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THE BRAIN OF THE ORGANIZATION: TALÂT PASHA

Teşkilatın Beyni Talât Paşa

Hasan BABACAN

Abstract: Mehmet Talât Pasha, the most important figure of the Committee of Union and Progress, was born in Edirne in 1874. Although known as a Pasha in history, Talât Pasha had started civil service as a civil servant at Edirne Post-Telegraph Administration and was called a Pasha since he became a Grand Vizier, according to the rules of the Ottoman Empire. In Thessaloniki, where he was exiled as an officer of Post-Telegraph, he became a founder of the Ottoman Society of Liberty with the influence of his brother-in-law İsmail Yörük and his other friends. Thus, the Committee, which initially operated as an underground organization, got stronger and became the Committee of Union and Progress as the Military staff in Rumelia became members of the Committee and Process, which led to the declaration of the Second Constitutional Monarchy. Following the declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy on July 24, 1908, Talât Pasha entered the parliament as the Edirne Member of Parliament. He became the minister of Internal Affairs in the government that was established after the Bâbüâlî Raid. Before and during the First World War, as the minister of Internal Affairs, he dealt with the issue of immigrants from the Balkans, the issue of Armenians, and especially the issue of forced Armenian migration. He became the Grand Vizier on February 4, 1917. During his Office as Grand Vizier, while the First World War continued, he dealt with problems such as the subsistence of the army and cities. Towards the end of the war, on the night of November 2, following the Armistice of Mudros, he left İstanbul with the leaders of the Union and Progress. He moved to Germany and continued his political activities while he lived in Berlin. On March 15, 1921, he was killed by an Armenian terrorist. On February 20, 1943, his body was brought to Turkey and buried at Hürriyet-i Ebediye hill.

Key Words: Talât Pasha, Union and Progress, Armenian Deportation, World War I, 31 March Incident, Sublime Port Raid

Öz: İttihat Terakki'nin en önemli figürü niteliğinde bir şahsiyet olan Mehmet Talât Paşa, 1874 yılında Edirne'de doğdu. Tarihte paşa tanınmasına rağmen Edirne Posta-Telgraf İdaresinde sivil memurlukla devlet görevine başlayan Talât Paşa, Osmanlı Devleti kurallarına göre sadrazamlık makamına geldiği için paşa olarak anılmıştır. Posta-telgraf memuru olarak sürgün edildiği Selânik'te eniştesi İsmail Yörük ve diğer arkadaşlarının etkisiyle Osmanlı Hürriyet Cemiyetinin kurucu kadrosunda yer almıştır. Böylece başlangıçta yeraltı örgütü olarak faaliyet gösteren cemiyet, güçlenerek Rumeli'deki askerî personelin de cemiyete üye olmaya başlamasıyla İttihat Terakki Cemiyetine dönüşmüş ve İkinci Meşrutiyet'in ilanına giden süreç yaşanmıştır. Talât Paşa, 24 Temmuz 1908'de meşrutiyetin ilanının ardından, Edirne mebusu olarak meclise girmiştir. Bâbüâlî Baskımı'nın ardından kurulan hükümette dâhiliye nazırı oldu. Birinci Dünya Savaşı öncesi ve savaş döneminde dâhiliye nazırı olarak Balkanlardan gelen göçmenler sorunu ve Ermeni meselesi ile ve özellikle de zorunlu Ermeni göçü konularıyla meşgul oldu. 4 Şubat 1917'te sadrazamlığa getirildi. Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nın devam ettiği günlerde geldiği sadrazamlık döneminde ordunun ve şehirlerin iaşesi gibi sorunlarla ilgilendi. Savaşın sonlarına doğru Mondros Mütarekesi'nin ardından 2 Kasım gecesi, İttihat Terakki liderleriyle İstanbul'dan ayrıldı. Almanya'ya geçti, Berlin'de yaşadığı günlerde siyasi faaliyetlerini devam ettirdi. 15 Mart 1921 günü bir Ermeni terörist tarafından öldürüldü. 20 Şubat 1943 günü naaşı Türkiye'ye getirildi ve Hürriyet-i Ebediye tepesine defnedildi.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Talât Paşa, İttihat Terakki, Ermeni Tehciri, Birinci Dünya Savaşı, 31 Mart Hadisesi, Bâbüâlî Baskını

Introduction

Talât Bey's real name is Mehmed Talât. He was born in Edirne on September 1, 1874.¹ Talât Bey's father was from Çepleci village of Kırcaali, which is today within the borders of Bulgaria. His father, Ahmet Vasıf Efendi, had attended a madrasah in Edirne and had worked as a kadi and müstantik, in other words, as an investigating judge. He had died when he came to Kırcaali on leave from his duty as Vize investigating judge. His mother was Hürmüz hanım, the daughter of Bayraktar Hüseyin Ağa from Sellüken town of Cisri Mustafa Pasha district.² When Talât Bey was three years old, his family migrated to İstanbul during the busy days of 93 War and lived near Çatladıkapı. They returned to Edirne after staying in İstanbul for about a year.³

After attending Vize Primary School, Talât Bey started Edirne Military Junior High School. A few days before he would receive his diploma, he was expelled from the school for beating an officer who was his teacher, and he was not given his diploma. Although he was given his diploma three months later upon the insistence and intervention of Refik Bey, the head of the provincial treasury, he could not start İdadi; that is, high school. Since his family's financial status was poor, he did not have the opportunity to attend school further.

He started civil service as an intern clerk at Edirne Post-Telegraph administration. A year later, he was appointed as Edirne telegraph Office of general directory registrar with a salary of three hundred kuruş on July 24, 1891. While working here, he was sentenced to three years of confinement in a fortress by the Edirne Court of Appeal on the allegation that he was involved in politics. He was dismissed from duty on June 30, 1897, and sent to Edirne Prison.⁴

After being in prison for about a year and a half, Talât Bey was pardoned by an amnesty issued by Sultan Abdülhamid II on the condition that he would be given a suitable post in another province and was appointed as a mobile postal clerk on July 13, 1898, to work between Thessaloniki and Bitola. One year later, he was appointed as a clerk in the Chief Directorate of Post and Telegraph of Thessaloniki. On April 15, 1903, he was promoted to chief correspondence clerk of the same institution. During the years he continued in this position, he was also secretly engaged in politics.

Considering the conditions of the period, the Post-Telegraph administration was the most important communication institution of the Ottoman Empire. By starting to work in this institution, Talât Bey had the opportunity to get acquainted with the outside world. Thanks to this duty, on the one hand he had the chance to receive news about the events in various parts of the country and on the other hand to be informed about the developments outside the country. Various publications and telegraphs from Europe and Rumelia passed from Talât Bey. Besides the information from these, he met many people in Edirne through distribution services; thus expanding his circle and other people's trust in him.

Besides his position at Post-Telegraph Administration, Talât Bey had also started teaching Turkish at Alyans İsrailitè school through the agency of some of his friends. Founded in the second half of the 19th century, Alyans İsrailitè Universelle was an institution that provided education in line with Zionist principles, helped Jews in various parts of the world, and aimed to strengthen their position in the places they lived. Talât Bey's being a teacher at Alyans İsrailite had an essential place in his life. This was because he learned some values he could not

¹ Presidency of the Republic of Turkey Directorate of State Archives Ottoman Archives (BOA), *Sicill-i Ahval Defteri*, 70/87.

² Murat Bardakçı, *Talât Paşa'nın Evrak-ı Metrûkesi* (İstanbul: Everest Yayınları, 2008), 235-235. According to İ. Mahmut Kemal İnal, Talât Pasha's mother was noted as the daughter of Bayraktar Hüseyin Ağa from Sellüken town of Cisri Mustafa Pasha district (İ. Mahmut Kemal İnal, *Son Sadrazamlar V. III*, (İstanbul, Undated), 1933.

³ İ. M. Kemal İnal, *ibid.* 1933; Tefik Çavdar, *Talât Paşa Bir Örgüt Ustasının Yaşam Öyküsü* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yay. 1995), 10; Ziya Şakir, *Yakın Tarihin Üç Büyük Adamı: Talât, Cemal, Enver Paşa'lar* (İstanbul, 1943), 4.

⁴ Ziya Şakir, *ibid.*, 14.

hear or learn from his immediate circle in this school. His position at Alyans also increased his knowledge of various subjects. He was able to follow the developments in the world from French magazines and newspapers that came to the Jews here. He also learned his first deep-rooted knowledge about the French Revolution at this school. French Revolution greatly impacted Talât Bey, as was the case with many Turkish intellectuals of the day. In later years, he stated that these thoughts also influenced him.

The Foundation of Union and Progress

Talât Bey's sister had married İsmail Yürük, a distant relative, in 1885. After this marriage, Talât Bey's relations with his brother-in-law constituted a turning point in Talât Bey's intellectual and political life.

İsmail Yürük was telling his brother-in-law Talât about the activities of Turkish patriots working in Europe and Egypt to overthrow Sultan Abdulhamid and abolish autocracy. He also saw no harm in telling him about the branch in Ruse and the position he had taken there. Talât Bey, a young postal clerk, listened carefully to all these and was greatly influenced by these ideas.⁵ Another person who influenced the development of Talât Bey's opposing ideas against the administration was Hafız İbrahim who was a man with a dirty urban and torn gown, who was not noticed by anyone at the time but who had later become a member of the parliament for İpek.⁶

Hafız İbrahim often traveled to Edirne and believed he could easily convey his ideas against the oppression. He thought that if he could succeed in this, he would be able to pressure İstanbul and even overthrow the government and the rule of the tyrant and establish constitutionalism. He was expanding his circle in Edirne with these thoughts. His close circle in Edirne consisted of the chief physician of Merkez Hospital, Doctor Mehmed Bey, physician of the cavalryman Doctor İsmail Bey; principal of military high school Behçet Bey; population clerk Kaltakkıran Faik Bey from Edirne customs officer Necip Efendi and Postal administration clerk Talât Bey.

This group sometimes gathered in the small room of Talât Bey's house that overlooked the courtyard and read the newspapers and pamphlets sent by İsmail Yürük Bey. In contrast, sometimes they would gather in the mansion of Faik Bey, who was Talât Bey's neighbor and held patriotic discussions. They wanted to re-establish the Committee of Union and Progress dissolved in İstanbul. They had not yet formed an organization, but they had spread their ideas against tyranny to all intellectuals and youth of Edirne. Corporal Cemal and gunner Şerafeddin always attended meetings and tried to spread their ideas among the community with newspapers and pamphlets read in these meetings.

The secret meetings held and negotiations continued until the middle of 1895. Since the regulars in these meetings had increased considerably, they were now considering forming an organization. However, a report by someone named Mülâzım Said Efendi struck a significant blow to their activities and they were all arrested. After six months of initial investigation, the organization's members were divided into two. Since they were soldiers, the documents of chief physician, Doctor İsmail, Lieutenant Ahmet Bey, Corporal Cemal, gunner Şerafeddin, and mobile gunner were sent to the Martial Court. The civilians' documents were sent to court, and they were sent to city prison.

As a result of the trials, Hafız İbrahim, who had attempted to establish a secret organization called the Committee of Union and Progress, was sentenced to six years of prison with Article 58 of the Penal Code, and the others were sentenced to confinement in a prison for three years due to some extenuating circumstances. Talât Bey was also among these prisoners.

⁵ Ziya Şakir, *ibid.*, 5.

⁶ Ziya Şakir, *ibid.*, 6-8.

He was found guilty by the Edirne Court of Appeal, immediately dismissed from civil service on July 30, 1897, and sent to Edirne prison to serve his sentence. In prison, they were made to talk about their ideas and their meetings, and they were tortured in various ways.

