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ON THE HIERARCHY OF PERPETRATORS DURING THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Suren Manukyan

Outlining organizers and perpetrators of genocides, as well as analyzing their roles in the process of mass killings are crucial for the study of particular cases of the crime.

Genocide is first and foremost a political crime, which is masterminded by humans and is carried out by humans. To understand the machinery of the crime we have to learn the system of hierarchy inside its operating mechanism: from decision-makers to ordinary executioners and their proponents.

This problem has remained somewhat out of the academic scope of the Armenian Genocide studies and has found itself in a specific perceptual trap of the belief that there is no need to study a subject as obvious as this. Surely, there have been researchers, which have reflected on the matter of identifying the felons; however, the system per se, its horizontal and vertical connections, from decision-making through execution has not been subject to academic scrutiny.

The Encyclopedia of Genocide defines perpetrator as individuals, who “initiate, facilitate, or carry out acts of genocide or crimes against humanity”¹. These functions – the initiation, facilitation, and implementation – to some extent describe the operational sequence of any genocide.

Article 4 of the UN Convention on Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (adopted on December 9, 1948) defines the scope of complicity to the crime: “Persons committing genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in Article III [of this Convention – S.M.] shall be punished, whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals.”² At the court hearings against the Young Turks in 1919-1920, the offenders were classified into a similar hierarchal order. Separated hearings were held for party leaders, state officials, members of the Special Organization, as well as regional officials, and party secretaries.³

The May 24th, 1915 declaration made by the three Entente countries reflected on the problem of personal responsibility, and the complicity of Ottoman officials in the mas-

1. Dinah L. Shelton (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Genocide and Crimes against Humanity*, vol. 2 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, Thomson Gale, 2004), 790.

2. The full text of the UN Convention on Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide is available at <https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/AH386.pdf>

3. See Vahakn N. Dadrian and Taner Akçam, *Judgment at Istanbul: The Armenian Genocide Trials* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2011); Meline Anumyan, *Tchanachum yev datapartum: Yeritturkeri datavarutyunnery (1919-1921 tt. և 1926 t.)* [Recongnition and Condemnation, The Young Turks Trials (1919-1921 and 1926)] (Yerevan: Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, 2013).

sacres of the Armenian population, and stated the need of the members of the Ottoman Empire and the participants of massacres to bear personal responsibility for the events.⁴

The circle of persons involved in perpetration and the hierarchical organization of the Armenian Genocide can be provisionally divided into the following groups: upper-level decision-makers, middle-level regional organizers, agencies, and structures, as well as lower level common population.

a. Decision makers

In the upper circle of perpetrators of the Armenian Genocide were those, who made the crucial decisions. They were responsible for the formulation of the ideology of the genocide, making the decisions on carrying out the genocide and supervising the course of the massacres. Decision-makers sent hundreds of thousands of people to death oftentimes without participating in their killings personally.

The perpetrators of this level were high ranked state officials, party elites, and a few influential individuals, who had a decisive role in masterminding the Armenian Genocide. It is impossible to segregate those roles since a person could appear in more than one position of a party leader, a state official, and an influential individual at the same time.

The state has a crucial role in programming and carrying out genocide. The genocides of the 20th century have been perpetrated by state authorities or its representatives, for only the excessive centralization of state power, as well as control over communications and transportation means make the organization of a crime of such extent possible on a practical level.⁵ State resources, the legitimacy of the use of force, access to infrastructures, such as telegraphs, railroads, concentration camps, make a 'project' as wide-scale as genocide feasible. The state is also the only agent in possession of all those means, which let instigate a feeling of hatred in the minds of the population by dehumanizing the victims, depicting them as an evil or a deadly menace, and, thus involving huge popular masses in the act of killing.

As a rule, such states are governed by political forces, which adopt a genocidal ideology and demonstrate willingness for the mass crime. Those forces included the National Socialist Party in the case of the Holocaust, the Khmer Rouge, one of the currents of the Communist party, in Cambodia. The Armenian Genocide is a crime committed by the Ottoman Empire; however, the decisions for it were made by the Central Committee of the Union and Progress Party, which had de facto incorporated the state's authority in its hands, performing functions of state bodies.⁶ The decisions by the Committee of the Union

4. "In view of those new crimes of Turkey against humanity and civilization, the Allied governments announce publicly to the Sublime-Porte that they will hold personally responsible [for] these crimes all members of the Ottoman government and those of their agents who are implicated in such massacres", (Cf. <http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/France.php>).

5. Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn (eds.), *The History and Sociology of Genocide: Analyses and Case Studies* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), 26.

6. See Taner Akçam, *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility*

and Progress, which had been implemented by the government, were later validated by a back date and were given legislative power by the Ottoman parliament.

The decision on genocide was formulated between 1910 and 1911 in the course of the congresses of the Young Turks.⁷ In the situation where the ideology of Ottomanism had demonstrated its inefficiency the urge to replace it with that of Turkism was growing. A number of proponents of the pan-Turkist ideology were elected to the Central Committee of Ittihad in the course of the party congresses held between 1910 and 1911.⁸ In the autumn of 1911, the 4th congress of the party verified the move to forced Turkification. Kazım Nami Duru, who was participating in the congress, recalls in his memoirs: “Ittihat swore to dissolve other peoples in the Turkish environment and so developed a program to achieve the goal.”⁹ Doctor Nazım, one of the pioneers of the plan, consolidated the vision of the ‘final Turkification’ at the 1910-1911 congresses; the program was to be implemented through mass resettlements of Muslims and through extermination of the Armenian population.¹⁰

Starting from 1913 the Central Committee of the Party of Young Turks discontinued reporting to the congress; having centralized the control of the country in its hands, the party relied on the influence and the authority of its members, who held positions in the government. It was the Ittihat Central Committee that elaborated and implemented the plan of exterminating the Armenian population of the Empire. Throughout the period, when the Armenian genocide was planned and implemented, i.e. in 1912-1917, the Central Committee of Ittihat remained unchanged and included General Secretary of the party Midhat Şükrü, Saïd Halim Pasha, Talaat Pasha, Eyüp Sabri, Doctor Nazım, Doctor Behaeddin Şakir, Doctor Rusuhi, Ziya Gökalp, Emrullah, Küçük Talaat, Atif Rıza, and Kara Kemal.¹¹

A number of authors (Arsen Avagyan, Dogan Avcıoğlu¹², Şükrü Hanioglu, Robert Melson¹³) give a pivotal role to Doctor Nazım and Behaeddin Şakir in programming and carrying out the Armenian Genocide.

(London, Macmillan, 2007); Vahakn Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus* (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 2003).

7. Vahakn Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide*, 179-180.

8. Robert Melson, *Revolution and Genocide: On the Origins of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 165; Jacob M. Landau, *Pan-Turkism: From Irredentism to Cooperation* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 49.

9. Kazım Nami Duru, Ziya Gökalp (İstanbul, 1965), S. 41, cited from Arsen Avagyan, *Genocid armyan: mekhanizmi prinyatiya I ispolneniya resheniy* [Armenian Genocide: Mechanisms of Decision-making and Implementation] (Yerevan, Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, 2013), 43.

10. René Pinon, “La Liquidation de L’Empire Ottoman,” *Revue des Deux Mondes* 53 (September, 1919): 131, 139-140 in Vahakn N. Dadrian, *Warrant for Genocide: Key Elements of Turko-Armenian Conflict* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1999), 98.

