Notes on German Naval Slang during the War

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there are internal proportions. This epistolary autobiography omits all mention of the *Progrès des Allemands* and it might even be alleged by quotation from it that Bielfeld had as signal a contempt for German letters as Frederick himself. This would be an exaggeration; but Lehdorff found in Dec. 1752 that he had 'ein wenig das komische Gebaren der Neugeadelten an sich.' He was not sure of his ground; and the question of German literature was, amongst other things, a means of social classification. His attitude towards it was timid, vacillating, and contradictory. Propagandism, moreover, of any kind would seem to have been alien to his native mental docility.

His one contribution to German literature was a weekly paper which, from 1768 to 1769—the year preceding his death, he wrote and published at Leipzig, under the title *Der Eremit*. Perhaps, remote from the social glamour of Berlin, he saw the anomaly of his own position more clearly; but he did not realise to what extent the hegemony of French was already undermined. And while his own book contributed little, if anything, to this result—and apparently nothing to the better knowledge of the new literature in France—it has an interest as a collateral symptom of the reviving national conscience in German literary art of the eighteenth century.

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NOTES ON GERMAN NAVAL SLANG DURING THE WAR.

The following selection of German naval slang expressions may serve as a supplement to the article on German war words published in the *Modern Language Review* for January, 1919. Except when otherwise indicated, the expressions were collected orally. The quotations are made in the main from (1) Oberleutnant z. S. Heins von Heimburg, *U-boot gegen U-boot*, Berlin, 1917; (2) *U-Boote im Eismeer* (anonymous), Berlin, 1917; (3) Kapitänleutnant Walter Forstmann, *U. 39 auf Jagd im Mittelmeer*, Berlin, 1918.

The submarine is responsible for a large percentage of the innovations. The vessel itself was called *die Röhre* and its crew *Röhrenbewohner* by the men of the High Sea Fleet, who, in retaliation, were dubbed *Panzerkulis* or *Schwabberkulis* (from 'schwabbern,' to swab decks). Torpedo boats were known as *die schwarzen Gesellen* or *die schwarzen Leute*, and the old battleships of the 'Wittelsbach' class were grouped together as the *Gummigeschwader* (owing to the elastic

behaviour of their side armour at full speed !). The obsolete ships laid up in Kiel roads were said to be *auf dem Friedhof*.

The personnel of the submarine included the *Kommandant*, familiarly known as *der Alte*, the first officer or *Eins W. O.* (= *Wachoffizier*, English 'Number One') and the engineer officer, *der Leitende* or *L. I.* (= *Leitende Ingenieur*, English 'Chief'). The engine-room petty officers or *Ölprinzen* had under them the *Ölheizier* or *Ölkannjongleurs*. The *Elektrodenpumper* were in charge of the battery or *Torfkiste*, a curious word explained by the fact that the cells were fitted beneath the men's sleeping quarters (*wo man sich auf den Torf legt*). The wireless hands, e.g. *F. T. Maat* and *F. T. Gäste*, were *Funkenpuster*; cf. English 'sparks' for the wireless operator. They worked in the *Funknbude*, a narrow room partitioned off from the *Zentrale* or control-room. Then there was the cook, *Schmutt* or more endearingly *Schmuttchen* (cf. Forstmann, p. 172), who provides much comic relief in the narratives.

The submarine's chief weapon was the torpedo or *Blehherring* (English slang: 'fish' or 'mouldy'). A torpedo missing its mark was said to go *um die Ecke* or was called more technically a *Grundgänger*, if it was expected to hit the bottom. A torpedo which swept round in a circle and returned on its course was a *Kreisläufer*. U. 39 had special names for its torpedoes, viz. *Reissteufler*, *Wolkenbrecher*, *die dicke Berta*, *Olympic* (cf. Forstmann, pp. 112 f.). One of the worst enemies of the submarine was the depth charge (*Wasserbombe*), familiarly known as *Knallbonbon*. Where these were plentiful, *herrschte dicke Luft* (an expression as popular as our 'getting the wind up'). The prevalence of these risks caused the Irish Sea to be known as the *Hexenkessel*; another dangerous locality was the *U-bootsloch*.

