Crimes Against Humanity and Civilization

THE GENOCIDE OF THE ARMENIANS

Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, Inc.
Brookline, Massachusetts

FACING HISTORY AND OURSELVES

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This book is dedicated to

Dr. Charles K. and Beverly J. Achki.

Among those who have known them, they have set a compelling example of human decency and respect for others that embodies the principles taught in Facing History and Ourselves.

Given in their honor by

Tom Blumenthal and Lisa Achki Blumenthal

and their children.

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ABOUT FACING HISTORY AND OURSELVES

Facing History and Ourselves is a nonprofit educational organization whose mission is to engage students of diverse backgrounds in an examination of racism, prejudice, and antisemitism in order to promote a more humane and informed citizenry. As the name Facing History and Ourselves implies, the organization helps teachers and their students make the essential connections between history and the moral choices they confront in their own lives by examining the development and lessons of the Holocaust and other examples of genocide. It is a study that helps young people think critically about their own behavior and the effect that their actions have on their community, nation, and the world. It is based on the belief that no classroom should exist in isolation. Facing History programs and materials involve the entire community: students, parents, teachers, civic leaders, and other citizens.

Founded in 1976 in Brookline, Massachusetts, Facing History has evolved from an innovative course taught in local middle schools to an international organization that serves communities throughout the United States and abroad. Through the work of over 100 staff members at the headquarters in Greater Boston and regional offices in Chicago, Cleveland, Los Angeles, Memphis, New York, the San Francisco Bay Area, and Switzerland, more than 19,000 educators around the world have participated in a Facing History workshop or institute. Each year, those teachers reach an estimated 1.5 million middle and high school students. Facing History is also constantly expanding its reach through technology, and bringing important lessons about the dangers of prejudice and the power of civic participation to more and more educators and students globally.

INTRODUCTION

In 1939, just before the invasion of Poland, Adolf Hitler told his generals:

> *The aim of war is not to reach definite lines but to annihilate the enemy physically. It is by this means that we shall obtain the vital living space that we need. Who today still speaks of the massacre of the Armenians?*[1]

He was referring to the systematic murder of the Armenians by Turkish leaders of the Ottoman Empire during World War I. In May 1915, in the midst of the war, Britain, Russia, and France warned that those leaders would be held accountable for "crimes against humanity and civilization" if the massacres continued. The Turks ignored the warning. In July, Henry Morgenthau, the U.S. ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, begged the State Department to take action against what he called the "race murder" of the Armenians. Instead, the nation chose to remain neutral.

Henry Sturmer, a journalist for the German newspaper *Kolnische Zeitung*, was also outraged by the murders. He wanted Germany to use its influence as an ally of the Ottoman Empire to stop the systematic extermination of the Armenians. When they failed to do so, he wrote:

> *The mixture of cowardice, lack of conscience, and lack of foresight of which our government has been guilty in Armenian affairs is quite enough to undermine completely the political loyalty of any thinking man who has any regard for humanity and civilization.*[II]

Hitler learned a lesson from the world's response to the mass murder of the Armenians. So did many Jews. Michel Mazor, a survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto, recalled: "During the terrible days of July and August 1942, we often spoke of the fate of the Armenians by the Turks in 1915." He wondered if "the gas chambers and crematoria of Auschwitz and Treblinka" would have come into being if "at the end of the First World War, a 'Nuremberg Tribunal' had convened at Istanbul."

When Raphael Lemkin, a young Polish Jew, learned about the massacre of the Armenians, he asked a law professor why no one had indicted the perpetrators for murder. The professor explained that there was no law under which they could be tried. In 1944, Lemkin coined the word *genocide* to describe the mass murder of a people and wrote a law that would make genocide a crime without borders. After World War II and the founding of the United Nations, it became part of international law.

The story of the Armenian Genocide and its legacies is told in Facing History's newest resource book, *Crimes Against Humanity and Civilization: The Genocide of the Armenians*. It is a history that is as relevant today as it was in the 1940s. It raises important questions about our own responsibilities as individuals

and as members of groups and nations to those beyond our borders.

These questions have long been central to the work of Facing History and Ourselves. Soon after the founding of the organization in 1976, Manoog Young of the National Association of Armenian Studies and Research approached us with the idea of creating a study guide on the Armenian Genocide as a companion to *Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior*. He and others in the Armenian community were eager to tell the story of what was then a "forgotten genocide." The booklet marked the beginning of our work with the history of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire.

Our long association with Richard Hovannisian, professor of Near Eastern Studies at the University of California at Los Angeles and now a member of the Facing History and Ourselves Board of Scholars, heightened our awareness of the genocide and its legacies. At our workshops and institutes, he describes how the failure to bring the perpetrators to justice and Turkey's evolving denials of the massacre have complicated our understanding of not only genocide but also guilt and responsibility.

We could not have produced *Crimes Against Humanity and Civilization: The Genocide of the Armenians* without the support of Richard Hovannisian. We are deeply appreciative of his friendship, aid, and assistance. We are also grateful to Carol Mugar for the grant to this project that funded our research, and to scholars Peter Balakian and Henry Theriault for their guidance and advice in creating this valuable resource. Special thanks to Thomas and Lisa Blumenthal, whose generous grant supports the printing of the book and its dissemination to educators. Facing History and Ourselves would also like to acknowledge the efforts of Senior Program Associate Mary Johnson in creating the first drafts of the book; Adam Strom who researched, wrote, and edited the final manuscript; Marc Skvirsky and Margot Stern Strom for their leadership; Sandy Smith-Garcés who designed the book; Chris Stokes and Cynthia Platt for helping to turn this manuscript into a book, as well as Karen Lempert, Sarah Gray, Melinda Jones-Rhoades, and Tracy O'Brien for their work in the library overseeing permissions requests.

NOTES

I. Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), p. 23.
II. Deborah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, *The Holocaust: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2002), pp. 39–40.

"Do you think of yourself as an Armenian?
Or an American? Or hyphenated American?"
—D.M. Thomas

Chapter 1

IDENTITY AND HISTORY

WE BEGIN TO LEARN OUR CULTURE—THE WAYS OF OUR SOCIETY—JUST AFTER BIRTH. THIS PROCESS IS CALLED socialization, and it involves far more than schooling. It influences our values—what we consider right and wrong. Our religious beliefs are an integral part of our culture, as is our racial and ethnic heritage. Our culture shapes the way we work and play, and it makes a difference in the way we view ourselves and others. Psychologist Deborah Tannen warns of our tendency to generalize about the things we observe and the people we encounter. "Generalizations, while capturing similarities, obscure differences. Everyone is shaped by innumerable influences such as ethnicity, religion, race, age, profession, the geographical regions they and their relatives have lived in, and many other group identities—all mingled with personality and predilection."[1]

The readings in this chapter address questions about how people come to understand their place in the world. The questions are raised through the stories of individual Armenians. As you read their stories and hear their questions, you will come to see that many of their challenges are familiar to all of us. These readings ask: What factors influence how we see ourselves? How can we keep our individuality and still be part of a group? What role does group and family history play in shaping the way we see ourselves and the way others see us? And, finally, how do all of these facets of identity influence the choices that people make.

Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, Inc., Courtesy of Jack Chitjian, boy on right.

An Armenian family, Ordu, Ottoman Empire, c. 1905.

Today most Armenians do not live in the Republic of Armenia. Indeed, most Armenians have deep ties to the countries where they live. Like a lot of us, many Armenians find themselves balancing their role in their new country with their historical and cultural roots. How far should they assimilate into their new countries? Does Armenian history and culture have something to offer Armenians as they live their lives now? When do historical and cultural memories create self-imposed limits on individuals?

This chapter also explores the way identity passes down from one generation to another. These issues are especially important for a group that lives with the memory of a genocide in which over a million and a half Armenians were systematically murdered between 1915 and 1923 in what is now Turkey. The deliberate historical revision, denial of the genocide, and the politicization of traumatic memory have consequences for the generations that live in the shadow of that history. Psychologist Ervin Staub, author of *The Roots of Evil*, observes that we can all learn about ourselves from the way Armenians have responded. He writes:

> *The intense need of the Armenians as individuals and as a community to have the genocide be acknowledged and known by the world teaches us something about ourselves as human beings. First, our identities are rooted not only in our group, but in the history of our group. For a complete identity, we must be integrated not only with our individual past, but also with our groups' past. Perhaps, this becomes especially important when our group is partly destroyed and dispersed; our families and ourselves have been deeply affected; and in a physical sense we have at best fragments of our group. Second, we have a profound need for our pain and suffering, especially when it is born of injustice, to be acknowledged, known and respected."* [2]

Reading 1 — WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Individuals begin to understand their own identity—who they are—from their families, peers, traditions, values, history, and society in which they live. One of the first markers of that identity is a name. Names are often chosen very carefully to send a message to the child and the larger society about who a person is. For many national and ethnic groups, names convey an even deeper meaning, especially when members of those groups find themselves living outside their traditional homeland. Names can be a statement of identity, marker of membership, a sign of difference, or all of these.

Writers from Sandra Cisneros to Ralph Ellison have discussed the relationship between names and individual identity. It is a theme that has been picked up by many prominent Armenian writers as well, including Michael Arlen, Peter Balakian, Diana Der-Hovanessian, and William Saroyan.

In his memoir *Black Dog of Fate*, Peter Balakian uses the stories behind family names as a metaphor for the way history, family experiences, and individual identity become intertwined.

> *My grandmother's big brown eyes keep watching me intensely. I am Peter, Bedros in Armenian, named after her second husband, who went into a coma from a cerebral hemorrhage about the week I was conceived and who died without regaining consciousness about three months before I was born. I am the eldest grandchild east of Fresno, California, the first male [in] the next generation, a filial position that in our Near Eastern culture comes with patriarchal status. . . . I did not understand then what the presence of a new generation meant for a culture that had been nearly expunged from the planet only forty-five years earlier. . . .*[3]

Balakian's grandmother was a survivor of the Armenian Genocide. Balakian writes that "when I was with my grandmother I had access to some other world, some evocative place of dark and light, some kind of energy that ran like an invisible force from this old country called Armenia to my world in New Jersey."[4] After the death of Peter's grandmother the other world intruded into Peter's suburban American childhood through the rituals and stories of his family.

Photo courtesy of Peter Balakian

Peter Balakian with his grandmothers, June 1953. Nafina Aroosian, a survivor of the Armenian Genocide, is on the right.

As Balakian grew, exploration of his mother's name became an opening for him to learn about the collective history of the Armenian people.

> *Arax Aroosian. My mother's name. Unplaceable sounds to the American ear. A name that must have baffled teachers in Paterson in the 1930s when they stared at it on the top of the class list. Arax: a name of eastern Anatolia and the southern Caucasus, where the Araxes River flows from the Ararat plateau eastward and makes a border uniting Armenia, Turkey, and Iran. A name that means turbulence, synonymous with the river.*
>
> *Aroosian, a name part Arabic and part Armenian, meaning "son of the bride," or more idiomatically, "son of beautiful ones." A name of southeastern Anatolia, north of Nineveh, where the Tigris hooks around the ancient stone-walled city of Diarbekir, a city the Hurrians, Urartians, Assyrians, Armenians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, and Turks all controlled at one time or another. Diarbekir: a linguistic estuary where Armenian, Kurdish, Turkish, Arabic, and French mingled, forming a creole language that Armenians spoke. Dikranagerdsi Armenian, they called it, because they called their city by its Armenian name, Dikranagerd, the city of King Dikran, who was the most powerful king of the Armenian Empire at its height, circa 50 B.C. Diarbekir: a killing city where the Turkish government killed more than a hundred thousand Armenians in 1915....*[5]

In Michael Arlen's *Passage to Ararat*, names create discomfort. Early in the book Arlen reflects on his father's name.

> *At the age of twenty-one he had changed his name from Dikran Kouyoumjian to Michael Arlen.*
>
> *My mother (who was American and Greek) sometimes called my father Dikran in private, and this was the only way I knew as a child that he was something other than—or in addition to—English. "It's an Armenian name," she explained to me one long-ago afternoon. For a while, I thought this referred to the kind of name—a private name. I understood that some of my far-off my uncles were called Kouyoumjian—an odd and difficult name for a child to scrawl on a thank-you letter. But my father, while he was well disposed toward the uncles, evidently detached himself from the name.*[6]

CONNECTIONS

- A journal is a way of documenting the process of one's thinking. For author Joan Didion and others, it is also a way of examining ideas. She explains: "I write entirely to find out what I'm thinking, what I'm looking at, what I see, and what it means." You may find it helpful to use a journal to explore the ideas raised in this resource book. Begin by writing about your own name. How did you get it? What does it connect you to?

- You may choose to write on the subject of your name—first name, last name, whole name, or nickname—for five minutes. This exercise may serve as an icebreaker in a class. Share your reflections in pairs before reporting back to the larger group. You may have partners share some of what they have learned about each other.

- What do names connect people with? Can those ties be severed when the name is changed?

- What are the connections between Peter Balakian and his family name?

- What might have influenced Michael Arlen's father to change his name?

In her novel *The House on Mango Street*, Sandra Cisneros' narrator, Esperanza, reflects on her name.

> *In English my name means hope. In Spanish it means too many letters. It means sadness, it means waiting. It is like the number nine. A muddy color. It is the Mexican records my father plays on Sunday mornings when he is shaving, songs like sobbing.*
>
> *It was my great-grandmother's name and now is mine. She was a horse woman too, born like me in the Chinese year of the horse—which is supposed to be bad luck if you're born female....*
>
> *At school they say my name funny as if the syllables were made out of tin and hurt the roof of your mouth. But in Spanish my name is made of a softer something, like silver, not quite as thick as sister's name—Magdalena—which is uglier than mine. Magdelena who at least can come home and become Nenny. But I am always Esperanza.*
>
> *I would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name more like the real me, the one nobody sees. Esperanza as Lisandra or Maritza or Zeze the X. Yes. Something like Zeze the X will do.*[7]

- What does Esperanza connect with her name?

- Why do you think she wants to change her name?

- What does her desire to change her name suggest about the relationship between names and identity?

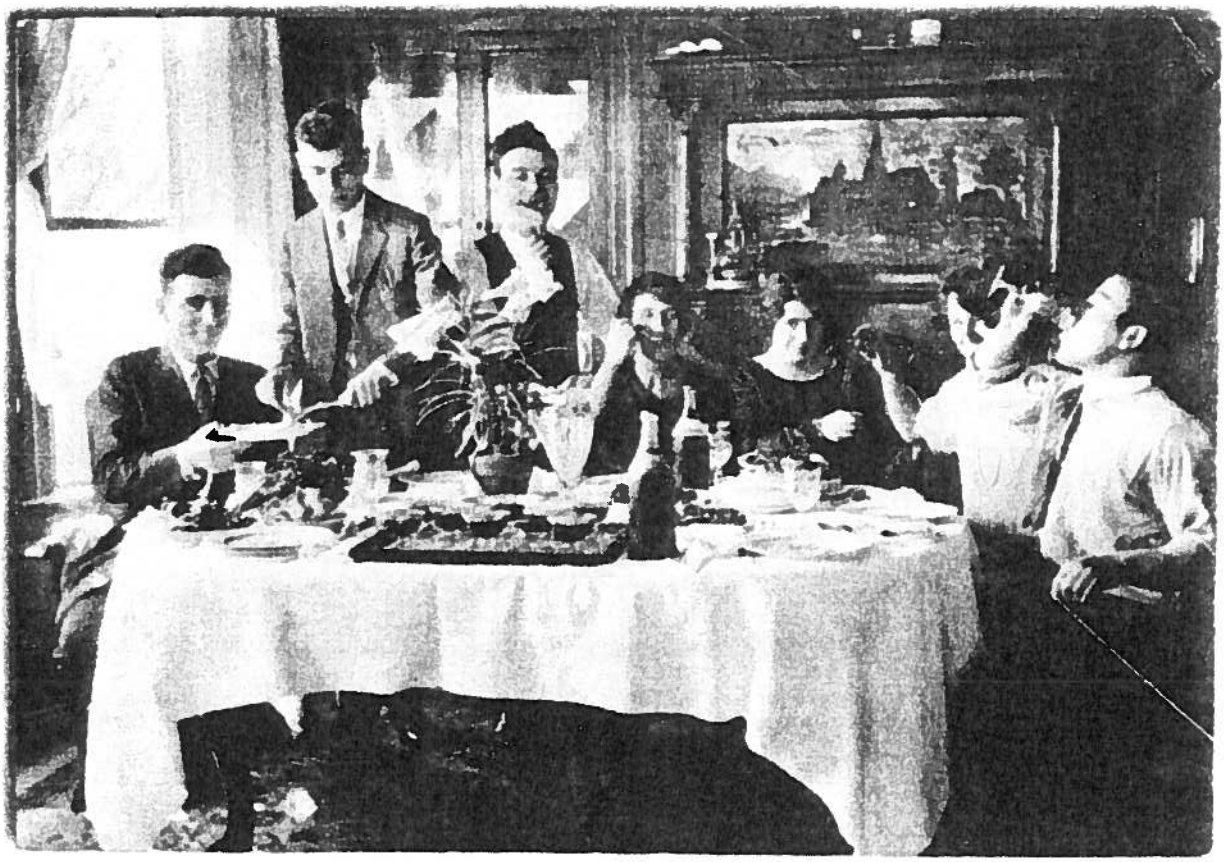
- How does Esperanza's reflection connect with the stories shared by Peter Balakian and Michael Arlen?

↩

Reading 2 — MULTIPLE IDENTITIES

Often people have many identities that are important to who they are as individuals. Many times those identities exist in the same person without creating conflict. For example a person may be an African-American woman, with one grandparent from Ecuador and another from Russia, and the daughter of parents who are both Christian—one Episcopalian and the other Catholic. For her, all these identities may live harmoniously, while in others they could provide a source of conflict.

Diana Der-Hovanessian is an Armenian-American writer born in the United States. Her grandparents came to the United States from Ottoman Armenia. In her poem "Two Voices," Diana Der-Hovanessian reflects on how her family history influences who she is as a person. The poem begins with a question from the British writer D.M. Thomas.



Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, Inc., courtesy of George and Miriam Kachadorian Markarian.

Armenian immigrants celebrating Easter in Worcester, MA, U.S.A., 1925.

Two Voices

by Diana Der-Hovanessian

"Do you think of yourself as an Armenian?
Or an American? Or hyphenated American?"
—D.M. Thomas

In what language do I pray?

Do I meditate in language?

In what language am I trying
to speak when I wake from dreams?

Do I think of myself as an American,
or simply as a women when I wake?

Or do I think of the date and geography
I wake into, as a woman?

Do I think velvet, or do I think skin?

Am I always conscious of genes and
heredity or merely how to cross my legs
at the ankle like a New England lady?

In a storm do I think of lightning
striking? Or white knives dipped
into my great aunt's sisters'
sisters' blood?

Do I think of my grandfather telling
about the election at the time
of Teddy Roosevelt's third party,
and riding with Woodrow Wilson
in a Main Street parade
in Worcester?

Or do I think of my grandmother
At Ellis Island,

or as an orphan in an Armenian village?

Or at a black stove in Worcester
baking blueberry pie for my grandfather
who preferred food he had grown
to like in lonely mill town
cafeterias while he studied
for night school?

Do I think of them as Armenian
or as tellers of the thousand and
one wonderful tales in two languages?

Do I think of myself as hyphenated?

No. Most of the time, even as you,
I forget labels.

Unless you cut me.

Then I look at the blood.
It speaks in Armenian.[8]

Courtesy of Richard Hovannisian

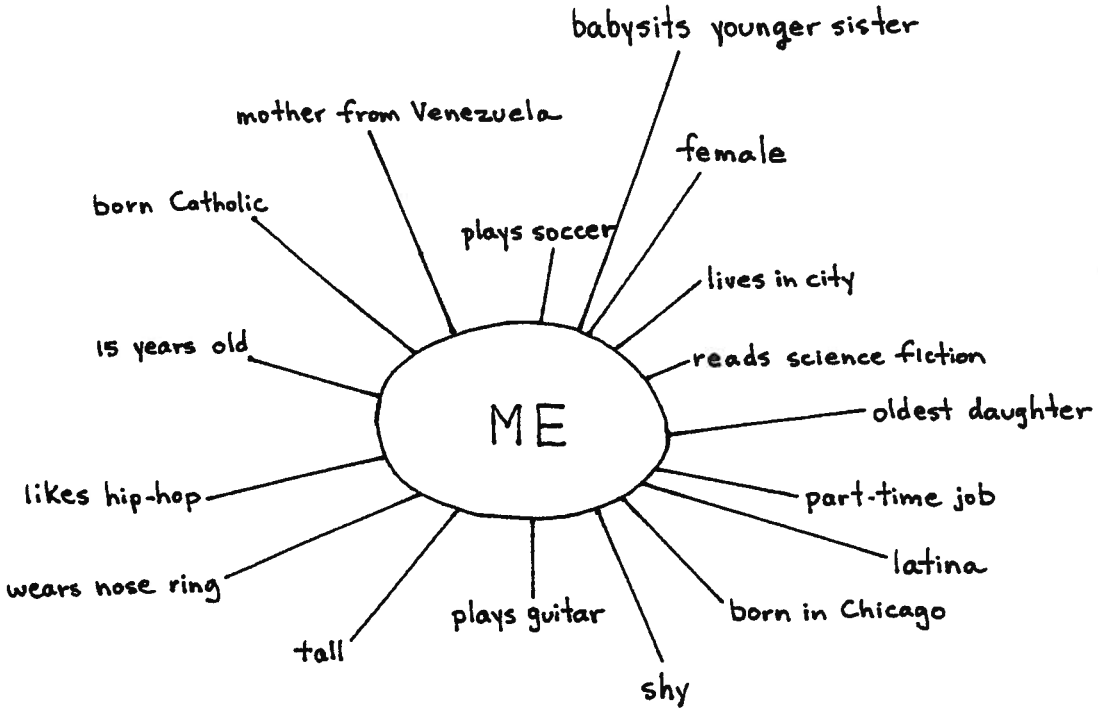
Richard Hovannisian on his family's farm.