11. Arsen Avagyan, *Genocid armyan*, 46-48.

12. Dogan Avcıoğlu, *Milli Kurtulu Tarihi*, Vol. 3 (İstanbul: İstanbul Publications, 1974).

13. Robert Melson, *Revolution and Genocide*, 145, 313, (ft 44).

Staying away from the public attention Nazım, nevertheless, had centralized the control of the party in his hands.¹⁴ He had repeatedly expressed himself in favor of the idea of exterminating non-Turkic minorities of the Empire and had his loyal proponents in this cause. Probably, it was Behaeddin Şakir, who, together with Nazım, authored the law of deportations.

The crucial role Şakir played was confirmed by Colonel of the German Army Stange, who, together with Şakir, was organizing guerilla operations against the Russian troops in the first trimester of the World War I. Stange informs that the same detachments were further transformed into those of killers.¹⁵ Vahakn Dadrian, too, underlines the crucial role the two had in the final decision regarding the plan of the genocide (along with Talaat, Head of the National Security Campolad, and Colonel Seifi, who was the Head of the Second Department [responsible for investigations] of the Chief of Defense of the country).¹⁶

Other two main ideologists of the Ittihat in the years of the genocide were Ziya Gökalp and Yusuf Akçura, who believed that the extermination of the Christians would eliminate the obstacle, which hindered the unification of the Turkic-speaking peoples living from Anatolia to Central Asia into a new super-empire.¹⁷

However, a detailed plan to annihilate an ethnic group could be implemented only where the party had a total control over the state apparatus, and its agencies, such as the law enforcers. In this light, the formation of the Ittihat dictatorship after the 1913 coup d'état was crucial, since the state and the party apparatus got totally amalgamated shortly after.

The government de facto was turned into an instrument in performing the party decisions. The power centralized in the hands of the Three Pashas, which also bore the main responsibility for the perpetration of the genocide. Minister of Defense Ismail Enver, who had accumulated all the military matters in his hands, actively propagated for an alliance with Germany, and, being married to the niece of the Sultan, was believed to have aspirations for the throne. Ahmet Cemal was the first governor of Istanbul, who later became Minister of Navy, Commander of the 4th Army, and the de facto proprietor of Syria. His relationships with Enver had always been complicated.¹⁸ In general, each of the strongmen in the Triumvirate would try to exclude others intervention in spheres under his control, which can explain the sometimes obvious discrepancies in their actions during the Armenian Genocide.

14. Arsen Avagyan, *Genocid armyan*, 55-56.

15. Report No. 3481, dated 23 August 1915, Botschaft Konstantinopel 170/23, cited from Vahakn N. Dadrian, "The Role of Turkish Physicians in the World War I Genocide of Ottoman Armenians," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 1(2) (1986): 173.

16. Vahakn N. Dadrian, "The Secret Young-Turk Ittihadist Conference and the Decision for the World War I Genocide of the Armenians," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 7(2) (1993): 176.

17. Norman M. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 25–26.

18. Abram Elkus, *The Memoirs of Abram Elkus: Lawyer, Ambassador, Statesman* (Princeton, NJ: Gomidas Institute 2004), 61-62.

The third in the triumvirate was Mehmet Talaat, the Minister of Interior, and later also the head of the government, who de facto entertained the greatest power inside the country, having undertaken the role to reconcile and to restrain the conflicting currents and individual influences within a closed circle of the Young Turks Party.¹⁹ As a Minister of Interior the police and the administration in the vilayets were also under his control, which gave him definitive influence and made him a central figure in the scheme that perpetrated the Armenian genocide.²⁰ Ambassador of Germany to the Ottoman Empire Count von Wolff-Metternich called him “the soul of the Armenian persecutions”.²¹ The telegrams, which were coordinating the extermination of Armenians in the vilayets, bore his name. Of course, those orders did not contain overt calls to manslaughter but indirectly indicated on the preparation of the monstrous plan. For instance, a confidential telegram from Talaat dated July 21, 1915, that was sent to the governors and Mutasarrif of Diyarbekir, Kharberd, Urfa, and Der-Zor ordered to bury the corpses on the roadsides, to burn the deserted properties, rather than throw the bodies into gorges, rivers, or lakes.²² In another telegram to the governor of Diarbekir dated July 22, 1915, Talaat called on to immediately terminate the killings of other Christian population, since applying the disciplinary measures against Armenians on other peoples might backfire.²³

The government of the Ottoman Empire had turned into a tool in the hands of the Young Turks Party fulfilling its programs. Prince of Egypt Saïd Halim Pasha,²⁴ who was in the closed circle of the leaders of the Young Turks Party, nevertheless never had a major influence on the decision-making inside it. He was only a docile agent for the triumvirate.

Provisional laws on deportations, which were chosen as a means to implement the Armenian Genocide, were passed on May 27, 1915. It should be mentioned that the deportations were fully underway from early spring and that the adoption of the provisional laws was a backdated attempt to somewhat legitimize the process.²⁵

19. Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 3rd ed. (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 110.

20. Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1918), 24.

21. Christopher J. Walker, *Armenia: The Survival of a Nation* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), 234.

22. Avetis Papazyan (ed.), *Hayeri tseghaspanutyuny yst erittutkeri datavarutyanyan pastatghteri [Armenian Genocide through the Documents of Young Turk Trials]* (Yerevan: AS of ASSR Press, 1989), 42-43.

23. BOA/DH.ŞFR, no.54-A/73, Coded telegram from interior minister Talaat to the Province of Diyarbekir, dated 22 July, cited from Taner Akçam, *The Young Turks' Crime against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 210.

24. Saïd Halim Pasha was the grandson of the famous ruler of Egypt Mohammed Ali (Nikolay Hovhannisyan, *Hayeri 1915 t. tseghaspanutyanyan lusabanutyuny arabakan patmagrutyan mej* [The 1915 Armenian Genocide Coverage in the Arab Historiography], *Patmabanasirakan handes (Historical-Philological Journal)* 1(1989): 30-31; Saïd Amin, *Vosstaniye Arabov v XX Veke* [The Arab Rebellions of XX c.] (Moscow: Progress, 1964), 80.

25. According to the Ottoman legislation, the temporary laws allowed to be put them in force before the discussion and approval by the Parliament.

The permission for the extermination of the deported population is evidenced by Talaat's directive on June 14, 1915, to kill those in the caravans of the deported population, who would show resistance and would attempt to escape.²⁶ Few days later in a conversation with a representative of the German Embassy, he would share about the Sublime Porte's intention to finalize the task under the guise of the "war against the enemy from within".²⁷

On June 9 the Ministry of Interior sent a directive to the governor of Erzurum to sell off the property of the deported population²⁸, which clearly indicates the Armenians were not expected to return to the areas of their settlement.

The process of deportation and extermination of the deported Armenians was ensured by the circulars and the directives issued by the Ministry of Interior for the local governments. For instance, the provisional law on deportations adopted by the government on May 27, 1915, cited the decision N270 dated May 13, 1915, issued by the Ministry of Interior on deporting Armenians to Mosul, Der-Zor, and other regions of Syria.²⁹ The pivotal role the Ministry of Interior and Talaat had in the genocide was evidenced by the participants of the 1918 parliamentary hearings, as well as by the high-ranked defendants during the tribunal initiated against the Young Turks in 1919-1920, most of which pointed to the ministry as fully responsible for the deportation and the massacres of the Armenian population.³⁰ To legitimize the atrocities, on May 23, 1915, the Ministry of Interior sent directives on measures, which were to be undertaken against "the Christians, which were supporting the adversary, and the Muslims, which were collaborating with them" were subject to military tribunal.³¹

Even before the World War I the Ministry of Interior had formed structures, which would mostly involve in the coordination of the Armenian deportations.

