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# German Cruisers of World War II

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The reader is not told when authoritative, archival material is reflected and when recourse to contemporary books and magazines is necessary. At the least, it seems that each major chapter should have had a bibliographical note citing such cardinal sources as official ship lists (e.g., the U.S. Navy's *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships* and the equivalent Dutch, Argentine, Italian, Brazilian, Greek, and other works), major scholarly books, etc.

Happily, the 1816-1859 volume that has been announced as in preparation has excellent choices of persons to prepare the critical United Kingdom and French sections, and the important Spanish section also is in very good hands. This forthcoming volume, expected in about a year, probably will be qualitatively the best of the lot—though the smaller number of ships being covered will give the authors some advantage despite the remoteness of the period in question. The editors at Conway's also have suggested that the 1860-1905 volume, the least well researched, is a candidate for revision and reissuance at some point in the future.

All in all, this set of books is indispensable for the serious student of warship history. What is most remarkable is that it took so long for such a useful series of books to be conceived.

CHRISTOPHER C. WRIGHT  
Baltimore, Maryland

Whitley, M. J. *German Cruisers of World War II*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1985. 176pp. \$21.95

This handsomely illustrated and well-written book is a significant addition to the literature on the cruisers which fought in World War II. Written as a companion to the author's earlier *Destroyer!* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1983), *German Cruisers of World War II* covers the design of Germany's light and heavy cruisers and their wartime operations. In the first part of the book, the ships' designs are described and illustrated by a number of detailed drawings, and the German ships are compared with similar warships constructed by the other naval powers. The second, and longer part of the book is devoted to a history of German cruiser operations during the war, and most of the operational narrative focuses on missions in or from Norwegian waters.

The growing interest of the U.S. Navy in the Norwegian Sea makes Whitley's section on cruiser operations especially timely. The German Navy found that sailing in Norwegian and Arctic waters took a heavy toll of men and machines. The pounding of high waves, sea spray icing and cold, combined to damage sensitive radar equipment—usually at those times when poor visibility made radar essential. Spray and ice also drastically reduced the effectiveness of optical ranging equipment, sometimes forcing cruisers to fight at very close range with torpedo-armed destroyers. Finally, wave action and

floating ice combined to stress cruiser hulls and injure their propellers, forcing unscheduled delays and extended spells in drydock. There were other enemies as well, particularly British submarines and aircraft. Together, the natural and man-made threats to the German cruiser force exacted a heavy toll. By the end of April 1940, for example, two of the six light cruisers in commission had been sunk and one other had been so heavily damaged that, when repaired, it was relegated to training cruises. Of the two 8-inch gunned heavy cruisers in service before the invasion of Norway, only one survived action there.

And so it went. There were simply not enough cruisers to meet Germany's needs, and the ships which were available suffered from a variety of problems. The light cruisers were too *lightly* built and protected to steam off on their own as commerce raiders. The 8-inch gunned type, on the other hand, though well protected and heavily armed (and way over the tonnage limits set by the Washington Treaty), did not have the endurance necessary for extended independent operations. Once the Royal Navy ran down the scattered tankers on which the German heavy cruisers depended, the threat to shipping posed by warships such as *Admiral Hipper* and *Prinz Eugen* fell off drastically. As Whitley notes, the German Navy learned that its armed and disguised merchant raiders were more effective against British and Allied shipping than its light and heavy cruisers. Because the German

cruisers were not very effective in the commerce raiding role, they played little part in naval campaigns after the end of 1943.

*German Cruisers of World War II* complements the growing literature on World War II cruiser designs and operations, a literature which includes books such as Norman Friedman's *U.S. Cruisers: An Illustrated Design History* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1984) and Alan Raven and John Roberts' *British Cruisers of World War Two* (London: L. Leventhal, Ltd., 1980). Whitley's study has only two minor faults: first, there are not enough maps of the North Sea, the Baltic, and the seas around Norway, and, second, readers in the United States may find it difficult to move back and forth from English to metric measures—as they must do when comparing the German cruisers with their U.S. and British contemporaries. Otherwise, *German Cruisers of World War II* has something for just about every interested reader—from operational summaries to armament data to revealing photographs.

THOMAS HONE  
Washington, D.C.

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Brouwer, Norman J. *International Register of Historic Ships*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1986. 321pp. \$28.95

Organized by four major classifications: Naval, Merchant Sail, Merchant Steam and Miscellaneous, the professional mariner, Norman Brouwer, has compiled a remarkable