

Italian Witnesses of Greek Massacre in Anatolia

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Abstract

Occupation is not a desirable situation for whatever reason and by which country. In 1919, Izmir and a large area of Western Anatolia were occupied by the Greeks. The reason for the occupation was the claim that the Turks carried out massacres against the Greeks in Izmir and the region. This decision, made by England, France and the United States at the Paris Peace Conference, was also accepted by the Italians. The Greeks committed such great massacres in their occupation that started with Izmir on May 15, 1919 that even the countries that gave permission for the occupation could not stand by. These countries, which felt responsible for what happened, formed a delegation. This delegation consisting of British, French and Italian generals under the chairmanship of American Admiral Mark Lambert Bristol made various investigations in the Greek-occupied areas of Anatolia in the summer of 1919. This delegation, which listened to many witnesses, published a report and announced that Greece was responsible for the negative situation in Anatolia.

Izmir was first promised to Italy with the secret agreements signed during the war. The Italians did not forget the injustice done to them and recorded every move of the Greek occupation forces in order to prove the wrongness of sending Greece to Anatolia. Italy; While documenting the Greek atrocities, she was showing that he was right to oppose their occupation of Izmir. Despite this, it is not overlooked that the Italians are meticulous. Before taking action according to the notes given by the Ottoman Government and other Turkish authorities on the subject, the Italians must have done a research themselves. So, we preferred documents that mention the atrocities

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detected by the Italians themselves, rather than the atrocities expressed by the Turkish authorities in their notes. These documents were sent to the relevant authorities in Istanbul or Rome by journalists, military officers and Italian diplomats stationed in Izmir.

In our paper, we will examine the Greek atrocities in Anatolia according to the Italian archival documents. We will do it by sampling, not all of the investigations and the events witnessed by the Italian authorities.

Keywords: Anatolia, Italians, Greek Massacre, Greece, Occupation.

Anadolu'da Yunan Mezaliminin İtalyan Tanıkları

Öz

İşgal, hangi gerekçeyle ve hangi ülke tarafından yapılırsa yapılsın arzu edilen bir durum değildir. 1919'da İzmir ve Batı Anadolu'nun geniş bir bölgesi Yunanlılar tarafından işgal edildi. İşgal gerekçesi, İzmir ve bölgede Türklerin Rumlara karşı katliam yaptıkları iddiasıydı. Paris Barış Konferansı'nda İngiltere, Fransa ve Amerika Birleşik Devletleri tarafından verilen bu karar, İtalyanlar tarafından da kabul edildi. Yunanlılar 15 Mayıs 1919 günü İzmir ile başlayan işgallerinde öylesine büyük katliamlar yaptılar ki, işgal iznini veren ülkeler bile seyirci kalamadılar. Yaşananlardan dolayı sorumluluk hissedilen bu ülkeler bir heyet oluşturdular. Amerikalı Amiral Mark Lambert Bristol başkanlığında İngiliz, Fransız ve İtalyan generallerden oluşan bu heyet 1919 yazında Anadolu'da Yunan işgali altındaki bölgelerde çeşitli incelemeler yaptı. Pek çok tanığı dinleyen bu heyet bir rapor yayınladı ve Anadolu'daki olumsuz durumun sorumlusunun Yunanistan olduğunu duyurdu.

İzmir savaş sırasında imzalanan gizli antlaşmalarla önce İtalya'ya vaat edildi. Buna rağmen İngiltere, Müttefiklerinin, Yunanistan'ın İzmir'i işgal etmesine izin vermesini sağladı. İtalyanlar, kendilerine yapılan haksızlığı unutmadılar ve Yunan işgal kuvvetlerinin her hareketini kayıt altına aldılar. İzmir'in işgalinde, limandaki İtalyan savaş gemilerinden Roma'ya gönderilen raporlarla işgal saat saat kayıt altına alındı. İtalya; Yunan katliamlarını belgelendirirken, bir yerde onların İzmir'i işgal etmelerine karşı çıkmakta haklı olduğunu göstermiş oluyordu. Buna rağmen İtalyanların titiz davrandıkları gözden kaçmamaktadır.

Osmanlı Hükümeti ve Anadolu Türk halkı İzmir'in işgaline ve Anadolu'daki Yunan zulmüne karşı tepkisini dünya kamuoyuna İtalya aracılığıyla duyurmuştur. İstanbul Hükümeti ve Aydın Vilayeti'nin, Anadolu'daki Yunan mezalimi hakkında İtalyanlara pek çok nota verdiklerini gördük. Ancak İtalyanlar, Osmanlı Hükümeti'nin ve diğer Türk makamlarının konu hakkında verdikleri notalara göre işlem yapmadan önce, mutlaka kendileri de bir araştırma yapmışlardır. Biz de Türk makamlarının verdikleri notalarda dile getirdikleri zulümleri değil, İtalyanların kendilerinin tespit ettikleri mezalimlerden söz eden belgeleri tercih ettik. Bu belgeler gazeteciler, subaylar ve İzmir'de görevli İtalyan diplomatlar tarafından İstanbul'a İtalya Yüksek Komiserliğine ya da Roma'ya ilgili makamlara gönderilmiştir.

Bildirimizde Anadolu'daki Yunan mezalimini İtalyan arşiv belgelerine göre inceleyeceğiz. İtalyan yetkililerin incelemeleri ve tanık oldukları olayların tamamını değil, örnekleme yöntemiyle yapacağız.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Anadolu, İtalyanlar, Yunan Mezalimi, Yunanistan, İşgal.

Introduction

Especially during the history of the last 100 years or so, the Turkish people have experienced many humanitarian crises. The mildest impact was to be exiled from their beloved homeland but the most serious effects were experienced by those living under inhumane captive conditions that shattered the norms of human dignity. Some of the worst burdens were borne by Turks migrating to Anatolia from a vast region ranging from the Caucasus to the Balkans, and from the Islands to the Near East. The migration happened almost instantaneously with the immediate acknowledgment of defeats in war, giving those impacted little if any time to prepare to gather whatever belongings they could carry and escape to safety in the Anatolian lands. The Balkan Wars left traumatic scars that are still felt more than a century later. However, after their defeat in World War I, Turks living in Anatolia faced the danger of losing their homeland while they grieved the loss of loved ones and their livelihood in a war that seemed endless.

