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## Admiral von Hipper, the Inconvenient Hero

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There is still a useful book to be written in which the whole structure of Richmond's thought is systematically studied. The present work is far from meeting this need and so does not do justice to Richmond's value. But, any student or staff member at a military college, by running through the present book, will see that the general issues to which Richmond addressed himself are still very much alive and still asking for resolution. Getting a feel for this may be the chief value of *Sailor-Scholar*.

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Philbin, Tobias R. *Admiral von Hipper, the Inconvenient Hero*. Amsterdam: Grüner, 1982. 229pp. \$24

Using a great number of German war diaries, official histories, letters, and private notes, an American historian, Tobias R. Philbin, gives a detailed and accurate account of the life and naval career of Admiral Franz von Hipper, though he never makes clear what it was that was "inconvenient" about Hipper.

Hipper served many years in large combatant ships and small and had a three-year tour as navigation officer of the Imperial Yacht *Hohenzollern*. He commanded both light and armored cruisers and in 1912 he was promoted to Rear Admiral. He became Deputy Flag Officer Scouting Forces, which consisted of hattle cruisers, armored cruisers, light cruisers, and torpedoboats (in the US and British navies, the latter were called destroyers). The next year he became Flag Officer Scouting Forces. He was promoted to Vice Admiral in 1915 and to Admiral in 1918.

From November 1916 until the war's end I served as an officer of the watch and gunnery officer in the *B 110*, a destroyer in the Scouting Forces. Young

officers generally have a good idea of the qualities of their superiors. My impression from those two years under Hipper's command coincide closely with the results of Philbin's investigations.

The reverses suffered by the German Navy in the first five months of World War I were certainly the result of restrictive orders from Imperial Headquarters as well as the lack of initiative on the part of Admiral von Ingenohl, the Fleet CinC. On 28 August 1914, when our patrols off Heligoland were attacked by British forces, few of the German battleships at anchor in the Elbe Estuary could have put to sea at once. I, as a cadet, heard the rumble of distant gunfire, but my ship got no order to weigh anchor. Fleet Command was also responsible in October 1914 for sending four unescorted old torpedoboats in full daylight along the Dutch islands to lay mines off the English coast. Long before dark British cruisers intercepted and sank them.

One of the greatest chances of the war was missed by Ingenohl on 16 December 1914. Hipper's battle cruisers were sent to bombard the English coastal towns of Hartlepool and Scarborough and the Battle Fleet was to be in readiness near the Dogger Bank. However, on the night before the bombardment there was a short encounter between German torpedoboats and British destroyers. Ingenohl reversed course and went home without informing Hipper. That morning had he been where he should have been according to his own orders, he would have met six British battleships with his 14. This might have changed the whole course of the war. Hipper, aware that British battleships, and battle cruisers too, were at sea, grasped the situation correctly and succeeded in avoiding contact with these now superior British forces.

A comparison of Hipper's and Beatty's

signals and movements in the opening phases of the Battle of Jutland clearly shows Hipper's qualities. With all his ships in perfect order, he opened fire at the distance he selected, far inside the range of the heavier British guns, while Beatty's battle cruisers were still partly masking each other's fire and his four fast battleships were left far behind.

From 1917 on, the main task of our Fleet was to get our submarines through the belt of mines with which the British tried to block the German Bight of the North sea. However, on 24 April 1918 the whole fleet went north to the latitude of Scapa Flow-Stavanger to intercept an expected British convoy. However, no convoy came, but the battle cruiser *Moltke* suffered an engine breakdown and had to stop. Radio was used to call the battleships and one of them towed the stricken cruiser south at a speed of six knots. Happily, no British ships appeared. This undoubtedly influenced the plans for the fateful October 1918 sortie which, despite a characterization to the contrary, definitely was no suicide mission. Even if the British Grand Fleet would have put to sea at once, the battle would have begun no more than 70 miles from the mouth of the Ems River.

Hipper did more than most high officers to prevent the mutiny in the Fleet which prevented that sortie. However, they all had been strangely inactive with regard to the living conditions of the crews. The crews were not at all ill-treated, but much more could have been done in four years of war to improve conditions aboard ship and especially in the main base of Wilhelmshaven. Evidently the psychological problems of a long and not very eventful war had never been studied, and hardly any consequences were drawn.

But have Western armed forces studied the conditions and consequences

of the subversive war which the Soviet Union has been conducting against Nato all this time? History cannot give us infallible recipes; it can give us a great many valuable examples and suggestions. This story of Admiral von Hipper, amply researched and excellently presented, is well suited to direct our attention to the problems of leadership in peace and war, based on the respect for our fellow men.

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Schoenbaum, David. *Zabern 1913: Consensus Politics in Imperial Germany*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1982. 197pp. \$25

At the end of 1913 in the small Alsatian town of Zabern a young Prussian lieutenant of the 99th Infantry Regiment encouraged his troops to harass the locals. The inhabitants began to jeer the lieutenant whenever he appeared in the streets until he had to be accompanied everywhere he went by armed guards. Upset by civilian disrespect, the regimental commander ordered mass arrests without prior consultation with civil authorities. The local military authorities had made fools of themselves. Naturally their superiors backed them.

The Zabern affair then exploded into a national issue. It was debated in the Imperial Reichstag and in the Prussian diet. It received extensive coverage in both the German and international press. The fate of the government, the role of the army in the state, and the Emperor's powers were subject to detailed often hostile scrutiny. Since then the affair has been regarded as a manifestation of Imperial Germany's autocratic organization and temperament.

David Schoenbaum also agrees that the affair typified the Germany of