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JACQUES PERVITITCH AND HIS INSURANCE MAPS OF ISTANBUL

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ABSTRACT: Continuing the research project on the maps of Istanbul and its region, which, upon the initiative of the insurance companies had been drawn by Jacques Pervititch in the period 1922-1945, the author of the article provides basic biographical data on their author (b. Močići near Dubrovnik, 1877, d. Istanbul, 1945).

1. Insurance companies and the prevention of fire in Istanbul (19th-20th c.)

The prevention of fires was among the major problems Istanbul had to cope with in the second half of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century. In the wake of the "great fire" of 1865, which destroyed the quarter of Hocaapaşa, and particularly the disastrous "Beyoğlu Great Fire" (Harik-i Kebir) in 1870 where hundreds of buildings were burnt down, an initiative against the peril was undertaken by the non-Moslems who suffered great material losses. Shortly afterwards three British insurance companies, the Sun, Northern and North British, initiated their operations in the city. Until then Istanbul proved an unattractive place for foreign insurance companies. By 1900, however, about 44 companies operated throughout the Ottoman Empire. In order to help prevent unfair competition, align the schedule of rates and act on common ground, the companies decided to form a union. Shareholders of the first local insurance company, Ottoman General Insurance Company (*Osmanlı Umum Sigorta*), were The Ottoman Bank (*Osmanlı Bankası*), Tobacco Regie (*Tütün Rejisi*, administration of the

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Tobacco Monopoly) and the Capital-holders of Public Debts (*Düyun-ı Umumiye*). In 1916 the union appeared as *Türkiye’de Çalışan Yabancı Sigorta Cemiyeti* (The Association of Foreign Insurance Companies Operating in Turkey). In 1924, following the declaration of the Republic, it was renamed into *Sigortacılar Klübü* (The Club of Insurance Agents), which in turn was changed to *Türkiye Sigortacılar Daire-i Merkeziyesi* (Central Office of Turkish Insurance Agents).

The above-mentioned data may be obtained from almost all the sources pertaining to the history of Turkish insurance business. By the early 20th century, the general context of it was much the same, apart from a few minor exceptions, relating mainly to the companies that operated in Izmir prior to the Sun, Northern and North British. All the relevant sources agree that the Europeans were the first to introduce insurance business in the Empire and that they contributed fundamentally to the development of the Turkish insurance sector. Protection of the clients’ interests by setting fixed insurance rates, helping with the firefighting, assisting in rescue operations and the development of cadastral-based insurance maps which helped identify the areas with the high fire risks were among the services rendered by insurance companies which operated under different names—associations, clubs, or central offices.

2. *The Istanbul cadastral maps made for insurance purposes*

In view of property, fire insurance rates were influenced by various risk factors: the quality of water supply in a particular city area, the location of the building, the type of construction, street width, fire protection, etc. The premium was thus determined in accordance with the estimated risk running factors. With this aim, in 1904 cadastral-based insurance maps of Istanbul and izmir were drawn. The British Chase E. Goad construction engineering company was commissioned for the purpose and, as far as the records are concerned, made 19 map sections of Eminönü-Beyazıt region, 18 of Galata-Pera region, 14 of Kadıköy-Pera region and 10 sections of central Izmir between the years 1904 and 1906. The maps were registered at the Stationers Hall in England and were reprinted in 1914¹. Regrettably, this pioneering work has failed to produce the desired effect as it was made at the time when

¹ These references are from the Goad maps.

triangulation networks and suitable survey plats of Istanbul and Izmir did not exist. The maps did not include the quarters where the wooden buildings prevailed, giving priority to the regions with stonework housing as well as the central business zones.

