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Gone To Texas – Twice! The Visits of the German War Cruiser *Karlsruhe*

By Simone Santiago Ramos

The use of ships for training cruises is a German tradition that goes back to the Prussian corvette *Amazon* in the mid-1850s which visited ports along the North Sea.¹ After the unification of Germany in 1871, the Imperial German Navy continued the practice. By the late nineteenth century, Germany possessed a colonial empire scattered around the globe, and “showing the flag” was essential. These cruises not only strengthened the ties between the emigrants and the homeland, but also helped improve relationships with the visited countries. During the Great War the training ceased, and it took several years for the new German government, the Weimar Republic, to restart them. Germany was devastated by the Versailles Treaty, morally, militarily and economically. The treaty reduced the fleet to 15,000 men, which included a mere 1,500 officers. Article 181 dictated the size of the maritime force: six light cruisers, twelve destroyers, and twelve torpedo boats were now the only vessels permitted. Submarines were banned altogether.² Moreover, the Treaty permitted replacement only if one of the authorized battleships, cruisers, or destroyers broke down and had to be replaced. New construction was restricted not only by length and tonnage but also by the amount of armor carried. Soon after the reinstatement of the German navy in 1920, the planning for replacement of old and obsolete vessels began. Because the Treaty of Versailles stipulated the specifications of new cruisers, existing plans from the former Imperial Navy could not be used. All plans and designs had to be approved by the Inter Allied Commission of Control. Construction of the first post-war cruiser, later named *Emden*, began in April 1922 and was launched at Wilhelmshaven in January 1925.³

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By the mid-1920s the Weimar Republic felt politically confident enough to show the rest of the world that Germany had moved forward as a new nation and recommenced the training cruises. These visits were restricted at first to Swedish ports in the Baltic. By 1925 the cruiser *Hamburg* sailed, not without incident, to North and South America.⁴ After the Reichstag approved the replacement of the obsolete *Medusa* in 1925, the *Deutsche Werke* in Kiel started to lay down the keel for a new light cruiser of the *Königsberg* class.⁵ The ship was outfitted with six oil-fired boilers with natural circulation and no longer depended on coal.⁶ The vessel was launched in August 1927 as the *Karlsruhe*, and during the first two years of service, the cruiser operated only in the Baltic Sea, but on May 24, 1930, she left for her maiden voyage under Captain Eugen Lindau.⁷ This trip brought the German sailors into the Mediterranean, through Suez and along the African East coast, to Durban, Lüteritz and across the Atlantic to Brazil.

In September 1931 Fregattenkapitän Erwin Wassner became the *Karlsruhe*'s second commander and on November 30, 1931, the cruiser left for its second goodwill tour around the world with forty five cadets and twelve engineer cadets, a total of 524 men on board. The *Karlsruhe* was expected to spend a little over a year away from home and cover roughly 43.000 nautical miles. The commander and his officers celebrated a few days before their departure with a gathering at the Schlosshof Hotel in Kiel. Commander Wassner stressed that the crew should "appear abroad for the good of our fatherland".⁸ Wassner was a well-known former submarine commander who was decorated with the Pour le Mèrite for accomplishments during World War I.⁹ A last church service onboard for crew and visitors was performed before the *Karlsruhe* finally lifted anchor the last day in November. Along the way to the Holtenau locks of the Kaiser-Wilhelm Canal, which eventually released the *Karlsruhe* on her one year goodwill tour around the world, family members, friends, and fellow sailors waived a last good-bye. The

ship's orchestra played Eichendorff's "*Wem Gott will rechte Gunst erweisen*" while an 800-strong honor guard saluted for the last time. As the *Karlsruhe* made her way toward the English Channel, Captain Wassner read three telegrams to the crew. President Hindenburg, Admiral Raeder, and Reichswehrminister Wilhelm Groener all sent greetings and best wishes. The crew was aware that this was not a 12-month vacation but rather a test of their abilities, stamina and determination, but also to bring honor to the fatherland and to increase awareness of the "Germandom abroad."¹⁰

The German goodwill tours of the early 1930s were an important first step in reconciling Germany to the rest of the world. They were meant to improve international relations, and the German government could not have picked better representatives.¹¹ Much like Theodore Roosevelt's Great White fleet in 1907, the German cruisers showed that they were capable of long voyages, that their engines were reliable, and the crews were well trained. However, there were problems. The *Karlsruhe* was not designed for tropical climates. The ship often ran short of fresh water, and high humidity led to ventilation problems in the engine rooms.¹² Moreover, the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich were short of foreign currency and avoided purchasing fuel in foreign ports or from foreign companies and ships. A chartered German tanker accompanied the German vessels on their tours. This was useful for learning the technique of refueling at sea a necessary skill for a world power possessing no naval bases.¹³ The German Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defense (*Reichswehrministerium*, RWM) carefully orchestrated all stops of the vessels in conjunction with the respective embassies abroad and after 1933 the German Foreign Institute in Stuttgart. Final arrangements were made at least six to nine months before the scheduled visits and even small adjustments to the itinerary proved troublesome. All visits were treated as "unofficial presentations". The end of October 1931 the

RWM in Berlin approved the final *Reiseplan*.¹⁴ The Foreign Office in Berlin reminded the embassies about the economic difficulties and declared that it would not reimburse the embassies for costs incurred during the visits.¹⁵ The expenses at each port were estimated to be about \$4,000, a large sum in those Depression-era days. Often this expense was supplemented by donations from local organizations or the host city.¹⁶

