

CHAPTER 18

GENOCIDE AT THE  
TWILIGHT OF THE  
OTTOMAN EMPIRE

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WORLD WAR I saw the almost complete annihilation of the Ottoman Armenians. The destruction stands at the centre of an intense debate. Some historians claim that Armenians organized uprisings in the rear of the Ottoman army and comparably few Armenians were killed during an anti-insurrection campaign.<sup>1</sup> Others do not address the genocide directly, but provide insights into the functioning of the state military, the ‘Special Organization’ (TM—Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa),<sup>2</sup> an organization that had been founded by the ruling Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) for intelligence, counter-insurgency, and other tasks that the government did not want to be associated with, and Ottoman demographic policies.<sup>3</sup> These studies

<sup>1</sup> Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *Ermeni Tehciri ve Gerçekler (1914–1918)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2001); *idem*, *Sürgünden Soykırıma. Ermeni İddiaları* (Ankara: Babıali Yayıncılığı, 2006); Hilmar Kaiser, ‘Dall’impero all repubblica: le continuità del negazionismo turco’, in Marcello Flores (ed.), *Storia, verità, giustizia. I crimini del XX secolo* (Milan: Bruno Mondadori, 2001), 89–113; *idem*, ‘Le génocide arménien: négation ‘à l’allemande’, in Comité de Défense de la Cause Arménienne (ed.), *L’actualité du Génocide des Arméniens* (Paris: Edipol, 1999), 75–91.

<sup>2</sup> Erdal Aydoğan, ‘Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa’, in Hikmet Özdemir (ed.), *Türk–Ermeni İhtilafı. Makaleler, Turkish–Armenian Conflict. Articles* (Ankara: Türk Büyük Meclisi Kültür, Sanat ve Yayın Kurulu Yayınları, 2007), 399–427.

<sup>3</sup> Fuat Dündar, *İttihat ve Terakki’nin Müslümanları İskân Politikası (1913–1918)* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001); *idem*, *Modern Türkiye’nin Şifresi. İttihat ve Terakki’nin Etnisite Mühendisliği (1913–1918)* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008).

discuss Ottoman wartime policies and undermine claims of an Armenian uprising, as large-scale demographic programmes would have been unthinkable under such conditions: the deportation of over three million people (Armenians and non-Armenians) depended on the absence of substantial resistance.

Other authors assume that the genocide was part of a policy that used the 'opportunity' afforded by the war to realize a scheme that had been in the making for years. Such interpretations stress the role of the CUP. The party had supposedly used the TM to execute the genocide, but the organization was a part of the Ottoman military.<sup>4</sup> Critically, the approach suggests coherent planning ahead of the crime while fragmented evidence is seen as a proof for a conspiracy.

Recent case studies have avoided generalizations based on limited sources.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, claims of long-term genocidal planning appear to be untenable. Instead, it has become evident that the development of the war determined the timing of deportations and massacres.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the genocide cannot be separated from demographic policies that targeted other communities, like the Greeks, Nestorians, Syrian Orthodox Christians, Circassians, and Druzes, and depended on the extraction of Armenian assets. The CUP's goal was the establishment of total control over state and society.<sup>7</sup> This chapter will consider the development of the genocide in the context of wider Ottoman demographic policies and late Ottoman history.

## THE OTTOMAN CONTEXT

Since the founding of the empire, deportations formed part of Ottoman policies by which unwanted groups were replaced with controllable populations. A solid tax base was crucial for the maintenance of bureaucracy and army.<sup>8</sup> A major divide in Ottoman society was that between Muslims and non-Muslims. While Muslim

<sup>4</sup> Vahakn N. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide. Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus* (Providence, RI/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1995); Taner Akçam, *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility*, trans. Paul Bessemer (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Uğur Ü. Üngör, '“A Reign of Terror”: CUP Rule in Diyarbekir Province, 1913–1913', MA Thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> Fikret Adanır and Hilmar Kaiser, 'Migration, Deportation, and Nation-Building: The Case of the Ottoman Empire', in René Leboutte (ed.), *Migrations and Migrants in Historical Perspective. Permanencies and Innovations* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2000), 273–92.

<sup>8</sup> Rudi Paul Lindner, *Nomads and Ottomans in Medieval Anatolia* (Bloomington, IN, Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1983).

communities constituted a majority by 1914, Christian communities formed a sizeable part of the empire's population. Importantly, Greeks and Armenians played critical roles in the Ottoman economy. Non-Muslims had some autonomy in internal community affairs, while being subjected to discriminatory taxation and an inferior legal status.<sup>9</sup> Following a weakening of government control, local competitors for the tax revenue emerged from urban and rural elites in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>10</sup> Early in the nineteenth century, the central authorities began eliminating this competition.<sup>11</sup> This re-centralization policy, however, did not check the rise of nationalist movements and the founding of independent Balkan states. Increasingly, Ottoman governments depended on European support. In return, they granted concessions and other privileges to European nationals. The governments were further weakened by increasing foreign debt that led to bankruptcy and tightening European control over the tax basis.<sup>12</sup> The loss of territory to European powers and secessionist groups intensified tensions even more.

Following a defeat by Russia, in the 1878 Congress of Berlin the Sublime Porte accepted territorial losses and reforms, including improvements for Ottoman Armenians. For years, Ottoman authorities had increased taxation while local elites had not stopped levying their own duties. The government did, however, not stop this abuse nor provide security, allowing continued double taxation. Competition for land increased the insecurity of Armenian life and property. The central government was partly responsible. For years, the Sublime Porte had settled Muslim immigrants to strengthen control over areas feared to be threatened by foreign occupation or national movements like the Armenian highlands. Many newcomers had survived ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, Caucasus, and the Aegean.

Lacking funds, the government regularly abandoned settlers without supplies, tacitly supporting their occupation of non-Muslim property.<sup>13</sup> In the Armenian highlands, Kurdish leaders joined in the competition for land, registering

<sup>9</sup> Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (eds), *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society* (New York: Holmes and Meyer, 1982).

<sup>10</sup> Bruce McGowan, 'The Age of the Ayans, 1699–1812', in Halil İnalcik and Donald Quataert (eds), *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 637–758.

<sup>11</sup> Andrew G. Gould, 'Pashas and Brigands: Ottoman Provincial Reform and Its Impact on the Nomadic Tribes of Southern Anatolia, 1840–1885', PhD Dissertation, University of California: Los Angeles, 1973.

<sup>12</sup> J. A. R. Marriott, *The Eastern Question: An Historical Inquiry in European Diplomacy*, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924); Donald C. Blaisdell, *European Financial Control in the Ottoman Empire: A Study of the Establishment, Activities, and Significance of the Administration of the Ottoman Public Debt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929; rpt. New York: AMS, 1966).

<sup>13</sup> Abdullah Saydam, 'XIX. Yüzyılda Adana Eyaletinin Sosyo-Ekonomik Yapısı Hakkında Bir Rapor', *Belgelerle Türk Tarih Dergisi* 71 (1991), 27–33; Gould, *Pashas and Brigands*.

