

= SMS Hessen =

SMS Hessen was the third of five pre-@-@ dreadnought battleships of the Braunschweig class . She was laid down in 1902 , launched the following year , and commissioned into the German Imperial Navy in 1905 . She was named after the state of Hesse . Her sister ships were SMS Braunschweig , SMS Elsass , SMS Preussen , and SMS Lothringen . Like all other pre-@-@ dreadnoughts built at the turn of the century , Hessen was quickly made obsolete by the launching of HMS Dreadnought in 1906 ; as a result , she saw only limited service with the German fleet .

During World War I , Hessen saw action in the Battle of Jutland as the second ship of the III Division of the II Battle Squadron . In the last daytime action between capital ships at Jutland , Hessen and the other pre-@-@ dreadnoughts of the II Battle Squadron covered the retreat of Rear Admiral Franz von Hipper 's battered battlecruisers from Vice Admiral David Beatty 's battlecruiser squadron . After the battle , the vessel was disarmed and used as a depot ship .

Hessen was one of the few obsolete battleships Germany was permitted to retain under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles . She served as a coastal defense ship in the 1920s and early 1930s , though she was withdrawn from front @-@ line service in 1934 . The following year , the ship was converted into a radio @-@ controlled target . During World War II Hessen served in this capacity , while also working as an icebreaker in the Baltic and North Seas . The ship was ceded to the Soviet Union in 1946 after the end of the war and , renamed Tsel , served until scrapped in 1960 .

= = Construction = =

Hessen 's keel was laid in 1899 , at the Germaniawerft in Kiel under construction number 100 . The third unit of her class , she was ordered under the contract name " L " as a new unit for the fleet . The ship cost 23 @, @ 867 @, @ 000 marks . Hessen was launched on 18 September 1903 and commissioned on 19 July 1905 .

The ship was 127 @. @ 7 m (419 ft) long overall and had a beam of 22 @. @ 2 m (72 ft 10 in) and a draft of 8 @. @ 1 m (26 ft 7 in) forward . The ship was powered by three 3 @-@ cylinder vertical triple expansion engines that drove three screws . Steam was provided by eight naval and six cylindrical boilers , all of which burned coal . Hessen 's powerplant was rated at 16 @, @ 000 metric horsepower (15 @, @ 781 ihp ; 11 @, @ 768 kW) , which generated a top speed of 18 knots (33 km / h ; 21 mph) .

Hessen 's armament consisted of a main battery of four 28 cm (11 in) SK L / 40 guns in twin gun turrets , one fore and one aft of the central superstructure . Her secondary armament consisted of fourteen 17 cm (6 @. @ 7 inch) SK L / 40 guns and eighteen 8 @. @ 8 cm (3 @. @ 45 in) SK L / 35 quick @-@ firing guns . The armament suite was rounded out with six 45 cm (18 in) torpedo tubes , all mounted submerged in the hull .

= = Service history = =

In July 1908 , Hessen participated in the annual summer cruise , which went into the Atlantic that year . During the cruise , the ship stopped in Tenerife , along with the battleships Deutschland and Pommern . During fleet exercises on 23 August 1911 , Hessen accidentally rammed and sank the Danish steamer Askesund . The crew of the steamer was rescued and there were no reported injuries . In October , the ship was badly damaged when she was rammed by the Danish steamer Argo . In July 1913 , Hessen collided with the torpedo boat G110 . The torpedo boat suffered significant damage , though it did not sink , and three of its crew were killed .

At the outbreak of World War I in August 1914 , the ship was assigned to the IV Battle Squadron along with her four sisters , and served primarily in the Baltic Sea . Hessen performed fleet duties up through the first two years of World War I. Hessen was present as part of the distant support for the battlecruisers that bombarded Scarborough , Hartlepool , and Whitby on 15 ? 16 December 1914 . During the operation , the German battle fleet of 12 dreadnoughts and 8 pre-@-@ dreadnoughts came to within 10 nmi (19 km ; 12 mi) of an isolated squadron of six British battleships . However ,

skirmishes between the rival destroyer screens convinced the German commander , Admiral Friedrich von Ingenohl , that he was confronted with the entire Grand Fleet , and so he broke off the engagement and turned for home .

