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# THE OCCUPATION FORCES EVACUATING GAZİ AYNTÂB AS PART OF THE ANKARA AGREEMENT

(ANKARA İ'TİLÂFNÂMESİ BAĐLAMINDA İŐGAL  
GÜÇLERİNİN GAZİ AYNTÂB'I TAHLİYE ETMESİ)

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**Abstract:** *Ayntâb, which was occupied by the British on 17 December 1918 with fabricated reasons, was handed over to the French occupation forces on 5 November 1919, although it was not included in the Armistice of Mudros signed by the Istanbul government on October 30, 1918. During the occupation period between 17 December 1918 and 5 November 1919, the British collected explosives, cutting tools and equipment, including firearms and onion knives, and made the people vulnerable. The French occupation forces, which intensified and increased their violence and pressure on the society day by day, almost all of them, composed of Algerian, Senegalese, Tunisian and Armenian legionnaires, began to attack the morals and beliefs of the people. Mustafa Kemal, who came to Kilis just before the Armistice of Mudros and organized the people against the invasion that would begin, corresponded with the Kemalists in Ayntâb while he was in Amasya, had the “Defense of Law Associations” (Müdâfaa-i Hukuk Cemiyetleri) established there and started the struggle. The hot war between the Kemalists and the French occupation forces, which started on April 1, 1920, ended with the initiative of the “Sulh ve Selamet Cemiyeti”, which took orders and instructions from the Istanbul Government, and the*

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city center fell on February 9, 1921. However, Mustafa Kemal's struggle continued and France, realizing that it could not stand against the "Guerrilla War" due to military and economic reasons, made peace initiatives and finally, the Ankara Agreement was signed between Ankara and France on 20 October 1921. As a result of the Ankara Agreement, which we can consider as a complete Pyrrhic victory for France and a diplomatic success for Türkiye, Cilicia, which, in Mustafa Kemal's words, was "a piece of our soul", regained its homeland. The evacuations were made in accordance with Article 4 of the treaty, consisting of Christian representatives and Turkish representatives. It was carried out in line with desires and requests by means of 'mixed commissions'.

**Keywords:** Mustafa Kemal, Ayntâb, evacuation, Ankara, commission

**Öz:** İstanbul hükümeti tarafından, 30 Ekim 1918'de imzalanan Mondros Mütarekesi içeriğinde yer almamakla beraber, uydurma gerekçelerle 17 Aralık 1918'de İngilizler tarafından işgal edilen Ayntâb, 5 Kasım 1919'da Fransız işgal güçlerine devir edilmiştir. İngilizler 17 Aralık 1918-5 Kasım 1919 tarihleri arasındaki işgal döneminde kentte, ateşli silahlar ve soğan bıçağı dâhil, patlayıcı, kesici alet ve edevatı toplayarak ahaliyi savunmasız duruma getirmiştir. Toplum üzerindeki şiddet ve baskısını günden güne yoğunlaştırarak artıran Fransız işgal güçleri ki bunların neredeyse tamamı, Cezayirli, Senegalli, Tunuslu ve Ermeni lejyonerlerinden teşkil edilmişti, halkın ahlaki ve inanç değerlerine saldırmaya başlamıştır. Mondros Mütarekesi'nden hemen önce Kilis'e gelerek, başlayacak işgale karşı halkı örgütleyen Mustafa Kemal, Amasya'da iken Ayntâb'daki Kemalistlerle yazışarak orada 'Müdafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyetlerini' kurdurmuş ve mücadeleyi başlatmıştır. Kemalistlerle Fransız işgal güçleri arasında, 1 Nisan 1920'de başlayan sıcak savaş, İstanbul Hükümetinden emir ve talimat alan 'Sulh ve Selamet Cemiyeti'nin girişimi ile sonlandırılmış ve kent merkezi, 9 Şubat 1921'de düşmüştür. Ancak Mustafa Kemal'in mücadelesi devam etmiş ve 'Gerilla Harbi'ne karşı askerî ve ekonomik nedenlerden dolayı dayanamayacağını idrak eden Fransa barış girişimlerinde bulunmuş ve sonunda, Ankara ile Fransa arasında 20 Ekim 1921'de Ankara İtilâfnâmesi imzalanmıştır. Fransa açısından tam bir Pirus zaferi, Türkiye açısından diplomatik başarı olarak değerlendirebileceğimiz Ankara İtilâfnâmesi sonucu, Mustafa Kemal'in deyimiyle, "canımızdan bir parça" olan Kilikya, anavatan topraklarına kavuşmuştur. Tahliyeler, antlaşmanın 4. maddesi gereği, Hristiyan temsilcileri ile Türk temsilcilerden oluşan 'karma komisyonlar' vasıtasıyla arzu ve istekler doğrultusunda gerçekleştirilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Mustafa Kemal, Ayntâb, tahliye, Ankara, komisyon.

### Introduction

The British Commander-in-Chief, Vice-Admiral Sir Somerset Gough-Calthorpe, signed an armistice on 30 October 1918 aboard the British warship *Agamemnon*, which was anchored in the port of Mudros on the Island of Limnos in the Aegean, with the authority granted by the British Government, in agreement with his Allies and accredited representatives by the Ottoman government<sup>1</sup>. The imperialist states occupied the Ottoman Empire on the basis of this armistice, which was recorded in history as the “Armistice of Mudros”.

The French politician, Georges Leygues, said in the Chamber of Deputies that “The axis of French politics is in the Mediterranean. One pole is in the west through Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco. The other pole should be in the east with Syria, Lebanon and Palestine”<sup>2</sup>. “The aim of France and Great Britain in the continuing of the war in the East, which began due to the ambitions of Germany, is the complete and final liberation of the peoples and indigenous peoples long oppressed by the Turks, their free choice, and the establishment of national governments and administrations taking their authority”<sup>3</sup>. In the context of these so-called policies, France, interpreting the relevant articles of the Mudros Armistice in line with its own interests, occupied the port of Iskenderun with a French fleet on 10 November 1918<sup>4</sup>. Although it was not written in the articles, Ayntâb<sup>5</sup>, which was occupied by the British on 17 December 1918 under the pretext of “finding feed for their animals and providing sustenance”, was officially handed over to the French occupation forces on 5 November 1919<sup>6</sup>, who arrived in the city on 29 October 1919 with the agreement<sup>7</sup> signed between them on 12 September 1919.

1 Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers*, Cmd. 53 (1919). “Terms of the Armistices Concluded between the Allied Governments and the Governments of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Türkiye. Signed in duplicate on board His Britannic Majesty’s Ship “*Agamemnon*” at Port Mudros, Lemnos, and the 30th October, 1918.

2 Flandin, M. Étienne (1853-1922), *Rapport sur la Syrie et la Palestine*, Paris 1915, p. 3-8.

3 *Papers on British policy and the Arab movement*, British Library: India Office Records (I.O.R) and Private Papers, Mss Eur F112/277.

4 Kurkjian, Vahan M., *The Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia*, New York, 1919, p. 1-2.

5 The word ‘Ayntâb’ in the Turkish archival documents, after being given the title of ‘Gazi’ by the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (T.B.M.M.) on February 08, 1921, it has been included as Gazi Ayntâb, then as ‘Gaziantep’. In archival sources abroad, it is mentioned as ‘Aintab’ and ‘Ain-Tab’.

6 Abadie, [Jean-Joseph] M[aurice], *Les Quatre Sièges d’Aintab*, Paris: Charles-Lavauzelle & Cie, 1922, p. 27.

7 Article 4 of the 8-article ‘Secret Treaty’ signed in Istanbul on September 12th, 1919 by Grand Vizier Damat Ferit Pasha on behalf of the Istanbul Government and J.Fresner and H.N.Churchill on behalf of the Government of Great Britain, immediately after the Sivas Congress, is as follows: “In return, the Turkish Government promised to guarantee British material support in Syria and Mesopotamia, if necessary, as well as the spiritual support of the Caliph in this region and in Muslim populated areas”. See: On May 14th, 1920, Lepissier, the French consul in Trabzon, sent a report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the text of the secret treaty. *MAE* (Fransa Dışişleri Bakanlığı Arşivi), E-Levant (1918- 1929), Turquie, Vol.: 93’ten aktaran Ünsal Yavuz, “Fransız Dışişleri Bakanlığı Belgelerinde 12

The death of Martyr Kamil on 21 January 1920 created a highly combustible situation. Afterwards the death of “Dülgerzâde Mehmed Said” (who had been sent by Mustafa Kemal with the code name Şahin-Eagle) in Elmalı Bridge at the hands of the French on 21 March 1920 ignited a hot war within the city.

