

# **Etiology and Sequelae of the Armenian Genocide**

**By**

**Dr. Richard G. Hovannisian  
University of California, Los Angeles**

From Richard G. Hovannisian, "Etiology and Sequelae of the Armenian Genocide,"  
In George J. Andreopoulos<sup>1</sup> (ed.), *Genocide: Conceptual and Historical Dimensions*,  
Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994, pp. 111-140.

The Armenian Genocide of 1915 was the supremely violent historical moment that removed a people from its homeland and wiped away most of the tangible evidence of its three thousand years of material and spiritual culture. The calamity, which was unprecedented in scope and effect, may be viewed as a part of the incessant Armenian struggle for survival and the culmination of the persecution and pogroms that began in the 1890s, or it may be placed in the context of the great upheavals that brought about the disintegration of the multiethnic and multireligious Ottoman Empire and the emergence of a Turkish nation-state founded on a monoethnic and monoreligious society. The Turkish government, dominated by the Committee of Union and Progress or the Young Turk party, came to regard the Armenians as alien and a major obstruction to the fulfillment of its political, ideological, and social goals. Its ferocious repudiation of a plural society resulted in a single society, as the destruction of the Armenians was followed by the expulsion of the Greek population of Asia Minor and the suppression of the non-Turkish Muslim elements to effect their turkification and assimilation. The method adopted to transform Ottoman plural society to a Turkish single society was genocide.<sup>1</sup>

Mass killings and "little wars" under the cover of major conflicts did not begin with the Armenian Genocide. Civilian populations have fallen victim to the brutality of invading armies, bombing raids, lethal substances, and other forms of indiscriminate killing. In the Armenian case, however, the Turkish government openly discarded the obligation to defend its citizenry and instead turned all its might against one segment of the population. In international law there were certain rules and customs of war that were intended to protect in some measure noncombatant, civilian populations, but these regulations did not cover domestic situations or a government's mistreatment of its own people. Only after the Holocaust during World War II was that aspect included in the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Nonetheless, at the time of the Armenian deportations and massacres, many governments termed the atrocities as "crimes against humanity" and made public their intent to hold the Turkish government individually and collectively accountable.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> George J. Andreopoulos is lecturer in history at Yale University and former associate director of Yale's Orville Schnell Center for International Human Rights.

There has been much political and scholarly debate on the precise definition of the term genocide and the compromise wording that was incorporated into the Genocide Convention.<sup>3</sup> Some have found the United Nations definition ambiguous and open to such broad interpretation as to allow for the inclusion of nearly all cases of persecution. There is a tendency on the part of groups that have been victimized, especially Jews and Armenians, to insist on a narrow definition in order to prevent the dilution or trivialization of their own suffering.<sup>4</sup> Many human rights activists, on the other hand, find the United Nations definition too restrictive, especially as it excludes political and social groups from the questionable protection afforded by the Genocide Convention.<sup>5</sup>

According to that document, genocide means the "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such" in any one of the following ways:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.<sup>6</sup>

What is compelling in the Armenian case is that the victims were subjected to each and every one of the five categories. Such drastic and absolute methods underscore not only the premeditated intent of the violence, but also the single-minded determination of the perpetrators to expunge the Armenians from a new Turkish society.

Scholars have begun to categorize the characteristics of genocide and the circumstances under which it is more likely to occur. Applied to the Armenian experience, these include the existence of a plural society with clearly defined racial, religious, and cultural differences; a sense of deprivation or danger felt by the dominant, perpetrator group; the relative social and economic upward mobility of the victim group; the espousal and propagation by the perpetrators of an ideology or belief system emphasizing the nobility and righteousness of its own group as opposed to the alien, exploitative nature of the intended victims; the determination to establish a new regional order and in that process eliminate elements posing real, potential, or perceived threats to achieving that goal; the mobilization of the state machinery and the military establishment for measures against the victims; and the seizure and retention of the material wealth and resources of the dispossessed population. In the Ottoman Empire, government and party merged as the Young Turk dictatorship created the *Teshkilati Mahsusa* ("Special Organization") to supervise the extirpation of the Armenians. Killer battalions were organized, and in every significant town and city party functionaries were

at work to ensure the execution of directives and to remove weak-hearted and recalcitrant officials. Young Turk officers were assigned to critical command posts to assist in implementing the grand design. Moreover, even in a country as undeveloped as Turkey in 1915, the use of technological advances such as the telegraph allowed for unprecedented coordination in the genocidal process. The intended victims didn't stand a chance and were doomed from the start.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Ghost of the Past**

The Armenian Genocide began in 1915 and culminated in the flight or expulsion in 1921-22 of the survivors who after the war had returned to the region of Cilicia. The Armenians were violently and irreversibly separated from their lands and cultural-religious foundations of many centuries. The social, political, economic, cultural, and religious infrastructure was completely demolished, leaving the bewildered survivors scattered around the world in alien surroundings and without the means of rapid recovery. For the rest of the twentieth century, their collective energies were concentrated on the building of new infrastructures in the countries of the Middle East and with less success in Europe and the Western Hemisphere, where the opportunities for social and economic mobility were counterbalanced by the processes of rapid acculturation and assimilation. A source of hope during these difficult decades was the existence of Soviet Armenia, the smallest of the constituent republics of the Soviet Union.

While most of the historic Armenian territories had fallen within the Ottoman Empire, the easternmost sector had been included in Persia and then in the nineteenth century in the Russian Empire. From this division had evolved the terms Russian (Eastern) Armenia and Turkish (Western) Armenia. The destruction of Turkish Armenia during World War I imperiled Russian Armenia, which also figured in the grand designs of the Young Turk dictators. Amid the turmoil created by the Russian revolutions in 1917 and the Turkish invasion in 1918, the Russian Armenians tried to salvage whatever possible by declaring the independence of the Republic of Armenia around the city of Erevan. Thousands of Turkish Armenian refugees crammed into the small state, where subsequently a large percentage of them perished as the result of starvation, epidemics, and exposure. Nonetheless, the little state, which was confined to less than half of Russian Armenia, managed to endure until the end of the World War.<sup>8</sup>

Armenians the world over celebrated the defeat of the German and Ottoman empires in November 1918, believing that the time of reckoning had finally arrived, that the victorious Allied Powers would punish the perpetrators of the genocide, repatriate and rehabilitate the survivors, and establish and lend assistance to a united Armenia encompassing both the western and eastern sectors of historic Armenia. Although the Allied Powers finally created such a state on paper in the Treaty of Sevres in August 1920, they were unwilling to commit

the armed forces necessary to remove the Turkish divisions from Turkish Armenia. On the contrary, they stood by and watched helplessly as the revitalized Turkish Nationalist armies of Mustafa Kemal invaded and put an end to the small Russian Armenian republic. Placed between an inescapable vise formed by the Turkish armies in the southwest and the Soviet Red Army in the northeast, the Armenian government had to cede half of Russian Armenia to Nationalist Turkey and save the rest of the country by relinquishing power and acquiescing in the proclamation of Soviet rule.<sup>9</sup> The strategy of the Turkish Nationalists furthered the Young Turk objective of creating a single, homogeneous society. The choice of Ankara as the Nationalist capital symbolized Mustafa Kemal's repudiation of the plural society represented by European, cosmopolitan Constantinople.

From 1921 onward, the only part of historic Armenia that still bore that name was the Soviet republic of about 12,000 square miles. With all its limitations and problems, that small state alone provided for the uninterrupted flow of Armenian life. National culture was allowed to develop within limits imposed by the Soviet system. Between 1920 and 1990, the population of Soviet Armenia grew from barely one million to three million, while the worldwide Armenian population increased to between six and seven million, at last replenishing itself and reaching its 1914 pre-genocide level. It took the Armenians two generations simply to recover, while the rest of the world was experiencing a population explosion.<sup>10</sup>

In the aftermath of the genocide the survivors and succeeding generations suffered from the psychological and emotional trauma caused by the calamity, world indifference, and Turkish attempts to deny or rationalize the crime. Yet the event had passed, and there did not appear to be any real danger of renewed massacres, except perhaps in the minds of those who had been so severely affected that they suffered from paranoia or other disorders. However great the oppressive policies and shortcomings of the Soviet system, Armenia was protected by the armies and resources of the mighty Soviet Union, and the people could live without serious fear of Turkish invasion or interethnic violence in Soviet Georgia and Soviet Azerbaijan, each with approximately half a million Armenian inhabitants. Armenians were disgruntled that Armenian-populated Mountainous Karabagh, which was adjacent to Soviet Armenia, had been awarded to Azerbaijan, and they repeatedly petitioned for the return of that highland district, but these measures did not affect the Soviet control mechanism throughout Transcaucasia, and life remained relatively secure and predictable.

The trade-off by which Armenia gave up much of its freedom, including the right to seek redress and world recognition of the Armenian Genocide in exchange for the protection afforded by the Soviet Union, changed abruptly in 1988. Genocide was no longer a haunting, terrible memory but a living reality. In the early part of that year, the Armenians of Mountainous

Karabagh and of Soviet Armenia took General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev's program of *glasnost and perestroika* seriously, as they did his declarations that the time had come to rectify past errors of the Stalin era. For the Armenians a cardinal crime of Stalin (and Lenin if he could have been named then) was the award of Karabagh to Azerbaijan. When the population and local government organs of the Mountainous Karabagh Autonomous Region petitioned for the right of self-determination and incorporation into Soviet Armenia, hundreds of thousands of people in Erevan and elsewhere in Armenia took to the streets in support of the Karabagh movement. The massive demonstrations were unprecedented in the Soviet Union and captured headlines in the broadcast and print media around the world. A wave of optimism engulfed Armenians both inside the Soviet Union and in the diaspora. Dormant Armenian communities in Russia began to stir, and the Armenians abroad rallied to the cause. Spirits were high and the mood was festive, as it seemed that for once in the twentieth century the continuous process of diminution of the living space of the Armenians might be reversed, since the proposed shift of boundaries could be affected as an internal Soviet affair.

Armenian optimism was dampened at the end of February 1988, by the outbreak of anti-Armenian violence in the Azerbaijani industrial city of Sumgait. The indiscriminate, brutal torture and killing, the mutilation and rape, the looting and burning sent shock waves into Armenian communities far and near. The terms "massacre," "pogrom," and even "genocide" became current, and immediate, spontaneous associations with 1915 were made everywhere. The Azerbaijanis, related by race, language, and culture to the Turks, became in Armenian minds the same vicious and heartless people who had perpetrated the genocide in 1915, and the victims of Sumgait were simply the most recent martyrs exacted from the nation since antiquity and especially since the Turanic domination of Armenia. Seventy years of Soviet mythology about the resolution and elimination of nationality problems and the friendship and brotherhood of all Soviet peoples dissolved in a single instant, and the traumatized Armenians came face to face with the ghost of the past.<sup>12</sup>

What was most disconcerting in the aftermath of the Sumgait pogrom was the failure of the central authorities to take swift, decisive action to apprehend and punish the perpetrators. Gorbachev may not have wished to jeopardize his image as a reformer who had repudiated the use of force, and there were those who accused the central government of resorting to the old imperial formula of divide and rule. It was inconceivable that massacres could occur in the Soviet Union without the complicity or tacit assent of the mechanisms of control. In any event, the inaction of the center exacerbated Armenian-Azerbaijani tensions, the raids and attacks along the frontier between the neighboring republics, the Azerbaijani economic stranglehold on Armenia, which received 80 percent of its food supplies and other goods over the railroads that passed through Azerbaijan. Once again, the forced starvation of hundreds of thousands of

Armenians in 1915 became a living experience for the blockaded people of Mountainous Karabagh and Armenia.<sup>13</sup>

The conflict intensified in the fall of 1988, as the Armenians of Kirovabad and the surrounding countryside were driven from their homes and forced to seek haven in Armenia, while the frightened Azerbaijani minority in Armenia fled eastward into Azerbaijan. Still greater violence erupted in Baku in January 1990, catching by surprise the 200,000 Armenians of the cosmopolitan Azerbaijani capital, which was believed to be relatively secure. The ferocity of the riot knew no limits, as women were bound together and set ablaze, throats were slit, and the worst forms of mutilation that often characterize inter-racial and inter-religious conflicts were fully manifested. Most of the Armenian minority in Azerbaijan abandoned home and business and fled with only the clothes on their backs to Armenia and many other parts of the Soviet Union. Even the forces of nature seemed to conspire with the perpetrators, as a massive earthquake in December 1988 devastated a third of Armenia, leaving 500,000 people homeless and claiming as many as 50,000 lives. Man and nature, it was said, had joined to deprive the Armenians of stability, prosperity, peace, and justice.<sup>14</sup>

The Karabagh crisis and subsequent developments in the Caucasus and the entire Soviet Union reveal much about the trans-generational psychological impact of genocide. In the best of circumstances, the trauma persists for decades, even for generations, and manifests itself in unexpected ways. The trauma is clearly compounded when the perpetrators are left unpunished, when there are no acts of contrition or indemnification, and when external society or governments find it inexpedient to join in remembrance. With the interethnic strife, the pronounced anti-Semitism, and the increasing sense of deprivation in the former Soviet Union, the Armenian experience must give us pause. Historical memory forcefully shapes contemporary outlook. The past is present.

### **A Plural Society**

The Armenians are an ancient people who inhabited the highland region between the Black, Caspian, and Mediterranean seas for several millennia. They are noted in Greek and Persian sources as early as the sixth century B.C., and they existed as a people and a coalescing state long before that time. On a strategic crossroad between East and West, Armenia was sometimes independent under its native dynasties, sometimes autonomous under princes who paid tribute to external powers, and sometimes subjected to direct foreign rule. The Armenians were among the first nations to adopt Christianity, and they developed a distinct national-religious culture that kept them apart from their more powerful neighbors.<sup>15</sup>

Most of the territories that had formed the ancient and medieval Armenian kingdoms were incorporated into the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century. The Armenians were thus drawn into a multiethnic and multi-religious society, but as a Christian minority in a Turkish-dominated Muslim realm they had to endure second-class citizenship, including the imposition of special taxes and levies, the inadmissibility of their testimony [in court] against true believers, and the prohibition against bearing arms. The Ottoman administrative structure was founded on unequal relationships sanctioned by Islamic legal and judicial precepts and customs. The Christians, as tolerated nonbelievers (*dhimmis*), were permitted to practice their religion in return for special obligations and acceptance of their inferior status. The structural inequalities in the Ottoman administrative system were institutionalized through the formal separation of Ottoman society into confessional-based Muslim, Jewish, Greek Orthodox, and Armenian *millets*. All Armenian Christians were born into and remained within the Armenian millet unless an individual opted to convert to Islam. The Armenian patriarch of Constantinople, as the head of the Armenian millet, had jurisdiction over the religious and civil affairs of his flock and, as a part of the sultan's administrative apparatus, was responsible for his people, the fulfillment of all their duties, and their behavior in a manner befitting *dhimmis*.<sup>16</sup>

The *millet* system allowed the Armenians to retain their cultural religious identity in a plural society, but it rendered them powerless politically and militarily. Over the centuries, ruler and ruled-Muslim, Christian, and Jew—became accustomed to their stations in life and the accepted norms of behavior that allowed for a *modus vivendi* rooted in legal inequality. Some Armenians converted to Islam to find relief from the disabilities and sporadic persecution, but most held tenaciously to their faith and fulfilled the obligations of second-class citizenship. Many Armenians sought security and prosperity in the coastal cities or in Constantinople (Istanbul), where they became merchants, traders, artisans, interpreters, and professionals. The great majority, however, never left their homes on the great Armenian plateau, there descending into the status of tenant farmers and sharecroppers under a dominant Turkish and Kurdish Muslim feudal class.

So long as the Armenians fit into the mold of a plural, unequal society, so long as they performed their duties and endured the harshness of life, they posed no threat and were allowed to exist in something of a symbiotic relationship with the dominant Muslim millet. But in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the framework of the Ottoman Empire was seriously undermined by external challenges and internal unrest. Unable any longer to compete economically or militarily with the West, the sultans lost province after province and became hopelessly mired in debt. The resulting corruption and breakdown of law and order produced widespread revolts in the Balkan provinces and cracked the foundations of traditional Ottoman plural society.

The decline and decay of the Ottoman Empire were paralleled by cultural revival and emancipatory movements among several subject nationalities. The egalitarian principles inspired by the French Revolution ran counter to the institutionalized inequality of the Ottoman administrative system and culminated in violent upheavals in the Balkan peninsula. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Greeks, Romanians, Serbians, and Montenegrins, supported by one or more European power, had secured their independence from Turkish dominion, whereas Bulgaria had gained autonomy and would assert its complete independence in 1908.

The increasing threats to the continued existence of the Ottoman Empire had forced the sultans to attempt reform measures to halt the process of deterioration. Encouraged and coerced by Great Britain and other powers, the sultans entered a period of restructuring that marked a radical departure from the traditional sociopolitical hierarchy. In the decrees of the so-called *tanzimat* period (1839-76), the sultans declared the theoretical equality of all Ottoman subjects. For traditionalists, these reforms constituted an attack upon their privileged status and on the interrelationship between true believers and infidels. In fact, however, the reforms did not bring equality to the distant Armenian provinces but only accelerated the breakdown of law and order by weakening the system of minimal protection that characterized feudal or semi-feudal societies. Moreover, while the *tanzimat* reforms proclaimed the equality of Ottoman subjects before the law, they did not eliminate the confessional millet structure and the implicit inequality therein.<sup>17</sup>

Unlike the Balkan Christians, the Armenians were concentrated on the great plateau in eastern Asia Minor and no longer constituted a majority in many parts of their historic homeland. Many thousands of Armenian merchants, craftsmen, artisans, and professionals lived in Constantinople, Smyrna, and all the major towns and cities along the seacoasts and in Asia Minor proper (Anatolia). Under these circumstances the Armenian cultural and political revival of the nineteenth century did not develop into a program for independence or separation from the empire. Instead, it focused on reforms to guarantee the security of life and property and on the concept of Ottomanism, by which the obligations and privileges of citizenship would be common and shared by all. There were Turkish intellectuals, too, who held the view that the Ottoman Empire could escape doom only through egalitarianism and constitutionalism, the underpinnings of Europe's strength and success. It was such sincere reformers who framed the Ottoman constitution which Sultan Abdul-Hamid promulgated for all the wrong reasons in 1876.<sup>18</sup>

Abdul-Hamid II (1876-1909) proclaimed the liberal constitution to ward off renewed European intervention on behalf of the Balkan Christians. Then, shortly after declaring war on Russia in 1877, the sultan suspended the constitution and prorogued the parliament that had just

convened. His military and diplomatic defeat in the war led to the loss of most of the Balkan provinces and drew the European powers collectively into the "Armenian Question." During the war, Russian armies had occupied a part of the Armenian plateau and were prepared to remain there until reforms had been implemented to safeguard Armenian life and property from Kurdish tribesmen and other predators. As Great Britain and the other European powers were instrumental in forcing the Russian armies to withdraw from the region, they agreed to act collectively to ensure that the sultan honored his pledge to institute effective reforms that would eliminate Armenian grievances.<sup>19</sup>

The diplomatic intercession of the European powers in the absence of any real show of force only compounded Armenian troubles. Nor were the attempts of some Armenians to resist tyranny by organizing guerrilla bands and revolutionary societies effective in matching the power and control mechanisms of the state. Nonetheless, in their quest for security and equality, the Armenians posed one more challenge to the customary relationships of traditional society and as such came to be regarded as disloyal and dangerous.<sup>20</sup> Abdul-Hamid armed Kurdish brigands and gave them a semi-official status in his determination to crush the incipient Armenian movement. The brutal suppression of an Armenian uprising in Sassun against Kurdish irregulars and Turkish tax collectors in 1894 led to renewed European pressure for reforms. Although Abdul-Hamid was coerced into issuing a compromise edict in the fall of 1895, his real response to external meddling was to unleash pogroms in nearly every province inhabited by Armenians. Within a year more than 100,000 Armenians lay dead, thousands more had fled into exile, and hundreds of towns and villages had been looted and burned or forced to convert to Islam.<sup>21</sup>

Lord Kinross, who has studied and written extensively about Turkey, describes the systematic nature of the pogroms:

Each operation, between the bugle calls, followed a similar pattern. First into a town there came the Turkish troops, for the purpose of massacre; then came the Kurdish irregulars and tribesmen for the purpose of plunder. Finally came the holocaust, by fire and destruction, which spread, with the pursuit of the fugitives and mopping-up operations, throughout the lands and villages of the surrounding provinces. This murderous winter of 1895 thus saw the decimation of much of the Armenian population and the devastation of their property in some twenty districts of eastern Turkey. Often the massacres were timed for a Friday, when the Moslems were in their mosques and the myth was spread by the authorities that the Armenians conspired to slaughter them at prayer. Instead they themselves were slaughtered, when the Moslems emerged to forestall their design.<sup>22</sup>

Upon analysis, it may be concluded that Abdul-Hamid's use of looting and massacre was a desperate attempt to preserve the status quo and his crumbling autocratic regime. His agents had little difficulty arousing the elements that were threatened by the Armenian demands for equality,

self-government, and even the right to bear arms. Looting, burning, and murder, it was believed, were justified by the sedition and economic exploitation of the Armenians. Popular participation in the carnage was enhanced by the knowledge that no one would be held to account.

Abdul-Hamid differed radically from his Young Turk successors. He still needed the dues and services of the Armenians, and, although wishing to teach them a good lesson to stay in their place and turn away from Europe, the sultan did not conceive of their total eradication. What the Young Turks had in common with Abdul-Hamid was their reliance on violent methods, only on a much greater scale. The strategy of the Young Turks, however, was not to maintain the status quo but rather to bring about fundamental and far-reaching changes and to create an entirely new frame of reference in which the Armenians did not figure at all. Pogroms in the first instance were to preserve the old order, whereas genocide in the second instance was perpetrated to destroy the old order and its plural society and to replace it with a single, homogeneous society made up of and for the benefit of Turkey and the Turks.

### **The Young Turk Dictatorship**

The Armenians were deeply disillusioned after the calamities of 1894-96, yet there seemed to be a glimmer of hope in the fact that various other groups, including liberal Turks committed to the concept of Ottomanism, were organizing against Abdul-Hamid's tyranny. Armenian intellectuals and political leaders were particularly attracted to the program of administrative decentralization and federalism as advocated by one of the sultan's alienated nephews. The Young Turks, or Committee of Union and Progress, did not hold a single view of how to resolve the monumental problems of the Ottoman Empire, but they were by and large European-educated and firm advocates of the constitutional system of government. In an unexpected series of events in 1908, Young Turk officers and sympathizers, in danger of imminent exposure and arrest, brought about a near bloodless coup, compelling Abdul-Hamid to reinstate the constitution of 1876 and relinquish most of his powers to serve as a figurative constitutional monarch. The Armenians hailed the Young Turk victory and collaborated enthusiastically with the new leaders of the Ottoman Empire. They participated in the parliamentary elections, engaged in legalized political activities, and for the first time gave their sons to serve in defense of the common Ottoman homeland.<sup>23</sup>

One of the most unexpected and, for the Armenians, most tragic developments was the transformation of the seemingly liberal, egalitarian Young Turks into xenophobic chauvinists bent on creating a new order and eliminating the Armenian presence. European exploitation of Turkish weaknesses after the 1908 revolution and the loss of more Ottoman territory in the Balkans contributed to the ascendancy of a radical, centralizing wing of the Young Turk movement. Already In 1909 some 20,000 to 30,000 Armenians were massacred in Adana and throughout the region of Cilicia. The Young Turk leaders blamed the reactionary forces loyal to Abdul-Hamid and deposed the sultan, but there were strong indications that supporters of the Young Turks had themselves participated in the bloodshed and looting.<sup>24</sup>

The Cilician massacres should have been an object lesson to the Armenians. Some of their leaders had taken the constitutional liberties at face value and immediately began to organize public rallies, demonstrations, and processions. They gave free flight to their fantasies in print and proclaimed without circumspection the end of the traditional relationships imposed by the *ancien régime*. In reality, as experienced by blacks in the United States and other minorities in reforming states, the promulgation of egalitarian legislation did not guarantee immediate implementation. Theory and practice are very different, and in the case of the Armenians and others enforcement of the law lagged far behind its issuance.

The crisis created by the attempted counter-coup of Abdul-Hamid's traditionalist supporters in 1909 prompted the Young Turk government to declare a state of siege and suspend constitutional rights for several years. It was during this period that the concepts of "Turkism" and exclusive nationalism completely captivated the Young Turk extremists, who began to envisage a new, homogeneous state expanding as far as the Turkic homelands in Central Asia in place of the existing discredited, enervated, and exploited multiethnic conglomeration and its malfunctioning plural society.<sup>25</sup> In another coup at the beginning of 1913, the ultra-nationalists seized control from the liberals and from then until the end of World War I in 1918 dominated the Ottoman government under the leadership of a triumvirate composed of Minister of War Enver, Minister of Interior Talaat, and Minister of the Marine, and subsequently military governor of Syria, Jemal. They all espoused the ideology of Turkism and the goals of Pan-Turkism as expounded by Zia Gökalp and other ideologues. Dedication to God and sultan was replaced by devotion to the collective entity of Turkism. As reflected in the words of Gökalp, the nation was supreme:

I am a soldier; it is my commander  
I obey without question all its orders  
With closed eyes I carry out my duty.<sup>26</sup>

The victory of the Pan-Turkists eliminated the possibility of continued coexistence on the platform of Ottoman liberalism. The centralized dictatorship now possessed an ideology that made any and all actions acceptable for the sake of the amorphous nation of Turan. I sought the means and awaited the time to transform multinational Ottomanism into exclusive Turkism. Drawing upon the German military model as the blueprint for success, the Young Turks resolved to eliminate those elements that would not fit into the Turanic program.<sup>27</sup> Not only were the Armenians alien by culture and religion, but their historic lands lay in the middle of the projected Turkic realm. Their upward mobility and their avid absorption of Western education and ideas made them all the more dangerous. The Young Turk strategy was to bring the Ottoman Empire into the European war as an ally of Imperial Germany against Russia in exchange for the right to invade Transcaucasia and Central Asia and liberate the Turanic heartland.

The outbreak of World War I in the summer of 1914 deeply alarmed the Armenians. If the Ottoman Empire entered the conflict on the side of Germany, the Armenian plateau would become the inevitable theater of another Russo-Turkish war. Since the Armenian homelands lay on both sides of the frontier, the Armenians would suffer severely no matter who might eventually win the war. For these reasons, Armenian spokesmen implored Young Turk leaders to maintain neutrality and spare the empire from certain disaster. What the Armenians did not know was that Enver and his cohorts had already sealed a secret military alliance with Imperial Germany and were preparing for the invasion of the Caucasus.<sup>28</sup> The Ottoman Empire's entry into the world conflict as a member of the Central Powers voided the last chance to solve the Armenian Question through administrative reforms. The time had come for Turkism to supplant Ottomanism and to give justifiable purpose to the unlimited violence necessary to create a homogeneous state and society. In *"Accounting for Genocide"*, Helen Fein has concluded:

The victims of twentieth-century premeditated genocide -the Jews, the Gypsies, the Armenians - were murdered in order to fulfill the state's design for new order... .War was used in both cases ... to transform the nation to correspond to the ruling elite's formula by eliminating the groups conceived of as alien, enemies by definition.<sup>29</sup>

### **The Genocidal Process**

If there still was any hope for the Armenians, that vanished with the humiliating failure of Enver Pasha to conquer Transcaucasia at the beginning of 1915. His one hundred thousand-man army was decimated by blizzards raging over the Armenian plateau, and his optimistic confidence that his forces would soon join with the indigenous Muslim population of the Caucasus and Central Asia against Russia was buried with the mounds in the snow that marked where his men had frozen. Such a staggering blow required an explanation—a scapegoat: the Armenians. And when the Allies tried to knock Turkey out of the war by landing an expeditionary force at Gallipoli in the ill-fated strategy to capture the Straits and Constantinople, the threat of internal subversion seemed to loom even greater.<sup>30</sup>

On the night of 23–24 April 1915, Armenian political, religious, educational, and intellectual leaders in Constantinople were arrested, deported to Anatolia, and put to death. Then in May, after mass deportations had already begun, Minister of Interior Talaat, claiming that the Armenians were disloyal, could offer aid and comfort to the enemy, and were in a state of imminent rebellion, ordered *ex post facto* their deportation from the war zones to relocation centers—actually the deserts of Syria and Mesopotamia. The Armenians were driven out, not only from areas near war zones but from the length and breadth of the empire, except Constantinople and Smyrna, where numerous foreign diplomats and merchants were located.

Sometimes Armenian Catholics and Protestants were exempted from the deportation decrees, only to follow once the majority belonging to the Armenian Apostolic Church had been dispatched. Secrecy, surprise, and deception were all a part of the process.<sup>31</sup>

The whole of Asia Minor was put in motion. Armenians serving in the Ottoman armies had already been segregated into unarmed labor battalions and were now taken out in batches and murdered. Of the remaining population, the adult and teenage males were, in most instances, swiftly separated from the deportation caravans and killed outright under the direction of Young Turk agents, the gendarmerie, and bandit and tribal groups prepared for the operation. The greatest torment was reserved for the women and children, who were driven for months over mountains and deserts, often dehumanized by being stripped naked and repeatedly preyed upon and abused. Intentionally deprived of food and water, they fell by the thousands and the hundreds of thousands along the routes to the desert. In this manner an entire nation was swept away, and the Armenian people were effectively eliminated from their homeland of several millennia. Of the refugee survivors scattered throughout the Arab provinces and the Caucasus, thousands more were to die of starvation, epidemics, and exposure, and even the memory of the nation was intended for obliteration, as churches and cultural monuments were desecrated and small children, snatched from their parents, were renamed and given out to be raised as non-Armenians and non-Christians.<sup>32</sup>

One paragraph from a report of the Italian consul general at Trebizond typifies the hundreds of chilling accounts by foreign officials and eyewitnesses:

The passing of the gangs of Armenian exiles beneath the windows and before the door of the Consulate; their prayers for help, when neither I nor any other could do anything to answer them; the city in a state of siege, guarded at every point by 15,000 troops in complete war equipment, by thousands of police agents, by bands of volunteers and by the members of the "Committee of Union and Progress"; the lamentations, the tears, the abandonments, the imprecations, the many suicides, the instantaneous deaths from sheer terror, the sudden unhinging of men's reason, the conflagrations, the shooting of victims in the city, the ruthless searches through the houses and in the countryside; the hundreds of corpses found every day along the exile road; the young women converted by force to Islam or exiled like the rest; the children torn away from their families or from the Christian schools, and handed over by force to Moslem families, or else placed by hundreds on board ship in nothing but their shirts, and then capsized and drowned in the Black Sea and the River Deyirmen Dere—these are my last ineffaceable memories of Trebizond, memories which still, at a month's distance, torment my soul and almost drive me frantic.<sup>33</sup>

Estimates of the Armenian dead vary from 600,000 to 2,000,000. A United Nations Human Rights sub-commission report in 1985 gives the figure of "at least one million."<sup>34</sup> The important point in understanding a tragedy of such magnitude is not the exact and precise count of the number who died—that will never be known—but the fact that more than half the Armenian

population perished and the rest were forcibly driven from their ancestral homeland. Another important point is that what befell the Armenians was by the will of the government. While a large segment of the general population participated in the looting and massacres, many Muslim leaders were shocked by what was happening, and thousands of Armenian women and children were rescued and sheltered by compassionate individual Turks, Kurds, and Arabs.<sup>35</sup>

The decimation of the Armenian people and the destruction of millions of persons in Central and Eastern Europe during the Nazi regime a quarter of a century later had particular and unique features. However, historians and sociologists who have pioneered the field of victimology have drawn some striking parallels. The similarities include:

1. The perpetration of genocide under the cover of a major international conflict, thus minimizing the possibility of external intervention;
2. Conception of the plan by a monolithic and xenophobic clique;
3. Espousal of an ideology giving purpose and justification to racism, exclusivism, and intolerance toward elements resisting or deemed unworthy of assimilation;
4. Imposition of strict party discipline and secrecy during the period of preparation;
5. Formation of extralegal special armed forces to ensure the rigorous execution of the operation;
6. Provocation of public hostility toward the victim group and ascribing to it the very excesses to which it would be subjected;
7. Certainty of the vulnerability of the targeted group (demonstrated in the Armenian case by the previous massacres of 1894-96 and 1909);
8. Exploitation of advances in mechanization and communication to achieve unprecedented means for control, coordination, and thoroughness;
9. The use of sanctions such as promotions and the incentive to loot or, conversely, the dismissal and punishment of reluctant officials and the intimidation of persons who might consider harboring members of the victim group.<sup>36</sup>

## **The Sequelae**

The defeat of the Ottoman Empire and its allies at the end of 1918 raised the possibility of enacting the numerous pledges concerning the punishment of the perpetrators and the rehabilitation of the Armenian survivors. After the Young Turk dictators had fled the country, the new Turkish grand vizier admitted that they had committed such misdeeds "as to make the conscience of mankind shudder forever."<sup>37</sup> United States General James G. Harbord, following an inspection tour of the former Armenian population centers in 1919, reported on the organized

nature of the massacres and concluded: "Mutilation, violation, torture and death have left their haunting memories in a hundred beautiful Armenian valleys, and the traveler in that region is seldom free from the evidence of this most colossal crime of all the ages." <sup>38</sup> The Paris Peace Conference declared that the lands of Armenia would never be returned to Turkish rule, and a Turkish military court-martial tried and sentenced to death *in absentia* Enver, Talaat, Jemal, and Nazim, the notorious organizers of the genocide. No attempt was made to carry out the sentence, however, and thousands of other culprits were neither tried nor even removed from office. Within a few months the judicial proceedings were suspended, and even accused and imprisoned war criminals were freed and sent home. <sup>39</sup>

The release of the perpetrators of genocide signaled a major shift in the political winds. The former Allied Powers, having become bitter rivals over the spoils of war, failed to act in unison in the imposition of peace or in dealing with the stiff resistance of a Turkish nationalist movement. They concurred that the Armenians should be freed and rehabilitated but took no effective measures to achieve that objective. They hoped that the United States would extend a protectorate over the devastated Armenian regions, but the United States was recoiling from its involvement in the World War and turning its back on the League of Nations. Unable to quell the Turkish nationalist movement, which rejected the award of any territory for an Armenian state or even unrestricted return of the Armenian refugees, the Allied Powers agreed to a drastic revision of the unratified Treaty of Sevres and made their peace with the new Turkey. The Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 made no provision for the rehabilitation, restitution, or compensation of Armenian survivors. Western abandonment of the Armenians was so complete that the revised peace treaty included no mention whatsoever of "Armenians" or "Armenia." It was as if the Armenians had never existed in the Ottoman Empire. <sup>40</sup> In Turkey, Armenian place-names were changed, and Armenian cultural monuments were obliterated or allowed to fall into disrepair. Attempts to eliminate the memory of Armenia included change of the geographical expression "Armenian plateau" to "Eastern Anatolia." The plural society of the Ottoman Empire had given way to the single society of the Republic of Turkey.

The dispersed Armenian survivors concentrated their collective energies on refugee and relief resettlement and the creation of a new diaspora infrastructure of cultural, educational, and religious institutions. They knew little of and often intentionally remained aloof from the governmental processes of their host countries, some because they continued to cling to the dream of someday returning to the homeland and others because they deemed it safer for the community not to become involved in local politics and instead to maintain proper relations with whatever group was in power. Embittered by world indifference to the plight of the exiled Armenians, diaspora communities tended to internalize their frustrations, hostility, suffering, and even creative and constructive talents.

During the two decades between World War I and World War II, Armenians commemorated the genocide with requiem services and programs in which they read sympathetic messages from government officials and foreign religious dignitaries. Yet on substantive issues, the Armenians could not make their voice heard. A dispersed people whose only remaining land was locked within Stalin's fortress, it had neither the political nor economic means to counter the growing appreciation and admiration in the West for Mustafa Kemal and his modernizing and secularizing Republic of Turkey. The strategy of Kemal and his successors was to encourage the propagation of the new image of Turkey and to avoid public discussion of the period of the Armenian Genocide. The strategy was aimed at biding time until the Armenian survivors had passed from the scene and their children had acculturated in their host societies.

The Turkish government used the diplomatic and economic channels available to it to prevent activities that might keep alive international memory of the Armenian tragedy. When in 1934 the movie studio of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer bought the film rights to Franz Werfel's celebrated novel, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, depicting the desperate struggle for survival of several Armenian villages near the Mediterranean Sea, the Turkish government immediately interceded with the Department of State, which in turn interceded with MGM and the Motion Picture Association of America. All efforts of the studio to compromise and satisfy Turkish objections were rejected by the Ankara government, which let it be known that production of the film would not only have a detrimental effect on Turkish-American political relations but would also force Turkey to ban the showing of American films and engage in other forms of economic retaliation. The quiet diplomatic pressure was sufficient to force MGM to shelve the project.<sup>41</sup>

By World War II, the Armenian Genocide had virtually become the "forgotten genocide," and it was to become even more remote as millions of new victims were claimed in the conflagration of war and the Holocaust. The Armenians continued to remember their dead, but they were alone.

It was not until 1965 that the politically fragmented Armenian diaspora drew together sufficiently for a united commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. This was paralleled by the first major demonstrations in Soviet Armenia, where discussion, let alone commemoration, of the genocide had been banned by the Soviet regime since the 1920s. The Armenian world, as if spontaneously, burst into frenzied activities aimed at national and international recognition of the genocide and various forms of restitution. Native-born generations of Armenians were able to write and speak as citizens of their host countries and to begin to work the political system in order to secure commemorative resolutions, messages from high-ranking officials, participation of government officials and politicians, and erection of monuments in memory of the victims of the genocide. In Montebello, California, for example, the community drew Governor Ronald Reagan, senators, congressmen, and numerous public officials, together with the United States Marine Band and military honor guards, to the dedication of a martyrs memorial. This was a scene mirrored in other communities and countries as well.

In 1973, the unexpected occurred. An elderly survivor of the genocide assassinated two Turkish consular officers in California, setting off a series of similar acts in various countries for several years. The political violence surprised everyone, most particularly the Armenians who had played the role of exemplary citizens as they strove for acceptance. But the press coverage of the assassinations invariably included reference and description of the Armenian Genocide. This gave Armenians the opportunity to draw attention to the unrequited wrongs of the past while at the same time distancing themselves from the violence. For the Turkish government, however, the renewed attention given the Armenian case was unwelcome. Denouncing Armenian terrorism, the Turks engaged in a new round of denials.<sup>42</sup>

The consolidation of Armenian legal and political action and the manifestation of illegal political violence ripped the Turkish veil of silence and undermined the strategy of avoiding discussion of the Armenian case while enjoying the benefits of the Armenian goods and properties for which no compensation had ever been offered. During the 1970s, therefore, the Ankara government decided to face the lingering stereotypes of the Turks by engaging in a worldwide propaganda campaign not only to denounce the Armenian violence in the present but also to explain Turkish measures against the Armenians in the past in terms of protective measures against Armenian terrorism. On the one hand playing up the strategic geopolitical position of Turkey and its role in the security and defense of the West, the propagandists, on the other hand, sought to demonstrate that there had been no organized persecution of Armenians.

In this effort, the Ankara government and its agencies reprinted or translated anti-Armenian propaganda from the period of World War I and produced crude, illogical, and transparent polemics that could be easily exposed and refuted. From these shoddy beginnings, the new wave of Turkish denial literature became increasingly sophisticated during the decade of the 1980s. This was attributable largely to the input and assistance of sympathetic or professionally hired Americans and Europeans who could write and translate with native language fluency and who understood the accepted form and style of scholarly treatises in the West and the effect of placing the Armenian issue in a relativist and rationalizing context rather than the hitherto unsuccessful approach of absolute denial. By the end of the decade their publications had become slick and polished, inclusive of archival references, notations, and bibliographies. Western scholars and major public relations firms were incorporated into the process.<sup>43</sup>

At the same time, however, the Armenian diaspora continued to organize and learn the use of political processes. In the 1980s, second and third-generation French and American Armenians took the lead in efforts to gain reaffirmation and recognition of the Armenian Genocide and to seek legal remedies to heal the festering wound. They established channels of communication with the governments and legislatures of Europe and America and interacted with human rights associations. While the Armenians were articulating their primary points of concern and making

significant headway in Europe, the political environment in the United States became increasingly charged and even hostile. This was a result of the heightened activity and pressure of the Turkish government and its agencies, the emergence of Turkish associations closely aligned with the Ankara government, and successive American administrations that placed perceived security considerations above respect for the historical record.

### **The Narrative of Power**

That mere commemorative resolutions to honor the memory of the victims of the Armenian Genocide have created crises affecting United States foreign policy in itself points to the narrative of power. The erstwhile participation of army and marine bands and honor guards has been withdrawn in order to appease the Turkish government. During a national gathering in Washington, DC, on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the Armenian Genocide in 1985, the organizers were allowed to hold a memorial service in Arlington National Cemetery only under the guise of a tribute to American war dead. The program was censored and closely monitored by federal authorities. As Armenian-Turkish relations became more confrontational and tense during the 1970s and especially 1980s, the United States government began to equivocate and to take precautions not to allow pro-Armenian expressions to strain Turkish-American relations to a dangerous point. The American retreat went so far that by 1982 the *Bulletin* of the Department of State wrote: "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 genocide against the Armenian people."<sup>44</sup> The announcement drew a sustained response from the Armenian community and from influential voices in Congress, including that of Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill, until the State Department backed down somewhat by declaring that the article in its *Bulletin* did not necessarily represent the official view of the Department.<sup>45</sup> Nonetheless, the damage had been done. No previous American administration had expressed doubt about the truth of the Armenian Genocide.

In the same year that the narrative of power allowed the State Department to question the Armenian Genocide, the Turkish government exerted extraordinary pressure on the Israeli government to prevent discussion of the Armenian Genocide in an international conference on the Holocaust and other genocides to be held in Tel Aviv. The Turkish blackmail, which has been documented in detail, led to withdrawal of official sponsorship of the conference by the Israeli government, Yad Vashem Institute, and Tel Aviv University, and crippled but did not cancel the proceedings.<sup>46</sup> It was clear that the Turkish government was determined to go to great lengths to prevent discussion of the Armenian Genocide at any level. The scenario has since been repeated often, and sometimes the power of intimidation has been sufficient to achieve results.

In a thoughtful essay, Terrence Des Pres has written: "Governments have always required short-term memory, but never more than now. The historical record either enhances or it hinders the ongoing process of propaganda, and the Free World doesn't need ugly events to question its virtue." He adds that in the narrative of power words such as "state security" and "national interest" take on exaggerated meanings given them by the military complex and that truth becomes subordinate to a state which claims for itself the power to lead human destiny. "Truth is at best a reckless element, a sort of wild card in a deck that otherwise is tightly stacked."<sup>47</sup>

During the Reagan administration, commemorative resolutions were introduced in the House of Representatives in 1985 and again in 1987. The resolutions recognized 24 April as a day of man's inhumanity to man with particular reference to the Armenian Genocide. Although half of the House was supportive of the resolutions, the acts went down to defeat on procedural motions after intense debates in which several themes emerged. On the one hand, most opponents rose to speak about the NATO connection, the military connection, and the business connection, but there were also those who contested the truth of the Armenian Genocide, emphasized that there were two sides to every story, and insisted that Congress was not a place to pass judgment on historical debates and that adoption of the resolution would encourage Armenian terrorism and contribute to the destabilization of a vital ally.<sup>48</sup>

What was new about these arguments was their coming straight out of materials produced by the Turkish embassy, the Institute of Turkish Studies, and the Turkish-American Associations, all linked closely with Ankara. The director of the Institute of Turkish Studies in Washington was instrumental in securing the signatures of sixty-nine scholars of Turkic studies in the United States on an open letter to the House of Representatives questioning the propriety of the Congress to act on such matters, asserting that rather than a genocide it seemed that the Armenians had been the victims of "communal warfare," that history should be left to scholars, and that hopefully the Turkish archives would soon be opened to shed light on this sad period during which Armenians and Turks suffered alike.<sup>49</sup> Arguments not used before except by the most active of deniers were now recited in the halls of Congress. It seemed to make little difference that the sixty-nine scholars were made up overwhelmingly of individuals who had no expertise whatsoever on the subject. Des Pres has noted that the effacement of memory is more the achievement of an all-too-wakeful consciousness than it is the result of its weakness and that the fury of the deniers comes from the fact that they must talk themselves out of what everyone else knows to be true before they can try to talk others out of it. And in the narrative of power the United States Executive, with its State Department, Defense Department, and

National Security Council, joined collectively to relieve an allied nation of the responsibility of facing up to its past.

After 1987 many Armenians felt that no more effort should be wasted on commemorative resolutions in Congress. This sentiment increased as the democratic movement in Soviet Armenia began to go sour and a reactive Azerbaijan' nationalism drove thousands of Armenians out of the country and as Soviet Azerbaijan imposed an economic blockade on Armenia. Nonetheless, the Armenian Assembly of America and the Armenian National Committee took the lead in reviving the issue through the Senate. This was preceded by a number of questions made to the two candidates for president. After the intractability of the Reagan administration, the responses of both candidates Dukakis and Bush were encouraging. With several influential Republican Armenian-Americans giving encouragement, future President George Bush responded to the questionnaire as follows:

The United States must acknowledge the attempted genocide of the Armenian people in the last years of the Ottoman Empire, based on the testimony of survivors, scholars, and indeed our own representatives at the time, if we are to insure that such horrors are not repeated. The American people, our government, and certainly the Bush Administration will never allow political pressures to prevent our denunciation of crimes against humanity, and I would join Congress in commemorating the victims of that period.<sup>50</sup>

The declaration came back to haunt the president many times in 1989-90, after Senator Robert Dole introduced a joint resolution to commemorate 24 April 1990 as the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. The wording of the resolution was chosen carefully to note that the Armenian Genocide had taken place before the establishment of the Republic of Turkey and that the present Turkish government was therefore in no way responsible. It was perhaps significant - that Senator Dole sponsored the resolution shortly after he returned from a visit with Secretary of Labor Elizabeth Dole to Soviet Armenia, where they witnessed the ravages of the massive earthquake of December 1988.

Introduction of Senate Resolution 212 in September 1989 elicited an immediate reaction from the Turkish government, which by that time had considerable experience in marshaling support in the Departments of State and Defense, the National Security Council, the business community, and certain academic circles. Scores of American businesses were warned that passage of the resolution would affect future contracts with and opportunities in Turkey, and the full weight of the aerospace industries and many other major corporations was brought to bear on the Senate.

When the judiciary Committee voted to forward the resolution to the floor of the Senate, the Turkish reaction was swift. American aerial operations in Turkey were curtailed, and the Ankara government threatened to take more drastic action if the Senate adopted the resolution. The State Department made a show of how serious the situation was by recalling Ambassador Morton Abramowitz from Ankara for consultations. The Turkish lobbyists and their influential public relations firms intensified efforts to pressure cosponsors of the resolution to withdraw their names to avoid responsibility for results that would seriously jeopardize the security interests of the United States. These forces also got to every major corporation doing business with Turkey to make it known that the significant trade relationship between the two countries would be adversely affected.<sup>51</sup>

While the agencies of the executive branch and Turkish lobby worked to defeat the resolution as if it were a serious threat to Turkey's territorial and political integrity, the proponents of the resolution read a large corpus of materials into *the Congressional Record*. These included statements of Ambassador Henry Morgenthau and other American diplomatic personnel in the Ottoman Empire at the time of the genocide; the testimony of American and foreign eyewitnesses to the systematic destruction of the Armenian population; descriptions of relevant archival holdings in the United States, Great Britain, France Italy, the Vatican, Germany, Austria, and other countries; a resume of past resolutions and presidential statements acknowledging the Armenian man Genocide; an analysis of the arguments of the deniers; an expose of the sixty-nine scholars whose advertisement questioning the genocide was repeatedly recited by opponents of the resolution; previous statements from the Senate floor; quotations from Adolf Hitler and Mustafa Kemal regarding the genocide; the postwar trials of the chief Turkish perpetrators; excerpts of the contemporary world press during the genocide; and an analysis of arguments that minimize the number of Armenians who perished and point to the Armenian "troubles" as actually being insurrection or civil war, and equate Turkish war dead with massacres of Armenians.

The resolution was debated on the floor of the Senate between 20 and 27 February 1990.<sup>52</sup> Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia gave notice that he would filibuster against the resolution and throughout the proceedings organized and led the opposition. Fearing that consideration of the resolution would in fact end with a majority in favor, the opponents chose the filibuster strategy, since a motion for cloture would require three-fifths of the Senate. Nonetheless, during the debate, pages of materials relating to the Armenian Genocide were read into the official record and supporters of the resolution struck hard on the actuality of the genocide, the moral and ethical considerations involved, and the anomaly of the United States being subjected to blackmail by an allied government. They

took care not to implicate the current government of Turkey, but they pointed to its moral obligation to cease and desist from efforts to distort and deny the historical record.

The opponents led by Byrd reiterated time and again geopolitical and military considerations, the impact on business and commerce, and the impropriety of using the word "genocide" to describe the "human tragedy" that affected not only Armenians but all the unfortunate peoples caught up in the strife of World War I. The great majority of opponents professed sympathy for the Armenian suffering but insisted on the primacy of United States security and economic interests. Only Byrd and Senator Malcolm Wallop of Wyoming directly repeated the Turkish arguments of denial, rationalization, and trivialization. Several senators nonetheless did take cover behind the argument that the Ottoman archives had not yet been studied and that it was too early to determine whether or not a genocide had occurred. The White House looked for a way out of the dilemma by indicating that it would not oppose a non-binding concurrent resolution, which would not require presidential action, but Senator Byrd rejected the compromise. Two votes on cloture of the filibuster failed to muster the required three-fifths majority, and after several days of intense debate the matter rested. The Senate, which passes judgment every day on issues of much greater importance, tried to persuade itself that it was not competent to determine whether the Armenian people had been victimized and whether the Senate should join with the descendants of the survivors in commemorating the seventy-fifth anniversary.

In a subsequent development in April 1990, the impact of continued Armenian pressure and of his own conscience was apparently sufficient to prompt President Bush to issue a formal statement on the occasion of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Armenian calamity. Drawing attention to the long, enduring relationship between the United States and the Armenian people, the president noted that their faith, strength, and resilience had withstood the tragic earthquake of 1988 and "most prominently, the terrible massacres suffered in 1915-23 at the hands of the rulers of the Ottoman Empire." While Bush avoided use of the term genocide, he judged the "terrible massacres" to be a "crime against humanity," and he called on all peoples to observe the seventy-fifth anniversary on 24 April as a day of remembrance "for the more than a million Armenian people who were victims."<sup>53</sup> It was a forceful statement that afforded solace to the Armenians and caused grave misgivings to the deniers. Had the statement been issued before or during the Senate debate, the outcome on the commemorative resolution might well have been different. Nonetheless, the Armenians expressed their gratitude to the president, urging him to take the final step by acknowledging that the "terrible massacres" and "crime against humanity" were in fact "genocide."

It is fitting to conclude with the insightful summons of Terrence Des Pres:

Milan Kundera, the exiled Czech novelist, has written that "the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting." This single remark, in my view, sums up the human predicament today and puts the burden of responsibility exactly where it falls - on writers, and now more than ever, on scholars.... National catastrophes can be survived if (and perhaps only if) those to whom disaster happens can recover themselves through knowing the truth of their suffering. Great powers, on the other hand, would vanquish not only the peoples they subjugate but also the cultural mechanisms that would sustain vital memory of historical crimes.... When modern states make way for geopolitical power plays, they are not above removing everything - in nations, cultures, homelands - in their path. Great powers regularly demolish other peoples' claims to dignity and place, and sometimes, as we know, the outcome is genocide. In a very real sense, therefore, Kundera is right; against historical crimes we fight as best we can, and a cardinal part of this engagement is "the struggle of memory against forgetting."

---

## Notes

1. For bibliographies on the Armenian Genocide, see Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Armenian Holocaust: A Bibliography Relating to the Deportations, Massacres, and Dispersion of the Armenian People, 1915-1923* (Cambridge, MA: Armenian Heritage Press, 1980). See also Richard G. Hovannisian, "The Armenian Genocide," and Vahakn N. Dadrian, "Documentation of the Armenian Genocide in Turkish Sources," in *Genocide: A Critical Bibliographic Review*, ed. Israel W. Charny, 2 vols. (London: Mansell Publishing Ltd., 1988, and New York: Facts on File, 1988-1991), 1:89-115 [Hovannisian], 2:86-138 [Dadrian]; Hamo Vassilian, ed., *The Armenian Genocide: A Comprehensive Bibliography and Library Resource Guide* (Glendale, CA: Armenian Reference Books Co., 1992).
2. See Richard G. Hovannisian, "The Allies and Armenia, 1915-18," *Journal of Contemporary History* 3 (January 1968): 145-55.
3. See, for example, Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, *The History and Sociology of Genocide: Analyses and Case Studies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 3-53; Leo Kuper, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982), 19-39; Robert F. Melson, *Revolution and Genocide: On the Origins of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 22-30.
4. Melson, *Revolution and Genocide*, 33-39; Vahakn N. Dadrian, "The Convergent Aspects of the Armenian and Jewish Cases of Genocide: A Reinterpretation of the Concept of Holocaust," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 3, no. 2 (1988): 151-70; Pierre Papazian, "A 'Unique Uniqueness'?" *Midstream* 39, no. 4 (April 1984), 14-25; Gregory F. Goekjian, "Genocide and Historical Desire," *Semiotica* 83, no. 3/4 (1991): 211-25; Yehuda Bauer, "Is the Holocaust Explicable?" in *Remembering for the Future*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1988), 1167-75; Michael R. Marrus, "Recent Trends in the Historicity of the Holocaust," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 3, no. 3 (1988): 257-65; see also Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The Holocaust and the Historians* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).

5. See, for example, Kuper, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century*, 22-39; and Chalk and Jonassohn, *The History and Sociology of Genocide*, 12-23.
6. See Appendix I. The entire text of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide is also included in Kuper, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century*, 210-14, and Chalk and Jonassohn, *The History and Sociology of Genocide*, 44-49.
7. See Robert Melson, "Revolutionary Genocide: On the Causes of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 and the Holocaust," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 4, no. 2 (1989): 161-74; Vahakn N. Dadrian, "Genocide as a Problem of National and International Law: The World War I Armenian Case and Its Contemporary Legal Ramifications," *Yale Journal of International Law* 14, no. 2 (1989): 221-334, and by the same author, "Some Determinants of Genocidal Violence in Intergroup Conflicts-With Particular Reference to the Armenian and Jewish Cases," *Sociologus* 12, no. 2 (1976): 129-49.
8. For this period, see Richard G. Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence, 1918* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967).
9. See Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, vols. 1-2 (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1971, 1982), and "Caucasian Armenia between Imperial and Soviet Rule: The Interlude of National Independence," in *Transcaucasia: Nationalism and Social Change*, ed. Ronald G. Suny (Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1983), 259-92.
10. See Mary Kilbourne Matossian, *The Impact of Soviet Policies in Armenia* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1962); Ronald Grigor Suny, *Armenia in the Twentieth Century* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 35-83; Claire Mouradian, *De Staline à Gorbatchev: Histoire d'une république soviétique: l'Arménie* (Paris: Editions Ramsay, 1990).
11. Christopher J. Walker, *Armenia and Karabagh* (London: Minority Rights Publication, 1991); Gerard J. Libaridian, ed., *The Karabagh File*, (Cambridge, MA: Zoryan Institute, 1988); Richard G. Hovannisian, "Nationalist Ferment in Armenia," *Freedom at Issue*, no. 105 (November-December 1988): 29-35.
12. Mouradian, *L'Arménie*, 405-64; Nora Dudwick, "The Karabagh Movement: An Old Scenario Gets Rewritten," *Armenian Review* 42, no. 3 (1989): 63-70; Samvel Shahmuratian, ed., *The Karabagh Tragedy: Pogroms against Armenians in Soviet Azerbaijan* (New Rochelle, NY: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1990),
13. See, for example, Aleksandr Miasnikian State Library, *Blokada: Khronika*, ed. H. Ts. Liloyan and others, 2 vols. (Erevan: "Luis," 1990).
14. See, for example, Yuri Rost, *Armenian Tragedy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990).
15. See, for example, Sirarpie Der Nersessian, *The Armenians* (New York and Washington: Praeger, 1970); Ara Baliozian, *The Armenians: Their History & Culture* (New York: Ararat Press, 1980).

16. See Kevork B. Bardakjian, "The Rise of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople," in **Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Society**, ed. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, vol. I (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1982), 89-100; Christopher. J. Walker, *Armenia: Survival of a Nation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), 85-89.
17. Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963); Edouard Engelhardt, *La Turquie et le tanzimat: Ou, Histoire des réformes dans l'empire Ottoman depuis 1826 jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: Cotillon, 1882-84), 2 vols.; Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 73-126.
18. See A. O. Sarkissian, *History of the Armenian Question to 1885* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1938); Walker, *Armenia: Survival a Nation*, 85-108.
19. Walker, *Armenia: Survival of a Nation*, 108-25; Great Britain, Parliament, House of Commons, Sessional Papers, *Correspondence Respecting the Conference at Constantinople and the Affairs of Turkey, 1876-1877*, vol. 91, Turkey no. 2, C. 1641 (1876-77); Sessional Papers, *Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Turkey, vol. 91, Turkey no. 15, C. 1738* (1877), and vol. 92, Turkey no. 25, C. 1806 (1877). See also Sir Edwin Pears, *Life of Abdul Humid* (London: Constable & Co., 1917), 17-123.
20. Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: The Development of Armenian Political Parties through the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963).
21. Johannes Lepsius, *Armenia and Europe: An Indictment* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1897); Great Britain, Sessional Papers, vol. 109, Turkey no. 1, C. 7894, (1895); vol. 95, Turkey no. 1, C. 7923, Turkey no. 2, C. 7927, vol. 96, Turkey no. 6, C. 8108, Turkey no. 8, C. 8273 (1896); vol. 10 1, Turkey no. 3, C. 8305 (1897); France, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Documents diplomatiques: Affaires arméniennes: Projets de réformes dans l'empire Ottoman, 1893-1897, and *Supplément, 1895-1896* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1897); Melson, *Revolution and Genocide*, 41-69; Walker, *Armenia: Survival of a Nation*, 133-74; Pears, *Abdul Hamid*, 214-68.
22. Lord [John Patrick Douglas Balfour] Kinross, *The Ottoman Centuries: The Rise and Fall of the Turkish Empire* (New York: William Morrow, 1977), 559-60.
23. Ernest E. Ramsaur, Jr., *The Young Turks* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), 124-39; Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 1-13; Charles R. Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1909), 55-73.
24. Walker, *Armenia: Survival of a Nation*, 182-89; Duckett Z. Ferriman, *The Young Turks and the Truth about the Holocaust at Adana in Asia Minor, during April, 1919* (London, 1913); M. Seropian, *Les Vêpres ciliciennes: Les responsabilités, faits et documents* (Alexandria: Della Roca, 1909); Georges Brèzol, *Les Turcs ont passé là: Recueil de documents sur les massacres d'Adana en 1909* (Paris: L'Auteur, 1911).

