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95th ANNIVERSARY

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The Armenian Weekly

APRIL 2010



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From Democracy to Justice

BY KHATCHIG MOURADIAN

On April 24–25, I gave a commemoration lecture in Istanbul and then spoke at a conference in Ankara on the Armenian Genocide and its consequences. Speaking to an audience of predominantly Turkish intellectuals and activists during both events, I emphasized the importance of the work they are doing—right in the heart of denial—to create awareness of the Armenian Genocide.

In our critique of the discourse of progressive intellectuals in Turkey, as we sit in the comfort of our offices and homes and community centers in the diaspora, we sometimes forget the circumstances in which they are saying what they are saying, and the kind of audience they are “trying to convert.”

Which is why it was important for me to go Turkey and speak there. This was not a one-time event to make a point, however. I will do it again and again. As I spoke in Istanbul and Ankara, I started by saying that even when I make my arguments in Turkey, I am nowhere near as vulnerable to the pressures and threats as they are. After all, I am a tourist—I say what I want and leave the country. I do not need to live every day with the consequences of my words.



Scenes from commemoration events in Istanbul on April 24, 2010.

These consequences do not make the issue of intellectual responsibility any less important, however. Intellectual responsibility is crucial when talking about the Armenian Genocide in Turkey not *despite* the pressures, but exactly *because* of them. Regardless of

what tactics progressive intellectuals use to generate a healthy discussion in Turkey, care should be taken to not get carried away by the tactics (generally based on concessions) and forget the goal.

One such issue is the framing of 1915 as a matter of democracy and freedom of speech in Turkey today. This is, of course, a good way of engaging otherwise uninterested people in the struggle of memory against amnesia and denial in Turkey. But the Armenian Genocide is first and foremost an issue of justice. An entire nation was not uprooted, murdered, and dispossessed so that 100 years later, those events are used to bring democracy and freedom of speech to Turkey.

The argument I repeatedly made in Turkey on April 24–25 was: Yes, we *should* be invested in defending democracy and freedom of speech in Turkey. But not at the expense of justice. □



Contributors



Seda Altug studied Economics at Bogazici University. She received her Masters degree from the History department of the same university. Her MA thesis is titled “Between Colonial and National Dominations: Antioch under the French Mandate (1920–1939).” She is currently a doctoral candidate at Utrecht University in

Oriental Studies department. Her dissertation is titled “Veiled sectarianism: Community, land and violence in the memories of the genocide, border and the French mandate in Syrian Jazira (1915–1939).” Her research interests include state-society and intercommunal relations in French Syria, and border and politics of memory in present-day Syria.

Gulisor Akkum is a journalist based in Diyarbakir. She received her sociology degree in 2003 from Dicle University in Diyarbakir. She contributes regularly to the newspaper Gunluk.



Cristina Andriani is a Ph.D. student in the psychology of genocide at Clark University in Worcester, Mass. Her research interests are in the mutual impact of Holocaust trauma and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on Jewish-Israeli understanding and experience of past and present. Two key questions she seeks to answer are: How

does past Holocaust trauma affect Jewish-Israelis’ current understanding and experience of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict? And, how does the experience of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict affect Jewish-Israeli Holocaust memory? Recent publications include Chaitin, J., Awaad, S., and Andriani, C. (2009) “Belonging to the conflict: collective identities among Israeli and Palestinian emigres to the U.S.” in *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture*; and Andriani, C. and Manning, J. (in press) “‘Negotiating With the Dead’: On the Past of Auschwitz and the Present of Oswiecim” in *Psychology & Society*.

Mujgan Arpat is a photographer of German-Turkish parentage whose photographs have been published in various magazines and newspapers in Germany and the web sites of a number of news agencies. An exhibition of her photographs was organized in Berlin under the title “Racism in Germany.” Her photographs have also been published in various dailies and magazines in Turkey such as Gundem, Birgun, Postespress, Agos and Amargi. She is one of the photographers whose work has been featured in the album “We are all Hrant Dink,” published after the assassination of Dink. She currently works at a German TV channel as a reporter in Istanbul. Her exhibition, titled “Gavur Mahallesi: Gidenler, Kalanlar” (The Givour



Neighborhood: Those who left and those who stayed) about the old Armenian quarter Hancepek in Diyarbakir was held both in Istanbul and in Diyarbakir in 2008.

Growing up on the Nez Perce Indian Reservation, **Mikal Brotnov** is a first-generation college graduate. Overcoming personal obstacles, including self-marginalization, inspired Brotnov



to focus his academic work on two marginalized groups: Gentile victims of the Holocaust and Native Americans. He is currently a research assistant for Professor Debórah Dwork at Clark University in Worcester, Mass., creating digital images of 3,000 original letters written by children and their parents separated during the Holocaust. Brotnov’s photographic work is anthropomorphic and reflects his own unique ethnographical background. His work has been published in trade magazines and most recently in *Flight from the Reich*, published by W.W. Norton & Co. in April 2009. His current exhibition “Resistance through Identity in Nimiipuu Country” is on view at Clark University until April 2011.



Ayda Erbal is writing her dissertation in the department of politics at New York University. She teaches two advanced undergraduate classes, “International Politics of the Middle East” and “Democracy and Dictatorship,” as adjunct professor of politics. Her work focuses on the politics of changing historiographies in Turkey and

Israel. She is interested in democratic theory, democratic deliberation, the politics of “post-nationalist” historiographies in transitional settings, and the politics of apology. She is a published short-story writer and worked as a columnist for the Turkish-Armenian newspaper Agos from 2000-03. Erbal is also the lead singer and second percussionist of the polyglot Middle-Eastern band NOUR (www.myspace.com/nourmusic).

Ayşe Gunaysu is a professional translator, human rights advocate, and feminist. She has been a member of the Committee Against Racism and Discrimination of the Human Rights Association of Turkey (Istanbul branch) since 1995, and was a columnist in a pro-Kurdish daily from 2005-07. She writes a biweekly column, titled “Letters from Istanbul,” for the Armenian Weekly.



Hamasdegh (Hambardzoum Kelenian) was born in 1895 in Perjench village, in Western Armenia’s Kharpert region. He attended the local school and received his higher education at the college in the city of Mezireh. In 1913, after spending a year teaching in his local village, he traveled to the United States to join his father. He spent his exile life in Boston, and only once

traveled to Europe. Yet, the 10-12 years he lived in Perjench remained alive in his imagination, and village life was a recurring theme in his work. Considered one of the greatest writers of the Armenian Diaspora, Hamasdegh has left behind literary masterpieces that link the Armenian Diaspora to its ancestral lands. In 1917, Hamasdegh submitted his first poems to the Hairenik Daily, which he referred to as his “little Armenia.” His first story appeared in the monthly *The Motherland* in 1921, and his first collection of stories, *The Village*, was published in Boston in 1924. Among his best known works are *The White Horseman*, a novel, and *Nazar the Brave and 13 stories*. He died in 1966.



Marc A. Mamigonian is the Director of Academic Affairs of the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR). He is the editor of the publications *Rethinking Armenian Studies* (2003) and *The Armenians of New England* (2004) and is the author or co-author of several scholarly articles on the writings of James Joyce.

Khatchig Mouradian is a journalist, writer and translator. He was an editor of the Lebanese-Armenian *Aztg Daily* from 2000 to 2007, when he moved to Boston and became the editor of the *Armenian Weekly*. He is a PhD student in Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University. His articles, interviews and poems have appeared in publications worldwide. Recent publications include “From Yeghern To Genocide: Armenian Newspapers, Raphael Lemkin, And The Road To The UN Genocide Convention,” (*Haigazian Armenological Review*, Vol. 29, 2009). Mouradian has lectured extensively and participated in conferences in Armenia, Turkey, Cyprus, Lebanon, Syria, Austria, Switzerland, Norway and the U.S. He has presented papers on genocide and the media at several academic conferences such as the 5th and 6th Workshops on Armenian-Turkish Scholarship, held at NYU in 2006 and at the Graduate Institute in Geneva in 2008; the 2009 International Conference on Genocide and International Law at Haigazian University in Beirut, the 2009 MESA conference in Boston, Mass.; and the 2010 conference on the state of the art of Armenian Genocide at Clark University in Worcester, Mass.



Tatul Sonentz-Papazian Tatul Sonentz-Papazian is a former editor of the *Armenian Review* and director of the ARF and First Republic of Armenia Archives, Watertown, Mass. He has been a contributor to the *Armenian Weekly* for over fifty years. Presently he directs the Publications Department of the Armenian Relief Society.

Elyse Semerdjian is Associate Professor of Islamic World and Middle Eastern History at Whitman College. She received her Ph.D. from Georgetown University in 2003 and is a two-time Fulbright award recipient. Her research concentrates on the history of Ottoman Aleppo, with particular attention to gender and marginality, and has resulted in the publication of *“Off the Straight Path”: Illicit Sex, Law and Community in Ottoman Aleppo* (Syracuse University Press, 2008). She is currently writing a social history of Aleppo’s Armenian community from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.



Henry C. Theriault earned his Ph.D. in Philosophy in 1999 from the University of Massachusetts, with a specialization in social and political philosophy. He is currently Professor of Philosophy at Worcester State College, where he has taught since 1998. Since 2007, he has served as co-editor-in-chief of the peer-reviewed journal *Genocide Studies and Prevention*. His research focuses on philosophical approaches to genocide issues. His research focuses on philosophical approaches to genocide, especially genocide denial and critical thinking and evidence standards, long-term justice, ethical analyses of perpetrator motivations, and the role of violence against women in genocide. His publications include “Rousseau, Plato, and Western Philosophy’s Anti-Genocidal Strain,” in *Metacide: Genocide in the Pursuit of Excellence*, edited by James R. Watson and Erik M. Vogt (Rodopi, forthcoming); “The Albright-Cohen Report: From Realpolitik Fantasy to Realist Ethics,” *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 4:2 (August 2009); and “Genocide, Denial, and Domination: Armenian-Turkish Relations From Conflict Resolution to Just Transformation,” *National University of Rwanda Centre for Conflict Management Journal*, (April 2009).

Ugur Umit Ungor is a postdoctoral research fellow at the Centre for War Studies, University College Dublin. He was born in 1980 and studied sociology and history at the Universities of Groningen, Utrecht, Toronto, and Amsterdam. His main area of interest is the historical sociology of mass violence and nationalism in the modern world. He has published on genocide, in general, and on the Rwandan and Armenian genocides, in particular. He finished his Ph.D., titled “Young Turk Social Engineering: Genocide, Nationalism, and Memory in Eastern Turkey, 1913–1950” at the department of history of the University of Amsterdam.



FOR THE RECORD

A Quiet Place Along the Khabour

Rescue and Survival in 'the Abattoir of Shaddadeh'

By Elyse Semerdjian



Sa'ad As'ad overlooks the cave he has guided so many Armenians to over the years.



he road to Der Zor—from Bab, Munbij, Meskene, Raqqa—is well documented in the memoirs of Armenian Genocide survivors and foreign eyewitness accounts. However, it wasn't enough to arrive in Der Zor alive; deportees were driven to march further north along the Khabour River to a place where gendarmes thought no one would hear their cries for help. A letter from Jesse B. Jackson, the American consul of Aleppo, discussed the deportations north of the desert city as they began in June 1916, when Zeki Bey was appointed Ottoman governor, replacing his more lenient predecessor. According to Jackson, the deportations were systematic; Armenians were deported from the city according to their place of origin. "They were told that they would be conducted to certain villages on the Khabour River, which empties into the Euphrates below Deir, and were sent off under strong escorts of armed gendarmes. Some arrived at small villages on the Khabour, but the greater part were taken only hours from Deir al-Zor, where they were set upon by bands of Turkish, Circassian and Kurdish exconvicts that had been liberated from prisons and taken there for that purpose. The most horrible butcheries imaginable occurred, the facts of which were related to me by a few survivors who miraculously escaped and who were given shelter by friendly Arabs and later returned to Aleppo after great hardships."¹ Jackson recounts a period of intensified massacre in the summer of 1916 along the Khabour River. His account, when paired with those told by local descendants of survivors, indicates that buried under the lands north of Der Zor lay untold stories to be unearthed.²

My first trip to Der Zor was on April 24, 2000, when I attended the genocide commemorations along with other Armenians. When the ceremonies subsided I made my first pilgrimage into the desert. My only geographical reference guide was a book I had purchased in Aleppo in 1994 by Robert Jebejian, a noted Aleppan doctor, who had documented the sites of the deportations and mass murders with the help of photographer Hagop Krikorian. His since out-of-publication *Routes and Centers of Annihilation of Armenian Deportees* made reference to Mergada, the church that sits upon a mass burial site about 88 km. north of Der Zor along the road to Hasakeh. From there, I had no idea how to get to the sites in the desert that I had seen in the book and had read about in survivor accounts. I did have faith that locals would guide me to the right place because since arriving to Der Zor people were forthcoming about discussing their Armenian grandmothers (called *hababah* in the local dialect). I hopped aboard a bus headed for Hasakeh, where I started a conversation with a young man returning home after serving in the Syrian military. He told me that his home town, Shaddadeh, was where I needed to go to see the caves and meet a wise man, referred to as "the *shaykh*," who knew a lot about Armenians and could help me.

From the main highway, we walked about two miles to reach the end of town. I must add that the young soldier passed by his own home—full of relatives ready to celebrate the end of his mandatory military service—in order to introduce me to the man who would help me find my way further into the desert. Even in April, the two-mile trek in the sun was exasperating. Yervant Odian, in his book *Accursed Years: My Exile and Return from Der Zor, 1914–1919*, describes his deportation not far from Shaddadeh and how a fellow deportee taught him to suck on a stone to sate his thirst.³ As my dependency on the bottle of water I carried grew, I imagined what it would be like with no water in April. Experiencing the desert in April only emphasizes that the

treasure: grandmother Khanimeh's bracelets

survivors who made it this far on foot had superhuman physiology, as the body naturally desires only to shut down when the sun beats down on it like a sledgehammer.

As we approached the end of the long street that cuts through Shaddadeh, a striking, grey-eyed *shaykh*, whose real name is Sa'ad Hammad al-As'ad, greeted me in front of his home on the edge of town. His first words to me were, "Are you Aintapli?" I nearly fainted because the man addressing me was wearing a white *abaya* over his head, a traditional white *jalabiya*, and was clearly not Armenian. Or was he? I asked him how he knew I was Aintapli. He informed me that many of the Armenians who had come to see him hailed from Aintap. He said that most of the people who passed by this town during the genocide were deported from there; he pointed to the back of his house as if noting a pathway. Then, he told me that his own grandmother was from Aintap and was deported only to be rescued in Shaddadeh. He invited me inside for an afternoon of enlightenment that I will never forget.

Inside the house, Sa'ad sat in his living room ringed with elegant green cushions and armrests as his young daughters quickly served us never-ending cups of tea. There he told me his story. His grandmother was an Armenian deportee from Aintap named



Sa'ad and his mother Zahaya at their home in Shaddadeh; Below: The site of rescue, Tel Shaddadeh, at sunset;

Khanimeh. He did not know her family name but was told that her father held an important position in the town as a *mukhtar* (neighborhood representative) in their city of origin. She and other small girls were brought by gendarmes to a small hill called Tel Shaddadeh in the village of Shaddadeh, which lies just outside a more recently developed town by the same name. The gendarmes ordered the chief of the district (*mudir al-nahiya*) to detain these girls until they came back for them. This chief was Sa'ad's great uncle, Khatab 'Abdallah al-Fadhl, who hailed from a notable family of the Jabour tribe. In fact, this position of district chief had

been held previously by Khatab's brother 'Ali, the narrator's grandfather at one time. According to the grandfather's account, when the gendarme left, Khatab, knowing that these girls were destined for the killing fields outside of Shaddadeh, informed his family and the surrounding residents of the ominous future awaiting the girls. The village quickly hid as many as they could among the local families. It was only later, in 2008, that I would visit the actual site of rescue, the mound called Tel Shaddadeh, where three of Sa'ad's male relatives rescued Armenian girls from this spot; one of the rescuers, 'Ali, would later marry Khanimeh.

Although Sa'ad wasn't clear on the date of this event, his family's story matches survivor narratives like that of Dikran Berberian, who was deported from Aintap to the desert near Shaddadeh. "From the banks of the Khabour, we saw drifting a hundred corpses attached to one another at the arm, some of which were dismembered. These corpses were the last traces of victims of the Shaddadeh massacre."⁴ Thus, Berberian referred to this quiet place as the "abattoir [sic]

Sa'ad As'ad overlooks
a cave outside
Shaddadeh.

of Shaddadeh." Sa'ad's account of his grandmother's rescue in the desert complements Berberian's, as he emphasized how young the girls rescued on the hill were: very young and far from puberty. Berberian describes "girls less than ten years old thrown into the Khabour."⁵ Sa'ad was told by his grandfather that the girls from Tel Shaddadeh were destined for the caves in the desert; this was confirmed later when he found their dead bodies in a ditch nearby a cave. His grandfather 'Ali took him into the desert, taught him where this cave and its ditch were located, and thereby preserved the family story for nearly a century.

Survivor accounts detail that girls were hidden in homes by Arabs living in the deserts around Der Zor. In fact, Odian writes that Armenian survivors would walk by Arab homes and hear women having conversations with one another in Armenian. Sometimes the women would say a few words out the window if they heard Armenian being spoken in the streets.⁶ It is impossible to know the details of how Sa'ad's grandmother came to marry his grandfather. According to Sa'ad, his grandmother was not married to his grandfather right away as she was too young to





A map of Der Zor
(prepared by George
Aghjayan).

marry when she was rescued. Some survivor accounts say that these girls were reared only later to marry male

family members; this seems to match Khanimeh's being married to a clansman once she reached maturity. Sa'ad described the way his grandmother disguised herself among the local population by tattooing her face traditionally like the Bedouin, yet she lived in fear of being discovered once again by Turkish officials.

