

Two Different Cases in the Ottoman Police Department: The Story of British Police Inspector Mr. Nolan and the Murder of Captain Butterworth

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Abstract

Having stuck in a difficult situation during the First Balkan War, The Ottoman Government appointed a British citizen called Mr. Nolan as the “Chief Police Inspector” to the capital of the state, Istanbul, while peace negotiations following the ceasefire in December 1912 were going on in London. In the first part of this article, the story of Mr. Nolan in the Ottoman Empire is narrated in the light of the documents in the Ottoman Archives.

The second part of the article is related to the murder of Butterworth, who was the captain of British steamer “Raithwaite Hall” anchored in Shatt-el-Arab in February 1914, in his cabin and the subsequent events. This part was also written mainly by the use of the documents in the Ottoman Archives.

A British Police Inspector in the Ottoman Empire: Mr. Nolan

When the First Balkan War was in a pause and peace negotiations were being held at St. James Palace in London, the Sublime Porte made an unusual attempt, probably aiming to gain the sympathy and the support of Great Britain. It was

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emphasized that the General Directorate of Police in Istanbul was not adequate to ensure a full and lasting security in the capital. Therefore, it was agreed to assign a British police officer, Nolan,¹ as the “Chief Inspector” with a salary of 8000 qurush per month to reorganize the General Directorate of Police as active and perfect as those in the centers of Europe. Nolan had already proved himself as an efficient officer when he had been in charge of the reorganization of the Egyptian Police Administration. Furthermore, a former officer from the Egyptian General Directorate of Security, Cafer Fahri Bey, was also appointed to the General Police Consultancy in order to collaborate with him and to supervise the implementation of accepted measures with a salary of 5000 qurush per month.² This decision approved in the Council of Ministers on 31 December 1912 was reported to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 1 January 1913 by Grand Vizier Kamil Pasha.³

According to his own statement dated 8 March 1913, Nolan was born in Liverpool in 1873. His father who was a factory man in England had passed away. After his primary education in Liverpool, he entered the University of London, acquired Ph.D. degrees and diplomas from the Medical, Law and Science Faculties. Besides his mother tongue English, he could speak and write in French, Arabic and Turkish. In the year 1897 he started to work as an official doctor in Egypt and during his twelve-year service, he performed technical duties as well as an official duty in the Egyptian Ministry of Justice in cooperation with the General Regent of Egypt. In 1909, he was assigned to the Egyptian General Directorate of Security. He resigned in 1912 and became an Ottoman citizen. On 31 December 1912, upon the decision of the Council of Ministers, he was appointed as the Chief Police Inspector to reorganize and improve the police department in the Ottoman Empire.⁴

The new government that came to power after the Bab-ı Ali coupe reexamined the status of British Nolan and Counselor Cafer Fahri Bey who were assigned to the Istanbul General Inspectorate of Police. The telegraph dated 2 February 1913 and sent by the Minister of Internal Affairs to Egyptian Extraordinary Commissioner Rauf Pasha reported that:

“...My predecessor (The former Minister of Interior) had seen it necessary and made attempts to appoint a chief police inspector to be employed in either administrative affairs or inspection duties -as the situation required- and a police counselor to work together with this person and control the implementation of approved measures. Mr. Nolan, one of the British police officers who proved himself successful in his service during the organization of the Egyptian Police Administration, was assigned to the General Inspectorate. In addition, one of the former officers in the Egyptian General Directorate of Security, Cafer Fahri Bey, was commissioned with the duty of General Counselor. However, both offices bear vital importance in ensuring the security of the capital city and it was agreed by former authorities to pay them high salaries; eight thousand qurush and five thousand qurush per month respectively. Thus, in order to procure the success of this attempt made by my predecessor with God’s help, which I also consider appropriate, and to justify the high salaries for their employment, it is deemed necessary to determine their identities and social status in Egypt as well as their specifications of their former services in the police department. Hoping you could do a special favor to my ministry, I am asking you about this subject. What were the positions and duties of these two men in the Egyptian Police Administration? How much salary did they receive in minimum and maximum? To what extent did their services concretely benefit? Did the reorganization service performed by Mr. Nolan give a successful result there? What is their social status and how is the general opinion about them? I request you to seek and inform me.”⁵

The Minister of Internal Affairs demanded information about Nolan and Cafer Fahri Bey from the General Director of Security too. Counselor Cafer Fahri Bey who was uncomfortable upon learning the inquiry about him submitted a petition to the Ministry of Interior and demanded the donation of his salary to the Association of National Support until the end of the Balkan War. Hereupon the Ministry of Internal Affairs dispatched Cafer Fahri Bey’s petition to the Accounting Management in the General Directorate of Security. In the notice dated 18 February 1913 and sent by the General Director of Security to the Ministry of the Interior, the General Director stated

they had information that a room had been assigned to Cafer Fahri Bey and Doctor Nolan in the Police Administration, yet there were no official reports on their salaries, the nature of their services and their skills. Besides, it was likely that under the current Budget of Public Security, the allotted salaries could not be paid. The General Director of Security demanded from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to collect and notify all available information about both names.⁶

On the other hand, the Headquarters of the National Defense Society sent a notification to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 23 February 1913. It was noted that Cafer Fahri Bey had donated his -5000 qurush salary- from the date of 3 February 1913 when the war resumed, to the date when the war would definitely end and peace would be made. Hence, the Headquarters emphasized that the salary in question was going to be received by a collector sent by them and appreciated the Ministry of Interior's immediate attention to this matter.⁷

The report sent on 4 March 1913 by the General Directorate of Security to the Ministry of Internal Affairs emphasized that formation of new offices like the General Police Consultancy or Secretariat and paying the officers high salaries would turn the reformed and reorganized General Directorate of Security back to its old situation. Besides, in such a difficult time, the Treasury would have to shoulder a futile and excessive burden. Therefore, it would be more appropriate and advantageous to abandon this idea and use the money allotted to them to increase the police officers whose number lacked and fell short to fulfill their tasks efficiently. In this way, the public peace and order would be achieved as required.⁸

The reply sent from the Egyptian Extraordinary Commissariat to the Ministry of Internal Affairs about Nolan and Cafer Fahri Bey indicated that Nolan had been employed with a monthly salary of 50 liras at the Court Medicine in Egypt. Even though he proved to be competent, he failed to achieve success in his next assignment at the Inspectorate of Murders Department in the Internal Medicine. As regards Cafer Fahri Bey, the report clarified that he had worked as a lawyer and not been charged with government services. Upon this information, the Ministry of Internal Affairs dispatched a notice about Nolan and Cafer Fahri Bey to the Grand Vizierate on 13

March 1913. In this notice, the information from the Egyptian Commissariat was given and it was indicated that *“even though the benefits of calling up and employing officers from abroad to bring the police department and reforms to the level of perfection seen in the European police administrations are evident”*, the stipulations of the Budget Law were not convenient for the employment of Nolan and Cafer Fahri Bey. Besides, it was also underlined that as it was the case in some administrative departments and branches of the present government, the officers to be assigned must be selected from among talented, well-known and expert persons who earlier proved to be successful and qualified in similar tasks and duties. However, The Egyptian Commissariat had reported that from the two names mentioned, Mr. Nolan had been employed at the Court Medicine in Egypt and Cafer Fahri Bey had never served in security affairs. Thus, the ministry saw no use in keeping their offices.⁹ The Ministry of Internal Affairs demanded that the issue was to be discussed again in the Council of Ministers and the way of payment for the accrued salaries of these names since the Council of Ministers’ resolution dated 31 December 1912 until that day should be determined.¹⁰ Yet in spite of the opposition by the Ministry of the Interior, the Council of Ministers that convened on 24 March 1913 agreed to maintain Nolan’s office.¹¹

