

**RUSSIA & TURKEY**  
**BILATERAL RELATIONS IN**  
**INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT**  
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE BOOK

**RUSYA & TÜRKİYE**  
**ULUSLARARASI BAĞLAMDA**  
**İKİLİ İLİŞKİLER**  
ULUSLARARASI KONFERANS KİTABI

**Edited By / Yayına Hazırlayanlar**  
Alexander Polunov  
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*19-20 October 2018 – Moscow*

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*19-20 Ekim 2018 – Moskova*

Türk Dünyası Belediyeler Birliği (TDBB) Yayınları, No: 29  
ISBN 978-605-2334-07-2

**Edited By / Yayına Hazırlayanlar:**  
Alexander Polunov  
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**Tasarım**  
Murat Arslan

**Baskı**  
İmak Ofset (Sertifika No: 45523)

İstanbul, 2020



TÜRK DÜNYASI BELEDİYELER BİRLİĞİ  
UNION OF TURKISH WORLD MUNICIPALITIES  
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THE STATEMENTS OF THE WHITE ARMY OFFICERS:  
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SERVICE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

**Dr. Mehmet Perinçek**

Many White Army officers and many civilians fled to Turkey at the end of 1920 after losing the civil war in Russia. This Russian population of 150-200 thousand people mostly settled around Istanbul and Çanakkale and dispersed to other places all around the world after the Turkish War for Independence ended.

However, many White Army officers returned back to their country when amnesty was granted. These persons had been questioned by Cheka, Soviet Secret Service (prior to KGB). The statements of the officers are kept in the archive of the Russian FSB (Federal Security Service, former KGB): Central Security Service Archive of Russian Federation (TsA FSB RF).

Apart from personal questions, the officers were questioned about the condition of the White Armies, their relations with the Allies and the plans of the White Armies and the Allies. One of the questions was “the situation and power of the Allies in Istanbul and their attitude towards Kemal Pasha.”

**“The Turks have hostile feelings for Britain and France”**

Lt. General Y.A. Slashov, one of the highest ranked White Army commanders who returned to Russia after the amnesty made the following statements in Moscow on November 10, 1921:

“The Turkish people have hostile feelings for Britain and France, while the Greeks feel sympathy towards them. Italy and the US are acting as mediators. It is difficult to assess the forces; I would say 7 thousand plus the navy personnel on the ships. It could be a total of 20 thousand. The number of tanks and military vehicles are 80. They have 8 machine guns per squad and 16 per battalion. These numbers could change. Each squad has 120 troops. There

are 10 artillery guns for every 1000 troops. They mainly rely on the cannons on the ships and the tanks. It is possible to wipe out the total Allied army from the Asian side by obuses and howitzers.”<sup>1</sup>

**“They are inciting national slaughter”**

General Alexandr Milkovsky answered the questions of Cheka the same day in Moscow. He said the following about the Anatolian Movement:

“I believe that the Allies have the same attitude towards Kemal Pasha all around. Whether intentionally or unintentionally they are switching sides between the Turks and the Greeks and inciting slaughter. Furthermore they are persistently strengthening their effects. There is also a competition and reciprocal distrust between Britain and France. Although it is not very apparent, they usually act opposite one another.”<sup>2</sup>

**Bad treatment from the British police**

Col. Mstislav V. Mezernitsky gave his statement on November 10-12, 1921 and stated that the number of Allied troops in Istanbul was 5 thousand. He continued to say:

“The Turkish people feel hatred for the Allies in general. The official attitude of the British and the French towards Mustafa Kemal Pasha is hostile. They do not refrain from selling anything for a good price. The Italian attitude is positive.”

Col. Mezernitsky stated that the White Army officers worked for the counter-intelligence services of the Allies to trail the Russians

1 Slashov’s approved statement is registered in the archive (TsA FSB RF) in f. 1, op. 5, d. 144, l. 95-98. Furthermore pls see *Russkaya Voyennaya Emigratsiya 20-kh-40-kh Godov. Dokumenty i Materialy: Tak Nachinalos Izgnanye (1920-1922 gg): Na Chuzjbine*, v. 1, book 2, Izdatelstvo “Geya”, Moscow, 1998, p. 90-94.

2 The approved copy of the statement is registered in the archives TsA FSB RF in f. 1, op. 5 d. 144, l. 100-104. Pls see *Russkaya Voyennaya Emigratsiya 20-kh-40-kh Godov. Dokumenty i Materialy: Tak Nachinalos Izgnanye (1920-1922 gg): Na Chuzjbine*, p. 95-100.

who were sympathizers of the Kemalist regime and the Soviet Russia. For instance former Russian Cavalry officer Lerhe was working for the British police and was running a brothel for them. He also said that the British treated the people they arrested very badly. For instance they had the prisoners up at 6 o'clock every morning in their underwear for sports and forced them to run. Those who ran slowly were whipped. At the end of the sports program they were ordered to run their wards. A British officer stood at the foot of each staircase to whip the passersby.

