

THE TURCO - ARMENIAN 'ADANA INCIDENTS'
IN THE LIGHT OF SECRET BRITISH DOCUMENTS
(July, 1908 - December, 1909)

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Introduction

For almost six centuries the position of the Armenian nation (*millet*) within the Ottoman Empire, was one of relative peace, order, security and prosperity until the genesis, in the 1870s, of the so-called "Eastern Question". The Turco-Russian war of 1877 had resulted in the abortive Treaty of San Stefano, and had brought about the signature of the Cyprus Convention and the Treaty of Berlin. These treaties were supposed to procure more privileges for the Ottoman Armenians, but they were actually intended to enable the Great Powers, in particular Britain and Russia, to interfere in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire with the hope of snatching a greater share of the spoils when the Empire ultimately collapsed.

From 1878 onwards various efforts were made by the Great 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, who were dispersed throughout Anatolia. One of their earliest unsuccessful attempts was directed towards the establishment of an autonomous Armenian province, which encouraged the Armenian extremists to provoke rebellions that almost led to an armed intervention by the Great 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 Great 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. This danger to the very existence of the Ottoman Empire, and to that of his throne, forced Sultan Abdülhamit II to concentrate all power in his hands. It also encouraged the Armenian extremists to set up secret societies, and to prepare for revolt, in order to procure an autonomous, or semi-independent, Armenian province in Eastern Anatolia where the Armenians were hopelessly outnumbered by the Muslims to the tune of four to one.

With 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 both with Britain and Russia who were vying with each other for Turkish favours in order to cater to their own interests rather than on behalf of the interests of the Armenians. Admittedly, both Salisbury and Gladstone did their utmost to procure the joint intervention of the Great Powers in the domestic affairs of the Ottoman Empire, but without success, as the interests of those Powers, which included Britain and Russia, were at conflict.

Following the establishment, by the Armenian extremists abroad, of secret revolutionary and terrorist societies such as the Hintchak and the Dashnaksoutioun, which indulged indiscriminately, within and without the Ottoman territories, in a campaign of terror, assassinations, sabotage, arson, abductions and forced levies, inflicted even on ordinary Armenians, and the resulting suppression by Ottoman authorities, who had hurriedly set up the Hamidiye regiments to encounter Armenian terrorism, a period of bloody incidents ensued which lasted from 1894 to 1896.

The first full-scale armed conflict between the Armenians and the Turks took place in the summer of 1895 at Sasun, where the Armenian insurgents had provoked a revolt. This was followed by other incidents all over Anatolia where practically a state of civil war had been provoked between the ordinary Armenian and Turkish people, resulting in the death of many victims on both sides and in the destruction of much property. The Armenian Patriarch, meanwhile, appealed to the Great Powers to intervene, which caused the Liberal Government in London to prepare for armed intervention and to resort to gunboat diplomacy. But the divisions among the Powers, in particular between Britain and Russia, made these British attempts, later espoused by Salisbury, ineffective. The Powers were reluctant to intervene and thus risk their favoured position in İstanbul, and Abdülhamit was quick to make full use of these divisions among the Powers to his advantage. He also tried to arrive at a *modus vivendi* with the Armenian insurgents and the Young Turks revolutionaries, with some initial success.

After the 1894-6 incidents many efforts were made to reconcile the Turks and the Armenians. From 1896 to 1908, although the so-called "Armenian Question" flared up intermittently with every major crisis or event such as the Turco-Greek war of 1897, the German Emperor's visit to

Istanbul, the eruption of the "Cretan and Macedonian Questions", and the attempt by the Armenians to assassinate Abdülhamit in 1905, nevertheless it simmered on and brought about a *rapprochement* between the Armenian revolutionaries and the Young Turks, who cooperated together with other malcontent elements of the Ottoman Empire in bringing about the Young Turk Revolution of July, 1908.

Turco-Armenian relations after the Young Turk Revolution

Following the restoration of constitutional order in the Ottoman Empire as a result of the Young Turk Revolution¹, the Turks and the 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 Hintchak Society of Turkey, declared at the Sourp Yervartioun Church of Pera (Beyoğlu) that henceforth the Hintchakists would terminate their revolutionary activities and do their utmost "for the development and prosperity of our country". At the same time M. Aknouni, another Russian Armenian and spokesman of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, the Dashnaksutium, announced:

"One of the primary duties of the Dashnaktzagsans 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"².

Despite these efforts to ameliorate the situation, the British ambassador in İstanbul, Sir Gerard Lowther, was, in the middle of August, still receiving alarming reports from Captain Bertram Dickson, the British vice-consul at Van, claiming that fighting was still going on between the tribal Muslims and the Armenians at Tiari, and near Şatak, 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

¹ *Düstur* (Laws), 2. tertip, v. 1, pp. 1-2; Ali Cevat and Faik Reşit Unat: *İkinci Meşrutiyetin ilanı ve otuzbir Mart hadisesi* (The declaration of the Second Constitution and the 31 March incident), Ankara, TTK, 1960, pp. 108-9.

² İsmet Parmaksızoğlu, *Ermeni komitelerinin ihtilâl hareketleri ve besledikleri emeller* (The revolutionary activities and aspirations of Armenian committees), Ankara 1981, p. 34.

recent protestations of brotherhood”³. Yet, by the beginning of September the situation had completely calmed down.

If we are to believe A. S. Safrastian, the Armenian dragoman of British Vice-Consul Shipley, 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 Muş-Roupen, Karmen and others, had surrendered to the authorities with their bands consisting of 150 *fedais* (guerrillas), and had been received with military honors. *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 road⁴.

These developments, which J. 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 Turkey. At Harput the reaction had subsided, although there was still a slight feeling of uneasiness among the Armenians. The C. U. P., or its sympathisers, 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 prelate, however, had already departed with a considerable sum of money.

The constitution was warmly received and celebrated at Malatya. At Diyarbakır 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

³ Public Record Office, Foreign Office documents (hereafter to be referred to as FO) FO 371/533/28405: Gerard Lowther to Sir Edward Grey, confidential telegram, İstanbul, 16.8.1908.

⁴ *Ibid.*: Acting Vice-Consul A.S. Safrastian to Consul Shipley, despatch, Bitlis, 1.9.1908.

interfere in administrative details. Its members, which consisted of 8 Muslims, 3 Armenians and 3 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 1895. 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 henceforth Turks and Armenians would work together like brothers for the good to their country⁵. Similar news was coming in from all over Anatolia, and was well received by some of the Great Powers, particularly by Britain⁶.

Turco-Armenian relations had improved so much that this prompted the British vice-consul at Van, Captain Bertram Dickson, to report to Ambassador Lowther on 30th 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 *fedai*", and others were being pursued. Then came the bloodless Young Turk revolt, the granting 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, over-bearing, and insolent imitation of the worst type of politician".

Armenian intrigues and clandestine arm imports continue

The two parties of the Armenians at Van, the Dashnaks and the Armenists, had utilised their revolutionary organisation for electioneering. The Dashnaks, with whom the Hintchaks were now allied, formed a powerful party, led by the "*fedai*" chiefs Aram, the "Doctor" (Varhad

⁵ FO 371/533/33230: Lowther to Grey, despatch, Therapia (Trabya), 20.9.1908.

⁶ *The Times*, 8, 9, 14 and 24.8.1908; see also İsmail Hami Danişment: *İzahlı Osmanlı Tarihi Kronolojisi* (Annotated Chronology of Ottoman History), v. 4, İstanbul 1961, p. 366.

