

Episode 11: The Interwar Period (1919-1939)

The Defense Scheme of 1922

The First World War was supposed to be the end of all wars and after its end, there was a general tendency throughout the world, even in those countries that had managed to stay out of hostilities, to regard all military service with disgust.

Politically, this was expressed in the formation of the League of Nations (an organization which was later part of the inspiration for the creation of what we know today as the United Nations)

From the beginning, the League of Nations had a profound influence on the politics of the interwar years and became the forum where small and large problems, including disarmament plans in many forms, were discussed. This influence, which naturally had to be, also had a strong impact on Danish defense policy. On 31 March 1919, the navy's security force was abolished after the mine clearance in Danish waters was considered completed.

Now the politicians put their trust in the League of Nations, and in the future Denmark would only need a modest neutrality guard and perhaps just a naval police at sea, as was proposed by the politicians and the Navy, like the Army, was heavily cut in the interwar years. New defense arrangements offered one cut after another, leaving a fleet without a fixed framework and without a purpose clause. The politicians were not receptive to factual arguments from the navy's management.

There were drastic cuts in the navy's grants and these savings campaigns strongly inhibited the training and exercise activities in the navy, at the same time insufficient maintenance and lack of renewal made it almost incomprehensible how such a high standard could be maintained as it actually succeeded.

First royal visit to Greenland

On 17 June 1921, Commander Cold, the commander of the cruiser Valkyrie, raises the royal flag on the king's voyage to the Faroe Islands and Iceland. King Christian X continues as the first Danish king to Greenland, but since the Valkyrie is not built to sail in ice-filled waters, the king has to change to De Forenede Dampskibs Selskaber's ship Island with the escort of the inspection ship Fylla.

The Crown Prince Appointed Naval Officer



Crown Prince Frederik as newly appointed naval officer 1921 (Jens-Ole B. Nielsen)

Later that year, on 20 September 1921, Crown Prince Frederik (later King Frederik IX) was appointed a naval officer. To his father's (King Chr. X) great chagrin, Crown Prince Frederik had chosen to train in the navy rather than in the army (Chr. X made a career as an officer in the Life Guards, where he became supreme commander in 1905)

As the first Danish crown prince, the Crown Prince had gone through the Royal Navy's Cadet School on equal terms with the other cadets and then made a career as an officer.

In 1927 he was given his first command of a torpedo boat and he advanced through several stages until his appointment as rear admiral in 1945.

Several of the naval officer comrades became friends for life, and the experiences from the sea came to a large extent to shape Frederik IX's style of government.

A Danish fleet at a bare minimum

In order to determine a modernized basis for the composition of the defense, in relation to the "*Ordnningen of 1909*", and adapt this to the new basis for Danish defense, a defense commission was set up which, among other things, dealt in great detail with the conditions during the neutrality watch 1914-18 and with the Danish-German negotiations that had preceded the defense arrangement of 1909.

The bill that was the result of this commission's work, *the defense scheme of 1922*, came to contain many innovations in the organizational and personnel field, but at the same time great challenges arose from the very beginning, as the navy's budget was cut by 25% . however, wanted to preserve as much as possible of the existing equipment, a sharp disparity arose between the equipment included in the Navy's numbers and the amount of money available for its maintenance and for new construction.

At the same time, both the equipment account and the salary account were insufficient, so that it was in no way possible to train and maintain personnel that corresponded to the material

The admiralty and the navy issued repeated warnings about the indefensible and dangerous nature of the course that had been taken in the field of materiel, but the majority of politicians were not receptive to factual arguments. On the contrary, the social democratic and radical side continued to work towards complete disarmament.

A proposal to replace the Navy with a sea police even reached the Riksdag's table, and even the more defense-friendly bourgeois parties contributed to weakening the defense's position by their mutual dispute over a few million more or less for the defense.

A dispute that led to the fall of the left-wing Madsen-Mygdal government in 1929 and thus the formation of the second Stauning government.

The structure of the fleet 1922

In accordance with the law of 1922, the fleet was to consist of the *Line* and the *Reserve*

The line, including:

- 6 warships (coastal armored ships) with a total tonnage of approx. 18,000 t • 24 torpedo and submarine boats of a total of approx. 7,000 t • 2 mine ships in total. 1,000 t
- other ships and vessel equipment for mine blasting. • Aircraft equipment.

The reserve comprising:

- 1 cruiser for overseas voyages, • Fisheries inspection ships • survey ships.

When the law came into force, it can probably be said that the listed material was present to some extent.

The line included:

- 4 warships with a total tonnage of approx. 14,000 t, of which the oldest (Herluf Trolle) was approx. 23 years old
- 9 torpedo boats and 12 submarines, a total of approx. 4,000 t • 1 minesweeper • and a lot of guard vessels and mine blocking equipment.

The reserve consisted of:

- The warship Skjold and 2 small older cruisers, a total of approx. 5,000 t • 3 torpedo boats and 2 submarines • as well as some mine blocking equipment. • 1 cruiser Valkyrien, • 4 inspection ships, • 3 survey ships and tenders were built as ships for special purposes. • The school ship (schooner) Ingolf, • transport ships and vessels • and the royal ship Dannebrog (1879-1932), which was also included in the Navy's figures.

The Navy and Naval Officer Corps are being reorganized

In the scheme of 1922, the Navy's previous non-commissioned officer corps was abolished, as those in question were transferred to deck officer positions corresponding to the Army's concurrently introduced officers, on an equal footing with other officers. 07 August 1921 with the adoption of the Swedish Navy Act, the navy's units are divided into divisions:

- The ship division with commander Commander Frederik Cold
- The torpedo boat division with commander Captain Christiern A. Broberg (subordinate to the ship division but separated from it on 8 October 1924)
- The Submarine Division with Chief Captain Henry C. Gad

In the Naval Officer Corps, the designations captain lieutenant and war captain as well as naval lieutenant of the 2nd and 1st degree were introduced instead of second lieutenant and first lieutenant, but the number of standard officer positions was set so low that the available equipment could barely be manned.

The submarine division is created

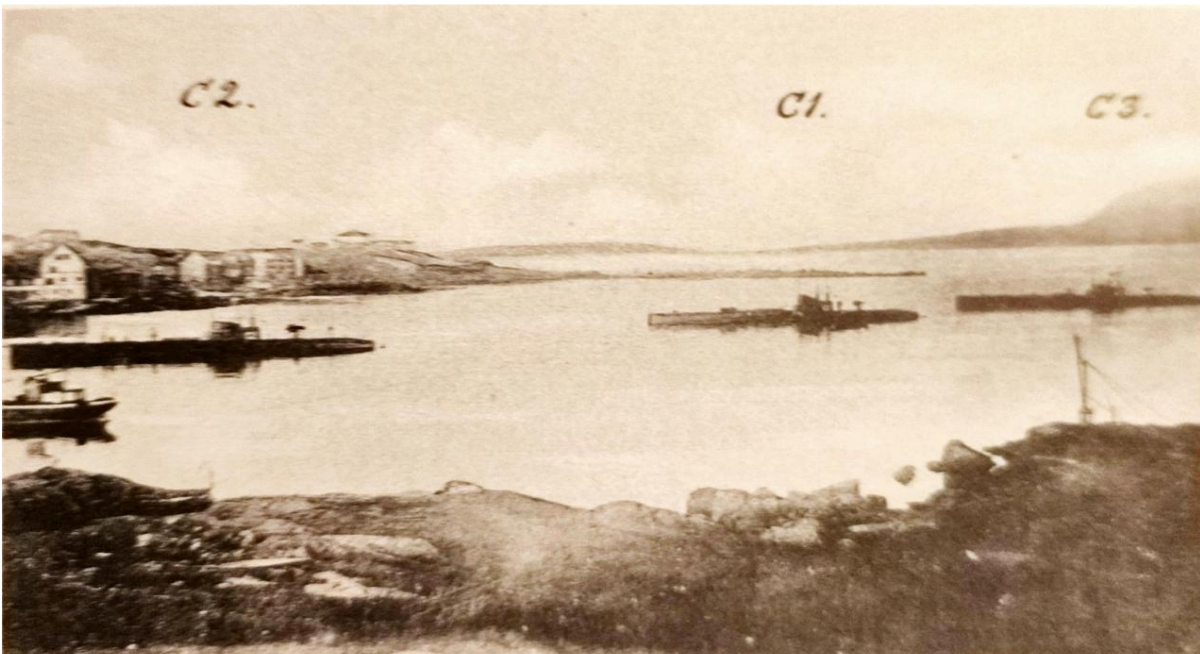


*Danish submarines at sea in the interwar years. At the front of the picture you can see the two D-class boats, with DRYADEN in front DAPHNE Behind you can see 2 C-class submarines with BELLONA at the front, and at the back of the picture you can just make out 2 B-class submarines.
(Photo from Orlogsmuseet archive)*

The submarine force had proven its value by guarding neutrality during the First World War and became one of the few parts of the Navy that was not affected by the massive cutbacks that followed in the interwar years and in 1920, 3 submarines participated in the celebration of Sønder Jutland becoming Danish again,

In 1922, the submarines were gathered in the Submarine Division, and this type of weapon was actually the most active part of the Danish naval defense and probably also the most effective during the entire interwar period. In the same year, two of the C-class submarines took part in a tour that, among other things, went to Stockholm and in 1923 submarines of the B class dived in the North Sea as the first Danish submarines.

This was surpassed already in the summer of the following year when the 3 new submarines of the C-class went on a long voyage around England and Scotland to the Faroe Islands - of course without an accompanying ship



Bellona, Rota and Flora on Thorshavn's red. During the stay in Thorshavn, Rota was given a new and untried task. A pregnant woman had to be picked up at Svino and sailed to the hospital at Thorshavn. As a result of the trip with the submarine, the child (a boy) was subsequently christened Rotaldur (Marine's Library)

After the sinking of the Diver, the fleet had 6 submarines of the A class (Havden, Thetis, Havfruen, 2den April, Najaden and Nymfen) and 5 submarines of the B class (Ægir, Ran, Triton, Neptun and Galathea), but from 1920 a further 3 boats (Rota, Bellona and Flora) of the new C-class and from 1926 two more new boats (Daphne and Dryaden) of the D-class were added, at the same time some of the older A-class and B-class submarines were phased out, but in periods prevailed The navy has more than 10 operational submarines.

The new D-Class was equipped with a total of six torpedo tubes, a strong armouring, which was however reduced as the two aft torpedo tubes were outside the pressure hull, which made it impossible to reload these tubes while the submarine was submerged. Furthermore, they were fitted with a 75 mm deck gun for use against surface targets and a 20 mm machine gun for use against aircraft. At the same time, the specific requirements that the Danish waters set for the submarines came through, so the D class did not go deeper than 2.5 meters when the navy demanded that the boats should be able to sail through the Bøgestrømmen east of Vordingborg

The majority of the submarines were constantly under command, which was partly necessary, e.g. for the sake of the maintenance of the accumulator batteries in particular. The batteries of the submarines benefited from being in frequent use, and since it required almost as large a crew to maintain a submarine as to keep it under command, the submarines throughout their service were one of the most active weapons in the navy.

