

**TURKS
AND
ARMENIANS**
*A Manual on the
Armenian Question*

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and
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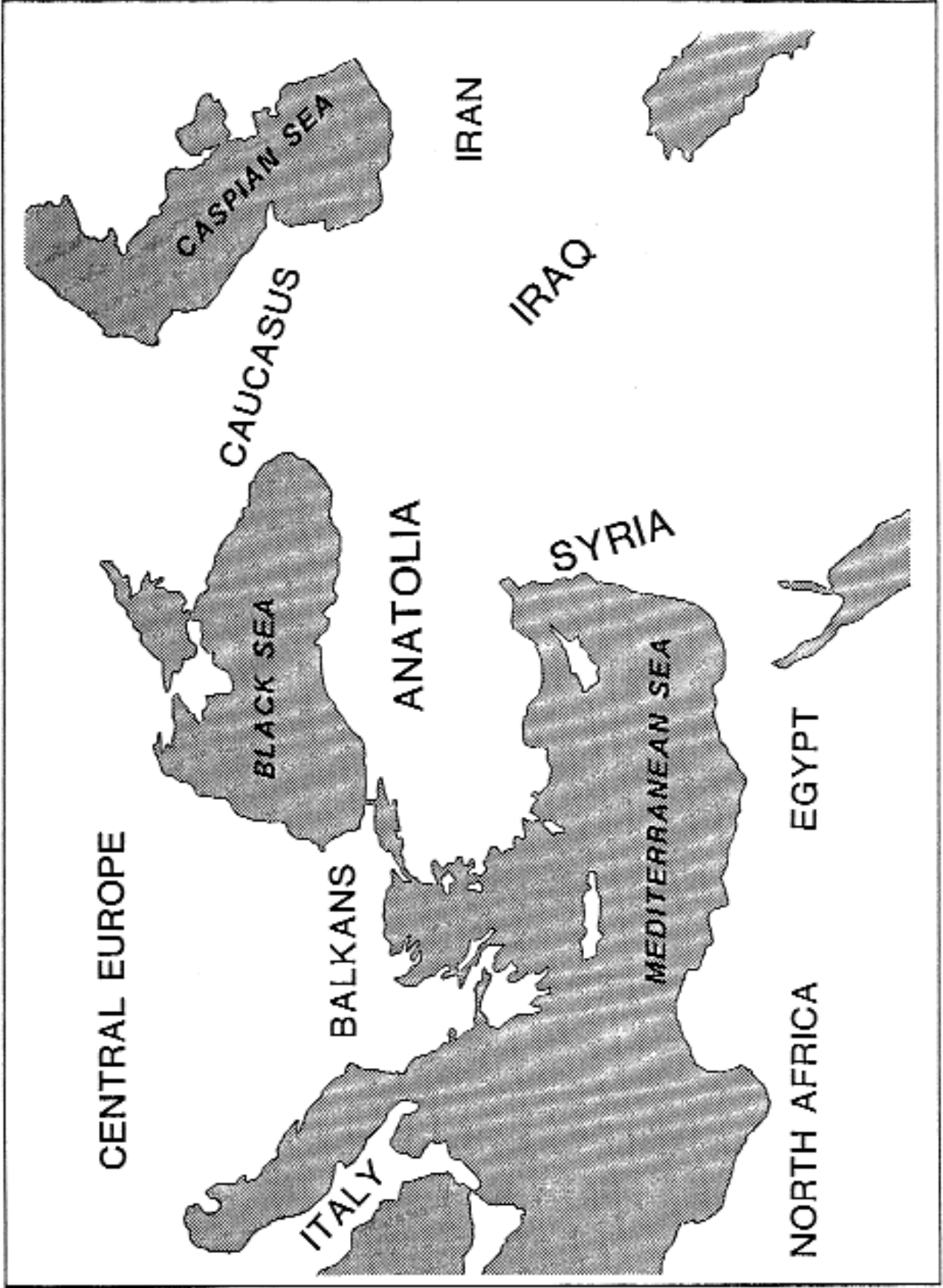
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Geographic Regions in the Near East, Southeastern Europe, and North Africa

1

Land and Peoples

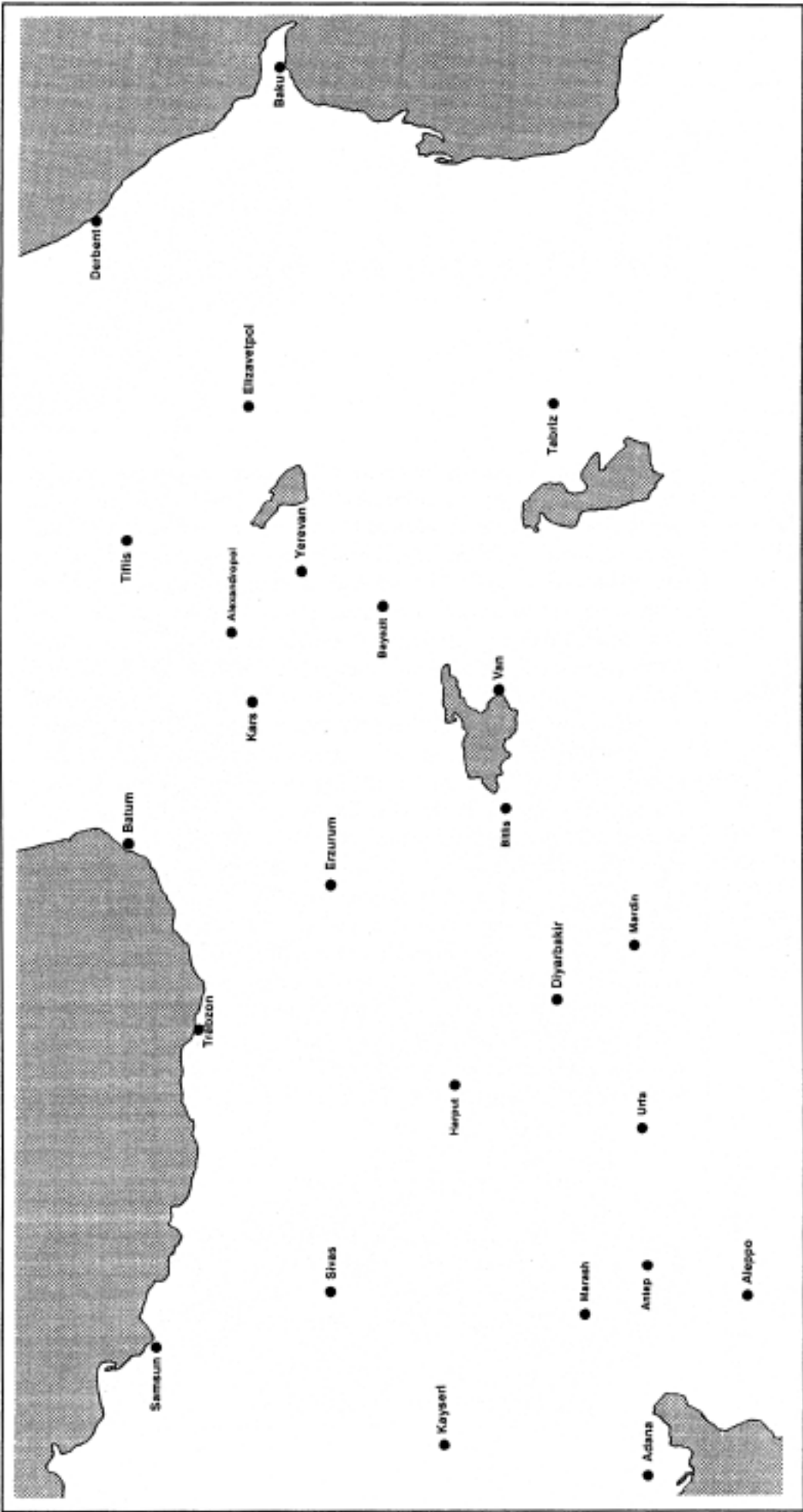
*The
History
and the
Region*

In the nineteenth century, European and American newspapers wrote of something they called The Armenian Question. At the time, the issues of the treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and whether Armenians would gain an independent state were important to Western politicians and writers. They have remained important today, both to Armenians and to Turks. Armenians blame Turks for atrocities and press their claim for an Armenian Homeland in Eastern Turkey. Turks blame Armenians for similar atrocities and deny that Armenians ever had a claim to Eastern Turkey. Politicians in the United States, Canada, and Western European countries have taken sides in the controversy. Much has been said of a polemic nature, many slogans shouted, and many strange assertions made. (Adolf Hitler's opinion on the Armenian issue has even been quoted in the U.S. Congress, although he is not known to have been an expert on the subject.) In all the noise of a political issue it is easy to lose sight of the fact that the events under consideration took place seventy or more years ago.

In fact, the Armenian Question is a historical question. Even though the fact has often been ignored, troubles between Armenians and Turks began not in 1915 or 1890, but a hundred years before. The same rules of analysis should apply to the Armenian Question as to other historical issues. To be understood properly, the relations of the Turks and the Armenians must be considered in their geographical, cultural, historical, and political context. The investigation begins with geography.

The Region

The region of Armenian-Turkish conflict was the northern Middle East--Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus. It was a crossroads through which armies had passed since the days of the Ancient Empires, but it was also a region in which whole peoples could hide from the armies



The Cities of Eastern Anatolia, Cilicia, and Transcaucasia

in mountain passes. Mountainous terrain insured that many different peoples and religions survived who would have been assimilated on the plain. They survived until the nineteenth century, when the struggle for dominance among the peoples ensued.

Because the Armenians and the Turks were geographically scattered peoples, their history was played out over large parts of two great empires--the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire. Europe and North America also became greatly involved with the Armenian Question. However, both in culture and geography the conflict was essentially Middle Eastern.

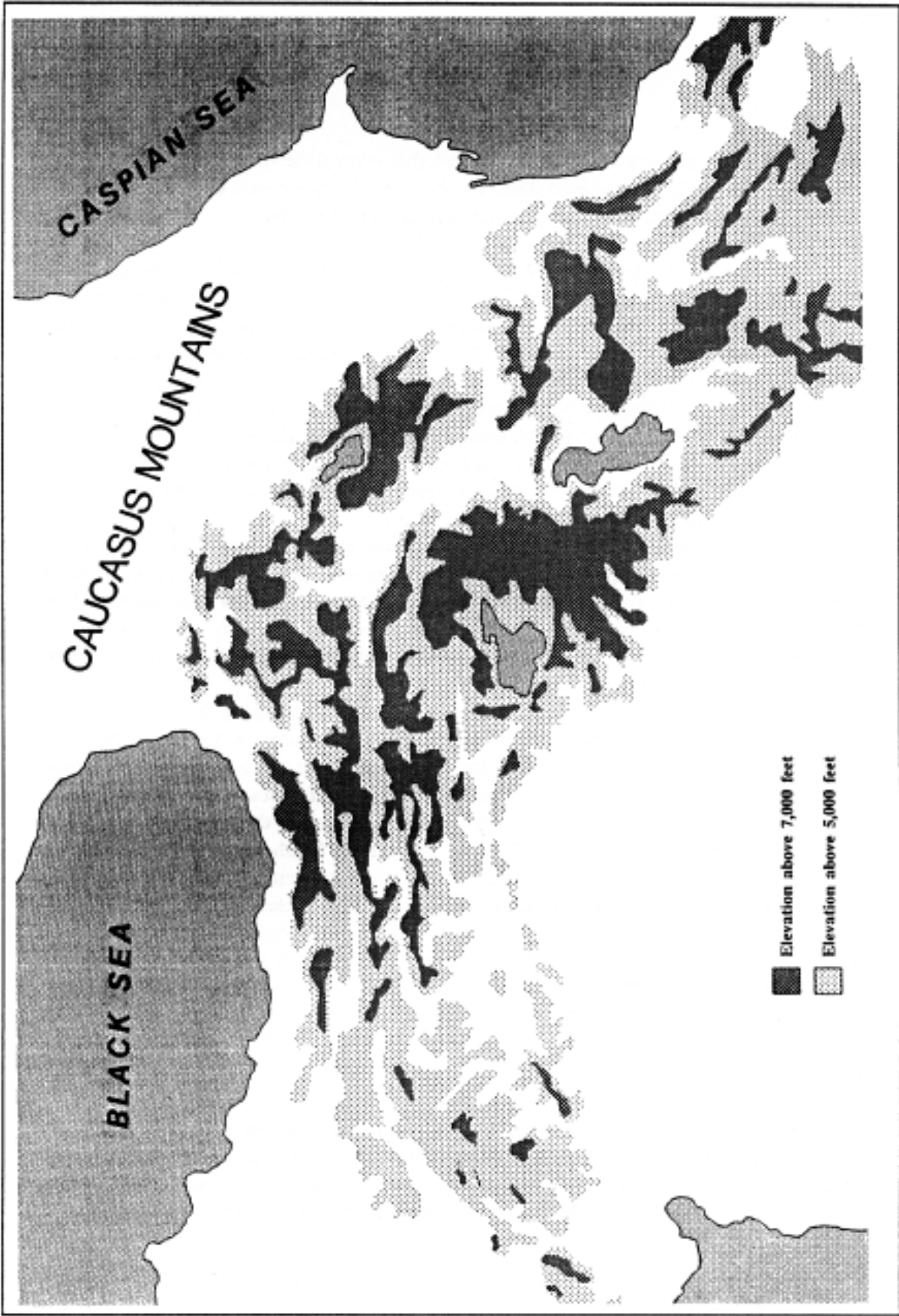
Armenians, Turks, and other peoples coexisted in the Northern borderlands of the Middle East, south of the Caucasus Mountains and in Eastern Anatolia. On the northern boundary, the Caucasus Mountains form a great barrier, easily crossed only on the coasts of the Black and Caspian Seas. Much of the land is mountainous, descending from the Caucasus onto fertile plains.

Eastern Anatolia is mountainous, with plateaus more than a mile and river valleys more than a half mile above sea level. Mountain chains contain peaks more than two miles high. Much of the land is not suitable for cultivation, although livestock are raised. Most agriculture is carried out in basins cut out of the mountains by rivers. Cities and larger towns are usually found in these river valley basins. The cities of Eastern Anatolia include Kars, Erzurum, and Van.

The homeland of the Armenians was in the mountainous region that stretched from the South Caucasus Region (called Transcaucasia because it was across the mountains from Russia) into Eastern Anatolia. However, the Armenians also dwelt in the border areas that lay alongside the region to the south and west. In the far Southeast, the mountains continue into Northern Iraq. Mountain chains also continue to the Southeast, coming to the Mediterranean west of the city of Adana. The area of Southeastern Anatolia that lies between the two sets of mountains is mainly plain, only one-fourth of a mile above sea level and descending to the Mediterranean in the region called Cilicia. East-Central Anatolia, including the cities of Sivas and Kayseri is high plateau. Conditions are much better than those farther East for agriculture and East-Central Anatolia was more integrated into the general culture and economy of Anatolia.

Isolation

Small ethnic and religious groups often survived in precisely the type of geography found in Eastern Anatolia and much of the land south of the Caucasus Mountains. Mountains isolated them from their neighbors. Their languages, customs, and religions



were not overwhelmed by those of other groups who lived nearby, because the people were isolated and had limited contact with their neighbors. Such isolation fostered diversity. On flatland, minority groups might have gradually assimilated with the majority through constant contact and economic and cultural pressure, but in the mountains it was easier to sustain a minority identity.

In addition to aiding their ethnic survival, isolation made the inhabitants of the mountains particularly difficult to govern. Isolated from each other, they were also isolated from conquerors and tax collectors. Thus it can be said that in much of Eastern Anatolia until the twentieth century the only real government was local government. Occasionally, when raids by mountain dwellers were particularly bothersome or when they openly rebelled against a central government, large armies would for a time subdue the mountain dwellers, but only for a time. The power of tribal leaders and local chiefs eventually reasserted itself.

Despite isolation of villages and regions, it was not true that the inhabitants of the region were completely cut off from the outside world. By the nineteenth century, and probably much earlier, each community was tied together by a network of communications based on the movement of peoples. Communities that might not welcome the tax collector nevertheless sent their sons to other regions for work and sometimes for trade. They returned with information of the outside world. Religious leaders of all communities traveled and brought news. Late in the nineteenth century, students, especially Christians who went to missionary schools, went off to study and sometimes returned. One of the main conduits of information was the market town, to which animals and produce were brought for sale and in which news, opinions, and rumors were exchanged. The communication in the East was an important part of the situation that developed in the region, as will be seen below.

The Peoples of Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus

Peoples and Races

The heart of the Armenian-Turkish Conflict lay in the separatism and group identification of the inhabitants of Anatolia and the Caucasus Region. Had the groups identified with the State or with a principle of multi-ethnic nationalism like that in modern states such as Canada or the United States, there would have been no conflict and no disaster. For that reason it is valuable to identify the peoples of the area and the ways in which they identified themselves.

First, it is important to identify what the Middle Easterners were not. A number of terms are commonly used today to describe the divisions into which humans group themselves--"peoples," "nations," "ethnic groups," etc. The divisions are based on language, common culture, or personal identification. Nineteenth century Europeans had developed a quite different designation for groups of people--"race". Today the word race is used quite differently, but then it often signified an idea closer to the modern concept of nation. Peoples were felt to be tied together by blood, or by an undefined racial spirit that was present in each person. Thus there was felt to be a German race, an English race, even an American race. Europeans applied the concept to the Middle East, naming Turks, Arabs, Armenians, or Greeks as separate "races." Less restrictive, but based on the same principles, was the concept of "nation." "Nation" carried with it the idea that each race should be a Nation, and that each nation should be separate and should have its own state.

Among Middle Easterners, the concepts of race and nation were unknown until European influence began to be strongly felt. Even then, the ideas of a nation defined by race was avowed primarily by intellectuals and political organizers. The people still generally identified themselves by religion. An Arab, asked the question "What are you," would answer, "I am a Muslim," as would a Turk. Nevertheless, nationalism did make inroads in the Christian communities of the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman Christians were already divided into religious groups and often spoke their own languages, so it was a relatively easy transition to think of themselves as a Nations. For the Ottoman Empire, nationalism was to be a divisive idea. Despite efforts by Ottoman politicians and thinkers, the idea of Ottoman Nationalism never overcame the old separatism. The nationalism that developed was based on the old religious distinctions. Armenians, for example, expanded the concept of Armenian to include Armenians who had converted to Protestantism or to the Armenian Catholic (Uniate) Church. Unlike most of the nationalisms of Europe, language or culture could not be identifiers of what it meant to be Armenian, because so many Armenians shared language and culture with the Turks.

Armenians

The early history of the Armenians is not known with any certainty. They were an Indo-European-speaking group who migrated into Eastern Anatolia before accurate records of such migrations were kept. It is known that an independent Armenian kingdom which included Eastern Asia Minor was formed under Tigranes the Great (95-56 BC). After Tigranes, for many centuries Armenians remained as vassals of others, including the Roman, Persian Sassanian and Byzantine Empires. Feuds and battles between Armenian lords weakened any chance of unity, but Armenian kingdoms existed in at least a small part

of Eastern Anatolia until the eleventh century, usually under domination of the great empires of the Byzantines, Persians, or Arabs. After the defeat of the Armenians' Byzantine overlords at Manzikert in 1071, the Armenians of Eastern Anatolia came under the rule of the Seljuk Turks. Another Armenian kingdom ruled in Cilicia from the late eleventh to the fourteenth century. It too passed into the hands of Turkish rulers.

The ethnic composition of the Armenian kingdoms is unknown. The rulers were generally Armenians, but other peoples lived in the region as well. The dislocation brought about by frequent wars and the incursions of the Turks and, later, the Mongols caused a scattering of Armenians and other peoples. From a very early time, Armenians lived outside of the boundaries of historic Armenia.

Armenians had been moving from Armenia for centuries before the Ottomans appeared. Early history on the movement of the Armenians is inconclusive, but it is known that large numbers of Armenians began to move away from Eastern Anatolia during the Byzantine times. Inhabitants of poor areas such as Eastern Anatolia naturally travelled in search of employment and a better life. Armenians also emigrated from Armenia to escape the wars that were almost continuous from ancient times until the Ottomans conquered Eastern Anatolia (1514-17). Armenian communities in cities such as Constantinople date from the Byzantine period.

The Armenians converted to Christianity around 300 A.D. Their Church (called Armenian Gregorian or Armenian Apostolic) was thought to be heretical by the Greek Orthodox and the Catholics. Therefore, rather than being a unifying factor with other Christians, the Armenian Church became a factor in Armenian separatism. Because it was distinctly Armenian, the Church was a repository of the cultural identity of Armenians.

Under the Seljuk Turks and later the Ottomans, the Armenians lived as a Christian religious group whose separate existence was guaranteed by the rules of Islam. Armenian dedication to their religion, their geographic situation in Eastern Anatolia, and Ottoman religious toleration guaranteed their continuation as a people. Their migration from their homeland in search of economic opportunity, begun under the Byzantines, continued under the Ottomans. Armenian colonies were found in Western Anatolia, the Balkan cities, and Istanbul. Indeed, by the end of the Ottoman Empire, the densest settlements of Armenians were found not in "Armenia," but in Northwestern Anatolia. Nevertheless, Armenian identification with their historic homeland continued even when they were dispersed throughout the Ottoman Empire and were a minority in historic Armenia.

Other Non-Muslims

When the Ottoman Empire began small Christian Churches had survived in Eastern Anatolia for hundreds of years. They were sects such as the Nestorians and Jacobites

(called Syrians), considered heretical by the Orthodox, who had taken advantage of mountainous geography to escape religious persecutions in the Byzantine Empire. Very few Jews lived in the Ottoman East, but thriving Jewish communities existed in Western Anatolia, Ottoman Europe, and Istanbul. Greek Orthodox Christians lived in large numbers in the Black Sea Region around the city of Trabzon. In the Caucasus, some tribal groups were partly Christian. In addition to the Armenians, the largest Christian group in the Caucasus Region was the Georgians, Orthodox believers who had formed an ancient Kingdom in the south-central Caucasus with its capital at Tiflis (Tbilisi).

Turks

The first historical mention of Turkish-speakers comes from Central Asia. They originated in a vast steppe area that even today is still Turkish in ethnic makeup and includes the Soviet Central Asian Republics, as well as parts of Afghanistan and China. In Central Asia, the Turks converted to Islam in the late eighth and ninth centuries and gained contacts with the Middle East.

Turkish rulers and armies entered Northeastern Iran, Afghanistan, and India in the ninth and tenth centuries. However, the mass migration of Turks into the Western Middle East began with the movement of nomad armies into Iran in 1037, led by the Seljuk family. After quickly conquering Iran and Iraq, the Seljuks defeated the Byzantines in 1071 and opened Anatolia to Turkish conquest. For the next 300 years Turkish nomad families migrated to Anatolia and settled there, eventually becoming the ethnic majority in all but far southeastern Anatolia.

Turkish armies were the basis of the Ottoman Empire, which began as a principality in Northwestern Anatolia. By the reign of the great sultan Mehmed II, the Ottomans had expanded their rule over most of Anatolia and Southeast Europe. In 1453 Constantinople fell to Mehmed. His grandson, Selim I, conquered Syria and Egypt, and Selim's son, Siileyman the Magnificent, added Iraq and Hungary to the Empire. With exception of Hungary, Transylvania, and smaller areas in the north, the Empire retained its area until the nineteenth century.

Turks were by far the largest ethnic and linguistic group in Anatolia, southwest Transcaucasia (today the Azerbaijan S.S.R.), northeastern Iran, and the Crimea and its hinterlands. In the East at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Turkish-speaking Muslims were the dominant linguistic and ethnic group in an area that stretched from the Caspian Sea to Western Anatolia and south to the Mediterranean Sea.

Other Muslims

Because the Ottoman census registered people by religion and not language group, it is difficult to distinguish the linguistic groups of Muslims in Eastern Anatolia. (For that reason, and because their primary identification was in any case religious, Muslims are identified here by language group only when the group is known for certain.) After Turkish, the largest language groups in Eastern Anatolia were Kurdish and Arabic.

In some areas of the East, Kurdish-speakers were intermingled with Turks, Armenians, and other groups. Their most dense settlement was in the far southeast of Anatolia, western Iran, and northern Iraq. Although they spoke various forms of the same Indo-European language, the Kurds had never been unified. Their allegiances were more likely to be to their tribe than to the State. In Ottoman times, the Kurds can best be understood as two different groupings. One group, those who lived in cities and towns or were settled farmers, were closely tied into the Ottoman political and religious system. More than three quarters of them were Sunni Muslims, like the Turks. Like the Muslims of the Balkans, some of whom spoke Slavic languages, or the Anatolian refugees who spoke languages from the Caucasus (see below), they were religiously and politically tied to the Turks and only separate linguistically. The others, tribal Kurds, were separated into many groups, often antagonistic to each other. Their allegiance to the Ottoman State was loose, dependent on what their chiefs saw as the best interest of the tribe.

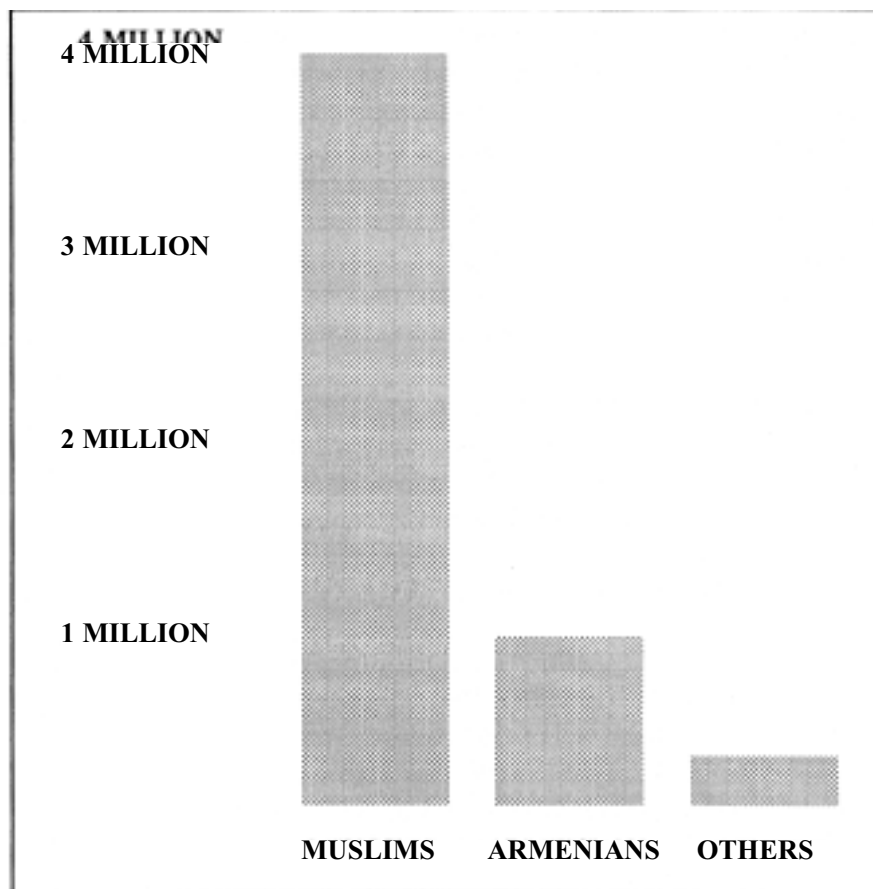
At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the only other sizeable linguistic group were a number of Arabic speakers who resided in the region directly north of present-day Syria.

The Caucasus Region contained many different Muslim ethnic groups, such as Circassians, Laz and Abkhazians, each of whom had a distinctive language and culture. As will be seen in the next chapter, millions of these Muslim were forced by Russia to flee into the Ottoman Empire. They were settled all over the Empire, including Eastern Anatolia. Today their descendants are Turkish citizens, but many have kept individual cultural traditions received from their Caucasian ancestors.

The Population Question

The composition of the population of Ottoman Eastern Anatolia is important to the Armenian Question. The claim of Armenian nationalists to a homeland in Eastern Anatolia would be considerably bolstered if there had been an Armenian majority, or even an Armenian plurality, in the East. Such was not the case.

Turks and Armenians



Population of the Six Eastern Anatolian Provinces, 1912

The figure represents the population of the six eastern provinces of Ottoman Eastern Anatolia, the area often called Armenia, in 1912. (Ottoman population records identified by religion, not ethnic group, so no identification of the number of Turks or Kurds is possible.) Due to extensive migration, it is difficult to find the population as precisely for early years. There were no censuses to register the inhabitants of Eastern Anatolia before the coming of the Ottoman Empire. Eastern Anatolia was too remote for the Ottomans to properly count the people before the end of the nineteenth century, although they did register Armenians in other parts of the Empire. Therefore, the composition of the Eastern Anatolian population before the Ottoman Empire began and during its first few centuries can only be conjectured. Whether Armenians were ever a majority in the region called Armenia, or whether the region was so-called only because

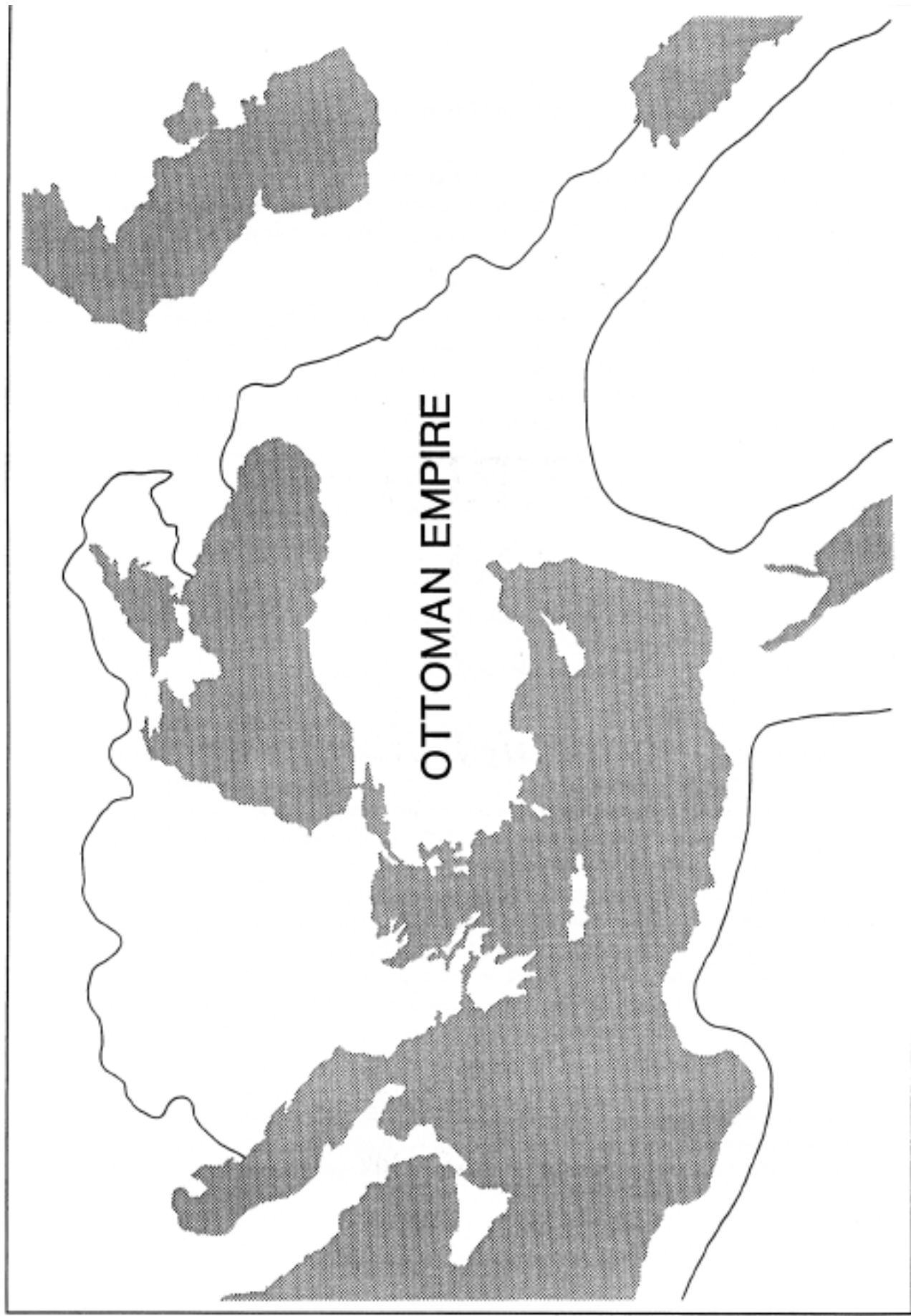
many of its rulers were Armenians, will never be known. It seems doubtful if Armenians were a majority in Eastern Anatolia even before Ottoman rule began. They were surely a distinct minority at the end of the Empire, the period for which accurate population figures are known.

