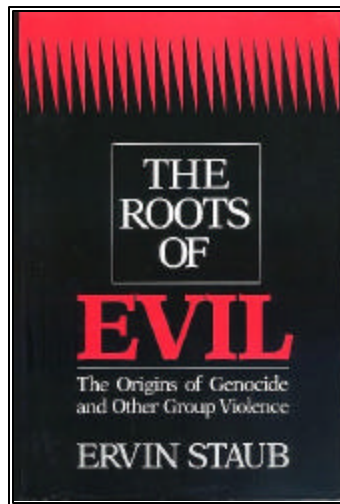


# The Turkish Genocide Against the Armenians

Excerpted From “*The Roots of Evil.  
The Origins of Genocide and other Group Violence*”

**By Ervin Staub**



## About the author

ERVIN STAUB is a scholar of genocide and a Professor of Psychology at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He has conducted extensive research and published many articles on



helping, altruism, values, aggression, and motivation. He is author of the two-volume work, ***Positive Social Behavior and Morality*** for which, in 1990, Professor Staub was awarded the Intercultural and International Relations Prize of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (a division of the American Psychological Association). Through a project in Rwanda he is also associated with the Trauma, Research, Education and Training Institute in South Windsor, CT. He is president of the American Psychological Association's Society for the Study of Peace, Conflict and Violence and of the International Society for Political Psychology.

As a six-year-old in Budapest, Hungary, Staub was first hidden to protect him from the Nazis, and then he and other family members survived with the protective passes Raoul Wallenberg (and then some other embassies in Budapest) created. This experience led Staub to dedicate his life to understanding how to inspire people to help those in need. His primary research is on altruism and helping behavior, genocide and other collective violence. He has studied the psychology of helping, good and evil in human behavior, and the roots of genocide for many years, leading also to a study of forgiveness and reconciliation. Currently, with a grant from the Campaign for Forgiveness Research of the John Templeton Foundation, Staub has launched a research project in partnership with local organizations in Rwanda to explore healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation in the wake of collective violence in that country.

Staub is also the author of ***The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence*** (1989), which inspired a television series broadcast on the Discovery Channel and the BBC. Among numerous other organizations and affiliations, he is also a member of the International Association of Genocide Scholars.

# An Introduction

*Excerpted From*  
***The Roots of Evil. The Origins of Genocide and other Group Violence, pp. 3-12***  
***Cambridge University Press, 1989***

A central issue of our times is the murder, torture, and mistreatment of whole groups of people. The widespread hope and belief that human beings had become increasingly "civilized" was shattered by the events of the Second World War, particularly the systematic, deliberate extermination of six million Jews by Hitler's Third Reich. Millions of other noncombatants were also killed, systematically or randomly and carelessly.

The destruction of human groups has a long history. In many ancient wars inhabitants of cities were massacred, often with great brutality, and the cities razed to the ground. Many religious wars were extremely brutal, if not genocidal. Our own century has witnessed, in addition to two world wars, mass killings by colonial powers, the genocide of the Armenians, and the mass destruction of lives in the Soviet Union through repeated purges and deliberate starvation of peasants.

Genocides, mass killings, and other cruelties inflicted on groups of people have not ceased since the Second World War. Consider the millions killed by their own people in Cambodia and Indonesia, the killing of the Hutu in Burundi, the Ibo in Nigeria, the Ache Indians in Paraguay, and the Buddhists in Tibet, and the mass killings in Uganda. Dictatorial governments have recently tended to kill not only individuals but whole groups of people seen as actual or potential enemies. This trend is evident in the Argentine disappearances and the death squad killings in El Salvador and Guatemala.

How can human beings kill multitudes of men and women, children and old people? How does the motivation arise for this in the face of the powerful prohibition against murder that most of us are taught? We must understand the psychological, cultural, and societal roots of genocide and mass killing if we are to stop such human destructiveness. As cultures, societies, and individual human beings we must learn how to live together in harmony and resist influences that turn us against each other. My analysis is intended as a contribution to these goals.

Genocide and war have much in common. In one, a society turns against a subgroup seen as an internal enemy; in the other, a society turns against a group seen as an external enemy. Identifying the origins of genocide and mass killing will also help to enlighten us about sources of war, torture, and lesser cruelties such as group discrimination that can be steps to mass killing or genocide.

Aggression, violence, torture, and the mistreatment of human beings are all around us. But kindness, helpfulness, generosity, and love also abound. Some Christians in Nazi-occupied Europe risked their lives to save Jews and other persecuted people. Many nations helped in response to starvation in Cambodia at the end of the 1970s and Ethiopia in the mid 1980s, the destruction wrought by earthquake in Soviet Armenia in 1988, and other tragedies.

This book presents a conception of how a subgroup of a society, whether historically established or newly created (such as the "new people" in Cambodia, the name the Khmer Rouge gave the

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\* On October 12, 1987, NBC news presented a program on the killing of children in our modern age. According to this program, "Once children just died in the crossfire, now they are targets." While always among victims of genocide, in the last twenty years children have increasingly become direct targets, killed in order to terrorize communities into political passivity.

inhabitants of cities they forced into the countryside), comes to be mistreated and destroyed by a more powerful group or a government. The conception is then applied to the analysis of four instances: in greatest depth to the Holocaust, the extermination of six million Jews in Nazi Germany; to the genocide of the Armenians in Turkey in 1915-16; the genocide in Cambodia in the late 1970s; and the disappearance and mass killing of people in Argentina during those same years.

### **The approach and content of the book**

*A brief preview.* Certain characteristics of a culture and the structure of a society, combined with great difficulties or hardships of life and social disorganization, are the starting point for genocide or mass killing. The resulting material and psychological needs lead the society to turn against a subgroup in it. Gradually increasing mistreatment of this subgroup ends in genocide or mass killing.

Under extremely difficult life conditions certain motives dominate: protecting the physical well-being of oneself and one's family and preserving one's psychological self, including self-concept and values; making sense of life's problems and social disorganization and gaining a new comprehension of the world, among others. It is difficult, usually, to fulfill these aims by improving the conditions of life. Instead, people often respond with thoughts, feelings, and actions that do not change real conditions but at least help them cope with their psychological consequences. These include devaluing other groups, scapegoating, joining new groups, and adopting ideologies - all of which may give rise to the motivation for, and diminish inhibition against, harming others.

What motives arise and how they are fulfilled depend on the characteristics of the culture and society. For example, a society that has long devalued a group and discriminated against its members, has strong respect for authority, and has an overly superior and/or vulnerable self-concept is more likely to turn against a subgroup.

Genocide does not result directly. There is usually a progression of actions. Earlier, less harmful acts cause changes in individual perpetrators, bystanders, and the whole group that make more harmful acts possible. The victims are further devalued. The self-concept of the perpetrators changes and allows them to inflict greater harm - for "justifiable" reasons. Ultimately, there is a commitment to genocide or mass killing or to ideological goals that require mass killing or genocide. The motivation and the psychological possibility evolve gradually.

