

Annihilation, Impunity, Denial: The Case Study of the Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire (1915/16) and Genocide Research in Comparison

Tessa Hofmann

A definition of genocide

“By ‘genocide’ we mean the destruction of a nation or of an ethnic group. [...] Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a co-ordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups. Genocide is directed against the national group as an entity, and the actions involved are directed against individuals, not in their individual capacity, but as members of the national group. [...] Genocide has two phases: one, destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed group; the other, the imposition of the national pattern of the oppressor. This imposition, in turn, may be made upon the oppressed population which is allowed to remain, or upon the territory alone, after removal of the population and the colonisation of the area by the oppressor’s own nationals.”

Raphael Lemkin: *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*. Washington DC, 1944, p. 79 f.

Introduction

A conquered and divided country, a dispersed nation:
Key elements of Armenian history

Armenia: Once a vast highland in the north of the Near East, covering more than 300,000 square kilometres. A mountainous land between the Little Caucasus in the Northeast, the Pontos ridge in the north, the lowlands of Mesopotamia in the south and the western stretch of the Euphrates. A country of extremes: cold in winter, hot in summer. Poor in water with

the exception of its three lakes Urmia, Van, and Sevan. A country only rich in stones. The inhabitants had to struggle hard to make this grand, but adverse landscape a home. They had to clean the soil from stones and to build channels and reservoirs in order to irrigate the fertile, but dry soil.

Being of strategic importance and crossed by ancient roads of transit trade, such as the Silk Road, Armenia became a bone of contention, and regional powers fought on Armenian territory in order to possess and control it: in the east the neighbouring empires of Iran and, from 1827 onwards, Russia, in the West those of Rome, Byzantine and, since the 16th century, Ottoman Turkey, with invasions by the Arab Caliphate and Mongol rulers in between. Devastation by war, conquest, foreign rule and foreign law, the partition of the country between contesting hegemonies - all this was known to the Armenians at a very early stage of their nearly three millennia of history.

After the Turkish Seljuks from Uzbekistan conquered Armenia and other parts of the then Byzantine Empire in 1071, hundred of thousands of Armenians fled their homeland. This was the origin of a lasting Armenian Diaspora (spyurk) whose number increased at every crisis in Armenian history: after the pogroms under Ottoman rule 1894-1895, after the Genocide (1915/16) of the Ottoman Armenians and, most of all, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Today, only three of the estimated eight or nine million of the Armenian world population live in Armenia.

As a nation, the Armenians would not have survived the partitions, deportations, the loss of their state and liberty and the Diaspora had they not developed their distinct identity. Armenian traditional identity is deeply rooted in Christian religion, which was introduced by king Trdat (Tiridates) the Great about the year 301. A century later and eleven hundred years before Martin Luther did the same for the Germans, Mesrop Mashtots translated the Bible into Armenian, thus helping to reinforce the new religion. Armenia was not the first state to accept Christianity as a state religion. But after the fall of older Christian kingdoms, such as Edessa, the Armenian-Apostolic Church survives as the most ancient Christian national church. As a religious institution, the Armenian Apostolic Church became a substitute for the state during five hundred years of statelessness.

Under Ottoman Rule: Armenians as part of the “raya”. Attempts for legal emancipation, European intervention, failing reforms and Turkish reactive nationalism: the stage is set for genocide.

After 150 years of wars, the Treaty of Diyarbekir ended the Iranian-Turkish fight over Armenia with a partition which brought all Armenia under Ottoman rule with the exception of the Armenian homelands in the East of Transcaucasia. Under Muslim rule the Christian Armenians were, as all Non-Muslim nations, part of the so-called flock, the raya. This meant that they were permitted to exercise their religion, but under numerous restrictions. Their loyalty was questioned, and therefore they were exempt from national service. They had to pay additional taxes, and they were obliged to indicate by their dress that they belonged to a despised minority. According to Muslim conventional law, Jews and Christians were inferior to Muslims and lacked many civil rights.

The European powers, in particular Great Britain, France and Russia urged the Ottoman government to improve home affairs by reforms, and reluctantly, after several military defeats,

the Ottomans gave in. During the tanzimat ¹⁾ -period of 1839-1876, two Imperial decrees were released, promising the legal equality of all Ottoman citizens, and the first Ottoman constitution (1876) secured equality, however, without abolishing the Muslim millet ²⁾ -system, which had caused the political and legal hierarchy of various populations. Furthermore, the constitution was almost immediately abolished by sultan Abdülhamit II.

For the Armenians, the situation worsened considerably after the Russian-Ottoman war of 1877/8 when the Six Great Powers of Europe obliged Ottoman Turkey to introduce administrative reforms in the “provinces inhabited by the Armenians” (§ 61 of the Berlin Treaty, 1878). This was the first time that the so-called Armenian Question ³⁾ became a matter of international law, but this did not improve the situation, on the contrary.

Before the background of a collapsing feudal empire whose colonies, one after the other gained independence, the Ottoman government reacted with increasing nervousness to European urges for the implementation of the “Armenian reforms”. Sultan Abdülhamit II, whom the British Premier Gladstone called the “Red Sultan” after the slaughters of 15,000 Bulgarians (April 1876), tried to prevent the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire by Pan-Islamism, thus unifying the Empire’s Muslim nations and channelling their religious bias against the “treacherous” Ottoman Christians. Successfully delaying the implementation of any reforms for 30 years, the Red Sultan understood very well the irresolution of the European Powers, caused by conflicting national interests. He also understood that the demand for reforms was lip-service, and that neither France, nor Russia would intervene for the “schismatic” Armenians, whose church did not belong to the Catholic or Orthodox camp. They would not fight for the Armenians, as France had done for the Catholic Maronites of Lebanon, or Russia for the orthodox Bulgarians, Serbs or Greeks.

During 1894-1896, up to 300,000 Armenians were killed at subsequent pogroms in Sasun (South Armenia), Constantinople, Erzurum, Trabzon, Urfa, Van and other cities, and 100,000 more had fled the country. Entire regions had been laid waste. A new slaughter occurred in Cilicia, April 1909, after the chauvinist Committee for Union and Progress (CUP; Ittihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti) had overthrown Abdülhamit’s rule in a military coup d’etat, this time with a victim toll of 30,000.

Notes

- 1) tanzimat: “decree”, “instruction”; free translation: “reform”- period
- 2) The Arab term millet (“nation”) does not fully correspond the modern European definition of a nation. It is applied to religious, not ethnic and/or language communities. The following religions and Christian denominations were officially recognized as a millet under Ottoman rule: Yahudi millet-i, Rum millet-i (Greek-Orthodox), Ermeni millet-i (Armenian Apostolic, originally also Syriac Orthodox), and from the 19th century Katolik millet-i (Roman Catholics) and Protestant millet-i. As a consequence, Protestant or Catholic Armenians were not members of the Ermeni millet-i and were not concerned by the state regulations for this “nation”. In Ottoman statistics, the figures for “Armenians” were always this for the members of the Armenian Apostolic church. The state approved millets were granted a certain internal autonomy, as far as legal matters between their members were concerned. Conflicts between a Jew or Christian and a Muslim were ruled under the general Ottoman law.
- 3) The content of the Armenian Question changed. In the late 19th and early 20th century, it meant the implementation of administrative reforms according to the Berlin Treaty. After the genocide, however, it became a synonym for the punishment of the genocide perpetrators, later a synonym for the recognition of the Armenian genocide as historical fact.

Mets Yerern - the Great Crime: Profile of a Genocide

When did it start: The methodical problem of determining the beginning

In research on the Armenian genocide, the question about the exact starting point remains unanswered. Whereas Vahakn N. Dadrian, the Nestor of Armenian genocide research, suggests a continuation of the genocidal policy from the reign of Abdülhamit, Dadrian's Turkish junior colleague Taner Akçam suggests that the fatal decision for genocide developed after the Balkan Wars of 1912/13 and finalised after the Ottoman Empire had entered the First World War. The determination of the exact date of the decision on genocide is important in several aspects. An early date before the Balkan Wars would imply that there was planned intention for genocide as a result of an increasingly chauvinist ideology, whereas Akçam adheres to the theory that the decision on genocide came as a reaction to substantial losses of Ottoman territory during the Balkan War and also to losses of Ottoman forces during the disastrous campaign against Russia at the end of 1914. The contemporary German documenter of the Armenian Genocide, Dr. Johannes Lepsius, mentioned April 21, 1915, as the decisive date.ⁱ⁾

Recently, there is a more comprehensive point of view, combining both perspectives. Looking back at the ideological development of chauvinist Turkish nationalism, one understands that it took a very clear anti-minority stand from the start. As early as 1910, Young Turkish assemblies discussed the "Ottomanization" of the multiethnic and multi-religious Ottoman state, meaning compulsory Turkification by means of lingual and cultural assimilation, but not excluding the use of mass violence in case assimilation programs failed.

