

“A Good-Will Ship”: The Light Cruiser *Köln* Visits Rabaul (1933)

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The concept of loyalty still holds a central space in many histories about New Guinean-Australian relations, especially during the Second World War, and translates into demands by Australians that New Guineans recognize Australia's political system as “the best”. In this article about the visit of the first German navy cruiser to New Guinea after the First World War, I tell a story not about loyalties, but about contesting colonial claims, namely Australia's insistence on “loyalty”, and Germany's demand for a “return” of her colony. The visit of *Köln* in 1933 raises questions such as: How did Germans and Australians negotiate living together in the Mandated Territory of New Guinea? How were divisions, grief, tensions, and hostilities after the First World War dealt with? What separated them, what united them, and what role did New Guineans play in this complex relationship?

The way in which the visit was received by high and low, is a pleasant sign that the bitterness against Germany of the war and post-war years is almost completely in the past.

Kirchenblatt, 3 April 1933¹

Legitimacy of Australian rule in the Territory of New Guinea rested on the legitimacy of the League of Nations, which suffered crisis after crisis from the early 1930s on, when Japan, ignoring all international interventions, invaded Manchuria. By 1933 the League of Nations was at the brink of collapse, and with it the Mandate system.² The Weimar Republic in Germany was unraveling, and it was unclear what form of government would replace it, and whether foreign policies pursued by Weimar would alter. Would a disintegration of the League of Nations and its Mandate system invigorate and strengthen German demands for a return of her former colonies, including New Guinea?

New Guinea, a former German colony, had been under Australian control for just under two decades, and a Mandated Territory of the League of Nations for twelve years. In this relatively short time major changes had been implemented, most notably the expropriation of German-owned plantations and the deportation of the majority of

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¹ *Kirchenblatt*, No 7, Jg. 9, 3 April 1933, p. 97f. This German-language journal of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Australia reported extensively on the reception of *Köln* in Adelaide.

² In March 1933 Japan announced its withdrawal from the League of Nations, followed by Germany in October 1933.

German colonial officials and settlers. In economic and administrative terms "German time" in New Guinea was over.

On a more practical level of day-to-day administration of New Guinea, the Mandate system set (some) restricting parameters to Australian rule. Australia had to govern New Guinea according to the terms of the Mandate, and had to provide an annual report to the League's Permanent Mandates Commission. Anxious over potential international criticism, Australia tended to err on the side of caution. Thus Australian bureaucracy was slow to change German laws and regulations, especially those dealing with matters directly affecting indigenous people, and German missionaries were given extensions, while the issue whether to deport them back to Germany was considered and re-considered. The removal of Germans had to be balanced with the guaranteed "freedom of conscience and religion".³ In regard to religious and educational interactions with New Guinea's indigenous inhabitants, German missionaries remained the dominant group into the mid-1930s. Their dominance, though gradually declining, ceased only with the changes brought by the Pacific War and the post-war area.

I. "Government Belong Me Fella"

At the end of 1932 the Territories Branch of the Prime Minister's Department asked Brigadier General Thomas Griffiths, the Administrator in New Guinea, about his opinion on a delicate matter. The German Consul General was seeking permission for a German cruiser, on a good-will tour through the Pacific, and scheduled to visit several Australian ports, to call at Rabaul. The visit, planned for June 1933, would be non-official and official arrangements would therefore be kept to a minimum.⁴ Administrator Griffith raised no objections to the visit, but suggested that "in view of the possible psychological effect on native mind" an Australian navy cruiser visit New Guinea about the same time.⁵

Köln was to be the first visit of a German warship to New Guinea since the First World War.⁶ In 1928 the cruiser *Berlin* had undertaken a small preliminary visit to Fremantle. Encouraged by the success of the visit, *Köln* was then sent on an extensive good-will tour through the Asia-Pacific region, followed by *Karlsruhe* in 1934. The Administrator's concerns, however, were not seen as important enough by the mainland departments. The Department of Defence, contacted by the Territories Branch, Prime Minister's Department, declared that only two naval ships of the Australian fleet were suitable for such an enterprise, but neither was available. The crew of one was overdue for leave, while the other was having minor repairs done. In the end the visit of *Köln* to Rabaul was granted regardless of the lack of a symbolic countering of German navy might as suggested by the Administrator.⁷

Cruiser *Köln*, one of five light cruisers built during the Weimar Republic, was an impressive ship. The light cruisers of the K-class were the pride of the German navy representing technological achievement and advanced engineering that marked Germany's return onto the world stage — that she marched again "at the forefront of

³ The Covenant of the League of Nations, Article 22, <<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/leagcov.htm>>, accessed 18 May 2006.

