

TURCO-ARMENIAN RELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE JEWISH HOLOCAUST

Dr. SALÂHİ R. SONYEL

Introduction

Tenacious and systematic attempts are being made by a number of Armenian 'scholars' to sway, especially Jewish public opinion, that there is a link between the experiences of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire during World War I, which they label as 'the first genocide of the twentieth century', and those of the European Jewry during World War II. By their persistent attempts, skilful manipulation of the feelings of some Jewish and other sympathisers, and masterful use of distorted, tendentious, and even forged 'documents', they have succeeded in winning over some of those who are the real victims of the Holocaust, and a number of younger generation Jewish writers, such as Yehuda Bauer,¹ Leo Kuper,² and a few others. Is there such a parallel? Let us examine the arguments for and against before we answer this question.

Hitler and the Armenians

The cornerstone of the Armenians' case, if there is such a case, had long been the spurious quotation from a speech which Adolf Hitler is supposed to have made on 22 August 1939, remarking *inter alia*: 'I have given orders to my Death Units to exterminate, without mercy or pity, men, women and children belonging to the Polish-speaking race. It is only in this manner that we can acquire the vital territory which we need. After all, who remembers today the extermination of the Armenians?'

¹ Yehuda Bauer: 'Is the Holocaust explicable?', *Remembering for the future - the impact of the Holocaust on the contemporary world*, Oxford, July 1988, p. 1970; Bauer: *A history of the Holocaust*, London, 1982, pp. 57-8; see also Bauer: 'Essay on the place of the Holocaust in history', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1987, pp. 213, 215 and 217.

² Leo Kuper: *The prevention of genocide*, London, 1985, p. 149; and Kuper: *Genocide and its political use in the twentieth century*, London, 1981, p. 105; see also Lucy S. Dawidowicz: *The Holocaust and the historian*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1986, p. 13.

American scholar Heath W. Lowry has very ably exploded the myth that Hitler has ever referred to the Armenians in his speech³. In fact, Hitler made two speeches on that day at Obersalzberg. He was addressing the three Supreme Commanders of the three branches of the armed forces, as well as the commanding generals bearing the title Commander-in-Chief (*Oberbefehlshaber*); and the text of his speeches were found in the files of the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* (Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces) at Flensburg, and were used as evidence at the Nuremberg trials.⁴ Neither of the Obersalzberg speeches, introduced to the tribunal as evidence, contains any reference to the Armenians. A forged third 'document', which had been leaked to the press and had already appeared in print, was not introduced as evidence after the original minutes of the Obersalzberg meeting were found. This 'document' is the source of the alleged Hitler 'statement' on the Armenians. It was published in the *Times* on Saturday, 24 November 1945.

Yet, according to Lowry, the results of this falsification were far-reaching. The world has been misled for almost fifty years into thinking that the Nuremberg transcripts provided the *Times* reporter with his source for the quotation attributed to Hitler. Armenian spokesmen have since argued that, Adolf Hitler justified his planned annihilation of the Jews on the world's failure to react to the alleged Ottoman 'genocide' of the Armenians during World War I, which is completely unfounded⁵.

Nevertheless Armenians, in their propaganda efforts, are striving to establish a linkage between their own historical experiences, and those of the Jews of Europe during World War II, by making lavish use of the spurious Hitler 'quotation'. Their allegation that Hitler himself cited the world's lack of reaction to the fate of the Armenians, and was encouraged by it, must be very poignant to the Jews⁶. Under the sponsorship of an Armenian-American Congressman, Charles Pashayan, Jr., sixty six elected U.S. Representatives made speeches on 24 April 1984 condemning Tur-

³ Heath W. Lowry: 'The U.S. Congress and Adolf Hitler on the Armenians', *Political Communication and Persuasion*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1985, pp. 111-140.

⁴ Transcript of the Nuremberg Tribunal, TMWC, vol. II, New York, AMS Press, 1961, pp. 285-6.

⁵ Lowry, pp. 119-20.

