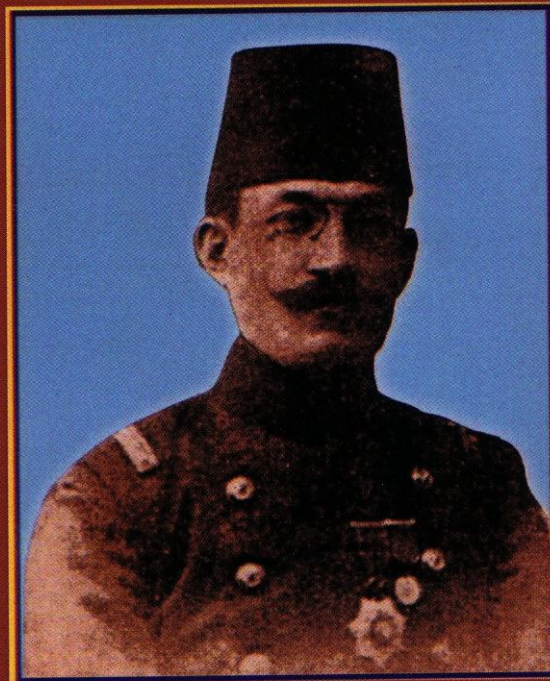


AHMET REFIK

TWO COMMITTEES TWO MASSACRES



TRANSLATION AND PREFACE

RACHO DONEF

Two Committees Two Massacres

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

Ahmet Refik wrote “Two committees two massacres” in 1919. Historian, poet, writer Ahmet Refik was born in 1880 and graduated from the Military Academy in 1898. He taught Geography and French in various schools and in 1908, after the proclamation of the 2nd Constitutional Period, became history teacher. He worked as the editor of the newspapers *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* and *Millet*. In 1909, Ahmet Refik oversaw the publication of Military Magazine (*Askeri Mecmua*) in the Military Chief of Staff's media branch. In the same year, he was elected to the newly established Ottoman History Society (*Tarihi Osmani Encümeni*). Subsequently, he went to France for historical research and in 1912, during the Balkan War, became Military Censorship Inspector.

Ahmet Refik retired in 1913 on the account of his poor eye sight. In 1918, he returned to his teaching profession and became Ottoman History Teacher at the University of İstanbul. In 1919, Ahmet Refik was appointed as Professor of Turkish History. He died in 1937 from pneumonia, at the age of 57. He had published 116 books.¹

I decided to translate this book primarily because I believe it is a great primary source which has been inaccessible to genocide researchers who lack knowledge of the Turkish language. Secondly, I think a great injustice is done to Ahmet Refik Altınay (his full name) in various sources by misrepresenting his views. Some scholars used this book as a testimony of the Armenian genocide. On the other hand, some Turkish historians used it to show that Armenians massacred Turks. On various Internet sites I noticed that only one part of the book attracts references: that part which suits each side's argument. Yet, Ahmet Refik Altınay's book is about “two massacres”.

Ahmet Refik wrote “Two committees two massacres” (*İki Komite iki Kitâl*) to condemn Ittihat² and Armenian gangs for massacres committed on Armenians and Turks respectively. I personally do not agree with Ahmet Refik Altınay's juxtaposition, which may give the misleading impression of some symmetry as far as massacres are

¹ M.Orhan Bayrak, *Osmanlı Tarihi Yazarları*, İstanbul, 1982.

² Ittihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti [Society for Union and Progress]; the party of the Young Turks.

concerned. This approach may absolve the Young Turks for the great crime they committed. However, I do not believe that this was the intention of Ahmet Refik. In fact, he advocates the punishment of the Young Turks. His approach is basically humanistic, in that, he believed that all ethnic groups had a right to prosper in the Ottoman Empire and that the Ittihat government mismanaged these relations. It is also noteworthy that he begrudges neither the Greeks nor the Armenians for desiring independence.

It is interesting that most Turkish academics who support the crude official thesis make no mention of Ahmet Refik Altınay's book, despite the fact that the 2nd part of his book is about 'alleged' Armenian atrocities.³ The reason the book has been disregarded in the past by the denialists is that the first part of his book is about deportation of Armenians and their massacres by the Ittihat. His criticism of Ittihat as corrupt and murderous groups of people and his reference to the Special Organisation (Teşkişat-ı Mahsusa) founded by Ittihat to murder Armenians, renders the book unsuitable for the official thesis.

The book was written in the Ottoman script but there have been several transliterations and adaptations to contemporary Turkish. In the 1999 edition, the transliterator Haluk Dursun claims that Ahmet Refik's view about Ittihat are "partisan",⁴ although he does not go as far as to suggest that they are not noteworthy because of it. Typically, however, Dursun tries to undermine the strength of evidence concerning the Armenian deportations and massacres. According to Dursun, the Armenian massacres cannot be said to be "ethnic cleansing" because the Greeks, the Süryanis (Assyrian) and the Jews have not been subjected to it.⁵ The transliterator is either not aware of Greek and Assyrian massacres or is trying to misinform the reader. Furthermore, he seems he ignores the evidence found in the book he transliterated. For example, according to Ahmet Refik,

³ I may be criticised for using the term 'alleged' as somewhat disregarding atrocities committed against Turkish people. However, having read for many years Turkish books and articles denying the genocide and referring to it as the "so-called" genocide and the "so-called" massacres, I believe as a researcher in this field I am entitled to reciprocate and depart, momentarily, from the rules of objectivity.

⁴ Ahmet Refik Altınay, *İki Komite İki Kitâh*, Bedir Yayınevi, İstanbul, 1999, p.6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.9.

some Armenian women in Eskişehir wanted to become Muslims to avoid deportation but the government did not approve of these conversions. This suggests ethnic cleansing.

Haluk Dursun goes on to repeat the usual false assertions about Armenians living in peace and harmony under the benevolence of the Ottoman administration prior to the war and adds that by rebelling the Armenians had committed an act of treason. I am not sure why anybody bothers writing this stuff anew, for they can just lift similar passages from an array of books published from the Turkish Historical Society which repeat these assertions *ad nauseam*.

Osman Selim Kocahanoğlu, who prepared an earlier edition, covers much the same ground in his preface to convince readers that there were neither “Armenian massacres nor an Armenian Genocide”,⁶ irrespective of the fact that much of the book concerns deportation of Armenians and massacres. While the material of the first section is ignored, when it comes to the second part, Ahmet Refik is treated as an eyewitness - which he was not - of Turkish massacres by Armenians. Ahmet Refik was an eyewitness of the aftermath of the war; he himself did not witness any massacres of Turks by Armenians. I am not discounting however his observations of the devastation which was brought upon the Turkish population following the Russian and Armenian withdrawal in the East.

The rest of Kocahanoğlu’s preface is predictable: Armenians were traitors, the Empire needed to protect itself and similar often repeated arguments. Osman Selim Kocahanoğlu is clearly hoping that readers will not go much beyond the preface; because if they do, they will realise that it is a blatant lie to say there were no Armenian massacres.

The Armenian genocide can not be brushed aside with arguments the kind of which I just referred to, namely that Armenians rebelled, that they were traitors, that they also killed Turks or even “that some things happened during those years” (“bazı şeyler oldu o

⁶ Ahmet Refik, *Kafkas Yollarında İki Komite iki Kitâle*, transliteration Osman Selim Kocahanoğlu, Temel Yayınları, İstanbul, 1998.

zamanlar”)), as somewhat crudely put forward by many academics, politicians and journalists in servitude of the Turkish state.

What Kocahanoğlu does by providing these predictable arguments is basically much the same as those academics who support the official thesis. His second method is the time honoured tradition of shooting the messenger. He asserts that Altınay wrote that book in a period where hostility against İttihat was in fashion and perhaps to serve the occupiers in Istanbul. Although it is not articulated clearly, Kocahanoğlu seem to accuse Altınay of treason and speculates that Altınay was after an official position. The reader should note that Ahmet Refik’s language is poetic, and at times affectionate, not calculating, as Kocahanoğlu suggests.

While Altınay’s observation of the Armenian massacres and his criticism of the corrupt government of İttihat in Kocahanoğlu’s consideration are not objective, somewhat Altınay’s reflections of Armenian atrocities against Turks are. This is what passess as scholarship in Turkey, even today.

The bulk of the book can be read as a criticism of İttihat as a murderous, inept, corrupt and despotic government. Although, the reader may get the impression that Ahmet Refik exaggerates, the devastation to many communities (including Turkish) brought upon İttihat is a matter of historical record.⁷ Even in the second part of the book, criticism of İttihat policies form a great part.

Perhaps Ahmet Refik’s book should have been entitled *İttihat ve Terraki* because the strength of his book lies on his observation about the İttihat government’s reign of terror. Nonetheless, he also wanted to point out the outcome of this tumultuous period during World War I.

⁷ For even harsher criticism of İttihat by a public servant who occupied high positions, see Mehmed Selahaddin Bey, *İttihat ve Terakki’nin Kuruluşu ve Osmanlı Devleti’nin Yıkılışı Hakkında Bidiklerim*, [What I know about the establishment of Union and Progress and the fall of the Ottoman Empire], Cairo, 1918, reprint İnkilap Yayınları, Istanbul 1989

There is one point I agree with Kocahanoğlu; Ahmet Refik does indeed contradict himself in some points. For example, Ahmet Refik argued that Greeks and Armenians avoided the military service by bribing, and yet elsewhere states that Greeks and Turks ate a concoction of straw and wheat as bread while Ittihat's cronies were living the high life, and that Greeks and Turks suffered alike under Ittihat administration.

Finally, it is important to point out that Ahmet Refik disapproved of the reactionary Turanian and pan Turkic ideas. He also blamed the Germans for Armenian massacres. He believed that Germans could have stopped the massacres, had they wished so.

We should be careful not to treat Ahmet Refik as eyewitness to any massacres, which he was not. He was working as a state employee when the Armenian deportations occurred and he saw the devastation endured by the Armenian community in Eskişehir and elsewhere. Ahmet Refik's book is a valuable first hand account of the murderous tendencies within Ittihat. He also had conversation with the murderer Çerkez Ahmet [Circassian Ahmet] who bragged to him how he barbarically murdered Armenian deputies.

In his preface Ahmet Refik stated prophetically that "one hundred years from now, this small book will be a document for the historian and will show the truth in all its tragedy". It is not quite 100 years yet, but 90 years after the 1915 genocide of Armenians, Assyrians and Greeks, the Turkish establishment still denies this reality.

The explanatory footnotes in the text are mine. The reader also should note that I preferred to use the Turkish orthography concerning Turkish proper names and some terms. To facilitate the reading of these names and terms, I included a pronunciation guide for several Turkish letters.

Racho Donef

Turkish Alphabet Pronunciation Guide

Turkish is written in Latin script. However, some letters are pronounced differently than those in English

A, a short 'a' as in 'art' or 'star'

â slightly palatalized or lengthened "a". There is no exact English equivalent of this sound. It's mostly a spelling convention nowadays.

C, c pronounced like English "dj" in "judge"

Ç, ç [c-cedilla] 'ch' as in 'church' and 'chatter'

E, e as in 'send' or 'tell'

G, g always hard as in 'go', never soft as in 'gentle'

Ğ, ğ a 'g' with a little curved line over it: not pronounced; lengthens preceding vowel slightly;

H, h never silent, always unvoiced, as in 'half' and 'high';

İ, i 'ee' as in 'see'

I, ı [dotless i] the first syllable of "Missouri" as pronounced by a native of that state.

J, j like French 'j', English 'zh', or the 'z' in 'azure'

O, o same as in English 'phone'

Ö, ö same as in German, or like British 'ur', as in 'fur'

Ş, ş [s-cedilla] 'sh' as in 'show' and 'should'

U, u 'oo', as in 'pull'

Ü, ü same as in German, or French 'u' in 'tu'

احمد رفیق

ایکی قومیت ، ایکی قاتال

✽

استانبول

کتابخانہ اسلام و مسکری ، ابراہیم سلمی
باب عالی جامہ سی

۱۹۱۹

طبعہ اورخانیہ

AHMET REFIK'S PREFACE

“Two parties, two massacres” is one of the terrible pages of Ottoman history. It is the last stage of the ten-year period of plunder by the rabble, following the uprising in Rumeli which rose to end Sultan Abdülhamid’s despotism. In truth, in the Ottoman history there are quite a few adulterated periods which are to be remembered almost with hatred; but none of them are comparable to the government of these bullies. This period which started with good intentions and ended with the disappearance of a great state, is the Ottoman Empire’s most grievous period. In no period the Ottoman Millet was wronged with such cruelty by its own members. In no period the Ottoman State suffered from a disaster to such a degree, due to the villainy of four-five bullies. In no period the Ottoman Sultan was so unaware of the blood being spilt around him and of the ruins of homes and families, that in the midst of the splendour of a transitory sovereignty could not apprehend the disaster befallen upon the unfortunate nation, and let his ancestors’ sacred heritage torn apart. Sultan Mehmed Reşat’s period, is the Ottoman history’s most inauspicious page.

In this book, I tried to take nothing into account other than humanity and describe only the facts. The ambition to murder people, to grab land, to subject humanity to a circle of blood and pyre is in our opinion entirely repulsive. A heart that loves, a soul that perceives, a mind which venerates beauty and artistry is always cherished, is always honoured. In this terrible period my soul is suffering equally for both the Turks and the Armenians whose lives have been ended in such a deplorable manner.

This book has been written in beautiful Istanbul where since the honoured days of the conquest no enemy had stepped a foot in, is trodden under the boots of the Allies. Its content is apparent to those who are living through this period. Nonetheless, one hundred years from now, this small book will be a document for the historian and will show the truth in all its tragedy.

Büyükada, 16 January 1919

PART I

Eskişehir, 20 September 1915

Unfortunate Anatolia is again moaning in misery. Trains full of soldiers, hungry and bare, are taken in droves to their place of execution. Thousands of families will be hungry again, the innocent, bare feet, wearing rags, will subsist by eating grass. The unfortunate mothers of the orphaned children, wrapping their heads with rags, their *shalwar*⁸ in tatters in their feet, will extend their wrinkled hands which have been deformed from digging over soil [and] in front of the cruel officers, who supposedly were sent to dispense justice, they will beg the officials of the corrupt government which sacrificed their parents to their ignorance and greed; they will cry, they will moan with pain, forgetting that their gold were plucked out their neck, their seeds taken from their houses, their oxen sold from their land, their monies seized by violence in the name of taxes and rights; they will beg for charity, benevolence and pity from this cruel government.

There is calm in Eskişehir. This beautiful city which experienced the first heroic period of the Ottoman dynasty will fulfill a duty which it has never seen in its life. The heroic Osman once made raids from the valleys of Sakarya to the walls of Byzantium, to lay the foundation of his dynasty. His grandson, who lived in infirmity and neglect for many years, has become a toy in the hands of the upstarts. He will escape now and abandon his sovereignty, his seat of government, his palaces, his mosques, his subjects, who were victims of ignorance and stupidity; he will abandon the imperial majesty and the pomp of his palaces, the pomp of his rule, the grandeur and circumstance, and take refuge among the villagers.

The Imperial treasury had already relocated to Konya. The elegant Armenian houses around the train station are empty. This [ethnic] element, with its wealth and commerce has shown superiority, obeyed the orders of the government and evacuated their houses and they withdrew to the suburbs of Upper Eskişehir and now their vacated houses with

⁸ Baggy trousers.

valuable carpets, elegant rooms and their shut doors, are as though they were waiting expectantly for the arrival of the fugitives.

Eskişehir's most beautiful most refined houses are around the train station. Houses near the train station, suitable for residence, were assigned to Ittihad's most important officials: the German school, its exterior deprived of paint and not even plastered, to Sultan Mehmet Reşat, a huge Armenian mansion to the prince, two canary yellow coloured houses side by side in the area of Sarısu Bridge, to Talat Bey and his assistant Canbolat Bey, a magnificent villa in the Armenian neighborhood to Topal İsmail Hakkı. In the city, secret agents, the gendarme, the police, the spies in the station, everything has been prepared. It is strange that those who have deceived the nation while cursing Sultan Abdülhamid's secret agents, they first sent their detachment of secret agents and police before escaping to Eskişehir. The poor people of Eskişehir, once they were making preparations to gather under Bayraktar Veli's banner in the name of justice and liberty; nowadays, impotent, helpless, and deprived of power, endurance, of everything, are making preparations for the arrival of murderers from Istanbul who have hearts full of vengeful rage.

Several days passed. Posuk Suyu [river] is flowing among the green rushes, silver leaf willows, and rose coloured flowers. Among the houses of upper neighbourhoods, Kanuni's Sultan Süleyman [the Lawmaker] vizier Mustafa Pasha's Kurşunlu Mosque stands as a religious monument of our glorious past, sorrowful and gloomy inspires our hearts of the grandeur of the past.