In the context of the oppressive, looting, burning, destructive and aggressive actions of the French occupation force consisting of Senegalese, Algerians, Tunisians and a large number of Armenians in the city, a hot war started between the French occupation forces and the Kemalists in Ayntâb on 1 April 1920. While this hot war was continuing, Admiral J. de Robeck, the British High Commissioner, in his letter dated 8.4.1920, numbered 496, which he delivered to Lord Curzon regarding the meeting in which Rear Admiral Webb and Mr. Ryan were present, stated that “*On 7 April [1920], a letter arrived at the British High Commissioner’s office stating that Grand Vizier Ferit Pasha had come to power on a platform for subjugating the supporters of the national movement [Kemalists] who would not submit to the will of the Istanbul Government, (...) that Ferit Pasha had asked Admiral de Robeck for help in having the edicts and fatwas to be issued against the nationalists [Kemalists] distributed to Anatolia with the two planes available, that the government had promoted Anzavur to the rank of Pasha and that he wished to distribute to his men the uniforms in the warehouses, that Ferit Pasha asked the British High Commissioner for arms for Anzavur’s forces and the Admiral said that he would discuss the matter with General Milne; that the government said it would use full moral will, but force should be used against those who remained unyielding; that the movement against the nationalists [Kemalists] organized by Anzavur in the south of Marmara was the first weapon in the hands of the government and that it had achieved considerable local success, that Anzavur had occupied Bandirma a few days earlier, that the Istanbul government had legitimized his position by giving him the status of governor of Balıkesir, that Ferid wanted to know how much the Allied government would support him in organizing and using these movements..., that the Government requests that we ensure that he makes the best use of the movements by allowing the anti-nationalist [anti-Kemalist] forces to be equipped with military materiel, that these questions must be answered urgently, that others, for instance, whether or not regular troops that the Sadakat Government can command should not be permitted to move, and, regarding all of these matters, the new government [the government of Damat Ferit Pasha] has the right to request the full support of the Allies (to compensate for the lack of armed cooperation) in reasonable*

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Eylül 1919 Tarihli Osmanlı-İngiliz Gizli Antlaşması”, *Askerî Tarih Bülteni*, Yıl : 17, Ağustos 1992, Sayı : 33, p. 137-161 ; Foreign Office 371/5117, E 260’tan aktaran Sina Akşin, *İstanbul Hükümetleri ve Millî Mücadele*, İstanbul 1983, p. 573 ; Sait Molla’dan Mister Frew’e mektup, Birinci Mektup. Mektupta antlaşmaya atıfta bulunulmuştur. See : Gazi Mustafa Kemal, *Nutuk*, Ankara 1927, p. 177-178. Krş., R. Salâhi Sonyel, “İngiltere Dışişleri Bakanlığı Belgelerinin Işığı Altında 1919 İngiliz-Osmanlı Gizli Antlaşması”, *Belleten*, C. xxxiv, No : 135, Ankara Temmuz 1970, p. 437-449.

*efforts to suppress the nationalists [Kemalists] who continue to resist its authority, and that this should be respected”<sup>8</sup>.*

While the hot war was continuing in Ayntâb day and night between the Kemalists and French occupation forces, it was stated that “*On 26 May [1920], the Grand Vizier visited the British High Commissioner, this was the first visit since the announcement of the terms of peace in Paris, the Grand Vizier first explained the position of the Government in the face of the national movement and stated that he complied with all the wishes of the High Commissioners in blaming the nationalists, Damat Ferit Pasha asked for permission to form and arm a force of 10,000 to suppress the Anatolian rebels [Kemalists], and said that he could make Izmit, which he had visited a while ago, a base of operations and subjugate Anatolia [Kemalists] within three weeks, the Grand Vizier will also talk to the High Commissioners of France and Italy about arming a force of 10,000 men, but he will not tell them about his secret conversation with the British High Commissioner”<sup>9</sup>.*

In the context of various opinions, thoughts and claims regarding the defense of Ayntâb, “starvation”, lack of “artillery” and “bullets” are brought forward. On 30 October 1918, with the Mudros Armistice signed by the Istanbul Government, the Turkish army was demobilized, their weapons were taken away from them, and the British occupation forces that occupied Ayntâb on 17 December 1918, collected all the weapons, including onion knives, from the hands of the people. Within the context of this fact, Selahaddin Adil gave the necessary answers to the claims of “lack of ammunition” and “lack of artillery” by explaining the current situation. Moreover, in a letter dated 23.9.36 (1920) to the Ministry of Defense, it was written: “*The Ayntâb Artillery Battalion has 8 cannons, which are the property of the battalion and are as follows: 3 Russian javelins, 2 ordinary javelins, 2 powerful javelins, 1 skoda javelin. There is also an additional schneider cannon in the battalion, the total number of which is 9 cannons”<sup>10</sup>*, which further clarifies the issue.

A fully equipped military supply convoy consisting of 400 camels arrived outside (in Ibrahimli) to break the blockade and enter the town, and the convoy left its position on the morning of 7 February. When the siege was about to

8 FO, 406/43, p. 289, No. 172'den aktaran, Şimşir, Bilal N., *İngiliz Belgelerinde Atatürk (1919-1938)*, Cilt II Nisan - Aralık 1920), *British Documents on Atatürk (1919-1938)* Volume II April - December 1920, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara 1975, p. XXVII-XXVIII, 26-30. British High Commission, Constantinople, April 8, 1920.

9 FO, 406/43, p. 420-423, No. 296'dan aktaran, Şimşir, Bilal N., *İngiliz Belgelerinde Atatürk (1919-1938)*, Cilt II Nisan - Aralık 1920), *British Documents on Atatürk (1919-1938)* Volume II April - December 1920, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara 1975, p. XLV-XLVI, 117-121.

10 ATASE., İSH, 795-68, Müdâfaa-i Milliye Vekâletine, 23/9/36 (1920), aded: 560., C[evap]: 19/9/36 (1920) tarih ve 3142/299 numarolu tele.

end<sup>11</sup>, Fevzi (Çakmak), Deputy Chief of the General Staff, sent a reply to the Second Corps Command, in cipher dated 7.2.1921, stating “*It is pleasing that those defending Ayntâb have found 10-days-worth of supplies again. It is necessary for the defenders of the town to stay in the town and continue the defense as long as food is available. And since taking all the defenders of the town outside before sunrise means leaving the town and the elderly, women and children who cannot participate in the defense to the enemy, such a move should not be allowed unless the supplies are completely exhausted. Since the troops are presently not available to take supplies to the town with an offensive, it is necessary to give up any new attempt in the next 10 days and give the troops the opportunity to rest and recuperate. In 10 days, it is likely that the 2nd Division will also be able to partially enter the Ayntâb area. If there is a way to smuggle supplies into Ayntâb, this should also be attempted. It is requested to inform the defenders of the town that new forces are on their way and to ensure that they persevere in their defense and fight to the very end by trying to procure supplies from within*”<sup>12</sup>. On 7-8 February 1921, Mustafa Kemal, the President of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, sent a telegram to the Central Committee of the Ayntâb Mudafaa-i Hukuk Organization (Countrywide Resistance Organization), in which he said, “*All kinds of attempts and sacrifices have been made and will continue to be made for the rescuing of our brothers from Ayntâb, who have sacrificially elevated the glory of Turkishness and Islam. Our forces abroad, which have been ordered to be reinforced with great force, are preparing to make a new and effective attempt very soon. I kindly request that the greetings and appreciation of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye be conveyed to the honorable people of the heroic Ayntâb*”<sup>13</sup>. With his message, the issue was clarified at the highest level.

Despite all these orders and correspondence, the members of the pro-French and religiously exploitative “Sulh ve Selâmet Cemiyeti” (Peace and Welfare Union), in accordance with Gubo’s declaration, “.... *Send a delegation of negotiators to the headquarters of the French Forces-Military in order to put an end to the war...*”, took immediate action and intensified their work. On 8 February 1920, they met with the commanders of the French occupation forces and left the headquarters to supposedly convey the written French demands to the representatives of the people. On 9 February 1920, the aforementioned “Union” went to the French headquarters in Ayntâb and signed the surrender documents at the feet of the French commander on the entrance stairs of the

11 Château de Vincennes, 1 K 208, Papiers Andréa, rapport du lieutenant-colonel Andréa sur la reddition de la ville d’Aïntab et sur l’exécution par les autorités turques des clauses de cette reddition, 2 mars 1921.