⁶ See, for example, Terrence Des Pres: *The survivor. An anatomy of life in the death camps*, New York, 1976, pp. 52-3.

key 'for failing to acknowledge its responsibility for the "genocide" of the Armenians', which allegedly transpired eight years before the Turkish Republic came into existence. Seven of the twenty two members of the U.S. Congress (three Senators and four Congressmen), who used the alleged Hitler 'quotation' in the course of their remarks, were Jewish.

Using the linkage conveniently provided by the spurious Hitler 'quotation', the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council has agreed that the Armenians were the victims of the 'first genocide' of the twentieth century, and therefore, deserved inclusion in the planned memorial. In a similar vein, Congressman Glenn Anderson, in his remarks on 24 April 1984, referred to the inclusion of the Armenians in the planned Holocaust Memorial, in the following terms: 'Towards this end, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, established by an act of Congress in 1980, has unanimously resolved to include the Armenian genocide in its museums and educational programs'⁷.

During the past few years, a number of state boards of education in the U.S.A. have adopted holocaust curricula, which include detailed treatment of the Armenian 'genocide' as the precursor of the Jewish Holocaust. The curricula adopted by a number of states stress the spurious Hitler 'quotation' as the tie that binds the Armenian and Jewish experience⁸. Other similar efforts are still continuing.

Even in its forged version, the Hitler 'statement' does not directly or indirectly refer to the Jewish people. It refers to the Poles. Yet, the World Council of Churches, too, has been taken in by Armenian propaganda. In its report for the year 1984, it remarks:

*'When Hitler began his programs, he was warned that the nations of the world would not tolerate his actions, and would not forgive or overlook the atrocities. To this warning he replied, "who today remembers the Armenians"'*⁹.

However, evidence from other Western Christian sources reveals that it was not the so-called 'extermination' of the Armenians by the Otto-

⁷ Congressional Record - House, p. H 2970, 24.4.1984.

⁸ Lowry, pp. 124 f.

⁹ World Council of Churches, Commission of the Churches on International Affairs: *Armenia - the continuing tragedy*, Geneva, 1984, p. 28.

mans that gave Hitler the idea of obliterating the Jews, but the works of Charles Darwin, the British naturalist, particularly his two books: *the origin of species* and *the descent of man*, published in 1859 and 1871, respectively. These books put forward the theory that the best living things were fitted to live, hence 'the survival of the fittest'. According to anthropologist Sheila Patterson:

'The theory of evolution replaced previous rationalizations justifying the domination of the white race. Since the latter had survived and been more successful than the other races, they must be superior to them, not only in organization and efficiency, but in every other field, including the mental and moral.'

This attitude made European nations, in the nineteenth century, more determined to expand their colonies. 'It also helped inspire Hitler in his plan to develop a "master race", and eradicate the Jews and others considered unfit to live'¹⁰.

On the other hand, the 'Andonian documents', too, are forgeries¹¹. These documents are supposed to include secret instructions which were said to have been sent by the Ottoman Interior Minister Talat Bey, 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 detailed instructions on paper'*¹².

But further on he contradicts himself by claiming that Talat Bey telegraphed the Governor of Aleppo, 'on 15 November 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', how-

¹⁰ See *Awake*, vol. 63, no. 3, 8.2.1982.

¹¹ Aram Andonian: *The memoirs of Naim Bey*, London, 1920, p. 64; see also Şinasi Orel and Süreyya Yuca: *Ermenilerce Talât Paşa'ya atfedilen telgrafların gerçek yüzü* (the telegrams attributed by the Armenians to Talat Pasha are not authentic), Ankara, 1983; Türkkaya Ataöv: *The Andonian 'Documents' attributed to Talat Pasha are forgeries*, Ankara, April 1984.

¹² David Marshall Lang: *The Armenians: a people in exile*, London, 1981 p. 20.

ever, have been faked by Andonian, and the documents referred to do not exist.

The Turco-Armenian incidents of 1915

Was there, in reality, a 'genocide' against the Ottoman Armenians in 1915? Before answering this question one needs to define the word 'genocide'. According to Raphael Lemkin, who coined the term himself, 'genocide' means the destruction of a nation, or of an ethnic group. It is a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of the essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves¹³. Hence, the main element of the crime of 'genocide' is the *intention to destroy*.

