

**TED ANKARA COLLEGE FOUNDATION HIGH SCHOOL**

**EXTENDED ESSAY**

**THE EFFECTS OF THE HAMIDIYE CRUISER LED BY CAPTAIN RAUF ORBAY  
ON THE FIRST BALKAN WAR IN THE ERA OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE**

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**ABSTRACT**

In this extended essay, the effects of the Hamidiye Cruiser, led by captain Rauf Orbay<sup>1</sup>, to the course of the First Balkan War were examined. The primary focus for this examination was the Raid Operation of the Balkan Wars, which has been the only succes for the Ottoman Empire. This operation was made by the Hamidiye Cruiser. The aim in doing this extended essay was to focus on the succes of the cruiser. The main question on the investigation process was to ask; How was the Raid Operation was succesful while the Ottoman Empire was on the verge of a defeat in the First Balkan War? Therefore, the actions of the Hamidiye Cruiser at the Raid Operation, The First Balkan War and the situation of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans were examined.

Most of the information regarding of the events during the Raid Operation were taken from the books focused on the Hamidiye Cruiser. These books were taken from the Library of the Sea Museum at Istanbul, property of the Turkish Navy. These sources point out every movement of the cruiser in detail, so the course of the operation in this essay was written according to these sources. Another source for the operation was the documentary, “Akdeniz’de Bir Destan: Gazi *Hamidiye* ve Akın Harekatı”. As written in the outline document of the project, this documentary was made using the Naval Archives, so it contains some quotes from the journals of Rauf Orbay and an anonymous soldier from the cruiser. However, there weren’t enough quotes to center the essay around them, so they could only be used while writing about the Raid Operation.

The sources used when giving information about the First Balkan War were recommended by my supervisor. These sources gave a point of view of all the countries involved in the war, as well as the forces behind. So, the reasons and resolutions of the war were told in a big, Europe-wide perspective.

Word Count: 327

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<sup>1</sup> Rauf Orbay: A politician and a soldier, who was the Naval Force Commander in the Ottoman Empire, and served as Prime Minister in 1922 and English Ambassador in the 40’s. He was the captain of the Hamidiye Cruiser.

## INTRODUCTION

The Ottoman Empire is considered being on a breakdown period from 1699 to the declaration of the Turkish Republic, 29th October 1923. During this period, the empire couldn't keep up with the Industrial Revolution<sup>2</sup>. The effect of this was the loss of the wars against European countries. They started to constantly lose their land with these wars and their borders constantly got smaller. As a result, the Ottoman Empire was started to be seen by the Europe as "a sick man".

Another factor for the Ottoman Empire to become less powerful over Europe and Balkans was the French Revolution<sup>3</sup>. The concept of independence of one nation spread all over Europe, mostly affecting countries under the monarchy of an empire. In the case of the Ottoman Empire, this was the loss of all the Balkan land under their hierarchy. Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and Bosnia-Herzegovina separated from the Ottoman Empire and declared their independence.

The political actions of the Balkan region were mostly controlled by Russia. Russia wanted to be involved in the world trade by opening its way to the Mediterranean Sea. Therefore, using the Pan-Slavism movement<sup>4</sup>, Russia took the countries in the Balkan region that separated from the Ottoman Empire as allies. This Balkan border was useful for Russia, as Germany completed its political and industrial unity in 1871 and this event changed the balance of Europe<sup>5</sup>. Looking at the situation of the Ottoman Empire before the First Balkan War, it can

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<sup>2</sup> Industrial Revolution: Started in the 18th century, this was an economical leap in which the production of goods changed with the advanced technology of the time, steam power. The leading countries of this revolution were England, Germany, United States and France (Source: <https://www.msu.edu/user/brownlow/indrev.htm>).

<sup>3</sup> French Revolution: A revolution in France in the year 1789. The cause for the revolution was the unfair treatment, especially in tax rates, to the peasants of France by the citizens considered noble, like the King and the Church. The Revolution, which was financially supported by the bourgeoisie class, was based on the ideas of freedom and human rights, brought up by French novelists like Voltaire (Source: [http://faculty.ucc.edu/egh-damerow/french\\_revolution.htm](http://faculty.ucc.edu/egh-damerow/french_revolution.htm)).

<sup>4</sup> Pan-Slavism: A movement considering all Slavic nations that all these nations should unite for their common goals (Source: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/440678/Pan-Slavism>).