Opposite, on top of a high hill, a dilapidated fort, disappearing among the purple fogs of the evening, stands as a neglected and disheveled witness of a great state. In the train station, a mournful, sorrowful activity is taking place. The needy children of the unfortunate country standing behind the policemen, papers in their hands, are scribbling something so that they can live as a tool of oppression. No doubt they are trying to preserve the filthy lives of those who committed treason against the fatherland; a six-

hundred year old state dragged into the abyss; they are registering those who came to Eskişehir.

Several days passed. There was no one coming from Istanbul, but the first convoy of fugitives already settled in Eskişehir. Among the women of Eskişehir wearing red *çarşaf*⁹, rose coloured socks and with shoulders bulged due to the bundle in wrappers they carried, you could see women from Istanbul wearing high-heel shoes, open-worked stockings and elegant garments. Among the fugitives from Istanbul a well known figure was attracting everyone's attention. This person who was wandering around Eskişehir streets with his *salta*¹⁰ on his back, his wide *shalwar* on his feet and his coarse and white beard, was not elected to safeguard the people of Istanbul's dignity, honour, pride or rights. He was instead an "esteemed"¹¹ deputy appointed by *Ittihat ve Terakki*.¹² It was now clearly seen that there was no morality, fortitude, honour or dignity left in the country.

Several days passed. No news, no helpers, nothing was arriving. Yet, those who were to arrive were not helpers, but bandits to be hung in gallows. For many years the country was crying under the despotism of these bandits. Those who annihilated the fatherland and brought upon disaster to Turkey would escape to the arms of Anatolia, which they starved to death, never thinking about the ruin they brought upon a six hundred year state, within six years. The people of Istanbul could no longer tolerate this usurper of a government which threw them into a disaster [and] exposed their families to the assaults of the enemy.

Istanbul was seriously in danger. Çanakkale [the Dardanelles] was shaken under enormous strength. The conquest of Istanbul was very important for the Allies. If the beautiful city named "the reigning city of the world" by Napoleon, was taken over by Allies, Germany would have been surrounded by an iron circle. The defeated Russian

⁹ Women's outdoor garment.

¹⁰ Short black jacket.

¹¹ [my emphasis] Ahmet Refik employs sarcasm here.

¹² [Society] for Union and Progress; the party of the Young Turks. The party will be referred with its Turkish name throughout the book.

army would have been resurrected with the help of the British and the French forces and this terrible war which has drown humanity in the flood of blood and pyre would have ended as soon as possible. The seizure of Istanbul was a great disaster for all the Ottomans and the Turks. The real danger for the people of Istanbul was not the enemy which would enter the city, but the Greeks and the Armenians, who lived for centuries under the name of the Ottomans, who have been harmed by the ignorance and incompetence of the Ottomans, [and who] were assisting in the annihilation of the Turks, more than the enemy. In the Ottoman hearts the affection towards the French and the respect for the English character was an enduring one; the war which was in progress could not extinguish this trust; the majority of the Turks were wholeheartedly cursing the alliance with Germany, but those who were seduced by the government, regarded this alliance as the only way to escape the disaster of the Universal War. They were even confident the civilised enemy would not harm the people who live deprived of arms, justice and prosperity. For them the fearful enemies were the people they lived with.

The Balkan War was a good example of this. In the cities they entered, the Greeks destroyed the Turkish element; they did not leave any individual that could constitute a nation. Even those with Ottoman citizenship fled to the Greek army; those who did not manage to flee joined them at the hottest point in the battle and obliterated the unfortunate Turkish element with ammunition taken from the Ottomans. The non-Muslim elements united with the invading enemy and with bayonets and knives obliterated the Turkish element with whom a year ago they lived as neighbours. In Istanbul honour, property, lives, almost everything was at risk.

The people who once with such proclamations as “long live”¹³ were developing their own murderers, now they were fallen victims to the despotism and ignorance [of these murderers]. The people of Istanbul deserved this catastrophe but there was an innocent, neutral, guiltless majority. The Ittihat government did not even take into consideration this majority. For them the only way out was to flee, if it were abjectly they will flee;

¹³ Referring to the initial period of the Ittihat government which were embraced by the population, including the non-Muslims as saviors.

even if the fatherland sank they would flee. The Turkish element may be annihilated, they would still flee. They would flee like ignorant minded murderers with blood in their hands. The only aim is to save themselves; let the people be trodden under enemy feet, families may be routed with bayonets, let innocent children, and chaste women die under knives. This was not important at all for them.

Several days passed. Poor Anatolia sent her poverty-stricken children, who suffered greatly, to the frontiers. In Çanakkale's narrow front, hundreds of thousands of Ottomans stood up. Their bloodied chests, their crippled limbs, their cut-off arms were used as a shield to save the unfortunate fatherland. Those living in great splendour in Istanbul did not hesitate to carry out their abominable oppression behind a holy shield consisting of the bloodied pile of corpses, bodies, heads and arms. In Istanbul, they murdered the owners of the arms, the children of the corpses; they starved to death those who needed the virtue and moral quality of those heads. The history of humanity has never recorded such despotism.

Did not the fatherland have an owner? The Sultan? Alas!

The Ottoman throne was occupied by Sultan Mehmed V [Sultan Reşat] for almost six years. This occupation was disastrous for the Ottoman State. In the Ottoman administration the Sultan was an important element. The only authority against the covetous and ignorant forces in the country was the Sultan.

Inertia of the Sultan's influence has always been disastrous for the Ottomans. To some degree, Sultan Mehmed V's era reminds one of Sultan Mehmed IV's first period. In those days, a number of upstarts, wearing the costume of patriotism rebelled against the oppression of Sultan Ibrahim. However, as soon as the government came under their control, the people started bitterly missing the Sultan Ibrahim period. Sultan Mehmed V's period was worse than that. The rule of *aghas*¹⁴ in those days lasted only two to three years. Sultan Mehmed V's period was continuing uninterruptedly for six years.

¹⁴ Here the term 'agha' (*ağâ*) refers to the title formally given to certain officers, esp. the Janissaries.

The country was disappearing. Countries which thirty three Sultans in succession conquered by spilling blood in six centuries, were razed under oppression and zeal during the six-year rein of Sultan Mehmed V. The Caliphate which Heroic Yavuz attained by prostrating oneself in gratitude, tears pouring from his eyes, was now at risk. Ignorance and villainy had broken down the Islamic bond. In India and China, in Africa's most remote deserts, those who submitted to Sultan's single gesture, nowadays, under the orders of the English, who were respecting rights and justice and securing their welfare and prosperity, were afflicting crushing defeats on the Caliph's armies. The Ottomans, who exalted Islam for centuries, have now become a laughing stock in the hands of a few bandits and with their own hands were destroying the foundation of Islam.

While the fatherland was being hit and the Ottoman chests were ripped apart by powerful bullets of the enemy, Sultan Mehmed V used to go to the *Hirkai Sherif* room¹⁵, with his white beard, blue eyes, tremulous hands, prostrating himself in prayer. As the silent prayer emanating from Sultan's innocent heart was echoing off the walls, adorned with gold, gildings, embroidery, green silk and eye catching porcelain, the reverberation of the prayer emanating from the tongue of Sultan Mehmed V in the first day of his accession to the throne, was heard in the domes of the holy place as a bitter mournful cry.

O my Lord! Do not show me this disastrous circumstance of mine.

But was there anything left to show? Was it not the rule and independence of the Ottomans or even the Turks, which continued for many centuries in a brilliant and magnificent manner, being destroyed with the bayonets of the enemy? Sultan Mehmed V was a pious, compassionately kind and gentle man who loved education. However, Sultan Abdülmecit's unlucky son did not have the fortitude to show any ability. Asceticism and pureness of heart or even angel-like virtues could not secure the nation's prosperity. For this, it was necessary to have other virtues, other abilities.

¹⁵ The room holding the venerated relic "the mantle of the prophet" Muhammad in Topkapi Palace.

Sultan Mehmed V, at the age of seventy, could not show the courage and fortitude of Sultan Mehmed IV, a sultan from his ancestry, showed at the age of seven. In the Ottoman history, this utterly confusing, tyrannical, overpowering period had no era to compare with. In no period the Sultan was without influence to this extent; in no period scoundrels have sent the fatherland's innocent and active children to the gallows so treacherously; in no period morality and the milieu was decaying to this extent. Even the number of those subjected to the oppression of Sultan Murad IV and Sultan Ibrahim's levity was not as high as this. No sultan's reign was glorified through the corpses of its citizens and human bodies. From the point of view of politics and civilisation, the tyrannical administration of Sultan Abdülhamid compared with this oppressive era was healthy.

For those who treated the Sultan Abdülhamid period following the 23rd of July incidents with ignominy, asking for God's pardon and forgiveness for their sins was now a binding duty. The most important factor to take into consideration in the Abdülhamid era was the Sultan himself. There used to be one sultan. Now many have sprung up; they were partaking in Sultan Mehmet V's throne and rule through their influence and despotism. Sultan Mehmet V was not aware of this oppression. Once the fall of the small [Ozi] Fortress caused the death of Sultan Abdülhamid I; nowadays the most valuable parts of the Ottoman Empire were passing to enemy hands, Sultan Mehmet V, unaware of the disaster befallen on the nation, was signing execution decrees. The people regarded the Sultan Mehmet V's era as deplorable inauspicious period and they were right in considering it as such. During Sultan Abdülhamid's reign they used to hang lanterns on the trees; during Sultan Mehmet V's reign they hung yellowing, bare foot, bare headed human bodies, corpses of officers, soldiers and young people with enlightened ideas. In the six hundred years of Ottoman history the most terrible successive fires which routed Istanbul occurred during Sultan Mehmet V's era. The people were bewildered; the Sultan was burning in flames. The hearts were sorrowful and the honour and integrity of the state under ignorance and oppression was abject.

In the consideration of the people, the only way to rid themselves of the disease of the Ittihat was the accession to the Ottoman throne of a sultan who is capable of differentiating between good and evil, who will take pity on the fatherland and the nation, who will not sacrifice the Ottoman's honour and integrity in the name of blind ambition. Sultan Mehmet V did not have those qualities. He did not object to the exile of Sultan Abdülhamid; he even consented to the execution of his son-in-law, who committed no crime, by the Ittihadist administration. He was unable to distinguish between those who served the country and those who did not. Even though he applauded the downfall of the Ittihadists against their adversaries, a day later he did not refrain from fawning and flattering the Ittihadists.

There was no escape or salvation for the nation. There was nothing to hope from Sultan's determination and comprehension. But there was a second gate of hope; that was the Senate and the Assembly.¹⁶ But this hope was slimmer than most. Despite this, it could have been observed that in some situations the Senate, more than the Assembly, showed courage. The membership of the Senate was not composed of scientifically and intellectually advanced minds. To a certain extent, the Senate, in its first formation, was composed of distinguished and older figures; at later time substituted for the Sultan Abdülhamid's period's Council of State. People who served Ittihat were transferred to the Senate. Nevertheless, a number of those who participated in Ittihat's oppression, after being appointed to the Senate opposed Ittihat's oppression and villainy, were asking forgiveness from God for their sins.

The Ittihadists found also a remedy for this. In order to justify their oppression and defend their villainy, they appointed a deputy, an expert in the canon law of Islam, as Ittihat's plenipotentiary in the Senate.¹⁷

As far as the Assembly is concerned, it was superfluous to assume that the greater part would be a body of delegates dedicated to defend justice and the truth and representing

¹⁶ *Meclisi Ayan* and *Meclisi Mebusan*, respectively.

¹⁷ Seyit Bey, Izmir deputy.

the people. The majority of the Assembly was appointed; they were Ittihat's loyal and faithful servants; their duties were trading, smoking, amassing wealth and traveling. Some deputies who came from Anatolia's most remote corners, before they even had time to improve their language and despite having their marriage-age girls, growing up sons, four-five children, were still chasing Istanbul's coquettish mistresses, begging for matrimony. Those who were thinking about the poverty of their electorate were very rare. The more peculiar ones on the pretext of providing for the people in their electorate, who were starving to death, would seize railway cars full of sugar sent to alleviate the needs of the unfortunate people and sell them in Istanbul to spend the money on wasteful extravagance. Some among them were ignorant; the educated ones were journalists, writers and thinkers who would present Ittihat's murders as virtues. A number of them were officers who served the Ittihat. Nevertheless, among them there were also men of honour, but they constituted a minority. The only crime of these people was not take advantage of this heavy and pertaining to conscience duty and not to defend the nation's rights against oppression. They were also at fault for not defending publicly, in the General Council, the rights of the nation they represented.

Nevertheless, it was not only the Turkish deputies who were negligent; Greeks and Armenians, all deputies were negligent in the defense of their constituents' rights. It was to such extent that neither the *tehcir* [deportation] nor the massacres of their co-religionists caused the protest of the non-Muslim deputies. Almost everyone refrained from risking their lives and showing noble bravery for the sake of the salvation of the nation. Those among the people with enlightened opinions, the class of people who were wide awake, regarded these deputies with hatred.

Those who took over the Ottoman rule, even though were not entitled to any rights or gifts, it was as though they took possession of the Ottoman state. They were spending extravagantly, wasting the nation's treasury. Against these calamities you could not see a trace of rebellion, or even heartfelt effective agitation among the people. People, who once ran behind the Ittihat's [procession of] cars during the election campaign, flags in

their hands, *zurna*¹⁸ in the front, streaming with perspiration, were now dying of starvation. The majority of them their hands tied, behind them hungry and destitute family, like sacrificial lambs run towards the sounds of the drum, to reinforce the upstarts' pomp and magnificence and form shields with their corpses. In this disaster the most injured was the unfortunate and poor Turkish element.

Bribery and corruption was public. Greeks, Armenian, Salonica's¹⁹ shop owners, grocery store apprentices, with the influence of money would change scenery and after three-four months of absence would appear again in public with their white aprons.²⁰ This trade of mobilisation [for war] was only interrupted by the bitter screams of a mother from a poor family, who was unable to bribe to save her son from the bullets; crying with her orphans around her, without kin or kith. Sometimes these screams would disappear among the enjoyment and the merrymaking of the wealthy deputies and those who enriched themselves during the war. Even the Byzantium in the last days of her downfall was not decaying to this extent. There was no compassion, pity or generosity in the country; there was nothing. People were dying in the streets of starvation and grief, as they walked pale-faced with weak steps to procure the livelihood of their families, the crowds in the thoroughfare would be dispersed by a hit of a car; sometimes a person's arm would be cut into pieces under a car, sometimes a poor person's arm would be severed. As if it were not enough that people died in the war, the poor people would be torn into pieces in the streets of Istanbul.

To this evident cruelty everybody obediently and submissively would bow. It was difficult for the people to rebel against this oppression. There were a variety of reasons for that. Firstly, there were no masses in the country to rally around the same body of opinion. The number of people who obtained their wealth through commerce and agriculture were few. Almost everyone tried to earn their livelihood with the government's assistance. It was difficult to live, procure wealth, even to save your life without the force of the government. For this reason some people obeyed the

¹⁸ A primitive double-reed instrument played with a drum in folk music.

¹⁹ The Northern Greek City of Thessaloniki.

²⁰ The author uses the Greek term for apron "Prostela" and not the Turkish.

government, joined the Society²¹ unwillingly and increased Ittihat's power. Nevertheless, among the people who joined the Ittihat there were many writers, thinkers, merchants who could see the abyss into which the country was rolling.

Secondly, Ittihat ve Terakki turned the majority of the army into its tool. It was obvious that an army which became a political instrument could not possess a higher and national value. Appointing officers as *mutasarrifs*, *valis* and the promotion of officers belonging to the Society before their friends, would naturally give opportunity to the weak and the ambitious to join the Society.²² Those who saw the gendarme officers who worked as aid-de-camp in Talat's car for a few months, to be appointed as *valis* after a while, would work to join with the wish to attain the same prosperity; or they would feel a deep enmity in their hearts and would hate the army and the duty. This situation had a detrimental effect on the morale of the army. Yet, it is fundamental that the army does not involve in politics. The army should know a single duty only: to defend the fatherland. The army should not have become an instrument in the hands of groups which worked to knock down their enemies with political intrigues. In any government if an armed force dominates political, intellectual and social life, despotism, annihilation and downfall is certain. The reason for the decline of the Abbasids was their soldiers. The Roman emperors were condemned to their downfall from the date the influence in the Empire passed on to the Praetorians.

These facts were not considered by the Ittihat officials. To them, the increase of power, the increase of followers, constituted the first means of success. In this manner there were two groups formed: the Ittihadists had an organisation, the people and the non-aligned did not have any organisation.

Since the 23rd July incident the country had not been without martial law. Constitutionalism exists only in name. The constitution was trampled upon in every act. The government was not implementing justice and the law. In any case, its existence was

²¹ Ittihat ve Teraki Cemiyeti (Society for Union and Progress).

²² *Mutasarrif*: Governor of a sandjak; *vali*: Governor of a province.

illegal and illegitimate. Two people, Talat and Enver, through their influence, their absolute rule and their lies were twisting the whole state around their little fingers. No one was in charge of the country. The people, even some of the most educated among them, were superior in hypocrisy to the uneducated. Some were talking about Talat's genius; their most fiery writers exclaiming "Yavuz the 2nd" [Yavuz Sultan Selim] insulting the name of a respected sultan. There were even people reciting poems glorifying Talat's genius. All this evidence shows that Talat's milieu was more vulgar, more contemptible than Kabakçı's circle. No one had written a poem for Kabakçı [Mustafa] or Patrona [Halil].²³ No upstart survived Istanbul's milieu for more than a few months, because the environment was more honourable, because the sultan was in charge of his country, because the sultanate knocked on their heads the illegitimate forces and showed a traditional courage. The dynasty would never tolerate attack on its rights. Now those who took complete command of the dynasty, the upstarts who beget relationships to the dynasty through marriage, did not even take the sultan seriously. The chief of bandits who came from Salonica's Beş Çınar Coffee House was in control of the whole country.

Enver, Talat and Cemal were the most influential in the cabinet. The Grand Vizier Said Halim Pasha was brought to the highest post to save the appearance. The Ibrahim Pasha of the twentieth century had no influence at all. The whole function of the office of the Grand Vizier was in Talat's hands. Talat's permanent undersecretary for politics and administration was a reserve officer who was appointed as [parliamentary] deputy, who, in order to perform a duty had murdered a military police, was helped to escape prison and ascended to the Ministry of the Interior. This individual [Ismail Canbolat], was a great diplomat among the Ittihadists.

Talat's ignorance was known to those around him. Their praises of him were not sincere. But the assurance of their interests dictated absolutely that a person like Talat, a chief of bandits, be in the highest post, to hold power for them. Consequently, their interests necessitated to express qualities in Talat's person - qualities which they did not even

²³ Kabakçı Mustafa opposed Sultan Selim III's reform movement and caused his dethronement; Patrona Halil, a Turkish bath waiter, led a mob uprising in 1730 that replaced the Ottoman sultan Ahmed III with Mahmud I.

possess themselves - to live comfortably on the back of the ignorant bully, to become deputies, to engage in commerce, to receive stipends with high salary and not to refrain from deceiving people.

There were such people who would help murderers escape from prison, who, not only were not subject to any punishment; they would even obtain rewards. Ittihat's all murders remained unpunished. When they were to murder a writer or an honest and esteemed person, who for the sake of the prosperity of the fatherland would tell the truth or anathematise Ittihat's villainy, an officer among [the Ittihadists] would undertake this cruel duty. The place and how the murder would be carried out would be determined and the police in that district would be informed. The unfortunate man, his heart aggrieved of concern for the fatherland, would fall over by a murderous bullet while going home or to his work. Next day the newspapers would analyse the clues at length; naturally, it was never possible to discover anything. These murders committed with the assistance of the government and officers would always remain unpunished, and the officer who was confident he was not going to be punished, would be protected as Ittihat's rough and rowdy fellow. Among the murderers, they were even people who rose to the ranks of pasha or deputy. Under these conditions it was not feasible to trust the Ittihadist gendarmes who guarded the prisoners, the police assigned to ensure discipline, the people assigned to discharge justice, the army, the Ittihadist judges or any one else.

The disunity among the people and the ignorance among the high officials was evident. The high ranking officials of the old era, outside the Ittihat, were unable to conceive the advance of the century. With the palace worship of the Abdülhamit era it was not possible to save this irresolute and ruined state. Consequently, Ittihat's determination, combined with their ignorance, the composure of old era's high official, combined with their lack of determination, was the reality which saddened those among the people with enlightened ideas and neutral high ranking officials. The dearth of able men was quite evident.

The Armenians and the Greeks [felt] completely hopeless about the state of the country and they were ready to take vengeance. But there was only one hope that consoled them, that no matter what, this administration would cause Turkey to be dismembered and they would be completely free. Nevertheless, the Turks were also tired of this administration. But for them neither a point of support nor wishes for independence; there was nothing. The Turk in his own homeland was the most helpless, the most with the lack of support. Even the Salonicians²⁴ would take advantage of the Turks under the disguise of Islam. The *Dönme*²⁵ would associate with the Jews more than the Turks and employ Jews in their shops, not Turks. Those in higher posts understood this reality and invented Turanism against the Greeks' Hellenism, the Armenians' Armenia and the Arabs' Arabism. The reason influenced the Ittihadists the most to pursue their aims, was that they themselves were engaged in brigandage against the Bulgarians and the Greeks in Rumeli; copying out Bulgarian and Greek methods. The Bulgarians radically cleaned up all their hostile elements, like the Greeks who put the sword to the Muslims in Macedonia.

The Ittihadists would kill writers who opposed them and [dreamed of] subjecting the Greeks [Rums] and the Armenians to the same calamity. The boycotts, national commerce were the portents of this thought. Nevertheless, the national commerce, rather than be the means for the prosperity of the Turkish element, it in fact prepared its doom. Topal Ismail Hakkı's young contractors, who were disdainful of the military and the veterinary, were the types who would mix nationalist discussions with street chats. Behind those people, a Jew, a Greek or an Armenian, supposedly in the name of the nation would engage in commerce. The Quartermaster General's Department which in the past used to give profit only to the Greeks, was now forced to pay the share of the Turkish partner as well.

²⁴ This is a reference to followers of Jewish Zabethai Zevi (Sabetay Sevi) who originally declared himself as the messiah but after an ultimatum from the Sultan converted to Islam in the 18th Century. His followers also converted to Islam but both he and his followers continued to practice Judaism in secret. The northern Greek city of Thessaloniki was an important centre for them.

²⁵ 'Turncoat'; reference to followers of Zabethai Zevi.

The engagement in commerce of those related to the Society had now brought about partnerships in Dutch auctions²⁶ and in auctions. The poor nation under the most painful disaster of the war was forced to empty its pockets. This oppression was never experienced in the nation's history. The commencement of the Universal War was almost a place of putting into practice the Turanian aspirations. The Ministry of Education had become a blind tool of these ideas. For those who once cried in decorated stages "O Turan, beloved country, where is your path?" and fainted, the path to Turan had opened up. There was no one thinking of Anatolia as the true centre of Turkism. Those who lived in Turan were fighting on the side of the Russians; yet the fatherland was protected by the disheveled, barefoot, unfortunate brave men with bare chests, who came from Anatolia.

Those who lived in Turan were fed most regularly through Russian means. The widows in Anatolia, the old mothers, could do nothing else other than eating grass in their mud huts and shed bloody tears. Those who lived in Turan were protecting their honour, lives and property under the Russian administration, which was a hundred thousand times more orderly and just than the Ottoman administration. Yet, they would take the rugs under the Ottomans Turks who lived in Anatolia and sell their belongings unjustly in the markets. Anatolia was dying from lack of knowledge, lack of schools, lawlessness and injustice. First and foremost, it was necessary to feed this hungry people, to teach this ignorant majority, this poor nation, to partake in life, science, knowledge and the prosperity of civilization. The aim of the Turkish youth should have been Ottoman Turkism. If this aim was pursued, then the Ottoman Armenians, the Ottoman Greeks could have pre-occupied themselves with their own culture. Under the name of Ottomanism all [ethnic] elements would have worked to improve themselves. The rule of the Turks over the [ethnic] elements whom they lived with would have been possible by being superior to them in terms of culture and civilisation. The Romans who conquered Greece were beaten by the nation they ruled by the sword, through that nation's culture. Particularly, the success of this idea politically was also prevented by the geographical situation and the weakness and disorder of the state. This idea could have been put into

²⁶ Auction where the price is successively lowered.

execution, if at all, through spiritual bonds. For the spread of the idea of universal Turkism, a centre, focus point is needed. Germany was a brilliant example. Undoubtedly, the Germans gathered around Prussia because Prussia possessed a high culture and skilful politics.

Similarly, the Turks under Russian administration understood monoideism better than the Ottoman Turks. And the Ottoman Turks were even losing their old civilisation and their personal dignity to Ittihadists' partisan party feelings and party ambitions. The twentieth century was particularly the century of nationalism. In this century it was not possible to implement representative code of laws. Austria-Hungary was the nearest example to this. It was not possible for Austrians to force the Hungarians and the Slavs to accept their culture. For a nation that knows its language, its literature, its history, to accept the culture of another nation is a kind of suicide. The whole of Europe was excited with nationalism. Particularly, to perpetuate their culture by destruction and annihilation was an evident murder. The Ottomans who succeeded in conquering great many lands, like the Romans, did not even deigned to accept such forceful measure. Firstly, Islam was strongly against this. Secondly, they would not even call to mind the rebellion of the peoples under their administration and would trust their own force and selves.

The Ottoman pashas who advanced to the northern foothills of the Caucasus Mountains, did not even bleed the nose of the Armenian individuals who lived in these lands; on the contrary, to ensure the victory of the army and the building of the province, they benefited from the work and activities of the *reaya*.²⁷ Nonetheless, Turkish, Armenian and Greek notables would live a refined and noble life under the Ottoman name and every element would show the subtlety of their intellect in various branches of the Ottoman administration, in accordance to their own aptitude and skills.

As this was the situation among the upper classes in Anatolia's different points, it was not possible to tell Muslims and non-Muslims apart by appearance, let alone by language. All [ethnic] elements had mutual confidence on each other. The Armenians, who had

²⁷ *Reaya*: the non-Muslim tax paying subjects of the Ottoman Empire.

come from remote corners of Van to work as menservants for noble mansions, would earn the confidence of the *harem*²⁸ and would almost be considered member of the family. Armenian artists would create exquisite art and serve the collective culture. This situation continued in this manner until the Europeans intervened in Turkish affairs and in order to obtain interests and privileges from Turkey they assumed the role of protectors of the non-Muslim elements and disturbed this situation. This was compounded by the continuation of Ottoman administration in irresolute and disordered manner. This was the first real reason. Until that time the *zimmi*²⁹ who had accepted their *reaya* status, saw a protector from abroad and learned their history and traditions. In the shining eras of the Ottomans, the Europeans culture was unknown to them. All the elements did now know any other high culture than the Ottomanism. Now, the European waves of ideas had awoken them as well.

The *Tanzimat*³⁰ Imperial Reform Edict had ensured the rights of the Christians. From that date the Turks needed to understand the European civilisation and work to ensure their existence in the nationalist movements and develop their culture. To succeed, science, rights, justice and laws were required. Unfortunately this aspect was neglected. The Ittihadists preferred the methods of the Hellenes and the Bulgarians, rather than this historical reality. The occurrence of the Universal War had facilitated their aspirations further. In the first days of the war, the Armenian correspondence had completely brought out in the open the Armenian ideas. In the majority of the letters it was advised that the Turks would be destroyed now in this war and to help the Russians.

Finally, the Armenian massacres in Van, constituting a hurdle to the military operations, emerged as an important opportunity for the nationalist aspirations of the Ittihadists. In a situation such as this, a just government which is confident of its force would have punished those who rebelled against the government. But the Ittihadists, wanted to annihilate the Armenians and in this manner eliminate the Eastern Question. In the eastern borders of Anatolia the Armenians thought that the liberation day had finally

²⁸ Female members of the household.

²⁹ Non-Muslim.

³⁰ Reorganisation; the political reform of Sultan Abdülmecid in 1839.

arrived and their hasty insurgence constituted a beginning for the massacres. Armenian, Turks, many thousands of the fatherland's children were trampled upon under the committees' feet. In the beginning of the war many gangs were sent to Anatolia from Istanbul. The gangs consisted of murderers and thieves which have been taken out of prisons. These people were trained for one week in the Department of Interior and were sent to the Caucasus border through the efforts of the Special Organisation.³¹ In the Armenian massacres these gangs committed the biggest murders. Nevertheless, in Eastern Anatolia a universal tumult was prevailing. Here the gangs and the people annihilated each other and horrible bloodshed was continuing. The Armenians joined the Russians and attacked the city of Van. This action of the Armenians attracted the appreciation of the Russians; Sasanof in his official declaration concerning this issue had praised the effort and the courage of the Armenians who attacked Van. But the most innocent and blameless, the Armenians living in Bursa, Ankara, Eskişehir and Konya provinces, who though committed no crimes, were subjected to *tehcir* [deportation].

In Eskişehir no one knew anything [of what was going on]. The disaster of the war had shaken the people very badly. Convoys of soldiers were passing, barefoot, their *shalwars* and *mintans*³² torn apart, their variegated clothes on their shoulders. For the people of Anatolia, the military service was a sacred duty. Even in the folk songs of the poor Anatolia the painful separation caused by the military service was sung. Sometimes one would hear the melancholic folk song of a soldier from afar, emanating from a train packed with soldiers. Sometimes one would hear the news about some soldiers tearing apart, throwing themselves off the train to escape. In the middle of beautiful and alluring Anatolia, the most elegant and the most untouched marvels were: streams, trees, flowers, valleys and the mountains. The people were infringing on this beautiful vista with their poverty and misery.

The people who lived in these homelands were the most unlucky creatures in the world. For many centuries they had not experienced the comforts of civilisation, they could not

³¹ *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa.*

³² A kind of heavy outer shirt.

even perceive their humanity; creatures which became toys in the hands of an ignorant government. No one is waiting for the high ranking officials of Istanbul. The risks of passing through the straits were partly neutralised. Yet the Istanbul deputies still would not leave Eskişehir. At the same time they did not want to remain idle: now and then they would give conferences so that the Anatolian people could benefit from their virtue and knowledge. One night another conference was announced. Next morning, as it was heard from the people who attended, the conference was about the [ethnic] “elements”. The esteemed deputy likened the Christians to snakes and scorpions among the Turks. That night the Christians who paid money to attend the conference left the conference hall cursing. Next morning everyone was criticising the politics of İttihat ve Terakki’s deputy.

Even the people of Anatolia did not approve this fanatical mentality. Everyone was happy with the neighbours they lived together for many years. In Eskişehir there were no quarrels between the non-Muslim elements and the Turks. On the contrary, the non-Muslim elements have contributed to the prosperity of Eskişehir. The most beautiful streets of Eskişehir were the streets where the Greeks and Armenians lived.

One morning a scene out of ordinary was witnessed in Eskişehir’s train station. Until that date, you could not see any one else other than Anatolia’s unlucky children coming out of the trains, crippled, cheeks collapsed, clean shaven, pale faced, behind them a torn military cloak, a dry piece of bread in their hands. Now the convoys coming out consisted of children, women, old men and young women.

This small convoy constituted such a sad, such a painful view that it would break your heart to see small children embracing their mothers with their soft arms, under the scorching sun of June, hungry and sweating and bowing their necks. Was that all, one would wonder. It was said that “they were going to Konya”. But in their pockets there was no money for the train ticket. And they were all poor, unfortunate villagers.

In the train station, in front of the railing an old woman with a blond blue-eyed girl, five or six years of age, in her lap and next to her a boy, sitting bow necked. I inquired. They were a family of a soldier; their father was taken to the army. Their mother had died. She was raising these unlucky orphans. I asked the girl's name: - Siranoush!

The poor innocent child, in her hand a dry piece of bread dipped into water and ate it that way. I found food for Siranush, I embraced and caressed her. Since that day a cordial relationship developed between us. But Siranush would never smile. In her glance, in her eyebrows, in her face, there was a melancholy, there was grief. Her soul was crushed from this *tehcir* [deportation], this oppressive action and her innocent heart was broken. When she used to see the food I gave her, as though she deeply felt hatred towards the nation I am a member of, without smiling, without looking at my face, with her tiny fingers, she would put it to her mouth.

That day in the station in front of this sad spectacle everyone was touched. And it was thought that this was all. The train that arrived at night annulled this apprehension perfectly. Along the train line a cry of lament was heard. From the side of the station facing the valley cries for help could be heard. I ran. It was such a sad sight. There was no lantern, no lights, no guide; there was nothing. Women crying with their children in their arms, priests with dishevelled beards, gathering their robs, tossing their loads on to their backs, mothers streaming in perspiration trying to unload their belongings, carrying their sick, their daughters, their children; poor, rich, hungry, destitute, thousands of families trying to get out of the cargo cars, struggling not to lose their children, their mothers, their belongings. It was not possible to see this sight – tears were shed uncontrollably from their eyes; it was not possible to help anyone. It was not possible to come to the aid of anyone. Even if help was offered, no one accepted it. This unjust oppression has created such a deep enmity that even if one wanted to help the most helpless, pitiful woman who had no kith or kin, would frown, look at our faces with hatred and with her firm heart, hurt soul, would walk fearlessly towards disaster, hunger and death.