By the 1700s, there was no large area in which Armenians made up enough of the population to be the majority in an Armenian state. No province of the Ottoman, Persian, or Russian Empires had enough Armenians to make up an Armenia. For example, even much later, in the late 1800s, after Armenians had migrated and concentrated their population, in no province of the Ottoman Empire was more than one-third of the population Armenian. The majority were in fact Muslims--Turks, Kurds, and many other ethnic groups who, as explained above, identified themselves primarily by religion, as Muslims, just as Armenians identified themselves religiously as Armenians.

The Ottoman Government

At the end of the migrations from Central Asia and the Ottoman conquests, Turks had become a majority in Anatolia and in parts of the Balkans and a sizeable minority elsewhere. Their numbers had been swelled by many who adopted Turkish customs and language and thus had become Turks. The Turkish population also formed the backbone of the Ottoman armies. However, the Empire was never considered theirs alone. Even though Europeans and later Americans called the Ottoman Empire "Turkey" or the "Turkish Empire," the Ottomans themselves never did so. To them, the Empire was an Islamic State, ruled by a sultan according to the rules of Islam. It was in no sense a national empire, and no formal separation by ethnic group was made. Reference to the Empire as Turkish would have been unthinkable. More Turks than any other ethnic group were in the ruling elite of the Empire, but the elite also included Slavs, Albanians, Arabs, and many others. The one condition was that they shared in the political culture of the Ruling Class, including the Islamic religion. In the later Empire even this distinction was dropped and Greek Christians, Armenian Christians, and others served in high positions in the Ottoman State.

The empire created by the Turks, the Ottoman Empire, was one of the greatest ever seen. Based on Islamic, Turkish, and Middle Eastern ideas of statecraft, it also adopted many of the government traditions of the Byzantines and others who had previously ruled



The Ottoman Empire in the Time of Süleyman the Magnificent

in Europe and Anatolia. Like other Middle Eastern Empires, the Ottoman Empire was personified in its leader, the sultan. In theory, the Ottoman government was under the absolute control of the sultan. All who held power did so because of their relation to him. Authority was centralized in his hands. In fact, an empire that ruled over vast territories in times of poor communication and transportation was of necessity decentralized. In some parts of the Ottoman Empire decentralization meant a system similar to the feudal system in Western Europe, in which local lords held lands from the sultan and in turn provided soldiers for the Ottoman army and kept the peace locally. In Eastern Anatolia, local governors, Kurdish tribes, and many Armenian villages had a great deal of autonomy.

For a variety of reasons beyond the scope of this study the power of the central Ottoman government began to decline in the late sixteenth century. In addition to internal problems, the Ottomans could not keep up militarily or economically with Europe. Like most of the world, the Ottoman Empire had not experienced the Renaissance or the European Scientific Revolution, with all their attendant benefits. The lack translated into defeats on the battlefield and in the marketplace. Decline of the authority of the central government meant that many areas in the East became virtually independent. For the Armenians and the Muslims of the East, their situation was dependent on their local rulers. Those with good lords prospered, others suffered.

In the nineteenth century, the Ottomans began a resurgence. Because Europe had the techniques of modernization, the Empire opened extensive contacts with the West. Ottoman students went to Europe and European teachers were brought to Ottoman higher schools. Gains were great, but the conservative mentality of many Ottoman subjects and external military pressures kept the Ottomans from advancing quickly. As will be seen in following chapters, defence from Russian attacks absorbed much money and effort that could have been better spent on reform.

The greatest opening to Europe was commercial, and Ottoman Christians benefitted disproportionately from European trade. Europeans took native Christians, mainly Greeks and Armenians, as their proteges. Christians became the middlemen in trade and commerce and many soon amassed considerable wealth. Their relative riches and closeness to the Europeans soon placed a new barrier between the Armenians and Turks. The gap increased when missionary schools opened throughout the Empire. Students were almost entirely Christians, who learned Western languages and gained the advantage of a Western education.

Millets

The traditional division of people in the Middle East was by religion, a system that had existed since biblical times. Because the Ottoman Empire followed Islamic rules of governing, the right of Christians and Jews to keep their religions was protected. Religious tolerance was also in the political interest of the State. Muslims were the largest group in the Empire, but non-Muslims were a majority. Much civil unrest could be avoided if personal freedoms were guaranteed. Thus for religious and practical reasons the Ottoman government protected the religious freedom and religious autonomy of its people.

In the Ottoman Empire, identification by religion was codified. The adherents of each religion were administratively formed together into **millets**, which can be translated as “religious nations.” The Greek Orthodox were a millet, as were the Armenian Gregorians, Catholics, Jews, and others. Each millet kept its own religious practices and each governed many of the most important areas of life. Education, welfare, family law (including marriage, divorce, and inheritance), and many other activities ordinarily thought of as governmental were the province of the millets. In disputes between members of one millet, cases were usually heard by the millet’s religious court. Each millet provided its own schools, courts, welfare, etc. Millet leaders were even put in charge of collecting some taxes. The system worked well for both the Muslims and the Christians and Jews. For more than five hundred years religious communities kept their faiths and their identities. In contrast to the religious persecution in Europe in the same period, the Ottoman practice of religious toleration is especially noteworthy.

All this seems odd to those used to the separation of Church and State, but the system was very practical in the Middle East, where people had long identified themselves primarily by religion. Although no laws demanded it, members of millets lived together in separate villages and separate quarters in cities. Daily affairs were often transacted only with members of the same religion and those of other religions were looked on as outsiders. The Ottomans had simply codified a tradition that had been in existence for centuries before their Empire was founded. The millet system was also a practical way to run a vast Empire in which the government could not do all that modern citizens expect of the state. Without the tools available to modern governments it would have been impossible for the Ottoman government to oversee the details of everyday life, and the people would not have wanted it to do so. However, the system did have a major drawback--it accentuated the separatism felt by the members of each religious group.

Points of Interest

1. Ottoman tolerance of religious minorities came from two sources. The first was religious. Since the time of the Prophet Muhammad Islamic law had ruled that Christians and Jews were to be allowed to keep their religions. With rare exceptions, Muslim rulers had always followed this law. Tolerance was also practical. The Ottomans ruled a vast Empire that included many religious groups: Jews, Greek Orthodox, Armenians, Catholics, Muslims, etc. Religion was the most important identifying factor in the lives of all these groups. If the Ottomans had tried to force conversions, they would have risked revolts. Nowhere in the long history of the Ottoman Empire is there any example of a government plan to make all the population Muslims.
2. The importance of religion in the Ottoman Empire cannot be stressed enough. Identification by nation has become so complete in the twentieth century that we have difficulty imagining a place where people did not first identify themselves in terms of their nation or even their ethnic group. Citizens of the United States will invariably identify themselves as Americans. Canadians will identify themselves as Canadians. Even if they feel affinity to an ethnic group, they will identify themselves as Irish Americans, French Canadians, Greek Americans, etc. In order to understand the history of the Middle East, we must be able to understand that Middle Easterners thought about themselves differently.
3. If the Armenian-Turkish troubles are to be understood, the minority status of the Armenians is also of great importance. The fact that "Armenia" was in fact a Muslim land shaped the character of Armenian revolutionary nationalism and affected all the sad events that occurred in Eastern Anatolia.
4. The millet system would not work well today. Indeed, it began to break down in the nineteenth century when the Ottoman peoples came into close contact with Western nationalism. However, it must be remembered that the millet system served the Ottoman Empire well for 500 years. Naturally, as times change systems that once worked well do not work well any longer.

2

First Conflicts

*The
Beginning
of the
Armenian
Question*

Although propagandists and nationalists often speak of the Armenian Troubles as if they began during World War I, or perhaps in the 1890s, common sense and a sense of history indicate that few problems begin from nothing and quickly rise to a head. In fact, most historical issues, especially ones that are based on peoples' dislike and fear of each other, begin slowly and begin long before they erupt in bloodshed. In the same way that family quarrels or neighborhood hatreds develop for a long time before neighbors or brothers come to blows, conflicts between peoples develop over time. The struggle between Armenians on the one side and Turks and other Muslims on the other developed as did other historical confrontations, beginning with small actions and growing to major ones.

At the base of the Armenian-Muslim conflict was the separation and religious identity described in Chapter 1. Long before nationalism appeared in the Middle East, Muslims and Armenians felt themselves to be separate groups, despite the fact that they shared similar customs, traditions, and even language. The sense of separation was stronger than any realization of similarity in their lives. In their daily lives this separatism had very seldom led to conflict. Armenians, Turks, and other Muslims had lived together in the Ottoman Empire for hundreds of years before the armed conflicts known as the Armenian Troubles broke out between them. Neither Muslims nor Armenians were always happy with their situation. By the standards of today, Middle Easterners were poor. This was particularly true of Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus Region. The land in the East provided only a meager living. Moreover, local tribal leaders, sometimes the only real government in an area, were by no means always good rulers. During the long period of Ottoman weakness, local rulers sometimes oppressed those over whom they had control, Christians or Muslims. When times were good and central government was strong all groups shared in the benefit. When times were poor all

groups suffered. Nevertheless, all could not have been bad for the Armenians in the East, because they continued to hold their lands, villages, and churches for more than four hundred years of Ottoman rule.

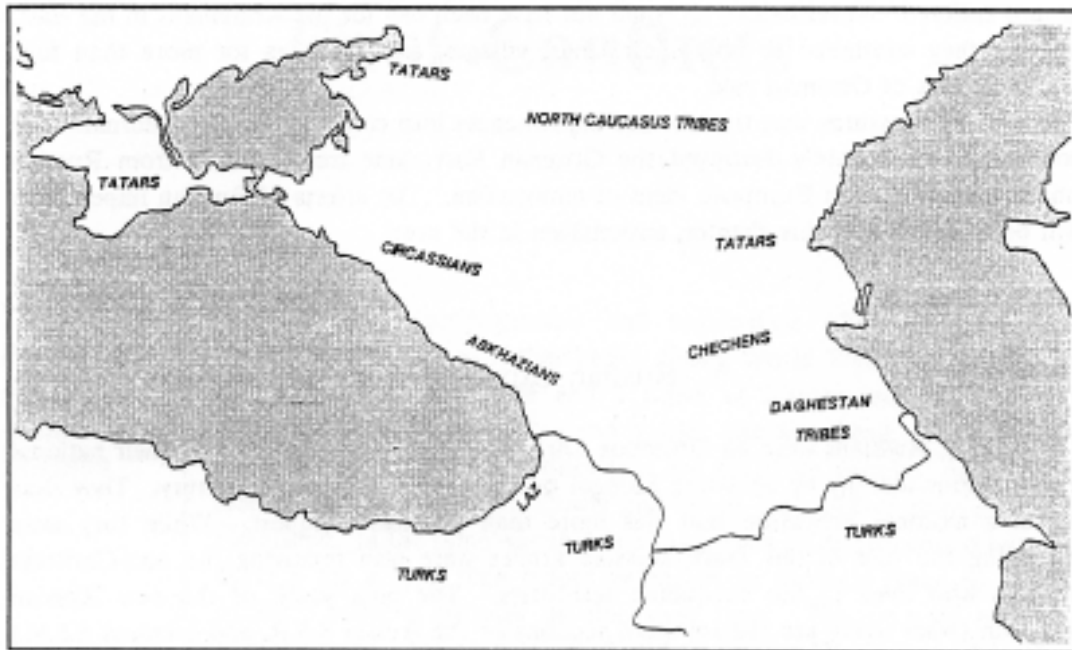
The pressures that transformed separateness into conflict were not internal. The conflicts that ultimately destroyed the Ottoman East came from outside, from Russian Imperialism and from European ideas of nationalism. The effects of Russian imperialism will be considered in this chapter, nationalism in the next.

Russian Expansion

The Russians were an Orthodox Christian people who had asserted their national and religious identity by defeating Mongol overlords in the fifteenth century. They then began a national expansion that was more than political conquest. While they were extending the rule of the Tsars, Russian armies were also removing the non-Christian peoples who lived in the conquered territories. The area south of the new Russian kingdom (what today are the southern sections of the Russia S.S.R. and Ukraine S.S.R.) was ruled by Muslims. Some parts of the region contained a significant Muslim Turkish (called Tatar) minority. In other parts, Muslim Turks were a majority. The Crimea and its hinterlands were almost entirely Turkish. Beginning in the reign of Ivan the Terrible, the Russian Tsars expanded their power into this land. The results of the expansion are to be seen today--except for a small remnant, the vast land which included the Crimea and the lands to the North has no more Muslim Turks.

The Crimean Tatars

The people who are usually called the Crimean Tatars were Turkish-speaking Muslims. Although nominally vassals of the Ottoman sultan, they formed an independent land under the rule of their **khans**. When the Russians invaded the Crimea the Tatars had lived there for more than 500 years. The Russians conquered them in 1774 and immediately began a policy of offering land in the Crimea to Christians from the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere, who were drawn by promises of free land and low taxes. Quite naturally, the Tatars objected to seizure of their lands, but those who resisted were hunted down and killed. The majority, who were not able to resist, were subjected to “administrative” pressures to leave the Crimea. Lands were seized and the Tatars forced to work as servants on their old farms. To high “legal” taxes were added illegal taxes, which Russian administrators collected to line their own pockets. Army units (the **Cossacks**, tribal cavalry



Muslim Ethnic Groups, ca. 1790

with a deserved reputation for attacks on civilians) were settled next to Tatar villages, which they raided with impunity.

During and after the Crimean War (1853-56) the Tatars suffered much worse than administrative pressures. Cossacks patrolled the Tatar villages, frequently killing, driving the villagers away, or taking bribes to leave them alone. Taxes were again increased and an active policy of “Russification” in schools, courts, and the government was implemented. The Tatars finally left. At least 300,000 Tatar refugees went to the Ottoman Empire. The small group who remained lived on until World War II, when Stalin exiled them all to Central Asia, from which only a small number have been allowed to return.

The Muslims of the Western Caucasus

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the region of the Western and Central Caucasus had never actually been ruled by anyone but the native inhabitants. These were fiercely independent tribes who, although they had become Muslims, had not been brought under the rule of the great Muslim Empires--the Ottoman Empire and Persia. Like the Crimean Tatars, they stood in the way of Russian expansion. Like the Tatars, they were

removed.

As will be seen below, the Russians had already expanded to the South and West of the Caucasian tribes when they turned their attention to them. The Orthodox Christian kingdom of Georgia had been annexed and the other southern (or Transcaucasian) lands had been taken from the Ottoman and Persian Empires. In the Eastern and Central Caucasus, resistance of mountain Muslim tribes had delayed complete Russian conquest for 30 years. However, by the late 1850s the Russians were free to invade the lands of the Western Caucasus. The largest groupings of Muslims in the West were the Circassians, who had resisted Russian advance and had raided and battled Russian settlers for decades. They were now surrounded by Russian power and could not resist. Their lands and the lands of others in the West were desirable because, unlike much of the Caucasus, they were fertile plains and their coasts held potential Black Sea shipping ports for Russian commerce.

The method of freeing the Circassian lands for immigration by Russians and other Slavs was simple and brutal. In 1864 the Russian army set about clearing the land of its native inhabitants. Those who resisted were killed. Muslim villages that refused to surrender to the Russians were bombarded by artillery and levelled, while the inhabitants were within their houses. Villages that surrendered were plundered, then destroyed. Houses and crops were burnt, so that the people would have no means of survival if they remained near their homes and carried out resistance, and no hope of a home to which they could return. Finally, the Circassians were herded to Black Sea ports and put on boats for the Ottoman Empire. Russians and other Christians took their places.

In 1867, the same system was used to force the Abkhazians, the main Muslim group to the south of the Circassians, to leave their homes. The Russians made sure to keep the cattle and moveable possessions of the Abkhazians, and young Abkhazians were kept behind to work as forced laborers for the Russians. The others arrived at the same Ottoman Black Sea ports that had three years earlier received the Circassians. Once again, Russians and other Christians, especially Georgians, came into now empty lands in Abkhazia.

The Ottoman Empire was not able to provide sufficiently for those who had been dispossessed by the Russians. The Empire was poor and no international bodies or church groups interested themselves in the fate of Muslim refugees. The Crimean Tatars travelled by foot into poorly equipped refugee camps in the Ottoman Empire. The Russians crowded the Circassians and Abkhazians onto boats without assistance or supplies. When each group arrived the Ottomans could only provide basic food and shelter. Smallpox, typhus, and typhoid ran through the refugee population. Eventually the Tatars, Circassians, and Abkhazians were settled all over the Empire at great cost, but not before a great number had died. Of the approximately 1.2 million Circassian and Abkhazian Muslims who were forced from their homes in the Caucasus and came to the Ottoman Empire, only two-thirds survived. One-third were killed by the Russians or died from disease and starvation.

Although less is known of the number of deaths among the Crimean emigrants, mortality among the Tatars was probably as great.

Significance to the Armenian Question

One of the most important points about the sufferings of the Turks and other Muslims at the hands of an expanding Russia is that it has essentially been forgotten. It has become a topic studied by a few historians, but is of no great concern to others. Among non-historians, only the descendants of the Crimean Tatars and the Caucasian Muslims, now citizens of Turkey, remember the plight of their ancestors. In the light of the many books written on the suffering of Christians in the Ottoman Empire, the lack of interest in the suffering of Turks and other Muslims is instructive of the approach to Turks which is too often adopted in Western Europe and the United States. The lack of even-handed consideration for human suffering was to carry on in consideration of the Armenian Question.

The Muslim losses to the Russians are also significant because of their effect on later events. Everyone in Anatolia and the Caucasus, Muslim or Christian, knew what had happened to the Crimean and Caucasian Muslims. The intentions of Russia were well known, and the fate of Muslim peoples who stood in the way of Russian expansion was also well known. Knowledge of Russian intentions was to affect Armenian-Turkish relations in Anatolia up to the first world war. Muslims were to see the Russians and their allies as enemies to lives, families, and homeland. Armenians were to see Russians as those who would force Muslims out and advance the cause of Christians such as themselves. By their actions the Russians had proved that Muslims could be driven from their homes of centuries and replaced with Christians. It was a lesson that was not lost on either Muslims or Armenian nationalists.

Turks and Armenians in The Southern Caucasus

No one will ever know to what extent the Russians actually planned the Russification of all the lands they conquered. Indeed, the analyses offered here are based on study of Russian actions, seldom on stated Russian intentions. The Tsars did not advertise their intention to deport Muslims and replace them with Christians. However, the actions of the Tsars' armies and administrators make it hard to believe that they were not implementing a consistent policy.

The Tsars settled Russians and other Slavs in the conquered lands of Southern Russia, the Crimea, and the Western Caucasus. Those lands were well suited to the needs of the Russian aristocracy. Great estates were created out of Muslim farms and villages and the typical life of Russian nobles and peasants was recreated. However, this was not possible in all areas of Russian conquest. If the Russians had ever intended Russification in the South or Central Caucasus Region (or in Central Asia or Mongolia), geography and a limited Slavic population would have defeated them. Probably they had no such intention. They did, however, intend to rule the Caucasus and eventually to rule Eastern Anatolia, as well. For their purposes it was desirable that majority populations of Christians, dependent on Russia, live in the conquered lands. Because of this, Armenians became instruments of Russian policy.

Armenians, Russians, and Turks in the East

From the 1790s until 1921 the history of Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus region was a chronicle of desolation caused by sectarianism. Most of the inhabitants of the region, whether farmers or city dwellers, Armenians or Muslims, undoubtedly wanted only peace. The population was mainly made up of farmers and herders to whom the most important thing in life was survival in a poor land. They could have had no wish for the destruction that was visited on them. However, the events precipitated by Russian expansion, ethnic nationalism, and religious sectarianism caused the farmers and herders to take sides-- Armenians and Russians against the Ottomans and Caucasian Muslims.

The basic question was one of loyalty. Neither the Ottomans nor the Caucasian Muslim rulers had ever expected national loyalty, as understood today, from their Christian subjects. Despite the fact that Armenians had lived and survived as a people for hundreds of years in the Ottoman and Persian Empires, their loyalties were unquestionably not to those states but to their religious community (**millet**). When the Russians advanced into the Ottoman Empire and Persia many Armenians took cause with the Russians, feeling that all would be better under a Christian monarch. Some even hoped that the Tsar would ultimately favor at least Armenian autonomy. Muslims, on the other hand, chiefly viewed the Russians as the enemy of their people and religion. They had good reason to do so.

The end result of the Russian invasions was a factional division among peoples who had lived together for hundreds of years. The millet system, as it worked in the Ottoman Empire and, less formally, in the Caucasus region, was designed to foster toleration (and government control) through acceptance of religious differences. The new division had the opposite effect. Instead of a division based on toleration it was a division based on mutual hatred and fear, fear that if the other side triumphed one's village and family would be

destroyed. The division grew throughout the nineteenth century, until it culminated in one of the worst civil wars in history during and after World War I.

The Conquest of the Khanates

Armenian actions against their Muslim overlords began during the Russian advance into the Eastern Caucasus khanates (principalities) in 1796. These khanates, although nominally under Persian rule, were in fact ruled by local lords (**khans**). Their populations were mainly Turkish, with large communities of other Muslims and Armenians. When

Russian armies invaded Armenian subjects of the khans acted as spies. For example, Armenians delivered the plans of the water supply of Derbent to the Russians, allowing the city to be taken. Armenian armed units fought alongside the Russians in the takeovers of the Muslim khanates. The Armenian archbishop Argutinskii-Dolgorukov in the 1790s preached his desire that the Russians would end Muslim rule over the Armenians through conquest. The archbishop's wish was fulfilled. In the khanate of Ganjah, for example, Russians and their Georgian auxiliaries slaughtered untold numbers of Muslims upon taking the



city of Ganjah, then spread their depredations to the countryside. After the conquest, mosques were confiscated and Muslim religious funds seized. The Muslim population was persecuted. Finally, many of the Muslims of Ganjah fled, to be replaced by Christians.

After the conquest of the khanates, the Tsar's officials encouraged Armenians to immigrate to the new possessions of the Russian Empire and so increase the Christian population. (One of the areas of Armenian immigration was the Khanate of Karabagh,

which still features in Armenian-Turkish conflicts today.) However, massive immigration of Armenians was not to begin until the 1820s. The khanates of the Southwestern Caucasus were unlike Circassia and Abkhazia in that their populations were dense and fairly pacific. The Russian policy of forced migration was put to better use in the Khanate of Yerevan.

1827-29: The Beginning of the Great Population Exchange

In 1827, Russia began in earnest her conquest of the great Muslim Empires--The Ottoman Empire and Iran. In two short wars, Russia defeated first the Persians, then the Ottomans. Russia's prize was the lands of the Southern Caucasus. Russia's task was to ensure the tranquility of her new possessions by shaping their populations. In the Tsar's conquests to the north, Russians and other Slavs had been moved into the new territories, often displacing Turkish-speaking inhabitants. Because of the distance from ethnic Russian lands and, perhaps, a lack of Slavs who could or would move to the Southern Caucasus, the Russians encouraged local Christians, the Armenians, to come into the new Russian territories. They took the place of Turks and others Muslims who had been evicted.

The best example of this population exchange comes from the province of Yerevan (or Erivan). Today the Yerevan Province is the Armenian S.S.R., but prior to 1827 it was a province of the Persian Empire. The majority of its population was Muslim, primarily Turkish. In their conquest the Russians either killed or forced to flee approximately 30% of the Muslims of Yerevan. The Muslims were replaced by Armenians from the Persian and Ottoman Empires. (Even so, it was not until the latter half of the nineteenth century, after further expulsions and migrations, that what today is Armenia became primarily Armenian in population.)

The results of the 1827-29 wars were a prototype of what was to come. Many Muslims, particularly Turks, were forced from their lands by the Russians. Others left because they had no wish to become Russian subjects. In the Ottoman Empire, some Armenians had assisted invading Russian armies during the Ottoman-Russian War, in which Russian armies had reached the city of Erzurum. These Armenians hoped that the Russians would be able to keep all the lands they had taken. When the other European Powers forced the Russian to hand back much of their conquests many Armenians left with the Russian armies. Some undoubtedly feared for their lives, others wished to be ruled by the Tsar rather than the Sultan. Like the Muslims who left Yerevan, their allegiance was religious and they left to follow it. Some sources estimate that 10,000 Armenian families left Eastern Anatolia for the lands newly conquered by Russia.

For the next 100 years the pattern of population exchange set in the 1827-29 wars continued:

Wars were fought in which the Ottomans were defeated by the Russians.

During the wars, many Armenians in the Ottoman territories aided Russian invaders. Many Muslims in the Russian territories aided the Ottomans.

The Russians were not allowed to retain all the lands they had conquered. Other European States, fearful of a change in the balance of power, forced them to return some territory to the Ottomans.

Turks and other Muslims in the lands kept by Russia fled to the Ottoman Empire during and after the war.

When the Russians left the territories they were forced to relinquish Armenians accompanied them, usually at least in the tens of thousands.

During the years between wars, many Armenians and Turks emigrated to join their families, get jobs, pay lower taxes, etc., or just to be with others of their own religious or ethnic group.

Even in times of peace between the wars the Russian Empire fostered the immigration of Armenians. The methods used are familiar today--tax breaks and promises of employment. Armenians were encouraged to come into the Russian Caucasus provinces by promises of free or inexpensive land grants and relief from the usual Russian taxation. Although the promises were often not kept and some Armenians returned to the Ottoman Empire, the Russians provided sufficient incentives to attract many Armenians. Even more effective was the comparatively higher standard of living in the Russian territories, which had benefitted from a higher standard of modernization than the Ottoman East. The Ottomans, held back by the dual burden of economically reforming what today would be called a Third World Economy and paying for repeated losses of land and money to Russian invaders, could not provide the economic opportunities available in the Russian domains. This was particularly true after oil was discovered in the Russian Caucasian provinces. The Russians favored Armenians as businessmen in the oil rich region of Baku (even though the population of the Baku Region, Azerbaijan, was mostly Turkish). Thus there was good economic reason for Armenian migration.

By no means did Armenians migrate only to Russia. Armenians also left Eastern Anatolia for Istanbul and for the cities of Western Anatolia and Ottoman Europe, in numbers probably greater than those who went to Russia. Eastern Anatolia was a disadvantaged area from which Armenians and others had been moving since Byzantine days. They also emigrated to other foreign countries, especially the United States.

Other Wars

Two other nineteenth century wars increased the tension between Armenians and Muslims and contributed to the population exchange.

In the Crimean War (1854-56), Russia invaded Eastern Anatolia, but was forced to retreat after her loss to England, France, and the Ottoman Empire in the Crimea. The history of the war in the East is little known, but it is known that Armenians followed the Russian retreat and settled in the Yerevan Province, bringing the once-Turkish province to an Armenian majority. The forced movement of hundreds of thousands of Turks during and after the war has been discussed above.



Region of Russian Invasion, 1854 and 1877

The forced movement of hundreds of thousands of Turks during and after the war has been discussed above.

In 1877, Russia once again declared war on the Ottoman Empire. More is known of the events in the East during this war than during the Crimean War. On both sides of the border, showing little loyalties to their governments, Muslims aided the Ottomans and Armenians aided the Russians. Throughout the Western Caucasus, those Muslims who remained revolted and assisted the Ottomans in an unsuccessful invasion. Many paid with their lives or were forced to emigrate. In the Eleşkirt Valley, the region of Russian invasion, the Armenian population went over to the Russians. When the Russians took the main city of the East, Erzurum, they put in a police force led by an Armenian. 6,000 Muslim

families fled the situation in the city. The English ambassador reported that “when the Russians occupied Erzeroum the Armenians availed themselves of the protection which they received to molest, ill-treat, and insult the Mahommedan [Muslim] population...” It became obvious that Armenians were generally to be considered partisans of the Russians and Muslims partisans of the Ottomans, no matter which government they lived under.

At the end of the war, in 1878, the polarization of the Muslim and Christian populations of the Ottoman East had considerably advanced. The Russians were forced by the European Powers to leave half of the Ottoman land they had conquered. At least 25,000 Armenians, many from the Eleshkirt Valley, accompanied the Russian troops. More than 60,000 Muslims left the newly conquered Russian territories of Kars and Ardahan. On the Black Sea Coast, the at least 40,000 Muslim Laz were forced to emigrate by Russians using the same tactics that had proved effective against the Circassians and Abkhazians. Their places were primarily taken by Christian Georgians from the south-central Caucasus. The Russian Empire now held the areas of Batum, Kars and Ardahan, where the population changed rapidly due to Muslim emigration and Armenian and Georgian immigration that continued until the first world war.

Points of Interest

1. Few peoples in history have suffered as much as the Turkish group called the Tatars. They once lived in the Crimea, in what today is the southern Ukraine and Russian S.S.R.s, and in the Northern Caucasus region. (See the map in the text.) Through a combination of murder, expulsion, and illegal taxes and other “administrative pressure” most of the Tatars were forced from their lands by the Tsars. The few who remained in the Crimea were banished to Central Asia during World War II by Stalin. Yet they are seldom if ever mentioned as an example of historical genocide. Why are they ignored? Their fate has been well documented by historians, so ignorance of their history cannot be the reason. The Russian operations against the Circassians and Abkhazians have similarly been ignored.

In the nineteenth century there was a mindset among Europeans and Americans that denied that Muslims could ever be oppressed. Westerners of the time were seldom able to see Muslims as anything but oppressors. Has that mindset continued in our day?

2. The first Armenian-Turkish conflicts took place as a result of Russian expansion. The final Armenian-Turkish conflict took place during World War I, also during a time of Russian expansion. Given the history of Russian interest in the lands of the Ottomans, can this be merely coincidental? Immediately after his victory in World War II, Stalin demanded that he be given the lands in Eastern Anatolia that once had been conquered by the Tsars. (Turkey, the United States, and their allies successfully resisted his demands.) The Soviets also retained all the lands in the Caucasus region which had been conquered by the Russian Empire. It is impossible to consider the history of the Armenians and the Turks without also investigating the intentions of the Russians.
3. Throughout history, empires have seemed to take lands in much the same way that the very rich often feel compelled to keep on amassing more wealth. They seize lands simply because they are there to be seized. The Russian conquests also had distinctive motives. Scholars have usually explained Russia’s conquests in two ways:
 1. Russia needed warm water ports for trade and to increase her military power.
 2. The Russian heartland was long under control of the Mongols. This made Russians ever after fearful that they would once again be conquered by their neighbors. For that reason, she followed a preemptive policy of conquering others before they could conquer her and set up buffers between Russia and her enemies.

Perhaps these points help explain the actions of the Russians in the Crimea and Caucasus. The Ottomans controlled the only warm water ports the Russian could hope to conquer. Also, populating areas around the Russian heartland with Slavs wherever possible and other Christian peoples if necessary was a way to extend the buffer around Russia proper.

3

Revolutionary Nationalism

*Nationalism
and The
Armenian
Revolutio-
naries*

Nationalism was one of the main causes for the downfall of the Ottoman Empire. The Empire was composed of many peoples. Like the Austrian Empire and other great empires, the Ottoman Empire could not hope to long stand if its peoples each decided that they wished to be members of individual national states. Once nationalism took hold it became impossible for peoples to live together. The **Webster's Collegiate Dictionary** definition explains it well: "*Nationalism*: loyalty and devotion to a nation; especially: a sense of national consciousness exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations or supernational groups." Subjects whose interest was to exalt their own group above all others did not fit well into any multi-national empire.