After stop-overs in Hamilton, Bermuda and Havana, Cuba, the crew sighted land on February 9 and within an hour the *Karlsruhe* arrived in Galveston, Texas. A 21-gun salute was fired, the Stars and Stripes hoisted, and both national anthems played by the board orchestra. Hundreds of Texans waited at the pier, while nine bi-planes flew formation above the harbor. German consular representatives from Houston and New Orleans, of the governor's office, and the city of Galveston exchanged official calls, which highlighted the importance of the visit. Sailor Robert Buttmi, a mechanic on the cruiser, was much impressed by the heavy applause and the sudden invasion by journalists and a film crew.¹⁷ He later learned that the last German war ship visited Galveston twenty years earlier.¹⁸ Before the German visitors were allowed to leave the ship, fact sheets were passed out with useful information about land and people visited. The sailors were warned of two things in Texas: local brothels and the speak-easies which served inferior alcohol! In February of 1932 prohibition still existed in America and drinking alcohol was not allowed. The diarist Kurt Gross referred on several occasions in his diary to the request by the Galvestonians for beer from the *Karlsruhe*, which they carried in large quantities. Captain Wassner however gave strict instructions to obey the prohibition laws of the country and Staff Sergeant Gross understood that the *Karlsruhe's* mission was not to defy local laws.¹⁹ Technically visitors to the ship could not be served any alcohol; it was, however, possible to have a beer with a sailor if an invitation was extended onboard. Even Captain Wassner had a last

“one more for the road” the morning of the departure of the *Karlsruhe* with invited guests.²⁰ The guests were very much awed with the beer onboard and the sailors recalled the rejoicing of the Americans when they all received two ½ liter bottles of “real” German beer from the pantry of the *Karlsruhe*.²¹

The visit to Texas was not only exciting and informative for the German sailors; many of the older ones were veterans of World War I, but also for the Galvestonians and especially the German-American community there. The 1930 Texas census revealed that Galveston had a population of about 35,000 people of whom one-third claimed to be of German origins. German groups as far away as Fredericksburg and New Braunfels in the Hill country were energized by the visit from the *Heimat*. Although German-Americans in 1932 were mostly second or even third generation, they nevertheless looked forward to the visit.²²

The port of Galveston had received preference over Pensacola, Florida. The German Ambassador in Washington Friedrich von Prittwitz advised that Pensacola’s influence over the region as a port city was declining and furthermore not enough German-Americans lived in the region to validate a stop. Military and economic reasons played also a large role in the selection process. Delegations both from the RWM and private companies toured the U.S. in regular intervals by the late 1920s, including Galveston and Harris counties. Chemical factories were surveyed and visits to military installations in San Antonio, Galveston, and El Paso added to the itineraries.²³ While Galveston was selected as the host in 1932, the city of Houston had also been looked at as a possible stop. The economic situation of the two cities was compared, and while Houston had surpassed Galveston in importance, Galveston received the honor. This disappointed Houston and set off a flood of requests by city and Harris County officials begging for a visit.²⁴ Houston had expressed interest in a visit already in February 1931, but the naval

command in Berlin needed to keep the number of stops to a minimum and could not possible add another port.²⁵

The Germans enjoyed the stay, but were overwhelmed by the technical advancements that existed in America. The wide streets and the many luxury cars in Galveston made a big impression and they could not believe that no one walked in this country. Galveston was described as a young, but sober colonial city without a “romantic historic center”, as often seen back in Germany. Some sailors believed that the German-Americans were “all American”, but still German in their hearts; they were still seen as *Landsleute* by the sailors.²⁶ Yet this group was also in a dilemma on how much to carry their Germaness on their sleeves. Hosts often reminisced about the time and negative experiences they had to endure because of their *Deutschtum* after 1917.²⁷ Many found support and help in lodges like the Sons of Herman who continued over the years to foster and cultivate *Deutschtum*, while others joined German clubs and societies in their newly adopted homeland; sports clubs and music associations often bore familiar names like Germania or Teutonia.²⁸ This *Deutschtum*, it seemed was particularly prevalent in the choir culture who kept their traditions alive by singing German songs, and staging an annual singing competition.²⁹ By 1932 German-Americans had overcome the challenges of 1917, but recovery after the war had been slow and difficult.³⁰

Most sailors made friends in Galveston fast, oftentimes close to one hundred cars were waiting to pick them up on the pier. The easy-going way of the Texans impressed, yet what puzzled the sailors was the “*Unkenntnis*” or ignorance of these people because many confused Germany with Austria.³¹ One encountered an older woman who touched his uniform because it was reported that the *Karlsruhe* sailor “were wearing uniforms made out of paper.”³² The Americans also seemed to remember the rumors they heard during the war. The crew was asked

on a number of occasions if German soldiers really hacked of the hands of little children in World War I.³³

Regardless, the visit was seen as evidence of friendship and bond between the two countries and the Germans reported on the friendly attitude of the press.³⁴ Local business placed welcome signs in their stores and took out ads in the newspapers greeting the ship.³⁵ German clubs and associations, the so-called *Vereine* were especially targeted to contribute as much as possible to the visit.³⁶ Texans were encouraged to visit the *Karlsruhe* in Galveston and inspect the ship and several afternoons were set aside for this. Many German-Americans took advantage of the arrival of the ship since it was considered German soil. The Lutheran board chaplain Armin Schallehn was busy conducting weddings and baptisms in almost every port. Furthermore all German choirs were expected to visit and participate in a planned concert on the 21st of February onboard the ship. These choirs were traditionally all male , German mixed choirs were not the norm even in America.³⁷ In a local newspaper article, the executive director of the German *Sängerbund* in Berlin, Dr. Karl Hammerschmidt, encouraged the German-Texan choirs of Galveston to continue to sing in their native language, German. Hammerschmidt respected the American citizenship of the members of the Texas choirs, but he also found it necessary to remind his fellow American brothers that they should always practice German character and customs, the *Deutsche Art und Sitte*. Singing so Hammerschmidt was another tool and opportunity to promote *Deutschtum* abroad and showed the strong links between Germany and the United States.