The main phases

1. The initial phase

a) ideological preparation: dehumanising the victim group in self-defence

Genocide starts in the mind of the perpetrator. It starts the moment a human being or even a co-citizen, as was the case with the Ottoman Armenians, is traditionally despised or belittled and eventually reduced to being a traitor, an "internal enemy" or worse, to be a "microbe", a "virus" or even a "cancer" threatening the sound body of the entire nation. "The Armenian bandits were a load of harmful microbes [mikroplar] that had afflicted the body [bünye] of the fatherland [vatan]. Was it not the duty of the doctor to kill the microbes?"ⁱⁱ⁾ Others compared the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire to weeds and the perpetrator's task with a gardener, who has to weed his garden. The Social-Darwinist, pseudo-medical logic of this thinking requires a treatment: viruses and microbes must be purged, the body of the nation must be cleansed. It is no surprise that the telling expression of "ethnic cleansing" goes back to the Young Turks.

Defensiveness is another feature of genocidal thinking and planning. According to genocidal vindication, the perpetrator kills in self-defence.

b) elimination of potential resistance

From the point of view of a genocide perpetrator, genocide planning demands the elimination of potential resistance at an early stage of preparation. The Young Turks expected resistance from the politically most active section of the Armenian population. Those were the members of two socialist parties, which in the past had fought the regime of Abdülhamit, including armed attacks on representatives of the repressive state or its institutions. After the revolution of the Young Turks in 1908, however, these parties, which in no way were representative for the average Ottoman Armenian, renounced and refrained from such activities. Nevertheless, Paramaz, the leader of the more radical Hnchaks, and in the past an active fighter against the Sultan's tyranny, was arrested together with 19 other members of his party as early as July 14, 1914. Nearly a year later, on June 15, 1915, the twenty Hnchaks were executed by hanging in front of the War Ministry, allegedly for planning an attempt on War Minister Enver. Arrests of members of the less radical Dashnaktsutyun Party, once a political ally of the exiled Young Turks, followed. Until early April 1915, most Dashnak were imprisoned.

The elimination of potential resistance was not limited to political activists. Young Turks had introduced national service for all male citizens of the Ottoman Empire ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ regardless of their religion. As early as 1914, Christian conscripts were rounded up for compulsory labour, starting with Greeks aged 18 to 45 or older and, in September 1914 the Armenians, who were conscripted from age 16 to 60. In all, there were up to 120 Ottoman labour unit battalions, the so called hamalar taburlari - units for carrying provisions and heavy loads of ammunition for the combat troops - or amele taburlari - units fixing roads. The Ottoman Army's labour units of those years consisted of Non-Muslims, most of them Armenians. Working conditions were horrible. They were malnourished and not provided with proper uniforms, boots or lodging. Consequently, they died by the thousands from starvation, exhaustion, and epidemics. Those surviving were finished off with bayonets, once they had completed their task. Locally, women, too, were recruited for compulsory work, but these cases have not yet been studied in detail.

After the massacres of 1909, the Ottoman government not only allowed Christians to possess firearms for their defence, but in many places they were encouraged or even compelled to obtain weapons. The Dashnaktsutyun Party received guns from the Young Turks in order to defend the Ottoman constitution in case of another counter-revolution. Under the pretext of confiscating these guns, beginning in the autumn of 1914, Armenian villages, cities or quarters were raided. The raids were accompanied by torture and humiliation of male inhabitants, often priests, and by the rape of women. Terrorised as they were, the raided Armenians agreed to "deliver" allegedly hidden weapons, even if they had to buy them for this purpose, usually at tremendous expense. The confiscated weapons were then photographed, and the photographs served as a concocted proof of an Armenian uprising and treason.

Under these circumstances, organised resistance to genocide was nearly impossible. But despite the lack of experienced leaders and despite the lack of weapons and ammunition, the inhabitants of several cities reacted with attempted resistance to the increasing persecution and final annihilation. The first case was in the city of Van, where Armenians outnumbered the Muslim population. After 24,000 Armenians had already been slaughtered in the province of Van, 70,000 reached the Armenian quarter of the city of Van and were able to defend

themselves from April 7-20 ⁴⁾ , 1915, until the advancing Russian Army reached Van on May 3-16. The resistance at Van was immediately used by Ottoman authorities to justify further reprisals. Another successful case of resistance was the defence of seven villages at the foot of Mount Moses, Musa Ler in Armenian and Musa Dağ in Turkish. Defending themselves on a mountain overlooking the sea, more than four thousand peasants of Musa Ler could be evacuated by Allied navy vessels. But most attempts of resistance in the hinterland failed, and defenders were mercilessly slaughtered or forced to join the death marches.

c) decapitation of the victim group: the elimination of the Armenian elite - the meaning of April 24

Until WW1, the Ottoman capital, Constantinople was still a predominantly Christian city, whose Greek and Armenian population outnumbered the Muslims; nearly 250,000 of the inhabitants were Armenians. The history of Constantinople's Armenian community went back to the 6th century. In the 19th century, The City (polis in Greek, bolis in Western Armenian) attracted many Armenian intellectuals from the Eastern provinces. In fact, Constantinople was, together with Tiflis in the Russian Empire, the most important spiritual and intellectual centre for Armenians.

On April 24, 1915 hundreds of Armenians were arrested and, after a few days in the Central Prison of Constantinople, deported first to the village of Ayaş or the town of Çankırı, both near Ankara, where they stood trial. After the court failed to prove any guilt of treason, the more prominent Armenians were sent via Adana and Aleppo to Diyarbakir. According to the Turkish scholar Akçam, the total number of arrests in Constantinople is 2,345. Only a few of them were released. Some were killed on the way, the others tortured, tried and murdered in Diyarbakir, the capital of the province of the same name, whose governor Reşid Bey was notorious for his cruelty and hatred of Christians.

For Armenians, April 24 is the starting point of their genocide, and is annually commemorated as a day of mourning by all Armenian communities of the world. For it was on this day that the elite of the Ottoman Armenians perished. Among the victims were gifted poets, journalists, scholars and spiritual leaders.

2. In full swing: the main phase

The “white” and the “red” ways of extermination

In early Christian theology, white martyrdom meant self-exile for the sake of Christ, whereas the red martyrdom meant violent death. In a similar way, Ottoman Greeks called massacres and atrocities red sphagi (“massacre”), whereas the more indirect ways of annihilation - exhaustion or starvation - were called white sphagi. One could also call them the rapid and the slow ways of dying. Both ways were equally fatal.

4) Dates given in the old and new style, that is according the calendar system of Pope Jules or Gregory. At the time given, the difference between both systems was 13 days. The more ancient “Julian calendar” was valid in the Ottoman Empire as well as in the Russian Empire.

a) massacres and holocaust; explaining the historic origin of the word

Physical extermination was not enough. Before their death, the victims of the Armenian genocide were degraded, humiliated, tortured and eventually murdered in ways, which indicate immense cruelty. Henry Morgenthau, the American Ambassador in Turkey until 1916, mentioned that the Young Turkish leaders studied the protocols of the Inquisition in order to learn new methods of torture.

Massacres occurred in the initial phase of the extermination, for their main tactical purpose was terror and elimination of potential resistance. Therefore their victims were predominantly adult men. Under guard, they were led away from their native towns and killed at the first remote spot.

There were, of course, many exceptions. Women were in no way safe from atrocities and the sadism of their tormentors. Pregnant women and priests ^{iv)} seemed to particularly provoke sadistic fantasies.

