

Teaching the Armenian Genocide in the Light of Turkish Denials

This monograph is based on lectures at Harvard University and San Francisco, 2001/2002
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Continued denial of the Armenian Genocide has extraordinary significance, not only for Armenians but also because of other perpetrators who appeared after World War I. For denial is a function of impunity, and those who escape punishment become defiant, emboldened in rationalizing the crime, and through political contagion, they embolden other potential perpetrators. The denial of the Armenian Genocide is also important because denial can serve to hinder access to documentation when deniers withhold or try to destroy evidence. A scholar of the Armenian Genocide, therefore, must not only be a scholar but also a kind of detective.

It must first be noted that the Armenian Genocide has a number of significant characteristics:

(1) Armenians were victimized in their own ancestral territories; (2) religion was a powerful instrument used to incite the masses; (3) there was massive, popular participation in the atrocities; (4) most of the perpetrators deliberately used blunt instruments. (to quote Ambassador Morgenthau: "to save shell and powder," and thereby protract the agony of the dying victims, the perpetrators used instead blunt instruments to avoid wasting bullets.)

But a key aspect of the Armenian Genocide which deserves special attention is the persistent denial of what Arnold Toynbee called a "gigantic crime that devastated the Near East in 1915." Specifically, denial of the Armenian Genocide has three key elements: (1) denial of the crime, (2) denial of the victims, (3) denial to third parties the right to engage in research and render a judgment on the crime.

Therefore, let us outline the specific elements of the denial because, before a crime of such magnitude as the Armenian Genocide can be documented, one has to overcome each specific element of the denial.

Today the Turkish Government claims:

1. That Armenians were not subjected to wholesale massacres, and admits only that they were subjected to deportation.
2. That only a segment of the Armenian population, specifically in the war zones in the eastern provinces, were deported.
3. That Armenians provoked Turkish authorities to take drastic measures that ended in tragedy, and that the provocation came from the Armenian side.
4. That if atrocities took place, they were reciprocal, that Armenians killed Turks, Turks killed Armenians.
5. That it was a civil war.

THE ARGUMENT OF A “CIVIL WAR”

Because of the brevity of time, one cannot deal with all the specifics of this denial but it is important to focus briefly on the argument of a “civil war” because it is persistent and terribly important. There are today many Turkophile historians, Turkish sympathizers, and other deniers, who continue to insist that the Armenian Genocide was simply a "civil war." By any definition, "civil war" means the collapse of central authority where factions fight with one another in the absence of a central authority. Let us see if this was the case during World War I in the Ottoman Empire. But first let me briefly describe the actions taken by Ottoman authorities before embarking on the genocide which were the key preparatory stages for the Armenian Genocide:

First, several months before embarking upon the Armenian Genocide, the Young Turk Ottoman authorities dissolved the Ottoman parliament. Talât Pasa in his post-war memoirs says the reason for this was that he wanted to forestall potential opposition in his parliament to the actions he had in mind as some Turks might have objected; he wanted total freedom and control. This is exactly what happened to the Jews in Germany before the Holocaust was initiated. The Reichstag was destroyed and the entire authority was transferred to the executive branch of government.

Second, these same authorities declared martial law. Martial law involves total control of movement, of censorship, control of the press and all communications, thus isolating provinces and communities from each other. This allowed for people to be arrested at will, regions to be cut off from each other. With martial law came also the threat of swift and severe punishment, and, of course, the secret service was mobilized.

In other words, not only were Young Turk Ottoman authorities in full control by **decree of martial law** but they had also consolidated power to run the affairs of the Ottoman Empire. But the most important reason why the "civil war" argument fails is that on August 2, 1914, three days before World War I broke out, Ottoman authorities declared general mobilization, calling all adult male Armenians, between 20 and 45 years of age for conscription into the Ottoman army. Most Armenian soldiers, however, were to be soon segregated, disarmed in stages, and later converted to “labor battalions” as early as January 1915, after which most of them were killed in groups. According to Vice Marshall Pomiankowski, Austro - Hungary's military plenipotentiary, who throughout the war was attached to Ottoman General Headquarters, the Young Turk regime first liquidated the able-bodied Armenian men "in order to render defenseless the rest of the population” which he said, “laid the ground for their annihilation.”¹

