

COPY

JOHN HOLT & COMPANY LIMITED

(Incorporated in England)

Lloyd's Agency.

Fernando Po. October 20th. 1936.

Messrs Lloyd's
London. E.C.3.

Dear Sirs,

"FERNANDO POO !"

We confirm our telegram dated the 16th October reading "COMPANIA TRASMEDITERRANEA MAILBOAT " FERNANDO POO" SUNK GUNFIRE AT BATA. POSSIBLY SALVABLE".

We have had no cabled reply, and think it just possible that our telegram has not been sent from here, for although we received a permission stamped on the actual telegram itself prior to taking it to the radio-station, we have since learned that this Government does not wish the fact to be known to Madrid that the "Fernando Poo" has been lost.

Details of the loss are as follows:-

The "Fernando Poo" is a motor vessel, constructed in 1935. Property of the Compania Trasmediterranea". Our Lloyd's Register is dated 1934/5 so we are unable to give further details, but no doubt you have been able to "place" the boat all right.

She has been taken over by the Madrid Government (as opposed to the Nationalist Party) and was on her way to Fernando Po with a general cargo. She lay for some time in Dakar awaiting supplies of fuel, and then proceeded, as we thought, to Fernando Po which in the usual way is where she would call before proceeding to Bata.

In the meantime however, as you are no doubt aware, there has been a change of Government in Fernando Po, which place is now in the hands of the Nationalists. Bata however was in the hands of the "Government" (Lefts), and the question arose as to whether the "Fernando Poo" would come here, in which case it would have been captured, by force if necessary, or would go to Bata. It did the latter, and had discharged all her cargo in a very short time, as it was expected that forces from here would attempt to take it.

Also on it's way here, this time from the Canary Islands, was a boat named the "Ciudad de Mahon", with some 600

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men, two guns about 3" calibre, and several machine-guns with crew.

Whilst on her way here, the "Ciudad de Mahon" is said to have received news that the "Fernando Poo" intended making an attack on Fernando Po, so changed her course, and went direct to Bata, finding the "Fernando Poo" at anchor there, opposite the Town of Bata and nearer the shore than boats generally enter.

Without going into details, the "Ciudad de Mahon" sent a boarding party of five on to the "Fernando Poo" to accept surrender, having previously sent a warning shot towards her. The "Fernando Poo" having taken this party on board, picked up anchor and proceeded seawards. It is supposed that in so doing she had the intention of ramming the "Ciudad de Mahon" but we have no confirmation of this.

The latter boat then opened fire on the "Fernando Poo", at first on the bridge and upper structure generally. This was very badly damaged and caught fire, but was not enough apparently to prevent or hold up the progress of the "Fernando Poo" towards the open sea.

This being so, the "Ciudad de Mahon" directed her fire into the hull of the "Fernando Poo", and according to what we take to be reliable report, hit the "Fernando Poo" in three places, one on the water line of No 2, and two shots aft well above the water-line.

The "Fernando Poo" thereupon turned over on her port side and sank in some 12 to 15 metres of water, the shots having entered on the starboard side, so that the holes are upwards.

Her present position is no danger to navigation as she is said to be visible at all tides.

The loss of life is not known, but the boarding party of five from the "Ciudad de Mahon" were all lost.

On board the latter boat was Sr Ley, who is a Sub-Director of the "Compania Trasmediterranea" and their Agent in the Canaries. He has asked us to have a competent survey made on the sunken boat, and we are arranging that such a Surveyor shall go from Lagos to Victoria, arriving thereon the 25th of October, where he will be taken to Bata by the "Ciudad de Mahon". The report he will make will probably be sent direct to you, but of this we are not certain, as it is not sure that the Surveyor will come to Fernando Po at all, but will be taken to some other port for proceeding back to Lagos by whatever means is available.

The Continent of the Spanish Guinea is entirely cut off from here for the time being, and you will probably receive a detailed report of the whole affair from Lloyd's Sub-Agent there. It will possibly differ from what we have given you here, but that is because our report is based on reports etc which have reached us, and these will probably be incorrect in many details.

The date when the "Fernando Poo" was sunk appears

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to have been the 15th October. The reason for her turning over is a matter for an expert in these matters. We understand that an empty ship travelling fast and making a sharp turn can cause a surge in water-ballast and/or fuel to such an extent as to cause the vessel to heel over past the safety point. On the other hand she may have been deliberately sunk by those on board to prevent capture. If an attempt is made at salving the vessel, this point may be cleared up. All we can definitely state is that she was sunk by an "act of war". This is emphasized in our telegram when we mentioned "...sunk gunfire...".

Yours truly,
John Holt and Co. (L-pool) Ltd.,
(Signed) Eric Molesey,
Agent.
Lloyd's Agent.



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