

Professionals Insight, June, 2005

Prof. Dr. Justin McCarthy, Louisville University in Kentucky (USA)

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### Let Historians Decide on So-called Genocide

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#### **Part I:**

Nationalists who use history have different goals. They use events from the past as weapons in their nations' battles. They have a purpose -- to triumph for their cause, and they will use anything to succeed in this goal. Like other men and women, historians have political goals and ideologies, but a true historian acknowledges his error when the facts do not support his belief. The nationalist apologist never does so. The Armenian issue has long been plagued with nationalist studies. This has led to an inconsistent history that ignores the time-tested principles of historical research. Yet when the histories of Turks and Armenians are approached with the normal tools a logical and consistent account results.

Throughout the recent debate on the Armenian genocide question, one statement has characterized those who object to politicians' attempts to write history, "Let the Historians decide." Few of us have specified who we are referring to in that statement. It is now time to do so.

There is a vast difference between history written to defend one-sided nationalist convictions and real accounts of history. History intends to find that the truth is illusive. Historians know they have prejudices that can affect their judgment. They know they never have all the facts. Yet

they always try to find the truth, whatever that may be.

Nationalists who use history have a different set of goals. They use events from the past as weapons in their own nation's battles. They have a purpose -- the triumph of their cause -- and they will use anything to succeed in this goal. While a historian tries to collect all the relevant facts and put them together as a coherent picture, the nationalist selects those pieces of history that fit his purpose' ignoring the others.

Like other men and women, historians have political goals and ideologies, but a true historian acknowledges his errors when the facts do not support his belief. The nationalist apologist never does so. If the facts do not fit his theories the nationalist ignores those facts and looks for other ways to make his case. True historians can make intellectual mistakes. Nationalist apologists commit intellectual crimes.

The Armenian issue has long been plagued with nationalist studies. This has led to an inconsistent history that ignores the time-tested principles of historical research. Yet when the histories of Turks and Armenians are approached with the normal tools of history a logical and consistent account results. "Let the historians decide" is a call for historical study like any other historical study, one that looks at all the facts, studies all the opinions, applies historical principles and comes to logical conclusions.

Historians first ask the most basic question. "Was there an Armenia?" Was there a region within the Ottoman Empire where Armenians were a compact majority that might rightfully demand their own state?

To find the answer, historians look to government statistics for population figures, especially to archival statistics, because governments seldom deliberately lie to themselves. They want to know their populations so they can understand them, watch them, conscript them, and, most importantly to a government, tax them. The Ottomans were no different than any other government in this situation. Like other governments they made mistakes, particularly in under-counting women and children. However, this can be corrected using statistical methods. What results is the most accurate possible picture of the number of Ottoman Armenians. By the beginning of World War I Armenians made up only 17 percent of the area they claimed as "Ottoman Armenia," the so called "Six Vilayets." Judging by population figures, there was no Ottoman Armenia. In fact if all the Armenians in the world had come to Eastern Anatolia, they still would not have been a majority there.

Two inferences can be drawn from the relatively small number of Armenians in the Ottoman East: The first is that by themselves, the Armenians of Anatolia would have been no great threat to the Ottoman Empire. Armenian rebels might have disputed civil order but there were too few of them to endanger Ottoman authority. Armenian rebels needed help from outside forces, help that could only be provided by Russia. The second inference is that Armenian nationalists could have created a state that was truly theirs only if they first evicted the Muslims who lived there.

To understand the history of the development of Muslim-Armenian antagonism one must apply historical principles. In applying those principles one can see that the history of Armenians was a history like other histories. Some of that history was naturally unique because of its environment but much of it was strikingly similar to what was seen in other places and times.

1. Most ethnic conflicts develop over a long period. Germans and Poles, Finns and Russians, Hindus and Muslims in the Indian subcontinent, Irish and English, Europeans and Native Americans in North America -- all of these ethnic conflicts unfolded over generations, often over centuries.

2. Until very modern times most mass mortality of ethnic groups was the result of warfare in which there were at least two warring sides.

3. When conflict erupted between nationalist revolutionaries and states it was the revolutionaries who began confrontations. Internal peace was in the interest of settled states. Looked at charitably, states often wished for tranquility for the benefits it gave their citizens. With less charity it can be seen that peace made it easier to collect taxes and use armies to fight foreign enemies, not internal foes. World history demonstrates this too well for examples from other regions to be needed here. In the Ottoman Empire, the examples of the rebellions in Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria demonstrate the truth of this.