One can only imagine the terror of the remaining Armenian population, consisting mainly of old men, women and children, a population very much aware of the Adana massacres of 1909, many of whom could still remember the harrowing massacres of 1894-96. It is the height of absurdity that one is asked to imagine that under these circumstances a collection of defenseless old men, women, and children would even dare to think of confronting the Ottoman army, the gendarmerie, or fully armed Muslims throughout the empire. (Understandably, this should not be confounded with incidents of a limited number of Armenian uprisings that were strictly defensive in nature and which were improvised, desperate last-ditch efforts to avert ultimate annihilation.)

¹ Joseph Pomiankowski, *Der Zusammenbruch des Osmanischen Reiches (The Collapse of the Ottoman Empire)* Graz, Austria, 1969, p. 160.

So where in this argument of “civil war,” could the logistics of battle come from, or leadership, or weapons? Where is the command and control system of this terror-stricken population, fearful of simply surviving the war? The argument that it was a "civil war" must be seen on its face for what it truly is, absurd. And because it is so absurd, a number of Turkish historians now advise their colleagues not to use this argument because it only serves to undermine their position. Any application of simple logic would reject this argument out of hand.

But it is important to note that if denial is persistent, if denial is truculent, one can only counter denial with documentation. And documentation has to meet the specifics of the problem at hand. I submit that documentation of the Armenian Genocide in the light of persistent denial requires a specific methodology. It cannot be simple documentation. It has to be documentation of a special kind, one that is so overwhelming that it renders the denialist arguments irrelevant.

I call this kind of documentation—using my definition —"compelling evidence." Not simply “evidence” but “compelling evidence” is what is needed.

What are the specific elements of Compelling Evidence?

THERE ARE FOUR ELEMENTS TO COMPELLING EVIDENCE:

1. **Unimpeachable.**

The evidence has to be reliable. By this is meant that the source has to be more or less **unimpeachable**. To illustrate the point: American Consul Leslie Davis from Kharpert graphically describes the atrocities in Kharpert province. When investigating the reports of massacres he took along a Turk to be his guide, and it was this Moslem Turk who showed him all the spots, all the sites of atrocities while providing graphic details of the events. To me, this is **reliable**. I would be skeptical if his guide and informant were an Armenian. But here is authentic Turkish evidence supplied to an American consul. That I consider to be adequately reliable, and therefore, **unimpeachable** .

2. **Explicitness.**

The second element in my definition of compelling evidence is what I call "**explicitness**." Was it deportation or was it the destruction of the deportee population? My research shows categorically that the deportation was merely a cover with the intended goal of destroying the deportee population.

3. **Incontestability.**

The third element in my definition of compelling evidence is "**incontestability**." Incontestability applies primarily to official documents that are authentic and here I will briefly cite some official German, Austrian and Turkish documents which illustrate the incontestability of this category of documentary evidence.

4. **Verifiability**

And finally, in my definition of compelling evidence, the fourth element is "**verifiability**." If a point of fact is made showing a reference to a document, anyone should be able to go to the source of that document, verify its existence and its content. That is called **verifiability**.

Therefore, overcoming denials of the Armenian Genocide requires that evidence be compelling in terms of the four elements just described. So the question arises, given the present conditions, how can compelling evidence be located, secured, and obtained? I use a particular methodology for this purpose, which I call the “exclusion/inclusion paradigm.”

Exclusion/Inclusion Paradigm

Documentation from Turkey's WWI Enemies.

I exclude from my research all evidence, all data, that may one way or another be associated with the enemies of the Ottoman Empire during World War I. By this definition, I avoid documents emanating from British archives, from French archives, and from Russian archives. All these three countries were enemies of the Ottoman Empire. Not that such documents are devoid of any value. On the contrary, the British archives are full of authentic documentation. But because they emanate from enemies of the Ottoman Empire, they invite doubt and entitle deniers to inject an element of doubt, saying that this can be 'enemy propaganda.'

