

= Reinhard Scheer =

Reinhard Scheer ( 30 September 1863 ? 26 November 1928 ) was an Admiral in the Imperial German Navy ( Kaiserliche Marine ) . Scheer joined the navy in 1879 as an officer cadet ; he progressed through the ranks , commanding cruisers and battleships , as well as major staff positions on land . At the outbreak of World War I , Scheer was the commander of the II Battle Squadron of the High Seas Fleet . He then took command of the III Battle Squadron , which consisted of the newest and most powerful battleships in the navy . In January 1916 , he was promoted to Admiral and given control of the High Seas Fleet . Scheer led the German fleet at the Battle of Jutland on 31 May ? 1 June 1916 , one of the largest naval battles in history .

Following the battle , Scheer joined those calling for unrestricted submarine warfare against the Allies , a move the Kaiser eventually permitted . In August 1918 , Scheer was promoted to the Chief of Naval Staff ; Admiral Franz von Hipper replaced him as commander of the fleet . Together they planned a final battle against the British Grand Fleet , but war @-@ weary sailors mutinied at the news and the operation was abandoned . Scheer retired after the end of the war .

A strict disciplinarian , Scheer was popularly known in the Navy as the " man with the iron mask " due to his severe appearance . In 1919 , Scheer wrote his memoirs ; a year later they were translated and published in English . He wrote his autobiography in 1925 . Scheer died at Marktredwitz . He is buried in the municipal cemetery at Weimar . The admiral was commemorated in the nascent Kriegsmarine by the heavy cruiser Admiral Scheer , built in the 1930s .

= = Early career = =

Scheer was born in Obernkirchen , present @-@ day Lower Saxony . He came from a middle @-@ class background , which initially hampered his naval career , as the Kaiserliche Marine was dominated by wealthy families .

Reinhard Scheer entered the navy on 22 April 1879 aged 15 as a cadet . His first sea assignment was aboard the sail @-@ frigate SMS Niobe . His first cruise aboard Niobe lasted from June to September 1879 . During the cruise he was trained in navigation and engineering . Following his return to Germany in September , Scheer was assigned to the Naval School in Kiel to continue his officer training . He received only a " satisfactory " rating on his cadet evaluation in 1879 , but received the second highest grade in his class for the Sea Cadet 's Exam the following year . Following his graduation from the Naval School , Scheer embarked on a six @-@ month @-@ long special training program for gunnery , torpedo warfare , and infantry training . Afterward , he was assigned to the gunnery training ship SMS Renown . Scheer was for a short time assigned to the armored frigate SMS Friedrich Carl . For his last year in cadet training , he was assigned to the frigate SMS Hertha , which conducted a world tour . The ship sailed to Melbourne , Australia , Yokohama , Kobe , and Nagasaki in Japan , and Shanghai , China during the trip .

Following his commission into the German navy , he was transferred to the East Africa Squadron ; his first tour with the unit lasted from 1884 to 1886 . He was assigned to the crew of the frigate SMS Bismarck . Here he was promoted to Lieutenant . He also made important connections in Africa ; among those he befriended was Lieutenant Henning von Holtzendorff , who would later serve as commander of the High Seas Fleet . During the assignment , on December 1884 , Scheer participated in a landing party that suppressed a pro @-@ British indigenous chieftain in Kamerun .

After his return to Germany in 1886 , Scheer took part in torpedo training aboard SMS Blücher , from January to May 1888 . In May 1888 , Scheer returned to the East Africa Squadron as a torpedo officer aboard the corvette SMS Sophie . This tour lasted until early summer 1890 , at which point Scheer returned to Germany , where he was made an instructor at the Torpedo Research Command in Kiel . Thus far in his career , Scheer had made a strong reputation for himself as a torpedo specialist . While stationed in Kiel , Scheer met Alfred von Tirpitz , who took note of his expertise . In 1897 , following von Tirpitz 's promotion to Secretary of State of the Imperial Navy Office , he transferred Scheer to the Reichsmarineamt ( RMA ) to work in the Torpedo Section .

After promotion to Korvettenkapitän , Scheer commanded the light cruiser SMS Gazelle .

