

UNIONIST TERROR AGAINST ANATOLIAN MINORITIES

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Boycotts, Pillages, Murders, Exiles and Fires

✘ **Sait Çetinoğlu**, Turkey, 6 September 2015

Translator: Serdar Koçman

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The boycott operations did not involve only the dispossession of the proprietor class and property extortion. They also wound up with work deprivation for laborers--classes which had only their working powers to merchandise. The exiles were nothing but a tool of extermination which can be

described as genocide because the way the "migration" was implemented and the tools that were used to cover its tracks.

This policy was designed well in advance and it is possible to see the tracks of this projection several years earlier. In 1905, when the committee of Union and Progress was not in power, a *Turkish* writer blamed the Christian bourgeoisie for the economic woes of Turks. He wrote: "The fortunes they made, the high levels they reached, the reason of all of these are their lives which were lived at our expense." He also suggested to his readers to draw the necessary conclusions and to boycott these merchants and craftsmen whose *numbers will naturally increase*. In these kinds of statements we can see the early cores of the National Economy Theory which intended to replace the Armenian and Greek businessmen by Turks and Muslims or to exterminate the former two groups. In these statements the followings is explained: "These successes which were gained by the Greeks or Armenians are not related to personal skill; these successes were gained through abuses which victimize the Turks."

This method was used as weapon when the Committee of Union and Progress came to power--to weaken the Christians with boycotts and to facilitate the entry of Turks into the market. When boycotts were ineffective, arson in the bazaars and in minority neighborhoods started and the business establishments and goods of Christians were confiscated using war, famine and the high cost of goods as excuse. Thus Christians were dispossessed. The Young Turks then proceeded to the next step and launched the genocide. We can conclude that the efforts of the Committee of Union and Progress to substitute Muslim-Turkish bourgeoisie for the Greek, Jewish, Armenian bourgeoisie which had developed much faster in the 19th century. The efforts to strengthen the economical status of the Muslim-Turkish bourgeoisie moved hand in hand with genocide.

The Boycott of 1908

Before 1908 there already existed in the Ottoman Empire the political boycott tradition. The Kastamonu and Erzurum mass boycotts against the regime caused difficulties for the rulers and their local representatives. These boycotts were one of the elements which enfeebled the regime of Abdülhamid.

The post-1908 boycotts bore a different meaning and were the most important policy weapons to strengthen the classes supporting the regime and to create an anti-Christian (especially Greeks and Armenians) public opinion. Since these two Christian communities were regarded as a danger to the regime, shaking, depressing and exterminating them was the natural next step.

The first steps of the new boycott strategy were taken through the boycott of the Austrian goods and by the [mediatisation](#) of Bosnia – Herzegovina after the Austro-Hungarian movement of July 1908. These boycotts continued by tearing the [tarbooshes](#) which were made in Austria and by manufacturing head pieces made of fabrics woven in Austria and other European countries. In 1908 an unsuccessful boycott attempt against Greek products was made because of the *Cretan Problem*.

The boycott against Austria and Austrian goods started on Oct. 8, 1908 and ended with the agreement on Feb. 26, 1909. In compliance with the agreement, Austria accepted to pay compensation of 2.5 million gold to the Ottoman state in consideration of annexation.

This boycott helped raise national feelings and strengthen national unity. However, it also harmed trade between the Ottomans and Austria, in addition to harming Christians of Ottoman nationality who sold Austrian goods. This was of little concern to the regime because power was their primary focus.

The Boycotts of 1909 -1911

The boycotts of 1909 against Greece and the expansion of boycott against Greek goods resumed during the *Crete Problem*. Greek products, shops operated by people who had Greek nationality and shops which sold Greece-made products and Greek workers were boycotted. This period saw the growth and the centralization of the boycott movement.

A "Boycott Community", also called Economical War Community, was established in Izmir and on August 17, 1909 it announced "*An economical war declaration decision has been made*". However, neither the boycott movement, which started in August 1909 nor the military operation carried out against Greeks produced a result. *The boycott did not make an impact on the masses because Crete was very far from their consciousness.* Soon after, upon the decrease of tension between the Ottoman state and Greece, the boycott ended.

The second boycott movement against Greece started in June, 1910 because of the *Crete Problem*. By then the relationship between the two countries had become tense. Among the Ottoman cities the best-organized boycott against Greece was in Izmir. *More than half of the population of Izmir-- the largest Aegean port-- was Greek. Because industry, trade and culture in the city were mostly Greek, Turks generally referred to the city as "Giaour Izmir."*

The boycott movement ended on November 1911 because of changes in the international situation brought about by Italy's invasion of Ottoman-ruled Libya in September 1911.

The boycotts were carried out through the coordination of the Boycott Committee and sparked through violence. The activities of the committee were inseparable parts of organizations such as the Navy Committee, the National Defense Committee Organization. Most of the activities of the committee were seen as parts of the secret work of the Committee of Union and Progress, because of the the boycotters called themselves officials and acted as officials. It was a large, non-legal organization and it had a free hand. Local directors and centre directors accepted the committee as a legal entity. Muslim tradesmen and notables were diligent partners of the boycotters.

There is large literature in relation to the boycotts. The newspapers of the period present extensive information about the movement: The report of the Embros newspaper (March 27, 1910 and June 9, 1910), titled "*The boycott is being declared all over Turkey*", the followings was said: "*After looting the*

Christian shops in Yafa, similar incidents occurred in Edremit. These incidents expose the meaning of freedom which came to Turkey from Europe. The newspaper added: "The unionists provoke the people against the Greeks. Plans to attack the Greeks are being mentioned. The incidents in Edremit started through the provocation of the mosque teachers. Two Greek shops were looted and if police do not intervene incident will become serious. Boycotts were started in Tekirdağ and Foça'da. Another boycott was started for the mail from Greece in Salonica and in relation to this Griparis, the ambassador of Greece, made a protest visit to Hakkı Pasha, the grand vizier. However, the grand vizier said the government could not control the people." In Embros (March 28) it was reported: "The condition in Izmir was provoked by the newspapers (İttihat, Ahenk, Köylü) which published fanatical articles and there are rumors about a mass massacre by the Turks of Crete against the Greeks. During the incidents the police protected the Greek Ambassador."

After a while the word 'Christian' became the preferred substitute for Greek in the movement and its publications. This caused boycotts to expand and hit all Christians. The boycotts, which started officially against the Greeks, expanded after a while to contain Greek tradesmen of the Ottomans. The Muslim identity was a reference point which separated this boycott from the boycott of 1908.

Henry Morgenthau, the American ambassador, wrote about the boycotts: "*Turks wanted the dismissal of the Greek elements of all the foreign establishments and they wanted Muslim elements instead of them. The Singer Manufacturing Company, one of the American companies, received instructions like this and despite my intervention and permission of sixty days I got, the company in the end complied with the orders. Not only in Anatolia but also in Istanbul an official boycott was realized against all Christians...*"



During the activities of the boycott movement talk of conspiracies, the extermination of certain people and the spreading of false information were common. Provocative publications published gory headlines to incite the people. We see here the prototypes of the propaganda techniques which we experience today. For example, newspapers claimed "The Greeks transformed the mosques into taverns, killed fetuses, affronted Islam and Muslim women and raped them." Not only workplaces were affected by the boycott but also Greek workers of local and foreign establishments, teachers in Greek schools and persons who worked for the public enterprises.

The boycott was discussed in parliament. Harisios, a member of the parliament from Serfiçe, said: "The boycott harms the economy of the empire therefore it must not be seen as a result of patriotism."

The boycott affected Christians and especially Greeks because it was impossible to differentiate between Greeks with Ottoman nationality and Greeks of Greece. Half of their families had Greek nationality and the other had Ottoman nationality. The 1909-1911 boycotts harmed the Greeks so deeply that some of them closed their workplaces and migrated to Greece.

In the *Amalthia* newspaper (June 14, 1910), Vangelis wrote, "If the discharge of Greeks is a matter of debate today, the time for discussion of the discharge of Romans of the Ottomans will come too." He thus shed light on the future.

