

# **Britain's Kurdish Policy and Kurdistan 1918 -1923**

by

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## **Abstract**

The Kurdish issue has remained in place on Turkey's agenda and that of the world for almost a hundred years. This subject recently became a current issue again with the invasion of Iraq by the coalitions in 2003. Over time, Turkey has attempted to enact different policies in order to resolve the Kurdish problem that causes armed conflicts in some regions even now. Declaration of part of Iraq as Iraqi Kurdistan region in 2005 by some Kurds who benefited from the chaos in this region brought a new dimension to the subject. The Kurds managed to found an autonomous region on the border of Turkey. Civil war broke out along the southern border of Turkey and Syria in 2011. The balance of the Southern border of Turkey has changed with Kurdish communities actively taking a role in the civil war in Syria. On 16th of July 2014, 'The law for ending terrorism and strengthening social integrity' was published in Turkey, and the Democratic initiative process was legalized. All these factors brought the Kurdish problem back into question.

The archival documents show that the Kurdish-British relations became intense especially between 1918 and 1923. In this term relationships were established between some British officers and Kurdish leaders. Major Noel, Major Soane, Talbot Wilson and Percy Cox in Eastern Anatolia and in the Mesopotamia region; Admiral Webb and Admiral Calthorpe in Istanbul; Churchill and George Curzon in London played important roles in shaping the British – the Kurdish relations, and in negotiations on possibility of establishing a Kurdish state. The British officials met with Sayyid Abdulkadir in Anatolia, Serif Pasha in Europe, Sheikh Mahmud and Sheikh Taha in Iraq and undertook important negotiations.

A great majority of the Turkish historians and researchers see Britain as the main force behind the birth of the Kurdish problem in Turkey and the Middle East. Nevertheless Britain was accused of provoking the Kurds, living in Turkish regions, against Turks. According to general Turkish claims, Britain made promises to the Kurds to found a Kurdish State only as a way dominating over Mesopotamia, and

used the Kurds as a tool for its own purposes. This thesis examines the extent to what rival these claims are valid and whether Britain really had a significant policy for Kurdish autonomy, or not, in the light of the Turkish and British archives.

In other words, it attempts to throw light on the questions of whether the promises for an autonomous or independent Kurdish State were given by the British to the Kurds. If the answer is yes; whether the claimed promises to Kurds were a result of British state policy or a result of personal initiatives of military officers who were acting in behalf of the Britain will be assessed. The study also investigates the progress of the Kurdish issue on international platforms, how it was shaped and which factors affected it, from the end of the First World War (1918) to the Treaty of Lausanne(24 July 1923). In addition to this, the claims made by British officials that autonomy promises were given to Kurds by the Turkish government in Ankara are evaluated in the light of the Turkish and British records.

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## Glossary

Elviye-i Selase: Three livas; Cities of Kars, Ardahan, Batum

Heyet-i Temsiliye: Representative Delegation

Heyet-i Vukela: The Council of Ministers

İngiliz Muhipleri Cemiyeti: The British Friendship Society

İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti: The Committee of Union and Progress

Kürt Teali Cemiyeti: The Society for the Rise of Kurdistan

Kuvayi Milliye: National Forces

Misak-ı Milli: The National Act

Müdafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyeti: Defence of the National Rights

Osmanlı Mebusan Meclisi: The Ottoman Chambers of Deputies

Şurayı Devlet: Council of State

Vilayet-i Sitte: Six Provinces: Cities of Erzurum, Van, Diyarbakır, Sivas, Bitlis, and Harput

## **List of Abbreviations**

ATASE: The Turkish General Staff Military History and Strategic Studies Archives

AAMD: Atatürk Research Center Magazine (Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi)

BOA: The Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives (Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi)

CAB: Cabinet Papers

CO: Colonial Office

FO: Foreign Office

HTVD : Harp Tarihi Vesikaları Dergisi (War History Documents Magazine)

ISH: Independence War Catalogue (İstiklal Harbi Katalođu)

PRO: Public Record Office

TGNA: Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM)

WO: War Office

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## Introduction

It is important to give brief information on the history of the Kurds under Turkish rule to provide a better understanding of the emergence of the Kurdish issue. During the reign of the 9<sup>th</sup> Ottoman Sultan Yavuz Sultan Selim (1512- 1520), expeditions was launched against Eastern Anatolia and the Safavid Empire. At the end of the expeditions Turkish sovereignty was established in the Eastern region of Anatolia and Anatolian Turkish unity was achieved. In order to keep these areas under control the system of yurtluk- ocaklık was implemented in the regions where a Kurdish population predominated. Through this system, a sort of autonomy was giving to the local people by Sultan Selim. Thanks to the yurtluk- ocaklık system Kurdish notables were getting more powerful every day. It is understood that the system completely ceased to function in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This system was therefore rearranged in the process of centralization policies which started with Tanzimat (The Hatt-i Sharif of Gülhane) (1839).<sup>1</sup> With the proclamation of the Tanzimat, significant changes were made to the administrative division of Ottoman lands. The main aim was to strengthen central authority. The real resistance against the Tanzimat in and around Diyarbakir came from the people who had lands operating right with the "yurtluk-ocaklık" system. Because, in order to restore the lost state authority in the region the lands of yurtluk- ocaklık were confiscated.<sup>2</sup> With the regulations of the Tanzimat the operating right of the some lands in this system transferred to the treasury and the ex-beneficiaries were appointed to the county government and they started to receive salaries.<sup>3</sup> However, due to geographical and social reasons, the new

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<sup>1</sup> Gencer, Fatih, 'Merkezîleşme Politikaları Sürecinde Yurtluk-Ocaklık Sisteminin Değişimi', *Ankara Üniversitesi DTCTF Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi*, XXX. p.76 (P.75-96), (Ankara,2011).

<sup>2</sup> Cabir, Doğan, 'Bedirhan Bey İsyanı' *Journal of Süleyman Demirel University Institute of Social Sciences*, No: XII, p.15-38, (Isparta,2010) p.16.

<sup>3</sup> Çadırcı, Musa, *Tanzimat Sürecinde Ülke Yönetimi*, (Ankara,2007), p. 195.

practice encountered opposition from time to time in the tribes living away from the state authority, since dominance in the Eastern regions could not be established for a long time.<sup>4</sup> Because of that, the new regulations presented by the Tanzimat met with massive opposition especially in the regions where the state had less control.

The major hostile reaction to Tanzimat was shown by Bedirhan Bey who was Emir of Bohtan-Cizre. When the implementation of Tanzimat regulations around Diyarbakır started, Bedirhan faced with the threat of losing his power, became worried.<sup>5</sup> In order to keep him calm he was promoted to colonel.<sup>6</sup> After Bedirhan learned the Tanzimat regulations intended to join Cizre to the Mosul province<sup>7</sup> he revolted that against the Ottoman Empire.<sup>8</sup> Bedirhan Bey, disappointed with the Ottoman government due to the new administrative regulations it attempted to implement in the Ottoman lands, had allied with other Kurdish chiefs, especially with rebellious Han Mahmud, to get power.<sup>9</sup> After he allied with the Han Mahmud, who returned from exile, the riot became one of the biggest Kurdish riots after the implementation of the regulations of the Tanzimat in the Eastern Anatolia.<sup>10</sup> The Ottoman Empire had to deal with the revolt between the years of 1843-1848.<sup>11</sup> In order to conduct talks with Bedirhan, Nazım Effendi was appointed by the Istanbul Government.<sup>12</sup> Bedirhan Bey was convinced to obey the Ottoman administration but Bedirhan Bey had some conditions such as he should be given a guarantee of his own safety by the Mosul consul of Britain.<sup>13</sup> In this way Britain would be drawn into the Kurdish problem. It is understood that Bedirhan Bey's conditions were rejected on

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<sup>4</sup> Dündar, Safiye, *Kürtler ve Azınlık Tartışmaları, Tarih, Kimlik, İsyanlar, Sosyo-Kültürel Yapı, Terör*, (İstanbul,2009), p.67.

<sup>5</sup> BOA, İ.MSM, 48/1229, Folder:17.

<sup>6</sup> BOA, İ.MSM, 48/1225, Folder: 17.

<sup>7</sup> BOA, İ.MSM, 48/1225, Folder: 13.

<sup>8</sup> BOA, A.MKT. MHM, 2/13.

<sup>9</sup> Sinan, Hakan, *Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde Kürtler ve Kürt Direnişleri (1817-1867)*, (İstanbul,2007), p. 171.

<sup>10</sup> Sarıbiyık, Mustafa, 'Tanzimatın Diyarbakır ve Yöresinde Uygulanması ve Önündeki Engeller', II. Osmanlıdan Cumhuriyete Diyarbakır Sempozyumu, (Diyarbakır,2006), p. 255.

<sup>11</sup> Barkey, Henry J. and Graham E. Fuller, *Turkey's Kurdish Question*, (İstanbul,1998), p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> BOA, AD, No. 609, p. 11.

<sup>13</sup> BOA, İ.MSM, 50/1258, Folder: 4.

the grounds that they would damage Ottoman sovereignty. Afterwards, the rebellion was suppressed by the Ottoman army that sent to the region in 12<sup>th</sup> August 1847.<sup>14</sup>

Kurdish-Turkish relations began to improve during the Abdul Hamid era (1876-1909). Talks by Abdul Hamid with Kurdish leaders included which subjects should be considered as a part of the centralization policy prevailing during the last period of Ottoman Empire. This policy of Abdul Hamid's focused on getting the Kurds to cooperate with central authority. This focus point aimed at suppressing Armenian, Arabs and even Kurdish opposition to the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire and towards preventing a Russian threat and it was against directing the Kurds' warrior-like characteristics towards separatist tendencies and towards ensuring everyone lived together peacefully.<sup>15</sup>

After the defeat in the Russo-Turkish War (1877–78) the Empire not only went through a period of financial fragility but also realized that securing the east was vital. After the War the Treaty of San Stefano was signed on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1878 and under the form of the agreement Russia gained great favor within the Ottoman lands. The Western Powers decided the treaty needed to be revised. The Great Powers, especially British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, were not happy with the treaty. Extension of Russian power would harm its interests in former and remaining Ottoman territories. These reasons prompted the Great Powers to obtain a revision of the treaty at the Congress of Berlin (13 June- 13 July 1878), and substitute the Treaty of Berlin on 13<sup>th</sup> of July 1878. In Article 61 of the Berlin Treaty, it was envisaged that, as an addendum, the Armenians in the region should be protected against the Kurds and the Circassians.<sup>16</sup> This article and other articles on Kurds and Armenians would never be implemented; but they are still important to show the first time Kurds were mentioned in an international treaty.

On the basis of this realization, Abdul Hamid wanted his Hamidiye Cavalries to prevent Kurd leaders who were used to living independently from becoming independent, and to prevent Russian attacks and Armenian riots by including them in

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<sup>14</sup> BOA. A.DVN. MHM, 4/A/68.

<sup>15</sup> Kösebalaban, Hasan, *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam, Nationalism and Globalization* (New York,2011), p.36.

<sup>16</sup> Şimşir, Bilal, *Kürtçülük (1787-1923)*,(Ankara, 2007), p.27.

this army system founded under his name.<sup>17</sup> However, while establishing this organization, it was decided that the majors in this regiment must be Turks.<sup>18</sup> What is more, this regiment, being exempt from some taxes, caused the situation of all Kurds competing with each other to join this tribe.<sup>19</sup>

Abdul Hamid tried to maintain a balance while forming this structure on the Caucasian border of Russia and around Erzurum, Bitlis and Van.<sup>20</sup> He aimed to channel the warrior characteristics of Kurds in the right direction, against the Armenian forces.<sup>21</sup> This regiment in an army made up of 47,000 people during the mid-1890s, rose in number to the levels of 53,000 in 1910.<sup>22</sup> Also the more the regiments' domain increased, the less effective Sheikhs became in the public eye.<sup>23</sup>

In time, the regiments enlarged their areas of activity so they became the subject of telegrams that reported their independent actions.<sup>24</sup> Armenians, who were especially against that organization from the beginning, declared their belief that these regiments wanted to sweep them all away. Armenians first charged these regiments over Samsun (1894-1895), Diyarbakır, Malatya, Urfa events (1895).<sup>25</sup> During the conflict between the Armenians and the Hamidiye Cavalries Kurds

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<sup>17</sup> Maraslı, Recep, 'Rizgari'nin Sosyalist Hareket ve Kürdistan Ulusal Kurtuluş Mücadelesindeki Yeri Üzerine Bir Deneme I', *Mesafe Dergisi*, 2010, p.69; Janet Klein, *The Margins Of Empire: Kurdish Militias In The Ottoman Tribal Zone*, (Stanford University Press, 2011), p.59; *The Manchester Guardian (1901-1959)* 'The Kurds: Tribal Organisation Government By Sheiks', 27 January 1923, p.12.

<sup>18</sup> White, Paul, *Primitive Rebels or Revolutionary Modernizers: The Kurdish National Movement In Turkey*, (London, 2000), p.60.

<sup>19</sup> Ünal, Fatih, 'Osmanlı Devleti'nin Son Yıllarında Güneydogu Asiretlerinden Milli Asireti ve İbrahim Pasa', *Hacı Bektası Veli Arastirmaları Dergisi*, V.41, 2007, p.183.

<sup>20</sup> Chaliand, *The Kurdish Tragedy*, p.25.

<sup>21</sup> Jawad, Sa'ad, *Iraq and Kurdish Question 1958-1970*, (London, 1981), p.4.

<sup>22</sup> Gunter, Michael M., *Historical Dictionary Of The Kurds*, (Oxford, 2004), p.121.

<sup>23</sup> O'Shea, Maria T., *Trapped Between The Map And Reality: Geography And Perceptions Of Kurdistan*, (California, 2004), p.79.

<sup>24</sup> Reynolds, Michael A., 'Abdürrezzak Bedirhan: Ottoman Kurd and Russophile in the Twilight of Empire', *Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, V.12, No. 2, Spring 2011, p.420.

<sup>25</sup> Anderson, Robert E., 'The Armenian Trouble', *The Villanova Monthly*, March 1897, V.5, No:3, p.123.

thousands of people from both sides lost their lives. So the armed conflict between them in a sense turned into a kind of bloodshed.<sup>26</sup>

Eastern Question refers to the political and diplomatic issues that arose between the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries following the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. Its origin can be dated to the Treaty of Kucuk Kaynarca which was signed between Russia and Ottoman Empire at the end of the six-year Russo-Turkish War and resulted in a huge defeat for the Ottomans in 1774. After the war the European States struggled to secure their military, strategic and commercial interests in the Ottoman territories. Basically the main issue was which portion of the Ottoman Empire lands would be gained by which European State. Consequently the minorities living under the rule of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans were provoked and rebellions were supported to establish new states under the zone of influence of the European states. After the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) the Ottoman Empire was expelled from the Balkans. The next stage was to dismiss the Turks from Anatolia, Mesopotamia and the Middle East. Therefore European States were focused on these lands of the Ottoman Empire.

Germany, which was able to establish its unity at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, wanted to take part in the Eastern Question and tried to establish good relations with the Ottoman State. The Ottoman Empire had thought that it was a good idea to establish friendly relations with Germany. The most important demonstration of the Ottoman-German agreement was the Baghdad railway project (whose construction began in 1903). This kind of rapprochement between the Ottoman State and Germany disturbed other imperialist states, especially Britain, and they thought that their interests have been damaged, and began to carry out politics on the basis of dismembering and sharing the Ottoman state.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, it became inevitable for the Ottoman state to take part on the side of Germany in the First World War or to act with German influence.

France intended to gain greater influence by increasing the political pressures on the Ottoman state by undertaking the protection of non-Muslim elements (especially Armenians) living within the Ottoman Empire.

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<sup>26</sup> Laçiner, Sedat, *Ermeni Sorunu, Diaspora ve Türk Dış Politikası*, (Ankara,2008), p.16.

<sup>27</sup> Özyüksel, Murat, 'İkinci Meşrutiyet ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Alman-İngiliz Nüfuz Mücadelesi, *İstanbul Üniversitesi, Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*,38, (Mart, 2008), p.241.

After its experience of Tripoli, it was understood that the Ottoman lands would be the next area where Italy would concentrate its attention. The main aim of Italy on the Ottoman lands to have the Aegean and the Mediterranean lands of Anatolia. Italy had preferred to make decisions based on political developments in the First World War by assessing its current strength in the best way so the Italians would have to be content with the benefits it could obtain.<sup>28</sup>

Since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Russia had viewed the Ottoman State as 'the sick man' while the Austro-Hungarian Empire was trying to develop its dominance in the Balkans. Russia was thinking establishing a Greek state in the territory of the Ottoman Empire, and had planned to occupy Anatolia after the Caucasus was occupied. Russia also was supporting the policy of establishing small states, like Armenia, under the influence of Russia, in order to ensure that the territories east of Anatolia enter the territory of Russia. In addition, Russia had pursued a "Pan-Slavist" policy, which we can define as the creation of a central Slavic state on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire and the Habsburg Empire.<sup>29</sup> But thanks to the Bolshevik Revolution the balance of the power and international policies were changed. Russia had to leave the war prematurely because of the Bolshevik revolution, Russia did not want the Allied Powers especially Britain and France to gain favour from the Ottoman Empire's fortunes. As a matter of fact, the satellite states that were to be established under the British administration in South-eastern Anatolia and Mesopotamia would protect the British interests in the region; it would exist as a major obstacle in front of Turkish and Russian interests. That is why Bolshevik Russia would want to have close relationship with Turks especially after the opening of the Turkish Grand National Assembly (23 April 1920).

The main strategy of the British policy was to increase British influence in the territories of the rich oil deposits in the Middle East that had been dominated by Ottoman Turks. This strategy Britain was crucial for the security of the Indian route. In order to put this strategy into practice Britain had started to encourage the autonomy, which Britain never granted in her own colonies, among the non-Turkish

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<sup>28</sup> Çelebi, Mevlüt, 'Milli Mücadele'de İtalyan İşgalleri', *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi (AAMD)*, Vol.26, (March,1993), p.395.

<sup>29</sup> Kohn, Hans, *Panislavizm ve Rus Milliyetçiliği*, translated by Agah Oktay Güner, (Ankara,1991).

elements living in the Ottoman lands. The British wanted to reshape the Middle East. For this purpose they tried to persuade Arabs to establish a large Arab state in the region that encompasses the entire Middle East among the Arabs. The British officers, such as Major Noel, in order to disrupt the unity of the Turkish struggle and to keep the Turks out of the regions that had rich oil fields, provoked the Kurds against the Ottoman State.<sup>30</sup>

Amidst these wider developments, within the O. E. itself, as a result of a military coup Sultan Abdul Hamid II was dethroned and Mehmed V became the new Ottoman Sultan (April 1909). After the dethronement of Abdul Hamid by Young Turks, 13<sup>th</sup> April 1909, many Hamidian Cavalry leaders stated that they would not obey the government. They asked for the leadership of Abdul Hamid back and announced that if that did not happen they would act independently. But these requests were not met. Because of the policies of Young Turks, in contrast to what Abdul Hamid expected, some of Kurdish tribe leaders' sons who were educated under the control of Abdul Hamid II became affected by nationalist winds blowing in Europe and wanted to establish a Kurdish State.<sup>31</sup> Thus, these people became the leaders of the Kurdish separatist movement and were in contact with European powers.

The principles of American President Wilson also would help to establish communication and promote the idea of national self-determination. American President Wilson expressed his opinions about the post-war order to be established, at the speech he had given at Congress on 8<sup>th</sup> January 1918.<sup>32</sup> Article 12 of this speech, which would be referred to as the Wilson Principles, was interpreted to mean the Turks would preserve their independence in the regions where they were the majority; however, right to an autonomous development would be provided for other nations under the Turkish dominance.<sup>33</sup> The British Prime Minister Lloyd George objected to this interpretation and claimed that that it was not possible for the

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<sup>30</sup> Zeyrek, Suat, 'Milli Mücadele sürecinde Türk-İngiliz Rekabeti: Kürt Sorunu', *Türkiyat Mecmuası*, 23, (Bahar, 2013), p.116.

<sup>31</sup> Yavuz, M. Hakan, 'Five Stages Of The Construction Of Kurdish Nationalism In Turkey', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol.7, No.3, (2001), p.5.

<sup>32</sup> Lansing Robert, *The Peace Negotiations: A Personal Narrative*, (1921), p.314-316.

<sup>33</sup> Seton-Watson Christopher, '1919 and the Persistence of Nationalist Aspirations', *Review of International Studies*, Vol.15, No. 4 November 1989, p.315.



Turkish dominance to continue over İstanbul. He also declared that on behalf of Britain, this statement of Wilson's should be limited to Anatolia.<sup>34</sup>

The twelfth article of Wilson's Fourteen Points gave the impression that all the peoples of the Middle East would be allowed to develop independently, when the nations were considered together with the fifth article, which regulated the principle of self-determination of their futures. These proposals led Wilson to earn great trust and respect among the peoples of the Middle East. There were also a large number of Ottoman officers and intellectuals who had hoped for the Wilson principles. Some of them believed it possible that the empire's territorial integrity before the war could be preserved, in other words, by interpreting the expression "providing autonomous development to non-Turkish elements" by themselves, by granting autonomy to the Arab lands of the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, Kamuran Bedirhan claimed that the interpretation of this article was clear and owing to the article all Ottoman minorities obtained a right to establish their own administration. Therefore, the Kurds had a right to establish their own administration and government system.<sup>35</sup>

There was not a clear explanation of how these principles would be interpreted and implemented. Again, it is known that all states interpreted the statements of President Wilson as they wished. However, it can be argued that the state which wished to make the most benefit from the Wilson Principles was England.

For instance, it can be asserted that the Wilson Principles were used as a screen for the expansion of British dominance over Iraq. Actually, Wilson's methods were not corresponding with Great Britain's policy in Mesopotamia by that time. But Britain and France did not want to contradict the Wilson Principles which proclaimed in 1918 therefore they did some tricks and the British used the concepts of war protection rather than war compensation, and mandate system rather than

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<sup>34</sup> Sterling J. Kernek, 'Distractions of Peace During War: The Lloyd George's Government's Reactions to Woodrow Wilson, December, 1916- November 1918', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, New Series 65(2), (1975), p.75.

<sup>35</sup> Martin Strohmeier, *Crucial Images In the Presentation of A Kurdish Identity, Heroes and Patriots, Traitors and Foes*, (Boston, 2003), p. 57.

colonialism.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, autonomy in the remaining regions of the Ottoman lands would not be possible because there was already a share plan in autonomy. As it was determined in Sykes-Picot Agreement, part of Mesopotamia, Palestine and Arabia would be under British mandate and Syria would be under French mandate.<sup>37</sup>

Wilson asked Colonel House, to do a detailed study of how to apply the fourteen points. Colonel House went to Europe to hold preliminary talks on the Peace Conference and assigned Walter Lippmann, Secretary of Inquiry, and Frank L. Cobb, editor of the *New York World News*, to this work. The Lippmann-Cobb report, prepared in September-October 1918, constituted the basis for the policy that the US would follow in the Paris Peace Conference.<sup>38</sup> It is also explained the way of the implementation of the twelfth point on the Ottoman Empire and the Middle East.

According to the Lippmann-Cobb report, the twelfth point was elaborated as follows: 1) The domination of Turks should be recognized in Anatolia, where they constituted the majority of the population; However, a) a special international audit should be established in the coastal regions where the Greek Cypriots are numerous, these regions should be placed under preferred mandates; B) In Anatolia, a general regulation [meaning capitulations] to link all the mandatory forces must be made and this regulation should be added to the peace treaty with the Ottoman State; C) with this arrangement the rights of minorities and the application of the "open door" principle should be secured; D) All main railway lines in Anatolia should be internationalized. 2) It is difficult to enforce the provision of autonomous development to non-Turkish elements. Because a) Mesopotamia, Palestine and Arabia are under the rule of the British mandate; B) the fact that Syria - as required by the Treaty of Picas - will be given to France; C) A port should be given to Armenia to provide its opening to the Mediterranean and a power to be taken for its protection shall be established. Although France seems eager to do so, it is understood that the Armenians will prefer the English. 3) Istanbul and the straits

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<sup>36</sup> William Roger Louis, *Ends of British Imperialism: The Scramble for Empire, Suez, and Decolonization*, (New York, 2006), p. 225, Hitchcock, Gilbert Monell, *The Adriatic Question*, (1920), p.21.

<sup>37</sup> Spencer C. Tucker, Priscilla Mary Roberts, *The Encyclopedia of World War I: A Political, Social, and Military History*, ABC-CLIO, 2005, p.1142-1143.

<sup>38</sup> De Novo, John A., *American Interests and the Policies in the Middle East, 1900-1939*, (Minneapolis, 1963), p. 111.

region will be put under international control. This control may be collective, or it may be fulfilled by a certain power that the League of Nations will mandate as mandatories.<sup>39</sup>

As it can be understood by the explication of the article, what Wilson understands from self-determination was certainly not their own determination of the people's future. Those, who will determine their future; or, -more precisely- who will rule their present and future, would be the great powers that will govern them in the capacity of "proxy". In Wilson's sense, self-determination is only a peculiarity of peoples who are supposed to have attained a level of development that they can govern themselves. As a matter of fact, this principle applied only to the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe. British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour stated that Wilson certainly did not consider the implementation of this principle out of Europe in relation to self-determination.<sup>40</sup> According to Balfour, Wilson's self-determination meant that "civilized" societies must not live under the rule of other "civilized" societies. Otherwise, it is not possible to apply this principle to peoples who do not have the power and ability to express themselves politically.<sup>41</sup> As Wilson did not foresee the application of the self-determination principle for the lands to be settled from the Ottoman Empire, Western Anatolia, Eastern Anatolia, Cukurova, Istanbul the Straits, etc., to the administration of the non-Turks as well.

The system, developed under the mandate, was nothing more than adapting the capitulations to the conditions of the day.<sup>42</sup> Leo Amery, parliamentary under-secretary at the Foreign Office, was explaining the new imperial vision of Britain by insisting that Britain's presence in the Middle East must be continuous. The mandate

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<sup>39</sup> Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1918, *World War Supplement I*, Vol. I, Washington D.C., United States Government Printing Office, 1933, p. 405-413; "Interpretation of President Wilson's Fourteen Points by Colonel House," *Diplomacy in the Near and the Middle East – A Documentary Record, 1914-1956*, edited: Jacob Colleman Hurewitz, Vol. II, D. Van Nostrand Co. Inc., (New York,1958), p. 40-45.

<sup>40</sup> Stivers ,William, *Supremacy and Oil: Iraq, Turkey and the Anglo-American World Order, 1918-1930*, (London,1982), p. 67.

<sup>41</sup> PRO CAB 27/24, Eastern Committee, Fifth Minutes, 24 April 1918.

<sup>42</sup> Cumming, Henry Harford, *Franco-British Rivalry in the Post-War Near East: The Decline of French Influence*, (London, 1938), p. 69-70.

system should be arranged so as not to interfere with this continuity. Mesopotamia, Palestine and Arabia should remain in the British imperial system, even if they are independent in the future.<sup>43</sup>

Mark Sykes, who signed the Sykes-Picot Treaty on behalf of his country, conveyed to the British administration a detailed report prepared by the beginning of 1918, which outlined what should be done in order to permanently settle Britain into the Middle East.<sup>44</sup> This brief, which reflects the logic of liberal imperialism and its philosophy, in changing conditions, urged that the terminology used by imperialism must change. Concepts and expressions that were excluded from current political terminology, such as "imperialism", "annexation", "military victory", "prestige", "responsibility of white man", "domains of influence" Instead, applicable current formulas and concepts should be produced.<sup>45</sup>

For example, if Britain wanted to settle in Mesopotamia, it should primarily claim, Mesopotamia is one of the largest potential food and fuel deposits in the world. When they are well processed, the world's workers are better fed and warmed than they are now. If Mesopotamia remains in the hands of the Turks, it cannot develop - and thus it will not be possible to nurture and warm up world workers better. The Turks, a militarist / imperialist force, use it only to increase its military power. The people of Mesopotamia cannot thrive if left alone, because there are nothing but four or five city oligarchs, and a few patriarchal nomadic communities in the country. The British must convince both their own democracies and world democracies that the British administration will serve not only for narrow capitalist interests, but for the development of the country and for the promotion of the freedom of the people. For this reason The people of Mesopotamia did not want to establish their own state at once, and that they preferred British administration to return to Turkish administration; that British contingent administration is based on the disposition of the rulers and that they are giving them their true independence;

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<sup>43</sup> Fromkin, David, *A Peace to End All Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East, 1914-1922*, (London, 1991), p.283.

<sup>44</sup> French, David, *British Strategy and War Aims 1914-1916*, (London,1986), p.147; Wilson, Arnold, T, *Loyalties: Mesopotamia 1914-1917: A Personal and Historical Record*, (London,1930), p.

<sup>45</sup> Mejcher, Helmut, *Imperial Quest for Oil: Iraq, 1900-1928*, (London,1976), p.177-180.

British must be able to argue that their contingency management does not intend to establish a commercial monopoly in the country.

They must also take steps to ensure this. The British must ensure that Christians and Jews are to be protected by the British against the reprisals they may face in the event of the return of the Turks. For this purpose, the British must have good relations with the Zionist and Armenian communities. The British must attract them by binding salaries to the chiefs of the great Bedouin tribes in the mountains. The British should encourage trade with Baghdad; So that the merchant class should feel that if we go away, its existence will fall into danger. The British must promote the use of civilizations such as electricity, transportation and water. The British must create new business opportunities. The British must establish and subsidize an Arab press denigrating the Turks, showing the British as the guardian of the Arab nation, and publishing in support of Arab nationalism. The British should set up a nationalist Arab party to which the intellectuals of the city are entitled and appoint the leading members of it to the official posts under British administration. The British should set up a training department and open as many schools as possible to support Arab nationalism. The British must meet all of the requirements of a local committee to integrate all elements of the country at the point of request to establish a local state under the British supervision. For this purpose, the British must provide jobs to those who want to work, especially intellectuals; The British must secure the lives and merchandise of merchants, Jews and Christians; The British must meet the demands of the inhabitants of the villages for less taxation and no military service; The British must give defined titles to the leaders of the community.

In the following chapters it will be analysed if Britain had a certain policy on the Kurds and if it did, how it was shaped by the recommendations of the British officers such as Sir Percy Cox, Arnold Wilson, Lord Curzon, Major Noel and others.

## CHAPTER 1

### Relations and Developments from 30 October 1918 to 19 May 1919

#### 1.1 Mondros Armistice (30 October 1918)

The Mondros Armistice Agreement was signed on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 1918 between the Ottoman delegation headed by Huseyin Rauf Orbay, the Minister of Maritime Affairs at the Port of Mondros in Limni Island, and the Allied Powers Delegation headed by British Admiral Calthorp in order to end the First World War.<sup>46</sup> This treaty had imposed very heavy conditions for the Ottoman Empire and, due to the armistice any part of the Ottoman Empire would be occupied if any unrest against the Allied Powers happened. This was a proof which in fact indicates that the Ottoman State had actually come to an end.

Some of the articles in this treaty directly ignored the will of the Ottoman Government. And it can be said that the Allied Powers were impatient to start the disintegration process of the Turkish lands, without waiting for the signing of the peace treaty, by the virtue of the Article 7 and Article 24. In this part a brief explanation of the conditions of the armistice will be given to have better understanding of the difficult situation that the Ottoman Empire was in after the Mondros Armistice. Major Provisions of Mondros Armistice can be listed as;

- 1) Decisions on the opening of the Istanbul and Dardanelles Straits and the free passage to the Black Sea will be taken by Allied Powers.
- 2) All torpedo fields in the Ottoman waters will show the locations of the torpedo and hive locations, help them to search and remove them.
- 3) Information about the torpedoes in the Black Sea will be given.

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<sup>46</sup> Orbay, Rauf, *Cehennem Değirmeni, Siyasi Hatıralarım I*, (İstanbul,1993), p.88-90.

- 4) Allied Powers and Armenian prisoners will be handed over unconditionally in Istanbul.
- 5) Except for the protection of the borders and the provision of internal ordinance, the Ottoman army will be distributed promptly.
- 6) The Ottoman war ships will surrender and will be kept under surveillance at the Ottoman ports shown by the Allied Powers.
- 7) In the event of a threat to their security, the Allied Powers will be entitled to occupy any strategic location.
- 8) Allied Powers will benefit from the Ottoman Railways and Ottoman Trade ships will be in the service of Allied Powers.
- 9) Allied Powers can benefit from the facilities in the Ottoman ports and shipyards.
- 10) The tunnel in the Toros will belong to the Allied Powers.
- 11) It is necessary to withdraw from the places where the Ottoman forces inside Iran and the Caucasus are occupied.
- 12) The control of radio, telegram and other communication channels outside the government communication will be handed over to the Allied Powers.
- 13) Commercial, military and marine related materials and materials will be prevented from being destroyed.
- 14) Turkey will meet the coal, diesel and oil requirements of the Allied Powers. Agreements with other countries for export will not be the issue. (None of them will be exported)
- 15) The Alliance of Allied Powers will control all the railways.
- 16) The forces in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Hijaz must surrender to the commanders of the closest Allied Powers.
- 17) The Ottoman officers in Benghazi and Trablusgarp will surrender to the nearest Italian Garrison.
- 18) The harbours under Ottoman occupation in Benghazi and Trablusgarp will be left to Italians.
- 19) German and Austrian nationals who are soldiers and civilians will leave the Ottoman lands within a month.
- 20) An order will made to deliver both the delivery of the military equipment and the dismantling of the Ottoman Army as well as the delivery of the means of transport to the Allied Powers.

- 21) A member shall, on behalf of the Allied Powers, work on the supervision of the subsistence, provide the needs of these countries and shall be given to him any information he wishes.
- 22) Ottoman prisoners of war will be under the supervision of the Allied Powers.
- 23) The Ottoman government will lose all relations with the central states.
- 24) If there is a chaos in places called six provinces (Erzurum, Van, Elazığ, Diyarbakır, Sivas, Bitlis), the right to occupy any part of these provinces will be in the Allied Powers.
- 25) The war between the Ottoman State and the Allied Powers will end on the 31<sup>st</sup> October 1918, at local time and noon.

The Armistice, which narrowed the sovereignty of the Ottoman State, was a threat to the independence of the Ottoman Empire. Particularly because of the occupation of the Straits by the Allied Powers, the connection of Thrace to Anatolia was cut so the security of Istanbul fell into danger.

Due to the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> articles of the Mondros Armistice Treaty the Ottoman state territories would be occupied for any adverse incident. In addition to that Ottoman forces were disbanded and the war vessels were confiscated so the Turks were deprived from self-defence right. Besides, due to the Article 24, six eastern provinces would be invaded. These six provinces were the places where the Armenians put in a claim for establishing an Armenian state.

Following the signing of the Armistice, Admiral Calthorpe and General Townshend expressed their satisfaction. Rauf Bey (Orbay) was anxious for the unclear articles of the armistice. Rauf Bey stated that although they knew how hard the conditions of the armistice were, they had signed the armistice due to their confidence in the British. Furthermore, he emphasized over and over that the Turks hoped that allies would stick to their commitments and promises.<sup>47</sup>

In the meantime, Mustafa Kemal Pasha informed the Grand Vizier Ahmet Pasha of the consequences of the provisions of the Mondros Armistice and is

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<sup>47</sup> Orbay, *Cehennem Değirmeni*, p.146-149



strongly protesting the practices that went beyond the truce conditions. Mustafa Kemal Pasha prevented the Turkish forces in Syria from surrendering to the Allied Powers by pulling the Turkish forces, which had to be delivered to the Allied armies, out of the territory determined in accordance with Article 16 of the Armistice. However, the Allies stated that the Syrian border passed through the north of Maraş so they demanded that the Turkish forces under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, which was located in the north of Aleppo, should surrender on the grounds of the armistice articles. But Mustafa Kemal refused to surrender and insisted on that the Syrian border border was under the control of the Turkey when the Mondros Armistice was signed.

In response to Mustafa Kemal Pasha's criticism and severe objections, the Istanbul government abolished the Yıldırım Army Group and the 7<sup>th</sup> Army Headquarters, and Mustafa Kemal Pasha was taken under the command of the Ministry of War. Nihat Pasha, who replaced Mustafa Kemal, was ordered to withdraw military troops to Seyhan and Göksu coasts and then to Pozantı, it was also declared that the remaining troops would be taken prisoner if they did not retreat within the given period of time. Thus, the last Turkish troops in Syria and Iraq began to retreat to specified areas.

## **1.2 The Situation under the Lights of British Officer's Reports**

Britain, the leader of the Allied States, would maintain its leadership in the new post-war regime, and would play the most important role in all significant decisions regarding Turkey. Therefore, the political superiority achieved in these days has made it possible for the British Empire to have more say on the territory of Turkey. With this being the case, England abstained from the actual occupation in Anatolia and preferred to control strategic locations for its benefit.

The Allied powers described the reasons for their occupation with the declaration they published.<sup>48</sup> According to the Mondros Armistice; the invasion was temporary; the Allied Powers' intention is not to break the dominance of the reigning authority, but to strengthen and consolidate that influence in the countries which would remain in the Ottoman administration; the intent of the Allied Powers was that

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<sup>48</sup> Atatürk, Mustafa Kemal, *Nutuk*, Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, (Ankara, 2011), p. 281.

they did not deprive the Turks of Istanbul. However, if there were incidents, such as a general disorder or massacre in the country, this decision could be changed. In this delicate period, whether it was Muslim or non-Muslim, everybody's job was to look at their own power, to help them to secure their security, to have a last hope for the establishment of a new Turkey from the ruin of the Ottoman Empire, not to be deceived and those who want to ruin them to comply with the orders to be given from Istanbul, which still remains as the center of the corps.

The British would not put in a claim for a place where was not occupied before the truce that's why the British occupied the Mosul before the Mondros Armistice was signed. As a matter of fact, the Turkish forces were unable to stand up against the British troops, which started to attack Ottoman lands in Mesopotamia on the 18<sup>th</sup> of October 1918, and they were obliged to retreat. The British forces, which were continuing to military march in defiance of the armistice, were warned to remain where they were. The British military units, which had not taken this warning into account, continued to their military move on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October 1918. The British military units, who demanded that the Turkish forces, should withdraw five miles north of Mosul border, reported that they would invade Mosul. General Marshall, the commander of the British forces, requested the 6<sup>th</sup> Army commander Ali Ihsan Pasha to evacuate Mosul from the Ottoman troops until 15<sup>th</sup> November. Eventually, on 8<sup>th</sup> of November, the city was evacuated and on the same day Mosul was left to the British administration.<sup>49</sup>

Upon the signing of the Armistice of Mondros, the evacuation of Kars, Ardahan and Batum -Elviye-i Selase; three provinces- were demanded by the Allied Powers according to Article 11 of the armistice. The 9<sup>th</sup> Army commander Yakup Şevki Paşa acted slowly about the evacuation procedures. Hereupon, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 1918, the Foreign Office of England demanded accelerating the evacuation process in these three provinces and to dismissing of Yakup Şevki Pasha.<sup>50</sup> Therewith, two British warships were sent to Batum and on the 24<sup>th</sup> of December 1918 the city was occupied by British forces. The British occupation was not limited to Cukurova, Mosul and Batum; British troops also invaded Antep,

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<sup>49</sup> Aydın, Ayhan, *Musul Meselesi*, (İstanbul,1995), p.29.

<sup>50</sup> Sarıhan, Zeki, *Kurtuluş Savaşı Günlüğü I*, (Ankara,1986), p.58.

Maras, Urfa and Ardahan. The British, who benefited from the Armenian elements in the places where they occupied, such as Ardahan, left some places to Armenians.

Thanks to the Syrian Agreement that was signed between Britain and France on 15<sup>th</sup> of September 1919, the French had the opportunity to confiscate some places in the South-eastern Anatolia region except Cilician Plain. By doing this move, the British would leave the French forces in the area where there was a powerful Turkish resistance, thus the British would prevent the French from directing their attention to the oilfields located on the South-eastern Ottoman lands. Within the framework of this policy, the British abandoned Antep, Maras and Urfa, which they had occupied, in favour of the French towards the end of 1919. The French benefited significantly from co-operation with the Armenian to control the lands which the French captured and Armenians were appointed with important positions such as security, communication and administration. To ensure security in the region a volunteer army which consisted of 6,000 Armenians was established. The Turks and the Kurds living in the region protested against these developments, with considerable Kurdish support for the Turkish resistance.

In contravention of the provisions of the agreement, immediately after the signing of the Armistice of Mondros the British attacked and seized Mosul, Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyah.<sup>51</sup> Following that, they attempted to implement the plan of establishing an autonomous Kurdistan whose centre was Sulaymaniyah under the leadership of Sheikh Mahmud, the chief of the Barzanji tribe, which was the most powerful Kurdish tribe of the era in the Sulaymaniyah region. The British sent specialist officers to the areas they occupied in order to protect their interests in the region by collaborating with the Kurds. These officers met with the notables of the region, conducted special investigations and sent important reports to the British authorities about the region and people. The policies of the British were shaped by the reports of the officials. Because of that these officers and reports will be mentioned often in the research. Undoubtedly that the most important and effective one of the specialists was Major Edward William Charles Noel.<sup>52</sup> In this manner,

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<sup>51</sup> Kılıç, Sezen, *Musul Sorunu ve Lozan, Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi*, p.7.

<sup>52</sup> Edward William Charles Noel was born on 14th April 1886. His father was lieutenant colonel Edward Noel. He served as a spy in Georgia, Azerbaijan, Central Asia and appointed as consul to Ahwaz in

Major Noel's primary mission in Sulaymaniyah was to alienate the Kurds from the Turks and to win the Kurds over to the British.<sup>53</sup> To achieve this goal, Major Noel was assigned to Sulaymaniyah on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 1918; for the recognition of some issues, such as the whereabouts of the borders in the event of the establishment of an independent Kurdistan being approved, determining the tendencies of Kurds, and finding out the extent of relations between the Turks and the Kurds.

Acting in accordance with the above-mentioned mission, Noel associated with Sheikh Mahmud, the leader of the Barzanji tribe in Sulaymaniyah, and reached a compromise in relation to the removal of Turkish forces from the area. As a requirement of this compromise, Noel arranged a meeting on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 1918 not only with the Kurdish tribal leaders in Iraqi territory but also with some Kurdish tribe leaders in Iran.<sup>54</sup> At this meeting, by declaring Sheikh Mahmud as the governor<sup>55</sup> of Sulaymaniyah on behalf of the British government, Major Noel aimed at the British creating a fast and efficient order within the territory.<sup>56</sup> According to Major Noel, the Turks wanted to assimilate the Kurds, just like they had done with the Armenians and Arabs, under their brutal and poor administration for 400 years. This claim is open to debate, but it is important to see in terms of the reflection the viewpoint of officers sent to the region by the relevant British authorities. During World War I, Major Noel made a pretty good impression through requesting sugar, tea and flour from the Baghdad and Kirkuk warehouses and distributing the materials to the needy during the creation of this order.<sup>57</sup> A great many rupees and gold were handed out to Kurdish leaders thereby literally contributing to the Kurdish-friendly profile of Major Noel.

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1915. He was awarded with Distinguished Service Order (D.S.O.) in 1919. He could speak Kurdish. He had close contact with Kurds in Eastern Anatolia and Mesopotamia. During his services in Eastern Anatolia and Mesopotamia he showed great efforts to establish a Kurdish State. In one sense, he wanted to be the "Kurdish Lawrence".

<sup>53</sup> Gavan, S.S., *Kurdistan: Divided Nation of The Middle East*, (London,1958), p.22.

<sup>54</sup> Rafiq Hilmi, *Kurdistan At The Dawn Of The Century, A New Hope*, (London,1998), p.51.

<sup>55</sup> Genel Kurmay Başkanlığı, *Türk İstiklal Harbi Mondros Mütarekesi ve Tatbikatı I*, (Ankara,1992), p.32

<sup>56</sup> *Appleton Post-Crescent*, 'Recognition By Ruler Of Irak Is Demanded By Kurds', 23 September 1922, p.22; *The Lima News*, 'Another Title For Irak King', 23 September 1922, p.5.

<sup>57</sup> Hilmi, *Kurdistan*, p. 33.

Major Noel prepared a report<sup>58</sup> regarding the Sheikh Mahmud incident and its effects on the economy of Sulaymaniyah on the 16<sup>th</sup> November 1918. In his report, Noel claims that he was sincerely welcomed by the notable figures of the region upon arriving to Sulaymaniyah in the 16<sup>th</sup> November 1918 in which Sheikh Mahmud and his hundreds of men took their stand in this welcome, and he stated that shortly after, some Turkish garrisons were captured and the Turkish soldiers residing there were sent to Kirkuk. He reported that the city had become a complete ruin, 80 % of the population lived in poverty, the villages and the towns had been devastated, and production had almost come to a standstill under Turkish domination. It is important that Noel gives information about the previous sale of 1.600 tons of wheat and 2.400 tons of rice in the region, so as to gain a better understanding of the region's situation.

Bearing in mind that this picture painted by Major Noel was in the immediate aftermath of World War I, it will be noted that the situation was not that different in other cities of Anatolia within the given timeframe. This should not be considered as a result of maladministration by the Turks but rather should be assessed as a consequence of the devastation brought by the war.

Major Noel warned the British that providing financial support to the region before winter was extremely important.<sup>59</sup> Major Noel argued in the continuation of his letter that Kurds in Sulaymaniyah had intense nationalist feelings and under the supervision and control of British political officers sent to the region, a Kurdish State would be shaped quite quickly and effortlessly.

In the telegram,<sup>60</sup> Noel emphasized that for the establishment of self-determination among the Kurds with the support of the British government, a serious association was at stake and that Kurdish leaders were expecting the support of the British. He gave the arrest of Turkish forces in the region by the tribes of Southern

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<sup>58</sup> PRO, FO 371/3385, From Civil Commissioner, Baghdad To Foreign Office and Tehran, 16 November 1918, No:191848, p.216.

<sup>59</sup> PRO, AIR 20/512, From Political Baghdad To Secretary of State for India,London, 17 November 1918, p. 13; PRO, FO 371/3385, From Civil Commissioner, Baghdad...,p.217.

<sup>60</sup> PRO, FO 371/3385, From Political, 19 November 1918, p.240.

Kurdistan as evidence to his claim. The matter referred to by Major Noel in this telegram was the capturing of Turkish forces with Sheikh Mahmud's forces and the agreement reached on the removal of Turkish troops from the area. Here, the point we need to emphasize is that although Major Noel admitted in the meeting arranged on the 19<sup>th</sup> of November 1918 that there was no unity between the Kurds; he declared a completely dissimilar idea in this telegram.

The subject of the telegram<sup>61</sup> sent from the Political Bureau of Baghdad to Delhi and Tehran in the 27<sup>th</sup> of November 1918 comprised Major Noel's proposals for the establishment of an independent Kurdish state with the help of the British. The telegram includes the assessments of Noel's suggestion by the British government of trying to establish a Kurdish state whose borders would start at Lake Van. In the telegram it was also stated that the Kurds of Sulaymaniyah greeted Major Noel warmly, and that they were willing to accept England's taking the control of the region although there were some small problems. Those 'problems' seem to be the anti-British movements emerging around Erbil. Captain William Rupert Hay<sup>62</sup> who was in Altinköprü was determined in his duty to prevent the case turning against England in the region as appropriate. For that purpose, it is seen that Major Noel, being sure that these events would quickly cease when Hay took control, ordered Hay to come to the region immediately and take control. From the information given in the attachments to the telegram, the conclusion that Major Noel's main purpose was to ensure the establishment of an independent Kurdish state under British protection can be reached. It is ascertained that a Kurdistan in accordance with this purpose would be shaped according to the desire of British government starting from the shores of Lake Van which could be easily occupied.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> PRO, FO 371/3385, From Political,..., p.434.

<sup>62</sup> He worked in Mendeli, Koy Sanjaq and Arbil as a deputy official and political officer between the years 1918 and 1920, published his memories about the period in 1921, in London with the title 'Two Years in Kurdistan'.

<sup>63</sup> Çağlayan, Kaya Tuncer, 'İngiltere'nin Kürt Politikasının Van Vilayetindeki Etkileri (1919-1920)', *Atatürk Dergisi*, Vol.3, January 2003, p.39.

Major Noel conducted a meeting with 60 Kurdish notables from Iran, Seniye, Sakiz and Avroman in 1<sup>st</sup> of December 1918.<sup>64</sup> During the meeting he stated he had full confidence in them finding the right way under the guidance of the British. Arnold Talbot Wilson, head of Baghdad Civilian Administration, also gave information about the meeting with the Kurdish notables. He expressed the view that the 60 tribe leaders in Sulaymaniyah on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 1918 would establish a Kurd Federation under the leadership of Sheikh Mahmud in North Iraq and the tribe leaders accepted that by signing a declaration. In this declaration, tribe leaders wanted an overall policy of saving eastern people from Turkish oppression and helping them in gaining their independence. As representatives of Kurdistan they wanted the British government to mandate Kurdistan and unite them with Iraq so as not to be cut off from the advantages it had. Also these leaders, who asked for a representative from the High Commissioner in Mesopotamia, promised to obey the demands and suggestions of the British government in the event of their providing support and protection.

In a meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> of November 1918, it was decided to accept the authority of Sheikh Mahmud, who had been assigned as a governor of Sulaymaniyah on behalf of the British government by Major Noel. The part relating to the acceptance of the authority of Sheikh Mahmud in the agreement was only written because of the changing attitudes of some Kirkuk and Iran Kurds. A promise was also seemingly made not to give administrative positions to Arabs in places densely populated by the Kurds.<sup>65</sup>

The Kurds were not united and while they were all seeking to gain their independence, some wanted a British mandate and some came up with completely different ideas.<sup>66</sup> Thus a multipartite structure of Kurds shows itself in this meeting and this is, in fact what the reality was.

Despite Major Noel's demands to establish a Kurdish state as expressed above, his report dated the 8<sup>th</sup> of December 1918 is quite important in terms of

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<sup>64</sup> PRO, FO 371/3385, From Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, p.216.

<sup>65</sup> Godfrey Rolles, Driver, *A Report on Kurdistan and Kurds*, Royal Anthropological Institute, (London,1919), p.80.

<sup>66</sup> McDowall, David, *A Modern History of The Kurds*, (NewYork,2004) , p.152.

assessing his point of view on Sulaymaniyah, Sheikh Mahmud and the Kurdish question.<sup>67</sup> According to Noel's report, Sheikh Mahmud's appointment as the British representative through taking into account his influence in Sulaymaniyah was decided in the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 1918 but could not be realized with just one last minute letter. The assignment's having been effectuated approximately 6 months later was also seen as a positive development by Noel who faithfully supported this. According to Noel, noting the influence and power Sheikh Mahmud had, there had been no control over this region by the Ottomans since before the war, and anarchy had prevailed in the region.

The task of maintaining order and safety in Sulaymaniyah and its surroundings lay under the influence of Sheikh Mahmud. When the document is examined in detail, it is seen that in fact, Major Noel had serious doubts about Sheikh Mahmud. According to Noel; there was a concern that Sheikh Mahmud's power was a problem for the British. The past experience of Turkish authorities was also that the Sheikh was prone to rebel any time. When it is considered that the Kurdish policy Britain was trying to carry out in Sulaymaniyah was based on the whim of Sheikh Mahmud, because Sheikh Mahmud's influence was much stronger than it had been in the past there was a possibility that this situation would damage British interests. However, in order to ensure the British plan of establishing order in Sulaymaniyah without the help of Sheikh Mahmud, England needed have to send a garrison to the region. Due to the conditions prevailing in that period the British government was totally against establishing a garrison in the region. Therefore, the risk of Sheikh Mahmud had to be taken and order should be ensured in the region without the direct military intervention of the British.<sup>68</sup>

In his telegram Noel<sup>69</sup> argued that among the Kurds there was a small intelligentsia which had the capacity to understand their progress in national feelings, for an autonomous government, depended on the relationship developed with

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<sup>67</sup> PRO, FO 608/95, Circular Memo. No: 43/dated December 8th 1918, From Major E. W. C. Noel, C. I. E. P. O. Suleimaniyah To A. P. O.'s Kifri, Kirkuk and Altun Keupri, 8December1918, p.410.

<sup>68</sup> Bell, Gertrude, *Mezopotamya'da 1915-1920 Sivil Yönetimi*, translated by. Vedii İlmen, (Istanbul,2004), p.125.

<sup>69</sup> PRO, FO 608/95, Circular Memo, p.410.



Baghdad, and that this situation put British politics into trouble. Noel warns that due to the fact that the demands of many nationalist Kurds in the region were not fulfilled and that they were disappointed, it would not be easy to convince the Kurds held in custody.<sup>70</sup> Noel alleges that the manifestation of anarchy or opposition from the Kurds would cause serious damage to the sustainability of the British policy. Therefore, although there was the possibility of an increase in costs, spending money should not be withheld in order to avoid such a situation. While these expenditures are made, support for Kurdish leaders taking sides with Britain should be given. This is because controlling national feeling amongst the Kurds was an extremely important issue for Britain.

According to the report,<sup>71</sup> should a compromise be reached on establishing the Kurdistan stipulated in the British-French agreement; this should be actualized through maintaining order with the ones selected as administrators and applying the guidelines that will be developed. The realization of this plan should both provide justice and development. The meaning of independence for many Kurds, who have national feelings, is to be free from all limitations and laws. Therefore, while talking with Kurds who have national feelings, one should take care not to discuss this. Unless the national movement among the Kurds is kept under control, this will be a process leading to disaster for British interests. The connection with Baghdad, also important due to geography, is emphasized as an obligation rather than a necessity in the report and the report also comprises matters that should be regarded in shaping policy towards the Kurds. Based on these considerations; administrator or assistant positions should be selected from Kurdish individuals; Kurdish troops should be trained by British consultants but should be controlled by Kurdish commanders and Kurdish should be the government's official language.

In addition, laws should be shaped according to Kurdish traditions and customs, the annual tax collection system should be formalized according to Kurdish practices and the distribution of the tax should be carried out in a manner that meets people's needs. It is emphasized in the report that the tribes' being respectful and

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<sup>70</sup> McDowall, *Modern Kürt Tarihi*, p.200.

<sup>71</sup> PRO, FO 608/95, Circular Memo, p.410.

loyal to the structure to be established would function in direct proportion to chieftains' placement in effective positions. This is due to the fact that the leaders are believed to have a vital importance in maintaining the order and forming the structure. Constituting a separate budget for each city, collecting the taxes in regards to provide country development and administrative sustainability without any delays, allocating shares to Baghdad at a certain rate are also other recommendations given place in the report.

The autonomous structure should establish close ties with Mesopotamia and issues such as education, social services, agriculture, and communication policies should be determined by Baghdad and implemented.<sup>72</sup> The fact is also mentioned in the report that as a result of the autonomy promised to the Kurds by Britain, the level of education in the country would rise in a very short time which would strengthen ties with Iraq. The report also discusses relations between the British government and Sheikh Mahmud. It is specified that Sheikh Mahmud made decisions under the influence especially of the people with whom he had spoken recently, that he was surrounded by meddling people and therefore, he was mostly occupied with trivial matters. Influenced by the people around him, it is argued that Sheikh Mahmud produced a variety of absurd projects, since he saw himself as the king of Kurdistan. Moreover, Sheikh Mahmud was considered as a rebellion-prone person but also it was anticipated that this would be kept under control. In the report it was highlighted that Sheikh Mahmud's appointment was supported by four out of every five people and this rate was quite important in terms of being an indicator of to what extent Sheikh Mahmud was supported socially in a scene where blood feuds perpetually prevail. Noel claimed that the best way to effectuate the interests of Britain was to do it through Sheikh Mahmud, therefore the British political officer assistants should contact the tribes in the region via Sheikh Mahmud and they should refrain from contacting with them directly. That's why the British policy officials to be assigned to the region should be approved by Sheikh Mahmud. But, Sheikh Mahmud was severely warned by the British authorities that his dominance in the region could not continue without the financial support of Britain.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> PRO, FO 608/95, Circular Memo, p.411.

<sup>73</sup> Edmonds, Cecil John, 'The Kurdish National Struggle in Iraq', *Asian Affairs*, Vol.2, 1971, p.157.

British officials also worked on the ethnic composition of the region and on determining the tendencies of non-Muslim and non-Turkish origin local people, the Nestorians, the Armenians, the Arabs, and the Kurds, of the population in Eastern Anatolia and Mesopotamia. One of these reports was prepared by Lieutenant Read on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 1918.<sup>74</sup> According to the information provided by Lieutenant Read, in Bakuba there were Urmian Nestorians that supported Britain, consisting of a population close to 10,000. The majority of the people in Caldiran have never attended the Nestorian Church. They preferred to be under the auspices of France rather than Britain. This could be disadvantageous for Britain in this region. The population around Van Lake consisted of Armenians and Kurds. Nestorians and Kurds get along very well and they were assigned to important tasks. However, the Nestorians were adopting an attitude against Armenian oppression. Except for two villages, the population of Hakkari consisted of Kurds and Nestorians. These two villages, Karanfil and Pagi were occupied by Armenians. The Armenian settlement started from the North of Baskale and spread to Siirt and to Muş.

A similar report that includes important information was prepared by the Major Francis Jardine about the Milli Tribe on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 1919. As it mentioned in the report, in 1919, the Viranşehir border ran across Siverek and the Karaca Mountains in the north, Urfa in the West, and Derek Meskok in the east and the Aziz Mountain in the south. Information about the population of the tribes, their economic structure and relation with other tribes and nations, and number of arms form the basis of this report prepared on tribes in the National Confederation and their subdivisions. But the part of the report about Koçekan Kurds, who lived in the north peaks of Nusaybin, is more important than others for this work. Hamo Agha ibn Ahmed Mahi, who was Sheikh of Koçekan Kurds, saved Armenians during the Armenian risings. Although he was called to Nusaybin by Ali Ihsan Pasha, he did not obey this order. Hamo Agha was a supporter of England and in order to facilitate the progress of the British in the context of the Mondros Treaty, Article 24, he attacked the Turks in Nusaybin. He was on good terms with Ali Batı who was the leader of the rebellion against Turks which would start on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May 1919 and finish on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August 1919.

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<sup>74</sup> PRO, AIR 20/512, Note on Kurdistan From Capt. Read, 23 January 1919, p.23.

At first glance this report seems to be one of the ordinary reports that give information about the tribes. However, when the report is analysed in detail it can be seen that it contains crucial information. The Koçhekan tribe, which is a branch of the Milli tribe, could be used to solve the problems that England encountered. As it is known, one of the major causes of the anti- British activities was the noncommittal attitude of Britain in the establishment of the promised Kurdish State. One of the major reasons for this noncommittal attitude was the difficulty in determining the boundaries of the proposed Kurdish and Armenian States. Another was the attitudes of the two communities against each other. Protection of Armenians during 1915 events by Hamo Agha, who was one of the leaders of the Milli tribe, can be one step towards improving the relationship between Kurds and Armenians. Also it can be claimed that Hamo Agha, who had 400 armed troops and good relations with England, gave support to Ali Batı during his revolt against the Turks. Considering these events, thanks to a collaboration being possible, Britain could get a partner to fight against Turks and a partner who can help to solve the problems between the Armenians and the Kurds. Herewith the British could kill two birds with one stone.

Major Noel, who was sent to the Mesopotamia officially just to contact the people who lived in the Eastern Anatolia and Mesopotamia and gather information, showed great efforts to establish a Kurdish State in the region and prepared some important reports in order to further his aim. One particularly important report about establishing a Kurdish administration was prepared by Noel in February 1919.

Major Noel started his report<sup>75</sup> dated in February 1919 and prepared at Sulaymaniyah with the statement 'Kurdistan is looking for its own government' and explained his ideas about an autonomous Kurdistan in this report. Indicating in the report that Kurds desired an autonomous government based on a Kurd-centred administration, Major Noel also stated that the current administration borders, including the areas where Kurds are densely populated should be rearranged. This administration system would be established outside the borders of the area described as the Southern and the Central Kurdistan. Suggesting the formation of a separate province that he called the Western Kurdistan, for the southeast region of Turkey,

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<sup>75</sup> PRO, FO 608/96, Note By Political Officer, Suleimaniyah, In Regard To The Political Status of Kurdistan, February 1919, p.385.

with an administration system centralized in Diyarbakir, Noel laid stress on making a political arrangement for the separation of this province from the region he described as the Southern Kurdistan and the Mosul province. There were various different offers about the borders of an autonomous Kurdistan to be established under the leadership of Sheikh Mahmud according to Major Noel's recommendations for example, to establish an administrative system centred on Sulaymaniyah to Kuwait. In the last part of the report Noel stated that he believed that if the suggestions above could be accomplished the Kurdish confederation would gain sympathy of the Kurds.

Noel stated in this telegram that the feeling in the region he identified as Kurdistan should be called nationalism; however, this naming deserved to be considered as tribalism rather than nationalism.<sup>76</sup> Noel introduced the concept of tribalism as people's desire to protect their language, customs and traditions and exclude foreign elements - whether Armenian, Turkish or even other Muslims - from Kurdistan. Major Noel, despite the matter stated in this telegram, implied that he was astonished by the absence of any antipathy against the Nestorians, or Chaldeans, but that Kurds had serious concerns about people that emigrated from those lands during the war coming back and reclaiming their properties.

He stated the Kurds preferred the administration of British political advisers instead of Sheikh Mahmud's, and expressed the Kurds desired a structure shaped by their own values and that they would be just as opposed to Arab domination in any form.<sup>77</sup>

Noel declared the opinion if the establishment of Kurdistan was approved under various political titles as proposed, the northern border of Diyarbakir province should be determined by population.<sup>78</sup> The strongest reaction to the proposal of the determination of borders according to ethnographic lines in Major Noel's telegram came from A. Talbot Wilson. According to Wilson, such a border was not acceptable

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<sup>76</sup> PRO, FO 608/96, Note By Political Officer, p.385.

<sup>77</sup> Meho, Lokman I., Kelly L. Maglaughlin, *Kurdish Culture And Society*, Greenwood, (London,2001), p.18.

