

= Italian battleship Conte di Cavour =

Conte di Cavour was the name ship of the three Conte di Cavour class battleships built for the Royal Italian Navy (Regia Marina) in the 1910s . She served during both World War I and World War II , although she was little used and saw no combat during the former . The ship supported operations during the Corfu Incident in 1923 and spent much of the rest of the decade in reserve . She was rebuilt between 1933 and 1937 with more powerful guns , additional armor and considerably more speed than before .

Both Conte di Cavour and her sister ship , Giulio Cesare , participated in the Battle of Calabria in July 1940 , where the latter was lightly damaged . They were both present when British torpedo bombers attacked the fleet at Taranto in November 1940 , and Conte di Cavour was torpedoed . She was deliberately grounded , with most of her hull underwater , and her repairs were not completed before the Italian surrender in September 1943 . The ship was then captured by the Germans , but they made no use of her . She was damaged in an Allied air raid in early 1945 and capsized seven days later . Conte di Cavour was eventually scrapped in 1946 .

= = Description = =

Conte di Cavour was 168 m 9 meters (554 ft 2 in) long at the waterline , and 176 meters (577 ft 5 in) long overall . The ship had a beam of 28 meters (91 ft 10 in) , and a draft of 9 m 3 meters (30 ft 6 in) . She displaced 23 ,000 long tons (23 ,000 t) at normal load , and 25 ,000 long tons (25 ,000 t) at deep load . She had a crew of 31 officers and 969 enlisted men . The ship 's machinery consisted of four Parsons steam turbines , each driving one propeller shaft . Steam for the turbines was provided by 20 Blechynden water tube boilers , eight of which burned fuel oil , and twelve which burned both oil and coal . Designed to reach a maximum speed of 22 m 5 knots (41 m 7 km / h ; 25 m 9 mph) from 31 ,000 shaft horsepower (23 ,000 kW) , Conte di Cavour failed to reach this goal on her sea trials , despite generally exceeding the rated power of her turbines . The ship only made a maximum speed of 22 m 2 knots (41 m 1 km / h ; 25 m 5 mph) using 31 ,278 shp (23 ,324 kW) . She had a cruising radius of 4 ,800 nautical miles (8 ,900 km ; 5 ,500 mi) at 10 knots (19 km / h ; 12 mph) .

The ship was armed with a main battery of thirteen 305 mm (12 m 0 in) guns in three triple gun turret and two twin gun turrets , designated ' A ' , ' B ' , ' Q ' , ' X ' , and ' Y ' from front to rear . The secondary battery comprised eighteen 120 mm (4 m 7 in) guns , all mounted in casemates in the sides of the hull . Conte di Cavour was also armed with fourteen 76 mm (3 m 0 in) guns . As was customary for capital ships of the period , she was equipped with three submerged 450 mm (18 in) torpedo tubes . She was protected with Krupp cemented steel manufactured by Terni . The belt armor was 250 mm (9 m 8 in) thick and the main deck was 40 mm (1 m 6 in) thick . The conning tower and main battery turrets were protected with 280 mm (11 in) worth of armor plating .

= = Modifications and reconstruction = =

Shortly after the end of World War I , the number of 50 caliber 76 mm guns was reduced to 13 , all mounted on the turret tops , and six new 40 caliber 76 millimeter anti aircraft (AA) guns were installed abreast the aft funnel . In addition two license built 2 pounder AA guns were mounted on the forecastle deck . In 1925 the foremast was replaced by a four legged mast , which was moved forward of the funnels , the rangefinders were upgraded , and the ship was equipped to handle a Macchi M.18 seaplane mounted on the center turret . Around that same time she was equipped with a fixed aircraft catapult on the port side of the forecastle .

