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ILL-FATED’ SONS OF THE ‘NATION’: OTTOMAN PRISONERS OF WAR IN RUSSIA AND EGYPT. 1914-1922

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of the Ohio State University

By

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the everyday lives of the Ottoman prisoners of war in World War I and the impact of captivity on them in a comparative perspective. Captivity narratives and previously untapped prison camp newspapers produced by the prisoners in various camps form an important part of the sources for this dissertation. Particular attention is paid to how the prisoners behaved in captivity, expressed their identities, and how they understood and what they proposed for the ills of their nation.

Because of the attitudes of their captors and the naturally unfavorable conditions in the different places of captivity, the Ottoman prisoners in Russia were worse off than their comrades held by the British in Egypt. Differences in the conditions faced are reflected in the reactions of the prisoners to their surroundings. In order to give their lives some semblance of normality, the prisoners—above all the junior officers—attempted to create conditions that were familiar from their homeland. They also became involved in debates that revolved around the issue of how to save their nation. Yet, the idea of nation was a problematic concept for the citizens of a multi-national empire. The evidence shows that multiple layers of identity coexisted, even among the educated junior officers, well into the early 1920s. Despite their attempts to normalize their lives and occupy their minds, the monotonous and dangerous environment of captivity soon started to take its toll on the mental condition of the prisoners. While many succumbed to various mental
and nutrition-related diseases while in captivity, the prisoners and their combatant comrades were not taken seriously by the Ottoman physicians, whose diagnostic approaches to war neurotics were shaped by the current practice of their field as it was molded in Europe, especially in Germany. Just as the sufferings of numerous prisoners continued even after repatriation, their sacrifice and captivity experience did not become a part of the memory of war in post-war Turkey.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

[The Turk is] an enemy who has never shown himself as good a fighter as the white man.

Robert Rhodes James, *Gallipoli*, written prior to the Gallipoli landings of 1915

The Topic

This dissertation is a study of the Ottoman soldier in captivity during and after World War I. Specifically, this dissertation concerns itself with more than 65,000 Ottoman prisoners of war (hereafter POWs) who were taken captive during that war by the Russians, and nearly 110,000 who were captured by the British, who interned them in Egypt. With a total of nearly 250,000 POWs in various places, the Ottomans in captivity numbered more than the actual troop strength of the Ottoman armies on the field in 1918. One in every eleven Ottomans mobilized for the war effort became a POW—a figure that, while lower than the one in three ratio of the Austro-Hungarian army, is still high enough to warrant serious attention. This study examines how thousands of Ottomans, thrown into an unfamiliar, restrictive, and harsh environment, behaved, adapted and thought. It also seeks to determine why, despite the trauma and suffering of war and captivity, these prisoners have remained voiceless in post-war Turkish society.

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1 As the prisoners were usually moved around from camp to camp or from India and Burma to Egypt, it is difficult to get an exact number of the captives during a given time.

Writing about the significance of the number of prisoners to the outcome of the Great War in a chapter titled “The Captor’s Dilemma,” Niall Ferguson argued recently that, from the point of view of the prisoners themselves, their fate was preferable to that of their dead or wounded comrades. But viewed by those who were commanding the war, various governments and their generals, a soldier captured was as much of a loss as a soldier killed in action. In fact, “in some ways he was a more serious loss: alive, he might be able to provide the enemy with intelligence or cheap labour,” and thus thwart the chances of his own nation’s success. Based on the attitude of their captors and their own nation’s perceived interest (or the lack thereof) in them, many prisoners saw themselves as a burden to both their captors and their home country.

This introduction will first give a brief historical and historiographical background to Ottoman participation in the Great War, which will provide a context for how these men found themselves in the situation they did. This is followed by a discussion of the most important and unusual sources for this study and, finally, a brief note on the organization of the dissertation.

The Ottoman Empire and the Great War: Historical Background

On 29 October 1914, two warships that the Ottomans had recently “purchased” through a fictitious sale from Germany and renamed Yavuz and Midilli, still commanded by a German admiral, sailed into the Black Sea and bombarded the Russian ports of

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1 Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), XLII.

4 Both the date on which the Ottoman navy bombarded the Russian coastline and the battlecruiser that led the Ottoman navy, *Yavuz*, would seem ironic years later. Exactly nine years after the bombardment, the Turkish Republic was proclaimed, on 29 October 1923, and after his death, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s body was carried on the same battlecruiser, *Yavuz*, from Istanbul to Samsun.
Sevastopol and Odessa. With the Allied declarations of war that inevitably followed a few days later, this bombardment drew the Ottomans to a conflict that would eventually bring their 600-year-old empire to an end.

Why did the relatively weak Ottoman Empire launch an unprovoked attack on Sevastopol and Odessa, a move that Ottoman leaders knew would certainly involve them in a risky and destructive war with the Allies? The Ottoman entry into the Great War has been interpreted in various ways, but in every case the limited nature of the available sources and the ideological leanings of those who have offered their opinions on the issue have shaped these interpretations. The plan to create a military alliance with Germany and draw the Ottoman Empire into the war was the brainchild of several of the Young Turk leaders in power at the time. Since the meetings and negotiations involving this strategy were conducted in secret, however, no official records seems to have been kept; if any unofficial records were kept, none has been found. Therefore, scholars looking into the issue have had to rely heavily on a few memoirs left behind by the Young Turk leaders. While the diplomatic correspondence of the German and other European foreign offices provides some additional insight, it does not reflect the opinions and reasoning of the Ottomans who made a conscious decision to enter the war.

What is known may be summarized as follows: The secret Ottoman-German treaty of alliance was signed on 2 August 1914 by Minister of War Enver Pasha, Minister of the Interior Talat Pasha, Minister of the Navy Cemal Pasha and Grand Vizier and

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5 The Göben (Yavuz) and Breslau (Midilli) had just escaped from the British Mediterranean fleet and found safety in the Turkish Straits. Although the Ottoman Empire announced that the two ships were purchased from Germany, no money was exchanged. This fictitious sale was the only way for the Ottomans to show that they were neutrals in the war, even though they had already signed a secret treaty with Germany.
Foreign Minister Sait Halim Pasha and by Halil Menteşe, the head of the House of Deputies. The rest of the Cabinet and the Parliament were unaware of the treaty.\textsuperscript{6} Having proposed alliances and requested assurances of territorial integrity from England, France and even Russia in the summer of 1914, and having been rebuffed by all three countries, even the most Entente-leaning members of the Young Turk leadership became convinced of real or imaginary Entente plans to partition the Ottoman Empire. Germany, on the other hand, had reacted favorably to the Ottoman overtures, with the Kaiser personally accepting Enver Pasha's proposal of alliance with Germany. It was natural for the Ottoman leaders to seek a political and military partner in this alliance-obsessed era, when nearly every power was locked into one alliance or the other. Therefore, seeing isolation as a danger, the rest of the leadership soon agreed that an alliance with Germany was better than no alliance at all. After the treaty was signed and the war in Europe had started, some members of the political and military leadership insisted on entering the war as late as possible despite the existence of the treaty with Germany, perhaps postponing entry until spring 1915; the extra time, they argued, would enable them to prepare the military and get a better sense of where the war was going. Under pressure from the German and Austro-Hungarian ambassadors and the German military mission in Turkey, however, Enver Pasha finally agreed to give the fateful order to German admiral Souchon to attack the Russian fleet in the Black Sea at Sevastopol and Odessa.

Kemal Karpat argued recently that the Ottoman entry into the Great War could be better understood if viewed not solely as the product of foreign policy, but also as a result

\textsuperscript{6} United States, Department of State, Documents Relating to Internal Affairs of Turkey, "Review of Press," 1-7 August 1926, 867.9111/159, p. 7.
of the Ottoman elite's century-long search for modernization, economic independence, and acceptance into the European community of nations.\(^7\) Economic independence was undoubtedly an important goal that prompted Ottoman entrance into the war. For this reason, Ottoman political leaders and elites attached crucial importance to the abolition of the existing capitulations and treaties that granted the European powers extensive privileges and extraterritorial rights in the Ottoman Empire; the Ottomans understood that it was only then that modernization would be possible.\(^8\) The Ottoman entry into the war may have been an act of ultimate desperation because there were no other viable political options; yet it was also an act laced with hopes that the war would bring the nation unfettered independence, economic freedom, and recognition of its membership in the European community of nations.\(^9\)

Although the Ottoman decision to enter the Great War has received some scholarly attention,\(^10\) scholars have largely ignored the history of the subsequent war years and the overall Ottoman war effort and its impact. Various official military histories of the Ottoman Great War have been compiled, produced by the history branch of the office of the Turkish Chief of Staff; however, these voluminous and seemingly

\(^7\) Kemal Karpat, “The Entry of the Ottoman Empire into World War I,” unpublished paper, research in progress, p.3. I am grateful to Professor Kemal Karpat for permitting me to cite his work in progress.

\(^8\) Ibid., p.4.

\(^9\) Ibid., p. 30; Yücel Yanıkdağ, “How Turkey entered the Great War of 1914,” conference paper delivered at Phi Alpha Theta Regional meeting, Virginia State University, Petersburg, Virginia, 6 March 1993.

\(^10\) See the review of the secondary literature in Kemal Karpat, “The Entry of the Ottoman Empire,” and Yanıkdağ “How Turkey Entered the Great War.”

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unconnected publications have not gone beyond summarizing or rewording the strategic and tactical minutiae as reflected in official correspondence. The result is that there is no social or cultural history of the Ottoman Great War.

As Chapter I will show, the periodization of the Great War in Turkish historiography comes with certain problems for various political and ideological reasons. In fact, some scholars view the whole period from the First Balkan War in 1912 until August 1922, when the Turkish Nationalist forces decidedly defeated the Greek armies that had invaded Anatolia in 1919, as one continuous “10-year war” [1912-1922]. It is true that this period might seem to constitute one continuous war broken up by short periods of respite, but making World War I a part of a larger series of wars, especially as a precursor to the War of Independence, minimizes the comparable significance of the Great War. The Great War differed from the earlier and later wars in one important respect; it was a total war. Political considerations aside, it was a war like no other, involving nearly every Ottoman male citizen, with fighting on seven different fronts. Additionally, the “10-year war” view, with its selectivity, ignores the guerrilla war in Yemen (1891-1911); this was a peripheral war, unlike the Balkan Wars, but it took serious commitment on the part of the Ottoman state. In fact, in some ways, judging from the numbers of “Yemen folk songs” from various parts of Turkey, one can claim that the wars in Yemen have a more significant place in Ottoman collective memory than

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It is encouraging to note that while still very much remaining within the bounds of strategic and tactical factors, a recent notable work, *Ordered to Die*, has synthesized much of the numerous official Turkish histories into a single volume. Edward J. Erickson, *Ordered to Die: A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 2000).
the Balkan Wars. In short, the “10-year war” framework privileges the Balkan (European) conflicts while ignoring conflicts in the Arab provinces.

Besides its human cost, which will be examined in Chapter I as part of the memory of the war in Turkey, the Great War was a major financial burden on the Ottoman state. European economic historians calculated, mostly by estimation, that the Great War cost the Ottoman Empire approximately $1,430,000,000 in 1914-1918 currency. A large part of this amount was financed by Germany. Callous though it may seem some historians, comparing the economic and human costs of the war, estimate that the “notional economic value of each individual soldier” to the Ottoman Empire was $984. Such macabre calculations, however, are not the purpose of this dissertation.

Perhaps some topics that go unstudied deserve their fate, but in the case of the Ottoman participation in the Great War the negative consequences of the historiographical neglect of the topic are both empirically and theoretically evident. At the most basic level the purpose of this dissertation is to fill a significant empirical gap in the historiography of Ottoman involvement in World War I, particularly as it relates to thousands of Ottoman soldiers who became prisoners of war. It is clear that, in western public knowledge of the Great War, the role of the Ottoman Empire occupies a small

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12 Ernest L. Bogart, *Direct and Indirect Costs of the Great World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1920), 261. As a point of reference, using Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank’s CPI index calculator (http://minneapolisfed.org/economy/calc/cpihome.html), we get a general idea that this amount is now worth approximately $12,769,900,000.

13 Clearly, this could not be an accurate or methodologically sound calculation. Niall Ferguson cites Bogart as giving the amount of $700 per Ottoman soldier—the same as a Russian, but only one half of a German, British or American soldier. Niall Ferguson, 336.
place. Ottoman participation in the war has been ignored by the scholarly literature, which is overwhelmingly concerned with the western front. Unfortunately, even in the Middle East, and specifically in Turkey, the First World War has remained neglected; this neglect has led to what we might call the de-Ottomanization of the Great War in the general historiography. This study, even if by concentrating on the peripheral issue of prisoners of war, aims to de-center the overwhelmingly European focus of the historiography of the war by rediscovering the Ottoman Great War—a war that was more destructive to Middle Eastern societies than it was to Europe. Of the veterans who returned from the Ottoman Great War, including the wounded, one in eight¹⁴ had been a prisoner during the war. Spanning eight years, from late 1914 until the repatriation of still numerous Ottoman POWs from Russia and Egypt in late 1922, captivity represents a relatively widespread experience of the Great War, both for the Ottomans and for soldiers in general. The Ottoman captivity experience also serves as an ideal case study for wider academic discussions of themes such as nationalism, collective remembrance, and marginality.

Poor and illiterate, the Ottoman peasant soldier has not left behind anything for the historian in the way of diaries, journals, letters, or the like. In the absence of materials that would enable us to write a history from below, that is, from the point of view of the common soldier, this study examines the next best thing: the experiences of junior officers. This literate group, composed almost exclusively of recently conscripted or volunteer lieutenants, occupied a niche between the uneducated and illiterate men

¹⁴ For clarity, it is useful to remember that one in eleven of the Ottoman soldiers became a POW, but of those who remained alive at the end of the war, one in eight had been a POW.
whom they commanded and their senior officers. It was they who wrote the captivity narratives and produced the prison camp newspapers that form an important source base for this study. Coming from various parts of Anatolia, most of these junior officers had a rural lower middle class background. Contrary to the claims of some scholars that only a few war narratives of the Ottoman Great War exist and that they were written by high-ranking officers, this dissertation shows that more war and captivity narratives were written by the young junior officers. While their captivity experiences may have differed from those of the rank and file, from whom they were separated by barbed wire in prison camps, the war experience of the junior officers was much closer to that of the men—with whom they shared the trenches, snow, hunger, desert heat, and thirst—than it was to that of their senior officers. While not a history from below, this dissertation nevertheless gives voice to that group of educated, yet only occasionally vocal, non-elite junior officers who came from humble backgrounds.

This study contributes to research on collective memory. Continued interest in collective remembrance demonstrates why and how certain memories are preserved by societies and others are discarded or overlooked. From studies on commemorations to those on the “invention of traditions,” scholars have pointed out the constructed and at times malleable character of collective remembrance. In fact, some of the most important works in the field of collective remembrance have taken as their subject the Great War, as

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16 For an examination of history from below studies see Jim Sharpe, “History from Below,” in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 24-41.
demonstrated by the works of George Mosse, Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan.\textsuperscript{17} The first chapter of this dissertation shows why World War I in general, and the captivity experience in particular, did not become a part of the collective remembrance of war in Turkey. Moreover, this dissertation also draws attention to the more destructive, in fact nearly catastrophic, nature of the Great War in the Middle East, which is generally overlooked by western scholars who concern themselves only with Europe with the notable exception of the failed Allied campaign in Gallipoli.

Furthermore, this dissertation is also part of an expanding body of literature on Turkish nationalism and patriotism in the multi-national Ottoman Empire. By examining the writings of prisoners as reflected in prison camp newspapers and captivity narratives, it contributes to a revisionist trend in studies of Turkish nationalism, which challenges the idea that after 1908 the Young Turks were all committed Turkists. Aiming to examine the appeal of ethnic Turkish nationalism, this study also explores how the nationalist ideas of the political and military elites trickled down to the group of junior officers who stood between the peasants and the elite. Accordingly, it is argued, the beliefs and ideas of the junior officers are more representative of the appeal of Turkish nationalism than the writings and actions of a few members of the political and military elite.

Finally, this study makes a contribution to the historiography with respect to the study of the transfer of scientific knowledge and of cultural constructions of manhood and disease by investigating "war neurosis" as detected by Ottoman and Turkish

physicians among combatants and prisoners of war. By examining the combatants (non-POWs) and POWs at the same time, mostly out of necessity, this study shows that it was not only the “shell-shocked” men of the Western Front, as reflected in the works of Robert Graves, Sigfried Sassoon, and others, who suffered from combat related neurosis. Moreover, in some cases, this study suggests that the mental problems from which the POWs suffered could be more complicated than neuroses suffered by combatants even without the addition of physical disorders such as pellagra;\(^{18}\) since POWs were not captured on their first day of combat, but after some time serving on the front, their conditions could be aggravated by captivity in an insecure environment.

**Sources**

The sources for this dissertation come from various American (National Archives), British (Public Record Office, Imperial War Museum, and British Museum), and Turkish Archives (Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives, Prime Ministry Republican Archives, Chief of Staff Military Archives, and Archive of the Turkish Revolution) and libraries. While official correspondence is also used throughout, especially to bolster the evidence found elsewhere, two kinds of sources form an important part of this study: 1) previously untapped prison camp newspapers produced by the POWs in prison camps; and 2) captivity narratives, the numbers of which, though modest by European standards, are not insignificant. The camp journals are found in libraries all over Turkey. Unfortunately, there has been very little attempt to gather them together in an effort to preserve and catalog them. There are a good number of these camp journals held by

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\(^{18}\) Pellagra is a nutrition deficiency disease that primarily affected the Ottoman POWs in Egypt.
private individuals, although most were reluctant to share them with me in connection with this study.\(^{19}\) My numerous attempts to gain access to the thousands of undelivered prisoner of war letters held by the Red Crescent Society (admittedly stored not in archives, but in burlap bags in a warehouse in Ankara), did not result in a positive outcome. The value of the letters as a significant source of information is suspect in any case, for a handful of letters I was able to find through personal contacts and in published sources do not contain information that would be useful in this study. These letters are usually very short and almost never contain anything more than greetings (*selamlar, hürmetler*) to numerous people named individually, and complaints from the prisoners about not getting any or enough letters in return. Nevertheless, these letters constitute a large, untapped resource and it is hoped that they will eventually be made available to researchers.

**Prison Camp Journals:**

Collected from various libraries all over Turkey, prisoner of war camp newspapers produced by the prisoners in various camps in Russia and Egypt form an important part of the sources for this dissertation. In many ways, the prisoner journals are not very different from the trench journals that have been used to very productive ends by J. G. Fuller and Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau in studies based almost exclusively

\(^{19}\) That is, individuals not related in any way to the captives themselves. Undoubtedly, there are more of these camp journals (and war narratives) in the possession of people who had POW relatives. Yet, despite my advertisements in newspapers in search of such collections, I was not able to locate anything additional of significance.
on these newspapers\(^{20}\) of the soldiers at the front.\(^{21}\) Although the Ottoman troops on various fronts, lacking many of the comforts of the Allied troops, did not produce the kind of trench newspapers from which the above authors benefited, those Ottomans who became prisoners in the hands of the British and Russians did produce various camp newspapers. The Ottoman POWs are in no way unique in their production of camp newspapers; however, no other scholars studying prisoners of war seem to have made use of similar publications.\(^{22}\)

Given the unfavorable conditions of captivity, one might wonder why the prisoners—or even the Allied front soldiers—would produce such newspapers. Fuller and Audoin-Rouzeau have offered some possible explanations for the trench newspapers, which will be reviewed here to see if the same justifications apply to Ottoman captivity newspapers. They argue that one primary purpose of the trench newspapers was to amuse their readers.\(^ {23}\) Some simply wanted to preserve a record of their thoughts and experiences, a record for history.\(^{24}\) Others had a far less self-conscious purpose, and produced the papers merely as a means of dealing with boredom and improving troop

\(^{20}\) Both J.G. Fuller and Audoin-Rouzeau refer to these sources as journals. However, for reasons of clarity and to avoid confusion with journals kept as diaries, this dissertation will use the term camp newspapers, or simply newspapers to refer to the serial productions of the POWs in the camps.


\(^{23}\) Audoin-Rouzeau, 12-14; and J. G. Fuller, 14.

\(^{24}\) Audoin-Rouzeau, 18; and J. G. Fuller, 12, 15.
We will see that in many ways the Ottoman captivity newspapers were produced for very similar reasons. All camp newspapers were hand written, with some being mimeographed to produce more copies. Some newspapers stated their aim and justification in their first issues. Vaveyla [Lament], in Krasnoyarsk, Russia, stated that it “would be the lamenting organ of the unfortunate prisoners in these distressful times,” in addition to constituting a memento of captivity. Another newspaper, Nilüfer in Egypt, declared that intellectual activity, which the journal would provide with its sociological, political and comic articles, had become a necessity like bread and water. Its main aim, it continued, was to “add flavor to the monotonous life inside the barbed wire by diverting our attention [from captivity] and especially to leave to the present generation documents and words of caution about circumstances we live in . . . .” To judge from the editors’ remarks, the aims of the Ottoman camp newspapers do not seem to be different from those of the Allied trench newspapers, as noted above. In a special issue celebrating its second anniversary, Vaveyla devoted all its pages to the comments of POWs in Krasnoyarsk on what the newspaper meant to them. Besides the usual words that fell in line with the stated aims of the editor, some expressed sincere appreciation of the newspaper. “It is

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25 Audoin-Rouzeau, 13; and J. G. Fuller, 14.

26 A number of prison camp newspapers existed for the sole purpose of providing news (mostly translations from local or British newspapers). Two such camp newspapers are entitled Esaret (Captivity), and Garnizon (Garrison).


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like a voice of consolation from the motherland in these terrible times,” one wrote; another commented that “our weak hearts, ridden with distress, find a measure of hope, and our eyes—that are darkened with the oppression of our future—find a source of light in its [Vaveyla’s] white pages.” Perhaps this journal became much more than it had originally aimed to be to its readers trapped in the harsh environment of Krasnoyarsk, Siberia. No doubt the production of a newspaper that averaged twelve pages per issue in the harsh conditions of Siberian captivity was much appreciated by Ottoman prisoners who were thousands of miles away from home.

The camp newspapers are invaluable as source material. They were produced in the camps while the prisoners were still in captivity, and as a result they are not influenced by subsequent experience. Despite the fact that they were not mass-produced—some newspapers appeared in only a few copies because of the difficulty of producing them, but were passed on from person to person—and were filled with individual opinion pieces, they nonetheless represent a collective rather than an individual commentary. Contributions were always welcome. After all, since some of the newspapers were run as businesses, they had to be popular with fellow prisoners if the editors wanted to reclaim the cost of producing them.

Captivity Narratives (Diaries and Memoirs):

Captivity narratives, whether kept as diaries while in the camps or constructed later as memoirs, also form an important part of the sources for this dissertation.

29 Vaveyla, 1-3 Mart 1333/1-3 March 1917, number 63, special issue, p.5.
30 Vaveyla, 1-3 Mart 1333/1-3 March 1917, number 63, special issue, p.8.
Although these captivity narratives vary in size, detail, and scope, they do roughly follow what might be called a "narrative contour." First articulated by Robert Doyle in his study of American captivity narratives\(^\text{31}\) spanning more than two centuries, the concept of a narrative contour fits nicely with our Ottoman Great War captivity narratives. According to this scheme, the narrator, that is, the prisoner, shapes the story of captivity after the seven major events of the actual captivity experience. Below I enumerate the components of this contour with slight modifications from Doyle's original.

**Precapture autobiography:** Here the prisoner tells his audience about himself, his life before the war, his concept of duty, or simply how he was placed in harm's way. Perhaps this is also done to create a contrast with his captivity life.

**Capture:** As the heading implies, this section deals with how, where, and when the prisoner was taken captive. At the moment of capture, death is close and the captive's life hangs on his every move, and every breath. In other words, despite the laws of war and military traditions, life depends on luck and rests with the whim and will of the captor. In many of the Ottoman captivity narratives the moment of capture is recounted in the minutest details. Some authors claim, in fact, that they were warned of their captivity in dreams they had a few days prior to capture.\(^\text{32}\) Prisoners also make various attempts to justify their capture: one prisoner explains that he could not even attack (or retreat) as the enemy approached his position because he found that his great coat, the only thing that protected him from the freezing cold of the Caucasus in

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\(^{31}\) Robert C. Doyle, *Voices from Captivity: Interpreting the American POW Narrative* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1994).

\(^{32}\) Rahmi Apak, 158; and Mehmed Åsaf, 5.
wintertime, had completely frozen into the ice in his dugout, where he had been trapped for days.  

For another, capture happened so suddenly that “he had no time to change magazines.”

Remove (long march, death march): In this section the prisoner describes how and when he was removed, or marched away from the place of capture to the place of permanent captivity. Next to capture itself, removal is the most dangerous event of captivity, for it marks the truly vulnerable prisoner’s first encounter with the captor’s value system. He is again at the mercy of his captors. In a large number of the captivity narratives from Russia, we see a significant development of this aspect of the narrative contour. Sometimes the prisoner, with the careful eyes of an outside observer, describes in full detail the towns, peoples, forests, and bridges which his train passes on its way to the place of permanent captivity. In contrast, we do not see anything that even approaches the same length or precision of observation from those Ottoman prisoners who were taken captive by the British. Traveling in Russia must simply have been more interesting to the prisoners there. After all, they were now in a foreign country rather than a former Ottoman territory; there was certainly more to see—various signs of Russian technological advancements that they could compare with Ottoman technological achievements (or lack thereof), different peoples (especially Turkic peoples), etc. In contrast, the travel through the deserts of Sinai or other depopulated and deforested areas

Ahmet Göze, 29. It seems that many of the Russian units were equipped with winter camouflage, making them practically invisible to poorly-equipped Ottoman units until it was too late.

Başkatipzade Ragıp Bey, 80.
with little to show did not take up much space at all in the captivity narratives of those in the hands of the British.

**Prison landscape:** If the prisoner survived the removal, he ultimately ended up at a permanent prison camp. These establishments varied considerably according to the place of captivity, even in the same country. No matter where he was housed, however, each prisoner knew and sometimes described in remarkably rich detail the topography of his place of imprisonment.

**Resistance and Survival:** The experience of captivity transformed the prisoner through physical and psychological pain. It was here that the prisoner began to understand the captor better. The prisoner’s feelings begin to surface; there is sometimes a search for cultural values.

**Release and repatriation:** Here the prisoner described his repatriation to the world from which he came. Tales of escape are found in this part of the narrative. Almost all captivity narratives are peppered with escape plans, though only a small number actually attempted escape.

**Lament:** In this section the prisoner expresses a sense of loss. Doyle argues that lament gives the prisoner the chance to grieve for the time wasted in captivity, for the material opportunities lost over time, and for his dead comrades. Some prisoners, he continues, lament their experience in the captivity narratives, but lamentation can also occur outside the narrative, in alcoholism or, more rarely, suicide or prayer. Admittedly, the Ottoman captivity narratives in general are relatively short on lamentation. Perhaps

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35 Doyle, 87.
grieving was more personal for the former Ottoman prisoners of war, and consequently they did not choose to share it with others; this point will be more fully explored in Chapter 1.

**Organization**

The body of this dissertation consists of four chapters. Chapter I examines the marginalization of the remembrance of the Great War and captivity in the collective memory of war in post-Great War Turkey. The next chapter delves into the minds of the POWs and examines how they interpreted their situation and the ills of their empire, and what they suggested as cured for their nation's ailments. In Chapter III, captivity in Russia and Egypt is examined in comparative perspective. The aim is to get a view of how soldiers of the same empire were treated and how they behaved as prisoners of two different belligerents thousands of miles away from each other. Chapter IV focuses on the medical, almost exclusively psychological, consequences of war and captivity.

Using many previously untapped and unique sources, this dissertation is not only a study of the Ottoman POWs in captivity. While it does examine the thoughts, reactions, sufferings, identities, and hopes of the Ottoman POWs in captivity, it also studies how many of them and their non-POW comrades, viewed as disease carriers and abnormal men, were scrutinized by the Ottoman and Turkish doctors on the home front. Furthermore, this is a study of how the Turkish state's nation-building project contributed to the marginalization of both the POW experience, and the war in which they became prisoners, in the memory of war and the history of the Turkish republic.
CHAPTER 1

The war has ended, but where are those who were supposed to return home? They did not come, the young men; they remain in captivity. They have fallen into foreign lands, save them, oh God. Some remain in wintry places, some remain in summery places.

Turkish folk song-Çorum region

CAPTIVITY, MARGINALIZATION AND MEMORY OF WAR IN EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY TURKEY

Introduction

Nearly 8 million men became prisoners of war (POWs) during the Great War, a number closely comparable to the number who actually died in battle. There were up to two million Austro-Hungarian POWs in Russia alone; the British POWs held by the Central Powers numbered about 190,000.1 While the numbers might suggest otherwise, in general, the captivity experience did not become a part of the memory of the war experience in most of the belligerent countries. And with the exception of a handful of scholarly studies, there has not been much published that highlights the experience of those men who became prisoners in such large numbers. Arguably, there were various reasons why the captivity experience did not become a part of the collective experience of war. In The Soldiers’ Tale, Samuel Hynes states that former British POWs either did not

write about their experiences at all, or placed them parenthetically in minor spaces in long narratives.² We must remember that the British POWs who did not make their stories known publicly were people of the same background and generation as such prolific veteran writers as Robert Graves, Edmund Blunden, Siegfried Sassoon, and T. E. Lawrence. The British reluctance to write captivity narratives does not seem to be unique at all among the belligerents of that war. The story is similar in other countries as well, but it is perhaps most true in the case of the Ottoman Empire, or more specifically Turkey, even if we factor in the much lower literacy rate in the Empire when compared to the other belligerent nations.³ Former POWs, it seems, have been reluctant to share their captivity experience by publishing their captivity narratives, and consequently their experience has not become a part of the memory of the war experience in early twentieth-century Turkey. Why such reluctance to tell POW stories of the Great War? Was it their own reluctance to tell their stories that made their war experience marginal, or did other factors make them hesitant to tell their stories? This chapter will address these questions as they relate to the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey. In answering these questions, we will consider two categories of reasons: One that could be considered generally


³The literacy rate is believed to have been around four or five percent at the turn of the twentieth century. Erik Jan Zürcher argues that the Ottomans did not leave war narratives in general because most men were illiterate and the few war narratives that exist were written by high-ranking officers: Erik Jan Zürcher, "Between Death and Desertion: The Experience of the Ottoman Soldier in World War I," *Turcica* 28 (1996): 235-42. Zürcher is correct in stating that the voice of the enlisted men is missing completely due to lack of literacy. However, the war narratives that exist are not all written by high ranking officers as Zürcher concludes; there are a good number of this type of work by junior to mid-rank officers of the Ottoman army, most of whom would have been educated.
applicable to other nations, and another that is specifically Ottoman and Turkish. In this direction, while examining the broader picture of the missing voice of POWs, we will first go over the identities of some former Ottoman POWs who did not leave behind captivity narratives and strategies of those who did keep some record of their captivity. After briefly considering the likelihood and evidence of societal cultural notions attached to “shame” of captivity in France and Japan, and in more detail in the Ottoman Empire, this chapter will examine the issue of possible personal shame that might have influenced the decision of former POWs about publicly sharing their captivity experience. As the chapter moves into the second category of reasons—specifically Ottoman and Turkish—we examine the effect of the Great War in Turkey and its place in nationalist Turkish historiography and memory as evinced in various mediums.

Captivity and the Ottoman Experience of the Great War

In examining the reasons for the missing voices of the POWs of the Great War, it might be more revealing to first consider the identities of those POWs who did not leave behind captivity narratives. It is estimated that there were 220,000-250,000 Ottoman POWs, but unfortunately we cannot break that number into officers and enlisted men with much accuracy. However, in order to get an idea how widespread captivity was for the

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Although the numbers are by no means exact, they are relatively correct, especially in the case of those POWs held by the British; they suffice to give us an idea of the breakdown. The British captured at least 5,600 Turkish officers and at least several hundred non-Turk Ottoman officers from Arab, Jewish, Greek and other ethnic groups. All non-Turkish Ottomans were counted as “other nationalities.” Great Britain, War Office, Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire During the Great War, 1914-1920 (London: HMSO, 1922), 631-633. Although some other sources contradict the statistics regarding the Ottomans in this source, an Austrian work gives the breakdown in Russia as 950 officers and 50,000 enlisted men. The same work puts the Ottomans captured by the British at 42,500, which is much lower (cont’d)
Ottoman officers, we might take a look at the record of the class of 1903 of the Ottoman Military Academy, Harbiye Mektebi. Of the 740 students who graduated from Harbiye in 1903, eighty were captured during the Great War.\(^5\) When we factor in the number of those who were either discharged or died before the outbreak of the war, the percentage of those who were captured stands at 13.2 percent. The percentage of captured officers among the later classes, especially of 1910 on, would have been significantly higher as they would have held lower ranks than earlier graduates and would, therefore, more likely have been in the front lines.\(^6\)

Among those captured by the enemy were some men who after repatriation would play significant roles in the history of the Turkish republic, or in the Arab countries to which they returned, either in their military capacity or as civilians.\(^7\) Among the former POWs of the Great War who later became influential in Turkish politics are two former presidents (and former chiefs of staff) of the Turkish republic who came to power directly as a result of the 1960 military coup; several former chiefs of staff (not including the


\(^6\) In the Austro-Hungarian Empire, for example, 20.3 percent of the 1913 graduates of the military academy were captured, while 30 percent died in the war, and 51.9 percent of the graduates were missing. István Deák, Beyond Nationalism: A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848-1918 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 91.

\(^7\) As the law requiring everyone to take a surname was not passed until 1934, the Ottomans did not use last names, but only first and sometimes middle names; it is therefore usually very difficult to trace the lives of individuals. Therefore, the list below of some people who were POWs could easily include other important personalities who somehow slipped through the cracks simply because they were mentioned as lieutenant Mehmet, Captain Ali, Ayıcı (Bear-handler) Arif, or Çingene (Gypsy) Halil. (cont’d)
above two who became presidents); and several 4-star generals of the Turkish army, one of whom ended up establishing the Adalet (Justice) Party after the 1960 military revolution. Clearly, a significant number of former POWs came to hold high military and political positions in Turkish society. Apart from political and military leaders, Said Nursi, an Ottoman Kurd who was in Russian captivity for a few years, started a religious movement known as Nurculuk after his repatriation, which today is even stronger and larger than when he was alive. There were others who were senators, doctors, journalists, newspaper editors, lawyers, or minor to mid-rank government officials. The point here is that there were many captured Ottomans who were educated and literate, and therefore the potential number of captivity narratives that might have been written by these people is not insignificant at all.

While the post-captivity professions of the former POWs differ from each other, the pattern continues—no captivity narratives, especially by those who came to positions of significance. It is hard to accept easily that so many people in such influential positions did not leave behind captivity narratives. While the first-person literary

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9 On Said Nursi's movement see Şerif Mardin, Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989).

10 One might include the following famous and notorious international personalities who were POWs in World War I: Bela Kun, Josip Broz Tito, Marc Bloch, Hans Kohn, and the Czech satirist Jaroslav Hašek. See Alon Peleg Rachamimov, "Marginal Subjects: Austro-Hungarian POWs in Russia, 1914-1918." (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2000), 4.

(cont'd)
tradition may not be very strong in Turkey, some people, especially those who have held high political and military positions, tend to leave behind autobiographies; unfortunately we do not see captivity narratives among them. The two former presidents, for example, did not leave anything in the way of memoirs, and the short journalistic and obviously inadequate biographical works on them do not even mention that their subjects were prisoners during the Great War. Did the author not discover that his subjects had been POWs? Is it possible that he simply chose to, or perhaps was asked to, leave that fact out of his work? Unfortunately, we do not have adequate answers for these questions, but we will see some possible explanations by the end of this chapter.

When looking at the writings of those who have left behind at least some sort of life narrative, we notice that these works are not always complete. Asım Gündüz, former POW and Chief of Staff of the Turkish armed forces during the Republican period, published his war memoirs, but they did not include a word about being taken captive by the British. Said Nursi published his Tarihçe-i Hayatım (Short History of My Life), but

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11 Despite the suggestive statements of scholars working in Ottoman studies regarding the “weak” tradition of first person literature (life narratives), the British officers, especially intelligence officers, thought the captured or dead Ottoman officers to be avid diary keepers, which eased the work of the intelligence officers by providing them with ready information about Ottoman forces. This, one hopes, also questions the sometimes undue weight given to the lack of literacy as the sole reason for a general lack of first-person literature in the Ottoman Empire. Perhaps the problem with the lack of literature is not that it was not written, but simply that it was not kept or made publicly available. Richard Popplewell, “British Intelligence in Mesopotamia, 1914-16,” Intelligence and National Security 5 (1990): 139-72. Unfortunately, my research in England did not turn up many of these confiscated journals.

12 Mustafa Atalay, Cemal Gürsel ve Hayatı (Ankara: Kültür Matbaası, 1960); Türk Ansiklopedisi, s.v. “Gürsel, Cemal,” and “Sunay, Cevdet.”

13 Asım Gündüz, Harıralarım (İstanbul: Kervan, 1973); and Türk İstiklâl Harbine Katılan Tümen, 125. (cont’d)
mentions that he was a POW in Russia only in passing when he makes a point that the Russian authorities gave him more freedom in captivity to preach Islam than the Turkish republican authorities after he was repatriated. Another interesting case is that of Colonel Arif [Baytin], who was a POW in Russia. Baytin published his war memoirs, but the narrative ends just before he is captured. This pattern is seen in other nations as well; the war narrative ends when captivity begins. But what makes Baytin's case interesting is that he is believed to be the same person as A(土耳其). Süleyman, who published his captivity narrative in a serialized form in the Turkish daily Vakit. While he was commonly known as Arif Bey among the troops, he chose initialize his first name as he published the Vakit narratives. Why a semi-hidden identity?

The existing captivity narratives can be grouped into two general categories: 1) those that were published immediately after the war, and 2) those published much later. All of those published soon after the war, and they number only a few, were published by

15Arif Baytin, İlk Dünya Harbinde Kafkas Cephesi: 29. Tümen ve 3. Alay Sancağı Hattraları (İstanbul: Vakit, 1946). Kaymakam Şerif Bey's memoirs of Sarıkamış are the same way; the volume ends when the author is captured. Ironically, the last chapter of the memoir is titled "Our Last Day." Şerif Bey, Kaymakam, Sarıkamış Bata Manevrasi ve Meydan Muharebesi (İstanbul: Necmi-i İstiklal Matbaası, 1922). There is also a modern Turkish version of this text: Kaymakam Şerif Bey, Sarıkamış Bata Manevrasi, ed. Murat Çulcu (İstanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1998).
16Hynes, Soldiers' Tale, 234.
17Cemil Kutlu, "I. Dünya Savaşındaki Rusya'daki Türk Savaş Eşirleri ve Bunların Yurda Döndürülmeleri Faaliyetleri," (Ph.D diss., Atatürk University, Erzurum, 1997), xviii. Kutlu noticed that that some passages from Baytin's İlk Dünya Harbinde were verbatim from the Vakit narrative.
the authors themselves. In some cases they tend to be polemical or defensive.18 A majority of the captivity narratives were published decades after the event, some by the former POWs themselves; others were published posthumously by the families of the prisoners. Some of the published narratives originated as diaries and journals kept by the prisoners in the camps—which clearly adds to their immediacy and accuracy as historical sources. Other former POWs wrote down their memories of the camps soon after repatriation. Although they kept diaries and memoirs which were copied or rewritten, in most cases it is not clear whether the POWs ever intended to publish their narratives. Usually the former POWs shared their experiences, at least to a degree, with their families or other relatives. In one case, a former POW kept his captivity experience all to himself, and it was only after his death that his family discovered his captivity diary among his belongings and learned that he had been a prisoner in World War I.19 Again, why such secrecy and reluctance to publish or even let one’s relatives know of the experience? Judging from the publication background of these POW narratives, it seems

18Ihsan Paşa’s narrative, for example, may have been defensive, for some junior officers who were in captivity with him accused him of behaving “distastefully” in captivity. Ihsan Paşa escaped from captivity as soon as he could. Perhaps the junior officers felt that as the highest-ranking officer, he should have stayed in captivity in charge of the Ottoman POWs. In fact, Colonel Arif Baytin, who was the second highest-ranking officer after Ihsan Paşa, is also accused of “not being a good leader.” Perhaps that explains his serialized narrative of captivity, but not his use of a different name. “A” in A. Süleyman may have referred to Arif. It is also important to mention that both Ihsan and Arif pursued political careers. Cemil Kutlu, “I. Dünya Savaşında Rusya’daki Türk Savaş Esirleri ve Bunun Yurda Dönürülmemeleri Faaliyetleri,” xviii. One could also mention here Eyüb Sabri, Esaret Hatıraları, ed., Nejat Sefercioğlu (İstanbul: Tercuman, 1978). This work was originally published as Bir Esrîn Hatıraları. Gaziantep’teki İngiliz Tecavüzünün Başılangıc ve Madârda Türk Üzerasına Yapılan Zulüm ve İşkenceler (Ankara: Öğüt Matabaası, 1338).


(cont’d)
clear that the prisoners wanted to keep the memory of their captivity alive in some way, even if they did not share it publicly. The fact that they kept diaries, journals, or later took the time to write down their memories of captivity is strongly indicative of this. If the captivity was an experience the former POWs wanted to forget, they would have erased the traces of their experience, instead of writing about it, or keeping what was already written as a reminder of their experience. Therefore, the assumption that captivity was something they wanted to forget as an explanation for the lack of written captivity narratives is not always adequate. The question remains: why did the Ottoman, or more precisely Turkish, prisoners choose not to share their experiences with the general public?

It was implied earlier that the Ottoman or Turkish society was not the only place where the captivity experience did not become a part of the war narrative. Other scholars considering the reasons why there exist so few captivity memoirs from World War I offer some possible explanations. Some of these explanations also apply to the Ottoman case. Samuel Hynes, for example, argues that in some cases the captivity did not last long enough to make a coherent story. Some POWs escaped and others were exchanged before they had spent a long time in captivity; a short captivity was not much of an experience to write about.20 There were certainly a good number of Ottoman POWs who were captured towards the end of the war, when the fronts started to fall one by one.

