

BOOK REVIEW

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Mustafa Çalık (ed.), *The Armenian Genocide Allegations: When Improper Calculation Returned from Talat and Relocation*, (Ankara: Cedit Neşriyat Yayınları, 2006), 260 pages.

The book entitled “Ermeni Soykırımı İddiaları: Yanlış Hesap Talât’dan ve Tehcir’den Dönünce “ (The Armenian Genocide Allegations: When Improper Calculation Returned from Talat and Relocation) is an edition, including the articles of Justin McCarthy, Gündüz Aktan, Guenter Lewy, Nuri Bilgin, Yusuf Halaçoğlu, Kemal Çiçek, Yusuf Sarıay, Ömer Turan and Hikmet Özdemir.

The main topics of the book are the emergence of the Armenian question, Turkish-Armenian relations and the reasons of Armenian deaths during the First World War. Besides these, the legal dimension of the Armenian question as well as the martial courts of relocation era is also comprehensively included in the book.

Within the part starting with Justin McCarthy’s article named as “Who initialized?” it is observed that the author questions history and being historian. The author, who emphasizes the necessity of investigation of the archives of all actors of Armenian question before its history is written, also expresses that history can not be written by feeding only from a single source and that it would not be history in case of it is written so.

McCarthy, who states that fields of politics and history are independent of each other, mentions that the politicians should not make judgments about history and they should undertake all duties and responsibilities of history if they do so. He criticizes that especially French and the European Union Parliament never pursued the methodology utilized by the historians and that they adopted resolutions regarding historical issues although they did not have time to make research on them.

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McCarthy, who explains that many authors in Turkey write books recognizing the so-called genocide and that they are able to freely declare their thoughts regarding the issue, by remarking that Turkey is mature and self confident He also mentions that the same indulgence is not displayed towards the Turks in Europe, who declares that “genocide had not been performed”.

McCarthy, who interprets the struggle of the Turks against the Armenians as self-defense, expresses this action with these words: “Anyone who were in the Turks’ position would do the same”. The author expresses that the problem between these two societies started to emerge not by the 19th century, in opposition to known, but by the 18th century.

McCarthy, who explains that the deterioration of the Turkish-Armenian relations by the beginning of (1877-1878) the Ottoman-Russian War happened to be more apparent due to the revolutionary Armenian Committees, also mentions about the roles of the Western countries and of the Armenian Church with respect to the rebellions at 1890s. The author, who examines the First World War and the emergence of the problem between Azerbaijan and Armenia within the following part of the article, highlights that the main dispute between two countries was triggered by the push of the Armenian nationalists (united with the Bolsheviks) in order to eradicate the Turkish population in Baku.

The part named as “The Armenian Question with Respect to International Law”, on the other hand, has been authored by Rtd. Ambassador Gündüz Aktan. Aktan emphasizes that it has been paid attention more on the political and historical aspects of the Armenian case up to date, and that its legal aspect, on the other hand, has been neglected.

Aktan remarks that the word “genocide” was first come out by the Polish Jew Raphael Lemkin and that Lemkin described also the Armenian events as genocide. He has emphasized that the genocide description of Lemkin gradually narrowed due to the development of law through time. Accordingly, the actions performed in order to physically and biologically eradicate only certain groups, not every group, were started to be qualified as genocide.

Aktan mentions that the first legal document including the definition of genocide is the UN Convention on the Prevention and the Punishment of the Crime of Genocide adopted on 9 December 1948. According to the agreement, which came into force at 1951, genocide was considered to be realized by performing a

group of actions in order to eradicate a national, ethnic, racial or a religious group as a whole or in part.

Aktan, who pays attention to the genocide issue in terms of the international law, emphasizes that the international society does not perform the same sensitivity with respect to the crimes against the humanity.

Aktan emphasizes that a racial hatred similar to the one felt by the Nazis towards the Jewish did not exist within the Ottomans towards the Armenians and that the relocation was not applied to eradicate the Armenians as a group. He also points out that the relocation was not exercised on the whole Armenians and that the Ottomans did not have any intention to exterminate a particular group as the definition of genocide supposed.