Papazian), Sarkis and Ishkhan. They presented the "Doctor" as their candidate for deputy, and in their first campaign to have their delegates elected to the electoral college, in opposition to the Armenist or Muslim delegates, they had been completely successful by having secured the election of all their candidates. This result was due partly to threats and to other methods which they had not hesitated to use. The Armenists, whose candidate for deputy was Terzibashian, "an intelligent and respectable merchant", as described by Captain Dickson, had not had the least chance against their rivals, although they comprised the more respectable and quiet portion of the Armenian population, and were supported by the Muslims and the Government.

The Dashnaks were also intriguing with various aghas (*aga*) to secure the tribal Muslim vote, and had reduced the Armenian bishop (*Murahhas*) to the position of a mere tool. Their attitude and actions had caused a friction which culminated in a fight in the Armenian Council between the bishop and Terzibashian. The Dashnakists then ingeniously used the resulting scandal to damage the Armenist cause. They were trying to secure the exile or imprisonment of Terzibashian, who was their ablest opponent. In fact their "*fedai*" chiefs who, two months earlier, were either in prison or fugitives, had now become the self-elected masters of the situation, and even attempted to dictate to the acting governor-general (*vali*). With "magnificent impudence", they claimed that the grant of the constitution was due entirely to their own efforts, and in this they were believed not only by most Armenians but also by many local Muslims.

Thus this Dashnak "*fedai*" organisation, as a political body, had increased its power in the Province of Van. At that particular moment it was practically blindly followed by the whole Armenian population of the province. Its chiefs - Aram, Papazian, Sarkis and Ishkhan - 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 the Muslims under the new regime. A proof of this had just occurred at Saray. A band of Armenia "*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 "*fedai*".

The insolent way in which these Dashnak leaders had been trying to dictate to the Government and to Muslim tribal 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 30th September as follows:

"... The Armenian in subjection, such as I have seen him, is an unsympathetic, mean, cringing, unscrupulous, lying, thieving curd; 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 in 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 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.

"Supposing the new regime continues", declared Captain Dickson, "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 have socialistic ideas very unpalatable to the Moslems, may be worth bearing in mind"⁷.

These pertinent remarks of a British vice-consul on the spot were only prophesying what plans 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 this plan 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 Grey⁸. Reports from the asiatic provinces of Turkey continued to show, on the whole, a satisfactory state of affairs⁹.

A new Armenian agitation

Taking advantage of the new situation in the Ottoman Empire, a number of Armenians and Armenophiles abroad began to put pressure on their governments to intervene on behalf of the Armenians. Ambrose O. Hopkins wrote to the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, on 24th

⁷ FO 371/560/37689: Captain Bertram Dickson to Sir Gerard Lowther, despatch, Van, 30.9.1908.

⁸ Ibid.: Lowther to Grey, confidential despatch, Therapia, 24.10.1908.

⁹ FO 371/560/36112: Lowther to Grey, confidential despatch, Therapia, 9.10.1908.

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 the Muslim Turks by declaring that he had no faith in the Young Turk movement, and that reformation would not come from that quarter.

"The Turk is a Mohammedan and a Mohammedan will not tolerate a Christian if he can help it", he claimed. "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..."¹⁰

Such religious fanaticism of some English Armenophiles blinded them to what was actually happening in the Ottoman Empire, whilst their bigotry and prejudice would not even give a chance 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 her independence on 5th October, and of Austria's annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina on the following day, whilst the Cretans had declared their union with Greece¹¹. These new developments activated some of the Armenian agitators abroad to strive again for the fulfilment of Armenian aspirations. Garabet Hagopian, an Armenian agitator living in Britain, wrote to Sir Edward Grey on 7th and 23rd 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 by 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.

¹⁰ FO 371/533/33333: Ambrose O. Hopkins to Grey, letter dated 24.9.1908.

¹¹ Sina Akşin: *31 Mart Olayı* (The 31st March Event), Ankara 1972, p. 24; Danişment: *Kronoloji*, pp. 367-8.

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 "wast sacrifices of blood and treasure". He therefore called upon 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 Turkey 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. In the British Foreign Office, J. A. Tilley found this rather "an unpleasant letter to answer".

"We do not want to hold out hopes of further interference on behalf of the Armenians", he declared. "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"¹².

Hagopian was supported by another Armenian agitator, Bishop K. Utidjian, who wrote to Sir Edward Grey on 29th October from Manchester, observing that the 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 tribal Muslims. 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

¹² FO 371/560/36965: Garabet Hagopian to Grey, letters, London, 7 and 23.10.1908.

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"¹³.

The Reverend Krikor Behesmilian of the British Armenian Mission followed with a letter dated 5th 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 loyal to their Muslim co-workers, and according to a latest letter from his own friends at Maraş, Armenians, Muslims and Christians 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 Empire¹⁴.

The 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 1894-5 incidents, and was exiled to Jerusalem by Abdülhamit because of his relations with the British Embassy and his machinations with the Armenian terrorist organisations. On his return to İstanbul after the revival 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 near Erivan (Yerevan), as Catholicos, or Ecclesiastical Head of all the Armenians, but the conviction that the Russian Government would refuse to sanction the appointment

¹³ FO 371/533/37734: Bishop K. Utidjian to Grey, letter, West Didsbury, Manchester, 29.10.1908.

¹⁴ FO 371/533/38633: Rev. Krikor Behesmilian to Grey, letter, Newport, 5.11.1908.

because of his reported nationalist tendencies convinced them to elect him as Patriarch of İstanbul instead.

Nevertheless on 14th November Ismirlian was elected Catholicos of Etchmiadzin to succeed the late Catholicos 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 Catholicos 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 confirmed¹⁵, but meanwhile Ismirlian was unanimously elected Patriarch of the Gregorian Armenians by the General Council of the Armenian Gregorian Church.

On 28th November he was officially received by the Sultan at the Yıldız Palace, and by the Grand Vizier and other Ministers at the Sublime Porte (*Bab-ı Ali*)¹⁶. 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 cordial 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 the Muslims and Armenians¹⁷.

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

¹⁵ FO 371/519/41393: Consul P. Stevens to Foreign Office, despatch, Batum, 16.11.1908.

¹⁶ Sublime Porte (*Bab-ı Ali*) is the name given to the Ottoman Government as Whitehall is the name given to the British Government.

¹⁷ FO 371/424/217: Further correspondence respecting the affairs of Asiatic Turkey and Arabia, confidential, 9482, October to December 1908; No. 60: Lowther to Grey, confidential despatch, Pera (Beyoğlu), 1.12.1908, p. 112.

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 reestablishment of the constitution was a most delicate experiment in view of the backward condition of the masses of the 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, 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 for the "predatory and oppressive tendencies" of their tribal Muslim and other neighbours. The task he had set himself of working out the "salvation" of his people in the outlying districts like Muş, 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 there¹⁸.

When Ambassador Lowther sent to Sir Edward Grey a copy of the confidential memorandum drawn up by Fitzmaurice, 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

¹⁸ FO 371/557/42608: Confidential memorandum by G. H. Fitzmaurice, dated 30.11.1908.

the Patriarch's views about Article 61 were worthy of serious consideration by the British Government.

In the Foreign Office this appeal received some attention. J. 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"¹⁹. But no action was taken.

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 17th December²⁰. The day before, Sultan Abdülhamit 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 Jews²¹. In 1913 Armenian representation was increased to 16²².

The opening of the second Ottoman parliament coincided with a marked improvement in the situation all over Anatolia, which was improving long before that major event. Thus, acting British Consul Safrastian (of Armenian origin) had reported from Bitlis on 1st September that there had been fraternisation in Muş, and that hundreds of Armenians were returning from Russia²³. In succeeding despatches he had stressed the

¹⁹ FO 371/557/42608: Lowther to Grey, confidential despatch, Pera, 2.12.1908.

