THE GREAT WAR AND THE TRAGEDY OF ANATOLIA
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(TURKS AND ARMENIANS IN THE MAELSTROM OF MAJOR POWERS)

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It is becoming more evident from primary documents preserved in the various European, American and Ottoman archives, now made available to researchers and the public, that long before the outbreak of the First World War the major Powers, such as Russia, Britain, France, Germany and others, were vying with one another in order to gain ascendance and influence in the Near and Middle East. The main country which in both the economic and military sense, became their arena of conflict, before, during and after the war, was the Ottoman Empire.

The ambitions of these Powers were directed towards infiltration into that empire in order to exploit its vast and practically untouched resources, and to incorporate it into their orbit of economic and other influence. One of the main resources that made this venture attractive to them was oil. They were so keen to possess this rare liquid mineral that they were perfectly willing to indulge in acute competition, even to the extent of armed conflict, in order to possess the vast oil resources of the Middle East. In fact, one of the chief causes of the First World War was this internecine economic competition among such Powers.1

It was mainly for economic reasons that the major expansionist Powers, from the early part of the nineteenth century onwards, began to send to the Ottoman territories travellers, missionaries, and various other agents, in the guise of diplomats, and through them to map the areas of strategic and economic importance, and to establish relations with Ottoman Christian and Muslim communities which they could exploit and use in their designs. It did not take them long to discover

and to establish relations with Ottoman Christian and Muslim communities which they could exploit and use in their designs. It did not take them long to discover that they could easily influence and use some, if not all, of the leaders of the Greek, Armenian, Assyrian and Kurdish communities.

They employed various methods in bringing these communities under their influence: religious antagonisms, economic boons, the protégé system of affording protection to them, human rights issues, and finally promises of autonomy, even of independence. Most of those promises were false, as these Powers were not so much interested in the Ottoman communities as in the lands and territories which they occupied. Nevertheless, some of the leaders of these communities were deceived by such promises, and consciously or not, allowed themselves to be manipulated by these Powers in their quest to dismember the Ottoman Empire. This ultimately led to the tragedy of Anatolia. This book attempts to trace the main events that contributed to that tragedy, which brought catastrophe to all the peoples of Anatolia, mainly to the Turks, other Muslims, and Christians, including the Armenians.

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INTRODUCTION

The Turks\(^1\) began their influx into Anatolia (Asia Minor) after having overwhelmingly defeated the military forces of the Byzantine Empire at the battle of Malazgirt (Manzikert) in 1071 CE\(^2\) and laid the foundations of the Ottoman Empire,\(^3\) which, in its heyday, stretched over three continents - Asia, Africa and Europe. The conquests of the Turks brought under their sway many non-Muslim peoples, including Christians, Jews and others.

The Ottoman Empire was organized on Islamic principles which allowed 'People of the Book' or 'of the Scripture', (\textit{Ahl el-Kitab}), such as Christians and Jews, to retain their own religion and become subjects of the Muslim ruler, provided that they agreed to certain conditions. According to Muslim law and practice the relationship between the Muslim state and the non-Muslim communities, to which it extended its tolerance and protection, was conceived as regulated by a pact called \textit{dimma}; those benefiting from it were known as 'People of the Pact' (\textit{Ahl al-dimma}), or more briefly \textit{dimmi} (\textit{zimmi}). By the terms of his contract with the \textit{dimmi}, the Muslim ruler guaranteed their lives, liberties and properties, and allowed them to practise their religion. The \textit{dimmi}, in return, undertook to pay the special poll tax (\textit{cizye}), and the land tax (\textit{haraf}), and agreed to certain restrictions that placed them legally at a lower status to that of their Muslim fellow subjects.\(^4\) Thus the \textit{dimmi} were allowed the toleration of the Islamic state, subject to certain conditions, and enjoyed a considerable measure of


\(^2\) C.E. stands for Common Era.

\(^3\) For the genesis and early development of the Ottoman Empire, including the Seljuk and Mongol periods, see H.A.R. Gibb and Harold Bowen: \textit{Islamic society and the West}, vol. 1, London, 1956, part 1, pp. 21-22; Kinross, p. 78; B. Lewis, p. 12; Shaw and Kural, vol. 1, pp. 2 ff.

\(^4\) A.S. Tritton: \textit{The Caliphs and their non-Muslim subjects}, Oxford, 1950, pp. 5-17; Gibb and Bowen, 1, part 2, pp. 207-208.
communal autonomy, whereas polytheists and idolaters were not entitled to such toleration.5

The policy of the Sultans towards each community was determined by the circumstances in which it had come under their control. Once determined, these policies were rarely modified for the sake of uniformity. The Ottoman government usually dealt with the dimmi of all denominations as members of a community (millet), not as individuals. The status of the individual dimmi derived exclusively from his membership of a millet (community or nation).6 The internal organization of the dimmi was determined by their own religious laws. According to the traditional view, millets were religious corporations with written, elaborate, charters. In fact, they were practically autonomous bodies in all that concerned religion, culture, economic and social life. Each millet was presided over by its highest ecclesiastical dignitary (Patriarch or Chief Rabbi), known also as the Millet Bayi (Head of the Community), who was elected by the community, and held office at the discretion of the Ottoman government. He was responsible to the government for the administration of the millet for which he acted as the recognized intermediary. His authority, besides his religious functions, included the control of schools, and even the administration of certain branches of civil law. He enforced discipline on his flock with the support of the government. These special functions assigned to the ecclesiastical leaders gave the millets, as institutions, a religious character.7 Despite this communal separation all social classes, institutions and communities were linked together to form the Ottoman society through the auspices of the Sultan, the keystone of the system, to whom all subjects owed allegiance.8

As Ottoman power spread into the Balkans, some of the Orthodox Christians adopted Islam, joined the Muslims, and played a leading role among the gazi (early Turkish warriors).9 However, there was no general Islamization of Christians - least of all by compulsion - within Ottoman territories, as confirmed by Douglas Dakin.10 The traditional Islamic society was egalitarian. It never developed anything like the caste system of Hindu society to the east of it, or the aristocratic privileges of Christian societies to the west.11 The Turks adopted a conciliatory policy towards the Christians from the beginning. The Balkan peasants soon began to appreciate that conquest by the Muslims meant, for them, liberation from Christian feudal Powers whose many exactions and abuses had worsened their situation, whereas Ottomanization conferred upon them many benefits, such as law and order.12

Like any other state, the Ottoman Empire strove to establish relations with other states. In February 1536 the empire signed an agreement with France, which permitted the French to trade throughout the Ottoman Empire. By this agreement the Ottoman government recognized the jurisdiction of French consular courts within the empire, with an obligation to carry out consular judgments, if necessary, by force. The Ottomans granted complete religious liberty to the French in their empire, and gave them the right to keep guard over the Holy Places, which amounted to a French protectorate over all the Catholics in the Levant.

This ominous treaty marked the beginning of the Capitulations, a system of privileges granted to foreign Powers. It allowed the exchange of permanent envoys between the Ottoman Empire and France; it enabled the latter to become, and for a long time to remain, the predominant foreign influence at the Bab-i Ali (Sublime Porte);13 and to act as the official protector of all the Europeans established in the Ottoman Empire until the enactment of the Capitulations with England in 1583.14 In granting to a foreign Power what came to be extra-territorial and supra-state or supra-national, privileges within the frontiers of the empire, a precedent was established, fraught with problems and dangers, that would bedevil the Ottoman Empire for centuries, and would ultimately contribute to its downfall.15

5 Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (eds.): Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire-the functioning of a plural society, vol. 1, the central lands, New York, 1982, pp. 4-5.
6 Gibb and Bowen, 1, part 2, pp. 207-212.
7 For further information on the millet system, see Gibb and Bowen, 1, part 2, pp. 207-212; Tritton, pp. 5-12; Paul Wittek: The rise of the Ottoman Empire, London, 1936, chapter iv.
8 For a different version of the millet system, see Braude and Lewis I, pp. 13 and 74; Benjamin Braude: 'Foundation myths of the Millet system' in Braude and Lewis 1, pp. 141 ff; see also Remal Karpat: Millets and nationality: the roots of the incongruity of nation and state in the post-Ottoman era, in Braude and Lewis, I, pp. 141 ff.
9 Kinnivan, p. 25; see also George Ansakov: 'Gregory Palamas among the Turks and documents of his captivity as historical sources', Sperchion 26 (1951), pp. 104-118; see also Kunt: 'Transformation of Zimm into Asketi' in Braude and Lewis, 1, p. 57.
11 B. Lewis, p. 52; cf. William Miller: The Ottoman Empire and its successors, 1801-1927, 4 vols., London, 1966, p. 21, who claims unfairly that the Muslims regarded the Christians as an 'inferior caste'.
12 Kinnivan, p. 42.
13 Bab-i Ali referred to the Ottoman government, as later, Quai d'Orsay referred to the French government, and Whitehall to the British government.
15 For a review of the different Capitulations granted to various Powers, giving them rights of protection over Ottoman subjects, see FO 371/3410/132748; see also FO 78/50: Arbuthnot to Fox, 5.5.1806 and 6.6.1806, and FO 195/294, 493 and 507; FO 524/8.
It is generally believed that the reign of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent (1520-1566) marked the zenith of the Ottoman Empire. Thereafter elements of weakness crept in, and began the slow and steady decline that ensued, particularly after the accession of Süleyman's son, Selim II (1566-1574). There were many causes for that decline, military, economic, political and social. The Ottomans were at war with European adversaries for over forty years in the sixteenth century, between their second siege of Vienna (1685) and the Treaty of Jassy (1792). They fought with Austria, Russia, Venice, and others. As a result of these wars they not only lost vast territories, but also, by the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca (21 July 1774) they were compelled to concede to the Russians the right to intervene legally on behalf of the Sultan's Christian subjects in a manner that opened the way to increased European influence in Ottoman internal affairs.

It is during this period of decline that some of the leaders of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire began to have closer relations and to intrigue, with Western Powers. Following the conquest of Constantinople (29 May 1453), which was renamed Istanbul, Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II (1451-1481) decided to organize the Armenian millet, as he had already organized the Orthodox Christians, and issued a firman in 1461, appointing Hovakim (Ovakim), the Armenian bishop of Bursa, to be Patriarch of all the Armenians within the Ottoman Empire. Turco-Armenian relations were founded on mutual trust, respect and sympathy, which were to last for centuries. Mehmet, one of whose official palace physicians was an Armenian named Amirtovlat, saved 70,000 Armenians from the Crimea, where they had been exiled by the Byzantines, and settled them on the coasts of the Sea of Marmara near Istanbul. He placed them under his protection; recognized their religion, rights and liberties, and converted them into a most trustworthy and loyal element in the Ottoman state; so much so, that, in time, they became known as the 'teba-i sadika-i Saljane' (loyal subjects of the Sultan), or 'millet-i sadika' (loyal community). However, during the period of Ottoman decline, some of their leaders began to intrigue with the major expansionist Powers, mainly with Russia.

Tsar Peter 'the Great' (1689-1725) used them in his grandiose schemes to invade the Caucasus the overwhelming majority of whose people was Muslim. The Armenians, whose dependence on Russia, and expectations of help from it, had begun to grow through the first incursions of Russia into the Caucasus, organized a military force to assist Peter. The Tsar, however, made lavish promises to them which he did not keep. Under Catherine II (1762-1796), her supreme commander Prince Potemkin dreamt of an Armenian kingdom under Russian control, but ultimately he, too, let them down.

Despite their disheartening experiences, Armenian secular and religious leaders supported Russia in its invasion of the Muslim Khanates in the Caucasus and in the overthrow of their Muslim rulers. At the same time, some of the Armenians acted as spies for the Russians against their Muslim rulers, the Persians. When the city of Derbend was under siege by the Russians in 1796, its Armenian residents sent to the invaders information on the town's water supply, enabling the Russians to defeat the Khan. An Armenian Archbishop, Argutinskii-Dolgorukov, proclaimed publicly in the 1790s his hope and belief that the Russians would 'free the Armenians from Muslim rule'.

There are other examples of Armenian ecclesiastical support for the Russians in the early 1800s. Both the Armenians and the Georgians, especially those who had relatives in Persia (Iran), or did business there, continued to be valuable sources of information for the Russian officials, which had some effect on Russia's political and tactical decisions. After the death of Argutinskii-Dolgorukov, the aspirant to his post, Daniel, who was backed by Russia as a candidate to the throne of Catholicos of the Armenian Church, provided the Russians with information. Tsar Alexander I (1801-1825) specifically sought out Catholicos Daniel's advice, and in 1808, he rewarded Daniel with the Order of St. Anne, first class, for his espionage services to the Russians. Over the next few years, as Russia fought to extend its frontier to the Kur and the Aras, Armenians continued to send messages...
to Russian officials encouraging them to occupy Muslim-ruled Khanates and save the Armenians from 'Muslim oppression'.

In many ways, the enmity which developed between the Armenians and the Muslims had, at its root, Russian expansion into the Caucasus. After the conquest of Muslim territories by the Russians, the Armenians were encouraged to move into Russian-held territory. For example, after the Russian occupation of Georgia, Tsar Paul I (1796-1801) lured the Armenians there in 1800 by offering the Armenian leaders attractive terms to settle in 'Russian territory'. Armenians also migrated to the Khanate of Karabag (Karabagh) after its occupation by the Russians.

The earliest Armenian aspirations for autonomy, or independence, were inspired by the ideas of the French Revolution (1789), particularly by the Greek rebellion (1821). The success of the Greeks in establishing their own state stimulated the Armenians' national sentiments and taught them the lesson that, for a minority to realise its ambition for independence, the intervention of foreign Powers was indispensable. Yet, in Anatolia the Armenians did not have the advantages which the Greeks and other Balkan peoples had. They were scattered throughout the country; nowhere did they constitute a majority of the population; they were divided into hostile sects (Gregorian, Catholic and Protestant); they lacked administrative capacity; and worst of all, they allowed themselves to be manipulated by the major Powers, particularly by Tsarist Russia, who vied with one another to despoil the Ottoman Empire. These Powers considered the Armenians merely as pawns in their designs for self-aggrandisement. But the Armenian militants were determined to get their own way, at whatever cost. Therefore, they tried to capitalize on any crisis which the Ottoman Empire faced in the nineteenth century.

The long struggle between Muslims and Armenians began in earnest during the Russo-Persian and Russo-Ottoman wars of 1827-29, when the Armenians felt that their opportunity had arrived. In these wars the Armenian subjects of the Ottoman Empire faced in the nineteenth century.

During the Ottoman-Russian war of 1828 many Gregorian Armenians in the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire helped the Russian commander Paskievich to capture Erzurum, which was restored to the Ottoman Empire by the Treaty of Edirne (Adrianople) of 14 September 1829. Some of the Ottoman Armenians showed their loyalty to the Russian cause by acting as spies for the Russians, and reporting on Ottoman troop movements. When the Russian army left Anatolia, thousands of Armenians followed them.

Earlier, the Russian occupation of the northern provinces of Persia had brought, within its frontiers, the monastery of Etchmiadzin, in the Khanate of Erivan, the seat of the primate of all the Armenians, the Catholicos. Russian diplomacy succeeded in reviving the dwindling authority of the Catholicos, who had been eclipsed by the Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul. Thenceforth, these princes became the loyal and subservient agents of the Tsars. Nicholas I (1825-1855), however, who coined the phrase 'Sick Man of Europe' to describe the Ottoman Empire, repeatedly asserted his status as supreme protector of the Christians within the Ottoman Empire. Under his rule, Armenian hopes for national emancipation were doomed to failure. The Russian authorities ruled the

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26 Ibid., fn 6, pp. 49-50.
27 Ibid., pp. 175-75.
28 Ibid., pp. 11-12, fn. 254.
26 Churches Committee on Migrant Workers in Europe: Christian minorities in Turkey, Brussels, September 1979, p. 7.
Erivan province, where 80 per cent of the population was Muslim before 1828, like any other colonial territory in their domain. In fact, the majority of the population in Transcaucasia, including the Erivan province, was Muslim and anti-Russian; but Russia, with the help of Armenians, suppressed ruthlessly the Muslims' periodic revolts.

The Crimean War (1853-46), in which the Ottoman Empire sided with the West against Russia, gave another opportunity to the latter state to incite the minorities in that Empire to rebellion, ostensibly posing as their spokesman, but actually trying to weaken and dismember the Ottoman Empire. During this war some of the Armenians in the eastern provinces of the Empire actively supported Russia and spied on its behalf, despite the fact that in June 1853 the Sultan had sent a firman to Patriarch Hagop, confirming the ancient ecclesiastical and administrative privileges of the Armenian community. In March 1854 a number of Armenian agents were arrested in Kars. Nevertheless the majority of the Ottoman Armenians remained loyal to the Ottoman government, but the Russians maintained relations with a number of them, and lost no opportunity in agitating among the Armenian militants.

Armenian writer E. Aknouni claims that his coreligionists were deceived by the Tsar, who had promised that the 'Armenian provinces' of the Ottoman Empire—i.e. the eastern provinces where the overwhelming majority of the population was Muslim—would be constituted into a separate kingdom under Russian protection. The Armenians had waited in vain for the fulfilment of that promise. When the Tsars needed volunteers, they showered the Armenians with compliments; but when the time for action came, they closed their eyes and ears to Armenian demands. The disillusionment of Catholicos Nerses Asdarakes, who had helped the Russians with his Armenian volunteers against the Persians, is well known. For his loyalty he received from Tsar Nicholas I only a letter of thanks. The Russian government did not hesitate to use violence to save itself from the 'impotent demands' of this elderly cleric. When Nerses suddenly died in 1857, it was widely believed that the Russian government had him poisoned in order to buy with him the Armenian programme of reforms. Yet many Armenians persisted in their loyalty to Russia, and their Catholicos at Echmiadzin did not hesitate to use his influence, even on the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, in favour of the Russians.

Nevertheless in the first part of the nineteenth century Turco-Armenian relations were relatively harmonious, and the Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul had some influence in government circles. The period following the Ottoman-Russian war of 1828 had ushered in a reform movement in the Ottoman Empire, known as the Tanzimat (Regulation or Organization), which was inaugurated by an edict under the title of Gülhane Hatt-i Şerifi (Noble Edict of the Rose Chamber), of 3 November 1839. This edict was confirmed and reinforced by the İslahat Hatt-i Hümayunu or İslahat Ferma (Imperial Edict of Reforms), of 18 February 1856. Both edicts aimed at expanding the reforms, which had already begun in the military sphere, to other fields as well, and to secure equality and guarantees of life, liberty and estate to the Christian population of the Ottoman Empire.

As a result of this reform movement the Armenian millet was given a constitution that was sanctioned by the Sultan on 17 March 1863. It was 'a remarkable document, institutionalizing a high degree of autonomy', according to Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis. It inaugurated a 'golden age' for the Armenian millet, some of whose militant leaders began to abuse their new privileges and strove for the establishment of an imperium in imperio. The Russians, who were not happy with the reforms, as they believed these would

10) Edgar Cowanl: Cehbi Rusyanın Türk ve Arım şekil osyaları (the conspiracies of Tsarist Russia in Turkey), translated into Turkish by Orhan Ariman, Ankara, 1967, pp. 255-254; see also Esra Parnak şahzad: Ermeni konumlandırın ihtilal hareketleri ve besledikleri eylemler (the revolutionary activities of Armenian committees and their aspirations), Ankara, 1961, pp. 1641.
14) Braude and Lewis, i, p. 29; see also Azarian, pp. 90-91.
spread to their own Armenian subjects, used the Armenian constitution as a pretext to intensify their interference in Ottoman Armenian affairs. 8

So far the Armenians did not seem to have any ambition to break away from the Ottoman Empire; whilst the Turks continued to have almost unlimited confidence in, and got on very well, with them. 9 However, a number of Armenian intellectuals had begun to give expression to their community’s discontent against both the Sultan and the Tsar, and to develop national aspirations and political ambitions from the 1850s onwards. 10 This was also the period when the Ottoman state had bestowed many rights, privileges and opportunities on urban Armenians, almost in all walks of life. They could climb to the highest administrative offices of the empire. A number of them became civil servants, governors, general inspectors, and even vezirs (viziers). From 1850 to 1876 every Grand Vezir (Sadræazam-Prime Minister), and Foreign Minister had an Armenian adviser. In 1868, for the first time in Ottoman history, an Armenian named Krikor Agaton was appointed to the post of Minister of Public Works. 11 There were also two Armenian generals in the Ottoman army in 1862, employed in the War Office, and the Admiralty. 12 A number of Armenians became Pashas, 13 the highest dignity in the empire. This is confirmed by Armenian writers Migirditch Dadian, 14 and Mikael Varandian. 15

Those Armenians living in rural areas near towns also benefited from these reforms; but others inhabiting villages in remote areas shared the fate of their Muslim neighbours, who were sometimes subjected to the lawlessness and depredations of nomadic tribes, mainly the Kurds. The more remote and inaccessible a rural settlement, the more the opportunity arose for brigands to make life a misery for the sedentary people, depending also on the weakness of the government at the time. In addition to the scourge of some of the nomadic tribes, the proselytising carried on among the Gregorian Armenians by the missionaries 16 contributed to much unrest in the country. First the Catholic missionaries, then the Protestants had begun a campaign of indoctrination among the Gregorians which created many problems. 17

In the words of an Armenian writer, the introduction of Catholicism and Protestantism among the Armenians had more ruinous effect on the nation than anything else ever had. 18 The Armenian millet was thus divided by these agents of the major Powers into three hostile sects the members of whom were constantly at each other’s throats, which needed Turkish intervention in order to prevent them from exterminating one another.

Aubrey Herbert relates that there were free fights between the Latins, the Greeks and the Armenians (especially in Jerusalem), in which ‘the Turks interfered to save lives and restore order’. He describes, how, once going alone to the Holy Sepulchre he found himself in the centre of two contending groups, who were ‘beating each other with crosses, sticks and any weapon that came handy’. The Turkish captain, sitting aloof and aloof above the tumult, sent a few soldiers into this fight, who pulled Herbert out of it. He was a man of ‘long military experience and covered with scars’, and he spoke to Herbert of his many battles. When Herbert asked him how he had lost his eye, the captain replied: ‘I lost my eye doing what I sent my men to do for you today, preventing Christians from killing each other’. 19

The Catholics in Turkey were protected by France and Austria, the Protestants mainly by Britain and USA, and the Orthodox by Russia. All these Powers aimed at increasing their influence in the Ottoman Empire, ostensibly in order to protect their protégés, but actually in order to promote their own interests. The Armenians were thus divided by the agents of the major Powers for their own ulterior motives. Russia was using the Gregorian Armenians to descend to the warm waters of the Mediterranean and cut off the British route to India; hence it was pressing the Catholics of Echmiadzin to stop the progress of the ‘heresy’ of reforms and to clear the empire of it; 20 Britain was using the Protestant and Gregorian Armenians to preserve its lifeline to India by containing Russia and restricting French influence; and France was making use of the Catholic

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8 Charles N. Elliot: Turkey in Europe, London, 1900, p. 395; Djemal Pasha, p. 245.
10 Soonel 3, p. 200.
12 Brande and Lewis, I, p. 332.
13 Artinian, p. 78.
14 Dadian, pp. 805-828.
17 Chopourian, op. cit.; Artinian, pp. 40 ff.
18 Varriogian, p. 37.
Armenians for its own interests in the Near East. Consciously or not, the major Powers were, directly or indirectly, encouraging enmity between the different Armenian sects. They were also using the Armenians in order to intervene in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire by pretending that they were interested in the problems of Christian minorities, but in fact, they were jockeying with one another for influence in, or for a portion of, that empire when the 'Sick Man of Europe' demised. Their frequent interventions contributed greatly to the upsurge of Armenian militance, and to the inception and intensification of Armenian insurrection and terrorism which, in time, became the root-cause of what came to be known as the 'Armenian Question'.

In an interesting memorandum drawn up on 16 June 1880, Lieutenant-Colonel C. Wilson, British Consul-General for Anatolia, described the Armenian character as 'extremely complex and difficult to understand'. He observed that the peasantry were 'sober, intelligent, frugal, laborious, and greedy of gain, but entirely without education, immoral, fanatic, bigoted and completely under the influence of an illiterate, ignorant and sensual priesthood, opposed to all education and advancement'. The townsmen were 'shrewd, intelligent, egotistical and proud, with a slight superficial education'; but there was always a small percentage of well-educated men capable of filling, with advantage to the state, most of the official appointments in the provinces.

'Neighbourhood, long custom, and certain religious relations had inclined the Armenians towards Russia', remarked Wilson, who went on, 'The Armenians knew well that their shrewdness, their love of falsehood, of espionage, and of intrigue; and their unbounded covetousness were highly appreciated by the Russians as a political means, and the Armenians boasted of being an essentially political people. Their tendency was to magnify everything, and this appeared in their political aspirations, which were not deep or real'. Wilson believed that their sympathy with Russia could only be removed 'by positive boons on the part of England by opening for them means of making money'. The Armenian character, he went on, 'is wanting in stability, courage and self-reliance, and generally in those qualities necessary for self-government, e.g. the mismanagement of their constitution, now twenty years old, one of the most liberal ever granted to a subject nation. Wilson's memorandum was partly an exaggeration, for, the Armenians also are known to be intelligent, hard-working, friendly and hospitable. They easily adapt themselves to their environment very quickly. They are faithful and loyal to their friends, beliefs and traditions, although sometimes they waver in these characteristics depending on the vagaries of the situation. They are also described as the 'most vigorous and pushing people; envied and ill-spoken of'. They are sharp men of business, thrifty and able to drive a bargain; but they are also argumentative, quarrelsome and great "know-alls". Perhaps Harold Armstrong has been unfair in describing them as 'crafty, grasping, secretive, acquisitive, and dishonest, making a great pretence of religion, but using it as a cloak for treachery and greed'.

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On the other hand David Marshall Lang, an Armenophile, ascribes to them 'secretiveness and marked acquisitive tendencies', which have combined 'to render them unpopular among some of their neighbours'.


62 FO 421/104/Conf. 4367, no. 2469 Goschen to Granville, 22.6.1880, enclosing copy of a confidential memorandum by Lieutenant Colonel C.W. Wilson on 'Anatolia and the necessary reforms', dated 10.6.1880.
65 Armstrong, p. ix.
CHAPTER 1

GENESIS OF THE 'EASTERN QUESTION'

Turco-Russian war of 1877-78

Towards the latter part of the nineteenth century the decline of the
Ottoman Empire became acute. The expansionist Powers, taking advantage of this decline,
waited impatiently to share the carcass of the dying 'Sick Man of Europe'. In order
to hasten his demise, they encouraged the growing nationalist movements in that
empire, particularly in the Balkans. As a result there were rebellions in Herzegovina
and Bulgaria in the 1870s, with the covert or overt assistance of some of these
Powers, who vied with one another for the control of the Near and Middle East, in
general, of the Balkans, Istanbul and the Straits, and later (through the
Armenians), of the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire in particular, in
order to satisfy their interests.1 The only impediment that kept them from
delivering the final blow was the possibility that, if the Ottoman Empire did
collapse, their rivalries would provoke a conflict of incalculable proportions.
However, if that empire had to be maintained, it had to be kept weak; for a
powerful empire might destroy the fabric of interests, commercial and otherwise,
that the Powers won out of the decline of the Ottoman state.2

Despite particularly Britain's attempts to preserve the Ottoman Empire as a
bulwark against Russian Panslavist expansion,3 guarding the route to India; by
the early 1870s the finances of that empire grew desperate. It could neither pay nor
organize properly its administration and army. Its ever growing taxes,4 (plus
internal and external agitation), were a spur to local revolts. Such revolts were
especially provoked by Russia for its own ulterior motives.5 It was such revolts, first
among the Serbs of Herzegovina, that sparked off the crisis leading to the
Ottoman-Russian war of 1877-78.

1 F.G. Maier: Cyprus from earliest times to the present day, London, 1968, pp. 124-5; Pierre
3 Anderson, p. 58; Bryce, p. 519; R.W. Seton Watson: Disraeli, Gladston and the Eastern Question,
London, 1933, p. 137.
5 Seton-Watson, pp. 17 and 254; W.F. Monypenny and G.E. Buckle: Life of Benjamin Disraeli the
6 Karal, p. 93.

Before the outbreak of that war, as early as September 1876, the leaders of the
Armenian Gregorian community in the Ottoman Empire, taking advantage of the
weak position of the Ottoman government following its embroilment in the
Balkans, began to whip up a movement of discontent among the Armenian masses.
British Ambassador Elliot was informed by an Armenian of high position that the
agitation then going on had been provoked by Russian intrigues.7 When the
Armenian Patriarch Archevique Nerses Vartabedian called upon the Ambassador
on 6 December to express the hope of his community that the forthcoming
Istanbul Conference (12 December 1876-20 January 1877), which would discuss
the situation in the Balkans, would procure for the Armenians the same privileges
the Porte would concede to the provinces that had risen against the Ottoman
government, he warned the Ambassador that his people were much excited, and
that if it was 'necessary to rise in insurrection' in order to secure the sympathy of
the European Powers, there would be 'no difficulty in getting up such a
movement'.8

The leaders of the Caucasian Armenians, too, supported such action. They
began to appeal to Tsar Alexander II (1855-1879) for assistance on behalf of their
'Turkish brethren'. The initiative in the Caucasus was taken in December 1876 by
Krikor Ardsrounie, editor of the Armenian paper Mushag (Worker), published in
Tiflis. He called upon the Armenians to revolt against 'the infidel', and to rely
upon Russia.9 Another Armenian intellectual, Raffi (pen name of Hagop Melik-
Hagopian), advocated the use of arms for throwing off 'the Turkish yoke' - a policy
which had been 'so successfully used in the Balkans'-but warned his fellow-
countrymen not to expect assistance from Europe. The major Powers only used
the 'Armenian Question' as a counter in their intrigues with one another. Other
Armenian intellectuals put forward similar views; but their appeals and petitions at
first made little impression.10

Despite the fact that the Armenian leaders and deputies in the short-lived
Ottoman parliament of 1877 promised to stand by the Turks in their war with
Russia, which broke out on 24 April 1877, when the Russian armies, commanded
mainly by Russian-Armenian generals, occupied Erzurum in June, some Ottoman
Armenians joined the invaders, acting as guides, while many others collaborated
with the invading Russian armies.11 However, when the Russians were forced to
retreat, the Armenians hastily changed sides and infuriated a British journalist,
who remarked: 'A more selfish, narrow-minded, mean, cringing race I fancy does

7 FO 424/41/Conf. 2968, no. 59: Elliot to Derby, 29.9.1876, p. 39.
8 FO 424/46/Conf. 3003, no. 336: Elliot to Derby, 7.12.1876.
11 W.E.D. Allen and Paul Muratoff: Caucasian battlefields., 1828-1921, Cambridge, 1953,
pp. 148-49.
not exist'. In some remote parts of Anatolia, Armenian armed bands took advantage of the absence of all able-bodied Turkish men and troops, to attack unprotected peaceful Muslim villages.

Russian officers of Armenian origin, such as Lieutenant-General Lazarev at Kars, and Major Kamsaragan at Erzurum, encouraged the local Armenians to enter the Russian service. Major Kamsaragan, a former Russian acting Consul in Van, became the Chief of Police of the town during the Russian occupation. Together with his assistant, Lieutenant Nicolosov, also an Armenian, he enlisted several Ottoman Armenians into the local police force. The presence of the Russians in the region encouraged the Armenian collaborators to maltreat their Muslim neighbours. On the other hand, the advance of the Russian armies across the Balkans created among the Armenian intellectuals and clergy in Istanbul, a belief in the Russian ascendance to power and in the ultimate doom of the Ottoman state. They began to calculate the speedy fall of the Ottoman ‘dominaton’, and to turn their eyes towards its successor.

The initial eagerness of the Armenians to assist the Turks was reversed after the capitulation of the Ottoman army under General Osman Pasha at Plevne (Plevna), and following the efforts of Armenian Russophils to induce their coreligionists to support Russia. The Armenians then decided to address a petition to the Tsar, requesting his help for the realization of Armenian aspirations. The Patriarch, too, who had pro-Turkish tendencies at the beginning, was compelled to change his mind. He visited the Russian Commander-in-Chief, Grand Duke Nicholas, at San Stefano (Yeşilköy), and later sent him a delegation under Migirditch Khrimian, a former bishop of Van, with a letter in-Chief, Grand Duke Nicholas, at San Stefano (Yeşilköy), and later sent him a delegation under Migirditch Khrimian, a former bishop of Van, with a letter

The Congress of Berlin

The Armenians also submitted a ‘règlement organique’ to the Congress of Berlin, which met from 15 June to 13 July 1878, asking for the establishment of an ‘Armenian province’, comprising all the country between the Russian and Persian frontiers, and the Black Sea. They warned that, if the congress refused to listen to their ‘just demands’, they were resolved to agitate until they obtained what they demanded, and if they could not succeed without foreign aid, they would place themselves completely in the hands of Russia, and even prefer annexation to it to remaining under Turkish rule. They also sent delegations to St. Petersburg, Paris, London, Rome, Vienna, and ultimately to Berlin, to follow the congress. However, at the Berlin Congress they did not obtain what they asked for; nevertheless Britain prevailed upon the congress to include an article in the Treaty of Berlin, Article 61, which read:

The Sublime Porte undertakes to carry out, without further delay, the amelioration and reforms demanded by local requirements in the provinces inhabited by the Armenians, and to guarantee their security against the Circassians and the Kurds. It will periodically make known the steps taken to this effect to the Powers, who will superintend their application.

There was a significant difference between Article 61 of the Treaty of Berlin and Article 16 of the Treaty of San Stefano, which was imposed by Russia on a defeated Ottoman Empire on 29 February 1878. Under the provisions of the latter, the Ottoman Empire had given an undertaking to protect the Armenians, and to carry out reforms in its eastern provinces, with the proviso that, the withdrawal of the Russian army of occupation would depend on the actual carrying out of these provisions. Under the provision of the Berlin Treaty, the Ottoman Empire gave its pledge to the six signatory Powers, to carry out the same provisions, but there would be no Russian army of occupation whose withdrawal would be subject to their implementation. Thus, Article 61 of the Treaty of Berlin definitely placed the Armenian reforms under the guarantee of the signatory

12 Charles N. Borman: The Times, 11.10.1877; see also Garabed Hagopian: The Armenians and the Eastern Question.
14 AP 36, LXXIII, 1878, 4122: Lavard to Derby, 18.12.1877, p. 579.
15 Moser, pp. 2526.
16 Longuet, p. 151; Shaw and Nunat, p. 188.
Powers, who thereby explicitly obtained the right to interfere in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire.²¹

The Armenian delegation was not pleased with this outcome, and on 13 July they lodged a formal protest against Article 61, claiming that they had been deceived, and that the Armenian people would never cease from crying out until Europe gave their legitimate demands satisfaction²². According to Turkish historians, the last part of this protest was as follows: The Armenian delegation will return to the East, carrying with it the lesson that, without struggle and insurrection, nothing can be achieved.²³ With great difficulty did the British Ambassador in Istanbul at the time, Sir Austen Henry Layard, persuade some of the Armenian leaders that the Cyprus Convention, which was signed between England and the Ottoman Empire on 4 June 1878, whereby Britain was allowed to occupy and administer temporarily the island of Cyprus in return for defending Turkey-in-Asia against Russia, would be beneficial to the Armenians, as it gave Britain the right to ask the Ottoman government to carry out reforms in Anatolia.²⁴

Neither Patriarch Nerses, nor the other Armenian leaders, could realise, however, that the British government was much less concerned with the Armenians than with the country they inhabited, which served as a buffer-zone between Russia and the route to India, through the Mediterranean. The main reason why British Foreign Secretary Lord Salisbury was instrumental in the insertion of Article 61 in the Treaty of Berlin was to deprive Russia of the modus vivendi of Balkanising the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire for its own ulterior motives.²⁵ It is interesting to note here that Captain Emilius Clayton, British Vice-Consul in Van, wrote in July 1879 as follows:

Remove the Turkish population from Eastern Turkey, transfer into the region some Armenians from abroad, amalgamate the Nestorians with the Armenians, keep the local Kurds in order by force... and thus create an independent Armenian state..., and establish a paramount British control over it.²⁶

²¹ Moser p. 27.
²² Aşkouni Le problème Arménien, pp. 88 ff.
²⁴ Turkey No. 4 (1880), nos. 118/1, pp. 154-56.
²⁶ Şinşir, I, pp. XXX-XXXVII.

**Gunboat diplomacy**

Following the signature of the Treaty of Berlin various attempts were made by the major Powers, particularly by the British Conservative and Liberal governments, for the introduction of reforms in the Ottoman Empire to benefit the Christians, especially the Armenians.²⁷ One of their earliest unsuccessful attempts was directed towards the establishment of an autonomous Armenian province, which encouraged the Armenian militants to provoke rebellions that almost led to an armed intervention by the major Powers. When, in April 1880, the Liberal Party came to power in London, the new British Prime Minister, William Ewart Gladstone, showed greater zeal than his predecessors, Lords Beaconsfield (Benjamin Disraeli) and Salisbury, in inducing the Powers to put joint pressure on the Ottoman government so that it might succumb to their demands and introduce wide-ranging reforms in eastern Anatolia. But owing to economic reasons the Ottoman government was in no position to fulfil its promise, as the reforms demanded would entail the expenditure of vast sums of money, and other resources, which a bankrupt Ottoman Empire could not afford. The empire was practically bleeding to death because of the Capitulations, the protégé system, and the public debt; nor would the Powers lend it any money. Therefore the danger of intervention threatened the very existence of the Ottoman state.

This danger forced Sultan Abdülhamit II to concentrate all power in his hands. It also encouraged the Armenian militants to intensify their intrigues with Russia,²⁸ and to prepare for revolt in order to procure an autonomous, or semi-independent, Armenian province in eastern Anatolia, where the Armenians were overwhelmingly outnumbered by the Muslims. This was confirmed by the French Vice-Consul at Erzurum, who reported that Russian intrigues were actively at work to foment a rising among the Armenians.²⁹ The Russians were continuing to make use of a number of 'local (Armenian) characters to spy and agitate for them'.³⁰

Following the financial collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the early 1880s the so-called 'Armenian Question' became more acute. This led to a deterioration in Turco-Armenian and Anglo-Turkish relations, and to the disillusionment of the Armenians with both Britain and Russia who were vying with each other for Ottoman favours in order to cater for their own interests rather than for the interests of the Armenians. Admittedly, both Salisbury and Gladstone did their utmost to procure the joint intervention of the major Powers in the domestic

²⁷ See for example FO 424/86, nos. 2 and 8, p. 183; Layard to Salisbury, 31.7.1879; Salisbury to Layard, 18.1879.
²⁸ FO 424/76, ap. 134, pp. 108-9; Biliotti to Salisbury, 26.10.1878; see also Turkey No. 10 (1879), p. 7: Trotter to Salisbury, 4.12.1878, about Russian intrigues.
²⁹ BA, indicator S-I, doc. no. 2, internal, 55755/185-35, carton 50: Ottoman Foreign Minister to Russian Ambassador, 20.4.1879.
³⁰ FO 424/106, no. 138, pp. 269-270; Everett to Trotter, 12.3.1880.
affairs of the Ottoman Empire, but without success, as the interests of those Powers, which included Britain and Russia, were at conflict.

Genesis and development of Armenian militant organizations

As early as January 1882 there were strong indications in Erzurum (northeastern Turkey) that some Armenian militiants were making preparations for insurrection. This was confidentially reported to Lord Dufferin, British Ambassador in Istanbul, by British Consul Major William Everett, who forwarded the copy of a translation and facsimile of a document widely circulated among the Armenians in the city and all over the province. It was an enlistment form to a secret army. Every man who signed this paper became the sworn soldier of a league whose object was the 'freedom of the country'.

By June the insurrectionary movement among the Armenians was intensifying. British Consul Everett believed that the movement emanated from Russian Armenia, and was secretly encouraged by Russia. The idea was spread among the Armenians that, if they wished to be delivered from 'oppression', they must look to Russia alone for aid, and Major Kamsragan (of Armenian origin), the Russian Consul in Van, a city in eastern Anatolia, had an active role in the disseminaton of this idea. There were many Russian agents perpetually travelling throughout the country and provoking the Armenians to revolution.

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While he was in London Everett told the new British Foreign Secretary, Lord Granville, that Russia was taking measures 'to prepare the way for an occupation by using the elements of disturbance existing in the country which were favourable to the promotion of her ends'. These consisted of a steady endeavour to foment the existing discontent among the Christians and other 'oppressed' races, with a view to step in as a saviour, when anyone of these races, goaded into action, should have brought upon themselves the vengeance of the 'dominant race'. This was well illustrated by the conduct of Russia towards the Armenians. Towards those Armenians within its territory it had shown a liberty previously unknown to them; a liberty, though, which the Armenians of Turkey had only been permitted to hear of. That liberty, however, was only in theory, for, in May 1883 the Tsar had already embarked upon a policy of repression and Russification among the Armenians.

Thereafter the Armenians were subjected to all kinds of persecution at the hands of the Russians.

In the Ottoman Empire, too, since their appeal to Russia and the Congress of Berlin, the Ottoman government had become very suspicious of them, and had begun to look upon some of their leaders as dangerous elements. The lot of the Armenians naturally became much harder than it had been. They, in turn, intensified their activities and established various committees all over the world, particularly in the European capitals, with branches in the Ottoman Empire. The Hntchak (Bell) committee was set up by Avedis Nazarbek (Nazarbekian or Nazarbekiantz) in Geneva in 1887, based on Marxist-Socialist principles. This was followed by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, the Dashnaktsasun (Hai Hghapokhakian Dashnaktsasun), which was established in the summer of 1890 in Tiflis, on national socialist principles, by Kristapor Mikaelian, Stepan Zorian and Simon Zavarian, all educated in Russian universities. The aim of both organizations was the establishment of the independence of 'Turkish Armenia' (eastern provinces), and ultimately its transformation into a national socialist state.

Avedis Nazarbekian, the founder of the Hntchak organization, admits in an article published in the Contemporary Review of April 1896 that the Hntchak was a secret organization, and as such it 'conspires'. According to him, British public opinion regarded the Hntchak party as the enemy of its people. They believed that the Armenian militiants were anarchists, opposed to law, fanciers of trouble, disorder and massacre, in short, 'criminals', declared Nazarbekian, but he himself claimed that the Hntchak party was 'patriotic in the best sense'. These were words coming from one of the most ruthless Armenian militant leaders who, in the relative comfort and safety of his base in Geneva, later in Paris and London, did not care an iota as to what happened to the innocent ordinary Armenian and non-Armenian people as long as he and his followers got what they wanted, a pretext for insurrection.
For the major Powers to intervene in the Ottoman Empire and to set up an Armenian state. That pretext would be supplied by Armenian rebels, or terrorists, by provoking the Muslims in most unimaginable and satanic ways so that they would retaliate and enable the Armenians to cry out that 'the barbarous Muslim Turks are massacring the innocent Christian Armenians'.

Louise Nalbandian, an Armenian writer, asserts that the programme of the Hintchak party was directed towards 'provocation and terrorism' in order to incite the feelings of the people against their enemies and derive benefits from their retaliation. 'Agitation and terror were needed to elevate the spirit of the people'. They also exterminated what they considered as 'the most dangerous' of the Armenian, Turkish and other elements, inimical to their cause, and did not hesitate to murder in cold blood their opponents and wealthy Armenians who did not contribute to their funds. To assist them in carrying out all of these terrorist acts, they organized an exclusive branch specifically devoted to performing acts of terrorism, reveals Nalbandian.

Thus, with the establishment of the Hintchak society the destiny of the Ottoman Armenians passed into the hands of a few Russian Armenian anarchists which, in the words of Leo, an Armenian writer, constituted a turning point in their history, for the Armenian millet was about to be made an instrument in a bloody contest that would span over many years. In this contest not only terror, but propaganda, and a campaign of lies and vituperations, were the main instruments used by Armenian militants who, through their repeated clamours, to convince the Christian West that they were being persecuted by the Muslim Turks because of their religion.

It is interesting to note here that, in August 1889, the British Consul in Erzurum, Colonel Chermside, reported to British Ambassador William White in Istanbul that 'statements to do deliberate attempts to exterminate the Armenians and the wholesale recruiting of hares with kidnapped girls, are exaggerations so gross as to be ridiculous'. In the same month, Thomas Boyadjian, British Vice-Consul in Diyarbakir, who was himself an Armenian, replied to inquiries by Ambassador White about allegations that a massacre had been ordered by Sultan Abdilhamit in that area, by saying that he could 'most positively state that the Sultan had never given orders for massacres. Other statements emanating from Armenian sources, declared Boyadjian, were 'either exaggerations or distortions'.

He also reported that, on a number of occasions, Armenians settled their personal differences by exterminating one another and then putting the blame on the Muslims. For example, in the summer of 1889, the Armenian chief of the village of Blidar in the Bisheri sub-district of eastern Anatolia, who had become a Catholic, used the services of a banal chieftain of a nearby Kurdish village to exterminate his Armenian opponent and family, and put the blame on the Muslims. This incident was confirmed by Thomas Boyadjian.

In September 1889, British Vice-Consul Devey reported to Consul Chermside that the Armenian militants caused incidents between local Muslims and Armenians, particularly in areas where the Armenians were in a tiny minority. They killed a number of Muslims, and enraged the rest, with the hope that the latter would retaliate on the Armenian minority and thus cause an outcry that the Armenians were being massacred by 'fanatical Muslims'. These allegations often found an echo in the Western press. For example, The Daily News (London) of 11 December 1889, claimed that an Armenian of the village of Zizaan was roasted to death by the Muslims. British Vice-Consul Devey called such stories 'absurd'.

While Armenian militance was spreading, some wiser counsels among the Armenian community were not lacking. In August the Armenian vicar in Bitlis, Chorene Vartabed, in a conversation with British Consul Chermside, deprecated the outcry raised abroad and the exaggerated stories published. He did not consider the general condition hopeless, and referred to the times of a past generation when there was 'no foreign intervention, no oceans of press pity poured out on the Armenians of Turkey', and when their forefathers still managed 'to live under Turkish rule quite happily'.

Towards civil war in Anatolia

Between 1890 and the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, Armenian militants, both the Hintchakists and the Dashnakists, caused many incidents in the Ottoman Empire, which amounted to a civil war. Particularly following the establishment of the Dashmaksutiun, Armenian affairs were shifted to more action; to bring about a long drawn-out fight against Ottoman 'tyranny' they called it, and to create in the country a continuous revolutionary state in order to procure European
intervention. The Dashnak leaders ordered their members 'to shoot the Turk everywhere, under any circumstance, to kill the reactionaries, those who violate their oath and Armenian spies, and to take revenge.' Strangely, the Dashnakists, in the beginning, directed their action only to the Ottoman Empire; ignoring the fact that the larger portion of what they termed 'Greater Armenia' was in the Caucasus under Russian domination, and a smaller portion in Persia.  

In time this Armenian terror organization ended up in the hands of a minority of foreign-inspired, self-seeking, violent opportunists, with limited ability and doubtful patriotism. Their main aim was to provoke armed rebellions all over the Ottoman Empire in order to 'spill blood to obtain freedom', which would bring fatal results to the Armenian and Muslim villagers and inhabitants of cities, resulting in mutual massacres. They also began to murder their own people, particularly the rich Armenians, in order to terrorize them into contributing to the funds of their organization. As a result of these acts of terror, in November 1890 the Ottoman government set up the Hamidiye territorial cavalry modelled on the Cossacks in Russia, consisting mainly of Kurdish members, to act as a frontier defence force and for use against Armenian insurgents.  

