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*A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility*, by Taner Akçam. New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt & Company, 2006. x + 376 pages. Notes to p.464. Index to p.483. \$30.00 (hardback). ISBN 0-8050-7932-7.

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## 1. Introduction

Taner Akçam preemptively asserts that the title of his book “A Shameful Act” is a quote from a speech by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk before the Grand National Assembly of Turkey on April 24, 1920, regarding what Akçam calls the “Armenian genocide” (pp. 12-13, 335-336, 348). Atatürk, the founder and first president of the Turkish Republic, never made such a statement, particularly with respect to the 1915 security-based relocation of Armenian civilians from the eastern war zones. What he dismissed as shameful were the claims of the Allied powers regarding the events of 1915.<sup>1</sup> Deliberately provocative and employing his signature polemical tone, Akçam is obviously stressed from the outset to justify his claim that there is “evidence of intent and central planning on the part of the Ottoman authorities for the total or partial destruction of the Armenian people” (p.4). No doubt, *A Shameful Act* will raise much heated debate and controversy among both scholars and laymen.

Akçam gerry-builds “an account of Ottoman culpability”, as he bold-facedly revises the history of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish National Movement from the conclusion of the Treaty of Berlin on July 13, 1878 to the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne on July 24, 1923. He focuses on the Armenian relocation of 1915-16, particularly the role of the Ottoman leadership in the ensuing human losses. In an abbreviated preface Akçam enumerates the issues he intends to explore and allegations he intends to prove. Oddly, he provides neither an introduction nor a conclusion, as his book meanders through an unnatural and awkward union of three sections, all being contentious within themselves and with each other.

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<sup>1</sup> Consult Nimet Arsan, ed., *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri:1919-1938* (Atatürk's Speeches and Statements: 1919-1938), Vol. 4, (Ankara: Türk İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü, 1961) and *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Gizli Celse Zabıtları* (Minutes of the Closed Sessions of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey), Vol.1 (April 24, 1920-21; February 1921), (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, Second Edition, 1985).

The first three chapters (Part One) are devoted to the Armenian question before 1915 and discuss the Ottoman state and its non-Moslem populations, the era of the Committee of Union and Progress (the political body that held power in the Ottoman Empire between 1908 and 1918) and the Turkish nationalist movement. Part Two attempts to answer the perennial question of what led to the decision to relocate Armenians and attempts to analyze the decision and its aftermath. The main emphasis in Part Three is the investigations and prosecution of the war criminals. The prose is often dry and overly abstract, perhaps understandably so given the subject.

The author makes effusive acknowledgment in the text and in various endnotes of the help he received from Vahakn Dadrian, Peter Gleichmann and the Zoryan Institute for Contemporary Armenian Research and Documentation (see, for instance, p.465). Even without this explicit acknowledgment, his debt to these various individuals and agencies is patent throughout much of his book and especially in the opinions he offers, as he toes the line of the orthodoxies of the Armenian perspective of WWI history perfectly.

## **2. Selective Memory, Forgotten Sources**

The impressive arsenal of sources in Turkish, German and English, which Akçam claims to have utilized, amazingly fails to reveal itself in his work. Although endnotes demonstrate his access to these wide sources, Armenian sociologist Dadrian's publications are the principal source on which this inquiry is based. The author admits that Dadrian is his "mentor" and that Dadrian "put at his disposal much material on the subject, which he [Dadrian] has collected for close to thirty years" (p.465). Accordingly, Akçam's own investigatory skills are marginalized by his reliance on Dadrian's. Dadrian, also like Akçam, is neither a historian or a legal scholar, and approaches late WWI history and the allegation of genocide, from the perspective of a sociologist and an adversary of the Turkish state.

Akçam's is not an objective look at the Armenian Independence Movement and associated revolt and relocation. Akçam exercises selective memory and selective choice of sources as he gerrybuilds evidence to justify his conclusion. An in-depth and independent textual analysis of Akçam's (Dadrian's) source materials is necessary. It will be useful to make an explanation of how representative the sources are, and a discussion of the methods used in assessing and interpreting the information they contain.

**a. Russian Sources:** Most glaringly, Akçam ignores Tsarist and Soviet Russian archival material, which are accessible to the public for the period under question (1878-1923). It has now been nearly sixteen years since the collapse of the Soviet Union allowed access to both Russian and non-Russian scholars to its files. The opportunity to do insightful work on the history of this country, including its aims and activities in the Caucasus and Turkey, is greater than ever. Important original documents are available to foreign specialists in the Russian State Historical Military Archive at Moscow and State Historical Archive at St. Petersburg. Indeed, most researchers of late Ottoman history, who have acquired the discipline of proper historical research, have found the Russian archives indispensable. Most who have benefited from the Russian archives have found their earlier hypotheses remarkably affected by the new evidence they have discovered. These central repositories provide historians unprecedented access to fresh materials that deepen our understanding of the Armenian past. Akçam owed it to readers to examine these records and add depth and objectivity to his analysis.

**b. French Sources:** Equally surprising is that Akçam did not consult the rich and voluminous materials available at the French archives in Paris, Vincennes and Nantes. The French records are extremely valuable, as they contain extensive material on the events in the Near East before and after WWI, which provide a broader perspective in assessing the Armenian Independence Movement. One also wonders why Akçam did not use published French materials, such as the memoirs of General

Henri Gouraud, High Commissioner for Syria and the Lebanon and Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the Levant in 1919-1923, to mention only one. Nor has French newspaper and periodical literature been utilized. The attempt to use French books translated to other languages and relying on secondary evidence has been made but this seems to be little more than a token gesture. French policy should have been researched from main and primary sources that are readily accessible to any serious researcher.

**c. American Sources:** A further illustration of Akçam's selective handling of sources is his use of quotes from American officials. U.S. Ambassador to Istanbul, Henry Morgenthau, is quoted a dozen times (pp.105-106, 111, 120-121, 126-127, 142, 144-145, 155-156, 170 and 214), but another American, Rear Admiral Mark Bristol, whose reports challenge the credibility of Morgenthau reports, is ignored except on one minor occasion (p.374). Morgenthau's hearsay reports are exaggerated, while Bristol eyewitness accounting is covered up. Morgenthau never visited eastern Anatolia about which he reported to Washington. Rather, he relied on Arshag Schmavonian, who was not only a translator and legal advisor of the Embassy, but an Armenian activist. Schmavonian accompanied the Ambassador in all meetings with Ottoman officials and assisted him in the writing of his cables to Washington. Morgenthau was largely influenced by the opinions of his Armenian functionary, who did not always agree with the American point of view or have American interests in mind.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, Bristol was actually dispatched to Eastern Anatolia, and provided a balanced account of crimes committed by Armenians as well as Muslims. This independent-minded

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<sup>2</sup> On Arshag Schmavonian's influence see especially United States National Archives and Records Administration (henceforth referred to as "USNA"), 867.00/1115. Report of Consul-General at London W.S. Hollis on political conditions in Syria, 2 February 1920. For more details, see Heath Lowry, *The Story Behind Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1990), pp.14-19, 25, 33, 38, 47 and 53-54.

admiral-diplomat had very definite ideas on Turkey and the settlement of Near Eastern question.<sup>3</sup>

Bristol's role needs to be explored. He, rather than Morgenthau, exerted influence on the outcome of the Armenian question and American policy in the Near East. His dispatches constituted an important source of information to American officials in Washington. Those dispatches did provide a corrective to the flood of anti-Turkish propaganda put out by various interests in the United States and Europe, including Morgenthau's office itself.<sup>4</sup>

Akçam also ignores scholarly work that does not agree with the Armenian point of view. Thus he overlooks the essence of Gwynne Dyer's critical bibliographical study of Turkish and Armenian works on the subject mainly because Dyer -- a British scholar who has done extensive research on the final years of the Ottoman Empire and the early days of the Turkish republic -- does not agree with the Armenian allegation of genocide.

Similarly Akçam dismisses the groundbreaking research of Justin McCarthy, Guenter Lewy, Heath Lowry and Robert Zeidner -- all eminent American authorities on the Armenian matter and genocide studies. He does not refer to Ferudun Ata's relevant work, *İsgal İstanbul'unda Tehcir Yargılamaları* ("Prosecutions for Relocations in Occupied Istanbul").

**d. Ottoman Sources:** Akçam's citation of Ottoman archival material leaves much to be desired, as he fails to provide basic information such as whether a mentioned source was a letter, an internal report, or minutes from a meeting or, crucially,

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<sup>3</sup> John DeNovo, *American Interests and Policies in the Middle East 1900-1939* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963), pp.130-131.

<sup>4</sup> Laurence Evans, *United States Policy and the Partition of Turkey 1914-1924* (Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins Press, 1965), pp.270-272 and Thomas Bryson, "Mark Lambert Bristol, U.S. Navy, Admiral-Diplomat: His Influence on the Armenian Mandate Question", *The Armenian Review*, Vol.21, No.4-84 (Winter 1968), pp.6 and 11.



the date of its writing. This casts doubt on his, or more correctly, Dadrian's archival research. Simply to cite a document as, "BA/DH/\_FR., 51-215, 1333CA 20" means nothing (p.414 endnote 21). One can only imagine that the author devised his own citation system of referring to Ottoman documents by alphabetical letters and numbers, leaving it to the reader to decipher the citation by consulting a list of abbreviations. Proper citation requires that a document be provided a title, even if the original does not bear one.

Akçam often cites or quotes from Ottoman documents without properly evaluating their contents, again inviting doubt on the credibility of his research. Akçam takes refuge by claiming that the Ottoman archives are "not easily accessible for scholars." There is no conspiracy here. Quality research is not easy; it is tedious work. Access in any archive is a matter of understanding the archival system and organizing one's research accordingly. At any one time, several hundred scholars, both Turkish and foreign, are researching in the Ottoman archives in Istanbul. The Archives provide a qualified staff for cataloging and retrieving sources, as well as general assistance. The Archives are divided into general and specific sections and subsections, including ministries and ministry divisions. The Archives provide technology priority to certain topics, including the Armenian Independence Movement, and associated revolt and relocation, the relevant documents of which are available in the original as well as on microfilm. The Archives provide photocopying, printing and binding services on demand.

It should be noted that Turkish requests for access to the archives of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation and other nationalist organizations, which are kept at the Zoryan Institute in Boston, the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul and the Catholicosate in Echmiadzin have not been answered.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Yusuf Sarıncay, "Türk Arşivleri ve Ermeni Meselesi" (Turkish Archives and the Armenian Question), *Bellekten*, Vol. 9, No. 257 (April 2006), pp.289-310.

### 3. Tampering with the Evidence, Examples

Thus, the dust jacket's assertion that this book is based on a broad and scrupulous investigation is wishful thinking, if not misleading. Akçam frequently misrepresents and misquotes sources and fails to include important contextual information. He goes beyond the bounds of acceptable scholarship by manipulating the sources. These mutations, in what purport to be critical approaches, consist chiefly in distorting most references to the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish National Movement. Such blatant tampering with source material strikes at the very heart of scholarly integrity. Consequently the bulk of the text is replete with wrong and unfair judgments and one-sided accounts. The following examples may suffice to caution readers against accepting Akçam's statements at face value.

**a. Ziya Gökalp:** Contrary to Akçam's assertion, Turkish nationalism did not have its roots in racism, but in patriotism based on Ottoman self-determination and liberalism based on opposition to Western colonialism (pp.52-53). Turkish nationalism began to grow after the Balkan Wars in 1913, as much of former Ottoman territories had been lost to other nationalist movements, and the Anatolian heartland was threatened by foreign occupation. Turkish nationalism was in reality a political plan of action to provide a basis for the Empire's survival. Akçam refers to Diyarbakir born sociologist and educator, Ziya Gökalp, to support his thesis that Turkish nationalism was racist and expansionist, and that Gökalp "laid the foundations for an expansionist version of Turkish nationalism" (p.53).

Yet Gökalp sought only to encourage pride in Turkish culture. Influenced by French and German liberals, Gökalp argued that the Turkish nation was to be based on common values and culture, and social solidarity, not on racial or ethnic identity.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> On Ziya Gökalp see Uriel Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism: The Life and Teachings of Ziya Gökalp* (London: Luzac, 1950); Robert Devereux, Preface to Ziya Gökalp, *The Principles of Turkism*, trans. Robert Devereux

Rather than the Ottoman Empire, which imprisoned Gökalp for his political thoughts, it was Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish nation who supported Gökalp and adopted his creative thinking to build the new Turkish Republic.<sup>7</sup>

Akçam confuses matters further, as he implies a connection between Gökalp's studies of the Armenians and "the Armenian deportations" (p.89). In fact, the Turkish intellectual had expressed his disapproval of the 1915 Armenian relocations during the deliberations of the central committee of the Committee of Union and Progress of which he was a member since 1909. The importance of Gökalp is the impact of his ideas on Atatürk and the Turkish Republic, 1923 onward.

**b. The Ottoman Special Forces:** Akçam in several instances alleges that the Special Organization played a direct role in implementing what he calls the "Armenian genocide" (see, for example, p.59). The Special Organization, established in November 1913, was used for special military operations in the Caucasus, Egypt and Mesopotamia – all areas suffering from separatist revolts. The Special Organization was employed to stop Arab separatists in Syria. The Special Organization played no role in responding to the Armenian Revolt and corresponding Armenian relocations. Again, a careful reading of the trial's proceedings would show that while the indictment of the 1919 courts-martial linked the Special Organization to the Armenian massacres, the indictment failed and the defendants were acquitted of the charges. Rather, defendants described the Special Organization's role in covert operations behind Russian lines, not behind Ottoman lines. Indeed, the Special Organization was similar to modern day, "Special Forces." The relationship

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(Leiden: Brill, 1968) (originally published in Turkish in 1923) and Taha Parla, *The Social and Political Thought of Ziya Gökalp, 1876-1924* (Leiden: Brill, 1985).

<sup>7</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ziya\\_Gökalp](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ziya_Gökalp).

between the Special Organization and the Armenian massacres is nothing more than the uncorroborated assertion of Akçam.<sup>8</sup>

**c. The Adana Revolts, 1909:** By any standard, Akçam failed to discuss in any meaningful depth, the Adana incidents of 1909. Akçam casually states that “the director of Tarsus American College had been told by Turkish officers that they had received orders to kill the Armenians” (p.70). The American Protestant missionary-educator, Thomas Christie, President of St. Paul’s Institute at Tarsus, is better known for his reports regarding Armenian agitation, as in his dispatches to the American Consul-General at Beirut, expressing that it was a cause of great regret that many religious and secular leaders among the Armenians of the Gregorian Church pursued a policy in contradistinction to the new Constitutional Movement. Christie reported that rather than engaging the freedoms of the Constitutional Movement in a productive program, the Armenian leaders rebuked the Ottoman reforms and were preparing for armed revolt. Christie reported that the removal of the prohibition against the sale of arms to private citizens, by the Constitutional Movement, was resulting in the massive acquisition of weapons; he complained that he had difficulty with his Armenian students, who often carried pistols and daggers, even on campus. Christie reported that the hot headed Gregorian Armenian Bishop of Adana, Musheg Seropian, made an extensive tour throughout his diocese, preaching to secret societies and often from the pulpits that the Armenians must take arms and fight for a politically and ethnically pure Armenian state from eastern Anatolia to the Mediterranean. A main supporter of Seropian, was the infamous convict, Karabet Geukderelian of Adana, who had been in prison for twelve years.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ata, *İsgal İstanbul’unda Tehcir Yargılamaları*, pp.193, 199, 201 and 204; Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey - A Disputed Genocide* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2005), pp.82-88 and 221; Edward Erickson, “Armenian Massacres: New Records Undercut Old Blame”, *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol.13, No.3 (Summer 2006), pp.67-75.

<sup>9</sup> USNA RG 84 Records of Foreign Service Posts, Diplomatic Posts Istanbul, Vol.216, From Consulates 1 January 1909-30 June 1909, Bie Ravndal (Beirut)

**d. The Maraş Massacres, 1920:** Akçam's interpretation of the events that took place in Maraş in January-February 1920 is wholly inaccurate. He claims that Turks carried out massacres against the Armenians in the area (pp. 300 and 309). The exact opposite was true. It was only when the Armenians attacked the Turkish quarters of town that the Turks began to offer resistance in self-defense. Immediately, the French occupying forces that had enlisted Armenian rebels and civilians in a campaign to take control of Maraş, supported the Armenian onslaught by bombarding the Turkish quarters with artillery. Several Turkish quarters were burned down, and its Turkish inhabitants annihilated. The armed struggle continued in the streets, and Turkish quarters became scenes of pogroms and racial killings by French troops and their Armenian combatants.

The Ottoman government protested that the occupying French forces, supported by Armenian rebels, armed native Armenians and incited them to commit outrages against the complacent Turkish population. The Ottoman government further stated that the Turkish population, unable to bear the oppressive occupation and to stand by as Turks were massacred, took up arms, not against Armenians as such, but against the occupying French forces that had engineered and lead the onslaught. The Ottoman government demanded that the Allies convene a mixed commission to conduct a thorough investigation of the occurrences in Maraş. Frustrated about accusations that Ottoman forces and Turkish civilians were carrying out these massacres, on March 6, 1920, the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies unanimously passed a resolution asking the United States to send an impartial commission to investigate the Maraş incidents and conditions in Anatolia.

Charles Furlong, a United States military official recently returning from a trip to the Near East including Turkey, in a letter of 23 March 1920 to President Woodrow Wilson stated that while

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to John Leishman (Istanbul), 11 May 1909. Enclosure: Copy of letter of 6 May 1909 from Thomas Christie.

investigating conditions in Istanbul and vicinity and through the very heart of Anatolia he saw or was cognizant of the following concerning the Armenian question: “One heard much of Turkish massacre of Armenians, but little or nothing of the Armenian massacres’ of Turks. There were Armenian troops in Cilicia, organized under the French, occupying Turkish territory where there was no need of such occupation. The Turkish population were helpless under their annoyance and the Turk could not place his hand on one of these Armenians without jeopardizing his safety or life, on account of thereby touching the French uniform. Furlong adds that the so-called Maraş massacres were not substantiated, in fact, in the minds of many who were familiar with the situation, there was a grave question whether it was not the Turk who suffered at the hands of the Armenian and French armed contingents which were occupying that city and vicinity.”<sup>10</sup>

This frank and honest account is an eye-witness confirmation of what many impartial historians have concluded from a study of the pertinent documents, except of course, Akçam. Furlong shows himself to be an acute observer of the Turkish scene during those crucial times. He gives the nuanced treatment French policy in post-war Cilicia deserves.

**e. Eye For Detail:** Akçam’s research and writing is further marred by numerous factual errors, a circumstance that does not inspire much confidence in a book that claims to be fundamentally concerned with the historical truth. A few examples are as follows: (1) The Ottoman Empire was not called the “Sick Man of Europe” in the 1830s, but after 1844 (p.27). This attribution was first used by the Russian Tsar Nicholas I during a talk with Sir Hamilton Seymour, the British ambassador at St. Petersburg, in 1844. It was a diagnosis that, at that time, was somewhat in error. As a matter of fact, the Empire was then

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<sup>10</sup> USNA , 867.01/34. Copy of Charles Furlong’s letter of 23 March 1920 to President Woodrow Wilson. Department of State, 1 April 1920. During the First World War Charles Furlong was an observer with American and Allied forces in the Near East. In 1918 he was named a member of the American delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, and served as a military aide to President Wilson. Again in 1920 he traveled in the Near East.

