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# Guenter Lewy's *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey*

Taner Akçam

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“Listen Muhittin, let them say whatever they want to say. The fact is that I know what I am doing. We are engaged in a war for life or death. Had we been at that time defeated by the revolution and the Russian army, today one would be able to count the Turks in Anatolia with one’s finger. We were not defeated at that time as it was our duty to ensure our right to live. I performed that duty. Perhaps everybody today, and even you, may be blaming me, however, at a later time the Turks with relish will remember my name. Nobody is responsible in this matter; the entire responsibility relative to the severity of the applied methods belongs to me.” Thereupon, I raised my doubts whether he, Talaat, in spite of everything and everybody could have been as brutal in the implementation of the [Armenian deportations] as Dr. Bahaeddin Şakir, who is being mentioned as one of those who have sought such brutality. He responded as follows: “As far as the law is concerned I am the one who is responsible. When promulgating the law, I certainly, proceeded in accord with my colleagues. When it comes to the matter of enforcing that law, however, I assume full responsibility for the severity applied...notwithstanding the fact that plenty of time has elapsed since, I absolutely don’t regret my deed.”<sup>1</sup>

The dust jacket of Guenter Lewy’s *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey: A Disputed Genocide*<sup>2</sup> features Norman Stone’s assertion that this book, “which has Olympian fair-mindedness as well as thorough knowledge of the various sources, now replaces everything else.” Lewy claims, in his book, to be situated outside the parameters of what he describes as “the Turkish view” and “the Armenian view.” Having positioned himself as being above such partisanship, he also claims that his book “subjects the rich historical evidence available to the test of consistency and (as much as the state of knowledge allows) attempts to sort out the validity of the rival arguments” (x).

A book that did not shy away from interpreting the opposing views of the events of 1915, one grounded in a solid knowledge of the historiography and the relevant documents, would indeed prove useful to individuals and circles not knowledgeable about the subject. One could even argue that, with respect to the vast field that is called conflict resolution, the preparation of such an inventory might be considered one of the principal tasks. But Lewy has failed to perform this task, and instead pursues a highly contentious one. Tessa Hofmann of the Eastern Europe Institute of the Free University of Berlin has revealed that

in the summer of 2000 a retiree, resting on my couch, expressed a strange intention. Guenter Lewy, the retired American political scientist, wanted to subject “the Armenian massacres” to a similar revision as he had done before with respect to the Sinti and the Roma. That revision, argued Lewy, had shown that even though their fate in World War II proved tragic, it did not represent a “real” genocide, as there were no centrally organized and state-sponsored premeditation and genocidal intention.<sup>3</sup>

## **The Central Thesis of the Book**

One of Lewy's main theses is that "the Armenians can hardly claim that they suffered for no reason at all. Ignoring warnings from many quarters, large numbers of them had fought the Turks openly or played the role of a fifth column" (109). Perpetrators always have some reason to justify their actions. It is natural, therefore, that the Ottoman authorities felt there were "logical reasons" for the annihilation of their own Armenian citizens. Throughout his book, Lewy explains why the Ottoman authorities felt compelled to exterminate the Armenians wholesale.

After a brief historical introduction, Lewy defines the central problem as follows:

The key issue in this quarrel . . . is not the extent of Armenian suffering, but rather the question of premeditation: that is, whether the Young Turk regime during the First World War intentionally organized the massacres that took place. (ix)

He repeats this assertion several times in the book:

The fact that large numbers of Armenians died or were killed during the course of the deportations can give us no reliable knowledge of who is to be held responsible for these losses of life. The high death toll certainly does not prove in and of itself the guilt of the Young Turk regime. (54)

The argument that the deportations in reality constituted a premeditated program of extermination of the Armenians of Turkey is difficult to square with many aspects and characteristics of the relocations. (251)

According to him, the "incredibly high death toll" was possible "without a premeditated plan of annihilation" (253).

