STUDIES OF THE OTTOMAN DOMAIN

Cilt:5 Sayı:9 Ağustos 2015 Issn: 2147-5210

www.thestudiesofottomandomain.com

THE 1922 SAMSUN BOMBARDMENT

1922 SAMSUN BOMBARDIMANI

Dimitris Michalopoulos*

ÖZET

Bu çalışma asıl olarak Bolşeviklerin desteği ile birlikte 1920 yılı başlarında planlanan Samsun limanının bombalanması üzerine odaklanmaktadır. 1922 yılında çalışmada adı ve özellikleri belirtilen gemilerin katılımıyla Samsun limanı bombalanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bombardıman, Samsun, Liman, 1922

SUMMARY

This paper focuses on the Samsun Bombardment which was planned by the support of Bolsheviks as early as 1920. Samsun port was bombarded by vessels which are mentioned and identified in this study in 1922.

Key Words: Bombardment, Samsun, Port, 1922

On May 25, 1922 (Old Style) a squadron of the Greek Royal Navy bombarded Samsun. The squadron was composed of five vessels, namely "Averof", "Panthēr" (=Panther), "Ierax" (=Hawk), "Adriatikos" (=Adriatic) and "Naxos" (=Island of Naxos).[1]

"Averof" was an armoured cruiser. Her dimensions were 140/21/7.5 metres and her displacement 10,000 tons. She had 2 reciprocating 19,000 bhp engines, 2 propellers and 22 Belleville boilers. Her capacity in coal was 1,500 tons and her speed 22 knots. She had 2 twin turrets of 23.4 cm/45 cal. from aft to fore, eight 19.5 guns on 4 twin side turrets, eight 7.6 cm guns, four 7.6 cm antiaircraft guns, six 37 mm and two submerged torpedo tubes. This ship was purchased by the Greek Government in October 1909. She was built at the Orlando shipyards, in Leghorn (Livorno), Italy, and launched on March 12, 1910. She joined the Greek Royal Navy in 1911. The cost, amounted to ca. 1,000,000 English pounds, was partially covered by Geōrgios Averof (1815-1899), a fabulously wealthy member of the Greek colony in Egypt. (That is why the cruiser was named after him.) During the 1919-1922 Greco-Turkish war "Averof" was the flagship of Royal Navy's First Fleet under rear-admiral Iōannēs Ēpitēs (1867-1956). Her crew was 670. (Now she is converted into a museum, manned by War Navy personnel, and considered to be "on active duty, undergoing long term repairs".)[2]

"Panthēr" was a destroyer (the former Argentinian "Santiago"). Her dimensions were 89.4/8.3/3 metres and her displacement 880 tons. She was equipped with 5 boilers (4 coal fired boilers and 1 oil fired boiler) and 5 funnels; her speed was 31 knots. She had 4 Bethlehem 10.2 cm guns, one 75 mm antiaircraft gun, six 21 inch torpedo tubes, and three electric search lights. She was built at the Camel Land shipyards, United Kingdom, and joined the Greek Royal Navy in 1912. She was confiscated by the French in 1916, because of the pro-German attitude of King Constantine of Greece, and returned in 1917.[3] She was decommissioned in 1946.

"Ierax" was a destroyer as well (the former Argentinian "Santa Fe"). Her dimensions were 89.4/8.3/3 metres and her displacement 880 tons. She had 5 boilers (4 coal and 1 oil one) and 5 funnels. Her speed was 31 knots. She had 4

*Director, Historical Institute for Studies on Eleutherios Venizelos and his Era.

[1] Newspaper *Hē Kathēmerinē* (= The Daily [published in Athens]), May 28, 1922, p. 4.

[2] C. Païzis-Paradellis, *Hellenic Warships, 1829-2001* (Athens: The Society for the Study of Greek History, 2002), pp. 48-49.

[3] *Ivi,* p. 141.

