



## THE LIBERATION OF BURSA FROM THE GREEK OCCUPATION ACCORDING TO ACCOUNT OF A BRITISH EYEWITNESS (10-11 SEPTEMBER 1922)

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### Abstract

Bursa was occupied by the Greeks on 8 July 1920. This occupation was met by great sadness in the Turkish Grand National Assembly and the assembly rostrum was covered with a black cloth. This black cloth was not uncovered during the occupation of Bursa which lasted two years, two months and two days. After the Greek army was routed in the Supreme Military Command War and left Anatolia, the 3<sup>rd</sup> army corps soldiers entered the city on the night of 10<sup>th</sup> September and on the 11<sup>th</sup> saved Bursa from the Greek occupation. When the city was saved from occupation the black cloth on the rostrum in the Turkish Grand National Assembly was removed. Bursa, which the Greeks left after widespread ravaging, healed its wounds and it became one of the important industrial cities of the Republican period. This article explores the events which occurred in Bursa on 10-11 September 1922, and were reported by Major H. G. Howell, the British member of the Inter-Allied Commission sent to Bursa on 10 September 1922 by General C. H. Harington, Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Occupation Forces in Turkey, to take the city from the Greek Occupation Forces.

### Key Words

*Bursa, Liberation of Bursa, Greek Occupation of Bursa*

## BİR İNGİLİZ GÖRGÜ TANIĞININ RAPORUNA GÖRE BURSA'NIN YUNAN İŞGALİNDEN KURTULUŞU (10-11 EYLÜL 1922)

### Özet

*Bursa 8 Temmuz 1920'de Yunanlılar tarafından işgal edilmiştir. Bursa'nın işgali Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi'nde büyük üzüntüyle karşılanmış ve meclis kürsüsü bir siyah örtü ile örtülmüştür. Bu kara örtü Bursa'nın işgal altında kaldığı iki yıl, iki ay ve iki gün süresince kürsüden indirilmemiştir. 1922 Başkomutanlık Meydan Muharebesi'nde Yunan ordusunun bozguna uğrayıp Anadolu'yu terk etmesinin ardından 10 Eylül gecesi 3. Kolordu askerleri kente girerek 11 Eylül günü Bursa'yı Yunan işgalinden kurtarmışlardır. Şehir işgalden kurtarıldığında Türkiye*

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*Büyük Millet Meclisi'ndeki siyah örtü de kaldırıldı. Yunanlıların çok büyük tahribat yaparak çıktığı Bursa zamanla yaralarını sararak Cumhuriyet döneminin önemli sanayi şehirlerinden biri olmuştur. Bursa'yı Yunan işgal kuvvetlerinden teslim almak üzere, İstanbul'daki Müttefik İşgal Kuvvetleri Başkomutanı General Harington tarafından İngiliz, Fransız ve İtalyan üyelerden oluşan bir komisyon kurulmuş ve bu komisyon 10 Eylül 1922'de Bursa'ya gelmiştir. Bu makalede komisyon başkanı İngiliz Major H. G. Howell'ın yazmış olduğu rapor ele alınmıştır.*

### **Anahtar Kelimeler**

*Bursa, Bursa'nın Kurtuluşu, Bursa'nın Yunanlılar Tarafından İşgali*



## INTRODUCTION: FROM ISTANBUL TO BURSA

According to instructions which were given by General C. H. Harington, Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Occupation Forces in Turkey, Major H.G. Howell, the British member of the Inter-Allied Commission who was sent to Bursa by General C. H. Harington to take the city from the Greek Occupation Forces, went to HMS "Sepoy" at 7 a.m. Sunday, the 10th September, 1922. After waiting two hours for the French and Italian members of the Inter-Allied Commission, they sailed at 9.15 a.m. from Istanbul to Mudanya. When they arrived at 12.30 p.m., they found that the rest of the commission had left for Bursa.<sup>1</sup>

They were informed by the general manager of the railway that no other train was leaving that day to Bursa, so Major Howell went to the Greek headquarters to try and obtain transport. However, they met with difficulties. Fortunately, Major Strover turned up about 1 p.m. and his influence with the Greeks enabled Major Howell to obtain seats for himself and his two orderlies-Corporals Gilbert and Benton-in two cars which were going on to Bursa.<sup>2</sup>

At 3.30 p.m. they left Mudanya, which was "crowded with refugees and absolute state of chaos". The road was blocked with vehicles, and "no one appeared to take any interest other than to protect his own skin". The villages along the route to Bursa were burning, having been set alight by the Greeks, as a Greek officer accompanying Major Howell told him.<sup>3</sup>