<sup>78</sup> PRO, FO 608/96, Note By Political Officer, p.385.

both due to the lack of Kurdish unity and the possibility of damaging the long-term plans of British interests.<sup>79</sup>

As a part of the British policy to gather information about the controversial region where an Armenian or a Kurdish State would be established, a report was prepared about Van vicinity and Iran border by the British Officer William Ainger.<sup>80</sup> In his report dated on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 1919 all the leaders, name lists and forces of the Kurds in the Urmia region were listed. As it can be understood from the report the number of their weapons increased after World War I, however, it can be observed that their forces had actually declined significantly. However, the report does not include any information about who provided these weapons to the Kurdish tribes or why these weapons were provided.

William Ainger Wigram<sup>81</sup>, stated that the Kurdish view of independence was in unity, although it appears so, were not able to desist from expressing that this unity does not cover all Kurds.<sup>82</sup> According to Wigram, if this unity expands in a manner that will cover all Kurdish people, this would be a first in history. Again, if the Kurdish tribe leaders were to be left alone under the supervision of British consultants, and if their raids on the surrounding regions were prevented, this liberation movement maybe occur on its own. Wigram, who stated that the respect the Kurds have for Britain and other countries is related to how much power they have, believed that Britain may utilize this respect they have to realize their plans for the region.

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<sup>79</sup> Lazarev, M.S., *Emperyalizm ve Kürt Sorunu (1917-1923)*, p.85.

<sup>80</sup> PRO, AIR 20/512, *Kurds And Kurdistan Affairs*, p.137-144. The document also has a map, showing the settlement of the tribes mentioned. It can be seen in Appendix 3.

<sup>81</sup> He was a British author and a missionary to the Church of the England. On 1 March 1919 He drew a graph and gave information about the Kurdish leaders lived in the region of Van and Iran. PRO, AIR 20/512, "Kurds And Kurdistan Affairs", p. 137-144.

<sup>82</sup> Lazarev, M.S., *Emperyalizm*, p.88.

### **1.3 Paris Peace Conference (18 January 1919 - 10 August 1920)**

Many groups from various countries and societies participated in the meetings of the countries, which convened in Paris to reshape the world, especially the Middle East, at the end of World War I.<sup>83</sup> 32 states participated in the conference. However, negotiations with the defeated states were not conducted during the preparation of the peace treaties. Despite the fact that 32 states took part in the Paris meetings, the main speakers were the representatives of England, France, Italy, USA and Japan. The four great powers England, France, Italy and America discussed among themselves what they saw fit for the defeated states. Then they presented the resulting treaty texts to the defeated states. At the Peace Conference, agreements were concluded with Germany (The Versailles, 28<sup>th</sup> of June 1919), Austria (The Saint Germain, 10<sup>th</sup> of September 1919), Bulgaria (The Neuilly, 27<sup>th</sup> of November 1919) and Hungary (The Trianon, 6<sup>th</sup> of June 1920). The extent of the Ottoman State's heritage was remarkable and there were conflicts of interest between the allies.<sup>84</sup> That is why the agreement to be made with the Ottoman State was delayed.

Britain, France and Italy were not thinking the same about the sharing of the Ottoman lands. Before and during the war Russia had great designs on the Ottoman lands especially in the Straits and in the Eastern Anatolia. But after withdrawal of Russia from World War I, Italy, France and England started a political fight for obtaining benefits on these regions.

At the Peace Conference, the issues establishing a new Turkish State in Asia and the while Armenian, Kurdish, Mesopotamian, Syrian and Hijaz states would be discussed. At the Peace Conference, secret agreements aimed at sharing the Ottoman State lands among the Allied Powers were discussed. Moreover, the British commitments given to the subjects who lived under the rule of Ottoman Empire had

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<sup>83</sup> Goldstein, Erik, *The First World War Peace Settlements, 1919–1925*, (New York, 2013), p.49; MacMillan, Margaret, *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World*, (New York,2003), p.37.

<sup>84</sup> Baykara, Tuncer, *Türk İnkılap Tarihi ve Atatürk İlkeleri*, (İzmir,1993), p.78.

been discussed. According to those commitments the Straits would be brought under control of the allies, Armenia, Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia would be separated from the Ottoman State.<sup>85</sup>

After Russia's withdrawal from World War I, Wilson joined the war on the side of Allies, and put forward some principles that undermined the interests of the Allied Powers. These principles encouraged the defeated states, and led to intellectual and political reactions in the colonies. On this occasion, the elders of the nations, which had been promised independence in order to benefit from them, came to Paris. Hence, apart from the Ottoman delegation, Arab, Armenian, Kurdish and Greek delegations also came to Paris to participate the negotiations.<sup>86</sup>

British diplomats supported the claims of the Greek and Armenians throughout the conference. Lloyd George had claimed that the Armenians would have to defend themselves by building an army of 40,000 people, and then that Britain would provide weapons and materials to Armenians. As a result, allies agreed on the future of the territories of Turkey, Armenia, Syria, Mesopotamia, Kurdistan, Palestine and Arabia. Britain thought to use Kurds against Russia in Eastern Anatolia, Mesopotamia and Iran. By establishing an independent Kurdish state in these regions, Britain would have prevented Turkey from controlling the region between Armenia and Mesopotamia.

At the Paris Peace Conference, military representatives prepared a report on 5<sup>th</sup> of February 1919, which covers the areas of occupation and influence. According to the report, British forces, would occupy Palestine and Mesopotamia; French troops would occupy Aleppo, Humus and Damascus railway. If the occupation of Armenia and Kurdistan became necessity America would send troops to these regions at request of the League of Nations. As will be seen in the future, despite the report, a detailed decision on the sharing of these regions could not be made until autumn 1919.

Meanwhile the French were busy with internal affairs, likewise the Italians were dealing with Adriatic problem. The British, who had the opportunity to take

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<sup>85</sup> Akgül, Suat, 'Paris Konferansı'ndan Sevr'e Türkiye'nin Paylaşılması Meselesi', *AAMD*, VII, (March, 1992), p.381.

<sup>86</sup> Ünal, Tahsin, *1700'den 1958'e kadar Türk Siyasi Tarihi*, (Ankara, 1974), p.489.



advantage of this situation, got the chance to apply their policies on Mesopotamia more comfortably than ever in the context of international policy. Nevertheless, the British would have to act with greater caution in order to avoid the reaction of the Muslim societies in British colonies and further complications resulting from French politics.

Shortly after the invasion of İzmir by the Greeks, the High Council of the Paris Peace Conference discussed the text sent by Damat Ferit Pasha on the 30<sup>th</sup> of May 1919 and decided to listen to an Ottoman delegation. After this decision, the French High Commissioner De France in Istanbul visited the grand vizier Ferit Pasha on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 1919 and invited him to the conference. Grand Vizier Damat Ferit Pasha, former Grand Vizier Tevfik Pasha, Finance Minister Tevfik and Shura-i Devlet Reis (Council of State Chief) Rıza Tevfik went to Paris to attend the conference. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of June 1919, before the arrival of Tevfik Pasha in Paris, Damat Ferit Pasha had a meeting with the delegations in Paris. During the meeting Ferit Pasha claimed that the Ottoman Empire was not a war criminal, that the state had been put into a war by the members of the Committee of Union and Progress, the Unionists, who were also responsible for the Armenian deportation.<sup>87</sup>

In the memorandum presented to the conference after the meeting, Damat Ferit demanded the conservation of the Ottoman territories status before the war. He also declared that negotiations could be started on the establishment of an Armenian state in the Eastern Anatolia and that autonomy can be granted for Arabs provided that it is bound to the Ottoman Empire. Although the requests expressed by Damat Ferit Pasha presented in the conference did not work at all, Allied Powers understood that the liquidation of the Ottoman state will not be so easy. The Turks, who were deprived of all the belligerent powers and pushed into total poverty, could still not be regarded as completely dangerless. Taking this into consideration, the committee announced that the peace, they were planning to sign on the 27<sup>th</sup> July 1919 with Turks, would be delayed until the time United States of America decided whether to

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<sup>87</sup> The organization known as the Committee of Union and Progress was founded in 1889 as a secret association which aimed at establishing a constitutional assembly in the Ottoman Empire. The pressures of the organization led to the declaration of the Second Constitutional Monarchy on 23 July 1908 in the Ottoman Empire. After the adoption of the second constitution the organization became a political party then became the ruling power in 1912. Its members were known as Unionists. The most important leaders of the Unionists were Enver Pasha, Talat Pasha and Cemal Pasha.

accept the mandate of some parts of Ottoman lands. It was announced that Turkish delegates could return to Turkey.<sup>88</sup>

Two important British officials from the Mesopotamia region participated in the Paris Peace Conference.<sup>89</sup> These were Arnold Talbot Wilson and Gertrude Bell. When we add Montagu from India to these two, it would not be wrong to claim that the staff shaped what the administration to be established in the Middle East should be.<sup>90</sup>

People who were thought to represent ethnic groups were invited to the conference. In this respect, the conference was the first international forum in which the Kurds presented their own demands. It can also be accepted as a significant milestone towards the “internationalisation” of the Kurdish issue, in line with the British aims.<sup>91</sup> It is seen that many candidates among the Kurds were considered to establish a delegation to be sent to Paris. These candidates can be listed as Sureyya Bedirhan, Abrürrezzak Bedirhan, Abdulkadir, Mahmud Ibn Hafid, the Milli tribe leader Mahmud Bey and Şerif Pasha. According to Driver, who assessed these candidates, it was difficult for Sureyya Bedirhan to be elected to the committee since he had been away from the Kurds for a long time. It was also difficult for Abdulkadir and Abrürrezzak Bedirhan, to be elected for they have lived in İstanbul for years, or again it was difficult for Mahmud Bey to be elected since he did not have that much influence outside his own small settlement. Şerif Pasha had gained his authority due to his education in Europe and his familiarity with the European culture, and was considered the best and most talented person for this job, although he had been away from the region where the Kurds lived.<sup>92</sup> Bulloch and Morris stated that the Bedirhan

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<sup>88</sup> Tansel, Selahattin, *Mondros'tan Mudanya'ya Kadar I*, (İstanbul,1991), p.260-261

<sup>89</sup> Sluglett, Peter, *Britain In Iraq, Contriving King And Country*, (London,2007), p.28.

<sup>90</sup> Michael, Dockrill, John Fisher, *The Paris Peace Conference 1919:Peace Without Victory*, (NewYork,2001), p.77.; Churchill was not take part in the peace process itself but he participated in discussions about the shape of the post-war world. Kennedy, A. L. and M. C., *Old Diplomacy And New: From Salisbury To Llyod George (1876-1922)*, (London, 1922).

<sup>91</sup> Kurubaş ,Erol, *Kürt Sorununun Uluslararası Boyutu ve Türkiye*, (Ankara,2004), p.199-212.

<sup>92</sup> Driver, *A Report*, p.101. Driver mention Abdurrezak as a candidate but Malmisanij gives 1918 as date of death of Abdurrezak. So one of the authors is wrong. Malmisanij, Cizira, *Botanlı Bedirhaniler*, (İstanbul, 2009), p.10.

family members were recommended by members of the Committee for Kurdish Liberation, however, another group preferred Sayyid Abdulkadir, and claimed that the Kurdish groups made contact with not only the British but also with America.<sup>93</sup>

The first negotiations; in the conference on “Kurdistan” started at the end of 1919 and in order to protect their interests there the British and the French participated in the negotiations. It is seen that some Kurdish leaders attended the conference by sending telegrams. For instance, it is confirmed that the leaders of the Ertusi tribe from Hakkari, and some Kurdish tribe leaders from Van sent a telegram stating that they wished for a separate Kurdish State to be founded under the leadership of the caliphate.<sup>94</sup> During the negotiations on the regions where Kurds lived, it was stated that although the Kurds lived in the highlands of Mesopotamia, it was of particular importance to utilise the regions where they lived, since they were living on the fertile grounds run through by the rivers of Euphrates and Tigris, and also in important oil zones such as Mosul and Kirkuk.<sup>95</sup>

The purpose of the British in these negotiations was to control the southern regions of Kurdistan and Mesopotamia, in other words to define the Mosul oil region and its security zones; and to keep the French away from this region.<sup>96</sup> In order to achieve this, it was necessary to ensure the security of the periphery. The plans to establish buffer zones between Turkey and Mosul and between Turkey and the Baku oil zones underlie the British efforts to establish independent regions under the name of Kurdistan and Armenia. For achieving this goal and satisfying the Armenians, the British followed two different policies in the regions where the Kurds lived. These regions were the highlands, Eastern Anatolia, without any oil reserves were claimed by the Armenians, and the plains with oil reserves, where the Kurds lived. This situation inevitably brought along two alternative policies to be pursued in the Kurdish regions. The first one of these was to stall the Northern Kurds who lived in

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<sup>93</sup> Bulloch, John and Harvey Morris, *No Friends But The Mountains: The Tragic History of The Kurds*, (1992), p.87.

<sup>94</sup> Yalçın-Heckmann, Lale, *Tribe And Kinship Among The Kurds*,(Frankfurt,1991), p.69.

<sup>95</sup> Miller ,David Hunter, *My Diary: At The Conference Of Paris With Documents Vol.4*, (New York, 1924), p.261.

<sup>96</sup> Kılıç, Sezen, ‘Musul sorunu’, p. 8.

Eastern Anatolia with various promises, while trying to use them against the Independence Movement which had started in Anatolia. The second one was to bring the Southern Kurds, Mosul and periphery, under British control.

Within the framework of these policies, it is seen that Lord Curzon, in order to protect British interests, wanted to avoid meeting with Kurds. Because of this Curzon agreed with Barthelot, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs to leave Kurd problem as it was and deal with this subject again after discussing the Mosul problem.<sup>97</sup>

It is understood that in the trilateral meeting held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1919 by French and British delegations, the subject of the Kurds was discussed.<sup>98</sup> Their proposals of the probability of Britain or France having a mandate for Kurdistan raised the chance of establishing an independent Kurdish state, but it was only an offer and it excluded south Kurdistan.<sup>99</sup>300 Because Britain was focused on the economic, military and political significance of South Kurdistan for Mesopotamia.<sup>100</sup>

Before the meeting began, Barthelot sent a diplomatic note suggesting that one part of Kurdistan must be included back in the Mesopotamian domain, and rest of it must be turned into a federation of Kurdish tribe leaders under the supervision of the French and British but Turkish sovereignty must be taken into consideration. Lord Curzon, who took the floor in the meeting, opposed Barthelot's proposal. Curzon firstly said that the Sultan lacked sovereignty in this region and he himself would not accept such a partition and he would never accept Turkish sovereignty.<sup>101</sup>

According to Lord Curzon, it is not possible for the whole of Kurdistan or for any part of it, to be under the mandate of either the British or the French; not even as a joint mandate of England and France. As a matter of fact, the states in question do not have any wish for a mandate. But one exception for this was the settled region in

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<sup>97</sup> Samsutdinov, A.M., *Mondros'tan Lozan'a Türkiye Ulusal Kurtuluş Savaşı Tarihi 1918-1923*, (trans. Ataol Behramoğlu), (İstanbul,1999), p.193.

<sup>98</sup> Butler ,Rohan, E.L. Woodward (ed), *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939*, First Series Vol.IV, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, (London,1952), p.966.

<sup>99</sup> Second Additional Note on the Situation in Kurdistan, 10 January 1920, TNA, FO/371/4193, p.3

<sup>100</sup> British Strategy's Notes of a Conversation, 26 February 1919, DBFP, first series, 7, pp.257-258.

<sup>101</sup> Yuluğ Tekin Kurat, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Paylaşılması*, (Ankara, 1986), p.71-74.

“South Kurdistan”. Also in the light of past experiences, establishing Turkish sovereignty in the region is against British interests. According to Curzon the Kurds may live together with Assyrians, Armenians. But the problem was that Kurds cannot be separated from the establishment of an Armenian State, which has been approved by British and French.

It was understood that Lord Curzon wanted the Kurds to decide for themselves on whether to organize in one state or as separated small states.<sup>102</sup> In the event of Turkish intervention to the region, Curzon suggested Kurds should be guaranteed against Turkish attacks. But neither France, nor England agreed to officially assign a counsellor. Both the French and British declared that they did not want to be faced with the kind of problem which England encountered on the Indian border.

These decisions presented by Curzon were accepted by Barthelot on condition that the Mosul problem was to be handled later. As a result of this meeting held in Paris 1919, Britain’s official policy had become manifest. The basis of these policies was formed on Curzon’s ideas. But those ideas did not match with the ideas of the experts in Kurdistan. Because of this, British policy makers were in a dilemma. However, Curzon, who followed a realist policy, had no intention of dealing with Kurds. His sole aim was to rationally protect the interests of England. It is well understood that the British policy was to dominate over oil fields and protect their own interests, not to protect the whole region where Kurds lived.<sup>103</sup>

On the whole, it is seen that there were four important heads of state who were influential in this conference. These were the US President Wilson, the British Prime Minister Lloyd George, the French Prime Minister Clemenceau, and the Italian Prime Minister Orlando.<sup>104</sup> However, we see studies claiming that the American President Wilson was in a position of total deception, when the last

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<sup>102</sup> Butler, Rohan, *Documents on, Vol.IV*, p.967.

<sup>103</sup> Değerli, Sarıkoyuncu, Esra, Lozan Barış Konferansında Musul, *Balıkesir Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 18, December 2007, p.132.

<sup>104</sup> Callahan, Edith, *Glimpses Of The Peace Conference*, (1920), p.94.

version of the treaty is examined.<sup>105</sup> Although issues such as language, race, religion, levels of development and geographical features were put on the agenda as factors to be used in the reassigning of the borders;<sup>106</sup> these were not in fact used, and the results emerged depending solely on the power balance of the four states participating in the conference.<sup>107</sup> The most important issue, with regard to our topic, was the issue of Kurdistan and Armenia, the states to be established. It is seen that the previous Stockholm Ambassador of the Ottoman Empire, Şerif Pasha, introduced himself as the chairman of the Ottoman Delegation first, and then as the chairman of the Kurdish delegation. This is sufficient to indicate that both parties, with common will left the decision for establishing an independent Armenia and Kurdistan to the great powers, as in the joint declaration by Şerif Pasha and Boghos Nubar Pasha.

### 1.3.1 Şerif Pasha in Paris Peace Conference

Before moving on to Sharif Pasha's activities at the Paris Peace Conference, it would be better to briefly talk about his meeting with Percy Cox on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 1918.<sup>108</sup>

Cox expressed the belief of Serif Pasha that the British were not in a position to politically dispose of the region which he defined as the Southern Kurdistan. During the occupation of the Basra province, he provided information that the British occupied Basra, Baghdad and Kirkuk, and carried out political negotiations with the Kurds in these regions. It was recommended that the positive British opinion regarding the Kurds should be announced in a declaration in order to prevent an anti-British movement in the region and to win the Kurds as a whole over in favour of the Britain.

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<sup>105</sup> Herron, George D., *The Defeat In The Victory*, (London,1921), p.ix; Robert Lansing, *The Big Four: and Others of the Peace Conference*, (Cambridge, 1921), p. 77-103.

<sup>106</sup> Dillon, E. J., *The Peace Conference*, (London, 1919), p. 3.

<sup>107</sup> Dockrill and Fisher, *The Paris*, p.5

<sup>108</sup> PRO, FO 371/4198, From Gertrude Bell To The Director Arab Bureau, Cairo, 4 October 1918, No:3527, Alakom, Rohat, 'Bir Esrar Perdesinin Aralanması, Kürt Şerif Paşa'nın Ölüm Tarihi', *Tarih ve Toplum Dergisi* V., 162, June 1997, p.4.

Cox also reported Şerif Pasha's belief that no *modus vivendi* was possible between Northern Kurdistan and the Armenians but that if Britain promised a "benevolent policy", Kurds from the North would move southwards in order to achieve autonomy as a race under their protective aegis. Cox also reported from Şerif Pasha that enlightened Kurds favoured a British administration centred on Mosul.

According to Şerif Pasha, Britain should follow a unifying policy among the Kurds, and a Kurdish state should be declared, while monitoring the status of the Mesopotamia Arabs. The capital of such a government should be Mosul. Also, Şerif Pasha argued, it did not matter how many states participated in the Peace Conference, there were only two main powers there; one was England, while the other was Germany.<sup>109</sup> It is very interesting that Şerif Pasha did not mention of America here. However, mentioning Germany as one of two main powers (neither France nor America) at that time was not a correct approach. Cox recommended that Britain, should declare in the Peace Conference that both Mesopotamia and the region known as Kurdistan were occupied by England; however, if the British government did not to annex these regions it would strengthen Britain's hand in the peace conference. He claimed that in the current situation, the British aim was the establishment of a system for the benefit of the people of the region.

Cox reported that, Şerif Pasha was ready to serve in whatever capacity,<sup>110</sup> stated that it is not correct for him to give an opinion about the advancement of Mesopotamia until he returned to the region called Kurdistan and understood what, was happening there. As it is understood from the document,<sup>111</sup> in this meeting Şerif Pasha requested from Cox, on behalf of the British Government, that an autonomous body be constructed in Southern Kurdistan, and while it was being formed, Northern Kurdistan should be taken into account. In this way, Şerif Pasha argued that the Armenian issue would be put on the right track with regards to the migration of the Kurds living in the North to the Southern Kurdistan, which was happening as a result

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<sup>109</sup> PRO, FO 371/4198, From Gertrude Bell to, October 1918.

<sup>110</sup> Gertrude Bell, *Mezopotamya'da 1915-1920 Sivil Yönetimi*, (Translated by Vedii İlmen), (İstanbul,2004), p.120.

<sup>111</sup> PRO, FO 371/4198, From Gertrude Bell To.

of the unifying policy followed by the British. He also argued that both the Kurds and the British would gain maximum advantage if it was declared, without delay, that the British would establish a state, on behalf of the Kurds.

Some scholars claim that the Cox-Şerif Pasha meeting was a turning point for determining the future of the region called Kurdistan.<sup>112</sup> However, the accuracy of this judgment may be doubted. This meeting should only be considered as a preliminary study, since it had occurred at a time, when the British position on the matter was still unclear.

According to the Foreign Secretary,<sup>113</sup> Şerif Pasha was aiming to learn what the British policy over Southern Kurdistan was in the first meeting between him and Percy Cox on 3<sup>rd</sup> of June 1918. Percy Cox's aim was to learn whether it was possible for Şerif Pasha to step up to rule if a balance between the Armenians and the Kurds in the region defined as Northern Kurdistan, were to be established and an atmosphere in which the two communities would live in peace to be provided.

Şerif Pasha had interviews with the French, in addition to the meetings with the British. Şerif Pasha, in fact, mentioned the idea of an autonomous Kurdistan to the French on the 26<sup>th</sup> of December 1918. However, the French, considering the emerging events, were not interested in the idea of autonomy.<sup>114</sup> According to his own claims, he participated in the Paris Peace Conference as a Kurdish delegate; however, he was a member of the Jaff tribe, and had tried to declare himself as the King of Kurdistan.

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<sup>112</sup> Bulloch and Morris, *No Friends*, p.89; Kamal Madhar Ahmad, *Kurdistan During The First World War*, (London,1994),p.198; O'Shea, Maria T., *Greater Kurdistan: The Mapping Of A Myth?*, Kurdistan: Political And Economic Potential, Geopolitics And International Boundaries Research Centre , (London,1992), p.4.

<sup>113</sup> PRO, AIR 20/512, Kurds and Kurdistan Affairs, From Political Baghdad To India, London, Simla and Tehran, p. 1.

<sup>114</sup> Ertürk ,Yasar, *Büyük Oyunun Eski Perdesi: Doğu, Güneydoğu ve Musul Üçgeni (1918-1923)*, (İstanbul,2007), p.68.



A short time after, Şerif Pasha, bearing the title of ‘Chairman of the Kurdish Delegation’, participated in the Paris Peace Conference.<sup>115</sup> The British authorities, considered Şerif Pasha’s participation in the conference as an opportunity for reconciliation between the Kurds and the Armenians, partially had the benefits of this opportunity in the process which had started with the publication of the joint declarations.<sup>116</sup> Meeting on a common ground would be a great opportunity to set the boundaries of the establishment of planned Kurdish and Armenian states. In addition, the Kurds would be prevented from supporting the Turkish National Forces. However, thanks to the subsequent successive victories the confidence and support to the National Struggle among the Anatolian people rose and the British officers could not manage to achieve their aims.

Şerif Pasha presented two memorandums in the Paris Peace Conference, titled the Demands of the Kurds. The first was on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 1919; and the second on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 1920.<sup>117</sup> However, the British met with Şerif Pasha and Boghos Nubar Pasha<sup>118</sup> on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November 1919, and they published a joint declaration, different from Şerif Pasha’s declaration. This declaration, formed by joint decision of the two representatives, was based on leaving the future of the Kurds and the Armenians to the decisions made at the Paris Peace Conference.<sup>119</sup> There were some comments that the most important historical consequence of this joint declaration was the indication that the states of Armenia and Kurdistan, anticipated in the Treaty of Sèvres , would survive side by side.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Heper, Metin, *Devlet ve Kürtler*, (İstanbul,2010), p.89.

<sup>116</sup> Ulubelen, Erol, *İngiliz Belgelerinde Türkiye*, (İstanbul, 1982), p.257.

<sup>117</sup> *The Times*, ‘Kurdish Independence’, 10 March 1920, p.12.

<sup>118</sup> Elphinston, W. G., ‘The Kurdish Question’, *International Affairs*, V.22, June 1946, p.95; Edmonds, Cecil John, ‘The Place of the Kurds in the Middle Eastern Scene’, *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society*, V.45, 1958, p.144; Aslan, Taner, ‘Saidpasazade Mehmet Şerif Pasa Muhalefeti ve İkinci Meşrutiyet Döneminde Yasaklanan Bir Risalesi’, *Ankara Üniversitesi Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi*,V.28, p.6.

<sup>119</sup> Kaymaz, *Musul Sorunu*, p.135.

<sup>120</sup> Kutlay, Naci, *Kürt Kimliğinin Oluşum Süreci*, (Ankara,2012), p.19; Göldas, İsmail, *Lozan: Biz Türkler ve Kürtler*, (İstanbul,2009), p.37.

The memorandum presented by Şerif Pasha to the Peace Conference on 22 March 1919 can be abbreviated as below:

*“As the extreme imperialistic demands of the Armenians have been declared today, I can overtly present the legitimate rights of the Kurdish Nation to the conference. The ethnographic borders of the Turkish Kurdistan start from Ziven in the north and extend to Erzurum, Erzincan, Kemah, Arapkir, Behismi and Divriği in the west; to Haran, Sincar heights, Telafer, Erbil, Kirkuk, Sulaymaniyah, Akk-el-man and Sinna in the south; and to Rawanduz, Başkale, Vezirkale, to Iranian border in the east. The Kurds have occupied these territories under various names since the oldest times and under the name of Kurd since 13<sup>th</sup> century. Kurdistan, had been comprised of 46 independent signatories before her voluntarily subjection to Sultan Selim the Stern ( ... ).*

*Let us be allowed to express the objection that the centres, in which the Kurds were the majority, are being tried to be included in Armenia, which is yet to be established; however, nobody should doubt that, due to the Kurdish majority, who are warriors devoted to their independence, there would be a permanent turmoil in that future Armenia; and even if the allied powers station a military force there, this force would face guerrilla warfare.*

*The Armenians base their demand for a Great Armenia on the claim that there was an Armenian Kingdom in the territory in 50 B.C. during Tigran’s reign; however, they deliberately forget to mention that this territory belonged to the Roman Empire, and Tigran, was invaded by Pompei. In this respect, a Great Armenia could not be claimed to be the ethnic cradle of the Armenian race. The Armenians and their supporters, in order to justify their demands, try to use a couple of thousands Armenians living in Kurdistan as a support. Against this claim, we will be contented only with the testimony of Nuttals encyclopaedia. Nuttals claims that “the Armenians have been migrating to neighbouring countries for a long time. Like Jews, the Armenians only engage in trade and most of them are bankers. The Kurds, too, never deny that the Armenians, following their commercial instincts, migrated voluntarily to Kurdistan to exploit the Kurds.”*

*Again, with the same commercial instincts, the Armenians have always preferred to live in the cities, and almost completely neglected to do agriculture. We may present the latest official resources of the great states of Europe and Turkey as evidence. Following the Treaty of Berlin, a delegation comprising of the British General Baker Pasha, the chairman of the council of state Said Pasha, and one of the Armenian notables Minas Effendi, was sent to Kurdistan to carry out a census. By way of example, it was found that the total population of Diyarbakır was 840.000, and of this population 600.000 were Muslims, and 240.000 were Armenians and Jews. ( ... )*

*In a meeting on the Armenian issue, on 3 November 1896, at the French Assembly, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs issued the following declaration: “according to the statistics at hand, the ratio of the Armenian population to the general population, in the Turkish provinces at stake at the moment, is 13%. In the Asian province (of Turkey) the distribution of the Armenian population is high in some places, while low in other places. Simply put, there was no single place in these provinces, in which this hapless nation was the majority or could demand any kind of autonomy.” As per the Wilson Principles, the Kurds have the right to establish a fully independent Kurdish State. As 14 articles by Mr. Wilson were accepted by the Ottoman Government, Kurds believe that they deserve to demand their independence without ever committing disloyalty to the Empire, in which they have lived for many centuries and which has protected their customs and traditions.*

*We can summarise our demands resulting from the explanations above as follows: we strongly protest the Armenian claims on Kurdistan, and we believe that the territory, with its borders defined on the attached map<sup>121</sup>, should remain under Kurdish control.*

*In order for the Kurdish people not to fall into poverty, since their national treasure almost completely depends on stockbreeding and stockbreeding requires winter and summer grasslands, we insist that these grasslands should not be*

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<sup>121</sup> According to the Özalp the map was prepared by British officials and given to Şerif Pasha. Özalp , Hisyar, ‘Tarihi Perspektifiyle Güney Kürdistan’ın Hukuki Statüsü’, *Serbesti Dergisi*, Vol. 22, Autumn 2005, p. 5. Şerif Pasha’s map of Kurdistan can be found in Appendix 5.

*removed from Kurdistan borders. We demand our rightful independence; because, independence would pave the way for progress and civilisation for us; and enable us to make benefit of the richness of our country, and to live in peace with our neighbours.*

*Also, according to the principle for nationalities, we kindly request from the Peace Conference that an international commission be established to draw up the borders of Kurdistan in ways that it would include all territories in which there is Kurdish majority. If any minorities would remain in the territories to be left to Kurdistan, they would be given special status for their national traditions.*

*We leave the life and future of an ancient nation, determined to modernisation if allowed, to the Congress, which, we hope, would do justice.<sup>122</sup>”*

After this memorandum, a recommendation was made to the British in May 1919 and Şerif Pasha stated that he was ready for service by coming to power in a Kurdistan under British rule.<sup>123</sup> However, when the Kurdish notables’ opinions are considered at the time of this offer by Şerif Pasha, it is seen that Sayyid Abdulkadir, and the sons and grandsons of Bedirhan Bey in İstanbul, Sureyya Bedirhan in Cairo, and Sheikh Mahmud in Sulaymaniyah each claimed that they were the best candidate for this position. It is also seen that there were no Kurdish notables, standing out, at the same period in today’s South-eastern Anatolian region.<sup>124</sup> Some sources, which may be considered more accurate, add to the aforementioned names, those of Sayyid Taha and Simko.<sup>125</sup>

According to Kurubaş, who made mention of the details of the letter of Sayyid Taha sent to the British in May 1919, Şerif Pasha claimed that the Kurdish people were so primitive that they could not keep a western type democracy alive

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<sup>122</sup> Şimşir, *Kürtçülük*, pp.304-306.

<sup>123</sup> White, Paul, *Primitive Rebels or Revolutionary Modernizers: The Kurdish National Movement in Turkey*, p.67.

<sup>124</sup> Mango, Andrew, ‘Atatürk and the Kurds’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, V.35, October 1999, p.5.

<sup>125</sup> Longrigg, Stephen Hemsley, *Iraq 1900 To 1950: A Political, Social And Economic History*, (Oxford,1953), p.101.

and the election would provoke conflicts among the tribes.<sup>126</sup> Şerif Pasha also stated that the Kurds lacked a leader to preside over the country even with British consultants trained for military and administrative matters but claimed that he was ready for service at this position.

Sheikh Mahmud, during the period in which Şerif Pasha's demands, recommendations and memorandums were declared, sent two envoys to participate in the Paris Peace Conference. Although Reşid Kaban and Sayyid Ahmed Barzanji started off from Sulaymaniyah, they were arrested in Aleppo by the British, and therefore Sheikh Mahmud's opinions could not be expressed at the Paris Peace Conference.<sup>127</sup> There are some aspects of the British propaganda that Şerif Pasha was representing the Kurds as a whole, therefore, to be reconsidered. However, it should be immediately noted that the Kurdish nationalists, referring to the event of preventing Sheikh Mahmud's representatives from arriving in Paris, also included in their studies the assumption that Şerif Pasha could be the representative of the Kurds as a whole, since the Kurds in İstanbul had sent a telegram saying that all Kurds were represented by him. Here, they were discussing whether Şerif Pasha was a representative or not, rather than the idea that Şerif Pasha's opinions were, in fact, in harmony with the opinions of all Kurds, i.e. an independent Kurdistan was the demand of all Kurds.

Both local and foreign resources are unanimous that the joint declaration by Şerif Pasha and Boghos Nubar Pasha in the Paris Peace Conference was the text of a reconciliation built on the idea that the Kurds and Armenians would forget past experiences and remove the Turks from the region, and an independent Kurdistan, besides an independent Armenia, would be established.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Kurubaş, *Kürt Sorununun*, p.78.

<sup>127</sup> Hilmi, Refik, *Anılar, Tanığının Dilinden Şeyh Mahmud Berzenci Hareketi*, (İstanbul,2010), p.21

<sup>128</sup> Bois, Thomas, *The Kurds*,(Beirut,1966), p.143; Nader, Entessar, 'Kurdish Ethnonationalizm', Riener, Lynne, (London,1992), p.83; Edmonds, 'Kurdish Nationalism', *Journal of Contemporary History*, V.6,(1971), p.90; Elphinston, W.G., 'The Kurdish Question', *International Affairs*, (June 1946), p.96.

Although some resources, after the declaration of the memorandum on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 1919, comment, upon the participation of Şerif Pasha in the Paris Peace Conference, that he was elected as the representative of the Kurds by the Kürt Teali Cemiyeti, this was just a claim;<sup>129</sup> because; there is no concrete evidence about when, where and by whom this election was held.

Şerif Pasha, subsequent to his memorandum dated on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November 1919 in the Paris Peace Conference, for which the translation was presented above, published a joint declaration together with Boghos Nubar Pasha.<sup>130</sup> The summarized translation of the declaration as below<sup>131</sup>;

*“Is as authorised delegates of the Armenian and Kurdish nations, we, as members of the majority race, and their official and unofficial governments are proud to present the desires of these two nations to the Peace Conference. We follow no other purpose and intent than their independence from the grip of the Turks which had so far tortured the Armenians and the Kurds. Depending on the principles of the self determination of nations, we have arrived at a consensus on demanding from the Peace Conference the establishment of independent Armenia and a Kurdish state under the protection of one of the great powers; and requesting all great states accept the purpose and intent of our nations, and help us in enlightenment and progress. As for the sharing of the territories, we leave the issue of drawing the borders, which we indicated in the memorandums we presented before, to the good faith and sense of justice of the Peace Conference.”*

Şerif Pasha totally abandoned the opinion that Kurds and Armenians were enemies and these two societies could never come to terms, which he had expressed in the meeting in Marseilles. In almost all studies analysing the character of Şerif Pasha, there is a consensus this situation was natural.<sup>132</sup> It was stated that Şerif Pasha

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<sup>129</sup> Jawad ,Sa’ad, *Iraq and Kurdish Question 1958-1970*, (London,1981), p.6; Aydın Taneri, *Kürtler*, (Ankara, 1976), p.358.

<sup>130</sup> Yıldız, Hasan, *Fransız Belgeleriyle Sevr-Lozan-Musul Üçgeninde Kürdistan*, (İstanbul,2005), p.61.

<sup>131</sup> Şimşir, *Kürtçülük*, p.307.

<sup>132</sup> McDowall, *Modern Kürt*, p.173.

acted pragmatically and at that time was thinking of his own interests, more than the benefits that the joint declaration would provide the Kurds.

It is understood that there were many reactions to the publication of the joint declaration from Eastern and South-eastern Anatolia. The focus of the reaction was the ten thousand years brotherhood of the Turks and Kurds and the belief that the Armenians and Kurds would never be friends.<sup>133</sup> The efforts of the Ottoman Empire to inform the Kurdish tribes about this declaration, needless to say, contributed to the spread of this reaction.<sup>134</sup>

The letter, dated on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 1920, sent by the Kurdish tribe leaders and notables, can be given as an example of the reactions which emerged. They<sup>135</sup> claimed that Şerif Pasha, who lived in Paris and claimed to be a Kurd who would not be successful in his plots with Turkey, collaborated upon in the Paris Peace Conference with Boghos Nubar Pasha, supposedly, for an independent Kurdistan; rather he claimed worked only for his own interests. In the remainder of the letter, it was emphasised that Kurds were legal brothers to the Turks with the same lineage and religion in the same country, and no one except for the Ottoman Government had the right to speak for the rights of Kurds. It was also stated that no discrimination had been made against the Kurds in Ottoman history and the Turks and the Kurds had fought side by side in all battles. It was underlined that 80% of the Muslim population who were killed by Armenians after the retreat of the Russian armies from Eastern Anatolia were Kurds, and it was meaningless for Şerif Pasha to enter in such cooperation with Boghos Nubar Pasha having knowledge of this fact. In the letter, it was argued that separating out a part of the Empire to give it to the Kurds would constitute the foundation for an Armenian state to be established in those territories. Therefore, it was stated, any attempts to cooperate with the Armenians

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<sup>133</sup> The Turkish documents shows the reactions to the declaration; BOA, DH.EUM.AYS, Box:33, Folder:74, 1 March 1920; ATASE,ATA-ZB, Box:11, Folder:32 , 24 February 1920; ATASE, ATA-ZB, Box:11, Folder:33, 26 February 1920; BOA, DH. SFR. Box:107, Folder:104, 20 March 1920.

<sup>134</sup> Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, p.68.

<sup>135</sup> Balaban Tribe Leader Paşa Bey, Basuranlı Tribe Leader Yusuf, Bal Tribe Leader Eyup, Medanlı Tribe Leader Çiçek, Görçeli Tribe Leader Yusuf, Abbas Tribe Leader Sayyid Ali, Rol Tribe Leader, Şadi Tribe Leader, Zişanlı Tribe Leader Muhsin. Şimşir, *Kürtçülük*, p.310.

would remain inconclusive. It is worthy of consideration that, in the last section of the letter, the following note was made: ‘We present to the attention of the Peace Conference that they had to annihilate us without leaving anyone alive before separating us from the Ottoman Empire’.<sup>136</sup>

Not only the aforementioned tribe leaders but also many tribe leaders from Erzincan, Siverek, Adiyaman, Kahta, Silvan, Nusaybin, Van, Hakkari, Hasankale, Urfa, Derik, Eruh, Siirt, Garzan, Eleşkirt, Palu and Hınıs showed their protests with telegrams they sent to both to the Bab-i Âli and to Western States’ embassies.<sup>137</sup>

In view of the reaction to the declarations, Şerif Pasha was obliged to end his activities in Paris. Kazım Karabekir Pasha argued that the main reason for Şerif Pasha’s resignation, wired from the Monte Carlo casinos to İstanbul, was the reaction of the Kurds living in Anatolia. As it was declared by Karabekir the Kurdish notables affirmed that Şerif Pasha did not represent all Kurds and they did not agree with the opinions of Şerif Pasha. Karabekir also stated that the sole representative of the Kurds was the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.<sup>138</sup>

It is seen that the only person who was cautious about the joint declaration in the British Government was Admiral Webb. Webb argued that Şerif Pasha was not aware of the real conditions of the Kurds and did not represent their real demands, in his comment about the joint declaration, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January 1920.<sup>139</sup>

There were some British statesmen who thought that his joint declaration and the actions of Şerif Pasha would lead to an obvious conclusion. The most influential among these was A. Talbot Wilson. Talbot Wilson believed that Şerif Pasha was

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<sup>136</sup> Simsir, *Kürtçülük*, p.310.

<sup>137</sup> Perinçek, Doğu, *Kurtulus Savaşı’nda Kürt Politikası*, (İstanbul,2010), p.45

<sup>138</sup> Karabekir, Kazım, *İstiklal Harbimiz*,(İstanbul,1969), p.650

<sup>139</sup> Boytok, Taner, *İngiliz Kaynaklarından Türk Kurtuluş Savaşı*, (Ankara,1970), p.109, *Documents On British Foreign Policy, IV, Doc. 621, p. 928.*



ignorant, and did not have any influence among Kurds, and was a Turkish sympathiser.<sup>140</sup>

Numerous scholars indicate that Şerif Pasha did not have much of a place in British politics, and his main use was to find a compromise for the resolution of the problems with the Armenians.<sup>141</sup> Considering the joint declaration, this opinion seems fair.<sup>142</sup>

While Şerif Pasha was presenting his claims about establishing a Kurdish state and looking for support of the European Powers in the Paris Conference, other Kurdish leaders were having meetings with the British officers in Eastern Anatolia and Mesopotamia. It is possible to see the names of the presumptive leaders of the planned Kurdish State in the report which was prepared by the Baghdad Civil Commission.<sup>143</sup>

It has been ascertained that a report that related to the power struggles was sent from Baghdad Civil Government to İstanbul High Commissioner on the 27<sup>th</sup> March 1919. The telegram includes some important points such as; Sayyid Abdulkadir, Sayyid Taha's brother, Abdullah Cevdet and Suleiman Nazif were supporting an independent Kurdish State under British sovereignty. According to the report, the members of Bedirhan Bey Family had close contacts with Ottoman bureaucrats in Istanbul, and the Kurds notables in Mardin and Diyarbakır. Sureyya Bedirhan was aiming to get independence in Mardin and Diyarbakır and he was showing effort and spending money to establish a Kurdish committee.<sup>144</sup> But the source of the funds was not mentioned in the telegram. It is likely that it was provided by rich Kurdish tribes or by the British, French and Russian authorities in the territory. But when the expenses made by British officers in order to gain Kurds' trust and support are taken into consideration, it can be surmised that the important part of the financial aid was made by Britain.

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<sup>140</sup> Lazarev, *Emperyalizm*, p.174.

<sup>141</sup> Öke, Mim Kemal, *Musul Komplosu 1918-1926*, (İstanbul,2012), p.67.

<sup>142</sup> Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, p.67., Öke, *Musul Komplosu*, p.68.

<sup>143</sup> PRO, AIR 20/755, From Political Baghdad To High Commissioner, Constantinople, 27 March 1919

<sup>144</sup> PRO, AIR 20/755, From Political Baghdad, p. 3.

Sayyid Abdulkadir was aware of his family's influence among Kurds,<sup>145</sup> so he negotiated with Andrew Ryan, the head interpreter of İstanbul High Commission several times at various times. The first negotiation was on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April 1919, and the second one was in May 1919. In these meetings he demanded the establishment of a self-governing Kurdistan.<sup>146</sup>

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of April 1919, Sayyid Abdulkadir met with Andrew Ryan, and informed him that Kurds did not display an anti-British attitude but also would not accept Armenian sovereignty. It is indicated that in case he was not given guarantees about Armenian sovereignty he would seek collaboration with the Turk.<sup>147</sup> In a sense Ryan was threatened indirectly by Sayyid Abdulkadir.

Sayyid Abdulkadir many times met with the British officers between the dates of 5<sup>th</sup> of January and 20<sup>th</sup> of April 1919.<sup>148</sup> In a telegram on 20<sup>th</sup> of April 1919 Admiral Calthorpe informed the Foreign Office that he was visited by Kurdistan Committee members and received a letter about demands of the committee. Şerif Pasha also sent a very similar letter to Paris.<sup>149</sup> When the letter is examined it is possible to claim that Şerif Pasha has already met with either Sayyid Abdulkadir or the Kürt Teali Cemiyeti before sending the letter. In both situations it means they were acting together.

Admiral Webb and Sayyid Abdulkadir held a meeting, and in the meeting Sayyid Abdulkadir clearly stated the allegiance of the Kurdish community to Britain. Calthorpe was pleased with Sayyid Abdulkadir's statement,<sup>150</sup> because Abdulkadir was one of the prominent people, who were able to contact with Kurds, Armenians

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<sup>145</sup> Kaymaz, İhsan Şerif, *Musul Sorunu: Petrol ve Kürt Sorunlarıyla Bağlantılı Tarihsel-Siyasal Bir İnceleme*, (İstanbul,2003), p.139.

<sup>146</sup> Ural, Selçuk, 'Mütareke Döneminde İngiltere'nin Güneydoğu Anadolu Politikası', *Ankara Üniversitesi AlîTE Atatürk Yolu*, V.39, May 2007, p.437.

<sup>147</sup> Kurubaş, Erol, *Kürt Sorununun Uluslararası Boyutu ve Türkiye*, (Ankara,2004), p.36.

<sup>148</sup> PRO, FO 371/3658, From Admiral Calthorpe To Secretary of State For Foreign Affairs, 20 April 1919, No: 68105, p. 354.

<sup>149</sup> PRO, FO 371/3658, From Admiral Calthorpe, p.355.

<sup>150</sup> Öke, *Musul Komplosu*, p.37.

and even Turks, and acting in favour of Britain.<sup>151</sup> This could have a positive impact on British interests.

Meanwhile, Calthorpe received some reports from Baghdad. There is no clear information about the context of the messages but it is seen that Calthorpe was cautious about the information in the messages received from Baghdad. But it is quite likely that the information was about the Kurds who showed negative attitudes towards the British and acted with Turks. According to Calthorpe these anti-British activities could be suppressed easily by threatening the rebels with their relatives in the region. As it can be understood from the context most probably Sayyid Abdulkadir was reported as one of the anti-British Kurds in the messages received from Baghdad. Calthorpe did not believe the reports about Sayyid Abdulkadir for being in anti-British activities. Calthorpe believed that as Abdulkadir had no hope from Turkish negotiations, thus he was making effort to establish an autonomous Kurdistan under British dominance.<sup>152</sup> According to Calthorpe, the possibility of establishing an independent Armenian State could cause some problems with the Kurds. This idea could be affirmed by considering the discontent of the local community about an Armenian threat. When the document is analysed within this frame, it is seen that England was trying to produce concurrent and compatible policies not only for the Iraq territory but also for all places that it regarded as significant.

While Sayyid Abdulkadir was meeting with Ryan, Major Noel was given a new mission and he met with some authorities and notables in Eastern Anatolia. Before giving information about the meeting of Noel, it will be useful to see where and why Noel was assigned. Major Noel, to collect information and contact with the Kurdish community leaders in Eastern Anatolia, was sent to the South-eastern Anatolian territory. To assign Noel to this duty, the British Secretary of State Balfour

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<sup>151</sup> It is seen that immediately before the Paris Peace Conference, Kurdish committee increased the frequency of the negotiations with both other foreign Powers and British authorities, particularly Calthorpe, Ryan and Webb. It can be said that these developments were strategic moves directed to the countries would attend to the conference in Paris, especially Britain, in order to let the Kurdish demands be considered seriously in the conference.

<sup>152</sup> PRO, FO 371/3658, From Admiral Calthorpe, p. 354.

was informed and asked for his consent.<sup>153</sup> The first place of duty for Major Noel in Anatolia would be Nusaybin. But Balfour had concerns about sending Major Noel to Nusaybin because Nusaybin was under the control of France at that time. The activities of Major Noel in the region could damage Anglo-French relations. However, Balfour suggested that if Major Noel conducted his activities without being noticed by the French authorities, he could have a major role in maintaining the British interests in the region.<sup>154</sup> In the meanwhile the Egyptian Expeditionary Force Commander General Allenby stated that in order to mask Noel's real duty, a fake task would be given to him.<sup>155</sup>

After all this correspondence Major Noel arrived in Nusaybin on the 12<sup>th</sup> of April, and to fulfil his secret duty he started to meet the chiefs of the tribes. After his meeting with the leader of the Miran Tribe, he had the impression that Britain was seen as an enemy, just as the Armenians were, by the local community. Then with the purpose of collecting information about the region Noel met with the district Governor of Nusaybin. The District Governor reported to Noel that as a result of the provisions of the Treaty of Mondros, 400 Ottoman soldiers in Mardin and 200 soldiers in Resulayn (Urfa) would be dismissed.

Noel continued to hold meetings to seek support in the region so he met with Zeki Bey, Governor of Mardin on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April 1919.<sup>156</sup> According to Noel, Zeki Bey was pro-British and an enemy of the Ittihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti thus he could be a useful person for the British interests. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of April 1919 Noel met with American missionaries<sup>157</sup>, and then he also met with Catholic Assyrians and Chaldeans on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 1919. In the meetings Noel noticed that Americans were not popular in the region due to their support for the Armenians during the war. Then Noel prepared a report about the situation of the region. In his report he

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<sup>153</sup> Öke, Mim Kemal, *İngiliz Ajanı Binbaşı E.W.C. Noel'in Kürdistan Misyonu*, (İstanbul,1992), p.10.

<sup>154</sup> Öke, *İngiliz Ajanı*, p.10.

<sup>155</sup> Kurubaş, Erol, *Başlangıçtan Günümüze*, p.45.

<sup>156</sup> ATESE, ISH, Box:30, Folder:14, Doc.14.

<sup>157</sup> It is possible to claim that they consulted about the borders of Kurdish and Armenian States to be established.

claimed that due to Ottoman propaganda against Britain, local communities were afraid of a British and Armenian threat. Because of this they had harvested and bought weapons to protect themselves against the British and Armenians. According to Noel, if no measure was taken, new incidents could appear in the region. As mentioned above, in his reports Noel stated that hostility against Britain had increased in the region and in order to stop this problematic situation the British Government should introduce a political initiative for the Kurdish tribes.<sup>158</sup>

A telegram that gives information about the relationship between the British and the Kurds in İstanbul was sent by Calthorpe to Baghdad Civilian Administration on 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 1919.<sup>159</sup> When the content and wording of the telegram is regarded, it is realized that Admiral Calthorpe used quite diplomatic language, avoided definite judgements and posed probable options. According to Calthorpe; the Kurdish stance against the British involved some facts which must be definitely examined and there were four main reasons which caused Kurdish aversion to the British. These four reasons were; the Panislamist activities of the Committee of Union and Progress, nationalist movements in Egypt, the effects of Indian nationalism on rebellions, and the effects of Bolshevist rebellions on the Kurds. Calthorpe was informed about the Kurdish independence demands of the Kurdish committees and he had reservations as to such an administration being established in Hejaz. In this respect he was showing a different attitude from Major Noel.

Sayyid Abdulkadir applied to the İstanbul High Commissioner, to ask for support from British authorities, to establish a self-governing Kurdish state under British protection, to escape from Turk sovereignty.<sup>160</sup> Meanwhile, to achieve his purpose Sayyid Abdulkadir was also negotiating with the French authorities. Sayyid Abdulkadir's dialogues with French authorities, in order to establish Kurdish sovereignty, can be regarded as a threat to the British, as England was in a power struggle with France for that territory at that time. Considering this, it can be assumed that Sayyid Abdulkadir did not trust the British much. Another possibility is

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<sup>158</sup> Öke, *İngiliz Ajanı*, p.42.

<sup>159</sup> PRO, AIR 20/714, From High Commissioner, Constantinople To Political Baghdad, 22 April 1919, p.1.

<sup>160</sup> PRO, FO 251/93, Personalities In Kurdistan, June 1919, p.102.

that, by contacting the French, he was trying to hasten the development of the British policy towards the Kurds.

Sayyid Abdulkadir was of the opinion that it was time for salvation from Turkish sovereignty.<sup>161</sup> It is possible to see the details of the policy followed by Sayyid Abdulkadir in the telegram sent by the British High Commissioner in Istanbul to Baghdad's Civil Administration. Also, reports from the Van British Consul about Sayyid Abdulkadir's aims to reconcile Kurds and Armenians and expel Turks from the territory, affirms the above given information.<sup>162</sup> This is because, with the Wilson Principles, British authorities could not find a way to compromise about borders of the Armenian and Kurdish States which they planned to establish East of Anatolia. This occasionally caused England to remain in between the Armenian-Kurdish conflicts and was the major obstacle to the development of the policy they were planning to carry out in the territory.

While these negotiations were being performed with Sayyid Abdulkadir, in the meantime Admiral Webb mentioned the probability of the establishment of a Kurdish State under the sovereignty of England, within the remaining four cities, with an Armenian State under American protection, in Trabzon and Erzurum in return. When it is considered that the foundation of a Kurdish State in the territory depended on the improvement of the Kurd-Armenian relationship, it can be said that importance of Sayyid Abdulkadir in the eyes of British authorities increased. It was believed that he could improve the relations between the Kurds and the Armenians. When all this information is taken into consideration, it is understood that Sayyid Abdulkadir's activities, aimed at providing solidarity between Armenian and Kurds, had caught the attention of the British. The British established intensive relations with Sayyid Abdulkadir, who was one of the people who actively followed politics in the period after the Armistice of Mondros, for the purpose of providing this solidarity.

Meanwhile, the people of Mardin repeated their allegiance to the Ottoman State by way of telegram sent to the Grand Vizier on 7<sup>th</sup> of May 1919. In many other

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<sup>161</sup> Gavan, S.S., *Kurdistan: Divided Nation of The Middle East*, (London, 1958), p.13.

<sup>162</sup> Klein, Janet, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias In The Ottoman Tribal Zone*, Stanford University Press, (USA, 2011), p.106.

telegrams sent from East and Southeast Anatolia, people asked the government to dispatch Ottoman troops to the region. In response to the telegrams, it was stated that it was not possible to send troops to the region due to financial and logistical difficulties but that the British High Commissariat would be informed of this situation.<sup>163</sup> The Ottoman government, who did not want to lose complete control over the region, began to send envoys with a view to approaching and to advising the tribes.<sup>164</sup> To this end the Diyarbakir governor Faik Bey was advised and encouraged.<sup>165</sup> However, the Ottoman government's failure to provide the Kurds with sufficient support in the region started to alienate them from the Ottoman Empire. The fear that Eastern Anatolia could be handed to the Armenians, a Christian power, like Smyrna was handed to the Greeks, in the Paris Peace Conference, resulted in the birth of a policy amongst the Kurds and the Turks to save the empire. The fact that the communities in the region, notably Erzurum and Diyarbakir, told the Grand Vizier that, taking the Armenian threat into account, Eastern and South-eastern Anatolia were inseparable parts of the Empire as well as the fact that these communities confirmed their allegiance to the Ottoman Empire could be considered as incentives to bring about the birth of this policy.

Noel, investigating the reasons why the tribes swore allegiance to the Ottoman government one after another noted that the local communities had no hostile attitude toward the British forces until a few months ago but that the communities who saw the Armenians as a foe came to see Britain as foe, too, due to the British backing of the Armenians during the process that started with the Paris Peace Conference and in its aftermath. According to Noel, this was the reason why the local peoples displayed resistance to the British.<sup>166</sup> Now realising that the root cause of the rage against the British in the region was a British protectorate of Armenia that was planned to be established in this very region, Noel reported that the use of force against the tribes would not bring a solution but rather increase the

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<sup>163</sup> Gökbilgin, Tayyip, *Milli Mücadele Başlarken I*, (Ankara,1959),p.135.

<sup>164</sup> Çağlayan, Kaya Tuncer, 'İngiltere'nin Kürt Politikasının Van Vilayetindeki Etkileri (1919-1920), *Atatürk Dergisi*, 3(3), January 2003, p.42.

<sup>165</sup> Gökbilgin, *Milli Mücadele*, p.135.

<sup>166</sup> Mesut, Ahmet, *İngiliz Belgelerinde Kürdistan (1918-1958)*,(İstanbul, 1992), p.85-86.

peoples' rage. According to him the support of the key people who had influence on the Kurds such as Sayyid Abdulkadir, needed to be gained by the Britain.

The influence of Sayyid Abdulkadir was thought much more than that of the Turkish Governors within the places where Kurds were densely populated.<sup>167</sup> But although Sayyid Abdulkadir was quite dominant among the Kurds, he was in a power struggle with the Bedirhan Bey family members, just the same as the conflict he had with Sayyid Taha.<sup>168</sup> This could have been a problem in establishing a Kurdish union under the leadership of Sayyid Abdulkadir and in ensuring the support of other Kurdish leaders to Sayyid Abdulkadir to establish the Kurdish state. In fact, this situation could have led the leaders of Bedirhan and Sayyid Taha to move to the Turkish side by showing a reaction against the British scheme. This would have been a blow to the interests of Britain in the region.

It is clear that Calthorpe used a diplomatic language and always had an error margin in the information that he gave. In his reports it is seen that both Sayyid Abdulkadir, and Bedirhan Bey and his family members, had a close relationship with the İstanbul High Commissioner. Calthorpe, who assumed Sayyid Abdulkadir to be an important character in Kurdish policy in İstanbul, had projected that sending his son to the territory defined as Kurdistan would serve British interests in the territory. Calthorpe emphasized that the families of both Sayyid Abdulkadir and Bedirhan Bey should be kept on the British side, failure of which would cause serious breakups in Britain's Kurdish policy, and this would in favour Turkish interests. In his telegram, Admiral Calthorpe stated that the policy of stalk the Kurdish leaders and direct them was failed. He was complaining about not having clear information as to who was supporting or opposing the British.<sup>169</sup>

According to Calthorpe Kurds could be evaluated in two groups; as pro-Turks and Kurdish Nationalists. He claimed that İstanbul Kurds were in the second

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<sup>167</sup> Burgoyne, Elizabeth, *Gertrude Bell: From Her Personal Papers 1914-1926*, Ernst Benn, (London,1961), p.15

<sup>168</sup> Kreyenbroek, Derek, Philip G., Stefan Sperl, *The Kurds: A Contemporary Overview*, Routledge, (London,1992), p.51; Kinnane, Derk, *The Kurds and Kurdistan*, (London,1964), p.25; Celile Celil, *Kürt Ayaklanması*, (İstanbul,2000), p.59.

<sup>169</sup> PRO, AIR 20/714, From High Commissioner, Constantinople, p. 2.



category and they presented their side as ‘Kurdish nationalist’. After receiving information on Sureyya Bedirhan from his military attaché, Calthorpe stated that Sureyya always worked in favour of the British during World War I. Calthorpe frequently met the sons of Bedirhan Bey and they were acting completely within the instructions of the British in order to achieve Kurdish unity.<sup>170</sup> Thus, Bedirhan family members were placed in the second group in Calthorpe’s evaluation and that was why ‘Kurdish nationalists’ were to be supported.

According to Calthorpe there were three alternative ways to be followed; and the British Government need to choose one of them.<sup>171</sup> The first way Calthorpe suggested was that the government in London would ignore unfolding events outside the lands Britain had captured, an option he deemed harmful to the British interests in the region. The second way was that Britain would demand that the Istanbul government take measures in the region. This might have created the impression amongst the populace that Britain was incapable of responding to the incidents. And this in turn might result in Britain losing the psychological warfare against the Ottoman Empire in the region; as well as in the Kurdish tribes supporting the Turks. For Calthorpe, the third and best way was that Britain would have a firm and constant hand on the tiller in the region by obtaining the allegiance of as many Kurdish leaders as possible. The best way to get the tribes’ backing was to appease them. For Calthorpe, the concessions that would be made to the Kurds would result in some of the promises that had been made to the Armenians not being redeemed and this could leave Britain in a difficult position. However the fact that the Turks could begin winning the Kurds over by using the Armenian threat could mean that the alarm bells started to ring for Britain. Herewith once again we see that Britain would eventually have to choose between the Armenians and the Kurds.<sup>172</sup>

It is seen that in some points the opinion of Major Noel was parallel to Calthorpe. According to Noel who argued that for the first time in history such a strong policy of Kurdish nationalism was pursued by the Kurds, whose future was at stake due to the British backing of the Armenians, and due to the Armenian threat;

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<sup>170</sup> PRO, AIR 20/714, From High Commissioner, Constantinople, p.2.

<sup>171</sup> PRO, AIR 20/714, From Major Noel, Nisibin To Political, Baghdad, 24 April 1919, p. 4.

<sup>172</sup> ATESE, ISH,Box:85, Folder:27, Document:27-2,27-3.

the best way to solve the problem was to reconcile the notables and win them over for Britain. Arguing that some sacrifices should be made to gain the support of Kurdish tribes, Noel tried to win the notable chiefs over by giving them money and posts.<sup>173</sup> In fact, this was addressed in a telegram sent to the Ottoman Ministry of Interior from Van province in May in which it was stated that the British agents and other officials in the region avoided no sacrifice to impress the Kurdish tribal chiefs.<sup>174</sup> In the telegram it was also reported that the British agents gave the chiefs money, posts and arms in return for their service to the British interests in the region. Likewise Kazim Karabekir Pasha, the Commander of 15<sup>th</sup> Army Corps, stated in a telegram sent to the War Ministry that the British worked hard to win Sayyid Taha over for them. According to Karabekir, the British promised a vast principality stretching from Rumiye to Cizre and donated him money and arms. As stated in the cable the British gave Sayyid Taha money, two cannons, four machine guns, 400 rifles and ammunition. When documents in the Turkish archives are surveyed, we see that the British government welcomed Noel's suggestion of sacrifice.<sup>175</sup>

Talbot Wilson notified in his telegram to Simla, Tehran, Cairo, Istanbul and Aleppo on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May 1919, that he had the opportunity to closely examine the Kurdish problem.<sup>176</sup> Also, Wilson expressed that he found the Istanbul High Commissioner's suggestions more suitable after he had had a meeting with Sayyid Taha. During the meeting he realised that Sayyid Taha would not support Sayyid Abdulkadir in Mesopotamia so the fact that Abdulkadir was in Istanbul would be more beneficial for the solution of the Kurdish problem.

Wilson, who believed that it was necessary to implement the general amnesty proposed by Noel, mentioned that the Armenians now lived in the regions where Kurds lived, and these regions must be given independence. But Wilson offered that it made sense to wait and decide later about the subject of the mandate planned for Kurds beyond the Mosul province.<sup>177</sup> He also mentioned that preserving the current

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<sup>173</sup> Melek, Kemal, *İngiliz Belgeleriyle Musul Sorunu*, (İstanbul,1983), p.18.