In his article named as “Reevaluation of the Armenian Genocide”, Guenter Lewy examines three main sources of the genocide allegations. Initially, the author, who investigates the Martial Courts (*Divan-ı Harb-i Orfi*) founded at 1912-1920, explains that how unreliable the judgments held by these courts were. By mentioning that the existence of six regional courts during these judgments is known, the author specifies that the overall number of the courts are not known due to the insufficiency of the documents.

Lewy, who later on pays attention on the arguments of the role of the Special Organization (*Teshkilat-ı Mahsusa*), that is one of the main subjects of the Armenian allegations, at the so-called Armenian genocide, manifests through documentary evidence that this organization was not involved in the genocide.

The author, who evaluates the documents within Aram Andonyan’s book (*The Memoirs of Naim Bey*) lastly, states that the authenticity of these documents is extremely subject to discussion.

In the article of Prof. Dr. Nuri Bilgin, titled as “The Armenian Genocide Allegations and Construction of History”, examines social usage of the genocide allegations, functionality of the Turk as the other and the charm of victimization are emphasized. Bilgin, who compares the attitudes of the West regarding the Armenian question with the theme within Sartre’s work *Nausea*, explains why the Armenian question is supported so much in the West.

Bilgin, who also mentions about the importance of mass media with respect to

persistence of the problem within the agenda, emphasizes that people strangely become pleasant, from a social psychological point of view, while reading or witnessing the evil things experienced by the others. The author, who highlights that considering the negativities of the others relaxes the individual, emphasizes that the individual feels better accordingly or, to put it in another way, he almost confesses by this way.

Furthermore, Bilgin, by explaining that the 'barbarian Turk' image at the Ottoman era was succeeded by the image of the Turk as the occupier and genocide perpetrator by the collapse of the Empire, expresses that the hostility coming from the previous periods' against the Turk reaches today.

Within the book, which includes a brief evaluation of Prof. Dr. Yusuf Halaçoğlu regarding the Armenian genocide allegations, it is discussed, by relying upon Russian archives, why the Armenians were subjected to relocation during the years of war. Halaçoğlu, who also mentions about the precautions that were taken during the years of relocation, highlights that none of the countries of the world would keep silent in front of the ones that tries to destroy itself.

Within the article of Prof. Dr. Kemal Çiçek, it is observed that the historical aspect of the Turkish-Armenian relations is examined thoroughly. Çiçek, who is rather intensified on the first meeting of the Muslim Turks with the Armenians, emphasizes that the Armenians used to undertake significant duties within the Ottoman state.

Çiçek, who declares that the relocation was a legitimate security precaution and that it was not applied on all of the Armenians, also submits the provisions of the decree on relocation for readers' information. Besides this, the article also analyzes the conditions within which the relocation had been operationalized. The author, who highlights that, besides the Armenians, people from numerous parts of the country was also affected negatively due to the prevailing conditions of the country during the relocation, expresses that much of the Armenians turned back by the end of war.

Within the part titled as 'Relocation of the Armenians and the Trials' written by the Director-General of the Prime Ministry State Archives, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Yusuf Sarınay, it is observed that the reasons of the immigration are highlighted once more. Sarınay, who remarks that the investigation commissions were established within the regions of relocation and the ones abusing their posts were

sent to the Military Courts. He concluded that 1673 people, including mayors, soldiers and Special Organization agents were judged in these courts.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ömer Turan from the Middle East Technical University, Department of History, examines the subject of 'The Armenians in 1830-1831 According to American Missioners E. Smith and H. G. O. Dwigth'. Turan, who rather focuses on the regional activities of the American Board Missioners, emphasizes that these missioners prepared some reports analyzing ethnic and religious backgrounds of the population within the regions they were employed. The author, who remarks that various strategies were developed regarding the region due to these reports, highlights that they also drew attention to the Western public opinion on the region.

The last article carries the title 'Epidemics and Deaths during the First World War' and written by Prof. Dr. Hikmet Özdemir. He examines the difficulty of war conditions during First World War years and the insufficiency of health services are highlighted. It is observed that the author remarks the Turkish losses, as stated in many English, German and Russian sources, due to hunger and disease. By this way, it is understood that the epidemic diseases cropped up during the years of war not only caused deaths of the relocated Armenians but also that of so many Muslims.

It is possible to evaluate this edition by Mustafa Çalık as an important source that might be utilized by readers.

