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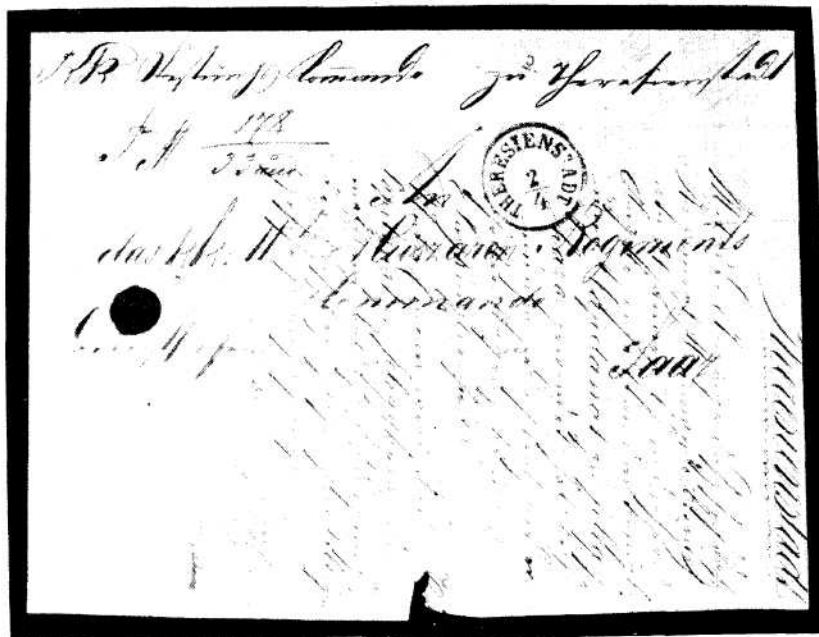
December 1984

No. 10, Whole No. 445

THERESIENSTADT — KLEINE FESTUNG

By Henry Hahn SCP

The Theresienstadt Ghetto and its postal services have received considerable attention in the SPECIALIST and elsewhere. While the subject will continue to be studied for years to come, significantly less has been published on postal services to and from the "Kleine Festung" (Small Fortress), which was a "Politisches Gefängnis" (political prison) and neither functionally or administratively related to the Theresienstadt Ghetto.



When Theresienstadt was founded by Joseph II in 1780, the Kleine Festung constituted only part of the much larger fortress city which incorporated the former Ghetto and the present town of Theresienstadt, i.e., Terezín. The Kleine Festung, located slightly northeast of the Ghetto, was built along the bank of the Eger (Ohře) river which often flooded and left the cells of the little fortress damp. These cells served both as a military and political prison during the period of the Hapsburg Monarchy.

An example of mail originating there is a letter (Fig. 1) from the Military Prison Command, dated April 2, 1871, and addressed to the Regimental Command of Prinz von Württemberg's 11th Huszars in Saaz (Žatec). The Theresienstadt post office then served the fortress city including the Kleine Festung prison. Among the famous or notorious prisoners held there during the period of the Monarchy was Gavrilo Princip, who in 1914 assassinated the Archduke Francis Ferdinand at Sarajevo, which affair has since become known as the immediate cause of World War I. A few years later, in 1918, Kleine Festung held some 560 soldiers who mutinied against the War in the town of Rumburg.

During the time of Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia, probably as early as June 14, 1940, the Prague Gestapo established a political prison at the Kleine Festung. This was a full sixteen (16) months before the establishment of the Theresienstadt Ghetto.

The Kleine Festung consisted of an entry courtyard with offices and guard house, the office of the Nazi commander Heinrich Jöckel, a clothing warehouse, and a garage. The entry bore the mocking sign "Arbeit Macht Frei" (Work makes free). A second courtyard followed, surrounded by 17 large cells and 20 solitary cells. These housed some 1,500 prisoners — as many as 100 prisoners per "large" cell. The first solitary cell, near the entrance, once held prisoner Princip. There was one bathroom and one "health station." A barber shop was hurriedly built prior to the arrival of the International Red Cross Commission in 1944. A hospital block (Krankenrevier) was also located in this courtyard.