In the beginning, the submarines' machinery and weapon systems were plagued by a number of "childhood diseases", which, together with the submarines' low surface speed, meant that it was not easy for them to form part of a force together with surface ships. One of the problems was communication between submerged units. In the first year, communication between the submerged submarines took place by means of a bell that sent out Morse signals through the water. However, most of the childhood diseases were solved immediately before or during the First World War. In the 1920s, e.g. underwater telegraphy to communicate with each other, and the A- and B-class command hoist was the starting point for a series of major exercises between the submarines and the surface units. The competition between the submarines and the surface vessels was fierce. While the officers of the submarines wanted to prove the combat value of the submarines, the officers on the surface vessels wanted to prove the opposite, as the Germans' sinking of the Lusitania in 1915 had created a reluctance among many naval officers who believed that submarines were a sneaky way of warfare.

The realistic exercises between the submarines and the surface ships, combined with the fact that the few officers on board the surface ships knew much about how the submarines maneuvered resulted in a number of dangerous situations and in several cases direct collisions between the Danish units. In 1922 the submarine Neptun collided with the submarine Triton while both were operating submerged, and later that year Neptun also collided with the torpedo boat Springereren. In both cases, those involved escaped without major damage, although the torpedo boat suffered a minor leak and the submarine had its bridge damaged.

In 1923, Bellona had her periscope bent after a collision with the cruiser Geyser, and two years later things went wrong again for the submarine, which again damaged its periscopes when it was hit by the torpedo boat Hvalrossen. In the same year, Ægir had her deck gun torn off during a collision with a torpedo boat. In 1926 Rota was rammed by the cruiser Hejmdal, and the following year Galathea had her periscope bent during a similar exercise.

Last but not least, in 1928 Daphne was sailed by Rota while both operated the dive.

Fortunately, neither submarines nor people were seriously injured in the aforementioned collisions.



Aerial photograph showing the collision between the cruiser Hejmdal and the submarine Rota in 1926. It is clearly seen how the two vessels reverse strongly to avoid the collision. Which, however, did not succeed completely (Marinens bibliotek)

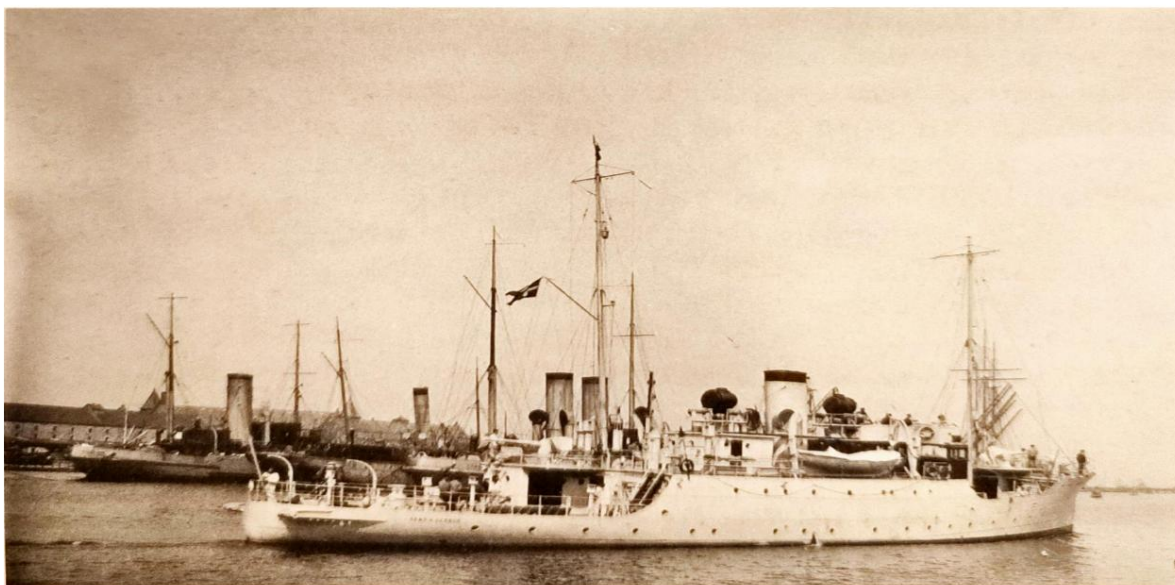
Submarines' Lifeline - Depot and workshop ships

In order for the submarines to operate far from the main base on Holmen, it became necessary to equip a workshop and depot ship that could follow the submarines on their voyages. The navy therefore chose in 1917 to convert the old gunboat Grønsund into the submarine squadron's first companion ship.



The workshop ship Grønsund with a submarine on the port side and one of the navy's HM II aircraft astern. After Henrik Gerner had taken command (1928), Grønsund was laid out on the islet as a floating workshop for the submarines. It lay here until 1950, when the 67-year-old ship was sold for scrapping (Marinens bibliotek)

From 1916 until 1928, the ship functioned as the mother ship for the submarines, but in the mid-1920s the old ship was reaching its end of life, and it became necessary to find a new ship for the submarines. For the first - and only - time a ship was built that was tailor-made for the task, and on 4 January Henrik Gerner set off from the Orlogsværftet's new shipbuilding facility on the dock island.



The depot and workshop ship Henrik Gerner (Marine's library)

The H-Class

In 1934 the shipyard began to project a new class of submarines to replace the gradually obsolete units of the B-Class (The last boat in the A-class had been phased out in 1932).

In order to keep the order, it was originally the idea that the new submarines should have been named the E class, but here problems were encountered in finding names, a problem which was further reinforced by the fact that the Navy had started to let the submarines have the same names with the D class initial as the class.

It was therefore decided that the names of the units should instead begin with hav-. The submarines were named Havmanden, Havfruen and Havkalen and were jointly referred to as the H-class. The Havmanden was launched in June 1937 and took command for the first time in October 1938, and seven months later Havfruen entered the fleet's numbers, followed by Havkalen 2 months later.

The submarines were technically on a par with other countries' coastal submarines and were equipped with both sonar and six hydrophones along the hull, which was some of the most modern underwater listening equipment'.

As a novelty, the H-class was not equipped with a deck gun for sinking smaller surface vessels. Instead, they got a powerful anti-aircraft armament consisting of 2 two 40 mm guns, which were placed with one fore and one aft of the turret and two 8 mm recoilless guns in the turret.

The heavy anti-aircraft armament shows, together with the reduction of the dive time (35 seconds for the H class), that the navy had realized that one of the greatest dangers came from the air.

The submarine was still intended to dive if it spotted an enemy aircraft, but should there not be time for this, it should also be able to defend itself while submerged,

Throughout the interwar period, submarines were the most active part of Danish naval defense and probably also the most effective. The effectiveness was multiplied by the arrival of the new boats, but the background for it was the tradition and the good spirit and education that throughout the period had characterized this weapon,

Disaster strikes

The savings campaign carried out in the 1920s could not avoid having an extremely annoying and inhibiting effect on the training and training business, which, together with the insufficient maintenance and renewal of the equipment, was a contributing cause of the accident on the Cruiser Geyser



Cruiser Geyser (Navy library)

The cruiser, and the Danish training division for which it was the command ship, were at the time on squadron training in Masnedsund in Småland waters.



The exercise division was at Masnedsund in the Smålandsfarvandet

The disaster occurred while officers and crew from several of the exercise division's ships were gathered on board Geyser to witness a demonstration of a new phosphorus fog development apparatus.

The plan was therefore that in the morning, 25 May, the exercise division's officer and commanders were to be instructed in the use of the fog development apparatus on board Geyser.

Originally, it was intended that the second-in-command of the torpedo boats should have attended the demonstration. It was instead decided that the bosses themselves should participate in the demonstration.

By the capricious play of fate, the accident therefore befell many of the commanders present, while the second-in-command, including Crown Prince Frederik, escaped. Crown Prince Frederik, later Frederik IX, had taken over as second-in-command of the torpedo boat Delfinen a few days before.

The explosion in the fog development apparatus happened immediately after the demonstration had started. The aft deck of the cruiser was instantly transformed into a burning inferno. Burning phosphorus was spread over those present.

A total of 55 were injured in the explosion, including 21 naval officers, 14 deck officers and deck officers, 2 temporary commanders, 12 permanent privates and 6 conscripts. Several of the injured sustained serious injuries.

Explosion instead of fog

First lieutenant Kai Hammerich, who was commander of the torpedo boat Sælen, later commander and commander of the Jutlandia expedition, who was himself badly injured in the explosion, himself later recounts the disaster: "We now gathered half a hundred commanders on the aft deck, and engineer E. Borg was assigned to demonstrate one of the devices to us. I myself sat on the rail one and a half to two meters from the device.

Borg now prepared to ignite the phosphorus, as it was intended that a thick and opaque smoke would then be developed, which would be carried on by the wind.



Laying of artificial fog (Marine's library)

Last year in Peder Skram, I had taken part in a similar exercise with some older and much larger devices, and I suddenly remembered that I then got a splash on my hand from glowing phosphorus, and that it took a long time to get this trifle laid.

It was therefore clear to me that I should be careful, so I jumped down from the railing and thereby turned my face away from the apparatus for a moment.

At the same time there was a deafening crash, and it was as if I had received a violent blow on the head, so that I could neither see nor feel, but tumbled over on the deck. Then followed a moment of perfect silence, as a sigh went through the ship.

After that I could hear groans and shouts around me, the meaning of which I did not understand, as well as shouts of commands to meet after the fire roll. I couldn't see anything, but when I breathed I could feel phosphorous fumes in my throat, so I got up to get a mouthful of fresh air. But again I fell over on the deck.

Suddenly it was clear to me what had happened: the 10 kg of phosphorus must have exploded instead of developing smoke as usual. I was also aware that if I took one more breath, I was out.

What happened next is only vague to me. But, oh, horror: I woke up a little later, and everything was burning and smelled of burnt flesh.

Human feet trampled over me, and Commander Wenck shouted from far away: See to it that Lieutenant Hammerich's clothes are off."

Captain Lieutenant Rützou died of his injuries

The 30-year-old captain-lieutenant Paul C. Rützou, commander of the torpedo boat Delfinen, was among those seriously injured in the explosion. A few days later, he died at the Garrison Hospital in Vordingborg, on 11 June 1923, as a result of the injuries he had sustained in the explosion.

Paul C. Rützou is survived by his American-born wife; and he was later buried at the Garrison cemetery in Copenhagen.



*Captain Lieutenant
Paul C. Rützou
died of his injuries
(Navy Library)*

The captain himself among the badly wounded

The commander of Gejser, war captain Godfred Hansen, was himself among the seriously wounded and had to resign his command the same day, when he was transferred to the Garrison hospital in Vordingborg together with the other wounded.