25. Ahmad, *Young Turks*, 92-120; Wilhelm Feldmann, *Kriegstage in Konstantinopel* (Strassburg: K. J. Trubner, 1913), 106-71.
26. Uriel Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism: The Life and Teachings of Ziya Gokalp* (London: Luzac, 1950), 124. See also Robert Melson, "A Critical Inquiry into the Armenian Genocide of 1915," in *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New Brunswick, NJ, and Oxford: Transaction Books, 1986), 75-78.
27. See James J. Reid, "Total War, the Annihilation Ethic, and the Armenian Genocide, 1870-1918," in *The Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, Ethics*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (London: Macmillan; and New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 21-52. For the German-Turkish alliance and the question of Germany's complicity in the Armenian Genocide, see Christoph Dinkel, "German Officers and the Armenian Genocide," *Armenian Review* 44, no. 1 (1991): 77-133; Ulrich Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 1914-1918* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), esp. 167-270.
28. Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, 15-61; Carl Mühlmann, *Das deutsch-türkische Waffenbündnis im Weltkrieg* (Leipzig: Koehler and Amelang, 1940), 15-16; Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, 40-42.
29. Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide* (New York: Free Press, 1979), 29-30.
30. Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, 45-46; Walker, *Armenia: Survival of a Nation*, 198-200; W. E. D. Allen and Paul Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 240-84; Trumbull Higgins, *Winston Churchill and the Dardanelles* (New York: Macmillan, 1963).
31. See, for example, Great Britain, Parliament, *The Treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire: Documents Presented to Viscount Grey of Fallodon, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, pref. Viscount James Bryce (London: Sir Joseph Causton and Sons, 1916); Leo Kuper, "The Turkish Genocide of Armenians, 1915-1917," in Hovannisian, *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective*, 43-59; Walker, *Armenia: Survival of a Nation*, 200-240.
32. For first-hand accounts relating to the women and children, see Donald E. Miller and Lorna Touryan Miller, "Women and Children of the Armenian Genocide," in Hovannisian, *The Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, Ethics*, 152-72, and for the reports of American missionaries, see, in the same volume, Suzanne Elizabeth Moranian, "Bearing Witness: The Missionary Archives as Evidence of the Armenian Genocide," 103-28.
33. *Treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire*, 291-92.
34. United Nations, ECOSOC, Commission on Human Rights, Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities (38th sess.), UN Doc. E/CN.4/sub.2/1985/SR.36 (1985) (Item 57) at 7.

35. See Richard G. Hovannisian, "The Question of Altruism during the Armenian Genocide of 1915," in *Embracing the Other: Philosophical, Psychological, and Historical Perspectives on Altruism*, ed. Pearl M. Oliner, Samuel P. Oliner, and others (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 282-305.
36. Vahakn N. Dadrian, "The Structural-Functional Components of Genocide," in *Victimology*, ed. 1. Drakpin and E. Viano, 3 (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1974): 123-35, and "The Common Features of the Armenian and Jewish Cases of Genocide," 4 (1975): 99-120; (Chalk and Jonassohn, *The History and Sociology of Genocide*, 27-32. See also Kuper, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century*, 40-100 *passim*,
37. U.S. Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1919: The Paris Peace Conference*, 4 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1943), 509.
38. U.S. Congress, *Conditions in the Near East: Report of the American Military Mission to Armenia*, prepared by General James G. Harbord, 66th Cong., 2d sess., Senate Doc. 266 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1920), 7.
39. Melson, *Revolution and Genocide*, 148-52; and the following studies of Vahakn N. Dadrian: "The Documentation of the World War I Armenian Massacres in the Proceedings of the Turkish Military Tribunal," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 23, no. 4 (1991): 549-76; "A Textual Analysis of the Key Indictment of the Turkish Military Tribunal Investigating the Armenian Genocide," *Armenian Review* 44, no. 1 (1991): 1-36; "Genocide as a Problem of National and International Law," 281-310. The transcripts of the trials were printed in supplements of the Istanbul journal *Tekvim-i Vekayi*, relevant portions of which have been translated into Armenian by A. H. Papazian, *Hayeri tseghaspanutiune est Erit-Turkeri datavarutian pastatgheri* (The genocide of the Armenians according to the documents from the trials of the Young Turks) (Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences, 1988).
40. France, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, *Recueil des actes de la Conference de Lausanne*, 6 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1923); Great Britain, Parliament, Sessional Papers, *Lausanne Conference on Near Eastern Affairs: Records of Proceedings and Draft Terms of Peace*, Turkey no. 1, Cmd. 1814 (1923), and *British and Foreign State Papers*, vol. 117 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1926), 543-639; Laurence Evans, *United States Policy and the Partition of Turkey, 1914-1924* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), 323-417.
41. Department of State General Records, Record Group 59, 811.4061 *Musa Dagh*, National Archives, Washington, DC. See also Roger R. Trask, *The United States Response to Turkish Nationalism and Reform, 1914-1939* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), 90-91.
42. See, for example, *International Terrorism and the Drug Connection*, pub. of the Press, Information and Public Relations Office, Ankara University (Ankara: Ankara University Press, 1984). See also Gerard Chaliand and Yves Ternon, *The Armenians: From Genocide to Resistance* (London: Zed Press, 1983), 1-11; Anat Kurz and Ariel Merari, *ASALA: Irrational Terror or Political Tool* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Post Press; and Boulder, CO: Westview Press,

1985); Khachig Tololyan, "Terrorism in Modern Armenian Political Culture," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 4, no. 2 (1992): 8-22.

43. For studies on the denial, rationalization, and trivialization of the Armenian Genocide, see the following contributions in Hovannisian, *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective*: Marjorie Housepian Dobkin, "What Genocide? What Holocaust? News from Turkey, 1915-1923: A Case Study," 97-101; Richard G. Hovannisian, "The Armenian Genocide and Patterns of Denial," 111-33; Vigen Guroian, "Collective Responsibility and Official Excuse Making: The Case of the Turkish Genocide of the Armenians," 135-52. See also Roger W. Smith, "Genocide and Denial: The Armenian Case and Its Implications," *Armenian Review* 42, no. 1 (1989): 1-38.

44. See Andrew Corsun, "Armenian Terrorism: A Profile," *Department of State Bulletin* 82 (August 1982): 31-35.

45. *Department of State Bulletin* 82 (September 1982): contents page.

46. See Israel W. Charny, "The Conference Crisis: The Turks, Armenians and the Jews," *International Conference on the Holocaust and Genocide*, Book 1, *The Conference Program and Crisis* (Tel Aviv: Institute on International Conference of the Holocaust and Genocide, 1983), 269-330.

47. See Terrence Des Pres, "On Governing Narratives: The Turkish-Armenian Case," *Yale Review* 75, no. 4 (1986): 517-32.

48. Vigen Guroian, "Post-Holocaust Political Morality: The Litmus of Bitburg and the Armenian Genocide Resolution," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 3, no. 3 (1988): 305-22. See also *Congressional Record*, vol. 131, 99th Cong., 1st sess., 1192 1-47, and vol. 133, 100th Cong., 1st session., 7315-35.

49. *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, 19 May 1985.

50. *Congressional Report Card, 100th Congress (1987-1988) and Presidential Candidate Questionnaire* (Washington, DC: Armenian Assembly of America, 1988).

51. See Vigen Guroian, "The Politics and Morality of Genocide," in Hovannisian, *The Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, Ethics*, 311-39.

52. See *Congressional Record*, vol. 136, 101st Cong., 2d sess., 1208-36, 1312-57, 1416-88, 1692-1716, 1731-32.

53. The White House, Presidential Statement, 21 April 1990.

54. Terrence Des Pres, "Introduction: Remembering Armenia," in Hovannisian, *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective*, 10- 11.

<http://users.ihost.biz/armgeno/articles/HovannisianArticle2-1.htm>