

A Page from the History of the Balkans (Rums¹, Greeks, British, 1906-1914)

Balkan Tarihi'nden Bir Sayfa (Rumlar, Yunanlılar, İngilizler, 1906-1914)

*İlay İleri**

Özet

İkinci Meşrutiyetten önce başlayıp Birinci Dünya Savaşı başına kadar geçen sekiz yıllık dönem Balkanların en karışık ve Türkler açısından en acı dönemidir. Yıllardan beri Avrupa devletlerinin Osmanlı Devleti'ne karşı izledikleri olumsuz politika meyvelerini verecek ve İtalya Kuzey Afrika'daki son Osmanlı toprağını 1911'de işgal edecektir. 1912'de yapılan anlaşma ile Rodos ve Oniki Ada da İtalyan işgali altına girecektir. Aynı yıl bu kez Balkan devletleri ile Osmanlı Devleti arasında savaş başlayacak, iki dönem halinde ve 1913 yılına kadar sürecek olan Balkan Savaşları büyük toprak kayıpları ve Osmanlı Devleti'nin yenilgisi ile sonuçlanacaktır. Osmanlı Devleti daha Balkan Savaşları'nın yıkımından kurtulmadan 1914 yılında Birinci Dünya Savaşı'na girecektir. İşte bu sekiz yıllık dönem içinde Osmanlı Rumları, Yunanlılar ve İngilizlerin Balkanlardaki politikaları, The Times Gazetesi'nin o yıllarda verdiği haberlere dayanılarak ortaya konulmaya çalışılmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: The Balkans, Rums, Patriarchate, Greek, English, The Times

Abstract

The eight years between the Second Monarchy and beginning of the First World WarWorld War was the worst period for the Balkans and the hardest times for the Turkish people living in Balkan Peninsula. As a result of the destructive policy of the European countries against the Ottoman Empire the last Ottoman territory in North Africa was invaded by Italy in 1911. Then Balkan Wars lasted for two years, 1912-1913. The Ottoman Empire lost the war and the Balkan countries captured a large scale of lands in the Balkan territory at the end of these wars. In 1914 Ottomans entered the First World War. The end of the war was, at the same time became the end of the Ottoman Empire. In this study, certain event which occurred in the Balkans in final years of the Ottoman

¹ Anatolian Greeks.

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Empire has been discussed by reviewing the articles in the British newspaper *The Times*.

Key words: The Balkans, Rums, Patriarchate, Greek, English, *The Times*

In this study, certain incidents in the final years of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans will be mentioned. The subject is the relations of the Rums under the rule of the Ottoman Empire with Greece and Great Britain during the second monarchy. The study is predominantly based on *The Times* articles.² Years between 1906 and 1914 were the worst years for the Ottoman Empire. The Government emerging with heavy defeat from the Balkan Wars was faced against Great Britain, Italy and France during World War I, and against Russia until the Pact of Brest-Litovsk. We shall strive to expose the biased articles of *The Times* on the relations of Rums, who were the subjects of the Ottomans, before and during the Balkan Wars and their relations with Greece and Great Britain during World War I.

Relations of Rums living in the Ottoman Empire established with foreign countries were no different from those of Armenians. Like Rums, Armenians struggled to break free from the Ottoman Empire rule and become independent as well. The difference between the two was that Armenians currently had no independent state and they claimed a part of the Ottoman Empire's lands and wanted to establish an Armenian State. Rums, on the other hand, were in touch with Greece that had been independent since 1829³. More importantly, majority of Greeks who were Ottoman subjects and Greeks believed that they were of the same ethnic and cultural origin. Accordingly, relations and cooperation between the Greeks and Greece were more intensive compared to others.

Within this context, our first article is dated 19 November 1906 and was sent by the newspaper correspondent himself to Sofia November 18th. The headline of the article is "*Turkey and the Greek Patriarchate*" and includes a statement in the end as follows:

"The Grand Vizier is stated to have employed strong language in conversation with a political personage with regard to the complicity of several Patriarchist Metropolitans in the massacres perpetrated by Greek bands, and journals are forbidden to mention the names of the Metropolitans of Grevena, Monastir, and Drama.

The Ministerial changes here and the pacific programme of the Government announced in the Sobranye have tended to modify the attitude of the Porte towards the Exarchate".

² The article dates will not provided in footnotes as they will be included within the text.

³ Independence of Greece was enabled by the Edirne Pact signed with the Russians. See. Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi (Ottoman History)*, vol. V, Ankara 1995, p. 120, 121 (2. print).

There are two points that should be emphasized here. The first one is the word “Greek” used by *The Times*. From time to time it becomes difficult to understand whether this word stands for the Greeks in Greece or Greeks who were Ottoman subjects. For instance, it is not often clearly perceived whether the expression “Greek Bands” stands for the bands that came from Greece or the Rum bands; because Greece might have used her units; especially the ones positioned on the borders, for this purpose. The ones mentioned in this text are Rum bands and some Metropolitans of the Greek Patriarchate who provided them with assistance. Especially the Grevena, Monastir and Drama Metropolitans were accused by the Ottoman Government of their assistance to the bands. According to the articles in the newspaper, close relations between the Porte and the Greek Patriarchate have significantly deteriorated for some reason. The reason for this deterioration was the provocative acts carried out by Rums in some Ottoman barracks.

In the article dated 20 November 1906 it was pronounced that the Greek Church was going to gather a council and would unite with the Anglican Church. Both parties knew that such a union would never take place but still such pronouncements were carried out for mutual benefit. In fact, the real purpose of the Greek Church was to unite with the Orthodox Churches because most communities in the east had decided on the Orthodox sect but each one had established a different Patriarchate. There are even independent Patriarchates among these; Autocephalous Orthodox Church in Cyprus is one of them. Other than the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Constantinople there is Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem, the Bulgarian Orthodox Patriarchate in Ohri, the Russian Orthodox Patriarchate in Moscow, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Athens, the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate in Alexandria and the Abyssinian Orthodox Patriarchate in Adisababa.⁴ While these seven Orthodox Patriarchates shared the same religious sect they were independent and separate in themselves. The real purpose of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Constantinople was to unite these independent Patriarchates and the independent Orthodox churches under its rule. The Rum Orthodox Patriarchate wishes to gain the control of the Bulgarian Church that broke away thirty-six years ago and had been affiliated for 1000 years from 870 A.D. to 1870 A.D.

It was deemed inconvenient even by *The Times* that the Synod of the Greek⁵ Church elected the Grevena Metropolitan for Synod membership who provided assistance to the Greek bands, and consequently was accused by the Porte of assisting the bands. The newspaper states the assistance provided to the Greek bands by the Greek Metropolitans would hinder the peace that was

⁴ For detailed information on Patriarchates mentioned, see Yavuz Ercan, *Osmanlı Yönetiminde Gayrimüslimler (The Muslims Subjects under Ottoman Rule)*, Ankara 2001, pp. 53–112.

⁵ Rum Church in İstanbul.

strived to be ensured and such actions would not be tolerated by the Ottoman Government. The paper also warns that such actions by the Greeks will place the Ottoman Government closer to the Bulgarian Church. Indeed, following the debates between Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria and Nedjih Melhame, changes in favor of the church were observed in the policy on the Bulgarian Church that the Ottoman Government followed.

The articles dated 22 November 1906 is again about Greek bands that attacked Bulgarians and Romanians, and Greek clergymen that provided them with assistance. The headline is: “*Turkey and the Greek Patriarchate*”.

The conversation that took place between the Grand Vizier Ferid Pasha⁶ and the Greek Patriarch who visited to pay his respects for the religious holiday, is significant in that it exposes the incompetence of the Ottoman Government and the courage of the Greeks resulting from the assistance they received from Greece. The Patriarch who was there to pay his respects for the religious holiday forgot about the reason for his visit and started to complain to the Grand Vizier that the Porte hindered the appointment of one of the clergymen in the local council, who provided assistance to the bands. The part of the article the conversation took place is as follows:

The Grand Vizier was surprised that the Patriarch should have come to him with such complaints. The Bishop in question had been deprived of the right to co-operate in the administration of the district because his complicity in the outrages committed by the bands had been proved up to hilt. Proofs of his guilt and of that of other Bishops had been communicated to the Patriarch, with a request that he would take action against them. Instead of being punished by the Church, they had been encouraged to persevere in their evil courses. One of the worst offenders -the Archbishop of Grebena- had actually been elected a member of the Synod. His Holiness wished to make him believe that the Greeks in attacking Bulgarians were helping to suppress the revolutionary movement and were thus acting in the interest of the Turkish Government. This one nonsense. The Porte was perfectly well aware that the Patriarchate in its policy of favouring the bands was acting in collusion with the most Chauvinist Pan-Hellenic elements in Athens. This movement was a speculation in view of an anticipated break-up of the Ottoman Empire; it was an attempt to peg out Greeks claims in the division of the heritage. It was thus a purely revolutionary movement directed against the integrity of the Empire. The Government was resolved to maintain the best relation with Romania and to bring about reconciliation with Bulgaria. For the Patriarchate to continue to assist the Greek bands was to work against the policy of the Porte. He frankly warned his Holiness that this would not be tolerated. If the Greeks had anything against the Bulgarians or Romanians let them fight it out in

⁶ Ferit Pasha, was the Grand Vizier between 1903–1908 and was dismissed by Abdülhamit II one day before the declaration of Kanun-ı Esasi. See E. Z. Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi (Ottoman History)*, vol. VIII, p. 299, 300, Ankara 1995 (4. print).