Scheer was promoted to Kapitän zur See in 1905 and took command of the battleship SMS Elsass in 1907 , a command he held for two years . A report dated 1 December 1909 recommended Scheer for promotion ; he became chief of staff to the commanding officer of the High Seas Fleet , Admiral Henning von Holtzendorff , under whom Scheer had served on the cruiser SMS Prinzess Wilhelm . Scheer reached flag rank less than six months after taking his post on von Holtzendorff 's staff , at the age of 47 . He held the Chief of Staff position until late 1911 , when he was transferred back to the RMA under Alfred von Tirpitz . Here , he held the position of Chief of the General Naval Department through 1912 . Following this appointment , Scheer returned to a sea command , in the form of squadron commander for the six battleships of the II Battle Squadron of the High Seas Fleet in January 1913 .

= = World War I = =

On 9 December 1913 , Scheer was promoted to Vizeadmiral . He remained with the II Battle Squadron until January 1915 , by which time World War I had begun . He thereafter took command of the III Battle Squadron , which consisted of the most powerful battleships in the German fleet : the dreadnoughts of the Kaiser and König classes . Scheer advocated raids on the British coast to lure out portions of the numerically superior Royal Navy so they could be overwhelmed by the German fleet . He was highly critical of Admiral Friedrich von Ingenohl , who he felt was overcautious .

Following the bombardment of Scarborough , Hartlepool and Whitby , during which Ingenohl had withdrawn instead of attacking a weaker British squadron , Scheer remarked , " [ Ingenohl ] had robbed us of the opportunity of meeting certain divisions of the enemy according to the prearranged plan , which was now seen to be correct . " Following the loss of SMS Blücher at the Battle of Dogger Bank in January 1915 , the Kaiser removed Ingenohl from his post on 2 February . Admiral Hugo von Pohl replaced him as commander of the fleet . Pohl was exceedingly cautious ; in the remainder of 1915 , he conducted only five ineffective fleet actions , all of which remained within 120 nautical miles of Helgoland .

= = = Command of the High Seas fleet = = =

Vice Admiral Scheer became Commander in chief of the High Seas Fleet on 18 January 1916 when Pohl became too ill to continue in that post . Upon promotion to the position , Scheer wrote Guiding Principles for Sea Warfare in the North Sea , which outlined his strategic plans . His central idea was that the Grand Fleet should be pressured by higher U @-@ boat activity and zeppelin raids as well as increased fleet sorties . The Grand Fleet would be forced to abandon the distant blockade and would have to attack the German fleet ; the Kaiser approved the memorandum on 23 February 1916 . Now that he had approval from the Kaiser , Scheer could use the fleet more aggressively .

Following the Kaiser 's order forbidding unrestricted submarine warfare on 24 April 1916 , Scheer ordered all of the U @-@ boats in the Atlantic to return to Germany and abandon commerce raiding . Scheer intended to use the submarines to support the fleet by stationing the U @-@ boats off major British naval bases . The U @-@ boats would intercept British forces leaving the ports when provoked by a bombardment by the I Scouting Group battlecruisers under the command of Vice Admiral Franz von Hipper . Scheer planned the operation for 17 May , but damage to the battlecruiser SMS Seydlitz from the previous month , coupled with condenser trouble on several of the battleships of III Battle Squadron caused the plan to be delayed , ultimately to 31 May .

= = = = Battle of Jutland = = = =

Admiral Scheer 's fleet , composed of 16 dreadnoughts , six pre @-@ dreadnoughts , six light cruisers , and 31 torpedo boats departed the Jade early on the morning of 31 May . The fleet sailed in concert with Hipper 's five battlecruisers and supporting cruisers and torpedo boats . The British navy 's Room 40 had intercepted and decrypted German radio traffic containing plans of the operation , and so sortied the Grand Fleet , totaling some 28 dreadnoughts and 9 battlecruisers , the

night before in order to cut off and destroy the High Seas Fleet .

