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THE ARMENIAN QUESTION AND
THE WARTIME FATE OF THE ARMENIANS
AS DOCUMENTED BY THE OFFICIALS OF THE
OTTOMAN EMPIRE'S WORLD WAR I ALLIES:
GERMANY AND AUSTRIA–HUNGARY

The wartime fate of the Ottoman Empire's Armenian minority continues to be controversial. The debate in the main revolves around the causes and nature of that fate. Some historians have alleged that what is involved is centrally organized mass murder—or, to use contemporary terminology, genocide. This school of thought maintains that the Ottoman authorities were waiting for a suitable opportunity to undertake the wholesale liquidation of the empire's Armenian population, and the outbreak of World War I provided that opportunity. The Committee of Union and Progress (CUP, or Unionists), who controlled the Ottoman government, they argue further, did in fact undertake this liquidation under cover of the war.¹ Others, however, dispute these assertions, especially that of genocidal intent. This group maintains that Armenian acts of disloyalty, subversion, and insurrection in wartime forced the central government to order, for purposes of relocation, the deportation of large sections of the Armenian population. According to this argument, apart from those who were killed in “inter-communal” clashes—that is, a “civil war”—the bulk of the Armenian losses resulted from the severe hardships associated with poorly administered measures of deportations, including exhaustion, sickness, starvation, and epidemics. In other words, this school of thought holds that the Ottoman Empire, in the throes of an existential war, had no choice but to protect itself by resorting to drastic methods; therefore, the tragic fate of the Armenians must be understood in the context of the dire conditions of World War I.² These views are encapsulated in the formula that the noted Middle East historian Bernard Lewis has used—namely, the desperate conditions of “an embattled empire.”³

The persistence of these antithetical standpoints accents the need for a different framework of analysis, with a view to obviating the controversy. Toward that end, one must try to answer with as much certitude as possible two questions. First, which

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camp is right—the one that alleges genocide or the one that denies it? And second, and equally important, why? Such a framework is provided by quintessential material available in the state archives of Imperial Germany and Imperial Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire's two staunch wartime allies. These depositories hold a class of official documents that are as revealing as they are exciting, and that seemingly have eluded the attention of Anglophone scholars, who tend not to know German. At issue here is the adverse impact on historiography that has resulted from the lack of research into this vast array of first-class primary sources, despite their paramount importance in clarifying a controversy that has raged for eight decades. During the war, Germany and Austria-Hungary disposed over a vast network of ambassadorial, consular, military, and commercial representatives throughout the Ottoman Empire. Not only did they have access to high-ranking Ottoman officials and power-wielding decision-makers, but these officials and decision-makers were in a position to report to their superiors as *locus in quo* observers on many aspects of the wartime treatment of Ottoman Armenians. They supplemented their reports with as much detail as they could garner from trusted informers and paid agents, many of whom were Muslims, both civilians and military. This correspondence represents the principal focus of this article, in which I analyze extensively a set of relevant and significant documents. By contrast, my monograph on this subject is but a compilation of excerpts from these documents, devoid of interpretative comments and explanations.⁴

One of the salient features of the many reports sent to Berlin and Vienna from various diplomatic and military posts in wartime Turkey is their recurrent use of the theme the “Armenian question.” The fate of the Armenians in these reports is explained less in terms of wartime “Armenian provocations” and Ottoman counteractions than in terms of solving the Armenian question. As far as its origin and evolution is concerned, the reports rely more on a context that has a pre-war time frame than on a war-related context. In this perspective, an event that the British historian Arnold Toynbee characterized as a catastrophe that “devastated the Near East in 1915”⁵ is accounted for mainly in terms of a history of conflict antedating World War I by decades rather than in terms of momentary precipitating factors. The thorny Armenian reform issue is depicted as the principal animus propelling the general Armenian question, and as such it is treated as being more or less coterminous with it. In other words, a central significance is accorded to the history of a protracted Turko-Armenian conflict, while recognizing also the catalytic role of the wartime conditions. It appears, then, that the question of what happened to the Armenians is inextricably entwined with the question, Why? In fact, the “what” emerges here as a function of the “why.”⁶ Put in more concrete terms, the wartime anti-Armenian measures are viewed as a major governmental effort to resolve during the war both the protracted Turko-Armenian conflict and the Armenian reform issue that underlay and fueled that conflict and that, for the Ottomans, was highly provocative.

Given this organic link, this article will attempt to examine the two issues as integral components of a developing problem. First to be examined are the fundamentals of the conflict as it relates to the historical origin and evolution of the Armenian reform issue.

THE PORTENTS OF THE UNFOLDING ARMENIAN QUESTION

The Armenian reform movement was actually a byproduct of the Ottoman reform movement called Tanzimat, which denoted the idea of restructuring Ottoman society in need of a new order. The theocratic underpinnings of the state, the attendant religious cleavages in the multi-ethnic fabric of Ottoman society, and the imperial–militarist style of the government in handling minorities were factors that combined to create a matrix of ongoing nationality conflicts. The twin Tanzimat reform acts were intended to obviate, if not eliminate altogether, the system of inequities that had permeated the socio-political organization of the Ottoman Empire, to the disadvantage of the non-Muslim population. As the late Ottomanist Roderic Davison observed, the 1839 Act had “the most novel aspect [namely] its official declaration of equality,” whereas the 1856 Act had an “official anti-defamation clause forbidding” prejudice and discrimination against non-Muslims.⁷ These principles and other, similar ones were embedded in the Ottoman constitution of 1876.⁸

Even though as a religious community (*millet*) the Armenians enjoyed a measure of autonomy in spiritual and certain administrative and judicial matters, in nearly every other respect they were relegated to a subordinate, and therefore inferior, minority status. This notwithstanding, for a long time they managed to establish a symbiotic relationship with the dominant Muslims. In recognition of this acquiescent adaptiveness, successive Ottoman rulers rewarded the Armenians with the epithet “the loyal nation” (*milleti sadıka*).⁹

Encouraged by the promises of the Tanzimat reform scheme, and acquiring a sense of entitlement from them, the Armenians, led by their patriarch, began to deluge the Porte, the seat of the Ottoman government, with pleas, entreaties, and requests. They sought governmental protection against, and for, a variety of ill treatments, especially in the remote provinces. In the 1850–70 period alone, the Armenian patriarch sent to the Porte 537 notes (*takrir*) detailing a host of depredations, including brigandage, abductions, murder, confiscatory taxes, and fraud by officials.¹⁰ These *takrirs* were largely ignored, however; at times, they were even regarded as signs of rebelliousness. As Erzurum’s British Consul Clifford Lloyd reported in 1890, “Discontent, or any description of protest, is regarded by the Turkish Local Government as seditious,” irrespective of the fact that “the idea of revolution” is not entertained by the Armenian peasants involved in these protests.¹¹ Davison explained the underlying problem in terms of Ottoman social structure. According to him, “the infidel *gâvours*,” permanently relegated to a status of “inferiority,” were subjected to a “contemptuous half-toleration.” This contempt issued from “an innate attitude of superiority” and was animated by “an innate Muslim feeling” capable of erupting in “open fanaticism.”¹² In an overall review of Ottoman nationality conflicts, C. Max Kortepeter imputed the ultimate dissolution of the empire to the inability of the Ottoman authorities “to respond to the grievances of the various [nationality] units of the Empire.”¹³ The vehement and sustained reactions to the 1839 and 1856 Tanzimat reform acts on the part of large segments of the Muslim population, led by Muslim spiritual leaders and the military, illustrate this point.

In his trenchant criticism of the egalitarian aspect of the 1856 Act, Koca Mustafa

Reşad, who six times in the 1846–58 period occupied the post of grand vizier, categorically objected to it. He argued that the proposal about “the complete emancipation” of the non-Muslim subjects, who were preordained to be dominated and ruled (*milleti mahkûme*), was “entirely contrary” (*tamamiyle zıdd-ı muhalifi*) to the prerogatives of “the ruling nation” (*milleti hâkime*) and to “the 600-year-old traditions of the Ottoman Empire.” Furthermore, he regarded this part of the reform initiative as disingenuous, meant to mislead and fool (*iğfal*) the Europeans who were insisting on it. Reşad then ominously forecast a “huge massacre” (*bir mukatele-i azîme*) should equality be granted to the non-Muslims.¹⁴

This overall anti-reform attitude eventually gripped the CUP’s Young Turk regime, whose revolutionary advent in July 1908 was trumpeted with a conjuration of the ideals of the French Revolution—that is, *hürriyet, müsavat ve uhuvvet*. In a speech before a secret conclave of CUP potentates in Saloniki on 6 August 1910, the Young Turks’ foremost leader, Mehmed Talât, disdainfully dismissed the idea of equality with “the *ghiaurs*,” to use his words, with the argument that it “is an unrealizable ideal since it is inimical with Sheriat [shari’a] and the sentiments of hundreds of thousands of Muslims.”¹⁵ In a wartime essay titled “The Two Mistakes of Tanzimat,” Ziya Gökalp, the high priest of CUP ideology, argued along the same lines, declaring that Islam mandates domination and that the non-Muslims can never become the equals of Muslims unless they convert and embrace Islam. This retreat from initial liberalism and constitutionalism in fact replicated the failure of the previous Tanzimat reform movement,¹⁶ because “no genuine equality was ever attained.”¹⁷ In consequence, the high echelons of the CUP “soon turned from equality and Ottomanization to Turkification.”¹⁸

The advent of the Armenian revolutionary period, in part the result of the abortiveness of the reform movement, served to aggravate dramatically rather than to alleviate the plight of the Armenians. Two principal revolutionary parties were involved: the Hunchaks, who came into being in Geneva in 1887, and the Dashnaks, who were established in Tbilisi, Georgia, in 1890.¹⁹ The non-indigenous origin of the founders of the two parties and of their top leaders, consisting as they did mostly of Russian Armenians, was a serious drawback that was matched by the very limited and mostly inadequate knowledge they possessed about Ottoman history, society, and government. Their combative posture, which was directed mostly against central and local authorities, and included sporadic acts of terrorism and retaliatory punitive raids and individual deadly assaults, is a central theme in a string of provocation theses.²⁰ The veteran French ambassador at Istanbul, Paul Cambon, put the picture in a broader perspective. In a detailed analysis titled, *Exposé historique de la question arménienne*, Cambon stated that the Armenian question emerged and evolved into a Turko-Armenian conflict when, by protesting and denouncing the Ottoman regime, diaspora Armenians ended up “transforming problems of simple administrative mishandling and abuses into an issue of racial persecution.” He went on to explain:

A high ranking Turkish official told me, “the Armenian question does not exist but we shall create it.” . . . They simply yearned for reforms, dreaming only of a normal administration under Ottoman rule. . . . The exactions of the officials remained scandalous . . . from one end of the Empire to the other, there is rampant corruption of officials, denial of justice and insecurity of life. . . . The Armenian revolutionary movement took off. . . . As if it were not enough to pro-

voke Armenian discontent, the Turks were glad to amplify it by the manner in which they handled it. . . . [T]he maintenance in Armenia of a veritable regime of terror, arrests, murders, rapes, all this shows that Turkey is taking pleasure in precipitating the events vis-à-vis an inoffensive population.²¹

In this connection, Cambon revealed that, by that time, Ottoman authorities were already “contemplating the possibility of transporting the Armenians en masse to Mesopotamia” (*transporter en masse les Arméniens . . . dans la Mésopotamie*). This remarkable revelation underscores the value of probing into the historical antecedents of the ultimate fate of Ottoman Armenians, given the prominent role the deserts of Mesopotamia played in shaping that fate during World War I. Furthermore, Cambon had been predicting for two years that the result of all this persecution and terror, and of the reactive embroilment of the Armenian revolutionaries in the resulting upheavals, would be “exactly” those sweeping massacres which in fact occurred and engulfed large segments of the Armenian population of the empire in the 1894–96 period: *L’Asie Mineure est véritablement en feu. On massacre presque partout.*²²

THE KURDISH FACTOR

As Cambon reported to Paris,²³ the sultan, anticipating the aggravation of the Armenian question, in 1891 set up a system of Kurdish tribal regiments of territorial cavalry. By 1899, their numbers had grown from 33 to 63. Though not formally incorporated into the regular standing army, these regiments nevertheless received ranks, uniforms, regimental badges, and Martini rifles, served out to them from government stores. The decision to recruit and engage the Kurds in the empire’s unfolding anti-Armenian campaign was not accidental. It was intimately connected with the very origins of the Armenian question. A large part of the suffering of the provincial, rural Armenian population was due to unchecked and unabating Kurdish depredations. As formulated by Henry F. Lynch, the British ethnographer and lawyer who in two separate trips spent eleven months conducting research in the afflicted areas, these Kurdish depredations constituted “the Kernel of the Armenian Question.”²⁴ A similar view is expressed by the Islamist scholars Hamilton Gibb and Harold Bowen, who have characterized the Kurds as “the mortal enemies of the Armenians.”²⁵ Several Turkish historians expound identical views.²⁶

The significance of all this is that, in an established state organization, massacre emerges as a viable instrument of state policy to decimate a minority population in order to resolve a conflict with it. As the late Harvard University historian William Langer concluded in his study of the problem, “It was perfectly obvious that the Sultan was determined to end the Armenian question by exterminating the Armenians.”²⁷ The British ethnographer William Ramsey, whose studies took him to the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire several times in the last two decades of the 19th century, and who was fluent in Turkish, went even further to make at that time—that is, in 1897—a grim prognostication. He declared, “The Armenians will in all probability be exterminated except the remnant that escapes to other lands.”²⁸

As acknowledged by the Turkish historian Enver Ziya Karal, “the Armenians were not pursuing their independence as was the case with the other Ottoman millets.”²⁹ Nevertheless, on the eve of World War I, their plight was “as bad as ever”; the CUP

had “stifled Armenian hopes.”³⁰ It was evident that the stage was being set for new crises, with a potential for a more sweeping cataclysm.

THE EXACERBATION OF THE ARMENIAN REFORM ISSUE
IN THE PREWAR YEARS AND THE RUDIMENTS OF PREMEDITATION

From its inception, the Armenian reform issue tended to acquire dangerous dimensions because of the direct and indirect involvement—in various degrees—of the European powers. To cope with the mounting pressures generated by such involvement, Ottoman authorities, whenever inevitable, tried to mollify these powers in a variety of ways, including the promulgation of reform acts, constitutional guarantees, and the signing of treaties and binding accords. This is one reason—and, perhaps, a main reason—that most of these reforms were moribund at the point of their initiation. Precisely for this reason they became sources of new and more grave crises. The Berlin Treaty’s Article 61, for example, became for the Armenians a matrix of such grave crises (as Article 23 of the same treaty convulsed Macedonia and the neighboring Balkan countries). A host of Turkish historians, authors, and statesmen trace the origin of the Armenian question to the reformist stipulations of that article.³¹ A strictly internal administrative problem had irrevocably been internationalized. This in itself was, and remained, a raw nerve for successive Ottoman rulers and elites; they were as sensitive about it as they were disposed to be piqued and often incensed.

But there was an ancillary and more consequential problem to worry about. A similar pattern of European intervention had brought about the emancipation of several Balkan nationalities from Ottoman dominion. The prospect that this pattern would be replicated for the benefit of the Armenians enveloped the Ottomans in apprehension and rage. At stake was not the periphery of the empire, as had been the case with the Balkan nationalities, but what they considered to be a part of the heartland of the country. Statements made by Abdulhamid and by Talât, principal leader of the CUP, show the gravity with which they viewed the ramifications of the Armenian reform issue.³² However, the prevalence of mutual suspicions and rivalries among the powers—especially between Russia and England at one time and between Russia and Germany at another—had rendered European intervention on behalf of the Armenians quite ineffective. In fact, this condition served to encourage the Ottoman authorities to all but ignore the pressures emanating from Europe. As a result, the vulnerability of the Armenians became even more pronounced. Deprived of a parent state, and devoid of any special ethnic or confessional ties with any European power, as was the case with several Balkan nationalities, they potentially represented a choice target for Ottoman backlash.

Unaware or unappreciative of the gravity of these predicaments, Armenian ecclesiastical and secular leaders of all kinds, composing their differences, decided to resuscitate the Armenian reform issue in the fall of 1912. The Ottoman armies had just suffered a crushing military defeat in the first Balkan war at the hands of former subject nations, the Greeks, the Bulgarians, and the Serbs. The human, material, and territorial losses were enormous; misery, destitution, and, above all, despair were ubiquitous. Yet under the leadership of the Catholics, the Supreme Patriarch of all Armenians, a delegation was formed whose mission was to proceed to Europe and plead

the case for Armenian reforms in conjunction with the impending peace negotiations on the future shape of the Balkans. This endeavor culminated in the forging of a new reform accord that came into force on 8 February 1914. But two aspects of the accord proved disastrous for the Armenians. First, the CUP was impelled, if not compelled, to acquiesce, for the first time in the history of international negotiations on Armenian reforms, to European control and supervision in the task of implementing the stipulated reforms. Second, the Russians, applying at once flexibility and obduracy, played a major role in the production of the accord.

With the signing of this reform accord, the Turko-Armenian conflict entered its most critical phase. The Russians, the historical nemesis of the Ottomans,³³ and the Armenians, an abiding source of trouble and danger for the empire, were seen in a new frame of reference—the confluence of two major threats issuing from within as well as from without. Having overthrown the opposition Liberal Union government through a second revolution in January 1913, the CUP eventually gained complete control of the government. At the same time, the party's Central Committee underwent a portentous restructuring whereby CUP's radical, xenophobic wing emerged as the dominant faction. Led by the two physician-politician members of that faction, Behaeddin Şakir and Mehmed Nazım, and with the support of the party ideologue Ziya Gökalp, this faction prevailed in the councils of the Central Committee. The result was the adoption of a new policy on nationalities and the targeting of the Armenians as a first priority. The empire was to be purged one way or another of the non-Muslim elements, and the liquidation of the Armenians at the first opportunity was a central part of this goal. Implicit and explicit declarations before, during, and after the war by the members of the CUP triumvirate attest to this preliminary decision.³⁴

As noted earlier, the revival of the Armenian reform issue and its outcome proved to be a catalyst for the explosive intensification of the Turko-Armenian conflict. In fact, the ground was paved for the CUP leaders to contemplate a radical resolution of that conflict. German and Austro-Hungarian testimonies unmistakably point in that direction. The most explicit testimony comes from none other than Richard Kühlmann. After serving as a special emissary at the German Embassy in the fall of 1914 and as actual ambassador there from November 1916 to July 1917, and before becoming Germany's foreign minister, Kühlmann prepared a lengthy "confidential" report in which he analyzed the wartime fate of Ottoman Armenians for the benefit of German Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg. In that report, Kühlmann spoke of "the annihilation of the Armenians which was carried out on a large-scale" (*die in grossem Umfange durchgeführte Armeniervernichtung*). He added that this was the result of "a policy of extermination" (*Ausrottungspolitik*), which he explained as having crystallized in connection with "the separatist activities of the Armenians" at a time that Turkey was near collapse due to the 1912 Balkan war (*während des Balkankrieges, als die Türkei dem Zusammenbruch nahe schien*). This policy, he further maintained, was due to "a policy shift and to a total victory of the Turkish-nationalistic direction in the councils of CUP."³⁵

In his post-war memoirs, Austro-Hungarian Vice Marshal Joseph Pomiankowski, who served in the Ottoman capital as military plenipotentiary in the 1909–18 period and throughout the war was attached to the Ottoman General Headquarters, and who understood Turkish, confirmed this pre-war penchant for extermination. He referred

to “the spontaneous utterances of many intelligent Turks” who blamed the old regimes for not decisively solving the problem of separatism “by either forcibly converting the Christian subjects to Islam, or by exterminating (*ausrotten*) them. In the light of this widely held view there can be no doubt that the Young Turk [CUP] government already before the war had decided to utilize the next suitable opportunity for rectifying this mistake, at least in part.” Pomiankowski then concluded that “the destruction of the Armenian people was a means to once and for all eliminate any possibility of the establishment of a Greater Armenia under Russian tutelage.”³⁶

A similar confirmation is made by Max Erwin Scheubner-Richter, a captain of reserves with the title “vice-consul” at Erzurum. With CUP orator and top leader Ömer Naci, Scheubner-Richter served as co-commander of an expeditionary force whose mission was to march into Iran and Azerbaijan to conduct anti-Russian guerrilla operations. Before leaving his post to return to Germany, Scheubner-Richter prepared an extensive report for the German chancellor. Referring to “a series of conversations with competent and influential Turks,” he relayed to Berlin this assessment: “[t]he finishing off (*Erledigung*) of the Armenians was part of a pre-existing program drawn up by the Unionist leaders. The plan is to recast the empire on a strictly Islamic and Pan-Turkic basis. A large number of these leaders believe that the empire’s non-Muslim inhabitants must either be forcibly Islamized and Turkified, and when this is not possible, must be destroyed. . . . The liquidation of the Armenians, for which these gentlemen deem the present [war] as the most propitious (*die geeigneteste*), was the first part of the program.”³⁷

Perhaps the most significant confirmation of premeditation and operational execution of the premediated plan comes from Colonel Stange. A principal participant in the guerrilla operations against the Russians, Stange, like Scheubner-Richter, had occasion personally to observe the exterminatory process in the field. He was in charge of the 8th Infantry Regiment of the 10th Army Corps of the Ottoman Third Army, whose cadres comprised a large number of former convicts enrolled in the notorious Special Organization (*Teşkilâtı Mahsusa*). Behaeddin Şakir, the mastermind and administrative chief of the eastern arm of that organization, served for a while under Stange’s command as guerrilla chieftain, and Stange got to know him rather well. To facilitate his contact with the people around him, Stange was presented by the Directorate of the Special Organization as a Muslim bearing the name Ibrahim Bey. In his summary “secret” report to the German Military Mission to Turkey dated 23 August 1915, Stange, writing from the headquarters of the Ottoman Third Army at Erzurum, provided a synopsis of the overall scope and the mechanics of that process. In that very long report—eight legal-size pages—he stated that the exterminatory measures were being carried out in accordance with “a plan conceived long time ago” (*einen lang gehegten Plan*). He went on to say that these measures of “expulsion and annihilation” (*Austreibung und Vernichtung*) were the result of a decision made by “the Young Turk Committee in Istanbul.”³⁸

WORLD WAR I AS A MAJOR CATALYST AND THE ISSUE OF ARMENIAN CULPABILITY

The raising of this issue is an integral part of a broader provocation thesis subsuming three main categories—namely, individual acts of sabotage, the role of Armenian

volunteers in the Russian Caucasus Army, and a series of uprisings. Addressing the matter of sabotage, Erzurum's Vice-Consul Scheubner-Richter in a report confirmed the incidence of isolated acts of sabotage, especially the cutting of telegraphic lines, and espionage; he added, however, that such "phenomena during a war in border areas containing mixed populations is nothing unusual."³⁹ Aleppo's consul Walter Rössler referred in a general way to "the occurrence of potential and actual subversive activities on the part of Armenians," adding that the authorities "wasted hecatombs of innocent people for the misdeeds of a few."⁴⁰ While deploring Armenian acts of disloyalty, Scheubner-Richter sensitized his ambassador to the facts that such acts were common in all theaters of war and that it was only natural for a population oppressed and abused by its own government to welcome an advancing enemy of the same faith.⁴¹

There is hardly any worthwhile material on Armenian volunteers in the German and Austro-Hungarian state archives. Nevertheless, a brief note is in order. Despite the strong objections of several Ottoman Armenian political leaders, Russian Armenian leaders proceeded with great fanfare to recruit and organize four Armenian volunteer detachments, about 6,000 men altogether,⁴² to fight in the ranks of the Russian Caucasus Army against the Ottoman army. Among them were a number of Ottoman Armenians with knowledge about the geography and the topography of the combat zone. Accordingly, they were used as guides and scouts.⁴³ In confirming the involvement of Armenian volunteers, Grand Vizier Said Halim Paşa, in an exchange with Ambassador Hans Wangenheim, merely stated that "a group of Armenians from Bulgaria had joined the Russian army as volunteers."⁴⁴

The third category, the most important in the overall scheme of the thesis of provocation and backlash, deserves special attention. Was there a general uprising, and if so, how widespread was it? As German ambassador Paul Wolff-Metternich wrote in a comprehensive report, "There was neither a concerted general uprising, nor was there a fully valid proof that such a synchronized uprising was planned or organized." Moreover, he said, the local uprisings in the summer and fall of 1915 were defensive acts to avert deportation.⁴⁵ Felix Guse, the German chief of staff of the Ottoman Third army and a close collaborator of General Mahmud Kâmil, the commander-in-chief of that army in whose command zone 90 percent of the male population reportedly was massacred outright, confirmed this when he wrote that there was no proof that the Armenians had any plan or intention to mount a general uprising.⁴⁶ For his part, Vice-Consul Scheubner-Richter declared that, except in Van, the uprisings everywhere else involved improvised self-defense.⁴⁷ Likewise, Vice-Consul Hermann Hoffmann reported that uprisings in Zeitoun, Urfa, Funducak, and Mussa Dagh in his district were spontaneous,⁴⁸ with Consul Rössler emphasizing that the Urfa uprising was designed to avert imminent annihilation,⁴⁹ and that the memory of the harrowing 1895 Urfa massacre animated the resolve of the defenders to prevent a recurrence of that nightmare.⁵⁰ Moreover, Adana's German Consul Büge twice reported that "all preconditions to mount an Armenian uprising in his district are lacking";⁵¹ Samsun's German Vice-Consul Kuckhoff stated that "the vast majority of the Ottoman Armenians was not in any way involved in uprisings" (*zum grössten Teil . . . keinen Anteil*)⁵²; and Major-General Posselt, commandant of Erzurum fortress until April 1915, described the conduct of the Armenian population of Erzurum as "blameless" (*tadellos*) and believed that they were exposed to "harassment and provocation on the part of the

Turks.”⁵³ German Ambassador Wangenheim, the architect of the wartime Turko-German political and military alliance, recognized that a general Armenian rebellion was neither conceivable nor feasible. In report dated 9 March 1915, he flatly disputed an Ottoman charge that the Armenians in Bitlis were “in revolt,” differentiating such an idea from individual acts of resistance to deportation.⁵⁴ In a report to his chancellor in Berlin, he declared that there might be disagreements about culpability on this or that issue, but “[i]n only one issue . . . there ought to be agreement: since the advent [in 1908] of the constitutional regime [of the CUP] the Armenians relinquished the idea of a revolution, and currently there is no organization for such a revolution.”⁵⁵

As noted earlier, the issue of Armenian rebellion has been, and continues to be, an integral part of the controversy under examination in this article. The extent of its significance can be gauged by the evidence supplied by an official German source focusing on a particular case. This case concerns the receipt of an order to proceed to an Armenian village, where “Armenian rebels” had reportedly barricaded themselves, and to “storm” that village and “punish” the villagers. According to the testimony of Vice-Consul Scheubner-Richter, who was involved in the operation, “the alleged rebels actually proved to be people who from fear of a massacre (*aus Furcht vor einem Massaker*) had barricaded themselves and would be more than willing to surrender their arms in exchange for a promise to be spared and not killed.”⁵⁶ It appears that, in order to promote such stories of Armenian rebellion, Ottoman local authorities often coerced the frightened Armenians to purchase weapons from Muslim neighbors to be delivered to the authorities. Such staged transactions involving seemingly confiscated piles of Armenian weapons would then be portrayed as evidence of Armenian plans of rebelliousness. This is what the German propaganda operative Max von Oppenheim reported to Berlin from Damascus on 29 August 1915.⁵⁷

More than any other argument, the argument referring to evidence of four specific instances of Armenian uprising constitutes the core element of the charge of Armenian culpability. As the various German officials acknowledged, there were four such local uprisings of any significance: Van (20 April–17 May 1915), Mussa Dagh (30 July–12 September 1915), Şabin Karahisar (6 June–4 July 1915), and Urfa (29 September–23 October 1915). Of these, the Van uprising stands out in two respects. First, it served as a major triggering mechanism for the activation of the anti-Armenian extermination plan. Second, unlike in the other uprisings, in Van the Armenians prevailed. The circumstances of this uprising are therefore worth brief review in the light of testimony furnished by German and Austro-Hungarian officials in order to assess the relevance of the argument that it was part of a major Armenian conspiracy and, as such, warranted the comprehensiveness and the severity of the government’s response. Before adducing such testimony, however, reference can be made to the eyewitness account of a Venezuelan officer who was given a command post in the Ottoman military operating in the Van area. His narration about the Van uprising was particularly appreciated by Felix Guse, the German chief of staff of the Ottoman Third army stationed nearby, and was independently verified by a contemporary German officer.⁵⁸ De Nogales, the officer, was given the rank of major in the Ottoman army; he was in charge of the artillery batteries bombarding the Armenian positions during the siege. He not only pointed an accusing finger at Ottoman authorities for provoking the Armenians and starting the series of massacres in the outlying villages of Van, but at

the same time he almost ridiculed the Armenians for being valiant but lacking in strategic thinking. This is what he wrote:

I have rarely seen such furious fighting as took place at Van. . . . The Armenians fought with a courage undreamt of by our Circassians. The resistance of the Armenians was terrific, and their valor worthy of all praise. . . . [However], if 30,000 or 40,000 Armenians shut up in Van . . . had undertaken the offensive, and arming themselves with cudgels if nothing better were available, and axes, and knives, had attempted a sally en masse, who knows if they might not have crushed us at length. . . . [They] committed their usual strategic error, entrenching themselves.⁵⁹

Of course, the Armenians were doomed because their supplies had critically dwindled. But the siege was broken by the timely advance of Russian troops and the hastiness with which the Ottoman forces beat a retreat. The success proved not only temporary, however, but costly as well, as some 55,000 Armenians in the outlying villages of Van were mercilessly hunted down and killed.⁶⁰ Anxious to reassure the Muslim inhabitants of Van, the leaders of the uprising had issued a proclamation “To our Turkish compatriots,” stating that their fight was against Governor Cevdet, who was “exterminating a guiltless and innocent people.”⁶¹ But this effort seemed doomed. According to the revealing account of the Ottoman–Turkish deputy of Van at that time, the authorities were bent on provoking the Armenians in tune with their scheme of wholesale obliteration. In his post-war account, he stated, “İttihad [CUP] was underhandedly instigating the [Muslim] people, prodding them to hurl themselves upon the Armenians” (*el altundan halkı tahrik ederek Ermenilere saldırtmış*).⁶²

In three successive reports, Erzurum’s Vice-Consul Scheubner-Richter alludes to a series of such provocations launched against Van Armenians by Vali Cevdet. He cites what he considers to be the perfidious ambush and murder of several Armenian notables who were falsely lured into a session of negotiation and the illegal arrest of an Armenian deputy and his subsequent disappearance, only to conclude that it is “unworthy of a government that has a claim on civilization . . . to directly precipitate an uprising through such provocations.”⁶³ Alexandrette’s Vice-Consul Hoffmann wrote, “Considering all that they endured, it is not surprising that Van Armenians rose up.”⁶⁴ For his part, Ambassador Wolff-Metternich advised Berlin that “there may be some truth (*etwas Wahres*) to the Armenian argument that the uprising in Van was provoked through acts of oppression of the Armenian inhabitants by the Turkish officials and soldiery.”⁶⁵

Given his constant presence at Ottoman General Headquarters as the military plenipotentiary of allied Austria-Hungary, Vice Marshal Pomiankowski’s assessment of the Van uprising is of foremost significance. Commenting on the origin and nature of that uprising, Pomiankowski characterized it as “an act of despair” (*Akt der Verzweiflung*). The Armenians, he went on to say, “recognized that the general butchery (*die allgemeine Schlächtere*) had begun in the environs of Van and that they would be the next [victims].”⁶⁶

THE ANTINOMIC NATURE OF THE PROVOCATION ARGUMENT

German and Austro-Hungarian accounts point to a series of efforts by Ottoman authorities to provoke the Armenians via atrocious acts in order to create a pretext. It

appears that an integral part of the plan to eliminate the Armenians was to orchestrate incidents whereby the Armenians could be accused of a variety of charges, including rebellion, sabotage, and sedition. The charges would then be embellished and made part of the official record before activating the plan. In November 1914—long before the Third Army suffered a crushing defeat at Sarıkamış (January 1915), and long before the Armenian Van uprising occurred (April–May 1915)—the brigands (*çetes*) of the newly formed Special Organization (*Teşkilâtı Mahsusa*) were busy in the eastern provinces, especially Erzurum, assaulting, raping, pillaging, and murdering Armenians. The first signal of the existence of such a scheme was relayed to Berlin by German Ambassador Wangenheim, who transmitted to Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg a 5 December 1914 report by Captain Paul Schwartz, then his consul at Erzurum. Detailing the provocations of the brigands (*Freischärler*), including the perpetration of murder, the consul spoke of the acute alarm of “the Armenian population of Erzurum, especially the rural population,” who believed these provocations to be the “harbingers of new massacres” (*Vorboten neuer Massakres*).⁶⁷ As Aleppo Consul Rössler reported in several dispatches, these troubles extended to Zeitun around the same time. Armenian conscripts, particularly those from Zeitun, were “ill-fed, mistreated, and tormented,” “women were molested,” and rumors were spread that Armenian soldiers had “poisoned the bread of fellow Muslim soldiers.” Moreover, “influential Muslims decided to send a telegram to the central authorities accusing the Armenians of having seized the mosques.” In dismissing these “inflammatory and stupid accusations,” Rössler alerted his superiors to the acute danger of consequent “atrocities” (*Metzeleien*), because, he said, “the instigators” (*Anstifter*) are continuing to agitate.⁶⁸

These acts of provocative abuse persisted until the spring of 1915, when the plan was put into action through mass arrests in Istanbul and the rest of the empire in April, and through the official proclamation of the decree for deportations in May 1915. On 30 April 1915, Scheubner-Richter reported on “the excesses and severe harassments”⁶⁹ the *mutassarrif* and gendarmes of Erzincan were inflicting on the Armenian inhabitants. On 15 May 1915, Scheubner-Richter reported the general mistreatment of the Armenian population by the authorities and the manner in which the Armenians were being agitated since the outbreak of the war through harsh methods, including devastating requisitions in the name of “war levies” (*tekâlifî harbiye*).⁷⁰ In a lengthy report dated 5 August 1915, Scheubner-Richter again advised his ambassador in Istanbul that “the *çetes* and the police have been simply challenging (*geradezu herausgefordert*) the Armenian people through their provocative conduct” (*durch das provokatorische Verhalten*).⁷¹ And in a 4 December 1916 final report, Scheubner-Richter, outlining the CUP plan, informed the German chancellor: “[t]he Armenians will be provoked to acts of self-defense. The resulting disorders will then be presented to the outside world in an embellished form to serve as a pretext for deportations. (*Selbstschutzbestrebungen der Armenier . . . aufgebauscht und zum Vorwand genommen*.) Once underway, they will then be attacked by the Kurds and Turkish brigands and some gendarmes, who will be incited by the CUP for this purpose, and murdered” (*ermordet*).⁷² As if to emphasize the regularity of this reliance on the method of provocation used against the Armenians, Major-General Otto von Lossow, German military plenipotentiary in Turkey and military attaché, referred in a comprehensive report to the German Chancellor to what he called “the Turkish policy of exterminating (*aus-*

zu rotten) the Armenians,” and declared, “Wherever possible, the Armenians are being aroused, provoked in the hope of thereby securing a pretext for new assaults on them” (*Man reizt die Armenier, wo nur irgend möglich, man provoziert sie in der Hoffnung dadurch einen Vorwand zu neuen Angriffen . . . zu erhalten*).⁷³

In trying to explain the dimensions of the anti-Armenian measures, Rössler reported on 10 May 1915 that the authorities were using a “magnifying glass” in order to claim to have detected an Armenian “conspiracy.” Applying a medieval mentality, they are “blaming an entire people for the deed of one or of a few. Their aim is the wholesale annihilation (*Vernichtung*) of Armenians in all the areas.”⁷⁴

It appears that the CUP’s use of deliberate provocation served dual functions. First, it underwent qualitative transformation as some of the targeted victims decided to respond in one way or another, thereby ostensibly reversing the sequence of provocation as well as the original subject–object disposition. Second, exploiting their overwhelming power advantage, the CUP leaders used the dynamics of this transformation through which they acted as the provoked party to carry out their underlying eliminational intentions.

THE RESOLUTION OF THE ARMENIAN QUESTION THROUGH THE WHOLESALE LIQUIDATION OF THE ARMENIANS

Even if one grants that the Armenians did provoke the authorities to any significant degree through acts of disloyalty and deserved severe retribution, the intensity and the scale of the retribution applied against them during the war raises valid questions about the plausibility of the argument. If the retaliation exceeded all bounds of commensurateness, had the characteristics of a predesigned general scheme that targeted an entire population rather than being random outbursts of impulsive violence directed against actual or suspected troublemakers, and if the tempo of destructiveness continued far beyond the elimination of the agents of provocation, then one has to consider other frameworks of explanation. The conclusions and judgments of German and Austro-Hungarian diplomats and military officers operating in various parts of the Ottoman Empire during the war provides such a framework of explanation.

On 12 November 1915, German Foreign Minister Gottlieb von Jagow relayed to his ambassador in Istanbul German Chancellor Hollweg’s edict (*Erlass*) decrying the Ottoman wartime policy of exterminating (*Ausrottungspolitik*) Armenians.⁷⁵ German Commander-in-Chief Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg denounced that “policy of annihilation” (*Vernichtungspolitik*), which he said was being used as a means to solve “the Armenian question” (*die armenische Frage*).⁷⁶ In the June 1915–October 1918 period, four successive German ambassadors explicitly characterized the anti-Armenian measures as devices to “solve the Armenian question through annihilation”; of these, three quoted directly Interior Minister Tâlat to this effect.⁷⁷ Austria-Hungary’s ambassador, Johann Pallavicini, after a meeting with Tâlat, informed Vienna that “through scandalous measures . . . the Armenian question has been solved” (*erledigt*).⁷⁸ Karl Count zu Trautmannsdorff-Weinsberg, deputy to Ambassador Pallavicini, in a 30 September 1915 report likewise spoke of a meeting with Tâlat, who “with a certain gratification” told him that there were no more Armenians in Erzurum. The deputy then lamented the fact that “unheard-of horrors” (*unerhörte Greuelthaten*)

are being perpetrated and that “the extermination of the Armenian race is all but achieved.”⁷⁹

Several German consuls and vice-consuls, stationed in the interior of the land, and therefore close to the scenes of the unfolding extermination campaign, underscored the historical antecedents of that campaign and consistently reiterated the theme: “solving the Armenian question” was the underlying, but actually overriding, purpose of the campaign.⁸⁰

In examining the wartime fate of Ottoman Armenians to portray it as accurately as possible, the “why” of that fate was treated as an inseparable part of the problem. The historical aspect of the “why” needs to be completed, however, by the consideration of the contemporary dimension of the problem. Reverting to the time frame of World War I, one needs to add to the “why” the adverb “now,” and ask the ancillary question: why now? German and Austro-Hungarian documents answer that question on two levels. Nearly all of them reiterate time and again that the conditions of the war, with all its crises, emergencies, and exigencies, were used effectively to initiate and implement the campaign of extermination. In other words, by harnessing its manifold opportunities, the war was rendered functional. In his “very confidential” (*streng vertraulich*) report, for example, veteran Austro-Hungarian Ambassador Pallavicini informed Vienna that the Ottoman authorities “will continue to exploit the conditions of the war to destroy” (*vernichten*) the Armenians.⁸¹ Alexandrette’s German Vice-Consul Hoffmann reported to his ambassador in Istanbul that the CUP leaders were bent on “once and for all” (*ein für alle Mal*) getting rid of the—“from a Muslim Turkish standpoint—politically and economically obnoxious Armenians” as the present war is deemed to offer “a singularly favorable opportunity” (*unwiederbringlich günstige Gelegenheit*).⁸² Erzurum’s Scheubner-Richter pointed out in a long report that the fate befalling the Armenians was preconditioned by “the Armenian question with which European diplomacy has been wrestling for centuries” (*Die Armenische Frage welche seit Jahrhunderten die Diplomatic Europa’s beschäftigt hat*). In it he repeatedly referred to the “utilization” (*Benutzung*) of the opportunities afforded by “the conditions of the present war” (*im gegenwärtigen Krieg*) for “the solution of the Armenian question” (*zur Lösung der Armenierfrage*). He went on to say that, apart from the outright massacres, the deportations “are carried out in such a way that they are tantamount to the act of complete annihilation of the Armenians” (*in einer Form ausgeführt wurden, die einer absoluten Ausrottung der Armenier gleichkam*).⁸³ Referring to these deportations, Pallavicini used identical words—that is, “tantamount to their total annihilation.”⁸⁴ The most explicit and authoritative answer to the question “why now?” is provided, however, by Interior Minister Talât, whom German ambassador Wolff-Metternich identified as the principal architect of the extermination campaign. In an effort to secure the cooperation of the German government, he informed Berlin that “the work that is to be done must be done now; after the war it will be too late.”⁸⁵

The other level refers to another advantage that, due to the war, seemingly accrued to the organizers of the extermination campaign. At issue here is the alliance with the Central Powers serving as a shield and intended to block or obviate outside interference in the extermination operations. The internal vulnerability of the population targeted for destruction is thus substantially amplified by pre-empting external deter-

rence. In one of his most important “confidential” reports, a veteran diplomat, Germany’s Aleppo Consul Walter Rössler, declared that “there can be no doubt (*kein Zweifel*) that the authorities are utilizing (*benutzen*) the alliance with the Central Powers for the purpose of resolving the Armenian question.”⁸⁶ In another “very confidential” report to Vienna, Ambassador Pallavicini analyzed the range of wartime problems associated with the Ottoman regime, foremost among which was the fact that the CUP was taking advantage of “the favorable” (*günstig*) situation of the war to restructure Ottoman society at the expense of subject nationalities, in the course of which they applied an “inhuman procedure against the Armenians.” For this policy they used “the alliance with the Central Powers as a prop” (*eine Stütze*).⁸⁷

THE INSTRUMENTS OF SUPERVISION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Given the vast dimensions of the wartime anti-Armenian campaign, the question of the methods and mechanics of that campaign did not escape the attention of the German and Austro-Hungarian officials. In fact, they would be hard put to answer the main question of the nature of the ultimate fate of the Armenians without addressing this ancillary question. The successful attainment of the campaign necessarily hinged on the effective marshaling of critical resources and their goal-directed utilization. More important than decision-making in the present case was the organizational task of administering and bringing to fruition the goals of the campaign.

In the welter of the reports filed by these officials, three categories of instruments are depicted and brought into relief as pivotal instruments. Foremost among these is the network of CUP potentates who are described as having been deployed in the major operational areas to supervise and control the details of the deportations and the particulars of extermination. In hierarchical order, those involved were the inspectors (*müfettiş*), delegates (*murahhas*), responsible secretaries (*kâtib-i mesul*), and members of the executive committees of local party (*heyeti idare; heyeti merkeziye*).⁸⁸

Another category that stands out in these reports has a military ingredient. It appears that a segment of the Ottoman officers corps was closely identified with the CUP and consequently embraced the radical goals of its Armenian policy. In fact, a significant number of these officers were highly engaged and operative members of that party. In other words, they were politicized to a degree that a student of CUP spoke of “[t]he politicization of the army and the overt military involvement in politics.”⁸⁹ This was bound to facilitate considerably the organization and carrying out of the extermination campaign. For to be swift in execution, such a campaign requires optimal efficiency in the application of lethal violence against concentrated target populations. The means of such violence were amply available throughout the vicissitudes of the war. Moreover, as is the case in almost every major war, the exigent and critical conditions of the war had catapulted the military to a superordinate position in the highest councils of government.

That government was dominated by the Young Turk triumvirate, two members of which were top military men. One of them, Generalissimo Enver, was not only minister of war but also the de facto commander-in-chief of all Ottoman forces. The other, General Ahmet Cemal, was commander-in-chief of the Fourth Army as well as minis-

ter of the navy when the Ottoman Empire entered the war on 29 October 1914 via a pre-emptive attack on Russia. Perhaps most important, the initiative for the comprehensive Armenian deportations came from Enver's headquarters.⁹⁰ The ensuing Temporary Law of Deportation allowed broad latitude for military commanders to decide and implement the deportations, injecting into the terms of the law the nebulous word "feel" or "sense" (*hissetmek*) relative to the possibility or probability of acts of disloyalty.⁹¹ The instrumental character of the role of the military in the elimination campaign against the Armenians prefigures in the earlier deliberations of the Young Turk leaders trying to grapple with the thorny aspects of the evolving Armenian question in the decades preceding World War I. As the historian Yusuf Hikmet Bayur wrote, the CUP leaders slowly drifted to the idea that the problems should be resolved "through the use of the army" (*işi ordu ile görmek*).⁹²

Three high-level Ottoman officers emerge in the German and Austro-Hungarian documents as having played the most consequential roles in determining the wartime fate of the Armenians. Foremost among these is the Third Army's commander-in-chief, General Mahmud Kâmil, who was an ardent CUP ideologue and a close friend of the members of the radical wing of the Central Committee of the CUP—that is, Şakir, Nazım, and Ziya Gökalp. He was appointed to that post by the special intervention of these three men after Enver had originally appointed General Vehip, who ended up being replaced.⁹³ Kâmil's role was rendered especially important because the military and civilian jurisdiction of the Third Army encompassed the largest concentration of Ottoman Armenians—that is, those in the provinces Erzurum, Bitlis, Van, Sivas, Diyarbakir, Harput, and Trabzon. On 16 May 1915, Scheubner-Richter reported that "the deportation of the entire Armenian population of the Erzurum region was ordered by the High Command of the Third Army"—that is, General Mahmud Kâmil.⁹⁴ It should be noted that this is exactly what the Turkish Army commander and, later, Grand Vizier Ahmet Izzet Paşa wrote in his post-war memoirs. According to him, it was Kâmil who "proposed and demanded" (*teklif ve talep*) the deportation of the Armenians.⁹⁵ On 26 June, Scheubner-Richter repeated the same information but declared that this order for wholesale deportation was "not militarily justified" (*militärisch unbegründet*).⁹⁶ And on 26 July 1915, Scheubner-Richter informed his ambassador that General Kâmil is "sharply intervening in the affairs of the provincial government" relative to the deportation of the Armenians.⁹⁷

Perhaps the most authoritative evidence supplied on this topic is the testimony of Colonel Stange, who was in the thick of the military operations of the Ottoman Third Army and accordingly could observe firsthand the military underpinnings of the anti-Armenian campaign. When relaying his observations, he explained that he was disturbed by the attempts of the Ottoman authorities "to conceal or downplay the events." He wanted to set the record straight (*Bestreben der Regierung die Ereignisse zu verheimlichen oder abzuschwächen*). Focusing on the paramount role of General Kâmil, Third Army Commander, Stange stated: "[t]he commander-in-chief must have known of the murder of the first deportee convoys. Yet he ruthlessly and ceaselessly pressed for the speeding up of the [series of] expulsions" (*dauernd auf rücksichtslose Beschleunigung der Austreibung*). This behavior is in tune with his utterance that "after the war there no longer will be an Armenian question" (*nach dem Kriege eine Armen-*

ierfrage nicht mehr geben werde). He ended his report by identifying General Kâmil as one of the arch-organizers of “the destruction of the Armenians” (*Vernichtung der Armenier*).⁹⁸

Another army commander (the Sixth Army; later, commander-in-chief of Army Groups East) actively involved in the extermination campaign was War Minister Enver’s uncle General Halil (Kut). In a 4 December 1916 report, Scheubner-Richter advised his ambassador that Halil Paşa “had ordered the massacre of his Armenian and Syrian battalions and had massacred the Armenian population falling under his control (*Massakrierung seiner armenischen und Syrischen Bataillone*).⁹⁹ In his memoirs, Halil not only admits but almost prides himself on having destroyed 300,000 Armenians: “[i]t can be more or less, I didn’t count.”¹⁰⁰ On 4 November 1915, Mosul’s Vice-Consul Holstein reported that “Halil’s troops perpetrated massacres in the north and now want to slaughter the Armenians of Mosul.”¹⁰¹

In terms of the clandestine aspects of the military and paramilitary operations, the logistics, and the financing, Colonel (later General) Seyfi (*Düzgören*) is identified as a major figure in the entire scheme. He was the head of Department II of both the War Ministry and the Ottoman General Headquarters and was in charge of intelligence and counter-espionage operations. The paramilitary units formed under the name of Special Organization (*Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa*) which comprised a large number of felons and former convicts, were mostly organized and administered by Seyfi. In a top-secret decision-making meeting where the fate of the Armenians reportedly was being decided, he was one of the five participants.¹⁰² The German military plenipotentiary at the German Embassy at Constantinople, Colonel (later Major-General) Otto von Lossow, confirmed Seyfi’s involvement in the matter. In a communication to the German General Headquarters dated 16 November 1916, Lossow indicated that Seyfi and his Department II at Ottoman General Headquarters were in charge of the “Armenian deportations” (*Armenierverschickungen*). “He handles this matter and knows exactly about it” (*der diese Sachen bearbeitet und genau orientiert ist*).¹⁰³ Moreover, Colonel Fuat Balkan, one of the top leaders of the Special Organization operating in the Balkans, stated in his memoirs that Seyfi directed the operations of the Special Organization from his office at the General Headquarters.¹⁰⁴

Other officers played lesser roles.¹⁰⁵ Two of them are worth mentioning. On 3 June 1915, Aleppo Consul Rössler reported that General Fahrettin or Fahri (*Türkkan*), commander of Aleppo’s 12th Army Corps, was in charge of the administrative arrangements of the deportations of the province and adjacent areas. In line with this, the CUP had sent Eyub, a special supervisor, to “implement its Armenian policy in that area, for which purpose he was directly subordinated to Fahri Paşa” (*direkt Fakhri Paşa unterstellt worden*).¹⁰⁶ Shortly after his arrival, Eyub told Mosul Vice-Consul Holstein that the central government’s official policy was the wholesale obliteration of the Armenian people, adding, “We want to extirpate the Armenian name” (*Wir wollen den armenischen Namen austilgen*).¹⁰⁷ On 7 December 1915, German Foreign Office Counsellor Dieckhoff noted in a memorandum that Nureddin Paşa (*Sakallı*), chief of staff of the army in Iraq, wanted “the deportation of Bağdad Armenians to Mosul, and from there together with Mosul Armenians to the Euphrates River”—that is, to their doom.¹⁰⁸

CONCLUSION

The main objective of this article was to address the ongoing controversy about the nature and outcome of the fate of the Ottoman Armenians during World War I. In doing so, a fresh perspective was used by way of focusing and exploring as fully as possible the official documents of the two wartime allies of the Ottoman Empire, Germany and Austria-Hungary. Given the unabating disputes surrounding the reliability and authenticity of Armenian and Ottoman–Turkish documents of all kinds, not only is this methodology preferable, but at present, it appears to be the only viable one. But the documents embraced by this methodology have additional attributes. Labeled “confidential,” “secret,” and “top secret,” the reports prepared and transmitted to Berlin and Vienna by these officials were not intended for public consumption. They were meant for internal war-time use. Consequently, these officials often felt compelled to contradict, for the sake of accuracy and truthfulness, official Ottoman assertions—in spite of the serious ramifications of such contradictions and the exigencies of the bonds of the alliance. The significance of this conscious act of questioning the contentions of a wartime partner cannot be overestimated. Some of these allied officials agonized over their task of rendering their judgments in this respect, especially about their urge to be “truthful.” The consuls, too, were torn between their sense of fidelity to the Ottoman allies, on the one hand, and the duty to ascertain facts and convey them, on the other. In a 16 November 1915 report to the German chancellor, Aleppo Consul Rössler not only articulated this dilemma but also indicated his preferred option to solve it: “I do not intend to frame my reports in such a way that I may be favoring one or the other party. Rather, I consider it my duty to present to you the description of things which have occurred in my district and which I consider to be the truth” (*was ich für die Wahrheit halte*). Rössler was reacting to the broadcast of an official Ottoman charge that the Armenians had begun to massacre the Turkish population in the Turkish sections of Urfa, a city in his district, after avowedly capturing them. He dismissed the entire accusation with one word: “invented” (*erfunden*).¹⁰⁹

These considerations impart a distinct quality to the conclusion of these officials that, despite varying attempts at coverups and outright denials, the wartime anti-Armenian measures were not only carefully planned by the central authorities, but were also intended to destroy wholesale the victim population, a destruction process to which they had become the reluctant witnesses. Their uniform conclusion about the nature of the wartime fate of the Armenians acquires special validation from an extraordinary source identified with the Ottoman camp: General Mehmed Vehip, commander-in-chief of the Third Army and an ardent CUP member. Given his background, Vehip’s testimony reflects not only authority but also a singularity in purpose. Departing from the established path of most other CUP leaders, including high-ranking military officers, he testified with candor. One can only infer from the tone injected in the text of his account that he was indignant at what he learned and observed. Lewis Einstein, special assistant at the American Embassy in Istanbul during the war, describes Vehip as “a chivalrous soldier.”¹¹⁰ At the request of the Mazhar Inquiry Commission, which in the post-war period conducted a preliminary investigation to determine the criminal liability of the wartime Ottoman authorities in the matter of Armenian deportations and massacres, Vehip prepared a deposition (*tezker-*

eyi cevabiye) on 5 December 1918. After providing a host of details, Vehip offered his “summary conviction” (*Hülasayı Kanaatım*) as follows:

The Armenian deportations were carried out in a manner utterly unbecoming to [our sense of] humanity and civilization and inimical to the honor of the government. The murder and annihilation of the Armenians and the plunder and expropriation of their possessions were the result of the decisions made by the Central Committee of Ittihad ve Terakki [CUP]. . . . These atrocities occurred under a program that was determined upon and involved a definite case of willfulness. They occurred because they were ordered, approved, and pursued first by the CUP’s [provincial] delegates and central boards, and second by governmental chiefs who had [ignored] the law, had pushed aside their conscience, and had become the tools of the wishes and desires of the [Ittihadist] *cemiyet*.

Ermeni sevkıyatı insanıyet ve medenıyet ve şerefi hükümete katiyyen yakışmıyacak bir tarzda yapıldı. Ermenilerin katl ve imhası ve mallarının yağma ve gasbı Ittihad ve Terakki Merkezi Umumisinin neticeyi mukarrerâtı olup. . . . Mukarrer bir program ve mutlak bir kasd tahtında yapılan işbu mezalim evvelen Ittihad ve Terakki murahhaslarıyla heyeti merkeziyelerinin ve saniyen kanun ve vicadanı bir tarafa atarak cemıyetin arzu ve meramına alet olan rüesayı hükümetin emr ve tensib ve takibiile yapılmış.¹¹¹

Vehip’s pungent testimony attests not only to the calamitous fate of the Armenians, but also to the fact that not all military authorities approved the scheme that brought about that fate. In fact, tensions and antagonism often existed between the high-ranking CUP operatives pushing for the implementation of that scheme and the high-ranking military and civilian officials who resisted and were even counterposed to it. Some of these men were dismissed; others were reassigned; and still others were killed outright or by ambush. One of these was Governor Mehmed Celâl. He refused to massacre the remnants of the Armenian deportee convoys who had survived the hardships of deportation and who had arrived in Aleppo in wretched condition. Celâl was then reassigned to Konya, where he lasted but a few months. After the war, he summed up his sentiments this way: “I resembled a man who helplessly, without any means of rescue, was standing on the shore of a river in which, instead of water, blood was flowing. Thousands of innocent children, guiltless old people, forlorn women, strong youth, were hurling down in the vortex of this stream of blood to their extinction” (*Bu kan cereyanı içinde ademe doğru akıp*).¹¹² His futile resistance to the extermination campaign is covered in several reports filed by Germany’s Aleppo Consul Rössler.¹¹³

It is this futility that accents the inexorability and meticulousness with which the anti-Armenian scheme was organized and was brought to a successful end.¹¹⁴

Based on the evidence supplied by a host of officials from Imperial Germany and Imperial Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire’s wartime allies, the following conclusion becomes inescapable. Through the episodic interventions of the European Powers, the historically evolving and intensifying Turko-Armenian conflict had become a source of both anger and frustration for Ottoman rulers and elites driven by a xenophobic nationalism. A monolithic political party that had managed to eliminate all opposition and had gained total control of the Ottoman state apparatus efficiently took advantage of the opportunities provided by World War I. It purged by violent and lethal means the bulk of the Armenian population from the territories of the empire. By any standard of definition, this was an act of genocide.¹¹⁵

NOTES

¹Leo Kuper, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1981), esp. chap. 6, “The Turkish Genocide against Armenians,” 101–19; Christopher J. Walker, *Armenia: The Survival of a Nation*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990); Frank G. Weber, *Eagles on the Crescent: Germany, Austria, and the Diplomacy of the Turkish Alliance 1914–1918* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1970), esp. chap. 4, “The Armenian Massacres and a Peace Move,” 144–58; Ulrich Trumppener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire 1914–1918* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968), esp. chap. 7, “The Armenian Persecutions,” 200–70; Robert F. Melson, *Revolution and Genocide: On the Origins of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Leslie A. Davis, *The Slaughterhouse Province: An American Diplomat’s Report on the Armenian Genocide, 1915–1917*, ed. Susan K. Blair (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Aristide D. Caratzas, Publisher, 1989); Israel W. Charny, ed., *Encyclopedia of Genocide*, 2 vols. (Oxford: ABD-CLIO, 1999), in which several entries deal with the Armenian case; Richard G. Hovannisian, ed., *The Armenian Genocide, History, Politics, Ethics* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992); idem, *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1986); idem, *Remembrance and Denial: The Case of the Armenian Genocide* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999); Yair Auron, *The Banality of Indifference: Zionism and the Armenian Genocide* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2000); Gunnar Heinsohn, ed., *Lexikon der Völkermorde* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1998), 37, 47, 61, 77–81, 126, 230; Taner Akçam, *Türk Ulusal Kimliği ve Ermeni Sorumu* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1992); idem, *Armenien und der Völkermord: Die Istanbul Prozesse und die türkische Nationalbewegung* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1996); Artem Ohandjanian, *Armenien: Der Verschwiegene Völkermord* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1989); Manoog J. Somakian, *Empires in Conflict: Armenia and the Great Powers 1895–1920* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1995); Roupen Boyadjian, ed., *Völkermord und Verdrängung: Der Genozid an den Armeniern—die Schweiz und die Shoah* (Zurich: Chronos, 1998); Christopher Simpson, *The Splendid Blond Beast: Money, Law, and Genocide in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Grove Press, 1993), esp. chap. 3, “The Young Turks,” 27–41; Gerard Chaliand, ed., *A Crime of Silence: The Armenian Genocide. The Permanent People’s Tribunal* (London: Zed Books, 1985); Vahakn N. Dadrian, *The Armenian Genocide in Official Turkish Records*, ed. Roger Smith, *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 22 (1994): ix, 1–202; Abraham H. Hartunian, *Neither to Laugh nor to Weep: A Memoir of the Armenian Genocide*, 2nd ed., trans. Vartan Hartunian (Cambridge, Mass.: Armenian Heritage Press, 1986); Suzanne E. Moranian, *The American Missionaries and the Armenian Genocide, 1915–1927* (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1994), University of Michigan Dissertation Services, xerographic copy, 1996; Ephraim K. Jernazian, *Judgment unto Truth: Witnessing the Armenian Genocide*, trans. Alice Haig (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1990).

²Esat Uras, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi*, 1st ed. (Ankara: n.p., 1950); *ibid.*, 2d ed. (Istanbul: Belge Publications, 1976); *ibid.*, 3rd ed., *The Armenians in History and the Armenian Question* (Istanbul: Documentary Publications, 1988); Şinasi Orel and Süreyya Yuca, *Ermenilerce Talât Paşa’ya Atfedilen Telgrafların Gerçek Yüzü* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1983); Kamuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1983); idem, *The Armenian File: The Myth of Innocence* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1985); Mim Kemal Öke, *Ermeni Sorumu 1914–1923* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1991); Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, 2 vols. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977); idem, *Reform, Revolution and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey 1808–1975*, 2:314–17, 325; Justin McCarthy, *Muslims and Minorities: The Population of Ottoman Anatolia and the End of the Empire* (New York: New York University Press, 1983), 117–19, 121, 133, 136–39; idem, *Turks and Armenians: A Manual on the Armenian Question* (Washington, D.C.: Assembly of Turkish American Associations, 1989); idem, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims 1821–1922* (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1995). In addition, Turkish civilian and military agencies since the 1980s have been releasing some tracts purporting to prove Armenian culpability and Ottoman solicitousness and protectiveness vis-à-vis Armenian population groups subjected to “deportation” and “relocation.” See, for example, the Press and Information Office of the Directorate General of the Prime Ministry in Ankara, (1) *Documents sur les Arméniens-Ottomans*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (1982), in original Ottoman Turkish and in English, 88 documents, nos. 1–88; (2) *Documents*, on Ottoman Armenians, vol. 2 (1983) in original Ottoman Turkish and in English, 53 documents, nos. 89–142; (3) *Documents*, 2 vols., vol. 1 in Ottoman Turkish and in French, 88 documents, nos. 1–88, n.d.; (4) *Documents*, vol. 2 in Ottoman Turkish and French, n.d., 53 documents, nos. 89–142. These documents are gleaned from three military-history special-edition vol-

umes of the journal *Askeri Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi*. Involved especially are documents contained in special editions of *Ermeni Belgeleri Özel Sayı*, vol. 32/83, no. 2 (1983); vol. 34/85, no. 3 (1985); vol. 36/87, no. 6 (1986). The latest official volume in these series is T. C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeniler: 1915–1920* (Ankara: Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, Yayın Nu. 14, 1994), containing 272 documents. Often, denial of the crime is closely linked with the denial of the victim in these works.

³Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East: A Brief History of the Last 2,000 Years* (New York: Scribner, 1995), 340.

⁴Vahakn N. Dadrian, “The Documentation of the Armenian Genocide in German and Austrian Sources,” repr. from *The Widening Circle of Genocide. Genocide: A Critical Bibliographical Review*, ed. Israel Charny (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 3:77–125.

⁵*Documents*. Viscount Bryce and Arnold Toynbee, ed., *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire 1915–16* (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, miscellaneous no. 31, 1916), 653.

⁶In a recent and rather daring interview, a Turkish historian, Halil Berktaş, acknowledged this interconnection when he stated that “behind the ‘Armenian Event’ lies a 19th-century background. Violence reached its peak in 1915, but these were events that had continued since the 1890s. . . . Before 1915, there were the 1880s and 1890s”: “Interview with Nese Duzel,” *Radikal* (30 June 2000).

⁷Roderic H. Davison, “Turkish Attitudes Concerning Christian–Muslim Equality in the Nineteenth Century,” *American Historical Review* 59 (1954): 848.

⁸Gülnehal Bozkurt, *Gayrimüslim Osmanlı Vatandaşlarının Hukuki Durumu. 1839–1914* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1989), 29–33, 62–70, 88–110, 181–83. For an English text of that constitution, see *The American Journal of International Law* 2 (1908): 367–87. The guarantees provided for non-Muslims directly and indirectly are in Articles 8, 10, 18, 25, but esp. 17.

⁹Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi Birinci Meşrutiyet ve İstibdad Devreleri. 1876–1907* (Ankara, 1962), 127. According to an account by CUP leader Talât, this epithet was first used by Sultan Mahmud II (1808–39): Cemal Kutay, *Talât Paşanın Gurbet Hatıraları*, 3 vols. (Istanbul, 1983), 3:115–16.

¹⁰Vahakn N. Dadrian, *Warrant for Genocide: Key Elements of Turko-Armenian Conflict* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1999), 39.

¹¹2 October 1890 report in *Blue Book*, Turkey no. 1 (1890), 80–82. Ten years earlier, when the *Levant Herald*, which was run by a British editor, and the editors of two Armenian papers pressed for “justice, protection, and better government in the provinces,” the Censor of the Press suppressed all three men for being “seditious”: Layard to Salisbury, *British Foreign Office Archives* (Kew, London), FO 424/106, fol. 360A (26 April 1880).

¹²Davison, “Turkish Attitudes,” 855.

¹³C. Max Kortepeter, *Ottoman Imperialism During the Reformation: Europe and the Caucasus* (New York: New York University Press, 1972), viii–ix.

¹⁴A. Cevdet Paşa, *Tezâkir*, 1–12, ed. Cavid Baysun, series 2, no. 22, Tezkire no. 10 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1953), 79.

¹⁵G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, ed., *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1889–1914*, part 1, vol. 9, doc. no. 181, 6 September 1910 report (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1926), 208. The Confirmation of the speech is in Austrian Vice Consul von Zitzkovsky’s “secret” report dated 14 October 1910 (no. 69), in A. A. Türki, 159 no. 2, Bd. 12, A18643. French confirmation is in French Foreign Ministry Archives, N.S. Turquie, 7:92–97. A particular additional phrase in this French version that is not found in the British report is Talât’s proposal to lull the potential victims of the Ottomanization program to complacency: “il faut que nous tranquillisons nos voisins.” This report is stamped “received” by the Direction Politique et Commerciale of the French Foreign Ministry, bearing the symbols D, Carton 391, and the date 6 August 1910, thus indicating that it was wired on the very same day on which the speech was delivered. This source was the French chargé at distant Hidjaz in Arabia, who was reporting to Pichon, the French foreign minister: N.S. Turquie, 7, 26 January 1911.

¹⁶K. Duru, *Ziya Gökalp* (Istanbul, 1949), 60–69. For more details on the genesis of this document, see Vahakn N. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus*, 3rd ed. (New York: Berghahn Books, 1996), 180–81.

¹⁷Davison, “Turkish Attitudes,” 848.

¹⁸Roderic Davison, “The Armenian Crisis, 1912–1914,” *American Historical Review* 53 (1948): 482–83.

¹⁹For a monographic study of these two and other lesser revolutionary parties, see Louise Nalbandian,

The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: The Development of Armenian Political Parties Through the Nineteenth Century (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963).

²⁰When critically reviewing these theses, Melson noted, “The principal weakness of the provocation thesis is that it neglects the independent predispositions, perceptions, and actions of the perpetrators. It may be that Mr. A killed Mr. B because Mr. B taunted him, but it also may be that Mr. A killed Mr. B because he wanted to rob Mr. B or because A hated B or even because he mistook B for C”: Robert F. Melson, “Provocation or Nationalism: A Critical Inquiry into the Armenian Genocide of 1915,” in Hovannisian, *Armenian Genocide in Perspective*, 71. See also “Assessment of the Provocation Thesis” in Melson, *Revolution and Genocide*, 51–53.

²¹Diplomatic Archives of Foreign Ministry of France (Documents Diplomatiques Français 1871–1900), vol. 11, doc. no. 50 (1947), 71–74. See also 20 February 1894 report, *Livre Jaune. Affaires Arméniens. Projets de réformes dans l’Empire Ottoman 1893–1897*, doc. no. 6 (1897), 10–13.

²²Paul Cambon, *Correspondance 1870–1924* (Paris: Edition B. Grasset, 1940), 393, 395.

²³French Ambassador Cambon to Foreign Minister, *Documents Diplomatiques*, vol. 11 report of 28 February 1894 (Paris, 1947), 72.

²⁴H. F. B. Lynch, *Armenia: Travels and Studies*, 2 vols. (Beirut: Khayats 1901/1965), 2:420.

²⁵H. A. R. Gibb and Harold Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West*, vol. 1, part 2 (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 227.

²⁶Doğan Avcıoğlu declared that the Kurdish regiments were used as instruments of bloodbaths against the Armenians: *Milli Kurtuluş Tarihi*, 4 vols. (Istanbul, 1974), 3:1088. Ismail Beşikçi stated that Sultan Abdulhamid exploited the Islamic religion to co-opt the Kurds and “unleashed against the Armenians a campaign which seemed to have no end and no abating . . . he thereby averted the establishment of Armenia”: *Doğu Anadolu’nun Düzeni: Sosyo-Ekonomik ve Etnik Temeller* (Erzurum: Sumer, 1969), 89, 236, 239, 479. Halil Berktaş noted that these “regiments were made to attack Armenians . . . benefiting from their primitiveness and violence”: “Interview with Halil Berktaş,” *Radikal* (30 June 2000).

²⁷William Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism 1890–1902*, 2 vols. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), 1:203. A more provocative explanation is provided by the American Civil War observer George Hepworth, who boasted of having “a keen appetite for facts.” He was allowed to inspect for about two months the sites of the empirewide massacres of 1894–96. He concluded: “Now to summarize. When I say that the Armenian massacres were caused by Armenian revolutionists, I tell a truth, and a very important truth, but it is not the whole truth. It would be more correct to say that the presence of the revolutionists gave occasion and excuse for the massacres. That the Turks were looking for an occasion and an excuse, no one can doubt who has traversed that country. . . . Equal opportunities for all are a delusion and a snare. They do not exist. . . . I am afraid that the reforms which are needed in Turkey can never be instituted”: George Hepworth, *Through Armenia on Horseback* (New York: Dutton, 1898), 339–40.

²⁸William M. Ramsay, *Impressions of Turkey During Twelve Years’ Wanderings* (New York: Putnam’s, 1897), 156–57. When Ramsay made that prognostication, he was extrapolating the extent of the massacres that ended in 1896 and the victims, which he estimated to number: “about 200,000.” A more strident declaration was made by Hepworth, who wrote, “During my travels in Armenia I have been more and more deeply convinced that the future of the Armenians is extremely clouded. It may be that the hand of the Turk will be held back through fear of Europe but I am sure that the object of the Turk is extermination, and that he will pursue that end if the opportunity offers. He has already come very near to its accomplishment”: Hepworth, *Through Armenia*, 146–47.

²⁹*La question arménienne. 1878–1923*, trans. Kaya Dorsan (Ankara: n.p., 1984), 7.

³⁰Davison, “The Armenian Crisis,” 483, 491, 500–501.

³¹Among these are Enver Ziya Karal; Feroz Ahmad; Ismail Danişmend; Ahmed Ferik, interior minister in the fledgling Turkish Republic; and Attorney General Reşad of the Turkish Military Tribunal prosecuting the authors of the Armenian deportations and massacres of World War I. For details and references, see Dadrian, *History of the Armenian Genocide*, 44–45.

³²In a memorandum he issued on 25 December 1895, Sultan Abdulhamid warned that under the guise of reforms, the objective is pursued to strengthen the Armenians so that eventually they can obtain independence and thereby partition the empire: Mehmet Hocaoğlu, ed., *Abdülhamit Han’ın Muhtıraları. Belgeler* (Istanbul: Türkiyat Publishers, 1989), 170. A similar view is expressed in an undated memorandum cited on p. 237. For his part, Talât, in his posthumously published memoirs, is quoted as saying, “I fully realized

that rather than reforms, the Armenians wanted to achieve autonomy first and then independence” *Talât Paşanın Hatıraları*, ed. Enver Bolayır (Istanbul: Güven, 1946), 55.

³³As one Kemalist deputy and subsequent minister in the fledgling Turkish Republic lamented during one of the secret sittings of Parliament: “for 350 years, we suffered defeat after defeat at the hands of the Russians” (*Üç yüz elli senedenberi daima mağlup olduğumuz*). For details of this statement by Hasan Fehmi (Ataç), see Dadrian, *Warrant*, epigraph.

³⁴Outstanding in this respect are the statements of Cemal Paşa. Several times, he warned the Armenian leaders of dire consequences, including the massacre of 300,000 Armenians in the provinces earmarked for reforms, unless they stopped their push for European-controlled reforms. In his post-war memoirs, Cemal openly admitted that “our sole purpose (*bizim yegâne gayemiz*) in entering the war was to stop once and for all the Powers’ interventions in our internal affairs . . . and to tear up the [Armenian] reform accord which was imposed upon us by Russia”: Cemal Paşa, *Hatıralar*, ed. and trans. Behcet Cemal (Istanbul: Çağdaş, 1977), 438. For his threat of large-scale massacres and related statements in 1913, see Dadrian, *History of the Armenian Genocide*, 211, n. 23. Talât also let it be known that the CUP had never forgotten that the Armenians in 1912 had “composed all their factional differences and through the initiative of their Catholicos had sent a delegation to Europe in pursuit of their goal of autonomy. While we were negotiating with them for a new reform scheme they did this in order to take advantage of Turkey’s [temporary] weakness” (*Türkiyenin zaaflıktan istifade . . .*) *Talât Paşanın Hatıraları*, 50–51. Armenian sources indicate that Talât in 1913 personally warned Armenian Parliamentary Deputy K. Zohrab to cease and desist from seeking European intervention, adding, “By doing so you are touching a very raw nerve. . . . We are determined to prevent by all means the materialization of such intervention and are prepared to resort to any means for this purpose. . . . Don’t force us to desperate measures”: Yervant Odian, “Teev Dasauyotu Khafiyen” (The Number 17 Spy), *Vertcheen Lour* (Istanbul Armenian newspaper), 11 and 12 November 1918. Another account indicates that during the initiation of the wartime anti-Armenian measures, Talât also told Armenian deputy, Vartkes, “During the Balkan war we were weak and the Armenians took positions against us. Now that we are strong we will teach a lesson to them”: “Dzerougeen Hishadagneru” (The Memoirs of Dzeroug), *Jagadamard* (Istanbul Armenian newspaper), 2 March 1919. It should be noted that a few weeks after the major 24 April round-ups, these two deputies were also deported, and outside the city of Urda the authorities had them killed: German Foreign Ministry Archives (Auswärtiges Amt; hereafter, A. A.), A. A. Türkei, A23991, or R14087 in the new system of indexing. K. no. 81/B.1645, Rössler’s 27 July 1915 report. As to Enver, the third member of the triumvirate, during the war he told the German Marine Attache Lieutenant Commander Hans Humann that through the implementation of the anti-Armenian measures, the basis for foreign intervention “has been eliminated without further ado” (*ohne weiteres aus der Welt geschaffen worden*): Botschaft Konstantinopel (hereafter, BoKon) 170, fol. 52, Humann’s 6 August 1915 memorandum.

³⁵A. A. Türkei, 183/46, A5919, or R14095. Copies of this 16 February 1917 report are found also in 181 secr. Band 2, and 161 Band 5.

³⁶Joseph Pomiankowski, *Der Zusammenbruch des Osmanischen Reiches* (Graz, Austria: Akademische Druck-und Verlagsanstalt, 1928/1969), 162–63.

³⁷A. A. Türkei, 183/45, A33457; also in BoKon 174, fol. 53, R 14094 in the new system, 4 December 1916 report.

³⁸A. A. BoKon 170, registry no. 3841. For a full description of Stange’s involvement in this matter and for additional details on his report, see Dadrian, “Documentation,” 110–11. His being renamed “Ibrahim” is in İsmet Görgülü, *On Yıllık Harbin Kadrosu. 1912–1922* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1993), 111, and in Alptekin Müderrisoğlu, *Sarıkamış Dramı*, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Kastaş Editions, 1988), 1:547–48.

³⁹A. A. BoKon 168, no. 9, 15 May 1915 report.

⁴⁰A. A. Türkei 183/38, A23991, or R14087 in the new system, 27 July 1915 report. Gripped by a general sense of gloom and doom, Armenian political parties and their religious head, the Patriarch, exhorted all Armenians to be very careful in their dealings with Ottoman authorities, to act patriotically in the performance of their wartime duties, and, if necessary, even endure small-scale atrocities to avoid provoking mass murder: Richard Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence, 1918* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 42.

⁴¹A. A. Türkei, 183/39, or R14088, “secret report” of 5 August 1915.

⁴²General G. Korganoff, *La participation des Arméniens à la guerre mondiale, 1914–1918* (Paris: Massis, 1927), 21.

⁴³Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, 44, 47.

⁴⁴A. A. Türkei 183/36, A389, or R14085, no. 342, 30 December 1914 report. In the course of a conversation with Mordtman, at the German Embassy's Armenian desk, General Posseldt did confirm that Ottoman Armenians had, through scouting and as guides, helped the advancing Russian army: A. A. K168, no. 258, 26 April 1915.

⁴⁵A. A. Türkei 183/40, A25749, or R14093 in the new system. The quotation is on p. 14 of the very comprehensive seventy-two-page report.

⁴⁶Felix Guse, "Der Armenieraufstand 1915 und Seine Folgen," *Wissen und Wehr* 10 (1925): 615.

⁴⁷A. A. Türkei 183/39, A33278, enclosure in Councillor Neurath's 9 November 1915 report, or R14089 in the new system, 5 November 1915 report.

⁴⁸A. A. Türkei 183/41, A2889, or R14089, 8 November 1915 report, no. 944.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, A35046.

⁵⁰A. A. Türkei 183/40, A33705, or R14089, 16 November 1915 report.

⁵¹A. A. BoKon 168, 18 March 1915, and K169, fol. 91, no. 4, 23 June 1915 reports.

⁵²A. A. Türkei 183/37, A22101, or R14086, 4 July 1915 report.

⁵³A. A. BoKon 168, ref. no. 258, 26 April 1915. Four months later, Colonel Stange reported the same thing to his superiors—namely, that the Armenian population of Erzurum was staying perfectly tranquil; A. A. BoKon 170, no. 3841.

⁵⁴A. A. Türkei 183/36, A9528, or R14085, 9 March 1915 report, no. 140.

⁵⁵A. A. Türkei 183/36, A13922, or R14085, 15 April 1915 report.

⁵⁶A. A. Türkei 183/45, A33457, or R14094, another copy in BoKon 174, fol. 53, 4 December 1916 report to Chancellor Hollweg. The unnamed village is described as being in the vicinity of Hesak. Scheubner-Richter, along with Co-Commander of the Expeditionary Detachment Ömer Naci, was on his way to Mosul in the command zone of the Sixth Army.

⁵⁷A. A. Türkei 183/38, A27584, or R14087, enclosure no. 4, which is an order issued by Fourth Army Commander Cemal Paşa objecting to this coercion on weapons purchases. For a detailed description of the widespread practice of this method during the war, see Vahakn N. Dadrian, "The Naim–Andonian Documents on the World War I Destruction of Ottoman Armenians: The Anatomy of a Genocide," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 18 (1986): 348, n. 34.

⁵⁸Felix Guse, *Die Kaukasusfront im Weltkrieg* (Leipzig: Koehler and Amelang, 1940), 62, n. 1; the officer and his comments are in F. E. A. Krause, *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* 1 (1931): 18, 20, 22. In this review of the German version of Nogales's book, Krause wrote: "I confirm the accuracy of his description of the events and the truth of his judgments": *Die Wahrheit der gefällten Urteile bestätigen*, 18.

⁵⁹Rafaël de Nogales, *Four Years Beneath the Crescent*, trans. Muna Lee (New York and London: Scribner's, 1926), 76, 135. Nogales's role in battling the Armenian defenders of Van is confirmed by a cipher of Van's Vali Cevdet. Dated 22–23 April 1915, it is doc. no. 2003 in *Askeri Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi* 34 (1985): 41.

⁶⁰Clarence D. Ussher, *An American Physician in Turkey* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1917), 265. He was an eyewitness to the conflagration in Van, serving the Christians and Muslims alike. Speaking of the unchecked massacres in the outlying Armenian villages of Van province, he declared, "We have absolute proof that fifty-five thousand people were killed." It is significant to note in this respect that the Van gendarme division fighting against the Armenians had many former bandits in its ranks: De Nogales, *Four Years*, 114.

⁶¹Onnig Mukhitarian, *The Defense of Van: An Account of the Glorious Struggle of Van Vasbouragan*, trans. Samuel S. Tarpinian (Detroit: General Society of Vasbouragan, 1980), 39. The book is said to be based on a diary the author kept while participating in the operations of the uprising: see pp. 23, 33–36, 43.

⁶²Ibrahim Arvas, "Tarihi Hakikatler, Eski Van Mebusu Ibrahim Arvasın Hatıraları," *Yeni İstiklal*, no. 193 (21 April 1965).

⁶³The first, on the ambush and murder, is in 26 April 1915, A. A. BoKon 168, no. 2540 report; the second, the illegal arrest, is in 15 May 1915, A. A. BoKon 168, no. 9 (3224 report); the third, on the Armenians being provoked, is in 5 August 1915, A. A. Türkei 183/39, A28584, or R14088, report.

⁶⁴A. A. Türkei 183/41, A2889, or R14089, 8 November 1915, 12–13.

⁶⁵A. A. Türkei 183/40, A25749, or R14093, 18 September 1915, 25.

⁶⁶Pomiankowski, *Der Zusammenbruch*, 160.

⁶⁷A. A. Türkei 183/36, A389, or R14085, enclosure in Wangenheim's 30 December 1914 communication to Berlin; the consuls' report is dated 5 December 1914.

⁶⁸A. A. Türkei 183/36, A14801, or R14085, 12 April 1915 report.

⁶⁹A. A. BoKon 168, no. (2616).

⁷⁰Ibid., no. 9 (3224).

⁷¹A. A. Türkei 183/39, A28584, or R14088, J. no. 580/secret report.

⁷²A. A. Türkei 183/45, A33457, or R14094.

⁷³A. A. Türkei 183/54, A34707, or R14104, no. 353.

⁷⁴A. A. Türkei 183/37, A17735, or R14086, no. 324.

⁷⁵A. A. BoKon 171, no. 855 (6749).

⁷⁶Paul von Hindenburg, *Aus Meinem Leben* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1934), 169.

⁷⁷Wangenheim's 17 June 1915 report quotes Talât telling Dr. Mordtmann, the man in charge of the Armenian desk at the German Embassy, that the Ottoman government is intent on taking advantage of the war in order to get rid of the Christians completely (*gründlich*): A. A. 187/37, A19744, or R14086. In his report of 4 September 1915, Ernst Wilhelm Hohenlohe, Ambassador Wangenheim's successor, stated that Talât on 31 August 1915 personally went to the German Embassy and told Hohenlohe that "the Armenian question no longer exists" (*La question arménienne n'existe plus*): A. A. 183/38, A24674, or R14087. On 20 March 1916, Ambassador Wolff-Metternich reported to Berlin that "Turkey is proceeding to finish off the Armenian people before peace is restored": A. A. Türkei 183/41, A18373, or R14090. And on 10 July 1916, he likewise reported that Ottoman authorities had inexorably carried out "their plan of resolving the Armenian question through the annihilation of the Armenian race" (*Erledigung der armenischen Frage durch die Vernichtung der armenischen Rasse*): A. A. 183/43, A17310, or R14093. In his memoirs, Johann Bernstorff, the last German ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, declared that when he kept "pestering" Talât on the Armenian question, Talât reportedly retorted, "[the Armenian] question is settled," which the ambassador explained in terms of the CUP scheme of "systematically trying to exterminate" the Armenians: Johann Bernstorff, *Memoirs of Count Bernstorff* (New York: Random House, 1936), 176, 374.

⁷⁸*Austrian Foreign Ministry Archives* (hereafter, AFMA), 12 Türkei/209, 71, 31 August 1915 report.

⁷⁹Ibid., no. 79/P.A.

⁸⁰Scheubner-Richter's 28 July 1915 report, A. A. BoKon 170, J. no. 552, secret report B, no. 21, and his 10 August 1915 report. A. A. Türkei 183/39, A28584, or R14088, enclosure no. 1. Adana Consul Büge's 13 August 1915 report is in A. A. BoKon 170, no. 699. Trabzon Consul Bergfeld's is in A. A. Türkei 183/37, A22559, or R14086, 9 July 1915.

⁸¹AFMA, I, Allgemeines/944, no. 95, 12 November 1915 report.

⁸²A. A. Türkei 183/41, A2889, BN 944, or R14089, no. 670, 8 November 1915 report.

⁸³A. A. Türkei 183/39, A28584, or R14088, J. no. 598, enclosure no. 1, 10 August 1915 report.

⁸⁴AFMA, 12 Türkei 463, no. 92, 2 November 1915 report.

⁸⁵Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, 127. On p. 231, Trumpener identifies Talât as "the soul of the Armenian persecutions," the outcome of which he on p. 219 characterizes as "the Armenian holocaust." Here is Trumpener's own analysis and conclusions on the matter: "[a] review of the Armenian tragedy during World War I suggests the following conclusions. First, the decimation of the Ottoman Armenian population between 1915 and 1918 through physical violence, hunger, and disease was not the unfortunate by-product of an otherwise legitimate security program but the result of a deliberate effort by the *Itihad ve Terakki* regime to rid the Anatolian heartland of a politically troublesome ethnic group. While there were undoubtedly some districts behind the Transcaucasian front where deportations and other precautionary measures were militarily justified, the sweeping geographic scope of the Porte's anti-Armenian program and its indiscriminate application to men, women, and children alike suggest that this was a politically inspired attempt to achieve a kind of 'final solution' of the Armenian question in Anatolia" (p. 268).

⁸⁶A. A. Türkei 183/38, A23991, or R14087, K. no. 81/B1645, 27 July 1915 report.

⁸⁷AFMA, 12 Türkei 210, no. 28/P.A., 8 April 1916 report.

⁸⁸General Posseldt informed the German embassy on 26 April 1915 that the CUP's local club members in Erzurum were paving the ground for massacre (*Metzeleien*). A. A. BoKon 168, no. 258. On 5 August 1915, Scheubner-Richter reported that the local CUP people, "a small group of quite inferior men" and "shady men operating behind the scenes," were intimidating everybody in their "campaign for annihilating the Armenians" (*Vernichtungs feldzug gegen die Armenier*): A. A. Türkei 183/39, A28584, or R14088. On

28 July 1915, Scheubner-Richter complained of “the shadow government” (*Nebenregierung*) that the CUP was running to control the anti-Armenian campaign: A. A. Türkei BoKon 170, fol. 63. On 4 December 1916, Scheubner-Richter again warned of the pernicious role of CUP men who were attached to his Expeditionary Force to organize massacres against the Armenians and other Christians. He urged his government to confront the CUP more energetically: A. A. Türkei 183/45, A33457, or R14094. On 9 July 1915, Ambassador Wangenheim informed Berlin that the massacres in Bayburt, Erzincan, and Tercan were committed on the demand of the CUP, whose members are playing “a disastrous role” with “the connivance of the governmental officials” (*eine verhängnisvolle Rolle spielen, unter Konnivenze der Behörden*): A. A. Türkei 183/37, A21483, or R14086. On 9 July 1915, Trabzon’s Bergfeld stated that the CUP was the “driving force” (*treibende Kraft*) in the campaign against the Armenians, and “the Central Committee was bent on finally put an end to the Armenian question” (*das Zentralkomitee . . . der armenischen Frage endgültig ein Ende*): A. A. Türkei 183/37 A22559, or R14086. On 23 August 1915, Colonel Stange in his long report to the German Military Mission to Turkey, compiled in Erzurum, put forth his own conclusion: “[t]he expulsion and annihilation of the Armenians was decided by the Young Turk Committee in Istanbul and was well organized (*vom jungtürkischen Komitee in Konstantinopel beschlossen, wohl organisiert . . .*); to achieve that goal the local members of CUP were engaged”: A. A. Türkei BoKon 170, J. no. 3841.

⁸⁸Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks: The Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics, 1908–1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 146, 164.

⁹⁰Talât Paşanın Gurbet Hatıraları, 63–64, 73.

⁹¹Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, *Türk İnkilâbı Tarihi*, 3 vols. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1957), 3:40. This *carte blanche* was also a form of disdainfulness toward legality. That disdain in a way reflected Enver’s attitude toward law—namely, “*yok kanun, yap kanun, var kanun*” (“No law? Then make law, and so you will have law”): Bayur, *Türk İnkilâbı*, (1955), 3:400.

⁹²Bayur, *Türk İnkilâbı* (1952), 2(4): 13.

⁹³Ali İhsan Sabis, *Harp Hatıralarım*, 6 vols. (Ankara: Güneş, 1951), 2:165, 179.

⁹⁴A. A. BoKon. 168, no. 3007.

⁹⁵*Feryadım*, 2 vols (Istanbul: Nehir, 1992), 1:201.

⁹⁶A. A. BoKon 1969, no. 47, fol. 110.

⁹⁷A. A. BoKon 170.

⁹⁸A. A. Türkei BoKon 170, J. no. 3841, 23 August 1915 report. For more details, see Dadrian, *Armenian Genocide*, 66–67. According to British records, Kâmil organized three secret conferences in Erzurum, mapping out the requisite plans, together with the governors-general of the provinces under his control: British Foreign Office, FO 371/6501, fol. 540/40, British High Commission legal adviser Andrew Ryan’s 19 September 1919 report.

⁹⁹A. A. Türkei 183/45, A33457, or R14094.

¹⁰⁰Halil Paşa, *Bitmeyen Savaş*, ed. M. T. Sorgun (Istanbul: Yedigün, 1972), 274. On p. 241, Halil is more emphatic: “I have endeavored to wipe out the Armenian nation to the last individual” (*Son ferdine kadar yok etmeğe, çalıştığım Ermeni milleti*). For more details, see Vahakn N. Dadrian, “Documentation of the Armenian Genocide in Turkish Sources,” in *Genocide: A Critical Bibliographic Review*, ed. Israel Charny, 3 vols. (New York: Facts on File, 1991), 2:116–17.

¹⁰¹A. A. Türkei 183/45, A33457, or R14089.

¹⁰²Dadrian, *History of the Armenian Genocide*, 218, 226–27, n. 1.

¹⁰³A. A. BoKon 174.

¹⁰⁴*Yakın Tarihimiz* (1962), 2:297. For an inquiry into the origin and mission of the Special Organization, see Vahakn N. Dadrian, “The Role of the Special Organization in the Armenian Genocide During the First World War,” in *Minorities in Wartime*, ed. P. Panayi (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1993), 50–82.

¹⁰⁵For a review of this problem of military and paramilitary involvement, see Vahakn N. Dadrian, “The Role of the Turkish Military in the Destruction of Ottoman Armenians: A Study in Historical Continuities,” *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 20 (1992): 257–88.

¹⁰⁶A. A. Türkei BoKon 169, fol. 13.

¹⁰⁷A. A. Türkei 183/41, A2889, BN 944, 12, Holstein report.

¹⁰⁸A. A. Türkei 183/45, A49466, or R14089. The memo was released on 19 November 1918.

¹⁰⁹A. A. Türkei 183/40, A35046, or R14089, no. 670.

¹¹⁰Lewis Einstein, *Inside Constantinople: April–September 1915* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1918), 151.

¹¹¹Vehip’s affidavit was read in its entirety at the second sitting of the Trabzon trial series (29 March

1919). Portions of it were incorporated in the Key Indictment, *Takuimi Vekâyi*, no. 3540, 5 May 1919, supplement, 7, with which the twelve-page, handwritten document was lodged, and in the Harput verdict, *Takuimi Vekâyi*, no. 3771, supplement, 9 February 1920, 1. The newspaper *Vakit* published the text in its 31 March 1919 issue. That text can also be found in *Hayat Tarih Mecmuası* 11, 3 (1981): 25–29; *ibid.*, (November 1981): 53; and in serialized form in *Le Courrier de Turquie*, the organ of the League for the Defense of Ottoman Interests (*Müdafai Vatan*), 1 and 2 April 1919 issues. The copy of the full text in its original Ottoman Turkish is in the *Jerusalem Armenian Patriarchate Archive*, archive series 17, file H (pronounced *Ho*, the sixteenth letter of the Armenian alphabet, not its variant *Hee*), doc. nos. 171–82. Inveighing against Behaeddin Şakir, whom he considered an arch-assassin who masterminded the destruction of the Armenians, General Vehip in his deposition declared, “All the human tragedies, instigations (*fitne*), and acts of depravity (*fesad*) . . . were engineered by Şakir, who recruited (*ihzar*) and directed the killer detachments. These consisted of gallowbirds (*ipten ve kazıktan kurtulmuş yaranını*), and included gendarmes with bloodstained hands and bloodshot eyes (*eli gözü kanlı jandarmalar*), butchers of human beings (*insan kasapları*).” Vehip further stated that Şakir, in a special automobile, went from province to province, issuing verbal orders to which ranking officials and functionaries “submitted” (*inkiyad*). After describing the charred remains of the women and children of Tschurig, an Armenian village 5 kilometers north of Muş in Bitlis Province, who were burned alive, Vehip denounced the act as follows: “[o]ne can find no such example of atrocity and savagery in the annals of Islam” (*tarihi Islamda misli görülmemiş bir zulüm ve vahşet*). He concluded by saying that “[d]ivine justice may be delayed, but it is not to be forfeited” (*adaleti Allahiyede inhal var, ihmâl yoktur*), pp. 4–6 of the deposition. For more details on General Vehip in this regard, see Dadrian, *The Armenian Genocide*, 62–65; *idem*, “The Documentation of the World War I Armenian Massacres in the Proceedings of the Turkish Military Tribunal,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 23 (1991): 572, 48; *idem*, “Documentation of the Armenian Genocide in Turkish Sources,” in *Genocide: A Critical Bibliographic Review*, 3 vols., ed. I. Charny (London: Mansell, 1991), 2:93, 94, 115–16, 118–19.

¹¹²“Ermeni Vekayii ve Esbab ve Tesirati,” *Vakit*, 12 December 1918, installment no. 2 of a three-part article series. Celal had a distinguished career. He was dean of the civil-service school (*Mülkiye*); interior minister in 1911; governor-general of several provinces, including Edirne, Erzurum, Aleppo, and Konya; minister of commerce and agriculture; and, during the armistice, mayor of Istanbul. Having studied in Germany, he spoke fluent German.

¹¹³A. A. Türkiye 183/36, A14801, or R14085, 12 April 1915; A. A. BoKon 169, or fol. 13, 3 June 1915; A. A. BoKon 169, no. 9, fol. 84, 21 June 1915; A. A. Türkiye 183/38, A23991, or R14087, 27 July 1915; A. A. Türkiye, A35046, or R14089, 16 November 1915.

¹¹⁴As the British historian Arnold Toynbee concluded, “The fundamental uniformity of procedure is more sinister than the incidental aggravations of the crime by Kurds, peasants, gendarmes or local authorities. It is damning evidence that the procedure itself, which set in motion all the other forces of evil, was conceived and organised by the Central Government at Constantinople”: Bryce and Toynbee, ed., *The Treatment*, 637 .

¹¹⁵Even though the coining of the term “genocide” is uniformly attributed to Raphael Lemkin, by the end of World War I, a Swiss author had already used the German equivalent of that word—*Völkermord*—when analyzing the related Armenian experience: S. Zurlinden, *Der Weltkrieg*, part 2 (Zürich: A. Institut Füssli, 1918), 642.