

# A GENERAL APPRAISAL OF THE ARMENIAN ISSUE\*

(ERMENİ MESELESİNİN GENEL BİR DEĞERLENDİRMESİ)

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**Abstract:** *The Armenian issue was one of the many issues which plagued the Ottoman Empire in its later days, corresponding to the last quarter of the 19th century. By the year 1878, all major Christian peoples of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans had created their independent or autonomous states. During this process, no attention was paid to the fact that the Muslim and/or Turkish population of the Balkans were a very numerous element, that they had lived there for centuries, that in many areas they constituted majority. All three major national movements – the Serbian, Greek and Bulgarian movements – were determined that the Muslim/Turkish population should leave, that if need be, that they should be exterminated. It was against this background that the Armenian issue was raised. Speculation is incompatible with serious historiography. However, one cannot resist the temptation of asking whether or not Muslim- Armenian peaceful coexistence might not have been possible, if World War I had not intervened. Today, we are entering a new phase in the Armenian issue. The attention that the Diaspora Armenians and Armenian propaganda has been able to get from the European Parliament, the US Congress and similar bodies, may be seen as a success for them. However, it is far from certain that they will be able to get exactly what they want. As more balanced views of the Armenian issue become prevalent in Western scholarship, these will gradually filter down to the media and thus in turn influence public opinion. Armenians of the Diaspora (and those who had lived in the Soviet Union), seeing that their exaggerated views are no longer accepted, that they are being subjected to critical examination, will have to let go of their passionate positions. Perhaps then, a symbolic reconciliation and a scholarly dialogue will be possible.*

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**Öz:** *Ermeni meselesi, 19. Yüzyılın son çeyreğine denk gelecek şekilde, Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun son günlerinde vahim sonuçlar yaratan pek çok meseleden bir tanesiydi. 1878'e gelindiğinde, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Balkanlar'daki tüm Hristiyan nüfusları bağımsız veya özerk devletler kurmuşlardı. Bu süreçte Müslüman ve/veya Türk nüfusun Balkanlar'da sayıca bir hayli fazla olduğu, o coğrafyada yüzyıllardır yaşamış olduğu ve pek çok bölgede çoğunluk oluşturulduğu tamamen göz ardı edilmiştir. Üç büyük milli bağımsızlık hareketi olan Sırp, Yunan ve Bulgar bağımsızlık hareketleri, Müslüman/Türk nüfusun gitmesi ve gerekirse de yok edilmesi konusunda kararlıydı. Ermeni meselesi böyle bir arka plan mevcutken ortaya çıkmıştır. Dayanaksız görüş belirtmenin, ciddi tarih yazımında yeri yoktur. Ancak, Birinci Dünya Savaşı araya girmiş olmasaydı acaba Müslüman-Ermeni barışçıl ortakyaşamının mümkün olup olmadığı çok cezbedici bir sorudur. Günümüzde Ermeni meselesinde yeni bir döneme giriyoruz. Ermeni diasporasının ve Ermeni propagandasının, Avrupa Parlamentosu, ABD Kongresi ve benzer kurumlardan elde ettikleri ilgiye bakarak kendilerinin başarı elde ettiğini düşünebilirler. Ancak, tam olarak istediklerini elde edecekleri kesin olmaktan çok uzak olasılıktır. Batı akademi dünyasında Ermeni meselesiyle ilgili daha dengeli görüşler yaygınlık kazandıkça, bu görüşler zamanla basına yansıtılacak, bu vesileyle de kamuoyunu etkileyecektir. Abartılı görüşlerinin artık kabul görmediğinin farkına varan ve eleştirel incelemelere maruz kalan Ermeni diasporası mensupları (ve eksi Sovyetler Birliği'nde yaşamış olanlar), bu meselede tutkuyla kenetlenmiş oldukları konularından vazgeçmek durumunda kalacaklardır. Belki bu gelişme olduğunda, sembolik bir uzlaşma yapmak ve akademik bir tartışma gerçekleştirebilmek mümkün hale gelecektir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Ermeni meselesi, Balkan milli bağımsızlık hareketleri, Birinci Dünya Savaşı, Ermeni diasporası, uzlaşma*

The Armenian issue was one of the many issues which clouded the life of the Ottoman Empire in its later days, during the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Ottoman Empire, according to European public opinion, was the “sick man of Europe”. It was the source of the Eastern Question, that prickly problem which continually threatened to bring on a general European war. From the point of view of European opinion, the solution to the problem was the creation of national states and the expulsion, “bag and baggage” of the Turks, first from the Balkans, and then, perhaps, even from Anatolia or at least from sections of it. Thus, the Ottoman Empire, a multi-national state, was to be transformed into separate national states. Since in many cases the national homes, far from being clear-cut, were very blurred and different ethnic groups were living ‘enmeshed’ in each other, the creation of national states meant the expulsion of a great number of people from their homelands. Especially in the case of Moslems, this expulsion was often accomplished by terror and/or massacre. The nationalist within each group were irresistibly attracted to this model, and European diplomacy continually strove, by peaceful or war-like methods, to achieve this aim. By the year 1878, all the major Christian peoples of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans had created their independent or autonomous states. There still remained Albania and the division of Macedonia and Thrace, but it was felt that it was question of time before Macedonia and Thrace would be shared between the Balkan states. The Greeks also had irredentist claims in Ottoman Asia. During this process, no attention was paid to the fact that the Moslem and/or Turkish population of the Balkans were a very numerous element, that they had lived there for centuries, that in many areas they constituted majority. All three major national movements – the Serbian, Greek and Bulgarian movements – were determined that the Moslem/Turkish population should leave, that if need be, they should be slaughtered out of existence. Majority rule, self-determination, the right to a homeland was not for the Moslems.

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It was against this background that the Armenian issue was raised. First, it entered the 1878 Treaty of Berlin (art. 61) – the Ottoman government was called upon to introduce reforms in the so-called “Armenian” provinces in Eastern Turkey. Then, with the creation in 1878 of Hintchak, in 1890 of

Dachnak organizations, the Armenians themselves began to agitate for autonomy/independence. Nationalist Armenians and probably most Europeans felt that it would be a 'repeat performance' of what had happened in the Balkans. Indeed, if the Entente navies or armies had been able to break through the Dardanelles in 1915, or if the Treaty of Sérvés had been put into effect, they might have come pretty close to their ideal (of course, whether they could have maintained an Anatolian Armenia for long is a different matter altogether).

By hindsight, these efforts appear to be the very height of folly, because the Armenian organizations chose the Bulgarian model or method. This meant practicing terrorism and from time to time organizing open revolts where Moslems would be massacred. The Moslems, in their turn, would conduct counter-massacres. This would draw the attention of European public opinion, which, disregarding the massacre of Moslems (very often, this wouldn't get reported), would pressure their governments to intervene in favor of the Armenians. This line of action seemed attractive, but there were very serious impediments to its success: 1) The Armenians were nowhere in Anatolia in the majority. Even in Bitlis, where they were most numerous, they were only one third of population. 2) Eastern Anatolia was almost inaccessible to European powers because of the extremely mountainous terrain and the almost complete absence of railroads and roads. 3) On top of this, the Armenians were to attempt this feat on the eve of, and during the Young Turk revolutionary period (1908-1918) – just when a revolutionary government was attempting a rapid modernization of the country. In other words, the adversary of the Armenians were now not the decadent Sultans of yore, but the Young Turk governments that were determined to end the "sickness" of the Ottoman Empire by radical means.

Though in reality unanswerable (because of its speculative nature) this seems a valid question, because thanks to the 1908 Revolution, the Armenians, like everyone else, achieved political representation in Parliament. As far as I know, relations between the Dachnak and the CUP (Committee of Union and Progress – the Young Turks) leaders were continuous and cordial. Armenian deputies played an active and constructive role in Parliamentary debates. Relations between Moslems and Armenians were peaceful – except in the bloody events in Adana during the abortive and short-lived counter-revolution of 1909 – and in many places, I presume, must have returned to pre-1890 cordiality. A few weeks before the beginning of the War, the Dachnaks, in their Congress held in Erzurum, had decided not to engage in anti-Ottoman activities. However, the enthusiastic activity of Armenian bands based in Russian territory, the conditioning and encouragement provided for many years by American missionaries and Europeans in general, the rhetoric Armenian nationalism and,

finally, the entry of the Ottoman Empire in the War, the catastrophic defeat of the Ottoman Army before the Russian army at Sarikamış, and the appearance of the mighty fleets and armies of the Entente before the Dardanelles, swept away all Armenian scruples. Many of them committed what every country in the world considers an act of heavy treason – they not only sided with the enemy, but they actively fought with the Russians or else they engaged in guerilla warfare against their lawful government and their compatriots. Thus, the decision to transfer the Armenian population of Eastern and Central Anatolia to Syria and Iraq.<sup>1</sup> During this transfer, many Armenians died. For different reasons, like revenge, robbery, hatred, some were killed. In some of the latter cases the open or tacit cooperation of the local authorities may have existed. A large number also died because they had to walk very long distances due to the absence of proper means of transportation. During the War, 1397 persons were tried by military courts for acts connected with the Armenian evacuation. As an illustration of the difficult conditions in Eastern Anatolia, let me point out that during the French retreat from Maraş in the winter of 1920, of the 5000 Armenians who marched with them to İslahiye, 2000-3000 died on the way exposure, hunger, disease.<sup>2</sup> There was no fighting on the way, and the French troops certainly must have done all they could for the fleeing Armenians.

A ‘*solution*’ to the problem: The Armenian side is full of stories of atrocities committed by Moslems *vis-à-vis* the Armenians. Some of these stories are probably pure fabrications, others may be gross exaggerations, but it seems to me that many are probably true and contain acts that are to be deplored. However, the Moslem side is also full of stories about Armenian atrocities.<sup>3</sup> Again, some of these horror stories are probably pure fabrication, other may be gross exaggerations, but many are probably true and contain acts that are to be deplored. (Often the Armenians themselves tire of showing themselves as pure martyrs and then they begin to sing the praises of their heroes and warriors, recounting how well they “punished” the Moslems.) Unfortunately, there are few Armenian writers or pro-Armenians who are ready to concede this symmetry. Many Armenians died during the transfer of population, but so did 2.5 million Anatolian Moslems between 1914 and 1923. A good many of these were most certainly killed by the Armenians. Of course, it is true that

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1 Transfer or evacuation of population and not deportation, because Syria and Iraq were then not foreign countries, but provinces of the Ottoman state.

