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● GERMAN  
SEA-POWER

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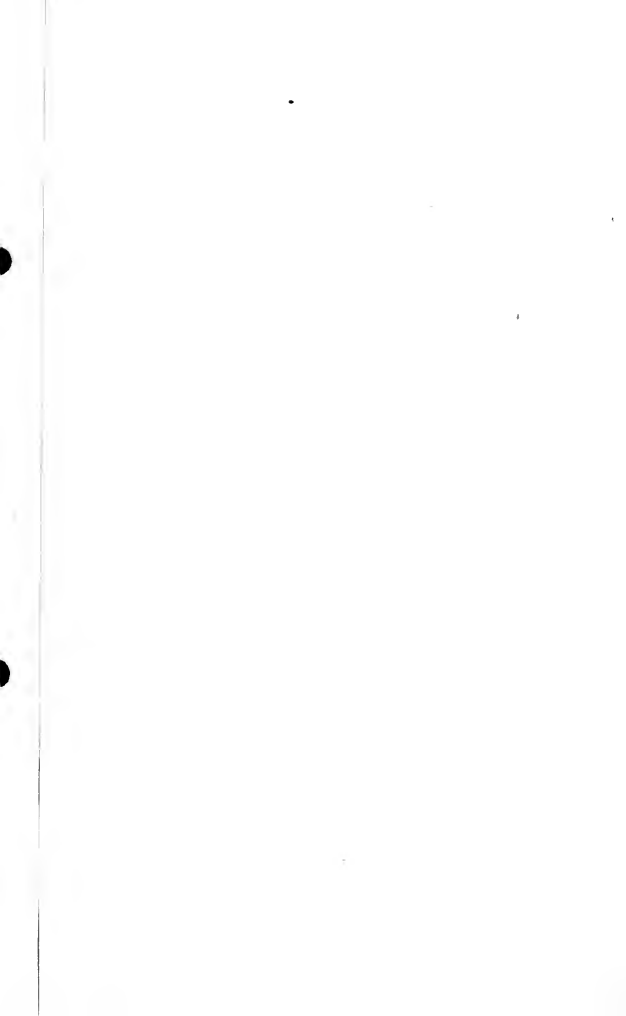
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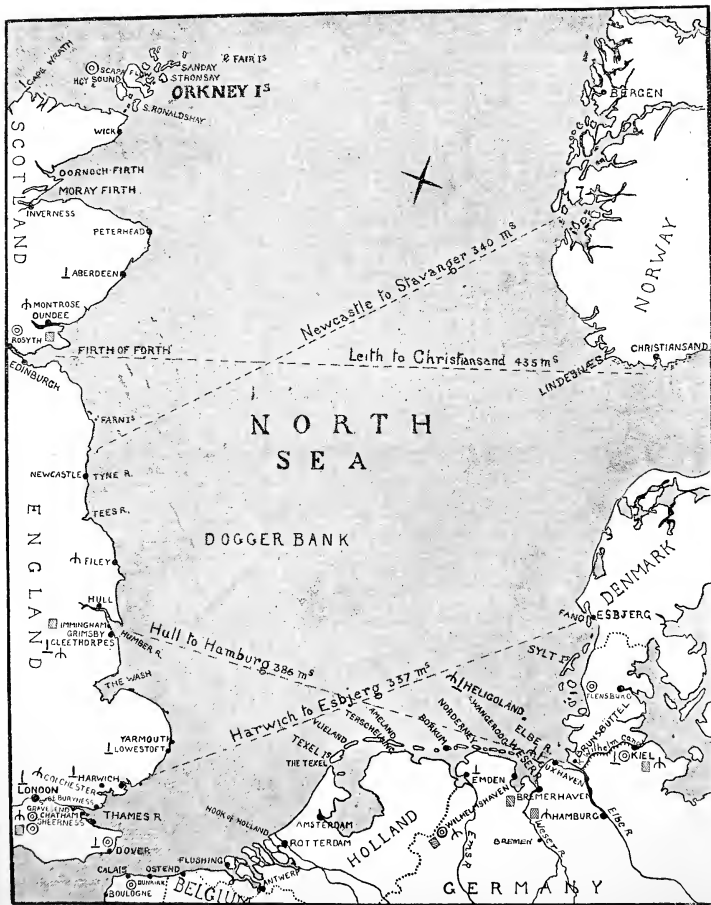
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# GERMAN SEA-POWER

## I. TRADITIONS OF SEA-POWER

As an effective instrument of policy and a potential weapon of offence the German navy is the creation of the fifteen years that lie immediately behind us (1898-1913). But the tradition of German sea-power is not so recent. Treitschke, who died two years before the first *Flottengesetz* (1898), was fond of reminding his countrymen that Germany once was the first maritime Power in Europe, 'and, please God, will be so again!' But the *Hansa Alemanniae* neither survived the new conditions of the fifteenth century, nor left an heir to its supremacy. Brandenburg's Great Elector (1640-88) made a groping effort to re-establish German sea-power on the Baltic, and even on more distant waters. A small flotilla flying the Hohenzollern eagle won and briefly held West Pomerania. On the Gold Coast the Elector's navy planted his flag (1682) in a region where, two centuries later, Imperial Germany took her place among the World Powers. He installed a *Marineamt* at Berlin in 1684, which controlled a fleet of 10 vessels and a modest *personnel* of 150 officers and men. But Grossfriedrichsburg and Arguin passed to other hands in the eighteenth century. Equally impermanent was the Elector's fleet. His immediate successors cultivated the more patently useful Prussian army. Hence, Frederick the Great for his naval activities resorted to letters of marque—an *Emden* of that day made herself conspicuous in the Mediterranean—and with negligible results.