This desperate action made the situation worse, because the majority of the Kurds were antagonistic to the Armenians for obvious reasons. The latter were striving to establish an 'independent Armenia' on territory where the overwhelming majority of the population was Muslim, as indicated in the following tables:

**Ottoman population statistics of the eastern provinces (1890)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Muslim</th>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>Armenian</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Erzurum</td>
<td>673,297</td>
<td>4,864</td>
<td>136,618</td>
<td>653</td>
<td>815,432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sivas</td>
<td>959,735</td>
<td>75,324</td>
<td>151,674</td>
<td>2,710</td>
<td>1,169,443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diyarbakir</td>
<td>492,101</td>
<td>1,935</td>
<td>73,226</td>
<td>52,563</td>
<td>619,825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mamuretül Aziz (Harput)</td>
<td>446,379</td>
<td>971</td>
<td>87,864</td>
<td>3,013</td>
<td>538,227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Van</td>
<td>179,380</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>67,792</td>
<td>11,968</td>
<td>259,141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bitlis</td>
<td>309,999</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>119,132</td>
<td>8,348</td>
<td>437,479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>3,040,891</td>
<td>83,095</td>
<td>636,306</td>
<td>79,255</td>
<td>3,839,547</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This contrasts with the following statistics produced by Vital Guinet in 1892, which were regarded as 'strictly impartial' by P.I.D., Geographical Section of the British Foreign Office.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Muslim</th>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>Armenian</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Erzurum</td>
<td>500,782</td>
<td>3,725</td>
<td>135,087</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>639,616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sivas</td>
<td>839,514</td>
<td>76,068</td>
<td>170,433</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,086,015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diyarbakir</td>
<td>337,644</td>
<td>9,440</td>
<td>79,189</td>
<td>45,233</td>
<td>471,506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mamuretül Aziz (Harput)</td>
<td>504,946</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>69,718</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>575,314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Van</td>
<td>247,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>79,998</td>
<td>103,002</td>
<td>430,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bitlis</td>
<td>257,862</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>131,390</td>
<td>9,162</td>
<td>398,624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2,687,748</td>
<td>90,093</td>
<td>665,815</td>
<td>157,419</td>
<td>3,601,075</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Meanwhile Russian Armenia had become a centre for arms collection and revolutionary organization aimed at the Ottomans. The activities of the revolutionaries were greatly facilitated by their relationship to the Armenian Church. As a body, the Church crossed the Ottoman-Russian border. Using the facilities of the Church, the revolutionary clerics easily kept up communication between the revolutionaries in southern Caucasus and Anatolia, and between the Russian government and the revolutionaries. The presence in the Armenian revolutionary movement of priests and bishops brought together the two foci of Armenian identity: Church and nationalism. Church officials also gave practical assistance to the revolutionaries; for example the monastery of Derik, on the Persian side of the Ottoman-Persian border, was organized by its revolutionary abbot, Bagrat Vartabed Tavaklian, or 'Akki', into an arsenal and infiltration point for the Armenian revolutionaries in the Ottoman Empire.  

In April 1891 British consular agent Thomas Boyadjian reported to Ambassador White that 'a dangerous movement' was discerned among the

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17 Dskari H.H. Dashnagtzoutian, 1892; Papasian, pp. 9-15; Lauger, I, pp. 155-58; Koca$, pp. 128-135; Nalbandian, p. 168; Varandian, pp. 80-84.
18 Sonvel 1, p. 120.
Armenians, who were procuring arms to a considerable extent and talking of the need for rebellion. They were confident that England, France and Russia, they did not know which, was coming to their aid that spring. The situation was made worse by the Armenians in disguise from Russia, or other countries, who were actively engaged in exciting the deluded Armenians in the country to a seditionist uprising. But the ordinary Armenian peasant wished to have nothing to do with them, and yet he became a reluctant, compelled victim of their intrigues.

Isabella Bishop, who travelled through the country in 1891, observed that the Armenian peasant was 'as destitute of political aspirations as he is ignorant of political grievances... not on a single occasion did I hear a wish expressed for political or administrative reform, or for Armenian independence'. David G. Hogarth talks of Armenians in the provinces who wished that the 'patriots' would leave them alone. All these people were not consulted. Whether they liked it or not, they were marked out by others for the sacrifice; their lives were the price to be paid for the realization of the 'fantastic national-socialist state of the fanatics', Hogarth declares.

In eastern Anatolia almost a reign of terror was brought about as a result of the reckless behaviour of a handful of Armenian agitators and assassins. They were even quarrelling among themselves and killing one another, usually the more violent ones murdering, or eliminating, the more passive Armenian leaders who were not in favour of violence. It was natural for the Turks to react to this agitation of the Armenian militants. Every Turk, from the Sultan to the private soldier, had a frantic terror of secret societies and plots, because most of them remembered the part played by the Greek and Bulgarian committees, and the disastrous intervention of Russia in 1877, and of other Powers. To them it now appeared that the loyal nation no longer deserved that title; the Armenians were as seditious as the Greeks and the Bulgarians; they had secret committees and revolutionary printing presses; they were arming and conspiring to massacre the 'good Muslims'. The Armenian militants had definitely planned a great conflagration.

Towards the latter part of 1892 leaflets through the post, bombs in public places, murders of officials, particularly of tax collectors and postmen, became the order of the day, and inevitably led to reprisals by the Muslims. In May 1893 the British Vice-Consul in Van, M. Newton, had an interview with one of the ringleaders of the Armenian terrorists, who said that he would use any means to attain his object, which led Newton to declare that such men were 'dangerous to be let loose in the country'. British Consul Graves also witnessed a similar incident. One of the Armenian terrorist leaders told him that he was prepared to use any means, even the taking of life, to attain his end. He was paid for his work by funds from abroad, and the intention of the movement was to cause such disturbances in the country as should attract attention to the 'oppressed condition of the Armenians', and compel the foreign Powers to intervene.

The Armenian revolutionaries were often violent and desperate people and very often mutilated the bodies of their victims. In June 1893 they murdered a number of Armenian 'informers' near the Armenian convent of Yedi Kilise, and nailed the ears of their victims above the door of the convent. They even used boys under fifteen to assassinate people they wanted to get rid of. Hajik, an Armenian lawyer, was assassinated by a fifteen-year old Armenian boy named Armenak. Sabotage, arson, and robberies were galore. They attacked foreign representatives in order to put the blame on the Turks and to attract the public opinion of Europe to their side. French Consul Carlier in Sivas, who had opened the Consulate to Armenian refugees, was shot by an Armenian youth, who, when challenged, declared that he wanted to kill the Consul so that this would have great repercussions in Europe, for they would have published the news that the French Consul, in whose house the Armenians had taken refuge, was assassinated by the Turks.

The Reverend Dr. Cyrus Hamlin, founder and first president of Robert College (now Bosphorus University) in Istanbul, who lived in Turkey and knew the Turks and the Armenians very well, in a letter he wrote from Lexington, USA, and published in the Boston Congregationalist on 23 December 1893, observes that an Armenian revolutionary party was causing 'great evil and suffering to the Turks and the Armenians very well, in a letter he wrote from Lexington, USA, and published in the Boston Congregationalist on 23 December 1893, observes that an Armenian revolutionary party was causing 'great evil and suffering to the

1. AP, 4578, XCVI, Turkey No. 1 (1892), C. 6032: Boyadjian to White, 13.4.1891, p. 47.
5. Elliot, p. 399; Langer, p. 159.
6. AP, Turkey No. 3 (1896), C. 80115: Newton to Ford, 25.5.1893, p. 104.
7. Ibid., Graves to Ford, 6.5.1893; Ford to Rosebery, 9.5.1893, pp. 105-106.
8. Ibid., no. 144: Rosebery to Nicholson, 14.6.1893, pp. 128-29.
known, the Armenian calmly replied, 'It appears so to you, but we Armenians are
determined to be freed'. Hamlin urged in vain that this scheme would make the
very name of Armenia hateful among all civilized people. He replied: 'We are
desperate; we shall do it'. 'They are cunning, unprincipled and cruel', remarked
Hamlin about the Armenian terrorists. 'They terrorise their own people by
demanding contributions of money under threats of assassination—a threat which
has often been put into execution'. The revolutionaries were of Russian origin;
Russian gold and craft governed it.°4

Naturally, as a result of all these incidents many Armenians were arrested. In
February 1894 A.J. Arnold, the secretary of the Evangelical Alliance, declared that it
was 'false and ridiculous' to state that there were 2,000 Armenian Christians in
prison, for the sake of righteousness. There was undoubtedly 'a strong sedition
movement' among the Armenians against Turkish authority, but the leaders were
only nominal Christians. The Armenians were simply agitating to hand 'Armenia'
over to Russia. 'To found an Armenia in Turkey is what no sane man, who knows
the facts, would wish', declared Arnold, 'and no just man, looking at the masses of
people who have the same right as the Armenians to live, would approve. It will be
foolish to identify ourselves with an agitation which is denounced by impartial and
well-informed observers as silly and criminal. He observed that those who were
agitating for the division of Turkey were shrewd enough to make use of every
persecution of Christians to influence Protestant Britain against Turkey, but the
missionaries were all agreed about 'the wickedness of the Armenian revolutionary
movement'.°5 The motto of the Armenian revolutionaries was:

There will be many things wanted for the deliverance of our mother
country. We will want time and money, and we will want blood... To
accomplish our work many will have to endanger their lives, be
persecuted and fall victims, whether it be those who wield the sword
or work with the pen.

'Has this Armenian trouble been, after all, a persecution, on religious grounds,
of law-abiding, God-fearing men, or has it been a civil and military prosecution,
of reckless, misguided men for high treason and murder?'°6 inquired Arnold.°7

A comprehensive report prepared by the British Embassy in Istanbul in March
1894 revealed that the Armenian revolutionary movement was not indigenous as
its active chiefs in the Ottoman Empire were Russian Armenians. The organizers of
the movement belonged to a small band who had come into the country in 1892,
after meeting at Kars to form a definite programme of operations. Their
organization among the Armenians of the Empire had been that of circles of
different degrees of intelligence and knowledge. Members of the lower circles
knew neither the chiefs, whom they obeyed, nor any large number of their fellow
conspirators.°8 The immediate aim of the revolutionaries had been to incite
disorder, bring about inhuman reprisals, and so provoke the intervention of the
Powers. Hence the field chosen for their operations was not the district where the
Armenians were most numerous, but a region where the Armenian element was
overwhelmingly outnumbered by the Muslim element of the population. The
active support of this movement in the Ottoman Empire had been drawn from
among the ignorant, or from the young men possessing some slight smattering of
education.

They were so ruthless and satanic that in April 1894 they even tried to
assassinate their own Patriarch. According to a report which the French
Ambassador in Istanbul, Paul Cambon, sent to Casimir Perrier of the French
Foreign Office, on 27 April, two days earlier (on Sunday), Patriarch Ashikian,
while returning to the Patriarchate after a religious ceremony at the Kumbak
Church, was attacked by an eighteen-year old Armenian youth, who tried to shoot
him with a revolver. He failed because the weapon was out of order. The would-be
assassin, who was said to belong to the Hintchak terrorist organization, and who
had come from Cyprus, was arrested.°9

By the middle of 1894 the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire were in a
tumult as a result of the Armenian insurrectionary movement. Incidents erupted
all over the country, some very serious, involving the death of many innocent
people on both sides, and the destruction of much property. At last the Armenian
revolutionary leaders had got what they wanted: Muslim reprisals and the pretext
for the major Powers to intervene in the Empire. It did not matter to them that
innocent people were being made to suffer for the realization of a programme
drawn up by a group outside the Empire, a group which had never been given any
mandate whatever by the Armenian community.

Thereafter incidents occurred at Sasun, Istanbul, Trabzon, and in many other
places of the Empire where practically a civil war was raging between the detested
Armenians and the Turks. These incidents, particularly the Sasun revolt provoked
by the Armenian militiamen in the summer of 1894, were echoed to the West by
them and their supporters, as 'Armenian massacres'. However, a number of
impartial observers laid much blame on the Armenian militants and their patrons.
A British M.P., Sir Ellis Ashmeed Bartlett, in a pamphlet he published in February

°4 Turkey No. 6 (1896), C. 8106, no. 214, pp. 38-9: Boston Congregationalist, 23.12.1893.
°6 'Armenia and the Armenians', The Presbyterian, 23.2.1894.
°7 Turkey No. 6 (1896), Currie to Kimberley, 27.4.1894, p. 53; see also Esat Uras: Tarihle Ermeniler ve Ermeni meselesi (Armenians and the Armenian question in history). Ankara, 1950, p. 473.
°8 Ibid., Currie to Kimberley, 27.4.1894, p. 53; see also Esat Uras: Tarihle Ermeniler ve Ermeni meselesi (Armenians and the Armenian question in history). Ankara, 1950, p. 473.
imposed upon by a gigantic deception', Bartlett declared and added: 'In particular, proprietors and editors of the great English journals have incurred a very serious responsibility by printing, as they recklessly have done, every tale—many of them so absurd and impossible as to bear their contradiction on the face of them—which has been poured forth by the Armenian manufactory of lies'. Such 'specimens of manufactured atrocities' all came from Armenian sources and were published in the British press, for example the Westminster Gazette of 15 December 1894 and 7 January 1895.8

Another British source, Captain Charles Boswell Norman, who was sent to the Ottoman Empire as an officer in the Royal Artillery, observes in a manuscript of 189541 that thither to the British had 'only the Armenian version of the disturbances, embellished with hysterical utterances of their English collaborators'. He maintained that England had yet to learn that 'the disturbances in Asia Minor are the direct outcome of a widespread anarchist movement of which she has been the unconscious supporter'. Noting that so much had been written 'for the avowed purpose of proving the Armenians to be a model of all meekness and the Turk a monster of cruelty', he deemed it necessary, 'in the interests of peace, truth and justice', to point out the aims of the Armenian revolutionaries. He recorded that the Hincchak committee was directly responsible for all the bloodshed in Anatolia for the past five years'. He described as untrue allegations that the Muslims had started the incidents, and said that they were commenced by the Armenians. He referred to a manifesto, dated 19 November 1895 and addressed to the Armenians of the Adana region, which exhorted them as follows: 'Armenians, arm yourselves now for the battle... Let us draw our swords and fall on the foe'. British journalists, he claimed, were duped by the Armenians. Noting that 'the touching story of Armenian matrons throwing their children over the cliff on Antokh Dogh (Sasun), and their jumping over themselves to avoid dishonour, is an absolute myth'. He wrote that, not only were the Armenian population figures 'very much exaggerated', but also the number of victims.72

Many of these Armenian falsehoods were also revealed during the sessions of the Sasun Inquiry Commission, which the Ottoman government established in December 1894, consisting of British, French and Russian representatives, in addition to Muslim ones.73 Although the report of the commission put an equal


71 Turkey No. 1 (1895), no. 119; FO 424/178/Conf. 0683, no. 479.
blame on the Ottoman authorities, as well as on the Armenian insurgents, the British consular delegate H.S. Shipley, in an accompanying memorandum, observed that 'the stories of the wholesale butchery of the Armenians by the Turkish soldiers, especially the slaughter of Armenian women in the church at Geligüz, and the convent of Surp Merapa in Talori, were without foundation'.

As for the toll among both Armenians and Muslims, in the numerous incidents that took place between 1894 and 1896, no reliable statistics are available. Most Armenian sources claim that 400,000 Armenians were killed; but they do not mention the number of Muslims exterminated by the Armenians. The Ottomans estimate the number as not more than 14,000. The figure must lie somewhere between 10,000 and 20,000 Armenians killed, which is a far cry from 400,000 Armenians 'massacred'. It is also estimated that between 5,000 and 10,000 Muslims were killed, most of whom were innocent people who became victims of Armenian extremism.

After these incidents many attempts were made by both the Ottoman government and some of the moderate Armenian leaders to reconcile the Muslims and the Armenians. From 1896 to 1908, although Armenian incidents flared up intermittently with every major crisis, or event, such as the Ottoman-Greek war of 1897, the German Emperor's visit to Istanbul in 1898, the eruption of the 'Cretan and Macedonian Questions', and the attempt by Armenian militants to assassinate Abdilhamit in 1905, nevertheless these simmered on until the rapprochement between the Armenian revolutionaries and the Young Turks, who cooperated together, and with other malcontent elements of the Ottoman Empire, in bringing about the Young Turk Revolution of July 1908.

CHAPTER 2
THE YOUNG TURK REVOLUTION AND ITS AFTERMATH

Young Turks and Armenians

Following the restoration of constitutional order in the Ottoman Empire as a result of the Young Turk Revolution, Turks and Armenians, dazzled for the time being by the slogans of the revolution such as 'liberty, fraternity and equality', began to show hopeful signs of rapprochement. In August 1908 M. Sabahgoulian, a Caucasian Armenian and president of the Hinchak Society of the Ottoman Empire, declared at the Sourp Yervartoun Church of Pera (Beyoğlu) that thenceforth the Hinchakists would terminate their revolutionary activities and do their utmost 'for the development and prosperity of our country'. At the same time E. Aknouni, another Russian Armenian and spokesman of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, the Dashnaksutun, announced:

One of the primary duties of the Dashnaktsagans will be to protect, or defend, the Ottoman constitutional regime, to work for the unification of the Ottoman nationalities, and to cooperate with the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP of the Young Turks).

At first the relations, particularly between the Young Turks and the Dashnakists, were cordial. This is confirmed by Cemal Pasha, who recalls that Malotimian (Aknouni), one of the Armenian leaders he met in Istanbul in 1908, frequently spoke to him of the Russian danger which hung over the Armenians' head. The Hinchakists and the Reformed Hinchakists, however, 'most of whose leaders', according to Cemal Pasha, 'had been bought by the Russians, sought no rapprochement with the Turkish committees, and aimed at an Armenian state under Russian protection'. The representatives of these 'Russian committees, who received money from the Russian consulates which took active part in the revolutionary organizations, and even the ecclesiastical party, had begun to declare that the protection of the Tsar (Nicholas II-1894-1917) was preferable to that of the Caliph', observes Cemal Pasha.

2 Parmaksızoglu, p. 34.
3 Djemal Pasha, pp. 249 and 292-3.
Despite attempts to ameliorate the situation in the Ottoman Empire, the British ambassador in Istanbul, Sir Gerard Lowther, was, in the middle of August, receiving alarming reports from Captain Bertram Dickson, the British Vice-Consul in Van, claiming that fighting was going on between the tribal Muslims (mainly Kurds) and the Armenians at Tiari, and near Satak, of the Bitlis Province, and that there was a state of lawlessness in the area. This report caused the British Foreign Office to see such incidents as 'the beginning of reaction after the recent protestations of brotherhood'. Yet, by the beginning of September the situation had completely calmed down.

A.S. Safrastian, who then served as the Armenian dragoman of British Vice-Consul Shipley, reported in September that public security having been assured 'more than it might be expected, unprecedented peace and tranquillity' prevailed all over the province of Bitlis where the dragoman was based. The Armenian revolutionary leaders in Muss-Roupen, Karmen and others - had surrendered to the authorities with their bands consisting of 150 fedais (guerrillas), and had been received with military honours. Ferik (Marshal) Salih Pasha had sent a military band to meet the Armenian leaders who, followed by soldiers, were frantically cheered by a huge crowd of Armenians and Muslims. Those leaders had pledged to work for the economic, moral and intellectual revival of the Armenian people. Meanwhile, hundreds of fugitive Armenians were returning home from Russia, and were being very well received by the Muslims on the road.

These developments, which John A. Tilley of the British Foreign Office found to be 'incredibly satisfactory', were confirmed by British Ambassador Lowther, who wrote to Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey, in September, that there was a complete change in the situation of the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire. At Harput the reaction had subsided, although there was still a slight feeling of uneasiness among the Armenians. The CUP, or its sympathizers, had taken the matters into their own hands and had procured the dismissal of many of the 'most corrupt and inefficient' officials including the Armenian bishop whose resignation was demanded by the crowd. That cleric, however, had already departed with a considerable sum of money.

The constitution was warmly received and celebrated at Malatya. At Diyarbakir the reactionary party seemed to have disappeared; a meeting of all the creeds was held in the Armenian church to celebrate the constitution; order was maintained perfectly, and all religious groups were living in complete harmony with one another. A local committee was set up which supervised the actions of government officials, though it did not unduly interfere in administrative details. Its members, which consisted of eight Muslims, three Armenians and three Catholics, were respectable men of good standing.

At the beginning of September a service was conducted by the Armenian Archbishop of Erzurum for the 'repose of the souls' of those who had perished in the incidents of 1894-96. A large crowd of Muslims attended, and some of their leaders subsequently made speeches in honour of those who, they said, had fallen 'in the cause of liberty'. They expressed the hope that the past would be forgotten, and that thenceforth Turks and Armenians would work together, like brothers, for the good of their country. Similar news was coming in from all over Anatolia, and was well received by some of the major Powers, particularly by Britain.

Turco-Armenian relations had improved so much that this prompted the British Vice-Consul in Van, Captain Bertram Dickson, to report to Ambassador Lowther on 30 September that it would be difficult to find a parallel for a reversal of the situation, the regime and the policy 'so complete as that which has come to pass in this province during the last three months'. In July the Armenian quarters in Van were blockaded by troops; 'severe' searches were conducted in houses; the prisons were full of Armenian fedais, and others were being pursued. Then came the bloodless Young Turk Revolution, the restoration of the constitution, and the order for the release of all political prisoners. It was some time before the people could understand the meaning of such a change, but as they came to realise it, the effect upon them had been extraordinary. From being a down-trodden, cringing outcast who dared not show his face outside the Armenian quarter, remarked Captain Dickson, 'the Armenian has become a noisy, blatant, overbearing, and insolent imitation of the worst type of politician'.

Armenian intrigues and clandestine imports of arms

The two parties of the Armenians in Van, the Dashnakists and the Armenists, were now allied. They formed a powerful party, led by the fedai (guerrilla) chiefs Aram, the 'Doctor' (Vahan Papazian), Sarkis and Ishikhan. At that particular moment the Dashnakists were practically blindly followed by the whole Armenian population of the province. The chiefs were Russian Armenians whose ideas, according to British Vice-Consul Dickson, were those of 'advanced socialism, amounting to anarchy', current among certain classes in the Caucasus who used terrorism as a means of attaining this end. These men, in the words of Dickson, 'with their uppishness and insolence, and their habit of dictating to all and sundry', were not likely by their leadership to make the Armenians more popular among

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1 FO 371/533/28605: Lowther to Grey, 16.8.1908.
2 Ibid., doc. no. 33230: Lowther to Grey, 20.9.1908.
3 The Times, 8, 9, 14 and 24.8.1908; see also Ismail Hami Danijenti: Izahh Osmanli tarhi kronoleji (annotated chronology of Ottoman history) vol. 4, Istanbul, 1961, p. 366.
4 FO 371/360/3769: Dickson to Lowther, 30.9.1908.
the Muslims under the new regime. A proof of this had just occurred at Saray. A band of Armenian fedai from Russia had come over the frontier, fully armed and in broad daylight, and had swaggered through Muslim tribal country into the town of Saray and on to Van. This had greatly incensed the Turks at Saray, and a quarrel erupted in the market as a result of an Armenian’s insolence to a Turk. Following this incident, the Armenian men of Saray left their families and went to Van en bloc to complain, not to the government, but to the Dashnakist fedais.

The insolent way in which these Dashnak leaders had been trying to dictate to the government and to Muslim Kurdish chiefs, with threats to get them punished if their orders were not obeyed, had further irritated all the Muslims, and led to many ominous threats by the latter who even placed posters on the walls in Van, warning the Armenians and their Russian leaders. The attitude of the Armenians was also deplored by British Vice-Consul Captain Dickson, who wrote to Ambassador Lowther on 30 September as follows:

The Armenian in subjection, such as I have seen him, is an unsympathetic, mean, cringing, unscrupulous, lying, thieving cur; given his freedom, he loses none of these bad qualities, but in addition becomes insolent, domineering, despotic. He is endowed with a sort of sneak-thief sharpness, which among ignorant people in these parts passes for intelligence.

The Muslims of the Province of Van, on the other hand, whom Captain Dickson described as ‘very uncivilised, retrograde, and entirely uneducated’, had a contempt for the Armenians whom they ruled for centuries, and would not, in Dickson’s words, easily submit (at least in that generation) to being led and dictated to by the Armenians, more especially as the Armenian policy, Dickson believed, was, had been, and probably always would be, ‘an entirely selfish one’, with no thoughts of an united Ottoman Empire, but only of their own nationality, if not of their own profit.

The British Vice-Consul was also informed that the Armenians were still bringing arms and ammunition surreptitiously into the country. Lately many Armenian fedais were coming to Van from Russia and Persia, and many were going to those countries from Van. Dickson observed:

Supposing the new regime continues, then the Turkish Armenians will enjoy an unheard-of liberty, while the Russian Armenians have only a half freedom. Formerly the Turkish Armenians intrigued to become Russians; it seems reasonable to suppose that now the Russians will intrigue to become Turkish. The Russian Moslems have always wished to become Turkish. Thus Russia will be placed in an awkward predicament with her Caucasian subjects. It appears to me that she may have the choice of two ways of remedying this: she may grant the Caucasus a more liberal constitution, or she may make the Turkish Armenians discontented with the Turks and their new regime by intriguing and stirring up dissension in Turkey. It is too early to say if Russia intends to take either of the two courses, but the fact that the Armenians here are entirely controlled by these Russian ‘fedai’, who had socialistic ideas very unpalatable to the Moslems, may be worth bearing in mind.

These remarks of a British Vice-Consul on the spot were only a prophecy about the plans which Russia was preparing for the Ottoman Empire in order to destabilise its eastern provinces, and indicated how a handful of Armenian revolutionary leaders were ready to help Russia put these plans into execution.

Even British Ambassador Lowther confirmed that the attitude of the Armenians since the re-establishment of the constitution had been ‘arrogant and provocative, while the Turks are sullen, subdued and suspicious’. The Armenians were also taking advantage of the abolition of the former ‘drastic and violent system’ of collecting taxes to refuse to pay them. Their general attitude seemed calculated to call forth a reaction, but ‘it cannot be denied that the present state of affairs is a great improvement, if only temporary and surrounded by dangers, on that which prevailed three months ago’, Lowther informed Grey.

The Dashnakists had cooperated with the Young Turks with the hope that, in return, they would obtain some measure of decentralization that would go far enough to establish one or two ‘purely Armenian provinces’, but as the regenerated Ottoman government was aiming at the establishment of a united Ottoman nationality without distinction of race or religion, their disappointment was great. Even Vice-Consul Dickson believed that the aims of the Dashnak Society were ‘preposterously ambitious’, and that they hoped for the establishment of an Armenian republic, formed out of the portions of Ottoman, Russian and Persian provinces, from which the non-Armenian elements would gradually be excluded. Dickson informed Lowther that the Armenian clergy were exhorting their flocks to marry young, and to beget large families so as to swamp the other elements.

\[1\] Ibid.
\[2\] Ibid., doc. no. 36112: Lowther to Grey, 9.10.1908.
\[3\] FO 371/702/3125: Lowther to Grey, 18.1.1909.
Thus, the Turco-Armenian rapprochement proved short-lived. Despite the sensible counsels of the new Armenian Patriarch, Ismirlian, directed to his community, to cooperate loyally with the Turks by showing prudence and moderation, and by abstaining from all extremist ideas, as, he said, the Turkish government and people were 'frankly and honestly disposed to treat the Armenians fairly', his advice fell on deaf ears. Since the restoration of the constitution the attitude of the Armenians, according to British Ambassador Lowther, had become 'arrogant and provocative'. This was confirmed a few years later by Ian M. Smith, the new British Vice-Consul in Van, who observed that the Armenians were prone to magnify any incident involving themselves. They were also unwilling to serve under the Turkish government and thus associate themselves with the 'governing race', which they looked down as 'less progressive and civilised than themselves'. The Armenians resent any attempt to lessen the gulf which divides them from the Turks', reported Smith.

A new Armenian agitation

Taking advantage of the new situation in the Ottoman Empire, a number of Armenians and Armenophils abroad began to put pressure on the governments of the countries in which they lived to intervene on behalf of the Armenians. Ambrose O. Hopkins wrote to British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey on 24 September, enclosing a resolution passed 'at a large public meeting' held at the High Street Baptist Chapel, at Abensychan, expressing sorrow that nothing had yet been done by the European Powers for the 'suffering' Armenians, and declaring its conviction that the solution of the problem lay not in the direction of the Young Turk movement, but rather in the 'separation of Armenia from the authority and influence of the cruel Turk'. Hopkins, too, poured out his hatred of Muslim Turks by declaring that he had no faith in the Young Turk movement, and that reformation would not come from that quarter. He remarked:

The Turk is a Mohammedan and a Mohammedan will not tolerate a Christian if he can help it. Not only so, the Turk is steeped in sin. Every imagination of the thought of his heart is only evil, continually. The Young Turk is no exception.\(^{16}\)

\(^{11}\) FO 371/553/33230: Lowther to Grey, 29.9.1908; see also Enver Babayan: \textit{Talir Pa$\text{'}a\text{'}n\text{'}in hatiras\text{'}leri} (memoirs of Talat Pasha), Istanbul, 1946, pp. 43 ff.
\(^{15}\) FO 371/557/42098 and FO 371/228: Lowther to Grey, 2.12.1908, transmitting copy of a memorandum by Fitzmaurice, dated 30.11.1908.
\(^{16}\) FO 371/2135/30300: Mallet to Grey, 29.6.1914, enclosing copy of a despatch from Smith, dated 10.6.1914.
\(^{17}\) FO 371/533/33333 Hopkins to Grey, 24.9.1908.

Such religious fanaticism of some English Armenophils blinded them to what was actually happening in the Ottoman Empire, whilst their bigotry and prejudice would not even give an opportunity to the Young Turks, who were not yet firmly in the saddle, to implement their promised policies.

In October the situation began to deteriorate as a result of Bulgaria's announcement of its independence on 5 October, and of Austria's annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina on the following day, whilst the Cretans had declared their union with Greece.\(^{18}\) These new developments activated some of the Armenian agitators abroad to strive again for the fulfilment of Armenian aspirations. Garabet Hagopian, who lived in Britain, wrote to Sir Edward Grey on 7 and 23 October that, in consequence of Prince Ferdinand unexpectedly proclaiming the independence of Bulgaria and eastern Roumelia, with himself as king, without obtaining the prior consent of the signatory Powers of the Treaty of Berlin, and the annexations of the Emperor of Austria-Hungary of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a new situation had been brought about which was deeply engaging the attention of Britain, France and Russia who were said to be convoking a congress to reconsider the relevant articles of the Treaty of Berlin.

Hagopian then emphasised the point that 'the only moral and legal protection' which the Armenians had in Europe, or in international law, was under Article 61 of the Treaty of Berlin. In trying to obtain the adequate fulfilment of that article, which was drafted by the Marquis of Salisbury at the Berlin Congress, his countrymen had made 'vast sacrifices of blood and treasure'. He therefore called on Sir Edward Grey, should the Treaty of Berlin come under the revision of the Powers, to ensure not only that Article 61 was maintained, but also to insist upon its being made more binding and stringent for the future. He also requested that, in giving full consideration to, and adequately safeguarding, the interests and the status of the Ottoman Empire in any revision of the Treaty of Berlin, the British government would, by virtue of the 61st Article, and of the Cyprus Convention, continue to exercise 'a friendly and watchful supervision' over the Ottoman administration in eastern Anatolia. At the British Foreign Office, John A. Tilley found this rather an unpleasant letter to answer. He observed:

We do not want to hold out hopes of further interference on behalf of the Armenians. If the Turks get into trouble again, there will be no solution but force on the part of Russia. On the other hand we still have Cyprus.\(^{19}\)

Hagopian was supported by another Armenian activist, bishop K. Utidjian, who wrote to Sir Edward Grey on 29 October from Manchester, observing that the

\(^{18}\) Sina Ak$in: \textit{31 Mart olay} (the 31st March incident), Ankara, 1972, p. 24; Davitnunt, pp. 367-68.
\(^{19}\) FO 371/500/36965: Hagopian to Grey, 7 and 23.10.1908.
Turkish constitution having caused a new situation in the Balkans, Britain was trying to bring about a conference of the Powers to ensure peace. He was informed that the Turkish government wished to prevent Article 61 of the Treaty of Berlin from being discussed as the Armenians would, under the new constitution, enjoy liberty, equality and justice. He declared, however, that three months had passed since the Young Turk Revolution but that the situation in eastern Anatolia was as bad as ever; the lofty sentiments of the Young Turks were difficult to implant in the heads of the Kurds. If the Armenians enjoyed equality, then Article 61 would lapse of its own accord. But it could not do any harm by remaining until the Armenians were assured of such treatment, since able officials were scarce in eastern Anatolia, and the tribal Muslims were numerous. He acknowledged that the Young Turks were eager for the Armenians' freedom, and that in their hands the Armenians should be safe if they were secure throughout the Turkish Empire. He prayed that 'every blessing' might attend Sir Edward Grey's strenuous efforts for peace and concord in the Balkans, and that, through his instrumentality, the 'sorely afflicted' Armenian nation might attain 'lasting peace'.

Krikor Behesmilian of the British Armenian Mission followed with a letter dated 5 November declaring that he did not see any change in Turkey where the reactionary party were making the work of the Young Turks and the Armenians hard for them. However, his Armenian compatriots, he claimed, were working hand in hand for the common welfare. He trusted that, through the efforts of Sir Edward Grey, Asiatic Turkey would not suffer from the political dispute in Turkey-in-Europe. Claiming to know Turkey intimately, he stated that the Asiatic provinces would soon enjoy peace if the dispute in European Turkey was dealt separately. The Armenians rejoiced that the British government were 'in deep sympathy with the new regime', and he trusted that the other Powers would be in harmony with Britain for the establishment of peace in the Ottoman Empire.

Election of a new Armenian Patriarch

In August 1908 it had become evident that the Armenian Patriarch, Malachia Ormanian, who had resigned during the Young Turk Revolution, was to be replaced by Matheos Ismirlian. The latter was Patriarch of the Armenians at the time of the 1894-96 incidents, and was exiled to Jerusalem by Abdülhamit because of his relations with the British Embassy and his machinations with the Armenian terrorist organizations. On his return to Istanbul after the restoration of the constitution, he was given an enthusiastic reception in which the Turks had taken part. At first the Armenians thought of appointing him to the vacant See of Etchmiadzin in Erivan, as Catholics, but the conviction that the Russian government would refuse to sanction the appointment because of his reported nationalist tendencies convinced them to elect him as Patriarch of Istanbul instead.

Nevertheless on 14 November Ismirlian was elected Catholicos of Etchmiadzin to succeed the late Catholics Migirditch I, by a conclave of 73 out of 78 delegates, who had travelled there from all parts of the world. The governor of Erivan, M. Tissenhausen, had watched the proceedings on behalf of the Russian government. As the election was subject to imperial confirmation, the new Catholics could not take up his duties as head of the Armenian Church until the appointment was acknowledged by the Tsar. In fact the election was later confirmed, but meanwhile Ismirlian was unanimously elected Patriarch of the Gregorian Armenians by the general council of the Armenian Gregorian Church of the Ottoman Empire.

On 28 November he was officially received by the Sultan at the Yıldız Palace, and by the Grand Vezir and other ministers at the Sublime Porte. During the usual ceremonies, Ismirlian addressed the Sultan, expressing the great joy of the Armenian people and the hope that he would receive the support of the Sultan and his ministers in the task that lay before him. The Sultan showed Ismirlian great cordiality and expressed satisfaction at his re-election and at the friendly relations existing between the Turks and the Armenians. He assured the new Patriarch that he and his ministers would do all in their power to secure prosperity for the Armenians. At the Porte, and along the route, the new Patriarch was cheered by both Muslims and Armenians.

Two days later Ismirlian received a visit from G. Fitzmaurice, the first dragoman of the British Embassy, who went to congratulate him on behalf of Ambassador Lowther. After general conversation, Ismirlian remarked that the changed conditions in Turkey implied that the Armenians had ceased to exist as a separate national entity and were merged in the Ottoman whole; that consequently it was his duty to avoid discussing 'politics' with foreigners, but that, as Fitzmaurice had been closely connected with Armenian matters, and as the British Embassy and government had, during the old regime, shown special sympathy and interest in the lot of his community, he felt impelled to ask Fitzmaurice to convey to Ambassador Lowther, 'in absolute confidence', his views on the existing situation in so far as it concerned his people.

He felt, he said, that the re-establishment of the constitution was a most delicate experiment in view of the backward condition of the masses of the

20 FO 371/533/37724: Utidjian to Grey, 29.10.1908.
21 Ibid., doc no. 58633: Behesmilian to Grey, 5.11.1908.
population, especially in Asia Minor, and the total lack of men and money as a result of thirty years of 'misgovernment and tyranny'. Internal tranquillity and the resultant confidence of the foreigners in the new regime were essential to its success, and any serious mishap would be fraught with 'most disastrous consequences' to his people. He was therefore firmly convinced that the only safe course for the Armenians, their only chance of pulling themselves together and making good their losses during the old Palace regime, lay in working in loyal union with the Turks on the lines of prudence and moderation, and eschewing all extremist ideas in the way of autonomy, etc. He was counselling his flock in this sense, and had let it be distinctly understood that he would resign the Patriarchate rather than countenance any advanced tendencies on the part of the Hintchak, Droschak (Dashnak), or other Armenian societies.

He was consequently deeply anxious and preoccupied at the rumours that the Powers, at the proposed conference (on Balkan affairs) intended to abrogate the 61st Article of the Treaty of Berlin. Such a course, he feared, would render his position untenable, as most of the Armenians, and especially the extremists, would certainly, either silently or overtly, protest on the grounds that liberty, equality and justice promised by the constitution were not yet applied, and the eventual success of the new movement was not yet assured. These protests would endanger the mistrust of the Turks and reawaken their suspicion that the Armenians were secretly harbouring what used to be called 'seditious and subversive ideas', whereas perfect mutual confidence and solidarity between the Turks and the Armenians were absolutely essential to secure for the latter a chance of repairing the disasters of the past, and an existence of tolerable freedom from the 'predatory and oppressive tendencies' of their Kurdish and other neighbours. The task he had set himself of working out the 'salvation' of his people in the outlying districts like Misir, etc., by a policy of harmonious cooperation with the Turks would thus be jeopardized.

Ismirlian went on to remark that the Turkish government and people were 'frankly and honestly disposed to treat the Armenians fairly', and that he was doing his utmost to ensure that his people met them more than half way, but the abrogation of the 61st Article of the Treaty of Berlin would impair the harmony then so happily existing between the two creeds. He therefore implored Ambassador Lowther to use his influence to prevent what he thought was a premature discussion of the article in question. He and his people were deeply grateful to England for its sympathy and help in the past, and he felt he might rely on the wisdom of the British government in this matter. He again begged that this communication should be considered strictly confidential, and that the Ottoman government should not hear that he had made this appeal to the British Ambassador.

Fitzmaurice later wrote a confidential memorandum in which he observed that consular reports from Erzurum, Van, Bitlis and other places showed that, though the authorities were on the whole animated by good intentions, they had not yet the means of coping effectively with the situation. It would be some considerable time before the 'forces of disorder' in the country abandoned their 'lawless' habits of the past. The central government was about to despatch a special commission composed of Turks and Armenians to deal with the situation in eastern Anatolia, but this commission could only remedy 'the most crying abuses', and that some time must elapse before anything approaching normal conditions were established there.21

When Ambassador Lowther sent a copy of Fitzmaurice's memorandum to Sir Edward Grey, he observed that the Armenian Patriarch had taken the opportunity to discuss the outlook of his community under the new regime, and of conveying 'a most secret communication' to himself (the Ambassador) on the subject of the rumoured proposal to abrogate Article 61 of the Treaty of Berlin at the impending conference of Powers. Harmonious cooperation with the Turks was now the last chance for the salvation of the Armenian race, and the protests that would inevitably be raised by a discussion of the said article would be certain to arouse once more the hostile suspicion of the Turks, and perhaps lead to a final Turco-Armenian showdown. The Patriarch had implored the Ambassador to use his influence to prevent what he considered a premature discussion of the article, and relied on the assistance of the British government in the matter. Under the circumstances Lowther believed that the Patriarch's views about Article 61 were worthy of serious consideration by the British government.

At the Foreign Office this appeal received some attention. John A. Tilley, one of the officials, commented that this was one of the questions which would be considered if the conference fell through, but in any case, the Turks were not anxious to have it raised, so that it might be eliminated without difficulty. Any interference by Britain between the Turkish Armenians, believed Tilley, got the Armenians into trouble sooner or later. Another official declared that, even if desirable, that was not the moment to deal with the problem. Article 61 had proved 'an absolute dead letter', and British interference had usually made matters worse. It was doubtful whether its maintenance was, in any case, desirable, but if it were abrogated, it would be easy to introduce some saving clause making its disappearance coincide with the introduction of reforms. Public opinion in Britain might demand this, but personally he thought it was an opportunity which should not be missed of getting rid of a 'useless, and at the same time inconvenient, article'.22 But no action was taken.

22 Ibid., doc. no. 42608: Lowther to Grey, 2.12.1908.
The first general election under the new regime

Throughout the autumn of 1908 Ottoman citizens were busy electing their deputies to the new Ottoman parliament, which was officially opened on 17 December.26 The day before, Sultan Abdüllah had announced the names of the newly appointed 39 senators. Of a total of 288 deputies, 147 were Turks, 60 were Arabs, 27 were Albanians, 26 were Greeks, 14 were Armenians, 10 were Slavs and 4 were Jews.27 In 1913 Armenian representation would be increased to 16.28

The opening of the second Ottoman parliament coincided with a marked amelioration in the situation all over Anatolia, which was improving long before that major event. Acting British Consul Safrastian had reported from Bitlis on 1 September that there had been fraternization in Mus, and that hundreds of Armenians were returning from Russia.29 In the following despatches he had stressed the security that prevailed in the eastern provinces, and his hopes for prosperity.30 The local authorities were doing their best, with the means at their disposal, to ameliorate the situation in those provinces. The old abuses complained about had greatly ceased.

Despite the adverse economic situation in some parts of the empire, there was no doubt that the restoration of the constitution had greatly ameliorated the position of the Armenians, as confirmed by Captain Dickson, the British Vice-Consul in Van. The attitude of the notorious revolutionary Dashnak Society also had changed. That society had now begun to exercise its influence more in Russian territory than in Turkey, as it opposed the Russian government more than the Turkish one. The restoration to the Armenian Church of its lands by the Russian government was attributed to this society's activities. But even Captain Dickson believed that the Dashnakists still cherished the idea of establishing an independent Armenian republic, to be formed out of portions of Turkish, Russian and Persian provinces, from which the non-Armenian elements would be expelled. Nevertheless he (Dickson) found these aims of the Dashnak Society as "preposterously ambitious".

He informed Lowther that the Armenian clergy were exhorting their flocks to marry young and to beget large families so as to swamp the Muslim elements. Moreover, the Dashnakists were trying to get all the disputes referred to themselves for arbitration and not to Turkish courts. They were still levying money contributions on their fellow nationals; and they were discouraging foreign missions as injurious to the maintenance of the national spirit. This was reflected in a printed programme of the Dashnak society which Captain Dickson had sent to the British Ambassador, and which, in the main, substantiated his statements. It embodied, in a crude form, the most extreme of the socialistic tendencies of Western Europe.

Meanwhile, although negotiations between the delegates of the CUP and the Armenians of Bitlis about future measures to be adopted in eastern Anatolia had been suddenly broken off, yet the possibility of eventually arriving at an understanding was by no means excluded. The leading Armenians of Bitlis district were gradually coming round to the view, which was very much that of the Armenian Patriarch, that it would be to their best interests to work together with the Young Turk Party, and while insisting on adequate protection for their lives and property, not to embarrass the authorities by persisting with extravagant demands. The Dashnakists in Erzurum, too, were strongly urging their compatriots to conduct themselves on these lines, whilst from Harput came the news that there was a considerable amount of unrest among the people. The Turks of the district were increasingly jealous of the preferential treatment accorded to the Armenians, and suspicious of the local branch of the CUP. They had formed a rival 'Committee of Islam' there. In the Adana Province, however, the situation was quiet.31

Since the election, the Armenians in general, and the Dashnakists in particular, had been more subdued than previously, though their relations with the local Turks, particularly in the Van Province, had never been really warm. The native Muslims of Van detested the Armenians for their past deeds, and resented to see them enjoying privileges given by the new regime. Their animosity, which was easily excited, was directed principally against the Dashnakists and their Russian leaders, Vramian, Aram and Ishkhan, as it was they who were striving to procure the punishment of the tribal and other Muslims for what they claimed to be past offences. At one of the numerous public meetings that the Armenians delighted to hold, some Dashnakists had spoken, advocating atheism. The population was furious, and a small riot ensued, while the Armenist and the Heinakist sections, jealous of the prestige of their Dashnakist rivals, had fanned the excitement of the people. There was, for a time, real danger of a serious faction fight in the Armenian quarter; but this was averted, mainly by the efforts of Vramian. This situation and its cause served as a pretext to increase the dislike of the local Muslims for the Dashnakists. The uneasiness had increased by the known

26 Takim-i Vekayi (Calendar of Events), 3.1.1324 (old style).
28 Walker, p. 182.
29 Turkey No. 1 (1909), p. 89.
30 Walker, p. 182.
fact that the Armenians, according to British Vice-Consul Captain Dickson, had been receiving revolvers by the hundred through the post.32

The Province of Erzurum, on the other hand, had enjoyed a remarkable freedom from disorder. The Armenians had contributed their fair share towards the maintenance of order, and had shown a commendable desire to avoid offending the susceptibilities of their Muslim fellow countrymen, with the result that the good relations between the two communities, inaugurated by the celebrations of August and September 1908, had been satisfactorily maintained. In this respect the Gregorian bishop of Erzurum, M. Sempad, had rendered valuable service by using his influence over his flock in the interests of order and tranquillity.

The British Consul there, Colonel H.S. Shipley, reported that he regarded the situation as fairly encouraging for the future, but an unfavourable impression was produced among the Muslims, for some time past, because arms were being imported into the Armenian villages from across the frontier. Shipley believed that this gun running was perhaps exaggerated. He had been assured by certain leading members of the local Dashnak organization, with whom he had spoken on the matter, that in no case was a systematic arming of the population being attempted, nor did it form part of their programme. Nevertheless, any importation of arms was a doubtful expediency as they might be made use of by the enemies of the new regime for their own purpose. This also formed an obstacle to the attainment of complete understanding between the two nationalities as a local CUP leader had more than once pointed out to Consul Shipley.