Talât Bey was not idle during his prison life. Although the court had banned him from politics and imprisoned him to keep him away from politics, he continued to encourage other prisoners and intellectuals to act against tyranny. Whenever he had the chance, he sent letters to the opposition in Paris. In the meantime, while waiting for the court to approve their sentence, the news came that Sultan Abdülhamid pardoned the sentences of the court. Talât Bey and his friends were released from the prison where they were imprisoned for about a year and a half on condition that they would not stay in Edirne and would not go to İstanbul. The rest of their sentences were converted into exile. Hafız İbrahim Efendi preferred to go to Kosovo, and Talât Bey did not want to leave him. However, the government did not consider it appropriate for them to be together. For this reason, it was deemed appropriate for Talât Bey to live in Thessaloniki, and he went there.⁷

In the first days of his arrival in Thessaloniki, he could not find a job immediately and wandered the streets hungry and miserable. He had come here as a political prisoner, and therefore, he was under the control of the police, and he was also a feared person. The municipality of Thessaloniki saw his difficult condition and gave him a minimal salary. After a few months, he made friends with the postmen, who were his colleagues. His postman friends in Thessaloniki helped him to start working in postal administration again. Therefore, as of July 13, 1898, Talât Bey was appointed as a mobile post officer with a salary of 540 kuruş between Thessaloniki and Monastir.⁸

In this new position, Talât Bey took mail from Thessaloniki to Viranya on the border of Austria, and then he took the mail from Europe to Thessaloniki. This was a position that could ensure direct contact with Europe. While in this position, he got to know the whole of Rumelia and those who thought like him in Rumelia. The fact that he received mail from Vrianya meant that Talât Bey delivered a mischievous document from Europe. Within a short time, he became the person sought and trusted by intellectuals and anti-tyranny environments in Thessaloniki.

During the first days in Thessaloniki, Talât Bey met two officers. One was Kemal Bey, a lieutenant from the Thessaloniki Redif division, while the other was Thessaloniki Military High School's French teacher Giritli Naki Bey. After a while, he met Tahir Bey from Bursa, who was the principal of Thessaloniki Military High School. Tahir Bey was a person loved and trusted by those around him. He was also using his knowledge, experience, and means to help the libertarians in the city. He was trying to encourage young officers of the Third Army to the idea of revolution by delivering them the newspapers issued by the Unionists abroad.⁹

On April 14, 1899, Talât Bey was appointed as a clerk at the headquarters of the Thessaloniki Postal Administration, and his circle expanded. He had met the intellectuals and leading people of Thessaloniki and became close enough with them to share their ideas and thoughts. Talât Bey frequently met his friends with whom he shared the same ideas and, they came together in secret and special places with the fear of being followed. In August 1899, on a Friday, he and his seven friends went to Çavuş Monastery, one of the famous recreation areas. During the political talks, Talât Bey said it was time to act and that the sultan had to be dethroned first. When asked how his ideas could be realized, he said they could be realized by communicating with those in Europe and making common decisions. His friends immediately accepted this idea of Talât Bey. They wrote a letter to Paris right there. In the letter, they said that they decided to establish a secret organization in Thessaloniki, and they talked about their

⁷ Ziya Şakir, *ibid.*, 9; Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, *Talât Paşa* (İstanbul, 1943), 12-13.

⁸ BOA, *Sicill-i Ahval Defteri*, 70/87; BOA, *Telgraf ve Posta Nezareti İradeleri*, 487/7, Lef 1.

⁹ Ziya Şakir, *ibid.*, 11.

ideas and plans. In the reply that was received shortly, the Young Turks in Paris approved these ideas of those in Thessaloniki. They stated that they thought this organization, managed with caution and prudence, would bring significant benefits to the country. Ideas and dreams had now turned into reality. What made Talât Bey Talât Bey was this initiative, decision, and courage.¹⁰

By 1906, Thessaloniki and its neighborhood had all the conditions and political background for the Young Turk movement and other organizations opposing the Ottoman administration. Such an environment was favorable for forming a secret movement among Turks. In this political and social environment, the Ottoman Liberty Society was founded in Thessaloniki in September 1906. As a result of private meetings that started as friend meetings on a Friday at İsmail Canbolat's house in July 1906, it was decided to establish the organization.

The ten people who gathered in Mithat Şükrü's house, Bursalı Tahir, Selânik Military High School's French teacher Naki, chief clerk of Thessaloniki Post and Telegraph Office Talât, Thessaloniki board of education accountant and Thessaloniki High School's teacher Mithat Şükrü, Rahmi, Ömer Naci, Kazım Nami, İsmail Canbolat, Hakkı Baha, Edip Servet are the founders of the organization. Four members were elected to lead the organization. These were Mehmet Talât, İsmail Canbolat and Rahmi and Mithat Şükrü. These members were selected as the Committee of the Assembly, later called the High Commission.

Although founded secretly, this movement started in Thessaloniki due to the favorable political and social environment and soon spread to other cities of Macedonia and the Balkans. Bitola branch of the organization was established after a short time. Thus, Bitola became the second most important center. Immediately after this, Resne, Ohri, Üsküp, Gevelyi, Serez, Edirne, and Drama committees were founded, and the movement established an effective control network in the Balkans.

One of the institutions that the Society used during the rapid spread of its ideas was the Masonic lodges in Thessaloniki and Macedonia. In Thessaloniki, there were Macedonia Rizorta, Laborlux lodges affiliated with the Italian Masonic Lodge, Perseveratzia lodges affiliated with the Spanish Masonic Lodge, l'Avenir de Orient, Veritas lodges affiliated with the French Masonic Lodge. There were also those affiliated with the Athens Masonic Lodge. The lodges that were influential in developing the Ottoman Liberty Society were Macedonia Rizorta's and Veritas's lodges. Talât Bey, Mithat Şükrü, and Kazım Nami were members of the Macedonia Rizorta Lodge. The master of the Veritas lodge was Emanuel Karasu, who later became a member of the central general assembly of the Committee of the Union and Progress. When the Young Turks were looking for safe meeting places in Thessaloniki, Karasu suggested meeting in masonic lodges. For this reason, Karasu was the real connection between the Masonic Lodge of Italy and the Young Turks. Talât Bey, Naki Bey, İsmail Canbolat, and Cemal Pasha were in this lodge. While the Ottoman Liberty Society was being founded and secretly spreading, until 1907, the Young Turks in Paris did not hear about this organization that operated within the Empire. The society in Thessaloniki knew about the activities of those abroad. The communication with those in Paris took place through the Canal of Bucharest. Talât Bey was the courier for communication within the Ottoman territory, while his brother-in-law was the liaison with Bucharest via Bulgaria.

By the winter of 1907, the spies of the Hafiye Organization were almost sure that something was happening in Thessaloniki. Although it was known how common the society

¹⁰ Two and a half years before the declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy, Talât Bey made the proposition: 'Friends, this will not end with distributing and reading newspapers and magazines. Let's form a society, and when we have more members, let's go to İstanbul, kill Sultan Hamid, and attempt to restore the constitutional monarchy. Halil Menteşe, *Osmanlı Mebusan Meclisi Reisi Halil Menteşe'nin Anıları* (İstanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları, 1986), 121.

was, they were suspicious of certain people. In March 1907, Talât Bey told Ömer Naci and Hüsrev Sami, who were members of the Thessaloniki committee like him, that he had seen the secret notice ordering their arrest. Ömer Naci had attracted the attention of Yıldız because of his verbal duel with Rıza Tevfik in the columns of the magazine called Çocuk Bahçesi. Ömer Naci and Hüsrev Sami ran to Paris immediately by telling only Talât Bey. They were terrified that they would be arrested. They planned to examine the programs of Ahmet Rıza and Prince Sabahattin in Paris, if possible, and to join forces with the one they had the most in common.

Ömer Naci and Hüsrev Sami, who reached Paris towards the end of March 1907, began to examine the programs immediately. Towards the end of the same year, following long discussions and conflicts, it was decided to interconnect the two groups. This proposal was discussed in the Committee of Experts and accepted at the end of a secret vote. Thus, the Committee of Union and Progress, the headquarters of which was in Paris, and the Ottoman Liberty Society, the headquarters of which was in Thessaloniki, were united as of September 27, 1907, under the name Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress, on condition that they followed the terms set between them. In the first days of 1908, this name was turned into Union and Progress.

Declaration of Constitutional Monarchy

By 1908, the Union and Progress movement, which had developed around Thessaloniki, had expanded its organization in Macedonia and the Balkans, formed foreign relations, and even established a counter-intelligence organization against the intelligence organization of Abdülhamid II's administration. Despite these developments, they were not planning to start a revolutionary movement immediately. However, the development of foreign events caused them to act faster. In short, the movement that organized the actions that led to the declaration of the second Constitutional Monarchy and which took an active role in the power struggle after 1908 is the movement that emerged and developed in Thessaloniki.¹¹

Enver Bey, who proclaimed liberty in Köprülü on July 21, 1908, went to Tikveş from here. Enver Bey, who received the invitation telegraph of the Committee from Thessaloniki when he was in Tikveş, went to Thessaloniki by train on July 23, 1908, after the publication of the will of Abdülhamid II calling the Assembly of the Parliament to meet again. He was given a magnificent welcome here. Enver Bey had now become Major Enver Bey, the hero of liberty. When Enver and Niyazi Bey, the heroes of the events that led to the declaration of Constitutional Monarchy, arrived in Thessaloniki by train, Talât Bey congratulated them before anyone else. They held Enver Bey's hand and got off the train together, and he introduced them to the cheering crowd as "Long live the hero of freedom, long live Enver, long live Niyazi." This way, Talât Bey showed his political maneuverability and intelligence by trying to prevent Enver Bey from coming to the front and to show their success as the success of the people.¹²

After the reinstatement of the Constitutional Law by the Sultan, that is, after the declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy, the Committee of the Union and Progress applied to Bâbüâlî through Inspector General Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, and first of all, proposed the abolition of the secret service and then asked for permission for some of its members to go to İstanbul to make the necessary negotiations on political issues. Although this proposal made the neurotic Sultan Abdülhamid hesitate, a delegation of the society was allowed since it was stated in the Council of Ministers minutes of July 29, 1908, presented to him that this would be useful for ensuring security. On July 31, 1908, it was announced that the secret service was abolished. On the same day, there was a news in İstanbul papers that a special delegation including members

¹¹ Cemal Kutay, "II. Meşrutiyet'e Giden Kanlı Yol", *Yıllarboyu Tarih*, 4, (July 1978): 14-17; Tevfik Çavdar, *Türkiye'nin Demokrasi Tarihi (1839-1950)*, (İstanbul: İmge, 1995), 94-95.

¹² İ. Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, "1908 Yılında II. Meşrutiyetin Ne Şekilde ilân Edildiğine Dair Vesikalar", *Belleten*, XX/77 (1956): 150.

of the Committee of Union and Progress Majors Cemal and Hakkı Bey, and Necip, Talât, Rahmi, Cavit and Hüseyin Bey, Talât Bey and Hafız Hakkı came from Edirne on August 2, 1908 and started their work in İstanbul.¹³

These influential members of the Committee of Union and Progress who came from Thessaloniki started their activities in İstanbul; Talât Bey and Hafız Hakkı first met the Sultan and got his word that Kamil Pasha would form the cabinet instead of Said Pasha. They also met Kamil Pasha, who was in charge of assembling the Council of Ministers and asked him to appoint the governor and commander of Tripolitania, Recep Pasha, as the Minister of War.¹⁴

After making these political connections, the members of the Committee started preparations for elections to realize the Second Constitutional Monarchy and the parliament. When the Second Constitutional Monarchy was declared, the third general election of the Ottoman Empire after 1876 and 1877 had to be held in 1908. The parliament of the First Constitutional Monarchy had prepared the law on the election of the Members of the Parliament. Since Abdülhamid II had suspended the Constitutional Law for 31 years, the text adopted by the Parliament could not be submitted to the Sultan for his approval and, therefore, did not become a law. With the declaration of the Second Constitutional Monarchy, this situation suddenly came to light, which was unknown or unforgotten until then. This text, which had not been enacted, was found and enacted, and elections were made by this law. The elections were held in November and December.