The United Kingdom, France, Russia and Italy had reached an agreement about the collapsed Ottoman Empire, through secret treaties they signed while World War I was still being fought. After the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, when the terms of the secret treaties were made public did everyone realize that the partitioning of territories which once encompassed the Ottoman Empire did not change the intentions and decisions of other

countries, except for Russia, which was undergoing its own dramatic transformations. The secret treaties became the geopolitical foundations for the United Kingdom, France and Italy against a debilitated Ottoman Empire. The biggest snag came with the proposed partitioning of Anatolian lands.

Izmir was promised to Italy with the secretly negotiated Treaty of London of 26 April 1915, signed as the arena of the WWI conflict expanded. However, the land also was promised to Greece in 1917 in exchange for its entering the war on the Allied Powers side. In a dispute between Italy and Greece the erupted at the post-war Paris Peace Conference, the United Kingdom -then the leading geopolitical power in the world- supported Greece because it preferred a dependent Greece instead of Italy gaining a stronger presence in the Mediterranean. With the support of France and the United States, joining the United Kingdom, Greece set foot on Anatolian lands in Izmir, on 15 May 1919. Greece came to Anatolia to make Izmir and its wealthy hinterlands part of its own homeland. Recognizing the domination by Turks for centuries, they knew that it was not possible for Turks to accept Greek domination and thus Greece's action led to violence. In the three and a half years spent in Anatolia attempting to break Turkish resistance, Greece committed atrocities that prompted reactions from even the states that dispatched them to Izmir and observers from neutral countries. Massacres carried out by Greek troops, in cooperation with Anatolian Greek gangs, were protested by the Ottoman government. However, the Allied Powers, which allowed Greek troops to occupy Izmir on their behalf, did not ignore the war crimes committed by Greek soldiers and Anatolian Greeks. Upon the insistence of the Italians, a commission chaired by the American High Commissioner Admiral Mark Lambert Bristol was established at the Paris Peace Conference. The Inter-Allied Commission of Inquiry, which held its first meeting on 12 August 1919, completed its site investigations in Anatolia on 15 October 1919. After its investigations in areas occupied by Greece, the Commission declared in its report that Greece was responsible for the situation in Anatolia.¹

1 For the report published by the Inter-Allied Commission of Inquiry, headed by American Admiral Mark Lambert Bristol, see: Peter Buzanski, "Anadolu'nun İşgali ve Yunan Mezalimi Hakkında Müttefikler Arası Komisyonun Raporu" trans. Kayhan Sağlamer, *Belgelerle Türk Tarih Dergisi*, Vol. 9-10, No. 49, October 1971, pp. 5-10; Mustafa Turan, "İstiklâl Harbi'nde 'Müttefikler Arası Tahkik Heyeti Çalışmaları, Raporu ve Tahkikat Neticesi", *Ankara Üniversitesi Türk İnkılâp Tarihi Enstitüsü Dergisi*, No. 4, November 1991, pp. 695-722. The

It is evident that terms such as “Atrocità (brutality)”, “Eccidio (massacre)”, “Crudeltà (brutality)”, “brigantaggio Greco (Greek Bandit)” and “atrocità Greche (Greek atrocities)” are used throughout the subject sections of the reports sent by Italian authorities regarding the acts committed by Greek occupation forces. One of the points that draw attention in the Italian documents is that Greeks living in Anatolia also joined these efforts, which were not limited to the occupation of Izmir.

Anatolian Greeks often participated in violent acts while wearing Greek military uniforms. It is evident that Greek authorities in Anatolia tolerated what Anatolian Greeks did to Turks, which was indeed utterly shocking, considering that they had lived together for hundreds of years. Many documents cite consistently that Greek soldiers and Anatolian Greeks cooperated and engaged in banditry even as they were dressed as military personnel. The Italian documents also indicate that Anatolian Greek pastoral and religious authorities were also at the forefront in the movements against Turks. The atrocities committed against Turks included material and moral oppression, such as arbitrary and brutal killings, stealing and looting, kidnapping, imprisonment, rape, banditry, the destruction of Islamic mosques, and defilement of the Qur’an.

It would be correct to divide the Italian documents about the massacres of the Greeks and the native Greeks in Anatolia into two. The first category includes the documents of various complaints that the Ottoman Government and the Turkish people sent to Italian authorities, of whom they felt the closest and most comfortable among the Entente States, concerning incidents of Greek persecution. The second category of documents concerns Greek atrocities that the Italians detected and confirmed without any outside prompting or reporting. Italy has never forgotten nor forgiven what it sees as an egregious error that Izmir, which was promised via secret negotiations to them by the Treaty of London and the Agreement of Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne signed during World War I, was given instead to Greece because the United Kingdom exerted its geopolitical influence. Italians did their utmost to record every act of violence and crime perpetrated by Greeks in Anatolia. Their purpose was to show that their allies were responsible for what happened. Thus, the Italians wanted to demonstrate with facts and documents

report, which was prepared as a result of the inspections of the Bristol delegation, was echoed in Italian newspapers with the emphasis that Greeks were responsible for what happened in Anatolia. *L'Idea Nazionale*, 2 Dicembre 1919.

the consequences of the error made by giving Izmir and its surroundings to the Greeks, even though Italians had been promised it. The documents for this research come from the archives of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Italian Army.

It is not the intention to address in this short article the whole scope of the Greek occupation in Anatolia. Rather, it is to address the atrocities Greeks committed during their occupations in Anatolia, especially in Izmir, as covered in previously published materials and which have been documented in reports made available by Italian authorities.² This article will summarize general evaluations along with examples about the atrocities committed by Greek soldiers and Anatolian Greeks who cooperated with them.

1. Greek Occupation

Although it had previously been promised to Italy, Izmir was occupied by Greek troops on 15 May 1919, because the United Kingdom preferred the presence of a weaker, dependent Greece rather than a comparably stronger Italy in the Eastern Mediterranean. The occupation turned quickly into a landscape of great carnage and looting soon after the first bullet was fired, the circumstances about which historians and scholars continue to debate. This will not be repeated here, as researchers have addressed and analyzed the outputs obtained in prior studies of Italian archives which have been published. In presenting new findings, this article will cite and quote Italian journalist Ernesto Vassalo, without any comment or additional context to what he wrote about what he witnessed during the occupation. Journalists who are wartime correspondents such as Vassalo become vital eyewitnesses, who by virtue of their professional training, document details that essentially frame the first draft of the historical chronicle of major events. Vassalo was in Izmir on the first day of the occupation and described what happened after the panic when the first bullet was fired. Vassalo's attention to detail is scrupulous, chronicling the scene for the reader who can easily visualize the violent chaos that erupted even without the benefit of photographs.

2 See some of my publications are as follows: Mevlüt Çelebi, *İtalyan Arşiv Belgelerinde Anadolu'da Yunan Mezalimi (1919-1922)* (Grek Massacres in Anatolia in Italian Archive Documents (1919-1922), Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, Ankara 2010; Mevlüt Çelebi, "İtalyan Arşiv Belgelerinde İzmir'in İşgali", *XIV. Türk Tarih Kongresi Kongreye Sunulan Bildiriler 9-13 Eylül 2002 Ankara*, Vol. III, TTK Yayınları, Ankara 2006, pp. 45-56; Mevlüt Çelebi, "İtalyan Arşiv Belgelerinde Anadolu'da Yunan Mezalimi", *XV. Türk Tarih Kongresi Kongreye Sunulan Bildiriler 11-15 Eylül 2006 Ankara*, Vol. V, TTK Yayınları, Ankara 2010, pp. 2335-2350.

Note that the journalist's focus is on comprehensive factual accuracy, free of censorship or restrictions that later generations of wartime correspondents would experience as embedded professionals in the midst of military conflict:

“The Hunt for Turks”

Scenes: After a brief clash that took place in Konak Square, the area was left to a large number of Greek soldiers and Anatolian Greeks - registered by Allied and senior Greek officials. Hundreds of well-equipped Greek soldiers in the area full of trees immediately began firing at their enemies. Although they had very few casualties - two Greek soldiers had been killed - Greek troops had legitimized all acts of violence against the attackers. They could bomb the barracks, kill everyone they caught. But when a small number of soldiers, as well as civilians including children and women, who were in the barracks and around the governor's Office surrendered, they were subjected to all kinds of insults which should not have been flung by Greek soldiers who have set foot in Anatolia, in line with the Wilson Principles.

As soon as the fire ended, a mass arrest of Turks began. Those arrested were in large groups, with their hands on their heads, wounded in the first round of fire and taken to hospital, or as they were leaving the barracks. They were met with saliva and insults, sharp-pointed pieces of metal or butts and hilts. They were in the middle of the soldiers carrying bayonets. They were directed to Greek ships where no preparation was made for its use as a detention centre. They often had to yell “Zito Venizelos!” three times. The voices of terrified and frightened elderly, women and Turkish soldiers could be heard: Venizelos! The torture of prisoners on the streets has increased. The Anatolian Greek crowd was laughing at them. The prisoners could barely walk, with blood dripping from their wounds and bruises and they were asking for mercy. The prisoners walking among the Greek soldiers on the shore were being shot at with firearms from the windows of some Anatolian Greek houses. Many local Anatolian Greeks dressed as soldiers were excited at the thought of slaughtering Turks. Wearing fez was a reason to be killed. If the Turks were spotted trying to flee or running to boats, they were shot at. The precious belongings of those who fell on the ground - shot dead or only injured - along the waterside named as Kordon, were taken away from them and they were thrown into the sea. On the main street, an allied officer saw an

Anatolian Greek, approached a Turkish man -wrists handcuffed and detained- between two Greek soldiers and shot him in the back of the head from behind. Anatolian Greek youth were having fun.

Like other prisoners, a Turkish lieutenant colonel -who was dripping blood- was pushed forward by Greek soldiers. He was seen falling on one of his knees. Along the docks, there were a small Turkish fishing boat, a reconnaissance vessel with a British officer taking snapshots, and other ships, including the Italian warship Bronzetti. The Turkish Officer, who was over 50 years old, exhausted and in pain, fell on the ground a few meters away from Bronzetti, where Commander Soldati, Control Officer Grenet (a captain of the Italian Navy and the Inter-Allied Maritime), Major Mario Carossini (Inter-Allied Control Officer for the Turkish Gendarmerie), and other commanders were present. Greek soldiers passing by the Turkish officer kicked him, mocked him. Our people, who saw this scene, felt pain because they were unable to intervene - due to the order of the British Admiral to the Allied sailors that they would not interfere. There, a Greek soldier approached the elderly Turkish Officer - moaning on his knees - drank the water he brought to his mouth with his palms, and stuck his bayonet to the Turkish Officer's back. There was a Greek officer nearby, but he remained indifferent. Our Commander Grenet could not stand that anymore and went down to the dock. He approached the Greek officer and asked him to order his soldiers to avoid such extreme behaviour. The Greek officer, with a cold expression, replied that it was not his job. Major Carossini, who had held important positions in the East and spoke Greek, came down and reminded Greek troops of their duties towards prisoners and especially towards those who are wounded, in their own language. Meanwhile, the Turkish officer was carried by our sailors to the deck of our ship Duilio, where a doctor was on duty. He was later transferred to a hospital in the city.

Violence and persecution against Turks continued on 15 May and beyond. Some were defended and released by French or American officers. Some of the Anatolian Greek people pursued personal revenge. They helped Greek soldiers to arrest Turks and thus, their great hatred of the Turks found a space to explode. The Anatolian Greeks were seen walking around on their own or led by Greek patrols. Especially at night, they broke into the homes of Muslims and Europeans - particularly Italians - under the pretext that they were searching for Turks who were hiding.

Different and exaggerated figures are given about the number of deaths which occurred on the night of 15 May. Reliable sources assured me of the following death toll: 300 Turks, 100 Anatolian Greeks and 2 Greek soldiers.”

In this excerpt, Vassalo documents the looting that occurred as Turks were being arrested throughout the city, and this report comes on the third day of the occupation. He specifies that the looters came from “Greek mobs:”

“Looting”

At the same time, while Turks were arrested everywhere, Turkish shops in many parts of the city were being looted. The city was abandoned to the greedy and thieving Greek mobs. The doors were broken, everything that lowlifes could do was done. Turkish police were either arrested or they disappeared. Murderers and thieves dominated the city. Around twenty Italian shops and some British and French shops were also looted. Those of the Greeks were saved. These shops were marked by their owners by hanging cards with a Greek flag on their doors. Jews and Armenians drew their own emblems to their doors to show that they are not Turkish shops. This morning, 18 May, most of the shops are still close, the streets where the trading businesses are located are still secluded, a sinister silence reign in everywhere. I have visited some looted shops. I have been briefed by some Turks and Italians who suffered from the looting. Halim Mustafa, gave me a note through his interpreter stated that goods worth about 40,000 Francs was looted in his shop. A lady who bought a holster for her pistol in the same store approached us and said she was robbed by a Greek officer. I advised her to report the matter to the Greek Military Command.

Most of the thefts were committed by armed Greeks who broke into homes of wealthy Turks - usually - and their money, jewellery and silverware were taken under threat. Most of the thefts were reported to British and American authorities to be communicated to Greek Military Command.”³

3 Ernesto Vassalo, “I greci hanno occupato Smirne fra i massacri e i saccheggi”, (The Greeks occupied Smyrna amidst massacres and looting), *Il Tempo*, June 9, 1919. Impressions of Ernesto Vassalo, an Italian journalist, about the occupation of Izmir see: Mevlüt Çelebi, “The Occupation of Izmir according to an Italian Journalist”, *Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi Araştırmaları*

The Greek landing at Izmir was cited in volumes of correspondence being exchanged among Italian authorities and the press also covered the occupation in as much detail as possible. This article cites a representative report from Italian newspaper *Il Tempo*, one of the newspapers that addresses the atrocities of the occupation. This *Il Tempo* report, which labels the violence in Izmir as “Izmir Massacres” (I Massacri di Smirne), indicates that the massacres eventually were extended to Foça and Urla.⁴

Despite the warnings of conscientious European public opinion and right-minded European politicians – Italians, in particular – no action followed to stem quickly the violence and atrocities of the Greek occupation forces. The occupying forces resorted to violence because they knew that Turks would never accept the Greek as superior authorities and, therefore, they anticipated the resistance as legitimizing their acts of physical and moral oppression. The horrors of Izmir extended to Manisa and Aydın, which also were occupied by Greek troops.

Aydın was occupied by Greek troops on 27 May 1919. Information located in a diary entry dated 6 June 1919, about the events that took place in Aydın, was repeated and eventually shared in nearly every Anatolian landscape that would be subjected to the Greek occupation. Therefore, a single comprehensively reported example from *Il Tempo* would be enough to frame the general outlook of what the occupation had wrought. According to the highlighted report, two Greek soldiers attacked and rape a Turkish woman who was picking olives in her garden. But when the woman shouted for help, the people who came to the scene managed to save the woman from the soldiers. A similar attempt occurred against a Turkish family (Yorgancı Hacı), targeting the wife and daughter. These two women narrowly escaped from being captured and rape by eight or ten Greek soldiers on their way to their garden, thanks to the vigilance of neighbors who came to the family's aid. The newspaper account also indicated instances of robbery, including a watch belonging to Veli Ağa and one gold lira and four paper liras, which were stolen by Greek soldiers on June 3, nearly three weeks after the occupation began. These acts were perpetrated continuously in different places on different dates.⁵

Dergisi, Vol. XIX, Issue Special Edition on the Occupation of Izmir, 2019, pp. 131-154.

4 *Il Tempo*, June 10, 1919.

5 Ufficio Storico Stato Maggiore dell'Esercito (Historical Office of the Army General Staff), (USSME), E3-5/3.

The most dramatic event of 1919 occurred in Menemen. The Greeks, who intended to expand their occupation areas after taking control of Izmir, also occupied Bergama on 12 June 1919. The Greek troops, which had failed to secure Menemen and were forced to retreat, massacred hundreds of Turks as the military units made their way back to Izmir, on the night of 16 June 1919 and continuing into the early hours of the following day. Among the fatalities was the District Governor Kemal Bey. Representatives had been sent to by the Allied Powers in Izmir to investigate the events that compelled attention across the continent.

After hearing of the massacre in Menemen, the Italian command and representation in Izmir sent health supplies and officials to investigate. Doctor Brunetti and an Italian officer who conducted investigations in Menemen confirmed that Greek soldiers massacred Muslims, looted their property and destroyed everything there.⁶ These two Italian officials also reported that they had witnessed Greek troops committing the atrocities, and they counted more than 200 dead and hundreds of injured, mostly women and children.⁷ As this case shows, Italian officials in Anatolia had been closely followed the massacre in Menemen. The last record on the subject is an informational note dated 6 July 1919. According to this note, Greek troops fleeing from Bergama looted houses after they killed about 30 officers and 300 Turkish civilians in Menemen, starting from the occupation on 17 June 1919.⁸

According to the Italian authorities, the Greek and Anatolian Greek forces laid waste to a path of Turkish villages between Bergama and Soma. They indicated their pride of what they had inflicted upon the Turks in Menemen and many other places.⁹ The summer of 1919 was filled with hardships for Turks, as famine and food and product shortages were exaggerated by the

6 USSME, E3-4/3; E8-87/22; E8-87/30.

7 Archivio Storico Diplomatico Ministero degli Affari Esteri-Affari Politici, (Historical Diplomatic Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Political Affairs Section), (ASDMAE-AP), 1919-1930, (Turchia/Türkiye 1919), Busta: (File): 1644-7738. From Rome to the Italian Delegation in Paris, June 22, 1919.

