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Looking at the Coloniser

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Looking at the Coloniser

Cross-Cultural Perceptions in Central Asia and the Caucasus, Bengal, and Related Areas

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Volker Adam

Ottoman Perception of Muslim Life in Russia and Central Asia

At the beginning of the 20th century the Ottoman Empire was still a large country stretching from the Balkans to the Yemen and from the Persian Gulf to the Cyrenaica. Its inhabitants differed widely from each other in respect of their ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds: the way of life of a Mediterranean town-dweller in cities like Salonika had little in common with the Bedouin life in Arabia. In order to cope with increasing European pressure from outside as well as internal fragmentation within Ottoman society, the ruling elite pursued, from the late 19th century on, a policy of nation building centred around an imperial ideology.[1] In regard to European colonialism the Ottomans saw themselves in a double bind: as a part of the Muslim world they feared becoming potential victims of further European colonial expansion; however, at the same time Ottoman bureaucrats felt the need to act as civilising modernisers in backward areas of their own empire, such as the Arabian peninsula. In provinces like the Yemen for instance, Ottoman officials suggested to the Sublime Porte that it treat such areas as colonies, taking as an example the British rule in Sudan.[2] When reading Ottoman travel accounts from the late 19th and the early 20th century we come across similarly ambiguous attitudes expressed by members of the Ottoman cultural elite vis-à-vis regions perceived as the 'Muslim outback'.[3] As far as the description of Muslim life in Central Asia is concerned, Ottoman travellers, as members of the *ummah,* expressed solidarity with the local population and raised concerns about the plight of their colonised co-religionists in Kazan or Bukhara.[4] However, when describing their meetings with Russian citizens, such visitors portrayed themselves as representatives of a modern

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1 Selim Deringil: The Well-Protected Domains. Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876-1909. London 1998.

2 I am grateful to Thomas Kühn for having drawn my attention to this fact; Thomas Kühn: 'Ordering Urban Space in Ottoman Yemen, 1872-1914'. In: Jens Hansen/Thomas Philipp/Stefan Weber (eds): The Empire in the City. Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire. Würzburg 2002, pp.329-47.

3 See, for example, Christoph Herzog/Raoul Motika: 'Orientalism Alla Turca. Late 19th / early 20th Century Ottoman Voyages into the Muslim "Outback"'. In: Die Welt des Islams 40(2000); pp.194-5.

4 Kemal H. Karpat: The Politicization of Islam. Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State. Oxford 2001; pp.283-7.

empire and often gave the impression of having more in common with Russian urban society than with the local Muslim population.[5]

The reports on Muslim life under Russian rule that I am going to analyse in this chapter were written by a different element of Ottoman society:[6] by Muslim émigrés from Russia whose writings at the beginning of the 20th century had a lasting influence on the Ottoman perception of Russia and its policy toward minorities. Europe, the émigrés warned constantly, would never accept the Ottomans as equal partners. It was time to look to Asia, the cradle of the Turkish nation, to pay more attention to Russia's Eurasian policy and to develop a national, Turkish consciousness instead of imitating a Western European lifestyle.

In the years between the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 and the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, the Ottoman press witnessed an active participation of Muslim writers from Tsarist Russia.[7] Some of them had been veterans of the Russian Revolution of 1905 and had fought actively during those years for political and religious minority rights.[8] Prominent figures among the Russian Muslim intelligentsia in Istanbul such as the Tatars Yusuf Akçura,[9] Abdürreşid İbrahim(ov) and Ayaz İshakî or the Azerbaijanis Ahmed Ağaoğlu [Aghayev],[10] Ali Bey Hüseyinzâde and Mehmed Emin Resulzâde had gained experience in political agitation, in organising meetings and in disseminating their ideas through a network of publications – skills that were not widespread among their Ottoman hosts after three decades of autocratic rule under the Sultan Abdülhamid II. Besides such well-known activists, Muslim students from various regions of the Tsarist Empire – almost exclusively members of the different Turkic peoples

5 Volker Adam: Rußlandmuslime in Istanbul am Vorabend des Ersten Weltkrieges. Die Berichterstattung osmanischer Periodika über Rußland und Zentralasien. Frankfurt am Main 2002; p.452.