The Boycotts of 1913 - 1914

The Balkan Wars became a laboratory in which Turkish nationalism was developed and popularized. The boycott movement moved from the Ottomanist discourse and started a solidarity propaganda campaign within the Muslim community. It started the demonization of non-Muslims and openly discussed their exclusion at the beginning of 1914. Flyers were printed and distributed freely to the public. They were, in one sense, a call to conquer the country once again. The language of the brochures was heavy with hate: The brochures said of Christians: "*They became vipers which we fed and they are fleecing the nation... we must take care of these parasites which were nourished with our flesh and we must exterminate them. The time has come for us to save ourselves from these people by means of legal remedies or illegal remedies.*" The writer of one of these brochures, under the title of "For Muslims", boasted: "I started this work just a month ago. However, I learned that five or ten Greek craftsmen from several districts walked off the job." The writer added an oath to the text: "*I will never deal with Christians. If I will I would be dishonorable, a skunk. I would deserve all kinds of curses and insults!*" The writer was thinking of publishing one thousand more of these brochures in a second edition in November 1910.

The character of the boycott was different this time. It was carried out together with state violence. The boycott, in one sense, targeted the expelling of Christians after their dispossession for the benefit of Muslims. The nationalist feelings were worked up and violence was multiplied. The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate reported in the *Ekklisiastiki Alitheia newspaper* that the boycott reached its most common form within the Empire at the end of February. The boycott was announced in the mosques, squares and bazaars. News of violence was received from areas where there was Greek concentration. Some of these areas were Bandırma, Kuşadası, Kayseri, Bartın, Edirne, Ayvalık, Bursa, Niksar, Çanakkale, Simav, Lazistan (Atina Mapavre), etc.

In 1914 during months which connect spring to summer and especially in June Balıkesir, Burhaniye, Bergama, Çeşme, Edremit, Foçateyn Kazasının Tümü, Eskice, Karaburun, Kemer, Kınık, Menemen, Ödemiş, Seyrek, Uluabad and villages and towns on the railway of Kasaba – Aydın and towns and villages around the Bursa and Ayvalık were exposed to the attacks and abuses of the Muslim gangs. As a result of the violent incidents and repressions, Greeks fled generally without taking their belongings. The ones who stayed and resisted were exposed to violence of the gangs and in Seyrek and Old Foça Greeks were killed. The properties and immovable properties of the departing Greeks were given to the Balkan immigrants after a while.

Armenians were also not spared violence and boycott. Muslims who are not Turkish, such as Albanians, had their share of violence. Local bureaucrats openly supported the violence. Reports of

these incidents were made by western observers and in the reports of the Greek embassy.

Physical and spiritual violence was used. Hüseyin Kazım Kadri, an important figure and writer of Unionism and Kemalism wrote a lengthy flyer in spite of the objections of the Greek Patriarchate. It bore the title "Open letter to the Greek Patriarch – Isn't Boycott a right of Muslims?" The government eventually banned it ostensibly because of negative reaction. In fact, the language used in the Greek Patriarchate's warning was very soft and deliberate. The patriarchate was, in brief, rejecting the assertion that "The boycott will save the Turkish people from slavery."

Dr. Nazım, who was considered the organizer of the boycott, said in a talk which with the consul: "The people were bristling with 'rage' and therefore it is not possible for the government to stop the boycott which is against the Greeks". Mr. Rahmi, governor of Izmir, implied the following to Smith: "The Greeks will probably be sent to interior zones for strategic reasons."

Kuşçubaşı Eşref, chief of the Ottoman Special Organization, was one of the implementers of boycott combined with terror. He had good relations with foreigners and was protecting a European merchant who had large investments in the northern part of the country. He was also planning to save the European in case of interference from the nationalists. Eşref gave the merchant a personally signed safe-conduct in addition to protection to another European who was a friend of the British Consulate of Izmir. These relationships are noteworthy.

The Emergency War Tax, under the banner of mobilization that was declared together with the war, was another process of dispossession. It was applied to Christians. The Christians' properties, goods, animals were confiscated without reason and through *Special Commissions*.

"Donation collection" was another type of dispossession. Patriotic donation-collection campaign by the Union Club of Trabzon for the official purpose of "purchase of battleships" is a good indicator of this policy. The donation-collection duty was assigned to local criminals who extorted large sums of money from Armenians and Greeks and plundered shops.