Richard Hovannisian, Professor of Armenian and Near Eastern History at the University of California Los Angeles, grew up in a small Armenian community in the San Joaquin Valley of California. A dozen or so Armenian families lived in his rural town: "almost all farmers of small vineyards and nearly all from the same village in historic Armenia." Hovannisian recalls hearing Armenian women, survivors of the genocide, sharing stories of the horrors that they had witnessed. During his childhood, he was not aware of the impact these stories would have on his life. He tried to distance himself from the older generation. He remembers:

> *I was sure I was not a hyphenated American. In fact, like most of my generation, even though we were the children of survivors or of first generation immigrants, the tribulations of the older generation seemed to have little bearing on our lives. [The Armenian Genocide] was something that had occurred far away and a long time ago—all of ten or fifteen years.*[9]

CONNECTIONS

Below is an identity chart for a high school student from the United States.



- Using this model, create an identity chart for Diana Der-Hovanessian. What labels does she use for herself? How do you decide which labels should be most prominent?

- Create an identity chart for yourself. Begin with words or phrases that describe the way you see yourself. Add those words and phrases to your chart. Compare your chart with those of your classmates. Which categories appeared on every chart? Which of them appeared on only a few charts? As you look at other charts, your perspective may change. You may wish to revise your chart and add new categories to those you have already included.

- This activity allows you to see the world through multiple perspectives. What labels would others attach to you? Do they see you as a leader or a follower? A conformist or a rebel? Are you a peacemaker or a bully. Are you an active participant or a bystander? How do society's labels influence the way you see yourself? The kinds of choices you make each day? Note the many identities that make up who you are. Consider which of them are most prominent in shaping your identity. Which identities might someone who does not know you recognize? Which would they fail to see?

- Diana Der-Hovanessian wrote "Two Voices" in response to a question: "Do you think of yourself as an Armenian? Or an American? Or hyphenated American?" How does she answer that question? Are there times when one aspect of your identity seems more important than others?

- How do children of immigrants negotiate their identity in a new culture? What pressures do they face that are unique? Which pressures are shared by their peers?

- Richard Hovannisian says that as a boy he was sure that he "was not a hyphenated American." What does he mean? What are the ways that people can honor their multiple identities? Why are some people threatened by the recognition of dual identities and multiple loyalties?

- In "Two Voices," Diana Der-Hovanessian writes that her blood speaks Armenian. She is not describing literal truth. She is using a metaphor to make a point. Scientists know identity and nationality are not literally carried in the blood, but the expression that "it's in my blood" remains part of everyday speech. If identity isn't literally carried in the blood, how is it passed from generation to generation?

Similar issues to those raised in "Two Voices" can be found in the Facing History and Ourselves study guide for the documentary *Becoming American: The Chinese Experience*. The guide is available at *www.facinghistory.org*, and the film is available from the Facing History and Ourselves resource library and *www.pbs.org*.

To extend a study of the relationship between the Individual and Society, see Chapter 1 of *Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior* as well as opening readings from all of the Facing History and Ourselves resource materials.

Reading 3 — AM I ARMENIAN?

What makes us part of a group? Biology? Language? Religion? Experience? Geography? And what holds those groups together over time? Most Armenians live in diaspora—scattered across the globe from the country of Armenia throughout the Middle East and the United States. Diana Der-Hovanessian's poem "Diaspora" captures the complex relationship between an Armenian-American and her "father's land."

Diaspora

by Diana Der-Hovanessian

I am the tourist
who looks just like
the native girl
who greets me, salt
and bread on her tray.

We have the same eyes,
the same smile and stride
but different tongues with which to say.

I am the stranger
in my father's land,
the traveler to the country
I can neither leave
nor stay,
a foreigner in the place,
where millenniums ago
my kind was bred.

I am no one
without these trees, these stones
and streets. But their shadows
have grown short and tall without my weight.

I am the tourist
from far away
where I left tables of plenty
thirsty and unfed.[10]

Courtesy of the Armenian National Institute

Armenian Refugee, photograph by John Elder, c. 1917-1919.

Sara Cohan, a teacher, also struggled with her relationship to Armenia and Armenian identity. She writes: "I do not practice the religion, speak the language, I am not directly from Armenia, and I only take part in a few of the traditions."

While visiting an Armenian school in California, those issues came to a head when a student at the school asked: "How is it again that you are Armenian?" Cohan shared her reflections on the student's question:

She had not meant for her question to hurt or challenge me, but it did. To know and love Armenian foods like choereg, boreg, and dolma does not make me Armenian. Knowing simple catch phrases like "gameer maz" (red hair) or "Sode gus-ez?" (Would you like a soda?) does not make me Armenian. My family's experiences during the Armenian Genocide makes me Armenian.

Born and raised in the United States, I am an American, but I have always considered myself to be Armenian too. Being American is who I am and Armenian is who my family was. When I talk to friends about being Armenian I inevitably start with the Armenian Genocide, because that is where my family always begins the discussion of who we are. In another way, the Armenian Genocide is where my family's story ended since only a handful survived the genocide.

As an Armenian, I feel compelled to teach the history of the Genocide to whoever will listen because the story is not over. Without an apology and without reparations from the Turkish government, my ancestors died in vain.

I am proud of my grandfather because he survived a genocide and was successful in his life. He started a family and was a psychiatrist trained at the American University of Beirut. He eventually helped establish the school of psychiatry at the University of Tennessee. At the same time, I mourn the loss of a lineage—sixty-nine members of my family perished in the genocide and only seven lived. There are approximately 6.1 billion people in the world and approximately 8 million Armenians. Most are in Diaspora and disappearing quickly. What my ancestors have accomplished and endured is worthy of remembrance and respect. With so few Armenians left in the world each one needs to do as much as s/he can to teach others about Armenians and the Genocide.

Photo courtesy of Sara Cohan

Sara Cohan's family after the genocide.

Recently, I saw The Official Story, *a movie about the Disappeared in Argentina. In the beginning of the film the main character is teaching a history course in a high school. She tells the class: "No people can survive without memory. History is the memory of the people." When I heard those lines I finally knew how I could answer the young girl who asked how I was Armenian: I was born a descendant of Armenians and I am Armenian because my love for my grandfather has inspired me to learn about Armenian history and the history of the Genocide. I am Armenian because I will never forget my family's history and, as long as I remember, Armenians will survive.*

Thousands of Armenian survivors settled in communities in the United States that had been established in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many of the survivors did not speak about their history, and many of the second generation did not make a concerted effort to learn about their history. In more recent generations, people like Sara Cohan have begun to explore their Armenian heritage. For many, one of the starting points for that exploration has become Peter Balakian's memoir *Black Dog of Fate*. Although Balakian learned about the genocide later in life, other rituals and traditions marked his Armenian identity, like baking Armenian treats with his grandmother while she shared mysterious stories from the old world. As a boy, Balakian recalls seeing his Jewish neighbors celebrating Jewish holidays and he recalls asking his mother why his family was not Jewish.

"Because we're Christians," she answered.

"Why are we Christians?"

"Our people decided to follow the teachings of Jesus." She paused. "There's a legend that Noah's ark landed on Mt. Ararat in Armenia. That makes Jews and Armenians cousins."

"What's Mt. Ararat?"

My mother exhaled as if she wished I would go away. "Mt. Ararat is our national symbol."

"The symbol of America?"

"No. Of Armenia."

"Where's Armenia?"

As long as I had known language the word Armenia had existed; it was synonymous with the rooms of my house. As assumption. Ar. Meen. Ya. Armenia. Like ma-ma, da-da. Like hurt and horse. Arm. You. Me. Eat. The word rolled to the back of my mouth and just as I almost swallowed it, I caught it back near the epiglottis and unrolled it, pushing it forward as my jaw dropped open to the Ya and the

word spilled into the air. Armenia. It was such an unconscious part of my life that I had never even thought to ask: Where is it? What is it? [11]

CONNECTIONS

- What makes us part of a group? What holds groups together? How are religious and ethnic groups different from groups of friends or from colleagues at work?

- Most Armenians live in diaspora—spread across the world. How is it possible for a group to hold on to a cohesive group identity when they are so spread out? What tools might people use to maintain their culture?

- What is Diana Der-Hovanessian's relationship to her "father's land"? What words does she use to describe that relationship?

- Do you feel connected to any countries beyond the one in which you live? What is your relationship to that place? What words do you use to describe your connection?

- After reading the poem "Diaspora," you may choose to revise the identity chart you created for Diana Der-Hovanessian. Which words would you consider adding? Have the issues raised in her poem "Diaspora" influenced the ways you think about your own identity? You may choose to revise your own identity chart as you encounter new ideas from the readings or from discussions with your classmates.

- Create an identity chart for Sara Cohan. Compare her identity chart with the one you created for Diana Der-Hovanessian. How are they similar? Which differences do you find most striking?

- How can someone be part of a group without being actively involved in many of the customs that have traditionally been part of the group's identity? How would Sara Cohan answer that question?

- Peter Balakian says that Armenia was synonymous with the rooms of his house: "It was such an unconscious part of my life that I had never even thought to ask: Where is it? What is it?" How does an identity become unconscious? What sort of experiences bring questions of identity to the surface?

- At the Armenian school she visited, Cohan noticed that many of the students would "assign degrees of Armenianness to their peers." Why would kids do that? What does it suggest about their identity and the way they feel about themselves? To create a "we," or an "in" group, do groups also need to create a "they"?

Reading 1 — GENERATIONS

Families pass stories down from generation to generation. Often these stories become the lore around which a family shares their identity and values. For many children, the stories of their parents and grandparents have a profound effect on the way they understand their own role in society.

What happens when these family stories are about being victims of injustice? What happens, not only to the survivors, but also to their children, when the larger world has not acknowledged that injustice? Journalist J.D. Lasica spoke to several Armenian families living in Sacramento, California, about the legacy of the Armenian Genocide and its impact on their family's identity. In the first of two stories in this reading Lasica writes about a relationship between a mother and her son:

"Emmy" has never before told her story to an odar, the Armenian word for foreigner. There is a reason for this: She does not speak English.

Emmy—an English transliteration of the Arabic word for "mother"—is what everyone calls Haygouhi Shahinian.

At an even 5 feet tall, she is a slight, wiry woman of 86, with white hair and a high-pitched voice. Her son, George, translates, but she forges ahead with her story before he can get the words out.

"I remember when the troubles started," she begins. "I was in the first grade, in Tarsus. One day my grandmother came and pulled me out of school. She was crying. We rushed home, and my father and uncle were standing with a gun at the window, looking at all the commotion in the streets.

"Finally, our whole family ran off to the fields on the outskirts of town. The Allewi (a [Muslim] sect) farmers were helping Armenians to hide there. We hid in the fields for three days, but the Turkish government declared that anyone helping Armenians would be put to death. So the farmers began to turn the people in the fields over to the soldiers.

"The Turkish soldiers began rounding us up in groups for firing squads. They were getting ready to shoot the next group of us when suddenly I saw an officer on a white horse come galloping, shouting in Turkish, 'Do not cut (kill) the Armenians, they have been pardoned by the new government.' We were so happy we were going to live, we showered the officer with kisses. We showered his horse with kisses."

Emmy clasps her face, and she takes a deep breath. Her account, like the others', meshes with the historical literature: The [new] Ottoman government was overthrown briefly in April 1909; there were massacres in the Tarsus [Cilicia] region at that time.

Emmy returns to her story: It is six years later, and her family has moved to Adana, a nearby city.

"In 1915, the Turkish government ordered all Armenians in our village to be deported into the Syrian desert," she says. "The local mayor—he was Turk—tried to prevent [this], but he was told to follow orders. The gendarmes gathered us into a caravan, and we set off, a thousand of us. My parents bribed the officials to let us take two small mule-driven carts. Along the way, we had to bribe the guards for food and water.

"Halfway through our journey, at the town of Ghatma, we passed a death field. Bodies, death were everywhere." An earlier caravan had passed this way.

"After 18 days, we reached Aleppo (a city in what is now Syria). They let some of us go, but we had nothing. We were forced to live like paupers on the street. My father supported us by working for the town—he used his wagon to pick up corpses, stacking them in the cart and hauling them to the city dump."

When the massacres ended, the Armenians were not allowed to return to their homeland, so Emmy's family remained in Aleppo. Life was better after that.

She married and raised six children. The youngest, George, came to this country in 1959 to attend college before settling with his family in Carmichael [California]. Emmy followed in 1971.

George Shahinian is quiet for a long time. This is the first time he has heard his mother's story at length. Finally, he says quietly: "It was just a miracle that she escaped. For our whole family, there was a very thin thread between life and death."

Shahinian, 55, is a short, soft-spoken man who wears bifocals and a kind expression. He works as a mechanical engineer with the state Air Resources Board.

Shahinian worries that his three children will not fully appreciate what the Armenians endured. "It's important to remember who we are and where we came from," he says.

One way the Shahinians tried to pass along a sense of ethnic identity to their children was through language.

Courtesy of Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, Inc., Courtesy of Mary Hadian Gelenian.

An Armenian family before the genocide, c. 1900.

Leon, at 22 the eldest, recalls: "Up until I was 4 or 5, we spoke only Armenian in the house. Then I went to kindergarten and picked up English after only a couple of weeks. Now, when I'm home, my parents still speak to me in Armenian, but I answer in English."

Shahinian still worries about his children's assimilation. "It's weakening our culture. We don't know how to stop it, and when it comes to our kids, I'm not sure, deep inside, we want to stop it."[12]

J.D. Lasica also interviewed two generations of Boyajians, who shared some of their stories about Armenian identity in the United States.

Joyce Poirot is the only offspring of Mesrop Boyajian, the boy who was sold into slavery for a silver coin.

Boyajian seldom talked about his experience, so it was not until adulthood that Poirot understood her father's place in the massacres. But she knew, from her early years in Detroit, that there was something about her heritage that set her apart.

"I knew it from the secret language we spoke at home and the way my grandmother dressed me," she says. "I knew it when I'd open my lunch box in kindergarten. Everybody else would have bologna on Wonder Bread. I'd open mine, and a couple of kuftas (meatballs) or lahmajoun (meat pies), smelling of garlic, would roll out."

Poirot, 51, rests on a sofa in her downtown condominium. She is a top academic administrator at the University of California, Davis, overseeing a statewide continuing-education program.

"My first awareness of Armenians being discriminated against came after our family moved to Fresno when I was 11," she says. "In Detroit, an Armenian was just another minority. But in Fresno, we were looked down upon.

"A few years later I came across a photograph of a sign in Fig Garden, an exclusive area of Fresno. It said, 'No Negroes, No Jews, No Mexicans, No Armenians.' And I thought, wow, this is for real."

As a young adult she became estranged from her culture because of the way in which women have been treated in traditional Armenian households. But Poirot has now made peace with her roots.

"About 10 years ago I began realizing there was a part of me I didn't know," she explains.

In 1983 she traveled to Yerevan, capital of Soviet Armenia. There she came upon the monument called Dzidzernagabert, or Fortress of Sparrows. It is dedicated to the victims of the Armenian tragedy.

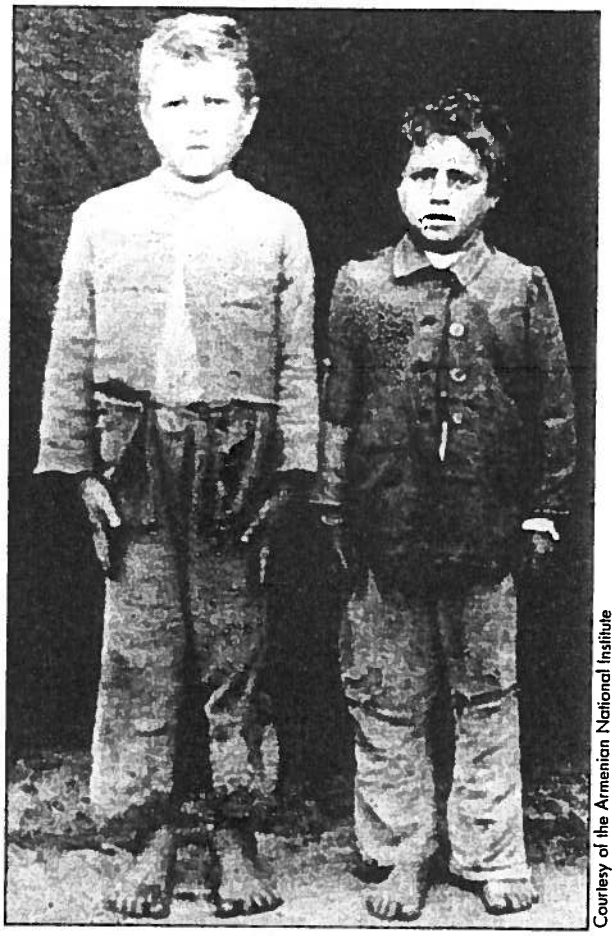
Poirot recalls: "The first time I came up to it, I was with my (now former) husband. I thought, 'This is no tourist site; this is something I want to be alone with.' Suddenly and unexpectedly I felt part of that distant experience.

"Later, when the sun was setting, I went back alone. I was just overcome, wracked with pain and grief and tears. I felt connected with it, with the martyrs, with my past. I felt there's no escaping it—it's in me. There's no more denying that I carry pieces of the trauma."

There is a long silence, and then: "I think I finally came to terms with it by accepting it."

Poirot's father, Mesrop Boyajian, ambles over to the television in his apartment, flicks it off, and settles into his favorite chair. "It's not a pleasant thing to talk about, being sold as a slave," he says, "so I very seldom talk about it."

Boyajian is 80 years old. He has smooth features, good, strong hands that once worked the vineyards, and a lilting, almost boyish voice. A patch of white hair shoots up from his head.



Courtesy of the Armenian National Institute

1915–1916, two orphaned Armenian boys, Ottoman Empire, in what is now Syria. Photograph by Armin T. Wegner.

Looking back on his stolen youth, he lets out a hollow sigh and says, "It feels like I've lost something. Something of myself."

Of course, things might have been worse, he points out. "Perhaps I was lucky to have been sold. Otherwise, who knows what would have happened? I understood later that most of those kids who were not sold died in the desert."

For Boyajian, freedom carried a $40 price tag. When he was 16, his brothers sent him the money to join them in the United States. Mesrop had no trouble getting permission to leave from his Syrian owners, who were grateful for 10 years of good work.

He entrusted the $40 with a Near East Relief missionary, who arranged for an Arab guide to smug-

gle him and 10 other Armenian children across the Turkish border to Aleppo, Syria. From there, he made his way to New York in 1925.

Boyajian spent 21 years in the U.S. Army, serving in World War II, when he won a Purple Heart, and in Korea. He lived for years in the Bay Area before settling in Sacramento.

"I have seen many many things in my time," Boyajian says philosophically. "Men are capable of great evil...."[13]

CONNECTIONS

Psychologist Ervin Staub, author of *The Roots of Evil*, has written about the impact of the genocide on Armenian identity. He observed:

The intense need of the Armenians as individuals and as a community to have the genocide be acknowledged and known by the world teaches us something about ourselves as human beings. First, our identities are rooted not only in our group, but in the history of our group. For a complete identity, we must be integrated not only with our individual past, but also with our group's past. Perhaps, this becomes especially important when our group is partly destroyed and dispersed; our families and ourselves have been deeply affected; and in a physical sense we have at best fragments of our group. Second, we have a profound need for our pain and suffering, especially when it is born of injustice, to be acknowledged, known and respected.[14]

- What happens when that history has not been acknowledged?

In a book that explores the relationship between family and identity, Elizabeth Stone writes:

We are shaped by our families' notions of our identities which exist as an idea beyond the reach of measurement. The image they mirror back to us exists earlier and more substantially than we ourselves do. And among the primary vehicles families use to mirror us to ourselves are the family stories we hear about ourselves. These stories ... are a record of our family's fantasies, often unconscious about who they hope we are or fear we are.[15]

- What parts of our identity are within "the reach of measurement"? What parts exist beyond its reach? What hopes and fears for the family and cultural identity emerge from the stories of the Boyajians and the Shahinians?

- How do the two families' experiences of survival affect the ways they think about Armenian identi-

ty? What aspects of Armenian identity seem most important to Joyce Poirot and George Shahinian?

- Why do you think Poirot's father, Mesrop Boyajian, has been reluctant to talk about his experiences during the genocide? How do you think the experience influenced the way he saw himself?

- As a follow up to this reading, interview your relatives about their identity and values. How have they come to understand their place in the world? What experiences and ideas have shaped their values?

- Many scholars have written about the pain caused by deniers who claim the genocide never happened. Professor Henry Theriault writes that for some survivors the psychological consequences of trauma can be mitigated over time, but denial blocks this, expanding the genocide's impact over time and increasing the original trauma. He argues: "Deniers thrust the genocide back onto its victims, so they must recall the violence done to and witnessed by them."[16] Several scholars note that trauma, when not responded to, can be passed down through families. What do you imagine would help to break the cycle?

- Haygouhi Shahinian and Mesrop Boyajian are not only survivors. They are refugees as well. They left their homeland and moved to the United States because of the oppression they faced in the Ottoman Empire. Are there refugee communities where you live? Who are they? What stories do they have to tell? What can you learn from their experiences?

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8. Diana Der-Hovanessian, "Two Voices," in *Selected Poems* (New York: Sheep Meadow Press, 1994), p. 23.
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11. Balakian, *Black Dog of Fate*, p. 40.
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13. J.D. Lasica, "*The Boyajians*," available at *http://www.well.com/user/jd/armenia3.html*.
14. Staub, "Genocide of the Armenians," p. 55.
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16. Henry C. Theriault, "Denial and Free Speech: The Case of the Armenian Genocide," in *Looking Forward, Moving Backward: Confronting the Armenian Genocide*, Richard Hovannisian ed. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publications, 2003), pp. 231–262.

