

the North Atlantic.” Schultz left *U-48* in Germany and returned to France to command the 3d Combat Flotilla at La Pallice.

No less aggressive was the *Ritterkreuz* holder Engelbert Endrass in the equally weary VIII *U-46*. But he was bedeviled by torpedo failures—four, he reported. On June 2 and 6, he attacked and hit a freighter and a tanker, but each time the torpedo failed to detonate. On June 8 he simultaneously attacked a tanker and a freighter. Two more torpedoes failed to detonate, but nonetheless Endrass damaged the 6,200-ton British tanker *Ensis* and sank a 5,300-ton freighter. In retaliation, *Ensis* turned on *U-46* and rammed her, knocking out the attack periscope. Endrass put *Ensis* under with a finishing shot, then aborted to France. Inbound to Lorient he sank a 5,600-ton freighter by torpedo and gun. His overclaims of 16,500 tons sunk also put Endrass beyond the 200,000-ton mark and he, too, was awarded Oak Leaves to his *Ritterkreuz*.⁷

Another *Ritterkreuz* holder, Wolfgang Lüth in the old but recently rehabilitated Type IX *U-43*, replaced Endrass in the patrol line. He sank two ships for 7,500 tons, but *U-43* was not really combat-worthy. When Lüth returned to Lorient, the boat went back into the yard for another overhaul, to remain there until November, having completed only two war patrols in twelve months, during which Lüth sank only five ships.

The other skippers of the patrol line—some on maiden voyages—sank another fourteen ships between June 1 and June 18. The most successful of these was Klaus Scholtz in the Type IXB *U-108*, making his third Atlantic patrol. He claimed sinking four ships for 27,300 tons, including a 14,000-ton auxiliary cruiser. In reality he sank four freighters for 17,000 tons.⁸

Erich Topp in *U-552*, who had made three patrols to North Channel in the duck *U-57* and two in *U-552*, requested that dangerous area again. In view of the fact that the duck *U-141*, on indoctrination patrol, had been severely damaged there in recent days, Dönitz was hesitant, especially since the shortest nights of the year were fast approaching. Finally, Dönitz consented.

The plan was for Topp to coordinate operations, if possible, with three Type IID ducks on indoctrination patrols close to the British Isles: the *U-141*, repaired in Lorient; the *U-143*, sailing from Germany; and the *U-147*, which had earlier sailed from Germany. Unknown to Dönitz, the *U-147*, commanded by Eberhard Wetjen, had been sunk on June 2 by British warships, the destroyer *Wanderer* and corvette *Periwinkle*, following Wetjen's bold solo attack on convoy Outbound 329.

Topp found the area teeming with ASW aircraft, forcing him to crash-dive up to ten times a day, a nerve-racking routine during which several of his men broke down. Nonetheless, he found and sank three ships for 24,400 tons, including the 11,000-ton British freighter *Norfolk*. These sinkings brought Topp's claims to 100,000 tons, earning him a *Ritterkreuz*.⁹ On June 18, Topp came upon an inbound convoy and attempted to attack and bring in the ducks and other boats, but the escorts drove him off. The duck *U-141* was unable to cooperate with *U-552* but she shot at two ships, sinking one.

Another duck, the *U-138*, commanded by twenty-five-year-old Franz Granit-sky, who had served in combat under Schepke and Lüth on other ducks, had arrived in Lorient from Germany for a top-secret special mission. Granitsky was to penetrate the mined British naval base at Gibraltar for the specific purpose of sinking the battleship *Renown* or an aircraft carrier or, at the very least, a heavy cruiser. Should he succeed in sinking a capital ship—as Prien had at Scapa Flow—he was assured of a *Ritterkreuz*. Should he run into difficulty, the crew was to scuttle and swim to Spain, where it was to be assisted in making its way back to Lorient.

Granitsky sailed from Lorient on June 12. Other than he, no one on the boat knew the purpose of the mission. Early on the morning of June 18, when *U-138* was about 100 miles west of the Strait of Gibraltar, inbound on the surface, the bridge watch spotted what was believed to be a “cruiser” and dived. Actually, the “cruiser” was the destroyer *Faulkner*, which in company with four sister ships of the 13th Destroyer Flotilla, *Fearless*, *Forester*, *Foresight*, and *Foxhound*, was conducting a sonar sweep, probably forewarned by Ultra to be on the lookout for *U-138*. The skilled sonar teams on *Faulkner* and *Forester* had helped kill the first U-boats of the war, *U-27* and *U-39*.