Two hundred years followed the Great Elector before

Germany again turned her face to the sea. Georg Herwegh wrote in memory of the old Hansa in 1841 :

*Und in den Furchen, die Kolumb gezogen,  
Geht Deutschlands Zukunft auf.*

To the eager patriotism of 1848 a fleet seemed the symbol of unity. And the practical need for one was urgent ; for Denmark, fighting for Schleswig, was more than a match at sea for the loose-jointed *Deutsche Bund*. The old Hansa districts chafed under the humiliation. Public subscriptions provided a few extemporized men-of-war. The *Nationalparlament* voted money for new construction. A Naval Board was constituted under the Ministry of Commerce, and Prince Adalbert of Prussia presided over a Commission to organize an 'Imperial Navy'. It proposed a fleet of 15 60-gun sailing frigates, 5 steam frigates, 20 steam corvettes, 10 dispatch-boats, 5 schooners, and 30 gun-sloops. Karl Bromme of Leipzig, trained in the American mercantile marine and recently with Lord Cochrane in Greek service, was appointed 'Imperial Commissioner' and the navy's first admiral. Its first shot was fired against the Dane off Heligoland. But the adventure was discouraging ; Great Britain warned the belligerents off her territorial waters. Moreover, the red, white, and black tricolour (the colours of the volunteers of 1813, the *Burschenschaften*, and the Nationalists of 1848) under which Bromme fought was the flag of a State which as yet had no existence. The 'Imperial Navy' lay under imputation of piracy, and Palmerston pointed out the fact ; an incident which the present Kaiser recalled (1905) 'with burning indignation at the outrage done to our navy and our flag'. International complications were prevented by the dissolution of the *Nationalparlament* at Stuttgart on



June 18, 1848, and the abandonment of the projected 'Imperial Navy'. Bromme was discharged in 1852, and Hannibal Fischer, as 'Naval Commissioner of the Germanic Confederation', dispersed the fleet so recently and hopefully assembled. Prussia and certain English firms bought a few vessels by private treaty. The rest—2 steam frigates, 6 steam corvettes, 1 sailing frigate, and 27 oar-propelled gun-boats—were sold by public auction.

Until 1871 the Prussian flag upheld the dignity of the *Deutsche Bund* at sea. Thrice since 1815 Prussia had considered and rejected the construction of an efficient navy. But her maritime vulnerability in the Danish War of 1848 moved her to effort. In 1849 she possessed a squadron of 24 small vessels mounting 67 guns, and with it relieved the pressure of the Danish blockade. The Treaty of London (1852), which brought the Schleswig-Holstein War to a truce, did not interrupt her naval progress. Prince Adalbert gave his wide experience, and Swedish instructors were secured. In 1853 Prussia bought from the Grand Duke of Oldenburg five square miles of barren land on Jade Bay, her first outlook on the North Sea. With great labour and expense she equipped and fortified it as a war-port. Under the name *Wilhelmshaven*, William I opened it in 1869.

The Second Danish War (1864) strengthened Prussia's maritime position. It was provoked by Bismarck partly with an eye to a strategic canal through Holstein to the North Sea, and its conclusion left Schleswig and Kiel in Prussia's hands. Kiel took the place of Danzig forthwith as her naval head-quarters. A generation later (1895), William II opened the completed Kaiser Wilhelm Canal, whose North Sea entrance Great Britain's cession of Heligoland five years before (1890) greatly strengthened. Holstein remained temporarily in Austria's hands.

In 1865 Bismarck submitted a Memorandum to the Prussian *Landtag* which foreshadowed the Navy Laws of 1898 and 1900. It disavowed an intention to 'enter into rivalry with first-class naval Powers', but asserted Prussia's claim to 'respect among those of second-class rank'. The vulnerability of her Baltic coast, the calls of her mercantile marine, and the need to assert her interests, if occasion arose, against States assailable only by sea, furnished valid reasons for the proposal. 'For the last twenty years', Bismarck reminded his hearers, 'the naval situation has engaged the attention of Germany above any other question.' But the Assembly was deaf to the appeal. Bismarck's programme was rejected, and a less ambitious one replaced it.

The Austro-Prussian War of 1866, which extruded Austria from the *Deutsche Bund*, confirmed Prussia's position as the first maritime State within it. Her naval operations in the war had been restricted to action on the Hanoverian coast. But its issue put in her hands the German North Sea littoral, excepting the Grand Duchy of Oldenburg, whose protection was a condition of her occupation of Wilhelmshaven. On sea and land alike she had qualified herself for the Presidency of the *Norddeutsche Bund* of July 1, 1867. Its federal Constitution declared the navy 'one and indivisible under the command of Prussia'. Thenceforth, whether under *Bund* or *Reich*, the German navy flew the tricolour bearing the Hohenzollern eagle and the Iron Cross. Kiel and Wilhelmshaven were constituted 'federal war-harbours'. In 1869 the *Reichstag* approved a naval programme providing for the construction within ten years of a federal navy of 16 armoured ships, 20 corvettes, and 22 steam gun-boats, besides dispatch boats, transports, and training-ships.

The Franco-German War of 1870-1 threatened to test the efficiency of the incomplete federal navy severely. France, next to Great Britain, was the largest naval Power in Europe. Wilhelmshaven lay exposed to attack, and if Denmark entered the war, Germany's position in the Baltic was likely to be precarious. But the French navy was as unprepared as the army. Germany had ample time to protect her vulnerable coasts, and the army's advance on Paris called up French crews and their guns to hold the thirteen forts protecting the capital. Part of the French fleet, however, passed the Great Belt, but gained no success at Kiel or elsewhere. A single formal naval engagement was fought off the coast of Cuba, between a German gun-boat and a French dispatch-vessel. But so little did sea-power affect the course of the war that for a generation Germany was disposed to underrate its importance.

