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Memorandum by George W. Rendel of the Foreign Office, 20 March 1922

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No. 1.

Memorandum by Mr. Rendel on Turkish Massacres and Persecutions of Minorities since the Armistice.

THE conclusion of the armistice with Turkey on the 30th October, 1918, seems to have brought about a temporary cessation of the persecutions of the minorities by the Turks which had gone on all through the war. In the course of those persecutions, it is generally agreed that about 1,500,000 Armenians perished in circumstances of extreme barbarity, and that over 500,000 Greeks were deported, of whom comparatively few survived. The ghastly Armenian persecutions of the early part of the war formed the subject of a British Blue Book¹ as early as 1916, and the almost equally horrible Greek persecutions have been dealt with in several Greek official publications (see particularly the proceedings of the third National Assembly in Athens in April 1921)². Information regarding the persecutions of the other Christian bodies has not yet been collected.

2. It is necessary to refer to these pre-armistice persecutions, since there is now a strong tendency to minimise or overlook them, and to regard those which followed the armistice as isolated incidents provoked by the Greek landing at Smyrna and the general Turkish policy of the Allies.

1919.

3. After the armistice the Allies, and in particular His Majesty's Government, recognised their moral obligation to do what they could to redress the wrongs suffered by the minorities during the war, independently of what might be done under a final settlement. They principally aimed at securing: (1) the restoration of confiscated property (which entailed repatriation to Turkey of numerous refugees); (2) the recovery of Christian women and children in Moslem hands; and (3) the establishment of the responsibility for the war massacres.

4. During the first few months of 1919, when the military position of the Allies in Turkey was still unimpaired, and before the development of the Nationalist movement, the Turkish authorities co-operated in these objects; but, by September of that year, they had become frankly

¹ The "British Blue Book" refers to the publication *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-1916* compiled by James Bryce and Arnold Toynbee

² The Third National Assembly proceedings mentioned are likely to be the sessions conducted on 5, 6 and 8 April 1921. The official publication *Οι ανθελληνικοί διωγμοί εν Τουρκία: Από τον 1908 μέχρι του 1921 ενώπιον της Γ' εν Αθήναις Εθνοσυνελεύσεως [The anti-Greek persecutions in Turkey: From 1908 until 1921 before the Third National Assembly in Athens]* (Athens: National Press, 1921) recorded the proceedings at these particular sessions.

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hostile and obstructive. As a result of Allied efforts, however (1) some property was restored and a number of refugees went back to their homes in Cilicia, &; (2) about 90,000 women and orphans were recovered from Moslem hands out of a total of about 170,000; and (3) certain notorious Turks were deported to Malta, whence, however, they were subsequently released.

5. As early as May 1919 reports of renewed persecutions of Armenians and Greeks all over Anatolia and Pontus began to come in.

6. On the 11th September, Lieutenant Slade (H.M.S. "Gardenia") reported that public security all along the Black Sea coast was very bad; that all the brigands had been pardoned by the Turkish Government and allowed to retain their arms; and that 80 per cent of the gendarmes were recruited from the brigands and devoted "most of their energies to rounding up odd Christians who were still at large."

7. On the 11th November, Admiral de Robeck reported as follows:-

" . . . The relief officers . . . find themselves met with obstructions and hostility . . . The most flagrant cases of injustice to Christians have to be left unredressed . . . the Christians are now bewildered and terrified . . . Every district has its band of brigands now posing as patriots, and even in the vicinity of Constantinople robbery under arms is of daily occurrence, the principal victims being naturally the unprotected Christian villages. Behind all these elements of disorder stands Mustapha Kemal. . . The Government cannot, and will not, move a finger to help the Christians. . . Turks are again taking possession of property restored to their Christians owners through the instrumentality of our relief officers, and a recent reports shows that there is a general tendency on the part of the Moslem population, supported by the local authorities, to render it impossible for the Christians to earn their living, and, by boycotting and terrorism, to drive them again from their homes, never to return."

8. On the 24th November a further report from Admiral de Robeck contained the following passage:-

"The methods which the Turks are employing to render life unendurable for their Christian fellow-countrymen are deserving of careful attention. . . His business is boycotted, his nut crops made dangerous of access and farmed out to Moslems, who repudiate their engagements, and his houses and property retained. It is consequently not a matter for surprise that the Greek and Armenian refugees are again leaving Asia Minor in increasing numbers."

And this statement was borne out and amplified by a detailed report, dated the 29th October, by Captain Perring, R.N. (H.M.S. "Gardenia"), on the situation along the coast from Samsoun to Batoum.

9. On the 23rd December, Admiral de Robeck wrote as follows to the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs: "It would appear that the system of persecution of Armenians by the Turks is definite and continuous; that movement is restricted, repair of their houses forbidden, robbery frequent, as well as threats. . . I am informed that, in spite of all this ill-treatment, the

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Armenians are proving most long-suffering, and are doing their utmost to prevent the recurrence of any unfortunate incidents." These representations, however, produced no result.

10. During November and December reports of increasing persecutions continued to reach His Majesty's High Commission in growing numbers, but it was not until the following year that the first really large-scale massacres occurred.

1920.

11. The first large-scale massacre since the armistice, regarding which we have reliable information, is that which took place at Marash at the end of January. It appears to have been partly due to the fact that the French, who took over the town from the British in November 1919, on the one hand succeeded in giving the Turks the impression that Turkish sovereignty over it was to cease, and on the other attempted to garrison the town with quite inadequate forces, largely consisting of Armenian levies.

12. Marash had a large Armenian population, which included considerable numbers of repatriated refugees and deportees.

13. The most vivid and detailed account of the Marash massacre is contained in the diary of Dr. Crathern, the secretary of the American Y.M.C.A. Mission there. The massacre began on about the 23rd January. According to the British Divisional Intelligence Officer, between 15,000 and 20,000 Armenians perished. Most of the women appear to have been killed with axes. Many of the women and children were subjected to horrible tortures before being killed. Dr. Crathern's description of the scenes of "hellish cruelty" which he witnessed is difficult to forget.

14. On the 22nd March, Admiral de Robeck transmitted a document drawn up by Dr. Kennedy, the representative of the "Lord Mayor's Fund" at Adana, containing the narratives of survivors of further massacres in the Islahieh and Marash districts. He added: "Their story shows that the proceedings lacked none of the ruthless and insensate brutality which hitherto have characterised Turkish outbreaks of massacre."

15. After the events at Marash, the French withdrew from their advanced positions in Cilicia, and, in spite of continued reports regarding the gravity of the situation, provide unable to give any support to the Armenians (consisting largely of repatriated refugees), who were now besieged by the Turks at Hadjin, Sis, Bozanti, and Aintab. The Armenians at Hadjin decided to try to hold on in the hope of being saved by a general settlement, and stood an eight-months' siege with great heroism. The town fell, however, on the 15th October, and, according to the report of a missionary from Adana, written a few days later, the Turks, on entering it, began a systematic destruction of both it and its inhabitants. All buildings were burnt and all fugitives from the flames were shot. The exits of the burning town were commanded by machine guns. After the fire, looking at the town through field-glasses, one could see that "not a house was left standing," and that the "whole ground was covered with dead bodies." The Armenian population of Hadjin at the time of the siege appears to have numbered about 9,000, of whom very few can have escaped.

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16. The spring of 1920 also witnessed the outbreak of intensified persecutions against the Greeks. Very numerous reports of these persecution and atrocities, dating back as far as the spring of 1919, and covering almost every district in Asia Minor, have been received from Greek sources, and many are embodied in the minutes of the meetings of the Armenian-Greek Section of the British High Commission at Constantinople, but independent information about them is difficult to obtain, as there were, if any, European relief workers or officials in the districts most particularly concerned. As early as the 9th February, however, Captain Perring, R.N., had reported that the lack of public security for the Greeks and Armenians in the vilayet of Trebizond was very serious. The following is an extract from his report:—

“A typical case is at Kavarra where a certain Ali Riza Bey carries out a continuous persecution, raids their cattle, burns their houses and makes them (the Christians) work for him without payment of any sort. This man terrorises the village to such an extent that the few local Christians dare not refuse. he is the leader of a well-organised band of brigands. In general, the Greek villagers cannot circulate freely, and are therefore obliged to sell their produce on the spot to Turkish merchants, who are thus able to buy at practically their own prices and realise large profits.”

17. Later, the persecutions became worse and were frequently accompanied by actual massacres. It will perhaps be enough, however, to give following quotations from two documents, the impartiality of which is above question.

18. The first is a report dated the 7th October, 1920, from a British officer attached to General Headquarters, British Army of the Black Sea, and deals with the destruction of the famous town of Nicaea (Isnik) by Nationalist bands, full reports regarding which had been received from the œcumenical Patriarchate:—

“From information in the hands of the Smyrna Division, which is confirmed by a previous report, the whole Greek population at Isnik has been massacred. Apparently the majority of the massacres took place at the end of August—the remainder of the population were killed before the Greeks took the town, *i.e.*, at the end of September. The number of killed is said to be about 130 families, or about 400-500 men, women and children.

“I myself was taken round to some of the places where the remains of the bodies lay. Lack of time prevented me from visiting every scene of the massacres. I was assured, however, by the Greek officers that there were other such places.

“At the foot of the mountains east of Isnik, about 300 yards outside the city wall, is a large cave. In this the burnt and mangled bodies had been thrown, a few old bodies lay about outside, though it was difficult to judge very accurately owing to the state of decomposition. I should say there were at least 100 dead at this spot alone.

“All the bodies I saw had been mutilated, apparently they had first had their hands and feet cut off, after that they were either burnt alive in the cave or had their throats cut. I clearly recognised the bodies of women and children among them—apart

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from the mutilated remains, odd bones which lay about proved conclusively that the bodies had been cut up.

“Djemal Bey is said to be responsible for these massacres. Many stories are in circulation regarding his outages in the town

“The ancient Greek church at Isnik, which dates from 332 A.D. has been thoroughly smashed up, only the walls remaining. The images, carvings, &c., were all broken up, and the church literature taken outside and burnt in a pile. It is said that a number of people were massacred inside the church.

“The Greek soldiers, who have every opportunity of visiting these places, are not unnaturally bitterly enraged about it.”

19. The second document is the White Paper containing the reports of Inter-Allied Commissions sent in May 1921 to investigate the alleged *Greek* atrocities in the Yalova-Gemlek and Ismid areas of March and April of that year. The Yalova Commission particularly mentions the destruction by the Kemalists in the preceding year (1920) of Nicaea, Ortakeni, Ehnalik, Fulajik and several

[The rest of this document is omitted until the next update. Apologies for any inconvenience]