

SIEGE AND FALL OF CONSTANTINOPLE

The Mehmed Turks II were at the entrance of Constantinople, the symbol city of Byzantium and its fall meant the triumph of Islam over the most persistent and firm defender of Christendom for about 800 years. The fall of Constantinople, after which Mehmed would be called “the Conqueror”, was possible due to the sultan strategic perception. He understood that without the control of the maritime access to the city, little could be done by his powerful troops. Thus, land and navy forces were able to subdue a courageously defended place which, for centuries, had resisted innumerable sieges and blocks.

By Rubén A. Barreiro

THE SITUATION IN THE MID 15TH CENTURY

The decay of Byzantine was more than evident: in the territorial aspect, it only had the city of Constantinople and its adjacent territories of little extension which lie on the coast of the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara; to the interior, it had domain over a few kilometres. In the Peloponnese, in the south of Greece, it kept the Despotate of the Morea, which, in theory, was under Byzantine control but physically separated by a vast territory under the domain of the Ottoman Turks. Some islands and small enclaves were still under the domain of the Empire, some in distant places, such as the Peninsula of Crimea in the Black Sea.

For the Byzantine, the 14th century was a period of political failure¹; this is why at the end of this century... Constantinople... was no more than a melancholic and decaying city, whose population had significantly declined from half a million in the 12th century to no more than fifty thousand.

On May 29, 2013, it was the 560th anniversary of the Fall of Constantinople in the hands of the Ottoman Empire. with this, doors were open to the centre of Europe and the consequences of this are still seen.

The author presents the war fact that led to this process and, at the same time, a broad scope for the analysis of said consequences, especially, in the aspects regarding geopolitics, strategy, sociology and culture

In light of this, the huge flood of Ottoman Turks took possession of great part of Anatolia (Asia Minor) and the Balkanic territories in the north, west and south of Constantinople. The city was surrounded.

In 1451, Sultan Murad II died in Edirne (Adrianapole) and his son Mehmed II, 19, succeeded him². Some time before, in 1449, the Byzantine emperor John VIII had died and Constantine XI Palaiologos was his

successor. Both of them were the protagonists of the final battle.

TO WAR

For Mehmed, the first and most important [of his obligations] was the conquest of Constantinople³. The desire of the sultan is not surprising: during the long fight between the Byzantine and the Muslim, the city had been sieged several times, as from 676, by Arabs and Ottoman. All of these attempts failed⁴.

1. Runciman, Steven; *La caída de Constantinopla*; Espasa-Calpe, Madrid; 1973; p. 12.

2. Seven years before, Murad had abdicated in favor of his 12- year son; however, and due to the discontent of ministries and the military with the new King, he had to take the throne again two years later although he had taken the control of the army before.

3. Runciman, Steve; op. cit., p. 47. During the winter 1452/53, the vizier Chalil visited Mehmed and gave him, as it was a tradition, some gold coins. The sultan rejected the present saying: "I want one thing only, give me Constantinople".

4. The Ottoman called the Balkan "Rume-eli" or Rumelia, that is, "land of the Romans". Both Mehmed II and his closest predecessors asked to be called Sultan-i-Rum, whose meaning could be "sovereign of the Romans" and have a connotation related to those who subjugated with the strength of guns. Muslims from the East often referred to the Ottoman as rumiyun, "Romans" (Nicolle, David et al., *The Fall of Constantinople. The Ottoman Conquest of Byzantium*, Osprey; Oxford; 2007; p. 174.)





Mehmet II

To the end of January, 1453, Mehmed gathered his ministers and persuaded them to authorize the war in order to conquer the city:

...He declared that the Turkish Empire would never be safe until they could take possession of Constantinople. The Byzantine could be weak, but despite having showed how well they could manage the enemies of the Turks and, due to their weakness, they could put the city in the hands of allies that would not be so inefficient. Constantinople was unassailable. The first sieges failed due to external reasons⁵.

