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**THE GERMAN CRUISER FLEET (1890-1940) AND THE CONSEQUENCES
OF THE SINKING OF THE HEAVY CRUISER “BLÜCHER III”
ON APRIL 9, 1940 NEAR OSLO**

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The Battle of Drøbak Sound took place the northernmost part of the outer Oslofjord in southern Norway on April 9, 1940. It actually marked the beginning of World War 2 in Western Europe. A German fleet led by the heavy cruiser “Blücher III” of the Admiral-Hipper-class was dispatched up the Oslofjord to begin the German invasion of Norway, with the objective of seizing Oslo. The sinking of the heavy cruiser “Blücher III” was the very symbol of Norwegian resistance for the following five years. The cruiser, which was one of the most important warships in the German fleet, was a true well-developed war machine in the spirit of the First World War, but the ship’s supremacy, modernity and striking power were stopped and defeated by Colonel Birger Eriksen – the commander of the fortress Oscarsborg. Through the histories of the three warships named “Blücher” (I, II, III) we will analyse the theory that the sinking of “Blücher III” was not only the end of this heavy cruiser, but also the end of cruisers in the German naval history. In other words, it wasn’t just a ship that sank on cold April morning 1940, but it was also the end of the heavy cruiser’ long evolution as one of the German Navy’s most murderous weapon.

Keywords: Oscarsborg, “Blücher III”, Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher, cruiser, Drøbak Sound, heavy cruiser, corvette, German Fleet, frigate, Admiral-Hipper-class, Oslofjord, the Battle of Drøbak Sound.

**ГЕРМАНСКИЙ КРЕЙСЕРСКИЙ ФЛОТ (1890-1940)
И ПОСЛЕДСТВИЯ ПОТОПЛЕНИЯ ТЯЖЕЛОГО КРЕЙСЕРА
“БЛЮХЕР III” 9 АПРЕЛЯ 1940 Г. ОКОЛО ОСЛО**

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Битва в проливе Дребак произошла в самой северной части внешнего Осло-фьорда на юге Норвегии 9 апреля 1940 г. Фактически это событие

ознаменовало начало Второй мировой войны в Западной Европе. Немецкий флот во главе с тяжелым крейсером «Блюхер III» класса «Адмирал Хиппер» был направлен вверх по Осло-фьорду, чтобы начать немецкое вторжение в Норвегию с целью захвата Осло. Потопление тяжелого крейсера «Блюхер III» стало настоящим символом норвежского сопротивления на протяжении пяти следующих лет. Крейсер, который был одним из самых важных боевых кораблей немецкого флота, представлял собой настоящую хорошо развитую военную машину в духе Первой мировой войны, но превосходство крейсера, его современность и ударная мощь были остановлены и разгромлены полковником Биргером Эриксоном – командиром крепости Оскарсборг. Изучая истории трех военных кораблей по имени «Блюхер» (I, II, III) мы проанализируем гипотезу о том, что потопление «Блюхера III» стало концом не только этого тяжелого крейсера, но и всех крейсеров в истории немецкого флота. Иными словами, холодным апрельским утром 1940 г. затонул не просто корабль, это был также конец долгой эволюции тяжелого крейсера как одного из самых смертоносных орудий немецкого военно-морского флота.

Ключевые слова: Оскарсборг, «Блюхер III», Гебхард Леберехт фон Блюхер, крейсер, пролив Дребак, тяжелый крейсер, корвет, немецкий флот, фрегат, класс «Адмирал Хиппер», Осло-фьорд, Битва в проливе Дребак.

Prologue

A military unit is an organization within a defence. It is under the command of a commander and consists of personnel and some equipment such as ships, vehicles and aircraft. Armies, navies and air forces are organized hierarchically into groupings according to functional, tactical and administrative purposes. Organization charts – called boxes and water pipes – describe the chain of command from the soldier to the largest unit. In the 1800s and the beginning of the 1900s the navy was very important part of the individual country's war machine. United Kingdom and the USA had the most important fleet during the centuries. In the second row you would find

Germany, Japan, Russia, France and from time to time in history also Sweden, Spain and Denmark.