At the session of the Council of Ministers dated 2 April 1913, it was resolved to pay the total accrued salaries of Inspector Nolan and Counselor Cafer Fahri Bey from the unforeseen expenses account of the Treasury since the beginning of their services until the end of February according to Rumi (Julian) calendar (13 March 1913). The total amount of Nolan’s accumulated salaries was 15493 qurush out of eight thousand qurush per month and Cafer Fahri Bey’s total amount of salaries was 9676 qurush 10 para (one fortieth of a kurush) out of five thousand qurush per month. The total amount to be paid, 25169 qurush 10 para, would be covered from the unforeseen expenses account of the Rumi year 1328. The Council also accepted to pay Cafer Fahri Bey 1935 qurush he was entitled to get until 13 March 1329 (26 March 1913), which was the due date of his service, from the unforeseen expenses account of the year 1329.¹²

Unlike Cafer Fahri Bey, Nolan remained in office by the resolution of the Council of Ministers. On 14 April 1913 an appeal was made to the Ministry of Finance

by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to annex 96.000 qurush-the annual total amount of salaries that would be paid Nolan (8000 qurush per month)- into the 2nd article titled “Salaries of Directors” of the 1st part of the 1329 Budget of Public Security. Accordingly, the Ministry of Finance prepared the justification and temporary draft law and submitted them to the Grand Vizierate on 20 April 1913.¹³ This temporary draft law exclusive to Nolan was as such:

This is the Temporary Draft Law on Establishing the General Police Inspectorate and the Inclusion of Its Annual Subsidy to the Present Year Budget of the General Directorate of Security.

First Article: A Police Inspectorate under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, General Directorate of Security has been established with a salary of eight thousand qurush per month.

Second Article: The annual subsidy, ninety six thousand qurush, of the mentioned Police Inspectorate has been annexed to the second article titled as “Salaries of Directors” of the first part of 1329 Budget of Public Security.

Third Article: The Ministries of Internal Affairs and Finance are authorized to implement the provisions of this law.

Fourth Article: This law is in effect as of 1 March 1329 (14 March 1913).

The justification of this draft law prepared for Nolan highlighted that Mr. Nolan was employed in the General Inspectorate that was responsible for the fulfillment of the police duties in a good way and ensuring the perfect security and order. In addition, the same procedure mentioned above for the payment of Nolan’s total annual salary of 96.000 qurush within the Budget of Public Security was explained.¹⁴

This temporary draft law exclusive to Nolan was accepted in the Private Council on 23 April 1913 and submitted to Sultan’s approval. The draft law was signed and approved by Sultan on 26 April 1913.¹⁵

There was another development regarding Nolan when he went to Beirut for inspection in October 1913. Here on 24 October 1913, Nolan wrote a letter to Hasan

Bey¹⁶ and reported his observations item by item. Nolan asserted interesting claims in the 4th item of his letter:

“At this moment there is an exceptionally influential gang here, which is the reason for the sudden change of opinion about the government. This gang has seized all the power and authority and does whatever it wants without any punishment. In my opinion, this society whose existence is out of doubt now is not much crowded. Yet they have succeeded in intimidating the whole city through their influence on every administration. Murders are committed from time to time. Although the Police know the authors very well, because of their commitment to the aforementioned secret society they do not dare to arrest the criminals”

In the 5th and last item of his letter Nolan claimed that the municipality was also in a very bad situation and the society in question was dominant here as well. According to Nolan, in addition to the money stolen after it was deposited into the Municipal Fund, almost half of the municipal revenues did not even enter into the Fund (Hereby Nolan implies that the money is directly transferred to this secret society).¹⁷

Moved by Nolan’s information, the Ministry of Internal Affairs notified the Governorship of Beirut about this intelligence but kept Nolan’s name hidden and softened the accusative remarks of him about the local administration and the Police. Because of this striking denunciation, the governorship was requested to investigate the matter and inform the results. Furthermore, it was emphasized that if such a society really existed, its members had to be caught and legal actions were to be taken against them. The Ministry also asked to be informed immediately about what kind of necessary measures were to be taken.

With regard to this issue, the telegraph sent by the Governor of Beirut, Bekir Sami Bey to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 1 December 1913 reported:

*“The British Police Inspector who came here did nothing although more than one and a half month has passed and what is more he has certain conducts deserving criticism. It is deemed appropriate to appoint him to the center and send him to the other cities...”*¹⁸

Henceforth the Ministry of Internal Affairs sent a very brief telegraph to the Governorship of Beirut on 6 December 1913:

*“Notify Mr. Nolan to move Istanbul”*¹⁹

Consequently, it appears that British Inspector Nolan was discharged from his duty in Beirut hereafter.

The Murder of Captain Butterworth

According to the report of the Lieutenant Governor of Basra, İzzet Bey to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 9 February 1914, the incident happened as follows:

Captain Butterworth who was the British master of the steamboat “Raithwaite Hall”, which belonged to the Strick Scott Company²⁰ and anchored in the port of Basra, Shatt-al-Arab, was murdered previous night in his cabin. Once the murder was heard the commander of gendarmerie, the police commissioner, the director of health affairs and the investigating judge immediately arrived at the crime scene. An inspection was made in the scene where the company manager, the British Consul and his dragoman were also present. The hands of the victim were tied and his face was covered with a blanket. He had been killed with a hack. Upon investigation, the crew of seven seamen was taken into custody as the suspect.²¹ This murder was notified by the British Embassy to the Sublime Porte, whereupon the Ministry of Internal Affairs demanded from the Governorship of Basra to find and punish the criminals at once.²²

It is evident that during a period of over four months afterwards, the investigation showed almost no progress. British captain had been murdered on the midnight of February 6. The notice sent from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of Interior on 11 June 1914 explained that the British Embassy had reopened the murder case and upon the order it had received from the British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey, it demanded 4000 sterling compensation for the family of the murdered captain. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs *“in no country can a local administration be held responsible to secure the public order in a way to be liable of paying compensation for any murder committed”* could be the possible reply to the British Embassy. Yet the necessary details were to be specified in the answer to

the British Embassy and hence full information about the results of the investigation had to be obtained. Thus, detailed information was urgently demanded from the Governorship of Basra.²³

On the same day (11 June 1914), the Ministry of Internal Affairs sent a telegram to the Governorship of Basra and notified that the British Government demanded 4000 sterling compensation from the Ottoman Government for the family of the murdered captain. In order to reject this demand formally and legitimately in the light of the evidence, the outcome of the investigation hitherto and information obtained from the interrogations of the crew were needed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and hence asked to be quickly reported.²⁴

The Governor of Basra sent just the same murder investigation report he had received from Basra Central Prosecution Office on 17 June 1914 to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 18 June 1914. As stated in this report bearing details on the murder scene, the British dragoman of the Consulate informed the central investigation magistracy about the murder on 7 February 1914. Thereon the Magistrate Arif, Gendarmerie Regiment Commander Hacı (Hadji) Namık, Gendarmerie lieutenants Reşid and Nuri, police sergeants Tevfik and Abdülhamid Bey accompanied by the British dragoman arrived at the steamer. The door of the cabin in which the captain had been killed was left open. The victim had two flannels, a shirt, and pants on and his body was covered with blood. The captain was found to be lying on his right side on the floor before his bed. There was a great amount of blood on the floor where he was lying and on the mattress laid out on his bed near the door. There were bloodstains on the wall close to the mattress. According to this situation, the captain after being hit by a hack in his bed, fell down and his hands were tied with hemp. The book and bottles on the two tables inside the cabin had fallen to the ground. The petty stuff like the lamp whose bottle had been broken and paper envelopes were scattered around and the whole place was in a mess. In the cabin, a Mauser rifle from the inventory stock of the steamer was also seen. All of these made it beyond doubt that the captain had been killed in his cabin. Bloodstains were seen on the upper side of the stairs leading down to saloon, on a piece of wood farther, over the linoleum covering the lower deck and