The trains were following each other in succession. From every train thousands of families, thousands of village folks were coming out, to that extent that it was not possible to transfer from Eskişehir those who arrived. Those who lost their hopes of leaving, settled in the station garden and on the road. Within a few days, the area around Eskişehir train station crammed with more than ten thousand, twenty thousand families. Children, women and men who could not be transported by the train, came by the road, their feet in blood, around them a few poor gendarmes. This sight was terrible. Where would these unfortunate families go? No one knew that. The railway company would not accept the transportation of people even at half-price. There was no longer any hope.

Many *paterfamilias* started putting up tents to protect their children from the cold. From the market, through their acquaintances, they would bring wood and sticks, covering them with their rugs and clothes. Even rich families who left their homes, their estates, their gardens, would spend the night on soil. Around Eskişehir an encampment consisting of twenty thousand people emerged. Streets appeared among the tents, markets set up. At night the mountains would turn dark, the extensive and sorrowful murmurs of Porsuk Suyu [river] would echo in the hills and you could see the dim lights of the valley, where the unfortunate Armenians were sleeping in wretched conditions. Sometimes these innocents, who saw their most sweet hopes and happiness disintegrate, slept by embracing each other under their tents, with sorrowful heart and emotional. The head of a poor blond girl who went to sleep in a corner of the tent, without having a morsel of food from the morning, would shine under the weak light of the candle.

The Armenians of Eskişehir were very sad of this sight. But what could they have done? The wealthiest among them gathered money for the transportation of a few families. Wouldn't the same disaster befall upon them, they wondered? But they seemed confident. There was information from the Armenians who came from Adapazarı and the surrounding areas: many weapons were found in Adapazarı. However, the people of Adapazarı were claiming these weapons were given to them by Ibrahim Bey and that they were absolutely not at fault. Nevertheless, whatever the case, it was clear that they were forced to migrate because of the weapons found in those areas. In Eskişehir no one was

concerned with the Armenian question. People were preoccupied with trade and agriculture. In the markets, it was said that a riffle was found in the river. But there was no doubt that this was the work of Eskişehir Center Officer. This fellow³³ was Eskişehir's most inauspicious figure. He joined Ittihat and became distinguished in disgracefulness and rowdiness. The Armenians of Eskişehir confident that they would not be forced to migrate, at times would come to the station to help their co-religionists.

The Armenians had now settled in tents in Eskişehir. No one was attacking them. Their only enemy was the cruel Centre Official. Sometimes he would assemble the men and seize their money from their pockets. Upon the women's cries for help, station officers would save the men and return the money the Centre Officer had taken by threatening them.

Several weeks passed. The Armenians were still not being transferred. Some were transported to Kütahya by road, but they did not enter the town and a second camp was arranged in the Alayurt train station. Now hunger had emerged for the thousands of families. There was no food, water or money; there was nothing. They eventually decided to sell their belongings. This was a terrible decision. In Eskişehir's streets, in the stations field, lace-work knitted by bridal age and young girls through eye-straining work, by nurturing sweet hopes in their innocent hearts, the silk bed sheets, the painstakingly prepared bridal ware, would be sold to the women with red *charshaf* for next to nothing and would wonder around the streets of Eskişehir. What a terrible predicament. From this disaster, ignorant people, Eskişehir's Germans and the Greeks would take advantage. For those who had nothing to sell, the only way out was begging. You could see most of the families with dishevelled clothes would sit in front of a door, bow-necked and beg. The hunger was increasing and the cold was getting worse. Those who could not make a tent for themselves would lay their beds in front of houses around the train station and spend the night on the streets with their children.

³³ The term 'herif' is always used derogatively, a meaning which the English term does not render.

Around the station, among the families who slept on the streets, there was an obstinate girl. Every morning she would torment her mother and not let her comb her hair. One morning, this poor woman, wretched and miserable destitute, was preoccupied with combing her daughter's hair. The disaster had caused despair in her heart. The child's obstinacy was increasing this despair exponentially. Eventually she was so afflicted that she took a pair of scissors and decided to cut her daughter's hair, but because of her grief her hands trembled; the scissors cut the obstinate child's skin off together with her hair. The blood from the child's head spilt over the unfortunate mother's heart. She took her child's head in her arms; she kissed and kissed, embraced her and started to sob.

This was not an isolated incident. Even those who were in bed with tuberculosis, sick people at the point of death, the invalid and the insane, beggars paralysed from the waist down, were forced out. Almost every day, in Eskişehir's Armenian Cemetery, the priest in front, behind him a few poor families would either bury one of their children or their mother or their old father. Neither an echo off a bell nor the chanting of an hymn would invite souls to pious reverence. This disaster would break your heart.

One day, a husband and wife were walking and chatting. They were both sad. But the sadness of the man was greater. The woman tried to console him: "What can we do? God is great. He will look after us", she said. The man immediately became angry looked at the woman with a forceful glance: "Do you still invoke [the name of] God? Where is God? Is there God? If there is, what is this situation?" he shouted. He walked towards the creek and wiped his tears in his eyes with his torn sleeves.

Eventually, one day a sinister order had arrived. Eskişehir was also to be evacuated. It was a great opportunity for the Centre Officer. A mournful calm prevailed that day. No one could go out in the street. It got dark. The calmness of death emerged in the houses which were calm and peaceful the day before. Guards were guarding street entrances; you could hear hammering noises in houses. So, they would also leave? So, innocent women who once were standing in front of windows with their shy manners and honest faces, sewing with chaste manners; who when they saw a male figure would withdraw

inside, young girls, unfortunate children, will also flow into the torrent of this disaster and death.

In fact, that is what happened. Next day, Eskişehir's helpless families with a basket in their hands and their coats in their arms, boarded on the animal compartment of the train. Their eyes full of tears, their hearts stirred up, left the houses they loved, lived for many centuries, their flower gardens, their cherished memories, and bid farewell to Eskişehir's pretty horizon, the historic city which reflected Heroic Osman's justice. They went towards the mountain which surrounds Konya Valley, the rugged mountain pass of Pozantı, Mesopotamia's hellish deserts, to hunger, to misery, wretchedness, towards death.

Was there no opportunity to save these innocent people? I talked to the German priest. I asked him to send a telegraph to Istanbul, through the Austrian Ambassador, to get permission for the Catholic Armenians at least. He accepted it. Next day an order arrived from Istanbul which declared that the Catholic Armenians, families of people in the military, employees of the railway company could stay. Young and elegant girls were establishing relationships with railway employees, who in normal conditions could not even be their servants. These relationships were to save their lives. Some among them wanted to become Muslims but the government would not accept it.

The Armenians of Eskişehir were evacuated now as well. Their valuable carpets and furniture were all in their houses. But the government was unable to protect these too. The houses with absentee owners were supposedly protected by the police. Yet, at night the carpets, possessions and valuable belongings were stolen in their entirety. The same situation emerged during the evacuation of Izmit and Adapazarı, where after the goods were stolen, the houses were set on fire to cover any traces. From this disaster of the Armenians, the Jews were the most content. The Jews would go to Izmit in groups to make a fortune out of the disaster-stricken Armenians. One of the few Jews living in Eskişehir approached me one day. Supposedly to carry favour with me against the Armenians, he looked at my curious eyes: "Very good Sir. They are living, are they not?"

Godspeed! What they have not done to us the Turks? What they have not done?" he said, and with the manner of a person who loves his homeland tried to express his feelings. In Eskişehir there were many hypocrites like him. But the majority of the people were very sad of these murders.

On the one hand the Armenians were deported, on the other hand the Turkish element was sent to danger in convoys. In the extensive valleys of Anatolia, in its wide fields, you could not see anyone other than barefoot, miserable children with sun-burnt faces and broken handles trying to manage a couple of weak oxen who seemed like calves. Under the bareness of the wide valleys these unfortunate children seemed like helpless creatures. On the one hand, the Armenians were sent to a disaster; on the other hand, the people were being starved to death. In trains passing in convoys, the desperate and sorrowful voices of the soldiers who were leaving were echoing as sad songs. Sometimes, the train as a sad farewell to Anatolia for the last time would raise a touching cry; a few minutes later the song:

In the orchards of Gesi I have a single rose
O ruthless [man] we are both going to die

would intermingle with the buzzing noise of the train wheels. Oh! The people who were going on these trains were so unlucky. What difference was there between them and the Armenians? Was it not the end the same for them? Indeed, the end was the same for both: misery and death. They were both going to end their lives, prosperity, and feelings, in two ends of Anatolia. One's life will end in the desert and the other's on the sea shore.

In Istanbul they were growing impatient. They even begrudged the miserable lives of the Armenians, who for many months lived on the streets and begged for money in order to survive. The areas around the train station were to be evacuated. Those who occupied the train station for many months would be transferred to Konya and Pozantı. But no one wanted to move from their places. They were all convinced a terrible force was waiting for them in Pozantı: death. The pine groves around the mountains were full of gangs Ittihat had sent. People were willing to stay in Eskişehir in order not to die. Anyhow,

what was the misdeed committed by these people? Weren't they the committees, those who prepared the rebellion, those who once united with Ittihadists, those who supported them at the time when "Hürriyet ve Itilaf Fırkası" [Freedom and Harmony Party] could have caused the downfall of the Ittihat, those in the Eastern provinces tried to annihilate the Turkish element in concert with Russians, those who caused Ittihat's massacres, spilled the blood of innocent Armenians?

These poor people worked well peacefully in their villages, in their orchards, in their gardens. They serviced agriculture, commerce and development in the cities they lived. Now, for the sake of a few ignorant upstarts they were becoming victims of the bloody ambitions of the murderous committees. The Turkish villagers were happy with their neighbours they cohabitated. In many villages between Adapazarı and Eskişehir the Turkish people applied to the government to try and save their neighbours. However, they did not think that there would be no compassion, no affection, in the heart of a tyrannical government. No one paid attention to their requests and application.

Finally, an order arrived from Istanbul. Emigration officials were sent to Eskişehir. All Armenians were to go to Konya, Pozantı and the valleys of Aleppo.

I was concerned about Siranush. I wanted to see that little child. Among many thousands of Armenians, I looked for the innocent blond orphan. I begged her grandmother: "Leave these children here. This disaster shall pass. Come afterwards and find me here", I said. The old lady, full of tears in her eyes, looked at the sky:

- No, she said. No Sir, thank you. We will all go and die together. How am I going to carry them anyway? I will do something very simple: On the way, I will just throw them to the river and then jump myself.

My heart suffered a sharp pain. Eskişehir was being evacuated convoy by convoy, train by train. These trains were not even sheltered cargo wagons. They were animal wagons in the shape of cages and open on all sides. "At least send them on covered cars", I said

to the officer from the Emigration Administration. In a nonchalant manner, he responded indifferently: “is it not better this way? They will get fresh air.” These poor people did not even have the desire to live, let alone get fresh air.

Yet another train, though orderly and magnificent, passed through this convoy of misery, one day. Enver Pasha was going to Izmir with his family, in imperial majesty and pomp. In the midst of the morning fog a high pitched noise woke up this hungry people. A few minutes later, the Ittihadist liberator³⁴, hands in the pockets, bare headed, came out to the front of the train, his eyes on the high horizons; passed through like a thunderbolt and left. He did not deign to turn his head to look at the knocked-down people, starving to death, unfortunate citizens.

There was an amazing activity in the train station day and night. One evening an elegant *madame* came out the train together with a pasha. She entered the hall. This terrible sighting caused deep grief in her heart. I talked to her: the Mademoiselle was Liman von Sanders’ wife.³⁵ She was coming from Syria with Cemal Pasha. She understood my grief too and immediately addressed these victims of emigration.

- What a pity, she said. I do not know what they want from these innocent people, these helpless women? They should punish whoever committed these crimes.

Supposedly the ones in Istanbul are less culpable than these people. The heads that should be cut off are those of Talat, Enver and that tyrannical cabinet. The rivers are carrying human corpses, children’s heads. This sighting breaks one’s heart. One day someone would be held responsible? The German officers took photos of all these cut-off heads, of all these torn apart corpses. In any case, not to disapprove this cruelty you have to have defective marauding mentality [like gang members]. Undoubtedly, the Germans whose hearts are filled with feelings of humanity they abhor these murders.

³⁴ A reference to the liberation of Edirne under Enver’s command.

³⁵ Otto Liman von Sanders served as head of the German military mission to Turkey in 1913, Inspector General of the Turkish Army in January, 1914, and commander of the Turkish First Army until March 1915.

However, if Official Germany wanted, it could have prevented this massacre. Said Halim Pasha was a blind tool of the Ittihadists'. Enver and Talat could not stray from what the Germans uttered. It was out of the realm of possibility that they carried these murders relying on their own forces. Undoubtedly, they were counting on a German victory and hoped to suppress this enormous tragedy and the cry of innocent people with the power of Germany and the Germans' victory refrains. Germany was intoxicated with the victories she was going to gain in Anatolia and about these murders, which could not even have been seen in Mediaeval times, she was taking the role of a silent and indifferent spectator.

The Armenians' greatest fear was Pozantı. The attacks of the gangs over there would shiver their hearts. Who [constituted] these gangs? There were two gangs Ittihat government sent to the Caucasus in the name of its Turan policy, in the name of Islamic unity. Even those who once would address themselves to the German Empire in the name of the Islamic world, bullies of the reign of the aghas who became distinguished as preachers of the Turkish Hearth,³⁶ did not these gangs send Sheik Ubeidulah Efendi to the Afghan Emir [Prince]?

These measures and the cruelty were all a comedy; a tragedy of the ignorant [caused by the ignorant]. The Germans were aware that Enver could not manage a military operation even like a captain. But in order to take Turkey under her influence as a colony, to extend German power, was it too much to applaud Enver, to pay too much attention to a common upstart?

On the question of Fez: "Germany joined world politics late. The colonies were fully shared. There was no space left for Germany in Africa. The places where Germany could make colonies were only the Islamic countries destined to decline. Germany would have turned these places to economic colonies. To reach this aim, if need be I would wear the fez", said Kaiser Wilhelm.

³⁶ Turkish Hearth (Türk Ocağı) cultural society founded in 1911 to promote Turkish culture and Turkish nationalist sentiment.

Consequently, in order to ensure their interests, sending telegraphs to Enver, welcoming Talat as an Ottoman diplomat, could not be perceived as humiliation. Did not Napoleon's Ambassador General Sebastian applaud Kabakçı Mustafa with the same aim in the period of Sultan Selim III?

One night a telegram arrived in Eskişehir from Cemal Pasha. In this telegram it was ordered to arrest Çerkez Ahmet [Circassian Ahmet] as soon as he got out of the train. Curious! There must have been an important reason. Cemal Pasha protected the Armenians; that he protected the helpless people who entered his area was known. But the arrest of Çerkez Ahmet must have had an important reason. Çerkez Ahmet was the darling of the Ittihat government. Why this lad who was among those who murdered Zeki Bey on behalf of Cavit Bey, was being arrested now? Even though, upon the downfall of Ittihat he was imprisoned on murder charges, he was a hero who received amnesty following the 23 January raid; for the salvation of Ittihat he sacrificed everything. Did not he even travel to the Caucasus front with his *jihadic*³⁷ friend Nazım in the last Universal War in the name of Islamic Unity?

Çerkez Ahmet was a real combatant. The Education Minister Şükrü Bey was to name a high school or primary school after him in the near future. Hearth's poets were going to compose poetry for his victories. Hearth's scientists' were going to study the spiritualism of this great combatant. Now where was this opposition coming from?

Eventually it became clear: Çerkez Ahmet, with his friends Nazım and Halil after causing many catastrophes against the Armenians, went to Cemal Pasha's area and was surprised to see so many Armenians. After a military salute, he said: "Give us an order; we will set up an organisation. We will wipe these ones out." Cemal Pasha did not approve this. At that point, Istanbul Deputies Zöhrab and Vartkes and other associates were exiled from Istanbul and arrived at Aleppo. Zöhrab, who with his fiery intellect, enlightened mind, sensitive soul, sacrificed his own personal ambition for the sake of his nation's prosperity, had an audience with Cemal Pasha. Pouring out his woes and

³⁷ Holy war.

lamenting, said that they were going to be sent to Diyarbakır War Tribunal. He shed such bitter tears that Cemal Pasha took pity on him and promised that he would protect them. He sent a telegram to the Interior Minister Talat. He said that until this matter was closed he would make Zöhrab and his friends “resurface” and that when the matter settled he would make them “reappear”. Talat did not approve. He insisted that they go to Diyarbakır. Eventually, when he saw that his wishes were not accepted, he left Talat’s telegram to his officers and said “show them this after I leave”, and then he departed.