*The commander of the cruiser
Gejser, war captain
Godfred Hansen
(Navy Library)*

Most of the commanders of the exercise division's 9 torpedo boats and 3 minesweepers were also among the wounded.

After receiving immediate first aid on board Gejser, the wounded were transferred to Vordingborg with rapid assistance from the exercise division's torpedo boats.

Branded for life

Only 2 of the wounded could resume their service on board the same day. On 26 May, 21 of the wounded were transferred to the Marine Hospital in Copenhagen, while the 32 most seriously injured remained at the Garrison Hospital in Vordingborg. As the individual's state of health permitted, they were transferred to the Marine Hospital in Copenhagen. By the end of the year, most were discharged as fully or partially cured. However, several of the wounded had been marked for life.

Machinist E. Borg, who had overseen the demonstration, was blinded, and several suffered large, painful and disfiguring wounds on the face, neck, arms and body. It took years and many painful operations before the wounds were fairly healed.

Several of those involved were marked for life by disfigurements and scars, which even the most skilled surgeons in Denmark and England could only help to a certain extent with the help of plastic surgery. First Lieutenant Kai Hammerich, who was among the seriously injured, as mentioned above, underwent more than 3 years of treatment and 14 plastic surgeries in both Denmark and England.



First Lieutenant Kai Hammerich, here as commander, was also one of the badly wounded (Navy Library)

In practice sharing

The cruiser Gejser, built back in 1892, had been a command ship in the exercise division since the beginning of spring 1923. The exercise division consisted of Gejser, 9 torpedo boats, 3 minesweepers, 7 submarines, as well as some flying boats as well as the auxiliary ship Grønsund and the tender Fenris. Commander HLE Wenck was in charge of the exercise division.

After the disaster, the division resumed its exercises, which ended in early July 1923.

Close to another disaster

A little later in the summer, the cruiser Geyser was involved in another accident that could easily have turned into an even bigger disaster.

During an attack exercise, Gejser collided with the submerged Danish submarine Bellona.

In the collision, the submarine bent one of its periscopes, but luckily there was no further damage and the exercises continued.

But just 2 days later, the submarine Bellona had her periscopes bent again. This time it happened when one of the Danish torpedo boats sailed across it.

Navy Air Force

As early as August 1910, the Ministry of the Navy had begun to investigate the possibilities of using aircraft in the fleet. It happened barely four years after Ellehammer, on 12 September 1906, had made his first 42-metre jump on the island of Lindholm.

Far-sighted officers in the navy apparently had a clear sense that the use of aircraft could perhaps strengthen the navy in solving its tasks, and several of the navy's officers had from the start been involved in the founding of the Danske Aeronautiske Selskab in 1909.

The pioneer era

On 25 March 1912, the aviator-interested Consul General Ludvigsen bought one of the HENRY FARMAN-type airplanes used by the aviator pioneer Robert Svendsen and donated it to the navy.



*The aircraft Glenten, the navy's first aircraft, had a 50 hp engine and a top speed of 80 km/h.
(Photo from [Orlogsmuseet](#) archive)*

The navy thus had its first aircraft, and since the navy had an old tradition of naming its vessels, it was named Glenten.

During the summer of 1912, a private collection had been initiated, which raised DKK 43,000, for which two flying boats of the Donnet-Leveque type were ordered in France.

On delivery in April 1913, the flying boats were named Maagen and Ternen, later the names were officially changed to Maagen 1 and Maagen 2.

By authorization of the Supplementary Appropriations Act for 1912-1913, the aviator Ulrich Birch received permanent employment as a naval aviator and instructor from February 1913.

Ulrich Birch provided his own personal plane, named the Eagle, for the naval flight, but it was short-lived. Already in October, the plane crashed, and Birch later died of his injuries.

The Air Force was initially located on the north-east corner of Kløvermarken in Copenhagen in a tent and a small hangar.

On neutrality watch

When the First World War broke out in August 1914, the fleet had two flying boats, MAAGEN 1 and 2, as well as five trained pilots, but already before the outbreak of war, exercises of an operational nature had been carried out.

Already the day after the outbreak of war, the Marine High Command could order daily aerial reconnaissance in the Sound, where a lot of German naval activity took place, e.g. in connection with mining.

The World War meant a stop to the purchase of material from the belligerent countries, but already in August 1914 Orlogsværftet was able to present a very promising project for an aircraft for water surveillance.

The project was an improvement on the previously delivered French Donnet-Leveque flying boats.



*MAAGEN 3 (FB II), the first flying boat built at Orlogsværftet.
(Photo from [the Defense Photogallery](#))*

On 22 August 1914, Orlogsværftet was authorized by the Ministry of the Navy to start production of the new flying boats. Until 1917, Orlogsværftet built a total of eight of the so-called OV-Flyvebådet, later named FB II.



*Airboat station Copenhagen on Margretheholm, later Luftmarinestation Copenhagen, is seen here in the early 1920s, with Nyholm in the background.
(Photo from [Orlogsmuseet](#) archive)*

Around 20 April 1915, the work to establish a flying boat station on a filled area east of Nyholm, Margretheholm, was so far advanced that the flying boats could be moved here from Kløvermarken.

The new flying boat station, later named Luftmarinestation København, was expanded repeatedly and served as a base for the flying boats as long as the Marine Air Service existed, until 1950.

The squadron in the Great Belt also needed aircraft to solve the reconnaissance tasks, and in order to have the greatest possible flying time available, during the autumn of 1916 a flying boat station was established at Slipshavn by Nyborg Fjord, from where the flying boats could support the squadron.

The Orlogsverftet continued to produce flying boats despite a constant lack of material, and by the end of 1917 the Air Force thus had more than 12 operational flying boats at its disposal.

In the same year, the first experiments with impact observation for the firing of the artillery ships were also held, just as night flight exercises were carried out.



Orlogsverftet's first flying boat workshop on Holmen.
(Photo from [Orlogsmuseet](#) archive)

The post-war years

Already before the end of the First World War, an independent Submarine and Aircraft Department had been established with a commander as head.

In return, the Reichstag had decided to stop all domestic aircraft construction, partly because of the many accidents that had occurred in the past years.

In practice, however, this ban was offset by the fact that after the end of the First World War, large quantities of material were available on the world market.

May 1919, the navy received five Friedrichshafen FF49 pontoon planes, later designated HB II.

The acquisition took place in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Works, which wanted to investigate the possibility of air-transporting the mail domestically.

From the autumn of 1921, the armored ships Olfert Fischer and Peder Skram were modified so that they were henceforth able to carry an HM I aircraft, whereby regular tactical cooperation was now introduced.

Now it is important to remember that the radar had not been invented, and thus these planes were the only possibility to see "beyond the horizon".

The Defense Act of 1922 meant a general weakening of the navy, but did mean that the Air Force was now mentioned as part of the navy. On 15 September 1923, the Navy's Air Force was thus established as an independent unit directly under the Ministry of the Navy.

Captain, later commander, Asger EV Grandjean, who himself was trained as a pilot, became the Air Force's first chief.

A job he held with great competence and authority right up until 1941.



*Commander Asger EV Grandjean (1889-1948)
Chief of the Air Force
1923-1941.)
(Navy Library)*

Land-based aircraft

Since the beginning, all aircraft in the fleet had been seaplanes, and all pilot training had therefore naturally taken place on these aircraft.

From England, however, valuable experience had been gained in using land planes for elementary training, and five used Avro 504K (LB I) wheeled training planes had already been purchased in 1921.

In the beginning, flight training now took place at the Army's training ground at Avedøre, later from 1923 at Kastrup, and from 1926 the flying school moved to the newly established Luftmarinestation Ringsted, which was established on the Army's former training ground at Ringsted.

From 1925-1928, the purchased training aircraft were gradually replaced with the more modern Avro 504N, which, however, still retained the Danish designation LB I, which had a larger engine and was also equipped so that blind flying could now be practiced.

Land-based aircraft had now become an essential part of the Navy's Air Force.

The first fighters

The development during and after the First World War had clearly shown the need for actual combat aircraft, not least to protect the reconnaissance aircraft.

Orlogsverftet had already drawn up a project for a two-seat flying boat fighter, but war experience had already shown that land-based fighters were totally superior to seaplanes.

A decision was therefore made to expand the Air Force with a section of modern land-based fighters, and in 1925 3 aircraft were purchased in England.



*The navy's and Denmark's first fighter aircraft was of the type Hawker Dankok (LB II).
(Photo from [the Defense Photogallery](#))*

The Air Force had chosen a modified version of the English day and night fighter Hawker Woodcock Mk.II, which had just entered service with the RAF.

The Norwegian Air Force thus had a state-of-the-art fighter, and over the next two years the Orlogsverftet built a further 12 aircraft of the type under license. All the aircraft were given the Danish designation Hawker Dankok (LB II), and were placed at the air force station at Ringsted.

Until now, the pilots' only rescue equipment had been a life jacket, but the Dankok fighter was also equipped for seat parachutes, which were thus put into use in Denmark.

The new fighters were formally included from 12 October 1926 in the now newly created 2nd Air Flotilla at Luftmarinestation Ringsted, while the seaplanes were organized into 1st Airflotille at Luftmarinestation Copenhagen.

The air navy station in Ringsted was not very large, and was not least surrounded by tall trees and telephone poles, which is why it was absolutely not ideal for e.g. elementary school flight.

In 1930, a flight ban was lifted for elementary school flying at the airfield, and instead a new air navy station was set up on the Avnø peninsula, which had been leased for a ten-year period.

Future school flights were then to take place at Avnø.

Numerically largest

The 2nd Air Flotilla had now been equipped with modern fighters, and the time had therefore also come to modernize the older and eventually worn out HM I's in the 1st Air Flotilla.

Six Heinkel HE8 pontoon aircraft were therefore purchased from Germany in 1928, which were given the Danish designation HM II, at the same time a license agreement was entered into for the construction of additional aircraft at Orlogsværftet.

As Germany was not allowed to construct military aircraft at this time, the aircraft was supposedly designed as a mail plane, but it turned out to be quite unproblematic to convert the aircraft into a very suitable military aircraft, equipped with two machine guns, radio equipment and holders for eight bombs.

In the period from 1929-1938, Orlogsværftet built a further 16 aircraft of this type, which in terms of numbers thus became the largest aircraft type that has entered the Navy's Air Force.

The HM II was a robust aircraft that largely influenced the development of the Air Force and performed a variety of tasks in the period up to the outbreak of the Second World War.

First flights in Greenland

The HM II was thus also to become the first aircraft to enforce Danish sovereignty.

In the early 1930s, a dispute arose between Norway and Denmark over the ownership of Greenland, with Norway claiming that Denmark did not enforce sovereignty over the large island.

