

DISINFORMATION: THE NEGATIVE FACTOR IN TURCO-ARMENIAN RELATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

When the Seljuk Turks began their influx into eastern Anatolia in the eleventh century CE¹, they came across a Gregorian Christian people, the Armenians, who called themselves *Hay* (plural *Hayk*), and the region they inhabited as *Hayastan*. Probably they belonged to a Thracian-Phrygian group of people that migrated to eastern Asia Minor in the sixth century BC under the pressure of the Illyrians.² From the Balkans they spread haphazardly into Anatolia, the Ararat region and the Caucasus, in which areas they intermingled with Jews, Greeks, Romans, Persians, Arabs, Mongols, Kurds and Turks, forming scattered communities all over the place without being in the majority anywhere.³

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1 'CE' stands for Common Era.

2 Both C.F. Lehmann-Haupt, *Armenian einst und-jetzt*, 3 volumes, Berlin, 1930-1, and F. W. König, *Handbuch der Chaldischen Inschriften*, Graz, 1955, support this view. See also Eric Feigl: *A Myth of Terror*, Salzburg, 1986, p. 23. Sarkis Atamian states that the Armenians came from Thessaly in Greece, see his book *The Armenian Community, the Historical Development of a Social and Ideological Conflict*, New York, 1955. See also *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 1, London, 1974, p. 529.

3 William L. Langer, *Diplomacy of Imperialism*, Vol. 1, New York, 1956, p. 147; see also Sadi Koças, *Tarih Boyunca Ermeniler ve Türk-Ermeni ilişkileri*, Ankara, 1967, p. 15.

Owing to the fact that they belonged to the Gregorian sect of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Christian Church, professing the faith recognised at the Council of Ephesus in 431, and rejecting everything favouring Nestorianism, including the declaration of the Council of Chalcedon in 451⁴ that the person of Christ consists of two natures, they became known as Monophysites (a view which claims that Christ has one nature).⁵ The second Council of Dvin confirmed this ruling in 554, under the presidency of the Armenian Patriarch, Nerses of Bagrevand, who proclaimed the severance of the ties uniting the Armenian Church with the Constantinople (Istanbul) Patriarchate.⁶ As a result, the Armenians found themselves separated in faith from most of their neighbours and were at loggerheads with the Roman Christians in Constantinople. Many attempts were made to achieve religious unity between the Byzantines and the Armenians, but without success. Hence, strong conflicts developed between the two over the centuries.⁷

On the whole the Seljuk Turks treated the Armenians well.⁸ Relations between them and the Turks reached its zenith following the conquest of Constantinople, in May 1453, by the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II (reigned 1451-1481). In 1461 Mehmet organised the Armenian *millet* (community), as he had previously organised the Greek Orthodox Christians under a Patriarch, by appointing Hovakim (Ovakim), the Armenian bishop of Bursa, to be the Patriarch of all the Armenians within the Ottoman Empire.⁹ Turco-Armenian relations were founded on mutual trust, respect and

4 Salahi R. Sonyel: *The Ottoman Armenians—Victims of Great Power Diplomacy*, Oxford, 1987, p. 4.

5 David Marshall Lang, *Armenia, Cradle of Civilization*, London, 1980, pp. 169 & 171.

6 Malachia Ormanian, *The Church of Armenia*, London, 1955, p. 28.

7 Sir Mark Sykes, *The Caliph's Last Heritage*, London, 1915, pp. 151-2; see also Lang, *op. cit.*, pp. 187-8, and Lang, *The Armenians, A People in Exile* London, 1981, p. 53; Sonyel, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

8 Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, 2 Vols., Vol. 1, Cambridge, 1977, p. 61. See also: Osman Turan, *Selçuklular zamanında Türkiye tarihi*, Istanbul, 1971, p. 18; Refat Yinanç, *Selçuklular ve Osmanlıların ilk dönemlerinde Ermeniler*, Izmir, 1983, p. 179; Azmi Süslü *et al.*, *Türk tarihinde Ermeniler*, Ankara 1995, pp. 77-84.

9 Salahi R. Sonyel; *Minorities and the Destruction of the Ottoman Empire*, Ankara, 1993, p. 38ff.

sympathy, which were to last for centuries. Mehmet placed the Armenians under his protection; he recognised their religion, language and culture, and he converted them into a most trustworthy and loyal element in the Ottoman state. This was so much so that, in time, they became known as the '*tebaa-ı sadıka-ı Şahane*' (loyal subjects of the Sultan), or '*millet-i sadıka*' (loyal community).¹⁰ However, during the period of Ottoman decline in the seventeenth century some of their leaders began to intrigue with the major expansionist powers, mainly Russia.

Tsar Peter 'the Great' (reigned 1689-1725) used them in his grandiose schemes to invade the Caucasus, where the overwhelming majority of the people was Muslim. He made lavish promises to them, which he did not keep. Under Catherine II (reigned 1762-1796), the supreme commander, Prince Potemkin, dreamt of an Armenian kingdom under Russian control,¹¹ but ultimately he and Catherine, too, let them down.¹² Despite their disheartening experiences, Armenian secular and religious leaders supported Russia in its invasion of the Muslim countries of the Caucasus, acting as informers for the Russians against their Muslim rulers, the Persians.¹³ In many ways, the enmity that developed between the Armenians and Turks, including other Muslims, had its roots in Russian expansion into the Caucasus.

Meanwhile, with the eruption of the French Revolution (1789)¹⁴ and, more particularly, the Greek rebellion of 1821, they began to aspire for autonomy or independence. The success of the

10 See also Langer I, p. 148; Koças, pp. 57-59; Mithat Sertoğlu, 'Türk-Ermeni dostluğu düşmanlığa nasıl dönüştürüldü', *Hürriyet* newspaper, 16 November 1981; Edgar Granville, *Çarlık Rusya'nın Türkiye'deki oyunları*, translated into Turkish by Orhan Arıman, Ankara, 1967, p. 19.

11 M. S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, London, 1978, p. 11.

12 Lang, *People in Exile*, pp. 111-12; Charles N. Eliot, *Turkey in Europe*, London, 1900, p. 394; Koças, p. 273.

13 Muriel Ann Atkin, *The Khanates of the Eastern Caucasus and the Origins of the First Russo-Iranian War*, doctoral dissertation, Yale University, 1978, pp. 25-27.

14 See also Bernard Lewis, 'The Impact of the French Revolution in Turkey', *Journal of World History*, I, 1953-54.

Greeks in establishing their own state with the help of the major Christian Powers, stimulated their imaginations and taught them the lesson that, for a minority to realise its ambitions, intervention by such Powers was indispensable. Yet, in Anatolia the Armenians did not possess the same advantages as the Greeks and other Balkan peoples. They were scattered throughout the country; nowhere did they constitute a majority of the population; they were divided into mutually hostile sects (Gregorian, Catholic and Protestant) by the missionaries; they were disorganised; and worst of all, they allowed themselves to be manipulated by the Powers (particularly Tsarist Russia) which vied with each other to despoil the Ottoman Empire. These imperialist Powers considered the Armenians to be merely pawns in their designs for self-aggrandisement. But Armenian militants were determined to get their own way, at whatever cost. Therefore, they tried to capitalise practically on any crisis that the Ottoman Empire faced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, or even to create such crises.