6 See extensively on this subject Adam, Rußlandmuslime.

7 Most of these articles appeared between 1909 and 1914 in Ottoman journals such as *Sırat-i Müstakim* (1908-12), *Türk Derneği* (1909-10), *Türk Yurdu* (1911-1931), and *İslâm Mecmuası* (1914-18) published by Ottoman editors, or in periodicals edited by the émigrés themselves such as *Tearüf-i Müslimin* (1910-11), *İslâm Dünyası* (1913-14) and in a few others of minor importance. All of them were published in Istanbul.

8 See for example, Nadir Devlet: Rusya Türklerinin millî mücâdele tarihi (1905–1917). Ankara 1985, as well as Christian Noack: Muslimischer Nationalismus im Russischen Reich. Nationsbildung und Nationalbewegung bei Tataren und Baschkiren, 1861-1917. Stuttgart 2000; pp.218-437.

9 François Georgeon: Aux origines du nationalisme turc. Yusuf Akçura (1876–1935). Paris 1980.

10 A. Holly Shissler: Between Two Empires. Ahmet Ağaoğlu and the New Turkey. London 2003.

– who had come to Istanbul in order to complete their religious or secular studies took up their pens and started to write about their native country.

These writings published in Ottoman journals reflect the clash between the jadidists (progressives) and the so called qadimists (conservatives) that was going on among Russia's Muslims since the end of the 19th century on questions of how to modernise the Muslim society and of whether or not to adopt Western habits.[11] All of the authors writing in Istanbul considered themselves to be jadidists. On the other hand, the authors described in detail the difficult conditions of Muslim life under Christian rule in general, in particular the consequences of Stolypin's reactionary coup d'état in 1907 for Russia's ethnic and religious minorities. Especially in the years 1909-11, the émigrés reproached the Russian government for deliberately trying to turn back the clock and thus deprive the ethnic and religious minorities of all the rights they had successfully fought for during the revolution of 1905. Stolypin was accused of co-operating with extreme nationalist parties as well as missionary circles in order to stabilise his authority and of pushing through Russian, that is, Slavic interest everywhere in the country. As in previous decades, Russia's non-orthodox subjects saw themselves again marginalised and as a consequence forced either to become assimilated or to emigrate.[12]

Such highly polemical literature did not fall on deaf ears in Russia and affected, to a certain extent, Russian-Ottoman relations. Russian authorities, such as the Department for the Religious Affairs of Foreign Confessions, the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of the Interior paid much attention in 1910 and 1911 to a potential pan-Islamic threat coming from the Young Turks and believed these writings to be part of an Ottoman strategy to undermine the Tsar's authority over his Muslim subjects.[13] This fear quite often expressed in Russian documents of the period was caused by a new phenomenon: the emergence of a Turkish press not only within the Ottoman Empire, but also in the Balkans, Russia and (admittedly to a lesser extent) in Central Asia – a press difficult to control by the Tsarist authorities due to the lack of experts capable of reading Turkic newspapers.[14] The

11 Adeeb Khalid: The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform. Jadidism in Central Asia. Berkeley 1998 as well as Ahmet Kanlıdere: Reform within Islam. The Tajdid and Jadid Movement among the Kazan Tatars (1809–1917). Conciliation or Conflict? İstanbul 1997.

12 See Adam, Rußlandmuslime, pp.220-303.

13 See Adam, Rußlandmuslime, pp.428-47. Cf. A. Arsharunin/Kh. Gabidulin: Ocherki panislamizma i pantjurkizma v Rossii ['Sketches on Panislamism and Panturkism in Russia']. Moskva 1931.

14 See, for example, Khalid, Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform, pp.107-27.

different centres of Turkic journalism in Russia had managed, since 1905, to build up an active network, and successfully integrated Istanbul and the Balkans into this network once the freedom of the press was reintroduced in the Ottoman Empire in 1908.[15] As a consequence, the Tatar, Azerbaijani or Turkestani émigrés in Istanbul were no longer cut off from their homes but followed the political and cultural debates that were going on in Kazan, Orenburg or Baku. At the same time, they informed the Ottoman public of the plight and daily injustices Muslims had to face in Russia in order to focus public attention on the national cause of Russia's Muslims. Their efforts to become a part of Istanbul's intellectual scene coincided with the aim of leading Ottoman journals such as *Sırat-i Müstakim* or *Türk Yurdu* to expand their world- view beyond the empire. The Young Turks hoped to stabilise their regime by gaining the support of Muslims from all over the globe. They wished Istanbul, with its metropolitan culture, to become the leading centre of the Islamic world; indeed, its *sheyhülislam* was expected to be the pole of theological reference for all Muslim societies, especially those under foreign domination.[16] The above mentioned Ottoman newspapers benefited from the presence of prominent Tatar and Azerbaijani journalists in the Ottoman capital and successfully penetrated the Russian market on the eve of World War I. Tsarist censorship viewed with suspicion such press contacts and the increasing interest in Ottoman publication among Russia's Muslims.[17] Besides dozens of Ottoman monographs, the Russian censors banned two journals, *Sırat-i Müstakim* as well as *Tearüf-i Müslimin*, and prevented them from entering Russia in the years 1910-1911. Both journals had willingly offered their Russian staff a platform to disseminate their propaganda amongst Ottoman and Russian Turks.[18]

