

Tigran N. Sarukhanyan

## British Documents on the Committee of Union and Progress: Ideology and Structure, 1908-1914\*

Henry Morgenthau, the US Ambassador in Constantinople during World War I, in his future memoirs provides the following provoking observation on the Committee of the Union and Progress:

The Young Turks were not a government; they were really an irresponsible party, a kind of secret society, which in intrigue, intimidation, assassination, had obtained most of the offices of state.<sup>1</sup>

The comments of the well-informed American diplomat on the phenomenon of the Ittihadist party inspired me to investigate the ideology, political agenda and structure of the party, which ruled the Ottoman Empire, except for brief intervals, for more than a decade, prior to its collapse in 1918.

The innovative British archival and research sources, which have been collected during my various trips to the British archives and libraries, come to shed new light, in an effort to understand „who, in fact, the Young Turks were.“

### Great Britain and the Turkish Revolution in 1908

Long before the Young Turk Revolution, Great Britain had gradually dropped her old role as the protector of the Ottoman State.<sup>2</sup>

Not until the Revolution of 1908, England had any chance to revert to her old position by improving her influence and reputation in Turkey. It would not be surprising to discover, then, that England in the beginning had supported the Young Turk Movement. However, the study of the origins of the Revolution leads to the conclusion that the English had no advanced knowledge of the Revolution. The view expressed by one of the prominent scholars of Modern Turkish History is very argumentative. He argues that, one of the most primary objectives of the Committee of Union and Progress of 1908 was the withdrawal of foreign „intervention in the affairs of the Ottoman Empire and that one of the factors which

\* The Paper was delivered at the Armenian-Turkish Fourth Workshop in Salzburg (WATS).

1 Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*, (New York, Doubleday, Page, 1918), p. 11.

2 William L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism*, (New York, 1935), Vol. 1, pp. 195.



gave the Revolution its initial impetus was the fear of further foreign intervention".<sup>3</sup>

The League of Union and Progress came to power in July of 1908, using the slogans of the Big French Revolution: „Fraternity,“ „Equality,“ „Liberty.“ It was mainly lead by people who were guided by principals of democracy and the Westernization of Turkey. The Revolution, at first, seemed to herald a warm relationship between Great Britain and the Ottoman Empire. That was why the Secretary of State for Foreign Office, Sir Edward Grey, described the Turkish Revolution as „marvellous.“ He also stated that Great Britain was „against the Turkish Government when it was bad, when the forces prevailed in Turkey which were more repugnant to good government, to justice and to liberty“. Then Ed. Grey added, that between them „and the people there was not, and never had been, any barrier“. <sup>4</sup>

From the outset of the establishment of the new regime, the new masters of Turkey, in earnest, tried to reestablish their endangered relations with all the Great Powers and to rebuild their ties with Great Britain, in particular.

Moreover, in the long enclosure of his dispatch to Sir Edward Grey, sent to London on February 27, 1909, the new accredited Ambassador of England at Constantinople, Sir G. Lowther wrote that the Young Turks had applied to England for an admiral to put the decaying fleet in order, and to utilize 7,000 officers who had no practical experience of their carrier.<sup>5</sup> Without any doubt, the Young Turks were also very eager to get the services of General von der Goltz, who was to reorganize the Turkish Army, and so careful were they in the early stages of revolution, not to do anything that might give offense to Great Britain, that G. Lowther was approached „as to whether His Majesty's Government would feel any resentment at the employment of German Officer.“<sup>6</sup>

Not less important and disputable was the following observation of Sir G. Lowther on the Young Turks:

I gradually came into direct personal contact with those who were the leading members of the Committee of the League of Union and Progress, and found them moderate and reasonable, expressing themselves as prepared to be guided by the advice of Great Britain, opposed to drastic measure regarding Sultan, concerning whose honesty and purpose they still expressed grave doubts.<sup>7</sup>

A year later he had to deny these views, as we will see below.

However, the study of English records makes it clear that in the case of England, the absence of advanced original knowledge on the Ittihadists' political

3 Lewis Bernard, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, (London, Oxford University Press), 1962, p. 143.

4 *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914*, Vol. V, p. 260.

5 *Ibid*, p. 256.

6 *Ibid*.

7 *Ibid*, p. 257.



agenda, structure and leadership, is just as apparent. Sir G. Lowther, the new British Ambassador to Turkey, was actually en route to his post when the Revolution took place, and was held deliriously by vast crowds on his arrival. One of the rumors circulating at the time in Constantinople was that the constitution was the gift of the English nation.<sup>8</sup> However, as Sir Ed. Grey later wrote to Lowther on July 31, „How little we either of us foresaw, when you were appointed, the reception you would actually get!“<sup>9</sup>

Eventually, it soon became clear that the establishment of a Constitutional regime in Turkey and even the original efforts of the Turkish revolutionaries to westernize and to improve the internal and external affairs of the Empire had not effected any fundamental change in Anglo-Ottoman Relations. British policy, after all, was still governed by the need to maintain *entente* with Russia, no matter what the character of the Ottoman support – whether political or financial – would have been considered, at best, unproductive, and at worst, downright harmful.

Hereafter, the Ottoman Empire was led to appear under the full control of German military and economic expansion. The Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) began to fully seek the German involvement in the political, economic and military affairs of their fatherland, because, to them, that was the only way to save the territorial integrity of the Empire.

The British Government even avoided any discussions of the Turkish offer of an alliance between the two countries. The Under-Secretary of State, Charles Hardinge, noted that a friendly Turkey was preferable to an allied Turkey. The dynamics of international politics, however, forced Britain to adopt a different policy towards Turkey.<sup>10</sup> In early October 1908, when Bulgaria proclaimed its full independence and Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia, Britain supported Russia in the question of Bulgaria's independence, but rejected the French proposal to call a European conference on the annexation of Bosnia. Grey advised the Turkish Ambassador in London to quietly accept Bulgarian independence and the loss of Bosnia, as Turkey needed „time and finances“ more than war. He promised loans and assurances of support from the British Government.<sup>11</sup>

The Anglo-Turkish relations became more suspicious of each other and aggravated in 1909, when the supporters of Abdul Hamid and Kiamil Pasha, who was considered to be an Anglophile, attempted to stage a coup to overthrow the Young Turk Government, not without the secret assurances of British support. After the Young Turks easily suppressed the coup and deposed the Sultan in favor

8 D. S. Margoliouth, „Constantinople at the Declaration of the Constitution“, Fortnightly Review, XC (October 1908), p. 563.

9 British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914, Vol. V, p. 263.

10 J. Heller, British Policy Towards the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1914, (London, 1983), pp. 24-25.

11 FO 371/550/294.



of his brother, Mehmet V, Grey concluded that the British Government had underestimated the powers of the Committee. He added that the Foreign Office should dispense less criticism and more encouragement in its dealings with the Committee.<sup>12</sup>

In fall of 1912, during those critical months on the eve of World War I, when Turkey was suffering military defeats in the Balkan War and in its internal problems, and when the Ittihadists were temporarily forced out of power, Russia, in further conjunction with the Great Powers, once again raised the issue of reforms in the Armenian provinces. In the issue, of implementation of reforms in Armenia, in 1912-1914, Great Britain had to act with her Russian ally. Asquith, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, had „a strong opinion“ that it was only a question of time before the instability and „rottenness“ of the Turkish Empire would bring about her downfall in Asia and, Britain ought to face these probabilities.<sup>13</sup> In May 1913, the Young Turk Government applied to Britain, seeking for British participation in the Porte's reforms program in the Armenian-populated provinces. The British Government was asked to supply inspectors for the gendarmerie officers in each province, and a counselor to the Inspector General.<sup>14</sup> On this matter and on the outcome of CUP's request, „The Times“ of London wrote:

The British Foreign Office, which was requested to appoint advisers, declined the responsibility, but agreed to the appointment of a certain number of British officials to these posts.<sup>15</sup>

It has been written and talked a lot about the passiveness of British politics to intervene in the internal and external affairs of the Ottoman Empire just prior to World War I, and, as a matter of fact, this politics can be described as a policy of a neutral observer.

Ed. Grey and the Cabinet better defined the above-mentioned policy in 1913. Their attitude was, for the time being, the „only safe policy“ was to maintain Ottoman rule in Asia.<sup>16</sup>

According to an opinion that prevails, the British suspicion and refusal to assist the Young Turk regime politically and financially, as well as the reason Britain considered any kind of support as unproductive and harmful, shows the lack of knowledge the Foreign Office and Lowther had on the Young Turks. Lowther's reports on the political situation in Constantinople, and on the character and activities of the Young Turks were much worse than on their predecessor, Abdul Hamid. On this, one of the English scholars wrote, „Lowther thus reinforced the longstanding anti-Ottoman prejudice in the Foreign Office, and encouraged its

12 J. Heller, *ibid.* p. 30.

13 Bodleian Library (Oxford), MS Asquith 7, f. 54, Cab. Meeting, 9 July, 1913.

14 British Documents on the Origins of War 1898-1914, Vol. 10 (London, 1936), p. 430.

15 „The Times“, July 4, 1913.