The book's central thesis is this: "no authentic documentary evidence exists to prove the culpability of the central government of Turkey for the massacre of 1915–6 . . . it is safe to say that no such evidence exists for the events of 1915–6" (250). There were undoubtedly deaths, but they resulted from the "harsh climate, the long distance to be traversed on foot, and the arbitrariness of local officials"; furthermore, a

large number of Turkish civilians died as a result of severe shortages of food and epidemics; large numbers of Turkish soldiers . . . perished . . . these results surely do not prove that the Ottoman government—ultimately responsible for all of these conditions—sought and intentionally caused the death of its own civilian population, of its own soldiers. (54)

Lewy similarly explains that Armenians perished "as a result of starvation and disease" or "were killed by Kurds . . . or fanatic Muslims" (256). He argues that "for all these occurrences the Ottoman regime bears some indirect responsibility; but there is a difference between ineptness, even ineptness that has tragic and far reaching consequences, and the premeditated murder of a people" (256). Lewy is convinced of "the absence of Turkish documentary evidence that proves the complicity of the Ottoman government" (246).

In order to provide a basis for these assertions, Lewy declares untrue, invalid, and unreliable the documents and related materials produced by those who characterize the experiences of 1915 as genocide or as a crime against humanity. In this section I list these documents; I will later give detailed information on each of the listed groups.

First among these "questionable" sources are those known as the Naim–Andonian documents.<sup>4</sup> Lewy concurs with the criticisms leveled at these documents by Şinasi Orel and Süreyya Yuca,<sup>5</sup> he believes that these authors "have raised enough questions about their [the documents'] genuineness as to make any use of them in a serious scholarly work unacceptable" (73).

The second group of documents that Lewy considers unreliable is that obtained in connection with the proceedings of the Istanbul courts-martial following World War I. He argues that the documents and the evidence revealed in the course of pre-trial interrogations and trial sessions cannot be taken seriously for the following reasons: the trials were launched for political reasons (74), “the proceedings in 1919–20 lacked many basic requirements of due process” (78) and “suffered from serious shortcomings when compared to Western standards of due process of law” (79); “throughout the trials, no witnesses were heard; the verdict of the courts rested entirely on documents and testimony mentioned or read during the trial proceedings” (80); “in many cases we do not know whether the official gazette or the newspapers covering the trials reprinted all or only some of the text of the documents reproduced. Neither can we be sure of the accuracy of the transcription” (80); and, perhaps most importantly,

the most serious problem affecting the probative value of the 1919–20 military court proceedings is the loss of all documentation of these trials. This means that we have none of the original documents, sworn testimony, and depositions on which the courts based their findings and verdicts. (80)

As far as Lewy is concerned, “the serious violations of due process as well as loss of all the original documentation leave the finding of the military tribunals of 1919–20 unsupported by credible evidence” (82). Accordingly, he characterizes as “alleged documents” those sources dating to the period from 1919 through 1920 (250).

Among the third group of documents that Lewy declares to be invalid are those implicating the Special Organization (SO) in the Armenian deportations and massacres. These charges come to light in the key indictment of the Turkish Military Tribunal that prosecuted the leaders of the İttihad ve Terakki (the Committee for Union and Progress, or CUP), but, according to Lewy,

there is no credible evidence other than the assertion of the indictment of the main trial for the allegation that the SO, with large numbers of convicts enrolled in its ranks, took the lead role in the massacres...there is no evidence anywhere that...any...SO detachment was diverted to duty involving the Armenian deportation. (84–85)

As Lewy argues, in the course of the trials “the defendants denied any connection between the SO and the central committee of the CUP...as well as any role of the SO in the Armenian deportation and massacres” (86).

Lewy casts his suspicious glance elsewhere as well. Reşit Akif Pasha, in a speech he delivered in the Ottoman Senate on 21 November 1918, revealed that the Central Committee of the CUP had ordered the destruction of the Armenians and that the brigands and the accompanying gendarmes were to execute this order by attacking and massacring the convoys of Armenian deportees. As far as Lewy is concerned, however, “the existence of this circular order...must be considered suspect” because Akif Pasha’s “speech was part of the elaborate propaganda campaign.” Moreover, he writes, the fact that Akif Pasha described the CUP as a “tyrannical body” and cursed it is sufficient grounds to be suspicious about the existence of such a document (89).

