

VON TRAPP FAMILY

Georg Ludwig Ritter von Trapp (1880 to 1947)

Naval career

In 1894, aged fourteen, Trapp followed in his father's footsteps and joined the Imperial and Royal Austro-Hungarian Navy, entering the naval academy at Fiume (now Rijeka).^[7] As part of their required education, all naval cadets were taught to play a musical instrument; Georg von Trapp selected the violin.^[1] He graduated four years later and completed two years of follow-on training voyages, including one to Australia, as a cadet aboard the sail training corvette *SMS Saida II*.^[1] On the voyage home he visited the Holy Land where he met a Franciscan friar who took him on a tour of all the biblical sites he wanted to see. Among other things, Trapp bought seven bottles of water from the Jordan River which were later used to baptize his first seven children.^[7] In 1900 he was assigned to the protected cruiser *SMS Zenta* and was decorated for his performance during the Boxer Rebellion, in which he participated in the assault on the Taku Forts.^[1] In 1902 he passed the final officer's examination, and was commissioned a *Fregattenleutnant* (frigate lieutenant, equivalent to sub-lieutenant) in May 1903.^[1] He was fascinated by submarines, and in 1908 seized the opportunity to be transferred to the navy's newly formed submarine arm, or *U-boot-Waffe*, receiving promotion to *Linienschiffsleutnant* (ship-of-the-line lieutenant, or lieutenant) that November.^[1] In

1910 he was given command of the newly constructed SM *U-6*, which was launched by his wife, the former Agathe Whitehead.^[8] He commanded *U-6* until 1913.

On 17 April 1915, Trapp took command of SM *U-5*. He conducted nine combat patrols in *U-5*, and sank two enemy warships. One was the French armored cruiser *Léon Gambetta*, sunk at 39°30'N 18°15'E on 27 April 1915, 25 kilometres (13 nautical miles; 16 miles) south of Cape Santa Maria di Leuca. In hunting and sinking *Gambetta*, Trapp achieved a notable success as commander of the first submarine to execute the first-ever underwater nighttime (and only the second nighttime) submarine attack on a vessel in the Adriatic.^[1] Just over three months later, he sank the Italian submarine *Nereide* at 42°23'N 16°16'E on 5 August 1915, 250 metres (270 yd) off Pelagosa (Palagruža) Island.^[9] He also captured the Greek steamer *Cefalonia* off Durazzo on 29 August 1915. Now lionised as a hero across the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Trapp was nominated for the award of the Knight's Cross of the Military Order of Maria Theresa for sinking the *Gambetta*, which he eventually received in 1924.^[1]