12 ATASE., İSH, Klasör No: 599, Dosya No: 153, Fihrist No: 2, 2-1.

13 T.B.M.M. Reisi Mustafa Kemal’den Ayntâb Şehri Müdafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyeti Merkez Heyetine, C. 5/2/1337, 2/155 sayılı şifreye, 7-8/2/1337 (1921) tarihli verilen cevap. See: Adil, Selahaddin, *Hayat Mücadeleleri*, İstanbul 1962, p. 366.



building, having the existing document previously signed not by the people, but by collaborators<sup>14</sup>. By signing the agreement, the “Sulh ve Selâmet Cemiyeti” fulfilled all the demands in the declaration of the French commander Gubo dated 4 December 1920 and the city center fell on 9 February 1921. However, none of the Ayntâb Kemalists signed this agreement on 9 February 1921 and it was not accepted by the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye. On the other hand, “gangs armed with crowbars continued to fight back in the villages”<sup>15</sup> and the city was given the title of “Gazi” (Veteran) on 8 February 1921, as part of the principles and plan of the “National War of Independence” initiated and led by Mustafa Kemal.

### The Path Towards the Ankara Agreement

The French High Commissioner in Beirut, General [Henri] Gouraud, in a ‘very urgent’ telegram to Minister of Foreign Affairs Millerand dated 5 September 1920, stated that intelligence insisted that Turkish reinforcements, estimated at 8,000 men, would arrive soon, that the intelligence found the situation in the North alarming, that the local population and the Government of Istanbul were saying that Bolshevik forces were coming to intervene, that there was no significant support they could expect from the population, that the Armenians were forming mostly marauding gangs, that General Garnier-Duplessis stated ‘I would be grateful if you could tell me whether you accept the evacuation from the international point of view’, and that the Government of Istanbul could be asked to send a governor and other officials of the province to Cilicia<sup>16</sup> while its troops were still there, that this policy would provide an opportunity to obtain commitments from the Government of Istanbul concerning the economic privileges granted to France at the time of the surrender of Cilicia.<sup>17</sup> On 28 September 1920, [Henri] Gouraud wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs M. Millerand, “... as my telegrams tell you, Cilicia is still a matter of great concern. And I am waiting for an answer to my question: Should we conduct

14 *L'illustration*, Samedi 19 Mars 1921; *Al-Takaddom*, 13 Février 1921.

15 Lohanizâde Mustafa Nureddin, *Hubb-ı İstiklâlin Abidesi Gaziayntâb Müdafaası*, Bâb-ı âli Cağaloğlu Yokuşu, Numero 38, 1340-İstanbul-1342, p. 370.

16 The region stretching from present-day Alanya to Kinet Höyük and surrounded by the Taurus Mountains to the north is known as Cilicia. Although it is not possible to specify the exact borders of Cilicia, in early times, it included Adana, Marash sanjak and its immediate surroundings. The region is referred to as “Çukurova” in contemporary Turkish documents. See: Pekdoğan, Celal. “Levant, Kilikya, Kemalistler Bağlamında Maraş Savunması.” *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Sayı 69 (2021): 71-102.

17 Le Général [Henri] Gouraud, Haut-Commissaire Français à Beyrouth, à M. Millerand, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères. T. nos 1695 à 1702. Très urgent. Beyrouth, 5 septembre 1920, 13 h. 30., *Documents Diplomatiques Français 1920-1932*. 1920 (D.D.F.), Tome II, 19 mai-23 septembre / Ministère des affaires étrangères, Commission de publication des documents diplomatiques français ; [réd. par Anne Hogenhuis-Seliverstoff, Corine Defrance, Traian Sandu] ; [sous la dir. de Jacques Bariéty]. 1999. p. 559-562.

a military evacuate of Cilicia or is there a possibility of our remaining there despite the agreement?”<sup>18</sup>

M. Millerand informed [Henri] Gouraud that “*I have not yet been able to reply to your telegrams asking for the government’s approval for the evacuation of Cilicia, in principle and for many reasons, both international and national, because, like my predecessor, I am there and I am openly opposed. The repercussions of a withdrawal under enemy pressure would have significant repercussions*”<sup>19</sup>.

On 26 November 1920, a telegram from M. de Peretti de la Rocca, director of political and commercial affairs, to M. Paul Cambon, the French ambassador in London, emphasized “*the absolute impossibility of maintaining the Treaty of Sèvres; the need to negotiate without wasting a minute with the Kemalists, who alone represent Türkiye, and the necessity for the negotiations to be conducted by France, and that the basis of this negotiation should be our immediate withdrawal from Cilicia, subject to the guarantees given to the Armenian population; the internationalization of at least the Thrace region and the Smyrna region; the renouncing of all Turkish claims to Batumi and the recognition of the independence of the Caucasian republics; the rejection of the entire Bolshevik alliance; the gendarmerie, organized before the war, to carry out its activities under international supervision to ensure order in Türkiye and the protection of minorities; a proposal for a Franco-Turkish alliance*”<sup>20</sup> in the negotiations held by Mr. Franklin-Bouillon, who had just arrived from Istanbul.

It is understood from this correspondence that the French commanders, who captured the city center thanks to the “Sulh ve Selâmet Cemiyeti” operating under the “Istanbul Government” between 5 November 1919 and 9 February 1921, clearly understood that they could not succeed against Mustafa Kemal’s “Guerrilla Warfare”<sup>21</sup> and tried to negotiate by all means.

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18 Général [Henri] Gouraud, Haut-Commissaire Français à Beyrouth, à Mon Cher Ami, Beyrouth, 23 septembre 1920, *D. D.F. 1920-1932*. 1920, Tome II, p. 667.

19 M. Leygues, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Au Général [Henri] Gouraud, Haut-Commissaire Français à Beyrouth 1. T. nos 946-949. Paris, 4 Octobre 1920, 15 h. 20., *D. D. F. 1920*, Tome III, 24 septembre-15 janvier 1921 / Ministère des affaires étrangères, Commission de publication des documents diplomatiques français ; [réd. par Anne Hogenhuis-Seliverstoff, Corine Défronce, Traian Sandu] ; [sous la dir. de Jacques Bariéty]. 2002. p. 48-49.

20 M. de Peretti de la Rocca, Directeur des Affaires Politiques et Commerciales, À M. Paul Cambon, Ambassadeur de France à Londres, T. nos 6780-67821. Paris, 26 novembre 1920, 21 h. 15. *D.D.F. 1920*, Tome III, p. 341-342.

21 “Gerilla harbinin yapılış tarzı hakkında Heyet-i Temsiliye Riyaseti tarafından bu hareketla yakından ilgili birliklere verilen talimat”, *Harb Tarihi Vesikalari*, Yıl 5, Mart-1956, Sayı: 15, p. 1, 383 nolu vesika vdd.



## The Occupation Forces Evacuating Gazi Ayntâb as Part of the Ankara Agreement

The negotiations and disputes between the two states during the period between 9 February 1921 and 20 October 1921 when Mustafa Kemal was operating in the region are extremely important.

On 8 February, just before the fall of the city center on 9 February 1921, Briand (Aristide Pierre Henri Briand) sent a long telegram to General Pellé, the newly appointed high commissioner in Istanbul, inquiring about Franklin-Bouillon's proposals for an agreement with Ankara. In the telegram, Briand demanded answers to the questions "*The London conference could be an opportunity for a liberal gesture towards Ankara, presumably in agreement with Lloyd George. Should Commander Sarrou be put in charge of the Turkish gendarmerie and should the 114 Turkish prisoners held by the British in Malta be released?*"<sup>22</sup>.

Undoubtedly the most important development in this period was the agreement titled "L'accord Franco-Turc Politique, Militaire, Économique, sur les frontières entre la Turquie et la Syrie, 9 Mars 1921"<sup>23</sup> (The Franco-Turkish political, military and economic agreement on the borders between Türkiye and Syria, 9 March 1921) signed between Bekir Sami and French Minister of Foreign Affairs Briand on 9/11 March 1921. However, the Turkish Grand National Assembly did not ratify the treaty on the grounds that it was contrary to the National Pact. Moreover, on 4 April Berthelot telegraphed Istanbul and Beirut to inform them that the Turkish Grand National Assembly had rejected the treaty. He therefore asked [Henri] Gouraud and Pellé to "*contact Ankara to inform him of what was going on there and what action could be taken*"<sup>24</sup>.

On 15 April 1921, Pellé telegraphed that Bekir Sami had come to see him and had conveyed to him [Henri] Gouraud's complaints about the non-implementation of the agreement of 11 March. Bekir Sami believed that the agreement would be immediately discussed and ratified. He underlined that the war would by no means end as long as a Greek soldier remained on Turkish soil<sup>25</sup>.

22 M. Briand, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, à M. Barrère, Ambassadeur de France à Rome, M. de Saint-Aulaire, Ambassadeur de France à Londres, et M. DeFrance, Haut-Commissaire à Constantinople. T. nos 349-350 ; 380-381 ; 348-349. Paris, 8 février 1921, 21 h. 15., *D.D.F. 1921*, Tome I, 16 janvier-30 juin / Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Commission de publication des documents diplomatiques français ; [réd. par Anne Hogenhuis-Seliverstoff, Geneviève Bibes, Corine DeFrance, Jérôme de Lespinois] ; [sous la dir. de Jacques Bariéty]. 2004, p.146-147.

