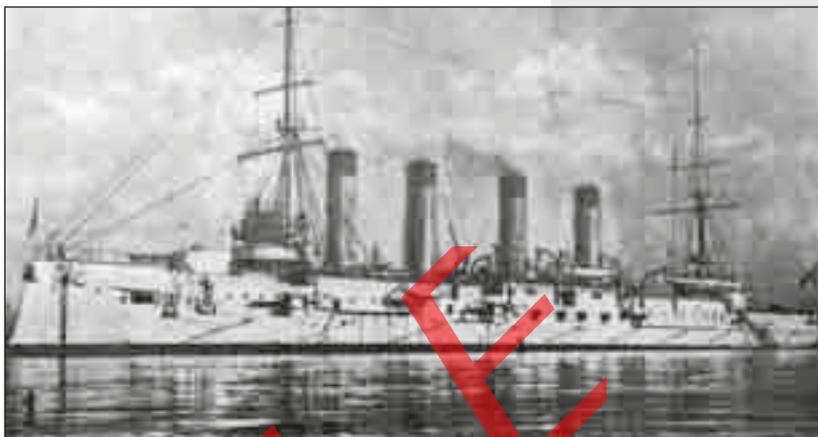


07 | Further attacks on Russian ships in Port Arthur and the first effort of “corking” the base by blockships

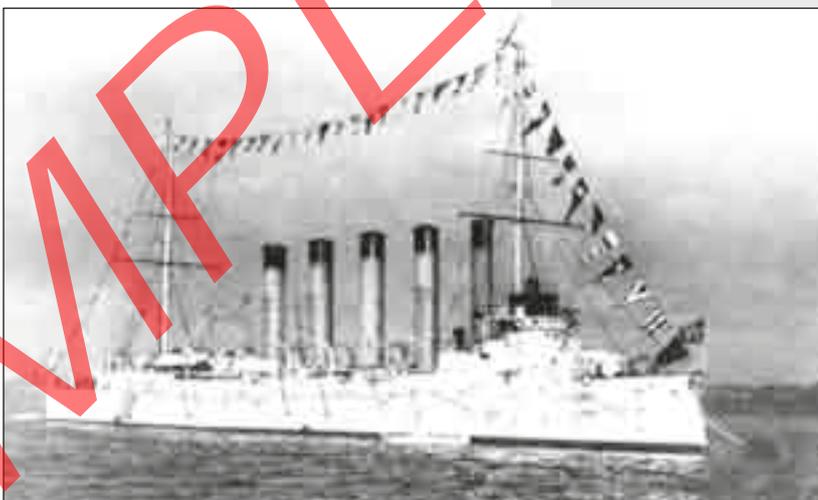
After the first attack on the Russian Pacific Squadron in Port Arthur, by 10 February Japanese ships concentrated in Asan Bay near Chemulpo. The next day Vice Admiral Togo received an order to provide protection for the transports that were to carry I Army troops to Korea. Therefore he regrouped, sending the IVth division under Rear Admiral Uriu along with the 9th and 14th Torpedo Boat Divisions to the Korean Strait, where together with the ships of the Vth division under Vice Admiral Kataoka Shichiro they were to protect the area against surprise attacks by the cruiser squadron from Vladivostok. At the same time the IInd and the IIIrd Divisions along with the 4th and the 5th Destroyer Divisions were supposed to patrol the area between Cape Shangtung and Chemulpo, shielding the redeployment of troops in case of an attack by the Russian squadron from Port Arthur. The main force – I division and the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Destroyer Divisions – were to be stationed at Mokpho near the south-west coast of Korea, in combat readiness.

In order to turn Russian attention away from the redeployment of I Army troops to Korea, Vice Admiral Kamimura Hikonojo decided to repeat the attacks by light Japanese forces on Russian units in Port Arthur. The first attempt to carry out a torpedo attack, undertaken by the destroyers on the night of 12/13 February, failed because of a storm which dispersed the Japanese ships. Despite the adverse weather the attack was repeated on the night of 13/14 February by the 4th Destroyer Squadron. Torpedoes were only launched by two vessels, scoring no hits. After this unsuccessful attempt all the destroyers so far accompanying the Kamimura squadron had, together with the units of the IIIrd Division, to steam to Mokpho in order to replenish supplies and undergo essential repairs. Further torpedo attacks were suspended.

What was worse, in the prevailing poor weather conditions even the blockade by Kamimura's armoured cruisers was hindered. In this situation, on 18 February, Vice Admiral



Russian cruiser Bayan.