²⁰ *Takvim-i Vekayi*, 3.1.1324 (old style).

²¹ Feroz Ahmad: *The Young Turks*, Oxford 1969, p. 145.

²² Christopher J. Walker: *Armenia, the survival of a nation*, London 1980, p. 182.

²³ Turkey No. 1 (1909), p. 89.

security that prevailed in the Eastern Provinces, and his hopes for prosperity²⁴. The local authorities were doing their best, with the means at their disposal, to ameliorate the situation in those provinces. The old abuses complained of had greatly ceased.

Meanwhile, some of the extreme Dashnakists at Van insisted on the complete restoration to the Armenians of the property which they claimed was seized from them in the past; but the British vice-consul there used his influence to dissuade them from a course which was not only impossible to realize, but which might provoke the tribal Muslims against them. Nevertheless, following representations by the Armenian Patriarchate at İstanbul, the Porte decided to appoint and despatch a special commission to deal with this delicate matter. The commission would also have the power to dismiss dishonest or incompetent officials; to ensure that the Hamidiye officers did not hold civil employment; to prevent the chiefs of tribal Muslims from exacting a tribute from the minorities; and to relieve the famine-stricken districts, if necessary, by the remission of arrears of taxes. The members of the commission soon resigned because the country had been under snow for 5 months, and it had been impossible for them to do any serious work. British Ambassador Lowther, however, believed that they had resigned because they were convinced of the hopelessness of attempting to remedy, in a short time, the accumulated problems of the past 30 years.

The Armenian Patriarch had been insisting on the immediate departure of the commission, arguing that, even if it only got as far as Erzurum, its rumoured approach would exercise a calming effect in the southern regions like Bitlis, Van, etc., and that when it reached Erzurum, it would be able to see to, or report on, the urgent steps necessary for the relief of the areas suffering from famine. The most affected districts were Kinis, Muş, other parts of the Bitlis *Vilayet* (Province), Hacin and Zeytun in the north of the Provinces of Aleppo and Adana, and the regions round Kayseri. Many of the Armenian and Muslim villages were equally affected. Charitable organisations all over the world were raising money in order to help the afflicted people, particularly the Christians²⁵.

Armenian extremism perpetuated

Despite the economic situation in some parts of the Empire, there was no doubt that the revival of the constitution had greatly ameliorated the

²⁴ Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

²⁵ FO 371/762/327: Lowther to Grey, confidential despatch, Pera, 27.12.1908.

position of the Armenians, as confirmed by the British vice-consul at Van, Captain Dickson. The attitude of the notorious revolutionary Dashnak Society had altered. 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 by the Russian Government to the Armenian Church of its lands was attributed to its activity.

At the time when the leaders of the Young Turk movement were still in exile, trying to form every kind of combination through which to overthrow the misrule of the Palace, the chief of the Armenian revolutionaries had imbibed the hope that, in return for any assistance they might render in attaining this end, they would obtain some measure of decentralisation that would go far 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 British Vice-Consul Captain 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 portions of Turkish, 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 these other elements. Moreover, the Dashnaks 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 C.U.P. 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 the 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 C.U.P. They had formed a rival "Committee of Islam" there. In the Adana *Vilayet*, however, the situation was quiet²⁶.

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 Hintchakist 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, the Dashnak leader. 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 fact that the Armenians, according to British Vice-Consul Captain Dickson, had been receiving revolvers by the hundred through the post²⁷.

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

²⁶ FO 371/762/3123: Lowther to Grey, confidential despatch, Pera, 18.1.1909.

²⁷ FO 371/774/15584: Lowther to Grey, confidential despatch, Istanbul, 20.4.1909, enclosing copy of despatch from Captain Bertram Dickson, Van, 31.3.1909.

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 organisation, 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 C.U.P. 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 indiscreet utterances, indulged in from time to time, by the younger members of the Dashnak organisation, about a future policy to be adopted by the Armenians. Shipley had, on a number of occasions, received complaints from prominent Tuks 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 strongly 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:

“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”²⁸.

²⁸ FO 371/774/15573: Lowther to Grey, confidential despatch, Istanbul, 18.4.1909, enclosing copy of despatch from Consul H.S. Shipley, Erzurum, 5.4.1909.

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

The counter revolution of 13th April 1909 (31 Mart Vak'ası)

The Kâmil Pasha Cabinet, which had replaced that of Sait Pasha in August 1908, was considered to be an Anglophil administration, 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 Vizierate. In view of this, the C.U.P., which had masterminded the Young Turk Revolution, although not in favour of the new Grand Vizier, had hesitated in having him ousted from power²⁹.

In the autumn of 1908, as the general election results began to be announced, on 30th November Kâmil Pasha made a number of changes in his Cabinet in order to placate the C.U.P. Despite some attempts to oust him from power, he nevertheless managed to receive an unanimous vote of confidence in parliament on 13th January 1909 after having promised, it was said, to respect the wishes of the C.U.P.

Early in February, making use of his enhanced authority, he strove to undermine the influence of the C.U.P., but this resulted in an internecine struggle between him and that organisation. At the same time there was a Cabinet crisis. On 10th February, the resignation of Arif Hikmet Pasha, the Navy Minister, which was tendered earlier, was accepted, and he was provisionally succeeded by Marshal Hüsnü Pasha. When Ali Rıza Pasha, the Minister of War, was appointed Commissioner for Egypt, he was succeeded by Nazım Pasha, commander of the Second Army Corps. This latter appointment, however, was effected without consulting with the C.U.P. and the other members of the Cabinet, and as a result many Cabinet Ministers resigned in protest.

²⁹ Tahsin Paşa: *Abdülhamit ve Yıldız Hatıraları* (Abdülhamit and Yıldız Memories), İstanbul 1931, p. 45; Ali Haydar Mithat: *Hatıralarım, 1872-1946* (My Reminiscences, 1872-1946), İstanbul 1946, p. 199; Hilmi Kâmil Bayur: *Sadrazam Kâmil Paşa* (Kâmil Pasha, the Grand Vizier), Ankara 1954, p. 244. The British first dragoman was reported to have described Kâmil Pasha as "madly pro-British": see G.P. Gooch and Harold Temperley: *British documents on the origin of the War*, London 1928, pp. 256-7; Sina Akşin: *31 Mart Olayı*, (The 31st March Event), Ankara 1972, p. 31.

On 11th February an interpellation was submitted to the Chamber of Deputies against Kâmil Pasha³⁰, who began to foster rumours in the press that the C.U.P. intended to remove Abdülhamit from the throne and to replace him by Yusuf İzzettin Efendi, by-passing Reşat Efendi³¹. Two days later, however, the Cabinet denied these rumours³². Meanwhile the Grand Vizier was doing his utmost to remove the army from the influence of, and weaken further, the C.U.P.,³³ but without success. His attempts, however, resulted in a vote of no confidence in his Cabinet, which was carried on 13th February³⁴. He was ousted from power and replaced by Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, the C.U.P. favourite.

It is interesting to note here the German version of the weaknesses of the Kâmil Pasha Cabinet as narrated in a cipher telegram which M. Marschall, the German ambassador, sent to Berlin on 29th April 1909. According to the German ambassador, Britain had made the mistake of interfering too much in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire, particularly during the Grand Vizierate of Kâmil Pasha, when she was claimed to have practically run the affairs of the Empire. Ambassador Marschall also reported on 3rd June that, according to Ferit Pasha, a bill was prepared by Kâmil Pasha, authorising the appointment of a commission with extraordinary powers to inspect the Eastern Provinces of Turkey where the Armenians lived; and this had caused much opposition among the Muslims. When Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, who was Minister of the Interior, at the time had pointed out the disadvantages of this bill, Kâmil Pasha had admitted that he himself had prepared the bill together with British Ambassador, Sir Gerard Lowther, to whom he had given an assurance that parliament would approve it³⁵.