Conte di Cavour began an extensive reconstruction in October 1933 at the CRDA Trieste shipyard that lasted until June 1937 . A new bow section was grafted over the existing bow , which increased

her length by 10 @. @ 31 meters (33 ft 10 in) to 186 @. @ 4 meters (611 ft 7 in) and her beam increased to 28 @. @ 6 meters (93 ft 10 in) . The ship 's draft at deep load increased to 10 @. @ 02 meters (32 ft 10 in) . All of the changes made increased her displacement to 26 @, @ 140 long tons (26 @, @ 560 t) at standard load and 29 @, @ 100 long tons (29 @, @ 600 t) at deep load . The ship 's crew increased to 1 @, @ 260 officers and enlisted men . Two of the propeller shafts were removed and the existing turbines were replaced by two Belluzzo geared steam turbines rated at 75 @, @ 000 shp (56 @, @ 000 kW) . The boilers were replaced by eight Yarrow boilers . In service her maximum speed was about 27 knots (50 km / h ; 31 mph) and she had a range of 6 @, @ 400 nautical miles (11 @, @ 900 km ; 7 @, @ 400 mi) at a speed of 13 knots (24 km / h ; 15 mph) .

The main guns were bored out to 320 millimeters (12 @. @ 6 in) and the center turret and the torpedo tubes were removed . All of the existing secondary armament and AA guns were replaced by a dozen 120 mm guns in six twin @- @ gun turrets and eight 102 @- @ millimeter (4 @. @ 0 in) AA guns in twin turrets . In addition the ship was fitted with a dozen Breda 37 @- @ millimeter (1 @. @ 5 in) light AA guns in six twin @- @ gun mounts and twelve 13 @. @ 2 @- @ millimeter (0 @. @ 52 in) Breda M31 anti @- @ aircraft machine guns , also in twin mounts . In 1940 the 13 @. @ 2 mm machine guns were replaced by 20 @- @ millimeter (0 @. @ 8 in) AA guns in twin mounts . The tetrapodal mast was replaced with a new forward conning tower , protected with 260 @- @ millimeter (10 @. @ 2 in) thick armor . Atop the conning tower there was a fire @- @ control director fitted with two large stereo @- @ rangefinders , with a base length of 7 @. @ 2 meters (23 @. @ 6 ft) .

The deck armor was increased during the reconstruction to a total of 135 millimeters (5 @. @ 3 in) over the engine and boiler rooms and 166 millimeters (6 @. @ 5 in) over the magazines , although its distribution over three decks , each with multiple layers , meant that it was considerably less effective than a single plate of the same thickness . The armor protecting the barbettes was reinforced with 50 @- @ millimeter (2 @. @ 0 in) plates . All this armor weighed a total of 3 @, @ 227 long tons (3 @, @ 279 t) . The existing underwater protection was replaced by the Pugliese torpedo defense system ; a large cylinder surrounded by fuel oil or water that was intended to absorb the blast of a torpedo warhead . It lacked enough depth to be fully effective against contemporary torpedoes . A major problem of the reconstruction was that the ship 's increased draft meant that their waterline armor belt was almost completely submerged with any significant load .

= = Construction and service = =

Conte di Cavour , named after the statesman Count Camillo Benso di Cavour , was laid down at La Spezia Arsenale , La Spezia , on 10 August 1910 , and launched on 10 August 1911 . She was completed on 1 April 1915 , and served as a flagship in the southern Adriatic Sea during World War I. She saw no action , however , and spent little time at sea . Admiral Paolo Thaon di Revel , the Italian naval chief of staff , believed that Austro @- @ Hungarian submarines and minelayers could operate too effectively in the narrow waters of the Adriatic . The threat from these underwater weapons to his capital ships was too serious for him to use the fleet in an active way . Instead , Revel decided to implement a blockade at the relatively safer southern end of the Adriatic with the battle fleet , while smaller vessels , such as MAS torpedo boats , conducted raids on Austro @- @ Hungarian ships and installations . Meanwhile , Revel 's battleships would be preserved to confront the Austro @- @ Hungarian battle fleet in the event that it sought a decisive engagement .

In 1919 she sailed to North America and visited ports in the United States as well as Halifax , Canada . The ship was mostly inactive in 1921 because of personnel shortages , and was refitted at La Spezia from November to March 1922 . Conte di Cavour and Giulio Cesare supported Italian operations on Corfu in 1923 after an Italian general and his staff were murdered on Corfu ; Benito Mussolini was not satisfied with the Greek Government 's response , so he ordered Italian troops to occupy the island . Conte di Cavour bombarded the town with her 76 mm guns , killing 20 and wounding 32 civilians . She escorted King Victor Emmanuel III and his wife aboard the battleship Dante Alighieri on a state visit to Spain in 1924 , and was placed in reserve upon her return until 1926 , when she conveyed Mussolini on a voyage to Libya . The ship was again placed in reserve

from 1927 until 1933 , when she began her reconstruction .