Mehmed II, “who was an outstanding strategist”, carefully planned his future assault against Constantinople. He warned that the siege of the



Source: Author

city would only be successful if it included a naval component in their forces⁶. The sultan foresaw that his navy would have the main goal of preventing aid from getting to the people sieged and avoiding a fight against the Venetian war galleys that were prowling in the area⁷.

At the beginning of the year 1451, Mehmed had decided to build a fortress on the European coast of the Bosphorus. This fortress, in

coordination with the one existing on the coast of Anatolia (Anadolu Hisari)⁸, would serve two purposes: ensuring a free path from one side of the strait to the other and controlling the ships coming from Venetian and Genoese colonies of the Black Sea. Moreover, during the siege of the city, the fortress would be an impassable bastion so that aid could come from the east and the fleet would have to serve as those in the western accesses.

5. Runciman, Steve; op. cit.: p. 57.

6. Philippides, Marios y Hanak, Walter A.; *The Siege and the Fall of Constantinople in 1453. Historiography, Topography, and Military Studies*; Ashgate, Farham; 2011; p. 429.

7. As we will see, the crew of Turk vessels (most of which were Greek) was of lower quality than the potential enemies. This situation was understood by Mehmed and he knew they had to avoid those encounters.

8. In this area, the Bosphorus is around 800 meters wide.

9. The inhabitants of the city were alarmed with this construction. Emperor Constantine tried to

persuade Mehmed not to continue with it, but the sultan replied without leaving any doubt: He would do what he wanted to do *in a region that was under his control and concluded: I will skin anyone who dares to talk about this issue in the future.* The Byzantine weakness could be seen: in the construction, they used columns from a Christian temple and killed the inhabitants who tried to prevent that. Only Italians (Genoese, Venetian) could successfully be involved but they were not interested in the Levante issues and their indifference encouraged Sultan's imperialist plans (Philippides, Marios; op. cit.: pp. 403/404.)

10. Runciman, Steve; op. cit.: p. 15.

To the end of August, 1452 and after four months and half work, the fortress of Rumeli Hisar (“Rumelian castle”) was built (the Greeks called it *Laemocopia*, or *murderer’s castle* or, more precisely, *executioner’s castle*⁹). Any vessel passing in front of it on the Bosphorus had to stop to be inspected and had to pay a contribution; two Venetian vessels eluded the rule, but a third vessel got sunk due to the shots of three huge fortress cannons and its captain was impaled and left by the wayside.

Meanwhile, Emperor Constantine was still looking for support from the West, as his predecessor did. The question was, essentially, to try to unite both Christian churches: Roman and Orthodox. This, in other words, meant for Byzantium to abide by the Roman Church. But in Constantinople, *only politicians and intellectual men defended the union*¹⁰. For John VIII, Constantine’s older brother, only the western aid would save the Empire... *Only the western Church could make the West agree on the release of the East*¹².

However, the events showed that the West was not interested in saving Byzantium. The different kings *entertained themselves at home*¹³. Venetian, Geonese and Ragusans, who had different interests in the region, took care of the issue, but thought mainly about the defense of those interests frequently wondering whether they would be favoured

The Turk Army was trained in Thrace, in the west of Constantinople. Different authors disagree on the number of troops of this army. According to Runciman, the most reliable figure is 80,000 regular force men, apart from 20,000 bashi-bazouks and some thousands of assistants. One of the best known eyewitnesses, the Venetian surgeon Niccolo Barbaro says that Mahomet went to Constantinople with 160,000 men. Fuller says there were 50,000 men.

with the Turks by dominating Constantinople.

OTTOMAN FORCES

In light of this situation, Mehmed started a campaign against the city of Constantinople. He had gathered a powerful fleet with almost 130 vessels of all types as he knew that having domain over the sea would contribute to victory.