All official teas, picnics, dances, and other forms of entertainment were preplanned before the *Karlsruhe* arrived in Texas. To keep with navy customs, separate events for the crew, cadets and the officers took place. Captain Wassner and four of his officers visited San Antonio

and Austin, while the rest of his men stayed behind in Galveston.³⁸ In Austin, the commander made an official visit to the Texas legislature. The official dinner in San Antonio was sponsored by the local Chamber of Commerce and its president Herman H. Ochs in the San Antonio Hotel. Senator Williamson and other Texas dignitaries were present, and it was stressed by the Texans in light of the political developments in Germany that the constitution of the United States “preferred no specific race.” Wassner also went to Houston for a short visit where he was greeted by Major Walter Monteith. A brief visit by Governor Ross S. Sterling on February 11th was highlighted by the crew and left a big impression on them.³⁹ Sterling gave a short speech in which he emphasized the positive German influence on the development of Texas. He furthermore reminded the attendees of the co-operation and goodwill of Germany.⁴⁰ Sterling took part in an international luncheon in honor of his fifty-seventh birthday, which was celebrated with cake onboard the German war cruiser. Consuls and vice-consuls of various countries, as well as the officers from the battleship *U.S.S Wyoming* which laid also in port took part in the gathering. Captain Wassner stressed the preservation of German culture abroad in a short speech. The German Consul in Galveston Julius von Jockusch underlined the importance of *Germandom*, its unity and strength.⁴¹ German-Americans were well aware of the political situation in Germany. The *Freie Presse of Texas* informed the readership in 1932 about Hitler’s open ten-page letter to Chancellor Brüning. A few weeks later an unsigned essay was published in the same newspaper, highlighting the main points of the Nation Socialists program.⁴² But the main stream press also kept Texans up-to-date about developments in Europe. The *Houston Post Dispatch* reported on the possible re-election of Hindenburg as president and the “definitely nomination of Hitler as a presidential candidate”.⁴³ During one of the many celebrations a Mr. Paul Bottler recited a poem about Versailles and he received general approval from the audience.

Bottler was a fixture of the *Deutschtum* in Texas and a popular figure in Houston.⁴⁴ Along the same lines, the *Freie Presse of Texas* emphasized the hard times during the Great War in the U.S. as well.⁴⁵ After an exhausting fourteen days in Texas the cruiser left for Mexico, on March 3, 1932.

Two years later the *Karlsruhe* embarked on her fourth goodwill cruise, leaving Kiel under the command of Captain Günther Lütjens.⁴⁶ Adolf Hitler was chancellor and the *Karlsruhe* now flew the swastika flag proudly onboard.⁴⁷ Before lifting anchor Lütjens reminded his men that the *Karlsruhe* was a German warship and the old, familiar greetings and songs were replaced by a “Sieg Heil” and the Horst Wessel song.⁴⁸ Texas was once again selected as a destination fulfilling a promise made to the city of Houston in 1933.⁴⁹ Texas congressman Thompson and the mayor had sent numerous requests to Berlin “begging that this communication of this invitation would be given to the Admiralty High Command of the German navy”.⁵⁰ Economic considerations again played a part in the selection process. Nazi Germany was the largest importer of Texas cotton and a German trade delegation accompanied by Dr. Hans Luther, German Ambassador and former Chancellor of the Reich, had visited Houston just weeks before.⁵¹ The Nazis also took advantage now of the popularity of the cruiser. Since the ship had been the first vessel with the national emblem to go abroad in the fall of 1933 eleven so-called *Reiseberichte* or travel accounts and photos were published over the course of that trip in the *Völkische Beobachter* in Germany.⁵²

Just as the *Karlsruhe* entered the Gulf of Mexico, the commander recalled that he “had visited these waters before”, prior to 1914.⁵³ Wharf number three in Houston was ready on the rainy and cold afternoon of April 26, when the *Karlsruhe* arrived for an eight-day stay. An enthusiastic few welcomed the ship. The sailors of the U.S.S. *Schenck* helped to moor the ship

despite the pouring rain.⁵⁴ Among the assembly was the official welcoming committee led by Houston Mayor Oscar Holcombe as the honorary general chairman.⁵⁵ Oilman and local attorney Captain George A. Hill was appointed to chair of the military affairs committee.⁵⁶ The German-Americans of Harris County also sent their representatives and some local organizations took advantage of the opportunity to promote their cause.⁵⁷ The official guestbook of the commander reflected a Who-is-Who in Houston ranging from the mayor, port commissioner, superintendent of schools, to the commander of the *Schenck*. The most puzzling entry came from Harris County judge William Henry Ward, who greeted Lütjens with “mizpah”.⁵⁸ Ward was the lawyer husband of Hortense Ward, a well-known woman’s right activist in Texas. Welcoming the *Karlsruhe* for the second time in Texas was Consul von Jockusch and Dr. Wendler.⁵⁹ The *Freie Presse* also handed out a welcoming letter to the cadets speaking of the new free Germany that broke chains of slavery.⁶⁰ The ship was on a tight, revised schedule, with little free time for officers and crew. A planned rodeo and barbeque was canceled because of the rainy weather, but the local boxing promoter Morris Sigel, of Jewish Russian immigrant parents, invited to a wrestling match at the City Auditorium without any incident.⁶¹ Saturday was booked with a semi-formal ball for the officers at the Houston *Turnverein*. The invitations for this dance were distributed to the public through the Germanic societies of Houston, including the local *Stahlhelm*.⁶² Harry Hughes and his orchestra played familiar tunes in a carnival atmosphere and although friendly relations between the United States and Germany were strengthened during the festivities, the *Houston Post* warned of the strict marriage guidelines of the German navy. A cadet had to be in service for at least eight years or having reached his twenty seventh birthday before he was permitted to marry.