<sup>5</sup> Anka'nın Yükselişi ve Düşüşü: Osmanlı Diplomasi Tarihi Üzerine bir Deneme; Oral SANDER; İmge Kitabevi; Eylül 2000  
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be seen that the empire was tried to be taken down by all the European countries, and thus was in a very fragile and hopeless position.

## **1. FIRST BALKAN WAR**

### **1.1) The Reasons behind the First Balkan War**

The conflict of interests between the Balkan Governments, especially between the Austrian Empire and Russia is the most important reason of the war. Bulgaria declared its independence and empowered itself in the Balkans as a result of Austria declaring having acquired Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908. Russia had been had involved in the Balkans consequentially, because of Serbia's policy which is against the acquisition. Russia controlled this region continuously. Russia didn't want a war between Bulgaria and Serbia under these circumstances and worked to fulfill both of the countries' ambitions.

The reason why Russians supported this alliance was the activities within the Ottoman Empire. The recent activities of The Union and Progress Party and The Young Turks on the Ottoman policy had the potential to re-develop the empire. Russia, who wanted to stop this activity and renewal within the Ottoman Empire, implemented the Balkan Block idea. With the attendance of Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece and Montenegro to this alliance, the Balkan Block declared the war against Ottoman with taking the advantage of the weakness of Ottoman who was in war against Italy in Tripolitania at 1912.

### **1.2) The Results of the First Balkan War**

Ottoman Empire was defeated almost all fronts in Balkan War. The impact of the defeat in Tripolitania in one hand, and the weakness of the army on another, and the Navy being neglected by Abdülhamit II. were the reasons for this defeat. The Ottoman Empire signed the Peace Treaty of London. The requirements of the treaty were as follows:

**“1. Albania, which was another Balkan government, got his independence**

**2. Crete Island, which is a subject of dispute since in the middle of 19. Century, was given to Greece**

### 3. The Thrace Border of Ottoman Government was determined as the Midye-Enez line, excluding Edirne.”<sup>6</sup>

The disagreement between Balkan Governments after that treaty - about the sharing of the conquered Ottoman land – led to the Second Balkan War. Ottomans seized this conflict between Balkan Governments as an opportunity and reconquered Edirne.

## 2. The Role and Services of the Hamidiye Cruiser During the First Balkan War

### 2.1) Ottoman Navy and the Hamidiye Cruiser

The Ottoman Government owned a navy with a total of 106 ships, consisting 30 armored and 76 wooden ships, being Europe’s second biggest and world’s third biggest navy was constituted by Sultan Abdul-Aziz<sup>7</sup>. Unfortunately, the navy was neglected, or sentenced to corrosion in Golden Horn<sup>8</sup> at the end of 1800s, in the period of Abdülhamit II, especially after the losing the Ottoman-Russian<sup>9</sup> war. The Ottoman Empire, who had made its current naval force out of service because of those reasons, was trying to obtain a new navy for using in the Ottoman-Greek war in 1897. The Ottoman Government ordered ships from abroad to establish a new naval force. Hamidiye Cruiser was one of the ships which came from England at September 1903 and joined Ottoman Navy.

The cruiser has a special place in the Ottoman maritime history especially with the Raid Operation<sup>10</sup>. The cruiser represented the Ottoman Empire, like its captain Rauf Bey in the international platforms which joined to Ottoman Navy with the name of *Abdul Hamid* in 1903 and got the name of *Hamidiye* with dethroning of Abdul Hamid II. in 1909. *Hamidiye* Cruiser

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<sup>6</sup> Anka'nın Yükselişi ve Düşüşü: Osmanlı Diplomasi Tarihi Üzerine bir Deneme; Oral SANDER; İmge Kitabevi; Eylül 2000 Ankara

<sup>7</sup> Akdeniz’de Bir Destan: Gazi *Hamidiye* ve Akın Harekatı (Belgesel); Etkin Prodüksiyon; Nisan 2008

<sup>8</sup> Akdeniz’de Bir Destan: Gazi *Hamidiye* ve Akın Harekatı (Belgesel); Etkin Prodüksiyon; Nisan 2008

<sup>9</sup> Ottoman-Russian War: The war between the Ottoman Empire and Russia in 1877-1878, caused by the pan-slavist movement of Russia. The result was the defeat of the Ottomans and the Ayastefanos Treaty (Source: Anka'nın Yükselişi ve Düşüşü: Osmanlı Diplomasi Tarihi Üzerine bir Deneme; Oral SANDER; İmge Kitabevi; Eylül 2000 Ankara).