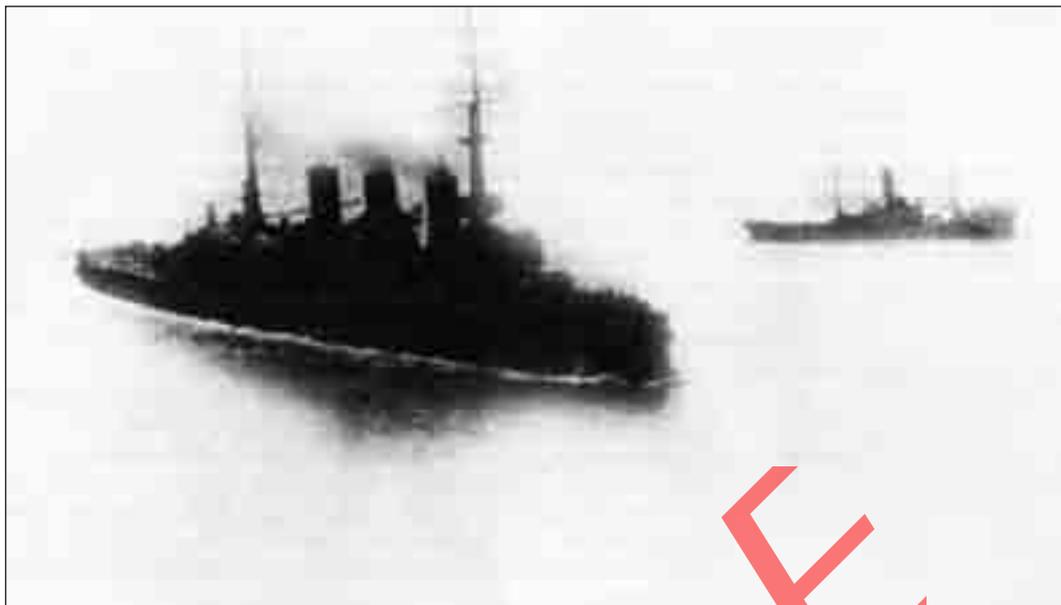


Russian cruiser Askol'd.

Pigeon Bay. The destroyer Boyvoy is in the foreground, followed by torpedo gunboat Vsadnik, and to left of these the old light cruiser Zabiya.



Battleship Pobeda returning to Port Arthur after hitting a mine on 13 April, 1904. One can see a clear bow-down trim with a slight list to port.



This all happened in front of the Russian garrison. Vice Admiral Makarov immediately ordered the cruisers on duty to put to sea and began taking the battleships to the outer roadstead. The cruiser *Bayan*, which was the first to reach the area of the battle, managed to pick up 5 survivors from the sunken destroyer. She had to retreat soon, as the warships of Dewa's IIIrd Division were approaching from the south. By that time the cruisers *Askol'd*, *Diana* and *Novik* along with the battleships *Petropavlovsk*

(with Makarov on board) and *Poltava* had managed to leave the harbour. Not waiting for the remaining vessels, Makarov formed a line of battle and headed directly for Dewa's division, which after a short artillery duel turned south trying to draw the enemy towards Togo's main force approaching from Encounter Rock island.

At first the Russian squadron, joined by the battleships *Peresvet* and *Pobeda*, chased the retreating cruisers of the IIIrd Division, but when Togo's battleships were spotted, Vice Admiral Makarov saw through the Japanese

Russian battleship Pobeda.

Russko-yaponskaya voyna 1904-1905., Moskva 1952, p. 65



the destroyers accompanying the main force to attack the escaping Russian ships (1st, 3rd, 4th and 5th Division - 14 vessels in total) and torpedo boats (1st, 12th, 14th, 16th and 20th Division - 20 ships altogether).

Uncoordinated and quite chaotic torpedo attacks lasted from 21.38/22.18 until 04.20/04.40 and were unsuccessful. A total of 14 destroyers and 17 torpedo boats took part in this action (the remaining vessels did not find the enemy in the darkness) launching 39 torpedoes³. However, they all missed their targets (apart from an accidental hit scored on *Chidori*), while six attacking vessels were damaged. The only

damage Russians had was due to mines – evading the attack, the battleship *Sevastopol'* went off course and struck a mine. She was heavily damaged, but managed to reach White Wolf Bay on her own. She was towed to port the next day. By 08.00 (Russian time) on 24 June, the remaining Russian ships reached the base without any problems.

The first effort to leave Port Arthur by the Russian squadron did not bring about any serious losses on either side. What was most important for the Japanese was the fact that the blockade was sustained and Russian ships did not force their way to Vladivostok.

3 According to B. Dienisow's article "*Ispolzovaniye torpednogo oruzhiya w rusko-yaponskuyu voynu*" (MS No 11/1935, pp.13-14) on the night of 23.24 June 1904, Japanese vessels launched 38 torpedoes in total. The same figures are also given in Dyskant J.W., *Port Artur...*, op.cit., p.137.