Normally war ships or battleships were named after war heroes, politicians, kings or other heads of states. In the age of sail fleets were divided into van, centre, and rear squadrons, named after each squadron's place in the line of battle. In modern times the squadrons are typically composed of homogeneous groups of the same class of warship, such as battleships or cruisers. In the modern sense fleets are usually, but not necessarily, permanent formations and are generally assigned to a particular ocean or sea. Most fleets named after that ocean or sea, but the convention in the United States Navy is to use numbers.

A fleet is typically commanded by an admiral, who is often also a commander in chief. Still, many fleets have been or commanded by vice admirals or even rear admirals. Most fleets divided into several squadrons, each under a subordinate admiral. Those squadrons, in turn, often divided into divisions.

With others, it was very important that this fleet was top tuned and its vessels were among the best that could be performed in the services of the navies. Here the types of warships and battleships played an important role. In the 1800s it was corvette and frigate and later on it was cruiser, heavy cruiser and battleships. For the individual maritime nations, it was about having the most modern and battle-capable ships for eventual decisive naval battles, and there was one of these from 1890 until the end of the First World War in 1918. The development of warships therefore played a decisive role in these short thirty years in German and as well as world naval history.

Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher

Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher (1742-1819) is one of Germany's greatest war heroes, who gave his name to three warships whose history was symptomatic of the history of the German navy history from 1890 to 1940. The German officer quickly proved to be a good soldier, first in the Swedish army and later in the Prussian. He entered war service with Frederick the Great and later in service with Frederick Wilhelm II. In 1801 he became lieutenant general and in 1813 he was given

command of the Silesian army (105,000 soldiers from Prussia and Russia). He won honour and glory at the Battle of Katzbach (August 26, 1813) and later at the Battle of Leipzig (October 18, 1813). Despite his advanced age, he was a particularly brave and offensive officer [7, p. 10].

With tact, Blücher led his soldiers into battle against Napoleon. He was nicknamed Marshall Forward (Marschall Vorwärts). His greatest victory took place on June 18, 1815 at Waterloo. Although the British General Wellington has reaped most of the credit for the victory in the Battle of Waterloo, Marshall Bücher also awarded a large part of the credit for the victory. He swept in from the flank and actually decided the battle at a very critical stage for the Emperor Napoleon. Blücher had just put his fresh Imperial Guard into the battle, to have the battle finally decided in his favour. But at the age of 72 Blücher put an end to that. He died four years later at his manor in Krobielowice near Wroclaw in Lower Silesia. However, Napoleon characterized him as a very brave soldier with no talent as a general but he admired his attitude, which he described as a bull that looks all around him with rolling eyes and, when he sees danger, charges. Napoleon thought Blücher was stubborn and untiring, knowing no fear. He called him an old rascal who would be always getting up on his feet again and be ready for the next battle as, following a sound defeat, Blücher had, almost instantly, returned to attack him vigorously again.

From 1876 until 1940 three of the most important war ships in the German Navy were named after Blücher [7, p. 448-449].

The German fleet (1890-1940)

Shortly after the young Emperor Wilhelm II ascended the throne of the relatively young German Empire in 1888, he launched his new ambitions for the country. The Empire now had to expand, modernize and train sailors so that it could become a measurable competitor for the English navy. Kaiser Wilhelm II's ambitions were also to make Germany a colonial power on an equal footing with England and France. To accomplish this goal, he depended on the construction of an exceptionally strong German navy. The top officers of the fleet were replaced with new and more ambitious officers, and the emperor simultaneously established a completely new

hierarchy in the imperial navy. In the years that followed, however, it was to prove really difficult to organize the new military. After all such a change usually took many years, as the military can be a bureaucratic machine.

There were major obstacles to building a powerful navy. A fleet that at the same time should be among the world most efficient. Only a few ships were built around 1890 and in the following years, and the Emperor had to increase efficiency significantly. The adventure as a colonial power was not necessarily happy for Germany either. Until 1888 the German navy had consisted of a relatively small fleet whose task was primarily to protect the coasts of the German Empire. A fleet that primarily has to operate in the Baltic Sea. There were neither cruisers nor outright battleships in the fleet.