The term 'genocide' appeared, for the first time, in an official document on 18 October 1945 when the Nuremberg Tribunal indictment charged the defendants with 'the crime of deliberate and systematic genocide'¹⁴. During the first session, on 11 December 1946, the General Assembly of the United Nations passed a resolution on the prevention and repression of 'genocide', and on 9 December 1948, approved a Convention, article 11 of which specified that the crime of 'genocide' was committed 'with the intent of destroying wholly, or partly, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group'¹⁵.

This has four components: 1. it is a state crime and entails the execution of the will of a sovereign state, 2. the victim is always a group (national, ethnic, racial, or religious), implying also political, economic, social, or cultural groups, 3. it leads to the destruction of the group, and 4. there is an intention, a premeditation, a will to annihilate the group. Only planned destruction: the execution of a deliberate scheme may be termed 'genocide'.

In the light of this definition, it is unfair to apply the term 'genocide' in the case of the Ottoman Armenians. There is no evidence to indicate that the Ottoman government had 'an intention to destroy in whole, or in part', the Armenian people. Turks and Armenians, together with Greeks,

¹³ Raphael Lemkin: *Axis rule in occupied Europe*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, 1944, p. 79.

¹⁴ *Procès des grands criminels de guerre*, Tribunal militaire international de Nuremberg, t. 1, 1947, p. 46.

¹⁵ Resolution 260, A III, 9.12.1948.

Jews and other ethnic and religious minorities, co-existed in relative harmony for more than six centuries, and shared a common Anatolian background. During this long period of harmonious relationship, based on common traditions and customs, the Ottoman Armenians, and other non-Muslim subjects of the sultan, particularly those living in urban areas, led prosperous lives, whilst many Armenians served in numerous high offices of the empire, including Cabinet posts. They also contributed to Ottoman culture and way of life to such an extent that they earned the special trust and confidence of the sultans, over the centuries, gaining the attribute of 'loyal nation' (*millet-i sadıka*). The Foreign Minister of the Ottoman Empire during the Balkan crisis in 1912 was Gabriel Noradounghian, an Armenian¹⁶.

Incidents between the Armenians and the Turks began to take place in the early 1880s, when the former, provoked by expansionist powers, who cast covetous eyes on Ottoman territories which they desired to possess, organised themselves in secret (terrorist) societies, and indulged in indiscriminate acts of terrorism, even against their own people. Their acts of violence and terror reached a zenith during the early part of World War I, when the Ottoman Empire was lodged in a life-and-death struggle on several fronts. This gave rise to an internecine conflict between the Turks and the Armenians, which took the form of a civil war¹⁷. As a result, both sides suffered human and material losses.

However, the claim that there was a premeditated and malicious intention, on the part of the Ottoman authorities, to destroy the Armenians, is unfair and impossible to sustain by any objective analysis of historical realities. What happened in 1915 was the implementation of a series of security measures against an ethnic group, many of whose members were not only in open rebellion against the state, but also cooperated actively with the foreign invaders, and indulged in a campaign of terror and murder against the civilian population behind the lines. In fact, Armenian ex-

¹⁶ S.R. Sonyel: *The Ottoman Armenians - victims of Great Power diplomacy* London, 1987, pp. 24 f.; see also T. Çark: *Türk Devleti hizmetinde Ermeniler, 1453-1953* (Armenians in the service of the Turkish State, 1453-1953), Istanbul, 1953; Mesrop K. Krikorian: *Armenians in the service of the Ottoman Empire, 1860-1908*, London, 1977.

¹⁷ See also Justin McCarthy: *Muslims and Minorities, the population of Ottoman Anatolia and the end of the Empire*, New York, 1983, pp. 118 f.

tremists were acting within the framework of a strategy which they had adopted earlier.

The Armenian Hintchak (Bell) Society, which was established in 1887 in Geneva, aimed at stirring up the Armenians in the eastern provinces of Turkey, and in its first programme it declared:

*'We are finally convinced that the chains preventing the evolution of the Armenians in Turkey must be broken, and that the Armenians must recover their independence, no matter what. All is permissible in order to achieve this goal: propaganda, terror, merciless war of the partisans'*¹⁸.

Their long-term aims were to disseminate national sentiments among the Armenians, and to arm and prepare them for guerrilla warfare. In their programme, which was drawn up at their first congress by delegates who were supposed to have come from all over the world, Anatolia was divided into different regions for insurrection, and the way in which the rebellion was to be started was made clear in great detail¹⁹. They confidently expected that, when the whole Ottoman Empire was aflame, the European powers would step in and secure the rights of the small nations. Then, ultimately, it might be possible to unite the Turkish, Russian, and Persian Armenians in a socialist state²⁰.

This is also confirmed by Louise Nalbandian, who states that the programme of the Hintchak Party was directed towards provocation and terrorism in order to incite the feelings of the people against their enemies, and derive benefits from their retaliation. She observes:

'The party aimed at terrorising the Ottoman government, thus contributing towards lowering the prestige of that regime, and working towards its complete disintegration. The Hunchaks wanted to annihilate the most dangerous of the Armenian and Turkish individuals who were then working for the government, as well as to destroy all spies and informers. To assist them in carrying out all of these terroristic acts, the party was to organize an exclusive branch specifically devoted to performing

¹⁸ Pierre Moser: *Arméniens où est la réalité?* Librairie-Edition Mallier, 1980, p. 37.

¹⁹ Enver Ziya Karal: *Osmanlı Tarihi* (Ottoman History), vol. VIII, Ankara, 147-62, p. 13.

²⁰ *Hintchak*, vol. I, no. 1, November 1887, nos. 11-12, October-November 1888, in which their programme is for the first time outlined in full. The best sources are the memoirs of founder Avedis Nazarbek's close associate Khan-Azad: 'Hai Heghaphoghaganie Housheritz', *Hairenik Amsakir*, V, 1927, no. 8, pp. 60-62, no. 9, pp. 52-63; see also Nazarbek's own account in the introduction of his book: *Through the storm*, London, 1899.

*acts of terrorism. The most opportune time to institute the general rebellion for carrying out the immediate objective was when Turkey was engaged in war*²¹.

The Hintchaks were responsible for many atrocities against both the Turks and the Armenians throughout the Ottoman Empire²².

On the other hand, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, better known as the Dashnaktsutiun, which was set up in Tiflis in 1890, in its programme, urged *action* in order to disseminate propaganda against the Ottoman Government, to create, in the country, a continual state of revolution, and to bring to the notice of the European powers the 'misrule of Turkey as regards the Armenians'²³. In a proclamation in 1892, it called upon the Armenians to prepare themselves with hope, belief and determination, so that the signal could be given to their 'brothers in Turkish Armenia' for general revolution²⁴. Only 'an armed revolution and the use of force' could put and end to an 'intolerable situation', it declared. Hence it organised revolutionary bands to fight the Ottoman Government incessantly, to destroy and pillage its institutions, and to terrorise its officials, 'traitors, usurers and all kinds of exploiters'²⁵. Thus terrorism had, from the first, been adopted by the Dashnak Committee of the Caucasus as a policy or method for achieving its ends²⁶. The members of this organisation committed many atrocities in the Ottoman Empire against both the Turks and the Armenians.

The Reverend Dr. Cyrus Hamlin, founder and first president of Robert College at Istanbul, who lived in the country and knew the Turks and the Armenians very well, in a letter he wrote from Lexington, U.S.A., and published in the *Boston Congregationalist* of 23 December 1893, observes that an Armenian revolutionary party was causing 'great evil and suffering to the missionary work and to the whole Christian population' of

²¹ Louise Nalbandian: *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, University of California, Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1963, pp. 110-111.

²² Sonyel: *Ottoman Armenians*, pp. 111 f.

²³ *Daragir H.H. Dashnagtzoutian*, 1892; Mikael Varandian: *Hai Heghapoghagan Badmoutiun* (History of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation), vol. I, Paris, 1932, pp. 80 f.; see also K.S. Papasian: *Patriotism Perverted*, Boston, 1934.

²⁴ Papasian, p. 14; Nalbandian, p. 168.

²⁵ William L. Langer: *Diplomacy of Imperialism*, vol. I, New York, 1956, p. 155.

²⁶ Papasian, pp. 14-5.

certain parts of the Turkish Empire. It was a secret organisation and was managed 'with a skill in deceit'. Hamlin then describes how 'a very intelligent Armenian gentleman', who was an eloquent defender of the revolution, assured Hamlin that they hoped to prepare the way for Russia's entrance to Asia Minor to take possession. The Armenian observed:

'These Huntchagist bands, organized all over the Empire, will watch their opportunities to kill the Turks and the Kurds, set fire to their villages, and then make their escape into the mountains. The enraged Moslems will then rise and fall upon the defenceless Armenians, and slaughter them with such barbarities that Russia will enter, in the name of humanity and Christian civilization, and take possession.'

When Hamlin denounced the scheme as 'atrocious and infernal beyond anything known', the Armenian calmly replied: 'It appears so to you, no doubt, but we Armenians are determined to be free'. Hamlin urged in vain that this scheme would make the very name of Armenia hateful among all civilized people. The Armenian replied: 'We are desperate; we shall do it'. Hamlin described the Armenian revolutionaries as 'cunning, unprincipled and cruel', of Russian origin as 'Russian gold and craft govern it', and called upon all missionaries and Protestant Armenians to denounce it²⁷.

These statements are confirmed by many other serious and impartial writers, officials, and travellers, such as Captain Emilius Clayton, the British vice-consul at Van in 1881, Windham Graves, consul at Erzurum in 1893, C.H. Williams, vice-consul in eastern Anatolia in 1896, Mark Sykes, and others. Armenian activists, however, claim that the Armenian population of Anatolia were loyal citizens of the Ottoman Empire. They reject such statements that Armenians were planning and actively pursuing rebellion with the intent of siding with Russia and her allies against the Ottoman Empire during World War I. Yet, on 30 January 1919, Boghos Nubar Pasha, the leader of the Armenian National Delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, listed the contributions of the Armenians to the war effort of the Allies, as follows:

²⁷ Public Record Office, Turkey No. 6 (1896), Command 8108, no. 214, pp. 38-9; *Boston Congregationalist*, 23.12.1893. Similar utterances were heard by Sir Edwin Pears: *Forty years in Constantinople*, New York, 1916.

'...I must emphasise the fact, unhappily known to few, that, ever since the beginning of the war the Armenians fought by the side of the Allies on all fronts... The Armenians have been belligerents de facto since they indignantly refused to side with Turkey. Our volunteers fought in the French "Legion Etrangère" and covered themselves with glory. In the "Legion d'Orient" they numbered over 5,000, and made up more than half the French contingent in Syria and Palestine, which took part in the decisive victory of General Allenby. In the Caucasus, without mentioning the 150,000 Armenians in the Russian armies, about 50,000 Armenian volunteers under Andranik, Nazarbekoff, and others, not only fought for four years for the cause of the Entente, but after the breakdown of Russia, they were the only forces in the Caucasus to resist the advance of the Turks, whom they held in check until the armistice was signed. Thus they helped the British forces in Mesopotamia by hindering the Germano-Turks from sending their troops elsewhere.

*In virtue of all these considerations the Armenian National Delegation asked that the Armenian nation should be recognised as a belligerent...'*²⁸.

An extract from the November 1914 issue of the Armenian paper *Hintchak*, organ of the Hintchak Party, is very revealing:

'The Hintchak Social Democrat Committee representing the Armenian nation, exposed to vexations and deprived of its rights, which has been working since over a quarter of a century in a bloody path to obtain the liberation of the Armenians in Turkey, now descends, driven by the power of the actual political events, from the Taurus Mountains and the borders of Armenia, down to the battle-field, blowing the trumpet of strife and revolution, to drown in blood the Ottoman tyranny.

In this gigantic struggle where the existence of nations is at stake, the Hintchak Committee as well as the entire Armenian nation, will join their forces, moral and material, and waving the sword of revolution in their hands, will enter into this world war.

