

= SMS Breslau =

SMS Breslau was a Magdeburg class cruiser of the Imperial German Navy , built in the early 1910s . Following her commissioning , Breslau and the battlecruiser Goeben were assigned to the Mittelmeerdivision (Mediterranean Division) in response to the Balkan Wars . After evading British warships in the Mediterranean to reach Constantinople , Breslau and Goeben were transferred to the Ottoman Empire in August 1914 , to entice the Ottomans to join the Central Powers in World War I. The two ships , along with several other Ottoman vessels , raided Russian ports in October 1914 , prompting a Russian declaration of war . The ships were renamed Midilli and Yavûz Sultân Selîm , respectively , and saw extensive service with the Ottoman fleet , primarily in the Black Sea against the Russian Black Sea Fleet .

Midilli was active in laying minefields off the Russian coast , bombarding Russian ports and installations and , because of a shortage of Ottoman merchant ships , transporting troops and supplies to the Black Sea ports supplying Ottoman troops fighting in the Caucasus Campaign . She was lightly damaged several times by Russian ships , but the most serious damage was inflicted by a mine in 1915 , which kept her out of service for half of a year . The ship was mined and sunk in January 1918 during the Battle of Imbros , with the loss of the vast majority of her crew .

= = Construction = =

Breslau was ordered under the contract name " Ersatz Falke " and was laid down at the AG Vulcan shipyard in Stettin in 1910 . At her launching ceremony on 16 May 1911 , she was christened by the mayor of Breslau , the ship 's namesake . After her launching , fitting out work commenced and lasted until mid 1912 . She was commissioned into the High Seas Fleet on 20 August 1912 .

The ship was 138 meters (455 ft) long overall and had a beam of 13 meters (44 ft) and a draft of 4 meters (14 ft) forward . She displaced 4,570 t (4,500 long tons ; 5,040 short tons) at full combat load . Her propulsion system consisted of two sets of AEG Vulcan steam turbines driving two 3 meter (11 ft) propellers . They were designed to give 25,000 shaft horsepower (19,000 kW) , but reached 33,482 shp (24,968 kW) in service . These were powered by sixteen coal fired Marine type water tube boilers , although they were later altered to use fuel oil that was sprayed on the coal to increase its burn rate . These gave the ship a top speed of 27.5 knots (50.9 km / h ; 31.6 mph) . Breslau carried 1,200 tonnes (1,200 long tons) of coal , and an additional 106 tonnes (104 long tons) of oil that gave her a range of approximately 5,820 nautical miles (10,780 km ; 6,700 mi) at 12 knots (22 km / h ; 14 mph) . Breslau had a crew of 18 officers and 336 enlisted men .

The ship was armed with twelve 10.5 cm (4.1 in) 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 . By 1917 , the 10.5 cm guns were replaced with eight 15 cm (5.9 in) SK L / 45 guns , one fore and aft and three on each broadside . 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 = =

Following her commissioning in 1912 , Breslau was attached to the German Mittelmeerdivision (Mediterranean Division) along with the battlecruiser Goeben under the command of Admiral

Wilhelm Souchon . The German Navy decided it needed a permanent naval presence in the Mediterranean in the aftermath of the Balkan Wars that began in 1912 . Karl Dönitz , the future Grand Admiral during World War II , served aboard Breslau from 1912 to 1916 . At the outbreak of World War I , Breslau and Goeben were to interdict French transports transferring troops from Algeria to France . On 3 August 1914 , Souchon 's two ships were steaming off Algeria ; shortly after 06 : 00 , Breslau bombarded the embarkation port of Bône while Goeben attacked Philippeville . The attacks caused minimal damage , however , and Souchon quickly broke off and returned to Messina to replenish his coal stocks .

Although the British were not yet at war with Germany , the two British battlecruisers HMS Indomitable and Indefatigable shadowed the German ships while en route to Messina . After partially replenishing Goeben 's coal on the 5th , Souchon arranged to meet a collier in the Aegean . Goeben and Breslau left port the following morning bound for Constantinople , pursued by the British Mediterranean Fleet . That evening , the 1st Cruiser Squadron , commanded by Rear Admiral Ernest Troubridge , intercepted the Germans ; Breslau briefly exchanged fire with the light cruiser Gloucester before Troubridge broke off the attack , fearing Goeben 's powerful 28 cm (11 in) guns .

On 8 August , Goeben and Breslau met the collier off the island of Donoussa near Naxos , and two days later they entered the Dardanelles . To circumvent neutrality requirements , Germany transferred the two ships to the Ottoman Navy on 16 August , though the supposed sale was simply a ruse . On 23 September , Souchon accepted an offer to command the Turkish fleet . Breslau was renamed Midilli while Goeben was renamed Yavûz Sultân Selîm ; their German crews remained with the ships and donned Ottoman uniforms and fezzes . The British did not accept the sale of the ships to the Ottoman Empire and stationed a blockading force outside the Dardanelles with orders to attack the ships if they appeared , regardless of the flag they flew .