⁴ 17 December 1932, Prime Minister's Department, Territories Branch to Administrator, Rabaul, Cablegram, National Archives of Australia (NAA) ACT, A518, I836/2.

⁵ 23 December 1932, Administrator to Prime Minister's Department, Territories Branch, Cablegram, NAA ACT, A518, I836/2.

⁶ *Pacific Islands Monthly*, 20 December 1932, p.48.

⁷ See NAA ACT, A518, I836/2.

all peoples”.⁸ Crewed by twenty-one officers and 493 crew, and 174 meters in length, *Köln* was more than a third longer than Burns Philp and Co’s passenger and freight service ship, MV *MacDhui*, which had been servicing Rabaul regularly since May 1931.⁹ On 8 December 1932, still under the government of the last Chancellor of the Weimar Republic, Kurt von Schleicher, *Köln*, a training ship of the *Reichsmarine*, left the port of Wilhelmshaven for its first major journey abroad. The trip took one year and four days, covered 37,000 nautical miles and included visits to India, South East Asia, New Zealand and Samoa, Australia, New Guinea, Guam, Japan, China, Greece, Italy and Spain.¹⁰ By the time the cruiser *Köln* reached Australia,¹¹ Hitler was in power, and she became, inadvertently, one of the first emissaries of the new National Socialist Germany.

Literature on *Köln* discusses the technological innovations of the cruiser and her “sister-ships”, and details the history of the light cruisers during the Second World War.¹² The earlier role of the cruisers, particularly *Köln*, as emissaries of Weimar Germany is only mentioned in passing. The German historian Johannes Voigt identified the visit of *Köln* to Australia as a major event and turning point in German-Australian relations.¹³ Apart from Voigt’s short survey there have been no previous studies into the political or cultural implications of *Köln*’s goodwill tour. This article takes up Voigt’s argument and investigates how the rise of National Socialism and the coming to power of Hitler in Germany in early 1933 affected the reception of *Köln* in the Mandated Territory of New Guinea.

In advance of the cruiser’s visit, rumors abounded in New Guinea. A German missionary wrote from Rabaul to a colleague in Germany:

I was [...] with the *Katemotec* for 2 evenings. [...] They are generally well informed. That the German cruiser Köln will be coming to Rabaul at the beginning of June they already knew, too.

⁸ *Kirchenblatt* 3 April 1933, No 7, p. 98.

⁹ <http://mns.ewebs.com/Burns_Philp/mv_macdhui.htm>, accessed 15 April 2004. “*Macdhui* was built by the Clydeside shipbuilders Barclay Curle and Co and launched 23 December 1930. Of 4,561 gross tons, length 341ft. and breadth 51ft she was registered in Sydney and carried an Australian crew. She commenced trading between Sydney, Papua and New Guinea in May 1931 providing a significant improvement in that service and remaining engaged therein beyond Japan’s entry to the Second World War.” She was sunk in 1942.

¹⁰ *Köln* left Germany on 8 December 1932 and returned on 12 December 1933; for details see <<http://www.lexicon-der-wehrmacht.de/Waffen/Koln-R.htm>>; <<http://www.geocity.com/pentagon/quarters/5768/koeln1.html>>; and <<http://members.aol.com/matzi555/leichte-kreuzer-koenigsbergklasse.html>>; *Köln* was the last of the light cruiser of the K-class built in Wilhelmshaven, and was launched in 1928 by the Mayor of Cologne, Konrad Adenauer, who would later become the first chancellor of the post-war Federal Republic of Germany.