In our many conversations, it was not clear whether or not Khanimeh was in a single or plural marriage. Sa'ad joked in front of his wife that "Aintap men only take one wife," as he himself has not married more than one wife despite his wealth and status. But I did learn that his own father had multiple wives when I visited his mother, Zahaya, the surviving daughter of his Armenian grandmother in 2008.

In describing Zahaya, I am at a loss of words. Like her son, she is strikingly beautiful despite her advanced years and illness. She is unable to walk, but instead sits reclined on a bed with blankets on her lap. Her beautiful blue-grey eyes look even more radiant against the whiteness of her hair and the paleness of her skin. This is in contrast to many of her children and grandchildren, whose faces are bronze and even reddish in complexion as if sun kissed. I felt emotional when I met her, and she was confused by that. I had just finished an entire trek through the desert with photojournalist Kathryn Cook from Aleppo to Shaddadeh, and the village near Tel Shaddadeh was really the climax of this journey; knowing that a few miles from there was the cave where the final massacre took place was overwhelming. My emotions took

over when I heard her daughter say, "Why are they here? Why is this so important to them?" I realized that despite Sa'ad's efforts to preserve his family history, its significance was lost on some members of the family.

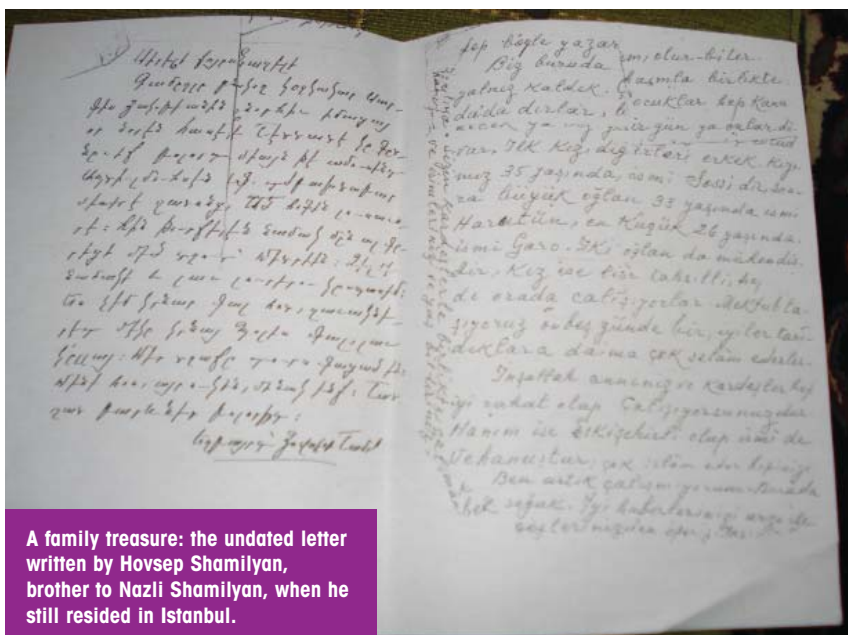
I asked Zahaya about her mother and what she could tell us about her rescue on the hill that was clearly visible from the family home, the home that belonged to her mother's rescuer. She had little to say, noting that her mother never told her much about the rescue in the desert. When she was asked about her tattoos, she spoke more readily. Her tattoos were shaped like a cross along her chin and when asked if there were other tattoos, Zahaya lifted her robe to show us that she had cross-shaped tattoos on each thigh. "My mother did it," she said. Even though I was not able to get much information about her mother, the tattoos clearly marked Zahaya as belonging to an Armenian Christian mother who through traumatic circumstances was forced into a new environment where she lived in concealment.

Tel Shaddadeh keeps telling stories. The disappearing Khabour River lies immediately next to it. During Odian's survival in the desert, he drank from this river to quench his thirst. Now there are only a few puddles left and they happen to be on the neighbor's side of the bend.⁷ In order to continue cultivating, the neighbor had run a loud generator to pump the existing water out of the puddles to water his crops, while members of the al-As'ad clan looked on helplessly. There continues to be no planting on their land due to the shortage of irrigation water.

Although Sa'ad told his story first, his wife Ghazaleh's story was just as remarkable. It is important to note that her grandfa-



Family treasure:
grandmother
Khanimeh's bracelets



A family treasure: the undated letter
written by Hovsep Shamilyan,
brother to Nazli Shamilyan, when he
still resided in Istanbul.

ther, 'Abd al-Muhsan al-Sa'ud al-Fadhl, was a cousin to the two al-As'ad brothers mentioned earlier and married one of the surviving girls from Tel Shaddadeh. Ghazaleh remembered her Armenian grandmother clearly, even knew her full Armenian name—Nazli Hovsep Shamilyan—and believes was originally from Mardin. Her grandmother clearly maintained her Armenian heritage throughout her life by informing her grandchildren of her real name rather than assuming a Muslim name. Ghazaleh remembers that her grandmother tried to teach her and the other children Armenian, and she still remembers some

of the Armenian names for parts of the body that she learned growing up. Her grandmother also read an Armenian Bible quite often, and since her death, this Bible has become a major point of contention among the grandchildren, as they have disputed over who gets to keep it. Ghazaleh claims that the Bible is a thousand years old, making it even more precious to her. During one visit, she began calling relatives to see if she could get the Bible to show it to me. I found Nazili's story remarkable as she really worked to maintain her own identity and introduce it to her grandchildren.

Ghazaleh, unlike Sa'ad, had even more clues about her heritage, as she once received a letter written in three languages—Arabic, Turkish, and Armenian—from her relatives who lived in Istanbul. She allowed me to photograph this undated letter, which included an address in Kadikoy, Istanbul, and was signed by Hovsep Shamilyan, Nazili's brother. It was a profound piece of evidence linking Ghazaleh to the Armenian side of her family tree. This letter, written by a

brother to his long-lost sister, is precious to her as she still hopes to find her Shamilyan relatives, whom she believes have since moved to Montreal, Canada. She has asked me to contact them, and I have tried to find them to no avail. I would love to fulfill her dream by finding the Shamilyans, if only to repay the family's endless generosity they have shown me though out the years.

On one of my more recent trips to Shaddadeh in 2007, we revisited the caves in the desert. Sa'ad had trouble finding his way to the cave this time, in part due to a debilitating struggle with diabetes; he and Ghazaleh both have diabetes and suspect that it may be something they inherited from their Armenian grandmothers. On this trip, Sa'ad's vision was so poor that we could not find the cave he had taken me to on previous visits. There was a strange irony in the scene of a nearly blind man walking through the desert in search of a cave he had guided so

many Armenian pilgrims to over the years. He has been the guide in this morbid tourism for decades, to a historical site that's unprotected, unpreserved, and somewhat unrecorded except in memories. I realized this may be one of our last trips to the site since Ghazaleh is increasingly protective of his health (rightly so as a scrape on his foot could take months to heal with his diabetes). As I began to fear that his knowledge of this tract of desert would be lost, a soldier stationed in a nearby post pointed us in the right direction. He also informed us that technically we weren't supposed to be trespassing on this land because of the military outpost

or oil interests in the area. Yet, the fact that the cave is common knowledge to the locals reassured me that the memories of this place will never be forgotten by the Arabs of the desert, who in many cases carry with them both the stories of their grandmothers and their rescuers.

Sa'ad is the most passionate of his fellow siblings about his Armenian heritage, and his wife is equally passionate. They are devout Muslims, but also embrace their Armenian ancestry and take pride in it. Sa'ad does what he can to preserve the memory of the event that shaped his family by constantly welcoming Armenian pilgrims into his home and serving as their guide into the desert behind his home. His dream is to go to Armenia and visit the genocide memorial outside of Yerevan; he has expressed this wish to me almost every time I have seen him, and we talk to each other often. Although he is certainly Arab and Muslim, he sees himself as connected to the Armenian people in a very profound way, through a set of memories passed onto him by his grandparents—memories shared by all descendants of the survivors. □

ENDNOTES

1. *United States Official Documents on the Armenian Genocide*, vol. 1, ed. A. Sarafian, 1993, pp. 148–149.
2. Hilmar Kaiser, *At the Crossroads of Der Zor: Death, Survival, and Humanitarian Resistance in Aleppo, 1915–1917* (Reading, UK: Taderon Press, 2002), pp. 66, 68.
3. Yervant Odian, *Accursed Years: My Exile and Return from Der Zor, 1914–1919*, trans. Ara Stepan Melkonian, intro. Krikor Beledian (London: Gomidas, 2009), p. 154.
4. Dikran Berberian, “Le Massacre de Deir-Zor,” in A. Andonian, *Matériaux pour l'histoire du génocide*, pp. 12–15. The English is my translation, while the original French text is posted on www.imprecipitable.fr/rhac/tome2/p2t51.
5. *ibid.*
6. Odian, 213.
7. *ibid.*, 168.

A river used to run through it: the disappearing Khabour River





FOR THE RECORD

Journey w

Translated from Armenian by Tatul Sonentz

Once, many, many years ago (these words sound like the start of a fable...), in 1929, I went on a trip to become more familiar with our people's sadness. Those were the years that the deportees of 1915, with heroic effort, enduring a thousand and one torments, had made it to some foreign shore where they could keep their collective existence and identity going.

I saw the hovels of Marseille, Aleppo, Lebanon. People reaching Jerusalem were a bit luckier settling in the Armenian Monastery.

All of them, all, were destitute and sad with a dust-colored sadness. If there was still something alive in them, it was their native spirit, awake as their eyes and nerves.

On their faces lingered the gray wisdom of suffering, like the ancient stones of our thousand-year-old monasteries.

Sadness always has its moments of introspection, and I wanted to bond with our people's grief, to make it part of my body and consciousness. I wanted to go from Lebanon to Der Zor—that immense graveyard of our martyrs...

The owner and driver of the car was a young Armenian man, thin, slight, with a

quiet melancholy in his features, especially in his Armenian eyes. He had not only witnessed the horrors of Der Zor, he had lived and been physically part of the daily turmoil and temper of the place.

His name was Manas. I also recall his vivid voice and sad smile. With all that, Manas was audacious—he had covered all the roads we were traveling on that day. There wasn't a rock, a field of thorn-bushes, a hill, a path that did not have its dreadful tale for Manas.

"Right there, near the bridge, the bandits assaulted skeletal creatures, while on the slope of that hill, the corpses had become the share of vultures and crawling beasts. In those days, monstrous animals, never seen before, had appeared, no one knows from where..."

Manas showed me a spot, where his mother had collapsed, unable to walk anymore.

"Strangely enough, I saw that at the last moments of her life, my mother was calm, and seemingly content that she was dying; she was particularly happy, that she had trusted me to a woman with whom they had become sisters in adversity. She too, had lost everything... children, husband. With great courage, she took me all the way to Aleppo, and became a mother to me."

With similar stories, we continued on our dusty, rocky road to the Euphrates River. On one of its banks was the city of Der Zor, and on the other started and expanded the vast desert of Jezireh, with a copper-colored, red hot sun and limitless sand, where, in a very short while, 40,000 Armenians had succumbed en masse and melded with the sands.

Manas kept telling how, in those days, the Turks of that alien desert would not allow these 40,000 Armenians, huddled together in stark terror, to reach Der Zor on the other bank of the Euphrates, to the outskirts of habitations and shelter.

There were still decayed wooden planks sticking out of the banks of the river. They were erected there to give shade in the scorching sun. Some writings in pencil on those planks were yet to vanish: "I had 20 gold coins I acquired 20 loaves of bread." There were words of curses and prayers, their significance still preserved on those crumbling planks.

It was in the immensity of that desert, that I saw bleached bones and shattered skeletons, ribs ripped from spinal columns, knee caps and skulls, all of it half buried in the sand. The Euphrates, cresting and flooding once in a while, had performed that interment under a cool, bone-colored

This page is sponsored by Richard and Nora Sarajian (Chestnut Ridge, NY)

With a SKULL

by hamasdegh

moon. That flooding had formed layers, and in between those strata stuck out countless limbs and skulls, large and small skulls. It was from one of these sandy crevices that I removed, with both hands, a heavy, sand-filled skull, with awe and reverence, as a celebrant priest would raise the chalice with both hands during Mass.

The shiny pallor of the skull had almost acquired the color of ivory in the dry sand. Its sturdy array of teeth was powerful and expressive as a curse, and the two cave-like eye cavities—where the eternal unknown seemed to start—conjured the image of ruined Armenian monasteries, with crumbling walls crusted with the ageless moss of tradition...

We became travel companions, the skull and I. Intimate friends sharing stories of green fields and desert days, me and the skull. The story of that journey is yet to be written.

If only I knew the name of that skull... In my agitated imagination, names paraded in single file and became alive, growing tall with an intense countenance. I could even hear their voices, powerful and wise as silence.

Mahtesi Arutin? Perhaps from Erzerum, tall and stately, with bushy eyebrows, heavy moustache, and clear eyes. He is wearing a coarse woolen *shalvar*, a gold

watch chain across his Lahore shawl belt. Mahtesi Arutin was a merchant and deacon of his church. He was expecting bales of merchandise to arrive via the Black Sea, when the Turkish mob attacked his big store and large house on nightfall. They looted and burned, then seized and delivered him and his spouse to the caravan gathered at the cemetery. They abducted his two lovely daughters in whom beauty bloomed like a flower. They had been so pampered and nurtured in the warmth of oriental rugs and plush pillows.

Makar Varzhapet? That day, the blackboard of the advanced students' class was covered with Anania Shirakatsi's equations, while the alert eyes of the students reflected a sadness; there were troubling rumors: A caravan of tormented Armenians had been seen passing on the highway skirting the town, a caravan of shivering dogs... "Tomorrow's assignment is Lazar Pharpetsi," had said Makar Varzhapet, restraining the distress in his voice.

The next day, neither the teacher nor the students were back.

Ter Tatik? Incense lingered in his voice and breath. The goodness of Holy Chrism was in his eyes as he raised his arms to the heavens in prayer. It was Sunday and Mass was being celebrated. A heavy, silver-

threaded cape and a silk miter, around which were silver embroidered renderings of the 12 Apostles. The angel-voiced children's choir of acolytes was singing.

People were slowly coming out of the church.

"Father! Father!" yelled the people in vain.

White-robed children of the acolyte choir scattered like doves. From the upper road of the surrounding fields, Kurds and Turks were entering the village armed with clubs and sabers.

The church was now empty just like that skull, while the priest continued his celebration of Mass... and I heard the skull's incantations of the Holy Mass.

If only I knew the name of that skull...

The skull was there, on the table, sometimes in a dim candlelight. The skull pondered, the skull lived. It seemed to breathe and to speak in silent wisdom. There were still dreams in it, despite the enemy's wish to fill it with sand. And it waited, as all the martyrs of 1915 waited for the mighty trumpet of Haik, the heroic bowman, calling them to gather their bones, to stand up, form ranks as mighty armies and reclaim their land, their monasteries, schools, their green fields and the rising smokes at the dawn of Navasard. □

The Armenian Genocide, Sheikh Said Revolt, *and* Armenians in Syrian Jazira¹

By Seda Altug

We have been witnessing a socio-political process in Turkey where the official state ideology underlying and sustaining the denial of the Armenian Genocide has increasingly started to be questioned at certain levels of Turkish society. Nevertheless, thanks to the official Turkish line and the several ways it informs the Armenian establishment narrative about the genocide, public and private discussions about the annihilation and uprooting of the Armenians revolve around 1915. Not undermining the symbolic significance of that year, 1915 is singled out as the very point where history starts and ends. Similarly, mainstream histories from above tend to homogenize the Armenians as a group and ignore internal socioeconomic, cultural, and linguistic differentiations and conflict. Variations in the form, method, and time that the genocide was executed and experienced, and the underlying local and regional factors, stay as under-explored issues.

The survivors and those who remained—in a world turned totally upside down—are other neglected issues that await scholarly inquiry. Related to this, both the Armenian and Turkish mainstream narratives leave out two other noteworthy forced displacements that occurred immediately after the 1915 genocide and led to the removal of around 90,000 Armenians from their home in Cilicia and south-eastern Anatolia in the early and late 1920's for different places in French-Syria, respectively.

At the time of the Mudros Armistice on Oct. 30, 1918, most Armenian survivors in the Ottoman-Syrian territory still hoped to return to their homeland as soon as the war was over; 120,000-150,000 deportees flew back to Cilicia, which by then had come under French occupation.² Yet these Armenian expectations of return were ruined after the French evacuation of Cilicia in late 1921 and the signing of the Ankara Treaty that finalized the border

between French-Syria and the newly founded Turkish Republic (Oct. 20, 1921). What followed instead was a renewed mass Armenian exodus from Cilicia to Syria and Lebanon.³ The French were followed by tens of thousands of Armenians who had survived the deportations and massacres of World War I. Around 80,000 new refugees arrived in Syria and Lebanon by land or sea and added onto the Armenian deportees from 1915-16, who could not manage to return to Cilicia, and the local Armenians (*al-arman al-qadim*) already living in Syria for centuries, who had entirely escaped mass deportation.⁴ The vast majority of the newcomers settled in Alexandretta, Aleppo, and Beirut.

Historian Richard Hovannisian estimates that by the end of 1925, there were approximately 100,000 refugees in Syria and 50,000 in Lebanon. The mandate authorities estimated that by 1923, approximately 200,000 Armenians had passed through Aleppo.