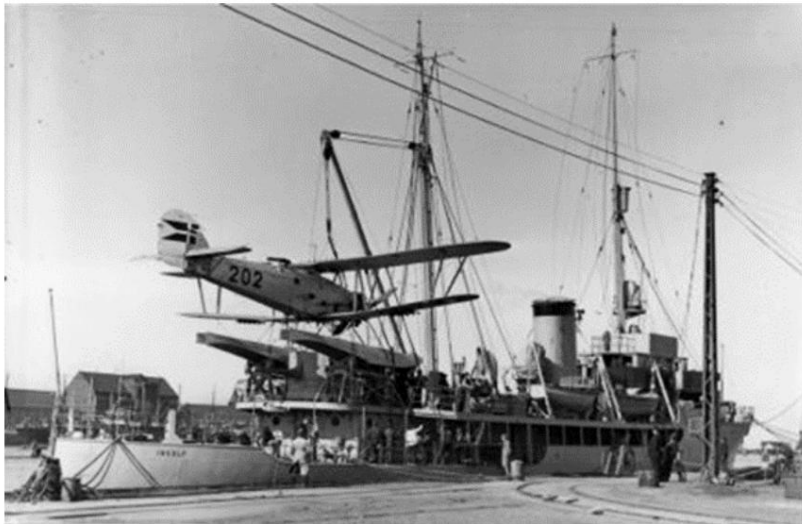
The situation escalated when, in 1931, Norwegian prisoners occupied several areas in Northeast Greenland, and the Norwegian government simultaneously equipped the prisoners with police authority in the occupied areas.



*Here a Heinkel HE8 (HM II) is seen during a flight in Greenland.
(Photo from [Orlogsmuseet](#) archive)*

When three equipped expedition ships were sent to Greenland in 1932, Knud Rasmussen's 7th Thule expedition and Lauge Koch's expedition to Northeast Greenland, all three ships were therefore, among other things, equipped with one of the Norwegian Air Force's HM II aircraft.

Through the 1930s, the inspection ships were equipped with flying boats.



*The inspection ship Ingolf in the process of taking seaplane aboard.
(Photo from [Orlogsmuseet](#) archive)*

Both expeditions were carried out successfully, and despite the difficult conditions, one or two HM IIs were subsequently stationed in Greenland each year.

The Air Force's tasks were primarily reconnaissance and artillery control, and in connection with sea surveying in Greenland, flying boats were also used here.

The conflict between Norway and Denmark was settled at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, by which sovereignty over Greenland went to Denmark, not least thanks to the Air Force's contribution to protecting Danish territorial rights.

From 1932-1938, the HM IIs also carried out, in collaboration with the Geodetic Institute, systematic aerial photography and surveying of large areas of Greenland for use in map drawing.

More powerful and offensive aircraft

For a long time, the navy had wanted aircraft of a more offensive nature, bomber and torpedo aircraft, which is why a three-engine torpedo aircraft was ordered in England in 1926. However, the aircraft did not prove stable and the contract was cancelled.

Later, however, the head of the Air Force, Commander Captain AEV Grandjean, instead succeeded in obtaining permission to purchase two English medium-range bombers of the Hawker Horsley type in 1932. The purchased aircraft were designated Hawker Dantorp, or HB III, in the Danish version.

When only two aircraft were purchased, it was due to a clear recognition that torpedo throwing from aircraft was something quite new that had to be tested before such a weapon could be used operationally. In connection with the purchase, the fleet had also received a license to build ten more aircraft at Orlogsværftet. Only in 1936 did it succeed in achieving satisfactory results in throwing torpedoes from the planes, but then there was no money for new acquisitions.



*Hawker Dantorp (HB III) has just released its torpedo during a practice launch at Bramsnæsvisg in 1934.
(Photo from [Orlogsmuseet](#) archive)*

The new Defense Act in 1932 had not brought about major changes for the Air Force, and therefore no improvements either. The Navy's Air Force was to continue to consist of two air flotillas, one with fighter aircraft and one with reconnaissance aircraft, plus training aircraft and aircraft for special tasks.

Despite the tight economy, in 1933 Grandjean succeeded in obtaining a grant for the purchase and license building of 12 new fighters to replace the now obsolete Dankok fighters (LB II).

Two aircraft of the type Hawker Nimrod Mk. II was purchased in England and a further ten aircraft were built under license at Orlogsværftet in the period 1934-1935.

The Navy's Air Force now had a modern fighter plane, but in these years the development within the aircraft industry was very fast.

The air navy station in Ringsted quickly proved too small for the new fighters, and in 1936 it was decided to buy the area at Avnø and set up a permanent air navy station there.

The following year, the layout at Avnø was finished, and the 2nd Air Flotilla, now consisting of 12 Hawker Nimrod (LB V), was transferred to the new Luftmarine station Avnø in 1937, and the Luftmarine station at Ringsted was closed down.

Dark clouds are rising

The Nazi takeover of power in Germany in 1933 and the resulting military buildup did not only destabilize the political situation in Europe.

At the same time, the aeronautical development meant an increased importance of the concept of air power in relation to the old-known naval and army forces, but both politically and militarily this had difficulty gaining attention.

In connection with the negotiations in 1936 on a new defense law, proposals were made for one more squadron of fighter aircraft for the navy, just as the Air Force had outlined the expansion with a bomb flotilla, so that the total strength reached 4 air flotillas.

But the necessary political support was lacking, and the force target was set in the Defense Act of 1937 to continue to be just 2 air flotillas, which, seen through the lens of posterity, had to be considered completely insufficient.

However, the politicians and the navy's leadership quickly, but too late, had to recognize that there was a great need not least to modernize the air force's fighter aircraft, but also an urgent need to acquire light bombers.

Grandjean was therefore authorized to both make an agreement for a new light bomber, but also a replacement for the rapidly aging Nimrod fighters.

In 1938, a contract was signed with the English Fairey Aviation factory for the construction of the two-seater bomber of the type P. 4./34 at Orlogsværftet, and in 1939 the yard was ordered to build 12 of these aircraft, but none of them were completed April 9, 1940.

The naval staff had also realized that the time of the Nimrod fighters was definitely over. The time of the biplane was over, and now the monoplane fighter was the future, but the time was running out.

Negotiations were therefore initiated on the purchase of new fighters for the 2nd Air Flotilla, and the choice fell on the Italian Macchi MC-200, even though the Air Force would have liked to have seen the acquisition of the Fokker D. XXI, which was now standard in the Army Air Forces.



The Macchi MC-200, here in Italian livery, was chosen as a replacement for the Nimrod fighter. (Photo from USAF Museum)

But the time had been missed, and it was now limited which nations could be traded with, if one wanted to secure the supply at the same time.

The contract for the supply of the 12 new Macchi MC-200 fighters to replace the fleet's aging Nimrod (LB V) was ready on 9 April 1940, but it was never signed.

In Denmark, the provision of a credible air defense was apparently considered an insurmountable goal.

On a trip with Niels Juel to South America

After the end of the war, the government was not inclined to use funds for a new armored ship. They wanted disarmament, and seriously investigated the possibilities of converting Niels Juel into a ferry or cargo ship, or simply selling it as scrap.

However, an installment had already been paid to Krupp for the guns, and after the First World War the company asked whether the delivery should be fulfilled. The radical government absolutely did not want any 30 cm guns, they were "assault weapons".

After all, a lot of money had been put into the construction project, so the end of the story was that a completely new design was prepared with 10 pieces of 15 cm guns, an extra deck was put on the ship, and then you had a seagoing training ship, a kind of slow cruiser, which was also excellent for representational purposes.

So Niels Juel took command in May 1923 and was then extensively used, among other things as a royal ship on voyages to Finland, the Faroe Islands and Iceland. As early as 23 October 1923, Niels Juel under Commander A. Bojesen set out on his first longer voyage to South America



The artillery ship Niels Juel sets sail from Copenhagen bound for South America. (Navy Library)

The purpose of the march was to show the flag in foreign countries, represent Denmark and thereby promote Danish trade and industry by showing the Danish film, the Greenlandic film and some of our best industrial films, and last but not least to bring greetings from Denmark to all Danes we could come into contact with abroad.

The departure was scheduled for Sunday 21 October, but first the ship had to be equipped for the trip. The loading of the provisions and grenades took place during approx. 1 week and while Niels Juel was in dry dock.

Loaded approx. 1000 grenades, many hundreds of sacks of flour and approx. 10,000 cases of Tuborg and Carlsberg. The freezer was filled with fresh meat and the cold room was also filled with tons of margarine and butter and preserves and several trucks full of wine, etc.



Niels Juel's crew photographed in the white uniforms they wore on the voyage to South America 1923-1924. (navy library)

Before sailing, the king paid a visit on board accompanied by his entire staff of officers during the royal salute, the 27 shots, from Niels Juel's guns and the battery Sixtus.

While the king was walking up the fall rope stairs, King Kristian was played and the king's flag flew to the top of Niels Juel under a renewed salute that echoed over the harbor and enveloped the ship in blue gunpowder smoke. After talking to the officers a bit, the king made a rather short but witty speech and said something like this:

When Niels Juel is now sent out on this train, it is Denmark he represents and many Danes out there in distant lands will look forward with longing to the day when a Danish warship approaches their port.

I wish you all a good and enjoyable journey. Happy journey and see you soon.

Live well.

The king then took leave of everyone by walking along the rows and saying goodbye in turn. He then disembarked again, and again the 27 cannon shots, with sharp flashes and a trailing mist, burst into the meek autumn day.

The procession

After lightening anchor, Niels Juel stood out of the Sundet, rounded Helsingør and Gilbjergbrinken and continued out into the Kattegat heading for Skagen, which was rounded after dark. After this, the journey went across the North Sea, which just didn't turn out to be pleasant.



After a few days of rough weather, the ship reached the English Channel and at approx. at 11 o'clock on October 26, Niels Juel arrived in the town of Dartmouth, a small town the size of Svendborg, which lies terraced up a mountain.

After 2-3 days of inspection, Niels Juel set sail on 29 October with Cadiz as the destination, a journey of 1025 nautical miles and approx. 5 days in the lake.