Leaders of the Central Committee of the Committee of Union and Progress became candidates from various centers. Talât Bey was also a candidate from his hometown, Edirne. The elections were controversial and eventful in Edirne, which was socially and demographically unsettled. When it was realized that Edirne Mayor Dilâver Bey tried to falsify the election results, Dilâver Bey was forced to resign in November 1908. If this deception of the Mayor had not been uncovered, no candidate from the Committee of Union and Progress would have been able to win the elections, and the mayor and two Greek candidates would have been elected as ministers. When the elections were completed, it was found that none of the Greek candidates had been successful. Mayor Dilâver Bey and Philippe Efendi, a lawyer from İstanbul received 44 votes each, doctors working in Edirne T. Calivoulos received 37 votes, Panayoti received five votes, and Grocho Tohorbadji received two votes, and all lost the elections. Talât Bey and Asım Bey received 90 votes each, Rıza Tevfik received 93 votes, and all were elected as ministers.¹⁵

At the end of the elections, the Parliament was opened with a magnificent ceremony on December 17, 1908, in the Courthouse near Ayasofya. The parliament immediately started working after it was opened. After a session on December 23, 1908, voting was held among the ministers to elect a president. Ahmet Rıza Bey was selected as the president with 205 votes. In the vice-president elections on the next day, Talât Bey was elected as the first deputy president by taking 116 of 215 votes.¹⁶

¹³ Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, *Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi*, 2, K: 2 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1991), 68-69; Enver Bolayır, *Talât Paşa'nın Hâtıraları*, (İstanbul, 1946), 39-40; Kâzım Karabekir, *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti 1896-1909*, (İstanbul: Emre Yayınlar, 1995), 359-365.

¹⁴ Bayur, *ibid.*, 90.

¹⁵ Aykut Kansu, *1908 Devrimi*, Tran: Ayda Erbal, (İstanbul: İletişim, 1995), 326-327; İnal, *ibid.*, 1935; BOA *Sicill-i Ahval Defteri*, No: 70, s. 87.

¹⁶ Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Siyasal Partiler*, Vol. III, İstanbul, 1952, 182-183; *Meclis-i Mebusan ve Ayan Reisi Ahmet Rıza Bey'in Anıları*, Haz. Bülent Demirtaş (İstanbul: Arba, 1988), 27; İnal, *ibid.*, 1935; Çavdar, *Talât Paşa*, *ibid.*, 110; Regarding Talât Bey's election as first deputy chairman, Ziya Şakir said: "Talât Bey was fully capable of sitting in the chair of the chairmanship of this assembly. But he showed humility here, too. He left the chair of the presidency to Ahmet Rıza Bey, who was more senior than him, and took the second chair..." Ziya Şakir, *ibid.*, 23.

31 March Incident

The Committee of Union and Progress, which entered the Parliament in a strong position, tended to manage and direct the government behind the scenes due to the need for more trained staff. This caused increased anger against the committee because in the eyes of Bâbüâlî pashas, such as Kâmil Pasha, the members of the committee were seen as children. The conflicts between the committee, the government, and the opposition increased through the press as of February 1909, and the political tension increased in the capital.

In this unsettled political environment, the Committee of the Union of Progress targeted Derviş Vahdeti and his newspaper *Volkan* because they opposed its activities. In this outstanding and tense political environment, the 31 March Incident, the subject of important debates in our history, occurred on April 13, 1909, when the soldiers of the Fourth Shooter Troop in Taşkılla revolted by imprisoning their officers.

When the incidents developed rapidly, and the rebelling soldiers came to the parliament, Talât Bey and Doctor Nâzım took refuge in the house of Ali Cemal Bey in Şehzâdebaşı and hid there for some time. The reason for this escape and hiding was due to the demands of rebels from the government. These demands were reported to the government at various times, with changes, and were reflected in the newspapers. However, according to the news received from a minister and published in *İkdam* on April 15, 1909, the demands of soldiers included sending Talât Bey from İstanbul. The rebels who acted due to this thought started a big hunt for unionists in the capital.¹⁷

On the second day of the incident, Talât Bey left the house he was staying in Şehzadebaşı with Doctor Nâzım Bey and took refuge in another home. Ahmet Rıza Bey thought this was because Talât Bey considered it dangerous to be with him. The exact location of Talât Bey in İstanbul was not known. Nevertheless, on April 15, he sent a telegram asking permission to go to Edirne for ten days to resolve important personal matters. Talât Bey's telegraph and his demand for leave, which came out on a day when the political atmosphere in the capital was so bad, raised the hopes of the opposition on the one hand and also worried his friends in the assembly on the other hand. The fact that he wanted to get away from İstanbul in such an environment as the leader of the Committee of Union and Progress led to different comments. Talât Bey had a sense that the course of incidents was terrible and had to find a way out. In order to put an end to this dire situation as soon as possible, to take the required measures, and to ensure that the parliamentarians and the members of the Assembly could meet in peace, Talât Bey traveled from İstanbul to Ayastefanos on the third day of the incidents.¹⁸

After a large part of the Action Army arrived at Ayastefanos, Talât Bey formed a delegation and started to prepare and send declarations to the government, rebellious soldiers, and students. On April 22, 1909, members of the Parliament began to come together at the yacht Club in Ayasefanos, as the national assembly, under the chairman of Said Pasha. During these first meetings, the National Parliament discussed the issue of the destitution of Sultan Abdülhamid II. Mahmut Şevket Pasha, who had arrived to lead the Action Army in Ayastefanos then, stated that he thought the issue of destitution should be considered later. He stated the reason for this was it was not possible to predict what kind of reaction the army would face in İstanbul and how it would be met while trying to suppress the rebellion. In the secret session of

¹⁷ Incidents such as the murder of Latakia MP Arslan Bey, who was likened to Hüseyin Cahit, caused the leading members of the Committee of Union and Progress to scatter all over the capital and hide. E. Z. Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, Cilt: IX, Ankara, 1996, s. 90-91; Regarding the escape of Hüseyin Cahit, see: Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, "31 Martın provası ve Komedi", in *Yakın Tarihimiz*, V. 1, (İstanbul: Vatan Gazetesi Yayınları, 1962), 136-137.

¹⁸ Ali Cevat Bey, *İkinci Meşrutiyetin İlâmi ve Otuzbir Mart Hadisesi (II. Abdülhamit'in son Mabeyn Başkâtibi Ali Cevat Bey'in Fezlekesi)*, Haz: Faik Reşit Unat, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1985), 186; Also regarding the events on March 31 see. Cavid Bey, *Meşrutiyet Ruznâmesi*, V.1, Haz. Hasan Babacan-Servet Avcı, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2014), 35-37; Çavdar, *Talât Paşa*, *ibid.*, 136-137.

the National Parliament on April 22, 1909, held under the chairmanship of Said Pasha, the issue of destitution was resolved. Still, by the thoughts of Mahmut Şevket Pasha, the decision was left for later.¹⁹

Mahmut Şevket Pasha thought that the issue of destitution would create more dangerous consequences if it became known among soldiers, especially among rebellious soldiers. In addition, he told the chairman of the National Parliament that he thought it would be more appropriate to bring up the issue of destitution after the power of Yıldız was utterly destroyed. Upon this, a telegraph was sent to the grand vizier signed by chief senate Said Pasha, second chief Gazi Ahmet Muhtar Pasha, and first deputy chairman of the Parliament Talât Bey, reporting that the future of the Sultan and his Sultanate was assured. In parallel with this, in his telegraph to the grand vizier, Mahmut Şevket Pasha also denied the rumors and stated that İstanbul would not be occupied.²⁰

The Army of Action entered İstanbul and suppressed the rebellion, after which the National Parliament was notified that security was ensured and that it could convene in its own building in İstanbul. Upon this, the parliament convened in its building in Hagia Sophia on April 27, 1909.²¹ At the end of the secret session chaired by Said Pasha, it was decided to dethrone Sultan Abdülhamid II. However, this decision had to be based on ecclesiastical law, and the approval of Shaykh al-Islam was required. It was decided to invite the Fatwa authority and representative to the parliament immediately. Âyan Gazi Ahmet Muhtar Pasha and İsmail Hakkı Efendi of Bitola and members of parliament Talât Bey and Mustafa Asım Efendi were sent to the Office of Shaykh al-Islam for the invitation.

On the morning of destitution, Talât Bey had personally gone to the houses of Shaykh al-Islam and Fatwa authority Nuri Efendi to the parliament and told them to come to the parliament. Fatwa authority Nuri Efendi made the excuse that he was not authorized to issue a fatwa and that it was Shaykh al-Islam's authority. Talât Bey refused these objections and took him by force. He then went to the Shaykh al-Islam and invited him. With Shaykh al-Islam's excuse that he was sick, Talât Bey asked, "What is wrong?" Shaykh al-Islam answered, "I have incontinence." Talât Bey threatened him as, "Efendi, after it has come to this, I will take you away even if you urinate in your pants, take your urinal with you" and took him to the parliament.²²

During the preparation of the fatwa on destitution, there were discussions about the resignation of the Sultan first, which were put forward by Shaykh al-Islam and Fatwa authority Nuri Efendi. Ultimately, the fatwa was written and signed by putting forward two options covering destitution and resignation. However, while the copy of the fatwa was read in the general board, so many voices of "destitution" were raised on the ministers that it was not possible to put their resignation to vote, and those who wanted this –including those who did not want to offend European rulers- could not say anything out of fear. Meanwhile, Talât Bey's words that destitution was decided in advance and the fatwa came later was adequate, and the parliament agreed on destitution.²³

¹⁹ Ali Cevat, *ibid.*, 187; İsmail Hami Danişmend, *Sadrazam Tevfik Paşa'nın Dosyasındaki Resmî ve Hususî Vesikalara Göre: 31 Mart Vak'ası*, (İstanbul,1972). 127; *Meclis-i Mebusan ve Ayan Reisi Ahmet Rıza Bey'in Anıları*, *ibid.* 38.

²⁰ *Son Vak'anüvis Abdurrahman Şeref Efendi Tarihi*, Haz. Bayram Kodaman, Mehmet Ali Ünal (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1996), 20-21; Danişmend, *Sadrazam Tevfik Paşa'nın.. ibid.*, 127.

²¹ Ali Cevat, *ibid.*, 187-188.

²² *Son Vak'anüvis Abdurrahman Şeref Efendi Tarihi*, *ibid.*, 21-22; Ali Fuat Türkgeldi, *Görüp İşittiklerim*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1987), 36.

²³ The pen with which the fatwa of destitution was signed was kept as a historical souvenir by Ahmet Rıza Bey, the Speaker of the Parliament. For the text of fetva, see Ali Cevat, *ibid.*, 148-149; *Son Vak'anüvis Abdurrahman Şeref Efendi Tarihi*, *ibid.*, 27-31; Bayur, *ibid.*, 211.

Right after the decision for destitution, the parliament elected two delegations immediately to notify Sultan Abdülhamid II of his dethronement and Sultan Mehmet Reşat of his enthronement. The first delegation, which included Âyan former Minister of Navy Arif Hikmet Pasha and Aram Efendi, Draç MP Es'ad Pasha and Thessaloniki MP Karasu Efendi were assigned to inform Sultan Abdülhamid II at Yıldız of his dethronement. Âyan Gazi Ahmet Muhtar Pasha, MP Talât Bey, Mustafa Asım Efendi, Agop Babikyan Efendi, and Aristidi Pasha were assigned to declare Mehmet Reşat at Beşiktaş Dolmabahçe palace his new position and to congratulate his position as the Sultan.²⁴

The delegation, including Talât Bey, went to Dolmabahçe Palace and informed Sultan Mehmet Reşat that he had been appointed as Sultan upon the nation's wish. Upon this, Sultan Mehmet Reşat said: I accept the wish of my people. Since childhood, I have not thought of anything other than the happiness of our people. I will work for our people's happiness with God's help. I am proud to be the first free Sultan of the free nation, and to have accepted his position. The delegation completed its mission and took the Sultan to the Ministry of War. Therefore, Sultan Reşat ascended the throne as Sultan Mehmet IV.²⁵

Talât Bey's Ministry of Internal Affairs

Following these political events, Talât Bey became the Minister of Internal Affairs on August 8, 1909, during the second Grand Vizierate of Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha. In the first days of his Office, the Armenian incidents in Adana took place. Afterward, the Malisör Uprising in Albania and the Ottoman Empire's failure to take the required measures against this uprising increased the opposition against him in the parliament and the government. This first ministry of internal affairs period of Talât Bey lasted until his resignation on February 18, 1909.