¹¹ See reports by Captain Otto Schniewind, 5 May 1933 and 16 May 1933, Political Archive of the Foreign Office, Berlin, (hereafter PA AA), R60025/1-Australia: Foerderung Deutschum 1927/36. Consul General Asmis reported to the foreign office that *Köln* had between March and June travelled to Fremantle, Adelaide, Port Phillip Bay, Melbourne, Hobart, Sydney, Fiji, and Rabaul. “Visits in all harbours can be assessed as a success.” 30 December 1933 Dr Asmis to Foreign Office, p 18, File 43515 Jahresberichte der deutschen Auslandsvertretung in Australien, 1929-36, Bundesarchiv Postdam, Foreign Office vol. 16/17.

¹² See for example Gerhard Koop and Klaus-Peter Schmolke, *Die leichten Kreuzer Königsberg, Karlsruhe, Köln, Leipzig, Nürnberg* (Bonn, 1994).

¹³ Johannes H. Voigt, *Australien und Deutschland. 200 Jahre Begegnungen, Beziehungen und Verbindungen* (Hamburg, 1988), pp. 126-129.

You can imagine what hopes they attach to that. It is always an effort, to talk them out off their ideas.¹⁴

The German newspaper of the town of Köln (Cologne), the *Kölnische Illustrierte Zeitung*, followed the journey of the cruiser bearing its name with great interest, and reported similar enthusiasm amongst the local indigenous population:

Sensation in the Bismark Archipelago.

"The Germans have returned".

In honor of the Cruiser's Visit the natives of the previously German Island in New Guinea held a big festivity, they were singing the Song of Germany and asking if the Germans had returned as their masters. [...] indeed a chief was even asking the Commander when the return of his land to the Germans was to take place.¹⁵

The *Rabaul Times* in contrast downplayed the political implications of the visit. It described the cruiser as a "good will ship", and praised its crew — the majority young sailors "who knew little of the world save the Post-War Germany in which they had been reared as children" — for fostering better understanding and friendship across national borders. *Köln*, the *Rabaul Times* said, had come as a messenger of post-war peace, healing the divisions the First World War had created amongst the white settlers of the Pacific. Yet an undercurrent of unease about how a German naval presence would be interpreted amongst the local New Guinean population also permeated the report of the *Rabaul Times*. At the end of the report the readers were presented with the opinion of a New Guinean man. The quote addressed the problem of colonial ownership of the Territory of New Guinea with a subtle affirmation of loyalty to Australia: "The purpose of the 'Koeln's' visit was aptly described by a local native, as he watched the long, grey vessel anchor: 'I t'ink Captain belong ship 'e come shake-hand along government belong me fella.'¹⁶

II. "Let Further Sound Your German Melodies"

Despite these undercurrents, the Australian population in New Guinea put their unease about Germany aside to welcome *Köln*. Months before *Köln* arrived, "Territorians" (white settlers in New Guinea) had begun to prepare a befitting reception. A "Koeln Committee" had been formed to organise entertainment for the crew and locals in and around Rabaul. By April a programme had been drawn up, which included a picture show and ball at the Regent Theatre, band performances in the Botanic Gardens, and an opportunity to inspect the cruiser.¹⁷ The only "German" contributions to the festivities were a *singsing* staged by the German Fathers of the Vunapope Mission, and a *Fruehschoppen*, a morning pint, organised by the German Club Rabaul on 8 June, the second day of the stay of the cruiser, at 11am.¹⁸ Other German Territorians played no major part in the preparations. Their number had been greatly reduced by the mass deportations of Germans in 1921, and those who were spared deportation chose to keep

¹⁴ 9 May 1933 Georg Pilhofer to Leonhard Flierl, Mission Archive Neuendettelsau ND 52/21 New Guinea: Correspondence and reports – Leonhard Flierl (1902-1970).

¹⁵ *Kölnische Illustrierte Zeitung*, Nr 49, p.1235-1237, in English translation attached to 7 February 1934, Secretary, Prime Minister's Department, Territories Branch to Secretary, Department of External Affairs, NAA ACT, A518, I 836/2.

¹⁶ *Rabaul Times*, 9 June 1933, "A Good Will Ship"; NAA ACT, A518, I 836/2.

