

= Italian ironclad Re di Portogallo =

Re di Portogallo was an ironclad warship built for the Italian Regia Marina in the 1860s , the second and final member of the Re d'Italia class . She was laid down at the William H. Webb Shipyard in New York in December 1861 , was launched in August 1863 , and was completed a year later in August 1864 ; the two Re d'Italia class ships were the only Italian ironclads built in the United States . The ships were broadside ironclads , armed with a battery of six 72 @-@ pounder guns and thirty @-@ two 164 mm (6 @.@ 5 in) guns .

Re di Portogallo saw action at the Battle of Lissa during the Third Italian War of Independence in 1866 . She engaged several Austrian wooden vessels in the melee , including ship of the line Kaiser , which rammed Re di Portogallo but inflicted no significant damage . The ship 's career after the war was very limited ; in 1871 , she was converted into a training ship . By 1875 , her wooden hull was found to have deteriorated badly , and so she was broken up for scrap .

= = Design = =

Re di Portogallo was 99 @.@ 61 meters (326 @.@ 8 ft) long overall ; she had a beam of 16 @.@ 76 m (55 @.@ 0 ft) and an average draft of 7 @.@ 18 m (23 @.@ 6 ft) . She displaced 5 @,@ 610 metric tons (5 @,@ 520 long tons ; 6 @,@ 180 short tons) normally and up to 6 @,@ 082 t (5 @,@ 986 long tons ; 6 @,@ 704 short tons) at full load . Her hull was built from green wood . She had a crew of 552 . The ship 's propulsion system consisted of one single @-@ expansion steam engine that drove a single screw propeller , with steam supplied by four coal @-@ fired , rectangular boilers . Her engine produced a top speed of 10 @.@ 6 to 10 @.@ 8 knots (19 @.@ 6 to 20 @.@ 0 km / h ; 12 @.@ 2 to 12 @.@ 4 mph) from 1 @,@ 812 to 1 @,@ 845 indicated horsepower (1 @,@ 351 to 1 @,@ 376 kW) . She could steam for about 1 @,@ 800 nautical miles (3 @,@ 300 km ; 2 @,@ 100 mi) at a speed of 10 @.@ 5 knots (19 @.@ 4 km / h ; 12 @.@ 1 mph) . For long @-@ distance travel , Re di Portogallo was fitted with three masts and was barque @-@ rigged .

Re di Portogallo was a broadside ironclad , and she was armed with a main battery of six 72 @-@ pounder 8 in (200 mm) guns and thirty @-@ two 164 mm (6 @.@ 5 in) rifled muzzle @-@ loading guns . The ship was equipped with a spur @-@ shaped ram at the bow . The ship 's hull was sheathed with wrought iron armor that was 4 @.@ 75 in (121 mm) thick . Her rudder and propellers , however , were not protected by her armor .

= = Service history = =

The keel for Re di Portogallo was laid down at the William H. Webb Shipyard in New York City in December 1861 ; she and her sister were the only Italian ironclads to be built in the United States . She was launched on 29 August 1863 and completed just under a year later , on 23 August 1864 . Re di Portogallo then crossed the Atlantic and joined the Italian fleet . In June 1866 , Italy declared war on Austria , as part of the Third Italian War of Independence , which was fought concurrently with the Austro @-@ Prussian War . The Italian fleet commander , Admiral Carlo Pellion di Persano , initially adopted a cautious course of action ; he was unwilling to risk battle with the Austrian Navy , despite the fact that the Austrian fleet was much weaker than his own . Persano claimed he was simply waiting on the ironclad ram Affondatore , en route from Britain , but his inaction weakened morale in the fleet , with many of his subordinates openly accusing him of cowardice .

Rear Admiral Wilhelm von Tegetthoff brought the Austrian fleet to Ancona on June 27 , in attempt to draw out the Italians . At the time , many of the Italian ships were in disarray ; several ships did not have their entire armament , and several others had problems with their engines , including Re di Portogallo , which could not get underway . Persano held a council of war aboard the ironclad Principe di Carignano to determine whether he should sortie to engage Tegetthoff , but by that time , the Austrians had withdrawn , making the decision moot . The Minister of the Navy , Agostino Depretis , urged Persano to act and suggested the island of Lissa , to restore Italian confidence after their defeat at the Battle of Custoza the previous month . On 7 July , Persano left Ancona and

conducted a sweep into the Adriatic , but encountered no Austrian ships and returned on the 13th .

