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San Jose State University, 1990

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Seegeltung: The Role of the High Sea Fleet
in the Baltic Sea and Blockade
from 1914 to Brest-Litovsk

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of History
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

By
Frank Howe Von Rassler
May, 1990

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ABSTRACT

SEEGELTUNG: THE ROLE OF THE HIGH SEA FLEET IN THE BALTIC SEA AND BLOCKADE FROM 1914 TO BREST-LITOVSK

by Frank Howe Von Rassler

This thesis addresses the topic of Imperial Germany's Hochseeflotte (High Sea Fleet) from 1914 to 1917. It examines the use of the German Hochseeflotte in the First World War and its impact on the Baltic theater. In addition to the origin of the fleet and its creators, personalities and events are also studied.

Research on this subject refutes arguments that some naval historians have claimed about the lack of involvement of the Hochseeflotte during the war. Aside from the Battle of Jutland, May 31 thru June 1, 1916, the Hochseeflotte played an important role in the security of the German coast, the enforcement of the Baltic Blockade, and the maintaining of a firm grip on the Baltic Sea and trade. After Jutland the role of the German battleship was redefined as demonstrated in the invasion of the islands of Oesel, Moon, and Dagoe in October of 1917.

Dedicated to the memory of Dr. Edgar Anderson

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FOREWORD

The history of the German *Hochseeflotte* [High Sea Fleet] is as perplexing as it is interesting. Unfortunately the history of this once mighty fleet has been buried by years of neglect. That is not to say that naval historians and theorists have not attempted to write its story--many have, and very well, I might add. However, for most the story of the German navy in World War I ends after May 1, 1916. After the Battle of Jutland, the *Hochseeflotte* does not appear in the pages of most histories, except when its surrender and self immolation is used as an emblem of its disgrace.

I have pondered many hours why the story ends so inconclusively after Jutland. The *Hochseeflotte's* impact on the German war effort, during the First World War, has been constricted in nearly all the histories I have read on the subject. Was the German navy's role really so unimportant?

The role of the *Hochseeflotte* in World War I lacked the aggressive fervor by which it was created, this is true, yet does this mean the German navy did not influence the outcome of the war? German historians such as Fritz Fischer, Walther Hubatsch, or Ernst Gagern have differing views of the navy's place in the history of the Great War, but they all agree it had one. Since most of the books by these

authors are not in English, the naval enthusiast who does not read German is forced to refer to the volumes written most generally by Englishmen. Such English histories end, as mentioned, after Jutland, and are extremely biased. This author's opinion is that Jutland was a national disgrace for the Royal Navy. The British role as a naval superpower was shattered after May 1, 1916, and one means of recompense is the deflating of an obvious German victory.

British historians, such as Richard Hough or Henry Newbolt, argue endlessly for the great tactics employed by the Grand Fleet during the war and at Jutland. Germany was chased back into its protective harbors never to challenge British Naval might again. A result of the failure of the *Hochseeflotte* to deal a death blow to the Grand Fleet was the use of the "cowardly" U-Boat. The great tradition of the Royal Navy in such books is thereby preserved--Germans can play with numbers all they wish; the victory belongs to England.¹

The German navy never did "challenge" the Grand Fleet after Jutland, but on the other hand the Grand Fleet never

¹ Stephan E. Ambrose and Ernest J. King, "Seapower in World Wars I and II," *Naval War College Review*, vol. XXII no. 7, (Newport: Naval War College, 1970), 26-41. Ambrose and King both agree that the Grand Fleet never "lost" control of the high seas in World War I. However, they neglect to mention that the British Fleet kept its distance from Germany for most of the war, and that the control of the Baltic Sea and the Dardanelles waters was never in British hands.

called out the German fleet for a rematch. Admiral Reinhard Scheer, Commander-in-Chief of the *Hochseeflotte* at the battle of Jutland, maintained after the war that the Grand Fleet too stayed in its protective harbors for fear of the U-Boat menace. Scheer was aware that the battleship's role in naval warfare had forever changed and that the weapon of the future was the submarine. The U-boat controlled the North Sea.²

It cannot be said that the *Hochseeflotte* was an aggressive weapon used at every moment in the war. One speculation is that had Germany employed its vast superiority against a weaker foe, Russia, then the war might have turned out differently. Germany fought a two-front war not only on land but at sea, and to defeat the Russian navy quickly would have turned the Baltic into a German lake. A victory of High Sea Fleet in the Low Sea might have ended the war in the east sooner.

Friedrich Ruge, Vice Admiral of the navy of the German Federal Republic, agrees with such a conclusion. He also believes that the *Hochseeflotte* should have also been used more aggressively in the English Channel.³ However, the

² Reinhard Scheer, *Germany's High Seas Fleet in the World War*, (New York: Peter Smith, 1934), 190-198.

³ Friedrich Ruge, *Der Seekrieg: The German Navy's Story 1939-1945*. (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1957), 3-20.

Hochseeflotte from its inception was designed to wage war on the North Sea or Atlantic Ocean. The Baltic never was seriously considered. The fleet was to be a weapon of world, not regional, power. Alfred Tirpitz, Grand Admiral of the *Kaiserliche Marine*, created the idea of the "risk factor," a strategic and tactical use of Germany's smaller battlefleet against the larger British Grand Fleet, which set the *Hochseeflotte* into motion against Great Britain. The "risk factor" was seen by England as a direct challenge to her naval might by an aggressive and militant Germany.

The "risk factor" had a major flaw. By this term the *Hochseeflotte* was already a defensive weapon, for it stated that any fleet strong enough to attack it would be in danger of losing its status as a naval power. Battleship doctrine up until the Battle of Jutland defined that warships are weapons of offense not defence. Who believes today that a nuclear weapon or aircraft carrier is designed primarily for defence? The Soviet navy today is publicly viewed as an instrument of potential aggression and, in the same way, Great Britain saw Wilhelm's "defensive" fleet. As with any war, however, one knows one's own weakness better than that of the opponent. Modern Dreadnought warfare brought with it a whole new chapter in the history of the sea, and neither England nor Germany could accurately predict what to expect.

This study can in no way include all the details of the war at sea. Much has already been written on the roles of the navies in the Mediterranean, North Sea, Atlantic and Pacific. Two regions that have not been adequately covered are the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea. Even in these centralized pockets of water, much can be written. Because of space limitations, I will concentrate on one topic, the role of the German *Hochseeflotte* in the Baltic Sea and its relation to the Baltic Sea Blockade in the period from 1914 to the conclusion of the war in the east in late 1917. This thesis focuses on the fact that Germany did use its fleet after Jutland. The use of the *Hochseeflotte* in the Baltic, even if reluctantly, helped along with other internal and external forces, to bring the Russians to capitulate.

CHAPTER I

THE WRONG COURSE:

THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL POLITICS THAT CREATED THE HOCHSEEFLOTTE

From 1897 to 1914 Germany's navy rose from the fourth most powerful in the world to the second, only surpassed by Great Britain, and its merchant fleet rivaled the British. What brought about these great changes? One must first consider Germany's late rise as a colonial power, then its incredible industrial growth and strength, and finally the ambitions of the young Kaiser and those of his cunning Admiral. All three of these factors brought about the change.

From 1895 to 1897 Germany began to realize that its navy could not effectively protect Germany's new overseas interests or secure her from a naval blockade by her European neighbors. Germany during that period also desired to use its navy as an instrument of *Weltpolitik*,¹ and along with other powers began to be more interested in colonial enterprises. Its interests appeared to be harassed by the

¹ Herbert Schottelius, *Marine und Marinepolitik im Kaiserlichen Deutschland*, (Duesseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1972), 211-234.

British in the Near and Far East, yet Germany desired an alliance with Great Britain.

Germany already had holdings in East Africa, Samoa, South West Africa, Togo, Cameroon, China, and had good relations with the Ottoman Empire. To secure the African trade German economic interests began to propose plans for a domination of "Middle Africa." In Europe Germany desired to control a "Middle Europe." These two political power positions would not be directed towards England or France, but against the future role in the world of the United States.² The United States' economic growth was as incredible as Germany's; therefore, many Germans believed that Germany had more to fear from America than Great Britain, which they saw as a declining world power. These German interests were represented by the *Kolonial Gesellschaft* and the *Bund Deutscher Industrieller*. They became strong lobbying groups in the Reichstag.

Policies concerning world industry, world trade, and passage upon the seas seemed to dominate post-Bismarck times. Germany's colonial ambitions established the need for *Auslandskreuzer* [cruisers dispatched to foreign waters] to protect its trade and influx of raw materials. Germany had

² Walther Hubatsch, *Die Ara Tirpitz: Studien zur Deutschen Marinepolitik 1890-1918*, (Gottingen: Musterschmidt Verlag, 1955), 25-51.

earlier lacked bases from which the *Auslandkreuzer* fleets could operate.

The major reason for secure naval stations on foreign territory was that Germany must be prepared at all times to provide its ships with food, coal, ammunition and other logistic needs, such as repair stations and docks, hospitals to care for the wounded or sick, and barracks for standby for relief crews. In case of war these stations would create effective bases for all operations, and they would serve as a gathering place for the fleet and a secure haven for Germany's merchant ships.³ These objectives are taken from a memorandum sent throughout the *Reichsmarineamt* in 1895. With them in mind, the Admiralty sent Alfred Tirpitz to China to secure a base in Kiautschou in 1896.

The same line of reasoning was current in the minds of naval planners of the other world powers. A major crisis developed between the United States and Germany near Manila two years after the memorandum mentioned above. An American fleet, under Commodore George Dewey, had just destroyed the Spanish East Asian Fleet at Cavite when the German cruisers *Cormoran* and *Irene* arrived in May of 1898. The United States had not yet made public its interest in the island group. Because the Spanish-American War presumably could have endangered German lives and property, the German

³ Ibid., 31.

government sought only to protect its interests and those of the, Dutch, Austrian, Italian, and Portuguese.⁴

The Philippines question was wide open. Since the United States had not claimed the islands, Russia, France, and Great Britain began to show some interest. Russia believed these islands would make a good half-way point between the long voyage from Europe to Vladivostok. France claimed sovereignty because of its proximity to Tonkin, and Great Britain sought to purchase the entire group. The navies of Russia and Japan were reported to be on their way to Manila. With so many powers in contention for the Philippines, Wilhelm backed down on trying to claim his fleet was there for protective purposes only.⁵

The two German cruisers anchored near Manila since mid-May created a major irritation to the newly promoted American Admiral Dewey. The irritation grew worse when a fleet under Admiral von Diederich's command arrived with SMS

⁴ The inhabitants of Manila two years before tried to persuade Tirpitz to help rid the Philippines of the Spaniards. Tirpitz did not listen to the insurrectionists, and turned down the offer of making the Philippines a German protectorate. The revolt against Spain in the Philippines was an open invitation to Germany to sieze the islands. Germany wanted to wait until the Spanish were overthrown. "Manila would be of enormous advantage to us," Tirpitz telegraphed the Kaiser. Bernhard Prince von Bulow, *Memoirs of Prince Von Bulow*, 4 Volumes, translated from the German by F.A. Voigt, (Boston: Little Brown & Company, 1931), vol. 1, 256.

⁵ Hubatsch, *Ara Tirpitz*, 36.

Kaiserin Augusta, *SMS Kaiser*, and *SMS Prinzess Wilhelm* in mid June. The American newspapers discovered this and inflated the event as a direct intervention by Germany and a threat of war. Furthermore, newspapers, such as the *New York Times* and *San Francisco Chronicle*, wrote that Dewey should destroy the German cruisers and that the United States should send the entire German fleet to the bottom.⁶ The American government, however, came to its senses and retracted the exaggerated stories of war with Germany, but stories of secret German plans and fleet movements still littered the papers.⁷

The Germans on board the cruisers also added to the tension by openly socializing with the Spanish. These moves could only be viewed with suspicion by Admiral Dewey. The cruisers were also thought to have been too close to the action between the American and Spanish fleets in May.⁸ Von Diederichs and his staff quartered themselves in Spanish

⁶ The *New York Times*, May through July 1898, and *San Francisco Chronicle*, May through August 1898. The accounts of the Spanish-American War are full of patriotic fervor and American invincibility. Likewise, the actions of the newly promoted Admiral Dewey served as a catalyst to strain German American relations. The *Chronicle* reported Dewey's heroic actions and his dealings with the "ostentatious Teutons" with great pride. The *Chronicle* greatly exaggerated the strength of Germany's Asiatic Squadron to make the situation appear more volatile.

⁷ Bulow, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, 257.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 256.

houses while the cruisers were coaling. Dewey viewed this act as an unauthorized enemy landing.⁹

Dewey announced a naval blockade around the port of Manila in mid-Summer of 1898. No ship was to pass through without identifying itself, yet he did not notify the German consulate or the German admiral. Once von Diederichs was notified he sent a memorandum to the officers under his command to ignore Dewey.¹⁰ The German ships passed through without identifying themselves to the Americans. After the *Irene* passed by the Americans into port, the USS *Raleigh* determined on its own not to let the next one through without a warning. The *Cormoran* was fired upon. The American captain explained to the German commander that the shot was not an unfriendly act, but rather a request for identification in case a Spanish vessel was trying to run the blockade under a different flag. Diederichs was of the opinion that the type of ship was a better way to determine which country owned the vessel than the flag it carried.¹¹ The American press inflated the story with pictures of a major naval engagement. Diederichs sent an officer to Dewey to present

⁹ Ibid., 37-38.

¹⁰ "Dewey Sends a Sharp Message." *San Francisco Chronicle*, 19 July 1898.

¹¹ This opinion was held by the Austrians, French and Japanese who agreed with the German admiral. The British were friendly toward the Americans; however, they saw no reason to allow the boarding of a warship by another power.

his opinion about the blockade. Upon receiving the young German officer, Dewey verbally assaulted him with threats of war as an answer to Diederich's question over his right to blockade. Diederichs ignored the threats of war, since neither of the admirals had the power to declare it, and the affair ended after diplomatic correspondence between Berlin and Washington eased tensions.¹²

Aside from the colonial problems in the Philippines, Germany experienced troubles in Samoa¹³ and in Africa.¹⁴ The need for raw materials outweighed such political problems, and special interest groups in Germany, such as the *Deutsche Kolonial Gesellschaft*, continued to press the need for German imperialism and raw materials for its

¹² Bulow, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, 257, see also Hubatsch, *Ara Tirpitz*, 39.

¹³ Hubatsch points out that the problems in the German-American-British protectorate of the Samoan islands caused constant problems between the representatives of these governments. By staging a number of uprisings, the aborigines did nothing to help ease the tension in which 50 German sailors lost their lives in a botched campaign. The uprisings were put down by the intervention of British warships. The incident did not give the German public a favorable opinion of German colonial ambitions. Hubatsch, *Ara Tirpitz*, 41.

¹⁴ The Kruger telegram did more to harm German-Anglo relations than did any other event up to that time. The Kaiser's note sent to President Kruger congratulating him on his victory over Jameson's raid in 1896 was a great setback for any ideas of a Anglo-German alliance. Bulow, *Memoirs*, vol. 4, 664-665.

thriving industry.¹⁵ The tremendous industrial boom that Germany experienced from 1871 to 1910 was equalled only by its growth in population. The population of Germany swelled from 41 million to 65 million over that period, and most of the population moved towards the cities. By 1913, 50% of the work-force was employed in coal, steel, and related industries.¹⁶

The industrialists became an important lobby to the Reichstag and exercised a great deal of influence in the passing of bills and laws governing business. Official policy demanded state support of industry, and this came to pass with the creation of the *Reichsbank* chartered in 1875. The *Reichsbank* provided the necessary capital to fund politically important enterprises such as the arms industry.¹⁷

The expansion of the coal and steel industry is fundamentally important to shipping and the navy. The output from German iron ore mines rose from 6.7 million tons in 1887 to 28 million in 1913. By 1913 Germany was importing 11.4 mil-

¹⁵ For information on the problems Germany faced with colonial logistics in relation to naval protection, see Charles Burdick, *The Frustrated Raider; The Story of the German Cruiser Cormoran in World War I*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 1979). 1-20.

¹⁶ Fritz Fischer, *Griff Nach Der Weltmacht: Die Kriegspolitik des Kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914/18*, (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag. 1962), 22.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 23-24.

lion tons of iron. The annexation of Lorraine after 1871 increased Germany's pig iron output, resulting in 43% of Germany's ore coming from inside the country, 22% from Sweden and 17.5% from Spain.¹⁸

The shipbuilding industry grew along with Germany's economic prosperity. The British lead in 1886 had not yet been challenged by the shipbuilding centers at Hamburg, Bremen, and Stettin, and leading British labor union representatives saw no threat. Germany possessed only 470,000 tons of merchant steamships, and most of these had been built abroad.¹⁹ By 1913 the position had changed when shipyards such as the Vulkan Yard in Stettin, Rickmers in Bremen, and Blohm & Voss in Hamburg were operative. Before the first World War broke out in 1914, German production of merchant vessels reached 400,000 tons a year and filled naval orders as well. Germany's mercantile fleet amounted to 4.4 million tons in 1913 of which a quarter were less than five years old.²⁰

Germany's merchant fleet placed Germany second in the world in trade by 1913. From 1888 to 1913 exports and imports of Imperial Germany increased from 6.5 billion marks

¹⁸ W. O. Henderson, *The Industrial Revolution in Europe: Germany, France, and Russia. 1800-1914*, (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961), 67.

¹⁹ Ibid., 68-69.

²⁰ Ibid., 69.

to 20 billion marks. Seventy percent of Germany's imports were industrial raw materials and food, which explains why Germany feared blockades. A quarter of the imports were finished goods and semi-manufactured items. Three-quarters of the exports were manufactured goods, machinery, clothing, and so on.²¹

By 1900 the link between the industrialists and politicians grew close. The *Centralverbund Deutscher Industrieller*, *Bund der Industriellen*, and the *Verien Deutscher Berg und Eisenhüttenleute* were represented by conservative elements in government. The union of these elements could not be separated from business and politics, and became, as the German historian Fritz Fischer writes, almost unreal. They represented an emotional appeal of self-determination of Germany upon the seas and abroad which fed upon the desire for world power in both economic and emotional terms.²²

These groups mentioned above felt threatened by increasing hostility from Great Britain, France and Russia in the Near and Far East. As a result, they manifested their approval of Tirpitz' and the Kaiser's naval ambitions by deluging the public with propaganda. The *Flottenverein* was created by the *Centralverbund Deutscher Industrieller*

²¹ Ibid., 72.

²² Fischer, *Griff Nach*, 16-17.

for business motives and these would thrive upon warship orders for years to come.²³

The *Flottenverein* developed into a fantastic state-controlled propaganda machine. It gathered members from many political offices. Members who ranged from princes to schoolteachers spread propaganda to every province and thus influenced political parties and public opinion.²⁴ Passing the Naval Laws was therefore not too difficult. Prince Bernhard von Bulow, who was Chancellor from 1897-1903, demonstrated the degree to which the *Flottenverein* influenced politics when he noted,

I had always been of the opinion that we must be anxious for an extensive protection of our interests at sea once we had been forced on to that element by the natural economic expansion of the German Nation.²⁵

The German development of armour plating led to a ready market for this product. The leader among the German firms was Krupps. Working alongside Germania Werft in Kiel and Schichau in Danzig, to name only two building yards, Krupps sold not only to German companies, but also to English²⁶ and Japanese.²⁷ Many British and Japanese

²³ Ibid., 18.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Bulow, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, 131.

²⁶ The British warship boom in the early 1900's created many jobs in which entire communities were dependant upon navy contracts for the Grand Fleet, as well as contracts from other nations like Japan and South American republics.

battleships used German armour plating as well as guns and rangefinding devices. The fastest destroyer of World War I was built by the Germans for Russia. Toward the end of the Nineteenth Century, the years preceding World War I testified to a fantastic race for naval supremacy. The two most illustrious naval powers in Europe, Great Britain and Germany, were on a collision course towards which their frantic quest for superiority had piloted them. German ambitions were, without a doubt, not only for her own economic and strategic hopes, but also for the desire to be equal in prestige to Great Britain and to reach for world power.²⁸

Germany's desire to create a navy to match its growth as a world power could not be achieved under the leadership of Albrecht von Stosch and General Count Leo von Caprivi.²⁹ Stosch and Caprivi lacked the leadership or the inclination to forge a fleet for Bismarck's Germany. Stosch, an army general, was the first to be appointed head of the Imperial

²⁷ A look through *Jane's Fighting Ships of 1914* illustrate this argument perfectly. Armour plating contracts were open to German companies. The advertisements for German companies are printed in the 1914 edition.

²⁸ Burdick, *Frustrated Raider*, 2-6, and Herbert Schottelius, ed., *Marine und Marinepolitik: 1871-1914*, (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1972), 34.

²⁹ Hans H. Hildebrand, ed., *Die Deutschen Kriegsschiffe: Ein Spiegel der Marinengeschichte von 1815 bis zur Gegenwart*, (Herford: Koehlers Verlagsgesellschaft MBH, 1979), 29-34.

German navy.³⁰ He was at the helm of the Naval Department of the War Ministry from 1871-1883. After relieving Prince Adalbert of command of the Prussian navy, a position for which he had little experience, Stosch demonstrated some interest in creating a well organized and modern fleet, which would keep up with Germany's growth, but towards the end of his career he grew too ill to carry out his plans.

Caprivi was appointed as Stosch's replacement in 1883; however, he too was an army officer and had much less enthusiasm for a large navy than did Stosch.³¹ His appointment to head the naval department occurred at a time when German imperial ambitions in Africa, Samoa and China placed German interests in an uncomfortable position. It was believed by some that keeping colonies and protecting German raw materials and markets were not possible without a fleet to secure them.³² According to Kaiser Wilhelm II,

³⁰ Stosch was a Lieut. General in the Prussian army and relieved Prince Adalbert of command in 1871. The Prussian navy was not a separate branch of the military as modern terms would define; instead, the navy was only an extension of the army and therefore appointed field officers to direct its affairs. Ibid.

³¹ The relationship between Bismarck and Stosch came into conflict over the size and use of the navy. Stosch believed that, because Germany had colonies in foreign waters and fishing operations in the Baltic and North Sea, a stronger navy would be needed to defend her interests. Bismarck was of the opinion that a strong navy would threaten German relations with England and drain funds from the army which would encourage a resurgent France to threaten Germany. Ibid., 29.

³² Hubatsch, *Die Ara Tirpitz*, 25-51.

Caprivi was opposed to any plans to increase the size of the navy. "When I began my reign," Wilhelm II wrote:

General von Caprivi was the Chief of the Admiralty. He was the last general to hold this post. I at once energetically took in hand the development and reform--in fact, one may say the foundation anew--of the Imperial German Navy, based on my preliminary studies in England and at home. That action was not to the liking of the general, who was able but rather self-willed and not entirely devoid of pride.³³

The influence of the Kaiser has to be discussed, for the creation of the German *Hochseeflotte* owed its existence, in part, to him. According to von Bulow, Wilhelm II feared that Tirpitz would receive all the credit for the creation of his magnificent navy and later Wilhelm scolded Bulow for introducing Tirpitz to him.³⁴

To rid himself of the shame that the German Fleet brought him during the opening of the Kiel Canal in 1895, Wilhelm II loudly proclaimed his disgust for his own navy. His was the worst represented and he could stand it no longer.³⁵ Wilhelm at that time made the statement for all to hear that Germany's future rested upon the sea. The disgust was no doubt a theatrical and political ploy to annoy his British relatives.

³³ Kaiser Wilhelm II, *My Memoirs*, (London: Cassel and Co., 1922), 49.

³⁴ Bulow, *Memoirs*, vol. 1., 130-131.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 36.

"Desperate times create for us a German fleet," Wilhelm exclaimed during the construction of the battleship *Kaiser Karl der Grosse*.³⁶ Much of the desperateness of the times was created by his *Machts Politik* and his continual trips to visit his relatives in the royal houses of Europe.³⁷ His insistence on the Navy Bills and the growing economic might of Germany sparked one of the most monumental arms races in history.

Caprivi grew weary of the constant badgering of the young Emperor, and, after one meeting with the Kaiser, asked to be dismissed. Caprivi stated the he was not satisfied with the position itself and that, moreover, the Kaiser had all kinds of plans for the future of the navy which he considered impossible to realize. Caprivi reasoned that in the first place there existed no means of training a large officer corps, and an expanded navy without a large corps was unthinkable. In addition to this, Caprivi informed Wilhelm, he had realized in the course of his Majesty's tours of inspection that the Emperor knew more about naval matters than he did or ever really wanted to know, "a fact

³⁶ Wolf von Schierbrand ed., *The Kaiser's Speeches: Forming a Character Portrait of Emperor William II*, (London: Harper & Row, 1903), 202.

³⁷ The stories Bulow relates in his memoirs are too many to list. Some border of tragedy and comedy.

which placed him in an impossible situation in relation to his subordinates."³⁸

Vice-Admiral Count Alexander von Monts' appointment to head the navy was mainly to break up the powerful political force of the Admiralty and replace it with a less centralized apparatus. The Kaiser could thus be more involved in the matters of the navy, and all disputes between the services and naval staff had to be presented to him for resolution. Monts had written to the Kaiser of his plans for the reorganization of the officer corps while Caprivi was still in office.³⁹ Monts' dispatch suggested that the *Reichsmarineamt* (Imperial Naval Office) should be separated from the *Obercommando der Marine* (High Command of the Navy). Until this time the navy staff was only an extension of the army staff and was not given a high priority for development. The Kaiser promptly accepted Monts' proposals in March of 1889 and ordered the following:

(1) The High Command of the Navy will as of 1 April be separated from the administration thereof and will be directed by the commanding admiral named by me according to my instructions. His duties and rights

³⁸ Bulow, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, 50-51. Bulow states that many leading German statesmen and military leaders--Bismarck, Caprivi, Tirpitz, and himself--were unjustly called traitors if they contradicted Wilhelm's demands. Bulow, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, 132-133.

³⁹ *Die Deutschen Kriegsschiffe*, 34. Most scholars agree that Wilhelm II desired to be at the head of "his" navy.

correspond to those of a commanding general of the army.

(2) The administration of the navy will be directed under the responsibility of the Imperial Chancellor by the Secretary of State of the Imperial Naval Office with powers of a higher imperial agency.⁴⁰

One should note that the Kaiser's interest and knowledge in naval matters were better than average. His interests were sparked by Admiral A. T. Mahan, an American naval historian. Wilhelm said that he "devoured" Mahan's book *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*.⁴¹ Wilhelm would attend the regattas at the Isle of Wight and expound upon the construction of ships and other nautical trivia. In a letter to the Tsar Nicholas II of Russia Wilhelm made reference to an article Wilhelm had published in the "*Marine Rundschau*" about two British-built cruisers intended for Argentina but delivered instead to Japan by Britain during the Russo-Japanese war.

I send you a copy of "*Marine Rundschau*" with an article about "ironclad cruisers" written by L. This L is a mask under which I hide myself, for I wrote it, but nobody has a blessed notion except Tirpitz. As material for my article--written in November--I managed to get very interesting details about "Rivadaria" and

⁴⁰ Ivo Nikolai Lambi, *The Navy and German Power Politics, 1862-1914*, (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1984), 32.

⁴¹ Ibid., 65-67. The importance of Mahan's book was such that it did almost serve as a psychological manual to the fleet. Not only did it influence Wilhelm, but Tirpitz too recognized its importance. *The Influence of Sea Power on History* (1890) and *The Influence of Sea Power on the French Revolution and Empire, 1793-1812* (1892) were first translated into German by Admiral Karl Ferdinand Batsch at Tirpitz' request. Of the 8,000 copies that were printed, 2,000 were distributed throughout the German navy.

"Moreno"--now presented to Japan by England. . . The paper cutting shows you what certain people call neutrality.⁴²

His article, Wilhelm claims, was highly technical and secretive. Wilhelm acquainted the Tsar with the power these two ships possessed, and he crossed his fingers that Nicholas' navy, which was on its way to being destroyed, would not have to face them. The motives behind the letter, Wilhelm writes, were to intimate to "Nicky" of any "news" that he could get a hold of. These were as Wilhelm writes, "at your request." Wilhelm signed the letter "Admiral of the Atlantic."⁴³

Otto von Bismarck stood in the way not only of Wilhelm's political goals but his ambitions for the navy, and the Kaiser forced Bismarck's resignation soon after he ascended the throne in 1890. Caprivi then replaced Bismarck as Chancellor of the German Empire. With Bismarck's departure in 1890, the complicated alliance system he had created began to crumble. Caprivi later was replaced by the aged Chlodwig zu Hohenlohe in 1892. Hohenlohe, when he assumed office, was overshadowed by Alfred von Tirpitz and his aide Bernhard von Bulow. German aims toward world power were, by Wilhelm's standards, linked with the navy.⁴⁴ Hence from

⁴² Walter Goetz, *Briefe Wilhelm II and den Zaren 1894-1914*, (Berlin: Verlag Ullstein, 1920), 336.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Lambi, *The Navy*, 40-49.

1888 to 1897 the inward politics of the *Reichsmarineamt* were guided by Monts (1888), Carl Eduard Heusner (1889-1890). Freiherr von der Goltz relieved Monts after he had fell ill; Friederich von Hollmann (1890-1897) replaced von der Goltz, and William Buechsel was then appointed during the transition period between Hollmann and Tirpitz (1897).⁴⁵

THE RISE OF TIRPITZ

Around 1871 a young junior officer submitted a pair of papers for publication which insisted upon the need for a powerful German navy. In one he wrote, "the prevention of a blockade, can only be achieved with a fleet, and namely a battle fleet."⁴⁶ This young officer was Tirpitz.

To encapsulate Tirpitz' career, up until his appointment as secretary of the navy, seems unfair. However, space allows only a brief overview. Tirpitz was born to a well educated middle class family, but showed no signs of being remarkable in school and, at his request, his parents enrolled him at age 16 as a sea cadet.⁴⁷ He excelled from his first examination on. As noted above, in 1871 he had written of the need for a battle-fleet. He also formulated

⁴⁵ Die Deutschen Kriegsschiffe, 62.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Lambi, The Navy, 62.

the idea that Germany needed not only a strong fleet for existence, but also that the purchase of the island of Helgoland⁴⁸ and a Baltic-North Sea canal were paramount for strategic purposes and for insurance against blockade.⁴⁹ In 1877 Stosch assigned Tirpitz to work on a torpedo weapon, and Tirpitz, showing promise as a competent officer, was placed in charge of its development and deployment. He used the small vessels' strategem to simulate battle-fleet tactics and wrote Stosch a memorandum stating his findings and his aims for a new approach to naval tactics. Tirpitz

⁴⁸ The location of Helgoland in the North Sea posed a great danger to German ports if it fell into the wrong hands. The purchase of the Island, the navy believed, would be of great strategic value. Once in German hands, the island could be fitted with heavy guns which would force enemy vessels to stay at a safe distance. Torpedo craft could also serve as a deterrent to raids on German commerce in case of war. Tirpitz claimed that Germany traded Zanzibar to England for Helgoland because of Germany's attitude toward a two front war. "Acten des Kaiserlichen Marine-Kabinetts, betreffend Helgoland. von 1894," *Records of the German Navy. Received from the U.S. Naval History Division, 1850-1945 WWI and Before, T-1022* (Washington: The National Archives National archives and records service General Services Administration, 1970), pg. 67720. Hereafter all microfilmed naval records will be cited as *Records of the German Navy*. See also Alfred von Tirpitz, *Erinnerung*, (Leipzig: Verlag von K. F. Koehler, 1919), 58-59.

⁴⁹ The prevailing thought at this time was that Germany's chief enemies were France and Russia. The admiralty believed that the Baltic was in great danger of falling into Russia's control. With the aid of the Danish fleet, Russia would have a great advantage over Germany. Germany therefore desperately tried to secure the friendship of Great Britain. *Ibid.*

theorized that at sea success lies only in destruction.⁵⁰ He stressed that the fleet should be used as a single formation and not as individual fighting units and, in his memorandum, he pointed out that ship construction needed to be modernized and production stepped up.⁵¹ These ideas were carried over into his plans for development for the German navy. In 1888 he resigned from the torpedo program and later commanded two battleships, SMS *Preusen* (1889) and SMS *Wurttenburg* (1890).

In 1890 Tirpitz was appointed Chief of Staff to the naval station at Kiel, a position which he held from 1891 to 1895.⁵² During that time Tirpitz further developed his ideas on fleet tactics of which he believed the German populace and the admiralty were ignorant.⁵³ The purpose of the fleet was to win.⁵⁴ Tirpitz was promoted to Rear-Admiral in

⁵⁰ Ibid., 41-49.

⁵¹ A. T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History 1660-1783*, (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1902), 534.

⁵² *Die Deutschen Kriegsschiffe*, 63.

⁵³ Fleet tactics as envisioned by Tirpitz for a high seas fleet using modern fighting vessels called for combined movements and deployments of the small torpedo boat and large battleships, battle cruisers and light cruisers. These are peacetime tasks. The details on what range for fire, speed for deployment, and type of formation best insured survival were studied. The result was a metamorphosis of construction design and operations with strategy and tactics. *Records of the German Navy*, pg. 66714. Ibid.

⁵⁴ Mahan writes in these words: "The best coast defense is the navy; not because fortifications are not necessary,

1895 and, in 1896, placed in charge of a squadron of cruisers enroute to China to purchase a base for the German navy.⁵⁵

Admiral Gustav Freiherr von Senden-Bibran, commander of the battleship *Bayern*, suggested Tirpitz attend a dinner at the Kiel Castle in 1891 to present his ideas. Wilhelm II, who had already met Tirpitz on a voyage to England while he was the Crown Prince, was impressed by his knowledge and interest in a large high seas fleet; and the admiral seemed to him a considerable improvement, on Monts or Caprivi, possessing the kind of leadership he was looking for.⁵⁶

Wilhelm II was stirred by Tirpitz' knowledge in naval matters and the fact that he could say more about the conditions of the navy besides "*die Schweinerei muss aufhoren*."⁵⁷ Caprivi wrote to Tirpitz that the Kaiser considered Tirpitz the future leader of the fleet and that he should concern

but because beating the enemy's fleet is the best of all defenses." Lambi, *The Navy*, 64.

⁵⁵ *Die Deutschen Kriegsschiffe*, 41-42, 63.

⁵⁶ Tirpitz' torpedoboats escorted Wilhelm II in 1887 to his grandmother Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. Both admired the British resolution to support its navy. Werner Rahn, ed., *Die Deutsche Flotte im Spannungsfeld der Politik 1848-1985: Vortraege und Diskussionen der 25. Historisch-Taktischen Tagung der Flotte 1985*, (Herford: Mittler, 1985), 61.

⁵⁷ "This pig's mess has to end." Tirpitz, *Erinnerungen*, 40.

himself with tactical and strategic training.⁵⁸ By 1896 Wilhelm had heard enough from Tirpitz himself, and following the advice of Caprivi, who had also gained a favorable impression of Tirpitz, appointed him to replace Hollmann as the Secretary of the *Reichsmarineamt*.⁵⁹

A major justification for the replacement of Hollmann was his limited view of fleet tactics. Hollmann composed a memorandum in 1891 which sought to reorganize the armoured fleet. The "doubling system," Hollmann had written, intended to organize all ships into pairs. One vessel would be manned by a full time crew while the other would be unmanned. In the event of war, half the ship's crew would be transferred to the empty one and the remaining crew would be called in from the reserves to bring both warships to full strength. Henceforth, Germany's navy would be able to manage at half strength during peacetime saving the cost of operating two fully manned battleships when it could get by with only one. Hollmann's system had a major flaw. In practice neither of the two ships could be called out in time for quick mobilization as war usually demands, and, if half of the crew departed, not one but two ships would sit idle wasting time and money.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Ibid., 41.