¹⁷ *Pacific Islands Monthly*, 24 April 1933, p. 39.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.39.

a low profile.¹⁹ Yet when the long anticipated day of the arrival of the cruiser came, many had made the effort to travel to Rabaul and attend the celebrations. Sarah Johnston Chinnery, wife of the Territory's Director of District Services and Government Anthropologist, E.W.P. Chinnery, observed the crowd in Rabaul. The town was buzzing with natives, "Chinese, Malays, half-castes, whites and German sailors. [...] Germans from outstations who hadn't been in Rabaul for years were present."²⁰

The German Club Rabaul, unofficial centre of the German celebrations, flew the "new" German flag (black, white and red) as well as a Swastika flag.²¹ The Club had in the post-war years adjusted to the changed political circumstances and a diminished German clientele. On one hand it catered to the nostalgia of those Germans remaining in New Guinea,²² on the other it found a niche, which made it an institution in Rabaul, appreciated and frequented beyond the German population. The German Club's following by Australians was less a sign of quality entertainment or cultural activities, than an embrace of alcoholic beverage and the fact that it admitted ladies. The German Consul Koeltsch, who visited New Guinea in late 1932 on a private holiday trip, commented that the German Club Rabaul was "remarkable", as it had twenty German members with voting rights, and 100 Australian members without voting rights.²³ Offering a *Frueschoppen* as its main event, the Club managed to satisfy the expectations and needs of both its German and Australian patrons.²⁴

Before *Köln's* arrival the German Club approached German Territorians for donations towards its special celebrations. The Club's request for a financial contribution threw the German Lutheran Mission's Superintendent in Finschhafen, Stephan Lehner, into a dilemma. If the mission contributed nothing, it would look as if it tried to keep its distance from all things German. If it gave money to the club, it would support indulgence and excess. Lehner explained to his director in Germany:

The main thing at the German club is generally drinking. And during the week of celebrations it will be the priority to achieve something in regard to this task. For this, however, we have not a penny to spare.²⁵

¹⁹ See for example 23 January 1933 Report by Consul Koeltsch, Aufzeichnung, Reise nach Neuguinea, Political Archive of the Foreign Office, Berlin, Deutsche Botschaft London, Paket 42: Generalkonsulat Sydney – Personalien Bd. 2 (1932-39).

²⁰ Sarah Johnston Chinnery, *Malaguna Road: the Papua and New Guinea diaries of Sarah Chinnery*, ed. Kate Fortune (Canberra, 1998), entry of 14 June 1933.

²¹ Hans Fuchs, *Heimkehr ins Dritte Reich. Die Weltreise des Kreuzers "Köln" zwischen zwei Epochen der deutschen Geschichte* (Dresden, 1934), p. 102.

²² A visiting German, pilot Walter Rothe from Dessau, dedicated a long, nine-verse poem to the German Club Rabaul, "to You, whom I found as Germans in the South Sea". Verse 7 reads:

Let further sound your German melodies,
Continue to speak your mother-tongue's sweet sound,
So you can prove it to the world with pride,
that you once again count on Germany's future.

3 September 1930 Walter Rothe, dem Deutschen Klub Rabaul ins Stammbuch, file R57 Neu/1216 DAI, Vereins-Archiv: Australien, Neuseeland, Samoa, Bundesarchiv Koblenz.

²³ See 23 January 1933, Report by Consul Koeltsch, Aufzeichnung, Reise nach Neuguinea, PA AA, Deutsche Botschaft London, Paket 42: Generalkonsulat Sydney – Personalien Bd. 2 (1932-39).

²⁴ *Pacific Islands Monthly*, 24 April 1933, p.39.

²⁵ 10 May 1933, Stefan Lehner to Director Epplein, ND 53/12 Feldleitung Stefan Lehner (1930-1935).