During the Balkan War, Talât Bey volunteered to join the army. Enlistment of a political person like Talât Bey had led to various comments. The opponents of the Committee of Union and Progress claimed that Talât Bey had been returned to İstanbul or even expelled by the guard of Edirne Şükrü Pasha because he made negative and political suggestions among soldiers.

Shortly after Talât Bey returned to İstanbul from this voluntary service, a government notice was announced asking volunteers to apply to central command within twenty-four hours. With this announcement, the military officers opposed the Committee, and Talât Bey aimed to catch Talât Bey, whom they considered a deserter. Those days, the government was already hunting Unionists and locked up those they could catch in Bekirağa division. However, they could not catch Talât Bey. It was said that he was wandering around İstanbul and living in Tokatlıyan. Especially in the eyes of police forces, Talât Bey had become an elusive spiritual being. Talât Bey, whom the government was trying so hard to catch, was having secret meetings with the Minister of War Nâzım Pasha and he was dealing with Nâzım Pasha about the path to follow to save the country from the disasters it had fallen into.²⁶

Under these circumstances, the leading figures of the Committee of Union and Progress, especially Talât Bey, had planned and carried out this raid to eliminate the political pressure on them, to put an end to the bad situation in the Balkans, and to find a way to come back to power. Talât Bey was the most important organizer of the Raid of Bâbiâli. As a result of the country's worsening political and military situation and the pressure on the Committee of the Union and Progress, Talât Bey was determined to do whatever it took to come back to power. Intending to

²⁴ For detailed information on the days after the assassination of Sultan Abdülhamit II, his transfer to Thessaloniki, and subsequent developments, see İ. Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, "II. Sultan Abdülhamit 'in Hal'i ve Ölümüne Dair Bazı Vesikalar", *Belleten*, X/ 40, (October 1946): 705-748; *Son Vak'anüvis Abdurrahman Şeref Efendi Tarihi*, ibid., 28.

²⁵ Bayur, ibid. Vol.1/II, 210.

²⁶ Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, "Tanıdıklarım: Talât Paşae, *Yedigün*, 8/186 (1936): 9; Hüsamettin Ertürk, *İki Devrin Perde Arkası*, Haz: Samih Nafiz Tansu, (İstanbul: Sebül Yayinevi, 1996), 161; Ahmet Turan Alkan, *II. Meşrutiyette Ordu ve Siyaset*, (Ankara: Cedit Neşriyat, 1992),165.

prepare a plot to overthrow the government, Talât Bey decided to meet his friends at Emin Beşe's house in Vefa. This meeting discussed the details of the raid and the task distribution. The raid occurred on the afternoon of January 23, 1913, when the MPs were working in Bâbiâli, as previously agreed upon.²⁷

Talât Bey and Enver Bey got into Kâmil Pasha's Office and made him sign his resignation. After Kâmil Pasha's resignation, Talât Bey went to the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the same building, and he informed all provinces of the raid and its reasons with a telegraph, acting as the deputy minister. Meanwhile, Talât Bey sent the former Athens Ambassador to foreign embassies to inform that he had been appointed as the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, internal security would be protected, lives and properties of foreigners were safe, and he gave assurance for these. Although Talât Bey was the person who changed the old government with a coup, he did not take part in Mahmut Şevket Pasha's government that took Office on January 30, 1913.²⁸

Upon the death of Mahmut Şevket Pasha, who had been appointed as grand vizier by the Unionists after the Raid of Bâbiâli, on June 11, 1913, as a result of an assassin, the Minister of External Affairs Said Halim Pasha became grand vizier on June 12. Thus, the Committee of Union and Progress seized power completely. Talât Bey became the Minister of Internal Affairs for the second time by the newly founded Said Halim Pasha government. The most important act of Talât Bey during his second term as the minister of Internal Affairs was taking Edirne back.²⁹

Although the Balkan states united to take our Rumelian land from us, they disagreed about sharing the land they had taken. Serbs and Greeks started to fight with the Bulgarians because of the division of Macedonia, and Romania began to invade the Bulgarian territory. Bulgarians, who were in a difficult situation, started withdrawing their military forces from Edirne.

Talât Bey and Enver Bey, who thought about taking advantage of this favorable situation, acted immediately. In the face of the new situation in the Rumelian territories of the Ottoman Empire, attempts were started as of July 6, 1913, especially for the settlement of the new territory issue between the Ottoman Empire and Bulgarians. The Minister of Internal Affairs Talât Bey, who met French Ambassador Bop, stated that the Ottomans wanted the Ottoman-Bulgarian border to be determined immediately, the Turkish army would advance to the Midye-Enez line, the immigrants who were high in number could be settled in these places, and the army could be demobilized. Talât Bey also spoke about the lack of money in the state and said that the state intended to finish Reji, that is, tobacco monopoly, as soon as possible and to take 1-1,5 million gold liras and pay their salary to workers and the army. Enver Bey tried to persuade Hurşit Pasha, the corps commander of which he was the chief of staff and Talât Bey attempted to convince the cabinet members to take back Edirne. Grand Vizier Said Halim Pasha, shaykh al-islam Esad Efendi, and the Minister of Justice İbrahim Bey were thinking like Talât Bey. Thus, the number of ministers who wanted to take Edirne back was in the majority. While there were ministers who completely opposed this, there were also those who were

²⁷ Tansu, *ibid.*, 107-108; Alkan, *ibid.*, 172.

²⁸ Bayur, *ibid.*, 270; Türkgeldi, *ibid.*, 78-79; for details fo The Raid of the Porte see. Samih Nafiz Kansu, *İttihat ve Terakki İçinde Dönenler*, (İstanbul: İnkılâp Kitabevi, 1960), 104-119; Ertürk, *ibid.*, 91-96; İsmail Hakkı Danişmend, *İzahlı Osmanlı Tarihi Kronolojisi*, Vol. IV, (İstanbul: Türkiye Yayınevi, 1972), 397-401; Şeref Çavuşoğlu, "Benim Gördüğüm Bâbiâli Baskını", *Yakın Tarihimiz*, , V. 1, (İstanbul: Vatan Gazetesi Yayınları, 1962), 193-195; Ali Canip Yöntem, "Bâbiâli Baskını'nın Bilinmeyen Tarafları", *Yakın Tarihimiz*, , V. 2, (İstanbul: Vatan Gazetesi Yayınları, 1962), 387-389.

²⁹ Sina Akşin, *Jön Türkler ve İttihat ve Terakki*, (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1987): 238.

impartial. Talât Bey kept the opposing ministers under constant surveillance so they would not persuade the others.³⁰

Some of the needs of the army had to be met to act. However, since the state budget was empty, funds had to be found urgently. Talât Bey met Mösyö Weyl, the general manager of Reji, and guaranteed to borrow 1.5 million liras on the condition that the period of privileges would be extended for another 15 years. In addition, an advance of 700 thousand liras was taken from the General Debt Administration. The costs of military operations and other urgent needs were met with this money.

After the financial needs were met, the Committee of Union and Progress General Secretary Mithat Şükrü and Cemal Bey met the cabinet members individually and persuaded the ministers to take action. Thus, after great efforts, Talât Bey got the necessary authorization from the Council of Ministers for the army to march Edirne.

On July 20, the government notified the Great Powers with a note through its ambassadors that they would march on Edirne. Without encountering significant resistance, the Ottoman army advanced to the River Meriç, encompassing Eastern Thrace. While the forces commanded by Fethi Bey saved Kırklareli, the forces commanded by Enver Bey took Edirne back on July 21, 1913.³¹

After Edirne was taken back, ceremonies were held on Friday, starting with a mevlit recited in Edirne Sultan Selim Mosque. Salih Pasha to represent the Sultan and some ministers and Talât Bey to represent the government were present in this mevlit and ceremonies. Talât Bey traveled to Edirne by car on the day of the ceremony, met the Muslim and non-Muslim leading figures of the city, and returned to İstanbul after dinner. In the İstanbul Treaty signed with Bulgaria on September 29, 1913, Talât Bey was the head of the Ottoman delegation.

One of the important issues Talât Bey dealt with during his second term as the Minister of Internal Affairs was the migration and the settlement of these migrants after the Balkan Wars. Turkish immigrants from various places in Rumelia settled in some provinces in Thrace and Western Anatolia. As a result of this settlement, some Greeks in the region migrated to Greece. When disputes and disagreements occurred between the two migrant groups, the Minister of Internal Affairs Talât Bey went to Western Anatolia on May 28, 1914, to examine the situation. In his return, he reported his activities to the government and the parliament.³²

By 1914, polarization and sides became more apparent in European politics. Many European countries had taken sides for economic, political, and military reasons and clarified their positions. Ottoman Empire also sought an ally to be trusted in this political environment. For this purpose, back in the first days, he was elected as the Minister of Internal Affairs, Talât Bey traveled to England and sought an alliance with the English government. However, this trip did not produce any positive results since England intended to share the Ottoman land in a possible war.

Entering the First World War

The Ottoman government also attempted to ally with Russia and France during this search for an alliance. The Minister of Internal Affairs Talât Bey traveled with a delegation to the summer palace of Russian Tsar Nicholas II in Crimea-Livatia at the beginning of May 1914 to make a treaty between the Ottoman Empire and Russia. However, despite all of Talât Bey's attempts, no conclusion was reached. Another attempt at alliance was with France. Cemal Pasha

³⁰ Bayur, *ibid.*, 360-396; Türkgeldi, *ibid.*, 105-106;

³¹ Haneî Bostan, *Bir İslâmcı Düşünür Said Halim Paşa*, (İstanbul: İrfan Yayınevi, 1992), 37.

³² Fuat Dündar, "İttihat ve Terakki'nin Etnisite Araştırmaları", *Toplumsal Tarih*, 91 (Temmuz 2001): 43-50; *Menteşe*, *ibid.*, 165-166; Ahmet Halaçoğlu, *Balkan Harbi Sırasında Rumeli'den Türk Göçleri (1912-1913)*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1994), 116-117; Bayur, *ibid.*, 251-252.

traveled to France to attempt the alliance before the First World War; however, the French did not accept this offer.³³

The Ottoman Empire wanted to ally with Germany and all the other great Powers. Attempts were made unofficially in 1913, but Germany did not favor the idea at the time. However, when the winds of war were blowing in Europe, on June 28, 1914, Ferdinand, the heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and his wife were murdered by a Serbian in Sarajevo. After this incident, the Austro-Hungarian government tried to include the Ottoman Empire in an alliance of three in the middle of July 1914. Germany brought up the offer of the Ottoman Empire in 1913 and offered an alliance on July 22, 1914. The search for an alliance with the Ottoman Empire caused the Germans to act, and the Ambassador to Germany, Wangenheim, informed Berlin about the thoughts of government members. In the telegraph sent to Berlin on July 21, a day before the alliance offer, Wangenheim wrote that Said Halim, Talât, and Enver Bey were ready for the alliance. Cemal Pasha's return from France with a negative response on July 18, the suggestions of the German ambassador to the government in favor of an alliance with Germany, and initiatives of the German military delegation in İstanbul in the presence of Enver Pasha played an essential role in Enver Pasha, Talât Bey and Chairman of the Parliament Halil Bey's being in favour of the alliance. Said Halim Pasha, Enver Pasha, Talât Bey, and Halil Bey accepted Germany's alliance offer. The negotiations for the Ottoman-German alliance started on July 26. The secret Ottoman-German alliance was signed in the Yeniköy residence of Grand Vizier Said Halim Pasha by the grand vizier and German ambassador Wangenheim.³⁴

Meanwhile, Talât Bey and Parliament Chairman Halil Bey went to Sofia on August 15, 1914, to persuade Bulgaria to enter the war within the Ottoman-German-Austrian bloc and negotiate an alliance. However, Goben and Breslav ships came to Dardanelles on August 10, 1914, and the announcement that these ships were bought on August 11 brought the Ottoman Empire closer to war, step by step. These two ships sailing to the Black Sea on October 24 with the Ottoman Black Sea Fleet under the command of German admiral Suşon and bombarding the Russian ports on the night of October 29, 1914, caused the Ottoman Empire to enter the war de facto. This entry of the Ottoman Empire into the war caused discussions among the leading figures of the Union and Progress and government members. Talât Bey stated that despite the alliance signed with Germany, members of the government, in fact, tried to be impartial as much as possible and intended to determine their attitudes in accordance with the course of the war. He claimed that Enver Pasha dragged the Empire to a war. However, in any case, the Ottoman Empire was now at war and had to fight on many fronts.