⁵⁹ Lambi, *The Navy*, 65.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Hollman was a distinguished naval man, yet he too had his run-ins with Wilhelm II. The Kaiser called him "Hollmannichin" and never took him seriously. Hollmann made a pleasant impression, yet Tirpitz, as Bulow states made one think of someone with "the capacity to hate, and a love of fighting for fighting's sake."⁶¹

Tirpitz theorized that two lines of thought were emerging with Germany's growing industrial and colonial destiny. Tactical obligations for a battle fleet, Tirpitz believed, required that Germany had to strive for sea-power and build ships to this purpose. Secondly, the political necessity of establishing a navy for Germany's maritime interests was expanding at such an overwhelming rate, that the navy was never an end in itself, but always the inevitable growth of these maritime interests. Without sea-power, Tirpitz wrote, Germany's position "resembled a mollusk without a shell."⁶²

Tirpitz' remarked in his correspondence with his former chief Stosch, Germany was in danger of slipping as a world power. To prevent this, Tirpitz maintained, Germany must "systematically" and "energetically" build up the fleet. Before 1900 Tirpitz later admitted that his fleet plans did not include operations against England; his plans

⁶¹ Bulow, *Memoirs*, vol. 4, 684.

⁶² Alfred Tirpitz, *My Memoirs*, vol. 1, (New York: Dodd, Meade & Co., 1919), 77.

were devised for war against France and Russia. The change was due to the great calamity called *Kaiserliche Machtpolitik*, or which might better be called *Ohnmachts-politik* [politics causing one to faint]. An example of the Kaiser's political folly was the Kruger telegram of 1896 which changed and outraged British public opinion against Germany.⁶³ In response the British fleet afterward organized and sent a "flying squadron" to act against German shipping in the North Sea in case of war.⁶⁴

The relations between Germany and Great Britain not only suffered from the Kruger dispatch, but subsequent ship building programs were passed by the English Parliament to keep Britain's future secure from German aggression. These hostile actions Tirpitz claimed, revised the war plans and tactics which called for a two front war since Germany no longer faced Russia and France but now also England. The *Hochseeflotte* was never to attack the full strength of the

⁶³ The Kruger Telegram came at a time when Germany tried to improve its diplomatic relations with Great Britain. Wilhelm II sent the telegram on the 3rd of January to President Paul Kruger, leader of the Republic of South Africa at war with England. "In 1896, Bulow wrote, "His Majesty had harbored the fantastic idea of concluding a defensive and offensive alliance with the Boer and to fight on their side against the English in Africa." Bulow, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, 546-547, vol. 4, 664-665. England never forgot the dispatch, Count Johann Bernstorff wrote, "it was an indication of the true state of feeling in Germany." Johann Bernstorff, *Memoirs of Count Bernstorff*, (New York: Random House, 1936), 45-46.

⁶⁴ Tirpitz, *Memoirs*, 26-27.

Grand Fleet. German warships in the North Sea were to conduct sorties into the blockade and destroy as many vessels as possible. U-Boats and mine layers were to operate as far as the British coast. According the above two plans, the German submarines and surface ships would deplete the Grand Fleet, the *Hochseeflotte* would engage it in an open and conclusive battle. War on commerce was to be carried out throughout the war years. ⁶⁵

Baltic Sea offensives were planned to disrupt Russian offensives as much as possible. The navy was to secure the harbor of Kiel, damage enemy trade in the Baltic, sweep mines, and undertake an occasional offensive by the *Hochseeflotte*.⁶⁶ The construction and deployment of the battle fleet was directed towards France, but Tirpitz wrote that British trade jealousy attempted to destroy any navy that challenged it brought out a new direction for German ship building.⁶⁷

It is the opinion of this author that Tirpitz' major contribution to the construction of the *Hochseeflotte* lay in the technical realm. This set him apart from many of his contemporaries. German pre-Dreadnoughts were, according to

⁶⁵ *Die Deutschen Kriegsschiffe*, 46.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 47-48.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

reviews, inferior to those of other navies.⁶⁸ However, the German Dreadnought program gave Germany better protected steamers than England or any other world power.⁶⁹ Tirpitz designed his navy with the idea of survivability.⁷⁰ Only one German Dreadnought was sunk in action. As one British sailor remarked after the raising of the scuttled SMS *Friedrich der Grosse*, "she would have been the very devil to sink."⁷¹

Comparing German Dreadnoughts to English, the first difference one finds is in weight. Comparable vessels, such as the German battle cruiser SMS *Lutzow* and the British HMS *Queen Mary*, revealed that the German one was 1,500 tons heavier. This trait not only showed up in the battle cruisers but also in the battleships where the difference was up to 2,000 tons.

British fleet construction was dominated by the fear of the cheap yet abundant torpedo weapon, and in Admiral John Fisher's⁷² mind, armor could be sacrificed for faster speed

⁶⁸ Tirpitz remark, "Up until 1906 our ships were but little protected against attack below the water line, whilst the English ships were badly protected even as late as this war. Tirpitz, *My Memoirs*, 170.

⁶⁹ Lambi, *The Navy*, 170-171.

⁷⁰ Richard Hough, *The Great War at Sea: 1914-1918*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 250-270.

⁷¹ Ibid., 274.

⁷² Though Fisher claimed he detested war, he could not stress enough the need for a large navy. When the Hague

and larger caliber guns.⁷³ England counted on the weight of its guns, not armor. Tirpitz's naval construction, however, repeatedly showed that the *Hochseeflotte* could take greater punishment from mines, shells, and torpedoes than the Grand Fleet. The survival rate of German warships can be credited to the elimination of the vast space between bulkheads. Although these spaces were divided into small compartments, which made for cramped quarters, they assured more flotation while, as Tirpitz points out correctly, British design allowed for larger rooms as characterized in passenger liners, therefore less.⁷⁴

Conference suggested that the world navies reduce, Fisher replied: "You might as well talk of humanizing Hell! War is the essence of violence! Moderation in war is imbecility. HIT FIRST. HIT HARD. KEEP ON HITTING." John Fisher, *Memories*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1919), 274-275. Tirpitz also was of like mind when a British delegation trying to end the race which was costing both sides dearly confronted him. He exclaimed, "Look at the facts. Here is England, already more than four times as strong as Germany, in alliance with Japan, and probably so with France, and you, the colossus, come and ask Germany, the pigmy, to disarm. From the point of view of the public it is laughable and Machiavellian, and we shall never agree to anything of the sort." As found in Richard Hough, *Great War*, 13-14.

⁷³ Hough, *Great War*, 250-270

⁷⁴ The example given by Tirpitz is the sinking of the *Titanic*. He draws further examples from the sinking of the *HMS Audacious*, after striking one mine in 1914, to the *SMS Goeben*, which struck three mines and survived. In general, the German vessels outlasted their British counterparts in battle and could take a great deal more punishment. Tirpitz, *My Memoirs*, 172.

THE NAVAL BILLS

Nine years before the launch of the *Dreadnought* in Great Britain in 1906, Tirpitz' delivered his first Naval Bill (*Flottengesetz*) to the Reichstag, and on March 28, 1898, by 212 yes votes to 139 no votes, it passed into law. The opposition to the naval bill came mainly from the left wing parties, Social Democrats, in the Reichstag from the Southern States who could see no use or benefit for the increase in taxes to fund a primarily industrial measure since their economies were based on agriculture.⁷⁵ The Naval Bill released the Admiralty from the 1873 constraint to create of a small coastal defense navy, and called for the following increases:

- 1 Fleet flagship
- 18 Ships of the line (two in reserve to be decommissioned after 25 years)
- 8 Coastal armoured cruisers
- 12 Heavy cruisers (three in overseas service, and three in reserve to be decommissioned after 20 years)
- 30 Light cruisers (ten in overseas service, and four in reserve to be decommissioned after 15 years)⁷⁶

The law was to stay in effect until 1903 because of constant world crises; however, the bill did not foresee any of the inflation or construction changes that were to take place over the next two decades.⁷⁷ The "fleet fever" that

⁷⁵ Bulow, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, 248.

⁷⁶ *Die Deutschen Kriegsschiffe*, 42.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

gripped Germany in 1900 gave Tirpitz the incentive to submit a second Naval Bill to the Reichstag. Tirpitz's so-called "risk theory" was formulated in this second bill. Germany must have such a strong battle-fleet that the strongest sea-power would stand at danger of having its naval might questioned.⁷⁸

The fleet must be created in such a way, Tirpitz maintained in a memorandum sent throughout the navy, that its greatest war-endeavor would be a confrontation in the North Sea for which the German navy would strive to be so strong, that even with the numerical preponderance of the English fleet, the British would think carefully before attacking. Herein lies Tirpitz' political defense and tactical will to wage a defensive war with the "risk factor".⁷⁹ However, the guidelines of the first Naval Bill kept the Germans from keeping pace with the British navy.

The second Naval Bill improved upon the already outdated recommendations of the first, although British naval programs were still far ahead of Germany's. This bill called for the following.

2 Fleet Flagships
36 Battleships of the line (four in reserve)
14 Heavy cruisers (three in overseas service, three in reserve)

⁷⁸ Ibid., 43.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

38 Light cruisers (ten in overseas service, four in reserve)⁸⁰

The Naval Bill passed on June 12, 1900 with 201 votes in favor, 103 against. The bill was brought into motion in two days to become law.⁸¹ The law was amended three times from 1900 to 1912: to shorten the commission of the smaller cruisers and to add torpedo boats, three extra battleships, two light cruisers, and to plan for developing the U-Boat and air reconnaissance. Again the greatest opposition to the bill came from the Social Democrats. The Kaiser wanted Tirpitz to go before the Reichstag once more to explain that the larger warships have a shorter lifespan. Battleship designs improved from year to year and no sooner was a ship launched than it was already be obsolete. Tirpitz had to face the indignation of Reichstag representatives for his suggestion, and he ended up compromising by accepting a longer lifespan for the large ships.⁸² These debates and proceedings brought the final plans to include the following:

Active Duty:	1 Fleetflagship
	3 Squadrons comprising 24 battleships
	8 Heavy Cruisers (Battle cruisers)
	18 Light Cruisers
Reserves:	2 Squadrons comprising 18 battleships
	4 Battle cruisers

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Tirpitz, *Erinnerungen*, 172-173.

	12 Light Cruisers
Overseas:	8 Battle cruisers
	10 Lightcruisers
Plus:	108 Torpedoboats
	54 U-Boats and three supply ships
Material	36 Torpedoboats
Reserves:	18 U-Boats and 1 supply ship ⁸³

THE NAVAL ARMS RACE

The desire for strong navies touched every corner of the world. Naval shipyards were flooded with orders after the launch of the HMS *Dreadnought* in 1906. Germany laid down the keel of the SMS *Nassau* in 1908, and needed to deepen its ports and canals to harbor these giants. These vessels instantly made every warship upon the sea obsolete.

For two decades before World War I sales of battle-ships seemed to be in vogue. Naval yards from Vickers-Maxim and Armstrong Whitworth in Britain to Blohm, Voss, and Krupp in Germany, to New York Ship Building and Fore River in the United States and companies from France sent their representatives around the world to secure contracts.⁸⁴ Often these representatives would arrive on their own products seeking bids from lesser powers and impressing prospective buyers. Schichau, La Seyne of France, Orlando of Italy and Cramps of Philadelphia built cruisers, torpedo

⁸³ Die Deutschen Kriegsschiffe, 43-44.

⁸⁴ Richard Hough, *The Great Dreadnought: The Strange Story of the Mightiest Battleship of World War I*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 14.

craft, and light cruisers for countries that did not have the facilities to build their own. Argentina, Russia, Turkey, Portugal, Mexico, Peru, Chile, and Japan, which soon did not need outside help to build warships as the others did, presented an open market for the best salesmen.⁸⁵

The real boom had begun after the passing of the Navy Bills in Germany in 1900. The British response to the tremendous escalation planned was to step up Britain's own production.⁸⁶ Japan and America followed with their own bills, and the lesser powers felt compelled to try to build their own fleets. At one time Newcastle, England had 30,000 employees belonging to Armstrong, Whitworth and Co., which built every type of weapon and parts needed for a battleship.⁸⁷ Peace talks meant depression and Balkan troubles meant food in the stomach.

The history of the arms race in South America gives a perfect example of the fever which struck the world. It began with Chile's mistrust of Argentina over frontier disputes and was highlighted by the fact that Argentina

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Churchill, who was First Lord of the Admiralty during the Great War, explains British politics which could be easily persuaded into increases. "In the end a curious and characteristic solution was reached. The Admiralty had demanded six ships: the economists offered four: and we finally compromised on eight." As quoted in Hough, *Great War*, 14.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

owned a larger fleet. To tip the balance in its favor, Chile ordered two battleships in 1901. After seeing the financial bill, Chile reconsidered and the British navy purchased the vessels.⁸⁸ Argentina at that time ordered cruisers from Europe, and was followed by Brazil which decided it could gain security from its neighbor by enlarging its fleet with three battleships, a host of cruisers, and support craft. These were to be purchased at a pace that Argentina could not match and Brazil put a naval law into effect in 1904 to make sure of that.⁸⁹

When news arrived around the world of the building of the *Dreadnought*, Brazil decided that she too wanted a pair. The *Minas Geraes* and *Sao Paulo* were delivered in 1910. In 1908 Argentina passed a bill that would deliver two Dreadnoughts which were ordered from American shipyards. The uncontrollable plague spread throughout South America as the government of Uruguay ordered a cruiser from Germany. The lesser republics wanting to keep pace began to buy up older vessels from the greater powers. Peru asked France to sell off an old 6,000 ton armoured cruiser, which would be added to the two light cruisers ordered from Britain. Venezuela bought an old captured Spanish gunboat from the United States. Ecuador purchased an old torpedoboat, also captured

⁸⁸ Ibid., 18-19.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 18.

from Spain, to maintain the balance of power, although with whom heaven only knew.

The great race in South America came to an abrupt halt when Argentina could no longer afford the luxury of these mammoth battleships, which had brought the country almost to bankruptcy. Chile cancelled her orders for the super-Dreadnought *Rio De Janeiro* when Brazil considered selling her two Dreadnoughts and scrapped all plans for any to be built. The race in South America ended as quickly as it began.⁹⁰

The numbers of battleships ordered by South America seemed insignificant when compared to Europe. The slogan "We want eight! / And we won't wait!" rang throughout England.⁹¹ With the race in South America finished, shipyards seemed pressed for money, and lay-offs due to the cancelled orders left partially completed battleships to rust.

The seller shifted from South America to the Balkans and Turkey as the tensions in that region became unnerving for diplomats in the second decade of the Twentieth Century. The Chilean battleship *Rio De Janeiro* was purchased by the Ottoman Empire in 1913. To be called the *Sultan Osman I*, this super-Dreadnought threatened to upset the balance of power in the Mediterranean and Aegean seas. A second Dread-

⁹⁰ Ibid., 24-50.

⁹¹ Ibid.

nought the *Resshadieh*, also a cancelled South American, was ordered by Turkey.

The Greek government, alarmed by the prospect of having to face this colossus, looked to the United States for available battleships. The American navy responded by trying to dump a pair of ancient battleships, which could only have been expensive coffins. The *Kearsage* and *Kentucky* were designed so poorly that the U.S. Navy was eager to sell them. After inspection the Greeks wisely reconsidered. Months later the champion of peace, Woodrow Wilson, let the Greeks know that two pre-Dreadnoughts were open for sale. The *Idaho* and *Mississippi* were purchased immediately.⁹²

The Turkish government could by no means afford this 30 million dollar extravagance, for the *Sultan Osman I* and *Reshadieh*, and resorted to begging from its own populace for wedding-rings and donations to purchase the ships. Turkey could just make the price, and in 1914 sent a crew to take its prizes home after nearly four years of construction. The crisis in the Balkans hit its ultimate climax when the Austro-Hungarian heir to the throne was assassinated. Turkey's relationship to Germany was too close in the mind of the British Admiralty, and the delivery of the *Sultan*

⁹² These two ships were also obsolete because they were laid down just after the Dreadnought was launched. Harold Sprout, *The Rise of American Naval Power: 1776-1918*, (Princeton: University Press, 1966), 315.

Osman I was delayed.⁹³ The British fleet did not wish to face the *Sultan Osman I* or the *Reshadieh* in battle, and therefore the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, blocked delivery to Turkey and kept the ships for England. Turkish possession of the *Sultan Osman I* in the Dardanelles at that time would have meant no warship could pass through safely. The *Sultan Osman I* was given to the Grand Fleet and renamed HMS *Agincourt*.⁹⁴

CONCLUSION

It is important to record the world events and influential personalities when the German Empire created its fleet, in order to understand the *Hochseeflotte's* role in the First World War. Understanding the philosophy, which had evolved from such a short tradition, behind the administration of the navy it is possible to grasp why the use of the *Hochseeflotte* had been so regimented and slow to change.

⁹³ Barbara Tuchman, *The Guns of August*, (New York: MacMillan Company, 1964). 140. The British used rumors of a Greek plot to sink the *Sultan Osman I* to convince the Turks to agree to delay reception of the warship until the *Reshadieh* was completed for extra protection against submarines. Both warships were completed before hostilities broke out in Europe, yet the British stalled further by inventing problems and delaying trials until the ship could be requisitioned.

⁹⁴ Hough, *Dreadnought*, 109-123.

Germany with its naval program had been on a path to war with England. The evidence suggests that Tirpitz' "risk factor," Wilhelm's ambition for a respectable navy, and Germany's growing economic and military might did create an atmosphere of hostility and mistrust between England and Germany. Germany's disregard for Great Britain's security was manifested in its challenge to the latter's navy. The creation of the *Hochseeflotte* cannot be viewed as a toy for an ambitious ruler. It was a weapon to be used.

Naval power, or the quest for it, can be powerful tool in the development of national pride and national policy. The years before the outbreak of the Great War were nothing short of passionate when it came to the topic of naval power. For the German nation, however, this passion was not played out with the same vigor during the war, yet when Germany's fleet was used, it had a tremendous impact.

The battleship race between Germany and Great Britain produced by 1914 two mighty fleets which were put to the test on the waters of the North Sea on May 31 - June 1, 1916 at the Battle of Jutland. The contest did not affect the strength of the Grand Fleet or the *Hochseeflotte*, yet the lessons learned by both navies were important. Did the "risk factor" of Tirpitz work? The answer can be yes and no. The main antagonist of the German fleet did not desire to risk its navy in an apocalyptic showdown, but on the

other hand, the "risk factor" put the German fleet on the wrong course in the wrong sea.

CHAPTER II

THE ROLE OF THE GERMAN NAVY IN THE
FIRST TWO YEARS OF THE WAR

The assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his wife Sophie on June 28, 1914 sent a shock wave through the governments of Europe. Within a month the European continent would be near a state of war as the full mobilization of Europe's war machines began. Years of suspicion and rivalry between the powers had created vast armies and large modern navies; the young men of Europe waited eagerly to teach a lesson to the enemy as nationalistic fervor swept them at a feverish pace towards the battlefield.

The news of the assassination in Sarajevo reached the German Kaiser while he was aboard the yacht *Meteor*.¹ The elimination of the heir apparent to the Austro-Hungarian Empire was called by some loyal to the throne, oddly enough, a "dispensation of Providence."² The ill tempered and obstinate Archduke's hatred for the Czechs, Slavs, and Magyars made him an unlikeable man among his subjects. This

¹ Churchill did not dismiss the Royal Navy's reservists (doing duty on the Grand Fleet in naval exercises during the Summer of 1914), but he kept the Grand Fleet together although there was no war. Churchill, hence, planned to go to war with Germany.

² Bulow, *Memoirs*, vol. 3, 158.

predilection might possibly have made him an "inconvenient ally." However, Wilhelm received the news with great distress since the Archduke was a close friend. Wilhelm was soon over the tragedy, and his advisors found it difficult to keep the supposedly grief stricken Kaiser from giving up his plans for a regatta which he had hopes of winning.³

All the demands, causes, and events leading to First World War cannot be set forth in a study such as this. In brief, diplomacy failed to heal the wound of the assassination in the Balkans as Austrian demands for Serbian concessions were impossible to fulfill. The Blank Check or Germany's guarantee to support Austria in case of war, Russian mobilization, declarations of war, and the invasion of Belgium, albeit a confusing chain of events, would usher in four years of war. This war would be like no other before it in its many dimensions, where the introductions of gas attacks, airplanes, submarines, and tanks, to name a few. But above all these aspects, the first "Great War" of the twentieth century emphasized the dependency of the industrial nations on the sea.

The importance of the sea in the First World War dominated the planning and administration of the war effort for all belligerents. Since the Germans believed the war would be a short one, however, they did not devote all their

³ Ibid.

resources to the navy. The previous chapter detailed the industrial might of Germany and its need for secure sea lanes to maintain this power. The rest of Europe too, especially Great Britain with its vast empire, could not afford to let any enemy control the sea. The industrial centers of the European nations were dependent on raw materials to keep up war production, the bulk of which came from non-European countries.

The German navy stood its best chances of a possible victory over the slightly stronger British Grand Fleet in 1914--a disposition that the British Admiralty found uncomfortable. The chart below lists the relative strengths of the German and British fleets.

Comparative Strength of the British and German Navies⁴

Ship Types:	British	German
Dreadnoughts	20	13
Battle Cruisers	8	5
Pre-Dreadnoughts	40	22
Cruisers	102	41
Destroyers	301	144
Submarines	78	30

The operational orders in the British Admiralty were to engage German warships wherever they could be overwhelmed and send them to the bottom of the sea. The immediate use of the German *Hochseeflotte* or the small fleet of *Auslands-*

⁴ H. M. Le Fleming, *Warships of World War I*, (London: Ian Allen, n.d.) 5-288.

kreuzer was not seriously considered by the German High Command, and Germany had one main objective, the war on land as devised by the Schlieffen Plan.⁵

The operational orders for the German fleets were carried over from the original plans devised by Tirpitz. The *Hochseeflotte* was to attack only sections of the Grand Fleet until the Germans could force the British into a pitched battle. After the Grand Fleet was destroyed, the German *Hochseeflotte* would blockade the British Isles. The *Auslandskreuzer* were ordered to disrupt enemy trade and troop transports and attack enemy ports.⁶ The Baltic Fleet was to secure the German coast from a Russian amphibious assault, keep the sea lanes clear of mines, and protect German-Swedish trade.

WAR IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND ABROAD

Aside from the U-boat fleet, in the Mediterranean and Adriatic, the role of the German navy was slight. The

⁵ Ruge, *Seekrieg*, 5. The war plan was the brainchild of Count Alfred von Schlieffen. He formulated a quick and crushing war against the French in which a strong German force would cross through the north of France and Belgium, while a smaller army would divert the French army in the south pushing through near Alsace. Once France was out of the War, Germany could then direct its offensive against Russia.

⁶ See Appendix I for statistics and diagrams on German warships .

battle cruiser *Goeben* and the light cruiser *Breslau* were the only surface ships Germany had in the Mediterranean. Before the Germans declared war on France, Tirpitz relayed orders to the commanding officer, Admiral Wilhelm Souchon, that he was to proceed immediately to North Africa to disrupt French transport of 80,000 soldiers from Algeria. From the Austrian port of Pola on the Adriatic, the *Goeben* weighed anchor. Its boilers were in disrepair and leaking badly, and for 18 days work details effected temporary repairs to get the battle cruiser under steam prior to her departure. Souchon, aware of the political situation, began replacing 4,000 damaged pipes in the boilers in mid July.⁷

The movements of the *Goeben* and *Breslau* were carefully watched by the British Mediterranean Fleet. England had not yet declared war on Germany, however, and the British Admiralty's orders to Admiral Archibald Milne were to screen both German vessels. If the Germans attacked the French transports or in case of war, the *Goeben* should be brought to action, but not against superior forces.⁸ The force in question was the Austrian fleet which with the *Goeben* and

⁷ Julian Corbett, *Official History of the War: Naval Operations; History of the Great War*, vol. 1, (London: Cassel & Co., 1934), 54-55, and Geoffrey Bennet, *Naval Battles of the First World War*, (New York: Scribners, 1968), 27-29 give a thorough military account. Tuchman, *August*, 143. See also Tirpitz, *Erinnerungen*, 302-303.

⁸ Winston Churchill, *World Crisis*, vol. 4, (New York: Scribners; 1929). 237-238.

Breslau constituted a "superior force" to that of the British. The instructions to Milne, however, did not clearly specify exactly what was a superior force, since the Admiralty believed that Milne would have understood that orders meant the Austrians. With this misunderstanding, coupled with Milne's incompetence, the *Goeben* and *Breslau* were neither captured or sunk by the British.⁹ The German ships moved unhindered through the Mediterranean towards the North African coast.

Souchon failed to catch the French when he reached Algeria, for the bulk of the transports had already departed. On August 4, Souchon was ordered to turn his ships around, abandon efforts to disrupt the troop transports, and make a run for Constantinople. The British were still hot on his trail and Souchon was running out of coal. The German war-ships made an attempt at catching at least a small number of the transports, but these too eluded them, and Souchon ordered his ships to shell the French Algerian ports of Phillippeville and Bone and then sail for Turkey.¹⁰

⁹ Richard Hough, *Admiral of the Fleet: The life of John Fisher*, (New York: MacMillan Co., 1969), 315.

¹⁰ The Germans had formed a secret Offensive-Defensive Alliance with the Turks. With the British acquisition of the *Sultan Osman I* and *Reshadieh*, the Turks were pushed towards the Germans, and the time seemed right now since Turkish public opinion of the British was not favorable. Wilhelm II further solidified his good rapport with the Turks by "offering" the *Goeben* and *Breslau* as a gift from the German people.

Since England and Germany were not yet at war, the British battle cruisers *Indefatigable* (20,000 tons) and *Indomitable* (17,000-20,000 tons) could do little else but follow the Germans to Messina as ordered.¹¹

Milne reported the German's position to the Admiralty, yet the direction of movement was omitted. Once more the orders to Milne were to engage the *Goeben* only if it intended to attack the transports. The German and English warships passed within fighting range, but could do little but stare each other down. Neither side wished to create an international incident nor give the other a pretext for war. The *Goeben* made for Messina again to coal, and prepared to sail to Constantinople.¹²

War with Germany was only hours away as Great Britain's Foreign Secretary Edward Grey's ultimatum expired. Tirpitz' order for Souchon to proceed to Turkey was changed, and the fate of the *Goeben* was left to its commander.¹³ Souchon decided to elude the British, who waited at the northern

¹¹ Churchill, *World Crisis*, vol. 1, 240-241, and Georg Alexander Von Muller, *The Kaiser and His Court; The Diaries, Notebooks and letters of Admiral Georg Alexander von Muller Chief of the Naval Cabinet, 1914-1918*, Walter Gorlitz editor, (London: MacDonald, 1961), 16-17.

¹² Churchill, *World Crisis*, vol. 1, 242. Corbett, *Naval History*, vol. 1, 60. See also Eduard von Mantey, *The War At Sea: The Mediterranean Division*, vol. 1, Translated from the German, (Office of Naval Intelligence, 1928), 1-15.

¹³ Tirpitz, *Erinnerungen*, 302. See also Muller, *The Kaiser*, 16.

exit of Messina and believed the Germans were attempting to head for Gibraltar. He steered the *Goeben* to the southern exit then north to the Adriatic during daylight. His ploy to trick the British cruiser *Gloucester* (4,800 tons), which kept a safe distance, into thinking he would attempt to make a run for Austria seemed to work as planned, Souchon's position during daylight hours persuaded the British that he would keep his course and sail into Rear Admiral Ernest Troubridge's squadron of four armored cruisers and eight destroyers.

At nightfall the *Goeben* altered course due east. The *Gloucester* was able to understand the German admiral's gamble and telegraphed Troubridge. Troubridge, however, declined to attack a "superior force" and left the *Gloucester* to pursue the Germans alone. Souchon tried to shake the cruiser by ordering the *Breslau* to fall back and maneuver in order to confuse the British. The attempt failed and salvos from the warships were exchanged at long distance. Neither side scored any hits, and the chase was resumed. What the German attempt failed to do, Admiral Milne completed. At 4:30 pm August 7 the *Gloucester* was commanded to disengage.¹⁴

Milne's battle cruisers took on coal in Malta and weighed anchor early morning August 8. Meanwhile Souchon

¹⁴ Newbolt, *Naval*, 33-35.

was able to haul in coal unhindered in the Aegean and resume his voyage. Milne guessed that Souchon still thought of heading west into his waiting fleet; therefore, his pursuit of the *Goeben* proceeded at a slow 12 knots to conserve coal.¹⁵ Neither he nor the British Admiralty could believe the German admiral would violate Turkish neutrality.¹⁶ Souchon was surely trapped in the Aegean, and it would be only a matter of time to find him. The time never came.

The *Goeben* and *Breslau* did escape, and their arrival to a mixed welcome in Constantinople brought Turkey into the war. Souchon notified the German naval attache' in Constantinople: "Indispensable military necessity requires attack upon enemy in Black Sea." Further instructions read: "Go to any lengths to arrange for me to pass through Straits at once with permission of Turkish Government if possible, without if necessary."¹⁷

Space does not allow more detail to this fascinating drama. The Turks were brought into the war on 28 October 1914 after Turkish destroyers aided the *Goeben* and *Breslau* in an action in the Black Sea. One Russian gun boat was sunk, and the ports of Sevastopol, Odessa, and Feodosiya were shelled. The Black Sea was closed to the Entente and

¹⁵ Corbett, *Naval History*, vol. 1, 68.

¹⁶ Tuchman, *August*, 157.

¹⁷ As quoted in Tuchman. Ibid.

Russia's only supply routes thus became Arkhangelsk in the White Sea and the distant Pacific ports.

The *Goeben* played an important role in prolonging the First World War, yet abroad the fortunes of war for the German navy was not so positive. The German China squadron experienced a short and dramatic career in the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. Since the *Auslandskreuzer* lacked ports to operate from, the British, Australian, and Japanese navies were able to force the Far Eastern Squadron out of the Pacific war.

THE BATTLE OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

Admiral Maximilian von Spee commanded some of the best trained crews in the German fleet. Under his leadership the German navy presented his *Vaterland* its first naval victory against the redoubtable British navy.¹⁸ The defeat of Rear Admiral Christopher Craddock at the Battle of Coronel on November 1, 1914 created a wave of finger pointing in the British Admiralty and apoplexy about the invincibility of

¹⁸ The *Kreuzergeschwader* consisted of the *Scharnhorst* (Flag), *Gneisenau*, *Nurnberg*, *Leipzig*, and *Dresden*, but even with their considerable firepower and threat to British trade, they lacked refueling capabilities which shortened their effectiveness. Their only hope of returning to German ports was through captured coal and a cruise from the Pacific around South America into the Atlantic.

the British navy in a pitched battle. At the same time, on the homefronts of Germany and Britain, the news had obvious results. Craddock, it seems, was under great stress, for he did not wish to be the first fleet admiral to turn tail and run. Craddock led his doddering fleet against von Spee and was killed.¹⁹

On Sunday December 6, 1914, von Spee convened a briefing during which he outlined his attack against the Falkland Islands. The *Gneisenau* and *Nurnburg* were to arrive at Port Stanley at 8:00 am and capture whatever provisions could be of use to the cruiser squadron. After this all coal supplies and works, harbor installations, ships, and telegraph stations were to be destroyed. Further, von Spee wanted the governor to be taken prisoner as a retaliation to the capture of the German governor of Samoa by the British.²⁰

On the morning of the 8th, at 5:00, the two cruisers were dispatched to proceed on a northerly course at 14 knots while the rest of the fleet slowed its speed to catch up later. The smoke from the two cruisers could be seen throughout the mission and helped maintain visual contact for three to four hours. Near Port Stanley, an unusual

¹⁹ His flagship the *Good Hope* and *Monmouth* were sunk. The *Glasgow* and the merchantman *Otranto* escaped.

²⁰ Records of the German Navy, Korvettenkapitaen Pochhammer, "Bericht uber die Schlacht bei den Falkland-inseln am 8. Dezember 1914."

amount of smoke filled the air above the harbor. The tops of ship's masts could be seen at a distance; these soon turned out to be smoke stacks of British warships.²¹

The imminent danger was not at first recognized by Captain Maerker aboard the *Gneisenau*. He wired that he believed the heavy smoke could be from burning coal installations, and that the warships were two to four in number, the largest being armored cruisers *Monmouth* class (9,800 tons, and the smaller *Glasgow* class (4,800 tons). At 8:45 am Maerker ordered battle stations. Fifteen minutes later heavy shells crashed around ship from the direction of Port Stanley. Maerker prepared to steer towards his attacker when von Spee ordered him not to engage the enemy but to proceed at 18 knots on an easterly course to rendezvous with the rest of the squadron.²²

From 9:00 to 12:00 noon the four British ships turned out to be six, and two of these were battle cruisers of the *Invincible* class. Nothing in von Spee's squadron could out-gun or out-run the battle cruisers, and at 12:38 the first salvos from the *Invincible* were fired. The British ships used their advantages of firepower and speed to keep enough distance between themselves and the German squadron to

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

maintain a flurry of fire without being in danger of being hit themselves.²³

Just as at Coronel, von Spee could in no way use his fighting force effectively against an elusive foe. His only option was to try to outrun the British, which was not feasible either. Both lines of ships were in a running fight at 20 knots and a range of 15,000 to 17,000 yards. A light breeze and good visibility should have presented excellent targets for both sides. However, an enormous yellow-brown cloud of smoke from his stacks, along with the powder flashes, hid Vice-Admiral Frederick Sturdee's battle cruisers, and made it all the more difficult for the British spotting officers to direct their fire.