16 Bodleian Library, MS Asquith 7, f. 54, Cab. Meeting, 9 July, 1913.



tendency to believe that the Ottoman Government was made up of men who were at once sinister and incompetent, corrupt and infantile."<sup>17</sup>

The letter of Ed. Grey to Lowther, on April 30, 1909, confirms that London shared the views of its subordinate in Constantinople. In reply to Lowther, Ed. Grey wrote the following:

I see that you are pessimistic. I was becoming so, or hearing that corruption was creeping into the Committee and the Young Turks. But I cannot help being impressed by the decision, purpose, discipline, and strength, which have greatly under-estimated the strength of the force at the disposal of the Committee. Who the Committees are, I do know, and I do not like the idea of an anonymous and irresponsible directing body and more than you do. ... I think that during the last three months we have let ourselves slide too much into a critical attitude towards the Committee and the Young Turks.<sup>18</sup>

Resuming the policy, that Britain should follow towards the CUP, Ed. Grey added, that they should better be „less critical and sympathetic“ towards the CUP.<sup>19</sup>

#### The CUP and Subject Races: The Case of Armenians

The early stages of the Young Turk Revolution, however, distinguished itself by a remarkable outpour of enthusiasm by all races and religions throughout the Empire. One could see Greeks and Muslims embracing each other, and Muslims and Armenians displaying their affection for one another. On how the subject races welcomed the Revolution, the same G. Lowther in the same dispatch of February 17, 1909, wrote:

But after the first doubts that were felt in the more remote districts as to whether the movement was sincere, and whether it was not some trick on the part of Sultan, had passed away, the sense of relief from the autocratic rule on the last thirty years became evident in every concern of the Empire....The Greeks at Smyrna showed signs of indiscretion in parading the Greek flag, but the temper of the Turks was admirable. At such places as Van, Diarbekir, and Mosul, which members of the League had been unable to visit, there was an inability on the part of the population to accommodate themselves to the new idea of a common country, based on the principle of justice, fraternity, and equality. But the Kurds were the principal ones who showed violence towards the Armenians, but the latter, on the whole, were satisfied at the unexpected release of so many of their co-religionists.<sup>20</sup>

Lowther continued to urge that „the idea of equality with Christians was abhorrent to them and that there was strong evidence that these Muslim tendencies were coming to the fore.“<sup>21</sup> Soon G. Lowther accused the Young Turks of resorting

17 Elie Kedourie, „Young Turks, Freemasons and Jews“, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1971, p. 90.

18 FO 15582/13941/09/44.

19 Ibid.

20 *British Documents on the Origins of War 1898-1914*, Vol. V, pp. 253-254.

21 Ibid., p. 258



to Abdul Hamid's tactics on the national policy. There had been no improvement in the conditions of the Christian population of the Empire, Lowther noted.<sup>22</sup> This opinion was not only shared by British statesmen, but also by the British Press. Regardless of the seriousness of the Young Turk regime to establish equality and respect between multi-ethnic groups in the Empire, „The Times“ expressed its uncertainty about the Revolution a few months later, when there still existed a lack of knowledge on the CUP. „The Times“ wrote:

Patriarchate, in discussing the education policy advocated by a section of the Young Turks—namely, the adoption of a common educational course in Government primary schools, with Turkish and the language of majority of the inhabitants of locality as *media* of instruction; and, secondly, the employment of Turkish as the sole medium of instruction in secondary and higher schools – criticizes it as a manifestation of „Pan-Turkism,“ designated to strangle the national consciousness of each of the communities which form the population of the Empire.<sup>23</sup>

From the beginning, the Young Turk Revolution got the sympathy of the majority of Armenians and the active support of the Dashnakists. This was appreciated by the CUP, during the elections of the Ottoman Parliament that took place just after the proclamation of the Constitution, which met on 17 December, 1908. British documents confirm that, of the Christian elements in Turkey, only Armenians gained „most in prestige“ during the elections, the great majority of whom had „wisely abstained from voicing the aspirations of the Dashnak society for an independent or autonomous Armenia.“<sup>24</sup>

In the first parliament, Armenians had 14 seats out of a total 288 deputies.

But soon it became clear to some Armenians, that the anti-Armenian policy of the CUP could be worse than that of Abdul Hamid. The reasoning for such fears was based on the events in April of 1909, when the Holocaust of Armenians took place in Adana province. British archival sources provide full and explicit evidence on the responsibility of the CUP in the crimes committed against the Armenians in Cilicia, and Adana, in particular.

On the night of April 13, a Counter-Revolution against the Constitution and the Young Turks broke out in Constantinople. In the end, the Counter-Revolution was suppressed.<sup>25</sup> The Armenian political parties, Dashnak as well as Hunchak, offered their assistance to Ittihad to restoring its power in the Empire.<sup>26</sup> The support of Armenians to the Young Turks was ended up with two-tier Adana massacre (1/14-3/16 and 15/25-14/27 April). The horrible events in Adana and the entire region of Cilicia had been fully narrated and described by the British vice-consul in Mersin, Doughty Wylie, in his reports to his supervisors both in Constan-

22 J. Heller, *ibid.* p. 31.

23 „The Times“, September 14, 1908.

24 British Documents on the Origins of War 1898-1914, Vol. V, pp. 279-280.

25 FO 15582/13941/09/44.

26 Vahakn N. Dadrian, „The Circumstances Surrounding the 1909 Adana Holocaust“, *Armenian Review*, Winter 1988, Vol. 41. No. 4/164, p. 1.



tinople and London. Despite the warnings and demands of the later, the local administration did nothing to stop the massacres of Armenians,<sup>27</sup> perpetrated by Turkish military, the local population and mobs, which plundered and robbed.

Doughty Wylie did his best to save the defenseless Armenians of the province, even after he was wounded and his arm was broken. The British Consular Officer estimated that 2,000 Armenians had been killed in Adana, and between 15,000 and 25,000 in the vilayet.<sup>28</sup>

During the first stage of the massacres of 13-16 April, the Young Turks were out of power in Constantinople. But on 24 April, when the previous regime had been already reinstated, the „Action Army’s“ commander, Mahmud Shevket, ordered two regiments of Rumeliot troops - crack Young Turk soldiers—from Beirut and Damascus to Adana. With their arrival, on 25 April, further bloodshed and fire began in the city, perpetrated in a more thorough and brutal manner than before.<sup>29</sup> A British eyewitness, H. Charles Woods, mentioned that the outbreak of the second phase of pogroms was more destroying, because of the use of kerosene, spread on the houses of Armenians, targeted to the Holocaust. As a result, 4,437 Armenian houses were burnt in Adana, and then the massacres spread to all the Armenian villages of the Cilician plain, wiping out 30,000 Armenians (Adana included).<sup>30</sup>

After the crimes committed against the Armenians, no any retributive justice was followed. Moreover, all the further proceedings were to cover up the whole truth. The CUP established a special investigative commission, made up of two deputies of the Turkish Parliament, Hagop Babikian and Yusuf Kemal (Tengirsek).

The article, titled „Turkey. The Adana Massacres“, which appeared shortly after the establishment of the investigative commission, is of much interest and importance. The first part reads:

An Armenian Deputy, M. Babikian, a member of the Parliamentary Commission sent to Adana, is returning, as it appears, in consequence of disagreement with the Turkish members of the Commission and of the Court Martial.<sup>31</sup>

H. Babikian, who had firsthand knowledge on what had happened in Cilicia, suddenly died under suspicious circumstances on 1 August, quite possible from poisoning.<sup>32</sup>

The outbreak of anti-Armenian sentiments and the case of the Adana massacre was not the last one, which came to prove on the existence of radical nationalism

27 FO 424/219/folios 80-85.

28 FO 424/219/folio 84.

29 Chr. J. Walker, *Armenia. The Survival of a Nation*, (London, 1980), p. 185.

30 Ch. Woods, *The Danger Zone of Europe* (London, 1911), pp. 136-138, 155-161.

31 „The Times“, July 8, 1909.

32 Chr. J. Walker, *ibid.* p. 187.



and well-organized conspiracy within the CUP on the eve of the World War I Armenian Genocide.

But the crimes of 1909 were not the last ones committed by the Young Turks.

Meanwhile, after those events, some Armenians were prepared to co-operate with the Young Turks. The Dashnaks, naively hoped for an accord with them, and on 6 September 1909, the two bodies signed a five-point circular.

At least all the Armenians, including the Patriarch in Constantinople, alarmed by the CUP's responsibility in the Adana massacre, criticized the Dashnaks. Regarding the disappointment of Armenians in the Young Turks, again „The Times“ of London wrote:

...the Young Turks were unable or unwilling to inflict adequate punishment on the responsible authorities and the Patriarch, Mgr. Dourian resigned in protest. Within a few days of the resignation the Press announced the formation of an alliance between Dashnakzutyun and the Committee of Union and Progress.<sup>33</sup>

Several years later, the same paper wrote about the continuing existence of a political alliance, or cooperation, between Armenians, Dashnaks, in particular, and the Young Turks. The information is regarding the elections to the Ottoman Parliament of 1914.

...the Government, while unable to accept the Armenian demand for proportional representation in this case, will not oppose any arrangement between the Turkish and Armenian Parliamentary parties, which will increase the Parliamentary strength of the latter. According to the latest information available the representatives of the Turkish Committee have offered the Armenians 20 seats in the next Chamber, provided that a certain proportion, apparently not exceeding 20 per cent of the Armenian candidates, are members of the Committee of Union and Progress.<sup>34</sup>

In the end, on the intervention of Interior Minister, Talaat Bey, the differences between the CUP and the Armenian parties on the subject of the Armenian Parliamentary representations was settled. The Armenians agreed to a compromise whereby they obtained 16 seats.<sup>35</sup>

#### British Sources on the Escalating Turkish-Armenian Relations and the CUP, 1910-1914

Available British documentation indicates that long before the World War I Armenian Genocide, the political and military top strata of the CUP leadership was discussing the task of „Turkification“ and „Ottomanization“ of the Empire, through wholesale extermination of the subject races, Armenians, in particular.

A British Consular record dated as far back as August 6, 1910, written by the British Acting Consul in Monastir, Arthur B. Geary, quotes from a speech of

33 „The Times“, January 3, 1910.

34 „The Times“, December 9, 1913.

35 „The Times“, February 26, 1914.



Talaat Pasha, which was delivered to a secret conclave of the Salonika Committee of the CUP. The relevant portion of the speech reads:

You are aware that by the terms of the Constitution equality of Mussulman and Ghiaur was affirmed but you one and all know and feel that this is an unrealizable ideal. The Sheriat, our whole past history and the sentiments of the Ghiaurs themselves, who stubbornly resist every attempt to ottomanize them, present an impenetrable barrier to the establishment of real equality, until we have succeeded in our task of ottomanizing the Empire.<sup>36</sup>

In a comment written a few days later, the British Ambassador, G. Lowther, remarked to Ed. Grey:

That the Committee has given up any idea of ottomanizing all the non-Turkish elements by sympathetic and constitutional ways has long been manifest. To them „Ottoman“ evidently means „Turk“ and their present policy of „Ottomanization“ is one of the pounding the non-Turkish elements in a Turkish mortar.<sup>37</sup>

The speech of Talaat, once again proves the advent of radical nationalism within the CUP ideology, long before the war with Italy and the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913. Shortly after Talaat's speech, the Third Annual Congress of Ittihad in Saloniki took place (November 1 to 12) in 1910. At the Congress, Secret Resolutions were passed, in which one can already find the preliminary elements of the Final Solution for the Ottoman Armenians.

As in the case of Talaat's speech, British records narrate the secret deliberations of that Congress, one of the vivid and urgent objectives of which was to work out a plan for forcible homogenization of Turkey.

Harry Lamb, British consul general at Saloniki, reproducing the proceedings of the Ittihadist Congress, indicated that, the most secret decisions were deliberated on and reached „after the end of the plenary sessions ... by five or six leading members (included Nazim).“ Dr. Nazim is described as the most powerful member of the Saloniki Committee, the extreme arm of which was „prepared to order the massacre of the Christians at a last resort.“ At the Congress, Nazim successfully pushed through the acceptance of budgetary allocations to enable him to undertake largescale resettlements of Muslims in the Balkans as well as in the „six Armenian vilayets“<sup>38</sup>.

British reports on the 1910 Congress underscore that, in fact, the stratagem that the CUP was a „secret“ and „covert“ organization, even being in power.

The British Ambassador at Constantinople provides the following comments on the Congress and its decisions „... there is a considerable contradiction between their professions and their acts. Besides their published decisions, they are

36 British Documents on the Origins of War 1898-1914, Vol. 9, part 1, (London, 1926), p. 208.

37 Ibid. p. 209. See also at Z. N. Zeine, Arab-Turkish Relations and the Emergence of Arab Nationalism, 1958, p. 75.

38 FO 195/2359/149.



credited with secret ones which inspire their inner workings."<sup>39</sup> Two weeks later the Ambassador described „the official version of the decisions“ of the Congress, as being intended „to throw dust in the eyes of the world“.<sup>40</sup>

A year later on September 30, 1911 the Forth Annual Congress of the Ittihad took place, when the previous deliberations on the brutal homogenization of the Turkish Empire were reaffirmed. On the Fourth Congress, Saloniki's Acting British Consul General James Morgan, for his part, sent two reports, while the actual Consul, Harry Lamb, sent one report.<sup>41</sup>

The secret deliberations and decisions accepted at the two Congresses were to be probed soon.