Such a progression is made more likely by the passivity of bystanders - members of the society not directly affected and outside groups, including other nations. Active opposition by bystanders can reactivate the perpetrators' moral values and also cause them to be concerned about retaliation. In the next chapter I will present a more detailed description of the core concepts. In subsequent chapters of Part I, I examine in greater detail each component of the conception, including the psychology of individual perpetrators, bystanders, and heroic helpers. In Part II, I apply the conception to a detailed analysis of the Holocaust; in Part III, to the analysis of the other genocides and mass killings.\*

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\* Part of the overall conception I present and many of the specific concepts, ideas, and considerations also apply to individual violence within groups. One major difference is that the cultural and psychological influences that arise from the differentiation between "us" and "them," ingroup and outgroup, need not be involved in individual violence. Another is that personal (rather than societal) characteristics and circumstances (or the characteristics of and conditions in families) become of primary importance.

In Part IV, I discuss how, with some changes and extensions, this conception provides an understanding of the origins of war, the other major form of group violence. The difficult life conditions that lead to war may include internal problems, problems in the international order, and conflicts with other nations.

Genocide and mass killing are tragedies for the perpetrators also. Their characters are affected, and at times the cycle of violence makes them victims as well. To diminish the chance of such tragedies, we must identify elements of culture, institutions, and personality that reduce hostility and aggression and enhance caring, connection, helpfulness, and cooperation within and between groups. To promote these ends we must create crosscutting relations that allow members of different subgroups (and of different nations) to work and play together; we must help groups develop positive reciprocity in their relationships; and we must guide individuals and groups to act in others' behalf. In these and other ways we can create a progression, an evolution of caring, connectedness, and nonaggression in opposition to the continuum of destruction. How the young are socialized by parents and schools is also essential. In Chapters 17 and 18, I present an agenda for creating caring and non-aggressive persons and societies.

***Differences and similarities and the selection of cases.*** This book searches for the origins of genocides and mass killings. The outcomes differ greatly (for example, in the number of people killed and methods of killing), and the influences that lead to genocide are not identical. Difficult conditions of life vary. Severe economic problems, political violence, war, and even rapid, substantial social change can result in social chaos and personal upheavals. Of the cultural-societal characteristics that have the potential to generate violence, only some may be influential in a given instance. The continuum of destruction takes various forms as well. In some cases a society has progressed along this continuum for decades or even centuries. In other cases, the progression develops over a much shorter time under the influence of difficult life conditions or of the ideologies adopted to deal with them.

Why did I choose the Holocaust, the genocides in Turkey and Cambodia, and the disappearances in Argentina for study and analysis? Each is significant in its own right, yet they differ in many ways. If we can identify commonalities in their origins, we can gain confidence in our understanding of the origins of genocides and mass killings in general.

The Holocaust is an instance of suffering and cruelty that informs our age. It gave rise to a deep questioning of the nature of individuals and groups, of human beings and human societies. For many, the evil embodied in the Holocaust is incomprehensible. For some, it is preferable not to comprehend, because comprehension might lead to forgiving.<sup>1</sup> But as I have noted, only by understanding the roots of such evil do we gain the possibility of shaping the future so that it will not happen again.

The genocide of the Armenians is the first modern genocide. Turkey and the Turks have never admitted that it happened. They say it was self-defense, the deportation of an internal enemy in time of war. For this reason alone, the Armenian genocide deserves attention. There are other important differences between the Holocaust and this genocide. The Holocaust made use of bureaucratic management and advanced technology in the framework of a totalitarian system. The genocide of the Armenians was less planned, with limited bureaucratic organization and very little advanced technology in its execution.

Paradoxically, in this highly technological age, we are horrified by the non-technological brutality of the Cambodian genocide, its direct, primitive methods of murder on a large scale. In this case people were killed not because of their religious or ethnic origin, but for political reasons. Because of their past or because of their current deviation from rules, many people were deemed incapable of living in the type of society envisioned by the Cambodian communists. Because the victims were members of the same racial and ethnic group as the perpetrators, and even religion did not enter into their selection, the mass killing in Cambodia can be regarded as "autogenocide."

Five to six million Jews were killed in the Holocaust, probably about eight hundred thousand Armenians in Turkey, and between one and two million people died in Cambodia. The disappearances in Argentina cannot be compared in magnitude: between nine and thirty thousand people were killed. The Argentine victims were regarded as political enemies who endangered the state: communists, communist sympathizers, or left leaning.

There can be no exhaustive test of my conception of genocide, but I can provide significant confirmation by demonstrating substantial similarities in the psychological and cultural origins of these four disparate cases and the existence of extraordinary life problems.

### **THE DEFINITIONS OF GENOCIDE AND MASS KILLING**

The word genocide was introduced by the jurist Raphael Lemkin, who began a crusade in 1933 to create what was to become the Genocide Convention. In 1944, in a study of the Axis rule in occupied Europe, he proposed the term genocide to denote the destruction of a nation or an ethnic group, from the ancient Greek word *genos* (race, tribe) and the Latin *cide* (killing).<sup>2</sup> As a result of his efforts, on December 11, 1946, the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) passed a resolution that said: "Genocide is a denial of the right of existence of entire human groups.... Many instances of such crimes have occurred, when racial, religious, political and other groups have been destroyed, entirely or in part."<sup>3</sup>

In subsequent work of UN committees on what became the Genocide Convention, passed on December 9, 1948, disagreements about content were substantial. The Soviet Union and other nations objected to the inclusion of political groups as victims of genocide, arguing that the etymology of the term should guide the definition: only racial and national groups could be objectively designated. Others argued that political groups are transient and unstable. Some objected that the inclusion of political groups in the convention "would expose nations to external intervention in their domestic concerns,"<sup>4</sup> and political conflict within a country could become an international issue. Those who wanted to include political groups pointed out that the meanings of words evolve. They wanted genocide to refer to the destruction of any groups.<sup>5</sup> Even the inclusion of economic groups was suggested.

The Genocide Convention as finally adopted did not include political groups. It defined the crime of genocide as "acts committed with intent to destroy in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group" by killing members of the group, causing them serious bodily or mental harm, creating conditions calculated to bring about their physical destruction, preventing births, or forcibly transferring children to another group.<sup>6</sup>

Killing groups of people for political reasons has become the primary form of genocide (and mass killing) in our time. There is no reason to believe that the types of psychological and cultural influences differ in political and other group murders. In this book genocide means an

attempt to exterminate a racial, ethnic, religious, cultural, or political group, either directly through murder or indirectly by creating conditions that lead to the group's destruction. Mass killing means killing members of a group without the intention to eliminate the whole group or killing large numbers of people without a precise definition of group membership. In a mass killing the number of people killed is usually smaller than in genocide.

For example, in Cambodia the scale of murder was genocidal, but the identification of who was to be killed somewhat imprecise, as it frequently is in political genocide. In Argentina the reasons were also political, but the number of victims was much smaller, and their identification even less precise - a mass killing rather than a genocide. The ideology that led to the killings in Cambodia demanded many more victims.<sup>7</sup>

#### **FOUR MASS KILLINGS/GENOCIDES**

I will here briefly describe what happened in the Nazi Holocaust, in the genocide of the Armenians, in the autogenocide in Cambodia, and in the disappearances in Argentina.

#### **THE HOLOCAUST**

The word refers to the extermination of about six million Jews by Nazi Germany from June 1941 to 1945. Another five million people were also killed: political opponents; mentally ill, retarded, and other “genetically inferior” Germans; Poles; and Russians. Gypsies, like Jews, were to be eliminated; more than 200,000 were killed, probably many more.

The extermination of Jews had several phases.<sup>8</sup> After sporadic killings, a policy of extermination, the Final Solution, was created. The policy took shape in 1941; it was institutionalized in January 1942 at the Wannsee Conference. In 1941, *Einsatzgruppen* (literally, task forces; special mobile killing units) were established and sent to the eastern front. They lined up and shot groups of Jews at the edge of mass graves, which at times the victims were forced to dig. Later they filled trucks with Jews and drove them around until they died of the carbon monoxide that was routed back into the truck. About one and a half million people were killed in these ways.

More and more, the killing took place in specially constructed camps, most located in Poland. Some were strictly extermination camps. Jews were told they would be resettled and gathered from all over Europe; in territories not occupied by the Germans but allied with them, governments were asked to hand over their Jewish population. The Jews were herded into freight cars and transported to camps. After days on end without food, water, or medical care, some died on the way. On entering the camps they were told to undress for showers. Instead, they were gassed to death. Their bodies were removed by Jews assigned to special working units and were burnt first in open fires, later in great ovens.

Other camps were combined labor and extermination camps. The “selection” at Auschwitz is infamous. Those deemed capable of work or considered useful in cruel medical experiments were sent to the camp. Others were immediately taken to the gas chambers. Families were separated in this process.

Other modes of killing were part of camp life. Inmates were deliberately starved. Those who became weak or ill were sent to the gas chambers. Some were killed in camp hospitals with injections into the heart. Others died for real or imagined infractions of inhumane camp rules; they were hanged or suffocated in tiny airless prison cells.

In addition to the organized murders, there was both planned and capricious brutality in the treatment of inmates. Only the most limited bodily care was possible. Toilets were long rows of holes, with only seconds to use them. Inmates slept three or four to a bunk. They were ruled by other inmates who were former criminals and were exposed to degradations, mutilation in medical experiments, and torture.<sup>9</sup>

### ***The genocide of the Armenians***

In the midst of World War I, during the night of April 24, 1915, the religious and intellectual leaders of the Armenian community in Constantinople were taken from their beds, imprisoned, tortured, and killed. At about the same time, Armenians in the Turkish army, already segregated in “labor battalions,” were all killed. Over a short time period Armenian men over fifteen years of age were gathered in cities, towns, and villages, roped together, marched to nearby uninhabited locations, and killed.<sup>10</sup>

After a few days, the women and children and any remaining men were told to prepare themselves for deportation. They were marched from Anatolia through a region of ravines and mountains to the Syrian Desert, where they were left to die. On the way, they were attacked by Turkish villagers and peasants, Kurds, and *chettis* - brigands who were freed from prison and placed in their path. The attackers robbed the marchers of provisions and clothes, killed men, women, and children, even infants, and raped and carried off women. Through it all, Turkish gendarmes urged the marchers on with clubs and whips, refused them water as they passed by streams and wells, and bayoneted those who lagged behind.

Telegrams to provincial capitals captured by the British army and reports by witnesses, including diplomats like Henry Morgenthau, the American ambassador to Turkey, provide evidence that the extermination of the Armenians was planned and organized by the central government.<sup>11</sup> Estimates of the number killed range from four hundred thousand to over a million; the actual number is probably more than eight hundred thousand.

### ***The autogenocide (Khmer killing Khmer) in Cambodia***

In 1975, after a five-year civil war, the communist Khmer Rouge, or Red Khmer, gained victory and power in Cambodia. They evacuated all the cities, including Phnom Penh, the capital, whose population had swelled with refugees to almost three million. All were brutally driven from the city and some were killed.

Whoever the small group of dominant communist leaders, Pol Pot and his followers, regarded as potential enemies of the ideal state that they wanted to build or as incapable of living in and contributing to such a state was killed. That included officers of the defeated army, government officials, intellectuals, educated people, and professionals such as doctors and teachers. Communists who became victims of infighting were often interrogated and tortured before being killed. The killings were not entirely systematic. There were more in some parts of the country than in others, more during certain periods than others. The killing actually intensified toward the end of the Khmer Rouge rule in 1979.

The populations of cities were driven into the countryside to build villages and irrigation systems and work the land. They were not allowed to settle in abandoned villages but had to build new ones from scratch. Peasants were allowed to keep some property, including small parcels of land. Those driven from the cities were allowed no property of any kind.

The people were forced to work very long days with little food. They were not allowed to forage in the forest, a customary source of food for Cambodian peasants. They were killed for the slightest infraction of the many and stringent rules, sometimes without warning. Parents were killed in front of their children, brothers in front of brothers. About two million people died from execution and starvation between 1975 and 1979.<sup>12</sup>

### ***The disappearances in Argentina***

In 1976 the armed forces took over the government in a coup. They intensified the war against guerrillas who had been committing murders and kidnapping people for ransom. The military began to kidnap and torture even people who were merely suspected of association with the guerrillas or regarded as left leaning or politically liberal. The selection of victims was indiscriminate; not even pregnant women were spared.

Most of those kidnapped and tortured were killed, alone or in mass executions. Some were drugged and dropped from helicopters into the ocean. The authorities gave away infants and young children of victims killed, often to military families, without informing relatives. When relatives asked about people who had disappeared, the authorities denied knowledge of their whereabouts. At least nine thousand were killed, with some estimates as high as thirty thousand.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Is mass killing ever justified?***

Are mass killing and genocide ever justifiable self-defense or understandable retaliation? How can they be? In both genocides and mass killings (but also frequently in war) the people killed include women, old people, children, as well as men who in no way harmed the killers. There may be antagonism or violence between some of the victims and the perpetrators. The perpetrators sometimes claim the victims provoked the mass killing.

There was some "provocation" in each of our four cases except the Holocaust. But how can hostility by some members of a group, often in response to repression or violence against them, justify the attempt to exterminate the whole group; or violence by a small group of people who oppose a system justify the "creation" of a large group whose members are then killed?