The captain and several of his officers left for Austin on April 29. Bowen Airlines sponsored the flight and the plane touched down as scheduled. Lütjens made his way immediately to the state capitol for an official reception with Governor James Allred. The two joked for a while about their good looks before Lütjens briefly addressed the joint session of the Texas senate. He commented on the economic developments and markets in both countries. This was the first time that he “spoke before parliament,” and he considered it an honor and privilege since the U.S. and Germany had the same ideals; honor, freedom, and unity.⁶³

From Austin he flew to San Antonio with his American aide to pay an official call on the commander of Fort Sam Houston and Randolph Field, Colonel Harms. Here, Lütjens “expressed honest concern” when he learned that there was no visit planned to the Alamo. Despite little time left, Lütjens and his entourage stopped at the “city’s famous shrine.” Escorted to the Alamo the commander baring his head bowed in silent tribute to Texas’s heroes. The following day several officers went to San Antonio by rail and repeated the procedure at the Alamo. Here they also gave the Nazi salute for the Alamo dead.⁶⁴ Much has been made of the visit in recent publications, but one must simply understand the framework in which they took place, and that romantic themes like Texas, the Wild West, and icons like cowboys play an important part in youth literature in Germany. The men were certainly familiar with these themes.⁶⁵

Consul Wendler underlined in his official report to Berlin that not all went as planned during this 1935 visit. A ball for the officers and cadets by the Junior League was cancelled. This event was seen as an important opportunity for the guest to meet and greet influential Texans. Wendler’s report only stated “*auf Grund eines Missverstaendniss*” as the reason for cancellation. He sensed a split over the visit of the war cruiser within the German-American community; some suggested that they should not show themselves in support of the ship out of fear of

ramifications. This was evident at the dance sponsored by the Houston *Turnverein*; few actual members were present.⁶⁶ At the same time Wendler felt that the German-Americans in Houston had reoriented themselves back to their heritage roots. The different clubs and organizations were in the process of forming an umbrella organization called *Deutsch-Amerikanischer Bund* under the leadership of Rice Professor Max Freund. Wendler however pointed out that Freund had just applied for U.S. citizenship and therefore might avoid any doubts on his loyalty to his adoptive country.⁶⁷ Overall, Wendler thought that the visit to Houston was heartfelt and warm, and a full success for Germany. Wendler was proud of the progress Germany was making and that Germany was anxious to build up world trade despite the many levies and tariffs in place.⁶⁸ A missed opportunity however was that no delegation of the cruiser visited German communities in the Texas interior. Communities were expected to pay for any festivities.

Lütjens' secret report to the German Foreign Office reiterated several of Wendler's observations but in a less emotional fashion. He agreed with the friendly welcome, but believed it was also to outshine the city of Galveston and the 1932 visit. He did not detect any reservations towards the "new" Germany but many of his guests complained openly about the incompetency of President F.D. Roosevelt. Yet Lütjens felt almost embarrassed about the current economic situation of Germany. During torpedo exercises in U.S. waters, the American navy supplied the necessary discs and tow-boats free of charge for him to use.⁶⁹ A German community in Houston, so he believed, was almost none existing. No "true" colony, as in South America was identified; the German-Americans in Texas formed neither a political nor cultural unit in part because of the lack of leadership. What set Houston apart from other places in America like California however was that *Deutschtum* still existed in the more rural communities where families still spoke some sort of German dialect. He also regretted that no German

settlement was visited but he believes that it was rather due to the prudent behavior of the German farmers to extend an invitation. Lütjens also highlighted the *Sängerbund* in his report and how they were able to act as a link between the ship, the city, and wider community. However his recommendation to Berlin was that Texas' ports should not be visited for the next three to four years, in part because of the above mentioned concerns, but also because Houston was not suitable as a training port; no beaches or attractions existed for the visitors.

What was not reported from Houston were signs of any boycotts of either German stores or products.⁷⁰ No warnings against German-Americans as published in East Coast papers were seen in Texas.⁷¹ Scenes like the once from the 1934 visit in California were avoided as well. During a stopover in San Diego, the crew of the *Karlsruhe* faced harsh criticism by local Communists and dock workers.⁷² Just a few weeks before the Houston stop the ship had visited San Francisco and police protection for the crew was necessary there.⁷³ No empty piers as seen in Tacoma were reported from Texas and no malicious agitations in the Harris County media was printed.⁷⁴ A Texas editorial specifically stated that the *Karlsruhe* was welcomed in Houston since a great majority of Germans are fine in mind and heart despite Herr Hitler and his program.⁷⁵ The sailors were not feared in public and the commander did not have to issue orders not to go on land alone.⁷⁶ The visit was well prepared by all involved.⁷⁷