"There has been no war, no conflict between the two contending powers, but a pitiless tornado of bloody ruin....Has it come to this, that in the last days of the nineteenth century humanity has placed itself on trial?"
—U.S. Senator Shelby Collum

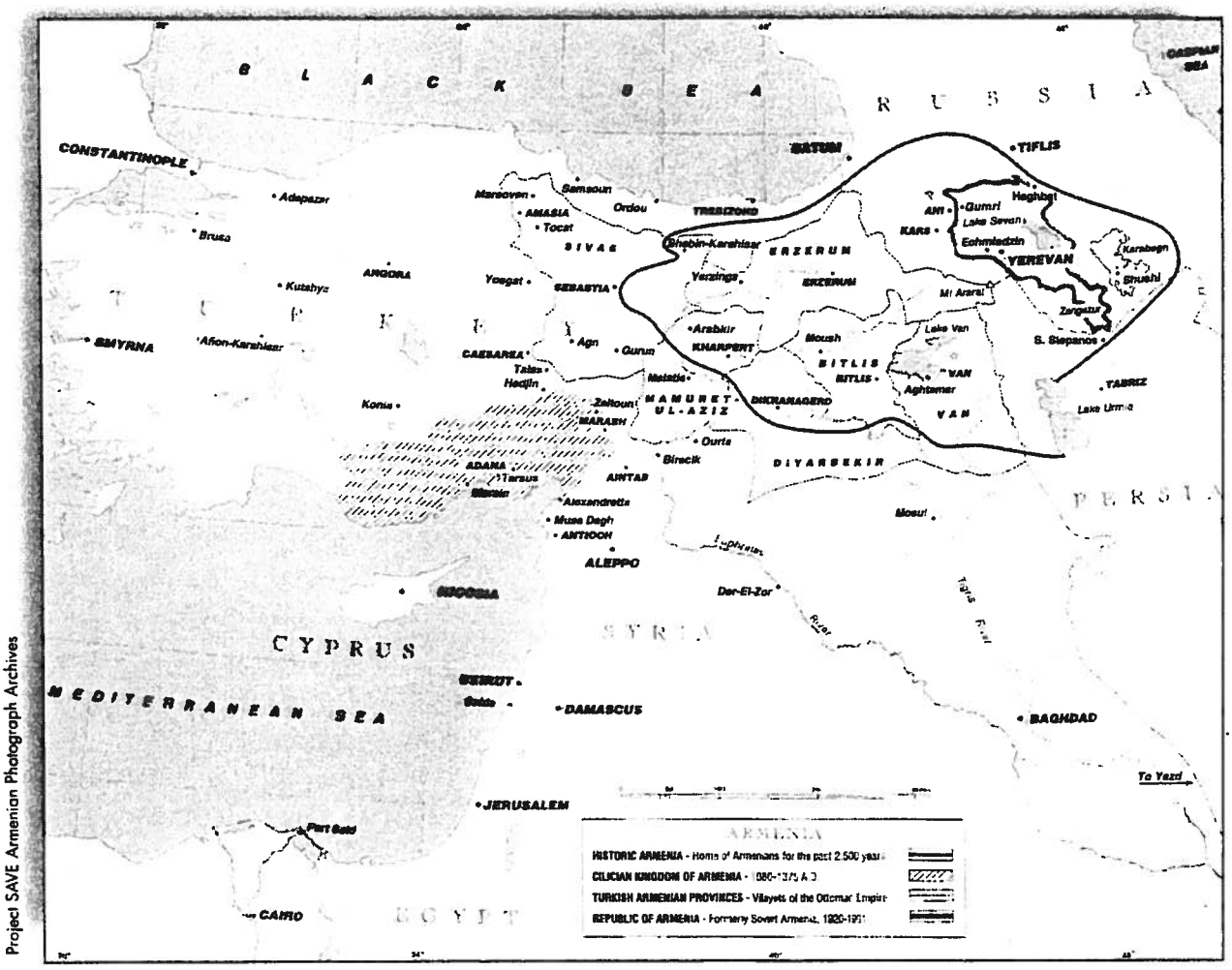
Chapter 2

WE AND THEY

Armenians in the Ottoman Empire

THROUGHOUT HISTORY MANY PEOPLE HAVE ESCAPED PERSECUTION AND VIOLENCE IN THEIR HOMELANDS and taken refuge in countries that have provided them an opportunity to start again. This book is about the twentieth-century genocide of the Armenians. In every history, some stories are particular, while others connect universally. The first chapter of this resource book examined the power of historical memory to shape identity. It looked at how Armenians today are influenced by stories of the Armenian past and the impact those stories have on their identity. Most of those stories were told by families who settled in the United States as refugees. This chapter begins a case study of the choices that ultimately resulted in the genocide of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and forced those families from their homes. As we tell this story our focus will be on the responses by individuals, groups, and nations—inside and outside of the Ottoman Empire—to the treatment of Armenians before and during the genocide. The readings focus on the roots of violence, the roles of leaders, the power of stereotyping, and the creation of the "other." It is important to study the steps that led to violence. If we can recognize how a conflict escalates, perhaps we can prevent future genocides.

The case of the Armenians under Ottoman rule offers insight into the problems faced by advocates for humanitarian causes. These problems become especially grave when there are no common rules for the



Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives

HISTORIC ARMENIA

This map of historic Armenia shows the general area that Armenia once encompassed, notable in comparison to the much smaller area delineated as the Republic of Armenia at the end of World War I.

protection of human rights. Many people wanted to protect the Armenians by including them in what Helen Fein calls "the Universe of Obligation"[17]—a circle of individuals and groups toward whom obligations are owed, to whom rules apply, and whose injuries call for amends. Without an international system for the protection of human rights, advocates of the Armenians met stiff resistance and, in the face of unfulfilled promises, left the Armenians even more vulnerable.

The Armenians are an ancient people that have lived on much of the same land for more than two thousand years. For some of that time, they ruled their own kingdom. During long periods of Armenian history, however, they have been a subject population, ruled by others. By the sixteenth century the Armenians were subjects in the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman sultan ruled not only as a monarch but also assumed the title of Caliph—the official leader of the Islamic faithful. Ottoman law conformed in many ways with Islamic law and was overseen by the Sheikh-ul-Islam (a religious leader who was appointed by the sultan). Christians and Jews, including Armenians, Bulgarians, Croatians, Greeks, Romanians, Serbs, and others, were classified as *dhimmi* (protected subject non-Muslims). The dhimmi were granted considerable religious freedom, but they were not subject to Islamic law and therefore were without equal legal standing. Codes also prohibited non-Muslims from certain professions—including service in the Ottoman army—and subjected them to additional taxes. Despite their second-class status, as the empire prospered the Armenians fared reasonably well.

During the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire's fortunes declined. The economy stagnated, and corruption was rampant. In addition, the empire was in debt to the European powers, especially France, England, and Belgium. Life for Armenians and other non-Muslims became progressively more difficult. Burdened by increasing taxation and without legal means to protect themselves or their families from exploitation, the subject populations looked for a way to improve their conditions.

Nationalism—the belief in a collective identity and destiny determined by membership in an ethnic, linguistic, or religious group—influenced the various groups of the empire. While the Greeks and others sought to break from the empire, Armenians were not concentrated in a single area that could easily become an independent state. Instead, they placed their hopes on promised reforms of the Ottoman administration. While waiting for the reforms to materialize, Armenians organized in a movement for civil rights. The sultan, however, responded to Armenian protests with repression and massacre. Some Armenian leaders now believed that help had to come from the outside.

There was a precedent for intervention on the behalf of Ottoman minorities. After the Greek revolution of 1821, the Great Powers—England, France, and Russia—became increasingly involved in Ottoman affairs. Describing the conditions of the Empire to a British envoy, Czar Nicholas I of Russia explained: "What we have on our hands is a sick man—a very sick man." What to do with the sick man became the obsession of European journalists and diplomats. Sometimes the European powers supported the independence struggles of Ottoman subjects as opportunities to achieve their own strategic interests

under the guise of "humanitarian intervention." At the same time, the growth of the media and a burgeoning concern for human rights made it possible for ordinary people, thousands of miles from the Ottoman Empire, to read about the suffering of the Armenians. In the United States, a movement for Armenian relief began in Christian churches but soon spread to communities at large and eventually to Congress.

By the late nineteenth century Armenian activists worked cooperatively with Turkish groups who were also advocating change. One of those groups, the Young Turks, a revolutionary organization promising equality for all, forced the sultan to enforce the Ottoman constitution and submit to constitutional rule in 1908.

This chapter traces that history by addressing several guiding questions.

- How do groups, nations, and empires define their "universe of obligation"?
- Who is responsible for protecting the vulnerable from being mistreated inside a sovereign state?
- When does humanitarian intervention make a difference on behalf of the vulnerable? What kinds of intervention leave the vulnerable population even more exposed?
- What is the difference between resisting oppression, advocating change, and revolution?
- What tensions emerge in the transition from a traditional society to a constitutional state?

From the private collection of Berj Fenerci

This postcard depicts Armenian women at work knitting socks in Ada-Pazar, Ottoman Empire. It was sent to the Armenian Church of Gedikpasha.

Reading 1 — THE OTTOMAN ARMENIANS

By the sixteenth century, Armenians were one national group within the vast Ottoman Empire. Over time, borders had changed and a portion of the traditional Armenian homeland had become part of the neighboring Russian Empire. Ottoman Armenians, like the rest of the population, were divided into millets, semi-autonomous communities organized by religion. Leaders of the millet ran most of the administration of the group including education and tax collection. While the sultan oversaw the Muslim millet—including Turks, Arabs, and Kurds—Christian patriarchs ran the Greek and Armenian millets, and the grand rabbi headed the Jewish millet. The leaders of the millets were held accountable for the behavior of the members of the group.

Under this system, Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire were second-class citizens.

Richard Hovannisian, the principal author of the 1988 California model curriculum for teaching about human rights explains: "Despite these disabilities, most Armenians lived in relative peace so long as the Ottoman Empire was strong and expanding." He continues:

> *But as the empire's administrative, fiscal, and military structure crumbled under the weight of internal corruption and external challenges in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, oppression and intolerance increased. The breakdown of order was accelerated by Ottoman inability to modernize and compete with the West.*
>
> *The decay of the Ottoman Empire was paralleled by cultural and political revival among many of the subject peoples. The national liberation struggles, supported at times by one or another European power, resulted in the Turkish loss of Greece and most of the Balkan provinces in the nineteenth century and aggravated the Eastern Question; that is, what was to happen to the enervated empire and its constituent peoples. A growing number of Ottoman liberals came to believe that the empire's survival depended on effective administration reforms. These men were movers behind several significant reform measures promulgated between 1839 and 1876. Yet time and again the advocates of reform became disillusioned in the face of the entrenched, vested interests that stubbornly resisted change.*
>
> *Of the various subject peoples, the Armenians perhaps sought the least. Unlike the Balkan Christians or the Arabs, they were dispersed throughout the empire and no longer constituted an absolute majority in much of their historic homelands. Hence, most Armenian leaders did not think in terms of independence. Expressing loyalty to the sultan and disavowing any separatist aspirations, they petitioned for the protection of their people and property from corrupt officials and marauding bands. The Armenians had passed through a long period of cultural revival. Thousands of youngsters enrolled in elementary and secondary schools, and hundreds of students traveled to Europe for higher education. Many returned home imbued with ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution to engage in teaching, journalism, and literary criticism. As it happened, however, this Armenian self-discovery was paralleled by height-*

ened administrative corruption and exploitation. It was this dual development, the conscious demand for enlightened government and security of life on the one hand and the growing repression and insecurity on the other, that gave rise to the Armenian Question as a part of the larger Eastern Question.[18]

Even though conditions for Armenians continued to deteriorate, many Muslims felt that the sultan's reforms went too far. In *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, Serif Mardin writes that with reform came a backlash. After the 1856 law of nationalities was introduced: "Many [Muslims] began to grumble: 'Today we lost our sacred national rights which our ancestors gained with their blood. While the Islamic nation used to be the ruling nation, it is now bereft of this sacred right. This is a day of tears and mourning for the [Muslim] brethren.'"[19]

CONNECTIONS

- Many Europeans called the Ottoman Empire the "sick man of Europe." What makes a country sick?

- What minimum protections do individuals and groups need for safety and security?

- In the Ottoman Empire, religious affiliation determined the rules of membership in the larger society. In your community, what factors influence participation in the larger society?

- The Armenians, as Christians, were promised tolerance as "people of the book" under the Islamic law of the Ottoman Empire. Create a working definition of the word "tolerance"? What are the strengths of the idea of tolerance? What are the limitations of the idea?

- Richard Hovannisian notes, "as the empire's administrative, fiscal, and military structure crumbled under the weight of internal corruption and external challenges in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, oppression and intolerance increased." What is the relationship between the health of a society and its treatment of minorities?

From the private collection of Berj Fenerci

This postcard is of a silk factory in Brossa that belonged to the Bay brothers, who were Armenian, 1890.

- Psychologist Ervin Staub studies genocide and the prevention of collective violence. He notes that economic problems and widespread violence threaten individuals on a personal level. Staub suggests those forces influence the way people view the "other." How did the Ottoman "universe of obligation" change as the economic situation became worse? How do you explain the changes?

William Ramsay, a British ethnographer, described the impact of prejudice and discrimination on the Armenians in graphic terms:

> *Turkish rule . . . meant unutterable contempt. . . . The Armenians (and the Greek) were dogs and pigs . . . to be spat upon, if their shadow darkened a Turk, to be outraged, to be mats on which he wiped the mud from his feet. Conceive the inevitable results of centuries of slavery, of subjection to insult and scorn, centuries in which nothing that belonged to the Armenian, neither his property, his house, his life, his person, nor his family, was sacred or safe from violence—capricious, unprovoked violence—to resist which by violence meant death! I do not mean that every Armenian suffered so; but that every one lived in conscious danger from any chance disturbance or riot.*[20]

- What tools do people need to survive when living in "constant danger"?

- The authors of the California curriculum note a period of "Armenian self-discovery" during a time of increased discrimination. What is the relationship between ethnic and national awareness and discrimination? Under what conditions do individuals stress the importance of their group identity?

Successful movements for national liberation within the Ottoman Empire led to a huge loss of territory. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* defines nationalism as follows:

1. *Devotion to the interests or culture of one's nation.*
2. *The belief that nations will benefit from acting independently rather than collectively, emphasizing national rather than international goals.*
3. *Aspirations for national independence in a country under foreign domination.*[21]

- Why do you think some people view nationalism as a positive ideal while others believe it is dangerous? Should every national group have the right to form its own country? What problems might be resolved? What new challenges would you anticipate?

- Considering the recent loss of Greece and much of the Balkans, why would many Ottoman leaders believe that "Armenian self-discovery" was a threat? Why might many Armenians have considered "self-discovery" necessary for survival?

- When Ottoman rulers promised equal rights to the all nationalities of the empire, many Muslims interpreted these measures as a loss of their own status. How do people behave when they feel that their status is threatened? Why do you think many Muslims would have interpreted equal protection for all as a loss of their own rights?

Reading 2 – IRON LADLES FOR LIBERTY STEW

Throughout the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire fought several wars over territory. In 1877, Russia and the Ottoman Empire fought in the Balkans and in the traditional Armenian provinces of the empire. As the war went on, Armenians, who were legally forbidden from serving in the Ottoman military, faced a dilemma. Should they support the Russians, Christians, who promised the Armenians would be treated fairly under the Czar's rule, or should they remain loyal to the empire that treated them as second-class citizens? In a pastoral letter, the Armenian Patriarch—the official leader of the Armenian millet—called on his people to pray for the victory of the empire. Despite the loyalty of Armenians, Kurds (a Muslim nationality that lived in the Ottoman Empire), fighting as irregular soldiers, looted and burned several Armenian villages. In the aftermath, many Armenians greeted Russian troops, led by Russian Armenians, as liberators.

In January 1878, the Ottoman government asked Russia for an end to fighting, and peace negotiations began. Negotiations soon collapsed, and the Russian army moved towards the Ottoman capital. Their actions set off alarms through the capitals of Europe, and the British government sent a squadron to prevent the Russians from taking Constantinople [Istanbul]. At a meeting in San Stefano, on the outskirts of the Ottoman capital, a second attempt was made to come to terms for a lasting peace. The resulting treaty granted independence to Serbia, Montenegro, and Romania, and autonomy to Bulgaria. It also awarded Russia several districts in the Caucasus with large Armenian populations and warned that Russian troops would not leave the western Armenian districts until reforms were enacted to ensure the security of the Armenian population.

Courtesy of Azed Ozzie Aslanian, Antranig Shahinian, and Harry Dickran

Archbishop Mkrtich Khrimian.

Russian gains were too much for the European powers. They pressured Russia into renegotiating the treaty in Berlin during July, 1878. To the disappointment of the Armenian delegation, led by Armenian Archbishop Mkrtich Khrimian, Russia was pressured into withdrawing its troops from the Armenian providences and the Armenians were once again offered promises of reform without a means to guarantee their enforcement.

Upon returning from the Berlin negotiations, Archbishop Khrimian shared his disappointment in a sermon at the Armenian cathedral in Constantinople.

> *You know that according to the decision of Patriarch Nerses and the National Assembly we went as delegates to Berlin in order to represent the Armenian Case to the*

Great Powers attending the Congress. We had great hopes that the Congress would grant peace to the world and freedom to the small and oppressed nations—among them our own. The Congress convened and the statesmen of the Great Powers assembled around a diplomatic table covered with green cloth while the delegates of the small and oppressed nations were waiting outside the Congress. In the middle of the Congress on the table covered with a green cloth was placed a big cauldron of Liberty Stew (Harriseh) from which big and small nations and states were to receive their share. Some of the participants were pulling towards the East, others were pulling towards the West and after a long argument they began to call in order one by one the delegates of the small nations. First the Bulgarian walked in followed by the Serb and Gharadaghian [Montenegrans]; the rattling and clinking of the sabres dangling from their sides attracted the attention of those present. After much talking these three delegates drew their sabers and using them as iron ladles dipped them in the cauldron of the Liberty Stew, took their portion and departed proud and dauntless. It was now the turn of the Armenian delegate. I drew near with the paper petition given to me by the National Assembly imploring them to fill my plate with Liberty Stew, too. The officials standing around the cauldron at the time asked me: "Where is your iron ladle? It is true that the Liberty Stew is being distributed here but one who doesn't have an iron ladle can't approach it." Hearken this if in the near future should the Liberty Stew again be distributed at that time, don't come without a ladle, you will go back empty-handed.

Ah! Dear Armenian people, could I have dipped my Paper Ladle in the cauldron it would sog and remain there! Where guns talk and sabers shine, what significance do appeals and petitions have?

... I had been given a piece of paper, not a saber, and for that reason we were deprived of Liberty Stew. In spite of all, in view of the future, going to the Congress of Berlin was not useless.

People of Armenia, of course you will understand what the gun could have done and can do. Therefore, dear and blessed Armenians, upon returning to your fatherland, each of you take a gun as a gift to your friends and relatives. Again and again, arm yourselves! People, place the hope for your liberation on yourselves. Use your intellect and muscle. Man must toil himself in order to be saved. . . .[22]

Not all Armenians were as pessimistic as Archbishop Khrimian. The Armenian Patriarch Nerses Varzhapetian remained hopeful that the sultan would implement reforms that would provide meaningful change in the life of Armenians living within the empire.

CONNECTIONS

- Khrimian was disappointed by the terms of the Treaty of Berlin. What is a treaty? How is a treaty created? How is it enforced?

- List the metaphors that Khrimian used in his speech. How do you interpret their meaning? What does Khrimian mean by iron ladles and the paper ladle? How were the nations with iron ladles different from the Armenian nation?

- According to Khrimian, how did the European diplomats define their "universe of obligation"? What recourse do victims of oppression have for violations of their safety?

- What is the difference between a reformer and a revolutionary? Based on your understanding of those terms, how would you describe Khrimian? How do you think the Ottoman government would have understood Khrimian's call?

- What was the major conclusion that Khrimian made about the outcome of the Congress of Berlin? Why does he say that the attendance of Armenians was not completely useless?

- What advantages do you see in following Khrimian's path for change? What are the disadvantages?

Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, Inc., Courtesy of Rose Babigian Koobatian.

Members of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (c. 1912-1913) that was created in 1890 in a desire to advance Armenian civil rights.

Reading 3 — ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE

From 1878 until 1881, the European powers issued collective warnings reminding the sultan and the Ottoman government of their obligations under the Treaty of Berlin. Despite the protests, conditions for Armenians in the empire did not improve. Armenians on the frontier were still subject to violent raids from local tribes. The Christians were still second-class subjects, victims of elevated taxation and unable to seek legal recourse in the courts. Inspired by Khrimian's example as well as by efforts of Christian groups in the Balkans to organize, some Armenians now believed that change had to come from within.

In the book, *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response*, Scholar Peter Balakian writes about the founding of Armenian political parties and their strategies to bring reform to the Ottoman government.

In Turkish Armenia, the rising tide of progressive ideas about liberty, human rights, and equality came both from the Armenian intellectuals in Russia and from a long-standing intellectual relationship with Europe and its Enlightenment. Western ideas had come to Armenians either in the course of travel or study in Europe, if their families were well-to-do, or because they had been educated at one of the many American Protestant schools in Anatolia, where they were instilled with the egalitarian ideas of the American Revolution.

But the formation of three political parties gave voice to Armenian aspirations in ways that were unprecedented for them and their Turkish rulers. The fall of 1885 saw the founding of the Armenakan Party in Van—that Armenian cultural center near the Russian border. It was a secret society and literally had its first meetings underground in a burrow used for pressing grapes. The party espoused Armenian self-defense in the face of violence and it affirmed Armenia's right to self-rule, trusting that the Powers would finally come to Armenia's aid. More vociferous and centralized was the Hunchak Party, which was founded in 1887 by a group of Russian Armenians in Geneva. A socialist party with a strong Marxist orientation, they sought change and emancipation for Armenia through a socialist program, and they believed that a new and independent Armenia would initiate a worldwide socialist revolution.