## II. THE NAVY, 1871-97

Upon the foundation of the *Deutsche Reich* a *Flotten-gründungsplan* was laid down (1873), which assigned a secondary function to the Imperial navy and outlined a modest programme of construction. No considerable advance was made during the remaining years of the first Kaiser's reign. In 1888, when his grandson took the helm, the naval estimates stood at £2,300,000, a smaller sum than was expended in that year by any Power except Austria-Hungary. The Imperial fleet contained 27 ironclads firing 160 guns, 23 cruisers, and a *personnel* of 16,995 officers and men.

The first decade of William II's reign (1888-98) also witnessed no material development of German sea-power, though in 1890 the Kaiser opened the Port of Stettin with the message to his people: 'Our future

lies on the water.' A naval programme was drafted in 1888-9, but was not carried out thoroughly. The subsidiary position which the navy so far held was corrected, however, by a Cabinet order of March 30, 1889, which transferred its management to a *Reichsmarineamt* under a Secretary of State, subject to the *Reichskanzler*. The active command also was separated from the administration, leaving the latter merely to supervise arsenals, dockyards, and matters affecting *matériel*. Between 1890 and 1897, while Admiral von Hollmann was at the *Reichsmarineamt*, the country responded with restrained enthusiasm to the Kaiser's Stettin rally. The Conservatives regarded the navy as a dangerous competitor with the more imperative claims of the army. The naval estimates were submitted to severe pruning, and in 1897 three out of the four cruisers which the Admiralty declared to be necessary were struck out.

### III. THE NEW POLICY

In his *Imperial Germany* the ex-Chancellor, Prince von Bülow, gives an interesting but incomplete explanation of the sudden and rapid development of the German navy which followed the arrival of Admiral von Tirpitz at the *Reichsmarineamt* in January, 1897: 'In view of the anxious and discouraged state of feeling that prevailed in Germany during the ten years following Prince Bismarck's retirement, it was possible to rouse public opinion only by harping on the national string and rousing the Empire to consciousness. A deep oppression weighed heavily on the people, occasioned by the rupture between the wearer of the crown and the mighty man who had brought the nation from the depths of Kyffhäuser. The oppression could be lifted only by the

Kaiser setting before his people, who were united then neither in a common aspiration nor a common policy, a new goal to strive for, "a place in the sun" to which they were entitled and should strive to attain. On the other hand, it would not do to stimulate patriotic feeling to such a degree as to endanger our relations with England, against whom our sea-power would remain insufficient for years, and at whose mercy we lay in 1897, as a competent judge remarked at the time, like butter under a knife. To make it possible for us to build the fleet we needed was the foremost and greatest task of German policy after Bismarck's retirement.'

The motives which impelled Germany on her 'New Course' were more complex than Prince von Bülow suggests. William II's public utterances attest the significance he has attached consistently to sea-power as a condition of national greatness, an axiom learned from Admiral Mahan. His early associations with the British fleet, and a conviction that only on the ocean could the Empire obtain its rightful 'place in the sun', confirmed his regard for the memory of the Great Elector, 'the one among my ancestors whom I hold in the most enthusiastic devotion and from my boyhood have set up as my model'. But during the first decade of his reign the Kaiser gained few converts as a missionary of sea-power, and at a later day reminded his subjects of the 'derision and mocking' with which his 'earnest prayers' for the navy's increase were received.

A more potent incentive was supplied by the rapid growth of German over-sea trade. In 1870 the Empire's steam merchant fleet was only half the tonnage of that of France. In 1904 it was twice as large. In 1889 Germany's merchant marine contained nearly 3,600 vessels, having a tonnage of over  $1\frac{1}{4}$  millions and a *per-*

*sonnel* of 38,000. Prince von Bülow states reasonably : ' It was not ambitious restlessness that urged us to imitate the Great Powers who long ago had embarked on *Weltpolitik*. The growing nation, rejuvenated by its political reconstruction [in 1871], burst the bounds of its old home and followed a policy dictated by new interests and needs. In proportion as our national life became international, the policy of the Empire became international, too.' A population of 41,000,000 in 1871 rose to 56,000,000 in 1900, and to 65,000,000 to-day. In 1885 about 171,000 Germans emigrated annually. In 1898, when the population was larger, the number was only 22,000. To-day it is still less. The continuing decrease signifies growing industries and enlarged demands for home labour. The fact is expressed in the volume of foreign trade. Between 1880 and 1899 German imports increased from £143,000,000 to £218,000,000, and exports from £147,000,000 to £289,000,000.

Nor is it an unrelated coincidence that the floating of a large naval programme followed closely upon the Franco-Russian *entente* of 1896, the first indication of an imagined *Einkreisungspolitik* which has become the bogey of German politicians. But superimposed upon impulses that are natural or legitimate were ambitions less tolerable to Germany's neighbours. ' He who reads history aright ', wrote Treitschke, ' must admit that since the days of the Great Elector, Germany's political history is summed up in Prussia. Every clod of earth lost by the old Empire and recovered since has been won back by Prussia. In Prussia, in fact, reside the political energies of the German people.' The statement will not be challenged. But Prussia is the offspring of *Machtpolitik* persistently pursued. And in two decades her ' pedantic militarism ' captured the Empire and inspired

it to pursue on a larger field the offensive strategy of which she herself was the outcome. War had been the industry of Prussia. It was to be the Empire's industry also. In Europe the limits of profitable expansion had been reached. By sea-power only could Germany take her 'place in the world'—the *first* place: 'The next war must determine that in all controversies throughout the world Germany speaks the last word.'