Lehner resolved therefore to send a generous gift of £25 on behalf of the Lutheran Mission Finschhafen to *Köln* directly. The gift came from the heart, and the letter Lehner sent the Commander of *Köln*, Otto Schniewind, betrayed his sincere and deep emotions. Only a few months earlier in response to “unsympathetic reports” by the local Patrol Officer, Lehner had in a somewhat clumsy and theologically winded argument assured the Administration in Rabaul of the mission’s loyalty.²⁶

we have always recognised the Divine authority of civil power, however constituted, as the power, to which is committed whatever external coercive action may be necessary to vindicate righteousness, and we taught our people to do the same.

Lehner’s message to *Köln* exhibited a completely different tone.

Most Honourable Commander!

Be cordially welcomed here in our old German colony together with all your brave men, as a greeting from our German home country.

We are pleased for you, that with your cruiser the local government of the mandate is shown a piece of German engineering and with your crew German manly virtues. [Your visit is] an action, the effects of which will surely also benefit us missionaries who live and work here.

A pity that you cannot make it possible to call on Finschhafen, [which is] still today the most German spot in New Guinea.²⁷

Lehner’s heartfelt patriotism was confined to his note to Schniewind. Like other Germans in New Guinea the Lutheran mission kept a low public profile during the visit of *Köln*, and even refrained from sending a delegation to Rabaul.

Lehner’s fellow Lutherans in South Australia, who had been given a hard time during the First World War for being too “German”, had voiced similar emotions at the arrival of the cruiser in Adelaide two months earlier, in their German language journal *Kirchenblatt*:

We also don’t want to conceal that we felt proud, when we inspected the wonderful engineering of the ship [...] and realised, how in this regard as well our ancestral people marches at the forefront of all peoples.²⁸

The reception of *Köln* by the wider public became the mirror event for Australian and German Lutherans both in Australia and New Guinea to their war and post-war humiliation as well as a long awaited symbol of rehabilitation. The difference between the Lutherans in Australia, and the Lutherans in New Guinea, however, was that the missionaries saw themselves as Germans, and Germany was “our [...] home country”, while the *Kirchenblatt* related to Germany via descent, and thus wrote about it not as a nation, but as an “ancestral people”.

For the German settlers in New Guinea the arrival of *Köln* signified something slightly different as well. Germany was not a place they wanted to go back to. They did not, like the missionaries, go to Germany on furlough; no German institution required regular reports from them; no children’s home or retirement place awaited them in Germany. New Guinea was their home. Their link to Germany was in the past and the arrival of *Köln* provoked retrospection and nostalgia. Talking to some of these settlers one of the officers of *Köln*, Hans Fuchs, was told stories which incorporated

²⁶ 7 March 1933, Stefan Lehner to The Acting Government Secretary, Rabaul, ND 53/12 Feldleitung Stefan Lehner (1930-1935).

²⁷ 10 May 1933 Stefan Lehner to Fregattenkapitän, Kommandant der Kreuzers Köln, ND 53/12 Feldleitung Stefan Lehner (1930-1935).

²⁸ *Kirchenblatt*, 3 April 1933, No 7, Jg 9, p. 98.

Germany's defeat and the loss of New Guinea as a colony into private accounts of continuing economic struggles:

They tell us about the hard times they had after the war, about the period of expropriation 1921-23, when property was taken off all planters, when difficulties of all kinds were put in their way, when every German together with wife and child was ostracised and outlawed. [...] They tell also about the present tough crisis, about the hard time the planters have, for whom copra yields nothing anymore, in contrast to former good living. No longer does wealth fall into their lap.²⁹

The German Consul Koeltsch, who had visited New Guinea and the Australian territory of Papua half a year earlier, commented, that the Germans in New Guinea were low in numbers and in a weak economic position. The second generation, those born in New Guinea, had either little or no feelings for "their old home land". "One can in general speak about a decline of Germanness."³⁰ Many had decided that naturalisation was the way to go to secure their future.

The visit of *Köln*, which arrived in the region during the crucial years 1932 and 1933, thus uniquely illuminates German expatriates' conflicting regional and transnational relationships. Their dealings with *Köln* encapsulate their ambiguous and sometimes conflicting endeavors to restructure and reformulate their identity at a time of economic, political, cultural and social crisis and change.