On these principles, the histories of Turks and Armenians are no different from other histories. Historical principles applied.

The conflict between Turks and Armenians did indeed develop over a long time. The primary

impetus for what was to become the Armenian-Muslim conflict lay in Russian imperial expansion. At the time of Ivan the Terrible, circa the sixteenth century, Russians began a policy of expelling Muslims from lands they had conquered. Over the next three hundred years, Muslims, many of them Turks, were killed or driven out of what today is Ukraine, Crimea and the Caucasus. From the 1770s to the 1850s Russian attacks and Russian laws forced more than 400,000 Crimean Tatars to flee their land. In the Caucasus region, 1.2 million Circassians and Abazians were either expelled or killed by Russians. Of that number, one third died as victims of the mass murder of Muslims that has been mostly ignored. The Tatars, Circassians and Abazians came to the Ottoman Empire. Their presence taught Ottoman Muslims what they could expect from a Russian conquest.

### **Muslims were massacred and forced into exile**

Members of the Armenian minority in the Caucasus began to rebel against Muslim rule and to ally themselves with Russian invaders in the 1790s: Armenian armed units joined the Russians, Armenian spies delivered plans to the Russians. In these wars, Muslims were massacred and forced into exile. Armenians in turn migrated into areas previously held by Muslims, such as Karabakh. This was the beginning of the division of the peoples of the southern Caucasus and eastern Anatolia into two conflicting sides -- the Russian Empire and Armenians on one side, the Muslim Ottoman Empire on the other. Most Armenians and Muslims undoubtedly wanted nothing to do with this conflict, but the events were to force them to take sides.

The 1827 to 1829 wars between Russians, Persians and Ottomans saw the beginning of a great population exchange in the East that was to last until 1920. When the Russians conquered the Erivan Khanete, today the Armenian Republic, the majority of its population was Muslim. Approximately two thirds, 60,000 of these Muslims were forced out of Erivan by Russians. The Russians went on to invade Anatolia, where large numbers of Armenians took up the Russian cause. At the war's end, when the Russians left eastern Anatolia 50 to 90,000 Armenians joined them. They took the place of the exiled Muslims in Erivan and else where, joined by 40,000 Armenians from Iran.

The great population exchange had begun, and mutual distrust between Anatolia's Muslims and the Armenians was the result. The Russians were to invade Anatolia twice more in the nineteenth century, during the Crimean War and the 1877-78 Russo-Turkish War. In both wars significant numbers of Armenians joined the Russians acting as spies and even occupation police.

In Erzurum, for example, British consular officials reported that the Armenian police chief appointed by the Russians and his Armenian force "molested, illtreated, and insulted the

Mohammadan population," and that 6,000 Muslim families had been forced to flee the city. When the Russians left part of their conquest at least 25,000 Armenians joined them, fearing the vengeance of the Muslims. The largest migration though was the forced flight of 70,000 Muslims, mainly Turks, from the lands conquered by the Russians and the exodus of Laz in 1882.

By 1900, approximately 1,400,000 Turkish and Caucasian Muslims had been forced out by Russians. One third of those had died, either murdered or victims of starvation and disease. Between 125,000 and 150,000 Armenians emigrated from Ottoman Anatolia to Erivan and other parts of the Russian southern Caucasus.

This was the toll of Russian imperialism. Not only had one-and-a-half million people been exiled or killed, but ethnic peace had been destroyed.

The Muslims had been taught that their neighbors, the Armenians, with whom they had lived for more than 700 years, might once again become their enemies when the Russians next advanced. The Russians had created the two sides that history teaches were to be expected in conflict and mass murder.

The actions of Armenian rebels exacerbated the growing division and mutual fear between Muslims and Armenians of the Ottoman East.

The main Armenian revolutionary organizations were founded in the 1880s and 1890s in the Russian Empire. They were socialist and nationalist in ideology. Terrorism was their weapon of choice. Revolutionaries openly stated that their plan was the same as that which had worked well against the Ottoman Empire in Bulgaria. In Bulgaria rebels had first massacred innocent Muslim villagers. The Ottoman government, occupied with a war against Serbs in Bosnia, depended on the local Turks to defeat the rebels, which they did, but with great losses of life. European newspapers reported Bulgarians deaths, but never Muslim deaths. Europeans did not consider that the deaths were a result of the rebellion, nor the Turk's intention. The Russians invaded ostensibly to save the Christians. The result was the death of 260,000 Turks, 17 percent of the Muslim population of Bulgaria, and the expulsion of a further 34 percent of Turks. The Armenian rebels expected to follow the same plan.

The Armenian rebellion began with the organization of guerilla bands made up of Armenians from both the Russian and Ottoman lands. Arms were smuggled in. Guerillas assassinated Ottoman officials, attacked Muslim villages, and used bombs, the nineteenth century's terrorist's standard weapon. By 1894 the rebels were ready for open revolution. Revolts broke out in Samsun, Zeytun, Van and elsewhere in 1894 and 1895. As in Bulgaria they began with the murder of innocent civilians. The leader of the Zeytun rebellion said his forces had killed 20,000 Muslims. As in Bulgaria the Muslims retaliated. In Van for example 400 Muslims and 1,700 Armenians died. Further rebellions followed. In Adana in 1909 the Armenian revolt turned out very badly for both the rebels and the innocent when the government lost control and 17,000 to 20,000 died, mostly Armenians. Throughout the revolts and especially in 1894 and 1897 the Armenians deliberately attacked Kurdish tribesmen, knowing that it was from them that great vengeance was not that likely to be expected. Pitched battles between Kurds and Armenians resulted.

But it all went wrong for the Armenian rebels. They had followed the Bulgarian plan, killing Muslims and initiating revenge attacks on Armenians. Their own people had suffered most. Yet the Russians and Europeans they depended upon did not intervene. European politics and internal problems stayed the Russian hand.

What were the Armenian rebels trying to create? When Serbs and Bulgarians rebelled against the Ottoman Empire they claimed lands where the majorities were Serbs or Bulgarians. They expelled Turks and other Muslims from their lands, but these Muslims had not been a majority. This was not true for the Armenians.

The lands they covered were overwhelmingly Muslim in population.

The only way they could create an Armenia was to expel the Muslims. Knowing this history is essential to understanding what was to come during World War I. There had been a long historical period in which two conflicting sides developed.

Russian imperialists and Armenian revolutionaries had begun a struggle that was in no way wanted by the Ottomans. Yet the Ottomans were forced to oppose the plans of both Russians and Armenians, if only to defend the majority of their subjects. History taught the Ottomans that if the Armenians triumphed not only would territory be lost, but mass expulsions and deaths would be the fate of the Muslim majority. This was the one absolutely necessary goal of the Armenian rebellion.

The preview to what was to come in the Great War came in the Russian Revolution of 1905. Harried all over the Empire, the Russians encouraged ethnic conflict in Azerbaijan, fomenting an inter-communal war. Azeri Turks and Armenians battled each other when they should have attacked the Empire that ruled over both. Both Turks and Armenians learned the bitter lesson that the other was the enemy, even though most of them wanted nothing of war and bloodshed. The sides were drawn.

In late 1914, inter-communal conflict began in the Ottoman East with the Armenian rebellion. Anatolian Armenians went to the Russian South Caucasus for training, approximately 8,000 in Kagizman, 6,000 in Igdir and others elsewhere. They returned to join local rebels and revolts erupted all over the East. The Ottoman Government estimated 30,000 rebels in Sivas Vilayeti alone, probably an exaggeration but indicative of the scope of the rebellion. Military objectives were the first to be attacked.

Telegraph lines were cut. Roads through strategic mountain passes were seized. The rebels attacked Ottoman officials, particularly recruiting officers, throughout the East. Outlying Muslim villages were assaulted and the first massacring of Muslims began. The rebels attempted to take cities such as Zeytun, Mus, Sebin Karahisar and Urfa. Ottoman armed forces which were needed at the front were instead forced to defend the interior.

The most successful rebel action was in the city of Van. In March 1915 they seized the city from a weak Ottoman garrison and proceeded to kill all the Muslims who could not escape. Some 3,000 Kurdish villagers from the surrounding region were herded together into the great natural bowl of Zeve, outside the city of Van, and slaughtered. Kurdish tribes in turn took their revenge on any Armenian villagers they found.

### **Part II:**

Popular opinion today knows of only one set of deportations, more properly called forced migrations, in Anatolia, the deportation of the Armenians. There were in fact many forced migrations. For the Armenians, the worst forced migrations came when they accompanied their own armies in retreat. Starvation and disease killed great numbers of both, far more than fell to enemies' bullets.

It is true that the Ottomans had obvious reason to fear Armenians, and that forced migration

was an age-old tool in Middle Eastern and Balkan conflicts. It is also true that while its troops were fighting the Russians and Armenians, the Ottoman Government could not and did not properly protect the Armenian migrants. Nevertheless, more than 200,000 of the deported Armenians reached Greater Syria and survived. Those who see the evil of genocide in the forced migrations of Armenians ignore the survival of so many of those who were deported. They also ignore the fact that the Armenians who were most under Ottoman control, those in Western cities such as Izmir, Istanbul, and Edirne, were neither deported nor molested, presumably because they were not a threat. If genocide is to be considered, however, then the murders of Turks and Kurds in 1915 and 1916 must be included in the calculation of blame. The Armenian molestations and massacres in Cilicia, deplored even by their French and British allies, must be judged. And the exile or death of two-thirds of the Turks of Erivan Province, the Armenian Republic, during the war must be remembered.

Historical principles were once again at work. Rebels had begun the action and the result was the creation of two warring sides. After the Armenian deeds in Van and elsewhere, Muslims could only have expected that Armenians were enemies who could kill them. Armenians could only have feared Muslim revenge. Most of these people had no wish for war, but they had been driven to it. It was to be a merciless conflict.

For the next five years, total war raged in the Ottoman East. When the Russians attacked and occupied the East, more than a million Muslims fled as refugees, itself an indication that they expected to die if they remained. They were attacked on the roads by Armenian bands as they fled. When the Russians retreated it was the turn of the Armenians to flee. The Russians attacked and retreated, then attacked again, then finally retreated for good. With each advance came the flight of hundreds of thousands. Two wars were fought in Eastern Anatolia, a war between the armies of Russia and the Ottomans and a war between local Muslims and Armenians. In the war between the armies, civilians and enemy soldiers were sometimes treated with humanity, sometimes not. Little quarter was given in the war between the Armenians and the Muslims, however. That war was fought with all the ferocity of men who fought to defend their families.

Popular opinion today knows of only one set of deportations, more properly called forced migrations, in Anatolia, the deportation of the Armenians. There were in fact many forced migrations. For the Armenians, the worst forced migrations came when they accompanied their own armies in retreat. Starvation and disease killed great numbers of both, far more than fell to enemies' bullets. This is as should be expected from historical principles; starvation and disease are always the worst killers. It is also a historical principle that refugees suffer most of all.



One of the many forced migrations was the organized expulsion of Armenians from much of Anatolia by the Ottoman government. In light of the history and the events of this war, it is true that the Ottomans had obvious reason to fear the Armenians, and that forced migration was an age-old tool in Middle Eastern and Balkan conflicts. It is also true that while its troops were fighting the Russians and Armenians, the Ottoman Government could not and did not properly protect the Armenian migrants. Nevertheless, more than 200,000 of the deported Armenians reached Greater Syria and survived. (Some estimate that as many as two-thirds of the deportees survived.)

Those who see the evil of genocide in the forced migrations of Armenians ignore the survival of so many of those who were deported. They also ignore the fact that the Armenians who were most under Ottoman control, those in Western cities such as Izmir, Istanbul, and Edirne, were neither deported nor molested, presumably because they were not a threat.

No claim of genocide can rationally stand in the light of these facts. If genocide is to be considered, however, then the murders of Turks and Kurds in 1915 and 1916 must be included in the calculation of blame. The Armenian murder of the innocent civilians of Erzincan, Bayburt, Tercan, Erzurum, and all the villages on the route of the Armenian retreat in 1918 must be taken into account. The Armenian molestations and massacres in Cilicia, deplored even by their French and British allies, must be judged. And the exile or death of two-thirds of the Turks of Erivan Province, the Armenian Republic, during the war must be remembered.

That is the history of the Conflict between the Turks and the Armenians. Only when that history is known can the assertions of those who accuse the Turks be understood.

### **Ottoman officials were falsely quoted as ordering hideous deeds**

In examining the claims of Armenian nationalists, first to be considered should be outright lies.

The most well-known of many fabrications on the Armenian Question are the famous "Talat Pasa Telegrams," in which the Ottoman interior minister and other officials supposedly telegraphed instructions to murder the Armenians. These conclusively have been proven to be forgeries by Sinasi Orel and Sureyya Yuca. However, one can only wonder why they would ever have been taken seriously. A whole people cannot be convicted of genocide on the basis of penciled scribbles on a telegraph pad.