But the necessary fleet could be built only with the support of public opinion. It was necessary to instruct it, therefore. The task was undertaken with brilliant success by Hollmann's successor at the *Marineamt*, Alfred von Tirpitz, a man of forty-eight, in 1897. He was distinguished already for his torpedo work in the service, for his tactical knowledge, and as Chief of Staff to the supreme naval command. He revolutionized the outlook of the Admiralty. Hollmann's programmes had been adjusted to a strategic design based on 'cruiser warfare', coastal defence, and commerce raiding. At the most the fleet he had in view was a 'sortie-fleet'. Tirpitz substituted offensive for defensive strategy, and set out the new formula in the Memorandum of 1900: 'Germany must have a battle fleet so strong that even the adversary possessed of the greatest sea-power will attack it only with grave risk to himself.'

To promote the new policy Tirpitz employed unwearied patience with the *Reichstag* and tact with the competing spending departments. For the education of public opinion he used noisier methods. The *Deutscher Flottenverein* was launched in 1898. Its object was defined thus: 'The German Navy League regards a strong fleet as necessary, principally to ensure the maritime frontiers of Germany against the risks of war; to maintain her position among the Great Powers of the

world ; to support her general interests and commercial communications, and to safeguard her citizens over-seas. The League therefore aims at stimulating, developing, and strengthening the German people's understanding of the importance and functions of a fleet.' The organization had official support and the association of such bodies as the *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft* and the *Pan-Deutsche Gesellschaft*. It was financed by the Krupps and other interests directly concerned with the objects of its propaganda. It maintained an army of lecturers and issued a monthly paper, *Die Flotte*. The Press held an important place in the Tirpitz system. An active and cleverly administered bureau was attached to the *Marineamt* to instruct and inspire the influential 'armour-plate Press' in the interests of the big-fleet policy. International crises were used to the same end. The Boer War smoothed the course of the Navy Law of 1900. The alleged *Einkreisungspolitik* of Edward VII helped the Amendments of 1906 and 1908. The Agadir incident of 1911 commended the Amendment of 1912. The Ministry of Education co-operated in the Tirpitz policy of enlightenment. The publications of the Navy League were distributed in the schools. The study of modern history and of the relation of fleets and colonies to national greatness was enjoined particularly. School excursions to naval ports, especially from inland places, were encouraged systematically by the authorities.

#### IV. THE LAW OF APRIL 10, 1898

Germany's Imperial Navy is the product of the Navy Laws of April 10, 1898, and June 14, 1900, and the Amendments of June 5, 1906, April 6, 1908, and June 14, 1912. The Law of 1898 followed the Empire's *début*



in *Weltpolitik*. German Anglophobia was born simultaneously and was advertised for the first time by the Kaiser on January 3, 1896, in a telegram to President Krüger. It was inspired by the Jameson 'Raid', and congratulated the Boers on repelling an assault on their independence 'without appealing to the aid of friendly Powers'. Two years later, on December 16, 1897, the Kaiser dispatched his brother, Prince Henry, to the Far East on an adventure which challenged the international balance in the Pacific. On that occasion, as in the Krüger telegram, the Kaiser used language which conveyed a clear menace: 'Should any one attempt to affront us or challenge our just rights, strike with your mailed fist.' Prussian *Machtpolitik* at length found utterance in the official mouthpiece of the Empire. But the navy was inadequate to support a policy of provocation. Germany had in commission only 8 battleships, the largest of them of 9,874 tons burden, 6 others of an obsolescent type, and 19 small armoured cruisers. The fleet was designed for coast defence, and was inferior to every other European navy except that of Austria-Hungary.

Whatever ulterior object was in view, the arguments which commended the 1898 programme to the *Reichstag* were legitimate. An explanatory Memorandum pointed out that the navy actually had weakened in recent years; that the Empire now possessed colonies needing protection; and that its growing trade not only made it vulnerable at sea, but increased the danger of complications with foreign countries.

The Law of 1898, adopting the tone of the Memorandum, moderately declared its object: 'to create within a definite time a national fleet of strength and power sufficient to protect effectively the naval interests of the

Empire.' Adopting an important innovation, the Admiralty prescribed in advance the number of ships required for the completed fleet, their character, the date by which the whole construction should be finished, the durability of each vessel, and therefore the moment for its automatic replacement. The Government proposed to complete the programme in seven years. But the *Reichstag*, judiciously handled by Tirpitz, shortened the period to a *Sexennat*, and promised the new fleet by the end of the financial year 1903-4. The new navy was to consist of (1) a battle fleet of 17 battleships, 8 armoured coast-defence vessels, 6 large cruisers, and 16 small cruisers; (2) a foreign service fleet of 3 large and 10 small cruisers, for duty in Chinese, American, East African, and South Sea waters; and (3) a reserve of 2 battleships, 3 large and 4 small cruisers. Each battleship and armoured coast-ship was automatically replaceable at the end of twenty-five years, and large and small cruisers at the end of 20 and 15 years respectively. Thus, by defining the duration of each vessel's serviceableness, and by working to a single and co-ordinated design, the German navy could be counted on in the future as a permanent instrument of policy.