<sup>174</sup> BOA, DH-KMS, 50-3/25.

<sup>175</sup> ATASE, ISH, Box:23, Folder:115, Document:115, 3-4.

<sup>176</sup> PRO, FO 608/95, From Civil Commissioner, Baghdad To Simla, Tehran, Cairo, Constantinople and Aleppo, 12 May 1919, No: 11315, p.140.

<sup>177</sup> PRO, FO 608/95, From Civil Commissioner, Baghdad To Simla, p.140.

situation was of the utmost importance for the sustainability of British policy and no other attempt must be made to change it. Talbot Wilson mentioned that the implemented Kurdish policy needed to be decided and controlled the special governmental unit and he wanted to be the only authorized officer in the region.<sup>178</sup>

While Wilson was supporting a wait and see policy, Major Noel was continuing his meetings at top speed. Arriving in Mardin once again on 11<sup>th</sup> of May 1919, Major Noel had a meeting with Colonel Kenan Bey, the commander of V. Army Corps. In this meeting Kenan Bey discussed the strict order sent from General Allenby, the invading forces' commander of Egypt, to Ottoman Foreign Ministry on 12<sup>th</sup> of February 1919.<sup>179</sup> The orders are important to understand British policy in regard to the Ottoman State and its Eastearn lands:<sup>180</sup> Ali Ihsan Pasha,<sup>181</sup> the commander of the 6<sup>th</sup> Army, who was responsible for the defence of Mosul when Britain landed troops there on 15<sup>th</sup> of November 1918, and made tremendous efforts not to surrender the city to the British, was to be removed from office. All of the field guns, rifles and machine guns that were in the possession of the 6<sup>th</sup> Army, the biggest force in the entire region capable of withstanding Britain, should be surrendered to General Allenby at an agreed location. All guns should be confiscated when General Allenby ordered so. Excessive personnel of gendarmerie within the General's administrative region should immediately be discharged. Those who were not discharged should be placed under command of General Allenby.<sup>182</sup> The Ottoman civil servants would be replaced by the personnel designated by Britain.<sup>183</sup> The

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<sup>178</sup> PRO, FO 608/95, From Civil Commissioner, Baghdad To Simla, p.141.

<sup>179</sup> Öke, *İngiliz Ajanı*, p.33.

<sup>180</sup> BOA, DH-KMS, 50-1/83.

<sup>181</sup> He defeated British forces during the siege of Kut Al Amara (7 December 1915 – 29 April 1916). At the end of the First World War he was arrested by the British and exiled to Malta.

<sup>182</sup> Thanks to this article Britain would not have to deploy a lot of British troops to strengthen control over the region and would make use of the Ottoman forces in the region.

<sup>183</sup> Through this article, civil servants capable of causing Britain trouble would be excluded. Besides, as it will be mentioned below, various government posts would be staffed with Armenian and Kurdish notables in Eastern Anatolia as was promised by Britain, hence the popular support for Britain.

Armenians who were deported in 1915 would return home.<sup>184</sup> Britain would help those whose property was damaged if they reported the damage through British soldiers. Those who broke the peace and those who committed murder could be arrested by order of a British army officer.<sup>185</sup> The administration of the entire railways east of Konya would be at his disposal. The control of the telegram lines within his area would be at his disposal and no encoded cable that was in Turkish would be accepted.<sup>186</sup> The 6<sup>th</sup> Army's personnel that were to be disbanded would be sent home in groups of 900. Thus they would be prevented from creating trouble. Ottoman officials should surrender all fugitives. Britain could occupy any area that they wanted.<sup>187</sup>

Just when Noel began to think that he had an influence on the local tribes, he found out that Elias, the Jacobite Patriarch, along with Fehim Effendi whom Noel failed to persuade despite all efforts, left for the capital in order to demand the continuation of Ottoman sovereignty in Mardin. Noel then feared that the Patriarch, a representative of local Christians, swearing allegiance to the Ottoman government could have an influence on other Christians, and thus he began to undermine this initiative by preventing them from reaching Istanbul.

Setting off to go to Mardin once again in company of a number of Ottoman cavalry men on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1919, Noel was received the following evening by the Mahalmi tribe presided over by Sheikh Halil<sup>188</sup> and his brother Hasan Bey.<sup>189</sup> Noel was puzzled upon hearing their confirmation of loyalty to the Ottoman government as long as the Sharia law was practised despite the fact that Halaf Bey, uncle to

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<sup>184</sup> In this way, Britain would both continue to support the Armenians as well as have a say in the trials of those deemed accountable for the 1915 Armenian Massacres.

<sup>185</sup> It can be claimed that this conflicted with the right to self-defence of the local Turks who tried to protect themselves. The local Turks made complaints to Ottoman officials arguing that they were arrested unjustly despite the fact that they were the victims in many cases, and that they only tried to safeguard themselves against the local gangs.

<sup>186</sup> In this way, the British hampered possible alliances by securing communication means in the region.

<sup>187</sup> BOA, DH-KMS, 50-1/83.

<sup>188</sup> PRO, FO 251/93, Personalities, p.123.

<sup>189</sup> *Musul-Kerkük İle İlgili Arşiv Belgeleri (1525-1919)*, (Ankara, 1993), p.398.

Sheikh Halil had been executed by the Ottoman government. This caused Noel, for the first time, to realise the religious factor, an important element binding the Kurds and the Turks together. In fact, Noel clearly expressed his opinion on this factor in a report sent to London in July. Classifying the Kurds as the “Islamists” and the “Nationalists” in it, Noel concluded that Turks and the Islamist Kurds collaborated.<sup>190</sup> That is why England should support the “Nationalist Kurds” and give them a stable country. In this way a buffer zone between Caucasus and Mesopotamia under British protection could be created.<sup>191</sup>

Meanwhile on the part of the Ottoman Empire it does not seem possible to conclude that the significance of Noel’s activities was fully recognised. Ahmet Cevdet Bey, the XIII. Corps deputy commander informed the War Ministry of the activities of Noel in Mardin.<sup>192</sup> He stated that Noel wanted to gain locals’ support for Britain in Mardin through making propaganda about Britain having been in the region in order to protect the Kurds’ rights, but he had failed.<sup>193</sup> Cevdet Bey reported that Noel was giving money to the Kurdish citizens to get their support for Britain. Ottoman officials in Istanbul claimed that the Kurds would not betray the Ottoman government for money and posts.<sup>194</sup> In a telegram sent by the government in Istanbul to XV Army Corps headquarters, Major Noel’s activities were described as insignificant.<sup>195</sup> But this was contrary to what the British thought about his importance. This was because the Baghdad Civilian Commissioner’s proposal about Noel going to Istanbul after he was finished in Diyarbakir was refused by the Foreign Office since he had undertaken substantial tasks in Iraq and Eastern Anatolia. For the Foreign Office, Noel’s life could be at stake once he was sent to Istanbul, and this could disturb British interests in the region.<sup>196</sup> This confirms again that whereas Noel and his activities did not mean much for the Ottoman officials they had an essential place in regard to British regional interests in the eyes of the Foreign Office.

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<sup>190</sup> Öke ,Mim Kemal, *Belgelerle Türk-İngiliz İlişkilerinde Musul ve Kürdistan Sorunu (1918-1926)*, p.

<sup>191</sup> Ural, ‘*Mütareke Döneminde*’, p.435-436.

<sup>192</sup> ATASE,ISH,Box.85,Folder.27,Document. 27-2.

<sup>193</sup> ATASE,ISH,Box.30,Folder.14, D.14-1.

<sup>194</sup> *Atatürk’ün Tamim, Telgraf ve Beyannameleri IV*, (Ankara,1964), p.43-44.

<sup>195</sup> BOA,DH-KMS,25/28.

<sup>196</sup> Şimşir, *Kürtçülük*, p.138.

Noel was received by the Sürğici and Seykhan tribes in Avira on 21<sup>st</sup> of May 1919 and he held talks with Ahmed Agha, the chief of Sürğici tribe.<sup>197</sup> Noel briefed Ahmed Agha on current European politics and in particular on the British policy regarding Southeast Anatolia. After this meeting, Noel stated that achieving a mandated territory or protectorate in the region would not be easy and if successful the state that would undertake the mandate over the region would have a hard time.

On the same day an important event came up to justify the opinions of Noel. Sheikh Mahmud in Sulaymaniyah rebelled against the British and had British officers arrested. This caused fear on the part of Britain that the riot could spread all over Anatolia and Iraq in a chain reaction. In a sense this came true and the people of Southeast Anatolia appealed to Sefik Pasha, the War Minister, to support Sheikh Mahmud, but they were refused.<sup>198</sup> In spite of willingness on the part of the locals to support Sheikh Mahmud, the Ottoman government, due to its apparent incapacity, made do with a petition to Britain that a situation contrary to the Armistice in Diyarbakir and Mosul be prevented from developing. This eventually led to a lesser confidence in the Ottoman government on the part of the Kurds thanks to the propaganda made about the Kurds achieving no positive results in their favour when they sided with the Ottoman rule.

Increasing unrest in East and South-eastern Anatolia led the British government to hasten their work on designating a policy in regard to the Kurds in the region. According to Montagu, the borders of Mesopotamia should not be kept large and no military operations should be performed outside the determined border. A mandate state, in the area specified as Kurdistan, should not be constituted by Britain. If any state accepted the mandate over Armenia, the borders of the mandate that were to be formed should not include any part of Mesopotamia and the Turkish administration should never be re-established on the Kurdish region. The Foreign Office reviewed their Kurdistan policy, coming to the decision, on the suggestions of Montagu that assurances given to the regional Kurds were kept limited.<sup>199</sup> According to the British Undersecretary Shuckburgh, making concessions to the Kurds about

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<sup>197</sup> Sonyel ,Salahi, *Kurtuluş Savaşı Günlerinde İngiliz İstihbarat Servisi'nin Türkiye'deki Eylemleri*, (Ankara,1995), p.363.

<sup>198</sup> Gökbilgin, *Milli Mücadele*, p.190.

<sup>199</sup> Ural, *'Mütareke Döneminde'*, p.435-436; Lazarev, *Emperyalizm*, p.84.

Kurdistan before the borders of an intended Armenia were specified could subsequently put Britain in a difficult position. After all the talks had been held, the British officers in the region and in particular Noel were told that they could make promises to the local people in a way that ensured England was not stranded later on, for it was understood that turning a blind eye to the regional developments was not in the British interests. In the telegram sent from the India to the Civilian Commissioner in Baghdad it was stated that ambiguous promises may be made to Kurdish tribes.<sup>200</sup> In the light of this information it could be argued that despite the Armenians the British government decided to make some concessions to the Kurds, too, in East and Southeast Anatolia.

The Commissioner in Baghdad who reviewed Calthorpe`s suggestions maintained, too, that the third way was the best to follow. For the commissioner, the Kurds should be granted an immediate amnesty, and a British protectorate beyond Mosul should be considered.<sup>201</sup> In a report dated 25<sup>th</sup> of May 1919, Montagu, Montagu as Secretary of State for India suggested that the Kurds be granted an amnesty, that regulations related to the region- even if only temporary - be made, that the Bedirhan brothers be made use of for a solution to the problem, and that the British policy in regard to Southeast Anatolia and Mosul be conducted from Baghdad.<sup>202</sup>

On 28<sup>th</sup> of May 1919, Noel left Mardin for Dirik, Diyarbakir and had a meeting there with Mesud Bey the former governor of Rawanduz.<sup>203</sup> As a result of all these meetings and investigations he engaged in in the region, he came to realise that the Americans who supported Armenian regional interests were not liked either and that whatever country that was in favour of Armenian interests would not be wanted in the region.<sup>204</sup> It could be argued that what Izzeddin Bey, the chief of Habasbani tribe, told him in their meeting near Sor on 17<sup>th</sup> of May 1919 had an effect on Noel`s coming to this conclusion.<sup>205</sup> In the meeting, Izzeddin Bey stated that he

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<sup>200</sup> Çay, Abdulhalük M. *Her Yönüyle Kürt Dosyası*, p.158.

<sup>201</sup> Öke, *Belgelerle*, p.34.

<sup>202</sup> Öke, *Belgelerle*, p.35.

<sup>203</sup> Genelkurmay Harp Dairesi Başkanlığı, *Türk İstiklal Harbi IV, Güney Cephesi*, (Ankara,1996), p.14-15

<sup>204</sup> Öke, *Belgelerle*, p.27.

<sup>205</sup> ATESE,ISH, Box:85,Folder:27, Document:27-4.

was not on good terms with the Ottoman government. He declared that he would not offer his support to Britain, because he was not comfortable with the British regional policy, and particularly, he did not trust Britain regarding the Armenian issue.<sup>206</sup> Noel asserted that the Turks and the regional Kurdish tribes would not pursue a hostile policy against the British, and would even support her, as long as Britain gave no support to the Armenian cause. That was why the Kurds should be convinced that Britain was by no means in co-operation with the Armenians and she would never would be. In this way, a branch of the İngiliz Muhipleri Cemiyeti (British Friendship Society) could subsequently be installed and operate in Diyarbakir, and regional British interests could thus be safeguarded.<sup>207</sup>

During his meetings with the Arabs in Sammar, Noel obtained information that the fellows of Serif Hussein who started the Arab Riot against the Ottoman Empire together with the British during World War I but who subsequently came to be at odds with Britain, were seeking support in the region with a view to removing the British from Mosul. When the ethnic components inhabiting parts of Anatolia and Iraq that were under British control were considered, the Kurds inclusion in a union that would be formed by the Turks and Serif Hussein could trigger events that would potentially bring an end to the British presence in Anatolia and the Middle East. Probably convinced that such a union could only be created under an umbrella of “Islamism” and that the spirit of nationalism in the Kurds should be awakened to prevent this union, Noel speeded up his negotiations with the tribes and obtained somewhat favourable results.<sup>208</sup>

Şerif Pasha was in various negotiations with the representatives of Armenia and participant countries, especially with England, for the establishment of a Kurdish state, while Major Noel was conducting meetings among the Kurdish tribes to protect British interests in the region. However, because of the disagreements between the British policy makers, the conflicts of interests among the Allied states, and the rise of the national resistance in Turkey while the Paris Peace Conference negotiations were still in progress, the activities of Şerif Pasha could not be successful. The

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<sup>206</sup> Öke, *İngiliz Ajanı*, p.34.

<sup>207</sup> Birer, *Kürdistan*, p.45.

<sup>208</sup> Çay, Abdulhaluk, *Her Yönüyle Kürt Dosyası*, (Ankara, 1996), p.310.



reactions of the Kurdish tribal leaders were also influential. On 27<sup>th</sup> February 1920 Kurdish leaders send telegrams to the embassies of the Allied Powers, Paris Peace Conference delegates, the Ottoman Government in Istanbul and the Heyeti Temsiliye delegates in Ankara. In their telegrams they declared that Kurds were first of all Muslim, then Ottoman and finally Kurdish. They declared that they had never betrayed the Ottoman Government and would never betray it. They also declared that Şerif Pasha was an opportunist, had collected millions of lira and embezzled it, that such a person could never represent the Kurds. Lord Curzon, who had learned the reactions to Şerif Pasha through telegrams, stated in the session of the conference on 19<sup>th</sup> April 1920 that although had shown himself as representative of the Kurds but the Kurds did not recognize him as their representative.<sup>209</sup> Finally Şerif Pasha announced his resignation with a telegram dated 5<sup>th</sup> May 1920 to the Conference and he left the Conference negotiations.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Ulubelen, Erol, *İngiliz Gizli*, doc.33, p.269.

<sup>210</sup> Ulubelen, Erol, *İngiliz Gizli*, doc.34, p.269.

## CHAPTER 2

### The Turkish National Struggle Emerges (19 May 1919)

After the Mondros Armistice while the British officers meeting with the tribes and trying to influence them in British interests, the Turkish and pro-Turk Kurds, who could not accept the capture of the Ottoman lands by the Allies, were protesting in many places. Because of that reason some unrest events were seen in many places, such as the Samsun and its vicinity. The Turkish government declared that the events of unrest were commenced by the Greeks, but the British held the Turks responsible for the events in the eastern regions of Turkey.<sup>211</sup>

Therefore, in order to determine the source of anarchy and unrest in the Eastern Black Sea and Eastern Anatolia, and to restore the disrupted order in the region, to prevent the deterioration of public order, to collect the weapons of the Turks and to close the organizations established against the Allied Powers Mustafa Kemal Pasha was appointed as 9<sup>th</sup> Army General Inspector on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 1919.<sup>212</sup> The area of his inspectorship was Trabzon, Erzurum, Sivas, Van provinces and Erzincan and Canik sanjaks, but his inspection area was not only limited to these areas because, as it was indicated on his certificate of authority, the corps commanders in Diyarbakir, Bitlis, Elazig, Ankara and Kastamonu had to consider Mustafa Kemal's orders. He was appointed to this mission with the duty of establishing order in the above mentioned region and investigation of the reasons of unrest in the region; collection and protection of the weapons and ammunition in the region and their storage in the Ottoman depot; suppression of the alleged Turkish resistance communities in the region.<sup>213</sup> Actually Mustafa Kemal wanted to go to

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<sup>211</sup> Evsile, Mehmet, 'Amasya Tamimi ve Atatürk'ün Amasya'daki Faaliyetleri', *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi (AAMD)*, XIV, Vol. 40, (March,1998), p.70-72.

<sup>212</sup> Genel Kurmay Başkanlığı, Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Dairesi Başkanlığı Arşivi, *İstiklal Harbi Kataloğu*, (ATASE,ISH), K.26, G.117, B.17-5.

<sup>213</sup> *Atatürk ile İlgili Arşiv Belgeleri, Başbakanlık Osmanlı Daire Başkanlığı Yayım*, Ankara,1982, p.23-24, Doc. 21

Anatolia to encourage powerful Turkish resistance there and to establish a fully independent new Turkish state.<sup>214</sup> After his appointment, Mustafa Kemal and his delegation of 18 officers departed from Istanbul and arrived in Samsun on 19<sup>th</sup> of May 1919. After arriving to his zone of responsibility Mustafa Kemal had meetings with military and civil officers and received information about the situation in the region.<sup>215</sup>

After Mustafa Kemal Pasha's arriving at Samsun, General Milne gave a note to the Ottoman Ministry of War on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1919, asking for the reason for this assignment. This note requested the reason of appointing a General Inspector, an Executive officer and delegates to the 9<sup>th</sup> Army which was previously abolished. It was also requested that the British authorities be informed of the duties and responsibilities of these officers.<sup>216</sup>

The note of General Milne was answered by Cevat Pasha on 24<sup>th</sup> of May 1919. Cevat Pasha stated that the 9<sup>th</sup> Army was previously abolished but its zone of responsibility was spreading over a wide area so in order to control how the orders were implemented by 3<sup>rd</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Army corps the 9<sup>th</sup> Military Inspectorship Office was established. In addition, Cevat Pasha informed General Milne that this delegation was not given a permanent place of duty and therefore could go on long journeys to fulfil their duties.<sup>217</sup>

Despite General Milne's note, it is possible to understand from the British press that the British did not much care for the sending of Mustafa Kemal to Samsun, and even that they could not understand very well the aim of his activities in Samsun and its surroundings. It can be seen that, because the movement initiated by Mustafa Kemal Pasha in Anatolia is not given importance at first but after the Sivas Congress (4-11 September 1919), news and commentary are seen to be increasing. In the British press, Mustafa Kemal Pasha was seen as a rebellious general, and the Turkish

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<sup>214</sup> Atatürk, Mustafa Kemal, *Nutuk*, <http://ekitap.kulturturizm.gov.tr/TR,81477/benim-kararim.html>, 20 October 2017.

<sup>215</sup> Harp Tarihi Vesikaları Dergisi (HTVD), Volume.4, (July,1953), Doc.62.

<sup>216</sup> Harp Tarihi Vesikaları Dergisi (HTVD), Volume.19, (March,1957), Doc.493,494.

<sup>217</sup> Harp Tarihi Vesikaları Dergisi (HTVD), Volume. 1, (September,1952), Doc.16.

National Struggle Movement was seen as one of the rebellions which often break out in the colonies.<sup>218</sup>

Despite the fact that just a few months had elapsed since the start of his mission the activities of Mustafa Kemal started to damage the interests of the nations who were claiming rights on the Ottoman lands. After staying in Samsun for a week, Mustafa Kemal Pasha who passed to Havza and then went to Amasya started to deal with the events that happened in various parts of the Ottoman lands and started to send telegrams and to publish notices. It can be seen that Mustafa Kemal Pasha had contacted the 15<sup>th</sup> Corps commander Kazım Karabekir Pasha on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1919. Again he had contacted the 20<sup>th</sup> Army Corps commander Ali Fuat (Cebesoy) Pasha and the inspectorship that affiliated to that corps on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1919.<sup>219</sup>

## **2.1 Declaration of the Havza Circular (28/29 May 1919)**

Mustafa Kemal came to Havza (a borough of Samsun), regarded as a safe region during the period of the national struggle, communicating with the army commanders and then sent general information and orders to the military and civilian authorities on 28/29 May 1919. In the circular it was decided that big and exciting rallies would be organized and occupations would be protested; protest telegrams would be drawn to the Istanbul Government. Notice letters and telegrams would be issued to representatives of the major states. The Christian people would not be harmed at the rallies. The circular is the first national document to be published during the Turkish National Resistance Period (April 1919- September 1922) that started by Mustafa Kemal after his arriving Samsun. Immediately after the circular, the public began to organize rallies; serious steps have been taken towards national

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<sup>218</sup> Aybars, Ergün, 'Milli Mücadele'de İngiliz Basını', *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi (AAMD)*, IV, Issue.12, (July,1988), p.605.

<sup>219</sup> Sakarya Üniversitesi Atatürk Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Webpage, <http://www.atamer.sakarya.edu.tr/kro-20.htm>, 20 September 2017.

unity and solidarity. In addition, Mustafa Kemal contacted the commanders of 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps in Samsun and the 13<sup>th</sup> Army Corps in Diyarbakir on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1919.<sup>220</sup>

Mustafa Kemal Pasha believed that the arms of the army should not be surrendered in order to protect the indivisible integrity of the state and the nation. He applied to the Ottoman Ministry of Defence and suggested that British demands for the disarmament of the Turkish Army be rejected.<sup>221</sup> By contacting the military authorities under his command, Mustafa Kemal Pasha ordered that the ammunition should not be delivered to the British control officers.<sup>222</sup>

Seeing the movements contradictory to Mustafa Kemal's duties of appointment, the British immediately took action to recall him. On the 6<sup>th</sup> June 1919, Commander of the British Naval Forces in the Black Sea, General Milne contacted the Ottoman Ministry of War and demanded that Mustafa Kemal Pasha should be dismissed from his duties.<sup>223</sup> A similar demand came from Admiral Calthorpe. The Istanbul Government, which accepted the British demands, ordered Mustafa Kemal Pasha to return to Istanbul immediately. In the meantime, the Istanbul Government made some attempts to prevent the activities of dismissed Mustafa Kemal Pasha. But Mustafa Kemal Pasha continued to his activities non-stop.

## **2.2 Borders of Kurdistan on the Baghdad Administration Report on 13 June 1919**

While on the one hand British officers were trying to prevent the activities of Mustafa Kemal Pasha, on the other hand they were trying to determine the border of the Kurdish State which it planned to establish. The post from the Baghdad Civilian Administration dated on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June 1919, entitled 'Kurdistan' was sent to India, London, Cairo, İstanbul and Tehran, and Wilson summarized recent developments in a list;<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Atatürk, Mustafa Kemal, *Nutuk, 1919-1927*, Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi (AAM) yayınları, (Ankara,1989), p.12 et.al.

<sup>221</sup> *Harp Tarihi Vesikaları Dergisi (HTVD)*, Vol.5, (September,1953), Doc. 93.

<sup>222</sup> Yurdakul Yurdakul, *Atatürk'ten Hiç Yayınlanmamış Anılar*, (İstanbul,1999), p.54.

<sup>223</sup> Dumont, Paul, *Mustafa Kemal*, translated by Zeki Çelikkol, Kültür Bakanlığı yayınları, Ankara,1993, p.30-31.

<sup>224</sup> PRO, AIR 20/714, From Political Baghdad to India, London, 13 June 1919, No: 6666, p.48.

1. The ethnographic map of East Anatolia had been recorded with the number of 2901 in the War Office. According to Wilson the map printed by the Royal Geographical Society in which East Anatolia was mostly shown as a Kurdish region was important in showing how difficult it was to designate Kurdish borders. However, the map referred to by Wilson could not be found in War Ministry records. Related to ethnological border discussions a map dated 23 July 1919 was inspected in a Foreign Office document, in the file numbered PRO, FO 371/4192 and this map is placed in Appendix. There is no information about the preparation date of the map referred to by Wilson. However, the possibility that this map is the one Wilson spoke of is very low because Wilson's telegram is dated 13 June but the map found in the Foreign Office is dated 23 July.

2. The Turkish –Iranian front line forms the eastern border of the region and this region was mostly populated by Kurds. In order to protect the advantages of the mountain regions of Iraq which were more suitable for development for both economic and strategic reasons, Sulaymaniyah and Rania were to be included within the borders of the Mesopotamia Administration. According to Wilson, Dahok and Zaho must also be regarded as in Mesopotamia; but Amedia must be excluded from Mesopotamia. Wilson, who saw Erbil as the completion of the Mosul province, expressed his anxieties about the involvement of prominent figures of Erbil in Kurdistan due to observations made on 6 June<sup>225</sup>. The sensitivity of people living in Erbil about the topic was related to the population distribution there. Likewise, if we remember that there is no sign that Kurds were in the majority in Erbil in June 1919, the anxieties of the people of the region where Kurds, Arabs and Turks lived altogether may be understood better.

3. The South border of Kurdistan was to start from point 1143 of Qandil Mountains and shall continue from the point where 37 Parallel and 44 Meridian cross

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<sup>225</sup> It can be claimed that the location of Erbil (for its important railway access) influenced Wilson's thinking.

towards the point where 37<sup>th</sup> Parallel and 43<sup>rd</sup> Meridian intersects.<sup>226</sup> In other words (if we take this explanation into consideration) the region between Van, Mardin, Nusaybin, Resulayn, Birecik, Elâzığ, Bitlis, Van, the Qandil Mountains, Revanduz and Sulaymaniyah would mark the borders of Kurdistan.

4. The South border of the region must be formed from areas with a majority population of Kurds, and this border should start from West of Cizre and the Nusaybin Province, from South of Mardin, from North of Resulayn to Birecik (Urfa) throughout 37<sup>th</sup> Parallel and from the upper Euphrates must follow the borders of Harput (Elazığ), and Bitlis Van provinces but Erzincan and Erzurum must be excluded. It is seen that this suggestion made by Wilson was criticized, and the person who criticized Wilson's idea most harshly was Major Noel. According to Noel, Kurds must not be separated and Kurds must be assessed as a whole. As will be mentioned in the following parts of the chapter, Kurds were seen as holistic by Major Noel. According to Noel, the establishment of a powerful Kurdish state in the region depended on integrity of Kurdish notables.

5. This region including the Diyarbakır province was mostly formed of Armenians and these parts were shown with thick lines in the map. However, as far as we can understand from Major Noel's explanations and other sources, Armenians were in a minority in that region, and settle them down there as administrators and giving them independence was not possible. Wilson said that it was guaranteed that the rest of the region and Erzurum and Trabzon would be under an American mandate and building a civilian and military administration would not be hard for America.<sup>227</sup>

6. In the telegram the region called as Kurdistan was divided into two ways; those people either supporting Britain or Turkey and Christians and those against them. If precautions were not taken, people supporting the Turks may effectively seize the control of the country. For this reason, the British side must hold an

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<sup>226</sup> PRO, AIR 20/714, From Political Baghdad to India, London, 13 June 1919, No: 6666, p.48.

<sup>227</sup> Under the influence of the recommendation, British officials worked through establishment an Armenian State under the patronage of America. But America was reluctant to accept the offer.

election. According to Wilson, if Turkish authority was rebuilt in Armenia and Kurdistan, the idea of a Kurdish State and an Armenian State would completely disappear. Time would prove Wilson right and some Kurdish tribes declared their support to the Turkish National struggle that was commenced by Mustafa Kemal and decided to fight on the Turkish side.<sup>228</sup>

7. According to Wilson, the lack of a foreign administration in the centre of Bitlis and Van, the tendency towards Islam in the Middle East, and the reaction towards the actions of Greece and one of the important Kurdish leaders Sayyid Taha pose an unfavourable situation for being under a Christian authority. Because of this, decisions taken for the policies to be implemented must be quickly carried out in the region and directions must be made according to British interests.

8. Trabzon and Erzurum provinces may be shaped to found a unique Armenian State under the auspices of America. The remaining four provinces, Elazığ, Van, Sivas and Diyarbakır, must establish a Kurdish State under the auspices of England. An Arabian State must be established under the auspices of England in Mosul, Baghdad and Basra provinces. The only alternative plan in place of these was the re-establishment of Turkish authority covering the six provinces to be established under the auspices of Europe.

9. The way for Britain to broaden its actions for Kurdistan was through understanding American policy. The British government must improve its policy by examining these issues. Also, Wilson suggests that Kurdish State currently run by British officers must be recognized by the British government.<sup>229</sup>

On 12<sup>th</sup> of June 1919, another telegram<sup>230</sup> was sent by Major Noel to the Civil Administration of Baghdad in which he reported that Kurdish nationalism launched by the British was expanding day by day and that some of Sheikh Mahmud's men came to see him and delivered him some of the Sheikh's demands about the Kurdish movement.

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<sup>228</sup> *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 3 December 1919; *Irade-i Milliye*, 5 December 1919.

<sup>229</sup> PRO, AIR 20/714, From Political Baghdad to India, London, 13 June 1919, No: 6666, p.48.

<sup>230</sup> PRO, AIR 20/512, From Noel To Political Baghdad, 17 June 1919, p.43.



A response letter<sup>231</sup> from Baghdad Political Office was sent to Noel on the 17<sup>th</sup> June 1919. In this letter, it was stated that the Kurdish policy had been approved by the British government, and that a Kurdish federation would be established if Kurdish tribes were ready and willing, and that Noel had been authorized to negotiate with the Kurds to investigate their situation.

### **2.3 Declaration of the Amasya Circular (22 June 1919)**

After Havza, Mustafa Kemal Pasha went to Amasya and met with the Turkish delegates and patriots. The Amasya Circular showed both intention and route for the Turkish resistance. The circular starts with a notice that there was a threat to unity of the fatherland and to the sovereignty of the nation. As can be understood from the notice, securing the national independence and the territorial integrity were two purposes of the Anatolian movement. The Istanbul government was affirmed as being under influence of Allied Powers, so the government was not capable to protect the interests of the nation. Therefore, to preserve its independence the nation needed to take more responsibility. In the Circular the need of a national committee to lead the national resistance and declare and prove to the world of the legitimacy of its goals was emphasized. The Amasya Circular called for a national congress to be held in Sivas on 4<sup>th</sup> September 1919, with the participation of three delegates sending from each sanjaks. Meanwhile, the Turkish resistance societies (Müdafaa-i Hukuk and Redd-i İlhak) were called to send delegates to the upcoming regional congress in Erzurum on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1919.<sup>232</sup>

The general draft of the text of the Amasya Circular was signed on 22 June 1919 by Mustafa Kemal, Kazım Karabekir, Rauf Bey, Refet Bey, as well as many others. The prepared Amasya Circular was distributed to all civilian and military institutions immediately after its approval.

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<sup>231</sup> PRO, AIR 20/512, From Political Baghdad To Political Mosul, Repeated Noel Rowanduz and Noel Suleimaniyah, 17 June 1919, p.44.

<sup>232</sup> TBMM, Milli Egemenlik Belgeleri, ( scanned original documents), (Ankara,2015), p.9-15,

The Amasya Circular, which is one of the turning points in the history of Turkey, has caused many significant results. With the Amasya Circular, the revolution phase began on behalf of the Turkish National Struggle. Justification, purpose and method for the War of Independence have been put forward. For the first time, there is an idea that a government based on national sovereignty should be established. The Government of Istanbul was ignored. A call was made to the Turkish nation to fight against the occupiers of Istanbul and Anatolia. With the Amasya Circular, the patriarch, the caliphate, and patriarchal ideas were replaced by nationalism and national ideas. An opinion on the formation of the Representative Mission was given. For the first time together with the Amasya Circular, liberation resistance has been written down. A decision was taken to convene a congress in Sivas for the unification of the Müdafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyeti. The decision not to discharge the army has been taken. The War of Independence was officially announced along with the Amasya Circular.<sup>233</sup>

Under the pressure of the Allies the Ottoman government reacted to these developments. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 1919, Ali Kemal, who was the Ottoman Minister of Internal Affairs, send telegrams to the provinces, such as Sivas,<sup>234</sup> and announced that Mustafa Kemal Pasha had dismissed from office by the demands of the British and that his orders were invalid.<sup>235</sup> Ordered to return to Istanbul, Mustafa Kemal Pasha had received telegrams on various dates but he refused. Minister of War Ferit Pasha sent a definite order to Mustafa Kemal to return to Istanbul as soon as possible with the telegram he sent on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 1919. Finally, on 8<sup>th</sup> of July 1919 it was reported to Mustafa Kemal that he was dismissed from his inspectorship duty.<sup>236</sup> Upon this, Mustafa Kemal Pasha sent telegrams to both the War Ministry and the Ottoman Sultan and informed them that he resigned from both the inspectorship and the military service. Mustafa Kemal would continue to lead the Turkish resistance as a civilian.

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<sup>233</sup> Atatürk, Mustafa, Kemal, *Atatürk'ün Bütün Eserleri*, V.III, Kaynak Yayınları, (İstanbul,2000), pp.107-108

<sup>234</sup> Yıldırım, Hüseyin, 'Atatürk'ün Sivas'ı Ziyaretleri', *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi (AAMD)*, Vol.36, (November,1996), p.636

<sup>235</sup> *Türk İstiklal Harbi Batı Cephesi II*, Genel Kurmay Başkanlığı yayınları, (Ankara,1994), p.94

<sup>236</sup> *Türk İstiklal Harbi Batı Cephesi II*, p.95

On the British side Major Noel was still struggling to determinate the borders of the Kurdish State which he wanted to establish. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of June 1919, Major Noel met with Baghdad High Commissioner who suggested to the British government on 13<sup>th</sup> June that an independent Kurdish state comprising of Van, Bitlis, Diyarbakir, Elazig, Malatya, Tunceli be established under British protection. In this meeting Major Noel briefed Colonel Wilson on the situation in the region. During this meeting, Major Noel must have mentioned to Colonel Wilson his conviction that the common ground binding the Ottoman government and the Kurdish tribes together was Islam. This view was featured in a June report<sup>237</sup> he sent to London that we mentioned above briefly; and Colonel Wilson suggested he should revisit the tribes in the company of a few men from Bedirhan tribe in order to prevent the Turks from spreading an Islamist policy in regard to Southeast and the East Anatolia.<sup>238</sup> Welcoming the idea, Noel persuaded Sayyid Moin, son of Emin Ali Bedirhan, and Sayyid Ibrahim, son-in-law of Sheikh Abdulkadir, to go with him.<sup>239</sup>

After all these developments, Major Noel began to lobby some Kurdish people against the Turks, for instance, Celadet Ali, and Kamuran Ali Bey from the Bedirhan Tribe, and Ekrem Bey from Diyarbakir. In these negotiations, Ekrem Bey stated that he was almost arrested by Turkish officers allegedly for being a supporter of a British mandate, but he escaped from the arrest by giving the name of Major Noel.<sup>240</sup> If this memory is true, it can be shown as evidence of the influence Major Noel had in the region.

Two days after meeting with Ali and Ekrem Bey, Noel faced an important issue when he went to Antep which was under British control. This incident showed how the Kurds' worries about the Armenians were justified. While he was there he heard some Armenians crying "this will be our home!" The Kurdish people thought that the British Army had captured the region to establish an Armenian State due to the complaisance of the British authorities towards these kinds of Armenian activities. After the investigation of Diyarbakır, Antep, and Maraş by Noel, he concluded that the Armenian population was one-tenth of that of the Turks, even

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<sup>237</sup> PRO, AIR 20/512, From Noel To Political Baghdad, 17 June 1919.

<sup>238</sup> Mesut, *İngiliz Belgelerinde*, p.83.

<sup>239</sup> Öke, *İngiliz Ajanı* , p.39.

<sup>240</sup> Öke, *Belgelerle*, p.29.

prior to the War. Because of that, he declared that the abandonment of the region to the Armenians would not be an impartial decision.<sup>241</sup> Moreover, Noel sent a telegram to the Clayton Egypt Force on 28<sup>th</sup> of June 1919.<sup>242</sup> In his telegram he stated that the population figures of the six vilayets, which were given in the reports of Tiflis British Occupation Command on 25<sup>th</sup> of April 1919 obtained from Armenian sources, did not reflect the truth. He based his assertions on the Turkish records and some interview results with Christian communities. He also gave some information, based on the same source, of the population distribution in Diyarbakır province. In the light of Major Noel's knowledge, although the Kurdish population was 750,000 before the war, it had decreased and became 600,000 after the war. Noel also indicated that the number of Armenians was 120,000 in the pre-war period, but it had fallen to 20,000 in the post-war period. When examining these population ratios, it can be seen that the Kurds were always the majority of the population. In this respect, from his point of view, if the region was given to the Armenians, it would be not only be a strategic mistake but also a demographic one. Noel indicated that, despite all difficulties, the Kurds were still dedicated to acting on behalf of British interests.<sup>243</sup>

Noel dwelt on the necessity of the Kurds' forming their own government in the Sulaymaniyah region in parallel with events after the Mondros Armistice Agreement. Noel also demanded the recognition of the Kurdish language and support for the tribes therein. Noel asserted that he considered the Kurds were not being adequately represented at the Peace Conference but that the problem actually originated from the warranties given to the Kurds not being clear and distinct. Noel indicated that the Ottoman Unionists would never accept the Kurds' demands, and this was indeed a distinct advantage for Kurds. In continuation of his report, (indicating that he published a notice about the region identified as South West Kurdistan from the Egypt Expeditionary Force in July), Noel stated that Turks were very angry with the British for discussing the Kurdish and the Armenian issues.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> ATASE, ISH, Box:85, Folder:27, Document:27-4.

<sup>242</sup> PRO/FO/629/3/113148, Military Intelligence 7 (MI.7), 19.06.1919.

<sup>243</sup> Birer, *Kürdistan*, p.47.

<sup>244</sup> PRO, FO 371/4193, Memorandum By Major Noel, 18 December 1919, No: 163038.

Major Noel admitted that there was no unity among the Kurds, and ensuring long-term unity would happen through forming different structures with different centres. This is why Noel suggested forming autonomous structures for each area which in Southern Kurdistan was Sulaymaniyah, in Central Kurdistan was Mosul, and in Western Kurdistan was Diyarbakir, in his report.<sup>245</sup> Although Major Noel was obsessed with endeavouring to establish of a Kurdish state, he warned England to take military precautions against a tribe that can rapidly unite a troop of 3.000 armed soldiers any time even in a small residential area.

## **2.4 Erzurum Congress (23 July – 7 August 1919)**

In order to prevent the establishing of an Armenian or a Kurdish state on the Eastern Anatolia lands of the Ottoman Empire, Erzurum Müdafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyeti were established on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 1919. British officer Alfred Wilson, who supervised the application of armistice conditions and was tasked with dispatching the Ottoman army's weapons to storage under the control of the Allied Powers, was investigating the establishment of an independent Armenian state in the region.<sup>246</sup> People living in Erzurum were provoked by the news that Erzurum would be given to Armenia. With the encouragement of Müdafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyeti in Trabzon, Müdafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyeti in Erzurum a provincial congress was held in Erzurum on the 17<sup>th</sup> of June 1919.

American authorities were aware of the newly started Turkish struggle; therefore to make observations on the developments, American High Commissioner Admiral Bristol, then a delegation headed by General Harbord came to Erzurum on 1<sup>st</sup> of August 1919 in order to inspect the merits of Armenian demands in Eastern Anatolia, including Çukurova (Cilician plain).<sup>247</sup> The delegation had come to Erzurum and started their inquiry. At the end of the investigations Harbord reported that there was no Armenian majority anywhere and anytime in the region. Harbord

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<sup>245</sup> PRO, FO 371/4192, Diary of Major E. Noel on Special Duty, 25 July 1919, No:107502, p.9.

<sup>246</sup> Lord Kinross, *Atatürk, Bir Milletten Yeniden Doğuşu*, trans. by, Necdet Sander, Sander Yayınları, (Istanbul,1984), p.276.

<sup>247</sup> Kasalak, Kadir, *Milli Mücadele'de Manda ve Himaye Meselesi*, Genel Kurmay Başkanlığı Yayını, (Ankara,1993), p.122.

also stated that taking the Armenians under the American mandate would bring a great economic and military burden to the United States. Thus, the hopes of the Armenians to be under the American mandate would be greatly reduced. These developments saved the Kurds from fear of massacres at the hands of the Armenians and contributed to making a decision to maintain their loyalty to the Ottoman State.

On the opening day of the Erzurum Congress, 23<sup>rd</sup> of July 1919, American High Commissioner Admiral Bristol sent a telegram to the Foreign Office. In it Bristol claimed that the only solution of the Turkish problem was to set up a mandate regime for the whole of the Turkish lands. According to Bristol, to hold an election in these nations was not easy, because they were both ignorant and uneducated. Because of that reason, only after a certain period, might an opportunity be given for the right of self-government to those nations, who sought for self-governance.<sup>248</sup>

Holding a nationalist congress would damage both British and Ottoman Governments who therefore wanted to prevent it. But they failed to achieve their aims despite attempts to prevent the congress from gathering in Erzurum. British officer Rawlinson had meetings with some leaders of the national struggle movement and demanded that the congress in Erzurum should not be held. He demanded that Mustafa Kemal should not be invited to the congress even it were to be held. Rawlinson threatened that if his warnings were not taken into account, the Eastern lands of Ottoman Empire would be invaded by Allied Powers as required by the Mondros Armistice resolutions. Before his meeting with Mustafa Kemal, Rawlinson conducted a meeting with Kazım Karabekir. In his meeting Rawlinson wanted to threaten Kazım Karabekir by asking him the number of troops that British forces had. But the response of Kazım Karabekir was more threatening. According to Karabekir, 'every single Turk was armed and nobody could have power to control millions of armed men'.<sup>249</sup> On the 9<sup>th</sup> of July 1919, in the meeting with Mustafa Kemal, Rawlinson wanted to threaten him by saying that it would be better not to convene the congress but Mustafa Kemal stated that in any case the congress would be convened. The congress was held with the participation of 62 delegates mainly

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<sup>248</sup> Kasalak, *Milli Mücadele'de Manda*, p.125.

<sup>249</sup> Kinross, *Atatürk*, p.277.

from Trabzon, Erzurum, Sivas, Bitlis and Van eastern provinces and some important decisions were taken.<sup>250</sup>

The National Border would be defined as the Turkish historic boundaries when the Mondros Armistice was signed. It was emphasized that the people of the Ottoman country were inseparable from each other so the country cannot be divided by any reason or excuse. If the Ottoman Government is dispersed, the nation would show total defence and resistance against all kinds of foreign occupation and intervention. If the central government cannot be established for the protection and integrity of the country and its independence, a provisional government will be established for the purpose of the cause. This government delegation will be elected to the Heyeti Temsiliye. If the Congress is not convened, this election will be made by the Representative Delegation. It was the basic principle of the National Forces to recognize the sole force and to make the national forces dominate. Christian minorities could never be given the privilege, which could cause a disruption of political domination and social equilibrium. Mandate and patronage would never be acceptable. The National Assembly should be assembled immediately and the government work had to be controlled by parliament.<sup>251</sup> Upon the complaints of the British about Mustafa Kemal, an order was sent to the 15<sup>th</sup> Corps Command by the new Minister of War Nazim Pasha on the 30<sup>th</sup> of July 1919 and ordering Mustafa Kemal to be sent to Istanbul due to his opposing behaviour against government decisions.<sup>252</sup> This order also shows that the Istanbul administration and the British were disturbed by the National Movement in Anatolia.

Those who participated in the congress adopted the principle of not avoiding any sacrifice and not migrating at all by facing all kinds of danger in order not to leave the Ottoman homeland. Participants of the congress also promised that if the country was attacked by the Armenians, they would react violently and protect their land until death. Turks and Kurds living in the vicinity of Erzurum had been gathered under a single roof for the defence of the country against the Armenian danger. In one sense, if the British proposals failed, which aimed to pull the Kurds out of the

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<sup>250</sup> Aybars, *'Milli Mücadele'de İngiliz Basını'*, p.167.

<sup>251</sup> Atatürk, *Nutuk*, p.43-44.

<sup>252</sup> Atatürk, *Nutuk*, p.48.

Turkish national struggle and persuade the Kurds to join the British troops failed, then British interests in the region would be affected negatively.

But there were some Kurdish leaders, such as Sayyid Taha, who were collaborating with the British. He visited Semdinan with the British authorities; and told the governor that the city should be handed over to the British; and demanded that the Turks retreat.<sup>253</sup> Sayyid Taha was thinking that if the Turkish forces were removed from Rania and Rawanduz, he would be the king of Kurdistan. The expectation of Sayyid Taha was supported by the British officer Captain Beale. He claimed that establishing a North Kurdistan state covering the whole Rawanduz Region and Dest-i Harir plain and expanding to the North including Semdinan district and Gavar would be a positive development with regard to the British interests in the region. Beale considered Sayyid Taha as the only person who could rule the region with his intelligence and influence in this part of the country. He recommended Sayyid Taha to be assigned as the king of the Northern Kurdistan state which would be established.

## **2.5 Ali Batı Revolt (11 May 1919-18 August 1919)**

After the signing of the Armistice of Mondros the Occupations of the Allied Powers and the demobilization of a large part of the Turkish army weakened the central authority. The interpretation and application of minorities' demands for land in Anatolia, in accordance with the provisions of the Armistice, contributed to the weakening of the central authority. During the armistice period, the instability in the Ottoman Empire led to riots in various parts of Anatolia including the Ali Batı riot.

The activities of Ali Batı during the armistice are in line with the arrival of the British intelligence officer Major Noel in the region. According to the District Governor of Şırnak, Jiljanlı Rasul and Ali Batı had been sent to Mosul for political purposes; in appearance they went for commercial purposes but in reality to provide

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<sup>253</sup> ATASE, ISH, Box:98, Folder:30, 27 July 1919.



British control in Siirt.<sup>254</sup> Diyarbakir Deputy Governor Mustafa Nadir informed that the gendarmerie organization in the region should be established as soon as possible in order to ensure the security of the province in the telegram he sent on 22 May 1919.<sup>255</sup> According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs' response to his telegram, it was necessary that the incidents in the region were settled by the gendarmerie and that the events should not be exaggerated in the eyes of the Allied Powers by using military force. The intervention of the army in the small events which the gendarmes could manage, would damage the situation of the Otoman State.<sup>256</sup>

Moreover, in the telegram<sup>257</sup> dated the 16<sup>th</sup> June 1919, Lieutenant Governor Mustafa Nadir claimed that the ammunition used by Ali Batı, a Kurdish bandit in Nusaybn, had been abandoned in Mosul by the Turkish army and secretly given to Ali Batı by the British. There was no evidence that Ali Batı wanted to set up a Kurdish State. It may plausibly be claimed that he did not have a sufficiently intellectual background nor were there Kurdish intellectual with him who were aiming for an independent Kurdistan. It is understood from the documents that Ali Batı practised banditry at least since 1908. He wanted to cause unrest to benefit from the unstable situation in the country. Before the Greeks invaded İzmir and Mustafa Kemal Pasha moved to Samsun, Ali Batı, who had acted with the help of the British with the help had made the Ottoman Empire suffer for months. The rebellion was suppressed by Turkish forces. And it was reported that, Ali Batı was seized in the telegram dated the 24<sup>th</sup> of August 1919, which was sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>258</sup>

The documents used in this part are important to show that most of the Kurdish tribes in the region were supporting the Turkish forces and naturally, the fact that the tribes had the ability to act independently of one another in the structure of the tribes, and sometimes the presence of hostility between them, made it possible for the state to quickly suppress the situation. Following the suppression of the incident, some tribal leaders were rewarded for their help. It is seen that after the rebellion was

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<sup>254</sup> *Harp Tarihi Belgeleri Dergisi*, Doc.1596, S.74, (March,1976), p.6.

<sup>255</sup> BOA,DH. EUM. AYŞ.,14/27,Lef. 12-13, 22 May 1919.

<sup>256</sup> BOA,DH. EUM. AYŞ.,14/27,Lef.4/1, May 1919.

<sup>257</sup> BOA,DH. EUM. AYŞ., 23/97, Lef.9, 16 June 1919.

<sup>258</sup> BOA,DH. EUM. AYŞ.,19/6,Lef.2, 24 August 1919.

suppressed, the district governor of Midyat and some Kurdish tribal chiefs such as Mezineli Ali Çelebi, Keferzili Mahmud Salih, Salahi tribal leader Ramazan and İzzeddin Agha were rewarded with medal for their support in the suppression of the revolt.<sup>259</sup>

## **2.6 Sivas Congress (4-11 September 1919)**

The Congress of Sivas was the gathering of elected national representatives in Sivas to search for measures to save Turkish land after the First World War and after the declaration of Amasya Circular of Mustafa Kemal, which aimed to protect the full independence of the Turkish nation. The Sivas Congress was a national conference that was held between 4<sup>th</sup> September 1919 and 11<sup>th</sup> September 1919.

The decisions of the Sivas Congress can be summarised as follow; the homeland within the national borders was an indivisible whole and it cannot be broken into pieces. The nation would defend itself against on foreign occupation and intervention and would resist them. If the Istanbul Government has to be obliged to abandon any part of the country in the face of external pressure, any measures and decisions would be taken to ensure the independence and integrity of the country. It was fundamental to recognize the Kuvayi Milliye as the only force and to make the national forces dominate. Mandate and patronage were denied. In order to represent the national interest, it was compulsory for the national assembly (Meclis-i Mebusan) to be convoked immediately. The national societies, which were set up to secure Ottoman citizens' rights and lands, have been combined as a general organization under the name of "Anadolu ve Rumeli Müdafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyeti". The General Assembly would be elected by the Congress to conduct the administration and decisions taken.

Thanks to the Sivas Congress's decisions; the National Pact principles were determined. The principles of independence and national sovereignty were accepted as basic principles and Mustafa Kemal officially elected as leader. Heyet-i Temsiliye

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<sup>259</sup> BOA,DH. EUM. AYŞ., 23/97, Lef.8, 1 September 1919

was accepted as the only representative of the entire Turkish homeland so that Turkish national unity and solidarity would be provided.

In addition to these, other importance of Sivas for the National Struggle was derived from being one of the mentioned cities Vilayet-i Sitte<sup>260</sup>, whose future was to be determined under the 24th article of Mondros Armistice agreement. Due to the agreement in the event of any disorder in these cities, they were to be occupied by Allied Powers. Due to the pressure of the British, the Istanbul Government was also trying to prevent the congress from being convened in Sivas. For this purpose, orders were sent to many state officials to prevent the Sivas Congress from being convened. One of these orders was sent to Reşit Pasha, the Governor of Sivas on 29<sup>th</sup> of August 1919.<sup>261</sup> Sivas Governor Reşit Pasha reported to Mustafa Kemal Pasha that he had received an order from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and that in case of a congress gathering in Sivas, Sivas would be occupied by Allied Powers.

Despite all the orders and threats of Damat Ferit Pasha, the gathering of a congress in Sivas could not be prevented, and as it was seen as a proof of the incompetence of his governance Damat Ferit Pasha had to resign from his post on 1<sup>st</sup> of October 1919. According to General Milne, Damat Ferit Pasha's government, lost the control of the State and fallen as a consequence. General Milne's opposition on to opposition to allowing British troops to go to Eskişehir in order to suppress the National movement and his orders to the British troops to follow a neutral attitude towards domestic politics accelerated the collapse of the Damat Ferit Cabinet.<sup>262</sup>

After the resignation of Damat Ferit Pasha, Ali Rıza Pasha, who had sympathy for the Anatolian Movement, became the head of government. These statements are important to show how ineffective the British were in the truce period of Istanbul. It was also recommended that the new Turkish government should have good relationships with Anatolia, thus aiming to make the expanding and strengthening national movement passive. The most important point for the Heyet-

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<sup>260</sup> Erzurum, Van, Diyarbakır, Sivas, Bitlis, Harput.

<sup>261</sup> Arıburnu, Kemal, *Sivas Kongresi, Samsun'dan Ankara'ya Kadar Olaylar ve Anılarla*, Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi (AAM) yayınları, (Ankara,1997), p.63.

<sup>262</sup> Sonyel, Salahi, R., *Kurtuluş Savaşı Günleri'nde İngiliz İstihbarat Servisi'nin Türkiye'deki Eylemleri*, (Ankara,1995), p.41.

Temsiliye was to be gathered as soon as possible and to reach the goals which were set in the congresses.

The gathering of the Sivas Congress and the decisions taken concerning the whole country created significant repercussions in Turkey and in the world. While the Western states described the Anatolian national struggle as a rebellion, this movement was seen as a national and fair movement by especially French public opinion. These developments gave moral support to the Anatolian movement and national unity.<sup>263</sup>

## **2.7 Inter-Departmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs (10 October 1919) and the Evaluation of the Conference**

In the document registered in the British archives as of 10<sup>th</sup> of October 1919, a meeting was held by the Ministries to discuss the Middle East Affairs.<sup>264</sup> When the minutes of the meeting are analysed, the emphasis is on re-evaluating the idea of reshaping the Kurdish policy of Britain, which was decided should be discussed after the Egyptian Expeditionary Force Commander Lord Allenby returned to London. It was determined that this request for re-evaluation was based on two main reasons.

- 1) Due to the treaty between Britain and France, Britain needed to retreat from the region from the right of the River of Euphrates to Habur, from Jagjag Su to Erad valley, from the shores of Tigris of Cezire Bin Omar and from Til to the right of River Tigris.
- 2) The region, as reported by Major Noel and Colonel Bell who visited the regions where the Kurds live, was outside the borders of the lands the British have occupied in Syria and Iraq in 1919. Mustafa Kemal Pasha and his troops had prevented them from advancing causing them to postpone their expedition to a future date.

With these two reasons in mind, the first matter to be resolved concerning British policies for the Kurds was the discussion for moving the British troops to the

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<sup>263</sup>Öztoprak, İzzet, *Kurtuluş Savaşı'nda Türk Basını (Mayıs 1919-Temmuz 1921)*, (Ankara,1981), p.100.

<sup>264</sup> PRO, FO 371/4198, *Inter-Departmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs*, 139292.

western regions, and according to the minutes of the meeting, it was stated that this situation is not clear. In the minutes of the meeting, the issue concerning the French retreating to their mandate is not clarified, and it is emphasized that it would be necessary to abandon the idea to found an autonomous Kurdish state in this region, if a decision to retreat to the west of this line is made.

It was decided that the Armenians would be the main factor in determining Kurdish policy, and policies should be established in accordance with the Armenian factor. In the reports it was also suggested that how the future of Kurdistan and Armenia would be reshaped.

It was stated that a decision was made in previous meetings held on the determination of the borders of Mesopotamia and Kurdistan, on limiting the financial expenses on the works on the Kirkuk railroad construction, if necessary. The grounds for this reason are that the British would not benefit from the railroad reaching Mosul but instead from the railroad traveling the desired route. However, one of the most important issues concerning the matter was to determine what kind of a solution would be found for the expansion of British influence in the region called Kurdistan, based on the determination of the route of this railroad. The importance of analysing this matter in detail was well-known.

It is seen in the reports that the Mesopotamian Civil Government Commissioner Arnold Talbot Wilson proposed the idea of establishing an autonomous Kurdish state around the regions where Arabs live in Mosul, under the leadership of the Kurds and the supervision of a British consultant. However, it was stated that the British authorities have not yet reached a decision concerning this suggestion and it was emphasized that the matter of whether this construction will reach Iran's borders should first be considered when making this decision.

In addition to all the suggestions made, the peace delegation in Paris should consider whether the issue concerning the Assyrian immigrants who should be returned to the Amedia region in Bakuba, should be analysed in detail. Based on the correspondence of the Ministry of War, it was a question of if the Assyrians, as planned, were brought to this region, chaos would reign and public order would be harmed.

Also, the decision stands out that the officers of India and the Foreign Office should be the key decision makers concerning the policies to be followed in regions under British dominance. In the meeting, the importance of the British determining their own policies for their own interests, before a decision was made at the Paris Conference, was emphasized.

It can be seen that in the final hours of the meeting some correspondence from the Istanbul High Commissioner's Office were examined. For example, it was stated that the Istanbul High Commissioner's Office expressed in the telegram dated 10<sup>th</sup> of September Serif Pasha were not a good candidate for governing Kurdistan and that a similar telegram had also been sent by the Baghdad Civil Government to the Office of the Indian Commissioner and the Indian Commissioner's Office had informed the Foreign Office of this telegram on 13<sup>th</sup> of September.

It can be observed from the minutes that the Egyptian Expeditionary Force presented their opinion on the region called Kurdistan on 15<sup>th</sup> of September 1919, and they emphasized that the issue concerning the region called Western Kurdistan should be considered seriously. Looking at the minutes, it is possible to conclude that it was expected that this situation would cause serious conflicts with the Kurds and a warning was made as the natural outcome of these conflicts would mean an increase in the quantity of troops and in the budget allocated to Mesopotamia. It was also briefly suggested by Major Noel that in the opinion of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, instead of including these regions in the state of Mesopotamia, it would be more favourable to include them within the borders of a Kurdish-Armenian state.<sup>265</sup>

As far as the minutes are concerned, a telegram was received from the Office of the Istanbul High Commissioner on 18<sup>th</sup> of September 1919.<sup>266</sup> In this telegram, the Istanbul High Commissioner stated that the reason why several Kurdish leaders were assigned to the area under the supervision of Major Noel was to improve their interaction with the various peoples in the region. However, he argued that they have

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<sup>265</sup> PRO, FO 371/4192, From Egyptian Expeditionary Force ,Doc. 136674.

<sup>266</sup> PRO, FO 371/4192, "From High Commissioner To Baghdad and Foreign Office", 18 September 1919, Doc. 137252.

deviated from the target and this has caused the understanding that Britain was on the point of directing the Kurdish national movement, and the people of Anatolia began to perceive Britain as a country, whose main purpose was to found a Kurdish state under British dominance. Due to this situation, the Istanbul High Commissioner suggested the British government should revise their Kurdish policy based on the latest developments of that time.

It can be observed in the meeting, that a telegram was sent by the Baghdad Civil Government to the Indian Office on 18<sup>th</sup> of September 1919 conveying that there were serious problems in the region called Kurdistan, especially in the Erbil region. Also, another telegram sent by British officers in Istanbul on 20<sup>th</sup> of September 1919 suggested that before the idea of an independent Kurdistan was assessed, the idea of establishing a front in Mesopotamia, within the scope of British policies, should be analysed. After this issue had been settled, it was emphasized that it would be important to focus on this region called Kurdistan for the interests of Britain.<sup>267</sup>

In the telegram sent by the office of Istanbul High Commissioner on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1919, it was stated that Damat Ferid Pasha suggested assigning certain Kurdish leaders to important Kurdish regions, especially to Diyarbakir, and the opinion of Baghdad Civil Government was requested. On the same day, concerning the opinion requested from the Istanbul Government, Baghdad Civil Government stated that Damat Ferid Pasha needed to gain the diplomatic support of the British government; however, they did not believe that sending Serif Pasha to the region would be helpful and the Babanzade family would be a better option for this mission. It was expressed that Babanzade family was suggested because they knew the region and it was believed that they would adapt easily if the government in Istanbul was to change.

During the meeting a telegram from the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, received on 3 October 1919, was analysed. The Egyptian Expeditionary Force stated that no Kurdish land should be in Mesopotamia otherwise it would be inevitable that

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<sup>267</sup> PRO, FO 371/4198, Inter-Departmental Conference , No: 139292

a situation similar to the problems faced on the north-western region of India would ensue and military troops would have to be assigned to this region.<sup>268</sup>

If this meeting is analysed in detail, it can be seen that British still had not decided on their policies on the region even in October, 1919. This perspective of reviewing alternatives, at the heart of their foreign policy, can be observed from the telegrams and reviews sent from Baghdad, Istanbul and Cairo.

## **2.8 Turkish-British Talks after Paris Conference (November 1919)**

The British authorities held talks with Turkish officials after the Paris Peace Conference. The most important of them was the meeting that was held between Andrew Ryan from the Istanbul High Commission and the Turkish Foreign Minister Reşid Pasha in November 1919.<sup>269</sup> The meeting was important because Reşid Pasha was given important information in it about British policy.

During the meeting Ryan informed Reşid Pasha about Britain's Kurdish policy. Ryan tried to compensate for misunderstandings because of Major Noel's being in Malatya. According to Ryan, when Major Noel was in Malatya, as a result of a bad coincidence, he came across Governor of Elazığ Ali Galip Bey<sup>270</sup> who was charged to carry out a raid on the Sivas Congress and to eliminate Mustafa Kemal and the Turkish National Struggles leaders. The Turkish authorities took advantage of the meeting of Bedirhans who were with Noel and Ali Galip and commanded the arrest of the Bedirhans and Major Noel. But this was unacceptable because according to Ryan the telegrams sent from Diyarbakır about Noel's intention to found Kurdistan were all nonsense. Ryan asserted that Major Noel's relation with the Kurds stems from his companionship. His duty was not propaganda, as was claimed by Turkish authorities, it was only research. Ryan also mentioned exactly after the ceasefire that the High Commissioner would be equidistant to all groups not only to Kurds. As he indicated, England saw Kurdish people as a different race whether they

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<sup>268</sup> PRO, FO 371/4198, Inter-Departmental Conference , No: 139292.

<sup>269</sup> PRO, FO 371/4193, Memorandum, 27 November 1919, No: 163681.