20 Hynes, Soldiers' Tale, 234.
Even though large numbers of Ottomans were captured towards the end of the war, perhaps as late as the fall of 1918, they did not necessarily return home right after the armistice was signed. The British and the Russians, whether out of lack of transport or because they simply wanted to keep the Ottomans in captivity and stop them from joining the Nationalist forces, kept them for quite a while following the armistice. Even if some managed to escape or were repatriated, there were still many who stayed in captivity long enough to make a story.21

Hynes believes that the disgrace of captivity was another reason why there was such a reluctance among prisoners to tell their stories in personal narratives. Another possible explanation that Hynes adduces is that compared to the trench experience, captivity simply was not terrible enough to dwell on. Perhaps captivity also was not heroic enough. Comparing World War I to World War II in a similar respect, the same scholar states that there were many more captivity narratives from the Second World War. Hynes dismisses the argument that the greater number of POWs in WW II explains why that war yielded more captivity narratives. Instead, he surmises that it was not the number of prisoners in the war, but rather what was done to the prisoners while in captivity that made their stories surface and become an integral part of the war itself.22

This seems a valid argument. If we follow Hynes’s argument to the end, then those who

21 Even as late as 19 May 1920 there were at least 32,968 Turks in British captivity alone. War Office, Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire During the Great War, 1914-1920 (London: HMSO, 1922), 638. We do not know exactly how many Ottomans remained in Russia by this time, but some of those POWs who have left narratives returned as late as 1922.

22 Hynes, Soldiers’ Tales, 234-36.
suffered in captivity more than others would be more likely to make their captivity stories known.

While no one, including officers in the modern Turkish army, likes to admit it openly, the idea that being a prisoner was shameful is, in fact, a valid explanation for the limited number of narratives. After all, a soldier, once he becomes a prisoner, loses his identity as a soldier; he goes through a transformation from being in relative charge of his destiny to being completely helpless, with his destiny in the hands of his captors. It turns out that it was not only the POWs themselves who saw shame in captivity; others, non-POWs, also thought less of those who had been captured. As there is no explicit example of this attitude from the Ottoman Empire, we may use one example from France. French veterans of the Great War considered it shameful to be a POW; thus the repatriated POWs were not welcomed by the existing association of veterans’ organizations (Anciens Combattants de '14), which challenged their status as combatants. Accordingly, the former POWs in France founded their own federation of combatant prisoners. While associations specifically for former POWs were established in many of the nations that took part in World War I or other wars, we do not find any similar organizations specifically founded by or for POWs in either the Ottoman Empire, or the Turkish Republic. While keeping in mind the limited development of civil society institutions in Turkey, this may have at least two implications: 1) the returning Turkish POWs were

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welcomed into existing or newly established general veteran organizations as they were not viewed as any less soldiers or victims of the war as, for example, their French counterparts were; 2) the former Turkish POWs did not establish their own societies because they did not want to set themselves apart from those who had not become POWs during the Great War.24

Another and perhaps better-known example in which captivity carried a clearly negative implication is that of Japanese culture. It may be surprising to learn that there really was no stigma attached to being a POW in pre-modern Japan and, in fact, the Japanese POWs of the Russo-Japanese war of 1905 received a hero’s welcome when they returned to Japan. Clearly, sometime between the Great War and World War II, the Japanese attitude towards captivity changed dramatically. Watching the war in Europe from afar, the Japanese military authorities worried about the number of prisoners taken during the Great War by each nation. Having convinced themselves that the western soldiers were all too willing to surrender, they argued that if the idea of surrendering spread to Japan, there “would be a national disaster” in time of war. From here on we see a significant change in the attitude towards captivity. Soon the Japanese army thought capture to be shameful. The Army Field Service Code, by leaving the “Prisoner of War”

24Unfortunately, my attempted research in veterans organizations in Turkey—Harp Muharipleri Cemiyeti (Organization of Combatant Soldiers) and Malîl Gaziler Cemiyeti (Organization of Disabled Veterans)—did not produce much concrete information as the earlier records (1920s-1940s) simply had disappeared. It seems that the POWs were welcomed by these organizations as I found the names of some former POWs’ descendants among the member rosters.
undefined, ultimately did not recognize such a category and thus turned it into a moral precept that bound even the non-combatants.\textsuperscript{25}

There are no similar concrete public or military examples of shame being attached to being a prisoner in Turkish or Islamic culture; however, a few publications appeared before or during the war that should be mentioned in this connection. Although some of these works are not specifically on captivity, they relate to a general discourse about captivity. Some of these books were read, as the enlisted men generally could not read, to large groups of men by officers. One is \textit{Tarihte Osmanli Neferi}, or “The Ottoman Soldier in History.” While making no judgmental statements about captivity, this work attempts to instill in these soldiers the sense that even in captivity Ottoman soldiers do their best to help their own side. In the case of the example given, the Ottoman soldier manages to blow up the gunpowder storage of the Austrian castle where he is being held while the Ottoman forces are besieging it.\textsuperscript{26} This is nothing negative about being a prisoner, but a simple lesson on Ottoman soldiers behaving like combatants even while in captivity.

In addition, there appeared a short book, \textit{Mehmetçiğin Esareti-Yahut Esir Olma!!!} (Mehmet’s captivity, or Don’t become a Prisoner of War!!!) by H. Cemal.\textsuperscript{27} While the title of the book might imply a much stronger message, the text simply recounts the story


\textsuperscript{26}Ahmet Refik [Altunay], \textit{Tarihte Osmanli Neferi} (Istanbul: Matbaa-yi Askeriye, 1915), 17-19.

\textsuperscript{27}H. Cemal, \textit{Mehmetçiğin Esareti-yahut Esir Olma!!!} (Dersaadet: Matbaa-yi Nefaset, 1329/1913). (cont’d)
of a group of Ottoman soldiers who became prisoners in the hands of the Bulgarians
during the Balkan Wars. The image it portrays is that life in captivity is miserable and
very difficult. The message conveyed in the above books are not so much that there is
shame in captivity, but that it is a terrible experience and one should do his best not to be
captured, “for captivity is an unbearable misfortune and trouble. Captivity does not take
away one’s life quickly like Azrael [the Angel of Death]; it eats away at one’s conscience
and dignity like a parasite.” In his war and captivity memoir of the Balkan Wars, the
same author states that, when he and his comrades were captured, he felt dismayed and
confused because he had not been prepared for or taught about captivity either at the
military academy or in the army.

Sanli Asker Ali Cavus (“Sergeant Ali, Illustrious Soldier”) is somewhat similar,
but much more simplistic and rather like a textbook, in the sense of being written at a
level where anyone can get its message. The story is full of not-so-subtle messages about
how an ideal Ottoman soldier should behave. Just in case the “simple” Anatolian soldier
does not get the message, each paragraph ends with a phrase that gives the gist or moral
of the paragraph. In one instance, during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78,
overwhelming numbers of Russians surround the outmatched Ottomans and call on them

28For POWs in the Balkan Wars, see Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Report of the
International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars (Washington, D.C.:

to surrender. But the Ottoman officers and soldiers respond together with "we would rather die than surrender."\(^{31}\) Ottoman headquarters urged the officers to read this work to their men while in training.\(^{32}\) The idea that on the battlefield one must "fight until the last bullet is spent, the bayonet broken, the sword bent,"\(^{33}\) seems drastic. There are also similar expectations of soldiers of earlier Islamic empires. We can safely assume, however, that the idea behind these teachings was not that one should never become a POW, but that a soldier should fight until captivity becomes the last option. This type of "education" was designed to discourage soldiers from surrendering to the enemy at the first sign of trouble. In fact, as mentioned earlier, desertion had become a major problem for the Ottoman armies and the authorities were very concerned about it. This desertion was mostly internal, but there were also cases of desertion to the enemy, especially among the Arab and other non-Turkish Ottomans.\(^{34}\)


\(^{32}\) Ismail Hakki, 4.

\(^{33}\) *Erlik meydanında son kurşun bitinceye, şunun kırmaya, ki lcm eğrilinceye kadar savaş Allahı da asla hatırlan çıkrma.* Ismail Hakki, İzmirli, *Yügitlere Öğütler-Gazilere Armağan*, 42.

\(^{34}\) In fact, the Ottoman military authorities were quite concerned about the issue of "legitimate" captivity versus desertion to the enemy. When the POWs escaped and returned, at least during the war, they were interrogated. Single-page interrogation questions, unfortunately for the historian, are chiefly concerned with determining whether the former POW deserted (*firar ve iltica*) to the enemy side or whether his capture was genuine (*ducar-ı esaret*). ATASE, World War I, K348, D1391, F1-1. For comparison one could consider the post-captivity questionnaire of the American forces during the same war. The American questionnaire was 8 pages long and most of the questions concerned how the POW was treated in captivity. Department of State, Enclosure: "Questions to be put to escaped American Prisoners," 27 October 1918, (cont’d)
Perhaps the most damaging evidence of any stigma attached to captivity comes from a captivity memoir serialized in an Ottoman newspaper in 1920. Here the former prisoner begins his captivity narrative with this statement: “The ordinary words expended on how it is preferable to choose death instead of captivity cannot be acceptable in our opinion.” Furthermore, the former POW argued, to pass such a severe sentence on a warrior who becomes a prisoner, simply because of preordained luck, cannot be within the bounds of humanity.35 Presumably, if a negative cultural judgment relating to captivity was not a possibility at all, the former POW would not have wasted his words on this topic. Accordingly, there was the possibility, even if remote, that there was a segment of public opinion that would condemn captivity.

Besides the limited evidence presented above, there do not seem to be any concrete notions associated with being a POW in Ottoman society. Although the evidence comes from an earlier period, it is useful to mention that there is a strong indication that the condition of being a captive (or a slave, as many war captives were enslaved) in the sixteenth-century Islamic world manifested itself as adverse fortune. According to at least one scholar, this idea of “reversal of good fortune” was one of the main reasons why captured prisoners were treated relatively well, though one should remember that prisoners were valuable as either slaves or possible sources of ransom.

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money in exchange for their freedom. We should also consider the fact that in the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire, captivity and slavery could lead to power and authority in the Ottoman government. Clearly, not much of this somewhat positive view of captivity remained by the twentieth century.

While there may not be commonly and clearly defined cultural norms concerning captivity in Ottoman and Turkish cultures, we should not discount the possibility of personal shame felt by the prisoners themselves. In one case, for example, an Ottoman who was captured by the British and spent some time in Egypt kept mementoes from his captivity, especially photographs. Curiously, however, he decided to scratch his image out of these group photos of his captivity friends, who included his older brother. Wishing that he had never been there, this man attempted to change his past by removing his image from a captivity photograph. Many years after his captivity, thirty-five years to be exact, he decided to write down his memoirs of captivity and his role in the War of Independence after he was repatriated. His son, who actually prepared the work for printing approximately forty-four years after it was written down, adds that his father “could not digest his captivity.” The same man, after repatriation, fought in the Nationalist forces against the Greeks, but this time his side won and he was not captured. Thus, when he returned home his “head was high and full of pride.”

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37İbrahim Sorguç, *İstiklal Harbi Hâşreti: Kaybolan Filistin*, ed. Erdoğan Sorguç (İzmir: E. Sorguç, 1996), (cont’d)

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36
What did it mean to be a prisoner of war to the prisoners themselves while they were still in the prison camps, before they had a "chance" to fight in the Nationalist army and "recover" their pride?

Although more than one POW claimed that no one who had not been a prisoner of war could understand what it meant to be a prisoner,38 using their own words we might attempt to understand what they said it was. Writing to a government office in Istanbul to complain about not being able receive news from his family, one POW claimed that "life in captivity is more dangerous than being in the Gallipoli campaign, but you cannot understand it because you have not experienced this kind of oppression (mūzāhim) and suffering (meşakk)".39 Deplorable (elim) and melancholic (hazin) grief (ekdar) of captivity40 causes, said an Ottoman doctor in captivity, "our oppressed (ezilmüş) and worn-out (yipranmış) minds enter a vegetative state (hububat)".41 Captivity for one was a "crisis of uncertainty" (buhran-i mūphemiyet) of one's surroundings that exhausted one's heart and soul with deep sorrow.42 "It was very difficult," one Turkish nationalist said, "to be in the position of only a spectator (temāşgir) for the son of the Uigur and future of

16, 59.


39 Mustafa Ankan, 165.

40 Vaveyla, 1-3 Mart 1333/1-3 March 1917, number 63, special issue, p. 7.

41 Vaveyla, 1-3 Mart 1333/1-3 March 1917, number 63, special issue, p. 7.

42 Vaveyla, 1-3 Mart 1333/1-3 March 1917, number 63, special issue, p. 8-9.
While the prisoners were clearly overwhelmed with feelings of sorrow and wasted years of precious life, they interpreted their captivity as bad luck, as kismet, a test from God. “Oh my God!” said one, “What humiliating experience it was. Our hands clasped behind our necks, rank and file and officers together, we were herded by the bayonet-weilding Russian soldiers. As if we had all committed some grave sin, the men could not bring themselves to look at the faces of officers, as neither could the officers look at their men.”

“What could we do?” another asked in a letter to his family, “It is divine whim (cilve-i ilahi).” He was seconded by another who characterized his captivity creatively as having been “grasped by the iron claws of cruel fate and thrown into a deep and dangerous whirlpool of despair and calamity.” As is clear from the expressions of the prisoners, the captivity itself was seen as an unfortunate fate. Seeing their captivity in this light must have lightened the weight of having been prisoners of war; after all, if it is fate, no one can escape it.

There may be some universal reasons why POW narratives did not really become a part of the war narrative in general. There are some other reasons that apply specifically to the Ottoman and Turkish case. It is in this direction that we now turn.

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43 Vaveyla, 1-3 Mart 1333/1-3 March 1917, number 63, special issue, p. 9.

44 Başkatipzade Ragip Bey, 80.

45 Mustafa Arıkan, “Asker Mektupları,” p. 32.

46 “Gaddar feleğin pençe-i ahenini arasında,” Vaveyla, 1-3 Mart 1333/1-3 March 1917, number 63, special issue, p. 9. Another one was caught because of “luck and destiny (mukadderat).” Rahmi Apak, 159. (cont’d)
order to see why captivity did not become a part of the Turkish war experience in the early twentieth century and became marginalized, we must examine exactly what World War I meant for Turkey. That is, we must examine—as much as our limited primary and secondary sources allow—the impact of World War I on the Ottoman Empire and Turkey.

The highest estimates for the number of soldiers the Ottoman military fielded during the whole length of the war stand at 2,850,000; some estimates are significantly lower than that. While this kind of information should generally be readily available, even the Turkish Military Archives lack precise information on this matter. We know with any certainty only the exact number of men fielded up to the date of July 1915, which is 1,943,700. Logically, there should have been many more men fielded by the end of the war, but the process of finding more men to fight simply became too difficult for the state. In addition, there were about 500,000 deserters by 1918. As imprecise and varying as they may be, if we look at the military casualties for the Ottoman Empire, we see that 325,000 (804,000 in some sources, a number which presumably also includes


48 ATASE (Office of the Chief of Staff, Military History and Strategic Studies Archives), World War I Collection, K18/D18/F1-1.

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those men who died of diseases contracted at the front) men died in battle, 400,000 were wounded, and 220-250,000 were captured; this brings the total to a range of 975,000-1,450,000 total military casualties for the war.

Table 1.1: Ottoman War Casualties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Official British Death Figures for Turkey</th>
<th>Niall Ferguson</th>
<th>POWs at the end of the War</th>
<th>Wounded</th>
<th>Total Casualties</th>
<th>Total killed as % of total mobilized</th>
<th>Total killed as % of males 15-49</th>
<th>Total soldiers killed as a % of population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>325,000</td>
<td>804,000</td>
<td>220-250,000</td>
<td>400,000</td>
<td>1,454,000</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Niall Ferguson, The Pity of War (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 295, 299, 369. The POW figures have been modified slightly.

Undeniably, without the inclusion of the men who died as a result of diseases, the Ottoman casualties seem small when compared to the total casualties of other countries. Including the non-direct (as a result of disease) deaths increases the death rate to a very high 3.7 percent of the Ottoman population. Still it was not the military casualties of the Great War on the battlefront that had so much impact on Ottoman society; rather it was the casualties on the home front and the soldiers who died from disease during the war that had the greatest effect on Turkey.

Deaths from various diseases were very high in the Ottoman armies. The Third Army in the Eastern front reported that of 118,563 soldiers who died during the war, 51,839 died of diseases. Tevfik Sağlam, Büyük Harpte 3. Orduda Sihhi Hizmet (Istanbul: Askeri Matbaa, 1941), n.p.

War Office, Statistics of the Military Effort, 357; Ahmet Emin [Yalman], Turkey in the World War (New Haven: Yale, 1930), 252-53, 262; and Maurice Larcher, La Guerre turque, 590.

Only Serbia’s total killed as a percentage of population was higher, at 5.7. Niall Ferguson citing Jay Winter, 299.

(cont’d)
When we look at the statistics that give us the numbers of people who lost their lives as either a direct or an indirect result of the Great War and the ensuing War of Independence, we are faced with a completely different picture of how war affected the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish republic. Suddenly, Turkey becomes a country that suffered a very heavy human catastrophe. Although it was Anatolia, not so much Istanbul, that supplied the bulk of the men who went off to fight wars on seven different fronts, it was remembered that during the war and afterwards one walking through the streets of Istanbul could hear nothing but the grieving voices of mothers, wives, and sisters who had lost their sons, husbands, and brothers. Since Istanbul was the capital city at that time and most easily accessible, its deplorable condition may have received more attention than other parts of the empire. The victorious Allies would eventually occupy the city, but it had not been the site of wartime enemy invasion, operating ground for Turkish and Russian armies, and inter-communal warfare between Muslims and Armenians as had regions of Anatolia. During the Great War, prices had risen by about 400 percent, and they would quadruple once again after the Allied occupation of the city. There were severe shortages of coal and wheat. As if the masses of displaced persons and refugees in the capital city were not enough, several hundred thousand anti-Bolshevik White Russians and fugitives arrived in 1918-1920. In addition, there were outbreaks of

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53 Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 146; Ahmed Emin [Yalman], *Turkey in the World War*, (cont'd)
the plague, cholera and typhus all over the country, largely in eastern Anatolia, but also sporadically in Istanbul. Living conditions were deplorable for the public in Istanbul; although the reason for the increase is unclear, the suicide rate in Istanbul went up four hundred percent from 1916 to 1921, with a major increase from 1918 to 1919—that is, at the end of the Great War. Undoubtedly many factors contributed to this increase; however, with the large upsurge coming at the end of the war, one might argue that it was related to war. The poet Nazim Hikmet recounts the deplorable situation of Istanbul at the end of the war in his epic *Kuvayt Milliye* in this way:

Sugar was distant and unreachable like jewels  
Kerosene was equal to the value of molten gold  
And honest, hard-working, poor Istanbulites  
Burned their urine in their number five kerosene lamps  
What they ate was corn cob and barley and seeds of broomstraw  
And the children's necks were thin as straw. . . .

Life was far worse in Anatolia, as it had become a war zone after 1915. By the end of the Great War and the War of Independence, Anatolia's Muslim population had declined by twenty percent. For comparative purposes it should be pointed out that this twenty percent decline in the Muslim population alone was nearly seven times as high as the

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55 Fahreddin Kerim, *Türkiyede Intiharlar Meselesi* (İstanbul: Kader Matbaası, 1932), 23.

total population loss in France, which was the hardest hit country among the European belligerents. In some parts of eastern Anatolia, the percentage of Muslim dead was more than thirty-five percent and in others between twenty-five and thirty-five percent. In some of the former war zones as much as one-half the population was dead and another twenty-five percent had become refugees. It was not only the Muslims who suffered, forty percent of the total Armenian population of Anatolia died. Again this percentage would have been much higher in the eastern provinces. In twelve provinces, mostly in western Anatolia, thirty percent of the women were widows. All this death was not only due to direct warfare. The wars disrupted infrastructure and caused a major labor shortage, which in turn led to famine and epidemics of cholera and typhus.

On the political front, the Ottoman Empire was carved up by the Allies. What was left by the end of the Great War was a ghost of what had existed only a few years earlier. A POW who was from a region to the south—the Arab lands—would return to a completely different place, a place occupied perhaps by the French, or the British. The situation was not much different for parts of Anatolia as well, for two-thirds of this region were occupied by French, British, Italian, and Greek forces. In short, much suffering,

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57 Much has been written and said on this emotionally charged issue. In general, the Armenians claim that the Ottoman authorities massacred 1.5 million Armenians. The Turkish side has admitted that perhaps as many as 600,000 Armenians died, not because of a deliberate massacre, but as result of communal warfare, deportation, disease, famine, and negligence that also killed nearly 2.5 million non-Armenian Ottomans. In this kind of fruitless environment, where one side blames the other, perhaps the issue can only be studied within the bounds of collective remembrance.

death, disease, war, destruction, and poverty were what the returning POWs would have found in their homelands.

The returning prisoners, whether they were returning from a seven-year captivity in Russia or perhaps a shorter one in Egypt or Burma, came back to a country that seemed to have suffered much more than they had in captivity. Certainly, the prisoners had experienced a hard life in captivity, some more than others, but it must have seemed to them and to others that the public on the home front had endured far greater hardship due to inter-communal warfare, inflation, famine, disease, invasion, and dislocation. Even if the prisoners did not think that way, contemporary observers, including soldiers returning from one front only to head to another one against the Greeks, may have thought that the prisoners had not suffered as much as they had. In fact, at least some prisoners in Egypt believed that the people on the home front thought of them as having a relatively easy life in captivity. This image comes out in the journals and newspapers that the POWs published in captivity. In a short story about post-war Istanbul by Yakup Kadri [Karaosmanoğlu], a repatriated POW, Namık, goes to see his friends from pre-war days. Every time he sees one of them, he is disappointed by their reaction. Instead of asking about his captivity, they tell him that he should have stayed there, for life in captivity could not have been worse than it was in Istanbul.

How could the former POWs tell their stories in this kind of environment when

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59 Hatıra-yı Esaret, 1336/1920, no page numbers.

60 Yakub Kadri [Karaosmanoğlu], "Hasretten Hasrete," in Seçme Yazlar, eds. Yakub Kadri, Falih Rifki, and (cont'd)
the whole country had suffered so much from war? Even if they wanted to, could they have found anyone to listen to them? The answer would have to be negative. Arguably, they did not tell their stories because public compassion was monopolized by the tide of refugees and the anguish of bereaved families who had lost their loved ones in one of the many ways an Ottoman citizen could lose his or her life during those times. Compared to the grief of those who had lost family members or other relatives, the hard times the prisoners went through may have seemed trivial to both the prisoner himself and to those around him. Consequently, either the prisoners did not attempt in any significant way to tell their stories, or what they attempted simply could not compete for public compassion when there were so many other people suffering.

In addition, some of the returning POWs found themselves on the front lines once again against the imperialist forces invading what little remained of the Ottoman Empire at that time. Unlike the other countries that had become relatively normalized by 1919, Turkey was just beginning its War of Independence. There were considerable numbers of returning POWs who joined the Nationalist forces, some even becoming prisoners once again, this time in the hands of the Greeks.61

Retroactive Interference: The War of Independence and the Great War

Writing about the memory of the First World War in Europe, the late George L.

61 At least one example of a repatriated POW becoming a POW once again is in Tegmen Cemil Zeki (Yoldas), Kendi Kalemdinden Tegmen Cemil Zeki (Yoldas): Anlar-Mektuplar, ed. Engin Berber (Istanbul: Arba, 1994).
Mosse argued that especially in the defeated nations there was a general feeling of pride at having taken part in and sacrificed for a noble cause, mixed with the mourning that dominated the memory of that war. Thus, the reality of the war experience was transformed into what he calls the myth of the war experience, which looked back upon the Great War as a meaningful and even sacred event. If, as Mosse argues, remembrance involves the conferring of a certain status on the bereaved and the event, and the formation of dignified narratives to explain the necessity and value of the losses, then what is remembered in Turkey is not the First World War, but the War of Independence. Arguably, in the case of Turkey, the status of noble and sacred event that Mosse thinks of has been accorded the War of Independence even though the Great War was much more of a human catastrophe. Thus the myth of the war experience in Turkey represents the War of Independence.

In Turkey the status and remembrance of the First World War came under challenge. Some of these challenges to the remembrance of that war were immediate and came about quite naturally, but others were the result of seemingly more deliberate ways of writing, representing and remembering the history of Turkey and the Turkish people.

In a recent work on war and remembrance, Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan argue that “the nature of warfare is a critical determinant of the activity of remembrance. A

succession of wars or other kinds of violent disruptions present a different challenge to remembrance in the case of one single war, however large. In other words, if an upheaval is followed by other dramatic events, the latter present a challenge to the remembrance of the former upheaval. For example, decades of continuous conflict in Russian and Israeli societies—civil war, collectivization, and purges in Russia and numerous Israeli conflicts with Arab nations—produced what the authors call a “retroactive interference.” That is, each new violent disruption challenged the primacy of the earlier conflicts. The memory of the 1948 Israeli war of independence, so powerful in the 1950s and 1960s, now seems to be on the decline as a result of the interference of more recent conflicts which for Israeli society were also more controversial. Arguably, this is exactly what happened in Turkey. In both Russia and Israel the traumatic events that challenged the primacy of the original event came some time after that original event. However, in the case of Turkey, the memory of the original event, which in this case is the First World War, was challenged almost immediately by the national struggle (Milli Mücadele) and the War of Independence.

Although not violent, but a turmoil nevertheless, one could also add to this list of disruptions the ensuing reforms and changes sometimes collectively called the Turkish

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64 Winter and Sivan, 34; Emmanuel Sivan, “Private Pain and Public Remembrance in Israel,” in *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, 177-204, especially 196-97; Catherine Merridale, “War, Death, and Remembrance in Soviet Russia,” 61-83, especially 62-63.
Revolution, which changed a number of things from the alphabet to the type of hats Turkish men wore in public. Certain sections of the population, not wanting to easily give up the Ottoman and Islamic identity for a Turkish one, openly revolted against the state, although these revolts were mostly localized. Those who had challenged the state and its reforms were tried in “independence tribunals” during the early republican period. While this immediate retroactive interference of the War of Independence and the revolution in the remembrance of Great War was unavoidable, the Great War’s remembrance, or the lack thereof, was also affected in other, more intentional ways as well.

The First World War in post-war Turkey soon came to be regarded as an unnecessary war, a war that the Ottoman Empire should not have entered. The fact that the war was lost certainly did not help its standing when compared to the War of Independence, which had the advantage of being more successful against those who had invaded Turkey after the Great War: French, Italians, and especially the Greeks. The entry of the Ottomans into the Great War was portrayed as a foolish move by those who were in power. Although one could make an argument that entry really was unnecessary and foolish, this thoroughly negative portrayal of the decision to enter the

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66 Admittedly, these types of works, either pamphlets or books, started to appear at the very end of the war. The authors usually were anti-C.U.P. and were perhaps heartened by the court-martial of the C.U.P. leaders in absentia. Some Turkish scholars from the 1950s on attempted successfully to “justify” the Ottoman entry in the war as the best of the options available to the C.U.P. leaders in power.
war came as a part of the new national historiography that succeeded in discr...led, and the Sultans. In order to assure its legitimacy and hegemony, the Republican state had to delegitimize the Ottoman government and its leaders prior to and during the Great War. Accordingly, the likes of those C.U.P. leaders at the top were portrayed, at best, perhaps somewhat truthfully, as helpless tools of the Germans and those who had simply “sold” the country to German interests, or alternatively as people who lacked intelligence and common sense. This view, ever-present in the nation state’s discourse, even appeared in the epic poetry of Nazim Hikmet:

We saw the fire and betrayal.  
And in the market of the bloody bankers  
those who sold the country to the Germans  
and rested on the bodies of those who had died [in war]  
now worried about their own lives

Once the war was portrayed as the work of those unscrupulous leaders who had dragged the country into another war right after the disastrous Balkan Wars, and fled the country after the defeat to save themselves while leaving the country in the hands of the invading Entente, the war itself was made unworthy of the sacrifices it claimed. There are some exceptions to this view of the First World War, notably the defense of the

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Dardanelles, which sometimes is seen in the later historiography as a prototype of the War of Independence. This is obviously the case; besides the battle of Kut al-Amara—which is rarely mentioned at all—it was the only major battle the Turks had won against the Allies. More importantly, though, it was there that the future leader of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal, made a name for himself as a successful military commander. In short, in order to elevate the War of Independence to a higher status and to show the Turkish people what they and their new leaders had achieved when compared to the First World War, the status of the latter had to be adjusted negatively. Even if there were no such “adjustment,” how could any other war be equal in any way to the War of Independence, viewed by one historian as:

. . . a war that was fought, on the one hand, against conservative, reactionary, traditionalist, utopian internal opposition forces, and on the other, against imperialist, capitalist, colonialist and opportunist outside forces in order to separate the Turkish people from their political, social, economic, legal, cultural, philosophical past in all kinds of areas and direct them towards life in a modern world. [It is also] a war that was the vanguard and an example to the rebellions of oppressed peoples and thus a universally-qualified war of freedom that opened new phases both in Turkish history and in world history.

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69 I am not challenging the sacrifices made and the strategic importance of Gallipoli. It was a very important battle that claimed many more lives than the siege of Kut al-Amara.
Clearly, such patriotic importance deliberately assigned to the War of Independence contrasts with the "unnecessary" and barely remembered Great War.71

As suggested above, the myth of the war experience, as defined by George Mosse, in Turkey involved the War of Independence and not the Great War. Mosse further argued that the deaths of so many soldiers during the war was of crucial importance to Germany, for without the dead there would have been no myth at all.72 That is, the greater the sacrifice, the more easily the event played into the myth of the war experience. While some sources describing the battle scenes of the War of Independence resort to imagery like "the plains and hills were full of dead soldiers,"73 the actual battle casualties of that war were just a fraction when compared to those of the Great War.74

Viewed in this way, the War of Independence also represents a clear break with the past, and thus historians, especially Turkish historians, generally adopt the year 1923 as the starting date for the history of modern Turkey.75 This is most common in books written in the early republican period. According to one critic this practice continues to

71 This in many ways reminiscent of the status assigned to the Great Patriotic War in Soviet Russia. Catherine Merridale, "War, Death, and Remembrance in Soviet Russia," 62-64.

72 George Mosse, Fallen Soldiers, 72.

73 The above quotation is in Enver B. Şapolyo, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Tarihi (Istanbul: Yeni Matbaa, 1958), 84.

74 The War of Independence claimed 9,167 battle dead and 31,173 wounded as cited in Anıtlarımız, Şehilerimiz (Erzurum: Atatürk Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1978), 71. It is neither possible nor necessary to distinguish the civilian casualties each of the wars claimed.

75 Attempting to give a historical and political background to the founding of the Turkish republic, some works start with the year 1918. In this way a contrast also becomes possible between a chaotic Ottoman Empire and the orderly republic that replaces it.

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this day; the early years of the twentieth century—that is, the end of the Ottoman period—are simply deemed unimportant.76

In 1923-24, middle and high-school education was reorganized, partially on the basis of the Belgian system of education. During this educational reform, a class called Malumat-i Vataniyye (National Information) was introduced in the seventh and eighth grades, where students learned about the “new” Turkish nation starting with the War of Independence, to the exclusion of the Ottomans.77 Starting in the mid- to late 1920s, the history of the Turkish republic in junior-high and high school history textbooks began with the conclusion of the treaty of Mudros in 1918. The Great War was completely overlooked except for a brief and limited review, when the life of Mustafa Kemal was discussed. In these history and sometimes sociology textbooks, the overwhelming topics of importance were the War of Independence and the Turkish revolution.78 Not surprisingly, in the earlier decades of the Turkish republic, the nationalist historiography was even less kind to Ottoman history in general. Scholars generally agree that in its nation-building project, the young republic attempted at first to reject and exclude its

78See Enver Ziya Karal, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Tarihi (1918-1960) (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basimevi, 1960). This book was “accepted” as a history textbook for high school by the Ministry of Education. It went through several editions, but no major change was made with the exception of bringing it up to date; a very similar organization is found in Enver Benhan Şapolyo, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Tarihi (Istanbul: Yeni Matbaa, 1958); Erdal Aslan, "Devrim Tarihi Ders Kitapları," in Tarih Öğretimi ve Ders Kitapları, 296-98; Ahmet Eşikcumalı, "Ideology and Education: Reconstructing the Turkish Curriculum for Social and Cultural Change, 1923-1946," 27-28, 38, 152-53, 211.
Ottoman past in the true Hobsbawmian style of invention of tradition.\textsuperscript{79} This sort of exclusion may help the nationalist historiography show that there was a clear break with the Ottoman past and that the republican history stands on its own. Unfortunately for the historians of the Great War, that war becomes by this exclusion a part of the now-defunct Ottoman Empire and only of limited importance to the Republic of Turkey, despite the fact that it was the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the Great War that set the stage for the War of Independence. For example, in the official \textit{Türk Ansiklopedisi} published by the Ministry of Education, the First World War is covered in 24.5 pages with only 5.5 pages devoted to the Ottoman involvement. Yet the War of Independence is examined in 31.5 pages.\textsuperscript{80} In another encyclopedia, the ratio is 6 to 22 in favor of the War of Independence.\textsuperscript{81}

This exclusion of the Great War from the nationalist historiography and the


\textsuperscript{80}\textit{Türk Ansiklopedisi} (Ankara: Maarif Matbasi, 1943-1984), s.v. “Dünya Harbi, I,” and “İstiklal Harbi.”

\textsuperscript{81}\textit{Yeni Türk Ansiklopedisi} (İstanbul: Otüken Yayınevi, 1985), s.v. “Birinci Dünya Savaşı,” and “Millî Mücadele.”
exaltation of the national struggle and the War of Independence for a considerable number of years have resulted in what one may call a flood of publications on the latter war. Some of these works are general histories of the War of Independence, but numerous others cover localized aspects of this war.82 Besides histories that often highlight only the role of a city, town, or even a village in the War of Independence, there appeared professional and amateur histories of the roles of teachers,83 women,84 people of religion,85 or ethnic and minority groups86 who had some part to play in the war. These histories of the roles of various places and groups in the War of Independence constitute nothing less than a process of legitimization through having taken some part, however little or large, in a war that has arguably defined the Turkish nation.87 While there may be

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82 Although there are hundreds of these works, two examples—one of the earliest and one of the latest—will suffice: Hüsnü Açıksöz, İstiklal Harbinde Kastamonu (Kastamonu: Kastamonu Vilayet Matbaası, 1933); Faruk Yılmaz, Kurtuluş Savaşı ve Sonrasında Niğde (Niğde: n.p., 1998).


87 While I was conducting research for this dissertation in Turkey, I contacted many people to talk to them about their late relatives who took part in the Great War. While these descendants were almost always very reluctant and unwilling to talk about their relatives’ World War I experience, those whose relatives had also some role to play in the War of Independence were always eager to share what they knew. In some cases I received comments that the relative had served in both wars, but they knew only about the War of Independence.
hundreds of these works, there has not been a serious study of the Great War with the exception of the rather tactical and strategic studies published along with works on the War of Independence by the history section of the Turkish Armed Forces.

This disinterest in the Great War is also visible in other areas. While there are numerous novels, and scholarly studies of these novels on the War of Independence, one is hard pressed to find any works of literature that deal directly with World War I with the exception of a few on the defense of Gallipoli. If the Great War is covered at all in a novel, it is used as a rhetorical tool to showcase the war in the Dardanelles as a prototype of the War of Independence. This may also explain why novels and poetry on the battles at the Dardanelles, though a part of the First World War, are usually included in various anthologies of “Turkish literature and the War of Independence.” In other words, the battle at the Dardanelles is simply appropriated into republican history.

Perhaps a relatively recent work of juvenile literature called Bu Yurdu Bize Verenler [Those Who Gave us This Land] will serve as a good example of at least a couple of the points made so far. In this short work, the author traces the lives of four heroes, each of whom is introduced with a bold caption as “from among the heroes of our War of Liberation.” Two of these heroes served in the Dardanelles campaign during the Great War and later joined the War of Independence, which forms the major part of the story,

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(cont’d)
while the other two are associated only with the War of Independence. Although this work is an example of juvenile literature, other examples abound. Clearly, the implication here is that participation in the War of Independence was a necessary quality of those who “gave us this land.” This process is nothing less than a selective co-optation of Ottoman history and the Great War into the national history and literature of the Turkish republic.

In fact, we see a similar attitude towards the Great War in the post-war Turkish film industry as well. In the early republican period, the national struggle and the War of Independence were the most popular film subjects. Footage from the War of Independence, sometimes featuring Mustafa Kemal, was shown to the public as “documentary” film. Sometimes making use of war footage to make the film more realistic, the first directed films about the War of Independence started to appear soon afterward. The earliest of these were *Ateşten Gömlek (The Trial by Fire)* in 1923, *Ankara Postası (Courier of Ankara)* in 1928, in 1932 *Bir Millet Uyanıyor (A Nation Awakens)*, *Vatan için (For the Motherland)* and *Yüzbaşı Tahsin (Captain Tahsin)* in 1951. Although not nearly as prevalent as those about the War of Independence, in the 1950s films about the Turkish involvement in the Korean War started to appear. The Great

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War had been passed over once again as a potential subject of war films. Although we cannot tell how many people watched these films, in the early decades of the Republic they had the potential to reach a large number of people in a society where the rate of literacy was still very low. For instance, it was estimated that in Istanbul alone nearly 50,000 people visited cinemas each day during the week, and that approximately 100,000 went to the cinemas on the weekends.\(^{92}\)

The myth of the war experience, or the War of Independence, made excellent use of the visual and textual materials to dramatize and romanticize war. This was done, as in Germany, not only through pictures and films, but also through symbols such as war cemeteries and war monuments.\(^{93}\) With the exception of the war monument in Gallipoli, which was financed with money donated by the public on the urging of a Turkish newspaper, the remainder of grand scale war monuments in Turkey are dedicated to the War of Independence; some of these monuments are part of larger “monument complexes.”\(^{94}\)

\(^{92}\) Department of State, 867.4061/3, “A report by Consul in Istanbul on Turkish motion picture theaters,” 24 October 1924.

\(^{93}\) George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*.

\(^{94}\) Perusing the pages of the three-volume semi-official *Cephelerden Kurtuluş Savaşı'na*, which features photographs of war cemeteries and monuments, certainly gives this impression. Mehmet Özel, *Cephelerden Kurtuluş Savaşı'na: İmparatorluktan Cumhuriyet'e* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1992). An article, “Meşhul Asker Kimdir?” (“Who is the Unknown Soldier?”), appearing in *Resimli Ay* on the occasion of the unveiling of the unknown soldier monument in Dumlupınar—one of the important battles of the War of Independence against the Greeks—reasoned that while the *Mehmetçik* (literally, “little Mehemet,” nickname given to Turkish soldiers) monument represented all unknown soldiers of “our history,” he was born in Dumlupınar. M. Zekeriyə, “Meşhul Asker Kimdir?” *Resimli Ay* (September, 1340/1924), p. 1. At other monuments to the dead, even when which war the monument represented was (cont’d)
The Great War and its veterans were overlooked in other areas as well. It is generally accepted that the Republican government, bound by treaty to pay off the Ottoman public debt, was short on financial resources. In 1925, during an informal debate in the parliament, this financial difficulty was cited as the reason for not giving the disabled veterans of the Great War public assistance at all, while the veterans of the War of Independence were awarded cash or land by the government. Once again, the Great War and its invalid veterans were ignored while those who fought during the War of Independence were rewarded. Presumably, the decision was an economic one, but the message it sent could be interpreted in various ways. One can only attempt to imagine the implications of being excluded from a financial reward for fighting for one's country because the veteran happened to be disfigured in the "wrong" war.

Conclusion

Although there do not seem to be any specific and negative cultural notions attached to war captivity in Turkish culture, we cannot discount the possibility of personal shame felt by the prisoners themselves. This "odor of disgrace," as Samuel Hynes calls it, seems to be a universally valid explanation for the missing voices of the

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unclear, important dates of the War of Independence were chosen as the days of unveiling. United States, Department of State, "Documents Relating to Internal Affairs of Turkey, 1910-1929," 867.9111/161, "Review of Press, 15-28 August 1926." p. 25.

°Feridun Kandemir, Cumhuriyet Devrinde Siyasi Cinayetler (Istanbul: Ekicigil, 1955), 58-60. Actually the "informal" discussion in the Parliament turned fatal. An altercation between Halid Paşa, who wanted the extend the law to cover all war invalids, and Ali Bey (and the majority of the Commission on National Defense), who wanted to the law the cover only the invalids of the War of Independence, resulted in guns being fired. Halid Paşa was fatally wounded. See Kandemir, 58-60 and Department of State, 867.9117/86, "Press Clippings, 14 February 1925," p. 31.

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POWs in the narrative of the First World War. However, the Ottoman and Turkish POWs, by interpreting their captivity as part of their fate and the will of God, reduced the weight of disgrace that might have been attached to captivity. There were also some other specifically Ottoman and Turkish historical circumstances that made the experience of the former POWs more marginal. When the Ottoman POWs returned home after several years in captivity, they faced a terrible environment. Their country had been divided up, and millions of people had died because of war, disease, and famine. In this kind of an environment they did not or could not tell their stories because the bereaved families and the refugees who had suffered so much through the Great War and the ensuing War of Independence simply monopolized the public compassion. Additionally, although it had set the stage and provided the training and the power for the men who fought and led the War of Independence, the First World War did not become a part of the history of the Turkish republic. In its effort to forge a nation of Turks, the republic rejected the cultural and historical legacy of the Ottoman Empire. The War of Independence, portrayed as a heroic war effort, and as the forerunner of the Third World revolutions to come, coupled with the presumption that the Great War belonged to the now defunct and proscribed Ottoman Empire, presents a challenge to the remembrance of the Great War in general. This in turn presents a double challenge to the memory of captivity in the First World War. Whether in war or captivity narratives, or in novels, who would be willing to write about a war seen in this light? Writing on collective remembrance, Winter and Sivan argue that if some voices are weaker than others it may be because of self censorship due
to lack of moral status in the eyes of others, or due to a low self-image.⁶ This observation applies equally well to both the POWs and the Great War itself in Turkey. Conceivably, those who had taken part only in World War I and had become POWs in that war had poor self-images. Certainly, the overwhelming glorification of the War of Independence, partially at the expense of the Great War, did not help the situation.

