

ARTAK SHAKARYAN

TALKING POINTS ON THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE



MANUAL FOR YOUNG DIPLOMATS

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Talking Points on the Armenian Genocide: Manual for Young Diplomats includes analysis of several aspects of the Armenian Genocide and provides scholarly arguments for countering the most widely used allegations by denialists. The author, organizing interviews with the renowned experts on the Armenian Genocide, touches many topics such as the number of the victims, the availability of specific orders, the self-defenses of Armenian, availability of Ottoman archives etc.

The primary target audience of the book is the youth participating in various conferences, studying abroad, taking part in exchange projects that provide them with opportunities of discussing Armenian Genocide and meeting Turkish peers. The book also may be of interest for scholars, journalists and students.

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**To the people of courage
who saved Armenian
lives in the midst of the
horror**

**To the devoted advocates
of historical justice**

*Special thanks to the peer-reviewers
of the English version whose names are
on the last page*

PREFACE

We tend to believe that Armenian society has profound knowledge on every detail of the Armenian Genocide. That every individual from the thousands of Armenians paying tribute on the 24th of April at Tsitsernakaberd memorial knows the names of the Genocide perpetrators, remembers the heroes of Nemesis revenge operation and demands from the world to condemn Turkey for its deeds. Moreover, we are sure that youth with higher education are

...85 percent have expressed a demand to have a manual including counter arguments to Turkish fictions. This demand is relevant and according to the same survey 53 percent of Armenian students use Google search engine when getting ready for a discussion, event, or a presentation on Armenian Genocide, and 36 percent use materials from Wikipedia.

better prepared because they have studied Armenian history and ought to know the pivotal period of Armenian fate in a more thorough way. However, our rich experience in working with Armenian society and youth in particular, proves that we are in a sweet delusion, since most members of our society do not have profound and well-argued knowledge on the Armenian genocide.

Meanwhile, our youth, with deficient knowledge on Armenian issues are actively participating at various conferences, youth forums and other activities abroad. They meet peers from Turkey and Azerbaijan who have undergone special trainings from respective organizations, have specific prepared questions and texts in order to create confusion regarding the Armenian Genocide among the various participants of the event. For example, an Armenian participant with a background in physics, linguistics or even history may unexpectedly be attacked with a demand to prove the Armenian Genocide by citing the specific order to annihilate Armenians or an accusation in revolt and treason during wartime. Lacking historical facts and knowledge

the young Armenian participants often give unprepared and patchy responses, and lose the imposed impromptu debate.

According to a survey that we administered among 100 Armenian university students across the United States and the United Kingdom, most expressed having dealt with Armenian Genocide commentation one way or another. Thus, 80 percent have introduced stories on Armenian genocide to their classmates,

With well-known Armenian experts we have organized in-depth interviews while drafting the possible range of answers on those Turkish fictions.

30 percent have responded to fictions of Turkish or Azerbaijani classmates, and 23 percent have participated at conferences on different aspects of

Armenian-Turkish relations. In general, most of the students (96 percent) are ready to contribute their overbooked time to Armenian embassies for the proper presentation of Armenian Genocide. Although only 43 percent of feel lack of knowledge on Armenian Genocide, 85 percent have expressed a demand to have a manual including counter arguments to Turkish fictions. This demand is relevant and according to the same survey 53 percent of Armenian students use Google search engine when getting ready for a discussion, event, or a presentation on Armenian Genocide, and 36 percent use materials from Wikipedia.

Manual for Young Diplomats is aiming to fill that gap. The primary target group is young people participating at various conferences/programs. The secondary group includes wider audiences interested in history.

We have researched Turkish materials on Armenian Genocide and anti-Armenian web content in order to highlight the most widely used bogus claims. With well-known Armenian experts we have organized in-depth interviews while drafting the possible range of answers on those Turkish fictions. The answers are grouped in chapters, re-formatted in academic style with sources and citations, peer-reviewed and approved.

The peer review was implemented by four professionals, whereas each one of them is representing a vanguard organization in the process of Armenian Genocide recognition and reparation process: Arsen Avagyan,

PhD (Head of the Neighboring Countries Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia), Suren Manukyan, PhD

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(Deputy Director of the Museum-Institute of Armenian Genocide), Armen Marukyan, PhD (Head of the Chair on Armenian Issue and Armenian Genocide, Armenian National Academy of Sciences), and Giro Manoyan (Head of the Armenian Cause office, Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnaktsutiun).

FROM DENIAL TO DENIAL

Doubt is our product since it is the best means of competing with the 'body of fact' that exists in the mind of the general public. It is also the means of establishing a controversy...

- Brown & Williamson tobacco company memorandum (1969)¹

Genocide isn't an action but continual process. The international Association of Genocide Scholars mentions 10 stages of genocide: classification, symbolization, discrimination, dehumanization, organization, polarization, preparation, persecution, extermination and denial.

Doubt is our product since it is the best means of competing with the 'body of fact' that exists in the mind of the general public.

The denial is the final stage that lasts throughout and always follows genocide. Many specialists

claim that the deliberate denial of the known genocide should be qualified as the direct or indirect participation in the implemented genocide².

The Armenian lobby puts much effort on the adoption of the bills on the recognition of the Armenian Genocide in different countries, and the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by Turkey is put as a final target. Meanwhile, the Armenian Genocide has been first recognized by the Ottoman Empire through a court

1. *Smoking and health proposal, Brown and Williamson collection, Bates Number 680561778-680561786, <http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/nvs40f00/pdf;jsessionid=53C030F77779D2073EF01246846F8591.tobacco03>*

2. *The Ten Stages of Genocide, Gregory H. Stanton. Originally presented as a briefing paper, "The Eight Stages of Genocide" at the US State Department in 1996. Discrimination and Persecution have since been added to the 1996 model. <http://genocidewatch.org/genocide/ten-stagesofgenocide.html>*

decision. Of course, "genocide" term wasn't used since it didn't exist in that period yet.

In 1919-1920 the Ottoman courts examined 63 court sessions during which many details of the massacres were revealed, responsible persons were disclosed, the death sentences were issued, and the Armenian massacres were condemned. The short hands and the text of the decisions of the court sessions were regularly published in the Ottoman press of that period which is an important source for the researchers today.

Highlighting the importance of this step from the viewpoint of the recognition and study of the genocide, it should be also mentioned that the real incentive of the court sessions was not the restoration of justice. We think that the most important reason of conducting the trials was that at the end of the World War I the talks on the establishment of the military tribunals between the Entente powers have already begun. The Ottoman Empire was afraid that if the implemented crimes against the civilians were examined not at the Ottoman court but the international one, the problem of the responsibility of the Ottoman state would come forward and imply territorial losses, compensation issue etc³. At that time, the preparatory works of Peace

Conference in France had already begun and, for example, there was a provision in the Treaty of Sevres regarding the punishment of responsible persons of a crime and a compensation by the state. Therefore, the Ottomans tried to minimize these obligations and that's why they

...the Armenian Genocide has been first recognized by the Ottoman Empire through a court decision.

...the Ottoman state was aware of all the possible severe consequences that could arise if the issue of the Armenian Genocide were examined at the international tribunal.

3. *Interview with M. Anumyan, interview with A. Marukyan.*

initiated and implemented the trials⁴. It means that the Ottoman state was aware of all the possible severe consequences that could arise if the issue of the Armenian Genocide were examined at the international tribunal. This is the reason of the haste that was seen at the end of 1918, i.e. immediately after the signing of the Armistice of Mudros the discussions were very quickly begun in media, then at the Ottoman Parliament and afterwards the trial was immediately begun at the beginning of 1919⁵.

In 1975, Turkey began working with Manning, Selvage, & Lee, Inc., a public relations firm...

Actually, in reality the Turkish government did not implement the punishment as itself. The punishment was implemented later by the

Armenian avengers⁶. Only one person was hanged that is very little responsibility for such crime⁷. Most of the real responsible persons weren't punished and even afterwards they became important figures of the Republican Turkey⁸.

Most of the real responsible persons weren't punished and even afterwards they became important figures of the Republican Turkey.

1960s were years of revival in terms of the recognition and the claim of the Armenian Genocide. Both in the Soviet Union and in Diaspora the Armenians began to raise their voices. Particularly in the US, a

generation of scholars and activists began an effort to educate the wider American public about the crime that had been committed decades before.

Turkey had, for decades, relied on state-to state contact with the U.S. and called upon the U.S. Department of State to

4. Interview with K. Manoyan.

5. Interview with M. Anumyan: Interview with A. Marukyan.

6. Interview with S. Manukyan.

7. Interview with R. Safrastyan.

8. Interview with A. Khosroeva.

represent its interests in the name of preserving good relations with an important trading partner and post-World War II military ally, this was no longer sufficient in the public realm. For Turkey, the solution was to try to win the public relations war.

In this period, it was not until 1975 that Federal Foreign Agents Registration Act reports show Turkey engaging public relations firms for purposes other than travel and tourism promotion. In 1975, Turkey began working with Manning, Selvage, & Lee, Inc., a public relations firm that disseminates

By the advice of these companies specialized on the issue of the manipulation of the public attitude, Turkey, together with the primitive strategy of denial, chose more skillful strategy of creating doubt.

material on behalf of the Government of Turkey for the purpose of influencing 'the attitude of the public and the Congress toward Turkey'. In the following years, other firms have been added in this works: Edelman International Inc., Doremus, and most importantly, Gray & Co., and Hill & Knowlton⁹.

By the advice of these companies specialized on the issue of the manipulation of the public attitude, Turkey, together with the primitive strategy of denial, chose more skillful strategy of creating doubt which have been used by the tobacco industry marshalling its own experts to magnify the appearance of a scientific debate long after the science was in fact unequivocal.

A 1972 memo by Fred Panzer, vice president of public relations of the industry-run Tobacco Institute, offered qualified praise for the nearly 20-year-long strategy of "creating doubt about the health charge without actually denying it," but cautioned that this commitment "to an ill-defined middle ground which is articulated by variations on the theme that, 'the case is not proved has "always been a holding strategy."¹⁰

9. See more in Marc Mamigonian, *Scholarship, Manufacturing Doubt and Genocide Denial*, *Armenia Weekly*, April 2013, pp. 37-42.

10. Fred Panzer, *The Roper Proposal*, Bates Number 2024274199-2024274202, May 1, 1972, <http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/quo14e00/pdf>

In order to “Manufacture doubt”, Turkey created the Institute of Turkish Studies, directed by Ottoman scholar Heath Lowry. Established in 1982 through an initial grant of \$3 million from the Turkish government, ITS generated prestige by association, disbursing funds to scholars associated with many illustrious American colleges and universities. Like the Tobacco Industry Research Committee, ITS has funded many entirely legitimate scholars and projects. But just as the TIRC “didn’t pay a lot of attention to tobacco and tended not to fund research that might cast cigarettes in a bad light,” so, too, ITS supported scholarship has not paid

But much more remains to be discovered before historians will be able to sort out precisely responsibility between warring and innocent and to identify the causes for the events...

much attention to the Armenians, much less the Armenian Genocide. The first “attack” of the Turkish doubt was already held in 1985 advertisement in the New York Times and Washington Post urging the U.S. Congress not to pass a resolution recognizing the genocide as such—with the names of 69 scholars who questioned the appropriateness of using the word “genocide” to refer to “Armenian suffering” during World War I. It argued that “the weight of evidence so far uncovered points in the direction of inter-communal warfare... But much more remains to be discovered before historians will be able to sort out precisely responsibility between warring and innocent and to identify the causes for the events...”¹¹

Over the years, this approach was crystallized in a simple Turkish proposal to establish a commission of historians to study the events of 1915–1923 with the hidden real aim: to postpone the process for decades continuously bringing up the necessity of an additional study and keep open the issue forever.

11. See more in Marc Mamigonian, *Scholarship, Manufacturing Doubt and Genocide Denial*, Armenia Weekly, April 2013, pp. 37-42.

Turkey changed governments, presidents, but the “holding strategy” remained the same and gained more explicit use by the authorities of the Justice and Development Party.

Thus, on April 10, 2005 for the first time in history, the Prime Minister of Turkey Erdogan sent a formal letter to President of the RA Robert Kocharyan, which particularly says.

“... We are extending an invitation to your country to establish joint group consisting of historians and other experts from our two countries to study the developments and events of 1915 not only in the archives of Turkey and Armenia but also in the archives of all relevant third countries and to share the results their findings with the international public.”¹²

Putting aside the simple fact that the content of the letter is not new since the call for historians to discuss the ‘events of 1915’ has been made by every single Turkish administration each time they are confronted with strong signs of international interest and attention to the Genocide and issues having to do with recognition, it’s necessary to pay attention to the following details:

a) The letter appeared in the Turkish media before it arrived to Yerevan. This clearly demonstrated that the letter was

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The letter appeared in the Turkish media before it arrived to Yerevan. This clearly demonstrated that the letter was an attempt to influence the attitude of public and not a desire to solve the problem.

12. The official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/data/DISPOLITIKA/text-of-the-letter-of-h_e_prime-minister-recep-tayyip-erdogan-addressed-to-h_e_robert-kocharyan.pdf

an attempt to influence the attitude of public and not a desire to solve the problem. Of course, the date is also important – April 10, because every year Turkey takes a step on the eve of April 24 to divert the interest of media and to provide maneuvering field to

the politicians unwilling to meet the demands of the Armenian lobby.

...the real addressee of the Turkish letter was not the President of Armenia, but the international community, particularly the US lawmakers.

b) The letter was immediately distributed in the US Congress with

the clear implication that the process of ‘rapprochement’ and ‘reconciliation’ are underway and that any US action (such as a Congressional resolution) is unnecessary. And again we are convinced that the real addressee of the Turkish letter was not the President of Armenia, but the international community, particularly the US lawmakers.

It is also interesting the fact that although the President of the RA Robert Kocharyan did respond to this letter, however the Turks have so far been successful spreading the false opinion that Erdogan’s letter

This initiative was very good touchstone to find out whether Turkey can recognize the Armenian Genocide without calling it genocide.

remained unanswered. Here the Armenian side has also its guilt, as in contrast to Erdogan’s letter, the photocopy of Kocharyan’s letter¹³ is essentially difficult to find through a web search.

Nonetheless, Turkey has realized that the manufacturing doubt as the only strategy to defend from the Armenian claims can’t be endlessly used. It was necessary to find a new tactical trick in contrast to the Armenian facts on the Genocide.

The “I Apologize” campaign was launched in December 2008 in Turkey by numerous journalists, politicians, and professors

13. Kocharyan response to Erdogan letter, 05YEREVAN707_a, http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/05YEREVAN707_a.html

calling for an apology for what they considered as the “Great Catastrophe that Ottoman Armenians were subjected to in 1915” through a form of a signature campaign. The campaign was signed by 5,000 people in the first 24 hours of its publication and 30,000 signatories by January 2009¹⁴.

This initiative was very good touchstone to find out whether Turkey can recognize the Armenian Genocide without calling it genocide. This also pointed out suggested the use of different definitions instead of “the Armenian Genocide” term that won’t contain the word “genocide”. It is not accidental that on the next April 24, the newly elected US President Barack Obama took advantage of the opportunity and used the expression “Meds Yeghern” in his speech¹⁵.

...the Turkish side clearly understands that in the battle of ideas the target is not the Armenian audience but the international community.

Thus, two strategies of doubt and misnaming began to complete each other and found their culmination on the eve of the centennial anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey Ahmet Davutoğlu published a 10–page article, putting forward the idea of ‘just memory’ and tried to associate the deaths during the Armenian Genocide and Turkish casualties during the World War I utilizing another keyword: “shared pain”¹⁶.

This article was echoed by the statement of the Prime Minister Erdoğan, of course, on the eve of April 24. When speaking about “the events of 1915” he mentioned that those years were ‘the difficult period, full of suffering for the Turkish, Kurdish, Arab,

14. The website of the petition at <http://www.ozurdiliyoruz.com/>

15. Statement of President Barack Obama on Armenian Remembrance Day, The White House, April 24, 2009, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Statement-of-President-Barack-Obama-on-Armenian-Remembrance-Day

16. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Turkish–Armenian Relations: Is a ‘Just Memory’ Possible?, Turkish Policy Quarterly, Spring 2014, p. 28.

Armenian and millions of other citizens of the Ottoman Empire, regardless of their religion or ethnic origin'. Along with his condolences to the grandchildren of the Armenians who lost their lives Erdogan again repeated his invitation to establish a committee of historians "to study the events of 1915 in a scholarly manner"¹⁷. Certainly, the international media took the bait and the daily news streams of April 24 were full of the headlines "Turkey conveys condolences to the Armenians".

Here it is worth highlighting the fact that before Erdogan's statement arrived to Armenia it has already been extended by the Turkish media in nine languages. It means that the Turkish side clearly understands that in the battle of ideas the target is not the Armenian audience

...during a debate the problem is not to prove your idea to your rival but to convince the judges and particularly the audience.

but the international community. As many debate schools, and particularly sophists, teach: during a debate the problem is not to prove your idea to your rival but to convince the judges and particularly the audience.

The April 23 message of Erdogan is the same manifestation of the denialism of Ankara with new packaging and better preparation. The denial of Turkey is going on thus continuing the Genocide of Armenians.