*Rear Admiral Vitgeft's flag-
ship Tsesarevich.*



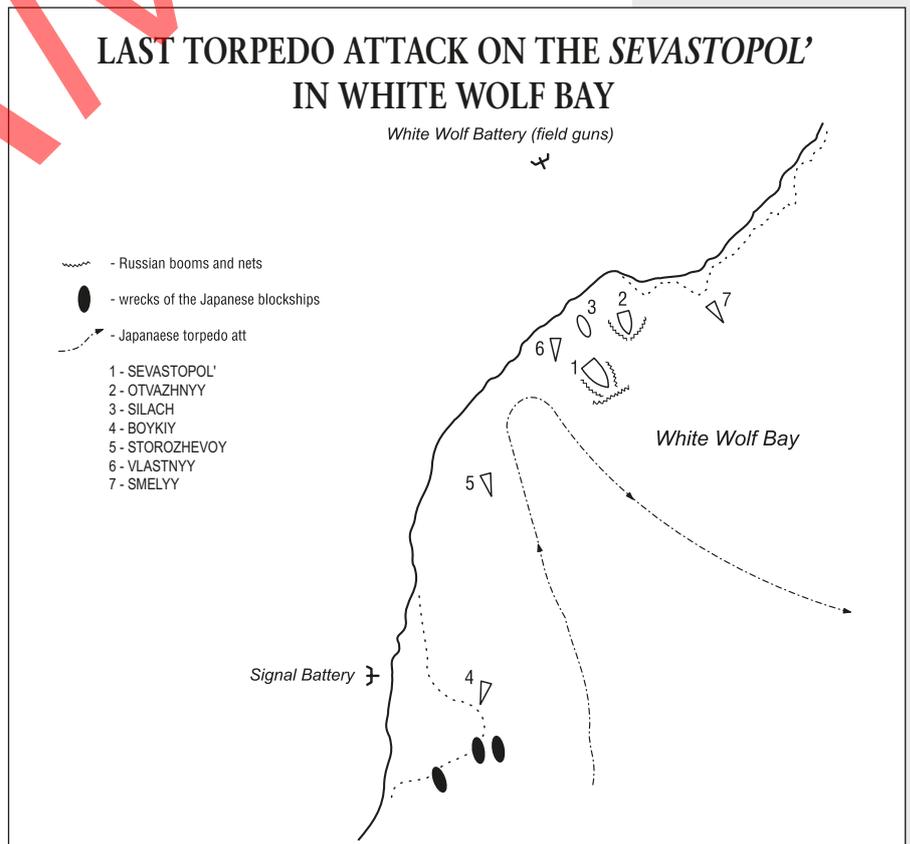
Russian battle-ships at Port Arthur bombarded by Japanese artillery. The cruiser Pallada in the foreground and the battleship Pobeda on its right.

the battleships harboured there. This day-to-day bombardment, though inaccurate, finally started to produce results. The Russian ships were hit more and more often. Although the efficiency of the 152-120 mm naval guns was limited, particularly against Russian armoured ships, heavy 280 mm howitzers turned out to be very dangerous. Their shells had a greater impact, due to their great weight. Falling at a high angle they easily broke through the lightly armoured decks of Russian ships, and by reaching the inside of their hulls, inflicted severe damage.