Armenian Survivor Accounts

The same applies, to some extent, to what I call "Armenian survivor accounts." Here again, some Armenian survivor accounts, specifically in the period of the 1920s, 30s, and 40s represent powerful documentation that is first hand, and fresh in the aftermath of the Genocide, not the recent surveys of 80 or 90-year-old Armenians, whose memories are dim, who tend to mix reality with fantasy, embellish, or become hostage to selective memory, et cetera. None of these conditions of defective recall are present in the massive volume of Armenian survivor accounts produced in the decades immediately after the end of the WWI that are still awaiting translation and analysis. Some day, when there is a vibrant and viable Armenian republic with a resource-rich academy, young Armenian scholars will focus more on this data and less on the survivor accounts of the last two decades. So, I exclude from this documentation Armenian survivor accounts as well - again, not that I am diminishing their value, but to deny the deniers the argument that this is "victim bias," although it is true, more often than not, that victims are prone to bias. This is a universal condition. So what is left to include after this **exclusionary procedure?** What can I include to produce **compelling** evidence?

There are two classes of documentation that meet the requirement of "compelling evidence."

1. One includes the archives of the allies of the Ottoman Empire from World War I: Imperial Germany and Imperial Austria-Hungary.

I have been to the German archives in Bonn (now transferred to Berlin) 13 times in the last 20 years and have collected hundreds of German documents, detailing graphically, day in and day out, the atrocities taking place in the interior of Turkey during World War I. These were produced by German officials, consuls, vice consuls, military officers, et cetera. And the same is true with Austria-Hungary.

It is inconceivable that a military and political ally, during a consuming global war, would try to discredit another ally. On the contrary, German and Austrian officials went out of their way for a long time after the genocide was initiated to protect the reputation of Turkey. At first they expressed doubts concerning the massacres until they were completely inundated with reports containing massive evidence by the middle of June 1915, that all the measures against the Armenians were not just ordinary mass deportations.

When you read German documents again and again, one word used repeatedly by different German ambassadors is the German word *Ausrottung*, which is the German word for "extermination." The most important reason why German and Austrian documents are *compelling evidence* is that they were not intended for public consumption and were wartime reports for internal use only. This underscores their significance while affirming their authenticity. They were reports from subordinate officers to their superiors, of events transpiring in their districts in the Ottoman Empire.

2. The second category of documents I use are authentic **Turkish documents**. On the one hand, I have said that the Turkish government denies it is withholding documents, or that it has destroyed documents, which is true. But how can one then explain the existence of valid Ottoman-Turkish documents? The fact is that no matter how meticulously one tries to destroy evidence, no matter how careful one is, for a crime of such scope as the Armenian Genocide, it is practically impossible to destroy every piece of evidence. Invariably, some documents survive. And these are the documents that I have and do use in my research.

What kind of documents are they? There are three sub-classes of such surviving Ottoman documents.

I. Documents of the Turkish Military Tribunal.

When Turkey at the end of October 1918 was defeated and asked for a suspension of hostilities, the victorious allies - France, Britain, and Italy - stipulated, among other things, a condition to postwar Turkish authorities. They said, "Unless you prosecute and punish the authors of the Armenian deportations and massacres, the conditions of the impending peace will be very severe and harsh." In part to accommodate the victorious allies and to forestall harsh reprisals at the peace conference, successive postwar Turkish governments established court-martials in Istanbul, Turkey.

Attached to these court-martials was an inquiry commission, invested with extraordinary powers of subpoena, arrest, et cetera, called the **Mazhar Inquiry Commission**. For about seven weeks, the Mazhar Inquiry Commission secured authentic official Ottoman documents from many provinces of Ottoman Turkey. From Ankara province alone, they acquired 42 documents, which mainly involved correspondence between two military commanders. One of them, Colonel Recayi, was the acting commander of the Fifth Army Corps stationed in Ankara, and the other, Colonel Sahabeddin, the acting commander of the 15th division in Kayseri. The correspondence mainly involved accounts relating the process of liquidation of the province's Armenians.

One example of this follows: The military commander of Bogazlzyan, a district in Ankara province, sends a cipher telegram to his superior in Ankara, Colonel Recayi. He says, "Today we dispatched so many Armenians to their destination." In Turkish, *Müretteblerine Sevk*. Colonel Recayi, pretending not to understand, wires back saying, "What do you mean, 'dispatched to their destination?' " The answer comes within an hour: 'They were killed off!' (*Katledildiler*). The Military Tribunal introduced several such documents in the court-martial proceedings.

Deniers and others try to diminish the significance of the court-martials, calling them "kangaroo courts." Why were they not kangaroo courts? For the simple reason that Ottoman prosecutors went out of their way to disregard Armenian survivor testimony so as to render their verdicts as solid as possible. The bulk of oral testimonies was discounted for this reason. That is what happened in Nuremberg as well. As in Nuremberg, so in Istanbul, most verdicts were predicated, not upon witness testimony, but upon official and authenticated documents of wartime provenance.

Why and how were the documents authenticated? As stipulated by the court-martial, before a document could be introduced as an exhibit, Ottoman Interior Ministry officials were asked to authenticate them. After doing so, the top of each document was stamped, "It conforms to the original" (*Aslina Muafikdir*). So, the Court-Martial material consists of wartime documents that have nothing to do with postwar politics, as implied by some deniers. These then are a few examples of the military tribunal's evidence as submitted:

II: Parliamentary debates in the Ottoman Parliament

For about seven weeks - October, November, December 1918 - in both chambers of the Ottoman parliament - the senate and the lower house - debates took place on the Armenian deportations and massacres, and these were documented. Several deputies came to confess, to confess the crime of massacres against the Armenians. I will give you **five examples** of how shattering they are in the face of all those who still persist in denying the Armenian Genocide. These are official declarations in the postwar Ottoman parliament by Ottoman deputies and Ottoman senators.

1. Statement of Ahmed Riza:

On October 19, 1918, on the first day of the opening of the Ottoman senate, the president of the Ottoman Senate, **Ahmed Riza**, a former Young Turk leader himself, made this declaration. He said, "We Turks savagely killed off the Armenians." He used the Turkish word *vahsiyane*. This is the president of the Ottoman senate, not only admitting the killing of the Armenians, but using the adjective "fiendishly, savagely."

A veteran and retired general of the Ottoman army in subsequent sitting of the parliament challenged him, saying "How dare you mention only Turkish atrocities but ignore Armenian atrocities against the Turks?" Ahmed Riza gave an answer, which further confirms the nature of the Armenian Genocide as a historical fact. He said, "Yes, we know that Armenians, out of vendetta, killed some Turks These were people who saw their parents had vanished and they were vindictive and they killed. But Armenians were not killed en masse by individual Turks; they were killed wholesale by the official policy of the central government of the Ottoman empire." He used the Turkish word *resmi*, which means "official." In other words, he said that Armenians were obliterated by the decision of the central authorities. That is a very significant statement.

2. Statement of Resid Akif:

On November 21, 1918, in the same senate, a most remarkable revelation was made by another senator, Resid Akif. He was an Ottoman statesman and on the day he made this declaration he said: "I was a member of the first postwar Ottoman government, and one day in my office, I came across two types of documents. One was the official order of the interior minister, Talaat, ordering the deportation of the Armenians in which, as we know from the contents of some of these documents, he is telling his subordinates, 'Protect the Armenian deportee convoys. Give them olives and bread... .' But simultaneously with this was an informal order sent from Constantinople, issued by the Central Committee of the Ittihad party." [i.e. the CUP.] **Akif** said: "The order was simple: 'As soon as the Armenian convoys leave their villages and towns and cities, proceed with the execution of the mission.'" Akif Pasa stated that "the mission of these criminals was to attack the convoys and massacre the population." This is the testimony of Akif Pasa, a high-ranking and distinguished Ottoman statesman.

