

The Royal Navy gained an enormous advantage with the capture of almost all the *Kriegsmarine's* official records. At the end of April 1945 a 30th Assault Unit detachment seized the German naval archives at Tambach castle, near Coburg.²⁷ The find included older historical files, technical reports, operational accounts, and war diaries. Historians and archivists at Tambach had decided to use wood and gasoline set aside for destruction of the archives to keep themselves warm through the winter.²⁸ The Royal Navy's sudden appearance solved the difficult professional dilemma of whether the archivists, not very keen on the idea in the first place, should destroy the records by some alternative means.

The Royal Navy recognized the significance of the papers. After inspecting Tambach, Commander Fleming recommended sending all post-1933 records, along with Korvettenkapitan Dr. Peter Freiherr Handel-Mazetti, the chief archivist, to the Admiralty.²⁹ The Tambach papers were centralized in London with naval files found in other scattered locations within the American and British Zones. Through prior arrangements, all records were 'the joint property of the British and U.S. Navies in the custody and under the direction of the Director of Naval Intelligence.'³⁰ The Admiralty instituted an ambitious classification, examination, and translation project, based upon its existing captured documents filing system.

Given the vast quantity of records, the identification and selection of pertinent documents posed a major challenge. WRNS personnel from the Special Duties (Y) Section prepared brief summaries for circulation to various Admiralty departments, and then made written or oral translations of documents considered to be of further interest.³¹ Technical and scientific topics generally received highest priority. For example, some documents provided valuable insights into German torpedo development.³² The papers proved especially useful in interrogating naval officers and scientists. The written records provided background information, refreshed failing memories on particular details, and checked the accuracy of oral statements.

Other records dealt with naval policy, both before and during the war. Since military occupation aimed at the elimination of German naval power, John Mossop, a lawyer in the Admiralty's Military Branch, considered the material 'worth study with an eye to the future.'³³ Translated documents exposed German evasions of the Treaty of Versailles and secret naval rearmament under the Nazis. The Tambach archives furnished the major evidential source in the later prosecution of major and minor war criminals.³⁴ These written documents disclosed the extent to which German leaders actively planned and waged wars of aggression.

Capture of the naval archives presented a unique opportunity. The victor navies were in absolute possession of most surviving records from the *Kriegsmarine* and its predecessors. At the direction of Captain Dudley Knox, USN, in Washington, special teams at COMNAVEU's headquarters in Grosvenor Square began a large-scale registration and microfilm programme to obtain 'a reasonably complete set of archives (microfilm form) for general historical reference in the future.'³⁵ The Royal Navy and US Navy intended to use German sources in writing official and staff histories. In just under two years, the American teams produced 3,905 microfilm reels from records selected by Captain Roland Krause, USN.³⁶ The Admiralty, which retained the original documents in London, imposed strict restrictions on access. During the trial of major war criminals at Nuremberg, the Director of Naval Intelligence opposed defence requests to inspect documents and war diaries in order 'to prevent the Germans from exploiting the contents of the records with a view to resurrecting their capacity for a future war.'³⁷ Although eventually forced to provide limited access, the Royal Navy claimed

proprietary rights to the German naval archives. Unlike the inter-war period, German naval authorities could not make use of historical writing and records to preserve a naval tradition and rebuild German sea power.³⁸ The official written memory of the German navy was firmly under British control.

Supplemental to the archival records, the Admiralty selected senior naval officers to write essays dealing with various political, operational, and specialized topics from the war. The rationale served more than just historical purposes. Burrough suggested sending to Great Britain officers, 'who are considered to be of outstanding importance and who, if left in Germany, might use their great knowledge to the detriment of the United Nations.'³⁹ Officers busily employed in writing could not become potential impediments to naval disarmament. Lieutenant-Commander Ralph W.B. Izzard, RNVR, and the Royal Navy's Forward Interrogation Unit cultivated a high level of confidence with many senior naval officers.⁴⁰ The voluntary essays were a natural extension of this interrogation work.....