Undeniably, the War of Independence is of extreme importance for the Republic of Turkey; it is not the aim of this chapter to challenge the significance of that war. The objective here is simply to show that the role of the War of Independence in the establishment of the republic and state-building that followed obscured the importance and the memory of the First World War.

CHAPTER 2
SAVIOR SONS OF THE NATION: REFLECTIONS OF THE PRISONERS' MINDS

Introduction
As most of the world was colonized, semi-colonized, or threatened with colonization by the western powers in the nineteenth century, peoples in the non-western world were faced with the danger of being completely overwhelmed. Non-western peoples attempted to find ways to counter the western threat with responses ranging from China's "self-strengthening" movement to the Middle East's Islamic modernism in the nineteenth century. In seeking to halt the western advance into their territories, the non-western peoples were faced with important and perplexing challenges.

Educated Ottoman officers in captivity were among those who confronted the question of how to save their nation from European hegemony. Arguably, their own desperate situation, coupled with their nation's bleak condition during the Great War, made the question all the more relevant and immediate for the Ottoman prisoners of war interned in camps in Russia and Egypt. As they encountered new customs and new peoples in the prison camps, they began an earnest examination of Ottoman society—in fact, a self-examination. Certainly, this kind of close and prolonged contact of so many Ottomans either with their captors—Russian, British, and British Dominion soldiers—or with allied prisoner comrades—Germans and Austro-Hungarians—would not have been possible in any other environment. Both their contact with "more advanced" peoples and
the limitless time they had on their hands as they witnessed the dissolution of their empire put the Ottoman POWs in an ideal position to reflect on the ills of their society and how to cure them. In many ways, the stress and nature of captivity clearly revealed the societal fractures that were always present, but visible only on occasion.1

This chapter will argue that the Ottoman prisoners—mostly junior officers—while in captivity saw a fundamental difference between their Oriental society and that of the West. Their observations of the differences between the East and the West were very much along the lines of Orientalist thought2 yet, at the same time, in the fashion of anti-colonial nationalism. These junior officers, who, the chapter will argue, constituted a discrete, identifiable group between the Ottoman peasants and the political and intellectual elites, maintained, furthermore, that the West was superior to the East; this superiority, the argument ran, lay in the materiality of western culture. Having accepted the advancement of the West and the shortcomings of their own society, the officers offered various solutions for the ills of their nation in order to catch up with and perhaps to overtake the West. The nature and the scope of the solutions offered to cure the ills of Ottoman society varied according to the intellectual and cultural outlooks of the officers. Because notions of religion and nation colored the officers’ perception of the ills of their society, we will explore the role that religion and nation played in the soldiers’

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1 For further observations on the revealing nature of “open conflicts,” see Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 42.

2 Here the chapter refers to the way Partha Chatterjee writes about the anti-colonial nationalists’ assimilation of Orientalist understanding of their society as a starting point. For a more detailed elaboration on post-colonial nationalism see Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (London: Zed Books, 1986), especially chapters 1-3.
expressions of identity. Yet, despite their overriding concern for the nation (millet), its definition and boundaries remained fluid well into the period of repatriation—that is, as late as 1922. Accordingly, various forms of identity—Turkish, Muslim, and Ottoman—coexisted among the captive Ottoman junior officers. If the coexisting identities can be seen among the educated officers, they were certainly present among their men. Seen in this light, the political problems and public resistance with which the Turkish republican government had to contend in its early reform years become more comprehensible.

After briefly examining the earlier reformist movements inspired by the crumbling empire, this chapter will examine, by sifting through their writings, how the Ottoman officers in the unique environment of captivity interpreted the ills of the Ottoman society and how they proposed to heal them. We will also see how they saw the various elements within society, especially how the peasants and they themselves, as the educated class, fit into their conception of the problem. In addition, by briefly examining the ideas of the intellectual and political elites—the Young Turks—we will also see how these ideas and identities trickled down to the educated yet not-so-elite officers and possibly to the rank-and-file.

The major source for this chapter will be the hand-written serialized camp newspapers produced by the POWs in the various prison camps in Russia and Egypt. These newspapers, in addition to captivity narratives—many in the form of diaries—composed by the prisoners, are unique in that they give us a window onto their authors’ mentality. In addition, and more importantly, these sources give agency and voice to a group of people whose voices have been left out of the debate regarding the state of the Empire. Belonging to the generation of Cevdet Sunay and Cemal Gürsel (both former

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POWs,³ who became the military and civil leaders of the Turkish republic in the 1950s and 1960s, in age these captive officers were almost a generation younger than the likes of Mustafa Kemal and Enver, Cemal, and Talat Pashas.

Scholars of Ottoman history writing on the Young Turk ideology and Turkish nationalism use the writings of the elites, which represent only elite opinions and beliefs.⁴ To a large degree, the authors of the editorials in the newspapers and the captivity narratives are the younger, lower-ranking officers, generally at the rank of lieutenant or slightly higher, and thus represent an identifiable social group. Judging from the information available to us about their socio-economic background, these junior officers—unlike many of the intellectual and political elites—came from relatively humble rural, small town, lower middle-class backgrounds.⁵ As such, these literate officers, whose ideas have hitherto been ignored, form the middle ground between the elites, whose ideology is well represented in the works of several noted scholars, and the voiceless Ottoman and Turkish peasants. In the absence of the autonomous voice of the illiterate subaltern—the peasant soldier—can his officer speak for him? Is the officer speaking for the subaltern better than silence?⁶ In the officers' criticism of the peasant

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³ See Chapter I for names of other former POWs who occupied positions of public and political importance.

⁴ For example, M. Şükrü Hanoğlu, Young Turks in Opposition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); idem, Preparation for a Revolution: Young Turks, 1902-1908 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁵ This is still largely true of the modern Turkish officer corps; 70-80 percent of those who are admitted to the military academies come from small-town families. See Mehmet Ali Birand, Shirts of Steel: An Anatomy of the Turkish Armed Forces (New York: I.B.Tauris, 1991), 25.

⁶ For subaltern studies and the debate about the agency of the subaltern, see various articles in the journal Subaltern Studies; Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Recovering the Subject: Subaltern Studies and Histories of (note cont'd)
soldiers, we get a glimpse of the social world and the ambiguous identity of the subaltern. Occasionally, we also hear the halting voice of the peasant soldier from his poems or plays. As he is taught to speak through education, his voice in many ways mimics that of his officer.

What Is to Be done? The Causes and Solutions to the Backwardness of the Empire

Despite the defeat and withdrawal of the Allied armada at Gallipoli, after roughly two more years of fighting most Ottoman officers began to lose faith in the positive outcome out of the Great War, as they realized that they were fighting against technologically superior and better-supplied and-supported enemy forces. Perhaps once the soldier became a POW, and saw thousands of other Ottoman POWs like himself behind barded wire wearing tattered clothes and sad faces, the terrible state of the empire assumed more urgency in his mind. All soldiers were aware that the nation was in despair, impoverished, and near extinction:

Science and the world have superiority today;
As for us, we have fallen, sunken, thrust into misery,
We are hungry, our backs are bare, and we are helpless, trembling....

This poem, written after the end of the Great War while the author was still in a POW camp, perhaps reflects most starkly the situation the Ottomans faced. No doubt, this

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piece represents equally well the situation of the POWs themselves and the nation they embodied. Expressions of this kind were rather common among the prisoners, who dealt not only with the hardships of captivity and a sense of defeat, but also with the loneliness associated with long separation from family members.

It is clear that whatever their cultural and educational backgrounds were, many Ottoman officers were concerned with the welfare of their nation. In this frame of mind, claiming to be motivated by the good of the nation, they started to discuss ways of saving and reforming the empire. In fact, they were not the first to recognize the ills of the empire and to search for a solution. The acknowledgement of technological inadequacy and search for solutions had occupied Ottoman sultans and government officials since the late eighteenth century. They were key concerns of high-ranking bureaucrats of the Tanzimat (reform) period, the Young Ottomans and finally the Young Turks. In this way, then, these officers were part of a tradition of the educated class's searching for a means to save the empire.

The Young Ottoman movement, which started in the late nineteenth century, can be summed up as a critique of the Tanzimat, drawing inspiration partly from the Tanzimat itself, partly from European political thought, and partly from Islamic tradition. The Young Ottomans, thanks to the increasing diffusion of Western ideas in the empire, represented a substantial advance over the men of the Tanzimat in their mastery of European thought. Yet, at the same time, the Young Ottomans criticized the leading statesmen of the Tanzimat for having gone too far, too fast towards westernization, and

\[\text{It will be remembered that many thousands of Ottoman POWs were not repatriated until 1922, some as late as 1923.}\]
for having cut themselves off from the resources of their own tradition. In other words, they objected to super-westernization and the annihilation of domestic culture. They, along with middle-and lower-class Ottomans, looked disapprovingly on Ottoman grandees who had adopted certain European modes of conduct and lifestyles. The Young Ottomans wanted to create a new Islamic cultural synthesis by selectively borrowing from the West to strengthen the Islamic Ottoman state. They aimed for a balance between Islam and western civilization by regularly making references to the practices they could associate with early Islam. In the 1870s, the Young Ottoman period came to an end with the closing of the parliament and the political neutralization of the Young Ottomans.

Growing resentment against the rule of Sultan Abdulhamid II triggered the re-emergence of a similar group in the form of the Committee of Union and Progress (1889). In contrast to the Young Ottoman emphasis on the thinkers of the Enlightenment, the Young Turks were familiar with current European thought in several fields, including philosophy, the social and natural sciences, and a variety of popular movements such as positivism and Social Darwinism. The Young Turks may be divided in two distinct groups based on their ideological leanings: all-out westernizers and Islamic modernists.

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12 Şükrü Hanioglu actually uses the terms modernist and moderate, as opposed to my "westernizers" and "Islamic modernists," respectively. The use of different terms by various scholars is confusing. Berkes's terms for these groups are different. Hanioglu's "moderates" and "modernists" appear as "Turkists" and (note cont'd)
The Young Ottoman vision of westernization is remarkably similar in many ways to that of the Islamic modernist (hereafter referred to simply as modernist) wing of the Young Turks, which attempted to prevent wholesale westernization while promoting a single-minded westernization policy: the development of whatever technology was necessary to defeat the West. However, the westernizer Young Turks, who dominated intellectual life in the Ottoman Empire, while paying lip service to Islam in public, privately denounced those trying to reach a reconciliation between Islam and western civilization. The westernizer intellectual regarded domestic culture as old-fashioned and unresponsive to contemporary problems.\(^\text{13}\) Having been joined and also influenced by Turkic peoples of Russia who came to study in the Ottoman Empire, the Young Turks even advocated \textit{narodnik}\(^\text{14}\) ideas for a period until they decided upon an elitist theory. Believing that it was a more suitable device to explain the peculiar social structure of the Ottoman Empire, the intellectuals expected to resolve the social dilemmas of the empire with Gustave LeBon's elitism. In the early years of the movement (c.1902), the Young Turks advocated the education of the masses, but when the organization adopted a revolutionary course (c. 1906) tasks like the education of the masses were discarded.\(^\text{15}\) Following

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

\(^{13}\) Hanoğlu, \textit{Young Turks}, 14-15, 18, 23, 200.

\(^{14}\) \textit{Narodnik}—Plural \textit{narodniki} (or narodniki)—means populist in Russian. \textit{Narodnichestvo}, or populism, was a nineteenth-century socialist movement that arose among the Russian intelligentsia. \textit{Narodniki} thought that political propaganda among the peasants would result in awakening of the masses, which in turn would lead to liberalization of the Tsarist regime in Russia.

\(^{15}\) Hanoğlu, \textit{Young Turks}, 207-208.
scientific, antireligious, and elitist ideology, the Young Turks, both in their publications and in private, described the masses as despicable and senseless. Believing in the value of the superior individual while condemning the people, the Young Turks dedicated themselves to the creation of an elite. Keeping in line with Le Bon’s ideas, this elite, then, could guide the masses by imposing its ideas through constant repetition.

Debates in Captivity

Seeing themselves—as opposed to the public servants—as the leaders of the educated class, and thus claiming the moral authority to rescue the once lofty empire, the interned officers offered their views on how the Ottoman Empire came to lag so far behind western countries, and their solutions for how best to steer it towards progress. The limitless time the officers had on their hands in captivity, and the endless gloomy news of the empire’s worsening situation filtering into the prison camps through foreign newspapers, drove them to take a deeper look at what was wrong with Ottoman society. What had gone awry with the empire that had once threatened the whole of Europe? Their constant contact with and observation of their enemies and similarly imprisoned allies, who came from societies they considered to be far ahead of the Ottoman Empire technologically, also contributed significantly to this self-reflection.

Predicting that the Ottoman Empire could only become a “farm” of the more advanced nations unless its citizens embraced change quickly, some writers saw the

16 Hanioglu, Young Turks, 22-23, 32.


18 “Dün, Bugün, Yarin,” Yarin, 9/1/1336/17 January 1920, number 3, p. 2.
problems of the empire as immediate and important. Here the concept of accepting change becomes problematic. Much like the Young Turks, the Young Ottomans, and the Tanzimat-era bureaucrats before them, the Ottoman officers disagreed among themselves on the nature and degree of these changes. The debate mainly revolved around whether wholesale changes—as also advocated by the all-out westernizer wing of the Young Turks—had to be made by adopting without question whatever made the West more advanced or whether only the technology necessary to achieve scientific and industrial progress should be adopted. The modernist wing of the Young Turks adopted the latter position, which had been promoted in the nineteenth century by the Young Ottomans and Islamic modernists such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, though they were not as vociferous as the westernizer Young Turks.

In essence, both sides recognized that there was a fundamental difference between the East and the West, which was far ahead of the East in various ways. Partha Chatterjee calls this the reversal of the Orientalist problematic. In other words, the object of the nationalist thought is still the Oriental, who retains the essentialist character depicted in Orientalist discourse. But now he is not passive as in the Orientalist discourse. As the prisoners recognized the differences, the challenge became, depending on the political slant of the observer, the determining of the degree and nature of change necessary to catch up to the West. In short, these officers were all convinced that the old


20 Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought*, 73.

21 Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought*, 38.
society had to be reformed in some way in order to enable it to cope with the modern world, but the two groups diverged on how much reform or change was necessary.

We shall begin with the writings of the officers who may be called modernists. Although this group may not have expressed its opinions and beliefs as widely and vociferously as the westernizers, their voices still come through in both POW newspapers and captivity narratives. Modernists divide the “world of social institutions and practices” into two domains: the material and the spiritual. The material side is the domain of the “outside,” of science, technology, and economy. The other side, spiritual, is an “inner” domain, which bear the marks of cultural identity, or what made the Ottomans Ottomans. Accepting the superiority of the West in the outer domain—that is in science, technology, and love of progress—they advocated adopting these things, which they thought had made Europe great, to revitalize the empire so that it could defend itself against European encroachment. However, in the inner domain, where they believed indigenous culture was superior to that of the West, they aimed to keep true to this Ottoman-Turkish-Islamic culture. The officer POWs were not the first to employ the matter versus spirit dichotomy in their arguments; in the nineteenth century Ahmet Midhat and in the twentieth Mehmet Akif and Ziya Gökalp—all well-known intellectuals—made use of this dichotomy in their writings. Although this particular mode of organizing the debate about cultural change seems to have gained currency after 1908 in both Islamist (Mehmet Akif) and nationalist (Ziya Gökalp) thought, in general it

22 Chatterjee, The Nation and Its Fragments, 6.


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does not seem to be the prevalent method in the Ottoman context. This makes the
writings of the officer POWs all the more meaningful. While the officers’ arguments
were somewhat unpolished, they successfully communicated their ideas. Although it is
not framed in a very sophisticated way, the piece below supports this assertion. Here the
author, concerned about Ottoman cultural and spiritual values, advocates the importance
of being selective in what Ottomans adopt from the West.

We have a false conviction that we do not always have to tell the truth, or we do
not always have to see the truth. I believe this conviction shows itself in every
institution and everything because, owing to the need of advancement and
development, we fall behind the West and become disagreeable without
exception. As a result we are ashamed to call “ours” the many good qualities we
possess... In fact, this situation brings forth a more dangerous catastrophe.
Unfortunately, a majority of our young people who are deprived of a sound and
real national training (or education) become confused and unsuccessful in this sort
of situation and finally, in a state of deep confusion, they, in the words of the
common people, become Europeanized (frenklemek)... This is such an
extensive social disease that... it is seen abundantly even among youngsters
known to be nationalists... [Some of our institutions lag behind] and in
opposition to our institutions that lag behind there are the western or European
world’s complete and long-standing institutions. It is because of this that our
youngsters tend towards [the European institutions] whether they want to or not.24

It is clear that this person is not in favor of simply adopting western and European
institutions wholesale but, on the contrary, finds fault with the adaptation and imitation of
institutions that do not fit well with Ottoman culture. According to him, the
unquestioning adoption of European institutions simply leads to becoming Europeanized
and thus to a deterioration and loss of the “national” culture. However, he continues,
imitation and adoption of western ways are not the only factors responsible for the
worsening of the “national” situation. Another danger was internally created. This

24 "İçtimai Hastalıklarımız," Nilüfer, 30 Kanun-i Sâni 1336/8 February 1920, number 1, p. 6-7.

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second danger is what he calls “pointless historical chauvinism.” While it was natural and commendable to be proud of the nation’s glorious past, many Ottomans—including political leaders—exaggerated the importance of events like the sieges of Vienna and the victory at Pruth.25 This exaggeration had reached a point at which it had grown tiresome, useless, and, in fact, self-deceiving.26 “We should know that to repeat such things so many times simply deceives us instead of inviting us to remember and recollect the causes of our pride. . . . It is because that regular [old] order has gone awry that we are today a small and defeated state.”27 Attributing this sort of “aimless vanity” to some sort of “medieval bravado that went out the door in Europe with the end of the feudal age,” the writer warns that this vanity “is still present in the Ottoman Empire.” The piece adds that in order to perfect Ottoman national institutions, everyone must identify and know himself honestly and not fool each other with pretentious—westernized—behavior. Every young Ottoman should, in short, keep this phrase in mind: “know thyself.”28 Although the author of the piece does not elaborate any further, it is clear that those who knew themselves were the ones who remained true to national culture and did not behave in an ostentatiously “frankish” fashion by “acting” European. This sort of criticism of phony “frankish” behavior was nothing new to the POWs; similar criticism and ridiculing were

25 In 1711 at Pruth, the Ottomans soundly defeated Russia, led by Peter the Great, reversing, though briefly, the setbacks of the seventeenth century. Vienna was besieged for the second time in 1683 by the Ottoman army.

26 For another expression of similar views against “empty exaggerated words,” see “Müstakim-ül-etvar ve el-efkar,” Zincir, 1336/1920, number 6.

27 “İçtimai Hastalıklarımız-II,” Nilüfer, 3 Şubat 1336/13 February 1920, number 2, p. 3

28 “İçtimai Hastalıklarınız-II,” Nilüfer, 3 Şubat 1336/13 February 1920, number 2, p. 3

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employed both by the Young Ottomans against men of the Tanzimat and in the novels of Ahmet Midhat Efendi, namely through the characters of Felatun Bey and Rakım Efendi. 

Similarly, in this regard one can also mention work of the Iranian intellectual Jalal Al-e Ahmad—Gharbzadegi [Westoxication / Weststruckness]—which may be regarded as the canonical work on the blind aping of the West.

The idea of knowing oneself and not losing one’s authentic identity certainly was an important concern among the modernists; perhaps in the physically and culturally threatening environment of captivity, the preservation of an Ottoman-Islamic identity took on more significance. These imprisoned officers believed that blind imitation of the West easily led to an identity crisis and accused the imitators of conceit. In an imaginary conversation between a modernist and a westernizer published in a POW newspaper, the two views clash. The conversation is ostensibly about music, but also represents the larger issue of the West versus the East. In this conversation the westernizer character, who is studying western music in the prison camp, condemns eastern music by calling it primitive and depressing. In turn, the other admonishes him: “Let me understand this correctly, just because you study western music you see yourself as being above others? Look, look at you! You are one of us, yet you do not like us. If

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29 In this connection, one can also mention Recaizade Ekrem’s Araba Sevdasi, in which Bihruz Bey’s imitative westernization is displayed.


you are an easterner, then it is necessary that you get your fulfillment from eastern music."

Addressing those Ottoman POWs who had been behaving "improperly" according to Ottoman cultural (and military) tenets in the prison camps, one prisoner argued, using the analogy of a tree sapling, that one could manipulate the shape of a sapling while it was still young and malleable, but that once it had grown older it became impossible to do so. The same was true of the cultural position of a human being: it was shaped while the person was young. Since what made a person part of a "nation" was his "national" culture, it was fruitless and wrong to attempt to change or manipulate it now, as some did. Judging from the title of this editorial piece, "terbiye" (upbringing, good manners), are we to assume that those who aped European manners were ill-mannered (terbiyesiz)? The moderates would have believed so.

Whether we look at the POW camps in Egypt, Russia, or India and Burma, we see similar subtle reminders of the importance of remaining true to tenets of "national" culture. In the eyes of the modernists, the idea of maintaining a certain "national" decorum became especially important when the POWs were in the company of fellow POWs from other nations who held, some moderates thought, negative ideas about Islam and the Ottomans. An editorial piece invited the Ottoman POWs in Krasnoyarsk to act according to Ottoman military dignity (haysiyet-i askeriye), especially in the company of foreign officers who, having read books about the Ottomans written by enemies of

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Islam, expected them to be unruly, rude, and rebellious. In this way, the author argued, they could show POWs of more advanced nations that the Ottoman POWs were members of a nation that possessed sound spiritual and moral ties. It is significant that the author of this piece does not refer to German and Austro-Hungarian POWs as Christians despite the fact they were influenced by the “enemies of Islam.” By arguing that the European peoples had been wrongly taught that Islamic peoples were unruly and rude, while asserting that the Ottoman national culture and spirituality were superior to those of the West, the modernists were, in fact, constructing a western Other—Europeans, who were materially advanced, yet ignorant of Islam and certainly of proper spirituality. On the other hand, the modernists were also attempting to achieve cognitive control over domestic Others—including westernizers who blindly imitated western ways—by constructing a discourse on proper behavior that was in many respects more “national.”

Their criticism of the “frankish” behavior aside, modernist officers’ disapproval of what one of them calls “aimless vanity” raises further questions. The censures of both blind imitation of the West and empty and aimless pride in the Ottoman and Islamic past raise the issue of finding a balance between the two options. How does one find and accept what is valuable in another’s culture without losing one’s own cultural identity? And how does one attempt a more fruitful reform, or more autonomously attempt

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35 For examples of what kind of behavior damaged and threatened the national culture or honor see Ölçen, Vezluga Memoir, 106-07 and 118.
regeneration, of national culture? Unfortunately, our sources, both camp newspapers and captivity narratives, are silent on this question with no clear right answer.

While there were many who argued and believed that the West was more advanced than the East materially, but lagged behind the East culturally and spiritually, there were also those who argued for a radically different view propounded by the westernizers. These westernizers were willing to concede that the West was far ahead in many areas and that it should be imitated without much questioning.

Although the newspapers contain various writings to the contrary, many POW writers saw religion as an impediment to advancement. In contrast to the modernist group, which argued for the spiritual and cultural superiority of the Ottomans, the westernizers were willing and almost eager to concede that the reasons for the Islamic peoples' backwardness were to be found in their culture, specifically in religion. Some of these POW authors found a fundamental hindrance to advancement in Islam above all, but also in other Asian religions. "All the peoples of the Asian lands saved their desires for the prosperity that would start after death [in the afterlife]. It is because of this that they did not pay attention to means of livelihood in the advanced nations, and interpreted working endlessly as an unnecessary trouble."36 What was the difference between the members of the advanced nations and those of the Islamic ones?

A citizen of clever nations worked, on the one hand, as if he would never die, on the other, busied himself with acquiring the natural delights of his short life. We looked down upon our world [saw it as inconsequential], took it as a guesthouse full of suffering, we thought of it as a nuisance unworthy of tiring ourselves for. While we prepared for dying instead of living, they [the Europeans] created . . . a

36 "Dün, Bugün, Yarın," Yarın, 9/1/1336/17 January 1920, number 3, p. 2. For similar expressions see Faik Tonguç, Bir Yedek Subay'ın Anıları, 82-89.
world separated from the past, a faith that escaped transitoriness, and a life that is committed to both their pleasure and their profit.37

The problem with the Ottomans and Muslims—and by implication with all Asians—was that they simply did not care about the life in this world; they were not materialistic enough to create a modern and adequate life for themselves.38 Although they would have differed over how far to go, this westernizer’s criticism would have been most likely seconded by modernists.39 “We Turks,” another piece argued, “like all Asians, are a nation who excessively neglected life’s pleasures. . . . Even today there are millions of Turks in every corner of our nation who live inside walls made of sun-dried bricks or clay, and thank God for the mere dry bread [they have] . . . .”40 Again the Orientalist problematic: presumably, if these poor Turks had only realized that life offered other alternatives and that they should enjoy it while in this world, they would not have been content with their dry bread and mud houses. A positivist westernizer writer related that historically religion’s influence on people has been rather transient, yet religiosity is a necessary phase that every nation has to go through. In time—in the advanced nations, at least—religion ceased to satisfy the psychological needs of the people, and gave way to the idea of nation.41 Judging from the construction of the sentence, presumably this

37 “Dün, Bugün, Yarın,” Yarın, 9/1/1336/17 January 1920, number 3, p. 2

38 “İştimaıyat,” İşık, no date, number 50, p. 1

39 Seeing the blind preparation for the next world as a fatal deviation from the Islam of Qur’an and hadith, nineteenth-century Islamic modernists such as Jamal al-din al-Afghani and Muhammad ‘Abduh would made similar statements.

40 “Dünya Sevgisi,” Yarın, 30 Kanun-i Sani 1336/9 February 1920, number 8, p. 2

41 “Gayesizlik,” Yarın, 9/1/1336/17 January 1920, number 3, p.3

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evolution had not yet occurred in the Ottoman Empire. In Russia, another prisoner stated, religion had a strong hold on the people, but under this religious propaganda there was always a sense of Russianness, a strong nationalism.\textsuperscript{42} This officer does not see religion and nationalism as mutually exclusive; as long as the hold of religion does not preclude attachment to nationalism, religion is harmless for him. However, some clearly saw an impediment in religion to advancement and nationalism.

Following up on the idea of the hold of religion and differences between the European and Islamic peoples,\textsuperscript{43} an officer argued that the peoples of Asia and Europe occupied two opposite poles of a spectrum as far as their faith and spirit (\textit{iman ve ruh}) were concerned. However, the writer’s comments were also against religion in general. This westernizer seems, at first, to accept the spiritual-material dichotomy only to devalue the spiritual side to make his point. Accordingly:

\ldots ever since time immemorial while one’s [the Asian’s] eyes were turned to the heavens, the other’s [the European’s] were turned to earth. Instead of using their ideas, Asians have used their illusions and as a result have fallen into decay in the face of a materialistic life. Many intelligent peoples of the East have either been exhausted on the endless roads of divinity or simply sat idly on sheepskin rugs in dervish lodges in order to reach the bliss on the other side of the bridge (\textit{ahiret köprüsü}) from this world to Paradise. Instead of writing commentaries on articles of faith (\textit{akide}), interpretation of Aristotle’s logical propositions, \textit{Shahnames} for the pleasure of Shahs. \ldots [and] books on the path to the next world, if these personalities—who ran after barren ideas and unfounded suspicions—had only busied themselves with a law in chemistry, a simple illness in medicine, a sapling in agriculture, cabinetry in arts, materialism in philosophy, [or] a piece of stone in nature, no doubt we would have been ahead of the West in many branches of science, learning, and art.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{42} Faik Tonguç, 214.

\textsuperscript{43} For another similar example see “Temaşa,” \textit{Yarım}, number 18.

\textsuperscript{44} “Bizde Hayaliilik,” \textit{Yarım}, 1 Nisan 1336/12 April 1920, number 20, p. 4-5.
The argument of the above piece does not seem to be much different in tone from those of pieces written by the secularist Young Turk elites in the journal *İttihad*. These westernizer officers also thought that there was a barrier keeping the Muslims from understanding their own ills and western civilization itself. Some attributed that mental barrier to religion. As should be obvious by now, the westernizers were also pointing out that the materialism of western culture was the reason for its advancement. On that point, they were not far from the modernists, for they also recognized the technological advantage of Europe. However, the westernizer argument generally ran that since the empire lagged behind Europe in many ways, it should follow Europe’s lead, its guiding light, to enlighten itself. Many westernizers believed that the material achievements of the West were manifestations of western ideas and values; therefore, the argument ran, unless the Ottoman Empire adopted the cultural and intellectual foundations of Europe, westernization could not take place. Here lies the main difference between the westernizers and the modernists. The adoption of western ideas and values, which the westernizers deemed necessary, was unthinkable for the modernists, whose emphasis on the importance and maintenance of indigenous “spirituality” precluded such adoptions. Still, the westernizers pushed on with their arguments; in a phrase rather reminiscent of the later republican slogans, one POW pleaded: “Up to now we have been a barrier to Europe; let us now become a bridge.” Unfortunately, the editorials that champion

45 Niyazi Berkes, 348.

46 Niyazi Berkes, 352.

following the guiding light of western culture do not have much to say about the issue of maintaining the essential character of their culture.

The readership of the newspapers was rather wide within the limits of the POW community. As editors invited everybody to submit pieces for publication, it is safe to assume that these secular views were shared by a good number of officers. The editorial pieces suggest that the prisoners believed that they could catch up with Europe if they could only change. How could the Ottomans catch up to the Europeans? It should be clear from the above that the westernizer argument first advocated the removal of the strong hold Islam had on the Ottomans in general. In their line of argument there was no need for “preparation for the next world,” and those who thought of their comfort and knew to enjoy this world would work much harder to make life better in their lifetimes (in this world).48

Many of the westernizer writers believed that the strong hold of religion and otherworldly concerns of the populace resulted from a lack of education. As will be noted below, education, or the lack thereof, held great importance among both the modernist and westernizer officers. The westernizers strongly believed that Quranic village schools were to blame for the peoples’ ignorance, even where religion was concerned. Condemning the inadequate village schools and their otherworldly teachers gave these officers an opportunity to criticize the hold of religion as well. The concern was how to rescue the young children from what they called the “poison” of the village teachers.


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As mentioned, modernists and westernizers alike championed the education of the peasant soldiers with whom they served against the enemy at the front and whom they now watched against a backdrop of barbed wire. It was mentioned above that the Young Turk leaders were elitists, as argued by Hanioglu. It seems that this elitist ideology may have started to change towards the end of the Great War, with the Halka Doğru (To the People) movement. How did the officers, who, unlike the Young Turk elites and intellectuals, were in relatively close contact with the peasants both in their capacity as officers and possibly as members of the rural population, view the common peasant soldiers they thought were in need of their help to lift them from their helpless condition and move the country towards westernization of one form or another?

Images of the Peasant Soldier

The Ottoman officers' image of the peasant soldier is rather sharply defined. And we should not see this image of the soldier only as it relates to the soldiers in the Ottoman army during the Great War. The common soldier was a simple peasant who was conscripted into the army. Accordingly, the peasant soldiers must be seen not only as soldiers, but as peasants as well. In this way, the officers' perception of the soldier extends to Ottoman peasants in general.

The most notable feature of the peasant soldier, as portrayed by the officers, is ignorance. Sometimes this state of ignorance is portrayed as a simple lack of knowledge, as naïvété, or as idiosyncrasy; still the portrayal was almost always condescending and inherently insulting, while at the same time paternalistic. The peasant soldier could be labeled naïve for escaping from a British POW camp in Burma in the hope of reaching
his village in Anatolia,49 or labeled simple or uncurious for not even bothering to learn the name of the Russian town where he was held captive for three years.50 Sometimes the observation of ignorance among the peasant soldiers pertained to subjects that were more important and immediate than knowing the distance between Burma and Turkey.51 One officer, who was not a prisoner of war but wrote about peasant soldiers under his command on the Eastern Anatolian front, recorded that

At first, I thought my soldiers were religious and even fanatical, but found them to be ignorant. Still, I told myself that they might be ignorant, but Muslims nevertheless. However, I understood a little later that despite the word “Islam” entered in their identification cards under religion, there were incompatible religions or, more correctly, remnants (tortu) of religion, denominations, various beliefs, and mystic orders alive and well among them.52

The Ottoman peasant soldier, while claiming to be Muslim, did not even know much about the prescriptions of his religion; he was ignorant of normative Islam. This same officer, a convinced nationalist himself, was most surprised when he questioned his soldiers—who were, he claims, Anatolian Turks—on their nationality:

49 Aydemir, 109, note 1, and 398.

50 Mehmet Arif Ölçen, 215. In fact, this paternalistic criticism of the peasant soldier was not by the officer himself, but by Yusuf Akçura, who was in Russia after the Treaty of Brest Litovsk arranging for repatriation of some Ottoman POWs. However, the typical officer’s criticism could not have been much different.

51 The officer, Aydemir, who mocks the former POW’s hope of reaching Anatolia from Burma probably was not aware of other POWs escaping from Krasnoyarsk, and eventually making it to their homeland. While it may have been less difficult for educated and foreign-language-speaking officers to negotiate a return route to the homeland, the uneducated enlisted men clearly faced more difficulties. As the case of Ibrahim Çelebi shows, the men had a general idea that the homeland was toward the west. Being told to go west from Siberia, Ibrahim Çelebi ended up first in Ukraine, then farther south in Romania among the Gagauz Turks, who assisted him. Private letter dated 23 February 1999 and conversations with Dr. Zekeriya Türkmen of ATASE Archives regarding his grandfather Ibrahim Çelebi, February 1999, Ankara.

52 Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, Suyu Arayan Adam, 105. The author was never a POW, but his view of the peasant soldier is no different from that of those officers who were POWs.
When I said:  
- "From what nation are we?"  
there was a different answer from everyone:  
- [when I asked] "Are we not Turks?"  
they answered: "I ask pardon of God!" ("estağfirullah!")  
So, they were not accepting their Turkishness.53

POW officers offer a similar picture of the peasant soldier.54 "These miserable fellows
[soldiers] did not even have the faintest knowledge about religion and Islam. For
example, when they were asked the name of our Prophet, they would naively answer,
‘Our Master, Sultan Ferəsad (Reşad)."55 Faced with peasant soldiers who did not know
the name of their Prophet, the correct name of the Sultan, or their nationality, this officer
and many like him believed that the Anatolian peasant soldiers were even ignorant of the
most basic information that identified them—their religion and nationality. The soldiers
confused and mixed Islam with many unorthodox beliefs, and from the way they
answered the officer, they also thought of being a Turk as something undesirable. While
the officers were upset with their men for not knowing their nationality, the peasant
soldiers’ hesitant answers to such inquiries raise the question of how much importance
the peasants themselves attached to their national identity.

In many instances, the officers felt a certain awkwardness when among their men.

"When I was struggling with my soldiers who did not mentally identify with the war, did

53 Aydemir, 104. It is possible, but not very likely that Aydemir’s soldiers included Kurds. It seems that the
Kurds formed separate tribal units. It should be pointed out, however, that historically “Türk” had
connoted a nomad or an Anatolian “hillbilly,” with all the “backwardness” typically associated with such
populations.

54 For other examples of “ignorant” peasants and peasant soldiers see Rahmi Apak, Yetmişlik Bir Subayın

55 Tonguç, 106. Another officer states that one of his men answered the same question, “Our prophet is
Enver Paşa.” Aydemir, 103.

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not know where and why they fought, and were not even aware of their own existence, I felt some sort of a mental conflict between feeling pity and strangeness towards them."\(^{56}\) Was it not possible that the peasant soldier identified with the war, but in a different way from the officers? This was certainly the case with the British rank and file, who thought the same thing about their officers. The British officers “saw the war from an angle far remote from the viewpoint of Thomas Atkins. . . . They were only with us, not of us,”\(^{57}\) one soldier complained. Yet, the Ottoman officers failed to assign agency to the peasant soldier in understanding the war. This should not be surprising; after all, if the peasant forms his own opinion of the war—that is, one that was not inculcated by the officers and was different from theirs—he would be displaying his autonomy. Autonomous beings cannot be led easily; however, the non-autonomous ones can be taught, as we will see below.

Although almost never doubting the military prowess and bravery of the simple Ottoman soldier\(^{58}\)—with the exception of occasional stories of desertion\(^{59}\)—the officers’ bewilderment and pity regarding the ignorance of the peasant soldier sometimes turned into outright anger and scorn. Placing the status of the peasants in the context of Ottoman society, an officer in Krasnoyarsk, Russia, related that there were two social classes in the empire: 1) the educated, or enlightened class (tabaka-yi münevvere) and 2)

\(^{56}\) Aydemir, 106.

\(^{57}\) A. Burrage, *War is War*, p. 60, quoted in J. G. Fuller, p. 54.

\(^{58}\) Tonguç, 137.

\(^{59}\) For representations of those soldiers who shot off their trigger fingers to get out of fighting see Ahmet Göze, 51-52. For deserters see Tonguç, 162.
the middle class (tabaka-yi mutavassita). Clearly, in this crude scheme, this is not the middle class as we now think of it; basing his division of Ottoman society into classes on education alone, the officer put everyone who was not in the educated class, including the “ignorant” peasants, in what he calls the middle class, which really should be lower class.

In our country the enlightened class is made up of us soldiers [officers] and civil servants [memurlar]. Generally, the rest [of the population] is in a dense state of ignorance and uncouthness . . . . Many times we came across soldiers who were huddled around a fire, but would not move to help another soldier who belonged to the same army and the same regiment and was freezing to death only a few steps away. Forget military brotherhood [uhuvvet-i askeriye], if these [soldiers] had the slightest degree of human sentiment [italics mine], they would not have allowed a comrade to remain in that kind of a condition . . . . A majority of the soldiers that make up our army are mentally invalid [ruhen malul] and are pathological [marazi] to such a degree. The reason why the members of our nation have such rough and wild [italics mine] manners is not only the result of a lack of education. There are also all kinds of effects of our army being unable to fully render its duties . . . . If we want to live on as a nation, we need to imbue the men with a sense of compassion and assistance by means of explanation.60

There is a certain amount of revulsion in the words of this officer about the peasant soldiers. Although this revulsion is directed at the peasants, he partially blames the army and officers like himself for not being able or not caring enough to “educate” them.

Lacking “human sentiment” and military camaraderie, these “rough, wild, and mentally invalid” soldiers simply had to be acted upon. It is relatively clear that both westernizer and modernist officers, perhaps with slight variations, shared this view of the peasant soldiers.

Of course, the larger problem, according to the officers, was a general lack of education among what this officer mistakenly calls the middle class, or non-officers and

60 “Hiss-i Şevkat ve Muavenet,” Vâveyla, 18 Kanun-i evvel 1331/31 December 1915, number 4, p. 3.
civil servants.⁶¹ Although they did not express such a degree of revulsion, others shared this officer’s views, for another piece echoes his opinion that the empire consisted of an ignorant public and a civil-servant population that clung to the security of their government jobs and cared for nothing else.⁶² Thus the civil servants were to be blamed for the ignorant condition of the people, and especially for their selfishness. One officer, complaining of the cultural divide between the educated class and the “ignorant” peasants, related that “a chasm has been formed between the upper stratum of society and the common people (halk), which has been deepening for centuries; [and] we have been trembling in a state of ignorance and deep darkness [in this chasm]. Effort is needed; remedy is needed. We want to understand the illness of the people, but they do not even understand our language.”⁶³ What is being suggested here is the simplification and purification of the language so that the peasants who speak Turkish can understand their leaders; this was nothing new, for the likes of Ziya Gökbal had spoken of such issues.⁶⁴

If the peasant soldiers, according to the officers, had no comprehension of the most basic forms of identification and belonging to a larger community, how could they be expected to reach a synthesis of western outer and native inner domains to ensure a bright future for the nation? Or alternatively, as the westernizers proposed, how could

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⁶¹ The literacy rate in the Ottoman Empire at the time of the Great War could have been only around 5 percent.


⁶³ “Halk Edebiyati,” Vaveyla, 31 Mart 1333/31 March 1917, number 67, p. 2. It should be remembered that the Ottomans had no national written language. Ottoman Turkish was a combination of Turkish, Arabic, and Persian languages.

they release themselves from the bonds of religion that made them care only about the afterlife? There is a certain resemblance between the way Ottoman officers viewed their peasant soldiers and the way Indian nationalists saw the peasant masses in the pre-independence days. In his examination of Indian nationalist thought, Partha Chatterjee argues that the nationalist leaders viewed the peasants as poor, ignorant, unthinking, and subject to unreasonable excitements; it was for these reasons that the peasants “needed to be led properly, controlled, not by force or fear, but by ‘gaining their trust,’ by teaching them their true interests.”65 This is exactly how the educated Ottoman officers approached their ignorant men; they would teach them their religion, nation, and even “human sentiment.”

Educating the Ignorant Peasant Soldier

The Ottoman officers’ solution to bolstering the shortcomings of the peasant soldiers was similar to that envisaged by the Indian nationalists. The peasants had to be led; they had to be made aware of their religion, their nation, and their shortcomings. In short, they had to be “educated.” In the empire the ruling elite had always used education to impose their own values on society. Tanzimat reformers had used education to sow seeds of Ottomanism; Abdulhamid used it to impart Islamism, and the Young Turks ideas of nationalism.66 In this regard the POW officers were no different; they simply wanted

65 Partha Chatterjee, Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World, p. 148-149; idem, The Nation and Its Fragments, 159.

to indoctrinate the uneducated men with their ideas and beliefs while teaching them simple skills such as reading and writing.

Unfortunately, since the voice of the subaltern, that is the peasant soldier, is missing we cannot tell how he interpreted and thought of his own “ignorance.” However, the discourse of ignorance and the state of semi-barbarity of the peasants propounded by the officers must have been convincing enough for the peasant soldiers to persuade some of them to go along with the officers’ representation of the peasants condition. A soldier who learned to read and write in one of the prison camp schools established by the officers in Egypt wrote the following poem for one of the camp newspapers:

A Bountiful Product of a Few Months of Education!