III. "From One Soldier to Another"

The *Rabaul Times* proclaimed the visit a "psychological experiment", which had been "crowned with deserving success". The *Rabaul Times*' assessment was partly due to the Editor, Gordon Thomas's, high opinion of Germans,³¹ partly to the commander of *Köln*, Otto Schniewind, and his diplomatic skills.

Kapitän zur See Otto Schniewind, forty-six years-of-age, who already had had a distinguished twenty-six-year career in the German navy, had been chosen well for a mission which demanded diplomacy, tact, and a fine eye for symbolic gestures.³² On the second day after anchoring in Rabaul harbour, Schniewind, accompanied by members of his crew and the cruiser band, marched from the Botanic Gardens to the cemetery, and placed a wreath upon the grave of one of the first Australians killed in New Guinea during the First World War, Captain Pockley, a medical officer,³³ and another wreath on the grave of a German naval officer, Oberleutnant Guelcher, who had died four years before the First World War, whose grave the Administrator had

²⁹ Fuchs, *Heimkehr ins Dritte Reich*, p. 102.

³⁰ 23 January 1933 Report by Consul Koeltsch, Aufzeichnung, Reise nach Neuguinea, PA AA, Deutsche Botschaft London, Paket 42: Generalkonsulat Sydney – Personalien Bd. 2 (1932-39).

³¹ The Editor of the *Rabaul Times*, Gordon Thomas, had lived in New Guinea when it had been still under German rule, and held some very positive opinions about the Germans, especially their firm treatment of "natives".

³² Otto Schniewind, born 14 December 1887, had for example been adjutant to the German Minister for War (1925-26), and commander of the second torpedo fleet (1928-30). He later became the first Chief of the Naval General Staff, who was in charge of naval operations on the high seas, Admiral Commanding the Fleet (6 December 1941 – 31 July 1944) and Commander-in-Chief of Naval Group North. See for example

<http://www.deutschkriegsmarine.de/Willkommen/Personen/hauptteil_generala/body_hauptteil_generala.htm; http://www.infobitte.de/free/lex/ww2_Lex0/schniewind.htm>.

³³ The *Rabaul Times*, 9 June 1933, wrongly reported that Captain Pockley was the first Australian killed after the landing at Kabakaul in September 1914. Captain Brian Colden Antill Pockley was the first medical officer to be killed. The first Australian casualty of the war was Able Seaman W.G.V. Williams RAN.

recently relocated from the island of Matupi to the more central Rabaul cemetery. The ceremony was a fine piece of diplomacy honouring Australian and German (war) dead symbolised by the graves of two men connected respectively to Australian and German forces, with neither having been a combatant in the First World War.

The carefully staged ceremony addressed on one hand the legacy of the Great War and the still existing rifts between former enemies. On the other hand it had to accommodate a peculiar undercurrent of unease by Australian officials and settlers about Australia's role and status in New Guinea. Article 22 of the League of Nations restricted Australia's military and naval presence in New Guinea. The "prevention of the establishment of fortifications or military and naval bases and of military training of the natives for other than police purposes and the defense of the territory"³⁴ was understood to mean that no military or naval bases were allowed. The extension of Australia's reward scheme for ex-servicemen, the soldier resettlement scheme, to New Guinea was a gesture which looked like an expression of utter confidence — New Guinea, Australia's booty of war, was to remain with the Commonwealth of Australia indefinitely — but it was also an admission of deep unease. The decision to establish no military or naval bases left Australia's northern frontier uncomfortably vulnerable. Hank Nelson has detailed the domination of ex-servicemen not only amongst plantation owners, but also amongst government officials, including all three administrators. "Rabaul was consciously a 'suburb of Anzac'". The presence of ex-servicemen as a kind of substitute for proper military presence also brought Australians to the territory, the sort of Australians who had proven their loyalty to the nation, and who "could be relied upon to Australianise New Guinea".³⁵ Yet paradoxically a successful Australianisation created its own doubts: Did a shift of loyalty of the "natives", who in contrast to mainland Australia outnumbered the settlers, confirm Australia's superior qualities as colonisers and rulers, or the shifty and treacherous character of New Guineans? Could what happened to Germany also happen to Australia?