In the summer of 1912, Macedonian Bulgars in Berana, and mostly in Kotchana, were brutally slaughtered by the Turks. After the Turkish Government avoided implementing the demanded reforms in its European provinces, and declining to punish the perpetrators of the massacre in Kotchana,<sup>42</sup> Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro and Greece declared war on Turkey in October 1912.

Both British official records and extracts from various British periodicals prove that even during the Balkan wars of 1912-1913, before the commencement of wholesale massacres, the CUP tried to experiment with the wartime situation and opportunity for its future anti-Armenian measures. The British documentation warned that something dangerous was going to happen to the Armenians inhabiting Turkey, and that those events would be even worse than those massacres organized by Abdul Hamid in 1894-1896 and worse than the Holocaust of Armenians in Cilicia in 1909. In an article in the British daily „Daily News and Leader“ of August 6, 1913, a report of wholesale massacres of Armenians in Rodosto and Malgara (Balkan Peninsula) can be found. It reads:

After the Bulgarians gave up the town the Commissaire Miguirditch Effendi, a Bulgarian subject, and representing the authorities of that country, was cruelly assassinated. Some Turkish soldiers cut off his ears and took them to an Armenian woman, whom they threatened in the same fate, and pointed their bayonets at her. The poor woman was so terrified that she nearly died. At the same moment two Armenian gendarmes, Bulgarian subjects, were also murdered.

Then the volunteers divided into several parties, which, each having at their head four or five Bashi Bazouks, attacked the Armenians in the market place and massacred eight of them....

People working in the fields, among whom were some Armenian soldiers captured at Adrianople, were atrociously butchered by the ferocious populace. As everyone is forbidden to leave the town, a number of people, both men and women, came to us **(European Officials and correspondents accredited to those regions)** to-day to ask us to recover their children, dead or alive, whom they had lost for the last three or four days. Steps taken with this object were stopped.

39 FO 371/1017, section 2, p.1.

40 FO 371/1017/section 5, p. 1.

41 FO 195/2382/folios 262-264, 323-324, 503-505.

42 J. Heller, *ibid.* p. 67.



We went to the Armenian cemetery, where the corpses of the Armenians assassinated in the town had been gathered. To-day, from the environs of Rodosto, five corpses have been brought in on vehicles. They were in a state of putrefaction. One of the victims had had his hands cut off, another his feet, and in another case the skull had been split with an axe. It was a terrible spectacle, which several of the Consuls (British Consul was also among them) were unable to look upon.

In the cemetery the men were gathered on one side and the woman on the other, weeping. Stifling my own grief, I felt hardly able to address a few words of consolation to those unfortunate people bowed down by indescribable despair. To-day, at a distance of one hour from the town, near the bridge of Tavanli, a man named Karnik Zavtarian and an Armenian soldier, who was captured at Adrianople, were murdered.

Towards evening news came to the vicariate that the authorities had told off men to bury on the spot the victims who had fallen in the fields, and then to clear off all traces of the murders. Thirty piastres (6s. 3d.) are being paid per corpse. It is persistently rumoured that some Mussulman scoundrels were going to fire shots at night in the Armenian quarter and then, by accusing our compatriots, provoke a massacre....

An eye-witness at Haskeny said that after the entry of the army he heard shots; many women and girls were caught by soldiers and were taken to a windmill. Afterwards they were stripped naked and sent away. A little later Moslem villagers arrived, and pillaged everything belonging to the Christians. Then fire broke out, and the village was burned.

The Bashi-Bazouks had many dogs with them. They hunted refugees, and the Bashi-Bazouks shot them. Our informant saw Christe Lambro, a notable, who had had his eyes gouged out and nose slit because he would not say where his valuables were hidden."

The report gives details not unlike those of Haskeuy, in regard to the villages of Thimitkeui, Kurtli, and Temberitkeui.

Seven villages paid each a ransom varying from 150 to 200 Turkish pounds to save themselves. They were only partly pillaged.

The Kaimakam of Malgara said „they deserved what they got, because they had sheltered Bulgarians.“

At the Kariopolis houses were pillaged; many people were imprisoned and tortured. Notables were forced to give declaration that the pillage and murder had been done by the Bulgarians.

At Huskeuy of Kariopolis an officer ordered the population to church and then his troops pillaged the houses. The Mouktar was ordered by the officer in command, revolver in hand, to choose for him three Greek girls. The Mouktar indignantly refused, but had to flee. In the evening all the women were gathered at a large threshing floor.

The report goes on to indicate the fate of these women, and adds that neither old age nor extreme youth was spared.