Armenian land in their names with the support of the authorities. Kurdish tribes used Armenian fields as pastures, demanded shelter for the winter, often taking possession by killing the owners and abducting women and children. The erosion of Armenian landholding was part of a policy to create a Muslim majority in Armenian districts. In the face of government indifference to Armenian protests, Armenians appealed to the Berlin Congress; thereby the 'Armenian Question' entered the agenda of European diplomacy.<sup>14</sup>

Reforms did not materialize. The Ottoman government continued its settlement programme, attracting as many Muslims to its territory as possible.<sup>15</sup> Increasing tensions between Armenians and Muslims favoured the rise of Armenian political organizations in the 1880s. These parties intended to protect villages. For its part, the government created the Kurdish 'Hamidieh' cavalry in 1890. The units were used against Armenian organizations and rewarded with tax relief. They enriched themselves openly at the cost of Armenians or other Kurds.<sup>16</sup> When in 1894 Armenian mountain dwellers in Sassun opposed double taxation, Ottoman troops and Kurds slaughtered them, starting a series of massacres. Throughout 1895 and 1896, Hamidiehs and Muslim villagers and townsmen massacred Armenians, plundering property, seizing land, and abducting women. The government furthered the weakening of Armenian communities by deporting survivors from Sassun, making room for more Muslim settlers.<sup>17</sup>

In the absence of foreign intervention, the Ottoman government organized the massacre of thousands of Armenians in Constantinople in 1896.<sup>18</sup> It survived the ensuing diplomatic crisis with a promise for reform. The Ottoman authorities continued to suppress political discontent as opposition remained weak and split along ethnic and ideological lines. By 1908, however, a severe economic crisis intensified social discontent.<sup>19</sup> An army mutiny forced the weakened government to accept parliamentary rule. The coup triggered intercommunal fraternizations

<sup>14</sup> Arshag O. Sarkissian, *History of the Armenian Question to 1885* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1938).

<sup>15</sup> United Kingdom, National Archives, Kew Gardens, Foreign Office (hereafter: FO) 195/2073, Massy to Chargé d'Affaires, Adana, Dec. 31, 1900, no. 31; *ibid.* FO 195/2095, Jan. 16, 1901, no. 7; *ibid.* Massy to O'Connor, Adana, May 5, 1901, no. 24.

<sup>16</sup> Martin M. Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Scheich und Staat. Politik und Gesellschaft Kurdistans* (Berlin: Edition Parabolis, 1989), 248–9; Jelle Verheij, 'Die armenischen Massaker von 1894–1896: Anatomie und Hintergründe einer Krise', in Hans-Lukas Kieser (ed.), *Die armenische Frage und die Schweiz (1896–1923)* (Zürich: Chronos Verlag, 1999), 69–129. Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: The Development of Armenian Political Parties through the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963).

<sup>17</sup> Avedis Nakashian, *A Man Who Found a Country* (New York: Crowell, 1940), 135.

<sup>18</sup> Hugo Von Köller, *Von Pasewalk zum Bosphorus. Ein abenteuerliches Junkerleben* (Berlin-Leipzig: Brunnen Verlag, 1927), 245–8.

<sup>19</sup> Donald Quataert, 'The Economic Climate of the "Young Turk Revolution" in 1908', *Journal of Modern History* 51 (1979), D1147–61; *idem*, 'Machine Breaking and the Changing Carpet Industry of Western Anatolia, 1860–1908', *Journal of Social History* 19 (1986), 473–89.

and Muslim and Armenian parties cooperated in parliament.<sup>20</sup> In April 1909, a counter-revolution caused a setback. Massacres had been prepared in many places as well but were prevented by CUP members. In Cilicia, 25,000 to 30,000 Armenians were slaughtered by reactionaries who took advantage of religious fervour, dire economic conditions, inflation, and the competition for land and jobs. Despite their defeat, the reactionaries' strength impressed the CUP, which decided to integrate the oppositional Muslim provincial elites. Accordingly, Armenian demands for reform and the restitution of property met with new resistance, giving fresh impetus to Kurdish outrages and occupation of Armenian land. Armenian communities lost their representatives through the killing of teachers, priests, party leaders, and village headmen. Disillusioned, the leading Armenian party, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, broke with the CUP in 1912, on the eve, as it transpired, of another series of catastrophic events. British ambassador Gerard Lowther concluded that the 1890s massacres had been 'succeeded by fifteen years of draconian methods spelling even a worse extensive "elimination" of the Armenian element.'<sup>21</sup>

## ETHNIC CLEANSING OF GREEKS AND BULGARIANS

During the Balkan Wars of 1912–13, a coalition of Balkan states defeated the Ottoman Empire, which lost Macedonia, Epirus, Kosovo, and Western Thrace. The consequences were felt far beyond the war zone. During the fighting all states had massacred and displaced civilians. The rationale was to eliminate competing claims to occupied or re-occupied regions. At least 339,074 Muslims fled to Ottoman-held territory, while 376,186 still had remained behind by January 1915. The government was unprepared for the influx of destitute refugees and many of them died of starvation or disease.<sup>22</sup>

In response, the Ministry of the Interior reorganized its settlement policies while the CUP unleashed a clandestine campaign against Ottoman Greeks and

<sup>20</sup> For an overview, see Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London/New York: I. B. Tauris, 2004).

<sup>21</sup> FO 424/237/570, Lowther to Grey, Constantinople, Dec. 31, 1912, no. 1129.

<sup>22</sup> Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1914); Murat Bardakçı, *Talât Paşa'nın Evrak-ı Metrûkesi. Sadrazam Talât Paşa'nın Özel Arşivinde Bulunan Ermeni Tehciri Konusundaki Belgeler ve Hususî Yazışmalar* (Istanbul: Everest Yayınları, 2008), 39, 45.

Bulgarians.<sup>23</sup> Party cadres and government officials coordinated attacks along the Aegean littoral.<sup>24</sup> The authorities' complicity became evident as criminals were allowed to continue their outrages and force thousands of Greeks to flee. Then they recorded displaced Greeks and their property. The state coordinated the displacements and the settlement of immigrants, thereby obstructing the return of the legal owners.<sup>25</sup> The campaign continued into World War I when Greek communities were officially deported and their property seized. A minimum of 163,975 Greeks were expelled or fled to Greece, while at least 93,088 were deported to interior provinces. As many as 58,039 Bulgarians were expelled to Bulgaria.<sup>26</sup>

## THE ARMENIAN REFORM SCHEME

Another major challenge for the CUP following the Balkan Wars was the resurgence of the Armenian Reform question. Armenian leaders had brought up their grievances with European powers. The latter forced a new reform plan on the Ottoman government. The eastern provinces were divided into two regions, each under a European high commissioner overseeing reforms. The CUP opposed the scheme and stalled its implementation while threatening the Armenian leadership. The issue remained unresolved until the beginning of World War I provided the CUP with an opportunity to abandon the scheme.<sup>27</sup>

## WORLD WAR I

A secret military alliance with Germany gave the CUP new political leverage. In October 1914, the Ottoman government abrogated the 'Capitulations' that had

<sup>23</sup> H. Yıldırım Ağanoğlu, *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Balkanlar'ın Makûs Talihi Göç* (Istanbul: Kum Saati, 2001), 346–54.