The Administrator chose not to be present in order not to endorse the ceremony as an official one, but sent Colonel John Walstab instead, Superintendent of Police, who had a distinguished army record.³⁶ The Returned Soldiers' League, the R.S. and S.I.L.A., was represented by several members, including its President, R.L. (Nobby) Clark.³⁷ Schniewind's speech after the ceremony emphasised everything, which united him and his hosts, and avoided anything divisive. The *Rabaul Times* reported: "He also

³⁴ For an online edition of the Covenant of the League of Nations and related documents, see The Avalon Project at Yale Law School, <<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/leagcov.htm>>.

³⁵ Nelson, "Defining the Nation", p. 5.

³⁶ In 1917 Walstab was awarded the DSO, in 1919 CBE; See records of the Australian War Memorial, <<http://www.awm.gov.au/database/>>; see also NAA, A452, 1959/5863 Walstab, J – Former New Guinea Officer.

³⁷ That Nobby Clark, an ex-service man and planter, formally attend the ceremony of Australia's former enemy is only one example of the man's character. In 1942, with nearly all Australian officials evacuated, Clark was amongst the men who surrendered Rabaul to the Japanese. "In so far as there was a formal end to Australian rule in Rabaul it took place on 23 January when R.L. "Nobby" Clark (businessman and member of the legislative council), Gordon Thomas (editor of the *Rabaul Times*) and Hector Robinson (from the Treasury Department) walked into Rabaul under a flag of truce and surrendered." Hank Nelson, "More than a Change of Uniform: Australian Military Rule in Papua and New Guinea, 1942-1946", paper presented at the 4th Symposium of the International Research Project *Pacific War in Papua New Guinea* at Rikkyo University on 15-16 December 2001, see <<http://members.jcom.home.ne.jp/pwpng/2001symposiumpaper/nelson.htm>>.

thanked the returned soldiers' representative for being present and voiced his appreciation 'as coming from one soldier to another'".³⁸

Schniewind made the relocation of Gulcher's grave the central point of a formal farewell and thank-you letter to the Administrator, which was also published in the *Rabaul Times*:

I must assure you that this generous gesture has been highly appreciated not only by us — the comrades of Lieutenant Gulcher — but, also, by our people and especially by the whole of the German Navy.³⁹

The wording was finely chosen, and avoided references to political or national entities, apart from the phrase "the German navy". Schniewind thanked "Your Honour", and the "inhabitants" of Rabaul for their kindness; neither Germany, nor Australia was mentioned, and the place *Köln* was visiting was "Rabaul", not the Mandated Territory of New Guinea.

Even the magazine *The Pacific Islands Monthly*, which was far more pro-British and anti-German⁴⁰ than the *Rabaul Times*, got swept up in the emotions of the event. Under the headline "International Courtesies in Rabaul", it reported on the "good feelings between German naval men and Australians". The "discipline and orderliness displayed by all ranks" had been outstanding, Schniewind's words had been "well-chosen", and the "town has been en fete ever since the arrival of the cruiser".⁴¹

IV The Old and the New Germany

The war was not forgotten, and nor Germany's "military aggression", and its "war guilt", as an article in the *Pacific Islands Monthly* a couple of months earlier showed.⁴² But the journal encouraged its readers to wait and see "how the Germany now emerging from the chaos of virtual revolution will develop".

If she is to be a Germany who has learned her lessons in the fires of war and bitter punishment, and who recognises that the British and Germans are not mutually antagonistic, but actually are closer together in national psychology than any other two peoples, and will develop accordingly, then there should be much for Germany to do in the future in the way of colonial development.

A changed Germany, the *Pacific Islands Monthly* said, would be welcome to re-join the colonial nations, as long as neither New Guinea nor any other former German colony would be taken from its present governing nations.⁴³ What made Australians nervous was not only that the Third Reich immediately started to aggressively dismantle the Treaty of Versailles; Japan's announcement that it would leave the League of Nations opened up the possibility that the entire mandate-order in the Pacific could be thrown into renegotiations. Thus the German Consul General in Australia, Dr Rudolf Asmis, resolved that no representative of the Consulate would be present in Rabaul; the German Consul in Wellington, however, traveled on board *Köln* to Apia, Samoa, and joined the local celebrations.

