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Beyond the Kaiser:

The Imperial German Navy's Destroyers and Torpedo Boats after 1918

Following on from his earlier study of the light cruisers of the Imperial German Navy in the wake of the First World War, **Aidan Dodson** reviews the careers and ultimate fates of the destroyers and torpedo boats in service or building in 1918, which included the unlikely transformation of two unfinished destroyers into fully-rigged sailing ships!

At the time of the Armistice on 11 November 1918, the German High Seas Fleet deployed eight flotillas of what it classified as 'large torpedo boats', but were equivalent to the destroyers of the Royal Navy.¹ They ranged from the 1,350-tonne *B97* type built in 1914–15, through the ongoing 1,000-tonne 1916 Mob/1917 Mob types, to the 500–960t vessels of prewar design.² Away from the main fleet, there were various other ships in local defence roles, modified as fast minesweepers or serving as training vessels; specifically built for coastal service were the 100–330t A-I, -II and -III types. In addition, undergoing trials were the first ships of the large 2,000-tonne, 15cm-armed *S113* type. The last 20 ships of the 1,020/1,061-tonne Type 1917 Mob had been laid down or were fitting out, and a number of the new standard 1,268-tonne Type 1918 Mob were on the stocks.

[Image 01]

Under paragraph 23 of the Armistice, 'fifty destroyers of the most modern types' were to be included among the 'German surface warships ... designated' to be 'interned in neutral ports or in default of them in allied ports to be designated by the Allies and the United States'. Thus, along with the battleships, battlecruisers and light cruisers that arrived in the Firth of Forth on 21 November were vessels from the I., II., VI., VII. and IX. Flotillas (less *V30*, which was mined and sunk en-route; she was replaced by *V129*, which arrived with the battleship *König* and the cruiser *Dresden* on 6 December). Of the ships left in Germany, a number (led by the big *V116*, and including at various times *V26*, *V28*, *V79*, *S63*, *S133–35*, *S139* and *H146*) were formed into the 'Eisernen Flottille' ('Iron Flotilla'), a 'voluntary' formation under the auspices of the new Provisional *Reichsmarine*, which played a security role during the political and social upheavals of the Spring of 1919. Like the cruisers remaining in German hands, all had their torpedo tubes removed.

[Image 01A]

Along with the rest of the fleet, the Scapa destroyers were scuttled on 21 June 1919, but many were beached by the British before they sank, some simply drifting ashore when their cables

¹ For destroyers from 1914–39, including an in-depth treatment of German vessels, see H Fock, *Z-vor! Internationale Entwicklung und Kriegseinsätze von Zerstören und Torpedobooten 1914 bis 1939*, Koehlers Verlagsgesellschaft (Hamburg, 2001).

² In 1918, German large torpedo craft were numbered in two series. Ships built since 1911 had a number allocated in a single sequence, prefixed by a letter denoting their builder (*B* = Blohm & Voss, Hamburg; *G* = Germania, Kiel; *H* = Howaldtswerke, Kiel; *S* = Schichau, Elbing; *V* = Vulcan, Stettin; *Ww* = Wilhelmshaven Dockyard); while the basic characteristics within a type were similar across all builders, each used its own design, giving a range of profile differences. Older vessels had previously been so numbered, but had progressively been renamed, with a '*T*' replacing their builder prefix as new ships were ordered with their old names; thus *G197* was renamed *T197* in February 1918 when the new *H197* was programmed.

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were parted. Two were sold by the British Admiralty³ in 1920: *G89* to A Young for £500, who broke her up locally at Stromness,⁴ and *V83* to the East Coast Wrecking Company for £120, which then re-sold her to Peter Kerr of Aberdeen. *V83* remained intact, however, and the option was transferred by the Admiralty to Cox & Danks on 25 January 1924, Kerr receiving a refund. Cox & Danks, which would salvage a large proportion of the former German wrecks, at the same time purchased the sunken *S53*, *S55*, *V70* and *G91* for £200 each (along with the battlecruiser *Hindenburg*, for £3,000), and acquired options on *S32*, *S36*, *G38–40*, *S52*, *S56*, *S65*, *V78*, *G86*, *G101*, *G103–104*, *B109–112*, *V129*, *S136*, *S138* and *H145*; *S54* was purchased on 30 November 1927. The latter was blown up *in situ* in 1931, but the remainder were all raised between 1924 and 1926, and either broken up locally at Lyness (*G38*, *G39*, *S53*, *S56*, *V70* and *S136*), or sold on for scrapping at Scottish yards. The remaining four destroyer wrecks, *V45*, *S49*, *S50* and *S131*, had been sold on 26 April 1923 to the Scapa Flow Salvage Company, and subsequently refloated and scrapped (*S49*, *S50* at Scapa; *V45* at Troon; *S131* at Granton).