<sup>24</sup> Midhat Şükrü Bleda, *İmparatorluğun Çöküşü* (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1979), 54–6.

<sup>25</sup> Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Auswärtiges Amt, Berlin, Politisches Archiv (hereafter: AA-PA), Türkei 168/11, A 12811, Wangenheim to Bethmann Hollweg, Therapia, June 25, 1914, no. 175; *ibid.* A 13109, Humbert to Wangenheim, Smyrna, June 25, 1914, no. 2795; copy enclosure in Wangenheim to Bethmann Hollweg, Therapia, June 6, 1914, no. 179; *ibid.* A 13846, Schönberg to Mutius, Therapia, July 9, 1914; enclosure in Mutius to Bethmann Hollweg, Therapia, July 10, 1914, no. 187.

<sup>26</sup> Bardakçı, *Evrak-ı Metrûkesi*, 39, 45, 79, 80–1.

<sup>27</sup> Armen Garo, *Bank Ottoman. Memoirs of Armen Garo*, trans. Haig T. Partizian, ed. and intro. Simon Vratzian (Detroit: Armen Topozian, 1990), 182–92.

granted foreign nationals some immunity from Ottoman law. The CUP also wanted to pre-empt foreign interventions in support of the non-Turkish communities.<sup>28</sup> Now the CUP targeted Zionist settlers in Palestine. The Ministry of Interior installed Manastirli Bahaeddin Bey, its expert for Zionist affairs and a member of the TM, as governor of Jafa. The official announced that he would destroy the Zionist movement; all foreign Jews would have to leave while new arrivals would not be permitted. Jewish settlers who had become Ottoman citizens were harassed and others discouraged from applying. On 5 November 1914, authorities searched Jewish houses for arms and documents, demanding the surrender of all guns legally owned by Zionists. The latter were forced to purchase guns to meet the number of guns demanded from them. At the same time, Bahaeddin promised Muslim villagers the Zionist settlers' land and women so that fear of massacre spread. On 17 December 1914, police rounded up and deported Jews to Egypt. Due to German and US opposition, however, the campaign slowed down until it gained new momentum in 1917.<sup>29</sup>

## NESTORIANS

Throughout the summer of 1914, the Ottoman government was concerned about Russian advances towards the Kurdish and Nestorian population. On 26 October 1914, Talaat ordered the deportation of the Nestorians from Hakkari to western provinces where they should be dispersed among Muslims. Three days later, the scheme was, however, postponed for lack of forces and soon abandoned for the time being.<sup>30</sup> The deportation scheme was probably connected with the imminent Ottoman attack on Russia. Apparently, the CUP suspected that the Nestorians would join forces with Russians and tried to pre-empt that danger. Seeing that its suspicions did not materialize, the CUP shelved the project. Avoiding deportation did not, however, mean escaping massacre during Ottoman cross-border raids into

<sup>28</sup> Ulrich Trumpler, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 1914–1918* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 38–9; AA-PA, Türkiye 159, no. 2/14, A 32771, Neurath to Bethmann Hollweg, Pera, Nov. 5, 1915, no. 654.

<sup>29</sup> Israel, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem, Z 3/52, Ruppin to Lichtheim, Jaffa, Mar. 24, 1915, enclosure to Action-Committee to Members, Berlin, Apr. 4, 1915; Isaiah Friedman, *Germany, Turkey and Zionism, 1897–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page, 1918), 370.

<sup>30</sup> Türkiye Cumhuriyeti, Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, İstanbul, Dahiliye Nezareti (hereafter: DH) Şifre Kalemî (hereafter: ŞFR) 46–78, Talaat to Van province, Oct. 26, 1914, Emniyet-i Umumiye Müdiriyeti (hereafter: EUM) Spec. 104; *ibid.* 46–102, Minister to Van province, Oct. 29, 1914, EUM Spec. 107; *ibid.* 46–195, Talaat to Van province, Nov. 5, 1914, EUM Spec. 113.

Iran or following the collapse of the Ottoman front along the Iranian border in 1915. Further inland, Syrian Orthodox Christians were massacred alongside Armenians in Diarbekir province.<sup>31</sup> Their killing appears, however, not to have been part of a central government policy. The provincial authorities were repeatedly instructed to treat Syrian Orthodox differently than Armenians.<sup>32</sup>

## ARMENIANS

In August 1914, Ottoman TM units started undercover cross-border operations into Russian territory. The goal was the softening of Russian border defences and to foment a rebellion among the Muslim population.<sup>33</sup> Following an Ottoman naval attack on Russian Black Sea ports on 29 October 1914, France, Britain, and Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire. On 14 November 1914, the Ottoman Empire declared a 'Holy War'. In December 1914, the Ottoman Third Army launched an offensive, hoping to take the Russians by surprise. The attack failed, however, and the army was almost annihilated. During their retreat, irregular units and fleeing Muslim civilians began plundering and massacring Armenian villages. The atrocities were motivated by the lack of supplies and a desire for revenge.<sup>34</sup> By spring 1915, the Ottoman army suffered further defeats on Sinai and the Mesopotamian and Iranian fronts. On 18 March 1915, an allied fleet nearly forced the Dardanelles.<sup>35</sup> In view of this danger, the Ottoman government prepared to evacuate the government and the imperial court from Constantinople.

Following defeat in Iranian Azerbaijan, Ottoman troops turned the region before the advancing enemy into a wasteland. They annihilated local Armenians although the latter had remained loyal. The campaign's principal target was the Armenian community in Van. The city was the Armenian political centre of the eastern provinces. Here, Armenian leaders organized and coordinated political

<sup>31</sup> Precise information about these atrocities is still lacking, but it appears that almost all surviving Nestorians fled the area. David Gaunt, *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors: Muslim-Christian Relations in Eastern Anatolia During World War 1* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2006); Üngör, *Reign of Terror*.

<sup>32</sup> See for instance: DH.ŞFR 57–102, Minister to Diarbekir, Bitlis, Harput, Aleppo provinces, Urfa district, Oct. 25, 1915, EUM Spec. 91, 51, 86, 113, 42; *ibid.* 70–79, Shukru to Diarbekir province, Nov. 23, 1916, Aşâir ve Muhâcîrîn Müdiriyyeti Umûmiyyesi, Settlement Dept. Gen. 1089.

<sup>33</sup> Arif Cemil, *I. Dünya Savaşı'nda Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa* (Istanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1997), 27–32.

<sup>34</sup> Hilmar Kaiser, 'A Scene from the Inferno': The Armenians of Erzerum and the Genocide, 1915–1916; in Hans-Lukas Kieser and Dominik Schaller (eds), *Der Völkermord an den Armeniern und die Shoah / The Armenian Genocide and the Shoah* (Zürich: Chronos Verlag, 2002), 129–86.