The Metropolitan of Rodosto reports that the evident intention of the Turks was to exterminate the Christian element.<sup>43</sup>

The massacres in Malgara and Rodosto had been reported also by „The Times“.<sup>44</sup>

43 „Daily News and Leader“, August 6, 1913.

44 For more details for massacre at Rodosto and Malgara look at „The Times“, July 24, 1913.



But if Malgara and Rodosto were on the battlefields of the Turkish and Balkan Armies and could be justified as wartime measures, Asiatic provinces of Turkey were „in peace“.

As to the conditions and anti-Armenian activities in those days, the British Press wrote:

There is a fear of serious trouble in Armenia. Massacres on large scale have not yet taken place, but assassination of Christians is proceeding piecemeal and quite unchecked.<sup>45</sup>

The „Westminster Gazette“ of the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, 1913, continues:

Telegrams via Kars inform us that thousands of Kurds have overrun various parts of Van, where pilaging and killing in the Armenian villages Gurants, Kurdchkan, and are being resisted by the besieged villagers. A catastrophe is inevitable if England remains indifferent to the interminable sufferings of the Armenian nation, protected by the Convention of Cyprus.<sup>46</sup>

In those days, during the critical months in the fall of 1912 when Turkey was suffering military defeats in the Balkan war, and internal problems, when Ittihad temporarily was forced out of power, the Allied Entente Powers once again raised the task of the reforms in the Armenian provinces. These were a real and serious alarm for the Turkish nationalists, as in the case of the implementation of the Armenian Reforms, the Asiatic provinces could have been dismantled as it had happened with her European territories.<sup>47</sup> One can, in fact, consider the reformation issue as one of the determinants of the Armenian Genocide.

In December 1913, a number of British leaders had warned the British Government that Turkey was bent on destroying the whole Ottoman Armenian population in the event the Powers imposed upon Turkey the Reform Act. According to this account, Aneurin Williams, who was a member of the British Parliament, the Chairman of the British-Armenian Committee, and by the time was one of the Champions of Armenians in Europe and in England, on September 18, 1914 informed British Secretary of the Foreign Office Edward Grey of the prevalence in Turkey of a „great fear of massacre.“ Grey replied that the British Government had done all its best to urge the Porte to maintain peace, and would be unable to do more.<sup>48</sup>

#### On Some Aspects of the Ideology, Leadership and Structure of the CUP

Both British and supplementary documents re-establish the idea, expressed by Henry Morgenthau, on the conspiracy and secrecy of the Young Turks as a mono-

45 „Truth“, June 13, 1913.

46 „The Westminster Gazette“, June 30, 1913.

47 Ronald Grigor Suny, „The Holocaust Before the Holocaust: Reflections on the Armenian Genocide“, in Hans Lukas Kieser and Dominik J. Shaller (Eds.), *The Armenian Genocide and the Shoah*, (Zürich, Chronos Verlag, 2003), p. 91.

48 FO 371/2116/51007.



lithic party, which didn't limit itself in any bloody tools, while dealing with the political opponents.

The British Ambassador, Sir G. Lowther's and his chief dragoman, G. H. Fitzmaurice's reports to London, provide us with enough, verifiable and reliable documentation to insist on that the CUP's party structure and conspiracy was built up on principals of Freemasonry.

In his early letter to Sir Ed. Grey, Sir G. Lowther, on February 22, 1909, wrote

that the Paris Committee had found it necessary to form a branch in Turkey, called at first the Committee of Liberty, and then the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress. These agents worked silently, but unselfishly and surely, on the lines of Freemasonry in the Salonica district, and especially in the army corps there and at the Adrianople.<sup>49</sup>

On the conspiracy of the Young Turks the Ambassador in the same report concludes:

That occult body, the Committee, has from the first worked with great mystery. It had no acknowledged head; occasionally persons crept up who were said to be the leading men, but they disappeared to give way to others. At times we were told that the headquarters were at Salonica, at others at Constantinople, and then again at Monastir. No individual presided permanently.<sup>50</sup>

In this conclusion, the more surprising is that the CUP still remained in conspiracy, even after the success of the Revolution and being a ruling party.

Not less intriguing is the part of the document, where the British Ambassador provides the total number of political murders, of which he possessed a record, during the last five months of 1909. According to him, the following numbers of political killings took place: in August – 3, in September – 7, in October – 25, in November – 15, in December – 21, a total of 71 political murders.<sup>51</sup>

The CUP finally transferred its headquarters from Salonika to Constantinople. In January of 1912, it dissolved the parliament and held a new election in April, so well prepared that out of a total of 275, only six opposition members were elected. The CUP packed the new parliament as Bernard Lewis notes,

through a shamelessly dishonest election ... thus illegally removing the legal opposition the Committee inevitably called into being a new opposition, not democratic or parliamentary – but military and conspiratorial – a ghost from its own past.<sup>52</sup>

It should be noted that the Saloniki branch dominated for a long time the overall party organization and its programs.