They arrived 3 miles outside Bursa at 5 p.m., where the headquarters of the Greek army was established. There, Major Howell met Lieutenant-Colonel Ciampi and Commandant Oliveur, the rest of the commission. They were demanding guarantees for the safety of Bursa from the Greek G.O.C., General Soumelas.<sup>4</sup> They also requested for rifles to arm the Turkish gendarmerie who were policing the city. Both requests were categorically refused by General Soumelas. Commandant Oliveur requested permission to bring up one French company from Mudanya to act as gendarmes, but

<sup>1</sup> FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, "Report on the Turkish Nationalist Offensive in Anatolia" by Major H. G. Howell, 15 September 1922. Also see FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, From Sir H. Rumbold to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, 25 September 1922. On 15 September 1922, Major H. G Howell sent his report to Lieutenant-General Sir C. H. Harington, Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Occupation Forces in Turkey, who, on 18 September 1922, forwarded Howell's report to Sir Horace Rumbold, the United Kingdom High Commissioner to Constantinople (Istanbul). Finally on 25 September 1922, Rumbold transmitted Howell's report to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

<sup>2</sup> FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, "Report on the Turkish Nationalist Offensive in Anatolia" by Major H. G. Howell, 15 September 1922. Also see FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, From Sir H. Rumbold to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, 25 September 1922.

<sup>3</sup> FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, "Report on the Turkish Nationalist Offensive in Anatolia" by Major H. G. Howell, 15 September 1922. Also see FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, From Sir H. Rumbold to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, 25 September 1922.

<sup>4</sup> Gotthard JAESCHKE; *Türk Kurtuluş Savaşı Kronolojisi, Mondros'tan Mudanya'ya Kadar*, Ankara: TTK Yayınları, 1989. ss. 192-193.



General Soumelas stated that this was impossible because he had no communication with Mudanya since the wires had been cut. Major Howell, on the other hand, agreed to this proposal upon the absolute understanding that the company would act as police only, and immediately vacate Bursa once the city was occupied by the Kemalists (Turkish army). Major Howell was not impressed by the staff, and he noted that they were all in a state of chaos from General Soumelas down.<sup>5</sup>

Because General Soumelas was not prepared to yield anything, they continued their journey to Bursa reinforced by Captain Kocher, the French Consul, and Captain Renedino, the commandant of Turkish gendarmerie, taking up their quarters at the *Hotel d' Anatolie* (Mme. Brotte). The commission immediately proceeded to the *commandant de la place* (Colonel Ciola-Kapulo) and demanded guarantees for the safety of the city, and arms for the gendarmerie. Colonel Ciola-Kapulo categorically refused either, and stated that he could not be responsible for anything. The Greek evacuation would be completed by 8 p.m., and he would then come to the hotel and hand Bursa over to the Inter-Allied Commission officially.<sup>6</sup>

The Turkish irregulars were pressurising the Greeks, and rife-fire was taking place all round the southern regions of the city. Colonel Ciola-Kapulo was in "*a pitiable state. His nerve had completely gone, and it was quite hopeless to expect him to do anything*". The European population and Christian elements had already been concentrated at a number of centres, such as the French and Spanish consulates, the French convent, *Hotel d' Anatolie* and so on, where guards of the gendarmerie had been posted to protect the inmates. The commission toured the principal streets in the French consul's car, "*and were received with cheers by the very few inhabitants who chose to poke their noses outside their houses*", which "*must have given them confidence*". The commission returned to the hotel to wait for the arrival of the *commandant de la place*.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, "Report on the Turkish Nationalist Offensive in Anatolia" by Major H. G. Howell, 15 September 1922. Also see FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, From Sir H. Rumbold to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, 25 September 1922.

<sup>6</sup> Mümtaz Şükrü EĞİLMEZ; *Millî Mücadele'de Bursa*, İhsan Ilgar (Yayına hazırlayan), Tercuman Tarih Yayınları, İstanbul 1981. ss. 146-159. FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, "Report on the Turkish Nationalist Offensive in Anatolia" by Major H. G. Howell, 15 September 1922. Also see FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, From Sir H. Rumbold to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, 25 September 1922.

<sup>7</sup> FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, "Report on the Turkish Nationalist Offensive in Anatolia" by Major H. G. Howell, 15 September 1922. Also see FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, From Sir H. Rumbold to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, 25 September 1922.