3. Statement of Hafiz Mehmed:

And finally, let me give you one more example of official Turkish testimony in the Ottoman Parliament. On December 11, 1918, the deputy of the province of Trabzon, Hafiz Mehmed, a lawyer by profession, made this declaration. He said, "I, Hafiz Mehmed, personally saw with my own eyes in the port city of Ordu on the Black Sea, how one night Armenian women and children were being brought and herded onto barges, taken to the high seas then drowned, after which the barges would return empty." He added that massive drowning operations took place in the various

port cities of that Black Sea littoral on the order of the governor general of Trabson province. Here is a Turkish deputy admitting this remarkable crime in the Ottoman parliament. These statements are from the parliamentary debates.

Then of course we have the **Fifth Inquiry Commission**, or *Besinci Sube Tahkikat Komisyonu*, which is very significant because the parliament wanted a legislative investigation, independent from the executive and the judiciary, whose venue was the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies. So they created their own inquiry commission, as a result of which all members of the two wartime cabinets were brought in and interrogated in official hearings.

4. Statement of Said Halim Pasa:

During those hearings, remarkable admissions were made, one of them by Said Halim Pasa, the wartime grand vizier, which corresponds to the position of prime minister, wherein he said: "The Turkish government, my cabinet, gave orders for deportation only, but the order for deportation was transformed into operations for killing which we never agreed upon." He declared plainly in hearings that the order of deportation was transformed into an order of killing by dubious organizations, and he mentioned the Special Organization, the *Teskilati Mahsusa*.

5. Statement of Ibrahim:

The wartime minister of justice, Ibrahim, made an equally remarkable revelation. He said, "I was pressured by War Minister Enver to release from the prisons of the Ottoman Empire criminals for patriotic duty... I advised him that the Ottoman constitution, Ottoman law, prohibits convicts from being employed as soldiers. I was pressured, and a substantial number of them (*mühim bin yeküna balig*) then were released They were used for massacre duty against the Armenians."

These are but a few examples of the litany of other confessions made during these hearings. So here we have a corpus of documentary evidence culled from the transcripts of the Ottoman-Turkish court-martials, parliamentary debates, and the inquiry commission. But the most important fact is that they are authenticated Turkish documents.

A few brief comments about the German documents. Every German ambassador, and there were five of them, Wangenheim, Hohenlohe, Metternich, Kühlmann and Bernstorff - all of them regularly reported to Berlin that the Christian minority in the Ottoman Empire, under the guise of deportation, was being exterminated under the most fiendish conditions. Dozens of such documents emanating from German ambassadors are now deposited in the German archives. And the same is true with the Austrian archives.

[Note: many of these documents from the German Foreign Office during this period are now available in English on the web at: <http://www.armenocide.de/armenocide/armgende.nsf> - ed.]

Now, having these two classes of documents, German and Austrian on the one hand, and Turkish on the other, are an ensemble I consider eminently qualifying for my criterion of **compelling evidence**. On the basis of this, I would like to reconstruct very briefly the Armenian Genocide, because, as a rule, perpetrators will not volunteer to provide blueprints of how they conducted a given genocide. We have to reconstruct it on the basis of acquired evidence which is, as I have said, compelling evidence. On the basis of this, there are **four determinants** of the Armenian Genocide requiring special attention for research and study: premeditation, intent, organization, and execution. Let me briefly describe these.

Premeditation.

In all systems of criminal justice, the most severe penalties are reserved for premeditated crimes. Because there is prior deliberation, the person must be aware of the consequences. There is significant evidence that the Armenian Genocide was not - and I emphasize the word - not an aberration of World War I.

Even Benjamin Whitaker, the British member of the UN Sub-commission on Human Rights, in acknowledging the Armenian Genocide on behalf of that sub-commission, in order to placate the Turks, to assuage Turkish pride, said, "Oh, the Turks lost control, it was a wartime condition." In other words, the genocide was a crime of passion. I am afraid he is quite wrong. There is ample evidence that the Armenian Genocide was a premeditated crime, and I would like to adduce here, very briefly, some documentary evidence to illustrate this.