Confidential sermons were preached in Muslim religious communities for the necessity of stopping the businesses and trades with Christians. From the beginning of 1913 commercial corporations which were comprised of only Turkish tradesmen were established and shopping only from these companies was explained so as "not to purchase filthy goods" of Christians. The decapitation of the Armenian officers in townships such as Agn , Arapkir, and Divrik accompanied these boycotts. In addition, ostentatious outrages like the fire at the Diyarbakır bazaar where most of the tradesmen and craftsmen were Armenian and the arson of the Armenian neighborhood in Edirne were other violent acts of the boycotters.

The boycotts and the exterminations were successful and the Unionists managed to transform the Turkish and Muslim bourgeoisie: there were only two Turkish incorporated companies in 1908. Their number increased to 13 in 1909 and became 39 between 1915 and 1917. The origin of the 80 companies, which were established with the active support of the Committee of Union and

Progress⁹⁴ (1916 to 1918), were confiscated Armenian properties.



The assignment of Ahmed Muammer Cankardeş as a governor to the Sivas province on March 30, 1913 (he held the position until Feb. 1, 1916) is considered as the starting point of the deterioration of the condition of non-Muslims. As soon as the governor took on his duties, he started a boycott of the Christian businessmen and tradesmen. Cankardes was the son of a Sivas-born judge who established a Unionist club network in the province starting in 1908. When the implicit economic boycott, which was imposed by the Committee of Union and Progress through the governor, failed to collapse the Armenian financial presence, a new method was applied. In April and May of 1914, in the bazaars of Merzifun/Marzevan, Amasya, Sivas and Tokat a spate of suspicious fires were started consecutively.

The fires started in the Christian neighborhoods make up a long list: Amasya Selağzı (12.3.1914 and 21.7.1915), Kastamonu Cebrail Neighborhood, Tokat Çarşı (May 1915, January 1916), Edirne Kaleiçi (24.8.1914), Bandırma Preme--Kapudağ (30.6.1915), Bursa Orhangazi Yeniköy (23/24.8.1915), İzmit Armenian neighborhood (27.8.1915), Haçin-Saimbeyli (3.10.1915,) Tire Greek neighborhood (2.7.1916), Ankara Christian neighborhood (September 1916), Bandırma Armenian village (March 1917), Ayvalık (April - August 1917), Gelibolu (18.4.1917), Erdek (27.8.1917), Tirebolu (1917, 1918), Espiye (1916), Sinop (17.12.1917), Samsun Kaleiçi (18.7.1818), Bafra (1917), Havza (December 1918)...

The fires were also an apparatus of terror. Armenians in Samsun were deported beginning in November 1915. At the end of 1916 the Greek villages around Samsun were plundered and burned. At the beginning of December 1916 Bahaettin Şakir went to Samsun and the exile policy was applied systematically there... On Jan. 9 the implementation of general exile started in Kadıköy, the Greek suburb of Samsun. "30,000 persons departed to Ankara from Bafra and its surrounding at the end of January and from Çarşamba and Ünye'de in February..." The Black Sea Fires, as it is understood, are a part of the general Greek deportation which started at the end of 1916. Morghenthau summarized the logic of these incidents with the following words: *"Germany had plans in relation to Anatolia. Therefore Greeks of this region were posing an obstacle unavoidably against German plans. As long as this region remains Greek, this situation would create a natural obstacle for Germany to turn towards the Iranian Gulf, just as in Serbia. Everybody who reads the pan-German literature is no stranger to the unusual method which was defended by the German policy writers in order to manage the people who were on the way of Germany. This method is deportation."*

We know from the memoirs which illustrate the agony, the boycott did not end even after the war. In 1921 a boycott was imposed on the Greeks of Ankara. A Greek wrote: *"We were having a good time apart from our fears and worries. Turks were imposing a boycott against us and they were dismissing us from the bazaar. They were saying: 'Why am I going to give it to you? You giaour. I give it to my fellow religion member. Swine giaours, your mother died, your father died, now it's your turn but didn't you*

become wiser?'. Especially on March 21, 1921, after Saturday midnight, our door was knocked with a loud noise. Turks were at the door; we understood it. Two days earlier my uncle had talked to Judge Panagiotis de Mikes Pestimacoğlu. Mikes had told him about the things planned by Turks [navy] and told him that Turks would kill Orthodox people. He also told that the informant had encouraged him to escape. My uncle paid no attention and continued to stay in Ankara and this decision became his destruction."