<sup>35</sup> Carl Mühlmann, *Das deutsch-türkische Waffenbündnis im Weltkrieg*. Mit einem Geleitwort von W. Foerster (Leipzig: Koehler and Amelang, 1940), 43.

campaigns and, in case of need, the community's self-defence. Therefore, the Ottoman civilian and military authorities gave the elimination of this suspected internal foe priority over combating the Russians. The government forces attacked on 20 April 1915 and massacred surrounding Armenian villages with few exceptions. In the city, however, the government forces were defeated by Armenian defenders and withdrew on 17 May 1915 before Russian forces reached the city.<sup>36</sup>

Having received news about the defence at Van and expecting an imminent attack on the Dardanelles, Talaat ordered the arrest of Armenian community leaders empire-wide on 24 April 1915. In Constantinople, the police rounded up Armenian, among others, journalists, clerics, politicians, and teachers. The arrested were sent to the interior where the majority was killed. Armenian elites in the provinces suffered the same fate.<sup>37</sup>

## INITIAL DEPORTATIONS

The April arrests were not the start of general deportations although Armenians from Zeitun were re-directed to Der Zor, the new main destination for deportees. On 2 May 1915, the Ministry of War suggested the deportation of all Armenians from the eastern border regions to the Russian lines or to interior provinces. As in the case of the Greeks, the Armenians should immediately be replaced by Muslim settlers.<sup>38</sup> Within a week, the governors of Erzerum, Bitlis, and Van provinces were ordered to deport, in cooperation with the army, Armenians towards the Syrian Desert and Mosul.<sup>39</sup> On 23 May 1915, the deportations were extended to districts in historic Cilicia and border areas of Mosul province. Armenians could keep their movable possessions. They were to be distributed in villages and small towns. New Armenian villages had to be at least twenty-five kilometres away from railway lines and could not exceed fifty households. Moreover, Armenians must never exceed

<sup>36</sup> Onnig Mukhitarian, *An Account of the Glorious Struggle of Van—Vasbouragan*, trans. Samuel S. Tarpinian ([Detroit, MI]: General Society of Vasbouragan, 1980).

<sup>37</sup> Hikmet Özdemir and Yusuf Sarıınay (eds), *Türk-Ermeni İhtilâfı. Belgeler* (*Turkish–Armenian Conflict: Documents*) (Ankara: Türk Büyük Meclisi Kültür, Sanat ve Yayın Kurulu Yayınları, 2007), 18–27. Yusuf Sarıınay, 'What Happened on April 24, 1915?: The Circular of April 24, 1915, and the Arrest of the Armenian Committee Members in İstanbul', *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 14:1–2 (2008), 75–101.

<sup>38</sup> Özdemir and Sarıınay, *İhtilâfı*, 33–7.

<sup>39</sup> DH.ŞFR 52–281, Minister to Tahsin Bey, May 7, 1915 EUM Spec. 4090; *ibid.* 52–282, Minister to Tahsin, Mustafa Abdülhalık, Djevdet, May 9, 1915, EUM Spec. Dept. 409[o?]; Türkiye Cumhuriyeti, Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeniler (1915–1920)* (Ankara: Başbakanlık Basımevi, 1994), 28–9.

ten per cent of the Muslim population. Local authorities were responsible for the execution of the plan.<sup>40</sup>

On 24 May 1915, the Entente powers declared that they would hold all Ottoman citizens and officials personally accountable for their role in the persecution of the Armenians. The declaration defined the outrages that had occurred so far as crimes against humanity.<sup>41</sup> The Ottoman government responded on 27 May 1915 with a 'provisional law' that gave Ottoman military commanders the right to deport anyone they wished to. Three days later, the Ministry of the Interior issued a manual for its Department for the Settlement of Tribes and Immigrants, specifying the deportations' implementation.<sup>42</sup> Armenian immovable property was to be seized and used for the settlement of Muslims. Evidently, the deportations were not a temporary emergency measure but should permanently change the demographic map.<sup>43</sup>

## ARMENIAN PROPERTY

On 10 June 1915, the Ministry of Interior regulated the liquidation of Armenian property. All property had to be registered while perishable goods and livestock were to be auctioned off immediately. The Muslim migrants were settled first, then nomads. The newcomers had to be capable of farming or operating the businesses they received. Non-distributed real estate was to be auctioned off. In sum, Armenian owners had lost their property rights and could not object.

On 26 September 1915, the government passed a provisional law concerning the property of Armenian deportees. Nominal attention was given to the rights of creditors who could present their claims, but obstacles rendered the pursuit of their interests impracticable. Even if claimants won their case, they could not obtain already liquidated properties. On 6 January 1916, Talaat stated that the Ottoman economy had to become an exclusively Muslim one. He decreed that Armenian property must fall into Muslim hands. On 23 November 1916, the government also sanctioned the seizure of property of Armenians who had not been deported.

<sup>40</sup> Özdemir and Sarıınay, *İhtilâfî*, 46–9, 66–9; DH.ŞFR, 53–91, Minister to Mosul province, Urfa, Zor districts, May 23, 1915, EUM; *ibid.* 53–92, Minister to Adana, Aleppo provinces, Marash district, May 23, 1915, EUM; *ibid.* 53–93, Minister to Erzerum, Van, Bitlis provinces, May 23, 1915, EUM; *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeniler*, 33–4; Bloxham, *Great Game*, 84–5. For an overview based largely on Armenian sources see Raymond Kévorkian, *Le génocide des arméniens* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2006).

<sup>41</sup> Arthur Beylerian (ed.), *Les grandes puissances, l'Empire ottoman et les Arméniens dans les archives françaises (1914–1918)*, Recueil de documents (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1983), 29.

<sup>42</sup> Özdemir and Sarıınay, *İhtilâfî*, 64–5, 72–81; Kaiser, 'Négation', 81–3.

<sup>43</sup> Özdemir and Sarıınay, *İhtilâfî*, 72–6, 78–81.

The Ottoman government faced strong competition for the loot throughout the expropriation. Local elites, government officials, common criminals, and Armenians themselves succeeded in obtaining or hiding parts of property that otherwise would have been transferred to the government.<sup>44</sup>

## THE SECOND WAVE OF DEPORTATIONS

As with the expropriations, by the extension of deportations far beyond the war zone the Ottoman government demonstrated that military considerations were not the driving force behind the deportation programme. On 19 June 1915, the Third Army ordered the extension of deportations and the removal of all Armenians from the Erzerum, Trebizond, Van, Bitlis, Harput, Diarbekir, and Sivas provinces.<sup>45</sup> The vast extension of the deportation programme necessitated adjustments by the authorities. Given the massive number of deportees, recordkeeping emerged as a major task. Repeatedly, the Ministry of Interior demanded information on Armenian villages, their location and agricultural potential, number of deportees and the route along which they had been deported, Armenian real estate, and suggestions for settlement of prospective settlers.<sup>46</sup> On 22 June 1915, Armenians who had converted to Islam were allowed to stay behind for the time being and had to undergo special registration. The order was personally addressed to the provincial governors, who were all trusted CUP members. They had to keep it secret and destroy the evidence.<sup>47</sup>

Throughout July 1915, the central authorities requested population data and information on the progress of the deportations and their impact on the ethnic make-up of the areas in question. The region around Diarbekir had been earmarked for Turkification and the settlement of other Muslim nationalities prohibited.<sup>48</sup> As Armenians were not to exceed ten per cent of the population, the

<sup>44</sup> Hilmar Kaiser, 'Armenian Property, Ottoman Law, and Nationality Policies during the Armenian Genocide, 1915–1916', in Olaf Farschild, Manfred Kropp, and Stephan Dähne (eds), *The First World War as Remembered in the Countries of the Eastern Mediterranean* (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2006), 49–71.