One of the world's best naval officers and a significant figure in the naval history the German Rear-Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz (1849-1930) had to be called into spearhead the building of the imperial navy. From 1897 and in the following 10-15 years and with expert help from the Netherlands, Denmark and of course England, a large and powerful fleet was built up and this with the main emphasis on great warships with superior gun batteries. In Germany there were almost thirty major shipyards, but none of them had the expertise to build the navy. Therefore, all major warships were built in English shipyards. It was a clear back for Kaiser Wilhelm II. But the apparent strength of the navy and the huge rearmament program at the beginning of the 1900s prompted the Kaiser to go to war in 1914, and thereby starting the World War I against nations such as France and England. But the vessels were built in English shipyards ... [11, p. 200].

The reason for the confidence in the Emperor's strength to go to war lay, among other things, in the fact that, parallel to the building of larger ships, the number of larger battleships grew larger and larger. In the period 1890 to 1918 more than forty larger cruisers and battleships were built for the German navy.

The first was the Battle of Helgoland Bight on August 28, 1914. Ironically, the German fleet had suffered a major defeat to the Danish fleet in 1864 in the same place. And the result was not different this time. Surprised, outnumbered and

outgunned, the German fleet suffered 712 sailors killed, 530 injured and 336 taken prisoner. Three German light cruisers and one torpedo boat were sunk, three light cruisers and three torpedo boats suffered damage. The British suffered casualties of 35 killed and 55 wounded; one light cruiser and three destroyers suffered damage. Ten German ships were sunk against four British. The heavy and minor German warships were not manoeuvrable at all, just as the English crew was far more experienced [8, p. 388-389].

In the two next battles – the Battle of Dogger Bank on January 24, 1915 and the Battle of Jutland on May 31 – June 1, 1916 (the world's largest battle of war ships) the results were even worse. Although both England and Germany claimed victory in June 1916. When the war ended in 1918 the German Imperial Navy had been partly decimated and the last vessels were sailed by the Allies to Scapa Flow in the Orkney Islands location of the British Navy. In 1919 the remaining 64 ships were sunk by the British. The Germans were forbidden to build both cruisers and battleships in the years to come, but not included in the Washington Treaty of February 6, 1922 which would prove to be the indirect cause of the declaration of the Second World War in September 1939 [8, p. 396-397].

The deposition of the German Emperor in November 1918 and changes in the top naval leadership created fresh air in the German General Staff. From 1919 until 1930 sat the German General Staff and analysed how it could go so horribly wrong. Likewise, the German General Staff sat and devised new boat types and improvements to already existing warships. In the 1930s the production of the German fleet started again and this time at German shipyards, especially Deutsche Werk in Kiel. The new class of armoured German class-cruiser ship (Panzer-schiff Deutschland), improvement of the submarine and expansion of the heavy cruiser were the main new secret German plans.

Despite the harsh restrictions placed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles on 28 June 1919 the German military General Staff was not on the quiet side. At the London Naval Conference in April 1930, the restrictions of tonnage of war ships and especially battleships were discussed. Cruisers with a tonnage of 10,000 tons were

more or less forbidden. It ended up that cruisers were divided into two classes, a light class and a heavy class. During the conference, the Germans negotiated a warship agreement with the British. Here it should be possible for the Germans to build a fleet of up to 35% of the English one.

The German cruisers development

The cruisers and heavy cruisers of the beginning of the 20th century are generally a continuation of the old frigates and corvettes from the golden age of sailing ships (the 1400s until the 1700s). Cruisers were intended for the dual role of monitoring and intercepting cargo ships and other marine vessels. The actual difference between the single-decked sailing frigates and the cruisers of the First and Second World War was fundamentally very great because of the technical development between 1890 and 1940. The most important was the entry of the steam engine, the use of iron and steel structures; technical advances in the batteries on-board the ships and the introduction of torpedoes and mines and submarines into the navy.