23 Archives Geneva, R589-11-11894-11894; *L'Europe nouvelle : revue hebdomadaire des questions extérieures, économiques et littéraires*. 1921-03-26, p. 407-408.

24 M. Briand, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, au Général Pellé, Haut-Commissaire Français à Constantinople, à M. de Saint-Aulaire, ambassadeur de France à Londres et M. Barrère, Ambassadeur de France à Rome. t. nos. 786-790 ; 1149-1153 ; 931-935. Paris, 4 avril 1921, 22 h. 20., *D. D. F. 1921*, Tome I, 16 janvier-30 juin / Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Commission de publication des documents diplomatiques français ; [réd. par Anne Hogenhuis-Seliverstoff, Geneviève Bibes, Corine DeFrance, Jérôme de Lespinois] ; [sous la dir. de Jacques Bariéty]. 2004, p. 425-426.

25 M. Briand, Président du Conseil, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, à M. Barthou, Ministre de la Guerre, D. s.n. Paris, 28 avril 1921, *D.D.F. 1921*, Tome I, 16 janvier-30 juin / Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Commission de publication des documents diplomatiques français ; [réd. par Anne Hogenhuis-Seliverstoff, Geneviève Bibes, Corine DeFrance, Jérôme de Lespinois] ; [sous la dir. de Jacques Bariéty]. 2004, p. 528-529.

Another important development was that even though the Ottoman cabinets, which were completely dependent on Britain, did not protest against the occupation of Cilicia, it was made clear that they would never give up Cilicia, which was, in Mustafa Kemal own words, “a piece of our soul (un morceau de notre chair)”<sup>26</sup>. The former high commissioner asked Kemal for a guarantee of mutual non-aggression in occupied Cilicia and proposed, as an “individual” idea, the evacuation of most of these territories (Çukurova, Maraş, Ayntâb, Urfa) in exchange for economic benefits, which was accepted by Mustafa Kemal<sup>27</sup>. However, this meeting was not followed up.

The Government of the Republic of France and the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye’s Government, who wished to conclude an agreement between the two countries, appointed their plenipotentiaries, and the matters agreed upon in the ongoing negotiations between Monsieur Henry Franklin-Bouillon, the Government of the Republic of France’s Former Minister, and Yusuf Kemal Bey, Minister of Foreign Affairs from the Government of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye, were submitted to the Turkish Grand National Assembly for approval. The negotiations were conducted in sessions held on 4, 12, 13, 16 and 18 October<sup>28</sup>. As a result of the discussions and negotiations, on 18 October, it was decided that “...since the French Government, the French Assembly of Deputies and Proprietors have the right of ratification for a treaty. In other words, the word “ratification” has a meaning in the law of the Constitutional Organization, so your Assembly has the right of acceptance and ratification. Secondly, why is it being negotiated in your Assembly? To submit every issue to your Assembly is to ask for executive power from your Assembly. There is also a law on the authority of the Executive Deputies in the Law on the Principles of Organization. Based on these two laws, I now ask for the authorization to sign, while your right to legislate remains unchanged. (Grant).”<sup>29</sup> Upon this, the Ankara Government signed the Turkish-French Treaty on 20 October 1921. The Government of France also ratified the Ankara Treaty of 20 October 1920<sup>30</sup>.

26 Gontaut-Biron, Comte R. De, *Comment la France s'est Installée en Syrie (1918-1919)*, Paris 1922, p. 338.

27 Sina Akşin, “French-Turkish Relations at the end of 1919,” Batu, Hâmit et Bacqué-Grammont, Jean-Louis, *L'Empire Ottoman, la République de Turquie et la France*, İstanbul-Paris, Les éditions Isis, 1986, p. 441-444.

28 For more detailed information, see: Metintaş, Mustafa Yahya, Ankara Antlaşması’nın Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisinde Tartışılması, *Eskişehir Osmangazi Üniversitesi Türk Dünyası Uygulama ve Araştırma Merkezi Yakın Tarih Dergisi*, 2019, Cilt 2, Sayı, 5, p. 1-26.

29 *T.B.M.M. Gizli Celse Zabıtları*, Devre : 1, Cilt : 2, İçtima : 2, 96’ncı İnikat, 3. Celse, 18 Teşrin-i evvel 1337 (1921) Salı, p. 360-372.

30 Accord signé à Angora le 20 octobre 1921 entre M. Franklin-Bouillon, ancien ministre et Youssouf Kemal Bey, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères de la Grande Assemblée Nationale d’Angora, Angora, 20 octobre 1921, *D.D.F. 1920-1932*. 1920, Tome II, 19 mai-23 septembre / Ministère des affaires étrangères, Commission de publication des documents diplomatiques français ; [réd. par Anne Hogenhuis-Seliverstoff, Corine Defrance, Traian Sandu] ; [sous la dir. de Jacques Bariéty]. 1999. p. 430-432 ; T.C. Ministère des Affaires étrangères, Service des Archives diplomatiques, *Centenaire de l'accord d'Angora (1921)* Documents des Archives Diplomatiques Françaises et Turques, Ankara 2022, p. 141.

### Implementation of the Agreement and the Evacuation of Gazi Aytâb

The announcement of the Treaty caused grave concern in Cilicia, as minorities considered Article 6 to be ambiguous. However, the minority rights recognized in the Misak-ı Milli (National Pact) were confirmed by the Ankara government as well as in the agreements concluded on this issue by the Entente states, their adversaries and allies<sup>31</sup>.

The most important aspect of the agreement was whether the Christian population should be evacuated or not, and if so, what the conditions should be. The prominent view was that it should be “*extended under international supervision to ensure the protection of minorities and the proposal of a Franco-Turkish alliance*”<sup>32</sup>.

In this context, [Henri] Gouraud, in an appeal on 9 November 1921, announcing the imminent transfer of power in Cilicia, advised “all good citizens” not to flee, claiming that the French government was doing what was necessary to protect the rights of minorities, while at the same time stating that leaving would be “nothing short of a disaster and an adventure with no happy ending”. However, an Armenian exodus from Cilicia had already begun. In this regard, [Henri] Gouraud had already warned his superiors that most of the Cilician Armenians would leave with the departing French troops<sup>33</sup>.

Dufieux, who commanded the army of occupation in Cilicia, was completely disillusioned with the French withdrawal. The order given by [Henri] Gouraud on 2 November to prevent Armenians from crossing the new border (without violence, of course) was rejected by Dufieux, who had made it clear months earlier what guarantees were necessary for the Armenians in Cilicia. But these guarantees were not included in the Ankara Agreement. He announced the agreement as ordered and added the meager arguments at his disposal to reassure the population, but applied the principle of giving written permission to Armenians wishing to leave, partly as a safety precaution to prevent the peoples’ fears from spilling over into mass flight or violent unrest<sup>34</sup>.

31 Le Général [Henri] Gouraud, Haut-Commissaire Français à Beyrouth, à M. Briand, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, t. nos 1446-1447, urgent. Beyrouth, 3 novembre 1921, 21 h. 45. (Reçu : le 4, 4 h. 50.), *D.D.F. 1921*, Tome II, p. 497-498.

32 M. de Peretti de la Rocca, Directeur des Affaires Politiques et Commerciales, à M. Paul Cambon, Ambassadeur de France à Londres, T. nos 6780-67821. Paris, 26 novembre 1920, 21 h. 15. *D.D.F. 1920*, Tome III, p. 341-342.

33 La Courneuve, Levant 1918–1940, vol. 137, fols. 152–4: [Henri] Gouraud to MAE, October 1, 1921. Already, in January 1921, Robert de Caix had warned [Henri] Gouraud of an “exodus of Armenians” in the event of a French withdrawal: La Courneuve, Levant 1918–1940, vol. 137, fols. 31–3: de Caix to [Henri] Gouraud, January 10, 1921’den aktaran, White, Benjamin Thomas, A Grudging Rescue: France, the Armenians of Cilicia, and the History of Humanitarian Evacuations, *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development*, Volume 10, Number 1, Spring 2019, p. 1-27.

34 White, *A Grudging Rescue*: p. 1-27.

Meanwhile, [Henri] Gouraud continued to tell the ministry that emigration was inevitable. This was the overwhelming impression not only of Dufieux, who resigned on 25 November, but of his officers in the field. That day [Henri] Gouraud wrote to Paris: “All the information I received from Cilicia, and especially that brought by Admiral Grandclement, came back from Adana, confirmed that the Christian population had decided from the beginning to leave the country irrevocably before the Turks returned”<sup>35</sup>. The French government, on the other hand, was of the opinion that “until the evacuation of Cilicia by our troops, it is firmly requested that the local administration, as far as circumstances permit, be completely surrendered to the Turkish authorities”<sup>36</sup>.

