

The Greek Occupation of Western Anatolia and the Jews, 1919-1922

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Abstract

During the Greek invasion of Western Anatolia in 1919-1922, the Jews living here were as much subject to massacre and destruction as the Turks. The region in this period was in a state of continuous war. About 15.000 Jews in the Aegean zone had lost all their belongings and fled to İzmir. The Jewish communities of Aydın and Nazilli were completely destroyed. The Greek authorities demolished the centuries-old historic Jewish cemetery in İzmir to make way for the anticipated campus of the Ionian University. Jewish tombstones were used as construction material. Protests to the British and French Consuls General have failed. Instead, rabbis in İzmir arranged for the transfer of the remains of the dead on 28 June 1921, which was declared a day of mourning for local Jews, who closed their shops to grieve. During the period beginning from the armistice days till the consummation of victory of the National Struggle, the Jews contributed to the achievement of independence of the Turkish State. Before all, the community followed a consistent line on the matter. Secondly, depending on place and time they resorted to several methods from passive resistance to active struggle. Either as individuals or at communal level the Jews as citizens have done what befell on them. The invasion of Western Anatolia is important in demonstrating the attitudes of the local inhabitants toward the Turkish nation. The Aegean Jews, in contradistinction to the actions of the native Greeks and Armenians, have remained in favor of the region's Turkishness. Despite some minor exceptions, the Jewish loyalty to the motherland was deep and sincere. The rabbinate in cities and towns did not accept the occupation and clearly

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showed their stances against the invaders. The Jews did not go out to welcome the occupation army and hid the fighters of the National Forces in their houses, when necessary. They did not participate in the meetings of gratitude to the occupation and to those who supported the occupation. In all these instances, they departed from the Armenians who backed the occupation.

Keywords: Anatolia, Greeks, Occupation, Turks, Jews.

Batı Anadolu'nun Yunanlılar Tarafından İşgali ve Yahudiler, 1919-1922

Öz

Yunanlıların 1919-1922 yıllarında Batı Anadolu'yu işgalleri sırasında burada yaşayan Yahudiler Türkler kadar katliam ve tahribata maruz kalmışlardır. Bu süre zarfında bölge devamlı savaş halindeydi. Ege havalisindeki yaklaşık 15.000 Yahudi bütün varlıklarını kaybedip İzmir'e sığınmıştır. Aydın ve Nazilli Yahudi cemaatleri tamamen yok olmuşlardır. İşgal sırasında Yunan makamları İyonya Üniversitesinin kampusunun inşasına yer açmak için İzmir'deki yüzlerce yıllık tarihi Yahudi mezarlığını tamamen yıkmışlardır. Yahudi mezar taşları inşaat malzemesi olarak kullanılmıştır. İngiliz ve Fransız Başkonsoloslukları nezdinde yapılan protestolar başarılı olmamıştır. Bunun üzerine, İzmir'deki hahamlar 28 Haziran 1921'de ölümlerinin kemiklerini başka mahalle nakletmişlerdir. Bu tarih, dükkanlarını kapatıp yas tutan İzmirli Yahudilerce matem günü ilan edilmiştir. Mütareke günlerinden başlayıp Milli Mücadelenin zafere ulaşmasına kadar geçen dönem boyunca Yahudilerin Türk Devletinin bağımsızlığına kavuşmasına katkıları olmuştur. Her şeyden önce, cemaat olarak izlenen kararlı bir tutum içinde olmuşlardır. İkincisi, zaman ve zemine göre pasif direnişten fiili mücadeleye çeşitli yöntemlere başvurmuşlardır. Gerek fert gerekse cemaat düzeyinde Yahudiler birer yurttaş olarak üzerlerine düşeni yapmışlardır. Batı Anadolu'nun işgali burada yaşayan unsurların Türk milletine karşı tutumlarını göstermesi açısından önemlidir. Egeli Yahudiler, yerli Rumlar ve Yahudilerin aksine, bölgenin Türk kalmasından yana olmuşlardır. Bazı küçük istisnalar dışında, vatana bağlılıkları derin ve içtendi. Şehir ve kasabalardaki hahamlıklar işgali kabul etmemişler ve müstevlilere karşı tavırlarını açıkça ortaya koymuşlardır. Yahudiler işgal ordusunu karşılamaya çıkmamışlar ve Kuvayı Milliye mücahitlerini gerektiğinde evlerinde saklamışlardır. İşgal ve işgal yanlıları için düzenlenen şükran mitinglerine katılmamışlardır. Bütün bu konularda işgali destekleyen Ermenilerden ayrılmışlardır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Anadolu, Yunanlılar, İşgal, Türkler, Yahudiler.

Introduction

The occupation of western Anatolia started by the landing of the Greek troops on İzmir nine days after the permission given to Greece by the Entente Powers on the date of May 6, 1919 in an unjust manner based on the 7th Article of the Armistice of Mudros dated October 30, 1918 in the meeting of the Peace Conference convened in Paris following the First World War, and the occupation ended on the date of September 9, 1922 with the driving of the Greek troops into the sea by the Turkish troops. Although the first instruction of the Peace Conference limited the occupation with the boundaries of the Province of Aydın (İzmir), the Greek troops composed of 13.000 soldiers, 4.000 mounts and beasts of burden and 750 cannons proceeded towards the interior regions of western Anatolia as soon as they landed on İzmir under the protection of the British, French, Italian, American and Greek battleships. In the morning of May 15, the Greek soldiers landed on İzmir, and more than 400 Turks were either killed or injured in the incidents that took place after their landing.

Since the first day of the occupation, the Greeks openly announced that they had come to western Anatolia not for temporary occupation but to annex greater Greece including western Anatolia and both sides of the Aegean Sea, to materialize the Megali Idea (Great Ideal) and to come closer to revitalizing former Byzantine Empire. With the Megali Idea, the Greeks were attempting to revitalize the Byzantine Empire and expand the boundaries of Greece from the Balkan Peninsula to the northern shores of the Peloponnesus, from the Adriatic Sea to the Black Sea and the Taurus Mountains. The Greek soldiers occupied Urla on May 17, and Çeşme on May 20 after taking control of İzmir completely and proceeded fast to the southern, southwestern, and northeastern sections of the Province of Aydın. Those military movements mostly took place across the river valleys where the Turkish towns were located. On May 21, Menemen, on May 26, Manisa, on May 27, Aydın, on May 28 Ayvalık and on May 29, Turgutlu (Kasaba), Bayındır and Tire were occupied. The Greek attacks also continued in June and Ödemiş, Nazilli, Bergama and Kuşadası were occupied by the Greeks at the end of this month.¹

1 Talat Yalazan, *Türkiye'de Yunan Vahşet ve Soykırım Girişimi*, Vol. 1, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Genelkurmay Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etütler Başkanlığı Yayınları, Ankara 1994, pp. 17-19; Engin Berber, *Sancılı Yıllar: İzmir 1918-1922 Mütareke ve Yunan İşgali Döneminde İzmir Sancağı*, Ayraç Yayınevi, Ankara 1997, p. 211.

The Greek soldiers and the local Greeks committed numerous atrocities against not only the Turkish population, but also the Jews living in the region peacefully for centuries despite the Armistice of Mudros by disregarding the provisions of treaties regarding The Hague Law of War dated 1899 and 1907. Those atrocities took place in the form of massacres, looting, rape and destruction of villages and towns. Those incidents were also verified by the Turkish, Italian, and British representatives. During the occupation, the Jews have always defended the loyalty of the region to the homeland and rejected to cooperate with the enemy and thusly they were subjected to the oppression of the occupiers.

The Ottoman defeat in the First World War and the occupation of the Turkish lands by the Entente Powers and the Greek soldiers under their protection and support worried the Jews living on these lands as much as those events hurt the Turks deeply. The defeat of the Turks and occupation of their country also meant the destruction of the state for the Jews under which they had been living freely for centuries and the loss of the lands where they had sought refuge while being driven away from one country to the next. If we remember the fact that those who defeated the Turks also had the Crusader mentality, which was the situation that the Jews, who had been victims of the Christian persecution for centuries, may easily understand. Above all, the tragedy of the Turkish Jews may be easily understood when it is considered that the Greeks, who massacred about 5.000 Jews during the Morean Rebellion between the years of 1829 and 1830 for no reason and burned down the Jewish neighborhoods of Salonika after the occupation of the city on November 6, 1912, attempted to annex the Anatolian lands and the local Jews were able to save their lives due to the protection of the Turkish rulers when their lives were at great risk because of the blood libels claimed by their cooperating local Greeks.²

The Armenians and the Armenian newspapers, along with the local Greeks, cheered up in masses during the entry of the Greek Army into İzmir and

2 Çetin Yetkin, *Türkiye'nin Devlet Yaşamında Yahudiler*, Afa Yayıncılık, İstanbul 1992, p. 175; Joshua Eli Palut, *Greek Jewry in the Twentieth Century, 1913-1983 Patterns of Jewish Survival in the Greek Provinces Before and After the Holocaust*, Associated University Presses, Cranbury, NJ 1996, p. 31; Devin Naar, *Jewish Salonica Between the Ottoman Empire and Modern Greece*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA 2016, p. 24; Cecil Roth, "The Last Days of Jewish Salonica: What Happened to a 450-Year-Old Civilization", *Commentary*, Vol. 10, No. 1, July 1950, pp. 2-3.

when the Treaty of Sevres dated August 10, 1920 approving the occupation of İzmir by the Greeks was signed.³ For instance, the daily published in İzmir in Armenian named *Mamul* penned down an article addressed to Konstantine I, the Greek King, after the occupation of İzmir, and stated that “it was the time for the Greeks and Armenians to get rid of the enslavement of the Turks until then and King Konstantine I was appointed for the protection of the entire Armenian nation”. Additionally, the article wrote to the King: “Oh King Constantine! Unsheathe your sword in the name of justice and walk through the noble road!”⁴

The Jews of the Aegean Region: Turks, Greeks, and Armenians

The history of the Aegean Jews goes back to the 4th century B.C. The famous Roman orator Cicero mentioned the existence of a Jewish community in Edremit and Bergama in one of his speeches that he gave in 59 B.C. Also, in the early periods of Christianity, the Jews were residing in this region. It is understood from some expressions in the New Testament that the Jews lived in İzmir in the early years of the first century. The mentioning of a women named Rufung who was described as the “Mother of the Synagogue” in an epitaph that is estimated to be from the 2nd or 3rd century A.C. is the proof that during those years, there were Jews in the city. Certain amount of the Jews who were brought from Spain and Portugal by the ships sent by Sultan Beyazıt II in 1492 were settled in İzmir, Manisa, Bursa and Efes. A large portion of the Jews who left Salonika due to massacres and brutality that took place after the occupation of the city by the Greeks moved to İzmir. Hayim Nahum who was the Chief Rabbi during the Ottoman period between the years of 1909 and 1920, supported the Turkish case in the European press between the years of 1920 and 1926 and served as an advisor at the Peace Treaty of Lausanne between the years of 1922 and 1923, and Nesim Mazliyah who served as the representative of İzmir for three terms between the years of 1908 and 1918 were born in Manisa.⁵

3 Henri Nahum, *İzmir Yahudileri Ondokuzuncu ve Yirminci Yüzyıl*, trans. Estreya Seval Vali, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul 2000, p. 185.

4 Güzin Çaykırın, “Milli Mücadele’ye Karşı Rum-Ermeni Ortak Hareketi ve Yunanistan’a Destek Faaliyetleri (1918-1922)”, *Askeri Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi*, No. 32, 2020, p. 97.

5 Yusuf Besalel, *Osmanlı ve Türk Yahudileri*, Gözlem Gazetecilik Basın ve Yayın A. Ş., Expanded Second Edition, İstanbul 2004, p. 26, 55-56.

Just like it was the case in all Ottoman cities, it was the economic, political, and religious factors that determined the nature of relations between the Greeks and the Jews. This important trading port had become one of the centers where conflicts had been experienced between the two religious communities between the 18th and the 20th centuries where the Greeks and Jews were high in numbers. And the incidents of blaming and attacks committed by the Christians and especially by the Greeks that took place for the duration of those two centuries arising from economic and political reasons would be supported by religious justifications. According to the Christians, the Jews were the “killers of the Savior”. In the Easter and other religious days this claim was often voiced in speeches that were delivered regarding Jesus and the same claim became the spark that would upset the coherent lives of the Jewish and Christian communities living in the same city. After the 1860s, the increase in the anti-Semitic attitudes among the Christians originated from the slow and gradual increase of the number of Jews in some main sectors of the Ottoman economy. The Jews started to gain successes in the Ottoman market that would worry the Greeks and Armenians. This leap forward upset the Greeks and Armenians. The allegations and attacks against Jews increased who had been “targets” or “scapegoats” everywhere for centuries. The allegations introduced the Christian’s boycotting, and the Greek and Armenian traders in the market were freezing their relations with the Jewish traders.⁶

The political developments in the 19th century also had an impact in the increase of the economic competition. The cooperation of the Jews with the Turks during the Morean Rebellion which was supported by the European states provoked the opposition against Jewish which was maintained by the Greeks. The Jews who remained in Greece became the victims of massacres. And the Jewish support of the Ottoman State in the Ottoman - Greek War of 1897 led to emergence of essays against Jews in the Greek press. On the other hand, the Armenian terrorist movements that arose at the end of the 19th century destroyed the official Ottoman trust for the Armenian community. Thusly, the Jews became the only religious community that gained the support of the Ottoman State in the economic sectors.⁷

6 Siren Bora, *İzmir Yahudileri Tarihi 1908-1923*, Gözlem Gazetecilik Basın ve Yayın A.Ş., İstanbul 1995, pp. 91-92; Richard Clogg, “The Greek Millet in the Ottoman Empire”, in *Ottomans and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, Vol. 1: *The Central Lands*, eds. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, Holmes and Meier, New York 1982, p. 115.

7 Bora, *İzmir Yahudileri Tarihi*, p. 92; Naar, *ibid*, p. 21; Julia Phillips Cohen, *Becoming Ottomans*:

Nine blood libel incidents initiated by the Greeks and targeting the Jews took place in İzmir in the years of 1864, 1872, 1874, 1876, 1888, 1890, 1896, 1901 and 1921. In each case, the Jews were blamed for kidnapping a Greek youngster, using his blood for making Matsa which was eaten in the Pass-over and killing the youngster. The Jews walking on the streets were beaten and the Jewish stores were looted. In fact, the Jewish neighborhood was sieged by the Greeks and Armenians for three months in 1872. The houses and shops of the Jews were burned down, and hundreds of Jews died of starvation. The blood libels targeting the Ottoman Jews led to the intervention of Western Jewish organizations and influential Jews and the Ottoman authorities. However, despite all interventions, the unsubstantiated allegations about religious murders continued. Many Jews who were afraid of Christian Anti-Semitism migrated to the Ottoman lands after the First Balkan War by leaving the Macedonia, Chios, Lemnos and Lesbos Islands occupied by the Greeks. Some of them moved to İzmir. The occupation of western Anatolia by the Greeks in 1919 exposed the Aegean Jews to new allegations.⁸

The relationship of the Ottoman State with the Jews who were one of the non-Muslim communities under the status of *dhimmi* has been more positive and friendly when compared to its relationship with the Greeks and Armenians who got involved with separatist currents. The Jews, who received more tolerance when compared to the Christians, cared about remaining loyal to the Ottoman State to guarantee their own lives. In this regard, they accepted voluntary military service in the Ottoman Army since 1895, defended the territorial integrity of the Ottoman State at the beginning of the 19th and 20th centuries and supported the reform efforts. Thusly, the Jews were protected by the edicts of the sultans in the allegations regarding religious murders (blood libels) targeting the Jews since the 15th century. In the Ottoman State, the relationship of the Muslim Turkish community with the Jewish community was closer and warmer than that of the Muslim Turkish community with other religious communities. Generally, in all Ottoman cities, the Turkish and Jewish neighborhoods were side by side. The relations between the Turks and Jews in İzmir continued without any

Sephardi Jews and Imperial Citizenship in the Modern Era, Oxford University Press, New York 2014, p. 45-73.

8 Bora, İzmir *Yahudileri Tarihi*, p. 93; Aron Rodrigue, "The Sephardim in the Ottoman Empire", in *Spain and the Jews: The Sephardi Experience 1492 and After*, ed. Elie Kedourie, Thames and Hudson, London 1992, p. 186.

interruption in the economic, social and cultural areas. The Jews in İzmir established friendly relations with both the government representatives and the Turkish people.⁹

The Greek Atrocities and the Jewish Resistance

In their attacks in western Anatolia, the Greek soldiers targeted everything and everyone who is not Christian. On 19 and 20 June 1919, 16 Jews were slaughtered along with hundreds of Turks. The Jews' houses and synagogues were burned down along with the Turks' houses and mosques. The first anti-Semitic attacks took place on May 15 in İzmir. The Greek soldiers looted the shops of Jews in the incidents that took place that day.¹⁰ Alberd Navon, the Principal of Alyans Boys School in İzmir wrote that he was concerned in a letter that he sent to the headquarters of Alyans in Paris. Because the shops of Jews were looted during the Greek Army's entrance into İzmir, the notables of the religious community were assaulted and even some killings took place.¹¹

On the night of May 14 and 15, an Islamic knelling call was recited from the minarets of mosques in İzmir, mixed company of men and women flocked to the Jewish cemetery in Maşatlık and by making fires at the cemetery until the morning the protest for the Greek occupation was indicated to the ships of the Entente Powers at the port. It is estimated that about 40 thousand

9 Bora, *İzmir Yahudileri Tarihi*, pp. 93-94; Aron Rodrigue, *Jews and Muslims: Images of Sephardi and Eastern Jewries in Modern Times*, University of Washington Press, Seattle, WA and London 2003, p. 233-235; Stanford Shaw, *From Empire to Republic the Turkish War of National Liberation 1918-1923: A Documentary Study*, Vol. 5, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara 2000, p. 2276.

10 Çağrı Erhan, *Greek Occupation of Izmir and Adjoining Territories Report of the Inter-Allied Commission of Inquiry (May-September 1919)*, Center for Strategic Research Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye, Ankara 1999, p. 20.

11 Nahum, *ibid*, s.184. Alliance Israélite Universelle or shortly Alliance (Alyans) means Universal Jewish Union. It was established in Paris in 1860 by the French Jews. Its purpose was to educate the backward Jewish communities or to teach them crafts so that they would catch the enlightenment period. For the purpose of realizing this goal, they opened up schools instructing in French in the Ottoman Empire and some other countries. Naim Güleriyüz, *Bizans'tan 20. Yüzyıla Türk Yahudileri*, Gözlem Gazetecilik Basın ve Yayın A.Ş., İstanbul 2011, pp. 168-170; Aron Rodrigue, *De l'instruction à l'émancipation: les enseignants de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle et les Juifs d'Orient, 1860-1939*, Calmann-Levy, Paris 1989; idem, *French Jews, Turkish Jews: The Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Politics of Jewish Schooling in Turkey, 1860-1925 (The Modern Jewish Experience)*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN 1990.

people gathered at Maşatlık.¹² Atatürk mentions that day in his book titled *Nutuk* (Discourse) as “the people who were able to gather at the Jewish Maşatlık in İzmir”.¹³ And Celal Bayar describes that day as follows: “Time was passing, it was 21:00 p.m. People did not decide what to do. Finally, it was decided to publish a declaration, distribute it in the Turkish neighborhoods, call the Turks to a meeting at the Jewish cemetery and send an envoy to the representatives of the Entente Powers in İzmir”.¹⁴

On May 15, the day of the occupation, Albert Ferid Aseo, the Branch Manager of the İzmir İtibar-i Milli (National Trust) Bank watched the malignant acts of the Greek soldiers on the dock from the bank along with all of this officials after hiding the money and valuable documents that belonged to his bank on the dock in the Ottoman Bank which was located at the back side of the bank just in case and returned to his office. Aseo thought about all possibilities and took all kinds of measures and requested from the Italian officer who was one of his friends serving as the Director of the İzmir Port to send a small boat with an Italian flag for himself tied in front of the Bank facing the sea. Although the boat with the Italian flag was waiting in front of the Bank, it was very difficult to pass through the Greek soldiers. Aseo impersonated an Italian officer and started to talk in Italian with the Greek officers and by using this trick he was able to go the Italian battleship named Caio Duilio waiting at the dock. Aseo told the bloody incidents that took place on the dock to Colonel Maliano who was one of the officers of the ship and asked him to mediate so that the Greeks stop their aggressive behaviors. The Italian officer told Aseo that a Turkish officer, who had multiple injuries and was thrown into the sea, was saved by the Italian boats and taken under medical treatment at the ship’s infirmary and upon this, Aseo visited the Turkish officer and realized that he was Sub Provincial Governor Kemal Bey who was serving as the commissar of the Aydın railroad who refused to say “Zito Venizelos” and Aseo consoled him. Colonel Maliano, the ship’s officer went to Admiral Sir Somerset Arthur Gough-Calthorpe who was the commander of the British fleet at the port and reported the situation. The British Admiral invited the highest ranked officer of the French fleet at the port

12 Zeki Sarıhan, *Kurtuluş Savaşı Günlüğü: Mondros’tan Erzurum Kongresi’ne (30 Ekim 1918-22 Temmuz 1919)*, Vol. 1, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara 1993, p. 240.

13 Kemal Atatürk, *Nutuk 1919-1927*, ed. Zeynep Korkmaz, Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, Ankara 1991, p. 2.

14 Celal Bayar, *Ben de Yazdım: Milli Mücadeleye Gidiş*, Vol. 6, Baha Matbaası, İstanbul 1963, p. 1784.

and the fleet commanders of the three states asked the Greek commander to stop those attacks immediately otherwise all of the responsibility would be on Greece. The Greek commander stopped the attacks in the evening of that day.¹⁵

It should also be added that Aseo was a member of the committee consisted of five persons declaring in 1926 after the announcement of the Turkish Republic that the Jewish community entirely and finally renounced the private law that the Peace Treaty of Lausanne dated July 24, 1923 recognized for the minorities and conducting the meetings between the official bodies and the Jewish community. Aseo went to Ankara and made the final meetings with the Ministry of Interior.¹⁶

Upon the opening up of the Turkish ports for the ships of the Entente Powers in accordance to the provisions of the Armistice of Mudros, the first ship that entered into the İzmir Port was the monitor of the British fleet with the bow number of 19 M under the command of Lieutenant Commander Charles Edward Dixon on the date of November 6, 1918. That day, the local Greeks decorated İzmir and especially the docks with the Greek flags and celebrated the arrival of Dixon. On November 7, a group of Greeks lowered down the Turkish flag on the balcony of the Kramer Palace (Splendid) Hotel next to the docks and raised the Greek flag in its place for the purpose of making up to the British Admiral while the notables of the city and Nurettin Pasha, the Provincial Commander of İzmir, and Dixon were present at the hotel. The Jewish youngster named Nesim Navaro of Bergama who was there got angry, lowered, tore, and trampled the Greek flag in front of everyone. Although the Greeks wanted to capture Nesim Navaro, they were unable to do anything because they were afraid of Dixon. Nurettin Pasha admired Nesim Navaro's patriotic feelings, saved him from the Greeks and sent him to his home in the company of police officers.¹⁷ Celal Bayar tells