One of the main targets of their criticism, as mentioned above, were the so called qadimists:[19] conservative, if not reactionary – as they were per-

15 Adam, Rußlandmuslime, pp. 33-155; for the history of the pre-revolutionary Turkic press in Russia see also Alexandre Bennigsen/Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay: La presse et le mouvement national chez les musulmans de Russie avant 1920. Paris 1964.

16 See Adam, Rußlandmuslime, pp.36-56.

17 See, for example, Vladimir Gol'mstrem (ed.): Musul'manskaia pechat' Rossii v 1910 godu ['The Muslim Press of Russia in 1910']. Sankt-Peterburg 1911.

18 See Adam, Rußlandmuslime, pp.417-28.

19 Research on Central Asian Islam has until recently focused, quite one-sidedly, on jadidist thinking. For an interesting sociological approach towards the phenomenon of the so called qadimists see Stéphane A. Dudoignon: Qu'est-ce que la «*qadîmiya*» ? Éléments pour une sociologie du traditionalisme musulman en Islam de Russie et en Transoxiane. In: Stéphane A. Dudoignon et al.: L'Islam de Russie. Conscience communautaire et autonomie politique chez les Tatars de la Volga et de l'Oural depuis le XVIIIe siècle. Paris 1997, pp. 207–25.

ceived to be – elements within the Muslim society who, according to their opponents, sought to prevent by any means a modernisation of the Muslim society because they feared losing control and influence over the simple folk over whom they presided. Common stereotypes of such qadimists were:[20]

a) the ignorant religious teacher, the *molla*. He outlaws any jadidist attempt to introduce a modern secular curriculum at the confessional schools.
b) the *ishan* or *sufi* (described as a charlatan) who ignores even the basic concepts of the Islamic religion but is worshipped as a holy man by the local population. In order to keep his profitable position within a superstitious Muslim society he is always ready to instigate a *fitna* (disorder) when challenged by his jadidist rivals.
c) the member of the official Islamic clergy paid by the state, such as the mufti of Orenburg, the head of the Muslim Ecclesiastical Administration. For fear of annoying their Russian masters such officials never risk changing the structure of the religious administration they supervise. No amelioration of the existing deplorable state of affairs in the Muslim communities, let alone a reform of the Ecclesiastical Administration, is to be expected from such dignitaries. For decades, orthodox missionaries like the notorious Nikolai Il'minskii – the arch-enemy of all Tatar nationalists – had openly interfered in the work of the mufti. Russian officials were accused by the jadidists of choosing the highest representative of Russia's Muslims from among Russified and subservient Tatars lacking any knowledge of Islam.

The constantly criticised qadimists seemed to be ready to co-operate with the Christian authorities (and by doing so to sacrifice the future of their Muslim communities), rather than to accept the concepts of the jadidists.[21] In order to quash further resistance by conservatives to new types of schooling, a modern interpretation of Islam and a cultural modernisation of Muslim life in Russia, the Ottomans were urged by the jadidist émigrés in Istanbul to summon up all their prestige as representatives of the caliphate to convince the *ʿUlamāʾ* in Russia that a radical change in education and in lifestyle had become necessary. The concepts of the jadidists were seen as being totally in accordance with similar Ottoman reforms of the 19th century. There is an interesting point to note: such a black-and-white portrayal that reduced all aspects of Muslim life in Russia to a battle between the good jadidists and the evil qadimists (supported by the Russian government) was