The smaller anti-submarine craft, trawlers, drifters, etc. were classed together as *Kroppzeug* or *Mahalla* (cf. Forstmann, p. 140). Trawlers were *Kopf- und Arschdampfer*, 'tramps' were *Schlurren* (Low-German for 'slipper'). Any ship could be called a *Kasten* or *Kiste* (cf. English 'tub'). To some speakers a 'dazzle-painted' ship was known as a *bunte Kuh*!

In connection with navigation the following are of interest: *zick-zacken*, *kringeln* ('dieses ewige aussichtslose Kringeln um Helgoland herum,' Forstmann, p. 18), *Strich steuern* (= to steer true). Of a less technical character are: *schippern* ('ein Franzose, der anscheinend von Marseille nach Oran schipperte,' Forstmann, p. 72; *ibid.* p. 152), *herumschwabbern* ('er darf nicht hier herumschwabbern, sonst rechnen ihm seine Reeder die Zeitversäumnisse nach,' *U-Boote im Eismeer*, p. 46), *herumgondeln* (*ibid.* p. 47), the latter being by no means restricted to naval slang.

In the narratives the vocabulary of the chase is ransacked for metaphors and similes, which, however, rather belong to the study of literary jargon than to slang proper. These figures include the variants for a rich prize or 'good catch,' e.g. *ein fetter Bissen*, *ein (grosser) Fang*, *ein guter Happen*; *Jagdgebiet* or 'hunting grounds' for the area of operations; *Rudel* for a formation of destroyers (cf. Heimburg, p. 39); *pirschen*, *heranpirschen* for 'stalking' an enemy ship (cf. Forstmann, p. 92); *wie der Weidmann Wechsel und Fährte des Wildes ausmacht* (ibid. p. 90); *auf Wartstellung* and *auf der Lauer* (cf. Forstmann, p. 108).

The talk of the engine-room supplies the following picturesque expressions: *Schaufelsalat*¹ for the 'stripping' of turbine blades; *abknattern* in '500 Seemeilen abknattern,' cf. to 'knock off'; *kurbeln*, lit. to 'crank,' then generally to turn a handle, figuratively e.g. in *Wachtdienst abkurbeln*; *schlieren* for the 'scoring' of friction plates; *Panne* for a breakdown; *Karre* for a pump. *Zirkulationswasserpumpe* was often compressed into the more convenient *Zirkuline*. The English word 'Compound' in 'Compound-maschine' was sometimes stressed on the last syllable and pronounced [ko'pu:nd]. *Plunger*, *Plungerpumpe* were much used, pronounced in the German way. The English 'overlap' and 'overhaul' appeared as *überlappen* and *überholen*. The air in the engine-room, which to the writers was *ölgeschwängert*, was more popularly *vermieft* or 'fuggy.' A neat portmanteau word is worth mentioning here: *ölelektrisch fahren*, i.e. to run one Diesel for propulsion while the other charges the battery. 'Full speed' is *Alle* [álé:] from *Alle Fahrt*. 'Utmost speed ahead' is abbreviated A.K.v. (*Äusserste Kraft voraus*).

Of terms employed in connection with signalling by wireless or other methods the following are selected: *knistern* and *morsen* for to 'wireless'; *winkern* for 'flag-wagging'; *Funkenstrippe* for the area in which messages could be received, e.g.: 'von der Funkenstrippe des Admirals loskommen' (Forstmann, p. 39); *Funkenstengen* as a variant of *F. T. masten*. Submarine signalling by hydrophone is *U. T.* (= *Unterwasser-telegraphie*).