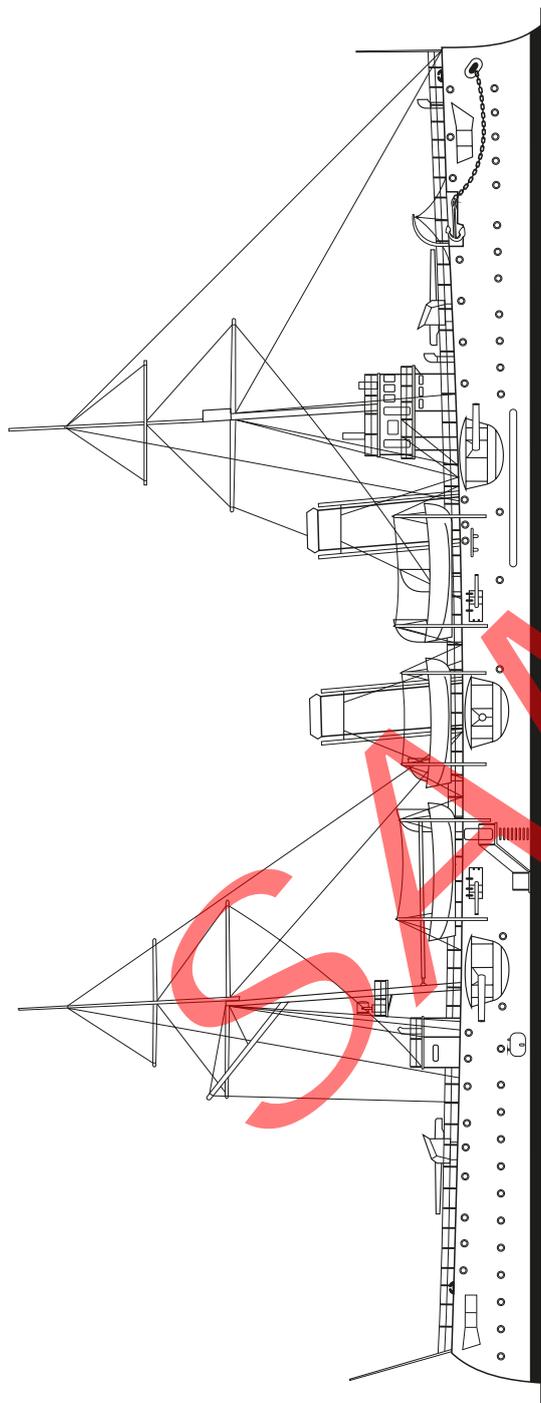
In the beginning of October, a further twelve 280 mm howitzers were sent to Port Arthur, along with two 152 mm naval guns. The latter were mounted in position as early as 22 October, and the very next day participated in the shelling, whilst the howitzers began firing on 26 October. By the end of the month, Port Arthur was under fire from eighteen 280 mm howitzers, four 152 mm naval guns, and ten 120 mm naval guns, not to mention a certain number of heavy field howitzers and siege mortars (of 152 – 120 mm, though the latter did not actually shell the port due to their limited range) as well as field artillery and light naval guns. Altogether, the Japanese heavy artillery fired at Port Arthur a total of over 30,000 280 mm shells, 5,000 152

mm shells, and 17,000 120 mm shells, 25-30% of which fell on the harbour and the battleships anchored there (the percentage could be higher for 152-120 mm guns). In this situation, despite the low accuracy of Japanese fire, between September and late November the Russian warships suffered such serious damage that most of them were unable to leave port and attempt to disrupt the blockade.

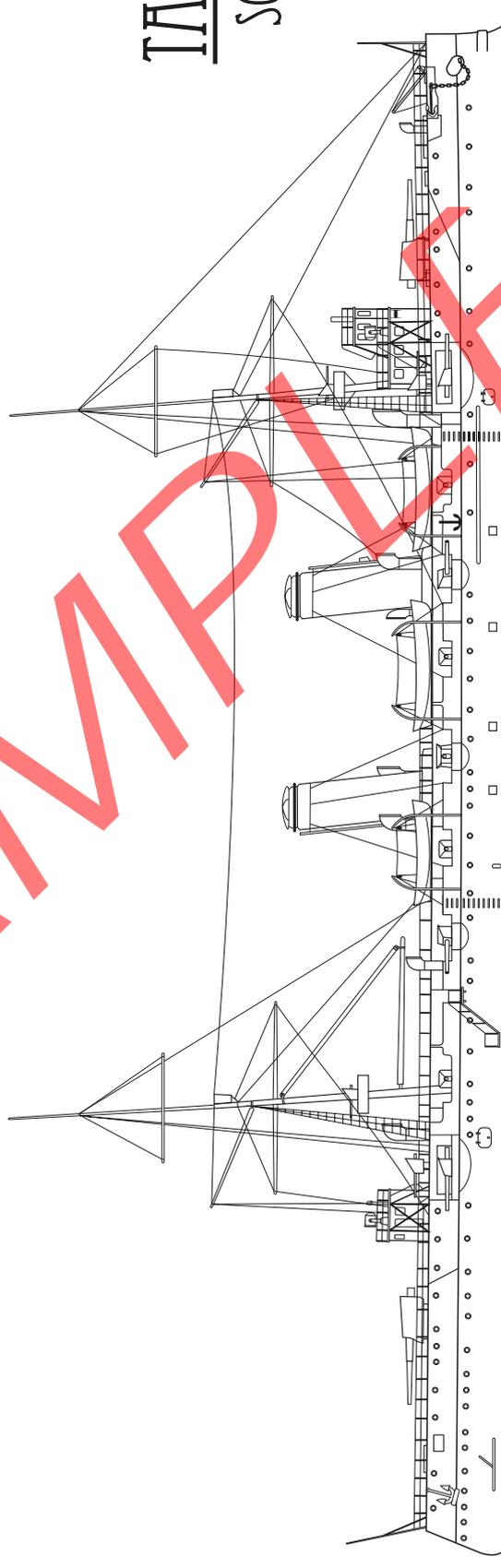
LAST TORPEDO ATTACK ON THE SEVASTOPOL' IN WHITE WOLF BAY



AKASHI
SCALE: 1/500



TAKASAGO
SCALE: 1/500



CRUISERS