After the appointment of Hilmi Pasha as Grand Vizier, the C.U.P. sent Mehmet Arslan to assure the British Embassy that the new Cabinet would continue to follow a pro-British policy³⁶. But the British became cool towards the C.U.P.³⁷. From then onwards the political situation

³⁰ *İkdam* newspaper, İstanbul, 12.2.1909.

³¹ Akşin p. 33; *Tanin* newspaper, İstanbul, 15.2.1909; *İkdam*, 19.2.1909.

³² *Tanin*, 14.2.1909.

³³ *The Times*, 6.2.1909; *İkinci Abdülhamit'in Hatıra Defteri* (The Book of Memories of Abdülhamit II), İstanbul 1960, pp. 134-5; Akşin p. 35.

³⁴ Akşin p. 36.

³⁵ *Die Grosse Politik*, no. 9600/132; Akşin pp. 290-1.

³⁶ *Tanin*, 15.2.1909.

³⁷ Akşin p. 38.

deteriorated. The opposition never accepted the Hilmi Pasha Cabinet, and began to incite the religious circles against it and against the C.U.P. There was also much displeasure among army ranks, in particular among a number of displaced officers³⁸.

By the 12th of April the situation became worse, although attempts were being made to calm the people. The first attempt came from the Armenian Dashnaksutiun Society which published a circular calling upon all political parties and societies to meet and terminate their "illegal fights", and to cooperate on points of mutual accord. The *İkdam* newspaper, on the other hand, suggested the establishment of a coalition (national) government³⁹. But nothing came out of these attempts.

On the night of 12/13th April, soldiers of the Fourth Expeditionary Force stationed at Taşkılla mutinied, tied up their officers and besieged the Chamber of Deputies. They were carrying white, red and green flags, the last mentioned being the emblem of the *İttihad-ı Muhammediye* (Mohammedan Unity), an extremist Muslim organisation set up by Derviş Vahdeti, a Turkish Cypriot preacher⁴⁰. Soon the rebellion spread to the other units in the capital⁴¹. Many young officers and other adherents of the constitutional movement were killed, parliament was raided and several deputies murdered. The leading members of the C.U.P. went into hiding. Talât Bey, the future Minister of the Interior and formerly a telegraph clerk, was said to have been sheltered by Aknouni, the leader of the İstanbul Dashnak Armenians⁴².

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 *softas* (theological students). They demanded an end to the corruption of government based on Western and secular ideas, and a return to the principles of *Şeriat* (Sharia - Sacred Law of Islam). They also demanded an amnesty, the replacement of army officers, who should be expelled from the

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 46-7.

³⁹ *Tanin* and *İkdam*, 9.4.1909; Akşin p. 50.

⁴⁰ *Volkan*, 16.4.1909.

⁴¹ Mevlanzade Rifat: *İnkulâb-ı Osmaniden bir yaprak* (A leaf from Ottoman Reform), Cairo 1329 (old style), pp. 80-90.

⁴² Some Armenian writers claim without any evidence that Aknouni was one of the first Armenian notables whose death warrant was signed by Talat Pasha latter; see Stephen C. Savjian: *A trip through historic Armenia*, New York 1977, p. 401.

capital, and the construction of a navy⁴³. The *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 *Şeriat*, and pardoning the rebels-although some Turkish historians admit that it is difficult to estimate his role in the reaction. İsmail Kemal says that he had no role⁴⁴; others argue to the contrary.

When Grand Vizier Hilmi Pasha learned the demands of the rebels from the *Şeyhülislâm* (Sheikh-ul-Islam - Muslim Religious Dignitary), he tendered his resignation 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 Anglophil, despite the fact that his wife was German⁴⁵. In his Cabinet which took office on 14th April, Rifat Pasha, then Turkish ambassador in London, became Minister of Foreign Affairs, whilst Gabriel Noradounkian, an Armenian, was appointed Minister of Commerce and Public Works. The new Grand Vizier then sent telegrams to the provinces advising "harmony between the different nationalities"⁴⁶. But despite this advice, bloody incidents erupted at Adana on 14th April, the day after the counter-revolution in İstanbul. These events are dealt with extensively below. Here we must follow the course of events that led to the final collapse of the counter-revolution.

In Salonica, Mahmut Şevket Pasha, the Young Turk general in command of the Third Army, decided to send troops to crush the movement. The troops arrived at Çatalça on 16th April, and frantic attempts were made to prevent their entry into İstanbul 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 Yeşilköy (San Stefano) where it was received by a parliamentary delegation. On 20th April the Armenian Dashnaktsutiun party sent a delegation to Yeşilköy, and announced that it supported the Army of Operations⁴⁷. This delegation consisted of women, who presented

⁴³ Akşin, p. 69.

⁴⁴ See *İkdam*, 15.4.1909.

⁴⁵ Gooch and Temperley p. 11.

⁴⁶ Akşin pp. 89-90.

⁴⁷ Yunus Nadi: *İhtilâl ve İnkılab-ı Osmani* (Revolution and Ottoman Reform), İstanbul 1325 (old style), pp. 144 and 157; *İkdam*, 22.4.1909; Akşin p. 234.

to that army a white flag and a bouquet of flowers, while Vartkes Efendi, an Armenian deputy, made a speech. The Armenian Hintchak party also sent a delegation offering volunteers. The Armenians were thanked and told that volunteers were not necessary⁴⁸.

Meanwhile the Dashnaks persisted in their attempts to procure joint action against Abdülhamit and the reactionaries⁴⁹. An inter-party committee was set up, which met on 23rd April under the presidency of Dr. İbrahim Temo. At that meeting, which was not attended by the C.U.P., Maloumian Efendi, the Dashnak leader, suggested that a seven-member delegation should be sent to parliament and the Government in order to inform them about the aims and duties of the committee, to inculcate in them the necessity of solidarity among all the parties and groups for the safety of the country and for the defence of the constitution, and to suggest that inter-party strife and inter-racial conflicts should be terminated. These suggestions should also be published in the press. The army should be thanked for its action in favour of the constitution, and security should be provided throughout the country⁵⁰.

Parliament met on 23rd April⁵¹ and passed a resolution emphasising the importance of the constitution, and of defending the unity and tranquillity of the different races. Hagop Babikian, an Armenian deputy, had tried unsuccessfully to make the wording of this resolution much stricter⁵². On the following day (24th April) the Army of Operations entered İstanbul and besieged the Yıldız Palace. It was claimed that the ambassador of one of the Great Powers (Russia was suspected) had sent an emissary to the Palace who saw 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 he did not wish to take up the offer⁵³.

According to another Turkish writer, Ali Haydar, a few days before the dethronement of Sultan Abdülhamit, the Russian ambassador had

⁴⁸ Akşin p. 249.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 264; *İkdam*, 23.4.1909.

⁵⁰ *İkdam*, 26.4.1909; *Mizan*, 11.4.1909; Akşin p. 265-6.

⁵¹ *Takvim-i Vekayi*, 199, 20.4.1325.

⁵² *İkdam*, 23.4.1909.

⁵³ Ali Cevat and Faik Reşit Unat: *İkinci Meşrutiyetin ilânı ve Otuzbir Mart Hadisesi* (The declaration of the Second Constitution and the 31st March Event), Ankara 1960, p. 74.

suggested to him (the Sultan) to leave Turkey on a Russian ship. The German Emperor was said to have made a similar offer⁵⁴. 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 İstanbul. Abdülhamit was said to have politely turned down the offer⁵⁵.

On 27th April the Ottoman Parliament decided to dethrone Abdülhamit II and to offer the throne to his brother, Mehmet Reşat, who became Mehmet V. In the *fetva* (bull) issued by the *Şeyhülislâm* (religious dignitary), Ziyaettin Efendi and the *Fetva Emini* (issuer of the bull), Hacı Nuri Efendi, Abdülhamit was accused of deletions from the books of *Şeri* (Shaira) and of forbidding and burning of some of these books; of wasting public resources, of killing people without Shariatic 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, an Armenian Catholic⁵⁶. Esat Pasha (Toptani) was authorised to tell Abdülhamit that he was dethroned. "Sire, we have been authorised by the national Parliament to inform you about its decision of today", he remarked, and went on: "the nation, with a *fetva*, 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 minute; 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"⁵⁷.

Abdülhamit was exiled to Salonika (Selanik) and lingered on until 1918 when he died peacefully in his bed in İstanbul where he was brought after the loss of the former city during the First World War⁵⁸. The fate of his Grand Vizier, Tevfik Pasha, followed a slightly different course. He was

⁵⁴ Mithat: *Hatıralarım*, p. 226.

⁵⁵ Hasan Amca: *Doğmayan Hürriyet* (Unborn Liberty), İstanbul 1958, p. 72; Akşin pp. 265-7 and 284.

⁵⁶ *İkdam*, 28.4.1909.

⁵⁷ Tahsin Uzer: *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi ve Son Osmanlı Yönetimi* (History of Macedonian Guerrilla Warfare and the Last Ottoman Government), Ankara 1979, pp. 245 and 298-300.

⁵⁸ See also Public Record Office, Foreign Office documents: FO 371/771/15921: Lowther to Grey, İstanbul, telegram dated 27.4.1909.

asked by the new Sultan to stay on in a Cabinet reconstructed on 1st May; but that Cabinet lasted only four days. Tevfik Pasha was forced by the C.U.P. to resign on 5th May, and was replaced by Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha.

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 constitution⁵⁹. 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 Adana⁶⁰. 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 independence of an imagined Armenian state in Cilicia, i.e., the Adana Province⁶¹, where, according to British sources, they constituted 75,000 of a total population of 393,000 of whom 290,000 were Muslims⁶², and according to Turkish sources, they

⁵⁹ FO 371/772/17612: Lowther to Grey, Istanbul, confidential despatch dated 4.5.1909.

⁶⁰ Sir Telford Waugh: *Turkey, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, London 1930, p. 129.

⁶¹ David Kherdian: *The road from home: the story of an Armenian girl*, London 1980, p. x.

⁶² FO 371/4239/160318: W. Childs, Geographical Section, PID, Foreign Office, 10.2.1920.

constituted 57,686 of a total population of 408,563 of whom 341, 903 were Muslims⁶³.

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 Turks⁶⁴. 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 Government⁶⁵.

The more the Armenians talked and recited poetry, and the more they armed themselves, the more they aroused the anxiety and alarm of the Turkish 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, an intention to take vengeance on the Turks and "to wipe their race off the face of the earth"⁶⁶. The Turks were also alarmed by the exhortations of the Armenians to arm themselves delivered by Mgr. Mousheg, the Gregorian bishop of Mersin, throughout the country particularly in Adana and its region where the bishop had a commercial interest in the sale of firearms. British Ambassador 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 at

⁶³ FO 371/4229/86552: Admiral Calthorpe to Lord Curzon, despatch, Istanbul, 24.5.1919, enclosing a pamphlet from the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs on population statistics, dated 14.3.1914.

⁶⁴ Parmaksızoğlu p. 26; Sadi Koçuş: *Tarih boyunca Ermeniler ve Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri* (Armenians and Turco -Armenian relations throughout history) Ankara 1967, pp. 142-4.

⁶⁵ Koçuş pp. 139 and 145.

⁶⁶ FO 371/772/17612: Lowther to Grey, confidential despatch, Pera, 4.5.1909; see also Christopher J. Walker: *Armenia: the survival of a nation*, London 1980, p. 183.

Mersin, Major Doughty Wylie, recognised this to such an extent that he later prevented the bishop's landing at Mersin on his return to his diocese, in the interests of public order⁶⁷.

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 İstanbul, and priests ("an Armenian priest is in his way an autocrat") urged their congregations to buy arms. It was done openly, indiscreetly, and, in some cases, it might be said wickedly. What can 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, "murder for murder. Buy arms. A Turk 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 guns⁶⁸.

According to Cemal Pasha, who was appointed to Adana following the incidents there⁶⁹ this "young and ambitious Armenian priest", was also one of the Hintchakist leaders. 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.

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 of the 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

⁶⁷ FO 371/772/17612: Lowther to Grey, confidential despatch, Pera, 4.5.1909.

⁶⁸ FO 424/220, no. 48, enclosure; see also Kâmurân Gürün: *Ermeni Dosyası* (Armenian File), Ankara 1983, pp. 167-8.

⁶⁹ *Hatıralar* (Memoirs), İstanbul 1959, pp. 345-6.

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 at Konya and Aydın in early April 1909 was perfectly quiet to all outward appearances, despite the report sent to British Ambassador Lowther by his vice-consul at 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. 40,000 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-general) 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 İstanbul 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 ⁷⁰.

On 13th and 14th 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 at 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 ⁷¹. 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 Maraş to gather in the barley harvest ⁷².

As soon as Doughty 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

⁷⁰ FO 371/771/26538: Lowther to Grey, despatch, Pera, 27.4.1909.

⁷¹ See also FO 371/772/17612: Lowther to Grey, confidential despatch, Pera, 4.5.1909.

⁷² FO 371/242/219, p. 80.

anticipated: he saw the odd dead body near the track, and refugees running panic-stricken towards the train. On 15th April he telegraphed Ambassador Lowther, reporting that disorders had broken out at 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 at Mersin and Tarsus appeared to him to be anxious⁷³. 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 Ambassador Lowther was assured by the Porte that they were doing all that was possible. Lowther, who was surprised by the news of the incidents, telegraphed to Sir Edward Grey on the following day that a warship should be sent to Mersin. The situation at Adana had not improve. He also suggested that a vessel should be present at Piraeus to await orders owing to disorders anticipated at Beirut⁷⁴.

During the whole of the 15th, 16th and 17th April Adana became the scene of wide 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 (*hocas* - Muslim clerics) and reactionaries. The *vali*, Cevat Bey, who was a man of good character, but incapable of administering the province, and the *ferik* (local army commandant), who was Mustafa Remzi Pasha, an old man⁷⁵, 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, the British vice-consul, 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 carnage⁷⁶. With about 50 Turkish soldiers, whom he got the authorities to place at his disposal, and the commandant of the gendarmerie, Major Doughty 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.

⁷³ FO 424/219 confidential 9532, no. 25: Lowther to Grey, telegram, İstanbul, 15.4.1909.

⁷⁴ Ibid., no. 29: Lowther to Grey, telegram, İstanbul, 16.4.1909.

⁷⁵ Cemal Paşa *Hatıralar* (Memoirs), İstanbul 1959, pp. 345-6.

⁷⁶ FO 424/219/p. 80.

“Wherever we went the fighting ceased”, he later reported to Lowther. “We cleared the streets sometimes by charging with the bayonet and sometimes by firing over the head of the crowd”⁷⁷. Alternatively, Doughty Wylie had a crier (*dellal*) 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 Major Doughty 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. Doughty Wylie later commented on this incident as follows: “He was probably deceived by my military uniform into thinking I was a Turkish Officer, or else too wild with terror or despair to know what he was doing”. His 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 on the Armenian quarter?

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 if the outbreak continued he would hold them responsible. As a partial solution he suggested that the Armenian quarter be sealed off with regular troops and good officers; no one should be allowed in or out; and the rest of the town should be patrolled, with people being driven indoors, by shooting if necessary. Having despatched the commandant of the gendarmerie he returned home to tend to his wound. It was mainly owing to his courage and bravery that, wherever he appeared at the head of a body of Turkish soldiers, bloodshed ceased - at all events temporarily⁷⁸. Major Doughty Wylie, whom Lang erroneously bases at Konya instead of Mersin, and who never even mentions that he was shot by an Armenian⁷⁹, was later awarded the CMG and the Turkish Order of the Mecidiye for his bravery⁸⁰.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 81.

⁷⁸ FO 371/772/17612: Lowther to Grey, confidential despatch, Pera, 4.5.1909.

⁷⁹ David Marshall Lang: *The Armenians, a people in Exile*, London 1981, p. 14.

⁸⁰ H.V.F. Winstone: *Gertrude Bell*, London 1978, pp. 119-20. C.H.M. Doughty Wylie was a close friend of Gertrude Bell; he died at Gallipoli in 1915.

Meanwhile the local authorities were paralysed with shock. According to Doughty 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 villagers and by the "frenzied population"⁸¹. The Muslim leaders were divided, some trying to quieten the crowd, other taking rifles and joining in the *melée*. 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 be punished in an exemplary way⁸².

It was only on the 17th 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 martiallaw was declared in Adana. Troops were being rushed there from everywhere.

In İstanbul an Armenian delegation went to the Porte to see the Grand Vizier, whilst the Ottoman Government, at its meeting attended by Nazım and İzzet Pashas, took a number of important decisions about Adana⁸³. It dismissed the Governor-General Cevat Bey and replaced him by Mustafa Zihni Pasha, the *mutasarrıf* (governor) of Burdur. The same fate was shared by the local commandant, Ferik Mustafa Remzi Pasha⁸⁴. It declared that henceforth the governor-general could directly demand from the army commanders the despatch of troops and then notify the Ministry of War instead of going in a round-about way of asking the Porte, then the Minister

⁸¹ FO 424/219, p. 82.

⁸² Akşin, p. 191.

⁸³ *Meclis-i Vükela mazbatası* (Minutes of the Council of Ministers), vol. 127, 19.4.1325 (1909).

⁸⁴ *İkdam*, 19.4.1909; Akşin p. 268.

of War and then the commanders⁸⁵. The Ottoman War Office announced, on the evening of 18th April, that no incident had occurred for the past 24 hours. Nevertheless the Government decided to send a cruiser and a number of armed sailors to Adana⁸⁶.

The *Şeyhülislâm* (Sheikh-ul-Islam), in a telegram to the *Müftü* of Adana, reminded him that massacres were against the *Şeriat* and against 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"⁸⁷. On 23rd 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 punished⁸⁸. On that day Parliament examined a telegram from the Catholicos of Cilicia, Mgr. Sehak, who had resigned, complaining that for the past two days Haccin 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 responsibilities⁸⁹.

The arrival, on or about the 25th April, of several British and other foreign warships at Mersin and İskenderun (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 population⁹⁰. German, Austrian and American ships joined them in order to protect their nationals⁹¹. Russia also was reported to have sent warships to Burgaz⁹² and Akpınar, but the Russian Foreign Minister, M. Isvolski, assured Turkish Ambassador Turhan Pasha that no Russian ship had left port⁹³. Apparently Russia was trying to procure the support of the other Great Powers in order to stage a naval demonstration. Austria and Germany, however, were not in favour as this would give Russia the right of

⁸⁵ Akşin p. 250.

⁸⁶ *Meclis-i Vükela mazbatası*, vol. 126, 6.4.1329 (1909); Akşin p. 205.

⁸⁷ *İkdam*, 20.4.1909.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.4.1909.

⁸⁹ *Takvim-i Vekayi*, no. 200-1, 21-2, April 1325 (1909); Akşin p. 287.

⁹⁰ *İkdam*, 17.4.1909; Yunus Nadi pp. 68-9; Ali Cevat and Unat, p. 55.

⁹¹ *Die Grosse Politik*, 27/1, no. 9588/37.

⁹² *Ibid.*, no. 9584/24.

⁹³ *Hariciye* (Foreign Ministry), carton no. 594/6, no. 191.

access to the Straits. Austria, therefore, was very late in sending her warships, whilst Germany had reluctantly decided to send ships in order to satisfy the demands of her nationals and as a counterpoise to the actions of the other Powers⁹⁴. The only countries that were keen in sending warships to Turkish waters were France and Greece⁹⁵. The visit of the captains of the French, German and British men-of-war to the *vali* had produced a good effect⁹⁶.

Meanwhile, the movement which had begun in Adana was spreading far and wide over the neighbouring districts⁹⁷. Simultaneously with the outbreaks at Adana, there were terrible scenes between the Turks and the Armenians at Bahçe, Maraş, Hamidiye, Antakya, Tarsus, Payas, Hacin, Erzin, Dörtüol, etc⁹⁸. It was not only on the Cilician plain that the Turks and the Armenians were killing one another, the whole of the coastline round the gulf of İskenderun was affected. Many Turks and Armenians lost their lives⁹⁹.

The *vali* of Aleppo had declared himself unable to restore tranquillity, but had sent instructions for the protection of British subjects, who were collected in the British Vice-Consulate. It was believed that the influence of the *Şeyhülislâm* and the Armenian Patriarch alone was likely to avail, and Ambassador Lowther proposed that the former should attempt to exercise such influence with the *Muftus* of the *Vilayets* 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 *Şeyhülislâm*. "The Armenians are our special care, and I think we should say something", commented an official, while Sir Edward Grey added: "We should do all we can with the Constantinople (İstanbul) authorities"¹⁰⁰. The Armenian Patriarch and the *Şeyhülislâm* 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 *Vilayets* of Diyarbakır and Aleppo¹⁰¹.

⁹⁴ *Die Grosse Politik*, 9582/23, 9588/37, 9589/13 and 9591/17.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 9590/42; Akşin pp. 147-8.

⁹⁶ FO 371/771/15398: Lowther to Grey, telegram, İstanbul, 24.4.1909.

⁹⁷ See also FO 371/771/14851: Lowther to Grey, cipher telegram, İstanbul, 20.4.1909.

⁹⁸ G.F. Abbott: *Turkey in Transition*, London 1909, p. 304; H. Charles Woods: *The Danger Zone of Europe*, London 1911, pp. 155-7.

⁹⁹ Woods, p. 160.

¹⁰⁰ FO 371/771/15013: Lowther to Grey, confidential telegram, İstanbul, 21.4.1909.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, doc. no. 15155: Lowther to Grey, telegram, İstanbul, 22.4.1909; *İkdam*, 19.4.1909.

There was much panic at Aleppo (Halep), Antep, and other nearby towns, and at Konya, Kayseri and even Beirut, where periods of grave alarm were recorded; but in most cases the local authorities, and notably the *mutasarrif* (governor) 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 25th 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 the restoration of some kind of authority in İstanbul. 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 soldiers¹⁰², although pro-Armenian authors claim that it was the Turks who began the firing¹⁰³.

The town was again in a blaze. All night long incidents went on, and by the time Major Doughty Wylie had obtained assistance from the *vali* the next day, under menace of foreign intervention, half of the town, including hospitals, churches, mosques and mission buildings, had been burnt down. Doughty 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 street¹⁰⁴. Woods believed that many of the fires were started "deliberately"¹⁰⁵.

The outbreak of these second incidents at 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 Hintchakist terrorists, who, in the wild hope of provoking foreign intervention, had attacked and killed 15 newly arrived Roumelian soldiers who were picketed in the Armenian quarter. Lowther

¹⁰² Cemal Paşa pp. 345-6.

¹⁰³ Walker p. 185.

¹⁰⁴ FO 424/219, p. 93.

¹⁰⁵ Woods p. 138; Abbott p. 305.

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 5,400 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 Armenians¹⁰⁶. Cemal Pasha claims that 17,000 Armenians and 1,850 Muslims were killed¹⁰⁷. 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 21,001¹⁰⁸. Cemal Pasha's figures are nearer the truth¹⁰⁹.

The Ottoman Government made an initial grant of TL 30,000 for relief work, and subsequently the Turkish Parliament voted two further sums of TL 100,000 each for rebuilding the burnt quarter¹¹⁰.

Who was responsible for the incidents?

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 Charge d'Affaires at İstanbul, 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 remarked¹¹¹. 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

¹⁰⁶ FO 371/771/15394: Lowther to Grey, telegram, İstanbul, 23.4.1909, and doc. no. 15478: Lowther to Grey, telegram, İstanbul, 25.4.1909; see also FO 371/4974/E 2404: Memorandum by R. McDonell, 25.3.1920, which confirms that 15,000 Armenians were killed; but the number of Muslims killed is not mentioned.

¹⁰⁷ The Shaws support this view; see: S.J. Shaw and E.K. Shaw: *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, Cambridge University Press, 1977, p. 281.

¹⁰⁸ United States National Archives, 353/43, no. 87, 4016/13.

¹⁰⁹ Gürün p. 176; Akşin p. 123.

¹¹⁰ FO 371/1002/4235; see also FO 424/220, no. 48: Turkey Annual Report for 1909, Lowther to Grey, confidential despatch, İstanbul, 31.1.1910.

¹¹¹ FO 371/1496/32933: Marling to Grey, despatch, İstanbul, 29.7.1912.

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 13th 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 *ferik*'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 Society (*Dashnaktsutiun*) propaganda, and of urging the Armenians to armed resistance"¹¹².

Cemal Pasha, on the other hand, puts all the blame on Mgr. Mousheg, the Armenian bishop of Adana, and on the local government, who did not prevent his "evil work"¹¹³. According to British documents, Mgr. Mousheg had taken bribes from Bahri Pasha; had encouraged the Armenians to buy arms; and had sold to them faulty weapons thus making a great deal of money. He had made provocative speeches; had paraded around with arms and bandoliers, and had his picture taken in dress worn by former Armenian leaders. The British ambassador, too, admits, in his despatch of 4th May 1909 that, Mousheg had great responsibility in the outburst of the incidents¹¹⁴.

According to Turkish writer Reşat İleri, Mgr. Mousheg had set up an organisation under the name of "private school of agriculture". In an inaugural speech opening the school, he even prayed for the Ottoman Empire and declared that the aim of the school was to educate the Armenian youth in modern agricultural methods, but not so in reality as the school was actually used in training Armenian guerrillas and terrorists. The Armenian

¹¹² FO 371/4974/E 2404: Memorandum by R. McDonell, 25.3.1920.

¹¹³ *Hatıralar* (Memoirs), İstanbul 1959, p. 345.

¹¹⁴ FO 424/219, no. 83.

youth enrolled in this school were indoctrinated against the Turks and taught how to use weapons and methods of sabotage¹¹⁵.

Mousheg himself reveals in a book he published in Cairo in 1909 on the Adana incidents and their culprits, entitled *Les Vêpres Ciliciennes*, that the Armenian committees in the Adana province had given importance to the arming of the Armenian people, and that he himself, and other Armenian leaders, used to travel round the villages, inciting the Armenian people "in the name of defending the constitution". According to an American missionary Krillman¹¹⁶, as quoted by the Armenian *Goshnak* newspaper, a number of hotheaded and emotional Armenians went around in Adana and Mersin, singing old Armenian songs. They were supported by the "young and inexperienced Armenian Bishop Mousheg", who perambulated round the villages in the Adana plain, urging the Armenians to eat less, to sell their belongings and buy weapons. Bishop Mousheg having thus prepared the ground, left for Egypt, and as soon as he departed, the Adana incidents began¹¹⁷.

Another leader of the Armenian extremists at Adana was Garabet Gokderelian, who, for many years, had served as a judge in Turkish courts of law. Moreover, the Armenian Church in the Kozan sub-province played an important role in the Armenian rebellion at Adana. This Armenian church was one of the most important religious establishments frequently visited by the Armenians, some of whom used to come from the U.S.A. When the revolt was being prepared, these visits became more frequent. Many Armenian terrorists were accommodated in the church, waiting for the day of the revolt¹¹⁸.

The local authorities, on the other hand, acted rather recklessly in calling upon the Muslims to get their arms and suppress the rebellion. The governor of the Kozan *Sancak* (sub-province), Asaf Bey, who did not dare leave Government House, sent alarming telgrams in all directions, inviting the Muslims to come to the aid of their brethren because he had received information that armed Armenians from Dört Yol were marching to Erzin, the capital of the sub-province, which was also known as Cebelibereket¹¹⁹.

¹¹⁵ "Ermeni Dosyası" (Armenian File), *Hürriyet* newspaper, İstanbul, 24.9.1982.

¹¹⁶ *New York Times*, 23.10.1909.

¹¹⁷ Koçuş p. 168.

¹¹⁸ *Hürriyet*, 24.9.1982.

¹¹⁹ See also Mehmet Asaf: *1909 Adana Ermeni olayları ve anılarım* (The Armenian incidents of 1909 of Adana and my reminiscences), edited by İsmet Parmaksızoğlu, Ankara 1982; see also Gürün p. 176; Cemal Paşa p. 168.

Many Turkish historiographers insist that, after the restoration of the constitution the Armenians did not remain idle; on the contrary, they mobilised their resources in order to achieve their "holy aspiration" -the establishment of an Armenian state in Cilicia (Çukurova). According to Reşat İleri, 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, 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 at Adana and its bishops were the chief instigators of this movement. The Turks also 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 Turks¹²⁰.

It is interesting to note here that David Kherdian, an Armenian writer, attributes the following statement in connection with the 1909 incidents in Adana, to his father:

"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:

¹²⁰ See also Mithat Sertoğlu: "Türk-Ermeni dostluğu düşmanlığa nasıl dönüştürüldü" (How Turco-Armenian friendship was transformed into enmity), *Hürriyet*, 17.11.1981; Sezai Orkunt: "Güçlülerin oyuncağı Ermeniler" (Armenians, toys of the Powerful), *Milliyet*, 5.10.1981.

“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 had 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”...¹²¹

And this hardly needs any comment.

The Commission of Inquiry into the Adana incidents

Meanwhile, the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies, which was reeling under the unexpected blow of the 13th April events in the capital, met early in May and decided to investigate the causes and development of the incidents at Adana. During a stormy session, Zohrab Efendi, a well-known Armenian deputy, criticised the Government for the “criminal carelessness”

¹²¹ Kherdian, pp. 65-8.

of the local authorities in not taking early and effective steps to check the disorders. In the end Parliament decided to send a court-martial to Adana as soon as possible¹²², and proceeded to appoint a commission of inquiry from amongst its members, including Hagop Babikian, the Armenian deputy for Tekirdağ, Yusuf Kemal, the Turkish deputy for Kastamonu and two members appointed by the Government, namely Arif Bey (Turkish), the chief clerk of the Council of State, and judge Musdikian Efendi (Armenian). The commission was asked to proceed to Adana and to carry out a through investigation *in situ*¹²³.