[Image 02]

Under the Treaty of Versailles, signed in June 1919, Article 181 restricted the new German Navy to twelve destroyers and twelve torpedo boats, and Article 190 fixed the displacement of replacements at 800 long tons (810 metric tons/tonnes) and 200 tons respectively – half the size of the some ships in these same categories that were building at the end of the war. Article 184 required the surrender of the Scapa vessels, and Article 185 that of ‘forty-two modern destroyers and fifty modern torpedo boats, as chosen by the Governments of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers’. Following the scuttling at Scapa, 41,800 tons of small floating docks and dockyard cranes were demanded to make up for the lost destroyers (five additional cruisers and heavy dockyard equipment were required to make up for the remainder of the losses). In practice, all surviving destroyers of the *V25* and later classes were to be handed over, as were all type A-II (*A26*) and A-III (*A56*) coastal torpedo boats. In addition, a number of older vessels were also to be surrendered, particularly those which had hitherto been used for minesweeping duties.⁵

Following drawn-out negotiations,⁶ a division of surrendered German and Austro-Hungarian vessels was agreed between the Allies and the USA, under which the majority of ships would be disposed of, but gave each principal nation a battleship, a cruiser and three destroyers for short-term ‘propaganda’ or experimental purposes before being sunk or broken up. Except for Italy, which received three Austro-Hungarian vessels, the ‘propaganda’ destroyers were all ships beached at Scapa: the UK taking *V44*, *S82* and *V125*, France *V46*, *V100* and *V126*, Japan *S60*, *V80* and *V127*, and the USA *V43*, *G102* and *S132*.

³ To which all German ship sunk at Scapa had fallen by Allied agreement: see page XXX below.

⁴ According to SC George, *Jutland to Junkyard*, Patrick Stevens Ltd (Cambridge, 1973), 54, her ‘boiler tubes were polished and cut up and sold in thousands for curtain rods’. George covers the destroyers at Scapa on pages 54–79 and 171–72 of his book, with some corrections required on the basis of the Admiralty Sales Register for the period (held by Naval Historical Branch, Portsmouth).

⁵ *T159–160*, *T165*, *166*, *169*, *T174*, *T181–184*, *T192*, *T195*, *T197* and *V106*.

⁶ See Dodson, ‘After the Kaiser: The Imperial German Navy’s Light Cruisers after 1918’, *Warship 2017*, 142–43. A full account and documentation of these discussions, subsequent allocations and their implementation is in preparation: Dodson and S Cant, *Spoils of War: the fates of the ex-enemy fleets after the two World Wars*, Seaforth Publishing (Barnsley, c. 2020).

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[Images 03, 04, 05]

The ships allocated to Japan were not taken over by their new owners and were immediately sold for scrapping at Dordrecht in the Netherlands. However the others were earmarked for weapon trials. The American *G102* and *S132* were sunk by bombs on 13 and 15 July 1921, and *V43* sunk by gunfire from the battleship *Florida* on the 15th. Two of the UK's ships were used in gunnery trials, with the monitor *Terror* as firing ship (*V82* on 13 and 15 October 1920, *V44* on 8 December); both were subsequently beached at Portsmouth, and although sold to TW Ward on 30 March 1921, they remained in place and were re-sold to Pounds in 1927; although stripped *in situ*, parts of their hulks are still visible at low tide.⁷ *V125* was not employed in the trials and was sold to John Cashmore on 20 July 1921 for £1,010, being towed away from Portsmouth, bound for Newport, on 2 September. Of the French ships, *V100* was scrapped in 1921, with the other two lasting as trials vessels until 1924 (*V46*) and 1925 (*V125*).⁸

[Image 06]