As can be deduced from the preceding examples, which he dismisses as being of “highly questionable authenticity” and as “alleged documents” (250), Lewy is not satisfied merely to declare that “no documentary evidence exists to prove the culpability of the central government” (250). Proceeding further, he states that “it is also significant that so not one of the many thousands of officials who would have been

involved in so far-reaching a scheme as a premeditated plan to destroy the Armenians has ever come forth to reveal the plot” (250).

Lewy does not stop at declaring the Naim–Andonian documents and the Istanbul court-martial proceedings unreliable and invalid. Inveighing against all other conceivable sources that might be used to demonstrate that the extermination of the Armenians was the result of decisions made by Istanbul’s central authorities (i.e., the government and the CUP), Lewy, as the Turkish saying goes, gives them “the sword treatment” (*kılıctan geçirir*). According to him, the German documents are important, but “they do not prove the responsibility of the central government in Constantinople for these killings” (135). The British “Blue Book” is “based on hearsay” (138) and “contains no evidence proving the responsibility of that government for the massacres that did occur” (139). The reports of missionaries reflect prejudice and one-sidedness, since the Muslims are portrayed as “the terrible Turk” and “Armenians were regularly depicted as innocent victims” (144). As to “survivor accounts,” they are hardly a reliable source of information on the events, for “the most basic problem regarding any survivor testimony . . . is of course that such recollections do not so much reproduce reality or reconstruct history as present a version of reality in tune with the survivor’s personality, perceptions, and experiences” (148). In brief, according to Lewy, all these sources, though some of them are most valuable, fail to prove the Ottoman central government’s plan for premeditated annihilation.

Lewy recognizes that countless reports prepared by American and German diplomats, as well as other foreign observers, attest to the exterminatory purpose of the Armenian deportations, but these, too, are dismissed. As he puts it,

Given the very large number of deaths and the observed complicity of many local officials in the murders, it is not surprising that not a few diplomats, like other eyewitnesses on the scene, concluded that the high death toll was an intended outcome of the deportations. Still, well-informed as many consular officials were about the horrible events unfolding before their eyes, their insight into the mindset and the real intention of the Young Turk leadership was necessarily limited to hunches and speculation. (250–51)

After describing as “hearsay,” “hunches,” “speculation,” and so on and declaring invalid all documents identifying the CUP as the mastermind of a plan of extermination, Lewy presents his thesis in the following words:

I start with the assumption that the various decrees issued by the government in Constantinople dealing with the deportation and its implementation are genuine and were issued in good faith. The Ottoman Government, I am inclined to believe, wanted to arrange an orderly process but did not have the means to do so. (252–53)

If there was a well-intentioned government in Istanbul, how is one to explain the magnitude of the fatalities? On this subject Lewy offers us a model. One leg of this model is “the incompetence and the inefficiency” of the authorities in Istanbul. Despite their good intentions, he says, they did not have the tools or the organization to implement such a gigantic undertaking. We are dealing here, argues Lewy, with a “bureaucratic fiasco” (253): “the government in Constantinople did not approve of these developments but did not do enough to prevent them either” (254). Further, the contention of American and German consuls that if the Ottoman regime could not “guarantee the smooth working of the relocation” they “should have refrained from deporting the Armenians” is in no way tenable, for the Ottoman authorities had “strong illusions and misconceptions about the ability of [the] bureaucracy

to accomplish the deportation of the Armenian community without too many problems" (255).

Besides the matter of Istanbul's clumsiness and inefficiency, Lewy's model has a second leg: local authorities did not listen to Istanbul and acted on their own initiative. Lewy writes that "the ability of the central government to influence the events in the province remained limited" (208); as a result of this weakness of the central authorities,

some of the killings are said to have been organized by CUP fanatics, who in certain towns formed a kind of shadow government. We know that in many cases local officials disregarded instructions received from Constantinople; or interpreted orders of the central government in an especially harsh manner. (231)

There were two reasons for this disobedience. First, "some of these officials were Muslims who had been forced to flee from the Balkans or Russia and therefore hated all Christians with great vehemence" (231). Second, before these local authorities initiated any steps, they would try to find out what the CUP's thinking was; "if the wishes of these men contradicted orders received from the central government, then these orders were disregarded." Hence, the "central government had little or no control" (231).

