codenamed *Terminal*] which took place between 17 July and 2 August 1945. In respect of the U-Boats, the Proceedings said that the UK, the USA and the USSR had concluded that:

*The larger part of the German submarine fleet shall be sunk. Not more than thirty submarines shall be preserved and divided equally between the USSR, UK and USA for experimental and technical purposes. (17)*

It was also decided at the Potsdam Conference that a Tripartite Naval Commission (TNC) should be established in Berlin charged with deciding, amongst other things, just which of the surviving U-Boats should be allocated to the three Allies (10 each). Thus, at face value, the

chances of the RCN being allowed to retain either of the two U-Boats that had surrendered in Canada were very slim indeed.

One of the TNC's first actions was to inspect each of the U-Boats which had surrendered, and as part of that process a team was sent to North America to inspect the five U-Boats which had surrendered in the USA, the two that had surrendered in Argentina and the two which had surrendered in Canada. The seven U-Boats that had surrendered in the USA and Canada were inspected in early September 1945, with the two in Canada being inspected on 12 September and, significantly, the only one of the seven to be assessed as operational (both on the surface and submerged) was *U-889*. In comparison, the TNC team assessed that *U-190* would need at least one month's repair work to bring it to an operational condition. **(18)**

Once all the assessments had been made, the TNC then turned its attention to deciding which U-Boats should be retained and, of these, which should be allocated to each of the three Allies. At that stage the RCN was fairly relaxed about the future of the two U-Boats in its temporary custody. It was expected that the CAT trials with *U-889* would be complete by the end of September, and it was already clear from the state of *U-190* that there was no pressing need for its retention. The initial allocation lists were announced by the TNC on 10 October 1945, but with the proviso that there should be some flexibility and that bi-lateral exchanges could be made subject to formal TNC approval. Of the two U-Boats located in Canada, *U-889* was, not unexpectedly, allocated to the USA, and *U-190* did not feature in any of the allocation lists and was therefore scheduled for sinking not later than mid-February 1946.

However the situation changed dramatically in the latter half of October when it became apparent to the RCN that the CAT trials were bound to be delayed and, because of this, in November the Canadian Government sought British support for the retention of the two U-Boats in Canada. To this end, the Admiralty in London was keen to do all it could to ensure that both *U-190* and *U-889* were amongst the U-Boats to be retained, and on 16 November Admiral Sir Geoffrey Miles, the senior UK member of the TNC, wrote to his US and Russian colleagues stating that:

*The British Admiralty are ... desirous of exchanging two of their [allocation of] submarines for two [U-190 and U-889] now in Canada. (18)*

In response, Admiral Robert Ghormley, the senior US member of the TNC, wrote on 29 November saying:

*U-889 and U-190, former German submarines, are located in Canada. I have been advised that the United States Navy Department desires to retain former German submarine U-889 in the United States allocation, but [has] no objection to the exchange of the former German submarine U-190. (18)*

The UK therefore dropped its proposal concerning *U-889*, which remained in the US allocation, meaning that sometime prior to mid-February 1946 it would have to be transferred from the RCN to the US Navy (USN), which was keen to acquire this Type IXC/40 U-Boat, especially because of its apparently excellent condition as assessed by the TNC inspection team in September 1945. However, the decision relating to *U-889* meant that, despite its poor condition, the RCN needed to retain *U-190* after all.

The TNC's Final Report was issued on 6 December 1945 but *U-190* was still not included in the UK's allocation. Thus a formal change was required so that the previously unallocated *U-190* could be allocated to the UK, with one of the U-Boats which had already been allocated to the UK being added to the list of those to be sunk. This change was a follow-up to the request made in November by Admiral Miles in relation to *U-190* and *U-889*, when both Admiral Ghormley and Admiral Gordei Levchenko, the senior Russian member of the TNC, had said they would have no objection to the UK retaining *U-190*.