Bethlehem 10.2 cm guns, one 75 mm antiaircraft gun, six 21 inch torpedo tubes, and three electric search lights. She had joined the Royal Navy in 1912, and was decommissioned in 1946.[4]

"Adriatikos" was a passenger ship, requisitioned and used for military transports during the 1919-1922 Greek-Turkish war.[5] She had three 89 mm Krupp guns, one 75 mm Krupp Howitzer and four machine guns. And "Naxos", i.e. the former "Purfleet Belle", former "Lady Martin",and former "Binbashi Riza Bey", was an auxiliary light cruiser, built in 1888 in Belfast, Ireland, and owned by the Embirikos Bros "National Greek Steamship Company". She was requisitioned during the 1919-1922 war, and used as flagship of the Black Sea Light Cruiser Squadron (A Fleet). Her capacity was 1,401 tons, and she had four 88 mm Krupp guns. After the war ended, she was returned to her owners.[6]

* * *

A naval campaign to the Black Sea southern coastline was planned as early as June 1920; the objective would be the harassment of Nationalist Turkish troops' supply by the Bolsheviks.[7] Nonetheless, the General Staff of the Greek Army turned a deaf ear to the relevant suggestion; for its leadership was fully aware of the difficulties of such an expedition. In point of fact, in November 1919, a Greek officer had travelled all over the Pontus area and tried to organise "Christian guerrillas"; still, the results of his efforts had been meagre.[8] In 1914, only 75,494 people out of Canik Sandzak's total population (estimated by that year more than 214,000).[9] What is more, a great deal of those 75, 494 *Rumlar* were either Turkish-speaking or simply offspring of immigrants from other Pontus districts and also from Cappadocia.[10]

Be that as it may, the point is that early in 1922 the military operations had reached a stalemate: the Greek troops were immobilised westwards of the Sakarya river, whilst the great Turkish attack was not yet launched. That is why, the

[4] *Ivi,* p. 79.
[5] *Ivi,* p. 24.
[6] *Ivi*, p. 129.
[7] Odysseus Lampsidēs, *Hoi Hellēnes tou Pontou hypo tous Tourkous, 1461-1922* (= The Greeks of the Euxine under the Turkish rule), Athens, 1957, p. 93.
[8] Chrēstos Samouēlidēs, *Hē periphereia Sampsountas* (= The Samsun district) in *Archeion Pontou* (= The Archive of the Pontus Euxinus [Athens]), vol. XXXVII (1982), p. 106.
[9] *Ivi.,* pp. 50-51.
[10] *Ivi.,* p. 59ff.

prospect of opening a "second front" in the Euxine began promising well. The Greek Naval Base at Istanbul, therefore, was ordered by the Navy Ministry to "gather intelligence" related to the "seashore of the Euxine".[11]

The intelligence in question was speedily gathered, thanks most likely to anti-Kemalist Moslems.[12] The port of Samsun was "crucial" as far as the recruitment and supply of the Turkish Nationalist Army was concerned.[13] Further, no mines were protecting that port, the garrison of the city was by no means a strong one (only 1,000 soldiers), whilst "even the Moslem dwellers of the city were exhausted by the heavy taxation imposed by the Ankara government".[14]

The leadership, nevertheless, of the Turkish Nationalist Army smelled the rat, and consequently a "War Council" was convoked in Ankara during that very March of 1922.[15] The decisions taken then and there had been very important. For "seven strongholds" were going to be established in the Black Sea area,[16] and several flotillas, composed of small, speedy vessels, were going to be organised.[17] Further, an Intelligence Service of the Turkish Nationalists was created in Istanbul, made up by officers of the Port Authority (and former officers of the Ottoman Imperial Navy, too). This Service kept an eye on the Greek war vessels and informed accordingly the Turkish naval authorities of the Black Sea.[18]

This very Turkish Nationalist "Intelligence Service" was the cause for quickening the naval bombardment operation.[19] The Greek General Navy Staff wanted to prevent the 'crystallisation' of a "Kemalist intelligence network" in the Ottoman capital that, in combination with the defence organisation of the whole of the Pontus coastline, already undertaken by the Ankara nationalist authorities, would avert for ever any Greek operation in the Black Sea.[20] So, as

---

[11] *Historikon Archeion Nautikou* (= The Greek Navy Archives [hereafter: IAN]), 1922, lieutenant commander Giannopoulos, commanding officer of the Greek Naval Base at Istanbul, to the Navy Ministry and the General Navy Staff, March 14, 1922 (Old Style).
[12] IAN, 1922, Giannopoulos to the General Navy Staff, March 15, 1922(Old Style).
[13] IAN, 1922, Report entitled "The Situation in the Euxine" (no date given, unsigned [most likely written by Giannopoulos]).
[14] *Ibidem*.
[15] IAN, 1922, Report entitled "Naval Organisation of the Enemy in the Euxine" (unsigned, no date given [most likely written by Giannopoulos in May 1922]).
[16] Actually existing in late May 1922: IAN, 1922, Giannopoulos to the General Navy Staff, June 1, 1922 (Old Style).
[17] IAN, 1922, Report entitled "Naval Organisation of the Enemy in the Euxine".
[18] IAN, 1922, Report entitled "Naval Organisation of the Enemy in Istanbul" (unsigned; written in May 1922 most likely by Giannopoulos).
[19] *Ibidem.*
[20] *Ibidem.*

aforementioned, the bombardment of Samsun took place on May 25, 1922 (Old Style).