Throughout the book, Lewy predicates his argument regarding the causes of Armenian deaths upon a single factor: the center's inability to exercise control on local authorities. According to him, for example, one such case was "the tug of war in Erzurum between the constituted authorities and the CUP radicals" (165). Lewy theorizes that in Erzurum, party potentate Hilmi, Bahaeddin Şakir, and many others "had been able to thwart the basically well-meaning intentions of the government, and these people probably were responsible for the harsh measures and the massacres" (164–65). The radical elements of the CUP who were defiant toward the government were able to keep the provinces under their control. The situation in and around Adana was similar. Indeed, in June 1916 "local officials in Adana, under the pressure of the rabid anti-Armenian CUP branch, ordered the deportation of thousands of Armenian railroad workers and their families. Interior Minister Talaat reaffirmed the exemption order on August 4, but the local officials disregarded it" (230).

In the end, Lewy, who is forced to admit the patent reality of the crimes that were committed, is driven to the task of proving that they were not committed on the orders of the central government. According to him, the perpetrators of the crimes were the Kurds, the gendarmes, and the brigands, those *chettes*, volunteers, and irregulars whose true identities he is unable to pinpoint accurately but whom he does not want to identify too closely with the CUP. He writes that "the common element is that chettes [i.e., *çete*] were irregulars who (no matter how recruited, directed, or composed) participated in the robbing and killing of Armenian deportees" (228). For Lewy, the perpetration of the crimes by these elements—and nobody knows who organized, directed, and assembled them—was made possible not by Istanbul's central authority but through local authorities. He claims that "these militia units were usually organized by local authorities, often under the influence of militants in the CUP clubs" (223).

The picture is somewhat confusing, however, in Syria and Iraq. Since such categories of killers as "milis," "brigand" (*çete*), and "irregulars" are no longer operational, leaving only gendarmes and Circassians, it becomes evident that the murders in question were perpetrated by people identified with these two groups.

This puts Lewy in a difficult situation, as Kurds, brigands, volunteers, and irregulars are no longer available to take the blame. Among the German reports there is, for example, the case of Ras-ul-Ain, where the *kaymakam* (county supervisor), on the orders of the central government, organized the killing of Armenians. But, according to Lewy, “whether the massacres had indeed been perpetrated on command from above, and, if so, on whose command, will probably never be known” (210).

Lewy stretches his theory of lack of control to such an extent that, as far as he is concerned, even the gendarmes assigned to protect the deportee convoys, who were under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior, were beyond the government’s control. Even Halil Mentese, the wartime Ottoman foreign minister, conceded that anti-Armenian crimes were perpetrated by the gendarmes themselves (225); Lewy confirms this, stating that “Turkish gendarmes and Kurds often cooperated in arranging for massacres and the looting of Armenian convoys” (224). Lewy is unable to explain how these contingents of gendarmes, attached to the Ministry of the Interior, could have operated outside and beyond the latter’s control; he nevertheless maintains, however, that the crimes in question had something to do with the character of the gendarmes and not with orders from the central authorities. He states that “the Turkish gendarmes were known to be ignorant, corrupt, and poorly trained” (224). The wartime release of convicts and their integration into the gendarmerie helped to aggravate the situation. Lewy maintains that these “hardened convicts” were the “men who in many towns murdered the Armenians arrested in the spring of 1915” (225). It is a fact, however, that it was the government that emptied the prisons; it was the government, too, that incorporated the “hardened convicts” them into gendarmerie units. Yet, as far as Lewy is concerned, the behavior of these gendarmes had nothing to do with the disposition of the central government.

Another point most eagerly advanced by Lewy, within the framework of this notion of a “central–local institutional contrast,” also requires attention. It concerns the systematic liquidation of the Armenian conscripts enlisted in labor battalions. By declaring that “in most cases we do not know who was responsible for the killings,” Lewy, who grants the existence of this practice, tries to sidestep the issue (229). For him the aim is to feel at ease when he states that “we know much about events in this province; but many questions, including the ultimate responsibility for the massacres, remain unanswered” (168).