## I. THE EVENTS IN BURSA ON THE NIGHT OF SEPTEMBER 10-11

At approximately 6. 30 p.m., it was reported that the Greek soldiers who were living in the house adjoining the French consulate had set fire to the house, “*apparently hoping that it would not be discovered until too late to save the consulate*”. Fortunately, however, the fire was discovered and put out. Meanwhile, the Greeks had destroyed the bridges inside Bursa, and also blown up and set fire to their principal church, which was completely destroyed along with about forty houses. As Major Howell states, “*there is no doubt but that the Greeks did this themselves, as they were at that hour holding a line between the church and the Kemalists.*”<sup>8</sup>

At 7 p.m., the Greeks started retiring, and a lot of rifle fire occurred. Major Howell remarks that the Turkish inhabitants were aware of what was happening and were cheering as a result. By 8 p.m., the Greeks had left Bursa, and “*the streets full of Turks yelling themselves hoarse and waving flags*”. At 8.20p.m., the chief of the Turkish irregulars, Puskulsuz (Püşkülsüz İsmail Ağa)<sup>9</sup>, came to the hotel with his staff, and was received with much applause, “*the French members being particularly cordial*”. Major Howell pointed out that these irregulars were all good fighters, armed and very keen, and not particularly forgiving. He added that “*when introduced and our names and nationality mentioned, I was the only one they offered their hands to*”. Shortly afterwards the two leaders left in the French consul’s car, undoubtedly to inform the Nationalist advance guard that Bursa had been evacuated. Meanwhile the French and Italian flags had been hoisted over the hotel. Once the Greeks had evacuated the city, a similar Turkish flag was hoisted between the French and Italian flags. Major Howell remarks upon his regret that he had not brought a Union Jack.<sup>10</sup>

During one tour of the city, they met with numerous parties of Greek troops, who appeared to lack morale and energy. Major Howell remarked that “*very little effort on the part of the Turks would have led to an utter rout*”. A large demonstration of the inhabitants of Bursa turned up outside the hotel, when cheers were raised for the Allies. They believed that the city would have been destroyed had the Inter-Allied Commission not arrived.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, “Report on the Turkish Nationalist Offensive in Anatolia” by Major H. G. Howell, 15 September 1922. Also see FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, From Sir H. Rumbold to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, 25 September 1922.

<sup>9</sup> Mümtaz Şükrü EĞİLMEZ; *Millî Mücadele’de Bursa*, İhsan İlgar (Yayına hazırlayan), Tercuman Tarih Yayınları, İstanbul 1981. ss. 146-159.

<sup>10</sup> FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, “Report on the Turkish Nationalist Offensive in Anatolia” by Major H. G. Howell, 15 September 1922. Also see FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, From Sir H. Rumbold to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, 25 September 1922.

<sup>11</sup> FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, “Report on the Turkish Nationalist Offensive in Anatolia” by Major H. G. Howell, 15 September 1922. Also see FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, From Sir H. Rumbold to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston,



The night of the September 10-11 was quite calm, with very few rifle shots. Several bodies of cavalry passed through on the way to Mudanya, horses were small and exhausted. All Turkish shops were opened, the streets crowded, but there was little excitement. At 9.30p.m., the commission went to meet the advance guard of the Turkish troops. The 1<sup>st</sup> division under Colonel Nafiz Bey (Nafiz Bey), had their headquarters at the railway station. When he was requested by the gendarmes to ensure the safety of the lives and property of the Christian population he regretted he could not, as he expected the General Officer Commanding 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps, General Shukri Pasha (Şükrü Naili Paşa), to arrive at any moment. Nafiz Bey (Nafiz Bey) referred the commission to the General Officer Commanding, Major Howell noted that Colonel Nafiz Bey (Nafiz Bey) was most courteous. The commission then proceeded to the *Hotel de Ville*, where General Shukri Pasha (Şükrü Naili Paşa) had just arrived. He was also “*most courteous and obliging*”, and at once promised every assistance to protect the Christian population. He emphasised that the Europeans did not need to feel any alarm and that they were quite safe. He was very grateful to the Allies, as he considered their presence had saved Bursa.<sup>12</sup>

Major Howell saw about half of the 1<sup>st</sup> division, who “*must average 32 to 33 years of age, and look a hard-bitten lot*”. He commented on their excellent discipline, because they always saluted the Allied officers when they passed, as they always saluted their own officers. They also appeared well clothed and fed, although their arms were not too well looked after: “*the Mauser predominating, though I noticed many other pattern rifles. I saw also four guns, Krupp, of sorts, light field pieces. They were well looked after. The guns were drawn by horses; but the ammunition wagons, by bullocks. The officer and men wear no numbers, so it is difficult to find out their regiment, corps, &c.*”<sup>13</sup>

