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## The King's Ships Were at Sea: The War in the North Sea August 1914- February 1915

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acceptable? That is the interesting question—not whether Roosevelt knew something he did not reveal or whether Churchill withheld vital intelligence from Roosevelt. Kimmel was outnumbered and his enemy had the initiative. What could he have done? Thinking about that question is important because there are US military commanders today who find themselves in a similar situation. *Pearl Harbor: The Continuing Controversy*, like most of the literature on the topic, does not address that question. It is, however, an accurate summary of the other issues raised by investigators of the attack, and its lengthy documents section is valuable even to people who have some knowledge of the Pearl Harbor debate.

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Goldrick, James. *The King's Ships Were at Sea: The War in the North Sea August 1914-February 1915*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1984. 356pp. \$21.95

This work by an Australian naval officer starts with late June 1914, when the newly enlarged Kiel Canal permitted the German navy to swing between the North Sea and the Baltic. After a comparison of British and German naval strengths and the steps that led to war, James Goldrick correctly notes that "The North Sea was to be the critical theatre of operations for both British and Germans." He sketches the geographical and material advantages and

disadvantages on both sides and notes that the British Board of Admiralty was much better than the German organization. The latter, with three offices where one would do, resulted in departmental in-fighting and an inability to agree upon policy. Goldrick's vignettes of major naval leaders are well done, as are the characteristics he gives of all classes of surface ships, submarines, aircraft, and lighter-than-aircraft.

After these introductory chapters Goldrick concentrates upon operations: the firing of the first shots; the northern and southern blockades of the North Sea by the British and French; reciprocal use of submarines, minelayers, and major combatants; the crossing of the British Expeditionary Force; and, except for the Battle of the Heligoland Bight on 28 August, the inactivity of the High Seas Fleet until the end of 1914. The chapter devoted to that battle contains an excellent analysis of the successes and failures of the commanders, ships, and weapons on both sides.

Chapter 5 deals with the first operations undertaken by submarines. The sinking of warships and then of merchant ships by U-boats opened German eyes to the submarines' utility for blockade and a war of attrition against the British fleet. If the British rushed to develop anti-submarine devices and doctrine, the careful Adm. John R. Jellicoe's caution grew with respect to his fleet's operations. Germany meanwhile occupied twenty-one miles along the Flemish coast and built U-

boat and destroyer bases thereon. British ships and aircraft failed to drive them from this advantageous position.

In Britain, for lack of a staff, a small group comprised of Winston Churchill, Sir John Fisher, and Sir Arthur Wilson, aided by Henry Oliver, made the decisions. In Germany, following the Battle of the Heligoland Bight, Adm. Friedrich von Ingenohl on the Kaiser's orders kept his High Seas Fleet tethered except for raids on the British east coast by Commander, Scouting Forces, Franz Hipper, in October and December 1914. Though Room 40 decoded German wireless radio intercepts and obtained a fair idea about German intentions. British errors enabled Hipper to escape.

One of Hipper's sorties led to the Battle of the Dogger Bank, 24 January 1915. Goldrick describes the battle in the penultimate chapter, and analyzes the reasons why the British were able to do better than the Germans despite their many errors. Ingenohl was discredited; he had not reduced the strength of the Grand Fleet by attrition tactics. His successor, Adm. Hugo von Pohl, shifted his efforts to a U-boat campaign.

Goldrick concludes, first, that navies must "derive sufficient knowledge of the capabilities and limitations of novel technology during peacetime operations so as to minimize the deficiencies of their equipment and to be able to create realistic strategy and tactics for a possible conflict. Second, navies must develop

systems by which operational experience at all levels can be assessed effectively and rapidly in order to maintain advantages and remove deficiencies in wartime."

Goldrick has obtained more British and German naval records than the official British historians, Corbett and Newbolt, did for their 5-volume *Naval Operations*, published in 1920-1931. He says that his objective is to retell the story they told in their first two volumes but without the official and unofficial constraints under which they labored. Since he prefers not to state where the earlier writers—and also Arthur Marder in *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*—fell short in their analyses and interpretations, he leaves the readers up in the air. He says little about the reaction of neutrals to either British or German attempts to control sea trade, and he shortchanges French naval contributions. While he has provided a fine operational history, he might have included an analysis of the mistakes in Grand Adm. Alfred Tirpitz's prewar assumptions. It was those errors that did much to cause Germany to lose the naval war and, in the end, enabled Allied sea power to strangle German land power.

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Miller, Kenneth E. *Tiger the Lurp Dog*.  
Boston: Little, Brown, 1983.  
214pp. \$14.95

*Tiger the Lurp Dog* is not an animal story for children. It is a novella