<sup>10</sup> The Raid Operation: The operation of the Hamidiye Cruiser, led by the Naval Force through the First Balkan War. The aim was to slow down and distract the enemies, and help the Ottoman Navy and Army.

became famous with suppressing the rebellion of Samos<sup>11</sup> before Balkan War, contributing to the Ottoman-Italian<sup>12</sup> war and representing the Ottoman Empire in the coronation ceremony of King George V in England (22 June 1910).

Utilization of the navy and sea battles were also common as much as land battles during the First Balkan War. The main reasons which the Ottoman Government wanted to utilize the navy in the Balkan Wars were to handle the battles against Bulgarian and Serbian navy, protecting its sea borders, carrying soldiers, ammunition and food. However, the Ottoman naval force didn't have enough skill and power as specified. This weakness prevented the navy to fulfill the specified functions. This factor increased the need for ships like *Hamidiye*.

Greek naval force had an advantage over the Ottoman Empire: Averoff Battleship. None of the Ottoman's ship could take against Averoff. ***“Averoff was of great value in favour of the Greek according to the comparison between Ottoman and Greek naval forces in speed, firepower of the cannons, velocity and high ammunition sufficiency. It had been observed that none of the Greek battleships were able to complete the missions without Averoff in Imroz battle.”***<sup>13</sup> That's why a “distractor” was needed to divert the naval force of the enemy countries and reveal the Ottoman navy in the battlefield. *Hamidiye* Cruiser was responsible for this mission. Under these circumstances, the mission of *Hamidiye* can be summarized as follows: Distracting Averoff towards to the Mediterranean and facilitate the duties of Ottoman Navy by making Averoff off the straits.

*Hamidiye* struggled in Black Sea during the First World War. The cruiser had no activity during the Turkish War of Independence but joined the Turkish Republic's Navy after proclamation of the republic (29 October 1923). Nevertheless the cruiser didn't battle by Turkey didn't get involved in any war; instead it showed up in the ceremonies and was used as

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<sup>11</sup>Rebellion in Samos: The rebellion caused by the opposition leader Sophilis to the governance of the island in 1908. (Source: Türk Deniz Harp Tarihinde İz Bırakan Gemiler, Olaylar ve Şahıslar: Gazi Hamidiye ve Akın Harekatı; Öğ. Bnb. Ersan Baş, Dz. Yzb. Arif Emre Kara, Öğ. Kd. Ütğm Ahmet Küçükoglu; Deniz Basımevi; Şubat 2009 İstanbul)

<sup>12</sup>The Ottoman-Italian War: The War between the Ottoman Empire and Italy caused by Italy conquering Tripolitania. The war ended by signing the Ouchy Treaty in 1912 (Source: Anka'nın Yükselişi ve Düşüşü: Osmanlı Diplomasi Tarihi Üzerine bir Deneme; Oral SANDER; İmge Kitabevi; Eylül 2000 Ankara).

<sup>13</sup> Türk Deniz Harp Tarihinde İz Bırakan Gemiler, Olaylar ve Şahıslar: Gazi Hamidiye ve Akın Harekatı; Öğ. Bnb. Ersan Baş, Dz. Yzb. Arif Emre Kara, Öğ. Kd. Ütğm Ahmet Küçükoglu; Deniz Basımevi; Şubat 2009 İstanbul

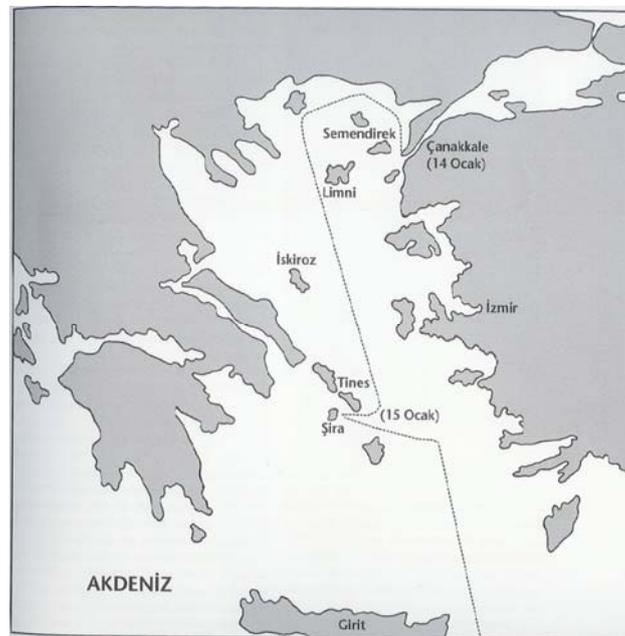
a training ship. The cruiser was converted to a museum in Gölcük at 1957 but was shut down because of the expense issues as an excuse and sold and dismantled in 1960.