These were not the only examples of words put in Talat Pasa's mouth. During World War I, the British Propaganda Office and American missionaries published a number of scurrilous works in which Ottoman officials were falsely quoted as ordering hideous deeds.

One of the best examples of invented Ottoman admissions of guilt may be that concocted by the American ambassador Morgenthau. Morgenthau asked his readers to believe that Talat Pasa offhandedly told the ambassador of his plans to eradicate the Armenians. Applying common sense and some knowledge of diplomatic practice helps to evaluate these supposed indiscretions. Can anyone believe that the Ottoman interior minister would actually have done such a thing? He knew that America invariably supported the Armenians, and had always done so. If he felt the need to unburden his soul, who would be the last person to whom he would talk? The American ambassador. Yet to whom does he tell all? The American Ambassador! Talat Pasa was a practical politician. Like all politicians, he undoubtedly violated rules and made errors. But no one has ever alleged that Talat Pasa was an idiot. Perhaps Ambassador Morgenthau knew that the U.S. State Department would never believe his story, because he never reported it at the time to his masters, only writing it later in a popular book.

The use of quotes from Americans is selective. One American ambassador, Morgenthau, is quoted by the Armenian apologists, but another American ambassador, Bristol, is ignored. Why? Because Bristol gave a balanced account and accused Armenians as well as Muslims of crimes.

The most often seen fabrication may be the famous "Hitler Quote." Hitler supposedly stated, "Who after all is today speaking of the destruction of the Armenians?" to justify his Holocaust. The quote now appears every year in school books, speeches in the American Congress and the French Parliament and most writings in which the Turks are attacked. Professor Heath Lowry has cast serious doubt on the authenticity of the quote. It is likely that Hitler never said it. But there is a more serious question: How can Adolf Hitler be taken as a serious source on Armenian history? Were his other historical pronouncements so reliable that his opinions can be trusted?

Politically, "Hitler" is a magic word that conjures up an all too true image of undisputed evil. He is quoted on the Armenian Question for polemic and political purpose, to tie the Turks to Hitler's evil. In the modern world nothing defames so well as associating your enemies with Hitler. This is all absurdity, but it is potent absurdity that convinces those who know nothing of the facts. It is also a deliberate distortion of history.

Population has also been a popular field for fabrication. Armenian nationalists had a particular difficulty -- they were only a small part of the population of the land they planned to carve from the Ottoman Empire. The answer was false statistics. Figures appeared that claimed that Armenians were the largest group in Eastern Anatolia. These population statistics were supposedly the work of the Armenian Patriarch, but they were actually the work of an Armenian who assumed a French name, Marcel Leart, published them in Paris and pretended they were the Patriarch's work. Naturally, he greatly exaggerated the number of Armenians and diminished the number of Turks. Once again, the amazing thing is that these were ever taken seriously. Yet they were used after World War I to justify granting Eastern Anatolia to the Armenians and are still routinely quoted today.

The Armenian apologists quote American missionaries as if missionaries would never lie, omitting the numerous proofs that missionaries did indeed lie and avoided mentioning anything that would show Armenians to be less than innocent. The missionaries in Van, for example, reported the deaths of Armenians, but not the fact that those same Armenians had killed all the Muslims they caught in that city.

The main falsification of history by the Armenian apologists lies not in what they say, but in what they do not say. They do not admit that much of the evidence they rely on is tainted because it was produced by the British Propaganda Office in World War I. For example, the Bryce Report, "The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire," has recently been reproduced by an Armenian organization, with a long introduction that praises its supposed veracity. Nowhere does the reprint state that the report was produced and paid for by British Propaganda as a way to attack its wartime enemies, the Ottomans. Nor does the reprint state that the other Bryce Report, this one on alleged German atrocities, has long been known by historians to be a collection of lies. Nor does the reprint consider that the sources in the report, such as the Dashnak Party, had a tradition of not telling the truth.

The basic historical omission is never citing, never even looking at evidence that might contradict one's theories. Nationalist apologists refer to English propaganda, missionary reports, statements by Armenian revolutionaries, and the like. They seldom refer to Ottoman documents, hundreds of which have been published in recent years, except perhaps to claim that nothing written by the Ottomans can be trusted although they trust completely the writings of Armenian partisans. These documents indicate that the Ottomans planned no genocide and were at least officially solicitous of the Armenians' welfare. The fact that these contradict the Armenian sources is all the more reason that they should be consulted. Good history can only be written then both sides of historical arguments are considered.