The need for *U-190* to remain in Canadian custody was therefore reinforced in a message on 22 December from the Secretary of State for External Affairs in Ottawa to the Foreign Office in London saying:

*We are advised that submarine U-889 has been allocated to the United States Government. The Canadian Government therefore wishes to retain submarine U-190 in order to complete experiments originally undertaken on U-889.*

*Request that Tripartite Commission be asked to leave Canadian Government in possession of U-190 for a period not exceeding one year with the understanding that on completion of experiments U-190 is to be sunk. (19)*

In fact, the TNC had no authority whatsoever to allocate any of the surrendered U-Boats to Canada, the only authorized recipients being the UK, the USA and the USSR. So, to overcome this hurdle, it was necessary to persuade the TNC to agree that *U-190* should be allocated to the UK for 'experimental and technical purposes', and then for the UK to make its own arrangements with Canada. As a result, the Foreign Office in London advised on 5 February that:

*It has been arranged with the Tripartite Naval Commission that U-190 should be substituted for a submarine of the original British allocated. The latter will be sunk at once in accordance with the Potsdam Agreement and the trials planned for her by the Admiralty will be transferred to U-190 and postponed for a year.*

*His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom are, therefore, agreeable to U-190 remaining in the possession of His Majesty's Government in Canada for one year on the understanding that she is available to the Admiralty at the end of that period. (19)*

The formal change to the TNC paperwork was implemented at the end of January 1946, and after that *U-190* was quickly loaned to Canada by the Royal Navy for a year. Thus, as one of the 30 U-Boats authorised for retention by the Allies, it was allowed to remain in Canada in the temporary custody of the RCN.

### **Extended Acoustic Torpedo Trials**

Whilst these discussions were taking place in Potsdam, the RCN nevertheless still remained keen to take every possible advantage of their temporary charges, particularly as they wished to initiate the CAT trials with the four remaining GNAT torpedoes. Thus it was decided to continue with the NRE torpedo trials with *U-889* for as long as possible, and a number of such trials took place between 23 September and 30 October 1945 in and around Halifax

harbour before it too was reduced to Care and Maintenance status on 12 November 1945 before the torpedo trials programme had been completed.

However, whilst *U-889* was being put to good use by the RCN in the latter part of 1945, the same could not be said of *U-190*. Whilst it was still based at Halifax, and despite all the high-level staff work that had taken place in Berlin to ensure that it could be retained in Canada, *U-190* was by that time deemed to be of little further use to the RCN. It was generally moored alongside *U-889*, and it was clearly deteriorating fast. Nevertheless, winter was approaching, and the situation was complicated by the need to transfer *U-889* to the USN despite the fact that the RCN's CAT trials with the four now-instrumented GNAT torpedoes remained unfinished. Thus there was a very real probability that, despite its poor state, *U-190* might now be needed to take over the torpedo trials work in the spring of 1946 rather than being subject to early disposal.

### **Transfer of *U-889* to the US Navy**

At the end of 1945, and in accordance with the TNC recommendations *U-889* could no longer remain in Canada. The U-Boat was therefore delivered to the USA by its RCN crew, but escorted by the US Navy tug *ATR-7*, arriving at Portsmouth Navy Yard (PNY), New Hampshire, on 12 January 1946. However, whereas when *U-889* had been inspected by the TNC in Canada in September 1945 and found to be in the best condition of all the U-Boats that had surrendered from sea in the Western Hemisphere, it was in a non-operational condition when transferred to the US Navy.

In particular, the condition of the battery was very poor and, on attempting to put a charge onto it, it was found that serious problems existed which would have been expensive to correct. Indeed the expense of returning the battery to a satisfactory condition did not appear to be justified in view of the plans that the US Navy had for *U-889*'s future use. Fortunately by that time the USN was already conducting trials on another Type IXC/40 U-Boat, *U-858*, which it had renovated, and it had no need for a second example to be included in its trials programme, even for any GNAT torpedo trials. The US Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) therefore granted PNY permission to de-activate *U-889*, and the U-Boat remained moored at PNY as a potential source of spares until the USN's Bureau of Ships advised the CNO on 27 September 1946 that all the necessary cannibalisation action was complete and that *U-889* was ready for disposal.

The USN was in no hurry to dispose of those of its U-Boats which were by now of no further use, and it was not until November 1947 that *U-889* was finally scheduled for use as a target in torpedo trials. Along with three other surplus U-Boats, *U-889* was first towed to Provincetown Harbour near Cape Cod, and then to a torpedo firing area 40 miles north-east of the Cape by the US Navy submarine rescue ship USS *Tringa* and the yard tug *YTB 366*. There it was sunk on the afternoon of 20 November by a torpedo fired from the submarine USS *Flying Fish*.