A Reprieve for Some

A small number of ships were allocated to particular nations for future operational use. France had a desperate need for modern destroyers, having not laid down any such vessels in her own yards since 1913. The only ships to join the fleet during the war had been two of the 1913 ships, four ships that had been laid down for Argentina, and a dozen ordered in Japan as an emergency measure. Italy had maintained a healthy destroyer programme during the war, but for political reasons demanded equal treatment with France in the share-out of ex-enemy vessels. Thus, it was agreed that each nation should receive ten destroyers, taken from the vessels surrendered by Germany under Article 185 of the Versailles Treaty and/or those given up by Austria-Hungary under Article 136 of the Treaty of Saint Germain. In addition, coastal torpedo boats were to be allowed to Brazil (six ex-German, disarmed for police duties), Greece (seven ex-Austro-Hungarian: one for any purpose, six disarmed for police duties), Poland (six ex-German or ex-Austro-Hungarian, disarmed for police duties), Portugal (six ex-Austro-Hungarian torpedo-boats, disarmed),⁹ Romania (seven ex-Austro-Hungarian, six disarmed) and the Serbo-Croat-Slovene State (later Yugoslavia: twelve ex-Austro-Hungarian).

The 42 Article 185 destroyers included *B98*, which had been used to carry post between Germany and the interned fleet and had been seized by the British when she arrived at Scapa the day after the scuttling. However, while in tow to Rosyth she broke her cable and grounded on the beach at Lopness, Sanday (Orkney) on 17 February 1920. She was sold to the East Coast Wrecking Company on 25 June, although parts of the wreck, including turbine casings, remain visible to this day.¹⁰ Of the remaining 41, these would be pooled with the eight surrendered Austro-Hungarian destroyers; ten ships from that pool were to be taken for commissioning by each of Italy and France; the rest would go to the UK for scrap. Twenty of what were judged to be the best German ships (mainly ex-‘Eisernen Flotille’) were accordingly delivered to Cherbourg during May/July 1920 to allow Italy and France to make a

⁷ See S Fisher and J Whitewright, ‘Hidden Heritage: The German Torpedo Boats in Portsmouth Harbour’, *Warship* 2017, 166–70.

⁸ The boilers from *V100* and *V126* were used respectively to reboiler the French destroyers *Aventurier* and *Intrépide* during 1924/27.

⁹ Portugal was also awarded an ex-Turkish gunboat, which was never delivered following the failure of the Treaty of Sèvres.

¹⁰ <http://canmore.org.uk/site/102230/sms-b98-west-langamay-bay-of-lopness-sanday-orkney-north-sea>.

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selection. France eventually took nine German and one Austro-Hungarian vessels, with Italy obtaining three ex-German and seven ex-Austro-Hungarian. All other ships due to be surrendered by Germany were delivered to Rosyth during August/September for further distribution or disposal.

Poland

As noted above, Brazil and Poland were each allocated six torpedo-boats, to be disarmed for police duties, and while Poland had an option to take Austro-Hungarian vessels, both nations' shares were in fact taken from the 50 such vessels delivered to Rosyth, the remainder of which were listed for scrapping in the UK. Brazil did not take over her ships (*A65*, *A74*, *A78*, *A93*, *V105* and *V106*), instructing the British Admiralty to sell them for scrap, which they did at Rosyth on 13 June 1921 (*A93* to W Duguid of Bo'ness, the rest to James W White of Queensferry, for £170 each – except for *V105*, which went for £550 and *V106* for £610). However, in the event, *V105* was swapped for *A69*, which had been allocated to Poland but proved to be in very poor condition and went for scrap in her stead. *V105* thus commissioned into the Polish Navy in 1921 as *Mazur*, alongside her sister *V108* (*Kaszub*), and the smaller *A59* (*Ślązak*), *A64* (*Krakowiak*), *A68* (*Kujawiak*) and *A80* (*Góral*, renamed *Podhalanin* in 1922). *Kaszub*, *Krakowiak* and *Kujawiak* were refitted at Rosyth Dockyard between December 1920 and August 1921. It was envisaged that they proceed under their own power to Poland; however, breakdowns en route meant that all eventually arrived at Danzig under tow, *Kaszub* on 3 October 1921. *Mazur*, *Ślązak* and *Góral* had already been delivered to Poland under tow in September 1921.

[Image 07]

The ships received a proper armament only in 1925, when they were fitted with two 75mm guns, two 450mm torpedo tubes and mine rails. On 20 July 1925 *Kaszub* was broken in half by the explosion of her forward boiler in the Neufahrwasser at Danzig; the forepart sank but the after part of the ship remained afloat. The bow was refloated a week later and the whole ship docked. She was subsequently broken up. The other ships survived into the 1930s, *Mazur* being extensively rebuilt during 1935–37 and still in service as a gunnery training ship at the time of the German invasion; she was, however, bombed and sunk at Oksywie on 1 September 1939. *Krakowiak* had been stricken in October 1936 and broken up, while *Ślązak* had become a target ship for aircraft in 1937; captured by the Germans in 1939, she subsequently sank while under tow. *Kujawiak* and *Podhalanin* had been stricken and converted to oil hulks in 1939; they were sunk respectively by bombs at Oksywie on 3 September, and in tow between Jastarnia and Hel on 24 September.

