

The Armenian genocide of 1915-1917: political, historical and juridical perspectives with regards to the word 'genocide', with specific mention of current revisionist trends

ABSTRACT

The large-scale massacres of Christian Armenians which took place in the Ottoman empire during 1915-1917 at the instigation of the ruling party C.U.P. (Committee Union and Progress), have been widely acknowledged as an act of genocide by both historians and genocide and holocaust specialists alike. When Raphael Lemkin coined the word 'genocide' in 1943¹, he spoke of these massacres as a seminal example of what genocide consists of. However, the refusal by successive Turkish governments to acknowledge these acts as genocide, in compliance with the widely accepted definition of this crime since the Convention of Human Rights of 1948, compels one to assess again the nature of the crimes committed, while looking at the current political implications of this denial. The present paper intends to do so using three main bodies of sources: recent declarations stemming from the international community with regard to the issue at stake; testimonies from foreign eye-witnesses and diplomats holding office in Turkey at the time of the massacres; documents that date from the Turkish Court Martial of 1919 in which the perpetrators were judged and sentenced to death. The goal of the conclusion is to point briefly towards the limitations of current international provisions with regard to prevention of genocide, and to sketch an ethical view on the phenomenon of revisionist historiography.

1. INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of March 2005, Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan called for a study by both Turkish and Armenian historians to examine claims of an Armenian genocide at the hands of Ottoman Turkish troops during and immediately after World War I. The Armenian Foreign Ministry rejected Erdogan's proposal. This response indicates in a pithy way the state of affairs which has existed for several decades between the two nations.² Despite what the uninformed

1 *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, which Lemkin published in November 1944, is the first text where the word *genocide* appears (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. The 16 pages of chapter nine of *Axis rule* (p. 79-95) deal specifically with the notion of genocide. The book's preface is dated November 15, 1943.

2 In the present case, speaking of 'nations' rather than 'countries' takes into account the fact that present day Armenia unilaterally proclaimed its independence from the Soviet Union on August 23, 1990. This

reader would think about this response, the matter in question exceeds the scope of the purely bilateral relationship between Turkey and Armenia. Much more is at stake in this dispute: essentially, a claim of 'genocide' carries with it universal significance, and as such involves the international community inasmuch as countries have bound themselves to certain international conventions.³

For present-day Turkey, this particular claim of genocide – the acknowledgement of which has been steadily growing within the international community⁴ – poses genuine problems when it

independence was ratified after a referendum held on September 21, 1991 (98% of the voters voted in favour of it). Obviously, the contentious point did not start at the time of Armenia's accession to independence.

- 3 I refer here – a.o. – to the convention on the prevention and repression of the crime of genocide adopted unanimously by the United Nations on December 1948 and implemented on January 12, 1951. Turkey has ratified this convention (Quid, 2002: p. 918, 1305). As defined by International Law for the last 60 years, the act of genocide includes two elements: a calculated intent to exterminate a racial or ethnic group, and the physical implementation of that intent, of which any of the following five elements might be a part:

- 1) Killing members of the group;
- 2) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- 3) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- 4) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

(From Article II of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide.)

- 4 A first national attempt at the recognition of the Armenian genocide was made by the Uruguayan Parliament in 1965; the resolution (only speaking of "martyrs") was confirmed by the presidency on March 26, 2004. On November 16, 2000, The Italian Parliament voted a resolution asking Turkey to recognise the *genocide*. This text, submitted to the presidency, remains for the moment at parliamentary level. Before the end of 2004, many other State legislative chambers had adopted similar resolutions including the word *genocide* and the name of the perpetrators thereof; the same applies to half of the states of the U.S.A., of Swiss cantons, and of provincial parliaments of Canada and Australia. The Armenian *genocide* was acknowledged by the House of Representatives of Cyprus (April 29, 1982); the House of Representatives in the U.S.A. (September 12, 1984); the Russian Douma (April 14, 1995); the Greek Parliament (April 25, 1996); the Belgian Senate (March 26, 1998); The Swedish Parliament (March 29, 2000); the Lebanese Parliament (May 11, 2000); the National Swiss Council (December 16, 2003); the Argentinean Senate (March 31, 2004); the Slovakian Parliament (December 1, 2004). The Vatican denounced the *genocide* (without mentioning the authors thereof) on November 10, 2000, and September 27, 2001; the same applies to the Canadian parliament (April 21, 2004). In France, the proposal of a law regarding the Armenian *genocide* was approved by the National Assembly on May 28, 1998, then by the Senate on November 7, 2000, and finally approved by the presidency of the Republic on January 29, 2001. The text, which omits to mention the perpetrators, has the status – thus far unique in the world – of a State law: "France publicly acknowledges the Armenian genocide of 1915. The present law will be enforced as State law." Thus far, the American presidency has conspicuously avoided pronouncing the word *genocide* in its declaration of sympathy towards the Armenian nation released on April 24 each year. The question of American-Turkish relationships, in particular the geo-political and military interests of the U.S.A. in the Middle East, no doubt plays a central role in this matter.

On June 13, 1997, the Association of Genocide Scholars issued the following resolution: "That this assembly of the Association of Genocide Scholars in its conference held in Montreal, June 11-13, 1997, reaffirms that the mass murder of Armenians in Turkey in 1915 is a case of genocide which conforms to the statutes of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide. It further condemns the denial of the Armenian Genocide by the Turkish government and its official and unofficial agents and supporters." On March 7, 2000, 126 holocaust scholars made the following statement; "At the Thirtieth Anniversary of the Scholar's Conference on the Holocaust and the Churches Convening at St Joseph University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, March 3-7, 2000, one hundred and twenty-six holocaust Scholars, holders of Academic Chairs and Directors of Holocaust Research and Studies Centres, participants of the Conference, signed a statement affirming that the World War 1 Armenian Genocide is

comes to the negotiations concerning Turkey's entry into the European Union.⁵ On June 18, 1987, the European Parliament voted for a resolution calling for Turkey to recognise the Armenian Genocide. This resolution would be a condition set forth for Turkey's bid to join the E.U. Although assigned a low status among the priorities of the E.U. for these negotiations – which were due to start October 3, 2005 – this condition still exists on paper.⁶ A few days after the European Union's decision of December 17, 2004, requesting that no prior condition be set for the examination of Turkey's candidacy, the Parliament of the Netherlands, in protest against its own government, voted a motion asking it to “continuously and explicitly raise the matter of the Armenian genocide within the frame of a dialogue with Turkey.” On December 15, 2004, the European Parliament voted a motion “to demand from Turkey to formally acknowledge the historical reality of the genocide of the Armenians in 1915.” It is naive to think that this issue will automatically disappear from the negotiations. In fact, the issue has already proved to be problematic as many Europeans have threatened to withhold their votes to ratify a European Constitution to protest the EU's willingness to offer membership to Turkey – in part because of this government's continued denial of the genocide.⁷