All the technical advances meant that the individual maritime nation developed its own warships as the various types of technical advances were implemented in the naval nations' fleets. The result was that most important seafaring nations ended up with a collection of slow-sailing vessels with big guns around the year 1900. These were very expensive ships both to build and to maintain. Therefore, many of the smaller maritime nations did not have many chances in terms of rearmament in the various fleets.

This meant that smaller seafaring nations had to develop smaller warships, ships that were far cheaper to operate. The types of warships that fundamentally had to be able to compete both technologically and in terms of equipment with the larger types of cruisers that the major nations produced on the assembly line, otherwise a hierarchy would arise on the oceans. This competition was the reason why three types of ships were leading on the world's oceans: the torpedo boats, the battleships and the cruisers.

A cruiser in the beginning of the 1900s could be different kind of ship types. It was up to the individual country to categorize and name the individual ship types and a cruiser could be anything from a smaller warship to a ship larger than the torpedo boats of the time. The similarities between the ship types of cruisers were that they were fast and that they had a reinforced iron or steel keel. The size could vary from 2,500 tons to 15,000 tons. The calibre of the guns varied mainly between 10.5 cm and 25.4 cm. The cruiser quickly gained acceptance in the structures of the larger fleets.

As discussed, the armoured cruisers became increasingly larger because at the same time they had to be faster than the battleships and have sufficient artillery and armour to fight them. When England built the battleship “Dreadnought” (delivered in 1906), which was larger and faster than any existing battleship, the armoured cruiser faced new challenges. The English’s own bid was the three battle cruisers of the invincible class completed in 1908-09. At 17,400 tons they were almost as big as the British battleship, but they only had 8 powerful guns against the Dreadnought’s 10, and the armour was also weaker. On the other hand, the speed had increased from 21 to 25.5 knots. The battle cruisers have been subjected too much criticism [2, p. 99].

During the 1905 Battle of Tsushima between Japan and Russia, the armoured cruisers had fought side by side with the battleships and fared well. In England the same tactics were used with the result that the battle cruisers suffered catastrophic losses against the German battleships in the Battle of Jutland in 1916. The criticism is only right when it comes to the use of the battle cruisers. When used properly that is as a reconnaissance force or in combat against cruisers, they performed well. For example, at the Battle of the Falklands in 1914 where “Invincible” and its sister-ship “Inflexible” wiped out the German Pacific Squadron. Apart from England, only Germany and Japan had the resources to build battle cruisers. In other countries, ships were started, but abandoned because of the price or the lessons learned from the First World War. Only in the USA was the Alaska-class built during World War II, which were a kind of modern successors to the battle cruisers [2, p. 105’

After the protected cruisers had become too slow, a design for an all-round cruiser type was lacking. For intelligence service, England built special “Scouts” that

were fast enough, but could not cope with other tasks. Not until 1912, when Germany completed the four cruisers of the Magdeburg-class, was there a satisfactory type. These cruisers were both fast (over 27 knots) and well armoured, and had sufficient artillery to destroy merchant ships and fight other cruisers and destroyers. The other countries soon followed, and when the building of warships was regulated by the Washington Treaty in 1922 and by later treaties, the light cruisers were classified as cruisers with a maximum of 15.5 cm artillery. Cruisers with more powerful artillery were designated as heavy cruisers.

The German Admiral Hipper-class cruiser

The German Admiral Hipper-class cruiser was a group of five heavy cruisers built in the mid-1930s. The class comprised the lead ship “Admiral Hipper”, “Blücher III”, “Prinz Eugen”, “Seydlitz” and “Lützow”. Only the first three ships of this class saw action with the German Navy during World War II. Work on “Seydlitz” stopped when she was approximately 95% complete. It was decided to convert it into an aircraft carrier, but this was not completed either. “Lützow” was sold incomplete to the Soviet Union in 1940. In German this type of boat was named “Schwerer Kreuzer” (heavy cruiser). Three main requirements were made for cruisers of this type [12, p. 21-22]: 1) they had to be able to compete with the absolute largest cruisers worldwide, such as the French cruiser “Algeria”, 2) faster than the French cruiser “Dunkirk” and 3) particularly adapted to the use of artillery in the Atlantic with powerful artillery [6, S. 88].