France and Italy

The French and Italian ships from the Cherbourg hand-over were each headed by one of the two *S113*-type large destroyers that had commissioned for trials before the Armistice. *S113* herself became the French *Amiral Sénès*, and *V116* the Italian *Premuda*. Italy received two further German ships, *B97* and *S63*, plus the seven ex-Austro-Hungarian vessels, taken over at Adriatic ports. France took just one ex-Austro-Hungarian ship but eight further ex-German vessels: *V79* (*Pierre Durand*), *V130* (*Buino*), *S133* (*Chastang*), *S134* (*Vesco*), *S135* (*Mazaré*), *S139* (*Deligny*), *H146* (*Rageot de la Touche*) and *H147* (*Delage*). The ships were little altered by their new owners, the main exception being the ex-*B97*, which became a trials ship in 1932; her after boiler was replaced with a gyro-stabiliser and the armament modified. All served into the 1930s, and were disposed of only when new tonnage was delivered to replace them.

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[Images 08, 09, 10, 11]

Leftovers

As already noted, the UK was to scrap all unallocated surrendered ships, and thus sold *T159*, *T160–161*, *T163–166*, *T169*, *T173–T174*, *T176*, *T178*, *T179*, *T180*, *T182–184* and *T186* (for £600–£1,030 each) at Rosyth during February/March 1921. The small *A27–29*, *A31*, *A33–39*, *A41*, *A44–46*, *A48–49*, *A52–55*, *A61–63*, *A66*, *A70*, *A75–76*, *A81*, *A86*, and *A87–95* were similarly disposed of, all but one of them going to John Jackson & Co for £150 (February) or £120 (March) each, for scrapping at Bo'ness. The exception was *A81*, lying at Limekilns, slightly further up the Forth estuary, which went to Thomas Round of Sunderland on 30 March 1921 for £150. The UK also sold [S24](#), *V26*, *V28*, *T189*, *T192–193*, *T195* and *T197* at Cherbourg on 22 October, the ships being 'rejects' from the Franco-Italian allocations.¹¹

In addition to the ships handed over to victorious nations through the process described above, Belgium had seized three Type A-I small torpedo boats (*A4*, *A12* and *A14*) that had been found at Antwerp following the German evacuation, and also took over another six A-Is (*A5*, *A8*, *A9*, *A11*, *A16* and *A20*) and five Type A-IIs (*A30*, *A40*, *A42*, *A43* and *A47*) on 25 June 1919, when these ships, in accordance with Article 184 of the Versailles Treaty, were handed over by the Netherlands from internment at Hellevoetsluis, having taken refuge there after the Armistice on 16 November. They remained in Belgian operational service only until 1927, when the Belgian navy was abolished. Most were then scrapped, but some lasted longer as training vessels – one (the former *A20*) survived to be captured by Germany in 1940, re-enter service with her former owners, and be broken up post-war.

One other A-boat served during the Second World War. This was the former *A32*, which had been wrecked off the Baltic island of Saaremaa in October 1917, salvaged by Estonia in October 1923, and commissioned as their *Sulev* in August 1924. She became the Soviet *Ametist* in 1940, following the annexation of the Baltic States, and survived as a patrol vessel and finally a tender until scrapped in the 1950s.

Destroyers to Merchantmen¹²

Article 186 of the Treaty of Versailles required 'the breaking up of all the German surface warships now under construction', but on 13 February 1920 the German Foreign Office wrote to the Naval Inter-Allied Control Commission (NIACC) asking for a ruling on the definition of 'breaking up'. The Germans proposed that it be understood as 'so stripping such vessels of their characteristics as war vessels that re-construction of war vessels would be impossible', the intention being that such vessels could be used as the basis for merchant ships. This was referred to the Allied Conference of Ambassadors with a recommendation for acceptance, as it achieved the objectives of the clause while also meeting a requirement under Article 189 that material arising from the breaking up of warships must be used for industrial or commercial purposes.