<sup>45</sup> Türkiye Cumhuriyeti and Genelkurmay Başkanlığı, *Arşiv Belgeleriyle Ermeni Faaliyetleri 1914–1918*, vol. i (Ankara: Genelkurmay Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2005), 187–8.

<sup>46</sup> DH.ŞFR 54–15, Ali Munif to Adana, Aleppo, Erzerum, Bitlis, Van, Diarbekir provinces, Marash district, June 14, 1915, İskan-ı Aşair ve Muhacirin Müdiriyyeti (hereafter: IAMM); *ibid.* 54–136, Ali Münif to Harput, Trebizond, Sivas provinces, Canik district, June 24, 1915, IAMM.

<sup>47</sup> DH.ŞFR 54–100, Minister to Governors of Van, Trebizond, Erzerum, Bitlis, Harput, Diarbekir, Sivas, Djanik, June 22, 1915, EUM Spec. 4531.

<sup>48</sup> DH.ŞFR 54–272, Minister to Diarbekir province, July 3, 1915, IAMM 54; *ibid.* 54/A–51, Minister to all provinces districts, July 20, 1915, EUM Spec. 397; *ibid.* 54/A–100, Minister to Erzerum, Adana, Bitlis Aleppo, Diarbekir, Sivas, Trebizond, Harput, Van provinces, Urfa, Djanik, Marash districts, July 24, 1915, EUM Gen. 400.

government had to face an increasingly large 'surplus' population that survived the death marches from the eastern provinces. As a countermeasure the settlement zones were broadened within the Mosul and Aleppo provinces and extended to today's Southern Syria and Jordan.<sup>49</sup>

The unfolding human disaster soon reached such proportions that the authorities were faced with an unexpected problem. Thousands of Armenian children had been left behind along supply lines and in cities and villages. In many places, local Muslims had taken children in, be it for altruistic or other reasons. Now the government tried to regain control of the situation. The Ministry of Education was put in charge of the children. Those younger than ten years of age were to be admitted to government orphanages, but adequate facilities were lacking or non-existent.<sup>50</sup>

Many families had given up children in face of imminent massacre or because they could no longer provide for them. Massacres in villages and towns were mostly avoided to preclude loss of property by plundering and burning like in the 1890s and in 1909.<sup>51</sup> The killing of Armenians during the deportations took place in several stages. While most Armenian men had been drafted into the army, there were still many older men, teenagers, deserters, and those who had paid the military exemption tax among the deportees. The government escorts, mostly gendarmes or local militia, usually separated most of the men from the caravans during the first days of the deportation. The men and boys were then taken away and killed. Males who either succeeded in disguising themselves as women or managed to bribe the guards gained a temporary reprieve from massacre. The men usually did not resist their murderers, not wanting to endanger the lives of their families.<sup>52</sup>

At specific locations along the route the deportees were camped for some days while several convoys were merged. During this respite, the deportees were informed that a massacre was imminent and asked to give up their children and teenage girls or to buy their way out of the predicament by paying a ransom. In this way, the authorities induced the deportees to surrender large amounts of money and valuables that otherwise could be obtained only with difficulty and effort as the deportees often swallowed precious stones and coins. Similar to a modern turnpike system, the convoys passed successive notorious massacre sites; where those who could not longer pay were murdered. Following the massacres, the killer squads searched the corpses for valuable documents, like life insurance policies and financial documents that could be used by the state to claim the benefits as being the legal heir of the victims.

<sup>49</sup> Özdemir and Sarınoy, *İhtilâfî*, 144–8.

<sup>50</sup> DH.ŞFR 54–163, Minister to Harput province, June 26, 1915, EUM Spec. 4573; *ibid.* 54–411, Ali Munif to provinces, July 12, 1915, IAMM 378; *ibid.* 54/A-54, Ali Munif to Sivas province, July 20, 1915, IAMM 66; Özdemir and Sarınoy, *İhtilâfî*, 118–19.

<sup>51</sup> Kaiser, 'Armenian Property'.

<sup>52</sup> AA-PA Türkei 183/40, A 32613, Sarkis Manukian to Rössler, Aleppo, Nov. 25, 1915; enclosure 2 in Rössler to Bethmann Hollweg, Aleppo, Nov. 30, 1915, K. no. 110, no. 2725.

The killing squads operated under the command of trusted CUP members who were either administrators or officers, or had been assigned to the TM. The composition of these units varied from district to district. While TM units were responsible for massacres close to the combat zone, the gangs in the interior districts included local militiamen, gendarmes, Kurdish tribal groups, or cut-throats hired from the local population for the occasion. The convoys' escorts cooperated with the killing squads in coordinating the delivery of the victims at the assembly points so that comparably few men could murder large numbers of victims with swords and daggers within a short period of time. Major massacre sites, located near transit camps like the Kemah gorge near Erzindjan, Lake Khazar near Harput, and the valleys south of Firindjilar near Malatia, shared certain characteristics. The sites were mountainous but still close to overland roads. Thus, the deportees could be easily transported to the massacre sites while having relatively few escape routes. Rivers and deep gorges facilitated the hiding or disposal of corpses.

The killers were rewarded with a part of the stolen property and women and children, depending on availability or preferences. Armenian boys survived in Muslim villages and among tribes as slaves working as either shepherds or farm hands. Their survival was, nevertheless, uncertain as replacements were cheaper than adequate food rations. Girls were mostly used as house servants or sex slaves and, if lucky, as brides within the family. This way the family saved payment of a dowry, a major expense within the life cycle of a Muslim peasant family. Moreover, converted Armenian children who were raised by Muslims could keep the inheritance from their original families, thereby generating considerable new income. The absorption of Armenian women into Muslim families presented no problem as the women were forced to become Muslim and the nationality of the males defined the identity of the family. Some, however, objected to the CUP's extermination policy and wanted to save a person from abuse and almost certain death.<sup>53</sup>

Following the murder of most men and older boys during the initial phase of the deportations, the history of the Armenian genocide became by and large that of women and children. It marked a reversal of gender roles within the Armenian community where women were subjected to patriarchal structures that limited their independent decision-making and contacts with outsiders. Moreover, women from exclusively armenophone communities had to cope with situations where they could only communicate with other deportees. Mostly women and children became the target of random and systematic rape. The violence was targeted at destroying the Armenian individuals' and community's self-perception by inflicting lasting psychological harm. Rape meant an irreparable transgenerational loss of self-esteem, or 'honor', for Armenians, even if they lived beyond the reach of the Ottoman government. The women's counter-strategies included disguising their age, forms of physical

<sup>53</sup> Kaiser, 'A Scene'; Özdemir and Sarıay, *İhtilâfî*, 194–5.

individual or joint resistance, but often suicide was the only ‘protection’ from rape left.

