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The German Navy in the Nazi Era

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However, Ranft has added some new insight on Jutland by printing Beatty's original dispatch, informal notes and reports, additions to the Battle Cruiser Orders containing the lessons learned, and reminiscences from a Royal Marine private and a petty officer.

Beatty's appointment to succeed Jellicoe as commander in chief Grand Fleet led to the most frustrating and stressful period of his career. Nearly a third of the volume documents this phase of his life. It shows Beatty's distress over what he saw as the navy's lack of achievement in contrast to the army's battles ashore and his frustration with the long struggle against German submarines. Ranft also reproduces a full fifty pages of selections from Beatty's Grand Fleet Battle Instruction of 1918. This document in particular shows Beatty's approach to fleet command. One may well call it the apogee of British fleet tactical development in the First World War. In addition, Beatty's close and informative correspondence in 1917-18 with the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Rosslyn Wemyss, gives clear insight into the differing perspectives between London and the fleet command.

Overall, Professor Ranft has made a major contribution by rendering these sources readily available to scholars and to serving officers. One must emphasize that it is a contribution both to the scholarly study of naval history as well as to professional naval thought. One can find in these pages both the personal and professional side of naval high command.

Throughout the volume, Beatty's correspondence with his wife gives great insight into his career and character. His squadron and fleet orders give insight into tactics and leadership. For all these reasons, any modern naval officer can benefit from reading this volume.

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Thomas, Charles S. *The German Navy in the Nazi Era*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1990. 284pp. \$34.95

The German navy has never had a very good press, and its officer corps deservedly has had an even poorer one. "Arrogant snobs" is one of the kinder things said about them. But now Charles Thomas has put into perspective their often baffling behavior in the twelve years of the Nazis. He draws copiously and skillfully upon the Federal military archives at Freiburg to show that the top officers of the navy, in particular the commander in chief, Fleet Admiral Erich Raeder, were determined that there be no repetition in World War II of the World War I revolt of the High Seas Fleet. To this end Raeder and most of his top aides continually assured Hitler and the Nazi party apparatus of the navy's loyalty. That this was galling to many is obvious, but equally obvious is the unhappy fact that the navy could not distance itself completely from the sordid madness of the party and its leaders. What Mr. Thomas calls a

"mild but nevertheless distinct anti-Semitic bias" made compromise with the party easier.

In its fighting role (a role defined by Hitler's decision for war in 1939 and not 1944 when the navy might well have been a formidable strategic force), the navy had little choice but to follow Raeder's own diary entry of September, 1939: "die gallantly and thereby to create the basis for an eventual rebirth in the future." The surface fleet which Raeder had carefully nurtured for fifteen years did indeed die gallantly. The heroism of their comrades in the submarine force was incredible; of all fighting arms in World War II probably only the Japanese *kanikaze* corps had a higher percentage of casualties. Raeder's successor (and also Hitler's), U-boat chief Karl Dönitz, would not emulate Raeder's aloofness from Hitler (Raeder called Dönitz "the Hitler Youth"). The two patched up their differences in their memoirs after they served their sentences from the Nuremberg Tribunals, but researchers are clearly warned that these memoirs are not reliable.

Mr. Thomas presents the problem well. Raeder, the more reflective man, suffered from the Kiel Revolt and the failure of the navy to carry out the "death ride" against the Grand Fleet in 1918. In 1939, with no effective strategic force, he could not have asked for a political voice even if he had wanted one. Dönitz had a supremely effective fleet that he believed he could strengthen by seeking support from his political masters. Thomas may downplay somewhat Raeder's

compromises. He may also downplay Dönitz's somewhat naive (to put the best face on it) fascination with Hitler and the Nazi machine.

After finishing Mr. Thomas's fine book (which was first published in Britain) the reader is left to wonder if the problem of the German navy in two wars was not insoluble in maritime terms. In the 1870 war with France, and in the Schlieffen Plan, the navy was not mentioned. Was Tirpitz's fleet a folly? Wasn't the creation of a traditionless officer corps on the model of Prussian regiments an organizational and social disaster? Hanseatic merchants before 1914 would tell a little daughter with a skinned knee, "Don't cry, *liebchen*, I'll buy you a lieutenant." To what extent did this rootless officer corps' febrile pursuit of "honor" lead it to ally itself with the unspeakable? Mr. Thomas seems to say it could have been worse.

May a reviewer offer appreciation for the Naval Institute's excellent production of this very worthwhile book? At a time when most books are so shoddy that Gutenberg might have wished himself a plumber, the appearance of this one is a genuine pleasure.

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Martienssen, Anthony, ed. and trans.
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1939-1945*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval
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