

GERMANY'S RACE FOR THE BLUE RIBAND

With the domination of technology a major Nazi goal, the ocean liners *Bremen* and *Europa* became the greyhounds of the Atlantic

BY DAVID REED

All the excitement of pre-war transatlantic travel is captured in this image of SS *Europa* arriving in New York Harbor after a Blue Riband run across the world's most popular ocean route.

Following the disastrous terms of the Treaty of Versailles at the conclusion of the Great War, Germany's merchant marine, along with the nation's entire economy, collapsed into a state of desperation. Virtually all of Germany's naval vessels and the majority of its large civilian maritime fleet had been seized by the victorious Allies as war reparations. These included the massive HAPAG liners *Vaterland*, *Imperator*, and *Bismarck*. The Treaty also allowed severe terms that would not allow Germany to renew its maritime interests — military or civil. Of course, pre-war competing firms were more than happy to have Germany's efficient and popular ocean liners removed from the economic equation.

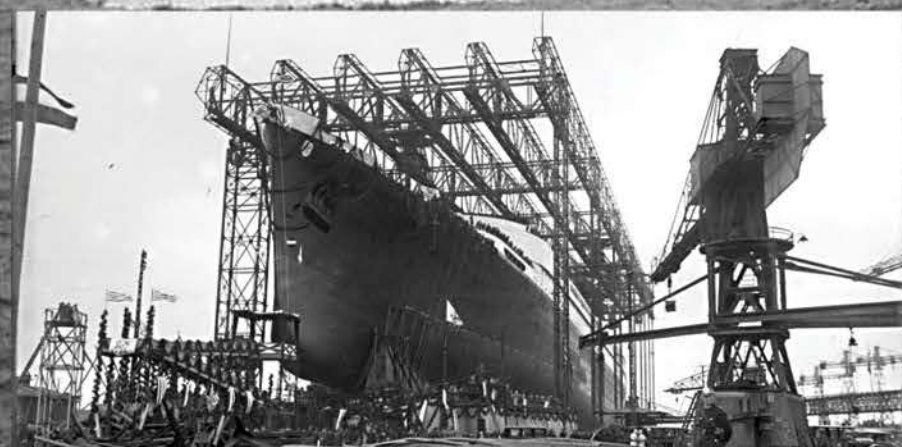
For ten years following the Great War, Germany was in turmoil. Its population was out of work and starving while communist forces attempted to seize control of the nation. Then, along came a fellow named Hitler and he and his new Third Reich had other ideas — lots of them.

During those hard years, a new light began to shine. During the latter part of 1926, the firm of *Norddeutscher Lloyd* (NDL) basically said rules be damned and came forth with proposals for the construction of a pair of modern express ocean liners that would be the cornerstone for a renaissance in German

shipbuilding and the foundation of a new merchant marine. These two ships would be the premier vessels in transatlantic service and they would resecure Germany's vaunted position in the maritime community.

What materialized from this bold and daring move were the powerful twins TS (Turbine Ship) *Bremen* and *Europa*. These two vessels would spark an international competition in the building of large, fast, and luxurious ocean liners that would be national focal points and symbols of pride and prestige during the 1930s.

Bremen was the first to begin construction, this being done by the new German shipbuilding concern of *Deutsche Schiff-und Maschinenbau* (abbreviated *Deschimag*). This was a cooperative formed by eight German shipyards with the leader being *AG Weser* in Bremen, *Deschimag* was founded in 1926 when influential Bremen merchants and bankers decided to create a consortium of great German shipbuilding companies. The intention was to coordinate and concentrate activities of these



Bremen under construction on 1 August 1928. The bulbous bow is evident.



After christening by Reichspräsident Paul von Hindenburg, *Bremen* heads down the slipway.

