



ÇUKUROVA STRATEGY OF FRANCE IN THE NATIONAL STRUGGLE PERIOD

MİLLİ MÜCADELE DÖNEMİNDE FRANSA'NIN ÇUKUROVA STRATEJİSİ

MURAT KÜTÜKÇÜ*

ABSTRACT

After the second half of the 18th century; the imperialist policies of the states such as England, Russia and Austria on the Ottoman Empire, caused significant changes in France's strategy in North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean. Although the Ottoman Empire tried to carry out its foreign policy with its balance policies until the end of the century, it couldn't prevent the transfer of population to the western states in order to establish colonies under the name of commercial activities in its territory. The privileges granted by the capitulations with the 1839 Tanzimat and 1856 Islahat Edicts, known as the enactment movements in the Ottoman Empire, increased the population of a new western settler dealing with trade under the name of "Levantine (eastern)" in the Ottoman lands. As well as the missionary schools opened in the region with this population, organized and supported by the separatist Arab population in Lebanon and Jordan. Despite the great defeat of the Ottoman Emperor against Russia in 1878 and the subsequent Berlin Congress, France set its sights on the North African lands (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt) and occupied them one by one. In spite of this occupation, France had to withdraw from Egypt, three years later, which was on the eastern trade route of England. By the First World War, France's eastern strategy became clear with the Sykes-Picot Agreement signed between two other allies, England and Russia. Along with Syria and Lebanon, France seized the opportunity to gain control over Çukurova, which has become a center of attraction for the French Levantines since 1860 and also the raw material warehouse of many industrial products. The occupation of this region, which was of vital importance for the French industry, which lost most of its Western and African colonies to England, would be a very valuable gain. The aim of this study is to analyze Çukurova Strategy of France, which was the basis of France's eastern strategy and also was occupied by the Syria Alliance with Britain after the First World War.

Keywords: Cilicia, Çukurova, France, Occupation, Strategy.

ÖZ

18. Yüzyılın ikinci yarısından sonra İngiltere, Rusya ve Avusturya gibi devletlerin Osmanlı İmparatorluğu üzerindeki emperyalist politikaları, Fransa'nın da Kuzey Afrika ve Doğu Akdeniz stratejisi üzerinde önemli değişimlere neden olmuştur. Yüzyılın sonuna kadar Osmanlı İmparatorluğu denge politikalarıyla dış siyasetini yürütmeye çalışsa da topraklarında ticari faaliyetler adı altında batılı devletlerin koloni oluşturmak amacıyla nüfus sevkiyatının önüne geçememiştir. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda kanunlaşma hareketleri olarak bilinen 1839 Tanzimat Fermanı ve 1856 Islahat fermanları ile kapitülasyonların verdiği ayrıcalıkları, Osmanlı topraklarında "Levanten (doğulu)" adı altında ticaretle uğraşan yeni bir batılı yerleşimci nüfusunun artmasına, ayrıca bu nüfusla birlikte bölgede açılan misyoner okulları ile de Suriye, Lübnan ve Ürdün bölgelerinde ayrılıkçı Arap nüfusu teşkilatlandırılarak desteklemiştir. Osmanlı İmparatoru'nun Rusya karşısında 1878'de aldığı büyük yenilgi ve devamında Berlin Kongresi ile Fransa, Kuzey Afrika topraklarına (Cezayir, Fas, Tunus ve Mısır) göz dikmiş ve birer birer işgal etmişse de, İngiltere'nin doğu ticaret yolu üzerinde bulunan Mısır'dan üç yıl sonra çekilmek zorunda kalmıştır. Birinci Dünya Savaşı ile Fransa'nın doğu stratejisi diğer iki müttefiki İngiltere ve Rusya arasında imzaladıkları Sykes-Picot Anlaşmasıyla belirginleşmiş; Fransa, Suriye ve Lübnan ile birlikte 1860'dan beri Fransız Levantenler için cazibe merkezi haline gelen, birçok sanayi ürününün hammadde deposu olan Çukurova üzerinde de kontrolü sağlama fırsatını ele geçirmişti. Batı ve Afrika sömürgelerinin çoğunu İngiltere'ye kaptıran Fransa endüstrisi için hayati öneme haiz bu bölgenin işgal edilmesi çok değerli bir kazanım olacaktı. Çalışmanın konusu; Fransa'nın doğu stratejisinin temelini oluşturan ve Birinci Dünya Savaşı sonrası İngiltere ile yapmış olduğu Suriye İttifaknamesi ile işgal ettiği Çukurova Bölgesi ile ilgili stratejisini analiz etmektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çukurova, Fransa, İşgal, Klikeya, Strateji.

* Dr., Çağ Üniversitesi, muratkutukcu@cağ.edu.tr, ORCID: [0000-0003-4311-8036](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4311-8036).

Introduction

The needs for the raw materials and the ambitions to sell industrial products of the states which completed the industrial revolution, accelerated the search for colonies.

The Ottoman Empire, in which some states planned to share their territory, began to collapse from the inside and outside. While the First World War was going on; England, France, Russia and Italy shared the Ottoman Empire among themselves with various treaties.

While Russia's idea of establishing an independent Armenian State¹ stretching from the Cilician² coast to the Mediterranean continuing, the conflict between England and France continued until 1912, after Napoleon's invasion of Egypt. After receiving the commitment from England and Russia that Syria and the adjacent Southern Anatolian lands would be given to France, it worked as if France were the secret owner of the region.³

During the First World War, secret agreements were made between England, France, Russia and Italy. The agreement which was included Çukurova region, was signed on 16 May 1916 by Colonel Mark Sykes on behalf of the British government and Minister Georges Picot on behalf of the French government. According to this agreement, the British would take Iraq except Palestine and Mosul, and the French would take all of Southern Anatolia apart from Syria. Thus, Iskenderun and Mersin ports, Ergani copper mines and Cilicia (Çukurova) cotton were left to the French.⁴

Colonial states tried to reach their aims in various ways without touching in their territorial integrity as they considered the conflict between each others in the division of inheritance.⁵

In the First World War, the Ottoman Empire, could not succeed in Çanakkale and wanted peace after the defeat of its allies. The war ended with the signing of Armistice of Mudros on October 30, 1918.⁶

With the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War and also the defeat of Germany at the same side and the revolution in Russia; Britain and France could share the Ottoman legacy. The war ended with the Armistice of Mudros for the Ottoman Empire, but the way leading to the invasion of the country had just begun. The provisions of the Mudros Armistice Agreement that directly concern Çukurova; Articles 5, 7, 10 and 16.

Article 5: Immediately demobilization of the Turkish Army, except for the units necessary for the control of the borders and the maintenance of internal order.

("Immediate discharge, apart from the military force required for the protection of the borders and the maintenance of internal security, will be decided by the Entente Governments after negotiating with the Ottoman State")

Article 7: Allies have the right to occupy any strategic point if any situation arises that threatens their own security.

("The Allied Powers shall have the right to occupy any point of deportation in the event of a situation threatening their security")

Article 10: Allied occupation of the Taurus tunnels.

Article 16: The withdrawal of all troops from Cilicia, except as necessary for the surrender of all garrisons in the Hejaz, Asir, Yemen, Syria and Iraq to the nearest Allied Commander, and for the maintenance of order as set forth in Article 5.

¹ Evgenii Aleksandrovich Adamof, *Rusların Emelleri, Anadolu'nun Taksimi*, Trans. Babaeski Hüseyin Rahmi, Istanbul, 1969, 61.

² In some foreign sources, the term Cilicia is used for Çukurova.

³ Laurance Evans, *Türkiye'nin Paylaşılması (1914-1924)*, Trans. Tevfik Alanay, 1972, 112.

⁴ Kasım Ener, *Çukurova Kurtuluş Savaşında Adana Cephesi*, Ankara: Türkiye Kuvayı Milliye Mücahit ve Gazileri Cemiyeti Publications, San Printing House, 1970, 25; England would take Mesopotamia, Haifa and Akka ports together with Baghdad and Basra, France would take the Syrian coast, Adana province (Cilicia), Southern Anatolia together with Harput: Ahmet Hulki Saral, *Türk İstiklal Harbi Güney Cephesi IV. Cilt*, Ankara: Official Publications of Genelkurmay Başkanlığı Harp Tarihi Dairesi, Serial No: 1, 1966, 7.

⁵ Bayram Kodaman, "Ermeni Meselesinin Doğuş Sebepleri", *Türk Kültür Dergisi*, 219 (1981), 240-249.

⁶ Kemal Çelik, "Çukurova'nın İşgali Döneminde, Fransız Propaganda ve Casusluk Faaliyetleri ile Millî Kuvvetlerin Buna Karşı Yayınladığı 1920 Tarihli Yeni Bir Belge", *Gazi Akademik Bakış*, 3 (Winter 2008), 104.

("All guard troops in Hejaz, Asir, Yemen, Syria and Iraq will be surrendered to the closest Entente commander. Apart from the amount required to maintain the order of the forces in Cilicia, decisions will be made in accordance with the conditions in the fifth article. will be withdrawn.")⁷

What Was the Importance of Çukurova?

The Middle East region has maintained its importance in every period of history. In addition to being a cross road between the east and the west, the presence of important water channels and the industrialization that started at the end of the 18th century further increased the interest of the colonial states in the Middle East. The Middle East is an excellent market as it is both a consumer and a raw material warehouse.⁸

France wanted to hold a triangulation point in the Eastern Mediterranean. In order for France to establish its influence in the Syrian region, which it determined as the bridgehead, and to prevent the dangers that could come to Syria from the north, it was necessary to seize the Taurus passes, and therefore Çukurova. Cilicia had economic necessity as well as strategic importance for the French. France, which could only meet 7.4% of the cotton it needed from its colonies, wanted to get rid of the US dependency on cotton raw materials. Achard, Agricultural Engineer from the French High Commission in Beirut, emphasized in his report that Cilicia, all of France's cotton needs, could meet at Cilicia and northern Syria, and that region should be in the hands of France.⁹

Briand, who was the French Prime Minister of the time, said, *"With the Adana region and Mersin port, Iskenderun constitutes a natural and perfect gulf. On the other hand, the mountains that will provide strategic defense are quite far from the gulf. This is why we decided to limit the borders of our military influence area, upon the consent and wishes of the Armenians. We wanted to take it far,"*¹⁰

Achard stated in his report that they would not face the difficulties that await every colonist in the holding of Cilicia and northern Syria, which are not far from Marseille. And they would complete the work started by Germany by replacing their great enemy, with defeated Germany.¹¹

In addition, the French wanted to take advantage of the Armenians by bringing the Armenians, who were previously removed from the region with the Relocation Law. They planned to settling Armanians to Çukurova and to use the Armenians as a tool against the Turkish Nation. If they had to leave the region, they would fill the void with the Armenian Statelet, and a buffer state would be established between the Turkish State and the Muslim Arabs in the south, in Syria and the unification of Muslims would be prevented. Another reason for France's interest in the region is the thought of there should not be a strong state, especially a Muslim state, in the Middle East.¹²

The British, on the other hand, thought of leaving a piece of land that was constantly boiling and that they thought would definitely be defended by the Turks to the French and to distract them from their Arab lands.¹³

With the Armistice of Mudros, the relevant articles of Sykes-Picot were amended, Britain used Kurdish and Armenian separatist elements to consolidate its influence in the regions left to itself and France tried to increase its power in the region against the Turks by getting support from both the British and Armenians for its dominance in Çukurova and its surroundings. The Armenians, who were under the protection of England and France, also planned to reduce the Turkish population in the southern provinces and to establish the Cilicia Armenian State.¹⁴

⁷ İbrahim Bozkurt, "İşgal Yıllarında Mersin (1918-1922)", *Journal of Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü*, 1 (March 2018), 411; Citations: Ener, *Adana Cephesi*, 13-14.

⁸ Necdet Kurdakul, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndan Ortadoğu'ya "Belgelerle Şark Meselesi"*, İstanbul: Dergâh Publications, 1976, 9-10.

⁹ Süleyman Hatipoğlu, *Türk-Fransız Mücadelesi (Orta Toros Geçitleri, 1915-1921)*, Ankara: Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu (AKD-TYK) Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, Yücel Ofset, 2001, 35-36.

¹⁰ Süleyman Hatipoğlu, "Çukurova'da Fransız-Ermeni İşbirliği", *Belleten*, 247 (December 2002), 951.

¹¹ Yahya Akyüz, *Türk Kurtuluş Savaşı ve Fransız Kamuoyu 1919-1922*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Press, 1988, 176.

¹² Süleyman Hatipoğlu, *Fransa'nın Çukurova'yı İşgali ve Pozantı Kongresi*, Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Publications: 1023, 1989, 8.

¹³ Hatipoğlu, "Çukurova'da Fransız-Ermeni İşbirliği", 943.

¹⁴ Erdal İlter, "Milli Mücadele'de Doğu Lejyonu (Legion D Orient)'nun Fransız İşgal Bölgesindeki Fonksiyonu", *Atatürk Yolu Dergisi*, 03 (March 1989), 420.

Military Forces in the Region

Shortly after the Armistice of Mudros, Prime Minister İzzet Pasha instructed the Yıldırım Army Group Commander Liman Von Sanders to come to Istanbul from Adana, to leave the command to Mustafa Kemal. Liman Von Sanders said to Mustafa Kemal, who arrived in Adana on the evening of October 31, 1918:

"Excellency; You are the commander I know very well on the battle fronts, Ariburnu and Anafartalar. Maybe there were incidents and incidents between us. But they finally introduced us to each other better. I think we are friends from the heart. Today, as I am forced to leave Turkey, I entrust the armies under my command to a commander whom I am very grateful for. It is impossible not to feel miserable in this general catastrophe. I am only consoled by one thing: by giving you the command."¹⁵

The correspondence situation, which started with the telegram dated 3.11.1334 (1918) and numbered 565, between the Commander of the Yıldırım Armies Group Mustafa Kemal and the General Staff (Commander-in-Chief of the Chief of Staff of the War) was asked to explain the scope of the Taurus Tunnels and the status of the discharges. It is understood that the Prime Minister (Grand Vizier and Chief Commander-in-Chief) İzzet Pasha was angry about to give Mustafa Kemal Pasha's resignation at the proposal of the British commander to convey the letter stating that the British's landing of soldiers in the Iskenderun Port was approved by the Government. In the ongoing correspondence, İzzet Pasha was extremely alarmed by Admiral S. A. G. Calthorpe's threat to war against the Ottoman Government in the face of Mustafa Kemal's order to open fire on the British soldiers to be taken to Iskenderun and the Yıldırım Armies Group Command. Thus, the armed force in the Cilicia region, was abolished.¹⁶ When it was announced that he was given the command of the Ministry of War, Mustafa Kemal Pasha left Adana to go to Istanbul on the night of 10-11 November 1918.¹⁷

The British French Administration, the Preference of the Armenians of France and the Occupations

It is not possible to evaluate the Armenian policy of France apart from the Ottoman-French relations. The relationship of France with the Armenians started with the establishment of commercial relations with Armenian merchants, who had an important role in Ottoman trade, thanks to the capitulations gained from the Ottoman Empire since the 19th century. Also, France has assumed the role of protector of the Catholics in the Ottoman region since the 19th century.¹⁸

As a result of the efforts of France to Catholicize the Armenians at the beginning of the XVIII. century, 30.000 Armenians converted to the Catholic sect in Istanbul. France thought that the Middle East region as its economic market and put forward the excuses of protecting Christian rights and protecting Catholic Armenians in order to settle in the region, since the beginning of the XIX. century.¹⁹

In the first years of the First World War, Armenians, by means of Bogos Nubar Pasha, applied to England together with Russia and declared that they could rise against the Turks.²⁰ Bogos Nubar Pasha gave the following information to Milne Cheetham, the British diplomatic representative in Cairo, on 12 November 1914:

"The Armenians of Cilicia are ready to enlist voluntarily to support a possible landing in Iskenderun, Mersin or Adana. The Armenians in the mountainous region will also be able to provide valuable assistance; if arms and ammunition are provided, they will rise up against the Turks".²¹

The French and British naval commanders were communicating with the Armenians in Adana, Dörtöyl, Yumurtalık and İskenderun, encouraging and provoking them to rebellion.