#### V. THE LAW OF JUNE 14, 1900

The Law of 1898 gave Germany a fleet such as her position in Europe and her interests outside it required. Neither in strength nor organization was it an offensive weapon, and Tirpitz declared (1899) that it met the Empire's needs. A revision of the Law in 1904, when its construction programme would be completed, might be expected. In fact it was superseded and repealed on June 14, 1900, by a new Law, which doubled the fleet and gave it a potentially offensive character. The

new measure, breaching an undertaking to the Budget Committee in 1899, was the first-fruits of Anglophobia artfully excited by the *Reichsmarineamt*. In 1899 Great Britain engaged in an arduous war with the Boer Republics in South Africa. Throughout Europe the plucky fight of a small people roused generous sympathy. But on Germany the Boers had a closer claim. As Low Germans they could be counted an advanced guard of German *Kultur* and *Weltpolitik*. Envious observation of the uses of sea-power, and annoyance at Great Britain's exercise of the right of search in the case of the mail-steamer *Bundesrat*, among others, roused a storm of Anglophobia in Germany, which permitted the *Reichsmarineamt* to 'scrap' the programme of 1898. 'Had the Government taken steps to put a spoke in England's wheel,' Prince von Bülow writes, 'popular approval was certain.' That Germany did not intervene, he admits, was due simply to the fact that 'our immediate national interests would not have benefited; . . . England's passive resistance to German *Weltpolitik* would have changed to active hostility. . . . We therefore occupied ourselves instead in building up our navy.' 'The trident must be in our hand,' the Kaiser again instructed his people, and the Navy League sedulously educated them to face the task which Treitschke had impressed upon his generation, the challenge of Great Britain's *Weltherrschaft*.

The Memorandum attached to the Bill of 1900 <sup>1</sup> defined its object :

'To protect the Empire's sea trade and colonies, in view of present circumstances, only one method can

<sup>1</sup> German naval legislation, 1898-1912, is printed (trans.) in A. Hurd and H. Castle's *German Sea-Power : its Rise, Progress, and Economic Basis*. John Murray, 1914.

avail—Germany must have a battle fleet so strong that even the adversary possessed of the greatest sea-power will attack it only with grave risk to himself.

‘For our purpose it is not absolutely necessary that the German battle fleet should be as strong as that of the greatest naval Power; for as a rule, a great naval Power will not be able to direct his whole striking force upon us. . . .’

‘In order to attain the object we have in view, namely, the protection of our sea trade and colonies and the assurance of peace with honour, Germany requires, according to the standard of the chief sea Powers, and having regard to our position, two fleets (four squadrons) of battleships, with the necessary cruisers, torpedo-boats, &c., pertaining thereto.’

Even in the *Reichstag* it was pointed out that the Navy Law of 1900 was aimed at Great Britain. Admiral von der Goltz candidly avowed the fact: ‘Let us consider the idea of war with England. There is nothing improbable in it, having regard to the animosity which Germany bears towards England, and to the attitude of the British nation towards all Continental Powers, especially Germany. . . . The general opinion in this country is that we could not hold our own against England’s maritime power, and therefore that our naval policy is futile. This puerile fear must be eradicated; for it prevents us from progressing. . . . Admittedly the maritime superiority of Great Britain is overwhelming now and, no doubt, will remain considerable. But, after all, she is compelled to distribute her ships throughout the globe. We may suppose that she would recall the greater part of them in the event of war. But the operation would take time to accomplish. Nor could she abandon all her over-sea positions. On the other

hand, though much smaller, the German fleet is concentrated at home, and with the proposed increase will be strong enough to meet the normal British naval force in European waters. It must be remembered, too, that the question of numbers is less important at sea than on land. Numerical inferiority can be made up for by efficiency, by excellence of *matériel*, and by the ability and discipline of the crews. Moreover, organization directed to rapid mobilization may even secure a temporary superiority of force.'

The new Law therefore provided (1) a battle fleet of 34 battleships, 8 large and 24 small cruisers; (2) a foreign service fleet of 3 large and 10 small cruisers; with (3) a reserve of 4 battleships, and 3 large and 4 small cruisers. The durability of battleships and cruisers remained as under the Law of 1898, which was now specifically repealed. An attached Schedule provided for the replacement of 17 battleships and 39 cruisers during the years 1901-17 inclusive. Thus the battle fleet of 1898 became two battle fleets, with three of the four squadrons permanently in commission. The new construction was no longer to be of the coast-defence type but suitable to a powerful high-sea fleet.

## VI. THE AMENDMENT OF JUNE 5, 1906

The Law of 1900 framed a programme in advance to 1917. Actually it was amended in 1906, again in 1908, and again in 1912. In 1901 Admiral von Tirpitz warned the nation that a greater effort was necessary, while the Kaiser presented to the *Reichstag* a table, drawn up by himself, showing comparatively the strength of the British and German navies. The Anglo-French *entente* of April 8, 1904, the Kaiser's descent upon Tangier on

March 31, 1905, and Germany's failure to carry her policy at Algeçiras in 1906 fanned the embers of Anglo-phobia and carried the Navy League to widening popularity. But on February 10, 1906, the launch of the British *Dreadnought* inaugurated a new type of battleship, the product of experience gained in the Russo-Japanese War recently concluded. In temporary perplexity the German yards suspended the building of battleships, and the naval Amendment of June 5, 1906, while it increased the amount of annual expenditure on the navy by one-third, added only five large cruisers to the foreign service fleet, and one large cruiser to the reserve.

