

= German cruiser Admiral Scheer =

Admiral Scheer was a Deutschland class heavy cruiser (often termed a pocket battleship) which served with the Kriegsmarine of Nazi Germany during World War II . The vessel was named after Admiral Reinhard Scheer , German commander in the Battle of Jutland . She was laid down at the Reichsmarinewerft shipyard in Wilhelmshaven in June 1931 and completed by November 1934 . Originally classified as an armored ship (Panzerschiff) by the Reichsmarine , in February 1940 the Germans reclassified the remaining two ships of this class as heavy cruisers .

The ship was nominally under the 10,000 long tons (10,000 t) limitation on warship size imposed by the Treaty of Versailles , though with a full load displacement of 15,180 long tons (15,420 t) , she significantly exceeded it . Armed with six 28 cm (11 in) guns in two triple gun turrets , Admiral Scheer and her sisters were designed to outgun any cruiser fast enough to catch them . Their top speed of 28 knots (52 km / h ; 32 mph) left only a handful of ships in the Anglo-French navies able to catch them and powerful enough to sink them .

Admiral Scheer saw heavy service with the German Navy , including a deployment to Spain during the Spanish Civil War , where she bombarded the port of Almería . Her first operation during World War II was a commerce raiding operation into the southern Atlantic Ocean ; she also made a brief foray into the Indian Ocean . During the operation , she sank 113,223 gross register tons (GRT) of shipping , making her the most successful capital ship surface raider of the war . Following her return to Germany , she was deployed to northern Norway to interdict shipping to the Soviet Union . She was part of the abortive attack on Convoy PQ 17 and conducted Operation Wunderland , a sortie into the Kara Sea . After returning to Germany at the end of 1942 , the ship served as a training ship until the end of 1944 , when she was used to support ground operations against the Soviet Army . She was sunk by British bombers on 9 April 1945 and partially scrapped ; the remainder of the wreck lies buried beneath a quay .

= = Design = =

Admiral Scheer was 186 meters (610 ft) long overall and had a beam of 21.34 m (70 @ 0 ft) and a maximum draft of 7.25 m (23 @ 8 ft) . The ship had a design displacement of 13,660 t (13,440 long tons ; 15,060 short tons) and a full load displacement of 15,180 long tons (15,420 t) , though the ship was officially stated to be within the 10,000 long tons (10,000 t) limit of the Treaty of Versailles . Admiral Scheer was powered by four sets of MAN nine-cylinder double-acting two-stroke diesel engines . The ship's top speed was 28.3 knots (52.4 km / h ; 32.6 mph) , at 52,050 shaft horsepower (38,810 kW) . At a cruising speed of 20 knots (37 km / h ; 23 mph) , the ship could steam for 9,100 nautical miles (16,900 km ; 10,500 mi) . As designed , her standard complement consisted of 33 officers and 586 enlisted men , though after 1935 this was significantly increased to 30 officers and 921 ? 1,040 sailors .

Admiral Scheer's primary armament was six 28 cm (11 @ 0 in) SK C / 28 guns mounted in two triple gun turrets , one forward and one aft of the superstructure . The ship carried a secondary battery of eight 15 cm (5 @ 9 in) SK C / 28 guns in single turrets grouped amidships . Her anti-aircraft battery originally consisted of three 8 @ 8 cm (3 @ 5 in) L / 45 guns , though in 1935 these were replaced with six 8 @ 8 cm L / 78 guns . By 1940 the ship's anti-aircraft battery was significantly increased , consisting of six 10 @ 5 cm (4 @ 1 in) C / 33 guns , four twin @ 7 cm (1 @ 5 in) C / 30 guns and up to twenty @ eight 2 cm (0 @ 79 in) Flak 30 guns . By 1945 , the anti-aircraft battery had again been reorganized and comprised six 4 cm guns , eight 3 @ 7 cm guns , and thirty @ three 2 cm guns .