No one cruiser of the Admiral Hipper-class was appreciably successful during World War II.

SMS “Blücher I” (1877-1909)

SMS “Blücher” was a Bismarck-class corvette built for the German Imperial Navy in the late 1870s. These corvettes were ordered as part of a major naval construction program in the early 1870s, and they were designed to serve as a naval scout and on extended tours of Germany’s colonial empire. “Blücher” was laid down in March 1876, launched in September 1877 and commissioned into the fleet in late 1878. Unlike other sister-ships “Blücher” was soon after commissioned into service

converted into a torpedo training ship to experiment with the new self-propelled torpedoes and develop German torpedo-doctrine.

“Blücher” served in this capacity throughout its active career. The vessel was originally based at Kiel in the Baltic Sea, under the command of later Rear-Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz. Between the 1880s and early 1900, most officers and crewmen in the German Navy received their torpedo training aboard ship. On November 6, 1907 a serious boiler explosion occurred on “Blücher”. The boiler, which had not been used by the crew for several weeks, had not been properly prepared by the crew, causing the high-pressure steam line to blow out the front wall. The resulting explosion broke through the deck in front of and behind the funnel and caused serious damage to the ship. Ten men were killed instantly and another twenty four seriously injured, six of whom later died. Since most of the crew was ashore at the time of the accident, the casualties were not even greater. “Blücher” was towed to the port of Flensburg, where a thorough investigation into the accident took place. On February 29, 1908 the ship was struck from the sea register. “Blücher” was instead sold to a Dutch company, which used it as a coal store [3, p. 44].

The ship’s heyday was in the late 1890s, although it was never deployed in war zones. The ship was marked by various conversions. The accident in 1907 was due to a poorly maintained boiler. It was also characteristic that the ship in the beginning of the 1900s was eventually not suitable for modern sailing, and was therefore used for exercises for the crew both in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. The question is what use the ship could have made after the year 1900 in real war situations and naval battles [3, p. 45].

SMS “Blücher II” (1909-1915)

SMS “Blücher II” was the last armoured cruiser built by the German Empire. It was designed to match what German intelligence incorrectly believed to be the specifications of the British Invincible-class battle cruisers. “Blücher” was larger than preceding armoured cruisers and carried more heavy guns, but was unable to match the size and armament of the battle cruisers, which replaced armoured cruisers in the British Royal Navy and German Imperial Navy. “Blücher” was built at the

Kaiserliche Werft shipyard in Kiel between 1907 and 1909, and commissioned on 1 October 1909. The ship served in the I Scouting Group for most of its career, including the early portion of World War I. It took part in the operation to bombard Yarmouth and the raid on Scarborough, Hartlepool and Whitby in 1914. “Blücher’s” tonnage was 17,500 tons and the ship had a length of over 160 meters. With twelve 21 cm, eight 15 cm and sixteen 8.8 cm guns, there was a large ship. But it was almost intended for a duel where “Blücher” and the enemy’s ship were facing each other [10, p. 34].

At the Battle of Dogger Bank on 24 January 1915 “Blücher” was slowed significantly after being hit by gunfire from the British battle cruiser squadron under the command of Vice Admiral David Beatty. Rear Admiral Franz von Hipper, the commander of the German squadron, decided to abandon “Blücher” to the pursuing enemy ships in order to save his more valuable battle cruisers. The cruiser met the fate in the Battle of Dogger Bank in January 1915. The ship was rammed with two quick shots from English ships and the reaction time was long from the German super cruiser. Manoeuvrability was also a problem, even on the open sea, just as it was very vulnerable to the more powerful torpedo boats. The ship went down after a battle of 5-6 hours against the English battle cruisers. The ship rolled onto its side and went down quickly. 792 crewmembers drowned in the sinking [10, p. 38].