15 Avram Galanti, *Türkler ve Yahudiler: Tarihi, Siyasi Araştırma*, Gözlem Gazetecilik Basın ve Yayın A.Ş., İstanbul 1995, p. 61-62. Avram Galanti who was born in Bodrum in 1873 served as the department chair in İstanbul University between the years of 1915 and 1933 and also served as the representative of Niğde in the parliament between the years of 1943 and 1946. For the brief biography of Albert Ferid Aseo see: Naim Gülerüz, *Toplumsal Yaşamda Türk Yahudileri*, Gözlem Gazetecilik Basın ve Yayın A.Ş., second edition, İstanbul 2015, pp. 164-166.

16 Sezai Balcı - Ahmet Yadi, *Osmanlı Bürokrasisinde Yahudiler*, Libra Kitapçılık ve Yayıncılık, İstanbul 2013, p. 73.

17 Galanti, *ibid*, pp. 61-62.

the same incident in the following manner: "That evening, a group of excessive Greek demonstrators raided the Splendid Palace Hotel run by Cemil of Milas and Hotel Manager Naim Bey. They forcibly lowered the Turkish flag on the balcony of the Turkish hotel and hoisted the Greek flag instead. In the meantime, Nurettin Pasha and Dixon were at the hotel. Both commanders just watched the situation, however one of our Jewish citizens named Nesim Navaro, who was one of the guests at the hotel, resisted against this excess. He took the hoisted Greek flag and trampled it in front of Dixon".¹⁸

The fact that among many Turks, a Jew's display of this reaction affected Nurettin Pasha deeply and he wrote the following statements on his card and sent it to Nesim Navaro after leaving the provincial command office and going to the front: "Dear respectful Nesim Navaro, I appreciate and applaud you for the national courage and moral courage that you have displayed by taking and tearing down the Greek flag which was hanged at the Kramer Palace Hotel by the *palikaria* of İzmir for making up to Lieutenant Commander Dixon on the day when he arrived İzmir in the early days of the Armistice in our weakest moment".¹⁹

İlhan Bardakçı also wrote that it was a Jewish youngster who climbed up to the flag post and took down the Greek flag hoisted in Kadifekale when İzmir was occupied.²⁰

Albert Navon, the Principal of Alyans Boys School in İzmir, complained in the following manner in his letter dated July 16, 1919 that he sent to the Alyans Headquarters in Paris: "The city was burned down and looted, everything that the people owned was looted. Nothing was left to eat. Generally, the whole public, and especially our fellow believers are faced with the risk of starvation". Additionally, Navon also wrote that not only the Jews of İzmir, but also the Jews of Aydın, Bergama and Manisa sought refuge in his school, and there was scarcity of food and medicine.²¹ After the First World War, a new and dramatic stage started for the Jews. Some of the Jews living in the neighborhoods surrounding İzmir left their homes, migrated to İzmir, and

18 Bayar, *ibid*, Vol. 5, p. 1602.

19 Galanti, *ibid*, s. 61.

20 İlhan Bardakçı, Tarihten Bugüne, "Biz Hiç İrkçi Olmamışız", *Tercüman*, (Interpreter, Daily) 7 May 1983, p. 3.

21 Stanford Shaw, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic*, New York University Press, New York 1991, p. 239.

preferred to settle down in the city due to the Greek occupation. The Jews of Aydın and Nazilli were forced to leave their homes by the invading Greek troops.²²

The Armenians donated 100.000 Liras monthly to the National Defense Committee established in İzmir by the local Greeks following the occupation of the city. The Committee which opened branches around İzmir later took the names of Asia Minor and Greek National Organization. This organization was attempting to spread its ideas in the newspapers and sending protest telegrams to the European States on one hand, it was also preparing and sending one battalion of soldiers to and around Uşak.²³

Although Konstantin I, the Greek King, who accepted the envoys of various religious groups visiting İzmir after the occupation, requested a statement from the Jews stating that “The Jews were happy about the Greek rule” the Jewish community rejected providing such a statement despite all pressures. The leaders of the community also rejected the Greek offer for sending Greek teachers to teach Greek in the Jewish schools in İzmir free of charge.²⁴ Similar incidents were encountered in the entire region, and the Jews rejected to hoist Greek flags, sign petitions on behalf of Greece and take part in the official demonstrations in Aydın, Manisa, Tire, Bayındır, Ödemiş, Bergama, Menemen, Foça and Turgutlu.²⁵

There was no single Jew appointed by Aristidis Sterghiadis, the Greek High Commissioner, who stated to the leaders of the Jewish community in the city as soon as he came to İzmir that certain number of qualified Jews would be needed to be employed under the upcoming Greek administration in the headquarters or the provincial organization of the high Commissioner’s Office between the dates of May 21, 1919 and September 8, 1922 until the end of the occupation.²⁶

The Greeks attempted to gain over the Jews in the city after invading İzmir with a fabricated policy. When no Jews believed in this policy, they started to act harshly. This Greek action was heard in Europe, and the British -

22 Siren Bora, *Birinci Judeira İzmir’in Eski Yahudi Mahallesi*, Gözlem Gazetecilik Basın ve Yayın A.Ş., İstanbul 2021, p.167.

23 *Anadoluda Yeni Gün*, 16 June 1922, p. 1.

