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Bombardment (April 22nd. 1854) of the Imperial Mole of Odessa. . . .

Stock#: 47750
Map Maker: Day & Son
Date: 1855
Place: London
Color: Color
Condition: VG+
Size: 23 x 10 inches

Price: SOLD



Description:

Fine early view of a naval Battle off the coast of Odessa, lithographed and published in London in 1855.

On April 6, 1854, soon after the declaration of war by Britain and France on Russia, the British steam frigate *Furious*, under the command of Captain William Loring, sailed to Odessa and sent a boat into the port under a flag of truce to collect the British Consul there. When leaving the port the boat was fired upon by the Russians. The British naval commander Vice-Admiral James Dundas demanded an explanation from Lieutenant-General Dmitri Osten-Sacken, the military governor of Odessa, for this breach of the laws of war. His reply was considered unacceptable, so a squadron was quickly selected to mount a punitive expedition

The Russians claimed that the *Furious* was actually carrying out a covert reconnaissance of the port, as the *Retribution* had done some time earlier, entering the port of Sevastopol under the pretext of delivering dispatches, but also making a survey of the defenses, as had been admitted by the British press. Marx also pointed out the "ridiculousness" of the Allies requiring such justifications for launching an attack on an enemy naval base in a time of war.

The squadron consisted of eight steam paddle-wheel frigates; the French *Descartes*, *Mogador* and *Vauban*, and the British *Furious*, *Retribution*, *Sampson*, *Terrible* and *Tiger*, supported by the British screw frigate *Highflyer*, fourth-rate sailing frigate *Arethusa*, and steam ship *Sans Pareil*, and the French screw corvette *Caton*. There were also six ship's boats armed with 24-pounder rockets; two from *Britannia*, and one each from *Agamemnon*, *Trafalgar*, *Sans Pareil* and *Highflyer*.

April 22, 1854, the Anglo-French fleet arrived off Odessa . At 5 a.m. the first division (*Descartes*, *Sampson*, *Tiger* and *Vauban*) sailed in, and opened fire on the Russian positions from a range of about 2,000 yards, with little effect. *Vauban* was hit by a red-hot shot that started a fire aboard and was obliged



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to temporarily withdraw. She soon returned, bringing the screw corvette *Caton* with her.

The second division (*Furious, Terrible, Retribution and Mogador*) then joined the attack, while *Arethusa, Highflyer and Sans Pareil* remained further offshore. The attacking ships now anchored closer in, and it was not long before a shot from *Terrible* hit a magazine on the Imperial Mole, which exploded causing great damage. About 24 Russian ships in the military port were set on fire, and several British and French merchant ships detained there took advantage of the confusion to escape. Meanwhile, the rocket-boats set fire to the dockyard storehouses. Late in the action the *Arethusa*, under the command of Captain William Robert Mends, engaged batteries on the south side of the Quarantine Mole, until recalled. As numerous fires were now threatening the town, the attack was ended at 5.30 p.m., and the squadron withdrew.

As a result of this "affair of honour", Odessa was essentially neutralized as a naval base, and remained so for the rest of the war, allowing the Allies to operate in the Black Sea with impunity and to thus maintain their supply lines following the subsequent invasion of the Crimean Peninsula in September.

Detailed Condition: