

TURKEY'S BID FOR THE EU MEMBERSHIP, THE TURKISH – ARMENIAN RELATIONS DURING THE WORLD WAR I, IN THE CONFIDENTIAL BRITISH DOCUMENTS

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Abstract:

In this article, it is intended to analyze Turkish-Armenian relations during the World War I in the light of British confidential archival documents. It can be understood from these documents that the British agents and diplomats in the Ottoman Empire were aware that the Armenians had a significant responsibility in the formulation of the decision of relocation because of their rebellious activities. The documents also reveal that the Armenians were not trusted by the British as an ally. The article concludes with a general evaluation of Western hypocritical position on the Armenian question

Key Words: World War I, British archival documents, Armenian question, Ottoman Empire, Armenian revolts.

Öz:

Bu makalede İngiliz gizli arşiv belgeleri ışığında Birinci Dünya Savaşı sırasında Türk-Ermeni ilişkileri analiz edilmektedir. Bu belgelerden anlaşıldığı üzere Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda görev yapan İngiliz diplomatlar ve ajanlar Ermenilerin tehcir kararının alınmasında son derece önemli bir sorumlulukları olduğunun farkındadırlar. Belgeler ayrıca Ermenilerin İngilizler tarafından güvenilir müttefikler olarak algılanmadığını da göstermektedir. Makale Batının Ermeni meselesi konusundaki ikiyüzlü tutumunu eleştiren bir bölümle sona ermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Birinci Dünya Savaşı, İngiliz arşiv belgeleri, Ermeni Sorunu, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Ermeni isyanları

There was no issue called 'the Armenian Question' within the borders of Turkey, until recently. However, developments related to the Turkish-Armenian incidents that recorded in the Ottoman period, and the so-called 'Armenian genocide' that Armenian militants, activists, and supporters

have been trying to reinvigorate, had been busying the Turkish administration and some academics.

Recently, upon Turkey's bid for the membership in the European Union (EU), French Foreign Minister Michel Barnier said in the mid of December 2004: "Turkey should officially recognize the Armenian Genocide of 1915 before being a member in the EU." Such an irresponsible statement that is baseless of any document, legal, and judicial evidence indicates that Turkey will face gradually increasing difficulties for its membership in the EU, and the so-called Armenian question was tried to be transformed into an internal issue.

It seems that successors of the former imperialist and expansionist states which exploited Armenians for their interests and passions and which had Turks and Armenians fight with each other, has been trying to revive the Treaty of Sevres that was forcefully had Turks signed on August 10, 1920 but never approved, and shelved upon the Turkish victory. As Monsieur Barnier and other supporters of the Armenian cause demanded, Turkey will not only be compelled to admit the so-called Armenian genocide, but also be compelled to pay compensation and to give territory to Armenians without charge; moreover, demands of other aspirants will succeed this process.

I believe in that it is crucially important, particularly in recent times, for the existence and future of Turkey that the current Turkish government should re-evaluate and reanalyze importance of its membership in the EU and outcomes of it, considering rejection of the EU constitution by referendums took place in France and Netherlands which was commented by the European press as an indicator of people's protest to the EU's recent enlargement and particularly accession of Turkey to the Union.

After this introduction, we will analyze Turkish-Armenian relations throughout the First World War through the confidential British documents. There are many British documents on those relations, yet some of them are contradictory and unreliable. The subject of the Turkish-Armenian relations has been exploited by biased, unscrupulous, and partisan authors. For this reason, while analyzing various documents the author should be careful whether those documents were sound and trustworthy or not, since those prepared these documents may not be perfect and may have prejudices and various flaws.¹

1 Salahi R. Sonyel, *The Great War and the Tragedy of Anatolia* [Yüce Savaş ve Anadolu Felaketi], Ankara, 2000, p. 137 ff.