Armenian deportation was another important event that caused debates and allegations for many years during the First World War, in which Talât Bey had to intervene and take part as the Minister of Internal Affairs. Before the Ottoman Empire entered the war, Armenian committees, especially the patriarchate, held meetings to determine the position they would take in case the Ottoman government entered the war against Russia. In May 1914, at the Armenian Grand Centre School in İstanbul, the United National Armenian Congress, including the representatives of Taşnaksutyun, Veragazmiyal Hınçak, Ramgavar under the chairmanship of priest Gabriel Cevahirciyan whom the Patriarchate appointed, decided that the Armenians should remain loyal to Ottoman Empire. The leaders of Taşnaksutyun also wanted to reassure the Ottoman government by making propaganda in this way. Meanwhile, they also prepared

³³ Celal Bayar, *Ben De Yazdım: Milli Mücadeleye Giriş*, V. I-VIII, (İstanbul: Sabah Kitapları, 1997), 182; Feroz Ahmad, "İttihat ve Terakki'nin Dış Politikası (1908-1919)", *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyete Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, V: 2, (İstanbul: İletişim, 1985). 298; Bayur, *ibid.*, 276-294; Jehuda L. Wallach, *Bir Askeri Yardımın Anatomisi*, (Ankara: Genel Kurmay ATASE Yayınları, 1985), 111-146; Yavuz Özgüldür, "Yüzbaşı Helmut Von Moltke'den Müşir Liman Von Sanders'e Osmanlı Ordusunda Alman Askeri Heyetleri", *OTAM*, 4, (1993): 297-307.

³⁴ Ali İhsan Sâbis, *Harp Hatıralarım: Birinci Dünya Harbi*, V.1, (İstanbul: Nehir Yayıncılık, 1991), 109-110; Mentşe, *ibid.*, 187.

with all their forces waiting for the situation to take shape. In the 8th Taşnaksutyun Congress that convened in Erzurum in June 1914 with the participation of representatives from different places of the world, particularly the Eastern provinces, it was decided to remain in opposition to Union and Progress, to criticize its political program and to engage in a violent struggle with it and its organization, considering the conflicting economic, social and administrative policy of the Union and Progress government against Christian elements and especially Armenians, the oppression and the deceptive behaviors in implementing reforms.³⁵

Contrary to the decisions taken in İstanbul, the committees sent coded telegraphs to their provincial organizations and gave them instructions to riot with all their means if the Russian army advanced from the border and the Ottoman soldiers retreated to put the Ottoman army between two fires, to bomb, blow up and burn buildings and state facilities, to join the Russians with their weapons, and to form gangs by escaping their troops.

Armenian committees began implementing their treacherous plans against the Ottoman Empire in Russia. They were engaged in activities to reinforce the Russian war force with all their forces. Armenian volunteers from all over Russia were gathering in the Caucasus to join the Russian army, gangs, and revenge regiments. An Armenian National Bureau was to be established in Tbilisi under the chairmanship of Mayor Khatisyan to organize volunteers. Russian military experts were also preparing Armenians to take part in possible operations against the Ottoman Empire. Within the framework of these efforts, Russians started to recruit volunteers from the Armenians in Iran and Caucasus and to give them weapons.

France and England were the protectors of small nations, and Russia was the protector of Eastern Christians. For Russian propaganda, Ecmiyazin religious authority was at the forefront. With the support and courage they received from these nations, Armenian Committees took measures. They made arrangements such as not obeying mobilization orders, not going to military service, fleeing military service individually or collectively with weapons and arms, demoralizing through propaganda in villages and cities, preventing Turkish soldiers from doing their duties as soldiers by driving them to protect their families and villages as a result of causing incidents, disrupting military transportation, attaching soldiers, supplies and ammunition, rebelling when Russians pass the border and stabbing the Turkish army from behind, escaping the Turkish army with the weapons of the state and joining the Russian army voluntarily, burning the churches, houses and foods in the villages they desert, and spying to carry military intelligence. The acts prepared according to these principles started immediately after mobilization. Armenian riots began to break out one after another in Ottoman territories. Until the outbreak of the Van rebellion, the Ottoman government tried to prevent the activities of Armenian committees with some minor measures. The most challenging incident occurred in Zeytun. The events in Zeytun also affected Antep and its surroundings. As a precaution, the government transferred some harmful Armenians to Konya. However, this idea was abandoned since they lived in a group in Konya, they united with the Armenians in that region and they caused danger. Therefore, it was decided to transfer the future ones to the southeast of Aleppo, and Zor, and Urfa regions. When the incidents started by Zeytun Armenians could not be calmed down, the Minister of Internal Affairs Talât Bey sent a cipher to Maraş governor on May 6, 1915 and ordered the expulsion of Zeytun people from the region. The riot that started in Zeytun on August 30, 1914 was followed with the riots of Kayseri, Bitlis, Erzurum, Mamuretülaziz, Diyarbakır, Sivas, Trabzon, Ankara, Van, İzmit, Adapazarı, Hüdavendigâr, Adana, Halep, İzmir, Canik.³⁶

³⁵ *Ermeni Komitelerinin A'mal ve Harekât-ı İhtilâliyyesi İlan-ı Meşrutiyetten Evvel ve Sonra*, Haz: H. Erdoğan Cengiz, (Ankara: Başbakanlık Basımevi 1983), 130-131; Azmi Süslü, *Ermeniler ve 1915 Tehcir Olayı*, (Ankara: Yüzcüncü Yıl Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1990), 105.

³⁶ Talât Paşa, *ibid.*, 63; *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeniler (1915-1920)*, (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Yayınları, 1994). 6; *BOA., DH. ŞFR*, Numara, 51/192, 52/249, 52/285.

Until April 25, 1915, nine months after the mobilization, the Ottoman government was contended with taking only local and special measures against the rebellion. During the fall of Van and the march of the Russian army to the eastern provinces, Muslim people were being killed mercilessly by the leading Armenian volunteering revenge regiments. The government informed the Armenian patriarchate, Armenian MPs, and committee leaders that it would take severe measures if riots, attacks, and murders continued. At the same time, the army was engaged in the defence of the homeland. Minister of Internal Affairs Talât Bey called Armenian Taşnaksutyun Committee leader Erzurum MP Vartakes Efendi to his Office and told him that the government had learned everything from the documents they got and the Armenians would be subjected to violent response if they took any action on the occasion of mobilization. In a secret instruction sent to the eastern provinces in December 1914, Talât Bey also stated that the foreign organizations and officials who were particularly interested in the education of Armenians were to be sent to other regions during the war. Deputy commander-in-chief Enver Pasha also met the Armenian patriarch and told him, based on official reports, that while the Ottoman Empire was expecting loyalty from its Armenian citizens in this war, Armenians who fled with their weapons attacked villages and killed officials. From then on, he advised the patriarch to give good advice to his community. He said the army would take strict measures if these acts became common. The patriarch stated that those who dared to commit such outrages were committee members and that he would advise the Armenian people not to obey the acts and suggestions of these. It was found that these meetings did not cause a decrease in the riots and the massacres of Muslim citizens. Upon this, the government made a general search in all the centres with Armenians. Many weapons, bombs and political documents were found in all. The first measure taken against Armenian soldiers in the Ottoman army was to remove them from the combatant class and to assign them to construction, road, railway and warehouse services of the army.³⁷

At a time when the Ottoman Empire was fighting for its life, the Armenians were engaged in activities to benefit the Russians at the front or behind the front. It could even be felt that they were preparing for a riot. In the face of this situation, the commander-in-chief's Office sent an order to all troops on February 25, 1915, pointing out that Armenians formed gangs in various places, they escaped from military service and engaged in banditry, a large number of weapons and bombs were found in searches and this was a preparation for a riot. They wanted the following measures to be taken: Armenian soldiers were not to be used in the mobilized army and armed services, commanders would resist the armed attacks, they would declare martial law if necessary, they would be alert everywhere, no searches were to be made in places where there were no planned operations and no harm would be given to loyal subjects.

Within the framework of these measures, it was thought that it would be inconvenient to suddenly terminate the employment of Armenian police and officers in various places in Anatolia. However, on April 1, 1915, orders were written to provinces from the Ministry of Internal Affairs for the transfer of Armenian police and officers who were not trusted and who were found to be involved in some incidents to appropriate regions or non-Armenian provinces. After having tolerated the incidents and massacres committed by the Armenians for nine months following the declaration of mobilization, the Minister of Internal Affairs Talât Bey had to take more permanent measures in this regard. Primarily upon the outbreak of Van uprising on February 9, 1915, he sent a secret order to the provinces and lieutenant governors on April 24, 1915 to dismantle the committee nests that started these events and armed the Armenians. This order demanded that Armenian committee centers be closed, to confiscate their documents, and to arrest the leaders of the committee. According to another similar order dated April 26, 1915, sent by the Commander-in-chief to all troops, 2345 people were arrested. With a temporary law

³⁷ *Askeri Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi*, 81, Belge No: 1830, (December 1982), 139-143.; BOA, *DH. ŞFR*, No: 52/282; Süslü, *ibid.*, 110.

issued, all provinces were asked to collect the weapons in the hands of Non-Muslims, especially Armenians.

While the rebellion that broke out in Van was in full swing, Armenians were also rebelling in other regions, blocking roads and murdering people by raiding Muslim villages. Since the Turkish army was at the front, it could not prevent the incidents that occurred behind the front. In order to find a remedy to this situation, deputy commander-in-chief Enver Pasha made the following wishes from the Minister of Internal Affairs Talât Bey with a letter dated May 2, 1915: “Armenians in the vicinity of Lake Van and certain places known in Van were a continuous place for riots and revolution. I believe this population should be removed, and the nest of rebellion should be dispersed. According to the information given by the Third Army, Russians sent the Muslim people within its borders naked to our land on April 7. Both as a response to this and for the purpose that I mentioned above, either these Armenians and their families should be sent within the Russian border, or they should be sent to various places within Anatolia. I request that these two options be chosen and implemented more appropriately. If it is no inconvenience, I prefer the families of rebels and the center of rebellion to be expelled outside the borders and to be replaced by Muslims from outside the border.” With this letter, Enver Pasha wanted Armenians to be dispersed in such a way that they would not be able to revolt. As it can also be understood from the letter, this practice was to be applied only to the Armenians in regions of revolt and unrest.