2 George Boudière, “Notes sur la Campagne de Syrie-Cilicie”, *Turcica*, tome IX/2-X, (1978), p. 160.

3 See, for instance, Kâmuran Gürün, *Le Dossier Armenian* (Triangle, 1984); Kara Schemsi, *Turcs er Arméniens devant l’Histoire* (Genève, Imprimerie Nationale, 1919); Congrès National, *Documents Relatifs aux Atrocités commises par les Arméniens sur la Population Musulmane* (Constantinople, 1919); Général Mayéwski, *Les Massacres d’Arménie* (Pétersbourg, Imprimerie Militaire, 1916). The last three have recently reprinted.

there is no symmetry in fact that, whatever their suffering, the surviving Anatolian Moslems were able to stay in their homelands, whereas Armenian survivors, though eventually given a chance to return to their homelands, generally chose not to.<sup>4</sup> In that respect the Armenian situation is perhaps more tragic and merits our further sympathy. The Turks, who have the tragic experience of hundreds of thousands of Balkan Moslems who survived sword and fire, but were uprooted from their homelands and were forced to take refuge in Anatolia and Thrace, are in a position to understand the feelings of Armenians.

My purpose is not to minimize anybody's suffering, least of all that of the Armenians. But it does seem to me that the Armenian problem must be 'solved'. And the only realistic and humane 'solution' is for the Turks and Armenians to accept publicly the fact that they inflicted great wrongs on each other. I believe Armenians privately admit the wrongs they did to the Turks, but they probably insist that the wrongs done to them were much greater than the ones they perpetrated. This is a matter which can and perhaps ought to be argued, but I am afraid no conclusion would be reached – first, because though the essential facts are more or less known, many of the details are either very difficult to find or else unavailable and secondly, because it is such an emotional issue. But if we suppose that a monument were to be erected to commemorate those who died in Anatolia during and immediately after World War I, irrespective of creed and nationality, and if representatives of the Turkish and Armenian peoples, were to place wreaths at this monument, such an act might go some way towards 'solving' the problem. I would think (and hope) the Turks and Turkish Armenians would do this, but how about Soviet Armenians or Armenians of the Diaspora or even European Armenophiles? It seems to me the latter have worked themselves up into such a psychology that many of them would have some difficulty in performing such an act.

*Turkish and European attitudes towards the issue:* At the end of World War I, the Ottoman government signed the Treaty of Sérvés (1920) which was to create a large and independent Armenia in Anatolia. However, no state ratified this treaty, which thus never entered into force. Instead, the victorious democratic-nationalist government of the Turkish Grand National Assembly signed the Lausanne Treaty (1923) which preserved the integrity of Anatolia and secured the complete independence of the new state. With these

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4 According to the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), Armenians living in territories which had been detached from Turkey were given the right to come to Turkey and opt for Turkish nationality within two years. If I am not mistaken, at the end of World War II, the Soviet Union also opened its doors to Armenians who wished to settle in Armenia. I do not know if it was possible for Armenians to emigrate to Armenia before that or whether they can do so since then.

developments, a large number of the Armenians who had not been evacuated from Anatolia in 1915 or who had returned at the end of the war left Anatolia by their own volition. Only a small number stayed on. Relations with Armenia had been settled by the Treaty of Alexandropol (Leninakan) at the end of 1920. The new Turkish regime was a radical departure from the past, a revolutionary republic which set out to create entirely new institutions. Even the alphabet was changed. The Turks felt that Ottoman past and, with it, the Armenian problem was now buried and forgotten. Turkish history school books dealing with Ottoman history did not even mention the Armenian problem. University scholars or historians in general never did any significant research that dealt primarily with this issue. (Perhaps the only notable exception was a book by Esat Uras (*Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi*) published in 1950.)

While Turks paid almost no attention to the Armenian issue, believing that it was now something irrelevant, belonging to the Ottoman past, the issue was kept alive in Europe and the US by Armenians and others – alive, but very much in the background. For instance, Bernard Lewis, in *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (1961) doesn't even mention the Armenian evacuation in his account of the Ottoman Empire during World War I, but he later has two brief paragraphs on the Armenian question and the evacuation in a chapter entitled "Community and Nation".<sup>5</sup> All along, the Turks felt confident they made a clean break with the past.

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However, European opinion, like all public opinion, especially as regards foreign countries, is prone to think in *clichés* (stereotypes). According to such *clichés*, Brazilians dance the samba, Mexican wear sombreros and like siestas, Spain is the land of bullfighting, the French like wine and women, the Germans tend to be overweight and are fond of beer, etc. Thus the *cliché* of Turkey, "land of harems" and, on the same level, "the barbarian, infidel Turks" who had successfully conquered and ruled for a very long time a good part of Europe (at the same time terrorizing the rest) continued to co-exist with the image of modern Turkey of Atatürk's reforms. The *cliché* was ready to accept at face value Armenian (or pro-Armenian) accounts of the evacuation. So readily and so uncritically, in fact, that with the passage of years the Armenian accounts

<sup>5</sup> B. Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (Oxford, 1968), p. 356.

became more and more exaggerated. It would make an interesting study to ascertain the progress of this exaggeration. But it should be borne in mind that the initial story itself was one –sided and exaggerated enough. It had been prepared by the war-time propaganda machine of the Entente, by Toynbee, Bryce and others who were doing 'military service' with their historiography.<sup>6</sup> It was the same propaganda machine which called the Germans "Huns", and which fabricated or exaggerated horror stories of German soldiers starving Belgian children and bayoneting defenseless women.