The second mass exodus, which forms the topic of this article, concerns those Armenians from the rural parts of Diyarbakir, Mardin, Siirt, and Sirnak. Witnessing one of the bloodiest faces of the genocide, there were few deportation caravans from the area and the death rate was higher there than in any other province.⁵ The CUP authorities were successful enough in exploiting the intra- and inter-tribal conflicts between the main Kurdish tribes of the region for their own ends. This fact is also revealed in the survivor memories of the Jaziran Armenians, who were originally from the towns and villages of the Reskotan and Hazakh districts and the Xerzan (Gharzan) valley, such as Biseri/Qubin (today Gercus), Zercil (today

Danali), Farqin (today Silvan), Bolunt (today Bilek), and Khaznamir (today Inpinar).⁶ Bissare Ceto, the chief of the Pencinar tribe, and his brother Cemilo Ceto are remembered as the evil personalities behind the annihilation of Armenian, Kurdish, and Syriac villagers in the region.⁷

The Armenians who were able to survive in their home towns or in neighboring villages until the mid-1920's—thanks to the (selective) protection provided by certain Kurdish lords—were hardly hit by another wave of state violence in 1925, the Sheikh Said Revolt. The ruthless military and social measures of the newly founded Turkish state aiming to suppress the revolt were a harsh blow to the local and tribal networks of protection through which these Armenians survived and sustained their livelihood after the genocide.⁸ Because of the compartmentalization in Turkish, Armenian, and Kurdish historiographies, Sheikh Said Revolt has been singled out as a turning point in Kurdish national history, but its effect on the Armenians needs further research. Based on the oral interviews of Jaziran Armenians, it can be stated that it *was* indeed a decisive historical incident for the Armenians of the mentioned region. Between the years 1925 and 1930, around 10,000 Armenians from the rural parts of Diyarbakir and Mardin had fled towards the south, crossed the still-open Turkish-Syrian border usually together with their Kurdish fellowmen, and found refuge in the north-eastern part of French-Syria, Syrian-Jazira.⁹

ARMENIANS AND FRENCH-JAZIRA

Syrian-Jazira used to be a “no man’s land” primarily reserved for the grazing land of nomadic and semi-nomadic Kurdish and Arab tribes until the beginning of the 20th century. Despite the fact that the Turkish-Syrian border was formally delimited in 1921, the delimitation rarely brought about an immediate formal change on the ground. The region remained a contested zone between French-Syria and Turkey for nearly a decade. As the French were busy suppressing anti-colonial revolts in southern Syria, formal state control and even occupation of the region was suspended. French intelligence and military officers, relief agents, and Dominican missionaries, however, still patrolled the region in the 1926–27 winter and autumn, though semi-independently.¹⁰

The colonial encounter in French-Jazira took place against a backdrop of Christian/Muslim (Kurdish) difference, which the impoverished Armenian refugees brought with them to Syria.

The colonial encounter in French-Jazira took place against a backdrop of Christian/Muslim (Kurdish) difference, which the impoverished Armenian refugees brought with them to Syria. French rule had reshaped and redefined this difference through various social, economic, and administrative policies.

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The settlement project was one of the most unique aspects of the making of French-Jazira. Robert de Caix, one of the most fervent supporters of French mandatory rule in Syria, outlined the intentions of the colonial power—that the High Jazira had to be effectively “colonized” by a Christian population “traditionally loyal” to the French. The region where there is no one but only a dust of nomads had to be “remettre en valeur.”¹¹ Labeled as “Kurdo-Chretiennes” by the French Intelligence Service officers, or as “Kurdo-Armeniennes” in the accounts of the Dominican missionaries, the Jaziran Armenians (together with other Christian refugees) were approached as the “Christian element on whom [the French] can rely in order to counterbalance the Muslim population and make Syria a mixed country.”¹² According to the colonial mindset, peopling the “virgin” Jaziran

land with Christians was the most appropriate solution aimed at forming agricultural labor and opening up the vast uncultivated Jaziran land—with its “*moeurs farouches*” and “*tempérament guerrier*”—to agriculture.

The authorities followed a contradictory agricultural policy towards the multi-ethnic and multi-religious (semi) tribal allegiances of the Armenian refugees. Religion emerged as a key feature in the distribution of land or organization of villages in the countryside. On the one hand, they supported small peasantry and detribalization, but on the other hand, they were anxious of destroying the tribal power structure for both political and economic reasons. More often the “outsiders”—the Kurdish or Armenians refugee peasants—would cultivate the nomadic tribes’ lands and pay a ground rent in return. It was the Armenian sharecroppers who worked on the lands of the Arab Tayy by paying one-fifth of the harvest in return.¹³

The French mandate founded small towns and villages on religious basis. These villages formed the economic background in the emergence of an elite-dominated sectarianism in French-Jazira. The founding of new villages along the border for the settlement of Christian and Kurdish groups, and the appointment of a co-religionist village headman (*mukhtar*), were surely novel phenomena that implied a radical shift in the social and political subjectivities of the local population and in local power relations.¹⁴ Gradually the multi-ethnic and multi-religious rural population dispersed and became new sharecroppers in the lands of the big landowners—the ex-Arab or Kurdish tribal leaders.

The French aspired to build urban centers along the border in order to compensate for the economic loss after the delimitation of the border. Catholics, both Armenian and Syriac, due to their less “ardent” and more “civilized” attitudes, were envisioned as comprising the majority of the urban population. Qamishli is an excellent example of such a colonial construction; founded in 1926 only 1.5 kilometers away from Nusaybin on the Turkish territory, its population rose to approximately 20,000 in 1937.

Trade, which used to be made between former hometowns and north-eastern Syria and Iraq in the pre-genocide world, had started to be replaced by the Jaziran trade, and later by Aleppo-Qamishli trade starting from the early 1930's. Communal networks played an important role in the development of the Aleppo-Qamishli trade. Armenians were pioneers in the flourishing of trade between Aleppo and the Jaziran centers by mobilizing their communal resources. Kurds were also involved in this trade, usually as peasants producing the foodstuffs or raw materials, or as those who gathered and sent them off from Qamishli to Aleppo. The Christians, especially Armenians in the Aleppo case, usually distributed the raw material in Aleppo and the Aleppan manufac-

tarianism in French-Jazira, whose features were to a certain extent inherited by the post-independence Arab nationalist regime, too.

ARMENIAN REFUGEES AND SYRIAN ARABS

The conflict and enmity between the refugees and the Syrians on the arrival of the former, regardless of its origins and manifestations—be it economic, social, or otherwise—are silenced in the mainstream Armenian historiography in Syria. As the early dissidence is excluded, the contested process of integration by the newcomers into their host society has also remained unaddressed. This ahistorical perspective goes hand in hand with the depoliticization of the community throughout the post-independence period in Syria (1946-) and leaves no room for tracing the negotiation and transformations in the political and social subjectivities.¹⁶ Despite the fact that there were no direct confrontations between the Armenian newcomers and the local Syrians in Jazira, as there was hardly a local settled population in the region, the arrival of the post-1925 Armenian refugees (along with other Syriac, Kurdish, and Assyrian

refugee groups in Jazira) caused extreme alarm and anxiety among the Arab nationalists of the inner Syrian cities. While the Arab nationalists' uneasiness over the arrival of Armenian refugees in 1915 and 1921 was expressed within the “harmful strangers vs. outraged Syrians” framework, the new flux of refugees caused extreme alarm. Their settlement in Jazira was considered as “the violation of the sanctity of the Syrian body and national-self,” as stated in the words

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turers in Jazira. Correspondingly, the *khan al-Jazira* in Aleppo had become one of the most active commercial depots in Aleppo.¹⁵

The French intelligence officers in French-Jazira heavily relied on the Christian refugees from Turkey in both the security and administration of the newly founded urban centers. However, the Turkish state regularly sent notes to the French mandate authorities asking them to prevent Armenians from being recruited in the security forces. Several Armenian refugees changed their names to Semitic names in order to escape this ban.

French political, economic, and ideological interests in French-Syria allowed Syrian-Jazira to turn into a microcosm reflecting in reverse the dynamics of Turkey's nation building. Added onto the Armenians and Kurds were Christians belonging to different sects, where the Orthodox Syriacs formed the majority; Jews from Nusaybin; sedentary and semi-nomadic Kurdish tribesmen; and some nomadic Arab tribes. The forced displacements continued for more than two decades until the early 1950's. The effects of the “unequal and segregated colonial modernization” lay the ground for the emergence of an elite-dominated sec-

of the newspaper *Al-cha'ab*, while the refugees were viewed as French “*colons*.”¹⁷ Their arrival in big numbers created the fear (which was well bolstered by the Syrian nationalist press) that more people were on their way to Syria. The newspapers gave fictitious numbers about new “incursions.” The settlement of refugees on Syrian land in Jazira and land distribution to these refugees were viewed as fundamentally unjust and illegitimate acts comparable in essence to the “settlement of Zionist settlers in Palestine.” The nationalist newspapers of the day compared the newcomers to the “Zionist settlers in Palestine” and the French- and League of Nations-sponsored projects of settlement in Jazira as part of a greater project to create an Armenian homeland (*watan kawmi armani*) in the middle of the “Arab homeland.” Unlike in earlier periods, the French mandate rule and “humanitarian aid” of the League of Nations were condemned for being pretexts to the “occupation of the country with the Armenians.” *Al-cha'ab* writes that “the more money is donated to the Armenians by the League of Nations, the more Armenians will flow to Jazira, which will very soon result in turning Jazira into their national homeland.”¹⁸ Anxiety over the

(dis)union of Syrian land, to which French colonial religious and administrative politics contributed greatly, made the Arab nationalists view the refugees' arrival and gradual betterment as "penetration into the Syrian land by building houses thanks to the donations from the western governments, especially Britain." If not in the streets, but in their newspapers, the nationalists protested the current situation of having "to pay the price of the refugees' tragedy (*musiba*) and at the same time suffer under the invading armies."¹⁹

The articles often ended with the demand of stopping *both* the recent Zionist and Armenian migrations to the *bilad sharq al-'arabi* (eastern Arabian lands). Assertive rhetoric that claimed to represent a united and active Arab nation called for a solution involving the earlier immigrants, as well. "Their stay among us will not last long," writes Al-cha'ab in a threatening tone. "Jazira is an Arab Syrian land; the Syrians will not give it away either to the Armenians or the non-Armenians...[The Arabs] would resist with all means possible against the settlement." The Armenians were "warned" that a future life in Syria would be insecure next to the "angry Arab."

"The settlement of the refugees on the Syrian-Arab land" was a frequently seen phrase in the newspapers at the time, usually followed by a description of the role of the "foreign powers" in the "derogation" of Syria, its land and its people. It revealed a nationalist anxiety over the lack of self- or national-agency in making its own historical destiny. Al-cha'ab wrote how "from the time that the Armenians have left their homeland, the doors of *all* the countries have been shut on their face, *except* this country, yet it was the security and peace provided by the French that led them enter here."²⁰ The same article argued that the League of Nations had approached all Western countries, that the French consented and chose "High Jazira" (most probably the French translation of Haute-Djézireh) as a suitable spot.

It was in this controversial atmosphere of agony and exhaustion towards French rule and the contested process of opening up Jaziran land to non-Arab and non-Muslim refugees that Jazira and Jazirans were introduced to the Syrian national body for the first time. It is against this background and its political repercussions in the Syrian public under the French rule that present-day Jazirans remember the past. And it was against this Arab nationalist fervor and an increase in communal clashes that the main Armenian political parties, the Hnchaks and Dashnaks, began to publicly state their good will towards the Arab. An Armenian journal, *Le Liban*, wrote in an Arabic-language article on May 15, 1930 that while "Armenians were bound to come to Syria, they never had the intention to create a national home there. The Armenians indeed have a national homeland but it is under the Soviet yoke. Whenever it is re-opened, they are going to return there."²¹

Similarly, a joint declaration by the Hnchak and Ramgavar Parties stated that "we only have one homeland; that is Armenia. In this hospitable country, our unique effort is to provide the needs of our families and assure the education of our children. We would like to see that the cordial relations between the Arabs and the Armenians are maintained and the misunderstandings that give

with us **USA** why not
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DETROIT AZADAMARD GOMIDE

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traditional division of labor was basically inter-religious between the Kurdish peasants and the Christian peasants; the Armenians worked as small artisans (as blacksmiths, saddlers, weavers, potters, or sharecroppers), while the Kurdish peasants mostly specialized in animal breeding.²⁵ Intimidation, plundering, and massacres, often by the hands of their Kurdish peers and state militias in 1915, inevitably resulted in the erosion of mutual trust and communal coexistence.

French efforts at land distribution, their refugee and urban policies, were all aimed at turning the refugees into either lower-class urban Christians or small land-owning peasants, and gaining their loyalty

rise to suspicions are stemmed.” Several other Armenian journals reassured Arabs that Syria was not comparable to Palestine or the Armenians in USSR.²² An article in the Aleppo-Armenian journal *Yaprad* on May 24, 1930 signaled the emergence of a “hard-working and apolitical Armenian guest” image in the Syrian collective memory. It said, that the “Armenian is hospitalized in this country and this fact is recognized by the mandate power and the noble Arab people. It is very evident that the hospitalized people do not have a claim to pursue anything but politics. The so-called project of ‘installation of an Armenian homeland in Syria is therefore without any foundation and is imaginary.’”²³

in return. Armenian political organizations also put some effort in turning these “*Kurdo-Armeniennes*” into “proper Armenians,” first by teaching them their language and later “true” Christianity.²⁶ The well-to-do or more settled community leaders, especially from Aleppo and Beirut, embraced another task in the general division of labor: Being the “white men” of their community in transformation, they had the “burden” of appealing to the French authorities for protection and support on behalf of the newcomers. This civilizing mission by the middle-class Armenians; the French-sponsored, elite-dominated sectarian system; and the resulting Christian visibility in the region, all helped to “heal” the wounds of the genocide, though it has not necessarily been overcome. □

CONCLUSION

In the pre-genocide world, several parts of the Diyarbakir and Mardin provinces were home to a mixed population, with several Christian groups from different sects, Kurds, Jews, and Yezidis usually under a loose Kurdish tribe with a certain dose of autonomy. Both in the countryside and in the city centers of Mardin and Diyarbakir were a considerable number of Jews, Arabs, and Christians from different denominations, alongside Kurdish and Arab tribal chiefs who resided in the city center. Surrounded by the fertile plains of Jazira, the urban population of Mardin and Diyarbakir was involved in regional trade and often in partnership with Kurdish *aghas*, and Armenian and Syriac merchants. The rural population shared a common culture, common dialect, and common respect for agricultural cycles. Being bound by similar hierarchies and obedience to the same Kurdish tribal leader, or having both a Christian and a Muslim *mukhtar* in a mixed village, were not very unusual. Kurdish tribal groups dominated the region and they incorporated both non-tribal Kurds and Christians in semi-feudal structures of control.²⁴ Several Kurdish tribes, most notably Haverkan, had integrated Christian and Yezidi notables who were in good terms with the rest of the Kurdish-Muslim elites in the tribe. The

ENDNOTES

1. Among the Armenians and Kurds of Syrian-Jazira, the Armenian Genocide is referred to as the first *ferman*, while the Sheikh Said Revolt is referred to as the second *ferman*. In local Jaziran usage, Syrian-Jazira is referred to as *binxet*, under the line denoting the land “under the “Baghdad railway,” whereas Turkey is referred to as *serxet*, above the Baghdad railway line.
2. S.E. Kerr, *Lions of Marash, Personal experiences with American Near East Relief* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1973), p. 36. Ara Sanjian, “The Armenian Minority Experience in the Modern Arab World,” *Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies* 3, no.1 (spring/summer 2001), p. 152.
3. Studies on Syrian-Armenians are disproportionate with the significance Ottoman Syria holds for most of the Armenian survivors of the genocide. See Raymond Kévorkian (ed.), “L’extermination des déportés arméniens ottomans dans les camps de concentration de Syrie- Mésopotamie (1915–16): La deuxième phase du génocide,” *Revue d’histoire d’arménienne contemporaine*, 2 (numéro spécial) 1998, pp. 10–14, 45–46, 60–61. For the deportations in Syria, see also *Album, taqrir*

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YOUNG TURK

MASS VIOLENCE

A Regime-Focused Approach

By Ugur Umit Ungor

This article will discuss the proposition that the Armenian Genocide may be contextualized within a wider vista of mass violence committed against civilians by the Young Turk regime over roughly four decades of rule. It will take as a point of departure the suggestion that a relatively cohesive regime profoundly transformed the multi-ethnic Ottoman society from the 1913 *coup d'état* to the elections of 1950. This model will posit the Armenian Genocide within the changing power relations in this period and an exploration of important themes such as leadership, governance, ideology, socialization, and especially mass violence. In the current article, only the latter theme will be developed, using existing theoretical insights from the field of genocide studies and dictatorship studies.¹ The scholarship on the Young Turk regime is developing rapidly. So far, the regime has been

studied in a fragmented way, with focus on specific aspects rather than its coherence. This article will attempt to challenge the convention by suggesting a new interpretative framework for understanding the regime. The value of this approach is that it can develop the thesis that from 1913–50, a clear political continuity can be observed in the administrative and ideological development of that dictatorship.

Models of dictatorships and totalitarianism need to identify areas in need of clarification, problematize major issues, and conjure up relevant research questions. For the Young Turk case, we have to ask several of these: How can the Young Turk dictatorship best be understood? What are the most relevant and pertinent set of research questions to ask? And in which directions should the scholarship develop in order to generate the most meaningful and fruitful results? Theoretical views on the nature of dictatorships developed in totalitarianism studies have yielded important insights and tools that can be used for shedding light on the rise and fall of the Young Turk dictatorship. In what follows, I will first outline several relevant facets of the regime itself, and then move on to discuss the issue of mass violence in more detail.

THE YOUNG TURK DICTATORSHIP

What is the Young Turk dictatorship? Any discussion on the nature of the Young Turk regime needs to commence with its leadership, the political elite at the apex of the regime's political and military power. There are at least three ways of viewing this theme: periodization, biography, and authority.

The first issue, periodization, remains a thorny issue in modern Turkish history. The conventional model of modern Ottoman/Turkish history holds that there are two distinct regimes at work in the first half of the 20th century. The Committee of Union and Progress (*Ittihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti*, or CUP) ruled the Ottoman Empire from 1913–18. Subsequently, the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası/Partisi*, or RPP) was in power of the Turkish Republic between 1923 and 1950. In this view, the War of Independence of 1919–22 segregates these two regimes as a new regime came into being. The abolition of the sultanate and promulgation of the Turkish

Republic in 1923 then marks the distinction through a clear legal discontinuity. These distinctions focus mainly on cosmetic problems such as labels and denominations, rather than on core issues such as regime structure, staffing, political culture, ideology, and policy. This chronological model is heavily influenced, if not produced entirely, by Young Turk historiography.²

In order to survive in an international force field that was opposed to them, it was in the Young Turks' interest to present the post-1918 regime as an entirely novel political movement. This dissociation was necessary since the CUP elite was indicted for war crimes and genocide. On the surface, the CUP dissolved itself in 1918, but in reality it only changed its name and appearance: The name of the political party, the party organ, and key security forces were changed after 1918. Upstart Young Turks then perpetuated and codified this myth. For example, in his famous 1927 speech "*Nutuk*," Kemal Atatürk misrepresented the historical record by aggrandizing his role in the Young Turk movement and airbrushing the fact that the CUP resurrected itself after 1918 and launched him to lead the movement.³ The Young Turk historical gaze became the official ideology of the Turkish Republic and has contaminated modern scholarship as well: The trap of "methodological Kemalism" is one of the most common pitfalls that surround scholarship on the Young Turk era. Historians, speciously, have tended to periodize either from 1923 on, or up to 1923. Rather, we should view the period 1913–50 as a more circumscribed, coherent period.

Second, biographies can concretize the abstract notion of the continuity of Young Turk rule. It can be suggested that a generation of men, born roughly between 1870 and 1890 and educated under Sultan Abdul Hamid II at the medical and military academies, and the school for civil service, would ultimately become the Young Turk generation. United in the Young Turk movement, baptized in the fire of Balkan paramilitarism,

ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THAT RATHER THAN COOPERATION, THE RELATIONSHIP [OF TALAAT AND ENVER] WAS MARKED BY INTRIGUE, COMPETITION, AND OCCASIONALLY EVEN THREATENING ENMITY AT THE NEXUS OF THE RESPECTIVE MINISTRIES THEY WIELDED POWER OVER

they struggled for power around the *fin de siècle* and rose to hegemony in the first half of the 20th century. The biographies of the Young Turks are relevant for understanding their ethnic and class backgrounds, and educational and political experiences.⁴ A solid understanding of individual and collective biographies can also explain the emergence of their belief system.

To support the claim of continuity in biographical terms, it is sufficient to cross-reference CUP members with RPP members and accentuate the emerging strong overlap in the composition and structure of the ministerial elites. It is no coincidence that names such as Mahmud Celal Bayar, Tevfik Rustu Aras, Mustafa Abdulhalik Renda, Kazim Ozalp, Ibrahim Tali Ongoren, Hilmi Uran, Ali Cenani, Sukru Kaya, and others appear throughout the 1913–50 era in official reports and operative documents as architects of state formation and nation building. The same continuity applies to the Turkish military.⁵ After the ostensible caesura of 1923, these were the men who were employed since they had proved their loyalty to the CUP's ideological projects and were intimately related to each other—in generation, kinship, and experience of war and revolution. Even though some men

were tried and hanged in 1926, innumerable Young Turks in mid-level positions remained in office.

The third issue, authority, is a stumbling block in the study of the Young Turk dictatorship. The political elite that made up the movement and the party largely consisted of the same group of officers and professionals. As we know, the top elite in charge of the regime changed. For the first phase of the regime, the government was led by Mehmed Talaat as interior minister (later "grand vizier"), Ismail Enver (minister of war), and Ahmed Cemal (minister of navy, viceroy of Syria). This regime has often been called the "triumvirate," but this is misleading: Cemal Pasha was sidetracked at the beginning of the war (and later tried to negotiate a separate agreement with the Allies), and the relationship between Talaat and Enver still awaits thorough investigation. Anecdotal evidence suggests that rather than cooperation, the relationship was marked by intrigue, competition, and occasionally even threatening enmity at the nexus of the respective ministries they wielded power over: the Interior Ministry and the War Ministry, respectively.⁶

The second Young Turk regime had a less multipolar structure, as authority revolved more around the personal dictatorship of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, aided by significant henchmen.⁷ Not one of the

triumvirate survived to see the Turkish Republic, but the political culture did not experience major changes. A major challenge in the scholarship is to come to grips with the (dis)continuities and change in this process, as well as with the nature of authoritarian rule and charismatic leadership. For example, fragmentation remains an issue to be investigated: The Young Turk dictatorship was no monolithic *moloch* in perfect inner harmony. There was considerable power struggle, rivalry, and intrigue within both phases and between regions, security forces, and administrative units. But there was also consensus on the nation-state ideology. More research is needed into these fields.

The nature of the Young Turk regime is a serious controversy in Turkish history, and opinions on it differ radically. Influential myths uphold the metahistorical idea that Atatürk established democracy in Turkey, and that the post-war Young Turk regime was a modern parliamentary democracy. Western countries have traditionally assessed the Young Turk regime in a positive light, as a buffer against Communism and an engine for reform against “reactionary” political Islam.⁸ Hans Kohn, for example, argued in 1939 that the Kemalist dictatorship “is based upon liberal principles, upon the ideas of progress of the nineteenth century.... Liberalism and democracy are not despised or scorned, they are the goal of education.”⁹ Some historians, too, apologetically reject the positing of the Young Turk regime as a totalitarian dictatorship imbued with a radically nationalist ideology, similar to a more general inter-war European phenomenon. For example, Zafer Toprak has claimed that the Young Turks had no plans to demographically homogenize the Ottoman Empire through force.¹⁰ In the face of the sophisticated body of research on Young Turk population politics, this is a hardly tenable position. Feroz Ahmad writes about the Young Turk rejection of democracy that “given the prevailing internal and external circumstances during these years, it would be rash to expect such a regime.”¹¹ This too, is a justificatory asser-

tion that aims to exonerate and exculpate the regime, e.g. from its agency in the mass crimes committed between 1913 and 1950.

Critical thinkers have dismissed these justifications as myths. Erik-Jan Zürcher, for example, writes that the Young Turk party had “totalitarian tendencies,” and continues to argue that what made it totalitarian was “the extreme nationalism, with its attendant development of a legitimizing historical mythology and racist rhetoric, the authoritarian character of the regime and its efforts to establish a complete totalitarian monopoly for its party of the political, social and cultural scene, the personality cult that developed around... Atatürk and İnönü... and the emphasis on national unity and solidarity with its attendant denial of class conflicts.”¹² (To this might be added the violent treatment of ethnic minorities.) Hans-Lukas Kieser, too, summarily dismisses the myth that the Young Turk leadership was naive, benevolent, and relatively powerless in the face of overwhelming circumstances.¹³ Considering the Young Turk regime’s monist urge to gain mastery over social processes and human destinies, its ambition to monopolize power at the center, destroy or silence opposition, commit mass violence against its own citizens, develop a radical ideology and a personality cult around a single leader, and extinguish non-Turkish cultural life in the public sphere of the eastern provinces, the regime perhaps may be classified as a nationalist, violent, totalitarian dictatorship.

MASS VIOLENCE

These insights need to be developed and related to discussions on the regime’s ideas and acts of violence. As Jacques Sémelin has argued, mass violence is never a spontaneous outburst of popular emotion, nor a chaotic swarm of individuals milling about. It is fundamentally a coordinated effort organized by the very top political elite, aided and carried out by the perpetrating agencies.¹⁴ In other words, to understand mass vio-

lence we have to understand better the workings of the political elite, the cogs of the dictatorial regime that pursued the destruction policies.

First and foremost, it is important to note that the Young Turk regime was responsible for unprecedented levels of political violence in modern Ottoman-Turkish society. Never before and never after have so many people been involved in processes of mass violence, either as perpetrators or as victims. The Young Turks were politically and ideologically committed to violence.¹⁵ Four decades ago, Feroz Ahmad already argued:

Another facet of the political revolution was the brutalization of political life. Once politics ceased to be the sport of the ruling classes the rules were changed accordingly. Under Abdulhamid death sentences were the exception not the rule. Dissent was made impotent through isolation and dissenters in exile could always recant.... The Unionists were men of a different stamp. To them politics was much more than a game and having seized power they meant to hold on to it. To do so they were willing to use all possible means, so that repression and violence became the order of the day. Nothing was sacred in the pursuit of power and those guilty of dissent must be prepared to pay with their lives.¹⁶

The polarization and depacification of Ottoman political culture and society was profound. During the Young Turk era (1913–50), we can distinguish at least two major processes of state violence: the persecution and murder of Armenians and Syrians in 1915, and the persecution and deportation of Kurds in the 1920’s and 1930’s. There are fundamental similarities and differences in these two episodes of Young Turk mass violence, but suffice it to mention that for our purposes we will focus on continuities. This section will discuss the Young Turks’ experience with mass

THE YOUNG TURK MOVEMENT WAS FORGED IN AN IMPERIAL APOCALYPSE OF WAR AND ETHNIC CLEANSING THAT PROFOUNDLY AFFECTED THEIR POLITICAL OUTLOOK ONCE THEY SEIZED POWER.

violence as it developed in the four decades the regime dominated Ottoman-Turkish politics. It will argue that the Young Turk movement was forged in an imperial apocalypse of war and ethnic cleansing that profoundly affected their political outlook once they seized power. From then on, the regime orchestrated several large-scale processes of violent persecution and mass murder of Armenians, Greeks, Kurds and others. Understanding the roots and rationale of all this violence remains an important challenge, which is beyond the scope of this article.

For our purposes, we can discern at least three schools of thought on the Armenian Genocide, although the term “school” should be used relatively loosely. A first (and early) avenue of investigation⁰ was pursued by scholars who contextualized the long-term Armenian experience, in particular the persecutions and massacres against Ottoman Armenians during the crisis from the 1890’s to the 1915 genocide. In this interpretation, the Armenian call for equality, a functioning rule of law, harmony, autonomy, or independence was met by successive Ottoman governments with violence and repression. The genocide was a culmination that ended the “Armenian Question” by ending the Armenian demographic presence in the empire.¹⁷ A second school contextualized the Armenian experience in World War I with that of other groups. They argued that the Young Turk regime from 1914 on engaged in a full-fledged policy of demographic “Turkification” involving deportations of entire groups, including Armenians,

Kurds, Circassians, Greeks, and others. The objective in this massive project was demographic “Turkification”: the numerical dilution of these groups in certain territories, to be repopulated with Turks. The destruction of Armenians was an *ouverture*, as well as major component, of this process.¹⁸ A third line of thought has contextualized the violence in the Turkish nation formation process in the long 19th century, during which the definition and demarcation of the nation under severe inter-state and intra-state pressures frequently led to crises of identity. During these crises, external enemies such as the Russian Empire were equated with internal ones, such as the Armenian middle classes in the Ottoman cities.¹⁹

It might be worthwhile to launch a fourth approach that may shed light on Young Turk mass violence from a different perspective. I argue, as an alternative or complementary approach to these three perspectives, for a historical contextualization that is regime-focused: I believe it can be helpful to apply Zurcher’s periodization of 1913–50 as the “Young Turk era” to the study of mass violence in that wretched period. Whereas Zurcher demonstrated political and administrative continuities in terms of state formation, I will conceptualize the problem from the perspective of mass violence. The problem appears to us when we consider the following timeline of intra-society state violence under the Young Turks. First of all, the very ascendance to power of the Young

Turk party in 1913 is marked by the bloody *coup d’état*, the installation of a dictatorship, and the silencing and destruction of the opposition. Nineteen fifteen saw the genocide of Armenians and Syrians, and 1921 the massacres of Pontic Greeks and Kurdish Alevi of Kocgiri. Only a few years later, the 1925 conflict and ensuing massacres in the Diyarbakir region destroyed innumerable lives, villages, and property. That episode was only matched by the 1930 massacres in the Ararat region, which included the first systematic Young Turk efforts of aerial bombing. The most serious inter-war massacre was the 1938 one in the Dersim region following a brief guerrilla war with the local Kurdish Alevi resistance.²⁰ All of this violence was committed by the Young Turk political elite.

For the victim groups it seemed as if they were singularly victimized in these episodes, and many authors have studied these episodes in isolation. Although we need to know much more about each disparate event, the disadvantages of this approach are that they are not related to each other historically or conceptually. The Armenian Genocide is no exception to this: As in many cases of genocide, the first studies were conducted by surviving intellectuals. However, lifting out the genocide from the broader context offered here may run the risk of decontextualizing it from four decades of Young Turk mass violence. For this, we need comparative studies of each disparate event: How do the deportations of 1915–16 compare to those of 1925 and 1934? Also, what can we learn about the perpetrators who were involved in all these events from 1915–38? Finally, what was the influence of earlier episodes of state violence on later phases?

It might be instructive to draw a parallel with the Stalinist dictatorship. Research into Soviet mass violence has yielded important results in terms of the forms and nature of violence that Stalin(ism) produced. Across Stalin’s bloody rule, several important campaigns of mass violence were launched: the deportation and murder of the country’s

rural middle class during “dekulakization” in the late 1920’s, the Great Terror campaign of political repression and persecution orchestrated in 1937–38, the mass murder of Polish military officers in 1940, and the destructive comprehensive deportation of many ethnic groups (Poles, Chechens, Germans, Koreans, Crimean Tatars). The same political elite targeted millions of people based on their supposed group identity over a period of two decades.²¹ With this series of massacres in mind, singling out the Great Terror of 1937–38 as if it had no relation with the other violent episodes obfuscates the overall nature of the regime. In the field of Armenian Genocide studies, the murder of Armenians is studied in relative isolation from the wider context of Young Turk mass violence. This hiatus in the scholarship is puzzling, considering only a few years separates episodes of Young Turk mass murder, such as the 1915 genocide of Armenians and the 1925 massacres and deportations of Kurds. In some areas, like Diyarbakir, the same local elites who had destroyed the Armenian presence were also instrumental in the massacre and deportation of Kurds. As in the case of the Stalinist dictatorship, the genesis of a violent episode depended on a myriad of factors related to the international pressures of the threat of war, the political tensions existing within the system, and the bipolar dynamic between minority and state. For each of these cases, more contextual research could clarify how it fits in with the regime’s utopian ideology or particular political objectives.

Here is one example that must stand for many. The embodiment of continuity in Young Turk mass violence might well be the bureaucrat Sukru Kaya (1883–1959). His involvement with the Young Turk movement and regime ranges from school teacher to civil servant to wartime director of the deportation apparatus, up to minister of culture and interior minister.²² Sukru Kaya was born on the Aegean island of Kos into a middle-class family. He enrolled in the Galatasaray Lycée, graduated from law school in 1908, and moved to Paris to continue his graduate studies. Upon his return to the Ottoman Empire, he began working

for the state, first as a clerk for the Foreign Ministry and later as a civil inspector. The Young Turk seizure of power offered him an opportunity to progress within the Ottoman state bureaucracy. In June 1915, Kaya was assigned the task of opening new state orphanages to house Armenian children younger than 10.²³ An efficient organizer, he won the favor of Talaat and was made director of the bureaucratic apparatus in charge of the deportation process, the Directorate for the Settlement of Tribes and Immigrants (*Iskan-i Asair ve Muhacirin Muduriyeti*, or IAMM). During his tenure, Kaya was the key executive responsible for the destruction of Ottoman Armenians. He traveled into the field, in particular Diyarbakir and Aleppo, and supervised the construction of concentration camps along the Euphrates. In 1918, the British arrested and imprisoned Kaya at Malta, along with other Young Turks who were accused of crimes. He escaped from Malta and stayed in Italy and Germany for a while, before he returned to Anatolia and joined the Young Turk movement in Ankara. In 1923 he worked as a consultant to the Turkish delegation at the Lausanne Conference.²⁴

Under the Turkish Republic, Kaya was made mayor of Izmir, member of parliament for Mugla, and minister of agriculture. Ultimately, he found his calling under Kemal Atatürk and functioned as interior minister between 1927 and 1938. During that period, Kaya was responsible for the implementation of the persecution and deportation of Kurds. Kaya was an ideologue: In his speeches, some of which have been published, he’d explain the need “to separate the country into west and east,” arguing that in the east, it was the government’s task to “render the Turk the master.”²⁵ This effectively meant the launching of a nation-state project whereby non-Turks would be expelled and deported from the eastern provinces, and Turks settled on the confiscated land. To determine the criteria for the identification and selection of the deportees, Kaya pushed for the

use of the term “race” (*irk*).²⁶ He saw violence against ethnic minority civilians as a legitimate solution of national security dilemmas. For example, after the 1925 campaign against Kurds, he concluded that government forces had “crushed and annihilated the rebels and bandits in the east...like all our other measures, this is a public expression of force. Whatever it costs for the strength of the Turkish state.”²⁷

Again, Kaya traveled into the field for several important research trips and reported directly to his superior, Kemal Atatürk. During a 1931 journey, he was enraged by the fact that former Armenian deportees in Syria were continuing their crafts and trades, and moving across the Turkish-Syrian border to conduct business in eastern Turkey. They were working with Arabs, Kurds, and Turks, some of whom were friends, neighbors, or even old business partners. As this thwarted the development of the Turkish “national economy,” he proposed a boycott against anyone working with Armenians and tighter surveillance, including building a hermetic border.²⁸ Kaya also oversaw the 1938 campaign in the Dersim region, in which at least 40,000 Kurdish Alevi were murdered and a further 15,000 deported in cattle wagons to be dispersed in western Anatolian villages. Some scholars have suggested that these high levels of violence were generated by Young Turk resentment against the Dersim Kurds for sheltering and rescuing considerable numbers of Armenians during the genocide.²⁹

The vindication of this nationalist violence was virtually identical to the same discourse that had justified genocide two decades before. Sukru Kaya’s biography suggests an inescapable diachronic link between episodes of Young Turk mass violence that may seem unrelated and disparate at the surface, but demonstrate thoroughgoing biographical, institutional, and ideological links. His profile epitomizes the ebb and flow of a generation of young, ambitious, and ruthless bureaucrats committed to an inherently violent ideology.