As for the Armenian side, accepting minister Erdogan's proposal would have amounted to stalling the Genocide Memorial and the Genocide Museum, erected in 1995 on the outskirts of the capital Yerevan, until such a joint commission of historians had reached a conclusion.⁸ It would also have cast doubt on the recognition of the Armenian genocide by a growing number of countries, by the Association of Genocide Scholars, and by other groups of historians.⁹ In fact, it would explicitly signify that the research conducted over more than half a century has not yet presented any compelling evidence, and that the conclusions reached by a large majority of scholars on this issue need, at best, to be reassessed.

an incontestable historical fact and accordingly urge the governments of Western democracies to likewise recognize it as such.” The petitioners, among who is Nobel Laureate for Peace Elie Wiesel, who was the keynote speaker at the conference, also asked the Western Democracies to urge the Government and Parliament of Turkey to finally come to terms with a dark chapter of Ottoman-Turkish history and to recognize the Armenian Genocide. This would provide an invaluable impetus to the process of the democratization of Turkey. Similar declarations (the text of which can be read in: <http://www.armenian-genocide.org.html>) were made by, respectively: The World Council of Churches (August 10, 1983); The Permanent People's Tribunal (April 16, 1984); a group of Concerned Scholars and Writers (April 24, 1998); La Ligue des Droits de l'Homme (May 16, 1998); The office of the Mayor of the City of New York (April 24, 1990).

5 Hereafter referred to as the E.U.

6 Both the European Commission (on October 6, 2004) and the European Council (on December 17, 2004) though mentioning the issue of the genocide, maintained that its recognition did not as such pertain to the so-called Copenhagen criteria which define the conditions to be met for the opening of negotiations between the E.U. and a country applying for E.U. membership.

7 The “no” vote expressed by a majority of French and Dutch citizens in 2005 against the proposed constitution illustrates the point. Thus far, nine countries of the E.U. are asking for Turkey's acknowledgement: Belgium, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia and Sweden. On April 21, 2005, a debate on this issue was initiated at the German Bundestag by the Conservative opposition.

8 Indirectly, the same should apply to the monument to the Armenian Genocide erected in Paris on April 24, 2003, representing the Armenian composer and ethno-musicologist Soghomon Komitas. Komitas, along with hundreds of Armenians intellectuals, was arrested on April 24, 1915. Subjected to deportation, many of them were later executed. Komitas, greatly admired by composers such as Claude Debussy and Erik Satie, died in 1935 in a psychiatric clinic near Paris, suffering from serious mental affliction caused by the experience of the years 1915-1920. Other such memorials include the Crosstone (*Khatchkar*) memorial in Assen, Netherlands, inaugurated on 24 April, 2000.

9 See footnote 4.

There is another thorny issue at stake for the Turkish government: in addition to the treatment by the Ottoman Empire of about two million of its Christian subjects one century ago there is also the subsequent tampering with the historical record by eliminating any mention of Armenians from official Turkish books and documents (as tourism guides and brochures produced in Turkey amply testify).¹⁰ Yigal Schleifer, correspondent for the Christian Science Monitor, stated the following in a recent article:¹¹ “The Armenian issue has long been one of the most fraught in Turkey, the limits of its discussion strictly controlled by the state.” Schleifer quotes Turkish executive Noyan Soyak who, in 1997, helped found a group to bring together businessmen from Turkey and Armenia: “When we started it was difficult even to publicly pronounce the word ‘Armenia’ or ‘Armenians’ in Turkey.” But with the prospect of joining the E.U., and the pressure exercised by European countries for democratic changes in Turkey, things are starting to move. A recent exhibition in Istanbul on the life of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the twentieth century has attracted considerable attention.¹² There are attempts at bringing young Armenians and Turks together on Internet discussion forums. The recent publication in England of Turkish historian Taner Akçam’s book¹³ is epoch making. On April 23, 2005, two Turkish historians (Ragip Zarakoglu and Ali Ertem) were decorated in France by Ara Touranian – representing the Armenian community in France – for their research on the Genocide. This movement, however, will be extremely delicate to handle for a government which, like all its predecessors, has supported the official versions of Turkish history, as purported by the Turkish Society of History created in 1930 by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.¹⁴ Questioning the official version of Turkish history can land someone in serious trouble, as a recent incident involving well-known Turkish author Orhan Pamuk indicates. After telling a Swiss newspaper that one million Armenians and thirty thousand Kurds had been killed in Turkey at the time of World War 1, Pamuk received death threats. An official of

-
- 10 For instance in a ‘Guide de l’Anatolie Orientale’ published in 1970 in Istanbul, we find ample mention of Middle-Ages churches and other non-Turkish monuments, like the remarkable city of Ani, capital of the Armenian dynasty of the Bagratides, but the word “Armenian” does not appear a single time in connection with this cultural and architectural heritage. The same applies to the official Turkish tourism documentation published thirty years later in 2002: in the brochure of the Eastern Anatolian region – a territory marked by three thousand years of uninterrupted Armenian presence until the 1920s – the words *Armenia* and *Armenian* are totally missing. One reads there that, in Kars, “the architecture of the church of the apostles (Xth century) displays a curious mixing of influences” and that on Lake Van: “there is on the island Aghtamar a church (Xth century) whose external walls are richly decorated with scenes and characters from the Old Testament.” In 2004, rare mentions of Armenia and Armenians started appearing in official tourism brochures of Eastern Turkey.
 - 11 “In Turkey, taboo lifts over past treatment of Armenians”, The Christian Science Monitor, 17 March, 2005.
 - 12 The exhibition presented five hundred postcards showing the omnipresence of Armenians in different sectors of economic and cultural activities. It attracted some six thousand visitors in twelve days. On April 5, 2004, a parliamentary commission heard two Turkish intellectuals of Armenian origin on the question of the 1915-1917 events.
 - 13 “From empire to republic: Turkish nationalism and the Armenian genocide”, Zed Books, Ltd UK/Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.
 - 14 In a first brand, this Turkish thesis affirmed that the Turks were Indo-Europeans, descended from the Hittites. As for the Armenians, they were a group which had arrived much later, without territory or history; they had never lived in Anatolia. This version of history having proved useless in the bid to stop the recognition of the genocide by the international community, a new strategy was embarked upon, attempting to justify the Ottoman policy of deportation and extermination of its Armenian subjects as an act of self-defence in view of the alleged treason of Armenians during First World War. An Institute of Armenian Studies was created to this effect. This new official version can still be traced on the official website of the Turkish Department of Foreign Affairs.

the Ispanta region intended to stage a public burning of all of Pamuk's books. This planned *auto-da-fe* provoked a reaction from two hundred Turkish intellectuals, denouncing "the collective hysteria born from Turkish and Kurdish nationalism".

