

ON A BOOKLET DEALING WITH THE “RIGHTEOUS TURKS”

(“HAKKANİYETLİ TÜRKLER” ÜZERİNE BİR KİTAPÇIKLA
İLGİLİ DEĞERLENDİRME)

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Abstract: *This essay is devoted to the in-depth review of a booklet titled “Turkish rescuers. Report on Turks who reached-out to Armenians in 1915”, authored by sociologist Taner Akçam and journalist Burçin Gerçek. The booklet focuses on, as the authors put it, the Turks who have “displayed a conscientious attitude in 1915 through a variety of motivations and approaches.” Despite the booklet’s attempt at being perceived as a serious work on history, it is fundamentally inaccurate, failing to convince because of a non-scholarly use of sources; some are distorted, some are not used with the necessary precautions, and others are neglected. Furthermore, despite the authors attempt to frame the 1915 events as a genocide, nowhere in the booklet do the authors present a convincing case about a genocidal intent from the Ottoman central government and also about a fundamental contradiction between the positive actions of local authorities such as Celâl Bey and Faik Ali Bey on one side, the Committee for Union and Progress regime of the Ottoman Empire on the other side. As a result, this booklet cannot be considered as an example for proper historical research.*

Key Words: *relocation, Armenians, Celâl Bey, Faik Ali Bey, Cemal Paşa, Talat Paşa*

Öz: *Bu makale, sosyolog Taner Akçam ve gazeteci Burçin Gerçek tarafından yazılan “Turkish rescuers. Report on Turks who reached-out to Armenians in 1915” (“Türk Kurtarıcılar. 1915’te Ermenilere Yardım Elini Uzatan Türkler Hakkında Rapor”) başlıklı kitapçığı derin bir incelemeye tabi tutmaktadır. Yazarların tabiriyle, kitapçık “1915’te çeşitli hareketleri ve yaklaşımlarıyla vicdanlı bir tutum sergilemiş olan” Türklere odaklanmaktadır. Ciddi bir tarih çalışması gibi gözükme çabalarına rağmen, kitapçık aslında özünde hatalı bilgi ve beyanatlar içeren bir çalışmadır. Çalışma, kaynakların akademik kurallara aykırı bir şekilde kullanılmasından dolayı inandırıcılıktan da yoksundur; zira bazı kaynaklar çarpıtılmakta, bazıları gerekli açıklamalar yapılmadan*

kullanılmakta, bazı kaynaklar ise göz ardı edilmektedir. Dahası, yazarların 1915 olaylarını soykırım olarak yansıtmaya çabalarına rağmen, kitapçığın hiçbir yerinde Osmanlı merkezi hükümetinin soykırım yapma niyeti içerisinde olmuş olduğunu inandırıcı bir şekilde ortaya koyan savlar öne sürülmemiştir. Kitapta aynı zamanda Celâl Bey ve Faik Ali Bey gibi yerel yetkililerin olumlu davranışlarıyla, Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti yönetimi arasında mühim bir tezat olduğunu inandırıcı bir şekilde ortaya koyan savlara da yer verilmemiştir. Tüm bunların sonucu olarak, bu kitapçığın düzgün bir tarihsel araştırma çalışması olarak nitelendirilmesi mümkün değildir.

Anahtar kelimeler: *sevk ve iskân, Ermeniler, Celâl Bey, Faik Ali Bey, Cemal Paşa, Talat Paşa*

This 74 pages booklet¹, devoted to the Turks who have “displayed a conscientious attitude in 1915 through a variety of motivations and approaches,” was released online in 2015 by the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation. This choice was particularly strange for an organization devoted to the study of the Holocaust and the saviors of Jews who proved their courage during that genocide. In other words, they went well beyond the limits of their mission. Quite regrettably, the main author is not a professional historian, but a journalist, Burçin Gerçek, and the “research supervision” was carried out by German sociologist Taner Akçam, whose fundamental dishonesty is now widely known in the academia, including among the historians sympathetic to the Armenian side of the Turkish-Armenian controversy.² The fact that a third person was needed for the “transcription of Ottoman archives documents” speaks volumes about the mastering of Ottoman language by the two other writers.

The surprise of the reader only increases with the quotation put in exergue of the text: it does not come from any historical source, but from a theater play written in 2011. The “genocide” claims³ are endorsed without discussion, and the authors nowhere provide their interpretation of the actual orders sent by the central government, forbidding killings.⁴ “If the Ottoman government really had ordered the massacres, why would it send confidential orders to provincial

1 Author: Burçin Gerçek, Taner Akçam and Ömer Türkoğlu, *Turkish rescuers. Report on Turks who reached-out to Armenians in 1915 (2015)*, available at: http://www.raoulwallenberg.net/wp-content/files_mf/1435335304ReportTurkishrescuerscomplete.pdf

2 See, among others, Maxime Gauin, “Review Essay — ‘Proving’ a ‘Crime against Humanity’?,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, XXXV-1, March 2015, pp. 141-157, http://www.academia.edu/11715403/Review_Essay_Proving_a_Crime_against_Humanity; by the same author, “A true or false story by Torossian,” *Daily Sabah*, 2 October 2015, <http://www.dailysabah.com/op-ed/2015/10/02/a-true-or-false-story-by-torossian>; Erman Şahin, “A Scrutiny of Akçam’s Version of History and the Armenian Genocide,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, XXVIII-2, August 2008, pp. 303-319, <http://tc-america.org/files/news/pdf/Erman-Sahin-Review-Article.pdf>. Even a favorable reviewer recently wrote that the last chapter of *The Young Turks’ Crime against Humanity* (2012) is based on “evidentiary manipulations.” Kent Schull, “Book review,” *The Journal of Modern History*, LXXXVI-4, December 2014, pp. 975-976. I could not find a single person ready to defend Taner Akçam during the largely pro-Armenian workshop that took place at Zurich University from 28 to 31 October 2015. On the contrary, the comments I got at this occasion, from Donald Bloxham and Hilmar Kaiser, on my review essay, were positive. Correspondingly, I received by e-mail favorable appreciations from Margaret Lavinia Anderson and Ara Sarafian about my piece on Sarkis Torossian, but no answer at all from Taner Akçam.

3 On these claims, see, in particular, Edward J. Erickson, *Ottomans and Armenians. A Study in Counter-Insurgency* (New York-London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013); and Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005).