One of them was the Directorate of Tribal and Immigrant Settlement founded in 1913³². Later it was expanded and reorganized into four departments, which were named in accor-

26. Osmanlı Belgeler, 43, Interior Ministry to Erzurum, 14 June 1915 cited from Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 90.

27. AAPA, Abt. 1A, Turkei 183/37, Pera, 17 June 1915, cited from Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide*, 90.

28. Şinasi Orel and Süreyya Yuca (ed.), "Affaires arméniennes, les "télégrammes" de Talât Pacha- Fait historique ou fiction? ", *Société turque de histoire* (France: Triangle, 1983): 117, no. 29, cited from Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide*, 90.

29. Arsen Avagyan, *Genocid armenyan*, 67.

30. Ibid

31. Ibid., 73.

32. The general migration administrative commission was formed to coordinate the influx of approximately one million over the next half century Chechen, Crimean Tatar, Muslim Georgian, and Turcoman immigrants (Kemal Karpat, "Population Movements in the Ottoman State in the Nineteenth Century: an Outline," in *Contributions à l'histoire économique et sociale de l'empire ottomane*; eds. Jean-Louis Bacque-Grammont and Paul Dumont (Paris: Editions Peeters, 1983), 385-428 and 405-408, cited from Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide*, 42.

dance with the functions they performed: departments of resettlement, security, transport, and tribes³³. Interestingly, the agency incorporated also the Scientific Council that was headed by Ziya Gökalp and was proposed for the collection of data on ethnic groups living on the territory of the Empire. Its creation was closely tied with a statement Talaat made once: “Anatolia is a closed box for us’, arguing that it was first necessary to ‘get to know the contents of it’ in order to operate on it”³⁴. The Agency for Settlement of Tribes and Immigrants was involved in the coordination of the deportations in the years of the Armenian genocide and was also responsible for the settlement of the Armenian areas with Muslims. The agency was operating under Şukru Kaya. Another pivotal structure under the ministry was the Directorate of General Security.³⁵

Yet another structure was Abandoned Properties Commission, which was in charge of coordinating the confiscation and redistribution of Armenian property.

Despite the main job for an organization of the forced deportations were performed by the Ministry of Interior and its bodies, involving local administrations, as well as security, police, and gendarmerie forces, other ministries, such as the Ministry of War and the Ministry of Education were actively engaged in the process.

In his theory of the law as a cumulative of resources American sociologist Alex Alvarez discusses how in times of genocides law “becomes a servant to those who have gained power and can be mobilized to serve their needs and protect their interests”.³⁶ By controlling laws the state gets power over agents with authority of legitimate violence.³⁷

In times of genocides, a “legal crime” or a set of actions that are protected by – in the perpetrator state but certainly not international society – by law are constituted”.³⁸ One such example is the Nuremberg laws,³⁹ which were illegal decisions formally corresponding to the definitions of law.

33. Cengiz Orhonlu, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Aşiretlerin İskâni* (Istanbul: Eren, 1987), S. 120, cited from Ugur Ümit Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey: Nation and State in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-50* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 36.

34. *Ibid.*, 36-37.

35. Donald Bloxham, “The First World War and the Development of the Armenian Genocide,” in Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Müge Göcek, Norman M. Naimark (eds.), *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 262.

36. Alex Alvarez, *Governments, Citizens, and Genocide: A Comparative and Interdisciplinary Approach* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001), 72.

37. *Ibid.*, 74.

38. *Ibid.*, 78.

39. Nuremberg laws were adopted on the initiative of Hitler on September 15th of 1935, at the National Socialist Party and Reichstag sittings in Nuremberg. There were two of them: the Law on the Reich Citizen (Reichsbürgergesetz) and the Law on the Protection of German Blood and German Honor (Gesetz zum Schutzedes Deutschen Blutsundder Deutschen Ehre) and (Gesetz zum Schutzedes Deutschen Blutes und der Deutschen Ehre): See Amy Newman, *The Nuremberg Laws: Institutionalized Anti-Semitism* (San Diego: Lucent Books, 1998); Hecht Ingeborgand, *Invisible Walls and To Remember is to Heal: A German Family under the Nuremberg Laws*, translated from German by J. Brownjohn and J. Broadwin (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999).

The parliament of the Ottoman Empire would pass such “laws” backdated, too often aimed to “legitimize” the crimes that were committed.

Early in the beginning of the war, the activities of the Ottoman legislative were de facto suspended. The actual structure of the Ottoman authorities in the emergency situation of the wartime had significantly relieved the executive from the potential restrictions the legislative might impose on it. Talaat hints in his memoirs that the freezing of the parliament’s work on March 1, 1915, was directly connected with the anti-Armenian campaigns.⁴⁰ This may indicate that a certain opposition to those operations was anticipated in the parliament. Furthermore, the suspension of the parliamentary works would let the deputies return to their provinces and inform their constituencies about “the Armenian danger”.⁴¹

The decision was later discussed and approved by the parliamentary committees for military and legal affairs. The Law on Deportations was passed as late as December 1916, following a voting organized in the parliament.⁴²

b. Local officials, party secretaries

The second level of genocide perpetrators encompasses structures, which are directly involved in regulating the genocide following the directives of top authorities, and ensuring the implementation of those instructions. The role of the structures or the state bureaucracy on this level was remarkable. A number of scholars of genocide have given a special role to those structures in describing genocides. Jack Porter, a professor at Harvard University, for instance, states perpetration of genocide requires that there are three major components in place – the ideology, the technology, and the bureaucracy.⁴³ Sociologist Irving Horowitz describes genocide as “structural and systematic destruction of innocent people by a state bureaucratic apparatus”.⁴⁴

The local bureaucracy would greatly precondition the nature and the intensity of genocide. Local elites could intensify or slow down the dynamics of killings.

The coordination of Armenian massacres in the provinces of the country was entrusted to valis, the governors of the provinces, most of whom were actively agitating for and arranging the deportations and killings.⁴⁵ And that was reasonable since most of the governors were loyal to the Union and Progress, oftentimes Talaat’s brothers in arms.

40. Kutay C., *Talat Pasanin Gurbet Hatiralan (The Memoirs of Talat Pasa in Exile)*, vol. 2 (Istanbul, 1983), 907 cited from Dadrian Vahakn N., *The History of the Armenian Genocide*, 223:

41. Vahakn N. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide*, 236.

42. Arsen Avagyan, *Genocid armyan*, 86.

43. Jack Nusan Porter, “Introduction: What is Genocide: Notes toward a Definition,” in *Genocide and Human Rights: A Global Anthology*, ed. Jack Nusan Porter (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982), 12-15.

44. Irving Louis Horowitz, *Taking Lives: Genocide and State Power* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1980), 17.