### **Re-Activation of U-190**

The result of the transfer of U-889 to the USN left the RCN with just U-190, which had been reduced to Care and Maintenance status in September 1945. Despite this, and despite the fact that in October 1945 COAC's report to the Naval Board had recommended that U-190, being unfit for further service, should be disposed of at an early date, by mid-March 1946 the situation had been reviewed and it had been decided that the U-Boat should be retained in commission with a reduced complement and as the firing platform in support of the NRE's remaining CAT trials. However, other than taking part in these torpedo trials at various times between May and the autumn of 1946, U-190 was involved in no other RCN-related activities.

This was not surprising, as on 2 August 1946 U-190's CO, who was now Lt J L Johnston, RCNVR, had advised in a report headed "*Steaming Capabilities and General Conditions of U-190*" that:

*At present U-190 is in such a condition as to warrant a major refit before she could be considered in a satisfactory sea-going condition.*

*The submarine is not capable of diving, due to lack of personnel for maintenance of main vents, hydroplanes, underwater valves, Diesel Air Compressor, Diesel engine exhaust blowing system and the overall watertightness of the ship.*

*There are a number of defects that have arisen in the last few months which indicate the state of deterioration of the ship. The port main motor has developed a full earth, making independent manoeuvring impossible. The galley electric range is unserviceable and is lacking spare parts. The forward bilge pump has defective wiring circuits. No. 8 main ballast tank has developed a leak into number 3 torpedo tube.*

*Many of the navigational aids on board are unserviceable. The Echo Sounder and the Radar Set are defective, and were found unreliable at their best. The low frequency transmitter and receiver are not working.*

*In my opinion U-190 is not capable of leaving Halifax harbour, and it appears that more defects will arise unless she is soon docked for a well deserved refit. (20)*

Thus, other than the intermittent NRE torpedo trials, the same pattern of general inactivity continued into autumn 1946.

### **Preliminary Arrangements for the Demise of U-190**

The approaching completion of the NRE's acoustic torpedo trials marked the end of U-190's already limited usefulness to the RCN and meant that a decision could be sought about the future disposal of the shortly to be surplus-to-requirements U-190, the loan period for which was due to expire in February 1947.

This process started in mid-September, and on 26 September the Director of Naval Plans and Intelligence in Ottawa wrote to the Assistant Chief of Naval Staff saying:

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*After the surrender of the German submarine fleet the RCN acquired U-889 and U-190, and the former was subsequently used for experiments with her acoustic torpedo gear and special hydrophone system.*

*The Tripartite Naval Commission sitting in Berlin in November 1945 agreed that 30 German submarines only should be retained and divided equally between the USSR, the USA and the UK. The 10 allocated to the United States included U-889.*

*Following this decision the RCN requested that the Tripartite Commission might authorise the retention by Canada of U-190 until acoustic torpedo trials were completed after which she would be sunk.*

*In January 1946 however it was arranged that U-190 should be substituted for one of the 10 submarines allotted to Britain. The latter was then sunk and it was agreed [with the UK, not the TNC] that U-190 should be retained by Canada for one year after which she should be made available to the Admiralty.*

*It is anticipated that the acoustic experiments will be completed early in October and there will then be no further requirement for U-190. Should the Admiralty require her return to the United Kingdom however the boat is not at present in a sufficiently seaworthy condition to make an Atlantic passage and a refit will be necessary.*

*It is therefore recommended that the Admiralty should now be informed of the condition of U-190 and a decision on her disposal requested. (19)*

In January 1947, the CO of the NRE formally confirmed that the weather conditions in Halifax had become so bad as to make it impossible to carry out any further GNAT trials with U-190, and he recommended that the torpedo trials should cease. As a result, on 24 January 1947 the C-in-C, CNA advised that:

*Further acoustic torpedo trials are to be abandoned. Torpedoes [are] to be landed and stored. U-190 is to be reduced to Care and Maintenance status. (13)*

This was then followed by advice from the Canadian Naval Mission in London on 21 March saying that:

*The Admiralty has no further requirement for this U-Boat and are enquiring whether the RCN would wish to retain her as a war relic. If not, the Admiralty would be grateful if the RCN would dispose of her by scrapping or sinking in deep water. It is suggested that the disposal of the submarine might provide valuable data on the damaging power of weapons, or the resisting power of the ship's structure, and the Admiralty Ship Target Trials Committee would be glad to advise the RCN on experiments that might be arranged.*

*The Admiralty point out that the circumstances under which this submarine was acquired make it inadvisable to transfer her to a third party before she is reduced to scrap. (19)*

This debate was finally completed on 16 April, when the Chief of Naval Staff wrote to the Minister of Defence saying that the Admiralty had no requirement for *U-190* and had requested that the U-Boat should be disposed of by one of the following three methods:

- a. Retention as a war relic. This would be of little value to the RCN and would involve the expense of care and maintenance.*
- b. Scrap. As the Admiralty specify that U-190 is not to be transferred to a third party for scrapping, this would entail the expense of the work being done by the RCN.*
- c. Sinking in deep water. (19)*

The CNS' memorandum went on to say that neither of the first two alternatives was considered to be desirable, and that as there was no further requirement for *U-190* she should be sunk after the removal of any equipment required by the RCN. The CNS recommended that, in order to derive the greatest benefit, *U-190* should be sunk by being used as a target for ship and aircraft practice, and asked the Minister for his agreement to this course of action, which was readily given.

The result of all this staff work was that on 23 April 1947 the formal decision was taken to sink *U-190* after the removal of any equipment that might be of further interest. In June it was forecast that the de-storing activity would be completed by 5 July, and that the submarine would then be ready for disposal. This was followed by a recommendation on 19 July that *U-190* should be paid-off at an early date and be placed in reserve pending disposal. Approval for the latter was granted on 21 July, and the U-Boat was formally paid-off on 24 July 1947. (13)

On the same day, COAC issued instructions concerning the care of *U-190* until such time as it was sunk, saying:

*When U-190 is berthed at a jetty where electrical power is not available, the power is to be obtained from the ship's main batteries which will last approximately 10 more days, at which time the ship will be in darkness and the bilge pump and ventilation fans being electrical, will be unserviceable. It will be noted that the batteries when dead will no longer give off oxygen gas and there will be no danger of explosion. However, in order to ensure that all danger is avoided, the ventilation fans are to be run for one-half hour twice daily for one week after the batteries are dead.*

*A 50 ton portable pump is to be made available for pumping the bilges.*

*It will be noted that No. 3 torpedo tube is flooded by a leak from No. 8 main ballast tank and there is reason to believe that a similar leak might develop into No. 4 torpedo tube from No. 8 tank: care is to be taken accordingly.*

*All underwater connections to the sea are shut off and the ship is taking a negligible amount of water into the engine room and motor room bilges. As the ship has not been on the dry dock since being taken over by the RCN the condition of these underwater valves and sea connections is highly questionable.*

*Every possible care is to be taken to ensure that HMC S/M U-190 is kept in an adequate condition in order to prevent sinking. (14)*

### **‘Exercise Scuttled’**

The only remaining question then was how to dispose of the unwanted U-Boat and, as was the case with most matters relating to *U-190*, that too took several months to answer. The initial proposals for sinking the U-Boat were discussed at a staff meeting on 27 May, and these were formalised in a memorandum to the Assistant Chief of Naval Staff on 6 June which recommended that:

- a. Date of sinking to be about 22 October 1947 in order that as many RCN ships as possible be available to take part in the exercise, and to allow air squadrons to participate.*
- b. Position of sinking to be about 50 miles SE off Halifax (over 100 fathoms).*
- c. Ships and aircraft to carry out rocket firings, gunnery, A/S weapon firings and bombings during the exercise. (19)*

This proposal to sink *U-190* in some style was endorsed at the 308<sup>th</sup> Naval Staff Meeting which was held on 21 July and, during a visit to Halifax later in the month, the Minister of National Defence confirmed that *U-190* would be destroyed by the RCN ‘with explosives’. Indeed, to this end, it had already been announced by the Director of Naval Information in a Press Release on 15 July that:

*Naval authorities have indicated that this [the sinking of U-190] will probably take place in the early fall, and that it is possible that both surface craft and aircraft will pay a part in sending the one time sea raider to its last account in a realistic anti-submarine exercise. (21)*

This announcement nevertheless caused a complication in that it motivated the Managing Director of Halifax Shipyards Ltd to write to the Head of the RCN’s Naval Administration and Supply Department on 21 July saying:

*I notice by a press report recently that the German submarine U-190 is to be taken out to sea and sunk. This seems to me to be a pity. Here are the steel mills in our country crying for scrap. There is a definite shortage and this submarine could well be used for that purpose. (19)*

Unfortunately Rear Admiral H W T Grant’s response on 24 July was somewhat equivocal. It did not make clear that the Admiralty in London had specifically ruled out scrapping by a third party, and it left the door open for a further review. Thus the inevitable happened and the Managing Director of Halifax Shipyards Ltd wrote yet again, this time to the Deputy Minister of Defence on 30 September when final arrangements for *U-190*’s sinking were well advanced. As a result, the matter had to be taken to the Defence Minister himself, who then accepted that there was a need to follow the Admiralty’s request.

Additionally, in July the Chief of Naval Staff had personally invited the Chief of the Canadian Air Staff (CAS) to consider whether or not he would like the RCAF to participate in the arrangements for sinking *U-190* but, somewhat surprisingly, the CAS declined the invitation, saying:

*Your invitation to participate in this exercise would have been speedily accepted were it not for the fact that the aircraft and personnel which would normally participate are fully engaged on prior commitments, My staff have endeavoured to arrange for the fitting out of other aircraft for this exercise, but I feel that any makeshift arrangements would be unwise. (19)*

Reading between the lines, it is clear that the RCAF were just not interested in participating what seemed very likely to turn into a publicity stunt.

As forecast in his earlier Press Release, and after a dummy run of the exercise on 14 October, the Director of Naval Information gave further information of the RCN's intentions on 18 October, saying:

*Preliminary arrangements have been completed for the destruction by ships and aircraft of the Royal Canadian Navy of the former German submarine U-190 off Halifax on Trafalgar Day, October 21.*

*The U-Boat, which surrendered to ships of the RCN in May 1945, will be sent to the bottom not far from where she torpedoed and sank the minesweeper HMCS Esquimalt on 16 April 1945. (22)*

The scenario that was invented for the exercise, and thus the purpose of the RCN's joint air and sea attacks, was that:

*U-190 is assumed to have been damaged during an attack carried out by a ship on patrol in the Halifax approaches. The patrol vessel having been sunk by GNAT, U-190 is attempting to escape on the surface. (20)*

The formal RCN orders for this highly publicised event, which went by the somewhat dull and very un-original code name of '*Exercise Scuppered*', indicated that it was due to take place on 21 October, that it was expected to take approximately 90 minutes to complete, that it would be located approximately 50 miles south-east of Halifax, and that the redundant U-Boat would be towed into position by the dockyard tug *Riverton*.

A considerable amount of trouble was taken to ensure that *U-190* would be ready for the event and would not simply sink under its own devices when towed out of Halifax prior to the planned exercise. The detailed preparations included:

- (a) The bridge and all uprights were painted with one coat of yellow paint. A strip 2.5 feet wide on the outboard side of the upper deck was painted yellow, while a strip on the upper deck 3 feet wide was painted red.*
- (b) All sea valves were checked closed. All bilge lines, cross connection valves and bulkhead valves were closed.*

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- (c) The ventilation system was checked, and all vents and compartment isolation valves were closed.*
- (d) Ballast tanks were blown and ship trimmed on even keel.*
- (e) The rudder was lashed in the mid-ships position. Forward Hydroplanes were given 10 degrees of elevation and After Hydroplanes were fixed in a horizontal position.*
- (f) All watertight doors were hammered up secure, and Conning Tower hatch dogged down.*
- (g) The periscope was plugged with a wooden plug, and the holes in the H/F, D/F Stands, caused by removal of same, were plugged with wooden plugs. (14)*

The RCN forces involved in 'Exercise Scuppered' were the destroyers HMCS *Nootka* and HMCS *Haida*, the minesweeper HMCS *New Liskeard*, as well as aircraft of the 18<sup>th</sup> Canadian Carrier Air Group (comprising eight Seafires from No.833 Sqn, eight Fireflies from No.826 Sqn, two Ansons and two Swordfish).