on the flooring and chain of the steamer. It was clear that a bloody hand had touched the chain. In addition, there was some dry mud on the wall outside the steamer. It made sense that it was a footprint and someone had descended the river from the steamer. In the meantime, the Director of Health Affairs Ahmed Bey had arrived at the steamer and having formally administered the oath he examined the corpse. There was a wound on either side of the captain's face and five dagger cuts on his neck. They were all wounds done by a kind of pointed hack. The cabin was attentively searched and but it was not recognized that something had been stolen. Yet it was detected that the wood in front of a drawer had been broken and this had been probably done by hand, not by a special tool. A brown camel tie was seen next to the head of the murdered. The crew on board on the night of the murder was all questioned: The butler and cook of the captain Rüstem bin Şecaaddin who was a citizen of Iran and 50 years old; Hüseyin bin Yusuf who was a citizen of Iran and 20 years old; İbrahim bin Salih who was an Ottoman citizen from Basra and 25 years old; Abdürrahim bin Hacı Muhammed who was a citizen of Iran and 50 years old. They claimed to have no knowledge about the murder, hear no hassle or noise in the steamer at that night, and see no one else on board. They also said that the captain had no enemy. The rest of the crew, İbrahim bin Ali who was a citizen of Iran, Hızır bin Hacı Hüseyin who was an Ottoman citizen from Basra and 27 years old and Ali bin Salim who was a citizen of Iran and 30 years old also said that they knew nothing about the murder, had been off-duty and spent that night at their homes. The houses of the crew were also searched and no sharp and wounding object was encountered. The camel tie made of brown wool was shown to the crew but none of them knew it and they said they did not have any idea about whom it might belong to.

Henceforth three notices were sent from the British Consulate in Basra on 11 February 1914, 16 and 19 March 1914. The British Consulate demanded an investigation about some suspects who had been fired and quarreled with the captain before. In consequence of the investigations, the evidence for the suspects Rüstem bin Şecaaddin, Ali bin Salim, Seyyid Nasrallah and Hemis? خمیس bin Hüseyin (Hussein) was found to be sufficient to charge them with murder. The other detainees and non-

detained suspects were exempted from the charges. The court day was set as 19 May 1914 but had to be postponed because the prosecutor was appointed to the presidency of the court of appeal. The most important evidence for the charges against Ali bin Salim and Seyyid Nasrallah seem to have been the hats found in their homes. Foreigners wore these hats. It was discovered that the hat of the murdered captain was missing. Once the Strick Scott Company and the British Consulate confirmed that the hat found in Seyyid Nasrallah's house looked like the hat of the murdered captain, the suspicions increased. Seyyid Nasrallah could not explain the owner of the hat found in his home. Ali bin Salim also claimed that the hat belonged to someone else whose name and identity he did not know.²⁵

After about six months, a notice related to this murder was sent from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of the Interior on 13 December 1914. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that since there was a war with Britain and the capitulations had already been abolished, even if there were foreigners among the suspects, it would be appropriate to begin the legal process directly before consulting the foreign dragoman of the consulates in the province.²⁶

¹ The full name of this police officer, whose name is written as نولان (Nolan) in the documents of the Ottoman Archives, and who himself signed the French handwritten letter he sent from Beirut as "Nolan" could not be detected.

² **The Ottoman Archives of the Prime Ministry (BOA.) The Ministry of Internal Affairs (DH.) The Administrative Department (İD.) 150/6** (The notice sent from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Grand Vizierate, 8 December 1328 [21 December 1912]) and **BOA. Minutes of the Council of Ministers (MV.) 172/24** (18 December 1328 [31 December 1912]).

³ **BOA. DH. İD. 150/6** (The notice sent by Grand Vizier Kamil Pasha to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 19 December 1328 [1 January 1913]).

⁴ **BOA. DH. İD. 150/6** (Nolan's curriculum vitae, 23 February 1328 [8 March 1913]).