8 Archivio Storico Diplomatico Ministero degli Affari Esteri-Conferenza della Pace, (Historical Diplomatic Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs- Peace Conference), (ASDMAE-CP), Pos.16 Turchia (Türkiye), Busta: (File), 57-50.

9 ASDMAE-AP 1919-1930, (Turchia/Türkiye 1919), Busta: (File), 1644-7738. From Grenet, an Italian navy officer in Izmir to Navy Command 22 June 1919.

interruptions of the prolonged war. The occupiers' atrocities amplified the horrors of which the Turks were experiencing.

According to a document dated 28 June 1919, Greek military officials who continued to deploy troops to Izmir and Edremit had approved de facto extending the massacres. The statistics in this document summarize the brutalities: Greek occupation forces killed 22 Turks in the villages of Izmir and 45 in Ahmetli and searched and ransacked the homes of all Turks in Manisa.¹⁰

Italian officials who travelled around the Greek occupation area also recorded the testimonies of Turks about the atrocities they suffered. Mario Indelli, one of the officers of the Italian representation in Izmir, relayed his impressions to the Izmir Representative Count Carlo Senni on 29 June 1919, about his short trip from the Büyük Menderes Valley and Kuşadası to Aydın. Indelli said in his report: "The day before the battle in Aydın and the evacuation of Nazilli, Greek soldiers and civilian Anatolian Greeks inflicted great damage to the Karapınar region" and that "they burned the villages of Yeniköy, Kadıköy and Emir situated between Germencik and Aydın, burned and committed massacres in Erbeyli, Şevketiye, Tekeler, Dermencik, Ahırköy, Osmanbükü, Kürtler and Kızılcaköy."¹¹

In his report to the Istanbul High Commissioner on 13 December 1919, Indelli stated that Greek soldiers and the Anatolian Greek people continued to murder, torture and maraud the Muslim people in the occupied areas. Writing that he was aware that his British, French and American colleagues had dispatched similar reports, the Italian diplomat added that on 24 October 1919, Ali Bey, a shoemaker who resided in Karşıyaka's outer quarter, was severely injured and robbed by Anatolian Greeks. Indelli also mentioned other massacres perpetrated by Greek soldiers and Anatolian Greeks. The most remarkable information is that eight Anatolian Greeks wearing military garb forcibly took money from the people of Başköy near Nif (Kemalpaşa), whom they gathered in a mosque, and tortured Sakaloğlu Mustafa, who was one of the notables there, and Ali's wife Dudu Hanım.¹² While such a document specifies individual names and incidents, it also exemplifies the extent of the brutalities inflicted about others and at a magnitude that

10 USSME, E3-5/3. From General Giuseppe Battistoni, Commander of the Italian Expeditionary Forces in Rhodes to the Supreme Command 28 June 1919.

11 ASDMAE-CP, Pos.16 Turchia (Türkiye), Busta: (File), 57-50.

12 ASDMAE-CP, Pos.16 Turchia (Türkiye), Busta: (File), 57-54.

undoubtedly shocked Italian journalists and authorities who had observed the impact and aftermath of the occupation.

2. Years of Occupations

Shortly after the Greek forces arrived in Izmir, they expanded the occupation zone, with the objective of eventually annexing the region to Greece. The Turks, who rightly had territorial claims to Izmir and the surrounding areas, supported the movement for the national struggle and independence with their hearts and souls under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Pasha. To counter this rising sense of Turkish nationalism, the Greek occupiers installed harsh, intolerant administrative rule, of which Italian authorities observed and recorded. Italians accepted this role voluntarily, given that they had expected Izmir to come into their hands as promised in the treaty. Italian officials confirmed what Turkish authorities had recorded as well in detailing the atrocities being carried out against innocent Turkish residents. The Italian archives also support the Turkish view that the persecution by Greek soldiers and Anatolian Greeks expanded in parallel with the activities of the Turkish resistance.

Turks mounted an armed resistance stretching from Ayvalık to the Menderes regions and it is evident that Greek forces retaliated with brute anger and hatred against civilians, given their ineffectiveness to repel the soldiers and civilian members of *Kuvâ-yı Milliye*. Among the leaders of the resistance unit were like ranking officers including Ali Çetinkaya, Mehmet Şefik Aker, Yörük Ali Efe and Cafer Agha, whose names have been recorded with gratitude in the historical chronicle of the events in Izmir and nearby areas.

In a 11 January 1920 report to the Italian delegation in Izmir, Major Carossini, regional inspector of the Ottoman gendarmerie, stated that “the ill-treatment and violence of Greek soldiers and Anatolian Greeks wearing military clothes continue against the Turks living under very difficult conditions.” One event in the report was striking for its detail: On the night of 25 September [1919], an armed gang of 15 came to the town of Torbalı Karaköy, claiming, “By order of the Greek government, we will kill a Turk,” and they subsequently killed İbrahim, Veli Ağa’s son, without previous cause.¹³

A similar incident around Torbalı occurred in the early days of the following year. On 5 January, a group of twenty people wearing Greek military uni-

13 ASDMAE-CP, Pos.16 Turchia (Türkiye), Busta: (File), 56-45.

forms injured Hafez Süleyman and his brother Mehmet and extorted three thousand lira from them, after mistreating and torturing the residents in the town.