In his speech at the French Parliament on 29 December 1918, French Foreign Minister M. Pichon said, *"We have rights that cannot be challenged there (in the Ottoman Empire). These rights, based on history, treaties, and treaties*

¹⁵ Ener, *Adana Cephesi*, 15-16.

¹⁶ Ener, *Adana Cephesi*, 16-24.

¹⁷ Bozkurt, "İşgal Yıllarında Mersin (1918-1922)", 412.

¹⁸ Hüner Tuncer, *19. Yüzyılda Osmanlı-Avrupa İlişkileri*, Ankara: Ümit Publishing, 2000, 99

¹⁹ İsmail Özçelik, *Ermeni Sorunu ve Gerçekler*, Ankara: Gündüz Education and Publishing, 2005, 85-87.

²⁰ Salâhi R. Sonyel, "Yeni Belgelerin Işığında Ermeni Tehcirleri", *Belleten*, 141 (January 1972), 36.

²¹ İler, "Milli Mücadele'de Doğu Lejyonu", 420.

include Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. Even in the face of the mandate system, we have never given up on our wishes and rights."²²

In the days following the Armistice of Mudros, while the Turkish homeland was occupied from time to time, the French and the British requested the evacuation of Çukurova on 24 November 1918, which was accepted by the Ottoman Government. Thereupon, Allenby said to the Governor of Adana: "*Due to the article of the Armistice of Mudros giving control authority, Çukurova will be occupied by the allied armies. This occupation is a precautionary measure that will last until the signing of the peace agreement, where the Ottoman laws will remain in force and Turkish officials will continue their duties.*"²³

The British Command announced the schedule for the Turkish troops. It announced that to evacuate Cilicia in November 1918. On December 1, 1918, all Ottoman continents would retreat to the west of the Ceyhan River. Before December 5, 1918; to the north of the Adana-Tarsus railway would have passed to the west of Pozantı with all of its troops. The Ottoman continents would deliver all their heavy and light weapons to the British at the Katma station and would make their demobilization in the west of Pozantı.²⁴ All armies would be demobilized, cadre units would be withdrawn to the north, all heavy weapons and ammunition, materials, clothing, food and other items would be delivered with all the heavy weapons available in the range depots of the units.²⁵

On November 9, 1918, British and French forces occupied Iskenderun, and then on December 11, 1918, another French battalion, composed of French and Armenians, occupied Dörtöyl. On 17 December 1918, the British and the French armies occupied Mersin. The French, with the troops they called the Eastern Legion (Legion d'Orient) under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Romieu, which they separated from this force. They started from Tarsus and Adana and occupied Osmaniye, Bahçe and İslahiye.²⁶

The proposal for the establishment of the aforementioned Eastern Legion was considered by France in 1916 and this legion was later called the Armenian Legion. In the recent past, the fact that the Çukurova Armenians were unsuccessful in the armed conflict with the Ottoman army and crossed to Musa Dagh on the Syrian coast of the Mediterranean Sea and were brought to the Port-Said region with the support of the French Naval Forces gave France the opportunity. It was looking for the Eastern Legion (with the thought that they could use it against the Ottomans). Thus the idea of the Legion d'Orient was born.²⁷

Colonel Bremond, the head of the French military mission in Cairo, in the report he delivered to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in September 1916, "*Why should we use Armenian soldiers?*" He answered the question as follows:

" . . . I have written to you before about the Armenians we brought from Musa Dagh. We have to pay for the camp expenses of these Armenians, over 30,000 francs per month, to England anyway at the end of the war. We will have allowed them to become Americans or Armenians. For this, we must immediately abandon our behavior until now and make a complete turnaround. If we act quickly today, these Armenians will do whatever we want. To ensure this, we must appoint a French officer as their commander and send this officer directly. We need to connect it to Paris.

. . . Thus, we will have a power at our disposal that we can trust. Let's not forget that with a contrary behavior, we will lose these Armenians and we will also pay money to England, who will benefit from them".

Colonel Bremond added to his report his two-point recommendation emphasizing that the Armenians would be pioneers in the lands to be left to the administration of France and that Jesuit priests should definitely be used as missionaries. The French Ministry of War decided to establish the Eastern Legion on 15 November 1916 and presented its report to the cabinet.²⁸

²² Laurence Evans, *Türkiye'nin Paylaşılması (1914-1924)*, 114.

²³ Ener, *Adana Cephesi*, 25-26.

²⁴ Ener, *Adana Cephesi*, 25-26.

²⁵ Mustafa Necati Cıplak, *İçel Tarihi*, Ankara: Güzel Sanatlar Press, 1968, 212-213.

²⁶ Çelik, "Çukurova'nın İşgali Döneminde", 104.

²⁷ İlter, "Milli Mücadele'de Doğu Lejyonu", 420-422.

²⁸ İlter, "Milli Mücadele'de Doğu Lejyonu", 422-423; Colonel Bremond will take over the administration of Çukurova in the capacity of General Governor at the head of the Eastern Legion (Armenian Legion) soldiers in Çukurova 3 years later.

With the support of the French authorities, the establishment of the Eastern Legion was completed. General Bailloud, the French army inspector, said on the units formed:

"Currently, the Armenian Legion consists of six divisions of 200 people each. A division has been formed from 160 Syrian volunteers...

1. Armenians who escaped from Palestine or Mesopotamia (Iraq) fronts while the best ones were soldiers in the Ottoman Army,
2. Musa Dagh Armenians,
3. Shipments from the United States,
4. Syrians."

This legion consisting of Armenian volunteers, after being trained with strict discipline in the military camp in Cyprus, was deported to the Palestinian front under the command of General Allenby in 1917, and later on, it would be mentioned frequently in Çukurova.²⁹ With the occupations, the French started intensive studies to increase the Christian population in the region and to return Armenians from various countries to the cities in Çukurova, especially in Adana.³⁰

In 1918 and until the last days of 1919, the French Government used to call The Cilician region as "Armenia". Prime Minister Clemenceau appointed Georges Picot as the administrator for Syria and Cilicia with the title of "High Commissioner for Syria and Armenia". On the other hand, the French administrative authorities in Cilicia were called "French Administrators of Armenia". The French Government was extensively using Armenian officials for the administrative affairs of Cilicia. Armenians were assigned to important services such as the police, railways and postal services.³¹

The French Government very clearly implemented the Armenian policy, appointed Armenians to administrative and military positions in the cities which they occupied and also carried out studies to change the socio-cultural structure by moving Armenians from different parts of the world.³²

Armenian forces (volunteers) were wearing French uniforms and were fighting under the French flag with their special ensigns.³³

The regions and average numbers of the Armenian forces, as those wearing French military uniforms, affiliated with an organized Armenian unit and armed gangs were as follows:

<u>Region</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Antep	2.500
Maraş	2.000
Saimbeyli	1.500
Urfa	1.000
Zeytun (Süleymanlı)	500
Şar (Sis)	350
Kozan	300
Adana ve Mersin	1.000
Osmaniye, Haruniye, Bahçe, İslâhiye	<u>1.000</u>
Totally	10.150 ³⁴

While the weapons in the hands of the Turks were gathered, the Armenians, the greatest assistants of the French in the region, were armed.³⁵

²⁹ İler, "Milli Mücadele'de Doğu Lejyonu", 424.