“Blücher III” (1937-1940)

When the German General Staff had to start building ships again around 1935, the Blücher III was an obvious choice on the part of the naval officers. The cruiser was launched at the Deutsche Werk in Kiel on June 8, 1937. Blücher III was on every newspaper front page. With a tonnage of more than 18,000 tons and a length of over 200 meters, it was a sight for sore eyes. The tonnage was too large as ships of that format were not allowed to have a tonnage of 10,000 tonnes. When you add to that the fact that during the construction period it was discovered that the ship’s original bow was a serious misjudgement on the part of the architects, yes, then you get the impression again of a warship that is, so to speak, over-equipped, overpowered, too heavy and not manoeuvrable [3, p. 66].

The choice to name heavy cruiser also seems a bit fateful. After all, both “Blücher I” and “Blücher II” had sunk under unfortunate circumstances, just as General Field Marshal Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher’s reputation as a general was not the best.

“Blücher III” was completed in September 1939, shortly after the outbreak of World War II. Many of the technical installations were completely new, indeed never before tried in a warship on a global scale, and the training of the crew took place far too quickly. After all, Germany was at war and the war materiel had to be quickly used in the fight. After completing a series of sea trials and training exercises, the ship was pronounced ready for service with the fleet on 5 April 1940. Even the main and secondary launchers had not been tested on the ship yet. It was armed with a main battery of eight 20.3 cm guns and, although nominally under the 10,000 tons limit set by the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, actually displaced over 16,000 tons [1, S. 97; 3, p. 67].

Immediately upon entering service, “Blücher” was assigned to the task force that supported the invasion of Norway in April 1940. “Blücher” served as the flagship by the Rear-Admiral Oskar Kummetz, the commander of Group 5. The ship led the flotilla of warships into the Oslofjord on the night of 8 April to seize Oslo, the capital of Norway.

As the political situation was chaotic, the 64-year-old commander colonel Birger Eriksen had not received any clear orders and had received no notice as to whether the approaching warships were German or Allied. He was well aware that Norway was officially neutral, but that the government was inclined to side with the British in case of direct Norwegian involvement in the war. Apart from the officers, almost all the soldiers manning the fortress were fresh recruits, having only been conscripted seven days before on 2 April. Because of the influx of 450 fresh recruits, the fortress’ naval mines were not deployed on 9 April. Part of the recruits’ training was to lay the mine barrier, a process planned for a few days later [6, S. 114].

The Battle of Drøbak Sound on April 9, 1940

A German fleet led by the cruiser “Blücher III” was dispatched up the Oslofjord to begin the German invasion of Norway with the objective of seizing Oslo and capturing King Haakon VII and his government. The fleet was engaged in the fjord by Oscarsborg Fortress, an aging coastal installation near Drøbak, that had been relegated to training coastal artillery service members, leading the Germans to disregard its defensive value. However, unbeknownst to German military intelligence, the fortress’ most powerful weapon was a torpedo battery, which would be used to great effect against the German invaders. The fortress’ armaments worked flawlessly despite their age, sinking the “Blücher III” in the sound and forcing the German fleet to fall back. The loss of the German flagship, which carried most of the troops and Gestapo agents, intended to occupy Oslo [4; 9, p. 44].

Although the battle station for the main battery and commander-in-chief at Oscarsborg fortress was on Håøya – northwest of Søndre Kaholmen – Colonel Birger Eriksen chose to take up a battle position in the reserve station on the eastern flank of the battery. At 4:21 am on 9 April Eriksen gave the order to open fire on the flagship of the unidentified fleet that was pressing towards the capital. Colonel was asked if they were really going to shoot with live ammunition. Eriksen answered: “Yes”, – before adding a now well-known sentence: “Either I will be court-martialled, or I will be a war hero. Fire!” [5, p. 3].

Two shells from the 28 cm Krupp guns “Moses” and “Aron” were fired at the German cruiser “Blücher III” at a distance of around 1400 meters. “Moses” and “Aron” were loaded with 255 kilos of high-explosive grenades, and firing them in aggression broke the then-current rules that warning shots should be fired first, as the fortifications further south had done. Colonel Birger Eriksen later explained his action by saying that warning shots, including live shots, had been fired further south in the Oslo Fjord; since the German warships continued to press north, and refused to respond to calls, he could consider them as enemy ships [1, S. 83].