17. Jonny Hogg, *Turkey's Erdogan offers condolences for 1915 Armenia killings*, Reuters, Apr 23, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/04/23/us-turkey-armenia-erdogan-idUSBREA3M0XN20140423>

THE PROOF OF INTENT IN THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Genocide as a crime is planned and carried out by a State. One specific element of genocide crime, which makes it different from other crimes, is the intent. That is why it differs from other similar, perhaps more bloody, crimes. For example there is no intent during a massacre. As homicide and calculated murder differ by the degree of severity and the most important characteristic of genocide is the existence of intent in contrast to other ways of mass killing. Hence, the assessment of genocide involves proof of intent which can be done in two ways¹⁸.

One specific element of genocide crime, which makes it different from other crimes, is the intent.

First, it is the existence of document or a range of documents presented that state that the specific group of people must be entirely annihilated. Finding written documents might be a very hard task since all perpetrators in Nazi Germany, Ottoman Empire and Rwanda did realize that genocide is a crime that is punished in all cases. Therefore, experts apply for the second method: general analysis of the actions. The whole crime, all deeds are studied, and experts see if the generality of the actions shows the existence of intent¹⁹.

In terms of documents, it must be taken into account that the genocide is a crime and every criminal tries to conceal every crime. That's why it's hard to find documents in many cases. In the case of Jewish Genocide there is a document that reveals the intent of Holocaust. It's the Protocol of Wannsee Conference that took place on January 20, 1942.

The "Wannsee Conference" was a high-level meeting of Nazi officials that took place on the shores of Berlin's Lake Wannsee

18. Interview with R.Safrastyan.

19. Interview with V.Vardanyan.

on January 20, 1942 to discuss the "Final Solution" of the Jewish Question.

The conference was called by Reinhard Heydrich, the head of the Reich Security Main Office which controlled both the Gestapo and the SD. The participants of the gathering included 14 senior SS officers, Nazi Party officials and civil servants. One of Heydrich's subordinates, Adolf Eichmann, took minutes, thirty copies of

which were evidently distributed among the participants and other interested parties. The only surviving copy, marked No. 16, was found in March 1947 among German

As homicide and calculated murder differ by the degree of severity and the most important characteristic of genocide is the existence of intent in contrast to other ways of mass killing.

Foreign Office files by American War Crimes investigators. After that discovery, the minutes, or "Wannsee Protocol," rapidly attained postwar notoriety²⁰.

"In large, single-sex labor columns, Jews fit to work will work their way eastwards constructing roads. Doubtless the large majority will be eliminated by natural causes. Any final remnant that survives will doubtless consist of the most resistant elements. They will have to be dealt with appropriately, because otherwise, by natural selection, they would form the germ cell of a new Jewish revival."²¹

The 'Jewish Question must find its final solution' phrase was used many times in the text which proves the intent of Holocaust.

Another secret consultation like the Wannsee Conference took place at the end of January 1915. Five key figure of the Ottoman Empire were present at the meeting: Minister of Interior and de-facto leader of the Young Turk party Talaat; members of the Central Committee, leaders of the "Special Organization" Behaeddin Şakir and doctor Nazım; head of the Public Security

20. <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/wannsee.html>

21. http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/Wannsee_Protocol.html

department of Interior İsmail Canpolat, who afterwards was appointed as the governor of capital Constantinople, and the head of the Political Department of General Headquarters of the Ottoman army, Colonel Seyfi who was known for his close relations with the military minister Enver. Head of the Intelligence Department of the Ministry of Interior Colonel Esad, the secretary of the meeting, documented the resolutions, and he was the one who then handed it to the British.

The secret meeting passed a decision with ten clauses known as "10 Commandments". On March 25, 1919, Türkçe İstanbul newspaper published what

it claimed was the Letter of Instruction from the head office of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) to the Special Organization (Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa) units as the deportation of

The "Wannsee Conference" was a high-level meeting of Nazi officials that took place on the shores of Berlin's Lake Wannsee on January 20, 1942 to discuss the "Final Solution" of the Jewish Question.

Armenians during the genocide began. The newspaper called it "A Tragic and Dreadful Document," and noted it was reprinting the document without making any changes. The Letter of Instruction consists of 10 articles that describe the steps to be taken in the deportation process²². Later, Vahagn Dadrian, an expert in Genocide Studies, thoroughly scrutinized the British archives and discovered a number of important facts, related with the origination of the aforementioned document, and published the text of the "10 Commandments"²³.

22. For the photocopy of the article in the newspaper see Arl Sekeryan, *Document Reflects CUP's Deportation Policy*, *The Armenian Weekly*, February 17, 2015, <http://armenianweekly.com/2015/02/17/document-reflects-cup-policy/> (accessed on February 18, 2015).

23. Vahagn N. Dadrian, *The Secret Young-Turk Ittihadist Conference and the Decision for the World War I Genocide of the Armenians*, *Holocaust Genocide Studies* (1993) 7 (2): 173-201.

(1). Profiting by Arts: 3 and 4 of Comité Union and Progres, close all Armenian Societies, and arrest all who worked against Government at any time among them and send them into the provinces such as Bagdad or Mosul, and wipe them out either on the road or there.

(2). Collect arms.

(3). Excite Moslem opinion by suitable and special means, in places as Van, Erzeroum, Adana, where as a point of fact the Armenians have already won the hatred of the Moslems, provoke organised massacres as the Russians did at Baku.

(4). Leave all executive to the people in the provinces such as Erzeroum, Van, Mumuretul Aziz, and Bitlis, and use Military disciplinary forces (i.e. Gendarmerie) ostensibly to stop massacres, while on the contrary in places as Adana, Sivas, Broussa, Ismidt and Smyrna actively help the Moslems with military force.

(5). Apply measures to exterminate all males under 50, priests and teachers, leave girls and children to be Islamized.

(6). Carry away the families of all who succeed in escaping and apply measures to cut them off from all connection with their native place.

(7). On the ground that Armenian officials may be spies, expel and drive them out absolutely from every Government department or post.

(8). Kill off in an appropriate manner all Armenians in the Army - this to be left to the military to do.

(9) All action to begin everywhere simultaneously, and thus leave no time for preparation of defensive measures.

(10). Pay attention to the strictly confidential nature of these instructions, which may not go beyond two or three persons²⁴.

24. *Memorandum by the Committee of Union and Progress outlining the strategy for implementing the Armenian Genocide. 1914-1915, United Kingdom, Public Record Office, Foreign Office Records, Class 371, Diplomatic Records, PRO reference:-FO 371/4172/1270/folios 385-386,388 (accessed at http://www.armenian-genocide.org/br-cup-memo_3.htm)*

There is no doubt that these 10 clauses refer to the deportation and annihilation of the Armenian people via various political tactics. In fact, when we compare what actually happened, we see that above mentioned 10 clauses have been unmistakably executed²⁵.

What is the importance of this meeting and participants? The Ottoman Empire was ruled by a single party, and like the Soviet Union it was controlled

by 'politburo' i.e. Central committee of the Party **In large, single-sex labor columns, Jews fit to work will work their way eastwards constructing roads.**

The decisions were being adopted by the members of Central Committee of the Party and the representatives of the Central Committee were more influential from valis, the governors. The nucleus of the influence of the Central Committee of the Party consisted mainly of the above-mentioned persons who participated in the secret meeting: Talat, Nazim, Behaeddin Şakir. Talat was both the Minister of Interior, i.e. he had an official position, and the most important figure of the Central Committee. He had both an important role in the adoption of the decision regarding the Armenian Genocide and the execution of it.

On May 24, 1915, the three powers of the Entente – Russia, Great Britain and France – came forth with a joint note, in which the mass slaughters of Armenians were severely condemned and for the first time in history qualified as 'a crime against humanity.' They underscored that the members of the Ottoman government would be recognized as personally accountable before the law for that crime. On the same day, the French text was submitted to the "Havas" telegraph agency, and immediately dispatched to

25. *The resolutions were documented by Chief of the Intelligence Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Colonel Esad, the secretary of the meeting. When he was arrested by the British intelligence in 1919, Colonel tried to sell this document to them. Later he got his freedom by handing the document to the British.*

Constantinople.

Talaat feared that the whole burden of guilt would be laid onto his shoulders alone, since there was no official documentation on the Armenian Genocide that was already in process. In an attempt to avoid it, he initiated a process aimed to disperse the guilt for the crime among government members, making it a matter of collective responsibility, rather than his personal accountability.

Two days later, on May 26, the Chief Commandment of the army, using the text prepared by Talaat, addressed the Internal Ministry and proposed to begin the deportation of the Armenians.²⁶ In response to that note, Talaat addressed the government on behalf of the Internal Ministry with a secret report, demanding that the Armenian population of the war regions be deported.

Without convening a session of the government, without discussing Talaat's report and without the requisite resolution of the government, it was hastily passed on the next day, May 27, under the title "Temporary Law on Measures to Be Taken from the Military Point of View against Those Who Act in Opposition to the Government's Activity in Wartime." It is also known as the "Law on Deportation." Although the law had been already passed, a session of the government was convened on May 30. It discussed Talaat's report and adopted a resolution to begin the deportation. The text of the resolution has been published by the Turkish state archives. On June 1 of 1915, the "Law on Deportation" was published in the official "Takvim-ivakayi" newspaper thus coming into force.

However, in any case it must be taken into consideration, that there was a parallel ruling mechanism in the Ottoman Empire as it was mentioned. The government sent the official order of

26. Ruben Safrastyan, *Ottoman Empire...*, p. 125.

deportation of the Armenians to its governors through the official channels. At the same time the Young Turks on behalf of their Central Committee sent the order of annihilation of the Armenians by the party channels²⁷.

Moreover, it's known that already during the years of the Republic of Turkey a special commission was in place to deal with destruction of such documents, and even if researchers nowadays try to find those, they will only find something that was missed from the attention of the commission. The great number of the documents and the fact that they were written in Ottoman language with Arabic-script contributed to a possible neglect of the committee; therefore despite the numbers of clean out in the Turkish archives some researchers were lucky to find few documents. In this regard, documents and materials of the trials during the Ottoman period should be emphasized, since over 60 cases were heard during the trial on the massacres and deportation of Armenians. The most important among those are the proceedings on members of "Union and Progress" party and the government. A joint general indictment was prepared for both trials in which over 41 documents have been used. Various telegraphs have been included in that indictment which reliability has become the subject of special study by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Ottoman Empire. Among these, the most important are the proceedings of "Union and Progress" party and government members. The general indictment has been formed for both trials in which over 41 documents have been used. The indictment included many telegraphs that were checked by a special research by

Excite Moslem opinion by suitable and special means, in places as Van, Erzeroum, Adana.

Apply measures to exterminate all males under 50, priests and teachers, leave girls and children to be Islamized.

27. Interview with R.Safrastyan.

the Ministry of Interior of the Ottoman Empire on the matter of trustworthiness²⁸.

Thus, although some of the documents had already been destroyed even by 1919–1920, the Turkish courts were able to use such documents during the trial that established the incident and very clearly confirmed that the regime of the Young Turks had decided upon a total annihilation of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire.

Anyhow, anticipation of a document to prove such a decision is also a trap. There is no such document for any genocide, even for the genocides carried out at later time frames and tried by the ad hoc courts²⁹.

The government sent the official order of deportation of the Armenians to its governors through the official channels. At the same time the Young Turks on behalf of their Central Committee sent the order of annihilation of the Armenians by the party channels.

The second method of establishing genocide is the overall analysis of activities. If it isn't possible to reveal the specific intent from documents, then it can be established by analyzing the events: the number of victims, attitude, and the general policy that aimed at the persecution of the Armenian ethnic group or the Armenian religious groups. So, since the intent is difficult to prove with precise documents in all cases of genocide (as in Rwanda), then the approach is to consider whether there had been a policy to suppress or annihilate a group or not³⁰.

The main thing is that both decisions and actions already testify the existence of such intent. One of the most important among these documents is so-called of "Black book" of Talaat Pasha; a notebook in which he recorded the movements of population in

28. Interview with M.Anumyan.

29. Interview with G.Manoyan.

30. Interview with V.Vardanyan.

the whole Ottoman Empire. It is not hand-written by himself; it was prepared for him and included maps and numbers. When the notebook was published in Turkey, its authenticity was argued since the wife of Talaat Pasha had given it to a Turkish journalist Murat Bardakçı about 10–12 years

ago and it was published only after that many years. According to the information contained in Talaat's notebook, already

Soldiers and diplomats from Germany, the ally of Turkey, testified in their reports that the authorities of the Ottoman Empire had decided to annihilate the Armenians.

by the end of 1916 there were about one million less Armenians in the Ottoman Empire than before. It means one million Armenians were already annihilated by the end of 1916. For two times Talaat sent cipher telegrams to provinces asking for detailed information about the presence of Armenians in different parts of the empire. His circular was simple and to the point: he wanted to know how many Armenians there were in each province, how many were "native", and how many were "outsiders". All those telegrams and the received progress reports are in the Turkish state archives; and historian Ara Sarafian

has published a book on them. The book has also been translated into Turkish; however it was neglected since it used irrefutable facts and the denialists had nothing to say³¹.

Soldiers and diplomats from Germany, the ally of Turkey, testified in their reports that the authorities of the Ottoman Empire had decided to annihilate the Armenians.

There are plenty of different types of documents which describe that annihilation of the Christians by the Young Turks was on policy level. The genocide of the Armenians was planned way in advance. Not only the Armenian but also the British, Russian, Austrian, German, US, Vatican archives contain a lot of materials confirming that the Armenian massacres by Young Turks' government were not accidental or unexpected. The book by the

31. Interview with G.Manoyan, interview with R.Melkonyan.

Turkish professor Taner Akçam "The Young Turks' Crime against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire (Human Rights and Crimes Against Humanity)" includes evidence of more than 600 secret Ottoman documents which demonstrate in unprecedented detail that the Armenian genocide resulted from an official effort to get rid the empire of its Christian subjects³².

Eye-witnesses are also an important component for the understanding of the process. Soldiers and diplomats from Germany, the ally of Turkey, testified in their reports that the authorities of the Ottoman Empire had decided to annihilate the Armenians. And these are also sufficient basis to show that the incident was intended and deliberate³³.

Definitely, accounts the eyewitnesses, the reports of diplomats, journalists, and missionaries add more evidence that the Armenian genocide had been planned in advance³⁴.

Thus, the question of establishing intent and tendency has been proven by many facts, testimonies, and an opposite claim does not stand any serious criticism³⁵.

32. *Interview with A.Khosroeva.*

33. *Interview with G.Manoyan, interview with R.Melkonyan.*

34. *Interview with A.Khosroeva.*

35. *Interview with A.Marukyan.*

THE NUMBER OF VICTIMS OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

The issue of the number of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and particularly in Western Armenia has always been a matter of dispute. The Turkish statistical data and the registers of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople are the two sources mainly used in the calculation of this number.

Even before the Armenian genocide, given political reasons, the Turkish statistics in every way tried to distort and reduce the number of Armenians in order to neutralize the threat arising from the Armenian issue. The Sublime Porte kept reducing the number of Armenians in order to minimize the possibility of any humanitarian intervention, since the great powers were constantly talking about the protection of the rights of the Armenians and under that pretext trying to interfere in the internal affairs of the Empire. Hence, the Ottoman authorities did their best to diminish the statistical data on the Armenians to show that they were not so great in number to talk about their rights. It should be noted that before 1878 the Turkish government officially recognized that about 2,400,000 Armenians lived in the Ottoman Empire; however, after the emergence of the Armenian issue in the international arena the number of Armenians according to the conducted Ottoman censuses data was reduced about two times, never exceeding 1,200,000-1,300,000 people³⁶.

On the other hand, it may seem paradoxical, but the Ottoman subject Armenians, particularly the rural residents, were also interested in showing less numbers in order to evade the poll tax, that later was replaced with *bedel-i askerie*, conscription-exemption tax, and thus avoiding the census conducted by both the Ottoman government, as well as, in many cases, the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople³⁷. In turn, the Armenian

36. *Interview with R. Tatoyan.*

37. *Interview with R. Tatoyan.*

Patriarchate of Constantinople did not want or could not resist the tendency of reducing the number of Western Armenians. It had two reasons. First, for a long time, especially before 1878, the Patriarchate was responsible for collecting taxes from the Armenian community and transferring to the Sublime Porte. Given that the taxes were very heavy, more accurate data would mean more taxes to be paid. In addition to that, the Armenian Patriarchate was reducing the number of Armenians in order to mitigate religious persecutions.

The factors of labor migration and emigration constantly existed in Western Armenia. Due to heavy tax burden many people kept moving to Constantinople or leaving the country with the aim of being useful to their family with their labor in other countries or other parts of the Ottoman Empire³⁸. Furthermore, it should be taken into consideration that the Patriarchate was responsible for the representatives of the Apostolic/Gregorian congregation. Protestant and Catholic Armenians, who were in quite large numbers, were out of these calculations. Whereas many Armenians, influenced by different Western ministers and charitable missions, changed their confession in large numbers and sometimes whole villages—hoping to have more secure lives and getting the protection of the given mission.

In any case, even according to the low from reality data of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople over 2 million Armenians³⁹ lived in the Ottoman Empire on the eve of the Armenian Genocide, and a mere and coincidental disappearance of that two million was impossible.

Many foreign sources confirm the data of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople or show a higher number for the Armenian population. As far back as in October 1916, the German consul in Constantinople Radovitz wrote in his report that 2 million were deported from two and half million Armenians; and

38. Interview with A. Marukyan.

39. See Kevorkian R., Paboudjian P.B., *Les Arméniens dans l'Empire ottoman à la veille du Génocide*, Paris, ARHIS, 1992, p. 57-60.

425 thousand of them were saved while about one and a half million were massacred⁴⁰.

The migration policy of the Ottoman Empire

Since the early Ottoman period, the Ottoman administrators had been able to manage the human flows and deportations in a very proficient way⁴¹.

Examples of deportation and resettlement policy by Turks can be brought from both early Ottoman and modern Republican periods. The best example is probably Cyprus. According to the decree of September 24, 1572, "every tenth family from Anatolia, Sivas, Karaman and Zulkadriye regions should be sent to the Cyprus" in order to populate the newly occupied island and to provide security. The deportees should have been selected among countrymen and handicraftsmen, and they were exempted from taxes for two years in their new settlements. It's interesting that the same was done in 1974 after the occupation of the northern part of Cyprus: thousands of families from different parts of the Republic of Turkey, especially the underdeveloped regions, were resettled in Northern Cyprus in order to increase the number of Turks⁴². Examples of deportation and resettlement policy by Turks can be brought from both early Ottoman and modern Republican

40. *Der Geschäftsträger der Botschaft Konstantinopel (Radowitz) an den Reichskanzler (Bethmann Hollweg)*, *Therapia*, den 4. Oktober 1916, Link: [http://www.armenocide.net/armenocide/armgende.nsf/\\$\\$All-Docs/1916-10-04-DE-002](http://www.armenocide.net/armenocide/armgende.nsf/$$All-Docs/1916-10-04-DE-002).

41. See more in Artak Shakaryan, *Deportation and 'Blood Tax' as Demography Management Tool in the Ottoman Empire (Brnagaghtn u manakahavqy worpes Osamnyan kaysrutyunum zhoghovrdagrakan veradasavorman metodner)*, *Middle East (II): History, Politics, Culture*, edited by N.Hovhannisyán and others, Yerevan, 2005., pp. 59-62 (http://serials.flib.sci.am/openreader/merc_arev_2/book/index.htm-#page/60/mode/2up) (In Armenian).

42. İnalçık, Halil, 'Ottoman Methods of Conquest,' *Studia Islamica*, II, 1954, pp. 123; Barkan, Ömer Lütfi, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Bir İskân ve Kolonizasyon Metodu Olarak Sürgünler," in *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası*, vol. XI, n°. 1-4, 1949-1950, pp. 550-561; Arslan, Hüseyin, 16. yy. Osmanlı Toplumunda Yönetim, Nüfus, İskân, Göç ve Sürgün, İstanbul, Kaknüs Yayınları, 2001, pp. 337-345.

periods. The best example is probably Cyprus. According to the decree of September 24, 1572, "every tenth family from Anatolia, Sivas, Karaman and Zulkadriye regions should be sent to the Cyprus" in order to populate the newly occupied island and to provide security. The deportees should have been selected among countrymen and handicraftsmen, and they were exempted from taxes for two years in their new settlements. It's interesting that the same was done in 1974 after the occupation of the northern part of Cyprus: thousands of families from different parts of the Republic of Turkey, especially the underdeveloped regions, were resettled in Northern Cyprus in order to increase the number of Turks⁴³.

After the end of 18th century, however, the deportation-resettlement policy of the Ottoman Empire was conducted not for settlement of newly occupied territories, but in order to shelter Muslims that fled from the lost territories after the defeats. Firstly the loss of Crimea brought uncontrollable flow of the Crimean Tatars that was continued by the immigration of the Muslims from the North Caucasus. However, the most significant were the migrations from the Balkans, where the locals struggling for their national independence were taking revenge from Muslim-Turkish population in an unsparing way. The new wave of migration of the latter washed over after the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish war, when the Muslim population was significantly decreased in newly independent Bulgaria⁴⁴. Thereafter every new defeat in the Balkans, every new step back for the Ottoman Empire, brought new human flows: people who were homeless and without land, people who had yet another reason to hate Christians and be vindictive.

The Ottoman Empire used these human flows to achieve its

43. Celestine Bohlen, *Fresh Tension for Cyprus: Counting the Newcomers*, *The New York Times*, 1991, January 23

44. Brubaker, Rogers, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 153.

long-term strategic goals. The first step was the policy of changing the ethnic and religious demographic image in the provinces of strategic significances in favor of the Muslims/Turks. In fact, the Muslim/Turk refugees became an integral part of the great project of Turkification of the Ottoman Empire. This two-fold method both forced Christian elements perceived as non-loyal to leave their native homes and settled loyal brothers-in-faith instead.

The period preceding the Armenian Genocide was also rich in human flow. This policy got more urgent in the result of the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the First Balkan War (1912-1913). Balkan countries such as Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, and Bulgaria formed an alliance against the Ottoman Empire and declared war in October 1912. Within a couple of months, the ottoman army had lost battles on all fronts and retreated to its last defense line in Çatalca, 60 kilometers from Istanbul. The loss of all territories in the Balkans, including the historic capital city of Edirne, and the arrival of thousands of Muslim immigrants who fell in front of advancing Balkan armies created a feeling of despair within Turkish society. The Balkan war was called a "national disaster"⁴⁵.

The defeats of the Ottoman army brought large masses of muhacirs, i.e., refugees. The latter were directed toward Armenian-populated areas in order to change the proportion of the population in the provinces. Also those landless and homeless muhacirs resentful of Christians in general were incited against the Armenians and thus given hopes to regain their future.

The Turkish sources on the number of Armenians

Nonetheless, the Turkish sources do help us in representing the number of Armenians more clearly even reckoning the continued migrations.

Thus, after the overthrow of the Young Turk Party in December in 1918, Mustafa Arif, the Minister of Interior, formed a committee

45. Behlül Özkan, *From the Abode of Islam to the Turkish Vatan: The Making of a National Homeland in Turkey*, Yale, 2012, p. 65.

to investigate the issue of the number of Armenians who were massacred. When three months later on March 14, 1919 the committee presented the results Cemal Bey was the new Minister of Interior. In his interview to "Alemdar" daily on March 17, 1919, Cemal, the Minister of Interior, noted that "800 thousands Armenians were deported and massacred"⁴⁶.

Throughout 1915–16, Talaat Pasha, the Ottoman Minister of Interior, supervised the destruction of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. Talaat received progress reports from different provinces and, at the end of 1916, ordered a general assessment of his work. On 24 August 1916, he sent a cipher telegram to 34 provinces (vilayets and mutasarrifliks) asking for detailed information about the presence of Armenians in different parts of the empire. His circular was simple and to the point: he wanted to know how many Armenians there were in each province, how many were "native" (yerli), and how many were "outsiders" (yabancı). Six months later, on 11 February 1917, he sent another cipher telegram, this time to 23 provinces, calling for a headcount of Armenians. Once more, he asked for the number of "native" and "outsider" Armenians in each region⁴⁷. According to Talaat's calculations (from the end of 1916 to the beginning of 1917) the number of deported Armenians was more than 900,000, while a note pointed out that the raw figures were undercounts and rounded⁴⁸.

The total number of deported Armenians is given as 924,158, a figure simply reflecting the number of Apostolic (or Gregorian) Armenians in these provinces according to official Ottoman statistics for 1914. The list does not include the European provinces of the

46. Meline Anumyan, *The Proceedings of 1919–1921 Trials of Young Turks according to the Ottoman Press (Yeritturqeri 1919–1921 tt. datavarutyunneri vaveragrey yst osmanyany mamuli)*, Yerevan, 2011, p. 64 (In Armenian).

47. The telegrams are available at the Ottoman Prime Ministry Archives (Istanbul) DH.Şfr., 68/112 and DH.Şfr., 72/210 as cited in Ara Sarafyan, *Talaat Pasha's Report on the Armenian Genocide*, Gomidas Institute, London, 2011, p. 5.

48. Interview with G. Manoyan.

Ottoman Empire, nor Kutahya or Van. It also does not mention the deportation of Catholic and Protestant Armenians. This list confirms that all Armenians were slated for deportation, and the exclusion of Van and Kutahya on the list also confirms that there were no deportations in Van because of Armenian resistance and no deportations in Kutahya because of local (Muslim) opposition to the central government's plans⁴⁹.

The report of 1917 shows us the discrepancy between the number of Armenians who were deported, and the number of deportees who were found in the Syrian deserts or other vilayets; thus 82 per cent of the deported Armenians or 841,161 persons were missing.

At the Paris Peace Conference⁵⁰ the Armenian delegation presented only the information they had by 1919 and we cannot assume that they had the full picture. However the genocide was still in process. The number of one and half million is used for 1915–1923. It should be always taken into consideration that the genocide might have slowed down after fall of the Young Turk administration, but it was mainly continued by Kemalist forces and nationalists. Therefore, one and a half million is about 1915–1923⁵¹. And the circumstance of the constant pogroms, massacres shouldn't be forgotten: the Hamidian massacres that took about 300,000 Armenian lives, the massacre of about 30,000 Armenians of Cilicia and Adana in 1909⁵².

In addition, it's likely that one and a half million also include the losses during the massacres in 1918 (e.g., Baku pogrom), the massacre in 1920 when Turks again entered Armenia and slaughtered a lot of people, and the Izmir massacre in 1922.

49. Ara Sarafyan, *Talaat Pasha's Report on the Armenian Genocide*, Gomidas Institute, London, 2011, pp.67–68.

50. *The Paris Peace Conference was the meeting of the Allied victors, following the end of World War I to set the peace terms for the defeated Central Powers following the armistices of 1918. It took place in Paris during 1919 and involved diplomats from more than 32 countries and nationalities.*

51. Interview with G. Manoyan.

52. Interview with A. Marukyan.

Moreover, a vast number of Armenians were massacred in Cilicia during the period of Kemalists⁵³. But in reality the problem is not in the number, as the Genocide Convention does not say that if the victims of the crime with intent were 300,000 people that would not constitute genocide⁵⁴.

Ultimately, the number of victims does not have such great importance to qualify the act of genocide as a crime. No convention defines a specific threshold of victims. A tendency to entirely or partially annihilate a nation in its kind is genocide; and it is unequivocally that the Turkish government did implement all those criminal actions that prove the existence of a tendency to entirely or partially annihilate. Eventually, today the number of the annihilated Jewish people (6 million) is also disputed, investigations are carried out that say that it's exaggerated, etc. It means that the speculations regarding the number of those victims will always exist⁵⁵.

The problem is in understanding the difference between genocide and mass murder. The target of mass murder is a person. The target of genocide is not a person but a kind of people. Theoretically genocide can be implemented even without killing. For example, if in group X children of the same group are forcibly taken from the members of the group during 20–30 years and given to other ethnic-racial groups, nothing will happen with the group. However, 30–40 years later the group will cease to exist as the representatives of that culture and that civilization will not exist anymore. It means that it is possible to implement genocide even without taking away the life of a single person. This is the whole problem. A number, of course, can have psychological and other type of impact, but tens of millions of people were killed during World War I, and we don't talk about genocide. Perhaps a greater number of people of ethnic Turks have died as a consequence of war, disasters and so on, but

53. Interview with R. Safrastyan, interview with R. Melkonyan.

54. Interview with G. Manoyan.

55. Interview with A. Marukyan.

that has nothing to do with the fact that the ethnic or ethno-national group of the Western Armenians ceased to exist during 1915–1923. Certainly there are Armenians located in different parts of the world, but a Western Armenian, as such, does not exist. The Western Armenian was a person who resided in that region and spoke Western Armenian, kept the traditions and customs which had been established and preserved for hundreds of years. So, that group does not exist anymore. Dialects were lost, for instance, or the carriers of those dialects became few in number, meaning that the group does not exist anymore. Even if one part of those persons was saved physically, the group ceased to exist⁵⁶.

Eventually, whether the genocidal crime of Turkey is eased, if the number of 1,500,000 of Armenian victims is changed to 600 thousand...? In any case it is genocide⁵⁷.

56. Interview with V. Vardanyan.

57. Interview with A. Khosroeva, G. Manukyan.

DEPORTATION AS A TOOL FOR THE PERPETRATION OF GENOCIDE

'The fact that during the summer of 1915 the people – women, children, and elderly – were made to march hundreds of kilometers in order to get here cannot be explained by any 'military precaution.' It has only one explanation: to annihilate the people sent! Even today, if one tries to make tens of thousands people march in caravans all the way here, even if it is in April, not in June-July, it will mean only the intention to annihilate. You cannot understand this unless you see Deir ez-Zor. In other words, you will understand this very well when you see the zone of Deir ez-Zor...', - writes Cengiz Çandarlı in his article 'In the Middle of the Syrian Desert on an April 24' in the Turkish daily Radika⁵⁸.

The belated law on deportation

On May 24, 1915, the three powers of the Entente – Russia, Great Britain and France – came forth with a joint note, in which

Even today, if one tries to make tens of thousands people march in caravans all the way here, even if it is in April, not in June-July, it will mean only the intention to annihilate.

the mass slaughters of Armenians were severely condemned and for the first time in history qualified as 'a crime against humanity.' They underscored that the

members of the Ottoman government would be recognized as personally accountable before the law for that crime. On the same day, the French text was submitted to the "Havas" telegraph

58. Cengiz Çandar, *Süriye çölünün ortasında bir 24 Nisan*, Radikal, 25/04/2010, http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/cengiz_candar/su-riye_colunun_ortasinda_bir_24_nisan-993383

agency, and immediately dispatched to Constantinople.

Talaat feared that the whole burden of guilt would be laid onto his shoulders alone, since there was no official documentation on the Armenian Genocide

that was already in process. **...for the first time in history qualified as 'a crime against humanity.**

In an attempt to avoid it, he initiated a process

aimed to disperse the guilt for the crime among government members, making it a matter of collective responsibility, rather than his personal accountability.

Two days later, on May 26, the Chief Commandment of the army, using the text prepared by Talaat, addressed the Internal Ministry and proposed to begin the deportation of the Armenians.⁵⁹

In response to that note, Talaat addressed the government on behalf of the Internal Ministry with a secret report, demanding that the Armenian population of the war regions be deported.

Without convening a session of the government, without discussing Talaat's report and without the requisite resolution of the government, it

was hastily passed on the next day, May 27, under the title "Temporary Law on Measures to Be Taken from the Military Point of View against Those Who

...he initiated a process aimed to disperse the guilt for the crime among government members, making it a matter of collective responsibility, rather than his personal accountability.

Act in Opposition to the Government's Activity in Wartime." It is also known as the "Law on Deportation." Although the law had been already passed, a session of the government was convened on May 30. It discussed Talaat's report and adopted a resolution to begin the deportation. The text of the resolution has been published by the Turkish state archives. On June 1 of 1915, the "Law on Deportation" was published in the official "Takvim-İvakayi"

59. Ruben Safrastyan, *Ottoman Empire: The Genesis of the Program of Genocide (1817-1920)*, Yerevan, 2011, p. 125.

newspaper thus coming into force.

However, the mass deportation of the Armenian people had started long before the Law was passed. The Law passed post factum, while the deportations had already been in progress

and, without any legal basis, people were taken out from villages and marched to death.⁶⁰ Thus,

Those who eventually made it to Deir ez-Zor in the most miserable state were massacred by Circassian-Chechens.

In the above-mentioned document, the Chief Commandment of the army suggested beginning the deportation of the Armenians of Zeytun, while on the orders of Talaat it had begun back at the end of March, had been underway all through the month of April, and regular Turkish troops were already deployed in Zeytun.⁶¹

Armenian writer Yervand Otyan, a deportee and an eyewitness of the Genocide, writes the following in his memoirs: "It is known that Zeytun Armenians were deported the first—in the first days of May 1915 if I am not mistaken. They were first brought to Sultaniye and Ereğli, and then were marched again to Deir ez-Zor. Thus

30,000 Zeytun Armenians died from hunger, misery, illness. Those who eventually made it to Deir

Sporadic cases of armed skirmishes were acts of self-defense.

ez-Zor in the most miserable state were massacred by Circassian-Chechens. When I reached Deir ez-Zor, only two persons were left alive from thousands of Zeytun Armenians."⁶²

The geography of deportation

The Turkish side often uses the word deportation instead of genocide, claiming that the Armenians had organized revolts throughout the entire Caucasian front in order to assist the

60. Interview with S. Manukyan.

61. R. Safrastyan, *ibid*, p.125.

62. Yervand Otyan, *Accursed years, 1914-1919 memoirs, (Anitseal tariner, 1914-1919 andznakanhishatakner)*, Tehran, 2010, p 107. (In Armenian)

Russian army, and the Ottoman government merely organized the relocation of an untrustworthy population far from the battlefields⁶³.

A study of the geography of deportation proves the emptiness of that argument.

In reality no revolt had taken place. Sporadic cases of armed skirmishes were acts of self-defense—the Armenians were not the initiating, but rather

reacting to the actions of the Ottoman authorities. Moreover, the number of self-defense incidents is very small. Only 10 small-scale resistances

...starting from February 1915, most soldiers of Armenian origin were disarmed and transferred to labor battalions. After being used for some time in the construction of roads and bridges, those men were killed.

throughout the enormous empire could not be a trigger for such massive operation. In addition, the Armenians were deported not only from the frontier zones, but also from the heartland, i.e. the central regions of Turkey, very far from the battlefield where there could be no justification of securing the front.⁶⁴ Ankara, Konya, Afyon, Eskişehir, İzmit, Adana – these towns were also included in Talat paşa's report⁶⁵ as places from where the Armenians were deported and at the same time they were hundreds of kilometers away from the Caucasus battlefield and the Russian army. Also, no mention of any self-defense resistance can be found for those towns.