<sup>270</sup> PRO, FO 251/93, Personalities In Kurdistan, June 1919, p.113.



accepted their different race or acted along with the Turkish people. The future of the people in that region would be determined the same way as other nations were determined. The will of the people in that region was not certain, because the British government did not have a clear picture about this. Ryan claimed that the problem of Kurdistan was important to England because Kurds were important, and the importance of Kurds stemmed from their being on a military border and their being close to Syria which had been invaded some days before. British interest in Kurds would continue into the future too. The reason for their concern for Kurds was because of British interests in Iraq. According to Ryan it should be understood from the actions that were seemingly for the benefit of the Kurds were actually the British officials misusing Kurds for their own country's profit. These actions of the British should not be seen as a counter attack against a national movement. While saying this Ryan emphasized that this policy was valid only for that time and in the future England would change this policy. According to Ryan England was not a decision maker or authority. British officials were listening to each group in order to create a British policy. The Kurdish problem would cause real challenges for England, because there was no one who would represent all the regions the Kurds inhabited. Ryan also indicated in the meeting that Britain did not want to divide Turkey. The reason for Turkey's misunderstanding of British policy by Turkish government stemmed from the perception that Britain supported the minorities in their actions.

The veracity of the information given by Ryan in this meeting should be a matter of suspicion. If the explanations he made were true, there would be many questions without an answer such as; what were the reasons for British officers' close relations with the Kurds and for their paying them salaries? Did the reason for British travellers and officials carrying out detailed research about Kurds just originate from curiosity? Was it just a coincidence that Major Noel was seen with separatist groups in the region? If the reason Ryan held the meeting was to prevent the adverse reaction of the Ottoman Empire, he made a serious miscalculation. In fact, the real reaction would not come from İstanbul; it would come from Anatolia by Mustafa Kemal.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> ATASE, ISH, Box: 30, Folder:14, Doc. 14-1.

## **2.9 The Foreign Office Meeting to Determine Kurdish Policy (22 November 1919)**

Several meetings were held in London concerning the matter after the correspondence between Baghdad and the Indian Office. The telegram sent by the Foreign Office on 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 1919 to the Baghdad Civil Government lists the principles of British Kurdish policy as follows;<sup>272</sup>

1. Due to military and policy related reasons, the borders of Mesopotamia should be as limited as possible,
2. As it is not possible to complete a military operation beyond the borders of Mesopotamia, this situation needs to be considered,
3. The British government shall not agree to any kind of protectorate in the region called Kurdistan under any circumstances,
4. If a protectorate is suggested for the Armenians, the borders of this state should not reach Mesopotamia.
5. The Turks will not be allowed to dominate the Kurds.

It is understood that the British Foreign Office's and Major Noel's suggestions concerning these five items, on keeping the Turks out of the region called Kurdistan, to avoid segregation in the region and to shape the border between Arabs and Kurds according to an ethnological determination should be evaluated carefully. It was also noted that according to Major Noel, the Kurds would be victorious against the Turks with minimal support.<sup>273</sup>

In this letter from the British Foreign Office, it was clear that they were seriously concerned about the activities of the Turks. The reason for that was the belief of the British officers of the Department of the State that if Turkish propaganda was not prevented, not only the region called the Southern Kurdistan but the area all the way to Iran could be under the influence of Turks. Actually, this letter is extremely important. The Foreign Office seems as if it was afraid of a country that

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<sup>272</sup> PRO, FO 371/4193, From Admiral De Robeck To Political Baghdad and Foreign Office, 7 November 1919, No: 149336.

<sup>273</sup> Gavan, *Kurdistan: Divided*, p.31.

was compared to a "sick man", and whose defence forces were taken away with the Armistice of Mondros. Despite Damat Ferid Pasha's works in Istanbul in favour of British policies, there was concern that the region could fall under the influence of the Turks, and this indicates that the spirit of the Turkish National Movement and maybe even the spirit of Ottomanism was still alive.

It is that the British Foreign Office made certain suggestions to prevent the expansion of Turkish influence. These suggestions may be outlined as follows;<sup>274</sup>

- Kirkuk and Altun Kopri should remain on the British side,
- The region from Erbil to north of Mosul and Cezri bin Omar should be left to the Kurds.
- The foundation of an autonomous state in the region called Kurdistan is both practical and applicable; however an adjustment to the borders in the Mesopotamia region should be considered.
- The adjustment made should not include the Assyrians.
- In the northern region of the Kurdish settlement, the Bedirhan family should be in a strong position.
- Commercial relations should be established between the Sulaymaniyah region and Baghdad, considering the economic and strategic importance of the region.
- If the region called Kurdistan were to be recognized as an autonomous state in unity both economically and geographically, it would not be difficult to build good relations with the local Sheikhs.
- As the fulfilment of the above mentioned conditions would give rein to the construction of the railroad between Kizil Road to Kirkuk, Tigris to Mosul and Fatha to Kirkuk, British dominance could be achieved in a faster and more effective manner.
- Erbil regional government would be shaped easily as required.

In this telegram sent by the Foreign Office, many aspects of the suggestions made by Major Noel stand out. The most important ones of these are the request to

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<sup>274</sup> PRO, FO.371/4193, From Admiral De Robeck to Political Baghdad and Foreign Office, 7November 1919.

exclude the Turks completely, to ensure that the Kurdish people stay united and to base the borders on ethnological elements.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 1919, Noel made three proposals on Kurdistan.<sup>275</sup> According to him, the Turkish government had to be removed out of Kurdistan; Kurdistan must not split; and the border has to be determined in accordance with the ethnological border between the Kurds and Arabs as much as possible. Major Noel's proposal faced serious protests because it contained handicaps that could not be seen as acceptable; notably, by Arnold Talbot Wilson as well as by the Baghdad Administration and the Indian Administration.<sup>276</sup> The most important of these handicaps originated from the fact that Mosul and Kirkuk, where oil resources, would be given to the Kurds according to Noel's proposal. Lord Curzon was seen to be the strongest supporter of Talbot Wilson, who reported these handicaps to London. Noel's proposal was not accepted as he could not win the support he needed from Wilson and Curzon. However, within this process, Noel enforced the orders successfully in relation to continuing studying the Kurds and developing bilateral relations. Arnold Talbot Wilson, while explaining the drawbacks about Major Noel's plans asserted that Diyarbakir, Nusaybin and Urfa should definitely be kept out of the Mesopotamian State (Iraq) formed under British Mandate.<sup>277</sup> Also he stated that autonomous states could be established in Sulaymaniyah, Revanduz, and Cezire bin Omer which formed the borders of the above-mentioned state; however, he believed that these places should not be within Mesopotamia.

In the letter sent by Major Noel, the emphasis on ethnological borders is based on the relations of Kurds with Arabs. Major Noel, who lived among the Kurds for a significant amount of time, believed that they would not agree to be under Arab

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<sup>275</sup> PRO, FO 371/4193, From Secretary of State To Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, 22 November 1919, No:157955,p.1.; Sheppard, E. W.,Some Military Aspects Of The Mesopotamia Problem, *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society*, V.8, No.1,1921, p.22. An ethnographic map of Kurdish region may be found in Appendix 2.

<sup>276</sup> Gorgas, Jordi Tejel, 'Urban Mobilization in Iraqi Kurdistan during The British Mandate: Sulaimaniya 1918–30', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.44, No. 4, 2008, p.538.

<sup>277</sup> McDowall, *Modern History*, p.175.

dominance and expressed this opinion not only in this letter but in many letters. In fact, Major Noel is not the only officer expressing this concern. Western newspapers published much news on the relations between the Kurds and the Arabs.<sup>278</sup> For example in the article published in *The Times* on 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 1919, it was stated that Britain was responsible for including the region from Mosul to Hanikin and Sulaymaniyah in Iran and defined the borders with a perspective similar to that of Major Noel; based on ethnological characteristics.

The aforementioned opinions of Major Noel were protested against in a telegram sent by A. Talbot Wilson from Baghdad to the India Office on 26<sup>th</sup> of November 1919, and considered unacceptable. As the discussions went on, the India Office held a meeting in London on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1919 and the delegates attempted to reach a decision considering the borders of the state of Iraq. In this meeting, Sir A. H. Hirtzel argued that Sulaymaniyah could be governed under British supervision and the region between two Zap rivers could be managed with a council. In addition to that, a suggestion was made to exclude Revanduz from all of these structures and to assign the Bedirhan family for the government of the Cizre region. Talbot Wilson objected to this suggestion and stated that the regions of Zaho and Akra should be included in the state of Iraq. In response to this objection, Major Noel emphasized the fact that Zaho and Akra were Kurdish settlements and that they should not be part of Iraq.<sup>279</sup>

On 8<sup>th</sup> of December 1919 Sayyid Abdulkadir met Hohler at the office of the İstanbul High Commissioner, and repeated his request to establish an autonomous Kurdistan. But apparently Hohler states that he would not be able to make a commitment on behalf of the British government.<sup>280</sup> However, in order not to create a negative atmosphere he made a speech such as to promise that the British government would support Kurdish rights at the Paris Peace Conference. Sayyid Abdulkadir claimed that an agreement had been made between Kurds and Armenians in İstanbul. But on the following day Hohler met with Armenian notables and he was

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<sup>278</sup> *The Lethbridge Daily Herald*, 'Create New State For Mesopotamia', 15 June 1921, p.10.

<sup>279</sup> Gavan, *Kurdistan: Divided*, p.32.

<sup>280</sup> PRO. FO.371/4193, Kurdish-Armenian Relations, No:165708, 9 December 1919.

informed that no agreement made between the Armenian notables and Kürt Teali Cemiyeti because of the divergence among the Kurds.<sup>281</sup>

Admiral De Robeck sent a telegram to Lord Curzon on 9<sup>th</sup> of December 1919.<sup>282</sup> According to the Admiral the Kurds pinned their hopes for independency upon England. Because of that, the impact of the results of the determined policy on British interests in the region had to be well calculated. In the Admiral's telegram, there was no information relating to the Armenian State. This is probably because they were waiting for decision of the U.S as whether to accept the protection of the Armenian State.

An event that may be commented on as a reflection of Curzon's anxieties in the context of Mosul-Kirkuk manifested itself on 23<sup>rd</sup> of December 1919, in his negotiations with the French in London. In the meeting, the subject of sharing the territories left over from the Ottoman Empire was discussed and whether the regions with dense populations of Kurds should be open to Turkish influence or not on the condition of being under the control of a British Mandatory in Iraq.<sup>283</sup>

In the meeting Curzon was unsure about the Kurdish lands which were under the Turkish domination, but according to him it was not right to separate these regions into population zones. Curzon claimed that it was hard to decide about the borders of the region to be established as Kurdistan before determining the borders of the Mosul province and South Kurdistan. In addition to this, Curzon listed the issues needed to be paid attention to the British and French consensus.

According to Curzon,<sup>284</sup> it was not possible for the entire region called Kurdistan to gain mandatory status whether it be only a British mandate or French mandate or a common mandate between the British and French, for the region called South Kurdistan must be excluded. Although it was rational to sustain a symbolic Turkish government in the region called as Kurdistan, but no compromises would be

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<sup>281</sup> Perinçek, *Kurtuluş Savaşında*, p.44.

<sup>282</sup> FO 371/4193, 1426.

<sup>283</sup> Bulut, Sedef, *Paris Konferansı'nda Şerif Paşa'nın Faaliyetleri ve Doğu Anadolu Ahalisinin Durumu*, (Ankara, 1998), p.53.

<sup>284</sup> Şimşir, *Kürtçülük*, p.400.

made. The Kurds could not be considered as independent in Armenia. Kurds must be left free to have their own government or establish loosely connected small regions. According to Curzon, if Turkish interference with the Kurds were prevented, the Kurds could be free to make their own choices.<sup>285</sup> Kurds must be secured against Turkish attacks but they must not officially be assigned French or British counsellors.<sup>286</sup>

## 2.10 Declaration of the National Pact (28 January 1920)

The National Pact that would be the main objective of the ‘National Struggle’ covered the Ottoman borders when the Mondros Armistice was signed. During the National Pact negotiations, the Erzurum and Sivas Congress decisions were adopted in the Ottoman Parliament. Thus, the boundaries of the national and indivisible Turkish homeland were drawn definitely. Moreover, in the treaties with foreign states, the acceptance of the National Pact would be a precondition. After identifying the decisions of the National Pact, it was announced that it would be possible to hold a referendum to determine the legal status of Kars, Ardahan, Artvin, Batum and Western Thrace. Furthermore, it was accepted that the future of Arab lands would be determined by the votes of the people living there. Although this decision would cause the danger of establishing an Armenian State in the region, the idea of the Mustafa Kemal was different. It can be claimed that General Harbord’s investigations were taken as a reference by the National Forces leaders to prove the population of the East Anatolia was predominantly of the Turks.<sup>287</sup> According to the report of Harbord there was no Armenian majority anywhere and anytime in the region. In this context, the National Pact’s decisions<sup>288</sup> showed that the Anatolian

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<sup>285</sup> Perinçek, Kurtulus Savası’nda, p.39.

<sup>286</sup> Aybars, Ergün, ‘Milli Mücadele’de İngiliz Basını’, *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi*, Vol.IV, No:12. (Ankara,1988), p.635.

<sup>287</sup> Mustafa Kemal and General Harbord had a meeting on 20th September 1919. Tevetoğlu, Fethi, ‘Milli Mücadele’de Mustafa Kemal Paşa- General Harbord Görüşmesi’, *Türk Kültürü*, VII, No:76,p.260

<sup>288</sup> Its six articles can be listed as; "The future of the territories inhabited by an Arab majority at the time of the signing of the Armistice of Mondros will be determined by a referendum. On the other hand, the territories which were not occupied at that time and inhabited by a Turkish majority are the homeland of the Turkish nation. The status of Kars, Ardahan and Batum may be determined by a referendum. The status of Western Thrace will be determined by the votes of its inhabitants. The

movement would not allow the establishment of an Armenian or Kurdish state under any circumstances in Anatolia.

### **2.11 Report of Garbett on the Kurds (30 January 1920)<sup>289</sup>**

Mr. C.C. Garbett, in his report on 30<sup>th</sup> of January 1920, provided further information on Kurdish activities; that representatives from both the Ittihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti and the Istanbul Kurdish Party met with Şerif Pasha in Switzerland in the second week of January. Furthermore, he stated that these representatives also organised meetings with Sayyid Taha, Simko and other Kurdish leaders in the region defined as Kurdistan. If this information is correct it means a significant point had been reached with regard to procuring the cooperation of the Kurds.

Garbett, who defined the determination of a Kurdistan policy as a vital requirement, and suggested that the idea of establishing the anticipated Kurdish state in the north should be closely pursued, considering the issues mentioned above. Garbett also recommended that Urfa and Diyarbakır stay under French dominance; Southern Kurdistan, the region to the south of Zab, needed to be under British authority; and Central Kurdistan should be established in the remaining region up to the Iranian border. According to him, the realisation of the formation anticipated in this plan would please the Kurds with regard to the Iranian border. Garbett claimed that the most contentious issue would be the definition of the Armenian border; however, the agreement of Şerif Pasha and Boghos Nubar Pasha in Paris would be the key instrument in resolving the issue.

Garbett asserted that if his recommendations were to be accepted by the British government, this would result in a Treaty, and, after imposing this upon the French government, this would provide the Kurds with an opportunity to build their own administration and system within the defined geography.

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security of Constantinople and Marmara should be provided for. Transport and free-trade on the Straits of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles will be determined by Turkey and other concerned countries. The rights of minorities will be issued on condition that the rights of the Muslim minorities in neighboring countries are protected. In order to develop in every field, the country should be independent and free; all restrictions on political, judicial and financial development will be removed."

<sup>289</sup> PRO, FO 371/5067, Note By Mr.C.C.Garbett, 30 January 1920, pp.117-119.



For Garbett, although the dream of the Kurds Party was to capture the administration of Central Kurdistan with the help of a foreign state, this was impossible. He claimed that the future of the Kurds living in the region he defined as Kurdistan would take different paths; however it would become an inseparable part of a whole. According to him, each Kurdish state would maintain good relations with their neighbours, after defining their own territories and they need to limit the influence of the dominant states where the Kurds lived, and thus the central Kurdish government would be established by itself.

The Kurds considered this aforementioned plan dangerous. Just as Major Noel did, Garbett, too, exercised the right to speak on behalf of the Kurds and asserted that the Kurds were afraid that they would lose their lands when the Turkish State's lands were shared by Allied Powers. Again, according to Garbett, the Kurds wished for a united Kurdistan under the protection of an external power. Their desire was so powerful that, they longed for a united Kurdistan even if it was under a powerless Turkish dominance. According to the Kurds who thought that the foundation of a united Kurdistan would provide the Kurds with self-expression, the system to be formed by the British was threatening the ideal of a single and united Kurdistan.<sup>290</sup>

In his report, Garbett claimed that the Kurdish groups had two aims. These were the recognition of the Kurdish nation, and protection for the Kurds whose governance was still in its infancy. This nationalism was built, not on the relation between the south and the region called central Kurdistan, but on the assurance of continuity and communication between Urfa and Diyarbakır. The dream of the Kurds was the foundation of a central government which controlled the tribes and gave them quite broad rights in their own territories, but this was to be administered via an external power. According to Garbett's claim, the Kurds knew that neither the British nor the French would take on this kind of responsibility. Their abstaining from such a responsibility could cause the idea of a united Kurdistan to stagnate and die. According to Garbett, the Kurds wished for a united Kurdistan under the protection of an external power. According to the Kurds who thought that the foundation of a

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<sup>290</sup> PRO, FO 371/5067, Note By Mr.C.C.Garbett, pp.117-119.

united Kurdistan would provide the Kurds with self-rule, the system to be formed by the British threatened the ideal of a single and united Kurdistan.

As Garbett reported,<sup>291</sup> the Turks offered the Kurds an autonomous Kurdistan system under the Ottoman sultanate, where the Kurdish representatives would take their places in the assembly. In this offer, it was anticipated that the administrators, the gendarmerie forces and civil servants would comprise the Kurds. It was decided that a fair amount of the income obtained would be spent for Kurdistan, and a small amount would be sent to the central government of the Ottoman Empire. The Kurds, while being free to accept foreign consultants from other states for some particular matters, the system to be formed would still remain an absolutely inseparable part of the Turkish Empire. According to Garbett, if the aforementioned plan was supported by the United Kingdom, the Turks promised to quickly repress the rebellions that had started to emerge against the British. Garbett stated that the Turks thought that, in this way, the anti-British movement, not only in the region but also in India, would be significantly reduced.

In the present situation, even though the opinions of the Allied Powers favoured founding an independent Kurdistan, the Kurds continued their plots together with the Turks. Garbett claimed that there would be severe problems with border security, as in the example of the murder of the five British officers. So, in a sense, Garbett did not trust the Kurds.

According to Garbett, Britain should accept that the region, defined as Kurdistan, should no longer be left to Turkish administration. He indicated that this acceptance required the immediate recognition of the Kurdish nation and the determination of a policy to be followed in the future; and especially emphasised that it was not possible for the British to establish an administration in the region defined as Central Kurdistan, without spending money and men.<sup>292</sup>

It is seen that Garbett discussed the details of the system to be established if his predictions came true. According to him, the official language of the Kurdish

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<sup>291</sup> PRO, FO 371/5067, Note By Mr.C.C.Garbett, pp.117-119

<sup>292</sup> PRO, FO 371/5067, Note By Mr.C.C.Garbett, pp.117-119

state formation should be Kurdish; the rights of the minorities should be protected; and a democratic establishment should be aimed at by forming Kurdish gendarmerie forces with local officers. Parallel to these developments, first the Kurds should be encouraged and when they had the power to form a confederation, France should allow the establishment of this union.

Garbett thought that the suggested solution would absolutely be accepted by the Kurds; and the French would not object to these recommendations since economic concessions would be granted to them. However, he indicated that the largest obstacle to this schedule to be realised was slow action. He emphasized the necessity for quick action since the spread of Turkish activities among the Kurds was also rapid. There could not be a more appropriate period for these recommendations to be realised; and he claimed if it was missed such an opportunity would not become available again.<sup>293</sup>

When the document is analysed in detail, it is seen that some of the recommendations contradicted the recommendations made by Major Noel, and some of them overlapped with his. Against the recommendation made by Major Noel, that major money and men losses would be prevented by the establishment of a central structure and by utilising the local leaders of the region he defined as Kurdistan, Garbett promoted the idea that it was impossible to realise these recommendations without spending money and men. However, a consensus, between Garbett and Major Noel, was achieved about the significance of the recognition of the Kurdish identity in the establishment of this structure. Although different opinions were asserted about these issues, it can be seen that some measure of Kurdish autonomy was in Britain's interests in the region.

In the meantime, related to the negotiations made with the Kurds Admiral De Robeck relayed the details of interviews between him and some Kurdish leaders who introduced themselves as sole arbiters on behalf of the Kurds in the telegram he sent to Lord Curzon on 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 1920.<sup>294</sup> As it can be understood from the

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<sup>293</sup> PRO, FO 371/4193, From Vansittart To The Lord Hardinge of Penshurst , 30 January 1920.

<sup>294</sup> PRO, FO 371/5067, From Admiral de Robeck To The Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., P.C., 3 February 1920, No: E-261, p. 109-111.

document in the meeting the issue of relations between Kurds and Armenians was discussed. When Admiral de Robeck stated the necessity to fix the problematic Kurdish - Armenian relations, the Kurdish committee had at first showed negative reaction.

When Robeck mentioned the Paris Peace negotiations on establishing independent Kurdish and Armenian states in the Ottoman territory, the reaction of the Kurds changed. The Kurdish committee asserted that the Kurds had no problems with the Armenians and the Kurdish- Armenian relations were at an extremely satisfactory level. The Kurds stated that they would not object to being the neighbor of the Armenians. Şerif Pasha was asked about his ability to represent Kurds in Paris and his brother, who was on the committee, declared that there was no reaction (in the areas where the Kurds lived intensely), against Şerif Pasha for being representative of the Kurds. The delegation stated that they did not want to live together with the Turks anymore. It is claimed that, the reason of the some Kurds being loyal to Turks was to fend off the Turkish pressure. The committee also claimed that they have more influence than the caliph on the Kurds.<sup>295</sup> As Webb detected successfully, at that time the influence of the representatives of the Kurdish separatist movement on the Kurds and the influence of the caliphate could not be compared. As it can be seen in the other British reports<sup>296</sup> the Ottoman caliph had much more influence than the Kurdish separatist movement leaders on the Kurds.

It can be claimed that this group was far from being sole spokesmen on behalf of the Kurds, because they were not even represented in the Kürt Teali Cemiyeti in Istanbul. The reaction of Sayyid Abdulkadir can be shown as a proof of that claim. Sayyid Abdulkadir, referring to the enmity between the Kurds and Armenians, stated his opposition to the declaration which was issued by Şerif Pasha and Boghos Nubar Pasha in February 1920. Sayyid Abdulkadir stated that such an agreement was unacceptable when 500,000 Kurdish were killed and expressed that they wanted an autonomous structure, although they were brothers with the Turks.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> PRO, FO 371/5044, The Situation In Turkey, 15th March 1920, March 1920, No: E-1917, p. 86.

<sup>296</sup> PRO.FO.371/5044, The Situation in Turkey, 15th March 1920, March 1920, E-1917, p.86

<sup>297</sup> Natali , Denise, *The Kurds and The State : Evolving National Identity in Iraq, Turkey and Iran*, Syracuse University, (USA,2005); Natali, Denise, 'Ottoman Kurds And Emergent Kurdish Nationalism', *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*,V.13,2004,p.386; Strohmeier, Martin, *Crucial Images In The Presentation of A Kurdish National Identity, Heroes And Patriots, Traitors And Foes*, Brill, (Boston, 2003),p.68.

A report was prepared on the security of Christians living in Turkey on 11<sup>th</sup> of March 1920.<sup>298</sup> In the report the information about Sayyid Abdulkadir and Kurds was shared. Kurds and Armenians came to an agreement in December 1919 on the establishment of a non- nationalist autonomous structure under the leadership of Sayyid Abdulkadir. That came to mean that the plans of the Kurds, who were thinking to act in concert with Turks, failed.

But interestingly, the information which Hohler shared with London, on the non-existence of such an agreement as mentioned above, had not been mentioned in this session. It can be claimed that it has two possible purposes. The first one is to keep the expectation that 'Kurds and Armenians would find the lowest common denominator' alive; the second one is to prevent the tendency of Kurdish interest towards Muslim Turks with whom they have lived together peacefully for years. In addition to the above given information it was indicated that Sayyid Abdulkadir had visited the İstanbul Embassies of America, England and France many times during the Paris Peace Conference, and negotiated with them on the creation of a self-governing Kurdistan, but he was not given much support, except by Britain.<sup>299</sup>

Curzon saw only the Turks as erroneous and he wanted a policy which secured Kurds without assigning counsellors to them and without detracting from their roles in British policy. The basis for Curzon's decisions was the Mosul-Kirkuk oil fields but this was perfectly camouflaged. However, the most interesting parts in Curzon's post were his commands to secure the Kurds and his emphasis that Kurdistan and Armenian issues must not be assessed as independent from each other.

These suggestions and ideas of Curzon's were discussed on 13<sup>th</sup> of April 1920 in the Interdepartmental Middle Eastern Affairs Committee meeting. In this meeting, Curzon, who criticised Talbot Wilson, clearly stated that the promise of Kurdistan for Kurds must be postponed completely. Curzon said that postponement of the Kurdistan issue did not mean Iran and Turk dominance over the region as Wilson

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<sup>298</sup> PRO, FO 371/5043, Position of Christian Inhabitants of Turkey, 11 March 1920, No: 1714, p.241.

<sup>299</sup> Hakan Özoglu, 'Nationalism And Kurdish Notables In The Late Ottoman–Early Republican Era', *Int. J. Middle East Studies*, V. 33, 2001, p. 396.

thought, and as a matter of fact England would not have enough financial power to sustain its invasion in Iraq. In the meeting both the ideas of Curzon and Wilson were discussed and in order to find a middle way, R. Vansittart's suggestions which would form the basis of Articles 62<sup>nd</sup>, 63<sup>rd</sup> and 64<sup>th</sup> of the Sèvres Treaty in the future were accepted.<sup>300</sup>

## 2.12 Report of William Rupert Hay

Hay, who worked in Mendeli, Koi Sanjaq and Erbil as a deputy political officer and political officer between the years 1918 and 1920, published his memories about this period in 1921 in London with the title *Two Years in Kurdistan*.<sup>301</sup>

He believed Kirkuk to be the main region where the Turkish population was high and stated that the Turkish population in Kirkuk was around 30,000 before World War I.<sup>302</sup> This information is important because it verifies the general Turkish thesis on Mosul and Kirkuk. According to the Turkish annuals<sup>303</sup> the majority of the population in these regions was Turkish; so the region should be kept under the Turkish rule.

It is interesting Hay stated that the Turkish, Arabic and Persian states would be demolished once the Kurds unite.<sup>304</sup> Hay, who believed that the Kurds would not be able to live in a modern and democratic order, stated that the Kurds could only be managed by force.<sup>305</sup> I believe that if the information he provides on the warrior side of the Kurds is true, it would shed light on the importance of the military forces of the tribe. According to Hay, Kurds were guerrilla fighters and they were good at attacking military stations by ambush. When faced with a force that was equal or

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<sup>300</sup> PRO, FO 371/5068, Inter-Departmental Conference On Middle Eastern Affairs, No: E 3706, 13 April 1920, pp.190-196.

<sup>301</sup> Hay, William Rupert, *Two Years in Kurdistan*, (London,1921).

<sup>302</sup> Hay, *Two Years*, p.81.

<sup>303</sup> *Musul Vilayeti Salnamesi*, 1325/1907, p.212-213.

<sup>304</sup> Hay, *Two Years*, p.36.

<sup>305</sup> *The Manchester Guardian (1901-1959)*, 'War And Finance', (13 January 1922), p. 5.

higher in strength than theirs, they would show no resistance and run away to the mountains. The fact that they were ready to make peace after a short struggle and to continue fighting once they were back on their feet was a great advantage during the times of war.<sup>306</sup> Hay probably wanted to put emphasis on the warrior side of the Kurds by stated that unless the tools to keep the Kurds under control were in place, the Kurds could have become Britain's most dangerous enemy, as it was mentioned in many British reports.<sup>307</sup>

In Hay's report, there were certain suggestions concerning the determination of the British policy. Hay stated that if the required conditions were fulfilled, agriculture would improve and with efficient use of the water resources in the region, irrigated farming and thus cotton and sugar cane production would be possible. Furthermore, if methods of agriculture were to be improved the region's productivity would increase one hundred per cent, compared to previous years products by production.<sup>308</sup> Hay clearly provided these details for a reason. Thus, I believe that it is a fair assumption that Hay wanted to emphasize the high tax revenue that might be obtained by Britain in this region.

Rupert Hay, who met Major Noel on 7<sup>th</sup> of November 1919, stated that with Noel's assignment in the area and his orders concerning assigning Kurds to the positions previously occupied by the Turks being followed, the aim was for the Kurds to gain experience in government.

According to Hay, thanks to a general amnesty the relations between the Kurds and British would be strengthened to Britain's benefit. In order to be favoured in the region, certain activities such as improving the poorhouses in various provinces, putting key personnel in the region on the payroll<sup>309</sup> including men of god and families of people who had died or were held captive in war, respecting the feelings of the people in the region on holidays and wishing them a merry holiday,

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<sup>306</sup> Hay, *Two Years*, p.75.

<sup>307</sup> Hay, *Two Years*, p.77.

<sup>308</sup> Hay, *Two Years*, p.107.

<sup>309</sup> Hay, *Two Years*, p.319.

and restoring religious student dorms in an attempt to be liked were carried out.<sup>310</sup> Here, it can be concluded that British administrators and managers who were aware of the importance of gaining the approval of the people in the region utilized all means to establish these fundamental aspects of British policy.

### **2.13 The Invasion of Istanbul and Abolishing of the Ottoman Chambers of Deputies (16-18 March 1920)**

The Ottoman Parliament was annulled on 21<sup>st</sup> of December 1918 by Sultan Vahdettin and new elections ordered in accordance with the demands of the British. At the end of the elections, the last Parliamentary Assembly could only hold its first meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> of January 1920.

With the gathering of the Ottoman Parliament, the Allied Powers thought that the national movement in Anatolia would be destroyed or be weakened. They also intended to facilitate the implementation of the peace treaty by controlling the parliament. However, the adoption of the National Pact by the representative committee (28th January 1920) would have nullified the expectations of the Treaty States. Then they started to pressurize the Istanbul government. Ali Riza Pasha, who could not stand this pressure, resigned on 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 1920. Ali Riza Pasha was replaced by Salih Pasha as the Grand Vizier. Sultan Vahdettin made it possible for all members of the government to be elected out of parliament, under the pressure of the Treaty of Agreements. 150 Ottoman intellectuals were arrested on 15<sup>th</sup> of March 1920 and then Istanbul was occupied by the Allied Powers on 16<sup>th</sup> of March 1920 and the Ottoman Parliament was by forcibly disbanded on 18<sup>th</sup> of March 1920 and parliament members were exiled to Malta.

The protest notes to the representatives of the Allied Powers in Istanbul, to the United States political representative, to the foreign ministries of the neutral states, to the parliaments of France, England and Italy were sent by Mustafa Kemal Pasha. It was announced that the communication between Anatolia and Istanbul were cut off. Sending of correspondence and even taxation to Istanbul was forbidden.

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<sup>310</sup> Sluglett, *Britain In Iraq*, p.63.



Financial funds and all money in the government offices were recorded and confiscated by the National Movement. It was ordered to capture the Ankara-Pozanti railway and to arrest foreign troops on that route and other foreign officers and soldiers who serve in Anatolia. Under the direction of this order, officially the head of the British Armistice Mission in Erzurum, Lieutenant Colonel Rawlinson, and about 20 English people accompanying him were arrested by Kâzım Karabekir Pasha.

## **2.14 San Remo Conference (19-26 April 1920)**

After World War I, an international conference was convened in San Remo, Italy between 19<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> April 1920 to share the Ottoman soil and to prepare the conditions of the Treaty of Sèvres to be signed with Turkey. The British Prime Minister Lloyd George, French Prime Minister Alexandre Millerand, Italian Prime Minister and representatives from Japan, Greece and Belgium participated in the conference. The conference discussed the sharing of the lands of the Ottoman Empire, which had come out of war defeated, and the sharing of the Middle Eastern oil; and the final form of the Treaty of Sèvres was determined.<sup>311</sup>

Prior to the gathering of the San Remo Conference, the focus was on the question of the sharing of Mesopotamian oil. This attitude proved that the great powers were trying to achieve the highest national interests, and they were also looking for a mandatory state, away from the political, military and economic difficulties of the Armenian question. The British, French and Italian representatives, acting in the hope of meeting in an agreed text, had the first session of the San Remo Conference on 18<sup>th</sup> of April 1920.

In the first meeting held in San Remo, Lloyd George suggested discussing the subject of Kurdistan.<sup>312</sup> Then Lord Curzon took the floor and said that the solution was very hard and the region was attractive for European states since it was near Armenia and related to Assyrian-i Keldani Christians. He also announced that South Kurdistan part of the Mosul province would be under the mandate of the Britain; the French and British governments would be able to patronize some parts of the country but neither state wanted to take this responsibility. According to him, it would be

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<sup>311</sup> *The Manchester Guardian (1901-1959)*, 'Mesopotamia: The British Mandate', 24 June 1920, p. 5.

<sup>312</sup> Butler, *Documents on* , p.43.

best to separate the country from the Turks and give autonomy to this country. Also Curzon stated that it was hard to foresee what the Kurds wanted and how they would provide a balance if they were given autonomy as a state, Curzon said that he personally understood the demands of Kurds; but following investigations in various places such as İstanbul and Baghdad, he claimed that it was not possible to find a Kurd whose representative credentials were widely accepted. According to him no Kurd would be able represent anyone except his own tribe. Even if Şerif Pasha volunteered himself as a representative of the Kurds, no one recognized him in this capacity. On the other hand, Curzon claimed that the Kurds give the impression that they could not survive without a powerful state behind them.

As Lord Curzon declared if Kurds did not accept the auspices of England or France, they would revert to the auspices of the Turks, and it would be hard for their region to be split from Turkey. Since Kurds lived in the mountainous areas which were in the Mosul province, the region in South of Kurdistan was important for British interests in the event of the establishment of an independent Kurdistan. The Kurds in Mosul would leave and be included in a newly founded Kurdistan.

At the end of the meeting this subject was left to be decided by England and France and they gave a break in the session in order to discuss the topic later.<sup>313</sup> When that session of the conference was over, 'Revised Article for Kurdistan' was prepared in the appendix of the meetings numbered 5.<sup>314</sup> This draft was accepted as articles 62, 63 and 64 of the Sèvres Treaty.

Another meeting was held in San Remo in order to implement a trilateral treaty to the mandatory region.<sup>315</sup> In this meeting the subjects generally related to 'South Kurdistan' and problems related to the Mosul province were handled. Lord Curzon said that they were ready to accept not referring to domains in Kurdistan in the trilateral meeting and for him the only region England would request would be Sulaymaniyah and its surroundings which were an unbreakable part of Mosul, and England would never claim economic privilege in any other part of Kurdistan. Lloyd George interrupted him and said that as a result of this situation England would never hold any responsibility for providing security in the region.

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<sup>313</sup> Meray, Seha, *Osman Olcay, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Çöküş Belgeleri*, (Ankara,1977), p.67.

<sup>314</sup> Butler, *Documents on* , p.44-45.

<sup>315</sup> Butler, *Documents on* , p.133.

Upon Barthelot's question about the British requests and what the North borders of the Mosul province would be, Curzon stated that these borders would be the most recent borders of the Mosul province.<sup>316</sup> This trilateral treaty, different from the one prepared in London, may be claimed to be prepared according to two assumptions. First, the autonomy of Kurdistan and second its being independent in the future.

It is mentioned in the introductory part of a very secret record of the trilateral treaty draft dated 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 1920 'states in question accepted the necessity of Kurdistan's being immediately or in the future independent and it would be better to clear away international competence for this issue in order to provide the necessary help this country will need in governance and to encourage development of this country.'<sup>317</sup> In contrast to this, as it can be understood from the context of the treaty, this draft was established on the basis of protecting the interests of the countries in the question and solving the problems between them. This draft had presented nothing more concrete than promises of support for a Kurdish State. According to the trilateral treaty accepted in the conference; west of Tigris was given to France in compliance with the Sykes Picot treaty.<sup>318</sup> Borders of Kurdistan were described as "East of Blue Region,<sup>319</sup> South of South border of Armenia<sup>320</sup> and North of North Iraq border. A Kurdistan autonomy plan was to be prepared by a commission to be gathered in İstanbul as it was later decided by provisions in the Sèvres Treaty. This plan was to include Nestorian and Keldani and other guarantees for saving other ethnicities and minorities in the region.

The Kurdistan borders determined in the Conference firstly excluded some Kurds in Iran and the North. The Kurds in the South, who did not want to join the Independent Kurdish State, would be excluded from the State's borders. Also it was declared in the conference transition from autonomy to independence was not a

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<sup>316</sup> Butler, *Documents on* , p.132.

<sup>317</sup> Meray, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun*, p.67-68.

<sup>318</sup> The map that shows the Anatolia and Mesopotamia regions in regard to the Sykes-Picot Agreement can be found in Appendix 1.

<sup>319</sup> The region stretching towards Yıldız Mountains of Sivas in the West of Tigris which is identified as French region.

<sup>320</sup> The border to divide mountainous region in South of Van Lake.

necessity. Finally, due to the common draft, Kurdistan would be divided into the three regions in regard to economic and political domains.<sup>321</sup>

Thus, the provisions relating to Kurdistan which appeared in the Sèvres Treaty, took their final version in the San Remo Conference. But these decisions were taken in fact under the effect of diplomatic cunning, implied words and recent conditions. On 24<sup>th</sup> of April 1920, Lord Curzon spoke to the Istanbul High Commissioner De Robeck during the Peace Treaty and stated that local autonomy plans were being drawn up for the regions where the Kurds were the majority.<sup>322</sup> After stating that it would be inappropriate to announce this to Damat Ferid Pasha and Sayyid Abdulkadir before the Turks, Curzon has explained that he was trying to avoid conflicts with the Kurds and if such a situation was to occur, Kurds would not refrain from killing each other. The concern here was the chaotic environment this situation would cause. Also it can be claimed that these decisions are known to have disappointed the Kurds, given their conception of Kurdistan. These decisions taken by allies may be claimed as the reason why Şerif Pasha decided to resign from representing the Kurds in the Paris Conference on almost exactly the same days.

In the San Remo Conference, it was decided that the Ottoman Empire should abdicate all her rights over Arab soil in Asia and North Africa, and an independent Armenia and an autonomous Kurdistan would be established. It was also decided for two A-type mandates to be established on the old Syrian lands of the Ottoman Empire, and Syria and Lebanon be left for French dominance and Palestine for British mandate. The A-type mandate administration anticipated that the states in question would be recognised as independent, and would stay under that mandate until they reached sufficient political maturity to self-govern.

Also, to gain French support, an oil convention was signed between Britain and France in the conference. With this convention, Mosul was ensured to be included in the British Mandate of Iraq, and a 25% share was to be given to France from Iraqi oil, and oil transportation conveniences to be provided.<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>321</sup> Lazarev, *Emperyalizm*, p.158, these parts can be found on Appendix 1.

<sup>322</sup> Potter, *The Persian*, p.197.

<sup>323</sup> Butler, Rohan, J.P.T.Bury, *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939*, Vol.VIII, (London,1958), Sonyel, Salahi , *Türk Kurtulus Savaşı ve Dış Politika*, TTK press, (Ankara,2003), p.75.

The most significant aspect of this convention for Britain was the inclusion of Mosul into the British Mandate of Iraq being established with the treaty, which had been thought to be left to France in the Sykes-Picot Treaty.<sup>324</sup> It can be claimed that, the London Conference in February 1920 and the San Remo Conference in April the same year provided the Kurds with autonomy before the Treaty of Sèvres.<sup>325</sup> This policy was later shaped with the Articles 62<sup>nd</sup> to 64<sup>th</sup> of the Treaty of Sèvres.<sup>326</sup>

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<sup>324</sup> *The Manchester Guardian (1901-1959)*, 'Critical Issues At San Remo: Allied Differences On Germany Still Unsettled Fate Of Armenia', 22 April 1920, p.9.

<sup>325</sup> *Cumhuriyet*, 'Lübnanlaşmak', 23 December 1992, p.5.

<sup>326</sup> The Articles 62 and 64 can be found on p.122-123.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE TURKISH GRAND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ERA (TGNA)

#### 3.1 Opening of the Turkish Grand Assembly (23 April 1920)

As mentioned before the National Pact had been adopted with unanimous approval in the Ottoman Parliament. The decisions of the National Pact were declared to public opinion on 17<sup>th</sup> February 1920. Ali Rıza Pasha's Cabinet was considered responsible for these developments and because of the pressure on him Ali Rıza Pasha resigned on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1920. After Ali Rıza Pasha's Cabinet, one of the short-lived governments, Salih Pasha's Government was formed on 8<sup>th</sup> March 1920. Salih Pasha was requested to condemn the National Forces but he had good relations with them therefore he did not want to condemn them. During his governance Istanbul was occupied by the Allied Powers on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1920 and most of the the Ottoman Parliament members were exiled to Malta.<sup>327</sup> Salih Pasha was unable to cope with pressure of both Ottoman Sultan and Allied Powers anymore so he resigned on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1920. Despite his apparent failure Salih Pasha has taken place in history as occupied capital city, whose resistance to the occupiers contributed significantly to the Turkish resistance process which resulted in the opening of the Turkish Grand National Assembly.<sup>328</sup>

On 5<sup>th</sup> April 1920, Damat Ferit Pasha's Government was formed. The Ottoman Parliament was officially closed on 11<sup>th</sup> of April 1920 by the sultan. Upon these developments, a new National Assembly was established in Ankara on 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 1920 with the participation of the deputies who could escape from the Ottoman

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<sup>327</sup> Orbay, Rauf, *Rauf Orbay'ın Hatıraları 1914-1945*, (Istanbul,2005), p. 265

<sup>328</sup> Göztepe, Tarık, Mümtaz, *Mütareke Gayyasında Vahideddin*, (Istanbul,1994), p. 262

Parliament raid. However, this parliament, which was established in Ankara, would not be able to use its representation for a long time and would not be accepted as a government agency by the Allied Powers.

Among the most important characteristics of the first period of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey is the fact that it has been operating under extraordinary conditions, it was a revolutionary council, and it was not based on the principle of separation of powers. Mustafa Kemal, who was the president of the Parliament, was also the head of the executive at the same time.

In addition to its duties, the Parliament had democratic and parliamentary characteristics. The TGNA was a revolutionary council with extraordinary powers, as well as a constituent assembly so the Turkish resistance was managed by parliamentary system.

The main activities during the period of the First Grand National Assembly (April 1920- April 1923) were: The law of treason was adopted, the Independent Courts were established for the trial of the rebels, and the rebellions were suppressed. In West Anatolia, a regular army was established mainly against Greek forces. With the victories in the eastern, southern and western fronts, a large part of Anatolia was freed from occupations.

Moreover, after the opening of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, especially good relations with Russia were tried to be established. As we know, during the First World War the Bolshevik revolution took place in Russia and Russia had to withdraw from the war. Russia did not want the Allies, in particular Britain, to gain power thanks to the economic gains and geopolitical positions from the Ottoman state lands. Therefore, Bolshevik Russia wanted to establish good relations with the Turks. Bolshevik Russia wanted to establish good relations with the Turks. The Parliament sent a note to Russia on 26<sup>th</sup> April 1920, inviting them to recognise the Ankara Government and asked for help to expel the imperialist states from Turkish territory, from Anatolia. In response to the note from the TGNA, Soviet Foreign Minister Georgy Chicherin reported that Russia recognized the National Pact and suggested that diplomatic relations be initiated. This rapprochement drew reaction from the other nations and worried about the Bolshevik threat. This can be seen the reports of the British officers. In the report prepared by Andrew Ryan for

the İstanbul High Commissioner,<sup>329</sup> it was said that Hamdi Pasha, the First Lord of the Admiralty, came to the Office of the İstanbul High Commissioner and offered the support of the Kurds against the Bolshevik movement in Iraq. It is noted in the report that Hamdi Pasha said that the Bolshevik movement posed a threat both for Iraq and for the territory defined as Kurdistan, and that Sayyid Abdulkadir and himself would go to Mosul to prevent this situation. The basic principles of Sayyid Abdulkadir that it was important to suppress the Kemalist movement and prevent the growth of Bolshevik influence on the Turkish National Forces and Anatolian people was supported by Ryan. The Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Empire Damat Ferit Pasha carried Sayyid Abdulkadir's basic doctrine to the next stage and had offered to use Kurdish support to prevent and repress the progress of the Kemalist movement. When the report is examined it is clear that the most important part of Hamdi Pasha's demand was the realization of Kurdish unity with the British help. However, to repair the fragmented structure of the Kurds and to use Kurds against the Kemalists were considered as very difficult. This was a quite realistic approach. In a way, with this report, the İstanbul High Commissioner had realised the power of the rising national struggle in Anatolia and had to confess the difficulty of using Kurds against Turks.

It can be said that the most important part in Ryan's report<sup>330</sup> was the one related to Kurdish solidarity. According to the information given in this part, the solidarity of the Kurds in the Alexandrian Gulf and between Caucasus and Iran was not what the British desired. It was emphasized that if Bolsheviks started to move to the inner parts of Mesopotamia and Iran in the beginning of 1921, a Kurdish alliance with the British might be an important element in preventing that. A special part had been left for Sayyid Abdulkadir in the report, in which Hamdi Pasha's character had been mentioned as "shifty". It was emphasized that if Bolsheviks started to move to the inner parts of Mesopotamia and Iran in the beginning of 1921, a Kurdish- British alliance might be an important precaution. Ryan indicated that there were two different tendencies among the Kurt Teali Cemiyeti. He categorized them as a group represented by the pro-autonomous group led by Seyit Abdulkadir, and the group in a pro-independence line represented by Emir Ali Bedirhan.

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<sup>329</sup> PRO, FO 371/6346, Kurdistan And Bolshevik Menace, Memorandum by Mr. Ryan, 23 December 1920, p. 9.

<sup>330</sup> PRO, FO 371/6346, Kurdistan And Bolshevik Menace, p. 9.



On 29<sup>th</sup> December 1920, Sir Horace Rumbold sent a message to Lord Curzon which was entitled 'Kurdistan and Bolshevist Menace'.<sup>331</sup> In the document it was emphasized that Mustafa Kemal Pasha, the leader of Turkish movement started in Anatolia, who regarded Mesopotamia as a redeemable part of Turkey, and claimed it as a Nationalist needed to be treated carefully. It was claimed that the Kurdish leaders in İstanbul, particularly Sayyid Abdulkadir, were ready to fight against Mustafa Kemal. But it was necessary to be cautious in this regard because there was no solidarity between Kurdish leaders.

### **3.2 Treaty of Sèvres (10 August 1920)**

The Treaty of Sèvres is one of the First World War's most controversial treaties. Despite the signing of a peace treaty with Germany<sup>332</sup>, Austria<sup>333</sup>, Bulgaria<sup>334</sup> and Hungary<sup>335</sup>, the Allied Powers delayed to sign a treaty with the Ottoman State due to the disagreements among the Allied Powers.

In fact, the real reason for the delay in the treaty was the disputes about the Allied Powers sharing Ottoman territory, especially disputes between England and Italy arising from the giving of Izmir to the Greeks; and the situation of the Mesopotamian lands. Of course there were other reasons besides such as the potential reactions of the Turkish people to the Treaty of Sèvres.

At the Paris Peace Conference convened on 18<sup>th</sup> January 1919, Allied Powers decided to break up the Ottoman State. During this conference it is possible to say that the objects of the disintegration of the Ottomans are seen as principles. Attending the San Remo Conference to be convened on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1920, Tevfik Pasha requested that the Allied Powers be sent a representative from the Ottoman

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<sup>331</sup> PRO, FO 371/6346, Kurdistan And Bolshevik Menace, from S.H.Rumbold to the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, 29 December 1920, E-342, p.6-7.

<sup>332</sup> The Treaty of Versailles ( 28 June 1919).

<sup>333</sup> The Treaty of Saint Germain (10 September 1919).

<sup>334</sup> The Treaty of Neuilly (27 November 1919).

<sup>335</sup> The Treaty of Trianon (4 June 1920).

Empire to announce the articles of the agreement to the Ottoman State. He sent a letter to Damat Ferit Pasha on 17<sup>th</sup> May 1920. According to him, the Ottoman Empire would be a colony through this agreement and it was impossible to sign a peace agreement without changing the terms of the agreement. On 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1920, the Ottoman government was invited to a peace conference to be held in Paris. The Sultan sent a delegation to Paris under the presidency of the former Grand Vizier Ahmet Tevfik Pasha. The next day, the Grand National Assembly, gathered in Ankara, announced that, with a letter which was sent to the foreign ministries on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1920, a separate government from Istanbul was established. Tevfik Pasha stated that the peace conditions were unacceptable to an independent state and gave a memorandum to the Conference delegation and returned to Istanbul.

Meanwhile, the Greek forces, demanded that the agreement take effect immediately, occupied Balıkesir, Bursa, Uşak and Nazilli on 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 1920. The Greek forces attacked the Ottoman lands as well through Thrace and invaded the land up to Tekirdağ. In this case, the Government of Istanbul decided to accept the treaty. Although this situation should be decided in consultation with the Parliament on the basis of the Constitution, since the Parliament was closed and disbanded, on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1920 the Parliament and the Grand Vizier convened the Parliament of the Chancellor for the initiation and acceptance of peace negotiations.

32 states participated in the Treaty of Sèvres including America (as observer), England, France, Italy, Japan, Armenia, Belgium, Greece, Hejaz, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, the representative of the Ottoman Empire and other observers.<sup>336</sup> It can be argued that the essence of the treaty was to determine how the Ottoman Empire would be break into pieces.<sup>337</sup>

On these developments, Heyet-i Vukela (The Council of Ministers) gathered on 20<sup>th</sup> July 1920 recommended the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres. The Sultanate Council gathered in Istanbul, on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1920, and in the meeting it accepted that signing the agreement was the only way for the Ottoman Empire to survive.

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<sup>336</sup> Simonson, Paul F., *Private Property and Rights In Enemy Countries*, (London,1921), p.161.

<sup>337</sup> Meray, Seha L., Olcay, Osman, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Çöküş Belgeleri: Mondros Bırakışması, Sevr Andlaşması, İlgili Belgeler, (Ankara,1977), p.43; *San Antonio Express*, 'France, Italy and Britain Split Turkey', 6 November 1920, p.18.

Therewith, the delegation of Hadi Pasha, Tevfik Bey and Bern envoy Reşat Halis Bey went to Paris and signed the Treaty of Sèvres on 10<sup>th</sup> of August 1920.

During a meeting with British High Commissioner Sir John de Robeck in Istanbul, the Grand Vizier Damat Ferit demanded Britain's help to fight against the Kemalists. After speaking with satisfaction with signing the Treaty of Sèvres, Robeck declared that after approving the agreement the British would help the Ottoman Government against the Kemalists.<sup>338</sup>

This treaty, although signed by the Ottoman Delegation on 10<sup>th</sup> of August 1920, took its place in the dusty pages of history as a stillborn treaty since it was not approved by the Assembly or Sultan Vahdettin.

Erzurum, Trabzon, Van and Bitlis provinces and the territory where the Harşit River flows into Black Sea were included in the “Armenian State” founded according to Article 88-92 of the sixth part of Sèvres Treaty. Decisions about Kurds took place in Articles 62-64 of the Treaty. However, the relevance of the Articles 62, 63 and 64 of the treaty to the Kurds, requires some evaluation, although the treaty did not enter into force.<sup>339</sup>First, let us quote the articles of the treaty<sup>340</sup> that are relevant to our topic, and examine those.

*ARTICLE 62.*

*“A Commission sitting at Constantinople and composed of three members appointed by the British, French and Italian Governments respectively shall draft within six months from the coming into force of the present Treaty a scheme of local autonomy for the predominantly Kurdish areas lying east of the Euphrates, south of the southern boundary of Armenia as it may be hereafter determined, and north of the frontier of Turkey with Syria and Mesopotamia, as defined in Article 27, II (2) and (3). If unanimity cannot be secured on any question, it will be referred by the members of the Commission to their respective Governments. The scheme shall*

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<sup>338</sup> Salahi, Sonyel R., *Türk Kurtuluş Savaşı ve Dış Politika II*, (Ankara,1986), p.84-86.

<sup>339</sup> Laizer, Sheri, *Into Kurdistan: Frontiers Under Fire*, (London,1991), p.129.

<sup>340</sup> The articles of the Treaty can be found,[http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Section I, Articles 1 -260](http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Section_I_Articles_1-260) (18 January 2015); Erim, Nihat, *Devletlerarası Hukuku ve Siyasi Tarih Metinleri I*, (Ankara,1953), p.525-691.

*contain full safeguards for the protection of the Assyria-Chaldeans and other racial or religious minorities within these areas, and with this object a Commission composed of British, French, Italian, Persian and Kurdish representatives shall visit the spot to examine and decide what rectifications, if any, should be made in the Turkish frontier where, under the provisions of the present Treaty, that frontier coincides with that of Persia.*

#### **ARTICLE 63**

*The Turkish Government hereby agrees to accept and execute the decisions of both the Commissions mentioned in Article 62 within three months from their communication to the said Government.*

#### **ARTICLE 64.**

*If within one year from the coming into force of the present Treaty the Kurdish peoples within the areas defined in Article 62 shall address themselves to the Council of the League of Nations in such a manner as to show that a majority of the population of these areas desires independence from Turkey, and if the Council then considers that these peoples are capable of such independence and recommends that it should be granted to them, Turkey hereby agrees to execute such a recommendation, and to renounce all rights and title over these areas.*

*The detailed provisions for such renunciation will form the subject of a separate agreement between the Principal Allied Powers and Turkey.*

*If and when such renunciation takes place, no objection will be raised by the Principal Allied Powers to the voluntary adhesion to such an independent Kurdish State of the Kurds inhabiting that part of Kurdistan which has hitherto been included in the Mosul vilayet.”*

Some ambiguous expressions attract attention in Article 62. Firstly, the borders of Kurdistan and Armenia were not certain. Some regions left by the Armenians years before and where now mostly Kurds lived ‘will not be inside the South border of Armenia which is to be decided later’ Thus, the North borders of the planned Kurdistan were not revealed. On the other hand, according to the prepared

autonomy plan, it is not certain under which state's mandate Kurdistan would be. Whether it would be under the auspices of England or France or temporarily under the auspices of the Turks, or else an independent Kurdistan would be established is not certain. But in Article 64, separation possibility from Turkey is granted but it might be thought that temporary Turkish auspices could be possible. Also the speculation about future commission and plans in this article increases its ambiguity.

Article 64 highlighted the challenges the Kurds must go through in order to gain independence. According to this, Kurds living within the borders drawn by Article 62 would need to show their desire to separate from Turkey and become independent within one year starting with the period which the treaty determined. But how this situation would be possible and to which degree it would have to be shown and who would decide this on behalf of the Kurds were left undetermined. In contrast to this ambiguity, if Kurds again wished to enforce this condition, they might apply to the League of Nations. After this, another challenge or condition was presented. Firstly the League of Nations would agree that this community had the potential to realize their aim to be independent and then support them realizing this. Under these circumstances Turkey would abdicate by following this advice. Of course it was not possible to understand why the most active member of League of Nations, England, would accept this request for independence although one year had passed since that treaty was signed and new balances for Near East were established and region was divided. Also when we take into consideration how attentively England followed the movements developing in Anatolia, the conditions presented within this Article might be thought of as something for gaining time. Apart from this, another subject for discussion is why England envisaged Kurds in Mosul being part of an independent Kurdish State despite giving so much importance to Mosul.

It is seen that scholars adopted many different perspectives about the existence of a Kurdistan anticipated by Articles 62<sup>nd</sup>, 63<sup>rd</sup> and 64<sup>th</sup> of the treaty.<sup>341</sup> For instance, according to scholars such as Sherman<sup>342</sup> and Jwaideh<sup>343</sup>, the Treaty of Sèvres promised the Kurds an independent state; and this promise anticipated a

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<sup>341</sup> Robins, Philip, 'The Overlord State: Turkish Policy and the Kurdish Issue', *International Affairs*, Vol. 69, No. 4, October 1993, p.658.

<sup>342</sup> Shain Yossi and Martin Sherman, 'Dynamics of Disintegration: Diaspora, Secession and The Paradox of Nation-States', *Nations and Nationalism*, 4, No:3, 1998, p. 327.

<sup>343</sup> Jwaideh, Wadie, *Kürt Milliyetçiliğinin Tarihi : Kökenleri ve Gelişimi*, (Istanbul,1999) p.263.

formation of autonomy first and then independence. According to scholars such as Hilmi<sup>344</sup> and Cook, the Kurds could not make the best of the rights provided by Treaty of Sèvres's and did not exactly understand what the treaty entailed. Albeit limited in number, scholars such as Lazarev<sup>345</sup>, Özalp<sup>346</sup> and Kaymaz<sup>347</sup> claimed that a promise for independence was not a matter for the Treaty of Sèvres, and the Kurds were deceived with this treaty. According to Olson,<sup>348</sup> it was contradictory that the Sèvres Treaty presented an independent but disjointed "Kurdistan". As we can understand from the treaty, large parts of Kurdistan would be included in Iran and Iraq. However, it is also contradictory that Kurdish leaders who supported an independent and united Kurdistan struggled to win the support of England. In fact this is another sign that Britain was in fact was not fully committed about founding a Kurdish State.

Similar political targets can be seen in interesting comments in a telegram which was sent to London.<sup>349</sup> According to this, the reason for founding such a state was to place a buffer state between Turkey, Armenia and Mesopotamia. It is evident that nationalist Kurds would not accept this. England's aims were keeping Turkey as a powerless state in order to provide security in Mesopotamia. According to the telegram, Kurdistan's independence depends on the condition of keeping Turkish nationalists powerless in order to provide security in Mesopotamia. In that case, if the British and the Turks agreed on the subject of Mesopotamia, there would be no need for such a Kurdish state. Indeed, the foreseeing one year in this treaty was for understanding the tendency of the Turks, because as Yıldız also mentioned,<sup>350</sup> in fact the British and even all of the allies closely follow the actions of the Turkish people in Anatolia. The Allied Powers were determining their policy according to the reaction of the Turks.

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<sup>344</sup> Hilmi, *Kurdistan*, p.17.

<sup>345</sup> Lazarev, *Emperyalizm*, p.188.

<sup>346</sup> Özalp, 'Tarihi Perspektifiyle', p.7.

<sup>347</sup> Kaymaz, *Musul Sorunu*, p.139.

<sup>348</sup> Olson, Robert, *Kürt Milliyetçiliğinin Kaynakları ve Şeyh Said İsyanı*, translated by, Bülent Peker and Nevzat Kırış, (Ankara,1992), p.49.

<sup>349</sup> Evans, Laurence, *Türkiye'nin Paylaşımı 1916-1926*, translated by Tefik Alanay, (İstanbul,1972), p.276.

<sup>350</sup> Yıldız, *Fransız*, p.82.

According to the comments of Sasuni,<sup>351</sup> the effects of the British and their long term aims draw attention. Since it was impossible to extend the Iranian border towards Malatya and Diyarbakır and dominate these regions, the British had to determine such a Kurdistan policy that the independency of the state was conditioned to time and circumstances and so they could continue their dominance over the region by means of the Kurds.

When the articles of this treaty are considered, it can be argued that England made the promise of a Kurdish state with undefined borders on a small territory around Hakkari.<sup>352</sup> However, it can be easily seen that the support to be provided for the Kurdish state was dependent on many conditions, especially when Article 64 of the treaty is examined. After all, a great number of ifs in the aforementioned article indicate that there were numerous problems in providing this support. The reality is that the victorious states sitting at the table in the Treaty of Sèvres , including Britain did not make any promise to give independence to the Kurds. Although the borders of a possible state were reflected on the maps, this was nothing more than a delaying tactic. Another aspect of the issue was that if the British really wanted to establish a state for the Kurds, why the Kurds living in Iraq and Iran were not positioned into the state as British officers had promised.

In this respect, a few reasons for the victorious states', including Britain's, not wanting a Kurdish state in the region may be listed. The first reason is the distribution of the population. Turkish, Kurdish and Armenian people had lived for years in the mentioned region. The territories demanded by the Kurds coincided with the territories demanded by the Armenians; they put in claims for almost the same regions. As is understood from the activities of the Armenian lobbies especially in America and France, there was a heavy pressure on the great powers to establish an Armenian state in Anatolia.

The main reason for failing to establish an independent Kurdish state after World War I was mostly hidden in the last section of Article 64, and is generally

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<sup>351</sup> Sasuni, Garo, *Kürt Ulusal Hareketi ve 15.Yüzyıldan Günümüze Kürt- Ermeni İlişkileri*, trans. by B.Sartaryan, M.Yetkin, (İstanbul,1992), p.180.

<sup>352</sup> Kurubas, Erol, 'Sevr Sürecinde Yapılan Uluslararası Toplantılarda Kürt Konusu ve İngiltere'nin Politikası', *SDÜ. İİBFD.* ; Vol.3, Autumn 1998, p.10.

overlooked. According to the last section of Article 64, "*If and when such renunciation takes place, no objection will be raised by the Principal Allied Powers to the voluntary adhesion to such an independent Kurdish State of the Kurds inhabiting that part of Kurdistan which has hitherto been included in the Mosul vilayet.*" This article with its promise of an independent Kurdish state potentially conflicted with England's presumed determination to create an oil-rich Iraq, including Mosul within it.

Another reason was the success of the Kemalist movement in Anatolia in recruiting the Kurds to their cause. For we know that the Turks engaged in anti-British propaganda activities which could be considered successful, especially around Mosul. For instance, as it would be remarked in the chapter 4.2, p.197, the organisations set up by Antep Militia Forces Commander Ozdemir Bey in Mosul on behalf of the Turks perturbed the British considerably.

The use of the expression 'independent Kurdistan' in the Treaty of Sèvres should be considered as directly proportional to the Middle East order England wished to establish for her own interests.<sup>353</sup> It can be claimed that Britain planned to achieve more than one aim with this promise. These aims were to cause conflicts between the Kurds and the Turks, to maintain the support of the Kurds who were living on rich oil reserves, and to limit, as much as possible, the potential areas of conflict during the establishment of the order they wished for in the Middle East.