³⁰ Tevfik Bıyıklıoğlu, *Türk İstiklal Harbi Mondros Mütarekesi ve Tatbikatı*, Ankara: Genelkurmay Press, 1962, 77.

³¹ İler, "Milli Mücadele'de Doğu Lejyonu", 428.

³² İbrahim İslam, *Milli Mücadele'de Yeni Adana Gazetesi*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Atatürk University Institute of Social Sciences, Department of History, 1995, 108.

³³ İler, "Milli Mücadele'de Doğu Lejyonu", 427-428.

³⁴ Saral, *Türk İstiklal Harbi Güney Cephesi IV. Cilt*, 47.

³⁵ Hasan Akıncı, "Kurtuluş Savaşı Hatıraları", *Kuvayi Milliye Magazine*, 57 (Mersin), 1965, 8.

Following the invasion, the French wanted 100,000 Armenians who had immigrated from Turkey.³⁶ About 100,000 of the Armenians who were expelled from Anatolia in the 1915 relocation, came to Çukurova. 50,000 Armenians were settled in Adana and its villages (70,000 in Adana, 12,000 in Dörtyol, 8,000 in Haçin, the remain amounts are around Kozan and also in Maraş and Zeytun).³⁷

Bremond mentioned that at the end of 1919, a resettlement was established in order to prevent the population rise in Adana, where there were 60,000 Armenians; 8,000 in Haçin, 1,000 in Hassa, 12,000 in Dörtyol, 1,000 in Osmaniye, 1,200-1,500 in Misis, around 1,000 in Abdioğlu, around 1,000 in Nacarlı, 1,200 in Incirlik, 3,000-4,000 in Tarsus and 2,000-3,000 in Mersin, he stated the number of Armenians. The number of Armenians in Cilicia had reached 120,000 by the end of 1919.³⁸

Governor-General Bremond used the phrase "Administrative Service in Armenia" in his official seal. But he stopped using the word "Armenia" in his seal after the reactions received.³⁹

Trade, import and export business in the region was widely controlled by Christians and Arabs. The Armenians, who came to Çukurova with the French, were not financially able to carry out their import and export business. At this point, the French stepped in again and made Ziraat Bank lend up to 250 liras for Armenian farmers. Later, they increased the amount of credit and enabled Armenians to take a role in trade.⁴⁰

The French carried out works to open exhibitions in various cities of Cilicia and a large exhibition and market in Adana. French administration has aimed to determine the production and consumption products of Cilicia, to obtain cheaply the ones produced in the region that are suitable for them, to increase the demand for French goods in consumption and to provide their availability, to supply all the essential materials for Cilicia directly from France, to introduce them to French merchants, to introduce the Cilicians such as Istanbul-Izmir. They aimed to turn them away from their homeland centers and turn them to themselves.⁴¹

France opened a branch of the Syrian Bank in Adana and Mersin⁴² and also established the French Adana Cotton Company through the Algerian and Tunisian Land Credit Institution, and bought the German cotton facilities in Adana.⁴³

Commander-in-Chief, General Allenby, divided the French-occupied regions into two, left the civil administration to the French and the military control to the British, and appointed Colonel Bremond as the governor of the northern region.⁴⁴

Colonel Bremond's speech to the crowd in front of the Adana Abidinpaşa Armenian Church on February 1, 1919, stating that "Armenian rights will be defended and the Armenian issue will be settled", increased the Armenian outrage under the auspices of the French.⁴⁵

Bremond banned the hanging of the Turkish flag in Adana on the grounds that Adana and its surroundings were under occupation and that the Armenians would not be contented when they saw the Turkish flag.⁴⁶ In fact, on February 3, 1919, when the return of the deported Armenians accelerated, all Adana was decorated with the Armenian flag.⁴⁷

According to Allenby's directive; the officers to be appointed would be submitted to the approval of the British General Headquarters and the Cilician Occupation Command would be applied for military assistance. But Bremond goes much further; He appointed non-cadre officers to the gendarmerie, changed the police and

³⁶ Gotthard Jaeschke, *Kurtuluş Savaşı ile İlgili İngiliz Belgeleri*, Translated by Cemal Köprülü, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Publications, 1971, 45-46.

³⁷ Kamuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Press, 1985, 279-280.

³⁸ Édouard Bremond, *La Cilicie En 1919-1920*, Paris, 1921, 11-12.

³⁹ Bıyıkhoğlu, *Türk İstiklal Harbi*, 75-76.

⁴⁰ Şeref Genç, "Fransızların Hububat İşlerindeki Rollerini", *Yeni Mersin*, 17 February 1946.

⁴¹ Şeref Genç, "Kilikya Pazarı", *Yeni Mersin*, 13 April 1946.

⁴² *Yeni Adana Newspaper*, 66, 26 March 1921.

⁴³ Akyüz, *Türk Kurtuluş Savaşı*, 177.

⁴⁴ Hatipoğlu, *Fransa'nın Çukurova'yı İşgali*, 19.

⁴⁵ *Yeni Adana Newspaper*, 8 January 1953.

⁴⁶ Esat Özoğuz, *Adana'nın Kurtuluş Mücadelesi Hatıraları*, İstanbul: Ülkü Press, 1935, 24.

⁴⁷ Yusuf Ziya Bildirici, "Çukurova'da Fransız-Ermeni İlişkileri ve 1919 Yılı Katliamları", *Journal of Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi*, 36 (November 1996), 759.

gendarmier uniforms and also had removed the crescent and star from the cap. Some Turkish teachers whom they deemed dangerous for themselves, forced the passengers to take road permits, had the Ottoman postage stamps stamped with Cilicia. They tied telegrams and letters to strict censorship. He abolished the school and had command language as French. He had all the contracting works done by the French, he tried to enrich even the smallest French officer by official or private means. He sent the documents from the Adana court to the Beirut Court of Appeals and imposed heavy fines on those who did not obey the order. After Bremond's attitude, the Armenians increased their recklessness.⁴⁸

The Syrian Agreement and National Movements Against the Occupation

Although the Çukurova region was occupied jointly, there was a struggle for influence between the British and the French in this region. At that time, Mersin was like a sanjak of Adana Province.