4 For example the telegrams of the Minister of Interior to the governorates (vilayets) of Diyarbakir, Elazığ and Bitlis, 14 June 1915; to the governorate of Erzurum, same date; to the governorate of Elazığ, 26 June 1915, in Hikmet Özdemir and Yusuf Sarıay (ed.), *Turkish Armenian Conflict Documents*, Ankara: TBMM, 2007, pp. 107, 109 and 117 (hereafter *TACD*). Also see Stanford Jay Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey* (New York-Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, volume II, *Reform, Revolution and Republic*, 1978), p. 316.

officials instructing them to safeguard the lives of the Armenians during the relocations?”⁵ Correspondingly, Burçin Gerçek and Taner Akçam do not explain how they conciliate their theses with the 1915-1917 trials organized by the Ottoman state as a repression of crimes perpetrated against Armenians:

The biases are also obvious in the choice of both primary and secondary sources. The booklet refers to the archives of the Armenian patriarchate in Jerusalem, which are not open, even to Armenian researchers perceived as not sufficiently nationalist: It also relies on the archives of the Nubarian library in Paris. The author of this review essay was never allowed to work there, in spite of repeated demands in 2011 and 2012.

1,397 people sentenced, with a peak from February to May 1916.⁶ Even more remarkably, the crucial role of Cemal Paşa, number three of the Committee Union and Progress (CUP) regime from 1913 to 1918, who largely contributed to the relief for relocated Armenians,⁷ is almost completely ignored. Cemal's efforts for relocated Armenians is now accepted by historians who support the “genocide” charge,⁸ but the authors prefer to neglect this evolution of the historiography.

The biases are also obvious in the choice of both primary and secondary sources. The booklet refers (p. 51, note 194) to the archives of the Armenian patriarchate in Jerusalem, which are not open, even to Armenian researchers perceived as not sufficiently nationalist: “Partisan scholars have used these archives in their work, though their assertions cannot be checked.”⁹ It also relies (p. 5, p. 50, notes 186 and 188; p. 57, p. 61, note 241) on the archives of the Nubarian library (*Bibliothèque Boghos Nubar*) in Paris. The author of this review essay was never allowed to work there, in spite of repeated demands in

5 Jeremy Salt, “The Narrative Gap in Ottoman Armenian History,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, XXXIX-1, January 2003, p. 22.

6 “Turks Avenge Armenians—Fifty-one Muslim Soldiers are Shot for Mistreating Christians”, *The Washington Post*, 4 June 1916, p. A2; Kâmurân Gürün, *The Armenian File—The Myth of Innocence Exposed* (London-Nicosia-Istanbul: K. Rüstem & Brothers/Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1985), pp. 212-213; Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *The Story of 1915—What Happened to the Ottoman Armenians* (Ankara: TTK, 2008), pp. 82-87; Yusuf Sarıncı, “The Relocation (Teheir) of Armenians and the Trials of 1915–1916,” *Middle East Critique*, XX-3, Fall 2011, pp. 299-315.

7 Yücel Güçlü, *The Holocaust and the Armenian Case in Comparative Perspective* (Lanham-Boulder-New York-Toronto-Plymouth: University Press of America, 2012), pp. 68-79; Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres...*, pp. 196-198 and 218-220.

8 Hilmar Kaiser, “Regional resistance to central government policies: Ahmed Djemal Pasha, the governors of Aleppo, and Armenian deportees in the spring and summer of 1915,” *Journal of Genocide Research*, XII-3/4, 2010, pp. 173-218.

9 “Study the Armenian Genocide With Confidence, Ara Sarafian Suggests,” *The Armenian Reporter*, 16 December 2008, <http://www.gomidas.org/press/show/14>

2011 and 2012.¹⁰ Correspondingly, the booklet recommends (p. 12, note 20) the discredited study of Vahakn N. Dadrian on the German role in the Armenian “genocide”¹¹ and uses nine times the more than questionable book written by the same Vahakn N. Dadrian and Taner Akçam on the trials that took place in İstanbul during the armistice period (p. 3, note 2, p. 15, note 35, p. 21, note 65, p. 23, note 73, p. 24, note 84, page 37, note 141, page 39, note 146, p. 52, note 199, p. 65, note 268).¹²

The case of Celâl Bey

The case of Celâl Bey, governor of Aleppo then of Konya, is the one presented with the most of details in this booklet. Nobody in Turkey will deny that Celâl Bey was good towards Armenians. In fact, one of the first, if not the first, book mentioning, as early as 1922, his positive role is sympathetic to the Turkish/Ottoman point of view towards the Armenian issue.¹³ As a result, pretending to re-discover the actions of Celâl Bey is hardly better than claiming to reinvent the wheel. The whole issue is: Were his actions in fundamental contradiction with the policy of the central government in 1915? If they were not, the thesis of the authors on Celâl Bey collapses and more generally the conclusions of their booklet are seriously undermined.

The core of the booklet’s reasoning in this regard is exposed on p. 14: “His [Celâl’s] departure was also the beginning of disaster for Armenians of Konya.” The only document provided to support this key allegation is presented as follows (p. 14, note 28): “Immediately after Celâl left, local authorities reported to the Ministry of the Interior that 10,000 Armenians have been deported from Konya in three days. BOA. DH.EUM.2.Şb. 68/92, 07/Z /1333.” By every aspect, this reference exemplifies the kind of unscholarly method shown throughout the years by Taner Akçam.¹⁴ Formally, the exact date and the nature

10 Maxime Gauin, “The Turkish-Armenian dispute: Who has something to hide?”, *Daily Sabah*, 14 October 2014, <http://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/2014/10/14/the-turkisharmenian-dispute-who-has-something-to-hide>

11 On this point: Donald Bloxham, “Power Politics, Prejudice, Protest and Propaganda: A Reassessment of the German Role in the Armenian Genocide of World War I,” in Hans-Lukas Kieser and Dominik Schaller (ed.), *Der Völkermord and den Armenien und die Shoah* (Zurich: Chronos, 2002), pp. 213-244; Mary Schaeffer Conroy, “Book Review,” *The Social Science Journal*, XXXVII-3, July 2000, p. 481; Hilmar Kaiser, “Germany and the Armenian Genocide: A Review Essay,” *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies*, VIII, 1995, pp. 127-142.

12 In this regard: Ferudun Ata, “Ermeni Tehciri Yargılamaları (1919-1920),” *Yeni Türkiye*, n° 60, 2014, <http://haypedia.com/makale/Osman%C4%B1%20Tarihi/48ef29a5-d846-40d9-b1d4-5d8ad06d2bb4.pdf>

13 Jean Schlicklin, *Angora... L'aube de la Turquie nouvelle* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1922), p. 145.