Escape from the caravans was no common option as the deportations had eliminated places of refuge within whole provinces. Nevertheless, Armenian women developed strategies defying the CUP’s genocidal logic. Elder women gave up their food ration for the children and girls were given up before the boys. Once only boys were left, the mother tried to protect at least one male descendant at the cost of her own life. Thus, women focused not on individual survival but that of the family as they understood it, and were willing to engage in activities that stood in extreme contrast to their social values.<sup>54</sup>

## THE THIRD WAVE OF DEPORTATIONS

By early August 1915, the government extended the deportations to the central and western provinces. Areas with small Armenian communities were excluded as were some urban communities in part.<sup>55</sup> Now the government sanctioned the ongoing dispersion of young Armenian children among non-Turkish Muslim villages. The government’s own assimilation efforts gained new momentum in 1916. It appears that the authorities relied on private and foreign institutions to keep the children alive until government institutions were put in place.

Unlike in the eastern provinces, large numbers of Armenians were deported by railway or along the railway lines. Again, the authorities tried to keep track of the deportees, their number, place of origin, and current location. Following protests from the US, German, and Austro-Hungarian embassies, Catholic and Protestant Armenians, who had so far not been deported, were exempted, unless they constituted a concern. Moreover, the number of remaining Armenians and their percentage of the total population had to be ascertained. Protests and production breakdowns secured the permanent or temporary exemption of Armenian

<sup>54</sup> Eliz Sanasarian, ‘Gender Distinction in the Genocidal Process: A Preliminary Study of the Armenian Case’, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 4:4 (1989), 449–61; Ara Sarafian, ‘The Absorption of Armenian Women and Children into Muslim Households as a Structural Component of the Armenian Genocide’, in Omer Bartov and Phyllis Mack (eds), *In God’s Name. Genocide and Religion in the Twentieth Century* (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2001), 209–21. Armen Anush, *Passage Through Hell: A Memoir*, trans. Ishkhan Jinbashian (Studio City, CA: Hagop and Knar Manjikian, 2005). Donald E. Miller and Lorna Toryan Miller, *An Oral History of the Armenian Genocide* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>55</sup> DH.ŞFR 54/A-200, Minister to 4th Army command, July 31, 1915, IAMM Statistical Dept. 63. *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeniler*, 81.

specialists and workers, while families of Armenian soldiers that still remained behind were distributed among Muslim villages.<sup>56</sup>

Already at the end of August 1915, Talaat was certain that the Armenian Question had been solved.<sup>57</sup> In the western provinces, however, the large number of deportees created considerable problems for operating the railways and increased the chaos in and around Aleppo, the cross-roads of the deportation. Streamlining the transfer of deportees and recordkeeping remained a major challenge. In response, Talaat dispatched a special envoy, Shukru Bey, to the railway and northern Syria. Increasingly, deportee convoys from central and eastern regions were re-directed towards Mosul.<sup>58</sup> The measure came in response to the rapid progression of deportations in the western and central provinces. By 18 September 1915, many districts had already been entirely emptied. Exempted Armenians had been dispersed among Muslim villages up to five per cent of the population. Two months later, Talaat decreed that those exempted had to become Muslims.<sup>59</sup>

On 7 October 1915, Shukru Bey issued new regulations for the deportations to the Syrian Desert. He had established new administrative offices along the lower Euphrates for the coordination of the deportations. Henceforth, the optimal size of a deportation caravan was 1,000 deportees. Rakka, Harran, and Der Zor were designated as settlement regions for hundreds of thousands who had to be individually registered. The extension of the deportations increased the government's expenses. In response, the authorities used proceeds from Armenian property for the financing of deportations.<sup>60</sup>

In spring 1916, the deportations from interior and eastern provinces came to a halt as relatively few Armenian women and children were left. These were to be dispersed in exclusively Muslim villages or taken into orphanages. Women of childbearing age had to marry Muslim men.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>56</sup> DH.ŞFR 55–206, Minister to Sivas province, Aug. 25, 1915, EUM Gen. 5256; *ibid.* 55–323, Talaat to Angora province, Aug. 30, 1915, EUM Spec. 67; *ibid.* 59–111, Hasan Shafi, Dept. IAMM Director, to provinces, Dec. 27, 1915, IAMM Gen. 790; Hilmar Kaiser, 'The Baghdad Railway and the Armenian Genocide, 1915–1916: A Case Study in German Resistance and Complicity', in Richard G. Hovannisian (ed.), *Remembrance and Denial: The Case of the Armenian Genocide* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 67–112; *idem*, *Cross-roads*; Özdemir and Sarıınay, *İhtilâfı*, 174–5, 178–9, 208–9; DH.ŞFR 54/A-294, Minister to Izmid district, July 28, 1915, EUM Spec. 43; DH.ŞFR 55–211, Minister to Syria, Adana, Konia, Ankara, Aleppo provinces, Urfa, Zor Marash districts, Aug. 25, 1915, EUM Spec. 5258; *ibid.* 55–208, Minister to provinces, Aug. 25, 1915, EUM Spec. 5260; *ibid.* 55/A-230, Talaat to Adana province, Sunday Sept. 12, 1915, EUM Spec. 64.

<sup>57</sup> AA-PA Türkei 183/38, A 26474, Hohenlohe to Bethmann Hollweg, Pera, Sept. 4, 115, no. 549; Özdemir and Sarıınay, *İhtilâfı*, 234–7.

<sup>58</sup> Özdemir and Sarıınay, *İhtilâfı*, 262–3, 272–3; DH.ŞFR 55/A-145, Talaat to provinces, Sept. 18, 1915, EUM Gen. 568.

<sup>59</sup> *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeniler*, 93–96; DH.ŞFR 57–281, Talaat to provinces, Nov. 4, 1915, EUM Spec. 6270.

<sup>60</sup> Özdemir and Sarıınay, *İhtilâfı*, 300–15, 380–3.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* 424–6, 438–9, 442–3.