Worst of all is the most basic omission -- the Armenian apologists do not mention the Muslim dead. Any civil war will appear to be a genocide if only the dead of one side are counted. Their writings would be far more accurate, and would tell a very different story, if they included facts such as the deaths of nearly two-thirds of the Muslims of Van Vilayeti, deaths caused by the Russians and Armenians. Histories that strive for accuracy must include all the facts, and the deaths of millions of Muslims is surely a fact that deserves mention.

Those of us who have studied this question for years have seen many approaches come and go. The old assertions, based on the Talat Pasa telegrams and missionary reports, were obviously insufficient, and new ones have appeared.

For a while, Pan-Turanism was advanced as the cause for Turkish actions. It was said that the Turks wished to be rid of the Armenians because the Armenian population blocked the transportation routes to Central Asia. This foundered on the rocks of geography and population. The Anatolian Armenian population was not concentrated on those routes. The Armenian Republic's Armenians, those in Erivan Province, were on some of those routes. However, when at the end of the war the Ottomans had the chance to occupy Erivan they did not do so, but went immediately on to Baku to protect Azeri Turks from attacks by enough to believe that their chief concern was advancing to Uzbekistan.

Much was made of post-war-courts martial that accused members of the Committee of Union and Progress Government of crimes against the Armenians.

The accusations did not state that the courts were convened by the unelected quisling government of Ferid Pasa who created the courts to curry favor with the allies. The courts returned verdicts of guilty for all sorts of improbable offenses, of which killing Armenians was only one. The courts chose anything, true or false, that would cast aspersion on Ferid's enemies. The accused could not represent themselves. Can the verdicts of such courts be trusted? Conveniently overlooked were the investigations of the British, who held Istanbul and were in charge of the Ottoman Archives, but who were forced to admit that they could find no evidence of massacres.

### **The enemy of the nationalist apologists is the truth**

#### **Part III:**

A German scholar has decided that the Ottomans reported and killed Armenians so that they would have space in which to settle the Turkish refugees from the Balkan Wars. Those with

some knowledge of Ottoman history know that the Balkan refugees were almost all settled in Western Anatolia and Ottoman Europe, not in the East, and that the refugees were all settled before the World War I Armenian troubles began. Nationalist apologists first decide that the Turks are guilty, then look for evidence that will show they are correct ... The enemy of the nationalist apologists is the truth. They have thrown false telegrams, spurious statistics, sham courts and anything else they could find, but the truth has advanced. Campaigns were organized to silence historians. One professor was mercilessly attacked in the press because he advised the Turkish ambassador on responding to questions about the Ottoman Armenians. No one questioned the probity of the American Armenian scholar who became the chief advisor of the president of the Armenian Republic or doubted the veracity of the American Armenian professor whose son became the Armenian Foreign Minister. Fewer and fewer historians are willing to write on this history. A very senior and respected scholar of Ottoman history, Bernard Lewis, was brought to court in France for his denial of the Armenian genocide. After a long and successful career, Professor Lewis could afford to confront those who accused him. Could a junior scholar afford to do the same? Applying the principles of history, we can see that what occurred was, in fact, a long history of imperialism, nationalist revolt, and ethnic conflict. The result was horrible mortality on all sides. There is an explainable, understandable history of a two-sided conflict. It was not genocide.

A recent find of the nationalist is the Teskilat-I Mahsusa, the secret organization that operated under orders of the Committee of Union and Progress. We are told that the Teskilat must have organized Armenian massacres. The justification for this would astonish any logician:

It is alleged that because a secret organization existed it must have been intended to do evil, including the genocide of the Armenians. As further "proof," it is noted that officers of the Teskilat were present in areas where Armenians died. Since Teskilat officers were all over Anatolia, this should surprise no one. By this dubious logic Teskilat members must also have been responsible for the deaths of Muslims because they were also present in areas where Muslims died. Does this prove that no Teskilat members killed or even massacred Armenians? It does not. It would be odd if during wartime no members of a large organization had not committed such actions, and they undoubtedly did so. What it in no way proves is that the Teskilat was ordered to commit genocide.

A German scholar has decided that the Ottomans reported and killed Armenians so that they would have space in which to settle the Turkish refugees from the Balkan Wars. For those who do not know Ottoman history, this might seem like a reasonable explanation. Those with some knowledge of Ottoman history know that the Balkan refugees were almost all settled in Western Anatolia and Ottoman Europe, not in the East, and that the refugees were all settled before the World War I Armenian troubles began.