The British scholar Mark Levene called this a “pathological need to mentally and physically torture Armenians as much as possible before killing them”. Levene concludes: “Sheer hatred for the victims explains some of it. Misogyny, too, clearly played a major role in the specific degradation, violation and mutilation of women, though with the added bonus for the perpetrators that this also degraded and traumatised whole victim families and communities. But there was also something else: the enjoyment factor.” ^{v)}

Burning victims alive was already practised during the reign of Abdülhamit II. Corinna Shattuck, a missionary from the USA, described in a letter the death of 3,000 Armenians who were burnt alive in their cathedral at Urfa on the 29th of December, 1895, as a Holocaust. This expression was repeated by the Jewish-French journalist Bernard Lazare in 1898. In one of his poems about the slaughter in Adana 1909, the prominent Armenian poet Siamanto wrote, based on a true story, about a group of Armenian women, who were compelled to dance while being torched. In his book about his own family, the US-Armenian poet and scholar Peter Balakian published the account of an Armenian from Diyarbakir, who watched a similar scene in her native town in 1915. In Bitlis and Mush, the initial massacres of men continued with the burning of ten thousand elderly people, women and children.

As a means of mass killing, this was repeated in 1916 during the liquidation phase of concentration camps in Mesopotamia. On October 9, 1916 the police chief of Deir-ez-Zor, Zekki Bey, “ordered to pile great stacks of wood and spilt 200 cans of petroleum on the whole stack. He lighted it and then had 2,000 orphans, bound hand and feet, thrown into the pyre.” ^{vi)} At the same town of Deir-ez-Zor, the Jewish officer of the Ottoman army, Eytan Belkind, observed the following: “The Armenians were told to collect thistles and thorn and to pile them to a huge stack. After that all Armenians were bound hand to hand, about five thousand people, and arranged to a circle around the thorn stack, and then they were torched... The screams of the unfortunate victims, who burnt to death in the huge fire, could be heard for miles.” ^{vii)}

Caves in the oil-rich area of north Syria were used for the same purpose of mass burning. In the caves of Shaddadeh (Syria), which is still called “Ditch of the Armenians” (Chabs el-Ermen), 80,000 deportees were burnt and suffocated alive in burning petroleum. ^{viii)}

b) deportation as death march

Since ancient times, rulers in the Near East used to deport populations in order to consolidate their own regime or improve the economy of their kingdoms. Such was the habit of the ancient Assyrian and Iranian rulers, and the Byzantine emperors and Ottoman sultans continued this tradition. Although deportation originally was not meant to physically annihilate the uprooted population, it often happened that the circumstances of deportation led to a high victim toll. The collective Armenian memory recalls the deportations by Shah Abbas I, when up to 100,000 Armenians were driven away from their native provinces of Van, Yerevan and Nakhichevan in February 1604 during the Iranian retreat from the advancing Ottoman army. One fifth of the deportees drowned when compelled to cross the icy waters of the Arax river.

However, the deportations forced upon the Ottoman Armenians, which started as early as February 1915 in Cilicia and then continued in the Eastern provinces, were no repetition of these earlier experiences. Abbas I was interested in the mercantile abilities of the surviving Armenian deportees and provided privileges to their new communities in Iran. Although the Young Turks of 1915 gave the deportation (*sevkiyat*) a legal appearance with a Temporary Law issued by the Council of Ministers on May 27, 1915, three months after the deportations began, they did not intend the deportees to survive. The Temporary Law did not even mention the Armenians. In the administrative language of the time, suspicious persons were relocated.

After a time of high tension and terror, when the prominent Armenians of a town or region had already been arrested, tortured and killed, and many of the adult men conscripted to the labour battalions, the remaining population was notified that they had to leave their homes within a few days, in some cases even within a few hours. They were not allowed to carry many possessions with them. Most valuables sold before deportation were sold far below the market price. If the deportees were allowed to use carts and draughts, these were taken away as soon as the convoys approached the mountains. For most of the time, they had to walk by foot, regardless of age, gender or health. Naturally, old people, infants, the sick, disabled and pregnant women were the first victims of these marches. The deportees walked in convoys guarded by armed policemen, who alone decided when to rest and when to drink. The most difficult, tiring and preferably lonesome roads had been chosen, for the planners of these death marches tried to avoid witnesses. En route, the defenceless deportees, in particular those from the Eastern provinces were attacked, robbed and slain by gangs of the local Muslim population or by killing squads of the Special Organisation. The further south they went the more the deportees resembled staggering agonised skeletons.

In a later stage of the deportation, Armenians were permitted to use the Baghdad railway for transport. For this service they had to pay high prices. The deportees did not travel in normal wagons, but in those used for transporting sheep. That meant the deportees could not stand or even sit in a normal position but had to squat for days. Women were giving birth, while others were dying.^{ix)}

Secondary victims of these death marches were the local Muslim population in areas crossed by Armenian deportees, who in lack of any hygiene became infected with typhus and other epidemics. Under conditions of war, the Ottoman government had no human resources to cover up the death marches. Corpses lay unburied, often in wells for drinking water. The river Tigris and the Euphrates turned red from the many corpses floating there after the deportees

had crossed these rivers. Infected by the living and dead deportees, at least one million Muslim Ottoman citizens fell victim to typhus. “This was the vengeance of the murdered Armenians against their henchmen,” wrote the Austrian Military Plenipotentiary, Joseph Pomiankowski ^{x)}.

c) the liquidation of the concentration camps 1916

Despite massacres, exhaustion and starvation en route, about 870,000 Armenian deportees had arrived in the desert areas of Syria and Mesopotamia. Several concentration camps had been established near stations of the Baghdad railway that ran along the banks of the Euphrates. Living conditions were disastrous. In a very short period of six or seven months, tens of thousands died from epidemics and starvation: in the concentration camp of Islahiye 60,000 (autumn 1915-early 1916), in the concentration camp of Mamoura about 40,000 (summer-autumn 1915), in the concentration camps of Radjo, Katma and Azaz about 60,000 (autumn 1915-spring 1916), in the concentration camps of Bab and Akhterim about 50-60,000 (October 1915-spring 1916), in the camp of Meskene about 60,000 (November 1915-April 1916) and in the camp of Dipsi about 30,000 (November 1915-April 1916). ^{xi)}

From spring 1916, a second phase of annihilation started: Most camps were “cleared” by death squads of the Special Organisation (mostly ethnic Circassians, Chechens and local Arab tribes) who butchered the population of one camp after the other or burnt tens of thousands alive in oil-rich cave systems such as Shaddadeh, which they set ablaze. In other cases, Armenians were driven into the interior of the desert region and left to a “natural” death of starvation or typhus. The most notorious camps were those of Deir ez Zor-Marat (192,000 victims during November 1915 - June 1916; 150,000 victims were slaughtered between Souvar and Shaddadeh) and Ras-ul-Ain (about 14,000 victims; 30,000 more died from starvation and epidemics in nearby areas). In all, 630,000 of the 870,000 deportees perished; of these victims, 200,000 died during massacres in the area of Ras-ul-Ain and Deir-ez-Zor.

3. Gleaning: The continuation of genocide 1919-1922

Further killings followed when the Turkish army crossed the border to the previous Russian Empire in autumn 1917 and 1920, this time under the new regime of Mustafa Kemal. In the cities of Alexandropol (now Gyumri/Armenia), Kars (Turkey), Baku (Azerbaijan) and Shushi (Nagorno Karabakh) new slaughters occurred, committed by ethnically mixed units of Azeri and Kurdish irregulars. In Baku alone, 30,000 Armenians were killed with approval by the victorious Turkish army in September 1918.

Still more killings followed when General Mustafa Kemal, a member of the Young Turkish party and the Special Organisation, integrated into his so-called liberation army those Young Turks who had been tried in absentia by Ottoman Special Military Courts in 1919 and 1920 for war crimes and crimes against the Armenians. In 1920 and 1921, Armenian survivors who were encouraged by Britain and France to return to their homeland in Cilicia were slaughtered and expelled by Kemalist liberation units.

The protagonists of genocide

In cases of genocide, the set of behavioural pattern is limited to four options: The perpetrators, the by-standers (by far the majority, whose indifference is a pre-condition for a successful genocide), the victims (not an optional behaviour, of course) and their supporters or saviours ^{xii)}. In the case of the Ottoman Armenians, as in subsequent cases, potential supporters were frightened by the menace of legal persecution. Offering shelter or help to Armenians was prosecuted by law and threatened with the death penalty, although we do not know of legal executions. Civil servants who took a neutral or even supportive position or objected to carrying out the orders of the CUP institutions, were soon substituted by ardent and obedient members of the CUP, in some cases murdered.^{xiii)} Actually, quite a lot of Muslim Ottomans did shelter Armenian deportees, in particular women and infants. Their motives, however, were not merely altruistic. Many profited from the victims' lack of options and exploited the Armenian women or children sexually and/or as slaves.