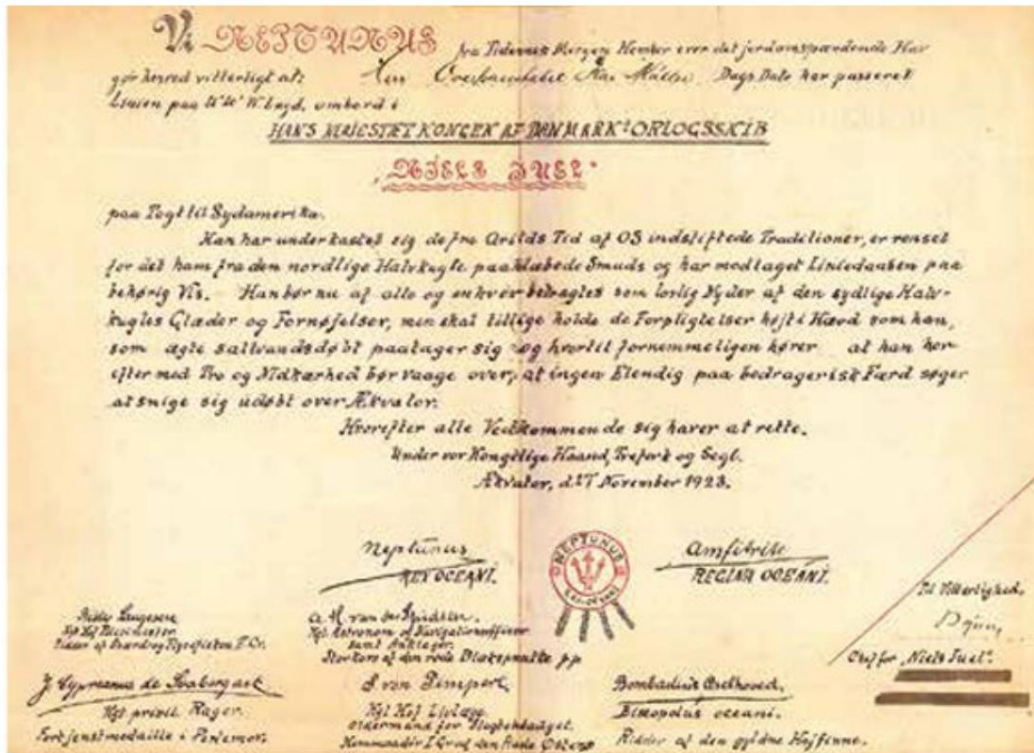
From Cadiz, the trip went on to Madeira and after a few days of visiting the island on to St. Vincent. And on November 28, Niels Juel crossed the equator

And as is the tradition, everyone must be baptized when they pass the equator, so Niels Juel's visit by King Neptune, who, according to old tradition, refuses to let the ship pass the line until all the unbaptized are baptized

Niels Juels train 1923-24



King Neptune and Queen Amphitrite accompanied on deck by Niels Juel. (Defence Library)



Line baptism certificate from the baptism on board Niels Juel on 27 November 1923. (Forsvarets Library)

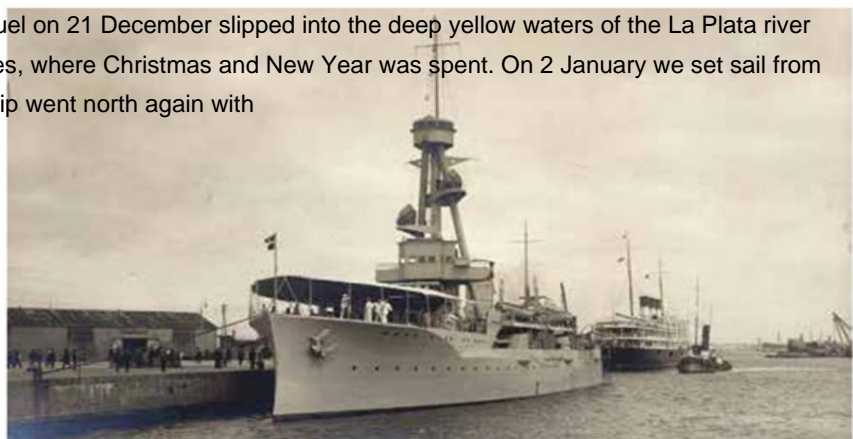
Rio de Janeiro

On 5 December at 2 Niels Juel reached the goal of the journey, Rio de Janeiro, the capital of Brazil.

Anchored on the Nest next to a large Brazilian dreadnought named Sao Paulo of approx. 18-20,000 tons with a crew of 1,000 men.

Niels Juel was greeted with a salute and answered politely again, and from one of the forts the faint notes of the Danish national anthem sounded towards the ship as a welcome gesture, a gesture which the crew of Niels Juel reciprocated with the Brazilian national melody as they paraded alongside.

After a 9-day visit to Rio de Janeiro, the trip ended on 15 December, the journey continued towards Argentina and After a few fresh days on the Atlantic, Niels Juel on 21 December slipped into the deep yellow waters of the La Plata river towards Argentina's capital, Buenos Aires, where Christmas and New Year was spent. On 2 January we set sail from Buenos Aires in the afternoon and the trip went north again with



Montevideo the capital of Uruguay as a goal.

Niels Juel at the quay in Montevideo on January 4, 1924. In the harbor besides Niels Juel were the three Danish ships, M/S Louisiana and S/S Christiansborg and S/S Sønderborg. (Defence Library)

North but not home - yet

On 9 January in the morning, Niels Juel left Montevideo and the journey home to Denmark began.

On the afternoon of 25 January, Niels Juel had the very sad event that head no. 984, T. Sørensen from Århus, passed away.

As the temperature was still 28 degrees C, it was impossible to take him ashore, so they had to immediately lower him into the sea the next day at approx. 6 degrees north latitude and 32 west longitude.

You didn't have flowers for a wreath, but the coffin was neatly wrapped in a large war flag with white crosses running along the lid.

While the funeral took place, Niels Juel lay still and dove in the lake with the large war flag lowered at half-mast, and after the chief's speech and subsequent burial, the coffin was lowered into the sea followed by a booming cannon shot from the bridge as a final tribute to the dead.

On 17 February, Niels Juel then docked at Plymouth with a delay of 2 days. Only a short 2 day stay here was planned to take in coal for the last part of the trip across the North Sea home to Copenhagen in Denmark 5 days later on February 22nd at 12 midnight, Niels Juel dropped anchor in the harbor of Frederikshavn and the next morning at 10 o'clock Admiral Konow and Prince Knud were put aboard the inspection ship Diana, after which the course was set for Copenhagen, which was approached at approx. 10 o'clock.

The circuit had then ended and back then was the joy of homecoming and the numerous welcome greetings that flowed to meet the crew.

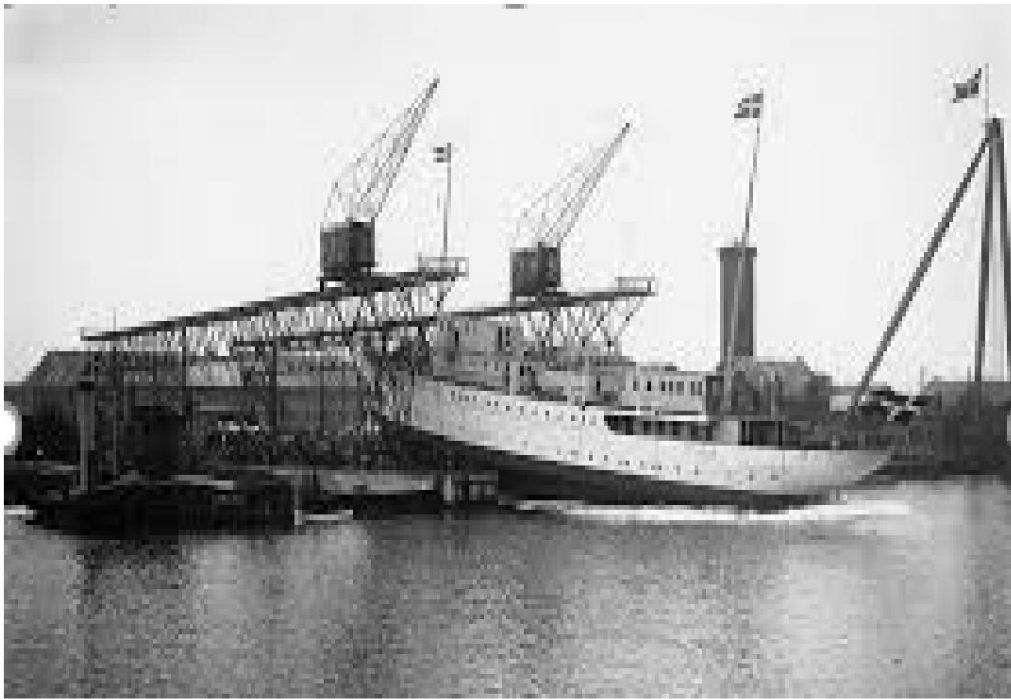
The shipyard becomes civilian

As mentioned earlier, the economic and materiel background for the fleet's activities during this period was very difficult.

On the organizational side, the very significant change was carried out in 1924 that the former military shipyard was transformed into a civilian state shipyard Under the Ministry of the Navy.

However, this reorganization had no influence on the size of the fleet, as the costs associated with the reorganization were covered by means of special appropriations, but they had profound effects on the future daily life and business of the navy and have been instrumental in creating a number of problems in the cooperation between the navy military and the shipyard's civilian technicians

With the transition of the naval shipyard to a civil state shipyard, the rest of Holmen was transformed by law on 29 March 1924 into a military command and is now called a naval station. The first commander was Rear Admiral Axel V. Scheel.



Dannebrog Søsættes (navy's library)

First new building on Dokøen

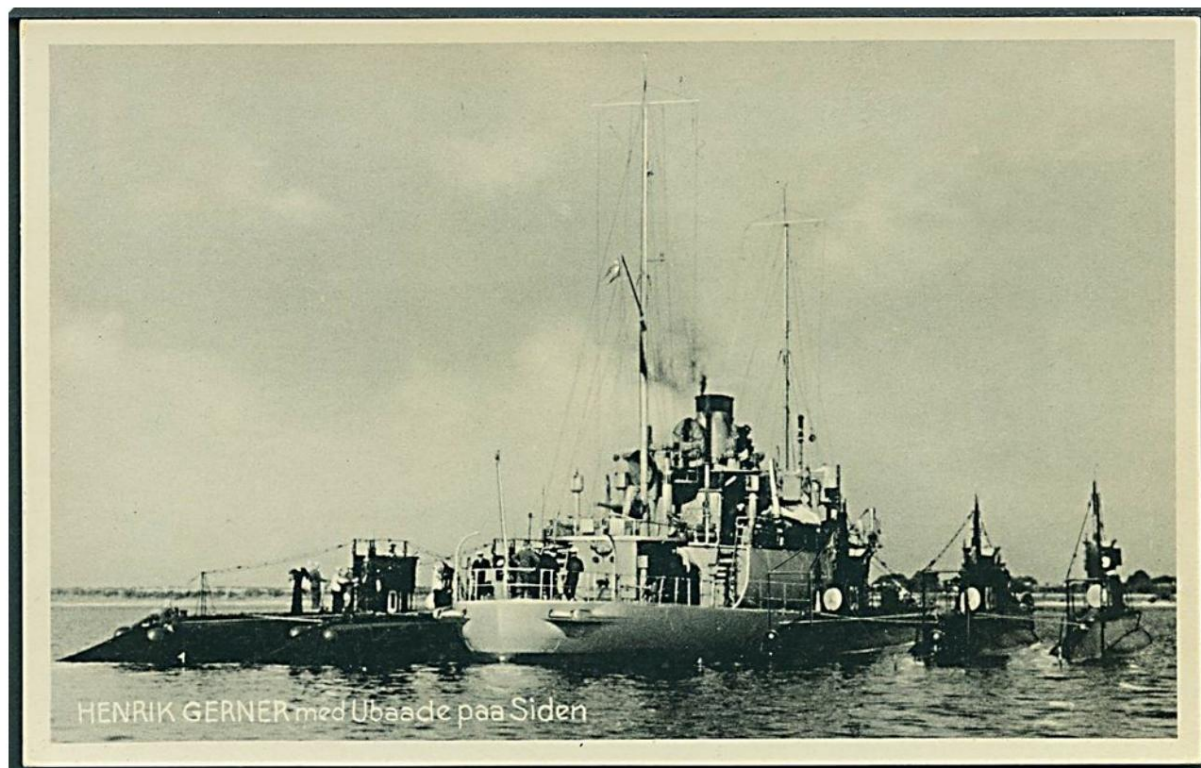
On 4 November 1927, the navy's first major new building, since the Artillery ship Niels Juel 1918, was launched at the naval shipyard, now the civilian state shipyard.