If I saw the letter “Alif” [١] I would have looked at it as if it were a beam.
If I saw the letter “B” [٢] I would have laughed as if it were a trough.
They made me read and write, and I did not grow tired.
Whereas I was living like a criminal in a wire cage [my italics],
Today I now know my history.
My officers, my veterans, my masters
I’ll always remember you auspiciously....
Do not interfere, may my life be a sacrifice for the nation.
Let me die, so that the flag and the nation should live on.
Oh peasants, oh laborers do not wait;
The exalted God is with us—do not be afraid.⁶⁷

The parallels between what one of the officers cited above calls the soldiers—“rough, wild, and lacking human sentiment”—and how this soldier imagines himself in his uneducated, ignorant days are remarkable. The peasant who lived like a criminal before

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he learned to read released himself from a rhetorical cage and "developed" the human sentiments the officer above mentioned. Certainly, becoming literate after only a few months of education is an accomplishment, but this man also claims that he is now aware of his history and nationality—just what the officers wanted. In some ways this recently "enlightened" man becomes the "exceptional normal," in the sense of Carlo Ginzburg’s Menocchio (Domenico Scandella) in The Cheese and the Worms; he is representative in a negative sense. Following this line of reasoning can we assume from the poem above, as the officers believed, that those peasants who were uneducated, unlike this man, lived in a cage like criminals in their illiterate days, and had no idea of their nationality and history?

In a similar vein, a group of previously "ignorant," "recently educated" enlisted men in a British prison camp put together a theatrical production that was watched by fellow men, officers and camp officials. In this play the men portrayed the evils of the village school, and the image they presented was no different from that depicted by the officers. After some schooling, the peasant soldiers, whose "human sentiments" were questioned, suddenly began to grasp a partial cause of the ills of their nation, and became "human" enough to collect what little money they could to send to refugees in Turkey.

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70 "'İlan," and "'C' Kampinda hamiyet yarışı," in Yarn, 13 Şubat 1336/23 February 1920, number 11, p. 5. It should be remembered that many POWs were still in captivity in 1922.
Although the Ottoman army did not exhibit the impenetrable social barriers of European societies, where class divisions, with all their “feudal trappings,” were clearly visible,\textsuperscript{71} there was nevertheless class-consciousness, as observed by the imprisoned officers themselves. There were surely sons and relatives of high-ranking Ottoman officials among them, but an overwhelming portion of the Ottoman officers came from backgrounds that were rural and not at all well-to-do. In comparison to the European armies, the division between the Ottoman officers and the men was not so much socio-economic as cultural.

While the officers pointed out the immense cultural gap between themselves and the rank-and-file, or between the educated class and the common people, they did not shy away from taking steps to narrow this gap. They were, as mentioned, convinced that a proper education was the solution to the problem. In fact, the lack of education, they were convinced, was one of the most important reasons why the Ottoman Empire lagged behind the more advanced western (\textit{Garp}) countries. The Ottoman army, like the Turkish army today, was seen as a place of education for the uneducated peasant soldiers. Generally, this “education” of the men did not go beyond teaching them a few basic things about their religion, how to act in battle, and the bravery of Ottoman soldiers in history.\textsuperscript{72} The aim must have been to make more reliable soldiers by instilling in them a sense of pride in their brave predecessors. However, finding themselves in an environment where time hung heavy and boredom was a constant threat, the Ottoman

\textsuperscript{71} J.G. Fuller, \textit{Troop Morale}, 53, 56. This is also clearly visible in Jean Renoir’s film \textit{Grand Illusion} (1937).

\textsuperscript{72} See Chapter I.
officers in captivity devised schemes to educate the peasant soldiers in ways not done before. Presumably, their contact with the enlisted men and officers of their allies—Germans, Austrians, and Hungarians—had also simulated their sense of mission. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why education of the men got a head start in Russia—where there was a more mixed group of POWs of various nations—as compared to camps in Egypt. In other words, in Russia, despite the less-than-adequate living conditions, the Ottoman POWs were exposed to a more diverse and intellectually stimulating population of fellow captives. However, we should also consider that the British captors were generally stricter than their Russian counterparts, and may not have approved earlier requests for POW schools by the Ottoman prisoners.

Compared to the schools of their German and Austro-Hungarian allies in the same camps, the Ottoman schools were rather simple, perhaps necessarily so. The school for Ottoman enlisted men in the POW camp in Krasnoyarsk, for example, had classes on reading and writing (okuma yazma), personal hygiene (hifz-i sihha), religion, arithmetic (hesab), and civics (malumat-i medeniye)\(^7\)\(^3\)—significantly, just the type of classes that would “lift” the men from their state of ignorance and wild (vahşi) ways. Gradually, other classes were introduced, but it is significant that even the westernizer officers promoted classes in religion and Quranic readings.\(^7\)\(^4\) It is possible that they were not as convinced secularists as the positivists of the Young Turk elite. Still, they might have also viewed the religion courses as an opportunity to get rid of the accretions, or “remnants,” as one

\(^7\)\(^3\) “Türk Esir Efradına Mekteb,” \textit{Vaveyla}, 1 Haziran 1332/ number 28, p. 12.

\(^7\)\(^4\) “Mesud Bir Gün,” \textit{Yarin}, 20/1/1336/28 January 1920, number 6, p. 6.
officer cited above put it, of pre-Islamic and folk beliefs mixed in with “true” Islam. In their efforts to educate the ignorant soldiers, the officers usually organized a graduation ceremony both to encourage participation of other enlisted men in the program and to pat themselves on the back for the accomplishments of the peasant soldiers. In these ceremonies the best-performing student soldiers were given prizes for their efforts, and their names, along with their grades, were printed in the camp newspaper. Commenting on such a ceremony in one of the Egyptian camps, Yarin did not pass up the opportunity to blame the religious village schools one more time for the uneducated and ignorant condition of the men in the ranks:

Turkish youths, who did not learn a thing even after five years of attendance at village schools of the traditional teaching style, learned enough in the new style inside the barbed wire in the short time of three to four months to erase and change the various sinister signs of illiteracy... It will not be too difficult to raise the nation's sons, who were left in the hands of the otherworldly village teachers, to the best specimens of the world.

Although the last statement may have been too optimistic, it does show that the officers had great hopes ofremedying the "ignorance" of the peasants and the state of the empire. Despite their ideological differences, the importance of proper education was clear to almost all of the officers whether they were modernists or westernizers, as they all served as teachers in the prison camp schools that they organized. Besides giving the officers a useful occupation and passing time, these camp schools served as tools to

75 "Ikinci Kampta Mükâfat Merasimi," Yarin, 16/1/1336/24 January 1920, number 5, p. 7.

76 "Ikinci Kampta Mükâfat Merasimi," Yarin, 16/1/1336/24 January 1920, number 5, p. 7; and “Kamplarda mesai,” Yarin, no date, number 7, p.2. For a sample list of those who graduated, along with their grades and their graduation presents, see “Şehadetnâme Alanlar,” Yarin, 13/1/1336/21 January 1920, number 4, p.5.
educate and shape the peasant soldiers of the Ottoman army. It is clear from the editorials and news in the POW newspapers that while there was a certain sense of pride at their accomplishment, there was also a hegemonic reminder to those peasant soldiers who could now read and write that it was the officers "who had taught" them.77

In the POW officers' act of educating the peasant soldiers, we see a divergence from the aim of the elite Young Turks. As noted above, the Young Turks, while claiming to be Narodniks at first, eventually became elitist and discarded the idea of educating the peasants. While the officers shared the elitist scorn for the peasants to some degree, they were not willing to give up on educating them, for the idea of education was very popular in all the prison camps, both in Russia and in Egypt. In other words, the officers, while at first seeing an almost unbridgeable cultural gap between themselves and the peasant soldiers, were not so elitist as the Young Turk intelligentsia and attempted to close the cultural gap. Many believed that education of the peasants was the most important step to awaken and lift them from their ignorant and ignoble situation, and to put them on the path of technological advancement of the nation.

While promoting education and pointing out the wrongs of the traditional village schools, some officer observers went beyond the question of education per se to how to apply education within society. While educated people in the advanced nations went into different areas of specialization, one author complained, the educated youth of the Ottoman Empire tended to seek, and in fact go to school for the purpose of, a civil service

77 "İkinci Kampta Müşafat Merasimi," Yarım, 1/1/1336/24 January 1920, number 5, p.7.
This struck the writer as a sign of "aimlessness," or education without a purpose. Instead of becoming civil servants, the argument ran, educated Ottomans should become entrepreneurs, businessmen, financiers, and engineers. Some even urged their fellow prisoners to use their time in the camps more productively. The aim, the argument ran, should be to learn a trade thoroughly and specialize in it, instead of jumping from one occupation or pastime to another like "a bee flying from one flower to another." Those who were educated should go to the nation's backward regions to educate, train, and help uplift the people there. By promoting the peasants' education, sending educated people as teachers or trainers to the backward regions, and establishing various financial and instructional institutions in these regions to help the peasants "as in Germany," instead of leaving them to the mercy of usurers and large landowners, the officers were, in fact, proposing ideas that would later—perhaps independently—culminate in the Village Institutes and People's Houses during the early republican era. Although there does not seem to be a direct link between the ideas proposed by the officers in captivity about "going to the nation's backward regions" and the Village

78 "Bugün, Yarin," Yarin, 13/1/1336/21 January 1920, number 4, p. 2


80 "Nasil çalışmalı," Yarin, 3 Şubat 1336/13 February 1920, number 9, p. 2.

81 "İçtimai Derdlerimizden: Gayesizlik," Yarin, 9/1/1336/17 January 1920, number 3, p. 3-4.

82 "İktisadiyat," Yarin, 30 Kanun-i Sani 1336/9 February 1920, number 8, p. 4.

Institutes of republican Turkey in the 1930s and 1940s, still, the prisoners’ thinking and later promotion of such ideas may have been one stream that flowed into such projects.\textsuperscript{84} As in other fields, such as the women’s movement in the late Ottoman Empire, the early republican reforms would not have taken the course they did without much pioneer work earlier on by people who have remained invisible and anonymous.\textsuperscript{85}

By establishing institutions to help and train the populace in many areas, the officers felt sure that the Ottomans could catch up to the West just like “our fellow Japanese race.”\textsuperscript{86} Although the miraculous Japanese defeat of Russia in 1905 had long served as a shining example of the achievement of a non-western people, it is interesting to note the racial closeness expressed here without a commentary.

\textbf{Ottoman or Turk: Ignorance or Nationalism?}

As mentioned, the officers often criticized their peasant soldiers for their ignorance of their nationality and religion. In fact, they believed this was one of the major signs of ignorance among the men. Some officers considered it more than a sign of simple ignorance. For example, of the 1320 enlisted men diagnosed as degenerate at the Erzurum hospital during the Great War, only 96—that is 7.2 percent—were listed as having “recognized” their nationality (\textit{millet}) and compatriots (\textit{milletdaş}), while 280

\textsuperscript{84} Again, the use of only the first names in the Ottoman Empire and republican Turkey until 1934 makes it impossible to find connections between the POWs and those who were involved in the Village Institutes project.

\textsuperscript{85} For the Ottoman women’s movement, see among others, Serpil Çakır, \textit{Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi} (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1993).

people were "more or less aware" of their nationality.\textsuperscript{87} While these people were declared degenerates for other physical and mental reasons, it is interesting to note that a sense of belonging to a nation was very important for the military doctors. Still, besides a few anecdotes recalled by the officers about the enlisted men's perception of their nationality, we do not have much evidence of how the peasant soldier identified himself.

As related above, it is rather clear that peasants could identify themselves with some form of Islam, Ottomanness, and possibly, though not very likely, Turkishness. If the peasant soldiers were as ignorant or confused about their ethnicity as the officers believed, how did the officers identify themselves and their nation?

The nationalism of the Young Turk elites and, later, the leaders of the Independence movement in Anatolia has been the subject of numerous studies. While the significance of the political elite's self-identification is not in doubt, there has been no attempt to investigate the more perplexing question of how educated, but not always vocal, Ottomans outside the political and intellectual elite, as the link between these elites and the common people, identified themselves.

It is useful to consider briefly how the historiography on the Young Turks has interpreted their identity and nationalism. M. Şükrü Hanioğlu argues that the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) gradually converted to Turkish nationalism well before the revolution in 1908; even as early as 1906, CUP propaganda had acquired a Turkish

nationalist focus. The more traditional argument holds that the Young Turks gradually discarded Ottomanism as the non-Muslim Ottomans (Greeks, Armenians, Bulgars, and others) continued with their nationalist claims even after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908; the Young Turks by this argument later discarded Islamism, because the Muslim Albanians and Arabs developed their separatist movements after the Balkan Wars (1912-1913).

Recently, however, the two conventional views have come up against significant challenges. Among others, Hasan Kayali has argued that political Turkish nationalism was not a viable force until after the Great War. The CUP subscribed to Ottomanist and Islamist political ideals to the end; like Arabs, Turks carried multiple layers of identities. Recently, Erik Jan Ziircher, looking at actual policies, as opposed to ideological writings, argues that the period of 1918-1922 was the zenith of Ottoman Muslim nationalism. Ziircher may be right in his conclusion, but his reasoning seems questionable, for he is much too eager to discount the possibility that the leadership of the National Resistance (Milli Mücadele) movement may have used the term “Ottoman Muslims” simply as a political ploy to maintain the support of the religious leaders and the Kurds, who were attempting to establish their own nation. In other words, it may not

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88 Hanioğlu, Young Turks, 211.

89 Hasan Kayali, Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Recently, Kemal Karpat argued along similar lines in an essay. See Kemal H. Karpat, “Historical Continuity and Identity Change or How to Be Modern Muslim, Ottoman, and Turk,” in Ottoman Past and Today’s Turkey, ed. Kemal H. Karpat (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 1-28.

be very credible to base one’s conclusion solely on what terms political elites—who were
desperate to find a unifying point among Turks, Kurds, and other Muslim peoples (Arabs
who remained within Misak-i Milli after the armistice, for example)—used to appeal to
various groups in the conservative environment of eastern Anatolia in documents meant
for the consumption of these specific groups. Moreover, as mentioned before, these
studies consider only the ideologies and actions of the political and intellectual elites.

Benedict Anderson argues in his influential work on nationalism that all nations
are imagined. He claims that nationalism emerges with the demise of broader notions of
community—in this case, Ottomanism and Islamism.91 His point diverts attention from
the different ways a nation can be imagined. As will be shown below, it was possible for
the broader notions of community to coexist with narrower definitions of Turkishness.92

*Millet* (nation) was the commonly used and supposedly neutral term employed by
the Ottoman POWs in expressing their identity. The meaning of *millet* must have been
taken for granted, as it is rarely defined.93 On one rare occasion, a POW expressed his
feelings about the nation in this manner: “Nation (*millet*) means the whole of the shared
institutions of literature, music, architecture, language, letters, traditions, customs, and, of
course, sentiments.”94 Another claimed that the attempts of Jews, Armenians, and

93 Perhaps it was also problematic to define “nation” in a multinational empire such as the Ottoman Empire. For the various meanings attached to *millet* and its evolution, see Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 38-42, 131-32n 27.
Arabs—who had never lost their indigenous “nationality and language”—in establishing their own “government” [sic] show that “nations never die.” Unfortunately, the authors of these definitions are not very explicit about the meanings of these characteristics of nationhood. Still, the idea they are expressing here is that there are essential, immutable qualities that define a nation: inherited culture and language. Although it could presumably belong with the categories of “traditions,” “customs,” and “sentiments,” it is worth noting that religion is not mentioned specifically. While the inherited culture could include the other heirs of Islamic culture, such as Arabs, the specification of language as a quality that defines the nation excludes the non-Turkish-speakers. Still, the use of the term \textit{millet} in general and without specificity by the Turkists and Ottomanists alike, whether the nation was Ottoman or Turkish, leads us to believe that its meaning was flexible and negotiable, meaning sometimes Muslims, and sometimes Ottomans, or simply Turks.

As we see below, Muslim, Ottoman, and Turkish identities were not mutually exclusive in the minds of many of the officers. In an ballad poem, printed over several issues of the camp newspaper \textit{Vaveyla}, one of the POWs in Russia—possibly a rare example of a literate enlisted man—refers to himself and his compatriots with three identifiers. If the author is an enlisted man (or even a sergeant)—which is very likely—who was literate prior to captivity, the heroic poem represents the genuine voice of the subaltern—that is, the peasant—with regard to his identity. If he became literate in captivity through the “educating” efforts of the officers, his epic represents either a

\footnote{\textit{"İçtimaiyat: Efrad ile Milletin arasındaki fark,"} \textit{İşük}, 28 Kanun-i Evvel 1335/5 January 1920, number 100, p.1}

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synthesis of his own identity prior to schooling and what was taught him by his officers or, alternatively, exactly what was taught him by his officers.

Ballad

Ottomans we are, our soldiers roar [like lions].
My mother and father should not cry; we will come back some day.
If we do not return, we will all die in the path of religion.
It is not a bloody bayram,96 this is the Jihad of believers.
My God's paradise was promised in these lands.
Even if we die, the soul of the nation, religion and state will live on.
Whosoever is Muslim will not stay home, but will avenge us.
Listen to me, as long as one Turk remains, let us continue our fight....
In the land of the Muscovite, there are many Muslims, let us unite with them.97
Let us topple the towers that display the Cross above the Crescent.
Ottomans we are, let us plant our flag in the four corners [of the world].98

The words of the peasant subaltern uttered as “we are Ottomans,” “whosoever is Muslim,” and “one Turk,” clearly show that the author considers himself and others as belonging to the same three categories. In other words, he assumes that all soldiers of his army are Ottomans, Muslims, and Turks.99 Yet at the same time, the context makes it clear that he is not appealing to all Muslims of the world (umma) in a broad sense, but to Ottoman Muslims and the Muslim Turkic people of Russia. Notably, the Turkic populations of Russia are referred to as simply “Muslims,” and not Turks, even though

96 Bayram: holiday. For a brief description of bayrams, see Donald Quataert, The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 163-66.

97 Osmanlya z askerimiz küküyör / Ağlamasın anam, babam, bir gün geliriz. / Gelmez isek din yolunda hepimizde ölürüz / Kanlı bayram değildir, bu münimlerin cihadı / Vaz olundu bu yerlerde Allah’ın cenneti. / Biz ölsėde ruh-i millet, din-i-devlet yaşar. / İslam olan evde durnaz öc almaya gider... / Beni dinleyin bir Türk kalsak hasımığın gudelim... / Moskof ilde İslam çökdür onlarlarla birleşelim... / Ay üstüne put dikilen kuleleri kiralım... / Osmanlıyiz sancoğümiz dört yana biz dikelim... “Destan,” Vaveyla, 1 Teşrin-i Sani 1331/14 November 1915, number 1, p.12.


99 It should be remembered that there were Jews and Christians in the Ottoman army, although they may not have been among this man’s captive compatriots in Krasnoyarsk.
the author feels himself to be a Turk, among other things. Perhaps even the fact that he uses the word “Islam” in Turkish rather than the more appropriate “müslüman” to refer to Muslims also gives away his rather rudimentary literacy. In many writings, such as the above, the distinction between Islam as a faith and Muslims as a community disappears. Evidently, the concern seems to be one of community rather than that of faith.

It was possible that one could be identified simply as a Muslim and a compatriot, as the following piece shows:

My friends went to work, [while] I fell sick in the city of Krasnoyarsk. Now, I am well and strolling about in the prisoners’ barracks. The spring came, meadows turned green one day that year. I longed for my coreligionists. I heard that a battle broke out on the banks of Çanakkale, That our compatriots clashed with the French and the British. In the end the Italians turned out to be treacherous [kançık] in their word.

From this brief poem it is not possible to deduce clearly the author’s vision of “our compatriots.” As the word “bizimkiler,” (compatriots) is ambiguous, he could also have meant “our guys,” or “our people.” In other words, he could have in mind Turks, Ottomans, or simply Muslims, as “my coreligionists” implies. Yet, it would not be surprising if the author meant specifically Turks, for it would not have been incongruous to identify oneself as Turk, while also referring to Islam. One officer in Russia, pleading with his comrades to mind their behavior, states: “Let us not forget that we represent the Turkish nation in this garrison. Let us show [others] that we are the inheritors of the great

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100 Arkadaşlar iše gitti, hasta düştüm Krasnoyarsk şehrinde / lyileştem getiyorum esirlerin köskünde / Bahar geldi, çayır açtı senin bir gününde / Dindaşla rım tüküyordu hep gözümün önünde / İşittimki harp açılmış Çanakkale boyunda / Çarpışmışlar bizimkiler Fransız İngilizin önünde / İtalyanlar kançık çıkmış nihayet sözünde “Manzume 4,” Vaveyla, 4 Kanun-u Evvel 1331/ 17 December 1915, number 2, p. 12.
Islamic religion.” It seems that similar sentiments found voice among the high-ranking officers as well. A general taken captive by the Russians, for example, accused the Russians of being “the foremost enemy of Islam and Turkism.”

For some officers one option was more important than the other. A POW writing an editorial in İşık on the occasion of a religious holiday, suggested that all prisoners should all prepare for the “real holiday (bayram), big holiday! This holiday, which will someday be recorded on the calendar, is more natural, more scientific than Islamic unification (ittihad-i İslam). . . . It will be the day of Turk(ic) unification (Türk ittihadi). Then history will record this day of ‘Turks’ second Ergenekon next to that important holiday of the sons of Israel breaking the bonds of Egyptian captivity.” While the quotation above might seem to be colored more heavily with Turkism than with Islamism, the writer clearly identifies with Islamism as well. Alternately, a medrese graduate, a devout Muslim, could just as easily identify with the ancient Turks.


102 ATASE Arşivi, K 313/ Fihrist 15. A junior officer at the time of his captivity, but a staff colonel when he wrote his memoirs, Rahmi Apak makes a similar observation. However, perhaps because his memoirs were written much later during republican times, the Russian becomes the enemy of Turks. “Yeryüzünde Türklere faulak etmiş milletlerin birincisi Ruslar ise, ikincisi muhakkak İngilizlerdir.” (“If the Russians are the first foremost harmful people to the Turks on the face of the earth, the second most harmful are surely the English”) Rahmi Apak, 133.

103 One of the most important ethnogenesis myths of the Turkic peoples, Ergenekon is an ancient epic story about the regeneration of the Gökturks after major setbacks. According to the epic, the word Ergenekon refers to the valley surrounded by high mountains on all sides where the defeated Turks had taken refuge. Finally, when they were numerous and powerful enough the Gökturks broke their way out and conquered the neighboring peoples. The departure from Ergenekon, or Nevruz, is celebrated on 21 March. For more detailed information on Ergenekon, see Devin Deweese, Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde: Baba Tükles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1994).

104 “Kurban Bayramı,” İşık, 6/9/1335/10 September 1919, number 70, p.1. See also note 94 above.
Traveling in a train through a densely forested area of Russia after escaping from a prison camp, Ragıp Bey remembered, “I was lost in thought. I was contemplating how Turkish braves had galloped their horses around here and I was likening the individual trees of the forest to their lances.” Viewed simply as unquestionable “historical truth” (hakikat-i tarihiye), the awareness of and sense of pride in Turkish history and the braveness of the ancient Turks was common among the POWs.

Romantic ideas of nationalism had strong appeal among the POWs. This was a rather recent phenomenon among the Turks, who had recently discovered mutual affinities with the Turkic peoples of Central Asia, and thus the idea of a broader pan-Turkic nation emerged. Given the fact that some of the prisoners had studied the history of the Turks while in school and that those in Russia came into contact with Turkic peoples, this is not surprising. While Turkish history in the civilian schools and textbooks was minimized, the military schools discussed Turkish history in detail. Central Asia was of great importance to those Ottomans who emphasized their Turkishness. Although allusions to Central Asia—or the original homeland (anavatan and dedeler yurdu) of the Turks, as some POWs called it—are rather common, they

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105 Bașkatipzade Ragıp Bey, 118.
107 See the Mughals of India referred to as a “Turkish empire,” and a “Turkish dynasty” in “Turan,” Niyet, 31/8/1917, reprinted in Faik Tonguç, 270.
108 Mehmet Ö. Alkan, 53.
seem, in general, to be more frequently expressed among those POWs who were held captive in Russia.

The POWs in Russia, both in captivity memoirs and in their camp, referred to ancient Turkish history in numerous ways. Clearly, their proximity to the places where ancient Turks were thought to have lived added to their expressions of attachment to a rather vague territory that stretched from Mongolia to Hungary.\(^{109}\) Sometimes they even explored the etymological roots of Turkish words and connected them with the Turkic presence in Central Asia.\(^{110}\) More than one prisoner felt something familiar in the cities and regions the prisoners’ trains passed on their way to different camps or in the locales where they were imprisoned. One prisoner, stating that the “city of Krasnoyarsk was part of the land where the Gökturks used to live,”\(^{111}\) made his environment more familiar in a primordial way. There were other such places, as well, that made the POWs feel nostalgic about their Turkish history, homeland, and ancestors. Another prisoner who kept a diary recorded the places his trained passed:

We come to the city of Tiimen. Our journey continues as we pass the first flourishing city of Asia, this old Turkish city and Turkish civilization located in the heart of this land of our ancestors [dedeler yurdu] where now their esteemed (saygideğer) souls flew and swarmed through the high skies and where we inhaled their delightful odor and kissed their soul . . . . We came to Manchuria station. This place is a very old Turkish motherland and Turkish city. This is

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\(^{109}\) See “ilk Türkler ve teşkil etdikleri saltanatlar: Moğolistan’dan Atilla’ya kadar Türkler,” \(Yarın\), 3 Şubat 1336/ number 9.

\(^{110}\) “İlmi Sütunlar: ‘Han’,” \(İzmir\), 9 Şubat 1336/19 February 1920, number 7, p.3; see also “Kültigin Kitabesi,” \(Yarın\), 1 Nisan 1336/12 April 1920, number 20.

\(^{111}\) Hüsamettin Tuğal, 122. It is possible that in captivity narratives written well after captivity, some of the Turkic knowledge might have been acquired after repatriation.
obvious from the people we see, and there is a certain noble quality in their faces. Both their faces and the language they speak are nearly the same as ours.\footnote{Halil Ataman, 133 and 197.}

Feelings of racial and linguistic identification with the local Turkic peoples could be even stronger, for some POWs referred to them as “irkdaş” (co-racials) and “our northern Turkish brothers,” (Şimal Türk kardeşlerimiz).\footnote{Inkilap Tarihi Arşivi, 97/33/33-8; and Başkatipzade Ragip Bey, Tarih-i Hayatım, 95.}

Some POWs were also conscious of the historical relationship between the Mongols and the Turks. Their statements also expressed a primordial geographical tie to the lands of the Mongols:

[The Mongols] came from the central parts of Asia, where the majestic Altai [mountains] reached the skies, from that old cradle of Turks. When the Turk moved from here by God’s order to conquer the world, and he first moved towards the East … then turning towards the West chasing the most famous powers of Europe—Germans and Romans—to the other end of the world, the Mongol was with him…. [Historically,] the word Turk is not in general the name of a single nation. But calling the Mongols Turks does not mean that they were Turks. Mongols are not directly from the Turkish family, but are the Turks’ closest brothers.\footnote{“Moğollar,” Vaveyla, 27 Temmuz 1333/ number 83, p.10}

Various writings by the POWs on their understanding of Turkish history show that what they believed was not too different from what was later officially accepted as the republican Turkish historical thesis, which, aiming to give a Turkish identity to the Turks of Turkey, rejected its Ottoman and Islamic past while making connections to the Turkic past in Central Asia. While it is likely that the consciousness of pre-Anatolian Turkic history was sharpened by contact with various Turkic peoples in Russia, expressions of
the POWs show also that they had some awareness of ideas already in circulation before they became prisoners.

As should be clear by now, the POW officers saw themselves as part of a modern world, and of a community of Muslims within that world, of a community of Ottomans, and finally of a community of Turks, which overlapped with the community of the Ottomans and Muslims. Writing about the early Ottomans, Cemal Kafadar likened their multiple layers of identities coexisting side by side to a bulb of garlic, with each clove representing one identity, or facet, to form the whole garlic. In many ways, the Ottoman officer POWs were not very different from their predecessors.

Conclusion

Whether they advocated a complete westernization, or only a partial, technologically-oriented version, all Ottoman prisoners were concerned with saving and advancing the “nation.” Perhaps because the idea of “nation” proved to be problematic concept to defenders of a multinational empire, what the “nation” meant may have differed from time to time and from person to person. Turkish, even pan-Turkic, nationalism was rather popular among the educated class of officers even though they did not specifically exclude Ottoman and Muslim components from Turkish identity. Interchangeable use of identity markers, without much pointed discrimination, among the POWs points to the presence of broader notions of identity existing at the same time. It is likely that while they were used interchangeably, one or another of them—whether

Turkishness, Muslimness, or Ottomanness—might have held a singular importance for the POWs.

Certainly, there were many who saw religion in general, and Islam in particular, as a hindrance to advancement in the modern world. For all of them, advancement meant catching up to the west, although there was disagreement about how best to achieve that goal. While some promoted an adoption of western ways without addressing how this might affect the Ottoman culture and nation, others, seeing the danger in the wholesale adoption of western culture, pushed only for familiarization with the West’s technological advancements, while keeping intact the “more spiritual and more advanced” Turkish, Ottoman, and Islamic inner domain.

Although it has come under significant challenge, some scholars argue that Turkish nationalism held an important place among the late Ottoman elite and was dominant after the Balkan Wars, or even before 1908. This may have been the case among the Young Turk political and military elite. But as shown by the evidence from the POWs—who, coming from small town or rural lower middle-class backgrounds, represent the educated classes that did not belong to the ruling political and intellectual elites—there were still strong ties to Ottomanism and even to Islamism. Clearly, not all Ottomans were positivists and materialists like the Young Turks. The sentiments of this larger group, as opposed to the small group of elite Young Turks, are significant, the more so because the great mass of illiterate rank-and-file soldiers are not represented at all. In the absence of the voices of the common peasant soldiers, the next best thing might be those of the educated junior officers, as they stood somewhere between the elites and the peasants, and recorded their thoughts and feelings in this rather unusual
environment of captivity. The stressful prison camp environment made visible the
different ideologies and identities that existed among the Ottoman POWs. If diverse
identity concepts coexisted among the educated POWs, similar diversity certainly existed
among the peasants; although briefly and faintly, this even comes through in the voices of
the peasant soldiers.

Given the various coexisting forms of identity and the intellectual and cultural
divisions within Ottoman society just before the establishment of the Turkish republic in
1923, the resistance encountered by the early republic in its reforms from the masses and
even the elites might becomes more understandable. Moreover, in the westernizer-
modernist dichotomy, we see the continuous identity crises and tensions, which
originated in the nineteenth century, within Turkish society in the republican years.
CHAPTER 3

PRISONER OF WAR LIFE IN RUSSIA AND EGYPT: A COMPARISON

In no group of prisoners did death claim so many victims as in this [the Turkish prisoners], chiefly owing to the unaccustomed climate. The religious fatalism and passivity of the Turk enabled him to bear the most appalling conditions with resignation. For a westerner there is something admirable in the peace and dignity with which a Turk takes leave of his life.

Elsa Brändström, Among Prisoners of War in Russia & Siberia.

Although they were prisoners in the same war, the captivity experiences of the Ottoman soldiers in Russia and Egypt differed in various ways. Variables, ranging from the geography and climate of the locales where the prisoners were interned to the historical legacy of their captors in Ottoman eyes, made the experiences of the prisoners vary in many significant ways. In this chapter we will examine their experiences and responses in a comparative perspective by considering the nature of captivity in both places. That is, how was captivity in Russia different from captivity in Egypt? In answering this question we must consider certain factors that will show us the prisoners’ concerns, or perhaps more correctly their difficulties in captivity, and outlooks. The argument is that the outlooks of the prisoners towards their captors, the war in general, and how they attempted to resist the captor were determined by the conditions they faced in captivity. In this direction we now turn to examine how the Ottoman POWs in Russia and Egypt viewed their captors and war in general. We will then look into the all-
important question of food in captivity before turning to relations among the prisoners, their everyday lives, and finally how they attempted to resist the captors.

Image of the Enemy

Scholars examining the British and French troop newspapers\(^1\) from the Great War generally agree that very few of the front-line troops shared the extravagant enemy-phobia of Germany, in this case, of the British and French civilian population at home. Although the French may have viewed the Germans less favorably than the British did, both nations' front-line troops in general had a rather positive image of their enemies. No doubt, the similarities in the plight of the soldiers of both sides made it easy to sympathize with the men on the opposite side. The British enlisted men used terms like “Johnny,” “the Allemand,” or more affectionately, “Old Fritz,” to refer to the Germans, while their officers may have preferred “the Bosche.”\(^2\) Arguing that the image of the enemy was one of the fundamental roots of the national feeling in France, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau points to somewhat contradictory indications of the image of the enemy. That is, in the French troop newspapers one finds both respect and hostility for the enemy.\(^3\) Still, the overwhelming tone even from the French side was one of respect for the enemy’s strength and courage.

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\(^1\) Although the authors of these books refer to these publications as “journals,” we will call them newspapers in this dissertation to avoid confusion with journals kept as diaries.


How did the Ottoman POWs view their enemies? The Ottoman image of the enemies, especially of the Russians, was unequivocal. As far as the Russians were concerned, the image was almost thoroughly negative, though from time to time prisoners or captivity newspaper articles express feelings of respect—grudging though it may be—even within the same piece, for the enemy.

In general, the expressions of dislike for the enemy are most common among the Ottomans who were captured by the Russians. After discovering the corpse of a helpless young victim of brutal warfare, one Ottoman exclaimed: "8-10 [Russian] soldiers raped and killed a young girl. [We] understood that there was no discipline in the army of these savage enemies of [sexual] honor and life."4 However, the sentiment did not change much even when the image was expressed independently of a specific event.

**Rage (Gayz)**

In front of the angels who witnessed my perseverance,
Suddenly I became a prisoner in the claws of the muzhiks [Russian peasants].
It is difficult to become a prisoner of an army that has been the religious, national, historical enemy of my nation since before the dawn of time.
If I were not surrounded by spies from all sides,
I would have revealed the hatred and rage that burn in my brain
Bloody infidel! Phantasm injecting rage and hatred into my forbearing heart, with that baseless conceit of yours.
Go on, seize the rule of every land....

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4 Faik Tonguç, 141.

5 "Gayz," Vaveyla, 31 Mart 1333/31 March 1917, number 67, p.4. The Ottoman text reads: Sebatma şahid olan meleklerin önünde / Esir düştüm mujiklerin pençesine nağahan / Ta ezelden milletimin dini, milli, tarihi / Hasmi olan bir orduya tutsak olmak çetindir... / Her tarafın casuslarla katılınması olmasa/Dimağımı yakant kini, gayzi ayan ederdim/ Kanlı kafir! Ey hekim ile meluf olan kalbine/ Gayz ve nefret hislerini aşlayan vâhime/ O temelsiz gururunla hikm ededur her ile.
The author’s hatred for the enemy comes through very clearly here; there is no respect for the Russians. As the use of the term “claws” in the above poem suggests, animalistic qualifiers were used to project negative Russian images. Vowing never to forget the voice of his captor, a Russian sergeant, an Ottoman POW described him as a “yellow-bearded, small, blue-eyed northern bear.”6 Another described his captor as “a young officer . . . who was not much different from a little yellow [blond] piglet.”7 If the Russian soldiers stole belongings of the captured POWs, they could easily become “carrion crows.”8 In the heat of the battle, a quickly moving Russian enemy was simply a “rabid hyena.”9 At the simplest level, animalistic terms dehumanized the Russians. They were not only animals, but particularly those animals that were considered to be rather despicable. The hyena and hooded crow are scavengers who live by picking at those who are already dead or dying. The bear, a common international image for the Russians, simply represents wild, uncouth behavior.

However, we would go too far if we were to take these dehumanizing terms as signs of racism, for we can also find occasional signs of affinity for the enemy. An officer, who was just as likely to call the Russians “demons from hell,” is taken aback by their singing, for in a sorrowful Russian song he finds comfort:

6 Faik Tonguç, 220.


8 Tonguç, 169. The term used is “leș kargası.”

9 “Sarıkamış,” Vaveyla, 29 Nisan 1332/ 12 April 1917, number 23, p.9.
A song rose from the throats of the Russian soldiers. It was so moving and beautiful that we [the Ottoman POWs] listened in silence. We were carried away by the sad melody of the song. The voice of an old and bearded Russian soldier in particular bewitched us. We didn’t want him to stop.\textsuperscript{10}

Most Ottomans viewed the Russian as the biggest threats and enemies of the Ottoman Empire; the British closely followed.\textsuperscript{11} The colorful language and animal imagery used to describe the Russians, however, are absent from the vocabulary of the Ottoman soldiers and prisoners when describing their British enemy. When the British soldiers took away the belongings of the captured Ottomans, they were not, for example, called “carrion crows.”\textsuperscript{12} In descriptions of the British, animal imagery was simply replaced by derogatory comments regarding the British understanding of “civilization” and “humanity.” One POW commented years after repatriation that he still remembered the Ottoman plight in British hands: “The inhumane and unethical treatment shown to the prisoners by the British soldiers is still fresh in my mind. . . . I leave to the [judgment of] our leaders and Turkish history the terrible and hateful (\textit{feci ve ığrenc}) episodes I witnessed.”\textsuperscript{13} Another complained that

we used to think of the English as having the greatest respect for laws and tradition. Yet I have come across many individual Englishmen who have punched and kicked the law in such a manner that I am now convinced that their respect for law and their vaunted humanity are pretty flimsy and useful only for show. . . . After the treatment I received at their hands my love for the British turned to


\textsuperscript{11} Rahmi Apak, 133; ATASE, K 313/ F15.


\textsuperscript{13} Sokrat İncesu, \textit{Birinci Dünya Savaşında Çanakkale-Ariburnu Hatıraları} (Çanakkale: Esen Matbaası, 1964), 32.
hatred. There was more respect for human dignity and rules of humanity among the Bedouins of Amir 'Abdullah than one could find among the pseudo-civilized British.15

There were some Ottomans who thought positively of the British treatment, especially once the prisoners arrived in the prison camps; nevertheless the complaints of brutal treatment by the “simple and vulgar” British guards, who “had not taken their share from civilization,”16 abound.17 Some disliked the British so much that, despite their boredom in captivity and opportunity to study English, they pointedly refused to learn English although they were quite willing to learn other languages.18

In his study of the French troops, Audoin-Rouzeau finds that soldiers judged the enemy by the yardstick of their courage under fire: “It was this, which forbade the latter [enemy] to be denigrated. Self-respect and respect for the enemy were inseparable ....”19 Furthermore, he continues, the hostility expressed towards the enemy increases as the level of education decreases among the French soldiers. That is, the more educated the soldier, the less likely he was to feel hatred towards the enemy. If we follow Audoin-Rouzeau’s argument, we would expect, by extension, our Ottoman officer POWs to be

14 The son of Sharif Husayn of Mecca and later king of Jordan.
13 Esref Kuşçubaşı, Turkish Battle at Khaybar (Istanbul: Arba, 1977), 128. For additional similar comments see p. 130.
16 Sokrat İncesi, 31.
18 “Bir Mülâzim-i evvelin harb ve esaret günleri: İmparatorluk’tan Cumhuriyet’e bir ömür,” Tarih ve Medeniyet p. 32; Rahmi Apak, 169.
19 Audoin-Rouzeau, 169.
much less hostile than Ottoman enlisted POWs towards their enemy. Yet, as the above
descriptions show, the Ottoman officers were quite hostile to the enemy. How can we
explain the Ottoman officer POWs expressing such hostility, even hatred, towards their
captors?

It is reasonable to assume, as Audoin-Rouzeau and J. G. Fuller argue, that few of
the front line troops shared “the extravagant Germanophobia of the civilians. . . . The
similarities in the plight of the infantrymen on both sides made it all too easy to
sympathize with the plight of the man opposite.”

Both the French and British front
soldiers’ awareness that so-called enemy troops were similarly victimized by the political
elites simply added to this sense of fellow-feeling. The attitude of the Ottoman POWs
towards their enemies relates to their status as prisoners of war. Simply put, the enemy,
whether Russian or British, was no longer the same enemy once the balance of power
changed. While in the trenches they may have respected each other’s bravery and the
danger they represented as the enemy, but when the Ottomans were captured, their
relationship to their fellow soldiers (the enemy) changed. With capture, the Ottomans
soldiers lost their equal status to the enemy. Now their plight was different from that of
their enemy, who suddenly became their captor. Both sides might have felt that the
soldiers were victimized by each side’s political elites, but the capture changed the
equation among the soldiers; the Ottomans POWs were now in a position to be

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20 J. G. Fuller, 38-39.

21 J. G. Fuller, 39; Audoin-Rouzeau, 165-66.
political elites no longer mattered. A careful reading of the captivity narratives, kept as
diaries, shows the change in stance towards the enemy from pre-captivity to post-capture.

It should be clear, from both the evidence and the colorful language used, that the
hostility towards the Russians was much more pronounced than hostility towards the
British. It is likely that the choice words reserved for the Russians are the result of strong
feelings towards the “traditional” enemy of the Ottoman Empire. The Russian Empire
had dealt some of the most memorable and devastating blows through at least nine wars
to the disintegrating Ottoman Empire. Since it was a lethal neighbor, its danger was
much more immediate than that posed by far-away England. The most recent war with
Russia, in 1877-1878, commonly known among the Turkish public as '93 Harbi (War of
1293 [hijri]), resulted not only in a major loss of territory, but also in waves of migration
from the lost areas that were still fresh in the memories of the Ottoman public and
military alike.

There had not been any similar experience with England. Granted, the distant
provinces of Egypt and Cyprus were lost to them, but it had been a diplomatic battle, not
one that caused death, destruction, disease, and the migration of thousands of people.
England had become involved in the internal affairs of the Empire through various
excuses, including what the British government regarded as the uncivilized treatment of
non-Muslim minorities of the Empire. Now that the British captors were not treating the
Ottoman POWs within the confines of what they understood as “British civilization,” the

22 It seems that the Ottomans ranked third in the Russian image of traditional enemy. Richard Stites, “Days
and Nights in Wartime Russia: Cultural Life, 1914-17,” in European Culture in the Great War, eds. Aviel
prisoners were quick to come back with charges of hypocritical British interest in civilized manners, even in war.