Some researchers wanted to legitimize the British occupation of the rich oil deposits in Mosul, after the Mondros Armistice was signed<sup>354</sup>, by basing their arguments upon the the treaty of Sèvres<sup>355</sup>. But this is an important mistake because the Treaty of Sèvres was not approved by either the Turkish National Assembly or Sultan Vahdettin. In other words, it was an unapproved treaty.

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<sup>353</sup> Saraçoğlu, Cenk, *Kurds of The Modern Turkey: Migration Neoliberalism And Exclusion In Turkish Society*, (London, 2011), p.192, Eskander, Saad, Southern Kurdistan under Britain's Mesopotamian Mandate: From Separation to Incorporation, 1920-23, *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 37, No. 2 (Apr., 2001), pp. 153-180

<sup>354</sup> Kösebalaban, Hasan, *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam, Nationalism and Globalization*, (USA, 2011)

<sup>355</sup> Beck, Peter J., 'A Tedious And Perilous Controversy: Britain And The Settlement of the Mosul Dispute 1918-1926', *Middle Eastern Studies*, V.17, No. 2, 1981, p.256



Although it was known by all historians that the treaty had not entered into force, some authors<sup>356</sup> assessed the events which emerged after the Treaty of Sèvres as a missed opportunity for the Kurds to win an independent state. The Treaty of Sèvres was a chance for the Kurds to have their independent state, whereas the foremost deficiency of the treaty was not drawing a border between north Kurdistan and Armenia. Furthermore, it did not involve the western Kurdish zones,<sup>357</sup> which the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916 had allocated to France. Nevertheless, the western Kurds did not have any reaction for their exclusion with the possible Kurdish state.

Nevertheless, as was stated by Yavuz<sup>358</sup> this treaty had a phenomenon called the Sèvres syndrome, and a sensation that the Turkish territories would face a separation risk because of a potential independent Kurdish State.

According to Kurubaş,<sup>359</sup> almost all Kurdish leaders, especially Şerif Pasha and Sayyid Abdulkadir, positioned themselves on the Turkish side against the British by reacting to the borders and the establishment of the Kurdistan state outlined in the Treaty of Sèvres. It might be true that the aforementioned names had been disappointed; however, the possibility that they could have positioned themselves on the Turkish side over this is a matter that should be approached cautiously.

Another issue about the treaty was the desire to change the treaty shortly afterwards even before the signatures on the treaty had dried. It can be claimed that not only the Turks but also the signatory states knew that the treaty had no chance of being implemented. Nevertheless, the promises provided by the Sèvres remained strictly deceptive in nature, as a lack of political will ensured that the terms of the treaty relating to the Kurds remained unstudied. However, we would not be mistaken in saying that, in the game played, the signatory states acted in a ‘what if it happens’

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<sup>356</sup> Culcasi, Karen, ‘Cartographically Constructing Kurdistan Within Geopolitical And Orientalist Discourses’, *Political Geography*, Vol.25, 2006, p.684

<sup>357</sup> McDowall, *A Modern History*, p.137

<sup>358</sup> Yavuz, M. Hakan, ‘Five Stages of Construction of Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey’, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 7(3), 2001”, p. 6. (p.1-24)

<sup>359</sup> Kurubas, ‘Sevr Sürecinde’, p.210

manner; because, although it had not been long enough after the signing of the treaty, even Lord Curzon, one of the treaty's masterminds, was obliged to state that the treaty could be changed. In fact, "*Britain was the only one of the powers with more than a passing interest in seeing Kurdistan on the map.*"<sup>360</sup> It can be claimed that the main reason for the declaration of this statement was the success of the National Struggle in Anatolia and the fact that that struggle had not been defeated in a short time. The Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA) was also invited to the treaty talks just one day after the Ottoman government was invited to Paris. The TGNA issued a declaration saying that it was impossible to put into practice the provisions of the peace treaty which would be signed just with the Ottoman government without being approved by the Turkish Assembly. Furthermore, in the TGNA's declaration, it was declared that if the Allied Powers want to sign a peace agreement with the Turks, it was obligatory to contact with the Turkish Grand National Assembly which was the sole representative of the country. Moreover, with a decision taken in the Turkish Grand National Assembly in Ankara on 19<sup>th</sup> August 1920, those who ratified the Treaty of Sèvres and those who signed it were declared traitors.<sup>361</sup>

The treaty did not cause the Turkish nation to drift into despair, but instead increased its struggle and determination. The treaty was legally void as it had not been approved by the Ottoman Parliament which was abolished by the Allied Powers after the invasion of Istanbul. It was not also approved by the TGNA because it was contrary to the National Pact and it was a threat to the independence of the nation. The TGNA had declared that it did not recognize the treaty. Also, in the TGNA meeting dated on 19<sup>th</sup> August 1920, signatories of the Sèvres Treaty were declared as traitor. Thus, the treaty became the only treaty that could not be put into practice after the First World War.

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<sup>360</sup> Macmillan, M., *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World* (New York, 2001), p.446.

<sup>361</sup> Ünal, *1700'den 1958'e kadar*, p.529.

### 3.2.1 The Reactions to the Sèvres Treaty

The Kurdistan plans that were finalized at the end of the San Remo Conference on 26<sup>th</sup> April 1920 were moved to the Sèvres Treaty. A prepared letter was presented to the Ottoman Empire on 11<sup>th</sup> May 1920 and the Turks were given one month to answer. The Ottoman Empire applied for a 15 day extension before this time finished. Meanwhile, Greek troops attacked on 23<sup>rd</sup> June in order to force acceptance of the treaty by the Turks. Tevfik Pasha, who was the head of the Turkish delegation in Paris, expressed his opposition to the treaty with the letter he sent to Damat Ferid Pasha on 17<sup>th</sup> May and emphasized the necessity for the change in the text.<sup>362</sup> The İstanbul Government concluded their discussions about the letter of agreement on 25<sup>th</sup> June. The Allies presented a final version of the treaty on 16<sup>th</sup> July to the Ottoman delegation and their delegation answered on behalf of the government.<sup>363</sup> According to their response, the Kurds had never wanted independence and would never want it. But if the people came up with the request for independence, the Istanbul government was ready to accept local autonomy. In the rest of the text it was suggested that since the borders shown in Article 62 did not comply with true race statistics and it claimed that some regions were populated with Turks when the Kurd population was dense there; particularly the provinces of Bitlis and Van and some parts of Mosul. If a conflict broke out about realistically executing 'the principle of nationality' an international commission would have to investigate the situation.

Upon this, the Allies gave an answer which served as an ultimatum to the Ottoman government on 21<sup>st</sup> July 1920. Although in the answer Kurdistan was not expressly mentioned, it was stated that the Allies had decided to save the regions which were not densely populated by Turks from the domination of Turks. It was also mentioned in the answer that the Istanbul government was given until 27<sup>th</sup> July to declare that the agreement was totally accepted. As a result of this, the Ottoman

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<sup>362</sup> The letter can be found on; Bayur, Hikmet, *Türk Devleti'nin Dış Siyasisi*, (Ankara,1942), p.60

<sup>363</sup> The whole text of the Treaty can be found on Meray, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun*, pp.8-30

Sultanate Council decided on the acceptance and approval of the treaty on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1920.<sup>364</sup>

The Ankara Government which was founded on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1920 harshly opposed signing of the treaty by the Istanbul Government. The Ankara Government saw Sèvres Treaty not as a Peace Treaty but as a War Treaty. The Allies, who understood from the harsh and strict opposition from Ankara government that the provisions of the treaty might not be implemented, tried to get on intimate terms with the Ankara government and moderate them. After this, England increased its contact with the Ankara government, but they decreased their interactions with the Kurds.

The Sèvres Treaty was a complete disappointment for some Kurdish leaders. After the appearance of the treaty draft, some Kurdish leaders like Serif Pasha, lost hope in the British and took the side of the Turks.<sup>365</sup> Serif Pasha was not the only one who was disappointed. Sayyid Taha met with Major Nalder and Captain Hay in Iraq in autumn 1920. In these meetings Sayyid Taha demanded arms and ammunition to act against the Turks. However, the British rejected his demands due to the continuing rebellion in Iraq;<sup>366</sup> therefore he was disappointed. Sayyid Abdulkadir, the head of the Kürt Teali Cemiyeti and former member and chairman of the Council State, was too, and so were, Cibranlı Halit Bey one of the old commanders of the Hamidiye Cavalries; İhsan Nuri, the leader in the Bitlis uprising and Yusuf Ziya the Bitlis MP. Some Kurdish leaders sided with the Turks and supported the National Independence movement because of the dissatisfaction caused by the Sèvres Treaty<sup>367</sup>. Consequently, one important aspect of the treaty for the Kurds was that it turned allegiance towards the Turks. It may be claimed that since Britain's Mesopotamia policy did not match the recommendations of Major Noel, Major Soane was appointed to conduct British relations, in May 1919 after the end of the war period.

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<sup>364</sup> Gürün, Kamuran, *Savaşan Türkiye ve Dünya*, (Ankara,1986), p.93

<sup>365</sup> Tunaya, Tarık Zafer, *Türkiye'de Siyasi Partiler II*, (İstanbul,1988), p.204.

<sup>366</sup> Kaymaz, *Musul Sorunu*, p.175.

<sup>367</sup> Yıldız, *Fransız*, p.157.

### 3.3 Captain Ely Banister Soane and the Kurds

Ely Banister Soane, who served after Major Noel, wished to establish a more authoritarian approach in his relations with Sheikh Mahmud, but could not reach an agreement with Sheikh Mahmud and responded aggressively to the events that occurred.<sup>368</sup> Some authors have argued that Soane and Sheikh Mahmud were enemies and the rebellion of the Sheikh was due to Soane's authoritarian practices.<sup>369</sup> Soane's greatest supporter concerning these interventions was A. Talbot Wilson, the Baghdad Civil Officer of Britain. Wilson, spoke highly of his actions, stating that Britain gained a lot with Soane being assigned in the region.<sup>370</sup> Talbot Wilson stated that Soane was an officer who spoke perfect Kurdish and it was not difficult to mistake him for a Kurd due to his competency in the language and the authentic way he dressed.<sup>371</sup>

It can be observed that apart from Soane's many activities in Sulaymaniyah, he also ordered Kurdish to be accepted as the official language in the works of the local government. He published a Kurdish newspaper (*Têgeyashîni*) in September 20, 1920 and took the first steps for a British-Kurdish dictionary to be prepared.<sup>372</sup> It can be claimed that the reason Soane ordered Kurdish to be accepted as the official language in Sulaymaniyah could be to encourage the ethnic identity of the Kurds.<sup>373</sup> Soane's activities are extremely important as they reflect how multifaceted the

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<sup>368</sup> Burton, H. M., 'The Kurds', *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society*, Vol.31,1944, p.71.

<sup>369</sup> Pelletiere, Stephen C., *The Kurds: An Unstable Element in the Gulf*, (London,1984) , p.43; Hilmi, Refik, *Anılar, Tanığının Dilinden Şeyh Mahmud Berzenci Hareketi*, (Istanbul,2010), p.46. During the his the first revolt Sheikh Mahmud especially wanted to capture the house which Soane used to live. PRO, AIR 20/756, 'From General Head Quarters Meopotamian Expeditionary Force To G. H. Q', 24 May 1919, p.16.

<sup>370</sup> Wilson, Arnold Talbot, *Mesopotamia: Loyalties 1914-1917*, (London,1931), p.267.

<sup>371</sup> Soane, Ely Banister, *Mezopotamya ve Kürdistan'a Gizli Yolculuk*, (Trans.Fahriye Adsay), (İstanbul,2000), p.17.

<sup>372</sup> Kreyenbroek, *The Kurds*, p.77.

<sup>373</sup> Hay, *Two Years*, p.36.

approach adopted by Britain was.<sup>374</sup> During this time Soane received the support of many people in the region. His greatest helper was the landlord Babekr and Soane clearly talked about him.<sup>375</sup>

Based on his research and observation on the Kurds, Soane stated that it was highly probable that the Kurds were Eastern Europeans rather than Asians, based on their dances and lifestyles.<sup>376</sup> Again, in Soane's study titled 'Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise', it can be seen that his perspective on the Kurds was different to the views in the past, and that he rejected the view that they lived in the hills, that they were uncivilized, cruel traitors, and that he aimed to prove this point.<sup>377</sup>

In his works Soane aimed to show that Kurds were good and Turks were bad people. He stated that the Turks have spread their terrifying rule in Diyarbakır, Mosul and Baghdad, like the other regions of the Empire.<sup>378</sup> It can be argued that this perspective was important as it reflected the mentality of the officers sent to the region from London.

Again, the language Soane used in his work, showing Turks and Kurds as enemies, reflects his general perspective on the matter. An interesting example of this perspective can be seen in a story he tells about himself wearing a red cap. He stated that the Kurds started to keep away from him and argued that the main reason for this was their hatred towards Turks.<sup>379</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> PRO, FO 371/5072, 'Mesopotamia Administration', 19 April 1920, No: E 3442, p.26.

<sup>375</sup> Soane, E.B., 'Evacuation Of Kurdistan: An Ill-Fated Expedition', *Journal Of The Royal Central Asian Society*, Vol.10, 1923.

<sup>376</sup> Soane, E.B., 'The Southern Kurd', *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society*, Vol.1922, p.44.

<sup>377</sup> Soane, E.B., *To Mesopotamia and Kurdistan In Disguise*, (London,1914).

<sup>378</sup> Soane, *To Mesopotamia*, p.27.

<sup>379</sup> Soane, *To Mesopotamia*, p.97.

### 3.4. Treaty of Alexandropol (Gümrü) (3 December 1920)

For the first time in the Erzurum and then Sivas Congresses, the necessity of foreign aid was emphasized by the Turks. At that time, there were two foreign states from whom aid might be obtained. These were the United States of America and Soviet Russia. Russia was not directly interested in Turkey's interests, but the end of the Turkish War of Independence would affect them because the states occupied Turkish lands were also enemies of Russia. The failure of the Turks in the war in Anatolia would endanger the security of the southern borders of Russia. For this reason, Russia approached positively the Turkish requests for help. Moreover, the possibility of a Turkish-Russia rapprochement, which emerged in the late 1919 and early 1920s, was met with great concern in the UK. During negotiations of a Soviet-British agreement in London in May 1920, Prime Minister Lloyd George wanted to impose the condition of not helping the Kemalists but his request was rejected by Russians.<sup>380</sup> According to the Russian officers, such as Mutischev, the Turks could play an important role in spreading the socialist regime. Since Turkish movement was fighting against imperialist powers so their success would be example of the success of the social revolution.<sup>381</sup>

After the signing of the Mondros Armistice, the Ottoman State had to withdraw its troops from the Caucasus despite the clear provisions of the Brest Litovsk peace treaty. The Armenians, in support of the Bolshevik regime, occupied some parts of the Eastern Anatolia region in 1919. At the same time, the Parliament had sent a delegation headed by Bekir Sami Bey to Moscow. The delegation identified some aspects of the treaty between the TGNA and the Soviets in the light of the Brest Litovsk agreement. Positive negotiations were started between the two states on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1920. However, the treaty was abandoned when the Soviets wanted some of the territories belonging to the TGNA government in the Caucasus region to be given to Armenia. If the Armenians declared in favour of Bolshevism, they would be stronger with support of Russia so that they could try to invade

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<sup>380</sup> Mütercimler, Erol, *Kurtuluş Savaşı'na Denizden Gelen Destek*, (İstanbul,1992), p.101-102.

<sup>381</sup> May, Hakkı, Mümin, 'Türk Kurtuluş Savaşı'nın Finansmanı', *Mevzuat Dergisi*, 12/133, 2009, p.9; Perinçek, Mehmet, *Sovyet Devlet Kaynaklarında Kürt İsyanları*, Kaynak Yayınları, (İstanbul,2014), p. 228.

Eastern Anatolia.<sup>382</sup>After these developments, the Eastern Front Commander Kazim Karabekir invaded Gümrü by taking Kars, Sarıkamış, Ardahan, Batum, Artvin and Iğdir, which were accepted as Turkish lands by the National Pact. On 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1920, peace negotiations were launched in Gümrü. As a result of the treaty signed between the TGNA and Armenia on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1920, the on-going operation against Armenians in the east came to an end. Due to the treaty: the international agreements already made by Armenians against Turkey would be cancelled; treaties such as the Treaty of Sèvres , which were against the interests of the TGNA, would not be approved by Armenia; the Turkish and Armenian people living on the border of Turkey and Armenia would have equal rights.

The Alexandropol (Gümrü) Agreement was the first treaty that the Grand National Assembly of Turkey signed with the Democratic Republic of Armenia in the international arena during the War of Independence. Thanks to the treaty signed on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1920, Armenia became the first state to recognize the TGNA and the National Pact. The Eastern Front was closed with the treaty, where the soldiers and weapons were sent to Ankara. At the same time, it is a treaty which is accepted as the political and military success of the Grand National Assembly.

### **3.5 The First Battle of Inonu (6-11 January 1921)**

The fact that the Turkish forces in Western Anatolia, when it came to the end of 1920, were dealing with the revolts initiated by Circassian Ethem provided the Greek government and Greek forces with a suitable military opportunity. The massive Greek military campaign launched on 6<sup>th</sup> January 1921 failed and the Greek forces went on the defensive on 11<sup>th</sup> January 1921. Upon this success of the Turkish forces, the British High Commissioner sent a letter to Curzon. In the letter it was reported that Mustafa Kemal was not a rebellious but a respected leader who needed to be taken seriously, and was supported by Turks and Muslims.<sup>383</sup> This development

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<sup>382</sup> Karabekir, *İstiklal Harbimiz*, p.670.

<sup>383</sup> Sonyel, Salahi, R., 'İngiliz Yüksek Komiseri Sir Horace Rumbold'un Türk Ulusal Akımı'na Karşı Tutumu (1920-1923)', *Bellekten*, LVIII, Vol.221, (April,1994), p.160.



shows the British officers would recognize the National Forces as an interlocutor and want to keep in contact with the TGNA.

The first success of the regular army established by the TGNA on the Western Front was the Battle of Inonu I. As a result the authority of the Turkish Government in Anatolia increased. The government gained confidence with the First Inonu War. As a result, the tax and military enforcement procedures could be implemented to a certain degree. The First Inonu Victory also increased the reputation of the new Turkish state in international public opinion. As a result, the Moscow Treaty with Soviet Russia was signed on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1921.<sup>384</sup> The Allied Powers organized the London Conference to discuss the new situation that emerged after the First Inonu War, and the Turkish Grand National Assembly was also invited to the conference.

### **3.6 London Conference (21 February - 12 March 1921)**

Over time, opinions about the Treaty of Sèvres had begun to change. The TGNA did not accept the Treaty of Sèvres, and sought to expell the Allies forces out of the country. During the National Struggle, Turkish forces stopped Greek progress in Western Anatolia and the National forces were successful against the French forces in the Southern Anatolia and the TGNA had initiated the Turkish-Soviet negotiations and the First Inonu Battle was won by the Turks.<sup>385</sup> Following these developments in order to make some changes in the Treaty of Sèvres the Allied Powers decided to hold a conference in London, in which Greece and Turkey would also participate.

At the end of the negotiations in Paris, the Supreme Council decided that representatives of the TGNA were required to attend this conference. It was stated that the Ankara Government should be informed by the Istanbul Government not by the Allied Powers. The government of Ankara was informed by a telegram sent by

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<sup>384</sup> Further information can be found in the pp.136-139.

<sup>385</sup> In Maras on 11 February 1920, in Urfa on 19 April 1920 and in Antep on 9 February 1921 French forces were defeated by the Turkish forces and were expelled from Southeastern Anatolia. besides, in the the Inonu War I in January 1921 Greek forces were defeated in the Western Anatolia.

Grand Vizier Tevfik Pasha of Istanbul on 27<sup>th</sup> of January 1921. On 28<sup>th</sup> of January 1921, Mustafa Kemal Pasha sent a telegram to Istanbul and stated that the conference invitation should be given directly to the TGNA by the Allied Powers.<sup>386</sup> As a result of great discussions, the Government of Ankara was invited by Lloyd George to attend the London Conference via Italian Foreign Minister Sforza.<sup>387</sup>

Apparently there were two Turkish administrations, one the Istanbul Government under the control of the England and the other the TGNA which was fighting for fully independent Turkey. Rumbold believed that he had to force the Istanbul administration to implement the ceasefire, and if this could not be done, the nationalist administration in Ankara would not accept the ceasefire.<sup>388</sup>

The conference began and the Turkish delegates strongly opposed to requests that to make minor changes on the articles of Sèvres Treaty which were made by the Allied Powers. Turkish delegates declared that they rejected entirely the articles of the Sèvres Treaty. Grand Vizier Tevfik Pasha, representative of the Ottoman Government, declared that the only delegate who had right to talk for the nation was Bekir Sami, who was the chief delegate of the TGNA. Then the Allied States had to make all kinds of negotiations with the delegation of the TGNA. The TGNA delegates informed the Allied States that based on the National Pact; they would not accept the Sèvres Treaty in any way. After the discussions, the London Conference disbanded without any decisions.

The London Conference was an important diplomatic achievement in terms of formally recognizing the TGNA by the Allied States despite the failure to obtain a decision. The TGNA was now officially recognized by the Allied Powers. The TGNA succeeded in announcing the principles of the National Pact and the righteous struggle of the Turkish people to the world public.

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<sup>386</sup> Atatürk, *Nutuk*, p.370-371.

<sup>387</sup> Atatürk, *Nutuk*, p.384.

<sup>388</sup> Sonyel, 'İngiliz Yüksek Komiseri', p.167.

After the London Conference, Winston Churchill<sup>389</sup> sent a report, about the Kurds, to the Prime Minister Lloyd George on the 16<sup>th</sup> March 1921. In this report<sup>390</sup> he claimed that the practicability of the 62<sup>nd</sup> Article of Sèvres Treaty ceased. According to him an opportunity for Kurds living in that region to be united with the region called North Kurdistan was lost. Thus, Churchill stated that the existence of a Kurdish State was impossible as of March 1921. However, a short explanation is necessary here. The Kurdistan State expressed in Churchill's post was Kurdistan as an independent structure, mentioned with North and South together. Otherwise, in Churchill's mind, that autonomy might be provided to the Kurds in the Iraq border as a buffer state was always one of the alternatives of British policy.<sup>391</sup>

Churchill continued his report<sup>392</sup> pointing out that until March 1921 British policy was not only about Kurdish regions. Churchill stated that the Kurds would certainly oppose any British policy whereby they would be united under Arab domination. And according to Churchill, this opposition would not be limited to only opposing to Britain but also would cause more events to break out leading to Britain retreating from the region in the wake of much chaos and rebellion. Churchill advised that it was proper to provide an explanation, taking these issues into consideration, of recent conditions of Iraq and the Kurdish government which will be decided upon later.<sup>393</sup> Churchill stated that benefits of a definite decision about Kurds' living under the auspices of Iraq which would be under control of the British. He foresaw that this situation would result in Turkish dominance returning to the British region, while some Turks would retreat from some regions.<sup>394</sup> As can be understood from the sentence the aim of the British officials was not to help Kurds to establish a Kurdish state. Britain's aim was to undermine Turkish domination in the vicinity of Iraq and Eastern Anatolia and achieve British dominance there.

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<sup>389</sup> He served as the First Lord of the Admiralty in 1911-1915. After the Gallipoli Campaign (1915) he resigned from his office. He was assigned Minister of Munitions (1917-1919), Secretary of State of War and Secretary of State For Air (1919-1921), then The Secretary of State for the Colonies (1921-1922).

<sup>390</sup> PRO, FO 371/6342, Policy In Mesopotamia, Palestine, Trans-Jordia And Arabia, From Mr. Churchill To The Prime Minister, 16 March 1921, No: E-4211, p.4.

<sup>391</sup> Dockter, Warren, *Churchill and the Islamic World*, (New York,2015), p.167.

<sup>392</sup> PRO, FO 371/6342, Policy In Mesopotamia, p.4.

<sup>393</sup> Dockter, Warren, *Churchill and the Islamic World*, (New York,2015), p.168.

<sup>394</sup> PRO, FO 371/6342, Policy In Mesopotamia, p.4.

Except for the aforementioned comments, Churchill declared in his telegram<sup>395</sup> to Cox that until England had decided its policy and events became clearer, the Kurd tribes must be stalled.<sup>396</sup> Although the stalling of progress of National Independence in Anatolia left a question mark in people's minds and Churchill asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs whether a meeting would be held with the Ankara government to stop rebellions against England or not, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs found the policy of "wait and see" suitable.<sup>397</sup>

### **3.7 Treaty of Moscow (16 March 1921)**

The Moscow treaty was signed between the Turkish Grand National Assembly and Russia on 16<sup>th</sup> of March 1921 in pursuit of mutual benefits. Following the withdrawal of Russia from the World War One after the Bolshevik revolution, the Allies had reacted by beginning to occupy Anatolia. Allied Powers, as the enemies of both countries, caused the Turkish Parliament and Russia to get close to each other. Russia, who wanted to secure itself in the South and the Bosphorus, went into a search a friendly country.

Due to the victories of the Grand National Assembly against the Armenians and the Greeks, Russia regarded the Turkish Grand National Assembly as the country it sought. The two countries were close to each other, as the Parliament was struggling with the imperialist countries. For this reason, the Moscow treaty was signed between the Russian government and the Turkish Grand National Assembly's delegation to Russia. By the treaty important decisions were taken and TGNA was officially recognized by a European country.

According to the treaty, Russia and the TGNA would not approve an agreement that was not approved by the both sides. Russia would recognize the National Pact and would accept the removal of the privileges. It was accepted that the treaties signed by the Ottoman Empire and Tsarist Russia were null and void.

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<sup>395</sup> CO/730/2, No:148.

<sup>396</sup> Öke, *Musul Meselesi Kronolojisi*, p.78.

<sup>397</sup> PRO, FO 371/6346, From Colonial Office To Secretary Of State, 22 April 1921, No: E-4766, p.42.

New financial and economic agreements would be signed with the TGNA and Russia. The Russian Parliament would accept the Turkish borders determined by the treaties signed by the TGNA with Armenia and Georgia on condition that Batum would be given back to Georgia.<sup>398</sup> They also agreed that Turkey would use the Batumi port. A conference would be held with the states that had coasts on the Black Sea to open the Straits to the commercial vessels without jeopardizing Turkey's sovereignty in Istanbul. In addition to that, on 16 March 1921 People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs Çiçerin, declared that ten million rubles here would be given to the Turks to support Turkish economy but this promise was not kept.<sup>399</sup>

### **3.8 Koçgiri Rebellion (6 March 1921-17 June 1921)**

This revolt which took place in Sivas, Tunceli and Erzincan regions was supported by Kürt Teali Cemiyeti. The forces of Alişan Bey (the leader of the Koçgiri tribe) began to control the Kangal-Zara region. In August, they attacked a military unit linked to Ankara. Then Alişan Bey Refahiye and his brother Haydar Bey took control of İmranlı. Mustafa Kemal Pasha tried to persuade Alişan Bey by explaining that the Erzurum Congress decisions included the Kurds and suggested that he be a Sivas deputy. Alişan Bey initially had accepted the offer, but after he met Baytari Nuri who was in charge of establishing the Kurdish State in the name of Kürt Teali Cemiyeti, he refused the proposal. After a meeting they decided to ask for some requests from the TGNA. They requested to the TGNA to approve the Sèvres Treaty and to establish an independent Kurdish state consisting of Diyarbakır, Van, Bitlis, Elazığ and Tunceli. In addition, they requested the release of the Kurds in Elaziz (Elazığ), Malatya, Sivas and Erzincan prisons and withdrawing Turkish civil servants and troops from the regions where the majority of Kurds lived. They also declared that if the TGNA would not accept their request they would act by force of arms. Rebels attacked a military unit that was following the fugitives, two regiments were sent to repress the revolt and the rebellion was suppressed in June 1921. This rebellion was important because its aim was to force the TGNA to approve the Treaty of Sèvres thus a Kurdish State that would be established.

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<sup>398</sup> This is the first concession given by the National Pact.

<sup>399</sup> Mütercimler, Kurtulu Savaşı'na, p.299.

### **3.9 The Second Battle of Inonu (23 March- 1 April 1921)**

In order to force the provisions of the Treaty of Sèvres to be accepted by the Ankara Government a second massive military campaign was launched by the British-supported Greek Armies on 23 March 1921.<sup>400</sup> The Second Inonu War resulted in the victory of the Turkish Army, despite the fact that the Greek forces had more ammunition and superior weapons.

As a result, the victories against the Greeks in the Inonu Battles put the British into a difficult situation. By that time, support for the British attitude behind Greece, had begun to change and immediately the Allied Powers issued a declaration that they were impartial in the war. France de facto recognized the TGNA government and began to negotiate with its representatives. Thanks to the victory in the war people's confidence in the TGNA Government and its army had increased, and the spirit of national struggle has been strengthened. Italy gradually began to withdraw from Anatolia after the Second Battle of Inönü.

### **3.10 Cairo Conference (12 – 25 March 1921) and Its Influence on the Kurdish Policy**

Winston Churchill attended the Conference held in Cairo on 12-25 March 1921 and the chairman and the attending members of this conference were Sir Percy Cox, Miss Gertrude Bell, Colonel T. E. Lawrence, Major H. W. Young, Major E. W. C. Noel and Major R. D. Badcock.<sup>401</sup>

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<sup>400</sup> Genelkurmay Harp Dairesi Başkanlığı, *Türk İstiklal Harbi II (TIH)*, (Ankara,1994), p.287

<sup>401</sup> *The Times*, 'Mr. Churchill's Cairo Conference', 14 March 1921, p.12; *The Times*, 'Mr. Churchill's Conference At Cairo', 5 April 1921, p. 7; *The Times*, 'Mr. Churchill's Mission', 26 March 1921, p. 8; J. Kelly ve B. Klieman, 'Foundations of British Policy in the Arab World: The Cairo Conference of 1921', *Middle East Journal*, Vol.26, No.4, Autumn1972, p.446; *The Observer* 'Political Notes', 6 March 1921, p.12.

The agenda of the conference was to make decisions on the appointment of a ruler in Iraq, the determination of the position of British soldiers in the Middle East and the determination of the essentials for the British in this region and how to obtain them. Although it was not in the main agenda of the conference, the Sèvres Treaty and its regulations were subjected to evaluation. But the main issue was the future of the Iraq. In the conference, where Faisal was designated as the best candidate for being the King of Iraq and the decision to make this announcement was made,<sup>402</sup> the 4<sup>th</sup> session was reserved for the Kurdish issue. When the minutes of this session are analysed,<sup>403</sup> we can see how British policy concerning the Kurds and the region called Kurdistan, as well as its future state was determined.

During the 4<sup>th</sup> session<sup>404</sup> carried out to determine the Kurdish policy of Britain, the final status of the Treaty of Sèvres was reviewed by the Britain's experts on the Middle East Bell and Cox.<sup>405</sup> In this framework, the suggestion to refrain from including the Kurds who lived in the southern regions of the state of Iraq was discussed. Percy Cox stated that the Kurds were entitled to some rights with the Treaty of Sèvres and that he personally dealt with the Kurds to gain these rights. In addition to that, he stated that the position of the Kurds in British policies should be reviewed again as the one year term would have come to an end.<sup>406</sup>

During the conference, it was stated that Kurds were the majority in Kirkuk, Sulaymaniyah, and the northern regions of Mosul, and that Kirkuk and Mosul were governed by Kurdish officers under the supervision of British consultants at that date. It was stated that Fettah Pasha was well received by the Kurds despite his Turkish nationality, when he was assigned as the governor of Kirkuk. He also

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<sup>402</sup> Tripp, Charles, *A History of Iraq*, (Cambridge,2002), p.47; Townsend, John, 'Some Reflections on the Life and Career of Sir Percy Cox, G.C.M.G, G.C.I.E,K.C.I.S.', *Assian Affairs*, 24(3), 1993, p.271.

<sup>403</sup> PRO, CO 395/1/1; PRO, FO 371/6343, Report On Middle East Conference Held In Cairo And Jeruselam, Memorandum Drawn Up In London By Middle East Department Prior To Cairo Conference, Fourth Meeting Of The Political Committee, 15 March 1921, No: E-8001, p.76-77.

<sup>404</sup> PRO, FO 371/6343, "Report On Middle East Conference Held In Cairo And Jeruselam, Memorandum Drawn Up In London By Middle East Department Prior To Cairo Conference, Fourth Meeting Of The Political Committee", 15 March 1921, No: E-8001, p. 76-77.

<sup>405</sup> Barr, James, *A Line in the Sand Britain, France and the Struggle that Shaped the Middle East*, (Great Britain,2011), p.121

<sup>406</sup> Lazarev, *Emperyalizm*, p.194.

believed that the regions where the Kurds lived as the majority were an integral part of Iraq and that these regions should remain part of the country considering the economic benefits. After Cox explained that the people of Kirkuk wanted to take part in the elections to be held, like Gertrude Bell, he expressed the need for including the Kurds in the parliament of Iraq to be established with these elections. Cox admitted that he had serious doubts that the Kurds in Sulaymaniyah shared the same opinion with him concerning the issues discussed. It was claimed that if it was possible to talk about how willing the Kurds were to take part in elections, the Kurds in Kirkuk could be vested with the rights they were entitled to.

Major Young stated that<sup>407</sup> Kurds were waiting for the results of the elections to be held in Iraq before they expressed their expectations. It was argued that it was critical for the sustainability of British dominance in the region for the elections to be held as soon as possible. Moreover, it was emphasized that a Kurdish state established under the Iraqi High Commissioner's Office should not be under British dominance but this responsibility should be undertaken by the government of Iraq.<sup>408</sup>

During the meeting, in response to a question<sup>409</sup> by Churchill, Major Noel conveyed that the Kurds believed that the promises made with the Treaty of Sèvres were not kept. Noel also stated that although the Kurds had not attacked the British, the British had started to retreat from the region. It was argued that if the retreating after continued, the Turks could even conquer the region up to Sulaymaniyah. Noel expressed the view that the Kurds wanted to be governed locally and autonomously and that they did not favour the dominance of an Iraqi government. Major Noel suggested the foundation of a Kurdish state against any potential Turkish activities in Iraq under these circumstances, and that a certain share of the revenues to be gained from Iraq could be reserved for the Kurdish, if customs requirements allowed.<sup>410</sup> Major Young commented that the situation with the Kurds was similar to the situation between Jordan and Palestine. It was because under those circumstances Jordan had been allowed to establish a local authority that the same solution was promised to the Kurds. As was also emphasized by Major Young, it was desirable for

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<sup>407</sup> PRO, FO 371/6343, "Report on, p.77.

<sup>408</sup> Dockter, Warren, *Churchill*, p.143.

<sup>409</sup> PRO, FO 371/6343, "Report on, p.78.

<sup>410</sup> Dockter, Warren, *Churchill*, p.167.



Britain to keep the Kurds under control; <sup>411</sup> however, it would cause great problems for the British if a Kurdish state under British control was to be founded.<sup>412</sup>

The meeting was also discussed whether the Kurds would agree accept to live under Arab dominance.<sup>413</sup> In the meeting the most experienced person on the issue of Arabs was Lawrence. He took the floor and claimed that it was not possible for the Kurds to accept Arab dominance under any circumstances, and this would not even be achieved even if it was required by Arabs.<sup>414</sup> Lawrence argued that the Kurds should not be entitled to a principality or autonomy, and instead of assigning two governors to the Kurdish regions, one would be a better option. Gertrude Bell objected to Lawrence's suggestion and suggested that Britain should wait for six months for all matters to settle; then it should be clear after this period whether it was reasonable to include the Kurds in the Iraqi government. Major Young stated that at that time that it was possible to capitalize on the situation. Preparations to establish a separate election region for the Kurds were on-going and it was not necessary to send British troops or Arabian forces to the region. If it was necessary to take security measures, it would be appropriate to utilize the Kurdish troops when taking such measures.<sup>415</sup>

Churchill agreed with the suggestions put forward by Major Young. Churchill stated that financial support might be given to the important Kurdish leaders for this would increase the conflict between the Kurds and the Turks, and ensure the support of the Kurds in the order to establish a new order. Churchill stated that the Kurds would not to take part in the Iraq elections. Churchill argued that even if one member of the Serif family, who enjoyed good relations with the British, had agreed to the constitution and its requirements, there would always be the potential to cause challenging situations in the future. According to Churchill, it was possible that the

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<sup>411</sup> Lukitz, Liora, *A Quest in the Middle East, Gertrude Bell and The Making of Modern Iraq*, (London,2006), p.144.; Mejcher, Helmut, 'Iraq's External Relations 1921-26', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 13(3), 1977, p.347. (340-358).

<sup>412</sup> Townshend, Charles, *When God Made Hell The British Invasion of Mesopotamia and the Creation of Iraq,1914-1921*, (London,2011), p.507.

<sup>413</sup> PRO, FO 371/6343, "Report On,p.84,.

<sup>414</sup> Klieman, Aaron, *Foundations of British Policy in the Arab World: The Cairo Conference of 1921*, (1970),p.110.

<sup>415</sup> Meiselas, *Kurdistan*, p.79.

person to be elected, backed by the Arabic army, would have to put pressure on the Kurds to a great extent.<sup>416</sup> In this situation, Britain would face new problems. For this reason, Churchill argued that considering these circumstances, establishing a buffer Kurdish state between the Turks and Iraq would be the best solution for British interests.<sup>417</sup>

After Winston Churchill's speech, Percy Cox stated that the tax revenue obtained from Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyah for the government of these regions would be extremely sensitive. Cox claimed that it would be more favourable to wait instead of intervening in this situation and see how the Kurds would collaborate with Iraq and whether they would have good relations.

When Major Noel was asked how he would draw the border between Iraq and the Kurdish regions, he claimed that it was necessary for the borders to be set at the foot of the mountains. He also asked if there were any articles in the Treaty of Sèvres concerning the future of Amedia, and if it was to be included in the British region. The chairman of the meeting, Winston Churchill, stated that the matters suggested by Percy Cox on Iraq and the Kurdish state to be established was similar to the relations between the South African government and Rhodesia. He emphasized that it was necessary to refrain from the appearance that the British policies were supporting the Arabs completely and the Kurdish were patronized, and that it was possible to establish two different Kurdish regimes in the regions of Sulaymaniyah and Kirkuk. According to Churchill, the administrative structures in the region called Kurdistan and Armenia might work closely together and even found a single state in the future. The Baghdad Civil Government was assigned the task of governing the developments concerning a future Armenian-Kurdish state.

In response to another question put by Churchill, Gertrude Bell suggested that Mosul should definitely remain within the borders of Iraq. However, Churchill stated that the idea put forward by Young about establishing natural borders could be the ideal option. Churchill ended the meeting by stating that Kurdish unity could be

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<sup>416</sup> Kaymaz, *Musul Sorunu*, p.152.

<sup>417</sup> Olson, Robert, 'The Churchill-Cox Correspondence Regarding the Creation of Iraq: Consequences for British Policy Towards the Nationalist Turkish Government, 1921-1923', *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, Vol.5 (1991), p.123.

achieved under the supervision of British officers and the chairmanship of Major General Ironside and Major Noel and that this matter could be discussed by a sub-committee.<sup>418</sup>

It would not be wrong to say that Cox and Bell exerted their authority in the Cairo Conference, because if the decision made is analysed, it was decided to leave the issue suggested by Cox to time; and the suggestion of Britain establishing a new system in places where the Kurds live was accepted.<sup>419</sup> Also the suggestions put forward by Cox against Churchill's ideas of establishing a buffer state, could be due to the fact of his greater experience of the region. Cox was claiming that having Kurds in Iraq would always be a source of potential chaos, and this would give the British a chance to intervene any time they wanted.

When the opinions expressed above are analysed, this conference manifests proof that Britain had given up the idea of a Kurdish state that they had promised as part of the Treaty of Sèvres. The Kurdish state suggested in the Treaty of Sèvres did not have clear and concise lines. When even Churchill's suggestions to found a Kurdish buffer state made during the meeting, was not accepted,<sup>420</sup> it would not be reasonable to believe that Britain still wanted to establish a Kurdish state after that date. Again, here the Sulaymaniyah government re-established by Sheikh Mahmud has a different position. This government established by the Sheikh was a temporary government seen as a way out of the challenges Britain faced. Britain had shown the strongest reaction when Sheikh Mahmud declared himself as the King of Kurdistan. The events and the documents clearly show that this period starting with the Cairo Conference proves that the ambiguous promises made with the Treaty of Sèvres were never meant to be kept. Here, it is also possible to conclude that Britain was detaining the Kurds by making uncertain promises in order to get their support for their policies on Iraq. It was decided to keep the environment ready for utilizing

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<sup>418</sup> PRO, FO 371/6343, Report On Middle East Conference Held In Cairo And Jerusalem, Memorandum Drawn Up In London By Middle East Department Prior To Cairo Conference, Fourth Meeting Of The Political Committee, 15 March 1921, No: E-8001, p.76-77.

<sup>419</sup> Kaymaz, *Musul Sorunu*, p.154.

<sup>420</sup> Cook, Helena, *The Safe Haven in Northern Iraq: International Responsibility for Iraqi Kurdistan*, Essex University Press, (Essex,1995), p.16.

Kurds when necessary, and for Arabs to remain in Mesopotamia, within the borders determined by the British, by establishing a solid British government in the region called Southern Kurdistan which was rich in oil reserves.

As a result of both the discussions above and the decision reached in the Cairo Conference, the government of Southern Kurdistan was shaped.<sup>421</sup> During the Conference it was decided that the Mosul military brigade would stay in the main region of Iraq; a system would be established for the brigade of Mosul under the supervision of British officers; the lower management in this brigade was to consist of both Kurds and Arabs; the Iraq High Commissioner was to be in charge of all assignments; British consultants were to be assigned to Erbil, Koi Sanjaq and Rawanduz; and Sulaymaniyah should be governed by a governor assigned by the High Commissioner who would assign a separate governor to Kirkuk.

Churchill, as Secretary of State for the Colonies, expressed in his telegram<sup>422</sup> to the Iraq High Commissioner Percy Cox on 13<sup>th</sup> June 1921 that he had seriously pondered on the issues covered in the Cairo Conference but he still had not changed his mind. Thus Churchill still thought that it was possible to establish a buffer state between the Turks and the Arabs and this must be reassessed taking the reactions of the Turkish and the Arabs into consideration.

When we analyse the telegram sent to the Iraq High Commissioner by Winston Churchill on 24<sup>th</sup> June 1921 about British government's Kurdish policy, Churchill understood that it was realized that after Cairo Conference he acquired different ideas, and by mentioning this in his telegram, said that it was possible to reach a middle ground between the two suggestions made in the Cairo Conference.<sup>423</sup> Churchill, who built this middle ground according to the necessity of giving a firm decision in Mesopotamia, identified that this region could be developed in parallel with direct control by the Iraq High Commission.

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<sup>421</sup> Lazarev, *Emperyalizm*, p.197.

<sup>422</sup> Meiselas, Susan, *Kurdistan: In The Shadow of History*, Random House, (NewYork,1997), p.80-81.

<sup>423</sup> PRO, FO 371/6346, From Secretary of State For The Colonies To The High Commissioner Of Mesopotamia, 24 June 1921, p.138-139.

Churchill declared that his decision concerning whether local levies in Kirkuk must stay as part of the region or as part of Mesopotamia was to exclude Kirkuk local levies from Mesopotamia. Churchill stated that this was very advantageous for England and the aim was to found a buffer state composed of people who were not Arabic.<sup>424</sup>

Churchill emphasized in the telegram that he was aware of local challenges, and wrote that he was opposed to the suggestions previously made by Cox since those suggestions included some issues that he could not accept. In his dispatch Churchill criticised Cox for not explaining about the second group of Iraq Kurds that were divided into four groups. Churchill said that Erbil, Kirkuk and Kifri that had been invaded by England were not completely Kurdish or completely Arab. According to Churchill, when the military post in Kirkuk retreated, it left a structure in the region formed of British counsellors rather than Arab forces, and these were of the utmost importance for the protection of British interests.

Churchill reported to Percy Cox that troops formed of non-Arab subjects under the direction of British officials, namely, Kurds, Turks and Assyrians were to be deployed on specified borders. Churchill reported to Cox that England must follow a 'wait and see policy' because he believed that if Faisal built an authority based on both Iraqi and British authority brought together, England would have a unique opportunity to have more control in the region.<sup>425</sup>

In this telegram<sup>426</sup> Churchill also suggested possible borders from the Mashora Mountain to Tegana, surrounding Mosul and running across to Kala Neft near the Iranian border. Three independent regions were to be governed in this structure. According to Churchill's proposals the borders of Sulaymaniyah province may be extended by including Kurd subjects in Middle Diyala located in North Kızıl Rabat; Arabs living in Kirkuk may be divided into two regions, Samarra and Mosul;

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<sup>424</sup> Fontana, Guiditta, 'Before Creating Nations, Establishing States: Ethno-Religious Heterogeneity And The British Creation of Iraq in 1919-23', *Middle Eastern Studies*, V.46 (1), 2010, p.7.

<sup>425</sup> PRO, FO 371/6346, From Secretary Of State For The Colonies To The High Commissioner Of Mesopotamia, 24 June 1921, p.138.

<sup>426</sup> PRO, FO 371/6346, p.139.

and each one must have a governor in contact with the Iraq High Commission and an British counsellor should be assigned in Sulaymaniyah and Kirkuk; an administrative structure by which the North regions could be controlled by Mosul under the supervision of an British counsellor must be established immediately in order both to promote a more efficient system and meet the needs of the Iraq High Commission. Churchill believed that his suggestions were the best available options for establishing British dominance over the region. These three regions mentioned in Churchill's suggestions have a constitutional structure and would be immediately independent from each other. Churchill believed that a province formed in the region called South Kurdistan would play a central role in this system and in order to enable Percy Cox to connect with non-Arabs, a suitable official must be assigned. To help with developing interactions between Arabs and British Military Officers he would be assigned to Kirkuk or to a non-Arab region. It can be claimed that Churchill was expecting that the assignment of such a person would be very efficient in providing British dominance over the region. Also, Churchill must have thought that if his suggestion to exclude Sulaymaniyah was accepted, it would not pose a challenge to existing British policy. However, these suggestions made by Winston Churchill were not realized and no Kurdish buffer state was established.

Cox's correspondence with Churchill about the Cairo Conference between the dates 9-24 June 1921 discussed whether the Kurds must leave Iraq or not, following discussions about the Kurds in the Cairo Conference. Correspondence between Cox and Churchill continued until Cox's idea of accepting Kurds as part of Iraq was accepted, a policy which was confirmed in 1922.<sup>427</sup>

To sum up, for the most part two different opinions were discussed at the meeting: the first, represented by Percy Cox proposing, the Kurds' inclusion in Iraq; second, the independence of Southern Kurdistan, as expressed by Churchill. Both sides claimed that they offered a solution to the two issues: 1) to defend Britain's position in Mesopotamia and Southern Kurdistan in the long run; 2) to prevent the movements of Ankara towards Mesopotamia. Cox and Gertrude Bell - contrary to the

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<sup>427</sup> Main, Ernest, *Iraq from Mandate to Independence*, (London,1935), p.78; McDowall, *A Modern History*, p.167.

information given by other diplomats - suggested that Kurds outside Sulaimaniya region wanted to join Iraq. Churchill and the assistant secretary in the Middle East Department Hubert Young claimed that an independent South Kurdistan would balance the parliamentary government in Ankara on the one hand and the Arabic kingdom on the other hand, but Baghdad would be better suited for British interests. The decision in the Cairo Conference was to separate the administration of South Kurdistan from Iraq and to establish a separate state in the future. However, the decisions of the conference were not immediately implemented by the Colonial Ministry, which faced the election of Faisal as king in Baghdad and the establishment of a new colonial rule. Thus, Cox opposed to the decisions taken by the conference. He formed the British administration with officers who completely agreed with him. In October 1922, with the fall of Lloyd George's coalition government, Churchill would lose his position and decisions taken in the Cairo Conference would be completely ignored by Cox.

### **3.11 Battle of Kutahya – Eskişehir (10 July-24 July 1921)**

The battle, between Greece and the forces led by the Ankara Government of the Turkish government, started with the attack of the Greek forces on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1921.<sup>428</sup> The Ankara Government forces had to withdraw to the east of the Sakarya River without losing the battle which ended on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1921. The Kütahya-Eskişehir War was the first and only military failure of the Ankara government. This situation caused the national struggle supporters to fall into despair for a short time. It was proposed to move the assembly to Kayseri. The ‘Commander-in-Chief Law’ was issued on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1921, as the seriousness of the situation necessitated immediate decisions. Mustafa Kemal Pasha was selected as the Commander-in-Chief by this law. In addition, the Assembly transferred all the powers to Mustafa Kemal Pasha.<sup>429</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> Baytok, Taner, *İngiliz Kaynaklarında Türk Kurtuluş Savaşı*, (Ankara,1970), p.139.

<sup>429</sup> TBMM (TGNA) Zabıt Ceridesi, V.12, 5 August 1921 Ankara, p.19-19., Yaman, Ahmet Emin, Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisinde Büyük Zafer, *Ankara Üniversitesi Dergisi*, p.151.

### 3.12 Assignment of Faisal as the King of Iraq

In accordance with the decision taken in Cairo Faisal was acclaimed King of Iraq<sup>430</sup> with the approval and recommendations of Churchill, Bell, Lawrence and Percy Cox.<sup>431</sup> Faisal ascended the throne on 23<sup>rd</sup> of August 1921 with the result of a 96% yes vote from a referendum.<sup>432</sup> Faisal, who started acting together with the cabinet he formed, implemented policies largely decided upon by England following their joint-treaty of 1922.<sup>433</sup> Nearly all the expectations of the parties signing the treaty were met,<sup>434</sup> since they signed the treaty with the belief that realizing this plan corresponded to endorsing an Arab nationalism.

It may be said that developments starting with the establishment of a government in Iraq under the authority of King Faisal, negatively affected the mission of establishing a Kurdish state in the region. The suppressing of the Koçgiri Rebellion which started in Anatolia by the Ankara government was an example of another issue contributing to a real break down in the progress of founding an independent Kurdistan. Faisal's opposition to splitting Kurdish regions from Iraq also affected this. In contrast with this opposition Faisal never opposed having good relations with the Kurds and thought that the communication between Baghdad and the Kurds should be close because it would benefit Iraq. Believing in good relations was only based on protecting the unity of Iraq. Faisal in this context never allowed

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<sup>430</sup> IOR, L/PS/10/919, Cox to Churchill, 9 July 1921.

<sup>431</sup> Gauvain, Auguste, 'Five Years of French Policy in the Near East', *Foreign Affairs; an American Quarterly Review*, Vol.3, No. ¼, 1924/1925, p.282; *The Irish Times*, 'The King Of Irak: Official Announcement', 23 August 1921; Dawisha, Adeed, *Iraq: A Politic History: From Independence To Occupation*, (Princeton,2009), p. 8.

<sup>432</sup> Walker, Martin, 'The Making of Modern Iraq', *The Wilson Quarterly* (1976-), V.27, Spring 2003, p.32.

<sup>433</sup> Mejer, Helmut, *Imperial Quest for Oil: Iraq 1910-1928*, (Oxford,1976) , p.53.; Mejer, Helmut, 'Oil and British Policy towards Mesopotamia 1914-1918', *Middle Eastern Studies*, V.8(3), October 1972, (p.377-391).

<sup>434</sup> Masalha, N., 'Faisal's Pan-Arabism 1921-33', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 27(4), 4 October 1991, p.680.



Kurdish separatist movements. Also, except for the mission of protecting territorial unity, the fact that most Mosul Kurds boycotted the election during Faisal's accession to the throne became one of the facts Faisal never forgot.<sup>435</sup>

Cox, sharing the same idea as Faisal, thought that having local autonomy for the Kurds in Iraq was the best idea for British policy too. But another issue to be underlined here is Cox's suggestion of assigning British counsellors to this autonomous structure. And this may be explained as classical British policy which necessitates having far-reaching control in all matters.<sup>436</sup>

Within the administrative structure shaped by Churchill's and Cox's suggestions, the places where Kurds were densely populated, especially I Sulaymaniyah and in Kirkuk, the idea of recognizing Arab domination was never approved.<sup>437</sup> Their opposition could be understood from both the breaking out of rebellions and from their largely boycotting the referendum over the choice of Faisal as king.<sup>438</sup>

During the period when Faisal was assigned as king, Percy Cox and Halil Bedirhan, were in correspondence. The letter bearing the signature of Halil Bedirhan and dated 28<sup>th</sup> of October 1921 is very important.<sup>439</sup> Halil Bedirhan in his letter claims that Kurdish people who had refused to pay taxes for the last two years as a proof of not submitting to Turkish domination in the Dersim, Diyarbakır, Bitlis and Van regions, were waiting for the Bedirhan Family to put the Kurds together. Halil Bedirhan also declared that they, as the Bedirhan family, wanted to found a buffer state with the help of England under the mandate of England between the states of Arabia and Turkey. Halil Bedirhan, who issued a guarantee of living in security and peace for Christians and Armenians in this newly founded state, also had some requests from England. The first and most urgent of these requests was that military

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<sup>435</sup> Goodman, Susan, *Gertrude Bell*, (USA, 1985), p.96.

<sup>436</sup> Thomas, Martin, 'Bedouin Tribes and the Imperial Intelligence Services in Syria, Iraq and Transjordan in the 1920s', *Journal of Contemporary History*, V.38, October 2003, p.549.

<sup>437</sup> Gunter, Michael M., *The Kurds In Turkey*, (Oxford, 1990), p.46.

<sup>438</sup> Randal, Jonathan C., *After Such Knowledge, What Forgiveness, My Encounters with Kurdistan*, (Oxford, 1999), p.121.

<sup>439</sup> Meiselas, *Kurdistan*, p.121.

officers like Major Noel must come to the region and arbitrate between the Kurds and British government, while the second request was for armaments, including machine guns and 5000 infantry weapons. Cox mentioned that Halil Bedirhan came to Baghdad and held negotiations there in November 1921. There is not enough information about which topics they talked about during Halil Bedirhan's negotiations in Baghdad. But Cox's opinion was not changed from the course of following events.<sup>440</sup>

### **3.13 Battle of Sakarya (23 August - 13 September 1921)**

The Greeks wanted to make a final attack and go to the east of the Sakarya River and to occupy Ankara after destroying Turkish forces. Therefore they started a military campaign on 23<sup>rd</sup> of August 1921. The war lasted until 13<sup>rd</sup> of September 1921. With the order of Mustafa Kemal, *"there is no defence line, but a defence territory, and that territory is the whole of the homeland. Not even an inch of the homeland may be abandoned without being soaked in the blood of its citizens..."* Greek forces were defeated.

The Sakarya Battle was a war of live or death for the Turkish nation; In the War of Independence, destiny was determined. The war ended with the victory of the Turkish army. It was the last defensive battle of the National War of Independence. The enemy's attack power has been exhausted; the desire to seize the Turkish lands had been defeated and the homeland defended. This victory helped to the TGNA to gain power and new treaties were signed with Russia and France.

### **3.14 Treaty of Kars (13 October 1921)**

After the victory of the Sakarya Battles resulted in the victory of the Ankara Government, the Treaty of Kars was signed on 13<sup>th</sup> October 1921 between the three Soviet Republic, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia and the Parliamentary Government represented by Kâzım Karabekir via Soviet Russia. According to this

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<sup>440</sup> Olson, Robert, 'The Second Time Around: British Policy Towards The Kurds (1921-22)', *Die Welt des Islams*, 27, Netherlands 1987, p.102 (p.91-102).

treaty, all three republics regarded the Moscow Treaty as valid for them as well. Thus, the eastern border of Turkey became definitive and the Armenian Question ended.

Because the problems of the East were solved completely for that period, the Turkish Grand National Assembly found the opportunity to concentrate on the west, where it was now able to achieve its goals more easily. Possible border problems with the Armenians were avoided. Since then, the treaty has not been altered, and the eastern borders have been preserved. The only article of the Treaty of Kars that may be defined as a failure was that Batum, which was accepted within the borders of the National Pact, was left to Georgia by making concessions from the National Pact principles.<sup>441</sup> But this was a logical compromise in the name of politics and the idea of permanently solving the problems in the east in order to concentrate to the west.

### **3.15 Ankara Agreement (20 October 1921)**

France had started bilateral relations with the Turks by signing a temporary truce with the TGNA 3 months before the Treaty of Sèvres was signed. The French sent Henry Franklin-Bouillon, one of its former ministers, informally to Ankara on 9 June 1921. He met Mustafa Kemal, foreign minister Yusuf Kemal and Chief of General Staff Kazım Karabekir and engaged in negotiations. However, the French did not want to sign an agreement without seeing the result of the Battle of Sakarya. The victory of the TGNA in the Sakarya Battle also affected Turkish-French relations positively. And the Ankara Agreement was signed on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1921 to end the military activities on the Turkish-French Front. Departing from the original political decisions in the Treaty of Lausanne, the two sides agreed on the settling of the southern boundary of the territory under the TGNA administration.

Thanks to the Ankara Treaty the military activities between French and Turkish forces were ended so the TGNA had an opportunity to transfer its military power to the Western Anatolia to expel the Greek forces from the homeland. With the Ankara Agreement, the Syrian border was secured. And for the first time a

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<sup>441</sup> It was also among the commitments of the Moscow Treaty that signed between TGNA and Russia on 16 March 1921.

member of the Allied Powers, France, accepted the National Pact. It was the beginning of the dissolution among the Allied Powers.

### **3.16 Henry Rawlinson's Report on the Kurds and the Reactions to this Report**

Henry Rawlinson prepared a report on the Kurds upon Churchill's request dated on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1922. This report is important in the sense that it explains the situation of the land unoccupied by the British briefly and succinctly. When Rawlinson's report is analysed, it can be seen that it focuses on three questions; how the politics of the Allied Powers was influenced by the combination of Turkish nationalist forces; to what extent Allied aims had been undermined by the changed situation in Turkey; what were the expectations and wishes of the Turkish nationalists regarding the peace agreement.

According to Rawlinson, it is not possible to answer these questions in one sentence. The reason was that the process initiated with the congresses held in Erzurum and Sivas were a complex, elegant and interwoven one. It is difficult to talk about a consensus amongst Turkish nationalists in the beginning. Similarly, the opinion of the Allied forces concerning the way the Ottoman land is to be shared after the war had begun to change as well. Just as developments such as the occupation of Istanbul and Izmir and the announcement of the Treaty of Sèvres<sup>442</sup> caused the differences between Turkish nationalists to decrease, so the difference of opinion among the Allied forces started to increase.

According to the report Rawlinson prepared, there were two main issues concerning Turkish nationalists that Britain has to deal with. The first issue was the mobility of the Turkish population; this population was a great advantage to the occupation of Kars by the Turkish nationalists and their attack against the Greeks. The second issue was growing liaison of the Turkish intelligence officers (trained by the Germans) with religious leaders in Iraq, Palestine and Egypt and with the revolutionary Muslim leaders in India.<sup>443</sup> As the Allied forces were unable to reach a consensus, Rawlinson expressed his concern that the Turkish nationalists would take

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<sup>442</sup> In the document the date of Sèvres Treaty was wrongly given as 1921 but it was actually 1920.

<sup>443</sup> Olson, 'The Second', p.92

steps to unite all Sunni Muslims from the Straits to the Caspian Sea; from Dagestan to Baku.

It is important that to see one British officer confessing that the Turks still have power in above mentioned regions so Britain could have difficulties making up policies as the occasion demanded. This is important as it reflects how serious British concerns were, regarding what was waiting at the end of the road as the Turkish War of Independence continued. I believe that it would be wrong to assume that these concerns stated by Rawlinson related only to Britain. Developments have shown that after a while each Allied state failed to create a policy looking after their own interests and this caused the unity amongst them to fail.

Rawlinson pointed out the policies for Britain need to follow to achieve its own political goals, if it would be necessary to follow a political path different from the one the Allies were on. According to Rawlinson, a choice needed to be made between using force to weaken the Turkish nationalists or to follow a moderate path. According to Rawlinson, in order for Britain to achieve its goals, it should not be against Islam, should employ a wait and see policy, not spend too much money and follow a sustainable policy.

Rawlinson believed that all four requirements would be fulfilled if the uncontrolled Kurdish population in the Eastern cities of Anatolia were to be taken under control. According to Rawlinson, it would not really be difficult to take the Kurdish population under control as they have managed themselves for years. On the other hand, as the Kurds had an advantage in terms of population in the Eastern cities, this could be used as a weapon against the Turks. Considering all these facts, he stated that it was possible to cause many simultaneous Kurdish rebellions and if this was achieved, the position of the Turkish nationalists would be weakened and it would be easier for Britain to achieve its goals within the region. Rawlinson's proposal supports the thesis that British officers encouraged Kurds to revolt against the Turks.<sup>444</sup>

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<sup>444</sup> Olson, 'The Second', p.92.

Rawlinson believed that producing many simultaneous Kurdish revolts would both help to weaken the Turkish nationalists and to ensure British interests in the region. According to him, to give arms and money, to each Kurdish tribal leader to trigger Kurdish revolts against the Turks would not be so expensive. The Black Sea coast, which would be bombed in the night by a British destroyer could be used to establish the British dominion over the region and propaganda activities would be made by spies in order to break Turkish resistance. Rawlinson stated that if more focus was placed on espionage activities on land, he would be able to show how weak the position of the Turkish nationalists was and the west and the east could be disconnected.<sup>445</sup>

It may be claimed that the suggestion of Rawlinson was misguided. Because, the use of British destroyer to attack Turkish lands, to trigger Kurdish rebellion, would have provoked a strong reaction in the Muslim world. Also, even if a Kurdish rebellion would be triggered as a result of an attack, it would be expensive to manipulate this rebellion and this would make it less likely to maintain the rebellion within the limits desired. Also the idea of using a British destroyer to attack Anatolia would contradict the above mentioned criteria put forward by Rawlinson for Britain to achieve its goals. Also, this action could cause the Kurds and Turks to unite against Britain because of the religious sensitivity of the nations, and put Britain in a worse position.

