

= SMS Karlsruhe =

SMS Karlsruhe was a light cruiser of the Karlsruhe class built by the German Kaiserliche Marine (Imperial Navy). She had one sister ship, SMS Rostock; the ships were very similar to the previous Magdeburg class cruisers. The ship was laid down in 1911, launched in November 1912, and completed by January 1914. Armed with twelve 10.5 cm SK L / 45 guns, Karlsruhe had a top speed of 28 knots (52 km / h; 32 mph), which allowed her to escape from British cruisers during her career.

After her commissioning, Karlsruhe was assigned to overseas duties in the Caribbean. She arrived in the area in July 1914, days before the outbreak of World War I. Once the war began, she armed the passenger liner SS Kronprinz Wilhelm, but while the ships were transferring equipment, British ships located them and pursued Karlsruhe. Her superior speed allowed her to escape, after which she operated off the northeastern coast of Brazil. Here, she captured or sank sixteen ships. While en route to attack the shipping lanes to Barbados on 4 November 1914, a spontaneous internal explosion destroyed the ship and killed the majority of the crew. The survivors used one of Karlsruhe's colliers to return to Germany in December 1914.

= Construction =

Karlsruhe was ordered under the contract name "Ersatz Seeadler" and was laid down at the Germaniawerft shipyard in Kiel on 21 September 1911. She was christened by Karl Siegrist, the mayor of Karlsruhe, and launched on 11 November 1912, after which fitting out work commenced. She was commissioned into the High Seas Fleet on 15 January 1914. The ship was 142.2 meters (467 ft) long overall and had a beam of 13.7 m (45 ft) and a draft of 5.38 m (17.7 ft) forward. She displaced 6,191 t (6,093 long tons; 6,824 short tons) at full combat load. Her propulsion system consisted of two sets of Marine steam turbines driving two 3.5 meter (11 ft) propellers. They were designed to give 26,000 shaft horsepower (19,000 kW), but reached 37,885 shp (28,251 kW) in service. These were powered by twelve coal-fired Marine type water tube boilers and two oil-fired double-ended boilers. These gave the ship a top speed of 28 knots (52 km / h; 32 mph). Karlsruhe carried 1,300 tonnes (1,300 long tons) of coal, and an additional 200 tonnes (200 long tons) of oil that gave her a range of approximately 5,000 nautical miles (9,300 km; 5,800 mi) at 12 knots (22 km / h; 14 mph). Karlsruhe had a crew of 18 officers and 355 enlisted men.

The ship was armed with twelve 10.5 cm SK L / 45 guns in single pedestal mounts. Two were placed side by side forward on the forecastle, eight were located amidships, four on either side, and two were side by side aft. The guns had a maximum elevation of 30 degrees, which allowed them to engage targets out to 12,700 m (41,700 ft). They were supplied with 1,800 rounds of ammunition, for 150 shells per gun. She was also equipped with a pair of 50 cm (19.7 in) torpedo tubes with five torpedoes submerged in the hull on the broadside. She could also carry 120 mines. The ship was protected by a waterline armored belt that was 60 mm (2.4 in) thick amidships. The conning tower had 100 mm (3.9 in) thick sides, and the deck was covered with up to 60 mm thick armor plate.

= Service history =

Karlsruhe's first commanding officer was Fregattenkapitän Fritz Lüdecke. Following her commissioning in January 1914, Karlsruhe was assigned to overseas service, under the command of Fregattenkapitän Erich Köhler. At the outbreak of World War I the following August, the ship was based in the Caribbean, along with the cruiser Dresden. She had anchored in Cay Sal Bank in the Florida Strait when she received warnings that war in Europe was imminent. Karlsruhe's standing orders in the event of war saw the ship conducting a commerce raiding campaign against British merchant traffic. To hunt down Karlsruhe and any merchant ships she might arm as auxiliary

cruisers , the Royal Navy deployed five cruiser squadrons , the most powerful were those commanded by Rear Admiral Christopher Craddock and Rear Admiral Archibald Stoddart . The British were forced to disperse their ships to cover the areas in which the two German cruisers , and any auxiliary cruisers they might arm , could operate .

On 6 August , Karlsruhe rendezvoused with the passenger ship SS Kronprinz Wilhelm about 120 nmi (220 km ; 140 mi) north of Watling Island . Karlsruhe was in the process of transferring guns and equipment to the liner when Craddock , in his flagship HMS Suffolk , appeared to the south . The Germans had only managed to transfer two 8 @. @ 8 cm guns , a machine gun , and some sailors by the time Suffolk arrived . The two ships quickly departed in different directions ; Suffolk followed Karlsruhe and other cruisers were ordered to intercept her . Karlsruhe 's faster speed allowed her to quickly outpace Craddock , but at 20 : 15 , Bristol joined the pursuit and briefly fired on the German cruiser . The German gunners scored two hits on Bristol during the short engagement . Karlsruhe turned east and again used her high speed to evade the British ships . The British failed to relocate her , and by 9 August , Karlsruhe reached Puerto Rico with only 12 tons of coal in her bunkers .

With limited options for coal in the Caribbean , Köhler took his ship down to the northeast coast of Brazil , off Pernambuco . The area was not as heavily patrolled by the British . Here , Karlsruhe had easy access to coal supplies , either from chartered colliers or captured vessels . Köhler frequently kept one or two prizes to assist in the search for targets . In the course of her patrols off the Brazilian coast , Karlsruhe sank or captured sixteen merchant ships . These merchantmen , fifteen British ships and one Dutch vessel , totaled 72 @, @ 805 gross register tons (GRT) . Köhler then decided to move to another area , as remaining in one area would increase his chances of being tracked down by the British . He turned his ship toward the West Indies to attack Barbados and Fort @-@ de @-@ France and the shipping lanes between Barbados and Trinidad .

As Karlsruhe steamed to Barbados on the night of 4 November , a spontaneous internal explosion destroyed the ship . The hull was split in half ; the bow section quickly sank and took with it Köhler and most of the crew . The stern remained afloat long enough for 140 of the ship 's crew to escape onto the attending colliers . Commander Studt , the senior surviving officer , took charge and placed all of his men aboard the liner Rio Negro . He scuttled the second collier and steamed north for Iceland . The ship used the cover of a major storm to slip through the British blockade of the North Sea , and put in at Ålesund , Norway . Rio Negro then returned to Germany by early December . The Admiralstab , unaware of the loss of Karlsruhe , coincidentally radioed the ship to order her to return to Germany . Germany kept the loss of the ship a secret , and the British continued searching for her until they learned of her fate in March 1915 . Köhler 's widow christened the cruiser Karlsruhe , the third to bear the name , at her launching in August 1927 .