There was a further source of misunderstanding between the two communities, and this was caused by the occasional indiscreet utterances by the younger members of the Dashnak organization, about a future policy to be adopted by the Armenians. Shipley had, on a number of occasions, received complaints from prominent Turks about the bad effect these utterances had had on the Muslims. It was difficult to persuade the latter that such clamours need not be taken too seriously. In conversations which Shipley had had with the leading local Armenians, he had invariably found that they deprecated any adventurous policy, and expressed the view that their condition as a nation had vastly improved as compared with what it was only a few years earlier, and that their best chance of making full use of the opportunity now afforded them for recuperation was to remain quiet, and to prove to the Turks that the interests of the two peoples were not antagonistic. The matter was well put to Shipley by one of the Armenian leaders, who observed:

32 FO 371/774/15584: Lowther to Grey, 20.4.1909, enclosing copy of despatch from Dickson, dated 31.3.1909.

In case of trouble the army would be for us, or against us. In the former event we have nothing to fear, while in the latter contingency such arms as we could import would be entirely useless.33

But, unfortunately, as the Adana incidents would prove later, evil counsels prevailed upon some Armenians, and forced them into a position of internecine conflict with their Turkish and other Muslim compatriots.

33 Ibid., doc. no. 15573: Lowther to Grey, 18.4.1909, enclosing copy of despatch from Shipley, dated 5.4.1909.
CHAPTER 3

THE COUNTER-REVOLUTION

The events of 13 April 1909 (31 Mart Vak'ası)

The Kâmil Pasha cabinet, which had replaced that of Sait Pasha in August 1908, was considered to be Anglophil, so much so that King Edward VII is believed to have ignored the rules of international protocol by sending a telegram to Sultan Abdülhamit, congratulating him for having brought Kâmil Pasha to the Grand Vezirate. In view of this, the CUP, which had masterminded the Young Turk Revolution, although not in favour of the new Grand Vezir, had hesitated in having him ousted from power.1 In the autumn of 1908, as the general election results began to be announced, Kâmil Pasha made a number of changes in his cabinet on 30 November in order to placate the CUP. Despite some attempts to oust him from power, he nevertheless managed to receive an unanimous vote of confidence in parliament on 13 January 1909, after having promised, it was said, to respect the wishes of the CUP.

In early February, making use of his enhanced authority, Kâmil Pasha strove to undermine the influence of the CUP, but this resulted in an internecine struggle between him and that party. On 11 February an interpellation was submitted to the cabinet on 30 November in order to placate the CUP. Despite some attempts to oust him from power, he nevertheless managed to receive an unanimous vote of confidence in parliament on 13 January 1909, after having promised, it was said, to respect the wishes of the CUP.

In early February, making use of his enhanced authority, Kâmil Pasha strove to undermine the influence of the CUP, but this resulted in an internecine struggle between him and that party. On 11 February an interpellation was submitted to the cabinet. The cabinet denied these rumours.1 Meanwhile the Grand Vezir was doing his utmost to remove the army from the influence of, and weaken further, the CUP, but without success. His attempts, however, resulted in a vote of no confidence in his cabinet, which was carried on 13 February.6 He was ousted from power and replaced by Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, the CUP favourite.

After the appointment of Hilmi Pasha as Grand Vezir, the CUP sent Mehmet Arslan to assure the British Embassy that the new cabinet would continue to follow a pro-British policy.7 But the British became cool towards the CUP.8 From then on the political situation deteriorated. The opposition never accepted the Hilmi Pasha cabinet, and began to incite the religious circles against it and against the CUP. There was also much displeasure among army ranks, in particular among a number of displaced officers.9 On the night of 12/13 April, soldiers of the Fourth Expeditionary Force stationed at Taşkısla, in the capital, mutinied; tied up their officers and besieged the chamber of deputies. Soon the rebellion spread to the other units in Istanbul.10 Many young officers and other adherents of the constitutional movement were killed; parliament was raided and several deputies murdered. The leading members of the CUP went into hiding. Mehmet Tałat, the future Minister of the Interior and formerly a telegraph clerk, was said to have been sheltered by Aknouni, the leader of the Dashnakist Armenians in Istanbul.11

The police and the army joined forces in guarding the embassies and key positions. But soon fighting broke out between them and the loyalist troops under Mahmut Muhtar Pasha. The rebels were joined by sofars (theological students). They demanded an end to the corruption of government based on Western and secular ideas, and a return to the principles of Seriat (Sharia-Sacred Law of Islam). They also demanded an amnesty, the replacement of army officers, who should be expelled from the capital, and the construction of a navy.12 The pro-Islamic Volkan newspaper whipped up enthusiasm in the devout with references to the blind imitation of the West, and an 'epoch of devils'. The Sultan unwisely aligned himself with the counter-revolutionaries, ordering the chamber to respect the Seriat, and pardoning the rebels - although some Turkish historians admit that it is difficult to estimate his role in the reaction. Ismail Kemal, an Albanian Muslim leader, says that he had no role; others argue the contrary.

When Grand Vezir Hilmi Pasha learned the demands of the rebels from the Şeyhülislam (Sheik-ul-Islam), chief of the Muslims, he tendered his resignation.


2. İkdam, 15.2.1909.

3. Ak$in, p. 69.


5. Tanin, 14.2.1909.

6. The Times, 6.2.1909; İkinci Abdülhamit'in hâsrâ defterleri (the memoirs of Abdülhamit II), Istanbul, 1969, pp. 134-5; Ak$in, p. 35.
which was accepted by the Sultan, who then called upon Ahmet Tevfik Pasha to form the new cabinet. Tevfik Pasha was considered to be an Anglophile, despite the fact that his wife was German.\(^{11}\) In his cabinet, which took office on 14 April, Rifat Pasha, then Turkish Ambassador in London, became Minister of Foreign Affairs, whilst Gabriel Noradounghian, an Armenian, was appointed Minister of Commerce and Public Works. The new Grand Vezir then sent telegrams to the provinces advising 'harmony between the different nationalities'.\(^{13}\) But despite this advice, bloody incidents erupted at Adana on 14 April, the day after the counter-revolution in Istanbul. These events are dealt with in extenso below. Here we must follow the course of events that led to the final collapse of the counter-revolution.

In Salonica (Selânik-Thessaloniki), Mahmud Sevket Pasha, the Young Turk general in command of the Third Army, decided to send troops to crush the movement. The troops arrived at Catalca on 16 April, and frantic attempts were made to prevent their entry into Istanbul where a bloodbath between the opposing factions would have been inevitable; but these attempts were not successful. This 'Army of Operations' (Hareket Ordusu), as it was called, carried on its advance and arrived at Yesilköy (San Stefano) where it was received by a parliamentary delegation. On 20 April the Armenian Dashnak party sent a delegation to Yesilköy, and announced that it supported the Army of Operations.\(^{16}\) The Hintchak party also sent a delegation offering volunteers, but the Armenians were thanked and told that volunteers were not necessary.\(^{17}\)

Meanwhile the Dashnakists persisted in their attempts to procure joint action against Abdülhamit and the reactionaries.\(^{18}\) Parliament met on 23 April\(^ {19}\) and passed a resolution emphasizing the importance of the constitution, and of defending the unity and tranquillity of the different races.\(^ {20}\) On the following day (24 April) the Army of Operations entered Istanbul and besieged the Yıldız Palace. It was claimed that the Ambassador of one of the major powers (Russia was suspected) had sent an emissary to the Palace who saw one of Abdülhamit's aides, Ali Cevat, and asked him if the Sultan had a wish (in the sense of escaping in order to save himself). Ali Cevat claims that he had brought this to the notice of the Sultan, who had replied that he was pleased to hear of this interest shown in him, but that he did not wish to take up the offer.\(^ {21}\)

\(^{11}\) Gooch and Temperley, p. 11.
\(^{15}\) Aşım, pp. 89-90.
\(^{16}\) Yunus Nadi: İhtilal ve İnşâl-ı Osmanî (revolution and Ottoman reform) Istanbul, 1325 (old style), pp. 144 and 157; İkdâm, 22.4.1909; Aşım, p. 251.
\(^{17}\) Aşım, p. 249.
\(^{18}\) İkdâm, 23.4.1909.
\(^{19}\) Taksim Vekâli, no. 199, 24.4.1325 (old style).
\(^{20}\) İkdâm, 24.4.1909.
\(^{21}\) Cevat and Unat, p. 74.

According to Ali Haydar, another Turkish writer, a few days before the dethronement of Abdülhamit, the Russian Ambassador had suggested to the Sultan to leave Turkey on a Russian ship. The German Emperor also was said to have made a similar offer.\(^ {22}\) It was also claimed that the British King had sent Dragoman Fitzmaurice to the Palace to ask Abdülhamit if he wished Britain to send the Mediterranean fleet to Istanbul. Abdülhamit was said to have politely turned down the offer.\(^ {23}\)

On 27 April the Ottoman parliament decided to dethrone Abdülhamit and to offer the throne to his brother, Mehmed Reşat, who became Mehmet V. In the Fetha (fatwa-bull) sanctioned by the Şeyhülislâm Ziyaettin Efendi and the Fetha Emini (issuer of the bull) Haci Nuri Efendi, Abdülhamit was accused of deviations from the Şeriat (Sharia) and of forbidding and burning of some of the religious books; of wasting public resources; of killing people without Shariaitic reason; of imprisoning and banishing them; of wavering from the path of righteousness despite his promise not to do so; and of being involved in sedition and 'massacres'.

Among the delegation who went to inform him officially about his dethronement was Aram Efendi, a Catholic Armenian.\(^ {24}\) Esat Pasha (Toptani) was authorized to tell Abdülhamit that he was dethroned. 'Sir, we have been authorized by the national parliament to inform you about its decision of today', he remarked, and went on, 'the nation, with a feyâha, has dethroned Your Majesty. The nation also guarantees your property and life and those of your children and family. Abdülhamit was flabbergasted and did not say anything for a while; then he murmured, This is my fate! I have served my nation for so many years. My value has not been appreciated. But everything will soon be found out. God is great. One day justice will be done'.\(^ {25}\)

Abdülhamit was exiled to Salonica and lingered on until 1918 when he died peacefully in his bed in Istanbul where he was brought after the loss of the fortress during the First World War.\(^ {26}\) The fate of his Grand Vezir, Tevfik Pasha, followed a slightly different course. He was asked by the new Sultan to stay at the head of a cabinet reconstructed on 1 May; but that cabinet lasted only four days. Tevfik Pasha was forced by the CUP to resign on 5 May, and was replaced by Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha.

\(^{22}\) Mülât, p. 225.
\(^{24}\) Hasan Anca: Doğulaşan bir liber't (unborn liberty), Istanbul, 1958, p. 72; Aşım, pp. 265-67 and 284.
\(^{25}\) İkdâm, 28.4.1909.
\(^{26}\) Fahri Üzer: Makedonya çikçaşlık tarihi ve son Osmanlı püriyetini (history of Macedonian guerrilla warfare and the last Ottoman government), Ankara, 1979, pp. 245 and 298-300.
\(^{28}\) See also FO 371/771/15921: Lowther to Grey, 27.4.1909.
The Adana incidents

The winter of 1908-9 had passed quietly in the Anatolian provinces, although the population suffered from the result of a bad harvest, and in many parts of the country subscriptions had to be opened to carry the needy people through the cold season. According to British reports, the restoration of the constitutional regime had so far produced little improvement in the situation: the Muslims were becoming discontented with the new order which had hardly brought them any advantage. In the words of British Ambassador Lowther, 'the ancient unquestioned dominance of the Turks' had been shaken, at all events in appearance, by ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity about which there had been so much talk since the restoration of the constitution. The Christians, on the other hand, and particularly the Armenians, were benefiting in many ways by the greater liberty allowed to them, and were easily importing arms and ammunition, 'in the first instance for self defence', claimed Lowther, and later on in an 'aggressive and self assertive vein of enthusiasm', which led them to discourse on 'the great destinies of the Armenian race, and on the eventual establishment of an Armenian principality'.

The Armenians, points out Telford Waugh, showed themselves arrogant and boastful over their new equality, as was seen in Adana. Moreover, their constitution and national assembly had worsened the arrogance of the Armenian intellectuals. Even Armenian writers admit that their coreligionists were allowed to sing previously prohibited patriotic, national and folk songs that hailed the country subscriptions had to be opened to carry the needy people through the cold season: the Muslims were becoming discontented with the new order which had hardly brought them any advantage.

Any Armenian who could write began to publish odes, poetry, stories, etc., which had little to do with the truth. Particularly on the anniversaries of the establishment of their national assembly they acted provocatively, and in their speeches, asserted their 'great ideal'. They also staged revolutionary plays and recited national marches inciting the Turks. They sang revolutionary songs loudly almost every day, in the streets and in Armenian houses and schools, whilst Armenian artists painted pictures that would arouse the national sentiments of the Armenian people. These pictures were used on post-cards, stamps, cigarette packets, curtains in theatres, and on pillows. Thus the Armenian intelligentsia tried their best to provoke the Armenian people to revolt, whilst the Ottoman government, true to the spirit of the new order, preferred to adhere to its principle of non-interference in the freedom of conscience, and allowed the growing anarchy to go on unchecked. It has been suggested that this was considered to be the greatest weakness of the Ottoman government.

The more the Armenians talked and recited poetry, and the more they armed themselves, the more they aroused the anxiety and alarm of the Muslim people, who detected in the aspirations of the Armenians, and in the gospel preached by their Hintchak and Dashnak societies, 'which did much to stir them, the intention of taking vengeance on the Turks, and wipe their race off the face of the earth'. The Turks were also alarmed by the exhortations of the Armenians to arm themselves, delivered by Mousheg, the Gregorian bishop of Adana, throughout the country, particularly in Adana and its region where the bishop, according to British Ambassador Lowther, had a commercial interest in the sale of fire-arms. Lowther believed that the Armenian bishop was largely responsible for inflaming the passions of the Armenian people and the fears of the Turks. The British Vice-Consul in Mersin, Major Doughty Wylie, recognized this to such an extent that, in the interests of public order, he later prevented the bishop's landing at Mersin on his return to his diocese.

According to a British Embassy report, under the constitution all men could bear arms. From the 'delightful novelty of the thing', thousands of revolvers were purchased. Even schoolboys had them and, boy-like, flourished them about. But worse followed: the swagger of the arm-bearing Armenian and his ready tongue irritated the 'ignorant' Turks. Threats and insults passed on both sides. Certain Armenian leaders, delegates from Istanbul, and priests ('an Armenian priest is in his way an autocrat') urged their congregation to buy arms. It was done openly, indiscriminately, and, in some cases, it might be said wickedly. What could be thought of a preacher, a Russian Armenian, wondered the report, who, in a church in Adana where there had never been a 'massacre', preached revenge for the 'martyrs of 1895'. 'Revenge', bishop Mousheg said, 'murther for murder. Buy arms. A Turk

27 FO 371/772/17612: Lowther to Grey, 4.5.1909.
30 FO 371/4229/160318: W. Childs, Geographical Section, PID, FO, 10.2.1920.
31 FO 371/4229/86552: Calthorpe to Curzon, 24.5.1919, enclosing a pamphlet from the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs on population statistics, dated 14.3.1914.
32 Parmakszoglu, p. 26; Kocaş, pp. 142-44.
33 Kocaş, pp. 139 and 145.
34 FO 371/772/17612: Lowther to Grey, 4.5.1919; see also Walker, p. 183.
35 FO 371/1002/4255: Lowther to Grey, 31.1.1910, transmitting the Annual Report for Turkey for the year 1909; see also Waugh, p. 129; Djemal Pasha, pp. 257 ff.
36 FO 371/772/17612: Lowther to Grey, 4.5.1919. Major Doughty Wylie lost his life in Gallipoli in 1915 and gained the Victoria Cross fighting the Turks whom, in the words of Aubrey Herbert, 'he understood and admired'; Herbert, p. xiv.
for every Armenian of 1895'. An American missionary, who was present, got up and left the church. Bishop Mousheg toured the province preaching that he who had a coat should sell it and buy guns.37

Cemal Pasha, who was appointed to Adana following the incidents there, observed that this 'young and ambitious Armenian priest', was also one of the Hintchakists leaders, 'the incarnation of all the evil instincts'. He imported guns and revolvers from Europe in order to arm his own men. He boasted that the Armenians, who were then armed, would never again be afraid of incidents such as those of 1894; if a single Armenian was hurt, ten Turks would pay in return. Because of the weakness of the local government, his wicked incitements went on unabated, and soon began to bear fruit.38

The relations of the two peoples grew more strained as the whisperings of fanatics and reactionary agents added to the tension. The strain and tension created by this situation had become so unbearable the sense of insecurity and nervousness throughout the province had reached such a pitch that only a spark was needed to set alight the conflagration. Even the reform commission, set up by the government at the instance of the Armenian Patriarch in the autumn of 1908 to make a tour of inspection, to remove corrupt officials, to restore any land 'illegally seized', and to introduce various administrative reforms, had resigned in a body before they had even started, having realised the hopelessness of the task before them.

Nevertheless the situation in Konya and Aydin in early April 1909 was perfectly quiet to all outward appearances, despite the report sent to British Ambassador Lowther by his Vice-Consul in Mersin, Major Doughty Wylie, that there were disturbing elements before the surface, such as the large importation of arms, and the dangerous weakness of the local authorities. 10,000 guns, revolvers and automatic pistols had been imported into the province since the restoration of the constitution, reported the British Vice-Consul. The judicial authorities had refused to condemn the guilty parties, however overwhelming the proofs of their guilt might be, for fear of incurring unpopularity, whilst the vali (governor) of Adana was being strongly attacked in the local paper, which observed that he was a good clerk but a bad governor, an honest man but one who was incapable of action, and recommended him to return to Istanbul and resume his occupation there as a secretary. Major Doughty Wylie's account indicated a general spread of lawlessness, but he believed that there was nothing that a small show of force would not at once put down, and the force, though small at the disposal of the authorities, was sufficient, if they would only use it.39

On 13 and 14 April reports were already spreading through the provinces of the startling events which were then occurring in the capital. On the night of the 14th an incident took place in Adana when an Armenian shot down two Turks who were said to be trying to abduct his wife, and immediately the whole town was in an uproar.40 The British dragoman, Athanasios Tripanis (of Greek origin), had reported the Adana incidents to Major Doughty Wylie immediately. At the time there were more than the normal number of Armenians in Adana and its surrounding villages, as it was the time of the seasonal migration of Armenian workers from Marash to gather in the barley harvest.41

As soon as Wylie received Tripanis’s message, he decided to go to Adana in person, and boarded the afternoon train on the 14th. He saw no reason for exceptional precautions and took his wife with him. From the train he began to suspect that things might be rather worse than he had anticipated; he saw the odd dead body near the track, and refugees running panic-stricken towards the train. On 15 April he telegraphed Ambassador Lowther, reporting that disorders had broken out in Adana in which a number of persons had been killed, but British subjects were in no danger. So far the Armenian quarter, which was armed, had not been attacked. Nevertheless he thought that the trouble was spreading, and the situation in Mersin and Tarsus appeared to him to be anxious.42 He had gone from Mersin to Adana, having heard that the situation was very critical, and had found 'many people murdered on the way'. Meanwhile Lowther, who was assured by the Porte that they were doing all that was possible, was surprised by the news of the incidents, and telegraphed Sir Edward Grey on the following day that a warship should be sent to Mersin. The situation in Adana had not improved. Lowther also suggested that a vessel should be present at Piraeus to acquaint persons to disorders anticipated in Beirut.43

During the whole of the 15th, 16th and 17th April Adana became the scene of widespread disorders. At the first sound of firing, the Armenians rushed to their own quarter, where they barricaded themselves and began to shoot at the Turks, who, Major Doughty Wylie reported, hunted them out from every corner and house-top, goaded on by hodjas (imām) and reactionaries. The vali, Cevat Bey, who was a man of good character, but incapable of administering the province, and the ferik

37 FO 424/220, no. 48, enclosure; see also Girün, pp. 167-68.
38 Djemal Pasha, p. 258; see also his book entitled Hattarlar (memoirs), Istanbul, 1959, pp. 345-46.
39 FO 424/220, no. 48, enclosure; see also Girün, pp. 167-68.
40 see also ibid., doc. no. 17612: Lowther to Grey, 4.5.1909.
41 FO 424/242/219, p. 80.
42 FO 424/219/Conf. 9532, no. 25: Lowther to Grey, 15.4.1909.
43 Ibid., doc. no. 29: Lowther to Grey, 16.4.1909.
(local army commandant), who was Mustafa Remzi Pasha, an old man, were paralysed with shock, and retired to the shelter of the konak (government house), making no effort to call out the soldiers who could easily have quelled the mob, or to calm the storm. Major Doughty Wylie, however, after his arrival at Adana, went straight to Tripanis's house, which was near the station. There he changed into his uniform, secured an escort, and set off to the konak. He found himself in the midst of a furious Turco-Armenian carnage. With about 50 Turkish soldiers, whom he got the authorities to place at his disposal, and the commandant of the gendarmerie, Wylie paraded up and down throughout the city with bugles blowing, rescuing foreigners, placing guards over foreign schools and missions and putting a stop to the fighting wherever he went. 'Wherever we went', he later reported to Lowther, 'the fighting ceased. We cleared the streets sometimes by charging with the bayonet and sometimes by firing over the head of the crowd'. Alternatively, Wylie had a crier (della) ordering everyone to go home, warning them that he intended to fire down the street. But this proved only partially effective, since the city was large and impossible for one group of men to control at all times.

By midday the city's main bazaar was on fire, whilst the Turks and the Armenians were engaged in house-to-house fighting, which was almost impossible to control. An urgent message came to Wylie to go down to the Tobacco Regie factory, where there were many wounded. While there, he was shot by an Armenian at close range, and his arm was broken. He later commented on this incident as follows: 'We were the Armenians' was probably deceived by my uniform into thinking I was a Turkish officer, or else too wild with terror or despair to know what he was doing'. Wylie's injury did not prevent him thinking fast: suppose the Turks learnt that the British Vice Consul had been wounded by an Armenian. Would this not be a signal for a general storm?

He sent the commandant of the gendarmerie back to the konak with an urgent message to the two officials there, that if they stopped the incidents he would not demand any indemnity or punishment. He backed up this request with a reminder to them that he had already telegraphed for a British warship, and that the reserves who were called up by the commandant, and who were roaming the streets, 'did an infinite amount of harm'. Much damage was also done by the looting of villagers and by the 'frenzied population'. The Muslim leaders were divided, some trying to quieten the crowd, others taking rifles and joining in the melee. By the morning of the 16th the outbreak had died down for the time being - not least because HMS Swiftsure and other foreign warships were cruising off the Cilician coast.

Meanwhile the paralysis of the local authorities with shock continued. According to Wylie, the reserves who were called up by the commandant, and who were roaming the streets, 'did an infinite amount of harm'. Much damage was also done by the looting of villagers and by the 'frenzied population'. The Muslim leaders were divided, some trying to quieten the crowd, others taking rifles and joining in the melee. By the morning of the 16th the outbreak had died down for the time being - not least because HMS Swiftsure and other foreign warships were cruising off the Cilician coast.

A day earlier (on the 15th) the Ottoman parliament at San Stefano had met to deal, inter alia, with telegrams from Adana describing the serious situation there, and decided to advise the people by telegram, and to ask the local authorities about the measures taken to quell the incidents. Vartkes Efendi, an Armenian deputy, declared that the real culprits were the anti-constitutional officials who should be warned strictly and even punished in an exemplary way.

It was on the 17th of April that the vali and Major Doughty Wylie could prevail on the Muslim notables and hodjas to agree to make peace with the Armenian priests and civilians. From the morning of that day the work of rescue and relief began. By the 19th April, when 100 troops had arrived from Beirut, the town of Adana was quiet again, but the situation remained serious for some time longer. The fighting was still going on, and martial law was declared in Adana. Troops were being rushed there from everywhere.

In Istanbul an Armenian delegation went to the Porte to see the Grand Vezir, whilst the Ottoman government, at its meeting attended by Nazim and Izzet Pashas responsible for security, took a number of important decisions about Adana. It was decided to dismiss governor Cevat Bey and replace him with Mustafa Zihni Pasha, the mutasarrif (sub-governor) of Burdur. The same fate was shared by the local commandant, Ferik Mustafa Remzi Pasha. The government also decided at the head of a body of Turkish soldiers, bloodshed ceased - at all events temporarily. Major Doughty Wylie, whom David Marshall Lang erroneously bases at Konya instead of Mersin, and who never even mentions that he was shot by an Armenian, was later awarded with the CMG and the Turkish order of the Mezidiye for his bravery.

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12 FO 424/219, p. 80.  
13 Ibid., p. 81.  
17 FO 371/772/17612: Lowther to Grey, 4.5.1909.  
18 Lang, p. 14.  
20 FO 424/219, p. 82.  
21 Akşin, p. 191.  
23 İkdam, 19.4.1909; Akşin, p. 268.
that thenceforth the governor could directly demand from the army commanders the despatch of troops and then notify the Ministry for War instead of going in a round-about way of asking the Porte, then the Minister for War, and then the commanders. The Ottoman War Office announced on the evening of 18 April that no incident had occurred for the past twenty-four hours. Nevertheless the government decided to send a cruiser and a number of armed sailors to Adana.

The Şeyhülislam, in a telegram to the muftis (mufti) of Adana, reminded him that massacres were against the Şeriat and the law of humanity. Ohannes Efendi, the Armenian Patriarchal Vicar, in a telegram to the Armenian murahhas (delegate) of Adana, asked for the cessation of the fighting, and expressed his surprise about the causes of such 'anti-constitutional actions at a time of liberty'. On 23 April, Maloumian, the Dashnak leader, suggested at an inter-party meeting that the Adana and Maraş incidents should be terminated, and that those responsible should be punished. On that day parliament examined a telegram from the Bishop of Cilicia, Sahak, who had resigned, complaining that, for the past two days Hacin (Sainbeyli) was under fire from the neighbouring Muslim people and from the army, and asking for an end to the situation. Parliament decided to send a telegram to Adana again calling upon the officials there to carry out their duties, and reminding them of their responsibilities.

The arrival, on or about the 25th April, of several British and other foreign warships at Mersin and Iskenderun (Alexandretta), including French and Russian vessels which had received orders to go to Turkish waters, did much towards restoring the confidence of the non-Muslim population. German-Austrian and American ships joined them in order to protect their nationals. Russia was also reported to have sent warships to Burgaz and Akpinar, but the Russian Foreign Minister, M. Isvolski, assured Turkish Ambassador Turban Pasha that no Russian warships at Mersin and iskenderun (Alexandretta), including French and Russian, had left port. Apparently Russia was trying to procure the support of the vilâyets of Diyarbakır and Aleppo, and that similar action should be taken by the latter. In this connection it was suggested at the British Foreign Office that perhaps a message from the British government might spur on the Şeyhülislam. The Armenians are our special care, and I think we should do all we can with the Constantinople (Istanbul) authorities. The Armenian Patriarch and the Şeyhülislam did not hesitate to send instructions to the religious authorities of Konya, where there were fears of disorders, and repeated their previous orders to the vilâyets of Diyarbakır and Aleppo.

There was much panic in Aleppo, Antep, and other nearby towns, and in Konya, Kayseri, and even Beirut, where periods of grave alarm were recorded; but in most cases the local authorities, and notably the muftis of Mersin among them, by vigorous measures and show of determination, were able to prevent excesses or outbreaks until the arrival of fresh troops, or of detachments from foreign warships, or until the news reached the provinces of the deposition of the Sultan and the ultimate victory of the constitutional party and the Young Turk regime.

By 25 April the ferocity of the incidents began to abate, and just as in the capital the period of suspense and uncertainty had come to an end with the entry of the army, so too in the provinces the reign of anarchy was abruptly ended upon

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51 Akşin, p. 250.
52 Mecûsî Vâlâca Mecmuası, vol. 126, 6.4.1329 (1909); Akşin, p. 293.
53 Ibid., 20.4.1909.
54 Ibid., 26.4.1909.
55 Türk Tarihi Vakfı Annaleri, no. 206-1, 21 and 22.4.1329 (1909); Akşin, p. 297.
56 Ibid., 17.4.1909; Nişâl, p. 669; Çevdet and Ünát, p. 55.
57 Die Große Politik, 27/1, no. 9588/37.
58 Ibid., no. 9584/24.
59 Hariciye (Foreign Ministry), carton no. 594/6, no. 191.
60 Die Große Politik, 9582/23, 9588/37, 9589/15 and 9591/17.
61 Ibid., 9590/42; Akşin, pp. 147-48.
63 See also ibid., doc. no. 14851: Lowther to Grey, 20.4.1909.
67 Ibid., doc. no. 15455: Lowther to Grey, 22.4.1909; İldam, 19.4.1909.
the restoration of some kind of authority in Istanbul. Fresh troops were despatched from the Roumelian Army, and the local authorities began to face the grave and pressing problem of relief and shelter for the homeless and orphaned refugees. But suddenly, on the evening of the 25th, soon after the arrival of the new forces at Adana, fresh shots were heard in the Armenian quarter, where some Armenian youths fired at the soldiers, although pro-Armenian authors claim that it was the Turks who began the firing.71

The town was again in a blaze. All night long incidents went on, and by the time Major Doughtry Wylie had obtained assistance from the vali the next day, under the menace of foreign intervention, half of the town, including hospitals, churches, mosques and mission buildings, had been burnt down. Wylie stated that his impression while going around Adana at this time was of a great number of cartridges exploding in burning houses, and of wreckage falling across the street.73 It was believed that many of the fires were started 'deliberately.'74

The outbreak of the second incidents in Adana had given rise at the time to ugly stories of complicity of the Roumelian troops, but British Ambassador Lowther found no truth in these reports. They were in reality started by some desperate Hitchakist terrorists who, in the wild hope of provoking foreign intervention, had attacked and killed fifteen newly arrived Roumelian soldiers who were picketed in the Armenian quarter. Lowther could give no definite figures of the dead and wounded, but in Adana 2,000 bodies were buried of whom 600 were stated to be Muslims. The Turkish government subsequently issued an official estimate of 5,000 casualties for the whole district; but Lowther found this was 'grossly under-estimated', and believed that the figure should probably be somewhere between 15,000 and 20,000 with 15,000 destitute Armenians.75 Cemal Pasha states that 17,000 Armenians and 1,850 Muslims were killed.76 The Armenian deputy for Edirne (Adrianople), Hagop Babikian, in a report he prepared for the Ottoman parliament, which was not discussed as he had passed away, gave the number as 21,001.77 The Ottoman government made an initial grant of 30,000 Turkish Lira each for rebuilding the burnt quarter.78

According to British Ambassador Lowther, to lay the responsibility at the door of Abdülhamit, as was at first done, was impossible; no evidence of any kind had been produced to incriminate him. In fact, Charles Marling, the British Chargé d'Affaires in Istanbul, believed as late as July 1912 that, by far the most probable theory was that the incidents were brought about with the special purpose of discrediting Abdülhamit. 'At all events, the worst of His Majesty's enemies could not accuse him seriously of an act which he was astute enough to recognise as calculated to justify his deposition', Marling remarked.79 Nor was there any evidence against İzzet Pasha, the vali, though there could be no doubt that a number of hodjas and reactionaries had done all they could to fan the flame of the Muslim excitable.

Lowther did not believe that there was any ground to assume that the Armenians were planning an insurrection, or that the Muslims had been preparing a carefully premeditated 'massacre'. The causes of the incidents were, according to him, rather to be found in the vainglorious talk of equality on the part of the young Armenians, who were all 'in theory' revolutionaries and advocates of home rule; in the fear which their attitude had inspired among the Muslims of some definite act of aggression, a fear which was somewhat justified by the constant stream of arms which flowed into the country for the use of the non-Muslim population; in the extravagance of the orators on both sides; and in the lamentable weakness of government authority. Through these causes had come the events of 13 April in the capital, and the murder of the two Turks by an Armenian as a pretext for the outbreak at that particular time. Once the incidents had begun, the 'cowardice of the vali' and 'the ferci's action in arming the reserves', had caused the Muslims to believe that 'the government were encouraging them to punish the Armenians', reported Lowther. And yet, R. McDonell of the British Foreign Office, commenting on these incidents eleven years later, observed that the Adana incidents 'were undoubtedly the result of (revolutionary) society propaganda, and of urging the Armenians to armed resistance'.80

Cemal Pasha, on the other hand, puts all the blame on Mushog, the Armenian bishop of Adana, and on the local government, who did not prevent his

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71 Cemal Pasha, pp. 345-46.
72 Walker, p. 185.
73 FO 424/219, p. 93.
74 Woods I, p. 138; Abbott I, p. 305.
75 FO 371/15394: Lowther to Grey, 23.4.1909, and doc. no. 15478: Lowther to Grey, 25.4.1909; see also FO 371/4974/E 2404: Memo. by R. McDonell, dated 25.3.1920, which confirms that 15,000 Armenians were killed; but the number of Muslims killed is not mentioned.
76 Shaw and Kurat support this view; see History of the Ottoman Empire, p. 281.
77 United States National Archives, 353/45, no. 87, 4016/13.
79 FO 371/1496/32933: Marling to Grey, 29.7.1912.
80 FO 371/4974/E 2402: Memo. by R. McDonell, dated 25.3.1920.
who used to come from USA. When the revolt was prepared, these visits became more frequent. Many Armenian terrorists were accommodated in the church, waiting for the day of the revolt.80

The local authorities, on the other hand, acted rather recklessly in calling upon the Muslims to get their arms and suppress the rebellion. The mutasarrif of the Kozan sancağı (sub-governor of sub-province), Asaf Bey, who did not dare leave Government House, sent alarming telegrams in all directions, inviting the Muslims to come to the aid of their brethren because he had received information that armed Armenians from Döryol were marching to Erzin, the capital of the sub-province, which was also known as Cebelirekë.

Turkish historiographers insist that, after the restoration of the constitution the Armenians did not remain idle; they mobilised their resources in order to achieve their 'holy aspiration' - the establishment of an Armenian state in Cilicia (Çukurova). According to Reşat Ileri, this independent Armenian state was to be set up on territory including Adana, İçel, Hatay (Alexandretta) and Maraş. In this venture the Armenians were assisted not only by the French but also by the British and the Americans. The writer goes on to claim, without evidence however, that American transport ships, laden with arms, under the protection of French warships, were clandestinely landing weapons for the Armenian terrorists. The British also were bringing arms and ammunition from Cyprus to be distributed to Armenian bands. Moreover, the Armenians had set up an arsenal at Saimbeyli (Hacine) where they manufactured guns, revolvers and ammunition. The greatest support, however, came from Russia who wished to gain access to the Mediterranean.

The Armenian Church in Adana, and its bishop, seem to have been the chief instigators of this movement. The Turks believe that in April 1909 Armenian bands had attacked Turkish quarters and had begun to massacre the people in accordance with a vow of vengeance that they had taken earlier. Those Turks who had managed to procure arms had retaliated. These incidents were echoed to the European press as the 'extermination of the Armenians by the Turks'.80

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81 See also Mehmet Asaf: 1909 Adana Ermeni olayları ve anıları (the Armenian incidents of 1909 of Adana and my reminiscences), edited by İsmet Pamukçuoglu, Ankara, 1982; see also Gürün, p. 176; Cemal Paşa, p. 168.
82 See also Mithat Sarıoğlu: Türk-Ermeni dostluğu dönümüştü: nası1 dönümüştü? (how Turk-Armenian friendship was transformed into enmity), Hürriyet, 17.11.1981; Sıla Orkun: 'Çığlıkların öynaçığı Ermeniler' (Armenians, toys of the Powerful), Milliyet newspaper, Istanbul, 5.10.1981.
At the entrance of a coffee-house I saw something that made the blood rush to my temples. Tacked to the wall was a small card on which was printed a map of Cilicia, with writing in Armenian. Above the card, which was charcoal-smeared, and written over in a crude hand, were the words: 'What Armenia, infidel dog?' I turned the card over and read, in Armenian: 'The future Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia'.

Kherdian then goes on to relate that a mullah had said to his father:

That dates from the 1909 troubles. As you know, when Abdülhamit was dethroned in 1909, the new government of the Young Turks promised certain freedoms to the Armenians and other subject races. The Armenians, in a burst of riotous folly, foolish even for them, began shouting from their clubs and meeting chambers of the freedom that would soon be theirs. It was then that they sent those unfortunate cards you ask about through the mails, and marched through the streets bearing banners of 'Lesser Armenia'. They even began speaking of a royalist army hiding in the mountain fasts of Hadjin and Zeitun, which was of course bluff...

It is most regrettable. Christian and Moslem have always been neighbours, if not always friends. The accusation that the Turk is persecuting the Armenians on religious grounds is the work of Western journalism. Until now not a single act of desecration has been committed against the Armenian church... I have analyzed the problem. The Armenians began to align with the West - first slowly through the missionaries, and then through the instigation of their intellectuals who had gone off to France to be educated. They returned with notions of autonomy and other nihilistic ideas about 'freedom', so that when the war came to our country, they were the natural dupes for the Western Powers, who began using these poor, uneducated Christians as their excuse to heap invective on our heads, and to rouse their own masses against us, should they feel it necessary to go to war with our country. So much of it is outright lies. We have never been granted a fair hearing before the great tribunal of humanity...10

And this statement hardly needs any comment.

10 Kherdian, pp. 65-68.
were as follows: Muslims: 1,924 killed, 533 wounded; Christians: 1,455 killed, 382 wounded. This presumably referred to the whole province, but did not correspond with the information furnished by Major Doughty Wylie to Ambassador Lowther, who hastened to inform Sir Edward Grey on 11 May that this could only be regarded as a reflex of the belief held by the local Turks that the Armenians had united in a great plot to annihilate their Muslim neighbours. This was a belief to which the activities of the Hintchakists, and of bishop Mousheg, seemed to have given some verisimilitude. The fear among the Turkish population was evidently genuine, 'however ill-founded', claimed Lowther, and the apprehensions of the Armenians were not as yet being fulfilled by the action of the government.

In Adana the authorities had arrested 104 Muslims and 89 Christians on the charge of being implicated in the incidents. As a result of these arrests, the situation in the town was gradually beginning to settle down. The court-martial appeared to be determined to bring the culprits to justice which contradicts Christopher Walker's claim that the military tribunal 'did little except frame Armenian plots'. There is no evidence to indicate that 'at all stages the attempts of the men (commission) to reach the truth were thwarted apparently by orders from Constantinople' as claimed by Walker.

British witnesses such as M. Gibbons and M. Chambers, who had given evidence before the military commission, were convinced of the existence of an Armenian 'nationalist' plot. Moreover, the American diplomatic representative in Istanbul had furnished British Ambassador Lowther with a report from one of the 'most experienced' American missionaries in Anatolia, the Reverend Dr. Christie, which gave an account of the very origin of the incident. He declared that the young Armenians of Adana were nearly all revolutionaries; that arms and ammunition had been sold for months, and that both sides had been laying in store of them. He also attributed a large share in the events to the 'evil counsels' of the Armenian bishop, whom he described as 'a very bad man'. These comments of Dr. Christie went far to show that, among a number of Armenians, headed by their bishop, the idea of a revolutionary plot did exist.

Whilst inquiries were continuing in Adana, on 30 June the Christian leaders of the city, including Gregorians, Protestants, Catholics, Syrians, Greek Catholics and Chaldeans, issued a declaration pledging loyalty to the constitution and the state, and denying that they ever had any intention of provoking a rebellion there. The declaration was presented to the various government departments. On the other hand, the court-martial and Yusuf Kemal had asked the British Vice-Consul, Major Doughty Wylie, for an account of what he had seen of the incidents. They had also urged him to give his views on the causes and the general politics of the affair. He gave them an account in which he tried, as far as possible, to eliminate anything which might cause a controversy. It appeared to him to be far more important to bring about, if possible, a better feeling between the two races than to uselessly dispute over who had fired the first shot. He also suggested to the new delegation from the Armenian Patriarchate, who seemed, at least the lay members, reasonable people, that they might bring influence to bear on 'disreputable Armenian witnesses', who made a scandalous living by giving false evidence against their own people.

Meanwhile Hagop Babikian, the Armenian member of the commission of inquiry, left for Istanbul after a short period, having complained that the weather in Adana was too hot for him. Yusuf Kemal, however, remained for three more weeks, and having finished his investigation, handed over all the documents to the British Vice-Consul, with a plea that he should read it and make any amendments he thought necessary in his own report. Yusuf Kemal then returned to Istanbul where he saw Babikian at the chamber of deputies, and suggested to him that they should rewrite and submit their joint report to parliament. But each time he approached Babikian, the latter evaded the issue. On the morning of 1 August, in the presence of Halil Bey, deputy for Menteşe, and his friends, Yusuf Kemal gave Babikian the copy of Doughty Wylie's report, which was in French. He pointed to its conclusion and suggested to Babikian that they should translate it into Turkish, both sign and submit it to the president of the chamber. Babikian expressed the wish to read the report, and took it from Yusuf Kemal.

The following day he brought it in an envelope, and in the presence of the same people, returned it to Yusuf Kemal. The report consisted of eight typed pages; seven of the pages related to the incidents, whilst the eighth page included the conclusion. When Yusuf Kemal opened the envelope, he discovered that the eighth page, which carried the signature of the British Vice-Consul Doughty Wylie, was missing. In his conclusion, the Vice-Consul had declared rather naively that he never believed in an Armenian insurrection which aimed at the establishment of a separate kingdom with foreign assistance. If the Armenians had such aspirations, they could have withdrawn en masse to the mountains where they could easily have defended themselves, and would never have left defenseless thousands of unarmed farmers in the fields, most of whom were their brethren or relatives. Apparently he did not know, or pretended that he did not know, about the methods which Armenian terrorists used in the 1890s in order to attract the attention of the Powers. It was also foolishness, Doughty Wylie...
believed, to imagine that the Armenians, who were only armed with revolvers and shotguns, would resist the Ottoman army. As for foreign intervention, such an idea was useless. He had also declared that the majority of the Muslims really believed that their government, their life and religion were in danger. Their ignorance was too much for them to understand that this ‘could not be possible’. Many of them were provoked by the inflammatory speeches of the Armenians, as such speeches were related to them in an exaggerated manner; moreover, many ‘bandits’ were attracted by the prospects of looting. Nevertheless the government was mainly responsible for not having discovered the incident beforehand and taken effective steps to suppress it. Those making inflammatory speeches could have been arrested quickly, and the first indications of the rebellion could have been stamped out by the troops, claimed Doughty Wylie.

When Yusuf Kemal discovered that the eighth page of the report was missing, he asked Babikian what had happened to it. ‘Did you not give it to me like that?’ the latter exclaimed. He then admitted the existence of page eight, and explained that, whilst dining at the Tokatian restaurant, he was also perusing the report: he must have dropped it there. They decided to visit the restaurant that evening and to look for it. Yusuf Kemal arrived there long before Babikian, who came shortly after together with Moradian, the president of the Hinchak Committee. Babikian, we are told by Yusuf Kemal, then begged the latter confidentially to have mercy on his children, meaning that he deliberately had to lose the last page of Doughty Wylie’s report. Yusuf Kemal consoled him, and told him that he would telegraph the president of the court-martial who already had the report, and ask for a copy. Babikian then left for his home at Ye§ilkoy (San Stefano) where he died of a heart attack that same night.

Shortly afterwards Yusuf Kemal submitted his report to the chamber of deputies, but it was not discussed as Babikian could not sign it. It is evident from a despatch which British Ambassador Lowther sent to Sir Edward Grey on 4 August that Babikian had been receiving threatening letters (probably from Armenian militants), and although there were suspicions of foul play in his death (possibly poisoning), they were groundless as shown by the post-mortem. Before he died, however, Babikian had given an interview to the Tavtir-i Etkar newspaper of 9 July, accusing a number of local officials, and making some wild and exaggerated remarks which exasperated the members of the court-martial. As a result, the officers of the court-martial resigned in a body, whilst British Vice-Consul Doughty Wylie thought that the majority of Babikian’s statements would be contradicted by his colleague Yusuf Kemal.

Babikian had said that the Armenians had given no cause for the incidents. If by this he meant, as he seemed to have meant, that there were no faults on the Armenian side, he went too far, declared Doughty Wylie. Considering the country and the people, there was certainly provocation in violent and insulting language, which was still too common. There remained, too, the propaganda for the buying of arms. As to bishop Mousheg, whom Babikian declared to be innocent and a much maligned man, he could be proved to have toured his province, exhorting his flock and others to buy arms at any price, and if he was not a dangerous man, why did his own people ask the British Vice-Consul to keep him away from Adana?

Babikian’s interview had thus, to the last degree, disgusted the Turks and accentuated the deep-seated dislike of the Armenians, which had already made a sympathetic treatment of the province so extremely difficult. It had been represented to the İiadal newspaper as a slanderous attack on the Turks and on the religion of the state. Doughty Wylie believed that Babikian’s facts were in some cases wrong, which was to the last degree unfortunate. As a result of his statements the Armenian Patriarch threatened to resign unless the government retracted its original contention that the incidents were the result of an Armenian plot to found an independent principality.

Meanwhile, in Istanbul the government passed the Law of Associations forbidding all political organizations based on ethnic or national groups, whilst the Grand Vezir and the Minister for War succeeded in inducing the court-martial, which had resigned en masse on account of the appointment of a new president, and the strictures of Hagop Babikian, to withdraw their resignation. At the same time, in Adana, the new vali addressed for several hours a meeting of the heads of the Armenian and Syrian Churches, held in M. Chambers’s house one evening. He spoke tactfully and frankly on matters concerning them, and succeeded in leaving a good impression on all his listeners. The acting British Vice-Consul R.E.W. Chafi believed that this should contribute tremendously to the success of the governor’s reforming efforts. The vali had also announced his intention of suppressing various Armenian sources of rumour and the so-called ‘reports’ in Adana, which was welcomed by Chafi, as ‘absurdly inaccurate’ reports and newspaper stories had emanated from Adana which had the most harmful results.


\[102\] Ibid., no. 43: Lowther to Grey, 4.8.1909.

\[103\] Ibid.

\[104\] FO 371/774/34994: Lowther to Grey, 8.9.1909, enclosing copy of a despatch from Chafi, 1.9.1909.
Considerable sensation was aroused in early September 1909 by a statement in the press on the subject of the condemnation to death of various Turks and Armenians in Adana. The number of Armenians condemned to death was variously as from four to nine; but British acting Vice-Consul Chafy informed Ambassador Lowther that none of the Armenians was condemned by the Adana court-martial under the presidency of Kenan Pasha. He believed it to be true that about forty Muslims had been sentenced to death. The sensation was greatly increased by the action of Tourian, the Armenian Patriarch, who sent in his resignation to the Grand Vezir on 7 September. The patriarch took up the line that, as the government had officially admitted the innocence of the Armenians in connection with the accusation of having caused the incidents, the presumption was that any Armenians who had killed Muslims had done so in self-defence, and that consequently it was not equitable to condemn them to death; that it would be fairer and more politic to severely punish the ex-vali and the others who were responsible for the disorders, and pardon even the individual Muslims who had taken part in the incidents; and that the sentences decreed against the ex-vali and the others were quite inadequate.