Rawlinson also made three important suggestions to the London government; the assignment of the Kurdish Eyup Pasha in Oltu as the governor of Erzurum, the assignment of Hussein Pasha of Eleskirtli as a manager in Kara Kilise and Bayezit and encouragement of the Kurds in Dersim for a rebellion. When these recommendations of Rawlinson's are analysed in detail, it can be claimed that they were the elements of the part of the 'divide and rule' policy.

According to Rawlinson, an environment in which the Kurdish rebels could act freely would be achieved if the Pontic Greeks rebelled and the conflict between the Turkish nationalists and the government in Istanbul was used to advantage, as it was possible to occupy Erzincan at any moment.

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<sup>445</sup> Olson, 'The Second', p.93.

The report of the Rawlinson was discussed in the meeting dated on 8<sup>th</sup> March 1922 with the participation of Colonial Office Assistant secretary John Shuckburgh, Middle East officers Reader Bullard and Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen and military adviser T. E. Lawrence. The outcome of this meeting was presented to Sir Percy Cox, British High Commissioner of Iraq by John Shuckburgh. John Shuckburgh has also expressed to Cox that Rawlinson's suggestion concerning a rebellion of the Kurdish population against the Turkish has been disregarded in the Colonial Office. However, Cox added an annotation that it would not be reasonable to completely disregard Rawlinson's opinions and these should be reviewed again in the future.

Lawrence had also prepared a report on the Kurds and Turks on March 1922.<sup>446</sup> In this report, Lawrence explained that manipulating the Kurds to act against the Turks would not result in stopping the Kemalist movement and those agents who were to provide guidance for the Kurds should be sent to the area immediately as in the Hejaz operation. In addition, Lawrence believed that the right decision would be to assign to office the candidates the Kurds themselves elect; and that this assignment needs to be handled with precision as it was difficult to access the regions where the Kurdish population lived, especially Dersim. It can be seen that Lawrence believed the idea of manipulating the Kurds with a warship, causing them to fall out with the Turks, and ultimately negatively affecting the Anatolian movement was far from rational. According to Lawrence, it was difficult to get the Kurds to rebel even if the conditions stated by him were fulfilled.

Actually, when Rawlinson's and Lawrence's ideas are compared, it can be seen that Rawlinson approached the issue without any consideration of the region or the Kurds but Lawrence's approach was from a perspective that accurately defined the situations of both the Kurds and Turks.

Lawrence emphasized that the economic aspect of causing a Kurdish rebellion should be analysed, considering the amount spent on the Arab revolt. In the report he stated that the British had to provide 8 ships, 50 British agents, £5 million

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<sup>446</sup> Olson, 'The Second', p. 93.

of capital and £16 million as cautionary reserves.<sup>447</sup> With this reminder, Lawrence concluded that a Kurdish rebellion would require even more pecuniary resources and the outcome of the rebellion should be analysed in detail. Lawrence believed that if a Kurdish rebellion was to be triggered, this should not only be about a conflict between the Turkish and Kurdish but should also include the Armenians and ultimately trigger a conflict between the Kurds and the Armenians. It can be seen that Lawrence tried to expand Rawlinson's opinion by stating that only this kind of a conflict would ensure British domination of the region.

Overall, the report of Rawlinson may be considered as an overview of the policies implemented by Britain until the beginning of 1922. Although the plans to provoke the Kurds against the Turks in 1921-22, as explained in Rawlinson's report, caused heated arguments to arise from time to time, especially after the second half of 1921, the ideas of those who objected to Rawlinson gained more acceptances in British policies. It can be said that the reason why these ideas gained acceptances in British policies was the success of the Turkish nationalists in Anatolia, especially against the Greeks. It can also be argued that the treaties signed with France, Italy, Soviet Russia and Afghanistan was effective in this context.

### **3.17 Cecil John Edmonds (1889-1979) and His Activities**

Cecil John Edmonds<sup>448</sup> suggested<sup>449</sup> the existence of two alternatives to the administration planned to be established in 1921 in the Sulaymaniyah and Kirkuk region.<sup>450</sup> The first of them was to include Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyah in Iraq with a unilateral decision, whether the people liked it or not; but it was anticipated that this

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<sup>447</sup> Olson, 'The Second', p. 96.

<sup>448</sup> He started his duty in Levant Consul service in 1910 as a translator. Then became vice consular in Bunshire in 1913 and political military officer in Western Iran. Between the years of 1919 and 1925 he served on different duties in the Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyah. Gunter, *Historical Dictionary ...*, p.46.

<sup>449</sup> PRO, AIR 23/368, From Edmonds To H. E. High Commissioner, Baghdad, Major E. W. Noel and Captain W. A. Lyon, 2 November 1922, p.77c-77d.

<sup>450</sup> Edmonds, Cecil John, *Kürtler, Türkler ve Araplar: Kuzeydoğu Irak'ta Siyaset, Seyahat ve İnceleme (1919-1925)*, (trans.Serdar-Serap Sengül), (İstanbul, 2003), p.167.



might cause some problems.<sup>451</sup> The second of them was to establish an indirect administration under the leadership of some eligible Kurdish leader who would get the support of the people and not easily be fooled by Turkish propaganda. Edmonds expressed an opinion within the context of this policy, that the Baban Family would not be a good alternative since according to him, although the family were popular in the region, even the doyen of the family did not know what Kurdish was and because of their only being concerned about the history of their family rather than political issues of the period.

In his telegram to Major Noel and Captain Lyon on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1922<sup>452</sup> Edmonds noted that Sayyid Taha had already stated his plans for reoccupying the Rawanduz and that therefore learning information about the total amount of his forces was important for the British forces. Edmonds mentioned that Sayyid Taha's position would mean the British accepting his invitation to Erbil and him isolating himself from both Turks and Iranians. Most interestingly, Edmonds said that if Sayyid Taha and Simko were in contact with Turks and Iranians, it would not be a problem for the British since Sayyid Taha and Simko played an active role in the Kurdish policy of Iraq. Edmonds claimed that if the British did not make use of Sayyid Taha, he could claim the return of Mergavar, Tergavar and Urmiye from the British, since he was close to the Iranian government, and his British representative must be asked what he thought of the idea. When Edmonds asked Sayyid Taha whether Simko would settle in Merga or not, Taha said it was possible, but after learning that it was dangerous because of the existence of rioters in Merga, he foresaw that the best place for Simko would be around Erbil.

Edmonds stated that the opportunity to use two powerful Kurdish leaders like Sayyid Taha and Simko was unlikely to crop up again and this twosome must be used for the benefit of the British.<sup>453</sup> Edmonds' views are useful for showing British

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<sup>451</sup> Edmonds, Cecil John, *East and West of Zagros, Travel: War and Politics in Persia and Iraq 1913–1921*, (Paris, 2010) *St. Antony's College Archives*, 'Cecil John Edmonds Collection', EDMONS, GB165-0095, p. 1.

<sup>452</sup> PRO, AIR 23/368, From Edmonds To H. E. High Commissioner, Baghdad, Major E. W. Noel and Captain W. A. Lyon, 2 November 1922, p.77c-77d.

<sup>453</sup> PRO, AIR 23/368, From Edmonds To, p.77c-77d.

officials' attitude to the Kurds. Edmonds spoke about Sayyid Taha saying that although he had never met with him, from British military officers' reports about him being sober and moderate and having a modern mentality, he thought that Sayyid Taha would be the most suitable candidate for implementing that system.<sup>454</sup>

Edmonds criticized the limitless powers over their tribes exerted by Kurdish Aghas.<sup>455</sup> Edmonds claimed that Sheikh Mahmud's dissatisfied attitudes and actions caused him to rethink the idea to take back Rawanduz and referred to his anxiety about the possibility of the Sulaymaniyah problem flaring up again. He also commented on Goldsmith's suggestion for Sheikh Mahmud's being assigned to his old position again, saying that Major Noel shared his ideas with him, but since Sheikh Mahmut had a defiant personality, this suggestion would not provide positive results.

According to Edmonds; it was easy to influence the Kurds of the South, because they easily ran or surrendered in the face of irresistible force. But if the troops sent to them were insufficient or indecisive, the Kurds might turn into a force that should not be underestimated. Indeed the Turks in 1918 and the British in 1919 and 1922 experienced this reality. Edmonds believed that it took time to solve problems caused by tribes but that the way to success lay in quick response. If the problems were solved decisively at the beginning and immediately removed, small forces would be enough to provide security.<sup>456</sup> After mentioning that using force is so important for controlling the Kurds but displaying force in the correct proportions was also crucial, he emphasized that any problem with Kurds might be easily handled if resolved at the very beginning but if too much time passed, it might turn even into a bloody feud.<sup>457</sup>

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<sup>454</sup> Edmonds, *Kürtler, Türkler*, p.170

<sup>455</sup> Othman Ali, 'Southern Kurdistan During The Last Phase Of Ottoman Control: 1839–1914', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol.17/2, 1997, p.284.

<sup>456</sup> Edmonds, *Kürtler, Türkler*, p. 438

<sup>457</sup> Edmonds, *Kürtler, Türkler*, p. 438

### **3.19 An Evaluation of the Allegations that the Ankara Government Gave Autonomy to the Kurds**

The birth of the claims that the Ankara government led by Mustafa Kemal Pasha gave the Kurds autonomy is based on a parliament session claimed to be held on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1922. It is understood that British Ambassador Horace Rumbold who was in İstanbul gave information about this session to Lord Curzon on 29<sup>th</sup> of March 1922.<sup>458</sup> Also Robert Olson in his work called '*The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and The Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880-1925*'<sup>459</sup> provided information about a draft autonomy which was claimed to be prepared by TGNA, as a result of his research in British archives.<sup>460</sup> According to the information presented by the aforementioned sources, the draft aimed at giving autonomy to Kurds was discussed in a closed session held on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1922 and was passed into law with 373 aye vote against 64 black ball. But researches in Turkish archives reveal that there was no session on the claimed date. For this reason the context of the draft which was claimed to be accepted by TGNA must be discussed in the light of the information presented in the British archives. The decision which was claimed to be passed into law may be summarized like this;

TGNA accepted establishing a Kurdish autonomy. According to this, Kurdish leaders would be able to choose a governor general, deputy general governor and an inspector in places where mostly the Kurds lived. TGNA would decide whether these persons were to be from Kurds or Turks. TGNA would assign someone thought by the Kurds to have enough experience of administration to serve as a Kurd governor general for 3 years. At the end of this period, if the Kurds did not request an extension, a new governor general would be assigned. Although the TGNA would decide to assign a Turk or a Kurd for the deputy governor a general position, the governor general would be chosen by the Kurdish Committee. But appointment of a governor general, deputy governor general and inspector would be realized with approval of the Ankara Government. The Kurdish National Assembly would be founded for 3 years with a general election in the Eastern provinces. This parliament

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<sup>458</sup> PRO, FO 371/7781, Administration of Kurdistan, 29 March 1922, No: E 3553, p.109-117.

<sup>459</sup> Olson, Robert, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion 1880-1925*, (Texas,1989),

<sup>460</sup> PRO. FO 371/778 Eastern E.3553/96/95.

would gather on 1<sup>st</sup> March for 4 months every year. If the parliament did not complete its work within this time, the time of the session would be extended upon request of the net majority of members. The Kurdish general assembly would have the right of supervising the income budget of the Eastern Provinces Administration and inquiring about injustices experienced by officials working under their administration. The Assembly would be the decision maker for resolving all conflicts. All these decisions were to be transmitted for the information of the Turkish Grand National Assembly. The Turkish Grand National Assembly would be the decision maker for solving all conflicts between the Governor General and the Kurdish Assembly. Both parties were obliged to obey the decision of the Assembly. Until the borders were decided upon by a mixed commission, the Kurdistan region would be formed of Van, Bitlis, and Diyarbakır provinces with some townships and districts of Dersim Shire. Jurisdiction organization in Kurdistan would be in compliance with local traditions for special regions. Half of this organization committee would consist of Turks; the other half would consist of Kurds. Any Turkish officials who resigned would be replaced by Kurdish officials. As of the date of enactment of this law, taxes under the name of war obligations or any other similar issues would not be levied. Taxes would be received once a year. The income tax to be paid to the Ankara Government would be decided by a commission formed of representatives coming from the TGNA and Kurdish National Assembly. A military unit would be established in order to provide security in the Eastern Provinces. The law regulating this military unit would be prepared by the Kurdish Assembly. But the main command post of the gendarmes would be administered by high ranked Turkish military officials until the date deemed necessary. Kurdish military officers and soldiers in the Turkish army would continue at their posts until peace was achieved but after that date if they wished, they would have the option to return to their own hometown. After peace, prices of all animals and materials collected from people during war or after war would be paid back to their owners within 12 months. Kurdish would be only used in the Kurdish Assembly, in governorate and government administration. Kurdish would be taught in schools. The first duty of the Kurdish Assembly was to found a university including departments of law and medicine. The Kurdish Assembly would not implement any

taxes without approval of the governor general and the TGNA. They would not give any privileges without consulting and getting approval of the TGNA.<sup>461</sup>

There is no evidence that these articles were discussed in the TGNA. Robert Olson who made this claim shows British archives<sup>462</sup> as evidence for his claims and gives no information about his making researches in Turkish archives. Some Turkish politicians and researchers who presented Olson's claims explain the fact that no document was found in the Turkish archives relating to the issue due to the fact that there were many documents that did not come to light in the Turk archives. It is true that there are many documents that did not come to light but it would be better to approach this issue with suspicion until such documents do come to light. In addition to this, it must be mentioned that the official holiday in Turkey was Friday until 1935, and the date when this draft was claimed to be discussed coincides with Friday. Making any session on that day is of low probability. A few sessions made on a Friday were because of a 'state of emergency' during the Turkish Independence War. To illustrate this, the "bill of law about creating a supreme military command position and assigning Mustafa Kemal Pasha to this position in order to transfer the troops faster" was accepted in the 'closed session' held on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1921, on Friday.<sup>463</sup> Another possibility which comes to mind is the possibility that the date of the session on which the draft of autonomy law was claimed to be discussed was modified in British archives. In order to explain this, Turkish archive records were analysed but there is no information about Erzurum representative Salih Bey and Mersin Representative Selahaddin Bey taking floor in a session for discussing Kurdish autonomy in any record including the Turkish Assembly records. For example, in the closed session dated 6-7 February 1922 that these two representatives attended, "custom taxes for corn and corn flours to be imported to Black Sea harbours and cereals to be imported to Izmit Shire" were discussed. In the closed session dated 9 February 1922, budget law was discussed. In Turkey until 1935 legal holiday was on Fridays and 10<sup>th</sup> of February 1922 was on Friday so there was no session on that date. The next TGNA session held on Saturday 11 February, started

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<sup>461</sup> PRO, FO 371/7781, Administration, p.117

<sup>462</sup> PRO, FO 371/778 Eastern E.3553/96/95

<sup>463</sup> <http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/TUTANAK/GZC/d01/CILT02/gcz01002062.pdf> (15 February 2014)

with the issues about people working as spies for Greece and then continued with budget talks. No other issues concerning Kurdish autonomy were discussed later that day. Further evidence to prove that no sessions were held in the parliament for giving autonomy to the Kurds is the implementation of a sequence number given for each session of the TGNA. In secret session minutes, the numbers of the sessions in question follow each other. For example, the session dated 9<sup>th</sup> February 1922 was numbered ‘Meeting 157’ and the session dated 11<sup>th</sup> February 1922 was numbered ‘Meeting 158’ and there is no information about the existence of another session made between these dates.<sup>464</sup>

Also it is claimed that 437 representatives claimed to attend the session in question, which was the number of members of the First Parliament on paper, who were in service between the dates 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 1920 -15<sup>th</sup> of April 1923 and it is seen in the records that on average only 365 people attended any session. Even if we do not take the number of representatives into consideration, since there were also Kurdish representatives among them, it is very interesting that none of Kurdish representatives talked this issue later or mentioned about this in their memoirs.

Incidentally, another reference point of research claiming autonomy was given to Kurds by Ankara Government was an interview with Mustafa Kemal, the leader of Turkish National Movement, which was given in January 1923. In a press conference by Mustafa Kemal Pasha in 1923, in Izmit, his answer to Mehmet Emin’s question about the Kurdish problem is of utmost importance.

*“Those in our national borders are only a Kurdish majority in limited places. Over time, by losing their population concentration, they have settled with Turkish elements in such a way that if we try to draw a border on behalf of the Kurds we have to finish with Turkishness and Turkey, for example in the regions of Erzerum, Erzinjan, Sivas and Kharput, — and do not forget the Kurdish tribes on the Konya desert. This is why instead of considering Kurdishness in isolation, some local autonomies will be established in accordance with our constitution. Therefore, whichever provinces are predominantly Kurd will administer themselves autonomously. But, apart from that, we have to describe the people of Turkey together. If we do not describe them thus, we can expect problems particular to*

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<sup>464</sup> TBMM Gizli Celse Zabıtları, C. II, (Ankara, 1980).

*themselves . . . it cannot be correct to try to draw another border [between Kurds and Turks]. We must make a new programme.*”<sup>465</sup>

Some researchers such as Bruinessen<sup>466</sup> representing the separatist movement try to deduce from Mustafa Kemal Pasha’s words that Kurds must have an independent state but this is hard to deduce. Bruinessen supported the idea that Mustafa Kemal Pasha carried out his promise for autonomy for the Kurds but after the Turkish Independence War was over, he renounced these ideas. The claim for firstly promising Kurds autonomy but then renouncing it may cause Kurds and Turks to be hostile towards each other and Kurds who felt the psychology of being misused started separatist actions.

Considering the explanation from the perspective of the system foreseen by the 1921 Constitution, it must not be wrong to say that Mustafa Kemal Pasha did not foresee the autonomy as being for the founding a separate state, but the system in which mayors of the region were elected by the people of the region. In fact, when Mustafa Kemal held this meeting the 1921 Constitution was in force and he referred to the provisions of the constitution. Indeed, According to the article 10, Turkey was divided into provinces in the terms of their geographical location and economic situations, the provinces were divided into districts. Moreover, according to the article 11, provinces had legal personality and autonomy in regional affairs. According to the laws legislated by the TGNA, the administration of foundations, schools, education, health, agriculture, public works and social welfare were within the competence of provincial councils. However, Internal and external politics, shari'a, justice, military affairs, international economic relations and the general taxation of the government and the cases damage the beneficiaries of the other provinces were exception. The region would have power to make decisions autonomously in the above mentioned issues and they would implement such decisions autonomously. This was the potential system which Mustafa Kemal outlined in his interview. In this case to claim that 'absolute autonomy' was given to the Kurds would be the false evaluation.

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<sup>465</sup> McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, p. 190, Hughes, Edel, 'Political Violence and Law Reform in Turkey:Securing the Human Rights of the Kurds?' *The Journal of Conflict Studies*,Vol.26, No:2,2006.

<sup>466</sup> Bruinessen, Martin van, *Kurdistan Üzerine Yazılar*, (trans. Levent Kafadar), (Istanbul,2002) p.32.

### **3.20 Armistice of Mudanya (14 October 1922)**

At the beginning of 1922, the most important task of the national forces was to remove Greek occupation forces from Western Anatolia and Thrace and to establish peace according to the principles of the National Pact. In 1922 Mustafa Kemal attempted to obtain a bloodless victory before he made his last military strike. For this purpose, in order to come into contact with Allies again and to ensure a peace that was compatible with the principles of the National Pact, if possible, the Deputy Foreign Minister Yusuf Kemal Bey was sent to Europe in February 1922.

The Sakarya victory (13<sup>th</sup> September 1921), in line with the positive results obtained from the outside political direction, provided positive political and internal results. After the Sakarya victory, Western states began to change their thoughts about Turkey and their attitudes towards the Greeks. Even the British, who always supported the Greeks, did not underestimate the Sakarya victory and saw that they would not be able to fulfil their wishes in Anatolia with the help of the Greeks. The British press also wrote that the first condition of peace was the withdrawal of the Greek army from Anatolia.<sup>467</sup>

On October 3, the Mudanya Conference was opened. Ismet Pasha represented Turkey. On the other side were British, French and Italian representatives. Turkey's intended aim was to seize Eastern Thrace as soon as possible and to go to the peace conference but to keep Eastern Thrace out of negotiations. Despite the fact that most of the Greek army was destroyed in Anatolia, Allied Powers tried not to accept this Turkish superiority at Mudanya. Lloyd George stated that they would launch a war against Turkey if negotiations in Mudanya did not result by the following day. But actually the British, especially General Harrington were against war. The truce talks, where tense moments were experienced and which almost reached breaking point, were concluded on 11<sup>th</sup> October 1922 with an armistice. The Greek government did not want to accept a truce and had to sign the treaty on 14<sup>th</sup> October when it could not find the support it expected from Britain, France and Italy. Refet Pasha was

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<sup>467</sup> Gönlübol, Mehmet, and Cem Sar, *Olaylarla Türk Dış Politikası*, Siyasal Kitapevi, (Ankara, 2014).



assigned by the Turkish Grand National Assembly to take over Eastern Thrace and establish a Turkish government in Eastern Thrace. Refet Pasha, who came to Istanbul on 19<sup>th</sup> October 1922 as a representative of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, was met with great interest and love.

The main factors that forced Britain to announce an armistice with the TGNA were the fact that the Greek army had been heavily defeated by the Turkish army, its allies abandoned the occupation of Anatolia, the British army did not want to join the war during a turbulent period in Britain's internal affairs, and Mustafa Kemal's influence on the growing public opinion in favour of the Turks.

With this agreement, Turkish dominance was regained in Eastern Thrace without fight, and the lands determined in the National Pact were recaptured to a great extent. The developments that resulted in favour of the Turkish side in the Mudanya Armistice were the end of the Turkish-Greek conflicts and the rescue of the Eastern Thrace region, but the government of the TGNA failed to establish the desired dominance over Istanbul and the Straits.<sup>468</sup>

### **3.21 Treaty of Lausanne (24 July 1923)**

It is understood from the bargains made with the French during the Paris Peace Conference convened on 18<sup>th</sup> January 1919 that Britain had regretted leaving the region to the French after they had occupied Mosul. At this conference the French agreed to give Mosul to Britain, and established the mandate system over Syria, Damascus, Aleppo and Iskenderun. Also on 18<sup>th</sup> April 1919 an agreement was signed between British politician Walter Long and French Petroleum Products General Commissioner Henry Berenger. With this agreement, Britain decided to take Mesopotamia's mandate with 70% of its oil revenues while France decided to buy 20% of its oil revenues and 10% oil revenue was left to local governments.<sup>469</sup>

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<sup>468</sup> Yaman, Ahmet, Emin, *Mudanya Bırakışması ve Yankıları*, Ankara Üniversitesi Dergisi, p.200-203

<sup>469</sup> Melek, Kemal, *Türk-İngiliz İlişkileri (1890-1926) ve Musul Petrolleri, Türk Dış Politikasında Sorunlar*, (İstanbul, 1989), p.43

However, France was uncomfortable with the sharing made and at the San Remo Conference France wanted 50% of the Mosul oil. And finally, with the San Remo Agreement signed on 25th April 1920 France had 25% of its crude oil production and 25% of Mosul oil shares.<sup>470</sup>

The border between Turkey and Iraq, especially the future of Kirkuk and Mosul, was one of the leading problems that caused the disruption of the Lausanne Conference talks. As mentioned earlier, Britain, who wanted to have oil reserves in the Middle East, invaded Mosul on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1918, just a few days after the signing of the Mondros Armistice Agreement of 30<sup>th</sup> October 1918. Thus, in Lausanne the hard discussions took place between the British and the Turkish delegations who claimed that Mosul was in their own territory when the Armistice of Mondros was signed.

The Colonial Office believed that if 20% of the petroleum supply would be abandoned to the Turkish government, they would leave the Mosul province to Britain.<sup>471</sup> Because of the decisive attitude taken by Ismet Pasha the Turks could not be persuaded about Mosul by Curzon. The issue was described as a failure of Curzon in the British Parliament and a campaign against Curzon was launched.<sup>472</sup> While on the one hand attempts were made to overthrow Curzon in Britain, the British Foreign Office Undersecretary Sir Eyre Crowe wanted to communicate with the Turkish delegation on the Mosul issue without Curzon's knowledge and with Rickett's invitation to representatives of the Turkish delegation.<sup>473</sup> Ismet Pasha, who realized that he could not agree with Lord Curzon on Mosul, wanted to settle this issue directly with the British government and sent two officers to London. After giving information about the contacts of the Turkish delegation, Andrew Bonar Law, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (23 October 1922- 22 May 1923) stated that Britain did not want to fight the Turks for Mosul, especially without French support, and emphasized that there should be no London-based interruption in Lausanne

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<sup>470</sup> Baytok, Taner, *İngiliz Belgelerinde Türk Kurtuluş Savaşı*, (Ankara,1970),p.302.

<sup>471</sup> The Parliamentary Archives, BL/G/13/18, From Bindsay to Curzon, 5 December 1922.

<sup>472</sup> The Parliamentary Archives, BL/111/12/42, From Bonar Law to Curzon, 8 December 1922.

<sup>473</sup> The Parliamentary Archives, BL/111/12/61, From Curzon to, 17 January 1923.

negotiations.<sup>474</sup> Between 11<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> January 1923, a showdown took place between Curzon and Long.<sup>475</sup>

Tension was also reflected in the conference and the Mosul issue started to be discussed by the Land and Military Commission on 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 1923 under the presidency of Lord Curzon. Since the results of the talks between Lord Curzon and Ismet Pasha could not be resolved, the subject was brought to the agenda in this session. Despite Ismet Pasha's claim that Kurdish and Turkish populations were in the majority, Lord Curzon summarized the reasons for appealing against the demand of leaving Sulaymaniyah, Kirkuk and Mosul to Turkey: There are many Arabs in Mosul province. The Kurds did not want to live together with the Turks, as can be seen from the events in 1914 Bitlis. The British government took responsibility for the Arabs after the Mondros Armistice, and the Arabs also were loyal to Britain. British armies having defeated the Turks in World War I gave Britain the right to conquer Mosul.

The response of Ismet Pasha was clear. He claimed that in the Mosul Province, the Arabs could not demand that they were bound to Iraq because they were minorities. However, if such a request were made, Turkey would demand that this region be included in its territory because of the presence of a much larger Turkish population in the north of Baghdad. It was not true that the Kurds did not want to live with the Turks. The presence of many Kurdish deputies in the Turkish Grand National Assembly clearly demonstrated that Kurdish citizens were in great service during the War of Independence. Turkey thought that Iraq did not need the British mandate and that it was not aware of it, even if such a mandate had been given. In order to justify the capture of Mosul by the United Kingdom, the right of conquest was unheard of in this century. Geographically and politically, Mosul was an integral part of Anatolia.<sup>476</sup>

As a result of the resistance of the Anatolian people to the Allied Powers and the Treaty of Sèvres by preferring death to implementation of the Sèvres Treaty with the catchphrase “either freedom or death”, the Treaty of Sèvres had never been

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<sup>474</sup> The Parliamentary Archives, BL/111/12/57, From Bonar Law to Curzon, 8 January 1923.

<sup>475</sup> UK The Parliamentary Archives, BL/111/12/61, 17 January 1923.

<sup>476</sup> Meray, Seha L., *Lozan Barış Konferansı Tutanaklar Belgeler I*, (İstanbul,1993), p.349-355.

approved. The Treaty of Lausanne took the place of the Treaty of Sèvres as a victory of the Turkish resistance.<sup>477</sup> The most important factor in the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne was the victories Turkish troops had won against the Greeks supported by the British. After all, this situation has been stated loud and clear in many studies in Western literature on the issue.<sup>478</sup>

In the Treaty of Lausanne many issues, held over from the Ottoman Empire, were resolved. The liveliest debate, with regard to our topic, was experienced over the Mosul-Kirkuk issue.<sup>479</sup> With regard to the Mosul-Kirkuk issue, one of the most important issues in the Peace Treaty, the local governors in Iraq requested from London the announcement of the fact that there were no plans to provide autonomy for the Kurds. Henry Dobbs, in a telegram sent from Baghdad, stated that such a declaration would provide a movement area in the Treaty of Lausanne.<sup>480</sup>

When the scope of this thesis is considered, it is not possible to elaborately discuss here the debates in the Lausanne Conference. However, there are one or two issues which we are inclined to highlight. While Mosul-Kirkuk was the first priority for the British at the Conference, this was a secondary priority for the Turkish delegation. The critical statistics and the demand for a plebiscite brought to the Conference by Ismet Pasha were rejected categorically.<sup>481</sup>

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<sup>477</sup> Wahlbeck, Östen, *Kurdish Diasporas: A Comparative Study of Kurdish Refugee Communities*, (Warwick,1999), p.44.

<sup>478</sup> Davison, Roderic H., 'Middle East Nationalism: Lausanne Thirty Years After', *Middle East Journal*, Vol.7, 1953, p.327.

<sup>479</sup> *The Manchester Guardian (1901-1959)*, 'The Mosul Dispute At Lausanne: British Responsibility', 18 December 1922, p. 8; *The New York Times*, 'Oil Chief Barrier To Lausanne Peace: British And Turks Virtually Agreed On General Terms', 16 December 1922, p.2.

<sup>480</sup> Denker, Mehmet Sami and Kurubas, Erol, 'Jeopolitika ve Jeostrateji Açısından Kürt Konusu, PKK ve Türkiye II', *Dumlupınar Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, Vol.8, 2002, p.225.

<sup>481</sup> *New York Times*, 'Ismet Proposes Mosul Plebiscite: Note To Curzon Says That Turkey Does Not Recognize British', 30 December 1922, p.4.

The definition of minorities expressed in Lausanne encompassed the non-Muslim citizens.<sup>482</sup> But the demands that within the Treaty of Lausanne to put the Kurds in the minority status was an intentional interpretation that aim at to damage the present order.<sup>483</sup> The point that the Republic of Turkey had promised to protect the rights of the minorities, non- Muslim citizens, should be assessed with regard to this context.

The statistics about Mosul, presented by Ismet Pasha at the Lausanne negotiations, were met by a serious reaction from the British, and mutual claims about vital data were formed to refute each other's thesis and to occupy Mosul.<sup>484</sup>

After evaluating the Treaty of Sèvres and the Treaty of Lausanne Gunter expressed the view that the Kurds were deceived because the promises of establishing an independent Kurdistan, that promised in Sèvres Treaty (1920), was abandoned in three years with the signing of the Lausanne Treaty (1923).<sup>485</sup>

Actually when both the Treaty of Sèvres and the Treaty of Lausanne are considered together, it can be seen that England did not clearly promise a Kurdistan state in the Treaty of Sèvres. Sèvres was a scheming study for establishing British dominance over the Middle East by setting the Kurds and Turks against each other over a promise for a Kurdish state in a geography with unclear borders and on an unclear date. The views we express here were not stated this clearly by Edmonds; however, Edmonds summarised the situation stating that the Treaty of Lausanne mentioned neither an independent Armenia nor an independent Kurdistan.<sup>486</sup>

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<sup>482</sup> Brifcani, Abdulkader, *Mustafa Barzani*, (London, 2000), p.50.

<sup>483</sup> Bawermend, Eziz, 'A Time for Rose and Time for Primrose', *Fire, Snow And Honey: Voices From Kurdistan*, (Sydney, 2011), p.171.

<sup>484</sup> *Syracuse Herald: Sunday Morning*, 'Turk Demand Draws Protest From America', 17 December 1922, p.2.

<sup>485</sup> Gunter, Michael M., *The Kurds Ascending: The Evolving Solution To The Kurdish Problem In Iraq And Turkey*, (New York,2008), p.13.

<sup>486</sup> Edmonds, Cecil John, 'The Place of the Kurds in the Middle Eastern Scene', *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society*, Vol.45(2), 1958, p.145.

Another important point about the treaty was the fact that Lord Curzon did not make any attempt other than Mosul-Kirkuk, in favour of the Kurds.<sup>487</sup> Of course the attempt mentioned here was the definition of language right and some cultural rights as stated. However, it can be easily understood how the British could abandon some promises made in Sèvres, by looking at the attitude of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Lord Curzon, who served as the British representative at Lausanne.<sup>488</sup>

Lord Curzon, giving a speech at the session on the protection of the minorities on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1922, while defending to the Christian minority in Turkey, considered the Muslims as a block; and handled the issue from a religious perspective. Lord Curzon did not make any mention of the Kurds, while he did mention Jews, Greeks, Armenians, and Nestorians.<sup>489</sup>

The Turkish Government saw itself as a party to the protection of the rights of the Muslim minorities in the Balkans countries such as Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia, rejecting the concept of a 'Muslim Minority' in the borders of National Pact<sup>490</sup>; and raised the issue about the Kurds during debates on the Mosul issue.<sup>491</sup>

Dr. Rıza Nur, who represented Turkey in the subcommittee convened under the chairmanship of the Italian representative Montana, claimed that the principle for the protection of minorities should be considered on the basis of the European minorities. Also, it is understood that Rıza Nur stated that there were only the Turks and the Kurds in Turkey, and the fate of the Kurds was common with the Turks'; and the Kurds did not want to be in the minority status.<sup>492</sup>

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<sup>487</sup> Göldas, *Lozan*, (İstanbul,2009), p.37.

<sup>488</sup> Yıldız, *The Kurds* , p.11-12; Mejcher, *Imperial Quest*, p.134

<sup>489</sup> Meray, Seha L., *Lozan Barış Konferansı Tutanakları*, (Ankara,1970), p.148.

<sup>490</sup> It is the name of the six articulated manifesto of the Turkish War of Independence. It had been adopted unanimously by the last Ottoman Chamber of Deputies on 28 January 1920, and announced in 17 February.

<sup>491</sup> Meray, Seha L., *Lozan Barış*, p. 178.

<sup>492</sup> Meray, *Lozan Barış*, p.58.

Upon the acceptance of the articles about the minorities by all parties, Ismet Inonu, representing the Turkish government, stated that the minority rights would only be accepted with the condition that the Muslim minorities living in the neighbouring countries benefited from the same rights based on the same principles stated by the treaties recently signed in Europe. It is understood that this view of Inonu was a reflection of Article 5 of the National Pact. On the other hand, Curzon's statement could be accepted as an attempt to form a conscious reconciliation with the Kemalist government by the British who approved the decisions of the National Pact in general.

There were many concessions and privileges for the western states which had been obtained in Sèvres, but lost in Lausanne.<sup>493</sup> However, this does not mean that they could not obtain anything they wished. The scope of this thesis does not allow for elaborating upon this point; because, Lausanne is a topic that should be considered all by itself. While the Lausanne negotiations continued, activities of Ozdemir Bey in Rawanduz and its vicinity disturbed the British.<sup>494</sup> As a result of this, Ankara was constrained to select one of the two options: either the war would continue, and the consequences, including the loss of all the achievements up to 1923, would be faced; or the road to some kind of compromise would be taken. When the facts of the period were considered, Ankara took a stand towards the second option. The conditions of the period were the most important factor in making this decision. It is possible to clearly see the reflections of this choice both in the Lausanne negotiations and the decisions made about Mosul-Kirkuk.<sup>495</sup>

When the post-World War I years, especially 1922 and 1923, are examined, it is seen that the Allied Powers, including England, did not want to fight anymore. When the Turkish side is considered, it is seen that Turkey had got out of a ten years period of battle, starting from the Balkan Wars, continuing with World War I and which come to an end with the War of Independence. The army was in a very bad

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<sup>493</sup>Brown, Philip Marshall, 'From Sèvres to Lausanne', *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol.18, No. 1, January 1924, p.114.

<sup>494</sup> Ali, *The Kurds*, p.522.

<sup>495</sup> Israel T. Naamani, 'The Kurdish Drive for Self-Determination', *Middle East Journal*, 20(3), Summer,1966, p.288.

condition. The troops would have to be transferred from the Western front to Mosul in case of a potential battle there. In such a case, İzmir and Trace would be exposed to another Greek threat. Also, it is thought that British intelligence was reading the telegrams between Ismet Pasha, Rauf Bey and Mustafa Kemal. It is understood that information was provided to Lord Curzon, by British intelligence, about the closed sessions at the National Assembly. It is also thought that the information stating that the Turks could not take the risk of a battle was transferred to the British authorities. On the other hand, it is understood that the Turks had no any information about whether the British and the French would risk a battle. Therefore, it can be argued that the Turks could not risk a battle.

The Treaty of Lausanne, signed on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1923, has become a turning point for the Kurds during the period. With this treaty, the Kurds, in accordance with the demands of the Turkish delegation, were accepted as a part of Turkish society. Therefore, they would not benefit from the minority rights because they were considered as a Muslim community, not minority; although the Greeks, Armenians and Jews, which were recognised as minorities, benefited from these rights.

However, it should be immediately stated that Ismet Pasha's basic thesis, while the Lausanne Conference continued, was the emphasis that the Turks and Kurds were brothers and there were representatives from these two brother societies; and they were at the conference as a sign of this brotherhood.<sup>496</sup>The statement "*We Kurds are together with the Turks*" by the deputy of Diyarbakır Piriñçizade Fevzi Bey and Zülfüzade Zülfü Bey, members of the delegate with Ismet Pasha, found its expression implemented in the Treaty.<sup>497</sup>As has been ascertained, similar views were expressed by the Dersim deputy Diyap Agha.<sup>498</sup> Diyarbakır deputy Piriñçizade Fevzi Bey and Zülfüzade Zülfü Bey, members of the delegation participating in the conference talks with İsmet Pasa, also stated that they were Kurds and they were together on the Turks side.<sup>499</sup>

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<sup>496</sup> Saraçoğlu, *Kurds of*, p.48.

<sup>497</sup> Denker, 'Jeopolitika ve Jeostrateji', p.226.

<sup>498</sup> Akbıyık, Yaşar, *Milli Mücadelede Güney Cephesi*, (Ankara,1990), p.34.

<sup>499</sup> Denker, 'Jeopolitika ve Jeostrateji', p.227.



According to Hasan Yıldız, there were two countries to make the most benefit from Lausanne. These were England and Turkey; because both states achieved their main aims, although they had seemed to be irreconcilable since the beginning of the conference. Again according to Yıldız, France and Italy, who could not perceive the situation in time, were far from understanding what was happening.<sup>500</sup>

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<sup>500</sup> Yıldız, *Fransız Belgeleriyle*, p.13

## CHAPTER 4

### **Anti-British Activities and Britain's Response to Them**

As mentioned before, Mesopotamia was ruled by the Ottomans for about five hundred years. But then the First World War broke out and the Ottoman Empire was defeated. That was a great opportunity for England to establish dominance in the region. Eventually, two weeks after the Armistice of Mondros, signed on 30<sup>th</sup> of October 1918, Britain landed troops in Mosul on 15<sup>th</sup> of November 1918. The local communities of Mosul, the Eastern and South-eastern Anatolia felt uneasy about the occupation of Mosul. An important part of the populations of Iraq, the East and South-East of Anatolia comprised of Turks and Kurds who had lived in tribes under Ottoman rule. In addition to that, most of them were related to each other. Therefore, an event occurring in one of these regions resulted in a reaction in others and anti-British activities began spreading in waves. Due to this characteristic of the region, after annexing Mosul and reaching the borders of South-eastern Anatolia, the Eastern parts of Anatolia became more important than ever. Hence, in order to consolidate British domination especially in the Mosul province, Britain started to show more interest in the regions of Eastern and South-eastern Anatolia. Therefore England landed troops in Kilis on 27<sup>th</sup> of December 1918, in Antep on 15<sup>th</sup> of January 1919, in Kars on 12<sup>th</sup> of January 1919, in Maras on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1919, and in Urfa on 24<sup>th</sup> of March and took control of these provinces.<sup>501</sup>

According to Turkish sources, in order to carry out these annexations, British officers tried to use Article 7 of Armistice of Mondros. Because in reference to Article 7, if Allied Powers consider any incident as threatening to their safety they would have the right to occupy any strategic region. In order to realise this purpose, some Kurdish tribes and Armenians were used to create unrest in the region.<sup>502</sup> In the cable dated 17<sup>th</sup> of January 1919, Haydar Bey stated that for the last 7-8 months British officials in the region had been trying to disturb the peace and provoke the

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<sup>501</sup> Genelkurmay Harp Dairesi Başkanlığı, *Türk İstiklal Harbi IV*, (Ankara,1966), p.13.

<sup>502</sup> BOA, BEO, 341351, 7 January 1919.

local people against the Ottomans.<sup>503</sup> Moreover, Ottoman officers in the region reported that some Armenians and Kurds they arrested, allegedly for causing trouble, were released on the orders of some British army officers. These incidents strengthened the suspicion that the British wanted unrest in the region and contributed to the unfolding of the events that took place in the region.<sup>504</sup>

In a telegram sent by the Governor of Urfa to the Ottoman Home Office on 29<sup>th</sup> March 1919, the Governor asserted that the British policy makers wanted to move towards Harput (Elazığ) by passing Siverek – Mardin – Diyarbakir – Malatya. It was also reported that the British stored up supplies and military materials which were brought to the region every day.<sup>505</sup> So it can be understood from the information given by Turkish Authorities, that public service offices were brought under the control of British military forces and the connection between the Ottoman administrative authority and the occupied cities was broken.<sup>506</sup> Thus the local inhabitants were gradually disinclined to heed the Ottoman administration. Besides, according to reports from the region, the British authorities were attempting to change the balance of population in the regions under their control and for those purpose Armenian immigrants started to be placed in certain areas.<sup>507</sup> Ottoman authorities were powerless in the face of all these events and British activities in the region, but circulated propaganda against Britain's activities.<sup>508</sup>

It can be argued that as well as the Ottoman Empire's propaganda, French propaganda in the region also had an influence on the emergence of the revolts in Iraq and Eastern Anatolia. Apparently French officers took part in various propaganda activities in the region. The reason for this was that, although the Mosul province and the Eastern Anatolia territory were promised to France by the British authorities as a buffer zone between Britain and Russia, upon the withdrawal of Russia from the World War I, British policy makers changed their mind about taking

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<sup>503</sup> BOA, DH-KMS ,50-2/52, 17 January 1919.

<sup>504</sup> BOA, DH. MB. HPS, 109/9.

<sup>505</sup> BOA, DH-KMS, 50-1/83, 29 March 1919.

<sup>506</sup> BOA, DH-KMS ,50-1/40.

<sup>507</sup> ATASE, ISH, Box:8, Folder:118, Document:118-1.

<sup>508</sup> ATASE, ISH, Box:21, Folder:95, Document:95-1.

advantage of the economic and strategic benefits of Mosul province.<sup>509</sup> But France did not want to leave the region to England just like that. To this end, French secret agents disseminated the news that the control of Mosul and Eastern Anatolia would be given to the French authorities.<sup>510</sup>

On the other hand rumours were increasingly being heard about deported Armenians. According to these rumours Armenians would be settled in Eastern and South-eastern Anatolia and the control of the region would be even given to an Armenian administration. As mentioned before, Antep was captured on 15<sup>th</sup> of January but on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April, control of the city was given to the French army which was comprised of Armenian legions.<sup>511</sup> Furthermore, on 15<sup>th</sup> of April, the administration of Kars was given to the Armenian forces in a similar way, hence the local people started to believe these kinds of rumours. Due to the Antep and Kars examples, the people living in eastern lands of Ottoman Empire began to worry about their future. If the Armenians who were forced to immigrate in 1915 came back and settled down in Eastern and South-eastern Anatolia, people living in these areas would lose their lands. British officials had not taken decisive steps to refute this, causing Kurds to suspect these rumours were true. Because of the failure of the promised Kurdish State, some pro-British Kurds became anti-British. One of these revolts was launched by the leader of the Şırnak tribe Abdurrahim Bey. Despite not being a huge disturbance, his riot was particularly important in terms of its content. Because of the revolt, British authorities had a hard time and they blamed the Turks and Damat Ferid Pasha's Government for it and the incidents that followed. But it can be claimed that Mustafa Kemal might have played an important role in the initiation of this uprising. It is known that Mustafa Kemal sent many letters<sup>512</sup> to the other tribe leaders asking for their support on the issues of avoiding the fall of Caliphate and Sultanate; protecting the people in Turkey from being captured by the Armenians, and preventing the spread of British policies. According to our enquiries, Abdurrahman Agha of Şırnak was one of tribal leaders who received a letter from Mustafa Kemal. In the letter<sup>513</sup> Mustafa Kemal asserted that, the caliphate and the sultanate were to be destroyed, and the land of the motherland was under Armenian

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<sup>509</sup> Kılıç, Sezen, *Musul ve Lozan*, p.

<sup>510</sup> Yıldız, H., *Fransız Belgeleriyle Sevr- Lozan- Musul Üçgeninde Kürdistan*, (İstanbul,1990), p.58.

<sup>511</sup> Genelkurmay, *Türk İstiklal Harbi IV*, (Ankara,1966), p.13-14.

<sup>512</sup> BOA, DH, EUM, AYŞ 4/83.

<sup>513</sup> Atatürk, Mustafa, Kemal, *Nutuk, V.3, Vesikalar*, (İstanbul,1969), p.940, Doc.49.

threat and the Ottoman government was incapable. He stated that he had gathered a congress in Erzurum for the emancipation of the country and he sent him a copy of the declaration and regulations given at the congress. Mustafa Kemal also demanded him to struggle against the British danger in the region. It is understood that after this letter Abdurrahim Agha suddenly became anti-British, although earlier he was reported as being a British supporter. Of course Britain's harsh policies could be the reason for this alteration but the letters sent by Mustafa Kemal might be another reason for this changing.

#### 4.1 Sheikh Mahmud and Relations with British Officers

At the beginning of the British invasion of Iraq during World War I, Sheikh Mahmud<sup>514</sup> entered into a relationship with the British. It is understood that indirect contact with the British started in 1917;<sup>515</sup> the first direct contact was dated 1918. Sheikh Mahmud had been captured by the Turks during the British invasion of Kirkuk in May 1918,<sup>516</sup> but later he was appointed as the governor of Sulaymaniyah by the Turks.<sup>517</sup> According to Elis, Sheikh Mahmud, just after the end of World War I, invited the British to Sulaymaniyah, and sent a letter stating that he would surrender the city to Britain in the event that he became the governor and 40 Kurdish tribes supported this. The British were pleased by the letter.<sup>518</sup> British officers had thought to appoint him as governor to Kirkuk; however this appointment could not be made with the Turks' claim upon the region. Later, with the British invasion of the region, Sheikh Mahmud was appointed governor of Kirkuk in December 1918.<sup>519</sup>

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<sup>514</sup> PRO, FO 251/93, 'Personalities In Kurdistan', June 1919.

<sup>515</sup> Romano, David, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement: opportunity, Mobilization And Identity*, Cambridge University Press, (Cambridge,2006), p.185.

<sup>516</sup> Gowan ,C. H., 'Northern Iraq', *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society*, 25(2), 1938, p.198 (193-203); Barth, Fredrik, *Principles of Social Organization in Southern Kurdistan*, (Oslo, 1953), p.62; Pelletiere, Stephen C., *The Kurds: An Unstable Element In The Gulf*, Westview, (London,1984), p.63.

<sup>517</sup> BOA, DH. EUM.2SB.No:61, Folder: 48, 21 September 1918.

<sup>518</sup> Elis, Hadi, 'The Kurdish Demand for Statehood and the Future of Iraq', *The Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2, Summer2004, p.194.

<sup>519</sup> This information is wrong, because Sheikh Mahmud was appointed on 1st November.

Parallel to the expansion of the British dominance over the region in 1918, encounters with local leaders increased and this had an effect on Sheikh Mahmud's British relations. This time he was appointed to Sulaymaniyah as governor by Major Noel.<sup>520</sup>

It is understood that Sheikh Mahmud was subject to pressure from British counsellors. They wanted to redirect his decisions. The British did not want to allow him to be recognized as a leader in the international arena. It has been ascertained that Sheikh Mahmud wanted to send a delegation of two persons Reşid Kaban and Sayyid Ahmed Barzanji to the Paris Peace Conference where the new borders would be designed after the end of the First World War. This attempt remained inconclusive as the British did not allow this to happen and they arrested his representatives.<sup>521</sup>

There is an intelligence report,<sup>522</sup> in the British archives that includes information about Sheikh Mahmud. When the report is examined in detail, it is obvious that Sheikh Mahmud's daily life, his relations with his wives, his houses' position and the status of the secret passages were reported in their finest detail. Preparing this report would not be so difficult with today's technology; however, a report containing this much detail, in an era without mass-communication technology, appears before us as a product of the extensive work of the British intelligence. As mentioned before the report includes the information that if a big bomb was to fall on Sheikh Mahmud's home it would be destroyed completely together with the surrounding buildings. It is possible that these details in the report were given to protect Sheikh Mahmud against a possible enemy attack. But more likely it was given in advance to plan a British RAF (Royal Air Force) attack against Sheikh Mahmud in the case of his getting involved in anti-British activities.

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<sup>520</sup> Garrod, A. G. R., 'Recent Operations in Kurdistan', *Royal United Services Institution Journal*, Vol.78, No. 510,1933,p.232; Edmonds, 'A Kurdish', p.84.

<sup>521</sup> Hilmi, *Anılar*, p. 33.

<sup>522</sup> PRO, AIR 23/355, Memorandum, 11 November 1923, p.83-84.; PRO.FO. 141/806/2, British Policy on Kurdistan, June 1919.

### 4.1.1 The First Rebellion of Sheikh Mahmud against England (20 May 1919 – 28 June 1919)

After Major Noel's assigning Sheikh Mahmud as governor of Sulaymaniyah<sup>523</sup> on 1<sup>st</sup> of November 1918, the Sheikh<sup>524</sup> attempted to expand his dominance and started to develop policies to procure acceptance of his dominance over Kifri and Kirkuk.<sup>525</sup> To achieve this expansion of dominance, the Sheikh removed all Turkish and Arab officers in the region and manned all units with his own men all the way to the villages and districts; he announced Kurdish as the official language and formed a mercenary unit under the counsel of British officers.<sup>526</sup>

This expansion of dominance was not received well by the British. The first Sheikh Mahmud rebellion<sup>527</sup> broke out with the raid by Mahmud Han Dizli on 20<sup>th</sup> of May 1919. The deputy foreign political officer Greenhouse, who tried to limit the Sheikh's authority to the Sulaymaniyah region, was arrested on 23<sup>rd</sup> of May 1919, the Sheikh raised the Kurdish flag instead of the British one, confiscated the treasure, imprisoned the British serving in Sulaymaniyah, destroyed the telegraph lines, and broke off with the British. This posed a serious problem for the British.<sup>528</sup>

After the rebellion broke out, Talbot Wilson stated that repression of the rebellion immediately and mercilessly was of vital importance. If the intervention was to be delayed there was a possibility that the impartial Kurdish leaders would

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<sup>523</sup> D.K.Fieldhouse, *Kurds, Arabs and Britons: The Memoir of Wallis Lyon in Iraq*, (London,2002) , p.7.

<sup>524</sup> Özalp, Hişyar, 'Tarihi Perspektifiyle Güney Kürdistan'ın Hukuki Statüsü', *Serbesti Dergisi*, Autumn 2005, ,p.4; BOA, DH.EUM.4.SB.,Box:20,Folder:11/A,31 Mayıs 1918.

<sup>525</sup>Kaymaz, İhsan Şerif, *Musul Sorunu : Petrol ve Kürt Sorunlarıyla Bağlantılı Tarihsel- Siyasal Bir İnceleme*, (İstanbul,2003), p.103.; *The Times*, 'The Case Of Kurdistan', 15 November 1919, p.11

<sup>526</sup> Kaymaz, *Musul Sorunu*, p.104.

<sup>527</sup> *The Times*, 'Kurdistan Conspiracy', 7 June1919, p.11.

<sup>528</sup> *The Daily Mirror*, 'British Taken Captive In Kurdistan', 30 May 1919; *The Manchester Guardian*, 'British Prisoners In Kurdistan', 16 June 1919, p.11; *The Observer*, 'Rising Of Kurds: British Officers Made Prisoner', 6 June 1919, p.15; *The Times*, 'Kurds Attack British Troops', 30 May 1919, p.12; *The Times*, 'Causes Of Trouble In Mesopotamia', 10 March 1920, p.15.

take sides with Sheikh Mahmud.<sup>529</sup> He requested that immediate action be taken since the realisation of this possibility would yield negative results not only in Sulaymaniyah but also in Mosul-Kirkuk and even in the Iranian region; and that it would be easy to repress the rebellion while it was still small and it would also be perceived as a sign of British strength.<sup>530</sup>

It is known that the British had concerns about a possible attack on Iran by Russia during the days in which Sheikh Mahmud rebelled against the British.<sup>531</sup> The immediate repression of Sheikh Mahmud's rebellion had vital importance, just as Talbot Wilson had stated, for the functioning of the system the United Kingdom wanted to establish in the Middle East.

Because of the importance of the issue British forces were sent against Sheikh Mahmud. Sheikh Mahmud was captured, wounded, near a rock around the Baziyan Pass on 18<sup>th</sup> June 1919, as a result of a British forces raid supported by the Jaff, Pindar and Talabani tribes. In *the Observer* newspaper it was stated that the day when Sheikh Mahmud was caught, 100 Kurds and 3 rifles were also captured, and all the British captives at the Sheikh's headquarters were released that evening.

After Sheikh Mahmud's capture the British did not encounter any serious opposition during the Sulaymaniyah invasion and the Halabja was occupied on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1919.<sup>532</sup> A strict system was put in to practice in the region. Many telegrams were sent, from Sulaymaniyah and various places, to the Ottoman administration, seeking ways to evade British dominance that went beyond mere complaint.<sup>533</sup>

Following his capture, the Sheikh was taken to court accused of causing casualties and material damage via a rebellion against the British government and raising the Kurdish flag instead of the British one.<sup>534</sup> After the trial, Sheikh Mahmud

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<sup>529</sup> Kaymaz, *Musul Sorunu*, p.104.

<sup>530</sup> Kaymaz, *Musul Sorunu*, p.105; *The Observer*, 'Rising Of Kurds: British Officers Made Prisoner', 6 July 1919, p.15.

<sup>531</sup> Jacobsen, Mark, 'Only by the Sword: British Counter- Insurgency in Iraq 1920', *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 2(2), 1991, p.325.

<sup>532</sup> PRO, AIR 1/426/15/260/1, 'Resume of Work, 31. Squadron', 20 July 1920, p.1.

<sup>533</sup> ATASE, ISH, Box:7, Folder:41,31 December 1919.

<sup>534</sup> Hilmi, *Kurdistan*, p.135.



was sentenced to death; however for the British interests he was not executed and he was exiled to India.<sup>535</sup>

The British, who wished to find the source of the unrest in Iraq both in 1919 and in 1920, conducted serious studies. Interestingly, the Şerif family members had become a pillar of strength for the British, who established mechanisms which carefully processed all kinds of information. The encounters between the members of the Şerif family and the British, based on mutual interest, were later used for the establishment of dominance in the region of both parties.<sup>536</sup>

A crucial document<sup>537</sup> about the participants of the first Sheikh Mahmud rebellion on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1919 was detected in the British archives. As far as I can ascertain, this information has not been published by either the British or Turkish academics. Information on the Kurdish tribes who participated in this rebellion will be summarized. When the document is analysed it can be seen that, 118 Kurdish notables were mentioned in the list; 27 of them were listed as ringleaders. They were the Sheikh Mahmud Barzanji family members such as Sheikh Kadir and Sheikh Mohammed. The current situation of the listed people is also reported in the document. According to the document some of these insurgents fled and some of them were captured by British forces.

Another report about the latest situation of the participants in the rebellion in June-July 1919 was prepared by the British Air Ministry.<sup>538</sup> By comparison with the aforementioned report, although 45 people were listed in the report, the Air Ministry

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<sup>535</sup> April, Mordechai, *Minorities In The Middle East : A History Of Struggle And Self-Expression*, (London,1991), p.31; Some Turkish officials reported Sheikh Mahmud was loyal to Turks, therefore he revolted against British. ATASE, ISH,Box:106, Folder:54, 1 August 1919; ATASE, ISH, Box: 48, Folder:111, 10 August 1919. On the other it is possible to find the documents which show Sheikh Mahmud was working for British interests on previous dates. ATASE, ISH, Box:90,Folder:69,3 May 1919.

<sup>536</sup> Sluglett, *Britain In*, p.31.

<sup>537</sup> PRO, AIR 20/742, 'Appendix H: List of Persons Implicated In Rebellion In Suleimaniyah on 20th May 1919'.

<sup>538</sup> PRO, AIR 20/757, 'List Of Rebel In S. Kurdistan And Their Fate', 26 July 1919, pp.73-78.

report had much more detail such as their current health status, detention status and penalties they had received.

The developments following the Sheikh Mahmud rebellion and the harsh intervention of the British over the issue was only the beginning of the conflict in Sulaymaniyah against the British.<sup>539</sup> The British had positioned a considerable number of forces in the Kirkuk, Chamchamal and Kalisan regions on 30<sup>th</sup> July 1919, to maintain order and obviate the chance of any new disorder. An archival document,<sup>540</sup> giving information about the personnel of the military units stationed in Kirkuk, Chamchamal and Kalisan, was detected in the British archives. As can be understood from the document, because of the uprisings many of the military units in the region requested more staff. When the document is analysed in detail it can be seen that the military units needed eight more agents and two more interpreters. Furthermore as it is specified in the report that the military unit had seven treasurers and five of them were redundant. These treasurers could be sent to other military units.

Further events along with the Sheikh Mahmud rebellion had disturbed the British. The Goyan tribe in the northern part of Iraq and most of the Kurdish tribe leaders at the southern parts of Turkey between 1919 and 1920 called against British dominance and this placed the British in a difficult situation.<sup>541</sup>

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<sup>539</sup> Lukitz, *A Quest*, p.155.

<sup>540</sup> *PRO, WO 95/5520*, 'From Head Quarters Fraser's Force, Suleimaniyah To General Head Quarters', 30 July 1919.

<sup>541</sup> MacFie, A. L., 'British Intelligence and the Causes of Unrest in Mesopotamia, 1919-21', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.35, June 1999, p.170; Wahlbeck, Östen, *Kurdish Diasporas: A Comparative Study of Kurdish Refugee Communities*, (Warwick, 1999) pp.50-51.

### 4.1.2 Sheikh Mahmud's Second Rebellion

Following Sheikh Mahmud's exile, and after the failure of the British to prevent public disorder arising from the Kurdish tribes, as well as the failure of preventing Ozdemir Bey's campaign the British were forced to reconsider their opinions about Sheikh Mahmud. The aim of the decision not to execute Sheikh Mahmud but to exile him to India was proven with developing events. The British brought the Sheikh back from exile to help to suppress the events in 1922.<sup>542</sup> But in order to limit Sheikh Mahmud's influence and ensure they had a powerful hand in Mosul and Kirkuk the British wanted to use Sayyid Taha. Sayyid Taha was considered as a leader who could control the Kurdish tribes in Semdinan and Rawanduz. Sayyid Taha was doing his best to minimise the influence of Turkish propaganda.<sup>543</sup> In the meeting headed by Bell, on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1922, it was decided that Sayyid Taha was to be the King of Southern Kurdistan.<sup>544</sup> But this decision never put into practice. It can be argued that the Armistice of Mudanya which was to be negotiated with the Turks, was influential in this decision; because, any direct counter attack by any of the parties would mean the end of the peace negotiations before their beginning, and all parties wished to avoid this situation. At this point, it can be argued that the British, following a policy differently from the Turks, forced Sayyid Taha into play and tried to give an impression that they did not directly intervene. Thus they would both limit Sheikh Mahmud's influence and ensure they had powerful hand in Mosul and Kirkuk. Nevertheless the return occurred with the Sheikh's grand entrance into Sulaymaniyah with a proud welcoming ceremony, accompanied by Major Noel, on 30<sup>th</sup> of October 1922.<sup>545</sup>

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<sup>542</sup> Elphinston, William Graham, 'Kurds and The Kurdish Question', *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society*, Vol.35, No:1,1948,p.98.

<sup>543</sup> Kaymaz, *Musul Sorunu*, p.158.

<sup>544</sup> Edmonds was authorised about the issues; however this meeting could not be realised since Sayyid Taha went to support Simko, after Simko's defeat by the Iranian forces. Kaymaz, *Musul Sorunu*, p.195.

<sup>545</sup> Lazarev, *Emperyalizm*, p.200.

A few days after his arrival in Sulaymaniyah Sheikh Mahmud requested that the independence of Southern Kurdistan be recognised. According to his demands, all territories on which the Kurds lived in Iraq should be annexed to this independent state, a joint commission must be established to determine the borders of this state and the state of Iraq, and he himself should be acclaimed as king. However, the British did not consider this request appropriate, and tried to neutralise the growing rebellions movement using bombings. Meanwhile, the Ottoman Empire sent telegrams to the Turkish local authorities in Iraq telling them to protest British military activities. Meanwhile, leaflets were distributed by British planes along with the bombings. The British announced the bombing would continue until the rebellions came to an end.<sup>546</sup>

Before his return to Sulaymaniyah, Sheikh Mahmud contacted with Ozdemir Bey<sup>547</sup> in September 1922. The British, informed about the Sheikh's new activities, started meeting Sayyid Taha and Simko to reduce his dominance. Sheikh Mahmud, seeing this, announced the Kurdistan Kingdom with Sulaymaniyah the capital, and acclaimed himself as king on 18<sup>th</sup> of November 1922,<sup>548</sup> and sent a telegram<sup>549</sup> to Ozdemir Bey on 5<sup>th</sup> January 1923. In his telegram Sheikh Mahmud stated that British spent a lot of effort trying to impress him. He also claimed that he had received two telegrams; one for him, one for Tahir Effendi. He noted that he sent a copy of the telegrams as evidence. He asserted that in order to ensure Kurdish support for British forces British officers spent huge amounts of money. According to him, their aim was not to help the Kurdish people; it was to secure British interests in the region. He emphasized that although Ozdemir Bey was desperate to establish Kurdish independence, they should unite forces to do this. He stated that their relations with the British were not good and they could clash with them at any moment; that is why he requested immediate troops, weapons and ammunition. He expressed that if there was anyone who could provide ammunition they should notify him with an

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<sup>546</sup> BOA, HR.IM. Box:13, Folder:28, 9 November 1922.

<sup>547</sup> Ali Şefik Özdemir was a lieutenant colonel in the Turkish National Forces. He was sent to Mosul by the TGNA and Mustafa Kemal Pasha to support resistance in Mosul.