## 2.2) Services of the Hamidiye Cruiser During the First Balkan War

Hamidiye Cruiser stood out with the Raid Operation and the battles it made within the scope of the operation. The cruiser played a key role within the war and provided ease of movement to Ottoman naval force by diverting the enemies' naval force in the before mentioned operation.

### 2.2.1 The Raid Operation

#### a) Bombardment of the Şıra Island (13 Ocak 1913)



Picture 1: Route of Hamidiye Cruiser to the Şıra Island

Hamidiye Cruiser started the operation at January 14th. *“The order required only one ship to go for providing the ease of operation. It was approved by Supreme Military Command Deputy and the Government too”<sup>14</sup>*. Mecidiye Cruiser, with Yarhisar and Basra destroyers that joined Hamidiye, located the Greek ships, especially the existence and position of Averoff, by a reconnaissance operation, and Hamidiye set out based on the information

<sup>14</sup> *Hamidiye Mecidiye ve Kruvazörler*; Ahmet Gülerüz; Denizler Kitabevi; Haziran 2009

claimed. *Hamidiye*, that aimed to arrive to the Aegean Sea quickly and invisibly, went out of the shadows of Gallipoli Peninsula<sup>15</sup>.

*Hamidiye* arrived at the Şıra Island at 15 January. *Hamidiye* battled with the Greek battleship *Macedonia* and did some demolition to the Şıra Island during this battle. **“The black smoke rising from the ship gave the *Hamidiye* Commander the impression that the target was destroyed.”**<sup>16</sup> The results of this victory places in the memoirs of Rauf Orbay as follows:

**“Şıra bombardment surprised our enemy. They flurried that I was going to bomb Pire after that. We threw them off the scent and continued our way from Aegean to south through the big and small Greek islands, by taking advantage of their hesitation and furriness...”**<sup>17</sup>

Admiral of the Greek fleet, Admiral Paulos Kountouriotis commanded Averoff to stay in the Bosphorus, percieving that *Hamidiye* wanted Averoff to fall back. He also sent Thyella, Aetos, Lonchi and Aspis destroyers to Crete region. Greeks wanted to take precautions and go after *Hamidiye*. However, none of the four destroyers were powerfull than *Hamidiye*<sup>18</sup>.

Bombing of Şıra led Greek Forces to notice *Hamidiye* and take precautions. This means that the ship was getting attention of Greek forces and also hesitating them and leading them to take actions.

The coal problem forced *Hamidiye* to go to Beirut despite the cruiser planned to go to the Adriatic for the disburden of Ottoman Army, so the cruiser went to the red sea for coal before going to Malta.

### **b) Going to Malta (6 Şubat 1913)**

*Hamidiye*, which set out towards Albania from Port-Said altered the course to Malta because of coal shortage. *Hamidiye* arrived to Malta on February 14 and anchored in the port of

<sup>15</sup> Akdeniz’de Bir Destan: Gazi *Hamidiye* ve Akın Harekatı; Etkin Prodüksiyon; Nisan 2008

<sup>16</sup> *Hamidiye* Mecidiye ve Kruvazörler; Ahmet Gülerüz; Denizler Kitabevi; Haziran 2009

<sup>17</sup> Akdeniz’de Bir Destan: Gazi *Hamidiye* ve Akın Harekatı; Etkin Prodüksiyon; Nisan 2008

<sup>18</sup> Türk Deniz Harp Tarihinde İz Bırakan Gemiler, Olaylar ve Şahıslar: Gazi *Hamidiye* ve Akın Harekatı; Öğ. Bnb. Ersan Baş, Dz. Yzb. Arif Emre Kara, Öğ. Kd. Ütğm Ahmet Küçükoğlu; Deniz Basımevi; Şubat 2009 İstanbul

La Valletta, where the cruiser stayed for three days. During this event, there was a denunciation heard by the Fleet Admiral that the Greek destroyers were waiting *Hamidiye* in front of the Malta Island.