In the face of the delicacy of the situation, the Minister of Internal Affairs, Talât Bey, took all responsibility and initiated the deportation of Armenians before a temporary law was issued and without the decision of the Council of Ministers. Talât Bey first wanted the Armenians in Van, Bitlis, and Erzurum to be taken outside the war area and asked the governors of the provinces above to act immediately by cooperating with the Third and Fourth Army commanders. Talât Bey, who realized that he could no longer carry the responsibility of deportation alone as a result of the pressure from Russia, England, and France with the allegations that Armenians were killed in Eastern and South-eastern Anatolia by Ottoman soldiers and Turkish people, revealed the seriousness of the situation in terms of the Ottoman Empire in the May 26, 1915, dated report to the grand vizier and listed the crimes committed by Armenians as follows: “Some of the Armenians living in the vicinity of the battlefields hinder the movement of the army engaged in defense of the borders of the state against the enemy, make it difficult to transport supplies and ammunition to soldiers, share the same goals with the enemy and cooperate with them. Some of the Armenians join the enemy, attack our military units and innocent people in the country, provide supplies to the enemy navy, and show the fortified positions to the enemy”.³⁸

With this report, the Ministry of Internal Affairs determined the places to be evacuated as follows: Van, Bitlis, Erzurum provinces, Adana, Mersin, Kozan, and Cebel-i Bereket sanjaks excluding Adana, Mersin, and Kozan city center, other places of the sanjak excluding the city center of Maraş, İskenderun, Beylan, Cısr-i Şu'ür and Antakya districts, villages and towns in the province of Aleppo excluding the center districts.

The places where the migrating Armenians would settle were as follows: the province of Mosul neighboring the province of Van except the northern parts, Zor Sanjak, the southern part of Urfa excluding the city center, eastern and south-eastern parts of the Aleppo province, neighborhoods in the eastern parts of Syria province.

³⁸ Bayur, *ibid.* 40; *Takvîm-i Vekâyi*, 2189 (hijri 19 May 1331 / 1 June 1915); Ergünöz Akçora, “Talât Paşa ‘nın 1915 Urfa İsyanı Hakkındaki Raporu”, *XI. Türk Tarih Kongresi Kongreye Sunulan Bildiriler*, Vol. V., (5-9 September 1990): 1763-1807.

The Deportation Law did not cover all Armenians. Those who met certain conditions were excluded from this law. These were the sick and the blind, Catholics and Protestants, soldiers and their families, officers, merchants, some workers, and craftsmen.

In the May 30, 1915, dated decision of the Council of Ministers, Minister of Internal Affairs Talât Bey had taken the following measures for the fair settlement of Armenians: “Those who need to be relocated will be transported to the places where they will be resettled in prosperity by ensuring their safety of life and property. Until their final settlement, they will be assisted the migrant allowance to ensure their livelihood. Their former financial situation will give them land and property. Houses will be built by the government for the immigrants. Farmers will be provided with seeds, and craftsmen will be provided with tools and equipment. The mobile goods and assets they abandoned will be delivered to them, and if this is not possible, they will be paid for them in cash. The real estate belonging to Armenians in the evacuated towns and cities will be counted, and after determining their types, quantities, and values, they will be given to the refugees to be settled in the villages. Immovable properties that can be used by muhajirs to be settled in the places to be evacuated from Armenians, i.e., olive groves, mulberry orchards, vineyards, and gardens, income-generating immovable properties such as inns, factories, warehouses, and shops, will be sold or rented by auction. The income will be recorded in the safety deposit boxes to be given to the owners.”

In an August 28, 1915, dated directive, the Minister of Internal Affairs Talât Bey listed the issues to be paid attention to as follows: “The groups of Armenians subjected to resettlement who set out by car or on foot will be taken to the nearest railway station and from there they will be transported by train to the places where they will be resettled. When those subjected to deportation arrive at the railway stations, women and orphans whose heads of families are soldiers or who have no one to take care of them will not be resettled elsewhere and will be placed in cities, towns, or villages near the station, provided that they present their situation to the authorities with an official document. The Armenians who will be resettled in other places will be provided with food during the transfer, and the poor will be provided free of charge. The security of the Armenians during the transfer will be ensured. The needs of pregnant women and newborn children will be met. The petitions of those who do not want to leave their places among those who are subjected to resettlement or those who want to return to their places and who show reasonable reasons will be sent to the Ministry of Internal Affairs by taking the officials' opinions. They will be acted according to the answer given by the Ministry. Any attack on Armenian migrants during the migration or accommodation will be immediately rendered harmless. The perpetrators will be arrested and referred to the Military Court and will be punished most severely. Those who receive gifts or bribes from those who are subjected to migration, those who rape women with threats, or those who have illegitimate relations with them will be immediately dismissed, referred to the Court Martial, and punished in the most severe manner.”

Western journalists and authors who wrote or researched Armenians and the deportation during the First World War and in the following period looked at the events entirely from the Armenian perspective. Some Armenian supporters such as Rene-Pinon, Morgenthaw, the German journalist Dr H. Stürmer, James Bryce, the German priest Lepsius, the Caucasian reporter of the newspaper *Le Journal*, claim that the Armenians did not rebel and that when the deportation movement began, they resisted with arms. When the dates of the Armenians' first rebellion and the enactment of the Deportation Law are analyzed and compared, it will become clear how baseless and inconsistent these claims are.

Said Halim Pasha resigned as Grand Vizier on February 3, 1917, due to his conflicts with the government and the Committee of Union and Progress during the days when the war continued in full intensity. As a result of the negotiations held within the society, on February 4, 1917, Talât Bey became the Grand Vizier by being given the rank of vizier.

In the first days of Talât Paşa as a grand vizier, the war was gaining its total weight on the army and society. The supply of food and drink, in other words, the provision of necessities such as food and drink, was a significant problem, especially for the army, İstanbul and other cities. Some profiteers and hoarders took advantage of the war conditions. The allegations that they had relations with the leading figures of the Committee of Union and Progress put the society and the government in a difficult situation. Talât Pasha took legal measures to prevent corruption. In this context, he enacted a law on May 24, 1917, to avoid black marketeering and imposed severe penal measures on those who committed this crime. Nevertheless, when such offenses could not be prevented, the Ministry of Supply was established in August 1917.³⁹

As the Germans started to suffer defeats against the British and the French as of August 1918, news of defeats started coming from the fronts. During these adverse circumstances, Talât Pasha traveled to Berlin for the last time in early September 1918, hoping that the Turkish side could obtain the best result in the agreements made by the Allied Powers and their allies. Talât Pasha, who had come to Berlin with the idea that the Allies would act together, immediately returned to İstanbul on September 28-29, 1918, when he saw that everyone was in trouble on their own and making peace attempts independently and that there was a danger that the road to Bulgaria would be closed due to the fall of the Macedonian front. On his return from Germany, Talât Pasha witnessed the collapse of the Bulgarian army, which lost the battle of Dubropolje against the multinational Armée de l'Orient, the Army of the East, commanded by General Franchet d'Esperey. The Bulgarian Government officially informed Talât Pasha, as his train was passing through Sofia, that Bulgaria was seeking an independent peace with the Allied Powers. On September 29, Bulgaria signed peace and withdrew from the war, leaving the Ottoman Government in a demoralizing isolation, cut off from its war allies in Europe.

As soon as he returned to İstanbul, Talât Pasha first organized a press conference to inform about the developments. At this press conference, Talât Pasha was trying to create an optimistic atmosphere, doing his best to appear cheerful and joking as usual. He told the press members that the penetration of the Bulgarian front and that things were not going well on our southern front were not as important as they were thought. He told them that new forces had been organized among the Turks of the Caucasus and Central Asia. These would soon be mobilized to the fronts, and the balance would be restored. He said, "During my stay in Berlin, I completely settled the existing disputes between the Germans and us about the Caucasus." In his private interview with Ahmet Emin Yalman after this meeting, he told Yalman the truth: "What I have just said to you all was intended to prevent a sudden wave of alarm and panic among the people. The truth of the matter is that everything is over. We have lost the war. Tomorrow is full of unknown possibilities. We have committed many mistakes, the greatest of which is that we did not allow an honorable opposition, which would take our place in a moment of disaster and protect the country from confusion, to emerge in due time and win the love of the people. I know you as a mature and honest person and journalist. I expect you to oppose destructive tendencies. Although we have our faults, you know that our love for our country is strong, that we take some risks out of national concerns, and then we lose control of the situation..."⁴⁰

After the press conference, Talât Pasha went to the palace and met Sultan Vahdettin. After this meeting, he decided to resign. On October 7, he convened the Committee of Union and Progress parliamentary group. The participants of the meeting were pressuring Talât Pasha with their speeches. The impression from the meeting was that Talât Pasha and the government were very much worn out. As a result, Pasha went to the palace on the evening of October 7 and

³⁹ Hasan Babacan, *Ermeni Meselesi Tehcir mi, Soykırım mı*, Ankara: Öncü Kitabevi, 2015.

⁴⁰ Falih Rıfkı Atay, *Zeytin Dağı*, (Bates: İstanbul, 1981), 15-16; Bülent Gökay, *Bolşevizm ile Emperyalizm Arasında Türkiye (1918-1923)*, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1998), 45-46; Bayur, *ibid.* Vol. III/IV, 247-248; Karal, *ibid.* Vol.IX, 557; Ahmet Emin Yalman, *Yakın Tarihte Gördüklerim ve Geçirdiklerim*, Yayına Hazırlayan, Erol Şadi Erdiç, Vol. I, (İstanbul: Pera Turizm, 1997), 368; Türkoglu, *ibid.*, 150.

informed the sultan that he would resign from the office of the Grand Vizier. The cabinet's resignation was given on the evening of October 7, but the official announcement was made on October 13.

The last Union and Progress Party congress convened on the first day of November 1918 at 11 o'clock in the Central General Assembly building. In the days following the Armistice of Mudros, as resignations and new party initiatives followed one another, about 120 members attended the congress. Talât Pasha assumed the chairmanship of the congress as he was the party's general president.

Talât Pasha, who opened the congress in an atmosphere of defeat, mourning, and astonishment, tried to explain the policies pursued for ten years between 1908 and 1918 since the proclamation of the constitutional monarchy as the president of the society and their justifications in a long speech, sometimes with confessions. In his speech, Talât Pasha emphasized the political activities carried out with great enthusiasm and excitement in the days following the Constitutional Monarchy's proclamation, especially the search for foreign policy.

After his speech, Talât Pasha left the chair and sat on one of the chairs reserved for the members. Pasha did not attend the following parts of the congress. This was because he was going to leave İstanbul on the night of the same day. As a result, it was decided at the congress that the Committee would be completely dissolved, a party called the Tamedüt Fırkası (Progress Party) would be established, and this party would be considered as the successor of the Committee of Union and Progress.

Going Abroad

Following the loss of the war and the resignation of Talât Pasha as Grand Vizier, it was decided that it would be inconvenient for Talât Pasha, Enver Pasha, and Dr. Nazım, Dr. Bahaeddin Şakir and Dr. Rusuhi, who were members of the Central General Assembly, to stay in İstanbul. The reason for this was that they were concerned about the armistice to be signed with the Allied Powers and the subsequent arrest and even murder of war criminals. According to the opinion of the Pashas, if they stayed in İstanbul, the Allied Powers could put forward harsher conditions. They also thought of hiding in İstanbul for a while, but they were worried that many people might be arrested and tortured to locate them. In addition, the possible oppression and aggression of the new government against the Unionists increased the fears and worries of Talât Pasha and his friends.⁴¹

Talât Pasha was against the idea of traveling abroad from the very beginning. Instead of traveling abroad, he considered residing in a village near Sivas. For the reasons mentioned above and in the hope that if they were in Germany during the peace treaty signing, the best decisions could be taken about the Ottoman Empire due to the intervention of Talât Pasha and Enver Pasha, his friends were urging him to go to Germany.

Talât Pasha agreed to leave the country under two conditions. First, the Committee of Union and Progress Congress would be convened, and all the accounts and transactions of the party would be handed over. Second, the signing of the armistice would be awaited. If the terms of the armistice included a provision for the occupation of the country and İstanbul by the Allied Powers, then action would be taken. Moreover, Talât Pasha also demanded that Dr. Bahaeddin Şakir, Dr. Nâzım Bey, and some other members should go with him.