Another raid on the English coast followed on 24 ? 25 April ; this time , the battlecruisers bombarded Yarmouth and Lowestoft . During this operation , the battlecruiser Seydlitz was damaged by a British mine and had to return to port prematurely . Visibility was poor , so the operation was quickly called off before the British fleet could intervene and inflict further losses .

= = = Battle of Jutland = = =

Hessen took part in the Battle of Jutland on 31 May ? 1 June 1916 . Hessen and the five ships of the Deutschland class formed the II Battle Squadron , under the command of Rear Admiral Franz Mauve . During the battle , Hessen and the Deutschland @-@ class ships performed a vital blocking action that covered the withdrawal of the German battlecruisers . Vice Admiral David Beatty 's battlecruisers had attacked the German ships in the darkness , and when the German ships had turned westward to evade their attackers , Mauve continued in a southerly course , which placed his ships between the British and German battlecruisers . The British battlecruisers turned their attention to the pre @-@ dreadnoughts , who in turn altered their course to the southwest in order to bring all of their guns to bear on the British ships . In the darkness , only muzzle flashes from the British ships could be seen ; as a result Hessen and the other II Squadron ships held their fire .

At approximately 03 : 00 on 1 June , a group of British destroyers launched a torpedo attack against the German battle line . At 03 : 07 , Hessen narrowly avoided a torpedo , but Pommern , the ship directly ahead of Hessen , was not so lucky . At 03 : 10 , Pommern was struck by at least one torpedo , which is believed to have detonated one of the ship 's 6 @.@ 7 in (17 cm) shell magazines , destroying the ship . Hessen was undamaged . Aboard Hessen , it was assumed that a submarine had destroyed Pommern ; at 03 : 12 Hessen fired her main battery at an imagined submarine . Hessen and several other battleships engaged imaginary submarines again at 05 : 06 , and again at 05 : 13 . Gunfire from Hessen and Hannover during the latter incident nearly hit the light cruisers Stettin and München ; Admiral Scheer ordered them to cease fire . At 06 : 55 , Hessen and Schlesien mistook a mine buoy dropped by Kaiser as a periscope and attacked it . In the course of the battle , Hessen had fired five 28 cm rounds , thirty @-@ four 17 cm shells , and twenty @-@ four 8 @.@ 8 cm rounds .

In 1917 , Hessen was withdrawn from active service , disarmed , and used as a depot ship in Brunsbüttel . While in reserve at Brunsbüttel , Hessen was jokingly referred to as SMS " Kleinste Fahrt " (SMS " Dead Slow ") because of a warning that had been painted on the ship 's hull . The ship 's four 28 cm guns were re @-@ mounted as railroad guns and employed on the Western Front . The Australian Army captured one of the guns on 8 August 1918 ; it 's preserved as the Amiens Gun at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra , Australia .

= = = Reichsmarine and Kriegsmarine = = =

Hessen was one of eight old pre @-@ dreadnoughts , along with the other ships of her class and the Deutschland @-@ class battleships Schleswig @-@ Holstein and Schlesien , that Germany was permitted to retain under the terms of Treaty of Versailles . After being refitted and rearmed , Hessen returned to service with the Reichsmarine in 1925 . Of the eight ships , Hessen was one of only three still in service as a warship when the Nazi Party under Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933 . The Nazis began a program of naval rearmament ; this included the battleship Gneisenau , which was ordered as a replacement for Hessen in 1934 .

On 12 November 1934 , Hessen was withdrawn from fleet service and placed in reserve . On 31 March 1935 , Hessen was stricken from the reserve list and converted into a target ship . Her armament was removed , the hull was lengthened , and new machinery was installed . The longer hull allowed room for two additional watertight compartments , which brought the number up to 15 from the original 13 . The ship 's superstructure was cut down nearly entirely ; Hessen retained only

a single funnel , a tower foremast , and the two armored barbettes for the main battery turrets . The ship had a crew of 80 , but could be operated by remote control when being used as a target .

Hessen was recommissioned on 1 April 1937 and served in the Kriegsmarine through World War II . On 31 March 1940 , Hessen acted as an icebreaker for the auxiliary cruisers Atlantis , Widder , and Orion , on their trip from Kiel to the North Sea . She and her control ship , Blitz , were ceded to the Soviet Union in 1946 . She recommissioned on 3 June 1946 as Tsel , and continued to operate as a target ship until scrapped in 1960 .