The victimisation of the Ottoman Armenians has a long history. As a result of the millet-system, members of the *raya*, that is Christians and Jews, were banned from many professions. Similar to the situation of Jews in medieval Europe, some Christians and Jews specialised in professions linked with finance, with investments, credits and interest, for faithful Muslims as well as faithful Christians were forbidden by their religions to lend money and to charge interest. This led to visible Christian wealth and to Muslim social envy. There was a clear discrepancy between the high ranking economic and social influence of certain Christians and the general legal and political inferiority of Ottoman Christians.

The CUP regime changed matters. The previous lack of Muslim interest in finance, business and enterprise turned into the clear intention to also turkify Ottoman economies, not only by confiscating the property of Christian victim groups, but by substituting them in their high ranks of economic leadership.

The victims: Gender and age group related features of the Armenian genocide (the plight of men, women and children during genocide)

There is a remarkable gender division in the Armenian genocide, as far as the average treatment of adult men and women is concerned. The separation of men and women is another distinctive feature of this genocide, which was repeated more recently in the genocide in Bosnia. Children and old people were especially vulnerable targets. Mothers tried to save their infants by offering them to Muslim women. Many more watched in helpless despair, when their children died during the marches. On average, however, children were left alone once their parents died. As an Armenian deportee observed, mothers tired themselves, by trying to carry their children. The exhausted mothers died, before their infants did.

From a certain point on, the state tried to organise the assimilation of the surviving orphans by gathering the younger ones - normally up to the age of 13 - into state run orphanages, where they were brainwashed and converted into Turkish speaking Muslims. Girls older than 13 were married to Muslim men without any choice of their own. Boys older than 13 were not accepted, but deported. This program of religious and cultural assimilation was run by one of the leading and earliest Turkish educators, the ardent CUP functionary and believing Muslim Halide Edip ^{xiv)}.

The perpetrators: The politically responsible (elite of *Ittihat ve Terakki*); the henchmen (leaders and members of the *Teşkilat-i Mahsusa*; the impact of Muslim refugees during the

annihilation of Ottoman Christians 1912-1922 and the question of the religious factor in genocide; the local/regional Muslim population)

The planning and co-ordination of the raids, arrests, massacres and deportations was the responsibility of two Ottoman key ministries: the Ministry of War and the Home Ministry. With the progress of the crime, Home Minister Talaat became increasingly important. In October 1914, he appointed the so called “Executive Committee” of the three Young Turk leaders Dr. Behaettin Şakir, Nazım Bey and Midhat Şükrü. They fixed the deportation routes, the times of the deportation and the massacres. At their disposal was the Teşkilat-i Mahsusa, the Special Organization, originally an intelligence service under the control of the War Ministry, which emerged during the Balkan Wars with the task of organising terror and sabotage. The Special Organization was also used in Turkey’s fight against neighbouring Russia. But since the undisciplined irregular units terrorised not only Armenians on both sides of the Russian-Turkish border, but Muslim populations as well, there were plans to dissolve it. However, in spring 1915, the organisation came under the command of the Home Ministry and was transformed into an instrument for mass murder of the Ottoman Christians. The number of members increased to 30,000. The irregular brigands [çeteler] were recruited among the Kurdish population and descendants from Muslim emigrants from the Balkans and the Caucasus, who felt deep hatred for Christians. Convicts were released from jails, in order to join the death squadrons. In addition to these irregulars, local Muslims were encouraged to participate in mass killings, if necessary. Their reward was impunity for rape, torture, kidnapping or plundering the victims dead and alive.

Despite the fact, that most CUP leaders were irreligious, the religious factor played a role. Already on November 14, 1914, the Shaikh-ul-Islam, the spiritual head of all Sunni Muslims, had declared the jihad, the Holy War against all “infidels” and enemies of the Faith. This included the “internal enemies”, the Ottoman Christians. Killing an Armenian had become a commandment. Another side-effect of the religious dimension, however, was islamization. In difference to Abdülhamit’s policy, the Young Turks did not give their Armenian victims the chance to save their lives by conversion. There are many cases reported when Armenians were deported, slain and killed despite their conversion. But the genocide could not be accomplished without consideration to the feelings of the Muslim majority. Halide Edip, who developed and implemented a system of orphanages as institutions for assimilating Armenian orphans, was a believing Muslim as well as an ardent Turkish chauvinist, and she applied Islam in her assimilation program. In the Trabzon province at the Black Sea coast, which was known for its particularly fanatic Muslim population - most of them deriving from previously converted Christians - Muslims would try to convert Armenians who were under the threat of deportation.

Was it genocide? Evidence and evaluation

The word genocide was not known before 1944. The words used by European and American witnesses and contemporaries to describe the Armenian genocide were “extermination”, “annihilation”, “eradication”, “atrocities” and “massacres”. The German ambassador Wangenheim wrote as early as the 7th of July 1915 to the German Chancellor:

“(…) The expulsion and resettlement of the Armenian people was limited until 14 days ago to the provinces nearest to the eastern theatre of war and to certain areas in the province of Adana; since then the Porte has resolved to extend these measures also to the provinces of Trapezunt, Mamuret-ul-Aziz and Sivas and has begun with these measures even though these parts of the country are not threatened by any enemy invasion for the time being. This situation and the way in which the resettlement is carried out shows that the government is indeed pursuing its purpose of eradicating the Armenian race from the Turkish Empire [die armenische Rasse im türkischen Reich zu vernichten]. (...)”⁵⁾

On October 4, 1916 the German Embassy estimated that from the Ottoman Armenian pre-war population of 2.5 millions, two millions were deported and 1.5 million of the deportees were killed: half of them by slaughter, the others by famine and epidemics. A year ago, the Armenian genocide was debated in the British Parliament, and on this occasion an early estimation of one million victims was made.

As allies of the Turks, Germans had a better insight into the situation in the Ottoman Empire during WW1 than other foreigners. The evidence of German diplomats, military advisers, missionaries, teachers and others are therefore of special importance. Next came the Americans who due to their neutrality (until April 1917) were allowed to continue their relief and educational work in the Ottoman Empire.

Further valuable information came from the survivors themselves. Armenian publications during and after WW1 contain lots of accounts and reports.

Important information was obtained through the inquiries, conducted by the Ottoman parliament and government after WW1. In March 1919, the then Home Minister Cemal mentioned some 800,000 Armenians “killed during the wartime deportations.”^{xv)} One valuable source is lost, however: Dr. Behaettin Şakır, the secretary of the CUP’s Central Committee, took the party’s archive with him, when he flew to Germany in October 1918; he personally destroyed incriminating documents.

Impunity and Denial

1. The contemporary legal situation

Since 1864, the Geneva convention and the Peace Conference of The Hague (1899, 1907) had tried to humanise warfare on land and sea, including regulations for cases of internal unrest or civil war. A first prevention of genocide was achieved with paragraphs 22-28 and 46 of the 2nd Hague Convention (1899), and in particular by the Martens Clause, incorporated into the Preambles of the 1899 and 1907 Hague Conventions. They are named after the Baltic German diplomat and law expert Fyodor (Friedrich Frommhold) Martens, “who conceived of it and

5) Political Archive of the German Foreign Office (Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, Berlin), file No. PA-AA/R14086. The English translation by Linda Struck is quoted from: <http://www.armenocide.de/armenocide/armgende.nsf>

framed the draft of it. The centrepiece of that clause was the concept of the ‘principles of the laws of nations’, a sort of conventional and customary international law that comprised three general elements: (1) ‘usages established among civilised peoples’, (2) ‘the laws of humanity,’ and (3) ‘the dictates of public conscience.’ ”^{xvi})

2. The reasons of failing justice

As soon as May 24, 1915, Great Britain, Russia and France warned the Ottoman government in a joint note of protest: “For about a month the Kurd and Turkish populations of Armenia have been massacring Armenians with the connivance and often assistance of Ottoman authorities. Such massacres took place in mid-April (new style) at Erzerum, Dertchun, Eguine, Akn, Bitlis, Mush, Sassun, Zeitun, and throughout Cilicia. Inhabitants of about one hundred villages near Van were all murdered. In that city the Armenian quarter is besieged by Kurds. At the same time in Constantinople the Ottoman Government ill-treats the inoffensive Armenian population. In view of those new crimes of Turkey against humanity and civilisation, the Allied governments announce publicly to the Sublime Porte that they will hold personally responsible [for] these crimes all members of the Ottoman government and those of their agents who are implicated in such massacres.”⁶⁾

However, political and economical competition in the Near East among the victorious Allies led to failing justice and impunity. Between 1919 and 1922, Russia - now under Soviet rule -, France, and Britain not only accepted the chauvinist Kemalist rebels at Ankara, but provided material and financial support and concluded bilateral treaties, despite the fact, that the Kemalist regime continued the CUP program of terror, expulsion and annihilation, this time directed mainly against the Greeks of Asia Minor. Despite earlier promises to Armenian representatives at the Paris Peace Conference (1919) and the Treaty of Sèvres (1920), the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) did not mention the Armenians, nor an Armenian homeland or state. The results of a decade of purposeful mono-ethnization and the death of 3 million Ottoman Christians, among them 1.5 million Armenians, were tacitly accepted by the signatory states.