Part of the Armenian male population was conscripted into the Ottoman army during the first months of WWI. However, starting from February 1915, most soldiers of Armenian origin were disarmed and transferred to labor battalions. After being used for some time in the construction of roads and bridges, those men were killed. As a rule, before deporting the population of a

63. Interview with R. Melkonyan.

64. Interview with S. Manukyan

65. Ara Sarafyan, *Talaat Pasha's Report on the Armenia Genocide*, Gomidas Institute, London, 2011.

locality, in order to avoid resistance to massacre, the perpetrators did their best to neutralize the Armenian men. For example, in 1915, the Young Turk authorities sent 1,500 Armenian young men from Urfa to the so-called 'rearward labors' and killed them just a few kilometers outside the town.⁶⁶

It is of utmost importance to understand why the Armenian Genocide is called genocide. One of the reasons is the idea of segregation in the process of its implementation. Since ethnic Armenians were deported, this means that there had been a process of segregation, and the groups to be annihilated were selected. The Ottoman police or other bodies were checking the identity of the person and in cases with an established origin, the Armenians were deported. Segregation is a very important fact because the courts in both Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia viewed the elements of segregation as a basis to prove the special intent of annihilating a specific group. In particular, Muslim men older than 14 years were separated and killed in Srebrenica. If there had not been a process of segregation, if everybody had been killed, it might have been very hard to prove the fact of the genocide. But the act of segregation showed that the action was targeting a specific group, and it indirectly implied the existence of special intent.

Thus, mostly women, the elderly and children were left in the Armenian localities. What could the elderly, women, children and a few unarmed men do against the Ottoman armies?

And here we see the emergence of the second hollow argument of the Turkish side – the deportations were done to save

66. *Shakaryan Ruben, The Self-defense of Armenian Quarters of Mush town in 1915 (Mush qaghaql haykakan taghamaseri inqnapashtpanutyuny 1915 tvakanin), The Issues of the History and Historiography of Armenian Genocide, 2006, № 12. p. 105 (in Armenian).*

the peaceful population by taking them far from the battlefields.

Even if we accept that the necessity of war caused the relocation of Armenians from warzones to more secure places, we should talk only about relocation from the vilayets of Van, Bitlis, Erzurum and so on. But the deportations took place all over the empire, including Sebastia (Sivas), Diyarbekir, and Kilikia (Adana and neighborhood) where there was no military danger.⁶⁷

Sometimes, on the contrary, the deportations brought the people closer to the battlefields. It is well-known that Syria was the main destination of the death marches, but at the same time Syria was much closer to the front than Kesaria (Kayseri) or Eskişehir.⁶⁸

The argument of using deportation to save the peaceful population from war might have been reasonable if it were not only the Armenians, but all the civilians of the regions, who had been relocated, including the Muslims.⁶⁹ Thus, this argument is again only a veil to use the wartime situation as an "excuse" for the deportations which was actually one of the main stages of Armenian Genocide.⁷⁰

The process of deportation and its destination

The destination of deportation routes clearly shows the endgame mentality – it is a total desert with no conditions for life. Deir ez-Zor was an enormous desert region with several thousands of nomadic Bedouin Arabs, i.e. was nearly completely desolate.⁷¹

It means that the Armenians were intentionally relocated to such places where they were fated to die – without food, without

67. *Interview with A. Marukyan.*

68. *Interview with M. Anumyan.*

69. *Interview with V. Vardanyan.*

70. *Interview with A. Marukyan.*

71. *Interview with S. Manukyan.*

water, under the burning sun, in insanitary conditions. Surely, those inhuman conditions also became a source of epidemics, taking the lives of thousands.⁷²

When planning to populate a certain region with around 1 million inhabitants one must put considerable efforts to create the necessary infrastructure. This was not done, of course. And if one is

not creating preconditions and is just ordering people to march there, the intent of annihilation becomes clear.⁷³ The creation of

The destination of deportation routes clearly shows the endgame mentality - It is a total desert with no conditions for life.

such conditions was done on purpose, and it is no coincidence that the UN Convention on Genocide of 1948 has a special clause (c) in Article 2 that says 'deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part' is a genocidal act.⁷⁴

There were no living conditions at the camp sites on the long routes of the deportation marches, either. There were concentration camps at the hubs of the road leading to the Syrian deserts, and those camps were designed in a way that deportees died from hunger and epidemics. Again, here is a citation from the

memoirs of the eyewitness Yervand Otyan who was in Tarsus, Kilikia in August-September and describes the concentration camp

...the Armenians were intentionally relocated to such places where they were fated to die.

there: "A whole wide field was turned into a settlement... In Tarsus, under the tents, there were 25-30 thousand Armenians from Adapazari, İzmit, Partizak, Bursa, Edirne, Rodos, Bandırma etc."⁷⁵ Otyan mentions that at the same time there were around 25 thousand Turkish soldiers in Tarsus. Armenian camps held the

72. Interview with A. Marukyan.

73. Interview with S. Manukyan.

74. Interview with A. Marukyan.

75. Yervand Otyan, *Accursed years*, p.119.

status of closed ghetto since "one needed a pass to go to Tarsus, and that type of a pass was being given to only 40-50 persons daily."⁷⁶ In the heat of the summer, without water, without sanitary conditions, without a right to come out from the closed territory, naturally, the camp was

full of contagious diseases, "There was at least one sick person under nearly all the tents, and the number of tents reached 5-6 thousands."⁷⁷ The

There were concentration camps at the hubs of the road leading to the Syrian deserts, and those camps were designed in a way that deportees died from hunger and epidemics.

main disease was dysentery: "The contagious dysentery was the reason of most of the deaths. This disease was taking 60-70 lives daily."⁷⁸

Just to reiterate, the UN Convention on Genocide of 1948 has a special clause (c) in Article 2 that mentions 'deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part'.⁷⁹ This means that if an ethnic group had been relocated from point A to point B with normal conditions and reached there in a normal way, and thereafter the group had the opportunity to return to the point A or at least continue living at point B, then it is hard to speak about genocide. For example, the policy of the United States of America towards its citizens of Japanese origin during the WWII cannot be depicted as genocide because though concentration camps with hard living conditions did exist, those settlements conformed to international standards, children even had the necessary conditions for education, deportees were vaccinated

76. *Ibid*, p. 121.

77. *Ibid*, p.124.

78. *Ibid*.

79. *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%2078/volume-78-I-1021-English.pdf>

on a periodic basis etc.⁸⁰ It is incomparable with the situation in the Ottoman Empire that created such living conditions that were intended to cause the physical destruction of the group. There was no intention of organizing a deportation; the intention was the annihilation of the group members.⁸¹

It must be mentioned that many Armenian deportees were not even coming any closer to the destination. Many Armenians were taken out of their villages not for relocation purposes but in order for them to be killed on the road.⁸²

A study of the available documentation reveals the following. The Special Organization "Teşkilat-ı Mahsuse" had organized the caravan routes in such a way that every caravan from Erzurum took a distinct route such that the next caravan does not witness the tragedy of the prior ones. For example, the first caravan departed from Erzurum and was lead to Aşkale, from Aşkale to Dercan, from Dercan to Kharberd, Malatya, Aleppo. The next group was taken to the north - towards Muturku, mount Dumri,

from there to Babert, from Babert to Canik. The third group was taken to the south - Khnus, Mush, Diyarbekir. However, as sources show, there was not a single route without corpses of Armenians at

...the UN Convention on Genocide of 1948 has a special clause (c) in Article 2 that mentions 'deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part'.

the endoJune or the beginning of July. The initial control had been lost and people were marched through the fiery hell of the past caravans. As a rule, 80 per cent of the caravans consisted

80. More on Japanese American Internment see Wendy L. Ng, *Japanese American Internment During World War II: A History and Reference Guide*, Westport, 2002, 209p.; Roger Daniels, *Prisoners Without Trial: Japanese Americans in World War II*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004, 162 p.; Robinson, Greg. (2010). *A Tragedy of Democracy: Japanese Confinement in North America*. *Journal of Transnational American Studies*, 2(1).

81. Interview with V.Vardanyan.

82. Interview with R.Melkonyan.

of women, children and the elderly, who did not constitute a menace.⁸³ There are many facts that all the measures had been taken to leave the deported people unprotected so that not only the 'guarding' Ottoman soldiers could attack, rob, rape and kill, but also other bands, during the long road.⁸⁴

However, the number of the deported Armenians was so large that in spite of all the organized difficulties on the way a considerable mass of people did reach the Syrian deserts, i.e. the destination. Though Armenians had experienced terrifying massacres on the way, yet according to Aram Antonyan "... the most gruesome bloodbaths and the largest-scale massacres happened in 1916 and afterwards in those far deserts."⁸⁵ The author of the book "The Great Crime" says that after the Armenians were deported to the Syrian deserts and

were accompanied there **...every caravan from Erzurum took a distinct route such that the next caravan does not witness the tragedy of the prior ones.**

the organization of three large-scale massacres - (1) in Rasul-Ayn - 70,000 Armenians annihilated; (2) Intilli - 50,000 Armenians; (3) the most gruesome and large-scale in Deir ez-Zor desert - 200,000 Armenians.

By the way, Aram Antonyan mentions that these numbers relate only to the losses through massacres, but the calculations should take into account also the Armenians who died at those three locations due to diseases, ad hoc killings, hunger and thirst.⁸⁶

The annihilation of the Armenians in the Syrian deserts began from the Rasul-Ayn camp. Upon the order from "Special organization" a special group was created. The group consisted of the youth of the Chechen village Safa, situated near Rasul-Ayn

83. Interview with A. Melkonyan.

84. Interview with G. Manoyan.

85. Aram Antonyan, *The Great Crime*, (Mets Vochiry), Boston, 1921, p. 15 (in Armenian).

86. *Ibid.*

and was led by Arslan bey. Ahmet Selim, one of the organizers of the annihilation of Armenians in Rasul-Ayn and Deir ez-Zor, who

...all the measures had been taken to leave the deported people unprotected so that not only the 'guarding' Ottoman soldiers could attack, rob, rape and kill, but also other bands, during the long road.

earned notoriety for his orders to burn Armenian children in wells, also was from this village. The Chechen band from Safa was armed from the army arsenals in Aleppo. "The

order to massacre in Rasul-Ayn was given directly from Aleppo. The order was given to the commanders of that band. Several of them had come to Aleppo and met with the head of the province Mustafa Abdulhak bey. 4-5 days after their return the prefect of Rasul-Ayn, Kerim Refi bey, was informed with a ciphered message about their arrival and their readiness for orders."

The mass massacres of Armenians in Rasul-Ayn began on March 17, 1916 and lasted till June, when all the Armenians had been killed. One of the organizers of this massacre, Zekki bey, was later appointed the governor of Deir ez-Zor, with an order to organize the same massacre here as in Rasul-Ayn. The massacres in Deir ez-Zor continued through 1916 under the direct supervision of Zekki bey. As a matter of fact, the mass extermination of

"... the most gruesome bloodbaths and the largest-scale massacres happened in 1916 and afterwards in those far deserts." Armenians in Rasul-Ayn and Deir ez-Zor meant the implementation of the main part of the Armenian Genocide program.⁸⁷

In 1919-1921, as part of the 63 lawsuits over the organization of Armenian massacres in the Ottoman Empire, the case of massacres was also brought in the Deir ez-Zor sancak (district). The Ottoman Almedar newspaper had published the verdict

87. Arsen Avagyan, *The Participation of Circassian bands at the 1915 Armenian Genocide (Cherqezakan djokatneri masnaksutyuny 1915 t. hayeri tseghaspanutyany)*, *The Issues of the History and Historiography of Armenian Genocide*, N 4, Yerevan 2001, pp. 32-33.

sentencing the mutasarrif (governor) of Deir ez-Zor, Zekki bey, to capital punishment in his absence. That document once again proves that the Armenians exiled to Deir ez-Zor not only lost their lives from the hard living conditions, which was inevitable, but also from the bands on horseback and without, organized by the above-mentioned Zekki bey upon the order of the Ottoman government⁸⁸.

"... the most gruesome bloodbaths and the largest-scale massacres happened in 1916 and afterwards in those far deserts." Thus, the "Law on deportation" was passed

when the deportation was already progressing in full scale. The aim of the deportation was not to get the rebelling Armenians far from the Caucasian front since there had been no uprising as such. Moreover, relocations had taken place also at settlements considerably far from the combat zones. The argument about using deportation for rescuing civilians by taking them far from the battlefields is also very weak, since in that case, logically, the other local populations also should had been relocated whereas in reality only Christian women, children and the elderly were deported. The long marches of the deportation were full of plunder, rape, and massacres. The deportees marching for hundreds of kilometers were not provided with food and water, while the summer heat was spreading epidemics. However, arrival of their death caravans to the destination, the Syrian deserts, did not mean the end of their sufferings; instead, it meant the end of their lives, as the mass exterminations of the Armenian deportees were organized in Deir ez-Zor and nearby places.

88. Meline Anumyan, *The death verdict (year 1920) of Zekki bey, the governor of Deir ez-Zor (der Zori karavarich Zeki beyi mahvan datavchiri (1920t.))*, <http://akunq.net/am/?p=9125>.

SELF-DEFENSE BATTLES OF ARMENIANS IN 1915 AND THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

The approaches of the Ottoman Empire towards national ideas

XIX century was the start of the fall of the Ottoman Empire; losses in wars, management mistakes and many other reasons gradually weakened the used-to-be glorious Ottoman Empire and made it unable to control its enormous lands. Meanwhile, during the same period national identity was on the rise among its subject nations, especially those geographically close to Europe.

Two ethnic states, Serbian and Greek, emerged in the first three decades of the nineteenth century. The Serbian gained de facto autonomy in 1815, and officially recognized autonomy in 1830. In 1867, Serbia becomes de facto independent.

1867, Serbia becomes de facto independent as Ottoman forces leave the country, pressured by Great Britain and France, and in 1878 de jure independence is formally declared in Belgrade by the decision of the Great Powers at the Treaty of Berlin. In 1814, a secret organization called the Filiki Eteria was founded with the aim of liberating Greece. By 1821, Greeks were in open revolt against the Turks and the Greek gained independence as early as 1831-1832⁸⁹.

Due to economic developments taking place both within and outside the Ottoman Empire, merchant groups of predominantly Slav and Greek origins managed to generate the wealth necessary to found schools, libraries and pay for Balkan youth to study at

89. Slobodan G. Markovich, *Patterns of National Identity Development, Balcanica XLIV (2013), p.211.*

the universities of Western Europe. It was there that they came into contact with the radical ideas of the European Enlightenment, the French Revolution and romantic nationalism⁹⁰. Certainly, only financial security, education and nationalistic ideas were not enough for a success in the struggle for independence; political support had its decisive role.

Thus, as a result of First (1804-1813) and Second (1815-1817) Serbian Uprisings Serbs achieved autonomy in the Ottoman Empire. However, Enlightenment ideas were not the only factor in the successes of the Serbs. The active involvement of Serbian

By 1821, Greeks were in open revolt against the Turks and the Greek gained independence as early as 1831-1832.

communities of Austro-Hungary, neighboring the Ottomans, and the direct and indirect interventions of the Habsburg Empire had undeniable essential contributions. For example, during the 1787-1791 Austro-Turkish war, the Austrians at first supported Serbian volunteers in Serbia against Ottoman authority in 1788, then made their regular army out of them and, finally, launched their own two campaigns in 1789⁹¹. And without diminishing the role of Greek struggle, it is noteworthy to mention that during the war for Greek independence Russian and British contribution did have essential role in its success.

However, during this whole period the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire proudly bore the name millet-i sadika or the faithful nation, since vast majority of the Armenians continued serving the Ottoman state faithfully. Armenian amira families held many important posts within the Empire. Thus, Dadyan family traditionally held the post of royal gunpowder-maker (barutçubaşı). The family started its rise in 1790s when Arakel amira Dad brought technical innovation in production of gunpowder

90. Richard Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 25-26.*

91. Slobodan G. Markovich, *Patterns of National Identity Development, p.217.*

that profoundly reformed the production line of the gunpowder factory at Azadli. During the following years, the Dadyan family had its great contributions in the production of paper, silk, arms and casts. They were the first to introduce European modern technologies in the production industry of the Ottoman Empire.

However, Enlightenment ideas were not the only factor in the successes of the Serbs. The active involvement of Serbian communities of Austro-Hungary, neighboring the Ottomans, and the direct and indirect interventions of the Habsburg Empire had undeniable essential contributions.

while Greeks and Serbs were revolting and getting independence, Armenians were busy perfecting arms and gunpowder.

The situation was different out of Constantinople. In the provinces Armenians were under the permanent oppression from the local Muslim population and from time to time sporadic actions of grievance were sparking because of heavy tax or other policies⁹². However, it should be mentioned that generally throughout all the empire the situation was getting unbearable. Not only Christians, but also other subjects were uprising. For example, the Turkoman Afşar tribe revolted in the Taurus Mountains in 1852⁹⁴; Kurds had been periodically revolting since 1850-1860s.