On July 15, 1974, with encouragement from the junta of colonels who at that time ruled Greece, Nikos Sampson, leader of EOKA (the Greek Cypriot extreme right-wing terrorist organization) seized power in Cyprus. The aim of the coup was probably to achieve union with Greece. Thereupon Turkey, to safeguard the Turkish Cypriots, who had suffered a great deal from Greek Cypriot oppression (and atrocities), used its right of intervention which was given it by the international treaties of London and Zurich. A Turkish force landed in Cyprus and occupied the northern section of the island. The next year, with the murder of the Turkish ambassador in Vienna (October 22, 1975) began a campaign of Armenian terrorism directed primarily against Turkish diplomats. Since then, over 30 diplomats have been murdered. The great majority of these attacks occurred in European countries. Turkish Airlines has also been a frequent object of attack. Armenian terrorists in 1982 attacked Esenboğa Airport (Ankara) and in 1983 Orly Airport, killing indiscriminately (nine in the first, eight in the second, besides many wounded). As a propaganda feat, it must be admitted that the campaign was until recent years a major success: 1) For many years, European police were unable to find the culprits, who seemed to disappear into thin air. In later years, sometimes suspects were caught, but in many cases they were released, acquitted or else they received light sentences. The Armenians were allowed to convert the trials of terrorists into propaganda forums where the 'sins' of Ottoman and Turkish governments were vociferously 'judged'. 2) European newspapers, radio-television networks immediately ran stories about "the Armenian genocide" in order to "explain" to their publics why the latest murder or murders occurred. This sort of behavior became a 'warm' invitation for the next attack.

Why did Europe receive Armenian terrorism 'so well'? First, because many European countries had Armenian minorities which, thanks to their skills and

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6 Toynbee later had this to say: "...I was being employed by His Majesty's Government to compile all available documents on the recent treatment of the Armenians by the Turkish Government in a 'Blue Book' which was duly published and distributed as war-propaganda!" About Armenian war-time cooperation with the Russians: "... the Armenians had got themselves massacred by the Turks for helping the Allies without getting the Allies committed in return to doing anything for them." A. J. Toynbee, *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1923), pp. 49-50.



industry, had built a place for themselves. This enabled them to exert a certain influence which they used to spread their side of the story. This was happening while Turks paid no heed to Armenian issue. One other reason why European were receptive to the Armenian version was because the ancient cliché of the “barbarian, infidel Turk”, even though initially in the background of the collective mind of Europe,<sup>7</sup> provided fertile ground for it. Thirdly, despite the fascist nature of the Greek junta and of the Sampson coup, and the legal character of the Turkish intervention in Cyprus, Greek propaganda was able to considerable extent to impress European public opinion that this was a “Turkish invasion” pure and simple. Fourthly, the negative attitude of European public opinion towards military rule and/or martial law in Turkey since 1980 was also an important factor. These factors helped to re-animate the old *cliché* and the image of the modernizing, progressive Turkey of Atatürk began to fade into the background.

Of course, another question that should be answered is why the Armenians, ‘out of the blue’ began their campaign of terrorism in 1975. One factor was probably the desire to exploit the anti-Turkish current in Europe resulting from the Cyprus affair. Another factor may have been Greek Cypriot encouragement and aid to avenge the Turkish intervention. A ‘good number of Greek Cypriots had a great deal of experience in terrorism. A third factor may have been Soviet encouragement, especially directed towards ASALA, the Marxist Armenian terrorist organization. Presumably, the motive for this would be to introduce another element of discord into NATO. A last factor which comes to mind is the ease with which terrorists could be trained in Lebanon, which has a sizable Armenian population and which lately has been living in conditions of anarchy and civil war.

*The moral issues raised by terrorism:* In a democracy any organ of the mass media is entitled to its opinions and prejudices. A television or radio station, a newspaper may believe every word of the Armenian question as presented by the most extreme Armenians. They may make, if they so wish, daily programs or run full-page stories about the Armenian “genocide”. However, decency, morality and civilization require that when a Turk has been assassinated by Armenian terrorists, this act should be fully and squarely condemned, not “explained” by trumpeting once more Armenian propaganda. The mass media in question should make or resume their propaganda only after a ‘decent’ span of time has elapsed. Otherwise, with the deceased person’s family still quivering under the shock of assassination, that sort of propaganda is an obscene act. It is also an invitation to the next murder. I use the word

7 What I say about Europe and Europeans in this article generally also applies to North America, though perhaps to a lesser degree.

civilization on purpose. One of the foremost hallmarks of the transition from barbarism to civilization is that punishment is meted out only to the person who has committed a crime and to no one else. Punishing his family, descendants, neighbors, fellow-countrymen, coreligionists is a sign of barbarism and/or racialism. A civilized person cannot or is not supposed to see the slightest justice in the killing of a Turk who wasn't even born in 1915. On the Armenian issue, the behavior of European mass media has, on the whole, been a dismal failure of morality and decency, a surrender to the most primitive prejudices.

