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By CDR Paul J. Lyons

Rising Tide: The Untold Story of the Russian Submarines That Fought the Cold War. By Gary E. Weir and Walter J. Boyle (Basic Books 2003, ISBN 0-465-09112-1).

A counterpart to Blind Man's Bluff by Sherry Sontag (et. al), Rising Tide provides first-hand insight into Russian submarine development, operations and challenges during the period. Conveyed through the lens of former Russian admirals and commanders, Rising Tide focuses on Russia's attempts to achieve parity with U.S. submarine technology. The book provides authoritative insight into incidences of collisions encountered during duels with U.S. submarines, catastrophes as a result of the embedded risks incidental to the quest for supremacy, and acts of bravery on the part of Russian sailors and crews. From Stalin's vision of a submarine force to the Kursk tragedy in 2000, Rising Tide recounts both the development and degradation of Russia's submarine force.

Perhaps most startling is the revelation that during much of the Cold War (and most notably, the Cuban Missile Crisis), nuclear missile and torpedo launch capability was delinked from presidential authority or collective control protocols. Instead, launch authority rested with individual commanders locally. In addition, the authors confidently assert that the "Father of the Russian navy," Sergei Gorshkov, was aware of the ineffective design, safety, training and maintenance of the submarine force, thus exposing Russian sailors and crews to needless risks, some of which ultimately led to their deaths.

Although interesting and insightful, Rising Tide fails to delve deeply into the confluence of political and military decision making that shaped the development of the submarine force, as well as the convoluted process of submarine design and technology, and the challenges associated with design choice. The book further lacks a U.S. perspective either to corroborate or discount the claims of parity and enhance the analysis of events. In addition, the book is founded on the personal reminiscences of those interviewed (Russian admirals and Fleet commanders) and not substantiated with documentary evidence. Rising Tide falls short of expectations.

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