24 Galanti, *ibid*, p. 54.

25 Nahum, *ibid*, pp. 181-182.

26 Berber, *ibid*, p. 288.

American Jewish Committee in London requested a report regarding this from the Jewish community in İzmir. In the report the pressures performed by the Greeks were mentioned. The Greek Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos, who became aware of this report, got upset. Gunarakis, the General Secretary of the Greek High Commissioner in İzmir, who served in London many times as political representative, complained about this situation to the Leader of the Jewish community of İzmir and stated the following: "I resent to the fact that you have sent such a report when we are present here".²⁷

The Greek authorities who were responsible for the occupation also destroyed the old Jewish cemetery in İzmir. Since the late 19th century, successive Ottoman Governors built a fence around the Jewish cemetery and maintained it. The Greeks destroyed the graves and broke the bones of the deceased persons. They used the rectangular marble tombstones, some of which were made on the date of 1492, which was the date of Jews expulsion from Spain, in building a new Greek university. The Jewish protests rose immediately. The European Consulate Generals got anxious, the incident gained an international dimension, the British Jewish representatives and the World Zionist Congress got alarmed.²⁸

The protests which were made before Sir Harry Lamb, the British Consulate General and Osmin Laporte, the French Consulate General in İzmir did not become successful. No positive outcome was obtained even though the managers of the Alliance Israélite-Universelle and Anglo - Jewish Association step in on behalf of the Jewish community in İzmir and met the representatives of the Greek Consulate General in London. David Alhanati of Salonika, the Jewish Representative of the Greek Parliament in Athens, made a request from the Greek government to stop this activity which was against the Jews which made him upset as a "Hellene". The attempt of Alhanati also failed. Albert Navon, the Principal of Alyans Boys School in İzmir, wrote the following in his letter dated July 26, 1921 that he sent to the Alyans Headquarters in Paris: "The Greek High Commissioner did not respond to our applications regarding the cemetery yet. I don't believe that they will. They are inconsiderate. When they feel themselves powerful, they are unable to act as a good ruler. They are also extremely clumsy in terms of decision-making. They both don't still consider themselves as the owners of İzmir and they distribute all works to be made in the city among the Greeks.

27 Galanti, *ibid*, p. 54.

28 Nahum, *ibid*, pp.186-187; Naar, *ibid*, p. 249.

Everyone complains about the Greek attitude. They have control of everything, and they treat us terribly. They made us seek the Turkish Government. Some of the tombstones were carried by the Greek soldiers". Upon this, the rabbis in İzmir transferred the bones of the deceased in the cemetery to another location on June 28, 1921. This date was announced as a day of mourning by the Jews of İzmir who closed down their shops and mourned. When the Greeks were pushed out of İzmir on the date of September 9, 1922 the Ionia University, which was claimed to be the "Beacon of the East", was never opened.²⁹

The Jewish public opinion was wary of the Greeks. The anti-Semitism of the Greek people was continuing. The Principal of the Alyans Boys School was not sure about the future. He wrote "the Greek people are still enemies of the Jews". There were many incidents that took place between the Greek community and the Jewish community. It was notified that incidents took place in Aydın, Manisa and Menemen. The Jews' siding with the Turks was the reason for those incidents.³⁰

The matter of İzmir's population arose during the Armistice, namely the matter of whether the number of Turks in İzmir were in minority. Although the Turkish press in İstanbul requested to have a plebiscite in this matter, the Greeks did not want to do this. Gunarakis complained about the distrust of the Jews of İzmir regarding Greece and told the Jews: "We did not accept the plebiscite for your sake, because we know that you would vote for the Turks".³¹

29 Avram Galanté, *Histoire des Juifs de Turquie*, Tome 3, Edition İsis, İstanbul 1986, p. 32-34; Naar, *ibid*, p. 249; Victoria Solomonidis, "The Ionian University of Smyrna, 1919-1922, 'Light of the East'", *Kampos: Cambridge Papers in Modern Greek 5* (1997), pp. 81-97; Consul General of Greece, Smyrna, to Greek Embassy, Ankara, 8 July 1930, Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, 1,1; Siren Bora, "İzmir'de Yahudi Mezarlıkları, Tarihçe, Kitabeler ve Smyrna Agorasında Yer Alan Yahudi Mezar Taşları", *Smyrna/İzmir Kazı ve Araştırmaları II*, Ege Yayınları, İstanbul 2017, p. 49; Yücel Güçlü, "Jewish Salonika in 1912 and 1943: The Ottoman and Greek/German Practices Considered", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 41, No. 3, December 2021, p. 18; Yücel Güçlü, Review of Sarah Abrevaya Stein's *Family Papers: A Sephardi Journey Through the Twentieth Century*, *Shofar*, Vol. 38, No. 3, Winter 2020, pp. 317-322.

30 Nahum, *ibid*, p. 187.

31 Galanti, *ibid*, p. 54.

The Chief Rabbi of İzmir Moşe Melamed did not abstain from indicating his loyalty to the Turks during the Greek occupation with great moral courage. The best example of this took place due to the request for providing autonomy to İzmir. Before the day when it would be voted to provide autonomy to İzmir, two Greek Generals visited Moşe Melamed and invited him to the special place in Kordon where demonstrations would be made for autonomy without mentioning the autonomy to him. Although he knew the reason for this invitation, he asked why he was invited to Kordon. He was given the answer that a meeting would take place there and later the Consulates' offices would be visited, and the Chief Rabbi asked the question of "will there be a memorial service or a prayer in the location to which you are inviting me?" to the Generals who insistently did not talk about the announcement of the autonomy and upon the "no" answer that he received he rejected to accept the invitation by saying "In that case, I have no place in tomorrow's meeting, because I am only a spiritual man".³²