Nor are genocides and mass killings ever "rational" expressions of self-interest. The three genocides, at least, were highly destructive to the perpetrators. The fabric of society was impaired, many people essential to its functioning were killed, and desperately needed resources were used in the service of killing.\*

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3. Ibid., p. 23.
4. Ibid., p. 28.
5. Ibid., p. 28.

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\* The frequently self-destructive nature of genocides makes it unlikely that its function is to reduce population surplus, as one author has suggested.' Certainly genocide does not seem to do this in an effective manner and does not appear to gain evolutionary advantage for the perpetrators.

6. Ibid., p. 19.
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# The Turkish Genocide Against the Armenians

Excerpted From *The Roots of Evil. The Origins of Genocide and other Group Violence*, pp.173-187

By Ervin Staub

## **HISTORICAL (LIFE) CONDITIONS**

When the First World War began, the Ottoman Empire had been losing power and territories for more than a hundred years. Once a great military power that ruled over many countries, it was called the Sick Man of Europe by Czar Nicholas of Russia in the middle of the nineteenth century. In 1877-78 it lost a war against Russia, and Russia annexed parts of Turkish Armenia. Turkey lost additional territories in the Balkan wars, between 1911 and 1913.

Turkey was also commercially and industrially backward and dominated in these realms by other nations. In 1875 the Ottoman Empire went bankrupt. A Public Debt Administration was set up by the great powers with representatives of Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Austria, and Turkey to control Turkey's finances, and 12 to 15 percent of Turkey's revenues were ceded to this organization.<sup>1</sup>

Within Turkey, commerce, trade, and finance were largely in the hands of foreigners or of non-Muslim minorities such as Greeks, Armenians, and Jews.<sup>2</sup> "Capitulations," which were extraterritorial agreements between the Ottoman Empire and foreign nations, granted judicial and economic privileges to foreigners. Partly because of the Islamic belief that law is derived from religion, so that only believers can participate in it, and partly for other cultural and historical reasons, foreigners were judged and protected by their own laws. They were exempt from all taxes except export and import duties, which had ceilings specified by capitulations. Foreign products flooded into Turkey, inhibiting industrial development.<sup>3</sup>

The Ottoman Empire continued to repress its many minorities. Reforms announced in 1839 and 1856 that would have provided rights to all citizens and others promised later (partly under foreign pressure) were not carried out. A constitutional government was created in 1876 but dissolved in 1878 by Sultan Abdul Hamid. A long reign of repression and terror followed.

Foreign powers continuously exerted influence on Turkey, military and political. Russia was consistently belligerent, partly because it wanted to acquire Turkish territories and reduce Turkish power. England's prime concern was the containment of Russia. Western powers and Russia were also interested in protecting the rights of Christian minorities in Turkey, but realpolitik usually won out. In exchange for promises of reform, England supported Turkey in its conflicts with Russia. After Russia's victory in the war of 1877-78, England intervened to shape a treaty that would minimize Russia's gains. The promises of reform remained unfulfilled.

In 1908 a revolution compelled Abdul Hamid to restore constitutional government. In 1909 the revolutionaries, who called themselves the Committee of Union and Progress but who were also known as the Young Turks, gained complete power. Initially, the revolution was widely welcomed. The Young Turks promised universal rights, freedom, and equality. However, political disorder, internal upheavals, internal violence, especially against Armenians, and losing wars continued. There was a counter-revolution and interventions by the military, but the Young Turks retained power.<sup>4</sup> Three months after their revolution, on October 5, 1908, Bulgaria proclaimed complete independence, and in

the Balkan wars, between 1911 and 1913, the Ottoman Empire lost Greece. By 1913 it was effectively eliminated from Europe.

Probably to a large degree as a result of these conditions, an ideology of Pan-Turkism, or Turanism, became dominant, its aim to enhance the power of the Ottoman Empire and to purify the nation, making it Turkish in language, customs, and religion. The Young Turks abandoned the alliance with England in response to political and material support from Germany. In the hope of regaining lost territories or conquering new ones, the Ottoman Empire entered the First World War on the side of Germany. Immediately, it suffered heavy losses to a massive Russian invasion. Although it also won a victory over the British at Gallipoli, the possibility of its losing the war at this early point was real.

Before the war, poverty, hunger, disease, an influx of refugees from lost territories and their conflicts with minorities added to life problems. The loss of provinces in Europe caused substantial migration of Muslims into Turkey, especially Anatolia. After the war of 1877-78 more than a-million people moved into Turkey.<sup>5</sup> There was conflict between the newly arriving Muslims and Armenians living in the territories that they had moved into. After the revolution strife between Armenians and Young Turks further contributed to political instability and violence.

The people experienced much hardship. Agricultural methods were primitive, and the yield was poor. Peasants had difficulty paying their taxes and lived in many areas in houses without sanitation, "without hope or ambition."<sup>6</sup> The peasants had feudal obligations to landlords and were forced to serve in the army, where they were poorly fed, rarely paid, and kept in active service beyond the legal period.<sup>7</sup> Cholera epidemics continued until the end of the century.<sup>8</sup> Eighteen percent of the Muslim population in Anatolia died during World War I, from starvation and disease as well as fighting. Two-thirds of the dead were civilians.<sup>9</sup>

These were the circumstances in which the genocide of the Armenians began in 1915. The loss of power, prestige, and influence as a nation and the tremendous life problems within Turkey had to result in powerful feelings of frustration and threat in both the people and the leaders and to give rise to the needs and motives that lead a group to turn against a subgroup of society.

## CULTURAL PRECONDITIONS

*The devaluation of minorities and Christians.* Devaluation of the Armenians had several sources. First, the Ottomans devalued and mistreated all their subject peoples. According to Toynbee, the concept of *rajah* (cattle) was applied to them.<sup>10</sup> In 1922 the *Encyclopedia Britannica* described the status of non-Muslims in Turkey the following way:

The non-Mussulman subjects of the Sultan had indeed early been reduced to such a condition of servitude that the idea of their being placed on a footing of equality with their Mussulman rulers seemed unthinkable. Preserved merely as taxpayers necessary to supply the funds for the maintenance of the dominant and military class, according to a foreign observer in 1571, they had been so degraded and oppressed that they dared not look a Turk in the face. Their only value was from a fiscal point of view, and in times of fanaticism or when anti-foreign sentiment ran even this was held of little account, so that more than once they very nearly became the victims of a general and state-ordered massacre.<sup>11</sup>

Although this statement may have been affected by the genocide of the Armenians, earlier sources are consistent with it.