#### VII. BRITISH POLICY

It was becoming clear, in Sir Edward Grey's words to the House of Commons (March 29, 1909), that Germany's object was to build 'the most powerful fleet the world has ever yet seen'. Great Britain's attitude towards that ambition is deliberate and inflexible. She does not resent Germany's appearance among the naval Powers. But she is sceptical of official assertion of the purely defensive purposes for which the German navy is designed. Germany has a restricted frontier assailable by sea-power and therefore needing sea-power for its protection. She bears colonial responsibilities which in comparison with Great Britain's are insignificant. The gross tonnage of her mercantile steamship marine is (1914) only one-quarter of Great Britain's (5,000,000 tons against 20,000,000 tons). Of steamships of upwards of 100 tons burden she owns only one-fifth of Great Britain's fleet (2,000 against 10,000). Yet Germany has provided herself with a navy larger than Great Britain regards as necessary for the defence of her own vaster

and more vulnerable interests. The supposition that Germany needs such a disproportionate naval strength for protection against Great Britain's assault is fantastic. Great Britain does not require and therefore does not covet Germany's comparatively unimportant colonies. As to European Germany, the suggestion that British naval supremacy might be employed in that direction is disposed of by the fact that Great Britain does not maintain, and is averse from maintaining, an army numerically adequate to invade the German nation in arms. As a potential weapon of offence, the British navy is valueless without an equally powerful army behind it. On the other hand, Germany, possessed of the essential army, has provided herself assiduously with a fleet which every year expands the Empire's radius of aggressive action. Her army, united with a navy less powerful even than the one she possesses, makes the latter a serious menace to an insular Power not overwhelmingly strong at sea. And this growing menace has been concentrated in the North Sea, almost within sight of the British coast. For the first time since 1815 Britain faces 'a powerful homogeneous navy under one government and concentrated within easy distance of our shores.'

Nor can Germany's neighbours forget that the elaboration and sudden release of offensive force is of the essence of German *Politik*. The Bismarckian system of 'blood and iron' is official still. Her record places any increase of Germany's armaments at least under suspicion. Officially she has disclaimed any hostile intent. But the publications of her patriotic societies and the utterances of her representative men do not attempt to conceal the fact that her armaments are offensively designed. They condone the admission on

the ground that her late arrival among the Powers makes aggression the only means for Germany to obtain what she holds herself entitled to. They justify their outlook by whole-hearted advertisement of the superiority of German *Kultur*. 'We Germans are the salt of the earth,' declares the present Kaiser. 'We are,' Professor Lasson, of Berlin, proclaims, 'morally and intellectually superior to all men. We are peerless. So, too, are our organizations and institutions.' To give these virtues greater scope by the acquisition of *Weltreich* presents itself therefore as an ambition almost altruistic! That it involves a challenge to Great Britain is not shirked. Treitschke, on the eve of Germany's naval expansion, wrote: 'If our Empire has the courage to follow unflinchingly an independent colonial policy, a collision with England is inevitable.' 'What my grandfather did for his army that will I do for my navy,' the present Kaiser has promised; 'I will carry out unfalteringly the work of reconstruction so that it may be able to stand in equal strength by the side of my army to procure the German Empire such a position over-seas as never yet it has attained.' During the fervid Anglo-phobia of the Boer War Admiral von der Goltz wrote in the *Deutsche Rundschau*: 'The material foundation on which our power rests is broad enough to warrant us contemplating a successful challenge to Great Britain's supremacy. Germany must face that crisis, when it comes, and lose no time in preparing for it.' In a chapter entitled 'Germany's Historical Mission', General Bernhardt wrote in 1911: 'We shall not be able to maintain our present position, powerful as it is, if we simply restrict ourselves to what we have got, while our neighbours are getting more. If we wish to compete with them, an ambition which our population and *Kultur*



entitle, and indeed compel, us to hold, we must not shrink from challenging the sovereignty of the world.'

Even were these aggressive ambitions not avowed, it is obvious that Great Britain cannot permit a navy as powerful as her own to ride the North Sea. So vital, indeed, is the challenge to her maritime superiority, that in view of the circumstances, it would have been competent for her to use Germany's pace-forcing in armaments as a *casus belli*, a course which, however defensible it might be, would have been rejected by the sober sense of British opinion. Great Britain adopted another method, whose character is epitomized in the *Round Table* for September, 1914: 'Strenuous efforts were made to bring home to Germany that she had nothing to fear from England, and that sea-power, however great, without an army to back it, was useless for offensive purposes. When the Liberals came into power in 1906, they went to the furthest possible limit to make Germany realize this and to put a stop to the competition in armaments before the growing tension ended in war. To prove the sincerity of their intentions, they only built one capital ship [i.e. a *Dreadnought*] in 1907, and in 1908 only two, against Germany's three in each year. . . . The German answer to the Liberal proposals was a new Navy Law [1908] increasing their annual programme to four capital ships. There is probably no case in history of one nation setting to work to challenge more deliberately the peace and safety of another. The Liberal Government in despair abandoned its efforts, and ended by giving an order for eight *Dreadnoughts* in one year to make up leeway.'

## VIII. THE AMENDMENT OF APRIL 6, 1908

Sympathizing with the Tsar's desire to bring the question of armaments before the Second Hague Conference in 1907, the British Admiralty for three successive years (1906-8) reduced its new construction to the lowest limit, permitting Germany to recover lost ground. In July, 1906, after the German Amendment of that year, the British Government announced its intention to cut down battleship construction by 25 per cent., destroyer construction by 60 per cent., and submarine construction by 33 per cent. The step was misinterpreted as a sign of exhaustion, and the Kaiser made known that Germany refused to regulate her programme by that of other nations. Nevertheless, the Prime Minister, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, published an important article in the *Liberal Nation* on March 2, 1907, pointing out that British sea-power was recognized universally as non-aggressive; expressing the Government's willingness to reduce armaments yet further in the event of other nations adopting a reciprocal policy, and pleading that the subject, vital to the interests of European democracies, should not be excluded from the Hague Conference. A communication in that sense was sent to all the naval Powers. The German Chancellor replied in the *Reichstag* a few weeks later (April): 'The German Government cannot participate in a discussion which, according to their conviction, is unpractical, even if it does not involve risk.' The Navy League agitated for the completion of the 1900 programme by 1912 instead of 1917. The Government partially complied in the Amendment of April 6, 1908. It reduced the effective age of battleships and armoured cruisers from 25 to 20 years, laid down

4 capital ships annually from 1908 to 1911 inclusive, and 2 capital ships annually thereafter, yielding by 1917 an additional 15 capital ships to the 1900 programme.