After the Armistice, the Ottoman parliament built up a commission to enquire into the crimes of the CUP regime, including the deportation and killings of Armenian and Greek co-citizens in Asia Minor and Thrace. Since January 30, 1919, the Ottoman government started to arrest CUP leaders. Special Military Courts in the Ottoman empire and in the province began to try and sentence Young Turk functionaries, although those mainly responsible had managed to escape, among them the previous Home Minister and Grand Vizier Talaat, War Minister Enver and Naval Minister and High Commander Cemal. They received the death penalty in absentia. CUP hard-liners and strongmen Dr. Nazım and Dr. Behaettin Şakır had found refuge in Berlin, together with Talaat and Cemal Azmi, until 1917 the governor-general of the Trabzon province. Two Ottoman requests for extradition of Talaat were declined by the German FO Minister Dr. Wilhelm Solf, with the reason that these requests came without an official sentence and secondly, that Talaat had proved to be a true friend of Germany during WW1. After 41 of

6) Quoted from: International Affirmation of the Armenian Genocide.
- http://www.armenian-genocide.org/Affirmation.160/current_category.7/affirmation_detail.html

the arrested Young Turks had been set free, the British interned 55 Young Turks in Malta on May 28, 1919, and a further twelve in Mudros. Under the pressure of the Kemalist counter-government at Ankara and in exchange for British hostages, taken prisoner by the Kemalists, the internees at Malta were set free in October 1921. Many of them received high posts under the nationalist government at Ankara, including ministries. On March 31, 1923, the Turkish government declared a general amnesty for all CUP members suspected or sentenced for the mass killing of Armenians and Greeks.

3. Trading territorial integrity for genocide punishment: the Ottoman Special Military Courts 1919/20 and their failure

On a national level, justice failed, for the conflicting Turkish governments at Constantinople and Ankara clearly tried to trade justice for the preservation of Ottoman territorial integrity. Urged by the Entente states, the ruling Sultan at Constantinople had promised on December 14, 1918, to prosecute those responsible for the deportation and the slaughters. From the 5th of January 1919 until January 1921 the Special Military Courts, which had been established in Constantinople and in the provinces, operated. Prison conditions for the arrested Young Turks were never strict. They freely communicated with each other, received visitors and even left the prison temporarily. They did not escape, however, because they were convinced they would be set free eventually. All their guards belonged to the secret organisation *Karakol Cemiyeti* ("Vigil Committee"), already established by Enver and Talaat before the war's end in October 1918. It became a useful network for organising the flight of CUP members from areas occupied by the allies to those controlled by the Turkish nationalists.

When it became obvious in spring 1920 that the Allies would not accept the Turkish claims for Anatolia, the Turkish interest in the legal prosecution of the CUP leaders declined rapidly. One day after the Treaty of Sèvres, whose paragraph 226-230 stipulated the prosecution of the guilty Young Turks, the Kemalist government at Ankara ordered the dissolution of all Special Military Courts in their sphere of influence.

Failing justice on international and national levels caused in five cases the revenge by Armenian survivors. The most spectacular case was that of Soghomon Tehlirian, who shot Talaat on March 15, 1921, in Berlin and was exculpated by a Berlin jury court on June 3, 1921.

4. The final phase of genocide: denial of facts; the official Turkish version and present state of affairs

During and after WW1, when there was still a high awareness of the crimes committed against the Armenians and other Christian populations in the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish government tried to justify the deportation as a necessity urged by war conditions and the alleged unreliability of the deportees. All human losses suffered during the deportation were explained by the war regime's inability to provide enough escorts for the convoys. The responsibility for atrocities and mass killings was transferred to non-Turkish ethnic groups, in particular Kurds. Furthermore, figures of victims were reduced to 300,000.

Justification and minimisation were followed by silence, then by straightforward denial of the genocide as a fact of Turkish history. Talaat and Enver, the two ministers most responsible, were transformed into national heroes, and received honorary burials. Places and boulevards are named after them, not only in Turkey, but also in towns with Turkish population in both parts of Cyprus. Furthermore, even heads of death squads such as the notorious Topal Osman are held in high respect in recent Turkey. In 1983, general Kenan Evren erected a monument of Topal Osman in his birthplace Giresun. He is honoured as a hero of the so-called liberation war of 1919-1922, when the nationalist government in Ankara “liberated” Turkey, not only from Allied occupation, but wiped out the Ottoman Greeks and the remainder of Armenians. In 2002 and 2003, the Turkish minister of education, Dr. Hüseyn Çelik ordered on various occasions the denial, not only of the Armenian genocide, but also the genocide of Syriac Orthodox Christians and Pontic Greeks; in 2003, he decreed an essay writing competition in the denial of the genocide of these Christian populations, including the participation of Armenian schools in Turkey.

Genocide researchers agree that all forms of denial - justification, minimisation, playing down - represent the final stage of the crime and an integral part of it. Denial causes permanent pain to the survivors of genocide and their descendants. Denial prevents genocide from becoming history, for it questions the perception of the survivors and their descendants. If the denier is right, the claim of the survivors and their descendants must be wrong. Their truth is allegedly distorted, either by mental disturbance or malice.

Denial is not the exception, but the rule, as far as the genocides of the first half of the 20th century are concerned. Progress in the punishment of genocide in the late 20th century, in particular the establishment of a Permanent International Court, marks a victory over such denials. But while we achieved progress in this aspect, the problem and pain of the denial of earlier genocides, such as the Armenian genocide, remains.

5. The Armenian claim for international and Turkish “recognition” of the historical facts as a contribution to genocide prevention; Turkish “dissidents”

Turkish denial led to the internationalisation of genocide recognition. The Armenian claim for international and Turkish “recognition” or “affirmation” of their genocide, according to the UN Genocide Convention, is caused by the denial of the Turkish state, the Turkish lawmakers and the still influential Kemalist elite of the country. Delayed by WW2, the Armenian movement for recognition gained momentum since 1965, when the 50th anniversary of the genocide was jointly commemorated in the Armenian Diaspora and in Armenia, despite attempted suppression by the Central Soviet government. Starting with the parliament of Uruguay, national lawmakers, meanwhile, of 14 countries issued statements and even laws in order to affirm the fact of the Armenian genocide. In Federal States, such as the United States of America, this “recognition procedure” was carried out on regional or provincial levels as well. International political organisations, such as the United Nations or the European Parliament issued reports or resolutions since the second half of the 1980s.

Another by-product is the fact, that in Turkey, and more in Turkey's Diaspora in Germany, courageous representatives of Turkish origin dared to speak out, although until 2002 these dissidents were regularly prosecuted by law for allegedly provoking "inter-ethnic hatred" or for "dishonouring the Turkish nation". Turkey's candidacy as a full member of the European Union and Europe's urge for democratisation support the development towards a re-evaluation of the events which led to the extermination of the Ottoman Christians. In the debate about criteria for Turkey's admission in the EU the idea was articulated that Europe is not only an area on the world's map, but stands for a set of values, among them the readiness to question one's own national history and to read and condemn the dark pages of national history.