2. A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF THE ARMENIANS

To understand the course of events which led to the order of deportation and elimination of the Armenian population from the Ottoman territory in 1915, it is necessary to look back on the history of the Ottoman Empire – particularly from 1875 onwards. A careful examination of the historical and political context shows that the Armenian Genocide did not occur in a historical vacuum. The dramatic events of 1915-1917 had been in the making for some time, with the persecution and massacre of Armenians in the 19th Century starting in 1862 in the Taurus region.¹⁵ An overview of the international political situation is important for understanding the place of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire at the time, the nationalist ambitions of the Turks, and the unfolding drama.

After the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453, the Armenians living in Asia Minor became subjects of the Sultan, and were known as a "millet", a term referring to the non-Muslim and non-Turkish peoples that would now exist within the Ottoman Empire. The Empire, a mosaic of different peoples who had inhabited the Byzantine Empire, included both Christians (Greeks, Syriacs, Armenians, and Slavs) and Muslims (Turks, Arabs, and Kurds). As for Armenians, at the time of the fall of Constantinople they had inhabited their ancestral land for some eighteen centuries – the forging of an Armenian ethnic entity going back to the seventh century B.C. Their history, marked by interference from the Romans, Persians, Arabs and later Turks (starting with the Seldjuks during the 11th Century),¹⁶ had taken a particular course with the adoption of Christianity as state religion around A.D. 301. Even before Constantine became the sole ruler of Rome and the Edict of Milan was proclaimed in 313, they had had to defend their new faith against the final attempt of Roman emperors to eradicate Christianity from the empire.¹⁷ This struggle would continue with the Sassanide Persians, intent on imposing Zoroastrianism on the Armenians a century later, and with the Arabs and Islam during the eighth and ninth century.

Relative harmony existed for some time after the Ottoman Turks took over the whole peninsula. The doctrine of Ottomanism, at least in theory, promised equality for all peoples in the Empire. However, Christian minorities, subject to the Sharia (Muslim Law), were not granted the same freedoms and political rights as the Muslim Turks. They could not testify in a court of law, and did not have the right to bear arms. On the other hand, Armenians had been granted certain rights, such as the election of a Patriarch, the leader of the Armenian Apostolic Church in

15 Cf Pasternadjian, 1986:319-320. During the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878 irregular elements attached to the Turkish army were responsible for massacres of Armenians in the regions of Bayazid, Diadin and Alachkert. Some 2400 Armenians were massacred in the city of Bayazid alone.

16 The battle of Manzikert, lost by the Byzantines against the Seldjuks in 1071, marked the end of Byzantine rule and influence on the Eastern regions of the peninsula.

17 Under Emperor Maximin Daia, who had first reluctantly applied an edict of tolerance issued by Galerius, his predecessor: "[He] had let it be known that he would welcome petitions against the Christians from cities. (...) By the end of 312, however, Maximin discerned the signs of the times and sent a letter to provincial governors, urging toleration. Shortly before his defeat by Licinius in April 313, he finally issued an edict to this effect. The signs he discerned included the failure of a brief campaign in Armenia, where he had tried to impose pagan worship on the Christians, and a disastrous famine due to the failure of crops" (Grant, 2004:233).

Constantinople. But these rights were unequally applied, benefiting the Armenian upper classes of Constantinople yet ignored in the far-flung provinces of Anatolia, or Western Armenia, where the majority of Armenians resided.

The precarious peace enjoyed by the Armenian millet would shatter at the end of the 19th Century under a new Sultan, Abdul Hamid II – the situation being exacerbated by Europe’s meddling.

3. EUROPE, TURKEY, ARMENIA AND THE ROAD TO GENOCIDE

To help us shed light on the complicated political components contributing to the chain of massacres of 1894-1896, and later to the 1915 genocide, the observations of social psychologist Irvin Staub are particularly insightful. He is quoted in Peter Balakian’s *The Burning Tigris: the Armenian Genocide and America’s Response* as referring to a “continuum of destruction”, and describes in the terms below the circumstances surrounding such a state:

... a history and cultural orientation that can lead to conditions for genocide ... A progression of changes in a culture and individuals is usually required. In certain instances – the Armenian Genocide, for example – the progression takes place over decades or even centuries and creates readiness in the culture.¹⁸

For the Armenians, a significant event on this continuum is undoubtedly the 1877 invasion of Turkey by Russia. Russia had declared war on Turkey, partly to come to the aid of the Balkan Christians who had been the victims of several massacres at the hands of the Turks. Eager to rally a Christian people against the Turks and to resolve what was becoming known as the Eastern Crisis, Russia annexed parts of Western Armenia and fought the war both in Eastern Europe and in Western Armenia. The process of serious destabilisation for the Armenians living in Turkey had begun. Firstly, the Russo-Turkish war would put Armenia and the Armenian Question in the international limelight for the first time. Secondly, half of the Armenian population would be integrated into the Russian Empire as a result of the war.

This would lead the Ottoman Turks, as they became desperate to retain the integrity of their slowly crumbling empire, to continually harbour suspicions regarding the Turkish Armenians and their loyalties. Armenians were seen as either pro-Russian or as revolutionaries who, with the help of Europe, would break away from the Empire the first chance they had to form an independent nation – as had been the case for the Balkan Christians. The 1878 Treaty of San Stefano had granted the Balkan Christians autonomy, resulting in the Empire losing a majority of its European territories. But this accusation against the Armenians was unfounded since most of them were, in spite of everything, extremely loyal to the Ottoman Empire and only wanted political and social reforms to be implemented within the confines of the Empire. In fact, educated Armenians were instrumental in working at the highest level to bring about reforms in the Ottoman administration.¹⁹

¹⁸ Balakian, 2003:114-115.

¹⁹ Sir Edwin Pears wrote the following about the administration of the Ottoman public debt in his biography of Sultan Abdul-Hamid, published in 1917 (quoted by Pasternadjan, 1986:285): “This administration soon found capable and safe auxiliaries, especially among the Armenians. Once they understood that the current oriental practices of corruption would not be tolerated and they would be protected in their resistance to these methods, they became invaluable auxiliaries. They are the ones who for the first time proved that Turkey could produce honest and capable civil servants.” The Frenchman Bertrand Bareilles noted that most Turkish statesmen during the so-called era of Reforms would get a Greek or Armenian

Until the Russo-Turkish war, the Great European powers had been aware of the crisis of Christian minorities living in the European territories of the Ottoman Empire. As the treatment against these minorities worsened, Europe regularly threatened force against Turkey unless serious reforms were implemented. Ironically, further away in Anatolia, the Armenians who lived under more appalling conditions had mostly escaped the notice of the West. It would take Russia entering the picture from the East and Great Britain (trying to protect her Eastern trade routes) coming in from the West, to rouse the conscience of the West to the situation of Armenians.