By the summer of 1890 Dashnakstutiun (Armenian Revolutionary Federation) was founded in Tiflis. Dedicated to a revolutionary struggle for Armenian advancement and freedom, the party evolved into a more nationalist platform that involved a commitment to engage in armed struggle in the face of wholesale violence and oppression, and before long would become the best known and most controversial of the these.

As the political parties evolved so did civic protest. And by the summer of 1890 in Erzeroum about 200 Armenians met in the cathedral church yard to draw up a petition to protest the conditions under which Armenians were living throughout the Empire. But, as the rally began the police interceded, and before

long an Ottoman battalion was dispatched to Erzurum. Before it was over, the Armenian quarter was attacked and looted, and there were more than a dozen dead and 250 wounded. A month later in Constantinople, Armenians demonstrated outside their cathedral in the Kum Kapu section of the city, and again violence broke out between the police, some soldiers and the Armenian demonstrators. Of the fracas that followed, the British Ambassador, Sir William White, noted what seemed to him the historical importance of the occasion by referring to it as "the first occasion since the conquest of Constantinople by the Turks on which Christians have dared resist soldiers in Stamboul."

By 1893, Armenian activists were placing yaftas—placards—on the public walls of certain towns in western and central Anatolia. The placards were addressed to Muslims around the world asking them to stand up to the sultan, an incompetent oppressor. Instead of instigating Muslim rebellion, however, the plan, which had come from Hunchak cells throughout Anatolia, instigated a mass of arbitrary arrests and torture across the empire. Nonetheless, by the early nineties the Armenians were making themselves heard, which further enraged the already paranoid sultan.[23]

Repression was not limited to the Armenians alone. Balakian describes the sultan's attempt to stamp out all reform.

He declared numerous words and subjects taboo and illegal. Beyond his strict censorship of all words and references to Armenia, he ordered a ban on any form of expression that referred to regicide or the murders of heads of state. The name of the deposed Sultan Murad V was banned; and the king and queen of Serbia were reported to have died of indigestion; Empress Elizabeth of Austria was said to have died of pneumonia, French President Carnot of apoplexy, and President McKinley of anthrax. So far did his paranoia carry him that he ordered his censors to expunge all references to H_20 from science textbooks because he feared the symbol would be read as meaning "Hamid the second is nothing."

The French writer Paul Fesch in 1907 summed up the state of the press under the sultan: "For thirty years the press has ceased to exist in Turkey. There are indeed newspapers, many of them even, but the scissors of the censorship cut them in so emasculating a manner that they no longer have any potency. If I dare, I would call them gelded newspapers—or rather, to keep the local colors, eunuchs." Correspondingly, intellectual freedom and book publishing were also under strict censorship.

It is not surprising, then, that Armenian political activism was met with rage by the sultan. Anyone suspected of sedition—which meant a genuine part of the population, in a society which was enveloped in the sultan's network of espionage and surveillance—was arrested, tortured, killed or exiled. It was in this climate that a group of liberal Turkish intellectuals...created a movement that demanded reform and constitutional government. As it grew in power, Abdul Hamid did what he could to tighten the muzzle on all political opposition. But the empire-wide corruption and the sul-

tan's own paranoia had corroded even the military, so that what was supposed to be the army of the sultan's protection became the seat of discontent and the seed ground for the Young Turk movement.[24]

CONNECTIONS

- Between 1878 and 1881 the European powers warned the sultan that there would be consequences for the treatment of minorities in the Ottoman Empire. Despite those warnings, conditions for the Armenians did not improve. What lessons might the sultan have taken away? What lessons do you think the Armenians learned?

- Peter Balakian characterizes the Armenian protests in this reading as acts of *civil disobedience.* In the mid 1800s American writer Henry David Thoreau popularized the concept of civil disobedience. Since that time, it has been invoked by such notable activists as Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. What does the term *civil disobedience* mean? What attributes would you use to characterize actions taken by those engaged in civil disobedience?

- Armenian civic protest and civil disobedience were repressed by the Ottoman government. In the United States the First Amendment is meant to protect the rights of individuals and groups to protest, petition, associate, and voice outrage. Why are those protections necessary in a democracy?

- Armenians engaged in civil disobedience were often met with collective punishment—looting and massacre. What did the sultan's forces hope would happen as a result of those measures?

Scholar Vartan Gregorian explains that there are many factors that contributed to the decline of the Ottoman Empire. Among several other factors, he highlights the challenges in creating a collective identity. Gregorian notes:

- *Among Ottoman rulers, there also developed a sense of complacency and a belief in the infallibility of Ottoman institutions and the inferiority of the "infidels."*

- *The failure of the empire to integrate various nations, peoples and regions into a cohesive whole. As a result, the empire remained a collection of different ethnic and religious populations (millets), such as Greek Orthodox, Armenian and Jewish, as well as semiautonomous regions (Arabia, Lebanon, North Africa and the like) without a common, unifying identity or unity of purpose.*

- *Perhaps most important of all, the rise of 19th-century nationalism in all the regions of the Ottoman empire, involving Christians at first and then, later, even Muslim peoples within the empire, such as Arabs and Turks.*[25]

- Who decides the rules of membership in a society? How can nations and empires create a cohesive identity? What obstacles get in the way? How can those obstacles be overcome?

- What do you think the Sultan feared would happen if the Armenians were to publicly air their grievances?

- Paul Fesch observed the intense censorship under the rule of Sultan Abdul Hamid II. He declared:

  For thirty years the press has ceased to exist in Turkey. There are indeed newspapers, many of them even, but the scissors of the censorship cut them in so emasculating a manner that they no longer have any potency.

- What is the purpose of the press? How does censorship deprive the press of its potency? Why is censorship such a powerful tool in resisting social change?

Reading 1 — HUMANITY ON TRIAL

The tensions between the Ottoman government and the Armenians erupted in 1894 after the Hunchak party in Sassun encouraged ordinary Armenians—farmers, peasants, and merchants, frustrated by their second-class status as symbolized by double taxation—to withhold their taxes. Ottoman troops were sent in to stop the protest. Instead of restoring the peace, the soldiers began massacres that would spread throughout the Turkish Armenian provinces during the winter of 1895-1896. The semi-regular *Hamidye* regiments of Kurdish and Circassian horseman carried out the campaign. In all nearly 200,000 Armenian were killed in the massacres. Reports of the massacre were smuggled out of Turkey and later collected as part of an official investigation conducted by the British, French, and Russian governments. The first public mention of the massacre to an outside source came on September 26, 1894. In published accounts of the massacres, names were withheld or replaced with initials in an effort to prevent retribution:

> *Troops have been massed in the region of the large plain near us. Sickness broke out among them, which took off two or three victims every few days. It was a good excuse for establishing quarantine around, with its income from bribes, charges, and the inevitable rise in the price of already dear grain. I suspect that one reason for placing a quarantine was to hinder the information as to what all those troops were about in that region....The sickening details are beginning to come in . . . it has been the innocent who have been the greatest sufferers. Forty-eight villages are said to have been wholly blotted out.*

By late October more details of the massacres were known.

> *We have word from Bitlis that the destruction of life in Sassoun, south of Moosh, was even greater than supposed. The brief note that reached us says: "Twenty more villages annihilated in Sassoun. Six thousand men, women, and children massacred by troops and [Kurds]. The awful story is just beginning to be known here, though the massacre took place early in September. The Turks have used infinite plans to prevent news leaking, even going to the length of sending back from Trebizond many hundreds from the Moosh region who had come this way on business." The massacre was ordered from Constantinople in the sense that some [Kurds] having robbed Armenian villages of flocks, the Armenians pursued and tried to recover their property, and a fight ensued in which a dozen [Kurds] were killed. The slain were semi-official robbers, "i.e. enrolled as troops and armed as such, but not under control." The authorities then telegraphed to Constantinople that Armenians had "killed some of the Sultan's troops" and they did it; only, not finding any rebellion, they cleared the country so that none should occur in the future.*[26]

It was common for Ottoman officials to describe the massacres of the Armenians as a justified response to armed rebellion. Despite those claims, British historian Lord Kinross observed that each

massacre followed a similar pattern.

> *First into town came Turkish troops, for the purposes of massacre; then came the Kurdish irregulars and tribesmen for the purposes of plunder. Finally came the holocaust, by fire and destruction, which spread, with the pursuit of fugitives and mopping-up operations, throughout the lands and villages of the surrounding provinces. This murderous winter of 1895 saw the decimation of much of the Armenian population and the devastation of their property in more than twenty districts in eastern Turkey. Often the massacres were timed for a Friday, when the Muslims were in their mosques and the myth was spread by the authorities that the Armenians conspired to slaughter them at prayer.* [27]

U.S. President Grover Cleveland

Ottoman soldiers recorded their participation in the massacres in letters they sent home. These letters offer a glimpse of the way Armenians had become dehumanized in the eyes of the soldiers. One soldier wrote:

> *My brother, if you want news from here we have killed 1,200 Armenians, all of them as food for the dogs . . . Mother, I am safe and sound. Father, 20 days ago we made war on the Armenian unbelievers. Through God's grace no harm befell us. . . . There is a rumor that our battalion will kill all the Armenians there. Besides, 511 Armenians were wounded, one or two perish every day.*[28]

Reports of the massacres horrified members of the United States Congress. In December 1895, Senator Wilkinson Call, a Democrat from Florida, proposed a resolution calling for the creation of an independent Armenian state protected by the "civilized" nations of the world. Although the resolution proved too radical for the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee did support the resolution of Senator Shelby Collum of Illinois condemning the massacres. Senator Collum urged President Grover Cleveland to take a stand:

Courtesy of the Library of Congress

U.S. Senator Wilkinson Call

> *Destruction and rapine have been and now are the orders obeyed in the beautiful valleys and on the rugged hills of Armenia. There has been no war, no conflict between the two contending powers, but a merciless, pitiless tornado of bloody ruin. . . .*
>
> *Has it come to this, that in the last days of the nineteenth century humanity itself is placed on trial?*[29]

Although Congress passed Collum's resolution, President Cleveland

refused to support the measure, fearing the military and economic repercussions such an action would have on relations between the Ottoman Empire and the United States. Without U.S. support, the European and Russian governments continued to pressure the sultan to implement the reforms promised in The Treaty of Berlin. While diplomats talked, massacres of Ottoman Armenians continued intermittently until January 1896.

CONNECTIONS

- Turkish officials commonly characterized protests by Armenians and other minority groups within the Ottoman Empire as rebellion. The government spread false rumors to confuse the facts and justify slaughter. Without an independent press, official fabrications often went unchallenged. It is often said that a lie repeated over and over again becomes the truth. How does that happen? How do you think those distortions influenced the way Turks thought about Armenians?

- Lord Kinross writes: "Often the massacres were timed for a Friday, when the Muslims were in their mosques and the myth was spread by the authorities that the Armenians conspired to slaughter them at prayer." What is the danger when religious differences are exploited to reinforce a "we" and "they"? How do you learn about people who practice other religions? What can be done to build trust across religious divisions?

- Richard Hovannisian believes the Ottoman massacres were "the way traditional regimes respond to calls for change and equality." Why would traditional regimes respond to calls for change with slaughter? How is a democracy supposed to respond to dissent? What protections are there for those that advocate for change in your community? School? Country?

- In a letter to his family, an Ottoman soldier writes: "We have killed 1,200 Armenians, all of them as food for the dogs. . . Father, 20 days ago we made war on the Armenian unbelievers." How do explain his attitude toward the victims? How do individuals and groups become dehumanized?

- In the 1890s the massacres of Armenians were often described as a *holocaust*, literally a destruction by fire. At the time, the word holocaust did not have the same associations and meaning that it has throughout much of the world today. Today, the word *Holocaust*, with a capital H, is most frequently used to describe the Nazis' attempt to destroy all of European Jewry during the 1930s and 1940s. At times there has been intense debate about whether it is appropriate to use the word *Holocaust* to describe other events. For example, some people refer to the Armenian Genocide as the Armenian Holocaust. Why does the language matter?

- How is it possible for a group to become so dehumanized that the local population would allow them

to be massacred in broad daylight? What are the small steps that lead to dehumanization? *After the First*, a video resource available in the Facing History and Ourselves library, explores some of the ways individuals may become accustomed to violence.

- The reading describes the struggle of politicians in the United States to find an appropriate response to the massacres of Armenians. Samantha Power, a scholar of U.S. foreign policy, describes those options as a "tool box." What tools are turned to most frequently? Think creatively. What other tools are available to those who believe that governments should intervene to protect human rights?

Reading 5 — THE SULTAN RESPONDS

In Europe, the popular press reported stories of the Armenian massacres. Newspapers featured cartoons of the "Bloody Sultan," a name coined by British Prime Minister William Gladstone. The press called upon the "civilized" world to do something to stop the bloodshed. Descriptions of "Turkish tyranny" and "outrages" against Christians written by Christian missionaries excited concern for the Armenians while reinforcing anti-Muslim stereotypes. After Sir Philip Currie, the British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, rebuked Sultan Abdul Hamid II for the Armenian massacres, the sultan felt compelled to defend his position. This is his response:

His Majesty states that he is well aware of your Excellency's friendly disposition towards himself and the Empire, and he does not for a moment imagine that in bringing these matters to his notice Your Excellency wishes to raise the Armenian Question.

His Majesty continues by stating that just as in other countries there are Nihilists, Socialists, and Anarchists, endeavoring to obtain from the government concessions and privileges which it is impossible to grant them, and just in the same manner steps had to be taken against them, so it is with the Armenians who, for their own purposes, invent these stories against the Government, and finding that they receive encouragement from British officials, are emboldened to proceed to open acts of rebellion, which the government is perfectly justified in suppressing by every means in its power.

His Majesty says that your Excellency will remember that the Bulgarians concocted the same stories against the government and proceeded just as the Armenians do, and that the British government extended a certain protection to the Bulgarians, who have now been formed into separate provinces. This cannot possibly, however, happen in the case of the Armenians. The Armenian population is spread over a large extent of the country and no place are they the majority. Their expectations, therefore, can never be realized, and all the exaggerated stories of oppression and persecution, got up with the object of exciting European sympathy to enable them to obtain an impossible end, should not be relied upon.

Naturally the Ottoman government was bound to take strong measures to put down sedition, and when the people were found with arms in their hands resisting the authorities, it was only natural that the government should mete

Sultan Abdul Hamid II

out to them summary punishment. Only a short time ago, in Italy, the Italians put down disorder with a strong hand. England herself had in India, resorted to the strongest measures to stamp out rebellion, and even in Egypt, England had put down disorder with a high hand. His Imperial Majesty treated the Armenians with justice and moderation, and as long as they behaved properly, all toleration would be shown to them, but he had given orders that when they took to revolt or to brigandage the authorities were to deal with the Armenians as they deal with the authorities.

His Majesty had read the account which your Excellency had given to him with horror and sorrow. His Majesty had had no knowledge of these facts, and yesterday morning, when he read the report, he immediately instructed the Minister of the Interior to make inquiries and cause a telegram to be sent to Zeki Pasha, Commandant of the Fourth Corps d'Armee, instructing him to report at once.[30]

Despite European pressure to implement long-promised reforms for the Armenians, the sultan resisted. Without any signs of progress the Armenians grew increasingly frustrated.

CONNECTIONS

- The sultan explains: "His Imperial Majesty treated the Armenians with justice and moderation, and as long as they behaved properly, all toleration would be shown to them, but he had given orders that when they took to revolt . . . the authorities were to deal with the Armenians as they deal with the authorities." Scholar Henry Theriault argues that "the Sultan's characterization of what the Armenians were asking for—'concessions and privileges'—suggests that the Sultan was explicitly aware that they were reformers, not revolutionaries in the true sense. Indeed, at the time and after, Armenian political activity strove toward full integration of Armenians into an egalitarian Ottoman state, not the destruction of the state or its government." Why is the distinction between revolution and reform important? Regardless of the motivation of the protesters, would massacre ever be a legitimate response? Why would the sultan suppress movements for change with radical violence?

- The sultan suggests that "the Ottoman Government was bound to put down sedition." What is sedition? U.S. President Thomas Jefferson once wrote that "a little rebellion now and then is a good thing . . . it is a medicine necessary for the sound health of a government."[31] How would you describe the Armenians' actions? Were they acts of rebellion? Are there times when rebellion is justified?

- Why do you think the sultan goes to great lengths to point out the policy of the British government in Egypt and India? Do the comparisons with European colonialism influence the way you think about the massacres?

- Often efforts to draw attention to the plight of the Armenians reinforced cultural stereotypes about

Muslims. Is it possible to call attention to injustice without further reinforcing attitudes of "we" and "they"? How can advocates for victims distinguish between the perpetrators, their supporters, and cultural attitudes about the victims, without depicting the conflict as a clash of civilizations?

Reading 6 — SEEKING CIVIL RIGHTS

While massacres of Armenians continued throughout the Ottoman Empire, Armenian leaders worked to find a strategy that finally would bring about the protections they had sought for so long. Although other minorities in the Ottoman Empire were able to break free into protected provinces or even separate countries, Armenians were scattered throughout the empire. Hopes for safety and security did not rest as much on independence as they did on real changes in the way they were governed. The two largest Armenian political parties—the Hunchaks and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation—planned direct action in an attempt to educate the world about their situation.

On October 1, 1895, 2,000 Armenians gathered in the Ottoman capital to demand civil rights. Peter Balakian describes how a non-violent protest turned into a slaughter.

> *As the sultan stalled on the new demands for reform in the Armenian provinces, the frustration among Armenians grew. By the summer of 1895, the Hunchak Party was planning a demonstration in the capital. The mass rally took place at noon on October 1, 1895, as nearly 2,000 Armenians gathered in the Kum Kapu section near the Armenian patriarchate to march to the Sublime Porte. Their goal was to deliver a petition, a "Protest-Demand" which decried the Sasun massacre, the condition of Armenians throughout the empire, and the inaction of the central government.*

Palace of the Ottoman Sublime Port, Constantinople.

The petition was—especially given its time and place—an extraordinary statement about civil rights. In clear language the Armenians protested "the systematic persecution to which our people has been subjected, especially during the last few years, a persecution which the Sublime Porte has made a principle of government with the one object of causing Armenians to disappear from their own country." They protested the "state of siege" under which Armenians were forced to live and the recent massacres at Sasun. Peace and security were essential, the text went on, "to a nation which desires to reach by fair means a position of comparative prosperity, which it has certainly a right to aspire to, and to reach the level of progress and civilization towards which other peoples are advanc-

ing." The list of Armenian demands was broad and basic: fair taxation; guarantees of freedom of conscience; the right of public meetings; equality before the law; protection of life, property, and honor (and this meant the protection of women). The petition also demanded the cessation of mass political arrests and the brutal torture that most often followed them, as well as the right to bear arms for self-defense. The Armenian authors of the petition underscored that the Armenians had waited patiently for the reforms promised them in the Treaty of Berlin in 1878. As one historian put it, it was "the first time in Ottoman history that a non-Muslim, subject minority had dared to confront the central authorities in the very capital of the empire."

As the rally commenced there was tension all over the city. The Sublime Porte was surrounded by cavalry and police, as the huge crowd made its way into the center of the city and approached the Porte. Copies of the Protest-Demand had already been delivered to various embassies. As the Hunchak leaders were about to deliver the petition at the Porte, they were stopped by Maj. Servet Bey, the adjutant to the minister of police, who ordered them to disband. As the soldiers and the police let loose on the protestors, about twenty people were bludgeoned to death and hundreds were wounded. Major Servet was killed, fights broke out and shots were fired, and a massacre began in the clear daylight on the streets of the capital. Foreigners and European diplomats looked on in horror....

During the first week of October, massacres continued throughout Constantinople day and night. Horrified by what they were witnessing, the foreign diplomats sent a collective message to the Porte asking for an end to the massacres. British ambassador Philip Currie telegraphed the grand vizier [the chief minister of the Ottoman government] to tell him that conditions were deteriorating by the day and that Armenians were being massacred in the city and throughout the suburbs. As the number of dead piled up on the streets and the hospitals filled with wounded, 2,400 Armenians stayed locked up inside their churches throughout the many sections of the city. Finally, on October 10, with assurances from all six foreign embassies, they agreed to come out into the open air. But by then the Constantinople massacre had set off a new wave of violence against Armenians throughout the empire.[32]

CONNECTIONS

- What demands did the Hunchaks make in their petition? What arguments did they make to support their positions?

- Balakian writes that the Hunchak petition was, "given its time and place—an extraordinary statement about civil rights." What are civil rights? Where do civil rights come from? How are they protected? What is the difference between a civil right and a human right?

- Throughout the nineteenth century, Armenians tried many strategies to bring about change in the

Ottoman Empire. Some worked within the system, while others organized into political parties and suggested alternatives. Still others looked for help from abroad. Despite promises, significant change never came. What obstacles did Armenians confront as they sought safety and security? What other strategies were still available to Armenians?

Reading 7 — HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION

By the mid 1890s the "Armenian Crisis" received prominent coverage in the popular press of the United States. The *New York Times*, *Boston Globe*, and *San Francisco Examiner* featured stories on the situation nearly every week. At the same time, activists around the country began to raise money for food and clothes for distribution through networks set up by Christian missionaries in Ottoman Armenia. Although the missionaries played a prominent role, the movement was not limited by religion or politics. In the United States Christians and Jews, liberals and conservatives, took up the issue of Armenian relief.[33]

Activists lobbied Clara Barton, the American founder of the Red Cross, a national symbol of humanitarian activism, to take up the cause. Impressed by extensive relief efforts in New York and Boston, Barton, who had become a household name for her work during the American Civil War, soon agreed. The 75-year-old humanitarian decided that it was time to take her work to Ottoman Armenia. She explained her decision by saying that "'immediate action was urged by the American people. Human beings starving could not be reached, hundreds of towns and villages had not been heard from since the fire and swords went over them." Barton argued that her intervention was justified on the basis that Turkey was one of the signers of the Red Cross Treaty of Geneva, and consequentially it had to be familiar with its humanitarian objectives.

Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Clara Barton

Balakian believes that American intervention on the behalf of the Ottoman Armenians had a profound impact on the way Americans viewed their responsibility to those that lived beyond their borders.

> *Although the United States sent money... to aid Greece during the Greek War of Independence in 1824-25, and Americans aided Ireland during the potato famine of the 1840s, the movement for humanitarian intervention for the Armenians in Turkey in 1896 commenced what I believe can be called the modern era of American international human rights relief.... In many ways Barton's mission anticipated the kind of work the Peace Corps would do in the second half of the twentieth century. Barton's voyage to Turkey was also another part, and a bright one, of America's growing global involvement during the decade that would bring the*

United States a new international identity....

In many ways, American women played a crucial role in the movement for Armenian relief, and their work helped to give shape to a new vision of what might be called global sisterhood. As survivor accounts and eyewitness reports came to public knowledge through the press, the magnitude of sexual violence committed against Armenian women—rape and sexual torture, abduction, slavery, and imprisonment in harems—appeared to be unprecedented in modern Western history, and it affected Americans deeply.[34]

The activism of American women did not take place in a vacuum. The treatment of minorities in the Ottoman Empire galvanized a growing international movement for humanitarian intervention—a belief that states, not just individuals and groups, have a responsibility to take action, using diplomacy or force, to prevent or end the abuse of human rights in a separate sovereign nation. Human rights expert Paul Gordon Lauren writes that efforts to intervene in the name of persecuted Ottoman minorities during the nineteenth century "contributed heavily to the growing theory of humanitarian intervention and its slow but steady acceptance as an increasingly important component of international law." In practice, Lauren explains, those efforts raised many questions about the tension between human rights, politics, and national sovereignty—questions that are still with us.

Humanitarian intervention both in theory and practice also helped to identify serious and troubling problems created when trying to transform visions of international human rights into reality. Even at this early stage, for example, it became evident that humanitarian intervention in the name of "humanity" might well be genuinely beneficent and justified, but at the same time always carried the dangerous potential of providing a convenient pretext for coercion or a guise for masking more suspicious motives of national self-interest and aggrandizement. Similarly, difficulties arose as to precisely what nations or group of nations could legitimately or precisely define the "laws of humanity," "the conscience of mankind," and the meaning of "human rights" for the world as a whole while still avoiding accusations of having arbitrary standards that applied to some but not all. The Great Powers who demonstrated such eagerness to protect the rights of the persecuted in the Ottoman Empire, for example, also happened to be the same ones known to persecute and discriminate against indigenous peoples within their own overseas empires. In addition, whereas carefully negotiated and solemn treaty provisions concerning human rights indicated a strength of desire, the lack of enforcement provisions revealed a lack of will.... Humanitarian intervention always carried the risk that it could provoke even worse reactions against the very people that it wanted to protect. Even more serious in terms of international relations, such intervention could create the risk of a dangerous precedent that might be turned against those who employed it and thus threaten their own independence, domestic jurisdiction, territorial integrity, and national sovereignty. Each of these difficult problems would continue to confront those who struggled to advance international human rights for many years to come.[35]

CONNECTIONS

- Balakian writes: "Looking back at the twentieth century, it seems clear that no international human rights movement ever obsessed or galvanized the United States as did the effort to save the Armenians." As you read about the treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman empire, what grabs your attention? What does it take for another group of people to become part of your "universe of obligation"? How do you express your concern?

- Paul Gordon Lauren highlights a series of dilemmas for those acting in the name of "humanity." He notes, "it became evident that humanitarian intervention in the name of 'humanity' might well be genuinely beneficent and justified, but at the same time always carried the dangerous potential of providing a convenient pretext for coercion or a guise for masking more suspicious motives of national self-interest and aggrandizement. Similarly, difficulties arose as to precisely what nations or group of nations could legitimately or precisely define the 'laws of humanity,' 'the conscience of mankind,' and the meaning of 'human rights' for the world as a whole while still avoiding accusations of having arbitrary standards that applied to some but not all." How can those dilemmas be resolved? Do the tensions need to resolved before any action is taken?

- Does the international community have a moral duty to intervene when human rights are being violated? If so, what standards should be used to determine when to act? How should nations determine when to respond diplomatically and when to use force?

- What human rights stories are in the news today? What obstacles need to be negotiated as individuals, groups, and nations respond?

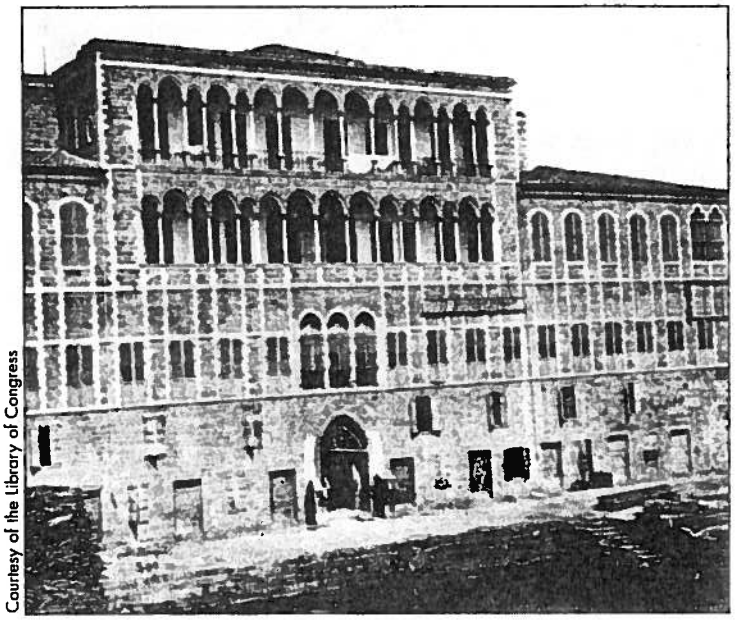
- Lauren warns that intervention may provoke unexpected consequences: "Humanitarian intervention always carried the risk that it could provoke even worse reactions against the very people that it wanted to protect." How can those that plan humanitarian actions minimize the risk of a backlash?

Reading 8 — SHOWDOWN AT BANK OTTOMAN

In August of 1896 leaders of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation decided they needed help from the European powers to stop the anti-Armenian massacres. Attempts to organize nonviolent protests often ended with the sultan's forces brutally breaking up the protests. In the aftermath, protesters were blamed for their own fate, and often the Armenian community was collectively held responsible. A small group of desperate Armenian leaders felt that it was time to try something else. Nearly two dozen members of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation plotted to take over Bank Ottoman, a European-controlled bank in Constantinople, the capital of the Ottoman Empire. Before they took over the bank, the organizers of the operation, Armen Garo, Papken Siuni, and Haig Tiryakian, issued several public declarations outlining their objectives. The plotters made it clear that they did not want to harm anyone or even to rob the bank. One manifesto was addressed to the Turkish public at large.

> *For centuries our forbears have been living with you in peace and harmony . . . but recently your government, conceived in crimes, began to sow discords among us in order to strangle us and you with greater ease. You, people, did not understand this diabolical scheme of politics and, soaking yourselves in the blood of our brothers, you became an accomplice in the perpetration of the heinous crime. Nevertheless, know well that our fight is not against you, but your government, against which your own best sons are fighting also.*[36]

The plotters also addressed a letter to the European powers. The attitude of the Europeans, the letter claimed, tolerated "Turkish tyranny...Sultan Hamit's murderous vengeance. Europe has beheld this crime and kept silence. . . . The time of diplomatic play is passed. The blood shed by our 100,000 martyrs gives us the right to demand liberty."[37] Another letter explained "it is the criminal indifference of humanity which has pushed us to this extreme."[38]



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Bank Ottoman, Constantinople.

After a shootout leaving both Armenians and bank guards dead and wounded, over a dozen Armenian revolutionaries stormed the bank. Armen Garo, one of the leaders of the operation, later wrote that his fellow Armenians were so inexperienced in handling weapons that several of them blew themselves up while trying to evade gunfire. Once the bank

was secure, he went to the second floor to talk to the bank personnel. Armen Garo recalled:

> *In my hoarse voice, I began to explain to them that they did not need to fear us, that we were Armenian revolutionaries who had occupied the bank to compel the European ambassadors to intervene in order to end the massacre of Armenians. I even reminded them: "Do you hear that howling outside? The Turkish mob has resumed the massacre of Armenians. . . ." In very courteous language, I explained to them what our aim was. I told them, unless we received guarantees that no more Armenians would be killed and the promised reforms would be enacted, we were not getting out of the bank. Should they try from outside to recapture the building by force, we would resist to the last bullet and the last bomb, and in the end blow up the building not to surrender ourselves. Therefore, it would be in their interest as well to bring about the European intervention as soon as possible, before our ammunition was exhausted.*
>
> *They all started to look at each other and then at me with terrified eyes. Their elemental terror of a short while ago was followed by a new one, more definite, and all together began asking how they could help us to bring about the European intervention as soon as possible.*[39]

The Armenian revolutionaries spelled out their demands in a message to the ambassadors of the European powers.

> *We are in control of the Bank Ottoman and we will not leave until the following conditions are met:*
>
> *1. To stop immediately the massacre now on in Constantinople;*
>
> *2. To stop the armed attack on the bank, otherwise we shall blow up the building when our ammunition is exhausted;*
>
> *3. To give written guarantees concerning the enactment of Armenian reforms with the amendment suggested by the Central Committee of the A.R.F. [Armenian Revolutionary Federation] in a special communication to you;*
>
> *4. To set free all Armenian revolutionaries detained because of current events;*
>
> *In the contrary situation, we shall be forced to blow up the building with everyone inside.*[40]

To prevent further violence, the European ambassadors negotiated a deal. The sultan promised to end the massacres, and the Armenian revolutionaries agreed to leave the building and go into exile. The European powers pledged to press the Ottoman government for reforms to ensure the Armenians would be protected. Although the Armenians boarded a ship to France without further incident, neither of the sultan's promises were kept. Instead, 6,000 more Armenians were massacred in the streets of the capital shortly afterward.

CONNECTIONS

- Leaders of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation decided they needed help from the European powers to stop the anti-Armenian massacres. Attempts to organize nonviolent protests often ended with the sultan's forces brutally breaking up the protests. In the aftermath, protesters were blamed for their own fate, and often the Armenian community was collectively held responsible. What options did leaders of the Armenian community have as they worked for change? Earlier attempts by Armenians to advocate for their rights did not elicit the responses they desired. Armenians were still treated as second-class citizens. What happens to groups and individuals when they feel they are not safe and are not able to protect themselves and their families?

- Protests are often staged as attempts to educate the public by drawing attention to a situation. Whom were the Armenian revolutionaries trying to educate? What lessons did they try to teach with their public declarations? What lesson did they teach when they took over the bank?

- What is terrorism? What is the difference between terrorism and civil disobedience? What factors influence your understanding of the distinctions between the terms?

- Some publicists and many European diplomats denounced the seizure of the Bank Ottoman as a foolish act of terrorism. Others, however, commended the Armenian revolutionaries for their bravery. One British historian wrote that "as young men of ideals inexperienced in the wiles of political agitation, they had failed to benefit their friends and had played into the hands of the enemy." Reflect on this statement. What do you make of the actions taken by the Armenian revolutionaries at Bank Ottoman? How did their actions both help and hurt the Armenian cause?

Reading 9 — THE RISE OF THE YOUNG TURKS

By the 1890s it was not just minorities within the Ottoman Empire who were calling for change and in some cases revolution. Christians, Muslims, and Jews were now joined by Turks and even members of the nobility—including the sultan's nephew, Prince Sabaheddin. At his home in Paris, the prince hosted a wide range of Ottoman dissidents in February of 1902 as the Congress of Ottoman Liberals. At the conference, 47 delegates, representing Turkish, Arab, Greek, Kurdish, Armenian, and Jewish groups, formed an alliance against the sultan. Together the groups called for equal rights for all Ottoman citizens, self-administration for minorities, and restoration of the suspended Ottoman constitution.

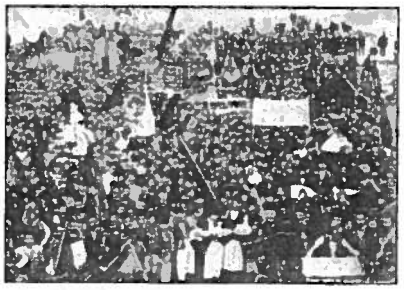
Despite their broad agreements, there were still tensions between the factions. Among the points of conflict was an intense debate about outside intervention. Many Armenians favored a resolution calling for European protection of all ethnic and national groups within the empire. Ahmed Riza, one of the leaders of the Young Turks—a coalition of Turkish groups that proposed transforming the empire into a representative constitutional government—believed that the Armenians and other minorities deserved equal rights and fair treatment, but he chafed at the suggestion that help from outside was necessary. According to Riza and others, many of the problems they were facing were partially the results of foreign intervention. Yet some Armenians worried that without help from the outside, they would be left with empty promises.

In 1907 the prince, with the support of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, organized the second Congress of Ottoman Liberals. At the meeting representatives called for immediate overthrow of the sultan.

While the prince was organizing dissident groups in exile, military forces representing the Committee of Union and Progress (a branch of the Young Turk movement) found themselves on the brink of being exposed by the sultan's forces. Not knowing what else to do, they went public. The committee representatives demanded restoration of the Ottoman constitution and marched toward the capital. As they traveled from town to town, the mutiny picked up public support. Without sufficient troops to put down the uprising, the sultan gave in to the demands of the Committee of Union and Progress on July 24, 1908. The Young Turk revolution was greeted with broad support. Newspapers reported scenes of Christians, Jews, and Muslims embracing in the streets.

Upon taking power, the Young Turks issued a proclamation outlining their plan to reform the Ottoman Empire.

> *Provided that the number of senators does not exceed one-third the number of deputies, the Senate will be named as follows: one-third by the sultan and two-thirds by the nation, and the term of senators will be of limited duration.*
>
> *It will be demanded that all Ottoman subjects having completed their twentieth year, regardless of whether they possess property or fortune,*



From the private collection of Berj Fenerci

A crowd of Armenians celebrating the Young Turk Revolution in 1908.

shall have the right to vote. Those who have lost their civil rights will naturally be deprived of this right.

It will be demanded that the right freely to constitute political groups be inserted in a precise fashion in the constitutional charter, in order that article 1 of the Constitution of 1293 A.H. (Anno Hegira, 1876 C.E.) be respected.

The Turkish tongue will remain the official state language. Official correspondence and discussion will take place in Turkish.

Every citizen will enjoy complete liberty and equality, regardless of nationality or religion, and be submitted to the same obligations. All Ottomans, being equal before the law as regards rights and duties relative to the State, are eligible for government posts, according to their individual capacity and their education. Non-Muslims will be equally liable to the military law.

The free exercise of the religious privileges which have been accorded to different nationalities will remain intact.

Provided that the property rights of landholders are not infringed upon (for such rights must be respected and must remain intact, according to law), it will be proposed that peasants be permitted to acquire land, and they will be accorded means to borrow money at a moderate rate.

Education will be free. Every Ottoman citizen, within the limits of the prescriptions of the Constitution, may operate a private school in accordance with the special laws.

All schools will operate under the surveillance of the state. In order to obtain for Ottoman citizens an education of a homogenous and uniform character, the official schools will be open, their instruction will be free, and all nationalities will be admitted. Instruction in Turkish will be obligatory in public schools. In official schools, public instruction will be free. Secondary and higher education will be given in the public and official schools indicated above; it will use the Turkish tongue. Schools of commerce, agriculture, and industry will be opened with the goal of developing the resources of the country.[41]

CONNECTIONS

- The Young Turk proclamation describes rights that were to be given to citizens of the Ottoman Empire. What is a citizen? What is the difference between being a citizen of a country and being a resident of a country? What responsibilities come with citizenship?

- After reading the Young Turk proclamation for the Ottoman Empire, which platforms stand out? Why? Compare your selections with those of your classmates.

- How do the Young Turks' proposals address the challenges facing the empire? Which platforms might have created discomfort with their partners from the Congress of Ottoman Liberals? How do you anticipate supporters of the sultan would perceive these changes?

- Research the constitutions of emerging democracies. How do they try to protect individual freedoms while creating or maintaining a national identity?

Facing History and Ourselves online module *The Weimar Republic: The Fragility of Democracy* and Chapter 3 of *Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior* explore the challenges Germany faced in building democracy after World War I.

NOTES

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"Religion has a place for a conscience, which racist ideologies do not."
—Christopher Walker

Chapter 3

THE YOUNG TURKS IN POWER

THIS CHAPTER LOOKS AT THE CHOICES MADE IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE BETWEEN 1908 AND 1914 THAT would eventually result in genocide. No historical event is inevitable. Individuals and groups operate within a particular historical moment, and the choices they make ultimately define the age.

In 1908, the Young Turk revolution brought great hope for many people living in the Ottoman Empire. The reintroduction of the constitution, with its promises of equal rights, seemed to offer opportunities to people who had been left behind in the old system. The Young Turk vision of a strong central government promised an alternative to the corruption and disorder of the sultan's regime. Many hoped the violence that had come to characterize the sultan's reign would now end.

For the Armenians, the constitution and its guaranteed equality seemed to offer many of the reforms they had long desired. But there were still unresolved tensions. What role would Muslims have in this new order? Were they going to quietly accept the loss of their special status in this new regime? What would happen to supporters of the sultan? What about the members of groups that suffered under the old regime? Could they trust the Young Turks? Who would enforce the changes they promised?

There were tensions within the Young Turk movement as well. Between 1908 and 1913, the diversity of opinion within the Young Turk movement became clear. Although one branch of the movement worked with Armenians and others, another branch of the party, favoring Turkish nationalism, began to gain influence. Others within the movement were less consumed by ideology than with the practical concerns of holding on to power. Internal unrest and further loss of territory aggravated the divide.

In 1913, Mehmed Talaat, Ahmed Djemal, and Ismail Enver organized a military coup and formed a coalition of ultranationalists who believed that the only way to hold on to the empire was embrace a radical ideology of ethnic resettlement and deportation. The Turkish nationalists gained strength when Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire agreed to a military alliance just before World War I. Old stereotypes about Armenian disloyalty were combined with religiously inspired ideas of the "other" and spread by the government to further a sense of "us" and "them."

Morgenthau

Young Turk leaders Talaat and Enver reviewing the troops.

Reading 1 — BLOODY NEWS FROM ADANA

For the Ottomans and their new leaders, 1908 brought disappointment. Austria-Hungary annexed the territories of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bulgaria declared independence from the empire, and the island of Crete broke away to become part of Greece. In the chaos, Turks loyal to the sultan attempted a counter-coup to restore him in April 1909. Although supporters of the sultan grew bitter as the empire lost land to former subjects, Armenians within the Ottoman Empire had rarely enjoyed so much freedom.

From the private collection of Berj Fenerci

A postcard of the Armenian Quarter in Adana after the 1909 massacre.

In the province of Adana, in the region of Cilicia near the Mediterranean Sea, tensions between Turks and Armenians exploded as Turks still loyal to the sultan watched Armenians celebrate their new opportunities. Historian Richard Hovannisian traces how those tensions expressed themselves in massacre.

> *After the Young Turk revolution, many Armenians were emboldened to believe that they could now enjoy freedom of speech and assembly. The audacious prelate [religious leader] of Adana, Bishop Mushegh, expounded in nationalistic rhetoric, proclaiming that the centuries of Armenian servitude had passed and that it was now the right and duty of his people to learn to defend themselves, their families, and their communities. For Muslims, however, the new era of constitutional government undermined their traditional relationship with Armenians and threatened their legal and customary superiority. At the same time that Abdul Hamid's partisans in Constantinople initiated a countercoup to restore the authority of the sultan, conservatives of similar sentiments lashed out at the Armenians of Adana. A skirmish between Armenians and Turks on April 13 set off a riot that resulted in the pillaging of the bazaars and attacks upon the Armenian quarters. The violence also spread to nearby villages. When the authorities finally intervened two days later, more than 2,000 Armenians lay dead. An uneasy ten-day lull was broken on April 25 with an inferno. Army regulars who had just arrived in the city now joined the mobs. Fires set in the Armenian quarters spread rapidly in all directions. Armenian Protestants and Catholics, who had generally remained aloof from nationalistic movements, were not spared as the massacre and plunder fanned out over the width and breadth of Cilicia. . . . Hakob Papikian, member of a parliamentary commission of investigation, reported that there had been 21,000 victims, of whom, 19,479 were Armenian, 850 Syrian, 422 Chaldean, and 250 Greek. Thousands of widows and orphans now stood as a grim reminder of the first massacre of the Young Turk era. Several Turks and Armenians were hanged in Adana for provoking the violence, but the most responsible persons, including the governor and commandant, got off with no real punishment.*[42]

Adom Yarjanian, an Armenian poet who went by the pen name Siamanto, wrote a series of poems known as *Bloody News from My Friend* about the massacres and their aftermath. Siamanto's poem "Grief" reflects the Armenian sense of isolation and despair in the wake of the massacres.

Grief

by Siamanto

You, stranger soul mate
Who leaves behind the road of joy,
listen to me.
I know your innocent feet are still wet with blood.
Foreign hands have come and yanked out
the sublime rose of freedom
which finally bloomed from the pains of your race.

Let its divine scent intoxicate everyone,
Let everyone—those far away, your neighbor, the ungrateful,
come and burn incense
before the goddess of Justice
that you carved from the stone with your hammer.
Proud sowers, let others reap with your scythes
the wheat that ripens in the gold earth you ploughed.
Because if you are chased down by raw Evil,
don't forget that you are
to bring forth the fruitful Good.

Walk down the avenues of merriment
and don't let the happy ones see in your eyes
that image of corpse and ash.
Spare the passerby, whether a good man or a criminal,
because Armenian pain
rises up in the eye's visage.
As you walk through the crossroad of merriment
don't let a speck of gladness or a tear
stain grief's majesty.
Because for the vanquished, tears are cowardly
and for the victors, the smile is frivolous, a wrinkle.