³⁸ *Rabaul Times*, 9 June 1933, "Cruiser Koeln Arrives", NAA ACT, A518, I 836/2.

³⁹ 11 June 1933 Otto Schniewind to His Honour the Administrator, *Rabaul Times*, (stamp) 16 June 1933, NAA ACT, A518, I 836/2.

⁴⁰ See for example *Pacific Islands Monthly*, March 23 1933, p. 3ff, article "The Brawl About Mandates".

⁴¹ *Pacific Islands Monthly*, 24 June 1933, p. 11.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 23 March 1933, p. 3ff, article "The Brawl About Mandates".

⁴³ *Ibid.*

Köln arrived at a moment when despite still existing bitterness about Germany's past deeds and renewed unease about Germany's future political development, there was hope and good-will amongst Australians in New Guinea that it was possible to develop calmer, friendlier relationships with a reformed Germany. *Köln*, and its "youthful cadets and ratings"⁴⁴, became the embodiment of what this new Germany might be like.

In New Guinea the brotherhood of whiteness still overrode the political concerns, which were voiced strongly in publications of mainland Australia in the wake of the German elections in March and the boycott of Jewish retailers in April. The favorable reporting about *Köln* and its crew stands in contrast to other reports about Germany in the wider Australian press. The German Consul General, Dr Asmis, reported to the foreign office that "the attitude of the Australian press has since the middle of March been extremely hostile to Germany; and the agitation rose until August"⁴⁵.

With the ascent of the Third Reich, however, this approving attitude in the Mandated Territories of New Guinea was soon to pass, and the young German sailors were to turn out as much a disappointment as their fathers. In October 1934 the *Pacific Islands Monthly* reported:

How many complacent Britons in Rabaul are aware that the tail of the British lion has been nipped by the indomitable German eagle? If anyone is interested he is invited to cruise in the middle of Rabaul harbour and train a pair of strong glasses upon the Matupi crater. There, right on the lip of the crater, close under the slowly rising smoke and steam, he will see the letters 'KOLN' outlined in white on black lava. Evidently, when the cheery young officers of the German war-ship *Köln* were in Rabaul not long ago, they undertook the formidable task of climbing right up to the edge of the crater, and while there, they left this memento of their visit and of their spirit.⁴⁶

Conclusion

The visit of *Köln* allowed many emotions to find expression. There was a mixture of nostalgia, pride, joy, and satisfaction amongst those who had been identified by Australia as being the enemy during the First World War. Germany had sent an emissary that made Australians realise that to be German meant to be disciplined, courteous, and virtuous. And *Köln* was also tangible proof that the "Huns" were not only at a par with British engineering, but superior.

For Australians living in New Guinea, where so many of the male population were First World War veterans, the recognition and honouring of the war dead, and the implicit recognition of Australia's right to administer and "own" New Guinea came as a welcome sign of peace and post-war stability. Also justification for grand celebrations only occurred every so often, and the white settlers, forging a life in New Guinea, were keen to show the world, even if it came to them in the form of a German navy cruiser, that they could mount festivities as grand and civilised as any other western community.

The arrival of *Köln* created a carnivalesque moment of openness and unpunished transgression, where Rabaul was, as Sarah Chinnery described, buzzing with natives,

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 24 June 1933, p.11.

⁴⁵ 30 December 1933 Dr Asmis to Foreign Office, p 20, File 43515 Jahresberichte der deutschen Auslandsvertretung in Australien, 1929-36, Bundesarchiv Postdam, Foreign Office vol. 16/17.

⁴⁶ *The Pacific Islands Monthly*, 17 October 1934, p. 12.

Chinese, Malays, half-castes, whites, German sailors, — and even the German settlers felt they could be present and participate as well. The town was filled with the noise of dance music, brass bands, and sing-sings. Celebrating together, everybody busily avoided talking about the war. The visit of *Köln* concealed existing tensions. The only ones talking openly about colonial rule and its legitimacy were fictitious natives onto whom Germans and Australians projected what they desired to say aloud.