

TABLE 7.9 Warships Delivered, 22 June 1941–9 May 1945

Type of Ship	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	Total
Light cruisers	0	1	0	1	0	2
Destroyers	14	3	0	0	1	18
Guard ships	0	0	2	1	0	3
Minesweepers	1	1	1	1	8	12
Large subchasers	2	3	1	9	3	18
Submarines	23	13	11	5	3	55
Monitors	0	1	1	0	0	2
Motor cutters	97	62	177	216	39	591
Motor minesweepers	23	80	93	123	8	327

Source: Zolotarev and Shlomin, *Kak sodavalas'*, 1:234.

## IV. RECAPITULATION

### A. WARTIME EVOLUTION

Although the Winter War with Finland (30 November 1939–12 March 1940) proved less embarrassing for the Red Navy than it had for the Red Army, there was still little cause for satisfaction with its performance. Surface forces had bombarded the Finnish batteries at Björkö, submarines had carried out patrols, and naval aviation had mounted attacks, but little had actually been accomplished. The submarines sank only five merchant ships while aircraft sank another four. Despite numerous air attacks, no hits were scored on the two Finnish coast defense ships. In the end, the blundering Red Army overwhelmed Finnish resistance by virtue of its massive numerical superiority, and the peace treaty granted Moscow the border adjustments it desired as well as the naval base at Hanko at the mouth of the Gulf of Finland.

During the interlude of peace following the Winter War, both the Red Army and Navy undertook a series of reforms, but these steps were far from complete when the Germans invaded on 22 June 1941. For the Baltic Fleet, the opening phases of what the Russians call the Great Patriotic War were characterized by confusion and heavy losses. In rapid succession, the bases gained in 1939–1940 were lost, and eight destroyers as well as a variety of other surface craft were sunk during the evacuations of Tallinn and Hanko; as for the toll in human lives, estimates suggest that it was close to 20,000 seamen and soldiers. In other circumstances, these evacuations would have been considered fiascos, but the two operations delivered more than 30,000 soldiers to Leningrad—an important addition to the city's defenses.

Nevertheless, it was unclear if Leningrad itself could be held, and on 13 September 1941 the Stavka ordered preparations to destroy the Baltic Fleet and its shore facilities. A detailed plan was worked out to use torpedo warheads

and depth charges to destroy the ships. For effect, and the guns of the warships played a role in the defense. The battleship *Marat's* bow was damaged, and the forward main battery magazine on the *Marat* was destroyed in shallow water. By the end of October, the *Marat* had been refloated and her guns were back in action.

But shore bombardment of the besieged Leningrad was a negligible contribution made by the big surface ships of the Baltic theater. Hemmed in by enemy fighters and by the Luftwaffe, starved of fuel, and with no bases ashore, the Baltic Fleet's war now became a struggle for survival. The island of Lavansaari (Moshchnyy), which remained in Soviet hands and became "a base," supported the minesweepers when they were blocked by submarines through the Finnish-German minefield, a formidable barrier, and the difficulties experienced in getting out into the Baltic were compounded by the presence of a double row of antisubmarine nets at the entrance.

The Baltic situation changed radically in September 1941, when the raised the siege of Leningrad; by September 1941 an armistice that granted base rights to Soviet forces was signed, and MTBs, and aircraft were unable to stop German forces from reaching the isolated Courland army. The fleet was reduced to a few MTBs in the first months of 1945, during the evacuation of the Baltic. The mine S-13 sank *Wilhelm Gustloff* (30 January 1945), tragically, about nine thousand refugees were lost.

Events had followed a broadly similar pattern in the defense of Odessa, a slower pace. The fleet ably supported the Romanian forces (13 August–16 October 1941), and the decision was made to evacuate Odessa. The evacuation of Sevastopol, now threatened by the German attack, carried out 1–16 October, was well organized, with 40,000 civilians, more than 1,000 vehicles, and 400 ships, during the nights, so the process was completed in a matter of days that it had started.

The battle for Sevastopol was a protracted struggle for the Black Sea Fleet operating from Novorossiisk port. The evacuation ultimately involving 42,000 men, were carried out from the Crimean Peninsula in the period of the evacuation to divert German forces from the siege.