

**AVEROF: THE SHIP THAT WON A WAR**

**Draft 1**

**(Apprx. Running time: 25 mins.)**

EXT. THE MARINA AT FALIRON. CAMERA IS ON BOARD A PLEASURE CRAFT THAT SLOWLY APPROACHES FROM SEAWARD. THE PRESENTER LEANS ON A RAIL AND GESTURES TO THE AVEROF AS THE SHIP APPEARS ON THE RIGHT.

PRESENTER

(TURNING TO CAMERA) Not quite what you'd expect to see among all these pleasure craft here at the Athens seaside. A hulking great grey warship. Where are we? A naval base? Not quite. This imposing vessel is actually Greece's floating naval museum. And it achieved that status by winning a war, almost all by itself, 110 years ago.

INT. THE HELLENIC MARITIME MUSEUM. A SENIOR NAVAL OFFICER (PREFERABLY IN UNIFORM) SITS OR STANDS BY A PANORAMIC PAINTING OF THE AVEROF IN ACTION. IN A FEW WORDS HE DESCRIBES HOW THE SHIP WON THE FIRST BALKAN WAR.

EXT. THE FOREDECK OF THE AVEROF. THE PRESENTER WALKS SLOWLY BENEATH THE GUNS TOWARDS THE CAMERA.

PRESENTER

This impressive piece of naval engineering is one of just two pre-World War One armoured cruisers still surviving in the world. To think that as

little as forty years ago it was literally left to rot on a tourist island. It has been restored to its pristine state at considerable work and expense. We said just now that the Averof won a war all by itself. How did it do that? Well, if you follow me below decks, we might just get a clue.

INT. AVEROF. CLOSE-UP OF TIN BUCKET.

PRESENTER

This battered tin bucket is about as old as the ship itself. You can see here old calcified stains, but look at this one. Many see the vague outline of a face. Tradition has it that it's the face of St Nicholas, the patron saint of mariners. (CAMERA PULLS BACK) And the fact that the Averof came practically unscathed through wars and neglect, is attributed to the saint.

INT. OFFICER OR CREWMEMBER EXPLAINS THE "SAINT" IMAGE.

EXT. DRONE IMAGE OVER THE AVEROF, LENDING A PANORAMIC VIEW TO ACCOMPANY THE NARRATOR'S VOICE-OVER.

NARRATOR

When the Averof rolled off the shipyard at Livorno, Italy, in 1910, it represented the most advanced warship design of its time. The designers were the Orlando Brothers. And here we can see clearly the elegant Italian lines that were an Orlando specialty.

The Averof has often, wrongly, been referred to as a battleship, but it's actually an armoured cruiser, cheaper to produce and ideal for small-nation navies of the time, and more manoeuvrable. But how did a small country like Greece in 1910 acquire such a sophisticated war machine?

INT. HELLENIC MARITIME MUSEUM. NAVAL OFFICER EXPLAINS GREECE'S NAVAL STRATEGY IN THE BALKAN WARS AND THE OBJECTIVE OF FREEING THE AEGEAN FROM OTTOMAN RULE.

IMAGE: GEORGIOS AVEROF

NARRATOR

This is the man who made it possible. Georgios Averof, a wealthy Greek trader in Egypt. In 1910 he had been dead for a number of years. But he had left a large bequest to be used by the Royal Hellenic Navy.

EXT. DRONE IMAGE OF AVEROF.

NARRATOR

When the Averof was being built, it was actually destined for the Brazilian Navy, but Brazil went bankrupt. Then word got around Athens that the Turks were interested, so the Greek government hastily posted a deposit of a quarter of a million pounds to seal the deal. That money came from the late Averof's bequest, which is how the cruiser got its name.

IMAGE: LAUNCHING OF AVEROF AT LIVORNO.

NARRATOR

The Averof was launched on 12 March 1910, in a celebratory atmosphere. Sea trials took a year before its commissioning. A young Greek Navy lieutenant, on his way to Italy to join the first crew, had this to record in his diary:

"My enthusiasm grows at the thought that I will fight here to save the liberty of my country. The shells from these guns will destroy the arrogance of our foes."