The Case Study of the Armenian Genocide and Comparative Genocide Research

1. Was the Armenian genocide the "first Genocide of the 20th century?" A comparison with the German genocide of the Herero and Nama tribes of Namibia in 1904

Often labelled as the "first genocide of the 20th century", the Armenian genocide has been preceded by two genocide events in Africa, the genocide of up to ten millions of Congolese, who were killed and mutilated in King Leopold's "private" colony during 1885 and 1908 ^{xvii}), and the genocide of the Herero and Nama tribes of Namibia during 1904-1908 - at the time the German colony "Südwest-Afrika" (Southwest Africa). After numerous cases of injustice against the native Africans, including many cases of sexual harassment and rape of Herero women by the German colonial power, the Herero tribe, then consisting of 80,000 people, followed their leader Maherero in rebellion, and killed 130 German settlers. The Herero uprising was soon followed by a military retaliation under the governor and commander of the German colonial forces, General Adrian von Trotha, who mercilessly led this "fight of races" ("Rassenkampf"), despite protests by the German national assembly ("Reichstag") against Trotha's "barbarian way of warfare". Previously, von Trotha was commander of the First Far Eastern Infantry Brigade, which oppressed in the most brutal way the so-called Boxer uprising in China.

60,000 Herero men, women and children and 10,000 of the 20,000 members of the Nama tribe were slaughtered, or perished in concentration camps as slave labourers and in desert areas after their lands were confiscated by an Imperial order, issued on Christmas day 1905. The Hereros never recovered from this genocide or regained their previous economical or social influence.

Compared with the genocide of the Ottoman Armenians, three common features come to mind:

- the colonial relation between perpetrators and victims: In both cases the politically dominant ruler had "obtained" a territory by dubious ways or violence and ruled without powersharing, after having subdued indigenous nations. Attempts of the subjugated to improve their situation

or to regain their previous status had been brutally oppressed. Active resistance or self-defence was regarded as uprising or treason and answered by annihilation of the entire community, including women and children.

- the similarity of the annihilation system: killing the adult male population, either in unequal fights (in the case of the Herero) or in concentration camps, leaving the others to famine, starvation, thirst and epidemics in desert areas, or reducing their numbers by means of slave labour.
- denial: Even 100 years after the genocide of the Hereros, the German government tried to avoid a clear statement of official apology. Only two of Germany's parliamentarians signed an appeal by the German NGO Society for Threatened Peoples calling on the German government to apologise for the injustice of the past and to acknowledge Germany's special responsibility for the descendants of survivors.^{xviii)} As the main reason for their continuing refusal to acknowledge the genocide of Hereros and Namas, the German government pointed out that it tries to avoid any statement which may lead to compensation. Meanwhile, the Riruakos Hosea Kutako Foundation had filed a case against the Federal Republic of Germany and several German enterprises, claiming a compensation of two billions USD. After the case was lost, a representative of the German government, development minister Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, expressed an apology during an official commemoration ceremony in Namibia on August 14, 2004: "I ask your forgiveness for our guilt." However, the word "genocide" was avoided in an official declaration of the German Foreign Office on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the "beginning of the insurrection of Herero and Nama".^{xix)}

As to the Armenians, not only Turkey, but Germany as well may fear compensation claims, for Germany has benefited from the slave work of Armenians, provided by the Ottoman Army Supreme Command for the Baghdad Railways. In lack of a clear representative of the Armenian nation, in lack of an All-Armenian umbrella organisation there are no general and clear statements about the Armenian point of view on compensation. From the start on the post-Soviet Republic of Armenia had made it clear that the recognition of the genocide by Turkey is no pre-condition for bilateral diplomatic relations, which however never materialised, after Armenia refused to influence the Armenian Diaspora to refrain from the demand on genocide recognition. The Republic of Armenia, however, represents only a third of the entire Armenian nation of nine million.

Although one could conclude that denial is mainly caused by fear for compensation claims, the insistence of descendants of genocide victims is a contribution to genocide prevention.

2. The Armenian genocide as part of the transformation of a feudal multiethnic society into a "modern" mono-ethnic state: A comparison with the genocide of Ittihadists and Kemalists on the Aramaic speaking Christians and the Greeks of Asia Minor

The Young Turk policy of ethnic homogeny did not concern the Ottoman Armenians alone. In principle, this policy concerned all ethnic Non-Turks of the Ottoman Empire. There were

plans for deporting and resettling Muslim nations, in particular those with strong aspirations for independence and secession such as Arabs and Kurds. The general idea was to resettle and dispel the uprooted nations in such a way, that no ethnic group would make up more than 5 to six percent of the local population. The program was also directed against nomadic groups, to force them to convert to a fixed residency. Liberation movements were seen as a threat. The oppression and persecution of Arab nationalists and Jewish Zionists was equal. A Jewish source mentions that half of the Jewish settlers in Palestine - 55.000 victims - perished as victims of Ahmet Cemal Pasha's persecution during WW1, while the other half was only saved by the arrival of the British army.^{xx)}

However, the Christian nations of the Ottoman Empire had developed a firm identity at a very early stage. This identity seemed difficult to destroy. In case of compulsory islamization, these nations would still preserve their lingual identity, if they were not, at the same time, dispersed among other ethnic groups or children educated separately from their community. And they would preserve their religious identity, if circumstances compelled them to assimilate their language. In the Black Sea region of Hamshen (Hamşin) and Pontos, islamized Armenians and Greeks preserved their national language and distinct culture, as well as the Turkish speaking Karamanlides of Kappadokia preserved their Orthodox Greek identity. Armenians and Greeks, as the largest indigenous Christian groups of Asia Minor, became especially suspicious from the Young Turk point of view, because of their alleged irredentist aspirations. An independent Greek state had emerged after the Greek liberation from Ottoman rule in 1821-29, and the Armenian homeland was divided between the Ottoman and Russian Empire. The Young Turks ignored clear distinctions between Greeks in Asia Minor and in Hellas or Armenians on both sides of the Russian-Turkish border. They also ignored the fact that Muslim nations as well lived on both sides of the Russian-Turkish border and had to fight in the Russian Army against their brothers in faith, who served in the Ottoman army. The Young Turks also ignored the fact that Christian volunteers of Ottoman nationality served as volunteers in the Ottoman army, and Muslim volunteers of Russian nationality served in the Ottoman army.

Once the Young Turks had decided to look at their Christian compatriots as internal enemies, assimilation and expulsion seemed not enough to exclude the alleged danger forever. Exiled enemies could return and take revenge. The deportation routes chosen by the Young Turks and Kemalist successors did not in most cases lead to the nearest border or port, but into remote desert or semi-desert areas.

Contemporary and recent calculations assume that the Ottoman Greek pre-war population - East Thrace and Asia Minor (including Pontos) - was 2.5 - 3 millions, and that about one million to 1.5 million perished between 1912 and 1922/23. As the American Ambassador Henry Morgenthau and other observers pointed out, the Greeks became victims of the Turkish homogeny policy before the Armenians did. But their persecution and annihilation lasted longer, with changing emphasis. The continuity of genocide techniques and policy becomes in particular obvious, if the example of the Greeks is studied. A smaller Christian nation, the Aramaic speaking Christians (Syriacs) of four different denominations⁷⁾ were victimised

7) The two main churches being the Syriac Orthodox Church and the Old Church of the East ("Nestorians", "Assyrians").

mainly in 1915/16. They describe their annihilation as “sayfo” or “seyfo” (“sword”), thus indicating, that most of their victims were killed during massacres. The surviving Syriacs estimate, that a third of their nation was killed, a third was forcibly converted to Islam, and a third escaped. If we consider, that there were roughly about five million native Christians in the Ottoman Empire before WW1, then about 3 to 3.5 millions were killed or perished until the Lausanne Treaty (1923). A set of laws prevented the return of survivors. Republican Turkey did not accept their citizenship, and their property was confiscated. Despite so many common features, scholars of genocide do not usually study the crimes committed against the Ottoman Christians during the transitional period of late Ottoman history as a whole or in comparison, but limit themselves to the Armenian genocide. Therefore some conclusions, too, are limited. Recently, representatives of Greek or Aramean/Assyrian communities have started to complain publicly on these politics of exclusivity.

If we compare the Ottoman Empire with the two other multiethnic states of the early 20th century - the Russian Empire and Austria-Hungary -, we find that they all did not survive WW1. They converted into mono-ethnic states, such as Austria and Hungary, or into a politically new defined empire, Soviet Russia. The implementation of state organised violence for ethnic cleansing remains unique for Turkey during WW1, but was subsequently repeated by Nazi Germany during WW2.