At 16 : 00 UTC , the two battlecruiser forces encountered each other and began a running gun fight south , back towards Scheer 's battle fleet . Upon reaching the High Seas Fleet , Vice Admiral David Beatty 's battlecruisers turned back to the north to lure the Germans towards the rapidly approaching Grand Fleet , under the command of Admiral John Jellicoe . During the run to the north , Scheer 's leading ships engaged the Queen Elizabeth @-@ class battleships of the 5th Battle Squadron . By 18 : 30 , the Grand Fleet had arrived on the scene , and was deployed into a position that would cross Scheer 's " T " from the northeast . To extricate his fleet from this precarious position , Scheer ordered a 16 @-@ point turn to the south @-@ west . At 18 : 55 , Scheer decided to conduct another 16 @-@ point turn to launch an attack on the British fleet ; he later explained his reasoning :

It was as yet too early to assume ' night cruising order . ' The enemy could have compelled us to fight before dark , he could have prevented our exercising our initiative , and finally he could have cut off our return to the German Bight . There was only one way of avoiding this : to inflict a second blow on the enemy with another advance carried through regardless of cost ... It also offered the possibility of a last attempt being made to bring help to the hard @-@ pressed Wiesbaden , or at least of rescuing her ship 's company .

This maneuver again put Scheer in a dangerous position ; Jellicoe had turned his fleet south and again crossed Scheer 's " T. " A third 16 @-@ point turn followed , which was covered by a charge by Hipper 's mauled battlecruisers . Scheer then ordered the fleet to adopt the night cruising formation , which was completed by 23 : 40 . A series of ferocious engagements between Scheer 's battleships and Jellicoe 's destroyer screen ensued , though the Germans managed to punch their way through the destroyers and make for Horns Reef . The High Seas Fleet reached the Jade between 13 : 00 and 14 : 45 on 1 June ; Scheer ordered the undamaged battleships of the I Battle Squadron to take up defensive positions in the Jade roadstead while the Kaiser @-@ class battleships were to maintain a state of readiness just outside Wilhelmshaven .

= = = Post @-@ Jutland = = =

After the battle was finished , Scheer wrote an assessment of the engagement for the Kaiser ; in it , he strongly urged for the resumption of the unrestricted submarine warfare campaign in the Atlantic . He argued that it was the only option to defeat Great Britain . Scheer spent the majority of the remainder of the year debating the issue with the naval command . Ultimately , Scheer and his allies prevailed and the unrestricted submarine campaign was resumed in February 1917 . Despite his conviction that only the U @-@ boats could defeat Britain , Scheer continued to utilize the surface fleet . On 18 ? 19 August 1916 , the High Seas Fleet again sortied in an attempt to draw out and defeat Admiral Beatty 's battlecruiser squadron . The Royal Navy again intercepted German communications and sent the Grand Fleet out . In this case , however , Scheer 's reconnaissance worked as intended , and warned him of the Grand Fleet 's approach in time to retreat back to Germany . In later 1917 , Scheer began to use light elements of the fleet to raid British convoys to Norway in the North Sea . This forced the British to deploy battleships to escort the convoys , which presented Scheer with the opportunity to attempt to isolate and destroy several battleships of the Grand Fleet . On 23 April 1918 , Scheer sent the entire High Seas Fleet to intercept one of the convoys . However , Hipper 's battlecruisers crossed the convoy 's path several times without sighting any ships ; it was later discovered that German intelligence had miscalculated the date the convoy would depart Britain . The German fleet turned south and reached their North Sea bases by 19 : 00 .

= = = Chief of Naval Staff = = =

In June 1918 , Scheer was informed that the state of Admiral von Holtzendorff 's health would not permit him to remain in his post as chief of the naval staff much longer . On 28 July , Scheer was informed that von Holtzendorff had submitted his resignation to the Kaiser . Two weeks later , on 11

August 1918 , Scheer was promoted to the Chief of Naval Staff ; his subordinate Franz von Hipper succeeded him in command of the High Seas Fleet . The following day , Scheer met with Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg and General Erich Ludendorff to discuss the deteriorating war situation . The three agreed that the U @-@ boat campaign would be the sole hope for a German victory , as the German army had been pushed to the defensive . Scheer then called for a crash program to build a vastly increased number of U @-@ boats . He stipulated that , at a minimum , at least 16 additional U @-@ boats be constructed per month in the last quarter of 1918 . This was to increase to at least an additional 30 per month by the third quarter of 1919 . In total , the plan called for 376 to 450 new U @-@ boats . However , German naval historian Holger Herwig suggested the program was " a massive propaganda effort designed to have an effect at home and abroad . "