The situation became more acute as the Armenian national assembly threatened to follow the example of their chief, and negotiations were opened between the Porte, represented by Mehmet Talat, Minister of the Interior, and Necmettin Bey, Minister of Justice, and Tourian, with a view to arriving at a compromise which should satisfy the demands of the latter. Talat's attitude at the outset was unconciliatory, and he told a press representative that the sentences passed by the court-martial would all be carried out on Christians and Muslims alike with impartiality. Talat states in his memoirs that he studied the report about the Adana incidents with great care. Those incidents were started by the Armenians, as stated by an Armenian witness (name not given). Even Hagop Babikian, claims Talat, who was one of the delegates sent to investigate the incidents, had clearly explained it to him. The purpose of the incidents was to provoke the people to riot, to attract European attention, and to establish an autonomous Armenian state in Cilicia.105

Despite Mehmet Talat's firm stand, it was announced a few days later that the death sentences passed on 29 of the Armenians found guilty had been commuted to penal servitude for life,106 whilst the capital punishment passed on about 40 Muslims was carried out.107 According to Cemal Pasha, who was appointed to Adana after the incidents:

Four months after my arrival in Adana I had thirty Muslims, convicted by the court-martial, hanged in Adana itself, and two months later, seventeen Muslims hanged in the town of Erzin. Only one Armenian was executed. Among the Muslims hanged was... the mufti of the Bahçe district... I regret that I could not capture Mr. Mousheg, who had escaped to Alexandria on a foreign ship on the second day of the incidents. This person, too, was rightly condemned to death in absentia by the court-martial. I would have hanged him opposite to the mufti of Bahçe.108

It was announced in the middle of December that four Armenians, Kirkor, Nazaret, Bedros and Mirran, with bishop Sahak, who had been condemned by the court-martial to hard labour for life and perpetual banishment, had been pardoned by the Sultan, and that further sentences to death of the culprits of the incidents should be commuted to hard labour for life.109 Yet many of the Armenians of Adana were not the innocent passive sufferers that they had sometimes been portrayed. They were insufferably and tactlessly loquacious, and their bishop Mousheg was 'a firebrand', who was seeking to force the foreign Powers to intervene, with the ultimate end of declaring himself 'king of Cilicia', as confirmed by secret British documents.110

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108 Girin, p. 176.
110 FO 424/220, p. 76; Walker, p. 187.
CHAPTER 4
TOWARDS CATASTROPHE

The Balkan wars

After the Adana incidents, in which many Turks and Armenians lost their lives, and which were, as usual, echoed to the West as 'the massacre of Armenians by the Turks', Turco-Armenian relations again became very strained. During the Balkan wars, which began in October 1912, extensive disorders took place all over Anatolia. The political and international situation, and reports from Turkey-in-Europe about the ill-treatment and murder of the Muslims there, added to other reports that the Armenians in the Balkans had formed committees to fight against the Turks, increased the animosity towards them in the outlying provinces of the Ottoman Empire.1

In November when fortune deserted the Turks, Russian diplomacy, taking advantage of the Balkan wars, incited the Ottoman Armenians to give the last blow to the dying 'Sick Man of Europe'.2 According to Armenian historian Richard Hovannisian, by 1912, Russian policy towards the Ottoman Armenians, which had latterly become hostile, had changed. He observes:

There were important reasons in 1912 for satisfying the Armenians. By reviving the Armenian question in Turkey, the Tsar would not only regain the loyalty of his Armenian subjects, but also would strike a blow against possible anarchy in Transcaucasia. Moreover, St. Petersburg feared German economic penetration in this region, and reasoned that 'Russian-supervised reforms' would be sufficient to keep the Germans out.3

Hence, Tsar Nicholas II and his advisers were now again prepared to 'resurrect the Armenian question'. This is confirmed by Cemal Pasha, who states that the Russian Chargé d'Affaires in Istanbul regarded the Armenian plan for reform in Anatolia merely as the first step towards the Russian occupation of eastern Turkey.4

Armenian extremist leaders, encouraged by the Ottoman defeats in the Balkan wars, and the success of the Balkan nationalities in obtaining their independence, judged the time ripe for achieving their own 'liberation'. According to Armenian writers, Louise Nabbandian and Kapriel Siropanian, through propaganda, agitation, and terrorism (methods they borrowed from the Russian nihilists and other anarchists), Armenian militants hoped to start a major insurrectionary movement in the Ottoman Empire, confidently expecting that, when the empire was aflame, the European Powers would step in and secure to them an autonomous or independent Armenia.5

When, as in the past (e.g. in 1828-29 and 1877-78), Armenian leaders again appealed to Russia for active support against the Sublime Porte, in Turkish eyes the Armenians became the instruments of Russian policy.6 As a result of Armenian agitation and intrigues with Russia the situation in Anatolia became so acute that, in April 1913, it was prophesied at the British Foreign Office that the break-up of the Turkish Empire, in Asia as well as in Europe, appeared to be imminent.7 This was also confirmed by Armenian writer Krikor Bekesnilian, in a booklet published in January 19148, in which he observed:

The country which once was called Turkey in Europe has been gradually, and of late, speedily, dismembered. The Turk can no longer expect to have an independent position in the Near East. He still holds (only temporarily) a very small territory in Eastern Europe. Constantinople (Istanbul) still remains the Turkish capital. The Turk however must be prepared for further defeat in his ill-gotten domains.

The fate of Asiatic Turkey, including Stamhoul, is in the balance...

Russia was now using both the Armenians and the Kurds to disrupt the Ottoman Empire. The new British Vice-Consul in Van, Molyneux-Scel, believed that, if, at any time, either the Ottoman Empire or the Powers seriously contemplated the granting of autonomy to the Armenians, 'Russia would naturally have done all in her power to prevent such an idea being realised'. An autonomous, or semi-autonomous, Armenian province dividing the Empire from Russia, besides creating discontent among the Russian Armenians, would form a very effective barrier against Russian expansion in that direction, the Vice-Consul suggested,9 whilst British Consul B.A. Fontana reported from Aleppo that the Armenians of Dortyol were well-armed with modern rifles, every mail adult having

6 Feroz Ahmad: 'Unionist relations with Greek, Armenian and Jewish communities of the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1914', in Braude and Lewis, I, pp. 425-24; Cemal Pasha, pp. 263 ff.
7 FO 371/1785/19793: Lowther to Grey, 26.4.1913, FO minutes.
9 FO 371/1773/35485: Marling to Grey, 25.7.1913, enclosing copy of the Vice-Consul's despatch.
one in his possession. The Consul also revealed that Greeks and others were smuggling rifles into Turkey, 'for the Kurds and Armenians to buy'; and that large numbers of arms were hidden, ready for immediate use in an emergency.10

The situation was so explosive that, in December 1913, Armenophile Lady Cavendish wrote to British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, expressing uneasiness about rumours that Russia was likely to annex the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire, which she called 'Armenia'. She observed that Noel Buxton had advocated, in the *Nineteenth Century* magazine, the handing over of 'Armenian territory' to Russia, and remarked:

I cannot look at that as a right solution of the Armenian terror... I have no faith in the Russian Government. Better for the Armenians to remain as they are, and wait for a better day. If handed over to Russia, the Russian Greek Church would at once compel the Armenians to abandon their Gregorian forms, and adopt those of Russian Greek, and the American Missionaries would be sent out of the country.

Grey tried to console her rather hypocritically:

I can only say that, our own object is not the dismemberment, but the integrity of the Asiatic possessions of Turkey, and the securing of reforms, especially in Armenia. For this the cooperation of all the Powers interested is essential, and this, we are doing our best to promote and to make effective.11

This was a strange statement by the Foreign Secretary of one of the protagonists who were planning to dismember the Ottoman Empire.

**A new reform scheme**

Meanwhile the situation compelled the Ottoman government to instruct its Ambassador in London, Tevuk Pasha, to submit a plan for reform in Asiatic Turkey under British officials, and to appeal to the British government for help. This appeal sparked off a long controversy among the Powers, as Russia opposed it very strongly. All through the summer of 1913 talks were held among the Ambassadors of the Powers in Istanbul about the prospective reforms in Anatolia. In these *pourparlers* Russia, assisted by Britain and France (the Triple Entente), posed as the champions of the Armenians, to whom they systematically gave false hopes in order to use them to advance their own interests;12 whilst Germany and Austria (two members of the Triple Alliance) took the side of the Ottoman Empire.

The result was the imposition on Turkey, on 8 February 1914, of an amended Russian scheme. The CUP government was forced by Germany to accept this scheme, although the former was not willing to put it into force, as it amounted to a partition of the Empire. For the Young Turks, with their experience of Macedonian reforms and their terrible consequences for the Muslims, this agreement seemed a prelude to a Russian protectorate over eastern Anatolia. That is precisely how the Russians viewed it. So great was the fear of the CUP of Russian occupation that it considered the Şeyh Sait Molla Selim rebellion in Bitlis (March 1914) as a pretext for such a move - another Adana incident, but this time on Russia's back door.13

The reform scheme for Anatolia, though much less comprehensive than the original Russian draft, granted considerable autonomy to the six provinces of eastern Anatolia, along with the province of Trabzon, which were to be consolidated into two administrative sectors. Erzurum, Trabzon and Sivas would form one sector, and Van, Bitlis, Harput and Diyarbakir the other. Each sector would be administered by a European inspector-general with wide powers. The inspectors-general would be appointed by the Sultan for a fixed term, but could only be removed with the consent of the Powers.

In vain did the pro-Turkish Ottoman Association in London try to persuade Sir Edward Grey that the Armenian and Chaldean Christians generally desired to remain within the Ottoman Empire, provided that, in addition to full religious liberty already enjoyed, they were guaranteed sound civil administration and real security against violence and ill-usage at the hands of the Kurds. The Association also observed:

It seems to be equally clear that deliberate efforts are being made by foreign agents to foment civil discord in Eastern Anatolia and frustrate the sincere endeavours of the present Ottoman Government to establish a just and orderly administration in the Armenian (eastern) provinces.

The reaction of the Foreign Office to this appeal was reflected in the following comments by A.C. (Grew or Crew?): 'The names of the signatories (Thomas

10 Ibid., doc. no. 52098: Mallet to Grey, 12.11.1913, enclosing copy of the Consul's despatch, dated 21.10.1913, about his tour of the country.
11 Ibid., doc. no. 50074: Lady Cavendish to Grey, 9.12.1913; Grey to Lady Cavendish, 18.12.1913.
13 See also Djemal Pasha, pp. 98 and 271; Ahmad in Braude and Lewis, I, p. 424.
Barclay, Harold Cox, Aubrey Herbert, Walter Guinness, and E.N. Bennett) do not inspire confidence. They are all names associated with political fads or extremes'.

**Armenian revolutionary organizations in action again**

During this period the influence of the Dashnakists was increasing at the expense of the Hinterpists owing to the more active and extreme policy they pursued. They were well organized; they had a regular and considerable income from subscriptions; and their agents throughout the Armenian villages in the province of Van worked for the party, and kept in touch with the central committee in the city of Van. According to the British Vice-Consul there, Ian Smith, the Dashnak party had actively and secretly imported arms during the year 1913, and distributed them among its followers. On 10 January he reported to the new British Ambassador, Louis Mallet, as follows:

I have seen Armenians openly carrying these arms in the country districts; a good number of inhabitants displayed a familiar knowledge of the different types of rifles and their mechanisms. In Van, it is said that the Armenians are now better armed than the Kurds. They have obtained a number of modern rifles in addition to a few old Martinis, which the Government had distributed to each village.

The policy of the Dashnakists, he went on, was to put the Armenians in the province in a position to hold their own against the Muslims, should the necessity arise. The selling of arms in Van was a very profitable trade - a rifle or pistol being sold for nearly three times its real value, and this made the arming of the villagers a not unattractive business for the Dashnak leaders who had taken it up.

In another despatch, in January 1914, Smith reported that the Armenians in Van were very optimistic, and believed that, numbering as they do about 2/5ths of the population of the province, owing to their superior education and commercial ability, they would, under European control, be able to dominate the Muslim elements of the population. Many Armenians of the intellectual type had been to Russia, America, and elsewhere abroad; considered themselves as Europeans rather than Ottomans, and looked down upon their Turkish fellow citizens. Smith observed:

This professional and trading class possibly attracts more attention to its views in Europe than they deserve; and I do not consider that, as regards this vilayet (province), they properly represent the opinions of the great majority of Armenians who live in their villages and think more of their harvests than of political questions. Apart from...

Before the outbreak of the Great War there were four main Armenian parties in the Ottoman Empire: Dashnaktsutiun, Hinterpist, Viragazmian Hinterpist, and Rangqar. The first two were described as 'revolutionary, or national socialist', with little difference in their methods of using violence and terrorism to attain their ends, which were autonomy or semi-independence for the Armenians, to begin with, and full independence, ultimately. According to a memorandum drawn up by R. McDonell of the British Foreign Office, the Dashnakists bought arms and ammunition in Russia, and sent them through the Caucasus and Persia to Turkey. They collected men and privately trained them. They planned and carried out every kind of agitation and assassinations, including the murder of wealthy Armenians who refused to contribute to their funds. The extremist activities of the Dashnak party are well-portrayed by Ian M. Smith, British Vice-Consul in Van, and by R. McDonell. The latter wrote about this party as follows:

They raised money by terror among their own people, and spent large sums on arms and ammunition; they fomented hatred of the Mussulmans... For the Dashnak there could be no peace without conquest; no decision will satisfy them, whose aspiration is an Armenia stretching from Erivan to the Mediterranean Sea.

Their policy was based on the dictum: 'the end justifies the means'. McDonell describes how, in March 1918, the Baku branch joined the Bolsheviks in order to be revenged on the Muslim Tatars, while the party in eastern Anatolia was 'social revolutionists'. When the Bolshevik-Armenian coalition was formed, Shaumian, the Bolshevik Commissar (of Armenian origin) was warned that a massacre would result, and replied: 'Would any good Dashnak think twice of a few thousand women and children if he saw the realization of his ideals? As a party the Dashnaktsutiun bore a major portion of responsibility, for it was often the leading force in organizing bands to perpetrate massacres, often exterminating the inhabitants of entire Muslim villages, commented Vorontsov-Dashkov.

The Hinterpists' programme did not differ markedly from that of the Dashnakists, but it devoted more attention to Armenian claims for some form of home rule within the Turkish Empire. Both parties had extremist and moderate...
members. While the Hintchakists aimed at the formation of an Armenian state under Turkish suzerainty, according to the moderates, independent, according to the militants; the Dashnakists aimed rather at so organizing the Armenian population as to make it an indispensable ally of the Young Turks against the conservatism of the Old Turks. The Hintchakists wished to reduce the cooperation with the Turks to a minimum; the Dashnakists encouraged it, at least, for a time. The Hintchakists’ programme also advocated propaganda, agitation, and terror, as means of achieving their objectives. The ‘methods’ advocated were reflections of those put forth by the Russian Narodnaya Volya (People’s Will).20

The Viragazmian was a conservative small group of dissidents from the Hintchak who disliked the occult conspiratorial methods of the latter. The Ramgavar was more moderate. It aimed at maintaining the powers and prerogatives of the Armenian Patriarchate until the claims of the Armenians regarding the special status of the six eastern provinces of Anatolia were granted autonomy, and was strongly opposed to the anti-clerical tendencies of the Dashnakists.21 All, or most, of these parties incited the Armenians to arm themselves.

Kurdish incidents

While Armenian insurgence was thus gathering momentum, the Ottoman government was trying half-heartedly to implement the agreement of 8 February 1914 which it found very unpalatable. But Russian policy was never to permit peace in eastern Anatolia. For this, Russia had to first establish a protectorate over eastern Turkey, further to awaken the sympathy of Europe for the Armenians, and to stir up the Muslim tribal beys and influential sheikhs to resistance against the government and the Armenians. It was in accordance with this carefully planned scheme that the Russian government supported Abdul Razak Bedirhani, the Kurdish militant leader, furnished him with lavish supplies of money on the pretext of restoring tribal rule at Sinai, and through the agency of its Consul at Bitlis, provoked Sheikh Sait Molla to rise against the Ottoman government in March 1914.22 According to the American missionaries in Bitlis, the Kurds, who were believed to have been incited against the government to die Armenians so that they could defend themselves against the Kurds, and this had a good effect on the community.23

On 26 May the Grand Vezir informed Mallet that the Kurds were again in rebellion, encouraged by the Russian Consul at Hoy (Khoi). Abdul Razak, the Russian protegé, was arranging a huge Kurdish movement, but the Ottoman government was prepared, and its troops were ready on the spot to check it. Mallet was, however, not to be intimidated by Russian threats, which he duly did. The Ambassador, ostensibly promised to make an inquiry about the Russian Consul involved,24 but actually he did nothing.

It is interesting to note in this connection that the British Consul at Erzurum, J.H. Monahan, reported to Ambassador Mallet on 13 June that M. Clergé had arrived ten days earlier as second secretary to the Russian Consulate-General there. He was generally known to be an officer of the Russian army, though his military rank was suppressed there, as was that of his predecessor, Colonel Wychinsky, who, after five years’ service, had left two days earlier to take up an appointment in the intelligence department of the War Office in St. Petersburg. 'The staff of the Consulate-General', reported the British Consul, 'consists of the Consul-General, a first secretary being a member of the Russian Consular Service, a second that is really military secretary, and three well paid Ottoman Armenian Dragomans of whom one is specially attached to the military secretary for the purpose of military information'.25

20 Nalbandian, p. 114. Narodnaya Volya (People’s Will) was the most significant of all the terrorist movements which operated in Russia between January 1878 and March 1881. It was established by anarchists and nihilists; see Grant Wardlaw, Political terrorism - theory, tactics and counter-measures, Cambridge University Press, 1982, p. 19.
21 FO 371/3656/47314: Webb to Balfour, 27.2.1919.
22 Djemal Pasha, pp. 275-76.
23 Ibid., doc. no. 15028: Mallet to Grey, 5.4.1914.
24 Ibid., doc. no. 15029: Mallet to Grey, 9.4.1914.
25 FO 371/2130/15735: German ambassador to German FO, received on 9.4.1914.
Partition of the Ottoman Empire

Meanwhile, the arrival (in May 1914) of the two inspectors-general for eastern Anatolia, Major Hoff, a Norwegian, and M. Westernek, a Dutchman, seemed to be an indication that Armenian dreams were about to be fulfilled, and the Ottoman Empire parcelled out. Perhaps it was a coincidence that, in the first week in May, the Russian newspaper, Novoe Vremya published a leading article on Asia Minor and the Triple Alliance, in which it stated that a new claimant in the economic division of Asiatic Turkey had appeared in the person of Austria, a country which had thitherto not been actively interested in the Asiatic continent. This was a reference to Austrian claims for concessions to work the natural wealth of the regions adjoining the southern littoral of Asia Minor - namely the Tekke sanjak (sancak) of the Konya province, and of the İç Ili sanjak of the Aydin province.

The paper then referred to the Italian claims also in the sanjak of Tekke, and expressed the opinion that any friction between Austria and Italy would be adjusted by their powerful ally, Germany, and added that Germany was undoubtedly supporting Austria and Italy in their claims to share 'in the economic division of Asiatic Turkey', and had probably encouraged these two countries to present claims. This would result in all the Powers of the Triple Alliance 'receiving a good share of the Turkish inheritance in Asia Minor'. The paper then went on as follows:

This possibility must not be passed unnoticed by the diplomacy of the Triple Entente, and especially by Russian diplomacy. These claims of the Triple Alliance to the whole southern littoral of Asia Minor are of such importance to Russia, France and England that it must evoke joint action on their part, and it will be much easier for them to act before the issue of Irades (edicts) by the Sultan granting Italy and Austria the concessions they are seeking, than afterwards when it is too late.28

Thus, 'the Armenian reform scheme' was nothing but an excuse for the major Powers to divide the Ottoman Empire into spheres of economic exploitation. The Ottoman government, however, which dreaded the Russian menace behind the scheme, tried to curtail the authority of the inspectors, and as soon as the Great War broke out, dismissed them.29

Long before the outbreak of the First World War, however, the Ottoman Empire had lost many of its territories. On 5 October 1908 Austria had annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Bulgaria had proclaimed its independence. Italy had seized Tripoli in 1911 and had occupied the Dodecanese Islands. The Balkan wars (1912-13) almost completely destroyed the Ottoman Empire in Europe. In the first war (October 1912-May 1913) the Ottomans lost almost all their European possessions, including Crete, to Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, Montenegro, and the newly created state of Albania (Treaty of London, 30 May 1913). In the second war (June-July 1913), fought between Bulgaria and the remaining Balkan states, including Romania, over the division of Macedonia, the Ottomans intervened against Bulgaria and recovered part of eastern Thrace, including Edirne. The Ottomans, since 1908, had lost 85 per cent of the territory and 69 per cent of the population of their European provinces, most of whom were Muslims, who were exterminated, or expelled. By 1913 the empire was already being parcelled out among the major Powers for economic exploitation. Those involved were Russia, France, Britain, Italy, Germany, and Austria. The empire was practically forced to sign a number of bilateral agreements, and the Powers then arranged among themselves to recognize each other's areas of influence in order to avoid a scramble. So, before the outbreak of the Great War, almost every inch of Ottoman territory was divided among these Powers.30 This scramble was facilitated by Armenian militancy and revolutionary activities.

The Ottoman Empire Joins the Central Powers

Between May and mid-July 1914 the Ottoman government made an alliance proposal to Russia through Mehmet Talât, Minister of the Interior, and a bid for closer relations with France, through Navy Minister Ahmet Cemal Pasha, only to be politely rebuffed in both cases.31 Britain, too, was not willing to accommodate the Young Turk government. When, on 1 August, Germany declared war on Russia, the Ottoman government began to mobilise on the following day, after German Ambassador Liman von Wangelheim and the Ottoman Grand Vezir Sait Halim Pasha signed a treaty of alliance between their countries.32 There were considerable differences of opinion in the Ottoman cabinet concerning the course which the empire should follow. Not the entire cabinet wished an alliance with Germany. While Enver Pasha, Minister for War, strongly favoured such an alliance, Cemal Pasha, Minister of Marine, and Cavit Bey, Minister of Finance, favoured an

28 FO 371/2134/20880: Buchanan to Grey, 5.5.1914.
32 Trumpener, p. 16.
alliance with France, and Mehmet Talat, Minister of the Interior, argued in favour of neutrality, but the attitude of the Triple Entente had forced Turkey into such an alliance.

Meanwhile, Armenian militants, who sensed and hoped that sooner or later the Ottoman Empire would be involved in the war, began to intensify their preparations for the coming conflict. On 5 August Kevork V, the Catholics of Etchmiadzin, wrote to Count Vorontsov-Dashkov, the Viceroy of the Caucasus, asking him to utilise the favourable moment in order to solve the ‘Armenian question’. He suggested that the ‘Armenian provinces’ of Anatolia should be united into a single province and placed under a Christian governor, selected by Russia, and independent of the Sublime Porte; and that a considerable degree of autonomy should be granted to the Turkish Armenians. If Russia agreed to this, all the Armenians would unconditionally support the Russian war effort.

Vorontsov-Dashkov replied that the problems which agitated the Armenians would be solved favourably, but warned the Catholics that the Armenians should act in strict conformity with his (Viceroy’s) orders, and if war were to come, Turkey should appear as the aggressor. It would therefore be undesirable, for the time being, to provoke an Armenian rebellion in Turkey. He added, however, that, in the event of war, he would expect the Armenians to carry out his orders. On receiving the Viceroy’s reply the Catholics wrote to Tsar Nicholas II that the Armenians hoped for Russian protection. The Tsar replied as follows: ‘Tell your flock, Holy Father, that a most brilliant future awaits the Armenians’. However, Russia was not really interested in the Armenians; it was prepared to use them only as tools in its expansionist policy. Meanwhile, Dr. Zavriyev, who directed the Armenian representatives at the central Armenian school of Galata (Istanbul), under the chairmanship of Gabriel Jevahirjian, and decided that, in the event of war, the Armenians would

remain loyal to the Ottoman government, and would individually do their military duty. The Dashnakists, however, held a congress in Erzurum in June or July 1914. No Turkish documents have been traced to show whether the CUP also attended this congress, and there is a controversy among the various authorities as to what exactly was said, or what decisions were taken at that congress. According to Papasian, in August 1914 the Young Turks suggested to the Dashnak congress that they should implement their agreement of 1907, and incite the Caucasian Armenians to a rebellion against Russia. The Dashnakists did not accept this suggestion, but declared that, if war broke out between Turkey and Russia, they would support Turkey as loyal subjects; but that they would not be held responsible for the actions of the Russian Armenians.

Another version of this is that the Ottoman leaders met with the Dashnakists in Erzurum in the hope of getting them to support the Ottoman war effort when it came, with the promise of Armenian autonomy. The Turkish branch of the Dashnakists promised that, if the Ottomans entered the war, they would do their duty as loyal citizens in the Ottoman armies, but that they did not know what the Russian Armenians would do. A booklet published in 1921 by the British Armenia Committee, and entitled The case for Armenia, admits, however, that the Armenian leaders of the national congress of the Ottoman Armenians, sitting at Erzurum in the autumn of 1914, declared that, as a nation they could not work for the cause of Turkey and its allies. Nevertheless the Armenians failed to live up to their individual promise, since, even before this meeting had taken place, a secret Dashnak congress held in Erzurum earlier had already decided to use the coming war to undertake a general attack against the Ottoman state.

In this connection, the manifesto of Hovhannes Katchaznouii, one of the Dashnakist leaders, presented to the convention of the foreign branches of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksutiun) in April 1923, is very revealing. Katchaznouii observed:

At the beginning of the Fall of 1914, when Turkey had not yet entered the war but had already been making preparations, Armenian revolutionary bands began to be formed in Transcaucasia with great enthusiasm and, especially, with much uproar. Contrary to the decision taken during their general meeting at Erzeroum only a few weeks before, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation had active participation in the formation of the bands and their future military action against Turkey. In an undertaking of such gravity, fraught with
most serious consequences, individual agents of the Transcaucasian ARF acted against the will of our superior authority, against the will of the general meeting of the party.

Katchaznouni went on to state that, in the autumn of 1914, Armenian volunteer bands organized themselves and fought against the Turks, 'because they could not refrain themselves from fighting'. He observed:

This was an inevitable result of psychology on which the Armenian people had nourished itself during an entire generation: that mentality should have found its expression and did so... We did participate in that volunteer movement to the largest extent, and we did that contrary to the decision and the will of the general meeting of the party... We had no doubt that the war would end with the complete victory of the Allies; Turkey would be defeated and dismembered, and its Armenian population would at last be liberated. We had embraced Russia wholeheartedly without any compunction. Without any positive basis of fact we believed that the Tzarist government would grant us a more-or-less broad self-government in the Caucasus and in the Armenian vilayets liberated from Turkey, as a reward for our loyalty, our efforts and assistance.

We had created a dense atmosphere of illusion in our minds. We had implanted our own desires into the minds of others; we had lost our sense of reality and were carried away with our dreams. (We believed the trifling nuances from Russia). We overestimated the ability of the Armenian people, its political and military power, and overestimated the extent and importance of the services our people rendered to the Russians.

By an extraordinary mental aberration, we, a political party, were forgetting that Our Cause was an incidental and trivial phase for the Russians, so trivial that, if necessary, they would trample on our corpses without a moment's hesitation... When the Russians were advancing we used to say from the depths of our subconscious minds that they were coming to save us; and when they were withdrawing, we said they are retreating so that they allow us to be massacred.

One might think we found a spiritual consolation in the conviction that the Russians behaved villainously towards us (later it would be the turn of the French, the Americans, the British, the Georgians, the Bolsheviks - the whole world - to be blamed). One might think that, because we were so naive and so lacking in foresight, we placed ourselves in such a position and considered it a great virtue to let anyone who so desired to betray us, massacre us, and let others massacre us.

He admitted that the Armenians had not done all that was necessary for them to evade war. They ought to have used peaceful language with the Turks, whether they succeeded or not, and they did not do it. When the skirmishes started, the Turks proposed that they meet and confer. The Armenians did not do so and defied them, concluded Katchaznouni. Unfortunately these were words of wisdom, but after the event!

It is also interesting to note here that, a secret circular of the Ottoman War Office reported that Ottoman Armenian leaders, Papasian and Vramian, both belonging to the Dashnak party, had gone to Erzurum, taking with them the resolutions of the congress held in Istanbul. The circular referred to a meeting held in Erzurum with the participation of Dashnakist delegates from the Caucasus, at which the understanding reached with the Russians about the latter's promise that the Armenians would be given independence on territories to be annexed from the Ottoman Empire, was discussed. The meeting approved the Russo-Armenian agreement and resolved as follows: the Armenians would preserve their loyalty in peacetime, pending the declaration of war, but would carry on with their preparations and with arming themselves with weapons brought in from Russia and obtained locally. If war was declared, Armenian soldiers in the Ottoman armies would join the Russian armies with their weapons. If the Ottoman army advanced, they would remain calm and loyal. If the Ottoman army retreated, or came to a standstill, they would form armed guerrilla bands and begin programmed operations behind the Ottoman lines.

After the Erzurum meeting, Vramian visited the governor of the province and proposed the following: if the Ottoman government declared war on Russia and attacked Caucasia, it must make a concrete promise to establish an Armenian state in order to enable the Armenians to cooperate with the Turks. In this rather hypocritical approach to the governor, after having already approved the resolutions of the Erzurum assembly of the Dashnakists, Vramian had two special purposes in mind: to preserve the national aspirations of the Armenians if the Ottoman army was victorious, and to mislead the Ottoman government by concealing and protecting the secret Armenian organization. However, the Ottoman Third Army Command was informed about these Armenian activities, and the governor and army commanders were warned to be vigilant. The Hintchakists, on the other hand, at their congress held at Costanza in Romania,

13 DOOA-1, doc. no. 1903 (99).
shortly before the outbreak of the war, pledged determined opposition to the Ottoman Empire.

As early as September 1914 the Ottoman government felt the necessity of keeping the Armenians under surveillance. In a coded circular, dated 6 September and addressed to the provinces where Armenians were concentrated, the Ottoman Ministry of the Interior directed the local authorities to keep the Armenian leaders and ringleaders under continuous surveillance, as many of them, particularly those living in the province of Van were secretly corresponding with the Russians. In the middle of September the Russians, through the Armenians of the Caucasus, were trying to draw to their side the Armenians living in the eastern provinces of Turkey, and to provoke them to revolt. The Armenians were being urged, if the Ottoman Empire entered the war, to revolt, and if conscripted, to desert from the army. They were promised independence on territories to be detached from the Ottoman Empire. The Russians were believed to have sent many men to the Armenian villages, disguised as Turkish peasants, who had brought with them arms and ammunition for wide distribution. The Armenians, however, did not need any Russian encouragement to desert from the Ottoman army, as they had already begun to do in droves, even before mobilisation, and crossing over the border, they joined the Russian army.

According to Aneurin Williams, the British Armenia M.P., following the Ottoman mobilisation hundreds of Armenians fled to the mountains rather than join the Ottoman army; and at least three encounters took place (in September) between Turkish gendarmes and bands of such Armenians in the province of Van. About three months earlier, Ian M. Smith, British Vice-Consul in Van, had written to Louis Mallet that the Armenian, and sometimes foreign, newspapers published reports from time to time of gendarmes ill-treating the inhabitants. As far as the Van province was concerned these reports were 'much exaggerated'. Unimportant incidents were magnified by the Armenian papers for their own purposes. The Ottoman government was ready to employ the Armenians in the gendarmerie and the army, but they were unwilling to serve under the Turkish government and thus associate themselves with the 'governing race', which they regarded as 'less progressive and civilized than themselves'. The Armenians resented any attempt to lessen the gulf which divided them from the Turks.

In a very interesting despatch, dated 25 September, British Ambassador Sir Louis Mallet referred to the northeastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire, and declared: 'Developments in Turkish policy may lead to the renewal of the insurrectionary activities of the non-Turkish races there, and consequently force Russia, sooner or later, to define her policy in regard to a region that marches with certain of the more disturbed portions of her own Empire'. The Ambassador believed that a feeling of 'general pessimism and dissatisfaction prevailed' in the area, which was aggravated by the recent mobilisation. In the Diyarbakir province certain Kurdish and Armenian villages had refused recruits and contributions. Referring to the 'radical, almost socialist tendencies' of the Armenian leaders, Mallet observed that 'the Armenians formed, at most, a third of the total population of the north-eastern provinces, but they were organized and armed with rifles, not only in that area, but also in the Adana province. Their relative preparedness had alarmed the authorities, who, in the Adana province, had artillery ready to quell resistance, and who, in the Erzurum province, were arming the local people. The Armenians, however, might well respond to a signal for revolution from the Dashnakists, were the moment propitious', remarked Mallet. The Dashnakists had established an ascendancy out of all proportion to their numbers by terrorist methods, and those who refused to be enrolled by them, had their trees cut down and their sheep driven off; they generally suffered, Mallet believed. Many cases had recently been reported to British consular officers.

According to the British Ambassador, the ideal of the 'more advanced' Armenians would be an independent Armenian state, freed as far as possible from Russian protection; and that if the Turks were anywhere in difficulties, the Armenians might attempt some movement, with this end in view, independently of assistance from Russia. It was perhaps for this reason that they had not emigrated to Russian territory wholesale. They would probably be joined by many of their compatriots from over the frontier. On the other hand, were the opportunity (or a rising to be afforded by a Russian incursion into eastern Anatolia, they would recognise the inevitable and use the Russians, in so far as they could, to their own advantage, treating them as an alternative preferable to their existing rulers. 'Turkish resistance to such an incursion could not count on much help from Armenian elements', remarked Mallet.

Already, Armenian militants everywhere had begun to prepare for agitation and possible rebellion. Many Armenian propagandists had dispersed all over

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11 Ibid., doc. no. 4/3671.
12 Ibid., 4/3671, class 2818, doc. no. 59, 2-19: Ottoman acting Commander-in-Chief to Commander of Ilizl Army, 6.9.1914.
13 Ibid., doc. no. 4/3671, class 2818, doc. no. 59, 2-19: Ottoman acting Commander-in-Chief to Commander of Ilizl Army, 6.9.1914.
Anatolia, and had started to agitate against the Ottoman Empire. Two Russian subjects were expelled from Erzurum in September for having been suspected of exciting disaffection among Armenian soldiers in Ottoman service. Numerous circulars and instructions were despatched to Armenian agitators from Istanbul and abroad, and their distribution was facilitated by the Russian, British, French and Italian Embassies and Consulates, which also assisted the Armenian revolutionaries in any way they could. In return, the Armenians undertook to spy for these countries, and to provide them with information which they could not obtain at the time. Numerous documents sent from Rhodes by Alfred Biliotti, the British Vice-Consul (of Italian origin), about intelligence gathered from various sources, including Turkish, Greek and Armenian agents, on the military activities of the Turks, which information was promptly forwarded to London, Cairo and later to the Commanders of the Dardanelles operations. Ottoman archives also abound in such documents. Here are a few examples from British documents from among so many.

Vahan Cardashian, an Armenian lawyer who served, in the summer of 1915, as the Ottoman High Commissioner for the San Francisco exhibition, wrote on 8 July 1918 to Lord Robert Cecil, then British Ambassador in Washington, claiming that, forty-one days before the entry of the Ottoman Empire into the war (i.e. on 21 September 1914) he had informed the British Embassy in Washington of its decision to enter the war on the side of Germany, and had transmitted to the British Ambassador 'the Turkish plan of campaign'.

An Armenian named Diran Yachibekian applied to the British Foreign Office on 11 May 1921 from Paris, appealing for assistance, and saying that he was a former employee of the administration of posts in Istanbul, and that in that capacity he had rendered valuable services to the British government. He went on:

When Turkey was still neutral, we had strict orders to keep all the telegrams to the embassies of the Allies. We received many cypher telegraphs for the British Embassy which would have never reached their destination. At the risk of my life, I remitted copies of these telegrams to the British Embassy through M. Nerses Noradoungian, the director of the firm Whittall and Company Limited at Constantinople. I kept on transmitting precious documents and information as can be proved by the British Ambassador at Constantinople. I was very faithful to Britain during the whole period of the war, and devoted, especially during the first critical period of hostilities up to the time Turkey declared war.

This was confirmed by Nerses Noradoungian, who wrote to Frank Rattigan, the acting British High Commissioner, on 20 July 1921, as follows:

With reference to the claim put forward by Diran Yachibeghian, who was a Telegraph Office Clerk, for services rendered during the war, I beg to state as follows: Just about the time of the outbreak of the War, this person handed to me for transmission to 'qui de droit' copies of all the cypher telegrams addressed to the British, French and Russian Embassies, which had been held up by the Turkish government. For this work a small payment was made to him at the time by the British Authorities here, amounting, I believe, to 20 Turkish pounds gold, to be shared between himself and a friend of his, also a clerk in the Telegraph Office. During the War, he, on several occasions, gave me valuable information obtained from Government telegrams, which I transmitted to my principal. I never paid him anything, because I could not allow him to understand that I was in a position to do so. I accepted the information as from friend to friend.

Nevertheless, on 26 November Lancelot Oliphant of the Foreign Office asked Sir Horace Rumbold, the British High Commissioner in Istanbul, to inform Yachibekian that the British government 'do not feel justified in complying with his request for pecuniary assistance'.

Moreover, on 29 October 1914 the British Consul at Batum, P. Stevenson, wrote to the Foreign Office that the Armenian organizations had set up a volunteer corps of about 45,000 men, 'presumably for service in Asia Minor, in conjunction with Russian forces, in the event that military operations against Turkey should be rendered necessary.' Recruits for this corps were concentrated and trained at Alexandropol. The local Armenian newspapers strongly recommended to their coreligionists living in Persia to remain in the country, and to those who had left, to return to their homes with the least possible delay, in order that, when the time came, they should be ready on the spot to take up arms and assist the Russians 'in ridding the Christian population of Asia Minor and Armenia, once and for all, of the Turkish yoke'.

On 27 December 1914 the British warship HMS Doris carried out a raid on Iskenderun (Alexandretta), where the railway station was occupied, the telegraph wires were cut, and the instrument was removed. Three Armenian railway officials

\[50\] FO 371/2146/70002: Monahan to Mallet, 14.10.1914.
\[51\] Parmaksızoglu, p. 77.
\[52\] FO 371/3410/129405: Cardashian to Cecil, 8.7.1918.
\[53\] FO 371/6575/E 5569: Yachibekian to FO, 11.5.1921; ibid., doc. no. E 9022: Rattigan to Curzon, 29.7.1921; ibid., doc. no. E 12057: Yachibekian to FO, 27.10.1921.
\[54\] FO 371/2147/74733: Stevens to FO, 29.10.1914.
themselves smashed the electric batteries on the lines 'with particular satisfaction', reported Captain Frank Larken. The Armenians then appealed for protection, stating that they would be hanged for the damage done. They were taken on board the ship. One of them could speak French. They were subjected to a searching inquiry, and gave 'useful information' to the enemies of their country.

On 31 January 1915, the Director-General of Security of the Ottoman Ministry of the Interior informed the Director of Ottoman Intelligence that reliable sources reported irregular communication between the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul and the Catholics of Etchmiadzin, through the Italian Embassy in the Ottoman capital. The Intelligence Service was therefore requested to conduct an extensive and secret investigation on the method of such communication 'which is likely to facilitate and effect the transmission of our most important secrets, and our military position, to Russia', it declared. Despite the censorship imposed on correspondence and communications with foreign countries, Armenians were reported to have been carrying on with their external communications, and also passing on information under coded words and sentences the meaning of which was only known to themselves.

On 20 July 1915 the British Minister in Sofia, M. O'Beirne, reported to the Foreign Office that the editor of the Armenian newspaper published in the Bulgarian capital communicated the following information obtained from his agents in Turkey:

Turks are now suffering greatly from lack of munitions of war. Their factory as Zeytun Burnu can only turn out 30,000 rounds of small ammunition and 200 shells a day. The limited output is due to some extent to the shortage of coal. Turks are therefore preparing an extensive offensive in Gallipoli in order to gain decisive success before the shortage of munitions of war becomes too pronounced.

In March or April 1916 an explosion took place at the arsenal in Istanbul, killing more than 150, and wounding a few hundred people. It was said that this had happened through a mine exploding by accident; but the truth was that it was the work of an Armenian saboteur.

There were also a number of Armenian rebellions before the entry of the Ottoman Empire into the war. One of the earliest Armenian rebellions began on 30 August 1914 at Zeytun (Süleymanlı) where the Armenians announced, following the Ottoman mobilization, that they would not join the Ottoman army, but instead, would set up their own volunteer regiment under their own officers in order to defend the Zeytun area. When their demand was not accepted, they rebelled and attacked an army unit and many Muslims, most of whom they robbed and killed. The rebellion was suppressed, but it broke out again in December with attacks on Ottoman gendarmeries. From then on until the relocations of the Armenians finally ended the revolt, the Armenians of Zeytun waged guerrilla war against the Ottomans.

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55 FO 371/2483/15033: Admiralty to FO, 9.2.1915, transmitting a report of the proceedings off the Syrian coast from 14 to 27 December 1914 of HMS Doris-Larken to Vice-Admiral, HMS Swiftsure, Port Said, 27.12.1914. File FO 371/2489 is full of documents on Armenian and other Christian espionage against the Turks; see also FO 371/3590/114458.

56 DOOA, II, doc. no. 1901 (57).

57 FO 371/2477/98992: O'Beirne to FO, 20.7.1915.

58 FO 371/2770/189941: War Trade Intelligence Department, secret report no. 21/454, Bucharest, 4.8.1916.

59 DOOA, doc. no. 1/131, class 2287, file 12, F. 110.

60 McCarthy, p. 189.
CHAPTER 5
THE TRAGEDY OF ANATOLIA

The Ottoman Empire enters the war

On the evening of 10 August 1914 the German battle cruiser Goeben and light-cruiser Breslau entered the Dardanelles, after evading pursuit by the British navy. Two days later it was announced in Berlin that Germany had sold both warships to the Ottoman government. Goeben became Yavuz Sultan Selim and Breslau was renamed Midilli. On 28 October German Admiral Wilhelm Souchon, who was now in Ottoman service, led his ships into the Black Sea and shelled Odessa, Nikolaev and Sebastopol. On 1 November Russia gave an ultimatum to the Ottoman government, which was rejected. The following day Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire, followed by Britain and France a few days later.1

According to a secret British Intelligence report dated 26 December 1917, the war aims of the Ottoman government were directed to removing the Russian danger, as the CUP government was genuinely afraid of Tsarist designs on Istanbul, the Straits, eastern Anatolia, Iskenderun and the whole northern half of the empire. It believed that Russia had been given carte blanche by Britain and France, the old protectors of Turkey, as a move in their policy of insurance against Germany. The secret war-time agreements between these states later confirmed the Ottoman fears.2 These agreements envisaged the complete dissolution of the Ottoman Empire.

The Constantinople Agreement of March/April 1915, between Britain, Russia and France, recognized Russia's claim to annex Istanbul and the Straits in the north.3

2 For the causes that led the Ottoman Empire into the Great War, see: Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the U.S., 1914. The World War; 62, pp. 136-141 and 149; Howard, pp. 106-25; Laurence Evans: United States policy and the partition of Turkey, Baltimore, 1965, pp. 21-48; Ahmet Emin (Yilmaz): Turkey in the World War, New Haven, 1936, pp. 41-78; Aksel Nemer Kurat: How Turkey drifted into World War I, Studies in International History, London, 1967; Khoren Karabekir: Cihan hainine nasil girdi (how we entered the World War), 2 vols., Istanbul, 1937; Harb kabinelerinin istevsali (the interrogation of War cabinets), 1983; Mustafa Sertoğlu: "Birinci cilial sava§ma giri§iziz", Cilian harbine nasil girdik (how we entered the World War), 2 vols., Istanbul, 1937; Laurence Evans: United States policy and the partition of Turkey...1918; M. Philips Price: Turkey, the Saint Jean de Maurienne Agreement of 17 April 1917, clarified the Italian claims in Asia Minor, promising Italy the Aydin province with Izmir.4

The Armenians, too, had hopes of benefiting from the war; therefore, when the Ottoman Empire entered the war, Armenian leaders in the empire adopted two stances: the 'establishment', consisting of businessmen, churchmen, and educationists, pledged individual support to the Ottoman government, although they adopted neutrality; while militant groups stepped up their anti-Ottoman activities, including the stock-piling of arms in eastern Anatolian cities. On the other side, Armenians in the Russian Empire, far from professing neutrality, supported Russia, and joined the Russian forces with the intention of occupying the eastern provinces of Anatolia, which they labelled 'Armenia', and uniting with their coreligionists.5 They pledged loyalty to Tsar Nicholas II, who promised 'to free' the Turkish Armenians. Soon after, Alexander Khatisian, the president of the Armenian National Bureau in Tiflis, in an appeal to the Tsar, declared:

Full of optimism, the Russian Armenians, in addition to contributing more than 200,000 men to the regular Tsarist armies, formed seven volunteer contingents specifically to assist in the 'liberation of Turkish Armenia'. The partisan tactics of the volunteers, and their knowledge of the rugged terrain, proved invaluable to the Russian war effort.6 This is also confirmed by two

2 McCarthy pp. 889; see also Katzovian, pp. 5.6
3 Horizon, Tiflis, 30.11.1914; Uras, p. 504; Stankevich, p. 239; Shaw and Kurat, pp. 314-5; FO 371/2484 and 2485/46941.
Armenian leaders. Avedis Aharonian, president of the Armenian delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, stated on 26 February 1919:

... At the very beginning of the war, our nation not only forgot all the grievances against Tsarist rule, and rallied wholeheartedly to the Russian flag, in support of the Allied cause, but our kinsmen in Turkey and all over the world, offered to the Government of the Tsar (the Russian Embassy archives in Paris prove this) to establish and support Armenian legions, at their own expense, to fight side by side with the Russian troops under the command of Russian generals...

Boghos Nouhar, president of the Armenian National Delegation, was more revealing when he added:

... At the beginning of the war, the Turkish Government had offered to grant to the Armenians a sort of autonomy, asking from them, in exchange, volunteers to rouse the Caucasus against Russia. The Armenians rejected this proposal and placed themselves, without hesitation, on the side of the Entente Powers, from whom they expected liberation...8

In a letter dated 28 October 1914, Garabet Hagopian, the chairman of the Armenian Patriotic Association in London, informed British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey that the Armenian people had not been idle spectators, but that when the war broke out, they offered up 'special supplications in their Churches for the success of the land and sea forces of the British Empire'. Armenians serving in the Russian lines with the Caucasian army were 'giving a good account of themselves', while a number of them were serving with the French army, as volunteers. He went on to observe that, after the war resulting in the 'glorious victory of the Allies', Russia should be given a mandate to take charge of the eastern provinces of Turkey, and establish 'a really efficient and honest administration' under which it might be possible for the Armenians to freely exercise their duty and privileges 'as Christians and as pioneers of a true civilisation'.9

On 10 November, Lieutenant-Colonel G. M. Gregory, president of the Armenian United Association of London, wrote to the Under-Secretary of State, Home Office, as follows:

It is well known to the Government that the Armenians, as a body, whether British-born, naturalized or Ottoman subjects, are absolutely loyal to the Allies who are now opposed to Germany, Austria and Turkey. Considerable numbers of them are fighting under the Russian flag, while smaller numbers are with the French and British forces.10

On 5 December, one of the Armenian leaders in the United Kingdom, Krikor Bebesnilian, informed Sir Edward Grey as follows:

I hardly need to convince you that the Armenians at home and abroad are on the side of the Allies, praying and longing for a victory for them... Writing as I do in the name of the Armenians in England and in my own name, I may be allowed to state that it truly is hard for us to be considered by the law as alien enemies when we have a natural dislike for Turkey as a misruled State, and abhor her latest madness. We are quite satisfied to expect a deserving defeat and ultimate dismemberment for that country...11

Moreover, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and many other British dignitaries, including Armenophils such as Lord Bryce, Lord Robert Cecil, and others, admitted that, 'during the war the Allies definitely encouraged the Armenians to join as volunteers in fighting for the Allied cause, and supplied them with munitions of war'.12

Armenian activities

Meanwhile a committee was established in Batum, consisting of Russian, Armenian, and Greek members, in order to facilitate the import into Anatolia of arms, ammunition, and explosives; to provoke rebellions in the Black Sea region by utilizing the services of Armenians and Greeks living there; and to gather intelligence and pass it on to the Russians. Many Armenians in the towns and villages east of the Hopa-Erzurum-Hinis-Van line did not comply with the call for enlistment, and escaped to Russia, where they joined Armenian organizations working against the Ottoman Empire. Numerous Russian weapons were discovered in the houses, schools, and churches of the Armenians at a number of places, and Armenian bands, consisting mostly of army deserters, began to attack and murder unarmed Muslim villagers.