Subject status and religion coincided. The treatment of non-Muslims as based on the Koran and Ottoman culture. The Koran has many passages prescribing the correct relationship between Muslims

and “infidels.” The legal rights of Dimmis (non-Muslims) were restricted. A Dimmi was allowed to give testimony in court, but the testimony was not weighted as heavily as a Muslim's. When the two testimonies conflicted, the Dimmi's is disregarded.<sup>12</sup> A Muslim who killed a Dimmi would not receive a death penalty; a Dimmi who killed a Muslim would. A male Dimmi couldn't marry a female Muslim, but a male Muslim could marry a female Dimmi. For a long time Christians were forbidden to own guns or ride horses; the possession of a gun was a serious crime.<sup>13</sup> They had to pay extra taxes and board migratory Kurds, who beat their hosts, raped their daughters, and looted their property.<sup>14</sup> The Armenians in particular were constant prey. At international conferences they repeatedly requested protection from the violence of Kurds and Circassians.

Religious and cultural devaluation of Christian minorities was thus maintained and strengthened by discrimination and constant mistreatment. After the Balkan wars the Armenians were the only large Christian minority left, a potential target for scapegoating and violence.

***Orientation to authority.*** The Ottoman regime was theocratic. Islam ruled the masses, whose deep respect for authority had a partly religious basis. The sultan was both a worldly and a spiritual leader.<sup>15</sup> The society was still feudal and hierarchical. In 1896 Muray Bey, expressing the views of the Young Turks, held that the population's crime was blind obedience to authorities, although obedience in general is a virtue.<sup>16</sup> In the Young Turk; revolution, officers of the army gained the support of common soldier partly because of unquestioning military obedience and partly by claiming that the sultan was in the hands of bad advisors.<sup>17</sup>

The Ottoman Empire was a monolithic society in which Islam and the Ottoman Turkish values, culture, and power structure held sway. Despite the many ethnic groups and religions, true pluralism did not exist. In 1856-57, a committee of Armenians attempted to redefine the Armenians' rights and responsibilities. Ottoman authorities rejected this and rewrote the Armenian constitution so that it reaffirmed subservience; for example, the election of the Armenian patriarch and of political and religious councils had to be approved by the sultan.<sup>18</sup>

The removal of the sultan and other political changes and upheavals must have added to the many-faceted life problems and intensified people's need for authority, for a positive self-concept, and a world view that offered guidance and hope.

#### STEPS ALONG THE CONTINUUM OF DESTRUCTION

***Devaluation and increasing mistreatment.*** In some ways the Turkish image of the Armenians was strikingly similar to the German image of Jew. The two minorities had a similar status in society and had developed in similar ways over centuries of persecution. Because of their religious beliefs and a tradition of militarism, the Turks devalued and avoided commerce, finance, and other middle-class occupations. These as well as low and middle-level administrative positions were open to the Armenians.<sup>19</sup> Foreigners preferred minority group members as trading partners because of their better education, shared religion, and contacts with Europeans. The Armenians were hardworking, capable, and intelligent. Many were successful, and some became wealthy. They became essential for the maintenance of the country. The result was the two-sided devaluation familiar from our discussion of German attitudes toward Jews: Armenians were seen as of low character, as cunning and treacherous, and as parasites, exploiters who plotted against Turks.

Aside from their "unofficial" victimization by Kurds and Circassians, Armenians were also subject to violence directly inspired by the authorities, which intensified under Abdul Hamid. In 1894-96, special troops composed mainly of Kurds, the Hamidaya, massacred over two hundred thousand Armenians in the midst of an apparently approving population.

Abraham Hartunian, an Armenian pastor, who survived both the killings of 1894-96 and the genocide of 1915-16, wrote of the earlier killings:

On Sunday morning, November 3, 1895, the church bells were silent. The churches and schools, desecrated and plundered, lay in ruins. Pastors, priests, choristers, teachers, leaders, all were no more. The Armenian houses, robbed and empty, were as caves. Fifteen hundred men had been slaughtered, and those left alive were wounded and paralyzed. Girls were in the shame of their rape....

On Thursday, November 7, the fifth day of our imprisonment, we were taken out and driven to the courtyard of a large inn. As we moved along in a file under guard, a crowd of Turkish women on the edge of the road, mocking and cursing us like frenzied maenads, screeched the unique convulsive shrill of the *zelgid*, the ancient battle cry of the women of Islam—the exultant *lu-lu-lulu* filled with the concentrated hate of the centuries.<sup>20</sup>

Under the Young Turks massacres of the Armenians continued. In Adana in the spring of 1909, about thirty thousand Armenians were killed. Administrative and military officials did not try to stop the massacre, and some of the troops fired on the Armenians. While the Young Turks probably did not initiate the killings, they let the two principal officials of Adana off with light sentences.<sup>21</sup> Dr. Chambers, the director of the American missionaries at Adana, wrote in a message to London:

A frightful massacre began on April 14; it subsided on the 16th, but it is continued in the suburbs. The following week an organized effort was made to bring help to 15,000 sufferers. The massacre began all over again furiously on the 25 of April, the soldiers and the *bashibozouk* (irregulars) began a terrible volley of firearms on the Armenian school where around 2,500 persons had taken refuge. Then the building caught fire and when the refugees tried to save themselves by running outside they were fired upon; many perished in the flames. The destructive fire continued until Tuesday morning. Four churches and the adjacent schools were burned as well as hundreds of homes in the most populated quarters of the city.<sup>22</sup>

#### **ARMENIAN "PROVOCATION"**

Some writers claimed that the genocide was a response to Armenian provocation, to the great threat the Armenians presented to Turkey and the Committee of Union and Progress.<sup>23</sup> The Armenians increasingly resisted repression and violence against them and demanded greater rights and more autonomy. From the middle of the nineteenth century, they repeatedly turned to foreign powers for protection. Russia helped other subject peoples, such as the Bulgarians, in their fight for independence, and its 1877 military action was at least partly on the instigation of Armenians. The Turkish government constantly feared that foreign powers would intervene on behalf of the Armenians or use the Armenians as an excuse for their designs on Turkey. The Armenians were closely linked to Russia (much hated by the Turks as the ancient and current enemy) by their Greek Orthodox religion and, after the Russian conquest of parts of Armenia, by the large population of Armenians in Russia. It was thus easy to associate the loss of power and humiliation by foreigners with the Armenians inside Turkey.

The Armenians attempted to gain increased rights as well as protection as conflicts between them and displaced Muslims moving into Turkey intensified. They organized and formed societies. The government-directed killings in 1894-96 arose partly from the sultan's fear of the "Armenian peril," a result of Armenian "agitation," protests, and demonstrations. Occasional refusal to pay taxes, for what to the Armenians seemed justifiable reasons, also incited anger. One of the events leading up to the massacre of Armenians at Sassoon in 1893 was refusal to pay taxes; they claimed the Kurds forced them to pay and could not pay a second time.<sup>25</sup>

Armenian acts designed to call attention to their plight also resulted in violence.. At the time of the large-scale killings under Abdul Hamid, in 1896, a group of Armenians seized the Ottoman Bank in Constantinople and held it until they were guaranteed free passage to Europe. More Armenian massacres followed in Constantinople.<sup>26</sup> Once an intensely negative image of a group develops, its acts of self-assertion or defense will be regarded as evidence of hostility and evil nature.