Von Spee's 6-inch guns had a range of 13,000-14,000 yards, and his 8.2 calibers could only be used accurately at 12,000-13,000 yards. Given the sporadic firing of the British cruisers, von Spee moved his cruisers within range at 11,000 yards at 1:40. The British broke off the engagement for a moment to get out of range, and then changed course to circle von Spee and gain a better vantage point on the Germans.²⁴

Spee attempted to distance himself by steaming to the south-east. For approximately one hour the fire was halted

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

on both sides. The *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* took the opportunity to inspect damages. Since there were no survivors from the *Scharnhorst*, only the *Gneisenau* reports indicate the extent of damage caused by the British shells. Aboard the latter cruiser two heavy shell hits killed one man and wounded ten others. A 12-inch shell crashed into the junior lieutenants' quarters and caught them afire, but the life boats above were filled with sea water which kept the fire from spreading. It also damaged the port steering compartment and sent splinters and shell fragments into the officers' mess, kitchen and quarters. The second shell detonated behind the third smoke stack and temporarily put one 8.2-inch casemate out of action. In all, however, the effect from the lydite shells was weaker than expected. The wireless communication between the *Gneisenau* and *Scharnhorst* indicated that the damage to von Spee's flagship was also slight.²⁵

At 1:50 Sturdee knew or was informed of the Germans' movement. Von Spee's run to the southeast had put a great deal of distance between him and Sturdee. It was not until 2:25 at a range of 15,000 yards, that the *Invincible* could renew action. The Germans turned to port to again close the gap to almost 10,000 yards. At such a close range the impact of the British shells began to take a heavy toll on the

²⁵ Ibid.

ships' company and equipment. The shells cut through the steel plates and decks. The damage, though severe, was negated by weak explosive power, but the constant stream of shells riddled the German ships full of holes. The water spouts from the many near hits forced seawater into ships.²⁶

The *Scharnhorst* had a tremendous hole in its port side which increased her draft by six feet. One stack was knocked over and flames engulfed the ships aft. With the situation desperate, von Spee opted to sacrifice his flagship to save the rest of his squadron. At around 3:35 he turned his ship to starboard and wired; "*Beabsichtige Torpedoangriff; versuchen zu entkommen.*" [Attempting torpedo attack; try to escape] His ship was already listing to port and taking on more water. His forward turret fired off one more salvo, after which the *Scharnhorst* went down with all hands including von Spee.²⁷

The *Gneisenau* was so shot to pieces that it could manage only 16 knots. Most of its guns still operated despite the mayhem caused by British shells. The *Gneisenau* too steered toward the two battle cruisers and the armored

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid. The British reports indicate the *Scharnhorst* sank at 4:17 pm. See Barrie Pitt, *Revenge at Sea; Two Great Battles of World War I*, (New York: Stein and Day, 1964), 116.

cruiser and closed within 9,000 yards. Further damage to the boiler tubes and engines slowed the ship down even more. With the fire of three ships against one the carnage must have been devastating. A further 12-inch shell destroyed the forward starboard 8.2-inch casemate and killed the entire complement. The same shell cut through the ship and knocked out the opposite 8.2 gun on the port side. Only the forward turret to Captain Maerker's ship remained in the fight, however the turret soon ran out of ammunition. Fire from the *Gneisenau* halted for a short time to bring up further shells, and this pause and the fact that the ensign could not be seen, gave the impression that the German ship had struck the flag. The battle cruisers halted fire, but soon the *Gneisenau* resumed fire and the British did likewise.²⁸

Shortly before 5:20 the chief engineer reported that the boilers could no longer produce steam. Upon this report Maerker ordered his ship to be abandoned and charges to be set to scuttle. His decision to scuttle the *Gneisenau* was a foregone conclusion. The battle damage inflicted by the British had already finished his ship. Within twenty minutes the ship capsized and sank with nearly all hands including the captain. Only 188 men survived.²⁹

²⁸ Ibid.

The light cruisers *Nurnberg*, *Leipzig*, and *Dresden* had detached early in the engagement to use their speed to escape. Of these three only the *Dresden* got away. The *Leipzig* was destroyed by the *Glasgow* and *Cornwall* at 9:23 pm, and the *Kent* sank the *Nurnberg* at 7:27 pm.³⁰

Besides von Spee's squadron, there were scattered throughout the world a small number of commerce raiders, light cruisers bearing the names *Emden*, *Koenigsberg*, *Karlsruhe*, and *Dresden*, and converted liners and merchantmen. By April of 1915 all the cruisers were sunk or scuttled. The impact on British and French shipping left by the scattered auxiliary raiders proved to be more effective than that of their powerful comrades.³¹ These used disguise as their greatest weapon to lure their victims into traps.

CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE KREUZERKRIEG

²⁹ Ibid. Maerker had been opposed to the idea of sailing into the Falkland Islands. Any contact with the British, he believed would give away the squadron's position and strength. In his dialogue with von Spee during the battle, the Admiral acknowledged his subordinate's advice. "You were right after all." As quoted in Pitt, *Revenge*, 175.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ The career of the *Emden*, commanded by Captain Karl von Muller, was a brilliant one. Muller's achievements demanded respect: he sank one Russian cruiser, a French destroyer, and sank six other ships and captured seven before being outgunned by the HMAS *Sydney* on November 9, 1914. Records of the German Navy, pg. 62742.

The German Admiralty came to the following conclusions in regard to cruiser warfare. The most important problem in waging cruiser warfare was coal and supply logistics. It was most opportune to coal at sea, since it would be least likely for the enemy to carry out a surprise attack at such a moment. The second option was to coal in either a German, neutral, or enemy port. It was clear that one's own stations, especially with a superior foe, would be guarded or blockaded, and that docking in such ports must be avoided, whereas enemy or neutral ports would not be blockaded. The neutral port had the greatest advantage to protect against a surprise attack and could not be occupied by enemy forces for an extensive period of time. The use of these ports was called into question with the intervention of neutral armed forces, and the Germans had to be careful to respect the rights of the neutrals according to the Convention Concerning the Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers in Naval War, Articles 1 and 5. Holland, for example, had in this war hindered and taken issue with the lay-over of colliers in its ports. The last option left would be enemy ports. When none of these options were available, the only option that remained was coaling at sea, preferably close to neutral shores.³²

³² Ibid., "Erfahrungen in Bezug' auf Fhrung des Kreuzerkrieges."

The construction of the cruisers and fast colliers had to encompass such problems as coaling at sea. The question arose whether it would be more feasible to detach colliers or keep them close by during the voyages. The preferable alternative was to have them at hand, since it would be less likely for them to be captured or sunk by the enemy. And if the colliers were captured in the presence of the cruiser, the exact disposition would be immediately known, whereas if detached, its fate would become a guessing game. A further advantage of having the colliers close by was that this made it possible to bring captured crews aboard the colliers, and that favorable weather and time considerations improved coaling opportunities.³³

The details and problems presented in waging cruiser warfare were deeply complex and extensive. It would be foolhardy to speculate on the differences these ships would have presented had they been used in the home waters around Germany. These ships were already committed. No doubt the lessons learned about the Falkland naval engagement proved invaluable to the Germans. The most important was the weakness of the British twelve-inch shells. The loss of all these ships did not affect the German war effort in the North Sea or Baltic Sea as much as did the absence of the *Goeben*.

³³ Ibid.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BALTIC

Trade with the Baltic neutrals was of vital importance to all concerned; foremost was that with Sweden. Sweden needed British coal, and British exports were the strength of Britain's bargaining power, for coal was still the chief fuel to power industrial machinery. With this trump card Britain could describe to the Swedes what it considered to be contraband and thereby impose a tighter blockade on Germany.³⁴

Russo-Swedish trade was small, but important. Russia needed Swedish machinery to help its war effort since it was so ill provided in a technological war. Sweden was also Russia's only line of railway communication with the allies. British Foreign Minister Grey feared that Russo-Swedish relations were never salutary, and under such precarious conditions as these, the antagonism would affect Swedish policy towards Great Britain and its allies. Germany and the Central powers would be favored by default.³⁵

³⁴ A. C. Bell, ed., *Official History of the War; A History of the Blockade of Germany and Countries Associated with Her in the Great War: Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey 1914-1918*, (London: Historical Section, Committee of Imperial Defense, n.d.), 82-84. Hereafter cited as *Blockade*.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

The control of the Baltic Sea was of equal concern for both the Russians and Germans. Consequently, the strongest navy in that sea would be able to dictate its own commerce as well as that of its enemies. However, from the outset of the war the *Reichsmarineamt* decided that the main theater of war would be the North Sea; therefore, only a small part of Germany's naval forces were allocated for the defense of the Baltic.

Russian industry depended upon foreign capital and resources to feed its fledgling factories. Much of its efforts to catch up to the rest of Europe was actively supported by all resources of the autocratic monarchy. Hence, from the mid-19th Century to the outbreak of World War I, subsidies, loans, premiums, tax reductions, and other benefits were available to private entrepreneurs to help ease the agricultural Russian past into an industrial future. Since Russian industrialization started later than in most of the other leading powers, it was possible to secure capital, expertise, and machinery from other nations. This proved to be a two edged sword, for it benefited rapid growth, but it also made Russia dependent on outside resources.³⁶

Russia benefited from the advances of modern industry; however, its development was kept in check by backwardness.

³⁶ Henderson, *Industrial Revolution*, 202-203.

The railway and road networks were inadequate. Rivers, the only other means of transportation, and harbors on the Baltic, White, and Black Seas were frozen in the winter. Russia had only a small mercantile fleet which lacked a warm-water port from which to operate. Therefore, much of its overseas trade was transported in the hulls of foreign ships and stored in foreign ports during the winter months.³⁷ The failure of Russia's economy was almost assured if the Russian Baltic Fleet did not break the German blockade.

From the outbreak of the war to its finish in the East with the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on December 15, 1917, the German navy never lost control of the passages leading into the Baltic Sea. A comparison of the Russian Baltic Fleet and the German Baltic Fleet illustrates that the Russians had the greater number of modern surface ships with greater firepower.³⁸ Yet the Russian navy could not open up the

³⁷ Ibid., 203-204, 231-240. Much of Russia's industrial backwardness could be attributed to the isolation of Russia from western Europe. Social changes that had swept across France, England, and Germany hundreds of years before, were just now coming to Russia. The most apparent was the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, but even this failed to lift the giant. Uneducated serfs or liberated uneducated serfs could contribute little to stimulate progress, and instead the pain of industrial expansion imposed upon the oftentimes unwilling peasant generated unrest.

³⁸ The Russian navy possessed four dreadnought type battleships and battle cruisers; however, the Russian Admiralty was reluctant to sacrifice these against the larger *Hochseeflotte*, and resolved to keep its giants caged

vital flow of goods from the West, and this strained the ability to fight. The Russians could not penetrate the German mine barrages in the west and were content to seal up their half of the Baltic.

Much of the war in the Baltic Sea was fought with mines. In the Irben Strait alone up to 10,000 mines were laid in a period of thirty days. Although Germany controlled the passages into the Baltic, the Russians controlled the Gulf of Finland and Gulf of Riga. Both sides, including Great Britain, waged a determined war against enemy commerce.

The Grand Fleet with all its might was helpless to offer relief to the Russian nation by smashing the German Baltic blockade. A forcing of the Danish Sound would not only endanger relations with the Scandinavians, but the loss of material was estimated as astronomical. Small forces of German war-ships could deal a death blow to the Grand Fleet in such constricted channels.³⁹ The weaker Turkish defenses in the Dardanelles appealed to the War Council and appeared to the First Lord of the Admiralty as a cheaper alternative.

Lord John Fisher decided to give in to Churchill's "pet" which soon turned out to be a "monster," and devised operational orders and plans to use older battleships to

in the Gulf of Finland. These ships never experienced the baptism of fire. See Appendix at end of text.

³⁹ Blockade, 20-21.

force the Dardanelles. The entire campaign from beginning to end was a military disaster and politically damaging for Churchill, and a rueful error on Fisher's part. Fisher had since 1908 envisioned a plan to invade Germany along the Pomeranian coast. His project meant, "victory by land and sea. It was simply history repeating itself. Frederick the Great, for the only time in his life (on hearing the Russians had landed), was frightened and sent for poison."⁴⁰ Fisher postulated that the geography of the Pomeranian coast "has not shifted, and a million Russian soldiers could have been landed within eighty-two miles of Berlin."⁴¹

Churchill was at first in agreement with Fisher about the importance of the Baltic to the war effort. He wrote:

My dear Fisher,

I am wholly with you about the Baltic. But you must close up this side first. You must take an island and block them in 'a la Wilson; or you must break the [Kiel] Canal or the locks, or you must cripple their Fleet in a general action. No scattering of mines will be any substitute for these alternatives.

The Baltic is the only theater in which naval action can appreciably shorten the war. Denmark must come in, and the Russians be let loose on Berlin.

There are 4 good Russian Dreadnoughts.⁴²

The uncomfortable disposition of the German defense against such an assault was admitted by Admiral Reinhard Scheer. If the British had attacked as Fisher's plans called for in the

⁴⁰ As quoted in Hough, *Admiral of the Fleet*, 329.

⁴¹ As quoted in *Ibid.*, 329.

⁴² As quoted in *Ibid.*, 330.

first weeks of the war, the Germans might have been beaten.⁴³

The invasion and relief of Russia via the Baltic never came to realization. Envisioning a slaughter, the Admiralty, under Churchill's direction, opted to nourish Russia via the Black Sea or the mistakenly called "soft underbelly" of the Central Powers.⁴⁴

THE LOSS OF THE MAGDEBURG

The German navy suffered its greatest defeat in the Baltic. Though the loss of one light cruiser seemed an unfortunate setback yet did not at first seem to cause any immediate tactical complications, the eventual repercussions proved disastrous. The SMS *Magdeburg* was the most modern cruiser assigned to the Baltic Fleet, but her inventory of maps, charts, and codebooks was more important than her fighting trim.

On August 25, 1914, SM Tpdbt. V 26, SMS *Magdeburg*, SM Tpdbt. V 186, and the light cruiser SMS *Augsburg* were directed to lay out new mine barrages in the Gulf of Finland. V 26 and the *Magdeburg* planned to set their barrage just north of island of Odensholm. Heavy fog

⁴³ Ibid., 333.

⁴⁴ Fisher, *Memories*, 56.

obscured visual bearing, so that from the bridge of the warship nothing could be seen past the bow. As a result the cruiser and torpedo boat lost contact numerous times during the mission. Around Midnight V 26 had its last sighting with the cruiser. Korvettenkapitaen Roeder remarked that his soundings indicated that they were headed for a land mass; therefore, he gave the order to alter course. At 12:30 the destroyer steamed on north-easterly, and Roeder remarked that he construed the *Magdeburg* did the same.⁴⁵

The *Magdeburg's* commander, Korvettenkapitaen Habenicht, failed to realize its peril until too late. A violent concussion shook the entire ship, and Habenicht believed he had struck a Russian mine. Then since no detonation was heard, he surmised that he had run aground. The *Magdeburg* tried in vain to free itself. As a precaution Habenicht ordered all documents and books not vitally needed to be burned and the others to be collected to prevent capture.⁴⁶ Habenicht informed Roeder of his situation and told him to complete his mission.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Records of the German Navy, "Abschleppversuch S.M.S. *Magdeburg* und Gefecht S.M. Tpdbt. B 26 am 26 August 1914 bei Odesholm."

⁴⁶ Matti Makela, *Das Geheimnis der Magdegurg. Die Geschichte des Kleinen Kreuzers und die Bedeutung seiner Signalbucher im Ersten Weltkrieg*, (Koblenz: Bernard & Graefe Verlag, 1984), 37-38.

⁴⁷ Records of the German Navy, "Abschleppversuch."

V 26 carried out its assignments in the Gulf of Finland until 1:45--the cut-off time to complete the operation--and began to search for Habenicht. The approximate position of the cruiser was relayed by wireless, but still poor visibility hindered search efforts. Habenicht wired V 26 that his position was desperate, that he could not free himself alone. The destroyer, at times losing its own bearing, crept along slowly and communicated with siren and horn as its searchlight scanned the black expanse.⁴⁸ Meanwhile the *Magdeburg's* crew was commanded to set charges in order to destroy the ship if needed.

Roeder steered towards Odensholm where his last contact with the *Magdeburg* had been. After nearly four hours of searching the sounds of work details fighting to save the ship finally revealed the position at 5:03.⁴⁹ Unfortunately for Habenicht, the Russian observation station on Odensholm also heard the noise and wired its Chief of Communications that German voices were heard. The 6th Destroyer Flotilla was ordered to investigate.⁵⁰

The German destroyer attempted twice to use tow lines to dislodge the *Magdeburg* and twice the lines snapped. The

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Makela, *Magdeburg*, 44-45. Harald Graf, *The Russian Navy in War and Revolution; From 1914 up to 1918*, (Munich: R. Oldenburg, 1923), 4.

failures confirmed Habenicht's worst fears; eyewitness reports stated that tears filled his eyes as he ordered his ship to be destroyed. V 26 was requested to stand by, and the *Magdeburg* released its final salvos against the Odesholm station and set it ablaze.⁵¹

As V 26 moved in closer to the cruiser, groups of crew members began to leap off the *Magdeburg's* decks into the water and swim towards the destroyer. All but 150 men which remained aboard to set the charges. V 26 was forced to stop and hurl life preservers and vests to the men in the water. Roeder's crew had to pull all these aboard before he could try once more to free the cruiser. Habenicht signaled the torpedo boat to "go back, this ship will soon explode." Roeder took it upon himself to ignore the order and try to save those still aboard the *Magdeburg*. Around 40 to 50 men were still in the water as V 26 eased towards the cruiser, and owing to poor visibility, these men were in grave danger of being dismembered by the destroyer's screws. At that time the fore part of the *Magdeburg* detonated tearing off huge pieces of metal, and the force of the explosion ripped the ship apart as far as the second smoke stack. Chunks of steel rained down upon V 26 and the helpless men in the

⁵¹ Ibid. Records of the German Navy, "Abschleppversuch."

water. V 26 escaped damage, but others were not as lucky and were injured or crushed to death.⁵²

Again the *Magdeburg* warned that charges in the aft section would soon explode. Roeder made up his mind to steer up to the cruiser and make sure that the rest of her crew could be saved. The cruiser was emptied of all but six of its crew and the captain who opted to stay with his ship. Forty-five of the crew swam for land. During this melee the signal books and charts were lost and their destruction presumed. V 26 proceeded to pull the rest of the water bound men aboard.⁵³

At around 9:10 the Roeder's look-outs spotted a cruiser at 2,500 yards with three stacks which he believed to be the *Augsburg* which had also been informed by wireless to offer assistance. As normal procedures dictated, Roeder ordered all hands to their battle-stations. The decks were now permeated with men, and some of the *Magdeburg's* crew complied with the orders and stood by to offer their help. As a second four-stack cruiser appeared, Roeder identified them by their type and color as the Russian cruisers *Bogatyr* and *Pallada*.⁵⁴

⁵² Records of the German Navy, "Abschleppversuch."

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

V 26 began to increase its speed to affect an escape. Roeder released his armament crews to fire at will. The Russian cruisers responded. The *Bogatyr* and *Pallada* salvos landed within minutes as V 26 maneuvered around the *Magdeburg* to avoid destruction and to bring her torpedo tubes to bear. Roeder was in a bad predicament, for he could not possibly outgun two cruisers, each with twice his weight in broadsides, nor could he maneuver in the shallow water. The situation became even more desperate since he could not fire off any torpedos, for the human mass on his decks made it difficult for the V 26 crew to get to the tubes. Sincere attempts by the *Magdeburg's* crew to bring V 26 tubes into action failed because they were unfamiliar with the operating procedures. Therefore, Roeder's greatest concern was putting distance between him and the Russians.⁵⁵

After ten minutes into the action V 26 could finally steer into deeper water and bring her speed to 30 knots. At that moment a Russian shell sailed across the front deck tearing eight men overboard to their death. Roeder gazed back and noticed steam coming out of his port turbine room. He realized he had been hit. Men, scalded by boiling water, began to pile out of the engine room. The steam also forced the port torpedo tubes to be abandoned. The starboard

⁵⁵ Ibid.

turbine could only manage 23 knots, but this was enough speed for Roeder's escape.⁵⁶

The Russian destroyer *Lieutenant Bourakoff* moved in close to the wreck. Miscommunications nearly resulted in disaster for the Russian Baltic Fleet. The 6th Destroyer Flotilla believed that only they had been ordered to investigate; therefore, when the *Pallada* and *Bogatyr* returned they were mistaken for Germans. The destroyer fired off a torpedo which missed. After recognition signals were exchanged, the guns were silenced.⁵⁷

The Lt. *Bourakoff* sent a boarding party to the *Magdeburg*. The vital signal books were captured intact on deck where they had fallen. Habenicht and 45 of his crew were captured and were sent to prisoner-of-war camps in Siberia. A further code book was found by divers investigating the accident site. It still was in the clutches of the drowned officer in charge of them.⁵⁸ One of these copies was immediately delivered to the British Admiralty. The German Admiralty could not be sure of the status of the

⁵⁶ Ibid. Roeder gave up any grand notion of bringing his torpedos into action after the shell hit, since he could not believe his speed could be maintained for long. Furthermore, the fog still obscured his vision. The action lasted 15 minutes and V 26 fired off 106 shells.

⁵⁷ Graf, *Russian Navy*, 6.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

codebooks but decided not to change the codes--a decision which cost them dearly.

CONCLUSION

The Russian Empire failed to control the Baltic Sea and could not depend on allied aid through its waters since the German fleet was the stronger. The White Sea and Sea of Japan were too remote, for Russia's railway system was too backward to aid the troops on the battlelines. The Black Sea, cut off from the Mediterranean by the Turkish control of the Dardanelles, was of no use. The Austro-Hungarian Empire, too, failed to use its small fleet in the Adriatic against the French, Italian, and British. England nearly failed to regain naval supremacy from the German U-Boat.⁵⁹

The history of the German navy from 1914-1916 had a profound effect on the outcome of the war. The *Goeben* sealed off Russia from the south and gave Germany another ally. The "victory" at Jutland not only boosted moral but sealed Russia's doom. Although greater losses of life occurred at the Somme, Marne, Ypres, or Tannenberg, the war at sea dictated who would be the victor and who the vanquished.

⁵⁹ Ruge, *Seekrieg*, xi.

CHAPTER III

THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND AND ITS IMPACT ONTHE BALTIC SEA AND BLOCKADE

During the war, the prevailing thought for the German and British admiralties was a search for a decisive action to sweep the North Sea clear of the enemy. Both the Grand Fleet and the *Hochseeflotte* were designed for that very purpose; however, naval warfare between two massive fleets like the *Hochseeflotte* or Grand Fleet had no historical precedent. The lesson of Tsushima in 1905, when the Russian Baltic fleet was destroyed during the Russo-Japanese War by Admiral Togo, was by now outdated. Tshushima became a lesson in what not to do.

The recent Battle of Dogger Bank January 22-23, 1915, also did not encompass a fleet action of such a magnitude.¹ However, lessons learned by the Germans, in regard to the battle cruiser *Seydlitz*, at Dogger Bank encouraged the Germans to improve their damage control methods. The effects of the British shells could be thouroughly re-

¹ The Germans had three battle cruisers, one armored cruiser, four light cruisers, and nineteen destroyers -- 27 ships. The British command had forty-seven which ships included five battle cruisers.

searched, and battle tactics could be drawn from these and from the action off the Falkland Islands. Each side had fired nearly 1000 heavy shells. The British battle cruiser *Lion* was forced to retire and the German armored cruiser *Bluecher* was sunk.²

The British plan for the decisive action in the North Sea was the hinge on which the greater scheme for the Admiralty's administration of the naval war moved. While the combined British and French forces were suffering staggering losses in the Dardanelles, Admiral Fisher's impatience with the Admiralty grew. He believed Churchill had underestimated the resolve of the Turkish defense of the Dardanelles and Gallipoli. Fisher lamented that he was opposed to Churchill's plan from its inception. He believed that the war could have been shortened by an aggressive move against the Baltic. Attacking in the Dardanelles, he wrote, "proved so contestable to them [War Council] that cutting off the enemy's big toe in the east was better than stabbing him to the heart in the west," and further, "that the Dardanelles was better than the Baltic, and that Gallipoli knocked spots off the Kiel Canal, or a Russian army landed by the British Fleet on the Baltic shore of Schleswig-Holstein." Fisher threatened Churchill with his resignation

² Langhorne Gibson, and Vice-Admiral J.E.T. Harper, *The Riddle of Jutland: An Authentic History*, (New York: Coward-McCann, 1934), 61-67. See also appendix 1 *Hochseeflotte*.

if he did not cease from "seducing men from private shipyards to become cannon-fodder."³

The overall plan of operation which led to the Battle of Jutland was then revealed to the creator of the modern battlefleet. Fisher later recalled: "I remember that at the War Council held on January 28, 1915, Mr. Churchill announced that the real purpose of the navy was to obtain access to the Baltic, and he illustrated that there were three naval phases." The first phase was the clearing of the outer seas; and that had been accomplished with the destruction of von Spee and the rest of the *Auslandskruezer*. The second phase was the sweeping of the North Sea. And the third phase was the clearing of the Baltic. Churchill stressed the importance of the latter operation, because Germany always had been and was afraid of being attacked in the Baltic. "For this purpose special vessels were needed" Churchill explained, "and the First Sea Lord, Lord Fisher, had designed cruisers, etc., etc., meaning the Armada." Lloyd George said to Fisher at another meeting of the War Council, with all listening: "How many battleships shall we lose in the Dardanelles?" "A dozen!" Fisher replied, "but I prefer to lose them elsewhere."⁴

³ Fisher, *Memories*, 52-56.

⁴ Ibid.

SCHEER TAKES THE HELM OF THE HOCHSEEFLOTTE

Admiral Reinhard Scheer was promoted to replace the inactive Admiral Ingenhol in mid-1916 because the latter acted so ineptly concerning the near disaster at Dogger Bank.⁵ Immediately the new Commander-in-Chief planned to use his fleet while he had time. A plan for a sortie against the English coast was planned to use his *Aufklarungsgruppe* (Reconnaissance group), comprised of fast and powerful battle cruisers commanded by Admiral Franz von Hipper, against the English coast to draw out elements of the Grand Fleet. These, he hoped, would eagerly give chase to von Hipper's squadron and be trapped by Scheer's entire fleet.⁶

The operation and the *Hochseeflotte's* movements were doomed from the outset since the British could decipher German orders with the aid of the *Magdeburg's* code books. The German movements were better known to the British than to the average German sailor. The Grand Fleet and *Hochseeflotte*, therefore, hoisted anchors within hours of each other in the early hours of the 31st of May 1916. The

⁵ Gibson and Harper, *Riddle*, 66. Ingenhol steered away from supporting the German battle cruisers during the engagement in which the *Bluecher* was sunk. The rest of the German fleet was to cover a retreat if needed.

⁶ Reinhard Scheer, *Germany's High Sea Fleet*, (London: Cassel, 1920). 133.

British fleet was commanded by the able John Rushworth Jellicoe who steered his armada towards the Jutland coast to dismantle the German fleet, and with a British victory the Grand Fleet would, he hoped, break the Baltic blockade. Both fleets headed out to sea without confirmed knowledge that the other was headed straight for his.⁷

The Battle of Jutland developed into five distinct phases.⁸ It began on the 31st of May and ended the 1st of June. Over 8,000 men were to meet their death in this engagement.

Von Hipper's *Aufklarungsgruppe* raised anchor at 3:00 May 31 from his base in Wilhelmshaven, and his commander-in-chief around an hour later in Kiel. In order for his plan to work, Scheer ordered his U-Boat fleet to be pulled from its regular assignments of commerce raids, and to be stationed near the Grand Fleet harbors of Scappa Flow, Firth of Forth, and Cromarty Firth. He anticipated that the eagerness of British ship captains in hot pursuit of his battle cruisers, as seen at Dogger Bank, would expose them to the submarine menace.⁹ However, his plan never came to fruition since the British Admiralty could read the German

⁷ Georg-Gunther Freiherr von Forstner, *Krieg in der Ostsee*, (Berlin: Gustav Weise Verlag, 1938), 115-116.

⁸ Major fleet movements collected in the Appedix 3 Maps.

⁹ Scheer, *High Sea Fleet*, 133-136.

navy's code. As a result, the British battle cruisers, under the command of Admiral David Beatty, at Rosyth harbor could make steam to meet with the rest of the battle fleet already under way to Jutland before any of the German submarines could reach station.¹⁰

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Nearing the Skagerrak both fleets made use of probing vessels. Scheer's desire to utilize his Zeppelin fleet had to be aborted because of unfavorable weather conditions. Jellicoe too had limited access to air reconnaissance, since one of his seaplane carriers was delayed and left port too late to be of use. His other carrier, the *Engadine*,¹¹ required too much time to launch a scout plane.¹² The German light cruisers and torpedo boat destroyers screens were the eyes of the fleet, and were usually the first to make contact with the enemy. At 2:30 the light cruiser *Elbing* sighted "heavy smoke bearing south west." The smoke came from Beatty's light cruisers *Galatea* (3,512 tons) and

¹⁰ John Rushworth Jellicoe, *The Grand Fleet*, (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1919), 316. All references to battle formations are to be found in Appendix 3.

¹¹ The *Engadine* was a converted cross-channel ship of 1,676 tons.

¹² Stuart Legg, ed., *Jutland*, (London: Ruppert Hart Davis, 1966), 23.

Phaeton, which had already signaled that they too had spotted the enemy, and upon which British light cruisers began to assemble and immediately opened fire on the nearest German ship, the *Frankfurt*.¹³

So opened the first phase of the battle involving the German and British battle cruiser squadrons of Hipper and Beatty. After first contact was made between the light cruisers, a running fire fight began to draw in more and more support units which could hear the thunder of the guns of the light cruisers engaged in battle. Within the hour Hipper and Beatty were at each other as they had been when both commanded at Dogger Bank. Hipper's battle cruisers included the *Lutzow*, *Derflinger*, *Seydlitz*, *Moltke*, and *Von Der Tann*; all armed with 11 to 12-inch guns and more armor plating than their British opposites. The British had the greater fire power, range, and speed. Beatty's squadron included his flag the *Lion* (29,700 tons, armed; 8-13.5 inch guns, speed; 28-32 kn.), *Queen Mary*, *Princess Royal*, *Tiger* (35,000 tons, armed; 8-13.5 inch guns, speed; 28-30 kn.), *Indefatigable*, (20,000 tons, armed; 8-12 inch guns, speed; 25-27 kn.) and the *New Zealand*.¹⁴ The distance between the two fleets at the outset was about 13,500-20,000 yards.

¹³ Jellicoe, *Grand Fleet*, 320-321.

¹⁴ The combined weight in broadsides was 16-12 inch, 32-18 inch, 12-6 inch and 90-4 inch against the Germans 28-11 inch 16-12 inch, and 58-5.9 inch.

On paper the numerical broadsides of the British fleet outweighed the German, yet the superiority of the British battle cruisers was negated by the position and the quick and accurate fire of the Germans. The Germans were able to locate their targets faster than the British because they possessed better stereoscopic range finders; therefore, the gun crews could straddle an enemy vessel first and lock onto its range to deliver a full salvo. The British used a similar type of device to approximate the range of the enemy, and they used a "key" to fire each gun turret from above in the gun control tower. British and German spotters operated under deafening thunder. For the British, when these fired simultaneously, it was difficult to tell which shell from which gun fell far or short. German trickery further hindered the British. As the British guns fired, the Germans would aim their lighter 5.9's into the water and fire, and thereby confuse the British spotters.¹⁵

With such an uneven exchange of telling fire, Beatty's force of six battle cruisers was reduced to four within thirty minutes of action against Hipper's five battle cruisers. Aboard the German and British battle cruisers, the impact of one of these shells created tremendous concussions and damage. Victor Hayward a sailor aboard the *Tiger* recalled:

¹⁵ Jellicoe, *Grand Fleet*, 322-323.

Very suddenly amidst noise, our ship heeled over to the hammershock and my mind rolled and spun like quicksilver. Then she seemed to shake herself like a dog with a bloody nose and belted on at the speed of the fleet, her guns hammering forth in a blazing torrent of defiance. We had taken a full salvo right forward, beyond the great wheel-operated armored door, and everything forward was wiped out.¹⁶

In less than twelve minutes of fighting, the same type of hammershock destroyed the first of three British battle cruisers at 4:00 pm. The *Von der Tann* scored a direct hit on the *Indefatigable's* "Q" turret. Internal explosions caused the ship, already sinking, to haul out of line. Soon another hit on the "A" turret destroyed the ship and over 1000 men in a matter of seconds. Only two survivors were found.¹⁷ Twenty minutes later the *Queen Mary* was struck amidships, fell out of line, rolled over, and exploded. A pillar of smoke climbed 800 feet into the air and almost her entire complement of 1,200 men were killed.¹⁸ The *Lion* also took a hit on the "Q" turret which killed all but two of the turret's crew. The ship was saved by flooding the chamber.¹⁹ The damages inflicted on the British battle

¹⁶ Victor Hayward, *HMS Tiger at Bay*, (London: William Kimber, 1977), 80. The *Tiger* was nearly lost when a 12 inch shell hit and detonated near and magazine storage which caused a fire that threatened to ignite the six inch shells. The ship was saved by flooding the chamber.

¹⁷ Jellicoe, *Grand Fleet*, 323.

¹⁸ Scheer, *High Sea Fleet*, 142. Churchill, *World Crisis*, vol. 3, 122.

cruisers were as much a surprise to Beatty as they were to the Germans. There did, indeed, seem to be something wrong!²⁰ Aboard the ships in the *Aufklarungsgruppe*, which had little or no damage, the morale was high.²¹

Beatty, whose morale should have been broken, still resolved to exchange fire with Hipper's battle cruisers, which appeared undamaged and running for home, as when they met at Dogger Bank. A resolute Hipper led Beatty southward. Meanwhile, Admiral Evan-Thomas' 5th Battle Squadron, composed of the four most powerful ships of the Grand Fleet (*Queen Elizabeth* class 31,000-33,000 tons, armed; 8-15 inch

¹⁹ Idem, *World Crisis*, vol. 3, 123. The turrets on these warships were self contained fighting units. They were seated on the hull of the vessel, and the barbette reached down to the keel. The cordite flash from the *Luetzow's* shell sent a wall of fire down to the bottom of the ship after it had penetrated the armored turret. Nothing but broken and burned bodies remained. The turret design in both fleets proved to be penetrable. The Grand Fleet, however, lost two battle cruisers as a result and the Germans none. The reasons for the explosions that sunk the *Indefatigable* and *Queen Mary* were in the way the turrets were operated. Before the war the Grand Fleet had gunnery competitions between the squadrons, and these created a lot of bad habits. Speed and accuracy for loading and firing caused turret crews to disregard built in safety precautions. Crews left doors wide open to the magazine and shell chambers to increase proficiency. They falsely believed that the flash screens were able to stop any flames from reaching the charges; however, during battle the screens were little better than cardboard against the cordite flames. The Germans stuck to the manual.

²⁰ Churchill, *World Crisis*, vol. 3, 124.

²¹ Oskar Immanuel von Hase, *Seig der Deutschen Hochsee-Flotte am 13. Mai 1916*, (Leipzig: K. F. Koehlers Verlagsgesellschaft MBH, 1934), 56.

guns, speed; 25 knots), began to close in on the *Aufklarungsgruppe*. For some unknown reason the 5th, which was to support Beatty, delayed its turn towards, and for nearly 20 minutes was in fact steering in the opposite direction putting the squadron 10 miles behind.²²

Hipper's battle cruisers ultimately were pounded by the 5th Battle Squadron battleships, which arrived at 4:10 pm. The battleships, which could not only out-run him but also out-gun him, gave him no opportunity to return fire. He fell back on the rest of the *Hochseeflotte*, which had by then come into view as a dusky trail of smoke. Beatty recognized the German stratagem, turned his ships around, and ordered the 5th Battle Squadron to do likewise. The *Barham* received Beatty's signal at 4:48 and commenced its turn five minutes later. The 5th was now in range of Scheer's 3rd Squadron which comprised Germany's newest battleships (*Koenig* class). For a half hour the unequal conflict resulted in repeated hits on the *Barham* and *Valiant*, which were engaged with Hipper, and the *Malaya* and *Warspite*, which dueled with Scheer.²³

The turn of direction and change of hunter and prey marked the second phase of the battle. Beatty now led Hipper and Scheer towards the waiting Jellicoe. In this

²² Churchill, *World Crisis*, vol. 3, 127-129.