Following these incidents, the Ottoman Third Army command began to realise that the Armenians were plotting a rebellion. In fact, plans for such a rebellion were under way in various places where arms, ammunition, and explosives had been stored for future use. The principal centres of the rebellion

9 FO 371/2116/64791: Hagopian to Grey, 28.10.1914.
10 FO 369/776/72725: Gregory to FO, 10.11.1914.
11 Ibid., doc. no. 79716: Bebesnilian to Grey, 5.12.1914.
12 FO 371/5399/E. 2245: Spender to Lloyd George, memo. entitled 'The peace settlement in the Near East', received on 27.3.1920.
were to be Van, Bitlis, Erzurum, and Karahisar; and secondary centres were to be Sivas, Kayseri, and Diyarbakır - all locations on the supply lines of the Ottoman army. As it became evident from the confessions of a number of arrested Armenians, who were tried by court-martial held at Sivas, the Armenian rebels had already appointed generals, inspectors, war commanders, and guerrilla leaders, and had ordered the registration of all Armenian able-bodied males at the Dashnak branches. They would later be armed and used in the revolt.

As soon as hostilities broke out, Karekin Pasdermadjian, the Armenian deputy for Erzurum in the Ottoman parliament, known by the revolutionary name of Armen Garo, crossed the frontier and joined the Russian forces together with all the Armenian officers and men in the Ottoman Third Army. After a short while, he returned with them and indulged in a number of atrocities against ordinary, innocent Muslims. Even Armenian writer Richard Hovannisian admits that 'several prominent Ottoman Armenians, including a former MP, slipped away to the Caucasus to collaborate with the Russian military officials', making it clear that the Armenians would do everything to frustrate Ottoman military actions. As a result of these incidents, the Ottoman authorities disarmed the Armenian soldiers and gendarmes, placed them in work battalions and employed them in construction and transport work. Many Armenians went on deserting from the army, and committed numerous atrocities, thus giving much anxiety to the Turks who began to worry lest the Armenians living in the eastern provinces might revolt in similar fashion and attack them.11

Huge amounts of arms and ammunition were stored all over Turkey, particularly at Oltu, Sarıkamış, Kağızman and Iğdır regions, and these were used in arming the Armenians living in the border villages and towns. The son of the Russian Armenian General Loris Melikov, accompanied by the leading Dashnakist leaders, Melkon and Ohannes, went to Van on 10 October in order to make arrangements for the distribution of weapons in the Van and Bitlis areas. Moreover, an irregular cavalry, consisting of 1,500 Armenians, was formed of those who had escaped from Oltu, Kars, Sarıkamış, and Trabzon. 1,000 of them went to Iğdır to be deployed in the Bayezit region, and 500 were sent to Oltu and Hodicor. Some 6,000 Armenians, consisting mostly of those of Bayezit, Van, and Bitlis, and of army deserters, assembled at Iğdır. They were armed and organized in guerrilla bands under Antranik, Edan, Portokalian, and Surpi. Armenian spy centres were set up in the towns of Trabzon, Erzurum, Muş, Bitlis, Van, Sivas, and Kayseri. Their duty was to inform the Russian army on the position, movements and operations of the Ottoman army.15

When war broke out between the Ottoman Empire and Russia, units of the Russian army began to advance towards Id, Kötek, Pasin Kara Kilisesi, and Bayezit, in order to give support to Armenian insurgents. Those insurgents had plundered the Muslim villages on their way, and had massacred every Muslim they could lay their hands on, including babies in their cradles. As the Muslim youth of those regions had already been conscripted for military service and were away at the front, only old people, women, children and the disabled had remained behind, and they fell victim to Armenian atrocities.16

Five days after Russia declared war on Turkey, Francis Blyth Kirby, the former acting British Vice-Consul at Rostov-on-Don, wrote to the British Foreign Office from London, that before leaving his post, a wealthy Armenian prince named David Chernoff had told him that the Armenians in Russia and Turkey were extremely anxious that war should break out between these two countries, in which case they would avenge themselves on the Turks for all the wrongs they claimed to have suffered at their hands. He also stated that 60,000 Armenians in the Caucasus, and on the frontier, had already volunteered to fight the Turks in the event of war breaking out, and were begging the Russian government to supply them with arms. He believed that a revolution would break out among the Armenians generally, if they thought that they could rely on the support of Russia 'under whose protection they hoped to obtain the freedom of their country'.17

In Cairo, on 12 November Bogos Noubar, one of the Armenian leaders in the recent negotiations for the introduction of reforms in eastern Turkey, repeated to M. Cheetham, the British diplomatic representative there, that the Armenian population of Cilicia would, now that there was no longer any hope of agreement with Turkey, be ready to enrol themselves as volunteers to support a possible disembarkation at Alexandretta (İskenderun), Merin, or Adana, by the allied forces. Valuable assistance could be provided by the Armenians of the mountainous districts, who, if supplied with arms and ammunition, would rise against Turkey. A number of men could also be supplied by the Egyptian Armenians.

One of the officials at the British Foreign Office, Lancelot Oliphant, commented on this suggestion as follows:

It is obvious that Russian success near Erzurum would encourage the Armenian districts, south-west of that city, and a landing at Alexandretta might be the last link in a chain to cut across the (Ottoman) Empire and cripple it most seriously. The difficulty lies in the shortage of arms, and the absence of the means of distributing

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13 Hovannisian, pp. 41-42.
14 Rafael de Nogales: Four years beneath the Crescent, New York, 1925, p. 45.
16 POOA, p. 49.
17 FO 371/2146/68443: Kirby to FO, 6.11.1914.
them. I venture to think that, while the crucial struggle continues to rage in West Europe, it might be better to wait, unless the Russians desire such action as a diversion...

Other officials, and Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey himself, did not support this venture, as they did not consider it wise to arm and stiffen, by expeditionary forces, an 'undisciplined and irregular population'; and besides, there were no trustworthy, representative Armenian leaders with whom to communicate, and through whom to distribute the arms. The British could not spare such arms, nor could they get them into the country.\(^{18}\)

\'Armenians, the small allies of the Great Powers fighting Turkey\'

The doom of the Ottoman minorities was sealed in Paris, on 30 December, when Sir Henry McMahon, representing the British Foreign Office, met his French opposite, M. Gout, who was accompanied by Colonel Hamelin of the French War Office, and M. Peretti of the French Foreign Office. McMahon was accompanied by G.H. Fitzmaurice of the British Embassy in Istanbul, and Percy Loraine of the British Embassy in Paris. M. Gout suggested that the Allies should stir up an anti-Turkish movement among the Arabs, and also use agents to promote an anti-Turkish movement among the Maronites and others. To this, McMahon replied that it would seem unwise to attempt to engineer revolts, etc., 'unless we were in a position to support them effectively', he remarked.\(^{19}\)

It is interesting to quote here from Aubrey Herbert about the doom awaiting the Ottoman minorities that would espose the cause of the Allies:

> When the Great War came, the Christian minorities (in the Ottoman Empire) were bailed by the French and by Mr. Lloyd George as the small allies of the Great Powers who were fighting Turkey. The Armenians, flattered by their recognition, went to the help of the invading Russian troops... and from that moment their peril became dreadful and imminent. Their doom was made irrevocable when Mr. Lloyd George, changeable in everything else, remained steadfast in his appeal to the minorities in Asia Minor to wage war on our behalf.\(^{20}\)

In fact, Lieutenant-General Sir John Maxwell had informed Lord Horatio Kitchener on 18 October that Christians in large numbers had taken refuge in the Lebanon, where they were practically without 'any means of defence'. He had been asked by the committee in Cairo whether the British government would give their support to the arrangement made with the Greek Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos for the supply of arms to be sent over immediately hostilities were commenced with Turkey. They stated that they could do this easily if the idea were supported by the British government. When the Foreign Office asked for Sir Louis Mallet's views on this, the latter replied that, if Britain were at war with Turkey, and in the event of operations in Syria, the supply of arms to Maronites and other Christians of the Lebanon would be 'the natural step to take as they occupy good position for cutting the Turkish railway communications between Beyrout and Homs and Damascus; and successful raids could hold up the Turks from receiving reinforcements from the North'. But Mallet stressed that it was dangerous to give any undertaking to the committee before hostilities began, as it might be divulged, and might have the effect of driving the Turks to occupy the Lebanon at once, and 'possibly kill the Christians before they are armed'.\(^{21}\)

Sir F. Elliot, the British Minister in Athens, telegraphed Grey on 7 December that some Maronite emissaries had obtained from the Greek government the promise of about 2,000 Gras rifles and a large quantity of ammunition 'in order to raise an insurrection in the Lebanon', provided that the Allied Powers concurred. Elliot asked Grey, if the British government concurred, to send the necessary instructions to the Admirals and to Cyprus, where the vessel, which would also be lent by the Greek government, would call.\(^{22}\) The Foreign Office informed Sir F. Bertie, their Ambassador in Paris, and asked him to bring this to the notice of the French government. The French government agreed that the 'Maronite insurrection' would probably be premature, but they did not wish to discourage it. Therefore on the British Foreign Office informed Elliot that, if the Maronites fully realised the danger to which they would be exposed should the arms and ammunition be found in their possession, and nonetheless still desired them, the British government would not oppose, though they could not aid the conveyance of the munitions to the Lebanon.\(^{23}\)

Meanwhile, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, William Harcourt, informed the officer administering the government of Cyprus that the Maronite Christians of the Lebanon were being supplied with arms by the Greek government 'to resist Turkish attacks'. It was proposed that the arms should be sent to Cyprus and transported to Asia in small sailing boats. The administrator of Cyprus should communicate confidentially with the British Minister in Athens with a view to giving the necessary facilities for the passage, through Cyprus, of these munitions. High Commissioner Sir J. Clauson, then administering Cyprus, obeyed

\(^{19}\) Herbert, p. 275.

\(^{20}\) Ibid., doc. no. 70494: Cheethem to Grey, 12.11.1914.

\(^{21}\) Ibid., doc. no. 75916: Elliot to Grey, 7.12.1914.

\(^{22}\) FO 371/2143/51184: Maxwell to Kitchener, 18.11.1914.

\(^{23}\) Ibid., doc. no. 81212: Bertie to FO, 10.12.1914.
Armenian atrocities

Between November 1914 and May 1915 Armenian militants and insurgents caused many incidents all over the Ottoman Empire, as confirmed by Turkish and other war documents. During the first year of the war the Ottomans were occupied with Armenian revolts all over eastern Anatolia. Only the revolt in Van was successful, but the other revolts caused great loss of life, and significantly hampered the Ottoman war effort. As early as November 1914 there were secret reports that the Armenians of the province of Van were planning a rebellion. On 29 November the commander of the Ottoman mobile division at Saray reported to headquarters that, if a rebellion did occur, a difficult situation would arise. In early December the Armenians of Sivas were cooperating with the Russians. Following a fight at Hanik, some Armenian soldiers deserted and joined the enemy. There were also indications of rebellion among the Armenians of the Kars and Gevaş districts of Van. They had cut the telegraph wires, killed a corporal, and fired at a sub-governor and his entourage. Armenian youth and army deserters were gathering together in many places. In the middle of December Armenians destroyed part of the telegraph lines of Reşadiye and Karışkan.

In the same month Armenians in Bitlis and Van provinces began to attack Muslim villages. Among numerous others, for example, they attacked the villages of Kayâli (Mardin sub-province), raping the young women and killing the villagers in the streets. They took hostages from the village and killed them on the road, and did the same to a large number of refugees who were fleeing from the area.

Ottoman officials found 19 bodies in the ruins of the village of Avran in the Bitlis province. The two villages of Merkehu and İstçu in the Van province reported the following, which were probably typical of most of the villages in the region: 'Killed in the village of Merkehu, 41 men, 14 women; killed after having been raped, 4 women; killed in the village of İstçu, 7 men, 4 women; raped but left alive, 5 women; wounded, 3 men and 2 women'. In many of these encounters the Armenians, too, lost some of their men.

The Anatolian Armenian units were most invaluable behind the Ottoman lines, cutting telegraph wires and engaging in other 'commando' attacks. They also served as advance units of the Russian army in numerous campaigns. The Armenians, however, were far more valuable to the Russians by keeping the Ottoman soldiers from the front. This was particularly true in regions such as Van, Zeytun, and Musa Dağı, where major insurrections kept thousands of Ottoman soldiers occupied. Eastern Anatolia was in a state of perpetual insurrection, and the Ottomans were forced to keep many soldiers far behind the lines to protect the population.

While these incidents were gathering momentum, Armenian soldiers, officers and doctors serving in the Turkish army, took every opportunity to escape with their weapons, and to join the Russian army, taking with them vital information about the position and resources of the army. It was later observed on many occasions that, in the most critical moments of a battle, the position of Turkish munitions and reserves were pointed out to the Russians. Moreover, the Armenian soldiers in the Ottoman army were inciting the Turkish soldiers to desert, and thus creating confusion and defeatism in the battle lines. Some Armenians behind the lines constantly communicated with the Armenians in the Russian army, informing them of the position and state of the Turkish units. Coded messages exchanged between them were frequently intercepted.

In January 1915 there were signs of rebellion among the Zeytun Armenians again. They attacked the homes of government officials and gendarmes. Many sick and wounded Turkish soldiers, sent home, were brutally murdered on the road by the Armenians. In many villages of the Elazığ region Armenians opened fire on the gendarmes. On 9 February two gendarmes were sent to the Sekur village of Gargar, but were driven away after having been told that government orders would henceforth not be obeyed. Eight gendarmes were then sent to the scene, but were fired upon by the Armenians from fortified positions, and six of them were killed. Many Armenians assembled at Korçur, Sekur, and Arsin villages and began raiding

21 FO 371/2470/1820: Harcourt to High Commissioner of Cyprus, 1.1.1915.
22 ATBD, no. 1812: Kâzım, Commander of the mobile division at Saray to Commander of the Third Army, 29.11.1914, p. 23; Niyazi Ahmet Banoglu: Ermeni'zin Ermeni'yezesi (the oppression of the Armenians by the Armenians), Ankara, 1976, p. 59; DOOA, pp. 56-51 and 63-64; doc. no. 1906 (102); from the Commander, special service volunteers' battalion, to the Third Army Commander, circa. 15.2.1915.
23 ATBD, doc. no. 1812: Kâzım, Commander of the mobile division at Saray to Commander of the Third Army, 29.11.1914, p. 23.
24 FO 371/2470/1820: Harcourt to High Commissioner of Cyprus, 1.1.1915.
25 ATBD, no. 1812: Kâzım, Commander of the mobile division at Saray to Commander of the Third Army, 29.11.1914, p. 23.
the Muslim villages in the area, committing all kinds of atrocities. The rebellion spread, and soon the whole plain of Muş was up in arms.\(^{30}\)

On 11 February, a Major K. El-Awad wrote to Cecil Spring-Rice, British Ambassador in Washington, suggesting the possibility of a voluntary and armed expedition against the Turkish forces in Syria. He observed:

> If Great Britain could accept our volunteers in some camp in Cyprus, where, with the help of a few non-commissioned officers, I could turn them into an organized body, and hold them ready within a striking distance to land on the Lebanon coasts, in case of necessity, or use them as an auxiliary force to an expeditionary force of the Allies, the results would influence favourably the wavering Druses and the Mohammedan population of Syria...; we shall have to look to the Allies for transportation, arming and maintenance of these volunteers.

But the Foreign Office, and the War Office, did not concur, and the scheme was apparently turned down.\(^{31}\)

In the middle of February it was discovered that the Karahisar-ı Şarkı organizations of the Dashnak committee, which had been arming the Armenian youth in the Sivas region since the restoration of the constitution, had set up an armed and equipped contingent of some 30,000 men in the region. Of these, 15,000 were sent to Russia, while 15,000 remained behind, ready for a rebellion upon orders from Russia. They were said to be capable of prolonging the revolt for thirty days. A war command had been established by the committee, consisting of 30 members, and headed by the Armenian bishop of Karahisar. Searches carried out at the Pürek village by the Ottoman army showed that many arms had been supplied to the local Armenians in preparation for a rebellion. Each Armenian had at least one weapon, with abundant ammunition, in addition to the arms and ammunition stored in depots. Printed revolutionary leaflets and programmes were also seized. In the Sivas and Erzincan regions alone the number of arms in the possession of the Armenians was estimated to be about 30,000.\(^{32}\)

On 20 February, a gendarmerie unit was attacked from the Arak Monastery where Armenian priests were harbouring insurgents. The commander and some gendarmes were killed, whilst the insurgents managed to escape. The following day the gendarmes were fired on at the Hizan, Servenk, and Kümès villages, and many of them were killed. The insurgents set the houses on fire. On 22 February about 50 armed Armenian army deserters attacked the gendarmes at Sironik village, near Muş. In many other villages the Armenians rebellion.

As these incidents continued in Anatolia, on 19 February the Allied attack on the Dardanelles began by an Anglo-French task force. Five days later Count Berckendorff, the Russian Ambassador in London, wrote to the British Foreign Office, asking them, on behalf of the Russian Foreign Minister Dmitrievich Sazonov, whether the British government would join with France in sending arms and ammunition to Alexandretta for the use by the Armenians against the Turks. This inquiry called forth a number of comments at the Foreign Office. Harold George Nicolson remarked:

> Even if we could spare these rifles, I do not see how we could organise their transport from Alexandretta to the interior, or trust the Armenians to make any effective use of them. Besides, now that the Goeben and Breslau will be occupied, I do not see why the Russians shouldn’t attempt to land arms at Samsun.

George Russell Clark commented as follows: 'This is an impracticable scheme in the present circumstances'. Thereupon Sir Edward Grey replied, with the concurrence of the Army Council, that the difficulty of transporting these munitions from Alexandretta to the interior rendered the scheme impracticable and suggested that, if the Russian government thought that 'the Armenian insurgents would be of real value to the Allies, the Russians themselves should supply them with these munitions through the Black Sea littoral.'\(^{33}\)

It is interesting to note in this connection that, on 15 February, Sir Henry McMahon, British diplomatic representative in Cairo, wrote to Sir Edward Grey, confidentially, giving a 'brief and incomplete summary' of the views held by what he called 'prominent and representative' Syrians, both in Egypt and Syria, about the future of the latter country. They had informed McMahon as follows:

> In the North of Syria it is of vital importance to England that no other Naval Power should hold Alexandretta. Alexandretta is the finest natural port in the Mediterranean and can be made impregnable. Whoever holds it, commands the entrance to the Suez Canal. Her potential value as a city of commerce requires no dreamer to foresee.

The Maronites alone stood by France; the Syrian Orthodox, the Greek and Armenian Churches were against it. Sentiment, however, might urge the forward school of French politicians to insist on the French government laying claim to part, at least, of Syria. 'There is, of course, more than a probability that Russia will

\(^{30}\) DOOA, pp. 50-51.  
\(^{31}\) FO 371/2480/27310: Spring-Rice to Grey, 15.2.1915, transmitting copy of a letter from a Major K. El-Awad.  
\(^{32}\) DOOA, pp. 6364; doc. no. 1906 (102): Commander, special service volunteers battalion, to the Third Army Commander, circa. 15.2.1915.  
\(^{33}\) FO 371/2494/46942: Russian Ambassador to FO, 17.4.1915.
also attempt to push down towards Adana and Alexandretta from the Armenian Plateau', concluded McMahon.31

Meanwhile, in the winter of 1914 the Ottoman army set out to regain the provinces it had lost to Russia in 1828 and 1878. Enver Pasha, who had assumed the title of acting Commander-in-Chief of the Ottoman armies on 21 October 1914, personally led the Ottoman Third Army in the Caucasus campaign, but his 100,000-man force was decimated at Sarkamis in January 1915, by the bitter cold weather and by the stubborn resistance of several Russian divisions assisted by three Armenian volunteer units from Transcaucasia.32 The Armenians were acclaimed by all the leading organs of the Russian press as the 'saviours' of the Caucasus.33 According to the Italian paper Tribuna of 14 May 1915, 'Enver Pasha accused the Armenians as traitors, and this accusation was probably correct, for the Armenians never failed, under any circumstance, to desire the triumphant march of Russia, and to help towards it... They hoped to see the salvation reborn from the embers of Europe in conflagration', declared the paper.34 The way was prepared for a new Russian push into eastern Anatolia, to be accompanied by an open revolt against the Sultan.35

In March Armenian insurgents indulged in numerous atrocities against the civilian Muslim population of a number of villages. The victims included women and children.36 As usual the Dashnakists were involved. This party bore a major portion of responsibility, for it was often the leading force in perpetrating these massacres. The Dashnakists organized bands, recruited mainly from Armenian army deserters, that would attack the Muslims and often exterminate the population of entire villages, as confirmed by Vorontsov-Dashkov,37 who had himself made use of such bands. At the All-Armenia National Congress held in Tiflis in February 1915, it was revealed that the Russian government had given the

31 FO 371/2480/23865: McMahon to Gert, 15.2.1915.


33 FO 371/560/1/F. 14006: British Armenia Committee: The case for Armenia, 1921.

34 FO 371/2771/125/94: The Residency, Cairo, secret despatch, dated 26.6.1918, enclosing secret summary no. 4 of the Arab Bureau, 16.6.1916; Tribuna, 14.5.1916.


36 See DOOA, pp. 4041, docs. nos. 15 and 1819.

37 I. Vorontsov-Dashkova Vsepadoimnitsiala zapiska po  upravlenii kavkaskom kraem generala adiutanta gera Zorontsava-Dashkova, 1907, pp. 19-14; Kazemzadeh, p. 19.

38 See FO 371/2482/25073, 25167 and 28172: Ironside to FO, 3.3.1915; War Office to FO, 4 and 9.3.1915.

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might be sent to Egypt and Cyprus for training. Lord Kitchener, however, did not consider this feasible for various military reasons.13

On 22 March Miran Sevasly, an Armenian lawyer of Boston, USA, wrote to Cecil Spring-Rice, the British Ambassador in Washington, asking for permission for six Armenians to go to Cyprus in order to organize a rising in Cilicia against the Turks. These Armenians were all Turkish subjects and belonged to the Hintchak party. He added the following:

The Armenians, who have always been on the side of the Allies, and who have sent thousands of volunteers to France, Germany and the Caucasus to join the French or Russian armies, are now shedding their blood for the cause of the Powers of the Triple Entente. Their trip is patriotic, to help the Allies to bring down the downfall of Turkey.

Two weeks later Sevasly wrote, in response to a query about their purpose in Cyprus, and explained that they would stay there for some time until they found a boat to take them to the Cilician coast. On 7 April Spring-Rice sent to Grey the correspondence with Miran Sevasly, who had said that he was acquainted with Lord Bryce, and asked whether facilities should be granted. The Foreign Office thereupon consulted Lord Bryce about Sevasly’s credentials. Bryce declared that he had known Sevasly for many years, and had always found him trustworthy. He wrote to the Foreign Office on 26 April as follows:

They are, as I told the Secretary of State and the Admiralty some time ago, trying to organize a rising of the warlike Armenian mountaineers of Cilicia against the Turks when a favourable moment arrives. Such a rising might be decidedly useful to us when we are fighting the Turks on land; and Cyprus is the best place from which to try to open communication with the Armenians of Marash, Anital (? Aymatap) and Zeitun. Steps are now being taken, as I understand, with the approval of the War Office, to form a force of Armenian volunteers to act somewhere.

The Foreign Office transmitted the copies of the correspondence with Miran Sevasly to the Colonial Office, and recalled that the Army Council had repeatedly expressed the view that half-organized volunteer risings would have little value, and that they should not be encouraged. Besides, such an expedition would result in the massacre of many innocent Armenians. Sir Edward Grey proposed, therefore, to instruct the British Ambassador in Washington to inform Sevasly that the desired permission could not be granted.14

This was followed by a letter from Miran Seraslan, chairman, M.D. Manuefian, treasurer, and Y. Servart, secretary, of the ‘Armenian National Defence Committee of America, addressed to Sir Edward Grey from Boston, USA, and dated 23 March 1915, informing the latter that they were making preparations to send volunteers to Cilicia, where a large number of the population would ‘unfold the banner of insurrection against Turkish rule’, which would greatly help to disperse and prevent the onward march of the Turks against Egypt. This insurrectionary movement of the Armenians would be able to bear fruit, they claimed, because it would extend from the seashore, viz. from that part of the country known as ‘Souedian (Sinyediye) and Tchokmarzovan (?) through Giavour-Dagh (Yavuzdag) to Marash and Fundejak (Finkelik), and thence to Zeytun, Funduz, Hadjin and Sis, and thus establishing a war zone extending from the Taurus to the sea’. The Foreign Office found this scheme slightly more mature than that previously put forward, but equally impracticable.15

British Armenophils and ‘autonomous Armenia’

On 14 April British Member of Parliament Aneurin Williams informed Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey that he had put down a question for the day that the House of Commons would re-assemble, asking of the British government whether it would use its influence to secure for Armenia, after the war, some measure of autonomy similar to that promised to Poland. As chairman of the British Armenia Committee he claimed to know that the Armenians were ‘most anxious’ about their future, and did not wish to be left ‘entirely to the will of Russia’. They recognized that Russian protection over, or perhaps annexation of, their country was inevitable; but they were very anxious that, if this came about, it should not come about by the other Great Powers simply washing their hands of Armenia and recognizing that it is Russia only who is concerned’. They desired that there should, at least, be some definite compact between Russia and the other major Powers, by which, certain definite rights would be secured to Armenia, even under Russian ownership or suzerainty. They looked, above all, to England which, if possible, should govern their country. They recognize, of course’, remarked Williams, ‘that in Armenia they are a minority, though nearly half the population, and by far the largest homogeneous element, besides being the most progressive’. They therefore did not ask for self-government in the full sense, which was impossible in the existing condition of their country. Williams laid these considerations before the Foreign Secretary in the hope that he would give the Armenians ‘all the comfort’ he could in their ‘grave anxiety’.16

13 FO 371/2485/30439: Minute by Sir A. Nicolson, 9.3.1915.
15 FO 371/2485/4144: Armenian National Defence Committee of America to Grey, 23.3.1915.
16 Ibid., doc. no. 40247: Williams to Grey, 3.4.1915.
The secretary of the Armenian Committee in Paris, Archag Tchobanian, too, who was described by Aneurin Williams as 'a very noted author among the Armenians', addressed a similar letter to Sir Edward Grey, repeating the same points, and supporting a Russian protectorate over, rather than annexation of, his country, which would include most of eastern Anatolia. He repeated these on 5 May, insisting on an autonomous Armenia based on the reform scheme of 1913, to include the six eastern provinces, plus Cilicia where the Armenians, though not in a majority, constitute its most important ethnical unit, and since a commercial outlet will be essential to the future state.

Sir Edward Grey did not hesitate to please the Armenian activists, and on 21 April Lieutenant-Colonel G.M. Gregory, president, and Archag Tchobanian, secretary, of the Armenian Committees of London, Manchester, Paris and Brussels, wrote to him (Grey), expressing their gratitude to the British government for the declaration of 'generous sympathy', which the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs had made in parliament in response to the question which was put by Aneurin Williams in connection with the Armenian people 'and their cause'.

Armenian atrocities and rebellions continue

Meanwhile, on 7 April Enver Pasha informed the Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul, who had complained to him about the treatment of the Armenians in Anatolia, that his disclosure did not tally with documentary evidence in Turkish hands. Nevertheless, he had ordered his commanders to inquire into the cases mentioned by the Patriarch, and remarked:

I am especially confident in, and evaluate tremendously the friendship and loyalty of, the emancipated Armenian nation towards the Ottoman Fatherland. Unfortunately, there are a few thoughtless people who have been misled by foreigners..., and who are resorting to brute force in order to fulfill their aspirations.

It was, therefore, necessary for the safety and defence of the country that the government should deal with such people with severity. He called upon the Patriarch to show the right path to, and inculcate wisdom in, such persons. But such advice does not seem to have been given, or if given, was not followed.

Early in April, the gendarmerie detachment, which was despatched to the Ilorasan village to look for an Armenian army deserter, captured many rifles, bombs, and dynamite. In searches carried out by the security forces at the Tuzlasat village of Hafik, many more weapons and bombs were found. During the search thirty Armenian insurgents opened fire on the gendarmes at the outskirts of the village, and escaped in the dark.

As these incidents continued in Anatolia, the Russian Ambassador in London informed the Foreign Office, on 17 April, that, from the information supplied by the Armenian deputies of Zeytun, Movino Huian, Michael Avardian, and Gasparian, the field staff of the Russian Caucasian army reported as follows:

The organization of the Haczchakists has many admirers throughout Cilicia, but particularly at Zaitum (Zeytun), where their number reaches almost 3,000; there are Committees at Aidana (Adana), Adjin (Hacin), Sir, Furnuz, Marash, and Aleppo. At the head of the movement might be placed the same persons who directed the movement of 1895, Tohadjian, Endunian, Surenian, Tchakirian, Yagubian and also Gasparian. The people of Zaitum assert that they can bring together up to 15,000 combatants, and they will be in a position to take in even the greatest number of weapons without any descent either at Alexandretta or its environs.

But the Foreign Office was not keen on the idea. A week later, the Russian Ambassador in Washington informed the British Ambassador Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, that the Armenians offered to send 1,000 men via Canada to cooperate in operations in Cilicia. They were ready to pay for uniforms and transport to the Canadian port. But after consultation with the War Office the British Ambassador was instructed to decline the offer.

Revolt in Van

As early as December 1914 the commander of the gendarmerie in Van, Kazum Bey, informed the authorities in Istanbul that two captured spies had revealed that a rebellion was being planned by the Armenian insurgents in the city and province of Van. Armenian incidents in the Karchikan (Karackikan) and Gevas districts of Van, at the beginning of December, involving the cutting of telegraph wires, firing at the kaymakam (administrator) and his entourage, and the concentration of

20 Ibid., doc. no. 1908 (194) Petrev Bey, Commander of the Twentieth Army Corps, Sivas, 8.4.1915, p. 59.
21 FO 371/2484/46912: Russian Ambassador to FO, 17.4.1915.
22 FO 371/2485/49515: Spring-Rice to Grey, 24.4.1915; ibid., doc. no. 51438, FO to Spring-Rice, 24.4.1915.
23 ATASE Archives, no. 4-3671, class 2818, doc. no. 50, index 2-54; ATBD, no. 8, December 1912, pp. 47-49.
Armenian deserts in certain places, gradually developed almost into a full-scale rebellion by March 1915.

In April the Dashnakists, with the help of their members from the Caucasus, organized a revolt in the city of Van, promising the Armenians living there Russian military assistance, if they showed loyalty to the Tsar by helping drive the Muslims out. The Russian army of the Caucasus, including Cossacks, had already begun an offensive towards Van with the help of a large force of Armenian volunteers recruited from Anatolian refugees and Caucasian Armenians.

On 20 April, Cevat Bey, the vali (governor) of Van, informed the commander of the Ottoman Third Army that the insurgents had opened fire in the Armenian quarter directed towards the Turkish positions and quarters. The Turks were taking defensive measures. In another telegram the following day he stated that the Armenians continued firing throughout the night in every part of the city where they attacked the Muslim quarter. On the night of 8 May the Armenians again attacked the Muslim quarter and burnt many houses. Thereupon the governor ordered the Muslims to evacuate the city and withdraw to safer areas in the Bitlis province. On 19 May, Armenians attacked Muslim families withdrawing from the southern shore of the Van lake and killed many of them.

Meanwhile the Russian troops reached Van on 14 May and were cordially welcomed by the local Armenian population. This Russian occupation compelled the Turkish army to evacuate the city of Van on 17 May. Four days after this evacuation the Armenians burnt the Muslim quarter completely. Following these incidents an Armenian state was established in Van under Russian protection and the governorship of Aram Manoukian, one of the revolutionary leaders. Moreover, an Armenian legion was constituted to expel the Turks from the entire south shore of the lake in preparation for a concerted Russian drive into the province of Bitlis. On 21 May, Tsar Nicholas sent a telegram to the Armenian revolutionary committee of Van, thanking it "for its services to Russia"; whilst the Armenian newspaper "Gochmak", published in the United States, proudly reported on 21 May that "only 1,600 Turks remain in Van", the rest having been slaughtered, or expelled.

After the Van disaster many Muslims, who had been able to flee, were set upon by Armenian bands on the roads. Approximately 100 from one group were killed between Erzis and Adilecevaz. Armenians also killed 300 Jews who tried to escape towards Hakkâri. The stories told by Muslim villagers were all the same. When Armenians attacked Muslims' own villages, or nearby villages, Muslims fled with whatever property they could carry. On the road, Armenian bands first robbed them, then raped many of the women and killed many of them. Usually, but not always, a number of women and children were killed as well. The Cossacks also joined the Armenian bands in this sordid affair. The stories were the same in the Bitlis province and countryside.

Thus, encouraged by Russia, the Armenians had begun to disrupt the Ottoman war effort by causing much trouble behind the Turkish lines, particularly on the eastern front. As the Russian forces began to march into Ottoman territory in eastern Anatolia, they were led by advanced units composed of volunteer Ottoman and Russian Armenians, who were joined by Armenian deserters from the Ottoman army. Many of these formed bands, and had armed themselves with weapons, which they had for years been storing in Armenian and missionary homes, churches, and schools. They also raided Ottoman supply depots in order to increase their own stock of arms and to deny them to the Ottoman army as it moved to meet this massive Russian invasion. Within a few months after the war began, these Armenian guerrilla forces, operating in close coordination with the Russians, were attacking Turkish cities, towns, and villages in the east, massacring their inhabitants, while at the same time working to sabotage the Ottoman army's war effort by destroying roads and bridges, raiding convoys, and doing whatever else they could to facilitate the Russian occupation.

The atrocities committed by the Armenian volunteer forces accompanying the Russian army were so severe that the Russian commanders themselves were compelled to withdraw them from the battle fronts and employ them in rearguard duties. The memoirs of many Russian officers, who served in the East at this time, are full of accounts of atrocities committed by these Armenian guerrillas, which were savage even by the relatively primitive war standards then observed in such areas. Basically the aim behind these atrocities was to leave only Armenians in the territories being claimed for the new Armenian state; all others, therefore, were massacred, or forced to flee for their lives, so as to secure the desired Armenian majority of the population in the territories they claimed.

In many places Armenians also revolted, and together with the local Greeks, acted as volunteers, informers, and saboteurs. Later, they were in communication
with the Allied forces which landed at Gallipoli. The following report, which appeared in the Armenian journal Mushag of Tiflis on 22 April 1915, is revealing:

Telegram received from Bulgaria by the Central Armenian Bureau of Tiflis: systematic massacres are taking place at Erzeroum, at Zeitoun and in the neighbourhood. Bloody collisions at Van and Mouche (Mus). Insurrection in Cilicia... The Sultan has issued an iradeh (edict) ordering that Armenian soldiers (in the Ottoman Army) should be disarmed.61

Relocation of the Armenians

In the initial stages of the Caucasus operations the Russians had shown that the best means of organizing a campaign was by evacuating the Armenians from their side of the border to clear the area for battle, with the Armenians going quite willingly in expectation that a Russian victory would soon enable them to return and occupy the Turkish areas across the border.62 Enver Pasha followed this example to prepare the Ottoman side, and to resist the expected Russian invasion. The Armenian leaders, in any case, had declared their open support for the enemy, and there was no other alternative. It was impossible to determine which Armenians would remain loyal, and which would follow the appeals of their leaders. Therefore, on 20 April Enver informed the commander of the Ottoman Third Army that some of the Armenian and Greek soldiers in the Ottoman service, particularly those employed in labour battalions, were deserting, forming small bands everywhere, resorting to violence against the gendarmerie dispatched to arrest them, and becoming tools for certain political aims in places where large Armenian and Greek communities lived. As the number of desertions was rising, and the number of the gendarmerie in the provinces and districts had declined, the Armenian deserters at large were increasing every day because they could not be captured.63

Under the circumstances, with the Russians advancing along a wide front in the east, with the Armenian guerrillas spreading death and destruction while simultaneously attacking the Ottoman armies from the rear, and with the Allies invading the empire along a wide front, the Ottoman government had to do something about what it considered to be ‘Armenian treachery’. The Ottoman government had reason to distrust many of the Armenians of Anatolia because of something about what it considered to be ‘Armenian treachery’. The Ottoman government had reason to distrust many of the Armenians of Anatolia because of the assistance given by them to the invading Russian armies in 1828, 1853 and 1877.64 Nevertheless, even after the Armenian revolt and atrocities in Van, the Ottoman government made one final attempt to secure the loyalty of the Armenians. Summoning to a meeting the Patriarch, some Armenian deputies and other delegates, it warned them that drastic measures would be taken unless the Armenians stopped their atrocities against the Muslims and gave up working to undermine the war effort; but the Armenian militant leaders saw in this warning the weakness of the Ottoman government, and intensified their activities to fulfill their aspirations.65

Even Sir Henry McMahon, the British High Commissioner in Cairo, admitted in a cipher telegram to the Foreign Office, dated 12 May 1915, that the Turks were facing considerable trouble from the Armenians, and that the latter had risen in several places. 'Any information regarding such a movement would be of value to the Military Authorities here', he remarked. Two days later the Foreign Office replied: 'There has been an Armenian rising, apparently in Van, which has been suppressed'.66 But when Lord Bryce asked a question in parliament on 6 October 1915, about the ‘massacre’ of Armenians, Sir Edward Grey denied that there was any ‘ground for the suggestion that there has been any rising on the part of the Armenians’; nevertheless the events contradicted him.

Meanwhile, the possibility of widespread rebellion behind Ottoman lines, and of the danger of the Ottoman army having to fight on a number of fronts, with its lines of communication threatened, compelled the Ottoman government, on 24 April, to decide to remove the Armenians from vulnerable strategic points where they could assist the enemy. This decision did not precede, but was the result of, Armenian rebellions and guerrilla activities which threatened the very existence of the Ottoman state by bringing about its total defeat at the hands of its enemies, let alone the fact that the unarmed remnants of the Turkish population (children, women and old men, as the young men were fighting at the front) were subjected to many Armenian atrocities.67 In order to prevent the Armenians from re-establishing centres of subversion, the following points were to be kept in view when relocating them: 1. the Armenian population should not exceed 10 per cent of the tribes and Muslims in the area they were being relocated to; 2. each of the villages which the relocated Armenians would establish should not consist of more than 50 houses; and 3. the evacuated Armenians should not be allowed to change their places of abode.68

On 26 May the Ottoman High Command informed the Ministry of the Interior that it was decided to evacuate the Armenians from the eastern provinces

61 FO 371/2488/59461: Williams to Primrose, 11.5.1915; Mushag, Tiflis, 22.4.1915.
63 DDOA, no. 1957 (103): Enver to Commander of the Third Army, 20.4.1915, p. 66
64 McCarthy 1, p. 89.
65 Ibid., no. 14883: Parliamentary Question by Lord Bryce, 6.10.1915.
67 ATASE Archives, no. 1/1, class 44, file 257, index 2-3, quoted by Sakarya, p. 224.
of Anatolia, and from similar places where they were concentrated, and to send them to the south of Diyarbakar province, to the valley of the Euphrates near Urfa and Silleymaniye, in order to prevent them from setting up new centres of rebellion.\footnote{DOOA. Genel Kurmay (Chief of General Staff), no. 1/1, class 44, file 207, F. 23.} On the same day the Ministry of the Interior, in a memorandum, gave information to the Grand Vezir about the rebellious and treacherous activities of the Armenians, stressing the necessity of relocating them.\footnote{Bayur, Belleten XXX, no. 117, p. 37; from the minutes of the Council of Ministers, dated 30.5.1915, p. 213.} The following day (27 May), the Provisional Law of Relocations, enabling the military authorities to implement the necessary measures connected with those who disobey (oppose) government action during war' (Tecih Kanunu) was passed. It did not mention the Armenians by name.\footnote{Tarih Vesikalari (historical documents), 1.6.1915; see also BA: Medenii Vekile Mecmactari, decisions of May 14/27 and May 17/30, 1331/1915, quoted partly by Bayur, in Belleten no. 117, pp. 35-40; Distur (laws), second series, vol. 1, p. 609, 27.5.1915; Takvimii Vekayi, no. 2189, 1.6.1915.} It was provisional because parliament was not in session. It was discussed at the Council of Ministers on 30 May and approved. It was also sanctioned by parliament after 15 September.

The Council of Ministers issued strict instructions on the mode of evacuation of the Armenians. Secret Turkish documents captured in Palestine by the British army in the autumn of 1918 reveal the decision of the Turkish government to close down the militant Armenian organizations. These interesting documents are appended hereunder verbatim:

Vali Jelal to mutessarif of Aintab (Antep), Aleppo telegram no. 50/627, code no. 25, 28.4.1915. Confidential message to be deciphered by yourself.

I herewith communicate to you a cipher message received from the Minister of the Interior. Please close down at once the branches of the Hintchak and Dashnak Committees. Arrest those who are dangerous or harmful among their active leaders and members, search them, investigate the documents which may be found on them and let me know the result. As a thorough execution of this order is necessary, I advise you to provide a sufficient force before you start so that you might meet a probable counter action. Vali Jelal.

Annexed:

Whereas the Armenian Committees have been trying to secure autonomy through their political and revolutionary formations; whereas the Dashnak Committee has, after the outbreak of war, passed a decision to raise the Armenians of Russia against us and that for the time being the Armenians of Turkey should await the exhaustion of the Turkish Army, and then assume such an attitude which would affect the life and future of the country, whereas the above decision and the last revolutionary movements of Zeitoun, Bitlis, Sivas and Van, which took place at a moment when the country was engaged in war, re-confirmed their treacherous aspirations; whereas all the Armenian Committees, which have their bases in foreign countries and which, by efforts of their members, prepared a complete revolution, formed the opinion that autonomy, which is their objective, may be obtained only by fighting the Government; whereas the Armenian Committees, when stored bombs and revolvers (some of which were discovered at Caesaria and Sivas) who formed Volunteer Regiments composed chiefly of the inhabitants of Turkey and invaded the country, aim at threatening the Turkish Army from behind, and this has been confirmed by their organization and publications; whereas the Turkish Government cannot close its eyes and bear any longer the existence of such organizations which form for us a matter of life and death; whereas the existence of such Committees, which arc source of unrest, cannot still be considered as legal and whereas an urgent necessity has been felt with regard to the abolition of all these political formations; we, in agreement with the Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Turkish Army, passed the following decision which you have to carry out immediately, and after you have made the necessary preparations: the branches of the Hintchak, Dashnak and similar committees in the vilayets should be closed at once and all documents found in these branches should be confiscated without giving them a chance to destroy them. All active leaders and members of Committees who are considered as dangerous or harmful to the Government should be arrested at once and those whom you object remaining at their homes should be concentrated at a convenient place without giving them an opportunity to escape. Aras should be searched for in suspected places, but before this is carried out an adequate force should be prepared through arrangement with the officer in charge of troops as a precaution against any counter-action. Perfect arrangements in securing thorough execution of this order should be made. All documents found should be investigated and persons who shall be arrested as the result of these investigations should be brought before the Courts Martial. The numbers of persons arrested and details about the enforcement of this order should constantly be reported. As this order is exclusively a measure against the extension of
Committees, you should abstain from putting it into a form which might result in mutual massacre of Moslem and Armenian elements.

At the British Foreign Office this document was minuted on 16 January 1920 by W.S. Edmonds, Consular Officer of the Eastern Department, as follows: 'There is not enough evidence here to bring home the charge of massacre any closer'. D.G. Osborne, a clerk of the Eastern Department, added the followin: 'On the contrary, the last paragraph of the order of the Minister of the Interior specifically warns against measures likely to lead to massacres'.

The above instructions were circulated by Mehmet Talat, then Minister of the Interior, whilst warnings were sent to Ottoman military commanders to ensure that neither the Kurds nor other Muslims used the situation to take vengeance for the long years of Armenian terrorism. The Armenians were to be protected and cared for until they returned to their homes after the war. These instructions were removed from the Ottoman archives in Istanbul during the Allied occupation at the end of the war, most probably by some Greek or Armenian agents working for British Intelligence. According to a private letter, dated 'Constantinople, 22nd May 1923', which Nevile Henderson, then acting British High Commissioner in Istanbul, sent to Lancelot Oliphant of the Foreign Office, these 'State Papers' were apparently obtained by the Military Intelligence, from the Sublime Porte, in the early days of the Armistice of Mudros (30 October 1918). They had lain hidden in their office ever since, and had then been sent to the British High Commission. They were the original instructions issued by Mehmet Talat, connected with the evacuation of the Armenians. It will be both relevant and interesting to quote some of them.

In a secret letter no. 296, dated 28 May 1915, the Ottoman Ministry of the Interior informed the officials and officers concerned with the Armenian evacuations, as follows:

... It is brought to our serious attention that, in article 8 of the rules concerning the installation and maintenance of the population that is to be transported to the known localities, it has been mentioned that a person installed in the place arranged could go to another place, if desired, after getting the authorization of the commission for migrants and the consent of local authorities. However, no persons must change their abode until the end of the war...

The following quotations from secret Ottoman documents are also revealing:

The Armenians... should be transported to the areas previously determined. The Catholics should be excluded from this relocation measure. Signed: Talat, 23.7.1915.

On 5 August 1915 İsmail Hakki, the governor of Bursa, in a confidential despatch no. 802 to the sub-governor of Mudanya, sent the copies of a number of despatches relative to the evacuation of the Armenians, together with the rules to be put into force in the province, recommending that he should put into execution these dispositions, when he received the order to act. Here are some quotations from these despatches:

28.7.1915. The laws relative to the liquidation of debts and credits between relocated Armenians and official institutions or private individuals, will be sent to you shortly. In the meantime, enter the particulars in a special register so that cases will not be lost sight of. Signed: Talat, Minister (of the Interior).

30.7.1915. It is learnt that the private property of relocated Armenians is being sold very cheaply to monopolists of this class of business, thus greatly wronging the proprietors. Consequently, the following measures must be taken:

a) forbid the entry or free circulation of all (strangers) and suspects in localities which will be evacuated;

b) if there are people of this category already in the district, make them to leave immediately;

c) if there are such persons who have bought goods at ridiculous prices, take steps to annul the sale, to restore prices to the right level, and to prevent illegal profits being made;

d) authorise the Armenians to take away with them everything they wish;

e) if there is found among the goods not taken away stuff which has deteriorated by the weather, sell by auction that of primary importance;

f) the merchandise not taken away that can remain without deteriorating, keep it on behalf of the owner;

g) prevent all agreements of the nature of hiring, pawning, attachment or sale or mortgage, which is likely to take away all rights of a proprietor to his property, and so sever his attachment to the country; consider as null and void all agreements of this kind which have been made from the time the relocations commenced until now;
h) prevent any further agreements of this kind being concluded;

i) authorise the formalities of definite sales, but prevent foreigners from buying land and household furniture. Signed: Talat, Minister.