<sup>548</sup> Kasalak, Kadir, 'Irak'ta Manda Yönetiminin Kurulması ve Atatürk Dönemi Türkiye-Irak İlişkileri', *Askeri Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Vol.9, February 2007, p.192.

<sup>549</sup> PRO, AIR 23/345, 'From Sulaimani To H. E. The High Commissioner', 5 June 1923, pp.214-215.

encrypted message. He added that he could go outside Sulaymaniyah to collect it. As it mentioned by Güztoklusu<sup>550</sup>, on 29<sup>th</sup> January 1923, a congress was held in Süleymaniye with the support of Özdemiş Bey, accompanied by tribal and religious leaders. According to the decision taken at the Congress the struggle carried out in South Kurdistan against the British occupation, was continued for four years. It was more appropriate to try to obtain legitimate autonomy from the Turkish Government against the illegitimate independence that the British wanted to give the Kurds; if the Turkish government would approve their request, they would be ready to fight any kind of war against the British. Their requests were not accepted. With regard to this point, the Kurds living in Sulaymaniyah followed a different path and preferred to resolve the hostility between Sheikh Mahmud and the British, and to be conciliatory. With this purpose in mind, a telegram from 42 Kurdish notables was sent to the High Commissary of Iraq on 25<sup>th</sup> February 1923.

In this telegram it was declared that five months ago the British had decided to establish a government centre under Sheikh Mahmud's governance for the sake of the Kurds; and since the British retreat from Sulaymaniyah, the Kurds had not done anything against previously agreed rules. In addition, they had no political stance opposing British policies and they were ready to act in line with these politics. The Kurdish notables expressed that they believed that this readiness would result in the clearing of the way for the Kurds, for their national feelings and development. In this respect they also declared that they were ready to repel any attack from outside, and promised to oppose Turkish activity in the region.

These Kurdish notables demanded to be informed about three subjects, while expressing their trust in the British government for its readiness to let the Kurds live together, despite British threats due to the misunderstandings between Sheikh Mahmud and the British government. The three points were that if there arose any hostile attitude towards the British caused by Sheikh Mahmud's forces they promised to fix it; that if they had participated in any anti-British movement they promised not to repeat it in the future; and finally if any British officer had any doubt as to their governance they would make an effort to rectify the matter. The Kurdish notables,

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<sup>550</sup> Güztoklusu, Murat, *El Cezire ve Özdemiş Harekatı*, (Ankara,2006), p.159.

who asked for forgiveness for the idea of advancing towards Baghdad which had been due to Sheikh Mahmud's weak administration, concluded their telegram by saying 'we, the undersigned Kurdish notables, as helpless and indigent individuals, promise to adopt any policy as determined by the British government'.<sup>551</sup>

As maybe seen from the document, the Kurdish notables did not want problems in their relations with the British and made suggestions about resolving the present difficulties. In this telegram, expressing that Sheikh Mahmud's movement was caused by national feelings, it was stated in plain language that it was possible to compensate for some of the unfavourable events that had happened. Another important aspect of the document was the Kurdish notables' trust in Sheikh Mahmud and their not mentioning any problems about his leadership.

The British authorities could not be satisfied by the assurance given by the 42 Kurdish notables and a notice, summarised below, was thrown from airplanes to the Kirkuk region in March 1923. In the notice it was declared that the people of the region would hear news about an airstrike in Sulaymaniyah, but they need not be afraid of this, and there was no change in the Kurdistan policies of the British and Iraqi governments. The notice continued explaining that Sheikh Mahmud, who had been assigned to establish Kurdish rule in Sulaymaniyah had made some extraordinary claims and demanded the government of the whole Sulaymaniyah province, and this demand was against the will of people of Sulaymaniyah.

Also, the notice claimed that Sheikh Mahmud had committed certain operations in Sulaymaniyah and caused cruelty and would not stop to contact with the Turks in his own interests.<sup>552</sup> The notice asserted that Sheikh Mahmud had promised the Turks he would attack the British government, and included the threat that if this attack did take place, it would bring both punishment and disaster to the region. The ones who participated with the Turks in this foolish plan would be punished severely, and it was announced that if Sheikh Mahmud continued to act against England he would jeopardise both the development of Kurdistan and the

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<sup>551</sup> PRO, AIR 23/344, 'From Sulaimani To H. E. The High Commissioner', 25 February 1923, p.97.

<sup>552</sup> *The Manchester Guardian (1901-1959)*, 'Rebel Sheikh In Iraq: British Bombing Operations', 18 April 1923, p.10; *The Times*, 'Problem Of Mesopotamia', 8 November 1919, p.13.

prosperity of the region. In the following parts of the notice, it was stated that although he had been invited by Percy Cox to speak on these matters, Sheikh Mahmud had refused to go to Baghdad, and had continued with his actions. In the last part of the notice, Cox wrote that Sheikh Mahmud had received enough warnings and now they were out of patience and would start to punish Sheikh Mahmud and his supporters. However, the ones who followed and worked for the order of the British government need not be afraid.<sup>553</sup>

After this notice, dated 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1923, the British started to bomb Sulaymaniyah and the Sheikh, as in the first rebellion, was obliged to leave Sulaymaniyah. The policy for expanding the area of invasion parallel to the bombing of Sulaymaniyah reached Rawanduz, and Ozdemir Bey's forces, which were not supported enough by the Ankara government, and were obliged to retreat towards the Iranian border. The British captured Rawanduz with the retreat of Ozdemir Bey. Now a new leader who could be loyal to the British and protect their interests needed to be found. At that point the report of Major Noel was received by the Baghdad High Commissioner. It was claimed that Sayyid Taha had more influence on Central Kurdistan and North-western Iran than all other Kurdish notables.<sup>554</sup> It was also reported that all the people who could have led the Kurds in the region had already either been killed or defeated. According to the report Kurdish notables such as Ismail and Suleyman Bey would come together under the leadership of Sayyid Taha who had the largest lands in Rawanduz. Also it was noticed that if the British Government aimed at capturing Rawanduz, it was important that Sayyid Taha stayed in Rawanduz because no one could rule there without a powerful British garrison in the region. It would be a big mistake to promote any incentive for, or to apply pressure to the Iraq central government to establish a Kurdistan state, leaving Sayyid Taha outside it. The Arab government was not powerful enough to control the Kurds or make them accept their wishes. According to Noel, if the British removed their troops from the region, a structure would be established in Rawanduz under rule of the Turks or the Kurds. He claimed that the Iraqi government would absolutely prefer the Kurds in such a case, so Sayyid Taha must be supported. According to

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<sup>553</sup> PRO, AIR 23/345, 'From High Commissioner, Baghdad To Adviser, Kirkuk', 2 March 1923.

<sup>554</sup> PRO, AIR 23/346, 'From Noel to High Commissioner, Baghdad', p.38.

Noel, Sayyid Taha was ready to accept both Arab dominance and other regulations made by the Iraqi government.<sup>555</sup> So that they both gained advantage against the Turks and won a supporter of the order there they assigned Sayyid Taha as the district governor in Rawanduz in 1923.

The events during this assignment were reported by the Kirkuk political administration to the high commissariat of Iraq on 21<sup>st</sup> August 1923.<sup>556</sup> In this report, it was stated that Captain Chapman had returned to Kifri and Kerim and Ahmed Bey from the Jaff tribe had waited for him to organise a meeting with him in Kifri. Later, it was stated that Sheikh Mahmud assigned Sayyid Muhammad to Penjwin as mufti, and he could not establish a successful system to collect duties; in fact Sheikh Mahmud had just come to Sulaymaniyah still without success. Captain Chapman reported that Sheikh Mahmud and 70 Turks from Sauj Bulagh (Mahabad) had arrived, having come to Kifri from Sulaymaniyah, and this was just the beginning; there were rumours among the people that soon Ozdemir Pasha would also go there, and declared that the source of these rumours was perhaps be Sheikh Mahmud himself.<sup>557</sup>

Sheikh Mahmut appointed Sheikh Ali's son Sheikh Mahmud to Khormal, and Jelali Tevfik Agha to Warmata, and complained that no taxes could be collected from the Halabja district. Other interesting information encountered in this document was found in the part where Adile Hanım asked questions about when the tax payments for both June and July would be made to the British authorities. It can be understood from this statement that Kurdish leaders were not given information about the details of tax payments. The cause of this situation can be asserted as the payments, for the tax arrangements were discussed only by the British authorities.

In the telegram, after stating that Mullah Tevfik, Sheikh Mahmud's representative, carried letters written to the tribes near Baghdad and this person

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<sup>555</sup> PRO, AIR 23/346, 'From Noel To High Commissioner, Baghdad', p. 38e-38l., Kasalak, 'Irak'ta Manda', p.193

<sup>556</sup> PRO, AIR 23/353, 'Copy of Memo No. K. 449 Dated 15.8.23, From Administrative Inspector, Kirkuk To The Secretary To H.E. The High Commissioner For Iraq', 21 August 1923,p.52.

<sup>557</sup> PRO, AIR 23/353, 'Copy of Memo No. K. 449 ', 21 August 1923, p.51



carried special letters for the Sheikh, it was noted that he was also the person who undermined Major Noel's Sulaymaniyah mission.

Sheikh Abdülkerim complained about the revival of Turkish propaganda in Sulaymaniyah, and gave his own thoughts, about the Turkish propaganda in Sulaymaniyah.<sup>558</sup> According to the rumours in Sulaymaniyah, the British would leave these regions to the Turks and retreat. The effects of this propaganda started to surface noticeably even in Kirkuk.

It was reported, based on the information provided by the district governor of Chamchamal that Sheikh Mahmud had collected the tobacco tax, and appointed Sayyid Muhammad Müftizade as the district governor to Halabja, and Fettah Effendi had returned from Ankara with two Turks and was welcomed ceremonially. At the same time, it was recorded as an interesting intelligence notice that Mustafa Kemal Pasha testified that Sheikh Mahmud's dominance over the region would be recognised from Sulaymaniyah to the Hamrin Mountains.

In the telegram,<sup>559</sup> the rumour that Sheikh Mahmud had agreed with Ali İhsan Pasha in Sulaymaniyah that the Turks would come into the town is also reported. It was further mentioned that Hamid Bey Jaff was in contact with Sheikh Mahmud and hoped to come to Sulaymaniyah soon; that Sheikh Faris Agha<sup>560</sup> had accepted to be assigned as a director to Karadağ; and the total number of Sheikh Mahmud's cavalry was about 130-150.

The British, upon discovering these notes explaining the situation of the persons closest to Sheikh Mahmut and describing the latest developments, received the intelligence in February 1923 that Sheikh Mahmud was preparing for another rebellion. The British acted swiftly and did not allow the preparatory phase of this rebellion to be completed.

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<sup>558</sup> PRO, AIR 23/353, 'Copy of Memo', p.52

<sup>559</sup> PRO, AIR 23/353, 'Copy of Memo', p.52

<sup>560</sup> PRO, FO 251/93, Personalities In Kurdistan, June 1919, p.112

Edmonds prepared a plan to keep Sheikh Mahmud under control; and if there was no possibility of keeping him under control, to make the rebellion break out immediately. According to his plan,<sup>561</sup> the High Commissioner of Iraq would send a telegram to Sheikh Mahmud and request him to come to Baghdad. If Sheikh Mahmud did not obey this call, the airplanes would make an appearance over Sulaymaniyah, and drop leaflets saying that Sheikh Mahmud was dismissed from duty and he had five days to go to Baghdad and report. . If there were any problems, support would be received from the Indian troops. If Sheikh Mahmud did not leave the city, the city would be bombed. Besides, as mentioned above detailed information was given about the place that Sheikh Mahmud lived. In the report it is emphasized that although his house could be demolished easily by bombing there were lots of hidden tunnels in his house. So, the British officers who considered everything in depth realized the danger of the Sheikh's betrayal and prepared a bombing plan in advance.<sup>562</sup> In order for the plan<sup>563</sup> to be successful against all odds, alternative policies were thought up and it was decided that Edmonds would meet with Simko and make him offers to ensure that he would not support Sheikh Mahmud.

Sheikh Mahmud, who had been invited to Baghdad as part of this plan, objected to the order to go to Baghdad and proclaimed himself as king of Kurdistan.<sup>564</sup> Sheikh Mahmud, who had fought in Sulaymaniyah until 4<sup>th</sup> of March 1923, abandoned the city taking the money in the treasury. As a consequence of this, the British responded harshly to this rebellion considering it a potential disturbance of the order they had established up until that time and would establish in the future.<sup>565</sup>

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<sup>561</sup> Edmonds, *Kürtler, Türkler*, p.414.

<sup>562</sup> PRO, AIR 23/355, Memorandum, 11 November 1923, p.83-84.

<sup>563</sup> Edmonds, *Kürtler, Türkler*, p.414.

<sup>564</sup> Townshend, Charles, *When God*, p.512

<sup>565</sup> Othman Ali, 'The Kurds and the Lausanne Peace Negotiations, 1922- 23', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.33, No. 3 July 1997, p.522

The report prepared by the officer of Koi Sanjaq on 23<sup>rd</sup> of May 1923 shows Sheikh Mahmud's forces before and after the revolt.<sup>566</sup> The information given in the report can be tabulated as below. When the figures are analysed it can be seen that Sheikh Mahmud's loss of soldiers was about 24.000 men. The figures corresponded to ninety per cent of Sheikh Mahmud's army. It would seem that in the struggle against the British forces Sheikh Mahmud suffered huge losses.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Military Forces Before Revolt</i>	<i>Military Forces After the Revolt</i>
Kerim Gaffur	Sergeant Major	Sulaymaniyah	3.286	369
Mirza Mulan	Corporal	Sulaymaniyah	3.303	132
Arif Haji Mahmud	Private	Sulaymaniyah	3.621	666
Ferej Nadir	Private	Sulaymaniyah	3.542	347
Ahmed Aziz	Private	Sulaymaniyah	6.130	231
Sayyid Suleiman	Private	Koi Sancaq	3.088	388
Mahmud Ahmed	Private	Siwak	3.575	379
Total			26.545	2.512

However, the repulsion of the British by Sheikh Mahmud's forces in the Taslica conflict in May 1923 caused serious concern to the British. The British responded brutally to this rebellion because it jeopardised the whole system that they had created after the First World War in the Middle East.<sup>567</sup>

The British authorities who had called out the RAF to repress this rebellion, ordered that all settlements supporting Sheikh Mahmud, particularly Sulaymaniyah, to be bombed heavily.<sup>568</sup> As part of this order, nearly all people living in

<sup>566</sup> PRO, AIR 23/351, 'From Special Service Officer Koi Sanjaq's Memorandum To Headquarters, Qoikol', 23 May 1923, p.76.

<sup>567</sup> Sluglett, *Britain*, p.59.

<sup>568</sup> Wenner, Lettie M., 'Arab-Kurdish Rivalries in Iraq', *Middle East Journal*, Vol.17, No. ½, 1963, p.70

Sulaymaniyah left the city and were obliged to move to the surrounding villages, towns and mountains.<sup>569</sup>

According to Refik Hilmi,<sup>570</sup> the British never meant to establish an independent Kurdish state.<sup>571</sup> Sometimes they trusted Sheikh Mahmud due to developments and made mention of establishing an independent Kurdish state; however they did not abstain from bombing the Kurds when appropriate, in accordance with a change in their policies.<sup>572</sup>

It is possible to ascertain signs that British policies were prioritised over Kurdish interests in Refik Hilmi's memoirs. Refik Hilmi mentioned that it was ill-treatment by the British which drove Sheikh Mahmud to rebellion. Refik Hilmi, who explained that he could tell whether the British were in an advantageous position or not when they arrested him after the rebellions, since if the British were in an advantageous position they treated him badly; if not, they treated him well.<sup>573</sup>

According to Refik Hilmi, there was only one reason Sheikh Mahmud did not get along well with the British; that was the Sheikh had an ambition to establish an independent Kurdish State and this ambition had no overlapping ground with British interests.<sup>574</sup> For this reason, Sheikh Mahmud initiated the rebellion movements against the British which have been elaborated above.

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<sup>569</sup> Zaken, Mordechai, *Jewish Identities In a Changing World: Jewish Subjects and Their Tribal Chieftains In Kurdistan*, (Boston,2007),V.9, p.112

<sup>570</sup> He was secretary of Sheikh Mahmud. Although the idea that Hilmi was Pro-British in some matters was asserted, it would be seen that that is not exactly the case when his memories are examined. However, he aimed at getting along with the British.

<sup>571</sup> Hilmi, *Anılar*, p.23

<sup>572</sup> Hilmi, *Anılar*, p.13.

<sup>573</sup> Hilmi, *Anılar*, p.58.

<sup>574</sup> Hilmi, *Anılar*, p. 75.

## 4.2 Ali Şefik Özdemir Bey (1885-1951) and His Resistance Against British Forces

The second most important rebellion against British forces was ruled by Ozdemir Bey. During the struggles against Ozdemir Bey British forces loss a significant number of soldiers, military materials, weapons and even aircraft.

Indeed, in a revolt in Rawanduz in 1920, the tribes in the region asked help from the Ottoman Government but the Ottoman government could not help. After that the TGNA did help the tribes attempting to take control of the region. Meanwhile, there was a weak military unit in Elcezire. On 9<sup>th</sup> August 1921, Major Şevki Bey was appointed to the command of Süleymaniye and 3 officers and 100 soldiers were sent for assistance. Due to the small number of this force and the difficulty of supplying ammunition, an order not to conflict with the British was given to the unit.<sup>575</sup> Despite this order, from time to time they faced British attacks. On 16<sup>th</sup> December 1921 numerous British infantries attacked to Rawanduz with the RAF support but the British forces had large numbers losses in Babacicek channel.<sup>576</sup>

Mustafa Kemal Pasha and the government of Ankara made various attempts in the period leading up to the Lausanne Conference on the Mosul issue. Following on the British attacks in Arbil and Rawanduz against the Sürücü tribe that supported the Turks in January 1922; Mustafa Kemal Pasha ordered troops to be sent military to the region in the telegram carried to the Ministry of National Defense in 1 February 1922.<sup>577</sup> As a matter of fact, in order to engage in a more fundamental action in the region upon the insistent desires of the people in the Mosul Kirkuk region actions were taken to prepare a mobilization force to establish a Turkish command center. This military force would struggle with the British forces supported by Iraq soldiers.<sup>578</sup> Finally a military letter of instruction was prepared and Özdemir

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<sup>575</sup> Genel Kurmay Başkanlığı, *Türk İstiklal Harbi, Güney Cephesi*, (Ankara,1966), p.266.

<sup>576</sup> Üzel, Sahir, *İstiklal Savaşımız Esnasında Kürt Cereyanları ve Irak-Revandiz Harekatı*, Resmi Vesaike Müstenit Harp Tarihi, İstiklal No.215, p. 68.

<sup>577</sup> Taşkıran, Cemalettin, 'Atatürk ve Misak-ı Milliye'ye Ait Bir Belge', Yeni Türkiye September-December 1998, V.24, II, p.244.

<sup>578</sup> Üzel, Sahir, *İstiklal Savaşımız*, p.170; Öke, Mim, Kemal, *Musul Meselesi*, p.80.

Bey, the lieutenant-colonel in the national forces, was appointed to the region; as its commander.<sup>579</sup>

The attacks on Rawanduz led by Ozdemir Bey in 1921<sup>580</sup> had popularised the thought among the people that this region would soon be captured by the Turks and the old order would be re-established, and spread the fear in the British that the Turks would carry out an attack on Mosul.<sup>581</sup>

In the process which started with Mustafa Kemal Pasha's order on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1922 to reinforce the troops in Rawanduz, Ozdemir Bey talked it over with Cevat Pasha, commander of the Al-Jazirah Front at Diyarbakır on 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 1922 and arrived at Rawanduz again in May 1922.<sup>582</sup> With the orders he received, Ozdemir Bey expanded his activities towards Rawanduz, Diyarbakır, Mosul, Van and their periphery. Ozdemir Bey's activities, aimed at removing British forces from the region by overcoming the British invasion with the Islamic brotherhood, were closely followed by the British. The greatest shortcoming of Ozdemir Bey was the numerical inadequacy of the troops he brought along, comprising only 129 people. In other words the purpose and the forces of Ozdemir Bey were disproportionate. Despite the situation, Ozdemir Bey scored historic victories over the British.

The information on Ozdemir Bey's trip to Van in June 1922 and the troops he had gathered there was expressed in a telegram in the British Secretary of State for Air archives. According to the British documents<sup>583</sup> Ozdemir Bey travelled to Van at the beginning of June 1922 with a small unit accompanying him, and continued on to Rawanduz on 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 1922 with the troops he had gathered there. In fact, before Ozdemir Bey's arrival, a small armed convoy of his troops entered Rawanduz. This troop carried out the propaganda requested by Ozdemir Bey, and expressed that the reclamation of Mosul was very close to encourage the local people to join them. In

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<sup>579</sup> ATASE, İstiklal:1676, Folder: 408.1.

<sup>580</sup> Göztoklusu, Murat, *Kurtuluş Savaşımızın Kapanmayan Cephesi: Musul, Özdemir Harekati*, (İstanbul,2008), p. 95-96.

<sup>581</sup> *The Times*, 'Kurdish Insurgents Chastised', 23 September 1921, p. 9.

<sup>582</sup> Kaymaz, *Musul Sorunu*, p.190.

<sup>583</sup> PRO, AIR 5/556, 'From G. O. C. Iraq To War Office', 3 June 1922.

this telegram it was stated that the 1,000 to 1,500 armed men brought from Van had the potential to cause trouble in Rawanduz.

It was seen that Ozdemir Bey's forces were not only efficient in Rawanduz, but also in Rania and Kala Diza. The British made the best of the failure to utilize the opportunity that had arisen during their retreat from Sulaymaniyah, and recuperated quickly, re-establishing their dominance over the region.

During all these events, Ozdemir Bey's troops were transferred from the command of Al-Jazirah Front Command to the command of the Eastern Front Command. As Kaymaz maintains, not enough support was provided to Ozdemir Bey's forces by the Eastern Front Command just like the Al-Jazirah Front Command.<sup>584</sup> As mentioned above, this lack of support meant a failure to make the best of the British retreat from Sulaymaniyah.

Ozdemir Bey sent a letter to the Dizai tribe Resul Agha on 26<sup>th</sup> of June 1922, offering him the chance to struggle together against the British. He stated that the British were against the Caliph and the Sultanate; it was their religious duty as Muslims to challenge the British; issues about Mosul were by gone and they were slowly dominating the region again; and he awaited their support.<sup>585</sup>

Ozdemir Bey, who had efficiently succeeded in turning the anti-British reactions into pro-Turk feelings, conspired effectively with the Surchi, Zibar, and Barzan tribes; and moderately with the Hemavend, Jebbari, Pindar, Avroman, Khosnaw, Zangana, Bayat and Daudi tribes. These tribes listed above promised to provide support and cooperated with Ozdemir Bey.<sup>586</sup>

As a result of the British bombarding of their tribal settlements, inflicted due to their support to Ozdemir Bey, the Bayat and Daudi tribes ended their support. During these events, the elimination of Simko Sikak by Iranian forces and his taking

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<sup>584</sup> Kaymaz, *Musul Sorunu*, p.191.

<sup>585</sup> Meiselas, *Kurdistan: In*, p.124.

<sup>586</sup> Kaymaz, *Musul Sorunu*, p.193.

refuge in Turkey, the support of the Kurds near the Iranian border, and the cooperation of Ozdemir Bey with the Neftçizade family in Mosul changed the balance in favour of the Turks.

Upon these activities by Ozdemir Bey, the British founded the Kurdistan League led by Nemrut Mustafa Pasha, and started to publish the newspaper named *Bang-i Kurdistan*. In August, thinking that he had started to gather force in the region they started planning to completely end his activities.<sup>587</sup>

Ozdemir Bey had followed the movements of the British closely, as they set out to prepare the local levies in Erbil, Kirkuk and Hanikin for a counterattack in his headquarters.<sup>588</sup> The British efficiently used a 1,000 soldier Assyrian levies' force, an Indian-British brigade and the Royal Air Force in addition to 4,000 Arab soldiers for the counterattack against Ozdemir Bey.<sup>589</sup>

The attack on 31<sup>st</sup> of August 1922, with the force of the tribes that had declared their loyalty to Ozdemir Bey, was expected by the British. However, although the British proceeded with a counterattack with the Kurdish and Assyrian levies the next day, Ozdemir Bey's forces defeated these troops in a short time and captured first Rania and then Koi Sanjaq. Percy Cox, the British High Commissioner of Iraq, fearing the rapid advancement of events, evacuated the city by removing the British and Christians in Sulaymaniyah and left the administration to Sheikh Kadir, brother of Sheikh Mahmud. The British partially retreated from Mosul, but at the same time as this evacuation, and quickly prepared a counterplan aiming first at breaking up Ozdemir Bey's forces, and then at forcing Ozdemir Bey to completely retreat from the region using the Royal Air Force.

Cox, in line with this plan, asked Churchill to assign Sheikh Mahmud as governor to Sulaymaniyah. The main reason behind Cox's offer was that it was

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<sup>587</sup> Fieldhouse, *Kurds, Arabs*, pp.98-99.

<sup>588</sup> Salmond, John, 'The Air Force in Iraq', *Royal United State Services Institution Journal*, Vol.70, No.479, 1925, p.487. (p.483-498).

<sup>589</sup> Kaymaz, *Musul Sorunu*, p.194.



possible to argue that some of the tribes supporting Ozdemir Bey had ended this support when Sheikh Kadir was commissioned to Sulaymaniyah. Cox calculated that the Sheikh's brother having such an effect would be multiplied if the Sheikh was to be brought to Sulaymaniyah, and reported his policy in this regard to the central government. With the approval of the policy by London, Sheikh Mahmud was brought back from exile. Major Noel accompanied Sheikh Mahmud during his transfer to Baghdad first and then to Sulaymaniyah. Ozdemir Bey had carefully followed Sheikh Mahmud's transfer to Sulaymaniyah; then he sent a letter to Sheikh Mahmud on 22 September 1922 and told him that he had wished to cooperate with the Sheikh just after the World War I but did not find the opportunity. Ozdemir Bey expressed that<sup>590</sup> Sheikh Mahmud had a prestigious position not only among the Kurds but in the entire Muslim world, and cooperation against the British was beyond a mere request, but a necessity.

Sheikh Mahmud, who replied in the affirmative to Ozdemir Bey's wish for cooperation, requested a guarantee from Ozdemir Bey that his own autonomous dominance would be recognised by the Turks, and a supply of arms and ammunition provided. Sheikh Mahmud, negotiating with the Talabani and Jaff tribes at the same time, fell into a historic error by believing the Talabani leader Sheikh Abdulkirim's promise that he would support him as long as he would side with the British.<sup>591</sup> Talabani leader's word was no more than an offer prearranged with the British. After Sheikh Mahmud accepted this offer, the pro-Turkish tribes supporting Ozdemir Bey took sides with the British. Thus, the British who balanced Ozdemir Bey's forces with Sheikh Mahmud also balanced Sheikh Mahmud's forces with the Talabani Tribe.

In addition to the strategic plan of bombing, the regional levies who were supported by British Air Forces took an active role of Ozdemir Bey's forces. At that moment, with the beginning of the Armistice of Mudanya negotiations, all Ozdemir Bey's activities were left unfinished with no possibility of an agreement.

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<sup>590</sup> Güztoklusu, *Kurtulus Savasimizin*, p.146.

<sup>591</sup> Kaymaz, *Musul Sorunu*, p.199-200.

On 28<sup>th</sup> March 1923, the positions and numbers of the Turkish forces sent from Erbil and stationed at Rawanduz region were described in a report.<sup>592</sup> According to the report the Kurdish supported Turkish forces had a total of 240 riflemen; including 30 in Rawanduz, 150 in Betwata; 30 in Zibar, and 30 in Serdaşt. Also, the Kurdish supported Turkish forces had a total of 6 machine guns and 3 heavy weapons, including 5 in Betwata and 1 in Zibar.

In the following pages of this document, the anti-British forces with a high probability of supporting the Turks are listed.<sup>593</sup> The information given can be tabulated as;

<i>Name of the Tribe</i>	<i>Armament</i>	<i>Name of the Leader</i>
Hoşnu Tribe	500	Kadir Bey
Mir Yusuf	300	Kadir Bey
Bagok	200	Ahmed Bey
Balikan	200	Molla Yusuf
Neodeşt	150	Gafur Khan
Serat Herki	150	Tahir Agha
Dola Akhan	100	Muhammad Emin Bey
Horan	15	Salih Bey
<b><i>TOTAL</i></b>	<b><i>1415</i></b>	

At the bottom of this table, there is additional information about two local Kurdish tribes which might help the Kurds against the British. According to the given information Surchi Kurds would support Turkish forces with 200 men, unless they were repressed. Additionally, Dole Hauti Kurds would join the Turkish forces with 400 men. The four possible plans of action by the Turkish forces in the case of a British invasion of Rawanduz were outlined in the document. These four possible actions are listed as; Retreat back into Iran via Riyadh, to Neri, Retreat to Zibar, or

<sup>592</sup> PRO, AIR 23/346, 'From Political Officer Attached Frontiercol', 28 March 1923, p.64-66.

<sup>593</sup> PRO, AIR 23/346, 'From Political Officer', p.67

staying in the Sulaymaniyah region, which was under the influence of Sheikh Mahmut.<sup>594</sup>

Captain B. E. Littledale, who had prepared the document, added the information that the most likely option for the Turkish retreat was the fourth one. In other words, at that time, the Turks and Sheikh Mahmud were still influential and Sheikh Mahmud was supported by the Turks, and in return, the Sheikh was poised to support the Turks in dire straits.

It is wrong to think of all the anti-British Kurdish tribes listed in the document as pro-Turkish. In fact, the tribes described as pro-Turk would be better classified as those who simply opposed British policies in the Middle East. Notwithstanding that, the majority of the tribes listed here were pro-Turkish, and some of them cherished the thought of an independent Kurdish state, and a few of them had opted for making an alliance with a third-party other than the British.<sup>595</sup>

The telegram from Mosul to the High Commission of Baghdad on 7<sup>th</sup> of April 1923 stated that, according to the information obtained from the district governor of Amedia on Ozdemir Bey's activities at the region, Sheikh Ahmet Barzan<sup>596</sup> had started to rule the local council at the request of Ozdemir Bey. However, despite the situation, it was stated that Sheikh Ahmed had a tendency to work for the British, unless the Turks helped him more.<sup>597</sup>

In April 1923, according to an archive document by the Secretary of State for Air on the operation to Qoikol, Ozdemir Bey's allies planned to cut all the roads to Rawanduz before the operation. The forces acting for this purpose can be listed as; Ibrahim Bey and Hasan Bey with 75 men in Betwata, Naci Bey with his 30 men and Rania district governor Sayyid Abdullah, Gafur Khan and Pindar tribe who held the Sehidan passage.

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<sup>594</sup> PRO, AIR 23/346, 'From Political Officer', p.66.

<sup>595</sup> PRO, FO 371/6346, 'Kurdistan and The Bolshevic Menace', 29 December 1920, No: E-342.

<sup>596</sup> PRO, FO 251/93, 'Personalities In Kurdistan', p.104

<sup>597</sup> PRO, AIR 23/345, 'From Administrator, Musul To High Commissioner', Baghdad, 7 April 1923, p.59.

With Ozdemir Bey's arrival in Rawanduz, considering the effect of Kaka Emin who held an influential position over the Kurds, Ozdemir Bey decided to immediately act against the British. As a result of the implementation of this decision, Ozdemir Bey's forces suffered considerable losses.<sup>598</sup>

In a telegram<sup>599</sup> sent from the Iraq Air Headquarters to the British High Commissioner in Baghdad on 11<sup>th</sup> of August 1923, after the failure of Ozdemir Bey's operations, and the conclusion of the Lausanne peace negotiations, it was stated that Basri Bey from the Mikaili tribe had arrived at Semdinan 15 days ago to receive instructions. It was stated that, until that time, Van, Saray, Başkale, Colemerik, Diza and Semdinan were in the administrative domain of the Eastern Front Command, but it was understood from the visit of Basri Bey, that Semdinan was now in administrative control of Cizre Command. The telegram stated that the positioning of the Cizre front had two purposes. These were protection of the Iraq border, and attacking Iraq via Mosul, Baghdad and Basra. The telegram stated that the Turkish government positioned Van under Cizre; and it included the information that, according to an unacknowledged report, Turkish forces had been moved from Cizre to Van.

The prevailing opinion in British academe about Ozdemir Bey is that Ozdemir Bey was supported by Ankara; and this is a correct evaluation. The precise nature of this truth varies according to the perspectives taken by each scholar. While some scholars state that he was commissioned by Ankara<sup>600</sup> to organise the Kurdish tribes against the British, some sources<sup>601</sup> asserted that his movement was

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<sup>598</sup> PRO, AIR 5/292, 'Qoikol Operations April 1923', p. 2.

<sup>599</sup> PRO, AIR 23/370, 'From Air Headquarters, Iraq To H. E. The High Commissioner, Baghdad', 11 August 1923, p.27-28.

<sup>600</sup> Cemal Yüzbaşı, *1923'te Şeyh Mahmut'la Özdemir'e Karşı Kuva-yı Berriye ve Havaiyenin Müşterek Harekâtı*, (Ankara, 1340/1924), p.28; İsrail Kurtcephe, *Atatürk Dönemi Türk Dış Politikasında Musul Sorunu*, (Ankara, 1998), p.20; Sahir, Üzel, *İstiklal Savaşımız Sırasında Kürtlük Cereyanları ve Irak-Revandiz Harekâtı*, Resmi Vesaike Müstenit Harp Tarihi, (Daktilo Metin) Genelkurmay ATASE Başkanlığı Kütüphanesi, İstiklal nr: 215, p. 68.

<sup>601</sup> Seal, 'Reflections On the Mosul Problem', *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society*, Vol.13, No.4, 1926, p.353. (350-364).

independent (individual). However, Ankara followed a policy which would enable him to make the best of the situation.

Mosul was the part of the Turkish National Pact thus in his statements in various dates Mustafa Kemal Pasha repeatedly stated that Mosul was an inseparable Turkish homeland. Mustafa Kemal Pasha, Fevzi Pasha and Ismet Pasha held discussions to organize a military operation to Mosul at various times. Even a top secret operation plan was prepared by the Turkish General Staff.<sup>602</sup> The military operation to be organized in Mosul would be commanded by Kazim Karabekir Pasha but this plan could not be put into practice.<sup>603</sup> Thereupon, M. Kemal Pasha accepted the granting of the necessary support to Ozdemir Bey, who would act in an informal manner in the region. Ozdemir Bey's unofficial operation failed due to the lack of the sufficient logistic support from the Ankara Government. Therefore the Turkish government focused on to find a diplomatic solution to the Mosul Question.

### **4.3 Peaceful Reactions to the British**

France wanted to settle with the Turks because of the French Muslim colonies. The struggle of the Allied Powers and the Turks caused discomfort, especially in North Africa. Curzon claimed in a memorandum circulated on 4<sup>th</sup> of January 1920 that France was supposed to create a Western Islamic world from Syria to Morocco in exchange for the Eastern Islamic world under the influence of Britain.<sup>604</sup> France did not take much role in the implementation of the Treaty of Mondros. The British occupied the most important role in the occupation of Istanbul and the Straits, and the occupation of Izmir by Greeks also increased the influence of Britain in the Near East. As a result, the French thought that to fight against the Turks would not provide any advantage to France.<sup>605</sup>

The anti-British demonstrations and activities of Indian Muslims after the occupation of Izmir were another factor which caused the British to reconsider their

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<sup>602</sup> Ilgar, İhsan, "Türk Genelkurmayının Gizli Harekât Planı", *Belgelerle Türk Tarihi Dergisi*, September 1970, p. 33

<sup>603</sup> Karabekir, Kâzım, *Paşaların Kavgası*, (Istanbul, 1991), p. 279

<sup>604</sup> Bıyıklıoğlu, Tefik, *Atatürk Anadolu'da I (1919-1921)*, (Ankara, 1959). p. 66

<sup>605</sup> Kürkçüoğlu, Ömer, *Türk-İngiliz İlişkileri, 1919-1926*, (Ankara, 1978), p. 112.

Turkish policy. Sevket and Muhammad Ali, known as the Ali brothers, organized a series of Caliphate Conferences in India in the last months of 1919. An Indian Caliphate Council was established and some delegates sent to Europe to convey their ideas to allies. This and similar delegations met with British statesmen during the years 1920 and 1921 and requested that the Caliph's status should be protected, and his sovereignty should continue just like before the war.<sup>606</sup> Apart from this, the whole Indian Muslim Alliance, the Madras Presidency Muslim Alliance, the Council of the Muslim Alliance of the Provinces of Punjab<sup>607</sup> and the Muslims of the Young Indian<sup>608</sup> sent warning telegrams that Britain should respect the territorial integrity of Turkey. Meanwhile, aside from in India, in South Africa, Southeast Asia and even England Muslims were protesting against the Turkish policy of Britain.<sup>609</sup>

The relations between Ankara and Moscow during the 1920s also disturbed England. Churchill and the Ministry of War indicated that some concessions must be made to Mustafa Kemal in order to prevent this relationship and the Ministry of War also reported that now the greatest danger in the East was Bolshevism and that the Turkish-Greek war pushed the Turks into the arms of the Bolsheviks. According to Churchill, Lloyd George had stated that the British Empire was the greatest Muslim power in the world and that the hostile reactions of Muslims would be exacerbated by the prolongation of anti-Turkish politics.<sup>610</sup>

Meanwhile, the pressure of Indian Muslims, Muslim groups in Britain and the opposition on the British government continued increasingly. Lord Northcliffe wrote that after a 10-day trip to India, Hindu and Muslims were acting together for the first time in India's history and wrote that even moderate Muslims claimed that no peace could be achieved in India unless the three conditions were fulfilled.

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<sup>606</sup> Toynbee, Arnold, *Survey of International Affairs 1925*, (London, 1927). p. 49; PRO., F. O. 800/151, Private Papers of Lord Curzon, from M. H. Kidwai to Mr. Montagu, 14 May 1921.

<sup>607</sup> PRO, FO. 371. E114022/275/44, E121111/275/44, E121114 / 275 / 44, E121236/275/44, E128924/275/44, E128965/275/44, August - October 1919.

<sup>608</sup> Hehir, P., 'The Near East Crisis', *19<sup>th</sup> Century and After*, No: 149, November, 1922, p. 832.

<sup>609</sup> PRO, F. O. 371. E 156222 /275 /44; 15 October, 1919; PRO, F. O. 686/71, The Caliphate Question, British India, 29 July 1920. pp. 206-209.

<sup>610</sup> Gilbert, Martin, *Winston S. Churchill*, IV, 1917-1922, (London, 1975), p. 1260-1261.

The following three conditions were British approval of the Ottoman Sultan as the guardian of the Holy Lands and the head of the Muslims; the restitution of Edirne to the Turks and the abandonment of all Anatolian lands, including Izmir, to Turkey.<sup>611</sup> With the approval of Indian Secretary Montagu, a very close friend of Lloyd George, the Viceroy of India, Lord Reading, made a message to Montagu via the press on 8<sup>th</sup> of March 1922, to allow these pressures to be effective on the government. According to this message, Reading wanted the Government of India to fulfil the following three elements in order to protect the neutrality of the Straits and the Muslim minority: the evacuation of Istanbul by the Allied Powers, the recognition of the sovereignty of the Ottoman Sultan over the Holy Land and the restitution of Rumelia and Izmir to the Turks. This event led to controversy between the British government, especially Curzon and Montagu, and resulted in the resignation of Montagu on 10<sup>th</sup> of March 1922.<sup>612</sup>

In May 1922, both the British and the Greeks understood that the Greek army had to be withdrawn from all Anatolia, including Izmir.<sup>613</sup> Mustafa Kemal sent Ambassador of the Interior Ali Fethi Bey to London as ambassador to London in order to learn about Britain's thoughts on peace before a final and definite attack against the Greeks.<sup>614</sup> The British authorities did not welcome Ali Fethi Bey and did not want his participation in peace talks. The *Daily Express* newspaper criticized the lack of interest in Fethi Bey, by saying, 'people want peace and British forces to withdraw from the Near East'. The same day, and also on the next day, it suggested that the British people had declining confidence in Lloyd George's pro-Greek policy which had been criticized.<sup>615</sup> Ali Fethi Bey reported on a telegram he sent to Ankara on 25<sup>th</sup> of August that Lloyd George and Lord Curzon were working for the disintegration of Turkey and that diplomatic initiatives would no longer provide any benefit and that the Greeks would not give up Britain's policy without a definite

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<sup>611</sup> *The Times*, 25 January 1922, p.12.

<sup>612</sup> Beaverbrook, Lord, *The Decline and Fall of Lloyd George*, (London, 1963). p. 154-55

<sup>613</sup> Şimşir, Bilal N., *British Documents on Atatürk, 1919-1938*, IV, TTK Yayınları, (Ankara,1984), p.269-273

<sup>614</sup> Okyar, Osman, 'Turco-British Relations in the Inter-War Period: Fethi Okyar's Missions to London', Hale, William, A. İhsan Bağış, *Four Centuries of Turco-British Relations*, North Humberside, 1984. p.71

<sup>615</sup> *Daily Express*, 9-10 August 1922

defeat. Then the Great Offensive commenced on 26<sup>th</sup> of August and ended on 9<sup>th</sup> of September with the Greeks being thrown out of Izmir.<sup>616</sup>

For the British government, what really mattered was to take the Straits under British rule. In a British cabinet meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> of September 1922, Lloyd George said that Gallipoli was "the most strategically important region of the world."<sup>617</sup> Curzon claimed that the Istanbul and Gallipoli peninsula would never be allowed to be captured by the Turks.<sup>618</sup> Because Churchill thought that if the Turks could get the control of the Straits, again both England would lose its benefits in the region and a new Balkan war would be inevitable.<sup>619</sup> Therefore the British cabinet decided not to withdraw British soldiers from the Anatolian side of the Straits after long discussions, but to resist and fight if Turks attempted to cross into Europe.<sup>620</sup>

The crisis was discussed at the British cabinet meeting on September 15<sup>th</sup>. Lord Curzon opposed the military path to the advance of the Turkish troops. But Lloyd George and Churchill convinced the other ministers to make the decision to reinforce the forces in the Straits and to prevent the Turks from crossing to the European side.<sup>621</sup> At the same time, it sought for ways to cooperate with France, Serbia, Romania and British colonies.<sup>622</sup> With the full support of Lloyd George for this purpose, Churchill pointed to Britain's intention to reinforce the Harington forces but Canada and Australia rejected Britain's request for military support. South Africa did not even answer.<sup>623</sup> Only New Zealand supported the new policy of Britain.<sup>624</sup>

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<sup>616</sup> Sonyel, Salahi R., *Turkish Diplomacy, 1918-1923, Mustafa Kemal and Nationalist Movement*, (London, 1975), pp.265-269

<sup>617</sup> PRO CAB 23/31/48, Cabinet meeting on 7 September 1922.

<sup>618</sup> Macfie, A. L., 'The Chanak Affair, September-October 1922', *Balkan Studies*, 20 (2), 1979, p.311

<sup>619</sup> Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, p.820.

<sup>620</sup> Bennett, Gill H., *British Foreign Policy During the Curzon Period, 1919-24*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995.

<sup>621</sup> Gilmour, David, *Curzon*, (London, 1994.) p. 543.

<sup>622</sup> Şimşir, *British Documents*, pp.418-419.

<sup>623</sup> Macfie, 'The Chanak', pp.318-319.

<sup>624</sup> Şimşir, *British Documents*, pp.530-542.



The British public was also against a war with Turkey.<sup>625</sup> On 18<sup>th</sup> of September, the *Daily Mail* published with "Stop this New War!" headline.<sup>626</sup> Also there were news in the *Daily Express* and *the Times* newspapers that warned the British Cabinet to avoid war. The *Daily Mail* was published with the headline of "withdraw from Canakkale" on 21<sup>st</sup> of September and people were called to protest against the war.<sup>627</sup> The same day the British Trade Union Congress reported to Lloyd George that the working class was "absolutely against the war" and would declare a strike if there was a war.<sup>628</sup> British High Commissioner Horace Rumbold suggested to London that a conference could be arranged between the parties as soon as possible, arguing that Turks would not want to fight.

Lord Curzon went to Paris on 19 September to meet with French Prime Minister Poincaré and Italian Ambassador Count Sforza in order to restore relations between the Allies. Curzon said to Poincaré that the issue of land in Anatolia was solved spontaneously by the last Turkish victory. He mentioned the Thracia issue and claimed that the solution of the Straits and Istanbul was so important that it could not be left to the Turks and reminded him of the French government's note on 14<sup>th</sup> of September stating the importance of preserving the neutral territory under the control of the Allied Powers. He asked why the French troops were retreating from the Turkish lands in Anatolia. Poincaré responded that France could not fight the Turks in Asia Minor for two reasons. Firstly, France could not ignore the fact that it was a Muslim power, and the growing disturbance in the Muslim colonies from Tunisia to China. Secondly, because of financial problems, the French could not send their forces to Asia Minor. Under these circumstances, neither the French Prime Minister nor the French Parliament could think of a war against the Turks. The only thing he could recommend to Curzon was to withdraw the British troops from the Chanak.<sup>629</sup> For the cease-fire negotiations, the parties announced that they would meet in Mudanya or İzmit.<sup>630</sup>

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<sup>625</sup> Walder, David, *The Chanak Affair*, (London, 1969), p 229.

<sup>626</sup> *Daily Mail*, 18 September 1922.

<sup>627</sup> *Daily Mail*, 21 September 1922.

<sup>628</sup> Walder, *The Chanak Affair*, p.240.

<sup>629</sup> Şimşir, *British Documents, IV*, pp.454-455.

<sup>630</sup> Şimşir, *British Documents, IV*, pp.526-527.

During the year 1922, the coalition government was also criticized not only for Lloyd George's foreign policy, but also for internal affairs such as the decision to hold an early election, Liberal-Conservative contests within the government disagreements over agricultural policy, and the Irish problem. But the Chanak crisis was the last straw to overflow, and eventually the Conservative Party MPs gathered at the Carlton Club to talk about the future of the coalition. Although Chamberlain spoke in favour of the coalition, MPs led by Bonar Law decided that the Conservative Party would enter the general elections as an independent party from the coalition.<sup>631</sup> Lloyd George, on hearing this news, resigned the same day as prime minister. In the general elections held on 15<sup>th</sup> of November 1922, the Conservative Party won 344, the Labour Party 138, and the Liberals under Asquith 60 seats. The Liberals under the leadership of Lloyd George had suffered a major defeat by taking only 57 seats.<sup>632</sup>

#### **4.4 The Cost of Rebellions to England: British Casualties**

The Britain that had first started to capture Iraqi lands with the invasion of Basra, later rapidly expanded her territorial dominance. With the expansion of the invasions, the British were obliged to develop mutual encounters not only with Arabs, but also with all societies living in Iraq. When we consider the matter with regard to our topic, the British tried to build their relations with the Kurds upon the foundation they had established since the 1800's. This establishment process was built generally by winning the Kurdish notables with promises of money and posts, and if this did not work, by threatening. An attempt to explain how well these threats worked will be made in various sections of our thesis. The parties' struggles for this purpose were mentioned in many news reports in the British media.

In a news report published on 15<sup>th</sup> of September 1919,<sup>633</sup> it was stated that the Kurds' rebellious attacks against the British were punished. According to this news

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<sup>631</sup> Walder, *The Chanak Affair*, pp.326-327.

<sup>632</sup> Walder, *The Chanak Affair*, pp.330.

<sup>633</sup> *The Times*, 'A Little War In Kurdistan', 15 September 1919, p. 9.

report the British engaged the Kurds around Mosul and Zaho in August 1919. Although there was no information about the casualties, it is very interesting that the newspaper published the information that the region had been bombed.

As a result of both the unrest between the Kurds after Sheikh Mahmud, and the unrest between the Arabs and other elements in Iraq and the public disorder, the British suffered heavy losses.

When the information collected from different sources about British forces losses is examined, the number of dead, wounded, lost and captured British officials in 1920 can be determined. Accordingly, a total of 425 officers who served in British forces were killed in the clashes in 1920, including 54 British, 354 Indian and 17 auxiliary forces officials. A total of 1228 officials were wounded<sup>634</sup>; including 100 British, 1079 Indian and 49 supporting forces officials in the conflict in 1920s. A total of 451 officials missing; 141 British, 282 Indian and 28 supporting forces officials, and a total of 164 officials were taken captive, including 136 British, 74 Indian and 11 supporting forces officials in the clashes in 1920.<sup>635</sup>

Despite such a table being available, it is interesting that during the debates in the House of Commons about the Kurdistan, on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1920, and no information were stated to inform an attack against Christians in the regions heavily populated by the Kurds.<sup>636</sup> However, it is seen that a report on the position of Christian inhabitants of Turkey was prepared on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1920.<sup>637</sup>

The relationship of the Kurds with the British was always superficial. As can be seen, this relation was generally built on mutual interest. In other words, both the

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<sup>634</sup> Fieldhouse, David, K., *Western Imperialism in the Middle East 1914-1958*, Oxford University Press 2006, p.97.

<sup>635</sup> Haldane, Aylmer, L., *The Insurrection in Mesopotamia 1920*, The Imperial War Museum, (London, 2005), Fieldhouse, D.K., *Kurds, Arabs and Britons: The Memoir of Wallace Lyon in Iraq*, (London, 2002), p.9.

<sup>636</sup> [https://api.parliament.uk/historichansard/commons/1920/mar/10/kurdestan#S5CV0126P0\\_1920\\_0310\\_HOC\\_185](https://api.parliament.uk/historichansard/commons/1920/mar/10/kurdestan#S5CV0126P0_1920_0310_HOC_185), last access on 12th June 2018.

<sup>637</sup> PRO, FO 371/5043, 'Position of Christian Inhabitants of Turkey', 11 March 1920, No: 1714, p.241.; [https://api.parliament.uk/historichansard/commons/1920/mar/10/kurdestan#S5CV0126P0\\_19200310\\_HOC\\_186](https://api.parliament.uk/historichansard/commons/1920/mar/10/kurdestan#S5CV0126P0_19200310_HOC_186)

Kurds and the British approached each other to obtain the maximum benefit from each other. The answer to the question ‘who made the most profit in this relation?’ would be, definitively, the British. However, the answer to the question ‘at what price was this benefit?’ is complicated. Thus, ‘the British Officers’ part of the price will be discussed briefly in this section.

The confident and moderating attitude of the British authorities, and their comfortable wandering among the Kurds with the confidence that nothing would happen to them yielded unexpected results. The first loss for the sake of realising British Kurdish policy was, as far as we could confirm, Captain Pearson, a British officer murdered in 1919.<sup>638</sup> Captain Pearson was murdered by the Goyan tribe on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1919.<sup>639</sup>

Apart from the writings about Captain Pearson, it is possible to find information about assassinations against the British in very few studies and archive documents. Among these, Gowan’s study, differently from others, asserted, when mentioning the murdered British, that the Kurds cut their ears off and sent them to other tribes around aiming at spreading terror in the region.<sup>640</sup>

In the telegram, sent from the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force to General Headquarters on 7<sup>th</sup> April 1919, it was stated that the dead body of the captain was found in Zaho. It is seen in the document that the source of the information was the Mosul political officer. Humphrey Bowman, in his book<sup>641</sup>, included the criticism that the British did not observe the delicate balance in the region, and in mentioning the deaths in Zaho; we agree with this opinion. British officers thinking that they could act as they liked in the region, with their moderating attitude, paid the heavy price for it.

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<sup>638</sup> PRO. AIR 20/510, ‘From Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force to General Headquarters’, 7 April 1919, p.55

<sup>639</sup> PRO, FO371/4191, ‘From Political, Baghdad To Cairo, Constantinople, Simla and Tehran’, No: 59057, 16 April 1919

<sup>640</sup> Gowan, “Northern ”, p.194.

<sup>641</sup> Bowman, Humphrey, *Middle East-Window*, (Oxford,1942), p.225

Cunliffe and Owen in their 1922 article titled “The Assyrian Adventure of 1920” asserted that at that date Surchi tribe and Zibar Kurds were inimical to the British policy;<sup>642</sup> they argued against the British politics to resettle the Assyrians to the region; and they were responsible for the murder of Mosul political officer J. H. H. Bill in 1919. It is likewise reported that Captain Scott, accompanying Mr. Bill, was also murdered near Bira Kapra by the Zibar tribe.<sup>643</sup>

On 18<sup>th</sup> of February 1920, a meeting the Central Asia Society was organised at Burlington House in London. In the briefing at this meeting, given by Captain W. Ormsby Gore, member of parliament, Lord Carnock and some other British authorities, it was stated that five of the political officers assigned to the northern parts of Mosul had been murdered by the Kurds in the last five months and this outrage eliminated the picture of a friendly future with the Kurds.<sup>644</sup>

When the studies that provided information on the 1920 assassinations are considered, we run across the information that the political officer of Kifri was murdered by the Kurds on 26<sup>th</sup> of August 1920.<sup>645</sup> However, the information provided here needs to be corrected. The aforementioned officer was not the political officer of Kifri, but the deputy political officer Captain G. H. Salmon.<sup>646</sup>

No wonder these rebellions had also a financial aspect and this financial aspect was not meaningless for the British.<sup>647</sup> Even though Liora Lukitz<sup>648</sup> stated that the rebellion had cost hundreds of British lives and £50 million but it should be considered that this amount was too high for only a rebellion. It would be more

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<sup>642</sup> Cunliffe, F. and Owen C.M.G., ‘The Assyrian Adventure of 1920’, *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society*, Vol.9, No. 2, 1922, p.92.

<sup>643</sup> PRO, AIR 20/513, ‘Note on Rowanduz By Major W. R. Hay, P.O, Arbil’, p.178.

<sup>644</sup> Gore, W. Ormsby, ‘The Organization Of British Responsibilities In The Middle East’, *Journal Of The Royal Central Asian Society*, Vol.7, No.2-3, 1920, p.86.

<sup>645</sup> Jacobsen, ‘Only by’, p.348.

<sup>646</sup> Longrigg, *Iraq 1900*, p.125.

<sup>647</sup> PRO, AIR 1/426/15/260/1, ‘Resume of Work, 31. Squadrons, Baghdad’, 7 May 1919, s. 3; PRO, AIR 1/21/15/1/109, ‘(Appendices), (e) Report By F/O H. G. W. Lock And F/O G.A. Gowler (No 30 Squadron) On Their Capture and Release’, p.3.

<sup>648</sup> Lukitz, *A Quest*, p.135.

reasonable to assume that this amount was spent for all the rebellion movements in 1920 including the murder of Lieutenant Colonel Leachmen.<sup>649</sup>

Talbot Wilson making a general review of 1920 stated that 30 to 50 officers had been murdered or died due to illnesses in the last 6 months, and 50 -60 officers had been killed in the last year, up till September 1920.<sup>650</sup> Of course it cannot be proved that all the casualties mentioned here belonged to the British officers murdered by the Kurds. The number provided by Talbot Wilson can be claimed to cover the total number of casualties in Iraq.

As has been ascertained, by 1922, around 6,000 Iraqis and around 500 British and Indian soldiers died in the revolt.<sup>651</sup> The revolt caused British officials to drastically reconsider their strategy in Iraq. The revolt cost the British government 40,000,000 pounds which was twice the amount of the annual budget allotted for Iraq and a huge factor in reconsidering their strategy in Iraq.

When it comes to 1922, we run across, in Philip Graves' *The Life of Percy Cox* and Edmonds' memoirs, the information that Captain Sidney Stephen Bond and Kenty McKant had been murdered.<sup>652</sup> We also run across praise of the aforementioned officers and information that they had been killed in treachery by the Kurds, in Elizabeth Burgoyne's *Gertrude Bell: From Her Personal Papers 1914-1926* and in the news reports of *The Manchester Guardian*.<sup>653</sup> In another news report in *The Manchester Guardian*, it was reported that Captain J. F. Carvosso and First Lieutenant R. A. Burr ridge had been murdered by the Kurds in the shootouts in January 1922.<sup>654</sup>

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<sup>649</sup> Fieldhouse, *Kurds, Arab*, p.64-65.

<sup>650</sup> Wilson, 'Mesopotamia', p.153.

<sup>651</sup> Tripp, Charles, *A History of Iraq*, (Cambridge,2007), p.43; Vinogradov, Amal, 'The 1920 Revolt in Iraq Reconsidered: The Role of Tribes in National Politics', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol.3, No.2, (April,1972), p.138

<sup>652</sup> Graves, *The Life Of Sir Percy Cox*, Hutchinson and Co. Ltd, (London,1941) , p.320; *The Times*, 'Kurdish Treachery', 27 June 1922, p.7.

<sup>653</sup> Burgoyne, *Gertrude Bell*, p.276; *The Manchester Guardian (1901-1959*, 'Two British Officers Murdered: Outrage In Kurdistan', 23 June 1922, p.8.

<sup>654</sup> *Manchester Guardian (1901-1959)*, 'Fighting In Kurdistan', 5 January 1922, p.8.

In the telegram was sent by the High Commissioner of Baghdad to the Secretary of State for Colonies on 2<sup>nd</sup> of July 1922, information on how the British officers had been murdered was conveyed. According to this document Fitzgibbon had been murdered around Sulaymaniyah while chasing a fugitive who was now in custody. In the document which reported that this event should be considered as an example of the anarchy supported by Mahmud Han Dizai at the north of Halabja, it was stated that this was also a typical example of how imperative an airborne attack on the region was. The telegram provided information that although Mahmud Han Dizai's attitude towards the British was quite positive, he had serious problems with the Jaff aristocrats in Halabja. However, although it was well-known in Sulaymaniyah, that Mott and Hudson had been murdered by a thief; unclear information about the identity of this thief was provided. According to this information, the murderer of these people was one Sheikh Mahmud's officers, who had participated in the 1919 rebellion. The behaviour of this person caused the levies to move towards Chamchamal region.

In this document,<sup>655</sup> which considered the only link between these two assassinations as the unrest unfolding in the region known as Southern Kurdistan, it was stated that the unrest was caused by two factors. The first of these was that the ones who had been confused by the Turkish propaganda after the failure in the peace negotiations with the Turks, had to make a decision; and the second was that the movement was oriented towards Iraq due to the improvement of the spirit of independence.

Various comments could be made on why these officers and military attendants had been murdered. However, the most accurate comment was made by Fieldhouse. According to Fieldhouse, the main reason for the murder of these officers was the disregard and unfamiliarity of the officers about the customs, traditions, manners, practices and religious beliefs prevailing in the region.<sup>656</sup> We

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<sup>655</sup> PRO, AIR 23/340, 'From High Commissioner, Baghdad To Secretary of State For The Colonies, London', 2 July 1922, p.55.

<sup>656</sup> Fieldhouse, *Kurds, Arab*, p.28.

may argue that, this reason should be taken alongside the desire of the peoples of the region to resist British dominance over their region and their unwillingness to be separated from the Turks.

Yıldız, in his comment on these assassinated officers, expressed his discomfort at these incidents' being described as the attack of the Kurds upon western civilization.<sup>657</sup> Again Yıldız states that<sup>658</sup>, in his study, grounded in French documents, these casualties were completely overlooked in British politics; however, this view is absolutely unacceptable. The British did not abstain from hailing down tons of bombs over the regions where their officers had been murdered, in the event of any assassination of any British servicemen.

#### **4.5 The Cost of the Rebellions to the Kurds: The Penalty Fines**

While on the one hand Britain tried to prevent anti-British incidents among Kurdish tribes by using force on the other hand British officers were trying to intimidate rebellious Kurds by imposing penalty fines. The documents found in the British archives can be shown as evidence of this situation. For instance, the document that shows the amounts of fines imposed on the Kurds in the Kirkuk and Kifri regions in September-October 1920.<sup>659</sup> The document gives information about the dates of the penalties given to tribes, and the amount of fines and their payment dates, the amount of arms and ammunition that were confiscated by British forces. When the amount of penalties is analysed it can be seen that the maximum penalty was given to Daudi Kurds. Referring to the document, the Daudi Kurds paid a 35.000 rupee fine. The Daudi Kurds also were forced to deliver 30 modern and 100 normal weapons to the British officers. Again according to this document the British officials collected 100 weapons and 10.000 small arms and ammunition from Bayat Kurds. This was the maximum amount of ammunition confiscated from a single tribe.

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<sup>657</sup> Yıldız, *Fransız*, p.28.

<sup>658</sup> Yıldız, *Fransız*, p. 29.

<sup>659</sup> PRO, AIR 20/710, 'Administrative Report of Kirkuk Division, Period January 1st 1920 To December 31st 1920', p.15.



As mentioned above, British forces inflicted numerous casualties, and this was causing problems in domestic politics. Britain had allies in the region so in the order she established during her dominion of Iraq, England wanted to take advantage as far as possible of local forces. In this context, the British wanted to establish small units which consist of the levies from local forces such as Arabs, Kurds and Assyrians. Although the biggest supporters of the British during the rebellions both in 1919 and after this date were the Şerif family members, the levies, established by the combination of various societies, should also be indicated as an addition to this force.

For the administration of the local levies, which started to be formed in 1920, 32 British officers and 59 local Iraqi soldiers were commissioned. By year 1920, approximately 7,000 soldiers were assigned to these troops. A monthly salary of 775 rupees for single men, and 1,550 rupees for married ones was paid. It is known that the local levies comprised of three cavalry troops, two of them from Kurds, and the other one from Assyrians; of three infantry troops, one Kurdish, two Assyrian; and one Assyrian support unit.

The British took many precautions against Sheikh Mahmud's rebellion. Indeed, the British did not only use British or Indian troops to repress the rebellions in Iraq in general and especially in the regions heavily populated by the Kurds, but also they used the Levies, who had members from various societies such as Arabs, Kurds and Assyrians.

#### **4.6 The Royal Air Force (RAF) and Its Operations Against Rebellious**

After the occupation of Mosul, the British hesitated to decide on the political future of Mosul. There was not consensus among the British officers in Mesopotamia and London about the future of Mosul. British agents in the region had mainly two separate proposals in their reports to the British Foreign Office. While some suggested leaving Mosul to Iraq in terms of Iraq's future and British interests, the

agents considering the ethnic structure of the region were proposing to be included in the borders of the Kurdish federation to be established.