⁵ **BOA. DH. İD. 150/6** (The notice sent by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to Egyptian Extraordinary Commissioner Rauf Pasha, 20 January 1328 [2 February 1913]).

⁶ **BOA. DH. İD. 150/6** (The notice sent by the Director of Public Security to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 5 February 1328 [18 February 1913]).

⁷ **BOA. DH. İD. 150/6** (The notice sent by the Headquarters of the National Defense Society to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 10 February 1328 [23 February 1913]).

⁸ **BOA. DH. İD. 150/6** (The notice sent by the Directorate of Public Security to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 19 February 1328 [4 March 1913]).

⁹ At this point in the notice of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, it was first written "The fact that Mr. Nolan is now a British citizen is also to be considered" but later it was crossed off.

¹⁰ **BOA. DH. İD. 150/6** (The notice sent by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Grand Vizierate, 28 February 1328 [13 March 1913]).

¹¹ **BOA. Decrees-File Procedure (İ. DUİT.) 84/14** (The draft justification sent by the Minister of Finance to the Grand Vizierate, 7 April 1329 [20 April 1913]).

¹² **BOA. MV. 175/118** (20 March 1329 [2 April 1913]). It is understood from this document that Cafer Fahri Bey was discharged from his office.

¹³ **BOA. İ. DUIT. 84/14** (The notice sent by the Minister of Finance to the Grand Vizierate and the enclosed temporary article of law and justification drafts, 7 April 1329 [20 April 1913]).

¹⁴ **BOA. İ. DUIT. 84/14** (Temporary article of law and justification drafts).

¹⁵ **BOA. İ. DUIT. 84/14** (The minute of the decision of the Private Council, 10 April 1329 [23 April 1913] and Sultan's decree annexed under the article of the temporary law, 13 April 1329 [26 April 1913]).

¹⁶ Probably Hasan Fehmi Bey who was charged as the director in the Ministry of Internal Affairs Private Secretariat. The fact that the translation of the articles 4 and 5 of this French letter was written on a paper of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Private Secretariat and later a telegraph sent by the Governorship of Beirut to the Ministry of Internal Affairs was transferred to Private Secretary Hasan Fehmi Bey strengthen this possibility.

¹⁷ **BOA. DH. The Directorate of Private Secretariat (KMS.) 3/20** (The French handwritten letter sent by Nolan in Beirut to Hasan Bey, 24 October 1911 and the translation of the articles 4 and 5 of this letter in the Ministry of Internal Affairs Private Secretariat).

¹⁸ **BOA. DH. KMS. 3/20** (The telegraph sent by the Governor of Beirut, Bekir Sami Bey to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 18 November 1329 [1 December 1913]). This telegraph was transferred to the Director of Private Secretariat Hasan Fehmi Bey.

¹⁹ **BOA. DH. KMS. 3/20** (The telegraph sent by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Governorship of Beirut, 23 November 1329 [6 December 1913]).

²⁰ The British company Strick Scott Line Ltd.

²¹ **BOA. DH. KMS. 14/38** (The telegraph sent by Lieutenant Governor of Basra, İzzet Bey to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 27 January 1330 [9 February 1914]); "The Murder of Captain Butterworth", **The Times**, 21 February 1914, p.7.

²² **BOA. DH. KMS. 14/38** (The very urgent telegram sent by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Governorship of Basra, 27 January 1330 [9 February 1914]).

²³ **BOA. DH. KMS. 14/38** (The urgent notice sent by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 29 May 1330 [11 June 1914]).

²⁴ **BOA. DH. KMS. 14/38** (The very urgent telegram sent by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Governorship of Basra, 29 May 1330 [11 June 1914]).

²⁵ **BOA. DH. KMS. 14/38** (The report of Basra Central Prosecution Office, 4 June 1330 [17 June 1914]).

²⁶ **BOA. DH. KMS. 14/38** (The notice sent by the Director of Political Affairs, Ahmed Reşid Bey acting on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 30 November 1330 [13 December 1914]).

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