The report cited numerous instances of atrocities. On 8 January, sixteen Anatolian Greeks in military uniforms and rifles surrounded a mosque in Keçeli, which was filled with members, and took their money before killing a villager. In the same town, a notable resident's son-in-law and daughter (Fatma), who was eight months pregnant, were murdered indiscriminately. Nine Greeks wearing Zeybek clothes attacked the Çambeli village on the following day, forcibly taking 3,000 Turkish Lira from residents. The same day, another gang of eight people, also dressed in Zeybek clothes, extorted 4,000 Turkish lira from people in Ören near Nif. Muslim residents in the Yoğurt and Demirci villages were robbed on the road by a gang of people dressed in Greek military uniforms as they made their way to the market to sell their goods. Twenty houses in Karantina, a few minutes from the road to the center of Izmir, were robbed by Anatolian Greek thieves within a two-month period. Not even 10 percent of the farms could be tilled for the growing season, as there was no assurance of safety for Turkish farms in Urla, Ödemiş, Tire, Bayındır, Nif, Menemen and Torbalı.¹⁴

The agricultural economy critical to their livelihood had been halted by unchecked atrocities perpetrated by the Greek occupiers.

No area of community life and activity was left untouched, including censored publications. An article titled, *Birazcık İtidal* (A Little Bit Calm), was published but partially censored by an Allied Censorship Committee in the Izmir newspaper *Şark* on 16 October 1919. As a result, Greek officials arrested Zeki Bey, the editor-in-chief of the newspaper; Yunus Bey, the author of the article, and Kenan Bey, the managing director. After a trial in the Greek Court of War, Zeki Bey and Yunus Bey were sentenced to one year in prison and a fine of 2,000 drachma each, and sent to Greece, while the managing director was released a few days later. Allied representatives in Izmir protested the arrests before the Greek High Commissioner Aristidis Sterghiadis, noting that the Allied committee already had reviewed the article. Upon Sterghiadis's reply that his court proceedings operate independently of such precedents, the Allied representatives in Izmir submitted the issue to

14 ASDMAE-CP, Pos.16 Turchia (Türkiye), Busta: (File), 57-54. From the Izmir Italian Delegation to the Istanbul High Commissioner, 16 January 1920.

Greek and other High Commissioners in Istanbul. Meanwhile, two journalists were sent to Greece.¹⁵

As we have pointed out above, being defeated in Anatolia by the Turkish army, Greek army troops doubled down on their presence in the occupied territory. Çakmak Pasha, who was the national defence minister of the fledgling Ankara government, ordered a woman to leave her house because he wanted to rent it for himself. In the house, Fitnat Hanım was living with her mother-in-law (Şaver Hanım), and a portion of the house was rented by Ali Bey, who was living there with his two daughters. When the landlord refused, seven Greek soldiers were sent to the house by Major Blacopoulos, and they seized the house by force on 18 February 1920. With the intervention of the Ottoman police, the soldiers were forced to evacuate the house. But the next day, seven Greek soldiers, this time under the command of a sergeant, entered the house by force and threw the tenant's belongings (Ali Bey) on the street. The major, who settled in the house, did not pay any rent and it was feared that valuables such as silverware, carpets and coats worth upwards of 3,000 Turkish Lira had been stolen from the home.¹⁶

In addition to domestic evictions, Italians traced the horrors of the occupation as they were intensified after the Turkish army won the prolonged Battle of Sakarya. According to a letter sent from the Anatolian Gendarmerie Command to the Eastern Mediterranean Italian Expeditionary Command on 14 October 1921, Greek troops destroyed the villages near Torbalı, Tire and Ödemiş on the night beginning 4 September. According to the same report, every Turkish village near Torbalı, ranging from Balatçık to Aziziye, was burned and destroyed a week later by Greek troops number approximately 100 soldiers.¹⁷

The Greek forces, who lost the battle in Sakarya, embarked on a campaign of fear, exacerbated by mass killings, to preserve their presence in Anatolia. The Italian Consulate in İzmir reported the mass murders in its letter dated

15 ASDMAE-CP, Pos.16 Turchia (Türkiye), Busta: (File), 57-52. From Istanbul High Commissioner Maissa to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Italian Delegation in Paris, 8 January 1920.

16 ASDMAE-CP, Pos.16 Turchia (Türkiye), Busta: (File), 230-2. From the Allied Police Control Delegation Italy Representative Colonel Balduino Caprini to the Ambassador of Italy in Istanbul, 11 March 1921.

17 ASDMAE-CP, Pos.16 Turchia (Türkiye), Busta: (File), 57-54; ASDMAE-AP. 1919-1930, (Turchia/Türkiye1919), Busta: (File), 1666-7787.

21 March 1922, which was sent to the embassy in Istanbul. According to the report, Greek soldiers gathered the majority of the civilian population, including women and children, in three mosques in the village of Karatepe and set the mosques on fire, burning no fewer than 150 people to death. According to the same report, the neighborhoods of Torbalı, Çakırbeyli, Saipler, Bozköy, Değirmendere, Akçaköy, Yeniköy, Cumalıköy and Tekeköy were exposed to Greek airstrikes. In one of those villages, Değirmendere, Greek soldiers mounted on the back of many Turks as if they were pack animals.¹⁸

As Turkish armed forces prepared for a new offensive during the summer of 1922, the levels of Greek persecution continued unabated. Count Carlo Senni, the consul general in Izmir, described in an extensive report to the Italian Embassy in Istanbul the scope of atrocities committed by Greek and Armenian occupiers, which had been detected by Italian authorities:

1-Two butchers were murdered in Çamlar.

2-On the night of 13 June, several Greek soldiers, who entered Muammer's house by force in Bağarası, near Foça, indiscriminately stabbed his wife to death. Next day, the examination of her body revealed that the woman was pregnant. In the middle of June, two Turks were massacred in Hamidler, near Bornova.

3-Greek soldiers raped Turkish girls after abducting them from the villages of Armutlu and Tahtacı, near Torbalı.

4-On 31 May, a Greek platoon on patrol in Urla killed a 13-year-old boy named Necip for no reason.