It is useful to emphasize another point: Because the missionaries, diplomats, representatives, and travelers that came to Turkey had know a little Turkish – or completely not know it – they were depended on the Greek and Armenian translators, many of whom was unscrupulous, found of money and unreliable, to prepare their reports and conduct daily activities. Furthermore, some leaders of the Ottoman Christian minorities and some of the Ottoman politicians were providing the British administration with spurious and exaggerated information about the situation in Turkey.²

Now on, I will try to explain some British documents, which are very interesting with related to developments that recorded about the Turkish-Armenian relations in the period of World War I, the most critical period of the Ottoman history. However, for a better understanding of the developments, it is necessary to go back to some extent.

Although Turks and Armenians reached into a partial agreement and peace after the Young Turk revolution of 1908, it was not long-lasting. According to what newly-elected Armenian Patriarch Izmirlian told F.H. Fitzmaurice, one of the translators of the British Embassy, in a secret meeting; he called the Armenian community to make business faithfully, and to behave moderately with regard to Turks, and to avoid extremities; he tried to told that the Turkish administration and people was intended to treat Armenians heartedly, honestly, and fairly; however particularly some extremists remained deaf to his warnings.³

As Sir Gerard Lowther, the British ambassador to Istanbul, reported to Sir Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, Armenians initiated to take an 'insolent and provocative' stance following the reintroduction of the constitution. The Deputy British Consul in Van, Captain Bertram Dickson defined Armenians as fitted to typology of the worst politician, fussy, noisy, insolent, and shameless people. Ambassador Lowther stated in a correspondence on September 29, 1908; "The Armenian policy was permanently selfish, is still selfish, and probably will be selfish. Armenians do not support a united Ottoman Empire, and consider only their nations and interests."

2 S. R. Sonyel: 'İngiliz Kaynaklarına Göre Ermenilerce Sahtelenen ve Osmanlı Arşivlerinden Aşırılan Gizli Belgeler [Confidential Documents Plagiarized from the Ottoman Archives and Fabricated by Armenians, according to the British Sources]', XIII. Türk Tarih Kongresi, Ankara, September 1999; Additionally see, Suraiya Faroqhi, *Approaching Ottoman History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p.140 ff.

3 The British Record Office (BRO), the British Foreign Office documents, class FO 371/file 533/document no. 33230: Büyükelçi Sir Gerard Lowther'den Dışişleri Bakanı Sir Edvvard Grey'e yazı, [Note from ambassador Sir Gerard Lowther to Sir Edvvard Grey, Foreign Office Secretary], Istanbul, 20.9.1908.

Dickson reported that Armenians were still introducing arms and bullets to the country in spite of the reestablishment of the constitutional monarchy, and commented: "If Armenians were granted with more freedom than necessary, Russia would create conflicts with various deceits and may provoke the Ottoman Armenians against Turks."

According to a report from British ambassador Lowther to Sir Edward Grey, British Foreign Secretary on January 18, 1909 Dashnaks were cooperated with the Young Turks hoping to ensure establishment of one or two Armenian provinces. However, since the Young Turks' administration pursued to establish the –united - Ottoman citizenship without ethnic or religious discrimination, Armenians were greatly disappointed.

Deputy British Consul Captain Dickson acquainted that Dashnaksutun party had "incredibly ambitious" aims; to establish an Armenian Republic including the Ottoman, Russian, and Iranian provinces that would assimilate all peoples different from Armenians; and the Armenian priests encouraged the Armenian community to get marry in early ages, and to have children, thereby, to outstrip other peoples in the region.⁴

The terrible events erupted in Adana on April 13, 1909 that is known as the event of 31st March, were derived from Armenian dreams to establish a great Armenia. As a result of the events in Adana and Istanbul, Sultan Abdulhamid was dethroned. The British Deputy Consul in Mersin Major Doughty-Wylie reported to ambassador Lowther that the Armenian Hinchak Party heavily incited Armenians, which concerned Turks. According to a correspondence from Lowther to British Foreign Secretary Grey on May 4, Armenian bishop Musheg did all his best to stimulate the ambitions of his community and concerns of Turks; Armenians started to armament utilizing the new regime. The great ambitions of Armenians and the objectives of Hinchak and Dashnak parties led concerns and anxiety among the Muslim people who perceived that Armenians indented to revenge from Turks.⁵

According to Pastor Dr. Christie, one of the most experienced missionaries in Anatolia, malevolence advices of the Armenian priest whom Christie defined as an

4 IDA, FO 371.560/37689: Correspondence from Dickson to Lowther, 29- 30.9.1908; Correspondence from Lowther to Grey, Istanbul: 24.10.1908.

5 IDA, FO 371/762/3123: Correspondence from Lowther to Grey, 18.1.19090.

‘extremely evil man’ greatly contributed to Adana events.⁶ The British ambassador Lowther reported to London that bishop Musheg profited from arms sale.⁷ The British deputy consul Doughty-Wylie was so offended with behavior of Musheg that, later, he prevented Musheg’s return to Mersin due to public security.

After the Adana events in which many Turks and Armenians lost their life and that naturally reflected in the West, again, as the ‘Armenian genocide,’ the Turkish-Armenian relations became tensed again.

Newly appointed British Consul to Van, Captain Molyneux-Seel who traveled many places in the eastern provinces of Turkey pointed out that the Armenian revolutionary committees severely harmed welfare of Armenians in his report of October 9, 1911, and stated: “that fact should not be overlooked; in every places where the Armenian political organizations are inactive, Armenians, Turks and Kurds live in peace ... in places where the Armenian revolutionary committees are active, Armenian people was embarrassed by representatives of that committees. Those representatives became rich through collecting money, and forcefully selling arms – although they bought them in a low price -- to Armenian peasants with a high price. In order to continue this evil trade they consistently propagate that Armenians are in danger.”⁸

The British deputy consul told the following event: “An Armenian agent went a village and advised an Armenian peasant to buy Mouser type of pistol. When the peasant answered that he had no money, agent told him “sell your ox.” The poor peasant reminded him that planting season neared and asked him what pistol does to cultivate field. Upon this debate, the agent shot cows of the poor peasants to death.”⁹

Wide range of events was recorded in every corner of Anatolia throughout the Balkan Wars. International and political situation and reports of maltreatments towards Muslims, murders, and Armenians in the Balkans established committees to fight Turks, increased the sense of animosity towards Armenians in the far

6 IDA, FO 37 1/772/17612: Correspondence from Lowther to Grey, 4.5.1909; copies of notes of Deputy Consul Major Doughty-Wylie were added.

7 IDA, FO 37 1/772/17612, Correspondence from Lowther to Grey, 11.5.1909; copies of notes of Deputy Consul Major Doughty-Wylie were attached.

8 IDA, FO 371/1002/4235: Correspondence from Lowther to Grey, 31.1.1910; Turkey Report of 1909 was attached. Additionally see, Sir Telford Waugh, *Turkey: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, London: 1930, p.129.

9 IDA, FO 371/772/17612: Correspondence from Lowther to Grey, 4.5.1909.

provinces of the Ottoman state.¹⁰ The Russian diplomacy that exploited these wars was inciting the Ottoman Armenians to strike the last blow to Ottoman State marked as “the ill man of Europe,” in November 1912 when Turks were in a heavy crisis.¹¹

The British Deputy Consul in Halep, R. A. Fontana, had informed the British ambassador Lowther with a secret Armenian plan in March 1913. Accordingly that plan, Armenians would occupy the mountainous areas in Zeytun, Elbistan, and Hacin (Saimbeyli); would probably capture Adana, and would establish an Armenian principedom in that region that has connection to sea.

He believed in that the Armenian soldiers that participated in the Bulgarian army in the Balkan Wars would handle and lead that projected Armenian principedom. In view of Fontana, Armenians had modern weapons. Every Armenian adult had at least one arm. The Greeks were smuggling weapons into Turkey to sell Kurds and Armenians. There were many weapons in every corner to be used in case of emergency.¹² In view of the Deputy British Consul in Van, Ian Smith, the Armenian Dashnak committee had smuggled many weapons in 1913 and delivered them to its supporters. The Armenians in Van was armed more than the Muslims, and the Dashnak organization had profited from arms sales greatly.¹³

Due to the Greek/Armenian provocations and their intrigues together with the Russians and Britons, situation in Anatolia was so tensed that there was a prophesy in the British Foreign Secretariat that the Turkish state was at the edge of collapse both in Asia, and in Europe.¹⁴ The Ottoman government was concerned with that situation and asked Tevfik Pasha, its ambassador to London, to request assistance of the British government to prepare a reform program for the Turkish Asia, under the supervision of the British officials. Since Russia opposed to that request, it led long-enduring debates among the powerful states.

In the summer and autumn of 1913, negotiations were materialized between the ambassadors of the leading countries in Istanbul to discuss projected reforms

10 IDA, FO 371/1263/43717- Correspondence from Molyneux-Seel to Lowther, 9.10.1911; Correspondence from Lowther to Grey, 29. 10.1911.

11 IDA, FO 371/1800/12195: Correspondence from Molyneux-Seel to Lowther, 17.2.1913; Correspondence from Lowther to Grey, 13.3.1913.

12 IDA, FO 371/1484/42899: Correspondence from Lowther to Grey, 9.10.1912.

13 S. R. Sonyel, *The Ottoman Armenians - Victims of Great Power Policy*, London, 1987, p.283.

14 IDA, FO 37 1/1773/16941 and 52128: Correspondence from Fontana to Lowther, 25.3.1913; Correspondence from Lowther to Grey, 10.4.1913; Note from Malet to Grey, 12.11.1913.

to be carried out in Anatolia. Throughout the negotiations, whereas Russia, supported by Britain and France of the Allies, was advocating Armenians, German and Austria of the Central Powers were supporting the Ottoman Empire. As a result of the negotiations, Turkey accepted a modified Russian plan on February 8, 1914. The Ittihat ve Terakki (Union and Progress) government was compelled by Germany to consent that plan, however it was not intended to implement it, because it was aware that implementation of the plan would cause disintegration of Turkey.¹⁵

According to the plan, the six eastern province of Turkey would be granted with an extensive autonomy. Those provinces would be separated into two administrative sectors that would be administered by foreign general supervisors. The Padishah would appoint those foreign supervisors, yet they could only be dismissed by foreign states. The Turks perceived that plan imposed on them as the first step to separate Turkey; and as soon as the World War I broke out, it gave up implementation of the plan. Indeed, the so-called 'revolution project' was a pretext¹⁶ to separate Turkey into the regions of influence and exploitation, and the Armenian militants helped them in their evil plans.

While the world was dragging into the war throughout May and July of 1914, the Ottoman government suggested Russia via the Interior Minister Mehmet Talat, and France via Ahmet Cemal Pasha, the Minister of Navy, to establish closer relations, however the both states rejected that suggestion.¹⁷ Britain was, also, not intended to please the Unionist government, because these states realizing secret meetings to share the Ottoman territories among themselves. For this reason, they did not favor to make alliance with the Ottoman state.¹⁸ For this reason, the Ottoman government could not find any solution not to be isolated other than allying itself with German and Austria of the Central Powers.¹⁹

The British documents in the period of war and reports of the Intelligence Service clearly prove that many Armenian activists and militants supported war objectives of the Allies including Britain and France against the Ottoman Empire, which was their own state. Hovannes Kachaznuni, one of the leaders of

15 IDA, FO 371/2130/5748: Note from Mallet to Grey, 30.1.1914.

16 IDA, FO 371/1783/19793: Correspondence from Lowther to Grey, 26.4.1913; Comments of the British Foreign Secretariat.

17 Sonyel, *The Great War...*, pp.74-75.

18 Ulrich Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 1914-18*, New Jersey, 1968, p.12.

19 Additionally see, Smith, *The Coming of the War, 1914*, Vol.I, New York, 1930, p.91; Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire...*, p.20.

the Dashnaksutiun, the Armenian terror organization stated in his manifestation that released in Vienna in 1923: "In the autumn of 1914, before Turkey entered into the war, the Armenian revolutionary mobs were founded in the inner Caucasus. Contrary to decision taken in Erzurum (by the Armenians) in a couple of weeks ago, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksutiun) played an active role in establishment of those mobs and their military operations against Turkey..."

Kachaznuni told how Armenians were deceived by the Russians, as well, and stated his regrets because they could not avoid from entering the war against the Turks.²⁰

There are many evidences in the British archives indicating that some Armenians spied during the World War I, even before outbreak of the war, for the Allies.²¹ Additionally, some Armenians were involved in sabotage activities,²² and initiated many riots in every corner of the country.²³ They also established voluntary brigades and mobs to fight against the Turks in Anatolia, together with the Russian soldiers.²⁴

As Aneurin Williams, an Armenian supporter British Deputy, informed the Foreign Secretary Edward Grey on September 18, 1914, fighting took place between the Armenian mobs, consists of Armenian deserters that rejected to participate in the Ottoman army and escaped to the mountains, and Turkish gendarmerie in Van.²⁵

The British ambassador Sir Louis Mallet reported to Foreign Secretary Grey that local people and particularly Armenians were unpleasant with the announcement of mobilization; and Armenians were organized and armed, not only in the northeastern provinces but even in Adana. He also added:

"The authorities are worried because the Armenians are making preparations in such a way. When the appropriate time comes, the Armenians may rebel upon

20 The British Royal Order, Command 671 (LI), 1920; additionally see J. C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East*, Vol.II, New Jersey, 1956, pp.7-25.

21 Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire...*, p.16.

22 Hovhannes Katchaznoui, *Dashnaksutiune amelik chuni ailevs*, Vienna, 1923, pp.1-5.

23 IDA, FO 37 1/3410/129455.

24 IDA, FO 371/2483/15633.

25 Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile - the Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821-1922* [Ölüm ve Sürgün - Osmanlı Müslümanlarının Etnik İmhası, 1821-1922], New Jersey, 1995, p.189.

a sign from the Dashnaks. Relying on the method of terrorizing, the Dashnaks gained the majority in proportion with their members. The trees of those who resisted joining the Dashnaks were cut down and their folds were taken away. Generally, the Armenians were faced with huge depression of the militants and they made a good deal of complaints to the British officials.”²⁶

Meanwhile, the head of the National Armenian Bureau in Tbilisi, Alexander Hatisian, send the following statement to the Tzar: “Armenians in all countries are hurrying to join the honorable Russian army with the aim of serving for the victory of Russia with their own blood. May the Russian flag sway over the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus. May the Armenians of Turkey suffering in the name of Christianity revive for a new life under the protection of Russia”. Therefore, the National Armenian Bureau began to make preparations for the war and established the armed bands named as ‘kumba’ that would help the Russian armies pretty much.”²⁷

The leader of the Russian Armenians, Avedis Aharonian, and the leader of the Ottoman Armenians, Boghos Nubar, clearly stated their obedience and assistance to the Allied States in their speeches that they made in Paris Peace Conference on February 26, 1919.²⁸ In this context, Aharonian made the following statement: ‘Our nation has not only left aside its complaints against the Tzarist regime in the beginning of the war, but also it supported the thesis of the Allies by being united under the Russian flag; our relatives in Turkey and all over the world proposed to the Tzarist government to establish Armenian legions with their spending who will fight side by side the Russian soldiers under the command of the Russian generals’. Boghos Nubar admitted this: “In the beginning of the war the Turkish government offered Armenians a kind of autonomy in exchange for voluntary troops who will fight against the Russians in the Caucasus. Armenians refused this offer and without any hesitation they assigned them to the service of the Allies from whom they expect freedom”.

The British consul in Batum, P. Stevenson, informed the British Foreign Secretariat with a text he sent on October 29, 1914 that the Armenian organizations had established volunteer troops composed of 45,000 people who would

26 IDA, FO 371/2147/74733: Correspondence from Stevens to British Foreign Secretariat, 29.10.1974; for other activities of the Armenian militants see. IDA, FO 371/2483/15633: Correspondence from British Naval Secretariat to the Foreign Secretariat, London, 9.2.1915; FO 371/2770/1 80941: War Trade Intelligence Unit, confidential report no.21/ 454, Bucharest, 4.8.1916.

27 IDA, FO 371/2116/51007: Letter from Williams to Grey, London, 18.9.1914.

28 IDA, FO 371/2137/59383: Correspondence from Mallet to Grey, 25.9.1914.

fight together with the Russian soldiers in Anatolia against the Turks. Those who would join these troops received military training in Gyumri. Armenian newspapers gave the following advice to their coreligionists: "When the time comes, be ready to help the Russians by taking up the arms to completely save the Christian people in Anatolia and Armenia (the Western provinces) from subservience to the Turks".²⁹

The head of the London Joint Armenian Association Lieutenant Colonel George M. Gregory mentioned in a text that he sent to British Ministry of Internal Affairs on November 10, 1914 that the Armenians were loyal to Allies, who were against Germany, Austria and Turkey; majority of them had been fighting under the Russian flag; a less number of Armenians were fighting the war by joining the French and British military forces.³⁰ The Canterbury Archbishop of Britain and many well-known Armenian-sympathizer British subjects, among whom Lord Bryce and Lord Robert Cecil were, admitted afterwards that during the war the Allies encouraged the Armenians before they voluntarily joined the war in their side and they provided arms to them.³¹

The British parliamentarian Aubrey Herbert put into words the disaster that the Ottoman minorities, who would support the thesis of the Allies, would face as such: 'When the First World War has begun, the Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire were greeted by the French and Lloyd George (British Prime Minister) as minor allies of the powerful states who are fighting against Turkey. The Armenians praised by this hurried to help the Russian army which had started to invade Turkey and following this behavior they became subjected to a terrible danger that had been approaching. Lloyd George, who changed his ideas in everything, made the tragedy of the Armenians inevitable with his persistence to call the minorities in Anatolia to fight together with the Allies.'³²

As the documents of war period protected in the Turkish and foreign resources have proved, the Armenian militants and insurgents began to inflict incidents in almost all over the Ottoman territories from November 1914 until May 1915. In the first year of the war, the Armenian uprising in many places of the Eastern Anatolia put the Ottomans in a lot of trouble. Only the Armenian uprising in

29 Horizon Newspaper, Tbilisi, 30.11.1914; IDA, FO 371/2484 and 2485/46941.

30 IDA, FO 371/4376/P.L.D., Paris Peace Conference, 26.2.1919; the statements of Aharonian and Nubar.

31 IDA, FO 371/2147/74733: Correspondence from Stevens to British Foreign Secretariat, 29.10.1914.

32 IDA, FO 371/776/727725: Correspondence from Gregory to British Interior Ministry, London, 10.11.1914.

Van became successful; but in other uprisings many people lost their lives and the Ottoman war capacity became vulnerable.

While these events were going on in Anatolia, the British and French forces attacked on February 19, 1915 in order to capture the straits. A few weeks later, Dashnaks light the fire of a rebellion in Van with the help of their members in the Caucasus and they attempted to drive out the Muslims from that city. At that time, the Russian army, which the Cossacks were also participated in, started to move towards Van with the help of the numerous volunteer Armenians composed of the migrants from Anatolia and the Armenians from Caucasus.³³

On April 20, 1915, Armenian insurgents attacked to the Turkish district in Van; again on May 8, they set many Turkish houses on fire. Upon this, the Turks began to walk out of Van; on May 19, the Armenians attacked the Muslim-Turkish families who were trying to draw back to the southern coasts of the Lake Van and killed many of them. Armenian people with crazy demonstrations welcomed Russian soldiers who came to Van on May 14. Turks emptied Van on May 17; four days later the Armenians set the Muslim district on fire entirely.³⁴

