= Francesco Caracciolo @-@ class battleship =

The Francesco Caracciolo @-@ class battleships were a class of battleships designed for the Italian Regia Marina in 1912 ? 1913 and ordered in 1914 ; the first ship of the class , Francesco Caracciolo , was laid down that year . The other three ships , Cristoforo Colombo , Marcantonio Colonna , and Francesco Morosini were all laid down in 1915 . Armed with a main battery of eight 381 mm (15 @.@ 0 in) guns and possessing a top speed of 28 knots (52 km / h ; 32 mph) , the four ships of the class were intended to be the equivalent of the British Queen Elizabeth class . They were never completed , however , due to material shortages and shifting construction priorities after the outbreak of World War I in 1914 . Only the lead ship was launched , and several proposals to convert her into an aircraft carrier were considered , but budgetary problems prevented any work being done . She was sold to an Italian shipping firm for conversion into a merchant ship . This too proved to be too expensive , and so she was broken up for scrap .

= = Design = =

In 1913 , Admiral Paolo Thaon di Revel became the Chief of Staff of the Regia Marina (Royal Navy) . He secured authorization for a huge new construction program , which called for four new battleships , three cruisers , and numerous other warships . The Francesco Caracciolo class was the first type of super @-@ dreadnought battleship designed by the Regia Marina . They were intended to match the new fast battleships being built in foreign navies , such as the British Queen Elizabeth class . Rear Admiral Edgardo Ferrati was responsible for preparing the designs . He originally called for a ship armed with twelve 381 @-@ millimetre (15 @.@ 0 in) guns and twenty 152 mm (6 @.@ 0 in) secondary guns , but by the time he had finalized the design , he had reduced the main battery to eight guns and the secondary battery to twelve guns .

= = = Characteristics = = =

The Francesco Caracciolo class was 201 @.@ 6 m (661 ft) long at the waterline and 212 m (696 ft) long overall . They had a beam of 29 @.@ 6 m (97 ft) and a draft of 9 @.@ 5 m (31 ft) . They would have displaced 31 @,@ 400 metric tons (30 @,@ 900 long tons ; 34 @,@ 600 short tons) at normal loading and up to 34 @,@ 000 t (33 @,@ 000 long tons ; 37 @,@ 000 short tons) at full combat load . They were to be equipped with two tripod masts .

The ships would have been powered by four Parsons steam turbines , with steam provided by twenty oil @-@ fired Yarrow boilers . The boilers were trunked into two large funnels . The engines were rated at 105 @,@ 000 shaft horsepower (78 @,@ 000 kW) , which provided a top speed of 28 knots (52 km / h ; 32 mph) . At a more economical speed of 10 knots (19 km / h ; 12 mph) , the ships could have cruised for 8 @,@ 000 nautical miles (15 @,@ 000 km ; 9 @,@ 200 mi) .

= = = Armament = = =

Francesco Caracciolo and her sisters were to be armed with a main battery of eight 381 mm 40 @-@ caliber guns in four twin gun turrets , all mounted on the centerline in superfiring pairs fore and aft . They had a secondary battery of twelve 152 mm 45 @-@ caliber guns mounted in casemates clustered amidships . These were supplemented by eight 102 mm (4 @.@ 0 in) 45 @-@ caliber guns . Anti @-@ aircraft defense was to be provided by twelve 40 mm (1 @.@ 6 in) autocannon . As was typical for capital ships of the period , the ships of the Francesco Caracciolo class were to be armed with eight torpedo tubes , either 450 mm (18 in) or 533 mm (21 @.@ 0 in) in diameter .

Armor for the class consisted of Krupp cemented steel manufactured by Terni . The main belt armor was 303 mm (11 @.@ 9 in) thick ; horizontal protection consisted of a 50 mm (2 @.@ 0 in) thick deck . The main conning tower had 400 mm (16 in) thick sides . The same level of protection was applied to the main battery turrets , while the secondary guns had 220 mm (8 @.@ 7 in) of armor protection .

= = Construction = =

Francesco Caracciolo was laid down at the Castellammare shipyard on 16 October 1914 . Marcantonio Colonna was laid down on 3 March 1915 at the Odero Shipyard in Sestri Ponente . Cristoforo Columbo followed on eleven days later on the 14th , at the Ansaldo shipyard in Genoa . The last member of the class , Francesco Morosini , was laid down at the Orlando Shipyard in Livorno on 27 June 1915 . Francesco Caracciolo was the only member of the class to be launched , on 12 May 1920 .

Shortages of steel slowed the construction of the ships , and after Italy entered World War I , other classes of warships , particularly destroyers , submarines , and other light craft were needed to combat the Central Powers . As a result , work on the ships was suspended in March 1916 . Around 9 @,@ 000 t (8 @,@ 900 long tons ; 9 @,@ 900 short tons) of steel had been built into the hull for Francesco Caracciolo when work stopped . Cristoforo Columbo was the next furthest along ship , with 12 @.@ 5 percent of the hull completed and 5 percent of the machinery assembled . Work on the last two ships had not progressed significantly by the time work on them halted . Two of the heavy guns intended for Cristoforo Colombo were installed aboard the monitor Faà di Bruno . The monitor Alfredo Cappellini received a pair of 381 mm guns from Francesco Morosini , and the two Monte Santo and four Monte Grappa @-@ class monitors were also equipped with spare 381 mm guns . Another pair of guns was installed in Venice as Batteria Amalfi to protect the harbor .

Work resumed on Francesco Caracciolo in October 1919 , but she was not to be completed . That year , the Regia Marina considered converting Francesco Caracciolo into a flush @-@ deck aircraft carrier similar to the British HMS Argus . The poor economic situation in Italy in the aftermath of World War I , and the heavy expenses of the Italian pacification campaigns in Libya , forced severe reductions in the naval budget . As a result , a modern carrier conversion could not be completed . Ansaldo proposed converting Franceso Caracciolo into a floatplane carrier , a cheaper alternative . It was nevertheless still too expensive for the Regia Marina .

In addition to the budgetary problems , the senior Italian navy commanders could not agree on the shape of the post @-@ war Regia Marina . One faction advocated a traditional surface battle fleet , while a second believed a fleet composed of aircraft carriers , torpedo boats , and submarines would be ideal . A third faction , led by Admiral Sechi , argued that a balanced fleet with a core of battleships and carriers was the most flexible option . In order to secure budgetary space for new construction , Sechi drastically reduced the number of older ships in service ; he also cancelled the battleships of the Francesco Caracciolo class . Francesco Caracciolo was sold on 25 October 1920 to the Navigazione Generale Italiana shipping company . The firm planned to convert her into a merchant ship , but the work was deemed too expensive , and so she was temporarily mothballed in Baia Bay outside Naples .

By this time , the Regia Marina had returned to the idea of converting the ship into an aircraft carrier . In the on @-@ going negotiations Washington Naval Conference , the proposed tonnage limits for the Regia Marina was to be 60 @,@ 000 long tons (61 @,@ 000 t) , which was now to include a converted Francesco Caracciolo and two new , purpose @-@ built ships . A new conversion design for Francesco Caracciolo was prepared , with an island superstructure , but Italy 's chronic budgetary problems prevented the navy from building any of these ships . Francesco Caracciolo was subsequently broken up for scrap , starting in the fall of 1926 . The other three ships had also been dismantled shortly after the end of the war .