45. See for example *Takvim-i Vekayi*, no. 3549, 4th hearing, 8 Mayıs 1335 (8 May 1919) from Taner Akcam, “The Ottoman Documents and the Genocidal Policies of the Committee for Union and Progress

E.g. Cevdet (the Vali of Van), Ahmed Muammer (the vali of Sebastia/Sivas), Cemal Azmi (the vali of Trabzon), personally led the process of executions and spared no effort to implement the plan to the best of their capacity. Becoming the vali of Diarbekir, Mehmet Reşid, one of the founders of the Young Turks Party, deported and exterminated hundreds of thousands of Armenians, demonstrating an outstanding zest. Arab eye-witness Faiz el-Ghusein mentioned that as of August 1915 some 570 thousand Armenians were exterminated in Diarbekir.⁴⁶ The crimes committed on the territory of the province ruled by Reşid are hard to describe: victims were crucified, horseshoed, hearts stamped by hot horseshoes, their skulls smashed to pieces.⁴⁷ The scale of his cruelty made the Germany Consul to Mosul Holstein demand that Ambassador von Wangenheim interfered and required the Ottoman government to restrain Reşid.⁴⁸ And he was indeed ousted: however, the reason was rather the expropriation of the Armenian property, not the massacres.⁴⁹ In an exchange with the general secretary of the Ittihat Midhat Şükrü (Bleda) that happened in the period following the war Doctor Reşid tried to justify the annihilation of Armenians by the sense of duty he felt both as a Turk and as a doctor, just like “dangerous microbes”.⁵⁰

Besides the valis, the process engaged heads of smaller regions, the mutasafirs (prefects), as well as local police, heads of the gendarmerie, and religious leaders. Members of the Ottoman parliament, e.g. Khoja Ilyas Sami in Bitlis, or Mehmet Nuri bey in Kharberd, and others were actively involved in the killings of Armenians across the country.

Party representatives were eagerly included in the Armenian genocide along the local officials. Ittihad had a well-tuned network of party structures in the vilayets. In 1908, shortly after the revolution, Ittihatists formed clubs in the regions, which were the real centers of power in the provinces directly following party decisions.⁵¹ The clubs were also expected to disseminate anti-Armenian hate speech. Russian consul in Erzurum, Adamov, reported on January 4, 1914: “...Armenians expect assault any time: despite the Muslim resent, which was caused by the Ittihatists under emissary Hilmi bey arriving from the cap-

(Ittihat ve Terakki) toward the Armenians in 1915,” *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 1(2), 2006: 141.

46. Faiz El-Ghusein, *Martyred Armenia* (London: C. A. Pearson, 1917), 49.

47. On Diyarbakir massacres see Hilmar Kaiser, *The Extermination of Armenians in the Diarbekir Region* (Istanbul: Bilgi University Press, 2014); Üngör Ugur Ümit, Mehmet Polatel, *Confiscation and Destruction: The Young Turk Seizure of Armenian Property* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011); Hans-Lukas Kieser, “From ‘Patriotism’ to Mass Murder: Dr. Mehmed Reşid (1873-1919),” in Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Müge Göçek, Norman M. Naimark (eds.), *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 126-150.

48. PAA-AA; BoKon/169; A53a, 4184; p.11.07.1915. Telegraphic report. See Wolfgang Gust (ed.), *The Armenian Genocide: Evidence from the German Foreign Office Archives, 1915-1916* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), 245-246.

49. Taner Akçam, *The Young Turks’ Crime against Humanity*, 211-212.

50. Interview with Ittihad party Secretary-General Midhat Sukru (Bleda) in Resimli Tarih, 5 July 1953. See Vahakn N. Dadrian, “The Role of Turkish Physicians...,” 175.

51. Fatma Müge Göçek, *The Transformation of Turkey: Redefining State and Society from the Ottoman Empire to the Modern Era* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2011), 79.

ital, the Ittihatist club, which was chaired by the Germany envoy, had organized a shooting contest in the distant districts of the town. The majority of the local mob and dadashes, equipped with arms, were there... Armenians are sure [of the prepared assault], while the dadashes openly say the massacre is simply postponed".⁵²

The local elites, including the valis, were all members of Ittihatist clubs and therefore entertained tremendous influence. Vice-consul of Germany to Erzurum von Scheubner-Richter reported on July 28, 1915, that a parallel authority operated in the state (Nebenregierung). He underlined the severity of conditions in which the deportations were carried out by a group Ittihatists. In an instance, when the governor had agreed to stop the deportation of families of health-crippled people, absent men, and lonely women, the local Young Turks club had interfered and had downplayed the decision. An undescrivable cruelty that followed led to the death of the people.⁵³

The clubs were integrated into the party branches in vilayets, which were operating under the party's central committee. In 1913 the central committee delegated party officials to regions. The delegates comprised executive secretaries of the Party of Union and Progress (Kâtibi Mesut), emissaries (Murahas), superintendents (Umumi Müfettiş), which played an essential role in carrying out the Armenian genocide. They were carefully selected and appointed by the central committee of Ittihat and were mostly former army officers.⁵⁴ These loyal party members could provide efficiency in the organization and guidance on the local level to ensure the smooth and accurate implementation of the plan. As a matter of fact, they were the party agents licensed for total control and a purpose to ensure the proper process of the genocide.⁵⁵

Those party activists were a link between the central committee of Ittihat and the grassroots conveying the orders down from the center. The encrypted directives of the Ministry of Interior were reaching the local authorities and structures, the governors, the regional security offices of the ministry, as well as the gendarmerie, through executive secretaries.⁵⁶

The secretaries would create groups of four to six to support them, head the local party structures, organize meetings, and set the local population against Armenians, issue orders on deportations, massacres, and lootings. In some instances, they would personally lead

52. AVPR (Archive of Foreign Policy of Russia), Embassy in Constantinople, 3726, p. 94 in M. Nersisyan (ed.), *Hayeri tseghaspanutyuny Osmanyany kaysrutyunum [Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire]* (Yerevan: "Hayastan", 1991), 325.

53. A.A., K170, No 4674, folio 63/- Vahakn N. Dadrian, "The Determinants of the Armenian Genocide," *Journal of Genocide Research* 1:1(1999): 72.

54. G. Vardar, *Ittihad ve Terakki* [n 23], p. 77, cited from Vahakn N. Dadrian, "The Determinants of the Armenian Genocide," 72.

55. *Ibid.*, 71.

56. Taner Akçam, "The Ottoman Documents and the Genocidal Policies of the Committee for Union and Progress (Ittihat ve Terakki) toward the Armenians in 1915," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 1:2(2006): 141.

the process of killing.⁵⁷ The executive secretaries were also involved in forming Teşkilat-i Mahsuse detachments and directing mob groups.⁵⁸

Executive secretaries were given tremendous power and could issue directives to valis and mutasarifs. Nail, the executive secretary of Trabzon, overturned the local vali's decision according to which children and handicapped people could temporarily avoid deportation.⁵⁹ In provinces (Angora, Yozgat, Aleppo, and Kastamonou), where the deportations were carried out with a certain degree of reluctance, the valis were ousted by the Ittihatist officials, punished in some cases, and replaced with more enthusiastic officials.⁶⁰

In the course of the 1919-1920 tribunal organized in the post-war period, the cases of the executive secretaries were heard in separate sessions, which proved the importance of the roles they played.⁶¹

These party structures and executive secretaries had worked with the governor, mutasarif and gendarmerie offices directly. These local elite groups, which were comprised of about 30 to 40 people, and were usually involved in genocidal operations, included heads of renowned families, Kurdish and Circassian tribe chiefs, as well as local administrations, law enforcement bodies, religious leaders, and party activists. The competition frequently evolving inside those groups was caused by a desire to prove group members' loyalty to the leaders of Ittihat in anticipation of privileges in the future. In Diarbekir, for instance, the race ended up with the victory of Piriçizade, Muftizade, and Derekzade families.⁶²

c. Military and paramilitary structures

Genocides are mostly carried out by means of military and paramilitary structures: in some case, those are already existing ones, while others new structures are specially formed for the perpetration of genocidal acts.

The police and gendarmerie under the Ottoman Ministry of Interior were directly involved in the perpetration of the Armenian genocide by participation in the massacres and the seizing of the confiscated Armenian property. The police would circle the Armenian settlements, break into the houses of the Armenian population pretending to toss for arms, detained Armenian men, forcefully deported the Armenian population. The "death marches" were usually guarded by the gendarmerie. They would urge on the deported, de-

57. Raymond Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2011), 144.

58. Many telegrams witnesses about this, for instance, from responsible secretary Mesul Rüştü from Samsun. On May 27, 1919, he confirmed that he had organized armed groups needed for this region, *Takvim-i Vekayi*, no. 3554, 5th hearing, 14 May 1919, cited from Taner Akçam, "The Ottoman Documents..." p.148 (ft 90).

59. Vahakn N. Dadrian, *History of the Armenian Genocide...*, 406-407.

60. Vahakn N. Dadrian, "The Documentation of the World War I Armenian Massacres in the Proceedings of the Turkish Military Tribunal," *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 22(1994): 141.

61. The materials on the trials of the CUP responsible secretaries see Avetis Papazyan (ed.), *Hayeri tseghaspanutyuny...*, 129-162

62. Ugur Ümit Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey...*, 106.

priving them of rest, expropriate their jewelry and clothes, prohibit the people from drinking, when passing by water sources and wells, depriving them of food, torturing them, raping, crippling, and killing them.⁶³ The ministries of interior and war also supervised the telegraph and the railroad networks, the main means of communication of the empire. The telegraph machines played a crucial role in organizing Armenian deportations and mass killings. Those were used to send directives and reports to the local administrations and party representatives. Talaat had once been a postal officer and had a telegraphing machine of his own, which he used to send orders from home. Numerous Armenians, who used to work at postal services, were laid off en masse from early 1915.⁶⁴

The Turkish army, too, had a part in the perpetration of the Armenian Genocide. A particularly big role has been played by the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Minister of War Enver, Commander of the 4th Army Cemal, and Commander of the 3rd Army Mahmud Kâmil. Generals Halil Kut, Enver's uncle, and Ali Ihsan Sabis, actively participated in the Armenian genocide, as well.⁶⁵

To remind, under Article 4 on deportations the observance of the provisional law was licensed to the Ministry of Defense.⁶⁶ Army's involvement was greatly conditioned by Enver's factor. The disarming and extermination of the Armenian militaries was motivated by Enver's crushing defeat in the Battle of Sarıkamış. Armenians have been openly declared as enemies of the state soon after. Hundreds of thousands of Armenian soldiers and officers, serving in the Ottoman Army, were exterminated in February-May 1915. Henry Morgenthau wrote: "In the early part of 1915, the Armenian soldiers in the Turkish army were reduced to a new status. Up to that time most of them had been combatants, but now they were all stripped of their arms and transformed into workmen. Instead of serving their country as artillerymen and cavalrymen, these former soldiers now discovered that they had been transformed into road laborers and pack animals... In many instances, Armenian soldiers were disposed of in even more summary fashion, for it now became almost the general practice to shoot them in cold blood."⁶⁷

Army units were actively involved where Armenians would organize self-defense, and there was a need to bear down the resistance.

63. See for example in AVPR, Politarkhiv (Political archive), 3508, p. 16. Cited from G. A. Abrahamyan and T. G. Sevan-Khachatryan (eds.), *Ruskiye istochniki o genocide armyan v Osmanskoy imperii-1915-1916 gody* [Russian Sources on the Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire – 1915-1916] (Yerevan: Areresum-ANI, 1995), 22; ЦГИА Арм. ССР, ф. 57, оп. 2, д. 692, п. 17-20, from M. Nersisyan and R. Sahakyan (eds.), *Genocid armyan v Osmanskoy imperii* [Armenian Genocide in Ottoman Empire] (Yerevan: "Hayastan", 1983), 284; James Bryce and Arnold Toynbee, *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire 1915-16: Documents Presented to Viscount Grey of Falloden by Viscount Bryce* (London: 1916), 262-264; Herbert Gibbons, *Posledniye izbiyeniya v Armenii* [The Last Brutalities in Armenia] (Petrograd, 1916), 15.

64. Johannes Lepsius, *Bericht über die Lage des Armenischen Volkes in der Türkei* (Potsdam: Tempelverlag, 1916), cited from M. Nersisyan and R. Sahakyan (eds.), *Genotsid armyan...*, 389.

65. Raymond Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide...*

66. Vahakn N. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide...*, 235.

67. Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*, 302.

E.g. the attempts to crack down resistance in Van and Musa Dağ involved army units. Furthermore, the influence the military had on the Turkish elites largely facilitated to presenting the activities as a military need. In January 1919 the Turkish authorities detained a number of high ranked military officers calling the latter organizers of Armenian massacres in the areas under their control. It corresponded to the truth to the certain extent. E.g. when von Scheubner-Richter the vice consul of Germany in Erzurum, complained to Tahsin, the local vali, of the violence against the deported population, Tahsin promised to stop them, while, at the same time, made an attempt to justify himself by explaining it with that the real power in the region was centralized in the hands of the Commander of the 3rd Army Mahmud Kâmil.⁶⁸

Since the genocide of the Armenians was carried out on war-torn territories of the empire and since there was a situation of martial law, the military had concentrated the political power of these regions in its hands. Vahakn Dadrian brings the case of the Kaiseri region where the army would take care of the military conscription, logistics, and transportation, as would perform additional functions – that of unproportionate confiscations on different levels, as well as ‘justices’ made by military tribunals – both of which had tragic consequences for the Armenian population. Furthermore, the army commanders often relied on the units of the Gendarmerie, which accompanied numerous groups of deported Armenians.⁶⁹

The use of non-regular forces to carry out the ‘dirty job’ was a well set Ottoman tradition.⁷⁰ Although the regular forces participated in many instances of carrying out the genocide of Armenians, they were rarely used to exterminate whole communities. It was the irregular forces, which became a real tool in implementing the state policy.⁷¹

A decisive role in the perpetration of the Armenian genocide was played by Teşkilat-i Mahsuse (the Special Organization). This structure was assigned to exterminate the deported Armenian population, as well as to coordinate the activities of all the involved organizations.

There are many interpretations of the emergence of the organization; however, it is clear though that up until the WWI it operated under control of minister Enver, and was influenced by pan-Islamic and pan-Turkic ideologies.⁷²

68. Hilmar Kaiser, “‘A Scene from the Inferno,’ The Armenians of Erzerum and the Genocide, 1915-1916,” in H. L. Kieser and D. J. Schaller (eds.), *Der Völkermord an den Armeniern und die Shoah* (Zürich: Chronos, 2002), 139.

69. Vahakn N. Dadrian., “The Agency of “Triggering Mechanisms” as a Factor in the Organization of the Genocide Against the Armenians of Kayseri District,” *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 1:2(2006): 110.

70. See James J. Reid, *Crisis of the Ottoman Empire: Prelude to Collapse 1839–1878* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2000).

71. James J. Reid , “Militarism, Partisan War, and Destructive Inclinations in Ottoman Military History: 1854-1918,” *Armenian Review* 39, no. 3/155(1986): 6–11; Arnold J. Toynbee, *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey: A Study in the Contact of Civilizations* (London: Constable and Co., 1923), 278–280.

72. See for example Arsen Avagyan, *Genocid armyan*, 93-96.

In the course of its existence, the organization had three leaders: Süleyman Askeri, Ali Başkampa, and Husamettin Erturk. Interestingly, all of them were of Northern Caucasus (Circassian) ancestries. Circassians have been widely represented also in other top positions of the Special Organization.⁷³

The real head of the organization, however, was Behaeddin Şakir. As early as in 1914 Behaeddin Şakir traveled to Erzurum with Circassian Hüsein Husni with a purpose of forming armed groups in Armenian provinces. Later he would coordinate the activities of the Special Organization by touring on his automobile to regions as well as by means of encrypted telegrams.⁷⁴ Nazım also played a big role in the organization.

Turcologist Arsen Avagyan underlines that the Teşkilat-i Mahsuse had four major tasks. Those were the organization of the disarmament of the Armenian population, organization of accompanying detachments, which were supposed to carry out the deportation and extermination of the population, organization of detachments for the extermination of the Armenian population in the deserts of Syrian and concentration camps, supervision and coordination of civilian authorities in vilayets in the organization of the Armenian genocide.⁷⁵

Teşkilat-i Mahsuse had one central and four regional units. The unit responsible for the eastern vilayets was intended for the coordinating the pan-Islamist and pan-Turkish propaganda in the rear of Russia; however, the perpetration of the Armenian massacres became its main function. In the eastern vilayets, the supervision of this function of the Special organization was assigned to the vali of Trabzon Cemal Azmi, vali of Erzurum Tahsin, a member of the Ittihat central committee Behaeddin Şakir, as well as Doctor Fuad Sabit bey.⁷⁶

The directives in Teşkilat-i Mahsuse were mostly communicated verbally; the correspondence was destroyed immediately after reading. The organization had strict disciplinary rules and used the cypher codes of the Ministry of Interior for correspondence.

Nevertheless, Teşkilat-i Mahsuse was only a body in an implementation of decisions. However it had some jurisdiction, which allowed for sending instructions to local bodies in organizing deportations and killings; to control their activities, and reporting. The valis, the kaimakams, and the agents of Ittihat were to abide by the requirements of the Special Organization. Many of them were its members, which significantly simplified the implementation of the tasks.

Of course, some tensions regularly arose between Teşkilat-i Mahsuse and other structures: e.g. army units every now and then would refuse to provide supporting forces, because, they said, they served the Commander in Chief alone, or would refuse to comply with orders received through the channels of the Special Organization. In such cases, the

73. Ryan Gingeras, *Sorrowful Shores: Violence, Ethnicity, and the End of the Ottoman Empire, 1912–1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 58.

74. *Supra*, p. 187, n. 155 from Raymond Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide...*, 199.

75. Arsen Avagyan, *Genocid armyan*, 109.

76. *Ibid.*, 107-108.

orders were sent via the Ministry of War. The relationships would regularly become extremely tough. One such instance was the case of Commander of the 3rd Army Mehmed Vehib who had planned to detain Behaeddin Şakir, and it was only with Enver's interference that the decision was derailed.⁷⁷

Executive secretaries closely communicated with Teşkilat-ı Mahsuse. A document dated September 13, 1913, and sent by the Special organization to the central committee of Ittihat proves that the secretaries were responsible for the forming of mobster groups in the regions. The telegram points that the actions were undertaken by the executive secretary of Samsun, Ruştu, who had formed groups in the area he controlled, are exemplary and should as models for other groups.⁷⁸ After they were formed, the groups were then sent to the capital⁷⁹ to be trained as militaries and then be commissioned with assignments to Armenian vilayets.

Interestingly, the correspondence took place through the general secretary of Ittihat Midhat Şükrü.

The numbers of people included in the detachments of the organization regularly changed per each assignment. The groups were mostly formed from Kurdish tribes, immigrants from the Caucasus and the Balkans, as well as criminals, who were released from prisons upon the decree of the minister of interior.⁸⁰ These mob groups were known as “savages and criminals” even among the Young Turk officials.⁸¹

Aram Antonyan points that the units comprised of Balkan muhajirs stood out for their remarkable hatred towards Christians and cruelty, which were guided by the feeling of revenge against Armenians, although the latter had little if any relation to the sufferings Balkan Muslims had undergone before.⁸² Groups were also formed from multi-ethnic communities of Muslims, which had earlier moved to the Ottoman Empire and which were commonly known as Circassians. One such detachment was led by Circassian Ahmed, who killed two Armenian members of Parliament – Grigor Zohrap and Vardges Seringulyan, in the neighborhood of Diarbekir.⁸³ The massacres of the Armenians, who had found refuge

77. Ibid., 119.

78. Takvimi Vekâyi 3554, 5th session, 14 May 1335. Taner Akçam, *From Empire to Republic: Turkish Nationalism and the Armenian Genocide* (New York: Zed Books, 2013), 171.

79. In the telegram dated November 13, 1914 it is demanded “that the people clandestinely recruited by the party secretaries in Izmit, Bursa, Bandırma, Balıkesir and other relevant regions should be summoned and moved [to Istanbul] within a week (Takvimi Vekâyi 3554, 5th session, 14 May 1335, cited from Taner Akçam, *From Empire to Republic...*, 163).

80. Taner Akçam, *From Empire to Republic...*, 161.

81. A. Mil, ‘Umumi Harpte Teşkilâtı Mahsusa’, in: *Vakit*, 2 October 1933 up to 18 April 1934, republished as: Arif Cemil (Denker), *I. Dünya Savaşı'nda Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* (Istanbul: Arba, 1997), 196. Cited from Ugur Ümit Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, 58.

82. Aram Antonian, *Mets votchiry [The Great Crime]* (Yerevan: Arevik, 1990), 53-54.

83. Ahmed Refik, *yerku komite, yerku votchir [Two Committees, Two Crimes]* (Yerevan, 1997), 46-50.

in the desert of Der-Zor in 1916 were also perpetrated by the çetes comprised of Chechens and Arabs, which were organized by the governor of Der-Zor Salih Zeki.

Turkish historian Suat Parlar mentions that Teşkilat-i Mahsuse had already started organizing groups of volunteers from the Balkans and the Caucasus, as well as prisoners serving sentences for grave offenses, even before the decision on deportations was made public. Constantinople received several complaints after the assaults the groups organized against villages.⁸⁴

Falih Rifki Atay, a personal assistant to Cemal pasha, has an interesting recollection of a conversation he had with Nazım as he approached him expressing the willingness to join the “homeland defense units” he had heard were being formed. Hearing the request, Atay recalls, Nazım responded with a faint smile on his face, saying those detachments “are made of criminals and murderers, and there is no place among them for a young man like you”. “I didn’t get anything about the army of murderers,” Falih Rifki Atay writes.⁸⁵

The çetes in Erzurum were formed under Behaeddin Şakir as an “Islamic police” in August 1914. The telegram addressed to the musaserif of Erzincan, kaimakams of Bayburd, Dercan, and Kiğ included the names of those, who were responsible for the establishment of the çetehs, ordering: “...to start secretly and silently and to always report on the results”. The mobsters in the mountains of Rizeh were openly offered to join the Special organization, which they readily did.⁸⁶

Kurdish aşirets were, too, involved in the process. Hilmi, the superintendent of the party in Erzurum, wrote about one of the Kurdish chief aşirets: “The time is about to come to deal with the problem we talked about in Erzincan...I want 50 brave [men] from you...I shall prepare everything for their convenience here...never mind if they are young or middle-aged men, as long as they are strong and determined and willing to sacrifice their lives for their country and nation...Upon first notice from us put them on their way... Only be prepared and keep Behaeddin Şakir Beyefendi informed...”⁸⁷

Kurdish detachments played a colossal role in exterminating Armenians in the eastern vilayets. One precondition for that was the nearly total equipment of the Kurds. Especially as with the annihilation of the Armenians, the Kurds would free a territory they had long been aspiring.⁸⁸ That is the reason the Kurds would mostly attack villages, and kill the pop-

84. Suat Parlar, *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Gizli devlet* (İstanbul, 1997), s. 75, cited from Arsen Avagyan, *Cherkesskiy factor v Osmanskoy imperii i Turtsii [The Circassian Factor in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey]* (Yerevan: Gitutyun, 2001), 231.

85. See Taner Akçam, Turetskoye natsipnalnoye “Ya” i armyanskiy vopros, [*Turkish National “I” and Armenian Question*] is available at <http://armenianhouse.org/akcam/genocide/application.html>).

86. Arsen Avagyan, *Genocid armyan*, 106-107.

87. Taner Akçam, *From Empire to Republic...*, 162.

88. Ugur Ümit Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, 108.

ulation, rather than deporting them. Good looking women and young girls were forcefully sent to harems. The villages were oftentimes set on fire.⁸⁹

d. “Ordinary” murderers

On the lowest level of the extermination, machinery were the “ordinary” murderers, who participated in the killings or the process implementation, advantaging of the atmosphere of impunity entertaining the general popular support.

Carrying out genocide is impossible without the large participation of masses. The number of participants to the killings depends on the technology of murder, the size of the victims’ groups, their dislocation, as well as the level of resistance. The decision on involving big numbers of people in the process of carrying out genocide, too, depends on political purposes. In their actions, the initiators of genocide must have support and get it by letting various groups of society satisfy their needs and wants. By involving big groups of population in the system of killings the forces launching the crime create stronger ties between the criminal society and the regime.⁹⁰

According to Paul Brass, two components shall be in place to ensure the participation of the population in genocidal acts: “planning” and “enthusiasm”. Authorities plan the process of the killings and ensure their coordinated implementation, encouraging at the same time the formation of an atmosphere required for the mass participation of the population. To achieve that the authorities rely on spreading rumors, instigating talks of an imminent danger, reactivate deep, subconscious superstitions, and exploit other means, which help justify the crime and put the responsibility from the true perpetrators to the “objectified, frenzied mass of nameless people”.⁹¹ The situation, when an individual turns into a minor part of a major crowd, is scrupulously described in French sociologist Gustave Le Bon’s “The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind”. Genocide is a group action. Criminals are members of groups, whether big or small or parts of crowds. According to Le Bon, the crowd can be described as “impulsiveness, irritability, incapacity to reason, the absence of judgment and of the critical spirit, the exaggeration of the sentiments, and others besides – which are almost always observed in beings belonging to inferior forms of evolution...”⁹²

In a crowd personalities are diffused into the collective mind, “...which makes them feel, think, and act in a manner quite different from that in which each individual of them would feel, think, and act were he in a state of isolation”.⁹³ Le Bon also points that “by the mere fact that he forms part of an organized crowd, a man descends several rungs in the

89. Arsen Avagyan, *Genocid armyan*, 121.

90. Encyclopedia of Genocide and Crimes against Humanity, , vol. 2, 792

91. Paul R. Brass, “The Partition of India and Retributive Genocide in the Punjab, 1946-47: Means, Methods, and Purposes,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 5:1(2003): 92.

92. Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc.; Reprint edition, 2002), 10.

93. *Ibid.*, 4.

ladder of civilization. Isolated, he may be a cultivated individual; in a crowd, he is a barbarian – that is, creature acting by instinct.”⁹⁴ In other words, the actions of the members of a group become more simplistic, more emotional, and, eventually, more anti-social.

Often times, the perpetrators of the Armenian genocide are pictured as zealous barbarians, a particular evil in human disguise. This gives some metaphysical nature to the committed crime. The same concern was present in interpreting and presenting the Holocaust;⁹⁵ however, it changed to a certain degree after the publication of “Eichmann in Jerusalem”, a book by philosopher and political thinker Hannah Arendt. Arendt called Nazi criminal Eichmann the embodiment of the “banality of evil” and described him as an ordinary and common personality. Eichmann was not a madman. Moreover, Eichmann was certified by psychiatrists as “normal.” Arendt argued that a terrifying thing about Eichmann was not how unusual or how sinister he was, but the understanding of his extreme ordinariness.”⁹⁶

Therefore, it can be stated that in terms of the Holocaust, the Armenian Genocide, or other genocides, the criminals to a great degree were hundreds of thousands of common people, who took millions of lives. Of course, there were those with mental disorders among them; however, the big number of the participants does not allow connecting the carrying out of genocide with individual conditions, educational level, or social origins of the murderers.

Privates, volunteers conscribed to the paramilitary detachments of Teşkilat-i Mahsuse, gendarmerie officers, criminals released from prisons, doctors, peasants, students, Kurds, refugees from the Balkans, i.e. almost every group of the society took part in the process of annihilating Armenians.

The scale of the participation was obvious even to the contemporaries of the events. E.g. British Admiral Richard Webb, who was the Assistant High Commissioner of Constantinople during its occupation, on April 13, 1919, reported to the British Foreign Office: “To punish all persons guilty of Armenian atrocities would necessitate wholesale execution of the Turks, and I therefore suggest retribution both on a national scale by dismembering the late Turkish Empire, as well as individually by the trial of high officials, such as those on my lists, whose fate will serve as an example.”⁹⁷

Turkish officials shared the opinion. E.g. Ali Kemal, later the minister of education of the Ottoman Empire, noted in “Sabah” newspaper on January 28, 1919: “...a crime unprecedented in scale was committed four to five years ago, a crime, which caused the awe of the world. If we want to make an impression on the scale and the terms of the crime, then

94. Ibid., 8.

95. James E. Waller, *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 61.

96. Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Group, 1994), 76.

97. British Foreign Office Archives 371/4173/53351 (folio 192-93), cited from Vahakn N. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide...*, 306.

we have to speak not of five to ten criminals, but of hundreds of thousands of them.”⁹⁸ Halil Menteşe, who had been the chairman of the Ottoman parliament, as well as its minister of foreign affairs, and the minister of justice in the years of WWI, confessed in his memoirs: “There were very few Turks, who did not have relation to the deportations.”⁹⁹

Therefore, one of the specifics of the Armenian genocide was the nearly total participation of the Turkish, Kurdish, and Circassian population in the massacres. The Armenian genocide was perpetrated by the hands of hundreds of thousands of ordinary people, who personally took millions of lives.