Such assertions are the result of the methods used. Nationalist apologists first decide that the Turks are guilty, then look for evidence that will show they are correct. They are like a man in a closed room fighting against a stronger enemy. As the enemy advances the man picks up a book, a lamp, an ashtray, a chair -- whatever he can find -- and throws it in the vain hope of stopping the enemy's advance. But the enemy continues on. Eventually the man runs out of things to throw, and he is beaten. The enemy of the nationalist apologists is the truth. They have thrown false telegrams, spurious statistics, sham courts, and anything else they could find, but the truth has advanced.

Some tactics have been all too successful in reducing the number of scholars who study the Armenian Question. When the fabrications and distortions failed, there were outright threats. When the historians could not be convinced, the next best thing was to silence them. One professor's house was bombed.

Others were threatened with similar violence. Campaigns were organized to silence historians. One professor was mercilessly attacked in the press because he advised the Turkish ambassador on responding to questions about the Ottoman Armenians. It is worth noting that no one questioned the probity of the American Armenian scholar who became the chief advisor of the president of the Armenian Republic or doubted the veracity of the American Armenian professor whose son became the Armenian foreign minister. No one questioned the objectivity of these scholars or attacked them, nor should they. The only proper question is, "What is the truth!" No matter who pays the bills, no matter the nationality of the author, no matter if he writes to ambassadors, no matter his religion, his voting record, his credit status, or his personal life, his views on history should be closely analyzed and, if true, accepted.

The only question is the truth.

Such attacks have had their intended effect. Fewer and fewer historians are willing to write on this history. A very senior and respected scholar of Ottoman history, Bernard Lewis, was brought to court in France for his denial of the Armenian genocide. After a long and successful career, Professor Lewis could afford to confront those who accused him. He also could afford to hire the lawyers who defended him. Could a junior scholar afford to do the same? Could someone who depended on university rectors, who worry about funding, afford to take up such a dangerous topic? Could someone without Professor Lewis's financial resources afford the lawyers who defended both his free speech and his good name?

I myself was the target of a campaign, instigated by an Armenian newspaper, that attempted to have me fired from my university. Letters and telephone calls from all over the United States came to the president of my university, demanding my dismissal because I denied the "Armenian Genocide." We have the tenure system in the United States, a system that guarantees that senior professors cannot be fired for what they teach and write, and my university president defended my rights. But a younger professor might understandably be afraid to write on the Armenians if he knew he faced the sort of ordeal that has been faced by others.

To me, the worst of all is being accused of being the kind of politicized nationalist scholar I so detest. False reasons are invented to explain why I say this -- my mother is a Turk, my wife is a Turk, I am paid large sums by the Turkish government. None of these things is true, but it would not affect my writings one bit if they were. The way to challenge a scholar's work is to read his writings and respond to them with your own scholarship, not to attack his character.

When, despite the best efforts of the nationalist apologists, some still speak out against the distortion of history, the final answer is political: Politicians are enlisted to rewrite history. Parliaments are enlisted to convince their people that there was a genocide. In America, the Armenian nationalists lobby a Congress which refuses to even consider an apology for slavery to demand an apology from Turks for something the Turks did not do.

In France, the Armenia nationalists lobby a Parliament which will not address the horrors perpetrated by the French in Algeria, which they know well took place, to declare there were horrors in Turkey, about which they know almost nothing. The people of many nations are then told that the genocide must have taken place because their representatives have recognized it.

The Turks are accused of "genocide," but what does that appalling word mean? The most quoted definition is that of the United Nations: actions "committed with intent to destroy in whole or in part a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group as such." Raphael Lemkin who invented the word genocide, included cultural, social, economic, and political destruction of groups as genocide. Leo Kuper included as genocide attacks on subgroups that are not ethnic, such as economic classes, collective groups and various social categories. By these standards Turks were indeed guilty of genocide. So were Armenians, Russians, Greeks, Americans, British and almost every people that has ever existed. In World War I in Anatolia there were many such "genocides." So many groups attacked other groups that the use of the word genocide is meaningless.

Why, then, is such a hollow term used against the Turks? It is used because those who hear the term do not think of the academic definitions. They think of Hitler and of what he did to the Jews. The intent behind the use of the word genocide is not to foster understanding. The intent is to foster a negative image of the Turks by associating them with great evil. The intent is political.