on the way to recovery; (2) Sasun is not in Cilicia but in eastern Anatolia (p.41); (3) Yusuf Kemal Tengirşenk was not the second foreign minister of the Turkish republic but the second foreign minister of the government of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in 1921-1922 – much before the proclamation of the Republic on 29 October 1923 (p.46); (4) The surname of the Russian foreign minister in 1911-1917 was Sazonov not Sazanov (pp.98-99 and 213); (5) Bahaettin Şakir never served as the chief of the Special Organization (p.149). The only public position he held was membership on the central committee of the Committee of Union and Progress in 1912-1918; (6) Pozantı is not thirty to forty kilometers to Adana but about seventy kilometers (p.158); (7) On 31 August 1915 Ali Münif Bey was not the Inspector but the Undersecretary of the Ministry of the Interior (p.169); (8) An Ottoman province called İçel did not exist in 1915 (p.193); (9) Hovhannes Kachaznuni was not the first president but the first prime minister of independent Armenia (p.198); (10) The governor of the province of Van in February 1915 was not called Cevdet Pasha but Cevdet Bey (p.201); (11) Iskenderun's earlier name is Alexandretta not Alexandria (Alexandria is in Egypt) (p.209), and the Ottoman Empire had no colonies but provinces attached to the metropolis (p.227); (12) Izmir was not occupied by the Greeks on 16 May 1919 but on 15 May 1919 (pp.279 and 294); (13) Hüsamettin Ertürk did not direct the activities of a new Special Organization in the armistice period in Ankara but in Istanbul (p.316); (14) In 1918, German army officer, Baron Friedrich Freiherr Kress von Kressenstein, was not general but colonel (p.325); (15) Colonel İsmet did not serve as advisor to the Ministry of War in May 1919 but was indeed the Undersecretary of the Ministry (p.420 endnote 140).

Akçam's poor fact checking is coupled with errors in translation and spelling, for instance, *Başbakanlık* in Turkish means Prime Minister's Office, not President's Office (p.471 endnote 65). There are inconsistencies in the spelling of Turkish names and surnames, such as two variations of Kazım/Kazim and Bîyıklıoğlu/Bîyikoğlu, sometimes even on the same page (p.426). Typographical errors abound. This reviewer detected more than

ten dozen of them. The author has not always been careful in writing. To give but three examples: the middle name of the Turkish diplomat Söylemezoglu is not Kemal but Kemali (p.117), the Turkish title of the memoirs of Damar Arıkoğlu is not *Hatıralarım* but *Hatıratım* (p.451 endnote 92) and the first name of the Turkish historian, Öztoprak, is not İsmet but İzzet (p.463 endnote 1).

Akçam's scholarship suffers further due to the absence of tables or charts, even on matters central to the study's focus. It also has no illustrations, no chronologies, no glossary of names and terms, no bibliography, and no appendices. The index includes a comprehensive listing of the individuals and places named in the text, but the subject headings are few, overly broad, and give incomplete page references. For example, the index and the text refer to a British representative identified only as "Frew": most readers are unlikely to know that the reference is to Anglican missionary Robert Frew— British intelligence official and a leading member of the Friends of England Society in Istanbul under the Allied occupation (p.312). In the absence of a bibliography, the index fails to provide guidance to authors, past and present, in the endnotes totaling 1819 in number. The endnotes are not an adequate substitute. The book is supplied with only one sketch map, which is not detailed. Interested readers will want to keep a good map of the Ottoman Empire handy.

#### **4. The Ottoman Courts-Martial, 1919-1920**

Akçam accepts as well as rejects the decisions of the Ottoman courts-martial, in a contradictory and self-serving interpretation of the events. On one hand, he seems to assert that if the criminal convictions are for genocide the tribunals are valid. On the other hand, he is forced by the facts to accept that the criminal convictions of the tribunals are for violations that do not rise to the level of genocide. At the end of his book, he asserts, "the perpetrators of the Armenian killings" were not brought "to justice to this day" (p.376).



Akçam, neither a trained historian nor a legal expert, contends that Armenian deaths were premeditated and so constituted genocide. He assumes his position on a general reading of the decisions of the Ottoman courts-martial of 1919-1920, which Akçam claims convicted officials of the government of the Committee of Union and Progress of organizing massacres of Armenians (pp.371-373). He offers no primary evidence that proves the elements of genocide as required in Article 2 of the 1948 UN Genocide Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, particularly the implementation of a plan of extermination with the specific intent to destroy Armenians as such. Furthermore, Akçam does not account for the political motivations underlying the military tribunals, including the insistence of Allied powers to deal retribution for Armenian deaths, or the hopes of the servile Ottoman government that by foisting blame and expending a few members of the Committee of Union and Progress, the Ottoman Empire might receive more lenient treatment at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919.

Further still, if we are to rely on the tribunals for evidence of genocide, a careful examination of the due process (or lack thereof), including rules of criminal procedure, rules of court, and rules of evidence is necessary. There were serious deficiencies, pretrial and trial. Pretrial, defense counsel was denied access to investigatory files and accompanying defendants at interrogations. With respect to the trials themselves, the Ottoman military tribunals lacked fundamental safeguards, such as the right to a trial before an impartial arbiter, right against self-incrimination, right to confront one's accusers and prosecution witnesses, right to cross-examine, right to present defense witnesses, and right to access to the prosecutions evidence. Rather, the arbiter was judge, jury, and advocate in one, questioning the accused and witnesses, presenting witnesses and evidence, and assessing the documentary evidence and testimonies. Indeed, the presiding officers acted more like a prosecutor than impartial judges.

The Ottoman courts-martial convicted 1,376 persons from among the military and civic functionaries, and sentenced them to penalties ranging from a month in prison to capital punishment for outrages and illegal behavior during Armenian relocations. A careful reading of the trial transcripts, something that Akçam does not demonstrate to have done, the vast majority of the charges and convictions were not for crimes against Armenian civilians, but mismanaging the relocations. Indeed, not even within the prosecution-bias criminal system of the courts-martial, and anti-Committee of Union and Progress political environment, were the Ottoman military tribunals able to hold that the evidence constituted a systematic extermination, let alone one administered by the central government with the intent of killing Armenians.

The abuses of the Istanbul courts-martial later resulted in the arrest of four members of the principal military tribunal on charges of obstructing justice and malfeasance. Indeed, when the British government decided to hold new trials on the island of Malta against Ottoman officials on charges of “outrages against Armenians”, it declined to use any of the evidence, analyses, and holdings of the Ottoman courts-martial of 1919-1920.<sup>11</sup>

## **5. The British Malta Tribunals, 1919-1922**

Akçam conveniently dismisses the Malta Tribunals, which arrested and charged 144 Ottoman government officials with “outrages against Armenians.” When discussing the British decision to release all 144 Ottoman officials, Akçam does little more than regurgitate Dadrian’s conspiracy theory that the Turks “used their British captives as leverage for its own people held on Malta. Ultimately, they succeeded in securing the prisoners’

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<sup>11</sup> A sound analysis of the Ottoman courts-martial of 1919-1920 can be found in Ferudun Ata, *Isgal İstanbul’unda Tehcir Yargılamaları* (Prosecutions for Relocations in Occupied Istanbul) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2005). The ATAA Armenian Research Committee has recommended that Ata’s work be translated into English, in order to enhance better understanding of the Armenian relocations and the prosecution of Ottoman officials for violations arising from the administration of the relocations.

release” (p.301).<sup>12</sup> The Ottoman prisoners were held in Malta for twenty-eight months while the British searched feverishly for evidence to substantiate their charges. The British appointed an Armenian, Haigazn Kazarian, who was provided complete access to the records of the Ottoman government. Kazarian was unable to discover any documentary evidence that would support the theory that the Ottoman government implemented the relocation or any other counter-insurgency measure with the intention of massacring Armenians. The British High Commission in Istanbul was unable to provide to London *any* evidence from the Ottoman records that would support a criminal conviction against any of the Ottoman officials. The British state archives and government records also lacked evidence that would support the charges. The British made a final, desperate request for evidence from United States Department of State, which reported back that nothing incriminating turned up that could withstand legitimate court scrutiny. In the end, the British Procurator-General determined that it was “improbable that the charges would be capable of proof in a court of law,” and released all the detainees.

## **6. Marginalizing International Law**

Legal analysis brings discipline to understanding and addressing factual issues, particularly controversial issues as whether the Armenian case constitutes genocide under international law. Discipline is lacking in Akçam’s work, as he neither discusses nor applies the elements of genocide even with respect to the facts he selectively uses to argue his point.

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<sup>12</sup> Vahakn Dadrian, “Genocide as a Problem of National and International Law: The World War I Armenian Case and its Contemporary Legal Ramifications,” V. 14 M.2 Yale J. Int. Law 221 (Summer 1989).

Akçam downplays the importance of international law with respect to the Armenian case.<sup>13</sup> The Ottoman relocation was well-founded in the customary international law of the time, and is well-founded in international law today. As Akçam himself grudgingly acknowledges, “the accusations against the Ottoman government concerned its own citizens, a situation not addressed by any international agreement” (p.223). Again in the words of the author, the Hague Convention of 1907 stipulated that “the only exception to the general principle of the binding force of the rules of warfare is in the case of reprisals, which constitute retaliation against a belligerent for illegitimate acts of warfare by the members of his armed forces or of his own nationals” and “this transforms the right of reprisal into a legal principle” (p.223).

With respect to contemporary international law, Akçam provides no serious discussion of what constitutes genocide, despite the large body of work in this field (p.9). Although Akçam says he uses the term genocide “in line with the United Nations definition adopted in 1948,” he fails to address in his analysis the key issues of genocide. Most basic to a proper analysis is the *chapeau* of Article 2 of the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which states that genocide means acts committed with the intent to destroy in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group, as such.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> For an analysis of the Armenian American Public Advocacy Network’s aversion to a legal approach on the issue of whether the Armenian case constitutes genocide, see, Gunay Evinch, “The Armenian Cause in America, Today, 2nd Edition,” *The Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Winter 2005), pp.35-50.

<sup>14</sup> The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Resolution 260 III A, B, and C) was adopted unanimously by the United Nations General Assembly on 9 December 1948, effective 12 January 1951. Since then it is accepted as law by more than 130 countries. For complete text and accessions, see *Yearbook of the United Nations 1948-1949* (New York: Office of Public Information of the United Nations, 1949), pp.959-960.

The words “as such” hold the essence of the meaning of genocide. It requires that a government kill persons in a protected group for no further reason, or with no further intention, but such persons’ national, ethnical, racial, or religious identity. Armenians were not subject to a relocation because they were Armenian as such, but because they revolted against the Ottoman Empire and collaborated with the Allied powers, particularly Russia, to attack the Ottoman civilian population, take private and public property, and partition the Ottoman Empire.

Similarly, Akçam does not address the issue of whether Armenians who were subject to the relocation were a protected group under UN Convention. The Armenians here were subject to a relocation, not because of their national, ethnical, racial, or religious identity, but because they revolted with the objective of creating a politically and ethnically pure Armenian state from the eastern Anatolia provinces. They were, as the Armenian National Movement and Armenian Revolutionary Federation, a political group. The drafting history of the UN Convention shows that though Raphael Lemkin, who coined the word genocide, argued to place political groups within the protection of the Convention, the drafters rejected the proposal and gradually marginalized Lemkin’s participation. They wanted to avoid overlapping genocide with other types of crimes that effect combatants and non-combatants during war.

Akçam even fails to make any reference to the obvious requirement of “intent to destroy.” The element of intent examines the guilty thoughts (*mens rea*) that support the guilty act (*actus reus*). At the time of ratification of the Convention, the Secretary-General of the United Nations Trygve Lie emphasized that the Genocide Convention defines genocide as a crime of “specific intent”. This means that genocide cannot be inferred from actions, but must be proven by direct evidence that the accused party intended to destroy the complainant group. Throughout his work, Akçam utterly fails to identify unequivocally the thoughts of the Ottoman government in 1915 (which he admits is “inconsistent”), based on direct evidence, and

explain how his belief that the relocation intended to destroy Armenians as such. Akçam is not alone. To date, no concrete and objective evidence of specific intent in the Armenian case is manifest. In contrast, the Ottoman archives in Istanbul is replete with copies of government regulations and instructions that state that the intention of the relocation to stop Armenian civilian support to Armenian rebels, stop Armenian rebel support to the Russian Army, and secure the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>15</sup>

Akçam's scorn for the determining factor of specific intent is accompanied by his inability to appreciate the importance of Ottoman plans and efforts to conduct a relocation that respected and protected Armenian lives and property. This counter-evidence that negates genocidal intent is demonstrated in thousands of documents in the Ottoman archives, including: (1) specific directives for the army to protect the Armenians against tribal attacks and to provide them with sufficient food and other supplies to meet their daily needs during the relocation and after they were settled; (2) warnings to Ottoman military commanders to avoid certain routes, to avoid or take precautions ahead of anticipated troubles from local tribesmen who might use the vulnerable state of the Armenian relocatees to restore tribe honor and gain vengeance for the long years of Armenian violence against the tribes and their villages; and, (3) protect and care for Armenians until they could return to their hometown after the region had been secured.

Similarly, Akçam provides meager treatment to the efforts of Ottoman General, Cemal Pasha, who commanded the Fourth Army in Sinai, Palestine, and Syria and served as the Governor-General of Syria and Western Arabia in 1914-1917 (p.186). Cemal Pasha saved thousands of lives by diverting Armenian relocatees to southern Syria and Lebanon, and averting areas

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<sup>15</sup> For an in-depth conceptual analysis of the term intent to destroy with all its ramifications see, for example, William Schabas, *Genocide in International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.93-94 and 213-228.

where local tribes were angry at the atrocities committed by Armenian rebels.<sup>16</sup> As yet no erudite biography of this Ottoman officer is available. He deserves one for his personal courage and outstanding military service to render the relocation more in conformity with international legal standards.