14 “Akçam’s way of citing Ottoman archival materials denies his readers even basic information such as whether a mentioned document was a letter, an internal report or minutes from a meeting, or, crucially, the date of its writing.” Yücel Güçlü, “Kitap Tanıtma—A Shameful Act,” *Belleten*, LXXI/260, April 2007, p. 226 (also see p. 223).

of the document is not provided; it is not specified that his document was likely not found by any of the authors in the Ottoman archives, as it was published and translated years before the release of the booklet reviewed here. And much more importantly, it is misleading to present the content of the document in this way, as the full text proves:

“It is hereby reported that between the dates 13 October 1915 and 16 October 1915 a total of nine thousand and six hundred Armenians have been sent from Konya, *including those who have come from other stations*. Out of the total, two thousands and five hundred have been sent on foot and the rest by train.”¹⁵

Verification proves that the actual figure is not 10,000 but 9,600 and, more seriously, this figure is not made of Konya’s Armenians only. Out of these 9,600, only 1,990 were actually from the province of Konya.¹⁶ By comparison, the total population of Armenians in that province was about 16,808 (24,858 with the independent sancaks) at the eve of the First World War.¹⁷ As a result, it is safe to conclude that the overwhelming majority of the Armenians in Konya remained at home during the war. In these conditions, it is hard to call a “disaster” their fate after the departure of Celâl Bey. However, this is not the only problem regarding the way the Ottoman sources are used in the booklet reviewed here. Indeed, a telegram of Minister of Interior Talat Paşa, dated 13 October 1915 and published eight years before the booklet reviewed here, also orders the local authorities of Konya to protect the Armenians, and actually to be the order the previously quoted document answered:

“Ref. Cipher Message dated 10 October 1915. It is understood that the Armenians to be transferred to other places are being sent via the land route. Request provisions of their rest on their way and the necessary measures is taken to ensure their safety.”

And ten days later, Talat ordered the governorate of Konya:

“The Armenians being in other parts of the province shall be not moved and sent to other places unless an order to that effect is received from our ministry.”¹⁸

15 Telegram sent by the deputy governor of Konya to the ministry of Interior, 16 October 1915, *TACD*, p. 323.

16 Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *Facts on the Relocation of Armenians (1914-1918)* (Ankara: TTK, 2002), p. 102.

17 Justin McCarthy, *Muslims and Minorities. The Population of Ottoman Anatolia and the End of the Empire* (New York-London: New York University Press, 1983), pp. 80 and 110.

18 *TACD*, pp. 319 and 345. Also see the telegram of 10 July 1916, *ibid.*, p. 459.

It is difficult to understand how the authors could have missed these documents. It is more probable that they deliberately ignored them.

Ottoman sources are not the only ones distorted to “prove” a fundamental contradiction between the actions of Cemal and the policies of the CUP central government, particularly Talat. Indeed, also on p. 14, note 28, the booklet explains us: “Wilfred M. Post, who works with Dr. Dodd at the American hospital in Konya, tells that on the day of Celâl’s recall, a policeman came to his pharmacy and cried out of happiness: ‘We won!’” So one may assume that Dr. Post is a reliable source for Burçin Gerçek and Taner Akçam. As the result, they should explain how they conciliate their hypothesis of a “disaster” in Konya after the departure of Celâl with the final observation of the same Dr. Post: There were *more* Armenians in the province of Konya in 1917—namely when the relocation had stopped—than at the eve of the First World War, because “the number of exiles introduced to the vilayet is much greater than that of the emigrants [from Konya].”¹⁹ The conclusion of Dr. Post is in perfect conformity with the Ottoman document evaluating the number of Konya Armenians expelled from the province to be less than 2,000. Similarly, the report of the French Navy’s intelligence service on Konya emphasizes that the Armenians of this province never suffered at the hand of the Turks, either during the reign of Abdülhamit II, or during the Young Turks decade.²⁰

A last confirmation of the fact that the departure of Celâl Bey from Konya was actually not a “disaster” for the Armenians of Konya is the arrest of his successor, Ahmet Muammer Bey, by the British after the armistice. Muammer was sent to Malta, and so he was one of the former CUP officials about whom the British investigators failed, after trying for two years, to find any evidence for an involvement in crimes against Armenians.²¹

This misuse of Ottoman and American sources and the neglect of British and French archives are enough to refute the thesis of Burçin Gerçek and Taner Akçam in this part of their booklet; however it is possible to go further. Indeed, their claims are primarily based on the series of articles published by a former

19 O. J. Campbell, Report on the Vilayet of Konya, p. 8, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University (California), Paris Peace Conference (1919-1920), U.S. territorial section, box 4. On Post and the Armenians in 1915, also see Kemal Çiçek, *The Great War and the Forced Migration of Armenians* (Belfast: Athol Books, 2011), pp. 197-203.

20 S.R. Marine, Turquie, n° 1351, 25 novembre 1919, Service historique de la défense (SHD), Vincennes, 1 BB7 235.

21 Letter of R. W. Woods, on behalf of the general prosecutor, to the Foreign Office, 29 July 1921, The National Archives, FO 371/6504/E 8745; Letter of Judge Lindsay Smith to the British High Commissioner in İstanbul, 24 August 1921, FO 371/6504/E 10023. Also see Bilal N. Şimşir, *Malta Sürgünleri* (Ankara-İstanbul: Bilgi Yayınevi, 2008).

governor in *Vakit* at the end of 1918, after the armistice. Nowhere have the authors of the booklet asked themselves if writing in this context was not a way to distance himself from the CUP he had served for years. Similarly, they mention the fact that he served as governor of Adana in 1919-1920 and then joined the Kemalist movement (p. 14), but they do not discuss this part of his life as a proof of a particular talent for changing side at the right moment, and for the best of his personal interests.

Even more strikingly, the authors confess (p. 11, note 16): “There is no trace of the ‘secret and personal’ letter in the Ottoman Archives, like of other letters mentioned in the memoirs of Celâl.” Probably understanding that this fact would undermine the credibility of Celâl Bey, they continue by saying: “It is likely that some correspondence exchanged between Celâl Bey and the Ministry of Interior are in the Atase archives, which are accessible only to a limited number of users approved by the Turkish General Staff.” The reader will conclude himself what must be thought about the speculation regarding the presence in the Turkish *military* archives of “some correspondence exchanged between Celâl and the Ministry of Interior,” namely two civilian officials. The main point here is that the Ottoman military archives are actually open. In addition to Turkish historians, Harvey Broadbent, Gwynne Dyer, Edward J. Erickson, Benjamin Fortna, Hilmar Kaiser, Michael A. Reynolds, Philip H. Stoddard, and Tim Travers have worked here since more than fifty years.²² If Burçin Gerçek, Taner Akçam, and Ömer Türkoğlu had a real intention to fully verify the claims of Celâl Bey in his Memoirs, they would have worked in the military archives as well.

The worst speculation, however, is the following, in the same note: “A telegram evoked by Aram Arkun and mentioned in a publication of the General Staff suggests such a possibility [an alleged correspondence between Talat and Celâl in the Turkish military archives]. (Zeytun and the Commencement of the Armenian Genocide, Aram Arkun, in *A Question of Genocide, Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, Edited by Suny, Gocek, and Naimar [sic: Naimark], p. 393, Oxford University Press, 2011). This telegram without signature, which is in the Atase archives, points out – relative to the events in Zeitun - the need for the state to only punish the guilty and avoid ‘offensive and humiliating’ treatments to those Armenians about whom ‘there is no doubt and hesitation on their loyalty to the country.’ These lines - as the phrase ‘I released the delegate’ - have many similarities with what Celâl wrote in his memoirs.”

22 Yücel Güçlü, *Historical Archives and the Historians’ Commission to Investigate the Armenian Events of 1915* (Lanham-Boulder-Toronto-Plymouth: University Press of America, 2015), pp. 63 and 92-93.

This is a manipulation of the document, also present in a previous book by Taner Akçam. The actual content is different of what Aram Arkun, Taner Akçam and Burçin Gerçek claim:

“As I have received your telegram, dated March 14, 1915, this morning I did not have time to reply during the night. As far as I am concerned about the events in Zeytûn, the only information I have is limited to the martyring of several gendarme soldiers during a clash that broke out upon the attack of several people to the prison. *I do not have enough information* neither on the identities of the aggressors nor about the sources that led to the occurrence of the events. However, I am definitely of the opinion that the aggressors who attempted to violate the soldiers and dared to commit massacres ought to be punished with the heaviest penalties.

I have read one or two of telegrams, sent by the people of Zeytûn to İstanbul Armenian Patriarchate and to Sis Armenian Catechumenate, as shown by the censor officer. As far as I have gathered from those telegrams and from the Armenian delegate as well as from the notables here, the Armenians are in a great hurry. *They are claiming that* these events were incited by couple of discreditable people, and that all of the Armenian people were in fact truly loyal and devoted to the government. I believe that, punishing of the murderers and the aggressors will be sufficient for the sake of delicacy of the situation; however, we should pretend that we believe in *their so-called sincerity*.

Under the present circumstances, the holding of the Armenian notables and spiritual leaders in Maras, and Aleppo in pledge might lead to a misunderstanding that the government considers the Armenians residing in Zeytûn as accomplices, and this will eventually lead to a more severe sense of insecurity among the Armenians, and to a severe hatred and anger among the Muslims. At this point, when the major states, which used to defend them no matter the circumstances were, whether they were right or wrong, are struggling with their own problems, the wise Armenians will conceive the delicacy of the situation and evaluate the reasons of upheavals better, and therefore, I do not think that the Armenians will rise.

Nevertheless, all of these are nothing but my personal evaluations, right or wrong, as *I am not equipped with thorough investigations on the issue.*²³

23 *Armenian Activities in the Archive Documents* (Ankara, ATASE, volume I, 2005), pp. 71-73.

It is quite clear that Burçin Gerçek repeated here the distortion of this document by Aram Arkun and Taner Akçam, perhaps without having checked anything. Far from having taken the statements on Armenian loyalty at face value, this anonymous official (the one they believe to be Celâl Bey) expressed skepticism on “their so-called sincerity.” The author of the document indeed said he did not think “the Armenians will rise,” but crucial words are conveniently neglected: He was not in position to investigate the matter deeply. It should be added that another report describes the seizure of the gendarmerie’s armory, the cutting of the telegraphic line and the killing of Ottoman soldiers by Armenian insurgents of Zeytun.²⁴ At the end, the suppression of this rebellion costed the life of 500 Ottoman soldiers.²⁵

More generally, the quotes from Celâl’s series of articles written at the end of 1918, and translated in the publication reviewed here, far from giving a strong credibility to his testimony, provided evidence on his lack reliability. P. 15, the authors quote him the following way:

“The duty of the government is to arrest and punish only the guilty ones, and if that is not possible, to settle the Armenians of the region in other places but not in a hostile manner, in contrary, with a friendly approach and temporarily. A member of an armed band can do anything. Because he is a bandit. [...] But the government sues only those who have committed crimes. Unfortunately, the government leaders of that time never lost their “Committee” spirit, and implemented this deportation in such a way that the most daring and bloody bandits could not have imagined.

The government of that time said they had extended the deportation to Ankara, Konya and Eskişehir as a precautionary measure, claiming that the Russians were going to attack the Sakarya Valley and that Armenians were going to help them. At that time [...] we were able to control to a certain extent the Black Sea, through the war cruisers Yavuz and Midilli. In these circumstances, it was not possible for the Russians to land in the Sakarya Valley. Now, assume that their hypothesis was correct. Why Armenians of Bursa, Edirne and Tekirdag were deported? Were these places also part of the Sakarya basin?

24 Yusuf Sarıncay (ed.), *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeni İsyanları* (Ankara, volume IV, 2008), pp. 105–108 and 113–115.

25 Yücel Güçlü, *The Holocaust and the...*, pp. 23 and p. 56, Note 20. Also see Gwynne Dyer, “Correspondence,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, IX-3, 1973, pp. 383–384.

What did they want from the Armenians of Aleppo, which represented less than the twentieth part of the population of the vilayet?”

The concern about a possible Russian landing at the Sakarya mouth was never a leading reason for the Armenian forced relocation in 1915 and Celâl feigns to ignore the main problem faced by the Ottoman Empire: As the Empire was now at war on several fronts, it was not possible anymore to mobilize big units, to find the insurgents and to eliminate them; the only remaining solution was to forcibly displace the Armenian population to prevent them from providing supply to the insurgents—a solution similar to the one used by the Spanish army in Cuba, the U.S. army in the Philippines, and the British army in South Africa.²⁶ Regarding Bursa (where more than 20% of the Armenian population was exempted of relocation²⁷), the concerns had obviously very little to do with a Russian landing on the Black Sea coast, and almost everything to do with the insurrectional activities of the Armenian committees of this province,²⁸ in the context of the Çanakkale (Gallipoli) battle.²⁹ In spite of these insurrections, no massacre of Armenians in Bursa is mentioned in the report of the French Navy’s intelligence service written in 1919 about that province.³⁰ Concerning Edirne, the claims of Celâl Bey about a general expulsion of the Armenians are simply wrong.³¹ Even more strikingly, the former governor of

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26 Note of Talat to Sait Halim Paşa, 26 May 1915, *TACD*, pp. 58-59; Edward J. Erickson, *Ottomans and Armenians...*; Kâmuran Gürün, *The Armenian File...*, pp. 186-210; Jeremy Salt, *The Unmaking of the Middle East* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London: University of California Press, 2008), pp. 60-70; by the same author, “The Armenian ‘Relocation’: The Case for ‘Military Necessity,’” *Review of Armenian Studies*, n° 29, 2014, pp. 65-75, <http://www.avim.org.tr/uploads/dergiler/ras-29—1—pdf.pdf>; Stanford Jay Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I* (Ankara: TTK, volume II, 2008), pp. 859-931 and 1034-1069. It also bears noting that Taner Akçam himself, in his 528 pages book *The Young Turks’ Crime against Humanity* (2012) never mentions, even to contest it, a claim of the Ottoman government regarding a possible Russian landing at the Sakarya mouth.