EXT. ON DECK.

PRESENTER

Ten thousand tons of hardened steel, 140 metres long, 21 metres wide, fuelled by 600 tons of coal, a range of 1,400 nautical miles at 12 knots. These guns are the original British-made Vickers, 23 centimetres calibre, and weighing a massive 28 tons each.

INT. HELLENIC MARITIME MUSEUM. NAVAL OFFICER EXPLAINS THE BASIC AIM OF THE FIRST BALKAN WAR AND THE NAVY'S ROLE IN IT. CUT TO PHOTO OF AVEROF IN GREEK WATERS. CUT TO EXT. AVEROF DECK.

PRESENTER

We can imagine the sheer enthusiasm the sight of this mighty vessel aroused in the Greeks. People on the island would row up to the great hull and kiss it. It was payback time for four centuries of Ottoman Turkish rule. And there were plenty

of fellow-Greeks in the Eastern Aegean under Ottoman rule, still waiting to be freed.

ARCHIVE FOOTAGE OF BALKAN WARS.

NARRATOR

In 1912 it was clear that the Ottoman Empire was in terminal decline. The Christian nations of Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece banded together to throw off the Ottoman yoke. In the words of Greece's prime minister of the time, Eleftherios Venizelos, "Greece is small, but will become great." Greece and its Balkan allies declared war on Turkey in October 1912.

INT. HELLENIC MARITIME MUSEUM. BACKGROUND: PHOTO OF AVEROF ANCHORED AT FALIRON. (PERHAPS ALSO MAP OF EASTERN AEGEAN).

PRESENTER

The task of the Averof was to draw the Turkish fleet to battle in the Aegean Sea, to eliminate it as a fighting force so that the ethnically Greek islands could be liberated. (MOVES TO PHOTO OF KOUNDOURIOTIS) Command of the Aegean fleet was given to Admiral Pavlos Koundouriotis, the latest of a long line of sea fighters. Battle with the Turkish fleet was joined on 3 December 1912, off the island of Lemnos.

INT. HELLENIC MARITIME MUSEUM. NAVAL OFFICER EXPLAINS TACTICS OF BATTLE OF LEMNOS, WHERE KOUNDOURIOTIS SINGLE-HANDEDLY DEFEATED THE ENEMY

FLEET. DESCRIPTION OF SIMILAR VICTORY OF CAPE HELLES IN JANUARY 1913.

CUT TO INT. AVEROF ADMIRAL'S QUARTERS AND PRESENTER.

PRESENTER

For about 20 years after World War One, the Averof remained the Royal Hellenic Navy's flagship, but grew obsolete. When World War Two rolled around, the ship was by no means fit for combat any more.

FOOTAGE OF GERMANS ENTERING ATHENS IN 1941.

NARRATOR

When German forces entered Greece in April 1941, orders went out to scuttle the old armoured cruiser to avoid the shame of its falling into enemy hands. But its crew disobeyed the order and took the ship secretly from its base at Salamis, under cover of night, down to Crete, where Allied forces were still resisting the German advance.

FOOTAGE OF GERMAN ATTACK ON CRETE.

NARRATOR

But Crete soon fell to the Germans. The Averof had managed to slip away again, this time down to the major Allied base at Alexandria, Egypt.

But since in 1941 the venerable Averof was far too old to fight, some use for it had to be found. Finally a use was found - to escort Allied convoys sailing between India and the

Middle East. And so to Bombay, now Mumbai, it went.

INT. AVEROF ENGINE ROOM.

PRESENTER

In the summer of 1941 temperatures down here in the bowels of the Averof would reach a blistering 50 degrees Celsius. Of course there was no air-conditioning. Greek crewmen couldn't take the hellish conditions, and so Indian stokers had to be employed. Nonetheless, the slow coal-burner did its convoy job well enough for three long, hot years. These engine-room instruments, by the way, still work.

