

TURKEY. No. 5 (1896).

CORRESPONDENCE

RELATING TO THE

ASIATIC PROVINCES OF TURKEY.

REPORTS BY VICE-CONSUL FITZMAURICE

FROM BIREJIK, OURFA, ADIAMAN, AND BEHESNI.

*Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.  
June 1896.*

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Correspondence relating to the Asiatic Provinces of Turkey.

REPORTS BY VICE-CONSUL FITZMAURICE  
FROM BIREJIK, OURFA, ADIAMAN, AND BEHESNI.

No. 1.

*Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received February 3.)*

My Lord,

*Constantinople, January 29, 1896.*

DURING an audience with the Sultan on the 15th instant, His Imperial Majesty referred to certain correspondence which had passed between Saad-ed-Din Pasha, the Commissioner, whose appointment is mentioned in my despatch of the 24th December,\* and the local authorities. These papers proved, His Majesty said, that the Ottoman authorities refused to recognize forced conversions of Armenians to Islam, and discouraged them from taking such a step when there was reason to believe it was not prompted by religious conviction.

The Sultan's First Secretary subsequently, by His Majesty's order, described the contents of the correspondence to my First Dragoman.

Saad-ed-Din Pasha had telegraphed that certain Armenians, villagers from the neighbourhood of Balahour, in the district of Baiburt, had appeared before him stating they had become Moslems, and that a flag was flying on their church. He at once told them that every one was free to profess what religion he pleased, and that conversion such as theirs was not acceptable. He then desired them to remove their turbans, and had the flag taken down from the church.

In the district of Kharput also Armenians had wished to become Moslems, but the Porte had been instructed to direct the local authorities not to admit such conversions.

The Sultan's First Secretary produced a telegram dated Birejik (Vilayet of Aleppo), and signed by the Heads of the Gregorian, Catholic, and Protestant Armenian communities of that town. It stated that these communities, "who dwell in perfect security and comfort under the just rule of the Sultan without danger to their lives or property, desire to embrace the religion of Mahommed; this offer is spontaneous, no one having made any proposal of the kind to them." The telegram ended by asking that the local authorities might be instructed to carry out the needful formalities.

The Sultan sent me a message saying that he desired this telegram to be brought to my notice; it was difficult for him to discourage persons sincerely desirous of embracing the faith of Islam. He was anxious, however, to prevent all but sincere conversions, and wished to inquire into this because he thought there might be more in it than met the eye. He would therefore instruct the Kaimakam and Naib of Birejik to report on the matter, and suggested that I should name some trustworthy person who could make a joint inquiry with those officials.

In reply, I proposed to send Mr. Fitzmaurice, now Acting Vice-Consul at Adana, to Birejik, but have as yet received no answer.

I have, &c.  
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

No. 2.

*Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received February 3.)*

(Telegraphic.)

*Constantinople, February 3, 1896, 2:15 P.M.*

WITH reference to my despatch of the 29th January respecting the conversion of Armenians at Birejik, Mr. Fitzmaurice has been accepted by the Sultan as Delegate to inquire into the matter, and I have therefore directed him to proceed there.

\* "Turkey, No. 2 (1896)," p. 273.

No. 3.

*Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received May 1.\*)*

My Lord,

Constantinople, April 27, 1896.

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copies of despatches which I have received from Mr. Vice-Consul Fitzmaurice reporting on the massacres and forced conversions which have taken place at Birejik, Ourfa, Adiaman, Severek, Behesni, and neighbouring districts.

I have, &amp;c.

(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure 1 in No. 3.

*Vice-Consul Fitzmaurice to Sir P. Currie.*

Sir,

Birejik, March 5, 1896.

IN pursuance of your Excellency's telegraphic instructions of the 4th February, received by me at Rhodes, I arrived here by way of Aleppo on Thursday, the 25th ultimo, having been preceded by some eight days by my Turkish colleagues, Ali Riza Effendi, Accountant of the Aleppo Evcaf Department, and Mustapha Nedim Effendi, President of the Civil Court of Aleppo.

On my remarking at Aleppo that their preceding me might be open to misconception, I was officially informed by the Aleppo authorities that they were under the impression I had already proceeded to Birejik, but there was no satisfactory reply to my answer that my whereabouts might have been easily ascertained from Her Majesty's Consulate at Aleppo. My colleagues had been already in communication with the new converts to Islamism before my arrival.

Your Excellency will better understand the causes of the acceptance of Islamism by the Christians of Birejik by a brief narrative of the events which led up to it.

Living among the Mussulman population of about 1,400 houses, the small Christian community of 240 houses consisted, with the exception of a few Greek Catholics, of Gregorian, Roman Catholic, and Protestant Armenians, for the most part poor and hard-working, and living peaceably among the Mussulman majority.

By the acknowledgment of the authorities here they had, with the exception of one or two so-called seditious documents found among them, no connection with political agitation.

About the beginning of November 1895, the anti-Christian feeling, which was so pronounced in some portions of this vilayet, spread to Birejik, and the Christians began to be insulted and threatened. This feeling reached such a height, that during November and December they were obliged to remain shut up in their houses, only occasionally venturing down into the town in disguise when absolutely necessary. They tried to make known their situation in Aleppo and Constantinople, but they maintain the postal authorities examined and tore up their telegrams and letters.

During these two months, though several attempts were made to assail the Christian quarter, the authorities and military, urged by some of the well-disposed Moslems, warded off the attacks.

About the beginning of December, a battalion of Roumkalé reserves, under the command of Talsin Bey, Major of Sourrouj, arrived in the town, and towards the end of the same month the Kaïmakam, at the instance of the Mussulman inhabitants, called on the Christians to deliver up their arms, declaring that otherwise he could not protect them. They thereupon sent down to the Government house all the arms they possessed, consisting chiefly of the old pattern pistols, daggers, &c., to be found in most Oriental houses in the interior of this country.

At this period, the last few days of December, during the massacres at Jibin and Ourfa, the Mussulmans of Birejik became fiercely excited, and besieged the Government house, openly reproaching the Kaïmakam with being an "uncircumcized infidel," with

• Full text of Inclosures received May 22.

protecting the Christians and concealing the Sultan's orders for their extermination, crying, "Our Padishah has ordered that the Armenians be massacred, and that no Christians are to be left in the country." The same spirit communicated itself to the reserves.

The preceding statements I hold more from Mussulman than Christian sources, and am convinced of their authenticity.

Finally, on the 1st January, 1896 (N. S.), at about 9 A.M., a general attack was made on the Christian quarter. The assailants, armed with fire-arms, axes, hatchets, and similar weapons, were divided into three parties, one to break in the doors and walls, the second to plunder, and the third to massacre all males above a certain age. On effecting an entrance, they induced the Christians to deliver up their money, trinkets, and other valuables on the promise of sparing their lives, and then handed them over to the mob.

I need not dilate upon the details of the massacre, suffice it to say that every house in the Christian quarter was pillaged, the mob in their frenzy burning and destroying what they could not carry off, the ruin and desecration of the Gregorian, Catholic, and Protestant churches being carried out with special thoroughness. The carnage lasted till close on sunset, by which time over 150 Christians (I have in my possession a carefully checked list of their names) were massacred and over sixty wounded.

Your Excellency will naturally wonder what the authorities and military were doing during these eight or nine hours of slaughter. The Major of reserves, whether he, too, believed that Government wished the extermination of the Christians, or whether the work of massacre was after his own heart, absolutely refused to move his men, or allow them to be moved to stay the destruction of life and property. A well-disposed Mussulman Notable of Birejik, begged him with tears in his eyes to give him a few soldiers to go up and save what he could. This the Major also refused.

Towards evening, when the mob had finished their work in the Christian quarter, they descended in search of those who had escaped. These latter were crowded together in the houses of one or two friendly Mussulmans. Covered with blood and with loud cries of extermination to the infidels, they several times assaulted these houses, but were beaten off by the Mussulman owners and their men. Seeing, however, their desperate determination to break in and exterminate the Christians, an Armenian woman ascended the roof, and with a white flag declared that they had all become Mussulmans. The remaining Armenians thereupon repeated the formula of Moslem creed, and the mob was induced to retire on the ground that they were now attacking their fellow Mussulmans. They withdrew and proceeded during the night to remove some of the traces of their bloody work by dragging the dead bodies with ropes down to the water's edge and throwing them into the Euphrates.

Two Greek Catholics, who had been secreted in Mussulman houses, together with one or two Jews, fled the town during the night, the name of Christian and Armenian being thus completely wiped out in Birejik, as it has been in the neighbouring district.

It will naturally occur to your Excellency that such being the facts attending the conversion to Islamism of the Birejik Armenians, there was very small necessity or margin for making an inquiry into the sincerity of their new belief and the conscientious grounds which led to their adoption of the dominant faith.

I would beg here to point out, and it is a distinction upon which the Turkish authorities may lay great stress, that the Moslems did not with axes in their hands invite the Christians to choose between the alternatives of Islam or death. They simply showed and proved their determined resolve to massacre all Christians, and the latter, to save their lives, accepted Islamism. It is the subtle logical distinction between objective and subjective. The alternatives offered by the Mussulmans were not Islam or death, whereas the only alternatives left to the Christians were those of death or Islam. So that the Armenians, to save themselves from certain death, became Mussulmans of their own free will, if, indeed, people under such terrible circumstances can in any way be considered as free agents or as possessing a free will.

I should add that even their adoption of Islam would not have availed them without the exertions of their few Mussulman friends, and many individuals during the massacre were cut down while in the act of pronouncing the Mussulman formula of faith.

The official account of the massacre was that in a quarrel between Mussulmans and Christians, five of the former and twenty of the latter lost their lives, the facts as regards the Mussulman loss of life being that one Mussulman was wounded in a brawl over the plunder.

Some individual soldiers seem to have participated in the massacre, and the Government immediately afterwards adopted the peculiar measure of sending the Roumkalé Reserves at Birejik to Aintab, replacing them by the Aintab battalion, who had been in Aintab during the disorders in that town.

The new converts to Islam, their former houses being ruined, were packed together in two khans, where they lay for some days, huddling together with insufficient clothing to protect them against the winter's cold, and a wretched pittance of bread and water received from the authorities and some Mussulman houses. No serious endeavour has as yet been made by the authorities to restore the stolen property.

As the legal formalities necessary on conversion to Islam had not yet been performed, the Government refused to recognize them as such before demanding instructions from Aleppo; and, as the population were still menacing in their attitude, and reproached them with insincerity in their newly-adopted faith, to prove their sincerity, in the face of threats, the Armenians proceeded to convert their church into a mosque, which they called the "Hamidieh Mosque," after His Imperial Majesty the Sultan; some of them took a second wife, went through the rite of circumcision, and the leading men of the three communities telegraphed the news of their conversion to His Imperial Majesty, to whose generosity they appealed in their state of destitution. They received, in reply, 100 Turkish liras, which was quickly spent. The extent of their losses on the day of the massacre was £ T. 10,000.

They now all wear turbans, and are apparently most zealous in their attendance at mosque and in the other observances of their newly-adopted religion.

The foregoing are the facts connected with the conversions to Islamism, which my colleagues and myself were instructed to inquire into.

The new converts had been threatened by the Mussulmans, if they did not declare that they had become Moslem of their own free will, the Mussulmans having further avowed that they would never again permit "infidels" to reside in their country. The outburst of fanaticism which had accompanied the massacres had not cooled down, but had, on the other hand, been intensified by the increase of religious fervour, invariably caused by the preaching and rites of Ramazan.

The Turkish Commissioners informed me that their instructions were to inquire, in my presence, into the cause of change of religion by the Armenians, and give the latter the assurances of the Ottoman Government that they would be protected in case they elected to return to their old faith.

I at once perceived that my task was one of no small difficulty, and that it was absolutely impossible for the Armenians to declare their real sentiments openly to the Turkish Commissioners.

I wish, therefore, to draw a careful distinction between my personal inquiry and that conducted in my presence by my Turkish colleagues. The latter at first proposed that we should assemble all the new converts in one place and ask them whether they had embraced Islamism of their own accord, and if they wished to remain Mussulmans. I objected on the ground that, owing to their evident terror and fear of their lives, they could not freely declare their real convictions, and that any statement by them under such conditions would be a committal to a course which they would subsequently be unable to renounce if they should so desire.

We finally agreed to confine our joint inquiry to taking the statements of some prominent Armenians, and, by visiting together the former Christian quarter and questioning the inhabitants, to getting a general idea of their views. We, moreover, conceded to one another the right of conducting a separate and independent inquiry, a right which had been freely indulged in by my colleagues before my arrival.

Annex (A) embodies the partial result of the interrogatory of four Armenian Notables as conducted by my colleagues in my presence, the answers to all the questions put by me not having been recorded.

Annex (B) is the result of our joint visit to the Christian quarter, where the questions put by my colleagues were not of a nature to elicit the confidence and real expression of opinion of the Armenians.

My colleagues informed me that they did not intend to put in either documents (Annexes A and B) officially.

So much for our joint inquiry, which, eminently unsatisfactory as it is from a European standpoint, I yet consider fairly satisfactory in view of the delicate nature of the situation and question, the Armenians in the present instance being still left free to return to their old faith. The result of my personal inquiry is as follows:—

The 1,500 Armenians remaining out of the 130 Gregorian, 65 Roman Catholic, and 45 Protestant houses of Birejik, saved their lives on the 1st January (n.s.) by

embracing Islamism. They are all Christians at heart, and desirous of making an open profession of their old faith. But they have lost their all, are surrounded by a fiercely fanatical and hostile Moslem population, and have no religious heads, the only Gregorian priest, Ohannes Vartabed, having been killed in the massacre, the Catholic priest having been previously sent to Aleppo, and the Protestant pastor Leon imprisoned at Ourfa. The Protestant preacher is now a Moslem. A declaration of Christianity by them at present would be most dangerous.

Mussulmans in Constantinople, who are not strict observers, and who are far removed from the scene of the present outbreaks, may be inclined to minimize the real significance of the provision of the "Sheri" law, that renegades from Islam are to be put to death (Turkish "murtadin Katli hellal"); but the Mussulmans of these districts, whose religious fervour has reached a white heat, are determined, especially in the face of the feebleness of the local authorities, to carry it out, should any of the converts renounce Islamism, the fact that they have not been officially recognized by Government having no weight with the population.

The case which occurred in the time of Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, as well as that of the Bulgarian girl in 1876 at Salonica, resulting in the massacre of two Consuls, will exemplify the extreme difficulty of the present case.

The whole question as regards the populace turns on this point, and the situation is most serious. It is essential that the legal formalities connected with the official recognition of the recent Armenian converts to Islam should not be carried out for some time until order be completely restored in these regions, if, indeed, such a result can ever again be obtained under the present system. The ordinary machinery of Government is not sufficient for that purpose. The local authorities having, by their criminally slack and dubious behaviour during the recent events, lost all prestige, respect, and authority in the eyes of the Mussulman population, are powerless to cope with the present question in any sense favourable to the Christian population; and the task of restoring order should be intrusted to a High Commission, one or more, according to the extent of the country to be dealt with, composed of high civil and military functionaries, and armed with extraordinary and summary powers, who would, after Bairam, visit the affected districts, and, in the Sultan's name, administer stern justice to the authors of recent outbreaks, after which the question of religious conversions could be attended to.

As the Tribunals of the Empire are now busy dealing with and punishing cases of Armenian sedition, there could be no reason for a charge of partiality in similarly meting out condign punishment to the Mussulman authors of recent massacres.

As regards Birejik, unless the fanaticism of the Mussulmans is curbed and mastered by some such stern exhibition of justice and authority, the Christians here cannot possibly openly proclaim their religion, and will be obliged either to remain Mussulman, or to relinquish what property they have saved, and quit the interior one by one for distant sea-coast towns or foreign parts.

The local authorities are both unable and unwilling to deal with the ringleaders of the massacres, many of whom are prominent citizens, and they would, I believe, gladly welcome some such extraordinary measures as I have ventured to propose for the treatment of the question.

With regard to the pitiable condition of Armenians in this town, any description of their sad plight would be merely an echo of the reports of Her Majesty's Consular officers from other districts in Anatolia, where similar events have occurred. Aid from relief funds should, I think, not be distributed too lavishly at first, as any such relief on a large scale would be a certain inducement to the local authorities to relax or probably abandon their already slack efforts to restore stolen property, the greater portion of which still remains in the plundered districts. It would be advisable at present to dole out what is barely necessary to relieve immediate distress, while trying to induce the authorities to do their duty in effecting the restitution of the stolen goods.

When the Turkish authorities awaken to a sense of duty, and things have righted themselves somewhat, any further relief will be very welcome and sadly needed. But to distribute relief on a large scale under present circumstances would be a temptation to unruly and unpunished marauders to renew their plundering.

I would beg to sum up as follows what I consider the proper course to be pursued with regard to the conversion question:—

1. The new converts should not be recognized officially for a period of some six months.
2. In the meantime the Ottoman Government should vindicate and restore its authority over the Mussulman population by severely punishing the prime movers in the

recent massacres, and take the proper measures, such as, for example, replacing the reserves by regular troops, for the protection of any converts who should return to Christianity.

I have, &c.  
(Signed) G. H. FITZMAURICE.

P.S.—I calculate at about 2,800 souls the number of Armenian Christians who have turned Moslem in Birejik, Ehnesch, Jibin, and Nisib.

G. H. F.

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Annex (A).

(Translation from Turkish original.)

ON the 17th (29th) February, 1311 (1896), Hasher Effendi, formerly Gregorian Armenian, now known as Mehmed Shakir; Sheikh Muslim, former Armenian name Abosh; Howaja Kevork, former Catholic Notable, now known as Mehmed Nouri Effendi; and the Protestant Notable Abraham, now known as Ibrahim, all inhabitants of the town of Birejik, having been interrogated in the presence of Mr. Fitzmaurice, declared as follows: That on the day of the massacre, in order to save their lives, they had accepted Islamism; that had they not done so their lives were in peril; that their lives had been spared through their accepting Islamism, and through the exertions of Hadji Zacheria Agha; that, however, nobody had invited them with urgency to embrace Islamism (*vide N.B.*); that, although perfect tranquillity should be restored, or, no matter what place of complete safety they may go to, they would not renounce Islam; that they declared this latter sentiment on their own behalf alone, and that they were unaware whether it was shared by the community at large, or whether the community wished to return to their old faith or not; that the church which they had turned into a mosque had been constructed by the exertions and money of their own community without any help from outside; that they would not allow it to remain a church, and should any of those who had contributed to its construction re-embrace Christianity, they would return them their money and let the church remain as a mosque.

On being asked whether they wished to sign the above statements, they declared their readiness to do so. They added that their families and children participated in these sentiments, and then signed.

N.B.—The real meaning of the above phrase “that although perfect tranquillity should be restored, or, no matter what place of complete safety they may go to,” is to be interpreted “that *for the present moment* they have no intention of renouncing Islam.”

(Signed) MEHMED SHAKIR.  
MEHMED NOURI.  
SHEIK MUSLIM.  
IBRAHIM.

We declare that the foregoing is the substance and sense of the answers given to the questions put by us, and that in our presence.

(Signed) MOUSTAPHA NEDIM,  
*President, Bidayet Court.*  
ALI RIZA,  
*Accountant, Aleppo Evcaf Department.*

Present:  
(Signed) G. H. FITZMAURICE.

February 17 (29), 1896.

N.B.—On the objection raised by Mr. Fitzmaurice that the statement contained in the above document bearing the signatures of the four individuals interrogated, viz.: “That, although perfect tranquillity should be restored, or, no matter what place of complete safety they may go to, they would not renounce Islamism,” might be construed into a limitation on the liberty of these persons to change their religion in the future, and might afterwards be an obstacle to their freedom to do so, whereas under the present circumstances it was impossible to predict what might in future be the sentiment of these men, and any such statement must be interpreted as referring only to the present situation; the phrase “that *for the present moment* they have no intention of renouncing Islam” was substituted in the last line of the above document instead of the previous above-mentioned statement. Mr. Fitzmaurice’s objection was concurred in by us.

(Signed) ALI RIZA.  
MUSTAPHA NEDIM.

February 18 (March 1), 1896.



## Annex (B).

(Literal translation of copy from Turkish original.)

The general impression resulting from our personal inquiry pursuant on the declaration of acceptance of Islamism by the Gregorian, Catholic, and Protestant communities of Birejik is as follows:—

All of these Armenians became Mussulmans under the influence of terror on the day of the massacre, and, though they have been assured that they are free to embrace any religion they choose, and that they will be protected by the Imperial Ottoman Government, their real sentiments can probably only be ascertained after the restoration of complete confidence and tranquillity, it being at the present impossible to gauge their future opinions on the subject. For the moment, however, a certain number, to judge by their statements, have no intention of renouncing Islam, and declare that, apart from the fright and terror caused by the massacres, no other violent pressure was brought to bear to force them to adopt Islamism. At the present moment they are in a pitiable state of misery and destitution resulting from the massacre and the plundering by which it was accompanied. It is plain from the expression and manner of a portion of them that they desire to return to their old faith.

This document bearing our signatures and containing the above statements has been exchanged between us.

(A true copy.)

(Signed)

ALI RIZA,

*Accountant, Aleppo Evcaf Department.*

MUSTAPHA NEDIM,

*President, Bidayet Court.*

G. H. FITZMAURICE,

*British Delegate.*

February 18 (March 1), 1896.

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Inclosure 2 in No. 3.

*Vice-Consul Fitzmaurice to Sir P. Currie.*

Sir,

*Ourfa, March 16, 1896.*

IN conformity with your Excellency's telegraphic instructions of the 7th March, I arrived here on the 10th March.

The gloom of the sad events which had occurred here during the last two months of 1895 still hung over the town, and the Armenian quarter especially, in spite of attempts during the preceding ten weeks to remove the traces of the final disaster, still wore the aspect of a town which had been ruined and laid waste by some scourge more terrible than any war or siege. The shops, with their windows and doors broken in, lay empty and deserted, practically no grown males were visible, and only a few ill-clad and ill-fed children and women, with a scared look on their faces, were to be seen moving about apparently in search of the bare necessities of existence in the shape of dry bread and scanty bedding.

Rumours of further massacres on the approaching festival of Bairam were rife, and the Mussulman population, emboldened by the impunity with which they had carried out the recent massacres, were openly threatening to "wipe out" the remaining Armenian Christians during the Bairam holidays.

The population of Ourfa before the 28th December, 1895, was close on 65,000, of whom about 20,000 were Armenians, 3,000 or 4,000 Jacobites, Chaldeans, Syrian Catholics, Greek Catholics, Maronites, and Jews, and the remaining 40,000 odd Turkish, Kurdish and Arab Mussulmans.

There have been, as your Excellency is aware, two massacres in Ourfa, the first on the 28th and 29th October, 1895, and the second or big massacre on the 28th and 29th December of the same year.

The causes leading up to these massacres were both remote and near.

The attitude of the Turkish Government on the Armenian question since the last Russo-Turkish war has been one calculated to end in some such deplorable catastrophe as that which has recently befallen the Armenian people and the Sultan's Government. Some twelve or fifteen years ago the persistent neglect of the latter to carry out the reforms it had by Treaty promised to introduce into its Armenian provinces, drove a certain number of Armenians in despair to have recourse to revolutionary methods. The Ottoman officials, instead of distinguishing between the guilty and innocent, chose,

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some from ignorance, many from motives of personal pecuniary gain, to regard all Armenians as traitors, scheming to throw off Ottoman yoke. As usually happens in Oriental countries, when the Central Government had adopted the same view, the real sedition of certain Armenians was confounded and lost in the mass of trumped-up charges, would-be seditious documents and imaginary reports and lists of revolutionary Committees, which poured in from all sides as soon as the demand of the Central Government for such a supply was felt. Turkish officials and leading Moslems criminally communicated these notions to the ignorant and indiscriminating masses of the Mussulman population, who are guided in their general action by the prescriptions of the Sheri Law. That Law prescribes that if the "rayah" Christian attempt, by having recourse ("dekhalet") to foreign Powers, to overstep the limits of privileges ("berat") allowed to them by their Mussulman masters, and free themselves from their bondage, their lives and property are to be forfeited, and are at the mercy of the Mussulmans. To the Turkish mind, the Armenians had tried to overstep those limits by appealing to foreign Powers. They therefore considered it their religious duty and a righteous thing to destroy the lives and seize the property of the Armenians.

The foregoing, strange as it may seem, was the actual frame and working of the Mussulman mind and conscience, when the Armenian demonstration occurred at Constantinople in September last.

I have made careful inquiries as to the extent of Armenian revolutionary propaganda at Ourfa, and have arrived at the conviction that, though there existed a large amount of, to my mind, well-grounded discontent among the Armenians arising from the fact that for some years past they have, in common with their brethren elsewhere in Anatolia, been treated practically as outlaws, the amount of actual disloyalty among them was very restricted.

Armenian Secret Societies in Europe have, as is well-known, been endeavouring to introduce explosives, rifles, and revolutionary literature into the Aleppo region, but their success at Ourfa has been exceedingly limited. They seem to have smuggled in some revolutionary pamphlets, but no rifles or explosives.

Ourfa, moreover, does not come under even the geographical designation of Armenia, being included rather in the limits of Mesopotamia or "Arabistan" (Arabia).

The foregoing was the state of things at Ourfa when, immediately after the Armenian demonstration in Constantinople, it appears orders were received here from the Central Government to the effect that should the Armenians attempt any disturbance, it was to be at once sternly quelled, and in the event of their offering resistance, they were to receive a terrible lesson ("terbiyyé shedidé"). The Central Government must have known or ought to have known the disastrous consequences which, in view of Mussulman feeling against the Armenians, such instructions were certain to have in the provinces, and it incurred a very grave responsibility in sending them.

The Mussulmans here and elsewhere interpreted them as the Sovereign's wish that they should put into execution the prescriptions of the "Sheri," and proceed to take the lives and property of the rebellious Armenian "rayahs." The demonstration at Constantinople was represented by the officials as an attempt by the Armenians to storm the Sublime Porte; rumours reached here of massacres of Armenians by their coreligionists in other towns in Anatolia; they were told that the Armenians were attacking mosques and using dynamite, while word came from their Mussulman brethren in towns where massacres had occurred inciting them to do their duty by Islam. The Government, too, began to serve out arms and cartridges to the zaptiehs and other guards, and had the Armenian quarter patrolled.

I should add that the telegraphic news of acceptance of the reforms was interpreted to the Mussulmans as the granting of autonomy to the Armenians, an interpretation which must have come from the Government officials, and which had a disastrous effect on Moslem feeling towards Armenians.

While this Moslem feeling at Ourfa was thus excited, an event occurred which precipitated matters. I shall go into it somewhat in detail, as being the much disputed point of departure of the most extensive of recent Armenian massacres.

A Mussulman had purchased from an Armenian money-changer called Boghos a number of "ghazis," *i.e.*, old gold coins worn as ornaments by native women, and as he was somewhat tardy in paying for them, the Armenian Boghos, on Saturday, the 26th October, 1895, went to the Mussulman's house to demand payment. The latter, apparently incensed at the Armenian coming to his private house to press for the money, abused the money-changer roundly and sent him away, saying he would see him on the morrow.

The following day, Sunday, the 27th October, the Mussulman, true to his word,

went with some comrades to Boghos' house, and, being told the latter was out, proceeded to search for him in the streets. He found him near the Armenian Cathedral, in the Armenian quarter, and at once stabbed him to death. It being Sunday large numbers of Armenians were in the neighbourhood of the Cathedral. They at once seized the Mussulman, and handed him over to the zaptiehs of a neighbouring guard-house.

The Turkish version of what followed is that the Armenians attacked the guard-house and mortally wounded the Mussulman, while the Armenians assert that, seeing that the zaptiehs were going to allow the Mussulman murderer to escape, they invaded the guard-house, insisting that the zaptiehs should either hand over the murderer to them to be conveyed to the Government-house, or that they (the Armenians) should accompany the zaptiehs and their prisoner to the Government. On the zaptiehs naturally refusing and trying to turn the Armenians out, a scuffle ensued, in which the prisoner was seriously wounded. He died on the way while the zaptiehs were conveying him to the Government-house. There an Armenian dispensary doctor, named Melkon, called in by the Major of Gendarmes to give a medical Report, declared that the wounds of which the man died were inflicted by zaptiehs bayonets. It is asserted that the Major threatened the Armenian doctor Melkon with death if he should declare the wounds to be bayonet wounds. Melkon sought refuge in a Mussulman house, but was sought out on the following day by the Major and a couple of men. He was dragged forth, shot by the Major, and dispatched by the latter's followers. His body was then dragged through the streets with every species of indignity, torn to pieces, and flung into a fosse.

The excitement among the Mussulmans and the uneasiness among the Armenians on Sunday night, October the 27th, the night following the death of the Mussulman was very great, and some Armenians were about in their quarter on the same night watching in anticipation of an attack. They encountered a Turkish patrol and shots were fired. The Armenian account is that on the Turkish patrol hailing the Armenians, the latter fled and were fired upon by the zaptiehs, while the Turkish version is that a band of Armenians, armed with Martinis, assaulted the patrol.

As the *mot d'ordre* of the Turkish authorities after the Constantinople demonstration became "attack of Armenians," and their stereotyped official version of the origin of most massacres was the supposed attack of Armenians on mosques during the Friday prayer, the above official account of the patrol incident must be received with great reserve, if not incredulity. It is moreover curious that the patrol said to have been attacked by armed Armenians was in no way hurt or injured, while they on their side did not succeed in capturing any of their Armenian assailants.

I should mention another Armenian version that the alleged attack was made by a band of Turks disguised as Armenians, with the object of giving a pretext for massacre.

The few Armenians who ventured down to the bazaar on the following Monday morning, 28th October, came rushing back, most of them wounded and streaming with blood. They were followed by an armed Mussulman mob, who attacked the Armenian quarter, with cries of death to the infidels.

The Armenians, the greater portion of whom had remained at home, seeing that the Mussulmans were bent on a general massacre, began a determined resistance at the principal entrances to their quarter, and finally obliged the mob to retire with a loss of four or five Mussulman lives, they themselves losing some twenty-seven killed.

The mob, baffled for the moment in this direction, turned their attention to plunder. They completely looted and wrecked some 700 Armenian shops and 190 Armenian houses.

The rapidity with which the above incidents succeeded one another seems to point to some preconcerted plan, and it is asserted that a certain Mussulman Notable of Ourfa, who has since been summoned to Aleppo, was the prime mover in the matter and that the man mentioned above, who was a poor man and not likely to be the purchaser of a large number of Ghazi gold coins, was acting on behalf of the Notable, with the object of driving the Armenians into some overt act of violence against a Mussulman, in keeping with the malicious reports spread among the Mussulman population of Armenian outrages on Turkish women throughout Anatolia, and it seems inconceivable that a general attack and massacre of Armenians could have been planned during the one Sunday night of 27th October.

After the Mussulman repulse of Monday, all Armenians found outside the Armenian quarter, within or without the city, were attacked and the males slain. Their quarter was besieged and no egress allowed. Their water supply was cut off and no food permitted to enter. This state of siege lasted practically for two months until the 28th December, the date of the final and great massacre.

The Armenian Bishop wished to telegraph the situation to His Majesty the Sultan, but the authorities refused to allow his telegram to be sent. Thereupon in despair at the hopeless situation of his flock, he retired to his monastery outside the town, where he remained a prisoner till after the second massacre; no Armenian, not even his secretary, being allowed to converse with him, except in Turkish and that in the presence of guards.

On the night of Monday, the Armenians in view of the desperate nature of their position, the post and telegraph being closed to them, dispatched a messenger to Aintab to make known their condition and to get aid. That messenger was subsequently arrested and is now in the Ourfa prison under a heavy sentence for his "seditious" conduct in so doing. Another messenger, dispatched on the following Wednesday night, met with the same fate.

During Tuesday, the 29th October, the mob continued their plundering on the outskirts of the Armenian quarter, and in this they were assisted by the zaptiehs who fired on and over the Armenian quarter, it being afterwards represented to the Mussulmans that the Armenians were firing on the Turks.

On Wednesday, the 30th October, the Mutessarif Hassan Pasha arrived from Surrouj, where he had been absent some ten days; over a thousand Mussulmans, most of whom had been engaged in the attack and plundering of the preceding days, were enrolled as reserves, and the Government called on the Armenians to deliver up their arms, especially the 1,800 Martinis they were supposed to have received from abroad, promising to subsequently disarm the Mussulmans. The Armenians replied that they had no such Martinis, that, as the Mussulmans had been the attacking party and had declared that the Sultan's Government had ordered the extermination of all Armenians, they had no longer any confidence in their Mussulman fellow-citizens, and, consequently, they could give up such arms as they possessed only after the Mussulmans had been disarmed. The Government insisted, however, that the Armenians should first disarm and that they could hope for no protection until they had delivered up their Martinis.

The newly enrolled reserves were scattered about in the Armenian quarter, nominally for their protection; but they proceeded to tell the Armenians that their extermination had been decided upon by Government. They extorted large sums of money and valuables from them on the promise of protection, and then informed them that only those who turned Moslem would be saved, all such new converts to run up a white flag on their roofs. The Armenians in utter despair turned Moslem *en masse*; and by Thursday night, the white flags on the Christian quarter were innumerable. The Government, however, refused to recognize them officially, but continued its demand for arms.

About this time a paper to the effect that the Armenians had attacked a guard-house, fired upon and killed Mussulmans and zaptiehs, and were resisting the Government forces with modern weapons, was sent round for signature to the heads of the different communities, and even some foreigners. This document was presumably forwarded to head-quarters.

On the 12th November, fifteen prominent Armenians were summoned to the Government House. There they were asked the meaning of their rebellious attitude, they were ordered to at once hand over the 1,800 Martinis, 100 revolvers, and ten men chosen from a list of 120 of those who were alleged to have attacked the guard-house on Sunday the 27th October.

The Armenians at once handed over the ten men required and while protesting that they had no Martinis, offered and at once proceeded to collect and deliver up any other arms they possessed.

The negotiations for the surrender of their arms lasted for some weeks, the Government, while accepting the ordinary arms handed over by the Armenians, still relentlessly demanding the Martinis and even hinting to the Armenians that if they had none they had money to purchase them. The latter actually bought revolvers and other arms from friendly Turks and other Christians to deliver up to Government.

By the 30th November they had handed over 240 pieces of arms, mostly old guns, pistols, daggers, &c., and some fifteen revolvers. On the same day, I may mention, Miss Shattuck, the American lady missionary, asked for permission and an escort to go to Aintab, a permission which was granted only on the 28th December, one hour before the final and general massacre.

On the 1st December the mob again attacked and fired into the Armenian quarter. They were, however, held in check by the Government.

By the 3rd December 600 arms of all sorts had been given up, but the Mutessarif and commander still renewed their demands.

The Armenians were now experiencing all the distress of a regular siege. Though they had bribed their guards to get in some food on the pretext that it was intended for the soldiers and had reopened old wells, which had for many years been closed up, their provisions and water supply were giving out, and beasts of burden worth several pounds were disposed of for as many shillings.

At this juncture they resolved to make a desperate attempt to communicate with Aleppo. Having written an account of their situation on a piece of cloth they sewed it into the lining of one of the long garments worn in the country, put it on a poor Armenian peasant not likely to attract the attention or cupidity of the surrounding Kurds, and despatched him at night by an unfrequented road to Aleppo with promises of lavish rewards in case of success. This messenger, however, was waylaid and stripped of the very garment bearing the message.

On the 13th December, on the pretext that tranquillity was completely restored, the Commander of the troops, ordered that the few Armenians, whose business places, bakeries, &c., were still workable, should come down and resume their work. On their doing so they were attacked and wounded, and fled back to their quarter. The Commander forced them to descend again, and with cavalry mounted guard over the few Armenians, who tried to do business under such novel and trying conditions. The Government then forced some twenty-five prominent Armenians to sign a telegram to Constantinople to the effect that, though the peace had been disturbed by the unruly conduct of some Armenians, owing to the efforts of the local authorities complete tranquillity had been restored.

During the following week, however, though the authorities assured the Armenians they had nothing to fear, and that Government was now going to disarm the Mussulmans, the Armenians having by this time given up, including revolvers and one Martini, 1,200 arms of all kinds, of which a large number had been purchased to meet the demands of the authorities, there were whisperings of a great impending disaster, friendly Turks sent word to the Armenians to be on their guard, and warning was given to the non-Armenian Christians to wear a black turban.

Finally on Saturday, the 28th December, a Captain of gendarmes went to Miss Shattuck, informing her that she might start for Aintab as everything was quiet. He then proceeded to the Armenian Cathedral, where the Armenian National Assembly, which had just sent a communication to the Mutessarif detailing their causes of apprehension and soliciting protection, was still sitting. The Captain gave them, on the part of the Government, every assurance that no disturbance would occur. He had, however, scarcely left the building when the storm burst and the general massacre of the 28th and 29th December began.

On the morning of Saturday, the 28th December, the Commander of the troops, sent word to the non-Armenian Christians to assemble in their churches and not stir out, but under no consideration to shelter or give asylum to a single Armenian.

The military with some mounted police were drawn up on the brow of the hill upon the slope of which the Armenian quarter is built, and were massed at the principal exits from that quarter. Behind them was an armed Mussulman mob, while the minarets were crowded with Moslems evidently in expectation of some stirring event. The Turkish women, too, crowded on to the roofs and the slopes of the fortress, which overlooks the Armenian quarter. Between 10 A.M. and 11 A.M. crowds of armed Mussulmans flocked round in the same direction cheered on by their women, who kept up the well-known "zilghit," or peculiar throat noise, used on such occasions by Oriental women to encourage their braves. Towards noon a "muezzin" gave out the midday prayer from one minaret, all the other minarets remaining silent, a glittering glass ornament resembling a crescent was seen shining from the top of the fortress overlooking one end of the Armenian quarter, while a mollah waved a green banner from a tall minaret overhanging the other end.

A few shots were fired and a trumpet sounded the attack from among the soldiers, who were seen to open their ranks and allow the mob behind them to come forward. Soldiers and mob then rushed on the Armenian quarter and began a general massacre of the males over a certain age.

The reserve troops, who knew the Armenian quarter well from their having been on guard there during the two preceding months, served both as guides and advance guard, being accompanied by a body of wood cutters, axe in hand, from the neighbouring mountains. The latter broke in the doors, whereupon the soldiers rushed in emptying their Martinis on the Armenian men, from whom they had anticipated a certain resistance. They had, however, given up all their arms, and, in abject terror at their dreadful

situation, pleaded for mercy for the sake of their women and children and the Prophet Jesus. With insulting language they were dragged out one by one from their hiding-places and brutally butchered. In many instances from fifteen to twenty men had collected in the larger houses as affording some chance of safety. They were hurled out one after another to the executioners, who speedily dispatched them. In the house next to that of the Protestant pastor (he, too, was slain, leaving six orphans), where I put up during my stay here, forty men were thus put to death. A certain Sheikh ordered his followers to bring as many stalwart young Armenians as they could find. They were, to the number of about 100, thrown on their backs, and held down by their hands and feet, while the Sheikh, with a combination of fanaticism and cruelty, proceeded, while reciting verses of the Koran, to cut their throats after the Mecca rite of sacrificing sheep.

Many Armenian men again secreted themselves at the bottom of wells in the hope of escaping from their would-be destroyers; but the latter hurled down jars and stones, and then fired down revolver shots, or flung down matting saturated with petroleum, which they then set on fire.

In several cases women and girls were mercilessly cut down while trying to shield their male relatives.

When all the men had been killed in a house, the mob proceeded to plunder in the most minute way, pouring kerosene on and burning corn, barley, woodwork, and whatever they could not carry away, and leaving only bare walls and floors.