In the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Armenians came to consider themselves to be a nation. "Nation" is a concept that has never been easily explained. Dictionaries usually define nation with statements such as, "a community of people composed of one or more nationality." "Nationality" is then defined as "belonging to a Nation," indicating a certain problem in definition. Often a nation is defined as "a people," but no satisfying definition of "a people" is forthcoming. Obviously, the concept is inexact. Sometimes a nation is felt to be based on common language, but often not. Some assert that a nation is bound together by a common culture, but sometimes not, and, in any case, the concept of "a culture" is itself fluid. In the nineteenth century, when nationalism was strongest, many defined nationality as a quality of the soul or the spirit. Nationalism was tied to the idea of "race" which was then common among Europeans and Americans. Germans were felt to be part of a German Race, defined by a commonality of spirit; English, French, and even Americans were believed to be separate races, each with an individual spirit that bound members of the race together. Each "racial group" felt itself to be superior to the others.

Because qualities of the spirit are difficult to discuss rationally, it is perhaps best to forget the metaphysics of nationalism and consider nationality as a matter of personal identification. Thus for the purposes of this study Armenians became a nation when they, the Armenians, considered themselves to be one.

The ideology of nationalism was foreign to the Ottoman mind. Nationalism was created in Europe and imported to the Ottoman Empire. For the first 400 years of the Empire, groups distinguished themselves from each other by religion. For example, words such as Turks, Arab, or Kurd, although used to describe language, were not used in any nationalistic sense. The primary identification was Muslim. In the same way, Armenians were Armenians because of their membership in the Armenian Gregorian Church. In their Eastern Anatolian homeland, Armenians shared the same basic culture as the other inhabitants. Many, perhaps most, of the Ottoman Armenians spoke Turkish as their first language. Even today, Turkish food and Armenian food, Turkish rugs and Armenian rugs, etc. are so similar as to be almost indistinguishable.

The traditions that historically made Armenians separate were religious traditions. Religion obviously cut Armenians off from Muslims, but it also distinguished them from Greek Orthodox Christians, who considered the Armenian Church to be heretical. Armenian liturgy and religious practice were distinctive, as was Armenian religious art, a glorious tradition that was uniquely Armenian. Until the nineteenth century, the concept “Armenian” was kept alive by the Church.

As mentioned in the last chapter, the Ottoman Empire fostered the religious separation of the Armenians and other groups. This allowed the Church to continue, but it also was of benefit to the Ottomans. Armenian churchmen, led by the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, were dependent on the government for selection and advancement. They generally supported the Ottoman system, and in turn received preferment for themselves and benefits for their Church and its people. Until the latter part of the nineteenth century the system of religious identification continued, then radically changed to a national identity.

The Religious Catalyst of Armenian Nationalism

The Armenian religion was the storehouse of Armenian traditions, so it was natural that religion provide the first steps in the development in Armenian nationalism. The Armenian Gregorian Church and Western missionaries contributed much of the early development of nationalism.

The first western missionaries to affect the Armenians were Catholics who traveled

to Anatolia in an attempt to bring the Armenian Church into the Catholic fold. The first Catholic attempts were largely unsuccessful in furthering their cause, although some Armenians did become part of a new Armenian Catholic (Uniate) Church. They were most successful in beginning a renewal of Armenian letters and culture. An Armenian named Mekhithar of Sebaste founded a Catholic Armenian order, eventually centered in Venice. Mekhithar and his followers invigorated Armenian literature with dictionaries of classical and vernacular Armenian, histories, and other studies. Perhaps as importantly, they and other Armenians opened a path to Europe. In 1831, the sultan recognized an Armenian Catholic millet. From that point, Armenian and European Catholics were instrumental in bringing Western education to the Armenians. A greater force in educating Armenians and advancing their nationalism was the missionary effort of American Protestant churches.

The American Missionaries

American missionaries first came to the Ottoman Empire to convert the populace, including the Muslims, to Protestant Christianity in the form espoused by Congregationalists and Presbyterians. They were sent to Anatolia by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. The Muslims and Jews proved to be impervious to conversion and the Greeks were generally content to remain Greek Orthodox. By default, the mission became a Mission to the Armenians. Ultimately, the relations between the missionaries and Armenians were to be of great importance in the mobilization of American public opinion against the Turks (to be considered below). However, the point of interest here is the effect of the missionaries on the development and nurturing of Armenian Nationalism.

The intent of missionaries to the Ottoman Empire was, quite naturally, conversion. The main tool was education. Schools that taught an American curriculum and used American educational methods were a success for both the Armenians and the Americans. Armenians saw in them a unique opportunity to become a part of the West and gain all the position and treasure that came with Westernization. The missionaries saw the schools as an opportunity to aid brother Christians, whom they viewed as downtrodden, and as a chance to proselytize both children and their parents. At first the missionaries were met with little opposition from the Turks, who under the millet system were little concerned with Christian education, but with great opposition from the Armenian Church, which resented Protestant influence. But the Armenian students saw the intrinsic value of the education and the missionaries made use of British and American political influence to stifle the Armenian Patriarchate. Opposition was overcome and the schools prospered. From 7 schools in 1845 the enterprise expanded to 450 schools with 26,000 pupils in 1913.

The American schools became centers of Armenian nationalism. Most missionaries were sympathetic to Armenian nationalism, even to Armenian revolution, but the schools

did not teach those values as such. It was the students, themselves, and some Armenian professors who organized the student bodies into nationalist groups. The missionaries' part in the advancement of Armenian nationalism was more intangible. They taught, directly and indirectly, a sense of Christian superiority in which they fervently believed. They also inculcated their charges with the Western idea of race. As described in an official publication of the American Board: "They [the Armenians] are a noble race, and have been called 'the Anglo-Saxons of the East.' ... Their standard of moral purity is also said to be immeasurably above that of the Turks around them, and they have a conscience which can be touched and roused."¹ The two ideas of Christian superiority and racial superiority, as believed by the missionaries and their charges, together were the psychological underpinnings of Armenian nationalism.

Seeming evidence of Christian superiority was not lacking. As the nineteenth century advanced, Armenians did indeed become progressively richer than Turks. They were favored as local middlemen by merchants from Europe and America. The education they received taught them Western methods of commerce, industry, and organization. As the Ottoman educational and commercial systems improved, Muslims also advanced, but not as rapidly. Neither the educational opportunities nor the preferment shown by Westerners were open to Muslims. The economic gap between Armenians and Turks increased. Today, we recognize that the same situation has applied in all underdeveloped countries in which favor has been shown to a minority group. It is obvious that lack of opportunity is the usual cause for one group's economic backwardness, not "racial inferiority." But in the age of Social Darwinism and "race consciousness" it was easy to believe that relative wealth arose from "racial" superiority.

One of the indirect ways in which American schools aided the Armenian nationalists was through the development of associations with the United States. Missionaries sponsored the travel of Armenian students and Protestant Armenians to America. A steady stream of Armenians left for America, the foundation of today's sizeable Armenian communities in the United States and Canada. Armenian revolutionary organizations were at work among the Armenians in America, and much financial backing came from there. Moreover, Armenians were able to return to the Ottoman Empire with American passports. Due to the Capitulations (agreements under which foreign citizens could not be tried under Ottoman law), these Armenians could more publicly act for their Cause. The Armenians in America also had a great effect on American public opinion. In the absence of any real Turkish community in the United States, the Armenians were the only voice heard.

1. Bartlett, Rev. S.C., **Historical Sketch of the Missions of the American Board in Turkey**, "Published by the Board," Boston, 1876, pages 2 and 3.

The Attitude of the Ottomans

It is instructive to compare the traditional image of the Ottoman authorities to their actions. The Ottomans are often portrayed as standing in the way of Armenian rights, and of denying the Armenians rightful opportunities for cultural and political expression. This is cited as a moral justification for the ultimate Armenian revolt against the Ottomans. In fact, the Ottomans were so tolerant that they can be said to have cooperated in revolt against themselves. The historical record shows that the Ottomans had always accepted religious diversity. In the nineteenth century their toleration expanded to include a separate educational system run by foreigners that taught nationalism to Armenians and gave Armenians the educational tools to become much more economically successful than their Muslim fellow subjects. Yet the Ottomans tolerated all this. Why?

The response of cynics is that the Ottomans tolerated all because they were afraid of European intervention if they did not favor the Armenians. There is a certain amount of truth to this. The Ottomans did especially wish to placate the British, so that they would assist the Ottomans against the Russians. However, the British were satisfied with formal assertions and had little ability to influence daily developments in Ottoman Anatolia. Moreover, after 1907, when the British changed policy and in effect made common cause with the Russians, there was much less need for the Ottomans to placate the British. Yet the Ottomans allowed the continuation of a vast Protestant educational system in Anatolia, a system whose avowed purpose was to make one segment of the population educationally superior to the majority. It was intended, in fact, to raise the Armenians above the level of the religious group to which the rulers themselves belonged.

It would not have taken major actions to stop the missionary educational establishment, small bureaucratic obstacles would have defeated the enterprise: Builders might have been “unavailable” or school building permits might have been “lost.” Endless documents might have been necessary before any activity could start. Shipments of books might never have arrived. Whole regions might have been closed to foreigners “to protect them from civil disorder.” Through most of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Government was not a democracy. Central Authority might have done all these things to stop the missionaries and, if those who castigate the Ottomans were correct, such actions should have been expected. If the Ottomans had meant to close down the missionary establishments, they could have done so. They did not. The Ottomans were acting toward their minorities in exactly the way they always had, tolerating a completely separate system of education as long as it did not threaten the State. Even when it did threaten the State they were slow to act, so ingrained was the tradition of religious toleration.

The Revolutionary Parties

Three Armenian revolutionary parties were founded in the last quarter of the nineteenth century--the Armenakan, Hunchak, and Dashnak parties. The Armenakan Party, founded in 1885, stated in its program that its aim was revolution that would create an Armenian State. To that end, party cells were organized in Istanbul, cities in Eastern Anatolia, Persia, Transcaucasia, and the United States. The party smuggled weapons into Eastern Anatolia and organized resistance groups, but their main revolutionary activities were a small number of assassinations of Kurds and Turks, which sparked limited reprisals.

The Hunchaks

The Hunchakian Revolutionary Party was more successful. Founded by Armenians in Geneva, Switzerland in 1887, the party was influenced by the Marxist ideology current in Europe at the time. In addition to an independent Armenia, they spoke against capitalists and “parasitic overlords.” The historian of the revolutionaries, Louise Nalbandian, has described their program: “The Hunchaks said that the existing social organization in Turkish Armenia could be changed by violence against the Turkish government and described the following methods: Propaganda, Agitation, Terror, Organization, and Peasant and Worker Activities.”² Terror was to include murders of both Turks and Armenians who stood in the way of Hunchak aims and the organization of a special organization within the party which was devoted to terrorism. The Hunchaks defined all their activities in terms of Marxist class struggle, perhaps because the party was heavily influenced by Russian Marxist parties.

The Hunchaks organized in Istanbul and spread to the East, with supporters in Europe and the United States. They also made extensive contacts with other ethnic revolutionary groups, such as Greeks and Macedonians, whose aims were similar to theirs. As will be seen in the next chapter, in 1894, Hunchaks organized rebellion in Eastern Anatolia, especially in the District of Sasun. Their bands were active throughout the East.

As often happens with revolutionary groups, the Hunchaks were defeated more by their own disunity than by any efforts of the Ottoman government. Nevertheless, in terms of the Hunchak aims, rebellions they led in Sasun and Zeytun can be said to have been successes. They succeeded in organizing local Armenians, succeeding in provoking strong Ottoman responses, and succeeded in attracting the attention of Europe (although little

2. **The Armenian Revolutionary Movement**, 1963, page 110.

European aid). They could not succeed in keeping their organization together, and from 1896 splits within the party drastically reduced the Hunchak's effectiveness. Their place on the revolutionary stage was taken by the Dashnak Party.

The Dashnaks

The most effective of the revolutionary groups, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (**Dashnaktsuthiun**, "Federation"), grew from roots among the Russian Armenians. Since the 1860s, Armenian nationalist and revolutionary groups had formed in Transcaucasia and in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Russian authorities occasionally closed down the groups, but seem to have allowed great latitude to those whose avowed intention was to work for revolution among the Ottoman Armenians. A number of these organizations came together in Tiflis in 1890 and founded the Dashnak Party.

Although the Dashnak Party had organized in the Russian Empire and members had extensive ties with Russian revolutionary parties, the Manifesto of the party was directed at "Turkish Armenia." Its political and economic agenda were socialist, but not so radically expressed as the Hunchak plans had been. In terms of terror tactics, the Dashnak plans were just as radical as those of the Hunchaks. The published plans of the party included organizing guerrilla bands, inciting guerrilla fighting, looting and destroying government buildings, and attacking Ottoman officials.

The Dashnaks began active revolutionary steps soon after the organization of the party. Party workers were infiltrated into Persia from the Russian Empire, because Northwestern Persia was just over the border from Eastern Anatolia and poorly policed by the government of the Shah. Factories were created to make small arms and guns and ammunition were easily smuggled from Russia. Revolutionaries and arms depots concentrated in various centers on the Ottoman-Persian border (including the monastery of Derik, where the abbot was an ardent revolutionary). From there they crossed into Eastern Anatolia, where they organized and armed Armenian guerrilla bands. A network of Dashnak guerrilla forces gradually expanded throughout Eastern Anatolia.

The Effects

When they began to accept missionaries and other agents of Westernization in their Empire the Ottomans could not have known of the long-term effects of their actions. A tradition of religious tolerance and a desire to placate British and American opinion led them to accept missionaries and missionary schools. They might have exercised more control over the missionary process. However, another factor that caused nationalism to

grow among the Armenians was beyond Ottoman control. The Armenians were divided between the Russian and the Ottoman Empires. While the Russians did their best to dampen Armenian nationalism in Transcaucasia, it was in their interest to support its growth in Anatolia. There was no effective way the Ottomans could have kept nationalistic and revolutionary ideas and from spreading across the Russian border.

Even if the Ottomans had the desire and ability to close the missionary schools and secure the Russian border, they would probably not have been able to halt the rise of nationalism among the Christian minorities in the Empire. In the nineteenth century, for reasons of survival, the Ottomans began to dramatically increase contacts with Europe. Ottoman students studied in Europe. European teachers were imported to teach Ottoman students. Trade increased and tens of thousands of Europeans and Americans came to the Empire. With the European presence came European ideologies. Nationalism was taught in Europe as a basic truism. It naturally spread to the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, Armenian students in Europe learned nationalist ideology at its source.

Nationalism was a dominant political ideology of nineteenth century Europe. It was unavoidable that the Ottomans became caught up in it. Turks learned it more slowly than Armenians only because Armenians were more closely tied to Europe.

Points of Interest

1. The actions of Armenian revolutionaries were shaped by the fact that Armenians were a minority in historic Armenia. For most nineteenth century European revolutionaries the situation was very different. They could hope to get the sympathy of a majority of the people and overthrow the government with popular agreement, or at least popular acquiescence. The revolution could be a purely “national revolution,” without much outside assistance. Indeed, the outsiders who intervened in European revolutions usually intended to crush the revolution. Foreigners attempted to crush the French Revolution of 1789 and did crush the revolutions in Naples in 1821, Spain in 1823, Hungary in 1849, etc.

The Armenian revolutionaries had quite different needs and intentions. They could never depend on majority support, because Armenians were outnumbered by more than 3 to 1 by Muslims in “Armenia,” and the Muslims would never willingly accept the creation of an Armenian state over them. Therefore, the Armenian Revolution could never be a democratic revolution. Only imperialism could succeed against majority rule. Armenian success could only depend on invasion by a foreign power and subsequent enforcement of minority rule over the majority.

2. It was no historical accident that the Hunchaks and Dashnaks adopted socialism as well as nationalism as part of their platforms. The fact that they were both socialists and nationalists reflects the European origin of their political philosophy. The two ideologies were the mainstay of European revolutionaries and thus naturally the pillars of Armenian revolutionary ideas, as well.
3. Because the Armenians were a minority, their revolution was probably doomed from the start. The area that the Armenians claimed was also coveted by the only power which could effectively help them to gain an independent Armenia, Russia. The Russians might gladly support Armenian revolutionaries in disrupting the Ottoman Empire, but it is unlikely that they would turn over Russian conquests to anyone else. If any rule was to be imposed on the Muslim majority, it would be Russian rule.

4

Revolution in the East

*The First
Battles
of the
Armenian
Revolution*

The coming of the Armenian revolutionaries brought a new element of disruption to the Ottoman East. The situation in Eastern Anatolia had always been a tense three-way balance among settled rural and urban Turks and Kurds, Armenians, and Kurdish tribes. The ability of the Ottoman government to advance the interests of the settled people, ensure civil order, and keep the various peoples from battling among each another was severely compromised by the losses and costs of the 1877-78 war with Russia. Nevertheless, the Ottomans attempted to keep the East quiet by techniques ordinary and extraordinary, including improving the **gendarmarie** (rural paramilitary police) command, dividing provinces into smaller units so that administrators would be closer to the lands they administered, and improving communications and transportation. Kurdish tribesmen were even made part of military units (known as the **Hamidiye** units, after sultan Abdulhamid II), on the theory that their military pay would be a smaller loss than the loss they might cause to the agricultural economy of the East if left on their own.

It was very much in the interest of the Ottoman government to keep the East quiet. The Ottomans feared any disruption in the region adjoining the border with the Ottomans' greatest enemy, Russia. Such disruption might provide the Russians with a pretext to invade, as they had in Bulgaria in 1877. The government also realized that problems with Armenians caused it great damage in the West, where the Ottomans could expect to be excoriated in the press, no matter who was at fault. In addition, the Ottoman Empire was going through political difficulties that resulted in a change of government in 1908. The last thing needed by the government was trouble in Eastern Anatolia, but the Ottoman plan to calm the East was disrupted by the actions of the Armenian revolutionaries, whose stated intention was disruption.

Armenian revolutionaries saw in the international situation a chance to gain their ends. Britain had long supported the territorial

integrity of the Ottoman Empire, because of fear that aggrandizement of Russia would upset the balance. However, with the rise of Germany as the primary power in Europe, Britain's interests were gradually shifting to a rapprochement with Russia. The Ottomans were experiencing difficulties in their European provinces. European politicians had proclaimed themselves in favor of Armenian desires. The time for revolution seemed ripe.

The Lesson of Bulgaria

The rebellion that culminated in the creation of a Bulgarian kingdom seemed to be a manual for the creation of an Armenian State. In 1876, Bulgarian revolutionaries had proclaimed their revolt. The first act of the rebels was a massacre of Turkish villagers in which perhaps 1,000 died. The Ottomans, who were fighting another revolt in Serbia at the time, were forced to entrust suppression of the revolt mainly to local irregular forces, the neighbors of the Turks killed in the revolt. These put down the revolt with severity, killing between three and twelve thousand Bulgarians. European newspapers filled their pages with lurid stories from the so-called "Bulgarian Horrors," never mentioning the murders of Turks which had started the affair. Popular opinion, especially in Britain, swelled against the Turks. Although the British had promised support to the Ottomans, public opinion kept the Disraeli government from intervening when Russia invaded the Ottoman Empire in 1877.

Left to face Russia's power on their own, the Ottomans were beaten and forced to evacuate Bulgaria. The sizeable Turkish minority in Bulgaria was reduced by more than half. More than 260,000 Bulgarian Muslims were murdered or died of disease and starvation as refugees. Another 515,000 were forced from Bulgaria. The Muslim population of Bulgaria was thus reduced by 52%, leaving a firm demographic base for the new Bulgarian State.

Armenian revolutionaries took the example of Bulgaria in planning their own revolution. The elements of revolt were to be the same:

- 1. Organize and arm bands of rebels.**
- 2. Attack those who will be most likely to retaliate (in this case, often Kurdish tribes). Severe retaliation will leave many Armenian dead.**
- 3. The deaths of Armenians will greatly influences European public opinion.**

4. European military intervention will force the Ottomans to grant autonomy and perhaps independence to Armenians in Eastern Anatolia.

5. Muslim population will flee or be removed from the new Armenia and Armenians from elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire, Iran, America and Europe will immigrate to it, leaving a demographically as well as politically Armenian state.

It is doubtful if the actual plans for revolt were quite so well thought out, but the intent of following the plan was evident, as admitted by the revolutionaries:

Europeans in Turkey were agreed that the immediate aim of the agitators was to incite disorder, bring about inhuman reprisals, and so provoke the intervention of the powers. For that reason, it was said, they operated by preference in areas where the Armenians were a hopeless minority, so that reprisals would be certain. One of the revolutionaries told Dr. Hamlin, the founder of Robert College, that the Hentchak [Hunchak] bands would “watch their opportunity to kill Turks and Koords, set fire to their villages, and then make their escape into the mountains. The enraged Moslems will then rise, and fall upon the defenseless Armenians and slaughter them with such barbarity that Russia will enter in the name of humanity and Christian civilization and take possession.” When the horrified missionary denounced the scheme as atrocious and infernal beyond anything ever known, he received this reply: “It appears so to you, no doubt; but we Armenians have determined to be free. Europe listened to the Bulgarian horrors and made Bulgaria free. She will listen to our cry when it goes up in the shrieks and blood of millions of women and children. . . . We are desperate. We shall do it.”¹

The revolutionary project had two flaws. Unlike in Bulgaria, Muslims were a large majority in the lands chosen for the new Armenia. This might not have been insurmountable if point five were actively pursued. However, it turned out that European support for the Armenian Revolution was unreliable.

1. William L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism: 1890-1902*, 1960, pages 157 and 158, quoting a letter from Dr. Cyrus Hamlin which appeared in the *Boston Congregationalist* of December 23, 1893.

The Revolution

The first steps in the rebellion went well for the revolutionaries. The Armenian revolutionary parties were able to organize rebel bands fairly easily in Eastern Anatolia. In 1892 and 1893, organizational posters appeared all over the East. Revolutionary cells were organized and revolutionary activity begun. At first, the rebel's deeds were on a small scale--the attempted murder of the governor of Van and of the Armenian Patriarch in Istanbul by Armenian rebels, bombing of soldiers, attacks on the Imperial Mail, raiding Muslim villages, assassinating Ottoman police, etc.



In 1894, large bands of Armenian rebels in the district of Sasun attacked Ottoman officials, especially tax collectors, as the first step in insurrection. When the Ottoman Army was sent to defeat the rebellion the rebels fled before it, slaughtering the inhabitants of every Muslim village in their path. In turn, the army, primarily Kurdish Hamidiye units, massacred Armenians in the rebellious region. Similar revolts took place in Zeytun and Van in 1895. The revolt in Zeytun spread throughout the Zeytun-Marash region and was put down with great difficulty by the Ottoman regular army, with a great deal of slaughter on both sides. The Armenian leader of the revolt in Zeytun, for example, claimed that his followers had killed 20,000 Muslims, probably an exaggeration, but indicative of the scope of the disturbance. In Van, the revolt was more easily put down, with approximately 400 Muslim and 1700 Armenian dead. Other cities experienced attempted assassinations, attacks on places of worship, riots between Muslims and Armenians, and random political violence.

In 1903-4, Dashnak bands under their leader Andranik led another revolt in Zeytun which, according to Armenian figures, led to 1,000 Muslim dead as opposed to 20 Armenians (surely an exaggeration, but instructive in that the events were termed a massacre of Armenians in the Western Press).

Before World War I, the worst disaster of attempted rebellion came in Adana. In Adana in 1909, Armenian rebel attacks on Muslims resulted in an overwhelming response from the Muslim populace, which greatly outnumbered the Armenians. The local Ottoman forces proved too weak to stop the violence and it took the regular army to bring peace. Between 17,000 and 20,000 were killed, most of them Armenians.

Armenian rebels knew that they could not stand on their own. Overwhelmingly outnumbered by Muslims in “Armenia” and much weaker than the Ottoman army, they faced certain defeat. Their intention was not to create Armenia through their rebellion, but to cause European intervention, exactly as the Russians had intervened in Bulgaria in 1877. If their own statements were not enough to demonstrate this, the actions of the revolutionaries would be sufficient. Only the intent to spark massacre in retaliation can explain the seeming madness of Armenian attacks on members of Kurdish tribes. Such attacks were a constant feature of small-scale rebel actions. Individual members of powerful Kurdish tribes were assassinated, undoubtedly in expectation of reprisals that would touch the heart of Europe. For example, the 1894 troubles in Sasun were preceded by Armenian attacks on the Bekhran and Zadian tribes, which resulted in armed battles between the Armenian revolutionaries and Kurdish tribesmen. In another example, 250 Armenian revolutionaries attacked the Mazrik tribe in 1897, but were forced to retreat by the tribesmen.

Point 2 of the revolutionaries’ plan was thus successful. Muslims were attacked and they retaliated. It is difficult to estimate the mortality of the revolts, but probably four to five times as many Armenians as Muslims died. Point 3 was also a success. European newspapers were filled with gruesome stories of Turkish attacks on Armenians, almost never reporting Armenian attacks on Turks. Little mention was made of the rebellions that initiated the Turkish response. The European and American press could be counted on to always portray Christians in the best possible light and ignore the side of non-Christians. Because of Western prejudices, the propaganda was effective. However, the hoped-for intervention never came. The European balance of power was in flux, with Germany in ascendance and Russia, France, and England afraid to commit to a Middle Eastern adventure. Russia had reason to fear that Armenian revolution might spread to her own Armenians in Transcaucasia; she wanted to take Eastern Anatolia, but not under a heavy moral burden to create an Armenian state. No help came from Europe, and the Ottomans were able to put down the revolts.

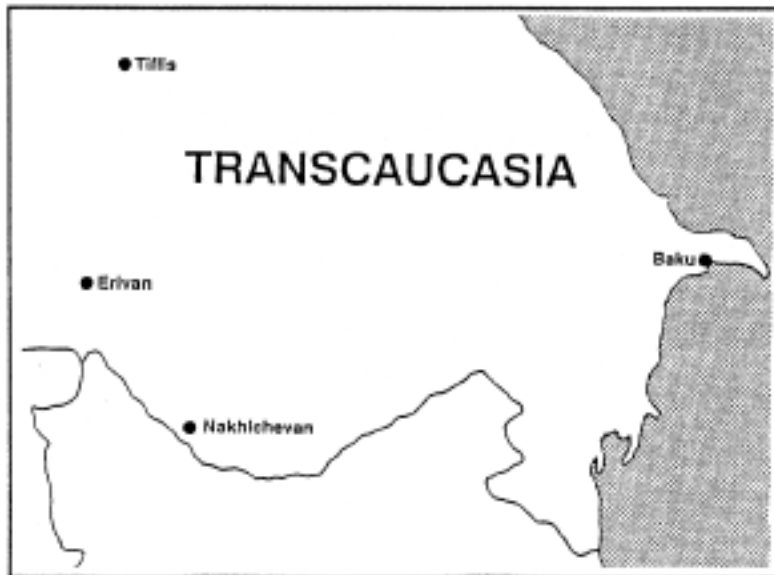
The Effect on the People of the East

The most important effect of the 1894-1909 rebellions was on the minds of the populace of Eastern Anatolia. It must be remembered that the rebellions of the 1890s came after 70 years of forced migration and death of the Muslims of the Caucasus who had come under Christian control. The lesson of what happened to Muslims once conquered was evident whenever the refugees from the Caucasus, now settled in the Ottoman Empire, were seen. The slaughter in Zeytun had taught the Muslims what to expect if the Armenians won. The Armenians had learned from Adana what to expect if they lost. Both sides had been taught to expect no quarter and to give none. The situation had become one in which both Muslims and Armenians knew that they must take sides in the coming battle if they were to survive.

Transcaucasia, 1905

The final preliminary to the destruction of the peoples of the East in World War I came in Transcaucasia. In 1905 the Russian system had broken down. Following their defeat in the war with Japan, the Russian government was engulfed by strikes and peasant revolts. Revolts

spread quickly to the Caucasus. In most of the Empire, the Tsar triumphed over the revolutionaries by a mixture of conciliation and military force, but in Transcaucasia the Russians were able to adopt another policy. They withdrew civil and military authority and let revolution degenerate into sectarian violence. The center of the revolution in the Caucasus



was naturally the industrial city of Baku. There, the Armenians and Turks took advantage of the revolution to kill each other rather than to oppose the Tsar. A British consul reported that there were two waves of pitched battles between Armenians and Turks of Baku, in February and in September. He estimated that in February approximately 900 Armenians and 700 Muslims were killed, in September 275 Muslims, 95 Armenians, and 150 Russians died. The actual numbers of deaths were probably greater.

While the battles went on in Baku, Armenian and Turkish villagers were murdering each other in rural regions in Nakhichevan and the southern part of Yerevan. Whole villages were burned to the ground and murders were common. Although the numbers of dead were uncounted, it is known that the massacres were local in origin and execution. Armenian villagers killed Turkish villagers with knives and clubs, and vice versa. The most common reason for the carnage given by observers at the time was what they called “race hatred.”

With the 1905 revolution defeated, the Russians reasserted their control over both the Armenians and the Turks with a heavy hand. The lesson learned was the same ones learned in Anatolia, “if the other side wins, you will die.”

Points of Interest

1. Armenian revolutionaries were able to take advantage of their unique knowledge in fomenting rebellion in the Ottoman East. They understood European ways and realized that drawing reprisals was the best way to insure Western support. At the same time, they knew Eastern Anatolia and knew the best ways to draw reprisals (e.g., attack members of Kurdish tribes.)
2. The Armenian revolutionaries developed ties with other revolutionaries operating in Europe in the latter half of the nineteenth century. These included nationalist and socialist revolutionaries, and the Armenians were philosophically part of the great revolutionary movements of the time. However, the Armenians were different from the Germans, Russians, French, etc. in that they were a distinct minority in the land for which they planned a revolution. Germans or English could at least hope to convince the people of their lands to accept socialist revolution. Armenians could never hope to convince the majority of the people of Eastern Anatolia, the Muslims, to accept Armenian Nationalism. This difference separated the Armenians from their fellow revolutionaries, who at least theoretically believed in majority rule.
3. The rebellions of 1894-6 have often been cited as “Armenian Massacres,” or the slaughter of innocent Armenians by Turks. Leaving aside the fact that such judgements ignore the murders of Turks and Kurds, there is a matter of common sense to consider. Because some wish to never admit that Armenians had a part in the creation of their own history of suffering, they are forced to ignore all Armenian actions against Turks. This leaves them with some difficult explanations. Why would the Turks, who had lived in relative peace with the Armenians for centuries, suddenly start to attack them? Is it just an incredible coincidence that the troubles in the East began as soon as Armenian revolutionaries began to organize there? Apologists for the Armenian Cause have resorted to the Devil Theory of History to explain what they allege were Turkish actions--a dormant evil tendency in the Turks awakened, stimulated by evil politicians. Such explanations can only seem believable if at least half the facts are ignored and one is willing to accept the absurdities of the Devil Theory. The antidote to this type of history is common sense.