In October , with the war largely lost , Scheer and Hipper envisioned one last major fleet advance to attack the British Grand Fleet . Scheer intended to inflict as much damage as possible on the British navy , to achieve a better bargaining position for Germany regardless of the cost to the navy . The plan involved two simultaneous attacks by light cruisers and destroyers , one on Flanders and another on shipping in the Thames estuary ; the five battlecruisers were to support the Thames attack while the dreadnoughts remained off Flanders . After both strikes , the fleet was to concentrate off the Dutch coast , where it would meet the Grand Fleet in battle . While the fleet was consolidating in Wilhelmshaven , however , war @-@ weary sailors began deserting en masse . As Von der Tann and Derfflinger passed through the locks that separated Wilhelmshaven 's inner harbor and roadstead , some 300 men from both ships climbed over the side and disappeared ashore . On 24 October 1918 , the order was given to sail from Wilhelmshaven . Starting on the night of 29 October , sailors on several battleships mutinied ; three ships from the III Squadron refused to weigh anchors , and acts of sabotage were committed on board the battleships Thüringen and Helgoland . In the face of open rebellion , the order to sail was rescinded and the planned operation was abandoned . In an attempt to suppress the mutiny , the High Seas Fleet squadrons were dispersed .

= = Post @-@ war = =

Scheer wrote his memoirs of the Great War in 1919 , which were translated into English the following year . In October 1920 , an intruder broke into Scheer 's house and murdered his wife , Emillie and his maid , and injured his daughter Else . The man then committed suicide in the cellar . Following the incident , Scheer retreated into solitude . He wrote his autobiography , entitled Vom Segelschiff zum U @-@ Boot ( From Sailing Ship to Submarine ) , which was published on 6 November 1925 .

In 1928 , Scheer accepted an invitation to meet his adversary from Jutland , Admiral of the Fleet Lord Jellicoe , in England . However , at the age of 65 , Scheer died at Marktedwitz before he could make the trip . He was buried in the municipal cemetery at Weimar . His tombstone reads : hier ruht admiral reinhard scheer [ Here rests Admiral Reinhard Scheer ] ? with the dates of his life , his flag in metal applique and the single word skagerrak ( the German name for the Battle of Jutland ) .

The heavy cruiser Admiral Scheer was named after Reinhard Scheer and christened by his daughter Marianne . The ship was ordered and funded by the Reichsmarine of the Weimar Republic and launched in 1933 .

= = Decorations and awards = =

German honours

Grand Cross of the Order of the Red Eagle ( Prussia )

Pour le Mérite ( 5 June 1916 ) , Oak Leaves added 1 February 1918 ( Prussia )

Iron Cross of 1914 , 1st and 2nd class

Knight 's Cross of the Royal House Order of Hohenzollern

Service Award ( Prussia )

Order of the Crown , 1st class with Swords ( Prussia )

Grand Cross of the Military Order of Max Joseph ( Kingdom of Bavaria )  
Grand Cross of the House Order of Albert the Bear ( Anhalt )  
Grand Cross of the Military Merit Order ( Bavaria )  
Knight 's Cross of the Military Order of St. Henry ( Saxony , 23 June 1916 )  
Grand Cross of the Albert Order ( Saxony )  
Grand Cross of the Order of the Griffon ( Mecklenburg )  
Honorary Grand Cross of the House and Merit Order of Peter Frederick Louis ( Oldenburg )  
Knight of the Military Merit Order ( Württemberg )  
Military Merit Cross , 1st class ( Mecklenburg @-@ Schwerin )  
Foreign honours  
Knight Grand Cross of the Imperial Order of Franz Joseph ( Austro @-@ Hungarian Empire )  
Order of the Rising Sun , 3rd class ( Japan )  
Grand Officer of the Order of Saints Maurice and Lazarus ( Italy )  
Order of the Iron Crown , 3rd class ( Austria )  
Order of Saint Stanislaus , 2nd class