The Greek naval expedition to Samsun aimed at destroying a port of vital importance for the supply of the Turkish Nationalist troops and, at the same time, preparing a major landing operation in the north of Asia Minor. Yet the results of the bombardment were minimal. Only a number of oil barrels, of American and "Bolshevik" (= Russian) provenance, burst into flames;[21] on the other hand, a depot full of munitions near the customs house had not been hit out.[22] And last but not least: the Government House (*Konak*) was allegedly destroyed, but the Greek naval authorities at Istanbul were rather doubtful about that.[23]

Whatever the facts of the matter, the Samsun port became by no means useless because of the bombardment. On the contrary, on May 26, i.e. merely a day following the cannonade, a ship from Russia carried munitions to Samsun.[24] What is more, the local garrison increased quickly to ca. 4,000 men,[25] whilst "feverish works" were undertaken in order that the "whole of the Euxine area be heavily fortified".[26] As a matter of fact, by the end of July, 1922, a "full division" of the Turkish Nationalist Army was stationed in Samsun,[27] while the Turkish coastline of the Euxine was so efficiently protected by Nationalist troops,[28] that a Greek landing operation was not feasible any longer.[29]

That is why the prospects of another Greek naval expedition in the Black Sea had been abandoned for ever; and the Samsun bombardment was regarded rather as a naval demonstration than as an actual naval campaign…

[21] IAN, 1922, Giannopoulos to the General Navy Staff, July 4, 1922 (Old Style).
[22] *Ibidem.*
[23] *Ibidem.*
[24] *Ibidem.*
[25] *Ibidem.*
[26] IAN, 1922, Giannopoulos to the General Navy Staff, July 23, 1922 (Old Style).
[27] *Ibidem.*
[28] *Ibidem.*
[29] IAN, 1922, Giannopoulos to the General Navy Staff, July 23, 1922 (Old Style): Report entitled "Enemy's Defence on the Pontus Euxinus".

REFERANCES

Chrēstos Samouēlidēs, *Hē periphereia Sampsountas* (= The Samsun district) in *Archeion Pontou* (= The Archive of the Pontus Euxinus [Athens]), vol. XXXVII (1982), p. 106.

C. Païzis-Paradellis, *Hellenic Warships, 1829-2001* (Athens: The Society for the Study of Greek History, 2002), pp. 48-49.

IAN, 1922, Giannopoulos to the General Navy Staff, March 15, 1922(Old Style).

IAN, 1922, Report entitled "The Situation in the Euxine" (no date given, unsigned [most likely written by Giannopoulos]).

IAN, 1922, Report entitled "Naval Organisation of the Enemy in the Euxine" (unsigned, no date given [most likely written by Giannopoulos in May 1922]).

IAN, 1922, Report entitled "Naval Organisation of the Enemy in the Euxine".

IAN, 1922, Report entitled "Naval Organisation of the Enemy in Istanbul" (unsigned; written in May 1922 most likely by Giannopoulos).

IAN, 1922, Giannopoulos to the General Navy Staff, July 4, 1922 (Old Style).

IAN, 1922, Giannopoulos to the General Navy Staff, July 23, 1922 (Old Style).

IAN, 1922, Giannopoulos to the General Navy Staff, July 23, 1922 (Old Style): Report entitled “Enemy’s Defence on the Pontus Euxinus”.

Historikon Archeion Nautikou (= The Greek Navy Archives [hereafter: IAN]), 1922, lieutenant commander Giannopoulos, commanding officer of the Greek Naval Base at Istanbul, to the Navy Ministry and the General Navy Staff, March 14, 1922 (Old Style).

Newspaper *Hē Kathēmerinē* (= The Daily [published in Athens]), May 28, 1922, p. 4.

Odysseus Lampsidēs, *Hoi Hellēnes tou Pontou hypo tous Tourkous, 1461-1922* (= The Greeks of the Euxine under the Turkish rule), Athens, 1957, p. 93.