I would also like to point out that this kind of uncritical pro-Armenian attitude probably is a disservice to the Armenians themselves. Nobody with any sense of justice can expect the Armenians to forget the tragic events of 1915. However, not forgetting is one thing, making a tragic historical event the central characteristic of an ethnic group, a characteristic by which others are to recognize it, is another thing. I am not a social psychologist, but it seems to me that the latter situation is not a very healthy one. The Armenians as an ethnic group, with their particular language and religion, their various qualities, have more to them than their evacuation from their homelands. An ethnic group that has vitality should not live in the past, but in the present and the future. Secondly, attitudes and action that tend to make Armenian terrorism a 'success' probably often elevate terrorist organizations into becoming representatives of the Armenian community. The unpleasant problems associated with rule, administration or representation by gun-wielding persons are well enough known to necessitate elaboration.

*The end of Turkish neglect:* One result of the campaign of Armenian terrorism has been that some Turks and some Westerners who are not Armenophiles (or Turcophobes) have begun to look into the matter. Their research has led to certain publications which have revealed some of the exaggerations, distortions or fabrications of Armenian propaganda. Those who desire to have a balanced, objective view of the Armenian issue will have to read some of these publications. I will enumerate a number of them and put forth their main arguments.

One such book is a work by Şinasi Orel and Süreyya Yuca, *Ermenilerce Talat Paşa'ya Atfedilen Telgrafların Gerçek Yüzü*.<sup>8</sup> The arguments in this book have been summarized in English, French and German by Türkkaya Ataöv.<sup>9</sup>

8 Şinasi Orel and Süreyya Yuca, *The True Nature of the Telegrams Attributed by the Armenians to Talat Pasha*, Ankara, TTK, 1983.

9 Türkkaya Ataöv, *The Andonian "Documents" Attributed to Talat Pasha are Forgeries!* (Ankara, SBF, 1984). Ataöv is the author of various booklets such as *A British Source (1916) on the Armenian Question (1985)*; *A 'Statement' Wrongly Attributed to Mustafa Kemâl Atatürk* (SBF, 1984); *A Brief Glance at the "Armenian Question"* (Ankara Chamber of Commerce, 1984).

Andonian is the name of the Armenian who got hold and later published certain telegrams written purportedly by the Minister of the Interior Talat Pasha, ordering the massacre of the Armenians. The study in question is a thorough investigation which proves that the so-called documents are forgeries.

Another work is by Bilal Şimşir, *Malta Sürgünleri*.<sup>10</sup> Şimşir here recounts, according to documents from the British and Turkish archives, the story of about 140 Turks who were imprisoned by the British in Malta at the end of World War I with the main intention of bringing them to trial for persecuting the Armenians. However, even though the Ottoman archives were at the disposal of the British (as well as of the French and Italians) who had occupied Istanbul and though they had about three years in which they could build a case – with the help of the Armenians – nothing came out of it. Not only that, but earlier when the Tevfik Pasha government, in February 1919 addressed notes to five neutral countries of the time, namely Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland, Holland, Spain, asking them to send two judges each in order to sit in a Commission of Inquiry that would ascertain those responsible for the transfer and the events accompanying it, (the Ottoman government undertook to cover all expenses), the British took measures to prevent this move. They, together with the French, discouraged the Spanish, Danish and Dutch governments from responding favorably to this quest. As to Sweden and Switzerland, the occupying powers went so far as to prevent the sending of the telegrams addressed to these governments.

A third work is by former ambassador Kâmuran Gürün. Published in Turkish and French,<sup>11</sup> it is a very comprehensive book (360 pages in the French version) which studies this question up till the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.

A fourth book by Justin McCarthy, entitled *Muslims and Minorities* is a demographic study which looks into the population question of Ottoman Anatolia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>12</sup> Each community is separately taken up and province by province, figures emanating from official Ottoman sources, the Patriarchates, European sources are compared. The result, as regards Armenian

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10 *The Malta Exiles*, Istanbul, Milliyet y., 1976. The author treats the same subject in an article in English: "The Deportees of Malta and the Armenian Question", in *Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey (1912-1926)* (Istanbul, Boğaziçi Üniversitesi, 1984). Şimşir has also published *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians* (Ankara, TTK), and *The Genesis of the Armenian Question* (Ankara, TTK, 1983).

11 Op. cit.

12 Justin McCarthy, *Muslims and Minorities: The Population of Ottoman Anatolia and the End of the Empire* (NYU Press, 1983). McCarthy also has a very enlightening article, "The Anatolia Armenians, 1912-1922" in *Armenians in the Ottoman Empire...* In this article McCarthy explains that in the 19th century Ottoman "Armenia" existed only in name, that everywhere in Eastern Anatolia they were in a minority, that there were more Armenians in the provinces of Western Anatolia than in the East.