Similarly, Akçam ignores the Ottoman Special Claims Commission that recorded the properties of relocated Armenians and sold or rented them at fair rates, with the revenues being held in trust for the relocatees. Remaining Ottoman civilians wishing to occupy abandoned buildings could do so only as renters, with the revenues paid to the trust funds, and with the understanding that they would have to leave when the original owners returned. The relocated Armenians and their possessions were to be guarded by the army while in transit as well as in Syria and Mesopotamia, and the government would provide for their return once the crisis was over.

The Ottoman Empire had relocated Armenians for legitimate national security reasons, and only after more than forty revolts had taken tens of thousands of lives. The relocation never intended to harm, let alone kill, the relocatees. No orders to kill or permit killings, are present in the relocation directives. Furthermore, there were directives not only to alleviate hardships, but to arrest for criminal prosecution or court-martial any civil person or Ottoman troop who engaged in any offense against the persons or properties of relocatees, including but not limited to, murder, robbery or rape. Donald Quataert, a historian of the Ottoman Empire, reminds that these directives and orders exist and can be examined and read.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ahmet Refik Altınay, *Kafkas Yollarında İki Komite, İki Kıtıl* (Two Committees, Two Massacres in the Paths of Caucasus), (Ankara: Kebikeç, 1994), p.39; USNA Inquiry Documents: Special Reports and Studies 1917-1919, Document 819, The Exiling of the Armenians of the Adana District, Elizabeth Webb.

<sup>17</sup> Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire 1700-1922* (New York: Cambridge University Press, Second Edition, 2005), p.187.

There is no question that during relocations Armenians were subject to attacks by local tribes that Ottoman troops were not able to repel effectively. It is also beyond question that in some instances, troops violated the rules of relocation. The gendarmes that were assigned to administer the relocation proved to be insufficient in numbers and training, by reason that the best of the rapidly dwindling Ottoman troops were utilized in the defense of the Empire on at least three fronts: Gallipoli against the Anzac and French, Caucasus against the Russian, and Sinai and Palestine against the British. The conditions of war in the areas of the relocations further exacerbated the difficulties of conducting the relocation, including local tribes who avenged the killings of their members by Armenian rebels, as well as disease, famine, and war. Akçam, for all his sociological training, fails absolutely to address the circumstances that aggravated the difficulties of relocating nearly 500,000 people.

Estimates of those who died during the relocations get short shrift despite its central importance in the book (p.183). Akçam's number at 800,000 regarding Armenian deaths is inflated (p.202). George Montgomery, director of the Armenia-America Society and a Protestant missionary who was highly critical of the Armenian displacements, in a report he drafted in 1919 stated that at the eve of WWI, the Armenian population within Ottoman territories was 1.6 million, and that 1,104,000 of these remained after the war.<sup>18</sup>

Akçam also fails to consider Armenian deaths in relation to the total population deficit in Anatolia and eastern Anatolia. Over four million Ottoman Muslims perished during and after WWI, by far the largest in proportion and total numbers of any other side to the war. In eastern Anatolia over one million Ottoman Muslims perished in comparison to approximately

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<sup>18</sup> George Montgomery Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Box 21, Armenia-America Society, January-February 1920, Copy of report titled, "The Non-Arab Portion of the Ottoman Empire, 1919."



600,000 Ottoman Armenians. The large number of Muslim deaths is indicative of the universality of the conditions of war in eastern Anatolia. In other words, the privations of war were indiscriminate with respect to Muslims and Armenians, as they each were equally effected by military invasions, revolts, intern-communal conflicts, famine brought on by desolated farm lands and foreign trade blockades, plague, typhus and other diseases.

Akçam refuses to acknowledge the ten-ton elephant in the room, as he ignores the suffering and deaths of over one million Ottoman Muslims. As the Russian archives provide, the Russian military and government documented extensively its use of Armenian rebels and Armenian civilians in the invasion and occupation of eastern Anatolia. Often, the Russians took exception with the horrors they witnessed committed by the Armenian rebels against Muslims, even when the rebels were in full retreat, such as in the massacres of tens of thousands of innocent Muslims civilians in Erzincan, Bayburt, Tercan, Erzurum, and other towns and villages on the route. Similarly, Akçam ignored the Armenian molestations and massacres in Cilicia, deplored even by their French and British allies, as well as the massacres and forced displacements of two-thirds the Turkish population of the Yerevan province, capital of the Armenian Republic, during the war.

Professor Justin McCarthy's observation underscores Akçam's black-and-white, one dimensional perspective of the human tragedy in eastern Anatolia: "To mention the sufferings of one group and avoid those of another gives a false picture of what was a human, not simply an ethnic, disaster." Moreover, McCarthy finds that "in the east [of Anatolia], the areas of Muslim deaths and Armenian deaths were almost perfectly correlated... In numbers, the Muslims lost many more persons than did the Armenians; in percentage of total population, less. The great mortality of both Muslims and Armenians does not fit into any theory that posits one group of murderers, another group

murdered.”<sup>19</sup> Akçam writes “the Armenian genocide and the question of Turkish responsibility” without addressing the universality and mutuality of the suffering and killings.

The conformity of Armenian displacements of 1915 with international law is only treated in passing. Akçam quotes the joint declaration issued by Russia, Britain and France on May 24, 1915 condemning the relocations and announcing, “they will hold personally responsible for these crimes all members of the Ottoman government and those of agents who are implicated in such massacres” (p.2). In contrast, Akçam accords only one sentence to the Ottoman reply. The author provides a faint appreciation of the Sublime Porte’s response of June 4, 1915 to the Allied Declaration which stressed the right to national sovereignty and self-defense, and declared in return that the Allied powers would be held responsible for their organization of and support for the Armenian rebellion (p.214). The Sublime Porte let it be known that it would not permit interference by any foreign power with respect to its policy to arrest the Armenian revolt.<sup>20</sup>

In the end, Akçam unexpectedly admits the national security basis of the Armenian relocation: “the decision to deport the Armenians from these regions [Cilician coastal areas ] was strongly influenced by information that the British were making preparations to land at Iskenderun” and “it is highly probable that the Unionists, who feared Armenian assistance to British during a possible landing, decided to evacuate the area as a precautionary measure”(p.146). If so, Ottoman policy of removing the Armenians from militarily sensitive zones to the inner parts of the country must be seen as a justified measure of self-defense not genocidal action. Iskenderun had great strategic importance from both a naval and military standpoint. It was a nodal point in the

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<sup>19</sup> Justin McCarthy, *Muslims and Minorities: The Population of Ottoman Anatolia at the End of the Empire* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1983), pp.137-138.