The last evening in Houston was spent at a *Kommers* sponsored by the *Sängerbund* in honor of the crew. To off-set the costs for this event, money was donated by local companies and organizations.⁷⁸ The local *Stahlhelm* sent regards and a check for sixteen dollars through their representative Paul Bottler. With this donation the *Stahlhelm* also gained official access to the gathering. Behind the scene the choir however struggled financially with the festivities, especially the free beer for the crew put a big hole in their budget for the year.⁷⁹ The *Sängerbund*

also invested in a \$5.00 swastika flag for decoration purposes.⁸⁰ Since the decision to purchase it was made on April 23, just a few days before the *Karlsruhe* was to arrive, such flags must have been readily available in Texas. Although the *Sängerbund* and most of its members tried to stay as neutral as possible in regards of their feeling towards Nazi Germany, they felt embarrassed by Mr. Bottler. He promote the *Stahlhelm* and its cause at every opportunity.⁸¹ The group around Bottler however was small and Wendler was apparently not impressed since he devoted just one sentence in his report about them.⁸² The eight days in Houston went by fast for the crew and on Saturday May 4, 1935 the *Karlsruhe* departed for Charleston, South Carolina, where it was expected six days later.

The *Karlsruhe* was decommissioned after her fifth overseas voyage in 1936, but reinstated briefly during the Spanish Civil War, and sat in a Wilhelmshaven navy yard at the beginning of World War II. In April 1940 the cruiser left with 1,100 sailors onboard towards Kristiansand, Norway, to participate in *Operation Weserübung*. Because of a series of errors by the Germans the vessel was torpedoed the night of April 9, 1940, by the British submarine *Truant*. Two torpedoes damaged the *Karlsruhe* badly enough that the commander of the nearby German *Greif* decided to sink her for good. By now Fleet Commander Admiral Lütjens delivered a devastating condemnation of the *Karlsruhe's* commander and crew surrounding the events during the night of April 9th. In his opinion the situation was not as hopeless as believed and cruiser was not doomed and still afloat two hours after being torpedoed.⁸³ The initial cost in 1927 of building the *Karlsruhe* was thirty six million Reichsmark, and it rests now on the floor of the Kristiansand Fjord.

The political tone had certainly changed between the two visits to Texas, but the 1935 visit was adequately announced in the local press. Negative news was largely omitted from the

front pages in 1935 about the new regime in Germany. Local German-American clubs and organizations played a vital role in the planning, execution, and success in the stay of the German sailors. *Deutschtum* had recuperated after World War I and was certainly celebrated in Texas in the 1930s even after the National Socialists founded the Third Reich. Although pro-Nazi groups like the *Stahlhelm* emerged in Texas, no open rifts were reported. *Deutschtum* in Texas survived World War II and is still thriving today. While the reception in other American cities on both coasts after 1933 was rather cool, reserved, and in some cases even hostile, Houstonians opened their homes and hearts and showed their sympathy and support towards the crew and officers of the German cruiser. No empty piers or demonstrations interfered with the jubilant celebrations here and Texas truly showed the world “Southern Hospitality.”

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¹ The *Amazon* sunk in a storm in 1861; over 100 men lost their lives. The *Amazon* was then replaced with the *Niobe* which sunk in 1932 and was replaced with the *Gorch Fock* which is still in service.

² Versailles Treaty, June 28, 1919, Article 183 and Article 191, <http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/versailles.htm>, accessed Dec 17, 2008.

³ Fate however made changes necessary as soon as the first keel was laid down. During the Disarmament Conference in 1922, delegates signed a Five-Power Treaty restricting tonnage and a ten-year moratorium, but also designated the *Imperial* or Washington ton as the new standard for ship weight. This 'standard' displacement was the weight of the ship equipped to sail with all ammunition and armament, plus water for the crew and boilers, but excluding fuel. The newly adopted standard weight affected shipbuilding in Germany dramatically; a previously designed 6000 ton light cruiser became now a 5280 ton cruiser. The challenge was now how to pack the latest advances in technology into a light armored cruiser without exceeding 5280 tons. Up until this time the usual method of construction had been riveting, but to make the ship as light weight as possible, the new cruisers were electrically welded together. However during a typhoon in March 1936 the *Karlsruhe* almost broke in half when large cracks appeared across the ship. Although welding a ship together saved precious weight which then can be used elsewhere, rivets were stronger and sturdier.

⁴ The *Hamburg* invoked an international incident when several crew members were caught selling beer to visitors in San Francisco during prohibition in the USA.

⁵ Gerhard Koop and Klaus-Peter Schmolke. *German Light Cruisers of World War II*. London: Greenhill Books, 2002, 25.

⁶ *Idid.*, 26

⁷ This however was not the first time a ship was named after the city; the first namesake sunk during World War One in November of 1914 after an explosion in onboard in the Caribbean.

⁸ Schönberg, *Amerika-Reise*, 3.

⁹ After the goodwill-tour on the *Karlsruhe*, Wassner became the naval attaché in London. Erwin Wassner died August 24, 1937. When the ship left Kiel in November 1931 under his command, Paul von Hindenburg was still Reichspräsident and the Germany chancellor was Heinrich Brüning. While the *Karlsruhe* was absent from Germany for almost one year the country saw two more chancellors in office, Franz von Papen and Kurt von Schleicher respectively.

¹⁰ Schönberg, *Amerika-Reise*, 4. The trip was also well publicized in Germany at the time. *Coburger Zeitung*, Dec 1, 1931 #287; *Fürstfeldbruck Zeitung*, Dec 2, 1931.