5

World War I

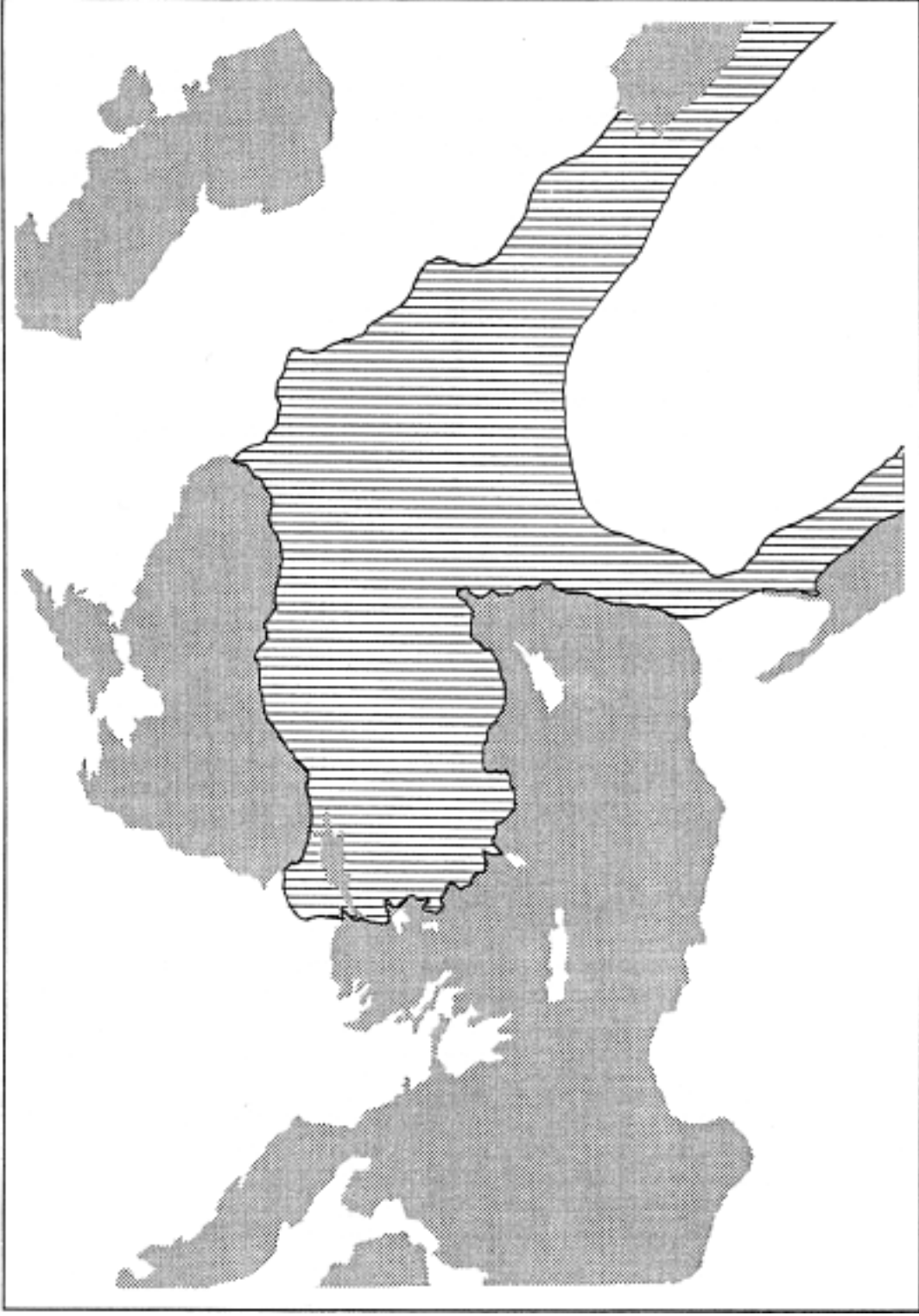
*World War
and
Civil War*

The events of World War I in Eastern Anatolia have been commonly portrayed as a genocide of the Armenians by the simple expedient of never mentioning the murders of Muslims, only the murders of Armenians. In addition, by neglecting a history of conflict stretching back 100 years, one-sided accounts have made the events of 1915-1921 seem to be irrational outpourings of hatred, when in fact they were understandable, if awful, reactions to a horrible history and a terrible present. The lesson of war in Eastern Anatolia is not that Turks massacred Armenians, because such a statement ignores the fact that Armenians massacred Turks, as well. The lesson is that all the inhabitants of the Ottoman East suffered. They suffered such terrors that to try to choose whose torment was greater is absurd. Only nationalist propagandists and those who wish to carry the conflict of 1915 into our day would attempt to do so.

The War in the East

In Eastern Anatolia, World War I began in November, 1914 with a small, unsuccessful Russian attack over the Ottoman border. The Ottomans followed with a major, though equally unsuccessful, attack in December. Thus both sides initially failed to advance, but Ottoman losses had been great, whereas the Russian armies were intact. The Ottomans were, therefore, in a dangerous military position on their northeastern border. Compounding the external threat, the Ottomans were also beset by an internal adversary, a great Armenian revolution.

The Armenian revolution had actually commenced before the first battles of the war. In August, 1914, the Armenians of Zeytun rebelled against military conscription. All over Eastern Anatolia Armenian guerrilla bands organized and came out of hiding. Weapons, provided by



The Ottoman Empire in 1914

the Russian government and the Armenian revolutionary groups, were brought from hiding. (In one government investigation, Ottoman officials complained that the Armenian guerrillas possessed better weapons than did the Ottoman soldiers sent to fight them. Armenian Rebels in the city of Urfa were armed with machine guns, in short supply in most regular armies at the beginning of the war.) Supplies, including weapons, ammunition, and even uniforms, had been successfully hidden in anticipation of just such a conflict. The Russians, anticipating a war, had cooperated with the revolutionaries, rightly assuming that Armenian rebellion in wartime could only assist Russian conquest.

Armenian revolutionaries resolved to take advantage of the best chance they had ever seen for successful rebellion. The war had claimed all the soldiers who would ordinarily be stationed in the Eastern provinces. Even the **gendarmes** (paramilitary rural police force) had been sent to the front. Those Muslims who remained behind were females and very old and very young males. The Muslim villages of Eastern Anatolia were in essence defenseless.

In theory, young Armenian males should have been conscripted into the army along with Muslims, but tens of thousands escaped to join guerrilla bands or fled to Russia, ultimately to join the Russian army or its Armenian auxiliaries. Many feared ill-treatment in the Ottoman Army, others preferred to fight for the Armenian revolution. (The Ottomans had initially planned to integrate Armenians completely into the regular armed corps, but desertions and rebellion made them reconsider. Armenian soldiers were instead placed in labor battalions.)

Guerrilla War

Soon after the war began, Armenian bands were raiding all over Eastern Anatolia. Some sprang up locally and immediately began their attacks. Others were made up of Armenians who had crossed the Russian border for training and returned, organized into guerrilla bands. Guerrillas from Anatolia were joined by Armenians from the Russian Empire, largely recruited by the Dashnak Party and armed by the Russian government. The bands were a major military threat, not a minor irritant. The Ottomans estimated 30,000 armed Armenian guerrillas in Sivas Province alone. Approximately 8,000 Armenians from Mush, Van, and Bitlis were trained by the Russians in the town of Kaghizman alone, another 6,000 were trained in Ighdir. No one accurately counted the numbers, but unquestionably there were more than 100,000 Armenian guerrillas or other fighters from Anatolia or the Russian territories fighting in Anatolia.

At first the Armenian rebels operated in classic guerrilla fashion, destroying communications, hampering military and governmental activities, and spreading terror. Recruiting units for the Ottoman Army came under particular attack, as did mail deliveries and telegraph lines. Gendarmerie posts, their usual squads spread thin by the war, were attacked. The first Muslim villages were raided. In short, the Armenian guerrillas had begun to act as advance units of the Russian Army, "softening up" the territory of intended Russian invasion. The Armenian activities soon expanded.

In a very short time the Armenian guerrillas, aided by Armenian villagers and deserters from the Ottoman Army, went to an advanced stage of rebellion. They set about to seize the cities of the Ottoman East. In most cases they were unsuccessful, and the cities (such as Kara Hissar) or defensive redoubts (such as the famous Musa Dagh) which they seized were only briefly held against Ottoman counter-attack. In military terms, however, the rebel attacks were a success. The Ottomans were forced to withdraw whole divisions from the Russian Front to meet the internal threat from the Armenians. The result was Russian invasion.

The Van Rebellion

The most successful of the Armenian rebellions, the taking of the City of Van, is indicative of Armenian plans and actions throughout the Ottoman East. In March of 1915, rebellion flared all over Van Province. The rebellion quickly took on the character of an inter-communal war. Armed Armenian bands attacked Kurdish villages. Kurdish tribesmen then retaliated by attacking Armenian villages. Wholesale massacres followed on both sides.

Armenian revolutionaries had secreted arms in the City of Van and surrounding villages. Throughout April, 1915, Armenian rebels infiltrated the city, which was policed only by small detachments of security forces. Clashes with Ottoman police in the city began on April 13. By April 20, the rebels had begun to fire on police stations, other government buildings, and Muslim houses. The security forces were defeated and forced to withdraw from the city in the first part of May. During and immediately after the Armenian takeover the Muslims who could not escape the city were killed, as were the Muslim inhabitants of surrounding villages which came under Armenian control. In one incident, Muslims from villages to the North of Van were herded into the village of Zeve, where all but a few of the approximately 3,000 Muslim villagers were killed. Similar incidents took place throughout the region. In Van itself, the entire Muslim quarter of the city was destroyed. No Muslims were left alive in the city. Refugees were set upon on the roads by Armenian guerrillas, who killed untold numbers.

While the massacres went on in Van remote Armenian villages came under attack themselves. Their inhabitants were slaughtered, just as the Muslim villagers were slaughtered elsewhere. The lines of battle were drawn in a war in which all were combatants. Undoubtedly most of the Armenians and most of the Muslims had no desire to kill. Both sides were forced to join with their fellows for defense and, in order to defend themselves, to attack.

The Ottomans rushed soldiers to Van, but the Armenians held the city until they could be relieved by the Russians. Spearheaded by Armenian units from the Caucasus, the Russian



Army arrived in Van at the end of May. An Armenian governor was appointed and Armenians from all over Eastern Anatolia encouraged to come to the new Armenia. Hundreds of thousands came to the Russian-occupied zone. The surviving Muslims of the region became refugees. However, the Armenian triumph was short-lived. Reinforced Ottoman forces briefly regained the city and forced the Russians to retreat north. They were accompanied by the entire Armenian population of Van, now swelled by the recently arrived Armenians from other regions. The surviving Muslims returned, only to be forced to flee once again when the Russians counter-attacked in Fall.

The terror of Van was repeated in other cities as the Russians and Armenians advanced. In Bitlis and other cities Muslim men, women, and children were hunted down and murdered in the streets. Villagers fled before the advancing armies to be massacred on the roads by Armenian guerrilla units. When Bitlis was retaken an Ottoman investigation team questioned surviving refugees, surveyed the ruins, and reported their findings. The central mosque, Great Mosque, 13 other mosques, and other religious buildings had been obliterated. One mosque had survived because it had been turned into a stable. The major commercial and military warehouses and all government buildings had been destroyed, as well, along with most Muslim houses. The city was a ruin.

Russian Advance

After some setbacks, the Russian Army managed to hold far Eastern Anatolia through the end of 1915. In January of 1916 the Russians advanced west and defeated the Ottomans. By April, 1916 they had taken most of Eastern Anatolia. Trabzon, Erzurum, Mush, Bitlis, and Van all passed under Russian control. The victory of the Russians was also a victory for the Armenians. Those who had retreated with the Russians the previous August now returned from Transcaucasia. It was the turn of the Muslims to flee. Although the Russians kept some order in the northeastern cities and large towns, Armenian bands were allowed practically free rein in the southeast, and it was from that area that the largest number of Muslim migrants and Muslim dead came.

The Countryside

There is no need to go into the details of the pillage and massacre visited on Muslim villagers in the vast region conquered by the Russians. Armenian bands were especially responsible. Muslim villagers told stories of rape, murder, and general inhumanity which can easily be imagined. Perhaps the best indication of the general tragedy is the fact that the Muslims of the conquered region were forced to flee their homes and villages as a body to escape the Armenian fury. The Ottoman Commission on Refugees enumerated more than 850,000 Muslim refugees from the Russian conquest. As these were only the officially known refugees, it seems probable that more than one million Muslims actually fled. Unfortunately, in the midst of war the Ottoman government was unable to offer much assistance to the refugees.

In areas still under Muslim control, many Armenian villagers suffered in much the same way as Muslim villagers. Because the Armenians were victorious in the first stages of the war, they certainly did not suffer as badly as the Muslims in 1915 or 1916, but Armenians who were at the mercy of Kurdish bands or escaping Muslim villagers were massacred. There was no question of quarter or mercy on either side. Some Armenians were rescued by Muslims of principle, just as some Muslims were rescued by principled Armenians. However, the stories of such nobility are too few to have been significant. To Muslims and Armenians caught up in war and revolution beyond their control, killing enemies must have seemed the only way to protect themselves and their families from those who, given the chance, would have killed them.

Deportations

The Ottoman governmental response to the Armenian rebellion was to apply a classic Middle Eastern tactic for pacifying a rebellious region—deportation. After the Van Rebellion, on May 27, 1915, a provisional law was passed ordering the forced relocation of Armenians. (The term “deportation” is used here because it is so commonly applied to the Armenian experience, but it is erroneous. The Armenians were moved within the same country, not expelled to another country, as “deportation” implies.) The law was implemented months later. In the interval, Ottoman officials promulgated regulations intended to protect Armenian life and property and excusing some classes of Armenians, including Catholic Armenians, who were not viewed as a threat, from deportation.

The principle of the deportation was based on one of the few known ways to defeat a guerrilla insurgency and has been used from ancient up to modern times. Because guerrillas depend on local villages for supplies, support, and recruits, the guerrillas must be separated from the populace. As far back as the Byzantine Empire, groups of Armenians had been deported to other parts of the Empire. The Ottomans had for centuries deported groups who threatened civil order, including rebellious Turks.

The primary intent of the Ottoman order to deport Armenians was to deny support to the guerrilla bands, but there were also greater political and military motivations. According to the Regulations of Resettlement of Armenians, those deported were to be relocated away from railroads, war zones, and other strategic locations. After resettlement, no more than 10% of any region was to be Armenian. Obviously, the Ottoman government was concerned that Armenians were a danger to the Empire if they remained in strategic areas, and they intended to keep Armenians out of such areas. Equally obviously, the Ottomans intended that the Armenian population be diluted so that the “critical mass” of Armenian population would be too low for revolution.

The basic moral question of the Armenian deportations goes far beyond the history of the Ottoman Empire. Deportation of civilian populations because of real or imagined guerrilla threats has been practiced by many modern governments. How far can a government go in defeating a rebellion? If the rebellious population is a distinct minority attempting to impose its will on the majority, does this make deportation of the minority more morally justifiable? Can one cause real suffering to deportees in order to ultimately save more lives by ending a war (an argument analogous to that of bombing of civilians in World War II)? The moral questions are thorny, like all questions caught up in the ultimate immorality of warfare.

There were two errors or wrongs which, with the benefit of hindsight, can be seen in the Ottoman deportation policy; First, laws were passed to protect the Armenians, but too little consideration was given to the inability of Ottoman officials in the provinces to

provide protection for the columns of Armenian migrants. Orders were indeed sent from Istanbul ordering local administrators to protect lives and property of the deportees, and there was no reason to send out such orders if they were not meant to be enforced. However, soldiers and gendarmes had been sent off to fight the Russians. The governors in the East had the choice of using the few gendarmes they had to protect Muslim villages from Armenian bands or to protect Armenians from Muslims. They chose to protect their own, as people usually will. Second, the Ottomans carried their deportation of Armenians beyond the boundaries of the war zone. Many Armenians were deported from coastal regions in which the threat of invasion was only possible, not imminent, and from interior regions. Once again with hindsight, we can see that Armenians in central Anatolia did not provide enough of a threat to justify the drastic action of deportation.

To be understood, the Armenian deportations must be viewed in perspective. The relocation order was not a decision made in a time that allowed calm and disinterested calculation. The order to remove Armenians was part of a regime of forced migrations\deportations that affected both Muslims and Armenians:

The order to deport Armenians came in response to Armenian rebellion in the East, which included the expulsion from their homes of countless Turks and Kurds. The first order came on May 27, 1915, after the Van rebellion of April 13, 1915. Other attacks on Muslims occurred even earlier.

The Armenians were not the only civilians forced to leave their homes. Muslims of Eastern Anatolia were forced out just as surely as were Armenians. The deportations ordered by the Ottoman government may have looked more official, but the deportations forced by the Russians and the Armenian bands were just as real. In fact, the worst forced migrations in the East were those caused by pillage and massacre, not by official actions of the Ottoman government, and the survival rate was far worse.

The Ottoman government was incapable of protecting many of those it ordered deported, which does not appear to have been a primary concern to the Ottomans, but should have been.

The Armenian deportations were publicly announced by the Ottoman government, which declared them to be necessary expedients of war. Whether the forced migration of Eastern Anatolian Muslims was an

officially decided policy of the Russian government and the Armenian revolutionary parties has never been admitted, and documents on deportation of Muslims from the Russian or Dashnak (Armenian Revolutionary Federation) archives have never been made available for neutral study. However, the actions of the Russians and Armenians appear as if they were part of a plan that had been arranged for greatest effect.

The Ottomans at least made attempts to protect many Armenians from the hatred of local Muslims and from Kurdish raids. Laws were passed ordering protective measures for the Armenian deportees. Ottoman civilian and military officials tried and punished (including executions) more than a thousand of those who had persecuted the Armenians. On the other hand, the Russian government and the Armenian revolutionaries were completely ruthless in forcing the migration of Muslims. No Russians or Armenians were tried for their crimes against Muslims.

Was There a Genocide?

It has been alleged that the Ottoman government had a secret purpose in the deportation of the Armenians--genocide. Armenian Nationalists and their supporters have contended since World War I that deportation was a subterfuge for mass murder. To date, no evidence of any central government plot to annihilate the Armenians has surfaced, although Armenian sources have produced documents later proved to be forged. The actual documents ordering deportation indicate a solicitousness for the welfare of the deported Armenians. However, those on one side of the debate claim such documents were "window dressing" intended to deceive, even though they were internal government documents later found in archives and never intended for publication by the Ottomans. The issue may never be resolved, because those for whom Armenian genocide is an article of belief will always claim that Ottoman archival documents are false. Of course, they would immediately accept as genuine any Ottoman document that explicitly ordered the murder of Armenians. However, as such a document would have to contradict all other known documents on the subject, it seems doubtful that it has ever existed.

The actions of the Ottomans make it difficult to believe that a genocide had been ordered. Why was there no genocide of the tens of thousands of Armenians who lived in Istanbul, Izmir, the European section of the Empire, or other areas, and who survived the war unmoved and unharmed? Some might argue that the Ottomans left those Armenians

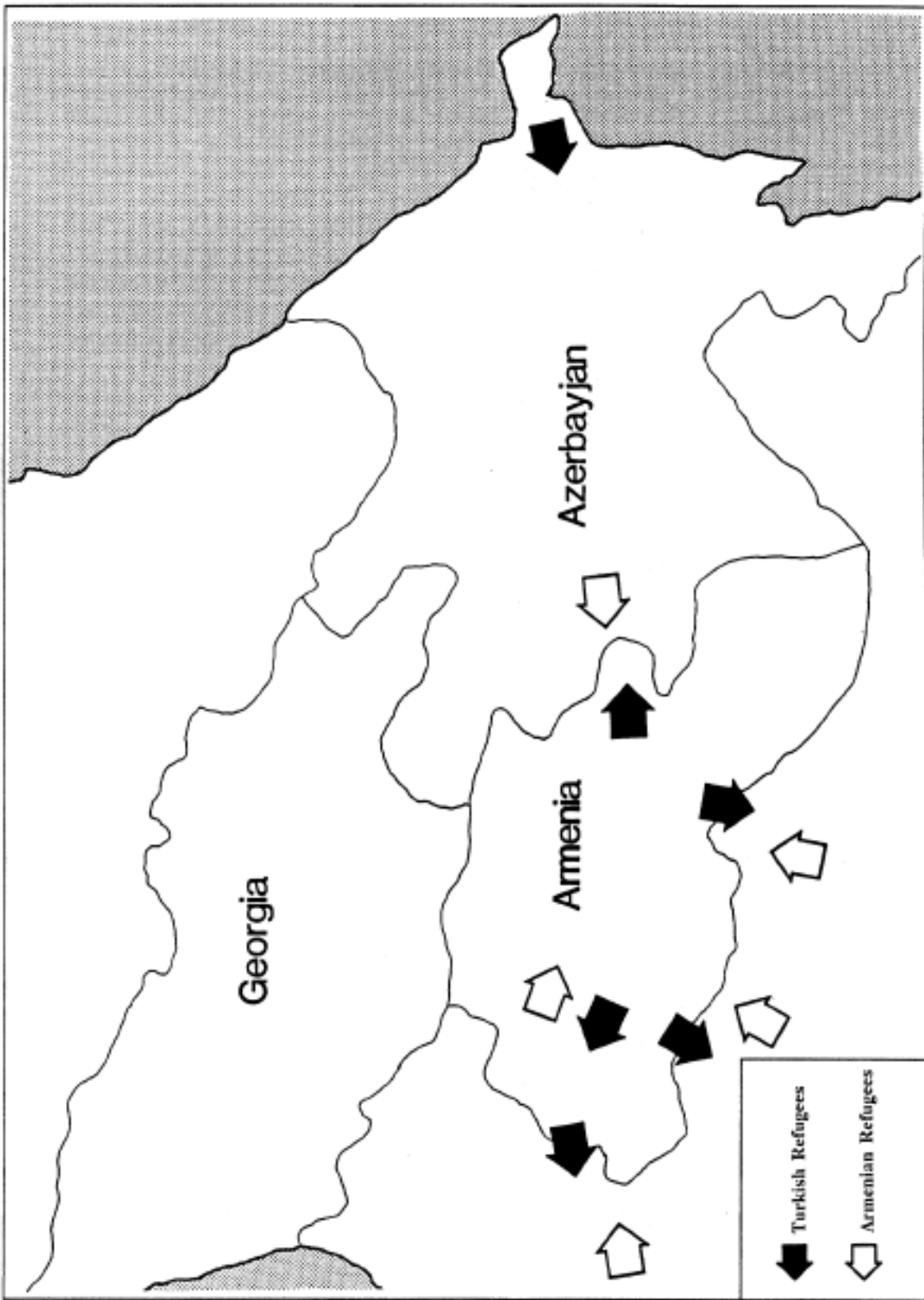
alone for fear of adverse publicity, but the adverse publicity was already there. The Western Press was already ignoring the deaths of Turks and grossly exaggerating the deaths of Armenians. If they intended to kill all the Armenians, and the Allies were already claiming that they so intended, why allow the Armenians to survive? Most convincing is the evidence of the survival of many of those who were deported. Many in the columns of deported Armenians were attacked by tribes and bandits and did indeed die from murder, starvation, and disease, but how does one explain the columns that arrived intact and the more than 200,000 Armenian deportees who lived out the war in Syria? If genocide had been ordered, why were they not killed? They were completely under Ottoman control and killing them would have been simple, had it been intended.

A government-ordered genocide did not exist in Eastern Anatolia, but there is a wider definition of genocide that applies. If genocide can be the action of one **people** against another, then genocide was definitely present in Eastern Anatolia. Both Turks and Armenians were its victims, and both were its perpetrators. Armenians killed Turks because they were Turks. Turks killed Armenians because they were Armenians. They had little choice. After the first days of the war, Turks and other Muslims knew that there could be no neutrality in the civil war with the Armenians. They would be killed because they were hated as Turks, not because of any political or tactical reason. Armenians were in the same situation. The extermination was mutual extermination.

1916-17

Not all the Muslims of Russian-conquered Eastern Anatolia were refugees, although up to one-half of the Muslim population had been forced to flee. Those who remained were generally in and near urban areas, particularly in northeast areas such as Erzurum and Trabzon where they were under close supervision of the Russian military. The Russians bore the Muslims no special affection, but Muslims under their direct control seem to have fared better than those in the countryside, who were the prey of Armenian bands. The remaining Turkish population was, in any case, composed almost exclusively of females and males too young or old to fight, and so was little danger to the Russian occupiers. Members of the semi-nomadic Kurdish tribes were also relatively safe. After the first days of Ottoman defeat the leaders of most of the tribes made grudging peace with the Russians. The mutual hatred of the Kurds and Armenians, which had grown large during the Armenian Rebellion, was in abeyance, to emerge with full force when Russian power later disappeared.

There is little evidence of the status of Muslims in rural areas not controlled by regular Russian troops. Refugee migration of Muslims continued, and the refugees brought



Refugees from Armenia and Azerbaijan (1918 borders)

with them stories of ill-treatment and massacres. Away from major cities the countryside, particularly in the area from Lake Van to the Russian border, had been almost denuded of Muslims, so that region was especially quiet.

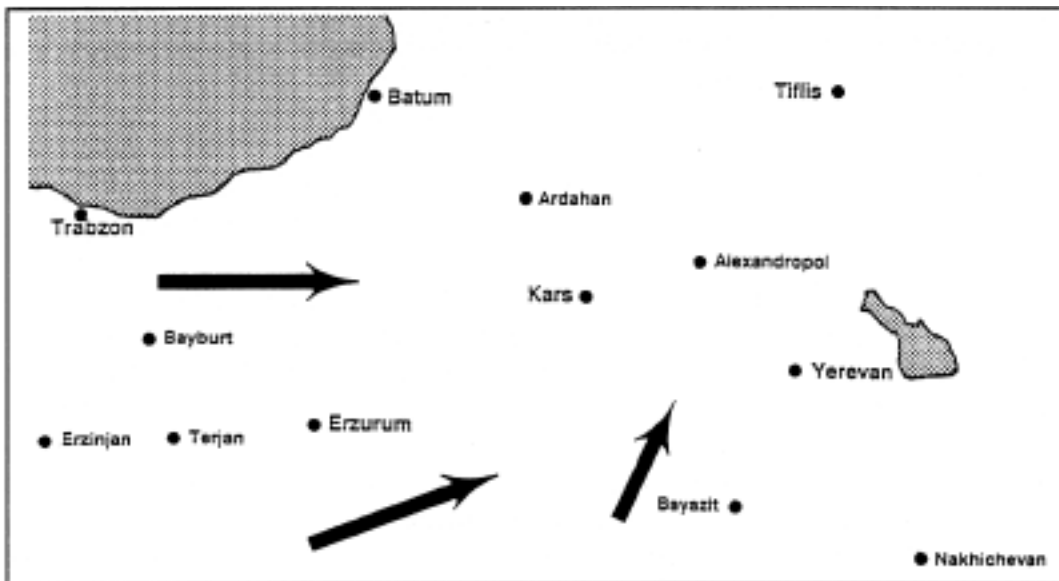
The End of the War in the East

By the Spring of 1917 the Russian Army had consolidated its hold on its conquests and was preparing further advances. It is doubtful if the Ottoman Army, which was also fighting in Syria, Iraq, and Europe, would have been able to resist Russian victory. The Ottomans and the Muslims of the East were saved by the Russian Revolution. Like their fellows who were fighting Germany, Russian soldiers in Anatolia deserted when they received word of the Revolution. All that remained were Russian officers, troops from Russian Transcaucasia (mainly Armenians), and Armenian guerrilla units.

The Armenians of Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus created a new Armenian Republic out of the old Russian Province of Yerevan and lands in Eastern Anatolia. The Republic attempted to hold all the old Russian conquest as part of the new Armenia, but they failed. An attempt at a Transcaucasian Federation, which included Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, foundered when the new states quarrelled over land. Thus the Armenian Republic was left to fight the Ottomans for Eastern Anatolia. What ensued was a continuation of the murderous inter-communal wars of 1915-16.

The Armenian Retreat

Even before the Ottoman advance, the Armenians saw that they could not hold all the territory they claimed. Half the Muslim population had fled and a great number had died, but the Armenians were still a minority. Moreover, the arrival of the Ottoman army, now the strongest force in Eastern Anatolia, was imminent. The Armenians retreated. Men, women, and children fled north from eastern Anatolia into Transcaucasia, where they suffered greatly from starvation and disease. As the Armenians retreated, they demolished all remaining Muslim buildings and burned what crops and moveable property that could not be taken. The Muslims who had remained in the region and who could be captured during the Armenian retreat were killed. As the Armenians left, the surviving Muslim refugees returned to their lands. They found devastation and a land almost devoid of both Turks and Armenians. Of the small number of Armenians who remained in the region, only those lucky enough to be put under the guard of the Ottoman regular army in the cities survived the vengeance of the returning Muslims.



The Armenian Retreat

In the northern regions near the Russian border, the Armenian Republic attempted to make a stand, but the Armenian forces were easily defeated by Ottoman troops. The Armenians fell back in disarray. On their retreat they destroyed everything in their path. Only the rapid advance of the Ottoman army saved the Muslim population, because the retreating Armenians had limited time to work. When the Ottoman soldiers entered the city of Erzinjan they found all public and Islamic buildings and more than 1,000 houses demolished. Hundreds of bodies of Erzinjan's Turks were found in the streets, hundreds more in wells or shallow graves. In other cities the scenes awaiting the Ottoman soldiers were similar. 400 buildings in Bayburt had been burned down and hundreds of bodies were in the streets. Terjan had been completely destroyed by dynamite. In Erzurum, the greatest city of the East, Ottoman officials estimated that 8,000 Turks had been killed in the city alone. The figure may have been exaggerated, but the soldiers did count and record each body buried by them and 2,127 male bodies were buried in the first 8 days. Out of a sense of decency, the soldiers did not count the female bodies buried or report what had happened to them.

The atrocities in the cities were repeated in the villages. On the Armenian line of retreat the Muslims who could not flee were killed. Very few houses and no complete villages remained. An Austrian newspaper reporter, who could not be accused of liking the Russians, Austria's enemy, stated that the Russians had treated the people of the region

relatively well, but that when Russia collapsed Armenian gangs destroyed the Turks. Dr. Stephan Eshnanie traveled the region and wrote “I have been observing the evidence of the cruelties of the Armenians at almost every step. All the villages from Trabzon to Erzinjan and from Erzinjan to Erzurum are destroyed.”¹ Turkish refugees, the remainder of the original population, who had been able to remain during the Russian occupation, now choked the roads.

There can be no doubt that Armenians who were captured on their retreat shared in the fate of the Turks. As in Southeastern Anatolia, too much had passed between the two peoples for quarter to be given. Once again as in the Southeast, the only protection for the few remaining Armenians lay with the Ottoman Army. It is instructive that American missionaries were allowed by the Ottomans (and later the Turkish Army) to continue to feed and clothe Armenian orphans. No record exists of Armenians allowing the same latitude to Turkish orphans. The condition of Turkish toleration of the missionary efforts was that Muslim orphans now also be fed.

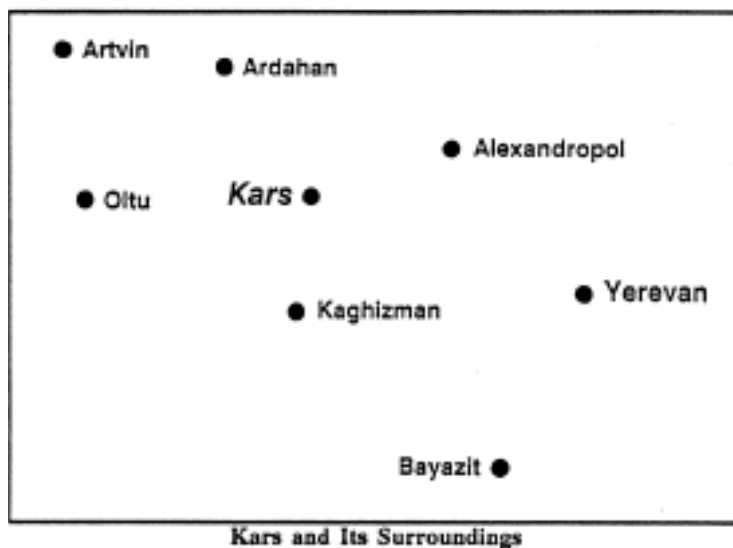
The Armenian Republic and the Turks of Kars

The Armenian Republic was granted a respite when the Ottomans admitted defeat and signed the Mudros Armistice with the Allies (October 30, 1918). The Allies had decided to create a Greater Armenia, including the old Russian province of Yerevan and adjoining areas, as well as most of the parts of Anatolia claimed by the Armenian Nationalists. Only the area called Cilicia (around the Ottoman province of Adana) was to be excluded, as it had already been claimed by the French. The Allies quickly set about attempting to disarm Ottoman soldiers and other Turks, who could be expected to oppose their plans.

In the province of Kars, which had been taken from the Ottoman Empire by the Russians in 1878, local Turks attempted to create an independent government, citing President Wilson’s principle of majority rule. However, on April 19, 1919 the British Army occupied Kars, gave civilian and military power over to the Armenians, then withdrew. The British planned for Kars to be included in the Armenian Republic, even though the Russian pre-war census had shown Kars Province to be over 50% Muslim. Turkish appeals to Woodrow Wilson’s “Fourteen Points,” which guaranteed majority rule, were ignored.