The Turk army was preparing in Thrace, in western Constantinople. There are very different figures regarding its number of troops: According to Runciman, the most reliable number is 80,000 regular force men, plus 20,000 *bashi-bazouk* and several thousands of assistants. One of the best known eyewitnesses in the area, Venetian surgeon, Nicolò Barbaro, says that Mehmed went to

Constantinople with 160,000 men¹⁴. Fuller speaks of 50,000¹⁵.

It was made up of three types of troops: the Janissary (“new troops or “new soldiers”), the *bashi-bazouk* and the men recruited from different provinces. The first of them, considered by Fuller as *the most fantastic fighters of the 15th century*, were between 12,000 and 15,000, a relatively small number and this may be why they did not have a decisive influence on the war¹⁶. In general, they were dismounted archers, who were highly disciplined, militarily trained since they were very young (they were recruited among teenagers and even kids), a standing force for the direct service of the sultan and those who were Christians were turned to Islam¹⁷.

The *bashi-bazouk* (which means “disorganized” or “airhead”) were

11. On December 12, 1452, in Constantinople, there was the union of the Catholic and Orthodox churches as a consequence of what was agreed in the Ferrara-Florence Council. Although the court and the nobles were part of the event, it was repudiated by the anti-union clergy and great part of the people. Lucas Notaras, last great Byzantine minister, was said to have a strong position: “We prefer the turban of the sultan to the cardinal’s hat”. Some time later, he was decapitated as ordered by Mehmed, together with his two sons.

12. Runciman, Steve; *op. cit.*; pp. 20/21.

13. Frederick III from Habsburg prepared his Coronation; Charles VII from France was recovering after the Hundred Years’ War, as the King of England did. The monarchs from Castile were busy with their own war against the unloyal. Only Alfonso V of Aragon seemed to be interested but he demanded an excessive price, thus impossible, for the throne of Constantinople. (Runciman, Steve; *op. cit.*; p. 49.)

14. *Giornale dell’Assedio di Costantinopoli, 1453*. Translated into English by John Melville-Jones *Diary of the Siege of Constantinople 1453*. New York: Exposition Press, 1969, partially available on the website <http://www.deremilitari.org/resources/sources/constantinople3.htm>. Runciman (62) says that this diary, without any extra information, presents the most probable description of the siege. The Turk return of this description is the one by Hermodoros Michael Kritovoulos, who was at the service of Mehmed and spent his last days in Constantinople (which was already Istanbul), as a monk (for the paragraphs related to the siege, see <http://www.deremilitari.org/resources/sources/constantinople4.htm>).

15. Fuller, John F.C.; *Batallas decisivas del mundo occidental y su influencia en la historia*; Luis de Caralt Ed.; Barcelona, 1961; tomo I; p. 579. Runciman remembers that the Greek estimated that the Turk army amounted to three to four hundred thousand men and that the most moderate among the Venetian made them amount to five hundred thousand.

16. Oman, Charles; *A History of the Art of War in the Middle Ages*; Burt Franklin; New York; 1925; vol. I; p. 342.

17. Delbruck, Hans; *History of the Art of War, Volume III, Medieval Warfare*; University of Nebraska Press; Westport; 1990; p. 474/475.

18. Fuller, John F. C.; *op. cit.*; p. 580.

irregular soldiers, *an undisciplined mob of Turks poorly armed and renegade Christians*¹⁸. Apparently, their pay was only the chance to loot conquered cities (according to Fuller, the Turk attack started with the call “loot!”¹⁹).

However, the most important force of the Turks was artillery, in which they trusted to get victory “spending powder and saving blood”. Mehmed had 70 cannons and bombards, although the main instrument was the *Basilica*²⁰, a huge iron bombard that shoot 800- pound ammunitions. Its inventor and constructor, Orban, from Hungary, had first offered his services to Constantine but he could not afford the price Orban requested and considered it excessive, especially because he did not have the elements to build it. It took forty two days, sixty oxes and more than two hundred men to take it from Adrianapole, an effort that did not have the expected result as after some shots, it burst and could not be used again²¹.