3. The genocides of World War I and II: a comparison between the Armenian genocide and the Shoah (similarities and causality); the Armenian genocide and the Shoah as empirical base of the UN convention on the punishment and the prevention of genocide; Raphael Lemkin, Robert Kempner and Franz Werfel - three European Jews reacting to the Armenian Genocide and the Shoah

When the Russian-Jewish lyric Ossip Mandelstam in 1930 described Armenia as “younger sister of the Hebrew land”, he had in mind many similarities between Jewish and Armenian history and destiny. But at that stage he could not know about the most striking parallel: the attempted total annihilation, committed during a World War and by a racist regime. Wars provide the necessary smoke-screens for genocide, and the abolition of parliamentary control, combined with the introduction of emergency laws are supportive factors.

Impunity of the state crimes during WW1 led to oblivion. Only a few remembered and warned, but in vain. It is not by coincidence that these early voices of concern were Jewish: Raphael Lemkin, a jurist from Poland, tried already in 1933 (Madrid) to initiate an international convention against genocide, but succeeded only after WW2 and a further genocide, now with six millions of Jewish victims. The “father” of the UN Convention drafted this important agreement on the empirical base of the Armenian and the Jewish genocide.

The Jewish-Austrian writer Franz Werfel wrote his novel *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* which depicts an episode from the Armenians’ genocide before the background of the increasing danger for Europe’s Jewry. German and Turkish reviewers were furious about the obvious parallels. Although an immediate best-seller in the USA, Werfel’s novel was censored and burnt in Europe only two month after its publication in late November 1933. Both the Jewish and the Armenian community of Turkey felt threatened by the Turkish media, which called the plan of M.G.M. to produce a film after Werfel’s novel an “Armenian-Jewish conspiracy”. In order to

escape further reproaches and persecution, the Armenian community joined in the burning of the novel: On December 15, 1935, a pyre was built in the yard of the Armenian Pangalti church in Istanbul, where some copies of the American edition of Werfel's novel and his portrait were burnt. In his speech the Armenian community's leader Ashot Kecyan denounced the "40 Days of Musa Dagh" as a "book full of defamation against the noble and decent Turkish nation".^{xxi)}

The world did not listen to Lemkin or Werfel, but negotiated with Hitler who appealed to German military commanders in a speech on August 22, 1939, a few days before the attack on Poland:

"(...) Our strength lies in our quickness and in our brutality; Genghis Khan has sent millions of women and children into death knowingly and with a light heart. History sees in him only the great founder of States. As to what the weak Western European civilisation asserts about me, that is of no account. I have given the command and I shall shoot everyone who utters one word of criticism, for the goal to be obtained in the war is not that of reaching certain lines, but of physically demolishing the opponent. And so for the present only in the East I have put my death-head formations [Totenkopfverbände der SS] in place with the command relentlessly and without compassion to send into death many women and children of Polish origin and language. Only thus we can gain the living space that we need. Who after all is today speaking about the destruction of the Armenians? (...) ⁸⁾

Hitler and many of his comrades were fascinated by Mustafa Kemal; in Hitler's view, Kemal had freed Turkey from the danger of Allied plans for division and from its internal enemies. As we can learn from his speeches, the Armenians, on the other hand, were a symbol of the loser in Hitler's opinion. Weakness in a nation was not acceptable. Therefore the Armenians deserved their doom. In the mind of Hitler and many of his compatriots, the ideal of ethnic homogeneity justified the expulsion, deportation and even annihilation of "weaker", but at the same time dangerous and inferior groups ("races").

There is also an analogy in the formation of Turkish and German nationalism: Both states are latecomers, compared to Great Britain or France, where democracy developed gradually and created well established safe-guards for the rule of law. The late-coming concept of national statehood, however, seems to be prone to a negative kind of nationalism, a reactive, elitist nationalism, which is hostile to minorities. It can rapidly grow into an ideology containing genocidal elements.

The main distinctive features between the Jewish and the Armenian genocides are:

- the implementation of racial "cleanliness" by the Nazis. With the exception of brothels in concentration camps, sexual intercourse - "sexual disgrace" - with Jews was prohibited by law. If the ideologists of the CUP had any comparative understanding of the superiority of the "Turkish race", a similar legal program would not work under the given circumstances. Sexual misuse and torture of Christian women was part and parcel of motivation of the henchmen

⁸⁾ Quotation from: Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939. Third Series, Volume 7. (London 1954), p. 258

and all those, who did the butchering and slaughtering. As a matter of fact, both treatments seem to be caused by the same contempt and also by fear of the victim. In the German case, possible sexual contacts were regarded as “unclean” and a threat to “national health”. In the Turkish case, the Armenian nation was identified with its women: In a concept of collective honour and disgrace which is equally familiar to Christians and Muslims in the Near East, the violation and humiliation of a woman came next to violating and humiliating the entire group, preferably in the presence of parents, husbands or other male relatives.

- legal punishment and denial of responsibility: For the first time in the 20th century, genocide became part of an international tribunal after WW2, although not on a large scale. For the Nuremberg Tribunals, it was still a minor topic: Only three of the 256 pages of the Nuremberg sentence mention the annihilation of the European Jewry.^{xxii)} Later trials brought more justice and more public awareness, in particular the trial of Eichmann in Israel (1961) and the Auschwitz-Trial in Frankfurt/Main (1963). Denial by the succeeding state was no problem in the Jewish case. Post-war Germany did acknowledge the guilt of the predecessor and its own responsibility for survivors and descendants of victims. But it is very doubtful whether these achievements would have happened without pressure from the victorious Western allies, in particular the USA. Denial of the Jewish genocide in Germany is prohibited by law. Nevertheless, as time passed by, anti-Jewish, anti-Semite and anti-Israeli feelings become increasingly articulate. However, German textbooks were never the medium of genocide-denial, nor were the children of survivors compelled to deny the genocide of their ancestors. There are many places of remembrance in Germany, as there are annual events of public commemoration, in contrast to the veneration of perpetrators in recent Turkey.

4. The Armenian genocide compared with the “total genocides” of the second half of the 20th century: R. Melson’s definition of “total (domestic) genocide” and the four case studies of Armenia, the Shoah, Cambodia and Rwanda.

The United Nations differentiate between genocide as a-whole and genocide in-part. On the basis of these categories Prof. Robert F. Melson developed a system of four categories: domestic and foreign genocide, with the varieties of total and partial genocide. As to the total domestic genocides, Melson named four in the course of the 20th century: The genocides of Armenians, European Jews, Cambodia and Rwanda. As to the European Jewry, there has been criticism, for the Shoah concerned not only Jewish nationals of Germany, but also the Jewish population of countries, occupied by Germany. According to the system of Melson, the Shoah would be a domestic, as well as a total genocide.

Compared to the cases of Cambodia (1975-79) and Rwanda (1994), the common features with the Armenian genocide are few and not well researched. From the case of Cambodia with at least 1.671 million victims, we can clearly understand that the perpetrators of every genocide, but of this in particular, are guided by different motives: political, religious, economic and social. The better off, educated of the Cambodian society fell victim to this state crime as well as Buddhist monks, nuns and foreigners (Chinese and Cham). Pol Pot, the man responsible for these crimes, was not arrested until July 23, 1997, and not for the mega-crime

of a genocide, but for killing his own comrades and for treason. It was a case of “the revolution devouring her own children”, similar to killings among Young Turks ^{xxiii} and more to killings of Young Turks by the regime of previous Young Turk Mustafa Kemal during the 1920-ies.

A particular feature of the Rwanda slaughters of 1994 was the active participation of women and children in butchering about 600,000 members of the Hutu tribe and at least 200,000 democrats of the Hutu majority. The general belief that women are by nature peaceful and not prone to propaganda of violence had been belied by the Rwanda genocide of 1994. At the same time this genocide has no religious dimension, in contrast to the earlier cases of the Armenian genocide and the Shoah.

Lessons to be learnt: A Conclusion

Wars and transitional periods offer ample opportunity for those who plot, intend and plan genocide.

What means do we have to prevent genocide? Not too many, it seems. The main tools, however, are justice - genocide punishment - and education. Despite national laws and international conventions, effective genocide punishment became a reality since a permanent International Criminal Court of the United Nations emerged in 1998. Previously, an International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia had been established in The Hague in 1993. The claims of survivors and their descendants for the recognition of genocide as a matter of fact and for subsequent compensation is another way of establishing justice. However, as the case of the Armenians shows, it is a time-consuming, tiring way for surviving Diaspora communities, who have to deal with many other problems, too.