The Turks of Kars were effectively disarmed, but the British could not disarm the Kurds of the mountains. The Kurds almost immediately drove all Armenians from the mountainous regions, and soldiers of the Armenian Republic set about ridding the lowland

1. reported to the **Nues Wiener Tagblatt**, **Prester Lloyd**, etc.



areas of the Turks who dwelled there. The fate of the Turks was almost an exact replica of what had occurred earlier in Eastern Anatolia. Murder, pillage, and the destruction of Turkish homes and entire Turkish villages drove the Turks of Kars to the mountains or south and west to the safety afforded by remaining units of the Ottoman Army. The British had left the scene to the Armenians. Therefore,

few Europeans were present to observe the carnage. One British observer, Colonel Rawlinson, who was assigned to supervise the disarmament of Ottoman soldiers, saw what was occurring. He wired to his superiors, "in the interests of humanity the Armenians should not be left in independent command of the Moslem population, as, their troops being without discipline and not being under effective control, atrocities were constantly being committed . . ." ² No one but the Ottoman soldiers paid heed to his analysis. They refused to surrender their weapons and prepared to attack.

Ottoman armies in northeastern Anatolia had remained intact after the war's end. They became the nucleus of the eastern army of the Turkish Nationalists. Under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal (later Ataturk), the Nationalists had created a new Turkish government in Ankara. They had resolved to resist the Allied dismemberment of Anatolia. Their forces in the East, which included units of the old Ottoman Army, soldiers from disbanded Ottoman units, and local Turks, attacked the Armenian forces and swiftly defeated them. It was then the Armenians of Kars who fled, to Yerevan Province. The Turkish refugees returned. They were joined by more than 200,000 Turks and other Muslims from Yerevan and other areas of the Caucasus, who had been forced in turn to flee from the Armenians.

2. A. Rawlinson, *Adventures in the Near East, 1918-1922*, London, 1925, page 227.

Armenia and Azerbaijan

During the world war, Russian military power kept any recurrence of the 1905 troubles between Armenians and Azeri Turks from breaking out. However, strife arose once again during the Russian Revolution when Russian power disappeared. The population of the largest city of Azerbaijan, Baku, was made up primarily of Turks, Armenians, and Russians. Because of the highly developed oil industry in Western Transcaucasia, Baku was an industrialized city and had a large class of industrial workers. The effects of the Russian Revolution thus were seen in Baku more than in the rest of the Transcaucasian region. The city was ruled by a revolutionary government (the so-called Baku Commune) in which most power was held by the Dashnak Party and the Bolsheviks. The Armenians and Bolsheviks felt that the Turks, represented by a Muslim political party, were loyal to their co-religionists in the Ottoman Empire rather than to the revolution. Street fighting broke out between the Armenians and Turks, fed by hatred between the two. Because the Bolsheviks aided the Armenians, the Turks were easily routed and a massacre of Turks began (March 30 to April 1, 1918). Between 8,000 and 12,000 Muslims were killed in the city alone and half the city's Turks were forced to flee. As the Ottoman Army advanced into the Western Caucasus, the Armenian Revolutionary forces in Baku fled and the Turks took their revenge. Almost 9,000 Armenians were killed on the night of September 14-15. The Ottomans entered the city on September 16 and restored order.

In the rest of Azerbaijan the Azeri Turks were initially at a great disadvantage. Comparatively much more well-armed, Armenian military forces were able to attack



Armenia and Azerbaijan (Modern Borders)

unarmed Turkish villages. Their intent was to cause the Turks to flee so that the Armenian State would have larger, more secure borders, and they were initially successful. American intelligence sources estimated that 60,000 Turks were forced to flee and that 420 Muslim villages had been destroyed by the Armenian forces.

In Yerevan Province, the Armenian government applied by then traditional tactics in clearing the Armenian Republic of Turks. Massacres and destroyed villages were an incentive to flight for the Turks. By the end of the conflict, 180,000 Muslims, more than two-thirds of the Muslim population of Yerevan province, had either been killed or forced to flee.

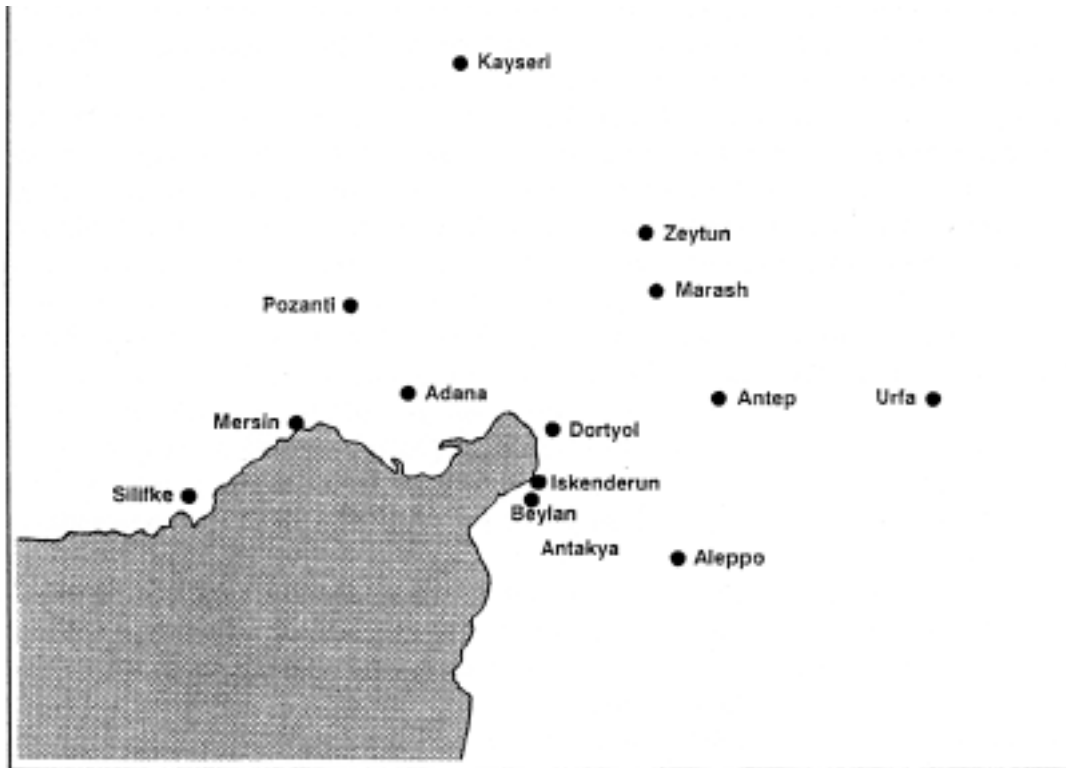
By 1920, the Turks of Azerbaijan had developed their power and were able to resist, aided by the resurgent Turkish Nationalists in Northeastern Anatolia. They held the Armenians to approximately the old borders of the Yerevan Province. As in Anatolia, Kars, and Baku, Armenian civilians now were forced to flee. They crossed from Azerbaijan into the Armenian Republic, effectively taking the place of the Turks of Yerevan. Conflict between the Azeri Turks and the Armenians was, in the end, stopped by the Soviet Conquest of Transcaucasia, only to break out once again in the 1980s.

Cilicia

The terms of the Armistice signed by the Ottomans and the Allied Powers did not allow the Allies to occupy the region of South Central Anatolia (the region of Adana and its surroundings). Nevertheless, the French did occupy the region. They had claimed Cilicia in secret wartime agreements to divide the Ottoman Empire and viewed the region as the northernmost extension of their claims in Syria.

In compliance with the Armistice, Ottoman troops had moved out of Cilicia when the French arrived. Very few French troops were used in the occupation. The first troops to arrive were the Armenian Legion, Armenians from Ottoman Anatolia and elsewhere who had enlisted with the French Legion of the Orient. Armenian revolutionaries were strongly represented in the Legion. Immediately upon their arrival attacks on Turks began. Scenes from Eastern Anatolia were reenacted in Cilicia. Murder and pillage forced the flight of unknown numbers of Turks.

The Armenian Legion was soon joined by Armenian refugees from Anatolia and elsewhere, many of them previously deported to Syria by the Ottomans. 8,000 were sent by Allied ships alone. Thousands more came by land. In the end, tens of thousands of Armenians arrived, joining thousands who had remained throughout the war. The actions of the Armenian Legion troops horrified even the British and the French. They disbanded the Armenian Legion in Cilicia, but Armenian troops joined into bands made up of refugees, local Armenians, and deserting Legionnaires. If anything, rape, murder, and



pillage increased. The Armenian refugees began to occupy Turkish homes, asserting that the homes had been taken from Armenians during the war. Undoubtedly some of the homes had been Armenian homes, but most surely were simply the best homes available. As many of the Turks were themselves refugees who had lost their own homes, the situation was volatile. Attacks on Muslims and seizure of Muslim land and property quickly led to Muslim resistance.

By late winter of 1919 Armenian and Turkish bands were operating throughout Cilicia. Each engaged in murders of civilians of the other group. Yet despite general anarchy in the countryside the French advanced to the West to include more territory in what they viewed as their new colony. They advanced on Marash and took the city, the “French” troops made up mainly of Armenians and Senegalese colonial levies. The French had taken a large territory, but in Marash they were met by organized resistance. Around Marash, Turkish Nationalist troops had united remnants of the Ottoman Army and local Turkish bands. These attacked Marash and took the city. The French and Armenians retreated, destroying every Turkish village in their path. Local Turks, in turn, killed the Armenians who fell into their hands. Until Turkish Nationalist authority was established

in the Marash District, massacre by both sides was endemic. Similar conditions were seen all over Cilicia until the French made peace with the Turkish Nationalists and withdrew to Syria. The Armenian population accompanied the French.

The French mistake in Cilicia had been to use Armenian troops, thus extending the inter-communal war after the international war had ended. General Gourad, the French commander, commented on the actions in Marash: "The majority of troops were made up of French colonials and of Armenians. They burned and destroyed many Turkish villages as punitive measures in their advance and practically all Turkish villages in their retreat from Marash."³ It is likely that the French reliance on Armenian troops, because it caused the Turks to organize in resistance, cost them Cilicia. Given the history of the previous four years, it was impossible that Armenians and Turks could live together in peace in 1919.

The Results of the War

At the end of the war, Eastern Anatolia was all but a wasteland. The Armenians had fled to Syria and Transcaucasia. The Turks had won, but the victory was bitter. Much of Eastern Anatolia had been destroyed in the war, more during the Armenian retreat. Hundreds of thousands of Muslim refugees returned to find villages and homes destroyed. Crops and trees had been burned to the ground, and those returning had little seed and few domestic animals to begin farming again. The cities of Eastern Anatolia were to a great degree demolished. In Van and Bitlis, for example, Armenians had destroyed all but a few of the Muslim houses and all public buildings and Muslim religious structures. Scarcely ten percent of the population of the cities remained. On the line of retreat from Erzurum to the Transcaucasian border two-thirds of the housing had been razed. In many areas, there was little remaining. The victors were left with very little more than the vanquished. Indeed, in some ways the vanquished gained more, because many millions of dollars of American and European aid came to the Armenians. None came to the Turks.

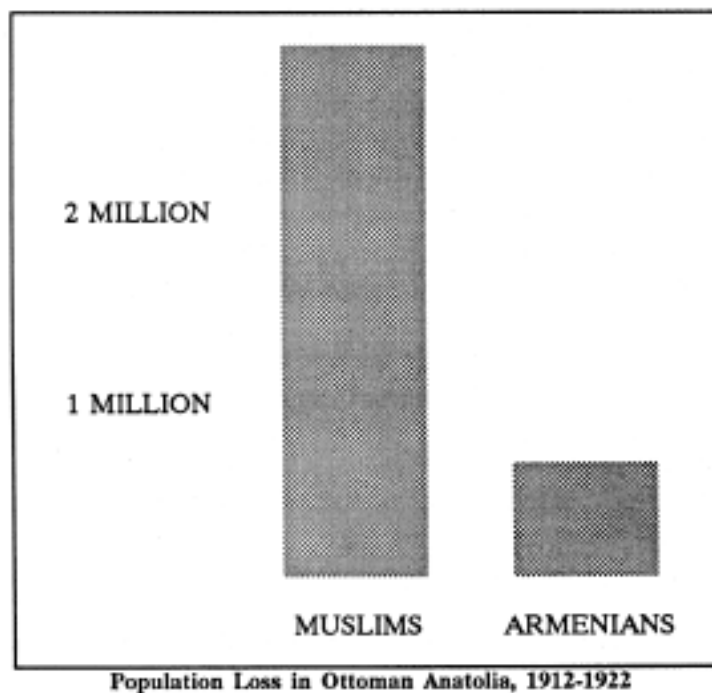
Mortality

It is difficult to estimate the numbers of Muslims and Armenians in Eastern Anatolia alone who lost their lives in the first world war and the Turkish-Armenian War. We have population statistics for periods immediately before and after the wars. However,

3. Quoted by General Hamelin in a letter to the High Commissioner, February 2, 1919, in the official history, *Les Armees Francaises au Levant*, vol. 1, page 122.

so many people were refugees who did not return to their homes that it is impossible to count the deaths in Eastern Anatolia alone. We do know the figures for those who did not survive in Anatolia as a whole, based on careful study of census records (as opposed to the guesses that are usually published). Almost 600,000 Anatolian Armenians died and more than 2.5 million Muslims. In the war zones of the East, more than half the population of some provinces, Muslims and Armenians, had died. The deaths of Armenians by province cannot be ascertained, but in the war-torn provinces mortality must have been especially great for both Muslims and Armenians. For example, of the Muslims who had lived in Van Province before the wars, more than 60% were gone at wars' end. Mortality among the Armenians of Van must have been as great.

The Eastern Anatolian wars were among the worst ever fought. To put the losses into perspective, the percentage of population lost in Anatolia in World War I was more than 25 times greater than the percentage loss in France, England, and Germany in the wartime period. If World War I in Europe is justly portrayed as horrible, what can one say of World War I in Anatolia? The horror of those times is unimaginable. As to comparisons of suffering, both sides suffered so much that to attempt to decide who suffered more is obscene.



The Great Population Exchange

By 1922 the great exchange of Muslim and Armenian populations was over. Regions in the Caucasus such as Circassia, Abkhazia, Lazistan, and Yerevan which had been filled with Muslim peoples were now the lands of Armenians and Russians. Anatolia, the heartland of Armenians for millennia was practically devoid of Armenians. In 100 years more than two million Muslims had set out for the Ottoman Empire from the Crimea and the Caucasus. More than 550,000 Armenians had gone to Transcaucasia from Anatolia. Within Transcaucasia, many had crossed from Azerbaijan into Armenia and from Armenia into Azerbaijan. In every step of the mass migration, great numbers of Muslims and Armenians were lost. The populations were exchanged, at great cost.

Conclusion

The events of World War I in Eastern Anatolia have been publicized as “The Armenian Genocide,” largely because only one side of the history of the inter-communal war has been seen. Genocide is a word of great power and vast value as propaganda. It is also a word with many imprecise definitions. At base, genocide is the killing, the attempted annihilation, of members of a group because they are members of that group. Whether the word can be ascribed to the mutual murder, starvation, and disease in Eastern Anatolia is doubtful. If there was genocide in Anatolia, it was genocide conducted by two groups, each desiring to see the other dead. It would seem to be far better to study the history of the Armenians and the Turks as a great human loss, and to abandon propagandistic terms.

What transpired in Eastern Anatolia was one of history’s worst human disasters. Its causes lay back one hundred years in the Russian conquests and in nationalism and religious separatism. Blame must be apportioned to the Russian government, which had no legitimate right to the lands it conquered, to the French, British, and Americans, who ignored their own avowed principles of majority rule, to the Ottoman government, which was not strong enough to defend its Empire from Russia or to protect its people from each other, and to the Armenian Nationalists, who were willing to sacrifice their own people in the name of their ideology.

History as related in this chapter stands opposed to the histories of what has been called The Armenian Massacres or The Armenian Genocide. But it is important to note that the opposition is not complete. It would be just as false to declare that there were no massacres of Armenians as to declare that there were no massacres of Turks. The deaths in Eastern Anatolia and the southern Caucasus were the product of international war and civil war. Millions on both sides were forced to flee their homes, often to be murdered or to die of disease or starvation. The political aims of Turks and Armenians are worth consideration, but they are secondary to consideration of the depth of human misery. Those who consider only Armenian suffering may satisfy their nationalistic ends, but they falsify the history, which was a history of human torment, and should be considered as such.

Points of Interest

1. Because the events of World War I in the Ottoman East have long been obscured by nationalistic concerns and prejudices, they have often not been considered as historical events like other historical events. In fact, they are similar to what has often been seen in other areas at other times. The use of guerrilla troops to disrupt communications and government and military organization behind the lines has long been a pattern of warfare. The Armenian actions in Eastern Anatolia can be viewed as just such a military maneuver. From the viewpoint of Russian aims, they were exactly that. The Ottoman deportation of the Armenians was also a classic military action. Middle Eastern governments have made use of strategic deportations for millennia. Smaller-scale strategic deportations have been a standard feature of modern fights against guerrilla forces. They have been seen in guerrilla wars in Africa, Southeast Asia, the Balkans, and elsewhere in modern times. In every case, the intent has been to deny local support to guerrilla forces, just as was the intent in the Ottoman East. Thus both the Ottomans and the Russians made use of classic military operations in the first world war.
2. The Ottoman order to deport the Armenians has long been criticized. Even though those who have led the cry against the Ottomans have neglected much of the historical record and acted from nationalistic motives, there is nevertheless real reason to criticize the deportations. The Ottoman government was not successful in defending its Armenian citizens, who had a right to protection, and thus the government failed. However, the fact that thousands of Turks and other Muslims were tried and convicted for crimes against Armenians indicates that the Ottomans at least intended to have the law protect the Armenians.

The other side of the coin is seldom considered. Armenian revolutionary groups such as the Dashnaks, who even today claim to be the true representatives of the Armenian people, unquestionably ordered the deaths of great numbers of Turks and Kurds in Eastern Anatolia. They forced the migration of Muslims as surely as the Ottomans forced the migration of Armenians and, unlike the Ottomans, there is no record of any solicitousness shown by them to their opponents. No Armenians were ever tried by their own Armenian party or government for their attacks on Muslims. Their record toward their opponents is actually considerably worse than the Ottoman record, but this is seldom mentioned or considered.
3. The events of World War I in Eastern Anatolia and Transcaucasia cannot be understood outside of their historical context. This should be no surprise. Few

political events, if any, make sense unless their historical background is known. The onset of World War II, for example, would be incomprehensible if nothing was known of the development of German nationalism, World War I, the Versailles Peace Treaty, etc. Yet all too often those who write teachers' manuals and other materials on the Armenian Question are content to consider the fate of the Ottoman Armenians out of their historical context. Perhaps worse, only one-half of the events of the war are presented-the deaths of Armenians are addressed, not the deaths of Turks. Whatever the ultimate judgement on the guilt of the Turks or the Armenians should be, it certainly cannot be arrived at by ignoring all the past history of the conflict between the two peoples and ignoring half of the events of the war.

6

American Opinions

*The
Effects
of
Prejudice*

The preceding chapters have presented a view of history that will be new to many readers. In the United States and Canada the Armenian-Turkish conflict has generally been assumed to have been a simple matter of Turks killing Armenians. Many Americans, perhaps most, have heard of the sufferings of the Armenians. Few have heard of the sufferings of the Turks. Scholars have disagreed with the conventional wisdom on the Turks and Armenians, but their scholarly works have not caught the popular imagination. Why is it that Americans have been so willing to believe only the best of the Armenians, and only the worst of the Turks? The answer lies in a prejudice against Muslims and Turks that began long ago.

The Image of Turks and Muslims in America

To find the extent of prejudice against Turks, one need only consult the dictionary. After the usual definitions of the name “Turk” by linguistic group and area of settlement, **Webster’s International Dictionary of the English Language** gives as a popular definition of Turk--“one exhibiting any quality attributed to Turks, such as duplicity, sensuality, or brutality.” **Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary** gives as a definition of Turk, “one who is cruel or tyrannical.” The **Random House Dictionary of the English Language** offers an “informal” definition of Turk as “a cruel, brutal, or domineering man.” The dictionary definitions reflect popular culture. In the late twentieth century, prejudiced statements about foreign peoples or ethnic groups have been very properly condemned, but the rules do not seem to apply to Turks. Movies or books that portray Turks as evil cause little popular outcry against ethnic stereotyping. People expect to see Turks portrayed as “the bad guys.” Even the Beatles, in the movie **Yellow Submarine**, chose Turks to be cartoon villains.

In short, the name Turk has become synonymous with nasty. Yet visitors to Turkey do not notice the Turks to be any more cruel, brutal, or tyrannical than any other people. In fact, the hospitality and consideration of Turks is mentioned throughout the travel literature. When the popular image of a people does not match reality something is wrong. The image is more likely to derive from prejudice than from fact. In the case of the Turks, the prejudices began hundreds of years ago, and they still go on.

Ethnic and Religious Stereotypes

The image of Turks suffers from a common process of ethnic stereotyping. Irish, Poles, Italians, Jews, Mexicans, African Blacks, and many others have all suffered from stereotypes. The image of the Turks is only one of the many negative pictures painted of different peoples.

Stereotypes of peoples are drawn from the available information. When there is little information, or when lies take the place of facts, stereotypes are most often negative. Perhaps the best example of this is wartime propaganda. Traditionally, warring governments that wished to instill in their people hatred of the enemy applied two basic principles of propaganda--any sympathetic accounts of the enemy people were stopped and negative accounts (real or manufactured) of the enemy were published. Despite modern embellishments, the two basic principles of propaganda have been successful for millennia. People are forced to draw conclusions from whatever information they have. If they only have flawed information, they will have flawed opinions.

The same principles can apply even without help from a government Bureau of Propaganda. In the nineteenth century, the common perception of the American Indians was extremely negative. It had been formed by newspaper accounts of massacres of settlers by Indians. No accounts of the massacres of Indians by soldiers and settlers were printed. The stereotypes were helped by the fact that the readers, most of whom lived in the Eastern United States, had never seen a Native American. Similar things could be said about Chinese, Africans, or scores of other groups. The media, anxious for exotic stories and none too careful about facts, printed all sorts of "colorful" tales of evil deeds by the "natives." Whether the group was American Indian, Chinese, or others, no one spoke up for them. There was no one to tell the true stories of their history or their daily lives. The public, with only prejudiced and incomplete accounts to go on, naturally believed the worst. They were told that Native Americans, Indians in India, Chinese, Africans, and many others were ignorant, bad, or both, and they believed the information they received. Public opinion on the Turks was no different.

The negative image of Turks was built over a long time. Like all prejudices, it was made up of half-truths, old beliefs, and much falsehood. Most of the prejudices that have

come down from the nineteenth century have been softened in our times, some have disappeared. The prejudice against Turks has proved to be harder to eradicate, even though it is as false as the prejudice against Blacks, Indians, Poles, or Irish. Those peoples all have many representatives in America. It is harder to keep up one's bigotry against a group when members of that group live next door. But there have been few Turks living in America, so the bigotry dies hard. Because prejudice against Turks is rooted in older religious biases against non-Christians it is especially difficult to eradicate.

The "Terrible Turk"

Throughout the Middle Ages, Islam competed with Christianity in Europe and the Middle East. Islam was feared, hated, and viewed as the tool of the Devil, sent to attack Christianity. Needless to say, the image of Islam among Europeans was very negative. It was also very inaccurate, filled with the sorts of falsehoods that bigots of that time also ascribed to Jews. The image of "The Terrible Turk" in the Western mind built on the negative image of Islam. For hundreds of years before the Turks appeared in the Middle East, Muslims had been seen by Christians as **The Enemy**. During the Crusades, a time of intense European Christian hatred of Muslims and Islam, Turks became known in Europe as the strongest Islamic warriors. They became the focus of all the religious hatred that the Crusades engendered.

When the Ottomans began to conquer Christian countries hatred was intensified by fear. Turks were the leaders of Islam, soldiers who were occupying Christian countries in Europe. Their successes filled Europeans with a great fear that they, too, would be conquered. (One of the few things that Martin Luther and the Pope agreed on was hatred of the Turks. "The Turk" was labeled the Antichrist.) For 300 years the Ottomans remained a threat to Europe. 300 years was more than long enough for a stereotype of Turks to form in the West. The stereotype was a familiar one--the "Terrible Turk"--moustache, turban, an evil look in his eye, about to slice a woman or child with his scimitar. "The Turk" became the image used by parents to scare young children into obedience. If they were not good, the Turk would come and spirit them away. Turks were convenient villains. In **Othello**, Shakespeare, wrote of the "malignant and turbaned Turk," and identified The Turk as "the circumcised dog." Prayers were offered in churches against "the scourge of the Terrible Turk."

The prejudice against Turks lived on long after the Turkish threat to Europe had passed. The image of The Turk may have filled a psychological need in the Western Mind. Turks were portrayed as not only evil, but sensuous, living a life filled with dancing girls, concubines, and heathen luxury. They figured as much in romanticism as in political treatises. As an example, Eugene Delacroix, the French master of Romanticism, played

upon the stereotypes in his famous painting, **Massacre at Chios**. All the cliches were present: the turbaned Turk, his face blank and brutal, brandishing a curved sword, was about to slaughter the helpless and innocent Christian maiden, who was, however, suggestively posed by the artist to reveal as much of her feminine charm as possible, while barely, and perhaps only momentarily, retaining her clothing. A kind of gruesome voyeurism and Christian outrage were presented together. (In this case, they were used to increase the artist's fame and fortune, giving the public exactly what they wanted.)

In the Western popular mind, the idea of The Turk existed almost synonymously with that of the Devil. In Thomas Hardy's **Far From the Madding Crowd**, the country folk of Wessex county say "Turk take it" instead of the common expression, "The Devil take it." Something was really unbearable if "A Turk couldn't stand it." In Scotland the arch-fiend was called "Mahound" (an insulting name for Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam). It is little wonder that Europeans, and later Americans, were always willing to believe the worst of the Turks. The Turks were equated with the Devil, and few thought well of the Devil.

The Nineteenth Century

In the nineteenth century cultural stereotypes directed against the Turks became part of the Armenian Question. The effect of racism on the teachings of American missionaries in the Ottoman Empire has been shown in earlier chapters. The feelings against Turks also had a great effect on the opinions of Americans at home. Almost all of the information on the Armenian-Turkish conflict that came to Americans originated with missionaries. Simply stated, the missionaries only told of Armenian suffering, never of Turkish suffering. Missionary accounts of the troubles of the 1890s or of World War I did not mention the part of the Armenian revolutionaries or the massacres of Muslims. Very rarely did they even admit the existence of Armenian Nationalist rebels. They almost never spoke of the deaths and starvation of Muslims such as the Circassians. From their accounts one would think that all was well for the Muslims and only the Armenians had troubles. How much of this was deliberate may never be known. It is possible that their prejudices blinded the missionaries to what was going on around them, and they had few friendly contacts with local Muslims. It is hard to believe that they could have seen so little, but the effect of their bias was very great.

Although there were surely great exceptions, nineteenth century Americans felt confident in looking down on their fellow humans. The Turks, like the Indians, the Blacks, the Chinese and Japanese, the Mexicans, the Africans, and many others, were considered semi-civilized or worse, and lacking in cultural achievements. This meant ignoring or scorning the high accomplishments of many centuries of civilization. Though the fine quality of Ottoman art is appreciated today, and can be admired in many of our best

museums, writers a century ago claimed the Turks had no art. The great poetry of the Turks was unknown in America, so it was assumed not to exist. Ottoman government was declared to be no government at all, despite the fact that it had successfully administered an empire for over five centuries. The Muslims of the Ottoman Empire were frequently described as fanatical in their religion, and this was very often given as the motivation for supposed attacks on Christians. Yet, the Ottoman government had a long tradition of religious toleration, and had allowed Christian and Jewish groups to retain their religions and practices, and to have a large amount of jurisdiction over their own affairs. It was, in fact, the Christians who had historically shown religious prejudice against non-Christians. (When the Christians conquered Spain and attempted to forcibly convert all non-Christians, it was the Ottoman Empire that had welcomed the Jews of Spain. The Muslim record of toleration toward Christians was far better than the Christian record of toleration for Muslims.)

Nineteenth century Americans knew little or nothing of Turkish poetry, art, or governmental tradition. They nevertheless felt confident in asserting their prejudices. What they read in their newspapers supported their feelings. Public opinion of the Turks at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries was molded by missionaries, clergy in America, and Armenians and others in conflict with the Turks. Equally important was the effect of prejudice on American newspapers. The public expected to read the worst of Turks, and newspaper reporters, editors, the public, and politicians refused to listen to the few disclaimers that the Turks were able to lodge.

The Role of Armenian-Americans

In addition to the American predisposition to believe only good of fellow Christians, Armenians had two great advantages over Turks for insuring that their version of events was heard in America. In the first place, they were a local group in the great cities of the United States. In the latter half of the nineteenth century Armenians had migrated to America in large numbers. In the second place, the reports of American missionaries had created a very favorable climate for Armenians in the United States.

Armenian immigrants had formed significant and vocal populations in several important American cities, such as in the New York and Boston areas. Their letters to newspaper editors were regularly published, expressing their view to the American public. There was no similar group of Turkish immigrants to write to American editors and congressmen. Over a period of time, the non-Armenian public was bound to be affected by the only viewpoint they were able to hear. By the 1890s, the press was not merely publishing Armenian opinion in the letters section of the newspaper, it was incorporating their views into major articles and actively seeking out leaders in the Armenian community

to interview for the news.

The opinions expressed by the Armenian community in America shared a consistent view of Muslims in general, and of Turks in particular. They presented a picture of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire that was calculated to please American ideas of the virtuous life. Occasionally an editor would point out distortions in this idealized image, but most often the Armenians themselves were allowed to tell the public about themselves. The Armenians called themselves “the Yankees of the East.” An emphasis was laid on their entrepreneurship, their Protestantism (though most Armenians were not Protestant), their noble women presiding over a fine home life, etc. When missionaries wrote of the Armenians they upheld the Armenian self-view. The American image of Armenians was thus formed by Armenians themselves and their friends.

Turks were neither asked nor allowed to present themselves, but were also described by Armenians or by the clergy. Unlike the Armenian self-view, this outside view of Turks and of Islam was certainly not a favorable, or even a neutral one. It was most decidedly hostile. Turks were presented as fanatical Muslims. In fact, when the words “Turk,” or “Mohammedan” (an incorrect term for Muslim) appeared in the press, they were almost invariably preceded by the adjective “fanatic” or “fanatical,” if some other cliched term was not used instead, such as “cruel” or “murderous.” The idea was often put forth that one of the tenets of Islam was the destruction of Christians. Rarely was the truth of this notion questioned or the lie exposed, so the public came to accept the false equation that Turks were good Muslims, therefore they killed Christians as a religious duty. The idea seemed more credible with each Armenian report of Muslims slaughtering Christians. Christian massacres of Muslims went unreported, or when reported were quickly forgotten, or were presented as somehow legitimate in the quest for independence. The American image of Turks was thus formed by their enemies.

An opinion expressed over and over by Armenians, both in America and in Eastern Anatolia, was that the Ottoman government had a plan to exterminate the Armenians. Massacres were said to be ordered by the Sultan, or by whatever government had control in the capital at the time of the killings. Closely related to this idea was the claim that the Ottoman government planned to wipe out all Christians. The accusations that the Ottomans plotted to annihilate Christians found a ready ground among a public which already believed that good Muslims killed Christians merely because of their Christianity. It made no difference that episodes of massacre were set off when Muslims were killed by Armenian revolutionary organizations, as even newspaper editors sometimes pointed out. Any claims were acceptable so long as they were directed against the Turks. For example, in one particularly ludicrous case, Armenian-Americans even accused the Ottoman Government of setting up the Armenian Hunchak revolutionary party, an obviously unlikely scenario. The Ottomans were presumably creating Armenian revolutionaries so that they could have an excuse to kill Armenians.