THE DEFENSE OF CONSTANTINOPLE

The first and most important defense of the city was, on the one hand, the characteristics of the terrain on which it was erected; on the other hand, the great chain of walls that protected



Basilica. 8 meters long. Diameter: 75cm. Weight of cannon: 18 tons. Weight of projectile: 544kg. Reaches 2 km.

it, both on the land and the marine access (see details).

This could make up, only in part as it is natural, for the small number of defenders. Under the order of the emperor, they amounted to only 5,000 men and 2,000 foreigners with few cannons and a small fleet²².

Although most of the Christian sovereigns, as explained, chose to be silent upon the Bizantine request, there were foreigners who were actively involved in the defense of the city²³.

First, Venetians, whose colony in the city offered *unconditional support... to honor God and all Christianity*²⁴ and nine Venetian

merchant vessels that were in the port were turned into warships. Then, the Genoese, led by Giovanni Giustiniani Longo²⁵, were accompanied by seven hundred soldiers from Genoa, Chios and Rhodes. There were Catalans led by Peré Julia (consul) and some men from other nations. Others, instead, ran away: on February 27, about seven hundred Italians left the city in seven vessels.

THE SIEGE

The movement of troops and vessels of the Ottomans increased since January, 1453. To the end of March, Mehmed left Edirne and set his camp in Maltepe on April 2 (on Sunday 1, the distressed inhabitants of the city had celebrated Easter), while Constantine, without doubts of the coming attack, ordered to lay down the chain that blocked the entrance to Golden Horn, destroy the bridges that went through the ditches and close the doors of the city.

The plan of the Ottomans had some military considerations as guidelines:

1. Act quickly to get a decisive victory before there is a reaction from the West.
2. Spend gunpowder and money and save blood.
3. Use the huge cannons to destroy the walls of the city and the fleet to prevent the arrival of food and reinforcement.



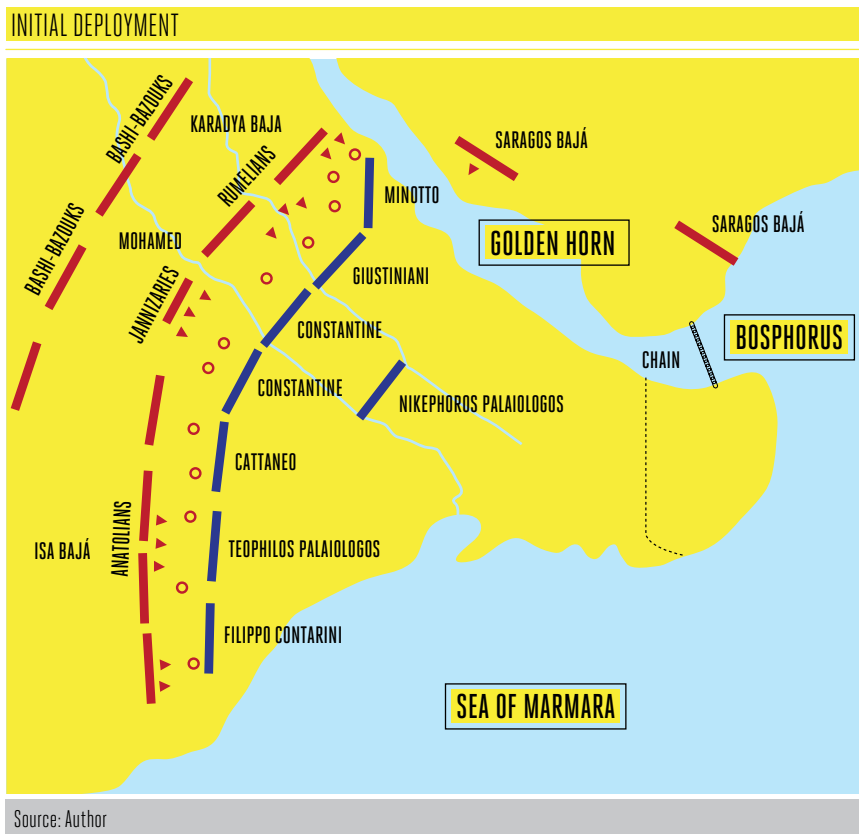
4. Take the city with as few material destructions and loss of inhabitants' lives as possible as these people would be the future subjects of the sultan.