The ship also carried a pair of quadruple 53 @ 3 cm (21 @ 0 in) deck @ mounted torpedo launchers placed on her stern . The ship was equipped with two Arado Ar 196 seaplanes and one catapult . Admiral Scheer's armored belt was 60 to 80 mm (2 @ 4 to 3 @ 1 in) thick ; her upper deck was 17 mm (0 @ 67 in) thick while the main armored deck was 17 to 45 mm (0 @ 67 to 1 @ 77 in) thick . The main battery turrets had 140 mm (5 @ 5 in) thick faces

and 80 mm thick sides . Radar initially consisted of a FMG 39 G (gO) set , though in 1941 this was replaced with an FMG 40 G (gO) set and a FuMO 26 system .

= = Service history = =

Admiral Scheer was ordered by the Reichsmarine from the Reichsmarinewerft shipyard in Wilhelmshaven . Naval rearmament was not popular with the Social Democrats and the Communists in the German Reichstag , so it was not until 1931 that a bill was passed to build a second Panzerschiff . The money for Panzerschiff B , which was ordered as Ersatz Lothringen , was secured after the Social Democrats abstained to prevent a political crisis . Her keel was laid on 25 June 1931 , under construction number 123 . The ship was launched on 1 April 1933 ; at her launching , she was christened by Marianne Besserer , the daughter of Admiral Reinhard Scheer , the ship 's namesake . She was completed slightly over a year and a half later on 12 November 1934 , the day she was commissioned into the German fleet . The old battleship Hessen was removed from service and her crew transferred to the newly commissioned panzerschiff .

At her commissioning in November 1934 , Admiral Scheer was placed under the command of Kapitän zur See (KzS) Wilhelm Marschall . The ship spent the remainder of 1934 conducting sea trials and training her crew . In 1935 , she had a new catapult and landing sail system to operate her Arado seaplanes on heavy seas installed . From 1 October 1935 to 26 July 1937 her first officer was Leopold Bürkner , later to become head of foreign intelligence in the Third Reich . By October 1935 , the ship was ready for her first major cruise , when on 25 ? 28 October she visited Madeira , returning to Kiel on 8 November . The following summer , she cruised out through the Skagerrak and the English Channel into the Irish Sea , before visiting Stockholm on the return voyage .

= = = Spanish Civil War = = =

Admiral Scheer 's first overseas deployment began in July 1936 when she was sent to Spain to evacuate German civilians caught in the midst of the Spanish Civil War . From 8 August 1936 she served together with her sister ship Deutschland on non @-@ intervention patrols off the Republican @-@ held coast of Spain . She served four tours of duty with the non @-@ intervention patrol through June 1937 . Her official objective was to control the influx of war materiel into Spain , though she also recorded Soviet ships carrying supplies to the Republicans and protected ships delivering German weapons to Nationalist forces . During the deployment to Spain , Ernst Lindemann served as the ship 's first gunnery officer . After Deutschland was attacked on 29 May 1937 by Spanish Republican Air Force aircraft off Ibiza , Admiral Scheer was ordered to bombard the Republican @-@ held port of Almería in reprisal . On 31 May 1937 , the anniversary of the Battle of Jutland , Admiral Scheer , flying the Imperial War Flag , arrived off Almería at 07 : 29 and opened fire on shore batteries , naval installations and ships in the harbor . On 26 June 1937 , she was relieved by her sister ship Admiral Graf Spee , allowing her to return to Wilhelmshaven on 1 July . She returned to the Mediterranean between August and October , however . In September 1936 KzS Otto Ciliac replaced Marschall as the ship 's commanding officer .