The Amendment brought home to Great Britain's pacific Government the fact that Germany would have a superiority in capital ships by 1914 unless instant steps were taken to accelerate British construction. Hence, on March 29, 1909, the Prime Minister, deprecating the race in armaments and insisting that his proposals were not charged with anti-German feeling, made it clear that Great Britain would not permit her naval supremacy to be challenged, since upon it depended her national security. The Two-Power standard, which had been adopted when France and Russia's conjunction was feared, was abandoned. Eight capital ships were laid down in 1909, and in March, 1911, the First Lord declared the Admiralty's intention to maintain the navy superior to any foreign fleet and to any probable combination that might confront it, a policy which involved a *Dreadnought* superiority of 60 per cent. over the building construction of Germany's programme.

#### IX. THE AMENDMENT OF JUNE 14, 1912

The Amendment of 1908 prescribed a fall in the annual rate of German construction to two capital ships in 1912. But at the end of 1911 a new Amendment was announced. It received the Kaiser's signature on June 14, 1912. It added 3 battleships and 2 unarmoured cruisers to the programme and provided for the construction of 6 submarines annually (total 72). But its significance lay beyond the mere addition of ships to the establishment. A Memorandum attached to the Bill described the fleet as suffering from 'two serious

defects : One consists in the fact that in the autumn of every year the time-expired men, i.e. almost one-third of the crew in every ship of the battle fleet, are discharged, their places being taken mainly by recruits from inland districts. Owing to this fact the war readiness of the battle fleet is considerably impaired. The second defect consists in the fact that at the present time, with an establishment of fifty-eight capital ships, only twenty-one are instantly available, in the event of the reserve fleet not being ready at the moment. Since the Fleet Law [of 1900] was promulgated . . . the moment at which the reserve fleet can come into action gets later and later still ; owing to the increasing complexities of modern ships and to the difficulty of training a large *personnel*. At present, therefore, the reserve fleet can only be counted a second-line fighting force, though in view of our great numerical strength in reserve men it has first-rate importance. Both of these defects it is proposed to remove, or at least to mitigate, by the formation of a third active squadron.'

Mr. Churchill pointed out the significance of the Amendment to the House of Commons on July 22, 1912. Its main feature is 'the increase in the striking force of ships of all classes which will be immediately available at all seasons of the year. A third battle squadron of 8 battleships will be created and maintained in full commission as a part of the active battle fleet. Whereas, according to the unamended Law [of 1900], the active battle fleet consisted of 17 battleships, 4 battle or large armoured cruisers, and 12 small cruisers, in the near future that active fleet will consist of 25 battleships, 8 battle or large armoured cruisers, and 18 small cruisers ; and whereas at present, owing to the system of recruitment which prevails in Germany, the German fleet is

less fully mobile during the winter than during the summer months, it will, through the operation of this Law, not only be increased in strength but rendered much more readily available.' He added: 'Taking a general view of the effect of the Law, nearly four-fifths of the entire German navy will be maintained in full permanent commission—that is to say, instantly and constantly ready for war. Such a proportion is remarkable, and, so far as I am aware, finds no example in the previous practice of any modern naval Power.' In the British navy it was usual to keep about half the fleet on a permanent war footing, the rest remaining in a condition of varying preparedness for instant service. The Amendment was a direct challenge by a navy manned by conscription on a low rate of pay to another whose *personnel* is voluntary and more expensively maintained. The German naval authorities do not disguise their belief that their numerical superiority gives them an advantage to which in the long run Great Britain's larger spending and construction power is bound to succumb.

#### X. ANGLO-GERMAN CONVERSATIONS, 1909-13

The 1912 Amendment passed under the impulse of renewed Anglophobia. Earlier in the year the British Government intimated that if Germany accelerated her construction Great Britain would lay down two keels to her one. Under the stress of increasing German menace also a redistribution of naval force took place, which concentrated Britain's main strength on the North Sea. These measures marked the collapse of conversations with Germany which the British Cabinet resumed after the Navy Amendment of 1908. Germany was

anxious to take up the broken conversation. Her appearance (1908) in 'shining armour' in support of Austria-Hungary's Balkan ambitions, while it succeeded in its immediate purpose, carried the certain consequence that at her own time Russia would seek to avenge the indignity which had been put upon her. Thenceforth it was almost certain that the next war would engage Germany on both her fronts, against France and Russia, whatever and wherever might be its originating cause. It was desirable, obviously, that Great Britain should be excluded from the contest; for in the event of her neutrality Germany was confident that the resources of the Triple Alliance would suffice to settle accounts with France and Russia.

The Chancellor, Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg, approached the British Cabinet in the summer of 1909. The consideration which he offered was a possible retardation of naval construction. In return he invited an agreement that Great Britain would not attack Germany and would remain neutral in the event of her being attacked by an enemy or group of enemies. He was prepared to give a similar undertaking on his side, which, in view of the European situation, involved Germany in no risks. In the autumn of 1909 the British Government declined the proposals. But throughout 1910 and until the spring of 1911 it continued its endeavour to establish an understanding with Germany without sacrificing obligations to France and Russia. In July, 1911, however, a reaction occurred in Germany which Prince von Bülow describes as 'somewhat violent'. The exciting cause was the Agadir incident, which, like the Kaiser's appearance in the Bosnian crisis three years before, illustrated 'the German policy of solving international difficulties by threatening war as the alternative

to retreat'. On Great Britain fell the brunt of Germany's wounded *amour propre*, and the Naval Amendment of 1912 was inspired directly by the discovery that her military resources were not yet adequate to support a policy of provocation. By her militarists the measure was denounced as inadequate. General Bernardi writes in his latest book, *Our Future: A Word of Warning to the German Nation* (1913):<sup>1</sup> 'It is difficult to understand how our naval authorities could rest content with the slender provisions of the last [1912] Navy Law; for without a doubt the German nation was prepared to vote every penny needed for the Army and Navy. . . . The new Law seems to me only a stop-gap. It is really inconceivable why our naval authorities did not ask for more.'