## THE LOWER EUPHRATES

Those deportees that survived the death march and reached the Syrian Desert found themselves trapped in a system of camps that stretched along the Euphrates to Der Zor. In the camps, the Ottoman authorities exposed them to contagious diseases like typhus which killed hundreds daily. Refusal to provide water and food increased the high mortality among the emaciated victims. Here as well, Muslims were eager to obtain Armenian women. Authorities registered such marriages but did not record the deaths of the former Armenian husbands.<sup>62</sup>

In January 1916, the route along the Euphrates was littered with human corpses and bones, bearing testimony to the ongoing killing of deportees and death by exhaustion, famine, and disease.<sup>63</sup> The government monitored the number and death of deportees but recordkeeping became more complicated when the authorities started emptying outlying camps and forced the Armenians into the desert camps around Der Zor. In June 1916, deportations to Mosul and Syria were stopped. Consequently, Armenians had to be distributed within the Der Zor region and adjoining districts of Aleppo province.<sup>64</sup>

The local economy could not support the tens of thousands of Armenians in the small desert settlements while the authorities watched the impact of a killing famine and ravaging pandemics. Nevertheless, Talaat accelerated the dispatch of Armenians into the disaster zone. The authorities reacted swiftly when they learned that bribed gendarmes were allowing deportees to escape from the desert and return to Aleppo.<sup>65</sup>

In July 1916, Talaat repeatedly ordered the dissolution of Armenian camps near the military supply lines along the Euphrates River. He declared that Armenians were a military threat and must be moved to appropriate locations. Accordingly,

<sup>62</sup> Raymond Kévorkian, 'Le sort des déportés dans les camps de concentration de Syrie et de Mésopotamie', in *Revue d'histoire arménienne contemporaine* 2 (1998), 7–61; *idem*, 'Témoignages sur les camps de concentration de Syrie et de Mésopotamie', *ibid.* 62–215; *idem*, 'Autres témoignages sur les déportations et les camps de concentration de Syrie et de Mésopotamie (1915–1916)', *ibid.* 219–44; Helmut Becker, *Äskulap zwischen Reichsadler und Halbmond. Sanitätswesen und Seuchenbekämpfung im türkischen Reich während des Ersten Weltkriegs* (Herzogenrath: Verlag Murken-Altrogge, 1990); DH. ŞFR 58–114, Talaat to Suad Bey, Oct. 24, 1915, EUM Spec. 47.

<sup>63</sup> AA-PA Türkei 183/41, A 5498, Rössler to Bethmann Hollweg, Aleppo, Feb. 9, 1916, no. 366 K, no. 18; Rahmi Apak, *Yetmişlik Bir Subayın Hatıraları* (Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1988), 149.

<sup>64</sup> DH.ŞFR 62–199, Minister to Zor district, Apr. 1, 1916, EUM Spec. 6; *ibid.* 64–165, Talaat to Zor district, May 31, 1916, EUM 22; *ibid.* 64–175, Talaat to Zor district, June 1, 1916, EUM Gen. 47469; *ibid.* 64–239, Talaat to Aleppo province, June 7, 1916, EUM Gen. 47701 Spec. 79; *ibid.* 64–248, Talaat to Zor district, June 7, 1916, EUM Gen. 47702 Spec. 25; *ibid.* 65–51, Talaat to Aleppo province, June 18, 1916, IAMM, Settlement Dept. Spec. 85.

<sup>65</sup> DH.ŞFR 64–292, Minister to Zor district, June 13, 1916, IAMM 28; *ibid.* 66–21, Talaat to Diarbekir province, July 18, 1916, EUM Gen. 49557 Spec. 39; *ibid.* 66–43, Talaat to Aleppo province, July 20, 1916, EUM Spec. 72.

Armenians in the employ of military transport had to be replaced by Muslims, thereby depriving the deportees of their only income. On 8 August 1916, Talaat ordered a count of all Armenians in the region and inquired into their percentage of the population. By the time of this order, the governor of Der Zor organized large-scale massacres. Near Der Zor, the governor burned alive approximately one thousand Armenian children. At the Khabur River, Chechen killing squads that had already massacred the inhabitants of the Rasulain camp slaughtered under government supervision Armenians by the tens of thousands. Again, the concentration of Armenian deportees assured that comparably few perpetrators could kill huge numbers of victims with axes and knives within a relatively short time while the authorities secured the victims' remaining valuables.<sup>66</sup>

Following these major massacres, the Ottoman government geared down its extermination programme. Der Zor remained a destination for deportees, particularly political suspects. The Armenians were continuously registered. In October 1916, the settlement commission at Rakka forwarded a list to Constantinople identifying 373 deportees from Amasia, Marash, and Hadjin.<sup>67</sup> Tracking surviving Armenians remained a concern for Talaat. He continued to monitor the progress, assimilation, and annihilation through population surveys while ideas for new settlement projects continued to be developed.<sup>68</sup>

The annihilation of the Armenians provided the government with a material basis for a restructuring of the Ottoman demographic map. In 1916, the authorities used the Armenian real estate in western and central provinces for the settlement of Kurdish tribal confederations. Like the last remaining Armenians, the newcomers were settled in small groups among Turkish-speaking Muslims to assimilate them. Their leaders were detained in distant locations. The area around Diarbekir, Urfa, and Adiaman received Muslim migrants, especially Albanians, and was designated as a 'Turkification region'. Kurds, Druze, Greeks, Shiites, and a variety of smaller groups were subjected to the programme. By 'Turkifying' entire regions as well as other non-Turkish and non-Muslim communities, the CUP sought to remove competing claims to Ottoman territory. The Kurds of Dersim had become alarmed by the extermination of Armenians as early as July 1915, fearing that they would be

<sup>66</sup> DH.ŞFR 66–19, Talaat to Zor district, July 19, 1916, EUM; *ibid.* 66–94, Talaat to Zor district, July 29, 1916, EUM Gen. 43 Spec. 1676; *ibid.* 66–159, Talaat to Zor district, Aug. 6, 1915, EUM Spec. 46; *ibid.* 66–170, Talaat to Zor district, Aug. 8, 1916, EUM Spec. 47; Ara Sarafian, compiler, *United States Official Records on the Armenian Genocide 1915–1917* (Princeton/London: Gomidas Institute, 2004), 555–60; AA-PA Türkiye 183/45, A 31831, Rössler to Radowitz, Aleppo, Nov. 5, 1916, K. no. 104; no. 3045; Anush, *Passage*; Kaiser, 'A Scene', 184–5.

<sup>67</sup> DH.ŞFR 69–261, Talaat to Marash district, Nov. 13, 1916, EUM Gen. 2942 Spec. 34; DH. EUM. Gen. 7–17/A, Rakka Settlement Commission to Ministry of Interior, Oct. 27, 1916.

<sup>68</sup> DH.ŞFR 69–120, Talaat to provinces, Oct. 29, 1916, EUM KLU 53999 Spec. 559; Türkiye Cumhuriyeti, Genelkurmay Başkanlığı, *Arşiv Belgeleriyle Ermeni Faaliyetleri 1914–1918*, vol. vii (Ankara: Genelkurmay Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2007), 320.

killed next. In response they sheltered Armenian refugees and formed joint Kurdish–Armenian resistance groups.<sup>69</sup>

## THE DEATH TOLL

The number of Armenian victims is unknown. Ottoman data filed in 1914 suggest an Armenian population of 1,281,173 or, adjusted for undercounting, at least 1,718,132.<sup>70</sup> Government data from 1915 shows that in Erzerum and Bitlis provinces 98,178 Armenians had been killed in clashes or had fled. The 67,792 Armenians of Van province were not deported, reflecting massacres and also Armenian resistance and flight. Of these 165,970 Armenians about 65,081 survived by escaping to Russian lines.<sup>71</sup> By April 1917, 284,157 Armenians remained, bringing the number of Armenians accounted for to 349,238. The statistics probably did not include Armenians in hiding and those who had converted. These formed, however, only a fraction of the 1,368,894 Armenians who had disappeared from Ottoman records. This suggests that over 1.1 million Armenians had lost their lives due to government policies. Possibly more than 150,000 Armenians had been forcibly assimilated. These low estimates are based on government data and do not cover Armenian losses in 1917 and 1918.<sup>72</sup> It must be emphasized that most survivors suffered from physical injuries, diseases, and psychological traumata. Many had been maimed. When these medical emergencies are taken together with the survivors' age and gender composition, and the annihilation of the secular and religious elites, the

<sup>69</sup> DH.ŞFR 54/A-128, Talaat to Erzerum, Diarbekir Bitlis provinces, July 25, 1915, Spec. Dept.; Adanır and Kaiser, 'Migration'. See also Dündar, *Türkiye'nin Şifresi*.