²³ *Ibid.*, 128.

phase the tide of the battle changed in favor of the British, for the Germans began receiving the greater punishment.²⁴ Hipper's cruisers were by 4:30 *hors de combat*, for up until the turn to the north, the Sun and visibility was in the German's favor.²⁵ Furthermore, Beatty had the advantage of speed. His remaining fleet was two knots faster than his enemy's, but he appeared to be a beaten foe, and Hipper and Scheer trailed behind to finish Beatty off. Beatty fell back on the rest of the Grand Fleet, whose presence had up to now been concealed, to allow Jellicoe to deploy his van to meet the German fleet.²⁶

Scheer was still unaware of the British Fleet's position when Jellicoe began to move his into position to "Cross the T."²⁷ Jellicoe's entire fleet (excluding the destroyers, light cruisers, and armored cruisers) numbered 28 Dreadnoughts against Scheer's sixteen. Jellicoe could average a speed of 20 knots against Scheer's 16 knots. Six

²⁴ Hase, *Seig Der Deutschen*, 60.

²⁵ German ship design in armor protection and "honeycombing" of the interiors into smaller watertight compartments proved that these ships were better vessels than the British. The *Luetzow* would receive over twenty-four heavy shell hits and two torpedoes before going out of action. The rest of Hipper's ships proved equally sturdy. Fisher had replaced armor for speed because he thought, "speed is armour." This proves that speed is not armor but armor is armor. Legg, *Jutland*, 3.

²⁶ Gibson and Harper, *Riddle*, 148.

²⁷ Churchill, *World Crisis*, vol. 3, 148-150.

German pre-Dreadnoughts of the *Deutschland* class reduced the entire fleet speed by five knots. Jellicoe's fire power was nothing less than astounding. He could boast in 48-15 inch, 10-14 inch, 142-13.5 inch, and 144-12 inch against Scheer's 144-12 inch and 100 11 inch.²⁸ With this type of strength, speed and numbers, Jellicoe had focused upon a simple tactical plan. He would use a single line of ships that could use range and speed, as at the Falkland Islands, to keep his ships out of the danger--the only flaw was his communications.²⁹

Without clearly communicated intelligence on the German positions, Jellicoe's numbers were *zweckloss*. Further, smoke and flame obscured the view of both admirals as Beatty's battle cruisers cut in front of his C-in-C's line of fire. By 5:45 to 6:00 the fleets were almost on top of each other without being aware of it. The distance between the opposing fleets was around 13,000-15,000 yards.

²⁸ Ibid. 114. These are the figures before the loss and damages in the initial beginnings of the battle. The total weight in broadsides was 396,700 pounds against 189,958. The British had 31 cruisers at sea against 11 German, and 85 destroyers against 72 German torpedo boats. Broad-sides mean little if the explosive power of the shell is negligible. As the Germans learned in the Battle of the Falkland Islands, the British shells were not as strong as expected. Germans were able to keep this information secret. British armor-piercing shells often failed to penetrate and exploded prematurely on the outside of the German armor plates. Churchill's analysis of the battle fails to recognize this. See Ibid., 166-167.

²⁹ Ibid., 132-133.

Jellicoe ordered 3rd Battle Cruiser Squadron to outflank Scheer's right and at the same time relay the exact German position. The Germans were steaming into Jellicoe's crescent shaped deployment.³⁰

Meanwhile, the German and British light cruisers were being obliterated by heavy shell fire. The *Wiesbaden* took a direct hit in the engine room from the *Invincible's* twelve inch shells and was disabled. The *Frankfurt* and *Pillau* too received great damage and Rear-Admiral Behnke tried as best he could to get his ships out of danger by leaving the *Wiesbaden* behind. The ship presented an inviting target for the British, since it was one of the most modern and valuable afloat. Three British armored cruisers under the command of Rear-Admiral Robert Arbuthnot steamed forth to administer the final deathblow; but his sight was obscured by the burning German cruiser, and his own search for glory left him open to Scheer's battleships. In seconds the three cruisers were under heavy fire, and the *Defence*, torn to pieces, sank at 6:19 pm. The *Warrior* began to move off slowly in flames and sinking. The 5th Battle-Squadron moved in to help the stricken cruisers.³¹

Resuming the reconnaissance for Jellicoe, Admiral Horace Hood steamed forth into destruction with his three

³⁰ Ibid., 114.

³¹ Scheer, *High Sea Fleet*, 152.

battle cruisers. Hood pressed home his attack on Hipper's flagship, which already was in renewed action with Beatty and Evan-Thomas' 5th Battle Squadron. His lead ship, the *Invincible*, which helped sink Spee's squadron at the Falklands, was engulfed in a massive flame of shell fire and explosions. The ship broke in half and took nearly all hands with her--1,025 men, including Hood, were killed. Only five survived.³² Beatty stood directly in the line of fire between Jellicoe and Scheer, but could offer little help to Hood. In fact, his position hurt Jellicoe's chances of pounding the German fleet into oblivion, for Scheer spotted Jellicoe's ploy and ordered the *Gefechtskертwendung* (battle-turn-away) to effect his escape.³³

The destruction of the *Invincible* marked the third phase of the battle. Jellicoe had hoped to cross Scheer's "T", an action which would bring his entire broadside against the forward guns of the German. A melee, he thought, would result as each German ship broke formation to escape. Scheer's 180° turn moved him away from the Grand Fleet before Jellicoe could decipher what had happened.³⁴ Scheer ordered a torpedo attack to cover his retreat and

³² Jellicoe, *Grand Fleet*, 337-338.

³³ Scheer, *High Sea Fleet*, 150-152. See also Hough, *Great War*, 246.

³⁴ Corbett, *Naval Operations*, vol. 3, 365-367. See Jellicoe, *Grand Fleet*, 337.

turned Jellicoe's battleships away. The Grand Fleet commander, caught completely by surprise, did not think such a maneuver was possible with so many ships. Scheer had placed extra attention in peacetime trials on this exact situation. The German fleet prepared for the worst scenario. As Scheer wrote: "The trouble spent was now well paid."³⁵

In the twilight hours visibility was rapidly disappearing. Crossing the "T" had been costly on Hipper's force. His flagship was in shambles and half sunk. Between 7:00 and 9:30, he was forced to transfer his flag onto a torpedo boat, then wait to board a less damaged ship. The *Lutzow* was emptied of personnel and scuttled.³⁶

Once more Scheer believed he had an advantageous position to do battle, but again Jellicoe was waiting to cross the "T." To save the fleet from destruction, Scheer ordered his battle cruisers to charge the enemy and force him to turn away. At a higher price and with a little more

³⁵ Scheer, *High Sea Fleet*, 158. The use of mass torpedo attacks had been greatly overestimated. The protective torpedo nets were removed after the battle. Scheer noted that the nets were so completely shot to pieces that there was a danger that parts would break off and entangle themselves in the propellers.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 156. The *Lutzow* refused to go down even after explosive charges were set. Torpedoes finished her off. Not all hands could be saved. A trapped group of men in the forward section of the ship were told the ship was going down with them.

disorder, a second *Gefechtskертwendung* was carried out at 7:55 before Hipper's battle cruisers (now under the leadership of Captain Hartog aboard *Derflinger*) and torpedo boats bought time by charging at the enemy. A third *Gefechtskертwendung* was carried out at 8:16.³⁷

The dusk hours marked the fourth phase and also ushered in darkness. Jellicoe had presumed that the German fleet was heading home via the Horns Reef and the island of Helgoland. In fact, all intercepted communications told him this. During the so called "Night Action," the German fleet made their "escape." Jellicoe was reluctant to subject his fleet to such close combat where his numerical superiority would be negated; he claimed that he planned to resume the fight at dawn further south. Further deterrents to a night battle were the disadvantages in searchlights--the Germans possessed the superior and the British the inferior.³⁸ The British did not master the night as their battle practices showed. Only the British destroyer and cruiser squadrons stood between Scheer and home and maintained contact with Germans throughout the night. With the

³⁷ Jellicoe, *Grand Fleet*, 448.

³⁸ The German searchlights were equipped with a shutter that let out a pencil thin beam of light. As soon as the operator believed he had spotted an enemy vessel, he would open the shutter upon which all guns would fire. The British searchlights served as targets rather than locaters. Furthermore the Germans shells lit up the enemy without giving away their own position.

thunder of German artillery and the beacons of fire from burning ships, there could have been no doubt as to where the Germans were.³⁹

The *Hochseeflotte* moved in behind the Grand Fleet and fought its way through the British destroyer screens. Jellicoe had no desire to engage the *Hochseeflotte* in a pitched battle at night. Georg Hase, chief gunner aboard the *Derflinger* writes:

A night action between two such powerful fleets was an impossibility. In spite of all identification signals for night-fighting a wild melee, a rendering of ship against ship without distinction of friend or foe would have been inevitable. But even if we had been reckless enough to seek a night action, the English fleet would have to avoid it. In a night action they would have to forgo [sic] all the advantages of their preponderating numerical superiority, their greater speed, the long range guns, and leave it to chance.⁴⁰

Further advantages the German fleet possessed were more submerged torpedo tubes, and the fact that the Germans were closer to home and in their own mined waters.⁴¹

³⁹ Churchill, *World Crisis*, vol. 3, 157. Poor communications gave away Jellicoe's position. The British used their spotlights to flash their positions in Morse code. The Germans picked up on this and were able to use their recognition signals to pass behind the Grand Fleet into the screen of British destroyers. The Admiralty informed Jellicoe of the Germans intent of assembling at the Horns Reef. Jellicoe ignored this vital information, and one might just speculate that, if the British navy were really intent on continuing the battle in the daylight hours, why did Jellicoe not use his speed to trap Scheer there?

⁴⁰ Georg Hase, *Kiel and Jutland*, (London: Skiffington, 1927), 126.

⁴¹ Scheer, *High Sea Fleet*, 159.

The night fighting between the British cruisers and destroyer flotillas against the German Dreadnoughts was deadly and, as expected, confusing. The sole survivor of Arbuthnot's squadron, the *Black Prince*, had, since its ill-fated charge been detached from the fleet. By mistake the cruiser tried to form up with the German 1st Squadron. The *Helgoland's* turned the cruiser into a burning mass of twisted metal. Near dawn the British destroyers did find that the German fleet had a weakness in the 2nd Squadron. Admiral Mauve's pre-Dreadnoughts lost the *Pommern* when a torpedo struck, and, of all the fatalities, the loss of the old battleship seems the most horrifying. It went down without warning and trace, and the lives of 844 men were snuffed out like a candle. The same fate befell the light cruiser *Frauenlob*. During the night the *Wiesbaden* also was sunk.⁴² Richard Stumpf, a sailor aboard the battleship *Helgoland* witnessed the gallant attacks by British destroyers. His epitaph to the recalcitrant destroyers and their crews is as follows:

And now something incredible happened. *Nassau*, which steamed in front of us, left the formation without any apparent reason and hove to on our port side. Suddenly a beautiful destroyer with three smokestacks came into

⁴² Ibid. The *Frauenlob* and *Pommern* were already obsolete ships. The 2nd Squadron was dubbed the five minute fleet. That was how long they were thought to last in battle. However, the individual accounts by those who participated in the battle are vivid. See Friedrich von Kuhlwetter, *Skagerrak*. (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag, 1933).

view and headed directly toward Nassau. The brightness of the searchlights allowed me to clearly identify its number as A 41 [*Spitfire*]. She disappeared behind Nassau before we had a chance to aim and fire our guns. Breaking off her masts and chimneys on Nassau's forward guns, she ran madly amidships and rammed the armored battleship squarely in the flank. Surprisingly enough, she managed to break loose and to turn around. Then she received a well-aimed broadside from the startled Nassau squarely in her belly. Now she was done for. A gun plummeted down from her middle, two tidal waves from each side collided over her, and with a hiss everything disappeared in the water. I observed this terrible spectacle from such a close proximity that my knees began to tremble as I became aware that three hundred young men had just been roasted alive.⁴³

The British destroyers bore the brunt of the night action while Jellicoe steamed south until 2:30. In excellent position to cut off Scheer or at least any stragglers, he resolved to end the conflict there and turned north. He had, contrary to popular belief, no intention of resuming the fight. The battle was over.⁴⁴

Phase five, the final stage, was the regrouping and escorting of the damaged ships to the home ports. Jellicoe and Scheer saw the sun rise on an empty sea. The Grand Fleet suffered a loss of three battle cruisers, three armored cruisers, and eight destroyers--a loss of 6,097 lives. The *Hochseeflotte* lost one pre-Dreadnought battleship, one battle cruiser, four light cruisers, and five torpedo boats--killing 2,551 German sea men. The

⁴³ Richard Stumpf, *The Private War of Richard Stumpf: The Unique Diaries of a Young German in the Great War*. (London: Leslie Frewin, 1969), 202.

⁴⁴ Churchill, *World Crisis*, vol. 3, 158-159.

Germans, in all the phases of the battle, handed the British a defeat, yet Scheer should have given chase to the Grand Fleet instead of waiting to resume battle in the morning, for by then Jellicoe had retreated.⁴⁵ When the results of the battle of "Horn Reef" appeared in the *London Times*, the nation was in a state of shock.⁴⁶

THE RESULTS OF JUTLAND

For the sake of space most of the details of the Battle of Jutland must be left out. Here too, volumes have been

⁴⁵ Even though tactically the "Crossing of the T" displayed superb fleet action, the Germans were always prepared for the most extreme of situations; hence Scheer's retreats which would be regarded as cowardess by the British were part of the overall plan of battle. It is this writer's opinion that Scheer could have inflicted heavier losses on the Grand Fleet had he followed Jellicoe home. The construction of the German ships and their resistance to shell fire added to the nearly expended ammunition in Jellicoe's magazines would have assured this. Jellicoe had from the beginning of the war respected the construction and technology of the German ships to be better than his. Gibson and Harper, *Riddle*, 67.

⁴⁶ See *London Times*, 3 June-5 August 1916. Accusations that the Germans were concealing their losses littered the paper. Scheer notes that the loss of the *Lutzow* was not mentioned because, in the interest of naval warfare, "the enemy could not have seen the ship go down." Scheer explained. "Unfortunately the secrecy observed produced the impression that it was necessary to enlarge our success to that extent." See U.S. Naval War College, *Battle of Jutland, 31 May - 1 June 1916*, (New Port: Naval War College, 1920), 99. The *Hochseeflotte* did, however, inflict heavier losses on the Grand Fleet, and not until the surrender of the German fleet in 1919 did the facts speak for themselves.

written, yet the important point for this study is that Jutland proved a greater teacher to the Germans than the British. Of course the British later implemented better damage control procedures in its ships, but overall the Grand Fleet went back to business as usual. The Germans redefined the use of the fleet. Scheer became more convinced that the U-Boat was Germany's only hope on the high seas and the battleship an expensive commodity.⁴⁷

It is true as Churchill stated that Jellicoe was the only man who could lose the war in the afternoon. Hence, the Commander of the Grand Fleet no longer desired to "challenge" the German navy into open battle unless it were in the proximity of Scapa Flow or Sunderland.⁴⁸ Any ambitions to break into the Baltic also failed at Jutland.⁴⁹ Yet the Germans too took great risks in sending out their fleet. An attack by the Russian Baltic Fleet, during the battle or after, near the Pomeranian coast, though highly unlikely, would have been opportune with so many ships out

⁴⁷ Scheer, *High See Fleet*, 190. See also Tirpitz, *Erinnerungen*, 336.

⁴⁸ Tirpitz, *Erinnerungen*, 337. The role of U-boats increased following Jutland, and on February 1, 1917 unrestricted U-boat warfare was renewed. As a result, the Grand Fleet laid out greater mine fields as an anti-submarine measure. The result was a further strain on the *Minensuch* groups who now needed to cover greater distances to keep lanes clear.

⁴⁹ John Rushworth Jellicoe, *The Crisis of the Naval War*, (London: Cassel and Co., 1920), 249.

of action. The damages to the *Hochseeflotte* were most dearly felt in the battle cruisers. One was sunk and all others severely damaged. Repairs to the most heavily damaged ships went on for months.⁵⁰

The time between Jutland and the Albion operation in October of 1917 was one of inactivity with the exception of two sorties into the North Sea, the more eventful being carried out on August 18-19, 1916. The German fleet steamed out once more to silence any claims that the German fleet did not desire to do battle. One German battleship, *Westfalen*, was torpedoed by the British submarine *E 23*, but was able to reach port. Jellicoe suffered the loss of two protected cruisers--the *Falmouth* (5,250 tons) sunk by *U 63* and *U 66* plus the *Nottingham* (5,440 tons) sunk by *U 52*. Only the *Derflinger* and *Seydlitz* were unable to participate in the action off Sunderland, but in addition to the fleet, the newly constructed *Bayern* and *Hindenburg* were able to replace their absence. Both fleets were able to use air reconnaissance to their fullest advantage.⁵¹

⁵⁰ The damages from such heavy shells turned battle-ships into masses of twisted metal. Men were trapped in sections of ships. The *Derflinger* took 17 hits, had 157 dead, and 26 wounded. Repairs lasted till October 15, 1916. *Grosser Kurfurst* had 8 hits 15, dead 10 wounded. Repairs lasted till July 16, 1916. See Stumpf, *Private War*, 213-215.

⁵¹ Churchill, *World Crisis*, vol. 3, 159-162.

THE EFFECT OF THE BATTLE ON THE BALTIC

While the German fleet underwent repairs, the situation on the Russian front near Riga caused great concern in the German General Staff. Since 1914, the Russian Baltic Fleet enjoyed complete control of the Gulf of Riga, and the old pre-Dreadnought battleship *Slava* could at any time bombard the German army's positions in Kurland. The flank of the 8th Army was always in jeopardy from Russian naval units which could at any time shell or even land troops via amphibious assaults. In August of 1915, the *Hochseeflotte* had been able to force the temporary surrender of the gulf to German naval forces, yet the lack of bases and control of the islands of Oesel and Moon could not make the surrender a permanent one.⁵²

The German navy then could only control the Gulf of Riga for two days, and, once the battleships had expended their fuel, they were forced to relinquish control. Only if the *Baltischen Inseln* were in the hands of the German army, could the Gulf of Riga be held. Any operations by the end

⁵² Der Weltkrieg 1914-1918, Im Auftrage des Oberkommando des Heeres. Bearbeitet und Herausgegeben von der Kriegsgeschichtlichen Forschungsanstalt des Heeres, (Berlin: Mittler und Sohn, 1925), vol. 8, 546-547.

of the August *Stellungskrieg* [stalemate] in the Gulf of Riga were out of the question, since there was not enough time to organize men and equipment and since the weather conditions grew worse as the months progressed.

The German Admiralty tried to persuade the General Staff to attempt to invade Oesel and Moon in March 1916. However some among the General Staff and Admiralty argued that the *Hochseeflotte* had been committed to a war in the North Sea not the Baltic, and none of its squadrons or support ships should be released. A combined land and naval operation against the Russian armies entrenched near Riga and on the islands would have likely brought an end to the eastern war, yet Falkenhayn was convinced that a decided victory in the west would be forthcoming. No troops could be spared in the early Spring of 1916. By the summer of 1916 the western front remained as it was in 1915, and a summer offensive against the Gulf of Riga was considered possible but risky, since mines and submarines were a continual danger, especially during the long summer days. An operation in the fall of 1916 appeared to offer the best chances of success.⁵³

⁵³ Ibid. Germany's trade with the Scandenavian countries was under extreme pressure. Russian and English submarines and mines caused tremendous damage to warships as well. But Germany was fortunate that the four Russian Dreadnoughts were never used.

The Winter months had given the fatigued Russian armies time to regroup and recover. Since the Battle of Tannenberg in 1914, the German troops had pushed as far as Riga, but could not advance beyond the old German Hanseatic city or the Dvina River. The city as well as the gulf remained in Russian hands. The main German forces were tied up at Verdun, and a combined French and British attack along the Somme was expected. With the Brusilov offensive (June-August 1916) in the east in mid June, General Falkenhayn was prompted to inquire if the navy were not in a position to prevent the northern Russian armies from moving into Silesia.⁵⁴ The navy could only provide ten Dreadnoughts and the antiquated II Squadron, and Scheer advised that the former was too valuable and the latter too risky to send into the mine infested Baltic on such short notice.⁵⁵

As a diversionary and precautionary measure, the II Squadron was to remain in the western Baltic. It was

⁵⁴ Winston Churchill, *The Unknown War: The Eastern Front*, (New York: Scribners, 1931), 359. The famed Brusilov offensive exerted tremendous force on the Austrian front in the early days of June. The German army had to be sent in to stem the tide of the advance. Since the Germans possessed the better transportation they were able to reinforce the Austrian divisions. See Erich von Falkenhayn, *General Headquarters 1914-1916 and Its Critical Decisions*, (London: Hutchinson & Co., n.d.), 244-256

⁵⁵ Ernst von Gagern, *Der Krieg zur See: Herausgegeben in Verbindung mit dem Bundesarchiv/ Militararchiv vom Arbeitskreis fur Wehrforschung, Der Krieg in der Ostsee; Von Anfang 1916 bis zum Kriegsende*, vol. 3. (Frankfurt/M: Verlag E.S. Mittler & Sohn, 1964), 55.

expected that the Russians would interpret this move as an aggressive one and force Russia to keep troops in the north.⁵⁶ The eastern front remained once again unbreakable as the Brusilov offensive lost its initial surprise. But not until the fall of 1917 did the *Hochseeflotte* see action in the Baltic.

THE NEW ROLE OF THE GERMAN NAVY

As stated once before, the land orientation of the German nation allowed the navy to wither away. The test of German naval metal at Jutland did demonstrate the fighting resolve of the *Hochseeflotte's*. Added to the German army, the *Hochseeflotte* last major role in the war in the Baltic was to support landing operations. Admiral Conrad von Holtzendorf was convinced that, within a short period of four weeks, a task force could be assembled and trained for an operation against Oesel and Moon, but the army was not as convinced as the admiral until August of 1917.

⁵⁶ The diversionary use of the II Squadron seems to have been a dispensable one. The inadequate Russian railway could not transport troops to reinforce the Silesian front. Churchill, *Unknown*, 365. Troop reinforcements from Riga were always the less desirable elements of the Russian army. Riga was "a nest of propaganda," troops from that district were demoralized and refused to attack anyone but their officers complained General Ruzsky in December of 1916. See Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, 3 vol., (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1964), vol. 1, 22

CHAPTER IV

STAY HERE SAIL OUT: THE PLANING
FOR THE INVASION OF OESEL AND MOON

After the capture of Riga in September of 1917, the German armed forces made preparations to seize the islands of Oesel (Saaremaa), Dagoe (Hiiumaa), and Moon (Muhu).¹ The location of these islands at the opening of the Gulf of Riga were of great strategic importance to both Russia and Germany. From here Germany could secure its flank from the Russian Baltic Fleet in the Gulf of Riga, force the Russian navy into the Gulf of Finland, and use the islands as a base of operations for commerce raids in the Baltic. If Germany could successfully occupy these Baltic islands, it could secure the Baltic Sea as a German lake and possibly knock Russia out of the war. The German name for the risky undertaking was "*Sonderverband der Marine*."²

THE FALL OF RIGA AND THE IMPORTANCE OF OESEL

In mid-Summer 1917 the decay of the Russian military seemed for a short time to subside as the so-called Kerensky

¹ The original plans of invasion foresaw only the capture of Oesel and Moon. See Appendix 2 page 36.

² Special task force of the Navy. Hereafter abbreviated as S.d.M..

Offensive brought the near collapse of the Austrian front.³ Kerensky appealed to the troops at the front in person: he stated, "You will go where your leaders conduct you. You will carry on the points of your bayonets--peace."⁴ With a German counteroffensive, the bayonets were blunted. The Kerensky offensive came to a halt, and the German High Command decided to use the momentum of the German victories to cause a total collapse of the Russian armies. The decision was reached to attack the north wing of the Russian 12th Army at Riga which comprised eight divisions. These divisions had proved to be a constant thorn in the side of the German north wing.⁵ The Germans bombarded the Russian positions for five hours with artillery, and under the leadership of General Oscar von Hutier, the German 8th Army attacked with eight divisions of infantry and two divisions of cavalry across the river Dvina (Daugava).⁶

Pontoon bridges assembled by the German army facilitated the advance across the Dvina. German U-Boats played a

³ Records of the German Navy, Naval Attache in Stockholm to Berlin. Nr.1132, pg. 69008-69010.

⁴ Trotsky, Russian Revolution, 367. Records of the German Navy. pg. 69126. No.1132.

⁵ General der Infanterie a.D. von Tschischwitz, *Armee und Marine bei der Eroberung der Baltischen Inseln im Oktober 1917: Erfahrungen und Betrachtungen*. (Berlin: Verlag R. Eisenschmidt, 1931), 9.

⁶ Hanson W. Baldwin, *World War I; An Outline History*, New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1962), 255.

small role by shelling shore installations with their deck guns, yet overall the use of the navy was limited. After two days of fighting along a 25-mile front, the old Hanseatic city of Riga was captured, and, according to the German accounts published in the *London Times*, many sections of the city were ablaze. The Germans had penetrated Russian positions at several points along the Jeagel River line, among which the most important was the town of Uexkull, where an important bridgehead fell. From that point on, the Russian defense crumbled. The Russian 12th Army could no longer hold its position in Riga and began to withdraw. The Russian army was in full retreat to the northeast, and thousands were taken prisoners by the more mobile German army.

Russian counterattacks were carried out in an attempt to hold back the German advance. The German army effectively rendered the Russian communication lines to St. Petersburg inoperative by crossing the Dvina, cutting the already sinking railway to Dvinsk, and gaining a firm foothold on the Jeagel line. Without communication to the St. Petersburg the Russian army could do little else but beat a hasty retreat leaving weapons and supplies behind.⁷

⁷ Information gathered from German and Russian reports of the battle for Riga seem to indicate that the fighting was fierce. The overall picture showed a bitter struggle by some of the Russian units, yet the retreat and impressions of the situation confirmed that the Russian army elected to

According to the *London Times*, the loss of Riga to the German army in September of 1917 appeared to be attributed to the Russian army, which had difficulties with insubordination and unwillingness to fight. The *Times* coverage of the capture of Riga pointed out this decay as Russian troops were being driven backwards towards St. Petersburg at the will of the advancing German 8th Army. The *Times* reported that in St. Petersburg the retreat from Riga had been quietly but seriously accepted. The canker of indiscipline and the wine of liberty had shaken the Russian army to its foundations. The Germans, the *Times* complained, had been free to take risks which they would never have dared if the opposing forces had been a military machine in running order. There was a general condemnation of the extremist agitation, which was deemed to be the cause of the breakdown in army morale. The people were becoming too accustomed to misfortune, and this, added to the eternal political turmoil, blunted their will.⁸

Riga, when captured from the Russians, opened the road to St. Petersburg.⁹ However, the waterways leading to Riga were not yet secured. The Russian Baltic Fleet had enjoyed

run away rather than stand its ground. *London Times* 2-10 September 1917.

⁸ "Nerves Blunted to Misfortune" *London Times*, 5 September 1917.

⁹ *London Times*, 6 September 1917.

complete control of the Gulf of Riga from the beginning of the war because the Russian army maintained a firm grip on the islands of Oesel, Moon, and Dagoe, and, because of larger naval detachments, they could bombard German land positions on the Western shores of the Gulf of Riga.¹⁰ Likewise the islands supported the strength of the Russian fleet as had been shown when German naval forces attempted a breakthrough in the Irben Strait in August of 1915. That attempt ended in failure.¹¹ Control of the Gulf of Riga, the German Official History states, could only be achieved if Oesel and Moon were firmly in German hands.¹²

¹⁰ Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 159-161.

¹¹ Harald Graf, *The Russian Navy in War and Revolution from 1914 up to 1918*, (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1923), 53-58. The *Novik* engaged two German destroyers during the night of 16-17 August. Both destroyers were severely damaged by the fire from the *Novik*. The German navy lost one destroyer V 99 during the night of August 16-17, 1915 due to mines. The strongest force to oppose the *Hochseeflotte* in the gulf was the 14,000 ton ship-of-the-line *Slava*. After a short battle in which the *Slava* was hit several times without being able to return fire, the Russian ship was forced to withdraw. Extensive mine sweeping gave the Russian Admiralty the impression that the Germans were planning a major offensive against the Moon Sound. The German position in the Gulf was only temporary. Unable to hold the gulf because of lack of bases in the immediate proximity, the fleet was forced to withdraw. See also *Records of the German Navy*, "Bericht uber die Taetigkeit 3 H.T.p. Boot V 99 am 16/17 August 15." pg. 62330-62332.

¹² Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 159.

The Russian resistance on the home front seemed to be deteriorating faster after the loss of Riga.¹³ The fall of the old German city showed that the Russians expected an attempt by the German military to march onto St. Petersburg. Hindenburg wrote:

Our attack at Riga aroused the liveliest fears in Russia for the safety of St. Petersburg. The capital of the country in panic. It felt itself directly threatened by our attack on Riga. Petersburg, still the intellectual center of Russia, fell into a condition of extreme nervous anxiety which made practical thinking impossible.¹⁴

The impractical thinking of the Russian military was not as confused as Hindenburg believed.

THE RUSSIAN DEFENSES ON OESEL, MOON AND DAGOE

German intelligence and air reconnaissance reported increased activity on the islands as Russia hastily reinforced its positions. The strongest defenses were located on the Sworbe (Soerve) Peninsula near town of Zerel. Here the Russians had placed heavy artillery up to 12-inch caliber which could fire on a 360° axis. This battery

¹³ The German naval attache to Sweden remarked in his letter that he had heard from close informants that his Russian counterparts expressed great concern over the present state of disarray affecting both the army and navy. **Records of the German Navy**, Naval Attache in Stockholm letter to Berlin July 2, 1917, Nr.957, pg. 69008-69010.

¹⁴ Paul von Hindenburg, **Out of My Life**, (London: Cassel & Company, 1920), 281.

effectively sealed off the Irben Strait to the German Baltic Fleet. The guns themselves were guarded by fortified positions near Anskull, and these cut off the entire peninsula from any advance from the north.¹⁵

Since Sworbe controled the Irben Strait, the Russians did not need to fortify the Southern end of Oesel. The Russian army concentrated heavy defenses near Tagga Bay on the Northern end of Oesel. Here at Hundsort they placed large caliber batteries ranging from 5-in. to 6-in., plus a few field artillery pieces on the Eastern side of the bay.¹⁶ Passage through the Soela Sound, covered by heavy artillery near Toffri on the island of Dagoe and further guns on the Pammerort Peninsula on Oesel, could only be made at great risk.

The land-bridge to Arensburg (Kurevsaare), the capitol of Oesel, was sealed off by fortified positions. Between Oesel and Moon there existed a stone dam which connected the two islands and bridged the Kleine Sund. The dam was also well guarded by a bridgehead on each side and a second bridgehead 7 km away from Orrisar. Further defenses existed near Woi on the southeast end of Moon and covered the passage through the important Moon Sound. These batteries were augmented by guns on the island of Werder. Every battery on

¹⁵ Tschischwitz, *Armee und Marine*, 20.

¹⁶ Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 164-165.

the islands, as well as at the airstrip at Arensburg, was protected by anti-aircraft guns scattered throughout the islands.¹⁷

The waters around the islands were "infested" with mines, and the Russian Baltic Fleet supported the defenses on the islands.¹⁸ The water passages through Moon Sound were too shallow for the Dreadnought type battleships and battle cruisers; therefore, older ships-of-the-line were used, *Slava* and *Grazhdanin* (ex *Cesarevic*), each armed with 12-in. guns.¹⁹ The Germans' plans were to deal with at least four modern Dreadnoughts from Helsingfors, two pre-Dreadnoughts mentioned, nine armored cruisers, an unknown number of light cruisers, thirty destroyers and torpedo boats, and forty submarines.²⁰

¹⁷ Tschischwitz, *Armee und Marine*, 20.

¹⁸ Georg Gunther von Forstner, *Krieg in der Ostsee*. (Berlin: Gustav Weise Verlag, 1938), 118.

¹⁹ Both of these old battlewagons were long out of date. Their pre-Dreadnought design did not afford them much protection or chance of survival against the modern battleship. They were, as the Germans called their own pre-Dreadnought squadrons, a five minute fleet, which does not refer to their rapid deployment, rather their time for survival when engaging a Dreadnought. German air reconnaissance reported the movements of the ships through the Moon Sound prior to the invasion. *Records of the German Navy*, B.Nr. SS. 370 Kaptl. Berthold, "Kriegstagebuch des Kommandeurs der Flieger beim Sonderverband."

²⁰ Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 165.

Among the submarines stationed around the islands, were eight British vessels.²¹ Each of the British submarines had one Russian navigator, and owing to the decay of discipline in the Russian navy since the Revolution, the British waged war on their own terms, not coming in contact with Russian sailors.²² The German High Command became convinced, through Great Britain's policies, that it would like to maintain command of islands and create for itself a new Gibraltar.

Navigation around the islands was not only difficult because of the many minefields but also because of natural obstructions. Reefs and shallows hindered safe passage and made many sections of the coast unfit for landing troops. The Russians could afford to secure only those areas where landings were possible. The islands themselves were varied in their geography. The flatness of the surface allows the Baltic winds to blow fiercely across. There were large marshes around Arensburg and a number of small forests throughout the islands which created natural defensive positions. The ground itself was rocky, which made travel difficult.

²¹ Henry Newbolt, *History of the Great War; Naval Operations*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1928), vol. 4, 91-98.

²² Tschischwitz, *Armee und Marine*, 21.

German intelligence reports guessed the strength of the troops stationed on the islands to be around a division under the command of Major General Ivanoff, a subordinate of Rear-Admiral Sveschnikov. The entire Baltic theater of operations was under the direction of Admiral A. V. Raswosov. Not only were the Germans able to gather information on the number of troops, equipment, and locations, but also the names of each of the regiments.²³ The strength of the Russian defenses forces one to ask what would give the German High Command the boldness to attempt such a risky operation.

THE DECAY OF THE RUSSIAN NAVY

As stated above, the state of the Russian military in 1917 was considerably weaker than at the beginning of the war. Discipline and morale were tattered from years of war and internal strife caused by the Revolution. As the Russian destroyer Novik's First Officer Harald K. Graf recalled:

But one felt, nevertheless, that war had lasted too long, that it was too much for the Russian people; they bore with great difficulty all the privations which accompanied it.

I have stopped longer on the analysis of the disposition of the navy personnel in order to emphasize

²³ Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 164.

how important it is to reckon with the spirit of the army and navy, especially in a prolonged war. Often the general state of things grows worse, in spite of good material conditions, on account of the moral fatigue of man.²⁴

Towards the end of February 1917, the political situation in Russia had become volatile. In the navy the officers on the warships were arrested by their crews who spoke of "making short work of all." The winter months fostered revolution among the bored and war weary, sailors. The seizure of the cruiser *Aurora* by "suspicious people" resulted in death of its commander, Captain M. J. Nikolsky. All authority from the Tsar to the officer on deck was in question, and in the navy many loyal followers of the Tsar were murdered. "The disposition of the men became more excited," Graf lamented,

since that morning; evidently revolutionary propaganda was being made amongst them. At 5 p.m. I left the ship. In town all was quiet and life continued as usual. The sailors I met saluted respectfully and had their usual sturdy look. Towards 7 o'clock I returned to the destroyer as the C. in C. required all the officers and men to be on their ships by 7 p.m..