= = = World War II = = =

At the outbreak of World War II in September 1939 , Admiral Scheer remained at anchor in the Schillig roadstead outside Wilhelmshaven , along with the heavy cruiser Admiral Hipper . On 4 September , two groups of five Bristol Blenheim bombers attacked the ships . The first group surprised the anti @-@ aircraft gunners aboard Admiral Scheer , who nevertheless managed to shoot down one of the five Blenheims . One bomb struck the ship 's deck and failed to explode , and two detonated in the water near the ship . The remaining bombs also failed to explode . The second group of five Blenheims were confronted by the alerted German defenses , which shot down four of the five bombers . Admiral Scheer emerged from the attack undamaged . In November 1939 , KzS Theodor Krancke became the ship 's commanding officer .

Admiral Scheer underwent a refit while her sister ships set out on commerce raiding operations in the Atlantic . Admiral Scheer was modified during the early months of 1940 , including the installation of a new , raked clipper bow . The heavy command tower was replaced with a lighter structure , and she was reclassified as a heavy cruiser . Additional anti @-@ aircraft guns were also installed , along with updated radar equipment . On 19 ? 20 July RAF bombers attacked Admiral Scheer and the battleship Tirpitz , though they failed to score any hits . On 27 July , the ship was pronounced ready for service .

= = = Atlantic sortie = = =

Admiral Scheer sailed in October 1940 on her first combat sortie . On the night of 31 October she slipped through the Denmark Strait and broke into the open Atlantic . Her B @-@ Dienst radio intercept equipment identified the convoy HX @-@ 84 , sailing from Halifax Nova Scotia . Admiral Scheer 's Arado seaplanes located the convoy on 5 November 1940 , The armed merchant cruiser HMS Jervis Bay , the sole escort for the convoy , issued a report of the German raider and attempted to prevent her from attacking the convoy . The convoy was ordered to scatter under cover of a smoke screen . Admiral Scheer 's first salvo scored hits on Jervis Bay , disabling her wireless equipment and steering gear . Shells from her second salvo struck the bridge and killed her commander , Edward Fegen . Admiral Scheer quickly sank Jervis Bay , but the delay allowed the majority of the convoy to escape . The Germans sank only five of the convoy 's 37 ships .

On 18 December , Admiral Scheer encountered and sank the refrigerator ship Duquesa , of some 8 @,@ 651 long tons (8 @,@ 790 t) displacement . The ship sent off a distress signal , which the German raider deliberately allowed , to draw British naval forces to the area . Krancke wanted to lure British warships to the area to draw attention away from Admiral Hipper , which had just exited the Denmark Strait . The aircraft carriers HMS Formidable and Hermes , the cruisers Dorsetshire , Neptune , and Dragon , and the armed merchant cruiser Pretoria Castle converged to hunt down the German raider , but she eluded the British .

Between 26 December and 7 January , Admiral Scheer rendezvoused with the supply ships Nordmark and Eurofeld , the auxiliary cruiser Thor , and the prizes Duquesa and Storstad . The raiders transferred some 600 prisoners to Storstad while they refueled from Nordmark and Eurofeld . Between 18 and 20 January Admiral Scheer captured three Allied merchant ships totalling 18 @,@ 738 gross register tons (GRT) , including the Norwegian oil tanker Sandefjord . She spent Christmas 1940 at sea in the mid @-@ Atlantic , several hundred miles from Tristan da Cunha , before making a foray into the Indian Ocean in February 1941 .

On 14 February , Admiral Scheer rendezvoused with the auxiliary cruiser Atlantis and the supply ship Tannenfels about 1 @,@ 000 nmi (1 @,@ 900 km ; 1 @,@ 200 mi) east of Madagascar . The raiders resupplied from Tannenfels and exchanged information on Allied merchant traffic in the area , parting company on 17 February . Admiral Scheer then steamed to the Seychelles north of Madagascar , where she found two merchant vessels with her Arado floatplanes . She took the 6 @,@ 994 GRT oil tanker British Advocate as a prize and sank the 2 @,@ 456 GRT Greek @-@ flagged Grigorios . A third ship , the 7 @,@ 178 GRT Canadian Cruiser , managed to send a distress signal before Admiral Scheer sank her on 21 February . The raider encountered and sank a fourth ship the following day , the 2 @,@ 542 GRT Dutch steamer Rantaupandjang , though she too was able to send a distress signal before she sank .