The Armenian community in America showed considerable support for the revolutionaries in their midst. Sometimes Armenian-Americans claimed to disapprove of the revolutionaries' violent methods, but in the next breath praised their "courage," "honesty," "sincerity," and depicted them as "well-educated." Above all, they were "patriots." Other Armenians gave their outright support, justifying any methods used against the Ottoman government. One popular sentiment was later adopted by the press and the general public: the Ottoman government was called "an aggregation of criminals...against criminals we do not have to measure means for bringing about results."¹

Using their presence and influence in America to present their case, the Armenians in effect imported a Middle Eastern conflict into the United States. However, only one side was available to present its case. Even so, the Armenian voice might not have been heard, were it not for the support of the American clergy and American newspapers.

The Role of the Clergy

Criticism of men of religion is perhaps the hardest to accept of all the statements made here. It is natural to assume that nineteenth century missionaries and clergymen were essentially the same as the American clergy today. Today the clergy is at the forefront of the movement against all forms of racism. They are sincerely anxious to stress the brotherhood of all humanity. Today some of those who best understand and sympathize with Muslims are missionaries to Turkey and other Middle Eastern countries, sent out by the same churches that sent the missionaries one hundred years ago. However, things were very different one hundred years ago. Despite their calling, missionaries were still children of their age. They had been brought up with all the prejudices of their time. Instead of leading them to sympathy for believers in other faiths, their religious dedication all too often led them to condemn those who did not share their particular beliefs.

In no way were the missionaries a disinterested source of reliable information on the events in Eastern Anatolia. They were imbued with a sense of Christian religious superiority and Armenian "racial" superiority that colored all their observations. They also felt a very practical need to support the Armenian cause. Missionary reporting of events in Eastern Anatolia was deeply influenced by the fact that the American Mission was a Mission to the Armenians. Without the Armenians, the Protestant Church in the Ottoman Empire would have barely existed. The Armenians were more susceptible to conversion to Protestant belief than any other group in Anatolia. Not only were the Muslims uninterested, but missionary efforts to convert the Greeks and Jews met with little success. That left

1. **New York Times**, November 18, 1894.

the Armenians. The dependence of the missionaries on the Armenians naturally led to closeness to the Armenians and a desire to advance their cause. The better the position of the Armenians, the better the position of the Mission. Once the Armenian Rebellion began, there was real fear that Armenian failure might mean the end of missionary activities. Not surprisingly, missionary reports listed, and often exaggerated, the deaths of Armenians, but did not tell of the deaths of Muslims. Like the revolutionaries, the missionaries called for European intervention on the side of the Armenians.

Aside from Armenian-Americans, the most vocal support in America for the Armenian cause came from Protestant clergymen. The clergy used their tremendous prestige and influence to promote and publicize the Armenian and missionary version of the so-called "Eastern Question." Their only sources of information seem to have been missionaries and Armenians who had come from the Ottoman Empire, although it is impossible to give the sources names. They were almost always simply identified as "reliable sources whose trustworthiness can be vouched for." The missionaries were believed because they were fellow churchmen, and because, as the press put it, they were above reproach since they came from the "best circles of American society." Actually, there was much reason to question the reports sent by missionaries.

Protestant churches and ministers were a very prominent and influential segment of American society at that time, much more so than today. The letters, meetings, activities, and speeches of mainline clergy, such as Congregationalists and Presbyterians, were regularly reported in the main sections of newspapers, alongside news of wars or important elections. In an age without television or radio, thousands turned out to hear clergymen denounce the Turks at public meetings. During times of trouble in the Ottoman Empire, clergymen addressing anti-Turkish meetings was a weekly occurrence. For example, Professor Schaff, D.D., identified as a theologian, summarized general feelings in one of the popular Saturday night lectures to the public which were held in 1878 in New York City. He judged that the "unspeakable Turk" had ruined the countries over which he had ruled, and that Turks had no business in Europe, because the Turk "never was properly Europeanized: he only pitched his tent in Constantinople." (This idea of the temporary quality of Turkish residence, while common, is curious in an American, for the Ottomans had been "camping out" in Constantinople since 1453 -- at that time, more than four times as long as the United States had existed as a nation. Yet it would never have occurred to Prof. Schaff or his contemporaries that Europeans had no business in the New World, though certainly they had ruined the societies of the peoples who already lived here, and had made no attempt to turn themselves into Mohawks, Sioux, or Cherokees.)

Schaff explained who should rule over others. Immediately following his condemnation of the Turks, he praised the English conquest and rule of India: "we cannot doubt that the result has been the greatest benefit to the Hindoo race. It is providence

ruling and overruling the affairs of man for man's own good. The English have certainly shown a remarkable aptitude for the government of semi-civilized races...Wherever England goes, there goes freedom, manly independence, a love of home, the unspeakable treasures of English literature and civil and religious liberty [applause.]”² Schaff assumed that India was pleased to have been brought “independence” and “freedom” by a conquering nation, or if not, she should have been. Above all, European imperialism was felt to be God's plan for the world. This was obvious to Europeans and Americans, even if not apparent to the rest of the world.

Like the concept of the divine right of Christians to rule Muslims, but not of Muslims to rule Christians, a double standard appeared when the clergy depicted Islam. Muslims were accused of fanaticism partly because they declined to convert to Christianity, though conversion in the other direction was just as unthinkable to Christians. It did not seem to occur to the accusers that the Muslims were merely as devout as they, or if steadfast belief is fanatic, only as fanatical as they. The American missionaries found Muslim resistance to their message perverse, puzzling, and irritating. “The Mohammedans of the country meanwhile seemed inaccessible to all direct Christian labors,” lamented the Rev. S.C. Bartlett, before devoting his attention to the Armenians, “a noble race [who] have been called ‘the Anglo-Saxons of the East.’ They are the active and enterprising class. Shrewd, industrious and persevering...Their standard of moral purity is also said to be immeasurably above that of the Turks around them.”³

The clergy shared with the missionaries the common prejudices of their time, expressed in notions such as the “white man's burden.” They believed, with their contemporaries, that white, Western, Christian civilization was properly destined to conquer and rule the world, spreading enlightenment with its governance of barbaric peoples. This philosophy justified the proposed conquest and division of the Ottoman Empire. For example, in 1896, this belief was invoked at a mass meeting held in the Episcopal Church in Brooklyn: “for the good of the whole Mohammedan people, who, trained from childhood to believe that Islam, the religion of the sword, is proved true by its success in destroying its enemies, cannot well be lifted to a higher plane of life until the strong arm of power shall, by the merciful suppression of fanatical ferocity, teach them the superiority of a Christian civilization.”⁴

Racism and religious prejudice were intertwined. It was repeatedly affirmed that there was no use trying to reason with Turks; they only understood brute force. One

2. “Turn out the Turk,” **New York Times**, Nov. 17, 1878.

3, Bartlett, Rev. S. C., **Historical Sketch of the Missions of the American Board in Turkey**, Boston, 1876, pages 1-3.

New York Times, February 3, 1896.

clergyman exclaimed in exasperation that one might as well send missionary tracts to the Central African negroes, revealing his feelings about both groups. A Baptist pastor advocated the increasingly popular view that Russia, as a Christian power, should take control of the Bosphorous. He spoke of annihilating the “Turkish” government because of the demands of civilization and Christianity.⁵ A former missionary for the Presbyterians in Beirut pictured the “condition of Armenia” as he imagined it: “It is as if 100,000 Wild Indians had New York City at their mercy, and know that they could do what they liked with impunity.”⁶

It was no accident that the Turks were routinely compared to Asian Indians, Africans, the Chinese, and “Wild Indians.” All of these peoples were considered, uncivilized, or semi-civilized at best. They were thought to need taming by Christian civilization, backed up by Western military might. The general American public barely conceded a human existence and motives to such people. It thought Indians attacked civilized people because that was what savages do, and Africans were barbarians beyond the pale of reason. The Ottomans also “cannot be dealt with as one deals with a civilized country.”⁷

In their pronouncements, the American clergy demonstrated a rampant prejudice against all Muslims. They repeated the Armenian and missionary view that Muslims were fanatical: Turks, Circassians, and Kurds were routinely described in this fashion from the 1890s through the end of World War I. A whole people, such as the Circassians, would commonly be characterized as “fanatic brigands,” and dismissed in one sentence. The Turks would then be blamed for letting loose such “fiends in human form” to steal from Armenians. Naturally, no mention of the expulsion by Russia that caused the Circassians to starve, and thus steal, was given. The clergy would not have thought to blame the real culprits, the Russians, for Russia was a Christian Power.

In its most extreme form, the feeling of the clergy toward Islam was one of extreme intolerance and misunderstanding. For example, the Reverend E.M. Bliss, a member of a prominent missionary family, felt it perfectly acceptable to state that “[Islam] recognizes no moral obligation of any kind. Sin is merely transgression of statute; falsehood, deception, robbery, murder, have no moral quality whatever. They are entirely legitimate when used in the furtherance of the Moslem State and even for the furtherance of individual advantage.” Bliss felt that “Cruelty, greed, and the grossest sensuality were not merely allowed but encouraged by his [Muhammad’s] teachings.” Armenians, of course, were described as “of exceptionally pure morals among the Eastern races; intense lovers of home

5. *New York Times*, November 18, 1895, in a series of interviews with prominent New Yorkers.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*

and family life, and hospitable in the extreme.”⁸

The nineteenth century clergymen were convinced that they, the Americans, were the best people in the world. They saw themselves as a model for the world. Turks were not willing to adopt American customs, but the clergy felt the Armenians were daily becoming like Americans. They portrayed the Armenians as having greater industriousness than the Turks, more nobility of character and customs, more moral goodness. In short, the Armenians were just like them; Turks were not. In particular, the American missionaries who provided Armenians with an American education stressed their Yankee qualities in reports to the folks back home: “The most zealous advocate of American civilization could not have done half as much for his country abroad as the missionary has done. The religious and social organizations, the various institutions introduced, are doing a great deal in introducing American civilization...Even in wild Kurdistan you will find some one [i.e., an Armenian] who can reason with you quite in Yankee style, can make you a speech which you cannot but own to be substantially Yankee, with Yankee idioms and American examples to support his arguments...Question the school-boy as you would at home; you will find his answers quite familiar to you. You may question him on geography, and you will certainly find, to your surprise, that he knows more of the United States than perhaps of his own native country...Having seen all this, you will certainly not be astonished if you see Yankee clocks; American chairs, tables, organs; American agricultural implements; Yankee cotton-gins, saw-mills, sewing-machines; American flowers in the very heart of Kurdistan...Be not surprised if you be invited to a prayer-meeting on these mountains, where you hear the congregation singing **Old Hundred**, as heartily as you have ever heard it at home. You will certainly own then, if you have not before, that the American people have a sacred interest in this country.”⁹

One wonders just how true this picture of a little America in Eastern Anatolia could have been. However, the missionary intention was obvious. They wished to raise the Armenians to be pseudo-Americans, perhaps with little foundation in their own geography and traditions, but with the ability to tell a stranger where the Mississippi River or the city of Boston were to be found. How much the missionary intentions truly affected the Armenians is questionable, but the missionary descriptions of Armenians as the Americans of Anatolia surely did have a great effect on the United States. Americans felt they had what the clergy described as a “sacred interest” in Anatolia. Therefore, Americans also could decide they had a sacred duty to interfere. It also followed that the Armenians, like the Americans, should have a revolution. A sympathetic attitude toward Armenian

8. **Turkey and the Armenian Atrocities**, New York, 1896, pages 55, 61, and 113.

9. Bartlett, pages 26-27.

revolutionaries was evident among American churchmen. They were compared to the American Revolutionaries. They were to be thought of as peaceful people who wanted life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and who resented taxation without representation. Differences between Eastern Anatolia in the 1890s and North America in 1776 were ignored, as were differences between the Dashnak revolutionaries and the Continental Congress.

The general conclusion of the clergy was that the Ottoman government should be wiped out. Every minister's speech to the public seemed to end with the same sentiment: "to allow it [the Ottoman Empire] to exist is a shame to Christianity;" "Christian civilization cannot longer endure this unspeakable Turk;" "the Turkish Empire should be blotted from the map of Europe without delay."¹⁰

The Role of the Press

Standards of reporting of nineteenth and early twentieth century American newspapers were considerably lower than those of present-day newspapers, but the influence of the newspapers was far greater. For all but a very few who travelled widely or had access to diplomatic reports, newspapers and magazines were the only source of news of the world. However, American newspapers had very poor sources of information on the Middle East. They only sent out reporters to the region in times of war or great disasters, and the reporters knew neither the languages nor the culture of the people. Diplomats themselves often knew little of what was occurring around them, but they seldom gave information to the press, so even what little they knew was unavailable as news. Because of prejudice and lack of familiarity with the Ottoman system, reporters seldom even considered soliciting the Turkish position. When the Ottomans offered their side of the story it was discounted, without fair hearing, as unreliable. This left two sources of information on the Ottoman Empire--missionaries and Armenians living in the United States. During World War I, these sources were supplemented with reports from the British, who were at war with the Ottomans. This was not a recipe for objectivity.

One-sided reporting of events in the Ottoman Empire by the newspapers was rewarded. After hundreds of years of prejudice, Americans expected to hear only evil of the Turks. Newspaper editors were anxious not to offend religious leaders and the newspapermen, themselves, were deeply prejudiced. They knew little and, of what they knew, they only printed what would be acceptable. The few reporters and editors who

10. **New York Times**, November 18 and 22, 1895.

attempted to present the Turkish side of the Armenian-Turkish conflict found that they were ignored or, worse, attacked. If a kind word was said of the Turks, letters flooded the editorial desk, sent by American Armenians and their supporters. There were few Turkish supporters to send letters. Kind words about Turks, no matter how well supported, were unaccepted. Editors and publishers soon found that it was beneficial to “give the people what they want.” That was what sold newspapers.

By the mid-1890s, the major American newspapers shared the viewpoint of the Armenians and the clergy. At first there had been caution when faced with unsubstantiated reports of killings and atrocities. The reports were published, but because unproved, were prefaced with the term “alleged.” Occasionally, reports from the Ottoman legation, explaining their viewpoint, were published also, with the source carefully identified. One editor even pointed out that Christian villagers did not suffer more than their fellow Muslim villagers, who lived under the same conditions, both natural and governmental. These conditions were not good by American standards, perhaps, but were not anti-Christian, as they affected all alike. This admission was soon forgotten, as it did not suit the picture of conditions in the Ottoman Empire that had already formed in the public mind. Some editors also initially showed some sympathy for the Ottoman government’s problem with terrorists, but soon changed their minds.

Most of the reporting on Turks and Armenians was not, in fact, based on reporters’ information from the Middle East. Very few reporters (and no editors) ever saw Eastern Anatolia. They took the reports sent in by missionaries, often after they had been amended by various church officials, and printed them as news. Missionary reports were supplemented with letters and comments from Armenian-Americans. Occasionally, articles from travellers would appear. But the overwhelming weight of material on the Armenians came not from news, but from commentary. Some of this was the contained in columns by editorial writers. More appeared in ostensible news stories which were actually collections of quotes from speakers at anti-Turkish mass meetings. There is an important distinction between what happened and what a speaker **said** happened, but it was a distinction that was probably lost on the reading public.

Armenian nationalists could not have asked for better publicity than what appeared in the American press. Not only were news articles one-sided, but features portrayed the Armenians in a light sure to appeal to Americans. Newspapers occasionally carried articles purporting to describe ordinary Armenian and Turkish life. Again, there is a contrast in the way the two are reported. An Armenian wedding would be described, or the contents of a talk given by an Armenian-American related, in which the nobility of his people, the virtue of the women, the beauty of Armenian manners and customs would be related to the American public. Articles on Turkish customs were meant to show Turks to disadvantage. At best, they carried the message that Turks had many oddities of character, and were a silent, fierce, stupid sort of people without any imagination whatsoever. Perhaps honesty

would be attributed to them, but even this virtue would then be derided as if it were a vice--it would mean they were too stupid to deceive or to see through the deceptions of others with more imagination. There was an emphasis on harem life, at least as fantasized in the West, for Americans were always eager to hear more that would support their belief about the Turks' supposedly lustful ways. Stories of "decadence" and of the life in the sultan's palace were favorites. Of course, the sultan never allowed reporters into his private quarters, so the stories were pure invention. The sexual ethics of Islam were actually very different than those imagined in American newspapers; "puritanical" would be a better description than "sensual," but such truthful descriptions did not sell newspapers.

The overall impression left by these reports was consistent with prior opinion, that is to say, with established prejudice. The message was: Armenians are likeable, and they are like us; Turks are not.

The same lack of proof which was seen in descriptions of Turkish home life also appeared in opinions on Islam. Again and again, newspapers reported that it was the duty of Muslims to kill Christians. No one ever quoted sections from the **Quran (the Holy Book of Islam)** or from Muslim Law which told Muslims to kill all Christians. This is not surprising, as there are no such sections in either the **Quran** or in Muslim law. Whether it was in descriptions of the morals of the Turks or of their religious laws, the American commentators found it more convenient to avoid facts and to stick to unsupported assertions. This was both because they did not know the facts and because the facts did not support their views.

The bias of the press was obvious in the manner in which information from Eastern Anatolia was evaluated. An example was that when Christians were accused of abducting a Muslim girl, it was disbelieved automatically, without evidence to support any conclusion. Muslims, though, were routinely charged with taking Christian women, and this was just as automatically believed, also without evidence. Undoubtedly these things happened during war and rebellion on all sides, but the response from the press was typical, and indicative of their prejudice. These judgments were made on what editors believed the character of the Christian and the Muslim to be, rather than on any facts or knowledge regarding a particular case involving particular people. Turks were thought to be lustful by nature, so no evidence was necessary.

It is impossible to quote here from the many examples of prejudice against Turks in the newspapers. A few examples must suffice: In 1895, a foreigner was killed in the Ottoman capital by a deranged man. A local policeman managed to bring the man to justice. As he was turning him over to the authorities, the policeman collapsed and died from wounds inflicted by the murderer. One would think this would be depicted in the

press as an example of an heroic officer upholding the law. Instead, the fact that a foreigner was killed was represented in the American press as evidence of mob rule in the Ottoman Empire and the worthlessness of the police (because they did not save the foreigner), and regarded as an indictment of Ottoman society in general. The noble policeman was forgotten, as was the fact that similar murders happened daily in American streets. The press was unable to distinguish between the individual madness of a criminal and profound societal problems. The press was able to distinguish between the life of a foreigner and the life of a Turk--the foreigner's life was much more important.

What was omitted was as important as what was printed. When the press reported an assassination attempt made on the Armenian patriarch in Constantinople in 1894, they omitted the information that the would-be assassins were themselves Armenians. The public could easily conclude, therefore, that the criminals were Turkish, since Turks were thought to go around killing Armenians as a matter of course. Lack of honest descriptions of the general situation of the population of Eastern Anatolia was also detrimental to the truth. For example, though Turks had controlled Eastern Anatolia for more than eight centuries and Muslims were a majority in every eastern province, Armenians felt an historic claim to much of this territory. The claim was accepted by the Western press, and was reflected in references to "Armenia," as though Armenia represented a definite country with particular boundaries. The press never reported the actual makeup of the population, which was overwhelmingly Muslim. Turks and Kurds were described as though they were all raiders from somewhere outside Armenia, rather than neighbors. No wonder that the American public formed an impression that a country that should have been independent--Armenia--was being held hostage by outside forces.

Churchmen, both missionaries and ministers in the United States, had an interdependent relationship with the press. Information about refugees and massacres came to the press from mission stations in Anatolia and Northwest Persia. Sometimes, news or stories in a letter written to a missionary's wife in America, or to a pastor, would be given to the newspapers. Even a young child of a missionary family, sent home, would be interviewed for facts about the progress of the conflict in Eastern Anatolia, and his statements published. Journalists could not see conditions for themselves, and relied on the hearsay reports of the missionaries.

The missionaries and other clergy, for their part, recognized the importance of the press in spreading their idea of the proper solution to their difficulties (i.e., send warships and crush the Ottomans). Newspapers publicized mass meetings around their circulation area, held to protest treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and to send resolutions to Congress and the President. Afterward, they published the speeches and resolutions adopted, and carried news of mass meetings in other American cities. Even the appearance of objectivity was abandoned. For example, during the 1895 troubles the **New**

York Times was congratulated by the pro-Armenian speechmakers for its “vigorous action and advocacy in voicing of our protest.”¹¹

The press had abandoned any attempt to present the news in an objective fashion. By 1896, journalists and editors had taken on the tone and sometimes even the religious imagery of the churchmen whose opinions they had also assumed. In imitation of the missionaries, the Armenians and the clergy, the press routinely slandered Muslims as brigands and murderers, Turks as barbarians. Muslims were further declared to be invaders in Europe, beginning with the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. Absolute nonsense was casually printed. For example Sultan Abdulhamid (the sultan in power during the troubles of the 1890s) was declared to intend the suppression of education because he had supposedly realized the absolute incompatibility of education with Muslim rule. In fact, Abdulhamid had done more in his reign to further education and the creation of schools than any sultan before him. Newspapers also reported the rumor that the Sultan was planning a crusade against Christians. Even though they were forced to admit that no one had ever heard an Ottoman official saying such a thing and that they had no evidence to support their belief, the **New York Times**, nevertheless stated that they were sure it must be true.¹²

The transition from some attempts at objectivity or neutrality to a completely hostile and slanderous portrayal of the Turks in the press was easy, because of pre-existing prejudices. Prejudice colored all interpretation and reporting of news that came out of the Ottoman Empire. It was literally impossible for an American to find the truth on events in Eastern Anatolia.

World War I

During the First World War, reporting rapidly became even less balanced and more anti-Turkish. The stakes were rising. The English propaganda machine churned out atrocity stories against both Germany and its ally Turkey to aid in its war effort both at home and abroad. Several European states coveted Ottoman territory, and the massacres and atrocities for which the Ottoman government was said to be responsible were used as the justification for breaking up the Ottoman Empire and for taking all or nearly all lands

11. **New York Times**, November 18, 1895.

12. editorial, November 2, 1896.

away from Ottoman rule. The Western nations needed to believe and promote Ottoman and Turkish atrocity stories in order to excuse their own plans to annex Ottoman lands. Atrocity propaganda was used for a similar purpose against the Germans. (At the Versailles Peace Conference, German “crimes” were used as the justification for reparations and severe peace terms.)

The proposed carving up of the Ottoman Empire and the assignment of lands to various powers seems to have been a favorite pastime of intellectuals, diplomats, and politicians, to judge by discussions of who should get what, which were published in the contemporary press. Russia, especially, was to receive substantial territories and gain important warm water ports. Some writers proposed that she be given Istanbul, the possession of which was an age-old Russian dream. Greece stood to gain Western Anatolia, and France southern areas of Anatolia and northern Syria. An independent Armenian state would be established in Eastern, or possibly South-central Anatolia. The Turks could have the leavings, which amounted to a small state in North-central Anatolia. (“Poor Turks,” one of these writers commented sarcastically at the conclusion of his dissection of the Empire.)

Again, the justification for these nations to take Ottoman territory and expel or obliterate the Turkish presence from these lands, was that European conquerors would bring civilization and Christianity. The Turk was declared to be a blot on the face of Europe, where he would always be considered an intruder. None of these writers, however, ever suggested that the French should leave their colonies in Muslim North Africa, or the British leave Hindu and Muslim India. Britain and France had intruded a foreign power and culture all over the world, but that culture was Christian and European. That justified everything.

During the first World War, when Eastern Anatolia and Transcaucasia became a battleground between the Russian and Ottoman Empires, journalists were unable to see events at first hand. The result was that the only information received in America came from the Ottoman’s enemies. Predictably, the “news” painted Turks and other Muslims of the Ottoman Empire in the worst possible manner. Propaganda was one of the weapons for fighting a war, and the Allies were anxious to get America, a neutral, to join their cause. Most often dispatches were transmitted from places in the Russian Empire, such as Petrograd, the capital, or from Tiflis in Transcaucasia via Petrograd. Frequently they came through London, or originated there. Great Britain was also at war with the Ottoman Empire, as well as with the Ottoman’s German ally. The British view was therefore the view of an enemy who we now know to have freely resorted to invention of atrocity stories to further their own war effort. Occasional dispatches were sent from Athens, another Ottoman enemy. Each of these governments had ample motives for promoting one-sided reporting of events in a time of war, and for publicizing Ottoman atrocities, whether real or invented.

It is significant that massacre and atrocity reports to the press came almost entirely from Petrograd, Transcaucasia, or Athens, where Russians, Greeks, and Armenians were eager and well-motivated to give them. The dispatches remained silent about Christian killings of Muslims, except when they were cast in the guise of heroism. Massacre accounts were sometimes brought back by American missionaries returning from Anatolia. These accounts were seldom from eyewitnesses and merely represent what they had heard. Other reports were prefaced with the ubiquitous, “from a reliable source” or “a trustworthy person,” and the public was then treated to a mass of hearsay, which usually was not witnessed even by the purportedly reliable informant. The unnamed, irreproachable source was a classic technique of wartime atrocity propaganda, heavily used by both the British and the Germans in World War I.

Occasionally missionaries and others did accurately report on the great and very real sufferings of Armenians. They correctly stated that Kurdish tribes and even some Turkish officials were responsible for the deaths of Armenians. The difficulty with their narratives was, as was so often the case, the complete lack of reference to Turks and Kurds killed by Armenians. The context of the Armenian rebellion was always ignored. In the case of refugee misery, in particular, one-sided reporting gave a false picture. By ignoring the million Muslim refugees, it was easy to portray the Armenian deportations as the only refugee agony in Eastern Anatolia. One-sided reporting and complete fabrications became the staple of wartime propaganda.

The British Propaganda Machine

Falsehood is a recognized and extremely useful weapon in warfare, and every country uses it quite deliberately to deceive its own people, to attract neutrals, and to mislead the enemy. The ignorant and innocent masses in each country are unaware at the time that they are being misled, and when it is all over only here and there are the falsehoods discovered and exposed. As it is all past history and the desired effect has been produced by the stories and statements, no one troubles to investigate the facts and establish the truth.

So began a British Member of Parliament in a book which described “an assortment of lies circulated throughout the nations during the Great War.”¹³ Propaganda was indeed

13. A. Ponsonby, M.P., **Falsehood in War-Time**, New York, 1928, p. 13.

an important weapon during World War I, and the Armenian Question was one of the main battlegrounds in which the propaganda war was fought.

For many years the use of wartime propaganda by the British government to blacken the image of the Germans has been known and studied. After the end of the first World War, books were written detailing the use of propaganda to manipulate public opinion. Through the admissions of officials responsible for manufacturing propaganda and post-war investigations of atrocity stories, the many falsehoods told of the Germans have been exposed. The deceptions have given way to a more just assessment of responsibilities for the conflict and the behavior of the participating Western nations. No such post-war investigations were conducted concerning the conflicts in Eastern Anatolia. Instead, the deceptions and distortions of propaganda on the Turks and Armenians have survived, so the legacy of hatred and prejudice remains. The Turks were remote, and for most Americans, as Ponsonby said, "it was all past history."

The handling of atrocity propaganda in other arenas of war is significant, for the manner of collecting, setting forth, accepting and publicizing "evidence" in other countries was copied in the case of the Armenians. The two main thrusts of British propaganda were the "Belgian Atrocities" and the "Armenian Atrocities." Both the Ottomans in Eastern Anatolia and the Germans in Belgium were accused of many of the same crimes. It was no accident that the two major theaters of war for the British were in France, against the Germans, and in the Middle East, against the Turks.

The atrocity propaganda that permeated the American press has been shown to have been heavily influenced by the British, who intended to bring America into the war on the Allied side. American newspapers and magazines generally took up the British version of the war, helping insure that American sympathies came to be placed with the Allied cause. Propaganda aimed at stirring outrage over the conduct of war in Anatolia was particularly effective in the United States because of American mission ties to Armenians, and because of previous beliefs in official Ottoman plots to annihilate Christians, going back to the nineteenth century. Most of the accusations leveled against the Ottomans were modelled after similar charges made previously against their allies, the Germans.

During and immediately following World War I, the Germans were accused of having sole responsibility for beginning the war. The Central Powers had premeditated the war, according to the Allies. During the war, American newspapers blamed the Kaiser, who was said to be Attila reincarnated and painted in the blackest terms. The Germans were portrayed as barbaric Huns. American papers repeated the Allied inventions of atrocity stories, which were widely spread and believed in America, as they had been in Britain, even when they defied common sense. These stories were used to characterize a whole nation as inhuman brutes. Germans were accused of cutting hands off children and babies

and the breasts off women. They were thought to have routinely bayoneted civilian populations, and raped women as a matter of course. A Canadian was reported to have been crucified, a child nailed to a door, and so on. These stories were told by people purported to be eye-witnesses, either Belgian refugees or Allied soldiers.

One set of reports on supposed outrages by the Germans is particularly important to the Armenian-Turkish conflict: many German atrocity stories were given credence by their inclusion in the British Bryce Committee's Report on German Atrocities in Belgium, issued in May of 1915. The report was set out in the form of a legal brief, and the alleged eye-witnesses interviewed by lawyers who took their depositions. Lord Bryce was a former ambassador to the United States, well-liked and trusted. His name gave the report enormous prestige and believability, and the report was published in full by American newspapers, which pointed to Bryce's endorsement as proof of the authenticity of the information contained within it. The headlines trumpeted the premeditated nature of the slaughter in Belgium, the mutilation of young and old, the attacking of women, the slaying of children, the systematic nature of the pillage and arson, all of which had, according to the report, been countenanced by German officers.

A few months later, in the autumn of 1915, an American Committee on Armenian Atrocities released a report to the press which appears to have been modelled on the Bryce Report, except that they had less concern for the appearance of legal depositions, and merely proceeded to relate atrocities supposedly committed by the Ottoman government. A section of the Armenian Atrocities Report dated in July takes up the theme of systematic terror against a helpless, peaceful civilian population, which had been used to good effect in the Bryce Report the previous spring.

The stories followed the pattern of Belgian atrocity stories. The "outraging" of women was a common feature. Women, children, and priests were mentioned, in particular, as massacre victims, the same as in stories of German atrocities. The Germans were blamed for directly ordering or condoning "this wholesale slaughter" in the Ottoman Empire. No witnesses to the stories in the report were identified, whether Armenian or non-Armenian. Not only that, but the names of cities and places where the stories originated or where these atrocities were supposed to have occurred were "deliberately concealed to protect the source." This was far less "evidence" and far more uncorroborated accounts and hearsay than the Bryce Committee had allowed into their report. The Germans, a European people, had a much better reputation than did the Turks at the beginning of the war, so there was more care in the preparing of the "proof" against them. Yet, the Bryce Report has long since been shown to have been a tissue of lies.¹⁴

14. Peter Buitenhuis, **The Great War of Words**, Vancouver, 1987, p. 27, and Ponsonby, Chapter 23.

The standard nature of war-time atrocity stories is described by H. D. Lasswell in **Propaganda Technique in World War I**: “Stress can always be laid upon the wounding of women, children, old people, priests and nuns, and upon sexual enormities, mutilated prisoners and mutilated non-combatants. These stories yield a crop of indignation against the fiendish perpetrators of these dark deeds, and satisfy certain powerful, hidden impulses.”¹⁵

Half of the members of the American Committee conducting the “investigation” into atrocities against the Armenians were clergy, including former missionaries in the Middle East. Their prestige, as Bryce’s had for the investigations into atrocities by Germans, lent an air of authenticity to the report, and it was widely accepted. These people were already very biased against Turks and Muslims in general, however, as has been shown. Like the investigators into Belgian atrocities, none of whom went to Belgium, none of these people went to the Ottoman Empire to conduct their “investigations.”

In England, Lord Bryce made statements about atrocities committed by the Ottomans, and these were related to the American public via the press. Bryce also produced a treatise on the “Armenian Massacres,” filled with reports, most of them anonymous, from one side of the war in Anatolia.

In all these reports and statements to the public, the Ottoman government was once more accused of a deliberate plan to exterminate the Armenians, just as the Germans were also accused of a program of systematic and premeditated atrocity in their conduct in Europe. The Germans were repeatedly accused of masterminding, or at least colluding in, the Armenian massacres. At one point, a photograph of the Kaiser, wearing a fez, was published in America, with the caption: “The German Emperor, as ‘The Unspeakable Turk.’”