As comrades of arms of the Triple Entente, and particularly of Russia, they will cooperate with the Allies, making full use of all political and revolutionary means they possess, for the final victory in Armenia, Cili-

²⁸ *The Times*, 30.1.1919.

cia, Caucasus and Azerbaydjan, being always led by their patriotism, and thus fulfilling their duties towards themselves and towards civilization...'

Relocation of the Armenians

As a result of Armenian insurgence, the Ottoman Government was compelled to take measures for its security. It decided to transfer the Armenian soldiers from fighting units to non-fighting ones, and to evacuate the Armenians from the zone of military operations to other areas where they would be unable to cooperate with the invading enemy forces and cause harm to defenseless civilians behind the lines. Such measures were not directed against all the Armenians. The families of those serving loyally in the army, priests, physicians, chemists, and an important number of Armenian civil servants were exempted.

These were essential measures which any country facing the problem of ensuring security behind its fighting forces would have taken. Action was not taken against the Armenians simply because they belonged to a particular ethnic, religious, or racial group. They were taken against those Armenians in areas where they openly rebelled against the state, massacred civilians, joined or cooperated with the invading enemy forces, or shown open sympathy to the enemy cause.

The Ottoman Council of Ministers issued strict instructions on the mode of relocating the Armenians. These, and rules about the mode of their transport, are included in regulations to be found among Ottoman documents some of which have been published by Turkish historians. In none of these documents is there any mention of 'massacre' or 'genocide'; on the contrary, in every one of them strict instructions are given that the Armenians should be safely taken to their destination and allowed to set up new abodes there²⁹.

Some of these secret documents, including the original instructions issued by the Interior Minister, Talât Bey, connected with the relocations and captured by British Intelligence in Istanbul in the 1920s, are very revealing, as they include strict and explicit rules about the safeguarding of

²⁹ Council of Ministers decree, Prime Minister's Archives (*Başbakanlık Arşivi*), Istanbul, vol. 198, decree no. 1331/163, May 1915.

the lives and properties of the relocated Armenians³⁰. There are many documents in the Ottoman archives indicating that the Ottoman Government tried to implement these measures with the least human suffering. Those officers and officials who were found guilty of negligence, in carrying out these instructions, were tried and punished even with the death penalty, if found guilty. More than ten officials were hanged.

Thus, the authorities, despite the limitations imposed by war conditions, did their utmost to protect the evacuees against any acts of vengeance or brigandage. However, conditions were extremely severe in the region where the army had to cope with both the invading forces and Armenian insurgents; where brigands, deserters, and local miscreants, taking advantage of the war, were at large, and epidemics rampant. When one adds to these the feelings of revenge of those whose kith and kin were massacred by Armenian insurgents, and the acts of some over-zealous officers, perhaps one can realise better the severity of the circumstances.

In the light of these facts, it is impossible to describe objectively these events as a premeditated and organised genocide with an intention to destroy the Armenians. The events were a cycle of action and reaction in war conditions, during which both sides suffered tragic losses; the Armenians losing probably between 300,000 and 500,000 souls, and the Turks and other Muslims over one million. These are certainly deplorable events, all the more so as they happened between Turks and Armenians who had so much in common, and who had lived in peace and harmony for centuries, when left alone, without any external provocation.

It is natural to react against the uncontrollable excesses which occurred during the implementation of these measures, but in the light of the real situation, and the historical background of these events, no one can objectively fit them into the agreed definition of 'genocide', however deplorable they may be found. The sense of objectivity and a knowledge of the antecedents warrant the rejection of the analogy between the Jewish Holocaust and the events of 1915. The two cases are totally different. The Jews were practically obliterated by the Nazis simply because they were Jews. The objective was to destroy them. The existence of such an

³⁰ P.R.O., FO 371/9158/E 5523: Neville Henderson to Lancelot Oliphant, Istanbul despatch, 22.5.1923, enclosing Ottoman documents; see also S.R. Sonyel: *Displacement of the Armenians - Documents*, Ankara, 1978.

intention was firmly established at the Nuremberg trial, through an international verdict, based on solid evidence, obtained from official primary documents.