About 8 o'clock, the captain, on account of the rumors circulating in the town, to the effect that a telegram had been received announcing the Emperor's abdication, decided upon telling the news to the crew without awaiting the order from the staff; nearly at the same time the order arrived.

The act of abdication was received by the men calmly, and my impression was, that they were acquainted with it before. After reading of it, I remained on deck to

²⁴ H. Graf, *The Russian Navy*, 113. The German Naval attache in Stockholm also writes of the poor state of the Russian navy as voiced by Russian naval officers. *Records of the German Navy*, No. 957, pg. 69126.

talk to the men. Suddenly the captain came down and informed us that he had learned by telephone that tumults had broken out on the *Andrei Pervozvanny* and the *Pavel I*, and that there were officers killed and wounded. He told them that he was sure of their good sense and begged them to remain quiet.²⁵

The dissension among the officers and men in the Russian navy was no secret to the Germans, who must have understood that the repercussions would effect the fighting ability of the Baltic Fleet. Truculent outbreaks of violence affected nearly every ship in the Baltic Fleet. Aboard the destroyer *Novik*, Graf feared that he and his fellow officers could no longer trust their crew. The lack of discipline was intolerable at home; however, the insubordination while at sea or in combat was in Graf's opinion, and most of his fellow officers, cowardice.²⁶ The actions of the officers were to be supervised by "ship's committees." These committees were comprised of the "most notorious of the villains and brawlers," who also became the "Court of Justice" which tried and executed officers.²⁷

Further evidence of the sad state of discipline in the Russian navy occurred on the 26th of September. The destroyer *Okhotnik* sank, after it struck a mine while patrolling the Irben Strait. As soon as the crew heard the explosion, the men rushed to save themselves; they took all

²⁵ Ibid., 116.

²⁶ Ibid., 126.

²⁷ Ibid., 127-128.

the lifebelts, the hammocks and lowered the lifeboats. Soon the lifeboats were full of sailors who had no thought of offering a place to the officers. The officers considered it futile to ask the men to take them. They remained on the destroyer and silently observed the retiring boats. The lives of the officers were not seen as worthy to be saved by the crews of sinking vessels.²⁸

Disorder became apparent to officers like Graf when the constant flood of propaganda influenced the ships' crews to escape danger under revolutionary slogans and mottos. The "ruin of the Fleet" was brought about by these revolutionary movements, and the performance of the ships at sea or in combat suffered. Before the Germans began their operations against the Baltic islands, the Russian Baltic Fleet had already lost a number of submarines. An example of the poor state of the Russian navy was the destroyer *Stroyny*. The destroyer ran aground in August of 1917 near cape Kavi close to the Irben Strait due to crew's neglect. The captain in charge, product of the "election system," could not combine authority with this honor since equality among the men hindered him from ordering his men around at will. The incompetent captain had to lead an insubordinate crew which tried in vain to release the ship from the shallows. In the meantime the Germans sent seaplanes to drop bombs on the

²⁸ Ibid., 147.

helpless vessel. A few well placed hits forced the work to be abandoned, and the *Stroyny* succumbed ultimately to the weather.²⁹

PLANS FOR THE INVASION

On September 11, 1917, the representatives of the army and navy were called to Berlin to debate the strategic planning of the invasion. The German High Command and the *Reichsmarineamt* (German Naval Office) were not prepared to underestimate the Russian navy and army.

The success of the S.d.M. operation could only be guaranteed if the army and navy could work together with harmony, precision, and surprise. Gallipoli was an earlier example of combined naval and land forces' joint effort. Unfortunately for the British, it was costly in human life and material. Even though the British attacked with complete surprise, the battle dragged on, first to a balance and then paralysis.³⁰ Oesel was well defended, and consequently, any delay could hinder the initial momentum gained by surprise attack and result in a repeat of the Dardanelles. The well entrenched Russian forces at Orri-

²⁹ Ibid., 145-146.

³⁰ Correlli Barnett, *The Swordbearers: The Supreme Command of the First World War*, (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1964), 97.

sar, Sworbe, and Arensburg could use the geography to their advantage as did the Turks. With a few well placed machine-gun positions, a large number of German troops could be held off by small groups of defenders.³¹

The German Baltic Fleet was mainly composed of pre-Dreadnought types of battleships and light cruisers which would be an insufficient force for the S.d.M. operation; therefore, the newest and most powerful elements of the *Hochseeflotte* were needed. Carrying out the invasion, however, draining the defenses of the North Sea for such an undertaking, put Germany at great risk. Should the Grand Fleet decide to attack in German waters, the *Hochseeflotte* would be unable to meet the challenge. Despite the risk, Admiral Reinhard Scheer remarked that the news of a planned operation "offered a welcome diversion to the monotony of the war in the North Sea."³² The head of the Operations Department, Captain von Levetzlow, was "overjoyed" to seize the opportunity to step into action.³³ Eleven dreadnoughts,

³¹ Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 171.

³² Scheer, *High Sea Fleet*, 295.

³³ Hindenburg wrote of the German navy's willingness to participate. "At our instigation our Fleet accepted our suggestion with loyal devotion. Thus originated the decision to capture the island of Oesel at the entrance of the Gulf of Riga. From that point we should directly threaten the Russian naval harbor of Reval and intensify our pressure on nervous Petersburg without employing any large forces." Hindenburg, *Out of My Life*, 281-282.

six cruisers, three torpedo flotillas, and a mine-clearing division were placed at the army's disposal.³⁴

Enthusiasm was not shared by all in the German Admiralty. Misgivings about the Oesel operation were voiced by the Commander-in-Chief of the Baltic Fleet, Admiral Prince Heinrich, and a number of staff officers.³⁵ Prince Heinrich did not wish to subject units of the *Hochseeflotte* to grave risks in the minefields around the Baltic islands. The year had advanced into Fall, and clearing minefields required time and good weather conditions, which the Germans could not control. A thorough clearing of mines without good conditions could not be guaranteed, and missing a single mine could result in death. When the Allies forced the Narrows of the Dardanelles in February 1915, the result was the loss of four warships, one of which was the French battleship *Bouvet*. After eight months of futile assaults against the well fortified Turkish positions, the Entente had had enough.³⁶ It was a failure.³⁷ If the Oesel

³⁴ Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 167.

³⁵ Georg Alexander von Muller, *The Kaiser and His Court; The Diaries, Note Books and Letters of Admiral Georg Alexander Von Muller Chief of the Naval Cabinet, 1914-1918*, Walter Gorlitz editor, (London: MacDonald, 1961), 301.

³⁶ Richard Thoumin, *The First World War*, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1964), 155-171.

³⁷ The British desired to force the Dardanelles at the beginning of the war. Churchill believed that if the Royal Navy could fight its way passed the Turkish defenses the Central Powers would be out flanked on the Austrian front,

operation had the same lack of leadership and preparation as the Entente powers did at Gallipoli, then only failure awaited the Germans.

In the meanwhile weather conditions during Fall were growing increasingly bad; therefore, it was suggested by the Admiralty that a larger number of mine-clearing vessels stand ready to secure a path on time. The delay of the mine-clearing operations would threaten the surprise attack's chances of success.³⁸ Drawing further units from the *Hochseeflotte's* mine-clearing division would create great strains on Germany's U-Boat fleet. These relied greatly upon clear passageways through the British mine-fields in the North Sea.³⁹

Prince Heinrich, unable to keep silent his anger and opposition, verbalized to the Kaiser about the uselessness of the operation. He pushed for a delay until spring of 1918 and presumed that Russia would have, by that time, collapsed militarily. The Baltic islands would then fall into German hands without a struggle. When the Prince heard

Turkey would fall, Russia could be supplied via the Black Sea, and the Serbs could be aided against the Austrians. The rewards were greater than the risk. Baldwin, *World War I*, 57-62. Lord Fisher thought of the entire Dardanelles operation as a waste of time and manpower. Fisher, *Memories*, 52.

³⁸ Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 167.

³⁹ Scheer, *High Sea Fleet*, 280-294.

of the deliberations in Berlin in September, he immediately travelled to Berlin and voiced his objections and those of Rear Admiral Albert Hopman.⁴⁰

The German Admiralty convinced the Kaiser of the feasibility and probable success of the operation. A sortie by the *Hochseeflotte* at this time, they insisted, would revive the fighting spirit of the men. Wilhelm was, however, informed that British interference in the North Sea need not be reckoned with. Although risky, the operation, once in progress, had to be carried out despite losses of vessels and troops.⁴¹

Aside from all of the technical complications involved in the "Ablion" operation, internal political decisions had to be made on who would command this invasion. Rear Admiral Hopman, an obvious choice since the Baltic was his realm of expertise, was considered to be too young; his youth eliminated him from command. Admiral Scheer believed he should command. The once reluctant Grand-Admiral Prince Heinrich also submitted himself as a candidate because of his rank as Chief of Naval Operations in the Baltic and experience. Heinrich was not chosen. Scheer was too

⁴⁰ Muller, *The Kaiser*, p. 301, and Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 167.

⁴¹ Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 168.

important to the *Reichsmarineamt*, which considered that his loss would have been an irreplaceable one.⁴²

Command of the battlefleet to attack the eastern Baltic was given to Vice-Admiral Erhardt Schmidt. Schmidt commanded the 1st Squadron of the *Hochseeflotte* and was also a veteran of the Battle of Jutland and one of the oldest admirals in the German Navy.⁴³ He also gained invaluable experience in the August 1915 breakthrough in Gulf of Riga. He was a good choice for handling naval matters as was the case in 1915, but the invasion of the islands included the land operations. The islands were within the reach of the victorious Eighth Army of General Oscar von Hutier. Prince Leopold von Bayern, suggested to the Kaiser that, to avoid misunderstanding, the operation should be bluntly stated to

⁴² Ibid. Oddly Scheer does not mention in his writings that he had any intentions of heading the Oesel operation.

⁴³ Ibid. Scheer's approval of Schmidt stems from Schmidt's quick thinking during the Battle of Jutland. When Scheer ordered the second *Gefechtskертwendung* Scheer's flagship had to turn the opposite way to the rest of the fleet. Schmidt could have made a grave error by duplicating Scheer's maneuver; however, he followed the book to the letter and led the rest of the van as was practiced. Scheer writes of Schmidt: "The maneuver was rightly understood by Vice-Admiral Erhardt Schmidt in the *Ostfriesland*, the Leader of Squadron 1. He did not wait, therefore, for the carrying out of the movement from the rear -- which is the general rule to avoid all danger of collision -- but himself gave the lead in the turning of his squadron . . . This action was a very satisfactory proof of the capable handling of the ships and the leaders' intelligent grasp of the situation. See also Scheer, *High Sea Fleet*, 158, 195, 296.

be under the complete control of the navy. Since fleet officers did not trust the generals, an animosity common between navies and armies, and since the operation was in the nature of a naval engagement, the joint venture should be named a "*Sonderverband*," of the navy.⁴⁴ It was decided that the navy was to direct the operation until the troops had been landed, and then the command should be given to the army.⁴⁵

Since September 12, the preparations had been proceeding without the supervision of a commander-in-chief. The core of the invasion forces had been chosen. These were three regiments of the 42nd Infantry Division, which had just participated in the capture of Riga. Among these were bicycle troops, machine-gun units, special "*Sturmkompanien*," (special first assault forces) a company of cavalry, artillery units, and a host of technical support and communications personnel. Approximately 24,600 men, 8,500 horses, 40 field pieces, 2,500 motor vehicles, and 3,400 tons of ammunition and provisions were provided.⁴⁶ To carry these men and equipment the Germans planned to use

⁴⁴ Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 168-169.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 171-172. Gen. von Kathen and his chief of staff Colonel Tschischwitz were to oversee the landing operations. Tschischwitz, *Armee und Marine*, 34.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 32.

19 vessels of varying sizes from 1,750 to 11,500 tons. Some were ocean liners of which four had been captured from the British. The entire armada including support, supply and hospital ships amounted to more than 300 vessels.⁴⁷

The elements of the *Hochseeflotte* which were chosen to participate were the battle cruiser *Moltke*, Schmidt's flagship; Squadron III, under the command of Vice Admiral Behncke was composed of the battleships *Koenig*, *Bayern*, *Grosser Kurfurst*, *Kronprinz*, and *Markgraf*; Squadron IV under Vice-Admiral Souchon comprising the battleships *Friedrich der Grosse*, *Konig Albert*, *Kaiserin*, *Prinzregent Luitpold*, and *Kaiser*; Scouting Division II under Rear Admiral von Reuter comprising the modern cruisers *Koenigsburg*, *Karlsruhe*, *Nurnberg*, *Frankfurt*, and *Danzig*; the light cruiser *Emden* led the torpedo-boat Flotillas II, VI, and VIII. From the Baltic Fleet the cruisers *Kolberg*, *Strassburg*, and *Augsberg* were under the command of Hopman. Added to the number were partial flotillas of torpedo-boats, Mine-Sweeper Flotilla II and Division IV, and six U-Boats from Kurland.⁴⁸

The battleships chosen were the backbone of the German navy. The three classes of battleships which had a dis-

⁴⁷ Tschischwitz, *Armee und Marine*, 33.

⁴⁸ Scheer, *High Sea Fleet*, 296.

placement between 24,000 and 28,000 tons, the firepower of 12-15 inch guns, and were all well designed as more than a match for most contemporary warships.⁴⁹ A chief factor for choosing these ships was the "high degree of safety they presented from mines, which they owed to their cellblock-compartment design."⁵⁰

News of the operation was to be kept under tightest secrecy. One is always amazed, however, how confidential information filters through the ranks. The rumor had already reached the lowest levels of the *Hochseeflotte*. Seaman Richard Stumpf, without knowing it, agreed with his Commander-in-Chief, Scheer, when he recorded in his diary that the monotony on board the German battleship *Helgoland*, as well as other vessels, became unbearable. The news of a Baltic Sea sortie was welcomed with excitement, and everywhere one looked, Stumpf wrote, "sailors talked of nothing else."⁵¹ By looking at a map, he explained, anyone could guess that Germany needed to seize Oesel. Although very few of Stumpf's *kameraden* were eager to fight and to "win victories," the plan was extremely popular among the men. "We would all like to give the Russians a thorough beating,"

⁴⁹ H. M. Le Fleming, *Warships of World War I*, (London: Ian Allen, 1960), 51.

⁵⁰ Tschischwitz, *Armee und Marine*, 33.

⁵¹ Stumpf, *The Private War*, 356.

Stumpf wrote, "not only because they so shamefully insulted us during the summer 1915 over the wireless, a message was intercepted at that time read: 'Germans love to gorge on ham and sauerkraut,' but for a number of other reasons as well."⁵²

The High Command's uncertainty over the operation became the brunt of jokes. The indecision raised questions of what the Commander of the Fleet did to keep himself occupied all day.

"Oh," said one of [Stumpf's comrades], "a great deal! He paces up and down all day long on the deck of the *Kaiser Wilhelm II* counting the buttons on his coat while he mumbles: Shall we stay here? Shall we sail out? Stay here? Sail out? As soon as he is finished he begins all over again. This explains why he issues different orders every five minutes. I would gladly cut off one of his buttons so that he could finally decide one way or the other."⁵³

Stumpf continues:

Stay here? Sail out? Our future still fluctuates between these two alternatives. No one knows anything of our immediate plans and why we are standing on perpetual alert. . . . The talk about Oesel has still not died down and it assumes new and more fantastic proportions with each passing day. The number of our troop transports has already risen to forty and it is said that 80,000 troops are to participate in the invasion! I no longer believe the whole swindle. We are merely being chased around in circles.⁵⁴

⁵² Ibid., 358-359.

⁵³ Ibid., 363.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Although the *Helgoland* was a good steamer, she and her sister-ships were not chosen for the voyage. Stumpf recalls that when he heard the news of the capture of the bridgehead at Orrisar, he and his comrades "could not help feeling a little bit envious of the Third and Fourth Squadrons."⁵⁵

Preparations for the invasion began in Libau on September 21, 1917. Tschischwitz claimed that the army and navy were thrilled to undertake such an unusual venture; however, the logistic, technical, and transportation problems presented headaches. Many of the transports had been mothballed in Bremerhaven and Hamburg; their sizes varied and their seaworthiness needed inspection. The problem of seasickness among the men and horses could render them useless or in a decreased fighting condition once landed, so the High Command introduced them to ship life quickly. New landing vehicles had to be made to dispatch men and equipment. Called *Pferdeschutten*, these pontoon-like vehicles had a flat surface and wide back wall which dropped out to served as a ramp.⁵⁶

To maintain the element of surprise, air reconnaissance flew over the landing zone in the Tagga Bay only

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Tschischwitz, *Armee und Marine*, 34-35. The transports were not protected from torpedo or mines like battle-ships; consequently, every man was issued a lifevest.

once. A UC-Boat, UC 58, without being discovered, also searched out the site.

On September 24, the operational details were released to the command officers in both the army and navy. The groundwork for the operation of the navy and landing corps were laid out in order of their completion. Each phase, from the bombardment of the shore batteries to the invasion routes, depended almost entirely on the success of the previous order. Although no time frame had been assigned to each order, the sequence demanded clockwork precision.⁵⁷

As the invasion date approached, the Russians were aware of the increase in German activity. Graf states that the German aircraft became very active in making reconnoitering flights not only over the Irben Strait, but also as far as Kuivast. The German flyers did not content themselves with reconnoitering, but bombed the 12" battery Zerel and also Russian warships in the area.⁵⁸

On the 1st of October the Germans bombed the Zerel battery again. The air attack came just before dawn and was very successful. A 60kg bomb fell into a munitions depot,

⁵⁷ Ibid., 24-27.

⁵⁸ Two destroyers of the "Ukraina" class were attacked from the air. Neither the Germans nor Russians suffered a loss in this encounter. **Records of the German Navy**, "Kriegstagebuch der Flieger," dated entry 9/27/18.

which immediately took fire and exploded.⁵⁹ On that morning 74 men were immediately killed and 43 mortally wounded. The casualty figure ultimately reached 174. German air corps had used the time effectively. Weeks before the invasion could start, because of poor weather conditions, the Zerel battery was repeatedly attacked as were other fortifications. The Russian navy could not move without the Germans knowing.⁶⁰

THE RUSSIAN MINE AND SUBMARINE THREAT

In response to German activity, the Russians planted further minefields in the Irben Strait, and Tagga Bay. The Russians were, Tschischwitz writes, "exceptionally strong in defense with mines." Combined with the bad weather, clearing a path through mined waters caused extra strain on the nerves.⁶¹ The mine-clearing vessels of the *Minen-Raum-Divisionen* were small in size; they weighed approximately 15-19 tons, had a draught of 1 meter and were launched from an auxiliary-cruiser. These were most efficiently used in calm seas and at slow speeds, which explained Prince Heinrich's misgivings. The war, however, had allowed mine

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 193-194.

⁶¹ Tschischwitz, *Armee und Marine*, 22.

sweeping to evolve, for mine-sweeping tactics were improved during the course of the war to such an extent that greater areas were being swept in shorter time and with better results. From 1914 to 1918, there was an increase in the searching patterns from 50 to 350 yards, the depth to 35 yards, and the speed of sweeping, when the newer boats were employed, went up to 15 knots. As a defense against mines--the foremost concern for the mine-sweepers, and all classes of ships--a special apparatus was invented attached to the bows. The *Minenraumgerat* was designed to cut the mine-cables before the boat struck the mine.⁶²

The types of mines used by the Russians were chained to an anchor and thrown overboard. The line was measured to allow the mine to stay 2-5 yards below the surface of the water to explode when touched. Armed with about 200 kg. of explosives, mines could cause a great deal of damage, and if they happened to detonate near a munitions room a ship could be lost.⁶³ They were spread between 40 and 50 meters apart. The floating mine or *Treibmine* posed an entirely

⁶² Scheer, *High Sea Fleet*, 288. For a picture of this device see also Forstner, *Krieg in Der Ostsee*, 80-81.

⁶³ Mines and submarines caused the greatest losses to the German navy in the Baltic. The English submarine E 8 torpedoed the old armored cruiser *Prinz Adalbert* in October 1915 killing 672 of her crew. From 1914 to 1917 mines sank 49 auxiliary warships and dozens of destroyers, torpedo boats, and mine-sweepers. Forstner, *Krieg in der Ostsee*, 95, 110, 124-125.

different threat. These had been used effectively by the Turks in the Dardanelles. In the Baltic, however, the *Treibmine* was a mine that had snapped its line and wandered.⁶⁴

Another problem, already mentioned in brief, was submarines. To defend against that threat, the German navy used depth charges detonated by an adjustable time fuse. These were dropped over the side onto the submerged submarine. A second method used was the "Kite," a device pulled by a boat with an explosive charge attached to the end. The kite served two purposes. First, it determined the direction of the current. Second, it exploded when it was grounded by the metal hull of a submarine.⁶⁵

THE FINAL PREPARATIONS OF THE LANDING CORPS

Bad weather postponed the mine-sweeping operations and invasion by two weeks. The German High Command used the extra time to practice the boarding and unloading of the transports at Libau. The troops were to spend at the most two days on board. The transports neither afforded luxury liner accommodations for so many troops, nor could one

⁶⁴ Tschischwitz, *Armee und Marine*, 22-23.

⁶⁵ Scheer, *High Sea Fleet*, 288.

expect the horses to stand for days on end without rest or exercise.⁶⁶

The boarding and unloading were practiced to perfection. The troops marched in soldierly fashion up the narrow gangways and scaled the walls of the transports into and out of the *Pferdeboote*. Many were caught up in the "Jacobs Ladders," a rope ladder, and could only be freed with difficulty, since practice was done in full combat uniform. The horses and vehicles were loaded and unloaded with winches, cranes, and booms.⁶⁷

After all the details of command, logistics, tactics were worked out, when weather conditions permitted, Operation S.d.M. finally began on October 11, 1917.

The entire scope of the operation against Oesel and Moon was based on years of experience and observations in the Baltic as well as the other theaters of the First World War. Such an operation could not be taken lightly. All the current political, tactical and economic conditions of the war at that time, however, dictated the need for the capture of the Baltic Islands. An aggressive stand by the army and navy could not be postponed for another year since Germany's own war fatigue had begun to take effect. Germany could not continue the war in the east and hope to dislodge the

⁶⁶ Forstner, *Krieg in der Ostsee*, 117.

⁶⁷ Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 193.

stalemate on the western front at the same time. A mighty blow such as the S.d.M. operation perhaps could finally drive Russia out of the war, free Germany's eastern divisions to be moved against the west, and give Germany the preponderance of numbers against the equally fatigued British and French.

CHAPTER V

THE INVASION OF OESEL, MOON AND DAGOE
IN OCTOBER 1917

German control of the islands, Oesel, Moon, and Dagoe, was a major step in the defeat of the Russian nation. The loss of these islands, like the fall of Riga discussed above, wrought a gradual decay in the Russian will to fight. The following chapter will demonstrate the nearly flawless execution of this operation by the German navy and army in October of 1917. The capture of these islands testified to the harmony in which *Reichsmarineamt* and the German army's High Command worked. Furthermore, it demonstrates by its success the missed opportunities that could have been employed earlier on the eastern front.

Day and night preparations would be put to the test. The first phase to the capture of the Baltic islands had begun with the clearing of a path through the surrounding mine fields.¹ The character of this operation depended on the speed and accuracy of the mine sweeping flotillas, and upon these rested the surprise and success of the entire operation.

¹ The German military and later authors referred to these islands as the *Baltischen Inseln* as a short title.

On October 11, 1917, the German fleet weighed anchor from the port city of Libau with 1 battle cruiser, 10 battleships, 9 small cruisers, 55 destroyers, 6 submarines, 1 airplane-carrier, 4 minesweeper divisions comprising 60 motorboats, 9 torpedo boats, and 56 fishing steamers. Since the speed of the slower transports could only handicap the *Sonderverband* and place it in jeopardy of submarine attack, a decision was reached to give them a head start of almost a full day. The nineteen transports, divided into five groups, were escorted by light cruisers and a torpedo-boat flotilla screen. Because of the mine and submarine danger, navigation required the most precise calculations and alert lookouts to spot these menaces.²

The departure of the transports did not go unnoticed as was hoped. The British submarine *E 1*, sent from Hangoe two days earlier to inquire about the presence of such a large number of battleships and cruisers in Libau since early October, observed the German troop carriers and escorts. The British submarine quietly watched the procession without gaining a clue to their intent. Had *E 1* sent a message, it would have, without doubt, taken away Germany's much coveted surprise factor; however, the British submarine commander has been dispatched to gain a comprehensive picture of the

² Erhardt Schmidt, *Eroberung der Baltischen Inseln*, (Berlin: Admiralstab der Marine, 1917), 13-15.

warships at Libau. He placed no real significance on these vessels which were seen only as a large number of torpedo boats and fishing boats escorted by a light cruiser.³

The German escorts were completely unaware of the British submarine. The submarine was within 1100 yards when, without warning, a German torpedo boat turned towards her. *E 1* thought itself discovered, dived for safety and did not surface until dark to follow the Germans northward. *E 1* further noticed a greater number of German torpedo boats and transports on course towards Oesel again without ascribing great importance to them. Extreme luck or extreme negligence on the part of the British skipper saved the *S.d.M.* undertaking from certain failure. One can only speculate that if *E 1* had stayed near Libau a day later, it might have struck a fatal blow to the German plans; instead, *E 1* broke off her mission to return to Hangoe.⁴

The *Hochseeflotte* followed in the wake of the transports the next day. Trust was placed in the minesweeping

³ Air reconnaissance reported sighting a submarine on September 30, 1917 just outside of the harbor of Libau. As a result, the Germans increased the search area by 30 nautical miles. **Records of the German Navy**, Berthold, "Kriegstagebuch." As for the *E 1* case, this German war diary is silent. Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 200-201.

⁴ *E 1* had operated in the Gulf of Riga during the attempted breakthrough of the German fleet in August 1915. Its commander, N. F. Laurence was credited by the Russian navy for his part in the Russian defense. Newbolt, *Naval Operations*, vol. 4, 91.

divisions to have already cleared a path for the *Sonderverband* to reach the rendezvous point 20 km north of the Tagga Bay. The Germans used submarines and "*Feuerschiffe*," designated after reference points on their maps, i.e., Alpha, Gamma, Epsilon, and so on, as navigational markers, and their positions threaded a path through the Russian minefields. The navigational beacons presented the only means by which to navigate during the pitch black Baltic night.

The crews aboard the *Feuerschiffe* were under considerable strain. As with any mission, a great deal of responsibility is placed on carrying out orders to insure success. The strain became manifest when *Feuerschiff* "Epsilon" set anchor nearly two kilometers too far to the west; therefore, the other *Feuerschiffe* were also off. The mistake belonged to the submarine *UC 58*, which guided "Epsilon" to the wrong point. Such a small distance seems hardly worth mentioning; however, the corridor through the mine-field was not much wider than ten kilometers. The mistake shifted the entire operation closer to Russian mines and directed the mine search flotillas too far to the north. The mistaken position of "Epsilon" accounted for some on the spot adjustment and repair. For the mine search operations, precious time wasted away as the transports tried to get their coordinates to match.

Schmidt wrongly guessed that the reference ships had set anchor on time and that the *Such Flotilla* and transports were already north of Oesel. Without his knowledge great confusion had hindered the mine-clearing operation and caused an hour delay before the proper coordinates were reached. As a result, a mixed up melee among the mine-sweeping and torpedo boat flotillas delayed further mine clearing operations north of Tagga Bay by two more hours. At around 1:00 some semblance of a formation resumed the dangerous task of clearing the mines; however, the area was completely wrong. The bombardment positions and the path to the assembly area were not cleared for the *Sonderverband*, yet the transports and *Hochseeflotte* navigated through the mine-fields without incident.⁵

Schmidt was informed of the delay and great confusion. The time set for the invasion approached with great rapidity; waiting any longer was impossible. At around 2:00 Schmidt ordered mine clearing operations discontinued and the mine-sweepers to gather in their devices to "make room for the fleet."⁶ By 3:00 the fleet dropped anchor. The landing craft were lowered into the sea at around 3:40.

From the assembly area, at 4:30, the German battleships were dispatched to their appointed bombardment positions.

⁵ Schmidt, *Eroberung*, 7.

⁶ Ibid.

The *Bayern*, *Emden*, and the 1st Torpedo boat flotilla steered toward the Soela Sound and Kassar Wik to bombard the Toffri battery and cover the landing zone at Pammerort. The III Squadron, comprising the *Koenig*, *Kronprinz*, *Grosser Kurfurst*, and *Markgraf* were to knock out the battery of Ninnast. The IV Squadron, consisting of the *Kaiser*, *Kaiserin*, and *Prinzregent Luitpold*, prepared to devastate the Hundsort battery. Schmidt's flagship, the battle cruiser *Moltke*, followed behind the first landing wave *Blitz*, *Equity*, and *Corsica* at 4:40 am, and from its position in Tagga Bay, offered close support to the invasion forces.⁷ *Friederich der Grosse* and *Koenig Albert* were to offer diversionary fire on the Sworbe Battery.⁸

Schmidt's orders were to hold fire until he gave the signal. The *Moltke's* position and that of the first landing wave in the Tagga Bay, made it a conspicuous target; therefore, Schmidt needed time to make certain the first wave had landed without detection. He believed the later the bombardment started, the better the chances for success. Premature firing would have possibly, in his opinion, given away the surprise.⁹

⁷ The battleships *Koenig Albert* and *Friedrich der Grosse* detached themselves from the fleet earlier to bombard Sworbe. Ibid., 206-209.

⁸ Tschischwitz, *Armee und Marine*, 101.

⁹ Schmidt, *Eroberung*, 7.

At around 5:00 the *Bayern* received a rousing welcome. The *Bayern* had wandered upon a mine which detonated in the front section of the ship. The damage was severe, yet it did not decrease its battle readiness for the time being. Shortly after the mine hit on the *Bayern*, the *Grosser Kurfurst* also struck a mine. The jolt must have awakened the *Bayern's* crew. Panic stricken lookouts believed that they spotted periscopes of enemy submarines and assumed that they were struck by a torpedo.¹⁰ The *Bayern's* captain gave the command to lay out a pattern of fire with the lighter batteries at 5:20.¹¹

The thundering guns of the *Bayern* were heard on the bridge of the *Moltke* nearly forty kilometers away. Schmidt had no idea of what transpired, but given the realm of possibilities he surmised that the *Bayern* may have been discovered by the Russians and that the *Emden* and *Bayern* had already been forced to begin their bombardment rather than that they were shooting at imaginary submarines. The German navy encouraged independent thinking among its officers. The wireless reports from the *Moltke* immediately ordered the rest of the fleet to commence firing.¹²

¹⁰ Tschischwitz, *Armee und Marine*, 29.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹² Schmidt, *Eroberung*, 7.

Within minutes of the opening salvos, the Hundsort battery was under the heavy fire of the IV Squadron. The Russian guns did not return fire on the IV Squadron, but instead opened up on the *Moltke*. The rounds landed far and short without damaging the flagship, and within thirty minutes, the Russian guns were silenced. Meanwhile, the III Squadron could not yet see the Ninnast battery, but as soon as it became visible, the Germans pulverized their target in short time.¹³ By 8:00 the gun positions, which were still in good shape, fell into the hands of the first landing wave. The fire from the battleships landed directly on the command station and one gun. Obviously the fire was too much for the occupants who abandoned them with great haste.¹⁴

The entry to the Tagga Bay was believed clear of mines; however, the transport *Corsica* ran into a mine shortly after the bombardment began. The steamer began to take on water rapidly. Schmidt detached his torpedo boats to assist in clearing the personnel and munitions. Immediately the ship was run aground to be repaired later. Schmidt ordered mine clearing of Tagga Bay, and found only a small line of rusted over mines stretched across the bay. Extreme fortune again followed the Germans since only one

¹³ Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 208-209.

¹⁴ Schmidt, *Eroberung*, 7.

ship was struck. UC 58 also proved to have been fortunate not to have landed upon a mine during its reconnaissance mission.¹⁵

The landing in the Tagga Bay took the Russians by complete surprise. Field artillery, hidden in the woods on the west side of the bay out of sight of German airplanes, opened up a lively fire against the torpedo boats and *Vortrupp* [first landing wave], yet failed to cause any problems. German aircraft were able to direct torpedo boat S 104 in silencing the Russian guns.¹⁶ With fire support from the torpedo boats, the *Vortrupp* advanced quickly and captured two Russian field guns. A second group of the *Sturmkompanie* landed on the east portion of the bay only to be pinned down by machine-gun fire. With fire-cover from the torpedo boats, the German troops rapidly overwhelmed and captured the two machine-guns. Schmidt ordered the main wave to begin its approach to the bay after a mine cleared path was made and the *Vortrupp* had secured the immediate area.¹⁷

Meanwhile the second landing at Pammerort began. The Toffri battery had not yet been silenced since its location

¹⁵ Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 207-208.

¹⁶ Records of the German Navy, Berthold. "Kriegstagebuch," Dated entry 10/12/17.

¹⁷ Tschischwitz, *Armee und Marine*, 48.

was well hidden and it had not yet fired a single salvo to give away its exact position. And with limited information as to its whereabouts, the *Bayern* and *Emden* could only take pot shots in its general area. Without prior intelligence, the Germans landed a well placed salvo behind the Toffri guns. The shell fell directly in the Toffri batteries troop quarters and caused a great fire.

The *Emden* sent out its boats to assist in the unloading of the bicycle troops, and upon that the Toffri guns began to fire. The targets chosen by the Russians were the landing craft. Shells fell around the small craft. Only one direct hit was recorded, and it, fortunately, did not explode. The fire and smoke from the Toffri battery gave the *Bayern* the visual confirmation to fix its sights and open up with its lighter guns. From the *Emden* it was observed that the first salvo landed in the water, the second on the beach and the third in Toffri battery. The Russian gun crews were observed running from their positions.¹⁸

At about 7:00 the first wave of *Sturmkompanien* and sailors landed near Pammerort without encountering resistance, and rapidly moved in to take the Russian gun positions. The islanders believed the German troops were British and let them go unhindered about their business. The German *Sturmkompanie* quickly moved north to capture the

¹⁸ Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 210.

supposed battery at Pammerort, only to find it did not exist. It became clear that the reported gun emplacement was a mistake of the air reconnaissance group stationed at Windau. The second objective was to capture the signal station. The station was found intact and abandoned and put to use immediately to communicate with air reconnaissance and the German fleet.¹⁹

The main objectives of the I and II *Radfahrer* Battalions landing at Pammerort were first to, capture the battery at Pammerort; second, to cut off the Russian army's escape routes from Arensburg to Moon or at least slow them down, and with quick mobility, to cut Russian communication lines and cause great confusion; and third, to begin the assault on the bridgehead at Orrisar.²⁰

The main body of the Pokka landing corps moved towards its objectives and carried out all of the assignments. The II *Radfahrer* Battalion marched eastward along the northern coast of Oesel towards Orrisar and the mole which connected Oesel to Moon. On their way the Germans captured around 150 Russians stationed near the town of Masik. By 9:00 the II *Radfahrer* Battalion had reached the mole and had occupied the bridgehead at Orrisar. German units from the I *Radfahrer* Battalion moved southward towards Arensburg and

¹⁹ Tschischwitz, *Armee und Marine*, 53.