Instead, the main target of Constantine was to cope with the siege as long as possible to give Hungary some time to prepare the land or sea intervention from Italy²⁶.

From April 4 to 6, 1453, the siege was started with the arrival and deployment of Ottomans in front of the city walls. Mehmed ordered half of his troops to move 1,5 km away from the outer walls and the next day a great part of the Ottomans were less than four hundred meters away from the defense. Byzantine troops had already been deployed in this defense.

To the right, the Turks deployed the Anatolians commanded by Muhmad Pasha and Isa Pasha; in the middle, the sultan with the Janissary and to the left, the Rumelian contingents commanded by Karabya Pasha. A thousand soldiers were sent to the opposite side of the Golden Horn from which a detachment was set to observe Galata.

Meanwhile, the Byzantine occupied the walls in the following order, from right- Golden Horn- to left- Sea of Marmara-: from the sea to Kerkpoporta, the Venetians led by Girolamo Minotto (they particularly defended the empire palace,



Source: Author

Blachernes); emperor Constantine and his Byzantine troops as well as the Giustiniani Genoese (to the right of Constantine) were in the area considered to be the most exposed, the one on both sides of Lycus river between the gates of Chasirios and Saint Romanos; from the gate of Saint Romanos to Reghium, there were

the Genoese troops led by Mauricio Cattaneo; then, Teophilos Palaiologos defended from the Reghium door to Pegac; from the latter to the Golden Gate, there were the Venetians led by Filippo Contarini. To the back of the sector defended by the emperor and Giustiniani, there was the reserve led by Nikephoros Palaiologos. On the

19. The Muslim tradition set some principles with relation to the conquered cities. If the city gave in, there would be no looting, but only compensation and the worship places would be respected. With some differences, this was applied to the surrender after an unsustainable defense. But if it was necessary to assault the city in order to conquer it, there would be looting for three days and the worship places would belong to the leaders of the winners who could do what he wanted with them (Runciman, Steve; op. cit.; p. 105).
20. During this time, cannons used to be given a name. For example, in the castle of Edimburgh, Scotland, one of them, *Mons Meg*, is still kept.
21. There are different versions about the reason for stopping the combat of the *Basilica*. While some say the event was due to a shot by Giustiniani's artillery, others think that it was an accident or an improper management of the impressive bombing by servants, who did not cool the cannon of the weapon. Whatever it was, the device was kept and is now shown at a Museum in Istanbul.
22. The census that Constantine ordered at the end of March, 1453, gave a small result as regards men

who were apt for combat: 4.983 Greeks and less than 2.000 foreigners. The emperor, *afraid of the figures, ordered not to disclose them* (Runciman, Steve; op. cit.; p. 64.) The population of the city amounted to 40,000/50,000 people. The number of combatants was, according to authors, between 9,000 and 6,000/7,000 (Setton, Kenneth M.; *The Papacy and the Levant (1204-1571) The Fifteenth Century*; The American Philosophical Society; Filadelfia; 1978; p. 116).

23. The reasons for this intervention were different: ideas, defense of religious principles, fear of losing privilege and getting benefits, as among the most courageous defenders, there were mercenaries as it used to happen in those years.
24. Runciman, Steve; op. cit.; p. 62.
25. Giustiniani was an expert in the defense of cities surrounded by walls; therefore, he was immediately requested to take control of the city next to land walls (Runciman, Steve; op. cit.; p. 63).
26. Said reinforcement never arrived: three Genoese vessels sent by the Pope were stopped by a storm in Chios. On May 11, Venetians sent some vessels that could not arrive in time. Hungarians planned a sea attack on the Ottoman flank, which did not take place.

walls that faced both sea- sides, there were troops of different origin.