DISCUSSION

Drawing together the threads of this argument, three types of continuities need to be suggested. First, regime continuity. There can be little doubt that the Committee of Union and Progress morphed into the Republican People's Party. But we need to understand better the precise administrative, political, and military continuities in this process. Secondly, in most administrative sectors there is a strong elite continuity, which can be demonstrated easily, for example, for men such as Sukru Kaya. Young Turk henchmen kept their power bases intact and were mobilized during periods of crisis and ideological politics to draw upon prior experience. Ideological continuity, then, is the third form of continuity. This in particular is exemplified in the nation-state ideology and in approaches to territoriality: From 1913–50, eastern Turkey was seen as a contested territory to be purified of large minorities such as Armenians and Kurds. We need to understand these continuities better—administrative, biographical, military, ideological, at the national and local levels. A sociological understanding of this violence must demonstrate the intersection between individual biographical experience, social structural changes, historical forces, developments, and events in the political process. □

ENDNOTES

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23. BOA, DH.SFR 54/150, Ministry of Education to provinces, June 26, 1915.
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THE REPARATIONS MOVEMENT

AND MEANINGFUL RESOLUTION OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

By Henry C. Theriault, Ph.D.

In memory of Dennis Brutus, South African poet and human rights activist, 1924–2009

O ver the past half millennium, genocide, slavery, Apartheid, mass rape, imperial conquest and occupation, aggressive war targeting non-combatants, population expulsions, and other mass human rights violations have proliferated. Individual processes have ranged from months to centuries. While the bulk of perpetrator societies have been traditional European countries or European settler states in Australia, Africa, and the Americas, Asian and African states and societies are also represented among them. These processes have been the decisive force shaping the demographics, economics, political structures and forces, and cultural features of the world we live in today, and the conflicts and challenges we face in it. For instance, understanding why the population of the United States is as it is—why there are African Americans in it, where millions of Native Americans have “disappeared” to, why Vietnamese and Cambodian people have immigrated to the United States, etc.—requires recognizing the fundamental role of genocide, slavery, and aggressive war in shaping the United States and those areas, such as sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia, affected by it.

Around the globe, those in poverty, those victimized by war after war, small residuals of once numerous groups, and others have recognized that their current difficulties, their current misery, is a direct result of these powerful forces of exploitation, subjugation, and destruction. Out of the compelling logic of “necessary fairness”—fair treatment that is necessary to their basic material survival and to their dignity as human beings—many have recognized that the devastating effects of these past wrongs must be addressed in a meaningful way if their groups and societies can hope to exist in sustainable forms in the future. This recognition has led to various reparations movements. Native Americans lay claim to lands taken through brutal conquest, genocide, and fraud. African Americans demand compensation for their contribution of a significant share of the labor that built the United States, labor stolen from them and repaid only with cruelty, violence, and individual and community destruction. Formerly colonized societies whose people’s labor was exploited to build Europe and North America, whose raw materials were stolen to provide the materials, and whose societies were “de-developed,” now struggle to survive as the global Northern societies built on their losses capitalize on the previous thefts to consolidate their dominance. And so on.

In the past decade those engaged in these various struggles have begun to recognize their common cause and a global reparations movement has emerged. In 2005, for instance, Massachusetts’ Worcester State College held an international conference on reparations featuring renowned human rights activist Dennis Brutus, with papers on reparations for South African Apartheid; African American slavery, Jim Crow, and beyond; Native American genocide and land theft; the “comfort women” system of sexual slavery implemented by Japan; the use of global debt as a “post-colonial” tool of domination; and the Armenian Genocide. While there are dozens if not hundreds of major reparations processes in the world today, it will be instructive to consider these cases in detail, as illustrations of these many struggles.

U.S. slavery destroyed African societies and exploited and abused violently millions of human beings for 250 years. At its dissolution, it pushed former slaves into the U.S. economy without land, capital, and education. Initial recognition of the need to provide some compensation for slavery in order to give former slaves a chance toward basic economic self-sufficiency gave way to violent and discriminatory racism. Former slaves were forced into the economic order at the lowest level. Wealth is preserved across generations through inheritance. Those whose people begin with little

and who do not enslave or exploit others will remain with little. Reparations for African Americans recognizes that the poverty, discrimination, and other challenges facing African Americans today result from injustices more than 100 years ago that have never been corrected, and the subsequent racist violence and discrimination that has preserved the post-slavery status quo every since.

The South African case revolved around the fact that, as the world had divested from South Africa in the 1980’s, the Afrikaner government borrowed money, especially from Switzerland, to continue to finance Apartheid. Against the international embargo, bankers’ loans paid for the guns and other military hardware that were used to kill black activists and keep their people in slavery. The fall of Apartheid did not mean an end to the debt. Today’s South

Africans live in poverty as their country is forced to pay off the tens of billions of U.S. dollars in loans incurred to keep them in slavery before. They pay yet further billions for the pensions of Afrikaner government, military, and police officials living out their days in quiet comfort after murdering, torturing, and raping with impunity for decades. What is more, U.S. and other corporations drew immense profits from South African labor. Many victims of Apartheid reject the loan debt and demand reparation for all they suffered and all that was expropriated from them as the just means for bringing their society out of poverty. After years of refusal, the South African government itself has recently reversed its position based on the desire to curry favor with large corporations and has begun to support U.S. court cases for reparations from corporations enriched by Apartheid.

In the aftermath of decolonization, societies devastated by decades or centuries of occupation, exploitation, cultural and familial destruction, and genocide were left in poverty and without the most basic resources needed to meet the minimum needs of their people. Forced suddenly to compete with those who had enriched themselves and grown militarily and culturally powerful through colonialism, they had no chance. Their only option was to borrow money in the hope of “catching up.” But corrupt and selfish leaders diverted billions to private bank accounts (with winks from former colonial powers), invested in foolish and irrelevant public works projects, and otherwise misappropriated money that was supposed to help these societies. Loan makers, such as the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, imposed conditions to push these societies into a new servitude to the economies of the United States and other

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great powers. Servicing the loans that have not helped their economies develop now means sacrificing basic human services and healthcare in these desperate societies and accepting extensive outside control of their societies to benefit former colonizers and multinational corporations at the expense of further degradation of the dignity and material conditions of their populations. The Jubilee movement calls for debt cancellation as a crucial step toward justice for the devastation of colonialism and post-colonialism and a path toward a sustainable and fair global economy.

Former comfort women have long faced assaults on their dignity in their home countries and by Japan. They were often impoverished by their devastating experiences of being raped on average thousands of times in permanent rape camps as sexual slaves to the Japanese military. Physical damage from incessant forced intercourse and the brutal violence soldiers subjected them to, the aftermath of coerced drug addiction, and intense psychological trauma have frequently followed the women into their old age. They have needed medical care as well as acknowledgment of the inhuman injustice done to them. In the early 1990's, surviving "comfort women" began calling for reparations to address the effects of what they had suffered.

Native Americans and Armenians share certain similarities in their past experiences and challenges today, from being crushed by competing as well as sequential imperial power-games and conquests, and a series of broken or unfair treaties, to a history of being subject to massacre, sexual violence, and societal destruction. Members of both groups have been sent on their "long marches" to death. In the aftermath of active genocide through direct killing and deadly deportation, even the remnants of these peoples on their own lands have been erased, through the raiding and destruction of hundreds of thousands to millions of Native American graves as a policy of the U.S. "scientific" establishment, and the continuing destruction of remaining Armenian Church and other structures throughout Turkey. For Native Americans, the continuing expropriation of land and resources, the blocking of Native American social structures and economic activity, and the dramatic demographic destruction (an estimated 97 percent in the continental United States) has left behind a set of Indian nations subject to the whims of the U.S. government and struggling to retain identity and material survival in a hostile world. Reparations, particularly of traditional lands, are essential to the survival of Native peoples and cultures. Similarly, from its status as the major minority in the Ottoman Empire a century ago, today an Armenian population of below 3 million in the new republic faces a Turkey of 70 million with tremendous economic resources built on the plunder of Armenian wealth and land—through genocide and the century of oppression and massacre that preceded it—and tremendous military power awarded it through aid from the United States in recognition of its regional power—also gained through genocide. The Armenian Diaspora of perhaps five million is dispersed across

the globe and slowly losing cohesion and relevance as powerful forces of assimilation and fragmentation take their toll. Reparations in the form of compensation for the wealth taken, which in many cases can be traced to Turkish families and business today, and lands depopulated of Armenians and thus "Turkified" through genocide, are crucial to the viability of Armenian society and culture in the future. Without the kind of secure cradle the Treaty of Sevres was supposed to give Armenians, true regeneration is impossible: Turkish power, still violently hostile to Armenians, grows each day, as the post-genocide residual Armenia degenerates.

Of course, reparations are not simply about mitigating the damage done to human collectivities in order to make possible at least some level of regeneration or future survival, however important this is. Reparations also represent a concrete, material, permanent, and thus not merely rhetorical recognition by perpetrator groups or their progeny of the ethical wrongness of what was done, and of the human dignity and legitimacy of the victim groups. They are the form that true apologies take, and the act through which members who supported the original assault on human rights or who benefited from it—economically, politically, militarily, culturally, and in terms of the security of personal and group identity—decisively break with the past and refuse to countenance genocide, slavery, Apartheid, mass rape, imperial conquest and occupation, aggressive war focused on civilians, forced expulsions, or any other form of mass human rights violation.



It is with both dimensions in mind that in 2007 Jermaine McCalpin, a political scientist with a recent Ph.D. from Brown University specializing in long-term justice and democratic transformation of societies after mass human rights violations; Ara Papian, former Armenian ambassador to Canada and expert on the relevant treaty history and law; Alfred de Zayas, former senior lawyer with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and Chief of Petitions, and currently professor of international law at the Geneva School of Diplomacy and International Relations; and I came together to study the issue of reparations for the Armenian Genocide in concrete terms. The Armenian Genocide Reparations Study Group's (AGRSG) work has culminated in a draft report on the legal, treaty, and ethical justifications for reparations and offers concrete proposals for the political process that will support meaningful reparations. The following are some of the elements of the AGRSG findings, arguments, and proposals.

International law makes clear that victim groups have the right to remedies for harms done to them. This applies to the Armenian Genocide for two reasons. First, the acts against Armenians were illegal under international law at the time of the genocide. Second, the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide applies retroactively. While the term "genocide" had not yet been coined when the 1915 Armenian Genocide was committed, the Convention subsumes relevant preexisting international

laws and agreements, such as the 1899 and 1907 Hague Conventions. Since the genocide was illegal under those conventions, it remains illegal under the 1948 Convention. What is more, the current Turkish Republic, as successor state to the Ottoman Empire and as beneficiary of the wealth and land expropriations made through the 1915 genocide, is responsible for reparations.

While the 1920 Sevres Treaty, which recognized an Armenian state much larger than what exists today, was never ratified, some of its elements retain the force of law and the treaty itself is not superseded by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne. In particular, the fixing of the proper borders of an Armenian state was undertaken pursuant to the treaty and determined by a binding arbitral award. Regardless of whether the treaty was ultimately ratified, the committee process determining the arbitral award was agreed to by the parties to the treaty and, according to international law, the resulting determination has legal force regardless of the ultimate fate of the treaty. This means that, under international law, the so-called “Wilsonian boundaries” are the proper boundaries of the Armenian state that should exist in Asia Minor today.

Various ethical arguments have been raised against reparations generally and especially for harms done decades or centuries in the past. Two of particular salience are that (1) a contemporary state and society that did not perpetrate a past mass human rights violation but merely succeeded the state and society that did, does not bear responsibility for the crime nor for repairing the damage done, for this would be penalizing innocent people; and (2) those pursuing Armenian Genocide land reparations are enacting a territorial nationalist irredentism that is similar to the Turkish nationalism that drove Turkification of the land through the genocide, and is thus not legitimate.

To the first objection, the report responds that because current members of Turkish society benefit directly from the destruction of Armenians in terms of increased political and cultural power as well as a significantly larger “Turkish” territory and a great deal of personal and state wealth that has been the basis of generations of economic growth, they have a link to the genocide. While they cannot be blamed morally for it, they are responsible for the return of wealth and making compensation to Armenians for other dimensions of the genocide. To the second objection, the report responds that the lands in question became “Turkish” pre-

cisely through the ultranationalist project of the genocide. Retaining lands “Turkified” in this way indicates implicit approval of that genocidal ultra-nationalism, while removing Turkish control is the only route to a rejection of that ideology.

In addition to the legal, political, and ethical arguments justifying reparations, the report also proposes a complex model for the political process for determining and giving reparations. The report makes clear that material reparations and symbolic reparations, including an apology and dissemination of the truth about what happened in 1915, as well as rehabilitation of the perpetrator society are crucial components of a reparations process if it is to result in a stable and human rights-respecting resolution. The report proposes convening an Armenian Genocide Truth and Reparations Commission with Turkish, Armenian, and other involvement that will work toward both developing a workable reparations package and a rehabilitative process that will tie reparations to a positive democratic, other-respecting transformation of the Turkish state and society. As much as reparations will be a resolution of the Armenian Genocide legacy, they will

also be an occasion for productive social transformation in Turkey that will benefit Turks.

Finally, the report makes preliminary recommendations for specific financial compensation and land reparations. The former is based in part on the detailed reparations estimate made as part of the Paris Peace Conference, supplemented by additional calculations for elements not sufficiently covered by the conference’s estimation of the material financial losses suffered by Armenians. The report also discusses multiple options regarding land return, from a symbolic return of church and other cultural properties in Turkey to full return of the lands designated by the Wilsonian arbitral award. The report includes the highly innovative option of allowing Turkey to retain political sovereignty over the lands in question but demilitarizing them and allowing Armenians to join present inhabitants with full political protection and business and residency rights. This model is interesting in part because it suggests a human rights-respecting, post-national concept of politics that some might see as part of a transition away from the kinds of aggressive territorial nationalisms—such as that which was embraced by the Young Turks—that so frequently produce genocide and conflict.

On May 15, 2010, the AGRSG will present its report formally in a public event at George Mason University’s Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution in Arlington, Va. □

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‘Divide et Impera’

The Turkish-Armenian Protocols

By Marc A. Mamigonian

In the discussions surrounding the Turkish-Armenian protocols that have taken place throughout the last year, there has been a disappointing, yet hardly unforeseeable, tendency to oversimplify matters and draw a clear-cut picture with “practical,” pro-protocols Armenians on one side, and “hawkish” diaspora “fanatics” who are dead-set against the protocols and any normalization with Turkey on the other side. We can see this as a minor refinement of the well-worn discourse of the Bad Armenians and the Good Armenians that we have come to know and some have come to love, or at least to make good use of.

As the Turkish scholar Taner Akcam has aptly described this discourse:

According to the defensive strategies developed by our intellectuals, the ‘bad’ Armenians aren’t the ones in Turkey or the ones in neighboring Armenia. The ‘bad’ Armenians are the ones in the diaspora because the ones who keep ‘insisting on recognition of the genocide’ are actually they. In other words, instead of directly stating that the problem has to do with defining Armenians as ‘the bogeyman’ and ‘bad,’ they accepted those definitions but changed the object of those definitions; instead of saying Armenians are ‘bad,’ they stated that the diaspora is ‘bad.’ In conclusion, the mentality that predominates in Turkey continued unabated in our intellectuals and continues to do so.¹

In recent discussions, it is the critics of the protocols who have become the “bad” Armenians, then, and interestingly enough, some Armenians who had previously been lumped into the “bad” category because of their emphasis on genocide recognition as such now find themselves, due to their support of the protocols, transformed (perhaps only temporarily) into “good” Armenians.

This leads us to Kerem Oktem’s article “The Armenia-Turkey process: don’t stop now” on OpenDemocracy, which was in turn a response to articles by Vicken Cheterian and Juan Gabriel Tokatlian.²

It is interesting to note that while Oktem rightly decries a reductionist understanding of “the highly cosmopolitan Armenian diaspora” as a univocal entity when, in fact, there is on the protocols, as on other issues, a wide array of opinions (both pro- and con- as well as *within* the pro- and con- “camps”), he seems to fall into the hardly less reductionist trap of equating those who oppose the protocols with those who oppose any normalization, of presenting those who oppose the protocols as a *nationalists* and those who support them as *humanists*. In other words, we have not really moved beyond the categories of Bad Armenians and Good Armenians—we have just done some rebranding.

