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Foreword

This volume is the second of a series begun by *Conway's All the World's Fighting Ships 1860-1905*, which dealt with a period for which there was little existing published material. Therefore it was only necessary to explain how – rather than why – the subject was covered. For the 1922-46 period there are already many reference books on warships, and so a few words about the aims of this volume are in order.

Available published works fall into three basic categories, all of which have some positive disadvantages from the point of view of the student or enthusiast:

1. Yearbooks and annuals. These have virtually no access to primary sources; they are also subject to security restrictions and, often, intentionally misleading official information put out for propaganda purposes. Yearbooks naturally concentrate on what is new, and so there is rarely any incentive to correct data in retrospect.
2. Pocket-books on navies or ship types. These are little more than fleet-lists, with no space to devote to the design background or general naval developments.
3. Monographs and detailed studies. This category contains many fine works of extreme importance in their own right, but by no means all navies and ship types have benefited from such studies (very few of the smaller navies have been covered, and even US cruisers are still without a definitive technical history). Therefore, even if an avid enthusiast could afford to collect all available books, there would still be gaps in their coverage.

Consequently the first aim of this book is to provide, in a single manageable volume, all the information that would otherwise require almost a library of naval reference works.

The second aim concerns the quality of the information: each volume of this series involves a major revaluation of published information with the advantage of hindsight, as well as the wide-scale use of unpublished sources, many of them available only recently.

No warship is merely a collection of data, and this book's third aim is to back the bare technical details, wherever possible, with notes on the history and rationale of the design. Judgements on the quality of a ship can only be made with reference to her designer's intentions, and similarly the policy of a navy cannot be understood outside the political and economic context in which it operated. These factors are covered in the introduction to each country.

SCOPE

The period covered is from the Washington Treaty to the end of the wartime building programmes. In some ways this volume is more comprehensive than its predecessor. The concern is still predominantly with *fighting ships*, but the exclusions have been less rigid. Riverine and lake vessels have been included, as have many very small craft, such as MTBs, and even special attack craft like Italian 'chariots' or Japanese 'Shinyo' suicide boats, the criterion for inclusion being their relative historical importance. This has also dictated the inclusion of some purpose-built auxiliaries (many of which have interesting technical features) as well as significant conversions from warships. In many

cases, the vessels of non-naval government agencies (coastguard, army, police or fishery protection services) have been omitted, or relegated to the Minor Naval Forces section at the end of the book. All important designs and uncompleted warships have been included.

NEW FEATURES

Compared with the 1860-1905 volume, the most obvious new feature is the greatly expanded notes and illustrations to the tables of ships extant at the beginning of the period. This was necessary because the Washington Treaty forced the major powers to extensively rebuild many capital ships in lieu of new construction, while the pace of technological advance during the war years meant that older ships had to be more frequently, and more radically, refitted. These developments belong here rather than the 1906-21 volume which will cover the details of the ships as built.

Apart from more detailed coverage, this volume has much new material to offer, in both text and illustration. For example, Eastern European sources have been widely used for those countries now in the Communist bloc, while many previously unpublished photos have been provided by a collector in the USSR. Many of the smaller navies have been adequately covered for the first time; this is particularly true of countries like Finland, which suffered from war-inspired security restrictions on the release of information. However, new information is not confined to the small or obscure navies: the US section contains for the first time succinct design histories of all significant warship classes entirely compiled from official records, while even the much-studied Royal Navy affords a few surprises, such as the projected cruiser designs of 1939-45, or the 'oil-drum' protective systems of the armed merchant cruisers.

ORGANISATION

The major naval powers – those with a modern battlefleet – come first. Thereafter countries are grouped geographically, to facilitate comparisons between neighbouring navies. Finally there is a short section outlining minor naval forces, few of which have any claim to being real navies. Dominion and Commonwealth navies are to be found under 'Great Britain', usually under the British classes to which most of them belonged.

The order within each country is standard: a general introduction, followed by a statement of its fleet in 1922, then the post-1922 classes in type and chronological order. The type-divisions are conventional (Capital Ships, Aircraft Carriers, Cruisers, etc) in descending order of importance, but where a classification is very general (such as Coastal Forces) each class heading may be followed by a more precise designation (such as *MTB*, *MGB* or *ML*).

ILLUSTRATIONS

Classes of ship of cruiser size and upwards are usually represented by both a photograph and a line drawing; wherever possible these are complementary – representing either different sister-ships, or the same