Since April 6, the city was bombarded during eighteen days although it is necessary to note that cannons were recharged slowly so there were no more than seven or eight shots per day and cannon²⁷. The first day, it seemed that victory was close for the Turks: one part of the wall was seriously damaged in the area where the channel that provided the city with water was on the side next to the Golden Horn; the next day, damages were increased but during the night, defenders were able to fill the gap.

Meanwhile, the efforts made by the Turks to force the way that was closed with the chain laid in the entrance of Golden Horn were unsuccessful. But artillery was used against the walls and these collapsed in some places. On April 18, the first of the main attacks took place in the area where Lycos entered the city. There, Mehmed attacked with several soldiers among which the Janissary Guard stood out. The fight was terrible and the people from the city were also involved. After four hours of fight, the Turks withdrew.

NAVY ACTIONS IN THE GOLDEN HORN

Since April 9, nine Venetian galleys were defending the entrance to the Golden Horn and the port that was there. The next day, great part of the Turk fleet arrived and anchored in the Bosphorus, 8 kilometres away from the city.

On April 20, 1453, the only naval battle related to the siege took place. As it was explained before, Mehmed,



Mehmed transported vessels by land (among the masts, the city). (Fausto Zonaro 1854- 1929).

who knew that the great number of his fleet did not make up for the low quality of the crew, had ordered not to start a combat. However, on the date indicated, four vessels approached the sieged city. They carried supplies, three of them were Genoese sent by the Pope and the fourth was a freighter led by an Italian that tried to enter the Golden Horn. Mehmed ordered to capture or sink the convoy and sent a great number of vessels. But, the western crafts were favoured by courage, climate conditions and the sea. The Turk fleet reached them and a fierce combat started and during this combat the Christian vessels seemed to be defeated, partly due to the strong tides that pushed them against the walls. But the wind, which was still until that moment, started

to blow favourably and they were able to reach the entrance to the Golden Horn, where after opening the chain, three Venetian vessels came to help and escorted them until they reached a safe port. In this way, Mehmed's fears turned real: Not only did the Christian vessels break the blocking but they also had few casualties. This may be due to the fact that European vessels were much higher and better protected than the Turk vessels and, especially, due to the lack of ability of the Ottoman crew²⁸.

It was clear for both sides that getting domain over the Golden Horn was essential. Mehmed, then, tried an audacious solution: avoid the chain that blocked the entrance to the estuary transporting ships by land from the Bosphorus. A road was built incredibly quickly by thousands of workers while the Turk artillery distracted defenders. The Turk vessels started to move pulled by oxes with the sails open. The Bizantine, on the other shore, saw that strange group starting to go down the slope that would lead them to the Golden Horn. Their desperate attempts to stop

27. Batteries were placed according to the walls points that were considered to be the weakest, specially the ones closer to the Golden Horn. Orban, the inventor of the Basilica, gave some advice with respect to this, using the knowledge acquired during his original relationship with the Byzantine.

28. The Bulgarian renegade, Balta Oghlu, admiral in charge of the Turk fleet was deprived from leadership by the angry sultan who gave him to his crew (rudely treated by him) to be punished. The nature of the punishment was not known but some versions agree that he was harassed in all senses (Setton, Kenneth; op. cit.; pp. 116/117).

The land and walls of Constantinople

The one- thousand history shows the wisdom of Constantine as he chose Byzantium as his new capital. He needed a place from which the emperor may exercise his authority over the South- East of Europe and Asia and from which the Danube and Euphrates rivers could be easily reached... there were few places to choose... but none that could be compared to the promontory Byzantium, in the entrance of the Bosphorus, in terms of strategic potential (Bury).