In 1876 the Young Turk movement sought the cooperation of the Armenians against their common enemy, the sultan, for the "good of fatherland." The appeal was rejected, and the Young Turks interpreted this as evidence of Armenian aspirations "apart from the welfare of Turkey," which pushed them to "criminal resolution."<sup>27</sup> The role of outside powers was a persistent issue for the Young Turks. Ahmed Riza of the Young Turks complained that the Turks suffered too under Abdul Hamid, but had no foreign protectors. At the 1902 Congress of Ottoman Liberals, the Armenian delegates and Ahmed Riza's Young Turks were at odds, especially about outside powers ensuring the rights of minorities in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>28</sup>

The conflict continued after the Young Turks came to power and was intensified by the refusal of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation at its meeting in 1914 to organize an insurrection in Russian Armenia if a war was declared. In a book edited by Arnold Toynbee, *The Treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-1916*, this is described as follows:

At the beginning of the European war, the Dashnaktzoutioun' party met in congress at Erzeroum in order to decide on the attitude to be observed by the Party. As soon as they heard of this congress, the Young Turks sent their representatives to Erzeroum to propose that the Party should declare its intention of aiding and defending Turkey, by organizing an insurrection in the Caucasus in the event of declaration of war between Turkey and Russia. According to the project of the Young Turks, the Armenians were to pledge themselves to form legions of volunteers and to send them to the Caucasus with Turkish propagandists, to prepare the way there for insurrection .... The Erzeroum Congress refused these proposals, and advised the Young Turks not to hurl themselves into the European conflagration - a dangerous adventure which would lead Turkey to ruin. <sup>29</sup>

In postwar Turkish writings, the Armenians are described as instruments of foreign agitation, tools of the European powers, an avenue for their mingling in the internal affairs of Turkey and for pursuing their designs the empire.

Did the Armenians represent a dangerous internal enemy? There was some violence by Armenians against Turks in the early part of the First World War, its extent is a matter of dispute. According to Turkish writers, as war started, invading Russian Armenian troops were joined by Turkish Armenian volunteers, killing Turks, with estimates as high as 150,000 to less than 40,000 killed. Apparently, the source of some of these estimates was the unreliable and repeatedly revised claims of the Ottoman government, for example, claims presented to their German allies.<sup>30</sup> Non-Turkish sources claim that

participation by Turkish Armenians was very limited. They also claim that uprisings by Turkish Armenians were attempts at self-defense as the genocide began.<sup>31</sup>

An uprising at Van in April 1915 was the immediate justification for the deportations that started in May 1915. The nature of this uprising is also in dispute. Armenian writers minimize its scope. **Missakian**, for example, claims that it was only a defense of the Armenian quarter of the city when it was attacked by Turkish troops; Turkish troops had massacred Armenians in outlying villages, and the deportations had already started in Cilicia before the fighting broke out in Van. Richard Hovannisian, a leading historian of the genocide, also sees the uprising as defensive. It started after three leaders of the Armenian community were killed and refugees from surrounding villages were coming into Van (personal communication).

**Gurun**, a Turkish writer, claims that Armenians seized Van and delivered it to the Russians.<sup>33</sup> Turkish writers claim Armenians endangered Turkey through acts of sabotage, defection, spying, and mass uprisings. Their actions made it necessary to deport them "from the neighborhood of the front and from the vicinity of railroads and lines of communications."<sup>34</sup> There was no genocide. Lives were lost during the deportations as were Turkish lives in the war, but much fewer than the number claimed by Armenians. **Justin McCarthy** makes similar claims. There was a civil war. "Large elements of the Muslim population in the Kars region of the Russian Empire aided the Ottomans whenever possible, and Armenian activities at the rear of the Ottoman army were a factor in Ottoman defeats."<sup>35</sup>

Other non-Turkish accounts make the claim of a civil war untenable. There were some Turkish Armenian attacks on Turks, but the Armenians gave only limited aid to the Russians and perhaps only after the atrocities against them had begun. It is certainly possible that the Turks believed that the Armenians represented a serious threat to them. They had long mistrusted Armenians.

Armenian males in the army were placed in unarmed battalions - although perhaps already in preparation for genocide. The Armenian unwillingness to cooperate with Turkish designs, however unreasonable they were from an Armenian point of view, conflicted with the evolving ideology and goals of Turkish leaders and what they saw as their long-established right to rule. This occurred when the war was already being lost and the empire was near collapse. Armenian actions before the war threatened nationalistic aspirations; those during the war perhaps generated a belief that the Armenians threatened Turkey's existence.

To sum up, the Armenians were victims of a progression of increasing destructiveness. They were devalued because of their religion and inferior status as a subject people. They were resented because of their financial, commercial, and administrative success. They provoked hostility by their attempts to protect themselves and to gain greater rights and autonomy, and in the end by acts of violence against Turks. Their religion, commercial involvements, and attempts to gain outside support linked them to foreign powers, especially Russia. Armenians were subject to many forms of discrimination, brutality, and murder on increasing scales.

## THE EVOLUTION OF YOUNG TURK IDEOLOGY

The Young Turks began as liberals who promised equality regardless of religion or ethnic background. They favored religious tolerance and freedom of religious practice, self-government in education, and

the right of all to private property. Colleges and schools were to be opened to Christians. The word *rajah*, or cattle, used to designate Christians, was to be removed from all public documents.<sup>36</sup>

From the start, however, there was a strong nationalistic element in the Young Turks' movement and a nationalistic component in their ideology. Young Turks wanted to restore the glory of the Ottoman Empire. They hoped to forge a new nationalism that would include other ethnic groups. In 1908 Enver Bey, a Young Turk leader, declared, "We are all equal, we glory in being Ottomans."<sup>37</sup> Ahmed Riza, whose outlook came to dominate the policies of the Young Turks, was a strong nationalist who believed that subject nationalities should be made into good Turks. After the outbreak of the Balkan wars, the Young Turks organized the Committee for National Defense. Its purpose was to encourage popular support for the war effort, substituting national identity for the old Ottoman Islamic identity.<sup>38</sup>

From the start, despite their liberalism, the Young Turks were insistent on Muslim and Turkish supremacy. They feared non-Muslim supremacy in parliament and manipulated elections to ensure a Muslim majority. They believed, probably correctly, that only the Muslim element would work to maintain the empire's integrity.<sup>39</sup> To ensure their dominance the Young Turks were ready to use power ruthlessly. According to some, they brutalized political life. They successfully mobilized the people, held mass meetings, and organized effective boycotts of foreign goods.<sup>40</sup>

The Congress of the Committee for Union and Progress met in Saloniki in October 1911 and proclaimed a nationalistic pan-Islamic program. "The sole reign of the Turkish race and the construction of the Empire on a purely Islamic basis" became the program of the government according to the German doctor Johannes Lepsius, president of the German-Armenian Society.

Sooner or later the total Islamization of all Turkish subjects must be accomplished, but it is clear that this can never be achieved by verbal persuasion, therefore the power of arms must be resorted to. The character of the Empire will have to be Mohammedan, and respect for Mohammedan institutions and traditions is to be enforced. Other nations must be denied the right to organize because decentralization and self-government would constitute treason against the Turkish Empire. The nationalities will become a negligible quantity. They could keep their religion, but not their language. The proliferation of the Turkish language would be a principal means to secure Mohammedan predominance and to assimilate the remaining elements.<sup>41</sup>

New visions set new goals: the creation of a single pure and homogeneous Turkic culture and an empire that would unite all the Turkic peoples, a worthy successor to the late Ottoman Empire.<sup>42</sup> The Young Turks feared that the Armenians might succeed in creating an independent state in eastern Anatolia, which would form a barrier between the Ottoman Turks and Turkic people to the east and destroy the possibility of the new empire.<sup>43</sup> Greater Turkishness, a national-cultural purity, and the creation of a new empire were to reestablish a feeling of unity and positive identity in Turks, including the Young Turk leaders themselves.

### ***The machinery of destruction***

As in Germany, preparations that initially served other purposes later came to function as part of the machinery of genocide. The Young Turks set up a party apparatus whose leaders in the Armenian regions became organizers of the genocide. The genocide was under the control of the Interior Ministry, led by Talat, and its subsidiaries, the Directorate of Public Security, the Istanbul police, and the Deportation Service, as well as the provincial gendarmerie. Turkish refugees from emancipated Balkan countries were also active. At the time of the genocide, a special organization was created to massacre the Armenians deported in convoys. It consisted of jailed criminals who were freed,

organized into detachments, and placed, together with other suitable groups such as Kurds, in the path of Armenians on the deportation march.<sup>44</sup> Executive officers of cities were instructed to evacuate Armenians along designated routes, guarded by military police.

## THE GENOCIDE

A group of political activists had gained power in Turkey. Within a few years their hopes and visions were profoundly frustrated by losses of wars and territories and by all the hardships and internal conflicts inside Turkey, including Armenian opposition and actions. In response to these conditions, their nationalistic ideology became more extreme. The Young Turks could at least in part deal with their intense frustrations, with the experience of threat and attack, and the resulting needs and motives by turning against the Armenians, one of the few enemies they could defeat. Genocide was not intrinsically tied to ideology, as it was in Germany. But it was a way - maybe the only one available at the time - to fulfill both ideological goals and emotional needs.

The Turkish population adopted the nationalistic fervor, and shared with its leaders the complex of motives and lack of prohibitions that I have previously described as reasons why a society turns against a subgroup. Those selected to perpetrate the genocide were willing, and the rest of society gave its support. A telegram to Jemal Bey, a delegate at Adana, said that it was the duty of all to realize the noble project of "wiping out of existence the Armenians who have for centuries been constituting a barrier to the Empire's progress in civilization."<sup>45</sup> As in the Holocaust, the killings were meant to realize a "higher" value.

It is known that specific orders for genocide were given by the government. The evidence comes from telegrams captured by the British and from accounts by foreign observers, including a detailed account by the U.S. ambassador to Turkey, Henry Morgenthau.<sup>46</sup> A frequently quoted "memoir" was published in London in 1920 by Naim Bey, the chief secretary of the Aleppo committee in charge of deported Armenians.<sup>48</sup> Another memoir, by Merlanzade Rifat, a Young Turk on the committee's Central Board, described the meeting at which the extermination policy was decided.<sup>49</sup> Rifat's account shows that the leadership meant to revitalize Turkey by purging it of non-Turkish nationalities, especially Armenians. The war provided the opportunity to exterminate them.

The Naim-Andonian documents outline a "radical solution" to the lingering Turko-Armenian conflict. They contain no reference to the wartime conduct of the Armenian populations, but refer to "the humiliations and bitterness of the past."<sup>50</sup> Morgenthau notes that Talat referred to the policy as the result of prolonged and careful deliberation. The documents show secret orders from various ministers. All Armenians were to be killed and the responsibility fully assumed by the government. The designated officials are assured that they will not be held accountable. Officials who stall are threatened

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\* In recent years questions have been raised about the authenticity of the Naim "memoirs" in reality not memoirs but fifty-two pieces purported to be documents, two letters, and fifty decoded cipher telegrams, with Naim's annotations explaining the individual items. There are interspersed comments by Aram Andonian, the Armenian who received the material from Naim and compiled it. Vakahn Dadrian examines the question of forgery and the factual errors contained in the documents but concludes that the errors can be explained and the material can be authenticated in many ways. Their validity is supported by the official and mostly secret reports of German and Austrian diplomats to their government, allied to man Turkey; by information that surfaced at the time of Turkish court-martial proceedings in 1919-20 that tried Young Turk leaders for their conduct of the war and the policy extermination; by the German consul at Aleppo, Rossler, whose district was in the center of events described in the documents and who read the French translation and judged the documents seemingly genuine. While they are important, these documents are only one source of information about the genocide in Turkey .<sup>47</sup>

with sanctions. Some telegrams exhort functionaries to show no mercy to women, children, or the sick and to dispose of Armenian orphans who were retained by Muslim families.<sup>51</sup>

First the leaders of the Armenians and the men in the labor battalions were killed.<sup>52</sup> Then the rest were marched into the desert without supplies. Many died along the way, and many were killed. Armin T. Wegner, a German eyewitness, wrote to President Wilson:

"And so they drove the whole people - men, women, hoary elders, children, expectant mothers and dumb sucklings - into the Arabic desert, with no other object than to let them starve to death."

" . . They drove the people, after depriving them of their leaders and spokesmen, out of the towns at all hours of the day and night, half-naked, straight out of their beds; plundered their houses, burned the villages, destroyed the churches or turned them into mosques, carried off the cattle, seized the vehicles, snatched the bread out of the mouths of their victims, tore the clothes from off their backs, the gold from their hair. Officials - military officers, soldiers, shepherds - vied with one another in their wild orgy of blood, dragging out of the schools delicate orphan girls to serve their bestial lusts, beat with cudgels dying women or women close on childbirth who could scarcely drag themselves along, until the women fell down on the road and died....

"Parties which on their departure from the homeland of High Armenia consisted of thousands, numbered on their arrival in the outskirts of Aleppo only a few hundred, while the fields were strewn with swollen, blackened corpses....