The result of this awakening would seal their fate. Instead of helping the Armenians, the demands for reforms became a sort of political game played between the powers, and a threat to be held like a hammer over the Ottoman Empire's head whenever convenient. The reforms were never enforced. In fact, none of the six European powers would lift a finger to stop the massacres of 1894-1896, or to punish the culprits. Instead, the political pressure would drive sultan Abdul Hamid²⁰ to seek to destroy the object of these reforms. Far from improving the lives of the Armenian population, Europe's "involvement" would crash down on their heads in the form of the Turk's axe.

4. THE 1894-1896 MASSACRES UNDER SULTAN ABDUL HAMID II

At the end of the 1877 war with Russia, the Ottoman Empire had been seriously weakened. It had lost the majority of its European territory in the Treaty of San Stefano, which had given autonomy to Romania, Serbia, and Bulgaria. The weaker the "sick man of Europe" (as Turkey was now known) became, the more it blamed its disintegration on the minorities in its midst rather than on Abdul Hamid's corrupt rule. Armenians, who were now the only significant minority left, had become the scapegoat. Thus the policy of ethnic cleansing would start, and between 1894 and 1896, planned and systematic attacks launched on the Armenian villages of the six Armenian provinces would leave between 200,000 – 300,000 dead (according to the Western diplomats who compiled the figures). The survivors would be left in utter poverty.

The goal of Abdul Hamid II had been to remove any dissension, any foreign element suspected of undermining the empire. The doctrine of Ottomanism was replaced by fierce nationalism and later, in 1908, with the Young Turk revolution, would be replaced by Pan Turkism and its claims of Turkish superiority and endeavours to unite all Turkish peoples as one.

On August 2, 1914, the Ottomans entered World War I on the side of the Austro-German alliance. The Young Turks had overthrown their opponents' government in January 1913 and now sought to reorganise the Ottoman army with the military assistance of the Germans. Since Kaiser Wilhelm II had always been a staunch supporter of Sultan Abdul-Hamid, this provided a favourable background to enter into such an alliance.²¹ A few months before the war, between January 26 and February 8, 1914, an international Armenian Reform Agreement had been signed

collaborator to do the work on his behalf. Bareilles mentions Dr Servitch (Serope Vitchenian) who was the counsellor of Fuad Pacha and Dr Odian, the collaborator of Midhat Pacha, himself the author of the Ottoman Constitution of 1876.

20 Known as the "Red Sultan" after the 1876 massacre of 25 000 Bulgarians on the eve of the Russo-Turkish war, which would lead to the creation of an independent Bulgaria. Future British Prime Minister Gladstone stigmatised these massacres in a widely read pamphlet entitled "Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East". Cf Pasternadjan, 1986:303.

21 Dadrian, 2002:2. Kaiser Wilhelm's policy of "Herrenvolke" no doubt appealed to the Young Turks who were developing Pan-Touranian ideals of unification of all Turkish groups throughout Asia.

in the wake of the 1912 Balkan war. This would be the last attempt of the European Powers (in particular Russia) to have reforms on behalf of the Armenian population implemented in the Ottoman Empire. That Turkey eventually entered in the war on the side of Germany and Austria can undoubtedly be ascribed to the fact that the Ottoman government wanted to extricate itself from this reform agreement.²²

5. DID THE YOUNG TURKS INTEND TO SYSTEMATICALLY ELIMINATE ARMENIANS FROM TURKEY?

The official record of conversations held by members of the C.U.P.²³ with foreign diplomats provides us with decisive clues to help answer this question. As a whole, we can classify the relevant documents under four main headings: political declarations made before the war; executive orders issued at the time of the events in question; the record of the trial of the culprits held by a Turkish military tribunal in 1919; and finally, the testimony of foreign diplomats relating their consular conversations with C.U.P. members²⁴.

The testimony of the American ambassador Henry Morgenthau – who was in Constantinople at the time of the events and had many private conversations with Interior Minister Talaat Pacha²⁵ – is invaluable in elucidating the extent to which the Young Turk Government was involved:

The conditions of the war gave to the Turkish Government its longed-for opportunity to lay hold of the Armenians ... They criticized their ancestors for neglecting to destroy or convert the Christian races to Mohammedanism at the time when they first subjugated them. Now (...) they thought the time opportune to make good the oversight of their ancestors in the 15th century. They concluded that once they had carried out their plan, the Great Powers would find themselves before an accomplished fact and that their crime would be condoned, as was done in the case of the massacres of 1895-1896, when the Great Powers did not even reprimand the Sultan.

22 K. Ziemke, a renowned German political scientist, stressed this fact in his book “Die neue Türkei 1914-1929” (published in Stuttgart in 1930). He in fact recognised the massacre and destruction of ‘one million Armenians’ during the war as the ‘radical solution’ of the Armenian question delivering Turkey from the burden of all future vexations; by so doing, the Turkish Government eliminated the conditions for future reform projects and the allied pressures.” (Dadrian, 2002(I):4). Already in August 1914, Turkey had expelled Norwegian General-Inspector Hoff, thus violating the Agreement of 8 February 1914.

23 Committee Union and Progress, the central organ of the party of the Young Turks.

24 As the available documents have been published and scrutinised by genocide scholars, I only intend to present a few of them here, mainly relying on Vahakn Dadrian’s compilation and study “The Armenian Genocide in Official Turkish Records, I & II, Yerevan, 2002”. It consists of a series of articles presenting and commenting on archival material.

25 Dadrian, 2002(I):13, originally “A Review of the Main Features of the Genocide” (in The Journal of Political and Military Sociology, Summer 1994). Talaat became Grand Vizier in 1917. He was sentenced to death *in absentia* by a Turkish Military Tribunal in 1919; he had escaped from jail and sought refuge in Berlin where he was shot dead in the street by a young Armenian, Soghomon Tehlirian on March 15, 1921. The trial of Tehlirian – who was eventually found not guilty – and in particular the testimonies of various persons, such as German pastor Johannes Lepsius, attracted worldwide attention. The proceedings of Tehlirian’s case were published in their entirety in 1985. Talaat’s remains were handed over to Turkey by Nazi Germany in 1943. Today, the mausoleums of Talaat Pacha and war minister Enver Pacha on “Freedom’s Hill” in Istanbul loom over the Armenian cemetery of Chichli. A boulevard in Ankara and an avenue in Edirne bear Talaat’s name. Enver, sentenced to death *in absentia*, also escaped from jail and joined anti-Bolshevik forces in Central Asia. He was killed on 4 August 1922 by an Armenian soldier during a battle fought in present day Tajikistan.

In his memoirs, Morgenthau later stated: “The real purpose of the deportation was robbery and destruction; it really represented a new method of massacre. When the Turkish authorities gave the orders for these deportations, they were merely giving the death warrant to a whole race; they understood this well and, in their conversations with me, they made no particular attempt to conceal the fact.”