Even the British High Commissionaire in Cairo Sir Henry McMahon stated in a confidential telegram he sent to British Foreign Secretariat on May 12, 1915 that the Turks had to deal with the Armenians who had rebelled in many places. The Ministry that replied him two days later accepted that an Armenian uprising had begun.³⁵ However, when the Armenian sympathizer Lord Bryce asked a question in the House of Lords on October 6, 1915 by referring to the so-called Armenian genocide, the Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey denied the Armenian uprising.³⁶ Even today, the sympathizers of Armenian militants, who are not informed of these British confidential documents, deny the uprisings of the Armenians in Turkey.

After these events, an Armenian state established in Van under the protection of Russia and an Armenian legion was created to remove the Turks from the entire southern coast of the Lake Van through cooperating with the Russian soldiers

33 IDA, FO 371 /5209/E 2245: Correspondence from Spender to Lloyd George, London, the souvenir on 'Peace in the Near East' taken on 27.3.1920.

34 Aubrey Herbert, *Me Myself - a Record of Eastern Travel* [Ben Kendim - Doğu gezisi ile ilgili bir tutanak], Londra, 1924, p.275.

35 McCarthy, *Death and Exile...*, pp. 189-190.

36 IDA, FO 37 1/2488/58350: A. Nicholson souvenir, London, 16.5.1915.

in order to facilitate the Russian occupation of Bitlis.³⁷ Many Muslims, who had been able to escape from the Van disaster, were raided by the Armenians on the roads, and many of them died tragically. Armenians also killed many Jews who were trying to escape towards Hakkari.³⁸ Thus, Armenians encouraged by the Russians provoked many incidents that damaged the Ottoman logistical system especially among the Turkish military routes in the Eastern Anatolia. While the Russian armies were moving on the interior of the Ottoman territories in the Eastern Anatolia, the Armenian volunteer deserters from the Ottoman army as well as the Ottoman and the Russian Armenians accompanied them.

Armenians also organized many mobs and were armed by the guns that they had hide for many years in the houses of the Armenians and the missionaries, in churches and schools. They organized sudden attacks to the Ottoman arms depots in order to deprive the Ottoman army, who had been preparing to confront a huge Russian incursion, from their arms. After a few months from the beginning of the war, through cooperating with the Russians, the Armenian mobs attacked to the Turkish cities, towns and villages in the East; subjected the people to decimation; at the same time attacked the military convoys by blowing up the roads and bridges; made whatever they could do in order to facilitate the Russian occupation.³⁹

In this situation, the Ottoman government had to take measures against this 'Armenian betrayal' since the Russians were moving ahead in the East over a large front, Armenians were attacking the Ottoman armies from behind by spreading death and destruction, and other Allies were occupying the Ottoman state over a large segment of war. The government was no more trusting to the Armenians; because their predecessors had helped the Russians in 1828, 1854 and 1877 Turkish-Russian wars.⁴⁰

The Ottoman administration, who was worried about the break out of a wide ranging uprising behind the Ottoman lines, the possibility that the Ottoman armies were obliged to fight in various segments of war and the transportation lines were attacked, took the decision on April 24, 1915 to lift up the Armenians from the important military zones where that could help the enemies and send

37 IDA, FO 371/4288/59060.

38 IDA, FO 371/4288/59060, The question that Lord Bryce posed in the House of Lords, 6.10.1915 and the response of Grey.

39 Richard G. Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence, 1918* [Ermenistan Bağımsızlık Yolunda], Los Angeles 1971, p.56; also see, EDA, FO 371/ 2488/127223 and 58550.