5-In the first week of June, Armenian-Anatolian Greek marauders slaughtered two millers at their workplace, located eight kilometers away from Yumru. In the Çağlak Strait, which is five kilometers from Akhisar, a man and a woman, as well as two men in the village of Gökçe Ahmed, 12 kilometers from Akhisar, were killed by these gangs.

6-In May, an Anatolian Greek-Armenian gang massacred ten people, including women, in Sazoba, 10 kilometers from Akhisar.

7-The villages of Bademiye, Adagide, Kazganlı and Yıkıklar, near Ödemiş, were set on fire. The inhabitants of these villages were missing.¹⁹

18 ASDMAE-CP, Pos.16 Turchia (Türkiye), Busta: (File), 246-4.

19 ASDMAE-CP, Pos.16 Turchia (Türkiye), Busta: (File), 246-6.

These reports were not isolated. In fact, as Turkish armed forces gained a foothold against the occupiers, Greek and Armenian soldiers continued to ratchet up random violence and killings against civilians, sparing no one, including women and children.

3. End of the Occupation

There is no doubt the Greek armed occupiers violated the norms of combat, thereby committing war crimes that could have been prosecuted under international treaty laws, both when they invaded Anatolia and subsequently retreated after the Turkish army defeated them. Hence, Article 59 of the Lausanne Peace Treaty explicated that the Greek army and the Government of Greece had committed war crimes.²⁰ Their actions did not change when they were forced on the defense, setting off arson brigades to scorch their path of retreat and destroy as many cities, towns and villages as possible. The Turkish army had little choice but to push the retreat as quickly and aggressively as possible to mitigate the devastation that the retreating forces had threatened. The archival records clearly provide comprehensive details about atrocities committed by Greek soldiers, as chronicled by Italian authorities, who also kept abreast of the developments regarding the Turkish offensive, which started on 26 August 1922.

Count Senni, the Izmir consul, telegraphed his respective embassy in Istanbul on 2 September 1922, reporting that Uşak was destroyed and the residents were killed before the evacuation. The Italian diplomat added that Kütahya and other Turkish villages were also systematically destroyed, as the Greek units were retreating.²¹ The same was reported about Afyon. It was reported by reliable sources that when retreating from Afyon towards Izmir, the Greek army perpetrated killings, looting and arson, destroying the villages and the cities in their path, arbitrarily and systematically.²² Viscardi, an Italian officer in Izmir, gave similar information in a telegram he sent

20 Article 59 of the Lausanne Peace Treaty is as follows: "Greece recognises her obligation to make reparation for the damage caused in Anatolia by the acts of the Greek army or administration which were contrary to the laws of war." *Düstur*, Third Series, Volume: 5, (11 August 1339-19 October 1340 according to the hijri calendar), Necmi İstikbal Printing House, Istanbul 1931, p.60.

21 ASDMAE-CP, Pos.16 Turchia (Türkiye), Busta: (File), 251-3.

22 ASDMAE-AP. 1919-1930, (Turchia/Türkiye 1922), Busta: (File), 1677-7813; USSME, E3-38-12. From Inter-Allied Liaison Officer of İzmir Lieutenant Colonel Eduardo Giordano to Istanbul Occupation Command, 4 October 1922.

to the Naval Forces Ministry and the Levant Fleet Command in Istanbul a few days later. Viscardi noted that Alaşehir and its villages, near Manisa, were burned by Greeks, who were retreating chaotically in the face of the advancing Turkish Army.²³

Senni also wrote to his embassy in Istanbul five days after his first telegram that Menemen, Salihli, Turgutlu, Manisa and all the villages nearby this area were burned by the Greeks, who were fleeing towards Izmir – confirming separately what Viscardi had documented.²⁴

While this correspondence was being exchanged among Italian authorities, Italian newspapers also reported on the atrocities committed by the Greek soldiers. The newspaper *L'Idée Nazionale* indicated that the Greek Army burned all of the villages and cities on their path of retreat, and it was feared that Izmir could be burned as well.²⁵ Unfortunately, this fear came true and the great fire that started on 13 September 1922 and continued for three days, brought the city down in ruins. Given that the Izmir fire was so extensive in the collapse of the occupation, its documentation would take up a separate research piece. However, as a representative indicator, a telegram sent by the Inter-Allied Liaison Officer in Izmir (Lieutenant Colonel Eduardo) to the Istanbul Italian Occupation Command on 17 September 1922 informs the reader enough to suggest how the Italians had viewed the atrocities and understood who was behind them, especially when they were being committed with utter and rash desperation. The Italian officer wrote that the fire that started in the Armenian neighbourhood in Izmir around noon on 13 September was set by Greeks and Armenians with the intention of intimidating Turks, a tactic they had carried out many times before.²⁶

Conclusion

The Ottoman Empire, after being defeated in World War I, was treated in a way that no other defeated country had been. It was an extraordinary and unprecedented invasion, going right to the core of occupying its capital.

23 ASDMAE-AP. 1919-1930, (Turchia/Türkiye 1922), Busta: (File), 1677-7813.

24 USSME, E3-38-1.

25 *L'Idée Nazionale*, September 10, 1922.

26 ASDMAE-AP. 1919-1930, (Turchia/Türkiye 1922), Busta: (File), 1677-7813; Archivio Storico Diplomatico Ministero degli Affari Esteri-Conferenza della Pace, (Historical Diplomatic Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Embassy of Italy in Türkiye), Pos.16 Turchia (Türkiye), Busta: (File), 251-3.

As for the invasion of the second largest Ottoman city, the proxy war, which was concealed from European public opinion and was carried out by the Allies using Greek occupation forces also contributed to the intense scope of inhumane acts that violated virtually every expectation of an international standard of human decency and dignity. Stated simply, the proxy war enabled and endorsed a special mission for Greek forces to engage in wiping the Ottoman Empire off the geopolitical map of history with an insatiable orexis. Unfortunately, it also was a misplaced moment of nefarious opportunity, as both the United Kingdom and France, still bearing the grudge of a major defeat they suffered in the Battle of Gallipoli, decided that the best way to settle the historical score was to allow Greece to decapitate the weakened Ottoman Empire. Therefore, Greece volunteered to use the force to split Anatolia.