An underground tunnel leads past a morgue to the execution yard where beginning

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in the latter part of 1943, executions were carried out without court action. Some 250 prisoners were executed by rifle squads. The gallows were once used for the simultaneous executions of these prisoners. In August of 1945 the bodies of 601 prisoners were exhumed nearby.

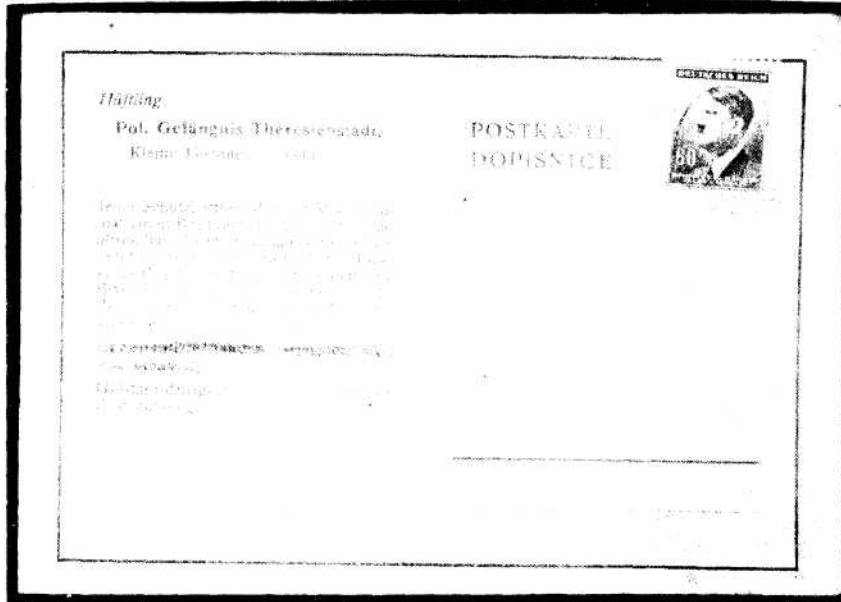
A new courtyard and cells were built between 1943 and 1944. By 1945 the new facility held more than 3000 prisoners, in cells of 400-600. Cell #44 was provided for prisoners designated for "liquidation." Solitary cells at times held as many as 12 prisoners. This courtyard also contained an SS barracks holding some 150 guards and a residence occupied by Commander Jöckel's family and others of high rank.

Yet another courtyard contained a work shop and a canteen for guards. A further courtyard was assigned to women prisoners, with cells identical to those used for men. A number of women were executed as well.

In April, 1945, an epidemic of typhoid spread throughout the small fortress. The Nazis took no action and abandoned the Kleine Festung on May 5, 1945. Medical personnel from Prague and Roudnice arrived as soon as the Nazis departed, and on May 8 the first Russian tanks arrived. With the further aid of Russian medical teams, which arrived on May 11, the epidemic was contained and eventually controlled. Most prisoners were repatriated by August 1945.

Postal communication with prisoners of the Kleine Festung was subject to generally the same rules as applied to other political prisons and concentration camps. Post cards (cachets) containing excerpts from the "Gefängnisordnung" (Prisoner rules) were issued in several varieties, two of which are illustrated below.

The first (Fig. 2) was mailed by prisoner Bohumil Máša to his brother on Dec. 12, 1942. It is of heavy, light brown stock. The prisoner writes that he is well and requests a piece of soap and 100 K (Crown) — though both requests are crossed out by means of a pencil. He mentions that food packages are permitted but must not contain written matter. He mentions that violations are "strictly punished."