After the hysteria of war feeling had subsided, charges against the Germans were dropped, their falsity admitted. The Germans were later thought to have been severe in Belgium, but not guilty of any systematic atrocity. No one any longer accuses them of responsibility for atrocities against Armenians. The Germans had advocates in the West, however, and were seen as fellow members of “the European family.” There were many German-Americans, and many educated Americans had been taught respect for Germanic culture and learning prior to the war. The good reputation of Germany was rapidly reestablished. There was no such feeling of fellowship with Turks to provide the will to clear their name of the same charges of deliberate, systematic atrocity. No one cared to investigate the authenticity of the report of the American Committee on Armenian Atrocities. The Bryce Report on the Germans was dishonored and forgotten; the Bryce

15. Cambridge, Mass., 1927, reprinted 1971, p. 82.

Report on the Turks went unquestioned. Accusations against the Turks that had grown out of war hysteria and war propaganda were left standing.

American Reports

The picture of Turks in the American mind did not depend solely on British propaganda. Americans were also at work to advance the cause of the Americans against the Turks. At the forefront of the campaign was Henry Morgenthau, who was American ambassador to the Ottoman Empire during the first years of the war. Ambassador Morgenthau was the main conduit of missionary reports to both the American public and to the British. As he himself stated, he had complete reliance on the honesty of the missionaries. Although he received Ottoman reports of Armenian activities in the East, he discredited them all without a hearing. His reasons were "racial."

Ambassador Morgenthau felt the Turks to be racially inferior, the Armenians to be racially superior, and this completely affected his analysis of events. In his book, **Ambassador Morgenthau's Story**¹⁶, he described the Turks as "bullies and cowards," "dull-witted and lazy," etc. Armenians, on the other hand, were superior--he described them as "Aryans," who "regarded themselves not as Asiatics, but as Europeans." His analysis of supposed Turkish reasons for killing Armenians was a study in the pathology of racism: Morgenthau declared that the Turks planned to kill the Armenian men, then take their women and have children by them. Their reason, according to Morgenthau, was the betterment of the Turkish Race: "These Armenian girls represented a high type of womanhood and the Young Turks, in their crude, intuitive way, recognized that the mingling of their blood with the Turkish population would exert a eugenic influence on the whole." No scholar has ever found any Turkish belief in the Racial Superiority of the Armenians, but Ambassador Morgenthau chose to project his own beliefs on the Turks. It is fairly easy to see why he found no evil in Armenians, but much evil in Turks.

Morgenthau, and others like him, spread their beliefs among the American populace in books, lectures, and newspaper articles. Their testimony was welcomed by the clergy, who were gathering support against the Turks.

The activities of the American clergy during World War I were much the same as their actions in the 1890s, related above. Scarcely a week went by without articles on the Armenians appearing in the religious press and stories by clergymen appearing in the popular press. As in the 1890s, the main problem with the news they published was not that it was false, although much was simply invented. The news was greatly exaggerated,

16. Garden City, New York, 1918, pages 275, 288, 291, and 337.

true, but Armenians were indeed suffering greatly and many of the stories of Armenian suffering were true. The fault lay in the complete absence of mention of Turkish suffering. Muslims in Eastern Anatolia were dying in greater numbers than Armenians, and each side was killing the other, but only one side's mortality appeared as news.

Like Ambassador Morgenthau, the clergy was predisposed to recognize only Armenian misery. But their reasons were usually religious, not overtly racial. Armenians were portrayed as Christians suffering at the hands of infidels. The fidelity of Armenians to Christianity was always stressed. This necessitated a certain amount of deception, because the Dashnaks who were leading the Armenian forces were Marxists, and Marxism was not popular among Americans. However, Marxism was never mentioned.

Added to the impulse of common Christianity was the very practical fact that Ottoman victory in the war would mean the destruction of all the missionaries had worked for. They knew they were too solidly identified with the Armenian cause to ever again operate as they had in Anatolia if their side lost.

During the war, the American press spared none of its rhetoric. Stressing the Christianity of the Armenians and labeling the Turks as enemies of God was common, especially in magazines and newspapers with emotional ties to the missionary establishment. On October 18, 1915, **The Independent** editorialized: "This [the Armenian Massacres] is no frenzied dream, but the authenticated fact. We have it from many sources which must be credited. Our mission boards are receiving the story. . . . Our old friend ambassador Bryce confirms the unmentionable details. . . . But the doom of Turkey must be near at hand. The world has endured the intolerable Turk to the end. Her crimes cry to heaven for punishment. Avenge, oh Lord, thy slaughtered saints." The sources of such editorials were clearly British propaganda and missionary reports, but the religious force against the Turks drew on a bias older than the Crusades.

American press accounts of the war in Eastern Anatolia made much of reports from the European enemies of the Ottomans. Sometimes the British and French testimony came as descriptive letters, sometimes under the guise of news, but it all had the same propagandistic intent. All were accepted without criticism. Much absolute nonsense was printed, including reports of Turkish attacks on their Christian allies and the annihilation of the Arabs of Anatolia, neither of which were in any way true. (In truth, the Turks even worked well with their traditional enemies, the Bulgarians, in the war, and the relatively small Arabic-speaking community of Anatolia remained after the war.) The origins of the allegations were given only as London.

In letters from Europe, the scope of wartime fantasy was often great. Henry Doucet, identified as the Bishop of Dioclea, wrote that the official newspaper of the Turkish governing party had publicly printed the government's intention to kill all Armenian men, take all Armenian women into Turkish harems, and force all old men to

starve. He declared that Armenian women and children were sold in slave auctions in Istanbul. According to Bishop Doulcet, only a few thousand deported Armenians had survived and had made it to Beirut, where they were rescued by a French warship.¹⁷ In fact, there had been no article in the newspaper, no slave auctions, no French warship that docked at a major Ottoman city while the French were at war with the Ottomans, etc. Yet the letter, and many others like it, were prominently printed without correction or question. Similar letters flooded the American press, especially from organizations such as the Women's Armenian Relief Board of England.

The most common mention of the Armenian-Turkish conflict in the press was not descriptions of events, but commentary. Commentary, analysis articles, and editorials needed to refer to nothing but the opinions of the authors and editors. The **New Republic** characterized the Ottomans as "physically impotent and morally broken," described "the weakness, the violence, the bloodiness" of the Turkish System, and repeated the usual slanders, such as the slave auctions of Armenians.¹⁸ The **Literary Digest** blamed the Germans for alleged Turkish actions, calling them "a cold-blooded political move" which "gave the actual execution of it into the hands of the Kurds and Turkish soldiers, who went about it with the ferocity of Moslem religious fanaticism." The **Literary Digest** intimated that the Turks could not have organized things on their own.¹⁹ And those two papers were among the most sedate. Others, such as **The Independent**, featured comments with headlines such as "The Assassination of a Race," "The Unspeakable Turk," and "Back to the Barbarians." **National Geographic** printed "Under the Heal of the Turk." The stately journal **Current History** read more like a tabloid when it considered the Turks: "Armenians Killed With Axes" and "Horrors of Armenian Encampments."

The propoganda against the Turks culminated at the end of the war, when the Ottoman Empire had been defeated. Missionary organizations had founded Near East Relief with the laudable purpose of ministering to Armenian victims of the war. The organization found that the most effective means of collecting funds was to paint the actions of Turks in the blackest possible way. What was said of the Turks was too similar to all that has been listed above to be repeated. The new factor in the Near East Relief propoganda was the skill in which the message was spread. Meetings were organized across the country. Schools and churches joined in the cause, and speakers addressed them, telling of the plight of the Armenians. The Turks were portrayed as devils who had without cause decided to destroy the Armenians. Given the state of information on the events in Eastern

17. **The Nation**, November 4, 1915.

18. January 27, 1917 and November 2, 1918.

19. October 27, 1915 and October 30, 1917.

Anatolia, the speakers probably knew as little of Turkish suffering as did their audiences. Posters appeared in public places showing images of "Suffering Armenia," complete with lurid pictures of Turkish oppressors. Even a silent movie was made, entitled "Ravished Armenia." The appeals of Near East Relief were literally everywhere. As a result, the image of the evil Turk was constantly before American eyes, not merely in newspapers and magazines, but on posters and in the cinema.

The amounts collected by Near East Relief were impressive; it distributed more than 100 million dollars in relief in a time when the dollar was worth much more than today. It has been said that neither before nor since has the American people so taken a charitable cause to heart. The problem is that in order to save one people another was defamed. A good purpose was served, the feeding of destitute Armenians, but it was done by completing the unjustified destruction of the image of a whole people in the minds of Americans.

Conclusion: The Persistence of the Image

From the 1890s until after World War I, Americans villified the Turks. They acted out of impulses both good and bad--to collect money for orphans, to win a war, to support the Cause of Christianity--or simply because they knew nothing of the realities in Eastern Anatolia. They did their work well. Many Americans have until this day kept the same image of the Turks created decades ago. How could they not? Their ancestors were bombarded with propaganda against the Turks. Men they respected told them Turks were evil and had done hideous things. No one was able to speak for the Turks, or was allowed to do so. Consequently, the view of the Armenian Question that was passed down to today, shorn of the worst excesses of racism, has been essentially the same as the view in 1918. The sufferings of the Muslims--the Circassians, Abkhazians, Tatars, Turks, and others--are little known, and thus a long war in which all sides lost has been called a genocide.

Americans today no longer accept the racial and ethnic prejudices of the 19th and early 20th century. Clergy, missionaries, ambassadors, and other community and civic leaders would be quick to denounce such ideas as violating the precepts of what it means to be an American. Yet those prejudices were the basis for, and led directly to, the conclusions formed by leaders in the 19th and beginning 20th centuries with regard to the Turks and the Armenians. How can conclusions and assessments based on premises that are now rejected be acceptable?

7

The Debate

*THE
CONFLICT
CONTINUES*

Most of what has appeared in the preceding pages is questioned by Armenian nationalists. Their view generally has been accepted in the United States, in large part because the other side of the question has never been heard.

The propagandists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did their work well. The history of Turkish-Armenian relations became defined in the Western popular imagination as The Armenian Massacres, later The Armenian Genocide. “The Starving Armenians” became a cultural image in North America, one of the few images of Middle Eastern history to strike the popular imagination.

The standard view of Armenian history was fueled by the fact that hundreds of thousands of Armenians lived in North America, but very few Turks. New England and California became the headquarters of the Armenian revolutionary groups after they were ousted from power in Armenia by the Bolsheviks. The presence of Armenians meant that one group was able to continue to influence Church groups and newspapers, and thus keep their movement alive.

Why was there no one to speak for an alternate view? The answer lies partly in Turkey, partly in the West. The Turkish government was unintentionally at fault for saying nothing on the issue. After World War I and the Turkish War of Independence, the founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, was faced with a land ravished by war. Turkey was a country full of refugees from the Balkans and the Caucasus. Quite naturally, the refugees hungered to return to their homelands. To have given in to their wishes would have meant wars which would ultimately have benefitted no one. Therefore, Ataturk and his government set upon a policy which he defined as “Peace At Home, Peace Abroad.” The Turkish government declared that it had no wish to reconquer lost lands. From that date on the Turks would live in what remained to them in Anatolia and Eastern Thrace, Modern Turkey. Any

mention of lost territories was actively discouraged. Sentiments of hatred for old enemies such as the Armenians was not allowed in schoolbooks or the press. In short, it was felt to be better to submerge all feelings of revenge, because they could ultimately only do more damage to the nation. The Turkish position was a success in Turkey. Those who wished wars of reconquest were never successful in deterring the government from a policy of peaceful development and forgetting past wrongs. However, the policy was a failure abroad. Lack of a Turkish voice meant that only the Armenian voice was heard.

In Canada and the United States after the First World War there were very few scholars who even knew how to read the Ottoman Turkish language, much less write authoritatively on recent Turkish history. American universities did not train students in non-Western languages. (There was very much more scholarship written on Ancient Middle Eastern History than on Modern Middle Eastern History.) Those few who might have written objectively were faced with a solid wall of feeling against the Turks. It is no accident that they chose to write about fifteenth or sixteenth century Ottoman history, rather than risk their careers delving into very unpopular issues. Until after the Second World War, no one but advocates of the Accepted Doctrine wrote about Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, and the writers were often from missionary backgrounds. Even after World War II, very little objective history appeared on the issue. Students of history could be excused if they thought the standard version of the Armenian Question was universally accepted, because it was not until the late 1970s that history utilizing all the available sources, and therefore questioning the conventional wisdom, was written.

The presence of a group of scholars who study and write on more modern Ottoman history is a result of a new American interest in the rest of the world, which began in the 1950s. Government scholarships to study foreign languages and history, as well as groups such as the Peace Corps, created a new group of scholars who had the skills to study the Middle East. Few, if any, of those scholars set out to study Armenian-Turkish relations, but they could not help but see problems with the traditional interpretation as they studied modern Turkish history. The Turks also realized that they could not keep quiet on the issue. This was brought home to them when Armenian terrorists began to assassinate Turkish diplomats, beginning the cycle of revolutionary violence anew. Turkish archives were opened and Turkish scholars began to publish on the Armenian Question.

The Disagreement

Today, there can be no doubt that there is a legitimate academic disagreement on the history of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. On May 19, 1985, an advertisement appeared in **The New York Times and The Washington Post**. The advertisement was signed by 69 American scholars who questioned the traditional view of an Armenian Genocide.

Most of the foremost scholars of Turkish Studies and Ottoman History in the United States were included in the list. Their statement read, in part:

As for the charge of “genocide,” no signatory of this statement wishes to minimize the scope of Armenian suffering. We are likewise cognizant that it cannot be viewed as separate from the suffering experienced by the Muslim inhabitants of the region. The weight of the evidence so far uncovered points in the direction of serious intercommunal warfare (perpetrated by Muslim and Christian irregular forces), complicated by disease, famine, suffering, and massacres in Anatolia and adjoining areas during the First World War. Indeed, throughout the years in question, the region was the scene of more or less continuous warfare, not unlike the tragedy which has gone on in Lebanon for the past decade. The resulting death toll among both Muslim and Christian communities of the region was immense. . . .

By no means are all 69 scholars in complete agreement on their interpretations of history. It is the nature of historical inquiry that historians often disagree. However, they were in agreement on the above statement and on the need for more research on the topic before anyone levels blame on any one group.

It is important to note that those who question the “Armenian Genocide” are very different from those who question the Genocide of the Jews by Hitler and his Nazis. No reasonable historian of Germany questions that the Nazis killed millions of Jews in their death camps, but there is a fringe group who does so. The “69 Scholars” who have questioned the use of “genocide” where Armenians are concerned are no fringe group. They are the foremost experts on the history of Turkey in the United States. Thus no one can rightly ignore their questions, as has been done in the past, by saying that “a fringe group of fanatics are the only ones who doubt that there was an Armenian Genocide.”

The Contemporary Debate

The issues which have been presented here and in materials distributed by Armenian groups can be a study in the mechanics of scholarship, the disagreements that arise among scholars, and the effects of politics on the search for knowledge.

The points of disagreement between the two “sides” are substantial.

POINTS OF DISAGREEMENT

*There was a **Genocide of the Armenians** carried out by order of the Ottoman Government.*

There was no genocide, unless one considers what transpired in Anatolia to have been a genocide carried out by both sides on each other.

The most important consideration in the Armenian Question is the irrational hatred of Ottoman Turks for Armenians.

The most important consideration is the long history of Armenian and Russian conflict with Turks and Muslims. Any irrational hatred was on both sides.

Armenian revolutionary activities were a response to Turkish oppression. They were based on the right of a people to have a secure homeland, for which all people strive.

Armenian revolutionary activities were based on a nationalistic desire to have a homeland, ignoring the principle of majority rule in an overwhelmingly Muslim land.

Armenians were innocent victims of the Ottomans. At the beginning of World War I the Ottoman Armenians were loyal, or at least neutral, subjects of the sultan. Only when attacked by the Turks did they rise up in revolt.

Armenians revolted against the Ottoman government, aided the Russian invaders, and killed their Muslim fellow-citizens **before** any action was taken against Armenians.

Forced migration was a tactic used by Turks against Armenians. (i.e., the only mention of forced migration in Armenian Nationalist writings concerns Armenians.)

Forced migration was a tactic used by Russians against Turks and other Muslims, only later used on Armenians by the Ottomans. During World War I, many more Muslims were forced to migrate than Armenians.

The Ottomans decided to deport the Armenians because World War I gave them a chance to get rid of the Armenians, which they had long wanted to do.

The Ottomans decision to expel the Armenians was primarily based on military necessity, but due to wartime conditions was not carried out properly.

Massacres of Armenians must be studied in detail, because they are the first modern example of the horrible crime of genocide. Blame must be apportioned to the Turks and their supporters for the murder of Armenians.

The entire history of Muslim-Armenian relations must be studied. Murders of Muslims must be studied as well as murders of Armenians. If there is blame, it must be shared by all guilty parties.

Contemporary Political Pressures

Obviously, the areas of disagreement on the Armenian Question are great and not subject to easy solutions. History is full of such thorny problems, and historians normally labor quietly for years to resolve them. The Armenian Question is different than other historical questions, because it is a continuing political question, as well. Armenian nationalists still wish to create an Armenian State in what today is Turkey. The Turkish Republic has no wish for this to happen. World opinion of the fate of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire is a weapon in a political war.

If the political question did not affect the teaching and study of history, politics could be ignored. To scholars, it is obvious that there are two sides (at least) to the issue of Armenian-Turkish relations. Debate is continuing on the question, and many new books and articles are appearing. If unbothered by those with political intentions, researchers would be able to go on with their studies and ultimately hope for better answers and general consensus. Students would be taught the Armenian-Turkish conflict as a part of Middle Eastern history on which there is debate. However, the danger is that present-day politics have greatly affected the teaching of the Armenian Question. State legislatures and boards of education have mandated that the Armenian Question be taught as the Armenian Genocide, and no other side is being presented.

Educators should ask why the historical debate does not appear in the materials given to American schoolchildren? Why are children being taught that all reasonable people agree that Turks ordered an "Armenian Genocide," when in fact historians do indeed question the existence of that genocide? Why is there no attempt to tell students that there are two or more sides to this issue?

The history of the Turco-Armenian Troubles is worthy of presentation in classrooms. Teaching the events in the Caucasus and Eastern Anatolia and the conflict between Armenians and Turks as an example of man's inhumanity to man is proper and valuable. The lessons on the dangers of sectarianism, radical nationalism, and the effects

of government weakness are worth inclusion in the history curriculum. It is proper to present the views of the Armenian nationalists, but it is also essential to present opposing views.

It is not the purpose of this book to analyze all the processes of curriculum selection, but readers may wish to consider the implications of the following:

Studies of the Armenian Genocide (in those words) are mandated by legislatures, not by teachers. It is probably fair to say that most legislators have not consulted history books before mandating curricula.

Although all agree that education should be free of prejudice and free of political pressure, it is difficult to bring these about in practice. Politically strong pressure groups have a much easier time presenting their views than do politically weak ones.

The traditional prejudice toward Turks makes it difficult to present Turkish history in a neutral way.

Many are afraid to question “traditional wisdom.” Little personal benefit comes from adopting unpopular views on curricula.

The history of the Turks, like the history of most non-Western peoples, is so little known in the United States and Canada that it is hard for teachers to know where to look for that history.

The Armenian Nationalist view of history has long been popularly accepted, although questioned by historians. Most people do not know that there is another side.

Because of all these reasons it is difficult to present an alternate view on the history of Armenians and Turks. Yet teachers, scholars, and politicians must ask themselves if it is fair to do other than present both sides of the story. Fairness is, after all, essential to the honest quest for historical truth. In the name of fairness, educators have investigated and subsequently changed much of the “traditional wisdom” once taught to students. The American Drive Westward is no longer taught as a purely noble quest, forgetting its effect on Native Americans. The history of slavery is no longer taught with suggestions that many

slaves were happy with their fate. Imperialism is no longer taught as The White Man's Burden. On those matters, the quest for fairness changed the teaching of distorted history. It should also be applied to the Armenian Question.

Suggested Readings

By
Specialists
on
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History

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*By
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on
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History
and Others*

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Appendix: Guides

Outlines

Questions

Vocabulary

Discussion Points

Maps

Chapter 1

OUTLINE

- I. The Region of Armenian-Turkish Conflict-Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus.
 - A. Most of the region was mountainous.
 - B. Groups in the region remained isolated.
 - 1. Terrain made isolation and continuation of minority groups possible.
 - 2. Because such a region was difficult to govern, much of the real government was local.
 - 3. However, the region was not completely cut off from the outside world.
 - a. News from the rest of the region was well known.
 - b. Migrants came in and out.
- II. The Peoples.
 - A. The concept of race (“German Race” or “English Race”, not “Black” or “White”) was common in nineteenth century Europe and America, but not in the Middle East.
 - B. Middle Easterners defined themselves by religion, and were so identified by the Ottoman government.
 - C. Armenians.
 - 1. There were Armenian kingdoms or principalities from the first century B.C., usually the vassals of others.
 - 2. In the eleventh century the region was conquered by the Seljuk Turks, later by the Ottomans.
 - 3. Armenians migrated from Eastern Anatolia before and during Turkish rule.
 - D. Other non-Muslims, especially smaller Christian groups.
 - E. Turks.
 - 1. Turkish-speakers were first seen in Central Asia.
 - 2. In the eleventh century Turkish nomads first began to migrate to Anatolia.
 - 3. The Ottoman Empire was founded by Turks.
 - 4. Turks were a majority of the population in Anatolia, Azerbaijan, the Crimea, and parts of Southeastern Europe.
 - F. Other Muslims.
 - 1. Kurdish-speakers can be divided into two groups by their actions and loyalties.
 - a. Those dwelling in cities or towns and settled agriculturalists, who were integrated into Ottoman society.
 - b. Tribesmen, who were primarily loyal to their tribe and only sometimes gave allegiance to the Ottoman state.

2. Arabic-speakers, near the border of present-day Syria.
 3. Refugees from the Caucasus, such as Circassians and Abkhazians.
- G. Population Numbers.
1. The population of the East was overwhelmingly Muslim.
 2. By the 1700s, there was no area that had an Armenian majority and was large enough to form a viable state.
- III. The Ottoman Government.
- A. The Ottoman Empire was not a national empire, but there were more Turks than any other group in the ruling class.
- B. Central government control in the Ottoman Empire changed over time.
1. In theory, the rule of the sultan was absolute.
 2. In fact, decentralization was necessary and some parts of Eastern Anatolia had a great deal of autonomy.
- C. In the late sixteenth century, the power of the central government began to slowly decline.
1. There had been no Renaissance or scientific revolution in the Ottoman Empire, so the government was weaker than European governments.
 3. Many areas of the Empire became virtually independent.
- D. Ottoman resurgence in the nineteenth century.
1. Extensive contacts with Western Europe began. The Ottomans began to borrow Western technology and ideas.
 2. Reform was successful, but limited.
 - a. Russian attacks took resources necessary for reform.
 - b. The conservative mentality of many Ottomans hindered reform.
 3. Commercial development disproportionately helped Ottoman Christians, who were favored by Western Christians.
- E. Millets (religious groups led by bishops, rabbis, etc.).
1. The system of division by religion into millets allowed much autonomy to the different religious groups in the Empire.
 - a. Education, welfare, family law, etc. were in the hands of the millets, not the government.
 - b. Each millet was led by its own religious leaders.
 2. The millet system was very effective in running an Empire of disparate peoples, but it fostered separatism.

Questions

1. How did isolation shape the makeup of the population of Eastern Anatolia? Are there other examples of isolation allowing peoples to remain separate from the majority of a country?
2. When did the emigration of the Armenians begin? Why did it take place?
3. How long have the Turks and the Armenians lived in Anatolia? To the inhabitants was there a real difference in the time their peoples spent there? Could all the peoples of Eastern Anatolia legitimately call it home?
4. What were the relative numbers of Muslims, Armenians, and others in Eastern Anatolia? Did this have an affect on the political situation? Should it have had an affect?
5. What was the Ottoman system of governing differing religious groups? Despite its benefits, was there the potential for later trouble in such a system?

Chapter 2

OUTLINE

- I. Two Roots of the Conflict--Russian Expansion and Armenian Nationalism.
- II. Russian Expansion.
 - A. The Crimean Tatars.
 - 1. The population of the Crimea was almost entirely Muslim Turkish (called Tatars).
 - 2. The Russians conquered the Crimea.
 - a. Land seizures, illegal taxes, and other "administrative pressures" were applied to the Tatars.
 - b. Russian army units raided Tatar villages.
 - c. A "Russification" policy was applied against the Tatars, who feared loss of their religion and culture.
 - 3. The Tatars were forced to emigrate to the Ottoman Empire. At least 300,000 became refugees.
 - B. Muslims of the Western Caucasus.
 - 1. The Russians applied brutal policies to the Muslims to force their emigration.
 - a. Villages were plundered and destroyed.
 - b. Houses and crops were destroyed.
 - c. Russian soldiers murdered Muslim villagers.
 - 2. In 1864, the Circassians were forced to emigrate to the Ottoman Empire.
 - 3. In 1867, the Abkhazians were forced to follow the Circassians.
 - 4. In 1877-78, the Laz were forced out.
 - 5. In all, more than 1.2 million Circassians and Abkhazians fled. One-third did not survive.
 - 6. The expulsions were significant to the Armenian Question.
 - a. The sufferings of the Muslims have been ignored by the West, indicating both prejudice and ignorance.
 - b. Both Turks and Armenians learned what they might expect from Russian conquest, which was to be important in later Muslim-Armenian conflict.
 - C. The Southern Caucasus--Transcaucasia.
 - 1. Loyalty was based on religion rather than political boundaries.
 - 2. Armenian actions against the Muslim Khanates of Transcaucasia assisted Russian invaders.

- a. In the 1790s, Armenian bishops preached in favor of the Russians.
 - b. Armenians cooperated with Russian invaders, even fighting on the Russian side against their Muslim rulers.
- 3. The Russian wars against the Persian and Ottoman Empires, 1827-29, began a great forced Population Exchange--Armenians to the Russian Caucasus, Muslims to the Ottoman Empire.
 - a. 30% of the Turks and other Muslims in Yerevan Province, conquered by Russia, were killed or forced to flee.
 - b. When the Russians were forced by other European Powers to leave some of their conquests Armenians from the occupied areas followed them out of Anatolia.
 - c. Other Armenians from Iran also went to Russian Transcaucasia.
 - d. Russia continued to follow the policy of population exchange for the next ninety years.
 - e. Armenians left Eastern Anatolia for economic opportunity in other areas of the Ottoman Empire and in Russia.
- D. Other nineteenth century wars.
 - 1. After the Crimean War (1854-56) an unknown number of Armenians followed the Russians out of Northeastern Anatolia.
 - 2. Migrations continued during and after the 1877-78 Russo-Turkish War.
 - a. Turks and other Muslims fled the Russian conquest in Anatolia, 6,000 Muslim families from the city of Erzurum alone.
 - b. After the war, at least 25,000 Armenians left Anatolia for Russian Transcaucasia.
 - c. More than 60,000 Muslims left the areas of Anatolia awarded to Russia in the Peace Treaty. 40,000 Laz were also forced from their homeland.

Questions

1. Why did Russia feel the need to expand into the Muslim Lands to the South? Some have theorized that the Russians wanted to gain warm-water ports. Others emphasize the Russian fear of conquest by their neighbors unless they conquer them and set up a buffer between the Russian homeland and Russia's enemies. Do these reasons sufficiently explain Russian Imperialism?
2. Are there modern examples of the same type of Russian expansionism? For example, after World War II Stalin demanded that the USSR be ceded Northeastern Anatolia and allow Russian bases on the Bosphorous. Was this similar to the Tsar's actions in the nineteenth century?
3. Did Russian Imperial policy take into account the people who were affected by the Russian conquests?
4. Why did so many Armenians prefer to go to the Russian Empire and so many Muslims prefer the Ottoman Empire? Were there dangers for each if they remained in their homes? How much did economics affect the moves?

Chapter 3

OUTLINE

- I. Nationalism--a Matter of Belief, Not Reason.
 - A. In the nineteenth century, nationalism was tied to the idea of "race".
 - 1. Europeans felt the "nation" to be in the soul or spirit of the people.
 - 2. Each "racial group" felt itself to be superior to the others.
 - B. Racism and nationalism were alien to the traditional Middle East, where group identification was by religion.
- II. Religion and Armenian Nationalism.
 - A. Armenian separatism was based in the Armenian religion, which was distinct from the other Christian religions as well as from Islam.
 - B. The Ottoman **millet** system reinforced Armenian separatism.
 - C. Missionaries helped the development of Armenian nationalism.
 - 1. Catholics were the first missionaries to help develop national consciousness among the Armenians.
 - 2. American Protestant missionaries developed Western-model schools to educate and convert Armenians.
 - a. The Ottomans offered little opposition to the missionaries or the schools.
 - b. Missionary schools were established all over Anatolia.
 - 3. American schools became centers of Armenian nationalism.
 - a. Teachers inculcated a sense of Christian superiority in their Armenian students.
 - b. Armenian teachers and students used the schools for revolutionary indoctrination and organization.
 - c. Western education allowed Armenians to economically advance faster than the Muslims, thus increasing their sense of superiority.
 - 4. Ottoman religious toleration allowed American missionaries to continue and expand their efforts, despite the divisive effects of the schools on the Ottoman state.
- III. The Armenian Revolutionary Parties.
 - A. The Armenakan Party was the first to organize, but least successful, of the parties.
 - B. The Hunchak Party, doctrinaire Marxist revolutionaries.
 - 1. Hunchak doctrine declared that violence against the Ottoman government and against Muslims was necessary for the creation of an Armenian state.
 - 2. In the 1890s, the Hunchaks organized rebellions in the Ottoman East.

- C. The Dashnak Party, most successful of the revolutionary parties.
 - 1. Dashnak party organization was centered in the Russian Empire.
 - 2. The Dashnaks directed revolutionary activities against the Ottoman Empire.
 - a. Armenian guerilla bands were organized all across eastern Anatolia.
 - b. Dashnak tactics included attacks against Ottoman officials and institutions, guerilla fighting, and inciting civil war.

Questions

1. Is nationalism rational? Can a nation be defined and reasonably understood or does it only exist in the minds of believers?
2. What were the similarities between nineteenth century racism and nationalism?
3. In the Ottoman Empire Armenian nationalism developed much more rapidly than Turkish or Arab nationalism. Why?
4. The Ottoman Empire was one of the three great empires of Eastern Europe and the Middle East. The others were the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires. Why did such empires fear nationalism?
5. The Armenian revolutionary parties shared a belief in terrorism to gain their ends. Why? Why is terrorism commonly a policy of revolutionary groups?
6. Is there significance in the fact that the Dashnaks organized in Russia and infiltrated weapons and men from the Russian Empire into the Ottoman Empire?
7. For centuries Armenians in the Ottoman Empire were distinguished by their religion. What was the place of religion in the development of Armenian nationalism? Once developed, how did Armenian nationalism go beyond religious identification?
8. How can the activities of American missionaries be explained? Did their dedication to their religious vocation keep them from prejudice?
9. Even if the missionaries never openly advocated revolution, how did their teachings in the schools advance Armenian nationalism and rebellion?