By September 1919, the France were secretly trying to establish the Society of French Rebels. On the other hand, the French people were opposing the joint occupation of the Adana region, which was within their sphere of influence. With the Britain, according to the Sykes-Picot Agreement, they wanted to remain alone in the region. This public pressure mobilized the French government. France successfully came out of its pressure on. England, Britain and France signed the Syria Agreement on September 15, 1919 (Anglo-French agreement on the replacement of the occupation forces in Syria and Cilicia). Thus, France would take Syria and the Cilicia region under their influence and the cities of Maraş, Antep and Urfa would be evacuated by the British and left to the French.⁴⁹ According to the agreement; it was envisaged that the military authority would be in France and the civil administration in the Ottomans. Pursuant to the Syria Agreement; as of November 1, 1919, Britain withdrew from Syria and the French troops began to occupy Adana, Antep, Maraş and Urfa.⁵⁰

Mustafa Kemal sent telegram to Erzurum Defense Center because of the contract;

"On the 15th day of September (1919), England and France, based on the treaty they signed in 1916, agreed on a contract that closely concerns our nation, under the name of the "Syria Agreement". They will start the occupation by doing injustice upon injustice, excluding Aleppo, including our rich lands, which are mostly Islamic and Turkish in our provinces of Urfa, Ayıntap, Maraş and Adana. Into the occupation zones and extending to the north as far as Harput and Sivas, including these places in Mersin. These regions, extending to the west of Turkey and separating Western Anatolia and Eastern Anatolia, will come under French influence and administration," he predicted.⁵¹

The Kuvayi Milliye organization in Cilicia was founded on November, 1, 1919 by Mustafa Kemal. Artillery Major Kemal Bey (Kozanoğlu Doğan) was appointed as the commander. Captain Osman Nuri Bey (Aydinoğlu Tufan), Captain Ali Ratip Bey (Tekelioğlu Sinan) was appointed as the deputy commander and Emin Resa (Emin Arslan Karakaş) was assigned to Adana as the Commander of the Crew No. 1 Fedai Detachments. There was a struggle against the occupation on three separate fronts in Adana and its environs:

1. Adana Eastern Front: Develi, Andırın, Feke, Saimbeyli, Düziçi, Bahçe, Osmaniye, Kadirli, Kozan and Ceyhan.
2. Adana Northern (Central) Front: Niğde, Çamardı, Karaisalı, Pozantı and the railway stations under French occupation.
3. Adana Western (Mersin) Front: Konya, Karaman, Cumra, Mut, Silifke, Erdemli cities and towns.⁵²

The Karboğazı War and the Flee Flee Incident Event, which will be discussed in detail, took place in the Adana Northern (Central) Front.

⁴⁸ Ener, *Adana Cephesi*, 31-32.

⁴⁹ Çelik, "Çukurova'nın İşgali Döneminde", 105.

⁵⁰ Bige Yavuz, *Kurtuluş Savaşı Döneminde Türk-Fransız İlişkileri Fransız Arşiv Belgeleri Açısından 1919-1922*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Press, 1994, 8-55.

⁵¹ *Atatürk'ün Tamim, Telgraf ve Beyannameleri IV (1917-1938)*, Ankara: Türk İnkılâp Tarihi Enstitüsü Ankara Üniversitesi Press, 1964, 119-120.

⁵² Çelik, "Çukurova'nın İşgali Döneminde", 105-106; Celal Erikan, *Komutan Atatürk*, Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Publications, Second Edition, 1972, 41.

Propaganda and Espionage Activities

France, who was not successful in the region at first, were not successful enough also in their propaganda and espionage activities. Because the people who could behave as spy, could not contact the National Forces. In the Flee Flee Incident Event, with the migration of the people of Adana to the National Forces region, the French Intelligence Organization infiltrated propagandists and spies among the Turks and Muslims who migrated to the Taurus Mountains, where the National Forces are located. Through these, they thought of destroying the National Forces, for which they did not have sufficient intelligence about their situation until that day. In this way, the France, who succeeded in transferring many of their personnel, which they bought to the side of the National Forces, managed to create confusion with their propagandists. On behalf of the French, the spies began to convey the intelligence information which they had obtained about the National Forces to the France. France also planned more conscious military operations.⁵³

In line with the information of the spies of France, who learned that the National Forces were less than their estimates and had insufficient equipment, believed that they would be successful in a new operation against the National Forces. Thus, they would motivate their troops with the success they would gain by defeating the National Forces and would raise the morale of his supporters. By concentrating on the war, France were considering success in the war due to their disproportionate superiority in weaponry compared to the National Forces. France also bombarded some targets that were difficult to reach, from the air.⁵⁴

At the end of the conflicts, France, who were in control of some regions, started a new propaganda and tried to prevent the support to be given to the National Forces. They printed the declaration on August 2, 1920, in the Armenian Printing House in Adana. The leaflet, which was delivered to the village of Captain under the protection of eight people and a French unit, assigned under the name of Advice Committee consisting of Armenian, Assyrian and Greek groups. It was distributed in the region on August 4, 1920. The statement published for the Yuregir Plain was as follows;⁵⁵

“To the People of Yuregir

From August 5, 1920 until the night of August 15, 1920, every villager can return to their home if they give the weapon to the occupation forces. If they behave like that, they will have property and past deeds will be forgiven. Otherwise, it is considered a gang and the French Eastern Armies Occupation Forces confiscate their properties and sell them. We hope that the sane Turks, who somehow faced the threat of a few rogue robbers who did not want any of this to happen. We want all of you will come to your place before this date and that a few rogues wandering around will take your weapons and hand them over to the occupation forces, and we send our greetings.

August 2, 1920

Governor General of Cilicia
Colonel Bremon

Governor of Adana
Abdurrahman”

The statement, which was published not locally, but for the general public, as follows;

“Official Communique: The Division Command announces that, as a forgiving measure, both the people of Adana and the residents of the surrounding villages are allowed to return to their homes and resume their work until midnight on August 15, subject to the following conditions.

- 1- Everyone shall immediately return to their village or to their place of residence in the city.
- 2- Provided that they comply with the legal regulations, everyone can start their previous job and work again.
- 3- The villagers and the people of the city will bring all kinds of weapons available to them and hand them over to our military authorities.
- 4- The people of the village or city will immediately cut off their relations with the gangs, and immediately inform both the Istanbul Government and the French authorities of all the movements of the gangs. As of midnight on 15 August, those who do not comply with the provisions contained in the articles mentioned in this circular will be considered as enemies by

⁵³ Ahmet Remzi Yüreğir, “Millî Mücadelede Çukurova”, *Yeni Adana Newspaper*, 8515, 18 June 1953.

⁵⁴ Çelik, “Çukurova’nın İşgali Döneminde”, 108.

⁵⁵ Ener, *Adana Cephesi*, 190.

us. The goods and properties of such people will be confiscated and sold for the account of the treasury. Those who lead gangs and those who are perpetrators of serious crimes cannot benefit from the amnesty provided by this circular.

Signature

J. Dufieux, Commander of the Near East First French Division"⁵⁶

The France wanted to impose their rule in various ways.

The French gave significant money to Baghdadizade Abdurrahman, whom they appointed as the Deputy Governor, and ensured that the newspaper, which was originally in French, was published in Turkish under the name *Adana Postası*. Abdurrahman Bey and Fanizade İlhami, one of the writers in the newspaper, attempted to make the local people understand the French administration with their articles.⁵⁷

There were also those who were actually French spies and showed themselves differently. Especially on issues that the public was sensitive to Tevfik Abut, whose mother was a Christian Arab from Jebel-i Lebanese, was a traitor who was essentially anti-Muslim, although he introduced himself as the Head of the Indian Caliphate Muslim Society or a member of the Indian Caliphate Committee in order to deceive the public and the National Force Commanders.⁵⁸

Some individuals, devoid of national feelings, seeking self-interest and wealth, to took refuge in various excuses in September 1920 with the motive of avoiding any sacrifice that might fall on them. Others said: "*The huge French Government is unbearable. You can't do business with these gangs*". They were making propaganda and breaking the people's resolution to fight. In the meetings they organized, they had taken some decisions towards an agreement with the France.⁵⁹ Such thoughts speeded up the feelings of interest of the owners, especially in the occupied regions, and it was seen that the people in question had moved to the occupied region. Even among some of the people who took part in the front, there were those who fled to the occupied areas.⁶⁰

Peasant people did not resist to France because of the influence of propaganda. Some communities behind the front also began to migrate to the unoccupied Karaisali. The people were convinced that France could not be resisted. Participation and support for the National Forces had ceased.⁶¹

While the France continued their efforts to espionage and create confusion on the Turkish fronts, they also made preparations for military action. They wanted to dissolve the siege in Adana and its surroundings by organizing a general attack. For this reason, the wars with the French continued for a while.⁶²

Solcenah Group Commander Bahattin sent message to the Regional Command,

dated 18.10.1920;

"...
4. Last night, 4 planes of the enemy arrived. It was bombarded with bombs.
5. The 3th Division laid down its weapons. After giving their clothes, they surrendered to the enemy.
..."