Romanians followed Serbs and Greeks. They achieved autonomy

92. Albert Kharatyan, *The Armenian Community of Constantinople (beginning of 18th century - 1923) (Kostandnupolsi hay gaghtodjakhy (18rd dari skizb - 1923t.))*, *Historical-Philological Journal*, 2009, № 2-3. pp. 36-37 (In Armenian);

93. M.G. Nersisyan, *The 1862 Rebellion of Zeytun (Zeytuni 1862 tvakani apstambutyuny)*, *Historical-Philological Journal*, 1962, № 4. pp. 59-68 (In Armenian);

94. See more on this in James J. Reid, *Crisis of the Ottoman Empire: Prelude to Collapse 1839-1878*, Franz Steiner Verlag, 2000, pp. 209-212;

In 1867, and got independence in 1878. During the same 1878 year, under the agreements of San Stefano and Berlin, Bulgarians got autonomy that subsequently turned into independence in 1908. It was the natural consequence of the strong contribution of Bulgarian volunteers in the victory of Russia in the 1877-1878 Russian-Turkish war that resulted in Russian political support of the Bulgarian efforts towards their independence.

During this period of the 1877-1878 Russian-Turkish war, Armenians were already brought into great politics. Ottoman tyranny, successes of brother-in-faith Russian armies at the Caucasian front, the achievement of the Balkan nations and emergence of Armenian intellectuals with Western education created a fruitful environment for the birth of hope to get free from Ottoman oppression. However, still the Armenian riots were more reactions to specific actions of the Ottoman army or police, and did not have a systematic approach. Only in 1878 a secret organization "Black Cross" was created in Van, aiming to disseminate freethinking ideas and organize self-defense groups⁹⁵.

A noteworthy fact is that Armenians often did not strive for independence as such but worked towards having broader scope of liberties either in the form of autonomy within the Ottoman Empire or joining the Russian one. Vast majority of the Armenians residing in the

...while Greeks and Serbs were revolting and getting independence, Armenians were busy perfecting arms and gunpowder.

...throughout all the empire the situation was getting unbearable. Not only Christians, but also other subjects were uprising.

95. Hakob Hatikyan, *The Struggle of Revolutionary Organizations of Western Armenia under the Conditions of the Activities of Sultan's Secret Service (Arevmtahayutyun heghapokhakan kazmakerputyunneri payqary sultanakan gaghtni tsarayutyunneri gortsuneutyun payman-nerum)*, *Regional Affairs*, 2014, #4, p. 77 (In Armenian);

Ottoman provinces bordering the Russian Empire had clear pro-Russian orientation and viewed brother-in-faith Russian soldiers as liberators. Thus, Gevorg Archimandrite Ruschuglyan had written in his memoirs that the grand duke Nikolay Nikolayevich during his conversation with the ambassador to Constantinople duke A.Nelidov and N.Ignatyev had mentioned the following: "I am very pleased with Armenian society for they have shown amiable reception to our soldiers ... I like Armenians ..."⁹⁶

Only in 1878 a secret organization "Black Cross" was created in Van, aiming to disseminate freethinking ideas and organize self-defense groups.

The eradication of Sasun and its neighboring villages from 1894 to 1896 illustrates a growing trend toward annihilation in Ottoman attitudes towards Armenians.

toward annihilation in Ottoman attitudes towards Armenians.

The Turkish government has published a group of Ottoman documents that also shows unintentionally this very trend. Certainly, the selection of the documents to publish is done to support the point of view of The Sublime Porte. Moreover, unsatisfied with misrepresentation of the reality, the translators while translating

96. Leo, *Documents on Armenian issue, (Hayots hartsi vaveragreny)*, Tiflis, 1915, p 51 (in Armenian).

from Turkish into English intentionally have added words or used more strong synonyms. As a result, there are ideas in the text that have very distant connection with the authentic document⁹⁷. However, citation of the documents here is important since there the armed Armenians are often called "brigands"⁹⁸, which agrees generally with what

Ottoman texts showed for other groups in the condition of rebellion as well. In order to trivialize the political ideologies of non-Ottoman idealists and to belittle their status,

Ottoman authorities tended to call any subject intelligentsia by the name brigand if they were revolutionary. However, if the Armenians had brigands in their midst, Kurdish, Laz, Turkmen, and Circassian brigands outnumbered them in far greater numbers⁹⁹. At the same time, it is very hard to find any document in the archives condemning the activities of Turkoman or Circassian brigands, and certainly very few contemporary Turkish historians would ever think of translating those. In general, the Ottoman state had a method tested for a long time which later got into usage also during the time of Young Turk rule. At first, the state sent Kurdish irregular militia called Hamidiye upon Armenian territories as if to look for Armenian brigands. Using this as a pretext, Kurdish militias attacked Armenian villages, terrorized, plundered and killed Armenians. Thereafter, in case of an Armenian self-defense regular Ottoman armies were sent to

The Armenian Genocide is a consequence of fear, because Bulgarians, Romanians, Serbs and Greeks had revolted and gotten independence, and Turks always anticipated that the Armenians would be next.

97. See more on this in James J.Reid, *Crisis of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 183.

98. Ertuğrul Zekai Ökte, et al., *Ottoman Archives, Yıldız Collection: The Armenian Question, Talori Incidents, Istanbul, Tarihi Araştırma ve Dokümentasyon Merkezleri Kurma ve Geliştirme Vakfı, The Historical research Center, 1989, pp.80-81, as cited in James J.Reid, Crisis of the Ottoman Empire, p. 183;*

99. Reid, pp. 183-184.

suppress and punish it¹⁰⁰.

Preparation of Turks to the main stage of the Genocide

Despite the massacres of Armenians that continued also in the beginning of 20th century, any systematic revolt did not take place, contrary to its anticipation by Turks. "The Armenian Genocide is a consequence of fear, because Bulgarians, Romanians, Serbs and Greeks had revolted and gotten independence, and Turks always anticipated that the Armenians would be next. This anticipation of

fear brought the decision of annihilation of the Armenians"¹⁰¹.

Armenians had already been turned into an untrustworthy element, and the Ottomans were nearly sure that in the

The 8th plenary of Dashnak party that took place in Erzurum (Karin) decided that the Armenian subjects of the Ottoman Empire should serve in the Ottoman army; and the Armenians in Russia – in the Russian one.

Caucasian front the population would collaborate with Russian troops. Nonetheless, the Ottoman authorities applied to the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnak party) in 1914 with a demand that in case of a war the Sublime Porte anticipates that the Armenians in the Russian Empire would revolt against Russian authorities¹⁰². The 8th plenary of Dashnak party that took place in Erzurum (Karin) decided that the Armenian subjects of the Ottoman Empire should serve in the Ottoman army; and the Armenians in Russia – in the Russian one¹⁰³. So, the Dashnak party opted for having Armenians serving in the armies of competing empires and fighting each other¹⁰⁴.

Armenians were conscripted to the Ottoman army where

100. Reid, pp. 185.

101. Interview with S. Manukyan.

102. Interview with G. Manoyan.

103. Interview with R. Safrastyan.

104. Interview with G. Manoyan.

they showed their loyalty with a number of case studies, like the rescue of Enver at the Caucasian front by Ohannes Aginyan from Sivas¹⁰⁵; the participation of Armenians at the Western front, in particular as military doctors¹⁰⁶. Only the life story of Ottoman army's artilleryman Sargis Torosyan¹⁰⁷, who got a medal of hero from Military Minister Enver¹⁰⁸, is enough to testify that Armenians did serve in the Ottoman armed forces in a very loyal way¹⁰⁹. Nevertheless, Austro-Hungarian diplomats report to Vienna from Constantinople that "very often Armenian soldiers are sent to the first line of the front so they are killed there"¹¹⁰. In spite of that starting from February 1915 most of the

...Armenians were in position to organize self-defense battles only in those places where Armenian men somehow evaded conscription.

105. Ezgi Berk, 'Bu kitabı I. Dünya Savaşı'nda görünmeyen Ermeni emeğini anlatmak için yazdım', Agos, 14.11.2014 (<http://www.agos.com.tr/bu-kitabi-i-dunya-savasinda-gorunmeyen-ermeni-emeğini-anlatmak-icin-yazdım-8604.html>)

106. Arsen Yarman, *Ermeni Etıbbı Cemiyeti 1912-1922 (Osmanlı'da Tıptan Siyasete Bir Kurum)*, İstanbul, 2014, 488 s.; Emre Ertanl, *Çanakkale'nin unutturulan gayrimüslim şehitleri*, Agos, 18.03.2013 (<http://www.agos.com.tr/canakkalenin-unutturulan-gayrimuslim-sehitleri-4692.html>)

107. Sarkis Torossian: *an Armenian hero of the Dardanelles*, The Armenian Genocide Museum Institute, <http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/24.04.2010d.php>; Robert Fisk, *The Armenian hero Turkey would prefer to forget*, *The Independent*, 12 May 2013 (<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/the-armenian-hero-turkey-would-prefer-to-forget-8612890.html>); Taner Akçam, *Sarkis Torossian Debate*, January 25, 2013, <http://www.tanerakcam.com/debates/sarkis-torossian-debate/>

108. *The scanned copy of the Ottoman original of the order regarding the medal at* <http://www.tanerakcam.com/files/2013/01/OTTO-MAN-DOCUMENT-Enver-Pasha.jpeg>

109. Interview with G. Manoyan.

110. 'Österreich-Armenien', 1872-1936 *Faksimilesammlung diplomatischer Aktenstücke*, Herausgegeben und eingeleitet von Mag. Dr. Artem Ohandjanian, Band I-XII, Ohandjanian Eigenverlag Wien, 1995, Bd. VI, s.449f, Haus-Hof und Staatsarchiv, Politisches Archiv, N 50; as cited in Zh. Nurdjanyan, *Chronology of the Armenian genocide (Zhamanaka-grutyun Hayots tseghaspanutyun)*, *The Issues of the History and Historiography of Armenian Genocide*, 2005, №10-11, p. 91 (in Armenian).

Armenian soldiers were disarmed and sent to labor battalions only to be killed after being used for some time in construction works. That was an attempt to eliminate the defense force in order to implement the genocide policy more smoothly and effectively afterwards. The history showed that Armenians were in position to organize self-defense battles only in those places where Armenian men somehow evaded conscription¹¹¹.

The Self-defense of Armenians

After having removed one part of Armenian men from their settlements, the Ottoman state directed Turkish and Kurdish bands to massacre the Armenian population almost without any hindrance. Facts of mass killings had been recorded already since January 1915, like in the village of Avsharik in Van where

107 Armenians were killed¹¹². Day by day news and testimonies about such killings or forced Islamization of women and children grew more

Only 10 small-scale resistances throughout the enormous empire is proof that in reality people were not ready to resist.

and more in number. Simultaneously, political and public figures had been arrested since February. Armenian political parties came to consciousness and joined with the people for self-defense but regrettably that was not a rebellion. History proved that "the decision of the 8th plenary of Dashnak party was wrong. If the Dashnak party had aimed for organizing a general Armenian rebellion, most of the Armenian people would have been rescued¹¹³".

The overall number of self-defense actions was very low. Only 10 small-scale resistances throughout the enormous empire is proof that in reality people were not ready to resist, since ready

111. Interview with G. Manukyan;

112. Barby Henry. *Au Paus de Eepouvante: E Armenie martyre*, Beyrouth, 1973, p. 240; as cited in Zh. Nuridjanyan, *ibid.*

113. Interview with R. Safrastyan;

people would resist much more effectively and in more places¹¹⁴.

Van

The most known self-defense action is the self-defense of Van that is often misrepresented by both Turkish and non-Turkish historians as a rebellion. However, after having studied the chronology of events in Van, it becomes crystal clear that the self-defense started only after the villages surrounding the town of Van had been destroyed by the same Turkish armed forces that came to Van later¹¹⁵.

...the villages surrounding the town of Van had been destroyed by the same Turkish armed forces that came to Van later.

The attacks on the villages in the neighborhood of Van began as far back as the end of 1914. Most of the villages were wiped out without any resistance. Henry Morgenthau witnessed that in just three days Turks had killed 24,000 Armenians in the northern part of Lake Van¹¹⁶, whereas before May they ruined around 100 villages in the province exterminating their population¹¹⁷. Few villages, like village Aren in Ardjesh province and village Tagh in Shatakh province, did resist as long as possible¹¹⁸.

"Armenian self-defense body of Vaspurakan" was established on April 5, 1914, but the power balance was not in favor of Armenians. Maximum 1,500 inhabitants of Van could use rifles,

114. Interview with S. Manukyan;

115. Interview with S. Manukyan;

116. Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*, New York, 1918, p. 297

117. Arthur Beylerian, *Les Grandes Puissances L'Empire Ottoman et les Armeniens dans les Archives Françaises (1914-1918)*, Paris, 1983, p. 25 as cited in R. Sahakyan, *The heroic battle of Van of 1915 in foreign sources (1915 t. Vani herosamarty otar aghbyurnerum)*, *Herald of the Social Sciences*, 1989, № 8. pp. 54-63 (in Armenian).

118. See more on this in Ruben Sahakyan, *Struggle for Life of the Armenians of Vaspurakan in 1915 (Vaspurakan hayutyun goyamarty 1915 tvakanin)*, *Historical-Philological Journal*, 1995, № 1, pp. 19-30 (in Armenian).

while only 300 guns were available. Only later the ranks of fighters were joined with people from neighboring regions taking refuge in Armenian quarters of Van. For one month Armenians managed to show resistance to the regular Ottoman troops armed with cannons and assisted by Kurdish and Circassian paramilitary bands¹¹⁹.

Mush

After failure in Van, the slaughterers serving the Ottoman government were not rushing to begin massacres of Armenians

The local authorities understood that the Kurdish tribes without the regular army, cannons and machine guns would not be able to implement the annihilation of Armenians.

in Mush, surrounding villages and Sasun since they had started to act in a more 'watchful' way. Besides, the Russian army had a successful attack in the Caucasus front and the

3rd Ottoman army was fully engaged in preventing the advance of the enemy. The local authorities understood that the Kurdish tribes without the regular army, cannons and machine guns would not be able to implement the annihilation of Armenians. Young Turks paused for the situation at the front to relatively calm down, so they were able to transfer the troops and massacre the Armenians of Mush. Despite the situation troubled Armenians, Dashnak figures responsible for organizing the self-defense decided to focus self-defense in the mountains of Sasun; thus most of the Armenian fighters left to Sasun and only a small number stayed in Mush.

In July 1915, after the retreat of the Russian army, Turkish authorities managed to concentrate significant forces against Armenians of Mush. Turks and Kurds stroke first at the Armenian

119. See more on this in Ruben Sahakyan, *The heroic battle of Van of 1915 in foreign sources (1915 t. Vani herosamarty otar aghbyumerum)*, *Herold of the Social Sciences*, 1989, № 8 . pp. 54-63 (in Armenian).

quarters of the town of Mush and nearby Armenian villages. Upon the order of the authorities Kurdish armed bands rushed to the town and guns were distributed to the Turkish inhabitants. The Armenian quarters were encircled by Turkish military units and paramilitary groups of Kurds and Turks.

On June 26, 1915 the mayor of Mush, Servet, ordered to deport the local Armenians and, in case of refusal, to threaten and make reprisals. The self-defense

of Mush Armenians started on June 28, 1915. The town of Mush had 5 Armenian quarters with 12,000 inhabitants. Another 10,000 Armenians who had escaped from the nearby

...notorious representatives of the Union and Progress Party – Cherkez (Circassian) Hasan and Khalil bey – had arrived to the town and orchestrated another massacre of Armenians by inciting Muslim mobs.

Armenian villages joined them. Armenians consolidated positions in certain quarters and started the self-defense. From time to time few Armenian groups managed to break out of encirclement and escape to the mountains of Sasun. On June 30, 1915 the enemy started another, more powerful attack. Turks succeeded to break the defense line of Mush Armenians. Self-defense combatants fought to death. After suppressing the resistance of the Armenians, Turks started an outrageous massacre in the town. In particular, Turkish gendarmes put the orphanage with Armenian orphans on fire¹²⁰.

Urfa

Armenians of Urfa also applied to self-defense against Turkish slaughterers. Since the spring of 1915 the town had been turned into a concentration camp and exile destination. Every day,

120. See more on this in Ruben Sahakyan, *The Self-defense of Armenian Quarters of Mush town in 1915 (Mush qaqhaqi haykakan taghamaseri inqnapashtpanutyuny 1915 tvakanin)*, *The Issues of the History and Historiography of Armenian Genocide*, 2006, № 12. p. 94-102 (in Armenian);

without a pause, the caravans of Armenians from different towns of Western Armenia were passing through Urfa. Bruno Eckart, an employee of the German mission in Urfa, writes in his memoirs that all this had a single aim of dooming Armenians to die from hunger in the deserts of Mesopotamia¹²¹. Plunder and looting of deported Armenians continued also in Urfa. The deportees concentrated in the town were in terrible insanitary conditions which caused the spread of different contagious diseases among the population of Urfa.

Contrary to the strict prohibitions of Ottoman authorities, local Armenians of Urfa (numbered around 100,000 that made one third of the total population of the town) were trying their best to help the deportees. Witnessing the ruthless and merciless behavior

of the Turkish authorities, few representatives of Urfa Armenians organized a meeting to discuss that impending condition. Meanwhile Turks were zealously looking for a pretext to deport the local

...Armenians were not the initiators but they only had reacted to the actions of the Ottoman authorities. Moreover, Armenians were not prepared and they tried to improvise post-factum. This proves that their actions had no nature of a rebellion.