After quoting Morgenthau, Vahakn Dadrian comments further:

Morgenthau’s opinion was unequivocally confirmed by the Young Turk party leader Talaat, one of his chief sources in Turkish government circles. Talaat told Dr Mordtman, the man in charge of the Armenian desk and the dragoman at the German Embassy at Istanbul, that Turkey was “intent on taking advantage of the war in order to thoroughly liquidate its internal foes, i.e., the indigenous Christians, without being thereby disturbed by foreign intervention.” (...) The Talaat statement is in German Ambassador Wangenheim’s June 17, 1915 report to his Chancellor in Berlin.” (...) In a joint memorandum to Berlin requesting the removal of German Ambassador Metternich, on account of the envoy’s unceasing efforts on behalf of the Armenians, Talaat (along with war lord Enver) reemphasised this point: “The work must be done now; after the war it will be too late.” (...) “These judgments are confirmed by Ernst Jäckh, the German expert on Turkey who undertook several inspection trips to Turkey during the war, relaying his conversations with high ranking Turkish officials and his observations to Kaiser Wilhelm II at his Headquarters, the German Chamber of Deputies and the Foreign Office. In his 22-page report covering his September-October trip he stated, “Indeed Talaat openly hailed the destruction of the Armenian people as a political relief.” (...) All these admissions and testimonies are confirmed by a Turkish newspaper which was able to gain access two days earlier to a pile of secret documents hidden in a suitcase which was found and impounded by the Turkish Judicial police during a raid (...) In its December 14, 1918, issue [i.e., after the end of the War, when the Young Turks were not in power any more] Sabah, the newspaper in question, concluded that “Talaat has ordered the extermination of the Armenians”.

The intention to eliminate Armenians existed even before the war started, and counters any claims by the Turkish Government that the Armenian losses were merely casualties of the war. This is made clear from the threats which, already in September-December of 1913, Djemal Pacha²⁶ addressed to Armenian Deputies serving in the Ottoman Parliament, the period during which the Armenians again pressed for reforms to be executed under European control:

Djemal repeatedly threatened the Armenian leaders with massacres through “the Muslim populations of the six provinces,” which were targeted for reforms. The threat was made to Vartkes, one of the Armenian Deputies serving in the Ottoman Parliament. Being an ardent Ittihadist²⁷, Vartkes, who was also a nationalist Dashnak leader, was advised to inform his party of this threat, warning it against further solicitation of European intervention (...) This threat was confirmed by K. Zohrab, another Armenian Deputy and a professor of international law at Istanbul’s law school. In his pre-World War I secret diary, Zohrab, in anticipation of the genocide, called the attention to Cemal’s threat.²⁸

26 A member of the Young Turk triumvirate running the regime between 1908 and 1918, and also Commander of the Fourth Army and Marine Minister during the War. He was killed in Tiflis (Georgia) on 25 July, 1922 by an Armenian.

27 The ruling party.

28 Dadrian, 2002(I):14. Both Vartkes and Zohrab were arrested and summarily killed during the war by agents of the Special Organisation.

Dadrian summarises the planned genocide as follows:

Alleging treasonable acts, separatism, and other assorted acts by the Armenians as a national minority, the Ottoman authorities ordered, for national security reasons, the wholesale deportation of the Armenian population of the Empire's eastern and south-eastern provinces. This measure was subsequently extended to virtually all of the Empire's Armenian population, including such far away cities as Bursa, Eskişehir, Konya, and the Ottoman capital, Istanbul.²⁹

The deportation was planned and effected in such a way that most of the deportees would die en route. The main destinations were Aleppo and Mossul, which implied forced marches through the desert of Syria without food or water, and with the constant harassment of irregular squads, often made up of Kurds. They were given a free hand to rape or abduct the women and loot the deportees of their last possessions. Jesse B. Jackson, the American consul in Aleppo (present day Halab in Syria) noted in a dispatch to Ambassador Morgenthau that the treatment of the deportees was "so severe" that "careful estimates place the number of survivors at only 15 per cent of those originally deported. On this basis the number of those surviving this far being less than 150,000 up to September 21, there seems to have been about 1,000,000 persons lost up to this date".³⁰ Jackson informed Morgenthau that he was sending copies of his report to the Governments of Great Britain, France, Russia and Italy, since those countries had entrusted their interests in this district to the American Consulate.

Balakian points out the role of the railway in this deportation, a means of transportation that would later be used with utter efficiency by the Nazi's in their own genocidal plans. Ironically enough, Turkish railways were built by Germans, many of whom, due to the work of maintenance, witnessed harrowing scenes. Many also tried to save their own Armenian staff. Soon, concentration camps appeared along the railway lines, such as Ras-ul-Ain, southeast of Urfa on the railway line to Mossul. Balakian quotes an account from a traveller going through the city of Afyon Karahisar, in October 1915: "The 16,000 deported Armenians who were living in the tents have been sent to Konia, in cattle-trucks. At night, while thousands of these unfortunate people, without food or shelter, shiver with cold, those brutes who are supposed to be their guardians attack them with clubs and push them towards the station. Women, children and old men are packed together in the trucks. The men have to climb on to the top of the trucks, in spite of the dreadful cold. Their cries are heart-breaking, but all is in vain. Hunger, cold and fatigue, together with the Government's deeds of violence, will soon achieve the extermination of this last remnant of the Armenian people."³¹

In order to give a legal character to this deportation order, Talaat Pacha requested that the grand vizier, through the cabinet, pass a special law that would authorize these deportations. As Balakian writes:

The memorandum was endorsed on May 29, 1915 and the cabinet acted on it the next day. The law was called the Temporary Law of Deportation. The commanders of armies, army corps, and divisions and commandants of local garrisons were now authorized to deport any groups of the population "on suspicion of espionage, treason, or military necessity." Because expropriating Armenian wealth and property was vital to the plan to destroy the

29 Dadrian, 2002(I): 6

30 Balakian, 2003:193.

31 2003:194-195.

Armenians, the C.U.P. devised legal as well as purely coercive and violent means of stealing, plundering, and appropriating Armenian movable and immovable wealth. In another legislative manoeuvre, the Temporary Law of Expropriation and Confiscation (September 1915) was passed.³²

The telegrams sent by the minister of Interior issuing the deportation orders are reproduced in an annexe.

Another confirmation of the systematic killing of the deportees can be found in the testimonies of numerous German officers. In his book, Balakian offers some of their incriminating accounts:

For instance, Colonel Stange, the highest-ranking German guerrilla commander in the Russian-Turkish border region, referred to the 'chetes' as 'scum' (Gesindel), who "in the area of Tercan killed without exception all the Armenians of the convoy coming from Erzurum." This "incontestable fact," he wrote, was carried out "with the assistance of the military escort." Similarly, German consul Scheubner-Richter, reporting on the massacres from Harput to Erzinjan, also referred to the killing squads as "scum."³³ The German consul in Aleppo, Dr Walter Rössler, in a July 27, 1915, report, noted that the killing squads were created by "the Turkish government which released convicts from the prisons, put them in soldier's uniforms, and sent them to areas through which the deportees are to pass".³⁴

It is difficult to assess the number of victims of this deportation. However, as Balakian notes, in the end between half and two-thirds of the more than two million Armenians living in their historic homeland in the Ottoman Empire were annihilated. Says Balakian: "The Association of Genocide Scholars of North America assesses that more than a million Armenian were killed, and probably somewhere between 1.2 and 1.3 million. Some historians put the figure at about 1.5 million, which spans the period from 1915 to 1922, when the last waves of killings took place."³⁵

As for Armenian soldiers in the Ottoman army,³⁶ they were officially disarmed within one month, at the beginning of 1915, and thrown into labour battalions. This order could only have

32 Standing alone, Turkish senator Ahmet Riza protested this new law, as he had been and would again during similar occasions. He said: "It is unlawful to designate the Armenian assets and properties as 'abandoned goods', for the Armenians, the proprietors, did not abandon their properties voluntarily; they were forcibly, compulsively removed from their domiciles and exiled. Now the government through its officials is selling their goods (...) nobody can sell my property if I am unwilling to sell it. Article 21 of the Constitution forbids it. If we are a constitutional regime functioning in accordance with constitutional law, we can't do this. This is atrocious. Grab my arm, eject me from my village, then sell my goods and properties, such a thing can never be permissible. Neither the conscience of the Ottomans nor the law can allow it." One of the founders of the Ittihad Party, Riza soon became a fierce opponent of its excesses. Dadrian reports that Dr Harry Stürmer, the Istanbul correspondent of the German daily newspaper *Kölnische Zeitung*, related an incident at the same Parliament when war lord Enver "went so far as to hurl the epithet 'shameless dog' at Ahmet Riza in the Senate without being called to order by the President." Dadrian (2002(I):23) further quotes Turkish historian Ahmet Refik, an eyewitness of the many procedures of expropriation, who relates a scene in the city of Ankara where the Armenians were reportedly forced to give back the money they had gotten right after selling their property to local Turks. Expressing dismay and shame, Refik wrote, "No government in history had at any time committed such a vicious crime. There is going to be a day of reckoning for this crime against humanity".

33 Scheubner-Richter was a close friend of Hitler, and was killed at his side during the aborted Munich coup. Hitler later referred to this death as an invaluable loss.

34 Balakian, 2003:184.

35 Id., 195-196.

36 They had first been conscripted in 1909, after the implementation of new constitutional reforms.

been given by the top echelons, and followed the humiliating defeat of Enver by the Russians at Sarikamish in December 1914-January 1915. Balakian explains the process:

Enver and his ruling elite, looking for a scapegoat, blamed the Armenians, claiming they were in sympathy with the Russians. Almost immediately after, the army began an organized plan of massacring the Armenian men in the labour battalions. Under the guard of armed soldiers, the Armenian soldiers were taken out into secluded areas where they were killed by gunshot or with bayonets by Turkish soldiers, often with the aid of the gendarmes and the chetes. In this manner, tens of thousands of Armenian men were disposed of. If the able-bodied Armenian men were not massacred in the labour battalions of the Ottoman army, they were most often taken out and shot in groups in the first stage of the deportation. As the Armenians were forced from their homes and organized into caravans to be marched out of town, the men were separated from the women and children and taken out into the fields outside their towns and villages and shot *en masse*. By killing the men quickly in these ways, the Turks rendered the rest of the Armenian community increasingly helpless without those who could best resist massacre and offer protection.³⁷

Just after the war, toward the end of 1918, stormy meetings at the Ottoman Parliament called the leaders of the C.U.P. to account for the way they had the Ottoman government endorsing and executing decisions of their Central Committee.³⁸ This would lead the following year to the military court set up to put them on trial. The documents of this military tribunal, unlike many archives which subsequently disappeared from the Turkish record, have been thoroughly investigated and have brought to the fore more than conclusive evidence with regard to the genocidal intentions of the Young Turks.³⁹ One excerpt of the verdict sums up the responsibility of the perpetrators:

37 Balakian, p. 184-185.

38 In the verdict ("Karamame") of the Turkish Military Tribunal, we read the following: "It is apparent from the statements of Minister of Finance Djavid Bey, and the written records of the Fifth Committee of Parliament, especially those of October 24-26, 1334 (1918) that the Executive of the Ittihad and Terakki Party had taken decisive and audacious steps involving the fate of the nation and the country, that it declared war on its own without even consulting the Council of Ministers and obtaining that body's consent, something which it found to be unnecessary – although even the kings cannot arbitrarily declare war. No good could come out of such behaviour. Everyone understood this. (...) After the revolution it had been deemed necessary to declare martial law, which the Party did – but without cessation, indefinitely. They enlisted the mob, the rabble, collectively to assail the Sublime Porte. They assassinated Nazim, the Minister of War, and his chief Aide, and they proceeded to overthrow the Cabinet of Kiamil Pasha, establishing a Cabinet of the Ittihad and Terakki. They summarily dismissed the experienced and honourable members of the Cabinet and replaced them with persons who belonged to the Party. There arrived a moment when people sought again the days of the tyrant [sultan Abdul-Hamid]. Everyone began to protest the rampant arbitrariness and tyranny. There was even more to it. They created an even greater atmosphere of harassment of the non-Islamic elements of the land, the Armenians in particular, who had hoped, from our precious Constitution, for justice and peace. These people now understood that they had been victimised by hypocrisy, and they assumed the posture of awaiting that opportune moment when they would be able to realise their former national aspirations. And the cause of all this were the Ittihadists themselves. They even raised national and racial issues among the Moslems of the land; they promoted divisiveness and conflict and jeopardised Ottoman unity. All this has been established by the intensive studies and examinations done of the matter as they appear in the charge of the Attorney General." (...) The legal form of the Ottoman Government called for authority to be divided into three agencies: Legislative, Executive and Judicial. The Ittihad rendered itself superior to the three branches of Government, brought itself to the fore as fourth power, prevailed through the force of threat, and disfigured our form of Government". (Source: www.armenian-genocide.org).

39 Such a document later called "The Ten Commandments" discovered and translated in early 1919 by British officials in Turkey. It is a blueprint of the Armenian extermination operation and appears to have

The five points projected by the Court are then the following:

(1) On the evidence of the trial which has taken place before this military Court, it is obvious that the massacres which took place in the Kaza of Boghazlayan (Ankara), the Sanjak of Yozgat, and the Vilayet of Trebizond, were organised and perpetrated by the leaders of the Ittihad and Terakki Party.