While this house-to-house carnage was going on, a constant firing from the brow of the hill down over the quarter was kept up on Armenians who tried to escape by the roofs.

Towards sunset, as at noon, the trumpet was again sounded, and the mob at once withdrew, with the exception of a few stragglers who remained to loot.

On the following day (Sunday, the 29th December) the trumpet was sounded at early dawn, and the massacre was resumed. Large numbers who on Saturday had not taken part in the attack fearing Armenian resistance, joined the mob on Sunday.

The savage butchery of the previous day was continued till noon, when took place the burning of the Ourfa Armenian Cathedral, an act which for fiendish barbarity has been unsurpassed by any of the horrors of recent massacres of Armenians, and for which the annals of history can furnish few, if any, parallels.

On Saturday night crowds of Armenian men, women, and children took refuge in their fine cathedral, capable of holding some 8,000 persons, and the priest administered the sacrament, the last sacrament as it proved to be, to 1,800 souls, recording the figure on one of the pillars of the church. These remained in the cathedral overnight and were joined on Sunday by several hundreds more who sought the protection of a building which they considered safe from the mob-violence of the Mussulman even in his fanaticism. It is computed that at least 3,000 individuals were congregated in the edifice, when the mob attacked it.

They at first fired in through the windows, then smashed in the iron door, and proceeded to massacre all those, mostly men, who were on the ground floor.

Having thus disposed of the men, and having removed some of the younger women, they rifled the church treasure, shrines, and ornaments to the extent of some £ T. 4,000, destroying the pictures and relics, mockingly calling on Christ now to prove himself a greater prophet than Mohammed.

A huge, partly stone, partly wooden, gallery running round the upper portion of the cathedral was packed with a shrieking and terrified mass of women, children, and some men.

Some of the mob, jumping on the raised altar platform, began picking off the latter with revolver shots, but as this process seemed too tedious, they bethought themselves of the more expeditious method employed against those who had hidden in the wells. Having collected a quantity of bedding and the church matting they poured some thirty cans of kerosene on it, as also on the dead bodies lying about, and then set fire to the whole. The gallery beams and wooden framework soon caught fire, whereupon, blocking up the staircases leading to the gallery with similar inflammable materials, they left the mass of struggling human beings to become the prey of the flames.

During several hours the sickening odour of roasting flesh pervaded the town, and even to-day, two months and a-half after the massacre, the smell of putrescent and charred remains in the church is unbearable.

At 3:30 P.M., at the Moslem afternoon prayer ("ikindi namaz"), the trumpet again sounded and the mob drew off from the Armenian quarter. Shortly afterwards the

Mufti, and other Notables, preceded by music, among which were brass military instruments, went round the quarter, announcing that the massacre was at an end ("paydoss"), and that there would be no more killing of Christians.

The next three days were occupied in removing the dead bodies, the Jews and donkeys being requisitioned by the authorities for that purpose.

Christians were not allowed to enter the church, now a ruin, the work of clearing out the débris being intrusted to the military, who are reported to have picked up large quantities of melted gold and valuables hidden about their persons by the Armenians, in their vain hope that the cathedral would be considered a sanctuary.

The massacre was decidedly anti-Armenian, no distinction being made between Gregorians, Protestants, and Roman Catholics, whose church was also rifled. Only forty Jacobites out of 300 families and one Greek Catholic were killed, while two or three Chaldeans were wounded and none killed.

The thoroughness with which some of the work was done may be understood from the fact that 126 Armenian families have been absolutely wiped out, not even a woman or a baby remaining.

The task of computing the number of Armenians who met their death in this massacre is very difficult. The Turkish official registers of the former Armenian population and what now remains are utterly unreliable, owing to the large numbers unregistered in order to escape taxation, while many unofficial Turkish estimates of Armenian losses are far in excess of those given by the Armenians themselves, and are evidently exaggerated. After very minute and careful inquiry, I believe that close on 8,000 Armenians perished in the two days' massacre of the 28th and 29th December, 1895, between 2,500 and 3,000 of whom were killed or burned in the cathedral.

I should, however, not be at all surprised if the figure of 9,000 or 10,000 were subsequently found to be nearer the mark.

Moreover, the condition of the thousands of widows, many thousands of orphans, and the grown-up men who remain, is wretched in the last extreme. At present the mortality, owing to uncared wounds, hunger, disease, and general extreme low physical and moral condition, is great, and may become still greater.

The loss of property, estimated roughly at from £ T. 150,000 to £ T. 200,000, is still harder to calculate. The majority have practically lost all except the clothes on their backs, while the authorities have made no serious attempt to restore the plundered property. Families which were formerly well off are now reduced to penury, and are too proud to ask assistance. Many of the children are unable to claim and look after the house and land property of their dead parents, and a great portion of this property is certain to be lost. Again, many Mussulmans, especially villagers, were largely indebted to the town Armenians. These debts are now unrecoverable, as the Mussulman thinks he has the same right to retain this property of the rebellious Armenian "rayah" as he had to take their lives and other property. In fact, one of the features and results of recent massacres has been the veritable "seisactheia," as regards Mussulman debts to Armenians.

The general position of Armenians here and in the surrounding country, if not, indeed, in the Asiatic provinces of the Empire, is deplorable. They are practically considered as outlaws, and it almost amounts to a capital offence in the eyes of the Mussulmans to be an Armenian. Nothing but the stern punishment of the Mussulmans who have been prominent in recent massacres and disorders, combined with a long period of tranquillity, can restore confidence, and it is very doubtful whether this period of tranquillity will be vouchsafed to the Sultan's Government. That Government has committed the fatal error of confounding the guilty with the innocent, and, instead of using its just rights to punish with all the severity of the law such Armenians as have engaged in really treasonable action against their lawful rulers, it has committed the further and all but irreparable blunder of allowing the Mussulman population to usurp the prerogatives of Government by wreaking their blind and unreasoning fury on a, to a great extent, guiltless section of His Majesty's most intelligent, hard-working, and useful subjects.

The local authorities at Ourfa and in other towns of the region I have visited, excluding the Zeitoun incident, upon the origin of which I am not in a position to pronounce an opinion, have not, I believe, connived at or brought about these massacres without having in their hands justificatory instructions. These instructions are the result of their deliberate and criminal misrepresentations to Constantinople regarding the Armenians, together with the false and unstatesmanlike attitude of the Central Government on the whole question.

There is one fact which stands out prominently amid the confusion of statements

and counter-statements with regard to recent events. All sections of the Ottoman populations, in spite of their general ignorance, have a keen *flair* as to the main tendency of the wishes of their autocratic Government; and both Mussulmans and non-Mussulmans assert that the Government wished these massacres to take place, and that if it had not so wished they could not have taken place.

That Government has been since in possession of both sides of the question, but so far it shrinks from inquiry, and manifests no desire to repair these disasters. Until it does so, its populations will not absolve it from the charge of having deliberately worked up these massacres.

Amid the wild devastation and destruction which has swept over this region there is one large Armenian village, named "Guermuch," which has so far escaped. This extraordinary fact happened in the following way:—When the Moslems attacked the Armenians of Ourfa, a mounted and armed multitude of tribal Kurds and Arabs bore down upon Guermuch. The Armenians, pitching a few tents they possessed in front of the village, made as large a display of armed force as they could muster, firing off their guns, and at the same time sending forward word to their assailants that the tents were occupied by soldiers sent by the Government to protect the village. The Arabs and Kurds, who had been incited to destroy the village, were puzzled, deceived, and withdrew, under the impression that the Government, for some inexplicable reason, was really protecting the villagers of Guermuch.

The authorities of Ourfa shortly afterwards summoned the Guermuch Armenians to deliver up the arms with which they were alleged to have attacked the Mussulman Kurds and Arabs. The Armenians, however, came in in a body to Ourfa, telling the authorities that if Government wished them to be massacred, they had better do so at once and on the spot in Ourfa, as they (the Armenians) were completely at their mercy, but that they would never surrender their weapons, which were their only protection against the surrounding armed and hostile Kurdish and Arab tribes. They still remain untouched and retain their arms, for which latter privilege they have paid no inconsiderable sums of money.