Zöhrab and his friends, in grief and very sad, departed for Diyarbakır by car,. On the road they came across Çerkez Ahmet’s gang. Çerkez Ahmet exterminated these poor people in one attack. When Cemal Pasha learned of this he became terribly angry. He ordered the arrest of Çerkez Ahmet. This was the whole matter.

When the train bringing Çerkez Ahmet arrived, the place was under guards everywhere. Anyhow, Ahmet was arrested in Afyonkarahisar. He was coming to Eskişehir under protection. From the train a tall person with a fur cap on his head, in the attire of Ittihat plenipotentiaries and governors, with long full and curved moustache and thin faced, emerged. Behind him another person with darker skin, velvet trousers and medium height came out. The tall one was Çerkez Ahmet, the other Mülazim Halil. These people were the gang chiefs sent through the efforts of Special Organisation. Halil especially had a greater military expedition on behalf of Islam. This fighter, when the gang of the Deputy Sudi Bey entered Ardahan, went to Artvin and routed the Armenians who were happily living in that beautiful city. I heard of this disaster when I was still in Ulukışla. The correspondent of a German newspaper who hated the murders of the loathsome gangs said: “If you saw how cruelly they behaved! I will be damned if I ever travel with these people again. Neither Islam nor Christianity; they do not recognise anything. Now, over there Islam is fighting with Islam.”

These words of the German correspondent spoke the truth. Three years later when I went to Artvin and I saw to what extent this was true. Poor Armenian women upon seeing Turkish uniform would show signs of weariness and would go out of the way. This

beautiful city with roses, flowers and fruit trees as though they originated from the havens, would give joy and pleasure to the soul, was now completely empty. Halil and his brutes had exacted such cruelty on the people of Artvin that Ismail Agha who was exiled to Siberia by Russians through the urging of the Armenians, was very sad for the suffering of these unfortunate people, and, following the Russian retreat he protected the Armenians from attacks.

Çerkez Ahmet was an important source [of information] concerning the Armenian catastrophe. I wanted to hear a little about the stages of this bloody incident. I asked Çerkez Ahmet what he had done in the Eastern Provinces. Wearing his high boots, he crossed his legs, emitted the smoke of his cigarettes around: “Sir, brother”, he said, “this situation hurts my pride. I served the fatherland. Go and see. I turned Van and the surrounding areas to Kaaba soil.³⁸ Today you could not even find one Armenian there. I served the fatherland so much; and these vulgar and unscrupulous fellows like Talat are sitting in Istanbul drinking their icy-called beers, while I am brought here like this under guard. This hurts my pride.

Yet, he had a friend Nazım; together they killed Zeki Bey! I asked Çerkez Ahmet about Nazım:

- Shush, Sir, brother. The poor man became a martyr, he said.
- So what happened to Zöhrab and the others?
- Aa! Have you not heard? I killed³⁹ them all off.

He spread the smoke of his cigarette around the room, he fixed his moustache with his left hand and continued:

- They were going to Aleppo. We came across them on the way. I immediately surrounded his car. They realised they were going to be killed off. Vartkes said:

³⁸ This is a reference to Kabaa in Mecca. It implies a land without Christians.

³⁹ The verb “gebertmek” in Turkish is even more contemptuous than the term “öldürmek”, both meaning to kill or murder.

- All right Ahmet Bey, you are doing this to us, but what are you going to do about the Arabs? They are not happy with you either.
- That is not for you to worry about, cuckold, I said. I blew his brains out with a bullet from the mawser. Then I caught Zöhrab. I gave him a hiding. With a big rock I crushed his head, I crushed it, I crushed it until he was killed off.

Çerkez Ahmet had gone to Istanbul with that morning's train. The arrival of Ahmet had quite bewildered his friends. This news also perplexed Bedri who, together with the Center Commander Cevat Bey, were examining something in the commanders' room. There must be some mistake. Çerkez Ahmet was going to go to Aleppo.

How Çerkez Ahmet, who, two years ago, as a great combatant with respect and honour assumed the leadership of the gang, could be brought to the Centre under arrest? The military police commander who heard about it was really astonished, bewildered he said: "Let him come in!" Çerkez Ahmet entered with cigarette in hand in dignified manner and swinging his arms about. Then a cordial chat ensued in the room. The captain had gotten up: "Oh my brother! My Ahmet, who would have thought of it", he said and embraced the great murderer. Çerkez Ahmet, lispingly "My dear. There must be a mistake. This is impertinence", he said.

A few weeks later the news arrived. Çerkez Ahmet was sent to Damascus "his removal was necessary" and Cemal Pasha did him for.

In Eskişehir, there were no other Armenians other than the Catholics and military families. Some on trains, some were sent by road in convoys. Around the train station you could not see anything but worn out clothes, rags and tent remains.

But Istanbul was not idle. Train after train they were sending Armenian thinkers and artists to Anatolia's remote corners. A train arrived in full, one night. I looked at the station. They were all figures I knew and recognized. Dirak Kelekyan, Pozat Keçiyan, Torkumyan ...

All thinking, patriotic Armenians were exiled, convoy by convoy. It was even said that all Armenians from Istanbul would be evacuated. In any case, was there anyone who was not hung, who was not exiled? It was as though Ottoman citizens were inheritances from the fathers of these upstarts. No one could raise their voice against this tyranny. Hallaçyan Efendi still in Istanbul, in his adorned mansion was offering feasts to Ittihadists, Armenian deputies still in the Parliament, continued to flatter Talat and his brutes. The Greek, Armenian and Jewish merchants still were competing with the Turks in profiteering.

In Istanbul, in order to justify this well organised murder, the necessary propaganda was fully prepared. The Armenians supposedly allied with the enemy; they would cause a rebellion in Istanbul, they would kill the leaders of Ittihat and they would succeed in opening up the Straits. These common falsehoods could only convince the populace which was unable to even perceive its hunger. I wish the Armenians were able to bring down the Ittihad leadership. Then they would have saved Turkey and the Turks from the oppression of the upstarts and earn the eternal gratitude of the Turks.

If you think about the aim of the Armenians about independence and liberation, such an action would have turned all their aspirations upside down. That is because if the downfall of Ittihat caused to bring about to government a party in favour of harmony and peace, then it would be possible to get out of the German encirclement, reconcile with the English and Turkey would have gained a more successful position. If it would not have been possible to escape from the German encirclement, we would have continued with the war; but at least there would have been an end to the tyranny of Ittihat's upstarts. Consequently, it is not possible to imagine that this action attributed to the Armenians, had any logic. In fact, the deportation issue in reality was the last retaliation of the rebellion and the massacres of the Armenians and what encouraged it were the successive German victories.

There was no one from the people of Eskişehir participating in the deportation atrocities. The cruelest against the Armenians were some officials, the gendarme and the police. In many places, the officers of the regular army did not participate in this bloody operation. The people were sad. Especially in the provinces of Western Anatolia the operation carried out occurred according to the capacity and criminal disposition of the provincial governors. The people who died in Eskişehir were victims to Talat's ruthless operation of deportation. Here, no one from the people, the gendarme or even the police killed any person. It was said that the most deplorable tragedies were brought about in Bursa, and especially in Ankara. Those who came from Ankara were recounting with a very sad language: the houses were subjected to blockade; hundreds of Armenian families were loaded up to cars and were thrown into the rivers. Many women who witnessed these terrible murders became insane. The houses belonging to wealthy Armenians were bought off and as soon as the deposition was delivered, the monies were retaken by force, by cruelty.

It was not possible to hear of these calamities and not be affected. It is certain that one day it would be called to account. The operation was a murder in the name of humanity. The deportation of the Armenians in a bloody manner was to deprive the country of an important organ. Following this deplorable operation, in Eskişehir the mills stopped and the people faced the danger of being without bread. In fact, all artisanship and craftsmanship was divided in the country according to the abilities and the aptitude of the ethnic elements.

I went around the station, to Porsuk shores. A melancholic autumn would cause the fall of leaves and the withering of flowers. Along the markets, Kaplıca's stone buildings were rising as two historic monuments to the justice and affection of the heroic Osman and young Orhan.⁴⁰ What an antithesis!

Once, Osman Gazi in this market place here had punished a Turk from Germiyan for usurping the rights of a Christian from Bilecik and proved his affection for justice and

⁴⁰ Osman Bey, founder of the Ottoman Empire and his son Orhan Bey

equity. Now, in the same city, the houses and homes were usurped and children and women were thrown to the mountains.

Eskişehir's active, honest, dignified people were preoccupied with their work. Once, they also incurred the wrath of this cruel government, among them a few self-sacrificing figures spent their lives in the goals of Sinop. Eskişehir's children whose hearts pounded with the love for liberty, who conscientiously rebelled against Ittihat's tyranny, can be proud of this virtue.

My eyes deflected involuntarily towards the railway and the land which ends by the purple mountains and the yellow trees. I thought of families, who, once, in the cold, in the darkness of the night, slept crying and seeing horrible dreams. Who knows where they are, in which mountain did they become victims in the paws of which ruthless gang? Poor Siranoush, beautiful innocent girl, where are you?

PART II

Erzurum, 6 May 1918

I am in a conflagrant area. This historical and self-sacrificing city is almost in ruins. The streets and the buildings, the mosques and the *medresses*⁴¹ are completely ruined. The houses are filled with human corpses, if you prod with your foot in the wreckage of the house which have burned down and collapsed, you would come across blackened bodies, heads with greening teeth, heads of children, arms and legs, pieces of feet.

Poor people of Erzurum! For centuries they would guard the frontiers and serve [military service at the Janissary corps] our brave Sultans with all their existence. Now they were subjected to the cruelty of the Armenian gangs, their women and children, their bare and ruined families turned purple under the wreckage of destroyed homes, [lying as] decaying bodies.

You can no longer hear the call to prayer echoing on the sad and lonely Palandöken Mountain; nor can you see the dignified and proud crowd. A terrible and ruthless storm of blood and fire passed through the city with elegant buildings, magnificent commercial buildings, adorned with historic tombs, which witnessed the Ottoman heroism for four centuries.

The crows flying over the tall poplar trees were crying mournfully, bare foot children, old and invalid people, unfortunate mothers without kith or kin bend double over the pain for their children, with tears in their eyes shaking with heavy and weak steps were wondering around burned and collapsed and destroyed homes.

Erzurum had never experienced such a big pain. The first year of the Universal War in Erzurum passed in peace and quite. But the attacks of the Russian Army in Western Anatolia violated this calmness. The Turks and the Armenians, two nations which lived together for centuries, were now going to end their friendship. The depravity of the

⁴¹ Muslim theological schools.

Ottoman administration had opened up a wide gap. The government which had a tyrannical and cruel influence on people, as well as distressing the Turks, had awoken feelings of freedom and independence among the Armenians. The Armenian committees supported this wish the most. The committees could have better secured Armenian prosperity through peace rather than through bombs and massacres. However, in order to satisfy their ambition, they considered permissible for themselves [to spill] the blood of the people. The Turks did not know about bombs. It was the Armenian committees which brought in the bombs to Turkey and tried to eliminate the Sultans' body and his palace. How many Turks had died when the Yıldız⁴² bomb exploded! A terrible explosion shook the area and in the air a whirlwind consisting of flesh, legs and arms had emerged. Near the Yıldız Palace, children whose lungs torn to pieces were knocked down among brave lion-like lads, their heads torn apart and corpses of horses. In the banister human flesh got stuck in mince-like conditions. These people who died, the torn apart corpses were all poor Turks.

Now bombs would explode in Anatolia and because of the operation of a tyrannical government the Armenians would drown these hungry and unlucky people in a torrent of blood.

For Armenians, Turkey's entrance into the Universal War was the beginning for salvation and independence. Armenians were completely convinced that the entry to the Universal War was a great disaster for Turkey. It was certain that the Turks, who encountered a painful loss in the Balkan War, could not gain any success the world war; they would even be annihilated and routed.

There could not be any more important opportunity than this one for Armenian independence. Armenians who were reasonable and logical were not willing to win Armenian independence by blood or by force at all; they also abhorred the covetous and murderous committees. In reality Turkey won the war. The Armenians could not gain any success by a bloody operation. If Turkey lost, naturally she would have been

⁴² Yıldız was the suburb where the palace was located.

dismembered and the Eastern Question would reappear [through the efforts of] Europe, which heretofore protected the Christian Armenians. In both cases, to cause an uprising through bloody means would unnecessarily drag the Armenian nation into misadventures. If the Armenians helped the Russians and rebelled, it was natural that the Ittihat committee would respond with some means, perhaps even more forcefully.

The Armenian committees did not take this observation into consideration. Furthermore, they become dependent on the loathsome influence of their ambition which corroded their hearts for many years.

For a while, Turks and Armenians fought ferocious and bloody battles in Bitlis and Van regions, to the extent that they ruined the cities and towns they were fighting for. Van constituted a terrible scene of these collisions. As the Russian Army was advancing, the Armenian force and courage was increasing. In some places the Armenians were attacking and the Turks were in defensive positions. The deportations and the killings started to follow one another. The only helpers of the Russian Army which entered Anatolia were the Armenians. Vengeance, independence and ambition had agitated the Armenians. Divisions consisting of Russian and Armenians were advancing towards Erzurum by [literally] running over Turkish and Armenians corpses. When Erzurum was taken over, the first action of the Russian Army was to prevent Armenian brigades from entering the city. The Russians knew very well that if the Armenians entered Erzurum they would tear apart the Turks in a terrible manner. The murders that would have been carried out under the protection of the Russians could have caused Turks to hate the Russians completely. Yet the aim of the Russians was to advance to Erzincan, Sivas and Trabzon.

As the Russians advanced, the people who feared the attacks of the Armenians would leave their homes and belongings, hungry and miserable, would seek refuge further inland. Some of those Turks who remained would die on the gallows due to the informing of the Greeks and the Armenians. In some cities, the Turks were subjected to continuous cruelties by the Russians, the Greeks and the Armenians. In Trabzon, the

doors of the Muslims would be kicked down and their women raped. Finally, when the Russian administration established these attacks ended to some extent. The people were at ease because they were not living in misery. The injustices disappeared in the dominion. They were working, earning money; they were not losing their rights.

In quite a short time Russian life was fully established from Sarikamish to Trabzon. The Markets and the shops stocked up with excellent Russian goods. The Ittihat government would proclaim Russian starvation in newspapers, while the people of Istanbul themselves were dying of starvation. Yet, the workers occupied with building roads in Erzurum's snowy mountains, in Zigana's pined gorges, would eat their fresh bread, drink tea with plenty of sugar and receive four to five *mantas* daily wages. The Turkish workers, the cart drivers, and artisans were all happy with this situation. In the past they were being slapped by the Turkish officials rather than receiving *baksheesh*, now they were receiving plenty of money from the Russian officers and Russian ladies.

After the tyrannical government of Ittihat, for the people who for centuries have not seen prosperity, security or justice, even the enemy administration of the Russians was almost a period of welfare. Even their ignorant minds could appreciate the Russian order. Now, elegant ladies, Russian officers with shiny uniforms would pass through with cars on the terrible roads that once convoys of miserable and invalid soldiers starved to death. Theaters, cinemas, merriment, everything was available in the cities.

If there was one thing that was an open wound for the Turks was the conversion of mosques to stables. Nevertheless, they started to be intimately acquainted with Russians and many among them even learned Russian.

This calm did not last for too long a period. The appearance of Bolshevism caused the catastrophe of the Turks who lived under Russian occupation. The Russians were looting the storehouses, selling their horses, killing their officers and escaping.

It was natural that the Turks would take advantage of this opportunity to liberate their occupied homeland. But the Armenians tried to render these efforts fruitless. As the Russians were escaping to their country, they took administration, order and government into their own hands. At some stage, the loyal allies of the Allied Powers succeeded in shielding fully the lands under occupation in form of an Armenian government. From that date on the Turks would live as Armenian subjects in their lands.

In fact, their arms were taken from them anyway. At the helm was a nation which assumed government, an enemy which attempted to destroy them and does not know of peace. For them, death, misery was always in hand in these beautiful places. In the consideration of the Turks, the Armenian Government was a bomb hanging over their heads. For this bomb to immerse into blood, there was no need for any reason or a crime to be committed. For the Armenians, Turkish blood was permissible. The Armenians committees only thought of rising by standing over Turkish corpses. At the same time, for this inordinately greedy and covetous, vindictive government, none of their organisations was working well. The aim of the Armenians was to counter the Turkish armies which were to return to their homeland upon Russian retreat. For this they were hiding the arms and ammunition the Russians left and they were keeping Russian artillerymen, officers or foot soldiers with payment of high wages. The Armenians who occupied themselves only with agriculture, commerce and the crafts were trying to be trained by the remaining Russian officers.