The expected sequence of events was set out in the Exercise Order:

- 1. Two Swordfish acting as reconnaissance aircraft will report the presence of the submarine, which will be presumed to have been damaged prior to the exercise.*
- 2. Fireflies armed with rockets will attack in formation.*
- 3. The destroyers will attack with 4.7-inch gunfire, opening fire at approximately 4,000 yards range.*
- 4. Seafire aircraft armed with bombs will attack from a height of about 5,000 feet.*
- 5. HMCS New Liskeard will close the target as it sinks – either following the above mentioned attacks or at any stage in the exercise should the U-Boat sink earlier – and deliver the final attack with 'Hedgehog'. (23)*

The event was given maximum publicity, and it was covered by press, radio and newsreel, with 24 reporters, commentators and photographers on-board the RCN ships, and one reporter was even able to view the exercise from the air whilst flying in one of the Anson aircraft.

However, despite all the careful planning, the whole event eventually went off like a damp squib because, after the initial rocket attacks by the Fireflies, *U-190* started to settle slowly by its stern. *Nootka* then opened fire with her guns, but was able to fire only two salvos, both of which missed the target, before the U-Boat suddenly up-ended and sank from sight less than 19 minutes after the start of the exercise.

Nevertheless the Director of Naval Information sought to give the affair the best possible positive gloss, stressing that it was solely an exercise designed to give ships' crews and the RCN aircraft crews training in combined air-sea operations, and saying in his somewhat emotive Press Release on 29 October that:

*The former German submarine U-190 made its last descent to the cold depths of the Atlantic on Trafalgar Day, October 21.*

*The once deadly sea raider came to a swift and ignominious end when, as a target for ships and aircraft of the Royal Canadian Navy, it was sunk in less than 19 minutes in the same waters in which it torpedoed HMCS Esquimalt in April 1945. (24)*

Inevitably, on the evening of 21 October 1947 there was a certain amount of typical informal celebration in the Wardroom of the Naval Air Station in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia about the fact that *U-190* had been successfully sunk by the air attacks before the RCN's surface ships had been able to make any effective contribution to the U-Boat's final demise. A little bit of inter-Service rivalry was not unsurprising.

Details of the event were forwarded to Naval Service Headquarters by COAC, (now) Rear Admiral C R H Taylor, RCN, and his Exercise Report dated 22 December 1947 concluded with the somewhat low-key words:

*The fact that U-190 was eventually sunk in the required position and without accident is considered to be the most important factor.*

*Although all phases of the proposed exercise were not carried out as a result of the effectiveness of the rockets, it is still considered that the sequence of attack was the best from the point of view of training to be obtained and the cooperation required between Air and surface ships.*

*It is also felt that 'Exercise Scuppered' provided very good publicity for the Royal Canadian Navy and gave the press an opportunity to understand more fully the duties of Naval officers and men.*

*In general I consider that great benefit was derived from the sinking of the U-190 by the Royal Canadian Navy. (20)*

The last words about the demise of *U-190* after its time in the RCN were written by the Naval Secretary in his equally low-key and belated response to Rear Admiral Taylor on 23 January 1948, viz:

*Your report has been noted with interest by the Department.*

*The administration for the exercise and the detail of the orders were admirably prepared, and reflect great credit on those who took part in the planning.*

*The air attacks speak for themselves, but it was a disappointment that sufficient of U-190 was not left for Captain (D) to dispose of. (20)*

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Finally, a physical link with *U-190* still exists even today in that, some 70 years after its sinking, the U-Boat's periscope is one of the many historical naval artifacts displayed in the Crow's Nest Officers Club in St John's, Newfoundland. It was removed from *U-190* before '*Exercise Scuppered*' and after it became of no further interest to the NRE and the RCN, it was initially on display in the Maritime Naval Museum in Halifax before being transferred to St John's for safe keeping in 1963.

### **The POW's from *U-190* and *U-889***

Whilst the crews of the two U-Boats played no significant part in the RCN's exploitation of either U-Boat, they nevertheless all spent about a year in Canada as Prisoners of War (POWs) before being transferred to camps in England in 1946 after the Canadians began to close their POW camps.