Bulgaria or Romania. They could not be allowed to choose Turkish provinces as their battleground. If, what the Grand Vizier hardly believed possible, the Patriarch did not feel the disgrace which these massacres and assassinations brought upon the Church and was unwilling or unable to use his ecclesiastical influence to put an end to them, the Porte would have no difficulty in accepting his resignation.

In conclusion, the Grand Vizier insisted that the Patriarchate should dissociate itself immediately and completely from the action of the bands and remove from their dioceses all Bishops convicted of having favoured them; that it should respect the rights conferred by Imperial *Irade* upon the Kutzo-Vlachs; and that it should cease the persecution of Bulgarians. The Porte could not continue to bestow favours and protection upon the Greek Church unless it complied with these demands.

This interview is said to have made a deep impression on the Patriarch, but the majority of the Synod seems resolved to persist in its present short-sighted policy. However, a meeting of the mixed council will shortly be held and it is hoped that the lay members will use their influence in behalf of moderate counsels.

The words of the Grand Vizier confirm the impression that a reconciliation is imminent between Turkey and Bulgaria, which would make the Macedonian question much less dangerous to the peace of the Balkan Peninsula. It is believed that the first steps towards reconciliation were taken in the interview two months ago between Prince Ferdinand and Nedjeh Pasha Melhame.

In response to what the Grand Vizier stated the Greek Patriarch's defense is unbelievable. Despite the fact that the Grand Vizier said:

It has been totally exposed that the Patriarchate has cooperated with the armed Greek bands in their cruelties..." the Patriarch was able to say, "...the real motive of the Greek bands attacking Bulgarians was to suppress rebellious acts and thus protect the interests of the Turkish Government.

But the Porte is aware that what the Patriarchate is doing is in fact nothing but a secret cooperation with the Greeks. This deed is speculative on behalf of the Ottoman Empire about to crumble, meaning an attempt to get a share out of the inheritance of the Empire for Greeks by taking advantage of the difficult situation. This is hard to believe but the facts were approved by *The Times* as well. It was observed that the Patriarch was not sincere in his defense, despite the Grand Vizier's harsh warnings and the evidence of the crime by the Metropolitan in question having been handed over to the Patriarch, and the Metropolitan was awarded instead of receiving punishment. If the Patriarch was sincere this Metropolitan should not have been elected for the Synod membership. Besides, the Patriarch is not alone in this erroneous behaviour, majority of the Synod Council is determined to keep up continue, as the newspaper puts it, its "*short sighted*" policies.

Here a question may arise in our minds: why did *The Times* communicate mostly the facts in this article and did not accuse the Ottoman Government by using harsh words and insults as it often did? The answer to this question is partly given by the newspaper at the end of the last paragraph of the article. As a result of the attacks by the Greek bands and their cooperation with the Patriarchate close relationships started to be built among the Ottoman Government, Bulgaria and Romania and this close relationship is not in the best interests of Great Britain in the Balkans. Therefore, according to the newspaper, this relation between the Patriarchate and Greece should be kept under control, because this would cause the Ottoman Government, Bulgaria and Romania to become closer and thus lead to the Ottoman Government to gain strength, and a powerful Ottoman Government did not match with Great Britain's policies.

Five years after these incidents two more articles were published about the Grevena Metropolitan. Obviously, the Metropolitan did not behave himself and was eventually murdered. The first article on the subject is dated 24 October 1911 and states that the Metropolitan was murdered. The letter he wrote before his death was published in Greek newspapers. The second article was published a month after the former. The article relates that the governor of the Serfiçe district instructed an investigation and the results showed that it was two Greek captains that murdered the Metropolitan. It is noted that there was an argument about a letter between the Greek captains and an individual named Emilianos and his two friends, and Emilianos and his friends were murdered in the end as well. Judging by the progress of events, it is likely that this was an incident to settle scores within the organization.

The rest of the news is about the relations and cooperation of the Rums with Greece published on the Crete Issue. The earliest article about the Crete Issue published in the paper is dated 8 September 1906 and those published later 19 November 1906, 20 November 1906, 22 November 1906, 21 May 1908, 14 June 1909, 26 June 1909, 30 June 1909, 13 November 1909, 19 November 1909, 10 January 1910, 3 February 1910 and 21 April 1910 are on the Crete Issue.

As a result of the cooperation between the Greeks living on the island of Crete and the Patriarchate with Greece, and the perpetual support of Great Britain, France, Russia and Italy, the island of Crete was occupied by Greece after a long struggle. As the attempts to tear Crete away from the Ottoman Government lasted, a boycott was initiated in Ottoman lands against the Greek ships⁷ and Greek newspapers Akropolis, Kratos, Scrip, Embros and Chranos were banned in the Ottoman Empire due to their provocative publications.⁸ In this context, four Greek journalists were expelled because they caused

⁷ Articles dated 1 July 1910, 19 July 1910, 31 August 1910 and 16 September 1910.