= = = Battle of Lissa = = =

On 16 July , Persano took the Italian fleet out of Ancona , bound for Lissa , where they arrived on the 18th . With them , they brought troop transports carrying 3 @, @ 000 soldiers ; the Italian warships began bombarding the Austrian forts on the island , with the intention of landing the soldiers once the fortresses had been silenced . In response , the Austrian Navy sent the fleet under Tegetthoff to attack the Italian ships . Re di Portogallo was at that time in the 3rd Division , along with the ironclads Terribile , Formidabile , and Regina Maria Pia , and the coastal defense ship Varese . After spending the 18th unsuccessfully bombarding the Austrian fortresses , the Italians withdrew late in the day , preparing to launch another attack the following morning . Persano sent most of his ships to bombard the town of Vis , but he was unable to effect the landing .

The next morning , Persano ordered another attack ; four ironclads would force the harbor defenses at Vis while Re di Portogallo and the rest of the fleet would attempt to suppress the outer fortifications . This second attack also proved to be a failure , but Persano decided to make a third attempt the next day . Re di Portogallo and the bulk of the fleet would again try to disable the outer forts in preparation for the landing . Before the Italians could begin the attack , the dispatch boat Esploratore arrived , bringing news of Tegetthoff 's approach . Persano 's fleet was in disarray ; the three ships of Admiral Giovanni Vacca 's 1st Division were three miles to the northeast from Persano 's main force , and three other ironclads were further away to the west . Persano immediately ordered his ships to form up with Vacca 's , first in line abreast formation , and then in line ahead formation . Re di Portogallo initially had trouble getting her engines running , but after repairs were quickly made , she joined the rest of the fleet . She was one of the last ships in the line .

Shortly before the action began , Persano decided to leave his flagship and transfer to Affondatore , though none of his subordinates on the other ships were aware of the change . They were thus left to fight as individuals without direction . More dangerously , by stopping Re d 'Italia , he allowed a significant gap to open up between Vacca 's three ships and the rest of the fleet . Tegetthoff took his fleet through the gap between Vacca 's and Persano 's ships , in an attempt to split the Italian line and initiate a melee . He failed to ram any Italian vessels on the first pass , so he turned back toward Persano 's ships , and took Re d 'Italia , San Martino , and Palestro under heavy fire . The Austrians quickly inflicted serious damage on Re d 'Italia and Palestro , eventually sinking both ships . After Palestro withdrew , the Austrian ironclads turned their attention to the 3rd Division , including Re di Portogallo .

Re di Portogallo initially attacked the unarmored ships Erzherzog Friedrich and Kaiserin Elizabeth before the ship of the line Kaiser rammed Re di Portogallo in an attempt to save them . Kaiser struck only a glancing blow , however , and inflicted little damage . Re di Portogallo fired her light guns into the ship in response , starting a fire , and killing or wounding a number of Austrian gunners before Kaiser could break free . By this time , Re d 'Italia had been rammed and sunk , and Palestro had been set on fire , soon to be destroyed by a magazine explosion . Persano broke off the engagement , and though his ships still outnumbered the Austrians , Persano refused to counter @-@ attack with his badly demoralized forces . In addition , the fleet was low on coal and ammunition . The Italian fleet began to withdraw , followed by the Austrians ; as night began to fall , the opposing fleets disengaged completely , heading for Ancona and Pola , respectively . Re di Portogallo emerged from the battle relatively unscathed , though many of her iron plates had been loosened in the collision with Kaiser .

= = = Later career = = =

After the battle , Vacca replaced Persano ; he was ordered to attack the main Austrian naval base at Pola , but the war ended before the operation could be carried out . The damage to Re di Portogallo was repaired after the battle , but the ship was rapidly made obsolete by the development

of casemate ships and shortly thereafter turret ships . As a result , her postwar career was very limited . In 1870 , the ship 's armament was modified ; twenty of her 164 mm guns were removed and two 10 in (250 mm) guns were added . The following year , she was converted into a gunnery training ship , and was again re - equipped , now with twenty 8 in guns , two 4 @ . @ 7 in (120 mm) guns , and eight 80 mm (3 @ . @ 1 in) guns . The ship did not serve long in this capacity ; the ageing of the unseasoned wood used to build the ship , coupled with several flaws in the ship 's construction cut her career short . She was stricken from the naval register on 31 March 1875 and subsequently broken up for scrap . The Navy discarded Re di Portogallo and the three Principe di Carignano @ - @ class ironclads between 1875 and 1880 to remove the cost of maintaining them from the naval budget , as part of an effort to reduce the financial impact of the new Caio Duilio and Italia @ - @ classes then under construction .