The British cruiser HMS Glasgow , which was patrolling in the area , received both messages from Admiral Scheer 's victims . Glasgow launched reconnaissance aircraft that spotted Admiral Scheer on 22 February . Vice Admiral Ralph Leatham , the commander of the East Indies Station , deployed the carrier Hermes and cruisers Capetown , Emerald , Hawkins , Shropshire , and the Australian HMAS Canberra to join the hunt . Krancke turned to the south @-@ east to evade his pursuers , reaching the South Atlantic by 3 March . The British , meanwhile , had abandoned the hunt on 25 February when it became clear that Admiral Scheer had withdrawn from the area .

Admiral Scheer then sailed northwards , breaking through the Denmark Strait on 26 ? 27 March and evading the cruisers Fiji and Nigeria . She reached Bergen , Norway on 30 March , where she spent

a day in the Grimstadfjord . A destroyer escort joined the ship for the voyage to Kiel , which they reached on 1 April . In the course of her raiding operation , she had steamed over 46 @, @ 000 nautical miles (85 @, @ 000 km) and sank seventeen merchant ships for a total of 113 @, @ 223 GRT . She was by far the most successful German capital ship commerce raider of the entire war . After returning to Germany , Krancke left the ship and was replaced by KzS Wilhelm Meendsen @-@ Bohlken in June 1941 . The loss of the battleship Bismarck in May 1941 , and more importantly , the Royal Navy 's destruction of the German supply ship network in the aftermath of the Bismarck operation forced a planned Atlantic raiding operation for Admiral Scheer and her sister Lützow at the end of 1941 to be abandoned . On 4 ? 8 September , Admiral Scheer was briefly moved to Oslo . There , on 5 and 8 September , No. 90 Squadron RAF , equipped with Boeing B @-@ 17 Flying Fortress bombers , mounted a pair of unsuccessful attacks on the ship . On 8 September , the ship left Oslo and returned to Swinemünde .

= = = Deployment to Norway = = =

On 21 February 1942 , Admiral Scheer , the heavy cruiser Prinz Eugen , and the destroyers Z4 Richard Beitzen , Z5 Paul Jakobi , Z25 , Z7 Hermann Schoemann , and Z14 Friedrich Ihn steamed to Norway . After stopping briefly in Grimstadfjord , the ships proceeded on to Trondheim . On 23 February , the British submarine Trident torpedoed Prinz Eugen , causing serious damage . The first operation in Norway in which Admiral Scheer took part was Operation Rösselsprung , in July 1942 . On 2 July , the ship sortied as part of the attempt to intercept Arctic convoy PQ @-@ 17 . Admiral Scheer and Lützow formed one group while Tirpitz and Admiral Hipper composed another . While en route to the rendezvous point , Lützow and three destroyers ran aground , forcing the entire group to abandon the operation . Admiral Scheer was detached to join Tirpitz and Admiral Hipper in Altafjord . The British detected the German departure and ordered the convoy to scatter . Aware that surprise had been lost , the Germans broke off the surface attack and turned the destruction of PQ @-@ 17 over to the U @-@ boats and Luftwaffe . Twenty @-@ four of the convoy 's thirty @-@ five transports were sunk .

In August 1942 , she conducted Operation Wunderland , a sortie into the Kara Sea to interdict Soviet shipping and attack targets of opportunity . The length of the mission and the distances involved precluded a destroyer escort for the operation ; three destroyers would escort Admiral Scheer until they reached Novaya Zemlya , at which point they would return to Norway . Two U @-@ boats ? U @-@ 251 and U @-@ 456 ? patrolled the Kara Gate and the Jugor Strait . The Germans originally intended to send Admiral Scheer with her sister ship Lützow , but since the latter had run aground the previous month , she was unavailable for the operation .