In the former category, clearly, Oktem has placed the political party the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), which has been vocally opposed to the protocols. Oktem writes of the ARF that “it has become trapped in the cage of an old-fashioned, if virulent nationalism: retribution, compensation, and transfer of land to Armenia are central to its vocabulary.” He contrasts this with the “humanist organizations” the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), the dioceses of the Armenian Churches of America, and the Armenian Assembly of America (AAA)—groups that support “normalization” even though genocide recognition “might be the first casualty.” He does not define what he means by a “humanist” organization.

What is at issue here is *not* these organizations *per se* or the merits of their respective approaches to the protocols as such (or to other issues), but rather how they are being depicted and deployed to suit a version of the Good Armenian/Bad Armenian discourse. The Armenian Assembly, in particular, is regularly grouped with the Bad Armenians due to its long record of working for genocide

recognition and lobbying for the U.S. to pass resolutions affirming the genocide—work that it shows no signs of abandoning and that has long been the *sine qua non* of the Bad Armenian.

It is true that to support the protocols is to support “normalization,” at least as it is defined by the protocols. But it does not follow that to oppose the protocols is necessarily to oppose any sort of normalization, unless one believes that the protocols represent the only possible route to normalization. Oktem also appears to lump together all critics of the protocols as virulent nationalists—which is barely an improvement on lumping together the entire diaspora as Bad Armenians. It is no wonder, then, that he cannot reconcile the fact that “serious observers such as Juan Gabriel Tokatlian and Vicken Cheterian” also take a stance against the protocols. It seems he simply cannot imagine *any* “serious” critique of the protocols, any critique that is not rooted in “virulent nationalism.”

But there is an obvious solution to his confusion: Just as there are people and organizations who support the protocols more or less uncritically and those who support them with serious reservations, so, too, are there people and organizations who are in favor of normalization but who oppose the protocols either in whole or in part for one or more of a variety of reasons—that is to say, it may be that their concerns about this or that aspect of the protocols are so strong that they cannot support them. Is it so inconceivable that a “serious observer” might hold such a view?

Furthermore, it is fair to say that one “political persuasion” (read: Dashnak) is more uniformly critical of the protocols, but it does not follow that all who are critical are of the same political persuasion; some, in fact, have close connections with organizations that have publicly stated their support for the protocols, and many (most?) have no political or organizational ties or loyalties whatsoever. Some critics, as should be obvious, are not Armenian.

Nonetheless, Oktem crafts a sharp distinction between the “nationalist” Armenians who oppose the protocols mainly because they hamper genocide recognition and the “humanist” Armenians who support the protocols even though it means sacrificing genocide recognition. Yet the AGBU and the other organizations that issued a joint public statement said clearly that they do not support the protocols at the expense of genocide recognition—declaring that there “should be no question that we also continue to stand firmly with the Nagorno Karabakh Republic to ensure its freedom and security as well as with all those working for universal affirmation of the Armenian Genocide.”³

Oktem concludes that opposition to the protocols is motivated by fear among those who “have long used the genocide to scare critical minds into conformity, to rule over their flocks as they pleased, and to claim the right to speak in their name” that they will lose their power. He does not seem to consider other things that would cause reasonable people not to support the protocols.

For example, as he himself says, “The joint historical commission, which the second protocol proposes, is indeed a bad compromise, if not a complete sell-out.” Would it not be a reasonable or “serious” stance to advocate normalization *without* such a “bad compromise?” For some, clearly, the proposed commission is too high a price to pay, for reasons that have been well expressed by Roger Smith among others.⁴ Is such a stance incomprehensible and incompatible with “serious” thinking?

It is striking how similar some of Oktem’s points are to those in a column by Cengiz Aktar in *Hurriyet* entitled “The Armenian Initiative and the Hrant Dink Case,” in which he nearly proclaims the end of nationalism in Turkey.⁵ Aktar, one of the initiators of the 2008 “apology campaign,” also observes that “[o]wing to the protocols, differences have surfaced within the diaspora—clear evidence that it never was a monolithic entity.” Evidently, if nothing else, we have the protocols to thank for this breakthrough in perception. However, “Within the diaspora, there are a limited number of people who are making a lot of noise. They do not care about the future of the Armenian Republic, make unrealistic demands and claim that it sold out the diaspora.” It is self-evident, apparently, that anyone who is critical of the protocols must “not care about the future of Armenia.”

Aktar, too, contrasts the “unrealistic,” “uncaring” noisemakers with “a silent majority that is calm and sober enough to grasp the importance of the protocols,” which he identifies with the AGBU. He does not, of course, say how he knows it is a silent majority.

Aktar then gives a short quote from the statement from the AGBU Central Board of Directors: “[The protocols] mark a significant moment in the history of relations between the Armenian and Turkish peoples. It presents major ramifications for both the government of the newly independent Republic of Armenia and the Armenian nation worldwide.”

There is nothing controversial in these words. They state the obvious: The protocols are “significant” and present “major ramifications.” Such language could derive from either a declaration in favor of the protocols or one against them. There is no dispute over whether the protocols are “significant” or present “major ramifications.” The dispute is over what the significance is and what the ramifications are.

It is revealing to read the *entire* AGBU statement in the context of the sharp “nationalist” vs. “humanist” distinction that has been drawn (the statement is available at www.agbu.org/pressoffice/article.asp?ID=626).

For example, after favorably noting the “pragmatic policy [of the Armenian government] in its negotiations with Turkey,” it goes on to state: “However, as practical as such a policy may be, it should not be implemented at the expense of **the inalienable rights of the Armenian people**. We believe the authorities in Armenia, as administrators of the state, must be guided by **the same pan-national goals and aspirations** in making

these difficult and far-reaching decisions. The documents establishing diplomatic relations between Armenia and Turkey touch directly or indirectly upon the Armenian Genocide and **our territorial demands**. While we understand the importance for the Republic of Armenia to have normal diplomatic relations with neighboring countries, including Turkey, we believe that **the inviolable Armenian Case in its broadest sense and the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide should transcend any diplomatic consideration**" (emphasis mine).

And then towards the end: "AGBU unwaveringly adheres to its national policy of supporting the homeland and safeguarding **the inviolable rights of the Armenian nation, and its historical, material and cultural legacy**" (emphasis mine).

If such language as appears in bold above were used in a statement *against* the protocols, would the "humanist" tag be stripped away and replaced with the label "old-fashioned, if virulent nationalism?" Or should one assume that Aktar and Oktem are fully in support of these aspects of the statement?

It is interesting to see how organizations that have hitherto mostly been lumped together as part of the powerful, nationalistic Armenian Diaspora lobbying machine are now being distinguished among. Noisy nationalists over here! Sober humanists over there! Oktem asks the rhetorical question, "Is it possible that the highly cosmopolitan Armenian diaspora, in 2009, can or would speak with a single voice?" He answers with a resounding "No!" But the more complete inferred answer from both his and Aktar's commentaries appears to be "No! It speaks with *two* voices!" An optimist might view that as an improvement of 100 percent!

It appears that, within the current revised Good Armenian/Bad Armenian schematic, if you *support* the protocols and talk about "the inalienable rights of the Armenian people" you are a "humanist." But if you *do not support* them and talk about "the inalienable rights of the entire Armenian Nation" you are a "nationalist."⁶

You are a "humanist" if you *support* the protocols and say "we understand the importance for the Republic of Armenia to have normal diplomatic relations with neighboring countries, including Turkey, we believe that the inviolable Armenian Case in its broadest sense and the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide should transcend any diplomatic consideration." But you are a "nationalist" if you *do not support* the protocols and say, "As neighboring states, Armenia and Turkey are bound to take steps to normalize relations [but] neighborly relations can be established between the two countries only when Turkey recognizes the Armenian Genocide and reestablishes the rights of the Armenian people."⁷

If you *support* the protocols, it is "humanistic" to refer to "the inviolable rights of the Armenian nation." But if you *do not support* the protocols, it is "nationalistic" to refer to "the unwavering rights of the Armenian people."⁸

And there is "humanism" in "our territorial demands" if you *support* the protocols, but "nationalism" if you *oppose* the protocols and mention "the dispossession of Western Armenia."⁹

Again, this is not about the AGBU, ARF, AAA, Armenian National Committee, etc. The point to be made is not that the so-called "nationalists" are really "humanists," or the so-called "humanists" are really "nationalists."

The point to be made is about how problematic it is to divide up Armenians along such lines. It is about recognizing a trap that is part of the legacy of imperialism. The Romans had a name for it: *Divide et impera*. □

ENDNOTES

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Echoes Echoes of the Past

Some of the Underlying Nuances of Holocaust Trauma in Israel

By Cristina Andriani

Introduction

Those that are able to flee or survive genocide are faced with far more than an adaptive process of relocation. Not only are survivors grieving the loss of their families and friends, or dealing with the repercussions of the violence they have witnessed, but they have been uprooted from their homes, rendered essentially stateless, and in a sense, stripped of their traditional roles of identification. A discourse of trauma develops on a national level to promote action and change, but are the individual voices recounting trauma silenced or heard? If trauma is not successfully healed at the individual level, what repercussions does this have on the community? The nation?

This article explores the trauma of the Holocaust and its resonance in Israel specifically. I will aim to define trauma, both individual and collective, and the way in which trauma is appropriated and transformed. I have reviewed for this purpose key literature across disciplines, specifically in psychology, sociology, psychoanalysis, history, and political studies.

Defining psychological trauma

A traumatic experience numbs, unsettles, fosters anxiety, overwhelms, destroys trust, challenges one's sense of safety, and creates feelings of powerlessness (Herman 1992; LaCapra 2004; Davoine and Gaudilliere 1994). The experience of trauma also affects one's memory of it (Van Der Kolk and Van Der Hart 1995). Dissociative symptoms are common, representing a disconnection from self, which in turn affects one's sense of identity (Herman 1992; LaCapra 2004).

Scholars such as Dominick LaCapra (1998, 2004), Judith Herman (1992), and Cathy Caruth (1995) contend that trauma is much like a gap that cannot be filled, an open wound that will not heal, or an infectious disease: It contaminates, and spreads past boundaries of time and space, its memories refusing to sink into the past.

The "resistance" of trauma, its refusal to take its place in the past, ruptures memory and shatters identity (LaCapra 1998; Davoine and Gaudilliere 2004). Because the Holocaust remains

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such an indigestible experience, the inability to integrate emotions of the experience and the failure to understand the experience fully, lead to flashbacks and hallucinations, as well as nightmares (Caruth 1995; LaCapra 1998; Krystal 1995). Other symptoms include hyperarousal—an over-reaction to outside stimuli, anxiety, depression, guilt, and a focus on the past (Herman 1992; Krystal 1995; Caruth 1996). These intrusive symptoms exist in conjunction with symptoms of psychic numbing, which include repression, isolation, cutting off of feelings or emotional numbness, denial, and dissociation. Many survivors no longer feel like people, but rather enter a constricted survival mode that leads to “psychological atrophy,” that is, dying psychologically while being physically alive (Herman 1992: 86).

Issues of personal representation

Representation becomes complex on several overlapping levels of emotion, content of memory, transmission, and language. First, if the memory of the trauma is transmitted through narrative, a certain emotional distance is necessary in order to convey the traumatic event without reliving it (LaCapra 2004; Caruth 1995). Secondly, the “accuracy” of traumatic memories is questionable, as memory is often affected by the terror of an experience (Young 1997: 22). Thirdly, the disconnection from a traumatic memory that allows the victim to survive the trauma in itself creates a “crisis of truth” because the event cannot fully be processed—and cannot fully be expressed because it does not fully register in the minds of the victim (Caruth 1995: 9).

But what would happen if the full transmission or representation of trauma could occur? Trauma can be “contagious”—it is transmitted to the children of survivors, and is relived by those who experienced it (LaCapra 2004). Insidious and vicarious trauma are “transmitted” traumas. Insidious trauma is what Laura Brown labels trauma that can be found in the second generation of survivors of the Holocaust (1995). Vicarious trauma is best defined by a horizontal transmission: It is not directly experienced but is transmitted through symbolic extension and psychological identification to non-survivors (Alexander 2004: 199).

Ruptures within the community: cultural trauma

A traumatic event experienced by an entire community affects its culture. It transforms values, norms, patterns and rules, roles, ideas and beliefs, narratives and symbols, and worldviews. “Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collective feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and chang-

ing their future identity in fundamental and *irrevocable* ways” (emphasis added, Alexander 1995:1).

While research in psychological trauma demonstrates that it exists, only a relatively small percentage of those exposed to trauma experience its psychological effects. Cultural trauma, on the other hand, reflects a collective manifestation thereof (Meierhenrich 2007). Cultural trauma is socially mediated, and can occur at the time of the trauma or can be retrospectively attributed to a collective memory. It is associated with an event that is represented as “indelible” within the collective; it carries negative emotions for the group and threatens the society’s existence (Smelser 2004: 44). Cultural trauma therefore explores the social dynamics of trauma within a community rather than the psychological dynamics that affect individual identity (Meierhenrich 2007).

Additional layers: social death and natal alienation

Trauma survivors experience even those closest to them as “others” because they cannot relate, and these do not substitute for those lost during the Holocaust. Survivors are often judged by those who have no understanding of what it means to be a survivor (Herman 1992: 115). Traumatized people come to have a different worldview, a changed self, and a changed way of relating to others: They no longer live in the illusion of safety provided by culture; rather they believe something bad is bound to happen again since it has happened in the past (Erikson 1995). As Judith Herman states, “traumatized people feel that they belong more to the dead than the living” (1992: 52).

For Holocaust survivors who fled from genocide, the trauma was not just one of genocide as a traumatic event, but also one of loss, one of radical life change, and one of forcibly having to adapt to a new environment and identity, frequently as second-class citizens through relocation. Several studies of genocide refugees indicate that this adjustment to a new land does not equate to the creation of a new sense of home (Khattak 2002; Warriner 2007; Cainkar, Abunimah, and Raei 2004; Tribe 2005; Gozdzia 2002). Leaving the homeland does not simply represent the leaving of a physical space and security but the disconnect that thereby occurs from one’s sense of self, one’s culture, and one’s history.

Here I will borrow from Claudia Card’s work on genocide and social death (2003), in which she uses Patterson’s concept of “social death”—first used in the context of African slavery in the U.S.—to define a parallel process of disconnection in genocide. The socially dead are “no longer able to pass along and build upon the traditions, cultural developments (including languages), and projects of earlier generations” (Card 2003: 73). Card’s use of these terms is flexible. Her focus is on the loss of cultural heritage that results from lost family ties, dislocation,

and transformations caused by genocide. This is not to question the death of individual Jewish tradition, but rather the victim's ability to *sustain* connections to those traditions. Social death therefore encompasses a variety of aspects of the Holocaust: indecent deaths and the inability to bury bodies properly, loss of family ties and generational heritage, loss of communities, and loss of traditions, values, and the ability to maintain rituals. Natal alienation is the birth of children to subsequent generations in which the community has been destroyed and the ties to past generations have been severed through separation and death. For refugees of the Holocaust who immigrated to Israel, social death and natal alienation are applicable concepts that highlight the link between psychological trauma and cultural trauma.

Israel and the Holocaust

Survivors in Israel experienced increased recognition of trauma that was the result of witnessing violence and death, but an overall failure to address the ongoing trauma of being uprooted and stripped of their roles of identification and culture, that is, their social death and cultural trauma. This failure, one could speculate, is tied to the political desire to maintain a united front in the establishment and promotion of Israel (Burg 2008; Segev 1991). Zionism provided an ideology with which to transform a persecuted minority group into a migrating group that would create its own nation by resettling in Palestine (Shapira 1998: 220). This ideology, in Ben-Gurion's mind, developed into a culture of defense, as this minority group developed into a group fighting for its freedom—therefore steering away from a narrative of trauma (Shapira 1997: 653). There was also an underlying expectation that Jewish exiles arriving in Israel would, out of loyalty to their new country, abandon their old selves in order to emulate the *Sabra*—the ideal Jewish-Israeli archetype (Zerubavel 2002; Segev 1991). The analysis of the survivors' encounters with humanitarian aid institutions, Zionist activities that influenced survivors towards Zionist goals, or fought to get Jewish children back to the Jewish people regardless of what was best for the children, points to a discrepancy between survivor needs and institution interests, and highlights the intertwining of the personal and political in the aftereffects of trauma (Reick 2009).

How has this affected the Israeli psyche?

The Holocaust should be remembered, but the way in which it is being remembered in the present is interfering with Israel's ability to experience its independence (Burg 2008). Israel gives more voice to its dead than its living, thus adopting a "sword" mentality through which everything is understood and explained by force (Burg 2008). "Israel lives in a constant state of emergency": Burg's (2008) concern as a politician is reflected in the social psychological research of Daniel Bar-Tal and his colleagues who developed and studied the concepts of victimhood and siege mentality, and analyzed it using quantitative methodologies. Victimhood is defined as "... a state of individual and collective ethnic mind that occurs when the tradi-

In Israel, siege mentality was born of the Jewish past of persecution (found also in Biblical reference), which was reinforced and confirmed by the occurrence of the Holocaust—a "metaphor for Jewish history itself" (Bar-Tal and Antebi 1992: 253; 1992b). Research indicates that while siege mentality may vary in intensity over time and in different religious or political subgroups of Israel, it continues to permeate in Israeli culture (Bar-Tal and Antebi 1992b).

tional structures that provide an individual sense of security and self-worth through membership in a group are shattered by aggressive, violent political outsiders. Victimhood can be characterized by either an extreme or persistent sense of mortal vulnerability" (Montville in Rosenberg 2003).

The components of victimhood therefore are a past of trauma and aggression that is perceived as unjustified, ongoing fear of past aggressors, and a sense of the world's indifference to one's plight (Rosenberg 2003). These components are present in Israel.

Siege mentality is a derivative of victimhood, a collective symptom grounded in the "mental state in which group members hold a central belief that the rest of the world has negative behavioral intentions towards them" (Bar-Tal, in press). This belief is accompanied by ethnocentrism, which develops out of a sense that the group is "alone" in the world; this leads to a sense of threat to the group, which then justifies group self-defense by any means (Bar-Tal and Antebi 1992). Both victimhood and siege mentality paradigms acknowledge the prominence of fear and vulnerability in affecting a group's perception of "self" and "other."

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Jewish history itself” (Bar-Tal and Antebi 1992: 253; 1992b). Research indicates that while siege mentality may vary in intensity over time and in different religious or political subgroups of Israel, it continues to permeate in Israeli culture (Bar-Tal and Antebi 1992b).

The literature across disciplines returns to these collective patterns of isolation, mistrust, hyper-reactivity, and insecurity that stem from the Holocaust. The Holocaust is a “chosen trauma” (Volkan 1997) or cultural trauma—an experience that survivors as a group have been unable to mourn and has thus become integrated into a traumatic collective memory; this leads to a collective focus on the group’s past victimization, which in turn may affect the group’s identity.

Politics of trauma: the manipulation of Holocaust memory

Collective trauma forges a collective identity through ritual and commemoration, so that even those that did not experience the trauma can remember it by participating in rituals (Giesen 2004). The memorial or museum are built within a political and cultural context that has an impact on what is memorialized and how it is memorialized, and thus what is remembered, how it is remembered, and more subtly what is also forgotten (Young 1993). In essence, according to Young (1993), these memorials tie past to present, destruction to construction of a new land, death to a new life in a new land, and victimhood to heroization. For example, Yad Vashem and its outdoor memorials built on Mount Herzl reflect the conjoining narratives of the heroes and victims of the Holocaust with a focus on resistance and resilience. The observation of two minutes of silence in Israel as a ritual during Memorial Day creates both a sense of common past and common future, thus uniting all Israelis regardless of their relationship to the Holocaust.

When the personal becomes political: the ethics of trauma manipulation

While Holocaust memorialization in Israel has given voice to survivors and opened a space where the personal has become political, it has simultaneously *shaped* the personal into political. Holocaust museums, memorials, memorial days, and testimonies are socio-politically “edited” to meet broader political goals and fit a national discourse so that aspects of the trauma remain hidden or buried, and aspects of the personal are erased: “The progressive narrative demanded a future-oriented renewal. Zionists argued that the Jewish trauma could be redeemed, that Jews could both sanctify the victims and put the trauma behind them, only if they returned to Jerusalem. According to the Zionist worldview, if Israel were allowed to exist, it would create a new race of confident and powerful Jewish

farmer-warriors, who would redeem the anti-Jewish atrocities by developing such an imposing military power that the massive murdering of the Jews would never, anywhere in the world, be allowed to happen again” (Alexander 2004: 220).

The Israeli national narrative is redemptive in nature. It is a narrative that has taken the Holocaust as a founding trauma for Israel. This discourse implies that the trauma is now over. This is where the personal and trauma are buried within the public and political. What is buried are those aspects of the personal experience that challenge the national narrative, or that threaten collective identity and cohesiveness. Social death and natal alienation are buried under the rise of a new national discourse that is rooted in the myth of returning to one’s land and denouncing exilic past. National discourse revolves around unity and integrity, but it does so by creating an image of wholeness, fullness, and closure that is imaginary because it discards the ruptures in trauma caused by mass violence, as well as the ruptures in traditions, rituals, and cultural legacies (Edkins 2003). These traditions are replaced with memorialization of the Holocaust and the ritualization of national mourning.

The psychoanalytic concept of working-through, which is applicable on an individual level, becomes increasingly complex on a cultural or collective level. A blurred understanding exists as to how the working-through is occurring and whether it has been successful. Very little in the literature agrees as to what it would

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mean to have successfully worked through trauma, to have successfully grieved the Holocaust.

The extensive review of literature certainly suggests that in Israel the trauma of the Holocaust has transformed, but not necessarily subsided. The recent increase in memorialization of the Holocaust indicates that it is a process that is becoming more institutionalized and not routinized or forgotten. New museums are designed to elicit strong emotions from visitors in order to more deeply induce psychological identification and broaden “symbolic extension,” thus making the process of working-through elusive (Alexander 2004: 255). In Israel, dynamics of memorialization are complexly intertwined with a political agenda for redemption and national pride.

The Holocaust has been appropriated in Israel for the broader political goals of developing collective unity and a national identity, and justifying military action (Bar-Tal and Antebi 1992a). These short-term national goals appear to have “splintered” the socio-psychological process of working-through, leading the discourse of trauma and its transformation in various directions for nationbuilding. In essence, the lessons and legacies of the Holocaust in Israel have overlooked psychic healing in favor of other lessons that have more “national currency” but lend themselves to trauma renewal in order to sustain unity. □

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representation, **HEADACHE,** and the square wheel

An Octuple Problem of Representation
147 Years After*

By Ayda Erbal

the Turkish edition of Vartan Artinian's doctoral thesis, "A Study of the Historical Development of the Armenian Constitutional System in the Ottoman Empire, 1839–1863," submitted to Brandeis University's Near Eastern and Judaic studies department in 1970, starts with a preface written by Rober Koptas, now a columnist for Agos and one of the editors of Aras Publications. Koptas quotes an anecdote originally narrated by Hagop Djololyan Siruni in his *Bolis yev Ir Teri* (Constantinople and Its Role): "...The first year of National Constitution was being celebrated. It was a big day for Bolis Armenians. People were running from large neighborhoods to Beykoz with the boats they rented. The boats were stopping at Bosphorus, in front of the Dolmabahce Palace, and the passengers were shouting, 'Long live Sultan!'"

It is told that Sultan Abdulmecid, asleep at the time, had woken up because of the noise and had summoned Sadrazam Ali Pasha immediately to his presence. The Sultan asks furiously, "What is this noise? What are these boats?"

"Your highness, the Armenians are very happy about the constitution granted to them and they are going to Beykoz to celebrate."

"Ali, what did you do? What did you give them? Don't you know they will become a headache soon?"

"Your highness, please do not get excited or worried. I gave them a square wheel. They are going to try to turn this wheel, but they won't be able to. This way they will clash with each other and leave us alone" (volume 3, p. 87, my translation from Koptas' translation to Turkish).

Koptas begins his piece by arguing that despite the impossibility of establishing the veracity of the anecdote, this famous story nonetheless exemplifies how Armenians perceived the Armenian Constitution that was ratified by the Ottoman Empire in 1863 after numerous changes. That same legal document preceded the two Ottoman Constitutions, of 1876 and 1908, the failure of which would first give way to the 1909 Adana Massacres, then to the hijacking of parliament by the Ittihadists.

While the anecdote tells a lot about how the Armenians of Istanbul embraced their newly ratified constitutional framework,

it also tells a great deal about the imperial mind and how it anticipates and operates—an imperial state tradition almost akin to a second nature that minorities everywhere have great difficulty reading, understanding, and hence strategizing accordingly.

The anecdote was the first thing that came to my mind when I read the text of the protocols between Turkey and Armenia.¹ I could have also remembered the long 19th century of the Ottoman Empire and how that century was particularly emblematic of the Ottoman state elite's periodic promises of institutional commitment on matters related to its non-Muslim subjects (citizens post-1908), followed by its periodic failures to keep its own promises. But the same century was also emblematic of an ever-growing Western Armenian quest for representation. This was a period in which the Armenian middle class and Armenian intellectuals in cities with large Armenian populations gained considerable ground against the centuries-old Amira [Armenian notables in Istanbul] domination

Ottoman Imperial Constitution. Krikor Odyan, who was not only one of the closest friends but also the advisor of one of the architects of the Ottoman Constitution, Mithat Pasha; Vahan Efendi, the undersecretary of justice; and Hovhannes Chamich Efendi, a State Council member, were all members of the Ottoman constitutional commission. Although the Armenian Constitution was suspended for three years until 1866 because of the disputes between political and religious committees, there had been instances in the long history of the Armenian Church where Armenian religious authorities had welcomed civilian deliberation. For example, the Armenian Church decision (506 AD) to reject the Chalcedon Council (451 AD) bears the signatures of civilians as well as church leaders.³

With this backdrop in mind, the protocols between Armenia and Turkey were a grim reminder of another loss during the Armenian Genocide and grand expropriation in the years after

How did Western Armenians end up in this painfully pre-modern, pre-constitutional, and almost tribal mindset with no serious political thinking, discussion, or debate about legitimacy, representation, and delegation?

in community and church affairs. The constitution was a result of not only a grassroots push for more representation in various community affairs, such as the management of schools, hospitals, and pious organizations, but also, to a certain extent, a result of inter-Amira competition especially between bankers and technocrats and their quest for regulation. But the decisive actors leading the movement for a written constitutional framework were the young intellectuals educated in European schools and equipped with liberal ideas on representation, delegation, and deliberation. The five years from 1855 to the final draft of 1860 would witness a fierce debate with intellectuals and guild members on one side, and powerful Amiras (such as Garabed Amira Balyan) trying to curtail their efforts for representation on the other.

As is hinted in the paragraph above, despite the fact that the National General Assembly² would be suspended several times starting in 1860, the Ottoman Armenian Constitutional framework was the ultimate result of a long and legitimate struggle for representation, a now-forgotten achievement of a legal (and by extension also legalist) tradition among Western Armenians. There was also an organic connection between the Armenian Constitutional movement and Kanun-i Esasi of 1876, the

1915: the almost complete eradication and disappearance of a legal tradition that takes issues of representation and deliberation rather seriously. Re-reading parts of Vartan Artinian's thesis, the single major question that comes to mind in the context of the protocols is: How did Western Armenians end up in this painfully pre-modern, pre-constitutional, and almost tribal mindset with no serious political thinking, discussion, or debate about legitimacy, representation, and delegation? The whole endeavor, both with its pro- and anti-protocol colors, could be the opening line of a popular joke: "A benevolent organization, a grassroots political organization, some political parties, and a state find themselves on a deserted island..."

True, these organizations and the Armenian state elite have some representative power in other issues. But to what extent they have power to represent Western Armenians in an issue that concerns all Western Armenians—notwithstanding whether they are affiliated with a party or a benevolent organization—is debatable, to say the least. Instead of debating the limits of their jurisdiction for representation, these organizations chose to hurry to take positions pro- or anti-protocol. The word on the street was that the Armenian state was pressured to take a position and several organizations reacted to that pressure; there were also, of course,

rumors about the political-economy of the whole thing, that the oligarchic elite of both the Armenian state and the diaspora were rushing to close the deal to their benefit. It looked like this kind of ersatz representation was all Western Armenian organizations could come up with in 95 years, carelessly letting otherwise trivial protocols redefine their positions vis-à-vis each other while testing their organizational, representational, and deliberative muscle—which, we saw, amounted to nothing. The Sadrazam, under the auspices of the international order, gave them a square wheel of a different kind; and, voila, they could not turn the wheel and, as expected, started to fight with each other.

However, the discussion to be had was not whether a benevolent organization or a political party was pro- or anti-protocols; the real and much belated debate should have been one of a different order, a discussion about increasing the quality of political participation, cooperation, and several possibilities of a larger political representation via innovative and legitimate deliberative channels. After all, Ottoman Armenians did not only eat kebab and dance to kef music, they also happened to be the lawmakers of both their own immediate communities and of the Ottoman Imperial Constitution itself.

Surely genocide can explain certain issues, but there are others for which Western Armenians should take responsibility and think seriously, beyond partisan concerns, after a mere 95 years. Political partisanship and difference of opinion are good and indicative of the health of a community in general; however, there are issues that require utter care and responsibility, surpassing the boundaries of partisanship. After all, the differences are trivial compared to the size of the calamity itself, and the loss is too dear to be used in age-old partisan disputes. Despite the organizational difficulties that have also been pointed out by Armenian Weekly contributors Harut Sassounian⁴ and Henry Dumanian⁵, there's still time to organize a better and much more democratic future both in the diaspora and Armenia proper if problems can be identified correctly.

From a theoretical point of view there are *at least* eight problematic areas of representation, some particularly Western Armenian in character, others directly stemming from the Armenian political experience in Armenia.

The most visible and most problematic area of representation is that concerning citizenship and the representative boundaries of the state of Armenia. There are two distinct but somehow intertwined issues that need attention, and they are wrongly perceived by most people, including the majority of Turkish intellectuals and journalists, as one problem: The rights of individual Western Armenians who are not, technically speaking, the citizens of Armenia, and the rights of Western Armenians as a community (concerning issues of communal ownership of several denominations).

To begin with, the state of Armenia does not have any jurisdiction whatsoever to represent the rights of individual non-citizen Western Armenians. Technically speaking, whatever it signs binds only its own citizens and nobody else. If anything, the aggregation of the rights of non-citizen Armenian individuals does not auto-

matically make those rights national rights. Individuals' claims in this domain, like in any other domain, are much closer to a larger class action rather than the action of a national entity as such. As we have seen from the recent Swedish decision once more, that class is larger and includes others such as Assyrians. There is also a major philosophical problem behind this reductionist perception of the individual imprisoning him/her to his/her ethnicity as in guilt by association. This perception itself is at the root of all crimes against humanity, which first happens in the mind of the perpetrator who is willing to reduce the multitude of individuals to an identity they are born into without their choice. Yes, the Armenian *nation* lost its churches, community centers, culture, and language; however, hypothetically speaking, *nationless* individuals who happened to be Armenians also lost property and lives. In the end, not being able to differentiate between individual and communal rights is tantamount to appropriating the mindset of the perpetrator who is willing to sacrifice the individuality of the person to his/her communal marker. These considerations should not remain as some esoteric philosophical discussion in one corner of a special issue of the Armenian Weekly, since killing the individuality of the weaker is what connects all acts of genocide to each other—anywhere from Namibia to Germany to Rwanda to Bosnia and Darfur. In other words, they not only killed Armenians or Jews per se, but millions of non-identical individuals with distinct rights who had myriads of other identifiers and millions of stories that should not have been reduced to their Armenianness or Jewishness, etc. Especially if one thinks about the official Turkish historiography regarding 1915 and how it is legitimized, one can further understand the problem with guilt by association and, in the case of the protocols, “reward” by association. Accordingly, the Turkish elite had to deport Western Armenians because some Western but mostly Eastern Armenians joined Russian forces against the Ottoman Empire. So Western Armenians were “legitimately” punished because of the actions of the Eastern Armenians. The protocols bear the rather dangerous seeds of a similar tribalizing of Armenians beyond their control. Perhaps not as visible and not on paper, but nevertheless in the speeches of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the process is marred with the same mistake from the Turkish side, which treats citizens of Azerbaijan and citizens of Turkey as one political unit.

In the case of communal rights, on the other hand, if the majority of Western Armenians are willing to delegate (or withhold) their communal rights to/from the state of Armenia, then they must do so *not* through illegal and ex-post facto fait-accompli, as we saw between Aug. 31 and Oct. 10, 2009, but through a carefully designed legal framework following proper rules of democratic deliberation, if indeed such communal rights can ever be delegated. If anything, these extremely amateurish six weeks were tainted with this and other problems of representation during which all parties touted, first and foremost, for lawlessness in what looked like a badly staged mock deliberation. As one can clearly see by now, being pro- or anti-protocols is not so much the cen-

tral issue compared to the problem of representation that parties involved should honestly and seriously (I can't emphasize both enough) think about.

The second problem of representation concerns the jurisdiction of individual diaspora organizations and their representative boundaries. Are political parties, churches, and organizations as distinct as the Armenian General Benevolent Union, the Armenian National Committee of America, the Armenian Assembly of America, and the Knights and Daughters of Vartan entitled to represent the rights of individual Armenians in *this* particular matter? Where, if anywhere, in their foundational or subsequent documents does it say they can act as councils delegating (withholding) the rights of non-citizen Western Armenian individuals to the state of Armenia? Who gave them the authority to do so? To begin with, there were no large pre-protocols town-hall meetings that engaged all segments of the Armenian communities. Instead of being illegitimate parties to a *fait-accompli*, these organizations' first priority should have been to provide and enable a transparent, deliberative environment in which concerned individuals could get non-partisan information (a huge task) about what the protocols are and what kind of representative options they had at hand (they had none at the time, and have none still). And even if they had conducted such meetings, the issue of legitimate representation would still be hanging in the air, since there is no overall framework defining these organizations and parties as representatives of individual Armenians in *this* particular matter. When and how did Armenians as individuals delegate their rights to these organizations and parties? What is the legal basis of their authority other than the calcified structures that the elite everywhere confuse with legitimate representation?

The same thing is true for communal rights, although to a certain extent it's understandable how the churches can claim representative rights in matters concerning the fate of communal property (such as the churches in Anatolia); even then, there are several issues (different denominations, for example, or the issue of civilian rights in matters concerning communal property) that need to be discussed in a proper framework.