ARCHIVE FOOTAGE OF ALLIES ENTERING ATHENS IN 1944.

NARRATOR

In October 1944 the Allied forces entered Athens, to intense public jubilation.

CUT TO PHOTO OF AVEROF NEWLY ARRIVED AT FALIRON.

NARRATOR

The legitimate Greek government was restored. At its head was a veteran politician named George Papandreou who, fittingly, chose to return on board the Averof, by now the symbol of national power and survival.

INTERVIEW (IF POSSIBLE) WITH PRESENT GEORGE  
PAPANDREROU ON HIS GRANDFATHER'S EXPERIENCES.  
CUT TO PHOTO OF AVEROF MOORED AT POROS.

NARRATOR

In 1951, after four decades of service, the Averof was finally decommissioned. But no-one, it seems, quite knew what to do with it. It was far too venerable for the scrapyard. In the end it was towed to the offshore island of Poros and tied up alongside the Greek Navy Petty Officers' School as a floating classroom.

EXT. ON BOARD THE AVEROF.

PRESENTER

I remember my own first glimpse of the Averof as a young boy on his first Greek island holiday. I wondered at this great grey hulk nestling among the white houses and fishing boats of Poros, and what it was doing there.

INT. HELLENIC MARITIME MUSEUM. INTERVIEW WITH NAVAL OFFICER ON THE GRADUAL DECAY OF THE AVEROF, THEFTS OF FITTINGS, GIANT RATS INSIDE, ETC. CUT TO IMAGE OF AVEROF BEING TOWED TO PIRAEUS. (THIS SEQUENCE MAY ALTERNATIVELY BE SHOT INSIDE THE AVEROF.)

NARRATOR

The Averof was actually doing nothing, except slowly decaying. That is, until 1984, when its refurbishment began. It was mobbed when it was towed to the port of Piraeus. Some 60,000 people saw it in the first week alone. Clearly, the old

armoured cruiser still could grab the public sentiment.

EXT. AVEROF. REAR BALCONY IN ADMIRAL'S QUARTERS.

PRESENTER

Many thousands of dollars were spent on bringing this ship back to its original pristine condition. And it didn't involve just a new coat of paint. Let's take a look inside.

INT. AVEROF. ADMIRAL'S QUARTERS.

PRESENTER

We can see here that even in a confined space, the commander was housed in fairly luxurious quarters. Typical of the sophisticated design is this door to the rear balcony overlooking the stern. It doesn't stay open, but closes by itself, under gravitational force.

(DEMONSTRATES)

INT. AVEROF. OFFICERS' WARDROOM

PRESENTER

We can get a good sense of what life was like for the ship's officers. This is the wardroom, appointed like the restaurant of a luxury hotel.

INT. AVEROF. CHAPEL.

PRESENTER

A good many devout crewmen prayed here, especially, one imagines, before going into action.

INT. AVEROF.

PRESENTER

Here are the crew's quarters, including the hammocks they slept in. Down here are the chutes where the coal was loaded. Which leads to a natural question: if you got enough coal down here, could the Averof sail again?

INT. AVEROF. OFFICER ANSWERS THE QUESTION. CUT TO DIAGRAM OF CROSS-SECTION OF SHIP, SHOWING COAL STORES.

PRESENTER

An intriguing fact about the coal fuel was that it was stored in a U-shape to protect the engines and vital bowels of a ship, a rather effective form of insulation against torpedoes.

INT. AVEROF. BRIDGE.

PRESENTER

Here's where Admiral Koundouriotis stood when about to do battle with the Ottoman fleet in December 1912, 110 years ago. With these guns beneath, the sheer impression of power even now is overwhelming. Let's not forget the First Balkan War was essentially won from up here.

EXT. AVEROF. INTERVIEW WITH SUITABLY IMPRESSED  
TOURIST. CUT TO DRONE IMAGE OF AVEROF FROM  
OVERHEAD. FADE OUT.

ROLL CREDITS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS