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Destroyer! German Destroyers in World War II

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Monsarrat. Where Monsarrat found the sea "cruel," Lombard-Hobson described it as "fascinating." The 175 pages of this book are all too few, and the reader will hope that Lombard-Hobson will try again. He is a superb story teller.

WILLIAM P. MACK
Vice Admiral, US Navy (Ret.)

Whitley, M.J. *Destroyer! German Destroyers in World War II*. London: Arms and Armour Press, 1983. 310pp. £12.95

This compact book should be in the library of anyone interested in destroyer design and operations. While there have been articles on German destroyers and torpedo boats, this is the first comprehensive English language accounting of those that participated in World War II (in German terminology, "torpedo boat" meant small destroyer).

The book is organized into three distinct sections. In the first 90 pages, Whitley covers design and construction. Here he provides ship plans and profiles as well as propulsion and armament diagrams, and he deals in detail with all critical design aspects. In the next 167 pages, he covers destroyer and torpedo boat operations from 1937 through the disposition of the few survivors in 1945. There are appropriate situation maps and numerous photographs of the ships. In this final part he provides technical data on each class of torpedo boat and destroyer, summary operational histories of all 40 destroyers and the like number of torpedo boats—including names of

commanding officers—armament details, boiler comparisons, mine-laying successes, ships sunk, and a relevant bibliography.

There is a bit of a mystery about the author, M.J. Whitley. There is no biography, not even a first name. One assumes Mr. Whitley is English. It is clear that he is technically oriented and obviously he had access to the German design and operational records. The book is a bit uneven since detailed descriptions of planned improvements are often followed by uncertainty as to which ships actually received them. It appears that the author made little effort to interview any of the surviving German design staff or those officers and men who actually participated in the operations he describes. Such additional effort might have moved this fine work into the category of truly great.

The big German destroyers, starting with the Type 34 of 1934, were conventionally arranged with five 127 mm single mounts and eight 21 inch torpedoes plus assorted 37 and 20 mm guns which steadily grew in number during the course of the war. At 3,100 tons and over, full load, these ships were far larger than their British contemporaries. They even exceeded the later US *Fletchers* which had similar armament. The Type 36A mounted the 5.9" (150 mm), the largest destroyer gun at that time anywhere in the world. But, it proved so unsuccessful as to force a return to the 127 mm in the later designs. Handling ammunition and accurate training

of the larger mounts proved difficult tasks which were not compensated for by the desired greater hitting power. The Germans also took the world lead in going to extremely high pressure steam propulsion—up to 1,600 psi. This reduced machinery weight but resulted in endless grief in terms of system reliability and maintenance.

The earliest of these destroyers were commissioned just before the war started in 1939 so the inexperienced German Navy had little operational experience with them before the fighting began. They were employed initially for minelaying in the shallow waters of the North Sea off the English east coast rather than with the German fleet. Ten destroyers were lost—almost the entire Type 36A class—at Narvik in the 1940 invasion of Norway during several desperate actions. The book covers the destroyers' and torpedo boats' actions against British destroyers and cruisers ranging from the coast of France to the frigid waters of the Norwegian Sea. Rough seas in the operating areas seem to have been a given condition. For this reason their efforts around the Norwegian North Cape to intercept Allied convoys moving in and out of Murmansk were unsuccessful. The author also covers the final efforts in the Baltic, where all available craft were employed to move large numbers of German troops and civilians out from under the rapidly advancing Russians.

The German destroyers did not live up to their designers' expecta-

tions and in many instances were frustratingly ineffective. In their defense, one must say that they operated in almost universally poor weather, that their fire control systems and radars were not the best and that they were up against an increasingly powerful enemy whose unending air raids made repair difficult. In action against surface ships, the German destroyers and torpedo boats relied heavily on torpedoes with almost no success (less than one percent of those fired, hit). One wonders what similar engagements would be like today with gun and ammunition handling automated and fire control systems.

Destroyers! covers a navy which, at destroyer level, never fought the US Navy, and yet the final German steam-driven designs, the Types 41/36C were generally comparable to the US *Gearings*. The Germans did, however, operate in areas where we intend to go. This book makes good reading both for the history it conveys and its lessons for the future.

R.F. CROSS III
Alexandria, Virginia

Dunlop, Richard. *Donovan, America's Master Spy*. Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1982. 562pp. \$19.95

Richard Dunlop is particularly qualified to write the Donovan biography. He not only worked for the OSS in the Burma and Greek theaters during World War II, but he also examined a multitude of recently declassified documents and interviewed many of Donovan's asso-