

The Secret Young-Turk Ittihadist Conference and the Decision for the World War I Genocide of the Armenians

Vahakn N. Dadrian

H. F. Guggenheim Foundation Research Project, Conesus, New York

This article presents and analyzes a Turkish World War I document regarding the decision to embark on the genocide of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. The document was discovered and translated in early 1919 by British officials in Turkey who dubbed it "The Ten Commandments." The roles of the military, the gendarm-erie, and the calculated incitement of the masses on religious and nationalistic grounds were central to the planning and implementation of the genocide. Reports by foreign diplomats in Turkey and testimony by other observers and participants bear out the very close correlation between the plan outlined in the document and the measures actually taken in the genocide of the Armenians.

Genocide is today widely viewed as the ultimate crime in the evolution of modern human conflict. The nature of the crime requires conspiratorial secrecy by the perpetrators, who wish to avoid personal implication. Moreover, the perpetration of genocide requires decision-making at the highest levels of the perpetrator group. This decision of necessity follows deliberations on costs, benefits, and risks, and measures are planned to reduce cost and risk. Therefore, the implementation of a decision to commit genocide requires both an operational blueprint and a plan of concealment and coverup. In addition, the factor which sociologists call "the opportunity structure" is important. Studies in criminology have shown that criminal resolve is closely related to the incidence of opportune moments for perpetrating the crime.

The document presented and analyzed below, dubbed by British authorities "The Ten Commandments," represents a stage in the Turkish deliberations which resulted in the decision to murder the Armenians in the Ottoman empire. Although it is difficult to pinpoint the exact date of the meeting at which this document was

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developed, it seems to reflect one of a series of secret meetings of top level Ittihad leaders during the early part of World War I. This ten point document reflects an advanced stage of deliberation and its fairly extensive detail warrants addressing it as an example of genocidal decision making. The document outlines administrative measures, types of lethal violence, incitement of the masses, and measures for deception and maintaining secrecy. All this came on the background of the opportunity for radical measures and massive murder afforded by World War I.

The Origin and Thrust of the Ten Commandments

The document was apparently translated from Turkish into English by the British, as indicated by the note inserted by the British High Commissioner's Office in Istanbul after the tenth instruction: "Above is a verbatim translation—dated December 1914 or January 1915."¹ It is part of a nine-page correspondence between the British High Commission in Constantinople (Istanbul) and the Foreign Office in London in early 1919. At the top left of page 388, "VERBATIM TRANSLATION" is typed in capitals and underlined. The document itself is headed: "DOCUMENTS RELATING TO COMITE UNION AND PROGRES ORGANIZATION IN THE ARME-NIAN MASSACRES." The subtitle is, "The 10 commandments of the COMITE UNION AND PROGRES." The British translation of the full text follows:

- (1). Profiting by the Arts: 3 and 4 of Comite Union and Progres, close all Armenian Societies, and arrest all who worked against Government at any time among them and send them into the provinces such as Bagdad or Mosul, and wipe them out either on the road or there.
- (2). Collect arms.
- (3). Excite Moslem opinion by suitable and special means, in places as Van, Erzeroum, Adana, where as a point of fact the Armenians have already won the hatred of the Moslems, provoke organised massacres as the Russians did at Baku.
- (4). Leave all executive to the people in provinces such as Erzeroum, Van, Mamuret ul Aziz, and Bitlis, and use Military disciplinary forces (i.e., Gendarmerie) ostensibly to stop massacres, while on the contrary in places as Adana, Sivas, Broussa, Ismid and Smyrna actively help the Moslems with military force.
- (5). Apply measures to exterminate all males under 50, priests and teachers, leave girls and children to be Islamized.
- (6). Carry away the families of all who succeed in escaping and apply measures to cut them off from all connection with their native place.
- (7.) On the ground that Armenian officials may be spies, expel and drive them out absolutely from every Government department or post.
- (8.) Kill off in an appropriate manner all Armenians in the Army—this to be left to the military to do.

(9.) All action to begin everywhere simultaneously, and thus leave no time for preparation of defensive measures.

(10.) Pay attention to the strictly confidential nature of these instructions, which may not go beyond two or three persons.

The document was obtained by Commander C. H. Heathcote Smith of the British Naval Volunteer Service, who was the right hand man of the British High Commissioner in Istanbul, Admiral Somerset Calthorpe. Smith was conversant in Turkish and served before the war as British Consul in Smyrna (Izmir), a major Ottoman port city on the Aegean Sea. He first learned of the document's existence from former British intelligence agent Percival Hadkinson of Smyrna and acquired it sometime in January 1919.

The Turkish source was Ahmed Essad, who had been the wartime head of the Ottoman Interior Ministry's Department II, Intelligence, which was under the jurisdiction of the office of Public Security (*Emniyeti Umumiye*). Essad had served as secretary to the conference, and two of the four documents acquired by the British from him, including the Ten Commandments, are in his own handwriting. He tried to sell the British these four documents for £10,000. Instead, the British had him arrested through the Turkish Court Martial authorities then investigating the Armenian genocide.² He was released on bail, and British documents indicate this was part of a deal between the British and Essad whereby the British would protect him once he surrendered the documents. Essad also claimed that "just before the Armistice officials had been going to the archives department at night and making a clean sweep of most of the documents, but that the original draft of the orders relating to the Armenian massacres had been saved. . . ." The seriousness with which the British related to Essad is underscored by the fact that they referred to him as the wartime Chief of Intelligence of the Interior Ministry's Public Security Office and as a "confidential Secretary" in charge of the Interior Ministry's secret records during the Armistice at the time the documents were acquired.³

The Ten Commandments is a draft of the plan to dislocate, deport, and destroy the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire. The conditions under which this was to be done were spelled out in general terms so as to allow local discretion based on specific local circumstances. Three of the five participants at the conference which produced this document were the ultimate decision-makers in wartime Turkey: Talat, and Doctors Nazım and Behaeddin Şakir. Talat was the omnipotent party boss and prime mover of Ittihad's Supreme Directorate which controlled the destiny of Ottoman Turkey. He also served formally as Interior Minister at the time of the meeting, and as Grand Vizier after February 1917. The two physicians worked jointly with Talat behind the scenes. The prominent role played by these three in the

planning and implementation of the Armenian genocide has been documented and discussed elsewhere.⁴

The other two participants in this conference were Ismail Canbolat and Colonel Seyfi, both of whom functioned as the actual organizers of the mass murder. Canbolat was head of Public Security in the Interior Ministry (roughly equivalent to the American FBI today) at the time of the meeting. He later served as Prefect of the Ottoman capital, Constantinople, then as the Interior Minister's Undersecretary, and then briefly as Interior Minister in 1918. Seyfi was head of Department II, Intelligence, in the Ottoman General Headquarters, as well as Director of the Political Section of the General Staff and was a close associate of War Minister Enver. He was in charge of the Special Organization's operational units who were assigned the task of massacring multitudes of deportees en route to "relocation" centers in the Mesopotamian deserts.

The Ten Commandments are a classic example of the use of disguise, deception, and deflection to conceal a crime. The disguise was in the order to employ gendarmes or provincial police "ostensibly to stop massacres" but actually to help implement them. The total elimination of all Armenian officials was to be carried out through the trumped up accusation that they were "spies" against Turkey. Deflection can be seen in the order to arouse the ire and hatred of Muslim masses so that a governmentally planned and organized mass murder might appear to be an inter-communal clash, resulting from long standing strife between Armenians on the one hand, and Muslim Turks and Kurds on the other. Indeed, according to the third, fourth, and eighth commandments: Moslem opinion was to be excited "by suitable and special means . . . [to] provoke organized massacres as the Russians did at Baku"; the masses were empowered to execute the massacres themselves in some provinces, while the military did so in other specified provinces; and "all Armenians in the army" were explicitly to be "kill[ed] off in an appropriate manner" by the military. The last commandment enjoins the recipients of the instructions to see to it that these instructions "may not go beyond two or three persons," that is, to treat them as highly sensitive state secrets.

The Document's Authenticity

The Ten Commandments may be considered on two separate levels. First, it is important to assess the status and authority of the source of the Ten Commandments and the three other documents. Ahmed Essad's high status during the war as a deputy to Canbolat is corroborated by prominent German journalist von Tyszka, who interviewed him during the war, with Canbolat's permission. Von Tyszka described him as the Chief of Department II of the Interior Ministry at the time of the interview, September 28, 1915.⁵

There is no doubt that at the time of the transaction with the British, Essad was

Deputy Director of Public Security in the same Interior Ministry. This continuity of status and authority not only lends credence to his active involvement in this wartime conference on the murder of the Armenians, but also placed him in a position to have custody of the documents in question. The British documents refer to his having access to the Interior Ministry's secret archives.