= = = Ottoman service = = =

On the evening of 27 October , Midilli and the rest of the Ottoman fleet left the Bosphorus and steamed into the Black Sea , ostensibly to conduct maneuvers . Instead , the fleet split into four groups to attack Russian bases on the other side of the Black Sea ; Midilli and another cruiser were tasked with mining the Strait of Kerch and then attacking the port of Novorossisk . Midilli laid sixty mines in the Strait , which later claimed two Russian merchant ships , and then joined the other ship in bombarding Novorossisk . They set the port 's oil tanks on fire , damaged seven merchant ships , and sank Nikolai of 1 @, @ 085 gross register tons (GRT) . Although the damage inflicted on the Russians was relatively light , it forced the Russians to declare war on the Ottoman Empire , bringing the country into the war on the side of Germany .

In early November 1914 , while Midilli was operating in the eastern Black Sea and covering Ottoman transports , she was detached to shell the Russian port of Poti in retaliation for Russian attacks on Turkish shipping . On 17 November , she sortied with Yavûz Sultân Selîm , under the command of Souchon , in an attempt to intercept the Black Sea Fleet as it returned from bombarding Trebizond . Midilli discovered the Russian ships off Cape Sarych , the southern tip of the Crimea in poor visibility at short range . In the resulting engagement , Souchon ordered Midilli to assume a safer position to Yavûz 's rear , but she was engaged by the pre @-@ dreadnoughts Tri Sviatitelia and Rostislav without effect before Souchon ordered the Turkish ships to disengage shortly afterward . The cruiser spent the rest of the month escorting shipping to Trebizond . On 5 December , she escorted a small raiding party to Akkerman , Bessarabia , that was intended to attack railroad installations . On the return voyage , Midilli bombarded Sevastopol , damaging some minesweepers at anchor .

A month later , on 23 December , Midilli sortied to rendezvous with Yavûz Sultân Selîm off Sinope , and in the darkness the following morning she encountered the Russian transport Oleg , which was intended to be sunk as a blockship in Zonguldak . Midilli quickly sank Oleg but was forced to turn away after spotting Rostislav . She then encountered another blockship , Athos , and forced her crew to scuttle the ship . She then briefly engaged Russian destroyers before moving ahead of the

Russian fleet to monitor their progress . Ottoman coastal guns forced the remaining blockships to scuttle in deep water . Midilli conducted a series of sorties against the Russians in early 1915 , including an operation in concert with the cruiser Hamidiye in January , during which they inadvertently came into contact with the Black Sea Fleet . Midilli scored a hit on the battleship Evstafi 's main battery turret before the Ottoman ships withdrew .

On 3 April , the Ottoman fleet sortied to attack Russian transports off Odessa . Midilli and Yavûz Sultân Selîm provided the covering force for the attack , which failed after the cruiser Mecidiye struck a mine and sank off Odessa . The Russian fleet attempted to intercept the Turkish force , but Midilli and Yavûz Sultân Selîm were able to escape undamaged . The two ships , joined by Hamidiye , conducted a sweep to attack Russian transports on 6 May , but found no targets . Later that month , detachments of naval infantry from Midilli and Yavûz Sultân Selîm were landed to assist in the defense against the Allied landings at Gallipoli . On the night of 10 / 11 June , Midilli encountered the Russian destroyers Derzki and Gnevny off Zonguldak . In a brief firefight , the cruiser crippled Gnevny with a hit in her starboard engine compartment that broke the main steam line to the engines , but was forced to turn away when Gnevny fired five torpedoes at her . Midilli was hit seven times herself with only slight damage and Gnevny was towed back to Sevastopol the following day by Derzki .

Midilli struck a mine on 18 July as she sailed from Constantinople to escort a merchant ship through the minefields defending the capital . The explosion under No. 4 boiler room killed eight crewmen and she was flooded with over 600 t (590 long tons) of water . The ship made it to port at ?stinye and an inspection revealed that she was not badly damaged . Hampered by a shortage of trained personnel and material , however , the ship 's repairs took quite a long time . The ship did not return to service until February 1916 , and the opportunity was taken to replace two of her 10 @. @ 5 cm guns with 15 cm pieces . On 27 February , she was used to quickly transport 71 officers and men of a machine @- @ gun company and a significant stock of supplies and munitions to Trebizond , which was then under heavy pressure from the Russian army . While en route on the night of the 28th , she encountered the Russian destroyers Pronzitelni and Bepokoiny . Midilli evaded the Russians and reached Trebizond . On 2 March , she attempted to attack a pair of destroyers north of Zonguldak , but she was unable to catch them . The ship then returned to the Bosphorus . On 11 March , Midilli made another run , this time carrying 211 soldiers and twelve barrels of fuel and lubricating oil , which were successfully landed on the 13th . She then stopped in Samsun , where she picked up 30 t (30 long tons ; 33 short tons) of flour , one ton of maize , and 30 tons of coal , before returning to the Bosphorus .