A commission of the League of Nations that visited İzmir while it was under occupation contacted the representatives of various communities and asked them what they thought about the future of the city. At the time, the leader of the Jewish community of İzmir was Boaz Menaşe. This person who served as the member of the Appeals Court of the Rhodes Island moved to İzmir upon the capture of the Island by the Italians. The commission invited Boaz Menaşe and asked him several questions and asked him to take a vow for not revealing those questions to anyone else, even his friends at the congregation of the Jewish community. The responses that Boaz Menaşe gave were published in a newspaper after İzmir was captured by the Turkish Army. Boaz Menaşe approved the authenticity of the questions that were asked to him and the answers that he provided when he saw the newspaper and for the question of "Do you Jews want İzmir to remain in the hands of the Turks or the Greeks?" he responded "The Jews have always lived comfortably with the Turks, they wanted İzmir to remain as a Turkish city".³³

The Jews of Tire continuously provided information to the troops of the National Forces regarding what was happening in the towns and surrounding areas. They established close relations with the Mufti of Tire and connected with the political circles in İzmir. In the meantime, İsmail ha-Kohen the

32 Vedat Tüfekçi, *Milli Mücadele'de Türkiye Yahudileri*, Doğu Kütüphanesi, İstanbul 2016, p. 238.

33 Galanti, *ibid*, pp. 63-64.

Chief Rabbi of Tire resigned from his position for not being forced into attending the funeral of an officer in the occupation forces in the Greek Cemetery.³⁴

In Bayındır, a Jew named Jak Uziyel was arrested and imprisoned by the Greek military authorities with the allegation that he was Mustafa Kemal Pasha's spy, and he was exiled from the town. Uziyel remained in İzmir until the Turkish Army entered İzmir, only then he was able to return to Bayındır after that.³⁵

Rabbi Isak Franko rejected to greet the Greek soldiers when they occupied Ödemiş.³⁶

Benjamin Katan, the Principal of the Bergama Jewish School continuously informed the Turks about the circumstances of the occupation. Additionally, he also struggled for preventing the Jews from signing the petition which was prepared by the Greek military authorities to establish an autonomous region in and around İzmir and only signed by the Greeks and Armenians. Benjamin Katan also took the initiative for establishing a Turkish police station in the Jewish neighborhood for the protection of the Jews. The Troop Commander of the Turkish Army notified his appreciation to Benjamin Katan when it captured Bergama by saying "When we were up in the mountains, we learned what you have done for the freedom of the homeland, we thank you for that".³⁷

Upon the speech that the British Prime Minister David Lloyd George gave in mid-August of 1922 regarding giving autonomy to İzmir, the Commander of the Greek occupation troops in İzmir organized a rally and to thank the British Prime Minister, penned down a declaration stating the appreciation and thanks of the public and had this declaration signed by the representatives of various communities. This declaration does not include any signature placed by Jews.³⁸

Salamon Tuvi, the City Councilor of Çeşme, supported the Turkish theses all the time and the local budget was sent to the Commander of the Greek

34 Galanté, *Histoire des Juifs de Turquie*, p. 346.

35 *Ibid*, p. 350.

36 *Ibid*, p. 352.

37 *Ibid*, Tome 4, p. 6.

38 Galanti, *ibid*, p. 55.

occupation forces by a Turkish official upon his suggestion. When the Greek Commander did not accept the budget and tore down the documents, the Turkish City Councilors and Tuvi protested this action and resigned collectively. When the Turkish Army saved Çeşme from occupation, Lieutenant Colonel Celal Bey honored Tuvi who visited the Lieutenant Colonel in his office and said, "Welcome to our town" by saying "I appreciate everything that you have done for the homeland".³⁹

Behor İsak Halegua, the City Councilor of Aydın and leader of the Jewish community, did not join the Greek and Armenian City Councilors who went out to greet the Greek army of occupation. When the city was occupied, the Jews did not hoist the Greek flag on their homes and shops. The Greeks burned down the residence of Katan family who hid the fighters of the National Forces despite the martial law announced by the Greeks and refused to hand them over despite all pressures. Although Ruben Katan was able to save himself out of the fire, his wife Coya Katan died in the fire. Upon this incident, many Jewish families moved to Nazilli, Denizli, Eğirdir and Antalya. During the occupation years, the Jews of Aydın suffered extensively due to the Greek atrocities. The Jews of Aydın assisted their Turkish neighbors besides trying to protect themselves. Behor İsak Halegua safely transported many Turkish families to the town of Karapınar which is on the other side of the Menderes River. İsak Saul saved many Turks who were subjected to Greek atrocities. When the Turkish Army initiated the final offensive on the date of August 26, 1922 the Greek soldiers in Aydın set the whole city on fire when they understood that their days in the city were numbered. After this incident, the residents escaped towards different directions. Majority of the Jews sought refuge in İzmir, and the others spread into different cities of Anatolia. Aydın was reduced to ashes and the existence of the local Jewish community came to an end. After some time, about 200 Jewish families in İzmir moved to Buenos Aires and Montevideo and set up neighborhoods which they called Aydın.⁴⁰

Just like the Jews in all cities and towns which were occupied by the Greek Army, the Jews of Menemen also indicated their loyalty for the homeland. The Jews of Menemen did not hoist the Greek flag on their homes and shops despite what their Greek and Armenian neighbors did.⁴¹

39 *Ibid*, pp. 22-23.

40 Galanté, *ibid*, pp. 101-102.

41 *Ibid*, p. 10.