27 Edward J. Erickson, *Ottomans and Armenians...*, p. 216. Also see the telegram of Talat to the governorate of Bursa, 17 August 1915, *TACD*, p. 215.

28 Telegram of Talat to the governorate of Bursa, 29 August 1915, *TACD*, p. 233; Aspirations et agissements; Stanford Jay Say, *The Ottoman Empire...*, p. 1073.

29 Edward J. Erickson, *Gallipoli: Command under Fire* (Oxford-New York: Osprey Publishing, 2015).

30 S.R. Marine, Turquie, n° 1504, 30 décembre 1919, SHD, 1 BB7 234.

31 Kemal Çiçek, *The Great War...*, p. 208; Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *The Story of 1915. What Happened to the Ottoman Armenians?* (Ankara: TTK, 2008), p. 94; Michael A. Reynolds, *Shattering Empires. The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, 1908- 1918* (New York-Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 149.

Aleppo seems to forget that, out of 22,000 Armenians in that city, only six or seven families were expelled during the First World War.³²

Correspondingly, Celâl Bey mirrored, at the end of 1918, the war-time propaganda³³ against his own country (quoted p. 16):

“When ordering the transfer of Armenians to Der Zor, did the government think how these poor people could survive without food and housing, among the nomadic Arab tribes? If they did, I must ask: how much food did they send in these regions? How many houses did they build for the immigrants’ settlement?”

Writing such questions, he deliberately neglected, not only the very difficult context of the Ottoman Empire (naval blockade, flow of Muslim refugees from the Caucasus³⁴) but also the money sent by the central government for the relocated Armenians and the authorization given to Americans, Germans and Swiss to improve this relief by their own efforts. The life in Der Zor was quite different than what was widely spread via caricatures -the main cause of mortality was, on the contrary, the second relocation, out of Der Zor, in 1916.³⁵ The role of Cemal Paşa in relief for Armenians has already been evoked at the beginning of this review essay, I will not come back to this subject.

32 Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres...*, p. 191.

33 Justin McCarthy, *The Turk in America. The Creation of an Enduring Prejudice* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2010), pp. 158-248; Pat Walsh, *Forgotten Aspects of Ireland’s Great War on Turkey* (Belfast: Athol Books, 2009), pp. 192-210.

34 Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres...*, pp. 54-62; Stanford Jay Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire...*, pp. 992-1027; by the same author, “The Resettlement of Refugees in Turkey during World War I and the Turkish War of Independence, 1917-1923,” reprinted in *Studies in Ottoman and Turkish History. Life with the Ottomans* (İstanbul: The Isis Press, 2000), pp. 463-499.

35 See, among other sources: Regulations dated 30 May and 7 October 1915, *TACD*, pp. 80-81 and 311-315; Telegrams of the Ministry of Interior to the governorate of Mosul, 9 June 1915 and to the governorate of Aleppo, 13 September 1915, *TACD*, pp. 93 and 263; Letter of Annie Allen to William W. Peet “16 September” (1915 or 1916), American Board of Commissioner for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) archives, Harvard University, Cambridge (Massachusetts), Houghton Library, 16.10.1, box 8; Letter of Abram Elkus to Charles Vickrey, 5 October 1917, Library of Congress, manuscript division, W. Wilson papers, reel 337; Report of Consul Jesse Jackson, dated March 4, 1918, reproduced in Ara Sarafian (ed.), *United States Official Documents on the Armenian Genocide*, Princeton-London: Gomidas Institute, 2004, p. 595; *Relief of Armenians. Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Affairs*, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1916, pp. 12-13; Kemal Çiçek, *The Great War...*, pp. 212-233; Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *The Story of...*, pp. 73-80; Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres...*, pp. 215-218. Also see the positive appreciation of governor Abdülhalik by Jesse Jackson as late as 1921 in the handwritten note of R. C. Lindsay (who spoke with Jackson) to D. G. Osborne, FO 371/6499/E 1445 (the note has not date, but the response of Osborne is dated 29 January 1921).

Diyarbakır

Besides the case of Celâl Bey, the issue of the forced relocations and massacres in Diyarbakır is one of the most present in the booklet reviewed here. As early as on p. 10, Note 13, a discredited legend is used, showing a deep contempt of the authors for their reader:

“Hüseyin Nesimi, Kaimakam of Lice and Ali Sabit, Kaimakam of Besiri, were assassinated because of their opposition to deportation and massacre orders.”

No source is provided for this very serious allegation. Taner Akçam previously presented the same charge, giving as reference the Memoirs of Nesimi’s son and accusing governor Mehmet Reşit to have ordered the murder of Nesimi.³⁶ This is a complete manipulation of the source, as explained five years before the publication of the booklet analyzed here.

“When Dr. Reşit was in Iraq and later during his governorship of Diyarbakır, many crimes were committed whose perpetrators could not be found. Most important among these were the murders of Ferit, the governor-general of Basra, Bedi Nuri, the lieutenant-governor of Muntefak, my father Hüseyin Nesimi, the prefect of Lice, and Sabit, the deputy prefect of Besiri and the journalist İsmail Mestan... It was impossible to carry out the relocation of Armenians with the Circassian gendarme units and with the members of the tribes of Bedirhani, Milli, Karakeçili who were actually the Kurdish militia. For this group was a cadre of pillage and plunder. Therefore, this group could not carry out the relocation and turned it into a massacre. And the elimination of the [administrative] staff who would oppose the pillage and plunder was inevitable.”

“Did Dr. Reşit give any order for the murder of my father? Or did this event occur without his knowledge? We can find the answers of these questions in Reşit’s memoirs... In these memoirs Dr. Reşit writes that he was extremely respectful towards my father and that my father had possessed the quality of rendering great services to the nation and that it was impossible for him to give any order for the murder of my father. Quite naturally I cannot be expected to have sympathy for Dr. Reşit, as my father was killed by a mobile gendarme regiment that was recalled

36 Taner Akçam, *From Empire to Republic Turkish Nationalism and the Armenian Genocide* (London–New York: Zed Books, 2004), pp. 173-174, and, by the same author, *The Young Turks’ Crime against Humanity* (Princeton-Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 196.

by this name. I have done research on Dr. Reşit. I have inquired about Dr. Reşit from his friends who had been in exile in Tripoli, where he was also in exile, and from other persons, especially from the governor of Tripoli, Celâl Bey, from Crete. Both the deceased Cami Baykurt and Celâl Bey had given testimony in his favor. I am of the opinion that Dr. Reşit was a well-intentioned, yet narrow-minded, person.”³⁷