At the Third Annual Congress of the Ittihad party, Dr. Nazim served as a vice president, was elected a member of the Central Committee, and Secretary General of the Saloniki branch. The American scholar of an Armenian descent, Vahakn N. Dadrian, quoting a French historian, states that Dr. Nazim was the

49 British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914, Vol. V, p. 249.

50 Ibid. p. 259.

51 Ibid. p. 289.

52 Bernard Lewis, *ibid.* p. 218.



chief advocate of the goal of completely „Turkifying“ the country, who during World War I, organized and supervised the killer detachments of the Special Organization“.<sup>53</sup>

As has been already mentioned above, Lowther's original reports to London, during the first months after his appointment, radically differ from those that were sent later, after several years of experience at Constantinople, where he could get well acquainted with the phenomenon of the Young Turks. In his judgements, G. Lowther was wholly guided by his chief dragoman, a Jew by origin, G. H. Fitzmaurice (1865-1939).<sup>54</sup> Lowther endorsed Fitzmaurice's contribution to the investigation of Freemasonry over the Young Turks, and strongly defended by „Tanin“. Both of them believed that masonry had become „the instrument of political intrigue in matters affecting British interests“.<sup>55</sup>

The results of the investigation are actually set out in along and detailed letter, „private and confidential“, dated May 29, 1910, from Lowther to the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, Charles Hardinge. The letter shed a new light on the leadership, structure and some aspects of the ideology of the Ittihad. According to this document, the political and military top strata of the Young Turks had been inducted into Freemasonry, namely Talaat, Javid, Dr. Nazim and Behaeddin Monastirli (Shakir). Some portion of Lowther's letter says:

Talaat Bey, the Minister of Interior, who is a Gipsy descent..., and Javid, the Minister of Finance, who is a Crypto-Jew are the official manifestations of the occult power of the Committee ... Since he became Minister of the Interior about a year ago, Talaat Bey has been spreading the net of the Freemason Committee over the Empire by appointing to provincial posts as governors, sub-governors, etc., men who are Masons or reliable Committee adherents and, in most cases, both. ... The invisible government of Turkey is the Grand Orient with Talaat Bey as Grand Master.<sup>56</sup>

The same record counts the following lodges, accept of Grand Orient, which were somehow integrated with the Young Turks. Those were „Macedonia Risor-ta“, „Resna“, „Ottoman Fraternity“, „Friends of Freedom“, „Oriental Fidelity“, „Les vrais Amis de l'Union et Progrès“, „Byzantio Risorto“, „La Vèritas“, „La Patrie“, „La Renaissance“, „Dawn“, „L“ Aurore“, etc.

As a matter of fact, most of the lodges had their foreign protectors. With the exception of the above-mentioned ones, for instance „La Turquie“ was a well-established British lodge. People were induced to believe „that in becoming Masons they are joining an English institution. The New lodges', like in the case of

53 Vahakn N. Dadrian, *Warrant for Genocide, Key Elements of Turko-Armenian Conflict*, (New Brunswick and London, 1999), p. 98.

54 FO 800/193B.

55 Ibid. Lowther to Hardinge, July 6, 1909.

56 FO 800/193A (Lowther papers). For more details on some leading members of the CUP and their national identities see at Hrayr R. Dekmejian, „Determinants of Genocide: Armenians and Jews as Case studies“ in *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective*, (Ed. Richard G. Hovannisian), (Transaction Books, 1986), pp. 92-93.



„La Turquie“, „claimed to follow the „Ancient Scottish“ rite, and falsely gave out that they indirectly held a charter from the Grand Lodge of Scotland, of which the King of England was protector“.<sup>57</sup>

Gradually, reduction of the British political influence affected the loss of the English lodges in Turkey. Lodges, strongly connected with the Central Powers prevailed.

In his letter, G. Lowther, repeats the idea, expressed by the U. S. Ambassador in Turkey, H. Morgenthau, several years later. G Lowther was also confident, that it „had professedly ceased to be a secret society!“.<sup>58</sup>

In the end, as a foreword to the final conclusion, it should be noted that the political history of the Ottoman Empire, and the history of the Committee of Union and Progress party, in particular, would gain much if it is studied in some context of the History of Freemasonry in the Middle East. Towards this purpose, the British documents are of great importance. However, the research would be even more valuable, if it is assembled using Turkish sources as well.

57 FO 800/193A (Lothar papers).

58 Ibid.