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Beyond the strategic importance of the situation of Constantinople, the geographic characteristics of the place give it a huge advantage in terms of defense against the attacks of possible invaders.

The city was surrounded by water in three of its sides: the so- called Golden Horn to the east and the Sea of Marmara to the south and north. The city could be accessed by land only through the west. The territory was like a triangle and was six to seven kilometres in its longest part and six hundred meters to six or seven kilometres wide. There were some hills of between 80 to 100 meters high and the Lykos river went through it.

The first wall was built by Constantine. It was three kilometres long and went from the Sea of Marmara (Proponeis) to Golden Horn.

During his kingdom, Theodosius II (408-450) decided to build a new wall taking into account that the growth of the city had turned Constantine's wall obsolete and it was necessary to extend the protected territory to the west.

The wall, known since then as the Theodosius wall or Theodosian wall had five parts. The main or inner part was 4.2 to 5 meters wide and 11/12 meters high. In this part, there were 96 square or octagonal towers which were 18 to 23 meters high, separated one from the other by 50/70 meters.

Between the main wall and the exterior wall, there was a free space, terrace or field (parateikon), of between 15 to 21 meters wide used for the movement of defenders and their eventual grouping in case of invasion by the enemy. The exterior part was thin if compared to the main part: it was between 60



centimeters and 2 meters wide and between 9 and 10.5 meters high. It also had 96 towers.

Between the exterior wall and the beacon scarp of the trench, there was another path for movement (peribolo) of 14 meters wide.

The trench was about 18 meters wide and it had a variable depth.

Apart from this wall that protected land access, several walls surrounded the city for protection purposes with respect to the attacks through the sea. They were more than 14 kilometers long and between 10 and 15 meters high and they had 300 towers.

Golden Horn was also permanently protected by a thick chain supported by pontoons that prevented the entrance through the Bosphorus. The edge that corresponded to Galata was in a tower from the years of Justinian in which a mechanism could stretch or loosen the chain, as it may be convenient.

On May 29, 2013, it was 560 years of the fall of Constantinople in the hands of the Ottoman Empire. Upon this event, the doors opened for expansion to the centre of Europe and the aftermath can still be seen.

The author presents the war event that gave rise to this process and, at the same time, a broad field for the analysis of those consequences, specially referring to geopolitical, strategic, sociological and cultural aspects.



the crowd and prevent vessels from reaching water were unsuccessful: part of the Turk fleet was already occupying the Golden Horn and, under their protection, Mehmed started to build a pontoon bridge so that his soldiers could reach the walls more quickly.

This situation had a significant impact on the development of the siege, while the Byzantine had to send reinforcement to the walls that were

on the side of the Golden Horn. Said reinforcement was taken from the main defense which became, thus, weaker²⁹. The Turks were able to avoid an attack with fire ships against the vessels that they were able to introduce in the Golden Horn, thus consolidating their presence although there were still some Venetian galleys in the area. The rest of the Turk fleet tried unsuccessfully to force the entrance that was protected with chains.

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ATTACKS AND COUNTERATTACKS

The courage and ability of the defenders, especially the ones led by Giustiniani, obliged Mehmed, in light of the possible failure of his artillery that caused damages that would soon be repaired to use another resource. This time, they did so by digging galleries underneath the walls with the purpose of weakening their foundations and using the excavation to get into the interior of the city. The defenders used to flood or fire the galleries when they found them. There were even some underground combats between opponents. As this means failed, Mehmed used a powerful mobile tower made of wood whose purpose was to protect those who worked to blind the ditch that surrounded the walls and which was seen as the main obstacle to destroy them although a great part of them were extremely damaged due to the bombing. When that purpose was about to be reached, the defenders were able to destroy the tower by blowing it.



The tactic of the sieged was to go out periodically trying to avoid a static defense. In light of the “dynamic tactic” of the sultan based on variable means, the defenders went out accessing the terrain between the outer wall and the ditch³⁰. They kept going out until the last days of the siege.