What must be considered by the serious historian is a simple question, "Did the Ottoman Government carry out a plan to exterminate the Armenians?" In answering this question it is important not to copy the Armenian apologists. When they declare that Armenians did no wrong, the answer is not to reply that the Turks did no wrong. The answer must be honest history. What cannot and should not be denied is that many Anatolian Muslims did commit crimes against Armenians. Some of those who committed crimes were Ottoman officials. Actions were taken in revenge, out of hatred or for political reasons. In total war men do evil acts. This again is a sad but real historical principle. The Ottoman government recognized this and tried more than 1,000 Muslims for war crimes, including crimes against Armenians, hanging some criminals.

Applying the principles of history, we can see that what occurred was in fact a long history of imperialism, nationalist revolt and ethnic conflict.

The result was horrible mortality on all sides. There is an explainable, understandable history of a two-sided conflict. It was not genocide. Throughout that history, both sides killed and were killed. It was not genocide.

Much archival evidence shows Ottoman government concern that Armenians survive. Also, it must be said that much evidence shows poor planning, government weakness and in some places criminal acts and negligence. Some officials were murderous, but a sincere effort was made to punish them. It was not genocide.

The majority of those who were deported survived, even though those Armenians were completely at the mercy of the Ottomans. It was not genocide.



The Armenians most under Ottoman control, the Armenian residents of Istanbul, Izmir, Edirne and other regions of greatest governmental power were neither deported nor attacked. It was not genocide.

Why are the Turks accused of a hideous crime they did not commit? The answer is both emotional and political. Many Armenians feel in their hearts that Turks were guilty. They have only heard of the deaths of their ancestors, not the deaths of the Turks. They have been told only a small part of a complicated story for so long that they believe it to be unquestionable truth. Their anger is understandable. The beliefs of those in Europe and America who have never heard the truth, which sadly is the majority, are also understandable. It is the actions of those who use the claim of genocide for nationalist political motives that are inexcusable.

Does any rational analyst deny that the ultimate intent of the Armenian nationalists is to first gain "reparations," then claim Eastern Anatolia as their own?

Finally, what is to be done? As might be expected from all I have said here today, I believe the only answer to false allegations of genocide is to study and proclaim the truths of history. Political actions such as the resolution recently passed by the French Parliament naturally and properly draw corresponding political actions from Turks, but political actions will never convince the world that Turks did not commit genocide. What is needed to convince the world that Turks did not commit genocide? What is needed to convince the world is a great increase in scholarship. Archives must remain open and be easy to use for both Turks and foreigners. Graduate students should be encouraged to study the Armenian question. No student's advisers should tell him to avoid this subject because it is "too political," something I have heard in America and, unfortunately, in Turkey as well.

I suggest, as I have suggested before, that the Turkish Republic propose to the Armenian Republic that a joint commission be established, its members selected by scholarly academies in both countries. All archives should be opened to the commission -- not only the Ottoman Archives, but the archives of Armenia and of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation. (The call is often made for the Turkish Archives to be opened completely. It is time to demand that Armenians do likewise.) I have been told that the Armenians will never agree to this, but how can anyone know unless they try? In any case, refusal to fairly and honestly consider this question would in itself be evidence that the accusations against the Turks are political, not scholarly.

Whether or not such a commission is ever named, the study of the Armenian question must be continued. This is true not only because it is always right to discover accurate history. It is true because honor demands it. Honor is a word that is not often heard today, but a concept of honor is nonetheless sorely needed. I have been told by many that the Turks should adopt a political strategy to deal with the Armenian problem. This strategy would have the Turkish government lie about the past for present political gain.

The government would state that the Ottomans committed genocide, but that modern Turkey cannot be blamed because it is a different government. This, I have been told, would cause the world to think more kindly of the Turks. I do not believe this ultimately would satisfy anyone. I believe that calls for reparations and land would quickly follow such a statement. But that is not the reason to reject such easy political lies. They should be rejected purely because they are wrong. Even if the lies would bring great gains, they should be rejected because they are wrong. I believe the Turks are still men and women of honor. They know that it can never be honorable to accept lies told of their ancestors, no matter the benefits. I also believe that someday, perhaps soon, perhaps far in the future, the truth will be recognized by the world. I believe that the accurate study of history and the honor of the Turks will bring this to pass.

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