In accordance with the Ankara Agreement signed between France and the Ankara Government on 20 October 1921, the French Command Headquarters, in its letter dated 9 December 1921, stated that after the evacuation of Cilicia by French troops, a large number of Christian and Armenian refugees would certainly arrive in the areas under the French mandate and that their demands for shelter and food and drink should be met<sup>37</sup>.

According to the letter of the High Commissioner of the French Republic for Syria and Lebanon, dated 21 November 1921, Colonel Pettelat, Chief of Staff of the Levant Army, would chair the Mixed Commission to be established in order to determine the procedures for the evacuation envisaged in Article IV of the Ankara Agreement and the handover of the areas to be returned to Türkiye. Moreover, Consul General Laporte would head the administrative and legal section and be responsible for relations with the Turkish authorities, which would no longer be under French administration. Additionally, General Dufieux would hand over the command of the 1st Division to General Marty<sup>38</sup>.

According to the program of the Mixed Evacuation Commission, signed by Colonel Şükrü Bey, Chairman of the Turkish Evacuation Commission, and Colonel Pettelat, Chairman of the French Evacuation Commission, for the transfer of the administration of the areas to be evacuated to the representatives of the Ankara Government, the supervision of the Turkish administration in the various cities of the territories returned to Türkiye by the Ankara Agreement by French officers or officials would cease as of 1 December 1921.

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35 White, *A Grudging Rescue*: p. 5.

36 M. Leygues, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Au Général [Henri] Gouraud, Haut-Commissaire Français à Beyrouth 1. T. nos 946-949. Paris, 4 Octobre 1920, 15 h. 20., *D. D. F. 1920*, Tome III, s. 48-49.

37 Château de Vincennes, Rapports et correspondance relatifs à l'évacuation de la Cilicie. Dossier. 6, p. 98-99.

38 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 6. (I have not come across any documents on this subject in the archives in Türkiye.)

## The Occupation Forces Evacuating Gazi Ayntâb as Part of the Ankara Agreement

It was decided that they would stay in the city as liaison service officers until 4 January 1922 to complete the solution of the problems related to the transfer of services and the evacuation of the region by French troops by negotiating with the Turkish and French authorities, and that the Turkish flag would be raised in the Government Mansions of Adana, Tarsus, Mersin, Ceyhan, Osmaniye, Dörtyol, Ayas, Kilis, Ayntâb and the houses of Hamid (Kapancızade) Bey and Muhiddin (Akyüz) Pasha as of 1 December<sup>39</sup>.

According to the circular of 21 November, which was set for the French side, Article IV of the Ankara Agreement of 20 October stipulated that the methods of evacuation and takeover of the territories returned to Türkiye were to be determined on the spot by a mixed Franco-Turkish Commission. For the French side, the structure of this commission, according to the general order of 21 November, was to be chaired by Colonel Pettelat, with Consul General [Osmin] Laporte in charge of administrative and civil affairs. Colonel Pettelat also assumed the powers of the High Commissioner for Cilicia delegation when General [Julien] Dufieux left (25 November). As a result, Colonel Pettelat was made responsible for maintaining order in the territory occupied by French troops<sup>40</sup>.

On the Turkish side, the Evacuation Commission consisted of a military body chaired by Colonel Şükrü Bey. In fact, the French Commission and the Turkish Commission did not merge into a single Commission, but continued to function in continuous contact and accord. The extraordinary envoy of Ankara, Hamid (Kapancızade) Bey, on the one hand, and General Muhiddin (Akyüz) Pasha, on the other hand, for military evacuation issues, brought the same spirit of reconciliation to their official and private relations, which facilitated the joint task considerably<sup>41</sup>.

Due to the distance of Ayntâb from Adana, a mixed sub-commission was established, represented on the French side by Captain Peulvey and on the Turkish side by Münir Bey, the Governor of Ayntâb. The goal was to find timely solutions to the many problems that arose due to the evacuation. As the Turks took over the returned territories, the French troops, with all their military equipment, were evacuated by railroad to either Iskenderun or Mersin on the appointed date, 4 January<sup>42</sup>.

The transfer of the administration of Cilicia to the Turkish authorities took place on 1 December, before the departure of the troops<sup>43</sup>. In general, all the

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39 Château de Vincennes, Rappports, p. 120.

40 Château de Vincennes, Rappports, p. 7-8.

41 Château de Vincennes, Rappports, p. 9.

42 Château de Vincennes, Rappports, p. 10.

43 Château de Vincennes, Rappports, p. 11.

young personnel who had been in service during the French occupation were replaced by Turks. In each of the services performed, the Evacuation Commission tried to leave an absolutely functional setting to the Turks and to ensure that the new authorities had all the necessary means to work effectively<sup>44</sup>.

In Article 2 of the Ankara Agreement (release of prisoners), regarding the issue of the mutual release of previously returned military prisoners, strictly political prisoners and common law prisoners, it was decided that only Muslim common law prisoners would be returned to the Turks. The surrender of Christian prisoners was optional for the French and a list of all prisoners was requested. All Turkish prisoners taken into custody were handed over to the Turkish authorities. Other than that, Hulusi, a Muslim notable who was captured at gunpoint while leading an irregular gang in 1920, was held hostage until an issue regarding a soldier from the Armenian Legion was resolved. Additionally, it was agreed that the French commission would be headed by Colonel Modat of Senegal and the Turkish commission by Colonel Edib Bey<sup>45</sup>.

As soon as the evacuation commission arrived in Adana, the Government of Ankara, either directly or through Mr. Franklin Bouillon, began to make demands for the transfer of military equipment. Moreover, as soon as the question of payment arose, it abandoned one demand after another, only to be able to transfer the Cilician telegraph lines on 4 January in exchange for 60,000 francs<sup>46</sup>.

While the Evacuation Commission carried out the evacuation of Cilicia in accordance with the treaty, in full agreement with the French authorities, who alone would ensure the maintaining of French interests, it was determined which French works would remain after the evacuation on 4 January<sup>47</sup>. In addition, a French and a Muslim orphanage was put into service, grouping Armenian, Syrian, Assyrian-Chaldean and Assyrian orphans who had been in separate orphanages prepared at the time of the evacuation<sup>48</sup>.

No serious incident occurred during this stage. From 1 December 1921 to 6 January 1922, the Evacuation Sub-Commission, operating in the Ayntab-Kilis region, resolved all issues, even the most sensitive ones, within a broad framework, in a spirit of mutual compromise, in the best interests of both sides, and under the best conditions<sup>49</sup>.

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44 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 12.

45 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 15-16.

46 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 17.

47 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 18.

48 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 19.

49 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 20.



## The Occupation Forces Evacuating Gazi Ayntâb as Part of the Ankara Agreement

In direct contact with the Turkish representatives and with the Government of Ankara through them, the Evacuation Commission dealt with other urgent problems. In this context, in the framework of determining the number of Christians who emigrated from the areas returned to the Turks between 1 November 1921 and 4 January 1922, it was determined that the number of Christians who left the Ayntâb-Kilis region for Syria was around 4,500<sup>50</sup>.

On the other hand, the Ayntâb-Kilis evacuation sub-committee was composed of civilian members, Consul General Sandfort and Vice Consul Lucas, military members, Captain Peulvey of the Levant Army; Captain Bourgon of the Intelligence Service Liaison Officer of the 2nd Division in Ayntâb; and Lieutenant Curnier, Liaison Officer of the 2nd Division Intelligence Service in Kilis<sup>51</sup>.

The commission focused on the Armenian issue in Kilis and Aintab, the attitude of the nationalist administration, custom rights, postal and telegraph communications, allegations of damage, local factors of French influence, evacuation of troops, nationalist officers and soldiers, investigation of the events, along with the log of the sub-commission, the commissions organised to protect the property of the refugees, the civil and military authorities in Aintab, and the situation of the cemeteries in Aintab<sup>52</sup>.

According to the Commission's reports, during its visit to Kilis on 30 November and its arrival in Aintab on 1 December, the sub-commission found the following situation: The Armenian population of these two cities, initially determined to emigrate, seemed to have generally recovered. Most of the dignitaries had left the country, while the religious leaders and the destitute masses remained. It was clear that the slightest incident or the slightest unfavourable event could cause an almost complete exodus of the Christians still present. The masses always spoke of their fear of seeing themselves looted, ill-treated, deported, massacred. However, when seriously questioned, the few remaining dignitaries admitted that they feared only two things: Compulsory military service and any kind of hardship that they would inevitably have to struggle with. However, the sub-commission noted that the Governor of Aintab and the District Governor of Kilis had committed themselves to this work with genuine goodwill and that they had both made very reassuring statements. The Governor's proclamation was displayed in the town the day after his arrival in Aintab. Indeed, despite the efforts of the nationalist authorities to readjust and assist them, the Armenian emigration, which had been halted for several days,

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50 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 334.