Armenian woman, with veils darkening you like death.

You, young man with native anguish
running down your face,
walk down roads without rage of hate
and exclaim: what a bright day,
what a sarcastic grave digger...
What a mob, what dances, what joy
and what feasts everywhere...
our red shrouds are victory flags.
the bones of your pure brothers are flutes...
with them others are making strange music.
But don't shudder, unknown sister
or brother of fate.
As you study the stars,
take heart, go on.
The law of life stays the same
human beings can't understand each other.

And this evening before the sunset
all of you will go back to your houses,
whether they are mud or marble,
and calmly close the treacherous
Shutters of your windows.
shut them from the wicked Capital,
shut them to the face of humanity,
and to the face of your God...,
Even the lamp on your table
will be extinguished
by your soul's one clear whispers.[43]

In the aftermath of the massacre, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation and the Young Turk Committee of Union and Progress released a joint statement promising to continue to work together to guarantee the full realization of the Ottoman constitution, suppress reactionary movements, and work to counter the myth that Armenians desired independence from the Ottoman Empire.

CONNECTIONS

- The Armenians in Adana and other places in Cilicia fell victim to the rage of those who were angered

by the changes taking place in the Ottoman Empire. What changes do you think they found so threatening? Why did that anger express itself in violence against the Armenians?

- Despite the revolution, some Young Turks joined the mob as they targeted Armenians and others. How do you interpret their participation in the violence?

- One strategy for analyzing poetry is to break the larger piece down into smaller sections and focus on those before moving on to try to understand the whole piece. Start with a close read of one stanza and then try to convey the mood and message in your own words.

- As you read "Grief," identify key words, images, or phrases. What do they mean? What does Siamanto hope to convey? What message does he have for the reader?

- What does Siamanto mean when he says: "The law of life stays the same. Human beings can't understand each other." How does his message resonate with what you have studied in this unit? What role can education play in helping people bridge differences?

- A British warship was in the area of the massacres and aware of the conditions. The commander of the ship applied to the Turkish governor of the district for permission to land and offer relief, but his request was refused. After being refused, the ship left the area. Why do you think the governor refused the commander's request? Why do you think the commander complied? Consider the political, diplomatic, and military issues that would have influenced his decision.

Reading 2 — IDEOLOGY

After the massacres in Adana and other places in Cilicia the Young Turks government declared a state of siege and limited some of the rights that had been newly granted to citizens of the empire.

British historian Christopher Walker describes the search for an ideology that the Young Turks could use to unify the fraying empire.

The options had emerged as Ottomanism, Islam or Turkism. Ottomanism meant strengthening the institutions of the existing empire and making them available for all its citizens, irrespective of ethnic origin. It gained a brief vogue, but never had much of a chance when compared with the other more exciting ideologies. Islam meant deepening relations between all Muslim peoples and nations within the empire and throughout the world, and perhaps creating a political unit out of the faith. There was a problem here too. It raised the possibility of a confrontation with the Christian powers, unknown since the Crusades. Moreover, the empire to the east of the Ottoman Empire, that of Iran, although Muslim was shi'i, would never accept the authority of the Sunni Ottomans. And anyway many of the Young Turks, and certainly those who organized the revolution of 1908, were atheists and positivists. Islam to them was little more than a vehicle through which they might mobilize the masses.

There remained Turkism: Turkish nationalism based on the Turkish race. This was an idea that developed and gained popularity among Turkish thinkers from the 1890s. It grew from ideas expounded by Europeans who were friendly to the Turks and who perhaps also sought to weaken imperial Russia. The idea that the Turks were not just the ruling elite in a declining empire, but had a vast kinship, based on race and the Turkic languages, stretching from the Balkans to Siberia, was attractive, something to revive them after the hangover of democracy. Turkism soon became the central ideology of the Young Turks. It gave them a clear new vision of their position, following the ending of the old hierarchies that had occurred with the 1908 revolution. Within a few years it had been accepted by most leaders of the Committee of Union and Progress as a central ideology.

The Armenians failed to grasp the nature of Turkism. They continued to see themselves primarily as Christians. If the Young Turks had adopted Islam as the guiding ideology, they would have understood the nature of the situation. Religion was an integral part to being an Ottoman Armenian, so a nonreligious ideology was hard to comprehend. They found it almost impossible to see what it meant to be up against a nonreligious, race-based ideology.

The chief Turkist ideologist was Ziya Gokalp, who was born in Diarbekir, a Kurdish city, in 1875; the Kurdish locality may have encouraged him to stress his Turkishness more forcefully as an identity. The subtext to his ideas makes it clear just what a threat Turkism was to Armenians....He held that the country of the Turks was not Turkey, or even Turkestan; it was a broad and everlasting coun-

Courtesy of Martin Gilbert, from *The First World War: A Complete History*, revised edition (Henry Holt: New York, 2003)

THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE BEFORE WORLD WAR I

Before World War I, the Ottoman Empire was a vast territory, including the countries we now call Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Kuwait, and parts of Saudi Arabia and Iraq.

try, Turan. One of his slogans was. . . . "All of the Turks are one army." This was a fearful threat to any nation in the way of such a grand union of Turkic peoples, but it was a threat that found little resonance with the Armenians, even though their homeland was most at risk from the "one army." They continued to believe that their woes came from Islam, from the Muslim nature of the Ottoman Empire, and from local tyrannical Muslims.

It should be pointed out that Islam has in fact a definite . . . place for Christian peoples ("people of the book") which race based Turkism does not. . . . Religion has a place for a conscience, which racist ideologies do not.[44]

CONNECTIONS

- What is the purpose of an ideology? How does ideology influence action? What transforms something from an idea into an action?

- Christopher Walker describes three potential ideologies for the Young Turk leaders: Ottomanism, Islam, or Turkism. How would you describe the differences in the ideologies? Why did the differences matter?

- How does Walker describe the appeal of Turkism to the Young Turks?

- Why do some people find racist ideas attractive? When are people most vulnerable to believing racist ideologies? In hard economic times? After negative experiences with differences? When fear of the "other" is especially strong? How was racism manifest in other parts of the world at the turn of the twentieth century?

- Why do you think the ideas of Turkism had such resonance among the Young Turk leaders?

- Walker writes: "The Armenians failed to grasp the nature of Turkism. They continued to see themselves primarily as Christians. If the Young Turks had adopted Islam as the guiding ideology, they would have understood the nature of the situation. Religion was an integral part to being an Ottoman Armenian, so a nonreligious ideology was hard to comprehend. They found it almost impossible to see what it meant to be up against a nonreligious, race based ideology." Under religious law, Armenians, as Christians, were not afforded the same opportunities and protections as Muslims. The spread of Turkism brought new challenges for the Armenians. What differences do you notice between the two visions?

- Racism and pseudo-scientific racist thinking known as eugenics were becoming increasingly influen-

tial among educated American and Europeans throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Eugenic ideals exerted a powerful influence over individuals as well as public policy in the United States and Europe and in the ways leaders in those countries related to people from across the world. Some Ottoman and Armenian scholars suggest that the ideology of Turkism was another expression of that pernicious form of racist thinking. To learn more about the influence of scientific racism in the American and European context, refer to *Facing History and Ourselves: Race and Membership in American History.*

Reading 3 — IDEOLOGY IN ACTION

French scholars Gerard Chaliand and Yves Ternon write that in the Ottoman Empire, at the beginning of the twentieth century, "there was a latent feeling of humiliation born of the weakening of the empire that had once been feared."[45] The problem was exacerbated in the spring of 1912 when the Balkan League was formed with Russian help. Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Montenegro, all former subjects of the Ottoman Empire, united with the goal of taking the Ottoman territory of Macedonia. At the same time, Ottoman forces were already fighting a war with Italy over Tripoli [Libya], a Muslim territory in North Africa. On October 8, Montenegro declared war on the Ottoman Empire. It was joined by the rest of its allies from the Balkan League ten days later. During the war, Armenian Christian soldiers fought alongside Muslims in defense of the Ottoman Empire for the first time. Their cooperation wasn't enough; the forces of its former subjects routed the Ottoman army. An armistice was signed on December 3, 1912, but before the peace agreements were completed a coup toppled the Ottoman government. Minister of War Enver, Minister of the Interior Talaat, and Military Governor of Constantinople Djemal created a new government of extreme Turkish nationalists.

Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, Inc., Courtesy of Anahid Nakashian Tashjian

An Armenian, name not known, serving in the Turkish Army, c. 1912.

Even before the coup Turkish nationalists were gaining power. During the war nationalists organized a boycott of Greek Ottoman shops. Before long targets of the boycott included Armenians and other non-Muslim businesses. Tekinalp, an architect of Pan-Turkist ideology, boasted that the boycotts "caused the ruin of hundreds of small Greek and Armenian tradesman." Furthermore, he argued:

> *The systematic and rigorous boycott is now at an end, but the spirit it created in the people still persists. There are Turks who will not set foot in foreign shops unless they are certain that the same articles cannot be purchased under the same conditions in the shops of men of their own race, or at least of their own religion. The feeling of brotherhood has taken firm root in the hearts of the people all over the empire.*[46]

Following the coup, the U.S. Ambassador to Turkey, Henry Morgenthau, chronicled Talaat, Enver, and Djemal's implementation of Pan-Turkish policy in the remaining territories of the empire.

> *In place of a democratic constitutional state they resurrected the idea of Pan-Turkism; in place of*

equal treatment of all Ottomans, they decided to establish a country exclusively for Turks. . . . Their determination to uproot [Christian schools], or at least to transform them into Turkish institutions, was merely another detail in the same racial progress. Similarly they attempted to make all foreign business houses employ only Turkish labor, insisting that they should discharge their Greek, Armenian, and Jewish clerks, stenographers, workmen, and other employees. They ordered all foreign houses to keep their books in Turkish; they wanted to furnish employment for Turks, and enable them to acquire modern business methods. The Ottoman government even refused to have dealings with the representative of the largest Austrian munition maker unless he admitted a Turk as a partner. They developed a mania for suppressing all languages except Turkish. For decades French had been the accepted language of foreigners in Constantinople; most street signs were printed in both French and Turkish. One morning the astonished foreign residents discovered that all the French signs had been removed and that the names of streets, the directions on street cars, and other public notices, appeared only in . . . Turkish characters, which very few of them understood. Great confusion resulted from this change, but the ruling powers refused to restore the detested foreign language.[47]

CONNECTIONS

- In their book on the Armenian Genocide, Gerard Chaliand and Yves Ternon write that at the beginning of the twentieth century in the Ottoman Empire, "there was a latent feeling of humiliation born of the weakening of the empire that had once been feared." Imagine the impact that the loss of a war to former subjects would have on the empire. Why do you think Turkish nationalist ideas found support in this environment?

Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, Inc., Courtesy Hagop Atamian.

Teacher, priest (bearded), and students of the National Apostolic Church School. Tulgadin village, Kharpert, Historic Armenia, Ottoman Empire, c. 1902.

- Psychologist James Gilligan, author of *Violence: Reflections on a National Epidemic* states: "I have yet to see a serious act of violence that was not provoked by the experience of feeling shamed and humiliated, disrespected and ridiculed, and that did not represent the attempt to prevent or undo this 'loss of face'—no matter how severe the punishment, even if it includes death." What do his

comments suggest about the relationship between self-esteem and violence? How do Gilligan's comments relate to the observation made by Chaliand and Ternon?

- How did the boycott of Greek and Armenian businesses bring Turks together? In what ways did it divide the nation? How did it prepare the country for dehumanizing a group of people? What lasting effects from the boycott does Tekinalp describe? Create a list of possible reasons why an ordinary Turk might have participated in the boycott?

- Morgenthau writes that the Young Turks' determination to "uproot" Christian schools "was merely another detail" of their desire for "racial progress." Why have some Turks viewed the elimination of Christian schools as a sign of "racial progress"? What was meant by "racial progress" at the turn of the twentieth century?

To learn more about the history of the idea of race and its impact on public policy see Facing History and Ourselves' resource book *Facing History and Ourselves: Race and Membership in American History*.

An editorial in the Turkish journal Hilal in 1916 reflects the psychological effects of Turkism on a people that previously felt shamed and humiliated.

> *The Turkish People, while it saw its own individuality develop, became conscious of its rights. It suddenly became evident to it that it was the only master in its own house and that nobody should exploit it or displace it in any field. The foreigners were in its eyes nothing but guests, who were entitled to its respect, but whose duty it was to become worthy of the hospitality they were enjoying. . . .*
>
> *Thanks to their schools foreigners were able to exercise great moral influence over the young men of the country and they were virtually in charge of the spiritual and intellectual guidance of our country. By closing them the Government has put an end to a situation as humiliating as it was dangerous, a situation which, unfortunately, had already lasted too long. Other measures of a political and economic nature were taken to complete a work which might be called the taking possession of the country by its own sons, who had too long been deprived of their rights.*
>
> *Thanks to this awakening, a little late but still in time, and thanks especially to this activity, Turkey has today become a "Fatherland," like Sweden, Spain, or Switzerland. Our country is no longer an estate or fief for anybody; it is the country of a people which has just been recalled to life, and which aspires, in its independence and liberty, to happiness and glory.*[48]

- How do the editors suggest Pan-Turkish ideology changed the ways in which the Turkish people thought about their place in the world?

Reading 4 — NEIGHBOR TURNS AGAINST NEIGHBOR

Relationships between Turks and non-Muslim minorities deteriorated as Pan-Turkish ideas became law. Armenians, who had always held an inferior position in the Ottoman Empire, were increasingly labeled gavours or "infidels." Veron Dumehjian, an Armenian girl who grew up at the turn of the twentieth century in the Ottoman Empire, remembers how she disgraced her family when she cut her hair in bangs to look like the Turkish mayor's daughter, Lehman.

> *"You should be ashamed of yourself," Auntie said. "Only Turkish girls wear their hair in bangs. You have brought disgrace upon your family."*

As Veron grew older she recognized that the differences between being Turkish and Armenian had taken on a new meaning.

> *I had never thought about time or change. But slowly changes began to occur. Our lives went on as before, but now our days, which had always seemed to be lit by the sun, were being shadowed by a dark cloud.*
>
> *For the first time I began to sense the seriousness of our problems with the Turks. I had always known that they were not our friends, even though there were some with whom we were friendly, but now it seemed, in truth, that they were our enemies. We were Christians, and they were [Muslims], but it was not this alone that separated us: we were also different in language, race and custom. We did live on the same soil, but I was told that soil could be owned and that the present owner of this soil, which we had always called home, was Turkey.*
>
> *Grandma had hinted in the past that there might be trouble between the Armenians and the Turks, but now it was being talked about more openly—not only by her, but by everyone in our quarter. I was told that the Turks had massacred several hundred thousand Armenians a few years before, in 1895, and then again in Adana, in 1909, when I was two years old. And now there were rumors that there would be more massacres. I wasn't sure what all this meant, but I could see that the elders were worried. This made me worried, too, and I began to talk about my fears with the older children. No one could understand what was happening, but I could see that they were uneasy, too. This made me aware for the first time that our fears were not imagined, not childish, but real and deep rooted.*

Veron Dumehjian

I began to hear whisperings—at home and at Grandma's, especially at night, when my parents thought we were asleep. But more than their whisperings, it was the way they looked, the way they talked and moved about, that made me know something was wrong. I began to hear words like "deportations," "massacres," "annihilation." I didn't like the sounds of the words, but mostly I didn't like the looks on their faces when they said these words.

It was around this time that the Turkish army drafted my uncles Apraham and Hagop. When I asked Grandma about this, she said something about the World War.[49]

In August 1914, the inner circle of the Young Turk leaders signed a secret alliance with Germany. Even before the war, those leaders had already put forth proposals to the German ambassador outlining their war aims. Historian Christopher Walker notes that the Ottoman dictators hoped the war would give them an opportunity to "establish a link with the Muslim peoples of Russia." Creation of the link would require finding a solution to the "Armenian Question," because Armenians were concentrated on both sides of the Russian border. When the Ottoman Empire entered the war at the end of October 1914, the government issued a proclamation declaring intent to extend its borders and unite "all branches of our race."[50] Quickly rumors began to spread about the safety of Christians within the Ottoman Empire.

An article in the January 11, 1915, *New York Times* brought the con-

The New York Times

January 11, 1915

SAYS TURKS ADVISE CHRISTIANS TO FLEE

Fear of General Massacre in Constantinople if Allied Fleet Passes Dardanelles.

Special Cable to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

ATHENS, Jan. 9. (Dispatch to The London Daily Telegraph.)—A man arriving from Constantinople who is in a position to know the facts has given me a mass of information concerning the present condition of affairs in the Turkish capital. He says the Turkish Government has no fear of an international revolution, and that the measures taken against the enemies of the Young Turk Committee are so drastic that no concerted movement on their part is possible.

The whole attention and anxiety of the Government is concentrated on the possible forcing of the Dardanelles by the allied fleet. It seems also that this fear is shared by their German mentors, for Baron von Wangenheim, the German Ambassador, has warned the Minister of a Balkan State in Constantinople that in the event of the allied fleet's forcing the straits, the Turks will vent their wrath by a massacre of the Christian population. In Constantinople no endeavor is any longer made by the Ministers to hide their feelings toward their Christian subjects.

To the Greek Patriarch

January

CHRISTIANS I

Talaat Bey Decla Room Only for

Special Cable to THE ATHENS, Jan. 1 London Morning P in well-informed cir for the present ha advance against Egy

In Constantinople the possible forcing continues.

It is evident that Christians is extreme in the large cities, a Minister of the Inter the Councillor of the G that in Turkey hencef room only for Turks profuse in assurances t ister regarding the c Greek persecutions. n tion of the situation is The Turks are agai Tchataldja lines.

From Kloian, Armenian Genocide: News Accounts

Articles from the* New York Times *reporting on the vulnerability of the Christian population in the Ottoman Empire from January, 1915.

cerns of the empire's Christians to the world's attention. Titled "Turks Advise Christians to Flee," the article reported that Mehmet Talaat, now the Minister of the Interior, had told the Greek Patriarch that there was no room for Christians living in Turkey. The story read:

> *A man arriving from Constantinople who is in a position to know the facts has given me a mass of information concerning the present condition of affairs in the Turkish capital. He says the Turkish government has no fear of an international revolution, and that the measures taken against the enemies of the Young Turk Committee are so drastic that no concerted movement on their part is possible.*
>
> *The whole attention and anxiety of the Government is concentrated on the possible forcing of the Dardanelles [the straits connecting the Aegean and Black Seas] by the allied fleet. It seems also that this fear is shared by their German mentors, for Baron von Wangenheim, the German ambassador, has warned the Minister of a Balkan State in Constantinople that in the event of the allied fleet's forcing the straits, the Turks will vent their wrath by a massacre of the Christian population. In Constantinople no endeavor is any longer made by the Ministers to hide their feelings toward their Christian subjects.*
>
> *To the Greek Patriarchate [Patriarch], who was sent to Talaat Pasha to remonstrate against the excesses committed by the organs of his Ministry, he unequivocally replied that there was no room for Christians in Turkey and that the best the Patriarchate could do for his flock would be to advise them to clear out of the country and make room for the [Muslim] refugees.*[51]

CONNECTIONS

- Veron came to understand that, "we" were the Armenians, and the "they" were the Turks. How did she learn those differences? How did you learn about which differences mattered? The lyrics to one of the songs from the musical *South Pacific* suggests: "You've got to be taught to hate and fear. You've got to be taught from year to year. It's got to be drummed into your sweet little ear. You've got to be carefully taught, you've got to be carefully taught." Where does hatred come from? Is it true that you have to be taught to hate?

- Under what conditions do differences between people and groups become obstacles to empathy? Under what conditions do those differences lead to violence?

- How did the Ottoman leaders view their "universe of obligation" in October of 1914? How had it changed since the Young Turk revolution in 1908?

- What did the *New York Times* article suggest was going to happen? What choices were available to

people who read the article in January 1915? What choices were available to world leaders? What options were available to Christians living in the Ottoman Empire? Which options seem most likely to have made a difference?

- Armenian survivor Abraham Hartunian tells a story to illustrate the increasing fear and mistrust between Turkish officials and ordinary Armenians:

> *[O]ne day, as I was conversing with a Turkish official, he said to me, "My friend, there is no hope. No longer can the Turk and the Armenian live together. Whenever you find the opportunity, you will annihilate us; and whenever we find the opportunity, we will annihilate you. Now the opportunity is ours and we will do everything to harm you. The wise course for you will be, when the time comes, to leave this country and never to return."*[52]

- Even though the Armenians had no army of their own, the Turkish official expressed fear that the Armenians would try to annihilate the Turks at any opportunity. How does prejudice distort the way people see the world? What is the danger when people no longer believe that a conflict can be resolved peacefully?

Reading 5 — PLANNING MASS MURDER

As the situation for Armenians in the Ottoman Empire deteriorated, Talaat and other Turkish leaders warned the Armenians not to turn to the European powers for help. In February 1914, however, after intense negotiation European leaders and the Young Turk government agreed that two foreign inspector generals would be allowed to monitor the treatment of Armenians in the empire.

Despite the Armenians' growing frustration with the Young Turk government, thousands of Armenian soldiers entered the armed forces to fight to defend their country after the outbreak of World War I. Russian efforts to expand into Ottoman Armenian provinces had little success. Ottoman Armenians pledged loyalty to the empire.

In December 1914 or January 1915, a small group of Young Turk leaders met secretly to discuss the fate of the Armenians and other minorities living within their dwindling empire. Their attitudes have been recorded in several documents that now reside in national archives and research libraries around the world. Plans were circulated to very few people to prevent leaks. Most of those documents were immediately destroyed. With the documents that remain, the information on one document often has to be understood in relation to another and then a case has to be pieced together in relationship with the physical evidence and the stories of survivors, perpetrators, and bystanders.