There is another possible explanation for the differences in the image of the enemy among the Ottoman prisoners. In *Blood Lines*, Vamik Volkan, a psychiatrist, argues that the more stressful the given situation, the more each side becomes preoccupied with the other. The process of dehumanizing may be conducted in stages; first, the enemy is demonized while still retaining human qualities, and then he is dehumanized. This sheds light not only on why the dehumanization of the enemy progressed after capture, but also on why the Ottoman image of the Russian captor was more negative and thoroughly dehumanized. Understandably, the Ottoman soldiers, once they became prisoners, found themselves in a more stressful situation than they had experienced prior to capture; in their view, their lives were now in the hands of the Russians. Whether perceived or real, the increase in stress initiated the demonization of the enemy. The Ottomans captured by the Russians, finding themselves in a more precarious and stressful situation, as this chapter argues, responded with complete dehumanization of the enemy. In contrast, those captured by the British forces reached at most the demonization stage, at which the enemy was evil but still human.

**Pacifism Among the Prisoners?**

European historians of the Great War have frequently pointed out that pacifist movements developed after the war among the war veterans. This pacifism, although not always ideologically based, first started to develop among the front line troops during the

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Did any sort of similar pacifism exist among the Ottoman soldiers in captivity? Since we do not know the answer for either the Ottoman and Turkish civilians and soldiers either during the war or afterwards due to lack of any studies on even a related topic, what this study will show about the POWs will be especially significant in this regard. Furthermore, we will consider whether there are any tangible differences between the prisoners in Egypt and Russia as far as pacifism, or lack thereof, is concerned. While it is worth noting that the number of Ottoman men choosing to go to military schools was on a rather sharp decline from 1904 through 1908, we can hardly take this as a sign of some sort of a pacifist movement; perhaps the coming of the Young Turk revolution opened other avenues to young Ottoman men who had until then sought careers in the armed forces.

Although it might not be surprising, especially in the European war narratives, to find statements by combatants about the evil nature of war, similar sentiments are not always readily and abundantly visible in the Ottoman war and captivity narratives. Yet, they do exist and are perhaps more visible in the captivity narratives and prison camp newspapers than in war narratives. Perhaps capture gave the soldiers an unwelcomed occasion to observe the casualties on the enemy side as well as on their own, and the time to reflect on the nature and consequences of war.

We regularly encounter sentiments relating to the destructiveness of war, especially among the narratives of the prisoners who were captured by the Russians on

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the Caucasus front. This may be because the war on that front was especially difficult and hard fought. In addition, the war on the Caucasus front was fought around populated areas, which added civilians to the victims of war. Not only the Russians, but also the freezing cold and various diseases rampant on the eastern front could easily prove lethal. Therefore, the soldiers on the eastern front were more likely to encounter signs of destruction and death. Still, the sentiments expressed in these captivity narratives do not go beyond a few sentences at most.

For better-developed pacifist sentiments and lengthier statements we have to turn to camp newspapers produced by the prisoners. In an editorial piece on the occasion of the Muslim festival of sacrifice (Kurban Bayrami), titled after the festival, one prisoner lamented the high human toll of the Great War:

Since the declaration of mobilization, we have lived through (idrak etmek) ten festivals (bayram) including the current one. . . . We can say that these ten festivals are the real ‘sacrificial’ festivals. Are the red poppies that decorate the front from the Vistula to the shores of the Sea of Oman [Gulf of Oman] anything less than the drops of blood from the Turkish sacrifices [of life] in the last five years?

The war thus is an atrocity; it sacrifices people. Although he may have been in captivity for a while, the tone of the piece implies that the author has seen his share of destruction. It is worth noting the universal imagery of the red poppies as well; they grow, and grow so red because they are nourished by the blood of the dead soldiers buried beneath

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26 Halil Ataman, 47, 249.

them. Although it takes the form of criticizing the Young Turk government and the intellectuals that supported it while it was in power, another piece carries on the theme of war’s destructiveness. The author of this camp newspaper editorial chastises Mehmed Emin [Yurdakul], the nationalist poet, who had recently given a speech in Sultanahmet, Istanbul, protesting the Allied occupation of Istanbul:

When . . . the country was afire in the flames of hell from one end to another [and when] the nation, from the babies in cribs to the martyrs in their graves, was crying blood instead of tears—why were you silent? Why weren’t you crying out, oh our esteemed and respect-worthy poet?

The devastation of the war aside, even the noise and tools of war were undesirable for some. In a rather satirical piece, one Ottoman prisoner relates a recent dream he had of post-war Turkey.

I had just gotten onto the quay when I noticed that a revolution had taken place in the lifestyle of the nation. . . . Military service had been abolished. Words like war, weapon, knife . . . had all disappeared from usage. . . . So as not to remind people of blood, orange juice had taken the place of red wine in pubs. . . . Rifle butts and the like had been set aside to be converted into crutches for those citizens who had become invalids during the General War [World War I]. Artillery carriages had been donated to the ministry of agriculture to be remanufactured into agricultural tools. . . .

The whistles that signaled the morning roll call in his prison camp in Egypt then awakened this dreamer from this peaceful dream into the world of captivity.

While lengthy editorials about the futility and devastation of war were not always commonplace, many others agreed that what the nation now needed was a time of peace

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28 For comments on the imagery of the red poppies in British war literature see Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 243-54.

29 “Mehmed Emin Bey’ in Nutku’ndan,” *İzmir*, 9 Şubat 1336/17 February 1920, number 7, p. 4.

to rebuild itself. The Ottoman warrior image sometimes came under attack as well. Further devastation of their country by the invading armies—French, Italians, Greeks—must have turned more of the prisoners into pacifists, for the feelings they expressed were not ones of hatred and revenge, but ones of horrific words and terrible images. The image below shows one prisoner’s view of the effect of war on Turkish cities. The image might be mere doodling with unshapely (and almost smiling) skulls and entwined snakes in the background, but the meaning comes through clearly.

Figure 3.1: War’s Impact on Turkey
Source: İzmir, 9 Şubat 1336/17 February 1920, number 7, p. 4


32 While the snakes resemble a caduceus, the number of snakes here (4) is double that of a caduceus.
The prisoners in Egypt were more aware of the events taking place in Turkey than their compatriots in Russia. They had relatively easy access to Egyptian and English newspapers. They were aware, also, of the ever-richer war profiteers in Turkey, while the rest of the country suffered. However, despite their concern for their relatives at home, their opinion of the war profiteers did not turn into hatred, although they did not hesitate to ridicule their behavior. The lack of clearly expressed hatred for the war profiteers stands in stark contrast to the French troops who had nothing but loathing and death threats for the analogous group of people in France. It is unclear what might account for the puzzling difference in attitudes. One possibility is that the French frontline soldier saw himself as a more “legitimate” victim of the war because he was still fighting for the very public the profiteers were gouging, whereas the Ottoman POW, whose war had ended in some ways, now depended on the public and the state to bring him back home. Yet while most of the criticism became more audible after the Young Turk government had fled the capital in the aftermath of the war, the prisoners were not shy of expressing their disdain for the Young Turk government and policy. Significantly, we should remember that the prisoners had less direct exposure to and news of the war profiteers than the frontline troops, while it was partially the policies and strategy of the Young Turk government and leaders that put the prisoners in the situation

33 “Harp Zenginleri Kolleksiyonundan,” *Kızıl Elma*, 12 Şubat 1335/11 February 1919, number 7, p. 4. For the somewhat related issue of rich versus poor people examined satirically, see “Birick Şişmanımız,” *Yarın*, 16/1/1336/24 January 1920, number 5, p. 6.

34 Audoin-Rouzeau, 126.

35 “Yamyamlar Hükümeti,” *İzmir*, 9 Şubat 1336/17 February 1920, number 7, p.1; Ölçen, 104; Göze, 38; Ataman, 36, 47-48, 83, and 87.

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in which they found themselves. In this way, the Young Turk government and leaders were greater villains than the war profiteers in the eyes of the prisoners.

From the War Profiteers Collection:

-Even though you used to fulfill all my wishes without any hesitation not long ago, you have not yet given me the necklace you have been promising for days.

-My dearest, you are forgetting that the war is over . . .

Figure 3.2: War Profiteers
Source: Kızıl Elma, 12 Şubat 1335/11 February 1919, number 7, p. 4.

The pacifist views that we have presented so far come from those POWs who were interned by the British in Egypt. When we look at the prisoners in Russia, in contrast, we see the relative absence of pacifist feelings, or at least of their clear expression. As mentioned previously, expressions of regret over the futility and destructiveness of the war, and the general disregard for human life and the remains of
the dead are not uncommon among the POWs in Russia before and after their capture. Yet the expressions of pacifism, or simply of hatred for the war, do not exceed in depth and length the simple recognition of the waste of human life in general. Their writings do not express the same degree of concern for what the nation needed to do after the war, or for how this war had totally devastated the Ottoman Empire, as those of the prisoners in Egypt. This is not to say that there were no pacifists among the POWs in Russia, but their number seems rather insignificant in comparison to those who still expressed hatred for the enemy. Thus, expressions of hatred and desire for revenge for their plight in the hands of the captors and for the destruction the war caused in the eastern provinces seem to overshadow all else. In fact, the more destructive nature of the war in the East may have been one of the causes of the lingering hatred.

Another factor that we might consider is the nature of captivity in both places. That is, how was captivity in Russia different from captivity in Egypt? In answering this question we must consider certain factors that were important to the prisoners themselves, notably food, treatment by the captors, and general captivity conditions.

**Food**

As was undoubtedly the case prior to capture, food was always one of the more important things on the prisoners’ minds. Complaints about the food they were offered in captivity revolved around both its amount and its quality. While the POWs in Egypt

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36 Faik Tonguç, 71. One prisoner recorded that the city of Bitlis was no different from a slaughterhouse, where “the melting snow had created puddles and rushing water that was colored red with the blood of those who had died so that one’s nose nearly became stopped up with the sickening smell of rotting corpses . . .” Mehmet Feyyaz Efendi, “Hatrat” (unpublished manuscript), pp. 23, 26; Halil Ataman, 47, 249.
usually complained about the quality of the food, the ones in Russia faced the problem of both poor quality and inadequate quantity. Mehmet Arif, recalling his captivity in Russia, remembered that

we all seemed to be starving to death. The so-called meat that was given to the garrison was ox and water buffalo heads that had been preserved under the snow. They were covered with maggots. We boiled them in water and ate them. The odor upset our stomachs and made us vomit. The amount of bread was reduced to six ounces a day.

Still, most prisoners remembered the pre-Russian Revolution days as the good days in captivity as far as food was concerned; it simply became much worse after the Revolution as chaos and famine reduced the amount of food available to the prisoners. Rotten or not, soon the idea of having meat for food became only a rumor. As if in a scene from One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich, one prisoner reminisced about the art of sharing a bowl of soup with thirteen other prisoners. Each of them knew how to savor the thin potato soup so delicately:

The thirteen of us gathered around it. We had only one spoon that we began to pass around. Each person drank [sic] one spoonful and then gave it to the man next to him. I had carried my own spoon . . ., [but] it was small and I wouldn’t be able to drink much soup with it. . . as we drank, the soup began to disappear from the tin and turned dark as it did. Tiny pieces of potato began to appear at the

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38 Ölçen, 101.

39 ölçen, 112-13, 116; Mehmed Åsaf, 82; Başkatipzade Ragıp Bey, 98-99.

40 Halil Ataman, 155.

bottom of the tin. We reached the point where we could no longer use the spoon. A residue of soup remained at the bottom. We then decided to share the pieces of potato. Each man in turn was going to put a corner of the tin to his mouth and swallow some pieces. This action required a certain skill, including a little shake, to keep the soup from spilling out.\footnote{Ölçen, 192.}

In a similar vein, the fine art of drinking tea required not only skill but creative imagination as well. In this way, one could drink tea with sugar in three ways depending on the availability of sugar. \textit{Kitlama} (drinking tea while holding a piece of sugar in the mouth) required an abundance of sugar. “If you had only a single sugar cube, drinking \textit{kitlama} style would mean having only a cup of tea. But, if you put this single cube of sugar in front of you and stared at it imagining its sweet taste you could enjoy many cups of tea.” This style was called “\textit{gözleme}” (watching, observing). In the absence of any sugar, one could resort to “\textit{umma}” (imagination, longing) style. One simply “closed his eyes and imagined a piece of sugar as he drank his tea.”\footnote{Mehmed \text{"A}saf, 81. For another description of creative ways of drinking tea without sugar, see Faik Tonguç, 150. Hilmi Erbug also comments on the frugality of some prisoners who could manage to have six cups of tea with a single cube of sugar, 213.}

Inadequate food generally resulted in scurvy\footnote{Scurvy is caused by lack of vitamin C.} or other nutritional diseases among the prisoners.\footnote{U.S. Department of State, 763.721114/2548, p. 7} Although we do not have any statistical information on how many people suffered from various nutrition-related diseases in Russia, we can safely assume that such diseases were not uncommon. It is highly likely that the Ottoman POWs generally had less to eat than other Central Powers prisoners, for they almost never received food...
parcels from home as their German and Austro-Hungarian friends did. In addition, the Ottomans were not willing in most cases to eat pork, or the occasional pets, mostly dogs, that became dinners and were described as “delicate and scrumptious” by their foreign comrades.46

In the British camps, though thousands of Ottoman POWs became pellagrous due to insufficient niacin in their diet (this topic is examined in full in chapter IV), the Ottoman prisoners in general complained only about the quality of the food they were given by the camp authorities.47 It seems that they found the amount sufficient as occasional comments regarding the “abundance” of food pepper both the captivity narratives and the POW newspapers.48 Still, there were periods of food shortage for various reasons, especially before the prisoners were placed in a permanent prison camp.49 These periods of shortage might have resulted from transportation difficulties, but some prisoners were convinced that their British captors purposefully fed them insufficient and disagreeable food. In one situation, for example, each prisoner was given an onion along with a piece of bread to eat; when the prisoners became extremely thirsty

46 Mehmed Á saf, 80. German indiscrimination regarding sources of supplementary food was not much different from the British in Japanese captivity in World War II, who supplemented their diet with whatever passed by, which included boa constrictors or more “delicate, sweet and delectable” Burmese kittens. Samuel Hynes, 248.

47 Although it may have been expanded to include additional varieties of foods on the occasion of Red Cross prison camp inspection, for the “typical” diet of the Ottoman prisoners in Egypt see Turkish Prisoners in Egypt: A Report by the Delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross (London: HMSO, 1917), 15-17, 19, 28-29, 50; see also Department of State, “Report on the Treatment of Turkish Prisoners of War in Egypt,” 26 April 1916, 763.72114/1257; Department of State, “Diet Sheet for Turkish Officers,” 8 November 1915, 763.72114/1021.

48 Emin Çol, 129.

49 Hidayet ˙Ozkok, 54

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after eating the onions, they found that they would not be given any water. In the eyes of
many, this was simply an example of British cruelty.\textsuperscript{50} The monotony of the camp diet
was a more popular complaint and a target of wit among the prisoners:

Let me tell you about a curious occurrence. The other day I looked to see what
was listed for lunch menu. The list read: bean stew with hamburger and stew
meat and rice pilaf with vermicelli cooked in beef consommé. When the food
came, I noticed that it was nothing more than the rice pilaf and bean stew we have
always known. . . . I told myself that perhaps a new literary movement in food
description had started.\textsuperscript{51}

Monotonous and tasteless it might have been, but at least there was a constant supply of
food in Egypt. In general, despite some minor complaints, the prisoners there rarely had
to worry about having enough food. While the officers had occasional complaints, we are
unaware of how the enlisted men received the food offered. An officer who briefly stayed
at the section reserved for the enlisted men offers us a rare glimpse; he complained that it
was much worse than the officers’ food.\textsuperscript{52} This officer was very close to the mark in his
assessment of the men’s food, for it was among the enlisted men that pellagra claimed
most of its victims (as examined in Chapter IV). The men were aware that some among
their ranks were suffering from diarrhea and other gastrointestinal problems (signs of a
somewhat advanced stage of pellagra), but the prisoners did not associate their problems
with a general nutritional deficiency; to their medically uninformed minds, their

\textsuperscript{50} Sokrat İncesu, 29-30.

\textsuperscript{51} "Ilaşe ve Edebiyat," \textit{Nilüfer}, 3 Şubat 1336/13 February 1920, number 2, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{52} Emin Çol, 133.
sufferings resulted from inadequately or improperly cooked food. They do not seem to have been aware that their fellow prisoners from Germany and Austria-Hungary were given different, more nutritious foods. Despite whatever complaints they had, the prisoners felt secure enough about the flow of food to attempt occasional and individual hunger strikes to get the attention of their captors.54

It should be clear that the Ottoman POWs in Russia had significant difficulty procuring food for themselves and that this situation simply deteriorated as their captivity lengthened. They did not have the comfort of even thinking about attempting a hunger strike, for food was a precious commodity. In many cases they had to agonize about how to secure their next meal. The lack of ample food was simply another concern for the prisoners in Russia. In contrast, their countrymen in Egypt, while medically suffering from nutrition-related diseases, did not suffer psychologically from a fear of possible starvation.55 While the Ottomans in Russian captivity must have observed that a general food shortage or famine affected everyone, they may have, nevertheless, occasionally held their captors responsible for the situation.

53 For example, the kind of oil—which must have been cottonseed oil—that was used in preparing the prisoners' food gave the prisoners something to complain about; they found its taste and green color disgusting. Some called it "hint yagi" (castor oil). Emin Çol, 133.

54 Rahmi Apak, 165-66; Emin Çol, 133.

55 Ironically, one of those who was on a hunger strike complained of being force-fed. Rahmi Apak, 165-66.
Relations among the Prisoners

As historians tell us, among the world's armies, certain divisions among the ranks are common, especially the divisions between the junior and senior officers.\(^5\textsuperscript{6}\) In this regard, the Ottoman army was no different. In fact, while fragmentation may not have been readily visible to outside observers, it may have been a more divided institution than the armies of other nations. In *History and Social Theory*, Peter Burke argues that stressful conditions make otherwise invisible societal fractures more perceptible and obvious.\(^5\textsuperscript{7}\) Here it is argued that the stress and nature of captivity created the perfect environment for revealing these fractures in the Ottoman army, which, being a conscripted army, conceivably represented the Ottoman society. Could we take Burke's argument a little further by suggesting that the more stressful the situation in which the Ottoman POWs found themselves, the more obvious were the signs of fracture? In answering this question we will briefly examine ethnic, educational, and rank-related divisions.

Although we do not know the exact ethnic composition of the Ottoman army, it is well-known that Turks formed the bulk of it, followed by Arabs and Kurds. Other ethnic groups—Greeks, Armenians, and Jews, for example—made up a much smaller portion of the army. This is attributable to fact that the non-Muslims, who were recently made

\(^{56}\) For example, see Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2000), 108.

\(^{57}\) Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 42.
liable for military service, could still buy their way out of it through financial means. In addition, many of the non-Muslim groups, notably the Armenians, were normally used in rear duties as their reliability was of major concern among Ottoman military authorities, especially on the Caucasus front. Since the Turks and Arabs formed the bulk of the army, we will consider only the ethnic rupture between the two groups.

Overall, the relations between Arab and Turkish officers seem to have been rather cordial until the Arab rebellion against the Ottoman state in 1917. From then on, relations took a turn for the negative and became significantly worse after the fall of Baghdad (11 March 1917) to the British.59 The relations among the POWs in Russia were more problematic. The point of the discussion below is not to give voice to otherwise fruitless polemical statements about Arab Ottomans, but simply to show the differences in the frequency and nature of the friction among the POWs in Russia and Egypt.

Almost every Ottoman captivity narrative from Russia has something disparaging to say about the Arabs. Some Turks certainly went further than others in their criticism of their Muslim comrades-in-arms. These condemnations ranged from questioning the Arab understanding of Islam and calling it hypocrisy to outright anti-Arab feelings of distrust and fear of Arab treachery.60


59 PRO, CAB 21/60/100, "Mesopotamia Administration Committee," notes the joy of the Shia Muslims (from Kerbela, Najef and Kadhimein) and Christian Ottomans and the cautious indifference of the Jewish Ottoman POWs at the news of the fall of Baghdad.

60 For criticism of Arab "treachery," see Mehmet Arif Ölçen, 105.
There were those who were against some innocuous musical entertainment, mainly Arab officers. They declared that musical instruments were forbidden by Islamic canon law. Among those opposed ... was an Arab captain who had married a girl ... in Istanbul. After a year of marriage, however, he left her and went back to his home in Baghdad. ... This man who said that playing musical instruments was religiously forbidden was able to intimidate people even though he had left his wife and newborn child hungry and destitute in Istanbul.61

In this prisoner’s eye, the Arab officers’ actions were no less than religious hypocrisy.

For him, it was a question of which was a bigger sin—playing music or abandoning one’s family. On another occasion the comment became more negative. When the members of non-Turkish groups in the Ottoman army cooperated with the Russian captors to charge exorbitant prices for additional food items, one Turkish prisoner, remembering Cicero’s speech to the Romans, stated:

‘O bastard children of the Romans! There are no longer real Romans among you, for a bastard generation has appeared from the Romans who mixed with the foreign people of the countries they conquered.’ Those who cooperated with the Russian sergeant were the bastard children of Turkey.62

Verbal quarrels that turned into physical fights were not uncommon between the Turks and Arabs in Russia. Since we get only the Turkish version of the reasons for the friction, the Arabs are always to blame, whether because they willingly surrendered to the Russians,63 or simply because they now volunteered to fight against the Turks in the Arab rebellion. One Turk remembered that when all but a few of the Arab Ottoman

61 Mehmet Arif Ölçen, 100; for another example of a Turk questioning Arab commitment to Islam, see Faik Tonguç, 210.

62 Mehmet Arif Ölçen, 108.

63 Halil Ataman, 110; Ahmet Göze, 77-78;
POWs in Russia volunteered for British service, the young Turkish officers became very agitated and gave a necessary lesson to these insolent [Arabs] (küstah) . . . . These traitors (hain) . . . . [who] made clear their contempt for Turkishness sank so low as to volunteer to fight against us who were their comrades in arms only a short while ago. They were not even bothered by their insolence in declaring their hatred and feelings in the enemy lands.64

The Turkish POWs did not see all Arabs in the same way; only those who had questionable loyalty to or outright disregard for the Ottoman state were seen in this light. While the prisoners in Russia were sharply divided, to the point of physical attacks, the ones in Egypt, while not on very friendly terms, enjoyed better relations. Although there could be an occasional fight or two,65 they seemed to get along much better. The relatively peaceful situation in Egypt is rather surprising since the British had fomented the Arab revolt and were coordinating it from Cairo. Here, too, the British had asked for Arab volunteers to fight against the Turks, but the accusations of treachery did not follow.66 In fact, one fight between the Arabs and Turks was interpreted as the result of a British plot.67 There is occasional criticism of Arab officers; however, it was much

64 Faik Tonguç, 209. For another occasion of near physical fight, see idem, 250.

65 Rahmi Apak, 168-69.

66 The British military authorities believed that with the exception of "a good number of low Baghdad types . . . [who] would not have been of much military value," eighty percent of the Arab Ottoman POWs would be willing to join the Sherifian army. However, they found that many Arab POWs were not willing to fight again. Many Arab POWs, whether out of some kind of loyalty or distaste for fighting, stated that they could not fight against their own government. British Library, India Office, L/PS/10 Political and Secret Department Records, "Correspondence for Arabs fighting for the Sherif," P 1165, February 23, 1917, p.2 ; and India Office, L/PS/10, "Report by Lt. Colonel Parker," P81, 1917, p. 3. However, one finds various messages that announce the departure of varying number of Arabs leaving the Indian and Burmese POW camps for Egypt to join the Sherifian forces, India Office, L/PS/10, 3763/1918; L/PS/10, 1351/1918; L/PS/10, 452/1918; L/PS/10, 3660/1918; L/PS/10, 3122/1918.

67 Rahmi Apak, 168-69.
milder, even for those who wanted to escape captivity by declaring themselves Arab and volunteering for the forces of Sherif Hussein, the leader of the Arab revolt against the Ottomans. Even when Turkish POW narratives mention the Arab forces that attacked the Ottoman armies in Mesopotamia, the judgment on their behavior is left to “history”:

The role of the British spy Lawrence in the Arab rebellion is an undeniable fact. We came from central Anatolia to fight and rescue the honor (seref ve namus) of the Arabs from being trampled by enemy boots; history will never forgive them for stabbing us in the back.

While the language is not friendly, such criticisms are rather rare. In fact, Arabs are not mentioned as often in the captivity narratives from Egypt as they are in the narratives from Russia. Both in Russia and Egypt the Arab and Turks were separated from each other to a certain degree, but they still had contact with each other. Still, especially after the fall of Baghdad, Arabs tended to associate with Arabs, and Turks with Turks.

What accounts for the more strained interaction between the two major ethnic groups among the Ottoman prisoners in Russia, especially when the Turkish POWs in Egypt, who had fought in Mesopotamia and Palestine, were more likely to have witnessed Arab desertions to the British and suffered from attacks by the rebellious Arab forces? In other words, having witnessed Arab desertion and attacks, the Turks in Egyptian captivity logically had more reasons to be more anti-Arab than did the Turks in Russia. But this was decidedly not the case as far as the evidence shows.

68 Emin Çol, 131-32.

69 Sokrat İncesu, 39. Note that the name “Sokrat” (Socrates) is not a Turkish name. See also Hüseyin Aydin, 34-37 for author’s justification of Ottoman rule over the Arab provinces and Arab “comfort” while the Turks fought to “save” those lands.

70 Emin Çol, 132.
Poor ethnic relations between the Turks and the Arabs were not the only source of tension among the POWs in Russia. As mentioned earlier, there was a certain rift between the junior and senior officers in the Ottoman army. No doubt the junior officers disagreed with the policies of and conduct of the war by the senior officers (those holding the ranks of major and above), but these complaints and disagreements usually went unexpressed. However, in Russia the junior officers' resentment of their senior officers reached such a level that we find numerous complaints, and even aversion for their superiors. The senior officers were denounced for various reasons ranging from limiting the junior officers' activities in the camps to stubbornly discouraging escapes, and for passing themselves off as invalids so they could be repatriated before everyone else, including the real invalids. In fact, the disparaging comments about the senior officers in the captivity narratives of the junior officers are a rather common theme.

As one related, whenever the junior officers wanted to organize theatrical and musical groups, or simply to have the Qur'an recited on religious and national holidays, the senior officers came up with one excuse after another to refuse the requests. A favorite excuse of the highest-ranking Ottoman officer in Krasnoyarsk, Hilmi Erbuğ remembered, was that anything smacking of religion and nationalism would anger the Russian captors and put the Ottomans in danger. Junior officers did not accept his excuses, for the German and Austro-Hungarian POWs were using every occasion—Franz Joseph's birthday, Christmas, and even the Ottoman victory in Gallipoli—to organize large gatherings and entertainment among themselves without angering the Russians.

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71 Hilmi Erbuğ, 220.
Despite the opposition of their seniors, some officers went ahead and organized various groups and clubs for celebrations and entertainment; the senior Ottoman officers, who wanted to obstruct their endeavors, were referred to as "our dull, callous and insensible superiors."\textsuperscript{72} By organizing musical and theatrical groups, getting involved in organized sports, and openly celebrating religious holidays, the junior officers were, in effect, revolting against their superiors. When the juniors disobeyed or ignored the limitations the senior officers put before them, they were fulfilled not only by the enjoyment of their activity, but also by the sense of power this minor rebellion afforded them. It is true that not all senior officers could have been obstructionists; some surely must have encouraged the younger fellows to find ways to entertain and educate themselves. Yet, the resentment towards the ranks of major and above (\textit{üméra}) is clear in most Russian captivity narratives. Perhaps their captivity offered the junior officers an ironic sense of freedom to disobey instructions from above. They could easily turn down the requests of senior officers when they felt that they were being used,\textsuperscript{73} or could ignore the seniors' warnings that they would offend their captors.

When at the end of the war it was announced that the invalid POWs would soon be repatriated, those who were sickly rejoiced. However, their happiness at this news did not last very long. "Unfortunately, in reality the poor infirm soldiers could not take advantage of this right. In general, the senior officers (\textit{erkan ve üméra}) turned out to be

\textsuperscript{72} Hilmi Erbuğ, 220-221

\textsuperscript{73} Mehmet Arif Ölçen, 106.
This lieutenant fell shy of calling his superiors derogatory names, but his accusation of their inappropriate behavior is rather clear. On another occasion, the same prisoner practically accused the seniors of stealing the supplies—blankets, coats, hats, boots, etc.—provided by the Red Cross; it was only after they had had first pick of the supplies that the rest were divided among the junior officers and men.  

It is clear from the numerous complaints above that the junior POWs had their difficulties with the senior Ottoman officers. However, the junior officers did not always enjoy peaceful relations among themselves either. Again, these frictions among the junior officers seem to be much more common among prisoners in Russia. The actions or behavior of one prisoner could easily anger another one. Complaints for such things could range from one prisoner praying out loud at a late hour, or taking up much needed space with his prayer rug, to establishing “overly” friendly relationships with foreign POWs, or going to the bathing area naked in “European fashion.” The arrangements and the ceremony for the burial of one of the prisoners, lieutenant Gani, who died while

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74 Başkatipzade Ragıp Bey, 102,106.

75 Başkatipzade Ragıp Bey, 102-03.

76 Faik Tonguç, 240-41.

77 Mehmet Arif Ölcên, 102, 106-07; Faik Tonguç, 245.

78 Başkatipzade Ragıp Bey, 97.

79 Başkatipzade Ragıp Bey, for example, complained that “Türklerden de ıryan hamama giden, baş açık baldırı çiplak dışarida gezinenler çogaldı,” 96.

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in captivity, for example, led to significant disagreements among the prisoners. On another occasion, a few Ottoman officers beat a young Ottoman lieutenant, for he had been signaling a Russian girl who lived across from the house where the prisoners were interned. This officer’s signals to the Russian girl “supposedly sullied the honor of his fellow prisoners and cast a shadow on their dignity.”

In Egypt there were also certain problems between the senior and junior officers, and among the junior officers themselves. However, the agitation between the groups was not as open and common as that in Russia. The prisoners in Egypt also complained of senior officers getting themselves listed as invalids so as to be repatriated as quickly as possible after the war. Most of the complaints about the senior officers, however, were rather mild. While the POWs in Russia griped about the ʿōmera’s objections to their organizing ways to pass time and educate themselves, the POWs in Egypt grumbled about the ʿōmera’s lack of interest in taking part in anything useful or educational. In other words, in Egypt the Ottoman “colonels, lieutenant colonels, majors stayed in the barracks and did not get involved in anything; they were awaiting the armistice,”

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80 The question over the arrangements revolved around the issue of whether the ceremony should be simple or much more elaborate to “impress” the captors and the fellow captives. Mehmet Arif Ölçen, 102. For examples of distrust among the POWs see Faik Tonguç, 230, 235.

81 Mehmet Arif Ölçen, 117–18. Faced with unexpectedly high numbers of prisoners from the Central Powers, the Russian government could not always place the prisoners in large prison camps. Most prisoners, especially Ottomans, were sent to Siberia. Those POWs who were sent to European Russia were usually quartered in houses or buildings commandeered by the Russian government. See Yanıkdağ, 72-73.

82 “Gençlik ve İhtiyarlık Duası,” Yarın, 2 Şubat 1336/12 February 1920, number 10, p.1 (cover caricature); and “Alem iş-ū-nuș’dan,” (Caricature) Yarın, 16/1/1336/24 January 1920, number 5, p. 5.

83 See, for example, Hüseyin Aydınoğlu, 40-41.
there was so much to do—teaching languages to officers and reading and writing to the enlisted men.84

Discord among the junior officers surfaced occasionally. Here, also, there were beatings of other officers. However, the reasons for such things in Egypt were not as slight as "dishonoring the prisoner barracks." Such violence against fellow prisoners was "justified" by accusations of treason. More than a few prisoners believed that there were a number of Ottomans who had surrendered to the British willingly and were now spying for them in the prison camps.85 The prisoners in Russia who were making plans to escape were always mindful that some Ottomans among their ranks could easily turn them over to the Russians.86 The issue of certain Ottoman POWs working for the enemy surfaced in both places.87 Whether one prisoner actually turned in another who was making plans to escape is not all that important; what is at issue is that some among them believed that they could trust only their closest friends.

Despite the differences among the subordinates—junior officers—themselves, they formed a unified front against their superiors. Their isolation from the āmera, who went their own way, and the homogeneity of their condition and at least partial mutual

84 "Albay, yarbay, binbaşı rüşbesindeki esir Türk subayları, barakalarına çekilmiştler, etliye sütüye karışmıyoruz, barışı bekliyorlar." Rahmi Apak, 167.


86 Faik Tonguç, 230, 235; and İnkiláp Tarihi Arşivi, 97/33/33/2.

87 Hüsamettin Tuğaç, 119.
dependence favored, to a certain extent, the development of a certain subculture of "us versus them." For example, faced with the superiors' demands that they salute even in captivity and sometimes in awkward places, the subordinates gave in. However, this saluting was done with so much exaggerated formality that both the subordinate and the superior knew that it was not genuine. Yet the action satisfied both sides.

We might ask ourselves why the difference between the prisoners in Russia and those in Egypt? Why did the junior officer prisoners in Russia seem to hold their superiors in such irreverence, and why were they plagued by discord among themselves? By the end of this chapter it will become more clear that the answers to these questions have to relate to the conditions of captivity in Russia and Egypt.

**Everyday Lives of the Prisoners**

In order to see how the captivity conditions of the prisoners in Egypt and Russia differed, we need to consider their everyday lives in captivity. Some of the activities the prisoners took on were universal. The boredom of captivity provided time and certain opportunities that were fully exploited by the prisoners. The most common activity among the Ottoman POWs, and in fact among non-Ottoman POWs as well, was to learn foreign languages. Although some sort of a schooling system was established in some of the large camps in Russia, most imprisoned Ottomans officers sought the personal assistance of their fellow foreign prisoners in learning German, French, Hungarian, and

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[88] For example the school established by the German and Austro-Hungarian POWs in Novonikolaievsk offered courses in 14 different languages, including Hebrew, Turkish, and Esperanto. Report of Donald A. Lowrie, 11 June 1917, *Donald A. Lowrie Papers*, University of Illinois, University Archives, Box 1.
even Russian.\textsuperscript{89} One officer in Krasnoyarsk estimated that about 60-70 percent of the Ottomans learned at least one language.\textsuperscript{90} It is possible that language learning proved to be more popular in Russia than in Egypt because prisoners from all nations were in close personal contact and did not have as many other activities available to them as those in Egypt.

Prisoners also established musical and theatrical groups that put on shows for their fellow prisoners.\textsuperscript{91} Theatre and music seem to have flourished much more among the Ottomans in Egypt than in Russia; while the POWs in Russia had only a handful of theatrical productions, those in Egypt had many more; some even had their reviews printed in the camp newspapers.\textsuperscript{92} The reason for this could be that there was a larger number of Ottoman prisoners in each of the several Egyptian camps when compared with the dispersal of Ottoman POWs among the numerous camps in Russia. Larger groups of the same nationality might simply have been more culturally productive. Having a larger audience, or simply the support of the rest of the prisoners, must have encouraged those who produced plays, concerts, and camp newspapers. Yet, at the same time, the existence of a small number of prisoners from one nationality did not mean that they were not culturally active; in Krasnoyarsk, an Arab Ottoman, Aref al-Aref, in addition to


\textsuperscript{90} Hüsamettin Tugaç, 29; Halil Ataman, 122, 140; Dwinger, 213; Mehmet Arif Ölçen, 88, 90; Mehmed Ásav, 39; Başkatipzade Ragip Bey, 94.

\textsuperscript{91} Mehmet Feyyaz Efendi, "Hatrat" (unpublished manuscript), p. 50; Tahsin İybar, 37.

translating Ernst Haeckel's *Das Welträtsel* into Turkish, produced a camp newspaper in Arabic for a total of twelve other Arab Ottomans in the same camp.\(^93\)

![Figure 3: Activities available to POWs in Egypt](image)


Sports in general, mostly soccer, were also more popular and longer-lasting in Egypt than in Russia. Certainly the factors that hindered theatrical and musical productions by the Ottoman POWs in Russia existed here as well. However, since soccer had to be played outside, the climate of Egypt made it a year-round sport that everyone in the camps could enjoy. Some Egyptian camps had two organized team matches a day. In the evenings the prisoners in Egypt had the choice of theatre of their own production or movies—featuring Charlie Chaplin and other early motion picture stars—shown by the camp authorities.

As the drawing above implies, it should be clear that life was much more "normal" for the POWs in Egypt. We must keep in mind that life was more of a struggle in Russia, as we will see below, and that the prisoners there had more immediate concerns. While the struggle in Russia was for survival in the face of the captivity conditions—natural and man-influenced—in Egypt it was for securing more comfortable arrangements. Although the temperature was hot and the prisoners risked sun-stroke in Egypt, nature seems to have played much less of a role in the everyday lives of the prisoners there. While there were some complaints about the climate among the prisoners before settling into permanent camps, they seem to have subsided when reasonable accommodations were made. The Ottoman POWs who were "fortunate" enough to have been interned at a camp near the Mediterranean could, for example, take

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94 Other Egyptian activities included dancing (schools), wrestling, boxing, billiards, and fencing. Hüseyin Aydin, 45; Department of State, 763.72114/1257, enclosure, “Report on the treatment of Turkish Prisoners of War in Egypt,” p.2.

95 Red Cross Society, *Turkish Prisoners in Egypt*, 46.
advantage of the sea to cool themselves. The prisoners in Russia, however, constantly complained about the extremely cold temperatures and lack of means—namely firewood—to heat their barracks. Cold temperatures in Russia not only made life difficult for the improperly clad Ottomans, but also kept them inside their barracks, or in various buildings where they were housed, for lengthy periods of time. This sort of inactive life, being holed up in a small place with numerous other people, made life less bearable and resulted in various tensions among them, while at the same time making them more catatonic:\textsuperscript{96}

\textbf{In Captivity (Esaret'\textit{de})}

People [who have become] emaciated and pale-faced from the wrath of unbearably cold temperatures, burn from inside out with the desire for freedom inside these damp and deaf walls. [They] weep quietly in some dark corner, as if sorrow is their eternal love. Their hopes freeze in the falling snow. Sitting on a rotten bench in some corner, a young brave never lifts his head as he sits on dirty and worn-out matting, not heeding the winds that make him shiver.\textsuperscript{97}

While the prisoners in Egypt were also deeply affected by captivity, emotionally moving protests of this sort do not exist among their writings.

The conditions in Russia were made more difficult by factors beyond climate.

Whether it was because the Russian authorities were not prepared to deal with the large

\textsuperscript{96} Halil Ataman, 147.

\textsuperscript{97} "Esaret'\textit{de}," \textit{Yaveya\textit{la}}, 31 Mart 1333/31 March 1917, number 67, p. 4. \textit{Yayurucu boranlı soğukların kahrından / Kadid olmuş vücudu, hencı ucuk insanlar ... / Kurtulmanın derdiyle için için yanalar / Rutubetli ve sağır duvarların içinde / Bir karanlık köşede yaşalarını aksır / Sanki matem onların bir ebedi aşkdr / Emelleri donur yaşan karın içinde / Bir kenarda çırumuş bir sedirin üstünde / Delikanlı bir yığıt hiç başını kaldırırmaz / Oturduğu ypranık pis hasırın üstünde / Vücudunu titreten rüzgarlara aldırmaz ...
number of prisoners they captured—which is more likely—or simply because they did not care, many Ottomans ended up being interned in places that were not fit to be living quarters. In fact, the suffering of the Ottoman prisoners captured on the Russian front started from the moment of capture. The men were transported in overcrowded boxcars to the prison camps. During the winter months, when the temperatures dropped to −30 Celsius or below, the transport was much worse; many prisoners died from cold or disease while in the boxcars.\footnote{ATASE, K2841/406/ Fihrist 1-1.} Foreshadowing circumstances of the Nazi transport of Jews nearly forty years later, the conditions in the Russian boxcars, in which the Ottoman POWs were transported, were brutal. Since the boxcar doors—which were locked from outside—were opened infrequently by the Russians, the Ottomans prisoners often had to relieve themselves in one corner of the car.\footnote{ATASE, K313/Fihrist 1; K313/Fihrist 8.} Closed doors meant that the prisoners had to travel for days in proximity not only to their own excrement, but also to the bodies of their comrades who had died because of cold, disease, or wounds. When the train stopped those who were still living simply dumped the bodies of their lifeless comrades by the railroad, hoping they would be buried somehow.\footnote{ATASE, K2482/406/Fihrist 1-8; K313/Fihrist 1; K313/Fihrist 1-1. At least one American diplomat, who was in Russia to observe the conditions of the German and Austro-Hungarian POWs before those countries were at war with the United States, observed that the transport conditions for the Ottoman POWs were much worse than what the Germans and Austro-Hungarians had to endure. United States, Department of State, “Report on Condition of Military and Civilian Prisoners of War in Siberia,” 14 June 1915, 622.}
Even after they arrived in the prison camps the conditions did not improve much. Many camps were overcrowded and had no mattresses or heat.\textsuperscript{101} All prisoners faced the threat of various diseases, especially typhus, while in the prison camps. By the late summer of 1916, at least 64,000 POWs of all nations had died from disease in Russian captivity.\textsuperscript{102} Dead prisoners, whose corpses were dragged along on the points of Russian bayonets stuck to them, were thrown into ditches for mass burials—200-300 at a time. The prisoners were demoralized not only by the rampant deadly diseases, but also by the clear disregard for the remains of their dead comrades.\textsuperscript{103} In these overcrowded Russian camps, each prisoner had a personal sleeping space of 18-21 inches at most for sleeping.\textsuperscript{104} Clearly, in such close quarters disease spread quickly when it appeared in even a single prisoner. While some captive Ottoman doctors and officers in Russia estimated that about twenty-seven percent or more\textsuperscript{105} of the Ottoman prisoners died even before they reached in their permanent camps,\textsuperscript{106} we have no reliable numbers to confirm or deny their estimates. Although its listing of the total number of Ottoman POWs in Russia seems to be off by nearly 15,000, at least one Austrian source gives the death rate

\textsuperscript{101} Department of State, 763.72114/1526, Peking to Washington, D.C., April 15, 1916, p.5; ATASE, K313/Fihrist 1-1.

\textsuperscript{102} ATASE, K313/Fihrist 1-3.

\textsuperscript{103} ATASE, K313/Fihrist 1-3.


\textsuperscript{105} İhsan Pasha, who was also captured by the Russians, estimated that nearly half of the Ottoman men died during transport. ATASE, K313/Fihrist 15.