It appears that, for Lewy, the Ottoman Empire of 1915 resembles today’s Afghanistan. Istanbul, as a capital, is just like Kabul; being extremely weak, it is almost entirely bereft of influence. According to Lewy’s understanding, the CUP’s local outfits functioned as shadow governments, just like Afghanistan’s warlords. The regions were controlled by local potentates who defied the central authorities. This is a serious assertion, and, in order to eventually transcend its hypothetical confines, it must be proven. But Lewy has yet to come up with any documentary or other evidence to support his profound belief in the good faith of Istanbul’s Ottoman authorities or to show the existence of a conflict between local authorities and the central government.

In brief, the most serious problem with Lewy’s book is that he has failed to apply to his own thesis the same criteria by which he sees fit to dismiss as “alleged,” “hearsay,” and “hunches” all the documents and evidence demonstrating the primary role of the Central Committee of the CUP in the genocide. His key concept of “center–local conflict,” contradicted by hundreds of documents, is hollow speculation. If, as he claims, the underlying fact of the mass murder of Armenians was the “center–local conflict” and

the lack of central control in the regions in question, such a fact would surely have left traces that could be pursued by researchers.

In none of the conceivable relevant sources can one find any document that shows a center–local conflict within the CUP or between Istanbul and regional party chieftains, nor is there any evidence of any social or political consequences of such a conflict. It is precisely for this reason that, among the many scholars dealing with twentieth-century Ottoman history and among the dozens of works by Turkish and foreign academics exploring the CUP, one is hard put to find any reference to or any indication of awareness of such a conflict. On the contrary, hundreds of documents, memoirs, and scientific studies attest to the fact that the CUP's central body exercised extremely tight control and maintained a formidable influence not only on its own organization but also on the government and the government's central and provincial organs.<sup>6</sup>

## **The Essential Flaws of the Book**

### **Lack of Familiarity with the Turkish Language**

One of Lewy's most important contentions is that a person who does not speak Turkish "can do meaningful work in this subject." Indeed, "a requirement that only persons fluent in the Turkish language be considered competent to write on this topic would disqualify most Armenians, who also do not know Turkish" (xi). Lewy is right on both counts. The criticism leveled against Guenter Lewy in some circles because of his "not knowing Turkish" is unjust, and it is made simply because of his views on the topic: it is obvious that had Lewy advanced some new view as to why the experiences of 1915 ought to be identified as genocide, similar criticisms would have been made by advocates of the official Turkish thesis. If we leave aside the familiar arguments resulting from the exceeding politicization of the Turkish–Armenian conflict, we may be able to state a general rule concerning the languages which are needed in order to make an original contribution to the study of the events surrounding 1915. Researchers, especially historians, can render two types of contributions with respect to the topic they are exploring.

First, using their language skills, they can uncover new documents and new knowledge. In the area of the Turkish–Armenian conflict, with some exceptions such as German military records, we can accept that the Western sources, mainly in German and English, are to a large extent known. But most Ottoman Turkish as well as Russian and Armenian materials are not known, and the information available in these languages has not been sufficiently absorbed by Western researchers. In this sense, a common body of knowledge has not yet been created. The knowledge we will be able to obtain from these sources is destined to substantially deepen, broaden, and even alter our understanding and our interpretations of 1915.

A second type of contribution is the reinterpretation of documents written in languages with which the researcher is familiar. Even though such reinterpretations do not necessarily produce any new proof, they have the advantage of allowing a fresh look at existing documents. Holocaust studies is replete with such examples. If we admit that history and historicism involve interpretation and reinterpretation of lived experiences, rather than merely the "uncovering of new documents," then we must acknowledge the value of such work.

We grant, then, that Lewy, or any other scholar not familiar with Turkish or Armenian, has the potential to make useful contributions by using documents written



in Western languages. Nonetheless, Lewy's qualifications to undertake this study remain problematic.

The fact is that Lewy is not sufficiently informed about the latest research and publications in the Turkish language. From someone who claims to be the bearer of "a new perspective" (xii), one would expect a thorough familiarity with some of the existing Turkish sources and data. It is clear that those who assisted him in translating (xiii) unfortunately did not provide sufficient knowledge about the sources in question. As a result, Lewy has committed avoidable errors. Had he been informed about documents in the volume *The Armenians in the Ottoman Documents 1915–1920*, published by the General Directorate of State Archives in 1995,<sup>7</sup> he would have realized the falseness of his claims about the deportation of Armenian Protestants and Catholics. By the same token, he would have recognized that the warning posted on the walls during the Trabzon deportations, a subject to which he allocates two pages in his book, was not an important document issuing from the central authorities but, rather, was created by local authorities. Equally importantly, he would have learned that Talât later prohibited its use (178–79).