An incident that involved the White Army officers was that they were instructed to dig up holes in the ground, carry the earth they dug up from one hole to the other and cover the holes.<sup>3</sup>

### **“Russians, Germans and Kemal are brothers”**

Col. E.P. Gilbih, former garrison commander of Simferopol, gave his statement on November 12, 1921 after returning to Moscow from Istanbul. He provided information on the British, Italian, French, Greek and US forces in Istanbul. The Russian colonel explained that the attitude towards Kemal Pasha as follows:

“The British have been on the Greek side as they were attaining great financial gain. The French are mostly on Kemal’s side as they want to play a great role in Turkey. There are some rumors that they even have supported Kemal with guns. The Italians have sympathy for Kemal as they do not want Greece to get stronger. Reciprocal relations are full of distrust and are even hostile, especially between the British and the French. They are constantly watching what the other one is doing.

The attitude of the locals toward the Allied powers: There are three tendencies: British, French and German. Even though the Russian influence is rapidly rising, the most popular tendency is

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3 For the whole statement pls see TsA FSB RF f. 1, op. 5, d. 144, l. 120-124: *Russkaya Voyennaya Emigratsiya 20-kh-40-kh Godov. Dokumenty i Materialy: Tak Nachinalos Izgnanye (1920-1922 gg): Na Chuzjbine*, p. 101-106.

towards the Germans. One thing one hears often is ‘Russian, German and Kemal are brothers’.<sup>4</sup>

The Greeks/Turkish minority Greeks are on the side of whoever is helping them the most. Now they are on the side of the British. Their final judgment is not much: First they shouted ‘Long Live Venizelos, death to Constantine’ and then they shouted ‘Long Live Constantine’. Last year, when they were more successful, they were getting ready to kick everyone out of Istanbul and erect a cross in St. Sophia and they regarded the Allied powers with hatred.”

Col. Gilbih emphasized that only the Turks treated the Russians very well.<sup>5</sup>

#### **“They are afraid that Kemal will come to Istanbul”**

Another White Army officer Boris Nikolayevich Voynahovsky gave his statement on November 13, 1921. He stated while answering a question about the Allies attitude to the White Army, that they feared the Russian sympathy for the Turks and did not want the White Army in Gallipoli to come to Istanbul. They have also forbidden all communication between Gallipoli and Istanbul.

He answered a question about “the situation of the Allies in Istanbul and their attitude towards Kemal Pasha” as follows:

“The Turks and the Russians hate the British and the French. The Greeks and Turkish minority Greeks are supported by them and are acting as if they like them. The Italians and the Americans treat them well but do not get mixed up in anything. The British are in charge. They have perfectly working intelligence and counter intelligence systems, many police and gendarmerie. There are also many Turkish Greek, Turkish and Russian secret agents as well as intelligence agents, some of them women. A lot of money is being

4 The last sentence was written in the Kiril alphabet in Turkish.

5 For the whole statement pls see TsA FSB RF f. 1, op. 5, d. 144, l. 133-138: *Russkaya Voyennaya Emigratsiya 20-kh-40-kh Godov. Dokumenty i Materialy: Tak Nachinalos Izgnanye (1920-1922 gg): Na Chuzjbine*, p. 107-114.



spent for spying. The subjects to be followed: Kemalist Movement, Bolshevism, Russian immigrants and communication with Russia.

The French have their private police. They deem each other dangerous and are following each other. They are also following important persons. Their attitude to Mustafa Kemal Pasha is not understandable. At times they support Greece (organize military ceremonies in Istanbul), and sometimes have meetings with Kemal. They are afraid that he will come to Istanbul and are trying to hinder it. They are also arresting Turks who have sympathy for the Ankara government. It is forbidden to have contact with Ankara and is being watched.”

He said that being arrested by the British meant to be beaten until half dead. He also pointed out to the excessive exploitation of the Greeks in business matters.<sup>6</sup>

### **Kroecker and Section**

One of the White Russians who was a witness to the terror created by the Allies’ police force during the occupation years in Istanbul was A. Slobodskoy. Slobodskoy came to Istanbul from Yalta in February 1920 and returned to Ukraine two years later. His Istanbul memoirs was published in 1925 in Kharkov.<sup>7</sup> Slobodskoy wrote that the Istanbul was divided into “zones of influence” by the Allies. Istanbul belonged to the French, Pera (Beyoğlu) to the Italians and the British, Heybeliada to the French, Büyükkada to the British, Kınalı and Burgaz to the Italians and the Americans.

The occupation forces had their own police force in each of these regions. The British police was called “Kroecker”<sup>8</sup> and the French

6 Pls see TsA FSB RF f. 1, op. 5, d. 144, l. 105-119: *Russkaya Voyennaya Emigratsiya 20-kh-40-kh Godov. Dokumenty i Materialy: Tak Nachinalos Izgnaniye (1920-1922 gg): Na Chuzjbine*, p. 114-131.