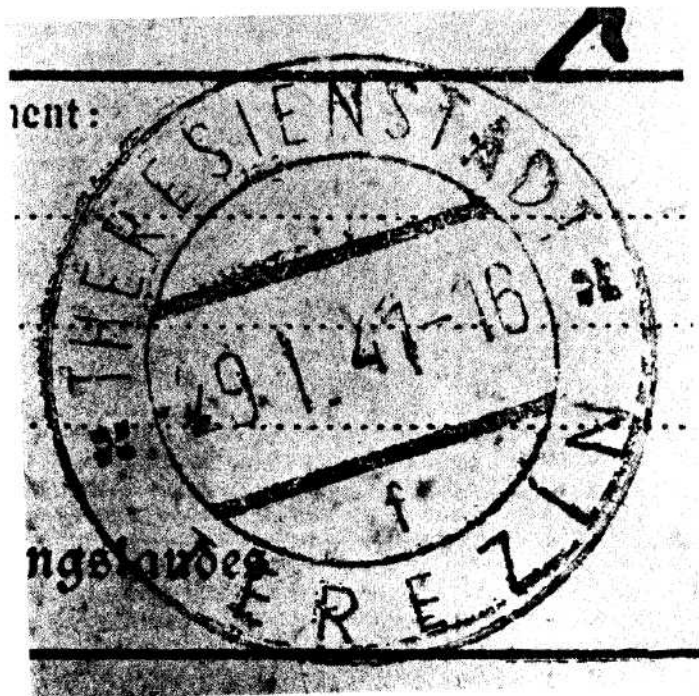


The cachet translates as follows:

Prisoner _____
Political Prison Theresienstadt POST CARD
Small Fortress _____ Cell _____ (GERMAN AND CZECH)

Each prisoner may receive and send monthly one letter or card.
Envelopes must be transparent. The letters must not be stamped.
The letters must contain at most 2 pages each of 15 lines, must be
written in ink and be clearly legible.

Foodstuffs of all types are forbidden (crossed out).
The sending of money is only permitted if sent by mail.



The post mark is not clear but may be the THERESIENSTADT-TEREZIN marking of the type shown in Fig. 3. This assumption is based on the paper by Kahn (1) in which he reports that the THERESIENSTADT-TEREZIN POSTMARK (of Protectorate issue) was transferred to the Kleine Festung and that all mail after establishment of the Ghetto bears this mark. This was done because the Ghetto was not permitted to operate a post office — its mail, when post marked locally, always being cancelled at the nearby railroad junction of Bauschowitz c. d. Eger/Bohušovice n. Ohří, shown in Fig. 4. However, it is known that mail from the Kleine Festung has also been cancelled at the Bauschowitz post office, and hence the illegible marking may be of that type.

Another variety of the cachet card is illustrated in Fig. 5. It is of equally heavy but light blue stock with essentially the same wording. The last paragraph is altered by adding "Monatlich bis 50 k" (Monthly up to 50 K).

Used copies of Kleine Festung cards are scarce — far scarcer than Theresienstadt Ghetto cards. This is due to the far smaller population at the small fortress prison, more severe restrictions, and the fact that a great many prisoners were non-Czech, particularly Russian.

BAUSCHOWITZ ad EBERG



<p><i>Häftling.</i> Pol. Gefängnis Theresienstadt. Kleine Festung. — Zelle.</p> <hr/> <p>Auszug aus der Gefängnisordnung. Jeder Schutzhäftling darf im Monat einmal einen Brief oder Karte erhalten und absenden. Briefumschläge müssen ungefüllt sein. Es darf dem Briefe keine Briefmarke beigelegt werden. Die Briefe dürfen höchstens 2 Seiten mit je 15 Zeilen aufweisen, müssen mit Tinte geschrieben werden u. deutlich lesbar sein. Briefpost von Häftlingen, die sich nicht mehr hier befinden, wird nicht nachgesandt. Briefe, die nicht der Vorschrift entsprechen, werden weder abgeschickt noch ausgehändigt. Lebensmittelpakete werden nicht angenommen. Geldsendungen sind nur durch die Post zulässig. Monatlich bis 50 K.</p>	<p>POSTKARTE DOPISNICE</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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Much research in this fascinating corner of our hobby lies ahead, and all contributions will be appreciated and published.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- (1) Kahn, Henry F., The Germany Postal Specialist, Feb. 1967, p.p. 86-87.