Henrik Gerner (Navy Library)

It was the workshop ship Henrik Gerner, which was built as a workshop and depot ship for the submarines. Henrik Gerner was built in steel with ice reinforcement in front, so that it could also function in ice-filled conditions. On both sides of the hull, a sway keel was placed to reduce the ship's rolling. The ship was designed as a combined workshop ship, charging station and magazine with torpedoes and spare parts for the submarines.

Henrik Gerner was armed with 2 pcs. 75 mm guns located respectively fore and aft of the ship, in addition the ship was equipped with mine rails aft and a stock of 80 sea mines, so that it could also function as a minelayer.



Henrik Gerner with submarines on the side (Marinens Bibliotek)

Henrik Gerner was built as the mother ship for our submarines and replaced the former workshop ship Grønsund, which was a gunboat that had been converted into a depot ship.

Henrik Gerner was equipped with two diesel engines of the same type as the D-class and was arranged so that you could charge the batteries of 2 submarines at the same time, as long as they lay along the side of the ship. In addition, Henrik Gerner brought both spare torpedoes and a workshop with spare parts of almost every kind, and this therefore facilitated the work in the event of breakdowns far from Holmen. So in the event of war, Henrik Gerne would be able to increase the submarines' radius of action considerably.

However, it was not the plan for Henrik Gerner to supply the submarines in open sea, as it would be too vulnerable there. So the idea was for the ship to lie hidden in one of the many Danish fjords or coves, where the submarines could then come and have oil, ammunition and provisions filled on board and repair any damage.

At the same time, there was room for the submarines' crews to live and eat on board Henrik Gerner and this therefore helped with the spartan accommodation conditions on board the submarines.

Henrik Gerner followed the submarines on their voyages in domestic waters and on a few occasions on foreign voyages.

World Exhibition 1929 in Barcelona

On 11 May 1929, the Marine Air Force's 1st Air Group took off with three aircraft of the Heinkel HMII type from Denmark to reach Barcelona in Spain via Cherbourg and Hourtin in France, where they participated in the World Exhibition. Denmark was the only country that participated by plane at this international event. The planes were back in Denmark again on 25 May.



Here, Heinkel HE8 HMII No. 97, 98 and 99 are seen in the harbor at Barcelona in May 1929. In addition to the three Danish aircraft, the artillery ship Niels Luel also participated from the Danish side. (Air Force Historical Collection)

First fisheries inspection by plane

On July 16, 1929, the head of the navy's air force, Orlogkaptajn AEV Grandjean, with sea lieutenant AG Topsøe-Jensen as leader, carried out a fisheries inspection from the air for the first time in history.

The route went from Copenhagen over Anholt and Læsø and on over Hirtshals, Skagen and further down the west coast of Jutland to Esbjerg and back to the air navy station in Copenhagen

On the trip, 14 Swedish and Norwegian fishing cutters were noted fishing illegally on Danish territory,

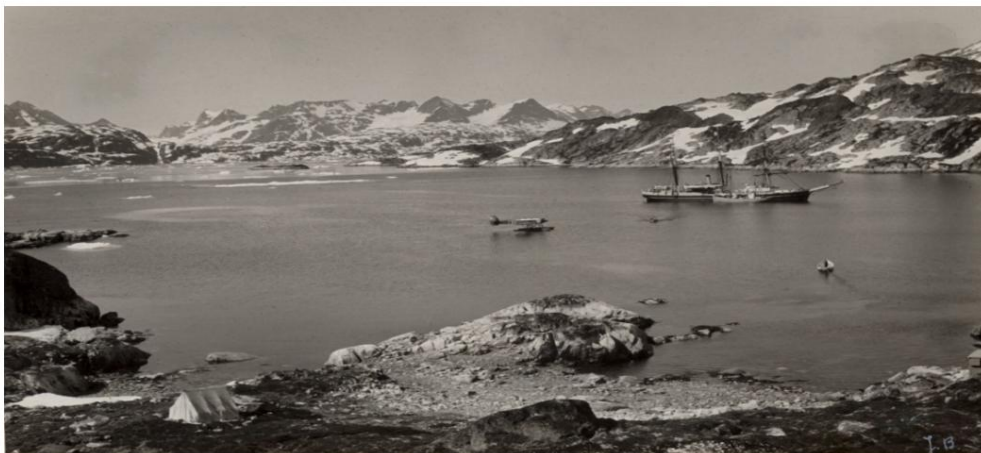


Heinkel HE8 HMII No. 84 glides on Greenland fjord with engine off. 1932. (Navy Library) 27

11 July 1932. The aerial survey of Greenland begins

Sea Lieutenant Erik Rasmussen started in one of the navy's aircraft of the type HMII from Arsukfjorden on the south-west coast of Greenland. This was the first Danish military flight in Greenland.

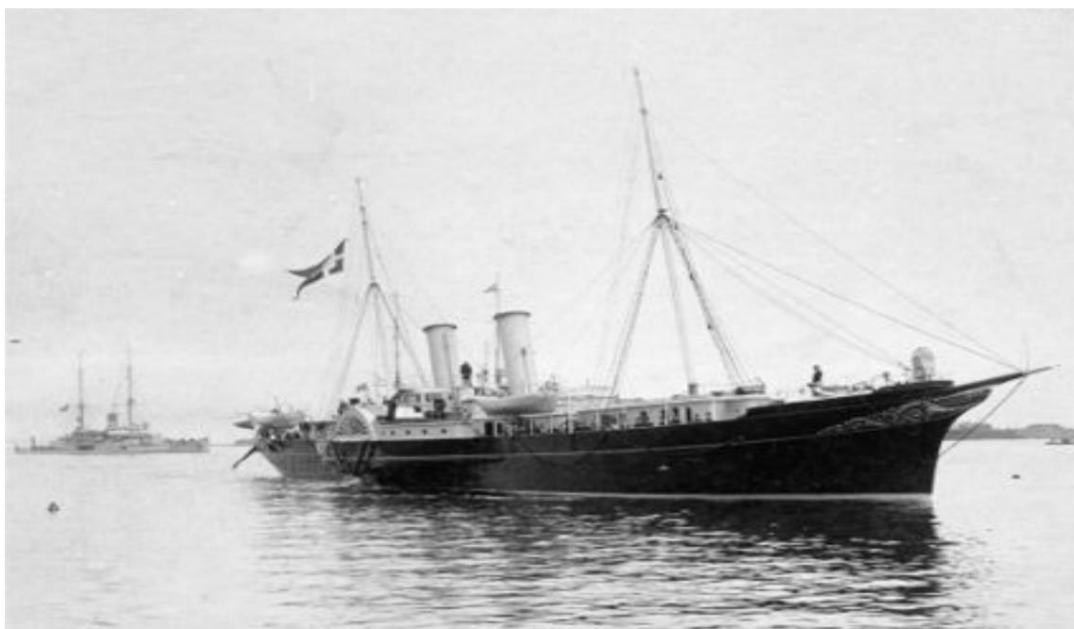
Until 1938, the navy's air force, in collaboration with the geodetic institute, carried out systematic aerial photography and surveying of large parts of Greenland



Aerial survey Greenland 1936. Gustav Holm and Heinkel HE 8 (HMII) no. 87.
West Greenland (*probably the Arsukfjorden*). (Defence Library)

New Royal Ship

The term royal ship in modern times covers a representational ship built especially for the use of the royal house. Of ships in this category, there have only been two, namely the paddle steamer Dannebrog built in 1879 and the current royal ship which also bears the name Dannebrog



The paddle steamer Dannebrog built 1879 (Navy Library)

But over the years, the royal house has had a large number of very different vessels at its disposal. Some have been the king's personal property, others have been actual warships belonging to the navy, and others the king has disposed of while the navy has paid for their operation.

A number of the ships have been transferred to the navy as warships when the king no longer needed them - or when the ship was no longer suitable for a king.

The royal family also has a number of small vessels - the so-called king hunts and swan hunts. These yachts have been used for hunting excursions and even though they were mostly small and unusable as actual warships, they were still listed in the king's handbooks as warships.

Many of the fleet's ships and vessels have also been used by changing kings as travel vessels between the different parts of the country. Only a few have actually been fitted out as royal ships, but some have been specially equipped for the king during certain voyages.

From its launch in 1879 until 1906, the paddle steamer Dannebrog was largely outfitted every year. In the years 1906-1908, it was overhauled and extended from 60 m to 72 m. After that, it was again equipped and put on the train, and in 1912 it carried King Frederik VIII's stretcher from Travemünde to Copenhagen on 17 May.

During the First World War, the ship was outfitted, but from 1919 it was again equipped every summer, but after the command hoisting on the artillery ship Niels Juel in 1923, this ship was sometimes equipped as a royal ship on longer voyages.

The technological advances in shipbuilding meant that time had gradually passed for the royal ship and plans were made for a new royal ship which should be able to be used during the royal family's voyages both in domestic waters and in the North Atlantic.

After some consideration, it was decided to build a motor ship at the naval shipyard equipped with diesel engines from B&W



On October 10, 1931, newbuild A.540 rolled off the stack at Orlogsværftet (Marine's Library)

After 267 days on the berth, a new royal ship was launched, which was also named Dannebrog. After the launch, seven months of fitting out at the naval shipyard followed before the ship could hoist command for the first time on 26 May 1932, and it proved to be good for the purpose. It became a particularly beautiful and representative ship that exists in good condition, thanks to careful maintenance and ongoing replacements



Royal ship Dannebrog (Navy Library)

Further cuts - Ministry Stauning-Munch

The fall of the Madsen-Mygdal government in 1929 led to a change in power and the new government was formed as a coalition between the Social Democrats and the radical Left, better known as the Stauning-Munch Ministry

Under this government, in 1932, the "sanitization" of the defense was carried out, which cleaned out so much that the absolute minimum in the history of Danish defense and the Danish navy was reached, while at the same time deleting the purpose clause and thus removing the basis for the navy's activities.