The lack of footnotes is equally regrettable when the booklet explains, on p. 12: “They [members of Parliament Krikor Zohrab and Vartkes Serengulian] were then sent to Diyarbakir and murdered in an ambush by Ahmet the Circassian before reaching their destination.” The double assassination actually happened and one of the murderers is rightfully identified, but Burçin Gerçek and Taner Akçam does not say that the perpetrators were arrested, put on trial and executed, as early as 1915, and that Cemal Paşa, number 3 of the CUP regime, played a decisive role in the choice of death penalty.³⁸ Even more problematically for the “genocide” charge in general and for the claims of the booklet in particular, a telegram sent by Talat to the governorate of Konya on 9 September 1915 proves that the Minister of Interior was behind the choice of Cemal to supervise the punishment of the murderers:

“Ahmet from Siroz and his friend Halil have been sent to Konya today, to be prosecuted by the Military Court of the 4th army for the crimes of murdering Armenians and usurping their possessions. The said individuals should definitely not be permitted to escape and they should be kept imprisoned in Konya, until receiving the request and written note of Cemal Paşa in that regard.”³⁹

This document is devastating for the assertions of Burçin Gerçek and Taner Akçam regarding both Diyarbakir and Konya. That is probably the reason why they do not comment on it.

Another published telegram of Talat Paşa, this time to the governorate of Diyarbakir, is also carefully neglected in the booklet reviewed here:

“Previously it had been planned to have the Armenian convoys departing Urfa to follow the route of Resülayn and Nusaybin. However, the

37 Abidin Nesimi, *Yılların İçinden*, İstanbul: Gözlem Yayınları, 1977, pp. 45-46, quoted and translated in Erman Şahin, “Review Essay: The Armenian Question,” *Middle East Policy*, XVII-1, spring 2010, p. 152, http://www.turkishcanadians.com/wp-content/uploads/armenian_question.pdf

38 Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres...*, pp. 112-113; Yusuf Sarıay, “The Relocation (Tehcir)...”, p. 309.

39 *TACD*, p. 261.

convoys sent through the said route had to turn back due to attacks by the Arabs and the [Kurdish?] tribes. Therefore, it is considered that the convoys must be sent through the route via Siverek under all conditions. Necessary instructions to that effect have already been communicated to Urfa. Accordingly, when the convoys arrive there, they will not be made to turn back but be transferred to Mosul.”⁴⁰

It is actually quite difficult to conciliate the “genocide” charge, and so the thesis of Turkish “rescuers” who allegedly risked their life, with such orders sent from İstanbul.

In some cases, it is not even necessary to look for neglected documents. Especially on p. 27, the authors, who have praised sub-governor of Mardin Hilmi Bey explain: “After this date [July 1915], Hilmi Bey is appointed to Hakkari, Nablus, Malatya, Der Zor and Bayezid subgovernorships.” Nothing bad happened to him, as they explain, during the whole war. Once again, they fail to explain how they conciliate this fact with the charge exposed at the beginning of the booklet: “objecting to deportations and genocide that the Armenians were subjected to at this time was greatly risky too.”

Central and Western Anatolia

The goal of this paper is not to refute the booklet paragraph by paragraph, however, some other examples shall be provided, to show that the pages on Celâl Bey and Diyarbakir are not aberrations but typify this poorly written study.

Concerning the province of Kastamonu, the authors repeat a not so new claim of Taner Akçam and Vahakn N. Dadrian: “According to his testimony read in Responsible Secretaries of the Union and the Progress trial in 1919, Reşid Pasha received an official message ordering the deportation of Kastamonu by Bahaeddin Şakir. Because he refused to obey this order, he was called “The governor of not the Turks’ but of the Armenians”, and a short time later he was discharged from duty.” There is a series of problems which should prevent any serious historian to endorse this kind of argument:

- 1) The “testimony” was delivered on a written form only, and was never submitted to any cross-examination, like the other “testimonies” submitted to the 1919-1920 court martials;⁴¹

40 *TACD*, p. 357.

41 Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres...*, p. 79.

- 2) The authors themselves explain us (p. 38) that Reşid did not repeat these claims in his Memoirs that were published after his death;
- 3) The “message” allegedly sent by B. Şakir was “signed ‘Head of the Special Organization,’”⁴² which is enough to discredit this claim. Indeed, if Şakir had in practice responsibilities in the Special Organization for eastern (not central) Anatolia, he was never the “head” of this elite unit and could not have signed any “message” with this title;⁴³
- 4) After the removal of Reşit, the Ministry of Interior repeated that there was no need to expel the Armenians from Kastamonu. On 1st September 1915: “The Armenians within the province shall remain.” On 28 September 1915: “At present, the removal of Armenians within the province is not necessary.”⁴⁴ And again on 23 October of the same year: “There is no need, for the time being, to remove the Armenians living in your province. However, legal proceedings should be carried out against the individuals in whose houses weapons have been found, and a register book indicating the types and the quantities of those weapons should be prepared and sent to the ministry.”⁴⁵ This telegram is another refutation of Celâl Bey’s post-war claims on the alleged refusal, by the CUP government, to distinguish between the guilty and the innocent.

Eventually, in 1916, a part of the Armenians of Kastamonu were “randomly distributed to the villages and districts where no Armenians or the people of other nations are living” to leave space for refugees “coming from the 4th Army region.”⁴⁶

Failing to find in the Ottoman archives any document ordering to expel or to kill the Armenians of Kastamonu, Burçin Gerçek and Taner Akçam use, in addition to this spurious “testimony” submitted in 1919, the book written by Grigoris Balakian. Not only the reliability of this book must be questioned because of the political fanaticism of the author, his selection of facts and his anti-Semitism,⁴⁷ but Ms. Gerçek and Mr. Akçam are equally selective in their choice of Armenian sources. Indeed, they allege (p. 37): “the province would stage the savage killings of majority of Armenians transferred from İstanbul

42 Taner Akçam, *The Young Turks' Crime...*, p. 416.

43 Yücel Güçlü, “Mislabeling Genocide?”, *The Middle East Quarterly*, XIII-2, Spring, 2006, pp. 67–68, <http://www.meforum.org/969/the-great-game-of-genocide>

44 Erman Şahin, “Review Essay: the Armenian...,” p. 159, Note 16.

45 *TACD*, p. 341.