The Pervititch maps, the first of which was dated 1922, were derived from the 1890 map of Galata and Pera region drawn by R. Huber, and the Goad maps. Pervititch's project, however, had a much wider context and included almost the entire peninsula, Kadıköy and Üsküdar regions, several sections of Izmir, regions with major industrial plants of Bafra and Hereke and also Rodosto, namely Tekirdağ (a city near Istanbul). The last map of the series dates from 1945.² The Pervititch maps were used for insurance purposes until the large-scale reconstruction operations conducted by the Democratic Party in the 1950s. The client would give his address to the insurer and the latter could easily find the related area, identify the exact location of the property, and fix the policy terms accordingly.³

3. The features of the Pervititch maps

The Pervititch maps include 243 sections. Today, they are of essential importance to the historical survey of Istanbul due to their detailed legends and very large scale. Most of the maps which covered the Kadıköy, Üsküdar, Moda, Erenköy, Eminönü, Fatih, Beyazıt, Beyoğlu, Beşiktaş and Şişli regions also included the street names and sometimes even the names of the buildings. The systematic approach of the Pervititch maps, which included a sectional guide for each region and large-scale drawings of the regions on the master plan, revealed how inadequate the previous mapping projects were. For example, there are three map sections of Üsküdar region in 1/4000 scale and the regions covered on these master plans (Salacak, İhsaniye, Nuh Kuyusu, Selimiye) are given in more detail on 27 different maps in 1/1000 and 1/5000 scales. In view of their former counterparts, the detailed nature of the Pervititch maps may be accounted by the fact that they were based on the 1904-1906 Goad maps, from which they have been principally drawn.⁴

² Map of Eminönü no. 77, in: *Jacques Pervititch Sigorta Haritalarında İstanbul / İstanbul in the Insurance Maps of Jacques Pervititch*. Istanbul: Axa Oyak Sigorta and Tarih Vakfı, 2001: p. 154.

³ Interview made with an ex-İMTAŞ employee, Selahattin Kazaz, on June 27, 2000.

⁴ İlhan Tekeli, "İcabında Plan", *İstanbul 4* (1993): p. 29.

The legends of the Pervititch maps are remarkably elaborate. Qualitative characteristics of buildings are marked with differentiated coloring: wood frame structures are indicated in yellow, brick, stone and armored concrete in pink, stone-and-brick ground and wood frame top floors in yellow and pink frame. Blue, for instance, indicates glass rooftops, pools, fountains, cisterns, wells and seas, while green stands for parks and gardens. The legend also explains the use of “letters” which add more information to the colorings and define the fire risks of the property to be insured. For example, fountains and wells are marked with FsP, stone or wooden stairs with Esc (PR)-Esc (BS), warehouses of flammable construction with DMI, very old wooden frame structures with Vx Bs and wooden arches wider than 50 cm with LRM.⁵ It is possible to trace the old names of some streets, especially in densely populated areas of Beyoğlu and Kadıköy. In addition, the contour lines on the maps facilitated their use against the flood risk as well.⁶

The Pervititch maps afford most extensive details and comments regarding certain features or areas, an illustration of which may be found in the drawing of the covered fruit market: “Although bags, garbage, and pieces of paper on the floor of the Fruit Market in Timurtaş Street in Eminönü section no. 77 constitute a fire risk, firefighting department can easily be reached due to the location”.⁷ References also include cemetery vacancies, box offices in open-air cinemas, even film cabins and the scene, sandy beach areas, currents caused by the strong winds in the Bosphorus, kiosks in the parks, notary offices, strawberry fields, bank branch offices as, for instance, the Selanik Bankası or Deutche Orient Bank which no longer operate, big trees, ruins of the İcadiye Theatre in Çamlıca Street, historical buildings and the date of their construction. A note in Üsküdar section instructs that a hilltop marked on the map has a complete view of the Çamlıca electric tramway line and the cypress trees growing opposite it. These maps clearly show that Jacques Pervititch was more than a mere topographer. His work is characterized by great professional zeal and devotion, the result of which are these magnificent plans worthy of appreciation.

⁵ The Pervititch maps are mostly in French. Therefore abbreviations usually stand for French names, as in Vieux Bois: Vx Bs. However, the maps made in the 1940s are in Turkish.

⁶ For the technical details of the Pervititch maps and their usefulness as historical source, see: Murat Güvenç, “Pervititch Haritaları: İstanbul için Bitmemiş bir Araştırma Projesi”, in *Jacques Pervititch Sigorta Haritalarında İstanbul*: pp. 11-19.

⁷ Map of Eminonu no. 77, in: *Jacques Pervititch Sigorta Haritalarında İstanbul*: p. 154.