The intention was good enough in so far as one would try to create a better match between money, materiel and personnel than the 1922 scheme and the economic development that has taken place since its adoption allowed.

But the result was that the fleet was reduced to such an extent that the newly appointed naval inspector (chief of the fleet), Vice Admiral HLE Wenck, therefore chose to resign as naval inspector after only four months in the post in protest against the severe cuts that with the adoption of the Defense Act of 23 March 1932 hit the navy as he did not believe that there was any reasonable relationship between ends and means.



Vice Admiral HLE Wenck
(Navy Library)

The law contained, among other things, a reduction of the navy's share of the defense budget by as much as 34% compared to the defense budget for 1930-31 - the cut meant that the number of employees was almost halved from 1135 to 669 men and with the passage of the law the navy effectively lost the ability to enforce

Denmark's neutrality. At the same time, the law of 1932 brought about a thorough change to the navy's highest administrative and command bodies, as it was decided that the vice admiral as head of the navy command should simultaneously hold the position of director in the Ministry of the Navy. An arrangement which was very similar to the organization of the English Admiralty.

It was particularly interesting, because Wenck was replaced by the then director of the Marine Ministry, Hjalmar Rechnitzer, and it was he who had drawn up the bill in collaboration with the politicians!

He had entered the navy in 1913 without a formal number and therefore could not immediately be considered for the post of naval inspector, but the law of 1932 contained a section that changed this (the so-called Lex Rechnitzer) and Rechnitzer could therefore be appointed on 1 April 1932 vice admiral and new naval inspector



*Vice Admiral H. Rechnitzer
(Navy Library)*

After the adoption of the 1932 scheme, the navy's leadership consisted of the navy command and the Ministry of the Navy. The Naval Command, which was personally attached to the Ministry of the Navy, but which acted as an independent institution, consisted, in addition to the Chief of the Naval Command, of his staff.

In 1932, the naval staff consisted of a command section and a staff section and was led by Rear Admiral AG Topsøe-Jensen and his deputy Commander Captain C. Hammerich.



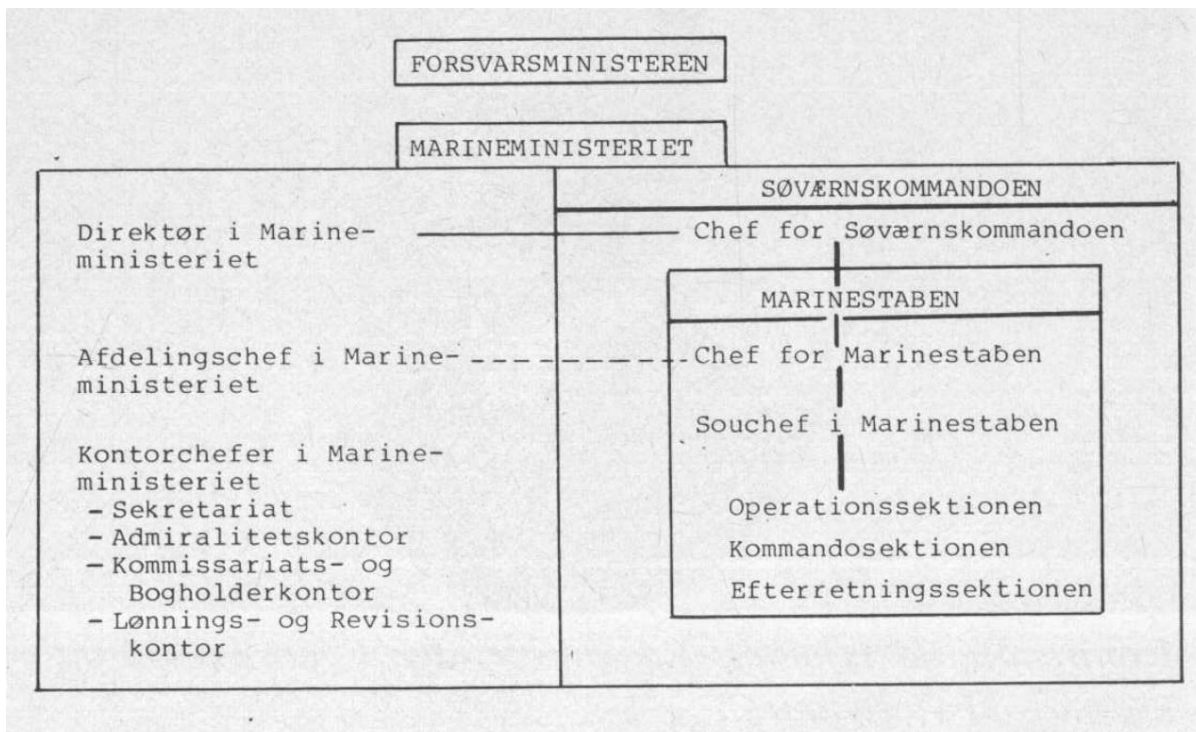
*Rear Admiral AG Topsøe-Jensen
(Navy Library)*



*Commander Captain C. Hammerich
(Navy Library)*

But already the following year, the naval staff was divided into a command, an operations and an intelligence section.

The administrative part of the Ministry of the Navy consisted of the secretariat, the admiralty office, the commissariat and accountant's office as well as the payroll and audit office, all led by a civilian head of office



The new system also had a profound impact on personnel. The deck officer system was abolished and a quartermaster corps was created, from which it was possible to advance to materiel master positions, as materiel masters came to belong to the officer group on an equal footing with machinists, quartermasters and doctors.

In the quartermaster group, partly the younger deck officers who wanted to stay in the navy were employed, partly the oldest former temporary commanders, whereby the group got an inhomogeneous composition in terms of age and education, which was only evened out as a new approach took place through the newly established quartermaster school.

According to the law, it was intended that the navy should have a significant number of permanently employed private personnel (mathers), but the development of this was slow, not least because they were paid less than the previous permanent personnel (constables).

Unfortunately, a large number of capable commanders chose to take their leave with severance pay and then pension rather than employment in the reduced navy, whereby this was also put in a difficult situation in terms of personnel

The structure of the fleet 1930

When the Defense Act of 1932 was introduced, the navy's capabilities had already been greatly reduced by the fact that several older ships had been phased out because there were no funds for the maintenance of this material and in 1932 the Line was also reduced to;

The line, including:

- 3 warships, tonnage approx. 10,800 t, of which the oldest (Olfert Fischer) was 27 years old old
- 3 torpedo and 8 submarines of a total of approx. 2,500 t • 1 minesweeper • 6 minesweepers • 4 guard vessels.

The reserve was reduced to:

- 1 warship • 1
- cruiser • 6 torpedo
- boats • 4 submarines

An inspection ship Hvidbjørnen, 2 submarines and the submarine depot ship Henrik Gerner were the only new buildings added to the fleet during this period, but 3 new torpedo boats (the Dragon class) were still under construction.

It could therefore not seem surprising, but rather discouraging, that the defense scheme of 1932 had chosen to state, without mentioning numbers, that the navy should consist of:

- 1) The still existing artillery ships (the former warships)
- 2) Torpedo and submarine boats
- 3) Workshop ship for submarines
- 4) Ship and vessel equipment for mine barriers, etc.
- 5) Ships for special purposes such as barracks and depot ships as well as inspection ships, survey ships, training cutters and ships for the King's Use (Dannebrog)

The departure of the artillery ships *without compensation* was foreseen

Likewise, the fixed tonnage of the fleet's framework had been completely abandoned and, in order to further make the scheme "flexible", a new paragraph was added that "*changes in the development of the ship types may lead to changes in the fleet's ship equipment*", with which one would probably express that technical development could lead to a change in ship types.

By this law, "air force equipment" was separated from the fleet's equipment and, in the case of air equipment, it was specified both which types of equipment were to be present and their number.

It is also noteworthy that the term "Reserve" is completely abolished for all materials.

In the following 5 years, 3 more torpedo boats (Glenten class), 1 inspection ship (Ingolf) and 2 survey ships (Hejmdal and Freja) were built, but the renewals still could not keep up with the departure and the actual war equipment was renewed only slowly compared to the ships for special purpose. However, in 1936, the artillery ship Niels Juel had its fire control system renewed so that the ship's 15 cm guns could be directed with great safety.

The pressure on the fleet increases

The navy's situation was further worsened by the fact that the considerably reduced coastal fortifications under the designation *Kystdefensionen* now passed from the army to the navy, but here too there was no connection between personnel and money or goals and means. The personnel arrangements were changed, and some of the key personnel chose to leave the service.



Commander Emmanuel Briand de Crèvecoeur. (Navy Library)

Commander Emmanuel Briand de Crèvecoeur was appointed as head of the Coastal Defence.

The choice of Crèvecoeur as chief was quite a sensible choice, for he was previously deputy commander of the artillery corps (1918-22), teacher at the Officers' School in applied artillery (1920-23), chief of the naval artillery's firing department (1922-26), and had also been headmaster of the artillery school on Krydseren Gejser and Orlogsskibet Niels Juel, respectively, as well as a participant in artillery schools in Sweden and France, so it was a very experienced man in artillery who took command of the coastal defense

Despite the Coastal Defense's natural connection to the lake, training conditions and tasks were somewhat land-based, so the Coastal Defense got its own budget and therefore remained a state within the state. A position that was further strengthened by recruiting and training a special corps of reserve officers called coastal officers to cover the significant mobilization and training needs that were largely unmet at the time of the takeover.

Fateful change in Europe

Very shortly after the Danish naval defense had thus been reduced to a minimum, the event occurred in Germany which signaled that eternal peace was far from coming yet.

Hitler took power in 1933 and began Germany's rearmament without meeting significant opposition from the powers expected to monitor compliance with the Treaty of Versailles.

On the contrary, a few years later England entered into a naval treaty with Germany which completely broke with the limitations of naval armaments which had hitherto bound Germany.

Among the naval officers in the period 1932-1940 there was a change in how Denmark's strategic situation was viewed. On the whole, there was a reassessment of Denmark's strategic situation against the backdrop of the German-English naval treaty from June 1935. Up to 1935, an English expedition into the Baltic Sea was generally assessed as a possibility, after 1935 only a few mentioned such at all, and only as an eventuality. The opposite was the case with the naval officers' assessment of Germany's military strength. At the end of the 1920s, Germany was still disarmed, but from Hitler's rise to power Danish naval officers increasingly began to regard Denmark as lying under German power, and from 1935 only a few were of a different opinion. In connection with this, before 1935 it was estimated that Germany would block or would require the Great Belt to be blocked in the event of war, while after 1935 it was largely believed that the opposite would be the case - if you assessed German naval strategy as defensive, it meant that you believed that Germany would demand closed straits, while, conversely, an assessment of German naval strategy as offensive-minded led to the belief that Germany would demand open navigational waters.