Many historians of the Armenian Genocide have been struck by a document that appears to outline the original plans for the mass murder of the Armenians. The document was acquired early in 1919 with several other incriminating documents by British officials. A cover note from one of the officials explains the context in which the document was found:

> *Just before Christmas, I was approached confidentially by someone who stated that there was still in the Direction of Public Security, Constantinople, an official who has been in the Minister of the Interior's Department during the whole of the war, and who had charge of the archives relating to the secret measures and orders issued by the Minister of the Interior as a result of the decisions taken by the Committee of Union and Progress. He said that just before the Armistice, officials had been going to the archives department at night and making a clean sweep of most of the documents, but that the original draft of the orders relating to the Armenian massacres had been saved and could probably be procured by us through him on payment of Ltq. £10,000 paper money. He pledged me to secrecy if I went any further in the matter.*
>
> *In the course of the next few weeks, I followed the matter up. The man who stole or rescued this draft copy is today an official in the Direction of Public Security. I persuaded him without any great difficulty that it would be in his own interests to let us have the documents without payment, and that if in the future he gets into trouble, we would protect him.*

There are four documents in this dossier. The first is what is called the "Ten Commandments" and is by far the most interesting. It is unsigned and is the rough draft, but the handwriting is said to be that of Essad Bey, who was at the time one of the confidential secretaries keeping secret archives in the Ministry of the Interior. . . . My informant states that at the meeting when this draft was drawn up, there were present Talaat Pasha, Dr. Beheddin, Shakir, Dr. Nazim, Ismail Jambolet (the Young Turk central committee) and Colonel Sefi, sub-Director of the Political Section at the Ministry of War; its date is given as December or January 1914 or 1915.

My informant declares that messengers were sent to the different [governors] in the provinces with instructions to read these orders to them and then return the originals which were to be destroyed. Analysis of the documents the "Ten Commandments" numbers 3 and 4 shows that in order to economize their forces, the Turks distinguished between places where they could rely on the population to go ahead with the massacres almost unaided, and other localities where they felt it required the presence of the military in case the population did not show sufficient zeal.

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS OF THE COMITÉ UNION AND PROGRES.

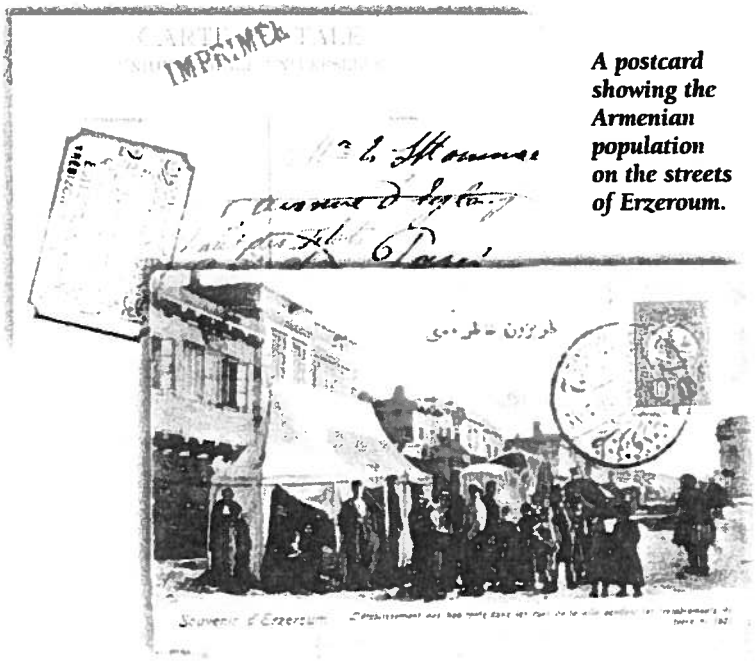
(1). Profiting by Arts: 3 and 4 of [the Committee of Union and Progress], close all Armenian Societies, and arrest all who worked against Government at any time among them and send them into the provinces such as Baghdad or Mosul, and wipe them out either on the road or there.

(2). Collect arms.

(3). Excite [Muslim] opinion by suitable and special means...

(4). Leave all executive to the people in the provinces such as Erzeroum, Van, Mumuret ul Aziz, and Bitlis, and use Military disciplinary forces (i.e. Gendarmerie) ostensibly to stop massacres, while on the contrary in places as Adana, Sivas, Broussa, Ismidt and Smyrna actively help the [Muslims] with military force.

(5). Apply measures to exterminate all males under 50, priests



A postcard showing the Armenian population on the streets of Erzeroum.

From the private collection of Berj Fenerci

and teachers, leave girls and children to be Islamized.

(6). Carry away the families of all who succeed in escaping and apply measures to cut them off from all connection with their native place.

(7). On the ground that Armenian officials may be spies, expel and drive them out absolutely from every Government department or post.

(8). Kill off in an appropriate manner all Armenians in the Army—this to be left to the military to do.

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

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

N.b. Above is verbatim translation—date December 1914 or January 1915.[53]

CONNECTIONS

- Historian Helen Fein describes four "preconditions, intervening factors, and causes that lead toward genocide." She suggests that these follow one another in order.

  1. The victims have previously been defined outside the universe of obligation of the dominant group.

  2. The rank of the state has been reduced by defeat in war or internal strife. (This is a predisposing condition toward a political or cultural crisis of national identity in which the third step becomes more likely to occur.)

  3. An elite that adopts a new political formula to justify the nation's position and idealizes the rights of the dominant group.

  4. The calculus of exterminating the victim group—a group excluded from the moral universe of obligation—changes as the perpetrators become part of a coalition at war against antagonists who have previously protested the persecution of the victim. Under these conditions the crime planned becomes less visible, and they no longer fear pressure from the antagonists.[54]

- How many of these conditions were met by the winter of 1914–1915? Like Helen Fein, Israel Charny, editor of the *Encyclopedia of Genocide*, has worked to understand conditions that increase the likeli-

hood of genocide. Among them, he notes that perpetrators often feel that "retaliation for genocidal acts" by neutral nations is unlikely. What actions can be taken by neutral nations to prevent genocide before it actually begins? How would you respond to the concern of critics of international intervention who argue that proof of the perpetrators' intent is needed before any preemptive measures are taken? How does the work of Fein and Charny attempt to answer those critics?

- Point 3 of the "10 Commandments" document describes the need to "excite" public opinion against the Armenians. How can leaders "excite" opinion and turn one group of people against another?

- Point 5 of the document describes the goals to "exterminate all males under 50, priests and teachers, leave girls and children to be Islamized." Why would they treat men and women differently? What would be the fate of those who were "Islamized" or converted?

- It is likely that the meeting described by the British official took place secretly during one of the meetings of the inner circle of the Committee of Union and Progress's party meetings. Scholar Vahakn Dadrian describes these meetings:

> *The picture that emerges from these party congresses is the dual track performance of Ittihad [Committee of Union and Progress]. On one hand there is the formulation of a platform outlining a party program that is intended strictly for public consumption. On the other hand, there is the clandestine mapping of a sketchy plan that is ominous and undoubtedly sinister in nature, and is, therefore kept secret from the public, even from the regular organs of the party leadership and naturally from rank and file.*

  Why would the leaders require such secrecy? What do you think they feared if their plans were made public?

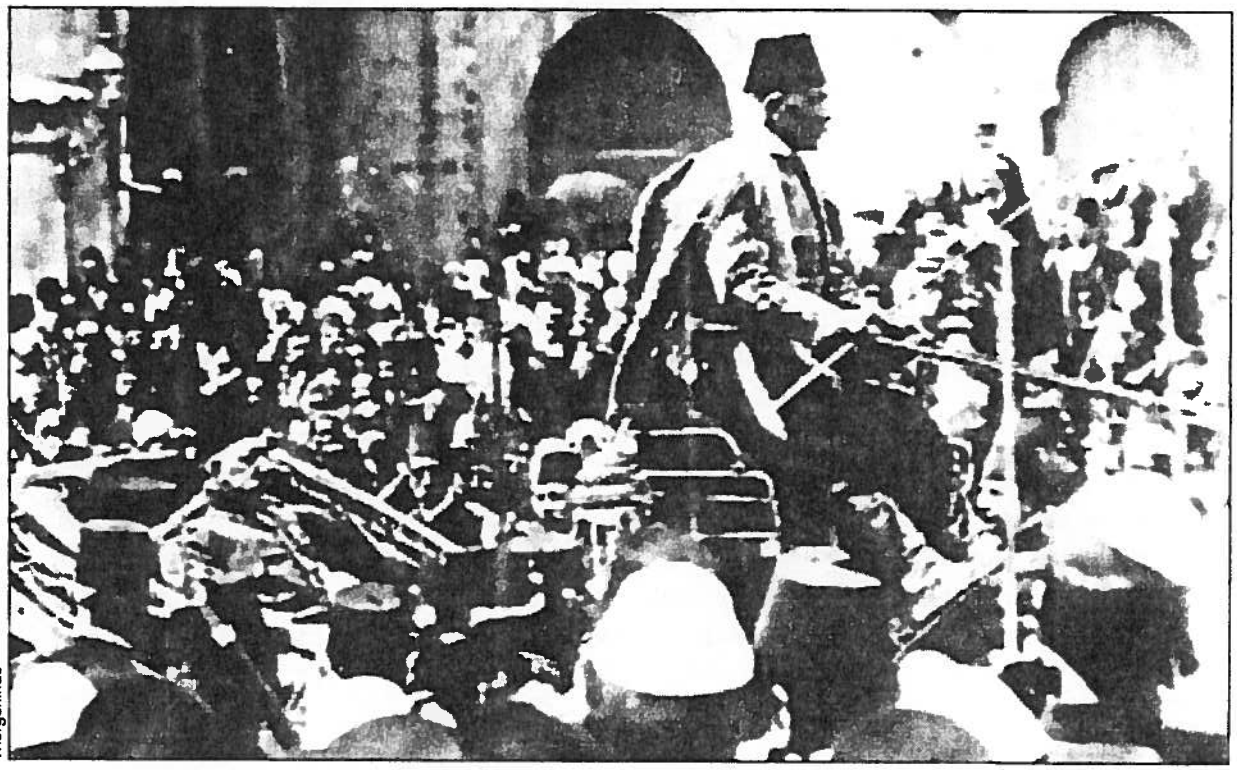
- This document included in translation in this reading is a primary source. What techniques have you used for analyzing primary sources? What do you learn by analyzing this document? What questions does it raise?

- Deniers of the Armenian Genocide have often worked to discredit much of the primary source evidence of the genocide—telegrams sent by the perpetrators, copies of orders, as well as this document—by claiming they are forged or mistranslated or incomplete. Although the veracity of the documents have been authenticated by countless historians, deniers continue their efforts. Why would deniers focus on documents such as this one? What does the document tell us about the genocide?

Reading 6 — DICTATING RELIGION

In the early days of World War I, the Young Turk leaders stepped up efforts to define the enemy. Recognizing the power of religious authority, Enver Pasha, the minister of war, declared that the Young Turks hoped to "make [Qur'an] serve Turan [the name for the mythical pan-Turkish homeland]."[55] In *The Armenian Genocide: News Accounts from the American Press: 1915-1922*, Jack Zakarian explains how the Young Turk leaders manipulated religious authority to suit their needs.

> *The Ottoman Empire was the center of the Islamic world, and the Sheikh-ul-Islam was the chief religious authority for all Muslims. The Sheikh was usually appointed by the Sultan, but the CUP [the Committee of Union and Progress] chose their own candidate, Mustafa Hayri Bey, who was not from the religious elite and who had served in other political offices, unlike previous Sheikhs. The Sheikh was compelled by the CUP dictators and the German government to issue a "Jihad", or a declaration of Holy War, on November 23, 1914. Ignoring the fact that Germany and Austria were Christian allies of Turkey, the Jihad appealed to all Muslims to fight a holy war against "the unbelievers". . . . The Jihad never had the influence over the masses that the CUP dictators hoped for; nonetheless, the Jihad created an atmosphere of distrust and incited wrath toward Christian minorities in the Ottoman lands, and it later facilitated the government's program of Genocide against the Armenians.*[56]



Morgenthau

The Sultan Mohammed V going to Friday prayers.

Vahakn Dadrian studies the role of religion in the treatment of Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire. After reviewing documents and testimony, Dadrian concludes, "organizing agitation against the Armenians in wartime Turkey, especially in the mosques during Friday prayers, was an integral part of the scheme of genocide." He explains:

> *This was a continuation of the legacy of massacres which were perpetrated during the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid. Nearly every episode of massacre in the provinces then was launched from mosques on Fridays, following inflammatory harangues by appointed agitators inciting the faithful. Such agitation gained a powerful impetus with the declaration of holy war in 1914. Non-Muslim subjects of the empire, especially Christians, were utterly vulnerable. In the case of the Armenians, this vulnerability was carefully exploited by the Ittihadist leaders who proceeded to cultivate and disseminate rumors about Armenian sedition, acts of sabotage, espionage, and rebelliousness.*[57]

Fa'iz El-Ghusein, a Muslim Bedouin from Damascus who witnessed the mistreatment of the Armenians in the name of Islam, expressed horror about how his faith was being used to justify the brutality:

> *Is it right that these imposters, who pretend to be the supports of Islam and the Khilafat [community of the Muslim faithful], the protectors of the [Muslims], should transgress the command of God, transgress the [Qur'an], the Traditions of the Prophet, and humanity! Truly, they have committed an act at which Islam is revolted, as well as all [Muslims] and all the peoples of the earth, be they [Muslims], Christians, Jews, or idolaters.*[58]

In September 1915, after a summer of systematic deportation and mass murder, the Sheikh-ul-Islam, resigned his position in the cabinet in protest of the "extermination of the Christian element."[59]

CONNECTIONS

- What are the dangers when religion becomes an instrument of the state?
- What authority is given to a cause when it is given religious blessing?
- Under what conditions does hateful language lead to mass violence? How does the fear and uncertainty of wartime influence the way people think about the "other"?
- In the United States there is a constitutional separation of religion and state. Why do you think the framers of the U.S. Constitution found that separation important for the strength of democracy? Are there ways that religion can strengthen democracy while still respecting pluralism and religious differences?

- Many people are confused by the word jihad. Although the term has been used to describe holy war, the Arabic word jihad translates into English as "struggle." Most Islamic religious scholarship suggests that only under certain circumstances can the term be applied to military conflicts, similar to the idea of "just war," which is shared by many religious traditions.[60] Why does the difference matter?

NOTES

42. Richard Hovannisian, "The Armenian Question in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1914," in Richard G. Hovannisian ed. *The Armenian People: From Ancient to Modern Times*, Vol. 2 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), pp. 230–231.
43. Siamanto, *Bloody News from My Friend: Poems by Siamanto*. trans. Peter Balakian and Nevart Yaghlian (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), pp. 37–39.
44. Christopher J. Walker, "World War I and the Armenian Genocide," in Richard G.Hovannisian ed. *The Armenian People: From Ancient to Modern Times*, vol. 2 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), pp. 241–243.
45. Gerard Chaliand and Yves Ternon, *The Armenians: From Genocide to Resistance* (London and Totowa, NJ: Zed Books, 1984).
46. Stephan H. Astourian, "Modern Turkish Identity and the Armenian Genocide," in Richard Hovannisian ed. *Remembrance and Denial: The Case of the Armenian Genocide* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999), p. 37.
47. Henry Morgenthau, Sr., *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* (Plandome, NY: New Age Publishers, 1975), pp. 283–285.
48. Viscount Bryce, *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire 1915–1916* (London: H. M. S.O., 1916), Annex A.
49. David Kherdian, *The Road from Home* (New York: Greenwillow Books, 1979), pp. 29–30.
50. Christopher J. Walker, "World War I and the Armenian Genocide," in Richard G. Hovannisian ed. *The Armenian People: From Ancient to Modern Times*. vol. 2, (New York: St. Martin's Press: 1997), p. 244.
51. Richard Kloian, ed., *The Armenian Genocide: News Accounts from the American Press: 1915–1922* (Richmond, CA: Anto Publishing, 1988), p. 3.
52. Abraham Hartunian, *Neither to Laugh Nor to Weep: A Memoir of the Armenian Genocide*, 2nd ed., trans. Vartan Hartunian (Cambridge, MA: American Heritage Press, 1986) p. xixi.
53. Great Britain, Pubic Record Office: FO 371/4172/1270/folios 385-386,#388.
54. Adapted from Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide: Victims—and Survivors—of the Holocaust* (New York: The Free Press, 1979), p. 9.
55. Quoted in Florence Mazian, *Why Genocide?: The Armenian and Jewish Experiences in Perspective* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990), p. 69.
56. Kloian, *Armenian Genocide: News Accounts*, p. [xiii.]
57. 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 (Fall 1993), pp. 186–187.
58. *Armenian Genocide: News Accounts*, p. 158.
59. *New York Times*. September 14, 1915, (reprinted in *Armenian Genocide: News Accounts*, p. 29).
60. Islamic Supreme Council, "What Jihad Is," available at *http://www.islamicsupremecouncil.org/bin/site/wrappers/default.asp?panc_2=content-legal-jihad_is_isnot*

"The Armenians, living in Turkey, will be destroyed to the last. The government has been given ample authority. As to the organization of the mass murder, the government will provide the necessary explanations."

—Behaeddin Shakir, a member of the Central Committee for the Committee of Union and Progress

Chapter 4

GENOCIDE

SCHOLAR ROBERT MELSON WRITES THAT ALTHOUGH THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE WAS CARRIED OUT DURING World War I, it was not an action of military necessity.

> *The genocide of the Armenians should be understood not as a response to "Armenian provocations" but as a stage in the Turks' revolution, which as a reaction to the continuing disintegration of the empire settled on a narrow nationalism and excluded Armenians from the moral universe of the state. Once the Ottoman Empire joined the Central Powers [Austria-Hungary and Germany] against Russia, the CUP could use the excuse of military necessity to destroy the Armenians. As many historians have noted, the Turkish revolution initiated by the CUP was successful in creating a new Turkey, but it also came close to destroying an ancient people in the process.*[61]

In 1915, there was no word to accurately describe what the Turks were doing to the Armenians. Raphael Lemkin did not coin the term "genocide" until Nazi brutality in Europe brought mass murder closer to the heart of the Western world. In the Ottoman Empire, journalists, diplomats, and other witnesses struggled to find language to convey the depth and the enormity of the anti-Armenian measures. Accounts refer to "horrors," "barbarity," "massacres," "murder," "deportations," or "ravages," but no

word captures the scale of the violence. American Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, after reading report after report from his consuls in the provinces, proclaimed that Turkish plans amounted to "race murder." On July 10, 1915, he cabled Washington:

> *Persecution of Armenians assuming unprecedented proportions. Reports from widely scattered districts indicate systematic attempt to uproot peaceful Armenian populations and through arbitrary arrests, terrible tortures, whole-sale expulsions and deportations from one end of the empire to the other accompanied by frequent instances of rape, pillage, and murder, turning into massacre, to bring destruction and destitution on them. These measures are not in response to popular or fanatical demand but are purely arbitrary and directed from Constantinople in the name of military necessity, often in districts where no military operations are likely to take place.*[62]

The perpetrators also looked for language. They looked for language to cover up the nature of the crime and for ways to distort language to blame the victims for their own misfortune. Armenian resistance to deportation and murder was called "revolt" or "rebellion." Armenians, once called "the loyal millet," were now accused of joining the enemy. The government claimed that Armenian deportations were necessary for the "security of our country" and the "welfare of the Armenians."

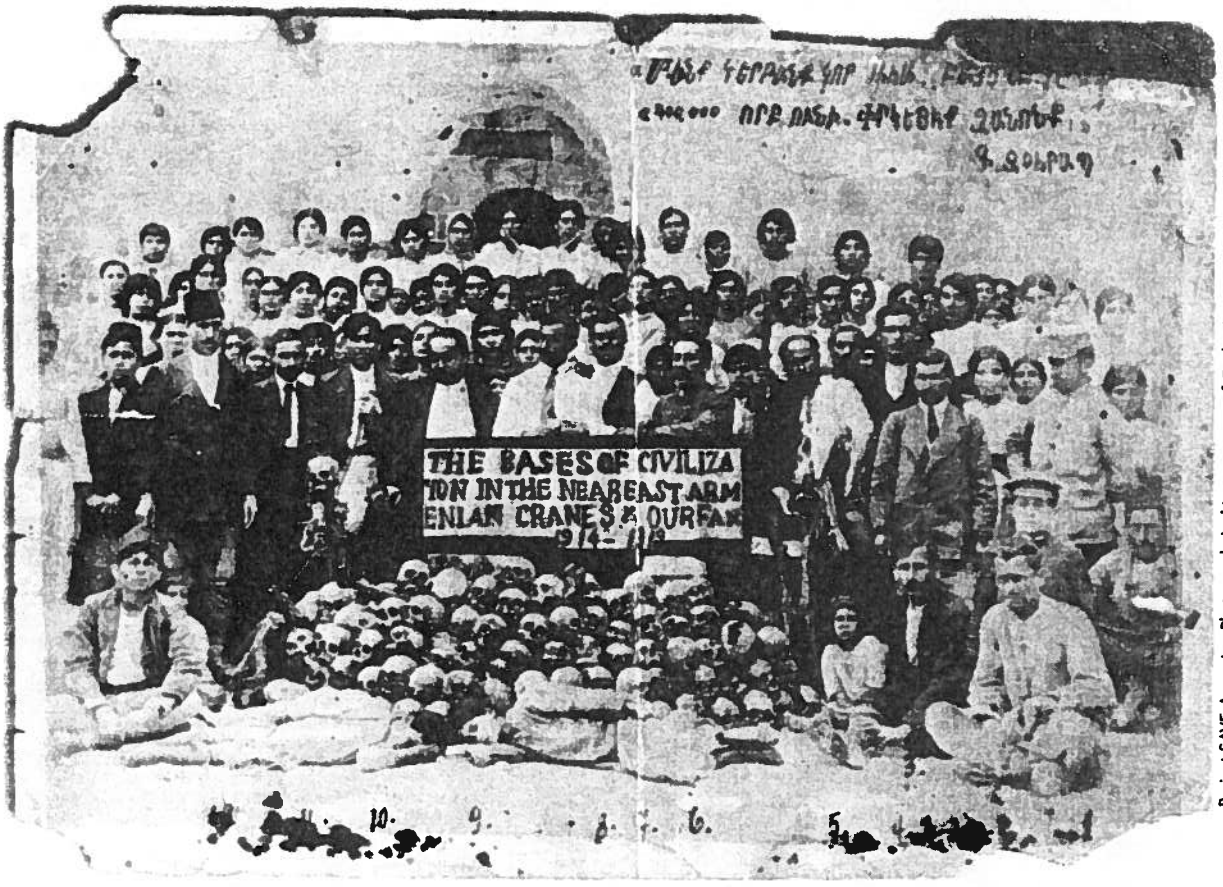
Even without contemporary language, people knew what they saw. On May 24, 1915, the Allied nations of Great Britain, France, and Russia warned the Young Turk leaders that their "crimes against humanity and civilization" would not go unpunished. Somebody had to be held accountable. The genocide was the result of choices made by individuals and groups acting in the name of the Ottoman government. The readings in this chapter focus on the results of those choices.