30.8.1915. Make special officials accompany the groups of relocated Armenians, and see that they are provided with food and other things that they have need of. Expenses incurred in this respect will be settled from the allocation for the migrants. Signed: Ali Minaif for the Minister.

On 2 August Interior Minister Talat informed the provincial governors that Armenian deputies and their families should not be relocated, and that the families of soldiers and officers, as well as military doctors, should be left in the areas where they were settled and not to be transported to other areas. Two days later Talat ordered that the relocation of Armenian officials, workers and other employees working on railways and carrying service documents with them and their families, should be stopped, and their numbers reported to the Interior Ministry.

On 28 August the Ottoman Ministry of the Interior drew up a number of instructions with regard to the relocation of Armenians which were then sent in confidential despatches to the various governors responsible for carrying them out, with specific orders that they should use their best efforts and give careful attention to their implementation. Some of the instructions were as follows:

Art. 1 - The convoys of those to be relocated on foot or in carts will be concentrated in the nearest station to their place of departure.

Art. 2 - If amongst those to be relocated in the stations there are official documents proving that the family supporter is a soldier, or if there are women or orphans without a supporter, or Catholics or Protestants that do not wish to go to their destination, they will be separated and distributed among the villages of the provinces and districts to which the stations belong...

Art. 3 - The families of soldiers, Protestant and Catholics not yet relocated from the places where they have lived for a long time, must be maintained in their places of residence, as well as any manufacturers who are really necessary to the country, and also any workers employed in the factories which produce goods of public utility, or who are employed on railways and in the stations. The families of Armenians in this category will be equally maintained in their locality...

Art. 4 - Persons and their families other than those who are subject to compulsory residence as registered in the lists of previous offenders will be transported to Ereğli and Pozanti by train...

Art. 9 - The necessary food for the evacuees while on their journey until they reach their destination must be secured. The cost of the food for the needy evacuees must be borne by the open credit for the service of the installation of the evacuees.

Art. 10 - Keep under permanent supervision the camps of the relocated and take the necessary measures to assure their wellbeing, as well as order and security. Ensure the proper good to the indigent evacuees and look after their health by daily visits from a doctor. Take care of sick people and provide all that is necessary for the expectant mothers and the newly born infants. The functionaries as a whole are responsible for all negligence in the carrying out of these orders...

Art. 12 - The officials of the expedition who are appointed from the provinces and the districts on which the stations depend, must execute the orders and the instructions received. The governors, administrators, and sub-governors of the districts are hierarchically responsible for the execution and integral application of these instructions, as also for that of the proper carrying out of the duties which are entrusted to the officials of the expedition and the controller of service of supplies.

Art. 13 - Those to be relocated between Ereğli and Pozanti must be forced to leave partly by railway and partly in motor cars. Sick people, the indigent, women and children must be sent first by rail, and the others according to their capacity for endurance, either in carts or on mules or on foot. Each convoy must be accompanied by a detachment of guards and the food supply for the convoy must be looked after until the destination is reached......

Art. 16 - The central service of expedition must be informed by telegram of the number of persons and date of departure of each convoy which is sent from Ereğli to Pozanti or to Tarsus or from Pozanti to Tarsus...

Art. 18 - The petitions that will be presented by the evacuees to the provinces and districts for leave to be maintained or returned to their places of residence, which show good reason other than that of military service, e.g. Protestantism or Catholicism,
must be sent to the Minister of the Interior with a recommendation on the subject and the officials will act in accordance with the reply received...

Art. 19 - All communications from other central departments on the subject of the maintenance or of the sending back to their place of residence will be brought by telegraph to the knowledge of the Minister, and the authorities will act in conformity with their instructions...

Art. 21 - In cases where the evacuees will be the object of an attack, whether in the camps or during their journey, stop the assailants immediately and refer the case to the court martial with particulars.

Art. 22 - The officials who receive from the evacuees bribes or gifts, or abuse the women by promises or by menace or establish illicit relations with them, will be immediately recalled and referred, with the particulars, to the court martial to be severely punished.

Art. 23 - If the special agents employed in the service of expedition and administrative functionaries who are responsible for the supervision are negligent in their duties, or careless in the exercise of their functions, they will undergo a stoppage of salaries or emoluments; in the event of a second offence, their emoluments will be reduced and they will, at the same time, be demoted in office.

Art. 24 - The governors and commissioners are responsible for exercising a continued supervision on the camps and en route, for taking measures, for organizing in a suitable manner the service of the expedition, and for assuring the complete application of the dispositions of these rules. Dated 28 August 1915.

Director of Service of Installation and Maintenance of Evacuees, in the name of the Minister of the Interior.

Note: The articles deleted dealt mainly with transport and other technical matters.

On 22 August Ali Fevzi, on behalf of Interior Minister Talat, informed the governor of the province of Hüdavendigar that information had been received that during the sale of the property and goods left behind in the areas evacuated, some officials wished to make purchases in lieu of their salaries then in arrear. As the involvement of state officials in such transactions will give rise to certain criticisms and illegal actions, they should definitely be prevented from taking part in the sales of these properties and goods left behind by the Armenians, warned Ali Fevzi. Meanwhile a supplementary commission was set up to record the properties of some of the evacuees, and to sell them by auction at fair prices, with the revenue being held in trust until their return. Muslims wishing to occupy abandoned buildings could do so only as renters, with the revenues paid to trust funds, and with the understanding that they would have to leave when the original owners returned. The evacuees and their possessions were to be guarded by the army while in transit, and the government would provide for their return once the crisis was over.

In the wake of the enactment of the above legislation there followed a long correspondence about complaints with regard to the evacuated Armenians, and about the attempts of the government to remedy any arising problems, especially with regard to the protection of the Armenians against brigands. The government also spent 25 million kuruş (piastres) in 1915, 80 million kuruş in 1916 and 150 million kuruş in 1917 in order to defray the evacuation expenses. The total number of those evacuated by the end of 1916, according to Turkish sources, was about 700,000. It should be mentioned, however, that Greeks and Muslims, too, were evacuated for similar considerations, and in accordance with the Law of Relocations.

The removal of many Armenians from certain areas to others was justified by the Ottoman government as a measure dictated by 'imperative military necessity'. The Ottomans argued that their state, at the time, was locked in a life-and-death struggle with its external enemies, and the relocations were necessary for the security needs of the state, as many Armenians were in revolt and cooperating with its enemies. In areas in which Ottoman authority was weak, and in war zones, the evacuees suffered extensively. They were set up by Kurdish bandits, and even by some Ottoman officials. Interestingly, the latter were often Muslims who themselves had been exiled from the Russian Empire, their places having been taken by the Armenians in the Caucasus. In areas in the south where Ottoman authority was strong, such incidents were few, and the evacuees arrived at their destination in relative safety, as attested by Armenians themselves.

Even some of the consular representatives of Greece in Turkey accepted the Ottoman government's arguments about the relocations. For example, the Greek
flow of the Armenian minority in the Arab Middle East', Greek Foreign Ministry Archives, AY E/1915/K/10, no. 192, dated 7.5.1915.

London, on 27 April, to bring to the notice of the British Foreign Office the following:

In this minute, George T. Clerk was referring to 'reported massacres', as he himself was not sure about the veracity, causes and extent of such incidents, nor was he sure whether the Catholicos was telling the truth; hence his proviso: 'If our Ambassadors at Rome and Washington find that the Italian and US Governments accept the statements of the Catholicos as credible. And if they do, we can prepare a communication to the Ottoman Government such as here suggested...'

While the relocations were beginning to take place in Anatolia, the Catholicos of Etchmiadzin informed the Russian government, which asked its Ambassador in London, on 27 April, to bring to the notice of the British Foreign Office the following:

The aftermath of the relocations

While the relocations were beginning to take place in Anatolia, the Catholicos of Etchmiadzin informed the Russian government, which asked its Ambassador in London, on 27 April, to bring to the notice of the British Foreign Office the following:

Le Catholicos des Arméniens (?)... claims that Arméniens of Turkey are being massacred. The Russian Ambassadors in Rome and Washington have been instructed to support the Armenian protest. It is rather strange that Russia, Britain and the USA, who already had a number of agents in eastern Anatolia, were informed about the massacre of Arméniens by the Catholicos of Etchmiadzin whose loyalty tho the Allies and hatred of the Turks was beyond description. However, it is not strange that the Russian Ambassadors in Rome and Washington (not those in Berne, Oslo or Helsinki) had been instructed to support the Armenian protest, as both of these countries were neutral but pro-Entente, at the time, and to expose them to this Armenian disinformation would go a long way in winning over Italian and American public opinion, and influencing their governments to enter the war on the side of the Entente Powers. In fact, Italy would enter the war on 23 May 1915 (against Austria-Hungary), on 25 August (against Turkey), and on 26 August (against Germany), whilst the USA would declare war on Germany on 6 April 1917, and on Austria on 7 December 1917, but not on the Ottoman Empire.

When, again on 27 April, the Russian Ambassador in London proposed that the French, British and Russian governments should publish a message to the Porte, holding Turkish officials responsible for the massacres, George T. Clerk of the British Foreign Office made this rather interesting comment:

Before we take action such as is here suggested it would be well to find out what we can about these reported massacres. If, therefore, we might begin by instructing our Ambassadors at Rome and Washington to support their Russian colleagues, if they find that the Italian and US Governments accept the statements of the Catholicos as credible. And if they do, we can prepare a communication to the Ottoman Government such as here suggested...

In this minute, George T. Clerk was referring to 'reported massacres', as he himself was not sure about the veracity, causes and extent of such incidents, nor was he sure whether the Catholicos was telling the truth; hence his proviso: 'If our Ambassadors at Rome and Washington find that the Italian and US Governments accept the statements of the Catholicos as credible. Only if they did would the British government support a communication to the Ottoman Government, as suggested...

Accordingly, on 29 April the British Foreign Office instructed Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, its Ambassador at Washington, as follows:

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81 Sonyel I, p. 300.
82 Shaw and Rural, pp. 315-16; see also Armenian claims in Richard Hovannisian 'The ebb and flow of the Armenian minority in the Arab Middle East', *Middle East Journal*, 28 (1974), p. 29.
83 FO 371/2486/51092: Russian Ambassador to FO, 27.4.1915.
If the Government to which you are accredited consider the case as presented by the Catholicos justifies their intervention, you may support your Russian colleague. This was repeated to Paris and Petrograd. The Foreign Office also informed Sir George Buchanan, its Ambassador at Petrograd, that the Russian Foreign Minister desired that the three Allied Governments should publish a message to the Sublime Porte in regard to the 'reported massacres of Armenians'. Before taking this step, I think it would be advisable to await the result of the appeal of the Armenian Catholics to the Governments of the US and Italy for their intervention at Constantinople', suggested the Foreign Office.\[81\]

On 1 May Spring-Rice cabled the Foreign Office that, according to the State Department, the USA Ambassador at Istanbul, Henry Morgenthau, had reported that the Armenians there had been arrested. 'He has interviewed in their favour and does not believe their lives are in danger', stated the State Department, although it did not know what was happening in the country districts 'where there is even less security than Constantinople'. The matter was then receiving the attention of the US government. On 9 May the Russian Ambassador at London, Count Benckendorff, informed the Foreign Office about the request of the US Consul at Van that his government might be informed that the American colony was in danger. Apparently the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Sazonoff had just received the following information from the Russian Consul at Hoy (Khoi):

Armenian emissaries from Van have arrived at Khoy. They have sent me a short note from the American Consul at Van, written in English and Armenian: a general rebellion has broken out in Van. The Government is threatening bombardment. American colony in danger. Please inform the American government.

There was also a telegram from the French Consul at Salonica (Selanik) which read as follows:

I have just learned from travellers arriving from Constantinople [Istanbul] that the Armenians at Van revolted and massacred the government officials and Muslims. They blew up with dynamite the inn where the municipality is based. They were masters of the town for three days, after which troops sent from Erzurum retook the city and massacred the Armenians. In consequence of these events 2,800 Armenians were arrested at Constantinople. Among them were numerous eminent people. Various house searches led to the discovery of compromising documents and bombs. It is believed that the Armenian revolutionaries intended, with the approval of the Allies, to kill Enver Pasha and Talat Bey, and to commit bomb outrages to provoke panic amongst the Muslim population. All the Armenians arrested were sent to Yeni Şehir, Asia Minor... French and English aged 15 to 20 years, living in Constantinople, have been invited to present themselves with all their luggage at the police department on 1 May, and were sent in an unknown direction. It was intended to concentrate them at Gallipoli.

This telegram was left at the British Foreign Office by the French diplomatic representative in London, Aime Joseph de Fleuriau. A. Nicholson of the Foreign Office, in minuting it on 10 May, observed:

According to the news furnished by the French Consulat, Salonica, it would appear that massacres were not all on one side, and that Armenians for a time held Van and disposed of a good many Turks.\[87\]

The following day (11 May) the British Ambassador at Petrograd, Sir George Buchanan, informed Foreign Secretary Grey that the Russian Foreign Minister thought the Allies ought to let it be known that they should hold the Ottoman government responsible at the end of the war 'for any massacre of Armenians', and suggested that the three Allied Governments should publish a declaration in this connection, in their respective official journals, on a given day to be agreed on, as follows:

In face of these fresh crimes committed by Turkey against Christianity and civilization, the Allied Governments announce publicly to the Sublime Porte that they will hold all the members of the Ottoman Government, as well as such of their agents as are implicated, personally responsible for the Armenian massacres.\[88\]

It is interesting to note that this suggestion was made by the Russian government, probably on the request of Armenian militant leaders, both of them instigators of the Turco-Armenian conflict then raging in Anatolia, but both of them thinking about its propaganda value, particularly at a time when Italy, USA, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, etc., were wavering as to whether to participate in the war. But on 12 May British Foreign Secretary Grey asked his Ambassador in Paris, Sir F. Bertie, to consult with the French Foreign Minister about the proposed pronouncement, and observed that such a declaration would have 'no moderating effect whatever on the Turkish authorities, and indeed might, on the contrary, instigate them to be still more vindictive towards the Christians'. 'We shall, when

\[81\] Ibid., doc. no. 51010: Russian Ambassador to FO, 27.4.1915; FO to Spring-Rice, 29.4.1915.
\[85\] Ibid., doc. no. 53135: Spring-Rice to FO, 1.5.1915.
\[87\] Ibid., doc. no. 58350: Minute by A. Nicholson, FO, 10.5.1915.
\[88\] Ibid., doc. no. 58387: Buchanan to FO, 11.5.1915.
the occasion arrives, be equally free to take what measures we consider justifiable and necessary against guilty Turkish authorities, whether we had or had not previously issued a public notification of our intention', he remarked.80

As the Allies were discussing the possibility of making representations to the Ottoman government, Sir Henry McMahon informed the Foreign Office on 12 May that information in Cairo pointed to the Turks having 'considerable trouble with the Armenians' who had 'risen in several places'. 'Any information regarding such a movement would be of value to the Military Authorities here', he declared. This is the first indication that the Turco-Armenian conflict in Anatolia would be used by the British as wartime propaganda. McMahon also added that, a certain Hagnemia, a Dashnakist leader at Cairo, had stated that he had a friend at Sofia by the name of Mateos Hagopian who was in a position to give information. 'While not appearing to favour the Tashnagist party, it might be as well to get into touch with Hagopian and see if he can give any information. Apart from the revolutionary interest, he might be able to give useful military information', suggested McMahon. Two days later the Foreign Office informed him that there had been 'an Armenian rising apparently in Van', which had been suppressed. The Turks were 'apparently encouraging massacres throughout Armenia'. No more was known for the time being.80

About a week later, on 18 May, Sir H.O. Bax-Ironsides, the British Minister at Sofia, wrote to Sir Edward Grey, forwarding the copy of a letter which he had received from an Armenian named Migirditch Nersesian, in which he appealed to the Allies, particularly to England, to procure 'freedom and independence' to the Armenians, and declared:

> It is this cherished hope which impelled many thousands of Armenians, at the commencement of the gigantic struggle to join the ranks of the Allies both in France and in the Caucasus, against the mighty foes of freedom and progress. In the district of Zeitoun the Armenian population has openly revolted against the state authorities. Our organization (Hintchak) in that section is in complete control of the situation, having armed all the male population capable of carrying arms. In Chok-Marsuan, Adang (Adana), Dioret-Yol and vicinity, including almost the whole of Cilicia, the organization is supreme, although the bands which are acting in inaccessible places are in sore need of assistance.81

When, on the same day (18 May) the Russian Ambassador in London represented to British Foreign Secretary Grey that, in order to satisfy Armenian opinion in Russia, his government were anxious to make a public declaration, warning Turkey about the treatment of its Armenians, Grey informed the Russian Foreign Minister that he concurred in such a declaration, and that he was prepared to publish it in London as soon as the French government agreed to do likewise.82 As a result of this communication, the Entente Powers warned the Ottoman government on 24 May, through the Havas Agency, that they would hold it responsible for the 'Armenian massacres'.

The Ottoman government, in reply, denied these allegations, and pointed out that the Armenians in Erzurum, Tercan, Egin, Sasun, Bitlis, Mus and Cilicia were not relocated as they had acted properly. In Istanbul, out of a population of 77,735 Armenians only 2,345 were relocated. The Ottoman government then declared that the Armenians were actually provoked to rebellion by the Entente Powers, particularly by Russia and Britain. The Ottoman government had only quelled the Armenian rebellion, without any massacres. While the British and the French naval commanders were bombarding the hospitals at Gallipoli, and the Russian government was provoking the Armenians to massacre the law-abiding Muslims in the Kars province, and exterminating the Turkish prisoners of war in the Caucasus, 'is it not strange for the Governments of Russia, Britain and France to talk about humanity?' it asked, and went on: 'Britain, France and Russia have not only organized the Armenian rebellion in Turkey, they also tried to provoke the Muslims to rise in rebellion against the Ottoman Sultanate. Those responsible for the incidents are the Entente Powers.'83

The Ottoman government was supported in its actions by Liman Wangenheim, the German Ambassador, who believed that there was a 'gigantic Armenian underground movement which threatened the very existence of Turkey'. He suggested that the Ottomans should take more drastic action against the Armenians.84

**Armenian incidents continue**

Despite the enactment of the Law of Relocations Armenian insurgents continued. There were rebellions at Bogazlayan on 23 July 1915, at Findik (Antakya) on 1 August, at the Gorunis village of Urfa on 9 August, at Musa Dağı (Antakya) on 11 September, at Urfa on 29 September, at Islihiye on 7 February

80 Ibid., Grey to Bertie, 12.5.1915.
81 Ibid., doc. no. 50096: McMahon to FO, 12.1915.
82 FO 371/2489/82061: Bax-Ironsides to Grey, 18.5.1915.
1916, at Akdağ Madeni on 4 April 1916, at Tosyan on 9 April 1916, and in many other places. While these rebellions continued, Armenian leaders abroad were still trying to procure intervention. On 15 July 1915 Boghos Noubar wrote to Sir Arthur Nicholson of the British Foreign Office, enclosing a memorandum from Kevork V, the Catholicos of the Armenians, on Armenian aspirations. The desiderata of the Armenians, as summarized in this memorandum, entailed an 'autonomous and neutralized' Armenia composed of the six eastern provinces of Turkey, and Cilicia, and possessing a 'status' based on the reform scheme of 1913. A commercial outlet via Mersin was also expected, and Boghos Noubar expatiated on the economic and political advantages which this would mean to the Allies - especially to Britain, who would thereby secure a neutralized terminus for its overland route to India. The chief point, however, was Noubar's insistence that this future 'Armenia' should be under the protection, not of Russia alone, but of all the three Allied Powers.

Meanwhile the Armenians continued with their espionage activities and intrigues. On 20 July the British diplomat at Sofia (Bulgaria) informed the Foreign Office that the editor of an Armenian paper there had communicated to him the following information obtained from his agents in Turkey:

Turks are now suffering greatly from lack of munitions of war... They are therefore preparing an extensive offensive in Gallipoli in order to gain decisive success before the shortage of the munitions of war becomes too pronounced.

In July, again, Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Mark Sykes had a meeting in Cairo with Souren Barstavian, the Dashnakist editor of the Armenian newspaper Housnaper, who revealed to him what Sykes believed to be the intentions and aspirations of his party. Barstavian had a high position of an occult kind in the organization to which he belonged. He spoke somewhat slightly of Boghos Noubar, as a person who had only lately taken an interest in Armenian affairs, but owing to his rank and position, the Dashnak party had decided 'to use him as an instrument'. Barstavian said that the Dashnakists would stand out for autonomy under international protection, but that they would be prepared to accept the suzerainty of Russia. He was very decided on the question of the division of 'Armenia', he agreed that the 'six vilayets' was only a vague term, and that their boundaries were not satisfactory enough to form the basis of an autonomous vassal state. He was doubtful as to the inclusion of Sivas, Diyarbakir and Kayseri, but considered Erzurum and Erzincan essential.

Two days later (on 16 July), Mark Sykes wrote to Major-General C.E. Calwell, that the Dashnak society would be prepared to consider the feasibility of the raising of a force of 5,000 to 6,000 men, from among the Armenians in the USA, for use in the Zeytun district, provided that the Entente Powers would assist in transporting this force to the scene of operations and further covering its landing. He said that, as the Turks were already taking the most violent measures possible against the Armenians in the area mentioned, the objection that such action would only bring misery on the Armenians could no longer be upheld. Boghos Noubar would probably advance some such scheme in the course of his forthcoming mission to Paris.

Six days later (on 22 July), a delegation for the Committee of Armenian National Defence of Cairo, asked Lieutenant-General Sir John Maxwell to help their compatriots in Asia Minor. They stated that a volunteer movement, under the direction of the revolutionary committee, was in progress among the Armenian colonies in America and elsewhere, and requested permission to concentrate a force in Cyprus, which could make landings at Mersin and Beylan. By seizing the Cilician Gates and the Beylan Pass, they claimed that they would paralyze all Turkish movement in Asia Minor. As there were more Armenians than Turks at Alexandretta, they claimed, and Haci on the Anti-Taurus was entirely Armenian, they contended that, once they had successfully landed an armed force from Cyrus, they would have no difficulty in holding the Taurus, the Anti-Taurus, and the Amanus mountains and the Turks, especially at a time when the latter were fully occupied with the Russians on the Caucasus, and the Anglo-French in Gallipoli.

The Committee were certain to concentrate 10,000 men, in addition to the Armenians in Asia Minor. Their compatriots, they believed, would flock from Russia, Greece, Armenia, Bulgaria, and even America; but they needed the goodwill of the British government, any arms that could be spared, and permission to assemble in Cyprus when they would ask for assistance in transport and, perhaps, a

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57 Girin, p. 211; see also FO 371/2488/14553: Stevens to FO, 16.9.1915. Kervork Shams. 15.9.1915.
59 FO 371/2477/98392: O'Brien to FO, 29.7.1915.
60 FO 371/2190/108253: War Office to FO, 6.8.1915; Major-General Calwell, enclosing letters from Sykes to Calwell, 14.7.1915.
61 Ibid.: Sykes to Calwell, 16.7.1915.
small allied force. Sir John Maxwell did not hold out any prospect for their proposal being accepted, but promised to forward it to the proper quarters.

On 23 July three Armenians, who claimed to be the chiefs of the Hinchak revolutionary society, arrived at Christiania in Norway. They had regular Russian passports, and the British Minister there, M. Findley, had ascertained that they had been in communication with the Russian Foreign Minister. They said that they were organizing an insurrection in Zeytun, and were going to America to make arrangements. Findley suggested to the Foreign Office that the Armenian insurrection would probably lead to nothing but massacres, and that it might be dangerous and inadmissible to have anything to do with these people. The Foreign Office agreed with him, and instructed him in no way to encourage the proposal, or to give any assistance.

On 2 August Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Mark Sykes saw M. Malezian, the secretary of Boghos Nourbar, and M. Damadian, a Hinchakist leader, in Cairo, and found out that the plan favoured by the Egyptian Armenians was as follows: that a force of about 5,000 Armenians should be concentrated in Cyprus, and there armed and organized at the expense of the Allies for a descent on the north Syrian coast. The force would consist of about 1,500 men, who had served in the Bulgarian or Turkish armies. The remainder would be men of little military experience, who were labourers in the USA. The plan of campaign would roughly be to land a detachment of about 600 men, who would seize Siwyedye (Sveydia) and foment disorder in a radius of about twenty miles around that place. The remainder would break up into small bands of fifty to sixty men, and landing at points between Ayas and Piyas, try to work northward towards Elbistan, and there operate as komitadjis (guerrillas) on Macedonian lines. The preliminary organization of this force would take about eight weeks. Thus, if the Allies approved the scheme on or about 15 August, operations would begin about 15 October. This would give the bands about three weeks to work up into the mountains before the snows began; after snow had fallen, the pursuit and tracking down of small groups would become almost impossible. The Armenians only required from the Allies arms, munitions, transport and a covering of their landing, after which they would rely entirely on themselves.

Sykes thought that the formation of this force, and its concentration in Cyprus, would be profitable, even if it was never landed in Asia Minor, as rumours and reports of its existence would always cause the enemy uneasiness, and it might be used as a feint to conceal other operations. It would also be a useful weapon in the event of Istanbul falling, about the middle of October (1915). In such an event, it might be advisable to cut off the Turkish forces in Asia Minor from Syria and Iraq. Once winter had come, the only road to either region for any considerable reinforcements lay through the Glician Gates, and over the Anamos. In this case, 5,000 Armenians might prove of value as an adjunct to a force from the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force. In order to seize the Adana plain and its entrance on the north and east, however, French approval was essential, and if the suggestion was considered, the army of occupation of Adana and its plain might be the French contingent then at the Dardanelles. An early decision was needed as the Armenians were getting very excited and restless, and unless they were given something to do, would fall out among themselves and add to the subsequent difficulties of the final settlement in Turkey. But the Army Council would not encourage an "irregular rising in Cilicia".

Further Ottoman justifications for the relocations

In August 1915 the Turkish Embassy in Gulahak (Persia) issued a statement about the removal of the Armenians from the Turco-Russian frontier, and explained the reasons for such action, and for the various Turco-Armenian incidents. It pointed out that the action of the Ottoman government had been misinterpreted in neutral countries by the 'enemies of Turkey', who tried to prove the innocence of the Armenians. The latter, from the beginning, had helped the Russians in their plans and recently attacked and burned the village of Kara Hisar, inhabited by Muslims. In order to put a stop to the Armenian agitation without bloodshed, the Ottoman government had been obliged to remove the frontier Armenians into the interior of the country, concluded the statement, which was minutely by Lanceot Oliphant of the British Foreign Office as follows: 'Mr. Marling informs me privately that rumours of events at Kara Hisar are very ugly.'

Thus the Ottoman government tried to minimize, or neutralize, the Entente-Armenian disinformation drive directed towards the then neutral countries. A dispatch which Sir Henry McMahon sent to Sir Edward Grey on 26 August, revealed that, through the medium of the Armenian Orthodox Patriarch in Egypt, McMahon had received, for communication to the British government, the translation of a letter dated 13 July and addressed by an Armenian of Istanbul to the Archbishop of the Armenians in Philippopolis (Dedegaç), in Bulgaria. (Bulgaria did not enter the war until 14 October 1915 - and unfortunately for the Entente-Armenian collaborators - on the side of the Central Powers). The letter was believed to represent 'the awful situation' in the eastern provinces of Turkey as known at that date in Armenian 'official' sources in Istanbul. But McMahon could
not guarantee the accuracy of the facts related. The Patriarch had sent telegrams to the sovereigns of Italy, Greece, Romania and Bulgaria (none of which countries was in the war at the time), calling attention to the Turkish policy of relocations that was being carried out. (One wonders why he did not send telegrams to other neutral states such as Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, etc.). Thereupon British Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Robert Cecil, thought that the letter of 13 July to Archbishop Tourian should be made known to the American press. 'As we cannot vouch for all the particulars given, I am a little chary of giving it officially to the Americans here, but perhaps you could arrange to put it into the right hands', he advised Maier in Washington.101

On 25 August Captain Torkom, a Bulgarian officer of Armenian origin, who had been serving with the Russian army, called on George W. Buchanan, the British Ambassador at Petrograd, and submitted a scheme for the organization of Armenian volunteers for service at the Dardanelles against Turkey. Buchanan did not encourage him, but nevertheless, promised to send his scheme to London. It was a thirteen-page plan of recruitment and training of Armenian volunteers, which to Harold E. Nicolson seemed 'hardly more practicable than the many other irresponsible offers that have reached us'.102 Four days later, M. Sabine of the Russian Embassy in London submitted the same scheme on behalf of Torkom, but Lancelot Olsbant, who informed the Director of Military Operations about this, notified the British Military Attaché in Petrograd of the Army Council's decision to refuse the scheme, in case he was approached by Torkom himself.103

In the middle of September British Consul P. Stevens reported from Batum that, according to the Kavakskoe Slovo newspaper of 15 September: 'Refugees who have arrived at Soukhom from Turkey state that a considerable number of armed young Armenians have raised the standard of insurrection in the mountains of Shan. The Lazz leader Ismail Beg is assisting them, and has joined the rebels with his men for combined action against the Turkish government.'104

On 24 September Sir Henry McMahon wrote to the Foreign Office, referring to the suspension of the Dardanelles campaign during the winter, and suggested 'the sudden and entirely unexpected descent' upon Alexandretta, which appeared 'the most suitable operation'. From Alexandretta, he believed, a force would seize, 'the sudden and entirely unexpected descent' upon Alexandretta, which appeared to the suspension of the Dardanelles campaign during the winter, and suggested with his men for combined action against the Turkish government.105

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On the same day Lieutenant-General Sir W. Maxwell telegraphed Lord Kitchener that everything should be done to help the Armenian refugees, by landing them either in Cyprus or Rhodes, taking their women and children. It would make an important diversion from the Dardanelles if the Allies could promote an Armenian movement. He suggested that pressure should be exerted on the High Commissioner in Cyprus to take them; and on 11 September the War Office asked for more information on the subject. Clerk of the Foreign Office believed that the French were 'entirely responsible' for the situation which had been created. 'The whole business is very sudden and distinctly mysterious,' he commented. 'The French should transport them to Algiers. It seems to be entirely a French show and we literally have no room at a moment's notice, were the refugees to be dumped down on us. I am still puzzled by the Armenians in Antioch.'

Meanwhile the Armenians were landed in Egypt on 14 September. Temporary arrangements were made for their accommodation and maintenance at Port Said, but McMahon hoped that early arrangements for their reception outside Egypt would be possible. 'They are a severe strain on our already highly tried staff and

101 Ibid., doc. no. 125295: McMahon to Grey, 16.8.1915; FO to Maier, 14.9.1915.
103 Ibid., doc. no. 122136: M. Sabine, Russian Embassy, to FO, 29.8.1915.
104 FO 371/2488/143153: Stevens to FO, 16.9.1915.

The Musa Dağ episode

Meanwhile the well-publicized Musa Dağ (Moussa Dag-Djebel Moussa) incident occurred. On 10 September McMahon informed the Foreign Office about a telegram from the High Commissioner in Cyprus that the French administration on the Syrian coast had collected about 6,000 Armenians 'fighting bravely against the Turks' at 'Jebelmussa near the Antioch (Antakya) bay'. On request, the administration had supplied them with munitions of war and provisions. The High Commissioner added that it was impossible to receive 5,000 old men, women and children in Cyprus. Politically it was inadvisable to introduce 'the victims of insurrectionary fighting' among the mixed Turkish and Christian population of Cyprus. G.T. Clerk of the Foreign office commented on this telegram as follows: 'The position is by no means clear. What are the Armenians, even Zeitudios, doing fighting near Antioch? How is it proposed to get 5,000 old men, women and children to the coast?' He suggested that the French administration should be consulted.

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Meanwhile Lord Bryce had received representations from the Armenian organizations in America regarding the prisoners at Sumerpur, India, taken from the Ottoman army in Mesopotamia. They were stated to 'desire intensely' to serve in the British army in Mesopotamia against the Turks, or if that was not considered desirable, to join the Armenian volunteer contingent in the Caucasus, or to look after Armenian refugees. The Viceroy of India considered their employment in Mesopotamia as undesirable, but there would be no objection to their employment elsewhere. On 30 June 1916 the War Office suggested their being drafted into the Armenian Labour Corps employed in the defences of the Suez Canal. But the General Officer Commanding did not wish to use them in that capacity owing to some trouble having arisen already in that unit.

In the Middle of October French Commander Romieux was instructed to make arrangements with the local authorities in Egypt so that, as soon as the necessary means of transport were collected by the French, Armenians fit for training would be transported to Cyprus, formed into battalions and drilled by French officers. The French alone would be responsible for the formation and equipment, etc., of this force. Meanwhile the British Foreign Office instructed the Director of Military Intelligence to use compulsion, in cooperation with the French, if these Armenians refused to go to Cyprus for training. On the other hand the British High Commissioner in Nicosia informed the Colonial Office on 6 September that the Armenians to be trained in Cyprus should have the minimum of contact with the Cypriot Turks, who were uneasy. 'I gather that the withdrawal of the new corps from Armenian political influence is one object of the project. For these reasons, I would recommend that a secluded site in the north or east of the island should be sought,' he recommended. On 14 November he informed the Colonial Office that the site for a French military camp for an Armenian corps under strict discipline had been allotted near the Monariga anchorage, 16 miles north of Famagusta.

On 9 December the French Minister at Cairo asked whether the 250 Armenian prisoners of war, said to be in camp near Bombay (India), could be sent to join the other Armenians then under French military training in Cyprus. The Armenian Patriarch, who was on his way to visit India, had volunteered to interview these prisoners and to persuade them to enrol themselves under the French flag.

resources' he warned the Foreign Office. Among the Armenians was a certain number of able-bodied men for whom it was impossible to find work, and the Egyptian authorities anticipated trouble unless something could be found for them. Therefore the General Officer Commanding telegraphed Lord Kitchener on 19 September proposing to provide at least 600 of them with arms and ammunition, and send them on French ships to fight the Turks in Asia Minor, or Syria. Lord Kitchener replied two days later that the Foreign Office thought the entire responsibility and arrangements for the 'Armenian enterprise' should be left to the French. Since then the General Officer Commanding had not received any further communication either from the French authorities or the War Office, and he wished to know whether the French authorities proposed to make any use of these Armenians, or whether they had any plans for their disposal. If not, he wished to send them to work on the beaches of Gallipoli where they were badly needed. Kitchener requested instructions by telegram, as soon as possible, as these refugees were likely to become an embarrassment to the Egyptian authorities.

The British Foreign Office asked its Ambassador Lord Bertie in Paris to inform the French government and urge them that the refugees should be transported elsewhere, 'as soon as possible'. The Foreign Office believed that in this case they had been 'badly pushed'; one official, A. Nicholson, commented: 'We should not have these bombs suddenly hurled at us'. On 11 October Lord Bertie informed the Foreign Office that the French military agent in Egypt had been instructed to recruit the Armenian refugees for service at Gallipoli, 'on favourable terms'.

The French were also planning to recruit Armenian prisoners of war. On 15 August 1916 the French diplomatic representative in London, Aine de Fleurián informed the British Foreign Office that the French government were in favour of recruitment of Armenian refugees and would like to know the number of refugees in Egypt, and prisoners in India, who could be enrolled. They suggested their concentration in Cyprus, and asked if the British government shared these views. This sparked off a discussion at the British Foreign Office where Harold Nicolson observed: 'I doubt whether the Governor of Cyprus will relish this... The political value of this proposal is that it introduces the French to the Armenians guilty, and without referring to the matter in words, prepares for the anticipated regime foreshadowed in the Franco-British agreement. It will also please the French and be a beginning of cooperation in the Levant'.

109 FO 371/2490/129419, 136257, 131502: McMahon to FO, 10.9.1915; Maxwell to Kitchener, 10.9.1915; and McMahon to FO, 14.9.1915.
110 Ibid., General Officer Commanding to Kitchener, 19.9.1915; FO to Bertie, 15.9.1915; McMahon to FO, 9.10.1915; FO to Bertie, 10.10.1915; Bertie to FO, 11.10.1915.
112 Ibid., doc. no. 127079: India Secretary to Viceroy, 18.6.1916.
113 Ibid., Viceroy to India Office, 17.6.1916.
114 Ibid., doc. no. 2094649: Colonel's reply of 10.10.1916.
115 Ibid., doc. no. 209679: FO to Director of Military Intelligence, 21.10.1916.
116 Ibid., doc. no. 1800040: Grindle to FO, 9.9.1916, enclosing copy of a despatch from Claisson to CO, 6.9.1916.
117 Ibid., doc. no. 251899: Claisson to Colonial Office, 14.11.1916.
118 Ibid., doc. no. 249258: McMahon to FO, 9.12.1916.
They were to be recruited and enrolled in the French *Légion d'Orient*, which would be used against the Turks in Cilicia. The antecedents of this force were as follows: When secret plans were hatched in London in the summer of 1916 in order to partition Turkey, the French representative, Georges Picot, in the presence of the British representative, Sir Mark Sykes, signed an agreement with the Armenian leader Boghos Nubar, according to which an Armenian legion would be set up to fight against the Turks. This military unit, which was named *Légion d'Orient*, would have formed the nucleus of the army of 'Armenia Minor', a state which France hoped to set up in the future.

According to another version put forward by the British Armenia Committee, as a result of negotiations in 1916 between the French Foreign Minister and the Armenian National Delegation, France undertook, after the victory of the Allies, to give autonomy to Cilicia under French protection. The Armenian National Delegation, upon this condition, cooperated in raising a force of Armenian volunteers, called originally *Légion d'Orient*, and later *Légion arménienne*. Under French officers, this regiment took part in the Palestine campaign, and earned the tribute of the commander of the French contingent and of Field-Marshal Lord Allenby. Of course, the Armenians were not aware, at the time, that there was no mention of an autonomous or independent Armenian state in the Sykes-Picot Agreement partitioning the Ottoman Empire between France and Britain.

Russia, too, while happy to use Armenian support, was no more anxious than were the Ottoman government to see the lands of eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus formed into an independent Armenian state. There was no place for an autonomous 'Turkish Armenia' in the postwar plans of Russia. On the contrary, the region was marked for annexation as an integral unit of the Romanov Empire, and for its possible repopulation by the Russian peasants and Cossacks. Hence, in the middle of 1916 Armenian hopes were rudely shaken. The Russian authorities abruptly ordered the demobilization of the Armenian volunteer units, proscribed Armenian civic activity, and imposed stringent press censorship, which left the Armenians aghast.

CHAPTER 6

WAR-TIME DISINFORMATION

Turco-Armenian incidents and Entente propaganda

According to Harold D. Laswell, propaganda (or disinformation) during the First World War, like in any other war, aimed at the following: to improve the friendly relations among the Allies; to establish amicable relations with neutral states, and to inculcate in them the idea that the Allies were not only right in their cause, but also that they would be victorious, and thus procure their support; to demolish the morale of the enemy states, and to create dissension among, and hatred against, them. Obviously the state indulging in propaganda would find it advantageous to attain its goals by depicting its enemy, as far as possible, as an 'inhuman creature'. These vital considerations were kept in mind by the Allies, who posed as the champions of liberation and independence of subject peoples, based on the Wilsonian principle of self-determination, which they never really cherished. When the Armenian relocations began, an excellent opportunity arose for the Entente Powers to use the resulting incidents for disinformation purposes against the Ottoman Empire.

This war-time disinformation of the Entente Powers was enshrined in three books: the first one edited by Lord James Bryce, and written by Arnold Toynbee, was entitled *Treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire* (Blue Book, London, 1916); the second book was written by Henry Morgenthau el. al., under the title of *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* (New York, 1918); and the third book was written by Johannes Lepsius and entitled *Le Rapport Secret du Dr. Johannes Lepsius sur les Massacres d'Arménie*, (Paris, 1918). It will be interesting to trace the developments that led to the compilation and publication of these three 'masterpieces' of war-time propaganda.

On 2 October 1915 Lord Cromer wrote to Lord Crewe of the Foreign Office, sending him a copy of a question which he had put down to ask in the House of Lords the following Wednesday. He offered to withdraw the question if it would cause any embarrassment, but he did not think that this was likely to be the case. He observed:

2 Ibid., pp. 62, 66 and 72.
I may mention that I think it very desirable at present to give the utmost publicity to the Turkish proceedings, with a view to letting the educated Mohammedans in India know what is the nature of the Turkish Government, and so bring home to their minds that it would be a great mistake in any way to identify the cause of Islam with that of Turkey.3

Lord Cromer was thus indirectly suggesting that the British government should indulge in a propaganda campaign in the USA, by making use of the Turco-Armenian incidents. In fact, four days later he declared in the House of Lords that Lord Bryce had given 'a horrible picture' of the incidents in Anatolia involving the Armenians, basing them on accounts by missionaries and Armenian sources. Lord Cromer also suggested ignorantly, or perhaps deliberately, that there had been no rising in Anatolia on the part of the Armenians.4

In early October the press stated that the US government had addressed a strong protest to the Ottoman government through the US Ambassador in Istanbul, 'on the grounds of humanity'. Some time earlier the German Ambassador had communicated to the US government a report from the German Consul at Trabzon justifying the Turkish measures on grounds of Armenian agitation.5 But the British were eager to exploit the Turco-Armenian incidents for propaganda purposes, and in fact, the British Ambassador at Washington, Cecil Spring-Rice, had already begun to spread the news of the 'Armenian massacres' through the press.6 The British even began to hunt for photographs of 'Armenian atrocities', or Armenian refugees, which might be made good use of in America.7 Failing to procure such photographs, they approached Lord Bryce, who promised to do what he could in the matter. But Lord Bryce, too, could not find any photographs despite the help of his Armenian friends.8

When, on 16 October, the British representative at the Vatican, M. Gregory, apprised the Foreign Office about the Pope having made personal representation to the Sultan, on the subject of the Turco-Armenian incidents, the Foreign Office instructed Gregory that they could suggest no action for the Pope to take except a public expression of disapproval. Lord Bryce had given 'a horrible picture' of the incidents in Anatolia involving the Armenians, basing them on accounts by missionaries and Armenian sources. Lord Cromer also suggested ignorantly, or perhaps deliberately, that there had been no rising in Anatolia on the part of the Armenians.

This correspondence prompted Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey to ask, in a minute, 'Have we ever contradicted the allegation that we had stirred up a rebellion in Armenia?' (News Department: 'I think so'). 'We cannot suggest how the Pope's influence can be used - should it be by public expression of disapproval. If we have not supplied arms to the Armenians, or stirred up insurrection - my recollection is that we always refused to do this, hence we would not support them - the charge should be contradicted by the News Department'. Harold Nicolson added: 'A denial was issued through Reuters and sent to neutral countries, including America, and the story was also denied through individual American correspondents'.9

Thus, the British Foreign Secretary himself was not sure whether the British had supplied arms to the Armenians, or stirred up insurrection, but in the light of past deeds and the documents referred to above, it would have been very difficult for a conscientious and honest person to have made such remarks; although many British documents dealing with such an explosive issue are lacking, having been conveniently withdrawn or destroyed. Paradoxically, a secret telegram which the Viceroy of India sent to the India Office on 27 October 1915 does not refer to any massacres. The telegram was as follows:

1,500 Armenian women and children recently arrived at Mosul from Van and are said to have been given subsistence allowance of two annas per diem by the Turkish Government. Armenians have been deported from Baghdad to Deir ez-Zor by Nuruddin (Nurettin). The general policy seems to be to exile the Armenians to places as far removed as possible from any of the theatres of war and so prevent their aiding the Allies by revolution or leakage of intelligence. To this end they move them eastwards from the Aleppo area and northwards from Baghdad...10

In view of the Anglo-Armenian disinformation then going on, M. Rifat, the editor of La Patrie Egyptienne, issued a statement to the Danish press on 13 October, in which he declared that England was responsible for the severe reprisals against the insurgent Armenians. That country had been organizing a conspiracy among the Armenians throughout Turkey; a rebellion was to break out in Istanbul and the rest of Turkey as soon as the Allies got through the Dardanelles. Inquiry had brought to light numerous documents showing that a

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3 FO 371/2488/143621: Cromer to Crewe, 27.10.1915.
4 Ibid., doc. no. 14038: Parliamentary Question by the Earl of Cromer, 6.10.1915.
5 Ibid., doc. no. 145949: Spring-Rice to Grey, 5.10.1915.
6 Ibid., doc. no. 153862: Spring-Rice to Grey, 8.10.1915; see also FO 371/2488/125956: Minute by Lord Robert Cecil, dated 9.9.1915.
7 Ibid., doc. no. 145460: FO to Buchanan, 11.10.1915.
8 Ibid., doc. no. 153610: FO to Patchin, 18.10.1915.
9 Ibid., doc. no. 152040: Gregory to FO, 16.10.1915; FO to Gregory, 21.10.1915.
10 FO 371/2491/168135: Viceroy to India Office, 27.10.1915.
major rising was planned. The insurrection broke out prematurely in the provinces where the Armenians fell upon the Muslim towns and massacred the inhabitants. The ring-leaders were arrested, and vast stores of munitions of war were discovered. Documents found in the possession of the leaders of the movement clearly established British complicity. Turkey merely acted in self defence in crushing the widespread plot which threatened the existence of the empire. The Turkish government was prepared to produce all the documents discovered. But at the British Foreign Office Rifat was regarded as a 'notorious agitator'. 'It might be as well to refute', suggested George T. Clerk; however, in the light of British, French, Russian and Armenian collaboration, no such refutation was issued.

Moreover, the British were not only in constant touch with various Armenian organizations 'for relief work for the Armenians', but were also members of some of them. In a minute dated 15 November 1915 Harold Nicolson of the Foreign Office observed:

I venture to suggest that our enemies are certain to seize upon anything which may be said, as evidence to show that HMG (His Majesty's government) and their Allies have been in correspondence with Armenian insurgents, and are therefore indirectly responsible for the treatment which military considerations have forced the Turks to adopt. It would be better therefore if the persons interested could be informed in confidence of what has actually passed in Armenian relief, (between the various Armenian elements).

In fact, a number of Armenian-British propaganda organizations were established in Britain between the 1890s and 1920s, as confirmed by Akaby Nassibian. According to her, especially the British Armenia Committee, which had its Propaganda Sub-Committee, was the most active during 1915-23, and an influential political group. It was an offshoot of the Balkan Committee of 1903, whose chairman in 1912 was Noel Buxton, MP. It was formed sometime between 29 November 1912 and 30 January 1913. Its chairman was Aneurin Williams, Liberal Party MP.