46 Telegram of the minister of Interior to the governor of Kastamonu, 20 April 1916, *TACD*, p. 439.

47 Yücel Güçlü, “Book review,” *Mediterranean Quarterly*, XX-4, Fall 2009, pp. 102-104.

to Çankırı." Doing so, they neglect the testimony of an arrested Armenian who took the American citizenship under the name of Matthew A. Callender: "There never were any massacre of Armenians in Changri [Çankırı] while we were there for several months."⁴⁸ The study of Yusuf Sarımay, based on Ottoman documents not used by Ms. Gerçek and Mr. Akçam, confirms that the majority of the Armenian arrested in İstanbul in April 1915 were not killed: out of 235, 19 were sentenced to death for betrayal and executed; one died in jail in 1918. Considering that the police found 19 Mauser guns, 74 Martini rifles, 111 Winchesters and 3,591 handguns (among other weapons), the charge of betrayal had a very concrete basis.⁴⁹

Burçin Gerçek and Taner Akçam's use of sources on Ankara is at least as tendentious as on Kastamonu. At the beginning of their development on this province, they quote governor Mazhar as having said (p. 51):

"As you know, even though deportation process was started in some other provinces, I had not. Atıf Bey came, he announced the oral orders from the Ministry of Interior concerning the massacre and the extermination of Armenians during their deportation. I thought 'No Atıf Bey. I am a governor, not a bandit. I cannot do that, I can get up from this chair, you can come and do it yourself!' I said."

And the footnote justifying this strange quote explains:

"Radi Bey's testimony, transcribed into Turkish in Latin alphabet, from the fragments of archive on İstanbul trials investigations, which we found in Nubarian library. Select copies from Jerusalem Armenian Patriarchate archives, Reel 3. The original of the testimony in Ottoman

Failing to find in the Ottoman archives any document ordering to expel or to kill the Armenians of Kastamonu, Burçin Gerçek and Taner Akçam use, in addition to this spurious "testimony" submitted in 1919, the book written by Grigoris Balakian. Not only the reliability of this book must be questioned because of the political fanaticism of the author, his selection of facts and his anti-Semitism, but Ms. Gerçek and Mr. Akçam are equally selective in their choice of Armenian sources.

48 Matthew A. Callender, "The Shock of Komitas," *The Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, 17 October 1959. I express my thanks to Yeşen Dursun for having found this letter to the editor.

49 Yusuf Sarımay, "What Happened on April 24, 1915? The Circular of April 24, 1915, and the Arrest of Armenian Committee Members in İstanbul," *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, XIV-1 & 2, Autumn 2008, pp. 75-101, http://www.turkishcanadians.com/wp-content/uploads/april_24.pdf

is not present among the documents. There is no information as to when and by who the transcription was done, but “Armenian Catholic Community, New York” has been noted down onto inscribed papers.”

As already seen in the introduction of this review essay, such documents of the Nubarian library are not accessible for the researchers who do not agree with the “Armenian genocide” charge. However, the most striking in that footnote is the confession that the “original” is impossible to find, and that this copy arrived from the “Armenian Catholic Community [of] New York.” What historian could take such a dubious copy at face value? Not embarrassed by this question, the authors continue, at the same page, by explaining that Mazhar, after this alleged statement, received the proposition to become governor of Aleppo. If there was even a part of truth in this statement and if, as the authors assume without providing evidence, the goal of the CUP was “genocide,” how a governor who had expressed such views would be not only maintained, at the same rank, in the administration, but would be proposed as governor of a sensitive province like Aleppo?

A similar dubious allegation on Ankara is based (p. 52) on “accounts” by Armenian “witnesses” that Burçin Gerçek found in (or received from) the Nubarian library. Even if the “account” was freely accessible, and even if a verification would prove the summary to be accurate, a much bigger problem would remain. Indeed, this compilation of accounts comes from the “Fonds Andonian.” In other words, it is a part of the “testimonies” collected in 1919 by Aram Andonian (1875-1952), the same person who, at the same time, prepared his compilation of crudely forged Ottoman “documents,” published in 1920 with openly racist comments.⁵⁰ Bernard Lewis rightfully compared the false “documents” edited by Andonian to another forgery prepared with racist purposes, the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.⁵¹ Any person familiar with oral history, and actually anybody with common sense, knows that the accuracy of a testimony largely depends on the way the person is interviewed. Andonian was hardly an impartial, or even honest interviewer, and himself he apparently did not regard his own work as impressive. Indeed, he never published the “testimonies” to promote Armenian nationalist claims, either in 1920 for the conference of San Remo, either for the conferences of London (1921 and 1922), or either during the negotiations of Lausanne (1922-1923).

50 On this point: Maxime Gauin, “Aram Andonian’s ‘Memoirs of Naim Bey’ and the Contemporary Attempts to Defend their Authenticity,” *Review of Armenian Studies*, 2011, n° 23, pp. 233–292; Jean-Louis Mattei, *Belgelerle Büyük Ermenistan Peşinde Ermeni Komiteleri*, Ankara-Istanbul: Bilgi Yayınevi, 2008, pp. 261–284; Şinasi Orel and Sürreya Yuca, *The Talat Pasha telegrams: Historical Fact or Armenian Fiction?* (Nicosia/Oxford: K. Rüstem & Brothers/Oxford University Press, 1986).

51 Bernard Lewis, *From Babel to Dragomans. Interpreting the Middle East* (New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 389.

This use of spurious sources is associated with an insufficient attention toward the Ottoman documents. For example, the telegram sent by Minister of Interior Talat to the governorate of Ankara on 29 August 1915 shows him trying to *protect* the Armenians of Ankara, instead of ordering their extermination:

“The Armenian issue pertaining to the Eastern provinces has been solved. Therefore, there is no need to harm the reputation of our nation and government by conducting unnecessary cruelties. Particularly the recent attack conducted on the Armenians at a place close to Ankara has caused great regret of the Ministry, considering its way of occurring, the obvious incompetence of the officials charged with supervising the transfer of Armenians, and audacity on part of the gendarmes and the local people who acted on their bestial instincts to rape and rob the Armenians. The transfer of Armenians, which is desired to be carried out in an orderly and prudent manner, should henceforth never be left to the individuals having fanatical feelings of enmity, and that the Armenians, whether or not they are subject to relocation, will be definitely protected against any assault and attack. At the places where such a protection could not be provided, the transfer of Armenians should be postponed. From now on, all of the officials in charge shall be held responsible with respect to their ranks for any attack, which may occur and shall be brought before the military courts. It is necessary to give very strict orders to the relevant personnel in this regard.”⁵²

The threat of military tribunals by Talat Paşa was real. From 1915 to 1917, 32 Muslims were sentenced in the province of Ankara only for their crimes committed against Armenians.⁵³

Even clearer, regardless, is the failure of Burçin Gerçek and Taner Akçam to present a convincing case about Kütahya (p. 62):

“In Kütahya, which became an independent sub-governorship in May 1915, the most well-known conscientious attitude was that of Faik Ali Bey. In 1915, he would manage prevent the deportation of Kütahya Armenians without being attacked or risked his life, he also made sure that those who came from other provinces were able to stay in Kütahya.

52 *TACD*, p. 235. The question of this telegram and his manipulation by Taner Akçam have been exposed several times during the last seven years, most recently by Edward J. Erickson: “Book review,” *The Middle East Journal*, LXIX-3, Summer 2015, p. 494.