There was also great agreement in the naval officer corps in the assessment of Denmark's ability to cope in a war situation. Up to 1935, the naval officers generally considered it possible to wage a desperate battle until help came from outside, but most lost this belief due to the conclusion of the German-English naval treaty, and Denmark was then considered to be isolated without the possibility of outside help in the event of a German attack, just as there was no belief in Denmark's ability to successfully defend itself against an isolated superpower attack; but the naval officers still stated that a larger navy would act as a deterrent against such an attack, and in this way the naval officers thus used Denmark's strategic situation to justify their demand for a rebuilding of the navy.

DSOK and SLS

The navy's fight for the reconstruction of the navy - in this connection is meant the naval officers' fight for the reconstruction of the military part of the navy - took place on 3 levels:

- Internal: towards the naval officers themselves
- External: facing the public in the broadest sense
- And: before the Reichstag and the ministry

There were 3 places in particular from which the naval officers championed the rebuilding of the navy: In the Naval Intelligence Circle (DSOK) and in the Naval Lieutenant Company (SLS) and in the Marine Staff/Naval Command. In addition, there were also individual naval officers who also tried Commander Captain CAS Westermann and Commander H. Barefoot and



*Commander Captain
CAS Westermann
(Navy Library)*

DSOK was formed in October 1932 as a reaction of the naval officers against the 1932 scheme, and in the following 1½ years they worked with lectures, contacts with the press, meetings with selected persons, holding study groups, recording and showing films about the navy and preparing a fleet program.

The program was discussed in February 1934 in the Søelieutenant selskabet, but without reaching an agreement on it, and after a few unsuccessful attempts to establish wider contact with the public - the attempts failed for various reasons, among others due to ministerial prohibition - withered DSOK into 1935/36.

Throughout the period, the Søelieutenant company held discussions regarding the size and composition of the navy, discussions which, among other things, aimed to promote agreement on this internally among the naval officers.

Throughout the period, the naval staff/naval command prepared reports to the minister of defense and to the defense committee regarding the fleet's shortcomings, just as an actual press service was established in 1937 after the end of DSOK

A defense minister out of step with reality

The Danish Social Democracy, which was in power at this time, gradually began to revise its position on the defense issue, and as early as February 1936 Vice Admiral Rechnitzer's hopes for the future of the navy were renewed on the occasion of a proposal presented by the conservative People's Party for the acquisition of air defense equipment, and in the after the following months, the naval staff tried through various proposals to Minister of Defense Alsing Andersen to win approval for a remedy for the shortcomings of the ship's equipment, but without immediate results.



*Minister of Defence
Alsing Andersen
(The National Library)*

The government's solution in the defense debate was the August directives (1936), which determined the framework according to which the military ministries were to prepare their draft arrangements for the individual defences. The directives determined that the navy, within the current financial framework, had to solve the tasks of rejection and inspection - rejection understood as rejection of the use of Danish territory. The aircraft equipment was not to include bombers, the artillery ships were to be abolished in line with their obsolescence, motor torpedo boats were to partially replace the existing torpedo boats, while the coastal forts, on the other hand, were to be largely maintained.

In a statement from mid-September 1936, the Swedish Navy violently went against the government's directives: In addition to torpedo boats and submarines, the Swedish Navy should also include aircraft and protected artillery ships, as both bombers and artillery ships were considered absolutely necessary. Motor torpedo boats, on the other hand, were reserved, and coastal defense was prioritized last.

In October, the Minister of Defense optimistically asked for a draft of a naval arrangement consisting of 1 artillery ship, 10 torpedo boats, 6 submarines, 6 minesweepers as well as ships with civilian tasks, but despite the naval command's fight for this sketch, with which they were quite satisfied, the Minister of Defense gradually reduced during the negotiations the outline for the status sought in the bill 1942: Artillery ship Niels Juel and 13 guard vessels of the line (torpedo boats, submarines and minesweepers).

The naval command's principled position on the result was clear. It was unequivocally pointed out "that the navy, which is thus expected to be provided according to the bill, is quite insufficient and, according to its composition, unsuitable for solving the tasks that will fall upon it as part of a unified Danish defence". But at the same time, the naval command was well aware that the outcome of the negotiations - the bill - was the highest achievable.

In 1937, as a first consequence of this, the Social Democratic Minister of Defense Alsing Andersen submitted a revised defense scheme, which however only offered small and insignificant improvements compared to the 1932 scheme.

But the money flowed a little more abundantly, the personnel framework was expanded, the current personnel system stabilized and material acquisitions started.

The building of new ships was immediately started, including 4 submarines (H-class) 6 minesweepers (Søløven-class). However, the last submarine and 3 of the minesweepers were not completed at the outbreak of war in 1939.

Design was also started for a minesweeper (Lindormen) and 2 minesweepers (Lougen and Lolland) as well as 2 large torpedo boats (Najaden and Nymfen), which, however, were only completed after World War II and given the names (Willemoes and Huitfeldt)

Furthermore, funds were also made available for a fairly substantial building of land establishments, including a naval officers' school, a barracks building for Luftmarinestation Copenhagen (the later sergeant and corporal school at Margretheholm) and a new torpedo workshop.

In the 1937 law, the reserve was revived, i.a. in order to preserve the artillery ship Peder Skram, which was 29 years old, but which during the fitting out in 1929 performed the same speed as during the trial trip. (It was also clear from the negotiations in the Folketing that the intention was to keep Peder Skram)

In addition, the air force's equipment is listed in the same paragraph as the fleet's other equipment and the artillery ship Niels Juel is mentioned separately.

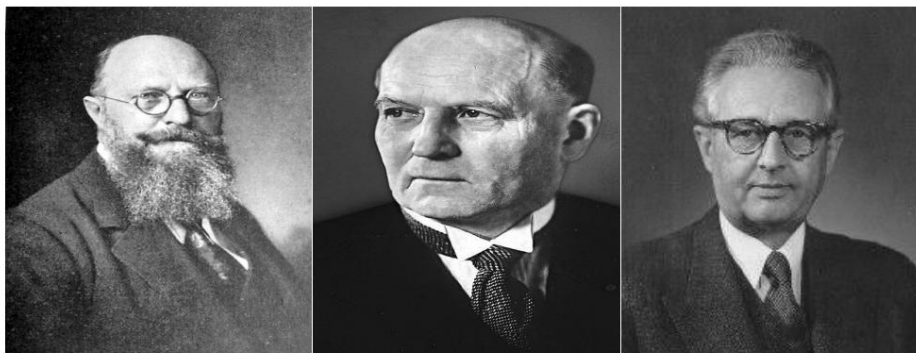


Coastal defense ship Peder Skram (Navy Library)

But no purpose clause was found in the law, and no minimum measure for the representation of the individual types was specified either, but as mentioned, more money was made available for material acquisitions and the new construction of submarines that had already begun was continued.

After that, for a year there was calm about the naval system, but due to the increasingly tense foreign political situation, the naval command and the general command appeared in the period February-August 1928 with several statements as a prelude to negotiations with the government regarding possible further defense improvements

On 1 August, Prime Minister Stauning, Foreign Minister P. Munch and Defense Minister Alsing met Andersen



Prime Minister T. Stauning
(National Library)

Minister of Foreign Affairs P. Munch
Andersen (National Library)

Minister of Defense A.
(The National Library)

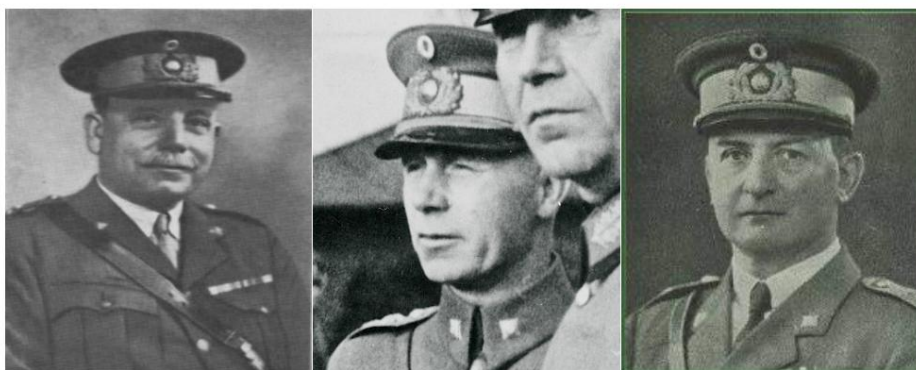
with the leadership of the defenses, from the navy vice admiral Rechnitzer, commander Hammerich and commander captain Nørgaard,



Vice Admiral H Rechnitzer
(Navy Library)

Commander C. Hammerich
(Navy Library)

from the army, General With, his chief of staff, Colonel E. Gørtz and Colonel DV Stemann, who was director of the Ministry of War.



General E. With
(Defense Library)

Colonel E. Gørtz
(Defense Library)

Colonel JD v Stemann
(Armed Forces Library)

But the meeting almost took on the character of a dogfight between Rechnitzer and With, who were obviously as distant from each other as they were during the internal negotiations in 1934, and neither defense achieved any of the sought-after defense improvements.

However, in April 1938, through the adoption of an authorization act for taking out state loans, the defense had already received 20 million. DKK to strengthen and speed up the planned new acquisitions, which for the navy, in addition to speeding up the already planned new building programme, meant permission to build 1 more submarine and 12 aircraft. Furthermore, in addition to the price adjustment of the extraordinary new building grants, permission had been given to transfer saved salary expenses to the new building account

After the outbreak of war in September 1939, when a security squadron was called in, Rechnitzer and the naval staff found it opportune to try to present a new construction plan to the Minister of Defense in October of the same year, and after being neglected by the Minister of Defense for a few months, the proposal was quickly negotiated and resulted in January 1940 in approval of the building of 1 training ship, 2 large torpedo boats, 1 submarine, 2 mine cranes, 10 minesweepers and 16 aircraft for a total amount of 32 million. NOK over 3 years and yet not without yet another confrontation between Westermann and the naval command regarding the suitability of the selected types - Westermann, who was also a conservative member of parliament, argued that the selected units were too pacifist to actually constitute any form of deterrence and security for Denmark.

But the time for rebuilding the navy was missed. They unsuccessfully applied to various countries for permission to export steel: in March, after great efforts, they got a bit from Sweden, but it was not until 5 April 1940 that they received a commitment to supply steel for the remainder of the new building program - the permission came from Germany

In September 1940, the fleet was thus of such a modest size that it was of no real combat value for a great power like Germany, let alone being able to protect a possible Danish neutrality, as had been the case during World War 1.

So under the Defense Act of 1937, Denmark slipped closer and closer to the disaster for the defense that World War II was to become.