Meanwhile, in February 1916 the Ottoman government published its first official defence against the charges connected with the Armenian relocations. In a statement, it lay the blame for the resulting bloodshed, on the Armenian revolutionaries who had caused uprisings among the Ottoman Armenians. It stated that the disturbances were provoked by the British, French and Russian governments. Ottoman troops had been betrayed when the Russian offensive had begun. The statement declared:

It is true that, in the course of the passage of the Armenians from one locality to another, certain deplorable excesses took place. But which nation in the world can throw a stone at Turkey because the Mussulman population - exasperated by the culmination of Armenian hostility, insurrection and massacre, at the time when the empire was engaged in war in defence of its very existence - at last took the law into its own hands and retaliated upon the traitors in their own coin? How could the imperial authorities immediately everywhere prevent these not unnatural outbreaks when their primary duty to the State was to employ all its resources in the defence of the country on three fronts against four major Powers?

The statement went on to explain that the Ottoman government was not inactive in respect of the protection of the lives and property of the Armenians. Stringent instructions were issued, and a battalion of gendarmes was entrusted with the task of conveying the relocated Armenians, which resisted an attempt made by the local Muslims to exercise vengeance upon them, and lost a considerable number of men in so doing. The government set up commissions to deal fairly with Armenian properties, and bring to justice those who committed excesses. It then emphasized:

The removal of the Armenians from certain regions to others was a measure dictated by imperative military necessity. No coercive measures were taken by the imperial government against the Armenians until June 1915, by which time they had risen in arms at Van, and in other military zones. This was after they had joined hands with the enemy.

According to the Arabian Report of the Arab Bureau, dated 15 October 1916, the German newspaper Frankfurter Zeitung published a long extract from the report submitted to the Congress of the CUP, which was then meeting in Istanbul. The report dealt at length with the Armenian incidents. Most of the space was devoted to an account, 'on the usual lines', of the dangerous and revolutionary character of Turkey's Armenian subjects, the disorderly behaviour of Armenian 'bands', and measures taken by the Turks to forestall them. The report concluded with a mild admission of 'excesses' and 'a vague promise of restitution'. The passage ran as follows:

11  FO 371/2488/14975; Lowther to Grey, 13.10.1915.
12  Ibid., doc. no. 172811: FO memo, given to Lord Robert Cecil by Aneurin Williams and T.P.O' Conner and minutes thereon by Harold G. Nicolson, dated 15.11.1915.
14  Ibid., pp. 46-47.
15  FO 371/2708/39517; The Sun, New York, 16.2.1916.
In order to save our armies from the danger of falling between two fires, it was considered necessary to remove the Armenians from all the theatres of war and from the neighbourhood of railways. As excesses occurred during these relocations, several committees of inspection were sent out to make investigations, and regulations were issued for the security of the property of those who had been removed elsewhere. The committees appointed under these regulations are at present compiling a register of the deserted estates.

At the CUP Congress held on 1 November 1918 Mehmet Talat Pasha, without denying that incidents did occur, stated categorically as follows:

The Sublime Porte has never acted in all these incidents according to a pre-conceived decision. The responsibility for these incidents lies with those elements who indulged in unbecoming activities. Of course, not all the Armenians are responsible for these activities. Nevertheless, during a war which would decide the life and existence of the state, it was necessary not to allow movements which violated the freedom of movement of its armies, and of provoking rebellions in the rear, which endangered the salvation of the country and the security of the army. The relocations were absolutely necessitated because of war conditions. These have been carried out orderly everywhere, and to the extent necessitated by the circumstances. In many places, however, accumulated hostility exploded and led to undesirable malpractices. Many officials acted violently and cruelly. In many places, some innocent people have been victimized. I do admit this.17

As a result, many officials (1,397 of them) were tried and sentenced; some of them were executed.18

In an interview with Aubrey Herbert on 26 February 1921, at the German town of Hamm, Talât Pasha likened the 'Armenian question' to the 'Irish question'. 'Can any nation go through war and acquiesce when it is slapped in the back? What would you have done if you had had Sinn Féin enclaves all over England, fighting you during the war?' he asked. He admitted, however, that the consequence had been the ruin of the Christian minorities, 'whom your Prime Minister has insisted on treating as your allies. If the Greeks and the Armenians are your allies when we are at war with you, you cannot expect our Turkish Government to treat them as friends', he remarked.19

Talât Pasha also admitted in his memoirs that, despite all the precautions taken by the government, 'a number of unscrupulous, immoral and mean people took advantage of the situation and committed many murders.'20 He iterated that he had established four commissions of inquiry and dispatched them to Anatolia. These commissions had numerous culprits arrested and handed over to courts-martial. Cemal Pasha, on the other hand, pointed out that many Muslims, too, who were escaping from Armenian atrocities, suffered, 'even more than the Armenians'. He observed in his memoirs:

But as those helpless people were Muslims, no German or American missioner wrote a report about them, or felt, in his conscience, the need to describe their tragedy and misery. More than one and a half million Muslims were barbarously massacred. Why are the Armenians not held responsible for these atrocities? Is it because the value of the Muslims, according to the views of the authors of the 'Armenian question'... is equal to that of flies?21

The Blue Book

Meanwhile, when the British Ambassador at Washington, Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, informed Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey in February 1916 about the formal protest made by the US government to the Ottoman government against the continuation of the 'atrocities', Lancelot Oliphant of the Foreign Office commented: 'I suppose we are already making use of the Armenian question for propaganda in the US'. 'Mr. Hurst is even now writing up the Armenian question, and his article will certainly teach the USA', rejoined another official.22

All this time the British Intelligence and Information Services, some political and military advisers, and Armenophil and Turcophobe enthusiasts such as Lord Bryce, Arnold Toynbee, Aneurin Williams and others, were urging the British government to publicize the 'Armenian massacres'. Internally, it was hoped that this would arouse, among the British public, more interest in 'the little Allies of the Entente' - the Armenians, and hatred towards the Turks; whilst, externally, it would divert the international attention from the atrocious persecution of the Jews by Britain's close ally Russia, which had intensified during the war, and also, it would stimulate the neutral countries with pro-Entente tendencies, such as the USA, Greece, and the Hashemite Arabs, to join the fray on the side of the Allies.
The task of collecting the material, mainly from Armenian sources, and of writing a report, which would later be published under the title: *The treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-16*, was undertaken by the well-known Armenologist Viscount Bryce, and Arnold Toynbee. Bryce wrote to Grey on 1 July 1916 that, 'in the interest of historic truth', he found it necessary 'to compile a general narrative of the events, and estimate their significance'. When responses from various mainly Armenian quarters showed that sufficient materials for a 'history - provisional no doubt, but trustworthy as far as the present date went, could be obtained', he claimed, he secured the cooperation of 'a young historian of high academic distinction', Arnold J. Toynbee, the former Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford.

Viscount Grey replied on 23 August, referring to the report as 'a terrible mass of evidence', which ought to be published and widely studied by all who had the broad interests of humanity at heart. He claimed that it would be valuable, not only for the immediate information of public opinion as to the conduct of the Turkish Government towards the 'defenceless' Armenians, but also as 'a mine of information for historians in the future', and for other purposes, which he did not specify. Armenian researcher Akaby Nassibian observes that both Aneurin Williams and his associates, and the Foreign Office, were anxious to have these accounts made known to the public; the former in order to stimulate relief contributions; and the latter in order to stimulate the war effort. Hence the publication of the 'Blue Book', as it came to be known, was the result of the effort and cooperation between the British government and the Armenophils. But Nassibian fails to mention the most important protagonist in the compilation of the 'Blue Book', and later of the book written by Johannes Lepsius, namely Henry Morgenthau, the US Ambassador at Istanbul from 27 November 1915 to 1 February 1916, who will be dealt with below.

The 'Blue Book' on the so-called 'Armenian massacres' turned out to be one of the most successful war-time propaganda exercises of the British government, which used it in inculcating hatred towards, and demonizing, its enemies, the Turks, before world opinion, in rewarding its Armenian allies with sympathy, flattery and false promises, and in effecting the major coup of finally winning over Turks, before world opinion, in rewarding its Armenian allies with sympathy, which used it in inculcating hatred towards, and denigrating, its enemies, the

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21 Toynbee, pp. xvi-xviii.

22 Nassibian, p. 54.

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20 Bryce, p. 344.

22 AP, 5376, XCVI, Turkey No. 1 (1890-91), C. 6214: Boyadjian to Cherinside, 10.8.1889.


Turks, was supplied to British Intelligence by a neutral US Ambassador, and was published as part of the British efforts to stir up the American public opinion against the Ottoman Empire and Germany, with an eye to getting America into the war, one cannot help but wonder about the discretion of Morgenthau himself. Nor was the Bryce report (Blue Book) the only British propaganda effort to make use of the Morgenthau material. Arnold Toynbee described and condemned the Turks in the Armenian atrocities: murder of a nation (London, 1915), and The murderous tyranny of the Turk (London, 1917), published by the Masterman Bureau. What is not mentioned is that many of the atrocity stories published by Toynbee in the 1915 work, were supplied by none other than Henry Morgenthau, who had played a key role in the genesis of all the war-time atrocity books relating to the Turkish treatment of the Armenians. Moreover, references were given to items published in the Armenian newspaper Horizon of Tiflis, the Ararat of London, the Gochnak of New York, and to the reports of the Armenian Atrocities Committee in the USA which gathered its information from missionaries and Armenians.

As for Arnold Toynbee, he has been described by Gordon Martel as a 'propagandist'. As early as June 1912 Toynbee wrote to his mother that he was anxious to see the Turks driven out of Europe, not because they were 'brutal oppressors', but because they were 'stupid and lazy'. He proposed to replace them with a regime that would be 'vigorous and brutal'. The decision of the Ottoman Empire to join forces with the Central Powers would make a sadder job of the war, he believed, 'but it will be a simplification in the end; we shan't leave any bits of Turkey lying about, when we clear up the mess afterwards.'

According to Martel, many men thought that they would discover their true selves under fire on the battlefield; Toynbee resigned himself to discovering what he could by working as a 'propagandist'. In May 1915 he went to London for the duration of the war to work in the newly-formed Department of Information (propaganda), located at Wellington House. For almost two years he devoted his considerable energies to writing books and articles such as The German terror in Belgium, The German terror in France, The Armenian atrocities, and The death of nurse Cavell. Toynbee, 'the distinguished historian and member of Wellington House', according to Sanders and Taylor, 'became something of a specialist in "atrocity propaganda"'.

From February 1916 onwards Toynbee, on instructions from Bryce, began to collect information against Turkey from various countries and individuals as well as from Armenian committees. These items of information were sent to him without much detail on their sources. In fact, Toynbee wrote to Lord Bryce an 11 May 1916 as follows:

Mr. Gowers from our office discussed with Montgomery from the Foreign Office how to publish the Armenian documents. They (the Foreign Office) claim that if you were to send these documents with an introductory note to Sir Edward Grey and state that they have been prepared under your supervision, that they are trustworthy, then your letter would be published by the Foreign Office as an official document, and the documents would constitute an appendix to your letter. The problem of publication would thus be solved. While giving the book an official character, it would free the Foreign Secretary from the obligation to take upon himself the proving of the accuracy of every matter mentioned in these documents.

Thus the 'Blue Book' was prepared by Toynbee, a member of the Masterman propaganda bureau - by collecting together various 'documents' without having thoroughly checked their accuracy, and gathered mainly from Armenian sources, or from people sympathetic to the Armenians, i.e. from second or third-hand sources, mostly with the help of Henry Morgenthau, and was issued as an official publication in order to give it more authenticity and credibility.

The work was completed in a short time, and definitely in less than a year. How authentic and reliable a work of 'historical scholarship' it is, scholars themselves must judge. Toynbee himself, at first, considered it as 'the biggest asset of His Majesty's Government to solve the Turkish problem in a radical manner, and to have it accepted by the public'; but he must have had some qualms about it as his later work, The Western Question in Greece and Turkey testifies. According to Gordon Martel, it was not that Toynbee particularly enjoyed his work as a 'propagandist'; in fact, he found it rather distasteful - 'no job for a gentleman' - and was relieved when he moved on to proper intelligence work in 1917.

Much later Toynbee disclosed that the British government had published the 'Blue Book' for a special purpose, of which he was unaware at the time, and he believed that Bryce was also unaware. According to Toynbee, the Russian armies, when retreating across the Polish-Lithuanian frontier in the spring of 1915, had
committed barbarities against the Jews there, and the advancing German armies had tried to exploit them. Jewish-American journalists invited to the German-occupied Russian territories, had sent ' lurid' despatches to American newspapers, and the British government in London had been seriously perturbed. Thus, in February 1916 The New York American had advised all American people to demand that 'Christian England and Christian France' restrain the 'savagery' of their 'barbarous allies'. 39 Toynbee believed that the British government was worried lest the American Jewry might retaliate against the Allies by throwing its weight against Britain in the debate then going on in the USA. Therefore the Turco-Armenian incidents in Turkey had provided the British government, according to Toynbee, with 'counter-propaganda' material against the Central Powers.40 Both Henry Herbert Asquith and Stanley Baldwin, in their joint memorial presented in 1924 to the then Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald, stated in no uncertain terms that Bryce's 'Blue Book' was '...widely used for Allied propaganda in 1916-7, and had an important influence upon American opinion and the ultimate decision of President Woodrow Wilson to enter the war'.41

Thus, the 'Blue Book', as a 'masterpiece' of British war-time propaganda, had a devastating effect. Its wicked influence is still extant as the book is being abused by Armenian activists in perpetuating their hatred towards the Turks, and by certain pseudo-scholars. Its success lay in the fact that it was based on 'atrocity' stories. British propaganda was geared towards such stories, real, exaggerated, or even fabricated;42 because disinformers could flog them to journalists and correspondents, who would then flash them under banner headlines in their journals.43 Arthur Ponsonby explains that 'the injection of the poison of hatred into men's minds by means of falsehood is a greater evil in wartime than the actual loss of life. The defilement of the human soul is worse than the destruction of the human body.'44 Perhaps the most notorious 'atrocity story' of the entire war was the case of the so-called 'corpses-conversion factory', where Germans were accused of boiling down bodies to make soap. The story was a complete fabrication - it was finally exposed in 1925 when it was discussed in the House of Commons.45 Most, if not all, wartime 'atrocity stories' were fabricated, or exaggerated tremendously; so was the myth of the 'deliberate extermination of Armenians in Turkey in 1915'.

After the war, reassurances failed to dispel the overall impression of Britain's wartime propaganda deriving from the German label of 'allies', and the abundance of crude 'atrocity stories' which circulated during the conflict. The ferocity of this kind of propaganda was most marked in the British press where much of it originated.46 The exposure of wartime 'atrocity stories' after the war, notably by Arthur Ponsonby's Falsehood in wartime, served to further undermine the respectability of the wartime experiment. James Morgan Read observes: 'Lying is an act of conscious deception. Much of British atrocity propaganda was unconscious deception built upon erroneous reports and impressions',47 and it was the British government itself which, between 1914 and 1918, had demonstrated to the world the enormous power of propaganda.48

As for the authenticity and validity of the 'Blue Book' as a work of 'historical scholarship', one only needs to peruse other works published after the Great War, exploduing many of the myths of British wartime propaganda; works such as Sir Campbell Stuart's Secrets of Crewe House (1920), Harold Lasswell's Propaganda Technique in the World War (1927), Arthur Ponsonby's Falsehood in wartime (1928), J.D. Squires' British propaganda at home and in the USA from 1914 to 1917 (1935), George Byrnes' Allied propaganda and the collapse of the German Empire in 1918 (1938), Lucy Masterman's C.F.G. Masterman (1939), H.C. Peterson's Propaganda for war: the campaign against American neutrality, 1914-17 (1939), James Morgan Reid's Atrocity propaganda, 1914-19 (1941), Cate Hairie's Keep the home fires burning (1977), and Michael L. Sanders and Philip M. Taylor's British propaganda during the First World War, 1914-18 (1982).

Ambassador Morgenthau's story

The second book of wartime disinformation was written by US Ambassador Henry Morgenthau and his associates, and was published in 1918 in New York under the title of Ambassador Morgenthau's story. American scholar Heath Lowry, who has thoroughly studied the Morgenthau papers preserved at the Library of Congress, Washington D.C., Manuscripts Division, and the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Presidential Library in Hyde Park, New York, wrote a critical review entitled The story behind Ambassador Morgenthau's story,49 which sheds much light on Morgenthau, his work as the US Ambassador in Turkey, and the antecedents of his book.

40 Toynbee: Acquaintances, pp. 149-52; Bryce Papers, UB 57, cutting, New York American. 2.2.1916, quoted by Nassibian.
41 Toynbee, ibid., pp. 149-52.
44 See also Sydney Whitman, op. cit., pp. 120-21.
45 Ponsonby, p. 18.
46 Hansard, 5th session, vol. 188, 24.11.1925; see also Ponsonby, pp. 102-120; 'Kadaver', The Nation, 38, 1925, p. 147-48.
46 Sanders and Taylor, p. 263.
48 Sanders and Taylor, p. 263.
49 The Isis Press Istanbul, Turkey, 1990.
According to Lowry, Henry Morgenthau, a successful New York real estate developer, had served as the Democratic Party Finance Committee chairman in Woodrow Wilson's 1912 presidential campaign. Upon Wilson's election he was rewarded with a political appointment as Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, which he initially rejected on the grounds that it was the only diplomatic post open to American Jews. Only Wilson's personal intervention, and the insistence of Rabbi Stephen Wise of New York City, convinced Morgenthau to reconsider. Having done so, the 58-year old Morgenthau arrived in Turkey on 27 November 1913 for 26 months, and returned to the US on 1 February 1916. His book written two years later, tells the 'story of his foray' into the world of international diplomacy. Pivotal as a foundation for the vehement anti-Turkishness, which came to typify American public opinion in the 1920s, and remnants of which are still visible today, the Morgenthau book continues to be a primary source for the belief that the Young Turk government of the Ottoman Empire perpetrated a premeditated massacre of its Armenian minority under cover of World War I.

The wicked influence of this book is widespread, as it is treated as a 'primary' source, reflecting the observations of a 'bystander'. It has served to shape anti-Turkish opinion in many circles. Decades after its first appearance, it is still reprinted, and quoted extensively in speech and prose. The actual concept of the book originated in the mind of the well-known, Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, biographer and historian, Burton J. Hendrick, who first suggested it to Morgenthau in April 1916, and actually wrote it himself. After the idea had been implanted in his mind Morgenthau wrote to his 'friend and confidant', US President Woodrow Wilson, on 26 November 1917, suggesting the publication of his book with the sole aim of fostering public support for the US war effort by indulging in anti-German, anti-Turkish propaganda which would win a victory for the war policy of the government.

Within a year, Ambassador Morgenthau's Story had been written; serialized in monthly instalments in one of America's best-known magazines, The World's Work (circulation: 120,000); appeared in many of the country's newspapers with a combined circulation of 2,630,256; released 'with great fanfare' as a book by Doubleday, Page and Company, and already accumulated sales of several thousand copies. Morgenthau also received an offer from Hollywood for the film rights of his story', with a promise of 25,000 dollars for the said rights; but Morgenthau's enthusiasm for a career in the movies cooled following the receipt of a second letter from President Wilson which expressed his disapproval in no uncertain terms. Wilson told him, 'Personally I believe we have gone quite far enough'. The attitude of the country towards Turkey 'is already fixed. It does not need enhancement'.

As for the 'sources' upon which Morgenthau's book is based, first and foremost is a typed transcript called 'Diary', which covers the actual period of his sojourn in Istanbul, i.e. the period from 27 November 1913 (his date of arrival) to 1 February 1916 (his date of departure) from the Ottoman capital - a period of 26 months. Morgenthau dictated to his personal secretary, a Turkish Armenian named Hagop S. Andonian, on a regular basis, who in turn typed them up for posterity. In addition, Morgenthau was in the habit of writing a lengthy weekly letter to various members of his family in the U.S. These letters were likewise prepared by Andonian, and indeed often, as Morgenthau tells us in a letter of 11 May 1915, they were actually written by Andonian.

Andonian, formerly a student at the American Robert College at Istanbul, had become Morgenthau's confidant and adviser. He left Turkey with the Ambassador to assist him with the book. Morgenthau writes that his services were 'indispensable'. Another key Armenian was Arshag K. Schmavonian, interpreter and adviser. Morgenthau knew none of the languages spoken in Istanbul. Schmavonian accompanied the Ambassador on almost every official visit, and also to meetings with American businessmen and missionaries. He assisted the Ambassador in the writing of his telegrams. He was also transferred to Washington, where he remained 'special adviser' in the employment of the US State Department.

Morgenthau's book was actually drafted and written by Burton J. Hendrick (his letter to Morgenthau, dated 7 April 1916). According to his letter of 5 July 1918, Hendrick was guaranteed, throughout the lifetime of the book, 40 per cent of the royalties. Some months before he died in 1949, Hendrick stated that he had the job of 'ghosting' Morgenthau's book, in the preparation of which US Secretary of State Robert Lansing also took part. Lansing read and commented upon every page of the manuscript before it was published in instalment or as a book. He made notes suggesting alterations or omissions. Lansing asked Morgenthau in a letter of 2 October 1918 not to mention his name in connection with the book.

The book contains supposed quotations from the remarks of Ottoman Ministers, Mehmet Talat and Enver Pasha, in quotation marks. Hendrick portrayed the Turkish leaders as thoroughly inhuman characters. Lowry, who examined

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56 Lowry, p. 8.
57 Ibid., pp. 1-2.
58 Ibid., pp. 4-5.
59 Ibid., pp. 8-9.
60 Ibid., p. 22.
61 Ibid.
carefully everything written by Morgenthau, could not locate a single reference to some very important alleged conversations. Apart from outright inventions, the 'authors' take rumours and put them in the mouths of Turkish leaders - moreover, in quotation marks. The authors, united in anti-Turkish disinformation and 'victory for war policies', try to portray the Ottoman Ministers as criminals, publicly boasting of their crimes. They take rumours, through Armenian interpreters, and credit them to the Turkish leaders. They feel utterly free to change, add, subtract and quote.

The book has many contradictions, e.g. on page 20, Talat Pasha is made to say that he 'scoffed at all religions and hated all priests, rabbis and hodjas', but in another place (Diary for 10 July 1914), that he is 'the most religious' in the Ottoman cabinet. In view of these contradictions and inconsistencies, 'did no one comprehend the enormity of the injustice perpetrated by Morgenthau's book?' asks Lowry. This is the question which must occur to anyone who systematically compares the written records compiled by Morgenthau, in the course of his 26 months sojourn in Turkey (a record which shows him to have been a fairly active participant in a complex game of international politics), with the crude half-truths and outright falsehoods which typify his book from cover to cover. A single letter, fortuitously preserved among the Morgenthau papers in the Roosevelt Library, addressed to the Ambassador by George S. Schreiner, proves that at least one of his contemporaries took strong exception to his efforts.

This letter, written by a distinguished foreign correspondent, who had served in Turkey from February, through the end of 1915, literally gives voice to all the queries one must have after this examination. Schreiner's name is recognized from references to him in Ambassador Morgenthau's story, in the 'Diary' entries for 1915, and from mention in the weekly family letters as well. There can be no question that Morgenthau and Schreiner frequently saw one another in 1915 as the 'Diary' records that the two men met on no less than thirty occasions between the date of 9 February and 31 May. In his book Morgenthau refers to Schreiner as 'the well-known American correspondent of the Associated Press, whose stories were carried in 937 daily papers'.

After reading his book, and by chance meeting him in the State Department in December 1918, Schreiner wrote to Morgenthau as follows:

I am writing this letter under the impression that the peace of the world will not gain by such extravagant efforts of yours. Before there can be understanding among peoples each must have the right perspective of things, and that perspective consists of knowing the true proportions of right and wrong... you (did not) possess in Constantinople [Istanbul] that omniscience and omnipotence you have arrogated unto yourself in the book. In the interest of truth I will also affirm that you saw little of the cruelty you fasten upon the Turks. Besides that, you have killed more Armenians than ever lived in the districts of the uprising. The fate of those people was sad enough without having to be exaggerated as you have done. I have probably seen more of the Armenian affair than all the Armenian attaches of the American Embassy together.

To be perfectly frank with you, I cannot applaud your efforts to make the Turk the worst being on earth, and the German worse, if that be possible. You know as well as I do, that Baron Wangenheim all but broke relations with the Turks on one occasion, when, to his pleas for the Armenians, he was returned a very sharp answer by Talat Bey, then Minister of the Interior. Has it ever occurred to you that all governments reserve to themselves the right to put down rebellion? It seems to me that even Great Britain assumed that stand towards the Fathers of the Republic. That the effort of the Turk went beyond all reasonable limits is most unfortunate, but have you ever considered for a moment that, in the East, they do not view things with the eye of those of the Occident?

Referring to Enver Pasha, Schreiner described him as 'rather inexperienced; somewhat impulsive, and given to being confidential, often in the case of untrustworthy characters'; and went on:

Apart from that, he was in no respect what you picture him. Of course, if we are to take it for granted that we of the West are saints, then no Turk is any good. You will agree with me, no doubt, that the Turks count among the few gentlemen still in existence.

I do not want you to look upon this as a declaration of war. My purpose in mentioning these matters is to let you know that there is at least one human being not afraid to break a lance with an ex-ambassador of the Republic. Ultimately truth will prevail. I have placed my limited services at her command...'

Many years were to pass before Schreiner's claim that 'ultimately truth will prevail' was to even begin to tarnish the self-image of 'omniscience and omnipotence' which Morgenthau attributed to himself in his 'Story', and before Morgenthau's efforts 'to make the Turk the worst being on earth' were to be
queried. Schreiner had been an eyewitness to events in Anatolia as shown by his book on his experiences in Turkey: From Berlin to Baghdad: behind the scenes in the Near East, in which he details meeting the first convoy of Armenian evacuees (those who had revolted in Zeytun), on the road near Adana, on 25 April 1915. In the ‘Preface’ of his book Craft Sinister, he observes:

It is to be hoped that the future historian will not give too much heed to the drivel one finds in the books of diplomat-authors. I at least have found these books remarkably unreliable on the part played by the author. It would seem that these literary productions are on a par with the ‘blue books’ published by governments for the edification of the public and their own amusement.63

Dr. Johannes Lepsius

The third disinformation book was written by Dr. Johannes Lepsius, and published in 1918, in Paris, under the title Le rapport secret du Dr. Johannes Lepsius sur les massacres d’Arménie. Lepsius was a German Protestant pastor, the son of a well-known archaeologist and noted traveller and writer on the Near East.9 He was also president of the German-Armenian Society, which aimed at embarrassing Germany and the Ottoman government.46 He had already published a book in Lausanne in 1896, entitled L’Arménie et l’Europe, which was translated into English the following year, and published under the title Armenia and Europe, based mostly on Armenian sources. According to Frank G. Weber, quoted by Turkish researcher Kâmuran Gürün, ‘lest other Armenians in the Ottoman Empire attempt to imitate the insurrectionaries of Van, Enver decided to suppress all Armenian schools and newspapers. Wangenheim regretted these orders as both embarrassing Germany and the Ottoman government.46 He had already published a book in Lausanne in 1896, entitled L’Arménie et l’Europe, which was translated into English the following year, and published under the title Armenia and Europe, based mostly on Armenian sources. According to Frank G. Weber, quoted by Turkish researcher Kâmuran Gürün, ‘lest other Armenians in the Ottoman Empire attempt to imitate the insurrectionaries of Van, Enver decided to suppress all Armenian schools and newspapers. Wangenheim regretted these orders as both embarrassing Germany and the Ottoman government.46 He had already published a book in Lausanne in 1896, entitled L’Arménie et l’Europe, which was translated into English the following year, and published under the title Armenia and Europe, based mostly on Armenian sources. According to Frank G. Weber, quoted by Turkish researcher Kâmuran Gürün, ‘lest other Armenians in the Ottoman Empire attempt to imitate the insurrectionaries of Van, Enver decided to suppress all Armenian schools and newspapers. Wangenheim regretted these orders as both embarrassing Germany and the Ottoman government.46

Wangenheim decided to help him.11

Lepsius had a number of meetings with Morgenthau. The American Ambassador’s ‘Diary’ for 31 July 1915 contains the following account of their first meeting: At 3 p.m. Dr. Johannes Lepsius, from Potsdam, called. He told us a great deal about the Armenian matters and was anxious to know what we knew... Lepsius seems to be really in earnest to do something. He suggests going to Geneva from here and appeal to the International Red Cross, heads of the neutral nations and Pope to join in a universal protest. The family ‘Letter’ which discusses this meeting repeats the above and adds the following: ‘I arranged an interview between Tsamados, the Greek Chargé d’Affaires and Lepsius, as the Professor wanted to know how the Greeks were treated’ (Morgenthau’s letter of 9 August 1915). Morgenthau consulted the State Department whether to give information to Lepsius, and supported it. On 6 August Lansing authorised Morgenthau to give Lepsius access to files. On 11 August Lepsius saw Morgenthau and said that he hoped to see Enver that afternoon but had little hope of accomplishing anything. On 11 August Lepsius visited the Ambassador again. The ‘Diary’ says: ‘Lepsius told me all about his interview with Enver. He was surprised how freely Enver talked to him about their plans to rid themselves of the Armenians. Enver told him that this was their opportunity and they were going to use it’. (Whereas Trum pener states that Enver told Lepsius that they could not end the relocations as Armenian rebellions were still continuing.)15 Morgenthau gave Lepsius some of the reports he had received from his various consuls.

57 Lowry, pp. 60-63.
59 Gürün, p. 219.
60 Trum pener, p. 217.
61 German Archives, Band 36, no. A 20525, quoted by Trum pener, p. 219.
62 Wilhelmstrasse stands for the German government.
63 Trum pener, p. 217.
64 Gürün, pp. 219-20.
65 Trum pener, p. 218.
It is obvious that Morgenthau was a key source for Lepsius' work. Given the fact that Lepsius spent only a month in the Ottoman capital during the war, and that the number of German missionaries in the interior of Anatolia was relatively small, it is not surprising that much of his material on the relocations should have been derived from American Protestant missionary sources. When Lepsius returned to Germany, he devoted himself to a campaign against the Ottoman government. His various talks were not well received even by some newspaper executives. One socialist editor, Max Grunwald, announced that he found Lepsius' arguments unconvincing. Another SPD social democrat editor, Julius Kaliski, joined publisher Bernhard's charge that Lepsius had printed the Armenian situation excessively in black colours. The charge that Lepsius was exaggerating the miseries of the Armenians was promptly repeated by a spokesmen of the Foreign Office in Berlin, in a press conference. The official German view was that the moral responsibility for the Armenian troubles had to be borne by all three Entente Powers.

The Turkish viewpoint is that Lepsius did not set foot in Anatolia; he did not talk to a single Armenian there. All the information he gathered consisted of what he had learned from the Patriarchate, and to some extent, from the reports which Ambassador Morgenthau had showed him, reports which were mostly based on hearsay.

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CHAPTER 7
THE LAST STAGES OF THE WAR
Collapse of the Tsarist regime

In mid-March 1917 the Tsarist regime in Russia collapsed and a provisional government emerged in Petrograd under Prince Georg Lvov, which brought A.F. Kerensky to prominence. When internal wrangling was raging between the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks, the Russian Caucasian army was deep in Ottoman territory, with Trabzon, Erzurum and Van being held by the Russians behind the Turkish lines. Soon this army began to collapse, and during the autumn of 1917 more sections of the Russian front and hinterland were taken over by various Transcaucasian volunteer units, including a large number of Armenians.

Following the Bolshevik Revolution in early November 1917, some Armenian leaders appealed to the British government, through its Minister in Tehran, Sir Charles Madling, for assistance to continue fighting the Turks. In the Caucasus the British sought to operate both 'idealist and traditionalist imperial policies' in an attempt to establish a friendly military force. But the Caucasus offered none of the logistical possibilities of the Arabian peninsula which served as the model for a number of British excursions in Central Asia. Nevertheless, for a number of months the Armenians had been pressing London for the recognition of their claims, and for military and financial assistance, in their fights with the Turks.

The feasibility of providing aid was highly doubtful, but the temptation to use the Armenians in the end overcame British scruples. On 13 November the Foreign Office offered the Armenians a vague promise of assistance and then immediately, but without success, attempted to shift the burden on to the US.

Though little was ever done for the Armenians, the episode is important because it ultimately led to the formation of a mission under the command of General L.C.

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1 Lowry, pp. 73-74.
2 Trumper, p. 224.
4 Gurun, p. 220.

1 Trumper, p. 167.
2 FO 371/244/125/290/05; Balfour to Stevens, 13.11.1917; see also Stanwood, pp. 219-222.
Dunsterville, which attempted to channel arms and money into the former Russian Empire, and which ended up on northern Persia, according to Frederick Stanwood.

Lord Alfred Milner, Secretary of State for War, made the case for intervention in the Caucasus in a memorandum for the War Cabinet at the beginning of 1918. Unless Britain held Caucasia, he argued, there was the danger of the Turks not only recovering the ‘Armenian provinces’, which had been conquered by the Russians, but establishing connection with the Turkish population of northern Persia (Azerbaijan) and with the Muslims of Russia. Such a combination would present a new and very real danger to the whole position of Britain in the East. ‘On the other hand’, he went on, ‘we have in the anti-Bolsheviks of Transcaucasia, the nucleus of an army which, if organised and led, would certainly fight, as it is a question of life and death to them to resist a Turkish invasion. Of all the various districts of Southern Russia which are struggling for local autonomy, Transcaucasia seems thus to be, both the most promising and by far the most vital from the point of view of British interests’.

Milner was prepared to risk a military débâcle by sending Dunsterville into the region without delay. On 4 January 1918 the Caucasian committee met to consider the means of rendering aid to the Armenians. ‘The success of this undertaking is our most immediate and vital concern, because it is only by establishing an Armenian cordon strong enough to hold back the Turks and the Kurds that we can protect the flank of our Mesopotamian force, hope to keep Persia clear from hostile penetration, and prevent the spread of an anti-British Turanian-Moslem movement working in German interests, from Turkey into the heart of Central Asia’, he remarked. The chances of success were negligible, and the Committee recognised the tremendous obstacles.

Lord Curzon, however, believed that Britain required an independent Armenia and was therefore opposed to allowing any other Power, including the USA, to be involved. He argued that ‘...we want to set up an Armenian State as a Palisade... against the Pan-Turanian ambitions of the Turks, which may overflow the Caucasian regions and carry great peril to the countries of the Middle East and East... We want to constitute something like an effective barrier against the aggression... of any foreign Powers’. Curzon, in the best of aristocratic tradition, chose the Armenians, whose long history, Christianity and good breeding made them perfectly suited to the task. By supporting Armenian nationalism, the British would develop a client capable of imposing order on the regions as a whole. These calculations were essentially intuitive. Like the Jews in Palestine, with whom

[1] Cab. 24/38: G.T., 3275: Memo. by Milner, n.d.; 3243, FO minute, South East Russia, 7.1.1918; see also Stanwood, pp. 51 and 63/64.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Cab. 24/38: G.T., 3275: Memo. by Milner, n.d.; 3243, FO minute, South East Russia, 7.1.1918; see also Stanwood, pp. 51 and 63/64.

Curzon compared the Armenians, they were to be a ‘hostage population’, permanently struggling to secure their homeland against hostile Muslim neighbours.

The British government wished to use the Armenians as a volunteer force for their own interests; but they were, as usual, too ready to make promises that they did not intend to keep. The Armenians were perfectly willing to be used as a ‘wedge’ separating the Anatolian Turks from the Tatars of the Caucasus and Central Asia; but when they were given arms in order to fight for Anglo-French imperialist ambitions, they used them in their private vendettas among themselves and against the Muslims. Yet, the Armenians boast that ‘General Oranjanian Antranik and his units helped the Russians, and in 1917, with the breakdown of the Russian army, they took over the Caucasian front, and for five months delayed the advance of the Turks, thus rendering an important service to the British army in Mesopotamia.’

The Armenians also cooperated with the Nestorian forces of Mar Shimoun in their wicked deeds against the Muslims. According to British army officer Major Noel, who reported in May 1919:

As a result of three months touring through the area occupied and devastated by the Russian Army and the Christian Army of revenge accompanying them, during the spring and summer of 1916, I have no hesitation in saying that the Turks would be able to make out as good a case against their enemies as that presented against the Turks... According to the almost universal testimony of the local inhabitants and eye-witnesses, Russians acting on the instigation and advice of Nestorians and Armenians who accompanied them... murdered and butchered indiscriminately any Moslem member of the civil population who fell into their hands... A traveller through the Rowanduz and Nerei districts would find widespread wholesale evidence of outrages committed by Christians on Moslems.

Following the Bolshevik Revolution the Armenians began to occupy the Turkish territories evacuated by the Russians. This led to an orgy of unprecedented savagery and atrocities by the Armenian soldiers of the Russian
army and irregulars, who joined forces with other Armenian and Greek militants. The aim was to get rid of the Muslims in a region where they constituted the overwhelming majority of the population, and so facilitate the demands of the Armenians for the establishment of an Armenian state on Muslim lands. Firuz Kazemzadeh observes that, in those parts of Turkish 'Armenia' which the Armenian army had re-occupied following the retreat of the Turks, massacres and pillage of the Muslim population reached tremendous proportions. A Soviet writer, Borian, himself an Armenian, states that the Armenian politicians had organized state authority, not for the purpose of administering the country, but for the extermination of the Muslim population and the looting of their property. When voices were raised in Armenia against this 'murderous policy', many of the leaders of the Erivan government answered: 'The Turks have always looted the Armenians; so why is it so strange if the Armenians should for once loot the Turks?'. Borian accused the Armenian Dashnakists for having 'excelled the Turks'.1 His opinion was largely supported by the American General Harbord, who wrote that the Turks had committed many atrocities, but that 'where Armenians advanced and retreated with the Russians, their retaliatory cruelties unquestionably rivalled the Turks in their inhumanity'.

American professor Justin McCarthy, who has done extensive research in this field, gives a lurid picture of the Armenian atrocities. According to him, the worst Armenian massacres of Muslims, and destruction of Muslim villages, took place in the two periods at the beginning and end to the war. In between, when the Russians occupied eastern Anatolia, scattered reports indicate that major massacres of Muslims took place, particularly in the Van and Bitlis provinces. A postwar British source stated that Armenians 'massacred between 3-400,000 Kurds and Muslims in the districts of the Van and Bitlis'.

After the Bolshevik Revolution, when the Russians began to withdraw, Muslim villagers suffered from the depredations of the deserting Russian soldiers, but they suffered far worse from the Armenians who were left in charge. After the Russians departed, nothing held the Armenians in check. The events of the first period of the short Armenian rule were of a type seen all too often at that time - murder of unarmed Muslim villagers, kidnapping of people, who were never seen again, destruction of Muslim markets, neighbourhoods and villages, and ubiquitous plundering and rape. When the Ottoman army counter-attacked in 1918 the

12 Borian, II, p. 82.
15 McCarthy, p. 197.

Armenians fell back in disarray. It was obvious to them that their cause was at least temporarily lost, and that the Turks would recoup what the Armenians claimed as 'Anatolian Armenia'. They set about to ensure that the Ottomans would find little when they arrived. Only the rapid advance of the Ottoman army saved many of the Muslims. Those who could not be reached in time all too often perished.

The Ottomans, and later the Turkish Nationalists, and in particular the Ottoman and Turkish Nationalist generals on the eastern front, lodged many complaints about the way the Muslims were treated by the Armenians. The complaints and lists of atrocities were usually sent first to the Russian commanders, who were nominally in charge, later to the generals, particularly General Odishelidze, in theory commander of the Transcaucasian forces. He was forced to admit that the massacres had taken place. Accounts are also supported by Georgian sources. Here are a few examples.

Events in Erzincan began at the end of January 1918. At first the Armenians took the more prominent male members of the Muslim community and executed them, some in the city, others in the surrounding areas. The remaining Muslims were slaughtered en masse, and many were burned to death in the town square, the barracks and the nearby houses. Hundreds of Muslims were brought from the surrounding villages into the city and executed. The intent to kill as many Muslims as possible was obvious from the actions, later repeated elsewhere, of the Armenian leaders, who went to the surrounding villages ordering the peasants to assemble in the city. Those who did so were slaughtered. Ten days later, after the slaughter began, Ottoman troops entered Erzincan, now a ghost town; Armenians had left, and Muslims were dead. The Armenian soldiers marched along a road of corpses. 'For three days', wrote Velib Pasha, the Turkish commander, 'we have done nothing but gather up the bodies of Muslims killed by the Armenians, and cast aside. Among these innocent victims are children not yet weaned, 90-year old men, and women cut to pieces'. Velib Pasha estimated that more than 1,000 houses had been destroyed... The Erzincan wells were full of corpses of Muslims. Dismembered bodies, hands, legs, and heads were spread all over the gardens of the houses, one report ran. 312 unburied bodies were found by soldiers, 600 were found buried in wells and ditches, and many more than that had been killed. The fate of 650 Muslims, who had been taken from the city, ostensibly for road building, was unknown.

In Bayburt the events were similar to those in Erzincan. The Armenians murdered 250 Muslims; the Ottoman troops found an additional 290 corpses hastily buried in the streets. Tercan was completely destroyed by the retreating

16 Kazemzadeh, pp. 85-86.
17 McCarthy, p. 198.
Armenians. The ruined buildings, many blown up with dynamite left in a Russian munition dump, were filled with Muslim bodies. 700 corpses of children alone were counted by the Ottoman troops, who entered the ruins. The remaining Turks and Ottoman troops blamed the Armenians for the atrocities. In Erzurum, as soon as the Russians left the Turks began to experience at first indignities at the hands of the Armenians, then abductions and theft, and finally rape and murder. The Turks were attacked in the streets and were little safer from the roving Armenian bands in their homes. The final massacre in Erzurum began on 10 February 1918. On that day a large number of Muslims were taken under pretext of corvee labour, then they were robbed and killed before the Kars Gate, which led out of the city of Erzurum. Thousands were killed in city houses. The Ottoman authorities estimated 8,000 killed in and around the city. Only the rapid advance of the Ottoman army saved Erzurum from greater misfortune. When the Turkish units entered the city they found thousands of corpses of Muslims murdered by the Armenians.

In the countryside all the villages from Trabzon up to Erzincan were piles of debris, said Captain Refik. The Christian villages were generally not touched. The worst destruction was among the villages on the Armenian line of retreat from Erzincan to Erzurum and from Trabzon to Erzurum. In the latter area Greek guerrilla bands were also responsible for some of these atrocities. According to Ottoman military reports, in the Erzincan region, Armenian guerrillas burnt twenty houses before they fled to Yeniköy, and murdered 35 people at Askale. Armenians escaping on the road from Hinis to Köprüköy killed any Muslims they encountered in the villages along the road. 4,000 Muslims were reported dead in the town and surrounding villages of Mamahatun (Tercan). On their retreat Armenian gangs swept quickly into Muslim villages they passed and killed whenever they could find. The village of Tazegül was burnt by one gang and 30 villagers killed; the same occurred at Čarçak in the same district. 36 Muslims in Yüsufçık, 150 in İspir and 85 in Köprüköy were reported killed. In Badicivan 200 were killed and 385 wounded.

The situation in the villages to the north of Erzincan was much the same as that in the east. These villages had suffered greatly from Armenian bands during the Russian occupation, and suffered even more during Armenian retreat. A correspondent from Austrian newspapers, who was on the scene, Dr. Stephan Eshanie, reported that 'all the villages from Trabzon to Erzincan and from Erzincan to Erzurum were destroyed'. 'Corpses of Turks brutally and cruelly slain all over. I am now in Erzurum, and what I see is terrible. Almost the whole city is destroyed. The smell of the corpses still fills the air.' A list of Muslim villages destroyed by the Armenians in the last months of the war would be long as would be the list of the massacred. After the Armenian retreat, much of eastern Anatolia was a graveyard.

The report by US Captain Emory Niles and (Mr.) Arthur Sutherland is damning evidence against the Armenians. 'In the arca from Bitlis through Van to Bârevît, in the entire region,' state the reporters, 'we were informed that damage and destruction had been done by the Armenians, who, after the Russians retired, remained in occupation of the country, and who, when the Turkish army advanced, destroyed everything belonging to the Mussulmans'. Their report continued as follows:

Moreover, the Armenians are accused of having committed murder, rape, arson and horrible atrocities of every description upon the Mussulman population... corroborated by material evidence. The only quarters left at all intact in the cities of Bitlis and Van are Armenian quarters, while Mussulman quarters were completely destroyed. The Armenian villages are still standing whereas the Mussulman ones are completely destroyed.

We believe that it is incontestable that the Armenians were guilty of crimes of the same nature against the Turks as those of which the Turks are guilty against the Armenians.

The difference, of course, was that they had seen the evidence of the Armenian crimes, not the Turkish ones - the one charge is based on evidence, the other on hearsay. However, according to McCarthy, this makes it more reliable concerning what they actually saw, because, despite their prejudices, they reported the evils perpetrated by the Armenians.

McCarthy also observes that, in the provinces in which war was primarily fought - Van, Bitlis and Erzurum, at least 40 per cent of the Muslims were dead at the end of the war. The Armenian death rate was at least as great. But the world has long known of the sufferings of the Armenians. Starvation and disease among them were great, and mortality massive. To the toll of the dead must be added the deaths of Armenians caught by vengeanceful Ottoman soldiers, or by Muslim villagers, who had returned to their homes to find their Muslim brothers slaughtered. What

18 Ibid., pp. 198-201 from an article cabled to Istanbul to be relayed to the Neues Wiener Tagblatt and other papers by Dr. Eshanie, recorded by the Ottoman censor, Batum, 23.5.1334. It is not known whether the article was published.

19 Ibid., p. 292.

20 Ibid., pp. 224-25.
is not known is the great suffering and loss of the Turks and other Muslims of the region. McCarthy remarks:

It is time for the world to also consider the suffering of the Muslims of the east and the horror that it was. Like the Armenians, Muslims were massacred or died of starvation and disease in stupefying numbers. Like Armenians, their deaths deserve remembrance.21

Armeno-Muslim conflict

On 4 February 1918 the Agence Milli of Istanbul published in the German and Austrian press a news item relating the 'terrible massacres' by the Armenians in the territory occupied by the Russians who were withdrawing. At the British Foreign Office this item was minuted on 21 February by an official (R.) as follows: 'I am afraid there is no doubt that the Armenians have been massacring. Colonel Pine has reported it to CITS, and it is only natural. Possibly the less attention called to the matter the better...'.22 When, on 20 March Brigadier-General F. Clayton of General Headquarters, Egyptian Expeditionary Force, sent to the Foreign Office what he called 'propaganda material' by an Armenian priest of Ourtass Convent at Bethlehem, in connection with 'massacres', William Young of the Foreign Office commented: 'Surely we don't want any more Armenian propaganda'. But S. Gaselee asked Arnold Toynbee: 'What is your opinion about articles on Armenian atrocities at the present time?' To which Toynbee replied: '... The moment is hardly opportune as the Armenians seem to have been doing counter-massacres during the recent fighting'. Gaselee admitted that 'there seems to be some ground for the accusations [against the Armenians]'.