The long struggle between the Muslims and Armenians began in earnest in the Russo-Persian and Russo-Turkish wars of 1827-29. The Armenian subjects of the Persian and Ottoman Empires, as well as those living in the Russian Empire, fought on the side of the Russians against the Muslims.¹⁵ In these wars the pattern was always the same: Russian invasion of Muslim territory, Armenians siding with the invader, huge Muslim mortality and migration, and *de facto* population exchanges of Muslims and Armenians. That is how an Armenian majority was established in what today is the Republic of Armenia, a majority created by the Russians. Yerevan was, until 1827, a Persian province with a Muslim (primarily Turkic) majority. Tsar Paul I (reigned 1796-1801) lured the Armenians by offering their leaders attractive terms to settle in Russian-occupied Muslim territory. Armenians also settled in Karabakh after its occupation by

¹⁵ Accounts and Papers (British Parliament), 34, 1854, LXXII (2199); British Foreign Office documents FO 371/3658/75852, Memorandum by Lewis Heck, April 1919; Shaw and Kural, Vol. 1, *op.cit.*, p. 31; Lang, *People in Exile*, p. 3; James Bryce: *Transcaucasia and Ararat*, London, 1896, p. 335.

Russia.¹⁶ The destruction, or forced migration, of the Muslim population thus enabled the Russians to repopulate the region with Armenians from Persia and the Ottoman Empire,¹⁷ who were ready to collaborate with that state.

The same pattern was repeated in all the other encounters between Russia and Turkey, eg. during the Crimean War (1853-56), the 1877-78 war, etc. Russia used the Armenians to suppress ruthlessly the Muslims, who periodically revolted against Russia.¹⁸ They continued their intrigues with the adversaries of the Ottoman Empire despite the boons provided to the Armenians by the Ottoman state. (These took the form of two reform edicts, the *Gülhane Hatt-ı Şerifi*¹⁹ of 3 November 1839 and the *Islahat Hatt-ı Hümayunu*²⁰ of 18 February 1856, which culminated in the granting of a liberal constitution to the Armenian community²¹ sanctioned by the Sultan on 17 March 1863, “a remarkable document institutionalising a high degree of autonomy” for them.²²) This was the golden age of the Ottoman Armenians who could climb to the highest offices in the administration of the empire,²³ but they frittered it away in their misplaced and misguided zeal to attain their impossible aspirations, and strove to establish an *imperium in imperio*.²⁴

16 Atkin, pp. 11-12, note 254.

17 Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile—the Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821-1922*, Princeton, New Jersey, 1995, p. 31.

18 Firuz Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, Oxford, 1951, p. 7.

19 Sonyel, *Minorities*, pp. 147, 149 and 154.

20 *Ibid.*

21 FO 424/123/Confidential British Foreign Office documents, 4628, part V, No. 148: Lord Dufferin to Lord Granville, 3 October 1881, enclosing a précis of the constitution of the Armenian *millet*, pp. 153-9 and 200-2; see also Vartan Artinian, *The Armenian Constitutional System in the Ottoman Empire 1839-1863*, doctoral dissertation, Brandeis University, 1970, p. 78ff.; *Düstur*, Series I, Vol. II, pp. 938-61.

22 Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (eds.): *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire—the Functioning of a Plural Society*, Vol. 1, *The Central Lands*, New York, 1982, p. 23; see also Atamian, *op. cit.*, pp. 90-91.

23 Sonyel, *Minorities*, p. 209ff.

24 Eliot, p. 395; Koças, pp. 69-70; Djemal Pasha, *Memories of a Turkish Statesman, 1913-1919*, New York, 1973, p. 245; see also Çetin Yetkin, ‘Osmanlıdan günümüze azınlıklar’, *Hürriyet* newspaper, 18-31 August 1987.

Following the Turco-Russian war of 1877-78 in which, as usual, many Ottoman Armenians supported the Russian war effort,²⁵ Turco-Armenian relations deteriorated, culminating in the establishment of various Armenian secret revolutionary and terrorist organisations, notably the *Hintchak* and the *Dashnak*.²⁶ Between 1894-96 there was practically a civil war raging in Anatolia due to the activities of these terrorist organisations. A lull ensued from 1896 to 1909, but in 1909, the Adana incidents erupted in which many innocent people, Turks, Armenians and others, lost their lives.²⁷ Between 1909 and the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, Turco-Armenian relations, which had slightly improved for a while following the Young Turk Revolution in 1908,²⁸ began to deteriorate again.

This dragged on until the Great War. The Ottoman Empire was forced to participate in that war on the side of the Central Powers (Germany and Austria-Hungary), because the Entente Powers (Britain, France and Russia) refused to admit that empire into their alliance as they wished to partition it.²⁹ In that war many Ottoman Armenians sided with Russia and the other Entente Powers, and betrayed their own country. Armenian militants did their utmost to impede the war effort of the Ottoman Empire and to enhance that of the Entente Powers. They revolted in many places and assisted Russia to invade the eastern provinces of Turkey. This led to yet another more catastrophic civil war between the Armenians and the Turks, resulting in the death of millions of people, Turks, Armenians

25 Sonyel, *Ottoman Armenians*, p. 27ff.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 109ff.

27 Salahi R. Sonyel, 'The Turco-Armenian "Adana incidents" in the Light of Secret British Documents (July 1908-December 1909)', *Belleten*, Vol. LI, No. 201, December 1987, pp. 1291-1337.

28 For the Young Turk Revolution and the Armenians see Sonyel, *Ottoman Armenians*, p. 245ff., and *Minorities*, p. 231ff.

29 For the secret treaties aiming at partition see S. R. Sonyel, *Turkish Diplomacy, 1918-1923*, London, 1975, pp. 1-2; see also British Command paper 671 (LI), 1920; H. W. V. Temperley (ed.), *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris*, London, 1924, Vol. VI, pp. 4-22; J. C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East*, New Jersey, 1956, Vol. II, pp. 7-25; and Harry N. Howard, *The Partition of Turkey*, New York, 1966, pp. 181-213.

and others. At one stage the Ottoman government was compelled to evacuate the Armenians from strategic areas, where they were helping the Russians, and to relocate them in less vulnerable regions.³⁰ But Armenian and Entente propaganda and disinformation portrayed this action as 'Armenian massacres'. This description was later elevated to 'genocide', and recently to 'proto-holocaust', with no foundation.

WARTIME DISINFORMATION

According to Harold D. Laswell, propaganda (or disinformation) during the First World War, like in any other war, aimed at the following: to improve inter-Allied relations; to establish amicable relations with neutral states, inculcating in them the idea that the Allies were not only right in their cause, but also, that they would be victorious, and thus procure their support; to demolish the morale of enemy states, and to create dissension among, and hatred against, them.³¹ Obviously states indulging in propaganda found it advantageous in attaining their goals by depicting their enemies, as far as possible, as 'inhuman creatures'. These vital considerations were kept in mind by the Entente Powers, who posed as the champions of 'liberation and independence of subject peoples', based on the Wilsonian principle of self-determination, which they never really cherished.³² When, in 1915, the Ottoman government faced the military necessity of relocating the Armenians, many of whom had revolted against the state and joined with the enemy, an excellent opportunity arose for the Entente Powers to use the Turco-Armenian incidents, which amounted to civil war, for disinformation purposes against the Ottoman government.

These wartime propaganda efforts were enshrined in four books: the first one, edited by Lord James Bryce and written by

³⁰ For the Armenian relocations see Sonyel, *Ottoman Armenians*, pp. 298ff., and *Minorities*, pp. 403ff.

³¹ Harold D. Laswell, *Propaganda Techniques in the World War*, New York, 1927, pp. 195-7.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 62, 66 and 72.

Arnold J. Toynbee, was entitled *Treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire* (Blue Book, London, 1916); the second book was written by Henry Morgenthau, *et al.*, under the title *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* (New York, 1918); the third one was written by Johannes Lepsius and entitled *Le rapport secret du Dr. Johannes Lepsius sur les massacres d'Arménie* (Paris 1918); and the fourth book was the work of Aram Andonian, an Armenian, under the title *The Memoirs of Naim Bey: Turkish Official Documents Relating to the Deportations and Massacres of Armenians*. All these 'masterpieces' of wartime propaganda have been severely criticised and demolished by eminent Western and Turkish scholars. However, space does not allow us to trace the developments that led to their compilation and publication. (Their origin and antecedents are extensively dealt with in my forthcoming book, *The Great War and the Tragedy of Anatolia — Turks and Armenians in the Maelstrom of Major Powers, 1914-1918*.)

