

1981

"Luxury" Fleets: The Imperial German Navy 1888-1918

Keith W. Bird

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Recommended Citation

Bird, Keith W. (1981) "'Luxury' Fleets: The Imperial German Navy 1888-1918," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 34 : No. 1 , Article 20.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol34/iss1/20>

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The strategic air offensive remains controversial, and its many unanswered questions deserve consideration. *Bomber Command* fails in its approach to those issues owing to its intentional incompleteness, and in the author's failure to appreciate that a military service or command performs in wartime only to the extent the nation has permitted it to prepare in peace.

W. HAYS PARKS

Herwig, Holger H. *"Luxury" Fleet: The Imperial German Navy 1888-1918*. Winchester, Mass.: Allen and Unwin, 1980. 314pp.

Since the publication of Jonathan Steinberg's *Yesterday's Deterrent: Tirpitz and The Birth of the German Battle Fleet* in 1965, historians have used the extensive archives of the German Navy to investigate the origins and fate of the Imperial Battle Fleet and its role in both domestic and foreign policy. As a microcosm of Wilhelminian society, the *Kaiserliche Marine* represents an opportunity for scholars to study in detail those forces that contributed to the period 1888-1918 in German and world history.

Unfortunately, much of the recent research has not been translated and the general reader is largely unaware of the pioneering and controversial works by such revisionist historians as Volker Berghahn who argues that the German Fleet was directed "against Parliament and England" and was built to protect the "Prussian-German system" against democratic pressures. Nor are the writings of Wilhelm Deist, Peter-Christian Witt, Frederick Forstmeier, and other German scholars available in translation. As the author of two major contributions to German naval history, *The German Naval Forces Corps: A Social and Political History 1890-1918* (1973) and *Politics of Frustration: The United States in German Naval Planning 1888-1941* (1976), Holger

Herwig is well qualified to provide the first overview of the Imperial Navy that reflects the recent scholarship "that has radically altered accepted views" of the navy.

Herwig divides *"Luxury" Fleet* into three sections with Parts I and III organized chronologically (1888-1914 and 1914-1919) and Part II topically. After outlining the roots of Germany's naval ambitions, he analyzes the Tirpitz shipbuilding program with its ultimate goal of 60 capital ships—a battle fleet that would allow the High Seas Fleet a "genuine chance" against the Royal Navy in the North Sea. In Part II, Herwig reviews the German colonial plans and the navy's personnel policies. The last section of the book deals with the tactical deployment of the fleet in World War I, the defense of the Tirpitz battle fleet strategy against proponents of *guerre de course*, and the lack of any decisive battle action in 4 years of war.

Herwig touches upon all the major "debating points" in the building of the "luxury" fleet: the German justification for a large blue-water navy; naval strategy and planning; German-English naval rivalry; the impact of the *Dreadnought*; domestic implications of fleet building; and the role of Tirpitz. The broad scope of the book, however, results in several topics receiving short shrift, most notably the issue of unrestricted submarine warfare and the naval mutinies of 1917-1918.

There is no doubt that Herwig, who is included in the ranks of the revisionists by his critics, will be faulted for his treatment of military-naval themes and technical details. There are indeed a number of errors and interpretations in this book relating to naval construction and battle reports that will annoy professional readers and some specialists but these do not detract from the overall purpose of the author—to provide a general survey for historian and lay reader alike. A useful comparison to Herwig's view of the

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navy and its leaders would be Walther Hubatsch's private publication *Kaiserliche Marine: Aufgaben und Leistungen* (1975) which is far more sympathetic to the building of the fleet and its role in the war.

In spite of the lack of footnotes, historians will find the book informative and most original in Herwig's analysis of the navy's political history, particularly the role of Tirpitz and the officer corps in the development and deployment of the High Seas Fleet. Herwig's brief treatment of the German colonial empire and the navy suggests an area for further study as does the fundamental issue of German naval strategy in the period 1888-1945—*Kleinkrieg* versus *Grosskrieg*. As Herwig's study demonstrates, the Imperial Navy is in need of its Arthur J. Marder and it is to the author's credit that "*Luxury*" *Fleet* points the way towards a definitive history.

KEITH W. BIRD
New Hampshire Continuing Education
Network

Johnson, Franklyn A. *Defence by Ministry: The British Ministry of Defence, 1944-1974*. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1980. 234pp.

Defence by Ministry is a study of the development of British defense administration since World War II. The book is a sequel to the author's earlier study, *Defence by Committee* (1960), that described the earlier administrative arrangements developed under the Committee of Imperial Defence.

Dr. Johnson's study is the first general history of the Ministry of Defence. The story is one of exceptional interest because it is part of a trend experienced by many nations. The growth of military technology and its ever-increasing complexity has forced aside older methods. In the area of administration, it has created the need

to have tighter control of armed force by central governments. The vast power and range of weapons has created the need to limit the decisions that a commander in the field can make without direct consultation, in order to prevent unwanted consequences. At the same time, these developments have increased the tendency for rapid decisions under pressure in a much broader range of defense matters. This, in turn, endangers the quality of judgment and the clarity of view that can be exercised in such circumstances. The administrative answers to these serious problems have been to increase central authority, to streamline command and to develop specialized bureaucracies and support organizations. It is in this very broad context that one must view the development of the Ministry of Defence.

The story is not a simple one. It involved the tenacious grasp of tradition and the struggle for political influence that are so much a part of government reorganization. At the same time, international events played a part in the shaping of the new arrangements. The end of World War II and the cold war followed by the birth of NATO, the Suez crisis and the general decline of British military and naval influence played an important role. The personalities of key figures were also important. During the war, Churchill had managed the British war machine as both Prime Minister and Minister of Defence. He had, himself, been minister of each of the three services as well as several related departments, and he had used this personal experience as the basis for employing the service chiefs of staff, rather than the service ministers, as the instruments of command. These wartime measures were continued after the war by Clement Atlee, who had advocated defense reform in the interwar period and had served in the War Cabinet as Deputy Prime Minister. Institutionalized in the Ministry of