¹¹ *Freie Presse für Texas*, February 19, 1932, no 67.

¹² Koop, *Light Cruisers*, 108.

¹³ Koop, *Light Cruisers*, 109.

¹⁴ Memo Reichswehrministerium, 1610 A IIO, Berichte 1932.

¹⁵ Several German exchange officers had left open bills in August 1929 in hotels in New Jersey which the embassy in D.C. eventually had to pay. Michael Wala. *Weimar und Amerika*, 202.

¹⁶ Politisches Archiv, AA IIF Auslandsreise des Kreuzers Karlsruhe, 1934/1935, Berichte, R 33481.

¹⁷ Buttmi, *Werben*, 9.

¹⁸ *Freie Presse*, Feb 12, 1932, #41.

¹⁹ Kurt Gross, Diary "Wir sind auch nichts ins Ausland gefahren um Gesetze umzustossen."

²⁰ *Houston Post Dispatch*, March 4, 1932, 4. See also Schönberg, *Amerika-Reise* for his observations.

²¹ The German brewery Schultheiss supplied all the beer taking abroad.

²² The 1930 Texas census revealed that Galveston had a population of about 35,000 people of whom one-third claimed to be of German origins.

²³ See footnote #44 in Michael Wala. *Weimar und Amerika: Botschafter Freidrich von Prittwitz und Gaffron und die deutsch-amerikanischen Beziehungen von 1927-1933*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2001, 195. A group of

German Americans had visited Berlin in 1922 to re-establish an understanding between the two nations. Philadelphia Inquirer, *German Americans at Bremen Festival*, May 28, 1922.

²⁴ Memo from German Embassy von Prittwitz to Foreign Office Berlin, Oct 9, 1931, Berichte 1932. See also AA R 33431, Correspondence from June 1929 concerning a possible visit of the *Emden* in Port Arthur in May 1930.

²⁵ Memo Reichswehrministerium, 1610 A IIO, Berichte 1932.

²⁶ Schönberg, *Amerika-Reise*, 27.

²⁷ Buttmi, *Werben*, 65, 69.

²⁸ German Texas., 14, 28.

²⁹ Furthermore these interest-group organizations had direct and continuous contact with the *Heimat* maintained through visits and delegations.

³⁰ By 1922 schoolbooks in New Jersey still did not recognize German Americans in their texts. *Jersey Journal*, 'German-Americans protest Jersey City school books', Aug 4, 1922; In 1923 German-Americans felt confident enough to openly support political candidates again, *Trenton Evening Times*, 'Return of the Hyphen', June 10, 1923; see also *Patriot* and *DMN*, Jan 14, 1921 on George Viereck.

³¹ Buttmi, *Werben*, 65.

³² *Ibid.*, 120. Buttmi had to correct her and explained that in the fabrication of the uniforms *Zellstoffaser* or cellulose fiber were used as well.

³³ Buttmi, *Werben*, 120 and 226. Buttmi explained it away as part of propaganda and that Germans are just humans just like the Americans.

³⁴ Schönberg, *Amerika-Reise*, 27.

³⁵ See also Gross and Buttmi on the stop in Juneau, Alaska on the welcoming signs.

³⁶ *Freie Presse für Texas*, *An das Deutschtum*, Jan 22, 1932, 4.

³⁷ See the comments and discussion about women and mixed choirs during the monthly board of directors meeting of the Houston Sängerbund, April 23, 1935; Theodore Gish. *The History of the Houston Sängerbund, 1874-1985*. Houston: Institute of Texas-German Studies, 1990.

³⁸ *DMN*, Feb 23, 1932, *Cruiser Karlsruhe to sail for Vera Cruz*.

³⁹ Gross recalled him as a handsome man, surrounded by men in cowboy uniforms.

⁴⁰ *Houston Post Dispatch*, February 12, 1932; Buttmi, *Werben*, 70. Dallas Morning News, Feb 11, 1932, *Sterling to celebrate Birthday at Luncheon*. Schönberg, *Amerika-Reise*, 29.

⁴¹ *Freie Presse für Texas*, February 26, 1932.

⁴² *Freie Presse für Texas*, Jan 1, 1932, no 35; *Was will Adolf Hitler*, Jan 22, 1932, 4.

⁴³ *Houston Post Dispatch*, February 23, 1932.

⁴⁴ Kurt Gross, Information sheet *Willkommen Gruss. Wir brauchen uns hier nicht zu schämen, wir sind uns keiner Schuld bewusst, drum fort die Sorgen und das Grämen, den Kopf hoch und heraus die Brust*. According to the 1930 census records, Bottler was born in Germany and listed salesman as his occupation. Bottler died March 2, 1964 in Harris County, 1930 Census, Harris Co, T626, roll 2352, 17. See also Houston Sängerbund Records, 1874-1985, Special Collections & Archives, University of Houston Libraries, UHSHSA 89. Box 1; Bottler was at least since 1920 on the board of directors of the Houston Sängerbund

⁵⁹ *Freie Presse*, February 26, 1932; February 12, 1932, 4. Fritz Neuhauser was born in Germany and immigrated in 1910 to the United States. By 1930 he was still a German citizen and published the *Freie Presse* in Texas. His occupation in the census was listed as newspaper editor. U.S. Census 1930, Texas, T 626, roll 2294, 4. Lütjens however warned in his report about Neuhauser; he called him worthless, loud and nervous, AA-IIF *Auslandsreise des Kreuzers Karlsruhe, 1934/1935*, Berichte, R 33481.