Furthermore, regarding the relaying of the instructions to provincial authorities for implementation, Ahmed Essad, according to the British agent's account, explained: ". . . messengers were sent to the different *Vali's* [provincial governors-general] in the provinces with instructions to read these orders to them and return the originals which were to be destroyed." The agent's source for the identity of the participants in this secret conference, of which there is no indication in the Ten Commandments themselves, was Essad as well.⁶ The possession of such information presupposes a level of knowledge usually limited to a select few highly placed officials and is indicative of the Public Security deputy chief's personal involvement in the Ittihad secret conference.

Having established that Essad was in a position to know of the conference and the document, the question of how Ittihad orders regarding the Armenians were transmitted to the field must also be addressed. Evidence that the procedure described in the Ten Commandments and the other documents was followed during the genocide would support Essad's veracity.

In his testimony at the Eleventh Session (March 5, 1919) of the *Yozgad* trial, conducted by the Turkish Military Tribunal investigating the World War I murders of the Armenians, Cemal, the governor of the *Yozgad* district in Ankara province,

. . . testified that an informal, secret order to exterminate the Armenians was given to him by Necati, Ankara's Responsible Secretary [a high ranking Ittihadist provincial boss], who called it "the will of Ittihad's Central Committee"; he showed the paper that allegedly contained the order, but would not permit Cemal to read it. When Cemal refused to take orders under such circumstances, denouncing the idea of massacring innocent people, he was dismissed within two weeks.⁷

By contrast, two county leaders in *Dyarbekir* province were ambushed and murdered for refusing to take similar oral orders. Furthermore, at the Fourth Session (February 11, 1919) of the same *Yozgad* trial, Şakir, *Yozgad's* elected representative to the Ottoman Parliament's Chamber of Deputies, testified to "the secrecy" with which orders for massacre were relayed to the provincial authorities.⁸

More significant is the corroboration between the testimony at the Seventh Session (February 18, 1919) of the *Yozgad* trial by Colonel Halil Recayi, the Deputy Commander of the Fifth Army Corps stationed at Ankara, and the documents given to the British by Essad. Colonel Recayi testified that he had received a circular order

from Enver, War Minister and de facto Supreme Commander of the Ottoman armed forces, directing military authorities not to interfere with the deportations of Armenians. This order was the third of the four documents supplied by Essad.⁹

In other words, Essad's document on the transmission of an official order by the Ottoman War Minister is verified by the testimony of a military commander who received the order. The demonstrated authenticity of the one document provided by Essad points to the authenticity of the others. As will be shown below, the authenticity of the first document, the Ten Commandments, will be substantiated further by examining its actual antecedents.

The question thus turns to the sequence of events reflecting the crystallization of the aims and objectives outlined in the Ten Commandments. In brief, the central task is to establish a direct and intimate relationship between the provisions of this draft decision and the thrust of the World War I anti-Armenian measures, along with their practical consequences.

Evidence of the Genesis of Premeditation

The so-called Ten Commandments are not so much a case of decision making as a by-product of decision making. The actual decision preceded the framing of the draft on genocide. Therefore, the draft is an operative plan meant to implement the decision. Both the decision and the blueprint reflect the fact that the crime committed against the Armenians was premeditated and the intent was the wholesale extermination of the victims. What follows is an attempt to document various phases and dimensions of this lethal undertaking as they relate to the Ten Commandments. This attempt is predicated on the belief that genocidal intent is best revealed in initiatives that have genocidal results. For the attainment of these results, the machinery of destruction must be of one mind with the ultimate objective being pursued. This aspect of the problem relates to what may be called the administration of genocidal violence, including the organization, supervision, and control of the procedures of deportation and the attendant massacre of the targeted population. Although the evidence available for this purpose is ample, several significant examples will suffice for the limited objectives of this paper.

If the operative plan outlined in the Ten Commandments resulted from a deliberative process over an extended period of time, like most conspiracies, then we should be able to identify indications that the Ittihadists had been entertaining the idea of a radical solution of the Armenian question prior to World War I.

The revolutionary leadership of the Armenian community of Turkey in this period helped spur this idea through its initiatives and pressures to reintroduce and effectively implement the Armenian reforms in the eastern provinces of Turkey containing large concentrations of Armenians, mostly peasants. The revival of the old "Armenian Question" was intensified in the wake of the 1909 Adana massacre, which

claimed an estimated 25,000 Armenian victims and rekindled considerations by European powers, primarily Russia, England, and France, to launch a new reform project for the Armenians. The coincidence of this movement with a number of internal setbacks suffered by the Ittihadists and the military setbacks in the first Balkan war (1912–13), paved the way for a new Turkish nationalist ideology bent on forcibly homogenizing the Ottoman Empire under the motto “Turkey for the Turks.”¹⁰

The 1909–14 period was the embryonic stage of the genocide idea, with two Ittihadist gatherings in 1910 being most significant: Interior Minister Talat’s August 6 speech before a top secret pre-convention conclave of Ittihadist leaders in Saloniki, in which the beginnings of a future policy of homogenizing Turkey by force of arms were outlined; and the secret consultations and decisions taken outside the formal sessions of Ittihad’s annual convention in Saloniki on October 18–19 (October 31 old style; o.s.). The details of Talat’s speech and the verification of its content by French, British, and Austrian consuls have been discussed elsewhere by this author, while the later meetings are detailed in the November 7, 13, 15, 16, 17, and 22, 1910, reports by Professor Max Choublier, then French Consul in Saloniki.¹¹

The sinister plans for the Armenian population of the Ottoman empire projected at these secret meetings were revealed a year later by Galib Bey, Director of Post and Telegraph in Erzurum (eastern Turkey) and a participant at the convention. He confided to his close friend Dikran Surabian, a Catholic Armenian and official interpreter at the French Consulate in Erzurum, that these plans “make one’s hair stand on end” (*faire dresser les cheveux sur la tête*).¹²

A similar revelation was made by the Swiss pharmacist Jakob Künzler, who served as a quasi-physician in the Urfa region during the war. According to a British Foreign Office document, a Turkish parliamentary deputy had confided to him during the war that the liquidation of the Armenians was decided upon before the war among the Ittihad deputies in the Ottoman parliament.¹³ The involvement of parliamentary deputies is attested to in the memoirs of Stepan Sabah-Kulian, an Armenian revolutionary leader. He wrote that in 1911 a deputy touring western Turkey agitated against the Armenians in public speeches. “The gist of his campaign was that either the Armenians embrace Islam so as to render their Ottomanism credible, or they will be *liquidated*” (italics in original).¹⁴

The 1915 report of Colonel Stange, a German military commander in charge of a Turkish military detachment during the war and close military collaborator of Dr. Şakir, should also be noted. Incensed by Turkish denials of the ongoing massacres of Armenians, Stange concluded that the Turks exploited supposed military necessity as “a welcome pretext” to take advantage of “this favorable opportunity” of the war in order to execute their “*long entertained plan*” of annihilation (emphasis added).¹⁵

Turkish opposition forces also provided ominous information and assessments to acquaintances in the two Armenian revolutionary parties, Dashnak and Hunchak, during the years 1908–13. One example of this is the repeated admonitions of Colonel Fuad of Van in 1908 to Armenians not to trust Ittihad pledges of support for Armenian demands for reform. He relayed some of the secret Ittihad plans for the Armenians to activists in the Dashnak party.¹⁶

Hunchak party leaders received similar reports from leaders of the main Turkish opposition party, Itilaf. As reported by Stepan Sabah-Kulian, Niksar Kaymakam Ihsan Bey and local military commander Sabih Bey “in 1912 delivered to us a batch of very precious documents which all bore the seal of either Ittihad’s central leadership or of the Ittihad-run government, such as: ‘Don’t be sparing to the Armenians. Don’t leave any of them alive. Seize all their goods and possessions.’” Ihsan was convinced that the total destruction of the Armenians was Ittihad’s goal. Similar warnings based on inside information were received from other officials, including the member of the royal family and Itilaf leader, Damad Salih Paşa, who warned “that the ruling circles of Ittihadists have resolved to absolutely annihilate the Armenians even if such an undertaking should result in the loss of the territories of Turkish Armenia.”¹⁷

The limitations and problems of the above sources are self-evident. In each case, both the transmitters and the recipients of the information were avowed opponents of Ittihad. The Armenians were urged to defend themselves and assassinate Ittihad leaders in order to avert the planned massacres of their own people. Therefore, the information can hardly be considered to have been objective. Moreover, each warning came from a single, uncorroborated source.

Still, these reports together corroborated each other’s warning that Ittihad planned to massacre the Armenians and were concealing this objective behind declarations of fraternity with the Armenians. The sources of the information were independent of each other, and each drew his information from a different Ittihad source. If anything, this diversity of sources combined with the similarity of the warnings points to the extent to which Ittihad’s sinister plans for the Armenians had already reached activists in many provinces well before World War I.

The Evolution of Premeditation

The thought of committing large-scale massacres is initially amorphous and tentative. Turning that thought into action is contingent upon developments which more often than not are crisis situations requiring emergency action by the perpetrator group. Escalating domestic conflicts between a dominant group and a subject minority group are rife with such crisis potential. Such crises can reach their peak in times of external war, especially global war, which will facilitate the rapid transformation of tentative ideas of massive violence into plans of action behind the screen of war. War

thus emerges as the connecting link between the embryonic and implementing stages in the evolution of a genocide.

Quite a few testimonies from the period show that for the Ittihad government the war served as a cover for the premeditated genocide of the Armenians in the Ottoman empire. One example is the memoirs of Vice Marshal Joseph Pomiankowski, Austrian Military Plenipotentiary in Istanbul and Military Attaché at Ottoman General Headquarters during the war. Pomiankowski had access to the highest decision makers of wartime Turkey and “was from start to finish a witness to nearly all the decisions and activities of the Turkish government.” According to him, Turkish leaders attributed the decadence and decline of the Ottoman Empire “exclusively . . . to the overabundant humanity of the earlier Sultans who either ought to have had the conquered people forcibly embrace Islam, or ought to have exterminated them. . . . In this sense there is no doubt that the Young Turk government already before the war had decided to utilize the next suitable opportunity for rectifying this mistake at least in part. . . . It is also very probable that this consideration, i.e., intent, had a very important influence upon the decisions of the Ottoman government regarding joining the Central Powers and upon the determination of the exact time of their intervening in the war.” Pomiankowski also lamented the murder of the Armenians. “The extermination [*die Ausrottung*] of an entire Christian nation offended the sentiments and moral principles of humanity certainly to a much higher degree than the unlimited submarine warfare, which Germany resorted to, was capable of.”¹⁸

The Turkish Military Tribunal set up by the Ottoman governments during the Armistice in an attempt to punish the authors of the Armenian genocide also charged Ittihad with exploiting the opportunity afforded by the war. In its main indictment the Tribunal scorned “the vile tricks and deceitful means” through which Ittihad took Turkey into World War I in order to carry out its hidden objectives while “Europe was preoccupied with that war,” and could neither deter nor intervene.¹⁹ Regarding deliberation and premeditation, the key indictment said: “The massacre and destruction of the Armenians was the result of the decision of the Central Committee of Ittihad . . . following extensive and profound deliberations.”²⁰ Even more important are the verdicts handed down by the same Tribunal, predicated on the Ottoman legal term for premeditation, *ta’ammüden*, which derives from the Arabic root word *’amd* and conveys intent based on prior deliberation. It is spelled out in Article 169 of the Ottoman Penal Code. In handing down its verdicts in the Yozgad,²¹ Trabzon,²² and Erzincan trial series,²³ the court invoked Article 170 of that code, which provides for a death sentence for the crime of premeditated murder.

United States Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, who through his wartime contacts with the ultimate power wielders in the Ottoman regime was privy to their

otherwise closely guarded secrets, also believed the murder of the Armenians was premeditated. As he recalled:

The definite conviction which these conversations left in my mind was that Talat was the most implacable enemy of this persecuted race. "He gave me the impression", such is the entry I find in my diary, August 3d, "that Talat is the one who desired to crush the poor Armenians." He told me that the Union and Progress Committee had carefully considered the matter in all its details and that the policy which was being pursued was that which they had officially adopted. He said that I must not get the idea that the deportations had been decided upon hastily; in reality, they were the result of long and careful deliberation.²⁴

Two missionary nurses engaged in wartime Turkey by the Orient and Islam Commission of the German Protestant Missionary Association, Alma Johansson of Sweden and Hansina Marcher of Denmark, gave similar testimony. Johansson was stationed in Muş, in Bitlis province, Marcher in Harput province. According to Johansson:

Already by November, we had known there would be a massacre. The Mutassarif [district governor] of Moush, who was a very intimate friend of Enver Pasha, declared quite openly that they would massacre the Armenians at the first opportune moment and exterminate the whole race. Towards the beginning of April, in the presence of a Major Lange and several other high officials, including the American and German consuls, Ekran Bey [should be Servet Bey, VND] quite openly declared the government's intention of exterminating the Armenian race. All of these details clearly show that the massacre was deliberately planned.²⁵

Marcher reported that the governor of Harput province, Erzincanlı Sabit, told the German Vice Consul in Erzurum, Dr. Max Scheubner Richter, on March 16, 1915 (some five weeks before the Armenian genocide began) that, "The Armenians in Turkey must be, and were going to be, exterminated. They had grown, he said, in wealth and numbers until they became a menace to the ruling Turkish race; extermination was the only remedy."²⁶

Since these last two testimonies are from Christian missionaries, whose objectivity in this case might be called into question, the issue of bias should be addressed. Both nurses cite the presence of other officials, civilian and military, all identified exactly. Specific dates are also given. Such detail in a testimony enhances its credibility since the other parties mentioned may be in a position to refute the testimony. Most importantly, perhaps, the core elements in the nurses' testimonies correspond closely to those of the other sources so far cited in this study.

What emerges from this constellation of more or less corroborative testimonies from divergent sources is the simple fact that by reported Turkish admission the destruction of the Armenians through organized massacres was preceded by careful deliberations culminating in a clear decision to do so.

Evidence of the Implementation of the Blueprint

The history of inter-group conflict is replete with emergencies, the acuteness of which has prompted many leadership groups to toy with the idea of destroying the weaker group. Victories in the wake of armed clashes will often serve this purpose, but there is a world of difference between entertaining a notion and turning that notion into action.²⁷ Planning a detailed design and implementing it represent a much more complicated undertaking.

Although each instance is more or less a unique phenomenon, the materialization of a genocide hinges on a number of internal and external factors affecting the group which may be disposed to commit the crime. In the absence of such factors, genocidal propensities and tentative designs are postponed, modified, or shelved altogether. The successful materialization of a genocidal predilection is discernible in the consequential relationship between a genocidal blueprint, or directives charting a specified course of action for a given actor, on the one hand, and developments ensuring a genocidal outcome on the other. Therefore, to the extent that a blueprint has been successfully implemented, it acquires functional significance. What follows is a demonstration of the existence of such a relationship between blueprint and outcome.

When analyzing the World War I Armenian genocide, Arnold Toynbee emphasized the "fundamental uniformity of procedure . . . 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."²⁸ Referring to the swiftness with which the anti-Armenian measures were applied, Toynbee asserted that they constituted "a deliberate, systematic attempt to eradicate the Armenian population throughout the Ottoman Empire, and it has certainly met with a very large measure of success."²⁹ In an internal American State Department memorandum of October 24, 1917, a Turkish Senator is quoted as saying that "the Armenian horrors [left] an indelible spot on the forehead of Ottomanism," and that "in the opinion of many other Turks, this was a well calculated, deeply planned, diabolical policy."³⁰ Secretary of State Lansing himself was convinced that the murders were carefully planned at the top, as he noted in his November 16, 1916 cable to Joseph C. Grew, American Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin, instructing him to seek the support of the German Foreign Affairs Minister for interceding to stop the "studied intention on the part of the Ottoman Government to annihilate a Christian race."³¹

The Ten Commandments clearly enumerated specific procedures, for the im-

plementation of which there is ample evidence. For example, the behavior of the gendarmerie, who were called upon in the fourth commandment, to help the Moslems with military force to carry out the massacres, was called by Toynbee “utterly atrocious . . . a very large proportion of the total misery inflicted was the gendarmerie’s work.”³²

There was an attempt by Dr. Şakir to implement the first commandment, to “wipe out” the Armenian leaders “who worked against the Government,” as early as September 1914. The idea was to decapitate the Armenian people by first liquidating their leaders. Şakir ordered Filibeli Hilmi, his assistant and deputy chief of Special Organization East headquartered in Erzurum, to ambush and kill the leaders of the Armenian Dashnak party who were returning to their homes from their party’s Eighth Quadrennial Congress in Erzurum (July 28–August 14, 1914). The plot failed because of last minute changes in travel plans.³³ This policy of murdering community leaders was addressed in the Court Martial trials described above. The key indictment cited a cable by Şakir, on June 21, 1915, demanding to know of his subordinate in Harput province whether the Armenian leaders there, called “harmful people” (*eşhası muzire*), were being promptly liquidated or merely “deported.”³⁴

Foreign diplomats were aware of this policy. The German Consul in Aleppo, Dr. Walter Rössler reported the murders of Armenian leaders to his country’s Ambassador on May 8, 1915 with scorn for the murderers. He saw these measures as part of a stratagem to reduce the Armenians to “a leaderless herd,” thereby making them easy prey for wholesale destruction.³⁵

The application of the fifth commandment to “exterminate all males under 50, priests and teachers, leave girls and children to be Islamized,” together with the third commandment’s order to “provoke massacres” and to empower the common people to carry out these massacres in specified localities, is confirmed by German, Austrian, and American diplomatic sources. A confidential memo of the Austrian Embassy in Constantinople stated that the anti-Armenian measures “were by and large approved by the Turkish people. Most Turks consider them necessary for the realization of the objective to Turkify the empire.”³⁶ This conclusion was echoed by US High Commissioner in Constantinople, Lewis Heck, in reports to the State Department on January 9 and 20, 1919. He wrote that most Turkish officials in the country’s interior either “actively participated” in the massacres or “condoned” them, while “the vast majority” of the Turks “heartily approved” them.³⁷

Corroboration of the implementation of the eighth commandment, to kill all Armenians in the armed forces, can be found in a September 4, 1915 report by Dr. Ernst Kwiatkowski, Austrian Consul at Trabzon. He quoted a Turkish military officer admitting that Armenian soldiers who were assigned to construction work were executed near Hamziköy, 52 kilometers from Trabzon.³⁸ Swiss historian S. Zurlinden described the pattern of the extermination of Armenian recruits by focusing atten-

tion on their fate under the command of Halil Paşa (Kut), commander of the 52nd Division. "Batches of 80–100 men were removed, isolated, surrounded by Turkish officers and soldiers, and either stabbed to death or shot to death. . . . There was no accounting, and not a trace of criminal procedure against the murderers of these Armenian soldiers who beforehand were degraded, divested of their uniforms, and were reduced to labor battalions."³⁹ Scheubner Richter, German Vice Consul in Erzurum, reported to Berlin on December 4, 1916 that the massacre of Armenian battalions was part of Halil's incursion into northern Persia.⁴⁰ The murder of Armenian soldiers by troops under Halil's command was also attested to by a Presbyterian missionary in Urmia at the time, Dr. William A. Shedd.⁴¹ Halil's colleague, General Ali Ihsan Sabis, commander of the 51st division, was also reported to have executed all the Armenian soldiers in his division, including physicians and pharmacists.⁴²

In his wartime work, *Armenian Atrocities, The Murder of a Nation*, Arnold Toynbee corroborated that Armenian soldiers in the Ottoman army were murdered.

The Armenian soldiers, too, have undergone the same fate. To begin with, all have been disarmed and are at work constructing roads. We know from a trustworthy source that the Armenian soldiers of the province of Erzeroum, at work on the Erzeroum–Erzindjan road, have all been massacred. The Armenian soldiers of the province of Diyarbekir have all been massacred on the Diyarbekir–Ourfa and Diyarbekir–Kharpout roads. However, from Kharpout 1,800 young Armenians were despatched as soldiers to Diyarbekir to work there. All were massacred in the neighborhood of Arghana. We have no news from the other districts, but the same fate has assuredly been inflicted upon them.⁴³

American Ambassador Henry Morgenthau gave a graphic description of the annihilation procedures against Armenian soldiers in the Ottoman army. He said that it was "the general practice to shoot them in cold blood." Groups of 50 or 100 would be taken to a secluded spot by Turkish soldiers, while tied together in fours, and there shot. Morgenthau had also heard of cases where the victims were forced "to dig their graves before being shot."⁴⁴

Finally, there was at least one case of a court martial proceeding as a result of these murders of Armenian soldiers. General Vehib assumed command of the IIIrd Army in February 1916. His zone of operations included the six provinces where the largest number of Armenians were murdered, although he learned of this only after the fact. Vehib discovered that a group of 2,000 Armenian soldiers whom he had ordered moved to a new labor assignment had been tied together in fours and shot. In the court martial proceeding initiated by Vehib, the gendarmerie commander in charge of the Armenian unit, K r Nuri, and the brigand chief  rkez Kadir, were

convicted and hanged. Vehib warned the men of the IIIrd Army against any repetition of such "massacres." Vehib's December 5, 1918 deposition for the court martial is the most explicit and unequivocal confirmation of the premeditated and organized nature of the Armenian genocide.⁴⁵ General Vehib also tried to arrest and court martial Dr. Sakir and the Governor of Sivas, Muammer, who had given Nuri the execution orders. Sakir escaped arrest, while Muammer was transferred by Talat out of Vehib's jurisdiction, to Konya, before Vehib could begin proceedings against him.⁴⁶

The Incitement of the Masses

Of all the directives in the Ten Commandments blueprint, the order to incite the masses and provoke massacres against the Armenians (commandment 3) is perhaps the most important for the success of the entire enterprise of organized mass murder. It is a historical fact that the level of direct and indirect popular participation in the massacres in the Ottoman-Turkish state system was almost always contingent upon, and therefore controlled by administrative fiat. Without official instigation and sanction no massacre on the desired scale could be conceived, let alone organized and carried out. The frequent use of the euphemisms "appropriate," "suitable," or "special" in connection with the leeway allowed the perpetrators in the selection of methods of perpetration epitomize this fact.

The purpose of the incitement is clear: to shift the blame to unruly masses, disclaim responsibility, and attribute the murders to "an intercommunal clash" entailing mutual atrocities. Perhaps the most significant aspect of this commandment is the injection of religion into the conflict ("excite Moslem opinion"). This calculated appeal to religious fanaticism, intended to inflame the passions against the targeted and subordinate Christian minority group, cannot be overestimated as a major factor behind mass murder in the history of the Turko-Armenian conflict. Within this context, it could be argued that Islam, however defined and interpreted, is at its core a militant creed prescribing the domination of its adherents over subservient conquered and subject peoples. The latter's failure to be subservient can bring severe retribution, including death.

Organizing agitation against the Armenians in wartime Turkey, especially in the mosques during Friday prayers, was an integral part of the scheme of genocide. This was a continuation of the legacy of massacres which were perpetrated during the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid. Nearly every episode of massacre in the provinces then was launched from mosques on Fridays, following inflammatory harangues by appointed agitators inciting the faithful. Such agitation gained a powerful impetus with the declaration of holy war in November 1914. Non-Muslim subjects of the empire, especially Christians, were utterly vulnerable. In the case of the Armenians, this vulnerability was carefully exploited by the Ittihadist leaders who proceeded to

cultivate and disseminate rumors about Armenian sedition, acts of sabotage, espionage, and rebelliousness.

In explaining the wartime treatment of the Armenians by the Ittihadist Turks, the import of the preceding history of the Turko-Armenian conflict cannot be minimized. The most salient feature of that conflict was its frequent explosion into massacres, bringing massive death and destruction to the Armenian population of Turkey. The causes of these past massacres were more or less the same as those producing the World War I calamity. The heterogeneous character of the Ottoman social structure collided with Islam as it was interpreted and practiced in the Ottoman empire. The martial legacy of the empire and the militarism in governmental circles served to stimulate and sustain the cycle of such collisions.

The crystallization of a religious-militaristic concept of a "ruling nation" (*milleti hâkime*) was ill-suited to the proper functioning of a multi-ethnic system. Demands for institutionalized and guaranteed equality for all the ethnic components of the system were becoming increasingly vocal, thereby producing enormous pressures on the authorities. The system became heavily strained and therefore in need of structural relief, as far as the interests of the ruling nation were concerned. The emerging problems were further aggravated by the fact that a succession of Ottoman regimes felt impelled to introduce reforms without being able and/or willing to enforce them. The notions of a radical remedy or a final solution, are reflective of these developments.

When Turkey entered World War I, perhaps the most apprehensive ethnic group were the Armenians (other than small revolutionary cliques with conspiratorial designs). To obviate these fears, the entire network of Armenian community leadership groups, with the Armenian Patriarchate at the forefront, mobilized their resources to support the Turkish war effort. Sermons in churches, editorials in Armenian newspapers, and speeches in community centers all appealed to the Armenian nation to remain loyal to the Ottoman state, bear all the requisite sacrifices, and even endure occasional abuses so as not to arouse the slightest suspicion of disloyalty. American Ambassador Morgenthau's observations bear this out:

Though the air, all during the autumn and winter of 1914–15 was filled with premonitions of trouble, the Armenians behaved with remarkable self-restraint. For years it had been the Turkish policy to provoke the Christian population into committing overt acts and then seizing upon such misbehavior as an excuse for massacres. The Armenian clergy and political leaders saw many evidences that the Turks were now up to their old tactics, and they therefore went among the people, cautioning them to keep quiet, to bear all insults and even outrages patiently, so as not to give the Moslems the opening which they were seeking . . . "even if they burn a few of our villages . . ." these leaders

would say, "do not retaliate, for it is better that a few be destroyed than that the whole nation be massacred."⁴⁷

As a result, thousands of young Armenians rushed to the conscription centers in the Ottoman army, hundreds of thousands of Turkish pounds were collected through subscription, many centers were set up to train young Armenian women as military nurses, mobile hospitals were assembled, a large portion of the only Armenian hospital in Istanbul was put at the disposal of the Ottoman army, and large quantities of socks, pullovers, and bedding were hand-prepared or collected as donations.

The response of the Ottoman authorities was limited to perfunctory expressions of appreciation. The abuses to which Armenian conscripts were subjected through rampant insults and overall hostility were the first discordant notes that discouraged the continuation of conscription by Armenians, and led eventually to a contagious trend of desertions in all parts of the country. The charges of treason, sedition, etc., were not slow in coming. The military requisitions everywhere became a gigantic plundering and pillage enterprise with respect to the Armenians, who nevertheless did not and could not object in any effective way. However, a number of incidents, armed clashes, and even killings occurred when provincial police, gendarmes, soldiers, or Special Organization brigands, began to rape Armenian girls and women while commandeering quarters for lodging purposes. Invariably, these clashes were reported to the central authorities as instances of Armenian "rebellion."

This Turkish readiness to distort and magnify was indicative of the existence of powerful, latent, forces of enmity, bordering on an eagerness to consider the moment ripe for a final reckoning. At the same time, the Ottoman legacy of massacres, which invariably were committed with impunity, left an abiding bitterness among the Armenians. Irrespective of their overt demonstrations of support for the Turkish war effort, it is fair to state that most (though not all) Armenians privately hoped for Turkish defeat and the end of Turkish domination.

Although the Turks could sense this residual bitterness, they still expected the Armenians to act like super-patriots. Again, Ambassador Morgenthau's recollections support these observations.

Their attitude illustrates once more the perversity of the Turkish mind. After massacring hundreds of thousands of Armenians in the course of thirty years, outraging their women and girls, and robbing and maltreating them in every conceivable way, the Turks still apparently believed that they had the right to expect from them the most enthusiastic "loyalty." That the Armenians all over Turkey sympathized with the Entente was no secret. "If you want to know how the war is going," wrote a humorous Turkish newspaper, "all you need to do is to look in the face of an Armenian. If he is smiling, then the Allies are winning; if he is downcast, then the Germans are successful."⁴⁸

In brief, the atmosphere was charged with considerable tension on both sides, with Ittihadist leaders probably welcoming the opportunity to review their radical designs on the Armenians, discussed earlier in this study. This condition became accentuated in the winter of 1914–15 when the Ottoman IIIrd Army suffered a series of very costly setbacks at the hands of the Russian army in the east, which thereby nipped in the bud the Pan-Turkic and Pan-Turanist plans of the Ittihadists. A mixture of frustration and anxiety began to grip the Ittihad leaders and the Armenian issue was pushed onto center-stage, assuming as it did pivotal significance for subsequent party and state policy.

Two factors influenced this turn of events. First, the Turks believed that the Armenian volunteer contingents fighting on the side of the Russians, had to some degree contributed to the military setbacks of the IIIrd Army. Second, a number of Armenians, individually or in consort with the enemy, engaged in espionage and sabotage, mainly on the eastern borders.

For an ideologically motivated and militant leadership group these two factors were both anathema and a welcome pretext at the same time. No allowances for mitigating circumstances could be made regarding the possible reasons behind these aspects of Armenian conduct. Scheubner Richter expressed understanding of those reasons in his long report of August 5, 1915.

However regrettable, it seems to me to be only natural that a maltreated and, therefore, unhappy border-inhabiting population of a different nationality and faith will join a triumphantly marching enemy of the same faith, especially when that enemy presents itself as liberator and lures it with promises. Such incidents have occurred in other theaters of war.⁴⁹

The thrust of all these observations and comments is that Turkish anxieties from a difficult and costly war, together with fears about Armenian revolutionaries and their potential,⁵⁰ prompted Ittihad to activate its tentative contingency plans regarding the fate of the Armenian population of Turkey. The coalescence of these factors came with an immense appreciation for the opportunity presenting itself. The die was cast when in the latter part of February and early March 1915, Ittihad finally embarked upon the various phases of implementation of the Ten Commandments blueprint, which is but a rough draft in essence.

The most important phase is that of agitation and incitement, portraying the Armenians as a treacherous, ungrateful, seditious, and rebellious minority deserving to be punished most severely. Severity of punishment requires preparatory work, even in an autocratic or despotic regime. A climate of public opinion has to be created that not only approves or applauds the punishment but actively assists in the administration of it.

The Anti-Ittihadist Plot—The Intervening Variable

Dormant or latent plans are often activated by what victimologists call precipitating factors. Between the condition of the embryonic plans of the Ittihadists and the processes launching the genocide itself, there was interposed a development which functioned to connect the two stages of the Turko-Armenian conflict. This was the discovery in 1913 of an Armenian plot to assassinate Talat and his cohorts by special agents to be brought into the Ottoman capital. The conspiracy was hatched at the Seventh Delegate Assembly of the Hunchak Party, convening August 25/September 7 (o.s.), 1913 in Constanta, Romania. However, one of the participants secretly notified the Turkish authorities of the plot, which was not even attempted in the end. However, after waiting for almost ten months, the authorities arrested all the members of the Constantinople branch of the Hunchak Party. Following a court-martial, 20 prominent members of the party were sentenced to death on May 14/27 (o.s.), 1915, and were hanged on June 2/15 (o.s.), 1915.

The executions and the publicity they were given throughout the length and breadth of the empire, served to degrade and vilify the entire Armenian community of Turkey, which became collectively suspect in the eyes of every Turk. On the face of it, the Hunchak Congress decision seems to be a classic case of "victim-precipitated crime," a crime in which the victim has a share in his own victimization. The authorities, especially the Ittihadist party operatives, exploited the convictions to the fullest by unleashing a massive campaign of defamation against the Armenians as a dangerous internal enemy which jeopardized the security of the nation.

But a closer examination of the circumstances reveals evidence of crafty manipulations aimed at amplifying the significance of the incident. The Hunchak assembly in 1913 lacked a quorum and was illegitimate by party rules. Only 17 of 64 party branches in Turkey were represented. The votes representing the branches in the USA and Egypt were rigged, and the votes of three of the 17 Ottoman branches represented were cast prior to the arrival of their delegates. Two of 13 participants were disqualified from the vote because they were Central Committee members. In other words, a small, unrepresentative clique acted on its own, taking upon itself to resort to terror and imperilling the safety of the nation in whose name they claimed to act. Two of these people were not even in Turkey and were later tried and convicted in absentia. The illegitimacy of the assembly was reported to Talat by the Hunchak Central Committee on August 8, 1914, but to no avail.⁵¹

It is significant that two years elapsed before the suspects were brought to trial, during which time they languished in prison without explanation. The hidden agenda for this delay is clear from the synchronization of the trial, conviction, sentencing, and executions with the initiation of the genocide in spring and summer 1915. In the absence of any actual assassination attempt, the court-martial utilized not only printed material, purported to be threatening to the Ottoman empire, but also

personal letters as proof of sedition. The most remarkable aspect of this kind of evidence was its date of origin: both printed and personal materials preceded the outbreak of World War I.

Nevertheless, the Turkish press and wire services reported with great fanfare that Armenian conspirators were caught red-handed in their plans to stab Turkey in the back in the midst of a war of life and death. Through careful omissions and deletions, the impression was created that this was a wartime plot to assassinate Talat and his cohorts. The ceremonial, public executions accented the grimness of the episode, which ushered in the period of terror through court-martial in wartime Turkey. For months thereafter, military tribunals throughout Turkey hanged countless Armenians on the flimsiest charges.

Because of the state of siege and the imposition of martial law throughout the empire, nearly all forms of communication were under strict control. The printed media were subject to censorship, and the organs of Public Security in the Interior Ministry and counterintelligence in the War Office maintained such control through their respective Departments II.

This meant that all anti-Armenian propaganda in the Turkish media at the time were either inspired or sanctioned by these authorities. Although the press in Constantinople was somewhat circumspect in using such propaganda, many a provincial daily gave vent to feelings of acute hostility through agitation. The two newspapers in Sivas, *Kızıl Irmak* and *Sivas*, for example, were typical in this respect. But two other publications, liberally adorned with damning pictures, appearing in the Ottoman capital as official organs of national security agencies, attacked the Armenians frequently as a dangerous internal foe. The *Polis Mecmuası*, put out by Department II of the Police Directorate was one of these, and the other was *Harb Mecmuası*, a weekly edited by Colonel Seyfi (head of Department II in the War Office). The impact of the latter went far beyond its 15,000 subscribers.

The most widespread wartime anti-Armenian agitation was in the so-called "Ottoman White Book," prepared jointly by these two departments mentioned above.⁵² First published in 1916, it is largely a collection of excerpts from prewar Armenian revolutionary literature, including material written for the campaign against the despotic regime of Sultan Abdul Hamid. Ittihad had struck an alliance with their Armenian counterparts to overthrow him. Half-truths and distorted translations from Armenian are the hallmarks of this propaganda tract. In addition, a number of professional orators committed to the aims of Ittihad were despatched to agitate in regions with large Armenian populations. Among them were many ex-officers and physicians. They were experts at feeling the pulse of their audiences and inflaming xenophobic passions fueled by religious fanaticism. The agitation was on two levels, before two different kinds of forums. The target audience at one level was Turkish notables and high-ranking provincial officials with influence on the masses.

The other forum was the common people, susceptible to being whipped up emotionally into a violent mob.

One form of calculated agitation was to invent and disseminate specific rumors of Armenian treachery. For example, on April 12, 1915, German Consul Dr. Rössler described the havoc created in the Aleppo region by the rumor that Christian Armenian soldiers had poisoned the bread of their fellow Muslim soldiers.⁵³ The same thing happened in Sivas on December 6, 1914, when a number of Turkish soldiers in the barracks of Kavakyazı suddenly took ill. Provincial governor Muammer and the commander of the area's army corps immediately declared the Armenian soldiers suspect and had them all arrested and thrown into dungeons. The Armenian neighborhoods of the provincial capital, Sivas, were surrounded, and the Turkish population was warned to brace itself for an Armenian rebellion. The same day, Muammer wired Talat that Armenians had poisoned Turkish soldiers and requested permission to retaliate. In the meantime, all Armenian ovenkeepers and their workers were arrested and beaten mercilessly. The mob, aroused by the inflammatory articles in the Turkish newspaper *Kızıl Irmak*, was anxious for action. However, the investigation by a team of Turkish and Armenian physicians and pharmacists established that no bread eaten by the Turkish soldiers had been poisoned. Ignoring this evidence, Muammer insisted that the crime of poisoning had been committed by Armenians and that the perpetrators needed to be punished. Though temporarily restrained by his superiors, Muammer was later given the opportunity to proceed against the Armenian population of Sivas province.⁵⁴

The evidence of incitement compiled by the Turkish Military Tribunal is both striking and compelling. At the eighteenth and last session of the Yozgad trial (April 7, 1919), Hami, defense counsel for gendarmerie commander Tefvik, one of the three principal defendants, conceded in his closing arguments that the people of Yozgad committed the retaliatory massacres against the Armenians.⁵⁵ The verdict in that trial declared that the defendants incited the Muslims and persuaded them to consider massacring the Armenians as a natural and necessary act of revenge (*tabii ve adetâ lâzım*).⁵⁶

Talat himself confirmed mass Turkish participation in the massacres, although he was not entirely forthright. He conceded in his memoirs that "the Muslim people" had participated in the massacres, and at another point he blamed "certain officials and the people." He also admitted the murderous role of the gendarmes. Yet, at the same time, he reiterated the charge that the Armenians were bent on "ending the independence of Turkey . . . launching a rebellion in Istanbul and imperilling the safety of the Straits . . ."⁵⁷

German diplomatic, consular, and military representatives independently confirmed the incitement and mass participation in their reports to Berlin. At first, in the spring of 1915, German diplomats and officers stationed in Turkey as allies took

Turkish accusations of Armenian sedition at face value and so reported them. The picture gradually changed during the summer of that year, as early doubts gave way to outright disbelief regarding the truth of these charges. As the design of mass murder became clear, most of these officials began to expose the truth of the anti-Armenian measures.

In his August 5, 1915 report to Ambassador Metternich, Vice Consul Scheubner Richter described the deplorable conditions of the “justifiably disaffected” Armenians and “the provocative conduct of the police agents and brigands” designed to incite the people. He saw the deportations as “a campaign of revenge, annihilation, and plunder, engineered by Ittihad and its shadowy operatives who are tolerated by the military authorities.”⁵⁸

In a November 16, 1915, report, Aleppo Consul Dr. Rössler called Turkish government charges—that the Armenian defenders of Urfa seized control of the Turkish quarters of the city and slaughtered their inhabitants—“fabricated.”⁵⁹ In a January 3, 1916 report, Rössler informed his ambassador of “the often reported and again recently confirmed fact that the organs of the government are inciting and encouraging the population to eradicate and destroy the Armenians.”⁶⁰ Metternich’s successor and later Foreign Affairs Minister, Richard von Kühlmann, reported to Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg on November 17, 1916 that Turkish charges that bombs and weapons had been found in an Armenian cemetery in Smyrna (Izmir) were a familiar Turkish “pretext” for anti-Armenian measures.⁶¹

Finally, Major General Friedrich Kress von Kressenstein, writing on September 3, 1918 from Tiflis in the Caucasus region, ridiculed and dismissed such Turkish excuses as “military necessity,” or “imperilled communication and supply lines,” as justifications for “the murder of thousands of human beings.” In an enclosure attached to the report, Kressenstein said the reports of Turkish Generals Essad, Şefki, and Nuri about the alleged threat of the Armenians were “deliberately distorted.”⁶²

The functional value of incitement to initiating a genocide is directly related to the disparity between the attitudes and actions of the masses being incited and those of the architects of the genocide and its incitement tool. The naiveté, gullibility, and excitability of the former contrasts with the pervasive cynicism of the latter. The incitement is as functional as the receptivity of the audiences and the ability of the inciters to transform them into lethal instruments. Ambassador Morgenthau wrote, “For years it had been the Turkish policy to provoke the Christian population into committing overt acts, and then seizing upon such misbehavior as an excuse for massacres.”⁶³

Harry Stürmer, a German journalist who went to Turkey as a reporter sympathetic to Ittihad, became disillusioned by the treatment of the Armenians and other assorted crimes. His wartime memoir corroborates the incitement reports.

[A]fter the first act in this drama of massacre and death—the brutal “evacuation of the war zone” in Armenia proper—the meanest, the lowest, the most cynical act of race-fanaticism the history of mankind has to show was the extension of the system of deportation, with its wilful neglect and starvation of the victims, to further hundreds of thousands of Armenians in the Capital and Interior.⁶⁴

The same cynicism was reported by Dr. Georg Mayer, the highest-ranking German medical officer stationed in wartime Turkey. In a March 2, 1916 report he described the atmosphere prevailing in the corridors of the Turkish Ministry of War regarding the huge death tolls among the Armenian victims which “with cynical grins” was attributed to “natural causes or unfortunate accidents as recorded in official medical reports.”⁶⁵

Ahmed Refik (Altınay), a wartime intelligence officer in Department II of the Turkish War Office and later a history professor and prolific author at Istanbul University, provided a glimpse into that atmosphere of cynicism permeating the department in his postwar memoirs.

In order to justify this enormous crime the requisite propaganda material was thoroughly prepared in Istanbul. [It included such statements as:] “the Armenians are in league with the enemy. They will launch an uprising in Istanbul, kill off the Ittihadist leaders and will succeed in opening the straits [for the Allies to capture Istanbul].” These vile and malicious incitements [however] could persuade only people who were not even able to feel the pangs of their own hunger.⁶⁶

Incitement, Self-Defense, and Self-Fulfilling Prophecies

Turkish charges of Armenian separatism and sedition threatening Turkey’s war effort and even her very existence are belied by the success of the genocide undertaking and the enormous losses of the Armenians. If Armenian revolutionary groups, Dashnaks and Hunchaks mainly, had in fact dominated the Armenian community of Turkey, such a success could hardly have materialized. These groups represented only a tiny fraction of the community in terms of numbers, resources, strength, and overall leverage. If anything, they were shunned, even dreaded, by the majority of that community. The fact remains that the Armenian community was completely unprepared for the calamity which befell it because it did not consider itself a threat to either Turkish national security or to Turkish national aspirations. Were it otherwise, the number of Armenian uprisings could have increased dramatically. Some, perhaps, could have been preemptive assaults, rather than the limited defensive efforts which reflected despair more than anything else.

It is with this in mind that the causes and direction of the four principal uprisings should be assessed. These uprisings were: Musa Dagh, lasting some 50

days in August and September 1915; Van, April 20–May 17, 1915; Şabin Karahisar, June 6–July 4, 1915; Urfa, September 29–October 23, 1915.

In the absence of such defensive uprisings, would there have been other excuses to blame the entire victim group wholesale for its own victimization? Would total surrender to extermination serve to diminish the scale of accusations leveled against it and concomitantly increase the culpability of the offender? Probably many more groups of Armenians would have risen in self-defense had they been afforded similar opportunities. The extent of surprise with which they were caught and trapped was exceeded only by the dimensions of deceit and cunning animating the perpetrators. Yet, even Celal, the benevolent Turkish governor who twice was relieved of his duties (Aleppo and Konya) for refusing to comply with the orders to massacre, is reported to have said: “It is the most natural right of a human being to want to live. Even a worm, trampled upon, crooks and twists. The Armenians will defend themselves.”⁶⁷

A Turkish wartime document from Van clearly recognizes the destructive Turkish provocations as the cause of despondent Armenian resistance to them. In a May 11, 1915 telegram, Erzurum’s governor Tahsin (governor of Van until October 1914) responded bitterly to a May 10 communication from Talat, asserting that the Van rebellion had occurred because his advice was not heeded.

Instead of dealing with the Armenians while the war is going on, and for the good of our army and our country, I believe . . . it is better to leave them alone and not force them to rebel. . . . We have before us the example of Van . . . At the time when the assurance was given that the 33rd Division could be safely withdrawn from Van, I did not see the slightest possibility of an uprising by the Armenians and I took upon myself the responsibility for this decision. That decision merited me your most violent criticism . . . We have forcibly created the inextricable situation in which we find ourselves.⁶⁸

This candid admission by a Turkish provincial governor is poignantly substantiated by the equally important admission of Ibrahim Arvas, a Turkish deputy from Van in the Ottoman parliament. In his postwar eyewitness account of events in Van, he conceded that “Ittihad was underhandedly instigating the [Turkish] people, prodding them to hurl themselves upon the Armenians.”⁶⁹

Conclusion

The 1915 assessment of German Vice Consul Dr. Max Scheubner Richter, who was also commander of a joint German-Turkish Joint Special Organization Expeditionary Force involved in guerrilla operations, serves as an apt summary of the planning and implementation of the genocide.

I have conducted a series of conversations with competent and influential Turkish personages, and these are my impressions: A large segment of the Ittihadist party maintains the viewpoint that the Turkish empire should be based only on the principle of Islam and Pan-Turkism. Its non-Muslim and non-Turkish inhabitants should either be forcibly Islamized, or otherwise they ought to be destroyed. These gentlemen believe that the time is propitious for the realization of this plan. The first item on this agenda concerns the liquidation of the Armenians. Ittihad will dangle before the eyes of the allies the specter of an alleged revolution prepared by the Armenian Dashnak party. Moreover, local incidents of social unrest and acts of Armenian self-defense will deliberately be provoked and inflated and will be used as pretexts to effect the deportations. Once en route, however, the convoys will be attacked and exterminated by Kurdish and Turkish brigands, and in part by gendarmes, who will be instigated for that purpose by Ittihad.⁷⁰

This rather authoritative official German testimony succinctly demonstrates the striking consistency between the murderous objectives enumerated in the secret conference on the one hand, and the confidential admissions of Ittihad leaders on the other. It also points out the singular value of reports from wartime diplomats in the Ottoman empire, especially the evidence systematically sent to Turkey's main ally, Germany, most importantly by Max Scheubner Richter. They reveal and authenticate the genocidal fate of the Armenians as determined and ordered in the top secret conference in Istanbul early in World War One.

Notes

1. British Foreign Office Archives, London, FO 371/4172/31307, pp. 383–91, February 10, 1919. The Ten Commandments are on pages 388–89. All documents from this archive hereafter cited as FO followed by its number. The Committee of Union and Progress was the Ittihadists' name, for both their association and their party. The Supreme Directorate referred to below was akin to a politburo. The Special Organization was the aegis under which killer units operated in the genocide.

2. The arrest was reported in two French newspapers: *Le Journal d'Orient*, (April 1, 1919) and *Le Courier de Turquie*, (April 5, 1919). The latter was the official organ of the League of Defense of Ottoman Interests. The other documents provided by Essad, whose English translations are in FO 371/4172/31307, pp. 389–91, include: "Cypher Wire from Ahmed Jemal to Ministry Interior Regarding Armenian Expulsion around Marash"; "Note from Army Headquarters to Director of Public Safety re Military Aid to Expulsions"; "From Public Safety 'I' Direction to G. H. Q. 'I' Department re Arrests of Armenians and Secrecy of the Movement."

3. FO 371/4172/31307, pp. 385–86. Essad is not believed by all to have been a high official with access to confidential documents. Whereas Christopher Walker, the author of *Armenia: The Survival of a Nation*, rev. 2nd ed. (London: Croom Helm, 1990), in a letter to the journal

Middle Eastern Studies, accepts the Ten Commandments as a valid historical document, Gwynne Dyer, in response, asserts that Essad was “a low class” official of dubious character, and that the British eventually ignored the document. See *Middle Eastern Studies* 3 (1973), Correspondence, pp. 376–79. There is evidence that not all branches of the British government were interested in exposing the crime of the Armenian genocide or its perpetrators, but this does not reflect on the historical validity of the document.

4. 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*, 18:3 (August 1986), pp. 314–19, 326–32; idem., “The Role of Turkish Physicians in the World War I Genocide of Ottoman Armenians,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 1:2 (1986), pp. 169–73, 184.

5. Bundesarchiv Bonn, German Foreign Office Archives (hereafter Bonn, AA), Türkei 183/39, A29593.

6. FO 371/4172/31307, p. 386. A *vilayet* was a province, governed by a *vali*. The *vilayet* was subdivided into *sancaks*, districts, each governed by a *mutasarrif*, or district governor.

7. Vahakn N. Dadrian, “The Documentation of the World War I Armenian Massacres in the Proceedings of the Turkish Military Tribunal,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 23:4 (November 1991), p. 563; idem., “The Naim-Andonian Documents,” p. 348, n. 33.

8. Dadrian, “The Naim Andonian Documents,” p. 348, n. 34, and p. 356, n. 104. See also Talcott Williams’s memoirs, *Turkey, A World Problem of Today* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page and Co., 1921), pp. 195–96.

9. On Colonel Recayi’s testimony, see *Nor Giank, Zhogovourti Dzayn*, February 19, 1919, and *Renaissance*, February 20, 1919. The document is in FO 371/4172/31307, p. 390.

10. Roderic H. Davison, “The Armenian Crisis, 1912–1914,” *American Historical Review*, vol. 53, no. 3 (April 1948), pp. 481–505.

11. On Talat’s speech see Vahakn N. Dadrian, “Genocide as a Problem of National and International Law: The World War I Armenian Case and Its Contemporary Legal Ramifications,” *Yale Journal of International Law*, 14:2, (1989), p. 254. Professor Choublier’s reports are in French Foreign Ministry Archives (Quai d’Orsay, Paris), N.S., Politique Intérieure, Dossier Général, VII, reports nos. 157, 158, 162, pp. 150ff. “Old Style” refers to the Julian calendar, which was in use in Russia and other places until 1918.

12. *Les Memoirs de Mgr. Jean Naslian*, vol. 1 (Vienna: Mechitarist, 1955), p. 10, n.6, 148, 412. See also Tovmas Mugurditchian, *Dikranagerdee Nahankeen Charteru Yev Kurderou Kazanoutinunneru* (The Massacres of Diyarbekir Province and the Ferocity of the Kurds), (Cairo: Djihanian, 1919), p. 43; Garo Kevorkian, *Amenoun Darekirku* (Everyone’s Almanac), vol. 12, (Beirut: n.p., 1965), p. 223. Galib was so distraught by his party’s new policy that he soon turned down an offer to become Minister of Post of the Ottoman Empire. During the war he was transferred to Beirut, whence he later sent his government a scathing letter of protest against the murder of the Armenians. He ultimately committed suicide.

13. Arnold J. Toynbee, ed., *The Treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire; Documents Presented to Viscount Grey of Fallodon, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1916), document no. 134, p. 530.

14. Stepan Sabah-Kulian, *Pokr-Haykee Hishadagner* (Memoirs from Lesser Armenia), Part I, vol. 1 (Chicago: Yeridasart Haiasdan Publication, 1916), p. 347.
15. *Botschaft Konstantinopel* 170, no. 3841. Secret report to the German military mission in Turkey, August 23, 1915.
16. Vahan Papazian, *Eem Housheru* (My Memoirs), vol. 2 (Beirut: Hamazkayeen, 1952), pp. 29, 35. Colonel Fuad, a Circassian married to an Armenian, was later implicated in the 1913 conspiracy which assassinated Grand Vizier Mahmud Sevket Paşa, for which Fuad and the other conspirators were hanged.
17. Stepan Sabah-Kulian, *Badaskhanadouneru* (The Responsible Ones), 2nd ed. (Beirut: Donigian and Sons, 1974), pp. 328–33. A number of these warnings and disclosures were reported from unnamed sources in *Hunchak*, the organ of the party of the same name. See for example nos. 2 and 3 (1913). Salih Paşa was also among those hanged for the assassination of the Grand Vizier in 1913.
18. Joseph Pomiankowski, *Der Zusammenbruch des Ottomanischen Reiches* (Graz: Amalthea, 1969 [reissue of 1928 edition]), pp. 13, 162, 164–65. Pomiankowski also castigated the United States for what he felt was an “inconsequential policy” regarding the murder of the Armenians. He was convinced that Ambassador Morgenthau knew of the preparations for murder by the winter of 1914/15 and rejected Morgenthau’s statement that the United States could declare war only in the face of a clear danger to American national interests but not on solely moral grounds. Pomiankowski believed United States policy was based primarily on a desire “to maintain peace with Turkey.” (p. 164)
19. *Takvimi Vekayi* (the Ottoman governmental paper in Istanbul whose special supplements served as a quasi-judicial journal covering the important portions of the court-martial proceedings), no. 3540 (May 5, 1919), p.4.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 8.
21. *Ibid.*, no. 3617 (August 7, 1919), p. 2.
22. *Ibid.*, no. 3616 (August 6, 1919), p. 3.
23. *Ibid.*, no. 3917 (July 31, 1920), p. 5. The court used the Turkish word *kasden* for the crime, which is a synonym for the Arabic word *’amd* mentioned earlier in the paragraph.
24. Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau’s Story* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page and Co., 1918), p. 333.
25. Toynbee, *The Treatment*, Document 23, p. 91. See also United States National Archives (hereafter NA), Record Group (RG) 59. 867.4016/226, Ambassador Morgenthau’s Report no. 612, enclosure no. 1, November 9, 1915. Major Lange was chief of staff of the Ottoman 10th Army Corps, IIIrd Army. See German Chargé d’Affaires Neurath’s November 9, 1915 report to Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg, in Bonn, AA, Türkei 183/39, A33278, for both German Vice Consul Scheubner Richter’s November 5, 1919 report and Alma Johansson’s testimony on the massacre at Muş and District Governor Servet’s role.
26. Toynbee, *The Treatment*, Document 64, p. 258.
27. For a detailed discussion of this issue as an important aspect of a theory of genocide, see Vahakn N. Dadrian, “Towards a Theory of Genocide Incorporating the Instance of the