The operational plan called for strict radio silence to ensure surprise could be maintained . This required Meendsen @-@ Bohlken to have total tactical and operational control of his ship ; shore @-@ based commands would be unable to direct the mission . On 16 August , Admiral Scheer and her destroyer escort left Narvik on a course to pass to the north of Novaya Zemlya . Upon entering the Kara Sea , she encountered heavy ice ; in addition to searching for merchant shipping , the Arado floatplane was used to scout paths through the ice fields . On 25 August , she encountered the Soviet icebreaker Sibiryakov . Admiral Scheer sank the icebreaker , but not before she sent a distress signal . The German ship then turned south , and two days later , arrived off the port of Dikson . Admiral Scheer damaged two ships in the port and shelled harbor facilities . Meendsen @-@ Bohlken considered sending a landing party ashore , but firing from Soviet shore batteries convinced him to abandon the plan . After breaking off the bombardment , Meendsen @-@ Bohlken decided to return to Narvik . She reached port on 30 August without having achieved any significant successes .

On 23 October Admiral Scheer , Tirpitz and the destroyers Z4 Richard Beitzen , Z16 Friedrich Eckoldt , Z23 , Z28 , and Z29 left Bogen Bay and proceeded to Trondheim . There , Tirpitz stopped for repairs , while Admiral Scheer and Z28 continued on to Germany . Fregattenkapitän Ernst Gruber served as the ship 's acting commander at the end of November . In December 1942 , Admiral Scheer returned to Wilhelmshaven for major overhaul , where she was attacked and slightly

damaged by RAF bombers . Consequently , Admiral Scheer moved to the less exposed port of Swinemünde . In February 1943 , KzS Richard Rothe @-@ Roth took command of the ship . Until the end of 1944 Admiral Scheer was part of the Fleet Training Group .

= = = = Return to the Baltic = = = =

KzS Ernst @-@ Ludwig Thienemann , the ship 's final commander , took command of Admiral Scheer in April 1944 . On 22 November 1944 , Admiral Scheer , the destroyers Z25 and Z35 , and the 2nd Torpedo Boat Flotilla relieved the cruiser Prinz Eugen and several destroyers supporting German forces fighting the Soviets on the island of Ösel in the Baltic . The Soviet Air Force launched several air attacks on the German forces , all of which were successfully repelled by heavy anti @-@ aircraft fire . The ship 's Arado floatplane was shot down , however . On the night of 23 ? 24 November , the German naval forces completed the evacuation of the island . In all , 4 @,@ 694 troops were evacuated from the island .

In early February 1945 , Admiral Scheer stood off Samland with several torpedo boats in support of German forces fighting Soviet advances . On 9 February , the ships began shelling Soviet positions . Between 18 and 24 February , German forces launched a local counterattack ; Admiral Scheer and the torpedo boats provided artillery support , targeting Soviet positions near Peyse and Gross @-@ Heydekrug . The German attack temporarily restored the land connection to Königsberg . The ship 's guns were badly worn out by March and in need of repair . On 8 March , Admiral Scheer departed the eastern Baltic to have her guns relined in Kiel ; she carried 800 civilian refugees and 200 wounded soldiers . An uncleared minefield prevented her from reaching Kiel , and so she unloaded her passengers in Swinemünde . Despite her worn @-@ out gun barrels , the ship then shelled Soviet forces outside Kolberg until she used up her remaining ammunition .

The ship then loaded refugees and left Swinemünde ; she successfully navigated the minefields on the way to Kiel , arriving on 18 March . Her stern turret had its guns replaced at the Deutsche Werke shipyard by early April . During the repair process , most of the ship 's crew went ashore . On the night of 9 April 1945 , a general RAF bombing raid by over 300 aircraft struck the harbor in Kiel . Admiral Scheer was hit by five Tallboy bombs and capsized . She was partially broken up for scrap after the end of the war , though part of the hull was left in place and buried with rubble from the attack in the construction of a new quay . The number of casualties from her loss is unknown .