Following the signature of the Brest Litovsk Treaty on 3 March 1918,23 by which Russia undertook to ensure the immediate evacuation of the provinces of eastern Anatolia and their lawful return to Turkey, the situation in Transcaucasia became highly unstable. There were numerous clashes between armed Armenian bands and the Muslim population in some districts. By May 1918, 250 Muslim villages in the eastern Caucasus had been burnt down by the Armenians. Even the British who were committed to the Armenian cause and the creation of an Armenian state, formally warned the Armenians that they would lose the sympathy of the world if such massacres continued.24

Meanwhile, on 26 May Georgia declared its independence. Two days later Azerbaijan and Armenia followed suit. Earlier, as a result of a prolonged strife in Baku between the Armenians and the Muslims, the government power in the city and its environs had fallen in April into the hands of the Council of People's Commissars, which was composed exclusively of Bolsheviks and left-wing Mensheviks. Headed by the Armenian Bolshevik Stepan Shaumian, the Council looked to Moscow for direction, and delivered large quantities of oil to Soviet Russia during its brief tenure of office. Early in June the Baku Soviet dispatched a 'Red Army' towards Elizavetpol to block the advance of the Turks and 'liberate' the Azerbaijanis from 'the forces of reaction'. During the ensuing campaign the Baku army, which was composed mostly of Armenians, indulged in many acts of terror against the Muslim population along the way, but was successful in holding up Turkish commander Nuri's army. By the end of July the columns of Nuri's forces reached the Caspian Sea, south of Baku, and began to close in on the city.

Faced with the imminent attack by the Turkish-Azerbaijani army, the non-Bolshevik majority in the Baku Soviet voted to call in British help; the nearest British force, about 1,000 men under the command of Major-General L.C. Dunsterville, was only a few days march away in northern Persia. Shaumian and the other Bolshevik commissars refused to get involved with the British 'imperialists', and eventually, on 31 July, left the city. They were intercepted and brought back as prisoners by the newly formed government of Baku. This new regime, organized by the social revolutionaries and supported by the Armenian nationalists, immediately invited Dunsterville's force to come to the rescue of Baku, and the first British soldiers arrived there on 4 August.25 But before the arrival of those forces, between 8,000 and 12,000 Muslims were killed in Baku alone. Even the Director of British Military Intelligence informed the Foreign Office on 16 September, expressing doubt whether 'absolute denial of massacres of Tartars by the Armenians could be accepted'. On 9 July M. Lindley of the Foreign Office had sent the following information from Leslie Urquhart, British official in the area: 'The Armenians joined the Bolsheviks and restarted their blood feud with the Tartars instead of continuing to fight the Turks. Over 8,000 Tartars were killed in Baku, over 18,000 unarmed Tartars were ruthlessly murdered in the Elizavetpol district, mainly by Armenian rebels and Bolsheviks. Evidence as to the needless aggressiveness of the Armenians is also contained in Sir C. Marling's (communication) no 76 of 30 April 1918, and Wardrop's no. 152 of 29 April 1918.26

Footnotes:

21 Ibid., pp. 329-31 see also FO 371/6265/ E 23; Report by Colonel Stokes at Tiflis on the situation in Armenia', 24.12.1918, and FO 371/3668/59561.
22 FO 371/3400/36460: A.J. Toynbee, Intelligence Bureau, Department of Information, 18.2.1918
23 FO 371/3400/36460: Report by Colonel Stokes at Tiflis on the situation in Transcaucasia, 19.4.1918
24 Treaty text in W. Wheelers-Bennett: Brest Litovsk, the forgotten peace, London, 1938, pp. 405-8
25 FO 371/3405/196800; FO 371/3301: FO to Derby in Paris, 27.7.1918.
Meanwhile, on 4 September the Turkish army attacked Baku. On the 15th they crushed the defence of the city, while the local Muslim elements began a pillage in the Armenian districts, and killed 9,000 Armenians. Dunsterville and his force ran away. On 26 September Nuri's regulars formally occupied the city and gradually restored order. They protected the remaining Armenians. There were 60,000 refugees from 420 Muslim villages destroyed by the Armenians. When the London Times and other British papers of 20 September published a news item about the Armenian atrocities and referred to the 'unreliability' of the Armenians, Sir Mark Sykes drew up the following minute:

I desire to draw attention to the heading and tenour of the appended cuttings from The Times, The Daily Mail and The Daily Express. The facts in the communiqués about [Armenian atrocities] are correct but they are displayed in a manner calculated to do the greatest damage to the Armenians as a whole... It must be pointed out that a local event such as has taken place at Baku, should not under any circumstances have been used in a way to give a bad impression of the Armenian race as a whole... The effect of the communiqués and headings will be to promote dissensions, doubt and recrimination among all the Armenians throughout the world, to stultify our Armenian policy and give the public a totally wrong impression of the Armenian race as a whole... The effect of the communiqués and headings will be to promote dissensions, doubt and recrimination among all the Armenians throughout the world, to stultify our Armenian policy and give the public a totally wrong impression of the

Eyre Crowe of the Foreign Office added the following: 'I have spoken with Sir Mark Sykes about this. It is of course quite natural for the military authorities to wish to avoid the impression being given that the retirement from Baku was due to any failure of the British troops, when in fact it was precipitated by the treacherous attitude of the Armenians at Baku'.

Nevertheless Mark Sykes's comments come as a surprise in view of what he had said about the Armenians in his book The Caliph's last heritage, which was published in London in 1915. In his book Sykes observed that there was no
distinction between the Turkish and Armenian villages, either in form or manner of construction, and in most cases the two peoples lived side by side. The situation, however, was growing intolerable, as the 'mutual fear and suspicion continue to smoulder and burn beneath the surface'. Fifty years of sound education might ameliorate the matter, but I cannot see how it will all end. Forcible deportation of one or the other is the only cure I can conceive. The Armenian national revival was a calamity which has not yet reached its catastrophe. Mollahs and missionaries should be put under lock and key before any serious business is undertaken, he remarked.

Sykes also claimed that, 'whether through tyranny or mismanagement, or by breeding or education, or a combination of all, the Armenians of the Mush plain [in eastern Anatolia] are at present an extremely difficult people to manage'. He went on as follows:

They are very avaricious and would object to pay the most moderate taxes; they are also exceedingly treacherous to one another, and often join the revolutionaries to wipe off old scores on their fellow villagers. As for the tactics of the revolutionaries, anything more fiendish one could not imagine - the assassination of Moslems in order to bring about the punishment of innocent men, the midnight extortion of money from villages which have just paid their taxes by day, the murder of persons who refuse to contribute to their collection-boxes, are only some of the crimes of which Moslems, Catholics, and Gregorians accuse them with no uncertain voice.

According to Sykes, the expression of the generality of the town Armenian young men was one which 'undoubtedly inspires a feeling of distrust, and their bearing is compounded of a peculiar covert insolence and a strange suggestion of suspicion and craft... The keynote of town Armenian's character is a profound distrust of his own coreligionists and neighbours. In common with many others of the Christians of Turkey, the town Armenians had an extraordinarily high opinion of their own capacities; but in their case this was combined with a strangely unbalanced judgment, which permits them to proceed to lengths that invariably bring trouble on their heads. They will undertake the most desperate political crimes without the least forethought or preparation; they will bring ruin and disaster on themselves and others without any hesitation; they will sacrifice their own brothers and most valuable citizens to a wayward caprice; they will enter eagerly into conspiracies with men in whom they repose not the slightest confidence; they will overthrow their own national cause to vent some petty spite

28 Allen and Muratoff, p. 495.
29 FO 371/3404/160992: The Times. 20.9.1918, about the unreliability of the Armenians; and FO minutes.
30 Sykes, p. 372.
31 Ibid., p. 409.
on a private individual; they will at the very moment of danger insult and provoke one who might be their protector but may at any moment become their destroyer; by some stinging aggravation or injury they will alienate the sympathy of a stranger whose assistance they expect; they will suddenly abandon all hope when their plans are nearing fruition; they will betray the very person who might serve their cause; and, finally, they will bully and prey on one another at the very moment that the enemy is at their gates... In finance, in commerce, and in religious matters, their dealings are equally preposterous and fatal. 32

Sir Mark Sykes continued to describe the Armenians as follows:

To add to this curious fatuousness of conduct, the town Armenians are at once yielding and aggressive. They will willingly harbour revolutionaries, arrange for their entertainment and the furthering of their ends... Another peculiar point is that, nearly every Armenian is imbued with a patriotism which is fiercely chauvinistic... This pride of race brings about many singularities and prompts the Armenians to prey on missionaries, Jesuits, consuls and European travellers with a rapacity and ingratitude which often cause a suppressed feeling of anger. The poor Armenian will demand assistance in a loud tone, yet he will seldom give thanks for a donation... Abuse of consular officers and missionaries is only a part of the stock-in-trade of the extra-Armenian press.

That the Armenians are doomed to be for ever unhappy as a nation, seems to me unavoidable, for one-half of their miseries arises not from the stupid, ranky, ill-managed despotism under which they live, but from their own dealings with each other. In a time of famine at Van, Armenian merchants tried to corner the valuable grain; the Armenian Revolutionaries prefer to plunder their coreligionists to giving battle to their enemies; the anarchists of Constantinople threw bombs with the intention of provoking a massacre of their fellow-countrymen. The Armenian villagers are divided against themselves; the revolutionary societies are leagued against one another; the priests connive at the murder of a bishop; the church is divided at its very foundation.

Never was a people so fully prepared for the hand of a tyrant; never was a people so easy to be preyed upon by revolutionary societies; never was there a people so difficult to lead or to reform. That these characteristics are the result of Moslem oppression I do not for one moment believe. That the oppression has been villainous, callous and brutal, I do not deny; but that it has brought about the peculiar, fatal fatuousness of the Armenian people is beyond all credence.

If the object of the English philanthropists and roving brigands (who are the active agents of revolution) is to subject the bulk of the eastern provinces [of Turkey] to the tender mercies of an Armenian oligarchy, then I cannot entirely condemn the fanatical outbreaks of the Moslems, or the repressive measures of the Turkish government. On the other hand, if the object of the Armenians is to secure equality before the law, and the establishment of security and peace in the countries partly inhabited by the Armenians, then I can only say that their methods are not those calculated to achieve success. The Bulgarian example cannot be followed in Turkey. Armenia for the Armenians would be almost as senseless a cry as England for the Briton. The Turkish government is odious, its ways are insane, its officers often reprehensible; but its faults have not been ameliorated by the conduct or character of the Armenians. 33

These quotations from Sir Mark Sykes do not need any comment.

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32 Ibid., p. 415.
33 Ibid., pp. 416-18.
CHAPTER 8
THE DEFEAT OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Armistice of Mudros

Following the collapse of the armies of the Central Powers, and after one of their allies, Bulgaria, formally asked for an armistice on 29 September 1918 and withdrew from the war, the Ottoman Empire followed suit. On 30 October the Ottoman government signed the Armistice of Mudros (Mondros) and shortly after, the victorious Allied Powers, taking advantage of some of the ambiguous provisions of the armistice, went ahead with their plans to dismember the Ottoman Empire. They occupied the key points, and gradually extended their occupation into the heartland of Anatolia to include whole provinces inhabited predominantly by Turkish and other Muslim people. Thus the Straits and Istanbul, the capital, were occupied by British and French forces; Italian troops were landed at Antalya (Adalia), French troops at Cilicia, and Greek troops later invaded the province of Izmir. Western Thrace was under Greek control, Eastern Thrace under French troops, and Mosul (Musul) under British forces.

The subject nationalities, particularly the Greeks and the Armenians, inspired by the principles of President Woodrow Wilson, and by other high-sounding declarations of the other Entente Powers, put forward very lavish territorial claims against the Ottoman Empire, irrespective of whether these were justified on demographic, ethnic, political, economic, and other grounds. Thus the Straits and Istanbul, the capital, were occupied by British and French forces; Italian troops were landed at Antalya (Adalia), French troops at Cilicia, and Greek troops later invaded the province of Izmir. Western Thrace was under Greek control, Eastern Thrace under French troops, and Mosul (Musul) under British forces.

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Armenian claims and disinformation

The Armenians made extensive use of propaganda and publicity, and used the services of their many amateur 'diplomats', to further their exorbitant claims. Even British Prime Minister David Lloyd George thought that some of their aspirations were of a 'rather colossal character'. Nevertheless they began to remind their Western 'Allies' of the 'massacres', which they claimed were perpetrated against them by the Turks. These 'massacres' were to be elevated to 'genocide', and ultimately to 'proto-holocaust', in order to sway Jewish public opinion that there are parallels between the experiences of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, during the Great War, and those of the European Jewry during World War II.

Armenian claims that in 1915 the Ottoman government 'deliberately' implemented a plan to exterminate the Armenian minority of the Ottoman Empire need to be meticulously examined and addressed. Some Armenian writers and Armenophiles, with no sense of proportion, claim that between 1.5 million and 2.5 million Armenians were 'massacred'. In order to prove that the Ottomans deliberately planned and carried out 'genocide' against the Ottoman Armenians they quote extensively from a book by Aram Andonian, an Armenian writer, which was published in London in 1920, under the title The memories of Naim Bey, official documents relating to the deportations and massacres of Armenians. They also allege that Adolf Hitler took the treatment accorded to the Armenians as an example in ordering, on 22 August 1939, 'the extermination of the Polish-speaking race'.

Was there, in reality, 'genocide' against the Ottoman Armenians during the First World War? Before answering this question one needs to define the term 'genocide'. According to Raphael Lemkin, a Polish Jew, who coined the word himself, 'genocide' means the destruction of a nation, or of an ethnic group. It is a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of the essential foundations of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. Hence, the main element of the crime of 'genocide' is the intention to destroy.

The term appeared, for the first time, in an official document on 18 October 1945 when the indictment of the Nuremberg Tribunal charged the defendants

4 Raphael Lemkin: Axis rule in occupied Europe, Washington, 1944, p. 79.
The conflict between Muslims and Armenians of the Ottoman East, which had been developing for many years, came to a climax during the Great War. According to Justin McCarthy, two wars were fought at the same time in the East—a war between the Ottoman and Russian armies, and an intercommunal war between the Armenians and the Muslims of eastern Anatolia and southern Caucasus. In terms of civilian and military losses, the wars fought in the east between 1914 and 1920 were among the worst in human history. The result of Ottoman weakness, Russian imperialism, European meddling and Armenian revolutionary nationalism, was widespread devastation. After the wars cities such as Van, Bitlis, Bayezit and Erzincan were largely rubble. Thousands of villages were destroyed. Millions on both sides had died. The Armenians, who revolted to gain a nation, were left with a Soviet republic in which they were not their own masters. The Turks, who ultimately won the wars, were left with a country in ruin.

McCarthy relates that more than a million Muslims of eastern Anatolia had died, as had at least 130,000 Caucasian refugee Muslims. The Armenians of the six eastern provinces had become refugees, or had died. In Anatolia as a whole 600,000 Armenians and 2.5 million Muslims had died. 'If this was genocide, it was a strange genocide indeed, one in which many more killers than victims perished', remarks McCarthy, who observes that the use of the word 'genocide' to describe the actions of the Turks is 'ludicrous'. What passed between the Armenians and the Turks was not genocide; it was war; war that engulfed the Turks and the Armenians in 1915. This conflict was the last in the series of the nineteenth century Turco-Russian wars. It was those wars that destroyed the Armenians in Anatolia together with many Muslims.

Between 1820 and 1920 Russians forcibly evacuated and killed many of the two million Muslims. Those who fled found refuge in the Ottoman Empire. In the process, whole nations - Crimean Tatars, Abkhazians, Circassians - ceased to exist in their ancestral homes. In the same period about 600,000 Armenians went from the Ottoman Empire to Russia, and two million Muslims came from Russia to Turkey. Once again, the suffering was far from one-sided. McCarthy emphasizes what he calls the 'historical truth' that Russian imperial expansion upset the traditional balance of the peoples of the Caucasus and eastern Anatolia. All the peoples suffered. In terms of number of deaths and relocations, those who suffered most were the Crimean and Caucasian Muslims. If any people were the victims of genocide, it was the Crimean Tatars, victims in their own homeland, of a planned extermination by [Peter and] Catherine, and ending with Joseph Stalin. Yet those who are all too willing to consider Muslims as its victim... It is a story of human
Unfortunately, 'that is not the way the story has been told. Instead of the truth of a human disaster, a great myth has arisen, the myth of the "evil Turk" and the "good Armenian". The myth has been perpetuated by stories of the sufferings of Armenians. The stories are often true, but they never mention the equal or greater sufferings of the Turks. The myth has been generally believed by non-Armenians because it fits well into a larger - centuries-old myth - the "terrible Turk". To the European, who had feared the Turk for more than five centuries, the myth of the Armenian genocide seemed just one more example of what they had been taught was the savagery of the Turk. It spoke to a prejudice that had been nurtured by textbooks, sermons, folk tales, and ancestral fears of the horsemen riding out of the East. The false image of the Turk was too strong to be affected by facts. When the Turks protested that their side should be heard, and that their dead should be mourned just as the Armenian dead were mourned, they found neither sympathy nor understanding. No matter the evidence they presented, nothing they said was believed\(^\text{10}\), remarks McCarthy.

Little attention is paid to the fact that in 1800 a vast Muslim land existed in Anatolia, the Balkans, and southern Russia. By 1923 only Anatolia, eastern Thrace and a section of the southeastern Caucasus remained as Muslim land. The Balkan Muslims were largely gone, dead or forced to migrate, the remainder living in pockets of settlement in Greece, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia. The same fate had overcome the Muslims of the Crimea, the northern Caucasus and Russian Armenia - they were simply gone. Millions of Muslims, most of them Turks, had died; millions had fled to what is today Turkey. 'Between 1821 and 1922 more than five million Muslims were driven from their lands. Five and a half million Muslims died, some of them killed in wars, others perished as refugees from starvation and disease', points out McCarthy\(^\text{12}\).

Despite the historical importance of the Muslim losses, it is not to be found in textbooks and histories that describe the 'massacres of Bulgarians, Armenians, and Greeks, have not mentioned the corresponding massacre of Turks. The exile and mortality of the Muslim is not known. The traditional view of the history of the Balkans, Caucasus and Anatolia is less than complete, if not misleading, because the histories of the Ottoman minority groups are taken out of context. A major part of that context is the suffering of the Muslims, which took place in the same regions, and at the same time, as the sufferings of the Christians, and often transcended them.

\(^{10}\) Ibid., p. 91.
\(^{11}\) Ibid., p. 92.
\(^{12}\) McCarthy, p. 1.

McCarthy believes that histories of Turco-Armenian relations are 'historical distortions', many of them. The 'Armenian question' is seldom mentioned in print without half-truths and falsifications. In fact, in the USA and Western Europe we have seen a new wave of false history. Armenian apologists have succeeded in tying themselves to those who wish never to forget the sufferings of the Jewish Holocaust, and the Armenian experience has been portrayed as a 'proto-Holocaust'. Television shows and newspaper articles have repeated and reinforced the old myth, accepted because Europeans and Americans have never been told the truth. A new generation of Armenians is learning the stories that will produce future terrorists. One American professor, Stanford Shaw, and his family, have been physically attacked for his statements on the fate of the Armenians, whilst another professor, Bernard Lewis, has been taken to court for 'denying the Armenian genocide'. 'Nevertheless the truth must be spoken. The best weapon against such myths is the truth', declares McCarthy\(^\text{15}\).

McCarthy also believes that the history of the Ottoman Empire needs revision. The history that results from the process of revision is an unsettling one, for it tells the story of the Turks as victims, and this is not the role in which they are usually cast. It does not present the traditional image of the Turk as victimizer, never victim, that has continued in the histories of America and Europe long after it should have been 'discarded with other artifacts of nineteenth century racism'\(^\text{11}\).

Other Western scholars and writers, too, agree that, rarely in history have facts been deliberately so distorted as to give a completely wrong picture, as the Armenians have done for more than a century in connection with the so-called 'Armenian question'. They succeeded in deceiving the public opinion of the Christian world because they posed as a martyred nation in the cause of Christ, and clothed that they have been 'massacred' by the 'fanatical, barbarous and infidel' Turkish Muslims in the name of religion. They exploited the dignified silence of the Turkish people, who by nature, custom and upbringing, are not articulate and vociferous, even when unjustly treated, to persuade Christian public opinion that, that silence was an admission of guilt. They also capitalized on Christian prejudice, fear, and even hatred, of anything that was non-Christian\(^\text{15}\).

As for the claims advanced by Armenians and their supporters that between 1.5 million and 2.5 million Armenians were 'massacred', these claims pre-suppose a pre-war (1914) Armenian population in the Ottoman Empire of over 2.5 million. Yet, even the most lavish estimates put the Armenian population in Turkey at 1.500,000. M. Zarcevski, French Consul at Van, offered the more realistic figure of

\(^{13}\) Ibid., pp. 93-94.
\(^{14}\) Ibid., p. 3.
\(^{15}\) See also Greyne Dyer: 'Turkish "falsifiers" and Armenian "deceivers": historiography and the Armenian massacres', Middle Eastern Studies, January 1976, p. 101.
1,300,000. Other estimates are as follows: Francis de Pressence (1895): 1,200,000; Tournebize (1900): 1,300,000; Lynch (1901): 1,158,484; Ottoman census (1905): 1,294,851; British Blue Book (1912): 1,056,000; L.D. Contenson (1913): 1,400,000; French Yellow Book: 1,475,000; Armenian Patriarch Ormanian: 1,579,000; Lepsius: 1,600,000.10

According to Ottoman statistics the total number of Armenians in the whole empire in 1914 was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gregorian</td>
<td>1,161,169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>67,838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>65,844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,294,851</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of Muslims: 15,044,846.17

With generous allowances, the total number of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire before the Great War did not exceed 1,500,000. Therefore, Armenian claims that between 1.5 and 2.5 million Armenians, i.e., more than the total population, were killed is beyond realism and logic.

Turkish estimates put the number of Armenians, who lost their lives during the Turco-Armenian incidents and relocations, at between 300,000 and 400,000. Considering that about one million Armenians were alive and accounted for at the end of the war, then living in Turkey, in the Caucasus, in some Middle East countries, in Europe, America, and elsewhere, as confirmed by Armenian leaders in their frequent boastings - e.g., Garabet Ilagopian wrote to the Under Secretary of State of the British Foreign Office on 24 December 1919: 'There still exists, we are assured, of one million Armenians who were Turkish subjects'18 - then it can be assumed that the number of Armenians who actually lost their lives is under 400,000. According to Caleb F. Gates, president of Robert College, the Armenian population statistics in January 1921, as confirmed by the Armenian Patriarchate, was as follows: Armenians in Ottoman provinces, approximately 600,000; Armenians alive: 944,906; Armenian total losses: 335,000.19 In the light of these statistics, how can the loss of about 400,000 Armenians be labelled as 'massacres, genocide, or proto-Holocaust', and the loss of over one million Muslims, as a result of Armenian activities, not even mentioned?

As for the so-called 'Andonian documents', these have been proved to be forgeries, so typical of militant Armenian machinations, which are reflected in many 'documents' forged by them and preserved in Western archives. These 'documents' are supposed to include secret instructions, which were said to have been sent by the Ottoman Interior Minister Mehmet Talat, on 15 September 1915 (7), ordering the 'extermination' of the Armenian people. Yet, even David Marshall Lang, no friend of the Turks, referring to these imaginary secret orders observes: 'The essence of the plan was secrecy. Since many telegraph operators, cipher clerks and local government officials were themselves Armenians, care was taken to avoid putting instructions on paper'.20 But further on he contradicts himself by claiming that Talat Bey telegraphed the governor of Aleppo, 'on 15 September 1915', taking him to task for not having 'without pity for women, children and invalids, however tragic the methods of extermination may be, without heeding any scruples of conscience', terminated their existence. These 'orders', however, have been faked by Aram Andonian, and the 'documents' referred to do not exist.21

According to two Turkish scholars, Sinasi Orel and Suireyya Yuca, during and after the First World War, the Ottoman government was accused of implementing a war-time policy of 'annihilating' its Armenian minority, and that as a result of this policy it had wiped out a large portion of the Ottoman Armenian population. These accusations were advanced in order to ensure that a share of the Ottoman territories, which were in the process of being divided up among the victorious Allied Powers, would be set aside for the Armenians. In order to support a claim of this nature, Aram Andonian, all Armenian, wrote a book in 1920 entitled The memoirs of Naim Bey... According to this book, an 'Ottoman official' named Naim Bey gave Andonian copies of 'official documents' substantiating the then current charge of Armenian 'massacres'. Among these 'documents' were copies of telegrams attributed to the war-time Minister of the Interior, Mehmet Talat. These are the 'documents' upon which the allegations about Armenian 'massacres' or 'genocide' have been based for more than sixty years. However, the Andonian 'documents' are forgeries, and Orel and Yuca prove this beyond doubt.22

12 FO 371/3600/165272: Gates to Rumbold, 16.2.1921, giving the statistics of the Armenians then living in Turkey, obtained from the Armenian Patriarch.
13 FO 371/6556/E 2730: Gates to Rumbold, 16.2.1921, giving the statistics of the Armenians then living in Turkey, obtained from the Armenian Patriarch.
14 FO 371/6556/F 2730: Gates to Rumbold, 16.2.1921, giving the statistics of the Armenians then living in Turkey, obtained from the Armenian Patriarch.

15 Lang, p. 20.
16 See also Türklays Atoğ: The Andonian 'documents' attributed to Talat Pasha are forgeries, Ankara, 1984.
The compiling of forged historical 'documents' for a variety of different reasons is not a new phenomenon. Recently public opinion was focused upon a series of diaries attributed to Adolf Hitler. Although the falsity of these diaries was soon demonstrated, more than seventy years after the initial publication of Andonian's book it is still necessary to disprove as fabrication the 'documents' upon which it was based.

During the trial in Berlin of the Armenian assassin Soghomon Tehlirian, who had murdered Talat Pasha in Berlin on 15 March 1921, none of the Andonian 'documents' was allowed to be entered into the court proceedings as evidence, hence they were not used. The 1981 publication of the Dashnakists' book Justiceir du Genocide (page 213) also admits that the Berlin court did not accept the 'documents' as evidence: 'These telegrams had been given to the court by the defence. However, despite the request of the defence lawyer, it was decided not to accept them in court... This occurred after the judge explained to the accused the meaning of an observation made by the jury'.

The prosecutor's personal opinion on the 'documents' is also found in the transcript of the trial, where we read: 'The use of the documents produced here cannot also lead me into error. As a prosecutor I am familiar with the history of how, in the chaos of the revolution, we came to possess documents bearing the signatures of high-ranking individuals, and how it was subsequently proved that they were false'. Despite this assessment made in 1921, today, more than seventy years later, Armenian circles are still insisting on the 'authenticity' of these 'documents'. Meanwhile all of the Andonian 'documents' have disappeared. It is not possible to locate a single one of them. Is it not possible that the Armenian circles purposely destroyed them in order to avoid the possible revelation one day of the spuriousness of these 'documents'? Given the fact that Andonian himself acknowledges that his book was a work of propaganda, such a question does not seem to be beyond consideration.

Hitler and the Armenians

Recently some Armenian militants began to draw a parallel between what the Armenians are supposed to have experienced in the Ottoman Empire and the Jewish Holocaust in Germany during World War II. By their persistent attempts, skilful manipulation of the feelings of some Jews and other sympathizers, and masterful use of distorted, tendentious, and even forged 'documents', the Armenian extremists have succeeded in winning over many supporters in the West, and among some of those Jews who are, or whose relatives were, the real victims of the Holocaust. A number of younger generation of Jewish scholars, too, such as Yehuda Bauer, Leo Kuper, and a few others have also fallen under their wicked spell. Is there a parallel between the two cases?

The basis of the Armenians' allegations had long been the spurious quotation from a speech which Adolf Hitler is supposed to have made on 22 August 1939, remarking inter alia:

I have given orders to my Death Units to exterminate, without mercy or pity, men, women and children belonging to the Polish-speaking race. It is only in this manner that we can acquire the vital territory which we need. After all, who remembers today the extermination of the Armenians?

American scholar Heath W. Lowry has very ably exploded the myth that Hitler has ever referred to the Armenians in his speech. In fact, Hitler made two speeches on that day at Obersalzberg. He was addressing the three Supreme Commanders of the three branches of the armed forces, as well as the commanding generals bearing the title Commander-in-Chief (Oberbefehlshaber); and the text of his speeches were found in the files of the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces) at Flensburg, and were used as evidence at the Nuremberg trials. Neither of the Obersalzberg speeches introduced to the tribunal as evidence contains any reference to the Armenians. A forged third 'document', which had been leaked to the press and had already appeared in print, was not introduced as evidence after the original minutes of the Obersalzberg meeting were found. This 'document' is the source of the alleged Hitler 'statement' on the Armenians. It was published in The Times on Saturday, 24 November 1945.

Yet, according to Lowry, the results of this falsification were far-reaching. The world has been misled for many years into thinking that the Nuremberg transcripts provided The Times reporter with his source for the quotation attributed to Hitler. Armenian spokesmen have since argued that, Adolf Hitler justified his planned annihilation of the Jews on the world's failure to react to the alleged Ottoman 'genocide' of the Armenians during World War I, which is completely

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Nevertheless Armenian militants, in their propaganda efforts, are striving to establish a linkage between their own historical experiences, and those of the Jews of Europe during World War II, by making lavish use of the spurious Hitler 'quotation'. Their allegation that Hitler himself cited the world’s lack of reaction to the fate of the Armenians, and was encouraged by it, must be very poignant to the Jews.

Under the sponsorship of the then Armenian-American Congressman, Charles Pashayan, Jr., sixty-six elected US Representatives made speeches on 24 April 1984 condemning Turkey for failing to acknowledge its responsibility for the 'genocide' of the Armenians, which allegedly transpired eight years before the Turkish Republic came into existence. Seven of the twenty-two members of the US Congress (three Senators and four Congressmen), who used the alleged Hitler 'quotation' in the course of their remarks, were Jewish.

Using the linkage conveniently provided by the spurious Hitler 'quotation', the US Holocaust Memorial Council had agreed that the Armenians were the victims of the 'first genocide' of the twentieth century, and therefore, deserved inclusion in the planned memorial. In a similar vein, Congressman Glenn Anderson, in his remarks on 24 April 1984, referred to the inclusion of the Armenians in the planned Holocaust Memorial Council, established by an act of Congress in 1980, and added that it had unanimously resolved to include the Armenian 'genocide' in its museums and educational programs. During the past few years, a number of state boards of education in the USA have adopted holocaust curricula, which include detailed treatment of the Armenian 'genocide' as the precursor of the Jewish Holocaust. The curricula adopted by a number of states stress the spurious Hitler 'quotation' as the tie that binds the Armenian and Jewish experience. Other similar efforts are still continuing.

Even in its forged version, the Hitler 'statement' does not directly or indirectly refer to the Jewish people. It refers to the Poles. Yet, the World Council of Churches, too, has been taken in by Armenian disinformation. In its report for the year 1984 it remarks:

When Hitler began his programs, he was warned that the nations of the world would not tolerate his actions, and would not forgive or overlook the atrocities. To this warning he replied, "who today remembers the Armenians".

However, evidence from other Western Christian sources reveals that it was not the so-called 'extermination' of the Armenians by the Ottomans that gave Hitler the idea of obliterating the Jews, but the works of Charles Darwin, the British naturalist, particularly in his two books, *The origin of species* and *The descent of man*, published in 1859 and 1871, respectively. These books put forward the theory that the best living things were fitted to live, hence 'the survival of the fittest'. According to anthropologist Sheila Patterson:

The theory of evolution replaced previous rationalizations justifying the domination of the white race. Since the latter had survived and been more successful than the other races, they must be superior to them, not only in organization and efficiency, but in every other field, including the mental and moral.

This attitude made European nations, in the nineteenth century, more determined to expand their colonies. It also helped inspire Hitler in his plan to develop a "master race", and eradicate the Jews and others considered unfit to live.

The sense of objectivity and a knowledge of the antecedents warrant the rejection of the analogy between the Jewish Holocaust and the Turco-Armenian events of 1915. The two cases are totally different. The Jews were practically obliterated by the Nazis simply because they were Jews. The objective was to destroy them. The existence of such an intention was firmly established at the Nuremberg trial, through an international verdict, based on solid evidence, obtained from official primary documents.

The 1915 events in Turkey, however, began with an armed rebellion against the state, perpetuating previous Armenian insurrections. The Armenian rebels massacred many civilians, cooperated with the invading enemy forces, declared themselves belligerents against their own state, and acted as informers and saboteurs for the enemy, which inevitably called for repression. As a result, not only one side, as in the case of the Jews who did none of these things, but both sides suffered heavy losses.

It is also relevant to note here that, 69 American scholars, the great majority of the American academic community with specialized knowledge of Turkey and its history, in an open statement emphatically opposed a proposed Congressional
resolution in May 1985, which claimed that the Armenians were victims of 'genocide'. They publicly declared that current scholarship simply does not support the 'genocide' charge. 'Events of 1915 are best described as a civil war within a global war', they declared.33

**Cooperation between the Armenians and the Nazis**

During World War II, while the Turkish government was giving asylum to many Jews fleeing from Hitler's tyranny,51 anti-Semitism engulfed the Armenian circles in the Nazi-occupied territories. A publication of the Armenian Information Service in New York, entitled 'Dashnak collaboration with the Nazi regime', purports to show that Armenian sympathies with racism had reached dangerous proportions. The following quotation from the Armenian daily newspaper *Hairenik* of 19, 20 and 21 August 1936, exposes something much more than prejudice and bigotry:

Jews being the most fanatical nationalists and race-worshippers... are compelled to create an atmosphere... of internationalism and world citizenship in order to preserve their race... As the British use battleships to occupy lands... Jews use internationalism or communism as a weapon... Sometimes it is difficult to eradicate these poisonous elements when they have struck deep root like a chronic disease. And when it becomes necessary for a people to eradicate them... these attempts are regarded revolutionary. During a surgical operation, the flow of blood is a natural thing... Under such conditions, dictatorships seem to have a role of saviours.35

In May 1935 the Armenians of Bucharest attacked the Jews of that city, while the Greeks of Salonika (Selanik) attacked the Jews in the August of the same year. During World War II, Armenian volunteers, under the wings of Hitler's Germany, were used in rounding up Jews and other 'undesirables' destined for the Nazi concentration camps. The Armenians also published a German-language magazine, with fascist and anti-Semitic tendencies, supporting Nazi doctrines directed to the extermination of 'inferior' races.36

This is confirmed by one of the champions of the Armenians, Christopher J. Walker, who admits that the Armenians collaborated with the Nazis. According to him, members of the Dashnak Party, then living in the occupied areas, including a number of prominent persons, entertained pro-Axis sympathies. A report in an American magazine went so far as to claim that the Nazis had picked on the

Dashnaktsutiun to do fifth-column work, promising the party an autonomous state for its cooperation.37 Walker goes on to state that relations between the Nazis and the Dashnakists living in the occupied areas were close and active. On 30 December 1941 an Armenian battalion was created by a decision of the Army Command (Wehrmacht), known as the 'Armenian 812th Battalion'. It was commanded by Dro, a former Armenian guerrilla leader, and was made up of a small number of committed recruits, and a larger number of Armenians from the prisoners of war, taken by the Nazis in their sweep eastwards. Early on, the total number of recruits was 8,000; this number later grew to 20,000. The 812th Battalion was operational in the Crimea and North Caucasus.

A year later, on 15 December 1942, an 'Armenian National Council' was granted official recognition by Alfred Rosenberg, the German Minister of the occupied areas. The Council's president was Professor Ardashes Abeghian, its vice-president Abraham Giulkhandanian, and it numbered among its members Mzdeh and Vahan Papazian. From that date until the end of 1944 it published a weekly journal, *Armenien*, edited by Viken Shant (the son of Levon), who also broadcast on Radio Berlin. The whole idea was to prove to the Germans that the Armenians were 'Aryans', in order to save their skins, claims Walker. With the aid of Dr. Paul Rohrbach they seem to have achieved this as the Nazis did not persecute the Armenians in the occupied lands.38

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CONCLUSION

Since the foundation of the Ottoman state, particularly during its ascendance, the ethnic and religious communities living within its boundaries, irrespective of their origin, culture and beliefs, benefited enormously from Ottoman lenience, and from all the other benefits provided by a strong and benevolent state. They enjoyed relative security of life, liberty and estate, social, educational and linguistic autonomy and economic prosperity, and preserved their ethnic and religious identity in peace and order within the Ottoman communal (millets) system. This is increasingly confirmed by impartial and conscientious historiographers who admit that, fundamentally, the Ottoman Empire was not a despotic theocracy, which oppressed and exploited its non-Muslim subjects. On the contrary, it allowed them a large degree of local, communal and regional autonomy, and measured against contemporary Europe, it practised exemplary tolerance towards the numerous ethnic and religious groups living within its boundaries. This was also verified by a number of British diplomatic and consular representatives who served in the various provinces of the Ottoman Empire, especially after the introduction, on 18 February, 1856, by Sultan Abdülmecit, of an Imperial Charter (Hatt-i Hümayun), confirming the religious and legal equality of all his subjects.

Nevertheless, following the establishment of the Capitulations in 1536, particularly after the signature of the Treaty of Köşk Kaynarca (Kouchouk Kainardja) of 1774, and a number of conventions and armed interventions, the Ottoman Christians of the Turkish Empire were placed under foreign protection. The Treaty of Paris of 1856 stipulated that, thenceforth, the Christian subjects of the Sultan would be under the collective protection of the major Powers. This is increasingly confirmed by impartial and conscientious historiographers who admit that, fundamentally, the Ottoman Empire was not a despotic theocracy, which oppressed and exploited its non-Muslim subjects. On the contrary, it allowed them a large degree of local, communal and regional autonomy, and measured against contemporary Europe, it practised exemplary tolerance towards the numerous ethnic and religious groups living within its boundaries. This was also verified by a number of British diplomatic and consular representatives who served in the various provinces of the Ottoman Empire, especially after the introduction, on 18 February, 1856, by Sultan Abdülmecit, of an Imperial Charter (Hatt-i Hümayun), confirming the religious and legal equality of all his subjects.

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It is revealed in many of their illuminating reports that the general condition of the Christian millets improved by leaps and bounds, particularly since the 1830s. Benefiting from the exemption granted to them from military service, in return for the payment of a trifling military exemption tax (bedel-i askeriye), these Christian millets were enriching themselves at the expense of the Muslims, who, if not killed in action for the defence of the Empire, returned home to find the local conditions changed, and their land, now uncultivated and infertile, usurped by the Christian money-lenders. Being religious and inarticulate, the Muslims preferred to suffer in silence rather than bring their grievances to the notice of the authorities in the Ottoman capital; whereas the Christians had, in Istanbul, and throughout the Empire, many redress-demanding representatives in the form of consulates, agencies and embassies. Indeed, not only were their complaints listened to when made, but even fabricated for them when not made, as reported by British Consul Palgrave in 1866.

However, there is no doubt that, from time to time some of the Christians did suffer from maladministration, especially when the Ottoman Empire began to decline in the latter part of its existence, and when imperialist, expansionist Powers began to plot for its downfall with the connivance of some of its minorities. In most cases they suffered because some of their leaders were given much autonomy in running the affairs of their community without much interference from the state; but they abused their power. Hence, the Christians suffered sometimes, not so much from Ottoman tyranny, as from the misrule of their own leaders. Nevertheless, as a result of the millets system, the Muslim and non-Muslim subjects of the Sultan lived in relative peace and security, until nationalism and revolutionary ideas began to make inroads in the Ottoman fabric early in the nineteenth century.

This is in sharp contrast to the status and fate of ethnic and religious minorities living in contemporary Europe, such as the Jews, the Irish Catholics, the Protestants of France and Silesia, the Calvinists in Hungary, and others, all of whom were persecuted for their religious beliefs, and many of whom could only find solace by taking refuge in the Ottoman Empire where Muslim, Christian and Jew lived side by side in harmony, as testified by a number of Western scholars. According to Alexander Powell, there was less religious bigotry and persecution throughout Ottoman history than there was in the history of the European states between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries.2

1 Waterk, pp. 28 ff.; Gibb and Bowen, I, part 2, pp. 207-61.
2 See, for example, Eliot, op. cit., Toynbee: The Western Question..., Voli; Powell; Waugh; H.A. Linsky in Eleanor Bisbee: The new Turks, Philadelphia, 1951, p. xi; G. Lewis; B. Lewis I; Maier; Shaw and Kunde, II.
3 See Lewis 2.
4 Turkey No. 17 (1877): Reports by Her Majesty's diplomatic and consular agents in Turkey respecting the condition of the Christian subjects of the Porte, 1868-85, London, 1877, No. 1/1.
5 Sir, doc. no. 23/1, p. xi.
6 See Lewis 2.
7 Powell, p. 120; see also Toynbee, p. 267; Waugh, p. 114.
It was when the Ottoman Empire began to decline at the end of the seventeenth century that some of the Christian minorities, which aspired for autonomy or independence, started to intrigue with the major Powers, particularly with Christian Orthodox Russia, who saw in such minorities valuable allies and instruments in its military ambitions directed against Ottoman territories. In order to fulfill its dream of self-aggrandizement towards the warm waters of the Mediterranean, Russia sought to undermine Ottoman strength from within by stirring up the religious feelings and national aspirations of the Sultan's Christian subjects, in particular of those with whom it shared a common Christian religious heritage.

Meanwhile, the influx into the Ottoman Empire of Catholic and Protestant missionaries during the nineteenth century, did more harm than good. These missionaries began to indoctrinate the Ottoman Christians by not only teaching them their own history, language and literature, but also by inculcating in them revolutionary ideas, and directly or indirectly, influencing them to rise in rebellion against the state. The Protestant missionaries were clandestinely trying to convert the Muslims as well as the other Christian sects; the Catholics were trying to lure the Orthodox Christians to the Vatican; and the Orthodox were forcing their congregation to remain in their own church. In order to protect themselves and their protégés, these missionaries, who posed as the champions of the Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire, began to appeal to the major Powers for their intervention, and thus caused many diplomatic incidents.

Most of the major Powers, more consciously than not, were directly or indirectly causing restlessness, and encouraging agitation, even insurrection, among the different Christian creeds. This would enable them to interfere in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire by pretending that they were interested in the problems of the Christian minorities; but, in fact, they were jockeying with one another for influence in, or a portion of, that Empire when the 'sick man of Europe' demised. In order to hasten his demise they encouraged the growing nationalist movements in that Empire, particularly in the Balkans.

Some of the ecclesiastical and lay leaders of the Ottoman Christian communities, taking advantage of the extensive rights and privileges granted to them within the Ottoman State, which almost amounted to an imperium in imperio, began to intrigue with foreign Powers. Having been deceived with promises of autonomy or independence, these leaders were manipulated by those Powers and forces that strove to partition and eliminate the Ottoman Empire, which would increase their own influence and authority. They used every occasion that weakened the strength of the Ottoman state to create disturbances and incidents, particularly when the country was at war, hoping to capitalize on this, and very often they offered their services to the enemies of their country.

In the light of recent archival material, and many publications, it has become more evident that, some of these Christian minorities played an important role in efforts to dismember the Ottoman Empire. Their aims and ambitions, if fully realized, would involve the dissolution and disappearance of the Empire, to be replaced by puppet Christian states subservient to their patrons, the major Powers, although nowhere in the Anatolian provinces did they constitute more than 15 percent of the total population.

Some of the various Christian creeds in the Ottoman Empire realized at an early stage of their relationship, which began during the Turco-Russian war of 1877-8, and even before that event, and blossomed during the Balkan wars and the Great War, that, in order to fulfill their aspirations they had to cooperate with one another. They also had to collaborate with the forces of instability, both inside and outside the Ottoman Empire, to act as instruments of those Powers that had a stake in the dissolution of that Empire, to benefit from any Ottoman crisis, or even to provoke such crisis, with the hope that the Powers would intervene on their behalf, and above all, to indulge in a propaganda campaign against Turkey and the Turkish people. In this, they were believed and assisted by a naïve Christian World, which was skilfully manipulated by the powerful, resourceful and deceitful Christian propaganda organizations and organs of disinformation all over the world, particularly in Europe and the USA.

In the field of propaganda no one could surpass the Ottoman Christians, including mainly the Armenians, who used their positions as translators/interpreters in the embassies and consulates of the Powers to convince those Powers of their stories, and to sway their relief workers, missionaries and ecclesiastical leaders, about the genuineness of their case. Many a time a gullible Western journalist was trapped by their vociferations, and spread their tales. Moreover, European diplomats and travellers within the Ottoman dominions were lured by these people who had the same religion, and who usually knew foreign languages, and through them, the tales were more widely spread.

According to the Reverend Dr. Cyrus Hamlin, the first president of the American Robert College in Istanbul (now the Bogazici University), a propaganda bureau was set up in London in the 1870s which had, for its object, the foreign dissemination of all news prejudicial to the Turks. Hamlin stated that the onslaught of this 'one-sided and unreliable information' about any people would, after a period of years, stir up a hostility and hatred that could not be easily

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8 Görün, pp. 37-40.

overcome. 'Whenever I pick up a paper of eastern news' he declared, 'I pray, O Lord, endow me with a suitable sense of unbelief'.

Because the Turks were inarticulate and religious, had a sense of dignity and decency, and preferred to suffer in silence rather than to vociferate, the Ottoman Christians and their champions were left unchallenged to spread the wildest myths and message of hate about the Turks and other Muslims. When documentary evidence was needed to substantiate their allegations, they invented or forged such 'documents' without any sense of responsibility or conscience. Their skill in inventing non-existent 'documents', and in a sense presenting the white as black, and in many cases getting away with it, is confirmed by numerous source material in the archives of many countries whose governments were often the target of such brain-washing.

As for Armenian claims about 'genocide', the documents used in this book, mostly from non-Turkish sources, make it abundantly clear that such claims are invalid, as they are not based on facts. It should be mentioned here that, at the end of the First World War when Turkey was occupied by the Entente Powers, the Ottoman government, through its Foreign Minister, handed five telegrams to the British High Commissioner in Istanbul, in February 1919, for transmission to the Ottoman representatives in Denmark, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Spain, and Sweden, asking them to invite the governments to which they were accredited to appoint two members each to sit on a commission of inquiry it had set up in order to find those responsible for the relocation of Muslim and non-Muslim Ottoman citizens, if any, and for any other war crimes. The Entente Powers, however, mainly Britain, blocked the way of such a commission, as it was not the intention of the British government to encourage neutrals to take part on such a 'Turkish commission', probably because its findings would have been contrary to the interests of the victorious Powers, who were themselves mainly responsible for the Turco-Armenian conflict, and the tragedy that befell Anatolia. Nor could the British find any evidence to try the many Ottoman statesmen and officials they had arrested during their occupation of Turkey at the end of the war, and whom they had deported to, and incarcerated, at Malta. Ultimately they had to release all of them.

It is abundantly clear, in the light of archival material, that the peoples of Anatolia, both Muslim and non-Muslim, became unwittingly, reluctantly, or voluntarily, the instruments and victims of the major Powers that had only one main purpose: their own self-interest, as reflected in the secret agreements they contracted among themselves during the Great War for the partition of the Ottoman Empire. In those agreements, as indeed in the Treaty of Lausanne which wound-up the Ottoman Empire, one searches in vain to find any mention of the promises those Powers made to the non-Muslim subjects of that Empire - promises which they forgot as soon as their own interests were secured.

These imperialist and colonialist Powers (of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) have been mainly responsible for the tragedy that befell the peoples of Anatolia; to which, admittedly, various weak and incompetent Ottoman governments have also contributed. On the other hand, one must not forget the responsibility of some of the leaders of the Ottoman Christian communities, who allowed themselves, and influenced their people, to become instruments of those Powers, and thus contributed tremendously to that tragedy.
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