Although capital ships, cruisers and destroyers were all put forward for potential mercantile completion,¹³ it was only in the case of destroyers that actual adaptations were put in hand

¹¹ [S24 and T189 both went ashore off Torquay en-route to breakers at Teignmouth on 12 December 1920, T189 breaking her back on rocks near Roundham Head, where her remain can still be seen. S24 was, however, towed off and broken up.](#)

¹² Most of this section is based on UK National Archives files ADM116/1994, ADM116/1992 and ADM116/2113.

¹³ For proposed capital ship conversions, see A Dodson, *The Kaiser's Battlefleet: German capital ships 1871–1918*, Seaforth Publishing (Barnsley 2016), 149–52; for cruisers see the author's article in *Warship 2017*, 143–45.

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(although only completed in four cases). Two basic schemes were drawn up and approved by the NIACC: one for a conventional coaster with a diesel engine aft, and one for a four-masted schooner with auxiliary diesel propulsion. Both these schemes involved cutting off the bow at the forward boiler room and the stern at the after engine room bulkhead, and adding new ends to the midship section. The latter comprised principally the machinery spaces, which would be emptied of boilers and turbines and would now accommodate the holds of the new merchantman, whose propulsion machinery would be housed in the brand-new stern section.

[Images 12, 13]

The removal of the original bow and stern was necessary to meet a key Allied requirement that the hull-form of any converted vessel be no longer suitable for high speeds: '[i]n the case of Torpedo Craft a complete reconstruction of the Bow and Stern would do away with the character of a fast warship'.¹⁴ It was on this basis that a design for the mercantile completion of the large *S113*-type *G119–121* was rejected on 7 September 1920 as retaining whole underwater form. However, a modified scheme, apparently including the requisite truncation, was approved at the beginning of October for *G119–121*, together with the very similar *S114–115*, *V117–118* and *B122–124* (of which *B122* was then being employed as a fuel hulk for the generators at the Blohm und Voss shipyard at Hamburg). Plans for converting the four A-III type torpedo boats fitting out at the Armistice (*A67* and *A83–85*) were also approved, but none of these even got as far as finding a potential mercantile converter.

The concern to remove any chance of the ships ever being completed or rebuilt as warships led to demands by the NIACC that bows and sterns be cut from all unfinished destroyers hulls that were not being scrapped immediately, whether or not a contract yet existed for a mercantile conversion to be carried out. Eventually, a compromise was reached in July 1921 whereby the bow and stern of still-extant unfinished destroyers could be cut off, but only as far as the waterline, to allow the hulks to be stored afloat until they could be converted; shaft brackets had also to be cut away and all original machinery cleared from the hull to fully meet NIACC requirements.

By the summer of 1921, however, while various unfinished destroyers had had their bow and/or stern cut away and their machinery removed, substantive conversions had been restricted to four ships, all of the 1918M type. Two (*S178* and *S179*) had been building at Schichau, Elbing: following the removal of their bows, they had been moved successively to Danzig, then to Bremen, where they were completed to the schooner scheme, and entered service with the Bremerhaven firm of F Kimme in 1921. The former *S178* became *Franziska Kimme*; in 1926 she was renamed *Kapitän J Frobeen*, finally becoming the Brazilian *Captain Alfredo Kling II*. Later still she became *Ajuricaba* and finally *Gonza* in 1933; she disappears from lists in 1936. The ex-*S179* entered service as *Georg Kimme*, becoming *Anneliese Rathjen* in 1927 and the French *Zazpiakbat* in 1928; she was scuttled at Martigues, near Marseilles, on 21 August 1944.

The remaining pair were the Howaldtswerke (Kiel) *H186* and *H187*, which were completed as coasters in early 1921, under the names of *Hansdorf* and *Hoisdorf* respectively. In 1924 they became *Dietrich Bohmekamp* and *Hermann Bohmekamp*, being sold to a Brazilian owner as *Peryneas II* and *Peryneas* in 1930. The former *H186* was sold there for scrap in 1935, but her sister passed under the Newfoundland (1931) and British Honduran (1933) flags before being broken up in 1933.

¹⁴ ADM 116/1994, 7 February 1920.

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The same basic coaster drawings were approved for the conversion of both the large *S113* type and the smaller 1917 Mob-type *S152–157*, *V158–163* and *H166–169*. Schooner drawings were also provided for *H166–69*, but neither coaster nor schooner conversions were taken forward in these cases. A proposal of 5 March 1921 (approved 12 Mar 21) was that *H166–169* be converted to oil lighters without propulsion engines but with auxiliary boilers to drive oil pumps and to warm oil. Although bows and sterns had been removed by April, work was then suspended following the receipt of additional requirements from Germanischer Lloyd (the national maritime classification society). This proved to be the end of the vessels, the hulks being scrapped at Kiel before the end of the year. Scrap also proved to be the ultimate destiny of all the remaining would-be-mercantile conversions from the summer of 1921 onwards, since although a further handful had been sold for conversion, a shipping slump meant that the reconstructions were simply no longer economically viable.