(2) The Defence argued that the news of these was communicated (to the Party) only after they had been committed. But even if this hypothesis were true, it is plain that even after the news was received of the atrocities, no steps were taken to prevent their repetition; nor were arrangements made for the punishment of the original criminals.

By official Turkish accounts alone, those directly killed numbered about 800,000 – not counting the tens of thousands of wartime conscripts exterminated by the military. Before the war, the Armenian population of the six Eastern provinces had approached two million, depending on the sources used – the Ottoman administration or the Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople. The figure of 800,000 victims – which today is reduced to a mere 300,000 by the official agencies of the Turkish government – was released by a post-war Turkish Interior Minister relying on statistics compiled by his Ministry. The same figure was also confirmed by Mustafa Kemal himself.⁴⁰ Of course, this figure does not account for all the victims killed indirectly – those who perished from exhaustion during the forced marches through the desert of Syria, or who died in the aftermath of the deportations. Neither does it account for the forced conversions of surviving Armenian children to Islam.⁴¹

The next Grand Vizier, Damad Ferid Pacha, acknowledged the facts on June 17, 1919 when he appeared before the Peace conference held in Paris. In his own words: “During the war, almost the entire civilized world was shocked to hear the account of the crimes which the Turks had committed. Far from me to try to cover these crimes which are of such nature as to let human conscience shudder of horror for ever. Even less shall I try to lessen the degree of responsibility of the actors of this great drama.”

In his response made on June 25, 1919, Georges Clémenceau, himself one of the European statesmen who most defended the Armenian cause before and during the War, took note of the fact that “Turkey formally or implicitly admits the massacres whose calculated atrocity equals or even surpasses everything which was ever recorded in history.”⁴²

been the centrepiece of a secret party meeting, which took place sometime in late December 1914 or in January 1915.

40 During an exchange with American Major General Harbord, the chief of the American Military Mission to Armenia, on 22 September 1919. Dadrian 2002(I): 21; cf also Kinross, 1964:189.

41 “In a message to his Ambassador in Istanbul (October 2, 1916), German Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, Zimmermann, who six weeks later replaced Jagow as Foreign Minister, denounced the exterminations accompanying the deportations, including the forcible “mass conversions” to Islam of Armenian children whose parents had been killed, as cause for “indignation in the entire civilized world” (Dadrian, 2002(I):11). Article 142 of the Treaty of Sèvres (signed between Turkey and the Allied powers on August 10, 1920) made specific reference of this fact: “Whereas, in view of the terrorist regime which has existed in Turkey since November 1, 1914, conversions to Islam could not take place under normal conditions, no conversions since that date are recognised and all persons who were non-Moslems before November 1, 1914, will be considered as still remaining such, unless, after regaining their liberty, they voluntarily perform the necessary formalities for embracing the Islamic faith. In order to repair so far as possible the wrongs inflicted on individuals in the course of the massacres perpetrated in Turkey during the war, the Turkish Government undertakes to afford all the assistance in its power or in that of the Turkish authorities in the search for and deliverance of all persons, of whatever race or religion, who have disappeared, been carried off, interned or placed in captivity since November 1, 1914.”

42 Pasternadjian, 1986:409-410.

The Armenian genocide would, alas, not be the last of the twentieth century. During his speech, pronounced before the military leaders at the Obersalzberg, August 22, 1939, in order to disclose to them the date of the start of the war against Poland, Adolf Hitler said:

(...) I have given the command – and I'll have anybody who utters but one word of criticism executed by a firing squad – that our war aim does not consist in reaching certain lines, but in the physical destruction of the enemy. Accordingly I have placed my death-head formations in readiness – for the present only in the East with order to them to send to death mercilessly and without compassion, men, women, and children of Polish derivation and language. Only thus shall we gain the living space [Lebensraum] which we need. Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?⁴³

The similarity of this statement with several declarations made by Talaat and his associates to Western diplomats posted in Constantinople before and during First World War, is so striking as to indicate that Hitler (perhaps via his former friend Scheubner-Richter⁴⁴) may have been very well informed of the planning and execution of the Young Turks' policies.

6. WHAT LESSONS CAN BE LEARNT FROM THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE IN TERMS OF PREVENTION OF GENOCIDE?

Although the prevention of Genocide forms part of a U.N. Convention, Vahakn Dadrian, along with other specialists, shows the limits of such a prevention under the current provisions. The following remarks are crucial to take into account when considering the present state of affairs on the African continent, in particular with the situation in Sudan:

The classification of genocide as a crime under international law in the U.N. Convention Against Genocide poses a number of difficulties in current international jurisprudence, where the principle of state sovereignty remains powerful. While a variety of new principles, doctrines, conventions, and covenants have emerged in the post-Nuremberg period and provided some help in this area, these difficulties remain substantial. Specifically, some of the obstacles to countering genocide under international law include: (a) The fact that international law has been largely confined to the level of declaratory principles. As Cardozo explained: "International law ... has at times ... a twilight existence during which it is hardly distinguishable from morality or justice, until at length the imprimatur of a court attests its jural quality" (...)

(b) The uncertainties attending the "self-executing" provisions in certain treaties which have somewhat diminished the usefulness of these treaties as legally binding instruments in municipal courts;

(c) The fact that treaties, lacking the force of legislation, often cannot effectively specify a crime, assign a jurisdiction, or provide the machinery for the administration of punitive justice;

43 Cf <http://www.armenian-genocide.org/hitler.html>: "The text above is the English version of the German document handed to Louis P. Lochner in Berlin. It first appeared in Lochner's 'What about Germany?' (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1942), pp. 1-4. The Nuremberg Tribunal later identified the document as L-3 or Exhibit USA-28. Two other versions of the same document appear in Appendices II and III. For the German original cf *Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik 1918-1945, Serie D, Band VII*, (Baden-Baden, 1956), pp. 171-172.

44 Cf footnote 33.

- (d) The absence of international law of criminal statutes and jurisdiction;
- (e) The lack of international criminal courts competent to deal with the offenders.

As indicated above, however, the major impediment to successful prevention of punishment of genocide under international law are the principles of state sovereignty and *raison d'état*. These principles allow a state substantial latitude in the treatment of their own subjects and substantial impunity from extra- or supra-national jurisdiction over such actions (...)