= = = World War II = = =

Early in World War II , the Conte di Cavour and her sister took part in the Battle of Calabria (also known as the Battle of Punta Stilo) on 9 July 1940 . They were part of the 1st Battle Squadron , commanded by Admiral Inigo Campioni , during which they engaged major elements of the British Mediterranean Fleet . The British were escorting a convoy from Malta to Alexandria , while the Italians had finished escorting another from Naples to Benghazi , Libya . Admiral Andrew Cunningham , commander of the Mediterranean Fleet , attempted to interpose his ships between the Italians and their base at Taranto . Crews on the fleets spotted each other in the middle of the afternoon and the Italian battleships opened fire at 15 : 53 at a range of nearly 27 @,@ 000 meters (29 @,@ 000 yd) . The two leading British battleships , HMS Warspite and Malaya , replied a minute later . Three minutes after she opened fire , shells from Giulio Cesare began to straddle Warspite which made a small turn and increased speed , to throw off the Italian ship 's aim , at 16 : 00 . At that same time , a shell from Warspite struck Giulio Cesare at a distance of about 24 @,@ 000 meters (26 @,@ 000 yd) . Uncertain how severe the damage was , Campioni ordered his battleships to turn away in the face of superior British numbers and they successfully disengaged . Repairs to Giulio Cesare were completed by the end of August and both ships unsuccessfully attempted to intercept British convoys to Malta in August and September .

On the night of 11 November 1940 , Conte di Cavour was at anchor in Taranto harbor when she was attacked by 21 Fairey Swordfish torpedo bombers from the British aircraft carrier HMS Illustrious , along with several other warships . The ship 's gunners shot down one Swordfish shortly after the aircraft dropped its torpedo , but it exploded underneath ' B ' turret at 23 : 15 , knocking out the main bow pump . Her captain requested tugboats to help ground the ship on a nearby 12 @-@ meter (39 ft) sandbank at 23 : 27 , but Admiral Bruno Brivonesi , commander of the 5th Battleship Division , vetoed the request until it was too late and Conte di Cavour had to use a deeper , 17 @-@ meter (56 ft) , sandbank at 04 : 45 the following morning . She initially grounded on an even keel , but temporarily took on a 50 @-@ degree list before settling to the bottom at 08 : 00 with a 11 @.@ 5 @-@ degree list . Only her superstructure and gun turrets were above water by this time .

Conte di Cavour had the lowest priority for salvage among the three battleships sunk during the attack and little work was done for several months . The first priority was to patch the holes in the hull and then her guns and parts of her superstructure were removed to lighten the ship . False bulwarks were welded to the upper sides of the hull to prevent water from reentering the hull and pumping the water overboard began in May 1941 . Some 15 @,@ 000 metric tons (15 @,@ 000 long tons) of water were pumped out before Conte di Cavour was refloated on 9 June and entered the ex @-@ Austro @-@ Hungarian floating dry dock GO @-@ 12 on 12 July . The damage was more extensive than originally thought and temporary repairs to enable the ship to reach Trieste for permanent repairs took until 22 December .

Her guns were operable by September 1942 , but replacing her entire electrical system took longer so the navy took advantage of the delays and incorporated some modifications based on lessons learned from the attack . Other changes planned were the replacement of her secondary and anti @-@ aircraft weapons with a dozen 135 @-@ millimeter (5 @.@ 3 in) dual @-@ purpose guns in twin mounts , twelve 65 @-@ millimeter (2 @.@ 6 in) , and twenty @-@ three 20 mm AA guns . The repair work was suspended in June 1943 , with an estimated six months work left to do on Conte di Cavour remaining , in order to expedite the construction of urgently needed smaller ships . She was captured by the Germans on 8 September when Italy surrendered to the Allies , and was reduced to a hulk . She was damaged in an air raid on 17 February 1945 , and capsized on 23 February . Refloated shortly after the end of the war , Conte di Cavour was scrapped in 1946 .