*Hamidiye's* existence in Adriatic put the Greek Navy in a difficult position, because his gunboats which have been used for the activities on the sea were not powerful enough against *Hamidiye*. Also, Greeks put the destroyers instead of gunboats because they had to protect the Serbian shipments too.

### c) Going to East Mediterranean (17 Şubat 1913)

*Hamidiye* set out from Malta on February 17 and arrived to Gaza on February 22. The information which Greek destroyers waiting in Malta turned out to be untrue. Ottoman Navy set out from Çanakkale at the same time but *Hamidiye* wasn't informed. Supreme Military Command Deputy wanted *Hamidiye* had to be informed from time to time about the operations, but Deputy Fleet Admiral thought he was not liable to respond to Rauf Bey about this. So, Supreme Military Command Deputy put himself as a direct communication with *Hamidiye*. Supreme Military Command Deputy repeated his offer to *Hamidiye* with the explanation that the Navy was doing an operation by setting out from the strait and nothing else, as the cruiser may do the operations by joining to the navy or do the operations by herself. Deputy's preference was that *Hamidiye* should operate on Adriatic area.

The communication problem between *Hamidiye* and management can also be seen at this point. Insufficient information and no information in specific times made Rauf Bey's operation plans difficult. The Captain had to do the plans without knowing the movement of the remaining naval force and direction of the war.

The liaison of *Hamidiye in Gaza* was Infantryman Major Omar Fevzi who had assigned for the cruiser. Omar Fevzi was responsible for the supplies of *Hamidiye*. *Hamidiye* went to Haifa for coal, Beirut and Kekova for resting the crew and maintenance according to his suggestions. *Hamidiye* went to Antalya in order to communicate with Istanbul on February 27. *Hamidiye* was welcomed with love by the public here.

The only way to send ammunition and food to the Garp Army at Albania under the siege of Greece was using *Hamidiye*. The reason was that *Hamidiye* was the only Turkish ship around Mediterranean and more powerful than the other ships. So the supplies were sent to

Avrat Island and the order was forwarded to *Hamidiye* to go to Avrat Island from Antalya. *Hamidiye* set out from Antalya and arrived to Avrat Island on March 2. It took the 1000 gold, 50 tons of ammunition and 200 tons of coal which would be sent.

*Hamidiye*, did the transportation at Beirut which she couldn't at Malta and went to Iskenderun for ammunition set out to Adriatic in March 8. ***“Supreme Military Command Deputy wanted to draw the captain's attention to the place of the Greek trade ships, and said that the Greek navigated through Italy, Greece and Suez with 600 ships during their conversations. If Hamidiye placed itself near the Suez Canal, it could burn those ships.”***<sup>19</sup>

All the while, the Greek fleet, who had started to patrol mission, showed off their strength and battled with the Ottoman forces. While the squadron was buying coal from Korfu Island for the journey to Syria, the ship named *Lonchi* had been charged to find out the Greek merchant ships and send them back to Thessaloniki. This orderly retreat shows that Greeks behaved worried and cautious about *Hamidiye*, so they couldn't fulfill their requirements.

#### **d) Going to the Adriatic and Battle at San Giovanni di Medua**

*Hamidiye* started the travel to Adriatic planned doing a show off to Greeks first and informed the Supreme Military Command Deputy. But he did not approve this for the reason of threatening of the operation and *Hamidiye* went to Adriatic unseen from Greeks.

By the way, *Hamidiye* met a ship named *Leros*. The ship was a Greek merchant ship which could not be found by *Lonchi* and didn't know that she had to go to Preveze. Rauf Bey took the crew in *Leros* to his ship and sunk the ship. He learned that the fleet managed by *Psara* got a patrol mission around Korfu Island, Greek merchant ships carried ammunition and soldier to San Giovanni di Medua Island for Serbians, and the downfall of Yanya Castle fortress. *Hamidiye* would attack to San Giovanni di Medua after unloading the ship at the River of Semeni bank based on these information. Greek ship *Lonchi* detected *Hamidiye* but didn't inform Greeks, and this event led Rauf Bey and his crew to this operation.