population in Anatolia is 1,500,000. This is important, because Armenian propaganda has continually inflated the figure of those who died in 1915. War-time Entente propaganda estimated the number of that as 300,000. At the end of war, Boghos Noubar Pasha, head of the Armenian National Delegation, in a letter dated December 11, 1918 and addressed to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, estimated that 390,000 survivors were in territories then occupied in allies (Caucasus, Persia, Syria-Palestine, Mossul-Bagdad) that 600,000 to 700,000 persons were transferred that it was unknown how many survivors there were in the desert. Even if we accept this latter category as non-existent, according to Noubar estimates, then, 210,000 to 310,000 Armenians died during the war. Over the years, these figures have been inflated to the point that Armenian propaganda now maintains that 1,500,000 or even 2,000,000 Armenians died in 1915. The latter figure, of course, is an impossibility because there weren't that many Armenians in Anatolia in the first place. The former figure, too, is impossible because if it were true, it would mean that every single Armenian living in Anatolia was evacuated, and that every single one of these Armenians died in the process. This is not true. In the first place, not every Armenian was evacuated. There were no Armenians evacuated in places very far from the front such as İzmir. As to places where they were considered a threat to the conduct of the war, certain Armenians were exempted from evacuation – the families or Armenians serving loyally in the Ottoman army, priests, Protestant and Catholic Armenians, doctors, pharmacists. Secondly, if every single Armenian had died, it would be impossible to account for the Diaspora (Outside Turkey and the Soviet Union) which now numbers about 1,750,000 and who are, largely, the children and grand-children of the survivors of the evacuation.

According to Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel K. Shaw, the number of Armenians who died was an estimated 200,000.<sup>13</sup> Gürün's estimate is a maximum of 300,000.<sup>14</sup> McCarthy has this to say:<sup>15</sup>

“We know from reliable statistics that slightly less than 600,000 Anatolian Armenians died in the wars of 1912-22, not 1.5 or 2 million, as is often claimed. Not that 600,000 is a small number. The Armenians suffered a terrible mortality. But when considering the numbers of dead Armenians, one must consider the numbers of dead Muslims. The

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13 Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. II (Cambridge, UP, 1977), p. 316.

14 Gürün, p. 226

15 McCarthy 1984, pp. 23-25. In *Muslims and Minorities* he says, “To find the wartime mortality, one must first estimate the number of Armenian refugees. The problems of counting them precisely are great, perhaps insurmountable.” P. 121.

statistics tell us that 2.5 million Anatolian Muslims died as well, most of them Turks. In the Six Vilayets – the Armenian homeland more than one million Muslims died. These Muslims, no less than the Armenians, suffered a terrible mortality. The numbers do not tell us the exact manner of death of the citizens of Anatolia. Civil War, forced migration of both Muslims and Armenians, inter-communal warfare, disease, and, especially, starvation are listed in the documents of the time as causes of death. The Anatolian mortality was not simply the deaths of soldiers in wartime, but deaths of men, women and children, Armenian and Muslim, who were caught up in international war between Russians and Ottomans and intercommunal war between Armenians and Muslims. We know from both documentary evidence and statistics that intercommunal warfare between Christians and Muslim was a major cause of death. The province of Sivas, for example, was not in the war zone; the Russian army never reached that far. Yet 180,000 of the Muslim of Sivas died. The same was true of the rest of Anatolia... I believe it is time that we consider the events of 1912-22 for what they were, a human disaster. It is time to stop labelling them as a sectarian suffering that demands revenge.”

Heath Lowry is the author of an interesting article,<sup>16</sup> where he explores the Bristol papers (Admiral Bristol was the US high Commissioner in Turkey at the end of the war) and Morgenthau’s memoirs (Morgenthau was the US ambassador in Istanbul during the war and his memories are one of the standard sources for Armenian propaganda) and tries to show that, contrary to the Armenian view, Bristol was not pro-Turkish, but that Morgenthau was definitely Turcophobe, that he hated and despised the Turks.

*The question of genocide:* Before World War II, mass killings were called massacres. But the mass-killing of 6 million Jews by the Nazis in a cold-blooded, systematic way, under circumstances where the Jews had done absolutely nothing to provoke this treatment, where they had been, in their respective countries, loyal citizens, was judged so horrible by humanity that the old term massacre was considered insufficient to describe this type of action. The result was that the word genocide was proposed and gained general acceptance. In the Nuremberg trials in 1945, the word was used and thus received official recognition. Later, the United Nations prepared and in 1948 accepted a *Convention for the Prevention and the Repression of the Crime of Genocide*. This Convention, which entered into force on January 12, 1951, was signed and ratified by Turkey. Though the initial impetus for the framing of

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16 “American Observers in Anatolia ca 1920: The Bristol Papers” in *Armenians in the Ottoman Empire...*

the Convention came from Nazi acts, there were numerous attempts to enlarge the scope of the concept during the preparation of the Convention. In the end, genocide was defined as acts directed against national, ethnic, racial or religious groups with the intent of destroying the group as such, in whole or in part. In other words, the destruction of one person is homicide, homicide on a more or less large scale becomes massacre, if this massacre occurs with the intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial, religious group “as such”, then we have a case of genocide. Thus, to be able to say that there has been genocide, it is necessary to prove the intent to destroy the group as such. Since 1951, therefore, genocide is a legal, well-defined concept, whereas massacre is not.