Lewy's ignorance of Nejdet Bilgi's *Ermeni tehciri ve Boğazlıyan Kaymakamı Kemal Beyin Yargılanması* (written to support the official Turkish thesis) is also a major shortcoming.<sup>8</sup> Had Lewy availed himself of the material in this book, he might have paused before offering such entirely imaginary tales as the allegation that defendants in the post-war trials were denied the right to inspect the documentary evidence and that no witnesses were heard during the trial sessions. It is evident that Lewy has not been made aware of the work of some critical scholars relevant to the matter of deportation and exile.<sup>9</sup> For example, he makes claims about Ziya Gökalp's supposed lack of involvement in the matter of deportations (44–45).<sup>10</sup> Had he been aware of the works of Fuat Dündar, he would have learned that, starting in 1913, the CUP showed a special interest in the ethnic make-up of Anatolia and that, as a result, under the leadership of Ziya Gökalp, it had dispatched experts whose task was to research and even to prepare a map of the region's religious and ethnic constituents.<sup>11</sup> He would also have realized that the deportation and exile of the Armenians was not a violent by-product of the war but, rather, was part and parcel of a plan to homogenize Anatolia on an ethno-religious basis. The poor quality of the help Lewy received in the matter of language (i.e., from those who translated for him) seriously handicapped his investigation.

Can it be maintained that Lewy has brought a new approach to the task of examining the existing documents, that he has offered "a new viewpoint," from a new perspective? Claiming that it supports their "official position," people identified with the Turkish Foreign Ministry have distributed Lewy's book free of charge. Likewise, the ASAM, (Center for Strategic Studies<sup>12</sup>)—the propaganda center of the official Turkish denial policy on genocide—has honored Lewy with the High Award for Combating Crimes Against Humanity. It is incumbent upon Lewy, I think, to ponder seriously whether or not his theses are really original.

### 'The Armenian Side' vs. 'The Turkish Side'

Lewy's entire work is predicated upon theses and perspectives that he identifies as "Turkish" on one side and "Armenian" on the other. Lewy not only portrays contemporary parties as "the Turks" on one side and "the Armenians" on the other but also depicts the period of Ottoman decline as consisting of "Turks," occupying one end of the spectrum, and "Armenians," occupying the other. The presentation of

historical and social events, and especially the beginnings of twentieth-century Ottoman history, in terms of "Turks," "Armenians," and "Kurds" as essentialized collective actors misrepresents the complete web of relationships and conflicts and projects today's nationalistic polarization backward onto a period to which they do not properly apply.

A simple case illustrates this point. It is a serious mistake to subsume both an Armenian in a village in Edirne, in western Turkey, and an Armenian volunteer in the Russian army under the uniform concept "Armenian" and to juxtapose such occurrences as the events on the Eastern front or the roles Armenian volunteers played in the Russian army during that period with the experiences of the Armenian peasant in Edirne. To do so is to write a nationalistic history based on an image of a monolithic "other." The net result is that the common ethnicity of the Armenian from the village in Edirne and the Armenian fighting under the Russian flag (most of these, incidentally, were either from Russia proper or from the diaspora) leads to a unitary image in which two disparate categories of Armenians living during that period dissolve and merge into one and the same Armenian.

As a result of this mentality, a swift logical relationship is established between the actions of the Armenian volunteers enrolled in Russian military units, on the one hand, and the deportation of the Armenian from Edirne, on the other; and in no way is such a procedure viewed as strange or wrong. A report would then depict the "other," fictive, and abstractly conjectured Armenian as the source of the problem.