In his message dated 19.10.1920;

"1. Blind Abdullah from Adana, caterer, the son of the baker Mustafa and the blind Hüseyin from Cyprus took refuge in the enemy by unfurling a white flag. These also caused the people to raise the white flag.
2. The men of Akkuyu, Kılıçlı, Kızıtaş, Buruk, Tünekli, Sofulu and Boynuyoğun villages abandoned their weapons and fled.

⁵⁶ Paul Du Véou, *La Passion de la Cilicie 1919-1922*, Trans. Reşat Gögen, unpublished text of the Kilikya Fâciaları, Paris, 1937, General Staff Presidency ATASE Archive Library.

⁵⁷ *Yeni Adana Newspaper*, 27-31, 6-20 Teşrin-i sani (November) 1336 (1920).

⁵⁸ Sinan Tekelioğlu, "Adana Cephesi Hatıratımdan", *Dirlik newspaper*, 655, 14 August 1965.

⁵⁹ Ener, *Adana Cephesi*, 232.

⁶⁰ Çelik, "Çukurova'nın İşgali Döneminde", 113.

⁶¹ Ener, *Adana Cephesi*, 241-242.

⁶² Çelik, "Çukurova'nın İşgali Döneminde", 114.

3. When I went to these villages with our cavalry yesterday, they saw me as an enemy. In fact, as soon as it was understood that they were going to capture, the cavalry which I sent to Sofulu and hand them over to the France, the cavalry fled. Now I have a few soldiers.”⁶³ he revealed the effect of French propaganda in some places.

Warning announcements were prepared by the National Forces against the French propaganda:

“TO THE PEASANT MUJAHID CITIZENS

Honorable Muslim Villagers:

With the bravery you have shown in the battle against your enemies (and cahid-u fisebilillah) until today, you have learned the divine consent, honored the spirit of the Prophet and thanked you for your homeland, by acquiring the secret of the verse of al-karim. You made the enemy like a prisoner who live in the cities by stuffing them into fortifications with your weapons. You have defeated and devastated thousands of your soldiers and captured their battalions. With these sacrifices, you have preserved your religion, your honor and your lands. You made Islam and Turkish shine. The whole country and the world of Islam applauded the Adana Front and its defenders. You have earned the nazar-i tahsin and appreciation of everyone.

Duty jihad is not over yet. The enemy is still in our country. It is dropping monstrous bombs on our refugees and soldiers, and even on our hospitals. Seems thirsty for blood of Muslims and the oppressed. They burns our villages every chance they get. They are incapable of violating the honor of our wives and daughters and looting our property wherever they find it.

In the last battle, many Armenians, together with the French, repeated their previous oppression of the Muslims.

Brave and devoted Muslims! You are the one who will put this vile and vicious enemy to his place. Jihad has been handed down to Muslims by our Master, Fahr-i Kainat. While the enemy has entered our country, fighting with them is obligatory from the age of seven to seventy. All Muslims are responsible for this duty. Do not believe that the enemy expelled the Armenians and handed over Adana to the Muslim officials and treated the people sweetly. These are lies invented to deceive the Muslims and to discourage them from fighting. Because the enemy is afraid of your strength, they invent lies like the devil in order to weaken this strength and to cause strife among you. If the enemy is true to their words, they must leave our country. However, they do not go, they want to deceive Muslims and take away their property. If not, what are they doing in the country? Why is it feeding soldiers in Adana? Why are they sitting? Since they understand that they cannot upset you with the force of arms, they want to deceive the people with cheating and lying. Do not forget that the enemy in our country is primarily the enemy of our religion. The Muslim countries of Algeria and Tunisia, which are groaning in the hands of the French today, also are in front of our eyes.

The enemies who coveted our country will soon flee from our lands without shoes, thanks to our resistance, due to the turmoil in their homeland.

There are also some scoundrels under the name of Muslims; they are working among you for the benefit of the enemy. They want to dissuade you from fighting by talking about the enemy being strong and unable to deal with it.

Pure-hearted and brave Muslims! Perhaps the enemy will not do any harm to such treacherous Muslims. The enemy even pays such Muslims to tell you so. There is no love of religion, concern for the homeland and honor in them. They are not disturbed by the fact that the honor of the whole country is carried out in the hands of the enemy and they are together. They only think of their own comfort and interests. Beware of them, do not listen to their poisonous words. The government will punish such people. Grab your weapons. Do not listen to any chief other than the command and signals of the municipal police.

Salvation is here for you. Do not be intimidated by the enemy's cannon and aircraft. Your ancestors have always crushed their enemies with little force. The Messenger of Allah always defeated many polytheists with little strength. You are the sons of that ancestor and you are the nation of the Prophet Zishan. You are right, because; land and country and religion and honor are yours. In your battles to protect this sacred thing from the evil of the enemy, the Divine Nusret is always with you. Let not an iota of weakness come to your faith and creed. The blood in your veins, which you have always bled with this faith and creed in the Adana Front, until now is the blood of Muslims. The greatest strength of a Muslim is in the faith in your chest, in your conscience and in your soul. Those who show weakness in this belief are enslaved and condemned to the

⁶³ Ener, *Adana Cephesi*, 242.

enemy. They will also be disappointed in the Day of Judgment. There is no salvation for such people in this world and the next. You have to be bold and firm and patient. Your heart may have to be as strong as iron. The days of peace and success are approaching. Our independence, for which we have been suing and fighting for seven months, will definitely be accepted and approved by the enemies. The Ferid Pasha Government, which was on the side of the enemies in Istanbul, fell. Our enemies will soon be plagued by God Almighty in their own country. They have already started to fight each other. The Greek King died and his army rebelled. The Germans are sharpening their teeth against the French. After a few months, war will begin again between them. Our eastern army is corrupting the Armenians in the Caucasus. By capturing Kars Castle, we captured thousands of Armenian soldiers and officers. Those who love their religion, love their country and want to preserve their honor should always be ready to fight the enemy and the tradesmen should not stop and run to the fronts. Allah is with us.

Adana Province Assembly Administration
(could not read signature)
Anatolia and Rumelia Cilicia Adana Delegation Center
Declaration to the public by the Adana Province General Assembly.
Teşrin-i sani (November)1920

To All Company Commanders

I request that the declaration sent by the Anatolian and Rumelia Defense Committee, must be read in the presence of efrad and subsequently returned to the commanders (unreadable). Fi 14 Teşrin-i sani (November) 36 (1920).

Mim. gayin. caf.
(signature could not be read)⁶⁴

The Battle of the Karboğazi, the 20-Day Armistice, and the Flee Flee Incident

Pozantı, in the middle of the Taurus Tunnels, which was especially located in the Mudros Armistice, due to its strategic importance, was exposed to the French occupation on 27 December 1918, and the Major Mesnil Battalion settled in this region.⁶⁵

Mesnil is remembered as a hero honored with the Legion D'honneur for his success in the defense of Verdun Castle. Mesnil made Pozantı a modern and powerful military defense center of the period with trenches, wire fences, cannons and machine guns connected with underground tunnels.⁶⁶

Tekelioğlu Sinan Bey attached great importance to the take possession of Pozantı. At the beginning of April 1920, the Pozantı region was besieged by the Kuvayi Milliye and all the roads leading up to Tarsus were under Turkish control.⁶⁷ The contact of the French with Pozantı was cut off.