20 See Adam, Rußlandmuslime, pp.305-30.
21 Noack, Muslimischer Nationalismus, p.359.

rooted deeply in the Ottoman perception of, and later in the historiography of, Republican Turkey on Islam in Central Asia. Many of the stereotypes of the qadimists were taken for granted by the Ottoman public as well as by later historians. Until 1991, when the archives in Russia and Central Asia finally became accessible, Western perceptions of the pre-revolutionary Muslim society in the Tsarist Empire relied heavily on the few available, but mainly biased, accounts written by (mainly Tatar) jadidists.[22]

The same holds true for the many clichéd accounts of Russian atrocities we come across in the Ottoman press of those days. Turkic newspapers in the Tsarists Empire, too, constantly deplored injustice and denounced once and again the arbitrariness of, and harassment by, Russian authorities and the Orthodox Church,[23] but tried in general to make a distinction between the different segments of Russian society and their behaviour towards the Muslims. The jadidist émigrés in Istanbul however, presented to their Ottoman readers in 1910 and 1911 a shocking, nightmarish picture: due to the despotic character of Russian society, Muslims had nothing to expect from the government but extinction. Once a Muslim community, either nomadic or settled, was conquered, a slow but irreversible process of assimilation or expulsion was initiated that could not be stopped for lack of internal organisation as well as lack of support from the outside Muslim world. In the case of nomadic peoples for example, the émigrés compared the Kazak tribesmen with the Red Indians of the American plains who were on their way to becoming extinct. But developed Muslim communities, too, were not far from the danger of extinction: Western Eurasia where the Tatars once reigned for centuries, had definitely lost its Turkic and Muslim character due to conversion to Christianity and assimilation. Only small islands of Tatar settlements had survived within the huge Slavic ocean. This loss of 'Tatarness' was not caused by mass killing, but by assimilation. The émigrés pointed to a typical phenomenon of Russian society, that is, the structure of the upper classes: these classes had always been open to members of different ethnic backgrounds regardless of their skin colour. On the other hand the Muslim lower classes, the peasants, once deprived of their political leadership, had tried to preserve their identity by relying on a rather traditional form of Islam. This conservatism had now, in an era of struggle between the nations, fatal consequences: not only the Russians, but a variety of other ethnic minorities living in Russia had better starting positions. The Muslim communities scattered throughout European Russia and Siberia seemed consequently to be doomed. A Muslim nation based on ill-

22 Adam, Rußlandmuslime, pp.29-31.
23 Noack, Muslimischer Nationalismus, pp.367-72.

educated peasants and nomads had no chance of surviving the tough competition of nations in the 20th century. Reports on the few remaining Polish Tatars who had lost their native tongue and most of their Islamic traditions underlined the process of decline that was going on in former Muslim-dominated areas. In the end, Tatar men married European, Christian ladies in order to become respected members of Russian society.[24]

In regions densely populated by Muslims, like the Caucasus and Central Asia, the Tsarist regime sought to stabilise its rule by settling Christian colonists among the locals and by instigating religious or class antagonism between the Muslims. The latter factor caused much consternation in the émigrés' writing: instead of showing solidarity, Muslim religious leaders and members of the co-opted Muslim aristocracy were distinguished by their alleged petty jealousy and vanity. It had always been easy for the Russian master to sow discord among Muslims. While all political actors in Russia, despite their internal conflicts, shared the common ideal of protecting the integrity of this mighty empire, the conquered and subjugated Muslims were still far from unifying to defend their rights, let alone fighting for a common cause.

Consequently, even regions with a dense Muslim population were in danger, in the long run, of becoming Russified. But things were much worse: the hunger of the Russian bear was not yet sated: Russia's Muslim neighbours, the Ottoman Empire, Iran and Afghanistan – the last independent Muslim states – could become the next victims. The fate they had to face in this case was the same as that of the already conquered Tatars or Turkestanis. According to the nationalist world view of the early 20th century, all these individual aspects of Russian rule and Muslim suffering were reduced to a historical conflict between Slavs and Turks: the two had competed since time immemorial to gain or to defend supremacy over Eurasia. When, after the Mongol expansion, the Turks had had superiority, they treated their Slavic subjects with respect, showed tolerance towards, and even protected, the Christian religion, as did the Ottoman Turks in their empire. Unlike the tolerant Turks, Slavs, whether Russian or Balkan Slavs, pursued, after having conquered an area inhabited by peoples of a different religion, a policy of ethnic cleansing or assimilation. The results of such an aggressive stance were to be seen at the beginning of the 20th century all over Eurasia: Russia had conquered Turkestan and the Altai mountains, the cradle of the Turkish nation, and its Balkan allies were knocking at the gates of Constantinople. Much to the chagrin of the Turks, their foes had obviously successfully strengthened their position by pursuing an inhuman pol-