²⁰ Ibid., 54.

encountered heavy resistance near the town of Tikka, yet overcame this opposition and effectively cut the island in half.²¹

The main landing force, the 42nd Infantry Regiment at Tagga, also made strides in advancing upon the Russians at Arensburg. German air support from Windau and the seaplane-carrier *Santa Elena* inflicted great losses on Russian cavalry, infantry columns and artillery. Intelligence reports on Russian positions and strength were sent by wireless or by airplanes which dropped satchels over the side.²² The advancing troops were warned to proceed with caution. The danger existed that German advance units could be trapped by waiting Russians. By nightfall the 42nd had advanced ten kilometers from Tagga, seized the Hundsort and Ninnast batteries, and captured the air-station at Papensholm. From here the main force split into four distinct groups. The 131st Infantry Regiment marched southward towards Sworbe, the 255th Infantry Regiment advanced on Arensburg, and the IV and V *Radfahrer* Battalions moved along the north coast of Oesel to meet the *Abteilung Winterfeld* at Orrisar.²³

²¹ Ibid., 55-56.

²² Records of the German Navy, Berthold, "Kriegstagebuch," Dated entry 10/12/17.

²³ Tschischwitz, *Armee und Marine*, 62.

An impressive number of captured Russian supplies and troops testified to the success of the surprise. By the night of the 12th over 300 prisoners were taken, along with 6 aircraft, scores of field guns, horses and motor vehicles. The Russians offered stiff resistance in isolated areas, yet overall only the wind, rain and rough terrain of Oesel slowed down the German advance.²⁴

While the German army did its part on land, the *Sonderverband* secured the Soela Sound and Tagga Bay from the danger of mines by starting an extensive search. A *Horchlinie* [listening line] stretched out into the Baltic from Ninnast and another blocked the Soela Sound.²⁵ The badly damaged *Bayern* set anchor in the Tagga Bay to effect temporary repairs after it became impossible to slow down the water leakage. It stayed there as an added support to the unloading operations and did not leave for repairs in Kiel until October 27.²⁶

To the South of Oesel the task of mine-clearing had begun in the Irben Strait on the 11th. Operational plans dictated that the German navy needed to control the Gulf of

²⁴ Ibid., 58-63, and *Records of the German Navy*, Berthold, "Kriegstagebuch," Dated entry 10/13/17.

²⁵ Gagern, Ostsee, "Anlage 2" Sicherung der Tagga Bucht.

²⁶ *Records of the German Navy*, "O 951 II Albion," Berlin. Oktober 28, 1917.

Riga; first, to support the advancing troops on Oesel, and second, to hinder the Russian Baltic Fleet from evacuating its forces by sea or bombarding the German troops. The still active Zerel battery on the Irben Peninsula tried with inconsistent and unsuccessful fire to hamper the German III Mine-clearing Division.²⁷

The breakthrough into the Kassar Wik became the immediate concern and a vital objective for the *Sonderverband*. From here the German navy could control the Moon Sound, besides the southern tip of Zerel, the only other access by sea into the Gulf of Riga, yet passage between the islands of Dagoe and Moon was not only impeded by the occasional shelling from the Toffri battery, but also by shallow and unsearched waters.²⁸ It was impossible for anything larger than a destroyer to pass through this sound without running aground, yet passage became absolutely necessary as the V and IV Radfahrer Battalions advanced. Without the strong support of the German navy, the Winterfeld command could not possibly hold out against the Russian army on Moon.²⁹

²⁷ Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 224.

²⁸ It appeared that the Russian gun crews took flight whenever the *Emden* or *Bayern* opened up with a few salvos only to return later. The Germans finally silenced the Toffri installation by sending a landing party to capture them and set charges for their destruction on October 12, 1917. Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 219.

With the news of the Tagga Bay invasion, the Russian navy was placed on a half hour's notice for deployment. The Russian admiral Bakhireff feared that, if the Germans broke through the Kassar Wik, the defense of Oesel would be as good as lost. The destroyers *Kondratenko* and *Pogranitchnik* were sent to guard the Soela Sound; however, by the time the Russian destroyers arrived, the Germans were already sending out the mine-clearing craft. With a flurry of salvos from the Russian destroyers, the Germans were forced to retreat back into the Soela Sound. The *Emden* covered the hasty retreat of the German minesweepers, and, although out of range, fired in the direction of the Russian warships forcing them to turn away.³⁰

Bakhireff planned to mine the Kassar Wik to restrict German warships from breaking through, so he dispatched the mine-layer *Pripiat* and the gun-boat *Grozaichy*.³¹ Here again he was too late. By 3:00 the Germans had assembled the 13th Half Flotilla comprising V 82, S 64, V 74, S 63, and S 61 for another sortie into the Kassar Wik. Slowly the 13th

²⁹ Tschischwitz, *Armee und Marine*, 78.

³⁰ Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 222-223, See also *Records of the German Navy*, Berthold, "Kriegstagebuch," Dated entry 10/12/17.

³¹ Graf, *Russian Navy*, 148, The *Groziachy* [sic] was the oldest serving gunboat in the Russian navy. It was very slow, but heavily armed with modern 9-inch guns. Greger, *Russische Flotte*, 106.

advanced, fearing at any moment to wander upon a mine. The *Kondratenko* wired that Germans had once more forced their way into the Kassar Wik, and, since the numbers were in favor of the German 13th, Bakhireff ordered the *Isiaslav*, *Grom*, *Zabiaka*, *Samson*, and *Novik* to assist in driving the Germans back.³² By the time the five Russian destroyers had reached the *Kondratenko*, a fire-fight was in progress.

Moving in a southeast direction the Russian destroyers led the German 13th towards Moon Sound. In the battle only the slow gun-boat *Groziachy* was hit. Three shells found it, yet it managed to escape destruction. Nearing the Moon Sound the Russian retreat and counterattack was joined by the 15,000 ton armored cruiser *Admiral Makaroff*. The 13th was forced to retreat back into the Soela Sound because of Russian tactical superiority and lack of daylight.³³

The Russian destroyer force led by the *Novik* pressed home their attack early the next morning. When the Russians reached the Soela Sound the *Emden* again aimed some salvos to disperse the five Russian vessels. No hits were confirmed; however, the captured ship's diary from the *Grom* noted one destroyer was hit.³⁴ The Russian destroyers sailed out of

³² Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 223, *Records of the German Navy*, Berthold, "Kriegstagebuch," Dated entry 10/12/17.

³³ Graf, *Russian Navy*, 148.

³⁴ Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 225, Graf does not mention any hits. Graf, *Russian Navy*, 148-149.

the *Emden's* range and waited for another German breakthrough in the Kassar Wik. A fog bank rolled in and ended the action around noon.³⁵

The Germans feared that the Russian destroyers had strewn mines in their retreat from the *Emden's* guns, and any attempt to pass through the Kassar Wik again was improbable. For such an endeavor, the range and caliber of the *Emden's* guns would not be sufficient. A renewed offensive was needed, covered by a battleship, if possible, to drive the Russian destroyers back and open up the sound.³⁶

Before daylight completely faded, the German air reconnaissance reported increased activity in the Moon Sound area. The pilots sighted 2 pre-Dreadnoughts, 1 cruiser, 9 destroyers, and 10 transports. These observations were not welcome news for the *Sonderverband*. It became even more pressing to break through the Kassar Wik to support the Winterfeld command and prevent a possible escape of the Russian army trapped on Oesel.³⁷

Luck once more followed the Germans. The time for costly deliberations and the wait for the battleship *Kaiser* at the Soela Sound gave the Russian navy ample time to

³⁵ Tschischwitz, *Armee und Marine*, 67.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Records of the German Navy, Berthold, "Kriegstagebuch," Dated entry 10/13/17.

complete mine-laying operations. The Russians dispatched the minelayer *Pripiat* to lay out the mines, and the destroyer *Raziatchy* was sent along for protection. Graf states that he had his doubts about the success of the operation which was to take place on the night of the 12th and 13th. Graf's doubts were not because of the strain on the crew of the minelayer, since the operation was to take place under poor weather conditions, but because the "crew of the *Pripiat* was very unreliable and therefore little hope was placed in the success of the mine-laying jaunt."³⁸ Graf's suspicion was well founded. The crew refused to carry out the job because of the danger that presented itself and returned after two hours without laying a single mine. The sound remained open.³⁹

The German navy planned to break through in the Kassar Wik in the afternoon of the 14th to give much needed support to the belabored German army at Orrisar. The battleship *Kaiser* took position to cover the I Torpedo-boat Flotilla, comprising 16 ships. Furthermore, the *Kaiser* supported a

³⁸ Graf, *Russian Navy*, 149.

³⁹ Tschischwitz, *Armee und Marine*, 68. Graf writes: "Next day it was all cleared up, that owing to the influence of agitators (the cowardly part of the crew), the rest refused to execute the mine-laying, giving as reason of this, the too great danger of the task; the Strait remained open for the passage of the enemy. Such cases can only happen in revolutionary time when they go unpunished." *Idem*, *Russian Navy*.

small landing party near Toffri in order to outflank the Russian destroyers and to keep the Toffri battery from shelling the *Kaiser*.⁴⁰ At 11:45 the *Kaiser* began a cannonade against the Russian destroyers and soon engulfed them in gigantic waterspouts. The Russian ships were forced to flee eastward for safe waters and thereby give up the Sound to the German navy.⁴¹

The German torpedo boats advanced slowly at 17 knots through the shallow waters of the Soela Sound, yet still three torpedo boats ran aground. The remaining 13 torpedo boats passed into the Wik at 12:00 at which time the Russian and German destroyers entangled themselves in a running fight. The Rosenberg command detached themselves from the rest of the German van and steered towards the Kleiner Sund to give much needed support to the German Army at Orrisar.⁴² During the engagement, the Russian destroyer *Grom* received a direct hit in the engine room from the guns of the *Kaiser* and was rendered immobile even though the shell did not explode. The German destroyer *V 100* moved in to finish the crippled Russian and landed a direct hit setting it ablaze. The state of the *Grom* required it to be taken in tow by the

⁴⁰ Records of the German Navy, 69254 NID. German wireless reports, KZ 59438 10/14/17.

⁴¹ Graf, Russian Navy, 150.

⁴² Tschischwitz, Armee und Marine, 69.

Russian gunboat *Chrabry*; however, (to its already sinking fortune) the tow line snapped and the ship had to be left behind burning and sinking.⁴³ The lines had not been fastened because of the great confusion of the *Grom*'s crew. Panic stricken sailors clamored for the safe deck of the gunboat, since both vessels were under heavy fire from the German squadron.⁴⁴

The Germans wasted no time in capturing the *Grom* and five of its crew.⁴⁵ One officer and five men from the torpedo boat *B 98* boarded the *Grom* and raised the German flag over the Russian ensign and gave three cheers for the Kaiser. On board the listing Russian destroyer, the boarding party captured vital charts to the *Kassar Wik* and the rest of the waters around the islands. To the relief of the German navy, the *Kassar Wik* had not been mined as was expected. The condition of the *Grom* grew worse from minute to minute as the ship took on more water, and it became futile for the Germans to hope to bring it in as a prize. The *Grom* listed heavily and all hopes to save it were abandoned. The German flag was taken down, the ship

⁴³ Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 233-235.

⁴⁴ Graf, *Russian Navy*, 150.

⁴⁵ Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 235. The dispatches of the fleet confirmed 8 sailors captured. *Records of the German Navy*, KZ 59441.

abandoned, and shortly afterward it slowly rolled over and sank.⁴⁶

The rest of the Russian destroyer force escaped towards the Moon Sound. Even with the help of the cruiser *Markaroff*, the *Kassar Wik*, for the time being, had to be abandoned to the German navy. The Germans were hereby free to move into the Kleiner Sund and bombard the bridgeheads guarding the mole on Moon and Oesel. The action could not have been better timed as Russian armored vehicles stationed on Moon appeared to be crossing over the stone dam.

Heavy fighting for this vital link between the two islands testified to the determination on both sides not to give ground. The bridgehead on Oesel changed hands often. The Russians had the advantage of numbers and the Germans had momentum. The advancing Russian army, still in retreat and disarray, stalled in front of the German positions yet exerted great pressure against the small German line as their numbers swelled. Further anxiety grew for the Winterfeld command, as the Russian batteries on Moon joined the struggle. Without contact or communications for relief the situation looked questionable.⁴⁷

Meanwhile the 42nd Division was under the impression that the enemy had since October 13 moved towards Arensburg

⁴⁶ Tschischwitz, *Armee und Marine*, 69-70.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 70-74.

to make its stand. The rapidly advancing German army closed off the northern roads to the city, and from there a reconnaissance patrol was able to ascertain to their surprise, that Arensburg had been abandoned and that the Russian army was in full retreat. The reports from the patrol confirmed that 12,000 men were headed towards Orrisar to flee across the mole onto Moon and that 5,000 more were marching south to Sworbe to evacuate with the help of the Russian navy.⁴⁸

The 131st Infantry Regiment had been assigned by the General Staff of the 42nd Infantry Division to pressure the Russian troops on the Irben Peninsula into surrender. The rest of the German assault was directed in relief of Orrisar, where they were informed the mass of the Russian troops were located. The marching orders were delivered to the exhausted troops on the night of October 13, and under difficult weather conditions, beguiled by mud and rain, the 255th Reserve Infantry Regiment took up positions behind the Russian army and sandwiched them between the 138th and the 17th.⁴⁹ By midnight they had reached the rear of the Russian army. With heavy fighting the only escape over to Moon was now in German hands. The Russian front began to collapse on both sides. Escape to Moon or back to Arensburg was impossible. The Russian army had been forced towards

⁴⁸ Ibid., 75.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 75-77.

the coast putting their backs to the sea. Tschischwitz rightly surmised that the Russians had to choose between destruction or surrender.⁵⁰

The Germans were unaware of the strength of their opponent. It was believed that the bulk of the Oesel troops had already escaped to Moon. Several attempts by Russian cavalry to break through the German lines on the morning of October 15 ended in failure. As with the capture of Riga the German army waited for artillery support before attacking the trapped Russians. At 2:30 am the 255th and 17th attacked in full force. German artillery caused panic, disorder, and carnage among the densely positioned Russian troops who were seen running about screaming and waving white flags. Thirty minutes later the bulk of the Russian 107th division capitulated.⁵¹

The situation on October 14 and 15 for the Russians cut-off on Irben looked even more hopeless. A captured Russian dispatch informed the Germans that the Russian navy was indeed requested by the commandant of Zerel to help disembark his trapped command.⁵² The Russian cruiser *Bajan* steamed toward the Zerel battery to raise the morale of the despondent men. Given the present situation, the Gulf of

⁵⁰ Ibid., 79.

⁵¹ Ibid., 80-83.

⁵² Records of the German Navy, KZ 59625.

Riga was still firmly in the hand of the Russian navy. Twelve destroyers, 2 *Slava* class battle-ships and three cruisers including the *Bajan* were observed from the air.⁵³

On the 14th the German army moved into Arensburg without resistance. Among the war prizes were 8 airplanes and two undamaged runways which were put to use immediately. Poor weather conditions, however, greatly restricted the use of aircraft over the Gulf of Riga, and, as a result, the air assault against the Zerel battery could not be carried out on that day.⁵⁴

The III Squadron was ordered to leave Danzig after fuel and ammunition were replenished and steam on towards the Irben Peninsula on 14 October to silence the Zerel battery after sunset.⁵⁵ The passage into the Gulf of Riga could only be assured if the 12-in. Russian guns were completely and permanently silenced. Only through the Irben Strait could Dreadnought battleships enter the Gulf of Riga--a decided advantage for the *Sonderverband* since they controlled the western Baltic. The B.d.A.d.O. (the Commander-

⁵³ Idem., Berthold, "Kriegstagebuch." Dated entry 10-14-17.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ All except the *Markgraf* were sent to Danzig to prepare for the second stage of the invasion, yet out of the 3rd Sq. the *Bayern* and *Grosser Kurfurst* were unable to participate leaving only the *Kronprinz* and *Koenig*. The *Grosser Kurfurst* went on to Kiel for repairs. Forstner, *Krieg in der Ostsee*, 119.

in-Chief of the Eastern Baltic Naval Forces)⁵⁶ believed it opportune to force the Strait on to Arensburg as soon as the mine-sweepers cleared a path.⁵⁷

The successful operation in the Kassar Wik secured the left flank of the German army, yet without control of the Irben Strait the right flank of the army lay unprotected from Russian naval forces. The German navy was to sail toward Arensburg to even up this imbalance. With the protection of Rear Admiral Hopman's *Aufklärungstreitkraefte* (Reconnoitering forces), a path was to be cleared through the minefield which would run along the coast of Lithuania just past the Irben Peninsula where it would then point directly to Arensburg.⁵⁸

Mines of different sizes and types were found and disarmed. At dawn on October 14 Hopman steamed with his three light cruisers and eleven torpedo boats up the channel to assist the mine-sweepers only to be turned back by the fire from the Zerel batteries. The mine clearing craft were too small to be detected by the Russian spotters; hence, they were left alone. Air reconnaissance later revealed that the Russian navy did not attempt to hinder the mine

⁵⁶ *Befehlshaber der Aufklärungstreitkräfte der ostlichen Ostsee.*

⁵⁷ Records of the German Navy, KZ 59441.

⁵⁸ Tschischwitz, *Armee und Marine*, 101.

sweeping operations since no Russian warships were in the immediate area.⁵⁹ Under poor weather conditions the operation crawled along.⁶⁰

While the 131st Infantry Regiment moved down the Sworbe Peninsula to the town of Anskul, the German IV Squadron under Admiral Souchon moved in position to bombard the Russians on Sworbe and assist the 131st. The three Dreadnoughts sent from Tagga bay arrived at 2:30, yet the Russian guns did not open fire on them until 4:00 pm. The Russian shells crashed in, uncomfortably close, and often forced the German battleships to alter course in unknown water where mines and submarines presented a grave danger.⁶¹

Earlier, on October 14, the 131st sent an envoy to the besieged Russian senior naval officer Captain Knupfer. Lieutenant von Oppen delivered an ultimatum of surrender or destruction to the Russian officer. The Germans promised to treat their Russian prisoners with fairness and respect if they surrendered the Zerel batteries intact. The German officer was not treated kindly and was threatened with being shot. Knupfer gambled for time, and suggested the Germans

⁵⁹ The Russian navy was observed to be anchored in the Moon Sound. The *Bajan* and four destroyers were spotted between Abro and Sworbe. *Records of the German Navy*, Berthold, "Kriegstagebuch," Dated entry 10/15/17.

⁶⁰ Tshischwitz, *Armee und Marine*, 99-102.

⁶¹ A submarine attack, although unsuccessful, forced the Germans to cease fire after one hour. *Ibid.*, 103.

withdraw or face a fierce fight. In the meantime he sent von Oppen back to negotiate a cease-fire.⁶²

The German infantry faced tremendous resistance on the morning of the 15th but reached the town of Anskull at 10:20. Along with Russian field artillery, the Russian naval units between Abro and Sworbe delivered a defiant message to the German ultimatum. Von Oppen returned to his unit at 1:30 to deliver the Russian suggestion of a cease-fire, yet given the present situation, von Oppen was sent back to deny any request for a cease-fire, since the Germans were beginning to make headway on land and sea. The mine clearing operations had penetrated two of the four barriers; Hopman's cruisers, two Dreadnoughts, and torpedo boats waited off the coast of Lithuania to escort more troop transports; the IV Squadron presented a constant threat; and the capture of an urgent message to the Russian navy alerted the Germans to the desperate situation facing the Russian command on Sworbe.⁶³

At noon the 131st renewed its attack while von Oppen informed Knupfer that the German army was in a better position to make demands. From Anskul the 131st swiftly

⁶² Ibid., 104, It became evident, Gagern believes, that the Sworbe batteries did not wish to fight but escape. Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 240-241.

⁶³ *Records of the German Navy*, pg. 69254, German telegram to Berlin, 10/16/17, KZ 59625.

marched south encountering little or no resistance taking many prisoners. Admiral Bachireff who went to Sworbe earlier that day aboard the Russian cruiser *Bajan*, as mentioned above, turned his cruiser around without any apparent reason. All these added to the decay of morale among the Sworbe combatants.⁶⁴ By 6:00 pm the situation had grown so desperate for the Russians that they capitulated.

Since dawn of the 15th, the IV Squadron had waited for orders to pound the shore installations. The rainy weather hid the German battleships from the Russian shore batteries which had been silent since the 14th. The silence was attributed to poor visibility. On the morning of the 15th the orders for the German warships were not to fire unless fired upon. The silence lasted until noon when smoke was observed in the area of the Zerel batteries. The main guns of the battleships opened fire without having the Russians fire back. Fire and explosions were seen during the one hour bombardment--the Zerel batteries would or could not fight back.⁶⁵

The fire and smoke on Sworbe which was observed from the battleships was a result of self destruction of the guns. The request for reinforcements was not answered and

⁶⁴ Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 240-241.

⁶⁵ Tschischwitz, *Armee und Marine*, 105.

as a result, the Russians sabotaged their main defenses rather than let them fall into German hands.⁶⁶

The entire island of Oesel was now in the hands of the German Army. Three days into operation S.d.M., the *Sonderverband* captured scores of Russian supplies, aircraft, vehicles, and nearly 20,000 Russian troops.⁶⁷ The first step in securing the Gulf of Riga had been accomplished. Even though the III Squadron failed to break into the Gulf of Riga before the 15th, the German 42nd Division carried the attack against the Russians without naval support. The absence of the Russian fleet during the seige of the Russian 107th Division was a fortune of war. The *Sonderverband* telegraphed the good news to Berlin that the first phase of the operation had been completed and that the General staff of the 23rd Regiment had already devised plans for the invasion of Moon.⁶⁸

THE INVASION OF MOON AND DAGOE

With the Sworbe battery out of commission the passage through the Irben Strait went unhindered on October 16. The

⁶⁶ Graf, Russian Navy, 151.

⁶⁷ Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 427. The final list of captured material and men will be given at the end of the chapter.

⁶⁸ Records of the German Navy, pg. 69254, 10/16/17.

III Squadron and Hopman's cruisers could safely bring the mine-sweepers and transports to Arensburg.⁶⁹ Although the original plan was to support the land forces for a siege against the capitol of Oesel, this plan was no longer needed. Arensburg had fallen into German hands without a struggle, and Schmidt ordered Hopman and Behncke to Moon Sound to stand ready to force the Russian naval forces to retreat or fight. Further orders were that they support the German army's crossing onto Moon.⁷⁰

The Russian navy pulled back all of its units from the gulf into Moon Sound, and thereby mastery of the Gulf of Riga was surrendered to the German fleet without a struggle.⁷¹ Continual attacks from air and sea followed the Russian Baltic fleet's retreat. German airmen claimed that an attack on the Russian battleship *Slava* with bombs on October 15 had scored a direct hit aft causing a noticable fire; however, neither the Russian nor German sources admit any such success.⁷² German submarines operating near Moon Sound detected and reported the movements of the Russian navy and laid a mine barrage at the southern opening of the

⁶⁹ Ibid., KZ 60116. 10/17/17.

⁷⁰ Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 256-259.

⁷¹ *Records of the German Navy*, Berthold, "Kriegstagebuch," Dated entry 10/16/17.

⁷² Ibid., 10/15/17.

sound and sealed the only passage open to the Russian navy.⁷³

In the early hours of October 17, Behncke decided to dispatch the III Squadron and its support of cruisers, torpedo boats, and minesweepers to the mine-free areas indicated on the captured Russian charts. The accuracy of the *Grom's* charts were called into question, for mistakes and inconsistent markings which indicated mine fields and barriers were often times wrong. The chart may have been purposely misleading in case of capture.⁷⁴ Orders for the fleet were to depart from Arensburg at 4:30 on October 17.⁷⁵ UC 56, UC 78, and UC 57 were sent into the Moon Sound earlier to set new mine barrages in addition to those already laid out.⁷⁶

⁷³ Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 257-258, 290-293. These were UC Boats and carried only mines. Three English submarines operating in the gulf. C 27 attacked the *Koenig* and *Kronprinz* on October 16 without success, yet hit and disabled the *Indianola*, a mineclearing mothership of 2000 tons. Apart from this there were no other successes. A Russian report published in the *London Times* describes the attack as harrowing. The Germans delivered a strong anti-submarine defense. C 27 was forced to dive for safety as it was being heavily shelled and riddled with shot by seaplanes. "British Submarines Exploit; A German Dreadnought Believed To Be Hit," *London Times*, 23 October 1917.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 259.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 260-261. The question of the mine barriers caused a delay of the appointed departure time. The fleet left at 6:00 am.

⁷⁶ Records of the German Navy, KZ 59896, 10/17/17.

The German fleet steamed towards the Moon Sound opening behind the minesweepers. At 7:00 the Germans made visual contact on two Russian destroyers off the Estonian coast; their course indicated they were making a run at full speed for the Moon Sound. The *Koenig* opened up with its main armament; however, the Germans had no luck in hitting the Russian warships. The destroyers confirmed that the *Grom's* charts were accurate on this occasion. A clear passage to the Moon Sound did exist.⁷⁷

The Russian warships, located near Kuiwast, responsible for the defense of Moon opened fire on the German minesweepers which were far ahead of Behncke's command at 7:22. The heavy guns stationed off Woi also joined in the attempt to force the mine-clearing vessels to withdraw. The Germans were unable to return fire with their battleships or cruisers, since these were out of range, and the small mine clearing craft were not equipped to stand up to heavy artillery. Not one German ship was damaged in the thirty minute melee. A smoke screen was laid down by the German minesweepers to effect a retirement behind Behncke's van.⁷⁸

North of Oesel and Moon two Russian gun boats and six destroyers tried again to break into the Kassar Wik on October 16, but failed to wrest it from the hands of the

⁷⁷ Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 261.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 262.

Germans. The *Sonderverband* stood ready to transport the army onto Moon, and with the upper hand in the Kassar Wik and Kleiner Sund, the operation could count on little interference from the Russian fleet. The German high command decided that it would be foolish to direct the German invasion over the mole, since the Russians still had a strong bridgehead on Moon backed by armored vehicles. Even with strong support from the German navy, heavy casualties could be expected. The island of Keinast, north of Moon, was selected as a crossing point.⁷⁹

Flights over Keinast on October 15 confirmed that the island was free of Russian forces. Further news showed that the water depth between Moon and Keinast was only 8 inches.⁸⁰ The conditions were better than could have been hoped for. A back door to Moon had been left open. The German *Sturmkompanien* were ordered to stand ready for deployment on the night of October 17. This opportune passage, however, was not needed since further flights over Moon on October 17 detected that only small bands of Russian troops still occupied the island. Only the bridgehead on Moon seemed in a position to defend itself.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Tschischwitz, *Armee und Marine*, 129.

⁸⁰ Records of the German Navy, Berthold, "Kriegstagebuch," Dated entry. 10/15/17.

⁸¹ Ibid. 10/17/17. German airplanes repeatedly attacked the bridgehead with bombs on October 16.

General von Kathen ordered the immediate crossover via the Stone mole and Kleiner Sund to Moon to prevent the escape of any more Russians. A small detachment from the 138 Infantry Regiment loaded onto the *Motoruderbarkassen* [motorized launches] and landed near Keggowa at 4:45.⁸² They encountered no resistance and moved against the northern flank of the Moon bridgehead. After a short firefight the Russian position collapsed. The rest of the 138th crossed onto the mole, yet was forced to stop 600 yards from the bridgehead as Russian machine guns offered a lively fire. A frontal assault was still pointless.⁸³

Only after repeated pressure from the German troops from the north did resistance crumble. At 1:45 on October 18, the Russians abandoned their fortifications. Two field guns, one machine gun, and a burnt out armored car were taken as prizes. The mole was secure for safe passage, and the rest of the invasion force could move out.⁸⁴

Before these events, the situation on October 17 for the German navy was one of surprise. At 8:00, after the mine-sweeping craft had been called back, Behncke tried to get his battleships into a position to broadside the Woi and

⁸² Records of the German Navy, KZ 60116. The wireless report stated that the invasion began at 1:15 pm.

⁸³ Tschischwitz, *Armee und Marine*, 130.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 131-132.

Werder batteries. He steered his command eastward towards mine-clear water. The shallow water and narrow lanes made maneuvering next to impossible. The *Slava* countered the southern movement of the retreating mineclearing craft and kept them under fire from its 12-inch guns. As the mine-sweepers reached the relative safety of the two German Dreadnoughts and Hopman's cruisers, the *Slava's* shells still were landed. The *Koenig* and *Kronprinz* opened up with their main guns to beat back the old Russian pre-Dreadnought, yet the Russian had the better range--an irritating 2000 yards.⁸⁵

The German Dreadnoughts could neither answer the *Slava's* barrage, nor could they manoeuvre in the small path cut by the minesweepers. Behncke decided to wait until his minesweepers cleared a path closer to the *Slava* and then engage it. At 8:40 the *Slava* steamed northward, still keeping up a heavy fire on the small German craft. Behncke followed close behind unable to offer cover to his mine clearing divisions and waited behind the Russian minefield halfway between Oesel and Estonia. The Russian battleships turned again to the south to beat back the German mine-sweepers. Werder and Woi too joined the effort to disrupt the operation. *M 77* and *M 67* were the only two ships to be slightly damaged from the otherwise ineffectual Russian

⁸⁵ Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 262.

artillery.⁸⁶ The German minesweepers worked under extremely difficult conditions, considering that they operated without protection, yet, despite the odds, they broke through the Russian mine barrage by 10:00.

The German squadron waited for the Russian fleet to gain enough confidence and false belief that their odds in a pitched battle were better than logic dictated. Russian observers noted that the German fleet lay relatively motionless. As the *Slava*, *Grazhdanin*, and *Bajan* moved further south into the middle of the Moon Sound to take advantage of their range, the *Koenig* and *Kronprinz* steamed at full speed towards the surprised Russians, who had stopped for meal time. The *Koenig* opened fire on the *Slava* at 10:13. The *Kronprinz* came into range at 10:17, and targeted the *Grazhdanin*.⁸⁷

The Russian battleships turned again to the north and directed their fire on the German minesweepers to slow down the German assault. The mine clearing devices were gathered in and the boats recalled. At 10:24 the *Slava* received a direct hit from one of the *Koenig*'s 12-inch shells--the third salvo from the *Koenig* found its range. Observations from the bridge confirmed that the *Slava* began to list, for it had taken on 1130 tons of water in the forward section of

⁸⁶ Ibid., 262-263.

⁸⁷ Graf, *Russian Navy*, 152.

the ship. A weak and inconsistent firing was returned by the Russians against Behncke's squadron none of which struck the Germans. The shell from the *Kronprinz* found its mark on the *Grazhdanin* and set it ablaze at 10:36. The *Bajan* was hit at 10:40 setting a fire in its oil tank. The shell crashed through the main deck and cut through the ship exploding deep inside. It took nearly 24 hours to extinguish the fire. Soon after the Russian resistance was broken as they made a run to the north.⁸⁸

To keep the canal clear, the Russian commander on the *Bajan* ordered the *Slava* to stop. Because of its sinking condition, the *Slava* jeopardized the other two Russian battleships' escape. The *Slava* counterflooded and took on more water, which lowered its draught by nearly 30 feet and made it impossible for escape. The Russian 6th Destroyer Flotilla came alongside and removed the crew.⁸⁹ The *Slava* was run aground and abandoned. It was hit 8 times by 12-inch shells from the *Koenig*. The first three caused it to list by 8 degrees and damaged the electrical generator blacking out the entire ship. Five further hits set the *Slava* on fire.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 263.

⁸⁹ *Records of the German Navy*, KZ 60087. See also Graf, *Russian Navy*, 152.

⁹⁰ *Tschischwitz, Armee und Marine*, 134, Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 263-264. While bombarding the minesweepers the

Great panic aboard the crippled *Slava* turned the crew into a hysterical mob. They refused to set the *Slava* down in the canal or carry out any orders to explode the ship. Understandably the situation unsettled their nerves. To render the battleship useless to the Germans, three Russian destroyers sent six torpedoes into it, of which only one exploded.⁹¹

At 10:46 the Werder battery began to bombard the German Dreadnoughts. The *Koenig* broadsided the battery and set fire to several buildings.⁹² The Russian guns were silenced after a few minutes and the German squadron set anchor near the Estonian coast. From 11:15 to 11:35 the *Koenig* bombarded the Woi battery into silence.

At 12:00 noon and 3:00 German reconnaissance reported from the Moon Sound that the Russian navy was pulling out all its forces. The *Fliegerverband's* bombers tried to damage the smaller Russian ships, yet achieved no hits.⁹³

The German cruisers *Strassburg* and *Kolberg* had moved into the opening of the Kleiner Sund at 1:35 and bombarded Woi for ten minutes without having the battery answer.

Slava's forward turret was damaged so it was unable to fire. *Slava* had to turn 180° to bring the aft turret to bear.

⁹⁰ Records of the German Navy, KZ 60087, Gagern, Ostsee, vol. 3, 264.

⁹² Ibid., Records of the German Navy, KZ 60087.

⁹³ Records of the German Navy, Berthold, "Kriegstagebuch," Dated entry 10/17/17.

Visual contact showed that the Russian guns were still intact. After the cruisers ceased fire the chief of the torpedo boat flotillas telegraphed for further targets. Since the invasion had not yet begun, they were ordered to standby. At 2:45, the cruisers set anchor. Shortly, orders arrived that a landing party should be formed to capture the Woi battery. At 3:45, eighty men were sent ashore via motorized launches only to find that the Russians had destroyed the guns before fleeing.⁹⁴

The island of Moon was circled on three of her four sides by the German navy, and the advance of the 138th could continue with the confidence that strong naval support would beat down any Russian force on land. Escape to the mainland was impossible.⁹⁵ After the fall of the Moon bridgehead, the German troops encountered little resistance; the 4th *Radfahrer* Battalion marched unhindered to Kuiwast where a strong Russian force was disarmed without bloodshed.⁹⁶

The advance over the small island confirmed that the Russian army had escaped to the northeastern sector near the town of Kallast. As the 138th closed in on the Russian position, a delegation of Russian officers saluted in a

⁹⁴ Tschischwitz, *Armee und Marine*, 125. The German navy can take credit for landing the first forces on Moon.

⁹⁵ Schmidt, *Eroberung*, 10.

⁹⁶ Tschischwitz, *Armee und Marine*, 130-131.

gesture of surrender. The Russians thought only of surrendering the island and evacuating the remaining Moon defenders. These were terms the Germans were not willing to grant, since they had the upper hand, and the answer was: "Surrender!--or else our attack will begin at 1:30."⁹⁷

The Moon defenders gambled for time, since Bachireff preferred not to give up the sound just yet. Minelayers were ordered to lay down further barrages at the northern end of Moon Sound and the eastern opening of the Kassar Wik. These barrages would slow down the German advance and give Bachireff time for escape.⁹⁸ The German UC Boats had also laid down a barrage that needed to be cleared. The night of October 17 was spent clearing away the German mines, and despite the ill will of the Russian mine-sweeping division, the Russian sailors were persuaded to think about their comrades on Moon.⁹⁹

Since the reply to the German ultimatum did not meet the deadline, the 138th began a three prong attack. Short yet strong, resistance kept the northern force at bay until a southern company outflanked the Russian defenders. The situation was hopeless for the Russians to go on fighting; thereupon they surrendered. Their reliance on the Russian

⁹⁷ Ibid., 131.