²⁷ OAB/NHC, US Naval Technical Mission in Europe, Series I, Box 2, File 'U.S. Naval Technical Mission Europe Reports 1944-45', Message from NTS G-2 SHAFF to Admiralty, COMNAVEU, ANCXF, 27 1518 April 1945. LHC, Job, Memoir, 'Special Service', p. 169. The German naval staff had evacuated the records from Berlin to Tambach to escape Allied bombing.

²⁸ Charles Burdick, 'The Tambach Archives: A Research Note', *Military Affairs* 36(Dec. 1972), p. 125. Jonathan Steinberg, *Yesterday's Deterrent: Tirpitz and the Birth of the German Battle Fleet*, (London: Macdonald, 1965), p. 6.

²⁹ OAB/NHC, US Naval Technical Mission in Europe, Series I, Box 2, File 'US Naval Technical Mission in Europe 1944-45', Message from SHAFF Main NTS G-2 to Admiralty, 06 01110 May 1945. Lieutenant H.P. Earle, USNR, and Lieutenant A. Penn, RNVR, upon arrival at Tambach on 12 June, moved the remaining 30,000 documents, weighing almost twenty tons, into two large locked rooms, searched surrounding fields and houses, crated records for evacuation, and politely heard grievances from the Countess of Ortenburg, the castle's still-resident owner. NA, RG 313, COMNAVEU, Series II, File 53, Letter from Commodore Tully Shelley, USN, Intelligence Officer to COMNAVEU, 3 July 1945.

³⁰ NA, RG 313, COMNAVEU, Series II, File 53, Memorandum from Captain I.M.R. Campbell, Deputy Director of Naval Intelligence to All Sections, 'NID Captured Documents Library', 30 Aug. 1945. Once sorted and catalogued, each file was assigned a PG number, short for 'Pinched from the Germans'. Howard M. Ehrmann, 'The German Naval Archives (Tambach)', Robert Wolfe, ed., *Captured German and Related Records*, (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1974), p. 158.

³¹ IWM, Ackroyd, Letter 27, Phyllis Whitmarsh, [n.d.].

³² DHist, 181.009 (593), 'A Short Description of Torpedoes Types ZAUNBUTT and ZAUNWAL', 12 Dec. 1945.

³³ PRO, ADM 199/443, Staff Minute by J.C. Mossop, 10 Sept. 1945.

³⁴ PRO, ADM 116/5550, Access Register, 'Information from the Tambach Archives, September-October 1945'. Anthony K. Martienssen, *Hitler and His Admirals*, (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1949), pp. 1-7.

³⁵ NA, RG 313, COMNAVEU, Series II, File 53, Letter from Captain D.W. Knox to Commander T.B. Kittredge, 13 June 1945.

³⁶ Ernest M. Eller, 'United States Navy Microfilm of the German Naval Archives', Wolfe, p. 169. See also OAB/NHC, German Naval Archives, Boxes T-136 and T-137.

³⁷ PRO, ADM 116/5549, Memorandum from Director of Naval Intelligence to Military Branch, 31 Jan. 1946.

³⁸ Keith Bird, 'The Origins and Role of German Naval History in the Inter-war Period 1918-1939', *Naval War College Review* 32(1979), p. 43.

³⁹ NA, RG 313, COMNAVEU, Series II, File 53, Memorandum from Captain W.A. Finn, USNR, Intelligence Officer to COMNAVEU Intelligence Officer, 'History of German Naval Warfare', 25 Aug. 1945.

⁴⁰ CCAC, Miscellaneous 49, Report from Lieutenant-Commander Ralph W.B. Izzard to Captain J.H. Lewes to British Naval Commander-in-Chief Germany, 'Activities of Forward Interrogation Unit 17th November 1944 to 1st January 1946', Section X.