- Holocaust: Comments, Criticisms and Suggestions," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 5:2 (1990), pp. 132–34.
28. Toynbee, *The Treatment*, p. 637.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 648.
30. "Memorandum Concerning the Situation in Turkey," October 24, 1917, initialed by A.K.S., in NA, RG 59, 867.00/12078, pp. 22, 23.
31. NA, RG 59, 867.4016/299.
32. Toynbee, *The Treatment*, p. 652.
33. Installments numbers 12 and 13 of the series on "Umumi Harpte Teşkilatı Mahsusa," by A. Mil, in the Turkish newspaper, *Vakit*, November 2, 1933 to February 7, 1934.
34. *Takvimi Vekayi*, no. 3540, (May 5, 1919), p. 6. The document is identified as series 9.
35. Bonn, AA, Türkei 183/36, A15877. See also Austrian Foreign Ministry Archives (hereafter Vienna, AA), report by Ambassador Johann Margrave von Pallavicini, June 24, 1915, P.A. XII, Box 209, no. 49E.
36. Vienna, AA, P.A. 40, Interna 1848–1918, 272. Interna Konfidentenberichte 1915, no. 312, August 8, 1915.
37. NA, RG 256, 867.4016/2, p.2 and RG 59, 867.00/59, p.3. The officials are referred to in the former and the population in the latter.
38. Vienna, AA, P.A. 38, Box 368, no. 54.
39. S. Zurlinden, *Der Weltkrieg*, vol. 2 (Zürich: Art. Institut O. Füssli, 1918), pp. 639–40. See also Wolfdieter Bihl, *Die Kaukasus—Politik der Mittelmächte*, Part I (Vienna: Hermann Bohlaus, 1975), p. 172.
40. Bonn, AA, Türkei, 183/45, A33457. See also K 174, file 53.
41. Toynbee, *The Treatment*, p. 103.
42. "Ov e Ali Ihsan" (Who Is Ali Ihsan?), *Zhogovourtee Tzain*, March 10, 1919. The unnamed author was a surviving Armenian officer of the 51st Division.
43. Arnold Toynbee, *Armenian Atrocities, The Murder of a Nation*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1915), pp. 81–82.
44. Morgenthau, *Ambassador*, pp.302–03. See also, Rafael de Nogales, *Four Years Beneath the Crescent*, (New York: Scribner's, 1916), pp. 141, 150. He was a Venezuelan volunteer officer who fought alongside the Turks during the war and had many conversations with the military executioners. He wrote about the murder of 1,300–1,500 Armenian soldiers by a Turkish regiment commanded by Mehmed Asim.
45. The details of the court martial, including General Vehib's proclamation to his men, can be found in *Ariamard*, (December 10, 1918). Three years after the court martial, Vehib charged the Ittihad leadership and its provincial officials with premeditated murder. His affidavit to the court was read in its entirety at the Trabzon trial (March 29, 1919), and parts

of it were incorporated into: the key indictment, *Takvimi Vekayi*, no. 3540, May 5, 1919, p.7; the Harput verdict, *Takvimi Vekayi*, no. 3771, February 9, 1919, p.1; and was serialized in *Le Courrier de Turquie*, April 1 and 2, 1919. A copy of the full text in the original Turkish is in the Jerusalem Patriarchate Archive, archive series 17, file H (pronounced ho), documents 171–82.

46. Bil, "Umumi Harpte," *Vakit*, installment no. 69 (see n. 33). See also Bishop Kenel Kalemkiarian, "Vehib Paşa Gu Gakhe Chartarar Hariurabedu" (Vehib Paşa Hangs the Massacrer Captain), *Zhamanag*, March 10/23, 1919.

47. Morgenthau, *Ambassador*, pp. 295–96.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 295.

49. Türkei 183/39, A28584. Secret Report No. 23, with 5 enclosures.

50. War Minister and Ittihad chieftain Enver is reported to have told Morgenthau, "It is our own experience with revolutions which makes us fear the Armenians. If two hundred Turks could overturn the Government, then a few hundred bright, educated Armenians could do the same thing." Morgenthau, *Ambassador*, p. 347.

51. *Badmoutium Hunchakian Kousaktzoutian* (History of the Hunchak Party), vol. 3 (1919), ed. H. Aramiantz, pp. 30–31; vol. 1, ed. Central Committee for Preparing the History of the Hunchak Party, (Beirut: Shirag, 1962), pp. 364–68.

52. The original text in Ottoman script is in *Ermeni Komitelerinin Amal ve Harekâtı İhtilaliyesi İlânı Meşrutiyetinden Evvel ve Sonra* (The Aims and Revolutionary Acts of the Armenian Committees, before and after the Proclamation of the Constitutional Government). The same text is available in Latin letters and modified contemporary Turkish in Abdullah Yaman, *Ermeni meselesi ve Türkiye* (The Armenian Question and Turkey) (Istanbul: Otag Publication, Document Series no. 2, 1973). The first French translation appeared in Hungary in 1917 as, "Verité sur le mouvement revolutionnaire arménien et les mesures gouvernementales," *Revue de Hongrie* (June 15, 1917).

53. Bonn, AA, Türkei 183/36, A 14801.

54. G. Kapigian, *Yegernabadoum Sepasdiyo* (The History of the Genocide in Sivas) (Boston: Harienik, 1924), pp. 49–52. See also Sebouh Agounee, *Million Mu Hayerou Chartee Badmoutiunu* (The Story of the Massacre of One Million Armenians) (Constantinople: Asadourian, 1920), pp. 77–78.

55. *Renaissance*, April 8, 1919.

56. *Takvimi Vekayi*, no. 3617, p.2. See also *ibid.*, no. 3772, p.4.

57. *Talat Paşanın Hatıraları* (The Memoirs of Talat Paşa), E. Bolayir, ed., (Istanbul: Güven, 1946), pp. 15, 72, 120.

58. Bonn, AA, Türkei 183/39, A 28584, "Secret Report" no. 23.

59. *Ibid.*, 183/40, A 35046.

60. *Ibid.*, 183/41, A 2888.

61. Ibid., 183/45, A 31505, Report no. 170.
62. Ibid., 183/54, A 39244. See also Dr. Harry Stürmer, *Two Years in Constantinople*, trans. from the German by E. Allen and the author, (New York: G. H. Doran, 1917), pp. 48–49, for a similar assessment of the official Turkish excuses for the murder of the Armenians.
63. Morgenthau, *Ambassador*, p. 206.
64. Stürmer, *Two Years*, p. 51. See also the German original, *Zwei Kriegsjahre in Konstantinopel* (Lausanne: Payot, 1917), p. 42. His comments on his initial “Turkophile” attitudes are on p. 43 in German and p. 50 in English.
65. *Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv*, Munich, Kriegsarchiv Department, MKr 13841, ad 27.
66. Ahmed Refik (Altınay), *İki Komite, İki Kıtıl* (Two Committees, Two Massacres), (Istanbul: İslam ve Askeri Publishers, 1335 [1919]), p. 40.
67. Governor Celal said this to Consul Rössler, November 16, 1915. Bonn, AA, Türkei, 183/40, A 33915.
68. Jerusalem Armenian Patriarchate Archive, Series 21, File M, nos. 519–20. See also Pomiankowski, *Der Zusammenbruch*, p. 160.
69. İbrahim Arvas, “Tarihi Hakikatler, Eski Van Mebusu İbrahim Arvasın Hatıraları,” *Yeni İstiklal*, April 21, 1965, no. 193.
70. Bonn, AA, Türkei 183/45, A 33457, and K 174, file 53, Munich, December 4, 1916.