This example epitomizes the overall mentality underlying Lewy's drive to overlook the political, social, and cultural differences separating the many Armenian communities, instead subsuming them all under a single, homogeneous Armenian entity. In Lewy's book, the "homogenous" and "other" Armenian, in the final analysis, is portrayed as someone who always attracted attention through his anti-government activities, his acts of "disturbing the peace," and as someone who, if need be, would not hesitate "to cooperate with foreign powers." This explains the book's total absence of information about the social and political underpinnings of the Ottoman collapse and about the divergent actions of diverse political actors.

In trying to account for the existence of different "Turkish" and "Armenian" standpoints, Lewy argues that the main point of contention between the two sides is the question of premeditation. This assertion is invalid. First, Lewy is mistaken in assigning a central role to the factor of premeditation and in rendering it interchangeable with that of intent. Premeditation and intent are concepts with different core meanings. Generally speaking, for the purposes of the genocide debate, premeditation is not important; genocide can be explored without considering premeditation.<sup>13</sup> The subject of premeditation is less a point of dispute for the "Turkish" and "Armenian" parties than among academics who have agreed that what happened in 1915 was genocide.<sup>14</sup> In any debate over whether or not the events on 1915 should be considered genocide, the question requiring an answer is whether there was an intent to exterminate.

Second, it is not appropriate to identify the arguments made in the debate as the "Turkish" view and the "Armenian" view; it should be an unacceptable attitude for a social scientist to classify the differences of interpretation of these events according to ethnic origin. Naturally, there will be people in every ethno-national group who support the idea that one can examine the history through distinctly Turkish or Armenian lenses. From the perspective of social science, however, such ethnocentric explanations of history can hardly be defined as opposite positions; on the contrary,

they are the reflection of one position and are generally treated as “nationalist historiography.”

Accordingly, when we classify different positions on the subject of mass murder, as in the case of the Holocaust or the Rwandan and Cambodian genocides, we do not categorize these positions according to the parties of the conflict (e.g., the German position, the Jewish position) or according to the ethnic origins of individuals. Rather, we define them according to the arguments, or types of arguments, underlying the various definitions and explanations. In the matter of the Holocaust, for example, the differing interpretations are identified not as “Jewish” or “German” but on the basis of different perspectives, approaches, and methods (e.g., functionalist vs. intentionalist). One would expect from Lewy, a social scientist, a similar analysis of the differences over the events of 1915, and a corresponding classification. Besides it is not technically appropriate to identify the existing parties as “Turkish” and “Armenian.” Evidently, one must grant that the meaning of the term “party” does change as the viewing position of the observer changes. And, speaking of parties, the following is what I am able to observe from where I stand at the moment.

On one side is the Turkish state, which has an official doctrine on 1915; this doctrine is based mainly on repressing historical realities and forcing those who oppose it into silence. The Turkish state is firmly convinced that it is competent to determine what, how, and to what extent a citizen can think on matters of history. For this reason, with the help of various ministries and institutes, it sternly supervises and controls the ways and means by which Turkish society acquires the requisite knowledge of history. It is no accident, therefore, that the first works dealing with the Armenian question were written by diplomats associated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Among the tasks of this ministry is to indoctrinate not only Turkish citizens but other peoples and states about Ottoman-Turkish history, to condition them to think about the subject in a certain way. It might not be too far-fetched to compare the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to an institute of history, and its diplomats to muftis issuing *fatwas* (authoritative opinions).

The official thesis is not shared by the majority of people in Turkey and cannot be considered representative. Despite eighty-five years of induced amnesia and a policy of repression, it is a fact that there exists, especially among the Alevi and Kurdish communities, a narrative—not yet sufficiently written down, as it exists primarily as part of an oral tradition—that is counterposed to the official thesis. To this one may add the recent emergence in Turkey of a powerful democratic movement within civil society. Undeniably an integral part of Turkish society, this group of people, apparently unable yet to express themselves with adequate leverage and consequently not yet sufficiently recognized by the public, consider the 1915 experience as a blot on the country’s history, deserving of moral condemnation.