⁹⁸ Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 264.

⁹⁹ Graf, *Russian Navy*, 152.

navy to take them off Moon was a blighted hope, since control of the Moon Sound belonged to the German Navy. The Russian troop transports escaped to the north with the rest of the Russian Moon Sound fleet, and the only means of reaching the mainland went with them.¹⁰⁰

THE INVASION OF DAGOE

The original plans to secure the left flank of the German army in Latvia foresaw only the necessary possession of Oesel and Moon. The island of Dagoe, the northernmost island of the group, presented a propitious target enabling the Germans to carry on an aggressive naval policy in the northern Baltic and Gulf of Finland. From here submarine and surface ships could threaten the Estonian coast and seal off the Baltic to Russian naval forces. The Kassar Wik would also be an uncontested German lake.¹⁰¹

To maintain a firm grip on Oesel, most of the landing party sent over to Dagoe on the 15th had been ordered back to stand ready for defense against a possible Russian counteroffensive.¹⁰² A small detachment of fifty men was

¹⁰⁰ Tschischwitz, *Armee und Marine*, 131.

¹⁰¹ Records of the German Navy, NK 932. 10/16/17. The dispatch was dated October 16. Schmidt writes that the *Sonderverband* and the XXIII Regiment discussed the plans as early as October 14. Schmidt, *Eroberung*, 10.

left behind to defend the southern tip of Dagoe. These were left on land by day and retired to small fishing loggers by night. The *Kaiser* and *Emden* were requested to offer support in case of attack and as a support to the planned invasion on October 18.¹⁰³

The 17th Infantry Regiment, 2nd *Radfahrer* Battalion, and 7th Field Artillery were ordered to depart on two transports to land on Dagoe on the 18th.¹⁰⁴ The command was placed under Lt. Col. von Kaweczynski. His command marched from Orrisar to Pammerort in two days and arrived on the 19th. The 2nd *Radfahrer* Battalion had already established a bridgehead, and the Russian troops were pulling back. The main assault was postponed until the afternoon because of poor weather. Once conditions favored a safe and effortless march, the German advance began. The route selected went along the Kassar Wik coast northward to the town of Keinis, and from there the 17th and 2nd split.¹⁰⁵

The 2nd stayed along the coast marching through the towns of Weimel, Heltermaa, and Hellama, and rendezvoused

¹⁰² Idem., NK 932.

¹⁰³ Ibid. The dispatch declared the "capture of Dagoe was no problem with the personnel at hand." The Russian defense of the island did not appear strong.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., KZ 59944 10/17/17. Along with these troops 516 horses and 140 trucks and cars were carried along. Schmidt, *Eroberung*, 10-11.

¹⁰⁵ Tshischwitz, *Armee und Marine*, 143

with the 17th at Kertel, where a great store of supplies, such as food and bandages were captured. The only resistance offered came from a detachment of 450 men at Heltermaa, who were forced to surrender after one hour of fighting. After two days, the German troops reached the Russian batteries at Lechtma and Tahkona to find them destroyed and evacuated. Evidence pointed to the likelihood that the Russians had already abandoned the entire island by sea and had reached Estonia. Only 750 Russians were captured on Dagoe.¹⁰⁶

THE CAPTURE OF ABRO AND RUNO

The German *Fliegerverband* achieved considerable success and augmented the navy and army well through observation, reconnaissance, and attacks on Russian troops and warships. Furthermore, the *Fliegerverband* took control of two small islands in the Gulf of Riga. Eight seaplanes transported one officer and 16 men to take the island of Runo on October 13. From Runo a strategic foothold in the Gulf of Riga during the campaign for Oesel and Moon fell into German hands.¹⁰⁷ A refueling point for the *Fliegerverband* was installed on October 16 to increase the range of the German

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 144.

¹⁰⁷ Records of the German Navy, Berthold, "Kriegstagebuch," 10/13/17.

aircraft. The island of Abro was captured by 6 seaplanes from Windau on October 15.¹⁰⁸

CLOSE OF OPERATION ALBION

From October 18 to October 30, 1917, the *Sonderverband* was slowly reduced in strength. Further military preparations were made for the defense of the islands against any possible Russian counterattack. The command of the islands was given to Lt. Gen. Freiherr von Seckendorff, who oversaw the defense and administration of the islands.¹⁰⁹ The main function of the navy was to sweep for mines; therefore, the larger warships were no longer needed. On October 22, the III and IV Squadrons were ordered back to Kiel after all mop up operations were completed. On October 27, Schmidt ordered *Friedrich der Grosse*, *Koenigsberg*, and the 13th Torpedo boat Flotilla to escort the *Bayern*, which could only proceed at 7 to 13 knots because of the mine damage, back to Kiel.

With the surrender of Moon the operation came to a successful end. The invasion of Moon was considerably easier

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 10/15/17.

¹⁰⁹ From January to April the Gulf of Riga and Moon and Kleiner Sounds are solid, and traffic by ship is impossible. Troops could pass over the ice with ease via the Moon Sound and Kleiner Sund. Tschischwitz, *Armee und Marine*, 159.

than expected, and the greatest credit should go to the German navy, for its domination of the sea lanes proved to be the key to victory. The entire operation could not have been so successful as it was if it were not for this very reason; however, the cost in material was rather high. Between the opening day of Operation S.d.M. and October 30, 1917, the *Sonderverband* received some astounding losses due to various causes. The *Bayern*, *Grosser Kurfurst*, and *Markgraf* were all damaged by the Russian mine defense; mines damaged two torpedo boats and sank another; twelve smaller craft, ranging from old torpedo boats and mine-layers to minesweepers, were damaged or sunk by mines; these accounted for 156 lives and 60 wounded.¹¹⁰

The German army gained tremendous success at the close of Operation S.d.M.. Only 54 men were killed in action and 141 wounded. Compared to the number of losses they inflicted upon the Russians, this was indeed small. In all there were 20,130 prisoners taken; 141 artillery pieces captured; 130 machine guns seized; further prizes included 2000 horses, 1,200 wagons, 2 armored cars, 28 automobiles and trucks, 10 airplanes, 6 hangers, and finally 365,000 Rubles. The exact number of Russian dead or wounded is not listed by available sources.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 188-189.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 188.

RETROSPECTION

The German navy and army captured the Baltic Islands in just a week's time and displayed by their cooperation a well organized and efficient fighting force. The *coup de maitre* of S.d.M. operation owed a great deal to the poor showing of the Russian navy and army. Even with the surprise Schmidt had, the Germans were lucky, for their losses could have been as severe as those of the French and British at the Dardenelles. There are some perplexing questions that need to be considered. First, why was the Russian response so weak, and what effect did the loss of these islands have on Russia? Second, what did the Germans learn about the use of the *Hochseeflotte*?

The invasion could not have possibly been a great "surprise" to the Russian military. The importance of the islands from the outset of the war showed this. Strong defenses were constantly being improved upon, and in the summer and fall of 1917 an invasion was a given. The long delay of the invasion gave the Russian military ample time to prepare a better defense, for the date of the invasion

came late in the year, and this alone should have hinted that the Germans must attack now or wait until late April.

The Tagga Bay landing was preceded by many warnings. Frequent flights by German aircraft, the build-up of the *Sonderverband* in Libau, and the mine-clearing operations all demonstrated that the Germans were ready to strike. The day of the invasion itself, not including E 1's observations, were given away by the three mine detonations. Furthermore, the captured codebooks retrieved from the *Magdeburg* should have also revealed German intentions.

The story of the Russian Baltic Fleet was one of missed opportunities. The refusal of the crew aboard the minelayer *Pripiat* was slight when considering the inactivity aboard the Russian battleships. The Gulf of Riga was under Russian control up to October 16. From the first day of the operation to October 15, the German army was at the mercy of the far-reaching guns of the Russian navy.¹¹² The Winterfeld command could have been destroyed or forced to retreat and the German advance halted leaving an escape route open. The blunder cannot be blamed entirely on the common Russian sailor or the influence of the revolutionary

¹¹² Heavy shell fire on the Oesel-Moon mole did not come from the Woi Battery, as was believed during the invasion, but from the guns of the *Slava* in the Moon Sound. Directed by airplanes flying over the Kleiner Sund, the 12 inch shells of the Russian battleship were hurled across Moon.

elements, as Graf would like to expound; such blunders rest with the admiralty: "Thus ended the epic and obstinate defense of the Gulf of Riga and Moon Sound," Graf reasoned,

which had lasted three years. All the Labour, all the sacrifices were lost, owing to the treason and the cowardice of the garrisons on the islands and the gunner's detachments for the batteries. Certainly one cannot accuse the gray mass of soldiers and sailors alone, for they had been promised peace at the most important moment of the war, and on account of this, discipline was undermined, and the authority of the officers as well. The principle fault is not theirs, but it lies on the February conspirators and the treacherous leaders of the revolution, who pushed Russia on the way of shame and ruin through the revolution.

If it were not for the revolution, never would the enemy have taken possession of the Gulf of Riga and the Moon Sound, so easily.¹¹³

With the S.d.M. operation the Germans administered a death blow to the Russian war effort. The loss of the Baltic Islands and the control of Riga were disastrous for the morale of the home front and the military. The daring enterprise demonstrated that the Russian Baltic Fleet could no longer repel the German navy. Since the outset of the war, the Russian fleet had been able to maintain a firm grip on the Gulf of Riga. In Petrograd, Kerensky tried to strengthen the resolve of the Russian populace to remain in the war:

I consider it my duty to reveal to you the whole truth, in order that you may be able to act accordingly. The enemy is penetrating farther and farther into our territory, but he is endeavoring thereby mainly to

¹¹³ Graf, Russian Navy, 152-153.

produce a psychological effect which will drive us to a dishonourable peace, realizing that he will not be able to achieve a real victory or impose his will on us, for the Russian army, whatever may be said of it, still exists and will do its duty to the very end.

Kerensky's appeal to the Russian populace to believe in the steadfastness of the army and navy was a difficult pill to swallow since the Russian defensive forces could no longer hold their positions.¹¹⁴

The German high command could look with full satisfaction on the results of the S.d.M. operation. Hindenburg believed it to be one of the most successful of the war, and overall the execution appeared flawless. Schmidt's appraisal of a job well done leaves no room for doubt that the operation went off without a hitch; albeit, he neglects to credit the extreme good fortune the Germans had. The Russian lack of determined defense, already mentioned, became a decisive factor for victory, but this does not detract from the fighting ability of the German army and navy. Germany could be extremely proud of its maritime forces, for these displayed their fighting value by surviving punishment received from mines and shells that British, French, or Russian ships could never claim.

¹¹⁴ Kerensky failed to realize the full extent of the Russian military's weakness and decay. General Alexeieff's description of the army's inability to fight was strongly protested by Kerensky, for he felt it was still an undefeated fighting force. "M. Kerensky and the High Command; Gen. Alexeieff on a Fatal Peace; Moral of Baltic Defeat," London Times, 25 October 1917.

The big-gun battleships in the Baltic were correctly used in October of 1917. Employed as floating batteries to support land operations, the *Hochseeflotte* created an imposing and devastating picture of power. The mere sight of the Dreadnoughts at Oesel caused the defenders to be "panic-stricken."¹¹⁵ The S.d.M. operation is just another example of the passing of the battleship era. It is not to say that the battleship became obsolete after Jutland. Instead, the battleship's role needed to be redefined as it was in Operation S.d.M..

Unfortunate for the German war effort, the October invasion of the Baltic islands illuminated by its astonishing victory that the *Hochseeflotte* should have been employed earlier and with greater resolve. The defeat of the Russian nation in World War I encompasses many facets, yet, in this writers opinion, the isolation of Russia from her allies because of the German blockade of the Baltic Sea stands first. After S.d.M. the Russian Baltic Fleet was forced into the Gulf of Finland until the end of the war, and one can only speculate what might have occurred if S.d.M. had been carried out in 1915 or 1916.

¹¹⁵ Graf, *Russian Navy*, 153.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

*Das deutsche Volk hat die See nicht verstanden. In seiner Schicksallstunde hat es die Flotte nicht ausgenutzt. Ich kann heute nur noch das Totendenkmal setzen.*¹

Tirpitz

The German people indeed did not understand the sea, nor did they understand the tremendous opportunities they squandered. Certain conclusions on the role of the *Hochseeflotte* are appropriate before all of the successive chapters can be linked. There can be no doubt that the *Hochseeflotte* could have been used more often, but the lack of aggressive endeavors in the Baltic Sea, such as may be seen with the planning of the S.d.M. Operation, stifled any aggressive actions before 1917. With the British surface fleet blocked out of the Baltic, the German navy should have used its strength against the Russian Empire.

The defense of the Baltic owed a great deal to the obstinate defense of the Dardanelles and the results of the *Goeben* 's cruise. Without these one can only speculate on the possibility of bypassing the Baltic to supply Russia through the south. Jutland, which British historians have discounted as having any effect on the war, provides them the tendency to brush over the fact that a British "victory" did not give the Grand Fleet any enticements to force the

¹ Tirpitz, *Erinnerungen*, 387.

narrows as Churchill explained to Fisher. Even with the German codebooks in the hands of the Admiralty, the British were reluctant, I believe, to risk another disaster.

The main emphasis of the last two chapters of this thesis point out that the fall of Riga and the Baltic islands insured the German position in the Baltic and did help force Russia into peace.² It may be a foregone conclusion that Russia was already on its way there, yet it was not only Russia's isolation from the Entente or its own internal disarray that caused this, but the fact that the control of the sea was captured from its navy. If Graf is correct, the war did last too long.

The Russian Baltic Fleet maintained a steady defense of the eastern Baltic until 1917 even without using its four Dreadnoughts. However, with such a weak force it was impossible to conduct an aggressive offensive. Likewise, the German Baltic Fleet could not press an attack against the Russian held waters without the aid of the *Hochseeflotte*. When the German fleet did press its attacks, they were successful in driving the Russian forces from their positions, yet without eastern bases none of the surrendered areas could be held. As soon as the German fleet swept an

² Forstner, *Krieg in der Ostsee*, 124.

area clear of mines and surface craft, the Russians would return to infest the waters once more.³

The impact of the German Baltic blockade on the Russian economy and war effort is difficult if not impossible to measure. Pre-1914 estimates or figures could not possibly compare to the needs of Russia during the war. Although some goods such as cotton and machinery were scarce, Russian trade increased, and even though a declining Russian grain production affected outside markets, the Russian population benefited from the surplus. But again one can only speculate how much Russia would have sent through the Baltic if the Russians were able. The route was sealed off and Russia's fate likewise.

From the outset of the war to its end, the German navy had an impact on its outcome. Without its navy Germany could not have lasted as long as it did. Even if the navy did not steam out of port, its potential as a viable force would have had to be respected. Directly or indirectly, therefore, the navy insured that Germany could remain in the war without the threat of invasion or bombardment.⁴

The *Hochseeflotte* was created as an instrument of war and ultimately aggression. The focus of this thesis has not been to conclude that the German navy actively participated

³ Gagern, *Ostsee*, vol. 3, 112-117.

⁴ Tirpitz, *Erinnerungen*, 387-392.

in every stage of the war. On the contrary, the German navy's history had moments of greatness, but on the whole, it did spend months on end in idleness. It is unjust, however, to claim that the German navy did nothing in the war as some histories have concluded. The land orientation of the German military gambled away the chances for Germany to win a war at sea. The Germans were made painfully aware of this mistake as the British blockade starved them into defeat. The failure to understand that the sea was the most powerful weapon Germany could bring against England cost Germany the war. Of the nations involved in World War I, those which could not control their main seaports were knocked out of the war.⁵

⁵ Ruge, *Seekrieg*, 3-20.

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APPENDIX 1 HOCHSEEFLOTTE

The German yards are abbreviated to save space.

B. & V. Blohm & Voss (Hamburg)
Dz. Dy. Danzig Dockyard
Ger. Krupp's Germania Yard (Kiel)
How. Howaldt (Kiel)
K. Dy. Kiel Dockyard
Sch. Schichau (Danzig)
Vul. (H) Vulcan (Hamburg)
Vul. (S) Vulcan (Stettin)
Wes. Weser (Bremen)
Wn. Dy. Wilhelmshaven Dockyard

GERMAN BATTLESHIPS (DREADNOUGHTS)

The early classes of German Dreadnought designs were armed with 11 inch and 12 inch guns. They differed from their British counterparts. The German designs created a wing turret arrangement which hindered the battleships from being able to fire a complete broadside with all six turrets, hence they could only engage with four turrets at a time. The design encompassed the Westfalen and Helgoland classes.

WESTFALEN CLASS

Length: 478 ft. Beam: 89 ft. Displacement: 18,900 tons.
Triple expansion: 3 screws. 20,000-28,000 h.p. 20 knots.
Guns: 12 - 11 in., 12 - 5.9 in., 16 - 3.4 in. 2-3.4 in. A.A.
Torpedo tubes: 6 - 17.7 in. Armor: Belt 11.5 in., Turrets 11.5 in. Complement 1,008-1,087.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Westfalen	10/1909	Wes.	1924 Scrapped
Nassau	10/1909	Wn. Dy.	1921 Scrapped
Posen	3/1910	Ger.	1922 Scrapped
Rheinland	1/1910	Vul. (S)	1922 Scrapped

All were at the Battle of Jutland and were part of the 1st battle squadron. These ships were built well and their wide beams offered good firing platforms.

HELGOLAND CLASS

Length: 546 ft. Beam: 89 ft. Displacement: 22,800 tons.
 Triple expansion: 3 screws. 28,000-35,000 h.p. 21 knots.
 Guns 12 - 12 in., 14 - 5.9 in., 14 - 3.4 in., 2-3.4 in. A.A.
 Torpedo tubes: 6 - 19.7 in. Armor: Belt 11.75 in., Turrets
 12 in. Complement: 1,113-1,192.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Thuringen	6/1911	Wes.	1923 Scrapped
Helgoland	8/1911	How.	1924 Scrapped
Ostfriesland	8/1911	Wn.Dy.	1921 Sunk
Oldenburg	8/1912	Sch.	1921 Scrapped

KAISER CLASS

Length: 564 ft. Beam: 95.5 ft. Displacement 24,380 tons.
 Turbines: 3 screws. 30,000-35,000 h.p. 21-23 knots. Guns:
 10 - 12 in. 14 - 5.9 in., 8 - 3.4 in., 4 - 3.4 in. A.A.

Torpedo tubes: 5 - 19.7 in. Armor: Belt 13.75 in., Turrets 11.75 in. Complement: 1,088-1,178.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Kaiser	10/1912	K.Dy.	1919 Scuttled
Fr. der Grosse	10/1912	Vul(H).	1919 Scuttled
Kaiserin	8/1913	How.	1919 Scuttled
Pr. Rgnt. Luitpold	8/1913	Sch.	1919 Scuttled
Koenig Albert	8/1913	Ger.	1919 Scuttled

1914 Friedrich der Grosse fleet flagship. Others formed the 3rd Battle-Squadron, and, except Koenig Albert, were present at Jutland. All were surrendered in 1918 and interned at Scappa Flow. In 1919 the crews scuttled entire squadron. All were raised and scrapped between 1929-1936.

KOENIG CLASS

Length: 580 ft. Beam 97 ft. Displacement: 25,390 tons. Turbines: 3 screws 31,000-35,000 h.p. 21-23 knots. Guns: 10 - 12 in., 14 - 5.9 in., 6 - 3.4 in., 4 - 3.4 in. A.A. Torpedo tubes: 5 - 19.7 in. Armor: Belt 13.75 in., Turrets 13.75 in. Complement: 1,136-1,218.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Koenig	10/1914	Wn.Dy.	1919 Scuttled
Markgraf	10/1914	Wes.	1919 Scuttled
Grosser Kurfurst	7/1914	Vul(H).	1919 Scuttled
Kronprinz Wilhelm	11/1914	Ger.	1919 Scuttled

All joined the *Hochseeflotte* in 1914-15 and were present at Jutland. All were present at the Oesel operation. These ships were also surrendered in 1918 and scuttled in Scappa Flow.

BADEN CLASS

Length: 623.33 ft. Beam: 99 ft. Displacement: 28,075 tons. Turbines: 4 screws 52,800 h.p. 22.25 knots. Guns: 8 - 15 in. 16 - 5.9 in. 4 - 3.4 in. A.A. Torpedo Tubes: 5 - 23.6 in. Armor: belt 13.75 in., turrets 13.75 in. Complement: 1,171-1,271.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Baden	11/1916	Sch.	1919 Scuttled
Bayern	3/1916	How.	1919 Scuttled
Sachsen	*		Never completed
Wurtemberg	*		Never completed

The Bayern and Baden were completed after the Battle of Jutland. The Bayern was present at the Oesel operation. The Bayern was surrendered in 1918. Both were scuttled at Scappa in 1919. The Bayern was raised and scrapped in 1934-35. The Baden was raised and sunk as a target in 1921.

GERMAN BATTLE CRUISERS

Battle cruisers were a hybrid of a battleship and cruiser. Germany was misled to believe that the British battle cruisers were designed to resemble the HMS Dreadnought with lighter armor and guns, (9.2 instead of 12. in.), however, the Invincible class did not resemble the Dreadnought. Upon that information the construction of the Bluecher already put the ship at disadvantage against the British battlecruisers. The speed and firepower of the Bluecher were no match to a battle cruiser, therefore, Germany never launched any sisterships. It would be more accurate to describe her as a armoured cruiser. The Bluecher, which was designed to counter the British battle cruiser, sank at Dogger Bank. The German battle cruiser program did create some remarkable and seaworthy vessels following the Bluecher blunder. By and large the German battle cruisers were equal if not superior to their British counter-parts. At the Battle of Jutland these vessels recieved tremendous amounts of damage from light and heavy shell hits, and

still remained afloat. Although they resembled scrap piles they inflicted heavier losses on the British battle cruisers. They are credited with sinking the Queen Mary and Idelfatigable, and they aided in sinking the Invincible.

S.M.S. BLUECHER

Length: 530.5 ft. Beam: 80.5 ft. Displacement: 15,500 tons. Triple expansion: 3 screws. 32,000-44,000 h.p. 24.5-26 knots. Guns: 12 - 8.2 in., 8 - 5.9 in. Torpedo tubes: 4 - 17.7 in. Armour: Belt 6.75 in., Turrets 6.75 in. Complement: 893.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Bluecher	9/1909	K.Dy.	1915 Sunk

The Bluecher was sunk at the Battle of Doggerbank.

S.M.S. VON DER TANN

Length: 562 ft. Beam: 87 ft. Displacement: 19,100-21,000 tons. Turbines: 4 screws. 43,600-79,800 h.p. 25-28 knots. Guns: 8 - 11 in., 10 - 5.9 in., 12 - 3.4 in., 4 - 3.4 in. A.A. Armour: Belt 10.5 in., Turrets 9 in. Torpedo tubes: 4 - 17.7 in. Complement: 923.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Von Der Tann	9/1910	B. & V.	1919 Scuttled

Present at Jutland 1916. Surrendered 1918. 1930-34 raised and scrapped.

MOLTKE CLASS

Length: 610 ft. Beam: 96 ft. Displacement: 24,640 tons. Turbines: 4 screws. 70,000-86,000 h.p. 27-29 knots. Guns: 10 - 11 in., 12 - 5.9 in., 10 - 3.4 in., 2 - 3.4 in. A.A. Armour: Belt 10.5 in., Turrets 9.5 in. Torpedo tubes: 4 - 19.7 in. Complement: 1,053-1,128.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Moltke	10/1911	B. & V.	1919 Scuttled
Goeben	4/1912	B. & V.	1914 Turkey

The Moltke was present at Dogger Bank, Jutland, and at the invasion of the Baltic islands in the Gulf of Riga. Surrendered in 1918. Scuttled in 1919. Raised and scrapped in 1927-29. The Goeben was offered for sale to the West German Government which could not raise the funds. In 1973 the exGoeben was decommissioned with great festivities and scrapped from 1973-1976.

S.M.S. SEYDLITZ

Length: 656 ft. Beam: 93.3 ft. Displacement: 24,610 tons.
 Turbines: 4 screws. 63,000-100,000 h.p. 27-30 knots.
 Guns: 10 - 11 in., 12 - 5.9 in., 8 - 3.4 in., 4 - 3.4 in.
 A.A. Torpedo tubes: 4 - 19.7 in. Armour: Belt 11.75
 in., Turrets 9.75 in. Complement: 1,068-1,143.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Seydlitz	5/1913	B&V	1919 Scuttled

In 1915 it served at the Battle in the Dogger Bank in which it was nearly destroyed by an explosion. Subsequently the crew learned better damage control procedures which they employed at the Battle of Jutland. At Jutland it was so heavily damaged that the British claimed to have sunk it. Not until its surrender in 1918 did this prove to be false. 1929-30 raised and scrapped.

DERFLINGER CLASS

Length: 689 ft. Beam 95.5 ft. Displacement: 26,180-28,000 tons. Turbines: 4 screws 85,000 h.p. 27-28 knots. Guns: 8-12 in., 12 to 14-5.9 in., 4-3.4 in A.A. Torpedo tubes: 4-19.7 in. Armour: Belt 11.75 in., Turrets 10.75 Complement: 1,112-1,214.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Derflinger	7/1914	B&V.	1919 Scuttled

Lutzow	8/1915	Sch.	1916 Sunk at Jutland
Hindenburg	5/1917	Wn.Dy.	1919 Scuttled

The Derflinger served at Dogger Bank and at Jutland. At Jutland its' commander Captain Hartog took the lead of the *Aufklarungsgruppe* when Hippers flagship, the Lutzow, was sunk. The Derflinger had every major gun shot away. All three ships surrendered in 1918 and were scuttled in 1919. Derflinger raised and scrapped 1939-1946. Hindenburg raised and scrapped 1930-1932.

Two further classes of battle cruisers were scrapped before completion. Length: c700-800 ft. Beam: c90 ft. Displacement: 35,000-38,000 tons. Turbines: 4 screws. 90,000 h.p. 27 kn. Guns: 8-13-15 in. Armour: unknown. Complement: 1,400-1,500.

PRE-DREADNOUGHT BATTLESHIPS

DEUTSCHLAND CLASS

Length: 430 ft. Beam: 72 ft. Displacement: 13,200 tons, Triple expansion: (3-cyl.) 3 screws 16,000 h.p. 18 knots. Guns: 4-11 in., 14-6.7 in. Torpedo tubes: 6-17.7 in. Armour: Belt 9.75 in., Deck 3 in., Turrets 11 in. Complement: 729.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Deutschland	1906	Ger.	1920 Scrapped
Hannover	1907	Wn.Dy.	1944-46 Scrapped
Pommern	1907	Vul.(S)	1916 Sunk at Jutland
Schleswig-Holstein	1908	Sch.	1920 Scrapped
Schlesien	1908	Ger.	1945 Scuttled

MACKENSEN
(Graf Spee, Prinz Eitel Friedrich, & Fuerst Bismarck)

ERSATZ YORK
(Ersatz Gneisenau & Ersatz Scharnhorst)

BRAUNSCHWEIG CLASS

Length: 430 ft. Beam: 65.5 ft. Displacement: 13,200 tons.
 Triple Expansion: (3-Cyl.) 3 screws. 16,000 h.p. 18 knots.
 Guns: 4-11 in., 14-6.7 in. Torpedo tubes: 6-17.7 in. Armour:
 Belt 9 in., Deck 3 in., Turrets 11 in. Complement: 691

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Braunschweig	1904	Ger.	1931 Scrapped
Hessen	1905	Ger.	1931 Scrapped
Preussen	1905	Vul. (S)	1931 Scrapped
Elsass	1904	Sch.	1936 Scrapped
Lothringen	1906	Sch.	1931 Scrapped

KAISER BARBAROSSA CLASS

Length: 384 ft. Beam: 65.5 ft. Displacement: 10,740 tons.
 Triple expansion: (3-cyl.) 3 Screws. 14,000 h.p. 18 knots.
 Guns: 4-9.4 in., 14--6 in., Torpedo tubes: 6-17.7 in.
 Armour: Belt 12 in., Deck 3 in., Turrets 10 in. Complement
 691

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
K. Friederich III	1898	Wn.Dy.	1920 Scrapped
K. Wilhelm II	1900	Wn.Dy.	1921 Scrapped
K. W. der Grosse	1901	Ger.	1920 Scrapped
K. Karl der Grosse	1901	B.&V.	1920 Scrapped
K. Barbarossa	1901	Sch.	1920 Scrapped

WITTELSBACH CLASS

Length: 400 ft. Beam: 67 ft. Displacement: 11,830 tons.
 Triple expansion: (3-cyl.) 3 screws. 15,000 h.p. 18 knots.
 Guns: 4-9.4 in., 18-6 in. Torpedo tubes: 6-17.7 in. Armour:
 Belt. 9 in., Deck. 3 in., Turrets 10 in. Complement: 650-715

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Wittelsbach	1900	Wn.Dy.	1920 Scrapped
Wettin	1901	Sch.	1920 Scrapped
Zahringer	1901	Ger.	1920 Scrapped
Mecklenburg	1901	Vul.(S)	1920 Scrapped
Schwaben	1901	Wn.Dy.	1920 Scrapped

CRUISERS

The late arrival of the German nation as a naval superpower gave it a slight advantage in cruiser construction. The Germans lacked a large number of armoured and protected cruisers, yet these, along with their light cruisers, were fast and well armed. The speeds were officially understated by two to three knots, so the speeds vary.

ARMoured CRUISERS

PRINZ ADALBERT CLASS

Length: 415 ft. Beam: 65 ft. Displacement: 9,050 tons.
 Triple expansion: (3-cyl.) 3 screws. 18,500 h.p. 21 knots.
 Guns: 4-8.2 in., 10-5.9 in. Torpedo tubes: 4-17.7 in.
 Armour: Belt 4 in., Deck 2 in. Complement: 557.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Prinz Adalbert	1903	K.Dy.	1915 Torpedoed off Libau
Friedrich Karl	1903	B. & V.	1914 Mined in Baltic

The British submarine E8 sank the Prinz Adalbert.

ROON CLASS

Length: 419 ft. Beam: 66 ft. Displacement: 9,350 tons.
 Triple expansion: (3 cyl.) 3 screws. 20,000 h.p. 21.5
 knots. Guns: 2-8.2 in., 10-5.9 in. 14-3.4 in. Torpedo
 tubes: 4-17.7 in. Armour: Belt 4 in., Deck 2.75 in.
 Complement: 633.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Roon	1905	K.Dy.	1919 Discarded

Yorck 1906 B. & V. 1914 Mined in
Jade Bay

SCHARNHORST CLASS

Length: 474.5 ft. Beam: 71 ft. Displacement: 11,600 tons. Triple expansion: (3 and 4 cyl.) 3 screws. 26,000 h.p. 22.5 knots. Guns: 8-8.2 in., 6-5.9 in., 20-3.4 in. Torpedo tubes 4-17.7 in. Armour; Belt 6 in., Deck 2 in. Complement: 765-850.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Scharnhorst	1907	B. & V.	1914 Sunk at Falklands
Gneisenau	1907	Wes.	1914 Sunk at Falklands

These cruisers were part of Germany's *Auslandskreuzer*; however, they were laid down before the HMS Dreadnought was launched, and were therefore obsolete.

PROTECTED CRUISERS

S.M.S. GEFION

Length: 362 ft. Beam 42.5 ft. Displacement: 3,770 tons.
 Triple expansion: (3 cyl.) 2 screws. 9,000 h.p. 20.5 knots.
 Guns: 10-4.1 in. Torpedo tubes: 2-17.7 in. Armour: Deck
 1.25 in. Complement: 302

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Gefion	1894	Sch.	Did not see action in war

The Gefion was to stand ready for action when mobilized in 1914, yet its age was considered and it served the remainder of the war as barracks. The Gefion was stricken from the list of warships in 1919 and scrapped.

SMS FREYA and HERTHA CLASS

Length: 363 ft. Beam 57 ft. Displacement: 5,660 tons Triple
 expansion: (4-cyl.) 3 screws. 10,500 h.p. 19 knots. Guns:
 2-8.2 in., 6-5.9 in. Torpedo tubes: 3-17.7 in. Armour: Deck
 4 in. Complement: 465

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Freya	1898	Dz.Dy.	1920 Scrapped

Hertha class had similar statistics and displacement reached 5,885 tons.

Hansa	1898	Vul (S)	1920 Scrapped
Hertha	1898	Vul.(S)	1920 Scrapped
Victoria Luise	1898	Wes.	1920 Scrapped
Vineta	1898	Dz.Dy.	1920 Scrapped

These were used mostly as training and sleeping quarters during the war. Only the Hansa remained armed until 1919.

SMS HELA

Length: 344 ft. Beam: 36 ft. Displacement: 2,040 tons.
 Triple expansion: (3 cyl.) 2 screws. 6,000 h.p. 20.5
 knots. Guns: 4-15.5 pdr. Torpedo tubes: 3-17.7 in. Armour:
 Deck 1 in. Complement: 178-195.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Helä	1896	Wes.	1914 Torpedoed off Helgoland

The Helä underwent reconstruction in 1910.

GAZELLE, NYMPHE and FRAUENLOB CLASSES

Length: 344 ft. Beam 39-40 ft. Displacement: 2,645-2,715
 tons. Triple expansion: (3 or 4 cyl.) 2 screws. 8,500 h.p.
 21.5 knots. Guns: 10-4.1 in. Torpedo tubes: 2 17.7 in.
 Armour: Deck 2 in. Complement: 264.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Gazelle	1899	Ger.	1920 Scrapped
Niobe	1899	Wes	1926 Became Jugo- Slav Dalmacia
Amazone	1900	Ger.	1954 Scrapped
Ariadne	1901	Wes.	1914 Sunk at Heligo- land Bight
Medusa	1901	Wes.	1929 Hulked
Nymphe	1901	Ger.	1931 Sold
Thetis	1901	Dz.Dy.	1929 Sold
Arcona	1902	Wes.	1948-49 Scrapped
Frauenlob	1903	Wes.	1916 Sunk at Jutland
Undine	1903	How.	1915 Sunk off Trel- leborg

 The Amazone survived two world wars. As did its sistership, Nympha, underwent modernization after WWI. Officially decommissioned in 1931, the cruiser was used as living quarters for the German navy. After the fall of the Third Reich it was used as a shelter for refugees in Bremen. Attempts to furnish it as a home for orphans never developed. The Arcona almost survived two world wars. After being stricken from the list of warships in 1930, it also served the German navy as barracks. In 1940 the cruiser was refitted as a floating flak platform and stationed at Wilhelmshaven. The crew scuttled it in 1945. The Frauenlob served at the Battle of Jutland with Admiral Hipper. Age and speed greatly handicapped its performance, and after receiving a torpedo hit from the HMS Southampton it lay dead in the water. After repeated hits from enemy ships it capsized and sunk. The Undine was sunk by the British submarine E19.