⁸ Articles dated 19 November 1909 and 29 February 1912.

arguments among ethnic groups.⁹ However, neither the boycott of the Greek ships nor the banning of newspapers and journalists could prevent Crete from being occupied by Greece. The articles on the Crete Issue are the certain records exposing the close cooperation among Greeks living on Crete, the Patriarchate and Greece.

As to the cooperation of Greeks with Great Britain; the relations and cooperation of Rums with Great Britain started especially during the Greek rebellion in 1821 and lasted perpetually until the end of the Turkish War of Independence.

One of the articles on this subject is dated 20 November 1906. According to this article the Greek Patriarchate is stating the excuse of uniting with the Anglican Church but the fact is it aims to unite the Orthodox Churches. The part of the article on the subject is as follows:

Although the idea of holding an Ecumenical Council has proved abortive, it is not without interest to note that there was a desire on the part of some Greek prelates to raise the question of a union of the Orthodox and Anglican Churches. English clerical tourists who have visited Constantinople and have taken the opportunity to pay their respects to the Greek Patriarch and other ecclesiastical dignitaries have contrived to give the impression that there exists a strong feeling in England in favour of this somewhat chimerical project.

As made obvious by the above mentioned text in the article, the real purpose of the Orthodox Patriarchate in Constantinople is not to unite with the Anglican Church but to unite the Orthodox Churches. Because the union of the Orthodox Church in Constantinople with the Anglican Church will result in the weakening of other Orthodox Churches therefore they will choose to unite with the Orthodox Church in Constantinople to prevent such a union.

The second article is dated 17 July 1914 and was sent by *The Times'* correspondent, in July 16th from Constantinople. The headline is "*Greeks Murdered on British Property. Protest to the Porte*". The subject of the article is a typical example of the Greek-Great Britain cooperation. It is about the murder of some Greeks on the island of Makronisi, in the bay of Smyrna, property of Great Britain. The text is exactly as follows:

The British Charge d'Affaires yesterday protested to the Porte against the wanton murder last Friday in the island of Makronisi, in the gulf of Smyrna, which is the property of a British subject, of several of the latter's unarmed Greek labourers, some of whom are declared to be Hellenic subjects. Three officers and a party of soldiers are incriminated. A prompt inquiry and the punishment of the culprits have been demanded.

⁹ Articles dated 29 February 1912.

According to the Turkish newspapers the incident was caused by an attempt to disarm “brigands”. According to letters from British residents at Smyrna, the “brigands” were simply Mr. Edwards’s tenants and their arms were mainly unprohibited fowling-pieces.

The Turkish Press to-day admits that there have been riots in which Greeks were killed at places near Smyrna. It is reported that the Government has begun to act with the utmost severity against Moslem malefactors.

Meanwhile the Patriarchate appears to have persisted in its refusal to re-open the schools and churches, and has appointed delegates to lay the case before the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches, a decision which hardly seems wise at the present juncture .

The expression used in the article is surprisingly interesting, because according to the testimony the investigation has not even started yet. It is not right for the press to declare judgment before a final verdict is stated by the court. However; the expressions used by *The Times* are as follows:

Wanton murders”, “Victims of a murder”, “unarmed Greek laborers whom are declared to be Hellenic subjects”, “A prompt inquiry”, “The punishment of the culprits”, “The riots in which Greeks were killed”, “Moslem Malefactors”, “the Patriarchate’s persistence in its refusal to re-open the schools and churches.

An expression that declares such clear verdict on an incident whose investigation has not even begun should be defined as “extrajudicial killing”. *The Times*, by quoting the word “brigand” used by Turkish newspapers, has attempted to reverse the meaning.

According to the article, although the Porte punished the “Moslem Malefactors” with severity the Patriarchate was not satisfied; on the contrary the Patriarchate provoked the people by closing down schools and churches. The murdered Rums were the tenants of a man named Edward and the newspaper did not consider the hunting rifles as weapons because they were licensed.

As a result, the Makronisi Island in the Smyrna Bay is the property of British subjects and, the British and the Greeks are closely in cooperation with each other. On the date 17 July 1914 when this article was published, World War I had begun but the Ottoman Government had not actually participated in the war and as a result they were not faced against Great Britain. Because of the psychological war Great Britain staged against the Ottoman Empire whom she had been producing news. With the establishment of “War Propaganda Bureau” in 2 September 1914 activities of producing “anti-news” against the Ottoman Government increased further; the famous “*Blue Book*” full of fictitious information against Turks was prepared by the War Propaganda Bureau. While assessing the articles in *The Times* these points should be taken into account and should be kept in mind.

Kaynakça

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