The Turkish government has adopted three lines of argument to convince the world that nothing out of the ordinary happened to the Armenians during the years 1915-1923. Three theses have been advanced: the denial thesis; the revisionist thesis; and the justification thesis. The three theses can in turn be divided among six categories of authors as follows: participants, apologists, rationalizers, revisionists, disinformers, and distorters. In the years since 1923 several factors have contributed to the world’s acquiescence in the Turkish program of denial and revisionism. First, Turkey became respectable as the Turkish Republic under Kemal Attaturk; second, Turkey joined the United Nations as a charter member in 1945; and third, Turkey joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1952.

Chapter 5

THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE:
REVISIONISM AND DENIAL

by Rouben Adalian

In the unfolding process of genocide, denial is the final stage. There was little doubt at the end of World War I that the Young Turk government had implemented measures which resulted in the decimation of the Armenian population in the Ottoman Empire. Yet two years later, the effort to rehabilitate the survivors was abandoned. Three years after that, the question of responsibility was entirely forgotten. Since then, the government of Turkey has found it convenient to deny that anything out of the ordinary happened to the Armenians.

The coverup of the Armenian genocide was not the work of the Turkish government alone. The course of political developments in the decades following World War I furnished a favorable environment for ignoring the consequences of genocide. The silence of the international community emboldened the Turkish government to make the denial of the Armenian genocide a state policy. Only the matter of legitimizing the official view on the non-occurrence of the event remained.

Post-War Unsettlement

The rapid changes in government that took place after World War I, including the shift of power from Istanbul to Ankara and the emergence of new leaders, hopelessly complicated the effort for a serious deliberation on the Armenian genocide. Defeated in war, the Young Turk cabinet resigned in 1918. The Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), which led the Young Turk movement, disbanded. The administration of what
When in the Spring of 1915 the Young Turk government issued orders for the mass deportation of the Armenians from Armenia and Anatolia to Syria and Mesopotamia, the U.S. ambassador to Turkey, Henry Morgenthau, realized that the edicts were only part of a larger scheme to destroy the Armenian people. In prior decades Armenians in the Ottoman Empire had endured large-scale atrocities and tens of thousands had fallen victim to the brutal repression practiced by the Ottoman sultans. Yet, the sultans had had no policy that affected the totality of the Armenian population throughout the empire. By 1923 when the modern-day Turkish Republic was founded, close to two million Armenians had vanished from a part of the world which they had inhabited for thousands of years. The only exception to this annihilation was a community that survived in Constantinople.

"The Murder of a Nation"

Morgenthau and Arnold Toynbee, then a young scholar entrusted with the task of documenting the events of 1915 and 1916, described the forcible removal of the Armenians from their homes and their expulsion to the desert as "the murder of a nation." The Young Turk government carried out the deportations under conditions of extreme deprivation and at a pace that induced death by starvation, dehydration, and exhaustion. It also organized special units which conducted a thoroughgoing slaughter of civilians—men, women, and children. Called a resettlement plan, the deportations and massacres were nothing less than a gigantic scheme to deprive the Armenians of their property, lives, and right to continued habitation in their ancestral homeland.

In the final analysis the genocide resulted in the theft of the contested homeland of the Armenians, for without Armenians there could be no Armenia. The possibility that the aspirations of this people might lead to a claim to a separate national existence had become anathema to the Young Turk party that governed the Ottoman Empire during World War I. Their solution was to destroy both the people and their nationalist aspirations.

Armenians as a Subject Minority

The Armenians had lived as a subject minority in the Ottoman Empire for some 400 years. Influenced by Western political thought in the nineteenth century, they began to organize and to petition the government to improve their living conditions, which were characterized by maladministration and the absence of security. In some parts of the Ottoman state Armenians fared well; they were dominant in certain sectors of the economy such as commerce and the specialized crafts. The combination of their financial success and their political activism became the source of an autocratic regime's obstinate refusal to consider reform, for reform and improvement might have led to a measure of self-government.

The Young Turks

No less opposed to the regime were the reform-minded Ottomans who organized the Committee for Union and Progress. This group, known as the Young Turks, overturned the Sultan. Their own nationalist plank, however, tended to emphasize once again racial privilege for Turks and exclusion of the Armenians who clearly gained nothing in the change of government. On the contrary, as Germany encouraged the war party to join in the impending conflict in 1914, the Armenians were caught in a vise. To the east where the Ottomans intended to advance lay the vast stretches of the Russian Empire. Because most of the Armenians lived on either side of the border, inevitably their homes would be engulfed in a battle area. Although loyal to their government, with thousands responding to the draft, the Armenian population was not sympathetic to the cause of the war.

A Homogenous Turkish State

Determined to use the opportunity of war and the alliance with Germany to restore the prestige of the declining Ottoman state, the Young Turks moved mercilessly against the Armenians whom they accused of treason and sedition once the war began to go badly for them. Unable to create the envisioned empire that would include all of the Turkic peoples to the East, the Ottoman government devised a method of purging the state of an ethno-religious minority whose existence stood at odds with the ideology of the extremist Young Turks. The decision to wage war against an unsuspecting civilian population was but an incremental escalation of a succession of decisions taken illegally and secretly to bring about the entry of the Ottomans into World War I.
The genocide was the culmination of the policy to create a homogenous Turkish state. By the time all the fighting in the Middle East had ended and the Ottoman Empire had fallen, the Armenian presence had been erased from those areas that would constitute Kemal Ataturk’s Republic of Turkey.

**ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

* 5.A *  
U.S. archival holdings documenting the Armenian genocide are comprehensively reproduced on microfiche in this microform production. Included are 30,000 pages of evidence from the records of the Department of State, the Commission to Negotiate Peace, the Office of National Intelligence, from the papers of Ambassador Morgenthau and President Wilson, as well as from other agencies of the U.S. government which were involved in gathering evidence on the Ottoman Empire during and after World War I. The documents also show the extent to which the U.S. government attempted to rescue the survivors through relief efforts.

* 5.B *  
Despite their longstanding denial of the genocide, various authors, scholars, memoirists, and government officials of the late Ottoman era have obliquely or inadvertently revealed the Young Turks’ violent handling of the mass of the Armenian population in the Ottoman state.

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In this detailed examination of the courts-martial convened in Constantinople after World War I to try the principal conspirators in the deportation of the Armenian population and the expropriation of their property, Dadrian shows that the judicial record clearly established the criminal behavior of the Young Turk government in its policies against the Armenians. Yet despite depositions taken from high ranking military officers, the incriminating evidence authenticated by Turkish legal experts, and the verdicts handed down by Ottoman courts, political changes and public pressure ultimately voided the convictions of the perpetrators of the genocide.

* 5.D *  
The first part of this work is an inventory of the major archival holdings documenting the condition of the Armenians in the Middle East during World War I. The countries with important repositories include Great Britain, France, Austria-Hungary, Germany, the United States, and Armenia. The second part lists published works on Armenian genocide written by eyewitnesses, survivors, relief workers, diplomats, and scholars. Hovannisian identifies some 400 works, mostly in English, French, and German.

* 5.E *  
Despite the Ottoman government’s efforts to censor the news, reports about the condition of the Armenian population reached the Western media. Kloian’s collection includes a representative sample of articles that appeared in the American periodical press, such as *The New York Times, The Literary Digest, The Outlook, Missionary Review,* and *The Independent.* The 124 articles in *The New York Times*—with typical headlines reading "Wholesale Massacres of Armenians by Turks" (29 July), and "Turks Depopulate Towns of Armenia" (27 August)—which appeared in 1915 alone meant that the American public was fully aware of the scale of the atrocities committed against the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire.

* 5.F *  
By virtue of his office, Morgenthau, the U.S. ambassador to the Ottoman Empire from 1913 to 1916, was acquainted with the Young Turk cabinet. In this account of his conversations and written communications with cabinet members, he leaves little doubt that Talat, the Minister of the Interior, was the central figure in the implementation of the Armenian genocide.

(continued on page 88)
remained of the Ottoman Empire was assumed by a new circle of ministers. The central government in Istanbul, however, was weak. It appeared compromised because it accommodated the Allied-imposed settlement. Upon the insistence of the British, and to a lesser degree the French, some of the Young Turk leaders were court-martialed in 1919-1920. Indicted also were members of the two wartime CUP cabinets. The tribunal handed down a series of verdicts finding the accused guilty of "the organization and execution" of the crime of massacre. Indicative of its moral indecision and evasion of domestic responsibility for dealing with the CUP officials, the Ottoman government was reluctant to carry out most of the sentences. In the case of the top CUP officials, however, the sentences were only a formality. The officials had eluded the law by taking refuge in Germany immediately after the war and were tried only in absentia. The final evasion of any personal culpability occurred with the refusal of Germany to extradite the accused war criminals. The failure to assign criminality to the policies of the Young Turks set the stage for translating the responsibility for exterminating a population into the subject of a debate.

Eastern Armenia Under Communism

Eastern Armenia had been part of the Russian Empire since the early nineteenth century. When, the Russian state disintegrated, as a result of the October Revolution the government of this province was assumed by the local people. In May 1918 they formed an independent republic which lasted only two and a half years. The Red Army put an end to Armenian independence in 1920. Almost immediately the Communist government internally imposed a complete silence on the Armenian genocide.

The lack of Allied resolve to adhere to the objectives of defining the concept of "crimes against humanity" and applying it to the case of the mistreatment of the Armenians was thus matched by the Russian Communists' rejection of all Western notions of appropriate and acceptable political conduct. The Soviet regime introduced new norms of political behavior. The ideological underpinnings of Communism which elevated mass terror into state policy only contributed to the environment in which it could be denied that the fate of the Armenians had been in any way exceptional. These were the years in which the totalitarian state was taking shape and the Communists had reached their own reconciliation with this kind of brutalization.

After six years of warfare and incalculable loss and suffering, Armenian identity became hostage to a redefinition at the hands of ideologues whose manipulation of the historical record only served to further alienate and isolate the Armenian people. Even a minimal effort to document the Armenian genocide was not contemplated. The single greatest catastrophe in Armenian history, virtually all-encompassing in its dimensions and implications, was dismissed as a non-event. With no effort made to preserve a record of the past, the Communists left the field all the more open to revisionism and denial. They added a powerful incentive, and in many respects accorded virtual encouragement, for Turkey to deny everything to the Armenians.
Abdications and Retributions

The Sovietization of the Republic of Armenia had another effect. The only vehicle available to the Armenian people for pressing their case against the Young Turks for adjudication in any kind of forum was denied to them. All legal options were closed. The Allies had given up on their intention to prosecute. The Ottoman domestic courts had discontinued the trials of the accused. The British had reached a settlement denied to them. All legal options were closed. The return of Ottoman officials arrested and incarcerated in Malta on charges of war crimes. The message was clear that, as far as the Allies were concerned, no sanctions would be imposed on Turkey for having a short time before deported, murdered, robbed, and exiled its Armenian population.

The situation posed an excruciating dilemma to Armenians. An underground organization already had been formed for the purpose of meting out punishment to key organizers of the Armenian genocide. Between March 1921 and July 1922, several of the Young Turk party leaders directly responsible for the agencies which implemented the deportations and massacres were assassinated. Each of the slayings occurred outside Turkey. None of the slain were at the time officials of either the Constantinople imperial government or the Nationalist regime in Ankara.

Despite the fact that the hunting down of these men were acts of retribution against individuals, this episode added further ambiguity to the lessons of the genocide. The assassinations plainly were carried out as acts of vengeance by Armenians. It is difficult to say what should have been done with Talaat and the others since no government considered even imprisoning them, but their slayings left the cloudy legacy that surrounds the notion of settling scores.

When the Treaty of Lausanne established Turkey's international boundaries in 1923, the implications for the Armenians were all too apparent. The deported Armenians stranded in Syria were sealed off from their former homes and reduced at last and irreversibly to a people without a country. That the Turks and the Allies at Lausanne ignored the Armenians only codified Communist Russia's dismissal of the Armenian case against Turkey. The Allies in the West for a short while had felt some obligation to the Armenians in view of the genocide. However, they were physically remote from the scene, and the exclusion of the Armenians from the world political arena relieved them of any further connection. Their pledges to settle the Armenians in a "national home" went unfulfilled.

Turkey Reformed

The circle of deniability was complete with the transformation of Turkish society under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal. His determination to secure uncontested sovereignty for Turkey would not countenance the charge of criminality for the Young Turk policies. Many of the CUP rank and file joined his movement. To the extent that they served his purposes, Kemal extended his protection to these men, and thereby signalled his tolerance of the racial policies of the Young Turks. These steps were taken within the framework of the Kemalist program to transform Turkey into a modern nation.

Kemal re-integrated Turkey into the world system of states by discarding the vestiges of the Ottoman past. The changes introduced through a series of reform measures were intended to fundamentally alter Turkish society. The most visible aspects of Kemal's modernization program included, for instance, the adoption of the Latin alphabet for the Turkish language. The legislation of new dress codes doing away with traditional garb for both men and women virtually imposed injunctions against Islamic practices. These tangible alterations of the appearance of Turkish society contributed measurably to a re-evaluation of the unflattering image of the Turk which the media had created in depicting, for a time, an unending series of atrocities against Christian minorities.

More significant in making Turkey acceptable as a modern nation was the political reorganization that took place under Kemal's guidance. The reforms proceeded on so many levels that within a comparatively short time Turkey was able to establish reciprocal relations with a host of countries, many formerly its enemies. This process also finally shut the doors on the Armenian people everywhere. Within a decade after the end of World War I Armenians could not find even a lone voice in the entire arena of global politics to express support for their cause or sympathy for their calamity.

Turkey's neutrality during most of World War II was evidence of Kemal's and his successor's ability to steer through troubled waters. Turkey declared hostilities against Germany near the end of the war in order to join the United Nations as a charter member. Turkey's entry into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization formalized its role in the Western alliance system. From 1952 onward Turkey shared in the responsibility of protecting the free world against expansionist Communism. In return, its own security was guaranteed by the might of the United States as projected through NATO. In thirty years time Turkey traveled so far from the genocidal episode of the early part of the
twentieth century that no question remained about any obligations toward the Armenian people.

As the Armenians disappeared from public view, so too did interest in them and their fate slowly fade. In contrast, a vast body of literature began to appear on Turkey. Its modernization process was regarded as a model for underdeveloped countries and became the subject of innumerable studies. Every aspect of the modern Turkish state found its devotees. Many were fascinated by the attempt at secularizing a traditional society. Others measured the progress in industrialization and commercialization. Still others observed the effects of educational policies and the advances made in literacy. Turkish political developments and the deft diplomacy of the Ankara government became the subject of considerable inquiry.

More fascinating to Western observers was the towering figure of Kemal himself upon whom the Turkish people bestowed the ultimate honor of naming him the father of his country, Ataturk. His personality, his style of leadership, his ideas and words, his deeds, his military valor and ability, his political acumen, his mannerisms of dress and behavior, all became topics of continuous study. The more impressive his list of accomplishments grew, the less cause his detractors had to be critical. Under the circumstances, the Armenian genocide lost its relevance.

Armenians in Diaspora

For the Armenians all this meant that the effects of the genocide would be regarded as inconsequential. During those same decades they were absorbed with the sheer struggle for survival as a homeless, stateless, and dispersed people. The shape of their new diaspora began to emerge as they desperately scrambled to reach any country that gave refuge. Within a short time a handful of impoverished Armenian immigrants spread out in all directions away from their ancestral home and reached all the continents of the globe. A quietude eventually descended upon their existence as their cause was forgotten and the challenge of keeping their offspring from completely assimilating into their host societies absorbed all their energies.

Cut off from Soviet Armenia, filled with bitterness toward the Turks, making up such small numbers as to be easily overlooked by society at large, and living among scattered communities, the Armenians exiled from Turkey possessed no resources to dedicate toward preserving the record of the Armenian genocide. Publishing the memoirs of individual survivors and gathering the history and folklore of the towns, cities, and regions once inhabited by Armenians was the most that was accomplished. A methodical study and documentation of the Armenian genocide was beyond the abilities of the Armenian people at the time. Further impeding any scientific effort to understand the genocide was the absence of Armenians trained in the disciplines necessary to begin such a project. The very first segment of Armenian society selected for extermination at the earliest stages of the genocide had been the intellectual elite: the teachers, journalists, lawyers, clergy, and politicians. Therefore those who ended up holding whatever valuable documentation passed into their hands were not equipped to treat them with the scientific and legal precautions necessary to authenticate that evidence beyond a shadow of a doubt. Lastly, most works written by Armenians on the genocide were written in the Armenian language, making them inaccessible to non-Armenians, and even to their own children.

Turning Points

The year 1965 proved a watershed year in the life of the Armenian people. Confronted with the realization that fifty years had passed since the genocide, Armenians across the world organized commemorative events, inaugurated the publication of works on the genocide, and presented petitions to their governments requesting formal recognition of their tragedy. Since that time somber ritual has come to surround 24 April, the date commemorated as the beginning of the genocide. Prior to 1965, April 24 had been regarded more as a day of mourning and memorialized by requiem services in Armenian churches. By 1965, the eschatological interpretation first given the Armenian genocide had proved unconvincing. New generations of Armenians had grown up and taken charge of their communities.

Diaspora-born, more secular in outlook, with a Western education, and not directly bearing the scars of persecution, they defined the Armenian genocide as the central event of the modern Armenian experience. They became gripped by an awareness of their necrolized national history. The question of justice denied, and for how long, rapidly politicized a stratum of Armenian society. But the old realization of powerlessness in the face of indifference became the cause of increasing frustration. The political impotence of the Armenians in the diaspora, the isolation of the Armenian state inside the Soviet Union with its inability to connect meaningfully with the diaspora, and the silence of the world contributed to a process of radicalization. Just as increasing numbers of Armenians were learning to cope with these dimensions of their heritage, a wave of political violence shook the Armenian communities.

Intent on forcing the issue on the nations of the world, and especially upon the Turkish government, small groups of Armenian terrorists appeared on the
scene. They primarily targeted the Turkish diplomatic corps. During a ten-year spree lasting from 1975 to 1985, Turkish ambassadors, consuls, attaches, and guards were shot and killed by these gunmen, whose demands were always the same: international recognition of the Armenian genocide and Turkish restitution of Armenian lands. After decades of being ignored, the methods of the militants at first seemed to be paying off as they captured headlines and succeeded in getting their story told. The campaign of violence, however, could not sustain itself. The costs to Armenian society began to mount as the repeated acts repelled more and more Armenians and raised their own set of questions. Countries on whose ground most of the operations were carried out responded with their own security measures to prevent the radicals from gaining access to publicity. Finally, Turkey also formulated its own response policies in order to bring the problem under control and stop the killings.

The long-term effects of the decade of political violence are yet to be analyzed. One short-term result was the intensification of the denial campaign by the Turkish government. Turkey repudiated not just the violence, but also the historic reason and fundamental injustice which propelled the terrorism in the minds of its practitioners. The Armenian genocide became contestable ground. Most of the revisionist and denial literature to appear on the Armenian genocide was produced against this backdrop.

The terrorism subsided, but the denial campaign remained in high gear. The production of denial literature took on a life of its own. With the resources of the Turkish government committed to obstructing, obscuring, confusing, distorting, and in any and every manner denigrating the Armenian genocide and its memory, the denial campaign became an industry. With increasing frequency the literature challenging every aspect and recorded fact of the genocide now reached libraries around the world. Revisionists, deniers, and spokesperson of the Turkish government, masquerading as scholars, historians, and specialists of one sort or another, made a living pounding away at the body of evidence documenting the Armenian genocide.

The stated purpose of the newest phase of the denial program was to control the damage to Turkey’s image. The depiction of Turkey as heir to a genocidal state was not a small problem for the Turkish government. That, however, was the lesser of its concerns since Turkey was far too deeply integrated into the world economy and the Western alliance systems to feel seriously challenged. Armenian terrorism provided Turkey the opportunity, once and for all, to confuse the record on the Armenian genocide by claiming it as nothing more than an unfounded charge made by irrational individuals. The violent insistence that there would be consequences to Turkey for failing to acknowledge the Armenian genocide only netted a powerful and elaborate program to deny everything to the Armenians once again, not just irredentist claims to lands inhabited by their ancestors some seventy or more years earlier, and not just the genocide either. The Turkish policy of denial established that everything was deniable; whether there ever was an Armenia, whether the Armenians were actually a people, whether they had a history. It mapped out an extensive program of mockery. Hence in the last two decades the Armenian genocide has been compromised twice over, once by violence staged by Armenian extremists, and again by a growing body of denial literature. For the rest of Armenians there was a penalty to be paid for their inability to establish the record of the genocide.

Defining the Armenian Experience

Opposed to, and apart from, these trends were other developments shaping the understanding of the Armenian genocide. First among these was the continuing progress made by the international community, through the United Nations and other bodies, to agree to covenants respecting the rights of all human beings, codifying conventions on warfare and war crimes, and defining provisions for punishing the commission of genocide. Basic documents giving expression to the concept of human rights were formulated. These achievements were registered with the widespread destruction of World War II in mind. The hope of preventing global conflict, nuclear exchange, or the gross abuse of human rights made a dent in the cold pragmatism of states which once left the victims of the Armenian genocide in the dust.

The second and critical development of the post-World War II period which brought the subject of genocide into focus was awareness of the Holocaust. The imperative to explain how educated men seemingly exercising their rational faculties sent an unimaginable number of people to gas chambers posed a challenge to the moral and intellectual premises of Western civilization. How nations fell prey to racial ideologies of their own choosing, and how they fueled anti-Semitism to the point of reducing Jews to victims of extermination, were questions demanding an answer. Drawing on the lessons of the Holocaust, the examination of past or present violations of the fundamental human right to life now takes a basic body of knowledge on political behavior, social psychology, mass culture, and the ideology of rationalized evil as common principles and tools. The Nuremberg trials set the stage for studying these and many other related issues as serious subjects of inquiry and they have had an
inescapable effect on a number of disciplines.\(^\text{17}\) Even the precedence of the Young Turk policy of extermination has become a subject of inquiry.\(^\text{18}\)

Lastly, the assimilation of the Armenians worked its own influence. Whereas most survivors wrote about their experiences in Armenian, second- and third-generation descendants did so mainly in English and French. As the Armenian genocide became the subject of serious inquiry, scholars, Armenian and non-Armenian, could only be studying it with the post-World War II reassessment and reconsideration of the human experience in view. The vocabulary itself changed as those examining the evidence began to label the destruction of the Armenians a genocide also. It had been described by contemporaries as massacres, atrocities, and race extermination. The word "genocide," however, had an established legal definition to it, which, retrospectively, made the Armenian massacres a more comprehensible unit of history in the context of the twentieth century.\(^\text{19}\)

From the point of view of the Turkish government and its apologists, the study of the Armenian genocide posed a serious challenge. The more the record of the Armenian genocide was established, analyzed, and compared, the more the denial position would be exposed as a contrived and sponsored program. Therefore one of the principal strategies of the denial policy has been to create confusion between Armenian political positions and academic research on the Armenian genocide by insisting that one is in the service of the other.

The Arguments

Three lines of argument have been advanced by those disputing the occurrence of the Armenian genocide. The denial thesis makes the following points: 1) the high casualty toll among civilian Armenians is explained by the fact that the Armenian-inhabited areas of Anatolia were a theater of war; 2) the Armenians also engaged in civil war against the Turkish populace and suffered additional casualties as a result; 3) the Armenians resorted to massacre and the Turks responded in "counter-massacres;" 4) some subscribers to this theory have extrapolated the argument and posited the case of a "counter-extinction" since the Armenian objective, they maintain, was to annihilate the Turks; 5) the deportations are depicted as an "emigration" or "resettlement" policy designed to remove rebellious Armenians from the war zone where they endangered the Ottoman armies; 6) the Armenian nationalists are accused of provocation by being "extremist" in their demands; 7) they are also accused of resorting to wide-scale terrorism; and 8) the nationalist Armenians are described as persons promoting race hatred.

The denial thesis basically reverses the course of history and depicts the victims as the victimizers. The revisionist thesis, on the other hand, builds on presumably reasonable arguments. It frequently draws on the comparative approach. The revisionists do not primarily deny the facts as much as they seek to explain them in a manner that disputes the case for genocide. They rely on these methods: 1) the casualty figure is always minimized by first questioning the size of the original Armenian population in the Ottoman Empire; 2) the spread of epidemics which is common in war is said to have caused most of the deaths; 3) starvation is attributed to "war-time shortages" which occur in every country; 4) the deportations are always regarded as a relocation policy designed for the safety of the Armenians; 5) or as a defensive policy intended to avoid the outbreak of communal hostility; 6) all of the above cumulatively are presumed to demonstrate that there was no policy of genocide. The deaths were incidental to the events.

The most disturbing of all the arguments is the justification thesis. The basic thrust of the justification thesis is to defend the policy of genocide by regarding the policy as an acceptable solution to a political problem. The partisans of justification draw heavily on what is called the provocation theory. The logic of this argument says that Armenians engaged in behavior so threatening to Turkish society that the Ottoman government was compelled to take the comprehensive measures implemented during World War I. The justification and provocation theories are built on a contrastive juxtaposition of the Armenians and the Turks: 1) the Armenians constituted enemies within the state; 2) they collaborated with foreign invaders; 3) they sabotaged Ottoman military campaigns; 4) they were revolutionaries preparing for the moment to revolt; 5) the Armenians believed that World War I offered the opportunity to implement their separatist national program; 6) therefore, they activated a campaign of terrorism meant to drive the Turks out of the areas the Armenians hoped to carve out as their national territory; 7) the Turks were caught in a life and death struggle and had no recourse but to eradicate the Armenians in order to save their nation. The justification thesis, therefore, is constructed on the twin pillars of provocation and salvation. Curiously, it admits that the modern state of Turkey was created by liquidating the Armenian population.\(^\text{20}\)

The Authors

The revisionist and denial literature can be divided among six categories of authors. Two key participants in the genocide wrote their biographies. Neither failed to defend his actions. Their denials soon were grist for
Turkish and non-Turkish apologists who were interested in creating public confidence in the new Turkey by covering up for the Young Turks. When the field of Middle East studies was professionalized in the fifties and sixties, academic rationalizers appeared. Consonant with the Cold War mentality, they described nineteenth and early twentieth century Armenian nationalism as an instrument of Russian expansionism. Eliminating the special and separate identity of the Armenian national movement and obscuring the oppressive aspect of Ottoman imperialism were their main contributions. The revisionists then built on this groundwork by explaining the Armenian massacres as the consequence of inter-ethnic warfare within the larger context of an international conflict where Russians were fighting Turks and the Turks were defending their country. They fashioned a war between two communities, Armenians versus Turks, and absented the hand of the Ottoman government as the real deciding factor. The revisionist arguments soon were approximating the standard Turkish government denials. Under the pressure of Armenian terrorism, which extended its intimidation to the university campus, an alliance was forged between academic revisionism and official Turkish nationalism. With their anti-Communist credentials, Turkish disinformers then were able to depict the question of genocide as part of an anti-Western agenda. Finally, the distorters went on the offensive to rewrite history totally.

Conclusion

The denial of the Armenian genocide demonstrates a number of points about human behavior in a post-traumatic situation: 1) survivors on their own are ill-equipped at first to document their case and have it adjudicated; 2) without intervention by a power stronger than the state engaged in genocide, the case cannot, under any circumstances, be resolved; 3) political pragmatism in the face of a crime of such proportions sets an uncontrollable precedent and exposes the surviving body of the targeted group to further abuse; 4) at the very least, that abuse takes the form of denying criminality and responsibility; 5) thereby, a circumstance is created where victims and victimizers are locked into irreconcilable positions; 6) worse yet, a member of the human family is delegitimized and excluded from fair hearing in any court of law or politics; 7) lastly, unrequited genocide places its victims and their descendants outside the norms of historical development by alienating them and isolating them from the rest of humanity.

Notes


5. 15 March 1921, Talaat Bey, former Minister of the Interior and Prime Minister, in Berlin; 6 December 1921, Said Halim, former Foreign Minister, in Rome; 17 April 1922, Dr. Behaeddin Shakir, a Paris-trained physician and party ideologue who served on the Supreme Directorate of the Central Committee of the CUP and headed the Special Organization in charge of carrying out the massacres, and Djemal Azmi, responsible for the massacres in Trebizond, in Berlin; 25 July 1922, Djemal Pasha, former Minister of the Marine and wartime governor of Syria, in Tiflis. For the trial of Talaat's assassin see, The Case of Soghomon Tehlirian (Los Angeles: A.R.F. Varantian Gomideh, 1985).


12. About two dozen Turkish officials were assassinated by the terrorists. Many civilians and others, such as security guards, were also killed. See Anat Kurz and Ariel Merari, ASALA: Irrational Terror or Political Tool (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985); Michael M. Gunter, Pursuing the Just Cause of Their People (New York, Westport, CT, and London: Greenwood Press, 1986); for a review of both works by Khachig Toloyan, see Conflict Quarterly (Summer 1988): 101-105; and Walter Laqueur, The Age of Terrorism (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1987), 227-229.


cal predispositions of Young Turk nationalism and on the Ottoman political calculations which sanctioned the deportations and massacres. The unusual aspect of his work is its mixture of admission of the substantive facts of the genocide with elaborate rationalizations framing the events. For instance, Djemal reported that the Ottoman government deported one and a half million Armenians and that 600,000 of them "died." Djemal developed a thesis arguing that the treatment of the Armenians, despite its summary nature, was both episodic and inevitable in the course of developments in Ottoman-Armenian relations. Armenians favored Russian protection and Russia threatened to overrun the Ottoman Empire.

The Apologists

* 5.3 *

Mustafa Kemal led the Turkish Nationalist forces in the War for Independence. In 1923 he founded the Republic of Turkey. He remained its president until his death in 1938. This long speech, delivered to the congress of the Republican People's Party, reviewed the Kemalist struggle for Turkish independence in the aftermath of World War I and the ensuing disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. Beyond the facts and documents assembled by Kemal for this presentation, the speech also had the effect of establishing the outlines of an official history. For Kemal the Armenian genocide was an accomplished fact that did not need dwelling upon. This form of denial simply dismissed a segment of history. Kemal saw the matter in purely political terms and treated the expulsion of the Armenians as a necessary step in the reassertion of complete Turkish sovereignty.

* 5.4 *

Halide Edib was a major literary figure in Turkey in the first part of the century. She was a proponent of modernization and an advocate of women's rights. She also became an ardent supporter of Kemal's reform program. Edib shifted the focus of discussion on the matter of the massacres by obliquely alluding to the genocide as a consequence of "destructive nationalism." She too repeated the charge of treason by Armenian revolutionaries and raised the specter of the extermination of the Turks as a consequence. She avoided the question of responsibility by developing what might be called a deflection thesis which implied that the Germans, in their desire for economic supremacy, hoped to see the Armenians eliminated. The circle of deflection was completed with the suggestion that Armenians and Turks shared equal guilt since both sides engaged in behavior characterized by mutual excesses.

* 5.5 *

Ahmed Emin Yalman was an American-trained sociologist and journalist who worked as news editor of the Young Turk party organ during World War I. His close acquaintance with the party organization, and his Western education—he attended Columbia University—made him a particularly perspicacious observer of the Armenian genocide. He developed a number of theses which, in contradistinction to the outright denials or falsifications, are more commonly repeated by equilibrating rationalizers. They include the following: a) the dispute over the exact, or approximate, figure for the Armenian population in the Ottoman Empire, the general purpose being to demonstrate that they were "a scattered minority," and therefore lacking demographic concentration in any part of the state; b) because of their aspirations and sympathies the Armenians constituted "Enemies Within," who were involved in "provocations"; c) that the deportations "actually applied only to the Gregorian Armenians," (p.217) and spared Catholics and Protestants, and thus were not necessarily racially motivated; d) that the Armenian volunteer divisions in the Russian army were first to engage in massacre and consequently "created an unofficial state of war between the Armenians and the Turks" (p.219); e) attacks against the Armenians were only "Counter-massacres." Despite these arguments, Emin has been regarded "the most candid" of Turkish authors on the subject because he is the only one to have admitted the ultimate purpose of the Armenian genocide.

* 5.6 *

A compilation of articles and statements supporting the American ratification of the Treaty of Lausanne and the establishment of formal relations between the United States and Turkey, this work is a virtual encyclopedia of the apologist literature written by Americans in the early 1920s. Some of the authors had actively raised funds to aid Armenian refugees and were one-time
supporters of Armenian independence. Almost all the arguments that subsequent rationalizers, relativists, revisionists, and deniers would rely on appear in this collection.

This work provides the best documentation on the rapidly changed view of American opinion makers for whom political pragmatism and commercial interest were sufficient reasons to abandon any further consideration of the Armenian condition. James Barton, the Secretary of the Foreign Department of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the main arm of the American missionary movement in Turkey, wrote: "an Armenian national home within the boundary of the Turkish Empire is a closed incident...however much we may regret it...that the battle was fought at Lausanne and it was lost." (p.23) In the "Report of the Committee on the Lausanne Treaty to the Executive Committee of the Foreign Policy Association (May 1924)," the organized murder of Armenians and the deaths caused by the war were already treated as an equivalence. "No right minded American will condone the massacre, literally by the hundreds of thousands, of Christian minorities by the Turks. No intellectually honest American, however, will close his mind to the fact that the Turks themselves have suffered cruel hardships as a result of war, famine, and disease." (p.82)

The re-interpretations of Armenian history had also begun. Rayford W. Alley, the president of the Council on Turkish-American Relations, wrote: "In referring to Armenia, we assume...the Armenian race because...Armenia is not now and never has been, except for a few isolated periods in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, more than a geographical expression." (p.103) Alexander E. Powell was already making excuses for Ottoman policies. In his opinion, "the Armenians have been the unwitting victims of European imperialism." (p.109) As for the "two million Armenian Christians," they were "discontented, disloyal, and longing for independence." The justification theory is observed here creeping into Western literature.

Others invoked the impressive figure of Kemal Ataturk for changing American opinion about the Turks. Lothrop Stoddard described Mustafa Kemal as "the living embodiment of that New Turkey which, like the fabled phoenix, has risen suddenly and dramatically from the ashes of what seemed to be hopeless ruin." George A. Plimpton argued for political support for certain types of racial policies and the suspension of moral judgment for their consequences. Turkey "is now a homogeneous nation, but to achieve this homogeneity it was necessary for her to drive out the Armenians and the Greeks. These alien people were largely merchants, business men and heavy taxpayers, but their presence in Turkey meant constant wars. Their expulsion cost great suffering to them and involved financial sacrifice to Turkey herself. Whether it was right or wrong for Turkey to drive out the Armenians and Greeks is not for us to decide, but it is a fact that it has been done and that peace now reigns within her borders." (p.7) In another type of equivalence, the treatment of the Armenians and of the Greeks is described as a forced exodus. The specific policy of exterminating the Armenians is ignored.

* 5.7 *


Popular literature on Turkey published in the United States often whitewashed the Armenian genocide, as does this example. This beautifully designed and illustrated book, which emphasizes the modernization and westernization of Turkey, also contains a considerable amount of historical narrative. In its organization the work reflects the perceptual change in the West since 1923. Anatolia is described as the homeland of the Turks, whereas other once native peoples are characterized "Previous Tenants." The disappearance of the Armenians from Anatolia is related in capsule form under "The Trials of the Armenians." It explains: "Few peoples have known as many changes of fortune as the Armenians...Under the Ottoman Empire, Armenian merchants and financiers thrived. As the borders of the empire contracted in the 19th Century, however, struggles broke out between Turks and Armenians for possession of Anatolian lands. Many Armenians died; others fled abroad." (p.29)

The Rationalizers

* 5.8 *


An authority on the Middle East, Kedourie posits the theory that the intellectual and political development of Armenian society in the last decades of the Ottoman era ineluctably led the Armenians down the path to suicide. In other words the genocide was self-inflicted. Kedourie determines that the exposure of the Armenians to modern concepts of government was self-destructive. He describes Armenian nationalism, imbibed from Protestant missionaries according to Kedourie, as a toxin. By leaping to these kinds of generalizations and abstractions, Kedourie sidesteps the issue of the decision made by the Young Turks to proceed with a plan of destruction. His basic argument maintains that there is no conscious element in history, only process-
es, a sort of natural evolution of conflicts. The genocide of the Armenians was the result of a cycle of escalation between a destabilizing nationalism and the defense concerns of the state.

* 5.9 *

The Shaw volumes were the first works published by otherwise legitimate scholars, employed at the university level, to stage in the most brazen form of denial. In earlier works on Turkey, American academics had preferred to overlook the subject of the Armenian genocide. The Shaws chose to accept the available denial theses without any attempt to examine contravening evidence. The Shaws couched the entire episode of genocide through the use of euphemisms such as "evacuation" and "transportation." They also minimized the casualties by estimating that about 400,000 Armenians were moved, of whom about half perished. They also claimed to have examined "the secret records of the Ottoman cabinet" and found no evidence that the central government had issued any orders to massacre Armenians. The Shaws elaborated the provocation thesis by characterizing the Armenians as murderous revolutionaries, saboteurs, and collaborators with the enemy. To make them appear a consequence of war, the events of 1915 were described within the story of the Ottoman campaigns on the eastern front.

* 5.10 *

Basing his work on the various types of census registers kept by the Ottomans, McCarthy reconstructs the ethnic composition of Anatolia in the first part of the twentieth century. Entirely dismissing the deportations as a deliberate and comprehensive state policy to alter the demography of the region, McCarthy resorts to the civil war thesis where for "both sides, the war became one of extermination in which the villages of the other side were annihilated." (p.119) The disappearance of the Armenians is explained by the fact that they constituted no more than forty percent of the total population in any one province. The argument also posits the theory of Armenian self-induced or self-inflicted genocide. The question of the organized killings of Armenians is entirely bypassed. Epidemics were the cause of a large number of deaths.

* 5.11 *

A claim regularly made by rationalizers has been their continuing discovery of archival documents which belie the genocide. Relying on British documents, Sonyel advances the disingenuous idea that, despite the documents demonstrating a willful plan of deportation, the Ottoman government cannot be "implicated in the massacres." Sonyel concocts one of the strangest combinations of argument: the partial admission of facts (i.e., the deportations) and the absolute of the Ottoman government for the consequences of their methods of implementing this policy. "Owing to the shortage of men, most of whom were fighting on the various fronts against the external enemies, the Ottoman government entrusted the guarding of the convoys of Armenians, who were being deported, to non-combatants, usually to convicts released from prisons for the purpose, and to local Kurds, who had old scores to settle with the Armenians. The deportations gave the Kurds the opportunity to deal severely with the Armenians who had already lost the favour of the Ottoman Government owing to their treachery. There is no evidence that the Ottoman Government planned the massacres, although deportations were well-planned in order to be effective enough to diminish the great danger of a general Armenian uprising." (p.60-61)

Sonyel’s article also contains a particularly good example of a euphemism. "The whole affair [understand genocide] was spontaneous and the result of extreme provocation on the part of the Armenians." (p.61) Like all rationalizers, Sonyel finds no contradiction between the claim that the Armenian population was in a state of rebellion and yet the deportations proceeded expeditiously, with little resistance, and according to plan.

* 5.12 *

This massive tome running into a thousand pages is the prototype of revisionist historiography on the Armenians produced in Turkey. The translation of a work first published in 1950 in Turkish, the Uras volume is in the main a collection of documents and lengthy quotations strung together with the sketchiest of background information. It leaves the impression
that the history of the Armenians can be discerned by reproducing diplomatic correspondence and official edicts. The distinguishing feature of the book is its reliance on Armenian sources. The first section of the book contains chapters on geography, ethnography, French historians of Armenia, works which are now, threatened, the principle of "ends justify means" comes that the history of the Armenians can be discerned by reliance on Armenian sources. The first section of the book is the legitimacy of Armenian rights to a homeland, a matter which he saw as "a very serious problem in the history of Anatolia." (p.219)

The largest section of the book is devoted to the question of the Ottoman reforms in the nineteenth century and the Armenian Question, topics covered by producing memorandum after memorandum supported by quotations from participants and observers. The chapter headed "Revolts and Relocation" covers the genocide. For all that is said in this chapter, Uras actually devotes just a single paragraph to the genocide, attributing Armenian deaths to "hunger, epidemics, anarchy, robbery, lack of transportation, desertions, enemy occupation...[and] the helplessness of the government." (p.879). The Uras thesis on justifiable genocide speaks for itself: "It should not be forgotten that when the survival of a nation and of a state is threatened, the principle of "ends justify means" comes into effect." (p.864)

Despite its size, the Uras work is only the backdrop to the update written by Cengiz Kırsad which covers the period from 1923 to 1985, and which is placed at the front of the publication. The section largely addresses the issue of Armenian terrorism which occurred between the years 1975 to 1985. Armenian efforts since 1923 to gain recognition for the genocide are dismissed as propaganda. Everything ranging from the effort to "keep alive the identity and culture of the Armenians" in diaspora to the founding of university chairs in Armenian studies also is labeled propaganda. (pp. 26, 79)

The Revisionists

* 5.13 *

Institute for Ataturk’s Principles and the History of Turkish Renovation. Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey (1912-1926). Istanbul: Bogazici University, 1984.

The book contains four articles "submitted to the 17th Annual Meeting of the Middle East Studies Association in Chicago, 3-6 November, 1983." The anonymous "Introduction" claims that the contents of the publication are part of the effort at a "re-evaluation of the Armenian issue. Even if it meant the re-writing [of] the entire Armenian history...." (p.15) It singles out educators of Armenian background by suggesting that their work is part of an effort by Armenians to vent their "discontent in various forms of expression, scholarship and terrorism not excluded." (p.10) Justin McCarthy's "The Anatolian Armenians, 1912-1922" summarizes his book on the demography of Anatolia. Bilal N. Şimşir, "The Deportees of Malta and the Armenian Question," is a condensed version of the booklet by the same title. Heath W. Lowry's "American Observers in Anatolia ca. 1920: the Bristol Papers," casts Admiral Mark Bristol, the U.S. High Commissioner in post-war Turkey, as an objective observer of the Anatolian scene because of his equal contempt for both Armenians and Turks. By a selective reading of information preserved in Bristol’s papers, Lowry attempts to disprove the report of a massacre upon the capture of the city of Kars from the Armenians by the Turkish Nationalist forces on 30 October 1920.

Mim Kemal Öke’s "The Responses of Turkish Armenians to the 'Armenian Question', 1919-1926" describes the effort by Armenians in Turkey in 1920 to organize the Turkish-Armenian Friendship Association. Reportedly the association sought to establish Armenian amity with Turks by "accepting the guilt of their revolutionary brethren." (p.71) Thereafter Öke quotes from a "brochure" purportedly produced by this organization which lists all the faults of the Armenians and justifies all the actions taken by the Turks: 1) "The author considered that this extraordinary measure [of deportation] was taken in 'self-defence'. He further added that the histories of all nations are filled with legitimate reasons to justify such decisions" (p.74); 2) "the real responsibility lay with the imperialist powers of the late nineteenth century" (p.74); 3) "Armenians »were brainwashed to believe in Turkish oppression" (p.75); 4) "Armenian massacres could only be explained in terms of the ‘oppression of Armenians by Armenians’" (p.75); 5) "Overambitious as they were, the Armenians launched a military-genocidal campaign penetrating deep into Turkish territory" (pp. 77-78); and so on.

* 5.14 *


This article by the Director of the Washington, DC-based Institute of Turkish Studies attempts to disprove that Hitler made the oft-repeated statement, "Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians." Basing his position on the argument that the document containing the statement was not intro-
duced as evidence at the Nuremberg trials because it had been leaked to the press earlier, Lowry casts doubt on the authenticity of the statement. He emphasizes the fact that the statement was made in the context of Hitler’s preparations for the conquest of Poland and did not allude to plans for the extermination of the Jews. Lowry claims that the quotation is “spurious” because in other records of the speech, and there are at least three variants, no reference is made to Armenians. This attempt to revisit the Hitler quotation was aimed at questioning the linkage between the Armenian genocide and the Holocaust.

* 5.15 *

The article responds to a series of charges made by the English-language Armenian popular media in the United States regarding “counterterror” by Turkey and the “harassment” of the Armenian community in Turkey. It also recites the “Turkish response” and concludes with the author’s “synthesis:” 1) “Turkish sensitivities about minorities and a desire to have a Turkey for the Turks is understandable ...” (p.67); 2) “Unofficial pressures to conform culturally and religiously undoubtedly exist in Turkey today, but how is this different than in any other country?” (p.67); 3) "there is no evidence that the Turkish government is destroying historical Armenian churches and monuments as an official policy..." (p.68). He dismisses the last matter as specious allegations in the Armenian "diet of disinformation."

* 5.16 *

One of the more carefully crafted works of revisionism on the massacre of Armenians in the region of Adana in 1909, the work strives to depict the series of killings which visited all the towns of the area as the result of armed conflict between Armenians and Turks. Based in part on British sources, secret only to the extent that they constitute Foreign Office documents, Sonyel places the massacre in the context of the 1909 palace counterrevolution and the consequent serious disruptions of civil society in Turkey. However, Sonyel finds that the Armenian reaction to the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 and the counterrevolution was so provocative that the Turks became frightened by the prospect of the Armenians overthrowing the government in Adana, and therefore retaliated.

* 5.17 *

Although this article focused on the threat of Armenian terrorism, it became the source of the language used to characterize the Armenian genocide in the American media. For instance, the “mass deportation” of the Armenians is presented as fact; the death toll, however, is qualified as “alleged.” Since that time this qualification has stuck and the use of the phrase “alleged genocide” gained currency. More critical in enunciating the position of the Reagan administration was the final “Note” appended to the article, which even further qualified the allegedness of the Armenian genocide. “Because the historical record of the 1915 events in Asia Minor is ambiguous, the Department of State does not endorse allegations that the Turkish Government committed a genocide against the Armenian people. Armenian terrorists use their allegation to justify in part their continuing attacks on Turkish diplomats and installations...” In the September 1982 issue of the Bulletin, further ambiguity was inserted in an “Editor’s Note” which stated that the Corson article “does not necessarily reflect an official position of the Department of State, and the interpretative comments in the article are solely those of the author.” However, the subheading of the Bulletin reads “The Official Monthly Records of United States Foreign Policy.” Since that time the U.S. government has avoided the use of the term “genocide.”

* 5.18 *

This is a collection of some twenty presentations which purportedly describes the problem of Armenian terrorism and demonstrates that it is supported by drug trafficking and the misrepresentation of historical truth. Some of the papers on terrorism by Western analysts contain useful information for understanding the problem. These contrast sharply with the remaining papers whose main thrust is historical revisionism under the guise of studying a contemporary problem. These include: Heath W. Lowry, "Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Armenian Terrorism: 'Threads of Continuity"; Justin McCarthy, "Armenian Terrorism: History as Poison and Antidote"; Michael M. Gunter, "Contemporary Aspects of Armenian Terrorism"; Türküyaya Ataöv, "Procurement of Arms for Armenian Terrorism:
Realities Based on Ottoman Documents”; and Kâmûran Gürün, "Causes and Prevention of Armenian Terrorism." Paul Henze, in "The Roots of Armenian Violence: How Far Back Do They Extend?," articulates best the main purpose of the above papers. He begins by asking: "Is there something unusual about Armenians as a people, or about their historical experience, that has made them prone to violence?" (p.179) He goes back to the beginning of history to search for an answer to this question. Henze finds it in the defects of historiography. "Armenian history has been studied and written almost entirely by Armenians. The same can be said, though perhaps not to the same degree, of many other peoples, such as the Georgians, Bulgarians, and Hungarians, who have tenaciously survived the vicissitudes of history. But Armenians seem to represent an extreme case, much more so than Jews, e.g. People [sic] who write their own history tend to glorify their past and avoid objective examination of controversial features of it." (p.180)

* 5.19 *


This publication contains a large collection of British documents from the Foreign Office. It includes reports by consuls in the interior of Turkey, dispatches by the Ambassador in Constantinople, and instructions by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. The documents paint a good picture of the lawlessness in the countryside, the shortcomings of the Ottoman government, the venality of the justice system, the extent of brigandage by Kurdish tribesmen, and the helplessness of the unarmed Christian population in general. Yet in a transparent exercise in selectivity, Şimşir writes an introduction to the collection that relies solely on reports critical of, or unflattering to, the Armenians. In a thesis belied by the majority of the documents, the editor argues that the reform measures the British encouraged were an avenue whereby the Christian minorities improved their lot economically to the detriment of the Muslim majority. Still the British purposefully agitated discontent in the Armenian communities as an excuse for intervention. As a result of the War of 1877-78, the Armenians also entered into secret relations with the Russians. The latter encouraged the idea of autonomy for the Armenians who only formed a minority in the provinces. According to Şimşir, the Armenians "were a mere pawn" in the "Anglo-Russian rivalry over Eastern Turkey." The Armenian leaders who advocated reform or western patronage were responsible for "bringing unrest and suffering to their own people." (p.22) The Şimşir volumes are part of a trend in revisionist historiography which aspires to accomplish two things: 1) to be credited with objectivity by publishing documents; and 2) to deflect attention from the genocide by widening the field of controversy to encompass the entire last century of Armenian existence in the Ottoman Empire.

The Disinformers

* 5.20 *


This set of booklets was written by the chair of the International Relations Division of the Faculty of Political Science at Ankara University. Meant for popular consumption, the publications revisit the themes of denial in a condensed form. They were all produced in response to the wave of Armenian terrorism and the publicity surrounding it.

The first booklet, after quickly summarizing all of Armenian history in a few pages and demonstrating the extent of Ottoman reliance on Armenian civil servants, begins discussion of the genocide in the following manner: "The events surrounding the transfer [sic] of the Armenian population in 1915 had to be examined in the light of active Armenian collaboration with the Tsarist Russian forces, Turkey’s enemy during the First World War." (p.33)

The second pamphlet disputes Hitler’s statement on the extermination of the Armenians on the grounds that Hitler was "no historian." (p.5) Ataöv maintains that by using the Hitler statement "militant Armenians are exerting every effort to make the Jews and others believe that they are also another persecuted minority." (p.8) Thereafter Ataov attempts to demonstrate "the inclinations of [Armenian] anti-semitism," (p.8) including the charge that "volunteer Armenian troops under the wings of Hitler’s Germany during the Second World War were used in rounding up Jews and other ‘undesirables’ destined for the Nazi concentration camps." (p.9)

The third booklet reviews the Sinasi Orel work on the same subject. In the preface, the work is described by Prof. Necdet Serin, Dean of the Faculty of Political Science at Ankara University, as "the first
volume of a series of books and booklets on certain aspects of Turkish-Armenian relations." (p.3)

The fourth booklet discusses the confusion between Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and a certain "Nemrud" Mustafa Kemal to whom a statement admitting the massacres is attributed. The error was detected by two Armenian authors who over the years waged a struggle to halt the proliferation of the misattribution. For Ataov the subject served as an opportunity to write a paen to Ataturk and criticize the facile tendency to sensationalize quotes, or misquotations, from world leaders.

* 5.21 *

The title of the first booklet speaks for itself. It is Ataov's contention that the high death toll of Armenians during World War I can be explained by the spread of epidemics which also affected the Turks in a similar pattern.

The second booklet revisits the Andonian telegrams as forgeries and reproduces "authentic" Ottoman documents including a 15 March 1916 original signed by Talaat Pasha ordering that "no more displacement of Armenians, on whatever reason, were to take place" (p.20), or a 23 May 1915 document "stating that the displaced Armenians be re-settled to the East of Damascus and the East and South-east of Aleppo" (p.24), while failing to note that what lies in the directions indicated from those two cities in Syria is in the main uninhabitable wasteland.

The third booklet identifies instances of the careless use, in works on the Armenian genocide, of a painting done by a Russian artist in 1871 called the "Apologia of War," which shows a heap of skulls in a desert, with its reproduction without proper attribution resulting in a number of publications claiming that the picture depicts an actual scene. Ataov then reviews the presumably forged Andonian documents again with the intent of leaving the impression that the Armenian genocide is based on falsified evidence.

* 5.22 *

Probably the most sophisticated work of revisionism to appear to date, The Armenian File was written by a former high ranking official of the Turkish Foreign Ministry with extensive experience at the ambassadorial level. By virtue of his background, Gürün may be regarded formally as one of the key articulators of Turkish government policy. This book purports to trace the political history of the Armenian people from its beginnings until the founding of the Republic of Turkey. Most of it is dedicated to demonstrating that Armenians engaged in a long series of terrorist activities and rebellions from 1860 to 1923, a period wherein virtually every new Armenian organization is assumed to have been founded with the intention of breaking up the Ottoman Empire including ones committed to charity. The provocation thesis is made all-ambracing. The genocide is characterized by Gürün as largely an emigration policy. He finds it specially significant therefore that the Ottoman directives spoke only of "relocation," of "transferring," and of "settling." As for the deaths, besides the usual causes, epidemics and climatic factors, Gürün inserts an original comparison: "The Armenians were forced to emigrate because they had joined the ranks of the enemy. The fact that they were civilians does not change the situation. Those who were killed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki during the Second World War were also civilians. Those who were killed during the First World War in France, Belgium, and Holland were also civilians. Those who died in London during the Battle of Britain were also civilians." (p.216) The Gürün thesis is a rather simple one the entire Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire was a casualty of war.

* 5.23 *

Basing his position largely on the inherent difficulty of authenticating telegrams, Orel attempts to cast doubt on a set obtained by an Armenian named Aram Andonian from an Ottoman civil servant known as Naim Bey. The telegrams in question contained orders for deportation and massacre. Because the documents were obtained surreptitiously, and because Andonian has left two differing accounts on how he came into possession of the telegrams—first depicting Naim Bey as a man having pangs of conscience and delivering the telegrams to ease his guilt, and then describing him more cynically, and accurately, as a gambler and a drunkard who sold him the telegrams—these problems have made the documents vulnerable to questions of authenticity. Thus, they give Orel sufficient cause to submit that the telegrams are part of the "conspiracy"
designed to falsely accuse Ottoman officials of responsibility "for the alleged Armenian-related events," Orel's euphemism for genocide. (p.98)

5.24

In its preface, the former Ambassador of the Turkish Republic to the United States, Sükrü Elekdag, describes this publication as the "first effort [by Turkish Americans] at setting the record straight vis-a-vis a wide variety of Armenian charges ... [and as a] compilation of materials which demonstrates that no Ottoman Government ever planned or carried out a policy of genocide against its Armenian or any other minority population." (p.v) Among a range of U.S. documents or statements outlining Turkish-Armenian relations, articles from the periodical press and selections from the Armenian-American media, included are also a series of reprints: 1) Heath W. Lowry, "Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Armenian Terrorism: Threads of Continuity"; 2) Paul Henze, "The Roots of Armenian Violence: How Far Back Do They Extend?"; 3) Justin McCarthy, "Armenian Terrorism: History as Poison and Antidote;" 4) Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, the chapter entitled "The Northeastern Front 1914-1916"; 5) Justin McCarthy, "The Anatolian Armenians, 1912-1922;" and 6) Heath W. Lowry, "The U.S Congress and Adolf Hitler on the Armenians." The handbook was issued for the purpose of blunting congressional support for commemorative resolutions on the Armenian genocide by claiming that they would endorse "a falsehood as truth," and would "reward the Armenian terrorists." (p. ix)

5.25

This document is an official response to the historical debate engendered by Armenian terrorism. More important, however, is the case made by the institute that the terrorism was preceded by a campaign of "defamation" and "vilification." The obligation to respond to the propaganda became compelling when the "propaganda identified itself with the terrorist movements." The argument is an unintended admission that public discussion about the Armenian genocide in and of itself did not present a sufficient threat. The radicalization of the issue through political violence, on the other hand, was alarming. Both the terrorist threat and the issue of the genocide associated with it required an answer. The standard denials about the Talaat telegrams, about a "planned and systematic" genocide, or about the number of victims are reproduced.

5.26

This collection of articles covers various aspects of Armenian-Turkish relations. Its overall purpose is to demonstrate that Armenians aligned themselves with the Western powers that were conspiring to dismember the Ottoman Empire. They encouraged Armenian terrorism against the Muslim population of Anatolia and Transcaucasia, and this resulted in the Armenians committing atrocities.