Nevertheless, there is a lot of loose talk about an Armenian “genocide”, allegedly perpetrated by the Ottoman government in 1915. Armenian propaganda has nowadays forgotten the word massacre. The only word they and their sympathizers use is genocide. A South African who practiced law and later became professor of sociology, Leo Kuper has published a book entitled *Genocide*.<sup>17</sup> It is a book of about 200 pages in small type. Kuper takes up or mentions all sorts of cases – Assyrians warfare, Troy, Carthage, Genghis Khan, Timur Lenk, the Crusades, massacres of Jews (all over Europe), heretical Christians (Albigensian sect, Hussites, Huguenots), American Indians, South West Africa (1904), partition of India, Hiroshima, the Soviet Union, Algeria, Rwanda, Burundi, Bangladesh, Cambodia, etc. Perhaps because of his legal background, Kuper is very careful about labeling this or that case as genocide. As he himself points out, “The inclusion of intent in the definition of genocide introduces a subjective element, which would often prove difficult to establish.” (p. 33). In fact, he introduces a further – to my mind logical – refinement (and limit) to the Convention by assuming “...that the charge of genocide would not be preferred unless there were a ‘substantial’ or an ‘appreciable’ number of victims.” (p. 32). He is so careful that he introduces a further concept, that of “genocidal massacre”. He says he hopes “...that the inclusion of genocidal massacre will reduce controversy over the selection of cases ... (p. 10). Earlier, he warns that “There is a preliminary problem in the choice of cases for inclusion. It involves a judgment that the case is in fact one of genocide. *Inevitably this is a somewhat personal, and sometimes controversial judgment*, since there is no international criminal court to investigate charges of genocide, and the United Nations evades the issue.” (p. 9) (my italics). To the scores of cases that he takes up, from the ancient Assyrians to present-day Cambodia, he scrupulously applies the term “genocidal massacre”. (I have been able to ascertain only one slip – where he speaks of “the Burundi genocide” : p. 162). Expect for two cases – the German

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17 Penguin Books, 1981.

genocide against the Jews, and the “Turkish genocide against the Armenians.” I doubt if anybody with any sense of fairness would argue against the first case, but as to the second, I am afraid it is, to use his own words, “Inevitably... a somewhat personal, and sometimes controversial, judgment...”

In the Armenian case, to which he devotes a whole chapter, he has no trouble establishing intent – in spite of the fact that he doesn’t even mention the Andonian telegrams. Basing himself on the ‘classics’ of Armenian propaganda – Lepsius, Morgenthau, Bryce, ‘the war time’ Toynbee – he calmly reaches his conclusion: “... the country-wide distribution of the destruction of Armenian communities, the timing, the general pattern were the product of a central administrative plan.” One is tempted at this point to enumerate all the arguments against premeditation, which are well-known to those who are familiar with the Turkish viewpoint, but in the next sentence he cavalierly and in advance seems to dismiss these (not that he seems to be very aware of their existence): “*It proceeded, however, appreciably by indirection, that is to say not by massacres from the center, but by setting in motion the genocidal process, as a low-cost operation with extensive reliance on local social forces.*” (my italics) Thus Kuper throws all his scruples and discretion to the winds and, perhaps without being quite aware of it, invents a new concept: indirect genocidal intent. I am afraid at this point one cannot help noticing the foremost acknowledgement in Kuper’s preface, which is to Prof. Richard Hovannisian, one of the major proponents of the Armenian cause, without any other name that I am aware of, to ‘balance’ him.

Another source which has championed the use of the term genocide is the so-called Permanent Tribunal of Peoples which ‘tried’ Turkey in Paris (13-16 April 1984) and reached the ‘inescapable’ conclusion of genocide.<sup>18</sup> Inescapable, because Turkey was “tried” in absentia and because the “documents” placed before the court (by whom ? one is tempted to ask) were ‘regular fare’ of Armenian propaganda – Hovannisian, Lepsius, ‘the war-time’ ‘Toynbee, Morgenthau, Bryce, etc. There was also a feeble effort to give the appearance of impartiality – the last document mentioned is the testimony of Prof. T. Ataöv at the Paris court which tried four members of ASALA who had occupied the Turkish Consulate in 1981 in Paris and killed an employee. Actually, the editors were doing a slight ‘injustice’ to the Court, because apparently it also “considered” a booklet (36 pages) entitled *The Armenian Issue in Nine Questions and Answers* published by the Foreign Policy Institute (Ankara, 1982) (pp. 203-252 in the book).

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18 *Le Crime de Silence: Le Génocide des Arméniens* (Paris, Flammarion, 1984). Edited by Gérard Chailand, with the assistance of C. Mouradian and A. Aslanian-Samuélian. Chailand is the co-author (with Yves Ternon) of *Le Génocide des Arméniens 1915-1917* (Bruxelles, Complexe, 1980)

*The report of Mr. Vandemenlebroucke:* The European Parliament has lately looked into the Armenian question. On a motion tabled by Saby, Charzat, Glinne and Fuillent on behalf of the Socialist Group, which noted that the Turkish government, in refusing to acknowledge “the genocide of 1915” had “obliterated the historical reality of Armenia” that this motivated terrorism, and asked that the EEC Council of Ministers, the governments of the countries concerned, and the UN should recognize the Armenian genocide. The question was referred to the Political Affairs Committee. Mr. Vandemenlebroucke, Belgian member of this committee, prepared a *Draft Report on a Political Solution to the Armenian Question* (June 26, 1985). After quoting extensively

*As to genocide, this is more of legal term, because besides the facts, you also have to ascertain the element of intent, and you have to do this with the methodology of a penal jurist.*