4. The map editions and the inventory project

The maps were printed on several occasions in the 1920s by *Société Anonyme de Papeterie et Imprimerie, Fratelli Haim*, which in the 1930s changed name to *Kaatçılık ve Matbaacılık Anonim Şirketi*. Although it is indicated that certain sections were reproduced in 12 copies each, the actual number of copies is unknown. According to the evidence available, the copies were later distributed to the leading insurance companies in the country.⁸ There is reason to assume that the copyright owner of the Pervititch maps drawn in the 1920s was *Türkiye Sigortacılar Daire-i Merkeziyesine* (Central Office of Turkish Insurance Agents), but that of the maps charted after 1932 “lies with the author”.

Today we do not have a complete collection of the Pervititch maps. Most of them are kept at the Atatürk Library of *Istanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi* (Mainland Municipality) and the archives of *Axa Oyak* Insurance Group. Apart from these two major centers, they can also be located at *İTÜ Mimarlık Fakültesi* (Istanbul Technical University, Architectural Dept.), *Mimarlar Odası İstanbul Şubesi* (Architectural Practice, Istanbul), *İstanbul Anıtlar ve Röleve Müdürlüğü* (Istanbul Memorial and Relief Map Management Center), *Alman Arkeoloji Enstitüsü* (German Archeological Institute), *Fransız Anadolu Araştırmaları Enstitüsü* (French Anatolian Research Institute), and *Türkiye Sigortacılar Birliği* (Turkish Insurers’ Society). From time to time they are sold by booksellers of İstiklal St., Beyoğlu Istanbul, or at auctions. My internet research has revealed that the Pervititch maps are also available at the Hitotsubashi University in Tokyo, Japan.⁹

The research project on the Pervititch maps was initiated in the year 2000. In the summer of that year, *Axa Oyak* Insurance Group requested information from *Tarih Vakfı* (Historical Foundation) on how to evaluate most effectively the maps they had found in their own archives. The experts from the Historical Foundation advised them to make an inventory first. I myself joined the project at this stage and worked on the inventory analysis of the Pervititch maps for about a month. While preparing the edition, which was

⁸ Interview with Selahattin Kazaz.

⁹ Web site of the library mentioned: <http://www.lib.hit-u.ac.jp/service/bunko/ishi-r.htm>. However, I could not get a healthy respond from the university, despite my endless efforts to get information concerning the number of the maps available and how they ended up there.

printed in the early 2001 under the title *Jacques Pervititch Sigorta Haritalarında İstanbul/Istanbul in the Insurance Maps of Jacques Pervititch*, we realized that we had compiled all the maps available.¹⁰ Brief marginal information on the Pervititch maps supported our assumption. Some regions indicated in the master plans had not been mapped due to various reasons, as Pervititch himself explained in the notes: “the mapping of this region has been postponed“ or “this region was not considered worth mapping”.

5. *The man behind the maps*

While working on the inventory, my curiosity was aroused by the man who drew all these maps and his life story. In the literature pertaining to the history of Istanbul it is simply indicated that the author “lived in Istanbul during the mapping project and then went back to his country”, without any further references. Whether Jacques Pervititch, following the practice of numerous foreign architects, topographers, and city planners commissioned in Turkey, stayed in Istanbul during the entire project or not remains obscure. Joseph Antoine Bouvard, the chief architect of Paris, was asked by Abdulhamit II to conduct a planning project of Istanbul, which he had completed without even setting foot in the city.¹¹ In 1904-1906, Chase E. Goad left England to work on the insurance maps of Istanbul, while Henri Prost left France for Istanbul and worked intensely on his mapping project between the years 1932 and 1937.¹²

So, it is only natural to think that Jacques Pervititch did the same. But the dates of the maps lead us to assume that he, unlike the others, lived in Istanbul continuously between 1922 and 1945. Also the maps drawn in the 1920s reveal that he was employed as a full-time topography engineer for *Türkiye Sigortacılar Daire-i Merkeziyesi* (Central Office of Turkish Insurance Agents). Moreover, he was the copyright owner of the maps drawn after 1932 and they did not bare the signatures of the Central Office. In one of the interviews I conducted with a veteran of the insurance sector, David Kohen, I concluded that after his resignation from the Central Office for some reason, Pervititch probably resumed work on the maps and sold them

¹⁰ *Jacques Pervititch Sigorta Haritalarında İstanbul*: p. 25.