Armenians of Urfa as well; therefore, during the meeting it was decided not to provide such a reason to the local authorities and not to engage in immediate actions by patiently enduring all the insults and violence of the Turkish authorities. But the latter arrested over 100 prominent Armenians, including the participants of the meeting within 2 hours on June 25. Only few managed to avoid the arrest. Shortly, Young Turk authorities sent 1,500 Armenian young men from Urfa to so called 'rearward labors' and killed them just few kilometers out of the town. Only two people managed to escape from that hell and bring the tragic news to Urfa. In the meantime notorious representatives of the

121. Bruno Eckart, *Meine Erlebnisse in Urfa, Potsdam, 1922, s. 7, as cited in Ruben Sahakyan, The Self-defense of Armenian Quarters of Mush town in 1915, pp. 94-102*

Union and Progress Party – Cherkez (Circassian) Hasan and Khalil bey – had arrived to the town and orchestrated another massacre of Armenians by inciting Muslim mobs. That event took the lives of around 200 Armenians. Urfa Armenians began to organize self-defense groups and try to procure guns.

On September 29 gendarmes encircled the house of two young men who had escaped from the massacre of the labor battalion in order to arrest as deserters.

The young men put up a fight, and killed several gendarmes. This skirmish

A real rebellion would trigger those at the same time.

triggered the self-defense of Urfa. Before the arrival of regular forces, Young Turk authorities raised the Muslim population of the neighborhood. For that period of time Armenian groups were defending themselves quite effectively.

Three Turkish battalions, two 120 mm howitzers and two field cannons were brought to Urfa by October 12. Turks concentrated around 11,000 soldiers, including 6,000 regular troops, 600 men of Suleyman beg of Srudj and the rest was the Muslim population of the neighborhood against the Armenians. The chief of Turkish headquarters was Wolffskeel von Reichenberg, a German officer who had participated in the annihilation of the peaceful population in Marash and Zeytun. Turks were assisted also by another German officer of Venezuelan origin Raphael de Nogales who also had rich 'experience' in these matters. The adventurer person had participated in the attacks on Van and commanded the Turkish artillery.

Despite the steadfast struggle of Armenians, the self-defense came to its end. According to some sources the fights finished on October 15-16, according to others – 23-24. Turks and Kurds killed the rest of Armenian men in the town, and deported women and children to the Syrian deserts¹²².

122. Ruben Sahakyan, *From the history of 1915 Urfa heroic battle (Urfayl 1915 tvakanl herosamarti patmutyunits), Historical-Philological Journal, 1988, № 3 . pp. 103-113 (In Armenian).*

Thus, all three cases demonstrate that Armenians were not the initiators but they only had reacted to the actions of the Ottoman authorities. Moreover, Armenians were not prepared and they tried to improvise post-factum. This proves that their actions had no nature of a rebellion.

The international criminal tribunal on the Rwandan case decided after having studied the case that “Yes, there was a situation of war, a civil war, but that does not diminish the fact that during the same time a genocide of Tutsis took place”.

In case of a rebellion, a simple logic would hint the strategy of uprising in all the places at once, since that would be the key to success. However, the self-defense fights of Armenians were not coordinated; they were separate, local skirmishes like those in Van, Şapın-Karahisar, Mount Musa (Musadağ) and Urfa. A real rebellion would trigger those at the same time, but the first was Van, then Şapın-Karahisar, afterwards Mount Musa (Musadağ) and later Urfa. This shows that the self-defense of local Armenians was improvised only when the danger was at their immediate doorstep¹²³.

...no one tries to justify the Jewish Holocaust by saying that “Jews in Warsaw revolted or organized self-defense, so it was justified to annihilate all those residing in the territories of the Reich”.

Moreover, it is not necessary to deny the opinions regarding an assumed Armenian rebellion in order to prove that the actions of the Ottoman Empire qualified as genocide. The classical case is the Rwandan genocide. For a long time, before and during the genocide, Rwanda was in civil war between ethnic Hutus and ethnic Tutsis. The international criminal tribunal on the Rwandan case decided after having studied the case that “Yes, there was a situation of war, a civil war, but that does not diminish the fact that during the same time a genocide of Tutsis

123. Interview with A. Marukyan.

took place”. So, even if someone claims that there were riots in Van and other places, or there were Armenian self-defense units that also took part in operations of the Russian army, this cannot anyhow justify the policy of the Ottoman Empire regarding the annihilation of the Armenian ethnic group¹²⁴.

In the same way nowhere no one tries to justify the Jewish Holocaust by saying that “Jews in Warsaw revolted or organized self-defense, so it was justified to annihilate all those residing in the territories of the Reich”¹²⁵.

124. Interview with V. Vardanyan.

125. Interview with G. Manoyan.

The uprising of Jews in Warsaw

Just like the self-defense in Van, Urfa, Mount Musa or elsewhere, Jews applied to self-defense only after the launch of the Holocaust.

In approximately one hundred ghettos, in Poland, Lithuania, Belorussia, and Ukraine, underground organizations were formed. The purpose of such organizations was to wage armed struggle, that is, to stage an uprising in the ghetto or to break out of the closed ghetto by the use of force in order to engage in partisan operations on the outside. In many instances, the two forms combined, the uprising being followed by an escape from the ghetto. There were also cases in which the uprising was spontaneous or improvised.

In many of the ghettos where resistance was more organized, Jewish youth movements were deeply involved in the planning and carrying out of the plans. Active resistance occurred in many forms, from armed struggle through hiding and escape.

...Jews did struggle not only in ghettos by organizing self-defense groups and revolts, they had also participated in partisan warfare.

While preparing for armed resistance, secret groups in the ghettos faced extremely difficult problems, such as smuggling arms into the ghetto, training the fighters under ghetto conditions, and establishing a method for putting the fighters on battle alert in case of a surprise action by the Germans. No less difficult was the task of gaining the ghetto residents' support for the fighting underground. It was clear that the insurgents did not have the slightest chance of forcing the Germans to put a stop to the extermination, and it was equally clear that only a handful of fighters could actually succeed in breaking out of the ghetto to join partisan units in order to continue the fight against the Germans.

The largest and most famous revolt by Jews took place in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in April and May of 1943, led by the Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa (Jewish Fighting Organization;

Z.O.B.). The Z.O.B. members saw themselves as rejecting a Jewish tradition of passivity and compliance¹²⁶. In the 27 days that the uprising officially lasted, the Nazis deployed a considerable military force that in the first days of the fighting consisted, on the average, of 2,054 soldiers and policemen and 36 officers. Facing them were 700 to 750 young Jewish fighters who had no military training or battle

Jewish partisans believed that they would never see home or family again, especially since the Nazis had already murdered most of their families.

experience, and who for all practical purposes were armed with not much more than a few pistols. The hand-to-hand combat lasted for several days. The Germans were not able to destroy the Jewish fighters, many of whom managed to get away and retreat over the roofs after clashing with the Germans. The Germans decided to burn the ghetto systematically, house by house. Gradually, the Jews' ability to resist or hide declined. On May 8th, the headquarters of the Z.O.B. fell. The Z.O.B. fighters had not made any plans for a retreat from the ghetto; their assumption was that the battle would continue inside the ghetto until the last fighter had fallen. Thanks to a rescue mission arranged by Z.O.B. men on the Polish side, several dozen fighters were saved by escaping from the ghetto through the sewer system. On May 16, German General Jürgen Stroop announced that the fighting was over. He blew up the Great Synagogue on Tlomacka Street (which was outside the ghetto and the scene of the fighting) as a symbol of victory and to declare to the world: "The Jewish quarter of Warsaw no longer exists."¹²⁷

As already mentioned, Jews did struggle not only in ghettos by organizing self-defense groups and revolts, they had also participated in partisan warfare. During World War II, partisans risked their lives by organizing secret resistance to Nazi control.

126. Israel Gutman, *Resistance: The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*, Mariner books, 1998, p. xvii

127. Israel Gutman, *Resistance*, pp. 1-2;

They attacked German-held railroads, bridges, and military installations. They also organized efforts to assassinate Nazi collaborators (local people who were helping the Germans).

There were many crucial differences between Jewish and non-Jewish partisans. Non-Jewish partisans joined the fight either as nationalists who wanted to rid their countries of all foreigners, or as socialist-leftists who wanted to combat Fascism. They left their families at home, generally expecting to return to them after the war. The Jewish partisans were not fighting for an ideal such as nationalism or anti-Fascism. The Jewish partisans were fighting for their lives. Jewish partisans believed that they would never see home or family again, especially since the Nazis had already murdered most of their families. Furthermore, non-Jewish partisans had support, and believed that as patriotic citizens doing their duty for their country, they could usually rely on local farmers to provide them with food and supplies. Not so the Jews. Jewish partisans could rarely rely on the locals who often hated Jews¹²⁸. Nonetheless, Jewish partisan units waged quite effective struggle against Nazis and caused much losses to their troops.

...certain part of Jews did actively engage in armed struggle against Nazis, revolted and waged partisan warfare in paramilitary groups; however no one ever tried to justify or excuse the Jewish Holocaust pointing at their resistance.

...during the Trebizond trial the testimonies were given by high-ranking officials such as the former Governor of Van Nazim, the former Governor of Erzurum Tahsin, the Minister of the Navy Avni.

Consequently, certain part of Jews did actively engage in armed struggle against Nazis, revolted and waged partisan warfare in paramilitary groups; however no one ever tried to justify or excuse the Jewish Holocaust pointing at their resistance. A revolt

128. *Resistance during the Holocaust*, Anti-defamation League, <http://www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/Resistance-During-the-Holocaust-NYLM-Guide.pdf>

and especially a self-defense do not validate genocide.

In summary, the Armenian genocide is a consequence of fear, because Bulgarians, Romanians, Serbs and Greeks had revolted and got independence, and Turks always anticipated that the Armenians would be next. This anticipation of fear brought to the decision of annihilation of the Armenians. There was no rebellion in reality, simply because the Armenian political mind had miscalculated the situation and was not ready for such ...the historical facts showed that the developments. The few British had absolutely no interest in this armed skirmishes were issue. cases of self-defense while Armenians were not the initiators and only had reacted to the actions of the Ottoman authorities. Moreover, Armenians were not prepared and they tried to improvise post-factum. The overall number of self-defense actions was very low. Only 10 small-scale resistances throughout the enormous empire is proof that in reality people were not ready. However, even a revolt of an armed struggle cannot in any way justify the policy of the Ottoman Empire regarding the annihilation of the Armenian ethnic group.

THE TRIALS OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE IN THE OTTOMAN COURT IN 1919-1920

In the end, all of them were released and returned to Istanbul, and later they became the founding fathers of the Republic of Turkey.

The Ottoman Empire was the first to recognize the Armenian Genocide. The Young Turks' policy of annihilation of the

Armenians was officially condemned by the Turks already in 1919-1920 by the Turkish military tribunals.

The defeated sultan of the Ottoman Empire and constantly changing prime ministers (Sadrazams) decided to prosecute the perpetrators of the crimes committed during the years of the war under the pressure of the international community in the wake of World War. The issue of the responsibility for the accusations of the deportations and massacres of the Armenians was also raised.

During the 1919-1920 63 various proceedings were held on charges of the deportation and massacres of the Armenians and

most of them were the trials of the members of the Central Committee of "Union and Progress" party, the heads of "The Special Organization",

Nuremberg was no less in occupation when the trial was held for the purpose of the prosecution of the culprits of the Holocaust.

members of the government and responsible secretaries of the Party.

From the viewpoint of the study of the Armenian Genocide the court hearings of Yozgat and Trebizond offer more testimonies and eye-witness accounts as well official documents obtained during the investigation which confirm again that the massacres were not the result of abuse by local officials but were organized by the government¹²⁹. The witnesses of both in Yozgat and in

129. See more on Yozgat and Trebizond trials in Meline Anumyan, *The irrefutable testimonies of the Armenian Genocide in the trials of the deportations and massacres of the Armenians from Yozghat and Trebizond*,

Trebizond court hearings were mainly Turks and Muslims of various ethnic origins¹³⁰. Moreover, during the Trebizond trial the testimonies were given by high-ranking officials such as the former Governor of Van Nazim, the former Governor of Erzurum Tahsin, the Minister of the Navy Avni, Legislative Inspector Kenan, the Chief of Army Staff in Trebizond and Lazistan, General Muhtar, Lieutenant Ahmed and others¹³¹.

What did induce the Ottomans to initiate the trials?

The first reason that casts light on it is the revenge of the Itilafists from the Ittihadists. "Freedom and Accord" Party (Hürriyet ve İtilâf) during the years

of the rule of Young Turks' "Union and Progress" Party (İttihat ve Terakki) was in exile and most party members were deported.

...the most important reason for holding the trials was that at the end of World War I discussions on the establishment of military tribunals among Entente powers had already started.

After the defeat of the

Ottoman Empire in World War I led by the Ittihadists, the Itilafists came to power who, from the perspective of some historians, sought revisionism¹³². According to them, this was the reason why the Itilafists initiated every possible move to take revenge from the Ittihadists using the administrative levers and enjoying the support of the British including blaming them for the massacres of the Armenians and condemning it.

The second reason that is very often used by Turkish historians was the British pressure as in that period the British fleet was in Constantinople¹³³ and the British were very interested in the

Regional Affairs, volume 2 (5), 2014.

130. Taner Akçam, *İnsan hakları ve Ermeni sorunu. İttihat ve Terakki'den Kurtuluş savaşına*, 2. baskı, İstanbul, 2002, s.303

131. See more in Meline Anumyan, *Recognition and Condemnation: The Trials of Young Turks (1919-1921 and 1926) (Tchanatchum yev datapartum. Yeritturqeri datavarutyunnery (1919-1921 tt. Yev 1926 t.))*, Yerevan, 2013 (In Armenian).

132. Interview with A.Marukyan.

133. Interview with A.Marukyan

punishment of war criminals. Generally, in the cases of the trials the interest in the proceedings of the British and their presence in the capital are exploited a lot and often in an irrelevant manner.

a) The interest in the proceedings

If the Turks were really under the direct pressure of the British, and if the British demanded the implementation of that trial why the British did not organize the trial themselves¹³⁴. When the first defendant was convicted in the Yozgat trial, and sentenced to death, a wave of great resentment was raised. The Young Turks who continued to be a great power within the Ottoman Empire organized large demonstrations in Istanbul. Meanwhile

the Greek army entered Izmir (Smyrna). At that time England feared other defendants would be released as a result and decided to relocate them to the Island of Malta

...the Ottoman state was aware of all the possible severe consequences that could arise if the case of the Armenian Genocide was investigated in the international tribunal.

which was done at the end of May in 1919¹³⁵.

The question then arises: if there was pressure by the British on the Young Turks for the condemnation of the crimes in Istanbul, what prevented the British from doing it in Malta. They could establish a tribunal and impartially conduct the trial¹³⁶ given that the deportees of Malta were the most important defendants; mainly members of government¹³⁷. However, the historical facts showed that the British had absolutely no interest in this issue, particularly after the Greek-Turkish war when many high-ranking officers had been captured by Mustafa Kemal, and the archives testified to the fact that from the viewpoint of the exchange of the prisoners, 66 deported Ittihadists were a playing card in the

134. Interview with A.Marukyan.

135. Interview with M.Anumyan.

136. Interview with A.Marukyan.

137. Interview with M.Anumyan.

hands of the British. In the end, all of them were released¹³⁸ and returned to Istanbul, and later they became the founding fathers of the Republic of Turkey¹³⁹.

b) the presence in the capital

The presence of the winning powers of World War I in the capital where the court sessions were held can be viewed as a psychological influence on the process. However, in that case the historians who overrate such influence should also revoke the Nuremberg trials. Nuremberg was no less in occupation when the trial was held for the purpose of the prosecution of the culprits of the Holocaust¹⁴⁰. The winning power judged the defeated power

in Nuremberg. Both in Nuremberg and in Tokyo the judges and prosecutors were the representatives of the winning power: from the Soviet Union, the US, and the Great Britain etc.

...the Turkish state itself did not implement the punishment and the verdict was not made as the vast majority of the defendants were released or later exchanged with the British prisoners.

In contrast to the trials embraced by the international community and considered to be a milestone from the viewpoint of the condemnation of the Holocaust, the proceedings in Istanbul were conducted by Turkish laws, Turkish courts, Turkish judges and prosecutors, which implies they are qualitatively better and incomparably free from influence¹⁴¹.

The real reason:

We suppose that the most important reason for holding the trials was that at the end of World War I discussions on the establishment of military tribunals among Entente powers had already started. The Ottoman Empire feared that if the committed

138. Interview with A.Marukyan.

139. Interview with A.Kosroeva.

140. Interview with S.Manukyan.

141. Interview with G.Manoyan.

crimes against civilians were not investigated in the Ottoman court but in an international one, the issue of the responsibility of the Ottoman state would emerge which would also imply territorial losses, material compensation etc¹⁴². At that time, the

...the verdicts of the Turkish tribunals indirectly testified that the Ottoman Empire itself was the one of the first to recognize the Armenian Genocide.

preparations of the Peace Conference in France were under way, for example, there was a provision in the Treaty of Sevres regarding the punishment of the perpetrators of the crime and giving compensation to the country in question. Therefore, the Ottomans tried to minimize these obligations and that is why they initiated and implemented the trials¹⁴³. It means that the Ottoman state was aware of all the possible severe consequences that could arise if the case of the Armenian Genocide was investigated in the international tribunal. This is the reason for the haste that was observed at the end of 1918, it means that right after the signing the Armistice of Mudros the discussions quickly popped in media, then in the Ottoman Parliament and then the trial immediately started at the beginning of 1919¹⁴⁴.

This is the one of the paramount proofs in the matter of the complicity of the Ottoman Empire in the Armenian Genocide as all the defendants were state officials.

It follows that the primary purpose of those trials was to save the remnants of the Ottoman Empire and possibly mitigate the punishment at least of the state if not the individuals. These trials actually precluded organizing other similar trials in the future. Moreover, if we discuss the results of these trials in terms of the punishment, it should be stated that the Turkish state itself did not implement the punishment and the verdict was not made as the vast majority

142. Interview with M.Anumyan, Interview with A.Marukyan.

143. Interview with G.Manoyan.

144. Interview with M.Anumyan, Interview with A.Marukyan.

of the defendants were released or later exchanged with the British prisoners.

Therefore, the Turkish government itself did not implement the punishment in reality. The punishment was executed later by the Armenian avengers¹⁴⁵. Only one person was hanged which is a very small number for the responsibility of such a crime¹⁴⁶. Most of those who were really responsible went unpunished and even became important figures in the Republic of Turkey¹⁴⁷.

Moreover, genocide is a political crime, and it is wrong to view it as just a criminal case as persons can be punished but the crime was not merely the murder of a person. And in this sense, the crime was not legally completed in the Ottoman court¹⁴⁸.

Thereby, the verdicts of the Turkish tribunals indirectly testified that the Ottoman Empire itself was the one of the first to recognize the Armenian Genocide. Of course, there was no article on genocide in the Criminal Code of the Ottoman Empire. However, the main defendants were sentenced to death based on the 45th article of the Criminal Code for the first degree murder. The latter is a premeditated murder. The element of such intent is very important for the description of the genocidal crime¹⁴⁹.

This is the one of the paramount proofs in the matter of the complicity of the Ottoman Empire in the Armenian Genocide as all the defendants were state officials. It means that the Armenian

...genocide is such an act the traces of which are practically impossible to eliminate.

...the mechanism of carrying out the Armenian Genocide should be thoroughly understood

145. Interview with M.Anumyan, Interview with A.Marukyan.

146. Interview with S.Manukyan.

147. Interview with R.Safrastyan.

148. Interview with A.Kosroeva.

149. Interview with S.Manukyan.

Genocide was a crime organized by the Ottoman Empire through official or state means¹⁵⁰. So, the Ottoman court itself factually gave an adequate estimation of the perpetrated crime via its verdicts, and today we can talk about the confirmation of the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by Turkey rather than recognition¹⁵¹.

150. Interview with A.Marukyan.

151. Interview with A.Marukyan.

OPEN AND CLOSED ARMENIAN AND TURKISH ARCHIVES ON THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Archives serve as the collective memory of the society. They hold the evidences of the past and provide the responsibility and transparency stemming from actions carried out in the past. Archives help people to have an objective picture of their past and history, as well as to properly understand the role of individuals, unfolded events and organizations in creating the past. Objective knowledge on the past makes it possible to build a better future. However, some of those who had a role in building of the past hide the dark pages of the it, falsifying history in an attempt to change the future. They do

everything to eliminate the documents and archives, to keep the archives strictly confidential and to get rid

The Armenian Genocide was implemented through two pipelines: the state and the party.

of any evidence. The criminals who implemented crimes against humanity are more attentive towards the documents and archives. In many cases, the documents directly testifying the genocides are difficult to find.

Both in Nazi Germany and in the Ottoman Empire, and in Rwanda the criminals realized that genocide is a crime that is punishable in all cases. In any case, no matter to what extent the archives are cleansed, genocide is such an act the traces of which are practically impossible to eliminate. In the case of faulty archives or their absence the specialists of genocide turn to the general analysis of actions, study the committed crime and conclude that there was intent behind the crime which proves that the executed act was indeed genocide¹⁵².

The issue of the archives is often raised in the study of the Armenian Genocide. Many specialists have studied the American, British, Russian, and Italian archives along with the archives of

152. Interview with V. Vardanyan.

the Ottoman Empire Germany and Austria although the most important archives- the Turkish ones- have not been fully explored yet¹⁵³.

The Turkish archives

What does it mean to explore the Turkish archives on genocide? It implies the assumption that there are documents on the Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman archives¹⁵⁴.

Indeed, no matter how much archives have been eliminated and cleansed, some documents testifying the genocide will have slipped out from that cleansings and will cast light on the persons who implemented the genocide in addition to their actions and the methods. However, the mechanism of carrying out the Armenian

Genocide should be thoroughly understood in order not to look for a black cat in the dark room which will most likely not be found there.

It was the Committee that initially made the decision to carry out genocide against the Armenians and before putting the state mechanism into motion, the party affiliates had spread the orders of the execution of the decision and the process had started.

The Armenian Genocide was implemented in the Ottoman Empire through two pipelines: the state and the party. Moreover, the levers of the "Union and Progress" (İttihatveTerakki) party were more influential. The coordinator of the realization of the genocide was Talaat with his two commanding positions: as the Minister of Internal Affairs and as the real head of the Young Turks' Party. As the Minister of Internal Affairs, he gave an order to the valis, the heads of vilayets, to organize the deportation of the Armenians.

At the same time Talaat gave orders to the representatives of the Central Committee of the Party who were in different vilayets. The Ottoman Empire was formally ruled by the government but

153. Interview with A. Khosroeva, interview with R.Melkonyan.

154. Interview with R. Safrastyan.

in reality the country was ruled by the Central Committee of the Young Turks. It was the Committee that initially made the decision to carry out genocide against the Armenians and before putting the state mechanism into motion, the party affiliates had spread the orders of the execution of the decision and the process had started¹⁵⁵. The Genocide has implemented under the auspice of the Committee of the Union and Progress and particularly by the Special Organization led by the famous doctor Behaeddin Şakir¹⁵⁶. For more details about the masterminds of the Genocide see in the relevant chapter.

The researchers of the Armenian Genocide should be interested not only in the state archives among the Turkish ones but especially the party archives. There are documents in the state archives that primarily refer to the deportations. Now, those documents are published in Turkey. Those documents are interesting and indirectly cast light on the past. However, the main documents are the

...the last leader of the German military delegation, General von Seeckt took a portion of the documents concerning the massacres and the Genocide of the Armenians with him to Germany.

documents of the Central Committee of the Young Turks' Party. Nevertheless the main documents of the Central Committee of the Young Turks' party related to the Genocide do not exist: they have been eliminated or have not been published yet. According to eye-witness accounts, there is some evidence that certain Turkish leaders (for example: Nazim Bey) took some documents while fleeing on board the German

Nevertheless the main documents of the Central Committee of the Young Turks' party related to the Genocide do not exist: they have been eliminated or have not been published yet.

155. Interview with R. Safrastyan, interview with R.Melkonyan.

156. Interview with A. Khosroeva.

ship from October 30 to November 1, 1918. There are witnesses who testify that documents were being burnt in the Central Committee of the Party for a few consecutive days and smoke was coming out of there. In this sense, there is information regarding

the participation of the Germans: the last leader of the German military delegation, General von Seeckt took a portion of the documents concerning the massacres and the Genocide of the Armenians with him to Germany.

...the official orders that have been represented as a reflection of the official policy have been added by secret directives: sometimes those secret directives were kept informed to the addressees that the official orders shouldn't be seriously accepted.

Additionally, there are no German military archives from that period. It is supposed that a big part was eliminated during the Second World War, although there is also some information that the archives were taken to the USA¹⁵⁷. However, General von Seeckt himself reported that "the official orders that have been represented as a reflection of the official policy have been added by secret directives: sometimes those secret directives were kept informed to the addressees that the official orders shouldn't be seriously accepted."¹⁵⁸

When it comes to the Turkish state archives, it is impossible to state with one word if they are open

...that the Turkish archives have been cleansed numerous times.

or closed. Turkish archives are a reserve that contains enormous material and that has not been organized to this day. There are few categorized documents. From this perspective, frequently problems emerge even for those who have an opportunity to work there.

157. Interview with R. Safrastyan.

158. General von Seeckt, *Die Gründe des Zusammenbruchs der Türkei*, from V. Dadrian, *German Responsibility in the Armenian Genocide*, Watertown, 1996, p. 135.

The second important reality related to the archives is that the Turkish archives have been cleansed numerous times. Since the 1960s, when rare specialists were granted the right to survey the Turkish archives, the Turkish state realized what kind of unsafe information they may contain and started the supervised state-initiated cleansing of those archives. Several military coups were staged during the history of the Republic of Turkey and after each case the new group coming to power would cleanse the archives in its turn. People who have been there trying to work in those archives confirm that the cleansing is easily felt as far as the dating is cut short. For instance in the 41st file documents 8, 9, 10 may be found after documents 5, 6 while document 7 may be missing.

...almost all the important documents on the Armenian Genocide are kept in this archive.

On May 1987 by the head of appointed director of the State archive İsmet Miroğlu the Armenian material was possibly cleaned from those archives. In May 1989, the Turkish state solemnly declared about the opening of the Ottoman archives¹⁵⁹. However, that declaration was

a miscalculation. By declaring the archives were open until the year of 1894, they belied themselves as far as each and every archive has date

...the officials handling related issues decide who of the historians or researchers can have access to the archive. They even control and determine what materials can be explored by the researcher.

of secrecy and expiry while they kept the archives from the period of the Hamidian massacres of 1894-96 closed realizing they expose a danger¹⁶⁰.

In any case, another trap should be avoided in the discussion of the Turkish archives. There are numerous discussions regarding

159. Interview with S. Manukyan.

160. Interview with A. Melkonyan.

the state of the Turkish archives being open or closed. However, speaking about the Turkish archives that are somehow related

to the Armenian Question or the Armenians or in general to the history of the Ottoman Empire and its legal successor the Republic of Turkey,

the state archives and the archives of the General Headquarters should be differentiated:

1. Adjacent to the Staff of the Turkish Prime Minister General Directorate of the State Archives (Başbakanlık'a bağlı Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü). It should be kept in mind that archives dating back to the Ottoman era are kept in the Ottoman archives which are in Istanbul's administrative district Kaghithane, in the location called Sadabad while the materials related to the Republican era

are in the archival stock in Ankara. This archive is open to all researchers and provides quality service corresponding to international standards. The Ottoman archives in Istanbul archival stacks are digital realm and can be ordered with the help of a

...exploring the Turkish archives does not have the purpose of proving the Armenian Genocide any more. They should be examined not to prove whether there was or there was not but to find out how it happened, what happened, why and who is responsible, where, in other words, for the sake of details.

computer. Part of the archival documents is digitalized and can be explored at any time upon the paid order to have it on a CD.

The documents that have not been digitalized yet can be obtained in a day upon order and if necessary the copy or the scanned version on a CD is available or one can personally take photos: the services are charged. The only issue is that some stacks of the Ottoman archives have not been moved from Gylulhen to Sadabad. On these grounds the access to documents

can be denied which is a temporary issue. It is another issue what documents are kept in the archive and which are presented.

2. The archive of the Directorate of the General Headquarters and the Office of Strategic Research ([Genelkurmay Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı]). Although it is stated that this archive is open, it can be considered closed. Important correspondence, documents on various topics between the Defense Ministry, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and various military bodies of the Ottoman Empire dating back to the First World War are kept here which means almost all the important documents on the Armenian Genocide are kept in this archive.

Lecturer at Bilkent University, professor Oktay Ozel shares his experience on the pages of the newspaper 'Radikal'¹⁶¹. According to him, the archive works

adjacent to the General Headquarters, so the officials handling related issues decide who of the historians or researchers can have access to the archive. They even control

Supposing they can find a document in the Armenian archives that all the Armenians residing in the Ottoman Empire had decided to rebel (it does not exist though), that will not be a justification for perpetrating the Genocide either.

and determine what materials can be explored by the researcher. It means not all catalogs are accessible for the researcher. They can deny access to the ordered material without well-grounded reasons. While the Ottoman archives correspond to international standards, the situation is different here. The researcher can take only a pencil and paper with him or her. Copying or taking photos are forbidden. Time allocated to studying documents is limited, too. The following link will help understand the procedure of making use of this archive¹⁶².

161. Oktay Özel, *Hükümetin 1915 bildiris vesilesiyle: Arşivlerimiz gerçekten açık mı?*, Radikal, 07/05/2014, http://www.radikal.com.tr/yorum/hukümetin_1915_bildiris_vesilesiylearsivlerimiz_gercekten_acik_mi-1190637

162. Genelkurmay ATASE başkanlığı arşivinde çalışma başvurusu, http://www.tsk.tr/9_yayinlar/9_5_genelkurmay_atase_baskanligi_arsivin-

In any case, exploring the Turkish archives does not have the purpose of proving the Armenian Genocide any more. They should be examined not to prove whether there was or there was not but to find out how it happened, what happened, why and who is responsible, where, in other words, for the sake of details. The question of authenticity was solved long ago¹⁶³.

The Armenian archives

To distract from the discussions on the archives the Turkish party frequently initiates discussions about the Armenian archives being open or closed. Let us start from the point where we should comprehend what they are seeking in the Armenian archives and what they want to find. What can the Turkish researchers be

Supposing they can find a document in the Armenian archives that all the Armenians residing in the Ottoman Empire had decided to rebel (it does not exist though), that will not be a justification for perpetrating the Genocide either.

interested in the Armenian archives regarding the Armenian Genocide. Before 1918 Armenia even did not exist as a state¹⁶⁴. Supposing they can find a document in the Armenian archives that all

the Armenians residing in the Ottoman Empire had decided to rebel (it does not exist though), that will not be a justification for perpetrating the Genocide either¹⁶⁵.

The National Archive of Armenia, the archival stacks and depositories of the Museum-Institute of the Armenian Genocide, Matenadaran, and the National Library are open to researchers representing the state. Some of the Turkish researchers and historians have recently raised this issue. Specifically, the Head of the Department of History at Tunceli University, professor Canan

de_calisma_basvurusu/calisma_basvurusu.htm

163. Interview with R. Safrastyan.

164. Interview with A. Khosroeva.

165. Interview with K. Manoyan.

Badem¹⁶⁶ and the candidate to PhD at the Chair of the Holocaust and Genocide at Clarks University in the US Umit Kurt¹⁶⁷ have recently shared with their experience and positive impressions in the Armenian newspaper of Constantinople 'Agos'.

All the available documents and testimonies have been published in three volumes by the Armenian National Archive towards the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. The three volumes were published

under the auspices of **The total number of military and civilian casualties in World War I was over 37 million.** Amatuni Virabyan and Gohar Avagyan¹⁶⁸ after which were translated

into Russian and English. Lately, the presentation of the Turkish version translated by the Turkish publisher R. Zarakolu was done. The latter gives the Turkish researchers an opportunity to get acquainted with those documents without visiting Armenia¹⁶⁹. These are materials written down based squarely on the narratives of the refugees from the South Caucasus, Iran's territory, Baku, Northern Caucasus, Constantinople and other places regarding the occurrences in their lives between 1916-1917. Just after a year from those events people described their village, the story of the deportations, and their odyssey about how they appeared in specific places.

The archival and depository stacks of the Mkhitarjans' Library in Venice and the Nubaryan Library in Paris serve scientists and researchers informally¹⁷⁰. The Turkish side exploits the fact of the Dashnak Archives in Boston. This party makes decisions regarding the extent to which the archives can be open or closed and it

166. Canan Badem, *Ermenistan Ulusal Arşivi Türk araştırmacılara açık, Agos, 08 Ekim 2012*, <http://www.agos.com.tr/haber.php?seo=ermenistan-ulusal-arsivi-turk-arastirmacilara-acik&haberid=2856>

167. Ümit Kurt, *Yerevan'da arşivler herkese açık, Agos, 30 Mayıs 2014*, <http://www.agos.com.tr/haber.php?seo=yerevanda-arsivler-herkese-acik&haberid=7318>

168. Interview with A. Melkonyan.

169. Interview with A. Marukyan.

170. Interview with A. Kartashyan.

has nothing to do with the Republic of Armenia. It follows that accusing Armenia of denying access to its archives or depositories by any official body or individual is at least a result of being disconnected from the reality¹⁷¹.

Ultimately, the archives of the ARF are essentially open. An important part of the archives has already been published (before 1913) but the Turkish side has never made use of them. It means this Turkish 'thesis' is also just a topic to speak about rather than a real justification¹⁷².

171. Interview with G. Manukyan.

172. Interview with K. Manoyan.

“JUST MEMORY” AND “SHARED PAIN”

The World War I began on August 1st (July 19) in 1914 between two groups of states: the Entente (Russia, The Great Britain, France) and the German-Austrian block (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey, with Bulgaria joining in 1915). Later Italy, Romania, and the United States also joined the Entente. Kaiser's Germany declared war against Russia on August 1, against France on August 3, followed by Great Britain declaring war against Germany on August 4. Military action took place on the territories of the Europe, Asia, Africa and the Far East.

The total number of military and civilian casualties in World War I was over 37 million. Over 16 million deaths and 20 million wounded, ranking it among the deadliest

The Ottoman army suffered greater than 86 thousand deaths at the battle of Gallipoli at the Dardanelles alone, with another 90 thousands Ottoman deaths at the battle of Sankamış.

conflicts in human history. The total number of deaths includes 9-10 million military personnel and approximately 7 million civilians. The Entente Powers (also known as the Allies) lost about 6 million military personnel while the Central Powers lost about 4 million.

