

# BOMBARDMENT OF CORFU

Nikolaos Sokrates Politis (1872–1942), Greek Delegate to the League of Nations  
to Sir James Eric Drummond (1876–1951), Secretary-General of the League of Nations

Geneva, 8 September 1923

With reference to the communications which the Council have received from His Excellency M. Salandra, regarding the bombardment of Corfu, I have the honor to transmit to you herewith a summary of the report on this incident which was submitted by the Prefect of the island to the Greek government and has now been forwarded to me by telegram.

At 3 PM on 31 August, the Prefect was visited by the officer commanding the Italian naval squadron, accompanied by his orderly officer. The officer commanding informed the Prefect in writing that he intended to occupy the island, and drew his attention to the consequences which would follow any attempt at opposition on the part of the inhabitants or of the military forces. The Italian Consul-General, who had arrived meanwhile at the prefecture, translated the communication from the naval authorities.

The Prefect, anxious to consult his government as to what attitude he should take up, asked for a delay, which was refused. He was obliged simply to enter a protest and to state that, as the town was not in a position to defend itself, it would only oppose the occupation by passive resistance. He added that there were between six and seven thousand refugees in the old fortress, that the small garrison of Corfu was stationed in the barracks, where there was also an orphanage containing 350 children under English direction and a hospital which contained patients, and that there were also a few refugees in the new fortress. The Italian officers left the Prefect at 4.15 PM and informed him that at 5 PM three blank shots would be fired and would be immediately followed by a bombardment unless the white flag was shown on the old fortress. No white flag having been shown, the bombardment actually began at 5 o'clock. Between 30 and 35 shells were fired, causing a number of casualties among the refugees. The fortress batteries did not reply to the bombardment and the occupying force was landed without incident. The bombardment did not cease until the white flag was flown. The Prefect was arrested, held prisoner for two days, and finally expelled.

“The Corfu Crisis,” *World Peace Foundation* VI (1923):208–209.