Chapter 4

OUTLINE

- I. Ottoman Attempts To Keep The Peace in the East.
 - A. Peace and civil order were in the Ottoman interest.
 - B. The interest of the Armenian revolutionaries was the opposite.
 1. The Bulgarian Revolution was an example to the Armenian revolutionaries.
 - a. In the first steps of the Bulgarian rebellion Muslim villagers were killed.
 - b. Muslim reprisals, extensively reported in the Western Press without mention of the murder of Muslims, killed Bulgarians.
 - c. Russia invaded Ottoman Bulgaria.
 - d. More than half of the Turks of Bulgaria were subsequently killed or exiled.
 - e. An independent Bulgaria, now with a much diminished Turkish population, was created.
 2. Armenian revolutionaries hoped to follow the Bulgarian example, but there were difficulties.
 - a. Unlike Bulgaria, Muslims were a large majority in Eastern Anatolia.
 - b. European could not be relied on to intervene for the Armenians.
- II. The Armenian Rebellion Began in Eastern Anatolia in the 1890s.
 - A. The first revolutionary actions were the organization of guerilla bands and small-scale attacks on Muslims.
 - B. In 1894 and after, rebellion flared in various cities of the Ottoman East.
 1. The revolts followed the "Bulgarian pattern," beginning with the slaughter of Muslims.
 2. All the revolts were put down, often with great loss of life among both Muslims and Armenians.
 3. In each case, Europeans failed to intervene militarily on the side of the Armenians.
 - a. Armenian attacks had been designed to draw reprisals.
 - b. European and American newspapers obliged by publishing one-sided accounts.
 - c. Primarily for reasons of European politics, intervention never came.
 - C. One of the greatest effects of the rebellions was psychological. Armenians and Muslims learned to fear each other.
- III. In Transcaucasia in 1905, Turks and Armenians Fought Inter-communal Battles.
 - A. Two pitched battles between Turks and Armenians came in Baku in February and September of 1905.

- B. In Nakhichevan and Southern Yerevan, villages were burned down and both sides engaged in massacres.
- C. As they had in Eastern Anatolia, both groups learned that if the other side won, they would die.

Questions

1. Why was it in the interest of the Ottoman government to keep things quiet in the East?
2. How did the successful Bulgarian revolution affect the thinking of Armenian revolutionaries? What was the place of Russian intervention in Bulgaria and in the Armenian plans?
3. Why did the Armenians seem to pick Kurdish tribesmen as victims for their attacks?
4. The Armenians who rebelled against the Ottoman Empire depended on European intervention, because they were a minority of the population and could not hope to win on their own. It did not come. Why not?
5. How did the rebellions of 1894-1908 in Anatolia and the 1905 troubles in Transcaucasia influence the people of the East? How did they polarize the people?

Chapter 5

OUTLINE

- I. War Began in Eastern Anatolia in November, 1914.
- II. The Armenian Rebellion.
 - A. Weapons stored for the rebellion were distributed.
 - B. Ottoman soldiers and other adult Muslims had been conscripted, leaving the old, the young, and adult women.
 - C. Guerilla war began.
 - 1. Armenian Revolutionary Organizations and the Russians trained and organized Armenian guerillas from Transcaucasia and Eastern Anatolia.
 - 2. Classic guerilla operations for "softening up" opposition to an invading army began.
 - a. Communications were disabled.
 - b. Conscription officers and other Ottoman officials were attacked.
 - c. Gendarmerie (police) posts were attacked.
 - d. Muslim villages were raided.
 - D. The Van rebellion.
 - 1. The city of Van was taken by Armenian rebels.
 - a. Van's Muslims were massacred or forced to flee from the city and its surroundings.
 - b. Kurdish villagers were massacred.
 - c. In rural areas, Kurdish tribes attacked Armenians, killing them or forcing them to flee.
 - 2. Van was held by the Armenians until Russian forces arrived.
 - 3. Ottoman counter-attack forced the Russians to retreat, but they returned in force and retook the city.
 - E. Massacre and flight all over Eastern Anatolia.
 - 1. Muslims of Bitlis and other cities suffered as had the Muslims of Van.
 - 2. Muslims were attacked in the countryside by Armenian bands and Armenians were attacked by Kurdish tribes.
 - 3. More than one million Muslims were forced to flee as refugees from areas occupied by Russians and Armenians.
- III. Deportation of Armenians.
 - A. The Ottoman government adopted a classic defense against guerilla attacks--deportation to deny guerilla support to Armenian bands and Russian invaders.

1. Armenians were deported from the East (except the large areas under Russian control) and other regions of Anatolia to Syria.
 2. The Ottomans made grave mistakes in the deportations.
 - a. The government was unable to provide sufficient protection for the deportees. Given the choice between protecting Muslims from Armenian bands and protecting Armenians from Kurdish bands, Ottoman officials often chose the former.
 - b. Armenians were deported from regions where there was little threat of invasion.
 3. Claims that the Ottomans intended to exterminate the Armenians are not supported by the facts.
 - a. Those Armenians who could most easily have been harmed (e.g., Armenians in Istanbul, Izmir, etc.) were not.
 - b. So many of those deported to Syria survived.
 - c. No believable evidence of any Ottoman plan to kill the Armenians has ever been seen, and all Ottoman archival documents assert the opposite.
 - B. The Ottomans made sincere attempts to protect the Armenians, but these were insufficient. Hatred was great on both sides and even some Ottoman officials persecuted Armenians. More than 1,000 Turks and Kurds were tried and convicted for crimes against the Armenians, indicating the intentions of the government to apply the rule of law.
 - C. Neither the Armenians nor the Russians ever tried their own people for their crimes against the Turks.
 - D. In fact, both sides forced the migration or deportation of the other. Many more Turks and other Muslims were forced to migrate than were Armenians.
 - E. The events of World War I were a combination of civil war and international war, and it was these, along with starvation and disease, that mainly killed the Armenians and the Muslims. There was nothing that could be called a "genocide," unless it was a mutual genocide.
- IV. Russian Collapse and Armenian Retreat.
- A. In 1917, the Russians prepared to advance their conquests in Anatolia, but the effects of the Russian Revolution destroyed their army.
 - B. Under the command of the new Armenian Republic, Armenians attempted to hold the Russian conquests, but were defeated by the Ottoman army.
 - C. Armenian forces retreated to Transcaucasia, accompanied by the Armenian populace.
 1. Great numbers of Armenian refugees starved or died of disease in Yerevan Province and on their journey.

2. As the Armenians retreated, all Muslims who could not escape were killed
 - a. In Erzinjan, 1,000 Turkish houses were destroyed and bodies fill the streets.
 - b. Bayburt, Terjan, and other cities were largely destroyed by retreating Armenians and Turks remaining in the cities killed.
 - c. In Erzurum, the largest city of the Ottoman East, an estimated 8,000 Turks were killed.
 - d. Similar or worse atrocities were repeated in the villages of the region.
3. Those Armenians who could not escape were massacred in turn.
- D. In Kars Province, the British took charge and gave the province to the Armenian Republic, even though more than half the population was Muslim.
 1. The Armenians could not succeed against the Kurds of the mountains, who drove them out.
 2. The Armenians did manage to control the Turks of the plain, who had been disarmed by the British.
 - a. Pillage and murder of Turks followed the Armenian takeover.
 - b. Turks fled from Kars to areas under Turkish control.
 3. Turkish Nationalist forces defeated the Armenians, who fled to Yerevan Province (today the Armenian S.S.R.) Surviving Turks returned.
- V. The Turks of Azerbaijan and Armenians of the Armenian Republic battled over land and control.
 - A. In Baku, Armenians and Bolsheviks first joined together to massacre Turks, then Turks took their revenge and massacred Armenians.
 - B. Turkish villages throughout the Armenian Republic were destroyed and Turks were forced to flee. Two-thirds of the Muslims of the Armenian Republic were forced to flee or were killed.
 - C. Armenians, in lesser numbers, fled Azerbaijan.
- VI. Cilicia was taken by the French, who used Armenian troops to conquer it.
 - A. Once again, Turks in the conquered area fled or died.
 - B. Impelled by Armenian actions, the Turks organized to fight Armenian bands and the French.
 1. The French and Armenians were defeated.
 2. As they retreated, the Armenians burned all Turkish villages in their path.
 3. The Armenians followed the French out of Cilicia as refugees.
- VII. Results of the War.
 - A Eastern Anatolia was largely devastated.
 1. In cities, public buildings and many private homes were destroyed.
 2. In the countryside, retreating Armenians had destroyed two-thirds of the buildings in some regions.
 3. International aid came to the Armenians, but none came to the Turks.

B. Mortality.

1. Deaths can only be calculated for Anatolia as a whole.
 - a. Almost 600,000 Armenians died.
 - b. More than 2.5 million Muslims died.
- C. With the end of the war also came the end of the Armenian-Muslim Population Exchange, which had gone on for more than 100 years.

Questions

1. The Ottoman situation in World War I was different than that of any of the other combatants. Did the French, British, Germans, Russians, or any of the other warring nations face the sort of internal rebellion during wartime faced by the Ottomans?
2. What was the effect of previous Armenian rebellions on the inter-communal war in the East during the first world war? How did the psychology of "kill or be killed" affect both the Muslims and the Armenians?
3. What was the significance of the Van Rebellion? Based on that and the other rebellions in the East, were the Ottomans justified in questioning the loyalty of Armenians?
4. Were the Ottomans justified in deporting the Armenians? Given the Armenian Revolt and the Russian threat, what should the Ottomans have done?
5. Why did the British give Kars Province to the Armenian Republic against the wishes of a majority of the population?
6. Can the deportation of the Ottoman Armenians be compared with the deportation of U.S. citizens of Japanese ancestry in World War II? Were the Armenians in open revolt against the Ottoman Government? Were the Japanese-Americans in revolt?

Vocabulary

Peoples

Abkhazians
Armenians
Bulgarians
Circassians
Kurds
Laz
Tatars
Turks

Places

Armenia
Anatolia
Azerbaijan
Baku
Bulgaria
Caucasus
Cilicia
Crimea
Erzurum
Kars
Ottoman Empire
Russian Empire
Transcaucasia
Van
Yerevan

Concepts

Civil War
Deportation
Genocide
Intercommunal War
Migration
Nationalism
Population Exchange
Race
Refugees

Organizations

Dashnaks
Hunchaks
Millets
Missionaries

Discussion Points

The Armenian Question is traditionally taught only as the history of the Armenians, but there are many other ways that the history of the Turkish-Armenian conflict can be presented. One way is as a study of the ways in which we form our opinions of other cultures and the histories of other peoples.

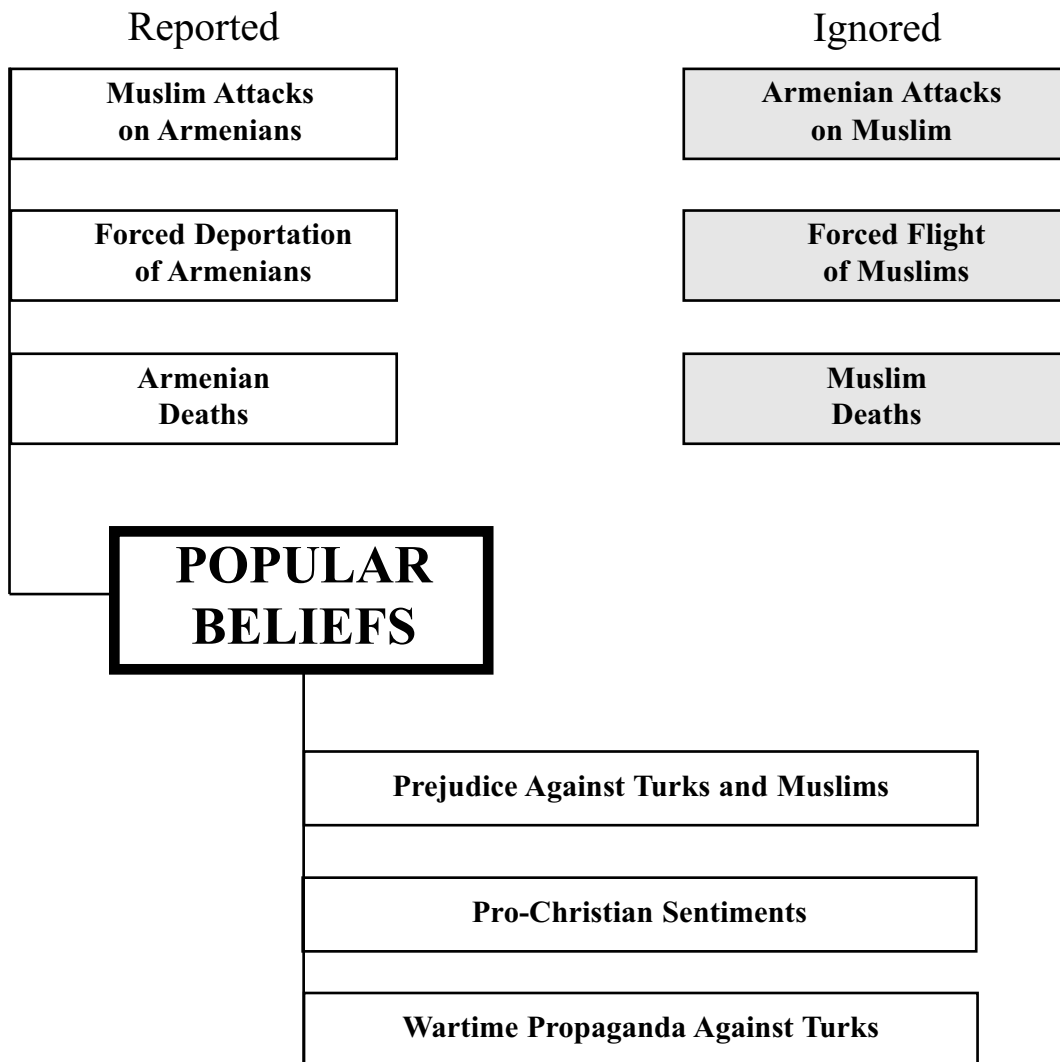
1. What is the effect of sources on our understanding of history? For many years, the only sources used to study Armenian history were the writings of missionaries and others who gave a one-sided view. Only recently have Ottoman records been studied in Europe and the United States. Ottoman records present a very different picture of Armenian affairs. For example, missionary accounts of the events of World War I give little or no indication of Armenian guerilla bands killing great numbers of Turks, whereas Ottoman records stress the deaths of Muslims. Is it legitimate to write history without considering both groups of documents? What does such selective use of sources say about the writing of history?
2. American diplomats in the Ottoman Empire usually neglected to mention the sufferings of Muslims. When the Russians expelled millions of Muslims from their homelands in the Caucasus region the Americans sent home few reports on the situation. What reports were sent complained of the disruption to the lives of Christians caused by the appearance of so many starving Muslims. The Circassians were castigated for stealing food, without mention of the starvation that caused them to steal. The Russians were not blamed.

During World War I the pattern of one-sided reporting was repeated. For example, the American Consul in Aleppo, J.B. Jackson, reported in detail on the misery of Armenian deportees, but seems not to have noticed the hundreds of thousands of starving Muslim refugees who were also in his consular district. (Jackson's reports are often used today and are even distributed to students studying the Armenian Question.) What can the mentality of Jackson and those like him have been? Did they really not notice the Muslim dead? Hard as it is to believe, it is possible that the conditioning and prejudice of such men was so strong that they simply did not notice what was around them. Few of them had close human contacts with Muslims; they preferred the society of Europeans and local Christians. Another explanation is that diplomats, being human, tended to report what they knew their masters expected to hear.

The first American ambassador who reported both Armenian and Turkish misdeeds was Admiral Bristol, the American plenipotentiary in Istanbul during the Armeno-Turkish War in the Caucasus and Eastern Anatolia after World War I. Bristol sent out agents who saw both sides and he forwarded their reports to Washington, along with his own caustic comments. It was probably no accident that Bristol had no particular liking for either Armenians or Turks. He had uniquely escaped the prejudices of his time, and thus he was able to report fairly objectively.

3. We see everything through the filter of our own concepts and prejudices, although we may have to wait for future historians to identify our failings. Our ancestors were no different. Their preconceptions influenced both their actions in the Ottoman Empire and what they wrote about events there. In the text, the idea of “race” has been much discussed. Race was just one of the ideas of the time. Concepts such as Social Darwinism, Manifest Destiny, and The White Man’s Burden were also indicative of the mentality of the recent past. Considering such concepts helps our understanding of Westerners in the Ottoman Empire. It should also make us very careful in evaluating the judgements of those Westerners.
4. During World War I, Turks were not the only ones to suffer from one-sided reporting and outright lies. Germans were also victims of the propaganda machines of the Allies. Many of the same stories of massacres and evils that were told of the Turks were told of the Germans. They were alleged to be starving the Belgians and others in order to destroy peoples who stood against them. Hideous tales of German tortures, rapes, etc. were printed as truth in American and British newspapers. But after the war the image of the Germans was “rehabilitated.” Scholars made detailed studies of wartime propaganda against the Germans and found it to be almost universally false. The image of “Belgian Babies on Bayonets,” printed and believed during the war, became a classroom example of propaganda and lies told during wartime. No such studies were made of the lies told about the Turks by the same propaganda machines. In fact, they are still repeated today. Why was that the case? It is not coincidental that only now, when Westerners have begun to develop a more open attitude toward non-Western cultures, are such studies beginning.
5. To most readers, most of what has appeared in these pages will be completely new. Yet historians of the Ottoman Empire have for some time presented alternate views to the story of the Turks and Armenians as it is commonly believed. Even if one chooses to believe that the traditional view is true, is it not odd that the most people do not even know that there is an opposing view? That fact says quite a bit about the way in which history is transmitted and understood.

Development of an Idea of Guilt



Popular writing on the Armenian Question has only mentioned the deaths of Armenians. Traditional prejudices against Turks and other Muslims, sentiment for Christians, and limited information on the actual events in Eastern Anatolia have left a false view of the history of the time. What does this say about the process of understanding and writing history? What does it say about the uncritical acceptance of “traditional wisdom?”

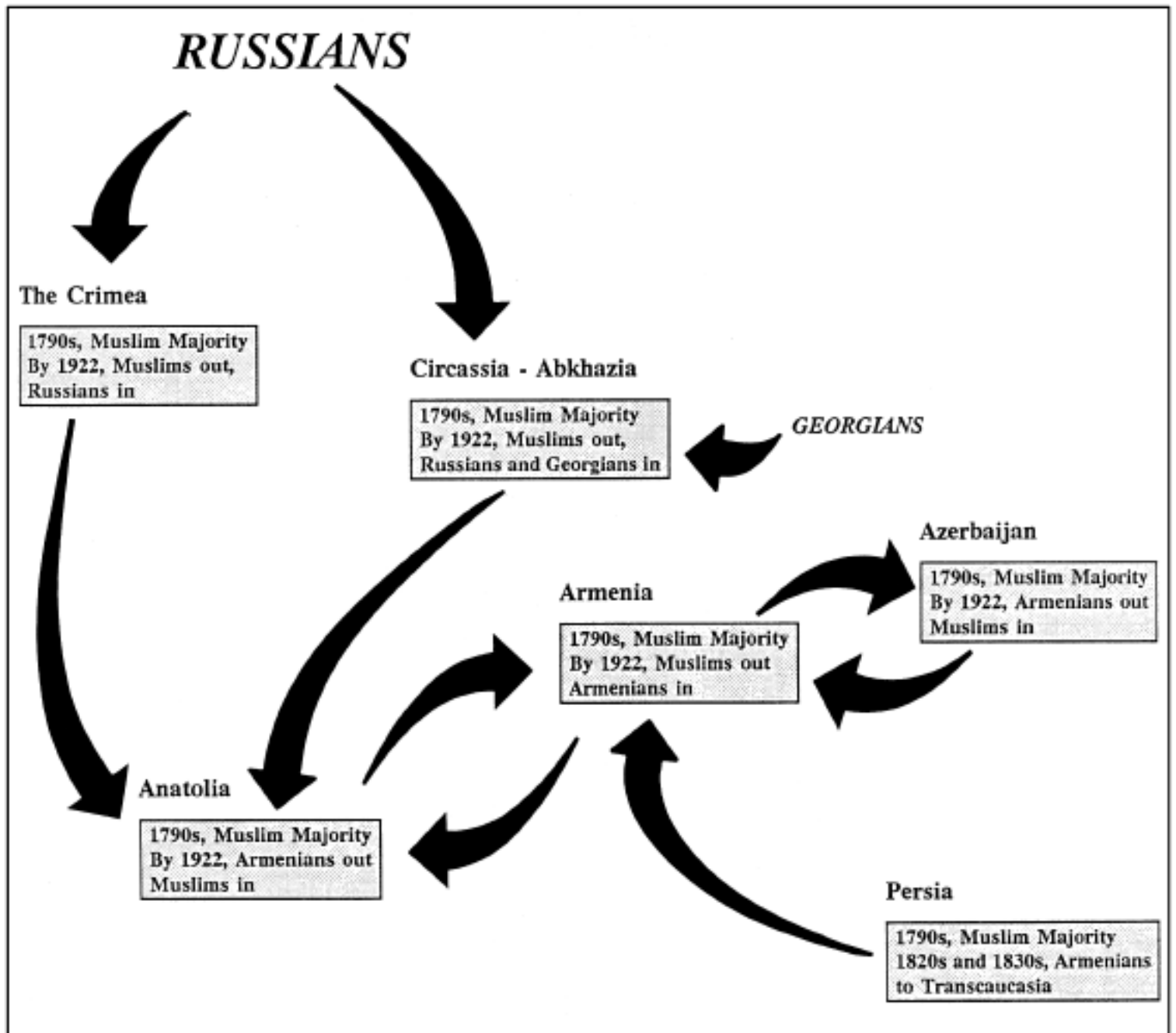
The study of the Armenian Question can be a study of the ideals of Western society. One of the most basic rules of inquiry has been that all sides of an issue should be heard. As demonstrated above, that rule has seldom been followed where Turkish history is concerned. The Armenian Question also illustrates the ideals of European and American political ideals when the rights of non-Europeans and non-Christians are at issue.

1. In 1918, President Woodrow Wilson put forth his “Fourteen Points.” They were widely praised and the Allies accepted them as a blueprint for peace, at least until the war ended. One of the strongest ideals behind the Fourteen Points was Self-Determination of Nations. Nations in the Middle East and the Balkans were to be allowed their own states wherever their people lived. Point 12 specifically extended this principle to the Turks. However, the political reality was quite different. Once the Turks were defeated, lands that had a Turkish majority both before and after the war were given to others. France, Greece, and Italy were all given parts of Anatolia and Thrace (European Turkey) to rule, despite their overwhelming Turkish majorities. All of the Eastern Anatolian lands given to the Armenian Republic had Turkish majorities.
2. It might be thought that the Allies simply misunderstood the composition of the lands they were distributing, but such was not the case. Despite a confusion of conflicting statistics presented by each national group, it was generally understood that the lands were Turkish. The British Foreign Office instructed the representatives it sent to Anatolia that the Ottoman census was the best population record available and should be consulted for pre-war figures. The Ottoman census clearly showed the situation. Yet in the Peace Conference the real statistics were ignored and the Turks were only allowed a small part of their lands. Even Istanbul, the capital of the Turks and a city with a Turkish majority, was taken by the Allies. Only the military victories of the Turkish Nationalists defeated the Allied plans.
3. There was little need for the Allies to justify their plans or even to publish false statistics. When it came to Turks, in essence, few in Europe or America cared about majority rights or self-determination.
4. Turks were by no means the only ones lied to. The Ottoman Arab Lands, which had a great Arab majority, were also not allowed their sovereignty. The British and French simply took them for themselves.
5. The gap between stated ideals and reality is obvious today. In 1919, few in Europe or the United States questioned the Allied actions.

The Population Exchange

1790s	Turks flee Transcaucasian Khanates	Armenians migrate to Transcaucasia
Crimean War	Turks (Tatars) forced from Crimea	Armenians migrate to Transcaucasia
1864	Circassians forced from Caucasus Region	Russians and other Slavs migrate into Circassia
1867	Abkhazians forced from Caucasus Region	Russians and Georgians migrate into Abkhazia
1877-1878	Laz forced from Caucasus Region Turks and other Muslims migrate from Areas Conquered by Russia	Armenians migrate to areas conquered by Russia
1878-1914	Further Muslim migrations to Anatolia	Further Armenian migrations to Transcaucasia
1915-1918	Turks and other Muslims flee from Armenian Bands and from the Russian Army	Armenians flee from Kurdish Tribes and from the Ottoman Army and are deported
1918-1920	Turks flee from Yerevan Province (the Armenian Republic) to Anatolia and to Azerbaijan	Armenians flee from Azerbaijan to Yerevan

By 1921, few Turks remain in Armenia and few Armenians remain in Anatolia. Muslims are gone from the Central and Western Caucasus Region. Armenians are gone from Eastern Anatolia.



The Population Exchange

World War I

The People of Eastern Anatolia

The Mentality of Both Sides

Armenians: We have been denied our rights for centuries. Muslims have ruled over us, denied us our God-given right to rule ourselves. We are poor, but we would be rich if we were in control. The success of our merchants and our education proves our superiority. The Muslims have many lands; let them rule elsewhere. We only have this land. If we do not gain our Armenia, what will happen to us? Already many of our sons and daughters speak Turkish as their first language. They leave us and go to Istanbul, to Russia, or to America to find their fortunes. Do we not deserve our own language, our own culture, our own State? We will lose all if we do not act.

Muslims: We have lived with the Armenians for centuries. Our land has been poor, and we have all suffered and gone hungry at times. We have not always been friends, but we have lived together. With the coming of the foreigner (missionaries, consuls, merchants) the Armenians have lately become richer than we. Now they say they want to be rulers of our land; they want to create an Armenia. If they do this, what will happen to us? We will be forced from our homes. Without the foreigners, this could never be, for we are many more than the Armenians. But the foreigners, especially the Russians, hate us. They will take over our land and give it to the Armenians unless we act. Have we no right to survive?

Of course, most Armenians and Muslims never articulated such thoughts. Most of the people of Eastern Anatolia were farmers or herdsmen. They had no desire for war. The European politics that caused World War I were beyond their comprehension. They only wished to be allowed to farm in peace. Yet both Muslims and Armenians had real fears. The Muslims knew what had happened to the Muslims of the Caucasus when the Russians conquered them. They also knew that Armenian guerilla bands were attacking innocent Muslim villagers. Armenians knew that innocent Armenian villagers were being attacked in retaliation for attacks on Kurdish villages, and that the Armenians were greatly outnumbered by the Muslims. Both Armenians and Muslims remembered the inter-communal massacres in Transcaucasia in 1905.

Neither side trusted the other. Is it any wonder that both sides believed they had to kill or be killed?

Was there any way out of the dilemma? Could anything have been done to avert the disaster? Could the Ottomans and the Armenian Nationalists have found a compromise that would have worked? Was there any satisfactory compromise?

In a greater sense, do situations and ideologies sometimes advance so far that there is no turning back from conflict?

The Question of Deportation

From the Ottoman Viewpoint, 1915

1. We are faced with an enemy, Russia, that has been taking our land for more than 100 years. Russia and her allies have agreed to seize what remains to us and divide it up between them.
2. From bitter experience we know that when the Russians conquer Muslim lands millions of Turks and other Muslims are killed or exiled.
3. Armenians have been assisting the Russians in their conquests for over 100 years.
4. Armenian revolutionaries, who are supported by large numbers of the Armenian populace, want to take over all of Eastern Anatolia. We cannot allow this, because three-fourths of the people there are Muslims. The Muslims would far rather remain in the Ottoman Empire than be ruled by Armenians or Russians.
5. Armenians have already rebelled all across Eastern Anatolia. We have been forced to recall whole divisions of soldiers from the Russian Front to partially put down the rebellions.
6. Armenian guerilla bands have been murdering Muslims all over the East. Muslims have retaliated. A real civil war is in progress.
7. Armenians have taken Van, our key city in the Southeast, and are holding it until the Russians can advance and claim it.
8. We can be confident that when the Russians advance Armenians will assist them. Armenian guerillas have already destroyed military communications, attacked soldiers and officials, and hindered the war effort. Armenian guerilla bands receive support from Armenian villages. Caches of arms have been found in many of them; many more undoubtedly lie undiscovered.
9. What shall we do? There is one sure way to deny support to the Russians and the guerillas. Shall we deport the Armenians?

MAP 1

Label the following regions:

Anatolia
Syria

Caucasus
Iran (Persia)

Label the following seas:

Black Sea
Caspian Sea

Mediterranean Sea



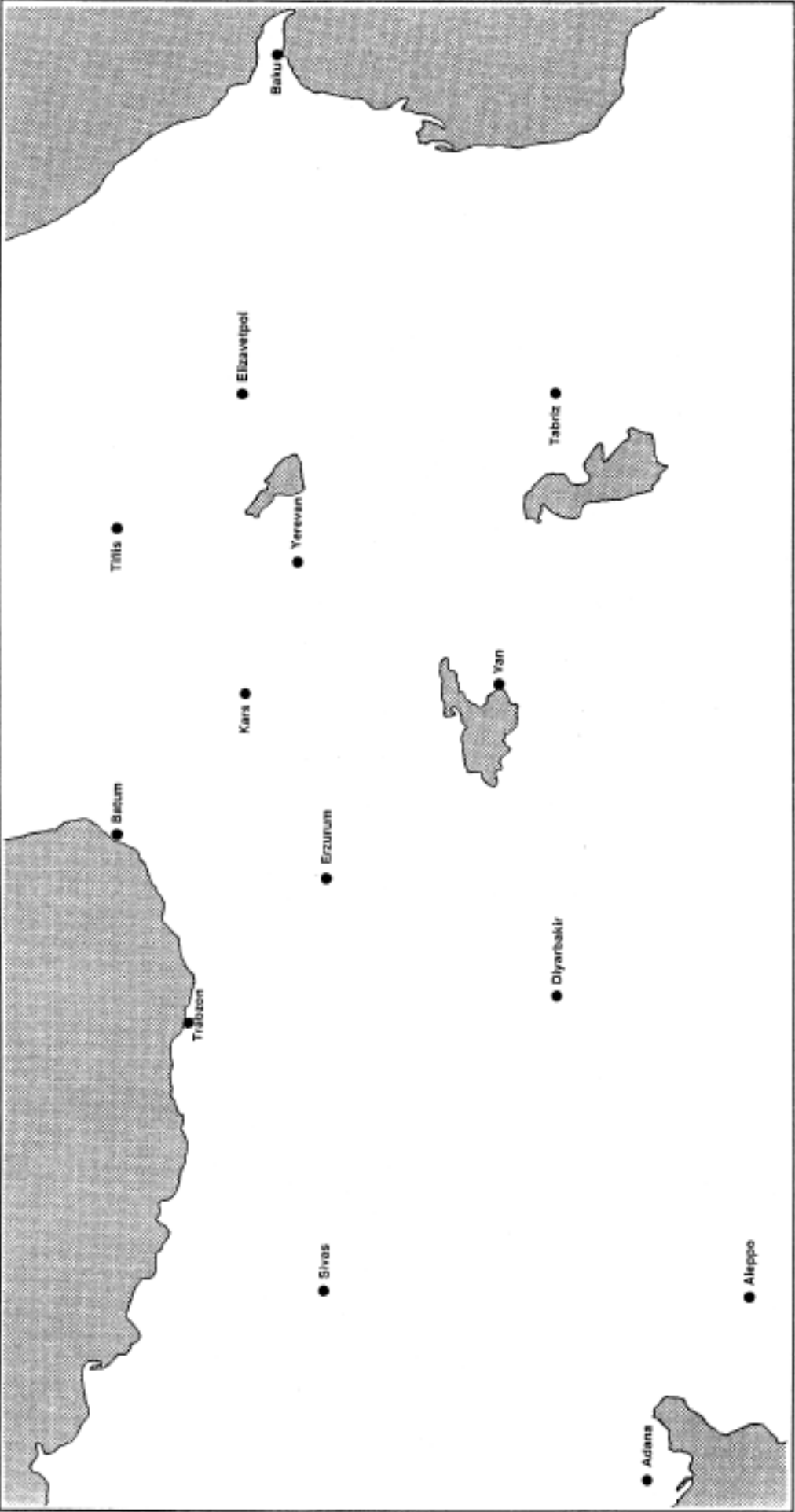
MAP2

Label the following:

Cilicia
Trans-Caucasia
Eastern Anatolia
Iran (Persia)

Shade in the Areas in which a majority
of the people were Muslims in 1790.

Draw an arrow to show the path of Russian invasion.



MAP3

Draw arrows to show the paths of Turkish and other Muslim refugees and migrants.

Draw arrows to show the paths of Armenian refugees and migrants



MAP 4

Shade in the areas in which the 1914-21 wars were fought. Include the areas of the civil war between the Muslims and the Armenians.

Identify the area conquered by the Russians in 1916.

Identify the Armenian Republic, the Azerbaijan Republic, and Cilicia.