If reading this history makes you feel powerless, and without a sense that people could stop the horror, then consider the importance of recognizing when there were opportunities to alter the course of history.

Reading 1 — EVACUATION, DEPORTATION, AND DEATH

In April 1984, The Permanent People's Tribunal—a public tribunal that hears cases of human rights abuses and tries them according to international law—held a session considering the facts of the Armenian Genocide. After considering arguments, the international panel of jurors, which included three Nobel prize winners and other prominent figures from around the world, ruled that the Turkish government was responsible for the crime of genocide against the Armenians. A section of their report details the genocidal process.

Beginning in January 1915, Armenian soldiers [serving in the Ottoman army] and gendarmes were disarmed, regrouped in work brigades of 500 to 1,000 men, put to work on road maintenance or as porters, then taken by stages to remote areas and executed. It was not until April that the implementation of a plan began, with successive phases carried out in a disciplined sequence. The signal was first given for



Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, courtesy of Garbis Kazanjian, River Vale, New Jersey, and Alice Jernazian Haig, Dana Point, California, daughter of Rev. Ephraim R. Jernazian.

Survivors of the genocide hold a burial service for the Ourfa Armenian victims whose bones were found strewn around the monastery yard. At the top, the words of Armenian poet Krikor Zohrab in translation say, "We are gone now, but the nation has 400,000 orphans. Save them."

deportation to begin in Zeytun [Zeitun] in early April, in an area of no immediate strategic importance. It was not until later that deportation measures were extended to the border provinces.

The pretext used to make the deportation a general measure was supplied by the resistance of the Armenians of Van. The vali [governor] of Van, Jevdet, sacked outlying Armenian villages and the Van Armenians organized the self-defense of the city. They were saved by a Russian breakthrough spearheaded by the Armenian volunteers from the Caucasus. After taking Van on May 18th, the Russians continued to press forward but were halted in late June by a Turkish counter-offensive. The Armenians of the vilayet [region] of Van were thus able to retreat and escape extermination.

When the news of the Van revolt reached Constantinople, the Union and Progress (Ittihad) Committee seized the opportunity. Some 650 personalities, writers, poets, lawyers, doctors, priests and politicians were imprisoned on April 24th and 25th, 1915, then deported and murdered in the succeeding months. Thus was carried out what was practically the thorough and deliberate elimination of almost the entire Armenian intelligentsia of the time.

From April 24 onwards, and following a precise timetable, the government issued orders to deport the Armenians from the eastern vilayets. Since Van was occupied by the Russian army, the measures applied only to the six vilayets of Trebizond (Trabzon), Erzerum, Bitlis, Diarbekir, Kharput, and Sivas. The execution of the plan was entrusted to a "special organization" (SO), made up of common criminals and convicts trained and equipped by the Union and Progress Committee. This semi-official organization, led by Behaeddin Shakir, was under the sole authority of the Ittihad central committee. Constantinople issued directives to the valis, kaymakans [district governors], as well as local SO men, who had discretionary powers to have moved or dismissed any uncooperative gendarme or official. The methods used, the order in which towns were evacuated, and the routes chosen for the columns of deportees all confirm the existence of a centralized point of command controlling the unfolding of the program. Deportation orders were announced publicly or posted in each city and township. Families were allowed two days to collect a few personal belongings; their property was confiscated or quickly sold off. The first move was generally the arrest of notables, members of Armenian political parties, priests, and young men, who were forced to sign fabricated confessions then discreetly eliminated in small

From the private collection of Berj Fenerci

Special organization gangs known as "chetes" or "shotas."

groups. The convoys of deportees were made up of old people, women, and children. In the more remote villages, families were slaughtered and their homes burned or occupied. On the Black Sea coast and along the Tigris near Diarbekir boats were heaped with victims and sunk. From May to July 1915, the eastern provinces were sacked and looted by Turkish soldiers and gendarmes, SO gangs ("chetes"), etc. This robbery, looting, torture, and murder were tolerated or encouraged while any offer of protection to the Armenians was severely punished by the Turkish authorities.

It was not possible to keep the operation secret. Alerted by missionaries and consuls, the Entente Powers [Allied] enjoined the Turkish government, from May 24, to put an end to the massacres, for which they held members of the government personally responsible. Turkey made the deportation official by issuing a decree, claiming treason, sabotage, and terrorist acts on the part of the Armenians as a pretext.

Deportation was in fact only a disguised form of extermination. The strongest were eliminated before departure. Hunger, thirst, and slaughter decimated the convoys' numbers. Thousands of bodies piled up along the roads. Corpses hung from trees and telegraph poles; mutilated bodies floated down rivers or were washed up on the banks. Of the seven eastern vilayets' original population of 1,200,000 Armenians, approximately 300,000 were able to take advantage of the Russian occupation to reach the Caucasus; the remainder were murdered where they were or deported, the women and children (about 200,000 in number) kidnapped. Not more than 50,000 survivors reached the point of convergence of the convoys of deportees in Aleppo.

At the end of July 1915, the government began to deport the Armenians of Anatolia and Cilicia, transferring the population from regions which were far distant from the front and where the presence of Armenians could not be regarded as a threat to the Turkish army. The deportees were driven south in columns which were decimated en route. From Aleppo, survivors were sent on toward the deserts of Syria in the south and of Mesopotamia in the southeast. In Syria, reassembly camps were set up at Hama, Homs, and near Damascus. These camps accommodated about 120,000 refugees, the majority of whom survived the war and were repatriated to Cilicia in 1919. Along the Euphrates, on the other hand, the Armenians were driven ever onward toward Deir-el-Zor; approximately 200,000 reached their destination. Between March and August 1916, orders came from Constantinople to liquidate the last survivors remaining in the camps along the railway and the banks of the Euphrates.

There were nevertheless still some Armenians remaining in Turkey. A few Armenian families in the provinces, Protestants and Catholics for the most part, had been saved from death by the American missions and the Apostolic Nuncio. In some cases, Armenians had been spared as a result of resolute intervention by Turkish officials, or had been hidden by Kurdish or Turkish friends. The [majority of the] Armenians of Constantinople and Smyrna also escaped deportation. Lastly, there were cases of resistance (Urfa, Shabin-Karahisar, Musa-Dagh). In all, including those who took refuge in Russia,

the number of survivors at the end of 1916 can be estimated at 600,000 out of an estimated total population in 1914 of 1,800,000, according to A. Toynbee.

In Eastern Anatolia, the entire Armenian population had disappeared. A few survivors of the slaughter took refuge in Syria and Lebanon, while others reached Russian Armenia.[63]

CONNECTIONS

- Why was the Committee of Union and Progress able to use the story of Armenian resistance at Van as an excuse to begin widespread deportation and mass murder? What is a pretext? How is a pretext used to cover the truth?

- The report notes that: "The execution of the plan [of genocide] was entrusted to a 'special organization', made up of common criminals and convicts trained and equipped by the Union and Progress Committee [the Young Turks]." How did the use of a "special organization" create a cover for the government's plans?

- In 1915 German officer Liman Von Sanders rejected a deportation order for the Armenians and Greeks of Smyrna and the central government backed off. What questions does the story raise for you?

- The genocide unfolded in several stages. List the turning points in the process that led to mass murder?

- The treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire had been of international concern long before the deportations began. Given that attention, how is it possible that no country intervened and that the genocide was not prevented?

- Reread the description of the genocide. What choices had to be made to make the genocide possible? Who made those choices? When was prevention possible?

- Based on the description of the genocide, is it possible that people did not know what was happening to the Armenians? If people knew, how do you explain why more people did not try to stop the deportations and massacres? What options were available to leaders, to ordinary people, and to other governments?

To view an interactive map of the Armenian Genocide including the principal routes of deportation, massacre sites, and concentration camps, visit *www.armenian-genocide.org*. A chronology of the genocide is also available on the same website.

Reading 2 — UNDER THE COVER OF WAR

Historians Deborah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt note: "The genocide of the Armenians was made possible by two events: the final collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the first decade of the twentieth century and the advent of total war in the second."[64] During the early months of World War I, Young Turk leaders continued to target the Christian population of the empire—Armenians, Greeks, and Assyrians. Behaeddin Shakir, a member of the central committee within the Committee of Union and Progress, outlined a rationale and structure for the forthcoming genocide in March of 1915.[65] He claimed that the Armenian Revolutionary Federation was preparing an attack and that the Armenians stood in the way of the central committee's "patriotic efforts." Shakir wrote:

> *Unable to forget the humiliations and the bitterness of the past, and filled with an urge for vengeance, the Cemiyet [central committee of the Committee of Union and Progress], full of hope for the future has reached a decision. The Armenians, living in Turkey, will be destroyed to the last. The government has been given ample authority. As to the organization of the mass murder, the government will provide the necessary explanations to the governors, and to the army commanders. All the delegates of the Ittihad ve Terakki in their own regions will be in charge of this task.*[66]

Throughout the late winter and spring, follow-up telegrams were sent to local officials with rationalizations for the deportation and murder of the Armenians. Arrests of Armenian leaders began in several regions as well as mass deportations of the Armenians from Zeitun and Erzerum. In late May, a law legalizing the deportations was enacted without debate in the Ottoman Parliament. By June, notices were hung in villages and towns throughout the empire meant to justify the government's plans to ordinary people.

> *Our Armenian fellow countrymen, who form one of the Ottoman racial elements, having taken up with a lot of false ideas of a nature to disturb the public order, as the result of foreign instigations for many years past, and because of the fact that they have brought about bloody happenings and have attempted to destroy the peace and security of the Ottoman state, of their fellow countrymen, as well as their own safety and interests, and, moreover, as the Armenian societies have now dared to join themselves to the enemy of their existence, our Government is compelled to adopt extraordinary measures and sacrifices, both for the preservation of the order and security of the country, and for the continuation of their existence and for the welfare of the Armenian societies. Therefore, as a measure to be applied until the conclusion of the war, the Armenians have to be sent away to places which have been prepared in the interior vilayets [provinces], and a literal obedience to the following orders, in a categorical manner, is accordingly enjoined upon all Ottomans:*
>
> *1. With the exception of the sick, all Armenians are obliged to leave, within five days from the date of this proclamation, and by villages or quarters, under the escort of the gendarmery [police force].*

Courtesy of Martin Gilbert, from *The First World War: A Complete History*, revised edition (Henry Holt: New York, 2003)

THE WAR FRONTS OF WORLD WAR I

With World War I being fought on numerous fronts, the Young Turk government found in the war a nationalist rationale—and shield—for their deportations of the Armenians.

2. Although they are free to carry with them on their journey the articles of their movable property which they desire, they are forbidden to sell their landed and their extra effects, or to leave them here and there with other people. Because their exile is only temporary, their landed property will be taken care of under the supervision of the Government, and stored in closed and protected buildings. Any one who sells or attempts to take care of his movable effects or landed property in a manner contrary to this order shall be sent before the Court Martial. They are only free to sell to the Government, of their own accord, those articles which may answer the needs of the army.

3. To assure their comfort during the journey, hans [inns] and suitable buildings have been prepared, and everything has been done for their safe arrival at their places of temporary residence, without their being subjected to any kind of attack or affronts.

4. The guards will use their weapons against those who make any attempts to attack or affront the life, honor, and property of one or of a number of Armenians, and such persons as are taken alive will be sent to the Court Martial and executed. This measure being the regrettable result of the Armenians having been led in error, it does not concern in any way the other races, and these other elements will in no way or manner whatsoever intervene in this question.

5. Since the Armenians are obliged to submit to this decision of the Government, if some of them attempt to use arms against the soldiers or gendarmes, arms shall be employed only against those who use force, and they shall be captured dead or alive. In like manner, those who, in opposition to the Government's decision, refrain from leaving, or hide themselves here and there, if they are sheltered or are given food and assistance, the persons who thus shelter them or aid them shall be sent before the Court Martial for execution.

6. As the Armenians are not allowed to carry any firearms or cutting weapons, they shall deliver to the authorities every sort of arms, revolvers, daggers, bombs, etc, which they have concealed in their places of residence or elsewhere. A lot of weapons and other things have been reported to the Government, and if their owners allow themselves to be misled, and the weapons are afterwards found by the Government, they will be under heavy responsibility and receive severe punishment.

7. The escorts of soldiers and gendarmes are required and

An Armenian mother and child, fleeing from death. This photograph was taken by Armin T. Wegner, an eyewitness to the Armenian Genocide.

are authorized to use their weapons against and to kill persons who shall try to attack or damage Armenians in villages, in city quarters, or on the roads for the purpose of robbery or other injury.

8. Those who owe money to the Ottoman Bank may deposit in its warehouses goods up to the amount of their indebtedness. Only in case the Government should have need thereof in the future are the military authorities authorized to buy the said goods by paying the price therefor. In the case of debts to other people it is permitted to leave goods in accordance with this condition, but the Government must ascertain the genuine character of the debt, and for this purpose the certified books of the merchant form the strongest proof.

9. Large and small animals which it is impossible to carry along the way shall be bought in the name of the army.

10. On the road the vilayet, leva, kaza and nahieh [province, county, district, village and cluster] officials shall render possible assistance to the Armenians.

25 June 1915 [67]

Witnesses recorded the atrocities of the deportations. Deportations to the desert meant death, either by starvation or through the butchery of special battalions created by emptying the jails of former prisoners and impoverished Kurdish tribesmen. Kurds and other Muslims became the beneficiaries of Armenian property when a second law, the Law of Expropriation and Confiscation became national policy.

CONNECTIONS

- Deborah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt note: "The genocide of the Armenians was made possible by two events: the final collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the first decade of the twentieth century and the advent of total war in the second."[68] What is total war? Why would the staggering brutality of World War I make the Armenian Genocide possible?

- What did the Young Turks hope to teach ordinary people about the Armenians through their public notices? What words and phrases stand out? How did they hope the notices would influence the way people think about the deportations of Armenians? How might an Armenian individual or an Armenian group respond to the decree?

- How do you explain the differences in tone and content between the two government statements about the Armenians? Who is the intended audience for each?

- By the time the deportation order was posted thousands of Armenian leaders from across the empire had been separated from their families and murdered. How does this order try to explain those executions?

- Just before the United States entered World War I, President Woodrow Wilson told a friend: "Once [I] lead this people into war and they'll forget there ever was such a thing as tolerance . . . a nation cannot put its strength into a war and keep its head level; it has never been done." What makes it difficult to keep a nation's "head level" during war? How might the outbreak of the war have influenced ordinary people's responses to the deportations?

- Compare the language of the order with the reading "Describing the Genocide" as well as other survivor and witness accounts. How is language used to cover what really happened?

- How do the messages in this order compare with the myths and rumors that had been spread through the Young Turks' propaganda?

- Look carefully at the photograph of the Armenian mother and child on page 89. What can you learn about their situation by studying the image? What questions are you left with? Armin Wegner, the photographer who took the picture, wrote a longer caption for the photograph which he called "Mother and Child." His caption reads:

  > *Fleeing from death. An Armenian mother on the heights of the Taurus Mountains. Her husband has been killed or slaughtered, thrown into prison or driven to forced labour. On her back she carries all that she owns, i.e. what she could take with her, a blanket for sleeping or to use as a tent to protect against the sun, some wooden sticks, and then, on top of everything else, her baby. How much longer can she carry this weight?* [69]

  How do Wegner's comments influence the way you respond to the photograph? What context does he add that you could not learn from looking at the photograph on your own?

Reading 3 — THE ROUND UPS BEGIN

While the ministry of war coordinated propaganda, Talaat, the minister of the interior, coordinated the mass murder of the Armenians. In January 1915, Talaat warned the Greek Patriarch that there was no room for Christians in Turkey and their supporters should advise them to clear out. Orders announcing the Committee of Union and Progress's plans for deportation began to circulate in late February 1915. By March, Armenian men in the Turkish army were being disarmed, placed in labor battalions, and killed.[70] Quietly, deportation had already begun in several communities. Armenian resistance was labeled sedition and used as propaganda to justify the murder and deportation of ordinary Armenian men, women, and children. By April, Armenian schools were closed. Later that month, on the night of April 23 and all through April 24, Armenian leaders and intellectuals in Constantinople were arrested and led outside of the city, where they were subjected to torture and many were executed.

One of the survivors, the priest (later to become Bishop) Krikoris Balakian recalls how he and others were resting after Easter celebrations while a secret project was being carried out near the central police station.

> *Blood-colored buses were already transporting groups of Armenians who had just been arrested from the near and far suburbs and neighborhoods to the central prison. Chief of Police, Betri, had sent official letters weeks earlier in sealed boxes to all the Guard offices with orders to open them on the same day and to carry out the assignments with precision and in secret.*
>
> *The letters contained the blacklist of Armenians to be arrested—a list which had been compiled with the help of Armenian traitors, and in particular by Artin Mkrtchian, as well as the neighborhood Ittehatist [Young Turk] clubs. Those listed for death were the Armenians who had played vital roles as social reformers or non-partisans, and were deemed to be able to incite revolution or resistance.*[71]

[Balakian and eight friends were arrested and put in the central prison.]

> *Every few hours until morning, newly arrested Armenians were brought to the prison. Behind the fences of the prison, there was a strange hustle and bustle to the growing crowd of prisoners. Like some dream it seemed as if on one night, all prominent Armenians of the capital—assembly men, representatives, progressive thinkers, reporters, teachers, doctors, pharmacists, dentists, merchants, and bankers—had made an appointment in those dim cells of the prison. More than a few people were still wearing their pajamas, robes, and slippers, and it made the whole scene seem even more dreamlike.*
>
> *On the Sunday the prisoners were subjected to searches and were crowded on buses under police escort and taken in the direction of the sea shore near Sirkedji. The buses then entered the area of the Saray-Bournou orchards where in the 1890s hundreds of young... Armenian intellectuals had been*

killed. From there they were crowded on a steam ship under armed army and police officials as well as army spies.

For a moment we were so shaken, we were convinced that we were being taken out to the Sea of Mavmara to be drowned. Many of the men were crying, many were remembering their loved ones, as we sailed toward the open sea. In a few months, many of us would regret that we had not thrown ourselves into the sea that night. Because death by sea would have been kinder than the torture the Turks did to us with axes and hatchets in the places they would later take us.[72]

Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, Courtesy of anonymous donor

Armenians being marched to prison in nearby Mezireh under the guard of armed Turkish soldiers, Kharpert, Historic Armenia, Ottoman Empire, 1915.

CONNECTIONS

- Why do you think the Young Turk government singled out intellectuals and professionals for arrest and deportation?

- What choices were available to Balakian and other leaders of the Armenian community? If they had chosen to resist, what do you think would the consequences for the rest of the Armenian community have been?

- Balakian uses the phrase "Armenian traitors" to describe the Armenians who cooperated with the Young Turks. What options were available to Armenians who were asked to cooperate with Young Turk authorities? Were they traitors, collaborators, or just trying to survive?

Reading 4 — THE GERMAN CONNECTION

Before becoming part of the triumvirate that ceased power in Turkey at the beginning of 1913, Enver, the Ottoman minister of war, served as a military attaché to Berlin. During his four-year commission Enver developed a close relationship with German Kaiser Wilhelm II.[73] After the coup of 1913 that brought Enver to power, German-Ottoman military cooperation became national policy.

In December 1913, a German mission arrived in Turkey with the task of reorganizing the Ottoman army. Officers of the German military mission assumed responsibility for the command of the Turkish army under the leadership of Enver. The German-Turkish relationship was strengthened after the agreement of a military alliance between Germany and the Ottoman Empire in August 1914.

In notes written after a meeting with Young Turk leaders, Max Scheubner-Richter, a German vice consul and commander of a joint German-Turkish special guerrilla force, described plans to "destroy" the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire.

Morgenthau

Kaiser Wilhelm II, of Germany wearing a Turkish Fez

> *The first item on this agenda concerns the liquidation of the Armenians. Ittihad will dangle before the Allies a specter of an alleged revolution prepared by the Armenian Dashnak party. Moreover, local incidents of social unrest and acts of Armenian self-defense will deliberately be provoked and inflated and will be used as pretexts to effect the deportations. Once en route, however, the convoys will be attacked and exterminated by Kurdish and Turkish brigands, and in part by gendarmes, who will be instigated for that purpose by Ittihad.*[74]

From their unique position as overseers of the Ottoman army, German soldiers watched as the genocide was carried out. The highest-ranking member of Germany's military mission to Turkey, General Bronsart von Schellendorf, directly issued orders for the round up and deportation of Armenians. Another high-ranking German officer, Lieutenant Colonel Boettrich, the military chief overseeing the construction of the Baghdad Railway, produced orders to deport the Armenian laborers, workmen, technicians, engineers, and administrators who were working on the railroad.[75] When Franz Gunther, deputy director of the