The Reichsmarine

Under the Versailles Treaty, the new German Navy, the *Reichsmarine*, was allowed to have twelve destroyers and twelve torpedo boats in commission at any one time. An additional allowance of a further four of each type in reserve, without stores or ammunition but with guns on board, was added under an agreement with the Allies of March 1920 – this also allowed two reserve battleships and two reserve cruisers. Initially, the operational torpedo boats were to be the 310-tonne *T99*, *T101*, *T102*, *T103*, *T104*, *T105*, *T106*, *T107*, *T108*, *T109*, *T110* and *T113* (1900–02), with the 142/147t *T88* and *T89* (Kiel) and *T86* and *T85* (Wilhelmshaven) (1897–98) as reserve vessels. However, it was then agreed in early 1921 that, given the limited military value of these ancient vessels, twelve plus four ships of the 412–665t *T132–168* series (1906–11) would become the *Reichsmarine*'s 'torpedo boat' allocation. The vessels selected were *T139*, *T141*, *T143*, *T146*, *T149* and *T168* (Baltic operational), *T144* and *T155* (Kiel reserve), *T151*, *T153*, *T154*, *T156*, *T157* and *T158* (North Sea) and *T148* and *T152* (Wilhelmshaven reserve).

The dozen operational 'destroyers' were originally to be *T185*, *T190*, *T196* (650/660t, 1911), and *V2*, *V3*, *V5*, *V6*, *G8*, *G10*, *G11*, *S18* and *S19* (570t, 1911–13). However, the list was adjusted to take into account the state of the various ships, with ships swapped with others from a pool of 'alternatives' that initially comprised *S23*, *T151–156*, *T158*, *T167*, *T168*, *T170* and *T175*. Thus, in March 1920, *G7* was substituted for *V6* and *S23* for *S19*, the latter joining the group of four ships that were by the summer listed as the four allowed long-term reserves (*S19* and *T175* at Kiel; *V6* and *T170* at Wilhelmshaven). Further changes then occurred, *V1* being withdrawn from the scrap pool to replace *T185* on the 'active' list, the latter going into the reserve pool in place of *T170* at Wilhelmshaven, which was now joined there by *T175*, *V6* going to the 'active' list and replaced by *T190*, which went to the Kiel reserve alongside *S19*. *T170* was stricken on 22 March 1921, along with many of the remaining old torpedo craft in excess of the Versailles allocations (others had already been stricken during 1920). The surviving modern Type A-I boats were stricken in May 1922, and the few remaining older vessels were gone by the end of that year.

Although divided between 'destroyers' and nominally smaller 'torpedo boats' by the Versailles Treaty (which also limited replacement 'destroyers' to 800 tons and 'torpedo boats' to 200 tons), most of the ships listed as 'destroyers' were actually smaller than some of the 'torpedo boats'. This had at its root a decision that torpedo boats built under the 1911 programme should be smaller than those of the 1910 programme, which were seen by some as too large for effective service with the battle fleet. The 14% reduction of displacement (from 660 tonnes to around 570 tonnes) resulted, however, in an unacceptable loss of seaworthiness, and the ships of the 1913 programme (*V25–S36*) were enlarged to ca 800 tonnes, with

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succeeding classes showing further growth. As it was the 1913 and later ships that were surrendered under the Versailles Treaty, it was the small vessels of the 1911 and 1912 programmes that represented the most modern torpedo-vessels left to Germany, and thus most appropriate to the higher-ranked 'destroyer' category.