Especially in Erzincan and in Erzurum the government was in Armenian hands. The Turks under this terrible administration were deprived of everything, of arms, defense and protection, and having no friends, they were equivalent to subjects. Almost in every instance the danger they were concerned about was the terrible vengeance of the Armenians'. The thoughts of the Armenians' seemed to justify the Turks' fears. In fact, they were looking for an opportunity to avenge the Van and Bitlis massacres and the Anatolian deportations. When following the conquest of Istanbul the Armenians became the first subjects of the Turks, Fatih Sultan Mehmed [the Conquerer], thinking of the

welfare of the Armenians established the patriarchate.⁴³ Now the Armenians were trying to take revenge on their first subjects, the Turks, and were satisfying their rage by committing isolated murders. Sometimes they would take to labor gangs poor Turks they gathered from the streets, garrote them in groups and throw them to the ditches. In Erzurum, Erzincan, Trabzon and in the surrounding areas a terrible Armenian tyranny was prevailing. The aim of the Armenians was to find guilty and systematically and progressively annihilate the Turks that remained under their administration. They mostly killed men, there were not that many that assaulted women.

Some Turks emigrated from the cities that were occupied and those who remained were torn apart during the Russian evacuation. Up to that time, the Russian administration protected the Turks. When the Russian army started to retreat and the Bolsheviks ran to their homeland, they knew the Armenians were going to annihilate the Turks. During the evacuation this catastrophe took place, just like the Russian thought it would. The Russian officers tried to prevent Armenian assaults. According to a report sent by a Russian officer to his superior, while informing about the evacuation he wrote the following: “No matter how much I tried to prevent the massacre, I did not succeed. Armenians killed eight hundred people. God is great.”

Nonetheless, the real massacre was to be experienced when the Ottoman army was seen near Trabzon and in the valleys of Erzurum. In fact, this massacre was really terrible: the western actions of the Ottoman army caused the catastrophe of the Turks. Outside the cities the Armenian gangs would oppose the Ottoman army and inside the city they would kill people cramming them into the barracks or holding them in their houses. Sometimes they would cut their heads on wooded slabs and throw their bodies into wells. The advance of the Ottoman army would increase two-fold the hopelessness and the tyranny of the Armenians. When this hope was lost completely, the Armenian gangs would turn into rabid monsters. They would demolish houses, burn buildings, destroy tombs, and the Turks would fall to the ground soaked in blood, killed by the bullets or by

⁴³ In 1461.

the bayonets. Erzurum was the worst scene of this bloody barbarism. The government house and even many of the wooden houses were burnt.

Among the whiteness [of the snow] rising to the skies in the hills of Palandöken and Eđerli Mountain, the cries for help and wails were also rising in the horizon in the form of black smoke and in flames. The mosques and the medresses, old Ottoman castles, would at times appear as white buildings among this black smoke. Erzurum was in an infernal catastrophe. Among these biting flames, innocent people would lie on top of the snow, disemboweled and their lungs torn apart. The Armenian committees demonstrated their most fine art with these arrangements, prepared these terrible scenes on the side of the roads where the army would pass through. The Armenian evacuation of Erzurum was so terrible that that they crammed hundreds of men to houses and burned them alive by spilling petrol over them. Those who managed to escape in the midst of the flames by using the axes they brought from their homes made a small hole on the walls, and until the Ottoman army arrived they lived among the fire debris, hungry and miserable.

In Istanbul no one had any idea. The terrible censorship of Enver Pasha, resolved to hide all these calamities from the people as though [this way] the land that was given up would have been retaken. At times, the enemy planes would devastate Adana and the unfortunate people would struggle with death. Yet, the government in its official announcement would say that either a camel died or the bomb fell on a citizen of the Allies. When the English army was approaching Aleppo, the Headquarters deceived the nation by still talking about the Sinai Front. The most curious was the wrong manner in which even the calamities people witnessed were announced. It could now very clearly be seen that, the government and the Headquarters were wicked and lying to the point that they could not perceived their own somnolence.

In any case, if they publicized the facts, what force was there to hold them responsible, to agitate against them? When Enver Pasha sacrificed one hundred and fifty thousand Turks in Sarikamish to his ignorance, who raised his voice? Which person responsible for murder or a catastrophe has been searched for in Turkey? Did not the Ittihat

mentality, the Hearth zeal forgive all the murders anyway? Was it not murder the most shining virtue in their consideration, representing determination and fortitude? There were murderers even among those who occupied positions in the [Department of the] Interior. In any case, the people had gotten used to be living under this administration. The heroes who brought freedom from Salonica to Istanbul were all armed rough young fellows. They even named the newspapers they published “Gun”, “Canon” and “Dagger”.⁴⁴ They would even print the word dagger on the top of the newspaper and on the side they would issue a threat: “to those who deserve it”. In their opinion those who “deserved it” were those who were enlightened with science and civilization, those who approved European policy, who fearlessly talked about the dangers fatherland faced, and those who did not approve of the Ottoman homeland to be disgraced in the hands of the barefoot. Yet the cannons should explode on their heads, the daggers should penetrate their chests.

The honest segment of the people in the name of Ottomanism felt humiliated living under the administration of such ministers. Now they hated the words freedom, justice, fatherland, Society, progress and constitution. Even the songs which reminded [them] of the agitating and exciting days of 23rd of July would cause a deep sorrow in their hearts. Sometimes the song “Our Army vowed”, in the *Rast makam*⁴⁵, echoed in the form of heavy and dignified divine songs to the Ottoman soul. Supposedly, this song interpreting the national sentiment and national life when sang with hypocritical pomp and joy, the Operation Army consisting of Ittihadist Turks, Albanians, Gypsies, Bulgarians and Greeks appeared before your eyes and echoes of cannons and machine gun noise reminded you of the grievous situation of Abdülhamid, who although had no involvement or crime he was dethroned by the heroes of Resne on 31 March⁴⁶, his place looted and

⁴⁴ *Silah, Top* and *Hançer* respectively.

⁴⁵ *Makam* is a concept of melodic creation which determines tonal relations, tessitura, starting tone, reciting tone and the finalis, as well as an overall indication of the melodic contour and patterns. Its closest counterpart in Western music is the medieval concept of mode. *Rast* is one of the oldest *makam*.

⁴⁶ Reference to a rebellion against Ittihat on 13 April 1909 (31 March in the Islamic calendar). The Operation Army (Hareket Ordusu) referred in the passage entered Istanbul and dethroned Abdülhamid, replacing him with Sultan Reşat.

plundered; later in the Beyazit square, in front of Ayasofya⁴⁷, among the sacred green of the chestnut trees shining under the magical gildings of the April sun, on top of new stools, their white clothes, their bare feet, their placards in their chests, hard as stone, the yellowing corpses of the officer hanging in a deplorable and terrible manner was called to mind.

Ah! How terrible, how bloody, how fearful days they were! I wish our army did not take the oath, I wish the fatherland did not lose its six hundred years old honor because of that ill-omened vow, I wish the state did lose the glorious country, the sacred land because of the tyranny and villainy of three and a half upstarts! It was the Ittihadists that brought it the army to this ruinous state. No army in the world has faced the catastrophes that the Ottoman army has been subjected for the last ten years. Since the Ittihadists seized the Ottoman rule by force the army did not rest for any year. In Yemen, in Kerek, in Albania, in the Balkans, it was the Ottoman army which fought in blood and pyre. Talat's illiterate diplomacy wanted to bring about reforms in Albania; he would cause the army to rush. Enver had avaricious thoughts to rejuvenate the army; it was again the army officers who would be ruined. Some of the young pashas because of their inexperience and clumsiness would attack the enemies' most superior forces, and the army would pay the price. While all these calamities were occurring there was no pasha being held responsible or being punished. Those who got tired of defeats and handing over cities, rested in their undersecretary chairs; those who thought of the well-being of the army and explained the dangers of the operations to be undertaken would be retired. All these irregularities were caused by Enver's negligence.

That Enver was instrumental to this extent was astonishing. The honorable hero of the 23rd of July incident got into a great fix, which was not expected of him under any circumstances. It was no longer possible to get out of this bind. Undoubtedly the things he was doing, his aspirations, were not to drag the fatherland into disaster. However, his

⁴⁷ Saint Sophie; a Byzantine cathedral which was converted to mosque after the Conquest of Constantinople in 1453.

thoughts had no scientific grounding and his aspirations were based on his silly and notorious ambition, which every instance would force him to the brink of catastrophe.

Enver, after he became related to the Ottoman Dynasty had completely changed his opinion. He thought of himself of someone in the position to save the dynasty and exalt its honor. His only concern was to reinvigorate the traditions. The people around him, the old, the traditionalists, those who were trying to preserve their positions in every administration, had an effect on this. Sometimes, he would take out Yavuz Sultan Selim's dagger from the Imperial Treasury and order the officers to be equipped with the same type of dagger. The officers, who carried a sword for one year, would carry a small sword next year; the year after a small poniard and the year after a dagger. These changes would break the uniformity of the army equipment. Enver would not preoccupy himself with his duties; language and politics were his principal preoccupation. The script that he applied in the War Ministry, forced the helpless civil servants to perform their duties by cursing. Despite this there was a serious order in the War Ministry. The pashas and the colonels that used to stack the branches before Enver's ministry were eliminated. The German successes were increasing Enver's ambition but were corrupting his morality.

Enver was an important pillar among those who married into the royal family.⁴⁸ His family had now entered the royal family. The freedom hero, who once was against pasha status and ranks, had now made his father and uncle pashas. Even his father, in his *cart visite*, rather than rank or office, would carry a strange appellation: Enver Pasha's father.

Enver Pasha, who once wondered around in the Military Academy with a shy demeanour and his Monastir⁴⁹ accent, was now partner to Sultan Mehmed V's [Sultan Resat] dynasty. Nonetheless, Enver was not a cordial figure for the palace. Enver showed such overt deference for himself to the extent that he supposed that the Ottoman dynasty's

⁴⁸ Enver married Naciye Sultan, niece of both Abdülhamid and Sultan Mehmed V. When they were married, she was twelve, he thirty-three.

⁴⁹ Monastir was how the Turks and Greeks called a Balkan town now the second largest in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

prolongation of grandeur and pomp was dependent on this young pasha, and, because of his victories and his efforts, he would [supposedly] take the Ottoman Empire out of danger and protect the Ottoman throne from the attack of the enemies. Enver would take advantage of his influence and purchase farms, seize land and try to amass wealth. Nevertheless, it was not as though he was not aware of the consequences of his actions. Indeed, he was aware that one day this amassed wealth and the usurped lands would be recovered. That is why the properties were registered in the name of his wife Naciye Sultan.

Among those who married into the royal family none was as influential as Enver. The palace was a meeting place of the ministers, of those who are in the service of the ruler and his old murderers friends. While the people were dying of starvation they were giving banquets there to the Ittihat high official and the Germans accompanied with *saz* and entertainment. Only the palaces food expenses was in excess of thousands of liras per month.

Enver had infinite confidence on the Germans. This confidence had forced him unnecessarily to drag Turkey into a disaster. Perhaps his conviction was right but after dragging the unfortunate and starving populace into a storm of blood and pyre, starving to death the children and the families who stayed behind, his turning a blind eye to the abuses in the army and those its rule, his protection of the thieves and profiteers, sending the strong and young heroes of the army to the place of execution due to their ignorance and inexperience was an unforgivable murder. Enver had committed the same murder during the Balkan War in Gelibolu Peninsula; he caused many of the children of the fatherland being torn apart by Bulgarian bayonets. The people had not even heard about that. The nation still has not settled the score for that murder. He did not even suffer of pangs of conscience - absolutely none - for the thousands of people he killed; the poor and friendless families whose children died under the bayonet for the cry of the orphans who had not even grew hair yet. The greatest murderer of Turkey, of the Turkish race, while clicking his boots repeatedly, he would recount his murders as victories and would look threateningly and conceitedly towards a single interjections, towards anyone whose

heart would pound for justice and humanity and would oppose him, and would ask in dignified manner about the murders.

The greatest profiteer who defiled Enver's administration with profiteering and thievery was Topal Ismail Hakkı Pasha. This inauspicious souvenir of Mehmet Şevket Pasha was the biggest profiteer who starved the people of Istanbul to death. During the period of Topal Ismail Hakkı Pasha, the Quartermasters General's Department was an official centre of profiteering. The front of his room almost every day would be full of rough, rowdy fellows expelled from the Ministry of War, Ittihat's lads who had resigned their military commissions, deputies, Jews and Greeks. Merchandise, goods and provisions bought at the cheapest prices would be sold through the Dutch auction at the most profiteering prices and would take decisions on tyrannical conduct causing the starvation of the people of Istanbul. This was the source for the Bulgarian coarse textiles and many markets.

Topal Ismail Hakkı Pasha had the power to make even the poorest merchant wealthy. Even the officers under his administration were fortunate, let alone those who would enter into discussions with him, and those merchants who were friends. Their clothes were clean, they had fine white bread, and they had plenty of provisions and money. There were candidate officers in Quartermaster General's even major and colonels who for many years in the rugged mountains of Anatolia their hair would turn grey in pursuit of brigands and yet they would even receive provisions as much as them. They were sub-governors who would grant oil in tinplates, okes⁵⁰ of rice to whomever they wanted and yet they would meanly send away the soldiers standing at their doors and helpless and needy officers. Even in the food supplies of the army there was a terrible inequity. Thievery was open. Some recruitment office commanders who once wandered around penniless and wearing miserable attire and commissars, who now would travel in cars princes would travel, purchase mansions worth thousands of liras. Many Jews, Armenians and Greeks would in fact pay a levy to many of them. Istanbul's streets were full of young people of military age and Jewish, Armenian and Greek youngsters. While

⁵⁰ Okka, weight of 400 dirham or 2.8 lb.

the children of the poor families would devotedly stick out their chests against enemy bullets in cold fronts and in labor gangs, these people would save their lives with the force of the money. Enver turned a blind eye to these abuses.

As the profiteering continued in this manner in parts of the army, the Kantariyye Company constituted a new commercial source for the Ittihadists. All kinds of provisions were made to rob the nation and let people starve. Especially national commerce was a national murder. To participate in this murder, ministers, provincial directors of financial administration, provincial governors and governors of *sanjaks* would take advantage of their offices and together would try to rob the unfortunate people. However, those who participated in this murder the most were the deputies who were involved in commerce. The merchant and profiteering deputies of Ittihat constituted the most insulting class of the nation. In order to get approval for Ittihat's murders Topal Ismail Hakkı Pasha would throw sacs of sugar to the mouths of these individuals and Talat would stuff them with dozens of titles of privileges.

With the exception of five to ten people, during the Universal War the deputies of the parliament consisted of *hodjas* who preferred profiteering to Sharia Law, tyrants and profiteers. This was not a parliament but a guild. The deputies that once the people considered them with respect, now in their eyes were not even worth as much as Abdülhamid's spies. Even the most ignorant segments of the population have found names which reflected their sentiments. Some would call it the Parliament of Connection; some would call it the Parliament of Profiteering.⁵¹ But to this insults, this hatred, they were entirely indifferent, being preoccupied with their commerce, entertainment and dissipation. There were some among them who covered the beds of their mistresses with five-lira banknotes and would burn a banknote to find their cigarettes in the dark. It was pointless to look for dignity on these pashas who were chasing water concessions, these dishonorable men who would be disgraced in the middle of tobacco bales.⁵²

⁵¹ This represents a play of words on the Ottoman term of *Meclisi Mebusan*, Parliament of Deputies, as "Meclisi Menbusan" and "Meclisi Menhusan" respectively, ie the Parliament of Connection and the Parliament of Profiteering.

⁵² It is not clear to what incident Ahmet Refik is referring.

The nation they represented was starving to death every day. For them this was not sufficient. It was also necessary to kill the unfortunate families of the officers who perished in the front by enemy bullets. The action of the enemy was even more humane than the tyranny of the profiteering deputies. The trench battles did not cause a great amount of losses unlike the attacks by a huge mass of people in field battles; sometimes the attacks would be carried out with interruption for days, even weeks. Yet the attack of the merchant deputies on the people, on the friendless self-sacrificing families of officers, on their breastfeeding children, on the old and the invalid, on the sick people suffering of tuberculosis lying on their death bed, was perpetual.

Rather than bread, the people would eat a mixture of straw and corn flour, worse than mud. Sometimes those who sold this bread, with the four-five *kouroush* they obtained would try and buy coal, hungry and weak, with the strength of one or two days heat would try save their lives. Typhoid fever and cholera was cooperating with merchant deputies and profiteers. The poor people would be killed by enemy bullets on the fronts and through the merchants and the profiteers from within. The nation was between two ruthless fire storms. In Istanbul there was not even shroud to wind in the dead. Because of lack of shrouds, the poor and even the wealthy would wrap the corpses in bed linen to bury them. The poor people would go even to their last dwelling bare and wretched, while the kept mistresses of Ittihat's deputies, of the profiteering merchants, would live their lives in promenades, in cinemas, in Switzerland and in Carlsbad. It was as though Switzerland has become a pleasure resort for the wives of the Ittihat murderers.