On May 7 and 12, the Turks launched the second and third attack against the defenders of the walls which were repelled after a strong fight.

To the end of May, hope was vanishing among Christians. On the Turk field there was also a pessimist and failure feeling. Siege was already seven weeks and in spite of all this, the strong Turk army

*with their great war instruments had not done much. Defenders may have been exhausted by that time with few men and little material and the walls of the city have suffered serious damage. But not even one soldier had gone through them. There was also the danger that some help could arrive from the West*³¹.

Finally, during the first hours of Tuesday May 29, 1453, a first group of Turks (*bashi-bazouks*) attacked the gate of Adrianople with the purpose of making the defenders tired and making them spend ammunition. This attack was repelled after two hours, but a second group of Anatolia troops that were more skilled and disciplined attacked taking advantage of the fact that defenders were exhausted although they were rejected by Giustiniani and two Janissary groups, about ten thousand of them were in combat. Giustiniani, who until that moment seemed to be the most successful, repelled one attack and another by the Turks, was seriously injured and had to withdraw from the battlefield and died some days later in Chios where he was moved³².

A fifth group of attackers finished the fight. Constantinople was under the Turks domain; they had killed more than four thousand people and there was looting and destruction of churches and libraries for three days. Emperor Constantine died defending the city in unknown circumstances. Several Venetian galleys and Genoese vessels could overcome the chain of the Golden Horn and fled to the west. Saint Sophie was dedicated to Allah.

This was the end of the millenary Byzantine Empire.

TO FUTURE

The fall of Constantinople meant for the Turks the platform through which they could reach the centre of Europe in an expansion that would finish in the outskirts of Vienna in 1683, after being defeated by the Holy Roman Empire and its allies. Said expansion had been the strategic and geopolitical target considered by the predecessors of Mehmed, who made it possible by means of his decisive conquer and later carried out by Suleiman the Magnificent³³. The Ottoman presence during more than centuries that said expansion lasted left some traces (nowadays rooted) in terms of culture, religion, ethnicity and linguistics, among others, in great part of Southern Europe.

But the fall of Constantinople also meant another expansion that is seen in the Bizantine legacy that was left to the western civilization. In Byzantium, there was a merger of the Hellenistic tradition (language, literatura, theology, worship) and the Roman tradition (law, military tradition, diplomatics, state supremacy)³⁴. Throughout the years and after its decline, Byzantium disappeared as a political institution but it had the traces of the symbiosis of the great traditions that, with the presence of the people who emigrated in 1453, had a powerful influence on the European Renaissance.

> REFEREED ARTICLE

29. To fix those failures, there was crew of the Venetian galleys led by Gabriel Trevisan, which could explain the indifference of these ships in light of the presence of Turks vessels that had reached the interior of the Golden Horn. It is evident that this was the effect sought by Mehmed with his daring movement.

30. Philippides, Marios; op. cit.; p. 497.

31. Runciman, Steve; op. cit.; p. 116. Among the Turks, there were those who fostered some kind of arrangement with the Christians and there were even some proposals to stop the siege.

32. Giustiniani became the key commander of the defense of Constantinople. While he controlled the operations, the city strongly resisted to Turk assault. Only after having been injured during the

last combat, he decided to withdraw and the city was then in hands of the Janissary (Philippides, Marios; op. cit.; p. 378). His withdrawal with a great number of his men, compared to his heroic performance was fiercely criticized by many of his contemporary men and led to a discussion among historians, which was never fully solved, although the almost immediate death of the Condottieri due to his injuries reasonably justifies his actions.

33. It cannot be said that the Ottoman purpose did not have a strong religious aspect based on the Muslim expression which, as a paradox and simultaneously, was being expelled from Spain after the long Reconquest path which started in Codavonga, eight hundred years before.

34. Baynes, Norman H.; *El Imperio Bizantino*; Fondo de Cultura Económica; México; 1951; p. 195.