Great Britain perforce met the new menace. Supplementary Naval Estimates were laid as 'the first and smallest instalment of the extra expenditure entailed by the new German Law'. Still, Mr. Churchill invited Germany in 1913 to join in a 'naval holiday'. The proposal was rejected. So, animated alone by the duty to defend her lawful interests, Great Britain took measures to equip herself adequately against a neighbour who openly challenged her position. For it remains as true to-day as when David Urquhart wrote sixty years ago: 'Our insular position leaves us only the choice between omnipotence and impotence. Britannia must either rule the waves or be swallowed up by them.'

<sup>1</sup> *Unsere Zukunft: ein Mahnwort an das deutsche Volk*. Translated by J. Ellis Barker and published under the title *Britain as Germany's Vassal*. Dawson. 1914.

APPENDIX <sup>1</sup>

## BRITISH AND GERMAN SHIPBUILDING PROGRAMMES

The following tables show the British and German ships laid down between 1897 and 1913.

	<i>Great Britain.</i>				<i>Germany.</i>			
	<i>Battleships.</i>	<i>Armoured Cruisers.</i>	<i>Protected Cruisers.</i>	<i>Destroyers.</i>	<i>Battleships.</i>	<i>Armoured Cruisers.</i>	<i>Protected Cruisers.</i>	<i>Destroyers.</i>
<i>Mixed armament period.</i>								
1897-8	4	4	3	6	1	—	—	—
1898-9	7	8	1	12	2	1	2	6
1899-1900	2	2	1	—	3	—	2	6
1900-1	2	6	1	5	2	—	2	6
1901-2	3	6	2	10	2	1	3	6
1902-3	2	2	6 <sup>2</sup>	9	2	1	3	6
1903-4	5	4	4 <sup>2</sup>	15	2	1	2	6
1904-5	2	3	—	—	2	1	3	6
1905-6	—	—	—	—	2	1	3	6
Totals	27	35	18	57	18	6	20	48
<i>Dreadnought period.</i>								
1905-6	4	—	—	6	—	—	—	—
1906-7	3	—	—	2	2	1	2	12
1907-8	3	—	1	5	3	—	2	12
1908-9	2	—	6	16	4	—	2	12
1909-10	8	—	6	20	4	—	2	12
1910-11	5	—	5	20	4	—	2	12
1911-12	5	—	4	20	4	—	2	12
1912-13	4	—	8 <sup>3</sup>	20	2	—	2	12
1913-14	5	—	8	16	3	—	2	12
Totals authorized (1905-13) (Dreadnought period)	39	—	38	125	26	1	16	96

<sup>1</sup> Hurd and Castle, *op. cit.*, pp. 374-7.

<sup>2</sup> Included in these two figures are eight scouts—small cruisers—which were laid down in 1902 and 1903.

<sup>3</sup> The cruisers of 1912-13 were designated 'light armoured cruisers'.



NAVAL EXPENDITURE AND *PERSONNEL* OF GREAT BRITAIN  
AND GERMANY IN EACH OF THE YEARS 1901-2 TO 1913-14

<i>Great Britain.</i>			<i>Germany.</i>		
<i>Year.</i>	<i>Total Naval Expenditure.</i> <sup>1</sup>	<i>Numbers of Personnel.</i>	<i>Year.</i>	<i>Total Naval Expenditure.</i>	<i>Numbers of Personnel.</i>
	£			£	
1901-2	34,872,299	117,116	1901-2	9,530,000	31,157
1902-3	35,227,837	121,870	1902-3	10,045,000	33,542
1903-4	40,001,865	125,948	1903-4	10,400,000	35,834
1904-5	41,062,075	130,490	1904-5	10,105,000	38,128
1905-6	37,159,235	127,667	1905-6	11,300,000	40,843
1906-7	34,599,541	127,431	1906-7	12,005,000	43,654
1907-8	32,735,767	127,228	1907-8	14,225,000	46,936
1908-9	33,511,719	127,909	1908-9	16,490,000	50,531
1909-10	36,059,652	127,968	1909-10	20,090,000	53,946
1910-11	41,118,668	130,817	1910-11	20,845,000	57,373
1911-12	43,061,589	132,792	1911-12 <sup>4</sup>	22,031,788	60,805
1912-13 (estimated) <sup>2</sup>	45,616,540	137,500	1912-13 <sup>5</sup>	22,609,540	66,783
1913-14 (estimated)	47,021,636	146,000 <sup>3</sup>	1913-14 <sup>6</sup>	22,876,675	73,176

<sup>1</sup> The gross total of naval expenditure excludes the annuity in repayment of loans under the Naval Works Acts, and includes (a) the expenditure out of loans under those Acts, and (b) appropriations in aid.

<sup>2</sup> Including Supplementary Estimate.

<sup>3</sup> Maximum numbers.

<sup>4</sup> Submarines not included.

<sup>5</sup> Estimates as voted.

<sup>6</sup> Estimates as proposed. Supplementary Estimate of £146,771 for Aeronautics not included.

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