Your Excellency has further instructed me to inquire into the number of Armenians at Ourfa who have accepted Islamism in consequence of recent events.

That number in Ourfa is between 400 and 500. Some of these became Mussulmans between the first and second massacre (*i.e.*, between the 28th October and the 29th December, 1895), some during the second massacre, and the remainder since that massacre. They did so under threats, or under the conviction that there was no security of life and property, either from Government or from their Moslem neighbours for any Armenians who openly professed Christianity.

Though Government has not sanctioned the carrying out of the legal formalities necessary in the case of conversions to Islam, and can thus say it does not officially recognize the neophytes, the latter are treated as Mussulmans by the officials and Moslem population.

The statements and facts contained in the foregoing account of the Ourfa massacre constitute a grave charge against the Ottoman Government, and I have been duly impressed with the responsibility of embodying them in an official Report.

Though the secret and terrorising methods of the Turkish Administration do not always permit of the production of the evidence usually required by a European Court, I have been at great pains to sift carefully my information, the greater portion of which I have obtained direct from Mussulman sources, or have had confirmed by Mussulman authority.

I have, &c.  
(Signed) G. H. FITZMAURICE.

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Inclosure 3 in No. 3.

*Vice-Consul Fitzmaurice to Sir P. Currie.*

Sir,

*Adiaman, March 25, 1896.*

IN accordance with your Excellency's telegraphic instructions of the 9th March to visit and report upon the massacre and consequent conversions to Islamism in this town, I arrived here on the 23rd March.

The massacre here began on the 7th November, 1895, and lasted three days. About the 1st and 2nd November, the dates of the massacres at Diarbekir and Severeck,



the Armenians here obtained information of a plot among the Mussulmans to massacre them, and besought the protection of the local authorities. The Kaimakan gave them all possible assurances, but, not being reassured, they wished to telegraph their fears to the superior authorities. Their telegrams, though accepted, were not sent, and on the 7th November, Thursday, a mob of the town Mussulmans and neighbouring Kurds, mainly instigated it appears by a local magnate, Sheikh Agha, assaulted the Christian quarter.

The population of Adiaman consisted of about 11,000 Mussulmans and 4,000 Christians, of whom some 250 were Syrians. The same plan was followed as in other recent massacres in these parts. They killed 410 persons, mostly males, including two priests, and then collected the women and children, with such men as had managed to hide during the period allowed for the massacre, in a large caravanserai, where they remained in a wretched state of terror and destitution for a week. The mob wished to set fire to this building and burn them all, and was only prevented from doing so by the exertions chiefly of the Kadi.

During their detention there, their houses were completely sacked, the windows, doors, and almost every particle of iron being carried off. One hundred houses were ruined, seventy fired, and the Gregorian, Catholic, Syrian, and Protestant churches plundered and ransacked, the tomb of an American missionary in the Protestant church having been desecrated.

As a result of the massacre, there are 250 new widows and 370 new orphans, while twenty-six Armenians were wounded, but escaped with their lives. Among the 410 killed were 25 Syrians.

The loss of Christians' property is estimated at £ T. 70,000, and the authorities have made no effort to have stolen property restored, while not a single Mussulman connected with the massacre has been in any way punished.

During the massacre some 150 Armenians of this town became Moslems, but only forty-seven still profess that religion, the remainder having returned to their old faith.

The number of conversions in the neighbouring villages, mainly through the instrumentality of the Kurdish Aghas, I calculate at about 840.

The principal feature of the Adiaman massacre was the thoroughness of the plundering, the loss of life, 410 out of some 2,000 males, being comparatively small, while the fact that the majority of the converts have returned to Christianity points to the absence of the element of fierce religious fanaticism.

The Government officials here, as elsewhere, might have easily prevented the massacre.

I have, &c.

(Signed) G. H. FITZMAURICE.

Inclosure 4 in No. 3.

Vice-Consul Fitzmaurice to Sir P. Currie.

Sir,

Adiaman, March 26, 1896.

THE following facts regarding the massacre during November last at the neighbouring town of Severek, in the Diarbekir Vilayet, may have a certain interest and value. I give them, however, with some reserve, as I have not had an occasion of verifying them by personal inquiry on the spot, but I believe them, meagre as they are, to be fairly reliable, as they come from a trustworthy source.

The population of Severek was about 18,000 or 20,000, of whom some 6,000 were Armenian or Syrian Christians, and the remainder Mussulman Kurds.

During July, August, and September of 1895, the Severek Christians were roughly treated by their Moslem neighbours, and threatened with annihilation.

The final massacre began on the 2nd November, the day following that of Diarbekir, and lasted several days. The plundering was of an exceedingly thorough nature, even the stone flooring (Severek stone is of a hard and valuable kind) of many Christian houses having been removed, while the killing was of a scarcely less thorough nature, close on 800 out of the 1,500 Christian grown-up males having been slain.

The Syrians and Chungushly Armenians who inhabited the same quarter were almost exterminated.

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In many cases the alternatives of death or Islam were offered to the Christians, and about 200 accepted the latter.

No distinction was made between Armenian and Syrian.

Churches were not respected, those of the Gregorians, Protestants, and Syrians having been sacked.

Osman Agha, the most powerful local magnate, is charged with having been the fomenter of the massacre, and he was certainly influential enough to have prevented it if he had so desired.

I may add that a number of the Christians fled to Veranshehr, and were there protected by a Kurdish Chief.

I have, &c.  
(Signed) G. H. FITZMAURICE.

Inclosure 5 in No. 3.

*Vice-Consul Fitzmaurice to Sir P. Currie.*

Sir,

*Behesni, March 27, 1896.*

I HAVE the honour to report that I arrived here on the 26th March, in conformity with your Excellency's instructions.

This town can boast of the enviable reputation of being the only white spot on the map of this region, no massacre or disturbance resulting in a serious loss of life or property having occurred here.

The fact is owing to the attitude of the local Mussulman Notables, who absolutely refused to be a party to or allow any injury to be done to the 2,000 Armenian Christians of Behesni. In doing so they have incurred the resentment of the neighbouring Mussulman populations.

About the 10th November, 1895, shortly after the massacres at Adiaman and Severek, large bands of Kurds arrived, with the intention of attacking the Behesni Armenians, but manifested considerable surprise on encountering the resistance of the Behesni Mussulmans, who declared that their Armenians were peaceable, and that they would not allow them to be molested.

The Kurds withdrew, but returned shortly afterwards only to meet with the same resistance.

Government then dispatched troops to the town, and they, on the Kurds renewing the attack, fired upon the latter, killing and wounding some twenty of them.

The troops did so without consulting the Mussulman Notables, who maintained that, by the exercise of their personal influence, they could have warded off this third attack without the shedding of blood.

The Armenians of Behesni are still safe, and it is to be hoped that they will escape the recurrence of any such disorder as that which has just occurred at Killis on the 20th March.

I have, &c.  
(Signed) G. H. FITZMAURICE.

Inclosure 6 in No. 3.

*Vice-Consul Fitzmaurice to Sir P. Currie.*

Sir,

*Aleppo, April 9, 1896.*

I BEG to offer the following remarks on the question of the recent conversions to Islamism in the region which I have just traversed:—

In addition to the numbers of converts already reported by me (Birejik town and district, 4,300; Ourfa, 500; Severek, 200; Adiaman and district, 900, *i.e.*, 5,900 in all). I learnt while at Marash that 200 Armenian houses in the Albistan district, 116 individual Armenians in the Anderm district, and a large number in the villages close to Marash had also adopted Islamism.

The local authorities have in no instance, to my knowledge, taken the necessary steps to secure these Armenians the degree of confidence and freedom requisite to enable



them to resume the practice of their old faith, nor have they, during the few months which have elapsed since the massacres, prevented the Mussulman population from forcing these Armenians by threats of death or otherwise to adopt in its entirety their new religion. They are obliged to wear turbans, to attend mosques, and learn the Koran, to be circumcised, not to speak Armenian, and to be known officially and privately under the Mussulman names. I have myself seen some of these new Armenian converts, members of an Administrative Council, at sittings of that Council, presided over by the chief administrative authority, addressed by their Moslem names, and affixing their official seals which also bore these names.