Another lesson which ought to be learnt concerns the process of revisionism and the re-writing of history for political or nationalist expediency. The history of historiography alerts the attention of specialists and cultural analysts to underlying motives when reconstituting and presenting facts relevant to entire communities of human beings. The quest for justice cannot be separated from the quest for truth if one is to leave the troubled shores of political convenience and opportunism. It is self-evident that there is an ethical component at the core of such a quest. Reconciliation, future cooperation, and better understanding between different communities whose differences led to bloodshed in the past, is dependent on the acknowledgement of that shared past, with a balanced appreciation of each of its tenets. For some, being confronted with their community's past is an unbearable sacrifice to have to make for the sake of the future. For others, the future exists only insofar as it can be rebuilt from a point in history which has long ceased to be. A balanced appreciation of today's situation for the sake of tomorrow takes into account that human political and cultural boundaries are not meant to remain the same for ever. This appreciation is in itself an element of justice, inasmuch as it realises that the use of brutal force can never enforce boundaries for a long time, let alone make them permanent.

ANNEXE

THE ANDONIAN TELEGRAMS

The official coded telegrams dispatched by Turkish Minister of Interior Talaat Pacha authorising the ongoing massacre of Armenians from March 1915 onwards, are known as the Andonian telegrams. They were found in Aleppo in 1918, after the Turkish army's military debacle. They were first reproduced in the Daily Telegraph of 29 May 1922, as well as in the book of Andonian "Documents officiels concernant les massacres arméniens", with photos of the originals (Paris, 1922). Their authenticity has been questioned by some, due to their incorrect presentation when first disclosed. However, the patient work of reconstruction which has since then been undertaken no longer allows any doubt as to their authenticity.

The first of the Andonian telegrams is signed by the "Djemiet", that is, the executive committee of the "Young Turk" organisation. Given that Talaat was himself chairman of the organisation, the telegram was necessarily issued with his authorisation:

March 25th, 1915:

To Djemal Bey, Delegate at Adana:

The duty of everyone is to effect on the broadest lines possible the realization of the noble project of wiping out of existence the well-known elements who for centuries have been the barrier to the empire's progress in civilization. We must, therefore, take upon ourselves the entire responsibility, pledging ourselves to this action no matter what happens, and always remembering how great is

the sacrifice Government has made in entering the World War. We must work so that the means used may lead to the desired end. In our dispatch dated February 18th, we announced that the Djemiet has decided to uproot and annihilate the different forces which for centuries have been a hindrance; for this purpose it is forced to resort to very bloody methods. Certainly the contemplation of these methods horrified us, but the Djemiet saw no other way of insuring the stability of its work.

Ali Riza [the committee delegate at Aleppo] harshly criticized us and urged that we be merciful; such simplicity is nothing short of stupidity. We will find a place for all those who will not cooperate with us, a place that will wring their delicate heartstrings. (...)

September 3rd, 1915

To the Prefecture of Aleppo:

We advise that you include the woman and children also in the orders which have been previously prescribed as to be applied to the males of the intended persons. Select employees of confidence for these duties.

Minister of Interior Talaat.

September 16th

To the Prefecture of Aleppo:

You have already been advised that the Government, by order of the Djemiet, has decided to destroy completely all the indicated persons living in Turkey.

All who oppose this decision and command cannot remain on the official staff of the empire.

Their existence must come to an end, however tragic the means may be; and no regard must be paid to either age or sex, or to conscientious scruples.

Minister of Interior Talaat.

November 18th, 1915

To the Prefecture of Aleppo:

It appears, from the interventions which have recently been made by the American Ambassador at Constantinople on behalf of his government, that the American Consuls are obtaining information by some secret means. They remain unconvinced, despite our assurance that the deportations will be accomplished in safety and comfort.

Be careful that events which attract attention shall not occur in connection with those who are near cities and other centers. In view of our present policy, it is most important that foreigners who are in those parts shall be convinced that the expulsion of the Armenians is in reality only deportation.

Therefore it is necessary that a show of gentle dealing shall be made for a while, and the usual measures be taken in suitable places.

All persons who have given information to the contrary shall be arrested and handed over to the military authorities for trial by court-martial. This order is recommended as very important.

Talaat

December 11th, 1915

To the Prefecture of Aleppo:

We are informed that some correspondents of Armenian journals are acquiring photographs and letters which depict tragic events, and these they give to the American Consul at Aleppo.

Dangerous people of this kind must be arrested and suppressed.

Minister of the Interior

Talaat

December 29th, 1915

To the Prefecture of Aleppo:

We are informed that foreign officers are finding along the roads the corpses of the indicated persons, and are photographing them. Have these corpses buried at once and do not allow them to be left near the roads.

This order is recommended as very important.

Minister of Interior

Talaat

January 15th, 1916

To the government of Aleppo:

We are informed that certain orphanages which have opened also admitted the children of the Armenians.

Should this be done through ignorance of our real purpose, or because of contempt of it, the Government will view the feeding of such children or any effort to prolong their lives as an act completely opposite to its purpose, since it regards the survival of these children as detrimental.

I recommend the orphanages not to receive such children; and no attempts are to be made to establish special orphanages for them.

Minister of the Interior

Talaat

(Undated)

*From the Ministry of the Interior to the Governor of Aleppo:
Only those orphans who cannot remember the terrors to which their parents have been subjected
must be collected and kept.
Send the rest away with the caravans.*

*Minister of Interior
Talaat.*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ak?it, I 1989. *Guide de L'Anatolie Orientale*. Istanbul: Publications Culturelles et Touristiques.
- Alcock, D 2002. *By Far Euphrates, A Tale on Armenia in the 19th Century*. Neerlandia, Alberta: Inheritance Publications.
- Armenian Political Trials Proceedings 1, 1985. *The Case of Soghomon Tehlirian*, tr. By Vartkes Yeghiayan. L.A., CA: A.R.F. Varantian Gomideh.
- Balakian P 2003. *The Burning Tigris, The Armenian Genocide and America's Response*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Dadrian, VN 2002. *The Armenian Genocide in Official Turkish Records I*. Yerevan: Museum-Institute of the Armenian Genocide.
- Dadrian, VN 2002. *The Armenian Genocide in Official Turkish Records II*. Yerevan: Museum-Institute of the Armenian Genocide.
- Del Valle, A 2004. *La Turquie dans l'Europe. Un cheval de Troie islamiste? Avant-propos de Péroncel-Hugoz*. Paris: Éditions des Syrtès.
- Grant, RM 2004. *Augustus to Constantine. The Rise and Triumph of Christianity in the Roman World. Foreword by M. M. Mitchell*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Kinross, P 1964. *Atatürk, the Rebirth of a Nation*. Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi.
- Pastermadjian, H 1986. *Histoire de l'Arménie Depuis les Origines jusqu'au Traité de Lausanne*. Paris: Librairie Orientale H. Samuelian.

KEY WORDS

Armenia
Persecution
Islam
Genocide
History of the 20th Century

TREFWOORDE

Armenië
Vervolging
Islam
Massamoord
Geschiedenis van die 20ste eeu

CONTACT DETAILS

Eric Kayayan
Posbus 65261
ERASMUSRAND
0165

Tel: 012 3453495
E-pos: ekayayan@iafrica.com