¹¹ İlhan Tekeli, »The Pervitich maps.«, *ibid.*: p. 29.

¹² M. Rifat Akbulut, “Proust, Henri”, in: *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi (Encyclopedia of Istanbul)*, vol. 6. Istanbul, 1992: p. 286.

to the companies upon his own initiative.¹³ Yet another piece of information implied that he could not have completed 15 map sections pertaining to Beşiktaş region single-handed in only a month (for all the maps are dated March 1922), which leads us to assume that he worked with a team. *Axa Oyak* archives reveal that Suat Nirven, cartographer, might provide us with more answers on the subject; unfortunately, his family informed us that Nirven, who graduated from *Güzel Sanatlar Akademisi* (The Fine Arts Academy) in 1932, died in 1987. The maps he made in the period 1946-1952 covered the area between Beyoğlu and Pera. By comparing the dates of Pervititch's last map dated 1945 and Nirven's first one from 1946, it is possible to conclude that Nirven succeeded Pervititch in the mapping project.¹⁴

İttihad-ı Milli Türk Anonim Şirketi (Turkish National Union Company - İMTAŞ)¹⁵ is among the companies that referred to the Pervititch maps for years. David Kohen, a third generation representative of a family in the insurance business and a once İMTAŞ employee, recalls that these maps were often consulted by the reinsurance departments and were treated as confidential. The maps were of the greatest importance to them in determining cumulative risks. Kohen further explains: "Companies avoided sharing the Pervititch maps with us. When we as agents needed to consult the plans, the staff of the reinsurance department would instruct us to 'wait aside' until they provided us with the information. The reason for this was competition because we were all after the same risks".¹⁶

The interviews I made during my research pointed to a common feature of the old generation of the insurers. To them, Pervititch was some kind of a map. Apparently, he was the name of those maps rather than the person who made them. This may account for the lack of interest in Pervititch's history even among the insurers who take interest in historical research. David Kohen gave a good explanation of this in the interview of June 12, 2000: "You are helping me view Pervititch from a different perspective. I had envisaged him differently before now. He was simply a name of the plans

¹³ Interview with David Kohen, June 20, 2000.

¹⁴ 31 maps made by Suat Nirven can be found in *Jacques Pervititch Sigorta Haritalarında İstanbul*: pp. 279-310.

¹⁵ İMTAŞ was founded in 1918. French Axa and Oyak Sigorta (founded in 1968) became partner in 1994, with an 11% share. Axa and Oyak merged with Nordstern in 1999. İMTAŞ have sold their shares and transferred their archives to Axa Oyak in 1999.

¹⁶ Interview with David Kohen, June 12, 2000.

that helped me with my work. Now by asking me ‘why did he draw this’ or ‘why did he mark the trees’ you are helping me see him from a completely different angle. He is like a real person now, someone who really existed... I never saw it that way before”.

6. *Jacques Pervititch: a sketch for the biography*

When the book *Jacques Pervititch Sigorta Haritalarında İstanbul / Istanbul in the Insurance Maps of Jacques Pervititch* was already in print, my internet research resulted with a record on a certain Jacques Pervitich, who had graduated from Saint Joseph French High School in 1894. A difference in the spelling of his last name was hindering me from obtaining more information. With the help of the Saint Joseph Graduates Association, I forwarded my request for the research in the school archives. At first I was denied, which did not come as a surprise considering the reserved nature of minority schools. When I was finally allowed access to the archives, it was quite easy to establish, with the help of Brother Ange-Michel, that the Saint Joseph graduate Pervitich was the same person who made the maps, because the map section of *Kadıköy Moda*, dated 1939, where the school was situated, was dedicated to the school and its archive by the author (“*A son collègue toujours aimé ce modeste souvenir d’un ‘ancien’ reconnaissant*”).

Under the light of the information gathered, it was apparent that the Pervititch family was Catholic. Thus, a survey at the Catholic graveyard in Istanbul was immediately initiated, and the Pervititch family grave was easily located in the Feriköy Latin Catholic Graveyard.¹⁷ My search in the church archives was coached by Rinaldo Marmara, a leading researcher of the Catholic community in Istanbul. We found out that the family records were kept in the archives of the Sainte Marie Draperis Church in Beyoğlu Istiklal Street. This finally led me to the information on Jacques Pervititch’s exact place of birth, his marriage and death certificates,¹⁸ and baptism records of his first two children.¹⁹

¹⁷ Feriköy Latin Graveyard, Saint Albert Section.