51 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 26.

52 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 27.

resumed in an unorganised manner, but later organised as a general movement<sup>53</sup>.

In this regard, after allowing Armenian emigrants to enter Egypt and Cyprus, Britain forbade Armenian or Ottoman Greek subjects from Cilicia to board the Khedive Company's boats, regardless of their destination, whilst British properties in Izmir and Istanbul were closed to Armenians. Under these circumstances, France believed it was its primary duty to allow Armenians to enter Syria and to organise the emigration of 35,000 Armenians who wanted to leave the lands returned to the Turks, both in Mersin and Dörtyol. The Armenian refugees were first sorted in Mersin according to their ability to work and the references provided, and were directed to the areas where they could earn the most livelihood without deeply disrupting the economic life of Syria and the political balance of the country. Camps were organised and construction sites were established to temporarily use the Armenian labour force that could not immediately find work in local industries.

The new District Governor of Kilis, who was appointed by the Ankara Government and extremely sensitive concerning the rights of minorities, took over the administrative services of the Kilis district on 11-13 December 1921.<sup>54</sup> On the occasion of the handover,<sup>55</sup> he addressed the representatives of the minority, promising to prevent any violation of the rights granted and expressing his desire to see the misunderstanding between France and Türkiye resolved forever<sup>56</sup>.

Among all the troubles and fears which the Christians would inevitably have to struggle with behalf of the Turkish authorities when the Turkish authorities resumed the free administration of the country, they pointed particularly to any dismissal from office, any investigation of their grievances, confiscation, underhand prosecutions on the grounds of facts or past indifference, illegal arrests, and partial prosecutions due to their Francophilia. Furthermore, the first efforts of the French Consular Representative, Mr. de Sandfort, were immediately directed at the meetings of Christian and Turkish dignitaries held in Kilis and Aintab, in order to give all the reassurances that would resolve the concerns of the Christians. He even made similar appeals when the new Turkish authorities took up office. The Governor of Aintab and the District Governor of Kilis both presented themselves with genuine goodwill and both made very reassuring statements. Moreover, the day after the Governor's arrival in Aintab, a proclamation on various issues was posted in the city. In

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53 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 28.

54 Château de Vincennes, Bulletin de renseignements n° 285, 11-13 December 1921, p. 131.

55 Bulletin de renseignements, p. 139.

56 Bulletin de renseignements, p. 140.

fact, the emigration of Armenians, which had been halted for a few days, resumed in an unhurried and disorganised manner, despite the overcorrection of the nationalist authorities and their admirable efforts to help. This emigration, however, did not appear to be organised as a general movement, but rather to be of an individual character<sup>57</sup>.

On the other hand, the French Consul warned the Armenians that they remained Ottoman subjects and were neither French subjects, nor under French protection<sup>58</sup>. For those who could afford it, the means of transport were never lacking in December, and throughout the month the services continued to Aleppo in stages, according to the number of cars available. The road was safe, guarded by Turkish gendarmerie posts and patrols. Only a few days, in mid-December, it actually became unusable due to bad weather conditions. In accordance with the instructions, Armenians were provided with Syrian passes on a large scale, averaging first 100, then 200, and by December, up to 300 passes per day in Aintab.<sup>59</sup> It seems that the Turks never prevented the emigration of Armenians. For, especially in Aintab, many Turks became tenants of the Armenian houses that had been left, as the houses of the Turks had become almost uninhabitable after the bombardment.

From the beginning of December, a separate commission was set up in each of the two cities to ensure the protection of the property of the Christian refugees. However, the commission encountered extreme indifference on the part of the Armenian dignitaries invited<sup>60</sup>.

A detailed list of all assets was prepared by the commission. The owners or guardians were identified, and the local police, in co-operation with community representatives, also contributed to the protection of the property of the emigrants. In summary, the Armenians of the Kilis-Aintab region were not subjected to any threats or pressure, and despite the assurances given by both the French representatives and the local authorities, they left the country without haste or panic, using the limited but adequate means of transport that arrived or were available, and the emigration ended on 1 January. At that time, one thousand Armenians remained in Kilis and about five thousand in Aintab. Finally, the remaining Armenians loudly declared that they doubted the future protection that the commission could guarantee them by declaring that they had been handed over to the Turks and that they were deeply resentful of the French.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, a person who wrote to the newspaper under the

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57 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 29-30.

58 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 29-30.

59 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 30.

60 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 31.

61 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 32.

pseudonym Pro-French asked the French authorities: “Why did you bring us here if you were going to leave us? After you leave, we will not forget that our sacred cemeteries were trampled by Mustafa Kemal”. An editorial by Arevelyan Mamul titled “*France Sells Out the Armenians of Cilicia to Mustafa Kemal*” was considered to be the most powerful expression of the Armenian community’s anger towards the French authorities:<sup>62</sup> “*Long live France! Long live France, which played the role of a perfect Judas for the Armenians of Cilicia. The names of [Aristide] Briand, the foolish Franklin-Bouillon and his friends will be written in red ink in history as Armenian executioners. Perhaps they will join the policy of Talat, Enver and Nazım and have the Armenians of Cilicia massacred too, so that the Armenian issue will be clarified and covered up forever*”<sup>63</sup>.

However, for the security of the Armenian people, the National Delegation, headed by Boghos Nubar, sent to the Paris Conference convened on 18 January 1919, with the authority to discuss and decide on behalf of the Armenian people, with the intention of facilitating the work of both sides and reconciling the interests of France and Armenia on the Cilician question, proposed in a friendly spirit that the following conditions be taken into consideration: “The Armenian presence in Cilicia shall be recognised by France and the French mandate in Cilicia shall be recognised by the Armenian delegation, the Armenian flag will fly fraternally with the French flag on all public, military and civil building.”<sup>64</sup> However, after the end of the Cilician conflict, France did not fulfil any of these promises.

The inauguration of the new nationalist officials in Aintab on 4 December and in Kilis on 7 December allowed the Sub-Commission of Aintab to see them in action and to form an opinion regarding their ideas and even their projects. Meetings, conversations and courtesy visits between Turks and Armenians, which were always valuable, were frequent, and the Turks did not reject them in any way, but were generally friendly, courteous and cordial. When the members of the Sub-Commission considered it worthwhile, they prepared notes, sometimes signed by one or other member of the Sub-Commission, sometimes by two members when the question was relevant, and handed them

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62 Arevelyan Mamul, *Ֆրանսո-Քէմալական Հռչակաւոր Համաձայնութիւնը (Franko-Kemalagan Hrchagavor Hamatsaynutivne)* [The Renowned Franco-Nationalist Agreement], 30 December 1921, no. 2746, cited by, Şekeryan, Ari, *The Armenians and the Fall of the Ottoman Empire After Genocide, 1918–1923*, Cambridge University Press 2023, p. 155.

63 Arevelyan Mamul, *Ֆրանսա Կը Օսմիկ Կիլիկիոյ Հայրութիւնը Մուսթաֆա Քէմալի (Fransa Gë Dzakhe Giligioy Hayutiwne)* [France Sells the Armenians of Cilicia to Mustafa Kemal], 11 November 1921, No. 2703’den aktaran, Şekeryan, Ari, *The Armenians and the Fall of the Ottoman Empire After Genocide, 1918–1923*, Cambridge University Press 2023, p. 156.

64 Augillon [Մթիկ] 30.11.1920, Organization of Armenian volunteers under the French flag. Augillon: Cattle prod. The Greek word ‘augillon’ means a stick with a pointed iron at the end to speed up an animal’s gait.

## The Occupation Forces Evacuating Gazi Ayntâb as Part of the Ankara Agreement

to Governor, and the issue was resolved perfectly, as always<sup>65</sup>. What was promised was fulfilled in full, and the French Consul Sandfort no longer recognised in these nationalists, who kept their promises so scrupulously, from the previous Turks that he had dealt with before the war<sup>66</sup>.

The newly appointed Governor Münir Bey arrived in Aintab on the evening of 2 December with great humility, in an un pompous way, and settled in a very modest room in the only hotel left, without a single demonstration on the occasion of his arrival. The government officials likewise went about their work unpretentiously, with pride in their hearts.<sup>67</sup> The officers of the Joint Evacuation Commission for Aintab left the city on 9 January<sup>68</sup>.

Post, telegraph and communications, the Turkish authorities of the two cities are in no hurry to see how the Turkish post office is functioning. It seemed that no one felt the need for this. Until 9 January, no regular postal service was reopened between Aintab and Marash or Urfa, as in Kilis and Aleppo<sup>69</sup>.

Until the arrival of the nationalist officials, none of the communities dared to claim compensation for the damage caused in and around Aintab during the siege. According to France, compensation could be the sole responsibility of Türkiye or could be settled in a subsequent negotiation between the two countries<sup>70</sup>.