LETTER TO THE EDITORS

Subject: *Third Airmail Issue 1930-1939*

Dear Editors:

I have read with great interest the first two parts of the translation of the study by Zdeněk Kvasnička on the third airmail issue and have the following observations and questions:

- 50 h — Type I, perforation $12\frac{1}{4}$. The copy in my collection measures 17.2×21.7 mm (narrow format) while in the March SPECIALIST, page 9, the dimensions are given as 17.7×21 mm (wide format). Do both dimensions exist officially?
- 1 Kč — Perf $12\frac{1}{4}$ and compound perf. The March SPECIALIST, page 9, says these stamps are the wide format while the SPECIALIST of April/May also on page 9 says they are narrow format. What I have are narrow; of the compound perforation I have a corner block signed by Gilbert. Do both dimensions exist officially?
- 2 Kč — Type II. The copy in my collection seems to be 30.8 mm in width rather than 30.5 mm.
- 3 Kč — Type III. The dimensions of the stamps I have are $31 \times 22\frac{1}{2}$ mm and not 30.7×21.8 . One of them is signed by Gilbert.

I would welcome any comments and look forward to the next installment of the article.

Tom Austin
San Jose, Costa Rica

RESPONSE

Dear Tom:

We are pleased to have received an authoritative response from Mr. Kvasnička, who writes as follows:

- 50 h — Type I. You are correct: the stamp is only of the narrow format (17.2×21.7 mm).
- 1 Kč — Perf. $12\frac{1}{4}$ and compound perf. $12\frac{1}{4}:13\frac{3}{4}$; again, only the narrow format is known.

The errors in Mr. Kvasnička's text occurred in typesetting and he appreciates your catching them.

THE THIRD AIR MAIL ISSUE OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA, 1930-1939

By Zdeněk Kvasnička — Translated by Henry Hahn

The next four pages, (centerfold) contain a continuation of the above titled work, which is being published serially. Publication began in the March issue.

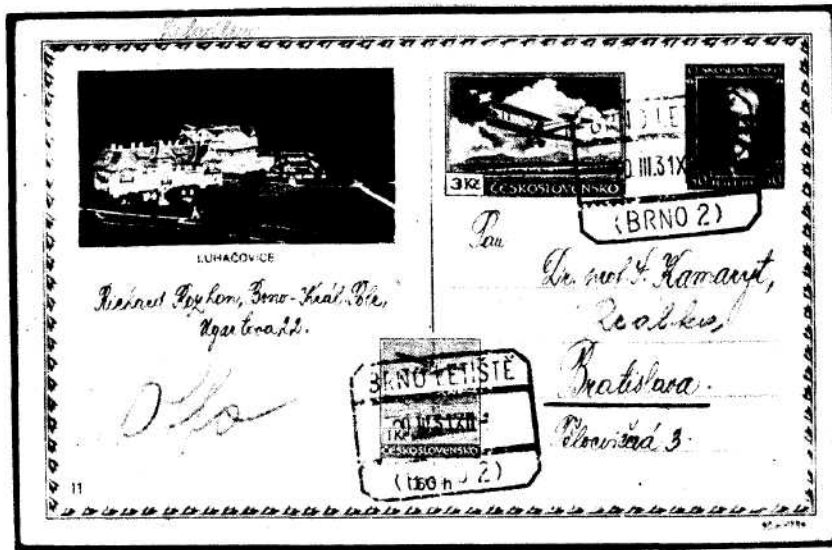


Figure 33. Postmark of the Postal Station at Brno Airport.

Air Mail Labels

Blue "Air Mail" labels of the sort still used today were first issues in 1928 with the bilingual text in Czech and French "LETADLEM-PAR AVION." These were provided at the post offices without charge. Extensive use of these labels called for seven different printings, which differ from one another by color, type-face and perforations. The post offices, however, made no objection to any kind of marking, and post offices at the airports used rubber stamps of various types to mark airmail letters.