Vice Marshal Pomiankowski, the Austrian military attaché attached to Ottoman headquarters throughout World War I, who was on duty in Turkey for ten years, i.e., from 1908 to 1918, said that during his duty in the Ottoman headquarters, he was told several times by Turkish officers and intellectuals that many of them considered previous sultans very deficient in their treatment of the Christian and non-Muslim minorities. They told him that these sultans should have forced non-Muslims to embrace Islam, and failing to do so, they should have exterminated them. They told him there that there is now a precious opportunity to rectify the mistakes of past sultans. Pomiankowski therefore concluded that the annihilative treatment of the Armenians during the war was in fact a function of this recognition of the mistakes of past sultans, that the Armenians and Greeks should either be forced to embrace Islam or be destroyed.

I think the most devastating document about premeditation comes from the German Colonel Stange. He was the only high-ranking German officer in charge of a special organization detachment. Most of his charges were convicts released from prisons. On August 23, 1915, Colonel Stange prepared a lengthy report 16 legal-sized pages, (of which I have a copy in the original German) to send to Marshal Liman von Sanders, the head of the German Military Mission to Turkey.

In the report he says that he regrets to inform Marshal von Sanders that "the Turkish government is misleading our government in Berlin regarding the case of the Armenians." In that lengthy document, Stange explicitly states that the decision to eradicate the Armenians during the war was made a long time before the outbreak of the war- in the original German "*Einen lang gehegten Plan*" is exactly what he says.

Then of course, the most devastating evidence of premeditation comes from the Turkish court-martial proceedings. In the key indictment of the Turkish military tribunal, which is reproduced in the legal journal of the Ottoman Parliament, the *Takvim-i Vekyi*, number 3540, page 8, this is what is stated in the key indictment: "There is evidence that one of the architects of the Armenian Genocide, Doctor Nazim, had warned the governor of Aleppo, Jelal, that the anti-Armenian measures were not the result of impulsive decision-making but the product of 'profound and long deliberations' (*ariz ve amik düsünülererek*). In response, Governor Jelal told the Ottoman authorities, "I can deport the Armenians but I cannot have them massacred! I cannot soil my hands with the blood of innocent people." Jelal was then relieved of his post and assigned to Konya province, where, because he continued to protect the Armenians, he lasted but a few months. And finally, in the several verdicts of the Turkish Military Tribunal – those held in Yozgad, Trabzon, Harput, Erzincan - the Arabic word for premeditation is expressly used, i.e., *ta'ammüden*. In the Bayburt verdict, the court again declared that the destruction of the Armenians was the result of a prior deliberation.

When it comes to Austrian and German documents, one sees again and again the phrase that the treatment of the Armenians during the war was meant to be the "final solution of the Armenian question." The most prominent academic journal in the world, which is the journal for Turkologists, Ottomanists, and other specialists of the Middle East, the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, has published a major article of mine in which I document and explain all these matters.² Indeed, German and Austrian documents again and again state that the destruction of the Armenians had very little to do with the behavior of the Armenians during the war, that it was intended to finally solve, once and for all, the lingering, and for the Turks, troublesome, Armenian question by in fact liquidating the Armenians.

Genocidal intent:

In the definition of the United Nations, in order for mass murder to qualify for a genocide, there has to be an *intent* to destroy in whole or in part the victim population. Genocidal intent is clearly stated repeatedly in nearly all the verdicts of the Ottoman military courts. The Yozgad verdict specifically declared that the deportation was a guise to destroy the deportee population, and added that "there can be no doubt or hesitation about this" (*Süphe ve tereddüt birakmadzgindan*). In brief, genocidal intent is explicit in Turkish, German, and Austrian-Hungarian documents.

Organization of the genocide:

Here again, the Ottoman court martial conducted a specific class of trial series reserved not for government officials but for functionaries of the Young Turk Ittihad party. It is unprecedented in the annals of legal justice that not only governmental officials but those invested with what sociologists call "informal authority," namely party functionaries, are being tried as unofficial adjuncts to the government, dominating and controlling that government. This problem of "informal authority" is the least appreciated and hence the most neglected aspect of genocide.