The 1915 events, however, began with an armed rebellion against the state, perpetuating previous Armenian insurgencies. The Armenian rebels massacred many civilians, cooperated with the invading enemy forces, declared themselves belligerents against their own state, and acted as informers and saboteurs for the enemy, which inevitably called for repression. The Public Record Office in London is full of documents to substantiate this fundamental point³¹. As a result, not only one side, as in the case of the Jews, but both sides suffered heavy losses.

So far no authentic documents have been traced in the Ottoman archives, or in the Public Record Office where a number of other very important Ottoman documents are lodged, captured by British Intelligence during the Allied occupation of Istanbul, to prove the existence of an intention on the part of the Ottoman Government to destroy the Armenians, but many which prove the contrary. None of the publications supporting the Armenian version is based on research in the Ottoman archives which, after all, are the most important source that can throw light on the subject.

Cooperation between the Armenians and the Nazis

During World War II, while the Turkish Government was giving asylum to many Jews fleeing from Hitler's tyranny, anti-Semitism engulfed the Armenian circles in the Nazi-occupied territories. A publication of the Armenian Information Service in New York, entitled *Dashnak collaboration with the Nazi regime*, purports to show that Armenian sympathies with racism had reached dangerous proportions. The following quotation from the Armenian daily *Hairenik* of 19, 20 and 21 August 1936 exposes something much more than prejudice and bigotry:

'Jews being the most fanatical nationalists and race-worshippers... are compelled to create an atmosphere... of internationalism and world citizenship in order to preserve their race... As the British use battleships to occupy lands... Jews use internationalism or communism as a weapon...

³¹ P.R.O., FO 371/1773/16941; *ibid.*, doc. no. 1673; *ibid.*, doc. no. 19793; FO 371/3410/129455; FO 371/6575/E5569; file 2130, and many others.

*Sometimes it is difficult to eradicate these poisonous elements when they have struck deep root like a chronic disease. And when it becomes necessary for a people to eradicate them... these attempts are regarded revolutionary. During a surgical operation, the flow of blood is a natural thing. ... Under such conditions, dictatorships seem to have a role of saviour*³².

In May 1935 the Armenians of Bucharest attacked the Jews of that city, while the Greeks of Salonika attacked the Jews in the August of the same year. During World War II, Armenian volunteers, under the wings of Hitler's Germany, were used in rounding up Jews and other 'undesirables' destined for the Nazi concentration camps. The Armenians also published a German-language magazine, with fascist and anti-Semitic tendencies, supporting Nazi doctrines directed to the extermination of 'inferior' races³³.

This is confirmed by Armenophil Christopher J. Walker, who admits that the Armenians collaborated with the Nazis. According to him, members of the Dashnak Party, then living in the occupied areas, including a number of prominent persons, entertained pro-Axis sympathies. A report in an American magazine went so far as to claim that the Nazis had picked on the Dashnaks to do fifth-column work, promising the party an autonomous state for its cooperation³⁴. Walker goes on to claim that relations between the Nazis and the Dashnaks living in the occupied areas were close and active. On 30 December 1941 an Armenian battalion was created by a decision of the Army Command (*Wehrmacht*), known as the 'Armenian 812th Battalion'. It was commanded by Dro, and was made up of a small number of committed recruits, and a larger number of Armenians from the prisoners of war, taken by the Nazis in their sweep eastwards. Early on, the total number of recruits was 8,000; this number later grew to 20,000. The 812th Battalion was operational in the Crimea and the North Caucasus.

A year later, on 15 December 1942, an 'Armenian National Council' was granted official recognition by Alfred Rosenberg, the German Minister of the occupied areas. The Council's president was Professor Ardashes

³² Quoted by James G. Mandalian: *Who are the Dashnaks?* Boston, Hairenik Press, 1944, pp. 13-4.

³³ Türkkiye Atav: *Hitler and the 'Armenian Question'*, Ankara 1984, p. 91.

³⁴ See also *The Times*, 19.7.1941, p. 5.