The evacuation of equipment and supplies from Aintab and Kilis was carried out without any incident during late November and December, with powerful horse convoys travelling to Katma, and the troops occupying Aintab left the city without incident on 25 December. All positions established on the hills overlooking Aintab to the south, east and north were destroyed by French troops the day before their departure. The troops were accommodated in the American College, which was still being converted into barracks, the offices of the General Staff were relocated to known and American-owned houses in the area, while the officials remained in the city, especially in the Armenian quarter<sup>71</sup>.

Between 4 December and 17 December, when the nationalist representatives took up office, there were no incidents either in Aintab or in Kilis. 8 days before

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65 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 33.

66 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 34.

67 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 35.

68 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 36.

69 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 41.

70 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 43-44.

71 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 50.

the evacuation of the troops, a series of incidents began in Aintab: On 17 December, a former Turkish veterinarian was attacked in the evening by two Algerian skirmishers who took his money; the assailants were never identified. The following day, on Sunday 18 December, French troops, whose actions up to that time had not given rise to any investigation, spread out all over the city with a bad prejudice, starting a brawl in the Verdun Cafeteria in the Armenian quarter and removing the veils of women in the Turkish quarter.<sup>72</sup> On the night of the same day, a service patrol was attacked by two men with pistols, both Armenians. Moreover, bottles were thrown several times at a group of French officers by Armenians on a balcony, even though they identified themselves. The Armenians were arrested by the Turkish police.

On 19 December the commander of the Turkish gendarmerie received a complaint about the theft by French soldiers from a suitcase merchant in a Turkish town. The soldiers were punished by the commander. On 20 December, at around 8.00 p.m., an armed clash broke out between a group of five Turkish villagers and the Spahi farm outpost outside the town; one of the Turks, shot in the stomach, died in hospital the following morning. The villagers claimed that the shooting happened due to a mistake and that the shepherds had started shooting at a wolf they had chased to the outpost. The French military authority decided this case in favour of the Turkish side. On 22 December, at the beginning of the night, the sentry of the Algerian skirmishers post was shot, the assailants were captured by the Turkish gendarmerie and it was established that the murder had been committed by three Armenians<sup>73</sup>.

Between 30 December and 3 January, the desecration of French military cemeteries was brought to the public's attention and the decision to repair them was implemented<sup>74</sup>. The perpetrators of the acts of vandalism were arrested and the requested immaterial compensation was paid in an official ceremony attended by civil-military officials, a Catholic priest, an imam and a team of 30 armed Turkish soldiers<sup>75</sup>. It was also found that three Muslim graves had been, and continued to be, dug up<sup>76</sup>.

A meeting of the Sub-Commission for the Evacuation of Aintab-Kilis<sup>77</sup> (composed of the French Consul, Sandfort, Captain Peulvey of the Army of the Levant, Captain Bourgon of the Intelligence Service, and Lieutenant Curnier of the Kilis Intelligence Service)<sup>78</sup> was held on 4 December 1921. The

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72 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 55.

73 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 56.

74 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 57.

75 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 58.

76 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 60.

77 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 62.

78 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 61.



administration of the Aintab Sanjak would be handed over to Münir Bey at the Aintab Mansion the following morning, and the appointment of the new governor of Kilis would be made as soon as possible after the Aintab authorities had taken control of the relevant departments, it was agreed in the presence of the Evacuation Commission, the Joint Sub-Commission, dignitaries and representatives of all communities that the gendarmerie of the sanjak and the police of the new government would take up their duties in Kilis from 4 December, but only on the day of the transfer of powers to the new Governor of Kilis, and that the police stations in the interior of the city would be taken over by the police officers and gendarmes of the new government<sup>79</sup>. The speech of the French Consul, Mr de Sandfort, and the positive attitude of the Governor created a good impression<sup>80</sup>. The officials arrived and took their places, the transfer of services was carried out without demonstrations, and the Governor made a reassuring statement reminding everyone in the city that the new Government was determined to enforce order<sup>81</sup>.

At the request of Captain Bourgon, representative of the Evacuation Sub-Commission regarding the organization of the Commission for the Property of Immigrants in Aintab, at 10 a.m. on 7 December 1921, Yeghiazar Benlian, delegate of the Armenian Orthodox Community, Dr. Khalfayan, delegate of the Armenian Protestant Community, Naoum Hougaz, delegate of the Armenian Catholic Community, Hakkı Bey, Director of Police, appointed as a member of the commission, and convened under the chairmanship of the mayor, Eşref Bey, decided to establish the powers of the chairman and members of the commission, to choose a place in the city for the meetings of the commission, to determine the method of work, and to entrust each of the delegates of the Armenian communities with the creation of a list of the community's refugees, along with the following: Buildings, furniture, property entrusted to third parties (parents who stayed in Aintab and administrators), property entrusted under the custody of the community, a copy of the list of abandoned property, its translation and the minutes<sup>82</sup>.

The representatives of the Armenian community, explaining that they had difficulty in making a list of the property of the refugees of their community, asked that this task be entrusted to the local authorities of the neighborhood, and the commission decided that the list of properties would be made by the local authorities in cooperation with the Armenian delegates (19 December 1921)<sup>83</sup>.

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79 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 64.

80 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 64.

81 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 64.

82 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 69-70.

83 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 73

The delegates of the Armenian communities conducted a census of the property of 237 refugees on 28 December 1921, and Dr. Khalfayan presented a list based on the name of the emigrant, district, religious denomination, furniture or buildings, name of the tenant, representative of the emigrant, new address of the emigrant, and at the meeting of 31 December 1921, a list of 300 buildings belonging to the emigrants<sup>84</sup>.

According to the report of the meeting of the Commission for the Protection of the Properties of the Refugees of Kilis on 28 December 1921, by the District Governor of Kilis on 17/12/1921, and by the Kilis officer of the Evacuation Commission of Aintab on 8/12/1921, in the context of the fulfillment of the solution proposals made at their meetings, in the presence of the Gendarme Commander, Rasim Bey, the Christian leader representing the Gregorian communities, Agob Basmacian, the elected representative of the Protestant minority, under the chairmanship of Costan Miguirditch (who had gone to Aleppo), Serop Seropian, representing the Catholic and Orthodox minorities, Lieutenant Curnier, appointed by the Sub-Commission of Aintab, and Mayor Tirazzade Ahmed Remzi, it was decided to make an inventory of the properties of the refugees and to protect the rights and interests of the landowners among them, and upon the proposal of the Chairman of the Commission, a sub-commission consisting of two Muslim and two Christian experts would be established to carry out the inventory<sup>85</sup>.

During and after the evacuation, on several occasions between December 25 and 31, French military cemeteries were vandalized, some graves were searched, stelae and crosses were broken and the name 'France' was carved, and also some Muslim graves were vandalized and searched. The Evacuation Commission was informed of the situation and requested that the graves be restored to their original condition and that the duty of punitive damages be fulfilled in respect of the graves. The Turkish authorities immediately carried out the necessary investigation, arrested the perpetrators, carried out the necessary repairs in accordance with the original and the moral reparation was fulfilled by holding an official ceremony at the cemeteries<sup>86</sup>.

Meanwhile, when Christians expressed their concern about threats from some extremists who had recently returned to Gazi Aintab, Mustafa Kemal sent a letter to the residents of Ghazi Aintab in response to a congratulatory message, reminding them that extremists should be prevented from committing acts or

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84 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 77-78.

85 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 79.

86 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 80-119.

87 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 65.

uttering words that might alarm Christians and suggesting contact with the Governor<sup>87</sup>.

In addition, the troops of the Algerian Fighter Regiment, which had returned to the city from the outposts due to bad weather conditions were placed in the Armenian quarter (because the houses in the Armenian quarter remained intact), and the Governor informed the authorities that he would imprison the local authorities if they refused to return the produce of their harvest to the Christians<sup>88</sup>.

On 25 December, the French troops moved out by 7 a.m. The Turkish troops, consisting of 175 cavalry, 4 75-gun cannons and between 400 and 500 men, entered the city from the Maraş road at 2 p.m. without any incident, speeches were made, a reception ceremony was held, and Captain Peulvey met with Colonel Talat Bey<sup>89</sup>.