<sup>20</sup> Esat Uras, *The Armenians in History and the Armenian Question* (İstanbul: Documentary Publications, 1988), pp.869-870.

Ottoman railway system, connecting Anatolia with Arab Asia, and the loss of this vital port-cum-railhead together with a thrust toward Aleppo, would have a disastrous effect on the Ottoman war effort in general, and on the movement of troops and supplies in particular.

## 7. The Ottoman Mind and Armenians

The element of specific intent in genocide is based on malice. In genocide there is no other reason but hatred for the killing of a protected group. Accordingly, the place of Armenians in the mind of the Ottoman state presents an essential inquiry. Akçam refers to but dismisses lightly an essential characteristic of Ottoman governance, the unique *millet* system that provided political autonomy based on religious freedom for non-Muslim minorities (pp.23-24 and 28-31). Following the conquest of Istanbul in 1453, Sultan Mehmet II, organized his non-Moslem subjects into *millets* or separate religious communities under their own ecclesiastical chiefs to whom he gave absolute authority in civil and religious matters, and in criminal offenses that did not come under the Muslim law. The Armenian *millet*, with its own ecclesiastic-civil leader and internal administration, had complete charge of its own affairs. The patriarch enjoyed jurisdiction over his community's spiritual administration and officials, public instruction, and charitable and religious institutions, and the civil status. The patriarch and his ecclesiastical subordinates had the authority to inflict both ecclesiastical and civil penalties on his people; matters of litigation were brought before his court, whether such were civil or criminal; and he maintained a small police force and his own jail at the capital. He could imprison or exile clergy at will, and though the consent of the government was necessary to imprison or exile laymen, such approval was generally easily obtained.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Avedis Sanjian, *The Armenian Communities in Syria under Ottoman Dominion* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1965), pp.30-31. Professor Avedis Sanjian was born in Maraş in about 1918, left with his father in 1921, going first to Aleppo, then Jerusalem, where he grew up, later to

As the American author Alexander Powell rightly pointed out, this *imperium in imperio* or practical self-government secured to the Armenians the right to manage their own affairs. It was a remarkable concession for an all-powerful Muslim ruler to make to a non-Muslim minority the more so as throughout Europe religious intolerance was the order of the day. The *millet* system also encouraged a community life, which eventually gave birth to an intense longing for a national life.<sup>22</sup> The ‘Armenian question’ was unknown in the Ottoman Empire, from when they first conquered Anatolia in the 1200s until the middle of the nineteenth century. For hundreds of years the Ottomans ruled Armenians with justice and equity, and allowed them to form an Armenian nation headed by the Armenian patriarch. The Armenians had self-government, and were given additional autonomy under the Armenian Constitution of 1863 that gave them their own national council.<sup>23</sup> In the words of the Armenian scholar Avedis Sanjian, “the new organization and administration of the Armenian *millet* was a liberal, democratic, and representative system of government, resting on universal suffrage for the election of the legislative and executive bodies. The Constitution was based on the principle of the sovereignty of the people.”<sup>24</sup> Hence it is not surprising Gerard Libaridian recognizes that there were large segments of the Armenian population who thought the Ottoman system was preferable to the Russian, since the Ottomans had allowed a *millet* structure to develop, had given more privileges to the Church and had not tried to assimilate the Armenians.<sup>25</sup>

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Beirut. At the time of the publication of the book he was teaching Armenian language and literature at Harvard University.

<sup>22</sup> Alexander Powell, *The Struggle for Power in Moslem Asia* (New York and London: The Century Co., 1923), pp.118-119.

<sup>23</sup> This competent analysis is developed in Emil Lengyel, *Turkey* (New York: H. Wolff, 1942), p.187.

<sup>24</sup> Sanjian, *The Armenian Communities in Syria under Ottoman Dominion*, pp.40-43.

<sup>25</sup> Gerard Libaridian, “The Ultimate Repression: The Genocide of the Armenians 1915-1917”, in Isidor Wallimann and Michael Dobkowski, eds.,

Considered the most faithful Christian subjects of the Empire, Armenians were called the *milleti sadıka* (loyal community) by the central government in Istanbul. Akçam glosses over the fact that when the Ottoman Empire entered upon a course of modernization, the first Christians to enjoy the benefits of the new regime of equality were the Armenians. The first Christian Ministers and high dignitaries of the Sublime Porte were Armenians. During the times of Resit, Fuat and Ali Pashas, the chancery of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was almost continuously confided to Armenians; so was almost all the diplomatic correspondence. When, after the Crimean War of 1853-1856, Ottoman statesmen started to work for a constitutional system (about 1860), they granted to the Armenian church and community a regime based on a fundamental law which was intended as an experiment in constitutions and was to form a model for later use. Among those who worked in subsequent years with Mithat Pasha at the establishment and working of the Ottoman constitution of 1876, a large number were Armenian dignitaries. Among them Odian Effendi particularly distinguished himself. The Ottoman Empire continued to have Armenians as Ministers. Indeed, the Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1912-13, Gabriel Noradounghian, was an Armenian.<sup>26</sup>

#### **8. The National Pact of 1919 and Turkish Sovereignty**

Akçam seems convinced that the Armenian relocation of 1915 was a pretext for genocide, and frustrated that he is unable to identify a state policy of genocide. He struggles to argue that the Armenian independence movement was immaterial, as in his mind, rather than territorial integrity and sovereignty, the Turkish National Movement looked favorably on foreign occupation.

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*Genocide and the Modern Age Etiology and Case Studies of Mass Death* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), pp.230-231 fn.20.

<sup>26</sup> Sommerville Story, ed., *The Memoirs of İsmail Kemal Bey* (London: Constable and Company Ltd, 1920), p.254.

Akçam states with respect to the 1915 relocations, “it is difficult to speak of a single, consistent approach taken by the Turkish National Movement in regard to the Armenian genocide. [T]he main reason is that the National Movement approached the issue as a secondary aspect of what it called the National Pact -- that is the creation of a Turkish state within the boundaries established by the armistice agreement in 1918” (p.303).