In a meeting conducted under the chairmanship of the Sub Provincial Governor of Söke, Albert Kadranel, the Fiscal Director of the District criticized the İstanbul Government and requested supporting the Government of the Turkish Grand National Assembly and declared that he would send the collected tax revenues to Ankara. After this meeting, the first batch of the taxes consisting of 4.500 Liras was collected by Yörük Ali Efe and sent to Demirci Mehmet Efe who was operating in the Aydın and Muğla region.⁴²

The September 1922 fire wrecked İzmir. There was not even one single Jew who was not harmed by this fire. The responsible managing cadre of the Jewish hospital and the Jewish schools escaped to Europe. Among the members of the Community Management Council composed of twelve persons, only three persons remained in İzmir. The Jewish community almost became a wreck. The Jews residing around İzmir were in a worse situation. The only area of protection was İzmir for the Jewish communities of Aydın, Manisa, Nazilli and Kasaba whose neighborhoods were completely burned down. The migrant Jews of western Anatolia, whose number was about 15.000, were first settled temporarily in the synagogues of İzmir. Those who had the material opportunities to set up their lives again remained in İzmir, and others migrated to western European and South American countries.⁴³

During the Greek occupation of Bursa (9 July 1920 - 12 September 1922) the Jews of the city displayed their loyalty to the homeland all the time and despite all pressures, they did not hoist the Greek flag on their homes and shops. Upon the declaration of the British Prime Minister David Lloyd George stating that the lands occupied by the Greeks would not be returned to Turks, the representatives of the Jewish community did not attend the meeting which was organized by the Greek occupation administration to send a thank you telegram for the British Prime Minister. Attorney Kemal Levi, Nesim Saban and Hayim Palaçi who attended a meeting made at the building of the Directorate of Waters harshly rejected the attempts to opening a negotiation regarding "giving Bursa the status of an autonomous province" and establishing a commission for that purpose and they refrained from signing the minutes of the meeting. Mustafa Kemal Pasha, the Prime Minister of the Government of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, who visited Bursa after the great victory, thanked David Saban, who was the lead-

42 Avram Galanté, *Histoire des Juifs d'Anatolie Les Juifs d'İzmir (Smyrne)*, Tome 1, İsis, İstanbul 1985, p. 150-151.

43 Bora, *Birinci Judeira*, p. 168.

er of the Jewish community of Bursa for more than twenty-five years and who was received by Mustafa Kemal Pasha at the Çelik Palace Hotel for the assistance that he provided for the National Forces between the years of 1920 and 1921.⁴⁴

Refet (Bele) Pasha, who was the İstanbul Representative of the Government of the Turkish Grand National Assembly said to Haliy Becerano, the Deputy of the Chief Rabbi of Türkiye, who visited him on October 26, 1922: "All Anatolia is convinced that the Jews of Türkiye are loyal to the Turkish case, and they have sincere opinions. If all constituents of the country were sincere in supporting the Turkish case as much as the Jews, that case would be won for quite some time ago".⁴⁵

There are examples proving that the relations between the Turkish Government and the Jewish community would be based on the principle of trust and develop after the War of Independence ended just like they did in the Ottoman period. The most important of those must be the response of Mustafa Kemal Pasha who was in İzmir on February 2, 1923 for the question of "Dear Pasha, what is your high opinion regarding the Jewish citizens who were happy with the happiness of the Turks, and were sad with the sadness of the Turks?" of Attorney Rafael Amato: "We have some loyal constituents, especially the Jews, who united their fates with the Turks who are the dominant constituent and because they have proven their loyalty to this nation and homeland, they have continued their lives in a comfortable manner until now and from now on, they will continue to live comfortably and happily". The religious community which first renounced the provisions of the Peace Treaty of Lausanne that recognized privileges for the minorities in Türkiye in terms of family law. Later, the Greek and Armenian communities notified that they had supported this decision.⁴⁶

Conclusion

The Jews living in western Anatolia during the Greek occupation of the region between the years of 1919 and 1922 were subjected to massacres and destruction as much as the Turks were. The number of defenseless innocent civilians who were massacred by the Greeks reached to hundreds of thousands and in the meantime hundreds of villages, numerous towns and cities

44 Güleryüz, *ibid*, pp. 236-237.

45 *El Tiempo*, 27 October 1922, p. 1.

46 Bora, *İzmir Yahudileri Tarihi*, p. 251.

were destroyed, and individual wealth whose value reached up to billions of liras was seized. During this period, the region was in a constant state of war. Following the great offensive, while the Greek soldiers were escaping from the Turkish Army, they burned down and wrecked the cities and towns. Under those conditions, about 15.000 Jews in the Aegean region lost all their possession and sought refuge in İzmir. The Jewish communities of Aydın and Nazilli were completely destroyed. Although the fire in İzmir did not start in the Jewish neighborhood, the Jews had their assets and workplaces in places where the fire took place.

During the Greek occupation, the condition of the Jewish schools in İzmir got worsened. The Jews were expelled from İzmir, and their assets were looted. The occupation authorities made positive discrimination for the Greek merchants and artisans and attempted to exclude the Turks and Jews from the economy. The Jews united their forces with the Turks between the years of 1919 and 1922 against the occupying Greeks, local Greeks, and Armenians in western Anatolia. They objected to the purposes of the Greek nationalists and the occupation of the region.

For the duration of the time period that passed from the days of the Armistice until the victory of the National War of Independence, the contributions of the Jews into the independence of the Turkish State were not unidimensional. Above all, they had a decisive attitude as a community. Secondly, they applied different methods by moving from passive resistance to active struggle according to the changing circumstances. The Jews have done their part both as individuals and as an organized group.

The occupation of western Anatolia is important in terms of indicating the attitude of the constituents living in that region against the Turkish nation. The Aegean Jews supported the Turks in keeping the region contrary to the local Greeks and Armenians. Except some little exceptions, their loyalty for the homeland was deep and sincere. The rabbis in the cities and towns did not accept the occupation and they revealed their attitudes against the occupiers openly. The Jews did not welcome the occupying army and hid the fighters of the National Forces in their homes when needed. They did not participate into the thank you meetings for the occupation and supporters of the occupation. In all of those matters, they differed from the Armenians who supported the occupation.

The attitude of the Turkish Jews, who are aware that the Turkish lands were their homeland and who “perceive themselves as the own children of this homeland since the beginning” as it was stated in the declaration dated September 15, 1925, indicating that they renounced the minority rights in the 42nd Article of the Peace Treaty of Lausanne, has always been the same throughout the history.

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