The French besieged of Pozantı, the national force detachment consisting of 44 people in the Battle of Karboğazi captured the French battalion in Pozantı and Mesnil, the commander of the battalion, who received the title of Heroes of Verdun for ending the German advance in the First World War. The National Forces, which dominated the French outposts, won a victory against the French forces in the Battles of Pozantı and Karboğazi, attacked the Mersin-Tarsus road and surrounded Adana. The French occupation managers and force commanders were stuck in Adana. They thought that the National Forces had an advantage in terms of numbers and had a large amount of ammunition. After the French battalion and its commander, which was under the siege of the National Forces in Pozantı, while trying to reach Mersin by breaking the siege, the possibility of being captured by the National Forces and upon the request of the French, who were considering taking the battalion out of there without being captured, started on the night of 29 May 1920, when this battalion was taken prisoner. The 20-Day Interim Armistice was signed.⁶⁸

The withdrawal of France from Maraş on February 10, 1920, and from Urfa on April 11, and the capture of a battalion of French forces in Karboğazi around Pozantı on May 20, the French extraordinary commissioner of

⁶⁴ Çelik, "Çukurova'nın İşgali Döneminde", 122-123.

⁶⁵ Jaeschke, *Kurtuluş Savaşı*, 399.

⁶⁶ Damar Arıkoğlu, *Hatıralarım*, İstanbul: Tan Newspaper and Printing House, 1961, 103-104.

⁶⁷ Hulki Saral, Tosun Saral, *Vatan Nasıl Kurtarıldı*, Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Publications, 1970, 63-64.

⁶⁸ Çelik, "Çukurova'nın İşgali Döneminde", 106-108.

Syria applied to Ankara for the Southern Front, May 1920. It caused them to request and sign a 20-day truce, which started on the night connecting the 29th to the 30th.⁶⁹

The main subjects of the Armistice were the evacuation of the French from Pozantı, Kozan and Antep and the exchange of prisoners and political prisoners.⁷⁰ The 20-day ceasefire, which was considered an important stage in the history of the liberation of Çukurova, was signed on 23 May 1920 and was decided to be valid from the night of May, 29.⁷¹

Thus, France indirectly recognized the Government of the Grand National Assembly, and the first political victory of foreign policy in the national struggle was achieved.⁷²

The coup in the Taurus Mountains, and the capture of the Mesnil battalion, intensified the feelings of revenge in the French and Armenians.⁷³

The French lost their important outposts on the railway line and were shaken after the Karboğaz defeat. After the 20-Day Temporary Armistice was broken on June 19, 1920, the enemy forces wanted to drive them away from the region, fearing the numerical superiority of the Turks in the center of Adana. On July 10, 1920, very violent and indiscriminate attacks began by the French and Armenian committee members to evacuate the region. The Flee Flee Incident, which ended on the evening of July 13, 1920, in which the Turks, who were trying to escape from the center to save their lives, were also bombarded by French planes when they were shot at from all sides, deeply injured this region.⁷⁴

One year later, Yeni Adana Newspaper mentions the "Flee Flee Incident " on its anniversary:

"Adana's Black Day (10 July 1920)

In following days of the armistice concluded (signed) with the French last year, the French were fired, and the Armenians were afflicted by the poor Muslims with their enthusiasm and passion. Every day left a bloody mourning shadow for Adana. The bandit 'Şişmanyar' who came from the Caucasus Mountains established a government in the Armenian church, where the Muslims gathered from the streets were sent to death with a thousand inquisition sentences and death and disaster filled the whole city.

The hyena-feeling (Adana military governor) French Bremond (Adana I. French Division Commander General) Dufieux gave orders to his executioners and the country was drowning in blood and fire. These betrayals are increasing. The hearts of these last Muslims tremble with fear of persecution. A convoy of women and children poured onto the roads, flowing towards the south of the city.

On the tenth day of July, the city became a slaughterhouse. The revolution, which was organized half an hour after that affliction, started and a hellish fire broke out from the part of the city, which was inhabited by Armenians. The corpses of many poor people were lying on the roads and in the streets, the girls and women were flocking to their feet to save their lives, suffocating in the dense dust rising in the hot flames of the open July sun. The puppies who lost their mothers, the white-haired mothers who snuggled over their babies with a pierced chest, the prairies and camps were filled with trembling virgins.

Migration had begun, bloody hands were raised towards the horizon and hyenas were rising from behind these heads. Days passed. Our precious country like Gulistan has turned into owl babies. Bloody hands were washed at the edge of Saf-i Seyhan. Turkish treasures were plundered.

There are many poisonous sounds still ringing in our ears to this day. They are coming, they filled it, Oh my honor, my baby, each mouth says these words separately.

They were walking away from five-hundred-year-old home. July 10 is the black day, the day when thousands of Islamic graves were opened."⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Utkan Kocatürk, *Atatürk ve Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Tarihi Kronolojisi, 1918-1938*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Press, 1983, 168.

⁷⁰ Kasım Ener, *Çukurova'nın İşgali ve Kurtuluş Savaşı*, İstanbul: Berksoy Printing House, 1963, 68.

⁷¹ Bige Yavuz, "1921 Tarihli Türk Fransız Anlaşması'nın Hazırlık Aşamaları", *Journal of Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi*, 23 (1992), 275.

⁷² Hatipoğlu, *Fransa'nın Çukurova'yı İşgali*, 50.

⁷³ Yusuf Ayhan, *Mustafa Kemal'in Pozantı Kongresi ve Adana'nın Kurtuluşu*, Adana: İpek Printing House, 1963, 54.

⁷⁴ Çelik, "Çukurova'nın İşgali Döneminde", 106-107.

⁷⁵ *Yeni Adana Newspaper*, 124, 10 July 1337-1921.

After the Flee Flee Incident, the Armenians and especially the Armenian Şişmanyar Government and the committee members; officially applied to the French Governor General, and said; "There are no Turks left in the city. Keep your promise to us. We will establish the Christian Republic of Cilicia."⁷⁶

Following the Flee Flee Incident, the French, as mentioned before, tried to break the Turkish will to struggle with the propagandists they infiltrated among the Turks who migrated to the Taurus Mountains in the hands of the national forces. When they learned, through their spies, that the National Forces were quite short of their numerical estimates and that their ammunition was insufficient, they wanted to organize a General Attack and become the definitive ruler of the region. Despite all their attempts, the French, who also failed in their General Offensive, faced the military resistance of the National Forces, as well as the struggle of the local people and the reaction of their own public opinion.⁷⁷

Despite all attempts, the national forces were successful and the French forces were besieged in Adana and the surrounding provinces.⁷⁸

Ankara Agreement and Independence

In fact, when France withdrew from Antep on February 8, 1921, they realized that they could not defend Cilicia. Thus, France began to look for a way to deal with the Turks. They stopped their military operations for a while and upon the Sakarya Victory. They signed the Ankara Agreement with the Turkish Grand National Assembly on 20 October 1921.⁷⁹

According to the Ankara Agreement; The Syrian border was drawn as it is today, except for Hatay, and the French agreed to withdraw their troops from the north of the border until 20 December 1921.⁸⁰