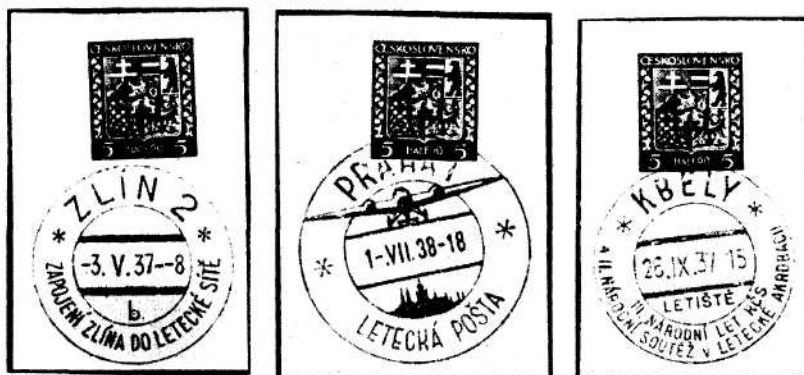
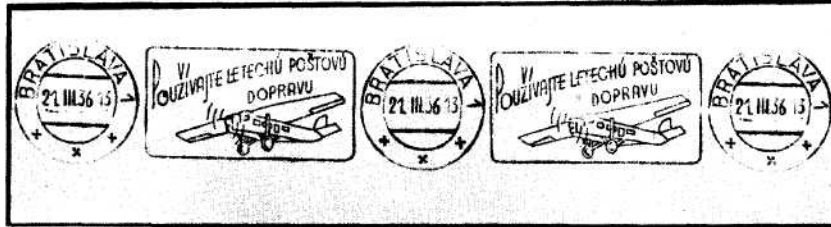




Figure 34. Examples of Air Commemorative Postmarks.



Figure 35. Examples of Air Propagational Slogan Postmarks.



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MAIL FROM THE DREADNOUGHTS

By Jiří Nekvasil — Translated by Henry Hahn
(Original article from FILATELIE, 19/1984, p. 594 ff)

The building of the Adriatic Fleet of the Austro-Hungarian Navy was initiated by Vice Admiral Tegethoff, who is pictured on the Austrian 60 + 60 gr. stamp of 1935 (Scott B136). Command of this force was at first assigned to Archduke Maximilian, future Emperor of Mexico, who was shot by the Mexicans in Queretaro in 1867. His magnificent villa, Miramar, built on the Adriatic shore, is our only* reminder of his uselessly tragic life. Support for construction of dreadnoughts came from Archduke and heir apparent to the Austrian Throne, Ferdinand d'Este, shot at Sarajevo in 1914. Archduke Ferdinand was General Inspector of all Austro-Hungarian military forces. It was largely his influence that led to the building of these super-heavy battleships. However, the assumptions of the Austrian naval experts proved to be erroneous, since these ships were unsatisfactory for a closed-in sea as is the Adriatic, because they were unable to fully utilize their capacities. Their construction cost the Monarchy billions of crowns. Through during the course of the war these ships nearly never left their safe harbors, and when they did, they were sunk. The Mediterranean and Adriatic were dominated by far lighter, less heavily armed warships operated by the Italians and French.



The Dreadnoughts

At the beginning of the 20th century, Austria began construction of four mighty battleships patterned after the British, which were to give the Austrian Navy a "super-power" status. In spite of that, Austria-Hungary remained a third-class naval power.

*Translator's note: Add to this Maximilian's residence at Chapultepec Park in Mexico City, memorial altar at the Schottenkirche in Vienna and probably others.

The Austrian dreadnoughts were well designed and had excellent characteristics. They had a displacement of 20,300 tons, and their main armaments were twelve SKODA WORKS manufactured 305 mm guns, located in four turrets of 3 guns each, front and back. In addition there were numerous lighter guns including anti-aircraft. Each ship represented a mighty fortress with powerful fire power.