Since the proclamation of the National Pact by the National Congress held in Sivas on September 4-11, 1919, the Turkish National Movement had clearly rejected and condemned any attempt by any parliament and government to raise the Armenian issue. Although the word Armenian did not figure in the National Pact, there were certain provisions that were designed to protect all non-Moslem minorities in Turkey. The Armenians naturally belonged to this group.<sup>27</sup>

Akçam argues that the Committees for the Defense of National Rights (Defense Committees) “never intended to fight against the Allied Powers” (p.319) and that they “had a positive attitude toward the British and French occupation forces” (p.320). The Defense Committees that came into being by mid-summer 1919 were dedicated to the defense of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Anatolia and eastern Thrace, in accordance with the National Pact. Just to give an example, the occupation of the region of Cilicia by the French forces caused deep resentment among the local Defense Committees and opposition to the French occupation as the French authorities moved from military sphere and began to interfere with local administration. During the whole of 1920, French soldiers dealt with the armed activities of the Defense Committees who had mobilized most of the population of Cilicia into detachments of 100 to 150 men. Experienced in methods of warfare still unfamiliar to the French,

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<sup>27</sup> The National Pact was the six-article brief document in which new Turkey’s maximum and minimum demands were embodied. See translation from the Turkish as printed in the Minutes of the Proceedings of the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies of 17 February 1920 in Lord Kinross, *Atatürk, The Rebirth of A Nation* ( London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), pp.531-532.

detachments easily outwitted the French by the ambush of convoys bringing much-needed ammunition and supplies for their garrison, and by the interruption of their communications with French forces elsewhere. During the first two weeks of February 1920, the French suffered in the fighting at Maraş over 600 casualties and were forced to withdraw from the city. Turkish resistance in 1921 was much better organized and more formidable than that of the previous year. The occupation of Cilicia cost the French 5,000 lives. Accordingly, Akçam's assert that the Defense Committees never intended to fight against the Allied powers, and that they welcomed English and French occupation is absurd.

There is no evidence presented – except a foreign press correspondent's report – that enables Akçam to contend that the Turkish National Movement offered to “the Great Powers an overall mandate for the former Ottoman Empire” (p.319). The author is on even thinner ice when arguing that the Sivas Congress “would agree to an American mandate if America itself would accept it” (pp.319-320). Although during the proceedings of the Congress there were long discussions on the question of accepting a foreign mandate, Atatürk and other members objected effectively. The principal points in the program of the Turkish National Movement were all expressions of one fundamental motive -- the desire to be on equal grounds with Western nations. From this insistence on equality the Turkish leadership's proposals led to the demand for recognition of Turkish independence and sovereignty.

According to Akçam, “the minorities question did in fact cause the [Lausanne] conference to break down temporarily” (p.367). Here again the author gives no source. As a matter of fact, it was not the Greek or Armenian questions that disrupted the negotiations in the Lausanne Peace Conference on February 4, 1923 but the capitulations, i.e. extraterritorial juridical rights for

foreigners.<sup>28</sup> Before his dispatch to Lausanne as the chief Turkish negotiator, Ismet İnönü was instructed at a meeting of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey as to exactly what was desired, wherein he might give way, and the points upon which he must be adamant. The matters upon which he was particularly determined were those that would give any outside power an ability to interfere with the actual government of the Turkish territories. He was particularly not to yield an inch on the suppression of the capitulations. The minorities question was largely settled before the rupture of the Conference. The Turco-Greek compulsory exchange of populations was already agreed by the signing of an accord on January 30, 1923 at Lausanne. Suggestions on the part of the Allied governments for an Armenian national home in Turkish territory had met with a categorical refusal from the Turkish plenipotentiaries, and were not pressed because the Allies had no power to insist on them. Not surprisingly, on February 9, 1923, the Armenian delegations at Lausanne addressed a note to the Allied powers protesting against their abandonment of the proposal to create an Armenian national home.

## **9. Open Debate Urged**

“[A]n open debate about the Armenian uprisings” is urged by the author (p.196). Indeed a vibrant and enduring debate has been going on in Turkey on this question in recent decades, involving academics and celebrities. The Armenian issue prominently features in Turkish media. Major newspapers and journals run series of pro and con interviews and publish in-depth reports and editorials on the subject. Interestingly enough, Akçam has also been writing for years numbers of feature articles

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<sup>28</sup> See *A Speech Delivered by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk 1927* (Istanbul: Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Turkey, 1963), p.599. Other evidence is in Joseph Grew, *Turbulent Era - A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years 1904-1945*, Vol.1, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1952), p.551. Joseph Grew was a member of the United States delegation to the Lausanne Conference and served as ambassador to Turkey in 1927-1932. Moreover, examine Parliamentary Command Paper 1814. Treaty No. 1 (1923) Lausanne Conference on Near Eastern Affairs, 1922-1923. *Records of Proceedings and Draft Terms of Peace* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1923).



appearing regularly in Turkish dailies and weeklies such as *Radikal* and *Agos*.

Turkish television stations, including state-run broadcasters, devote several programs to the matter inviting historians and intellectuals with different points of view to round table discussions. An Institute for Armenian Research was established in Ankara in February 2001 and its efforts are channeled through a new specialized, bilingual quarterly. The Institute aims to promote the examining of the Armenian themes through research, analysis, publication, and public fora. It also collects data and archival material, and makes its resources open to the public. The Institute has expressed readiness to work with Armenian historians and institutions.

Lately research on Armenians in the Ottoman Empire is experiencing a marked upswing in Turkey. Armenian studies have grown into an important field by the renewed vigor and quality of annual international conferences on the topic. Increasing numbers of scholars conduct inquiries on various distinct aspects of the Armenian saga and the role of the great powers, especially Russia, Britain and France. They hold conferences and seminars. And Akçam himself personally took part in a major academic conference held on “Ottoman Armenians during the Decline of the Empire: Issues of Responsibility and Democracy” at Bilgi University at Istanbul on 24-25 September 2005 and delivered a paper on the state of Ottoman archives. A number of Armenian scholars who had published works describing the relocations of 1915 as genocide also participated in the meeting. Conference papers will reportedly be published in print and accessible to the public at large.

## **10. Conclusion**

For a work of history, *A Shameful Act* is singularly lacking in trustworthy fact finding, objective analysis, and historical depth and perspective. The author, Taner Akçam, makes no real attempt to set events in the Ottoman Empire, not all of which occurred in

isolation from the outside world, in their historical context. Doubts regarding Akçam's qualities as a historian is raised on several instances, as bad history, as the book under review demonstrates only too well, often involves the bending of facts, or even their suppression.

Akçam's claim that he uses the term genocide "in line with the United Nations definition adopted in 1948," turns out to be little more than lip service, firstly because his analysis lacks an application of the critical elements of the genocide to the facts, and secondly because his recounting of the facts is woefully incomplete. With a self-invented definition of genocide, and by de-emphasizing direct evidence that the intention of the relocation was security-based and ignoring exculpatory evidence of Ottoman programs and efforts to protect Armenians lives and property during the relocation, Akçam attempts to pigeonhole the Ottoman Armenian relocation into a genocide conviction, and achieves only a self-fulfilling recount of his own perspective of history, or at most, the expression of ready-made opinions that espouse the orthodoxies of the Armenian perspective of late Ottoman history.