40 McCarthy, *Death and Exile...*, pp. 189-190

them to more safe places. This decision was taken not before the Armenian uprisings and the mob activities but after these events. These Armenian activities were threatening the existence of the Ottoman state by completely defeating it in the hands of its enemies. Moreover, the Armenian mobs and the militants cruelly destroy the Turkish/Muslim people of women, children and elders, who were left behind while the young Turkish men were fighting in the fronts.⁴¹

Major Edward Noel, a member of British Intelligence Service, makes the following statement in a report he wrote in May 1919: “During the three-month trip I made in the spring and summer of 1916 to the region which had been occupied and plundered by the Russian army and the accompanying Christian revenge army, I can say that without any doubt the Turks had a cause against their enemies just like the cause put forward against them. According to the statements of the local inhabitants and the eye-witnesses, the Russians together with the Nestorians and the Armenians who had accompanied them had cut the Muslim populace without exception.”

A passenger who travels the Revanduz and Neri towns sees the far-reaching proofs of violence by Christians over the Muslims there.⁴² The Soviet writer of Armenian origin B. A. Borian verifies these Armenian barbarities and states: “The Armenian politicians used the authority of the state not to govern the country but to wresting the property Muslim populace by annihilating them.”⁴³

After these horrible events, the Ottoman Cabinet issued strict instructions and published regulations about the relocation of the Armenians in other places. According to the Ottoman confidential documents, which were captured by the members of the British army in Palestine in autumn of 1918, the Ottoman administration had proposed to shut down the Armenian militants and organizations, and to arrest the leading responsible individuals. In none of these documents an Armenian genocide is mentioned. The officials of the British Foreign Secretariat have also proved this.

W.S. Edmonds, an official of the Secretariat and the responsible of the Eastern Desk, has made the following comment after monitoring the Ottoman documents: “There is not enough evidence in these documents that will verify the accusations of genocide.” Another official called Francis Osborne added these:

41 Sonyel, *The Great War...*, p. 111.

42 McCarthy, *Death and Exile...*, p. 189.

43 S. R. Sonyel, *Impact International*, London, 28.10.1983; also see Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire...* p.202.

“On the contrary, the (Ottoman) Interior Minister warned in the last paragraph of his order to avoid any behaviors which will lead to slaughters”.⁴⁴ In the secret regulations prepared by the Ottoman Interior Ministry regarding the methods with which the Armenians would be moved to safer places, there is no mention of Armenian annihilation. These confidential Ottoman documents were stolen from the Ottoman archives by the British Secret Intelligence Service agents after the formal occupation of Istanbul in 1920 by the Allies, and they were sent to London afterwards. In these secret Ottoman documents we come across, there is not any order regarding the slaughter of the Armenians.

During these transportations, the Armenians had some casualties; however, many Turks and Muslims also wiped out by the Armenian terrorists and the militants. The Turkish-Armenian incidents occurred during the period of the First World War are characterized as a civil war. This war is resulted from alliance of many Armenians with the enemies of their country and the Armenian uprisings. The Armenians and the Turks were set at odds by the imperialist and the exploiter states that used Armenians in their plans to separate the Ottoman state; they killed each other and the British documents that I have explained to you today have also verified these.

I have been searching in the Western and especially the British archives for a time longer than forty years. Besides, I have examined many Ottoman, French, German, American, Italian, Russian and Greek documents regarding the Turkish-Armenian relations. Until today, I have not come across any documents, which prove the genocide claims that are generally put forward by the Armenian militants and their sympathizers. Therefore, there are not any documents, which are reliable and acceptable by the judicial authorities, verifying the claims that the Armenians were subjected to genocide within the framework of 1948 United Nations Genocide Convention.

According to the estimations, between the years 1914 and 1918, nearly 400,000 individuals from the Armenian population of 1.3 million lost their lives mostly due to war conditions, mob struggles, and seasonal conditions. However, the Turks and other Muslims were also had over two million casualties because of these same reasons, and due to Armenian terrorism and slaughters. How come the death of nearly 400,000 Armenians is described as ‘genocide’ in the history books that the West, who frequently does mastership to Turkey, teach their children, and the Turks and other Muslims over two millions are not even mentioned? Is this the justice?

44 IDA,FO 371.