The first salvo hit “Blücher III” right in front of the aft mast, and set fire to the middle of the ship right up to the fore mast. The second shot in the salvo hit the

forward gun turret – something that further set fire to the ship and sent large parts of the turret into the fjord. The main battery managed only these two shots, as reloading time with 30 fresh recruits did not allow for more shots. Only a group of trained artillerymen were present, but these were split up between the two guns, with fresh recruits and other personnel to assist. Among the personnel were Oscarsborg's cooks, who were awakened to help with the batteries. Nor was there time to fire the third cannon "Josva", which was loaded but unmanned [5, p. 75].

The reason why the two shots fired caused so much damage to the "Blücher III" was that the first shell penetrated the side of the ship and exploded in an ammunition store. The ammunition store contained oil cans, smoke dispensers, incendiary bombs, sinking mines and bombs for the ship's Arado Ar 196 seaplane. The bulkheads around the ammunition store were destroyed and the oil ignited, which led to a large fire. The second shell knocked out the electronics for the ship's main weapons, rendering them unable to respond to the fire [6, S. 69].

"Blücher III" immediately began to founder as water poured in and its turbines stopped. Meanwhile, the fire in the hangar got worse. As the ship was drifting on to the rocks on the side of the fjord, an order was given to drop an anchor. At 6.30 am there was a large explosion as a magazine blew up. A great column of smoke shot into the sky. By 7.00 am the stricken warship had developed a 45 degree list and soon the ship lay on its side. At 7.31 am "Blücher III" sank beneath the surface, and subsequently there was a further explosion and flames could be seen under the water. The ship has only one small boat useable as a lifeboat, which was used to transport wounded to the shore, but the bulk of the 2,500 sailors and commando who survived were faced with having to swim the 400 or 500 yards, either to the eastern shore or to a small island in the middle of the fjord. The water was freezing. The danger to the survivors was increased by burning oil, which spread over the water threatening to engulf them. In all, almost 1,000 Germans lost their lives [9, p. 46].

Conclusion

If we start with the actual sinking of as well "Blücher II" as "Blücher III" it strikes one that the ships, when they are put into battle, bear the stamp of an old-

fashioned war machine in modern surroundings. A bit like the use of the French Maginot Line or Ships built for potion warfare like trench warfare. Both ships do not seem manoeuvrable and the first shots both in the battle of Dogger Bank and in the battle of Drøbak Sound almost give the ships their death blow.

And it is obvious that the war material must live up to the usual standard in the war in question. Both “Blücher II” and “Blücher III” were built somewhat based on the same objectives of the greater the tonnage and the calibre of the guns, the better warship. But better to be small and agile than big and lazy. But not everything was the fault of the ship’s construction itself. The German military General Staff, at least as far as the navy was concerned, lived in a different reality than reality. The cruiser was on its way out of the picture in several maritime nations, and around 1930 it was other ship types, that interested the nations. But also the actual prelude to the deployment of the heavy cruisers of the Admiral Hipper-class in war situations caused problems for the Germans. Without really well-prepared preliminary work with both officers and crew members on heavy cruisers, just as the material in other cases had neither been reviewed, tested let alone used, gives an image that a warship that was not at all equal to the effort it had to deliver on the open sea.

It must also be noted, that both “Blücher I” and “Blücher II” as military equipment at sea stood in stark contrast to the military equipment the Germans had on land. In a very short time was greater part of Eastern Europe conquered with armoured vehicles, tanks and equipment that were classes and other war materiel in the European countries. The word armour must be part of the solution of this riddle. As good and effective as armoured material was in the war on land it is just as heavy and inflexible on the open sea. Among other things, after the battle at Drøbak and after the fate of the other heavy cruisers at the start of the Second World War, not only the Germans but also the other naval nations ended the productions of very heavy cruiser battle ships. Aircraft carriers have replaced the very heavy cruisers and battle ships.

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