The third problem of representation has to do with how much the elites of these organizations represent their constituencies in any given matter, at any point in time. Apart from the issue of jurisdiction above, the organizations and parties did not follow the rules of deliberation even for their own constituencies. There was a big gap between the reaction of the grassroots of the organizations, and the elites running the organizations. Even if the elite knew better, they still had to justify their decisions to the people they supposedly represent. Instead, they chose to stamp and hijack the process, much like the Amiras and Hodjas of the 18th and 19th century. One way of honoring the dead and the lost, which is at the center of all things Turkish-Armenian, could have been learning from their experience. That experience was the culmination of several centuries of serious thinking and writing about representation.

There was some discussion about the fourth problem of representation, which has to do with the legitimacy of the 2008 presidential elections in Armenia and how representative the Armenian state elite is of its own citizens. This dimension of legitimacy and representation was problematized on and off in the writings and speeches of Raffi Hovhanessian, Vartan Oskanian, Levon Ter Petrossian and, albeit very late (as argued by Henry Dumanian⁶), within some Dashnak quarters as well. Overall, diaspora organizations were also criticized for not being as interested in the health of the electoral process in Armenia and its outcome as much as they were interested in the protocols. This was a misplaced criticism because the issue of citizenship (elections) is a matter of political choice, whereas the issue of being a survivor is not a political choice. One can choose to become a citizen of Armenia in order to have a say in the politics of Armenia, but individual survivors, regardless of which country's citizen they are, have a say in any process involving Turkey without necessarily becoming involved in any political process in Armenia.

Diaspora organizations' or individuals' investment in Armenia does not automatically grant them the right to meddle in Armenia's domestic affairs unless they also are citizens of Armenia. They, of course, can choose to invest in a direction to enhance the democratization of the institutions in Armenia; however, this is all they can do without a political commitment to a national political order.

The fifth problem of representation has to do with the status of Nagorno-Karabagh and the disputed territories, and the role of Stepanakert in matters that concern its people's borders, security, and right to self-determination. This is the least clear of all issues of representation, more visible since the Madrid principles. To what extent the "self" in "self-determination" represents Karabagh's self, to what extent it is the state of Armenia's self, is up for debate.

The sixth problem of representation concerns the representation of churches other than Apostolic denominations in the process since, historically speaking, they also have a right to be part of any negotiation—something that is often overlooked and forgotten in the process.

The seventh problem of representation has to do with the patriarchal and generally archaic character of Armenian political and benevolent organizations, all of them predominantly governed by heterosexual men. This issue is perhaps not unique to Armenian organizations, and may be prevalent in all traditional settings in which the overwhelming presence of the church as a representative institution makes it all the more difficult for others to be represented equally. However, in an ever-changing and dynamic world, the legitimacy of these organizations will depend more on their ability to embrace all previously underrepresented constituencies instead of clinging to a traditional understanding of patriarchal politics.

The eighth problem of representation concerns the Istanbul Armenians since, theoretically speaking, a good number of Armenian churches of Apostolic denomination within the borders

continues on page 93



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The Holy Akhtamar



By Ayse Gunaysu
Images by Mujgan Arpat

The historic homeland of the Armenians turned into a cemetery after the genocide of once-precious Armenian monuments—demolished or left to ruin. According to the last census of the Patriarchate of Istanbul, in 1913, on the eve of World War I, there were approximately two million Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, inhabiting 2,925 town quarters and villages. These communities had 1,996 schools, with over 173,000 male and female students, as well as 2,538 churches and monasteries—evidence of a vibrant and deeply rooted Armenian presence in the empire. This rich cultural heritage was intentionally further eradicated throughout the 95 years following the genocide. In January 2008, a motion was presented to the European Council urging Turkey to put an end to this cultural cleansing; it described the situation as follows: “Today, virtually no Armenians remain upon their historic homelands currently incorporated in the Republic of Turkey, and thousands of churches, monasteries, and other spiritual and secular treasures of European architectural heritage have been either completely destroyed or damaged to the extent of becoming immediately subject to the threat of disappearance.”

In 2007, this historic homeland of the Armenians—deprived of everything remi-



niscient of its thousands-years-old presence—witnessed an extravagant project of restoration, supported with high-profile publicity activities by the Turkish authorities and the media. The restoration project was for the 1,000-year-old Holy Cross Church on Akhtamar island, Lake Van. The church, which was visited by many foreign tourists throughout the years, had been worn out and closed, neglected and harmed by treasure hunters, and facing collapse. Both its foundation and ceiling had cracks and holes.

The restoration undoubtedly rescued such an invaluable monument. Yet, the approach to the restoration itself and the opening ceremony—attended by the Turkish minister of culture, various government officials, ambassadors of several countries, Armenian (Mutafyan), a delegation from the Republic of Armenia, and journalists was proof of that Turkey was not ready at all for a real attempt at reconciliation. The stage was overwhelmed with the presence of Turkish flags—of every size, and in every location possible. A huge Turkish flag, in



Cross Church in Island



fact, draped over one end of the island, was the first thing that greeted the visitors. While the restoration site was turned into a worship site of the Turkish flag, the Holy Cross Church ceased to be a holy cross church, as Turkish authorities refused to put a cross on the church dome. A cross had been prepared nearly a year before the opening, and Mesrob II had petitioned the prime minister and minister of culture to place the cross on the dome of the cathedral. But Turkish officials said it would be inappropriate to display a cross or hold a mass in what was now a secular museum.

The opening ceremony also served as a setting for Turkish nationalist groups to protest the entire project. They carried Turkish flags, pictures of Atatürk, and banners that read, "The Turkish people are noble. They would never commit genocide." The heavy police presence cut their protests short. In the meantime, however,



about a thousand kilometers from Van, in Ankara, demonstrators outside the Ministry of the Interior chanted slogans against the idea of a cross being mounted atop the church, declaring, "You are all Armenians, we are all Turks and Muslims."

The motion presented to the European Council regarding the lack of any efforts to preserve the Armenian cultural heritage referred to this restoration project, as well: "Despite Turkey's long-standing official denial of the genocide and its attendant dispossession, a happy exception to the general rule has been the recent restoration of the Armenian Church of the Holy Cross on the island of Aghtamar in Lake Van," it read. "Hopefully, this trend will continue into the future, but it must be recorded that the Turkish authorities have forbidden the placement of a cross atop the church. Holy Cross remains crossless and, having been converted into a museum, is closed to prayer, worship, and religious ceremony."

It went on: "The Parliamentary Assembly invites Turkey to take the following measures pursuant to its international obligations and the European identity to which it aspires: in the finest example of integrity and leadership proffered by the Federal Republic of post-war Germany, to face history and finally recog-



nize the ever-present reality of the Armenian genocide and its attendant dispossession, to make restitution appropriate for a European country, and so to achieve reconciliation through the truth; [...] in particular, to conduct in good faith an integrated inventory of Armenian and other cultural heritage destroyed or ruined during the past century, based thereon to develop a strategy of priority restoration of ancient and mediaeval capital cities, churches, fortresses, cemeteries, and other treasures located in historic Armenia, and to render the aforementioned fully operational cultural and religious institutions...¹ □

ENDNOTES

1. To read the full text of the motion, visit <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/WorkingDocs/Doc08/EDOC11510.htm>.



Resistance through Identity in Nimi'ipuu



Text and images by Mikal Brotnov

The intended focus of the photographic component was to explore how personal and communal identities are formed in a post-genocidal society.

Prior to returning home to the reservation, I interned in the Education Department of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian under the direction of Carol Johnson and Clare Cuddy. While working in the material culture vaults, I experienced a visceral reaction to what was in front of me and prompted me to move from the past to the present. Thus, the focus of this photographic essay changed.

As a future historian, I read many books written about the Nimi'ipuu as if they were extinct. Much of my own research is built upon evidence revealing that thousands died at the hands of squatter imperialism. The importance of documenting the modern Nimiipuu loomed large for me, and dominates this work.

Images focusing on ritual, transmission of culture, centers of power and communal celebration inform this photographic essay.

I was struck by the inherent strength of native youth. They navigate multiple identities—modern and traditional—through numerous ethnic, racial and cultural lifeways.

The photographs, when juxtaposed with archival documents and maps, take on an entirely different dimension and demonstrate how genocide shapes modern-day Nimiipuu society. Maps showing past and present boundaries elucidate the geo-political implications of non-native encroachment and cultural harm the federal government inflicts upon the Nimiipuu, or Nez Perce.

For me, the photos crystallize how resistance, often powerful, manifests through the various avatars of carefully maintained and constructed native identity.

My aim became to document the Nimiipuu as I see them: a nation of vibrantly proud people who have given so much and taken so little. □



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1889—FEBRUARY 4—P

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Puzzle & Sincerity

Let's give Armenians what we took from them

By Gulisor Akkum

"The history of civilization" started in Anatolia, a geographic region that harbored the riches necessary for "sedentary life." This richness made it an attractive place throughout history, and resulted in its being constantly invaded.

However, it never saw a massacre as horrible as the one during World War I, and never went through such homogenization.

In this war of apportionment between western imperialism and the Ottoman Empire, the latter committed a social and cultural genocide to peoples such as the Armenians, Syrians, Alevis, Kurds, Pontic Greeks, and Yazidis, destroying, in just a few years, all the tangible and intangible treasures of humanity formed in the past 14,000 years.

Approaching these policies of genocide and deportation from only a biological and social point of view makes it harder for us to see the costs for humanity. This event demolished all the scientific and cultural values in the region, where the foundations of the history of civilization were laid.

These genocides in Anatolia, the cultural heart of the Middle East, weren't confined to it, but caused a historical decline for all "Oriental communities."

Such a fragmentation in Anatolia almost turned the reconstruction of the Middle East into a puzzle.

And in this puzzle, Kurds have come close to finding their place within Anatolian unity. Nevertheless, they know that their place will remain incomplete until the other pieces of the puzzle find their own places as well.

This awareness has not evolved into a concrete theory within the Kurdish movement. In connection with this theory, which must be

formed without delay, Kurds can play a crucial role in this puzzle of the century, provided that the right steps are taken.

The most sensitive point in this theory is that the puzzle is composed of "organic" pieces, and that therefore it can be made whole not by crude political calculations, but by sincerity only.

Kurds must come to terms with their history, remember their brotherhood with Armenians, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Greeks, Alevis, and Yazidis—with whom they wrote the history of civilization in Anatolia—and recapture this organic connection with them.

These peoples, who have suffered genocides, are dispersed throughout the globe. Their eyes and ears are turned toward Turkey, and what they expect most is sincerity.

A few weeks ago, I thought it might be a good symbol of the Kurds' sincerity if a house that once belonged to an Armenian in Diyarbakir, Turkey, were bought and returned to an Armenian in need. I got an appointment from the Diyarbakir Metropolitan Municipality to talk about the legality of such a proposal.

Before the appointment, however, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan declared that he would deport 100,000 Armenians working in Turkey (the number was inflated) as a response to the attitudes of Sweden and the United States towards the "Armenian Question."

That is why I cancelled my appointment with the municipality. And now I am making my proposal to those who really count:

"None of these peoples, with whom we share our songs, stories, dances, and sufferings, is an immigrant on these lands. Let's give them back what we took away from them, so that they don't have to live on their lands as 'immigrants!'"

Of course, I don't expect this proposal to be accepted by Turkey. But I want those who are sincere to gather around the proposal. □

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of Turkey are under their jurisdiction, and any retributive justice including matters of church and other monuments' renovation would require their input. In addition to this, who should represent the Istanbul Armenians or whether they should also have a civilian representative body has been a stand-alone divisive issue for the last five years. The current status of Armenian citizens of Turkey is determined by the Lausanne Treaty, which recognizes them as a religious community with the Patriarchate being in charge of matters concerning the community. The problem of Istanbul-Armenians' representation is further exacerbated by what was supposed to be the election of a co-patriarch. The process has been stalled for almost four and a half months now, while the community awaits the approval of the Ministry of Interior. What should have been an otherwise procedural decision of the Ministry of Interior has been derailed because of the rather arbitrary decision of the co-patriarch election committee to disregard the framework of the 1863 Armenian National Constitution. Even if one party were willing to disregard a legal precedent or a framework partially or totally, that party needs to follow due process rather than hi-jack the discussion with a quasi coup d'état or try to score points with *fait-accomplis*. It looks like touting for lawlessness has become the current "national" marker of all Diaspora Armenians from the United States to Turkey. This kind of coup d'état mentality, an utter contempt for any due process, and a dangerous penchant for arbitrariness are perhaps the few things the Turkish and Armenian elite can claim brotherhood around, since the Turkish side of the equation is also heavily marred by several domestic faux-pas concerning the procedural aspect of Ergenekon and sub-Ergenekon plots, in addition to a very arbitrary judicial process coupled with an extremely problematic and equally arbitrary process of changing the constitution—a major legal-institutional residue of the 1980 coup d'état.

Perhaps it's time for all parties to the protocols to better understand their at-times common history in the last 100 years of the empire. Although what followed led to the annihilation of Western Armenians from their ancestral territories, those 100 years were also years emblematic of a crucial political process taking issues of representation, legitimacy, and deliberation seriously. □

ENDNOTES

* I thank Marc Mamigonian and Aram Arkun for their comments and suggestions.

1. The second thing was the now-defunct Oslo Peace Process which resulted in the Second Intifada; the third was the entire record of the British Mandate in Palestine, particularly its purposefully murky and vague documents, and the imperial institutional design that was also reflected in the linguistic vagueness of the documents themselves.
2. The name of the assembly was not consistent in its Armenian and Ottoman Turkish versions. For example, in the Armenian

version it was *Azkayin Inthanur Joghov* (National General Assembly), which became *Meclis-i Umumi* (General Assembly without any "national" qualifier) in Ottoman (see Artinian, Vartan, *Osmanli Devleti'nde Ermeni Anayasasi'nin Dogusu* (Istanbul: Aras Publishing, 2004, p.117); "A Study of the Historical Development of the Armenian Constitutional System in the Ottoman Empire, 1839–1863" (trans. Zulal Kilic, ed. Rober Koptas)).

3. Yumul, Arus, "Ottoman Empire's Constitution," reprinted in *Osmanli Devleti'nde Ermeni Anayasasi'nin Dogusu 1839-1863* (ed. Rober Koptas) (Istanbul: Aras Yayincilik, 2004, p. 165).
4. Sassounian, Harut. "Proposal to Create a Framework that Unites Diaspora Armenians," the Armenian Weekly, Feb. 23, 2010.
5. Dumanian, Henry. "Readers' Comment on Harout Sassounian's 'Proposal to Create a Framework that Unites Diaspora Armenians,'" the Armenian Weekly, Feb. 23, 2010.
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 5. Ugur U. Ungor, "A Reign of Terror CUP Rule in Diyarbakir Province, 1913–1923," unpublished MA thesis submitted to the University of Amsterdam department of history, June 2005.
 6. For the Armenians of this region, see Raymond H. Kévorkian and Paul B Paboudjian, *Les Armeniens dans l'empire Ottoman a la veille du Génocide* (Paris: ARHIS, 1992), pp. 400–401.
 7. For the clashes between Kurdish tribes in the region, see Ungor, "A Reign of Terror," pp. 27–31. Also see www.tirej.name/osman%20seabri/3.html.
 8. For an elaborate account of this refugee flux, see Vahé Tachjian, *La France en Cilicie et en Haute-Mésopotamie: Aux confins de la Turquie, de la Syrie et de l'Irak 1919–1933* (Paris: Karthala, 2004), pp. 274–285. According to the report by Basmadjian and Térdjanian, by the end of 1929, 500 Armenian families had entered High Jazira (CADN, m. S.L, 1er versement, b.d. no. 2544, "Rapport du Basmadjian et de Michel Tergegnian sur les émigrés Arméniennes, arrivés récemment et réfugiés dans les régions de Kamechlié, Hassatché, Amouda et Karamé," Dec. 28, 1929, p. 2).
 9. Robert Montagne, "Quelques aspects du peuplement de la Haute Djeziré," *Bulletin des Etudes Orientales*, II, 1932, pp. 53–66. For a detailed geographical assesment of the region, see André Gibert and Maurice Fevret, "La Djezireh Syrienne et son Réveil Economique," *Revue de Géographie de Lyon*, 28, 1953, pp. 1–15, 83–99; Etienne de Vaumas, "La Djézireh" *Annales de Géographie*, 65 (348), 1956, pp. 64–80; P. Poidebard, "Mission Archéologique en Haute Djezireh (Automne 1927)," *Syrie*, 9, 1928, pp. 216–223. For the ancient history of the region, see Louis Dillemann, *Haute Mésopotamie Orientale et Pays Adjacents: Contribution à la Géographie Historique de la Région* (Paris: Geuthner, 1962). For the *barriyya*, see Victor Muller, *En Syrie avec les Bédouins* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1931).
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 16. For relations between the Armenians in Syria and the Syrians under the French mandate, see Keith Watenpaugh, "Towards a new category of colonial theory: Colonial cooperation and Survivor's Bargain, The case of the post-genocide Armenian community of Syria under French mandate," in Nadine Méouchy and Peter Sluglett, *The British and French Mandates in Comparative Perspectives/Les mandats Français Anglais dans une perspective comparative* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), p. 599
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 18. Al-cha'ab, al-watan al-qawmi al-armani fi shimal, yuallim al-suriyyin," Nov. 3, 1928.
 19. Al-cha'ab, al watan al-kawmi al-armani fi Suriya, d'awaal-"orient" ila iskan al-arman fi al-cazira, Jan. 28, 1930.
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 21. Taken from CADN, dossier 576, Service politiques, bureau d'études, "l'Armenie et les Armeniens," redacteur: cdt. Terrier.
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 24. Martin van Bruinessen, "Constructions of ethnic identity in the late Ottoman Empire and Republican Turkey: the Kurds and their Others," www.let.uu.nl.
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