A few expressions appended below are less susceptible of classification, e.g. *pennen*, *einpennen*, to sleep, 'doss'—much used outside the navy as well; *sich aus den Kinken bergen*, 'to show a clean pair of heels'; *Bleilutsch* for the game of 'shovelboard' (not in Muret-Sanders); *versacken*, *wegsacken* to 'founder' or 'settle'; *Stall* equivalent to our submarine 'pens' or berths (Forstmann, p. 42); 'die Schiffsglocke glast

¹ A curious parallel to this use of *Salat* is *Wortsalat* for the confused babble, characteristic of certain types of insanity.

bereits acht Glas' (ibid. p. 181); *das haut fein hin* (Forstmann, p. 145), and *es hätte nicht besser mit der Zeit hinhalten können* (ibid. p. 23), of to 'chime in,' fit in; *peilen*, lit. to take a bearing or to take soundings, fig. to scan, 'take in' with a glance; *alles ist wieder in Lot*, i.e. in trim, shipshape; *ausgebüxt* for *ausrangiert*, i.e. 'paid off' (Forstmann, p. 161); *seetoll* for seasick (Heimburg, p. 104); *Stropp* in 'ein englischer Kreuzer, der dort tagaus tagein auf seinem *Stropp* pendelte' (Heimburg, p. 105) for 'billet'; *angeprescht kommen* for to 'dash up' (ibid. p. 124), *vorbeipreschen*, to dash by; *Hühnerleiter* for the companion from control-room to conning-tower (K. T. or *Kommandoturm*); *Wettergott*, clerk of the weather; *auf uns losballern*, to 'let fly' at us. Of a man who failed to return from a cruise it was said *er hat dran glauben müssen* or *er ist geblieben*. There appears to be no equivalent for 'Davy Jones's locker,' the idea being expressed by 'die Wellen' or 'die salzige Flut' (the 'briny'), also *ein kühles Grab finden, den Seemannstod finden*. A few additional expressions will be found in René Delcourt, *Expressions d'Argot Allemand et Autrichien*, pp. 34 f. and 59.

As to the borrowings from other languages and dialects it may be noted that most of the sailors use the form *zwo* for 'zwei' and are fond of interlarding their talk with English words. In addition to such technical terms as *Trawler*, *Drifter*, *Tankdampfer*, *Tauchtanks* (ballast-tanks), *Tide* (also Low-German), *backbrassen* (to heave to), *der Wunsch* instead of 'die Winde,' *Transporter*, *gestoppt liegen*, *war-channel*, etc., I noted the following: *alright*, *jumpen* (pronounced in the German way), *auf-picken* for *auffischen*, *Palauer*, *Mimikry* (stressed on second syllable, for 'dazzle-painting'), *pullen*, *Englischmann*, *skipper*, *Käpten*, *plenty*, e.g. in *plenty Geld*.

Many other Anglicisms occur in the publications in proportion to the narrators' knowledge of English.

In conclusion the writer would like to point out that in the published narratives of the submarine cruises alone there are, in addition to the slang expressions selected here, a large number of nautical and maritime words which have not yet been adequately recorded in the dictionaries and which would repay the labour of collection and classification.

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NOTE. In this connection it is of interest to note the following English words used by *Norwegian* seamen in making their Maritime Declarations before the Courts convened to investigate war losses,

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e.g. *steamer*, *steambaat*, *tugbaat*, *destroyer*, *konvoy*, *submarine* (also *U-baat*), *eskortetrawler*, *patrolbaat* or *patruljebaat*, *fiskekutter*, *gig*; *jam*, *bacon*, *props* (with double plural *propser*), *en tynd wire*, *boks*, *koks* (= 'coke'), *skrapjern*, *pigjern*, *groundnuts*, *log wood*; *breakwateret*, *pieren*; *donkey manden*, *young mand* ('ship's boy'); *laare* (to 'lower'), *reversere*, *gaa klos*, *passere klods forbi*; *blokadezone* (also *sperrezone* from *Sperrgebiet*); *rigger*, *fuldrigger*, *forpik*, etc.