7 Pls see A. Slobodskoy, *Sredi Emigratsii. Kiev-Konstantinopol. 1918-1920*, Izdatelstvo “Proletariy”, Kharkov, 1925.

8 Kroecker Hotel in Beyoğlu was used by the British as a court and a prison. Other buildings used by the British for the same aim were Galata Tower, Arapyan

and Italian police “Section”. Slobodskoy wrote that the British police and the French gendarmerie were a menace not only to the Turks but to the Russian immigrants as well. The British and the French excelled in their extreme cruelty and powerful intelligence services. They also had agents of the local people, especially from the Greek minority.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the White Russian counter-intelligence team that arrived from Novorossiysk with their equipment and documents were also working for them.

### **Medieval Torture**

Slobodskoy wrote about the police forces of the occupation powers as follows:

“To be placed in Kroecker or Section was the same as being tortured in a medieval cell. If this had not been repeated by many, many persons, it would have been hard to believe. Kroecker was a building near the American Embassy at Petit Champ Street. It was a dark four storied place. The cells of the prisoners were below the street level, overlooking the inner courtyard. The political prisoners were placed in cells without windows. There was a fat British warden. The city police was attached to him. There were also British prison guards and former Russian officers who spoke perfect English and French.

### **Screams for help**

The French gendarmerie was also working for the Italians. They had a typical small Turkish house with three stories. But their activities were quickly observed through the screams that came from the house. There were other houses near ‘Section’. Their inhabitants were always waking up with screams that were followed by moans.”

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Han, Sansaryan Han and Şahin Pasha Hotel. Pls see Bilge Criss, *İşgal Altında İstanbul (1918-1923)*, 8th ed., İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2011, p. 104.

9 This information was given by many sources during the same period. “İstanbul streets were full of Greeks and Armenians in British uniforms. They worked as police for the British to insure public safety and intelligence services” Pls see Bilge Criss, *ibid*, p. 95.

Slobodskoy wrote that the French and the Italian “Sections” were located opposite each other on Margarit Street. The Russians claimed that the Italians were the “best”. They did not meddle in things and walked away if possible. If they caught somebody which was very seldom, they turned them over to the British or the French.

Slobodskoy narrated some of the incidents he had witnessed. The Russian immigrants and the Turks hated the British police deeply. The hatred had grown after meeting them face to face. These encounters were quite frequent as the scope of the foreign police was very wide.

### **Without discrimination of sex**

The health authority in the city was under the command of the British. Every new arrival in the city had to register there and get his passport back from the doctor two weeks later. All documents for arriving and departing were handled here. Consequently, there were many people, Russians, Turks, Greeks, Armenians, etc. waiting in front of the building each day. Whenever the crowd started to murmur, 4-5 well-built British police exited the building and hit everyone on the head with batons without any discrimination of sex.

Those who managed to go in and get a visa were confronted on the way out by 10-12 British police who manhandled the person roughly before kicking him down the stairs. One White Russian officer who encountered this treatment turned back to object and was hit on the head with the hilt of a gun. He was pulled away by a Turk who told him in French that if he did not walk away, he would be beaten and then imprisoned. The officer started crying after walking away and then said:

“I was at the German front for three years. I was awarded a medal. I was a prisoner of war in the hands of the Germans but no one ever treated me like these villains.”

### **Russians in the police force**

Slobodskoy also wrote that Russian aristocrats who came to Istanbul from Russia and who spoke excellent French and English worked for the police of the occupation forces. Among these were princesses and baronets etc. It was not rare that a Russian asking a question the French police was answered in Russian. The Russian immigrants hated the Russians working for the police as much as they hated the normal police of the occupation forces.

Once at Galata Bankalar Street, two Greeks were engaged in a fight and were surrounded by the people on the street. Some passing British patrolmen started hitting the watchers to disperse them and a Russian who was in the crowd hit him back.

The police caught the Russian and beat him up terribly in Slobodskoy's narrative. Then they took his unconscious body to Kroecker. Afterwards the Russian was sent to Crimea. It was later learned that one of the patrolmen was a friend of the Russian from the same unit from back home.

### **Raid for Das Kapital**

Slobodskoy wrote in his book that the British police was keeping a close tab on the White Russians in Istanbul and was run using counter-intelligence to prevent the Bolsheviks from any activities.

One of the Russian officers living in the Prince Islands had told during a conversation that a friend of his possessed Karl Marx' book Das Kapital. The British police arrested him immediately after getting this information and tortured him to get his friend's name. The officer did not give the name of his friend. However the book was found along with a brochure on other works. The owner of the book was a Russian officer who had fought against the Red Army and had been awarded after the war. He explained that he was keeping the book and the brochure as souvenirs but nevertheless was sent to Crimea for being a Bolshevik. Slobodskoy wrote that

many Russians destroyed many valuable historical materials that could pose a threat.

### **Conclusion**

The White Army officers' statements show confrontation after the WW1. There were Allies competing with one another ,on one side, and Turkey with Soviet Russia on the other. Even tough the White Russians were collaborating with Allies power, they were still not acceptable for them. These documents also exposes the inhuman practice of the West occupation forces.