\textsuperscript{106} ATASE, K313/Fihrist 1-3.
among the Ottoman POWs as twenty percent. Casual remarks by POWs in Siberia regarding the frozen corpses of dead prisoners which had been stacked like firewood to be buried at the first thaw perhaps best convey how accustomed to death or callous the prisoners had become.

Also well-portrayed is the helplessness and frustration of the POWs in their losing battle against the ever-present lice. Many Russian captivity narratives, Ottoman and European, contain references to endless and yet ineffective delousing. While they devised various ways to kill them—drowning, spearing with needles, burning, and squashing between fingernails—their battle was only ceremonial, for it always ended in defeat. One prisoner remembered that “even though I cleaned my bed and clothes numerous times every evening... these creatures would sometimes fall off from my eyebrows into my eyes...” We can feel this man’s frustration. Even when the prisoners could take advantage of a bath, they had to wear the same clothes and sleep in

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107 The Russians give the number of Ottoman POWs as 64,509, with less than a one percent casualty rate. The Austrians put the number of Ottomans at 51,000. Nikolai N. Golovine, *The Russian Army in the World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1931), 74; and Hans Weiland and Leopold Kern, *In Feindeshand: Die Gefangenschaft im Weltkriege in Einzeldarstellungen* (Vienna, 1931), no page number, pull-out.


the lice-ridden beds. Clearly, this filthy existence contributed to and caused some of the
diseases that decimated the prisoner population. The POWs in Egypt do not seem to have
had any lice problems at all. They went through a more effective delousing process
before entering the permanent camps and the British camps, were usually well-supplied
with water and baths. A few caricatures by the prisoners printed in the camp newspapers
suggest that some POWs could not even properly use the European-style latrines and
baths at first, but did not take long to get used to them.\footnote{Esaret Albümü, Seydibeşer, 1336, no pagination. Some Egyptian POW camps were built near the Mediterranean, which allowed the prisoners to swim.}

The Ottomans captured by the British complained of brutal treatment at the time
of capture, ranging from withholding of water and food\footnote{ATASE, K313/Fihrist 13; K313/Fihrist 13-1; K313/Fihrist 6-1; K313/Fihrist 7-1; Türk İnkılap Tarihi Arşivi, 91/29/29/1-2; State Department, 763.72114/2311, Constantinople to Washington, D.C., enclosure, December 8, 1916, p. 2. Although he blames the lack of supplies and unexpectedly high numbers of captured Ottomans, one British officer confirms that they did not, in fact, have nearly enough food and water for thousands of Ottoman POWs; Imperial War Museum, Lt. J.F.B. O'Sullivan Papers, p. 10-12.} to bayonetings\footnote{ATASE, K1486/Fihrist 1; K313/13; Nureddin, “Misir Çöllerinde Türk Gençleri, 21,” Vakit, 2 June 1924, p. 4. Charges of brutality against the captors should not be taken lightly. Niall Ferguson recently argued that especially during the early part of the war, neither side was keen on taking prisoners and many, especially the wounded, were killed by the captors. Niall Ferguson, The Pity of War, 367-94. Ferguson’s argument is supported by testimony of a few Ottoman POWs, who reported that the British soldiers finished off all those Ottomans who were seriously wounded. One further stated that the bad treatment continued until Kut al-Amara fell to the Ottomans and the 13,000 British and Commonwealth defenders of the garrison were made prisoners. It was only then the Ottoman POWs observed a noticeable change in the British attitude towards the prisoners. State Department, 73.72114/2311, Constantinople to Washington, D.C., enclosure, December 8, 1916, p. 2-4. For individual accounts of French, British and Commonwealth brutality towards German and Austrian POWs see August Gallinger, The Countercharge: The Matter of War-Criminals from the German Side (Munich: Knorr and Hirth, Inc. 1922).} of captured
men especially by the non-Muslim Indian units. Nonetheless, their complaints, while not
negligible,\footnote{ATASE, K313/Fihrist 7.} seem to have subsided significantly once they reached the prison camps.\footnote{ATASE, K3437/Fihrist 6-2.}
In Egypt many thousands of Ottoman POWs fell victim to pellagra (discussed in Chapter IV); some recovered; some became insane; some simply died. Records of a single POW hospital in Egypt reveal that about 2-4 Ottomans died every day for various unrecorded reasons.\(^{117}\) Although over 10,000 Ottoman POWs died in British captivity—more than twice the death rates of Austrian and German POWs, as the table below shows—we rarely find mentions of death in the Egyptian captivity narratives. Since these people died in hospitals, out of sight of the rest of the prisoners, in most cases the Ottomans in British captivity did not see the kind of wasting of human life by nature, or disease, or mistreatment that Ottomans in Russian captivity saw.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>POWs Captured</th>
<th>POWs who died in captivity</th>
<th>Percent Dead</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germans</td>
<td>335,516</td>
<td>9,043</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austrians</td>
<td>10,041</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottomans</td>
<td>150,041</td>
<td>10,742</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
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**Resisting the Captor**

The differences in the everyday lives of the prisoners in Egypt and Russia are also clearly evident in the ways they resisted their captors, whether in open or concealed fashion. This comparison will show us that even in times of total control by the captors, the prisoners were able to devise hidden transcripts to resist their captors; this hidden resistance was occasionally publicly declared.

\(^{117}\) Public Record Office, WO 95/4414, Prisoners of War Camp, Salhia, War Diary, 1 May 1919-23 July 1919. This is only one hospital during a relatively short time period. I was not able to locate any other hospital records from Egypt.
Once again, as should be clear from our discussion of food above, the prisoners in Egypt were more open in their resistance. On many occasions the resistance was publicly declared in front of the captor, as in the case above of refusing to eat and being force-fed by the British.\textsuperscript{118} Other times, these individual public declarations of defiance in the face of the captors became widespread among the prisoners, evolving into collective action. In one of the camps for the enlisted men, a small protest about the low quality of food turned into a full-fledged protest by most of the internees. The organizers of resistance coerced those prisoners who were not willing to comply with the boycott of the camp food.

Because we had taken a decision in this way... we started a food boycott. Since we did not go out for the roll call... or for food, food was brought to us;...we openly threw the food into a ditch.... The twelve organizers of the movement were going to embarrass those who ate the food and spit in their faces as punishment for not having kept their promise.... When the British attempted to separate those they believed were the leaders, a fight started.... The British were using their fists, we were kicking, slapping, tripping, and even biting them.... [The fight] ended when a British major whistled and yelled “finiş... finiş” [finish] and they simply left defeated.\textsuperscript{119}

The public declaration, or rebellion, above was a mass action by a large number of prisoners against a smaller number of armed captors, but evidence shows that the prisoners were not afraid to act alone. When an escaped prisoner, Beykozlu Ali, was recaptured, the camp commandant decided to punish him by putting him in a small isolation chamber for a few weeks. As he was being led to this chamber, which was only one meter square and dark, Beykozlu Ali started to kick the British soldiers who were

\textsuperscript{118} Rahmi Apak, 165-66.

\textsuperscript{119} Emin Çöl, 133-35.
accompanying him. Once in the chamber, the other Ottoman POWs, despite the strict rules against it and the guards posted by the small chamber, tried to help him by throwing cigarettes, bread and other necessities in the direction of the small opening in the roof of the chamber as they casually walked by it; “and when the wind was blowing in the right direction, some of these things would fall inside the chamber, others outside of it.”  

The Ottoman POWs in Egypt must have been certain that they were not putting their lives in danger by declaring an open rebellion against their captors. It is possible that they found safety in numbers, though individual acts of defiance were not uncommon. Perhaps the rather light punishment meted out by the camp commandants encouraged bold behavior and acts of defiance. If one overlooks the terrible tolls of trachoma and pellagra among the Ottoman POWs in Egypt, their lives in captivity bear a noticeable amount of resemblance to those of Allied prisoners of war in German captivity during World War II: relatively adequate food, comparatively tolerable treatment, and acts of defiance by the prisoners. If the lives of the POWs in Egypt remind us of the Allied POWs in Germany during World War II, then the lives of those Ottomans in Russia bears similarities to those of the Allied captives in Japanese hands, minus the vivisections and summary executions of prisoners.  

As in the case of the Allied POWs in Japanese captivity, we come across no open defiance against captors among the Ottoman prisoners in Russia. With the exception of a few meager verbal protests regarding food and overcrowding by those POWs who were

120 Türk İnkılap Tarihi Arşivi, 91/29/29(1-4).

121 For a brief treatment of the lives of POWs in Germany and in Japanese camps, see Samuel Hynes, The Soldiers’ Tale, 232-58.
Interned in commandeered private houses in European Russia,\textsuperscript{122} we see no individual or collective acts of open defiance against the Russians. This can be attributed to the harder and less certain conditions in Russian captivity. Surely, the prisoners groused among themselves, but they still had to tolerate traveling next to their diseased or dead comrades for days on end, inadequate food that sometimes included maggot-ridden meat, poorly heated and overcrowded barracks, and other difficulties that came with captivity in Russia. There, the Ottomans could not attempt anything comparable to the actions taken by the prisoners in Egypt when they disliked something. The prisoners in Russian captivity had to be minimalists. They disliked the black bread they had to eat, but were happy to have something to eat. They did not have the luxury of openly protesting the type of oil used to cook their food. This was because they could see that in most cases the Russians themselves were not eating much better. However, there was another factor that kept the prisoners from open acts of defiance, and this was their uncertainty and, in fact, fear of potential Russian reaction to such acts. Unlike Beykozlu Ali, mentioned above, who when recaptured attempted to physically assault a couple of his guards before he was put in an isolation chamber as punishment, the prisoners who escaped in Russia, when recaptured, came back either as corpses or nearly dead.\textsuperscript{123}

The harshness of the conditions in Russia did not completely deter the prisoners from defiance. In fact, many prisoners resisted and defied the captors; they just did not do so openly. Resistance was kept hidden until the prisoner felt himself ready to declare

\textsuperscript{122} Mehmet Arif Ölcen, 122.

\textsuperscript{123} Hüsamettin Tuğaç, 121.
Almost every prisoner made plans to escape; some of these plans took months or years to develop or fine-tune. Despite the lengthy amount of time devoted to these plans, they were disappointingly simple. In general, they revolved around establishing contact with the local Turkic peoples—who were always eager to help—when the prisoners were allowed to go into nearby towns on some weekends. These Turkic peoples would obtain civilian clothes and Russian passports for them. If the prisoner decided to act on his urge, after months of planning, arranging, and rehearsing, he would seek permission to go into town from the camp commandant, or merely bribe a guard, find his local contact, change into civilian clothes, and walk away with his Russian identity papers. Almost none of these escape plans included digging tunnels, the forging of official papers by the prisoners themselves, disabling guards, or any other of the stratagems we might associate with escapes that took so long to plan.

Why did the prisoners take unusually large amounts of time to devise rather simplistic escape plans? The answer is clear. Not having the option of public defiance of the captor without putting their own lives in danger, the prisoners in Russia had to find other, hidden ways to resist the Russians. Having no other obvious options, they chose constantly to plan escapes, even if they did not really intend to escape. Creating and devising plans was not only a good way to deal with boredom; it also made the prisoners feel like real soldiers or men even though they were completely stripped of their power as individuals. These hidden acts of defiance, even if they did not materialize, made

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124 Mehmet Arif Ölçen, 111.
them feel as if they were still struggling against the enemy; the devising of plans made escape possible, and that possibility gave them back a fragment of their pre-capture identities.

How do we explain the differences between the hidden and public defiance of the captors in Russia and Egypt? Why did prisoners in Egypt openly defy the captor, while those in Russia seemed content with hidden acts of rebelliousness? In many of the Russian camps the Ottoman POWs formed a small percentage of the prisoners captured; as a result they could not find safety in numbers. The harsher conditions of captivity in Russia also made prisoners suspicious of one another, as the higher frequency of conflict among them shows; it seems this type of internal friction or suspicion of one's fellows was also present among the American POWs in Japanese captivity, where the conditions were possibly worse.\textsuperscript{125} Perhaps the difficulty of reliance on others made the prisoners reluctant to openly challenge the captor. Of course, the most important factor has to be the attitude, or reaction, of the captor to such acts; when the prisoners saw or heard about the executions of their recaptured comrades, they realized they could not openly defy the Russians. Even before they reached their camps, their treatment during the transport had to serve as a warning to them; in a land where prisoners died by the thousands because of disease, hunger, cold, or simply out of neglect, the killing of a prisoner who defied his captors would not have attracted much attention. Let us not forget also that the prisoners in Russia had their hands full ensuring their own survival in the face of all the other things that threatened their lives; resistance may not have been an important aspect of

\textsuperscript{125} Samuel Hynes, 242-57.
their captivity lives. The prisoners in Egypt found safety in numbers. In contrast to the prisoners in Russia, the Red Cross and American State Department prison camp inspectors visited those in Egypt; therefore, perhaps they felt that someone was looking out for them. The feeling of “being forgotten” by those at home was much more prevalent among POWs in Russia. In short, the prisoners who already had some creature comforts and less to worry about could push their captors occasionally to new limits to gain more freedom, or better food. The prisoners in Russia had much less leeway before they would trigger an unwanted reaction from their captors to their demands; therefore, they did not openly defy them. The hidden defiance, represented by the endless escape plans, was a much safer choice. However, because they could not openly declare their defiance, they did not have much to gain.

### Conclusion

As this chapter has made clear, the lives, outlooks, attitudes, and responses of the Ottoman prisoners of war varied from Russia to Egypt. The Ottomans in Russia had a dehumanized view of their captors. Although they may have been tired of war and its destructiveness, they were nonetheless considerably more hawkish, or at least less pacifist, than their counterparts in Egypt. They were more likely to have conflicts with the Arab Ottomans among them and to attribute to them far more negative qualities. They

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126 Although Ottomans in Russia occasionally received help from the Swedish Red Cross or the YMCA, no inspection team traveled to Russia specifically to listen to their problems. One exception that should be added here is the mission of Yusuf Akçura in 1918, which came after the end of the war with Russia, although he was not able to go to the Siberian camps because of the Civil War and the Czech Legion’s control of those areas.

127 Mehmet Arif Ölcen, 88.
had more frictions both among themselves and with their superiors, which sometimes
developed into physical confrontations and open disobedience. Yet, at the same time,
they were more reluctant to openly defy their captors. The prisoners in Egypt, on the
other hand, were more tolerant of their captors, and more pacific. Although they did not
clearly enjoy amicable relations with Arab Ottomans and superior officers, they were less
likely to express strong feelings of distrust and revulsion; and they were more likely to
publicly challenge their captors.

Since these men were all soldiers of the same army who were territorially
assigned, this might seem strange at first. The differences between the two groups of
prisoners can only be explained by the locations and conditions of captivity each group
faced both before and after they were captured. The prisoners in Russia were transported
in more stressful conditions, and once they arrived in the prison camps, the stress
continued in various ways. Their existence seemed less secure; they had the insecurity of
not having adequate food all the time; they did not have as many activities to keep them
occupied; they had to compete for the limited space available to them; they faced much
harsher climatic conditions when compared to the prisoners in Egypt. In addition to the
generally more stressful existence in Russia, the harsh weather and cold temperatures
kept the prisoners inside their barracks most of the time and intensified what might be
called the hatred of the near.¹²⁸ In short, the generally more adverse environment of
captivity negatively affected the behavior of the prisoners towards each other and in
general. Whereas some POWs in Egypt, while surely feeling the depression of captivity,

¹²⁸ Halil Ataman, 147.
felt that they were in a state of repose (istirahat) from war, for the POWs in Russia the struggle continued. It is true this struggle was not on the front, but it was a struggle nevertheless. No one in Russia, whether in a captivity narrative or camp newspapers, used the word istirahat to refer to his captivity.
CHAPTER 4

Who are these? Why sit they here in twilight?
Wherefore rock they, purgatorial shadows,
Drooping tongues from jaws that slob their relish,
Baring teeth that leer like skulls’ wicked? . . .
-These are the men whose mind the Dead have ravished.

Wilfred Owen, “Mental Cases”

OF MINDS AND MEN: WAR, CAPTIVITY, AND TURKISH MENTAL MEDICINE

This captivity has caused me suffering:
My body is only skin and bone.
I am surrounded by emptiness, my place and home are of sand,
Whatever I eat is poison and oleander.1

Thus starts Haşim Nahid’s 1920 play The Prisoner Who Went Insane (Deliren Esir). The prisoner then goes on to scream and talk to himself. Yakup Kadri in “Hasretten Hasrete,” (From One Yearning to Another) relates that the difficulties of life in captivity make Namik thoughtless, callous, and a creature without memory (hatırasız).2 There are a few other references to a POW having gone through some psychological change because of his experience. In Zeyno’nun Oğlu (Zeyno’s Son), Halide Edip gives us another image of a former POW. One of the villains of the novel, 1 Su esaret beni bir derde saldı: / Vucudum bir déri bir kemik kaldı. / Etrafım bir boşluk, yerim yurdum kum/ Yediğim iç empower zehirle zakkum. / Haşim Nahid, Deliren Esir (n.p. n.p., 1336), 3. Oleander is a poisonous, chiefly tropical shrub, but in this case it is an idiomatic expression alluding to the zaqqam/zakkum fruit that supposedly grows in hell.


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Ramazan, “... remained in Russia for a few years as a prisoner. ... After his return, the hostility he showed to his son and wife and the torment he put them through was well known among all the villagers.”3 Is there a direct connection between Ramazan’s “cruel” behavior and his experience of war and captivity? Even if the play and the novel are works of fiction, they imply at least an awareness of the mental effect of war and captivity on the participants.4

This chapter will explore the psychological and social ramifications of war and captivity on its participants by examining how physicians came to an understanding of psychological breakdown during the First World War. As contemporary Ottoman studies on POWs are practically non-existent, we will first examine war neurosis, or what was commonly known as “shell-shock.” The doctors’ understanding of war neurosis will, no doubt, also shed light on mental ailments related to captivity. As part of our discussion of captivity related disorders, we will include pellagra—a nutrition-deficiency disease rather widespread among the Ottoman POWs in Egypt—as it could lead to severe mental retardation. In this direction, an attempt will be made to locate the psychological and physical diseases from which the soldiers suffered within the medical discourse and medical practice of the time. A related question in this connection is how much did professional discourse and the doctors’ sense of national responsibility determine diagnostic practice and prejudice? Here we will pay special attention to how Ottoman and Turkish doctors framed, diagnosed, and explained the conditions of the war neurotics

3 Halide Edip Adıvar, Zeyno'nun Oğlu (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1973), 44, 284. This work was originally published in 1928.

4 In this connection, one could also mention Orhan Hançerlioğlu’s Ekilmemiş Topraklar (Istanbul: Varlık Yayinevi, 1954).
and repatriated POWs.\(^5\) While answering these questions, this chapter will also argue that the Ottoman doctors came under German medical influence. It is, therefore, necessary to look briefly at the state of German psychiatric medicine during the war.

**Turkish Psychiatry and the German Connection**

The first medical school (*Mekteb-i Tıbbiye*) in the Ottoman Empire was established in 1827. Other schools were subsequently established; European teachers were brought in to teach various subjects. Some students were sent to Europe—initially France, but more often to Germany at the end of the century—to study.\(^6\) The study and practice of modern psychiatry in the Ottoman Empire started with Dr. Raşit Tahsin at the very end of the nineteenth century and continued with Dr. Mazhar Osman (Uzman) into republican times. Raşit Tahsin, Mazhar Osman and his students—Drs. İhsan Şükrü (Aksel), Fahrettin Kerim (Gökay) and others of the same generation—were heavily influenced by the famous German psychiatrist Emile Kraepelin. In fact, most of them, including Mazhar Osman and Fahrettin Kerim, were students of the great German psychiatrist. Although ultimately asylum doctors,\(^7\) these people were the only leading psychiatrists in the Ottoman Empire and in early republican Turkey. The German

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7 Almost all famous psychiatrists in Europe held university positions. Asylum doctors were not generally seen as up-to-date on current psychiatric research.
Psychiatric influence in Turkey continued well into the 1940's, when it was supplanted by the Anglo-Saxon school. Meanwhile, in Germany heavy industrial development in the late nineteenth century led to an increased number of industrial and railroad accidents. Legislation created by Bismarck gave financial compensation to modernity's most visible victims, survivors of industrial and railway accidents. The Reich's insurance offices extended this beneficence to workers who suffered from the mental and nervous effects of industrial accidents as well. In effect, with this act the Empire institutionalized Berlin neurologist Hermann Oppenheim's diagnosis of traumatic neurosis, a kind of precursor to today's post-traumatic stress disorder (hereafter PTSD).

Oppenheim treated post-traumatic nervous symptoms as a distinct entity resulting from the direct—anatomical or psychic—effects of traumatic events. Oppenheim's many critics, however, viewed such symptoms as hysterical reactions, thus emphasizing processes that occurred within the accident victim's mind rather than the damaging impact of any external traumata. According to this line of reasoning, traumatic events do not make healthy people sick, but rather sick people react pathologically to traumatic events. It was not long before the new pension policies were blamed by Oppenheim's

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opponents for creating an epidemic of “pension neurosis” among the German working class. By attributing the condition to the patient’s psyche rather than the direct accident effects, the hysteria diagnosis offered doctors an alternative to traumatic neurosis. That is, explaining these symptoms simply as hysterical reactions made trauma patients ineligible for pensions from the state treasury, which was rapidly heading towards bankruptcy. In fact, Oppenheim’s opponents viewed sufferers of psychic trauma as pension seekers and advocated cutting off compensation.10

Soon after the Great War started, German soldiers began breaking down in epidemic numbers, displaying functional disorders of sight, hearing, speech and gait as well as insomnia, tremors, and uncontrollable emotionality, which were simply diagnosed as “war neurosis.” However, the subdivision of war neurosis into specific neuroses provoked considerable confusion and conflict among the medical community.11 Having seen similar symptoms a decade or so before, Oppenheim diagnosed these sick soldiers with traumatic neurosis. But other doctors who did not believe his traumatic neurosis theory saw his ideas as dangerous, anti-patriotic, and extremely costly to the state.12 These two views came into direct conflict at a 1916 congress of the German Psychiatric Association convened in Munich to discuss wartime nervous and mental illnesses. Here Oppenheim and his theories were attacked relentlessly, especially by Drs. Max Nonne

10 Paul Lemer, Hysterical Men, 103-19.
and Robert Gaupp. It was not that these doctors believed the sick soldiers were all simulators, though they believed there were many of those; rather, they believed that the malady was a "legitimate" disorder separate from any war-related factors. Sufferers from traumatic neurosis or "pension neurosis" were seen not simply as simulators, but as genuinely ill; however, their malady was termed a sickness of will (Willenskrankheit). "Will" took on a rather peculiar meaning among German doctors; it meant forcing oneself the regimen the doctor ordered. There was an even larger problem with this emphasis on will. Since the doctors argued that recovery was a matter of willpower, the patient was considered to be at fault if he did not recover. The anti-Oppenheim faction claimed success in treatment of these soldiers through suggestion, including electrotherapy, and crude forms of psychotherapy. They claimed success as proof that these disorders were products of the mind and not the body. In addition, they argued that studies on prisoners of war and those with serious injuries showed that war neuroses seldom occurred among these groups, stating that only those in need of an excuse to get away from the war were likely to "flee into illness" through neurosis. A prisoner, Gaupp’s conference argument continued, would not be served by becoming hysterical, for an hysterical condition would guarantee neither a trip home nor a pension. Furthermore, Gaupp attributed war neurosis to a flight into hysterical symptoms by a terrified, weak-willed individual and argued that neuroses would actually work against

13 Paul Lerner, “Rationalizing the Therapeutic Arsenal: German Neuropsychiatry in World War I,” in Medicine and Modernity, 126-27; Mazhar Osman, “Harp Nevrozları” in Şehir Emaneti Şişli Müessesinde Emraz-ı Akliye ve Asabiye Müsamereleri, 2 Mart 333-6 Nisan 333 İctimalar, Numro 4 (Dersaadet: Hilal Matbasi, 1333), 3-8
the interest of prisoners because the prisoner must endure so that he can return home healthy.15

An Ottoman doctor, Mazhar Osman, attending the conference in Munich must have come away from it with the conclusion that war neuroses had little to do with war and that similar neurosis could not be found among prisoners of war because the war prisoner had already finished his war. His German teachers and colleagues concluded that what these men had was hysteria and only those who were weak-willed, lazy, cowardly, and terrified of war wished it upon themselves. When he returned home, Mazhar Osman presented and published a summary of the neurosis debate and its final outcome. Although he mentioned Oppenheim’s argument, it is clear that he believed that Oppenheim’s theory had been discredited by Gaupp and Nonne.16 He related Gaupp’s argument that “war neurosis was very rare even among those prisoners who were exposed to extreme trauma.”17 In short, the Ottoman physicians were now exposed to the idea advanced by many German doctors. These ideas were 1) that war could not cause mental illness and those men who became ill in the war were hysterics who, being constitutionally inferior, clearly were not up to the demands of military service; and 2) that neurosis rarely occurred among POWs. The German doctors’ attitude towards war neurosis and was clearly shaped by their assumed duty to save the state from bankruptcy by turning away the pension requests of the hysterics. Did the Ottoman doctors adopt the

13 Lerner, “Rationalizing the Arsenal,” 122-127; Lerner, Hysterical Men, 120-22.


findings of the German doctors without questioning the cultural and economic context in which they were made? In other words, were attitudes and medical knowledge shaped in the specific cultural and economic environment of World War I-era Germany transferred to Turkey?

**War Neurosis in the Ottoman Empire**

Some historians point to the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 as the first major war where numerous cases of war neurosis were detected among the Russian soldiers.\(^\text{18}\) It is unlikely that the Ottoman soldiers—outnumbered, outgunned, and surrounded—were somehow immune to the war neurosis to which their opponents succumbed. Yet, the first substantial psychiatric studies of Turkish soldiers started to appear only in the late twentieth century, as PTSD was detected among the soldiers who fought in eastern Turkey against the Kurds.\(^\text{19}\)

The small number of officers (thirty-nine) and enlisted men who were hospitalized at the mental asylum of Toptaşı in 1923-24 pales in comparison to the large number of war neurotics in Germany and England.\(^\text{20}\) Germany had 200,000 and England

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\(^{20}\) During the years 1923-1924 there were only thirty-nine officers hospitalized at Toptaşı for various ailments. Twelve of these officers were listed as schizophrenic. By trade the officers constituted the second largest group of patients after day laborers (rençberler). It is likely that some of these rençberler were discharged enlisted men listed under their peace-time occupation. Ranked by ailments, schizophrenia came in second, showing a major increase in comparison to previous years. *Istanbul Emraz-ı Akiye ve Asabiye Müessesesi Senelik Mesaisi: 339-340 Senelerine Mahsus* (Istanbul: Kader Matbaası, 1925), pull-out table and 322-23.
followed with 80,000 war neurotics—four percent of all casualties.\textsuperscript{21} If we apply to the Ottomans what seems to be the average four percent rate from Germany and England, we arrive at a possible number of 39,000 war neurotics in the Ottoman Empire.\textsuperscript{22} However, a downward adjustment of this number might be in order. War neurosis is generally associated with static, that is, trench warfare. Most of the Ottoman fronts against the Allies were along moving fronts—with the notable exception of Gallipoli—which resembled the Western Front. In short, in comparison to Germany, England, and France, which had committed the bulk of their forces to trench warfare, the Ottomans faced similar warfare only in Gallipoli and occasionally elsewhere. Therefore, the percentage of men affected by war neurosis would likely have been slightly less than the average four percent. Nevertheless, we should not be too quick to reduce it by much, for during the war one British doctor claimed that every man leaving Gallipoli was in a condition of profound neurasthenia.\textsuperscript{23} Could not this be true for the Ottomans as well? At any rate, even if we were to assume that three percent (instead of four) may have suffered from war neurosis, that gives us a total of 29,000. While much less than the figure of either Germany or Britain, this is not an insignificant number at all. Yet, we see no mention of these men at all in secondary literature and only passing allusions in the primary literature.

\textsuperscript{21} Four percent seems to be a generally correct rate of war neurotics in relation to total war casualties. Paul Lerner, \textit{Hysterical Men}, 8; and Eric J. Leed, \textit{No Man's Land, Combat and Identity in World War I} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 185. In England the actual number of cases of war neuroses diagnosed during the war was 80,000, but after the war 200,000 men were given pensions for war-related nervous disorders. Allan Young, "W. H. R. Rivers and the War Neurosis," \textit{Journal of the History of Behavioral Sciences} 35 (1999), 359.

\textsuperscript{22} This number does not take into account the unusually high number of Ottomans who were afflicted with pellagra, which would clearly increase the number of neurotic patients.

\textsuperscript{23} Eric J. Leed, \textit{No Man's Land}, 181.
that relates to the war and health. Considering that even as late as 1925 psychiatric centers in Turkey could accommodate only 650 patients,\textsuperscript{24} it is unlikely that many at all of these soldiers were examined, diagnosed, cured, and sent home without leaving even the remnants of a medical paper trail. Meanwhile, by comparison, at about the same time in England approximately 6,000 war neurotics were still in mental hospitals; after the war nearly 100 treatment centers were opened for shell-shocked men.\textsuperscript{25}

As is the case with many other things that relate to the Ottoman involvement in World War I, our evidence is not nearly complete. Clearly the best evidence to show the incidence of psychoneurosis related to war and captivity would be the statistics and reports prepared by the doctors or other officials who examined the Ottoman soldiers referred from the fronts or returning from captivity.\textsuperscript{26} In most cases, however, the prisoners did not undergo physical exams upon their repatriation, and a psychiatric exam would have been even more extraordinary.\textsuperscript{27} Much like the non-existent statistics on POW or war neurotics in general, there is a clear dearth of medical studies concerning

\textsuperscript{24} In the same year 1,646 people were treated as in-patients and 898 as out-patients. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti, Sihhat ve İçtimai Muavenet Vekaleti, 


\textsuperscript{26} The Ottoman psychiatrists of the time were based at Toptaşı Asylum and later the asylum in Bakırköy. Toptaşı Bimarhanesi was a very old and small building. In 1927 the hospital was moved to \textit{Resadiye Kışlası} (army barracks) left vacant after the Great War in Bakırköy, which then became the \textit{Bakırköy Ruh ve Sinir Hastalıkları Hastahanesi} (Bakırköy Hospital of Mental and Nervous Diseases). For a brief history of Turkish psychiatry see Fahrettin K. Gökay, “Türk Tababeti Ruhiye Tarihi,” \textit{Tıp Düşyasi} 48 (1975): 368-79.

\textsuperscript{27} For examples and further references regarding the Ottoman state’s indifference to the plight of the repatriated POWs see Yücel Yanıkdağ, “Ottoman Prisoners of War in Russia, 1914-22,” \textit{Journal of Contemporary History} 34 (1999), 83 and note 57.
this time period. Let alone works on repatriated POWs, there are not any substantial medical studies of war neurosis or even a general medical history of the Great War. There were various article-length publications during and after the Great War on psychiatry, but a very large part of these studies dealt with mental disorders unrelated to war, or at least made no connection to war even when it was possible to do so.

Making use of the somewhat limited number, detail of publications that appeared, we will see how the Ottoman and Turkish doctors viewed mental disorders related to war and war captivity. As mentioned, since contemporary Ottoman and Turkish studies on POWs are practically non-existent, the following discussion will first cover war neurosis, or what was commonly known as “shell-shock,” in some detail. The doctors’ diagnosis, understanding, and framing of war neurosis will, no doubt, also shed light on mental ailments related to captivity.

With Mazhar Osman reporting on German psychiatry and the neurologist Mustafa Hayrullah [Diker] reporting on French psychiatry during the war, it is clear that Ottoman psychiatrists were generally aware of the psychological problems the Great War was causing for the soldiers of their allies and enemies alike. The publications, limited as they were, and the 3-4 years of conferences on psychiatry held during the war at the Hôpital de La Paix—under Ottoman control since the beginning of the War—in

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28 Although a commission was organized for the purpose of writing the medical history of the Great War during early republican times, nothing seems to have resulted from it.


30 This French hospital was established in the 1850’s during the Crimean War and run by the Sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul to treat the wounded coming from the front. After their entry in the Great War, the Ottomans took control of the hospital and referred to as Şişli Müessesesi. Dr. Mazhar Osman was put in (cont’d.)
Istanbul must have informed a major part of the rather small number of psychiatrists in
the Ottoman Empire about the state of the field. It seems relatively certain that the first
Ottoman doctor to observe the connection between exploding shells and the strange
symptoms the soldiers showed was Doctor Yahoub.31 Noticing an artillery soldier whose
arms drooped loosely by his sides and whose head plunged down between his shoulders,
doctor Yahoub concluded in an unpublished conference paper that the soldier’s condition
was caused by shells exploding and being fired around him. Having witnessed thousands
of similar cases, other doctors joined in with similar symptoms—partial paralysis,
blindness, arched back, and stuttering—they had noticed among soldiers from the front.32
Even if the Ottoman doctors did not record individual cases of war neurosis they
witnessed, the soldiers knew on a more personal level how it all started:

And the damage first starts psychologically. When the war of movement that
distracts [the soldier] comes to a halt and the gloom of the trenches starts after
months of inactivity, a melancholy surrounds the soul at first. This melancholy
starts with the person becoming introspective. When a private, a simple soldier,
becomes introspective what he finds is his own material and brutal self.33

As there were not enough psychiatric specialists to staff all of the larger units of
the Ottoman armies, in most theaters the task of examining the soldiers who were
mentally unstable fell to general practitioners. Therefore, the level of psychiatric training

31 His name is mentioned as “Dr. Yahop” in M. Hayrullah, Asabiye Hastalıkları, Nuhâ Asabımuhitiye,
Sempatik Sistemi Hastalıkları, Nevrozlar (İstanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1929), 2:490. “Dr. Yahop” must be
Yahoub Garabet as also mentioned by H. Hatemi, “Balkan Harbi Yaralılar Adlî Eser ve Dr. Yahoub,” Tip

32 Nazım Şakir, “Travma Sar’ası,” Askerî Tic Mecmuası 56 (1927), 281; M. Hayrullah, Asabiye
Hastalıkları, 489; Mazhar Osman, Psychiatria, 275-76.

33 Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, Suyu Arayan Adam (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1997), 109.
each doctor had must have varied greatly. It is discernible from the available evidence that in most cases the soldier or officer was not sent to a psychiatric hospital after being diagnosed by one of the doctors at the front. Unlike their German and British counterparts, the Ottoman doctors did not use common terms such as war neurosis or “shell shock” to refer to the conditions of the soldiers who suffered from the effects of combat. Both the lack of a common terminology and the various levels of training among the non-specialist doctors make it difficult to determine whether different terms might refer to the same condition. The most common terms used to describe the ailments of soldiers who suffered from various disorders as a consequence of war were traumatic hysteria, neurasthenia, schizophrenia \((dementia praecox)\), amentia (confusional insanity), and traumatic epilepsy, in addition to other, less common terms.\(^{34}\)

Whether doctors called it hysteria, neurasthenia, schizophrenia, or any other name, it is relatively clear that there was not a standardized way to identify neurosis related to war.\(^{35}\) It is quite possible, as a consequence, that some affected soldiers were not easily identified and diagnosed. In fact, credible evidence shows that the sufferings of many soldiers were taken as simulations and the soldiers as malingerers. Writing decades after the Great War, a military doctor, Mevlut Doğantuğ, stated that during war it was difficult to identify the pathological character of the reactions of schizophrenic soldiers. He admitted that many mistakes were made in identifying schizophrenics by the

\(^{34}\) They referred to their soldier patients’ illnesses with various names: \(\text{ateh-i nıbehen}güm \text{ and vaksıtsız} \), or \(\text{erken bunama} \) (in Ottoman usage all meant \(dementia praecox\), later known as schizophrenia), \(\text{isteri} \) (hysteria), \(\text{nevrasteni} \) (neurasthenia), \(\text{travma sarası} \) (traumatic epilepsy), \(\text{da’ al-raks} \) (tremors or shakes).

\(^{35}\) In fact, doctors themselves usually stated that it was very difficult to diagnose some of the ailments as they resembled each other.
doctors and officers of the Turkish and other armies during the Great War. It was clear now, he continued, that modern warfare "could cause various mental disorders among those who were constitutionally weak . . . . Most of these unfortunate people faced wartime laws and were considered guilty . . . [and] some were given the death penalty in the heat of battle."36 Another doctor also acknowledged that many of those soldiers who received the death penalty for desertion from the front suffered from schizophrenia.37 "Soldiers showing signs of mental disorders were treated like simulators and cowards and wasted their lives . . . in prisons . . . [T]here were many among these disabled who faced the harshest penalties."38 As psychiatric medicine became more advanced, even more doctors conceded that thousands of people who may actually have been sick with some form of war neurosis were put in prison or executed for desertion and dereliction of duty because they were thought to be simulating.39 Thus it was only years later—sometimes not until the 1940s—that some physicians active during the Great War remembered and understood the sufferings and harsh treatment of thousands of war neurotics.

Convinced that large numbers of men were malingering during a war when every man was needed on the front, some Ottoman doctors tried various methods to filter out simulators; some of these methods closely resembled the practices of their German colleagues. These methods included powerful electrotherapy (the Kaufmann method),

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36 Mevlut Doğanuğ, Orduda Sınr ve Ruh Hastalıkları Serisinden: Erkenbunama (Şizofreni) (Istanbul: Askeri Basimevi, 1946), 39-40, and 'onsöz'.


39 Nazım Şakir, "Orduda Temaruz (Simulation)," in Ordu Doktorunun Nöropsİşleri Kılavuzu, 145.
isolation, restricted diet, injection of pain-causing drugs, and showers with pressurized cold water. It seems that the Ottoman physicians, rather like their British counterparts, who went out of their way to prove that there was nothing wrong with the war neurotics, were more inclined than the German psychiatrists to turn over those they diagnosed and judged to be malingerers to military courts. German physicians treated the possible simulators with the same method they used on the “authentic” war neurotics instead of sending them to be tried and punished. While this practice must have saved German lives, it was more likely an attempt to increase their patient pool than a demonstration of sympathy. Additionally, the German doctors viewed the desire to escape war service as a pathology. In England and especially in the Ottoman Empire, the overworked physicians had no intention of increasing the patient pool and viewed the malingerers as a negative influence on troop morale in general. A British POW in the Ottoman Empire, who was a patient in the Haydarpaşa hospital then briefly in the Gümüşsuyu military hospitals in Istanbul, related that he saw many Ottoman soldiers who were diagnosed as malingerers. While the doctors at Haydarpaşa treated him and his friend harshly, but humanely, he found the doctors as Gümüşsuyu brutal; he was convinced that the

40 Although Ottoman doctors do not go into any detail about this drug, it must be ether injected just under the skin. This method, considered not dangerous but extremely painful, was also used by the European psychiatrists.

41 Nazım Şakir, “Orduda Temaruz (Simulation),” 147. Nazım Şakir says that hypnosis was not used at all for treatment.

Gümüşsuyu doctors jumped to the conclusion that because his friend was a prisoner of war, he must be malingering and thus treated him with exceptional cruelty.33

Why were many Ottoman soldiers misdiagnosed while others were not diagnosed at all? A major part of the problem, of course, was that there were not enough qualified doctors to diagnose these ailments. We do not know how many psychiatrists served in the Ottoman army during the war, but the total of all the doctors in the service was only 1060 in 1914. When the war started 142 medical students who were still being trained and 1283 civilian doctors were conscripted into the army, thus bringing the grand total number of doctors in the Ottoman war service to 2,485—or fewer than one-tenth of the doctors in the German army (26,300). These doctors also suffered high casualty rates; by the end of the war 12.5 percent of them had died and many others had become POWs.44

If we assume that the Ottoman army numbered 1,200,000 men at any given time, this means that one doctor was responsible for 482 men’s health. Clearly, the doctors had a very large responsibility. Since there was a general shortage of doctors, it is not surprising to discover that the number of psychiatrists was so inadequate that in most cases it was the general practitioners or surgeons on the battlefield who diagnosed the ailments of soldiers displaying symptoms of mental breakdown. It seems that only in some instances were the soldiers sent to the major military hospital in Istanbul, Haydarpaşa, where there were psychiatrists on duty. Here, few patients stayed more than


44 A break-down of all the doctors by nationality and religion would look like this: Turkish, 1,701; Greek, 340; Armenian, 246; Jewish, 119; Catholic, 79. Dr. General Kemal Özbay, Türk Asker Hekimliği Tarihi ve Asker Hastahaneleri (Istanbul: Yörüklü Basmevi, 1976), 1:304-07. On the number of German doctors see Lerner, Hysterical Men, 36.
a week or two. At the end of this “observation” period their fate was decided: asylum, front, or punishment.\textsuperscript{45} Some of the patients could also be referred to Şişli hospital, where Mazhar Osman was in charge.\textsuperscript{46} However, this general shortage of doctors and especially psychiatrists was an important shortcoming. Clearly, as some of the psychiatrists also related, this could be a life and death question for soldiers who suffered from legitimate disorders. One psychiatrist complained that while many truly sick soldiers were treated like malingerers, some other “shrewd and clever sons of Anatolia and Arabia, who were the true malingerers, were not always detected” by the non-specialist doctors and even medical committees who examined them.\textsuperscript{47} Dr. Nazım Şakir enviously lamented that “the countries, especially the Great Powers, we were bold enough to fight, had established hospitals and medical sections close behind the lines for mental disorders... [and] treated conditions [such as] traumatic neurosis—which [some of us] had not even heard of [italics mine]—in these hospitals.”\textsuperscript{48} It is highly likely that Nazım Şakir is alluding to the non-specialist and civilian doctors conscripted into the army. General military preparedness aside, it is clear that, lacking trained medical personnel, the Ottoman army was not prepared to deal with the medical consequences of modern warfare. Consequently, many war neurotics were not diagnosed or were misdiagnosed as malingerers.

\textsuperscript{45} E. H. Jones, \textit{The Road to En-Dor}, 289.


\textsuperscript{47} Nazım Şakir, “Emraz-ı 'Asabiye ve 'Akliyede Teşhis,” 182.