THE BLUE BOOK

The *Blue Book* on the so-called 'Armenian massacres' turned out to be one of the most successful wartime propaganda exercises of the British government. It used it to inculcate on world opinion hatred for and denigration of its wartime enemies, the Turks, and rewarded its Armenian 'little allies' with sympathy, flattery and false promises. This effected the major coup of finally winning over the wavering pro-Entente neutrals—the Hashemite Arabs, USA and Greece.³³

According to recent revelations by the American scholar, Heath Lowry, the US Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau, was the chief source of the 'documents' supplied for publication in the *Blue Book*. When one realises that this material, which forms the backbone of what was one of the most effective pieces of wartime propaganda directed against the Turks, was

³³ S. R. Sonyel, 'Turco-Armenian Relations and British Propaganda during the First World War', *Belleten*, Vol. LVIII, No. 222, August 1994, p. 442.

Disinformation: The Negative Factor in Turco-Armenian Relations

supplied to British Intelligence by a neutral US ambassador, and was published as part of British efforts to stir up American public opinion against Turkey and Germany, with the intention of getting America into the war, one cannot help but wonder about the discretion of Morgenthau himself, remarks Lowry.³⁴

Toynbee, a member of the Masterman propaganda bureau, prepared the book. It is based on various 'documents', which he did not check thoroughly for accuracy, and which were gathered mainly from Armenian sources, or from people sympathetic to the Armenians, ie. from second- or third-hand sources, mostly with the help of Morgenthau. It was issued as an official publication in order to give it more authenticity and credibility.³⁵ The *Blue Book* had a devastating effect. Its wicked influence is still extant as it is still being exploited by Armenian activists in perpetuating their hatred towards the Turks, and by certain naïve or pseudo scholars. Its success lay in the fact that it was based on 'atrocities' stories. British propaganda was geared towards such stories, real, exaggerated, or even fabricated,³⁶ because propagandists could flog them to journalists and correspondents, who would then parade them under banner headlines in their journals.³⁷

Arthur Ponsonby explains that "the injection of the poison of hatred into men's minds by means of falsehood is a greater evil in wartime than the actual loss of life. The defilement of the human soul is worse than the destruction of the human body."³⁸ Most, if not all, wartime 'atrocity stories' were fabricated, or exaggerated tremendously; so was the myth of the 'deliberate extermination of the Armenians in Turkey in 1915'.

34 Heath W. Lowry, *The Story Behind Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*, Istanbul, 1990, pp. 76-77; see also Michael Sanders and Philip M. Taylor, *British Propaganda during the First World War, 1914-1918*, London, 1983, pp. 144-46.

35 British Foreign Office documents FO 96/205, Toynbee papers; see also FO 371/3404/162647, p. 2.

36 See also Lucy Masterman, *C. F. G. Masterman*, 1939, p. 298.

37 See also Sidney Whitman, *Turkish Memories*, London, 1914, pp. 120-21.

38 Arthur Ponsonby, *Falsehood in Wartime*, New York, 1971, p. 18.

AMBASSADOR MORGENTHAU'S STORY

As for *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*, American scholar Heath Lowry, who has thoroughly studied the Morgenthau papers preserved in the Manuscripts' Division of the Library of Congress in Washington DC and the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Presidential Library in Hyde Park in New York, has demolished both Ambassador Morgenthau and his story, in his able monograph entitled *The Story Behind Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*.³⁹ This book sheds much light on Morgenthau and his work as the US ambassador in Turkey between 27 November 1913 and 1 February 1916, when he returned to the USA. It should be mentioned here that the confidant and private secretary of Morgenthau were both Armenians. Morgenthau did not know any of the local languages, and had to rely on his Armenian aides.⁴⁰

Morgenthau's book was instrumental in whipping up the Turcophobia that came to typify American public opinion in the 1920s, and its remnants are still visible today. It continues to be the main source for the belief that the Young Turk government of the Ottoman Empire perpetrated a premeditated massacre of its Armenian minority under cover of World War I. Its wicked influence is widespread, as it is treated as a 'primary' source, reflecting the observations of a 'bystander'. It has also served to shape anti-Turkish opinion in many circles. Decades after its first appearance in 1918, it is still reprinted, and quoted extensively in speech and prose.