<sup>70</sup> This figure represents a low estimate. An Armenian census arrived in 1913 at 1,914,620 Armenians while leaving out some communities. Mutlu adjusted 1914 Ottoman data by 34% for undercounting. Ottoman statistics from the Turkish military archives gives a total of 1,219,323 Armenians, but omits at least 65,850 Armenians of Diarbekir province. Thus bringing the adjusted Armenian population to 1,718,132. Servet Mutlu, 'Son Dönem Osmanlı Nüfusu: Müslüman ve Ermeniler', in Şafak Ural, Feridun Emecen, and Mustafa Aydın (eds), *Türk-Ermeni İlişkilerinde Yeni Yaklaşımlar. Uluslararası Sempozyum 15–17 Mart 2006* (Istanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2008), 57–77; Raymond H. Kévorkian and Paul B. Paboudjian, *Les Arméniens dans l'Empire ottoman a la veille du génocide* (Paris: Les Éditions d'Art et d'Histoire, 1992), 60; Genelkurmay Başkanlığı, *Ermeni Faaliyetler*, i, 607, 609.

<sup>71</sup> Genelkurmay Başkanlığı, *Ermeni Faaliyetler*, i, 159–70. I have estimated Armenian losses among those killed at 50% for Van and Erzerum provinces, and at 70% for Bitlis.

<sup>72</sup> Bardakçı, *Evrak-ı Metrûkesi*, 108–39. The document is undated; however, the data on Beirut were taken from a report compiled in March 1917. DH.EUM 2 Şb 74–55, Muhiddin to Ministry of Interior, Beirut, March 12, 1917, Chief Secretariat Gen. 374 Spec. 19 Secret.

remaining Armenians were a disintegrating fragment of their former community rather than resembling just a numerically reduced population.

## THE AFTERMATH

After the Ottoman defeat, the victorious allies, Armenian survivors, and the Ottoman opposition tried to bring the CUP criminals to justice. Many of the key figures, among them Talaat, had, however, fled. Others were protected by post-war Ottoman administrations. Nevertheless, some perpetrators were condemned by Ottoman courts. The government had an interest in putting the blame for the killings on the TM and Kurds, thereby exculpating the state. The proceedings produced documents that provided insights into the organization of the massacres.<sup>73</sup> Within months, the CUP regrouped and began, under its new name, the National Movement, a successful campaign against Armenian survivors, Greeks, and the Western powers. The CUP overcame its internal opponents and competitors for territories within the Ottoman core provinces outside the Arab-speaking regions. In the aftermath of the 1921–2 Greco-Turkish war with its huge interethnic violence, the international community sanctioned with the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 the realities created by the CUP during the Armenian genocide, and furthered the ethnic homogenization of Anatolia by sanctioning the Greco-Turkish ‘population exchange’.<sup>74</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The Armenian deportations were not the result of an Armenian rebellion. On the contrary, Armenians were deported when no danger of outside interference existed. Thus Armenians near front lines were often slaughtered on the spot and not deported. The deportations were not a security measure against rebellions but depended on their absence. The initial deportations resembled earlier measures against Greeks, Nestorians, and Zionists. The dramatic extension of deportations in May 1915 showed signs of improvisation. No detailed regulations for the

<sup>73</sup> Osman Selim Kocahanoglu, *Divân-ı Hârb-i Örfî Muamekatı Zabıt Ceridesi. Tehcir Yargılamaları* (1919) (Istanbul: Temel Yayınları, 2007); Kaiser, ‘Dall’impero’.

<sup>74</sup> See Ben Lieberman’s chapter in this volume.

administration of Armenian property or the assimilation of women and children existed. The execution of deportations was largely left to provincial administrators who had to find their own means for the task at hand. Nevertheless, the CUP understood that the deportations afforded it a unique opportunity to acquire the Armenian communities' assets and finance not only the government's budget but also an ambitious demographic engineering programme, the Turkification of the empire's core provinces. Talaat viewed the negative economic consequences of the deportations as a price the government had to pay.<sup>75</sup>

The assimilation of Armenian children and women overwhelmed the state's resources and local Muslim initiative became decisive. Thus, many Armenian children and women entered Kurdish and Arab households while the state intended the Turkification of Armenian children and young Armenian women. Local competition for Armenian property was another field where the Turkification programme encountered sustained competition from local circles.

The central authorities monitored the deportations and tried to keep precise counts of deportees. The loss of life caused by death marching, famine, diseases, and systematic massacres along the routes appears to have been part of the government's programme. The government assigned to the deportees settlement areas in thinly populated districts with very limited arable land. Here they were not to exceed ten per cent of the Muslim population. Thus, the Ottoman authorities were faced with an Armenian 'surplus' population that could not be accommodated or assimilated. Financing Armenian deportee camps for extended periods of time was out of the question already at the start of the deportations as the Ministry of Interior had declared that it was impossible to feed the comparably few Zeitun deportees. The deaths caused by starvation were therefore not unforeseen but appear systematic.<sup>76</sup> The same holds true for deaths caused by disease. By May 1915, the Ottoman authorities had adequate information about the prevention of infectious diseases, particularly typhus, but deliberately exposed Armenian deportees to infection. The employment of so-called natural causes for death and massacres at remote locations in the eastern provinces, hidden from foreign observers, caused hundreds of thousands of deaths.

Nevertheless, far too many Armenians still survived and reached the lower Euphrates. Armenian resilience and a series of survival strategies as well as undercover relief work made this survival possible. In response, in the summer of 1916, the central authorities coordinated the concentration of survivors in a few localities before they were slaughtered under government supervision. However, it seems that in 1915, the CUP had no coherent single plan for the extermination of the

<sup>75</sup> Hilmar Kaiser, 'Die deutsche Diplomatie und der armenische Völkermord', in Fikret Adanır and Bernd Bonwetsch (eds), *Osmanismus, Nationalismus und der Kaukasus: Muslime und Christen, Türken und Armenier im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 2005), 226–7.

<sup>76</sup> DH.ŞFR 52–292, Minister to Konia province, May 9, 1915, EUM Spec. 22.

Armenians. It is more likely that Talaat and his associates accepted mass murder as a viable policy option to be employed in case problems arose. The CUP leadership habitually opted for genocide in the interest of Turkish nationalism.

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