Barthe de Sandfort, the French consul in charge of the mission in Adana, wrote to Foreign Minister Briand, in a letter dated 30 December 1921, addressed to Ayntab and titled “Statements of an officer of the nationalist army”. He stated the following in his letter: *“The day after the Turkish troops entered Aintab, Captain Peulvey, Captain Bourgon and I were invited to dinner at Colonel Talat Bey’s house. Surrounded by his officers and the Governor General, the colonel gave the floor during the evening to his deputy commander Nuri Bey, one of the most typical figures of the nationalist general staff. Nuri Bey, a very active participant in the battle of Sakarya, with an extremely aggressive and irritable disposition, had just returned from the Anatolian front: ‘As long as there is a Turk left alive, Izmir will not belong to the Greeks,’ he says. ... ‘The strong support they found in London is beginning to disappoint them and the British have offered to withdraw from the war game if we give them freedom in Mesopotamia. But we do not want to negotiate and we will not give in on the Mesopotamian issue as we did on the Smyrna and Thrace issue’. On many occasions, Commander Nuri Bey expressed the Turks’ deep gratitude to France, which was the first to extend its hand to them, and proved to the whole world the rightness of their cause”*<sup>90</sup>.

According to French military documents, the border was very permeable and while some Armenians took refuge in Aleppo, where they gladly accepted the

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88 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 66.

89 Château de Vincennes, Rapports, p. 66.

90 M. Barthe de Sandfort, consulchargé de mission à Adana, à M. Briand, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, D. n° 5. Aintab, 30 décembre 1921. (Reçu : 27 janvier 1922.), a. s. déclarations d’un officier de l’armée nationaliste, D.D.F., 1921, Tome II, 1er juillet-31 décembre / Ministère des affaires étrangères, Commission de publication des ocuments diplomatiques français ; [rédigé par Anne Hogenhuis-Seliverstoff, Geneviève Bibes, Corine Defrance, Jérôme de Lespinois] ; [sous la direction de Jacques Bariéty]. 2005, p. 808.

“Near East Relief”, others returned to Aintab and Kilis and settled in their old places there. Meanwhile, as they were about to leave Aintab, it was reported that the French military cemeteries in and around the city had been ransacked, crosses and tombstones broken and several graves opened, and the Evacuation Sub-Commission and the authorities were informed. The guilty Muslim fanatics were promptly arrested, material repairs were made, and finally, on 5 January, a formal ceremony was held in the main French cemetery in a friendly tribute to the dead. In the presence of French delegates, Turkish civilian and military officials, a group of 30 Turkish soldiers led by an officer, a priest and an imam, prayers were offered and the ceremony took place<sup>91</sup>.

According to Paillarès, no propaganda was used to encourage the emigration of the Cilicians, and Christians and some Muslims were instinctively<sup>92</sup> motivated to emigrate by this unique population,<sup>93</sup> which found itself abandoned to its tragic fate and sacrificed to the relentless Moloch<sup>94</sup>.

## Conclusion

It was stated that there were no serious disagreements between the representatives of France and the Ankara government on the implementation of the treaty, on the contrary, great goodwill and efforts were made to resolve the issues amicably, and that the Christian factor had to leave a city which was an important ‘client community’ for the French and which they were believed to have occupied to defend them<sup>95</sup>. Evacuations were carried out everywhere in an orderly and calm manner<sup>96</sup>. Decisions concerning minorities were resolved strictly within the framework of decisions taken in ‘mixed commissions’ in which representatives of each community participated. However, the Christians who did not want to migrate remained in their places, especially the Armenians, most of whom stayed in their places of their own accord, and the Armenians who had initially migrated were provided with every opportunity to return and were employed in Ghazi Aintab.

In the declaration issued to the ‘Christians of Cilicia’ following the Treaty of Ankara, it was emphasized that the allegations made against the treaty were completely unfounded, that all the general guarantees provided to minorities

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91 Bulletin périodique n° 39, 5 décembre 1921-5 janvier 1922, p. 7.

92 Paillarès, Michel, *Le Kémalisme devant les Alliés, éditions du Bosphore*, Constantinople-Paris, 1922, p. 386.

93 Paillarès, M., 1922, p. 386.

94 Paillarès, M., 1922, p. 386.

95 Château de Vincennes, Bulletins et rapports périodiques provenant du haut commissariat sur la situation en Syrie et en Cilicie, Dossier, 001, p. 3.

96 Bulletins et rapports Dossier, 001, p. 05.

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in European countries were essential and that both Governments promised to fulfill their agreed guarantees, that a Joint Franco-Turkish Commission representing all communities had been appointed to protect abandoned properties, that any acts of looting would be punished mercilessly, that the return of the refugees to their homes was guaranteed to everyone in the context of freedom and justice<sup>97</sup>.

According to Aurore Bruna,<sup>98</sup> in the defense of Aintab, which was a Pyrrhic victory for them, France, facing reality and focusing on its domestic politics, only wished to rebuild itself and find peace, legitimized a revolutionary government and officially recognized the new state with the Treaty of Ankara. The scope of the Treaty of Ankara is therefore remarkable because modern-day Türkiye is based on this Kemalist Türkiye. The Ankara Treaty is therefore an extremely important diplomatic achievement<sup>99</sup>.

By signing the Treaty of Ankara, Mustafa Kemal rendered the Tripartite Agreement<sup>100</sup> between Britain, France and Italy, which was based on a campaign to divide and fragment Anatolia, inoperative.

In the context of the disputes between Britain and France, Britain accused France of violating the Tripartite Agreement. However, on 14 July 1921, France gave precise assurances to the British Government, emphasizing that France had no choice but either to retain its troops and continue the war in Cilicia or to negotiate with the de facto power in command of the Turkish troops in this region, and after a clear, strong and continuous expression of the will of the French nation in favor of evacuation, the French Government declared that it was obliged to pursue the conclusion of a local arrangement. The present document was sent to the British Government on 4 April 1921, and it was emphasized, as had already been verbally communicated to Lord Hardinge, that the Treaty of Ankara was a local arrangement of local scope, concluded only by an authority capable of fulfilling and enforcing its commitments, and by a force displaying patriotism and loyalty<sup>101</sup>. Another issue was that the Treaty also ceded a strip of territory conquered by British troops in violation of the Allies' joint commitments<sup>102</sup>.

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97 Adana, 1e Novembre 1921 signe : Mouhiddine Pacha, Hamid Bey, Franklin-Bouillon, Proclamation p. 205-206.

98 See: Gauin, Maxime, "Review Essay: Aurore Bruna's Anti-History of the Ankara Agreement," *Review of Armenian Studies*, Issue 43 (2021): 141-175.

99 Bruna, Aurore, La France, les Français face à la Turquie, *IRICE* | Bulletin de l'Institut Pierre Renouvin, 2008/1 N° 27, p. 27-41.

100 Tripartite Agreement between the British Empire, France and Italy respecting Anatolia [Cmd. 963.] signed at Sèvres August 10, 1920, printed and published by His Majesty's Stationery Office, London 1920.

101 *D.D.F. 1921*, Tome II, 1er juillet-31 décembre, p. 574-593.

102 Château de Vincennes, Rapport de l'attaché militaire, dossier no 1, série 1920-1940, carton 7 N 3212.

The disputes, especially between Britain and France, significantly undermined the Tripartite Treaty and solidified the foundations of the nascent Turkish Republic.

Mustafa Kemal expressed his views on the Treaty of Ankara in a speech to the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye on 5 December 1921 as follows:

*“Within the framework of the newly concluded treaty with France, our officials have returned to Adana, which has been an integral part of our country for centuries but has been under military occupation since the end of the Great War. I praise the Almighty God for the return of the province of Adana and other parts of our lands to the motherland. On behalf of the Grand National Assembly, I am happy to greet the people of this part of the country in their homeland. (...) The people of Adana and the Aintab region, who, having been subjected to the calamities and sorrows of the Great War, have now found tranquillity, will naturally devote themselves to the development and prosperity of the country, (...) The various minorities in the territory of Türkiye, who have lived for centuries with the fraternity and affection of a native son, and who have been bound together by the strongest of social bonds, the interest of participation, and who have been attached to this country by many precious memories, (...) also have their duties to perform. In order to remind you of these duties in a few words, I am addressing the entire population, without distinction of sex or religious denomination: The Government of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye is a democratic government, the nation and the Government are in close cooperation in all matters of national concern. It is futile to dwell on the need for tranquillity felt by our country, it must be refuted by actions. In the face of the malign voices raised by our enemies, it is necessary to prove to our friends as well as to our enemies that we are the members of a free and united nation. Therefore, it is your duty to help the government and always put the interests of the country above personal interests. I am convinced that the people, who have so far shown their ability to maintain their dignity and tranquility in the face of many extraordinary and important events, will appreciate this necessity this time as well, and will establish mutual affection in their minds, regardless of religion and ethnicity, and will not take any action that is contrary to reason and logic.”<sup>103</sup>*

By the time the imperialist states realized that they were faced with a genius, it was already too late.

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103 Château de Vincennes, Bulletin de renseignements, Proclamation, p. 143-144-145. See : *Atatürk'ün Tamim, Telgraf ve Beyannameleri*, Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, Ankara 2006, Belge No : 437, p. 442.



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