

**From the Consul in Smyrna (Alfred van der Zee) to the Legation in Constantinople (Carl Ellis Wandel)**

**Bombardment of Smyrna**

No. 3

Consulat de Royal de Danemark. Smyrne, 12th. March 1915. *[To]* His Excellency Mr. C. E. Wandel, His Majesty's Minister Resident, Constantinople. Bombardment of Smyrna. *[Original document written in English - not translated]*

Sir,

I have the honour to report as follows:

On Friday 5th. Inst. an Anglo French fleet composed of three battle cruisers, four torpedo-boats, five mine sweepers & 1 transport under the command of Rear Admiral Sir Henry Pears *[Pierce]* appeared off Vourla at 1.30 p.m. The three cruisers directed their course towards St. James fort (Sanjak Kalé) at the entrance of the Gulf of Smyrna.

At 10 minutes to two p.m. the ships opened fire on the fort and continued to shell it up to five o'clock when firing ceased. 136 shells had been fired out of which 27 had hit the fort in full, at the beginning the fort replied by firing six times but shortly after kept silent.-

On Saturday the 6th. Inst. fire was opened at 8 o'clock a.m. on the marked batteries, on the coast, between Kilisman & St. George's village, continued till 10 o'clock when it ceased but was recommenced at 2 p.m. and carried on till 4 p.m., the batteries replying vigorously.-

On the same day an order signed by H. E. Enver Pacha Minister of War was forwarded to H. E. Pertev Pacha, Commander of the 4th. Army Corps, in Smyrna, to arrest the subjects of belligerent powers and to send them to the places which were shelled. At 12.30 the police assisted by gendarmes proceeded to these arrests and imprisoned all the French, English, Belgians, Montenegrins and Serbs in Smyrna, at the Sultanié School where they were kept till ten o'clock, when those who could afford it were allowed to take up their quarters in such Hotels as indicated by the Authorities & under Guard.-

The belligerent subjects living in the villages were concentrated: those in Bournabat at Mr. Herbert Whittall's house, those in Boudjah at Mr. Gordon's house. H. E. Rahmy Bey Governor General did all in his power, under the circumstances, to moderate the orders received.

On Sunday the 7th. Inst. the bombardment was commenced at 10.30 a.m. carried on till 12

recommenced at 2.30 continued till 5 p.m. rebegan at 8 p.m. and stopped at 1.30 a.m.; the night attack being made to protect the mine sweepers that had endeavored to begin the clearing of the submarine minefields. On this day all the belligerent subjects of 60 years and over were allowed to return to their homes on parole that they would not leave them.-

On Monday 8th. Inst. the bombardment began at 10.20 and went on till 12.20 most of the firing being directed on the fort to which the military authorities had hastened new guns. It was recommenced at 4 p.m. and carried on till 5 when the fort ceased replying, and rebegan at 7.20 p.m. till 3 a.m. to protect the sweepers, one of which is reported to have been struck & sunk.-

I am well informed that during the bombardment of the batteries the Turkish officers & soldiers behaved most gallantly & their excellent moral never failed.-

When war was extended also between Turkey & the Allies, three English steamers, the "Biliter" the "Assiout" & the "City of Khios" which were then loading in the Port of Smyrna were captured by the Turks as *prise de guerre*. On Tuesday the military Authorities ordered these three steamers to be sunk, one by one, at the entrance of the Gulf of Smyrna & inside St. John's fort, in order to render navigation to the enemy still more difficult. A few shells had been fired by the warships on that direction, in view to prevent this measure from being carried out. On that same day it seems that the English Admiral signaled that he was ready to receive a parliamentary-delegate on board & to that effect Carabiber Bey, Director of Political Affairs in Smyrna accompanied by Mr. [George] Horton, American Consul General went on board. Pending their visit firing had naturally ceased but was resumed however after their departure à 3 p.m. & continued till 4 p.m.-

On Wednesday 10th. Inst. there was no bombardment pourparlers [*preliminary consultations*] going on between the Admiral through the American Consul and the Authorities and pending results the subjects of the belligerent powers were set free. On Thursday 11th. an understanding seems to have been arrived at, the conditions of which are not exactly known but which as far as can be ascertained with any authority, are as follows:

1. The town will not be occupied by the English-
2. The mines are to be raised-
3. The fort and all the batteries are to be dismantled-
4. Smyrna not to serve as an eventual port of refuge to the Austrian or German fleets-

and other conditions of less importance. According to the very best informations [*sic*]obtainable all the conditions were accepted except the 3rd. one, which was referred to Constantinople and a truce up to Saturday 13th., to be extended to Monday 15th. if necessary, agreed upon.-

So far nothing positive is known but there is a fear that this might not be accepted and that military operations might unfortunately be recommenced. All measures have been taken by H. E. the Vali of Smyrna for public security, conventional flags are flying over churches, hospitals etc. and so great is the confidence established that although arrangements has been made for neutrals to leave the town they have been abandoned.-

During the bombardment the whole of the population kept peaceful and quiet, watching from the quay of Smyrna and other prominent spots the great number of bullets which, missing their target, fell into the Sea, raising columes [*sic*] of water. Not one single casualty occurred owing to the

vigilance of H. E. Rahmy Bey, Governor General of the Vilayet, who personally & continually circulated across the town in a motor-car, on horseback or on foot.-

H. E. General Pertev Pacha of the 4th. Army Corps and H. E. Djemal Bey, Commander of the Smyrna Forces, with their staffs were every day on the spot of action & in the night when they returned to their barracks I spent some time in their company & much enjoyed their good temper after an active time during the day.-

I will report fully on the situation and give you the particulars of all *pourparlers* that have taken place as soon as I can get them in detail.-

Meanwhile I remain Yours [*sic*] Excellency's most obedient servant.-

Alfred van der Zee

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**Source:** DK/RA-UM/UM, 2-0355, "Konstantinopel/Istanbul, diplomatisk repræsentation", "Noter og indberetninger om den politiske udvikling, 1914-1922", "Verdenskrigen. Rapporter fra Smyrna. Nov. 1914-marts 1916"

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