⁴⁶ Günther Lütjens, born in Wiesbaden, Hessen in 1889 was a career navy officer who attended the naval artillery school before World War I. His assignment during that war was on a minesweeper and later a torpedo boat and from September 16, 1934, to September 23, 1935 he commanded the light training cruiser *Karlsruhe*. Lütjens was promoted to Admiral with the outbreak of World War II and involved in *Operation Rheinübung* in May 1941 commanding the battleships *Bismarck* and *Prince Eugen*. He perished on May 27, 1941 in the North Atlantic. The *Prince Eugen* was eventually used by the United States during nuclear testing in the Bikini Atoll. In 1967 a West-German guided-missile destroyer was christened *Lütjens*. The rest of the crew 34 received orders for the *Emden*. Topp, *Odyssee*, 25.

⁴⁷ It was reported that Hitler was not only informed of the trip but also showed great enthusiasm.

²⁶ The text was reprinted during the visit of the *Karlsruhe* in San Francisco in the *California Journal* February 28, 1935. The orchestra played now the *Adolf Hitler Fanfare* and the song *Nation to Arms*. The Nazi press also took advantage the popularity of these training cruises and reported regularly on them. Since the ship had been

the first vessel with the national emblem to go abroad in the fall 1933 eleven so-called *Reiseberichte* or travel accounts and photos were published over the course of the trip in the *Völkische Beobachter*; *Völkischer Beobachter*, June 15, 1934 “*Kreuzer Karlsruhe in heimatische Gewässer*”; Foreign Office Reise 1933, Memo Foreign Office Oct 19, 1933 to German Embassies, II F 3380 on Horst Wessel song and the new flag display on the *Karlsruhe*.

⁴⁹ The State Department had notified government officials that Houston would be the Texas port at which the *Karlsruhe* would put in. Chamber of Commerce, Houston 1934-1935, Main Library of Houston, RG-E1, March 1935. Houston was also added because of former Congressman and ‘German friendly’ Clarke Thompson. Report Lutjens, AA- IIF Auslandsreise des Kreuzers Karlsruhe, 1934/1935, Berichte, R 33481.

⁵⁰ AA Reise Aug 1933-Jul 1934 R 33459, II F Akten; letter to Luther, Dec 29, 1933 and Anlage Bericht der Deutschen Botschaft, Dec 1933, #2076. Thompson spoke personally to Luther (before Dec 1933) if a change in plan was possible during the 1933/34 trip to add Houston. Holcomb to Luther, Dec 9, 1933 and the disappointment that *Karlsruhe* could not visit in 1932. See also letter from RWM to AA, Feb 6, 1934, II 72A/c which explains that *Karlsruhe* cannot visit Houston during 33/34 trip because of military reasons.

⁵¹ Chamber of Commerce, City of Houston, Dec 14, 1930, 145, RGE1, vol 1; Chamber of Commerce, City of Houston, 106, RGE1, vol 21.

⁵² *Völkischer Beobachter*, June 15, 1934 “*Kreuzer Karlsruhe in heimatische Gewässer*”.

⁵³ The training cruiser *Hansa*. Houston Post, *Karlsruhe commander tells of torpedo fighting*, April 27, 1935, 6.

⁵⁴ Houston Chronicle, April 27, 1935. In San Francisco the communist union workers refused to moor the ship. No incidents were ever reported from the Lone Star State. Only a short apology for the behavior of the longshoremen’s union in San Francisco appeared in the *California Journal*. *California Journal*, March 2, 1935.

³² Witthoef was a lieutenant on the *Emden* stationed in China at the outbreak of WWI. The vessel went to sea and preyed upon commercial vessels, playing a game of hide-and-seek with the Allies for over a year. *News & Courier*, South Carolina, May 11, 1935, 3. He was the marine attaché from November 1933 to December 1941 in Washington, DC at the German embassy, then he became vice admiral, commanding ships in the Black Sea. For the reception in Houston see also Topp, *Odysee*, 39. Cadets Topp and von der Esch were assigned as guards to Lütjens’ quarters. See picture of Topp and v.d. Esch, Houston Chronicle, April 27, 1935.

⁵⁶ William Bernrieder was the executive secretary and George D. Wilson was in charge of port business.

Furthermore several subcommittees were formed including: transportation, athletic, ball, religious services, crew dances, publicity. Chamber of Commerce, Houston 1934-1935, Main Library of Houston, RG-E1, March 1935.

⁵⁷ Houston Chronicle, April 26, 1935, *Esperantists hold exhibition at Library*.

⁵⁸ G□stebuch des Kommandaten des Kreuzers ‘Karlsruhe’. Marineschule Flensburg-Mürwik and Archiv of the Wehrgeschichtliches Ausbildungszentrum WGAZ Mürwik, Mizpah is the Hebrew word for an emotional bond between separated people, but it could also be the misspelled Yiddish word ‘family’ – mispocha.

⁵⁹ Dr Ernst Wendler, was born 24.4.1890 into a prominent weaving and industrialist family and worked in the German Foreign Office in Australia, USA, and Bolivia representing Nazi Germany. He preceded Baron von Spiegel as consul general at New Orleans. After the war he joined his families weaving enterprise.

⁶⁰ Logbuch Kadett Herbert Opitz, Crew 1934, Marineschule Flensburg-Mürwik and Archiv of the Wehrgeschichtliches Ausbildungszentrum WGAZ Mürwik.

⁶¹ A small Jewish community existed in Galveston and Harris counties since the 1880s and synagogues could be found in Houston, Galveston, San Antonio, and El Paso.