The flag ship of the entire Adriatic Fleet was S.M.S. VIRIBUS UNITIS, which name translates to "WITH UNITED FORCES." This was to signify the "inviolable brotherhood in arms" between Austria and Germany. On its highest smoke stack there waved the flag of the Commander of the Adriatic Fleet, Anton Heus, whose Chief of Staff was Rear Admiral Josef Rodler.

The dreadnought is shown on the Austrian 20 + 3 h semi-postal stamp (Scott B6). The other three dreadnoughts constituted the 1st Division of Heavy Battleships, which had a purely offensive mission — which mission was never realized in the Adriatic throughout W.W.I. To the contrary, the entire Mediterranean and Adriatic was dominated throughout the war by Italian, French and mainly British naval forces, which were considerably weaker than the Austrian.

The Commander of the 1st Division was Admiral Maximilian Njegovan, who never denied his Croatian origin and was therefore replaced following the mutiny at Boka Kotorska by Captain Horthy von Nagyabanya, who was a devoted servant of the Hapsburgs. Following the war, as a sealess admiral and administrator of a kingless kingdom, he ruled Hungary between the wars.

As troublesome as the building of the dreadnought S.M.S. SZENT ISTVÁN was, so speedy was its demise. In the summer of 1918, Admiral Horthy was made responsible for the transfer of S.M.S. Tegetthoff and S.M.S. SZENT ISTVÁN from the naval port of POLA to CATTARO. The units were attacked by fast Italian torpedo boats. A torpedo struck the SZENT ISTVÁN which sank after three hours.



Ship Mail

The crews of the individual dreadnoughts included over 1,200 men, so that the total complement of all four was nearly 5,000. That number is over 20% of the entire mobilized force of the Austrian Navy. A large quantity of mail was dispatched from the dreadnoughts, and hence covers from there are by no means rare. Since the ships belonged to the Hochseeflotte (High seas flotilla), they used the uniform circular cancel. These are shown in Fig. 2 and 3. These appear on mail sent during peacetime. In addition, various straight line cancels were used, some of differing circular design, frame cancels, censorship mailings, etc. These continued in use during WWI. Two censor markings (frame) used on the S.M.S. VIRIBUS UNITIS and PRINZ EUGEN are shown in Fig. 4. The latter ship was named after the famous Austrian military leader Eugene of Savoy (1663–1736) who in spite of his French origin was loyal to the Hapsburgs. He was an excellent strategist and his superb mastery of the military art brought Austria many victories. A second such military master was of Czech origin. This was Marshal RADECKÝ of RADEC, who with his Czech regiments pulled the Austrian chestnuts out of the Italian fire. His departure led to the loss of Lombardy and Venecia, two rich Austrian provinces, whose population hated Austrian occupation and rule. Incidentally, one of the cruisers of the Adriatic Flotilla carried his name — S.M.S. RADETSKY.

Fig. 2 shows a post card from S.M.S. VIRIBUS UNITIS of July 21, 1916, and Fig. 3 shows a post card from S.M.S. PRINZ EUGEN.

This marking originally contained at the center a drawing of the Austrian National Emblem — the two-headed eagle. Fig. 5 illustrates a good strike of such a unit marking. It originates from the S.M.S. TEGETTHOFF. The unit marking devices were originally made of metal — only during the war was rubber substituted. A censor marking from the ship S.M.S. SZENT ISTVÁN is shown in Fig. 6. Hungarians, who composed the majority of the crew of this dreadnought, did not appreciate seeing this hated Austrian emblem. Therefore, during the war, these markings were replaced with those showing both the Austrian and Hungarian emblems. This was acceptable since the warships were a common weapon of the so called "dual monarchy," even though the Hungarians were a minority in the Navy. Most sailors, officers, gunners, technical and torpedo officers were of Slavic origin, predominantly Czechs. The majority of field post mail both from and to ships received the field post cancel K.U.K. MARINEFELDPOSTAMT - POLA. This field post operated throughout the war as the postal directorate for the entire Adriatic Fleet. The standard type of cancel was used with the identifying letters a,b,c.... In addition there were three non-standard post marks, which are far rarer on cover.