After it was decided to go to Germany temporarily to return to İstanbul after the situation calmed down and the country was liberated from foreign occupation, preparations were started immediately in secret. In the Central General Assembly, the handover of the transactions and

⁴¹ Bünyamin Kocaoğlu, *Mütarekede İttihatçılık İttihat ve Terakki Fırkası'nın Dağılması*, (İstanbul: Temel Yayınları).

accounts of the party was carried out, and the members of the Central General Assembly were paid their salaries one year in advance, just in case.⁴²

Talât Pasha did not have much money when he decided to go abroad. First, he sold the automobile given to him as a gift by Sultan Reşat. He had some money saved from his salary and some government bonds. The government bonds were transferred to Emanuel Karasu through his friends. Both from the car and the sale of bonds, he got about 5,500 liras. Pasha left half of this money at home and took the other half with him. All preparations were completed, as mentioned above, the last congress was convened, and the party was handed over. On the night between November 1 and November 2, Talât, Enver, Cemal Pasha, the Governor of Beirut Azmi, the former Director of Police Bedri, Dr. Nazım, Dr. Bahaeddin Şakir and Cemal Azmi boarded a German submarine on the Bosphorus in front of İhsan Namık Poroy's mansion, and Talât Pasha wrote a letter to Grand Vizier İzzet Pasha explaining the reasons for his departure from İstanbul.

On November 2, the German submarine carrying Talât Pasha and his friends arrived at Gozleve, Evpatoria, on the Crimean Peninsula, near Sevastopol. During the voyage on board, plans were discussed. Enver Pasha talked about crossing to Russia, revolting Turkestan in agreement with the Russians, organizing in the Caucasus, and, if God willed it, winning a victory there, and if not, dying on the way. On the other hand, Talât Pasha thought that their political life was over, that the nation was resentful and wrathful towards them, whether they were right or wrong, and that the best thing to do would be to go to Europe and sit in a corner. However, he said that one day, if conditions arose and there was an opportunity, they could return and perhaps engage in politics again. Apart from Enver Pasha, his other friends had the same opinion as Talât Pasha.⁴³

The Germans were waiting for Talât Pasha and his friends at Gözleve. They had prepared a military train for the movement of the Turkish delegation to Germany. Taking this train, Talât Pasha and his friends left Gözleve and arrived at the German border on November 8, 1918, without encountering any difficulties. During these days, there was political turmoil and confusion in Germany. Germany was on the eve of a revolution, and so it happened.

On November 9, the winds of revolution blew everywhere, the republic was proclaimed, and the emperor fled to Holland. Due to internal turmoil, Talât Pasha and his friends stayed at the German border for a night, then boarded a freight train and arrived in Berlin on the second day of the revolution. They got off the train at the Aleksandr Platz station in the south of Berlin and settled in a small hotel there.

Only two days later, Talât Pasha and his friends had gone abroad. Although there were rumors in the newspapers published on 3 November, they did not have definite information. On the same day, Cavit Bey called Talât Pasha at his house, but his wife, Hayriye Hanım, told him that he had gone to the farm. The letter of Talât Pasha to İzzet Pasha, which we mentioned above, arrived on the 4th of the month, and thus, the news that Talât Pasha and his friends had left the country was confirmed.

⁴² Cemal Kutay, "Yıkılış Günlerinin İbret Vesikası: Talât, Enver, Cemal Paşalar Memleketi Niçin ve Nasıl Terketmişlerdi?", *Tarih Konuşuyor*, I/1, (February 1964): 24-25; Arif Cemil (Denker), *İttihatçı Şeflerin Gurbet Maceraları*, (İstanbul: Arma, 1992), 10.

⁴³ Mithat Şükrü Bleda, *İmparatorluğun Çöküşü*, (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1979), 123-124; Akşin, *ibid.*, 307; There are various opinions about the means by which Talat Pasha and his friends left İstanbul. While some writers such as Ziya Şakir state that they left by German Torpedo and Mithat Şükrü by Cruiser, Şevket Süreyya and Sina Akşin state that they left by Submarine. Şevket Süreyya even gives the detail that this Submarine was U-67. Ş. Süreyya Aydemir, *Makedonya'dan Ortaasya'ya Enver Paşa*, Vol. III, (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1970), 494; Ziya Şakir, *ibid.*, 78; İnal, *ibid.* Vol. III, 1943-1944; Mustafa Çolak, "Tehcir Olayının Propaganda Sürecindeki Doruk Noktası: Talât Paşa Davası", *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi*, 58/XX, (March 2004): 2.

This news had a significant impact on the Bâbüâlî neighborhood. The press and the opponents of the Committee of Union and Progress started to put intense pressure on and attack İzzet Pasha and his cabinet on this occasion. The government immediately began prosecuting those who had stayed behind and started activities for the return of Talât Pasha and his friends from where they had gone.

On November 5, Grand Vizier İzzet Pasha sent the following telegram to Rifat Pasha, the Ambassador in Berlin, asking for the extradition of Talât Pasha and his friends. From the reply of the Berlin Ambassador Rifat Pasha to this telegram, it was understood that the German authorities were taking things slowly and did not favor their extradition. The German government's note to Rifat Pasha on November 22 was reported to İstanbul on November 25. Here, the German government said: "We are willing to apply the seventh article of the extradition treaty to Cemal, Bedri, Nâzım, Azmi and Bahaeddin Şakir. Enver is not in Germany." In the next part of the German note, the issue of Talât Pasha was addressed, the Armenian issue was discussed, and it was reminded that the appeals of the German Government to stop these events had always been fruitless.

As can be understood, the German government considered Talât Pasha apart from his other friends and protected him. The German Government wanted the Ottoman Government to prepare the necessary documents and gain time by using the time that had passed in the meantime. Finally, the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs wrote to the Ottoman Embassy on April 30, 1919, stating that according to the extradition treaty, the extradition documents had to be submitted within two months. Still, four months had passed, and the matter was now closed.⁴⁴

Upon the increase in the attacks against İzzet Pasha's government on the grounds that they failed to prevent Talât Pasha and his friends from leaving the country, İzzet Pasha resigned on November 8, 1918, and Tevfik Pasha's government was appointed in his place. During Tevfik Pasha's government, firstly, a decree was issued for the seizure of the property and cash of the Fugitive Pashas, and the property of Talât Pasha and his friends back home was confiscated. Subsequently, on February 2, 1919, the Council of Ministers set up committees to investigate the events of deportation and persecution. Talât Pasha and some of his friends were tried in absentia, while others, such as Said Halim Pasha, were tried in person. On March 4, 1919, after the government of Damat Ferit Pasha was established, the nature of the events changed. During this period, it was evident that the government showed more hostile behavior towards Talât Pasha and his friends. Especially the extradition of Talât Pasha was brought up at every opportunity. During the first three cabinets of Damat Ferit Pasha's government, a new Court Martial was established on March 8, 1919, to try the leading figures of the Committee of Union and Progress. This Court Martial, established under the chairmanship of Mustafa Nâzım Pasha, immediately went into operation, arrests, and trials began on April 27, 1919. In the decree prepared at the end of these trials, Talât, Enver, and Cemal Pasha were shown as the main criminals. It was also decided that Talât Pasha's pasha rank and honors would be canceled.⁴⁵ Among the Unionist leaders abroad, Talât Pasha was the only one engaged in multifaceted activities. Whereas Enver Pasha and Cemâl Pasha only engaged in direct political relations with the Soviets and tried to get help from German officers, Talât Pasha, on the other hand, tried to play a leading role in relations with the Bolsheviks, and also held semi-official talks with the British, while exchanging letters with Mustafa Kemal Pasha and trying to determine a common work plan with him.

⁴⁴ After this part of the journey, Enver Pasha separated from Talat Pasha and set out on his path. For Enver Pasha's life after that, see Aydemir, *ibid.*; Mustafa Çolak, "Tehcir Olayının Propaganda Sürecindeki Doruk Noktası: Talât Paşa Davası", *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi*, Sayı: 58, Cilt: XX, Mart 2004, s. 2; Baymirza Hayit, *'Basmacılar' Türkistan Millî Mücadele Tarihi (1917-1934)*, (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 1997).

⁴⁵ Çolak, *ibid.*, 2.

While Talât Pasha proposed to take power in Turkey by establishing a party after the peace, Enver Pasha was more in favor of leading the National Struggle and was desperate for power after the National Struggle. Cemâl Pasha, on the other hand, agreed to fight against the British in a joint strategy with the Soviets and decided to work in Afghanistan for this purpose. However, he did not want any intervention in the National Struggle. In this respect, we can say that the activities of Unionists abroad were discussed in the meetings held under the chairmanship of Talât Pasha until his death.

The first of such meetings of the Unionists was held in Berlin in December 1919 under the chairmanship of Talât Pasha, where it was agreed that Enver and Cemâl Pasha would go to Russia, and that Talât Pasha would write the below-mentioned letter to Mustafa Kemâl Pasha. Before the letter was written and this first meeting was organized, the Unionists had established an Oriental Club in Berlin under Talât Pasha's chairmanship. The Oriental Club, established at the Talât Pasha initiative, brought together the Azeri, Indian, Egyptian, and other North Africans and the Unionists in Berlin. A dormitory rented by Talât Pasha for their accommodation and a coffeehouse opened to cover their expenses also served the same purpose.⁴⁶

Political Activities Abroad

During the early period of his settlement in Berlin, Talât Pasha had worked on what kind of political activity he should carry out. In this framework, he had decided to visit other European countries after two trips to Germany. For this purpose, he obtained a passport certifying that he was the director of Hilâl-i Ahmer (Red Crescent), and he traveled to Denmark and Sweden for the first time after having his passport visa issued by the Danish and Swedish embassies. The purpose of this trip was to prove to the political leaders and influential people of those countries that the false opinions and allegations against Turkey and the Turkish people were not accurate.

His trip to the Netherlands was significant in terms of being an activity of Talât Pasha aiming to prevent the attacks against the Turks within the framework of international political relations and being his first contact with the socialists. He traveled to the Second Socialist International Congress, convened in the Netherlands in 1919, to meet with the socialist leaders who would attend the congress. He spoke to Camille Huysmans, the secretary general of the Congress in the Netherlands. He told her that the words spoken against Turkey were not valid, the biggest obstacle to the development and progress of the country was the capitalisation, the foreign elements in the country were acting in the interests of the imperialist countries, and they were living in an environment of complete liberty. He said that the Turks desired to live as a free and independent state in a geography where most Turks lived. For this purpose, he emphasized that the law rules applicable to everyone should also be applied to Turks. He explained at length that these demands were the rights of the Turkish nation and other nations.

As a result of such meetings with the leaders of European politics, Talât Pasha had the chance to see the extent of the negative ideas that European capitalism and imperialism held about Turkey and the Turks. Therefore, realizing that the Turks could not expect any help from Europe, he directed his future political activities toward the Bolsheviks. The reason for this was that, at that time, Bolshevism was the only force that openly fought against European imperialism, which was hostile to the Turks and advocated new principles for societies.

After meeting Huysmans in The Hague, Talât Pasha, due to his interest in Bolshevism, attempted to contact the Bolsheviks. Since the communication and transport between Berlin and Moscow were interrupted, he tried to get the representatives sent by the Bolsheviks to Berlin.

⁴⁶ Tunaya, *ibid.*, Vol. III, 583; İbrahim Olgun, "İttihatçıların Kurtuluş Savaşı Sırasında Anadolu 'ya Sızma Teşebbüsleri ve İslâm İhtilâl Cemiyetleri İttihadı", *VIII. Türk Tarih Kongresi Ankara 11-15 Ekim 1976 Kongreye Sunulan Bildiriler*, Vol. III, (Ankara, 1983): 1967-1976.