⁶² *Houston Post*, April 26, 1935. Morris Sigel, of Russian-Jewish parentage was in the 1930s and 40s a boxing and wrestling promoted in southeastern Texas. U.S. Census 1910, Harris Co, T-624, roll 1560, page 26.

⁶³ *Houston Post*, April 27, 1935, 6; April 29, 1935; April 30, 1935, 2; *Karlsruhe set to celebrate Nazi holiday*, May 1, 1935. Houston Chronicle, May 1, 1935. Lutjens was fluent in English, a requirement after several embarrassing visits by German officers in the late 1920s. Furthermore Dr. Luther’s February visit to Allred was also discussed between the two men, *Austin Statesmen*, April 29, 1935, “*German Naval Official Fete*”.

⁶⁴ The *San Antonio Light*, May 2, 1935. The following day another group of sailors arrived by rail in San Antonio and also paid tribute at the Alamo. Houston Chronicle, May 1, 1935, Officers pay tribute to Heroes at Alamo.

⁶⁵ For works on Karl May see: Marlies Bugmann, *Savage To Saint, The Karl May Story*. Book Surge Publishing, 2008 and Hans Wollschläger. *Karl May. Grundriß eines gebrochenen Lebens*. Wallstein: Göttingen, 2004. See also John M. Gonzalez. *Border Renaissance*. University of Texas Press: Austin, 2009, 29-31 on his interpretation of the Alamo visit in 1935. In Dec 2011 a group of German bankers visited Texas and again the visit to the Alamo was highlighted in the German press. HNA Dec 21, 2011.

⁶⁶ An article in the *Aufbau* pointed jokingly about German *Vereinsmeierei*: 5 Germans come together and form a club. During their first general meeting *Meinungsverschiedenheit* erupts, nobody gives in, the club splits in half, we

now have two! The Deutschtum is completely merged in Vereinsmeierei; *Aufbau*, 1 June 1936. Lutjens reported that San Francisco alone had 75 German clubs and associations.

⁶⁷ Dr. Freund was also involved in the court case of Dr. Heinrich Meyer, faculty member of Rice who was arrested in 1943 when his US citizenship was revoked. For more information see *The Handbook of Texas*, Heinrich Meyer. Wendler also took the opportunity and visited Rice where he passed out books to the German language classes.

⁶⁸ Houston Chronicle, April 26, 1935, "German Naval Attache and Consul at New Orleans here to welcome cruiser". By 1935 German export had fallen from 281 billion RM in 1932 to 157 billion RM in 1934. Germany lost ground in chemicals, textiles, meat and fish products, hides and skins/leather goods, iron and steel, tools and agricultural appliances, fertilizer, and household items. *Aufbau*, June 1, 1935.

⁶⁹ Report Lutjens, March 18, 1935, San Pedro/San Francisco. AA

⁷⁰ *Aufbau*, Oct 1, 1935, *Effectiveness of the Boycott of German Goods*.

⁷¹ Jewish Chronicles, *German Americans warned against talk*, May 18, 1934.

⁷² *San Diego Union*, March 28, 1934, 1. Sam Darcy, a communist activist recalled many years later the arrival of the 'Nazi Cruiser' in San Francisco in March 1935 when the dockworkers refused to tie the ship down and the cadets had to do the work themselves. Samuel Darcy oral history interview; Dimitrov, Stalin, and the 1936 Presidential Election in the U.S., www.revolutionarydemocracy.org.

⁷³ Picture police protection in San Francisco, 1935.

⁷⁴ Some sailors were upset about the false information or *Hetzkampanien* (agitation campaign) of the American press in other harbors. It was for instance reported that the uniform buttons had swastikas on them.

⁷⁵ Houston Chronicle, April 29, 1935, "Our guests, the German sailors". While south Texas newspapers reported extensively on the visit, media in the interior did not do so. Papers from east Texas were examined during the visit and there was no mentioning of the cruiser.

⁷⁶ Buttmi, *Werben*, 338.

⁷⁷ During the 1934 voyage, the first after Hitler's take-over, Boston officials waited until the day before of the arrival to form a welcoming committee and the sailors remembered the ceremony as stiff and the disappointing empty piers, Buttmi, *Werben*, 361. See also Völkische Beobachter, June 15, 1934, *Kreuzer Karlsruhe in heimatlichem Gewässern*.

⁷⁸ Wendler believed that the *Houston Turnverein* was the wealthiest of the German-American clubs with a new clubhouse and capital of about \$600,000. The only sport still exercised in 1935 however was bowling. Lutjens reported that the Turnverein had about 400-500 members but only 150, those of German decent had the privilege of using the facilities. It was reported to him that the club was 'Jewish influenced' but he encountered none. According to Wendler, the *Houston Sangerverein* was better organized and continued with German traditions through music but had less money available.

⁷⁹ Houston Sängerbund Records, 1874-1985, Jahresbericht 1934-1935, July 1935, University of Houston, Houston, Texas

⁸⁰ Houston Sängerbund Records, 1874-1985, Jahresbericht 1934-1935, July 1935. University of Houston, Houston, Texas.

⁸¹ Houston Sängerbund Records, 1874-1985, Meeting Memorandum, June 18, 1940. University of Houston, Houston, Texas. Bottler was an honorary member but by the 1930s his enthusiasm shifted to the *Stahlhelm*.

⁸² Nevertheless Bottler managed to get invited to the personal quarters of Lütjens; his entry is the last recorded in the guestbook for Houston.

⁸³ Koop, *Light Cruisers*, 113.