LIGHT CRUISERS

BREMEN CLASS

Length: 364.5 ft. Beam: 43.5 ft. Displacement: 3,250 tons
 Triple expansion: (3 cyl.) 2 screws. 11,000 h.p. 23 knots.
 (Luebeck was fitted with turbines and 8 screws) Guns: 10-4.1
 in. Torpedo tubes: 2-17.7 in. Armour: Deck 2 in.
 Complement: 320.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Berlin	1904	Dz.Dy	1947 Sunk by British
Bremen	1904	Wes.	1915 Torpedoed in Baltic
Hamburg	1903	Vul.(S)	1944 Sunk in air raid
Luebeck	1904	Vul.(S)	1920 Scrapped in Britain
Muenchen	1905	Wes.	1920 Scrapped in Britain

 The Berlin and Muenchen were present at Jutland. The Berlin was decommissioned in 1935 and used as quarters for U-Boat

crews. In 1947 it was destroyed off of Jutland with gas munitions. The Luebeck and Berlin were rebuilt with raked bows in 1914 and 1924. All (except Berlin) were decommissioned between 1929-1935.

LEIPZIG CLASS

Length: 341 ft. Beam: 43.5 ft. Displacement: 3,250 tons
Triple expansion: (4 cyl.) 2 screws. 11,000 h.p. 23 knots.
Guns: 10-4.1 in. Torpedo tubes: 2-17.7 Armour: deck 2 in.
Complement: 286.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Danzig	1907	Dz.Dy.	1920 Scrapped in Britain
Leipzig	1906	Wes.	1914 Sunk at Falklands

S.M.S. KOENIGSBERG

Length: 354.25 ft. Beam: 43.75 ft. Displacement: 3,400
Triple expansion: (4 cyl.) 2 screws. 13,200 h.p. 23.5
knots. Guns: 10-4.1 in. Torpedo tubes: 2-17.7 Armour: Deck
2 in. Complement: 295-350.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Koenigsberg	1907	K.Dy	1915 Sunk

-----The
 Koenigsberg was the last of the German *Auslandskreuzer* to be sunk. After sinking the HMS *Pegasus* in 1914 it retreated up the Rufiji River, in present day Tanzania, and in 1915 was blockaded from escaping and sunk by British monitors.

STETTIN CLASS

Length: 385 ft. Beam: 43.66 ft. Displacement: 3,550 tons. Triple Expansion: (4-cyl.) 2 screws. 13,200-21,000 h.p. 23.5-25.5 knots. (Stettin had turbines with 4 screws). Guns: 10-4.1 in. Torpedo tubes: 2-17.7 Armour: Deck 2 in. Complement: 350.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Nuernburg	1908	K.Dy.	1914 Sunk at Falklands
Stettin	1908	Vul.(S)	1920 Scrapped in Britain
Stuttgart	1908	Dz.Dy.	1920 Scrapped in Britain

DRESDEN CLASS

Length: 388 ft. Beam: 43 ft. Displacement: 3,650 tons. Dresden: Turbines: 4 screws. Emden: Triple expansion: (3-cyl.) 2 screws. 14,000 h.p. 24.5 knots. Guns: 10-4.1 in.

Torpedo tubes: 2-17.7 in. Armour: Deck 2 in. Complement: 380.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Dresden	1909	B. & V.	1915 Scuttled at Juan Fernandez.
Emden	1908	Dz. Dy.	1914 Sunk

Admiral Spee ordered the *Dresden* to escape as best it could. The *Dresden* headed southward towards the Cape Horn and was given aid by a German pilot in previously uncharted waters. It had hoped to find sufficient coal from German merchantmen; however, escape back to Germany was not realistic. The *Dresden's* commander decided to resume commerce raids in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. The cruiser, desperately low on coal, received orders to be interned. At Cumberland Bay the cruiser was surprised by the armoured cruiser *Kent* and light cruiser *Glasgow*. Only after hoisting the white signal flag could the *Dresden* return fire. Shot to pieces, the *Dresden* was scuttled and the crew interned. The *Emden*, the most successful of Germany's raiders, had, in this author's opinion, written the manual on commerce raiders. To give the entire story of this ship in such a short space would not do it justice. The author therefore recommends the reader to further research and reading. Suffice it to say, the *Emden's* career came to an end when it was finally sunk by HMAS *Sydney*.

KOLBERG CLASS

Length: 428 ft. Beam: 46 ft. Displacement: 4,350 tons. Turbines: 4 screws. (Mainz 2 screws). 20,000-31,000 h.p. 25.5-27.25 knots. Guns: 12-4.1 in. (Augsberg and Kolberg were altered to carry 6-5.9 in., 1-3.4 in. A.A.) Torpedo tubes: 2-17.7 in. Armour: Deck 2 in. Complement: 380.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
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Augsberg	1910	K.Dy.	1920 To Japan war prize
Kolberg	1909	Sch.	1920 To France war prize
Koeln	1910	Ger.	1914 Sunk
Mainz	1909	Vul.(S)	1914 Sunk

The Augsburg was present at the Oesel operation in 1917, and scrapped in the Netherlands in 1922. The Kolberg also belonged to the German Baltic fleet, and was, therefore, present at the Oesel operation. The Kolberg became the French Colmar in 1920. The Koeln and Mainz were sunk at the Battle of Heligoland Bight.

BRESLAU CLASS

Length: 455 ft. Beam: 43.5 ft. Displacement: 4,550-5,100 tons. Turbines: 3 screws. (Breslau 4, Strassburg 2). 26,000-35,000 h.p. 27-30 knots. Guns: 12-4.1 in. (Stralsund and Strassburg were altered to carry 7-5.9 in., 2-3.4 in. A.A.) Armour: Belt 2.75 in., Deck .5 in. Complement: 370.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Breslau	1912	Vul.(S)	1918 Mined off Imbros
Magdeburg	1912	Wes.	1914 Destroyed
Stralsund	1912	Wes.	1920 To France war prize
Strassburg	1912	Dz.Dy.	1920 To Italy war prize

-----The

Breslau was given to Turkey in 1914, and in 1918 it sank in the Aegean sea. The Magdeburg's importance derives from the captured code books after running aground and being destroyed. The crew exploded sections of the ship to make capture useless, however, the code books were not destroyed. With the books the British Admiralty was able to guess German fleet movements. Refer to *Das Geheimniss der Magdeburg* by Matti Makela. The Stralsund was present at the

Oesel operation. In 1920 she became the French Hulhouse. The Strassburg became the Italian Taranto.

KARLSRUHE CLASS

Length: 468 ft. Beam: 45 ft. Displacement: 4,900-5,500 tons. Turbines: 2 screws. 32,000 h.p. 27.25 knots. Guns: 12-4.1 in. Torpedo tubes: 4-19.7 in. Armour: Belt 2.5 in., Deck .75 in. Complement: 420.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Karlsruhe	1913	Ger.	1914 Destroyed by explosion
Rostock	1913	How.	1916 Sunk at Jutland

The reason for the explosion of the Karlsruhe were never explained.

REGENSBURG CLASS

Length: 468 ft. Beam: 45 ft. Displacement: 4,900-5,500 tons. Turbines: 2 screws. 32,000 h.p. 27 knots. Guns: 7-5.9 in., 2-3.4 in. A.A. Torpedo tubes: 2-19.7 in. Mines: 120. Armour: Belt 2.5 in., Deck .75 in. Complement: 385-420.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Graudenz	1914	K.Dy.	1920 To Italy war prize
Regensburg	1914	Wes.	1920 To France war prize

The Regensburg was present at Jutland. Graudenz present at Dogger Bank.

FRANKFURT CLASS

Length: 476 ft. Beam: 45.5 ft. Displacement: 5,120-5,400 tons. Geared turbines: 2 screws. 45,000 h.p. 28 knots. Guns: 8-5.9 in., 2-3.4 in. A.A. Mines: 120. Torpedo tubes: 4-19.7 in. Armour: Belt 2.5 in., Deck .75 in. Complement: 500.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Frankfurt	1915	K.Dy.	1921 Sunk in U.S. bomb test
Wiesbaden	1915	Vul.(S)	1916 Sunk at Jutland

Both at were at Jutland. The Frankfurt took part in the Oesel operation. Frankfurt surrendered in 1918 and was interned in Scappa in 1919. The crew attempted to scuttle it, yet the ship failed to sink. Delivered to the United States along with the Ostfriesland, the Frankfurt sunk in aerial bomb tests at Cape Henry, Virginia.

ELBING CLASS

Length: 444 ft. Beam: 45.5 ft. Displacement: 5,120-5,400 tons. Geared turbines: 3 screws. 27,400 h.p. 27.5 knots. Guns: 8-5.9 in., 2-3.4 in. A.A. Mines: 120. Torpedo tubes; 2-19.7 in. Armour: Deck 3 in. Complement: 442.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Elbing	1915	Sch.	1916 Sunk at Jutland
Pillau	1915	Sch.	1920 To Italy war prize

Both vessels were ordered for Russia, yet with outbreak of WWI the German Admiralty followed the correct procedures and confiscated both ships. Both were at Jutland and were part of the first section of the *Hochseeflotte* to engage the British. The Elbing collided with the Posen and sank. The Pillau surrendered in 1918 and became the Italian Bari in 1920.

BREMSE CLASS

Length: 460.5 ft. Beam: 44 ft. Displacement: 4,000 tons. Turbines: 2 screws 46,000 h.p. 34 knots. Guns: 4-5.9 in., 2-3.4 in. A.A. Mines: 400. (Torpedo tubes: 2-19.7 in. in Brummer). Armour: Belt 1.5 in., Deck .8 in. Complement: 309.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Bremse	1916	Vul.(S)	1919 Scuttled
Brummer	1916	Vul.(S)	1919 Scuttled

These ships were called *Minenkreuzer* "mine-layer cruiser." The *Brummer* sank at Scappa and was brought to the surface in 1929 to be dismantled. The *Bremse* has, up to this date, never been recovered after it sank.

KOENIGSBERG II CLASS

Length: 496.5 ft. Beam: 47 ft. Displacement: 5,300-6,150 tons. Turbines: 2 screws. 45,000 h.p. (Karlsruhe Geared turbines) 28.5 knots. Guns: 4-5.9 in., 3-3.4 in. A.A. Mines: 200. Torpedo tubes: 4-19.7 in. Armour: Belt 2.5 in., Deck. .75 in. Complement: 475.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
<i>Emden</i> II	1915	Wes.	1920 To France for destruction
<i>Karlsruhe</i> II	1916	K.Dy.	1919 Scuttled
<i>Koenigsberg</i> II	1916	Wes.	1920 To France war prize
<i>Nuernberg</i> II	1916	How.	1920 To Britain for destruction

All were present at the Oesel operation. *Koenigsberg* became the Metz.

COELN II CLASS

Length: 485 ft. Beam: 47 ft. Displacement: 6,150 tons.
 Geared turbines: 2 screws. 45,000 h.p. 27.5 knots. Guns:
 8-5.9 in., 3-3.4 in. A.A. Mines: 200. Torpedo tubes: 4-19.7
 in. Armour: Belt 2.5 in., Deck .73 in. Complement: 559.

Name	Completed	Builder	Fate
Dresden II	1918	How.	1919 Scuttled
Coeln II	1918	B. & V.	1919 Scuttled
Frauenlob II	*	K. Dy.	1921 Scrapped
Leipzig II	*	Sch.	1921 Scrapped
Magdeburg II	*	Vul. (S)	1921 Scrapped
Rostock II	*	Vul. (S)	1921 Scrapped
Weisbaden II	*	Dz. Dy.	1921 Scrapped
Ersatz Coeln	*		
Ersatz Emden	*		
Ersatz Karlsruhe	*		

The Coeln II was never raised. The Ersatz ships were
 scrapped on the docks.

DESTROYERS AND TORPEDO BOATS

The destroyer and torpedo development in Germany began in 1887. Over the years and into World War I the sizes increased. Many destroyers were as large as light cruisers. These became torpedo boat flotilla leaders. The torpedo boats were constructed under similar plans. Germany spent a great deal of time and effort before 1916 to develop this weapon. After 1916 more attention was given to the construction of the U-boat as a weapon.

V 116 CLASS (V 116-118)

Length: 352 ft. Beam: 34 ft. Displacement: 2,360 tons.
 Turbines: 2 screws. 45,000-56,000 h.p. 34-37 knots. Guns: 4-
 5.9 in. Torpedo tubes: 4-23.6 in. Mines: 40 Complement: 170
 Completed: 1918

V 116 was completed in 1918. V 117 and V 118 were never
 completed. Became French Premuda in 1920.

V 125 CLASS (V 125-130)

Length: 269 ft. Beam: 27 ft. Displacement: 924-1,188 tons.
 Turbines: 2 screws. 23,500-25,500 h.p. 34-37 knots. Guns: 3-
 4.1 in. Torpedo tubes: 6-19.7 in. Mines: 40 Complement: 110.
 Completed: 1917-1918.

V 125, V 126, V 127, and V 129 were at Jutland, and
 scuttled in 1919. V 128 scrapped in England. V 130 became
 French Buino in 1920.

S 113 CLASS (S 113-115)

Length: 337 ft. Beam: 33.5 ft. Displacement: 2,060 tons.
 Otherwise same as V 116 class. Completed: 1918.

S 113 became Amiral Senes in 1920. Others were never
 completed.

B 97 (B 97-98) and B 109 CLASS (B 109-112)

Length: 321.5 ft. Beam: 30.5 ft. Displacement: 1,374-1,843
 tons. Turbines: 2 screws. 36,000-40,000 tons. 35-37.5 knots.
 Guns: 4-4.1 in. Torpedo tubes: 6-19.7 in. Mines: 24
 Complement: 140-160. Completed: 1915

All were scuttled at Scappa Flow in 1919 and raised in 1926 except B 97 to Italy as Cesare Rossari 1920. B 98 seized and later wrecked at Scappa Flow.

G 101 CLASS (G 101-104)

Length: 312 ft. Beam: 31 ft. Displacement: 1,116-1,734 tons. Turbines: 2 screws. 28,000-29,500 h.p. 32-34 knots. Guns: 4-4.1 Torpedo tubes: 6-19.7 Mines: 24 Complement: 130. Completed: 1915

All were scuttled in Scappa Flow 1919. G 102 was raised and destroyed as a bombing test target at Cape Henry, Virginia in 1920. G 104 and G 101 were scrapped in 1926. G 103 was raised but later sunk in storm in 1925.

V 99 CLASS (V 99-100)

Length: 324.75 ft. Beam: 30 ft. Displacement: 1,350-1,847 tons. 40,000 h.p. Otherwise the same as B97 and B 109 classes. Completed: 1915.

V 99 sunk in Gulf of Riga 1915. V 100 scuttled in 1919.

G 96

Length: 277 ft. Beam: 27.5 ft. Displacement: 990-1,047 tons. Turbines: 2 screws. 24,000-26,500 h.p. 34 knots. Guns: 3-4.1 in. Torpedo tubes: 6-19.7 in. Mines: 40 Complement: 96-100. Completed: 1916

Mined off Ostend in 1916.

G 85 (G 85-95)

Length: 272.25 ft. Displacement: 960-1,147 tons. Mines: 24. Otherwise the same as G96. Completed: 1915-1916

G 86, G 89, G 91, and G 92 scuttled in 1919. G 93, G 87 and G 94 mined in North Sea in 1918. G 85 sunk by HMS *Broke* in 1917. G 88 Torpedoed in 1917 off Zeebrugge. G 90 mined in Gulf of Finland. G 95 scrapped in England in 1920.

V 67 CLASS (V 67-84)

Length: 269 ft. Beam: 27.5 ft. Displacement: 924-1,188 tons. Geared turbines: 2 screws. 24,000-25,000 h.p. 35-36 knots. 3-4.1 in. Torpedo tubes: 6-19.7 in. Mines: 24 Complement: 85-100. Completed: 1915-1916

Ten were scuttled and sunk in action during the war. Seven were scuttled at Scappa in 1919. In 1920 V 71 assigned to Britain for scrap. V 79 to France as *Pierre Durand* in 1920.

S 53 CLASS (S 53-66)

Length: 272 ft. Displacement: 919-1,170 tons. Otherwise same as V 67 class. Completed: 1915-1917.

Seven scuttled in 1919. Seven scuttled and sunk during the war. S 63 was raised and became the Italian *Ardimentoso* in 1920.

V 43 (V 43-48) and G 37(G 37-42) CLASSES

Length: 261-272 ft. Beam: 27.5 ft. Displacement: 822-1,188
 Turbines and Geared turbines: 2 screws. 24,000-25,000 h.p.
 33-36 knots. Guns: 3-3.5 Some with 2-4.1 in. instead.
 Torpedo tubes: 6-19.7 Mines: 24. Complement: 85-100.
 Completed: 1915.

 Seven Scuttled in 1919. Four scuttled and sunk during war.

V 25 (V 25-30) and S 31 (S 31-49, 50-52)
 Length: 257-261 ft. Beam: 27.5 ft. Displacement: 802-1,074
 tons. Turbines and Geared turbines: 2 Screws. 23,500-25,000
 h.p. 33-36 knots. Guns: 3-3.5 Torpedo tubes: 6-19.7 Mines:
 24 Complement: 85-100 Completed: 1914-1915.

 Six scuttled in 1919. Five sunk during the war. Two assigned
 to Britain for scrap. V 30 sunk by mine en route to
 surrender in 1918.

S 13 CLASS (S 13-24)
 Length: 234.5 ft. Beam: 24.33 ft. Displacement: 568-695
 tons. Turbines: 2 screws. 15,000-22,000 h.p. 34-37 knots.
 Guns. 2-4.1 in., 1-3.5 in. Torpedo tubes: 4-19.7 in. Mines:
 18. Complement: 75-95. Completed: 1912-1913.

 Seven sunk in action during war. One to Britain. S 23 became
 T 23 tender in 1931. S 18 and S 19 scrapped in 1935.

G 7 (G 7-12) and V 1 (V 1-6) CLASSES
 Length: 234- 235 ft. Beam: 24-25 ft. Displacement: 569-719
 tons. Turbines: 2 screws. 17,000 h.p. 33 knots. Guns: 2-3.5
 in. Torpedo tubes: 4-19.7 in. Mines: 18 Completed: 73-93.
 Completed: 1912.

Three sunk in war. Others were discarded reassigned between 1929-31.

T 176 (T 176-179), T 180 (T 180-185),
T 186 (T 186-191) T 192 (T 192-197) CLASSES
Length: 242-243 ft. Beam: 25-26 ft. Displacement: 650-810
tons. Turbines: 2 screws. 17,750-19,000 h.p. 33-35.5 knots.
Guns: 2-3.5 in. Torpedo tubes: 4-19.7 in. Complement: 73-93
Completed: 1910-1911.

Six sunk in war. Others reassigned or scrapped after the war.

T 174 CLASS (T 174-175)
Length 242.75 ft. Beam: 26 ft. Displacement: 700-824 tons.
Turbines: 2 screws. 15,000-16,000 h.p. 32 knots. Guns: 2-3.5
in. Torpedo tubes: 4-19.7 in. Complement: 73-93. Completed:
1910.

T 174 scrapped in Britain in 1920. T 175 scrapped in 1926.

T 169 CLASS (T 169-173)
Length: 242 ft.. Beam: 26 ft. Displacement: 670-778 tons.
Turbines: 3 screws. (Zoelly turbines and 2 screws in T173)
15,000-16,600 h.p. 31-32.7 knots. Guns: 3-3.5 in. Torpedo
tubes: 3-17.7 in. Complement: 73-93. Completed: 1909-1910.

T 169 and T 173 scrapped in Britain in 1920. T 171 sunk in
collision before war in 1912. T172 mined in North Sea 1918.
T 170 scrapped in 1921.

T 162 (T 162-164) and T 165 (T 165-168) CLASSES
 Length: 242-243 ft. Beam: 25-26 ft. Displacement: 639-765
 tons. Turbines: 2 screws. 15,000-17,500 h.p. 33.5 knots.
 Guns: 2-3.5 in. Torpedo tubes: 3-17.7 in. Complement: 73-93.
 Completed: 1909-1911.

T 162 mined in Baltic. All others scrapped after war.

T 150 CLASS (T 150-161)
 Length: 237.75 ft. Beam: 25.5 ft. Displacement: 558-691
 tons. Triple expansion: (3-cyl.) 2 screws. 10,900-14,800
 h.p. (T 161 with turbines) 30-33 knots. Guns: 2-3.5 in.
 Torpedo tubes: 3-17.7 in. Complement: 73-93 Completed: 1907-
 1908.

T 150 sunk in collision near Helgoland in 1915. T 151 became
 the target control vessel Komet in 1934. T 152 and T 154
 scrapped in 1935. T153 became training vessel in 1934. T 155
 was rebuilt between 1925-1928 and scuttled in 1945. T 156, T
 157, and T 158 became submarine tenders, T 158 awarded to
 Soviet Union in 1945. T 156 and T 157 scuttled in 1945.
 T159, T 160, and T 161 were scrapped in Britain in 1920.

T 138 CLASS (T 138-149)
 Length: 232 ft. Beam: 25.5 ft. Displacement: 533-684 tons.
 Triple expansion: (3-cyl.) 2 screws. 11,000 h.p. 30 knots.
 Guns: 1-3.5 in. Torpedo tubes: 3-17.7 in. Complement: 72-80.
 Completed: 1907-1908.

T 138 sunk in North Sea in 1918. All others were scrapped
 between 1920-1935.

T 137

Length: 234.5 ft. Beam: 25 ft. Displacement: 693 tons.
 Turbines: 3 screws. 10,800 h.p. 30 knots. Guns: 1-3.5 in.
 Torpedo tubes: 3-17.7 in. Complement: 63-80. Completed:
 1907.

 Scrapped in 1920.

T 132 CLASS (T 132-136)

Length: 215.5 ft. Beam: 23 ft. Displacement: 412-544 tons>
 Triple expansion: (3 cyl.) 2 screws. 7,000 h.p. 28.5 knots.
 Guns: 1-3.5 in. Torpedo tubes: 3-17.7 in. Complement: 68.
 Completed: 1906-1907.

 All were scrapped between 1920-1921.

T 120 CLASS (T 120-131)

Length: 212.33 ft. Beam: 23 ft. Displacement: 371-482 tons.
 Triple expansion: (3 cyl.) 2 screws. 6,400 h.p. 28 knots. (T
 125 with turbines and 3 screws) Torpedo tubes: 3-17.7 in.
 Complement: 49-60. Completed: 1904-1905.

 T 122, T 123, and T 124 sunk during war. All others scrapped
 after war.

T 108 CLASS (T 108-113)

Length: 216 ft. Beam: 22 ft. Displacement: 330-440 tons.
 Triple expansion: (3 cyl.) 2 screws. 6,000-6,600 h.p. 29
 knots. Torpedo tubes: 3-17.7 in. Complement: 49-60
 Completed: 1902-1903.

 All were scrapped between 1920-1921.

T 90 (T 90-101) and T 102 (T 102-107; 114-119) CLASSES
 Length: 206-207.5 ft. Beam: 23 ft. Displacement: 310-406
 tons. Triple expansion: (3 cyl.) 2 screws. 5,900 h.p. 26-
 27.5 knots. Torpedo tubes: 3-17.7 in. Complement: 49-60
 Completed: 1899-1903.

 Five sunk in action during the war. T 90 wrecked off coast of
 China in 1914. All others scrapped between 1920-1921.

TORPEDO BOATS AND MINESWEEPERS

Germany's torpedo boats in summary.

Group	Total	Tons	Built	Numbered	War losses
I	34	85-100	1885-1887	T 7-41	3
II	31	125-140	1889-1894	T 42-73	16
III	8	155	1894-1896	T 74-81	1
IV	8	145	1897-1898	T 82-89	0
V	10	250-350	1886-1996	D 1-10	0
VI	4	340	1915	V 105-108	1
VII	25	137	1915	A 1-25	9
VIII	30	227	1916-1917	A 26-55	3
IX	35	330	1917-1918	A 56-91	10
X	4	390	1918	A 92-95	0

 All others were sold, scrapped, reassigned, or awarded as
 war prizes.

COASTAL CRAFT

Summary

Total	Tons	Built	Numbered	War losses
75	18-19	1915	F 1-75	2
33	15-17	1917-1918	LM 1-33	0
17	6	1915-1916	FL 1-17	5

ANTI-SUBMARINE

12	27	1916-1917	UZ 1A-12A	0
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22	40-44	1917	UZ 1-22	0
12	60	1917	UZ 23-35	0

All others scrapped or reassigned.

MINESWEEPERS

Total	Tons	Built	Numbered	Lost
6	425	1915	M 1-6	1
20	450	1915	M 7-26	9
18	480	1916	M 27-44	6
12	480	1916	M 45-56	4
89	500-525	1917-1918	M 57-158	8
36	193	1917-1918	FM 1-36	0
29	205	1918	FM 37-66	0

Germany also put into service trawler-minesweepers. These weighed around 250 tons, and out of the 100 commissioned 30 sank in action.

All others sold or scrapped.

U-BOAT Summary

Type	Total	Tons	Ship Numbers
Karp	4	200-400	U 1-4
U5-18	13	500-560	U 5-18
UA or UK	49	1500-2200	U 137-159 (173-200)
MITTEL-U	188	560-900	U 17-70, 81-116 127-138, 158-172, 201-276
UB (COASTAL)			
UBI	17	128	UB 1-17
UBII	29	270	UB 18-47
UBIII	107	510-550	UB 48-155
UC (SMALL MINELAYERS)			
UCI	15	170	UC 1-15
UCII	63	400-430	UC 16-79
UCIII	45	475-510	UC 80-124
UE	20	750-1160	U 71-80, 117-126

Of the total of 431 U-boats commissioned 199 were sunk, scuttled, destroyed, or captured.

APPENDIX 2
The Russian Baltic Fleet

Table 1: German and Russian Baltic Fleets August 1914

Type	Russian	German
Dreadnought Battleships....	2	0
Pre-Dreadnought Battleships	4	0
Armored Cruisers.....	5	0
Cruisers.....	4	0
Light Cruisers.....	0	7
Destroyer/Torpedo boats....	63	9
Submarines.....	12	3

Table 1A: Russian Baltic Fleet¹

Name	Built	Displacement	Guns	Fate
<u>Dreadnought Battleships.</u>				
<i>Gangut.....</i>	1914	23,360	12-12in.	USSR
<i>Petropavlovsk.....</i>	"	"	"	"
<i>Poltava.....</i>	"	"	"	"
<i>Sevastopol.....</i>	"	"	"	"
<u>Predreadnoughts</u>				
<i>Imperator Pavel I..</i>	1911	17,600	4-12in.	"
<i>Andrej Pervosvannyi</i>	"	17,400	"	"
<i>Slava.....</i>	1905	14,000	"	Sunk
<i>Cesarevic.....</i>	1903	13,110	4-12in.	Scrap
<i>Imperator Alexandr2</i>	1889	10,010	2-12in.	"
<u>Battle Cruisers</u>				
<i>Borodino.....</i>	1913	32,500	2-14in.	Scrap
<i>Izmail.....</i>	"	"	"	"
<i>Kinburn.....</i>	"	"	"	"
<i>Navarin.....</i>	"	"	"	"
<u>Armored Cruisers</u>				
<i>Rjurik.....</i>	1909	15,190	4-10in.	"
<i>Admiral Makarov....</i>	1908	7,835	2-8in.	"
<i>Bajan.....</i>	1910	"	"	"

¹ Source: Rene Greger, *The Russian Fleet*.

<i>Pallada</i>	"	"	"	Sunk
<i>Gromoboj</i>	1904	12,400	6-8in.	Scrap
<i>Rossija</i>	1897	12,200	"	"

Light Cruisers

<i>Adm. Butakov</i>	1913	6,800	15-5in.	Scrap
<i>Adm. Greig</i>	"	"	"	USSR
<i>Adm. Spirodov</i>	"	"	"	"
<i>Svetlana</i>	"	"	"	"
<i>Bogatyr</i>	1902	6,645	16-5in.	Scrap
<i>Oleg</i>	1904	6,675	"	"
<i>Avrora</i>	1903	6,700	14-6in.	USSR
<i>Diana</i>	1902	"	10-5in.	Scrap

Seaplane Carrier

<i>Orlica</i>	1915	3,800	8-3in.AA	Scrap
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Gun Boats

<i>Bobr</i>	1908	960	2-5in.	Est.
<i>Giljak</i>	"	"	"	Finn.
<i>Koreec</i>	"	"	8-5in.	Sunk
<i>Sivuc</i>	"	"	2-5in.	"
<i>Chivinec</i>	1906	1,340	4-5in.	USSR
<i>Chrabryj</i>	1897	1,450	5-5.1in.	"
<i>Grozjascji</i>	1892	"	4-6in.	Scrap

Large Destroyers

<i>Gogland Chios</i>	1913	1,350	4-4in.	Sunk
<i>Kulm Grengamn</i>	"	"	"	Scrap
<i>Rymnik Patras</i>	"	"	"	"
<i>Stirusuden Smolensk</i>	"	"	"	"
<i>Avtroil</i>	1917	"	"	Est.
<i>Brjacislav</i>	"	"	5-4in.	Scrap
<i>Izjaslav</i>	"	"	"	USSR
<i>Prjamislav</i>	"	"	"	"
<i>Fedor Stratilat</i>	"	"	"	"
<i>Kapt. Kern</i>	"	1,260	4-4in.	Scrap
<i>Kapt. Miklucha-</i>				
<i>Maklaj</i>	"	"	"	"
<i>Kapt. Konon-Zotov</i> ..	"	"	"	Est.
<i>Kapt. Kroun</i>	"	"	"	Scrap
<i>Kapt. Izylmetav</i>	1916	"	"	"
<i>Kapt. Belli</i>	"	"	"	"
<i>Lt. Dubasov</i>	"	"	"	USSR
<i>Lt. Li'in</i>	"	"	"	"
<i>Gavril</i>	"	"	"	"
<i>Konstantin</i>	"	"	"	Scrap

Meceskav.....	1915	"	"	USSR
Michail.....	"	"	"	Scrap
Sokol.....	"	"	"	"
Vladmir.....	1917	"	"	"
Azard.....	1916	"	"	Sunk
Desna.....	"	"	"	USSR
Grom.....	1915	"	"	Sunk
Letun.....	1916	"	"	Mined
Orfej.....	"	"	"	"
Pobeditel.....	1915	"	"	USSR
Samson.....	1916	"	"	"
Zabijaka.....	1915	"	"	"
Novik*.....	1913	"	"	"

* The Novik was the fastest destroyer of WWI at 36kn.

Torpedo Boat Destroyers.

20 Ships..... 1906-1907 580-615 2,3-4in.

2 Sunk

Torpedo Boats

29 Ships..... 1905-1908 335-380 2-3in.

5 Sunk

TB Minesweepers

14 Ships..... 1895-1903 150-220 2-3in. & 2in.

7 Finn

Submarines

42 Ships..... 1904-1917 105-1264

5 Sunk

Minelayers

12 Ships..... 1875-1917 80-6100

3 Sunk

Minesweepers

14 Ships..... 1895-1917 98-248

5 Sunk

Table 2: Russian mine operations: estimates²

Position	1914	1915	1916	1917	Total
Central Position	2995	-	2165	4342	9502
Flanking Barrier	290	-	-	1541	1831
Foward Barrier..	-	-	3963	2922	6885
Abo-Aaland.....	-	745	276	264	1285
Bottensee.....	-	569	821	303	1893
Moon Sound &....	-	141	191	44	376
w. Dagoe.....	-	150	-	1190	1340

² Ibid.

G. of Riga.....	-	368	380	850	1598
Irben S.....	-	2179	5940	1908	10,033
Windau, Libau...	200	-	-	-	200

Total.....	3485	4152	13,736	13,570	34,943

ALBION OPERATIONAL ORDERS

A.O.K. 8. (High-command of 8th Army) A.HQ. 24.9.1917

Ia 3258/17 op. top secret.

Army Orders

1. To capture the Gulf of Riga and to secure the flank of the army, the islands of Oesel and Moon are to be taken by land and sea forces; Moon Sound is to be blockaded to prevent enemy naval detachments from entering the gulf.

2. To standby:

a) A.O.K. 8 the Landing corps under Gen. Comm. of the 23rd Reserve corps on board of the fleet flagship.

b) The Navy: Coverfleet and Transportfleet.

3. Leading and protecting the transports will be guided by the leader of the naval forces. these are placed under his command for the duration of the journey up to the landing.

After successful landing, the leader of the naval forces will submit himself to the A.O.K. 8 and render all available services needed.

4. The islands of Oesel and Moon belong to operational area of the 8th Army. The operations are to be guided by the leader of the Landing corps, who is after that responsible for their defence.

5. The assembly and fitting of the Landing corps is to take place in Libau. The details in loading and unloading are to be solved by the Gen Com. 23rd Reserve Corps and leader of the naval forces.

In areas of doubt, the A.O.K. 8 will decide.

6. Concerning the arrival and departure time from Libau, the following orders will be posted.

7. Landing to be in the Tagga Bay.

8. The protection of the transports and landing against enemy attack above and below the sea is the responsibility of the leader of the naval forces; he is also responsible for silencing the batteries in Tagga Bay.

The navy is to offer cover fire, its location to be pinpointed by the Gen. Com. of the 23rd Reserve Corps.

9. To offer a diversion for the enemy, the weaker elements of the fleet will attack Sworbe batteries.

10. The 23rd Reserve Corps is to secure the landing-zone, capture Hundsort Peninsula and Ninnast batteries, and take the air-station at Papensholm, and wait for reinforcements.

11. The next objective is the capture of Arensburg, which will become the fleet-assembly area, and the capture of Sworbe from the North.

The march must be done soon.

In order to cut off Arensburg's and the Western defences, the attack must come from the Northeast roads. To support the assault the navy will have to breakthrough the Irben Strait as early as possible. The support and transports arrival must be done after a path has been cleared in the Gulf of Riga.

12. The diversionary troops at Sworbe will land and capture the batteries by Tirimets and the fortified positions near Welja. They will secure the Sworbe Peninsula. The 360⁰ batteries are to be held in check by the navy.

13. After the capture of Arensburg, reinforcements are to land.

14. The second objective is the capture of the bridgehead at Orrisar to clear the way to Moon via the stone dam.

15. Our naval detachments are to protect the flank of the troops at Orrisar from enemy naval vessels.

16. Passage over the dam must be supported by the naval forces.

17. The landing of troops on Moon is to be supported by covering the transports and destruction of the batteries on Moon.

18. Communications during the operation are to be posted.

19. Communications officer of the A.O.K. will be with the leader of the naval forces, Major von Rauch; by Gen. Com. 23rd Reserve Corps Rittmeister von Wallenberg.

20. All meaningful orders and additions to the Gen. Com. 23rd Reserve Corps and the leader of the naval force are to be delivered to the A.O.K. in triplicate.

Commander in Chief

von Hutier

BATTLE OF JUTLAND

CHART I

4:10 pm

EVAN-THOMAS

GERMAN
BRITISH

12,000 YARDS

- ♣ BATTLESHIP
- ♠ B. CRUISER
- ARMORED + LIGHT CRUISER
- DESTROYERS FLOTILLA
- ⚓ SUNK
- ⚓ DISABLED

INDEFATIGABLE
SUNK 4:05

BEATTY

HIPPER

Battle of Jutland
CHART IV
6:30 pm

Battle of Jutland
CHART V 7:30 pm

BALTIC SEA

Gulf of Finland

MAP I Gulf of Riga