24 See, for example, Adam, Rußlandmuslime, p.231.

icy. The Turks, whether Tatars or Ottomans, had now to pay a heavy price for their former liberality.[25]

As mentioned above, all the separate reports in the Ottoman press on Russian injustice were combined in order to present an overall picture, according to which only a radical change in Russia's behaviour towards its minorities could really ameliorate their living conditions and could let them consider themselves equal citizens. The émigrés always stressed that Russia was their home, the common house of all the nations living there. They had fought at Port Arthur for the Russian cause. There was no question of separatism. The idea of separating from Russia and founding a new pan-Turanic empire – frequently encountered in the European press of those days – was repeatedly characterized by the émigrés as nonsense,[26] as the panic mongering of the Russian right. But in the years 1909-1911, when most of the émigrés writings on Russia were published in the Ottoman press, a change was not to be expected from the government of Stolypin.

Let's have a short look at the alleged Russian oppressions in detail: The very first target of jadidist criticism was the orthodox missionary.[27] One of the most ardent polemicists, Ahmed Taceddin from the city of Troitsk, told his readers how he once as a child asked his teacher: What is a missionary? Everything is a missionary, was the short answer he got. The émigrés gave the impression that their whole life, from the cradle to the grave, was controlled and supervised by Russia's church. Even though cases of open conversion remained a rare exception at the beginning of the 20th century, the days of the missionaries seemed to be far from over. They were still seen to be able to influence the policy of the government both in regard to religious and cultural affairs, as well as in regard to the education of Russia's religious minorities. Indeed, after a short decline in power during the revolution of 1905, missionaries regained influence under Stolypin who sought their support in order to cope with socialist movements and all those critical of the system. In 1910 the Ministry of the Interior relied on the advice of missionary organisations on the question of how to deal with a newly emerged Muslim political consciousness and an expanding Muslim press. Jadidists accused the missionaries of poisoning the atmosphere between the government and its Muslim subjects by constantly warning of pan-Islamism.[28]

[25] Adam, Rußlandmuslime, pp.276-80.

[26] See, for example, Fatikh Kärimi: İstanbul mäktübläre. Orenburg 1913; p.416.

[27] Adam, Rußlandmuslime, pp. 226-36.

[28] Robert P. Geraci: Window on the East. National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia. Ithaca 2001; pp.285-296 as well as Noack, Muslimischer Nationalismus, pp. 364-5.

Since the second half of the 19th century the danger of being denounced in public as Muslim fanatics whose sole aim was to wage war against Russia and to spill Christian blood had become even more serious: nationalistic and pan-Slavic newspapers accused Russia's Muslim subjects of co-operating with foreign enemies such as the Ottomans in order to establish an Islamic caliphate in Eurasia.[29] On the local level, in the provinces where Muslims lived, such propaganda paved the way for all kinds of blackmailing and plundering by the notoriously corrupt Russian civil servants. In the capital, an always suspicious Russian government felt itself obliged to suppress all Muslim attempts towards a modernisation of their society that were not directly controlled by the state, and strongly opposed any step in the direction of a cultural and national unity of its Turkic speaking minorities, let alone a strengthening of cultural or linguistic ties with the Ottomans.[30]

But the conflict went far beyond the cultural sphere: Russian and other European settlers sought to acquire the most fertile areas of newly conquered territories and were supported by the state if it became necessary to expel the local Muslim population. After the Northern Caucasus and the Crimean Peninsula had been Russified during the 19th century it was now the turn of the steppe.[31] The government motivated hundreds of thousands of Russian and Ukrainian peasants having no landholding in Western Russia to own a piece of land in the steppe.[32] The native Kazak nomads tied to their nomadic traditions did not feel the necessity to register a small piece of land as their own at an office far away in a town. The jadidist émigrés feared that as a consequence of this development Kazak life could be restricted within a few years to the most infertile parts of the steppe and their extinction would then be only a question of time.

