

= Chilean battleship Capitán Prat =

Capitán Prat was a unique ironclad battleship of the Chilean Navy built in the late 1880s and completed in 1890 . Armed with a main battery of four 9 @. @ 4 in (240 mm) guns in four single turrets , Capitán Prat was the first battleship in the world to be equipped with an electrical system . She was built in the La Seyne dockyard in France , and commissioned into the Chilean fleet in 1891 . Foreign navies tried to purchase the ship twice before the outbreak of wars , including an American attempt in 1898 and a Japanese offer in 1903 .

Capitán Prat served in the fleet for about ten years , until she was disarmed in accordance with a treaty signed with Argentina intended to stop a naval arms race between the two countries . The ship returned to service , however , and remained on active duty with the fleet until 1926 , when she was reduced to a coastal defense ship . In 1928 ? 1930 , she was used as a submarine tender , and in 1935 , she was disarmed and used as a training ship for engineers . She remained in the Navy 's inventory until 1942 , when she was sold for scrap .

= = Design = =

Capitán Prat was 328 feet (100 m) long between perpendiculars and had a beam of 60 ft 8 in (18 @. @ 49 m) . She displaced 6 @, @ 901 metric tons (6 @, @ 792 long tons ; 7 @, @ 607 short tons) and had a draft of 22 ft 10 in (6 @. @ 96 m) . Her hull was steel @- @ built , with wood and copper sheathing , and was equipped with a ram bow . The ship mounted two masts , both with fighting tops . She had a crew of 480 officers and enlisted men .

She was powered by a pair of horizontal expansion engines that were supplied with steam by five cylindrical boilers . The boilers were trunked into two funnels on the centerline . Her propulsion system was rated at 12 @, @ 000 indicated horsepower (8 @, @ 900 kW) for a top speed of 18 @. @ 3 kn (33 @. @ 9 km / h ; 21 @. @ 1 mph) . She was designed to carry 400 t (390 long tons ; 440 short tons) of coal , though she could carry up to 1 @, @ 100 t (1 @, @ 100 long tons ; 1 @, @ 200 short tons) . She was the first battleship of any navy to utilize electricity to power machinery .

The ship was armed with a main battery of four 9 @. @ 4 in (240 mm) / 35 caliber guns in single , electrically powered turrets . One was placed forward , on the centerline , two were mounted amidships , and the fourth was located aft of the superstructure on the centerline . Her secondary battery consisted of eight 4 @. @ 7 in (120 mm) guns in four twin turrets ; they were mounted on either side of the foremast and mainmast . Close @- @ range defense against torpedo boats was provided by a battery of six 6 @- @ pounder guns , four 3 @- @ pounder guns , and ten 1 @- @ pounder guns . She was also armed with four 18 in (460 mm) torpedo tubes in deck @- @ mounted launchers . One was in the bow , another in the stern , and two on the broadside .

The ship 's armor consisted of Creusot steel . Her armored belt was 11 @. @ 8 in (300 mm) thick amidships above the waterline , and 7 @. @ 8 in (200 mm) below . Above the waterline , the belt was reduced to 4 @. @ 9 in (120 mm) forward and 5 @. @ 9 in (150 mm) aft . The belt was 3 @. @ 9 in (99 mm) below the waterline , on either end of the ship . The belt extended for 2 ft 4 in (0 @. @ 71 m) above the waterline and 4 ft 7 in (1 @. @ 40 m) below . The citadel was 3 @. @ 1 in (79 mm) thick and protected the ship 's machinery spaces amidships . It extended to the upper deck and was closed on either ends by bulkheads 3 @. @ 1 in (79 mm) thick . Outside the citadel , the deck was protected by 2 in (51 mm) thick armor . The barbettes for the main battery guns were 8 to 10 @. @ 8 in (200 to 270 mm) thick , with 2 in (51 mm) thick hoods to protect the gun crews . The conning tower had 10 @. @ 5 in (270 mm) thick sides .

= = Service history = =

On 22 August 1887 , the National Congress of Chile passed a law authorizing the construction of new vessels to modernize the fleet . As part of this , they decided to order a new battleship from a foreign shipyard . The contract for constructing the new Chilean battleship was advertized throughout the European shipyards , and was sought by British , German , and French shipbuilders .

The contract for Capitán Prat was awarded to the Société Nouvelle des Forges et Chantiers de la Méditerranée shipyard in La Seyne , France on 18 April 1889 . The cost of the ship was agreed at £ 391 @, @ 000 , and she was laid down in 1889 . The ship was launched on 20 December 1890 , commissioned into the Chilean fleet in 1891 , and arrived in Chile in May 1893 . Capitán Prat received favorable reviews from contemporary naval critics , as she was seen as a prime example of combining a high speed with good armament and armor protection . She was also heralded as " the most powerful war ship possessed by any South American Government [sic] ... [and] any vessel at present in commission in the United States Navy . "

The construction of the ship helped begin a naval arms race between Chile and Argentina . In addition to Capitán Prat , the Chilean Navy ordered two new protected cruisers and a pair of torpedo boats . Argentina responded with the battleships Independencia and Libertad . The race continued through the 1890s , even after the expensive 1891 Chilean Civil War . The race culminated in the orders for two armored cruisers for the Argentine Navy and two Constitución @-@ class battleships for the Chilean Navy , though the latter two were purchased by the United Kingdom . The British , concerned over the possibility of war between the two countries , mediated an agreement , which resulted in the Pactos de Mayo . The treaty ended the expensive arms race and stipulated that both countries arrive at an agreement to balance their fleets . The latter led to the demilitarization of Capitán Prat and two Argentine armored cruisers , though all were later rearmed .

In March 1898 , shortly before the outbreak of the Spanish ? American War , the US Navy attempted to purchase Capitán Prat to bolster its fleet for the coming conflict with Spain . The negotiations fell through , however , and the ship remained in Chile . By 1903 , in the prelude to the Russo @-@ Japanese War , the Japanese government looked into purchasing Capitán Prat and the cruiser Esmeralda , along with other South American warships . Esmeralda was eventually purchased and commissioned into the Imperial Japanese Navy as Izumi . By 1907 , the ship was seen as outmoded in comparison to newer armored cruisers in the fleet . In 1909 ? 1910 , the ship was modernized , which included the installation of twelve new Babcock & Wilcox watertube boilers in place of the old cylindrical boilers , increasing the ship 's top speed to 19 @.@ 5 kn (22 @.@ 4 mph ; 36 @.@ 1 km / h) . The height of her funnels was also increased .

On 11 March 1916 , Capitán Prat suffered a magazine explosion while she was anchored in port in Valparaíso . Two cases of bad cordite propellant in the aft main battery magazine exploded . The construction of the ship , however , which provided a quick venting of the explosion , and defects in the propellant cases that allowed the explosive gasses to escape easily , saved the ship from destruction . The cordite was by that time 17 to 20 years old , about the maximum life @-@ span of the propellant . By 1926 , Capitán Prat was reduced to a coast defense ship . From 1928 to 1930 , the ship was designated as a submarine tender for Chile 's H and Capitan O 'Brien @-@ class submarines . She was disarmed in 1935 to serve with the mechanical training school . The old battleship was ultimately sold for scrap in 1942 .