Morgenthau, Chaliand and Ternon, Libaridian, Bryce, “the war-time” Toynbee, Lepsius, Kuper etc., and ‘for balance’ Gürün, he reaches his ‘inevitable’ conclusion of genocide. A few sentences later, however he says “... the Turkish Government can no longer deny the history of the Turkish-Armenian question and the “element of genocide”. Though he dismissed with a cavalier footnote the notion that the Andonian telegrams might be forgeries, here he says “element of genocide” which may not be the same as “genocide”. Then he proclaims that “... recognition (by the Turkish government) would eliminate one of the main reasons for the senseless, desperate and inexcusable acts of terrorism committed by splinter groups from the Armenian diaspora.” That sounds like a promise, but it may also be interpreted as a warning, or even a threat: if the Turkish government does not recognize “genocide”, then the “senseless, desperate and inexcusable” acts of “splinter groups” will continue. Here a very pertinent question can be asked. Generally speaking, ascertaining and recognizing the existence of massacre in this or that situation may not be too difficult, because it is a question of fact. (Though ascertaining the facts may be a very difficult task as well.) As to genocide, this is more of legal term, because besides the facts, you also have to ascertain the element of intent, and you have to do this with the methodology of a penal jurist. Is the Turkish government (or the European Parliament<sup>19</sup>) in a position to do this? Or, for that matter, any other government – England (say, in India), France (say in Algeria or as regards the Huguenots), the US (say, in the case of American Indians or in Vietnam), Belgium (in the Congo), Italy (in Libya or Ethiopia), Bulgaria (*vis-à-vis* the Turks), the Soviet Union (say, in Crimea, or in Afghanistan), Japan (in China). I would suppose lawyers and historians, working together,

19 Mr. Vandemeulebroucke himself entitled his report “Political Solution”. Can there be a “Political solution” to a legal problem? And how serious or respectable a “solution” would that be?



might in each case be able to reach a conclusion in this respect. But what if other lawyers and historians disputed such a conclusion? How could a government, with political responsibilities *vis-à-vis* different segments of opinion, decide and act?

Recently the US congress had before it a proposal for a Joint Resolution (H. J. Res. 192) to designate April 24, 1985 (anniversary of the outlawing of Armenian revolutionary committees by the Ottoman government and the arrest of their leaders in 1915) as “National Day of Remembrance of Man’s Inhumanity to Man”. It calls upon the President to issue a proclamation to observe that day as a day of remembrance for “all victims of genocide, especially the one and one-half- million people of Armenian ancestry who were victims of the genocide perpetrated in Turkey between 1915 and 1923, and in whose memory this date is commemorated by al Armenians and their friends throughout the world.” First of all, let me point out that the need for and acceptance of the term of genocide, as I remarked earlier, arose from the extermination of Jews by the Nazis. Apparently, until then, the word and concept of “massacre” had sufficed. The extensions brought to the concept by the Convention cannot blur the fact that the genocide *par excellence* was the Jewish one. It seems almost a disrespect to the supreme tragedy of the Jews, to try to upstage the Armenia case (even though that is also a tragedy, *but* a two- way one), as the resolution attempts to do. The letter that US Secretary of State George Shultz addressed to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, illustrates well the dilemma facing any political body such as parliaments or governments in judging historical events, especially when it involves a legal verdict such as crime of genocide does. Schultz said: “Over 60 of our most distinguished scholars of Turkish and Middle East studies have questioned the historical assumptions of H. J. Res 192. While we do not dismiss the historical tragedy that occurred in Eastern Anatolia 70 years ago, there remain powerful reasons for opposing the resolution. I asked your help in securing its defeat.

Declaration by the European Parliament or by the US Congress can never attain the respectability of impartiality, given the fact that in Europe and in the US, Armenians are a pressure group acting on their respective representative bodies, whereas the Turks are not. Further, to expect legal or quasi – legal verdicts – as a declaration of genocide would be –from political bodies is contrary to the principle of the separation of powers, which Montesquieu discerned to be the very foundation not only of democracy, but also of civilized, decent government. In other words, political bodies should not be in a position to interfere with legal processes, nor, I may add, with history (or sciences in general).

In conclusion, I can say that the attention that the Diaspora Armenians and Armenian propaganda have been able to get from the European Parliament, the US Congress and similar bodies, may be seen as a success for them. However, it is far from certain that they will be able to get exactly what they want. A number of reasons for this may be enumerated. First, the belated attention that pro-Turkish scholarship has given to the history of the Armenian issue over the last ten years has begun to bear fruit. It will become more and more difficult for those who seriously claim impartiality to disregard these works. Secondly, Western public opinion has begun to realize some of the unsavory aspects of Armenian terrorism and its implications. Thirdly, the Turkish image has lately begun improve. Turkey's irrevocable progress towards full democracy is one factor. Another is the economic and administrative consolidation of the independent (and very democratic) Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, its conciliatory attitude as regards the prospect of federal union with Greek Cyprus, highlighted by uncompromising, defiant attitude of the latter.

As more balanced views of the Armenian issue become prevalent in Western scholarship, these will gradually filter down to the media and thus in turn influence public opinion. The Armenians of the Diaspora (and those in the Soviet Union), seeing that their exaggerated views are no longer accepted, that they are being subjected to critical examination, will have to climb down from their passionate positions. Perhaps then, a symbolic reconciliation, a scholarly dialogue will be possible.

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