The Distorters

5.27

Ostensibly a book on Armenian terrorism, the Feigl tome perhaps can best be described as an extensively illustrated attempt to distort all of Armenian history. Everything Armenian—history, literature, art, archaeology, geography, is subjected to revisionist re-interpretation and, according to the author, demythologized, whereby virtually nothing is left having any resemblance to the established record of Armenian history. He maintains that Armenia is a geographical name. Therefore the suggestions that the Armenians are original inhabitants of this land is only a historical myth. Throughout their existence Armenians were a minor religious sect. Nationalism reached them through Protestant missionaries and spread from the church to other organizations. There was only a relocation policy in 1915 and the Armenians murdered the Ottoman ruling elite in retaliation. Feigl finally concludes with graphic coverage of the wave of political violence in the seventies and early eighties under "Terrorism as Bloody, Real Fantasy-War." The Feigl volume integrates all the distortions pressed on Armenian history by revisionists and deniers into a comprehensive synthesis.

5.28
The collection contains documents from the palace of the Sultan Abdul Hamid II relating to the Ottoman military operations against a remote mountaintop cluster of Armenian villages charged with insurrection in 1894. Original Ottoman documents, dated from 19 May 1894 to 6 October 1894, are reproduced, transliterated into Latin script, translated into Turkish and English. The documents are introduced by four essays, three on Armenian villages charged with insurrection in 1894.

Of Armenian villages charged with insurrection in 1894 of the Kilrşađ the prevention of "the further distortion of events" (p. xxxiii), is also in large part a reprint of the section on this period from the Uras volume. The introductory essay, wherein the aim of the foundation is given as the prevention of "the further distortion of events" (p. xxxiii), is also in large part a reprint of the section on this period from Uras. Under the guise of describing the episodes of political terrorism from Armenian history, Kürşad's work engages in another exercise in denial. Kürşad’s framework, however, virtually reduces the last hundred years of Armenian-Turkish relations to one of terrorism inflicted by Armenians on Turks. The genocide is only "a theme in the campaign of propaganda and psychological warfare." (p. 21) The Ottoman-Russian campaigns during World War I were a war by Armenians against Turks. Besides describing the " resettlement policy as a 'countermeasure,' " Kürşad, taking his cue from Gürün, is adamant on the matter of the deportations. "Not a single Armenian was deported." (p. 25)

* 5.29 *

"The betrayal of the relatively prosperous Armenian people of the Ottoman Empire by their own self-seeking, self-centered and foreign-inspired leaders, and in return, the treachery of some of the Armenians against their own country, Turkey, when that country was engaged in a life-and-death struggle against its enemies during the First World War and after..." is the opening sentence of this article. Apart from betrayal, Sonyel asserts that Armenian leaders were skillful in the use of propaganda, themselves "indulged in a wide campaign of terror and massacre against the Muslims and then persuaded the West that it was the Armenians who were massacred." Sonyel catalogs all the different kinds of treachery the Armenians engaged in: espionage, collaboration with enemy powers, propaganda, and atrocities. The journal Belleten is published by the Turkish Historical Society.

* 5.30 *

This collection of Ottoman documents—reproduced in facsimile and translated into English, French, and Turkish, including a number of telegrams from 1915 signed by Talaat—shows that the displacement of the Armenians was a well-organized, closely monitored, and carefully implemented policy. The documents give the semblance that the entire process was peaceful, orderly, and with no harm brought to the "immigrants." According to Sonyel the evidence verifies that "the Ottoman Empire planned to displace some of the Armenian citizens temporarily to other parts of the country taking the most humane measures..." (preface) The editor fails to note that, without geographical specification, instructions for "transport" are virtually meaningless. For example, one communiqué from Talaat reads: "The Armenians within the province should be transported to the areas previously determined." (p. 1) Another signed by the Chief of General Staff glumly states: "It is decided that the Armenians should be moved to the interior of the country." (p. 1) Virtually all the instructions are equally vague about the destination of the people "transported." Nor are there any indications of the scope of the measures, or the numbers of persons supposedly relocated. All the directives produced refer to the province of Hudavendigar, the area around Bursa which saw no fighting during World War I. This detail is overlooked by the editor as it contradicts one of the main arguments by rationalizers and revisionists which insists that only Armenians from the "war zones" were deported.

* 5.31 *

Sonyel attributes the disintegration of Turkish-Armenian relations to the interventionist policies of England and Russia. As they alternated in their sponsorship of "reforms" on behalf of the Armenians, the European Powers only propelled Armenian nationalism. Consequently, they contributed to the emergence of Armenian revolutionary organizations. Sonyel characterizes the massacres from the 1890s on as episodes of civil war, and the genocide of 1915 is called a "Turco-Armenian tragedy." He maintains that Armenian extremists "succeeded in deceiving the public of the Christian world simply because they posed as a 'martyred' nation in the cause of Christ and clamoured that they had been 'massacred.'" Sonyel advances the interesting notion of a double irrationality as the reason behind the suggestion of genocide: Armenian distortion
and Western gullibility and predilection to believe other Christians.

* 5.32 *


During the Allied occupation of Constantinople after World War I, the British arrested over a hundred former Young Turk leaders. Originally incarcerated in the city, they were moved to Malta to prevent their escape. The intention of the British government was to try these individuals for crimes against civilian Armenians and British prisoners of war. The reluctance of British jurists to try the accused because of the legal difficulties involved with the case of foreign nationals, the disagreement among the Allies about prosecution, and hostage-taking by the Kemalists unraveled the effort to haul the Young Turks to court. Şimşir uses the failure of the Allied effort to affix criminality as evidence of the absence of proof, the falsehood of the charges, the innocence of the accused, and vindication of the denial that intentional violence had been inflicted on the Armenian population. Şimşir fails to point out, however, that some of the accused were turned over to the Turkish courts, which tried them on the basis of government evidence and which delivered guilty verdicts to a number of them. The key CUP figures tried in absentia were given death sentences.

* 5.33 *


"There was no genocide, unless one considers what transpired in Anatolia to have been a genocide carried out by both sides on each other." (p. 98) This contradictory conclusion is one of the main arguments of this book. Once again the specter of "mutual extermination" is elaborated upon at some length. More attention is paid to developing the argument that the massacre stories were a propaganda ploy. Throughout, a great deal of emphasis is placed on the supposition that there was so much prejudice against Turks in the West that Christians were apt to believe every stereotype unfavorable to the Turks and favorable to the Armenians. As is common practice with the proponents of the mutuality theory, the role of the Young Turk regime is thoroughly minimized and the Ottoman government is excused by depicting it as inept or distracted.

* 5.34 *


A collection of Ottoman documents from the Turkish Military History Archives which are reproduced in facsimile and translated into English, it covers the period 1914-1918, when, according to the editor, Armenians engaged in two series of "aggressions" against Turks in 1915 and from 1917 on. Sixty-three of the one hundred and forty-two documents date from 1918 when the collapse of the Russian front pit the Ottomans against armed Russian-Armenians fighting on their own. The entire warfare of that period is characterized in the cables from the front as a series of massacres by Armenian "gangs" against civilian Turks. The internal inconsistency of the information provided in the cables dated 1915, however, is more interesting. Reportedly they convey an idea of the extent of Armenian infiltration and sabotage. Yet the context of the war with Russia is not provided, nor is indication given of the Ottoman military’s response to the specific instances of infiltration or desertion which are reported in such detail. Instead these reports are used, for instance, to justify taking summary actions "to disperse the Armenians." Similarly, contradictions are concealed in the reports on the rare cases of resistance. One dispatch dated 15 June 1915 talks of "500 Armenian bandits" who had sealed themselves in the castle of Shabin-Karahisar. Another dated 18-19 June reports "500 Armenians" including women and children. There is no mention of the deportation order which had been issued earlier, though the first report says that "security forces were burning down all the Armenians’ houses around the castle," without giving a reason. Lastly, a cable dated 28 July reports that "all remaining Armenian bandits in Karahisar have been punished." The form of punishment is not explained. However, no one is known to have survived the siege of the castle. No documents are reproduced, incidentally, on the course of the deportations. The selection of documents therefore is designed to provide ex post facto justification for Ottoman actions by comparing 1915 with 1918. According to Nicati Özkaner, the Director General of Press and Information, who writes in his preface, the documents show "the hostility provoked by the Armenian militiants and the atrocities committed by them toward the Ottoman State and the Turkish Muslims of Anatolia during the First World War years."