General Shukri Pasha (Şükrü Naili Paşa) was asked to communicate with Istanbul and request a destroyer to be sent to Mudanya to take the commission home. Now their work was over, there was no need for them to stay in Bursa. The general stated his regret that he was not able to, as his wireless installation had not yet arrived. He had received no information regarding the Inter-Allied Commission from Istanbul. The general was

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25 September 1922. Mümtaz Şükrü EĞİLMEZ; *Milli Mücadele’de Bursa*, İhsan İlgar (Yayına hazırlayan), Tercuman Tarih Yayınları, İstanbul 1981. ss. 146-159.

<sup>12</sup> FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, “Report on the Turkish Nationalist Offensive in Anatolia” by Major H. G. Howell, 15 September 1922. Also see FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, From Sir H. Rumbold to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, 25 September 1922. Mümtaz Şükrü EĞİLMEZ; *Milli Mücadele’de Bursa*, İhsan İlgar (Yayına hazırlayan), Tercuman Tarih Yayınları, İstanbul 1981. ss. 146-159, 208-214.

<sup>13</sup> FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, “Report on the Turkish Nationalist Offensive in Anatolia” by Major H. G. Howell, 15 September 1922. Also see FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, From Sir H. Rumbold to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, 25 September 1922.



given a list of the houses the commission wished to be guarded, and he at once gave orders to the Turkish *commandant de la place* to post regular soldiers to do so.<sup>14</sup>

Shukri Pasha (Şükrü Naili Paşa) told the commission that the Greek 11<sup>th</sup> division had “*failed to get orders to retire from Gemlik*”, and he “*hoped to capture the lot*”. The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Greek divisions were retiring to Panderma (Bandırma), and Shukri Pasha (Şükrü Naili Paşa) seemed to be certain that there would be no trouble between the local people and the Christians. There was heavy fire from the north at 7 p.m., and shells could be seen exploding over the hills of Mudanya. This was the commencement of the attack on the 11<sup>th</sup> division.<sup>15</sup>

Although the night passed quietly, gunfire from the north continued throughout the day. The commission called upon General Neury Bey (Nuri Bey), *commandant de la place*. He “*was most agreeable, and complied with all requests regarding the safety of Christians*”. He promised to issue a proclamation to the inhabitants of Bursa not to disturb the Christian population. The gendarmes were to arrest anybody found “*wandering about or in hiding*” and take them to the civil prison, where they would be protected. This promise was realised.<sup>16</sup>

The city was very peaceful. The commission received a “*most hearty welcome*” from the locals wherever they appeared. There were frequent demonstrations at the hotel. Shops were full of food of all kinds, and prices were 50 per cent cheaper than in Istanbul. There was no shortage of food. At 5 p.m. the first batch of prisoners arrived, approximately 700 of them, very depressed and sad-looking. The Turks seemed to be happy, but other than a little yelling, nobody attempted to harm them. The city was celebrating in the evening, but in a very orderly manner.<sup>17</sup>

The Italian Consul, M. Miazzi, reported that he had just visited a Turkish village, where the Greeks had slaughtered some sixty odd women and children, most of whom had been raped before being killed. The

<sup>14</sup> FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, “Report on the Turkish Nationalist Offensive in Anatolia” by Major H. G. Howell, 15 September 1922. Also see FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, From Sir H. Rumbold to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, 25 September 1922.

<sup>15</sup> FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, “Report on the Turkish Nationalist Offensive in Anatolia” by Major H. G. Howell, 15 September 1922. Also see FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, From Sir H. Rumbold to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, 25 September 1922. Mümtaz Şükrü EĞİLMEZ; *Millî Mücadele’de Bursa*, İhsan İlgar (Yayına hazırlayan), Tercuman Tarih Yayınları, İstanbul 1981. ss. 146-159, 208-214. Selahattin TANSEL; *Mondros’tan Mudanya’ya Kadar*, Cilt: 4, Başbakanlık Basımevi, Ankara 1974. ss. 195-196.

<sup>16</sup> FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, “Report on the Turkish Nationalist Offensive in Anatolia” by Major H. G. Howell, 15 September 1922. Also see FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, From Sir H. Rumbold to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, 25 September 1922.