In allocating ships to Treaty headings, a key criterion also seems to have been propulsion, all the 'destroyers' being turbine-powered, while of the 'torpedo boats' only *T168* had turbines, the others all having reciprocating engines. Nevertheless, in practice, the 'destroyers' and 'torpedo boats' were managed as a single pool, all units of which continued to be designated *Torpedoboot* by the *Reichsmarine*: it was not until the 1930s that the formal classification of *Zerstörer* was introduced into the German Navy (see below).¹⁵

The first 'destroyers' to recommission were *G7*, *G8* and *G11* on 22 March 1921, joining the battleship *Hannover*, commissioned as the first ship of the *Reichsmarine* on 10 February. They were followed on 25 May by *S18* and *S23*, and later in the year by *V5* and *G10*. By the beginning of 1923, *G7*, *G8*, *G10*, *G11*, *S18* and *S23* were allocated as the Baltic 'destroyers', with *T139*, *T141*, *T143*, *T144*, *T146* and *T149* as the 'torpedo boats', supporting *Hannover* and the cruisers *Medusa*, *Berlin* and *Thetis*. Attached to the North Sea station were *V1*, *V2*, *V3*, *V5*, *V6* and *T196* as 'destroyers' and *T151*, *T153*, *T154*, *T156*, *T157* and *T158* as 'torpedo boats', alongside the cruisers *Hamburg* and *Arcona*, and the battleship *Elsaß*. Reserve vessels remained as previously listed.

All recommissioned vessels had been refitted at Wilhelmshaven, a common pattern of initial modifications being adopted across the 'destroyer' fleet, with 10.5cm guns substituted for their original 8.8cm weapons; in compensation their torpedo complement was halved from four 50cm tubes to two. This latter modification also allowed the ships' forecastles to be extended aft, thereby filling the characteristic 'well' in front of the bridge. The 'torpedo boats', however, initially retained their original armament but received enlarged bridges and funnel caps. During 1922–24, *T151*, *T153*, *T155–158*, *T185*, *T190* and *T196* were converted to oil firing; the last three were also reboilered) and had their forecastle further extended. *G7*, *G8*, *G10* and *G11* were then rebuilt during 1928–31, being lengthened amidships by 4.7 metres. In this form they carried two 10.5cm/45 guns, plus two single 50cm TT; *T185*, *T190* and *T196* received the same guns, but carried two twin 50cm TT mountings. These seven vessels thus represented the most effective of the old destroyers available to the *Reichsmarine* at the beginning of the 1930s and, with the exception of *T185*, would remain in front-line service until the latter part of the decade.

[Images 14, 15]

The End of an Era

The days of the aged warriors were, nevertheless, drawing towards their close. In 1932, the I. Torpedo Boat Flotilla still comprised *G8*, *G7*, *G10* and *G11* (1. Half-flotilla) and *T151*, *T156*, *T158* and *T153* (2. Half-flotilla), but the II. Flotilla was now made up of eight modern vessels of the *Möwe* (Type 1923) and *Wolf* (Type 1924) classes. Under the Versailles Treaty, destroyers and torpedo boats could be replaced fifteen years after launch, and as the oldest ships had been launched back in 1907, new ships could be begun in 1922. However these should have been 200-ton 'torpedo boats', so in the event the first ships to be 'replaced' were the smallest 'destroyers', launched in 1911, and thus replaceable in 1926.

The design of the new Type 1924/1925 'destroyer' was based on that of the *H145–147* series,

¹⁵ Although some of the larger First World War vessels had been colloquially referred to as such.

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with various modifications, including a distinctive profile that was also adopted in the modernisation of older ships – and would continue into the Second World War. Twelve were built and commissioned between October 1926 and August 1929. They were nominal replacements for the dozen ‘destroyers’, although of the ships actually stricken in compensation, only six (*T175*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*, *V5* and *V6*) were from the declared ‘destroyers’ list, the other six being nominally ‘torpedo boats’. Evidently it was a case of clearing out the least capable vessels rather than strict adherence to the letter of the Versailles Treaty, particularly since further replacements would be subject to the 200-ton ‘torpedo boat’ replacement limit, a figure less than a third of the displacement of the ships that would need to be taken out of service in exchange. Doubtless it was for this reason that the building of the *Möwe/Wolf* classes was accompanied by the rebuilding of *G7*, *G8*, *G10*, *G11*, *T185*, *T190* and *T196*, to allow an adequate fleet of torpedo craft of useful size to be maintained until such time as the restrictions of Versailles could be eased or disregarded.