Execution of the Armenian Genocide

Here is an event which is unparalleled in the annals of human history. The two major perpetrators, architects of the Armenian Genocide, Doctor Nazim and Doctor Shakir - in their consultations with their colleagues in the Central Committee, repeatedly declared in so many words that "Sultan Abdul Hamid did not finish the job; we cannot be satisfied with partial results, therefore in order to finish the destruction of the Armenians, drastic measures are needed. We need criminals to do the work. We have to be merciless even with women and children."

They succeeded in persuading their colleagues to release from the prisons of the Ottoman empire the most bloodthirsty criminals. For this class of criminals some authors use the word *kanli katil*. They sent to every prison teams consisting of three members: a member from the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of the Interior, and, most significant, the third member was a physician, whose job it was to select the most ruthless criminals for massacre duty. So these teams went from prison to prison and selected thousands of convicts from prisons in the Ottoman Empire.

² For a full exposition of these facts and other material please see the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol.34, No.1, pp. 59-85; Cambridge University Press, 2002, "The Armenian Question and the Wartime Fate of the Armenians as Documented by the Officials of the Ottoman Empire's World War I Allies: Germany and Austria - Hungary," by Vahakn N. Dadrian.

And in this respect there is a very important court-martial document that was mentioned before, and this is the written testimony of Ottoman Third Army Commander-in-Chief Vehib Pasa. When the genocide was all but finished in the eastern provinces at the end of 1915, the Turkish High Command appointed General Vehib Paşa commander of the Third Army. His predecessor, General Mahmud Kâmil, was installed there by the pressure of the three architects of the Genocide: Doctors Nazim, Shakir, and the CUP's high priest, Ziya Gökalp. War Minister Enver, in February 1915, had originally appointed General Vehib to the Third Army who thus was replaced.

Why is the Third Army so important? Because the jurisdiction of the Third Army embraced the six major provinces with the largest concentration of indigenous Armenian populations: Van, Bitlis, Erzurum, Diyarbakir, Sivas, and Kharpert. And Trabzon was attached to that army jurisdiction as well. General Mahmud Kâmil, who shared the ideology of these three men, totally identified with them and did a thorough job. He supervised the destruction of all the Armenian male population and the subsequent deportation of the remaining Armenians in the seven provinces. He then retired and as Undersecretary in the Ministry of War came to Istanbul in February 1916.

The court martial asked Vehib Pasa to prepare an affidavit as to what he saw as commander of the Third Army. On December 5, 1918, he submitted a 12-page affidavit, a copy of which I have. In that affidavit, he says: "When I came to my post in Erzincan, I saw that the Armenian population had vanished; there was no trace of Armenians in the entire region. I immediately suspected that a major crime had been committed, but being a military officer I could not investigate simply out of curiosity. I waited for an opportunity, and that opportunity came."

What happened in 1916 was that the Baghdad Railway construction managers needed additional workers. So they asked Vehib Pasa to transfer from Sivas to Adana 2,000 Armenian labor battalion soldiers. So he issued an order for their transfer. Within 48 hours the 2,000 Armenian soldiers had vanished. "There were inquiries," Vehib said, "I sent them myself." So Vehib said that "here was an opportunity to investigate." So he investigated and found that the governor of Sivas, Muammer, had given oral instructions to the gendarmerie commander in charge of the 2,000 Armenians to liquidate them. It developed that under the most fiendish ways, these 2,000 disarmed labor battalion Armenian soldiers had their hands tied, and with axes, swords, et cetera, they were brutally massacred, and some of them thrown off the rocks into abysses had just disappeared.

He established a court martial and hanged the two major perpetrators of the massacre of these 2,000 Armenian soldiers. In his affidavit, General Vehib gives a detailed description of how the Armenian Genocide took place. He says that Dr. Shakir, one of the main architects of the genocide, went from province to province with a private automobile and gave verbal orders to people. Vehib then describes the release from prisons of the most brutal, fiendish criminals. ("*Ipten ve kazıktan kurtulmuşo yaraniniz.*") That's the actual language he uses. Then he describes a scene of atrocity that epitomizes the quintessence of the Armenian Genocide. Vehib Pasa said that he went to Mush in Bitlis province and to Tchurig, a small Armenian village, five kilometers north of Mush, and describes what he saw:

In all the wooden houses of that village, Armenian women and children were crowded and burned alive. I saw their charred remains. In the history of Islam, you cannot find any parallel to such fiendishness and savagery.