\textsuperscript{48} Nazım Şakir, “Emraz-ı 'Asabiye ve 'Akliyede Teşhis,” 182.
Cases of misdiagnosis must have been commonly known among the psychiatrists, for some doctors questioned the diagnosis made by specialists and non-specialists alike. Citing the case of an officer, Zihni Efendi, who had "muscle fatigue, headaches, loss of appetite, gait, and changing personality," one psychiatrist, Şükrü Hazım, complained that there was an inclination among some of the Ottoman doctors either to diagnose any mental illness they could not recognize as neurasthenia, or alternatively to deem neurasthenia a minor disorder. Doctor Şükrü continued that even the major military hospital in Haydarpaşa, Istanbul, diagnosed Zihni Efendi with neurasthenia and gave the officer twenty days' rest. When the rest period was over, the officer returned to duty, his symptoms continued, and he neglected and refused his duties. Once more he was sent to Haydarpaşa hospital, only to be diagnosed again with the same disorder and finally sent into retirement with a small pension. When Dr. Şükrü examined the officer, he re-diagnosed him with the more serious schizophrenia, which, the doctor implies, also changed his pension salary upwards. He pleaded with other doctors not to take neurasthenia so lightly as to use it as a cover-all diagnosis. Another physician stated that neurasthenia was an early stage of schizophrenia and could resemble traumatic neurosis in many ways, and therefore urged that the diagnosis should be made carefully. Even the most distinguished psychiatrists declared as late as the 1930s that "hysteria,

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51 M. Hayrullah, Asabiye Hastalıkları, 504-12.
neurasthenia, traumatic neurasthenia, epilepsy, obsession are maladies that closely resemble each other.\textsuperscript{52}

The Ottoman doctors were not alone in their complaints of diagnostic confusion regarding war-related psychoneurosis. German and British psychiatrists were having diagnostic difficulties as well.\textsuperscript{53} Doctor Nazım Şakir recommended that all doctors—generalists and surgeons alike—go through a training period in psychiatry. The same doctor argued that while most non-specialists are able to diagnose mental illnesses if the patients show clear physical symptoms, they overlook these illnesses, or simply misdiagnose them as simulation, when there are no physical symptoms.\textsuperscript{54} In 1930, Mazhar Osman published the case of a Great War veteran who possibly fits into this category. This patient saw action in Yemen, Gallipoli, and in the East against the Russians, where he was wounded. The soldier stated that he “must have gone insane at that moment,” and shot himself in the foot. Some years later, the same man murdered his wife and mutilated her body. Although we do not know anything else about the patient’s life between his “going insane,” and killing his wife some years later,\textsuperscript{55} it is highly possible that he suffered from a mental ailment that was not diagnosed when he was treated for his wound. It is also possible that because he shot himself in the foot, he was viewed as someone who deliberately shot himself to get out of returning to the front, and

\textsuperscript{52} Mazhar Osman, \textit{Tababeti Ruhiye}, 23.

\textsuperscript{53} Martin Stone, “Shellshock and the Psychologists,” 249-51; and Allan Young, “W. H. R. Rivers,” 367.

\textsuperscript{54} Nazım Şakir, “Emraz-i 'Asabiye ve 'Akliyede Teşhis,” 183-84.

\textsuperscript{55} Mazhar Osman, “Mecnunlar Arasında Müc rim Tipleri, 5,” \textit{İstanbul Seririyatt} 12 (1930), 3687-89.
thus was not taken seriously. Clearly, those soldiers who were not treated for their mental disorders could also be a threat to those around them. As the case above shows, sometimes there could be a long gap between the soldier’s becoming ill and his actually seeing a doctor, perhaps for the first time. In a similar case, a thirty-eight-year-old veteran was brought into hospital seven years after the end of the Great War. Half of the patient’s body was paralyzed (hemiplegia), and he had partial loss of the capacity to use or understand words (aphasia), and depression. It was related to the doctor that the patient had been in this condition since the Great War. Unfortunately, we do not know whether the patient had seen other doctors previously. However, it would not be at all surprising if this man, especially if he were not an uneducated enlisted man, had not sought a mental health professional after the war if his symptoms were not diagnosed and treated during the war. As the Ottoman and Turkish psychiatrists also complained, belief in primitive folk practices was all too common in attitudes on health and healing, especially in rural communities. Turkish psychiatrists claimed as late as the 1960s that mental disease in general was interpreted in rural areas as a punishment from God and “therefore as a sign (or guilt) which should be kept secret.” Unfortunately, we cannot

56 For a sample simulation diagnosis of a man who had just been called up to serve in the military, see Mazhar Osman, “Harbde Görülen Vakayiden,” 5-6.


tell whether the families of these silent victims of the Great War may have interpreted the mental condition of the war neurotics in the same way.

Mental Breakdown in Captivity

If war neurosis was diagnosed and misdiagnosed in various ways by the specialists and non-specialists, how did the doctors view the repatriated POWs? As mentioned, publications on the POWs are practically nonexistent; therefore, most of our information will come from works on general psychiatry where minimal references are made to war captives. Considering that there were about 200-250,000 Ottoman POWs in the Great War, this lack of medical literature about them seems particularly troubling. It is worthwhile—in the absence of medical case studies of repatriated POWs—to look for evidence on the prevalence of psychological disturbance among the prisoners as reflected in captivity narratives.

In order to isolate correctly instances of mental ailments, we must first briefly review the medical literature on what was then known as barbed wire disease. Unfortunately, this review will of necessity be of works on western medicine. While it is possible that people of different cultures show different symptoms of trauma and captivity, the lack of Turkish literature on this topic leaves no alternative. Still, this brief review should be adequate to allow us to compile a general list of symptoms that normally point to the existence of barbed wire disease and other anxiety and depressive disorders in prisoners of war. Very few prisoners who had been in the camps for over six months escaped this condition. As a point of reference, epidemiological studies, conducted on prisoners of later twentieth-century wars have shown that while the lifetime occurrence of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in combat veterans is at thirty
percent, PTSD rates among former POWs stand at about sixty-seven percent. In other words, POWs—at least those in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam—were much more likely to carry the mental scars of war and captivity when compared to other combat veterans.\footnote{Although many factors may have made the lives and conditions of captivity different for the POWs of the Great War, in the absence of post-repatriation medical studies on the POWs of that war, it might be worthwhile to consider studies on prisoners of later wars. These studies concluded that former POWs frequently developed health problems identified as post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The symptoms of PTSD are chronic anxiety, recurring memories of trauma, sleep disturbance, substance abuse and eating disorders, and family problems. Some follow-up studies also show that more than half of those affected still showed persisting symptoms of the disease after forty years. Nancy Speed, et al., "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder as a Consequence of the POW Experience," \textit{The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease} 177 (1989), 152; Thomas W. Miller, et al., "Traumatic Stress Disorder: Diagnostic and Clinical Issues in Former Prisoners of War," \textit{Comprehensive Psychiatry} 30 (1989), 147; P. B. Gold, et al., "Trauma Exposure, Resilience, Social Support, and PTSD Construct Validity among former Prisoners of War," \textit{Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology} 35 (2000), 36-37; D. Kozaric-Kovacic, et al., "Combat-Experienced Soldiers and Tortured Prisoners of War Differ in the Clinical Presentation of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder," \textit{Nordic Journal of Psychiatry} 53 (1999): 11-15.} After all, the non-captives bear only the scars of war, as terrible as they might be, but not those of captivity. According to a study published right after the Great War, the disorder showed itself in various ways and in varying degrees, from easy excitability to an introspective, apathetic condition. It was characterized by irritability, restlessness, memory failure, difficulty in concentrating, moodiness, general depression and nightmares. Contemporary literature concluded that the effects of barbed wire disease were exacerbated by the 1) impossibility of being alone; 2) uncertainty about the duration of captivity; and 3) absence or irregularity of communication from home.\footnote{Adolf L. Vischer, \textit{Barbed Wire Disease: A Psychological Study of the Prisoners of War} (London, 1919), 3, 53.}

Arguably, most of these exacerbating factors applied especially to the Ottoman POWs. They were usually the last to be repatriated from Egypt and especially from Russia; some Ottoman POWs in Russia were not repatriated until as late as 1923. It must have been at the least frustrating for the Ottomans to witness the repatriation of most, if
not all, of the Germans and Austro-Hungarians while they remained in captivity. In addition, widespread illiteracy, both among the prisoners and on the home front, and the defunct mail delivery system in Turkey resulted in Ottoman POWs receiving minimal amounts of correspondence from their families when compared to other POWs. While their foreign friends received packages from their families, some Ottoman POWs could not even get news about their families. This must have put an extra burden on them to worry not only about themselves, but also about the fates of their loved ones at home.

Although we do not have statistics, it seems likely, at least from the evidence in the captivity narratives, that the prisoners in Russia were more prone to depression or other maladies associated with prison psychoses than were their counterparts in Egypt. If this were the case, the conditions of captivity in Russia in comparison to Egypt would account for the difference. Captivity in Russia lasted somewhat longer for the Ottomans then captivity in Egypt. As most of the Ottomans were sent to Siberia, the colder and gloomier winter climate there would certainly have kept the captives inside their barracks. As the barracks were almost always overcrowded, the prisoners had no possibility of being alone. A report by the Danish vice-consul in Irkutsk, filed with the American Legation in Russia, stated, for example, that there was “an abnormally high proportion of cases of mental disorder.”

62 There are numerous comments in captivity narratives and POW letters about the frustration felt by the POWs over the absence of mail from home. It is likely that illiterate soldiers from illiterate families seldom sent letters home. When this happened, it was only because the soldier found a literate comrade who would write and read for illiterate soldiers; the illiterate soldier’s family had to do the same. Many letters written and read for illiterate people contain greetings and wishes for the literate people who served as secretaries for both sides. Even when the letters were written by both sides, it did not mean that they found the addressee. Hundreds of sacks of undelivered POW correspondence from World War I still present in the Kızılay Archives, which are off-limits to researchers, perhaps explains some of the problems encountered. For a sample POW letter sent home see Adnan İşik, Malatya, 1830-1919 (Istanbul: Kurtiç, 1998), 774-75. For the weekly number of letters written by the Ottoman POWs between 12 March 1915 and 23 October 1915, see “List,” enclosure in “Turkish Prisoners of War at Meadi,” 763.72114/1002, 29 October 1915.
percentage of mental disturbances. During the four and a half years of imprisonment, the greater part of the prisoners have aged from fifteen to twenty years. The Turkish and [sic] Hungarian peasants have suffered especially in this regard.63

The symptoms of PTSD as listed above correlate with evidence of psychological disorders found among the Ottoman POWs in various camps as reflected mostly in the captivity narratives. An officer interned in Russia, Halil Ataman, who religiously wrote in his diary on a daily basis, stopped making entries and could not account for the unrecorded time. He claimed to have lost his senses of touch, sight, and hearing, or at least he felt that his hands, feet, eyes, and ears did not perform as well as they used to. After some time in captivity, he was convinced that life had no meaning and truly wished that he were dead, for “death was true happiness.”64 Another prisoner in Russia observed that in his camp “anger and nervousness among the prisoners were like a contagious disease. Everyone was a powder keg to the point that a simple word a fellow prisoner of war might say, even a greeting, was enough to greatly infuriate another prisoner to the point of physical response.” The author of these words, a lieutenant, clubbed his major with a hard object for jokingly refusing to return a book he had borrowed.65 Yet another POW in Russia observed of one of his comrades:

63 “General Condition of Health Among the Hungarian and Austrian Prisoners in Siberia,” enclosure in 763.72114/5081, October 10, 1919, p. 1. For somewhat similar statements about the POWs in Malta and Italy (interned since the Tripolitan War) see “German, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Subjects Interned in Malta,” enclosure in 763.72114/1803, 13 July 1916, p. 2; and “Note Verbale [translation] by the Sublime Porte,” in 763.72114/2687, 27 March 1917, p. 1

64 Halil Ataman, 141, 152, 165. Similar expressions of “wishing for death” are rather common in the captivity memoirs even if the prisoner does not show clear signs of depression.

65 Ahmet Göze, Rusya'da Üç Esaret Yıldız, 2d printing (İstanbul: Boğaziçi, n.d.), 73.
the behavior of one of them... changed markedly. He took off his clothes and threw them, with all his money, into the toilet... He had become a different person. Sometimes he would hide in the corner of a large room, close his eyes, and shout, “I closed my eyes! You can’t see me!...” At night, we couldn’t sleep because of his screaming... Finally, it was decided to send him to the Moscow asylum... [At the quay where a crowd had gathered] he... began to shout very loudly, ‘Enver Paşa doloy’ (To hell with Enver Paşa)!... [He] shouted, “I am a Muslim. I descended from the skies. Henceforth, you shall make the sign of the cross to me and not to Jesus.”

Lieutenant Cemil Zeki in one of the Egyptian camps noticed that “this life of captivity affected us deeply. A few friends went insane and committed suicide. Poor young Turks continued to be washed out in this fashion in the deserts.”

The captivity narratives indeed contain evidence of prisoners suffering from mental problems, but what did the physicians make of these disorders? Unfortunately, the statements and observations of the doctors on the POWs are rather distant and overly general. In these publications we regularly encounter vague statements like “…we saw incidents of captivity psychoses at Toptaş after the [Great] War.” In an earlier publication, in which he promises to take up the subject of POWs on another occasion—a promise never fulfilled—Fahrettin Kerim’s remarks remained just as minimal and passive: “Most of our officers and men returning from Egyptian camps were disabled

66 Ölçen, 102-104. The prisoner then continued with rather obscene comments.


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with this kind of insanity [schizophrenia]. The restricted life of captivity can leave marks
even on the strongest of nerves. Again, we encounter the implication that some people
were more prone to become ill than others. Predisposition, according to the physicians,
was a factor among the POWs as much as among the non-POW war neurotics. In another
instance, decades after the Great War, Mazhar Osman states almost as an afterthought, "It
has come to our attention [that] . . . many of our soldiers and officers who were able to
come back alive from Egypt, India, and Siberia had schizophrenia [and] dispersed among
their families [italics mine] like the living dead . . . . The number of [these
schizophrenics] was so high as to boggle the mind." If there were so many, one might
wonder why there are no statistics and studies on these prisoners. Clearly, the clue to
why there is nothing of substance on the POWs is hidden in Mazhar Osman's phrase
"dispersed among their families like the living dead;" it seems that most, if not nearly all,
of the prisoners were not diagnosed or treated before they "dispersed." It will be
remembered from above that most large groups of repatriated POWs do not seem to have
been inspected in any way. While there may have been some Ottoman military and
medical negligence here, one must also remember that the city to which the POWs
returned was under Allied occupation. In fact, there was the added problem that after the
allied occupation of Istanbul, the city's largest hospitals were taken over by the French

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70 *Mısır kamplarından dönen zabitan ve askerlerimizin ekserisini bu nevi cinnette malûl gördük. Esaretin
kamplı mahdut hayatı en sağlam sınırlar überinde bile mes'um tesirler brakır.* Fahrettin Kerim, *Yorgun
 Sinirler ve Marazi Asklar Üzerine Ruhi Tedzikler* (1928), 46-47.

71 "*Mısır'dan, Hindistandan, Sibiryadan sağ gelebilen askerlerimizin ve zabillerimizin bir çoğunu erken
bunama ile canlı ölü halinde ailelerinin arasına kargışlardır.*" Mazhar Osman Uzman, *Psychiatria,*
fourth printing (Istanbul: Kader Basımevi, 1947), 169. In some cases the number of those ill is stated as
"*akillara dehset verecek kadar çaktu.*" See p. 303.
and British forces to treat and house their own men. Still, we do not even encounter this factor being used as an excuse by the Ottoman and Turkish doctors for why they did not examine the repatriated POWs. The repatriated POWs had at least one advantage over other war neurotics. Since the war was over by the time they returned, the mentally incapacitated among the POWs could not be diagnosed as malingerers even if they were examined. While many may have gone to their homes without receiving treatment, as stated by Mazhar Osman, they at least were not punished.

Among the published case histories of neurotic patients, it is very rare to find one about a prisoner. In one of these rare cases, Mazhar Osman published a very brief case study. A man named Serkis Kapanciyan, an Armenian Ottoman, was referred in 1922 by the Ministry of Justice to the mental asylum, where he stayed for eight to nine years until he died of some disease, possibly tuberculosis. During the Great War Serkis fought on the Palestinian front, where he was captured by the British. After two years in captivity, he escaped. After a few months’ stay in Istanbul during the Allied occupation, he went to the Caucasus, briefly fought for the newly-established Armenian republic, and then came back to Istanbul. Complaining of intestinal problems, he went to Yedi Kule Armenian hospital, where a doctor operated on him against his wishes. This operation, according to Serkis, left him crippled for some time. He decided to take his own life, but unable to go through with it, he killed the doctor who had operated on him.

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73 For another example of a former POW who murdered someone see Şevket Aydemir’s account of Hüseyin Çavuş, who murdered his wife in a most gruesome fashion (akıl almaz bir cinayet). Şevket S. Aydemir, Sayı Arayan Adam (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1997), 398-99.
mental asylum, Serkis behaved violently; he attempted to kill a doctor and one of the
orderlies with a home-made knife and attempted suicide a few times. Doctor Mazhar
Osman diagnosed Serkis as a degenerate and psychopath, yet he made no connection at
all to his captivity.\textsuperscript{74} It is possible that Serkis did not suffer from a disorder related to
captivity, but no adequate connection was made to any of the factors in this man's
otherwise normal pre-war life as a cause of his malady. His complaints of intestinal
disorders may possibly have related to recurring bouts of pellagra he suffered while in
British captivity in Egypt. This would also shed light on his unstable mental condition.

\textbf{Pellagra in Captivity}

Serkis's case brings us to another issue that the POWs faced both while in
captivity and after they returned: pellagra. While the POWs were learning to deal with
the boredom and stress of captivity to keep themselves from falling victim to depression
and other mental disorders, certain physical diseases started to appear among them.
Towards the end of the Great War larger and larger numbers of Ottomans were taken
captive, much to the delight of the British medical authorities, for with the capture of so
many Ottomans "unexpectedly favourable opportunities became available in 1918 to
British Army medical officers for investigating pellagra."\textsuperscript{75} The investigation conducted
by British army doctors in Egypt revealed that pellagra was rather common among the
Ottoman POWs in Egypt. This disease, which results from niacin (vitamin \textsuperscript{3}B) deficiency, is characterized by a skin rash, gastrointestinal problems, and mental

\textsuperscript{74} Mazhar Osman, "Mecnunlar Arasında Mucrim Tipleri," \textit{İstanbul Seririyyatı} 12 (1931), 3776-79.

\textsuperscript{75} "Recent Researches on Pellagra in Egypt," \textit{The Lancet} CC (1921), 1:189.
disorders, and is fatal if not treated.\textsuperscript{76} The state of medical knowledge at that time was such that the British doctors knew of pellagra and most of its consequences, but not its cause or cure.\textsuperscript{77} The number of Turkish POWs who were admitted to the POW hospital to be treated for pellagra in 1919 alone was 3,729, and out of these 1,617 (43.3 percent) died while in hospital.\textsuperscript{78} It is highly likely, as the British doctors imply, that there were even greater numbers of Turkish pellagra patients in the years before 1919.\textsuperscript{79}

Comparing the statistics of pellagra among European, mostly German, and Turkish POWs in the same camps, one might arrive at the conclusion that the Turks were more susceptible to the disease. In 1919, 9,257 "recognized" cases of pellagra occurred among 105,668 Turkish POWs; that is, one in eleven Turks became a victim of the disease. During the same period, there were only 79 cases of pellagra among 7,606 European POWs in Egypt, a rate of only one in ninety-six.\textsuperscript{80} The British doctors blamed the higher incidence of pellagra among the Turks on a "known difference in the

\textsuperscript{76} Pellagra was also known as the disease of the 3D's—Diarrhea, Dementia, and Death. Niacin, or Vitamin B-3, helps the body to use carbohydrates and fat efficiently and is essential for the normal functioning of the brain and the nervous system. Although pellagra was first recognized in the early 18th century, it was not until the 1930s that niacin was found to cure the disease.


\textsuperscript{78} Report of Investigations on Pellagra, Table II: Pellagra: Total Admissions and Deaths during 1919 by Camps. On page 8 the authors of the report argue that the forty-four percent death rate is not very accurate due to some complications in record-keeping. However, the death rate would have to be relatively close to forty-four percent even with minor adjustments.

\textsuperscript{79} Records of one POW hospital show, for example, that 2-4 patients died every day; no causes were given for deaths. Public Record Office, WO 95/4414, Prisoners of War Camp, Salhia, War Diary, 1 May 1919-23 July 1919. This is only one hospital during a relatively short time period. I was not able to locate any other hospital records from Egypt.

\textsuperscript{80} Report of Investigations on Pellagra, 8; and "Recent Researches on Pellagra in Egypt," The Lancet CC (1921), 1:189.
hardships undergone.” Unfortunately, there is no way of telling if these “hardships” were undergone prior to or after capture. No doubt “hardships undergone” contributed in some way to a general level of poor health among the Turks. However, as far as pellagra is concerned, the British focus on the hardships faced by the Ottoman soldiers is an absurd excuse. In fact, an Ottoman doctor, A.Riza, who was a POW in Egypt, charges that there was an inclination among the British doctors to establish some illusory connection between the disease and the Ottoman soldiers’ pre-war lives. A. Riza and his fellow prisoner colleagues were asked by the British doctors to establish the regions from which the Ottoman sick prisoners came. In effect, a “disease” map of the Ottoman Empire was created.81 Despite the protests and statements of the Ottoman doctors that they had not encountered pellagra among the soldiers prior to captivity, the British attempted to trace the disease to certain regions of the empire.82 A. Riza and several other Ottoman doctors in the camps drafted and signed a report stating that pellagra did not exist among the Ottoman soldiers prior to capture and delivered it to the British health commission in the prison camps. According to Doctor A. Riza the report claimed that pellagra was not bacteriological and had nothing to do with physical stature, age, race, climate, gender, or status, but was simply a matter of better and fresh nutrition. In the eyes of the Ottoman

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81 This map can be found in “Report of a Committee of Inquiry Regarding the Prevalence of Pellagra Among Turkish Prisoners of War,” Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps 34 (1920), 283.

82 Dr. A. Ruza, “Pellagra ve Vitamintler,” İstanbul Seririyatı 13 (1932), 129-30. A. Ruza and other non-POW Ottoman doctors claimed that even though they had occasionally encountered scurvy among the Ottoman soldiers in the field, they almost never encountered pellagra even during times of food shortage. A. Ruza’s observation that while the Ottoman soldiers suffered from scurvy and even beri beri during hard times, pellagra did not make an appearance is seconded by other doctors who served during the Great War. Abdulkadir Noyan, “Vitaminsizlik Hastalıklar: Ordu ve Memleketimizde Durumu,” Anadolu Kliniği 11 (1944), 48-49; Osman Şerafeddin Çelik, “Bir Pellagra Vakası,” Türk Tıb Cemiyeti Mecmuası 2 (1936), 17; Dr. Bedrettin, “Pellagra bir Avitaminose Hastalığımız mı?, [sic]” İstanbul Seririyatı 13 (1932): 104-05.
doctors the fact that the better-fed German and Austro-Hungarian prisoners, and even the
Ottoman officers who had access to food-stuffs from outside sources, did not fall victim
to pellagra was a direct proof of their claim. The British medical committee, it seems,
was at pains to show that the Ottoman POWs had pellagra prior to capture. Giving an
account of the inadequacy of the Ottoman soldier's diet prior to capture and finding
pellagrous ones among a recently captured group of POWs, the first medical committee
seemed to be more concerned with proving that some POWs had pellagra before
capture. However, this certainly did not explain why the number of affected men
continued to increase in the camps. In fact, a group of healthy POWs, arriving from
years of captivity in India and becoming pellagrous within a couple of months' stay in
Egypt, threw the doctors into total confusion.

Taking our cue from Dr. A. Riza, it is instructive to compare the diets of the
Turkish and European POWs (see also APPENDIX D). Although the Turks' caloric
intake had remained relatively low up to that point, from the end of 1918 the Turks were
on a ration which had higher caloric value than the German ration, but the biological
protein value (BPV)—which the doctors believed was a factor in preventing pellagra—of
the "Turkish" ration was too low. Had the British health officials taken the advice of
the Ottoman doctors or decided on their own that the Ottomans should be given the same
rations as the Europeans, the problem of pellagra would have been mostly demystified.

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83 Dr. A. Riza, "Pellagra ve Vitaminler," 130.

84 "Report of a Committee of Inquiry Regarding the Prevalance of Pellagra Among Turkish Prisoners of
War," Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps 33 (1919), 426-447.

85 Report of Investigation of Pellagra, 13-19. Among other foodstuffs, European POWs received herring,
meat, bacon, and potatoes—all niacin-rich foods. Turks were given plenty of bread (3 times the amount
(cont'd.)
Unfortunately, our sources are silent on why there was need for a “Turkish” ration for the Ottomans and a “European” ration for the German, Austro-Hungarian, and Bulgarian who were captive in the same camps. It is certain that the British authorities were not aiming to cater to the tastes of the Ottomans. Did the British health commission investigators fail to appreciate the medical link between the poor diet and the prevalence of pellagra despite the recommendations of the Ottoman doctors, or were there other, perhaps racialist reasons? It is likely that both factors played a part.

While the specially-appointed British doctors could not solve the mystery of pellagra among Ottoman prisoners, an Ottoman doctor of internal medicine, Said Cemil, published an article on this subject. In a little-known but very significant piece, Dr. Said laid out his recent findings and observations. Showing evidence, including his observance and treatment of already repatriated and pellagra-stricken Ottoman POWs, Said argued that given the evidence it was “not possible to disagree that vitamin deficiency was the only reason” for the disease. Of the 59 patients Said treated for his study 23 died and 36 recovered. Although better than the British committee’s success rate (forty-four versus thirty-nine percent death), Said’s success rate leaves something to be desired. However, one has to remember that when the prisoners reached him, most

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were already at a very advanced stage of the disease and were not able to even digest the food they were fed.\textsuperscript{87}

Although pellagra has a few other symptoms, the symptom that concerns us most here is the disease's effect on the nervous system. Doctors, basing their conclusions on relatively recent research, listed both neurosis and psychosis as the mental symptoms of the disease. Manic depression and confusion, they believed, were the most common mental symptoms of pellagra. Besides these, neurasthenia, anxiety, melancholia, paranoia, stupor, and hallucination were rather prevalent. Turkish doctors at home observed that some of the patients, unable to cope with the disease, committed suicide. Others, whose conditions were far too advanced to be cured, died during delirium convulsions.\textsuperscript{88} Generally, the patients did not die because of pellagra, but of another disease—dysentery or tuberculosis, for example—that was long-standing in the patient's body, or simply contracted as pellagra made their immune systems weak.\textsuperscript{89}

There is no indication that, while the British doctors conducted nutrition tests on the living and autopsies on the dead Ottomans in Egypt, they notified the Ottoman authorities about the prevalence of pellagra. At least some of the repatriated pellagrous prisoners were hospitalized once they were in Turkey.\textsuperscript{90} Since we know that not all boatloads of repatriated POWs were inspected by the Ottoman authorities, it is likely that

\textsuperscript{87} Said Cemil, "Pellagra," 1183-84.

\textsuperscript{88} Mazhar Osman Uzman, "Pellagra ve Sinir Sistemi Hastalıkları," 6-7; Report of Investigations on Pellagra, 24-25; Mazhar Osman, Psychiatria, 157-58.

\textsuperscript{89} Philip Manson-Bahr, "The Correlation of the Pathology and Bacteriology of Bacillary Dysentery," Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps 33 (1919), 133-34.

\textsuperscript{90} Mazhar Osman Uzman, "Pellagra ve Sinir Sistemi Hastalıkları," 3-4; Said Cemil, "Pellagra," 1181-84. Said Cemil refers to seeing hundreds of cases—still much fewer than the roughly 10,000 recorded cases.
only those severely sick with pellagra and psychological disorders were recognized and hospitalized. Unfortunately, we do not have any case histories of POWs who became neurotics as a consequence of pellagra to examine how the Ottoman physicians diagnosed and treated them.

Viewed as disease carriers, the bodies of the prisoners became contested objects. The British doctors stated that most of the diseases—dysentery, tuberculosis, trachoma and others—the Ottomans carried were long standing in their body, or at least contracted before captivity. The Turkish doctors disputed the British claim and were convinced that the POWs contracted most of these diseases, especially dysentery and trachoma, while in captivity.

**War Neurotics and the Doctors**

In their self-appointed role as guardians of the mental health of the Turkish nation and the military, many doctors passed judgment, though sometimes indirectly, on those who had taken part in the Great War. In their accounts one can see evidence of blame, denial, and the doctors’ construction of manhood and health. Even as late as 1941, some doctors explained that most of the psychoneuroses caused by war were, in fact, due to fear and nervousness. After shell explosions, “there is nothing at first, but as a result of [the soldier’s] imagination sometime after [the explosions] one may see mutism and

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92 Osman Şerefeddin Çelik, “Harp ve Sari Hastalıklar,” *İstanbul Seririyanı* 22 (1940), 10

93 See Mazhar Osman Uzman, *Tababeti Ruhiye* (İstanbul: Kader, 1941), 7-9 for statements regarding this assertion.
paralysis." In other words, according to this psychiatrist, if the soldier had been braver and less nervous and easily given to imagination, he would not have been affected by the exploding shells around him. Another Turkish psychiatrist declared in 1947 that some of the thousands of soldiers who developed hysterical symptoms because of a simple abrasion or having fallen on a limb could be cured with the simple question, "Are you not ashamed?" This moralist approach to curing war neurosis by appealing to the individual soldier's sense of honor was also practiced by the Allied doctors among their shell-shocked men.

Writing about hysteria, a military doctor, stated, "Hysteria is a psychosis for people given to imagination rather than people who think logically. [And] this is the reason why it is more common among women." Although this statement suggests otherwise, in general, Ottoman and Turkish doctors did not make direct connections between hysteria and femininity. Here again, we see a similarity with Germany, where war neurotics were portrayed as weak-willed, opportunistic and parasitic, but rarely as effeminate. In England, on the other hand, shell shock was described as "the product of womanish, homosexual, or childish impulses in men." How do we explain the general

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96 Eric J. Leed, No Man's Land, 169.
97 Rasim Adasal, "Sinir İhtilaçları ve Bayılmaları," in Ordu Doktorunun Nöropsişteri Kilavuzu (İstanbul: Askeri Basimevi, 1946), 73.
98 Paul Lerner, Hysterical Men, 412.
absence of references to effeminacy of the hysterics in the Ottoman Empire? The answer has to be related, at least partially, to the Ottoman doctors studying and training in Germany, where hysteria relating to industrial accidents had reduced its association with effeminacy. Additionally, despite the popularity of German psychiatric medicine in the Ottoman Empire, a few Ottoman doctors were still trained in France, where Jean-Martin Charcot's and Babinsky's work on male hysterics had blurred the association between hysteria and women. Accordingly, while having no experience with men who became hysterical as a result of industrial or train accidents, as in industrialized states, the Ottoman physicians generally overlooked hysteria's feminine connotations.

If not with femininity, associations were made with other factors. A neurologist, Mustafa Hayrullah, claimed that in order for a man to become hysteric, he must "above all possess an inherited psychologically degenerative background." In fact, this idea of inherited predisposition was commonly held among the Ottoman physicians who studied in both Germany and France. The French physician Jean-Martin Charcot promoted the idea of constitutionally disposed individuals' inclination for traumatic experience with his concept of "diathèse." Consequently, the Ottoman doctors were also inclined to connect mental ailments with physical marks and argue that certain traits make some more vulnerable to psychological diseases brought on by war. Like many of their foreign colleagues, they believed that the "weak and degenerate" were more likely to

100 M. Hayrullah, Asabiye Hastalıkları, 480.
101 Lerner, Hysterical Men, 104.
102 Mazhar Osman Uzman, Tababeti Ruhiye, 14-15. An American psychologist, Norman Fenton, in the mid-1920s observed that it was traditional among the physicians to make this connection. George Mosse, "Shell-shock as a Social Disease," 105-06.
break down under the pressure of war. Who were these “degenerates” predisposed to psychoneuroses? Using bodily signs to establish diagnosis of the 70,000 patients seen at the Erzurum hospital during the early part of the Great War, 2,000 men of rank and file—since no degenerate could be in a position to become an officer—were identified as degenerate. The degenerate stigmata included misshapen nose, skull, mouth, face, legs and arms, and disproportional genital organs, muscles, and extremities. Among these 2,000 men 1320 were diagnosed as having deficient intelligence, attention, and memory. In almost all cases degeneracy was seen as hereditary. Although not as diligently as the German and especially British physicians, who went as far as assembling family pedigrees that purported to show that soldiers who broke down in war did so because of their tainted heredity, the Ottoman doctors paid close attention to the family history of their soldier patients as well. As Eric Leed also argues, reading the symptoms of war neurosis into hereditary degeneracy had two consequences: it marked the neurotic soldiers with a sign of moral inferiority and it removed the symptom from the context of the war.

Convinced that psychiatry was the foundation stone of racial hygiene, which was starting to become popular around the world, and that psychiatrists had a very important role to play not only in society but especially in screening the military recruits, Dr. Mazhar Osman related that “when many young men were running to the nation’s borders

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104 Martin Stone, “Shellshock and the Psychologists,” 252.

105 Eric J. Leed, No Man’s Land, 171-72.
to fight, there were those who shamelessly tried to get out of service and deny themselves the honor of carrying weapons.” Yet, at the same time he argued that every physically fit person could not be a soldier. “A soldier,” he continued, “must be as fit mentally as he is physically... How could one assign a duty to a simple soldier who is more stupid [brainless] than the horse he feeds... A psychologically disabled man does not constitute a whole man under our law.”106 Could we take this comment to mean that a war or captivity neurotic was an incomplete man as well? Since there is no clarification that separates the war or captivity neurotic from other mentally disabled persons, we may assume that the war neurotics belonged to the same category.

Following up on the idea of screening soldiers prior to action, Dr. Fahrettin Kerim Gökay reasoned that because the “American soldiers sent to the European front during World War I were closely examined by psychiatrists before they left the United States, there were no psychopaths, defeatists, and degenerates among them. As a result of this policy there was not a single incidence of desertion among the American soldiers; in fact, they went to the front with the same kind of attitude and outlook as if they were going to a rugby or boxing match.”107 The implication here is that those nations which did not examine the soldiers they sent to the front would have many psychopaths and degenerates who would desert and run away from the front. It was commonly known that the

106 “Her kolu bachığı sağlam olan askerlik edemez, asker vücudu kadar başına sağlam olmalı. ... Yem verdiği beygirden beyinsiz bir nefere nasıl iş verilir.” Mazhar Osman, “Ruh Tibbünün İçtimaiyatta Rolü,” İstanbul Seriiriatı 19 (1937), 205; Mazhar Osman Uzman, Tababetti Ruhiye (İstanbul: Kader Basimevi, 1941), I: 9.

107 Fahrettin Kerim Gökay, “Harb ve Sinir,” Tib Dünüyası 14 (1941), 4606; see also the following for a similar observation of the American army: Mazhar Osman, “Ruh Tibbünün İçtimaiyatta Rolü,” İstanbul Seriiriatı 19 (1937), 206.
Ottoman army of the Great War had a major desertion problem; the number of deserters had reached 500,000 by 1918. Since there were so many deserters, the argument would logically follow that there were also many psychopaths and degenerates in the Ottoman army, but our doctor tells us that “weakness of the nerves is not something to be seen among the Turkish soldiers.”

Despite the myth of strong nerves among the Ottoman and Turkish soldiers, it is clear that thousands broke down under the pressure of modern warfare. Marvels of modern military technology, represented by the large artillery shells, especially the large Entente naval guns at Gallipoli, exploding around them, overwhelmed their psyches. Could we expect anything else when the soldiers—peasants, workers, and officers—of the nations they were fighting alongside and against suffered the same fate? Could culture be so powerful as to completely shape human psyches? Perhaps this myth was one of the reasons why so many soldiers were viewed and judged as malingerers by the military physicians. When the “strong-nerved” soldier claimed to be affected by war, there had to be another reason for his condition besides real illness.

It is telling that occasional studies appeared in the post-war years, very much along the lines of German racial hygienic theory, that pointed out the fallacy of Darwin’s theory of survival of the fittest. Mirroring similar ideas that would eventually lead to sterilization or euthanasia of people deemed unfit in Germany (and other places as well), this argument ran that it was not the fittest who had survived the Great War, but


rather, for the most part, it was the “unfit” who survived because while the brave and fit
(both mentally and physically) soldiers and officers sacrificed themselves in defense of
the nation, those who were “weak, cowardly, lazy, and unfit” became ill or pretended to
be ill to save themselves.\(^\text{110}\) Clearly, this argument did not apply to all those who had
survived the war, but only to those who became ill psychologically. The correlation
between this Turkish doctor’s views and those of some German physicians is striking.
Emil Kraepelin and Robert Gaupp also regarded war as the very negation of the
Darwinian idea of selection; they thought the “‘fittest’ went ‘nobly’ to their deaths, while
their counterparts were spared by sickness.”\(^\text{111}\) When many of the fittest died in battles
and the weak remained safe in hospitals and behind the lines another problem was created
for the nation. The argument followed that “the deaths of so many fit and noble men in
battle creates a shortage of capable men and as a result of this shortage many of the weak
men acquire the opportunity of easily marrying eligible woman and producing
children.”\(^\text{112}\) The implication is clear; these weak men should not marry and produce
similarly degenerate offspring.\(^\text{113}\)

Studies on European victims of shellshock show that sometimes ethnic
differences and stereotyping were used as gauges of soldiers’ prowess. In the British
army, for instance, the Irishmen and the lowland Scots were thought to be especially

\(^{110}\) Mahmut Şemsi, Harbin İstifai Tesirleri ve Zabıtlerimizin, Neslimizin İslahndaki Ehemmiyetleri

\(^{111}\) Paul Lerner, Hysterical Men, 46-47.

\(^{112}\) Mahmut Şemsi, Harbin İstifai Tesirleri, 23.

\(^{113}\) Mahmut Şemsi, Harbin İstifai Tesirleri, 11.
prone to malingering and not up to manly combat. The Germans doctors thought that in
the German army certain groups, notably Jews, were especially prone to hysteria.\footnote{George Mosse, “Shell-shock as a Social Disease,” 103; Joanna Bourke, “Effeminacy and the End of
Trauma: The Sufferings of ‘Shell-shocked’ Men in Great Britain and Ireland, 1914-39,” \textit{Journal of
Contemporary History} 35 (2000), 60-61.} While ethnic prejudice helped to define illness in these two countries and perhaps in
others, we do not find any apparent evidence that the Ottoman doctors had similar
partiality based on stereotypes of certain ethnic groups’ inclination to malingering and
falling victim to war neurosis.\footnote{It is only fair to point out that some Ottoman commanders found the Arab troops—second largest group
after the Turks in the army—to be less reliable than the Turks.} It will be remembered from above that Doctor Nazım
Şakir believed that all those who thought themselves clever and shrewd, including the
Turks and Arabs, were capable of malingering.

After the Great War, as was the case in other belligerent countries, the Ottoman
and Turkish doctors saw themselves as the leaders of a new era of health, just as the
mental hygiene movement became more popular around the world. Among other things,
they assumed the role of guardians of the mental health of the Turkish nation and came to
play a much greater and more visible role in the everyday life of the nation. They
established and became leading members of associations like the Turkish Society for
Mental Hygiene (\textit{Mental Hijyen Sosyetesi}) and \textit{Yeşilay} (Green Crescent—Temperance
Society). In particular, Mazhar Osman and Fahrettin Kerim published a number of
medical and popular health journals: \textit{Sihhi Sahifeler (Hygienic Pages), Tib Dünüyasi
(Medical World), and Istanbul Seririyyatt (Istanbul Clinical Studies).} Articles featured,
especially in \textit{Sihhi Sahifeler}, ranged from how one could become a better citizen to

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mental and general hygiene. Along with other psychiatrists and neurologists they spoke out against alcohol and drug abuse, which they thought led to insanity and degeneracy. One of them, Fahrettin Kerim, even became the mayor and subsequently the governor of the city of Istanbul.

The Ottoman doctors were not any less sympathetic than the German and British doctors in many ways. Paul Lerner recently argued that “although ostensibly less concerned with the economic consequences of treatment than their German counterparts, Entente doctors practiced the same methods of treatment, and likewise engendered the wrath of their patients and the lay public.” Similarly, the economic concerns of the Ottoman doctors could not have been an important factor, as the empire did not have as developed and encompassing a pension system as Germany. However, the doctors’ control over their patients was real. While some soldier patients were treated harshly, we do not see any backlash from the former patients or the lay people about the doctors’ treatment of the war neurotics and POWs. Similarly, no counter-narrative of their illness and treatment developed among the war neurotics and the POWs. Certainly, the many who were executed for dereliction of duty could not speak out against the doctors. While that leaves those who were imprisoned or simply sent back to the front to continue fighting, no one spoke out against the doctors.

Conclusion

It should be clear from the foregoing discussion that there were many war neurotics in the Ottoman Empire. Although we are not able to ascertain their numbers

\[116\] Paul Lerner, *Hysterical Men*, 17.
with any degree certainty, the Ottoman physicians were clearly influenced by their German teachers. While there was no pension hysteria in the Ottoman Empire, the Ottoman physicians were just as severe in the treatment of their patients. Whether they had their cue from their German colleagues, or they developed the idea on their own, the Ottoman physicians—especially the non-specialists—were rather distrustful of the common soldier claiming to be affected by modern war; usually the doctors saw instead a weak person attempting to escape his duties as a man. Any soldier who wanted to escape service or who could not cope with the stress of war and adapt to his circumstances was seen as abnormal. In this way, as in other belligerent countries, the medical conditions of the war neurotics and the POWs were transformed into a social disease. The doctors believed that only the constitutionally weak and degenerate, and those who were given to imagination, suffered from ailments related to war. Consequently, then, many neurotic soldiers were treated as malingerers as the symptoms they displayed were not seen as genuine. In the eyes of the doctors, real and normal men were not nervous, did not give in to imagination, controlled their passions and bodily movements, and had a well-built and proportioned bodily structure. In many ways, the Ottoman psychiatrists were children of their time. If not all, many of their ideas and prejudices were shared by European doctors. After all, they had studied in Germany and France.

