Focusing primarily on the missions of U-701 and its captain Horst Degen, Ed Offley accurately captures the effectiveness of Germany’s U-boats (submarines) to disrupt travel and shipping during 1941-42 in the Atlantic Ocean in his latest work, *The Burning Shore: How Hitler’s U-Boats Brought World War II to America*. Offley chronicles in great detail the three combat patrols of U-701, emphasizing its final mission to attack military and merchant ships and to lay mines a mere several hundred yards off the shore of the northeastern coast of the United States. The close proximity of the U-boats, as well as the vicinity of sunken ships, to the US coast is astonishing. The technology used by the German Navy was quite extraordinary and was especially evident with the inability of the United States Navy or United States Army Air Corps to effectively sink German U-boats.

Offley uses quite effectively a variety of sources, including archival documents, interviews, memoirs, secondary sources, and a number of online sources. He describes in detail the history of Degen, as well as Harry Kane, the American pilot credited with sinking U-701 on July 7, 1942. U-701 along with a number of other U-boats, which Offley unfortunately does not specifically total, fighting off the US coast terrorized the Atlantic Ocean during the beginning of the Second World War. Furthermore, a strong point of *The Burning Shore* is Offley’s descriptions of the grueling conditions experienced by German seamen.

There are a number of minor issues with *The Burning Shore* that should be addressed. Offley does not lay out a clear thesis in his introduction. The book also includes some inaccurate information without providing necessary citation. For example, Offley states that there were anti-Nazi protests in the United States in 1934 (p. 20), yet this statement is unfounded. He should have at least cited a source for this information and at most described the reasons for such protests. The given year appears to be far too early for anti-Nazi protest. Furthermore, Offley goes slightly off topic when describing Japanese ships shooting at fuel holdings just a few hundreds yards off the California shore. Although interesting, this discussion does not focus on the area specified throughout the rest of the book and takes up a large portion of chapter 7. Offley also incorrectly states that there were "175 POW camps" in the United States that held German prisoners of war (p. 243). The number was far greater, numbering roughly 500.[1] Finally, Offley does not discuss the influence that U-boat attacks had on the treatment of German American citizens, as well as the designated German Enemy Aliens (people of German ancestry, often even American citizens, who were interned during the Second World War). Although this topic is partially out of context from Offley’s chronicling of U-701, it nevertheless would be interesting to investigate since people of German descent were viewed as suspicious, held under surveillance, with a large number even being interned.

Offley’s work, despite the aforementioned minor issues, is an interesting and captivating read targeted toward a general audience. Although it recounts a relatively known aspect of World War Two—the war in the Atlantic Ocean—it does present firsthand accounts, which are important and fascinating. *The Burning Shore* offers a noteworthy look at the reasonably unknown aspect of how close the Second World War truly came to the United States.
Note


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