Raymond Kevorkian, Ermeni Soykırımı, çev. Ayşen Taşkent Ekmekçi, İletişim Y. 2015, s 51

Garbis Altınoğlu, Apoizmin Tatsız meyveleri,

<http://gelawej.net/index.php/yazarlar/garbis-altinoglu/1794-apoizmin-tatsiz-meyveleri> (3.5.2015)

Hasan Taner KERİMOĞLU, 1913–1914 RUMLARA KARŞI BOYKOT VE HÜSEYİN KAZIM BEY'İN BİR RİSALESİ ÇTTAD, V/13, (2006/Güz), s.s. 91–107

The boycott operation which was started as from the date of 1909 against Greeks and after that which contained the entire Christians within the geography that lie down from Filistin to Yanya was financed by the Deutsche Bank.

Feroz Ahmad, İttihatçılıktan Kemalize, çev. Fatmagül Berktaş, Kaynak Y. 1999, s 106

Büyükelçi Morgenthau'nun Öyküsü, çev Attila Tuygan, Belge y. 2005 s 47

Italy occupied Tripoli, as a reaction to this, during the Tripoli War, a boycott also realized against the Italian goods in the Ottoman country.

Y. Doğan Çetinkaya, Osmanlı'yı Müslümanlaştırmak, çev. Özgür Bircan, İletişim, 2015, s 99

Y. Doğan Çetinkaya, 118

Henry Morgenthau, *Büyükelçi Morgenthau'nun Öyküsü*, Belge yay., İstanbul, 2005, s.48.

Y. Doğan Çetinkaya, Osmanlı'yı Müslümanlaştırmak... s 96

Y. Doğan Çetinkaya, 115

Y. Doğan Çetinkaya, 167

Ahmet Nedim Servet Tör, Nevhiz'in Günlüğü, YKY, 2000, s 123

Emre Erol - Makedonya Sorunu'nun Batı Anadolu'ya Sıçrayışı ve 1914 Rum tehciri, toplumsal tarih 252 aralık 2014 s 58-65

Hüseyin Kazım Kadri is considered as the most important, insightful and skillful writer of the Young Turks, he was the governer of Aleppo and Salonico, Manina member of the parliament of the

committee of Union and progress in 1912. Member of the parliament within the Kemalist period, Vice president of the assembly of the fourth period 4.

kay. ing FO, 195/2458, "Hıristiyan Karşıtı Boykot" dosyası (eski referans no. 306/3080), kutu no. 6 (Aydın valisi Rahmi Bey ve Dr. Nâzımla yapılan görüşmeler), s. 553. akt. Çetinkaya aynı yerde.

Y. Doğan Çetinkaya, s 226

Raymond Kevorkian, Ermeni Soykırımı... 249

Raymond Kevorkian, Ermeni Soykırımı...235,294,295

Raymond Kevorkian, Ermeni Soykırımı... 605-606

As for the Greek deportation "... it was announced on the 9th of November and started on the 16th of November ... The Greek population was exiled to Giresun in the first step, after that ... they arrived to Şebinkarahisar'a. Also in Espiye the deportation was started on the same date.: "The armed gangs of Topal Osman entered into Espiye after the deportation of the last Christian group. Some of the youth from Espiye participated into the plunder together with them, most of them were from the immigrant families... After three hours they burned the discharged Greek houses. (Taylan Esin-Zeliha Etöz, 1916 Ankara Yangını, Felaketin Mantığı s 82-83)

Taylan Esin-Zeliha Etöz, 1916 Ankara Yangını, Felaketin Mantığı, İletişim, 2015 s 90

Büyükelçi Morgenthau'nun Öyküsü... s 47-48

The festival in which national feelings were increased, Bkz* Edirne 1914

ANDRONİKİ KARASULİ MASTRİDU Kayıp Vatanımdan Hatıralar (Ankara'daki Hayatım), Atina, 1966