It is true that there were not nearly enough qualified physicians to identify and treat these hysterical, neurasthenic, and schizophrenic men. Much like the war neurotics (non-POWs) who were not treated by qualified professionals in many instances, the repatriated POWs did not in most cases receive the medical attention they should have received. As Dr. Mazhar Osman passively admitted, lacking guidance, many of the
POWs simply walked away after repatriation. However, it was not because they refused examination and treatment, but simply because no one offered. Although the majority of them could not make it into the hospitals and asylums to be treated, the strange behavior and condition of some managed to provoke the attention of authors and playwrights, as shown at the beginning of this chapter. The German doctors decided that neurosis was not a common malady among prisoners of war. Consequently, the unbalanced mental condition of thousands of Turkish POWs was largely ignored. Of course, in addition to those who may have suffered from mental consequences of captivity without organic causes, we must consider more than 10,000 pellagrous soldiers with neurotic symptoms coming back from the Egyptian camps. Admittedly, at that time Turkey had neither the hospitals nor the expertise to deal with all these mentally ill and dying people.

From the Ottoman officer, locked up in Austrian Garrison Hospital Number 1 in Vienna, who screamed all night, to the former prisoner in Burma, who brutally killed his wife after his return,\(^{117}\) the prisoners of war and war neurotics were overlooked as legitimate victims of war. Consequently, their horrific experiences were not generalized to represent the shocking ordeal of modern warfare, World War I in particular, in Turkey or the Arab states.

\(^{117}\) The officer in question must have been fighting on the Galician front as part of an Ottoman unit sent there by Enver Pasha. K. R. Eisler, *Freud as an Expert Witness: The Discussions of War Neuroses between Freud and Wagner-Jauregg* (Madison: International Universities Press, 1986), 197; and Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, 147.
CONCLUSION

The Great War not only resulted in millions of deaths, but it also left behind thousands of bodies, minds, and even societies dismembered and incomplete. In Turkey, and no doubt in other places as well, it was followed by a period when the war’s meaning and the identity of those who fought and experienced it were reconfigured in the service of national unity and identity. Having examined the lives of Ottoman prisoners of war in Russia and Egypt in captivity and to a certain degree after their repatriation to Turkey, we arrive at conclusions that inform us not only of the lives and conditions of the prisoners, but also of their nation in general.

This dissertation argues that the memory of captivity did not become a part of the memory of war in Turkey for various reasons. While there do not seem to be specific and negative cultural notions attached to war captivity in Turkish culture, we should not ignore the possibility of personal shame felt by the prisoners themselves. This personal "disgrace" partially explains the missing voices of the POWs in narrative of the First World War. After all, many prisoners who wrote memoirs were at pains to "justify" how they became captives. As outlined by Robert Doyle in his POW narrative contour, former POWs’ efforts to justify their captivity are common to prisoners of many nations; in other words, it is an attempt by the prisoner to make sure that his being taken prisoner would not be construed as evidence of cowardice or ineffectiveness in battle.

Furthermore, there were also other specifically Ottoman and Turkish historical
circumstances that made the experiences of the former Ottoman POWs more marginal than those of POWs from other combatant nations. When the Ottoman POWs returned home after several years in captivity, some as long as seven years, they faced a bleak landscape. The empire was no more; it had been divided and invaded. By the time many had returned there was another war, a national struggle, in Turkey—the War of Independence. While many of the repatriated POWs took part in that struggle, too, some completely missed it. In short, millions of people had died because of war, disease, and famine. In this kind of an environment where everyone seemed to suffer considerably, they did not tell their stories because the bereaved families and the refugees who had suffered so much through the Great War and the ensuing War of Independence monopolized the public compassion. Despite the evils of captivity, it could not measure up to what the home front had faced.

Bereaved families and refugees were not the only factors that inevitably overshadowed the stories of the POWs. In its effort to forge a nation of Turks, the Turkish republic rejected the cultural and historical legacy of the Ottoman Empire. Although it made the republic possible, the Great War went out with the Ottoman Empire. However, even before that, the War of Independence retroactively interfered in the memory of the Great War. Portrayed as an heroic war effort that inspired subsequent Third World revolutions, the War of Independence simply overshadowed the Great War. While the histories, films, and memoirs of the War of Independence flourished, the Great War, with the exception of the battle in Gallipoli, became the pre-history of the republic. Having been prisoners in a war that was seen in a negative light, the former Ottoman
POWs were doubly marginalized. The battle in Gallipoli, for its part, was simply appropriated to become a part of the national struggle.

Yet, the Ottoman POWs suffered a great deal. Now that we have looked at POWs in Russia and Egypt, a logical question might be who was better off: the ones in Russia or those in Egypt. How does an outsider judge the suffering of a prisoner of war, especially in comparison to that of another prisoner? Is it possible to say because nearly 10,000 Ottomans in British captivity died, many thousands became terminally ill or insane because of pellagra, while 15,000 became blind mostly because of trachoma, they suffered more than the prisoners in Russia? Or alternatively, were the Ottomans in Russia worse off? Austrians estimated that 10,000 Ottomans died in Russian captivity, yet we have no statistics on those who became insane, or suffered from other diseases—whether epidemics or diseases brought on by malnutrition. Facing the subjectivity of such questions, we might turn to the POWs writings to see how they perceived their own hardships and sufferings.

When we look at the prisoners' writings as reflected in memoirs, diaries, and prison camp newspapers, we get a general sense of how prisoners on each side perceived their conditions in captivity. It is overwhelmingly clear that the prisoners in Russia certainly felt that they suffered immensely, while the ones in Egypt did not complain as much about their treatment, food, climate, or diseases.

This dissertation argues that, even if the actual conditions in Russia were not truly worse, then certainly the prisoners' perception of these conditions adversely affected their lives in significant ways. The Turkish POWs in Russia were more likely than their counterparts in Egypt to have conflicts with the non-Turkish members, predominantly
Arabs, of the Ottoman army regarding the loyalty of non-Turkish groups. They were more likely to have conflicts and divisions both among themselves as junior officers and between themselves and the senior officers. Although occasional terms of respect can be found, especially for the Russian peasants, in general the Ottomans in Russia had thoroughly negative and dehumanized image of their captors. This dehumanized image of the captor comes through clearly not only in the captivity narratives, but also in camp newspapers, which were subject to Russian scrutiny. Having seen the more destructive nature of war and disease on the Caucasus front, the POWs in Russia, perhaps weary of war and its destructiveness, were also considerably more hateful of the enemy and hawkish, or at least less pacifistic, than their counterparts in Egypt. And perhaps not surprisingly, they were certainly more prone to depression and other forms of mental anguish as evinced in the captivity narratives. After all, once they became prisoners in Russia, their battle for survival did not end; they had to continue to struggle against the cold, diseases, and mistreatment by the enemy. Their brutalization both before and after capture, in other words, made them less pacifistic. The prisoners in Egypt, on the other hand, had a relatively sympathetic image of their captors. In addition, although they did not enjoy unquestionably amicable relations with Arab Ottomans or with their superior officers, they were less likely to express strong feelings of distrust and revulsion.

Furthermore, the differences between the two groups of prisoners can be explained only by the location and conditions of captivity each group faced. The argument continues that when people, Ottoman POWs in this case, face more stressful conditions, they tend to be more belligerent, or more easily excitable and less tolerant of others—both fellow prisoners and captors—around them. Thus facing more stressful
conditions—their existence seemed less secure; food was not always readily available; they had less activities to keep them occupied, especially during winter; the space available to each prisoner was more limited—the POWs in Russia were more affected by their captivity experience.

While the conditions of captivity and the responses to these conditions differed, there was one thing that was common to nearly all Ottoman officer POWs. Having found themselves in an environment surrounded by peoples they considered materially more advanced than themselves, the prisoners started to reflect on the ills of their empire. Similar questions had already been asked and debated by the political and intellectual elite of the empire. The debates of the POWs, which in many ways followed the issues raised by the elite groups, about how to save the empire or the nation are well-reflected in the camp newspapers the prisoners produced and in their captivity narratives. Yet, here was a non-elite group arguing over the same issues. While some argued for complete westernization, others promoted selective westernization, specifically technologically-oriented westernization. The latter group believed that while the West was technologically advanced, it was well behind the East in the cultural and spiritual domain. Despite their ideological and cultural differences, all Ottoman prisoners were concerned with saving and advancing the “nation.” Yet, what the “nation” meant differed from time to time and from person to person. Turkish, even pan-Turkic, nationalism was rather popular among the educated class of officers even though they did not specifically exclude Ottoman and Muslim components from their identity. Interchangeable use of identity markers, without much pointed discrimination, among the POWs points to the presence of broader notions of identity existing at the same time. It is likely that while
they were used interchangeably, one or another of them—whether Turkishness, Muslimness, or Ottomanness—might have held singular importance for different groups of POWs.

This idea of coexisting identities is not new in the discussion of Turkish nationalism. Other scholars, such as Kayali and Karpat, who have recently challenged the thesis that Turkish nationalism was dominant among the late Ottoman elite, have proposed similar conclusions. What is new in this study is the extension of the inquiry from the elites and their policies to the identities of those who did not belong to the political and intellectual elite. The examination of POWs—who, while not completely homogeneous in their class origins, came largely from small town (lower) middle class backgrounds—shows that there were still strong ties to Ottomanism and even to Islamism. The sentiments of this larger group, as opposed to the small group of elite Young Turks, are significant indeed, especially because the great mass of illiterate rank-and-file soldiers—the peasants—have left nothing behind for us to examine. In the absence of the voices of the common peasant soldiers, the next best thing might be those of the educated junior officers, as they stood somewhere between the elites and the peasants, and recorded their own thoughts and feelings in this rather unusual environment of captivity. If various facets of identity coexisted among the educated POWs, they certainly existed among the peasants; although briefly and faintly this even comes through in the occasionally-expressed sentiments of the peasant soldiers.

Despite the contributions some of the former POWs subsequently would make to Turkish political and cultural life, their state’s help was wanting both while they were in captivity and after they returned. Our look into the previously unexplored site of war and 208
psychiatry in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey reveals that many thousands of Ottoman soldiers, non-POWs and POWs, who were suffering from various mental disorders resulting from war and captivity were not taken seriously and, in some cases, were mistreated by medical personnel and military authorities. The Ottoman and Turkish doctors, having been influenced by medical and racialist ideas of European, especially German, origin viewed many soldiers and POWs as simulators and degenerates. As the products of their own age and influenced by the current teachings of psychiatry, the doctors, turning mental illness into social diseases, saw weak and abnormal persons attempting to escape their duties as men instead of soldiers who were affected by modern warfare and war neurosis. Although the Ottoman doctors did not view the war neurotics as effeminate, in the manner in which some British doctors did their own shell-shocked men, by viewing the conditions and symptoms of the men as attempts to escape military service, they made gendered associations of military service with men's duty. In this way, the Ottoman doctors followed their German colleagues and teachers once again. Judging from all accounts there were probably many executions and imprisonments of those who were judged to be simulators by the doctors and military tribunals, or sometimes by individual commanding officers in charge in the Ottoman Empire. As the details of such incidents remain obscure, we do not have anything but the subsequent vague statements—in the passive voice, it should be added—of doctors who were active during the Great War. These admissions started to surface only in the 1930s and 1940s and included statements about the repatriated Ottoman POWs as well. At least one doctor, Mazhar Osman, remembered that thousands of repatriated POWs, who were no different, in his own words, from the living dead (canlı ölüler gibi) went back to their
families without receiving any medical attention. Some former POWs received medical attention, most likely those who were stricken with pellagra or invalids, but many more had no guidance at all from the state. Admittedly, the state was also in dire need just when the POWs started to return. The Allies had invaded the capital city and nearly two-thirds of Anatolia. Attempting to house their own soldiers, the Allied military commanders commandeered many of the large buildings, including hospitals.

While receiving very little medical help from either their captors or the Ottoman doctors after repatriation, the POWs were seen as disease-carriers by both sides; in this way their bodies became contested objects. Orientalist and racist-based assumptions of the British resulted in the idea of a “Turkish diet” for the Ottoman POWs, different from the “European diet” offered to the German and Austro-Hungarian POWs. The result was the outbreak of the nutrition-deficiency disease pellagra among the Ottoman prisoners. As the British attempted to find a pre-capture reason behind the ailments from which the Ottoman POWs suffered—pellagra, trachoma, and dysentery among others—the Ottoman doctors and even the Turkish nationalist assembly in Ankara argued that the prisoners were all infected while in captivity. The trachoma scare in Turkey in the late 1920s and early 1930s was traced to the POWs returning from captivity in Egypt.

Despite the obscurity of the shell-shocked men and POWs in post-war Turkey, the mental health specialists gained more public visibility partially as a consequence of their war service. Some continued, as did the German specialists, to divide the populace into constitutionally fit and unfit, just as they had done with the front soldiers and POWs during the war. Perhaps because the mentally affected combat and POW veterans (once
again) were marginalized in this way by the physicians, no narrative of their sufferings as mental patients developed after the war.
EPILOGUE

Aiding the Prisoners and Repatriation

During the Great War and afterwards foreign individuals and institutions declared that the Ottoman Empire did not care for its prisoners, especially for those in Russia. In this section of the dissertation, we will examine the validity of such statements. In so doing, we will briefly look at how the Ottoman state attempted to help its prisoners in Russia and Egypt and the problems it encountered in such efforts. What the POWs themselves thought of the efforts of their state both before and after repatriation is also important; in this direction we will draw out the complaints of the prisoners from their narratives.

When the war broke out the Ottoman state employed the services of the neutral Spanish government for its diplomatic and prisoner of war affairs in Russia. In some ways this was a poor choice because the Spanish embassy in Russia did not have enough officials to deal with thousands of Ottoman POWs. Secondly, in defense of Spain, the Ottoman state was not forthcoming with financial compensations necessary to conduct such expensive and demanding tasks as inspecting prison camps and handing out

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1 Yankdağ, “Ottoman Prisoners of War in Russia,” 80 and note 49.

financial aid or clothing to prisoners.\textsuperscript{3} There was an initial attempt by the Spanish
officials to help the Ottoman POWs in Russia, but when compensation did not arrive, the
aid to prisoners ceased. Thus, the “protection” provided by the Spanish government for
the Ottoman POWs in Russia remained only symbolic. Meanwhile in Turkey a “POW
Committee” was established by the Ottoman state in the first days of the Gallipoli
invasion, but it was short-staffed and under-funded; therefore, its services were
inadequate.\textsuperscript{4}

Until the American entry into the Great War, U.S. diplomats were responsible for
inspecting and caring for the German and Austro-Hungarian POWs in Russia. However,
after the American entry into the war on the Entente side in 1917, Swedish Red Cross,
among other neutral Red Cross organizations, began to care for the German and Austro-
Hungarian POWs in Russia. Although the Swedish were not directly responsible for the
Ottoman POWs in any way, they helped them whenever they could for humanitarian
reasons and through occasional intervention of the Ottoman government.

Although it had attempted on various occasions to help the Ottoman POWs in
Russia, the government in Istanbul became more concerned about the recent reports of
mistreatment of its prisoners in that country. Up to this point, the Ottoman government
learned the condition of Ottoman POWs in Russia partially through limited information
that came indirectly from foreign newspapers reporting the inspections of the various
European Red Cross organizations in Russia.

\textsuperscript{3} Yücel Yanıkdağ, “Prisoners of War in Russia,” 81.

\textsuperscript{4} Esin Güven, “I. Dünya Savaşı'nda Rusya'daki Türk Esirleri ve Rusya Türkleri,” (M.A. thesis, Marmara
University, 1996), 32-33.
Perhaps the government became more concerned than ever, the Ottoman *Hilal-i Ahmer* (Red Crescent),\(^5\) which had previously asked the government to be more involved in the aiding of Ottoman POWs and been rejected for reasons of "military security,"\(^6\) was finally given limited permission to help the prisoners. Although the Ottoman Red Crescent was a very small organization by European standards,\(^7\) with its involvement, the gears started to turn a little more assuredly though rather late. Despite the still limited responsibility granted to *Hilal-i Ahmer*, it seemed to be willing to do whatever possible to help the prisoners. In 1915, the director, Besim Ömer Pasha, most likely hoping that the financial matters would be handled after the war, asked the American Department of State on more than one occasion whether its officials in Russia who were in charge of the German and Austro-Hungarian POWs would supply information regarding the needs of the Ottoman POWs in the same camps. He was advised, however, by the American officials to take up the matter with the Spanish embassy.\(^8\) Herein lay the source of the problem for the Red Crescent: They did not have enough money to pay the Spanish government to hire additional personnel to inspect the prison camps all over Russia; and they had hoped that the Americans, who were already inspecting the same camps for


\(^6\) Esin Güven, 32.

\(^7\) As of August 1915 there were 12 Red Crescent hospitals in the empire with a total of 7,000 beds. Seeing the need to expand the Red Crescent, the Ministry of the Interior planned to open regional offices to enlist the help of the locals after the war. BOA, DH-HM§ 30/134.


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Germans and Austro-Hungarians, would simply extend their coverage to the Ottomans. Rebuffed by the State Department, the Red Crescent, lacking adequate funding, staff, and organizational sophistication that the European Red Crosses possessed, simply could not do very much for the Ottoman POWs until much later in the war.

In 1917, the well-known Turkish nationalist of Tatar origin, Yusuf Akçura, and Rauf Orbay of the Ottoman Navy, along with other Ottoman representatives, traveled to Copenhagen for the Red Cross conference. While there the Ottoman delegates sought the help of Swedish representatives in Russia in delivering aid to the Ottoman POWs. Finally, a Red Crescent office was established in Copenhagen to expedite the coordination of aiding the prisoners in Russia. It was only with the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (December 1917), the Ottoman delegates in Copenhagen were able to move into Petrograd in early 1918 and coordinate their efforts from there. Led by Yusuf Akçura, the representatives of Hilal-i Ahmer Üsra Şubesi (Red Crescent POW Branch) enlisted the assistance of Tatar and other Turkic-language newspapers published in Russia, and the local Turkic peoples to announce to the Ottoman POWs that the Ottoman state was now there to offer them a helping hand; they had hoped that the Ottoman POWs had some access to these newspapers or to Turkic peoples living in town near their places of captivity. Many well-to-do Turkic peoples across Russia had already voluntarily

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9 Yusuf Akçura, 10-16. See both Yusuf Akçura and Galip Kemali Söylemezoğlu, Siyasi Hatıralarım, for various amounts of money used for the purpose of helping the Ottoman POWs. However, in the end it is impossible to get an idea how much money was spent on the prisoners. See also Dahiliye Nezareti, Kalem-i Mahsus, 1876/38/14.

10 Yusuf Akçura, 17-19.
assumed this responsibility on their own on a limited basis without attracting the attention of the Russian state.\textsuperscript{11}

Although quite late when compared to the assistance German and Austro-Hungarian POWs, the assistance of \textit{Hilal-i Ahmer} could not have arrived at a better time for some of the prisoners, for the officers had lost their privilege of receiving salaries from the Russian government. Wherever he could, Akçura, with the help of either Turkic peoples or Swedish Red Cross, sent money, other essentials, and books.\textsuperscript{12} Later Akçura moved to Moscow, but his services from that city was short-lived as the civil war made it impossible for him to aid the prisoners in Siberia. In July 1918 he attempted to visit the camps around Kazan, Samara, Simbirsk, and Ufa and gathered together nearly 200 prisoners who had been wandering aimlessly in those regions and returned with them to Moscow. Hoping to get the help of the Ottoman embassy there in sending the men to Istanbul, Akçura was disappointed to find out that the staff of the embassy, perhaps fearing for their safety, had simply packed and left for Istanbul. Stranded without funds and perhaps through official negligence, Akçura soon gave up his position as representative of \textit{Hilal-i Ahmer} in Russia.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{11} One good example of such helpful people is Ahmet Şahmerdan Bey of Krasnoyarsk, who spent a total of 19,950 rubles on the Ottoman POWs in that city. He was eventually compensated with TL 5,000 in 1925. Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 030.18.01/013.01/013.20/16.

\textsuperscript{12} Yusuf Akçura, 24 and passim. The Red Crescent could not have picked a better representative than Akçura, who was well-known among many Ottoman officers and knew his way around Russia. While Akçura was very concerned for the welfare of the Ottoman POWs, his limitless efforts to send books (162,000) and Qur'ans (49,000) to prisoners betrays his intellectual concerns. Overwhelmingly illiterate, the rank and file would have found the books useless when they had other more immediate needs. Esin Güven, 41.

\textsuperscript{13} Yusuf Akçura, 61-71.
However, before he gave up his duty and left Russia in early 1919, Akçura arranged for repatriation of some invalid Ottoman POWs as provided by various treaties. Perhaps the description (in the words of Akçura himself) of state of some of these invalids who had remained in Russia until late 1918 will give us an idea of their condition. Akçura waited at the station as the train that carries the invalid Ottoman POWs stopped in front of him. Calling out for Ottoman POWs as loudly as he could as he ran along the length of the train, he finally heard someone in the distance: “Here, here.” As he approached the wagon:

I was confused at first, I could not understand. Near a light, but still well-hidden by the darkness of the night I saw a man who was even shorter than a young child. As I got closer, I experienced my first shock. He was a man, a ghazi, who was missing both his legs. And near him was another man in the same condition. Completely stupefied, I entered the wagon. This wagon had brought such pains, sorrows, calamities . . . . Those I saw first [the legless men] were the lucky ones. . . . There were those who were missing hands, arms, part of their faces, especially those who had two dark holes in their faces . . . .

For partially-unknown reasons the number of those Ottomans who were exchanged with Russians remained very small. While the Germans exchanged 3,617 (2.1 percent) of their soldiers, the Ottomans exchanged only 428 men (.063 percent) between 1915 and spring 1918. Did the state and the generals see the POWs as complete loss, as Niall Ferguson put it, and therefore not care about them? The Ottoman state was already exchanging invalid POWs with the French from early on until the end of the war.

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15 Elsa Brandström, 185. For one POW’s disappointment at exclusions of Ottomans POW exchanges see Halil Ataman, Esaret Yılları, 140.


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would be difficult to believe that the Ottoman government favored the invalid Ottomans held by the French over those held by the Russians; consequently, the reason for the small number of exchanged invalids might also rest with obstacles set by Russia. In fact, on numerous occasions, the Ottoman foreign ministry expressed its frustration with Russian un-responsiveness. It protested the Russian treatment of Ottoman POWs at various times to no avail.

It is clear that the Ottoman government’s attempts to help the prisoners in Russia were very limited. However, these attempts, especially after the inclusion of the Hilal-i Ahmer in the process, became more genuine and frequent. Still, it is undeniable that not nearly enough was done for the prisoners. There were occasional, as was the case especially in Egypt, interest in individual prisoners of war. In Russia, the state attempted, for example, to send money to Bedîüzзамan Said Nursî while he was still being held in Tbilisi, before he was sent to his permanent camp in Kostroma. While there may have been political interest in Said Nursî, there was even more personal interest in certain individual prisoners in Egypt.

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17 See U.S. Department of State, 763.72114/2140, “Note Verbale, Sublime Porte,” 5 October 1916, p.1-2 for Ottoman protests after Russia promised to deliver a list of 40,000 Ottoman POWs held by Russia, but delivered only information on 3,700.


19 For more on Said Nursî, see Chapter 1.

20 BOA. DH. KMS. 41-36

Examining the available diplomatic correspondence one notices more inquiries into the affairs of the Ottoman POWs in Egypt in comparison to those in Russia. Numerous times the Ottoman government inquired about the condition of its prisoners there. These inquiries took the form of request for information or investigation into certain conditions it believed—based on information from its agents in Egypt, rumors, and letters sent home—the prisoners were facing. Occasionally the government used threats such as reprisals or limiting the privileges of the British POWs in the empire in an attempt to improve the conditions for the Ottoman POWs in Egypt. Because of the various sources of information available to it, the Ottoman government was simply much better informed about the condition and treatment of the Ottoman POWs in Egypt. When it protested the ill treatment of POWs in Egypt, it could draw attention to specific instances. Information about the POWs in Russia was limited; in other words, the government could not address the specific conditions, which the POWs in Russia faced. Since the American government was responsible for the affairs of the British POWs in Turkey before the American entry into the war, whenever the American officials inquired about the British POWs, the Ottoman government requested that in exchange for information about, or visitation rights to British POWs, the American government had to look into the condition of the Ottoman POWs in Egypt. Although the diplomatic maneuvering of the Ottoman government regarding its prisoners in Egypt took the form of reactive diplomatics, it seemed to be effective. American diplomats were allowed

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access to the British and Commonwealth POWs in Turkey when their requests were accompanied by reports about the Ottoman POWs in Egypt. The state simply could not do this for its prisoners in Russia even when news reached Istanbul that 2,110 of the 3,000 Ottoman POWs on Nargin Island in the Caspian Sea had simply died. Its various protests, when issued, simply fell on deaf ears.

How did the prisoners, especially those in Russia, view their state’s seeming lack of interest in them? They did not know, after all, why the Germans and Austro-Hungarians received significant amount of help from various groups and they did not. In his study on the Austro-Hungarian POWs in Russia, Alon Rachamimov recently argued that the Dual Monarchy had managed a modest but significant relief effort for its over two million POWs in Russia. However, Germany simply did more for its 167,000 men in the same camps. The difference in the relief effort, Rachamimov continues, indicated symbolically and practically to the POWs that Germany cared more about its soldiers in Russia than the Hapsburg monarchy did. If the Austro-Hungarian POWs felt that their state cared less for them because it sent less relief than the German government did to its prisoners, how did the Ottoman POWs feel as they received practically no help from the

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23 Various complaints, for example, resulted in a Red Cross inspection of the Egyptian camps. See Turkish Prisoners in Egypt: A Report by the Delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross (London: HMSO, 1917).

24 The U.S. Consul in Cairo personally forwarded the POW letters to Turkey, for example. U.S. Department of State, 763.72114/1002, “Consul-General in Cairo to Washington, D.C., 29 October 1915,” p. 2.

25 Brandstrom, 143-44. For a description of Nargin island, also known as Snake Island (Yılan adası), see Ahmet Göze, 67ff.

26 Alon Rachamimov, 185.
Ottoman state until 1918 and absolutely no packages from their families as did the German and Austro-Hungarians?

Generally, the feeling among the Ottoman POWs about their state’s perceived lack of interest in them can be described as one of “having been forgotten.” Although occasionally they did envy the material relief the other POWs received, for the Ottoman POWs it was more symbolic than material. What bothered them more was that it seemed as if no one cared for them. First the Americans and then the various Scandinavian Red Crosses cared for the other POWs. While the Ottomans received occasional humanitarian assistance before 1918 from some of these organizations, clearly no one was there to help the Ottomans specifically. Consequently, the feeling among them was that their state had simply forgotten about them. As one prisoner in Krasnoyarsk put it:

It was understood that the only cause for our tears of sadness and our writhing in mental pain and bitterness was our own kind, our own inefficiency; our state has not investigated our situation directly or indirectly [by using other agencies]. On the other hand every year one or two German, Austrian, Hungarian [sic] Red Cross representatives would arrive bringing winter and summer needs of their prisoners and arranging for exchange of communications between their homeland and the prisoners. I have known foreign officers who received nearly a postcard a day every day from their homeland, from their families. Yet, I have also known Turkish officers in the same prison camp who, ... despite all their attempts, did not receive a single piece of news of from the homeland, or families.27

It should be remembered, however, that the growing resentment of the home government was rather common among all belligerents in the last two years of World War I. On the Western Front, the French troops mutinied; in captivity, the Austro-Hungarian prisoners grew increasingly dissatisfied with their government’s efforts to help

them. It is worth noting that despite the less than adequate conditions both at the fronts and captivity, there were no mutinies at the front, or no widespread and open resentment of the government with the exception of occasional complaints. The fact that the prisoners did not put their displeasure with the government’s missing concern for them into words does not mean, however, that they were not aggravated in private. Perhaps the protest was understood even without the words. In one camp newspaper in Egypt, for example, the news of the Ottoman government’s pledge to spend three million liras on repatriation of the POWs as late as December 1919 was reprinted without a comment from the editors.28 Being in more dire needs, some of the Ottoman POWs in Russia took the matter into their own hands; in 1919, when they were finally deprived of the Swedish Red Cross support, the prisoners in eastern Siberia unsuccessfully petitioned the American representatives in Tomsk for assistance.29 Yet, sometimes when the Ottoman state was attempting to help the prisoners, this help was not always resulting in any fruitful action. For example, even when the Ottoman government had paid for the repatriation expenses of 1,100 Ottomans who had been waiting in Vladivostok, their repatriation was “forested for political reasons.”30 Even before the repatriation stage,


30 Gaston Lichtenstein, Repatriation of Prisoners of War from Siberia: A Documentary Narrative (Richmond, VA: The William Byrd Press, 1924), 14. “Political reasons” most likely means that England, on the urging of the Greek government, was delaying the repatriation of Ottoman POWs. For the British interest in Ottoman repatriation, ibid., 128.
when the Ottoman state sent financial aid to the prisoners, it often failed to reach the prisoners, as various corrupt officials in Russia frequently intercepted the funds.\textsuperscript{31}

It is well known that the Ottoman Empire financed its war effort almost completely with the financial compensation received from Germany. Without the necessary funds and the infrastructure, the state and its institutions simply could not do very much for its prisoners in various countries. The Ottoman POWs in Russia were especially unfortunate because on top of their own government’s shortcomings, they became prisoners of a nation that could not adequately deal with the more than two million men it captured from the Central Powers. The Ottomans in Egypt were better off because the British did not capture as many POWs as the Russians and that the Ottoman state could pressure the American officials into looking after its prisoners.

The financial condition of the Ottoman state did not improve at all after the armistice. Accordingly, prisoners’ feeling of state disregard for their plight did not improve much once the prisoners were repatriated. Many officer POWs observed an indifference on the part of the authorities once they were in Istanbul. Some had to prove that they had in fact been prisoners.\textsuperscript{32} Many others were treated coldly\textsuperscript{33} and numerous others had to find jobs immediately\textsuperscript{34} to keep from starving. Even the invalid and ill

\textsuperscript{31} Price, \textit{Boche and Bolshevik}, 143; and Mehmed Asaf, 85.

\textsuperscript{32} Mehmet Arif Ölçen, 243.

\textsuperscript{33} Ahmet Göze, 102-06. For a colorful account of a “tense” exchange between a former POW and the Ottoman ambassador—or in the words of the POW, a “\textit{devlet recülü pezevenk}” (pimp statesman)—in Vienna, see Göze, 103-05.

\textsuperscript{34} Hidayet Özkök, 64.
POWs did not always receive proper treatment. If the former POW officers faced this kind of reception, one might wonder of the condition of the repatriated enlisted men.

Some men were seen selling their overcoats, boots, and whatever else they could to keep from starving or to obtain little money to finance their way back to their villages in Anatolia.

While there were some attempts by the Ottoman government to give financial compensation to repatriated POWs in 1921, we do not know how far and wide these attempts went. In 1920-21 both the nationalist government in Ankara and the imperial government in Istanbul attempted to court the interest of the POWs still in captivity.

Members of the nationalist government, for example, demanded that the POWs still in captivity in British-held areas be repatriated immediately and that the government investigate the circumstances surrounding the fate of 15,000 Ottomans who became blind in captivity. In fact, the British were directly accused of blinding these Ottomans by subjecting the POWs to completely immerse in purposefully powerful cresol pools in the name of science. While cresol can be extremely damaging to soft tissues like the eye, there is overwhelming evidence that the prisoners had trachoma

35 For the difficulties a NCO, who lost his eyesight during the war, faced after his repatriation see Emin Çol, 151-154.


37 "930-Harb-i Umumide duçar-ı esaret veya bazı kit'atdan 'avdet eden erkan ve ümera ve zabitan ile mensubin-i askeriye istihkaklarının sure-i tesviyesi hakkında karamame," in Ordu Emirnamesi 5 (1337/1921): 130. See also "931-Esaretden avdet eden zabitan ve mensubin-i askeriyenin 1335 senesi nihayetine kadar istihkaklarının tesviyesi için 1336 Harbiye büdcesine daha üç yüz bin lirann ilavesi hakkında karamame," in ibid. p. 131. Some POWs were given temporary rooms in various places; see Mehmet Feyyaz Efendi, "Hatırat," unpublished manuscript, 61.

38 Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 030.18.01/03.26.11 and 030.18.01/18.51.03.
(conjunctivitis), which was prevalent in Egypt and the environs. Still, it must be mentioned that many prisoners were convinced that they were blinded by the cresol or the ointments given by the British; some even reported becoming blind within days of the cresol bath.39 Yet, there was a major scare of trachoma in Turkey in the post war years as the POWs from Egypt brought back the disease with them.40 What is important is that the sufferings of the POWs did not end once they were repatriated. Some did not get the financial compensation they thought they deserved, some were mentally affected by war and captivity and received no treatment for it, and still other became blind for one reason or another.

In the Introduction, while discussing the seven narrative contours of Robert Doyle, it was mentioned that Doyle argued that some prisoners attempted to overcome their experience in narrative, some in alcoholism, a few in suicide, and some in prayer. Some became influenced by the new ideologies, such as communism, they encountered while in captivity or after repatriation.41 No doubt, many more had a hard time adjusting to civilian life whether because of some mental or depressive consequence of captivity, or for another reason. While we have no evidence of suicide or alcoholism among former

39 Private letter dated 5 February 1999 and conversations with M. Kemal Saraç of Gürün, Sivas, regarding his father Hüseyin Saraç, February 1999. I am grateful to Kemal Saraç for sharing his father’s story with me despite the “warnings” of his friends, who advised against sharing information with strangers about these kinds of matters. See also Chapter I, for reluctance of ordinary citizens to open up on issues regarding World War I.

40 See, for example, Mehmed Emin, Memleketimizde İntişar etmekte olan Misir hastalığı (Istanbul: Necm-i İstiklal Matbaası, 1337/1921); and Sihat ve İctimai Muavenet Vekâleti, Trahom Hakkında Halka Nasiha (Dersaadet/Istanbul: Hilâl Matbaası, 1340/1924).

POWs—not to say it did not happen—we do see evidence of at least a few former POWs turning to prayer.\footnote{Ahmet Özer, \textit{İki Kumandan: Yübaşı Re'fet, Binbaşı Âsun} (Izmir: Işık Yayınları, 1997); and Necmeddin Şahiner, \textit{Son ŞahitlerBediüzzaman Said Nursi'yi Anlatıyor} (İstanbul: Yeni Asya Yayınları, 1978), passim.} We can also add “hard work” to that list of how former POWs coped with their experience. As already mentioned in Chapter I (see also APPENDIX A), in the post-war years many of the repatriated POWs came to hold positions of importance. Former POWs like Cevdet Sunay and Cemal Gürsel who first became the Military Chiefs of Staff and later the presidents of the Turkish republic perhaps found comfort in hard work after years in captivity. There were certainly many others, who did not become the president of the republic, but still came to influential positions to leave a mark on the social, cultural, and political history of Turkey. It is certainly plausible that a sense of “wasted” years in captivity was what pushed these people to work harder than others to make up for the years when they had no control over their lives and activities.
### APPENDIX A

**A SAMPLE LIST OF FORMER GREAT WAR POWs AND THEIR LATER OCCUPATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Akbaytogan, Ali Sait</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Inspector, 1st and 3d Armies; MP from Kocaeli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akyüz, Muhittin</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Ambassador to Iran and Egypt; MP from Kars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apak, Rahmi</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>MP from Tekirdağ, 1935-46; Ambassador to Baghdad, 1949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aref al-Aref</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Mayor of Jerusalem, 1950; Minister of Public Works, Jordan, 1955; historian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulca, Ahmet Fuat</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>MP from Çoruh; President of Air Force Society (Tayyare Cemiyeti/Hava Kurumu)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derviş, Ahmet</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Military Attache, Berlin, 1925; Ministry of National Defense Undersecretary, 1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erçetin, Mehmet Sabri</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Judge, Military Supreme Court (Yargıtay), 1932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feridun Fikri Düşüncel</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>MP from Dersim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gümüşpala, Ragıp</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Joint Chief of Staff; MP and founder of Justice Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gündüz, Asım</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Joint Chiefs of Staff, second chief; MP from Kütahya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gürsel, Cemal</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Joint Chief of Staff, President of Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>İhsan Sökmene</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Governor of Izmir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noyan, Sabit</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Chief, 3d Army; Member, High Military Council (Şura)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sakarya, Rüstü</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Lt. Governor, Konya; Chief Judge, Military Tribunal in Konya and İstanbul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Said Nursi</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Founder of the Islamic Nurculuk movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solok, Nazmi</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Ministry of National Defense Undersecretary, 1936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunay, Cevdet</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>President of Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uke, Şitki</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>MP from Tokat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX B

POW CAMPS IN EGYPT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Camp</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HELIOPOLIS</td>
<td>3,906 Turkish non-commissioned officers and men; 3 Turkish soldiers of the Sanitary Corps; 2 Armenian doctors (officers in the Turkish Army).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAADI</td>
<td>5,556 Turkish non-commissioned officers and men; 3 imams; prisoners include Turks, Arabs, Armenians, Greeks, and Jews. Large portion of the POWs were captured in Gallipoli.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIDI BISHR</td>
<td>430 officers; 410 orderlies (enlisted men); 10 imams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BILBEIS</td>
<td>As some of the camps were newly established to deal with the large number of prisoners taken in late 1917 and early 1918, various new camps were established while others were disbanded to consolidate larger groups of prisoners in much larger camps. Accordingly, number of prisoners varied widely in each camp.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 This is not an exhaustive list. Some of these camps are listed as of January 1917. Later on the numbers in these camps would swell and additional camps would be added. The numbers, however, were not always accurate as the prisoners were moved or transferred from one camp or hospital to another. Source: *Turkish Prisoners in Egypt: A Report by the Delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross* (London: HMSO, 1917), passim; and *Report of Investigations on Pellagra among Turkish Prisoners of War in Egypt, 1920.* (Alexandria: Whitehead Morris Limited, 1921), passim.
### APPENDIX C

**POW CAMPS IN RUSSIA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achinsk (32 officers, 4 men-1919)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altefskaya (150-1916)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barnaul (1-1915)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berezovka (1 officer, 1036 men-1915)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blagoveschensk (151-1918)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bugurusian (1-1916)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chita (865-1915)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dauria (2,330 men-1915)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habaromsk (158-1915)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iman (185-1915)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansk (78 officers, 25 men-1915)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krasnoyarsk (120 officers, 46 men-1915)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasdolnoe (715)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikolayevsk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikolos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikol's-Ussuriysk (247-1915)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nizhneudinsk (121-1915)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novonikolayevka</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novonikolayevsk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novorossiysk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petropavlosk (10-1915)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samara (26 men-1916)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shkotovo (3 officers, 724 Men-1916)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simbirsk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spasskoe (642-1918)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stretensk (124 Men, 6 doctors-1916)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobolsk (4-1915)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totskoie (11, possibly 249 additional-1916)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsaritsin (28 officers, 125 men-1916)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyumen (1-1915)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vetluga</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 As there were more than 300 prison camps in Russia, this list contains only those where presence of Ottomans are mentioned. The parentheses contain the number of prisoners and the year it was listed in the sources. Not all reports listed number of Ottomans in the camps the American officials visited. Noticeably, many of the numbers listed for the Ottomans date from 1915 and 1916; later on the numbers would have increased.

Source: U.S. Department of State, Records of the Department of State Relating to World War I and its Termination, 763.72114/ documents numbers: 1526; 1487; 1513; 1088; 2367; 3599; 997; 2548; and 820.
# Appendix D

## Diets of POWs in Egypt: European (German, Austro-Hungarian, and Bulgarian) vs. Turkish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>EUROPEAN DIET</strong></th>
<th><strong>AMOUNT</strong></th>
<th><strong>FREQUENCY</strong></th>
<th><strong>WEEKLY ADDITIONS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bread</td>
<td>9 ozs.</td>
<td>daily</td>
<td>Either 8 ozs. of Salt cured herring with 2 ozs. of Oatmeal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broken biscuits</td>
<td>4 ozs.</td>
<td>daily</td>
<td>OR 4 ozs. of Salt cured herring with 2 ozs. Oatmeal and 2½ ozs. broken biscuits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat (Beef or Horseflesh) OR Preserved Meat</td>
<td>4 ozs.</td>
<td>twice a week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bacon</td>
<td>3 ozs.</td>
<td>5 days a week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salted, smoked, or pickled Herring</td>
<td>1,75 ozs.</td>
<td>once a week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>¼ oz.</td>
<td>daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>1 oz.</td>
<td>daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt</td>
<td>¼ oz.</td>
<td>daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>20 ozs.</td>
<td>daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh vegetables</td>
<td>4 ozs.</td>
<td>daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Split peas or beans</td>
<td>2 ozs.</td>
<td>daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>1 oz.</td>
<td>daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oatmeal</td>
<td>1 oz.</td>
<td>daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese</td>
<td>4/7 oz.</td>
<td>daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margarine</td>
<td>3/7 oz.</td>
<td>daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pepper</td>
<td>1/100 oz.</td>
<td>daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maize meal</td>
<td>½ oz.</td>
<td>daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>TURKISH DIET</strong></th>
<th><strong>AMOUNT</strong></th>
<th><strong>FREQUENCY</strong></th>
<th><strong>WEEKLY ADDITIONS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bread</td>
<td>32 ozs.</td>
<td>daily</td>
<td>EXTRA ISSUES:¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat (including bone) OR Preserved meat</td>
<td>4 ozs.</td>
<td>daily</td>
<td>Lentils or Beans 4 ozs, 4 days a week 1/100 oz. pepper, 3 days a week 1/10 oz. cumin in lieu of pepper per week when available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable</td>
<td>3 ozs.</td>
<td>daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>4 ozs.</td>
<td>daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil or Margarine</td>
<td>½ oz.</td>
<td>daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt</td>
<td>½ oz.</td>
<td>daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onions</td>
<td>½ oz.</td>
<td>daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>½ oz.</td>
<td>daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>1 oz.</td>
<td>daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dates or olives</td>
<td>2 ozs.</td>
<td>daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹Generally implies that this addition of extra issues was occasional. While the calorie value of the Turkish diet was higher than the European diet sometimes, as the increase in the calorie came from the high amount of bread only, nutritionally the Ottomans were suffering as they did not receive nutrition rich foods such as fish. Preserved meat generally loses its niacin value. Source: Report of Investigations on Pellagra among Turkish Prisoners of War in Egypt, 1920. (Alexandria: Whitehead Morris Limited, 1921), 10-14.
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