The people of Istanbul were being robbed in the hands of the murderers. Women with their children, their bridal ware in their shoulders, their machines in their arms, would go to the markets. Some women tightly covering the veil of their *hidjab*, under their *charshaf* clothes bundled in a wrapper, would run to the markets to obtain their livelihood. In the midst of these hungry, needy, friendless people, there were mothers holding the fez of their sons who had been in the army, women wearing clean clothes, would go from shop selling their martyred son's clothes to ensure one day's livelihood. Sometimes the carpet market would go up and people would sell their carpets at home.

Nonetheless, among the people partaking in this disaster and misery there were also Ittihadists. These people were the wretched flock who joined Ittihat due to ignorance and somnolence. Almost every day in street corners, on bridges, you would see corpses of people starved to death or torn apart by a car while they were on their way to obtain their families' livelihood, covered haphazardly by a handkerchief.

Hunger, death and profiteering were the greatest enemies of the people of Istanbul. Sometimes in the middle of this hunger you would hear the painful cry of a woman who learned of her son's martyrdom; in Christian neighborhoods the mournful echo of the church bells would shiver the soul with its mournful, sorrowful, intermittent buzzing sound. You could not observe anything other than mourning, tears and cries for help, sadness and wailing. While people faced these calamities, those who transferred from the ministries to commerce, the profiteers, the Jews and the merchants were collecting the banknotes in bundles, but not relying on the Turkish government's standing, would purchase apartment buildings and farms with the money they obtained in order to guarantee their wealth. The deputies and the profiteers worked to such an extent to kill the people of Istanbul and tired themselves, that some among them preferred Büyükada to rest.

Büyükada had become the summer residence for Turkish, Jewish, Greek and Armenian merchants and war profiteers. Here, the merchant ministers, profiteering provincial financial administrators, experts on railway car arrangements belonging to the military railways of General Staff, war profiteers who were Hasan Pasha's spies, the murderers who tore apart the Armenians, all constituted a group. Drinking, debauchery, gambling, musical parties followed one after another. The island boat was busy every week carrying troops of Gypsy musicians with *uds*, *kemençes*, *tanburs* under their arms.⁵³ The educated figures of the Island who were mostly used to the sounds of piano, in the final years of the war were being entertained with the sounds of *zurna*. The profiteers arrived

⁵³ *Ud*: an instrument with six pairs of strings played with a plectrum; *kemençe*: small violin with three strings, played like a cello; *tanbur*: an ancient form of lute.

trained in coffee houses where *semai*⁵⁴ singers gathered together, were now paying hundreds of liras to rent mansions and would enjoy themselves till the mornings with the monies they took from the people's pockets. The women, who once wandered around in clogs from neighbor to neighbor in the suburb of Deniz Abdal, would now use horses of magnificent carts; sometimes they would not be able to hold the horses firmly and in amongst the cries of distress they would be disgraced in front of the crowd of Nizam Caddesi.⁵⁵

The Island had changed into a different profile, different colour. In front of the Ispalandit Palas you would see black fez wearing rascals with their tassel on their side, drinking *raki*. These were the national merchants, war profiteers. Much of the money taken from the people through profiteering and cheating were spent in the Island. Mr. so and so would want to rent a mansion on the Island, one or two swashbuckling village dandy's on his side, would travel by paying hundreds of liras for the entire boat of the maritime lines. Even in periods characterized by disastrous lack of coal, the Ittihat ministers would arrive on the island with steam boat and private yachts. Almost in every corner of the island the musical parties were ongoing. Those who pulled out fingernails in prisons, those who sold railway cars under the protection of Talat, in the midst of people's hunger and misery, would lead a life of leisure with musical parties, banquets and drinking till the mornings.

Sometimes Cavit Bey in his gilt and magnificent mansion would give shining banquets to his compatriots under electric lights and would send steam boats to Tokatliyan to bring ice cream. For the Ittihat upstarts time and place was insignificant. In their eyes the money they stole from the people's pockets was a legitimate right. As a reward for the dispersing they caused to a six-hundred year old state they were not restrained by shame in living an excessively wasteful life and live like sultans. Talat and Cemal would visit the school they seized from the Greeks in Heybeliada and for the transportation of the great upstarts for the short distance between the wharf and the hill they would bring a car

⁵⁴ A form used by minstrels in folk music.

⁵⁵ Central thoroughfare of the Island.

from Istanbul to Heybeliada with great troubles and difficulties and waste tons of coal. A few years ago, the big bullies they would tire themselves wondering from coffee shop to coffee shop in Salonica. Now at the expense of the unfortunate nation whose honour they stained, they would not even climb a little uphill without a car. This great pleasure trip which would cost thousands of liras, was followed by iced champagnes, exquisite ice-creams and elaborate meals. The people, Turks and Greeks, would eat “bobota” mixed with straw and would turn pale from illness, their checks collapsing, around their eyes turned purple, wearing clothes of mourning and facing the banquets of these usurpers, sorrowful, they would not refrain from cursing.

How was it possible to love this government any longer? Compared with the administration of the rabble, the cruelties of the Abdülhamid’s regime were more legitimate and more honorable. People like Kara Murat Ağa, Bektaş Ağa and Delil Birader were more virtuous people compared to Talat, Enver and Cemal Pashas. The wastes of the Tulip Age⁵⁶ were nothing compared to the intentional betrayals of this villainous period. In those days the people begrudged them the life which was not suitable to the culture and soaked in blood the high ranking officials of the Tulip Age. Nowadays, there was no one rebelling against this usurper of an administration, no one raising their voice, no one raising an objection. The blood of the people who agitated in the name of the old Ottoman values of justice and honour, had now dried in their veins. Yet, everyone was longing for and appreciating the Sultan Abdülhamid era. The people, who in the first day of the 23rd of July rebellion were complaining of the tyrannies of the Abdülhamid era, could not foresee that they will come to consider that period of despotism as period of happiness. The fatherland was in misery. Within ten years, Ittihat’s upstarts, due to their ignorant policies they caused the great cities the Ottoman dynasty conquered in two hundred years by spilling blood and through great suffering, to be trodden under foot. Because of this illiterate policy, honours were sacrificed uselessly and purity was trampled upon.

⁵⁶ “Lale Devri” in the early 18th Century.

Enver would sacrifice Turkish soldiers to his inexperience; Talat would starve the people of Istanbul to death; Cemal Pasha in Syria would exile the Arabs and he would hang in the gallows the most virtuous and esteemed figures. The military chief of Egypt, who led a life of pleasure in Syria, tried to cover the failures he endured in the campaign, by hanging Muslims. This action of Cemal's was perceived as the final and absolute domination of the Turkish administration over the Arabs. Turks, Arabs, Greeks and Armenians were all ready and waiting for the decline of this cursed administration. Neither Sultan Mehmed V, nor the Senate or the lodge of profiteers⁵⁷, which although received fistful of money every month, would not oppose Enver's spurious rattles; none of them was of any use. The unfortunate people lived a desperate, humble and insignificant life. This was almost no life at all; it was life in misery.

The day Sultan Abdülhamid passed away, the spiritual rebellion of the people manifested tacitly. The roads through which the funeral procession was to pass were packed with thousands of people. As the funeral procession went through, among the affirmations of "God is great"⁵⁸ and the pronouncement of the profession of God's unity⁵⁹, mothers of martyrs, widows, father whose children fell victims to the ignorance of the upstarts and many women, shedding tears, raised their hands to the sky and cried: "Lift your head and look. To whom are you leaving us? This cry for help was right. Even those who once criticised Abdülhamid's tyrannical administration when the funeral prayer was performed, they would not refrain themselves from repeating the couplet:

O everlasting one your dignity on the stone⁶⁰
They should show respect to your companions

Nevertheless, as long as the people were not determined to defend their rights and were not prepared to break the forces which usurped their rights, it was obvious that they would never be liberated from despotism and tyranny. Turkey, with the administration of a committee, with brigandage, could not live among the civilized states of the twentieth

⁵⁷ This is a pun on the lower house of the parliament.

⁵⁸ Allahu ekber.

⁵⁹ Lâilâheiliallah

⁶⁰ The stone upon which the coffin is placed during the funeral service.

century. This was almost like a wound which had the disposition to become gangrenous in a clean and healthy body. For this wound to heal fully, it was necessary to possess the same blood and the same organism as the European structure. This evolution could only have been possible through science, talent, justice, acceptance of the truth in all its bareness and to become European not in outward appearance but mentally.

National commerce had ruined the Turkish nation. In the shop signs such appellations “the Barbers of Turan” and “the Red Apple Restaurant”⁶¹ on red background, showed that the national commerce and national culture were going hand in hand.

The Germans, detached from these calamities people faced, were trying to permeate through their goods. The Jews were continuously learning German, ready for the future influence of the Germans. Greek and Armenian shops had German signs. Even the ladies were learning German and considered happiness to find husband among the dealers of *bulgur*.⁶² At the same time, it was not as though the Ittihadist have not done anything useful for the country; but their general unscrupulous acts were so many and so ignorant that it was not possible to see the useful deeds. Among them there were honest people, who would not deign to accept bribes; but their personal virtues would disappear among the profiteering, corruption and ignorance of the disintegrating masses and did not have any impact at all. This was such a torrent of demoralization of character, of looting, of profiteering, of tyranny and oppression that was possible to stop it only with the overwhelming determination of a strong party, equipped with science and knowledge, holding sentiments for the fatherland and civilization above all kinds of personal feelings, enlightened, resolute, filled with feelings for the humanity, with the use of force of the law.

The youth was too weak to form such a party; it lacked determination, courage and intellectual capacity. The older generation, even in the seats of the Senate, was consumed with passing the time pleasantly and not upsetting anyone. Social ethics

⁶¹ Reference to the Turanian ideal of mythical land of Kızıl Elma (Red Apple).

⁶² *Bulgur*: pounded wheat.

disappeared just like the political ethics. There was no desire for science, knowledge or personal dignity in the country. The Ittihat government even more than the Abdülhamid' policy of using spies had caused the decaying of public morality through hunger and despotism, under the protection of the Hearth. Spies in civilian clothes would stand around almost in every corner around Bab-i Ali and the gendarme under the Bab-i Ali building would be preoccupied with continually loading and emptying their rifles. Every defeat of our army caused an increase of patrol troops. But, was there any one left to be hit, to be killed, anyone to rise? The people were weak from hunger anyway; were it not the fronts reducing the Turkish population in sufficient numbers?

Talat and his bullies were completely detached from the misery of the people. The upstarts, who even to their mistresses gave rail cars, despite the people's needs, they would go from banquet to banquet by cars. The poor and helpless people of Istanbul, weak from hunger, sorrowful for losing their children, were shedding bitters tears, while Talat, Enver, Cemal and his friends in Kağıthane, in the Mansion of Silahtarağa, in the gardens of Haliç dockyards would pass their time drinking and enjoying themselves and they were not refraining even from hurting unfortunate Selim III's honoured soul.

In Vienna and in Berlin, Ottoman Embassies were two important centers of profiteering. In these two embassies, from the military attachés to the ambassador, everyone was occupied with commerce.

The Armenian deportations were forgotten. There was no one concerned about the unfortunate Turks who were killed by the bloody daggers of the Armenian bands and starved to death in Erzincan and Erzurum. Cavit Bey, lively and smiling, would organise flower festivals in Kadıköy. The elegant ladies of Istanbul in fine silk stockings, which showed the freshness of their skin, their blonde and black hair, wearing silk and diamonds were running coquettishly to these patriotic parties. These parties arranged through groups consisting of the country's most capable people were great opportunities for them. Turkey's greatest orator of the false revolution, conceited Neker, was the axis of these parties. These individuals who starved the people of Istanbul to death and

dragged the Ottoman dynasty into decline through their ignorant politics, preoccupied with their enjoyment and parties, spending their nights gambling, while in Erzurum's Tebriz gate, in the narrow wells of Erzincan, in the ditches, lifeless corpses, their arms stretched to the side, their mouth facing the sky in a state as though they were cursing their murderers, women, children, men, were lying on the snow were covered in blood.

I am in the middle of the ruins. Around me the tombs have collapsed, the glazed tiles have been striped from the mosques. From the columns of the burned houses still a suffocating smoke is emanating. Even the sacks of salt I am touching are warm. While the high officials of the Ittihat in Istanbul were listening to the *saz* and music and enjoying champaign, here the Turks who died with their cries for help rising to the sky, in the midst of benzene flames, suffocating smoke, hot flames, were routed by Armenian tyranny, and they are lying under the burnt columns. Between Trabzon and Erzurum nothing but ruins can be seen. One could not come across any living creature in any village or in any shed. Hunger followed the Armenian tyranny. Even the army is hostile to its citizens; Erzurum's food provisions seized by the command. The people of Erzurum, who were saved from the life threatening risk of the Armenian administration, now had enough of the hunger and despotism of the Turkish administration. As though it was not enough they robbed the people of Istanbul, now the profiteers thought of trading the shrouds of the dead. They paid three *qurush*⁶³ for the *manats*⁶⁴ which the Russians sold to the people for 12 qurush. With this money they went to Russia to buy goods, and the government which supposedly understood rights and justice, imposed a set price on the Erzurum's helpless traders. But there was not even equality in their tyranny. In Erzincan the okke of tea was sold for nine hundred qurush, in Erzurum they imposed a set fee of two hundred qurush.

This tyranny caused people to be tired of their lives. It seemed that no one was happy with the return of the Ottoman administration. If the Armenian had not followed, the Russian administration despite it being foreign and unjust was [still] the most just

⁶³ Qurush (or *Kuruş*) was (and is) as a Turkish currency subunit. One Turkish Lira was/is equal to 100 *Kuruş*.

⁶⁴ Russian currency on the Caucasus.

administration for the people. The people who a few months ago were trembling under the threat of death and their hearts were pounding under Armenian tyranny were now subject to the risk of hunger.

This risk started in Trabzon. Trabzon's women with average means, children in their side with worn out clothes, knives in the hands cutting grass on the side of the Headquarter's walls in order to ensure their livelihoods. Up to Hamsi Köy there was no one but hungry people in misery, on all the roads. In Cevizlik, one morning, a small, blonde girl with hazel eyes, approached me and asked for bread. What a pity! Under a dirty *yemeni*⁶⁵ you could see her attractive face. With her torn clothes, her leg turned red under the sun, her bag in her shoulder, a stick in her hand, she almost reminded one of an elegant and extraordinary mademoiselle who pretended to be a beggar on stage. She was ten-twelve years old. Who knows for how many months she had not seen any bread. I gave the girl some bread; she did not even think it was necessary to thank. She was enraptured by a sudden joy. Raving, smiling, with joyful steps she flew away like a gazelle. Her feet full of warts in a moment disappeared among the dust. She ran towards her father and her mother further up, who were walking utterly exhausted and the convoy consisting of donkeys and emigrants, extended her arm showed her bread and shouted in joy: "Bread, bread!"

Anatolia was ruined. Hunger, orphans, destitution, misery was now universal. You could see unfortunate pale children with rawhide sandals on their feet, wandering around mountain roads covered by pine, looking for their villages and their mothers, women who placed their old husbands onto donkeys, climbing the very steep road, sleeping on the side of the fields and begging for a morsel of bread. One evening, I was wandering around the shops in Ardasa. There were many carts in front of the shops. In one of the carts there was a human head, with its greening teeth it was as though laughing at this catastrophe of Anatolia's. All of a sudden a boy appeared before me. He was only eight years old. He approached me, he lowered his eyes in a shy manner and he put his finger in his mouth. A blond, stocky, a blue eyed boy, wearing a white, old, felt cap on his

⁶⁵ Coloured cotton headkerchief.

head, a blue, patched *mintan*, a dirty *shalwar*, and worn out rawhide sandals,. With an innocent, orphan-like manner he asked: “Apparently they are giving away bread to emigrants.”

I did not understand immediately. I asked again. Further up, the sub-governor⁶⁶ was being preoccupied with the organization of the hungry and unfortunate emigrants. They were the Turks who left the country because of the Armenian atrocities and after several years of miserable life in remote corners of Anatolia, returned to their homeland. I took the boy to the sub-governor. He inquired. Within a minute we were surrounded by the villagers. The villagers who saw us talking to the child were coming out the coffee shop one by one and were inquisitively listening to us. One among them entered into the discussion. He asked the boy: “Boy, which village are you from? What is your name?”