And this is a Turkish army commander, an Ittihadist himself, who is speaking up. He then concludes his affidavit, saying, "Divine justice may be delayed, but it cannot be forfeited" (*Adaleti Allahiyede imhal var ihmâl yoktur*).

To conclude, what do we learn from all this? I think the single most important characteristic of the Armenian Genocide, especially in comparison with the Holocaust - and I think here you see a conspicuous parallel, a convergence, is this: Not the regular organs of the Ottoman state, but the secret party organization of the Young Turk Ittihadist Party was in charge of the genocide, from beginning to end: conception, premeditation, decision-making, organization, implementation - they were all done primarily, if not exclusively, by trusted officials of the Young Turk Ittihad Party, just like the Nazi's in Germany, in World War II.

You know the Third Reich was divided into Gaus, provinces, and high-ranking party representatives, the so-called Gauleiters were in charge. Likewise, the top Nazi national security agency, the Reich's *Sicherheitshauptamt* - RSHA in brief - was the main instrument of the Holocaust, together with the SS and the Gestapo. All of these outfits were run by party fanatics. A similar set-up functioned in the organization of the Armenian Genocide. Here we see the functionaries of the party at work. There were three categories: responsible secretaries, delegates, and inspectors, in ranking order.

It may be useful to provide an example of how these people in the party overwhelmed and overruled regular government officials in the state system of the Ottoman Empire. In Trabzon, when the decree of deportation was proclaimed, the Greek archbishop and some Armenians bribed the governor of that province with the understanding that pregnant women, children, and old men would be temporarily exempt from deportation, and Governor-General Cemal Azmi agreed. However, as soon as the representative of the Young Turk party, Yenibahçeli Nail, learned of this, he instantly countermanded the decision of the Governor and said that all Armenians without exception would be deported.

The same thing happened in Erzurum. Governor-General Tahsin was a relatively benevolent man and wanted to exclude those who were sick or pregnant. The inspector of the Erzurum region and the right hand man of Dr. Shakir, Filibeli Hilmi, upon learning of this arrangement, immediately countermanded the order and all Armenians were deported. In other words, in order to grasp the essentials of the Armenian Genocide, we have to shift our focus from the operations of the state to that of a highly organized secretive party.

Many genocide and Holocaust scholars continue to say that genocide is a state crime. I submit that on the basis of the facts of the Armenian experience and my research on the Holocaust, that genocide is not so much a crime of the state but primarily a crime of a conspiratorial, political, monolithic party that manages to eliminate all opposition, that succeeds in gaining total control of the organs of the state, imposing on that state its secretive party agenda, and in the process subverts the functions of the state, and thus criminalizes the state. Genocide, therefore, is primarily the ultimate result of the criminalization of the state by a highly conspiratorial, secretive, political, monolithic party. To fully understand the Armenian Genocide, one must see the Ottoman state as an entity subservient to the Young Turk Ittihad party that pursued and successfully carried out its covert agenda to deal with the Empire's non-Muslim nationalities.

And finally, what major conclusions can be drawn?

People say that it was acute hostility, it was Turkish nationalism and fanaticism, et cetera. True, but not in and of themselves. In my judgment, as in the case of the Holocaust, genocide emerges here as a means to an end. It is, therefore, functional. Turkey, a heterogeneous society, a multiethnic Ottoman Empire, is transformed by violent, lethal means into a more or less homogenous society.

The slogans "Judenrein" (Germany cleansed of Jews) and "Turkey for the Turks" are emblematic of these goal-directed genocides. Therefore, my conclusion is that ultimately genocide is a vehicle for restructuring a social system through centrally organized comprehensive mass murder.