Its real author, however, is believed to be the Pulitzer Prize-winning American journalist, biographer and historian, Burton J. Hendrick.⁴¹ President Woodrow Wilson also encouraged its publication with the sole aim of fostering public support for the US war effort by indulging in anti-German and anti-Turkish

39 The Isis Press, Istanbul, Turkey, 1990.

40 *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

propaganda, which would win a victory for the war policy of the government.⁴² Even US Secretary of State Robert Lansing took a hand in its preparation by reading the text and making suggestions for amendments, additions or deletions, while asking Morgenthau, in a letter of 2 October 1918, not to mention his name in connection with the book.⁴³ One needs to read Lowry's monograph to realise the extent of the "crude half-truths and outright falsehoods" in Morgenthau's book, "from cover to cover."

Here, suffice it to say that the well-known American journalist George S. Schreiner took Morgenthau to task very severely for having published a book full of falsehoods and exaggeration, and expressed the hope that "ultimately truth will prevail."⁴⁴ In the preface of his book *Craft Sinister* he observes: "It is to be hoped that the future historian will not give too much heed to the drivel one finds in the books of diplomatist-authors. I, at least, have found these books remarkably unreliable on the part played by the author. It would seem that these literary productions are on a par with the Blue Books published by governments for the edification of the public and their own amusements."⁴⁵

JOHANNES LEPSIUS AND THE ARMENIANS

The same criticisms apply to the book of Johannes Lepsius. Lepsius was a German Protestant pastor, president of the German-Armenian Society, which aimed at embarrassing Germany and the Ottoman government.⁴⁶ He, too, was connected with Morgenthau whom he visited in Istanbul. He had arrived in the Ottoman capital

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-63.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65; see also George A. Schreiner, *From Berlin to Baghdad: Behind the Scenes in the Near East*, New York, 1918, pp. 183-213, and his *The Craft Sinister—Diplomatico-political History of the Great War and its Causes*, New York, 1920, pp. 110-135.

⁴⁶ Ulrich Trumppener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 1914-18*, Princeton, 1968, p. 217.

on 24 July 1915, after stopping over in Switzerland, Bucharest and Sofia, where he had lengthy strategy talks with Armenian circles.⁴⁷ After collecting information in those places on the situation in Turkey, mainly from Armenian sources, he went to Istanbul where he was received by the Armenian Patriarch, who fed him with the Armenian version of the incidents in Anatolia. Lepsius also had a number of meetings with Morgenthau, who gave him much information from the files of the US Embassy, based mainly on Armenian sources. When he returned to Germany and began to talk and write against the Ottoman government, his statements were received as exaggerations. The official German view was that the moral responsibility for the Armenian troubles in Anatolia had to be borne by all three Entente Powers (France, Russia and Britain).⁴⁸ The Turkish viewpoint is that Lepsius did not set foot in Anatolia, and did not talk to a single Armenian there. All the information he gathered consisted of what he had learned from the Armenian Patriarchate, and from the reports which Morgenthau had shown him—reports which were mainly based on hearsay.⁴⁹

THE NON-EXISTENT MEMOIRS OF NAIM BEY

Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the Great War (October 1918), the Armenian militants began to publish 'documents' in order to 'prove' that the Ottomans deliberately planned and carried out a 'genocide' against the Armenian minority. An Armenian writer, Aram Andonian, published a book in London, in 1920, under the title of *The Memoirs of Naim Bey: Turkish Official Documents Relating to the Deportations and Massacres of Armenians*. The 'documents' included in the book have been proved to be forgeries. They are typical of militant Armenian machinations that are reflected in many such 'documents' that they forged and dispatched to the governments of the victorious Powers and which

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

⁴⁹ Kâmuran Gürün, *The Armenian File*, London, 1985, p. 69.