<sup>17</sup> FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, “Report on the Turkish Nationalist Offensive in Anatolia” by Major H. G. Howell, 15 September 1922. Also see FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, From Sir H. Rumbold to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, 25 September 1922.



women had had their breasts cut off. This was later corroborated by Captain Kocher, the French consul, who also visited the scene of the atrocity.<sup>18</sup>

A telegram was sent to Istanbul via Mudanya requesting a destroyer to be sent there to take the commission to Istanbul. During the morning the commission called upon the newly-appointed Vali, who was “*most pleasant and very grateful to the commission for what they had done*”. At 5.30 p.m., about 2000 Greek prisoners of war arrived. As Major Howell remarked, “*the most pathetic part of the show was that 90 per cent of them were wearing their caps and shouting “Vive Kemal!*”, which pleased the inhabitants.<sup>19</sup>

## II. RETURN TO ISTANBUL

Early on September 14, the commission paid a farewell call on Colonel Neury Bey (Nuri Bey), who informed them that Shukri Pasha (Şükrü Naili Paşa) had gone to Panderma (Bandırma). The Greek army was penned in near Panderma (Bandırma), and the Turks were expected to round them up in a short time.<sup>20</sup>

The commission left Bursa at 2.15 p.m., and were at Mudanya at 5.30 p.m. Major Howell noticed several corpses along the road. It was obvious that the Greeks had made a short stand among the olive groves close to Mudanya. There were still 5000 refugees at Mudanya, mostly women and children; with no food and very little water. According to various reports, the Greeks had stampeded and rushed the ships which were taking refugees.<sup>21</sup> They pushed a large number of women and children into the sea. Major Howell saw their bodies still floating there. The Turks were guarding the refugees, but they were wishing someone would take them away. Mudanya was full of supplies, stores, etc. There were countless motor vehicles; many field guns and ammunition; numerous cattle.<sup>22</sup> The

<sup>18</sup> FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, “Report on the Turkish Nationalist Offensive in Anatolia” by Major H. G. Howell, 15 September 1922. Also see FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, From Sir H. Rumbold to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, 25 September 1922.

<sup>19</sup> FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, “Report on the Turkish Nationalist Offensive in Anatolia” by Major H. G. Howell, 15 September 1922. Also see FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, From Sir H. Rumbold to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, 25 September 1922. Mümtaz Şükrü EĞİLMEZ; *Milli Mücadele’de Bursa*, İhsan İlgar (Yayına hazırlayan), Tercuman Tarih Yayınları, İstanbul 1981. ss. 146-159.

<sup>20</sup> FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, “Report on the Turkish Nationalist Offensive in Anatolia” by Major H. G. Howell, 15 September 1922. Also see FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, From Sir H. Rumbold to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, 25 September 1922. Mümtaz Şükrü EĞİLMEZ; *Milli Mücadele’de Bursa*, İhsan İlgar (Yayına hazırlayan), Tercuman Tarih Yayınları, İstanbul 1981. ss. 146-159, 208-214.

<sup>21</sup> Mümtaz Şükrü EĞİLMEZ; *Milli Mücadele’de Bursa*, İhsan İlgar (Yayına hazırlayan), Tercuman Tarih Yayınları, İstanbul 1981. ss. 146-159.

<sup>22</sup> Mümtaz Şükrü EĞİLMEZ; *Milli Mücadele’de Bursa*, İhsan İlgar (Yayına hazırlayan), Tercuman Tarih Yayınları, İstanbul 1981. ss. 146-159. FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, “Report on the Turkish Nationalist Offensive in Anatolia” by Major H. G. Howell, 15 September 1922.





commission embarked at 6 p.m. on the French destroyer “Toures”, which arrived at Tophane (Istanbul) at 10.45 p.m.<sup>23</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Greek troops were left totally demoralised with not a drop of energy left. Major Howell remarked that they would “*be a negligible quantity for some time to come*”. He also noted that the Kemalists were “*well disciplined, very keen and a dangerous quantity*”. He was concerned that they might become boastful. However, he continued that they had behaved very well and had not allowed any atrocities to occur; although he had reservations about how long this would continue.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, “Report on the Turkish Nationalist Offensive in Anatolia” by Major H. G. Howell, 15 September 1922. Also see FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, From Sir H. Rumbold to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, 25 September 1922.

<sup>24</sup> FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, “Report on the Turkish Nationalist Offensive in Anatolia” by Major H. G. Howell, 15 September 1922. Also see FO371/7898/E10383/27/44, From Sir H. Rumbold to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, 25 September 1922.



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