The boy with his rawhide sandal was continuously poking the ground, his finger on his mouth, lifting his eyes from the ground hesitantly asked: “My name? Osman. I am from Hasilya.” Someone among them recognized the boy: “the son of Ahmet from Tonya”. The boy was looking at the ground; he was almost frightened of the crowd. His eyes fixed on the ground; he was answering the questions with a calm and hesitant voice. Poor child had not seen his parents for two years. For two years, an orphan in destitute, with his small stature and innocent heart, he had slept in coffee shops in Giresun, hungry, he had endured, he was shown compassion, and he survived. He considered his father and mother dead and himself without any relatives. He had come near his village but was not aware of it. He was hungry. He wanted to find a morsel of bread. He had heard that they were giving away bread to the emigrants and he had found me even though he did not know me, and bow necked came to ask for some bread.

One of the villagers came forward: “Boy, your parents are alive”, he said. O God ... Osman’s dirty face turned red. His blue eyes looking at the ground suddenly darkened. His small dirty hands with a nervous excitement reached his face. A long cry emanating deep from his heart, a moaning ensued. Poor Osman was sobbing loudly. The tears

⁶⁶ *Kaymakam*, governor of a district.

pouring from his eyes were trickling through his hands and living white marks on his dirty face.

It was getting dark on the mountains. Five villagers and I, in the middle of the conflagration area were sorrowful facing the tears of an innocent child who just reunited with his parents.

From Ardasa to Erzincan the whole road was full of hungry and desolate Turks who you would come across quite infrequently. The Turkish population who once filled the villages and townships was almost at a point where you could say it was eradicated. Emigration and death ruined and doused the hearths from which smoke used to emanate in the pined hills of Anatolia and her green valleys. When the Moscovites⁶⁷ retreated, the Armenians caused such damage in the villages and the townships that from Trabzon to Kars they left no one alive in any village, destroyed the mud houses, burned and left nothing but ruins behind them. Now among the sporadically returning helpless people, consisting of the men who were victims to Ittihat's ignorance, the women who were victims to the Armenian tyranny, girls and boys were wandering in these empty plains, in these cold valleys to reach their homeland hungry and desolate, begging a morsel of bread from very rarely passing people who were satiated. But even this happiness seemed impossible to attain. Some of them could find a little grass on the shores of the Euphrates and were obtaining their livelihood through the abundance of their miserable homeland. On the roads the food depots left behind by Russians contained hard biscuits, *sucuks*⁶⁸ and fish. No one was giving a morsel of bread to these people who were dying of hunger in the cold valleys.

The scene I witnessed in Köselier was really bad. This was a ruined, bare and gloomy village. In the muddy streets among the mud houses the flocks of sparrows would fly through and sizeable dogs would be asleep.

⁶⁷ Colloquial term for Russians.

⁶⁸ Savoury sausage.

The strong wind blowing through the valley almost froze everything above the frothy waters of the creeks; the flocks of sparrows would be blown away from the strong wind and get stuck in the tree branches. There was no food here; there was not even grass to help with the stomach's function. This convoy consisting of women, children and old women in the middle of this desert of hunger, their hands in their chests, the wind behind them, they were flying, trembling bare foot, they were running wearing rugs, they were chasing the death escaping them. They were in such a misery! Even in the face of death they would not want to compromise their modesty and innocence. Amongst these dirty rugs, blue, hazel, black women eyes could be seen from the edge of the headscarf. Once they lived happily in their villages and they loved; they could hear their heart pounding with the excitement of love.

Was it not always the case that the husbands of these unfortunate mothers went to the army, became targets to the bloodiest of attacks, died, and their sons also killed by bullets? These helpless people, who could not even perceive their humanity under a tyrannical and violent government, lived a helpless life under the influence of their soul. Even in their songs you could sense the elegance of their soul:

...
Let my husband be with me
I would even go out to beg

In fact they were willing to tolerate everything. They were willing to take a bag and go to beg, so long as their husbands were with them and they were liberated from the arbitrary rule of the rowdies. In their consideration, their devotion to their husbands was the biggest happiness.

In any case how many women were there who had their husbands, their children for a few years with them, who lived a happy and prosperous life with the children they loved and raised? Did not the whole of Anatolia live in tumult, obedient to the orders of a few murderers who participated in Sultan Mehmet V's rule? Who knows, in what front their husbands were killed because of the ignorance of a young pasha [commander]. The

women who once trembled from the bloody knives of the brigands, who came to their townships, remembered those bitter days in the couplet:

I don't know what happened to my agha [husband]
His skin turned yellow

The women with no kith or kin, hid the couplets in their souls, were now deprived of their husbands, of their sons, of help, of everything. They were running towards unknown horizons, towards the snowy mountains.

They surrounded me. The wrinkled, hardened, soiled hands were extending among the flying threads of the rug patches, and from every mouth a shy and sorrowful voice emanating: "Son, one morsel of bread. Let me kiss your feet, let me be your slave." The oldest among them raising her blue eyes glumly said: "We just do not die; God is not taking this soul".

What a sad scene it was! These unfortunate people wanted to die for centuries. In any case was it not preferable to die rather than suffer under such a government?

Starvation and death was prevailing everywhere. Sometimes, on the shores of the cascading and crying Euphrates, on the terrible rocks, you would see a dog tearing apart and eating a Turkish corps, killed by the Armenians; sometimes in front of the villages you would come across a child's head with grinning teeth.

Erzincan was almost a cemetery for Turks. The neighborhoods were almost entirely destroyed. The ruined and collapsed walls of the houses showed that terrible battles had taken place between the Armenians and the Turks. Both Turkish and Armenian houses were in ruins. Both Turkish and Armenian cemeteries were ruined. But the fresh corpses the blood of which have not yet dried, in the streets, in the wells, were of the poor Turks who were killed by the Armenians. The embellished paved courtyards of the Armenians, their trees, their flowers which just had blossomed, were widely tainted with blood stains. When one looked at the narrow wells an abominable smell with dizzying effect would

cause one to faint, and one could see the hair and torn clothes of the Turks got stuck on the rocks of the wells.

The buildings in ruins, the burnt buildings, the sides of the walls, were all full of the dead of the Turks, torn arms, crania, leg bones, and human corpses, still not decayed. The people were sorrowful and miserable. The people wandering around the markets, bare foot, their face burned, and their clothes in tatters, were poor people who lost their humanity. Most of the shops were closed. The shops were selling grass for people to feed. There was no trace of wheat other than in the Command Centre. If it were not for the kindness of the commander undoubtedly even the *mutasarrif* would have starved to death.

I went towards the cemetery. A few people were digging a grave. I saw the corps of a young man. It was crashed and blackened. His clothes were torn off, half of his legs decayed. Apparently he was a thirty four year old merchant.

Istanbul had no idea about these tragedies. Batum was occupied. For the pashas of Istanbul a source of booty and dissipation was attained. After four years there was no place left to rob in Anatolia. Now in Batum you could probably find something for trade and entertainment. Enver Pasha spending many thousands of liras from the peoples treasury for cakes, food, drinks and banquet expenses, ran to Batum, while Cemal Pasha who heard about the elegance of the women of Batum and the abundance of Batum's gas, arrived in Batum with a great convoy.

While concerts were given in the Batum Club, in Erzincan, those who took out their fathers' dead bodies from the Armenian wells, distressed, hungry and miserable, were shedding tears. Over there, five-ten Armenian boys whose fathers escaped, with their red cheeks and innocent figures returned to their houses; they were sitting on the soil in front of the walls, bow-necked. Further down a few Turks sacks on their shoulders were carrying the corpses of their children or their fathers. You could not refrain from cursing Turks or Armenians responsible for this terrible crime against humanity. How miserable

Erzincan was! After living in friendship and cordially for centuries, Turks and Armenians were separated in a torrent of blood and pyre. Now in these places you could not hear anything other than the cry of mourning, among the tears and the soul destroying lamentation. Blood, mourning, death, and hunger everywhere ... there was nothing else.

Anatolia was in poverty. In Bican you could see children's heads, Mamahatun resigned to itself about its torn apart children, its ruined mosques, its ruined houses and it was as though it was crying. The Armenians blew up the mosques which remained from the Akkoyunlus⁶⁹ and massacred quite a lot of people. Further down, on the shores of the rivulet, a wide hole had full of hundred of Turkish bodies. The smelling corpses of the people were enmeshed with clothes and rawhide sandals. These corpses with their melting fat, crushed heads, torn apart arms and legs constituted a pile. The flock of starlings with their feathers swollen from the cold were singing together and flying around these ill-fated corpses.

Anatolia was starving to death. The people of Yeniköy were busy eating grass in the midst of the ruins. I gave bread to a seventy year-old man who ran the oxen for our cart. It was the greatest gift for him. Poor man, embraced the bread with all his body, one hand in the headlock, struggling along to advance in front of us, out of breath, with a hoarse voice said: "Thank you friend! We have not see bread for three months. We are eating grass", and with a great appetite tucked into the bread. On the road there was nothing but village ruins. You could not see anyone in any village. What you could come across on the side of the roads associated with people were pieces of arms, legs, hands and heads. The whole of Ilıca was almost empty. Other than the flocks of starlings, nothing was giving joy to this beautiful place. The people of Ilıca was almost completely, one could say, was drowned in blood by the Armenians.

Erzurum was among the Turkish cities which became the target of Armenian cruelty the most. There were thousands of Turkish corpses in the streets of Erzurum. Two houses in

⁶⁹ The "Akkoyunlu" or White Sheep Turks (from the banner they used) were Turcomans who invaded the Middle East with the Seljuks (11th century) and established themselves in eastern Anatolia around Diyarbakir.

the Muslim neighborhood were real cemeteries. One of these houses belonged to Mürsel Efendi, the other to Hacı Osman of Ezirmik. These two mansions were facing each other in the avenue. As you go up the hill, the top of the house on the right was burnt upstairs and the ground level was in ruinous state. When you entered you would notice a huge hole in the wall. The Armenians crammed this house with Turks and burned it by using benzene. Some among them managed to escape through the hole which emerged on the wall. Under the wreckage of the walls there was nothing but Turkish corpses. If you scratched the soil a little, a human arm would appear, and then the head of the body could be seen in all its tragedy. The bodies decayed to such an extent that when you touch their heads the brains would lick, the greening chins would fall apart, oily, dirty, black, burned and crushed human torsos among the soiled clothes, would appear bare and in misery.

The same murder scene could be seen in the house across the road. The poor people amongst these terrible murders were preoccupied with searching for their mothers and fathers. Erzurum was almost like a burned place. To defend Erzurum, the Armenians had detained the Russian artillery officers; they were captives with their families, staying in Erzurum. One night we visited them. Even with the lack of necessities and in captivity were preserving their national life. Around them there were many Russian newspapers and magazines. Their highest ranking officer was a captain. I talked to this captain. I talked of Armenian cruelties and I asked: “they say that these massacres were managed by the Russians”. The captain turned red. With a manner of a civilized person, who did not want the stain of murder attributed to his army, waved his hands: “Niet! We did not get involved. The Armenians did it all. We even wanted to prevent it. Our sub-governor wrote all these. Read his memoirs”, he said.

- All right, but why did you stay, since the officers of your army left?
- We could not have lived our stronghold without an order.

The captain’s remark was not correct. They stayed to defend their stronghold with the Armenians. Upon the arrival of the army they could not escape; they became captives in Erzurum. Nevertheless, many of the Russian officers as soon as they learned of

Armenian plans of massacres, they helped Turks. The people of Erzurum did not feel great enmity against the Russians. The Turks and the Russian felt enmity and hated the Armenian gangs the most. These gangs which were completely deprived of feelings of humanity and compassion, despairing that their aspirations were not going to be realized, they would destroy the villages they would come across, killing unarmed Turks in a terrible manner, and withdrew to Kars leaving nothing but blood and wreckages in the villages. These gangs which rebelled in the first years of the war, hoping to be liberated from the Turks for ever, unnecessarily brought catastrophes to Armenians and the Turks, were now escaping, deprived of any aspiration, with their bloodied hands and their desperate and vengeance seeking hearts, in face of the pursuit of the Turkish army were running towards Russia's hinterland robbing of villages and wrecking houses.

The Armenian-Turkish struggle did not conclude with this. This struggle which started in Trabzon continued in Gümri. The Armenians who run away after burning Kars's markets and provision depots, in Gümri, as soon as they realized the city was to be given up, they started to slaughter (by cutting throats) the Turks. Gümri was the last stage of the Armenian-Turkish massacres. The last stages of bloody murders were coming to an end. From Trabzon to Gümri, from Bitlis to Van, the worlds most beautiful open fields were stained with blood and there was almost no population left.

Among the Turks and the Armenians the people who had fallen victims to these terrible slaughters were always the poor villagers who were not involved in anything. Ittihat and Armenian gangs, who brought about this terrible and enormous murder, marked the twentieth century civilization with an irremovable stain.

The committees which have nothing to do with intelligence and knowledge, extended their bloody hands to the humanities most unfortunate people; they torn apart their lungs, and drowned in blood and pyre, hundreds of thousands of these creatures who lived in rugs and without partaking in humanity's joy and happiness.

Among these ruins on the Trabzon-Gümri road, Erzurum was subjected the most to massacres and destruction. One could see the bullet wounds in the face of the stone inns.

In the streets, you could not see any one other than old men in miserable attire and helpless orphaned children. The mountains extended on the side of the desolate and wide valley; the flocks of crows with sad sounds were flying around the tall poplar trees. An old man from Erzurum sat on the side of a ruined water fountain, and from the deep corners of his orphaned heart was reading a song as though he was crying, mourning, with a sorrowful and worn out voice:

Yakup is crying, Yusuf is crying
My poor son went but did not return

Ah! In Erzurum there were so many Yakups who became martyrs under Armenian daggers, their heads cut off on tree stumps and their bloody corpses lied under the ruins.

Erzurum and Erzincan with their sad songs left an eternal reflection on the Ottoman fatherland. Once in Erzurum the liveliest folk songs were sung. Now in this ill-fated city you could not hear anything other than cries for help and mournful cries. Once these wide open fields would fill with pashas' tents with three horsetails⁷⁰ and their horsemen, the palaces in the fortress, the *tympanum* and drums would ring the horizons. Now the valleys are empty, the castles are ruined, the hearts are put out, and the necks are bowed. Armenian cruelties left a terrible and bloody conflagrant wreckage in Erzurum. The Russian invasion was nothing compared with the Armenian cruelties.

An officer approached me. With a sorrowful manner he said:

- My dear. What you see is the cleanest state of the city. These streets were full of dead bodies of women and children. The women's breasts and even their most intimate organs were hung on the walls. To this telegraph poll only children's lungs were hung. Their stomachs were cut open, bare corpses of women were lined up on the two sides of the road. Even if we do not punish those who deported the Armenians, undoubtedly the

⁷⁰ Attached to a helmet or flag-staff as a sign of rank.

Europeans will. But let us see whether civilized Europe will also search for those responsible of this great murder. If you listen to the people of Erzurum who escaped this catastrophe, your hair would stand on end. Armenians captured highly esteemed sheikhs and threatened them with bullets and daggers and in front of them, while under constraint, committed indecent assault on their virgin daughters. They captured such innocent girls and attacked them like monsters and took their most animal-like vengeance on their bodies, and at the end with bayonet cut their abdomens and threw them on the fire. For many weeks we were preoccupied with gathering the corpses, taking photos and burying. You should have seen the side of the roads entering the city. On two sides corpses of women were lined up. Women's intimate organs were cut off and male organs were placed on them.

I went to the Lala Mustafa Pasha Mosque. The water from the fountain was reverberating sweetly. This excellent monument of our period of imperial majesty and grandeur, wounded with the assaults it was subjected to, with its torn walls, its windows with torn off tiles, was saddening the heart.

The place was in ruins. In conflagration areas you could see darkened window with no glass. In this beautiful city, the last generation of brave men who once felt proud of the Ottoman force, now were killed under the boot of the *Moskof*, with the axe of the Armenians; some are in ditches, others lied under the debris with their wounded chests.

I looked toward the mosques gate. On the right hand there is an inscription written in beautiful *nesih*⁷¹ towards the end of which the following lines could be read:

“Any one from our children and illustrious great viziers and noble ministers who acquiesce to tyranny and heresy in the Ottoman Empire, let the curse of God, angels and people be upon them”.

⁷¹ A style of Arabic script, naskhi [check]

Sultan Mehmed IV with this *ferman*⁷² was forgiving the people of Erzurum and was holding the heroic people of the border land in an eminent place. Now the brutes of the Sultan Mehmed V's period, because of their ignorance and somnolence, caused them to be treated under enemy boots, let alone saving people from heresy. With their tyrannical government they caused more harm to them than the enemy. I looked at the mosques arising among the burnt walls of the city, the unfortunate lying under soil, these streets, the people wandering around with their bent backs and broken hopes. My tears are pouring uncontrollably and from the deepest point of my heart I could hear a painful curse:

“Fealeyhim la’netullahi ve’l-melaiketui ve’n-nasi ecmain”

[Let the curse of God, angels and people be upon them]

⁷² Imperial decree.