Disinformation: The Negative Factor in Turco-Armenian Relations

are now preserved in their archives.⁵⁰ These 'documents' were supposed to include secret instructions, which were allegedly sent by the Ottoman Interior Minister Mehmet Talat (on 15 September 1915), ordering the 'extermination' of the Armenian people.

Yet, even David Marshall Lang, no friend of the Turks, referring to these imaginary secret orders, observes: "The essence of the plan was secrecy. Since many telegraph operators, cipher clerks and local government officials were themselves Armenians, care was taken to avoid putting instructions on paper."⁵¹ But further on he contradicts himself by claiming that Talat Bey telegraphed the governor of Aleppo, 'on 15 September 1915', taking him to task for not having, "without pity for women, children and invalids, however tragic the methods of extermination may be, without heeding any scruples of conscience, terminated their existence." These 'orders', however, have been faked by Aram Andonian, and the 'documents' referred to do not exist.⁵² Two Turkish scholars, Şinasi Orel and Süreyya Yuca, have proved their falsity after meticulous research in the Ottoman archives.⁵³

It should be stressed here that the compiling of forged historical 'documents', for a variety of different reasons, is not a new phenomenon. Recently public opinion was focused upon a series of diaries attributed to Adolf Hitler. Although the falsity of these diaries was soon demonstrated, more than seventy years after the initial publication of Andonian's book it is still necessary to disprove as fabrications the 'documents' upon which it was based. These 'documents' were not accepted as evidence during the trial in Berlin of the Armenian assassin Soghomon Tehlirian, who murdered Talat Pasha in Berlin on 15 March 1921. None of the Andonian 'documents' were allowed to be entered into the court proceedings

⁵⁰ Sonyel, *Minorities*, p. 452 and note 29.

⁵¹ Lang, *People in Exile*, p. 20.

⁵² See also Türkçüoğlu, *The Andonian 'Documents' Attributed to Talat Pasha are Forgeries*, Ankara, 1984.

⁵³ Şinasi Orel and Süreyya Yuca, *The Talat Pasha Telegrams—Historical Fact or Fiction?*, London, 1986, p. vii-viii.

as evidence, hence they were not used; nor did the Allies make use of them when they were desperately trying to find evidence against Ottoman wartime leaders whom they had arrested and incarcerated in Malta, many of whom they wished to try as 'war criminals'.

More than seventy years later, Armenian circles are still insisting on the 'authenticity' of these 'documents'. Meanwhile all of the Andonian 'documents' have conveniently disappeared. It is not possible to locate a single one of them. Given the fact that Andonian himself acknowledges that his book was a work of propaganda, it does not need a genius to imagine what has happened to them.⁵⁴

OTTOMAN GOVERNMENT'S COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

It should be mentioned here that, at the end of the war when Turkey was occupied by the Entente Powers, the Ottoman government under Tevfik Pasha, through its foreign minister, handed five telegrams to the acting British high commissioner in Istanbul, Vice-Admiral Richard Webb, in February 1919. These telegrams were for transmission to the Turkish diplomatic representatives in Denmark, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden. They asked them to invite the governments to which they were accredited, to appoint two members each to sit on a commission of inquiry it had set up in order to determine those responsible for the relocation of Muslim and non-Muslim Ottoman citizens, if any, and for any war crimes. The Entente Powers, however, mainly Britain, blocked the way of such a commission with the excuse that it was not the intention of the British government to encourage neutrals to take part in such a Turkish commission.⁵⁵ This was probably because its findings would have been contrary to the interests of the victorious Powers, who were themselves mainly responsible for the Turco-Armenian conflict and the tragedy that befell the peoples of Anatolia—not only Armenians, but Turks and others.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 213-23.