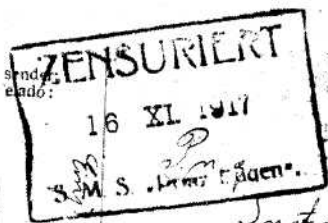
Since all of the dreadnoughts lay at anchor throughout the war (though with fired-up boilers, ready for action that never came), the crews had ample opportunity for shore leave. They sent home various picture post cards as field post mail. Even though the S.M.S. SZENT ISTVÁN was sunk, mail from it is no scarcer than from the other three dreadnoughts. Some 20 postal markings of all types originated on the four ships, and getting all of them represents some difficulty.

What was the end of these mighty ships? After the sailors' mutiny at Boka Kotorska which was caused by poor rations and poor clothing issued to the sailors as well as their desire for an end to the useless struggle, real order within the Austrian Navy was never restored. Admiral Horthy tried to accomplish this, but failed. S.M.S. SZENT ISTVÁN was sunk in the summer of 1918, as mentioned earlier. The others survived the war which ended in November of 1918 and became war booty to the Allies. After the war, Yugoslav sailors took possession of the VIRIBUS and raised their flag, considering it as their own booty. Great jealousy and hate by the Italians caused this ship to be "accidentally" sunk by a torpedo, long after cessation of hostilities. The ship hit bottom at anchor, though its superstructure remained above the surface. Finally, the rest of these unused giants were scrapped.

At the start of this century, the First Lord of the British Admiralty was Admiral John A. Fisher, who knew that a war was about to erupt among the major powers which would prove to be a life-death struggle, and which was to result in a new division of Europe, both politically and economically. He strived for a Navy which could achieve British dominance of all the oceans.

In the ill-fated Russo-Japanese War, on May 27, 1905, the entire Russian Navy was destroyed by long range guns mounted on modern Japanese armored vessels operating beyond the range of Russian guns. Hence, in 1905-1906 the British built a super-heavy battleship, the HMS. DREADNOUGHT with a displacement of 26,400 tons and a speed of 21.5 knots. Its performance parameters exceeded everything that was then in existence. The ship was armed with ten long range guns of 305 mm caliber, which were placed in five rotating gun turrets able to fire simultaneously both laterally and frontally. The side armor thickness was 280 mm while the frontal armor and stern armor were 150 mm and 100 mm, respectively. Its armor piercing shells could penetrate armor 280 mm thick. The deck was 8.5 m above the ocean surface, which permitted good guidance as well as firing observation. The propulsion was of a revolutionary design, consisting of four rows of steam turbines generating 25,700 Hp. Thorough testing confirmed all the advantages of this new class of ships, and production of a series of identical ships began. An added benefit was that coal was soon replaced by diesel fuel which increased their range and permitted better use of space.

The British example was soon followed by the U.S., France, and Italy as well as Austria. The Austrian Admiralty planning office in Pola prepared all plans and drawings for construction of the new class of battleships. Czech engineers had the main say, and construction of four battleships was initiated. For three of the ships, S.M.S. VIRIBUS UNITIS, PRINZ EUGEN and TEGETTHOF, such basic components as armor plate, forgings, etc., were provided by the VITKOVICE IRON WORKS in OSTRAVA; guns and gun turrets by the SKODA WORKS in Pilsin; and electrical and electro-mechanical systems by a Prague firm now part of the concern CKD PRAHA. Here Czech engineers and workers proved their excellence. The fourth dreadnought, the S.M.S. SZENT ISTVAN (St. Steven) was mainly manufactured (because of their share of taxes) by Hungarian firms. Because they lacked the required technology base, the results were poor. Actual construction was left to a Hungarian shipyard in FIUME (now RIJEKA) named DANUBIUS-GANZ which up to then had only built passenger ships and freighters. This shipyard knew nothing of construction of naval vessels. The Hungarian component suppliers were also unequal to the task, and hence construction lagged and floundered, till finally the Austrian Admiralty took over to prevent collapse of the project.



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