A third supply operation followed on 3 April , when the ship brought 107 men , 5 @, @ 000 rifles , and 794 cases of ammunition to Trebizond . After making the delivery , the ship met the U @- @ boat U @- @ 33 and proceeded to attack Russian forces . Midilli shelled Russian positions at Sürmene Bay , where she set the minesweeper T.233 on fire , which was then destroyed by U @- @ 33 's deck gun . Midilli then turned north and sank a Russian sailing vessel off Tuapse before running into the powerful dreadnought battleship Imperatritsa Ekaterina Velikaya . Midilli fled at high speed after being straddled several times , though she was not damaged . In early May , the cruiser laid two minefields , each of 60 mines . The first of these was laid off the Chilia branch of the Danube River and the other off Cape Tarkhankut in the Crimea . On the second trip she bombarded Eupatoria after laying her mines . Midilli transported more troops to Sinope and Samsun on 30 May , returning with grain and tobacco as deck cargo .

In July , Midilli and Yavûz Sultân Selîm sortied to support the Ottoman counterattack at Trebizond , which broke the Russian lines and advanced some 20 km (12 mi) . Midilli sank a pair of Russian ships off Sochi on 4 July and destroyed another that had been torpedoed the previous day . She then rejoined Yavûz Sultân Selîm for the return to the Bosphorus , during which the two ships evaded strong Russian forces attempting to intercept them . Later that month , on 21 July , Midilli attempted to lay a minefield off Novorossisk , but Russian wireless interception allowed the dreadnought Imperatritsa Mariya and several destroyers to leave port and attempt to cut Midilli off from the Bosphorus . The two ships encountered each other at 13 : 05 , and Midilli quickly turned back south . Her stern 15 cm gun kept Russian destroyers at bay , but the ship only slowly drew out of range of

Imperatritsa Mariya 's heavy guns . Several near misses rained shell splinters on the deck and wounded several men . Heavy use of smoke screens and a rain squall allowed Midilli to break contact with her Russian pursuers , and she reached the Bosphorus early the following morning . By the end of 1916 , a severe coal shortage prevented Midilli and Yavûz Sultân Selîm from conducting offensive operations .

In May 1917 , Midilli laid a minefield off the mouth of the Danube ; while there , she destroyed the wireless station on Fidonisi Island and captured 11 prisoners . The minefield she laid later sank the destroyer Leytenant Zatsarenni on 30 June . While Midilli was at sea , a Russian force raided the Bosphorus , including Imperatritsa Ekaterina Velikaya , which had by then been renamed Svobodnaya Rossiya . Upon returning to port , Midilli was spotted by the Russian fleet , which attempted to cut her off from the safety of the Bosphorus . Midilli raced toward port , while salvos from Svobodnaya Rossiya fell around her . The destroyer Gnevny closed to attack , but Midilli 's 15 cm guns drove her off . The cruiser managed to reach port without damage ; this was the last engagement of the war between the former German warships and the Russian fleet . On 1 November , Midilli left the Bosphorus to conduct a sweep for Russian warships . The Russians observed the departure and attempted to attack the cruiser with Svobodnaya Rossiya and the new battleship Volya , but mutiny aboard Svobodnaya Rossiya prevented the force from intercepting Midilli before she slipped back into port that night .

= = = Battle of Imbros = = =

On 20 January 1918 , Midilli and Yavûz Sultân Selîm left the Dardanelles under the command of Vice Admiral Hubert von Rebeur @-@ Paschwitz , who had replaced Souchon the previous September . Rebeur @-@ Paschwitz 's intention was to draw Allied naval forces away from Palestine in support of Turkish forces there . Outside the straits , in the course of what became known as the Battle of Imbros , the two Ottoman ships surprised and sank the monitors Raglan and M28 which were at anchor and unsupported by the pre @-@ dreadnoughts that should have been guarding them . Rebeur @-@ Paschwitz then decided to proceed to the port of Mudros ; there the British pre @-@ dreadnought battleship Agamemnon was raising steam to attack the Turkish ships . While en route , Midilli struck a total of five mines and sank ; Yavûz hit three mines as well and was forced to beach to avoid sinking . Three hundred and thirty of Midilli 's crew were killed in her sinking , 162 survivors were rescued by British destroyers . According to Hildebrand , Röhr and Steinmetz , only 133 men were rescued from the ship .