"Even before the gates of Aleppo they were not allowed to rest ... the shrunken parties were ceaselessly driven barefooted, hundreds of miles under the burning sun, through stony defiles, over pathless steppes, enfeebled by fever and other maladies, through semi-tropical marshes, into the wilderness of desolation. Here, they died - slain by Kurds, robbed by gendarmes, shot, hanged, poisoned, frozen, parched with thirst, starved."

". . . I have seen maddened deportees eating as food their own clothes and shoes - women cooking the bodies of their new-born babes."<sup>53</sup>

Like the German Holocaust, the genocide was self-destructive. Turkey deprived itself of a large portion of its professional and administrative class. Resources badly needed for war were diverted. Killing and removing Armenians resulted in a lack of support personnel that made the 1916 Russian invasion of Turkish Armenia easier. Count Metternich, a German official, noted that the Turkish government seemed almost bent on losing the war.<sup>54</sup>

## **THE ROLE OF BYSTANDERS**

In 1876 Turkey put down a Bulgarian revolt with indiscriminate massacres. In England there was a strong public reaction led by Gladstone, then in Opposition. He said that the evidence of atrocities "makes the responsibility of silence... too great to be borne."

An old servant of the Crown and State, I entreat my countrymen, upon whom far more than perhaps any other people of Europe it depends, to require, and to insist, that our Government, which has been working in one direction, shall work in the other, and shall apply all its vigour and concur with the other states of Europe in obtaining the extinction of the Turkish executive power in Bulgaria; let the Turks carry away their abuses in the only possible manner, namely by carrying themselves off..<sup>55</sup>

However, Great Britain's policymakers feared Czarist Russia and therefore courted Turkey.<sup>56</sup> Realpolitik won out over moral or humane considerations. British (and world) indignation was not brought to bear on Turkey.

European nations also passively accepted the great massacres under Abdul Hamid. At the time of the massacres Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany visited Constantinople, publicly embracing the sultan. Massacres of Russian Armenians during the Russian revolution of 1905 also made killing Armenians more acceptable. The German atrocities in Belgium early in the war had a similar effect.

During the war Turkey was heavily dependent on Germany, which gave it tacit support in suppressing Armenian opposition. Count Ernst von Reventlow wrote in the *Deutscher Tageszeitung*:

If the Porte considers it necessary that Armenian insurrections and other goings on should be crushed by every means available, so as to exclude all possibility of their repetition, then that is no "murder" and "atrocious" but simply measures of a justifiable and necessary kind.<sup>57</sup>

Germany was the only nation in a position to exert influence on Turkey, but the German government never responded to invitations by the United States and other governments to cooperate in efforts to end the genocide. In the view of one Armenian writer:

It is clear that, whoever commanded the atrocities, the Germans never made a motion to countermand them, when they could have stopped it at the start by a single word... by entering the war, Turkey placed herself entirely in Germany's power. She is dependent on Germany for munitions of war and leadership in battle, for the preservation of her existence at the present and for its continuance in future, should Germany succeed in preserving it now. The German Government had but to pronounce the veto, and it would have been obeyed; and the local authorities at Berlin could have ensured its being obeyed through their agents on the spot. For ever since 1895, Germany has been assiduously extending the network of her consular service over all the Asiatic provinces of the Ottoman Empire. In every administrative centre throughout those districts where massacres and deportations have occurred - in Anatolia, Cilicia, and Armenia - proper - there is a German consul; and the prestige of these consuls is unbounded. They are the agents of a friendly power, the only power that offers Turkey her friendship with no moral conditions attached.<sup>58</sup>

The capacity of Germany to halt the genocide is probably overestimated here. Once an intense motivation to kill becomes dominant and gains expression in action, suppressing it is not easy. But Germany did not try.<sup>59</sup>

Ulrich Trumpener argues that German diplomats and military officials had little capacity to influence the internal policies of Turkey, whether to promote German financial and economic interests or with regard to the treatment of the Armenians.<sup>60</sup> But he also indicates that Germany, intent on keeping the Turkish army fighting, was reluctant to do anything "drastic" about the atrocities. The German ambassador refused to consider extending German protection to the Armenians. As it became evident that the extermination was in progress, the ambassador informed his government, which took no action and sent him no policy directive. His own protests of actions against Armenians not "dictated by military reasons" were ignored by the Ottoman government.<sup>61</sup> The German government showed no concern about the victims, but did show an interest in preparing a defense against possible charges of complicity.

In the early stages the Germans did believe that there was an Armenian insurrection. Later they realized the true nature of events but continued to use insurrection as a justification. The German ambassador in Washington, once the atrocities became difficult to deny, defended them on the grounds that "the Armenians were disloyal and secretly aided Russia."<sup>62</sup>

Just-world thinking, the devaluation of victims, fear of alienating their ally and a tendency to adopt its attitude, a focus on their own concerns in the midst of the war, and perhaps their own attitudes toward minorities all contributed to German passivity. An article in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in October 9, 1915, reveals part of the German attitude.

The Armenian ... enjoys, through his higher intellect and superior commercial ability, a constant business advantage in trade, tax-farming, banking, and commission-agency over the heavy-footed Turk, and so accumulates money in his pocket, while the Turk grows poor. That is why the Armenian is the best hated man in the East - in many cases not unjustly, though a generalization would be unfair.<sup>63</sup>

Dr. Johannes Lepsius went to Armenia to see, to protest, and also to aid Armenians, which was not allowed by the Ottoman government. Upon his return to Germany, his description of events in Turkey was criticized as exaggerated, even by liberal politicians.

Germany's behavior with respect to Turkey during the First World War may have been one element that paved the way for the Holocaust. The Armenian genocide helped shape German attitudes toward violence against "internal enemies." The quiet acceptance by the rest of the world also contributed. Even after Turkey lost the war, and despite new massacres of Armenians in 1922, little was done to punish Turkey or individual Turks. Hitler could later justifiably say, "Who remembers now the massacres of the Armenians?"<sup>\*64</sup>

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\* After the military trials, Turkey reversed course and has ever since denied the atrocities. The reasons for this probably include psychological defenses (denial in the psychological sense, rationalizations, and justifications), fear of Armenian claims for reparations, and the unrealistic fear of an Armenian attempt to establish an independent state. Such denial is potentially very harmful. A society not facing up to atrocities it committed and not dealing with its own inhumanity is likely to continue or repeat such actions. In Turkey, interference with the cultural life of the Armenians, discrimination, and economic pressure have continued. Complicity by others contributes to the possibility of denial: for example, the U.S. State Department, apparently influenced by U.S. national interests in Turkey, decided in 1982 that the evidence of the Turkish genocide or atrocities was unclear. Later, Congress reasserted the earlier U.S. view recognizing that a genocide had taken place.<sup>65</sup>

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59. Miller, *Ottoman Empire*, p. 538.
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62. *New York Herald Tribune*, quoted in Bedrossyan, *First genocide*, p. 131.
63. Ibid., p. 131.
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