The attitude of the British, the French and the Americans supporting the Armenians led to an increase in the Kurds' suspicions of the European states, especially Britain. The French supported the Armenians so the Armenians started to join the French military forces. In addition to that the British supported Christian Nestorian and the Assyrians in the region and they joined the British armed services. British support to the Armenians and the uncertainty of the British policy on the Kurds caused opposition of the Kurds to the British. Thereupon to reduce the Kurds' hostile reactions and to protect British interests in the region the British formed a unit of government named 'South Kurdistan' under the rule of Sheikh Mahmud, who had influence over the Kurds. But in the sixth month of his reign Sheikh Mahmud revolted against the British in May 1919 and British aircrafts located in British air bases<sup>660</sup> in Mesopotamia served to suppress the revolt.<sup>661</sup>

Meanwhile, the Kurds in Mardin registered their allegiance to the Ottoman Empire by sending a memorandum to the Ottoman Government. They wanted the government to intervene in their problems. For example, the Kurds in Erzurum and in Diyarbakır also declared their allegiances to the Ottoman Empire by sending telegrams.<sup>662</sup> Because the Ottoman Government could not meet the Kurdish demands for help, the Kurds worried about their future. But after Mustafa Kemal started the national resistance movement the worries of the Kurds decreased. The reactions of the Kurds and the British officials to the propaganda were clarified with the Erzurum Congress (23 July - 7 August 1919). A statement issued after the Sivas Congress (4 - 11 September 1919) emphasized that there was no problem between the Turks and Kurds and they would live as two independent siblings that were inseparable from each other.<sup>663</sup> Already, a large number of Kurdish representatives participated in the Sivas Congress. In the Amasya talks, it was emphasized that the Kurds were not

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<sup>660</sup> According to the British Air Ministry records the main British squadron was in Basra and in addition to the that 30th , 31st and 72nd aircraft squadrons were located in Baghdad. PRO, AIR 1/426/15/260/1, 'Correspondence Regarding The Use of Aircraft in Mesopotamia 1918- 1920', p.23-25 ; PRO, AIR 1/426/15/260/1, 'Resume of Work, 31. Squadron', 7 May 1919, p.1.

<sup>661</sup> Üzel, Sahir, *İstiklal Savaşımız*, p.55

<sup>662</sup> Öke, *Musul Meselesi* , p.80

<sup>663</sup> Mısırlıoğlu, Kadir, *Mısır Meselesi ve Irak Türkleri*, (İstanbul,1975), p.83

allowed to leave Ottoman society. Also Mustafa Kemal had sent letters to the Kurdish leaders such as Abdurrahim Agha and Sheikh Mahmud in August 1919 to ask for their support against the British forces. The support of the Kurds to the Turks increasingly continued after the congresses. The Kurdish delegations of Diyarbakir, Mosul and Bitlis repeatedly declared their support by participating in the Turkish national movement.<sup>664</sup> The Milli and Karakeçili tribes also agreed and declared that they would join armed to resist against the occupation.<sup>665</sup>

Meanwhile, news about the establishment of an Armenian state on the Turkish territory and the support of Britain cooled the tribes in the region from England and caused them to move in common with the Turks.<sup>666</sup> As it mentioned by Calthorpe in his report sent to the Foreign Office on 29<sup>th</sup> July 1919, the Armenian issue was bringing the Kurds back into line with the Turks. According to him British support for Armenia at the Paris Peace Conference changed the attitude of the Kurds against the British in a negative way.<sup>667</sup> Meanwhile, a TGNA delegation headed by Foreign Minister Bekir Sami was sent to Moscow to conduct negotiations with Russian delegates to get Russian support for the Turkish National Movement. The representatives arrived in Moscow on the 20<sup>th</sup> July 1920 and began negotiations with the Russian delegation. During the negotiations Georgy Chicherin (People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the Russian SFSR) proposed the Armenian question for the agenda, and demanded the Eastern Anatolia lands (Van and Bitlis) be put Armenia. His demand was rejected by the Turkish delegates.<sup>668</sup> But the demands of Georgy Chicherin and his support to the Armenians frightened the Kurds and supporting the Turks became more logical for future of the Kurds and Kurdish support to the Turks against the British increasingly continued. For the Kurds, to leave the Turkish sovereignty was to enter the Armenian sovereignty. The fear that lands of the Kurds would be given the under the control of Armenia was the main factor that encourage Kurds to have a unity and protect their lands. This fear brought Kurds closer to the Turks. Further on, it is reported that the Karaağaç tribe began establishing a militia organization of twelve thousand people.<sup>669</sup> Because of these

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<sup>664</sup> Öke, *Musul Meselesi*, p.103

<sup>665</sup> Melek, Kemal, *İngiliz Belgeleriyle Musul Sorunu (1890-1926)*, (İstanbul,1983), p.36

<sup>666</sup> Kurtcephe, İsrail, *Atatürk Dönemi Türk Dış Politikasında Musul Sorunu*, (Ankara,1998), p.8

<sup>667</sup> ATASE, Folder: 1872, File: H-17, 10/18

<sup>668</sup> Sonyel, Salahi,S, 'Kurtuluş Savaşı Günlerinde Doğu Siyasamız', *Bellekten*, V.164, p.674-675

<sup>669</sup> ATASE, Folder: 1611, File: 151, 2/108

anti-British activities in South-eastern Anatolia the British authorities in Istanbul started to be worried. In September British bomber aircrafts were used to suppress the revolts. According to the news<sup>670</sup> the Kurds around Mosul and Zaho were bombed by the RAF bomber aircrafts on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1919 and the rebellious Kurds were punished. The concerns of the British officers were also seen in their reports. Colonel Meinertzhagen in his telegram dated 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1919, to Lord Curzon reported that Mustafa Kemal was attempting to unite the Turks, the Kurds and the Arabs to push the invaders out of Ottoman lands.<sup>671</sup> In the meantime, the Kurds in Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyah were reported to have revolted against the British.<sup>672</sup>

In 1921, the British had formed an area of influence in Iraq. In March 1921 Britain, seeking to alleviate resistance, decided to support Faisal as the king of the administration under the British mandate in Iraq and Faisal came to the throne in August 1921. But Kurds in Mesopotamia preferred to stand with the Turks rather than to live under the rule of the Arabian Faisal, who was the king of the British patronage Arabian state Iraq.<sup>673</sup> And the resistance against the British became stronger.

Until 1921 only limited use was made of the RAF to suppress riots. However, after 1921, the air forces began to be used frequently to suppress rebellions, as it would reduce both war costs and military personnel losses but would increase the civil losses.<sup>674</sup>

On 31<sup>st</sup> August 1922 Ozdemir Bey attacked the British with their troops. Ozdemir's troops, which won the Derbent Battle, captured six machine guns and two pieces of artiller in this battle with many items from the British army. Then British aircraft started to bomb but Ozdemir's troops shot down four of the low altitude British bomber aircraft.<sup>675</sup>

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<sup>670</sup> *The Times*, 'A Little War In Kurdistan', 15 September 1919, p. 9.

<sup>671</sup> Üzel, Sahir, *İstiklal Savaşımız*, p.90

<sup>672</sup> Genel Kurmay Başkanlığı, *Güney Cephesi*, p.273

<sup>673</sup> Öke, Mim, Kemal, *Musul Kerkük Dosyası*, (İstanbul, 1991), p.16

<sup>674</sup> Townshend, Charles, *When God* p.511

<sup>675</sup> Üzel, Sahir, *İstiklal Savaşımız*, p.97

Mustafa Kemal Pasha's statements about Mosul and his promises of a plebiscite influenced local people so as to encourage them to act against the British in October 1922. Then the British began bombing Koi Sanjak, İmadiye and Dinart as from 17<sup>th</sup> October 1922 to punish the tribes those in the target area of the British. The British aircraft often bombed the territories and villages in which anti-British tribes lived, with their fields and herds. On 15<sup>th</sup> December 1922, the air strike which was carried out with 22 aircrafts and continued for an hour and a half and caused fires on every side of the Koi Sanjak.

The British, who had been waiting for a while after the air and land troops-assisted operations that the British had conducted against Köysancak and İmadiye had failed, began to attack again. The British Ministry of War decided to reinforce the eighth squadron which was under the command of General John Salmon. General Salmon began operations in Northern Iraq at the beginning of February 1923 and focused its military operations on Sheikh Mahmut and Ozdemir.<sup>676</sup> The number of the British aircraft was increased to a hundred by adding new aircrafts that would operate in the region at that time. The aircrafts were supported by two Indian brigades, one infantry and the other one cavalry. There were volunteer troops of around 4,000 Nasturi and Armenians and about 1,500 tribal troops.<sup>677</sup> The bombers bombed Rene, Derbent and the other cities in the region.<sup>678</sup>

In these explorations conducted by planes, statements were made in order to cause psychological effects on the public, trying to spread the idea that the tribes preferred British rule, and in other ways which reduced confidence in the Turkish government.<sup>679</sup>

Meanwhile, attacks of British aircraft continued unabated. Ozdemir Bey reported that his artillerymen shot down two bomber aircrafts in January 1923.<sup>680</sup> On

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<sup>676</sup> British General John Salmon published reports on the air campaign against Sheikh Mahmut and Özdemir Bey in 1923 in the London newspaper dated 10 June 1924. In the same year, this report was translated into Ottoman Turkish by Captain Cemal, an English translator of the General Staff. Salmon, John, *Şeyh Mahmut'la Özdemir'e Karşı Kuvayi Berriye ve Havaiyenin Müşterek Harekatı*, translated by Captain Cemal, (Ankara,1924), p.1

<sup>677</sup> Genel Kurmay Başkanlığı, *Güney Cephesi*, p.280

<sup>678</sup> Üzel,Sahir, *İstiklal Savaşımız*, p.136

<sup>679</sup> Salmon, *Şeyh Mahmut'la*,p.11

<sup>680</sup> Üzel,Sahir, *İstiklal Savaşımız*, p.302

2<sup>nd</sup> March 1923 while the rebellion of the Sheikh Mahmud continued the British aircrafts bombed Sulaymaniyah and the city was ruined.<sup>681</sup>

While the Lausanne negotiations continued, the British-Iraqi troops in Mosul launched an attack against the Turkish-Kurdish forces on 8<sup>th</sup> April 1923, with one of them on the Hodran Suyu in the direction of the Devil's Strait, and the other on the Great Zap Suyu in the direction of Serderya. Many of the soldiers from both sides were killed during the raids on 11/12 April night. After a while, the British, who paid more attention to air attacks, attacked with more airplanes on 13<sup>th</sup> April and the British attacks were exacerbated further on 19<sup>th</sup> April 1923.

Ozdemir Bey, who realized that he could not stay in the region any longer, decided to withdraw to Iran on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1923. Ozdemir reached Van on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1923 and the Turkish military operation, which began in 1922, ended.<sup>682</sup> General Salmon continued his campaign after Ozdemir Bey took refuge in Iran. The British policy, which aimed to completely suppress the tribes in the region, was fully implemented. Many pro-Turkish Kurds were forced to move away from the region in order to avoid being followed by the British.<sup>683</sup>

As can be seen the RAF had been used regularly and effectively after the establishment of the British domination in Iraq and in the revolts since the 1919-1920 rebellions.<sup>684</sup> Kurds were well armed and talented warriors. In addition to that, Anti-British Kurds knew the topography of the region so they would frequently spring ambushes on British forces. That was why they caused many casualties in British forces. British officers joined local people in the British armies. Because pro-British local powers also knew the region; thus they would make a major contribution to the British forces. But it was not enough to decrease the loss of the personnel. The reason was that guerrilla tactics were practised successfully by the Kurds in the mountainous areas. The importance of the activities of the RAF can be better understood by taking in to account the geographical features of the region. The RAF aircraft would be used to observe the region and attack the rebels in the mountainous areas and this could give crucial advantages to the British forces. In virtue of the

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<sup>681</sup> The Manchester Guardian, 'Rebel Sheikh in Iraq: British Bombing Operations', 18 April 1923

<sup>682</sup> Öke, *Musul Meselesi*, p.106

<sup>683</sup> Salmon, *Şeyh Mahmut'la*, p.22-26

<sup>684</sup> Randal, *After*, p.5

aircrafts British forces' casualties were reduced and the war costs and the reactions of the British public opinion would be minimized.<sup>685</sup> According to Wilson, the Royal Air Forces (RAF) made major contributions, such as making easier the control of densely populated region, and the protection of communication and roads in Mesopotamia, to the protection of the railway bridges and the petroleum filling plants.<sup>686</sup>

It is clear that, the more efficient use of the RAF started in 1921 when Winston Churchill was the Secretary of State for the Colonies and RAF involved many operations against the rebels especially between the years of 1921-1923.<sup>687</sup> The Cairo Conference, where the question of enhancing the effectiveness of RAF was also in the agenda, turned out to be a milestone not only for the RAF, but also for reshaping of Middle East map.<sup>688</sup> Again, Churchill thought that expenses for Iraq must be limited by taking Britain's economic situation into consideration. But he emphasized that these limiting precautions must be done at such a level that it should not harm British sovereignty either in the short, medium or long term. Churchill stated that the way to sustain British long term plans concerning the region, and limiting expenses was to effectively use the RAF (Royal Air Force), and he created a sub-unit responsible for sustaining these activities in his own Colonial Office between the years 1920 and 1921. This sub-unit included following names: J. E. Shuckburgh from the India Bureau, Major Hubert Young from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Basra's old Consul R. W. Bullard, Richard Meinertzhagen, an old political military officer chief in Philistine, and Colonel T. E. Lawrence.<sup>689</sup>

Nadia Atia, in her article called "Mesopotamian Myths"<sup>690</sup> mentions that 131,000 soldiers with modern arms were involved in the rebellions by Arabs and

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<sup>685</sup> *The Times*, 'Air Force Control In Iraq', 26 March 192, p.13.

<sup>686</sup> PRO, AIR 5/223, 'Note of Use of Air Force in Mesopotamia in Its Political Aspects And As to Its Utility Actual and Potential in Support of The Civil Government of That Country', 1920-1921, March 1921, p.1.

<sup>687</sup> Randal, *After*, p.6

<sup>688</sup> Priya, Satia, 'The Defense of Inhumanity: Air Control and the British Idea of Arabia', *The American Historical Review*, Vol.111, February 2016, p.32 (p.16-51)

<sup>689</sup> Sluglett, *Britain In Iraq*, p.40.

<sup>690</sup> Atia, Nadia, 'Mesopotomanian', p.250.

Kurds in 1920 but even so the British army forces could not suppress these rebellions. She criticised the consequences of RAF involvement leading to the deaths of many women and children. Izady also severely criticises the use of the RAF against Kurds. According to him British forces applied a disproportionate level of force to the local community and air bombings turned civilians into targets.<sup>691</sup> Indeed, as can be seen from the newspapers<sup>692</sup> the RAF carried out numerous operations on the anti-British Kurds. The documents found in the Turkish archives also give information about RAF operations against anti-British peoples in the Mesopotamian region. According to these documents the RAF operations were really effective in the region and a great number of Turkish-Kurdish casualties were suffered during the bombing.<sup>693</sup>

It has been claimed that gas bombs were used on the region by the British bomber aircrafts as well. Related with this claim, a recorded graph was found in the archives of British Air Ministry. When this graphic was analysed, it is not hard to understand England preferred using the Air Forces rather than the land forces. According to this graphic, it is seen that RAF had a developed system which would drop one gas bomb in two minutes from an airplane where speed was 75 miles in an hour and at the height of 2000 feet and this bomb would affect an area of half mile. With the help of this technology it would be easier to completely dominate over the region. Similar information on this topic was given by Howard Kaplan. In 2007, in

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<sup>691</sup> Mehrdad R. Izady, 'Between Iraq and Hard Place: The Kurdish Predicament', p.73, *Iran, Iraq and Legacies of War*, Edited by Potter G. Lawrence and Sick, Gary G., pp.71-101 (USA,2004).

<sup>692</sup> *The Observer*, 'Mesopotamia Fighting: Big Punitive Expedition Against Kurds', 14 December 1919, p.13; *The Manchester Guardian (1901-1959)*, 'British Air Attacks In Mesopotamia: Heavy Tribal Losses', 21 September 1920, p.8; *The Manchester Guardian (1901-1959)*, 'Disorders In Mesopotamia', 18 May 1921, p. 6; *The Manchester Guardian (1901-1959)*, 'Kurdish Outbreak In Mesopotamia: Punitive Expedition 1,000 Strong', 2 January 1922, p.10; *The Manchester Guardian (1901-1959)*, 'Mesopotamia Incidents: Aerial Action Against A Defiant Sheikh', 28 September 1921, s. 8; *The Times*, 'Kurdish Tribe Punished', 15 December 1919, p.13.

<sup>693</sup> ATASE, ISH, Box:202, Folder:14,23 December 1919; ATASE, ISH, Box:348, Folder:85, 13 January 1920; ATASE, ISH, Box:115, Folder:139,26 Ocak 1920; ATASE, ISH, Box:348, Folder:89, 19 November 1920. The map that shows the retreating of Turkish forces by the virtue of RAF operations can be found Appendix 8.



his article for a magazine on the enhancement of RAF activities, Howard Kaplan asserted that Churchill was offered the use of toxic gas against the Iraqi Kurds but this was not put into effect as the RAF lacked the necessary technical capability for its use.

It can be claimed that the RAF operations made a major contribution to the assertion of British interests. With the RAF operations a large number of anti-British rioters were eliminated in a short time and British casualties reduced to a minimum level. Thanks to the use of bombing, British forces could launch operations in numerous places at one time and also psychological pressure was established on anti-British demonstrators. Through the efforts of British officials and RAF activities some Kurdish tribes went over to the British side.<sup>694</sup>

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<sup>694</sup> Attar, A.R.Şeyh, *Kürtler Bölgesel ve Bölge Dışı Güçler*, (İstanbul,2004), p.96; PRO, AIR 20/513, From Civil Commissioner, Baghdad To India and London, 3 July 1920, p.332-333.

## CONCLUSION

At the end of the First World War, the Kurds did not form a political entity but were in essence a group of tribes without real unity or harmony between them. According to Bell, to establish an independent Kurdish state under protection of Britain was too dangerous politically. She had serious doubts as to whether the Kurds could overcome the difficulties those they would face as a independent state. Kurdistan was recognized as a geographic name for the area centred on the region of Anatolia around Diyarbakır, Bitlis and Van, and spreading to Kirkuk. In southern Kurdistan, the Kurdish part of Mosul vilayet, Kurdish attempts to establish a Kurdish State were more intense than in Anatolia after against. The most effective resistance against to the Turks was led by the most active Kurdish leader Sheikh Mahmud Barzanji. At the end of the war Sheikh Mahmud captured the Ottoman governor and garrison and asked for help from England to establish the Kurdish nation as liberated people. The biggest supporter of the establishment of a Kurdish state Major Noel was assigned to Kirkuk. As can be seen in his reports after coming to Suleymaniya and visiting some Kurdish notables his confidence in establishing a Kurdish state in the region was increased. On 1<sup>st</sup> of December 1918, at the end of the meeting with a group that introduced themselves as representatives of Kurdistan, a number of Kurdish leaders submitted a declaration that showed their acceptance of the British authority. Moreover, the Civil Commissioner was asked to send a representative to provide the necessary assistance in order to advance peace in the civilized line of the Kurdish people in a British protectorate. The Kurds would accept the orders and recommendations of British Government, if the ruler had provided protection to them. Mahmud claimed that Mosul had the authority to establish an autonomous state, of which he would be the head, embracing all Kurds, including those from Iran and most other places. Nevertheless, Mahmud stated that if feasible he would like to facilitate the tasks of establishing an Arab state in the rest of Mesopotamia. Upon instructions from London Major Noel travelled to the western and northern Kurdish areas and had meetings with Kurdish leaders and he introduced the new system of government to them. Major Noel got plenty of support from the Kurdish leaders,

after promising them that an independent Kurdish state would be provided by the courtesy of the British.

As may be realized the belief of Noel in Kurdish autonomy would never decrease, but the experienced officer Wilson always found it difficult to assess to what extent they could succeed in creating union between the Kurdish leaders when there was so much serious competition between them. Because of this the attempts to establish a Kurdish State were seen as an artificial product of the personal ambitions of the Kurdish leaders.

The appointment of Sheikh Mahmud, who was seen by Major Noel as the Sulaymaniyah representative of Britain, as a governor of Lower Zap and Iranian border, which was referred as Kurdish Area B, was an important step. Despite his undoubted status amongst Kurds and his successful resistance to the Turks Talbot Wilson saw Sheikh Mahmud as threat to government and his assignation lacked legitimacy. The activities of Major Noel attracted the attention of the national movement leaders in Ankara and the leader of the Turkish national movement Mustafa Kemal Pasha ordered Noel's arrest. The over-enthusiastic activities of Major Noel to establish a Kurdish State also led to a hostile reaction from Wilson. For these reasons, Major Noel was recalled and Major Soane was sent to the region to engage in discussions with Kurdish notables. Major Soane had supported a Kurdish State but with strictly British-style government. Kifri and Kirkuk, two important districts, were removed from the autonomous Kurdish area in early 1919. Wilson saw his deal with Mahmud as a temporary concession until British control could be effectively provided. As Wilson wanted to keep Sheikh Mahmud under control he appointed officers who had similar outlooks by his own to rule over the vicinity of Sulaymaniyah.

Eventually, Sheikh Mahmud attacked the British garrison; he took control of the garrison and arrested British officers. He confiscated the funds and the ammunition in the garrison and he raised a Kurdish flag after lowering the British flag. The idea of Mahmud establishing a Kurdish State was certainly reasonable. The autonomous area already had Kurdish as its official language and had its own armed forces. Although he took the control of some of the districts there were still some districts such as Halabja he could not get under control, even though it was close to

Sulaimaniyah. Like some local tribal leaders, some important Kurd leaders such as the Baban and Bedirhan families rejected the claim of Sheikh Mahmud to become the King of Kurdistan. The reaction of the British was also immediate and strong. A battalion of soldiers was sent to the region in order to suppress the rebellion of Sheikh Mahmud, when he was captured. After capture, he was put on trial and sentenced to death. The British thought that they could benefit from Sheikh Mahmud in the future so his sentenced was changed to one of exile to British controlled India.

Meanwhile, the Turkish struggle under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Pasha was begun in Turkey. The Turkish people reacted to the Allied powers' occupation of the Turkish territories where under the pretext of Articles 7 and 24 of the Mondros Armistice. The reactions shown were also preparing the ground for new occupations. For this reason, Mustafa Kemal Pasha was sent to Samsun as the 9<sup>th</sup> Army Inspector to suppress the unrest in the east of Anatolia and the Black Sea and to control the delivery of the arms of the Turks to the representatives of the Allied Powers.

But his main aim was different. Just after coming to Samsun on 19<sup>th</sup> May of 1919, in order to understand the situation in the region Mustafa Kemal Pasha held meetings with the Turkish officers and local people. His area of responsibility covered Trabzon, Erzurum, Van, Sivas, Elazığ and Samsun. These cities were relatively safe places compared with others. In his reports, he noted that the unrest was caused not by the Turks in the region, but by the minorities. During that period the Istanbul Government was silent against the occupations. Mustafa Kemal Pasha published the Havza Circular (28/29 May 1919), by which, contrary to his duty, he invited the whole nation to send protest notes to the authorities and to organize protests against the invasions. By reacting against the invasions Mustafa Kemal fulfilled the role of the long-awaited leader. He refused to deliver the ammunition to the Allied Powers officers, because it would be used to retain Turkish lands. The Allied Powers reacted strongly to the circular and 67 Turkish intellectual were exiled to Malta. Mustafa Kemal was called back to Istanbul but he disobeyed the order and went to Amasya and declared the Amasya Circular (22 June 1919).

By the Amasya Circular it was announced that the unity and the independence of the nation was at great risk. The Istanbul Government could not

exert the authority they held and the situation of the nation looked dire. Independence of the nation could be saved only by determination and faith of the nation. To achieve the purposes of the nation and to defend the nation's rights, a national committee free of restraint and inspection should be established. The congress would be held in Sivas which was the safest place in any case. For this purpose by the members of Müdafaa-i Hukuk and Redd-i İlhak three people from every province would be selected as representatives. In any case the representatives were not to use their real identities on the road and this circular needed to be kept as a national secret. For the east side cities at July 10th there would be a congress at Erzurum. Until that date if the other representatives could reach Sivas the ones in the east cities would go to Sivas. In brief, the justification, purpose and method of the War of Independence had been determined in the Amasya Circular. The Government of Istanbul was ignored. For the first time, to establish an administration based on national sovereignty was offered. All citizens were called to fight against invaders in Anatolian lands.

By the participation of 62 representatives from the eastern cities of Anatolia the congress of Erzurum was held between the dates of 21<sup>st</sup> July and 7<sup>th</sup> August 1919. The Erzurum Congress had many characteristics in terms of the decisions taken, but one of the most important of them was the decision to establish unconditional national sovereignty for the first time by rejecting the mandate and protection of any country. Moreover, the Erzurum Congress mentioned for the first time the national borders and it was announced that the border of the Turkish homeland, would be the territory which was signed by the Mondros Armistice Agreement.

The Erzurum Congress was a national congress in terms of decisions taken despite the fact that it was a regional congress in terms of the way it was gathered. That is why the decisions taken in the Erzurum Congress were accepted by the Sivas Congress which was held between 4<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> September 1919. In addition to that, by the decisions was taken at Sivas Congress, the nation would resist all kinds of foreign occupation and intervention and would defend itself as a whole thereafter; all the societies in Anatolia and Rumeli would be gathered under the name of Anadolu ve Rumeli Müdafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyeti. In order to organize the resistance a representative committee (Heyet-i Temsiliye) that consisted of 16 people was constituted and Mustafa Kemal was elected as head of the committee.

After all the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA) was opened on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1920 and the regular army was established. Thanks to the regular army the Ankara government had many victories over Armenians in Eastern Anatolia and over British-supported Greek forces in Western Anatolia. After the victory over the Armenians, the Treaty of Alexandropol (Gümrü) was signed on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1920 and the Armenian threat on the Turkish lands was ended. By the help of the regular army victories over British supported Greek armies, European Powers such as Russia, France and Italy wanted to have close relationships with newly established Ankara Government and National Forces. By this means both moral and material support were provided and Britain was increasingly isolated.

The Kurds were now constantly stalled and given evasive replies by the British and the boundaries of the possible Kurdish state were not determined in any way. For these reasons the Kurds were disappointed in the British and some anti-British demonstrations were organized. After the elimination of the Armenian danger the Kurds stood on the Turkish side as they had before.

Although the future of Kurdistan was still undecided, it was not in any case envisaged that it would go beyond loose political control and the establishment of an indirect British administration. After the uprising of Sheikh Mahmud the British, who thought they were supporting the spread of the British influence over the Kurds in southern Kurdistan, realized that they were wrong. After that, the British preferred to have close contact with South Kurdistan in Baghdad, and they decided to start extension works to the railway network in the region.

Meanwhile, the Kurdish attacks against the British continued increasingly, and in assassinations many important British officers lost their lives. Because of the mountainous and rough terrain, and the guerrilla tactics of the Kurds, and ambushes so many British officers were killed. In response before the British authorities wanted to deter those who opposed them by going to the destruction of their possessions. British authorities began to use air forces, seeing the difficulty of operating in Kurdish territory with land forces. Already in the British reports prepared earlier, it was reported that British troops could be in a difficult situation in a possible war with the Kurds. Although the air attacks of the Royal Air Force have

caused massive damage to the Kurds, it was not possible to establish full British control over them.

As was occasionally mentioned in the British reports, the Kurds needed to be directed and kept under control. In the light of recent developments it was clear that Britain did not control the area, but that the Turks would, as in the past, be able to control it. In one sense, this could be better than to deal with ungovernable Kurds. But again the continuation of Turkish domination in the region was against the interests of Britain. Most of the British officers, except a few officers such as Major Noel, did not fully believe that the Kurdish nation with its strong and vibrant tribal traditions, could establish an independent or even an autonomous Kurdish state. There was no unity among the Kurds and none of the potential leaders had the support of the majority. It was hard to tell how far a national movement existed and how far it was the artificial product of the individual desires of the Kurdish leaders, who saw in Kurdish autonomy a unique chance for extending their own interests.

The British Cabinet was still working to find a clear policy line in April 1920, Montagu was still supporting an independent Kurdish state but although months passed the British officers could not succeed in finding a proper leader who could establish an absolute authority or indeed a leader who was supported by the majority of the Kurds. Time was passing, and the possibility of Kurdish independence became more confusing as long as the delay continued and the construction of the new Iraqi state proceeded. The oil resources in Kirkuk found no room in the cabinet's talks but as its potential became better known, Iraq seemed to have a vital importance for the future. Establishing an independent or autonomous Kurdish State alone and maintaining its existence could have had very dangerous consequences. The best way for the Kurds might be joining Iraq. Despite their ethnic discrimination and their avoidance of Arab sovereignty, the Kurds were reconciled to the Iraqi government under Sunni management. As Sunnis, they would help to balance the potentially disturbing Shiite majority in Iraq.

The biggest obstacle to the establishment of the autonomous state was the inability to establish a Kurdish union in the region. Especially in Rowanduz, the spread of the continuing unrest in other regions damaged both British and Kurdish interests. The Middle East Department assumed the responsibility for southern

Kurdistan, which was included in the Mosul province, but only when the local people voluntarily joined a Kurdish State.

On 15 March at the Cairo conference Churchill assembled a committee consisting of Lawrence, Cox, Bell, Young and Noel, to discuss Kurdistan. In the meeting Mosul and Kirkuk were considered to be an integral part of Iraq; and it was decided that purely Kurdish territories should not be included in the Arab State of Mesopotamia. But to decide which parts of Kurdistan would join Iraq was not an easy question. So it was decided to determine the precise area after the treaty which would be signed with Turkey. Until then a committee which had a British adviser would run the developments. Lloyd George believed that there would be a separate Kurdish zone, and the question to be decided was whether as part of Kurdistan or Mesopotamia. The most likely possibility was to leave Mosul, Tel Afar and maybe Kirkuk to the Arabian Iraq while the outposts of Mosul, such as Sulaymaniyah and maybe Kirkuk would be garrisoned by Assyrian levies and the Kurds.

The unification of some parts of Kurdistan with Iraq made drawing the border impracticable. Iraq would also be a more powerful state with the participation of the Kurds. Thus a more powerful Iraq State would be a more effective barrier to the Turks than any buffer state, such as Kurdistan. But it led to some problems in the region for the British. It would be difficult to keep a powerful state under British control. The area was managed with a delicate balance and a wrong decision could disrupt all the balances in the region. So it had to be considered carefully before any action.

When the Paris Peace Conference convened in January 1919, the all the powers, except Russia, agreed that the Ottoman lands to be partitioned. The Straits would be brought to an international position, Armenia, Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia would leave the Ottoman Empire. Between France and England, however, there was disagreement about partition of the Turkish lands. Meanwhile, Lloyd George added another region, to be cut off from Turkey. This was "Kurdistan between Mesopotamia and Armenia". Thus, the issue of the removal of Kurdistan from Turkey which was launched by the British, was immediately accepted by the other states.



The British wanted to take the Kurds under their control. Thus they would use the Kurds as a trump card in Mesopotamia and Iran, against Arabs, Iranians and even the some Kurdish tribes who collaborated with the Turks. The inclusion of Kurdistan in the list of lands to be obtained from Turkey was a sign of the new policies of the British. It was even considered that in 1918 the British would establish an independent Kurdish state in the summer under British supervision. Thus, Turkey would be prevented from maintaining the region between Armenia and Mesopotamia. Moreover, it would be also a buffer zone for the all-important oil regions. The British Civilian Commissioner Arnold Wilson was commissioned to establish an independent South Kurdistan State with the help of the British. The Kurdish issue was especially important for the British so they established contact with the Kurdish elements and supported the establishment of the nationalists. The most important of these organisations was the "Kurdistan Teali Society" under the leadership of Sayyid Abdulkadir. This community wanted to apply the Wilson Principles to provide autonomy to the Kurds. And finally on 30<sup>th</sup> of January 1919 with the support of Britain "Kurdistan" was mentioned as the land to be separated from Turkey for the first time at the Paris Peace Conference. On top of that, there was intense Kurdish propaganda in Istanbul and in Anatolia. For this purpose, Kurdish newspapers and magazines were published, Kurdish dictionaries were prepared and intensive propaganda activities were carried out for the Kurdish people to be accepted as the official language for reviving Kurdish nationalism.

Şerif Pasha, who was a representative of the Ottoman Liberal Turks in Paris, represented himself as a Kurdish representative and tried to convince the delegates to decide in favour of the Kurds. On the other hand, Major Noel was sent to Mesopotamia then Anatolia to investigate whether the Kurdish people were qualified to manage themselves or not. While these activities were going on for the Peace Conference, a consensus was declared between Serif Pasha and Boghos Nubar Pasha from the Armenian delegates. On 20<sup>th</sup> of November 1919, the joint declaration proposing the unification of independent Armenia and Kurdistan was presented to the conference as a motion. However, the joint declaration published by Serif Pasha and Boghos Nubar Pasha received many negative reactions from many Kurdish leaders and tribes, especially Sayyid Abdulkadir. This led to new groupings among

the Kurds. In other words, a compromise between the Armenians and the Kurds was planned, but this declaration led to the formation of a new opponent grouping.

The British had contacted the Grand Vizier Damat Ferit Pasha, thinking that the settlement of the Kurdish issue was in the power of the Istanbul Government. On 16<sup>th</sup> of April 1920, Admiral de Robeck sent a letter to the British Foreign Office saying that Damat Ferit Pasha told him that Kurdish leader Sayyid Abdulkadir was ready to attack the Turkish Nationalists. The Admiral requested that the plan be supported on the basis of the will of the Peace Conference. Damat Ferit Pasha repeated that Kurdish leaders were against the invasion of Bolshevik element into Kurdistan and thus stated that they were ready to oppose Mustafa Kemal. Some of the Kurdish leaders did not agree with the map drawn by Wilson for Armenia, and some struggles developed between those who wanted an Armenian mandate and those who wanted an autonomous Kurdistan.

The Treaty of Sèvres promised the formation of a self-governing Kurdish State which would have the right to request the League of Nations for full independence after 12 months. But that right was bound to many conditions and a year period. This was certainly a stalling tactic of the British Foreign Office. The Foreign Office wanted to assess the situation during the time. The Grand National Assembly under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal announced that the treaty of Sèvres was repudiated. In February 1920, the National Pact was declared and it was announced that Mosul was unalienable historic Turkish territory and would not be abandoned. As a result of Turkish victories over Greek forces in Western Anatolia the implementation of British promises for establishing an autonomous Kurdish state was delayed.

In 1921, Turkish infiltration in Kurdistan intensified. A Kemalist battalion under the command of Özdemiş Bey advanced to Rawanduz in the summer of 1921, hoping to start a rebellion amongst the Surchi. The British could only respond with Royal Air Force (RAF) attacks, which failed to remove the Turks from the places that they captured. The Turkish moves became more threatening in 1922 and Koi and Qala Diza were captured by the Turkish forces while Rania was seized by a group of Kurdish tribes who revolted against the British. The Turks and the Kurds began to cooperate against the British. The British would be caught between two fires. The

possible achievements of the Turkish and Kurdish troops against the British could also cause great damage to the interests and position of Britain in the region. The moves made by Britain with utmost care for years could come to naught.

Following all these developments in order to regain their authority over the Kurds and put an end to the anti-British rebellions, Britain brought back Sheikh Mahmud, who had previously been exiled, to Sulaymaniyah and appointed him as governor.

Sheikh Mahmud gradually re-established his authority in Sulaymaniyah and even got more support than the first time. The influence of Sheikh Mahmud was increasing day by day and it was a sign of nationalist extremism. In 1922, Cox insisted on limits to the authority of Sheikh Mahmud and deprived him of the help he needed to fulfil the British demand to throw the Turkish forces out of Rawanduz. However, the attempts of Cox to revive the candidacy of a rival Kurdish leader, Sayyid Taha resulted in failure.

Research has shown that Kurdish leaders, especially Sharif Pasha, Sheikh Mahmud, Sayyid Abdulkadir and Sayyid Taha, made intensive efforts to establish an autonomous or independent state under their leadership. For this purpose they entered talks with Britain, France and even the Turks. It is seen that the Kurds relied especially on England for the establishment of Kurdish autonomy. The main reason for this was that some officers acting on behalf of Britain, especially Major Noel, gave promises, beyond their authority, that they would not be able to keep. Britain paid maximum attention in to the moves they made in the region. From time to time the British had been threatened by the Kurds because of their cautious approach to the Kurdish issue and as a result, the Kurds started several rebellions against the British.

At the end of October 1922, the days after the government of Lloyd George collapsed and resignation of Churchill from Colonial Office, Sheikh Mahmud declared himself king of South Kurdistan and launched the second rebellion against the British. The Turkish forces had been withdrawn from Mosul after the heavy air attacks of RAF. In October 1922, the Turkish troops in Rania and Aqra also had to retreat. In consequence of air bombing the forces of Sheikh Mahmud abandoned Sulaymaniyah. The heavy air bombing, especially between 1921 and 1923, is

important to show the determination of the British to protect Mosul. Britain stayed in Iraq and continued to control Mosul. The status of Mosul remained uncertain after the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne (24<sup>th</sup> July 1923). It was decided that the problem should be solved by bilateral agreements between England and Turkey. If England and the new Turkish state could not make a joint decision, the situation of Mosul would be determined by the League of Nations.

In this period, opinions were reported by the Istanbul government that it was possible to establish an autonomous state in the Kurds. However, contrary to what is claimed, an autonomy promulgated by the Government of Ankara was not found in the records. In the atmosphere of uncertainty after World War I, every nation wanted to make gains but Turkey did not respond positively to the demands of the British supported Kurds. Britain was in a military and politically difficult situation and the National Struggle led by Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk) ended successfully. As a result after establishing an Arab state in Mesopotamia, the British left the Kurds alone in the region and tried to secure their own interests by means of League of Nations.

Overall, it seems that Britain had no desire to establish a Kurdish state in the region. As stated in Churchill's speeches, the main aim of England was to control rich oil deposits in the region, the securing of Egyptian and Indian routes, the creation against the Turkish and Bolshevik Russian danger in Mesopotamia. The nature of the states, which would be established in the region, as long as it fulfilled British aims, did not seem important for England.

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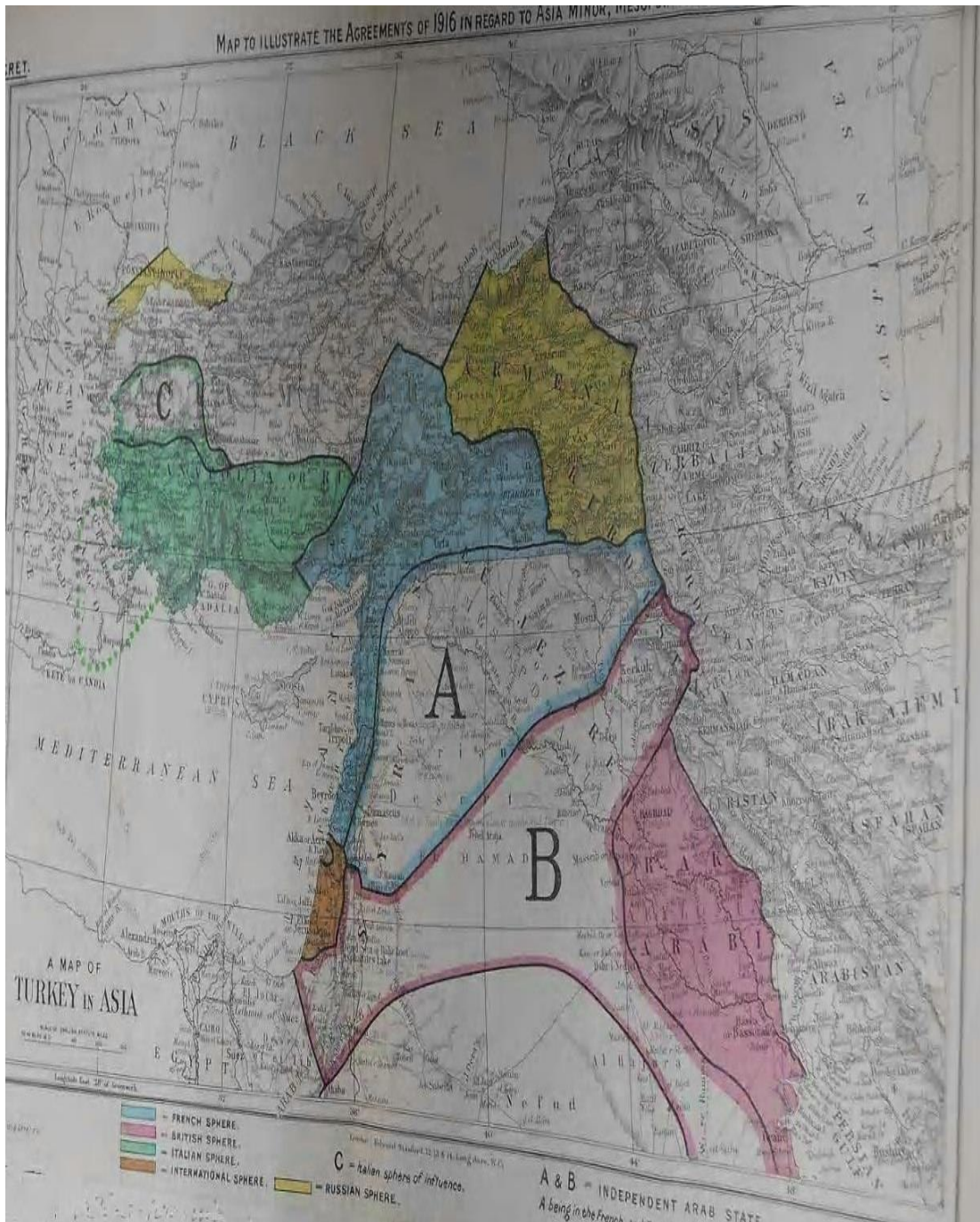
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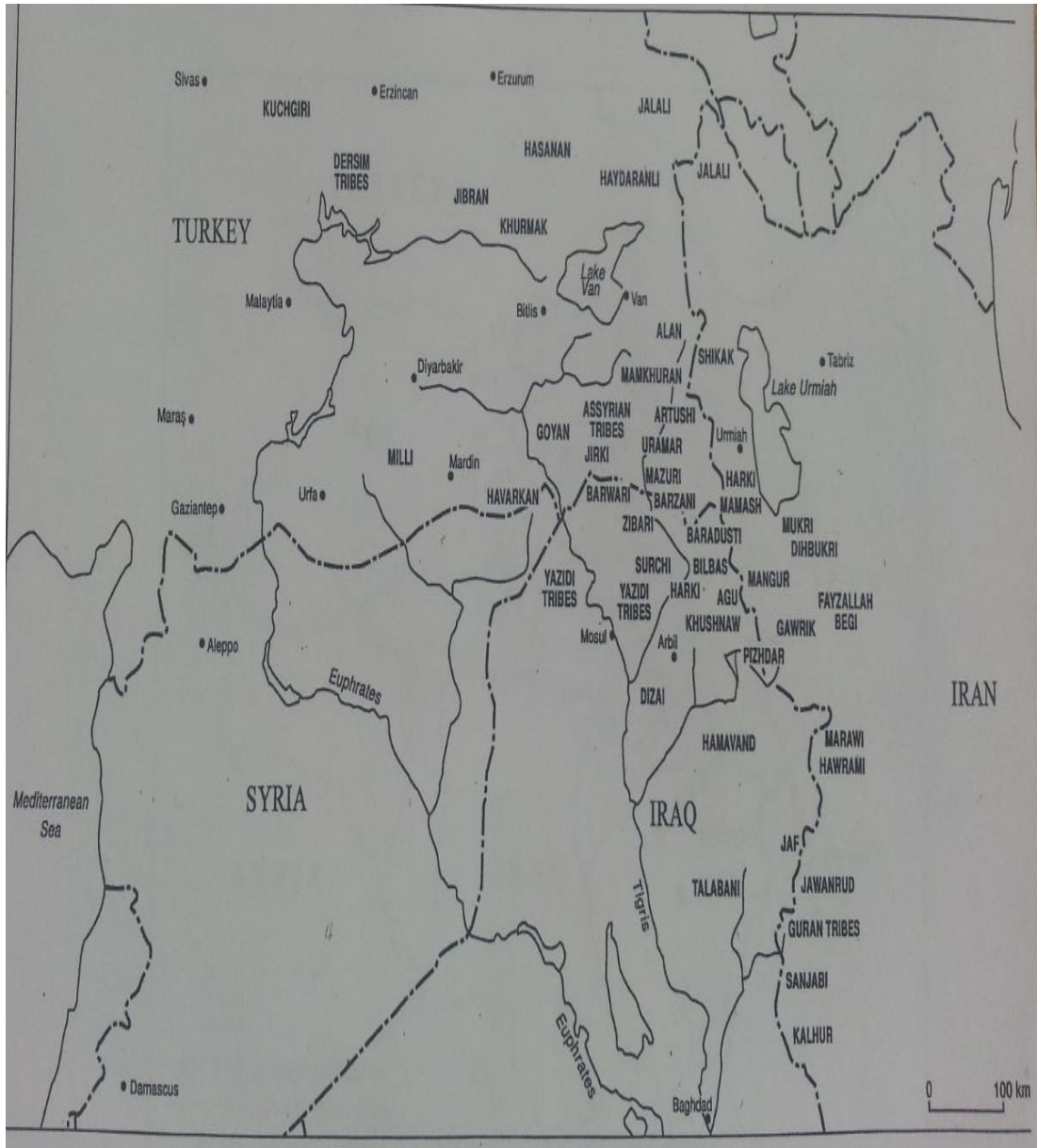
## **APPENDICES**



Appendix 1: The map shows the Anatolia and Mesopotamia regions in regard to the Sykes-Picot Agreement. (Source: PRO.FO 608/96)

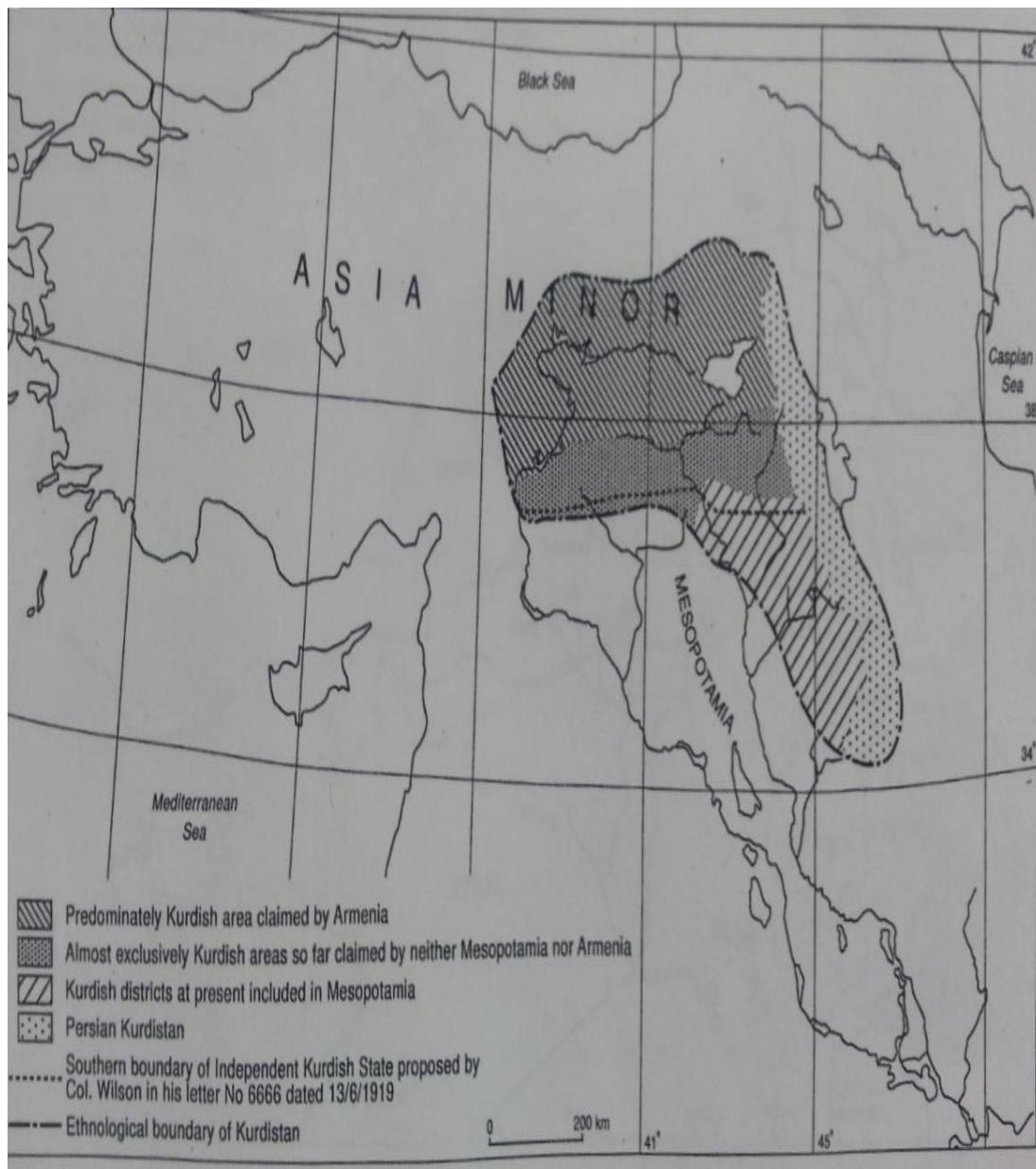


Appendix 2: The ethnographic map of Kurdish region. (Source: PRO. FO. 371/4192, 'From Admiral Calthrope to Early Curzon', 23 July 1919, p.40)

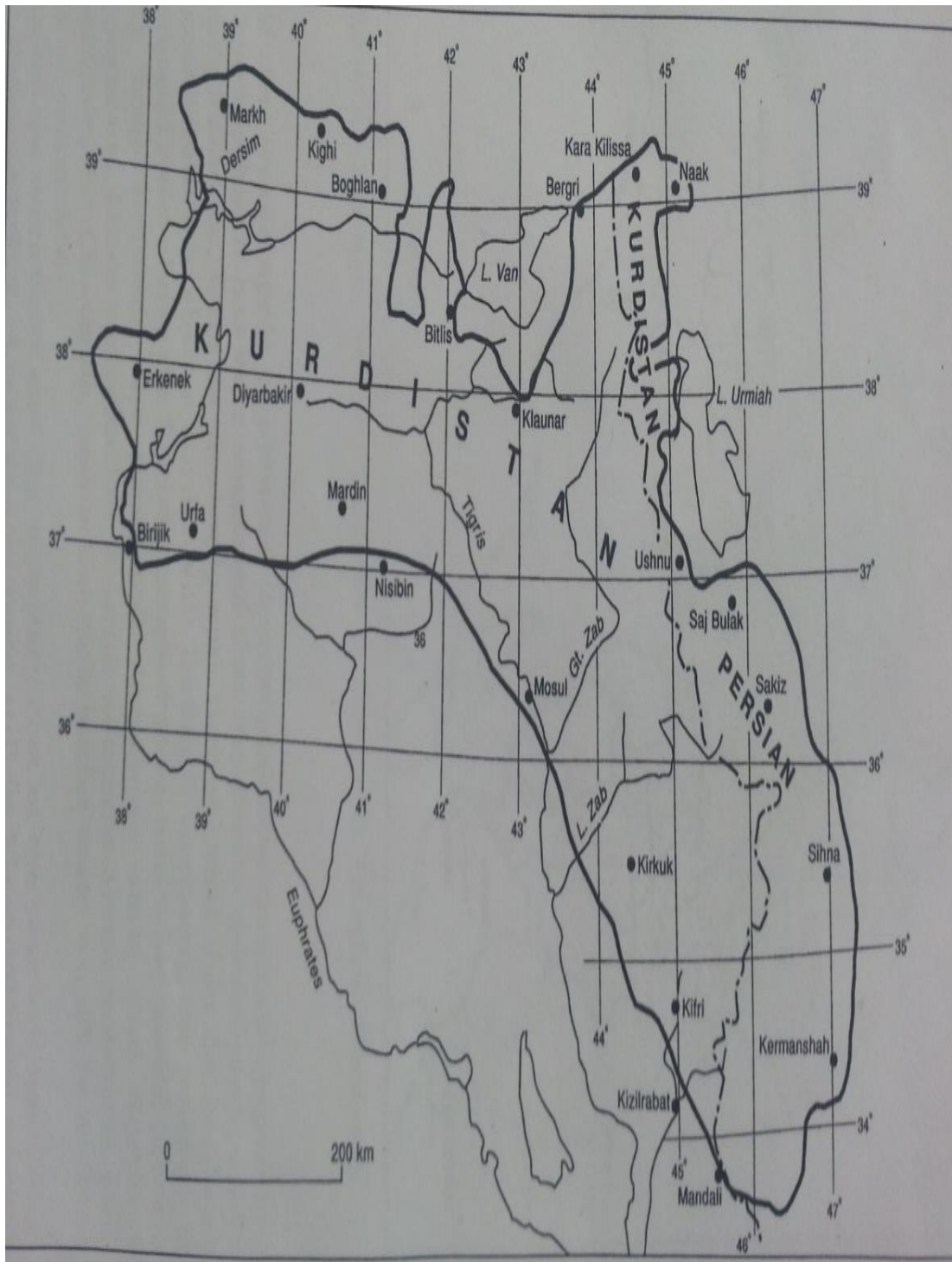


Appendix 3: The Map of Kurdish Tribes. (Source: Maria T. O' Shea, *Trapped Between The Map and Reality Geography and Perceptions of Kurdistan*, Routledge New York & London, 2004, p.xxii.)

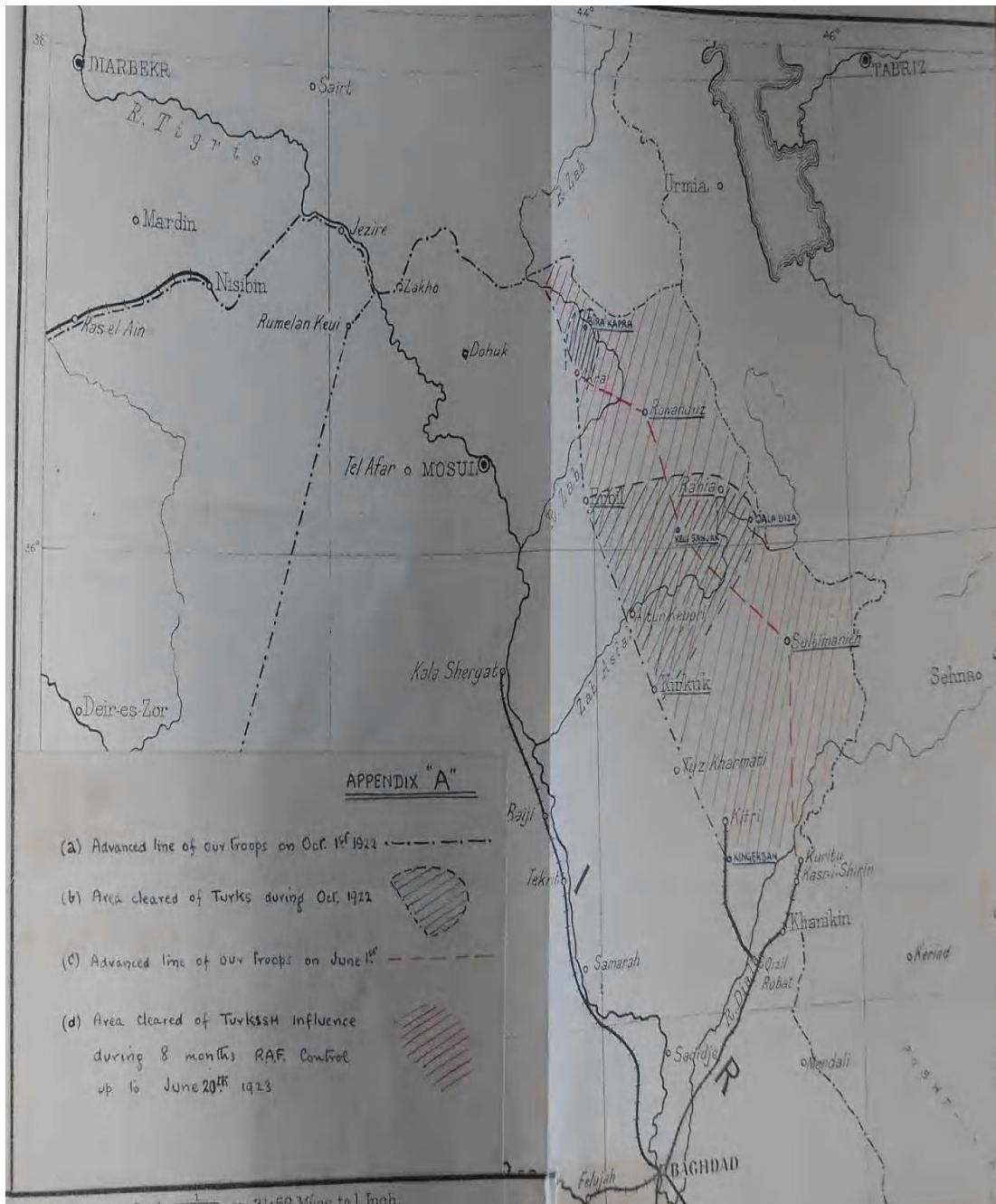




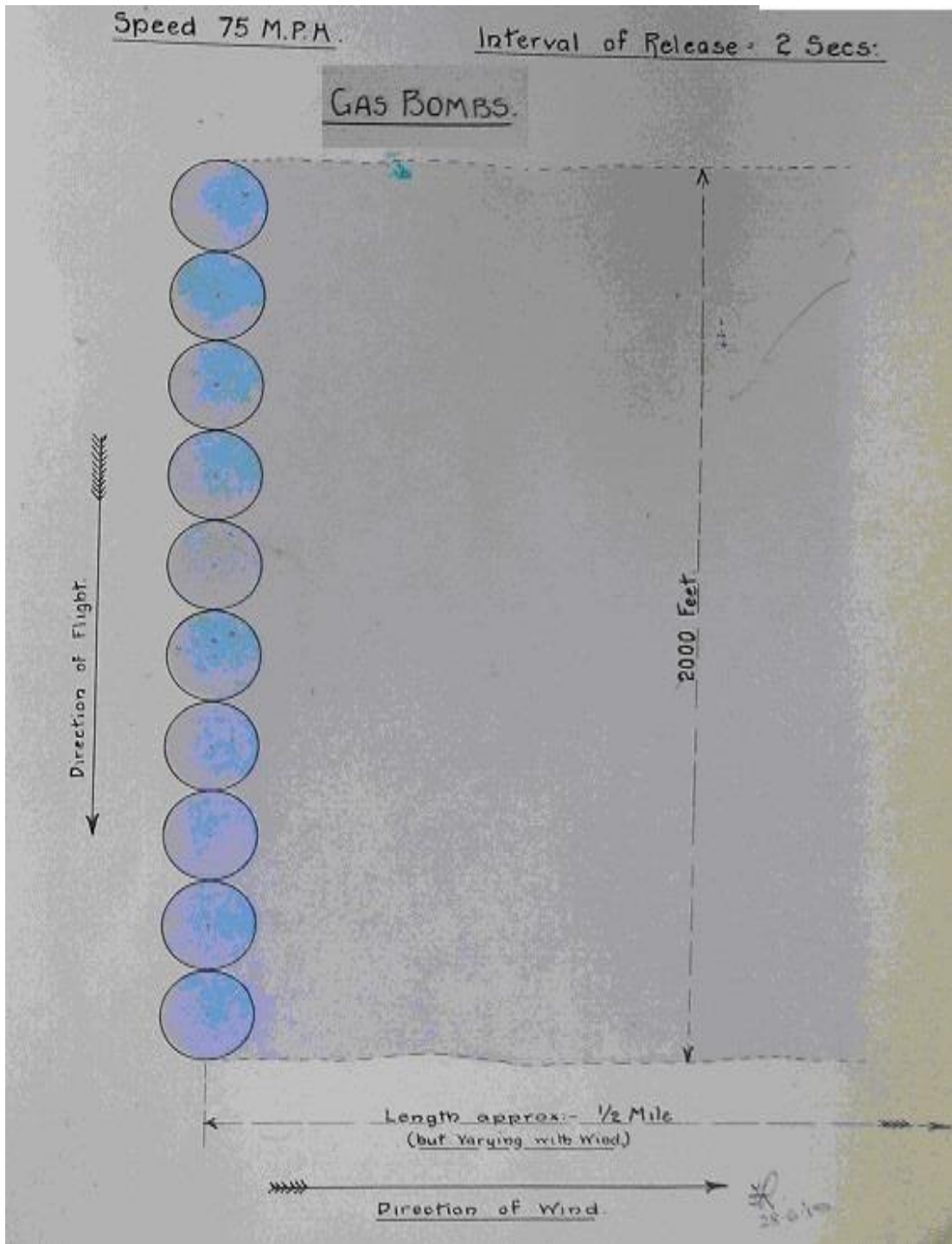
Appendix 4: Map to illustrate a note by Major Noel on the Situation in Kurdistan.  
 (Source: Maria T. O' Shea, *Trapped Between The Map and Reality Geography and Perceptions of Kurdistan*, Routledge New York & London, 2004, p.137.)



Appendix 5: Serif Pasha's Map of Kurdistan. (Source: Maria T. O' Shea, *Trapped Between The Map and Reality Geography and Perceptions of Kurdistan*, Routledge New York & London, 2004, p.167.)



Appendix 6: The map that shows retreating of Turkish forces by the virtue of RAF operations. (Source: PRO. AIR 5/476, 'Appendix B', p.97. )



Appendix 7: The figure shows proposed use of gas bombs against hostile forces in Mesopotamia. (Source: PRO. AIR 2/122, 'Proposed Use of Gas Bombs Against Hostile Forces in Mesopotamia', p.21)