The commission arrived at Adana soon after, but its members refused to be accommodated by the local officials as they declared that they would also investigate the activities of those officials. Their first job was to visit the wounded, and to extent help to the needy. There was already a commission charged with the latter duty, but many complaints had been made against it. Yusuf Kemal, who was already appointed a member of the aid commission, which was set up in İstanbul to help the Adana victims, invited the leaders of the local Armenians and Greeks together with the consuls of France and Britain to attend the meetings of the commission.

At their first meeting at Government House, Yusuf Kemal told those present that he had abolished the existing membership of the commission, and asked the Armenians and the Muslim to select three new members each, which they duly did. He then turned to British Vice-Consul Major Doughty Wylie, who was present, and invited him to become the honorary president of the commission, which he accepted gladly. Yusuf Kemal had already been informed of the good work done by Doughty Wylie during the disturbances, and that he was even wounded in the arm by an Armenian. Thereafter their relationship became friendly¹²⁴.

By the second week in May there were indications that the new governor general of Adana, Mustafa Zihni Pasha, father of İsmail Hakkı, member of Parliament for Bagdad and editor of *Tanin* newspaper, was disposed to attribute all the blame to the Armenians. He had telegraphed to İstanbul that the total casualties were as follows: Mussulmans: 1,924 killed,

¹²² FO 371/772/17775: Lowther to Grey, confidential despatch, İstanbul, 4.5.1909; Turkish press of 4.5.1909.

¹²³ Yusuf Kemal Tengirşen: *Vatan Hizmetinde* (In the Fatherland's Service), İstanbul 1967, p. 120.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

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 11th 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 lulled by the action of the Government.

In Adana the authorities had arrested 104 Muslims and 89 Christians on charge of being implicated in the incidents¹²⁵. 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 gives the lie to Christopher Walker's that claim the military tribunal "did little except frame Armenians"¹²⁶. 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 (*sic* Istanbul)", as claimed by Walker¹²⁷.

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 İstanbul 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 on sale 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 exist¹²⁸.

¹²⁵ FO 371/772/19552: Lowther to Grey, telegram, İstanbul, 24.5.1909.

¹²⁶ Walker p. 186.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, doc. no. 21190: Lowther to Grey, confidential despatch, Pera, 1.6.1909.

Whilst inquiries were continuing in Adana, on 30th 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 people¹²⁹.

Meanwhile Hagop Babikian, the Armenian member of the commission of inquiry, left for İstanbul 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 İstanbul where he saw Hagop 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 1st 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

¹²⁹ FO 424/220: No. 24: Lowther to Grey despatch, İstanbul, 14.7.1909, enclosing copy of despatch from Major C.H.M. Doughty Wylie, Adana, 6.7.1909.

page included the conclusion on the events. When Yusuf Kemal opened the envelope, 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 defenceless 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 happened to it. "Didn't you give it to me like that?" the latter exclaimed. He then admitted the existence of page 8, and explained that, whilst dining at the *Tokallian*, 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 Mouradian, the president of the Hintchak 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 Yeşilköy (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 it¹³⁰. We learn from a despatch which British Ambassador Lowther sent to Sir Edward Grey on 4th August that Babikian had been receiving threatening letters (probably from Armenian extremists), and although there were suspicions of foul play in his death (possibly poisoning), they were groundless as shown by the *post-mortem*¹³¹. Before he died, however, Babikian had given an interview to the *Tasvir-i Efkâr* newspaper of 9th July, accusing a number of local officials, and making some wild and exaggerated remarks which exasperated the members of the court-martial¹³². As a first 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 by the *Itidal* 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 unfortunate¹³³. As a result of his statements the Armenian Patriarch

¹³⁰ Tengirşenk, pp. 120-5.

¹³¹ FO 424/220, no. 43: Lowther to Grey, confidential despatch, Therapia, 4.8.1909; Walker p. 187.

¹³² See also FO 371/777/28694: Garabet Hagopian's letter to Sir Edward Grey, London, 28.7.1909, about the Adana incidents from the Armenian point of view.

¹³³ FO 424/220: Major Doughty Wylie to Lowther, despatches, Adana, 19.7.1909, pp. 63-5.

threatened to resign unless the Government retracted its original contention that the incidents were the result of an Armenian plot to found an independent principality¹³⁴.

In İstanbul where the Government had passed the Law of Associations forbidding all political organisations based on ethnic or national groups, the Grand Vizier and the Minister of 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 resignation¹³⁵; whilst the new *vali* in Adana 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 hearers. The acting British Vice-Consul, R.E.W. Chafy believed that this should contribute tremendously to the success of the governor-general's reforming efforts. The *vali* had also announced his intention of suppressing various Armenian source of rumour and the so-called "reports" in Adana, which was welcomed by Chafy, as "absurdly inaccurate" reports and newspaper stories had emanated from Adana which had the most harmful results¹³⁶.

Considerable sensation was aroused early in September 1909 by a statement in the press on the subject of the condemnation to death of various Turks and Armenians at Adana. The number of Armenians condemned to death was given variously 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 Mgr. Tourian, the Armenian Patriarch, who sent in his resignation to the Grand Vizier on 7th 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

¹³⁴ Ibid., no. 43: Lowther to Grey, despatch, Therapia 4.8.1909.

¹³⁵ Ibid., same despatch.

¹³⁶ FO 371/774/34994: Lowther to Grey, confidential despatch, İstanbul, 8.9.1909, enclosing copy of despatch from acting Vice-Consul R.E.W. Chafy, Adana, 1.9.1909.

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 Council threatened to follow the example of their chief, and negotiations were opened between the Porte, represented by Talat Bey, the Minister of the Interior, and Necmettin Bey, the Minister of Justice, and Mgr. Tourian, with a view to arriving at a compromise which should satisfy the demands of the latter. Talat Bey'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 Bey states in his memoirs that he investigated the report about the Adana incidents with great care. Those incidents were started by the Armenians, as stated by an Armenian witness. Even Hagop Babikian, claims Talat Bey, 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 at Cilicia (Çukurova)¹³⁷.

Despite Talat Bey'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 life¹³⁸; whilst the capital punishment passed on about 40 Muslims was carried out¹³⁹. According to Cemal Pasha, who was appointed to Adana after the incidents:

“Four months after my arrival at 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 Müftü of the Bahçe district... I regret that I could not capture Mgr. Mousheg, who had escaped to Alexandria on a foreign ship on the

¹³⁷ Talât Paşa: *Talât Paşa'nın Hatıraları* (Memoirs of Talat Pasha), İstanbul 1958, pp. 14 ff.

¹³⁸ FO 371/774/35805: Lowther to Grey, confidential despatch, Therapia, 16.9.1909.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, docs. nos. 45105 and 46733: Marling to Grey, cipher telegram, İstanbul, 12.12.1909; see also FO 242/219, p. 195, and despatch, 21.12.1909, enclosing copy of despatch from R.E.W. Chafy, Adana, 15.12.1909.

second day of the incidents. This person, too, was rightly condemned to death *in absentia* by court-martial, I would hanged opposite to the *müftü* of Bahçe”¹⁴⁰.

It was announced in the middle of December that four Armenians, Kirkor, Nazaret, Bedros and Mihran, 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 life¹⁴¹. Yet the Armenians of Adana were not the innocent passive sufferers that they have sometimes been portrayed. They were insufferably and tactlessly loquacious, and their bishop, Mousheg, was “a foolish 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 documents¹⁴².

¹⁴⁰ Gürün p. 176.

¹⁴¹ FO 371/774/46068: Marling to Grey, confidential despatch, İstanbul 15.12.1909.

¹⁴² FO 424/220, p. 70; Walker p. 187.