There was no hope to be expected from the Russian opposition or Western Europe – the so-called civilised world. Western parliaments showed concern and raised protest when the rights of the Tsar's Finnish or Polish subjects were curtailed by the government. But when it came to their attention that a whole nation like the Kazaks were condemned to perish, the reaction of the civilised world seemed to be an unequivocal 'So what?'[33] Leftwing and liberal politicians in Russia too, although constantly fighting social injustice and bourgeois imperialism, ignored the plight of the Mus-

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[29] Adam, Rußlandmuslime, pp. 296-305. According to the émigrés the most notorious Russian newspapers in this regard were *Novoe Vremia* and *Russkoe Znamia*.

[30] Adam, Rußlandmuslime, pp.259-68, 281-96.

[31] Adam, Rußlandmuslime, pp.269-76.

[32] Gulnar Kendirbai: Land and People. The Russian Colonization of the Kazak Steppe. Berlin 2002 (ANOR 12); pp.60-1.

[33] Adam, Rußlandmuslime, p.273.

lims.[34] Such intellectuals ardently advocated women's right to vote in Russia, but when reminded by the jadidists that millions of Central Asian Muslims had been deprived of their right to vote for the third Duma, their reaction was a clear *Nu chto*? (So what!)[35] It goes without saying that the jadidist émigrés in Istanbul had not the slightest sympathy for an Ottoman *Ne ise!* (So what!) on this matter. The Ottomans were indeed harshly criticised for paying no attention to the suffering of their co-religionists in the Tsarist Empire.[36] Furthermore, they were accused by Russia's Muslims of underestimating the danger which arose from Russia – a country willing to go ahead with its conquests of regions inhabited by Turks and Muslims.

It is important to note that the émigrés did not advocate a direct Russian-Ottoman confrontation but called, especially in the years 1913-14, for a rapprochement between the two empires. Even though the émigrés may have hoped that their writings could persuade Ottoman officials to play a more active role in the future in protecting the rights of religious minorities in Russia just like the French, British or Tsarist consuls did in Turkey, their influence on Ottoman foreign policy certainly remained insignificant. However, when the war broke out in late 1914, quite a few of the clichéd accounts of Russian atrocities that had been propagated by the émigrés in the Ottoman press during 1909-1911 were used again as wartime propaganda. As a consequence, the Ottomans and their German allies were firmly convinced that the 'suppressed' Muslims in Tsarist Russia would rise against their oppressor after the Ottoman *sheyhülislam* had issued a *fetwa* to all Muslims calling for a jihad. But these hopes would soon be buried as the vast majority of the Tsars Muslims remained loyal.

Nevertheless there is another, momentous aspect of the émigrés' activities that should be mentioned. A red thread runs through their writing: the way in which Russia treated its Muslim subjects was always compared with the supposedly tolerant stance the Ottomans took up against their Christian minorities. But while no one in Europe criticised Russia for violating the civil rights of its Muslims, the Ottomans of all the nations were constantly accused by Europe of terrorising their minorities. The extreme way in which Russia's alleged atrocities were presented by the jadidist writers in Istanbul was obviously welcomed by the Ottoman public. Compared to the sufferings of Muslims in Russia, the Ottoman Christian seemed to enjoy all kinds of religious and cultural rights and to live all over the Ottoman Empire under the protection of influential European consulates. The reports

34 Adam, Rußlandmuslime, pp.274, 296-7.

35 See, for example, Noack, Muslimischer Nationalismus, p.380.

36 Adam, Rußlandmuslime, pp.330-75.

from Russia were therefore seen as proof that the image of the terrible Turk that existed among Europeans as well as among their own minorities was unfair and unfounded.

Little by little such kinds of propaganda undermined the idea of a common Ottoman nation that still existed among an important part of the Ottoman political elite on the eve of World War I and strengthened a newly awoken Turkish-Muslim nationalism in the era of the Young Turks.[37] The question implicit in the above analysed reports from Tsarist Russia found its radical answer during and after this war: if Russia was able to strengthen its position as a colonial power by oppressing its Muslim minorities – doing this without the slightest interference from Western Europe – why shouldn't the Ottoman Turks take more radical measures in order to cope with the national aspirations of their Greek, Armenian or Arab subjects?

[37] Masami Arai: Turkish Nationalism in the Young Turk Era. Leiden 1992 as well as David Kushner: The Rise of Turkish Nationalism 1876–1908. London 1977.