While Karl Radek, the most important representative of the Bolsheviks in Berlin, was in prison, Talât Pasha had the opportunity to meet him secretly several times. After these meetings, a joint action plan was worked on. As a result of the meetings between Radek and Talât Pasha, a delegation consisting of a few people to be selected would go to Moscow, and political relations between the two sides would be initiated. At Talât Pasha's request, it was decided that the Turkish delegates of the delegation would consist of Bahaeddin Şakir and Cemal Pasha. Enver Pasha was also planned to join them, but he could not make the journey. The aim of Talât Pasha and his friends in these negotiations was to make the national movement in Anatolia capable of acting together against the Western imperialists led by England.⁴⁷

It can be seen that Talât Pasha cut off his relations with the Bolsheviks in later periods. The most significant factor in Pasha's opinion was the policies of the Bolsheviks against Turks and Muslims. Talât Pasha, who knew the new Soviet administrators and their ideas well since the Brest-Litovsk negotiations, claimed that the Bolsheviks had destroyed everything they had promised to Muslims in terms of independence and freedom, and that they were putting the old policies of the tsarist period back into practice. This was because the new Soviet administration was implementing an oppressive policy like a second tsarist regime on the Central Asian Turkish Republics, which it had deceived by promising freedom and independence. Therefore, Talât Pasha no longer wanted to work with the Bolsheviks. Although Enver and Cemal Pasha traveled to Moscow in 1920 and worked in cooperation with the Bolsheviks, Talât Pasha stayed in Berlin and continued his work there.

In short, Talât Pasha centered his activities abroad on three countries. The first was to reach an agreement between the Soviet Union and Turkey; the second was to establish relations with Britain and other Western powers; and the third was to support the Anatolian movement. In this framework, apart from the Bolsheviks, Pasha tried to send a message to the British through Herbert Aubrey on two main issues. The first of these are the ideas and attitudes of the Unionists towards England since the 1908 revolution and the attitudes of British diplomats towards them, and the second is Talât Pasha's diplomatic ideas on why the Ottoman Empire entered the First World War on the side of the Germans. When Talât Pasha did not receive a positive approach from the British administrators to support the National Struggle in Anatolia due to these meetings, he started anti-British activities in Berlin.

Furthermore, Talât Pasha had written to Mustafa Kemal with the desire and idea of representing the National Struggle abroad, either officially or unofficially, and had promised to help in any way he could if this idea was supported. Although Mustafa Kemal Pasha accepted the most important parts of Talât Pasha's proposals, he spread the word that all his proposals had been accepted by Ankara.

After arriving in Berlin, Talât Pasha changed several houses. He was living in house numbered 24 on Hardenberg Street in the Charlottenburg neighborhood. Although he led a very economical and simple life, he had recently run out of money and had fallen into great financial difficulties. For this reason, he wrote letters to his friends in other European cities and asked them for money. As mentioned above, he even wrote to Mustafa Kemal Pasha that they were out of money.

Because of a lack of money, he and his wife tried to make a living by selling all the precious stones, jewelry, and objects they owned. Pasha had borrowed money from a friend by pawning a gold cigarette case given to him as a gift by Sultan Reşat. Many years later, while talking about their days in Berlin, his wife Hayriye Hanım said that there were days when they

⁴⁷ İlhan Tekeli-Selim İlkin, "Kurtuluş Savaşı'nda Talât Paşa İle Mustafa Kemâl'in Mektuplaşmaları", *Bellekten*, Cilt: XLIV, Nisan, 1980, Sayı: 174, s. 316; Arif Cemil, *ibid.*, 26-27; Tunaya, *ibid.*, Vol. III, 569-570; Hayit, *ibid.*, 190; Dilek Zaptçioğlu, "Talât Paşa Davası", *Cumhuriyet*, (21 April 1993).

were penniless in Berlin, they had sold the rings on their fingers, even the last souvenirs and medals given to Pasha.

It is known that sometime after moving to Berlin, Talât Pasha's health deteriorated, and he got diabetes. For this reason, he paid attention to his daily life as advised by the doctor. He would go out on the street only in the mornings, enter the zoo with his usual leisurely walk, take a tour there, sit in the Oriental Coffee House in the garden, talk to some of his friends, and return home again before dinner time.

Martyrdom

On the day of his assassination, Talât Pasha went out at his usual time and started walking towards the zoo. Solomon Teilirian, who had committed the murder, and his friends were following him on the opposite sidewalk, trying not to lose sight of him. Teilirian was alone, his friends were following him five or ten steps behind in a car. Talât Pasha entered the zoo. He was wearing a grey overcoat. He took a tour around the garden, and after sitting in the Oriental Coffee House and having a cup of coffee, he got up to go home and started walking. Talât Pasha entered Hardenberg Street, where his house was located. Just as he arrived in front of the house numbered 17, the murderer tapped Talât Pasha on the shoulder and called out, "Talât, Talât". When he turned round, the killer put a bullet in his head, left the gun at the scene and fled. Talât Pasha collapsed on the ground, dying. People in the neighborhood caught the murderer, who was about to flee, and handed him over to the police. Talât Pasha could not be identified at first because he was wearing a fake identity card issued in the name of Ali Sai. Pasha's body remained at the scene for about two hours, after which it was autopsied by the police and taken to the morgue. Salim Bey, who had witnessed the incident from 200 or 300 meters away, came to the scene and identified the pasha, and ensured that the news of Talât Pasha's murder was recorded in the police report.⁴⁸

After the assassination on Tuesday March 15, 1921, at around 11 a.m., the body was taken to the morgue, then, after the funeral on Saturday March 19, it was embalmed and preserved in a special place in the Muslim cemetery in Berlin, to bring it home later.

The capture and trial of Talât Pasha's murderer and the mistakes made during the court process revealed the point where Germany's political tendency had reached and how some political movements had influenced it after the war. The murderer Teilirian, despite being an accused murderer, was applauded with the influence of the powers that won the war and was released with a justice reserved for the winners. The deceased Talât Pasha, on the other hand, was tried and convicted with a justice reserved for losers. Because both Talât Pasha and his friends in Germany had lost the First World War.

When we look at the court that tried Teilirian, it is possible to see that the priest Johannes Lepsius and Field Marshal Liman von Sanders, who expressed their opinions as experts in the court and significantly influenced the jurors with their views, were not qualified to be experts on deportation. Lepsius was known to be a fanatical Turkophobe from his activities both before and after deportation. Although Lepsius traveled to the Ottoman Empire occasionally, he mostly followed the military and political developments in Eastern Anatolia from Germany and falsified German documents related to the deportation in a biased manner. Therefore, he had not experienced the real situation on the Caucasus Front and in Eastern Anatolia. He was following the events from the perspective of the Armenian associations in Germany, of which he was a part. On the other hand, Liman von Sanders was active throughout the First World War as the head of the German Military Mission under the Ottoman Ministry of War. Still, he was never on the Caucasian Front, which led to the deportations. Sanders himself declared this in court and

⁴⁸ Ziya Şakir, *ibid.*, 80; "Eşi Hayriye Hanım Talât Paşayı Anlatıyor", *Yakın Tarihimiz*, Vol.2 (1962): 194; Arif Cemil, *ibid.*, 33-34;

also stated unequivocally that he had never received any order from Talât Pasha to exterminate Armenians during his service in the Ottoman Empire. German Felix Guse, who served as Chief of Staff of the Third Army on the Caucasian Front during the deportation of Armenians, was never invited to the court.⁴⁹

Likewise, high-ranking German officers such as von Schellendorf and von Seeckt, who worked under the Ottoman Ministry of War during the period above, were not invited to the court. According to these German officers, deportation had to be implemented for the military situation of the Caucasus Front and the security of the civilian Muslim population in the region. It is also noteworthy that, despite the applications, no Turkish official familiar with the deportation incident was heard in the court.

When we look at the issues that were discussed, emphasised and debated during the trial of Teilirian, it seems like it was as if the murder had been committed in Anatolia, not in Berlin. The court was more interested in the deportation incident than the murder and brought the Armenian Question to the forefront. The defense lawyers specially requested this, and the defense lawyers manipulated the court. Only the propaganda of the massacre of the oppressed Christian Armenians could save Teilirian. The judges accepted what Teilirian said and claimed in the court as accurate, including his identity, without questioning anything. They delivered its verdict in a day and a half. On the one hand, the court accepted that Teilirian was an epilepsy patient and was not conscious at the time he committed the crime and set him free; on the other hand, it accepted the words of this sick man about the deportation of himself and his family and his words accusing Talât Pasha, without questioning their truth.

A large number of allegations were made against Talât Pasha's personality and his statesmanship, and a large number of documents and information were presented to the court. However, it was revealed much later than Teilirian's trial that many of these documents were fake and distorted.

The internal political state of Germany had also influenced Teilirian's trial. In the First World War, Kaiser Wilhelm II, an ally of the Ottoman Empire, and his team had been removed from the power, and Germany had founded its first republic. This Weimar Republic, which did not last long, wanted Teilirian's trial to be concluded as soon as possible, without any questions asked to the government. According to the German Foreign Office, German interests required this at the time. In fact, the case had gained an international dimension, and as long as it dragged, Germany could get harmed. Thus, political will was involved in the court Teilirian was tried in.

In the days when the Second World War continued in full swing, as a result of the negotiations between Turkey and Germany, the Hitler government decided to return the body of Talât Pasha's body, which had been embalmed and buried specially after his murder in 1921, to Turkey. A delegation was organized and sent to Germany to transfer the body.

On February 20, 1943, Talât Pasha's body was placed in a coffin adorned with flowers in a special wagon attached to an express train coming from Berlin to İstanbul. Meanwhile, a small ceremony was held, and German foreign affairs officials and Turkish officials in Berlin participated in the ceremony.

When the train entered the country, the administrators and the public greeted it at all stations and were shown love and respect. Especially in Edirne, where Talât Pasha had been born, Pasha's funeral caused great excitement.

The train that carried Pasha's body arrived at Sirkeci Station early in the morning on February 25, 1943, and was greeted with a ceremony there. The ceremony was attended by

⁴⁹ Ziya Şakir, *ibid.*, 81-82; Zaptçioğlu, *ibid.*, *Cumhuriyet*, (23 April 1993), 14; Arif Cemil, *ibid.*, 144-145; Çolak, *ibid.*, 9-10.

Central Commander of İstanbul General İhsan İlgaz, Chief of Police Halit Nihat Pepeyi, Hayriye Hanım, wife of Talât Pasha, Hayriye Hanım's new husband Hamdi, their children Erol and Ertuğrul, Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, Küçük Nazım, Nafiz and many other close friends of Talât Pasha. The body was taken from here and transferred to Şişli Sıhhat Yurdu. The official ceremony prepared by the Governorate started at Sıhhat Yurdu at 14:00. The coffin was put on a carriage and transported to Hürriyet-i Ebediye Hill, followed by a band and military and police guards. During the march, Governor and Mayor Lütfi Kırdar, Secretary General of the President Kemal Gedeleş, Undersecretary of the Prime Ministry Cemal Yeşil on behalf of the prime minister, General Fahrettin Altay, representatives of foreign countries and other civil and military officials were present.⁵⁰

Talât Pasha's funeral cortege was brought to Hürriyet-i Ebediye Hill, following Şişli tram Street. It was buried there in his grave, prepared under a pine tree on the inside of the railing that overlooked the Kağıthane side of the monument.

Conclusion

As the most important figure of the Union and Progress, Talât Pasha was a revolutionary statesman who represented the history of an era in the country. He is a person who solved all the obstacles in front of him and walked all the way to realize his ideals with the feelings of freedom and patriotism inside him.

He attracted attention with his simple life and humility. He was even able to win the praise of his opponents from time to time. His deficiency was his belief that the Committee would definitely save the state. He remained loyal to his party to the point of fanaticism and shared his friends' mistakes in domestic and foreign policy.

Talât Pasha had not received a high level of education. He was not also ulema. He was not rich. The only way was to establish an organization with the power to resist, including civilian and military intellectuals. He was a brave and conscious leader who could be an ideologue, politician, and statesman. He used the Balkan committees as an example in his acts.

In conclusion, Talât Pasha, who left his mark on the Second Constitutional Monarchy Period, paved the way for the newly founded Republic of Turkey with many military, civilian, administrative, intellectual, and social acts and international policies he carried out in the country.

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⁵⁰ *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 13 Kânunuevvel 1342 (13 Aralık 1942); *Vakit*, 25 Şubat 1943.

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