Besides, in accordance with the Ankara Agreement, no one would be considered a war criminal between the parties. Armenians and French left Adana and its surroundings. According to the Evacuation Protocol signed in November 1921; on December 20, in Adana, on December 27, in Tarsus, and finally in Mersin on January 4, 1922, the flag of the occupying forces was lowered with a ceremony and the Turkish flag was hoisted. On January 4, 1922, the French forces left Mersin with by ships. The Ankara Agreement with France left the Armenians, who committed unthinkable and unimaginable atrocities during the occupation, in a panic. Because the idea of establishing an Armenian State in the south disappeared, and it was confirmed that the region belonged to the Turks.⁸¹

According to Armenian sources; during the evacuation of the region by the French with the Ankara Agreement of 20 October 1921, more than 120,000 Armenians fled to Syria, and about 30,000 Armenians migrated to Cyprus, Egypt and Istanbul.⁸²

Even the Armenian sympathizer Arnold J. Toynbee is concerned with the Armenian events on the Southern Front; "*The French followed an irresponsible policy by adding Armenian volunteers to the Eastern Legion they established in Cilicia in order to reduce the burden of the army. The French allowed the Armenians to form irregular gangs and take up arms... Then France, which remained a bystander to the bitter events, is much more guilty than the Armenians.*"⁸³

Istanbul Robert College Director C.F. Bates, sent the letter which was dated April 12, 1920, to A. Lybyer, who is one of the members of the American Investigation Commission who came to conduct regional research in Turkey. It was stated that the French administration brought Armenian fighters to the region and used them as gendarmes and police, creating a bad effect in the whole of Anatolia.⁸⁴

⁷⁶ Hatipoğlu, "Çukurova'da Fransız-Ermeni İşbirliği", 961.

⁷⁷ Çelik, "Çukurova'nın İşgali Döneminde", 119.

⁷⁸ Çelik, "Çukurova'nın İşgali Döneminde", 107.

⁷⁹ İlter, "Milli Mücadele'de Doğu Lejyonu", 431.

⁸⁰ Şerafettin Turan, *Türk Devrim Tarihi*, Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1991, 221-222.

⁸¹ Çelik, "Çukurova'nın İşgali Döneminde", 107.

⁸² İlter, "Milli Mücadele'de Doğu Lejyonu", 433.

⁸³ Arnold Joseph Toynbee, *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey: A Study in The Contact Of Civilizations*, London: 1922, 312.

⁸⁴ Salâhi R. Sonyel, "Tehcir ve Kırımlar Konusunda Ermeni Propagandası, Hıristiyanlık Dünyasını Nasıl Aldattı", *Belleten*, 161 (January 1977), 14.

In fact, the vast majority of French generals and officers were weary of the Armenian Legion. In their messages to France, they stated that the Armenians belonging to this legion acted only out of vengeance, they burned down Turkish villages and thus the anti-French hatred spread rapidly. In the first days of January 1920, the French commander, General Gouraud, in telegrams sent to Paris, declared that the Armenian Legion was disbanded and that it was a pity for the money and effort spent on this legion. But he could not convince Clemanceau, who lost the election on 17 January 1920 and resigned from the Prime Ministry the next day.⁸⁵

Conclusion

It can be evaluated the Çukurova strategy of France as the last point reached in the Middle East geography of the one hundred and fifty years of colonial activities initiated with England. Since 1750, they incited Arab nationalism against the Ottoman administration by sending missionaries to Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and Syria, which were under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, in the guise of merchants, in order to implement the colonial policies towards the region and rebelled against the Ottoman rulers in the region. The weakening of the central government of the Ottoman Empire with each passing year facilitated the realization of this goal. On the other hand, England, whose policy of expansion towards the east was contrary to its own interests, tried to prevent France by continuing its policy of defending the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire from 1791. Because the British economy and industry largely depended on the openness of the Indian trade route. The defeat of the Akka Fortress in Syria in 1799 caused the failure of the Eastern Mediterranean-Middle East occupation policy initiated by France under the leadership of Napoleon, with Ottoman-British cooperation.

The First World War had set aside the political disagreements of the British, French and Russians. It caused them to unite against their common enemy, Europe's rising power, Germany. Especially the new energy resources discovered in the Arabian peninsula and the Middle East, the British Indian trade route and the Suez Canal, the most important transit point of this road, were the strategic targets of the war. Britain, which won the Arabian Peninsula through various intrigues, wanted to reach an agreement with its post-war allies on the distribution of the lands obtained and to protect its pre-war interests. For this purpose, War Minister Lord Kitchener's Middle East affairs adviser, MP and Colonel Sir Mark Sykes were tasked with preparing a plan for the future status of Syria and the south of Anatolia with François Georges-Picot, who served as a political adviser at the French embassy in London. The prepared plan was accepted by the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Sazonov under certain conditions and was accepted for post-war implementation. According to this agreement reached by two diplomats; The Eastern Mediterranean region, Adana, Antep, Urfa, Mardin, Diyarbakir, Mosul and the Syrian coast were left to France.

With the aim of facilitating this division agreed in 1916 to the Mudros Armistice Agreement signed at the end of the war, the objectives that were desired to be achieved by the war (even if they were not won by fighting) would be captured by adding articles that would facilitate occupation, even though they were not occupied at the end of the war.

In order to legalize the invasion, England first gave a note to the Ottoman Government which declared that it would land troops in the southern provinces of Anatolia "for the purpose of supply", and this situation did not mean an invasion. However, at the same time, it was decided that these regions, which were temporarily occupied by the Syria Agreement with France in 1919, as per the Sykes-Picot Agreement, would be given to French control in turn.

Considering that it was in their interests, the French Government tried to carry out the administration of the region with the Armenians who moved away from the region in the past. Including the Armenians in the military operation and the administrative Armenianization of Çukurova is the French dream of Çukurova. Because a French-controlled Armenian buffer state and French-controlled Syria would be safe in Çukurova.

However, this strategy of the French administration was doomed to failure. The bringing of Armenians, who were under the influence of the 1915 events, especially the British propaganda, and immigrated to France and the USA from the regional provinces before the war, under French uniforms, started the period of persecution and massacres of the Armenians, who acted with the intention of "revenge."

⁸⁵ İlter, "Milli Mücadele'de Doğu Lejyonu", 431.

The French military administration, which seized the administration in Çukurova, made illegal appointments, relocations, exiles and tried to change the demographic structure of Çukurova.

During the occupation, France aimed to reduce the resistance against the occupation and keep it weak with the policy of divide and rule by separating and grouping the society.

France tried to manage the economy with various practices and new taxes in order to dominate the production

The occupation covers the propaganda activities, the resistance of the national forces against the persecution, the capture of the Verdun Hero Mesnil troops in the Karbogaz, the short-term ceasefire agreement with the Franco-Armenian cooperation, and the periods when the escape event took place. In the Çukurova region, the destruction of the land and air by violent attacks, forcing people to leave the area, summarizes the occupation.

The great difficulties experienced due to the occupation did not discourage the people of Çukurova, the region became one of the strong resistance fronts of the Kuvayi Milliye and the civil and Kuvayi Milliye organizations and resistances in the region during the occupation period forced the French and Armenians to withdraw from the region step by step. As a result of the epic struggle of the Kuvayi Milliye, the imperialist occupation administration could not expand in Çukurova.

According to the peace made with France by Ankara Agreement, it says that the Armenians in a state of panic due to their unimaginable atrocities during the occupation, the idea of establishing an Armenian State in the south disappeared, and it was confirmed that the region belonged to Turks.

The colonial efforts of the France, which aims to carry out on the back of the Armenians, were ruined with the establishment of the Turkish Republic.

In conclusion; this paper claims that although the strategy that France tried to realize by using Armenians during the National Struggle period failed, the assumption that it will never give up on its purpose has been felt intensely in its activities towards the region in recent years.

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