It's natural that the precise presentation of the number of deaths in the World War I is quite difficult, with different historians presenting different numbers. The calculation is further complicated by the fact that other tragic events also took place in parallel with the war, where one group of historians classify them as consequences of the World War I (collateral casualties so to speak), while others don't, such as the Russian Civil war and the epidemic of the Spanish flu. In any case, the volume of losses is so great that even the average numbers are on a scale hard to comprehend by the average person.

The Ottoman Empire entered World War I, when the devastating

results of the defeat in the First Balkan War (1912-1913) were still fresh. Turks were shocked not only because of the lost territories and the defeat from their subject nations, but also due to the Muslim refugees immigrating to the Ottoman Empire from the Balkans. Their stories of massacres in the Balkans, their desperate situation and their bitter fate caused deep compassion towards the civilian population, which had been killed, plundered and left homeless. The Ottoman Empire itself was in serious financial distress and was not able to fully address the issues of Balkan refugees. Engagement in World War I resulted in additional casualties for the Turks. According to various sources, the number of deaths in the Ottoman Army varies between 325 and 450 thousands. The Ottoman army suffered greater than 86 thousand deaths at the

The Armenian and the Turkish losses are incomparable as are the losses of the Holocaust with killed German soldiers and the losses of German population due to starvation, bombing campaign and other war related losses during World War II.

the population of the defeated Ottoman. Various regions of the empire were plagued by famine and epidemics; the Entente troops were victorious at almost all fronts. William Ekhardt and Spencer Tucker¹⁷⁴ note that World War I took the lives of about one million civilians in the Ottoman Empire (not counting the one million Ottoman Armenian victims).

Perhaps the current Prime Minister of Turkey, Ahmet Davutoglu, took this numbers into consideration when we wrote

173. See more in Hew Strachan, *The First World War, Volume I: To Arms*, Oxford University Press, 2003, 1248 Pages; Spencer C. Tucker, *The Great War, 1914-1918*, Indiana University Press, 1998, 296 pages.

174. See more in Spencer Tucker, *European Powers in the First World War: An Encyclopedia*, Routledge, 1999, 814 pages; Eckhardt, William, "Three page table", in Sivard, Ruth Leger, *World Military and Social Expenditures 1987-88* (12th ed.).

that "For the Armenians, 1915 was a year of relocation during which exceedingly great tragedies took place. The years prior to and after 1915 were also a time of tremendous tragedy for the Turks in Anatolia. It was at this time that the Turks fought for their very survival in the Balkan Wars, at Çanakkale, and in the War of Independence. Actually, this was a time of "shared pain"¹⁷⁵.

With respect towards the memories of all nations and all people who lost their lives during and as a result of World War I, by the decision of the Young Turks to take the nation into war, some clarifications need to be made to set the record straight.

The Armenian and the Turkish losses are incomparable as are the losses of the Holocaust with killed German soldiers and the losses of German population due to starvation, bombing campaign and other war related losses during World War II.

It's one case when an armed soldier fights and dies defending his state or the borders of his country, but it is completely another when civilians are subjected to mass annihilation by their own government under the guise of the war¹⁷⁶.

Any war brings casualties, and a state entering into a war should be prepared to absorb both civilian and military casualties. In this case, the Turkish casualties might be accepted as war casualties, whereas the implemented actions against the Armenian population can't be packaged as war casualties, since it was an intended and planned annihilation of people through both deportation and mass murder directed against those people as members of an ethnic and religious group. Here, casualties directly resultant from a war (military and civilian) are being compared to casualties from a planned annihilation of a people, by their own government, because of their ethnicity and

175. Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Turkish-Armenian Relations: Is a 'Just Memory' Possible?* Turkish Policy Quarterly, Spring 2014, p. 28.

176. Interview with G.Manukyan.

religion. These are completely different cases from both legal and historical-political aspects¹⁷⁷.

Apart from the losses of the Armenian subject population, the rest of the casualties from the Ottoman Empire (reaching more than one million human lives) can be divided into three categories:

The first category includes the Turkish war casualties or the killed soldiers of the defeated army, where responsibility lies with the leaders that pushed the country into the war and the incompetent generals. As mentioned above, the number of war casualties of the Ottoman Empire varies within 325–450 thousand people. These losses (moreover, it's impossible to affirm that all 100 percent were of Turkish origin) were among the soldiers of the Ottoman army that fought against the Russians and the British, protecting the lands of the empire. In this sense, they were in equal condition with the enemy, and with the same success, they also killed the Russian, British and other soldiers etc.

It certainly is not just **...20,000 out of the 80,000 soldiers that lost their life, did so by freezing to death.** and fair to compare the armed Turks that died during the military operations with the slaughtered Armenian population.

Every defeated commander seeks to justify his defeat pointing at scapegoats. Once upon a time, Enver also pointed at the Armenians as the main reason for the humiliating defeat in Sarikamış. He failed to acknowledge that as part of this bloody battle, which started on December 9, 1914 and lasted till January 5, 1915, 20,000 out of the 80,000 soldiers that lost their life, did so by freezing to death¹⁷⁸.

Before the operations, Enver pasha walked among the detachments and said encouraging words to the hungry and

177. Interview with S.Manukyan
178. Interview with A.Melkonyan.

lightly-dressed soldiers: "Soldiers, I met you all. I've seen that you are barefoot and there aren't overcoats on your shoulders. However, the enemy standing in front is afraid of you. Very soon you will attack and enter the Caucasus. You will find much food and wealth there. The whole Muslim world follows your last efforts with hope.¹⁷⁹"

Unsurprisingly, Enver blamed his defeat on the alleged betrayal of the Armenians, which was certainly very convenient with the planned campaign of genocide against the Armenian population of the country. Turkish historians didn't study **...due to the lack of intelligence, the details of the battle Turkish 31th and 32th infantry divisions of Sarikamış to reveal in conditions of poor visibility began to shoot at each other, each division assuming to have engaged the Russian troops.** e.g., when due to the lack of intelligence, the Turkish 31th and 32th infantry divisions in conditions of poor visibility began to shoot at each other, each division assuming to have engaged the Russian troops¹⁸⁰. Turkish historians deliberately conceal the fact that tens of thousands of the Turkish soldiers simply died from frostbite, even before entering into any fight with the Russian army, since Enver Pasha had ignored the insistent demands of the German advisors and pushed his soldiers forward into snowstorm conditions. "Hungry, without a warm winter coat and shoes, the soldiers fell under a snowstorm when crossing Arsian pass which was augmented by very low temperature ... The soldiers lost discipline, messed up the formation, lied down to have a rest during the difficult uplifts, got covered with layers of snow, froze... Many soldiers left the way,

179. N. Korsun, *Sarikamış operation (In Russian)*, Moscow, Voenizdat NCO USSR, 1937; (http://militera.lib.ru/h/korsun_n1/08.html).

180. N. Korsun, *ibid.* "The Commander of Turkish 9th Corps writes in his memoirs "When we understood our mistake, the people started crying. It was a heartbreaking picture. For entire 4 hours we were combating against the 32nd division". The Turkish army had minimum 2000 casualties".

stood out of formations and tried to take refuge in the summer cattle sheds from the bad weather. On that day (on December 13) the Turks had more than 10 thousand losses from frostbite¹⁸¹.

These are just few episodes of disgraceful participation of the Ottoman troops in World War I. However, the Turkish historians prefer to point out the Armenians as the scapegoats. Additionally, in order to further dramatize, the Turkish historians mention that during those days numerous Armenians fought in the ranks of the Russian army and bring up the names of General Andranik and General Tovmas Nazarbekov.

The Armenians and particularly the Armenian volunteer intelligence subdivisions really distinguished themselves during the Sarikamış battle. Especially notable were the scouts of General Andranik's brigade I and Keri's brigade IV. In November-December 1914, the scouts of the First brigade managed to get important information

The soldiers lost discipline, messed up the formation, lied down to have a rest during the difficult uplifts, got covered with layers of snow, froze...

on the deployment and armaments of the Turkish-Kurdish forces. During the initial phase of the Sarikamış battle, Keri's scouts were the first to report about the appearance of Turkish predominant forces. Keri forwarded the received information to the commander of the first Caucasian corps general G. E. Berkhman¹⁸². However, the latter neglected that important information, assuming that in such geographic and climatic conditions (heavy snowfall and snowstorm¹⁸³) launching an aggressive large-scale operation by the enemy was equal to

181. N. Korsun, *ibid.*

182. Ruben Sahakyan, *From the history of activities of intelligence services at the Russo-Turkish front on the eve of WWI and during it (1914-1917) (Aradjin hamashkharhayin paterazmi nakhoryakin yev yntatsqum rus-turqakan razmadjakatum hetakhuzkan tsarayutyunneri gortsuneutyan patmutyunits (1914-1917 tt.)), Historical-Philological Journal, № 3, pp. 112-113 (in Armenian).*

183. N. Korsun, *ibid.*

suicide. The experience of the Russian general to conduct war in winter conditions didn't betray him, and Sarikamış became more of a suicide mission for the Turks.

Turkish historians have overlooked the fact that similar number of Armenians lived in the Russian Empire, who were naturally recruited to serve

The experience of the Russian general to conduct war in winter conditions didn't betray him, and Sarikamış became more of a suicide mission for the Turks.

in the Russian army. Over 250,000 Armenians from a population of 2 million and 54 thousand were recruited by the Russian Army in the years of war¹⁸⁴. Generals Andranik and Nazarbekov and many others distinguished themselves in Sarikamış, Van and elsewhere. There were not traitor deserters of the Ottoman army, but soldiers of the Russian army, so accusing them as such is nothing more than manipulation of facts to fit a certain narrative.

The second category is the logical continuation of the same manipulation. The Muslim population killed during World War I is represented as causality by the hands of the Armenians. The names of Generals Andranik and Nazarbekov are again misused as the responsible ones for losses of Turkish and Kurdish population that suffered during the advance of the Russian army. It is preposterous to blame the Armenians who resided in the western part of the Ottoman Empire (Izmir, Eskişehir, and Bursa) for advances of the Russian army or the actions of Generals Andranik, Nazarbekov or others, who were soldiers of the Russian army and citizens of the Russian Empire. Even in Nazi Germany, no one ever thought to justify the Jewish Holocaust with the fact that Jews served in Soviet, British, or American troops, or that the Jewish partisan detachments were operating in Eastern Europe. Therefore, if the Turkish historians would like to, they can blame

184. G. Ghorghanyan, *Participation of Armenians in WWI at the Caucasian front, 1914-1917 (Hayeri masnaksutsyuny aradjin hamashkharhayin paterazmin Kovkasyan razmadhakati vra 1914-1917 tt.), Hayreniq, Boston, 1927, №2, p. 12 (in Armenian).*

the Russian Empire for killing the Muslim population, but not the Armenians, even though in the case of the latter, it still cannot be a justification for the perpetration of the Armenian Genocide.

Certainly, the inhabitants of some Armenian settlements fought against irregular bands or the Turkish soldiers, resisting the implementation of the genocidal programs. However, unfortunately for the Armenians, the number of such self-defense acts was too few to change the outcome of the genocide. In that large area of the Ottoman Empire only 10 small-scale sporadic cases of resistance were recorded, representing a small drop

in the sea. The exact chronology shows that the resistances started only after the Armenian massacres and killings had been launched¹⁸⁵.

Over 250,000 Armenians from a population of 2 million and 54 thousand were recruited by the Russian Army in the years of war.

Genocide does not mean a situation when the perpetrator kills everyone with no resistance. Self-defense in the face of a campaign of genocide does not negate the preceding planning execution and veracity of the act of genocide. Even in the case of the Holocaust, at concentration camps, ghettos, and in areas with higher density of Jewish population, there were rebellions, and acts of self-defense. Franz Werfel's *Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, a story on self-defense of the Armenians of Musa Dagh against the Turkish genocide campaign, became a rallying cry for the Jew of Warsaw, the most famous of these rebellions, which unfortunately was extinguished in blood. Nevertheless, it is also a testimony that a victim of genocide tries and has the right to rebel for the aim of self-defense¹⁸⁶.

Indeed, there were also cases of revenge when the Armenians who fled from death marches or were informed about the murder of their relatives, took revenge from their neighbors, who very

185. Interview with S.Manukyan.

186. Interview with V.Vardanyan.

often equally participated in the massacres of the Armenians with the Ottoman soldiers.

There are some differences between the Armenian Genocide and the Jewish Holocaust. Firstly, Jews were collected and settled in the ghettos, and then the decision was made to annihilate them.

They were taken, put into trains and transferred to concentration camps, where they were killed, burnt or suffocated. It means that the perpetrators did their best keep the rest of the population of

Even in Nazi Germany, no one ever thought to justify the Jewish Holocaust with the fact that Jews served in Soviet, British, or American troops, or that the Jewish partisan detachments were operating in Eastern Europe.

the country uninformed of their acts of genocide. The German population by and large did not have any direct participation in the Nazi regime's campaign of genocide. However, this wasn't the case in the Ottoman Empire. During World War I, Jihad (Holy war) was announced against the Christians by the Sublime Porte. Afterwards, the government sent special groups to vilayets in order to incite the local Muslim people against the Christians¹⁸⁷. The revenge for hardships in the Balkan wars, the desire to possess the women, money and lands of the Christians were blessed by the government and the religion. The Muslim population participated in the massacres of the Armenians: a neighbor killed a neighbor in order to possess his wealth, his property and his wife¹⁸⁸. It is natural that in some areas the Armenians resorted to either self-defense or revenge; however, once more it must be mentioned that the words *resistance*, *self-defense*, and *revenge* imply implemented and preceding action by the Turks, so the deeds of Armenians cannot be considered as a reason.

The third category is the non-Armenian casualties of the Ottoman Empire: the Assyrians and Greeks who were massacred

187. Interview with R.Safrastyan.

188. Interview with R.Safrastyan.

by the Ottoman Turks in the course of the same World War I. According to various sources, the number of Assyrian Genocide losses by the Turks during WWI and the subsequent years reaches 500-750 thousand. The genocidal policy of the Young Turks against their own people was also a crime planned and organized in advance and with specific intent, which is substantiated by both with confessions of the Ottoman senior officers, and testimonies of the diplomats of the great powers, foreign missionaries, the press of that period, the archives, and finally, the witnesses¹⁸⁹. During 1914-1923, Pontus area was basically "cleansed" from its

Greek population as the result of a special policy. More than 350,000 Greeks lost their lives because of the policies of the Young Turks and their subsequent

The Muslim population participated in the massacres of the Armenians: a neighbor killed a neighbor in order to possess his wealth, his property and his wife.

Kemalists¹⁹⁰.

The policy of massacres by the Turks against the Assyrians and the Greeks is unequivocally qualified as genocide by the standards of the international law. This once more proves that the Ottoman Turkey is truly a genocidal country¹⁹¹ with many examples from different ethnic and religious groups.

Thus, every human life is precious, and when evaluating the 1915-1923 period of the Ottoman Turkey, doubtless, one must condole to the Republic of Turkey as the heir to the Ottoman Empire for both the soldiers lost on the battlefield and the civilians

189. Anahit Khosroeva, *The Assyrian Genocide in the Ottoman Turkey and Adjacent Territories populated by Turks (end of 19th - first quarter of 20th centuries) (Asorineri tseghaspanutyunn Osmanyanyan Turqlayum yev harakits tyurqabnak vayrerum (XIX dari verdj - XX dari aradjin qarard))*, Yerevan, 2004.

190. See more in Photiades K., *The Annihilation of the Greeks in Pontus by the Turks: Tübingen: Union of the fighters for the Liberation of the Greek Lands seized by Turkey*, 1987, 38 p.

191. Anahit Khosroeva, *The Assyrian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire and Adjacent Territories, (The Armenian Genocide: Cultural and Ethical Legacies*, Ed. by Richard Hovannisian, New Brunswick, New Jersey, Transaction Publishers).

killed in the consequence of the war. At the same time, the victims of genocide and the casualties of the military operations must be differentiated¹⁹². The unarmed Armenian population lost approximately 60 percent of its number only for the reason of religious and ethnic identity. And it's not just to put a sign of equality here¹⁹³.

Before talking about "just memory", taboos and the closed topics must be eliminated. Before a dialogue with Armenians, the first thing to be done in Turkey is an open discussion on the fait accompli of the Armenian Genocide in society. When the leaders of Turkey succeed in making this topic a subject of open discussion in their own society, and people won't be arrested for talking on this, where article 301 won't be executed etc., only then we can talk about "just memory" or formation of general memory. A state where 70 percent of the population is uneducated on the topic, can't talk about "just memory." If the topic is taboo, if there isn't any relevant material in textbooks about those years and is not taught at schools, if those years and the phenomenon are forgotten at all, then such a society can't produce not only just memory, but any memory whatsoever. Surely, the reason was also the regime of Kemalists or the policy of continual brainwashing during the following decades and the revision of the country's history. It means that the Turkish society perceives not the history that really existed, but a history that was specially created and shaped by the dictation of its state administration.

No "just memory" can be uttered in this conditions¹⁹⁴.

192. Interview with V.Vardanyan.

193. Interview with R.Safrastyan.

194. Interview with S.Manukyan.

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