On the other hand, the 200-ton limit pushed the *Reichsmarine* towards considering less conventional ways of providing a second echelon of torpedo craft. This resulted in the development of the big motor torpedo boat *S1* (ex-*W1*, ex-*UZ16*), commissioned in August 1931, and the precursor of the extremely effective vessels deployed by the German Navy during the Second World War.¹⁶

With the commissioning of the new ships during the late 1920s, some old vessels began to reduce to secondary duties in preference to disposal. Already in 1927, *S139* and *S141* had been disarmed and converted (under the names *Pfeil* and *Blitz*) to act as control vessels for the former battleship *Zähringen*, which had just completed reconstruction as a radio-controlled target. *Blitz* was replaced in 1932 by *T185*, which became *Blitz* (ii); *S23* (renamed *T23* in 1932 and *T123* in 1939, when a new *T23* was projected) also became a control vessel (*Komet*) in 1939, following the addition of another ex-battleship, *Hessen*, to the radio-control fleet, as a replacement for *Pfeil*, which became a torpedo-recovery vessel (TRV); *Komet* followed suit in 1943.

[Images 16, 17]

Initially, only the dozen operational ‘destroyers’ were replaced by the Type 1924/1925 vessels. The 1920 agreement had been unclear with regard to replacement of the four reserve vessels when they became over-age. This led to a disagreement between France and the UK when Germany projected replacements for the two permitted reserve battleships in its 1931 Naval Programme.¹⁷ The German position was that not to allow such a replacement of reserves with new construction would mean that the vessels in question would be so much older that the operational ships that they could in no way substitute for them when required, a view with which the British expressed sympathy. Duly encouraged, the *Reichsmarine* programmed four further vessels of significantly enhanced displacement, in the expectation that further relaxations of the Versailles regime could be achieved. The characteristics of the new Type 1934 would thus be kept secret until Adolf Hitler’s denunciation of the military clauses of the Treaty on 16 March 1935. The ships finally emerged as 2,500-tonne giants with an ancestry going back to the *S113* type of 1918; they would be the first German vessels to be designated ‘*Zerstörer*’.

The commissioning of these ships and their immediate Type 1934A successors during 1937–

¹⁶ For the early history of the S-boats, see P. Schmalenbach, ‘The Genealogy of the Schnellboot’, *Warship International* VI/1 (1969), 10–23.

¹⁷ TNA ADM 116/2945.

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38 meant that there was no longer a need to keep any of the older destroyers as potential operational vessels. However, none was disposed of; rather, they began to be adapted for a range of support duties. *G7*, *G8*, *G10* and *G11* became training ships from 1936 onwards with their forward guns removed and bridgework extended for instructional purposes; in April 1939 they were renamed *T107*, *T108*, *T110* and *T111* in order to free their names for the new (but ultimately abortive) *Geleitboot* (escort vessel) programme; *G10* had the distinction of carrying out the German Navy's first seaborne radar trials in 1938. *T155–158* became submarine tenders and TRVs from 1936, *T151* served as a fast tug and TRV from 1937, and *T153* became a rangefinding training vessel (under the name *Eduard Jungmann*). *T190* became an experimental vessel (*Claus von Bevern*), and *T196* a minesweeper command ship from 1938.

Restricted by their duties to home waters, the old ships survived essentially unscathed until 1945, with the exception of *T157*, mined in the Danzig Neufahrwasser on 22 October 1943. However, as the war drew to a close, *T111* was bombed at Kiel on 3 April 1945, *T155* was scuttled on the evacuation of Swinemünde on 22 April, *T156* at Kiel on 3 May and *T110* at Travemünde on 5 May. Although the fate of *Pfeil* after 1944 is unknown, the remaining nine old warriors nevertheless survived to be surrendered to the Allies. *T108* and *T151* were broken up respectively by the UK and USA; *Eduard Jungmann* went to the USA, but served as a German Minesweeping Administration buoy tender until scrapped in the Netherlands in 1949; and *Claus von Bevern* was handed over to the USA and scuttled in the Skagerrak. The other five ships went to the Soviet Union, being delivered in January 1946 and commissioned the following month. *Blitz* (ii), now renamed *Vystrel*, still acted as control ship for *Hessen* (now the Soviet *Tsel*). *T158* was renamed *Prozorlivyi*, *T196* *Pronzitelnyi* and *T107* *Porazaiuskii*; *Komet*'s new name (if any) is unknown. The former *T196* was stricken in 1949, but the former *T158* and *T107* were further renamed *Araks* and *Kazanka*, respectively, in 1950, on going into reserve until 1957. The ex-*T107* was then stricken, but the ex-*T158* then became the trials vessel *UTS-67*, until finally stricken in 1961. The final fates of the former *Komet* and *Blitz* remain obscure, but if the latter may have remained in service as long as her associate *Tsel* (ex-*Hessen*) it was not until 1961 that the last two of the former Imperial German Navy's destroyers finally went to the scrapheap, after five decades of service.

[TABLE]