⁵⁵ British Foreign Office documents FO 371/4173/47293: Richard Webb to Balfour, 25 February 1919; Foreign Office to Webb, 2 April 1919.

CONCLUSION

It is evident from the above examination of a number of wartime propaganda publications that disinformation had a negative and destructive effect on Turco-Armenian relations. The archives of many Western states that had dealings with the Armenians are replete with faked, falsified or fabricated 'documents', mainly by Armenian militants who made extensive use of propaganda to serve their own purposes. Their wicked influence has marred centuries-old Turco-Armenian coexistence in relative amity, trust and even fraternity.

In the field of propaganda no one could surpass the Ottoman Christians, particularly the militant Armenians. They used their positions as dragomans in the embassies and consulates of the major powers to convince those powers of the genuineness of their complaints and to sway their missionaries, relief workers and religious leaders. Many a time a gullible Western journalist was trapped by their clamours, and spread their tales. According to the Reverend Cyrus Hamlin, the first president of the American Robert College (now Bosphorus University) in Istanbul, a propaganda bureau was set up in London in the 1870s (and many more since then),⁵⁶ which had for its object the foreign dissemination of all news prejudicial to the Turks. Hamlin stated that the onslaught of this "one-sided and unreliable information about any people would, after a period of years, stir up a hostility and hatred that could not be easily overcome." "Whenever I pick up a paper of eastern news", he declared, "I pray, oh Lord, endow me with a sense of disbelief."⁵⁷

Because the Turks were inarticulate and religious, had a sense of dignity and decency, and preferred to suffer in silence rather than to vociferate, the Armenians, other Christians and their champions were left unchallenged to spread the wildest myths and messages of hatred

⁵⁶ See also Akaby Nassibian, *Britain and the Armenian Question*, London, 1984, pp. 44-47.

⁵⁷ Eliot Grinnell Mears (ed.), *Modern Turkey*, New York, 1924, pp. 4-5.

about the Turks. When documentary evidence was needed to substantiate their allegations they invented or forged such 'documents', with no sense of responsibility or conscience. Their skill of inventing non-existent 'documents' and, in a sense, presenting white as black, and in many cases getting away with it, is confirmed by numerous pieces of source material in the archives of many states whose governments were often the target of such brain-washing.⁵⁸

According to the American scholar Justin McCarthy, who believes that for more than a century the world has been hearing only one side—the drum-beat of the Armenian 'massacres'—states that, instead of the truth of human disaster that befell all the people of Turkey, a great myth has arisen, the myth of the 'evil Turk' and the 'good Armenian'. Non-Armenians have generally believed the myth because it fits well into a larger, centuries-old myth, the 'terrible Turk'. This myth spoke of a prejudice that has been nurtured by textbooks, sermons, folk tales and ancestral fears of horsemen riding out of the East. The false image of the Turk was too strong to be affected by facts. No matter what evidence the Turks presented, nothing they said was believed.⁵⁹

McCarthy believes that histories of Turco-Armenian relations are "historical distortions", many of them. The 'Armenian question' is seldom mentioned in print without half-truths and falsification. The history of the Ottoman Empire needs revision, he stresses. The history that results from the process of revision is an unsettling one, for it tells the story of the Turk as victim, and this is not the role in which he is usually cast. It does not present the traditional image of the Turk as victimiser—never victim—that has continued in the histories of America and Europe long after it should have been "discarded with other artefacts of nineteenth century racism."⁶⁰

58 See also S. R. Sonyel, 'How Armenian Propaganda Deceived the Christian World in Connection with the Deportations and "Massacres"', *Bellekten*, Vol. XLI, No. 161, Ankara, January 1977, pp. 157-75.

59 McCarthy, *Death and Exile*, p. 92.

60 Justin McCarthy, 'Armenian Terrorism: History as Poison and Antidote', *International Terrorism and the Drug Connection*, 1984, p. 141.