¹⁸ Sainte Marie Draperis, Registers of deaths, book 12, record no. 520.

¹⁹ Sainte Marie Draperis, Registers of baptisms, 12 (1898-1908). Jeanne Pervititch, record no. 1839; date of birth: July 16, 1907; date of baptism: December 1, 1907. Marcel Pervititch, record no. 1234; date of birth: December 29, 1903; date of baptism: May 1, 1904.

Jacques Pervititch was born in Močići in 1877, near Cavtat, 17 km south of the city of Dubrovnik which is within the borders of today's Republic of Croatia. His father, Petar Pervititch, was born in Cavtat in 1839 and died in Istanbul. He was a sailor and he moved to Istanbul with his wife, three sons and a daughter in 1880. Jacques Pervititch's mother, Marianna Guljelmović, was also born in Cavtat in 1846 and died there in 1942. Jacques had a sister and two brothers: Paula was born in Cavtat in 1878 and died in Istanbul in 1908; Auguste's date of birth is unknown, but we do know that he died in Istanbul in 1885 and Petar (Pierre) Pervititch was born in Istanbul in 1887 and died in Dubrovnik in 1926.

Auguste, Pierre, and Jacques went to Saint Pierre Elementary School, and they continued their education with a scholarship at the French Saint Joseph High School. Having graduated with distinction from Saint Joseph in 1894, Jacques Pervititch must have continued (if he ever did) his college education abroad, because at the time cartography training was provided only at the military schools. The first record on Jacques Pervititch, after his graduation from Saint Joseph, goes back to 1903, when he married Josephine Drossa. In the year of the marriage their son Marcel was born. In 1907 they had a daughter named Jeanne, and in 1911 a son named Henri. When their first two children were born, the Pervititch family lived in Istanbul, in what is today known as Tarlabası, in Aynalı Çeşme Street, and when Henri Pervititch was born, the family lived in Kadıköy, Yaver st. No. 7. Both of his sons attended Saint Joseph. His younger son Henri died in 1924 at the age of 14. There is no evidence on the Pervititch family from the year their third child was born (1911) to the date the first Pervititch map was printed, in 1922. The date of his last map, 1945, is also the year of his "sudden" death.²⁰

Records from Sainte Marie Draperis show that Jacques' daughter Jeanne Pervititch married a man named Nazım Kurt and became a Turkish citizen. However, further research on Nazım Kurt, his family and offspring gave no conclusive results, and the records at the Feriköy Latin Catholic Graveyard were the same as the church records. It seems that with the death of Jeanne Pervititch Kurt in 1961,²¹ the Pervititch family in Istanbul died out.

²⁰ Sainte Marie Draperis Records, Registers of deaths, book 12, record no. 520.

²¹ Saint Marie Draperis Records, Registers of deaths, book 12, record no. 659. Date of death: May 16, 1961.

My investigation at one of the addresses Jacques Pervititch and his family lived, in Aynalı Çeşme Street, proved futile, for the numbers on the buildings were not clear. Nevertheless, there was an old stone and a brick building on the address: Yaver Sokak No:7, Kadıköy Mühürdar. The house is the oldest in the street, but it was impossible to gather further information on its residents. The oldest dweller in the street informed me that the building belonged to an Armenian couple who died without heirs in 1960. Being abandoned for a long time, the Treasury took possession of the property.

In the course of my research, which lasted almost two years, I came across a lot of unreliable and misleading evidence: the family supposedly had a summer house in Yeşilköy, Jacques Pervititch gave lessons at the Fine Arts Faculty in Istanbul, he walked with a limp and was quite a “rake”. Because of the reserved nature of the Catholic community mentioned earlier, it was not possible to interview the elderly members. In fact, I managed to trace a person who was acquainted with the Pervititch family and who may have been a valuable source of information, but unfortunately my request for interview was denied. Last of all, the graveyard keeper mentioned a person named Istamboulie, from Lebanon, who used to visit the family grave and had it cleaned. This person, however, has not visited the grave for the last two years, and no information could be obtained from the Lebanon Consulate.