The invasion of Izmir was intended as a critical strategic step to establish Greek domination in Western Anatolia, thus annexing it as part of the Grecian homeland. However, it became apparent that even with the support of the United Kingdom, France and the United States of America, Greece could not win the objective by following the legal norms of warfare. If Greece was to establish dominion, it would need to convince millions of Turkish residents in the targeted region of its legitimacy. However, it was evident that the dominant Turkish population would never consent to such a change, especially when the terms of who controlled the land had been negotiated in secret and without even one whit of consent from them. The Greek occupiers decided that the only feasible option was to use total force to establish dominion. Encouraged by the Allied propaganda, which also explained why the war and invasion were unprecedentedly cruel up until that point of history, the Greeks unilaterally justified tyrannical atrocities as their unjustified and unmatched revenge for having lived under Turkish rule for centuries.

At the time, the Ottoman Empire lodged protests regarding Greek atrocities to the Allied Powers, and publicized the accounts in various foreign languages.²⁷ These publications have not only been beneficial, but have also

27 Some of the publications are: *Rapports, Officiels reçus des autorités militaires Ottomanes sur l'occupation de Smirne par les Troupes Helleniques*, (Reports, Officials received from the Ottoman military authorities on the occupation of Smirne by the Hellenic Troops), Constantinople 1919 ; *Rapports, Officiels reçus des autorités militaires Ottomanes sur l'occupation de Smirne par les Troupes Helleniques*, (Reports, Officials received from the Ottoman military authorities on the occupation of Smirne

added a new dimension to the debate about revealing the Greek atrocities, which were confirmed by the Italian authorities, who were an ally of Greece, at least in theory. The Italian authorities, by confirming and documenting the horrific record of the Greek occupation in Izmir, had hoped to demonstrate the grave error the Allied Powers had made in overruling the original terms regarding Izmir and ceding the territory to Greece. The tragedy of an unfair diplomatic move led to catastrophic consequences which Turkish citizens suffered and paid dearly for in the loss of life, property and livelihood.

The Greeks, of course, were unsettled greatly by the existence of such comprehensive records that Italian military and civilian authorities had kept. Italians living in Izmir also were subjected to a great deal of pressure from the Greek administrative occupiers.²⁸ In spite of these pressures, some Italian authorities and journalists followed their conscience instead by reporting what they had observed so that the world and the arenas of public opinion would be compelled to demand that the Greek occupation end as quickly as possible.²⁹

History includes many instances of complicated relationships of diplomacy and alliance among countries around the world. Certainly, the bilateral relations between Türkiye and Greece are no different. Following the Lausanne Peace Treaty, the Republic of Türkiye, nobly leaving behind what Greeks had done in Anatolia in the past, eventually moved to establish good relations with Greece, and succeeded in doing so. Friendly relations between the two

by the Hellenic Troops), Constantinople 1919 ; *Rapports, Officiels reçus des autorités militaires Ottomanes sur l'occupation de Smirne par les Troupes Helléniques*, (Reports, Officials received from the Ottoman military authorities on the occupation of Smirne by the Hellenic Troops), Livre II, Constantinople 1919 ; *Rapports, Officiels reçus des autorités militaires Ottomanes sur l'occupation de Smirne par les Troupes Helléniques*, (Reports, Officials received from the Ottoman military authorities on the occupation of Smirne by the Hellenic Troops), Livre III, Constantinople 1920.

28 The Italians living in Izmir, who were exposed to unfair and violent treatment by Greek military and civilian administration, reported the situation to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and protested the Greek administration. *L'Idée Nazionale*, 18 October 1920.

29 Filippucci Giustiniani, who sent articles about the events like the great fire or the liberation in Izmir to the Italian newspapers, visited the Greek occupation zones and conspicuously penned his observations. He reported that Greeks burned Manisa, Uşak, Afyon and Eskişehir while retreating, and that an Italian officer in İzmit witnessed a mass grave with nearly 200 people in it, some of whom were women and children. G. Filippucci Giustiniani, "Dopo l'incendio di Smirne", *Il Messaggero*, 6 Ottobre 1922; G. Filippucci Giustiniani, *Dieci anni di viaggi politici in Oriente, Turchia-Grecia-Egitto-Palestina-Siria (1914-1924)*, (Ten years of political travels to the East, Turkey-Greece-Egypt-Palestine-Syria), Casa Editrice M. Carra & C. Di Luigi Bellini, Roma, p. 251.

countries in 1930s laid the foundations of the Balkan Entente, which Romania and Yugoslavia had joined.

The nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1934 of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk by the Greek Prime Minister Venizelos not only revealed the point they had arrived at bilateral relations, but it was also a step that showed Greece also had moved on from the past. In 1940, the people in Anatolia, who also were enduring conditions of poverty, demonstrated their own altruism by sending harvested supplies of grain crops to the Greek people. However, how they have returned these favours of the Turkish nation remains unclear, especially after developments in recent years. To wit: on 19 May 1994, the date representing when Mustafa Kemal Atatürk stepped ashore at Anatolia seventy-five years earlier, was officially recognized as “*The Day of Remembrance of the Genocide of Pontus Hellenism*”. This was, indeed, a twisted act aimed toward not only reversing a narrative, but more significantly a major stipulation (Article 59) of the Lausanne Peace Treaty, the final negotiated pact of the great war: *Greece recognises her obligation to make reparation for the damage caused in Anatolia by the acts of the Greek army or administration which were contrary to the laws of war*. In hope for a reminder of a valuable lesson from the past, even today, Article 59 of the Lausanne Peace Treaty remains relevant to our geopolitical mindset and the perception of Türkiye as a contributing nation in the international community of foreign affairs. Turks remain mindful of the history.

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