Genocide education is about genocide awareness. It is in particular necessary in societies where genocide took place in the past. As Turkish scholars and dissidents have rightly said, the denial, or even justification of genocide, leads to the general acceptance of violence in a society. As we can see from the case of Germany - a democratic, European country with established rule of law - recognition of its colonial genocide in Namibia is difficult even a hundred years post factum. The denied or hidden genocides of today are those of the colonial past, be it the past of European states, or Turkey's Ottoman colonial past.

As we also learn from the genocides of the Armenians and European Jews, religion is not the main reason for modern genocides. The Young Turk authors of the Armenian genocides and the Nazi ideologists were irreligious. ^{xxiv} But they accepted and even played into the hands of older and widespread religious biases among the majority population. As comparative conflict studies show, every religion can be improperly used against minorities. Religious leaders, therefore, bear the responsibility for misuse.

Notes

-
- i) Compare also: Bloxhelm, Donald: The Beginning of the Armenian Catastrophe: Comparative and Contextual Considerations. In: *Der Völkermord an den Armeniern und die Shoah - The Armenian Genocide and the Shoah*. (Ed.) Hans-Lukas Kieser, Dominik J. Schaller. Zürich: Chronos, 2002, p. 101-128

- ii) The governor of the Diyarbakir province (March 1915 - March 1916), Dr. Mehmet Reşid (1873-1919), a high CUP functionary and physician, in a conversation with Mithat Şükrü (Bleda), the secretary general of Ittihat ve Terakki in 1915; quoted after Kieser, Hans-Lukas: Dr Mehmed Reshid (1873-1919): A Political Doctor. In: *Der Völkermord an den Armeniern*, op. cit., p. 262
- iii) By the amendment of the Ottoman conscription law (July 1909). Muslims or Non-Muslims (Jews and Christians) could avoid national service only by paying a very high amount of exemption tax (*bedel-i nakdi*), which only the well-to-do could afford. The first recruitment of Christian conscripts occurred in October 1909. Compare Zürcher, Eric Jan: Ottoman Labour Battalions in World War I. In: *Der Völkermord an den Armeniern*, op.cit., p. 190.
- iv) Of the 5,000 Armenian-Apostolic clerics in the Ottoman Empire only 400 survived. – Koutcharian, Gerayer: *Der Siedlungsraum der Armenier unter dem Einfluß der historischen und politischen Ereignisse seit dem Berliner Kongreß 1878; eine politisch-geographische Analyse und Dokumentation*. Berlin 1989, p. 128
- v) Levene, Mark: The Experience of Genocide: Armenia 1915-16 and Romania 1941-42. In: *Der Völkermord an den Armeniern*, op. cit., p. 456-7
- vi) Affirmed by the deposition by an Armenian lawyer, quoted after Dadrian, Vakan N.: Documents, p. 353-354
- vii) Quoted from a letter to the editor by the correspondent Hannes Stein (Jerusalem), published in "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung", August 4, 1998
- viii) A Pictorial Record of Routes and Centres of Annihilation of Armenian Deportees in 1915 within the boundaries of Syria. Ed. Robert Jébéjian. Aleppo 1994, p. 65
- ix) Christoffel, Ernst J.: *Aus dunklen Tiefen: Erlebnisse eines deutschen Missionars in türkisch Kurdistan während der Kriegsjahre 1916-1918*. Berlin (1921), p. 10
- x) Pomiankowski, Joseph: *Der Zusammenbruch des Ottomanischen Reiches: Erinnerungen an die Türkei aus der Zeit des Weltkrieges*. Zürich, Leipzig, Wien (1928), p. 261
- xi) Figures according to Raymond H. Kévorkian, based on statistics by the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople and a comprehensive documentation. - See: Kévorkian, Raymond H.: *Ahmed Djémal pacha et le sort des déportés arméniens de Syrie-Palestine*. In: *Der Völkermord*, op. cit., p. 197-207
- xii) Compare Hovannisian, Richard G.: *Intervention and Shades of Altruism during the Armenian Genocide*. In: Richard G. Hovannisian (Ed.): *The Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, Ethics*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992, pp. 177ff
<http://www.ancsf.org/files/armenian%20genocide/Shades%20of%20Altruism%20in%20the%20Armenian%20Genocide.pdf>
 Raymond J. Kévorkian counted 15 persons in the Ottoman Empire, whose behaviour corresponds with the Jewish-Christian category of "just". –
 Kévorkian, Raymond H.: *Au Panthéon des Justes, les Arméniens reconnaissant*.
http://www.armenweb.org/negationnisme/pantheon_suite1.html
- xiii) The governors (*vali*) of Angora (Ankara), Konya und Aleppo were replaced. In Mardin the mayor (*mutessarif*) was replaced, in Midyat und Lice – all in the province of Diyarbekir - the kaimakans - Besiri (Sabit Bey) and Nesimi Bey, who were later murdered (Nesimi for demanding a written order to slaughter the Armenian population).
- xiv) Halide Edip (Edib) Adıvar (1883/4/5-1964), also called Halide Salih during 1901-1910. Completed as first Muslim the *American College for Girls* in Constantinople/Üsküdar in 1901; writer, educationalist and founder of Turkey's women's movement; ardent nationalist politician. Delegated to Syria in 1916 by the Commander of the Fourth Ottoman Army, Ahmet Cemal, where she founded schools and orphanages for the assimilation of Armenian orphan girls. Fled together with her second husband Dr. Adnan Adıvar to Ankara in fear of arrest by the Western Allies. Served as a nurse in the nationalist "liberation army" of Mustafa Kemal, then interpreter, PR-officer and eventually Mustafa Kemal's secretary. See also: Halide Edib: *Memoirs of Halide Edib*. New York & London: (The Century Company), 1926
- xv) Quoted from: Dadrian, Vahakn N.: *The Key Elements in the Turkish Denial of the Armenian Genocide: A Case Study of Distortion and Falsification*. Cambridge, MA.; Toronto, Ontario: The Zoryan Institute, 1999. p. 20
- xvi) Dadrian, The Key elements, *ibid.*, p. 22
- xvii) See Hochschild, Adam: *King Leopold's Ghost: a Story of greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1998
- xviii) Delius, Ulrich: *100 Jahre Völkermord an Herero und Nama*. Göttingen: Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker, Januar 2004 (Menschenrechtsreport N. 32 der Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker)
- xix) http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/de/laenderinfos/laender/laender_ausgabe_archiv?land_id=118&a_type=Pressemitteilungen&archiv_id=5242

- xx) Böhm, Adolf: Die zionistische Bewegung. Band 1: Die zionistische Bewegung bis zum Ende des Weltkrieges. 2., erweiterte Auflage. Tel Aviv: Hozaah Ivriah Co. Ltd., 1935 [The Zionist movement. Vol. 1: The Zionist movement until the end of the World War. 2nd., enlarged ed.], page 643 following
- xxi) Bali, Rifat N.: Musa'nin Evlatlari Cumhuriyet'in Yurtlasi. Istanbul, 2001, p. 132 ff. Quoted after: Wertmüller, Justus: Komplotte gegen das Türkentum: Die Kontinuität des Antisemitismus in der modernen Türkei. "Bahamas", Nr. 43, Winter 2004/04, p. 15
- xxii) Kieser, Hans-Lukas; Schaller, Dominik: Völkermord im historischen Raum 1895-1945. In: Der Völkermord an den Armeniern, op. cit., p. 43
- xxiii) Dadrian, Vahakn N.: The Execution of Some of the Arch-perpetrators of the Armenian Genocide by the Ittihadists and Kemalists, 1915-1926. This article was first published in the Turkish paper "Yeni Gün-dem", November 2 and 3, 2000
http://www.zoryaninstitute.org/Table_Of_Contents/genocide_docs_executions.htm
- xxiv) The historian Frank Smitha explains the example of the Young Turkish parliament speaker Ahmet Riza: "Riza's contempt for Islam's holy men, the Imams. To his sister, Fahire, he wrote that if he were a woman, he would embrace atheism and never become a Muslim, and he denounced men being allowed four wives and as many concubines as they wishes.

Privately, Riza described the imams as ignorant and as misconstruing the Prophet's words regarding science. Privately he and his colleagues held that science was for the elite and religion was for the masses. Riza and his colleagues wanted a strong government in which they, the intellectual elite, played a dominant role and religious leaders played no role in government or in education. Publicly they spoke of an ideal Islamic government in which authority is collective and every citizen is free." – From: Smitha, Frank: Turkey and Islam, 1900-1930. <http://www.fsmitha.com/h2/ch090tu.html>