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Archival Treasure for Scholars of the Kriegsmarine

The Bundesarchiv-Zentralnachweisstelle (BA-ZNS), Kornelimünster.

Many thanks for including my note on the Deutsche Dienststelle (WASt) in the last issue of the journal. I have since returned from my research trip to Europe. While in Germany, I again spent some time in a rather special archive--one that appears to be little known and clearly underused by most researchers of the Kriegsmarine. Your readers might benefit from the following information:

The Bundesarchiv-Zentralnachweisstelle (BA-ZNS) is the central depository for court martial records of the Wehrmacht, Waffen-SS, Luftwaffe and Kriegsmarine, as well as the German Mine Sweeping Administration (GMSA) in the immediate post-war period.

It is located in a former Benedictine monastery in the picturesque village of

Kornelimünster, some 10 miles south of downtown Aachen. This website offers

pertinent information for users, including e-mail address and transportation:

<www.bundesarchiv.de/aufgaben_organisation/dienstorte/aachen_kornelimuenster/index.html>

The archive's director is Herr Ronald Meentz (r.meentz@barch.bund.de) who supervises a friendly and helpful staff of sixteen. The reading room is generously equipped and overlooks the grounds of the abbey--an idyllic setting compared to user arrangements in most archives elsewhere.

The Kriegsmarine files, well over 60,000 altogether, appear virtually complete and cover all naval jurisdictions afloat and ashore, including those in occupied territories. They allow for fascinating insights into the social and professional life, background, attitudes, morale, behavioral expectations, and civil-military relations of officers, enlisted men as well as civilian naval personnel, not to mention the standards and procedures of the Kriegsmarine's legal bureaucracy. Cases cover everything from traffic accidents, public drunkenness, fraternization, altercations, homosexuality, AWOL, negligence, and various

types of dereliction of duty, to serious matters such as theft, rape and even murder. Especially interesting are instances of sedition, cooperation with the enemy, sabotage, and desertion in the later stages of the war. Unfortunately the files are randomly numbered and typically indexed only by the name of the accused, thus rendering systematic inquiries into particular transgressions, commands or locales difficult. There does exist a separate index for the several hundred men who were sentenced to death. Tentative plans call for the closing of the ZNS in Kornelimünster within the next few years and its relocation possibly to Germany's Military Archives in Freiburg or the Deutsche Dienststelle (WASSt) in Berlin. Until that happens researchers should feel encouraged to take advantage of the excellent holdings, relaxed atmosphere and scenic setting of one of Europe's finer but lesser known archival facilities.

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