Abeghian, its vice-president Abraham Ciulkhandanian, and it numbered among its members Nzdeh and Vahan Papazian. From that date until the end of 1944 it published a weekly journal, *Armenien*, edited by Viken Shant (the son of Levon), who also broadcast on Radio Berlin. The whole idea was to prove to the Germans that the Armenians were 'Aryans', in order to save their skins, claims Walker. With the aid of Dr. Paul Rohrbach they seem to have achieved this as the Nazis did not persecute the Armenians in the occupied lands³⁵.

Conclusion

In summing up, one cannot help but point out that the Republic of Turkey is being summarily indicted and condemned by the extremist Armenians and Armenophiles, of the fallacious charge of 'genocide'. No one denies the tragedy that brought death, suffering and destruction, not only to the Armenians, but to all the peoples of Anatolia, during World War I. What must be disputed is the selective focus on the sufferings of one ethnic group, while ignoring the fate of more than a million Turkish and other non-Christian people, many of whom died under similar circumstances, and at the hands of Armenian revolutionary groups, instigated and supported by Tsarist Russia, whose armies were invading Ottoman territories.

The Armenian revolutionary organisations intended to benefit from the resulting chaos, and to establish, by force, an exclusive Armenian state in an area where the population was preponderantly Muslim³⁶. Ottoman responsibility, if any, must lie in the government's inability to protect its civilian population, both Muslim and non-Muslim, from wide-scale civil war, brigandage, famine and disease, while fighting a world war on five fronts. To label and accept this failure as 'genocide' threatens to deprive the word of its meaning. To compare the events of 1915 in the Ottoman Empire with Hitler's planned extermination of the Jews in World War II is a disservice to the memory of the millions of victims of the Nazis whose only 'crime' was to be born Jewish.

The 'evidence' advanced by Armenian historians to support their claim of a premeditated policy of extermination is a series of forged tele-

³⁵ Christopher J. Walker: *Armenia: the survival of a nation*, London 1980, pp. 356-8.

³⁶ P.R.O., FO 371/4239/164676: P.I.D. Geographical Section, memorandum received on 24.12.1919.

grams attributed to the Ottoman Minister of the Interior, Talat Bey. When these were put forward in 1920, they were rejected even by the British, who were holding more than 150 former high-ranking Ottoman officials in Malta with the intention of charging them with war crimes. After a two-year investigation that included thorough searches in the Ottoman, British, French and U.S. archives, the British Crown Prosecutor's Office decided to drop the charges and to release the detainees. Since then no serious scholar has attributed authenticity to the so-called 'Talat Pasha telegrams'³⁷.

In February 1919, the Ottoman Government dispatched telegrams to the Governments of neutral powers such as Denmark, Switzerland, Netherlands, Spain, and Sweden, asking them to send members to sit on a commission of inquiry in order to ascertain those responsible for 'war crimes'; if any, against the Muslim and non-Muslim citizens of the Ottoman Empire. But the Entente Powers, mainly Britain, intervened and blocked the way, as she did not like 'the meddling' of neutral powers in the affairs of the Allied Powers³⁸.

One can surmise that the Ottoman Government was thwarted probably in order to prevent an independent and impartial tribunal from carrying out a thorough investigation into the 'Armenian massacres', and finding out that the chief culprits responsible for the destruction of the Anatolian people, not only of the Armenians, but also of the Greeks, the Jews, the Muslims, and others, were the imperialist and colonialist Great Powers. These powers had already shared among themselves the carcass of what they are accustomed to term 'the sick man of Europe', even before its demise, and had then used the ethnic and religious minorities to destroy the Ottoman Empire by enticing them with lavish promises, promises which they failed to fulfil³⁹.

³⁷ See also Bilâl Şimşir: 'The deportees of Malta and the Armenian Question' in *Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, Istanbul, 1984, pp. 26-41.

³⁸ P.R.O., FO 371/4173/47293: Admiral Webb to A.J. Balfour, Istanbul cipher telegram, 25.2.1919.

³⁹ See also Elie Kedourie: *England and the Middle East - the destruction of the Ottoman Empire, 1914-1921*, London, 1956; Laurence Evans: *United States policy and the partition of Turkey*, Baltimore, 1965; Harry N. Howard: *Partition of Turkey*, New York, 1966.