Shortly after its arrival at Shelburne in Nova Scotia on 13 May, the 55-man German crew of *U-889* was disembarked and taken to Halifax for interrogation. Similarly, after its arrival at Bay Bulls in Newfoundland, *U-190*'s 54-man crew was transferred to the frigate *Prestonian*, which sailed for Halifax on 14 May. After their interrogation they were all then handed over to the Canadian Army and despatched by rail to POW camps in Ontario and Québec, although the CO of *U-889* and five of his colleagues remained in Halifax until 22 May whilst they assisted the RCN with the U-Boat's initial engine running trials.

The five officers from *U-190* and three of the six officers from *U-889* were taken to Camp 20 at Gravenhurst, Ontario, two of the officers from *U-889*, including the U-boat's CO Fritz Braeucker, were taken to Camp 40 at Farnham, Québec, and the remaining one was taken to Camp 44 at Grande Ligne, Québec. (25)

Whilst *U-190*'s officers were at Gravenhurst, a somewhat distasteful event occurred which did not reflect well on the integrity of the Kriegsmarine. During *U-190*'s last two patrols the relationship between the U-Boat's CO, Hans-Edwin Reith, and his four colleagues had seriously deteriorated due to his pomposity as well as his indecisiveness and inability to control difficult situations. Thus soon after their arrival at Camp 20, the other officers from *U-190* petitioned the camp's German senior officer to dissolve the command relationship between Reith and themselves because they had lost respect for him and found it distasteful even to have to salute him. A Board of Inquiry resulted in the granting of this request, with an option to re-open the matter of Reith's behaviour if there should ever be an opportunity within any future post-war German Navy. (26)

The non-commissioned crewmen from both U-Boats were transported to Camp 33 at Petawawa, Ontario, where they arrived on 18 May. Most of them were later transferred to Camp 100 at Neys, Ontario, on the north shore of Lake Superior on 20 January 1946 from where, after just two months, they were moved to Halifax and embarked on the troopship *SS Aquitania* which departed for England on 26 March 1946. (17) They were then held in various English POW camps before being returned to Germany in 1947 and 1948.

It was the turn of *U-190*'s and *U-889*'s officers to be transferred from Gravenhurst to Southampton in England via Halifax on the *Aquitania* in June 1946 (18), where they too were held in a variety of POW camps for up to a further two years before finally being taken

to Germany for release. For instance, *U-190*'s Werner Hirschmann was not released until August 1947, and Fritz Braeucker, the CO of *U-889*, was not released until December 1948, more than three years after he surrendered his U-Boat in the North Atlantic off the east coast of Canada in May 1945.

### **Summary**

In summary, two Type IXC/40 U-Boats surrendered to Canadian naval forces in May 1945. First, *U-889* on 10 May and, second, *U-190* on 11 May. Both were commissioned into the RCN, and both were evaluated, tested and trialed by the Naval Research Establishment at Halifax during their short time in Canadian hands. Also, both took part in public exhibition tours of coastal towns and cities in eastern Canada in August 1945.

*U-889* was transferred to the US Navy in January 1946 in accordance with Allied decisions concerning the allocation of the small number of U-Boats that were allowed to survive post-war. However, when received by the USN it was found to be non-operational and it was therefore never used for any purpose other than for cannibalisation of its spares and equipment for use in other USN U-Boats. It was sunk as a torpedo target off Cape Cod on 20 November 1947.

*U-190* was formally allocated to the Royal Navy in early 1946, but then immediately loaned to the RCN. It was nevertheless in a poor state of maintenance and proved to be of very little use to the RCN after the end of 1945 other than as a floating firing platform during the NRE's CAT-related torpedo trials. This is contrary to the views of several authors who have suggested – quite wrongly – that the U-Boat was used by the RCN for anti-submarine warfare training during 1946 and 1947. Its final demise was planned to be a spectacular and highly publicized event off Halifax on Trafalgar Day, 21 October 1947, but in the end *U-190* had the last laugh, disappearing beneath the waves only 19 minutes after the start of what was supposed to be a 90-minute anti-submarine exercise conducted jointly by RCN aircraft and ships.

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