Many of these Armenians, seeing the impossibility of again professing Christianity in their native towns, have abandoned their property, and fled to other towns, where they were not known, and could, in poverty, practise their old faith. The authorities have sought them out, and forced them to return to their native places, where they are once more obliged to live as Mussulmans.

The aspects of the conversion question differ in different towns. In some places like Marash and Aintab, where there remains a large Christian population, a great part of the new converts can, by keeping out of observation, gradually and in the course of time, avoid the profession of Islamism. In others, like Adiaman, where the massacre does not seem to have been characterized by intense religious fanaticism, the majority of the converts have reverted to their former religion. But at Albistan and Birejik, and generally in the villages, where the entire Christian population has turned Moslem, the problem is much more difficult. The old Mussulmans of these places show their extreme aversion, backed up by very significant threats, which the authorities do not prevent, to allowing the former Christians to return to Christianity, and as no Christian houses or priests remain, it is impossible for them to make even a secret profession of their old religion, owing to the smallness of the towns and the consequent close every-day relations between both sections of population.

This conversion question, if not the most serious, is the ugliest feature of recent massacres. It is also the most difficult of remedy, for, though enlightened interpretations of the Mussulman religious and civil law do not sanction such peculiar changes of religion, yet the ignorant masses of the Mussulman population, whose fanaticism has been deeply stirred, and who have now for some time regarded and treated the new converts as Moslems, would, in case of their reverting to Christianity, consider them as renegades, and thus punishable by death, according to the precepts of the Koran.

I have, &c.

(Signed) G. H. FITZMAURICE.

No. 4.

*Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received May 11.)*

My Lord,

*Perá, May 7, 1896.*

WITH reference to my despatch of the 27th ultimo, Mr. Fitzmaurice has now, at my request, drawn up the accompanying Memorandum suggesting the measures which should, in his opinion, be taken to restore confidence at Birejik, and thus enable the converts gradually to return to Christianity.

Shortly stated, these suggestions are:—

1. That the troops now stationed at Birejik should be withdrawn and replaced by regulars:—
2. That some high functionaries should be sent to Birejik with full powers to take measures for the restoration of confidence.
3. That the leaders of the massacre of the 1st January, 1896, should be punished or banished.
4. That one or more foreign Delegates should accompany the Ottoman functionaries.

The above arrangements would, Mr. Fitzmaurice thinks, be followed by the re-conversion of a certain portion of the Birejik Armenians, and the nucleus of a Christian community would thus be re-established, which would afford the other converts an opportunity of eventually returning to their old faith.

Such a measure would, no doubt, produce a salutary effect in other places where similar conversions have taken place.

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Mr. Fitzmaurice has, since his return, had interviews with the Grand Vizier, the Foreign Minister, and the Sultan's First Secretary, and has informed them of the results of the inquiry and of the opinions he has formed.

I called upon Tewfik Pasha three days ago, and after urging upon him the necessity of some measures being taken to satisfy public opinion on this question, I stated informally the steps which I considered advisable. I requested him to press the subject on the consideration of the Sultan and of his Government, and to inform me as soon as possible, of the decisions that may be taken. I at the same time stated my readiness to send Mr. Fitzmaurice again to Birejik if his presence would facilitate a satisfactory settlement.

I have, &c.  
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 4.

*Memorandum by Vice-Consul Fitzmaurice.*

THE result of the Birejik Commission, on which I had the honour to represent Her Majesty's Government, having established that the Armenians there became Mussulmans under the influence of terror, and can only return to Christianity on the restoration of confidence, I have the honour to submit to your Excellency what I consider to be the proper measures to be taken to secure that end.

The Birejik question, though only a small part of the general conversion question, has a special importance from the fact of the participation of a foreign Delegate in the Commission of Inquiry, and I am convinced that if it could be satisfactorily solved, the conversion questions in the neighbouring districts would gradually settle themselves.

I shall endeavour to reduce to a concrete form the general suggestions which I had the honour to make in my Report from Birejik of the 5th March:—

1. The reserve troops now stationed at Birejik, who were present at, where they did not actually participate in, recent disorders, should be replaced as soon as possible by regulars.

2. His Majesty the Sultan should then dispatch a body of functionaries, composed if possible of a military man, of the rank of General of Division (Ferik), a judicial functionary, a Mussulman religious dignitary, who would, in the mosque and out of it, give the necessary advice to the local Mussulman population, and, lastly, an Armenian Ecclesiastic. The sending of an Armenian Ecclesiastic is not perhaps a *sine quâ non* and is open to certain objections, as the Mussulman functionaries might prefer to attend to the matter without interference. The Ottoman Government might add other officials to the above, if it wished to lend additional importance to the Mission.

They should have ample, if not full powers to take such measures as would restore the lost confidence of the Armenians in their Government, the minimum of which I would consider to be the power to exile some of the leading Mussulmans who fomented the disorder there of the 1st January, 1896.

Such action of the Ottoman Government would probably be followed by the return to Christianity of a certain portion of the Birejik Armenians, and a Christian community having been thus re-established in that town (there is not now a single declared Christian there) the greater part of the remaining Armenians would gradually find means of returning to their old faith. It would, moreover, have the effect of restoring the confidence of the Armenian converts to Islam all over the Aleppo region.

(Signed) G. H. FITZMAURICE.

No. 5.

*Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Substance received by telegraph, May 14.)*

My Lord,

Pera, May 18, 1896.

IN continuation of my despatch of the 7th instant, I have the honour to state that on the 12th instant the Minister for Foreign Affairs informed me that he had submitted to the Sultan the observations and suggestions which I had made to him with regard to the question of conversions at Birejik, and added that he entertained

hopes of a favourable decision being arrived at in the matter. On the following day Mr. Block, First Dragoman of the Embassy, went to the Palace, and was received by the Sultan's First Secretary, who, after repeated communications with His Majesty, informed him that the following steps had been decided upon:—

1. Regular troops would be substituted for the Reserves.
2. Telegraphic instructions would be sent to the Commission of Inquiry then at Marash, to proceed at once to Birejik, and inquire into the question of the church which, as reported by Mr. Fitzmaurice, had been converted into a mosque, under the name of the Hamidié Mosque, and in the event of this being the case, to restore it to its former condition, and deliver it back to the Christian community.
3. Further instructions would be sent to the Commission not to leave Biredjik until, by means of efficacious measures, confidence was thoroughly restored, so that the converts might be enabled to declare openly and officially their real religious views and perform their religious worship in perfect security.

On receipt of this information I instructed Mr. Block to write to Tahsin Bey, taking note of the verbal communication, made in the Sultan's name, and expressing my acknowledgment of the action which His Majesty had been good enough to take on the suggestions which I had submitted to him.

On taking leave of the Sultan last Friday, His Majesty thanked me for my messages, and said that he would shortly make some further communications to Her Majesty's Embassy on the subject, through the intermediary of the First Dragoman.

I have, &c.

(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

No. 6.

*Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received May 18.)*

(Telegraphic.)

*Constantinople, May 18, 1896.*

IT will be advisable that Mr. Fitzmaurice should return to Birejik, in order to watch the proceedings of the Commission, and I propose to send him there. He will start on Friday.

No. 7.

*The Marquess of Salisbury to Sir P. Currie.*

(Telegraphic.)

*Foreign Office, May 19, 1896.*

I HAVE received your telegram of yesterday's date, and I approve your proposal to send Mr. Fitzmaurice to Birejik in order to watch the proceedings of the Commission.

No. 8.

*The Marquess of Salisbury to Mr. Herbert.*

Sir,

*Foreign Office, May 26, 1896.*

I HAVE received Sir P. Currie's despatches of the 7th and 18th instant, respectively, reporting the representations which his Excellency made to the Porte on the question of forced conversions at Birejik, and the measures which the Sultan had decided to take in consequence.

Sir P. Currie's action in this matter meets with the entire approval of Her Majesty's Government.

I am, &c.

(Signed) SALISBURY.

TURKEY. No. 5 (1896).

Correspondence relating to the Asiatic Provinces  
of Turkey (Reports by Vice-Consul Fitzmaurice  
from Birejik, Ourfa, Adiman, and Behesni).

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