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<sup>19</sup> Türk Deniz Harp Tarihinde İz Bırakan Gemiler, Olaylar ve Şahıslar: Gazi *Hamidiye* ve Akın Harekatı; Öğ. Bnb. Ersan Baş, Dz. Yzb. Arif Emre Kara, Öğ. Kd. Ütğm Ahmet Küçükoglu; Deniz Basımevi; Şubat 2009 İstanbul

**“Hamidiye, while going to San Giovanni di Medua according to the decision of its captain, saw the army tents around Durrës lighthouse tower at 10:40. The cruiser sent 23 21 inch missiles. Many Serbian soldiers were killed.”<sup>20</sup>** San Giovanni di Medua front alerted after getting this information. They were unprepared and this was a great advantage for *Hamidiye*. There were seven ships named *Harisonalis Şifneos*, *Trifilya*, *Elpis*, *Zanof Sifneos*, *Marika*, *Zeva* and *N. Verveniotis* on the bank.



Picture 2: Illustration of the battle in San Giovanni di Medua

*Hamidiye* ordered to the other ships' crew to surrender and leave their ships according to international marine laws. However, it started firing due to a missile that came from the land. Six of the ships sunk and an explosion in one of the ships caused a great loss both the crew and soldiers.

Seriously damaged *Hamidiye* went back to Istanbul and completed the operation after letting their prisoners go and taking care of the coal and maintenance problems of the ship.

<sup>20</sup> Türk Deniz Harp Tarihinde İz Bırakan Gemiler, Olaylar ve Şahıslar: Gazi *Hamidiye* ve Akın Harekatı; Öğ. Bnb. Ersan Baş, Dz. Yzb. Arif Emre Kara, Öğ. Kd. Ütğm Ahmet Küçükoglu; Deniz Basımevi; Şubat 2009 İstanbul

## CONCLUSION

*Hamidiye* cruiser and her Akın Operation was the only case that went fine and keep the Turk's trumps in hand during Balkan War which was always been a moral element to public. The appreciation it met by the people not only within the boundaries of the Empire but also within other countries is an important indicator. In fact, the contributions on behalf of Ottoman in the course of the war has the character retarding the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The Greek patrols around Çanakkale might have easily attacked to Straits and capture Istanbul if *Hamidiye* did not exist. With the distractions of *Hamidiye* the Greek Navy was unable to find any opportunity to make a serious assault. Greek Navy was forced to change ship and tactics constantly due to *Hamidiye*. Without San Giovanni di Medua assault, Serbian Army would have taken the required support through Albania and the situation could have dramatically changed. Even though Averoff's attention has not been distracted, most of the Greek Naval Forces on Mediterranean were waiting somewhere to take precautions against *Hamidiye*.

The operations run by *Hamidiye* was a success story despite all the plans and precautions of the Greeks, and the time wasted in struggle with the problems such as lack of coal and maintenance. Running the operation has need very careful planning and is a tactical success too while hiding from the ships during the operations. This led to the ship to move more effectively.

Rauf Orbay proved his managerial and tactical skills with this operation. He assumed the title "Hamidiye Hero" primarily for these reasons. The personal abilities like considering various scenarios, planning according to the needs and priorities, treating in accordance with diplomatic relations even during war, and making tactical and risky decisions confidently in spite of rare communication with Ottoman Management showed his leadership.

The "piracy acts" of *Hamidiye* wasn't positive for just the Ottomans. While watching the war, Europe was aware of the actions of the cruiser. So, *Hamidiye* trespassed its own borders and Rauf Orbay "**wrote his and his ship's name in golden letters to the world maritime history as the captain of the *Hamidiye* Cruiser in the First Balkan War.**"<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Akdeniz'de Bir Destan: Gazi *Hamidiye* ve Akın Harekatı (Belgesel); Etkin Prodüksiyon; Nisan 2008

The operation that *Hamidiye* made despite the lack of time, communications and sources made an example to the whole Europe. ***“None of the ships that replicated Hamidiye in the First and Second World War at open sea with more supplies could succeed better than Hamidiye.”***<sup>22</sup>

This success was awarded with a special Hamidiye medal made by the government.



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Picture 3: Hamidiye Medals

If the operation mentioned in this essay is examined and evaluated, it can be said that *Hamidiye* cruiser had an active role in the First Balkan War as a distraction for the enemy forces and as a moral factor for the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>22</sup> Türk Deniz Harp Tarihinde İz Bırakan Gemiler, Olaylar ve Şahıslar: Gazi *Hamidiye* ve Akın Harekatı; Ög. Bnb. Ersan Baş, Dz. Yzb. Arif Emre Kara, Ög. Kd. Ütğm Ahmet Küçükoglu; Deniz Basımevi; Şubat 2009 İstanbul

<sup>23</sup> Source for the photograph: Osmanlı Madalyaları ve Nişanları; Metin Erüreten; DMC Yayınevi 2001

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