53 Kâmuran Gürün, *The Armenian File...*, p. 213. For more information on the relocation from Ankara, see Taha Niyazi Karaca, *Ermeni Sorununun Gelişim Sürecinde Yozgat'ta Türk Ermeni İlişkileri* (Ankara: TTK, 2005), pp. 189-237.

[...] There is little information in the Ottoman Archives as to how he managed to do this exceptional resistance.”

Simple logic is already devastating for this way of reasoning. Burçin Gerçek and Taner Akçam had argued from the beginning: “An attitude of this sort meant being relieved of duty or being dismissed from a position as civil servant, and in some circumstances it meant risking death.” (p. 3). And now, they give us the example of a sub-governor who was “not attacked,” who did “risk his life,” in spite of his “conscientious attitude,” and they do not give any explanation on this contradiction. Moreover, this is not a surprise if “There is little information in the Ottoman Archives as to how he managed to do this exceptional resistance.” Indeed, there is no document in the Ottoman archives requesting the relocation of the Armenian community of Kütahya.⁵⁴ Trying to find documents to substantiate their claims about a “resistance” of sub-governor Faik Ali Bey, the authors quote (p. 62) three telegrams sent to Kütahya, but as the quotes they provide themselves prove, these telegrams are about Armenians from other provinces and sent to Kütahya. In other words, they have completely failed to prove any intention of the central government to relocate the Armenian community from this very province. This is not a minor issue, as this community counted more than 5,000 persons at the eve of the First World War,⁵⁵ as this province was not far from İstanbul, and as, to use the words of the authors, Kütahya “became an independent sub-governorship in May 1915,” precisely the month during which the law on forced relocation was adopted.

Concerning the Armenians relocated to Kütahya, and who were eventually not sent to Arab provinces, the authors show once again their penchant for selective quotes. Indeed, they write: “we see that in August 1915, the government began to worry about Armenians deported from other places gathering in Kütahya and remaining there for long a time. First, the Ministry of Interior reminded that ‘The Armenians arrived in Kütahya should be sent to Aleppo.’” Once again, the exact date of the document is not provided, however it is not difficult to find the full text:

“All the Armenians arriving in Kütahya shall be transferred to Aleppo. Any expense to be made for the Armenians shall be met from the Immigrants Fund. A money order of a hundred thousand kuruş is about to be sent for that purpose.”⁵⁶

54 Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *The Story of...*, p. 91, n. 220.

55 Justin McCarthy, *Muslims and Minorities...*, p. 80.

56 Telegram of Suhbi, on behalf of the Minister of Interior, 19 August 1915, *TACD*, p. 227.

The reason of this omission is clear: Such an order is in formal contradiction with the claims of Celâl Bey (previously analyzed) and Taner Akçam on an alleged absence of care, from the Ottoman central government, toward the relocated Armenians.

The end of the booklet has an even slimmer basis. The example studied here is the one of İzmir (p. 65):

“French Marine [sic: Navy] Archives [more exactly the Intelligence service of the Navy] describe how Manisa sub-governor Tevfik executed orders only superficially and saved Manisa Armenians. In the same way, it was mentioned that Aydın Gendarme Commander Nuri tried to prevent the deportation. It was not possible for us to reach any other witness accounts or detailed information on their attitude.

Brigitte Balian with whom we met in Marseilles, expressed that her family was protected in İzmir by Tabbah Dede. Brigitte Balian’s grandfather had a pharmacy in İzmir. Tabbah Dede was an acquaintance of the family. In front of their house, Tabbah Dede announced that no one could touch that family unless they trampled over his body.”

The first paragraph is not based on any research in the French military archives at Vincennes, but are a pure and simple repetition of Raymond Kévorkian’s claims. Due to a technical, temporary problem, I could not check the accuracy of Mr. Kévorkian’s summary. However, another report of the French Navy’s intelligence service observed in 1920 that the Armenians of İzmir had no serious problems with the Turks, “even during the war,” without attributing this difference with eastern Anatolia to any “rescuer” who would have bravely opposed the CUP regime.⁵⁷ Concerning more precisely the city of Ödemiş, the same intelligence service explained in 1919 that the Armenians “prospered even, during the war, because *they were not molested*” (emphasis in the original). Once again, the report does not try to explain this absence of molestation by any “rescuer.”⁵⁸

Regarding now the allegations of Brigitte Balian, it must be noticed that the interview with her took place in 2014, that she was not a witness of the events during the war, and that she could not provide any evidence. Any serious study on the Armenians in İzmir during the First World War should consider first the correspondence between governor Rahmi Bey and the central government.

57 S.R. Marine, Turquie, 16 décembre 1920, SHD, 7 N 3211.

58 S.R. Marine, Turquie, n° 833, 14 juin 1919, SHD, 1 BB7 232.

Rahmi was praised by French, British and American citizens for his actions during the war,⁵⁹ including as far as the Armenians of his whole province were concerned.⁶⁰ Preferring the allegations of a person who was not even born in 1915 to a work in the relevant archives speaks volume on the scholarly level of this booklet.

Conclusion

As we could expect from a research supervised by German sociologist Taner Akçam, this booklet is fundamentally inaccurate, failing to convince because

As we could expect from a research supervised by German sociologist Taner Akçam, this booklet is fundamentally inaccurate, failing to convince because of a non-scholarly use of sources: Some are distorted, some are not used with the necessary precautions, and others are neglected.

of a non-scholarly use of sources: Some are distorted, some are not used with the necessary precautions, and others are neglected. Nowhere in the booklet do the authors present a convincing case about a genocidal intent from the central government and about a fundamental contradiction between the positive actions of local authorities such as Celâl Bey and Faik Ali Bey on one side, the CUP regime on the other side. Orders from İstanbul and punishment of perpetrators in 1915-1917 prove an intention to relocate *a part* of the Ottoman Armenian population, for security reasons, without giving any license to

kill innocents. Neglecting the perfectly well documented actions of Cemal Paşa in favor of Ottoman Armenians, Burçin Gerçek and Taner Akçam even failed to attain the level of sophistication attained by the most subtle supporters of the “Armenian genocide” charge—namely people who graduated in history instead of sociology or journalism.

As a result, this booklet cannot be considered an interesting contribution to the historiography, even a flawed one, but an example favoring prejudice and pre-conceptions over scholarship.

59 Pétition de notables français, britanniques et américains en faveur de Rahmi Bey, 8 février 1919, Centre des archives diplomatiques de Nantes, 36 PO/1/42, dossier Smyrne.

60 Letter of Charlton Whittal to General Townshend, 10 February 1921, FO 371/6499/E 2265.

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France

Centre des archives diplomatiques de Nantes, 36 PO/1/42.

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