Further still, the popular participation cannot be differentiated by gender or age. E.g., Mkrtich Kechyan, a survivor of the genocide, recalls how Turkish and Circassian villagers of all gender and age, circled Armenian women and children and continued the killings.¹⁰⁰

Participation of women and children in crimes is a separate topic within genocide studies. There were many women, members of the SS, working at the Nazi concentration and death camps. The number of women involved in the genocide committed in Cambodia exceeded men in the country, that in its entirety was turned into an actual concentration camp, and tens of thousands of women served as order givers and guards or even participated in the killings. At least three of the main perpetrators of the genocide in Rwanda were women – the wife of the assassinated president, and two members of the government, while thousands of other Hutu women joined the process of instigating the actual killings, lootings, and raping of Tutsi women.¹⁰¹ Children were easily getting engaged in the genocidal acts in Cambodia and Rwanda. The ways people joined the process varied. Part of them was encouraged to do so, while others were forced in to committing crimes. Children were learning by watching scenes of murders, and killings were turning into routine ways of proving loyalty to own community.¹⁰² Jean Hatzfield, a French reporter in Rwanda, recalls a young member of the Kibungo mob group, which had killed around 50,000 Tutsis, explaining: “Killing is easier than farming”.¹⁰³

It is equally traceable in the case of the Armenian genocide. E.g. Admiral Mark Bristol, who was the High Commissioner of the United States to Turkey between 1919-1927 described the extermination of the Christian population in Smyrna in a telegram sent to the US State Secretary on September 14, 1922: “...Several of the relief workers as well as Vice Consul Barnes reported to me that there was a noticeable change in the temper of the Turkish troops and civilians towards the Armenians. The impression they received that

98. Günel G., “İttihat Terakki’den Günümüze YekTarz-ı Siyaset: Türkleştirme, BelgeYayınları”, (İstanbul, 2006), s. 127, cited from Meline Anumyan, *Tchanachum yev datapartum*, 52-53.

99. Halil Menteşe *Osmanlı Mebusan Meclisi Reisi Halil Menteşe'nin Anıları*, (İstanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları, 1986), s. 239, cited from Meline Anumyan, *Tchanachum yev datapartum*, 28-29.

100. Raymond Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide...*, 510.

101. Encyclopedia of Genocide and Crimes against Humanity, vol. 2, 793.

102. Ibid.

103. Steven K. Baum, *The Psychology of Genocide: Perpetrators, Bystanders, and Rescuers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 123.

every able-bodied Armenian man was being hunted down and killed wherever found; even small boys of between 12 to 15 years armed with clubs (were) taking part in the hunt.”¹⁰⁴

Children participation was not spontaneous in every instance. E.g. following the military failures of Turkey during the Balkan war, in 1912 Turkish authorities launched a full-scale program for national and paramilitary training of young Turkish population. The by-law of the Association for the Development of Turkish Forces (Türk Gücü Cemiyeti), created in 1913, had program for “preparation of young people”, which was “needed to make the nation that of soldiers again” and to prevent “the deterioration of the Turkish people” (Turk irki inhitata). There were other youth groups, too, which operated under the Ministry of Defense, and were getting prepared to “defend the homeland”.¹⁰⁵ To achieve it the ministry provided rifles, bullets, and outfit. The process was coordinated by Ziya Gökalp, the ideologist behind the minister of defense Enver, and Ittihat. The League for National Defense (Mudafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti), which was created in the course of the Balkan war, was also aimed at providing military education. The founders of the league included party and government leaders, including Talaat, Enver, Saïd Halim, Cemal, and minister of justice Ibrahim.¹⁰⁶

The atmosphere of violence was an important precondition to warrant popular participation. A proper atmosphere guarantees popular support for radical leadership and awakens the binary contradiction between “us” and “them”. The war helps outline the “adversary” and make people perceive it as a danger and menace.

Involvement of masses in the killings in the course of the Armenian genocide took place through a number of concurrent and intersecting processes. The state propaganda would picture Armenians as the fifth column collaborating with the adversary, traitors, responsible for all the defeats and misfortunes of Turkey. This overt propaganda was spread through Young Turks’ clubs and mosques. High level of illiteracy and the traditional anti-Armenian public sentiments and stereotypes proved the efficiency of propaganda. The persistent stereotype of Armenian racial inferiority or *raya*¹⁰⁷, the popular treatment of Armenians as infidels or *gyavurs*, were further nurtured by the rage of the population, incited by the constitutional provision which gave Armenians equal rights with Muslims following the Young Turks revolution of 1908. All these factors created the basis for the rationalization¹⁰⁸ of mass engagement in killings. Ordinary citizens were given an opportunity to feel

104. Christos Papoutsy, *Ships of Mercy, The True Story of the Rescue of the Greeks, Smyrna, September 1922* (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Peter E. Randall, 2008), 38.

105. Among them were also sports and scouting groups (see. Hayk Demoyan, *Haykakan sportn u manmamarzuty Osmanyan kaysrutyunum [Armenian Sport and Gymnastics in the Ottoman Empire]* (Yerevan: Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, 2009), 135-136

106. Vahakn N. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide...*, 196-197.

107. C. E. Bosworth, “The Concept of Dhimma in Early Islam”, in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, ed. B. Braude and B. Lewis, 2 vols, (New York and London, 1982).

108. Rationalization is a psychological protection mechanism that looking for a rational and good ex-

them as part of a big cause, and a historical event (building the Greater Turan, saving the Homeland), as well as a chance to get possession of the property of the victims.

The population had achieved a total consensus in its system of values, which allowed for conscribing squads of future murderers from various groups of society.¹⁰⁹ Daniel Jonah Goldhagen reflected on a similar phenomenon in his controversial book, where he claimed the Nazis' success in organizing the Holocaust without much effort was made possible owing to the preparedness with which the Germans carried it out. According to Goldhagen, the regime did not have to overcome moral doubts or reluctance of those who were supposed to commit the crime of the Holocaust, since an average German was overwhelmed with extreme antisemitism.¹¹⁰ Of course, the picture is exaggerated; however, in a certain degree, it characterizes those, who conscribed to genocide. The attitudes of Turks towards Armenians in the Ottoman Empire had much resemblance to the attitudes in the German society: given an opportunity the majority of the Muslim population would realize its long-time desire, would organize atrocities and would massacre Armenians, especially when there was the "blessing" of the religious leaders, who declared jihad, a holy war against the infidels.

Although the leaders of the Young Turks were not fervent religious Muslims, they took the advantage of the announced jihad to raise the forces inside the empire filled with religious zeal against the Christians.¹¹¹

The ease with which the Turkish population took up the role is well described in a number of instances: Admiral Bristol, known for his pro-Turkish stand, found in proper to send a recommendation to Washington: "It is known that the Turks will rob, pillage, deport and murder Christians whenever the opportunity is favorable from their point of view... It is my opinion that, knowing the character of the Moslem Turks... if you arouse the brutal instincts of the Turks, together with his fanatical tendencies, he will attack the Christian races if he is not restrained by absolute force."¹¹²

planation for behavioral decisions that have other, condemnable reasons. The term was suggested by Z. Freud, and the concept was later developed by Anna Freud, see for example Jason D'Cruz, "Rationalization as Performative Pretense," *Philosophical Psychology* 28, no. 7: 980-1000. Siegfried Zepf, "About rationalization and intellectualization," *International Forum of Psychoanalysis* 20:3 (2011), 148-158.

109. Mihran P. Dabag, "The Decisive Generation: Self-Authorization and Delegations in Deciding a Genocide," in *Genocide: Approaches, Case Studies, and Responses*, ed. Graham C. Kinloch (New York: Algora Publishing, 2005), 134.

110. Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Vintage, 1997), 14, 416-419.

111. Leo Kuper, "Theological Warrants for Genocide: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity," in *Confronting Genocide: Judaism, Christianity, Islam*, ed. Steven Leonard Jacobs (Plymouth:: Lexington Books, 2009), 25.

112. US National Archives, Record Group (RG) 59.867.00/1361, Bristol's October 23, 1920 report to Washington, pp. 1-2.