To restate the matter in other terms, if currently there are parties to the dispute, what divides and separates them is not the question of whether or not to use the word “genocide.” Rather, the parties differ on the issue of whether the ill fate that befell the Armenians can be considered a morally wrong act, a crime that must be condemned accordingly, or whether it can be explained away or excused. On one side of the dispute are those who treat the events of 1915 as morally indefensible, beyond the pale of humanity, and therefore want to place them in the category of offenses. Subsumed in this category of people, whose point of departure is moral condemnation, are (1) those who consider the events of 1915 as a case of genocide; (2) those who prefer to refrain from using that term, even though they may grant that that term does exactly reflect

the reality; and (3) those who describe the act as a crime against humanity rather than a clear-cut case of genocide. These people, anchored on a very powerful moral foundation, are steadily gaining ground, as they proceed on the premise that no mass murder can be justified or excused. Counterposed to this perspective is that of the Turkish state, which posits that the situation under review here does not warrant the use of the term "crime"; even though there were some deaths, a state has the right to resort to such an operation.

The existence of this strong ethical and moral conflict within Turkey renders this subject exceedingly meaningful and important. A widespread segment of Turkey's civil society, which, relative to the events of 1915, has adopted the position of moral condemnation, views the problem as an integral part of a process requiring an open confrontation with Turkey's history, placing 1915 within the framework of Turkey's contemporary pursuit of democracy and human rights. The need to confront the events of 1915 and talk about them is, for them, an absolutely necessary condition for the democratization of that society as a whole. Yet, the other side—which endorses Lewy—the partisans of the official Turkish posture, using the leverage of the state, continues to menace, prosecute, and intimidate with threats of imprisonment those who would like to come to terms with history. The assassination of Hrant Dink cannot be understood except within this context.

### Serious Factual Errors

Lewy's book contains many errors of fact; these errors alone may constitute sufficient warning to readers that this work should be approached with suspicion. The following very limited examples are offered by way of illustration.

First, in an article published as an introduction to the forthcoming book, we find the following:

(1) "The first recorded tribunal began on February 5, 1919, in Yozgat, the province which includes Ankara, charging three Turkish officials, including the governor of the district, with mass murder and plunder of Armenian deportees."<sup>15</sup> Three major errors converge in this single sentence. First, the Yozgat trial series was conducted not in Yozgat but in Istanbul. Second, Yozgat is not a province (*vilayet*), and Ankara is not part of such a province; in fact, Yozgat is a county within Ankara province. Third, Kemal not only was not governor but was not even serving as *kaymakam* (county supervisor) in Yozgat during the period in question; in fact, he was *kaymakam* of Bogazliyan county at the time. Only later did he become *musatarrif* of Yozgat.

(2) "Seven key figures, including Talât Pasha, minister of interior; Enver Pasha, minister of war; and Cemal Pasha, governor of Aleppo, had fled, and therefore, were tried in absentia."<sup>16</sup> This statement contains two errors that appear to be minor but nevertheless ought to have been avoided. At the time of his flight, Talât Pasha was not interior minister but the former grand vizier, while Cemal Pasha was never *vali* (i.e., governor) of Aleppo; rather, he was commander-in-chief of the 6th Ottoman Army deployed in Lebanon and Syria.

Lewy's book corrects these errors that appeared in the introductory preceding article; it is likely that Vahakn Dadrian's exposure of the errors prior to the appearance of the book played a role in these corrections.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, the book is still replete with factual errors, some of which are detailed below:

(1) "German missionary Liparit . . . stated that Talaat was a man 'who over the last six years has acquired the reputation of a sincere adherent of Turkish-Armenian friendship'" (65). This indicates that Lewy is unaware that Dr. Liparit Nasariantz was

an Armenian activist, not a German missionary; he was a member of the German-Armenian Society with Johannes Lepsius and later became a member of the Armenian National Council.

(2) "In January 1916 the Russians, led by advance guards of Armenian volunteers, took Diarbekir" (118). The fact is, however, that Diarbekir was never occupied by the Russians. Moreover, it is common knowledge in Turkey that on 11 March 1916 Mustafa Kemal was appointed to the post of commander in charge of the Diarbekir-Bitlis-Muş front, and that he remained on duty there from 1 April 1916 to the end of 1917.

(3) "The Turkish Historian Kamuran Gürün..." (113); "...the Turkish historian Ahmed Emin Yalman" (249). In fact, neither of these two men was a historian: the former served as a diplomat, while the latter was a journalist.

(4) "Throughout the trials no witnesses were heard; the verdict of the courts rested entirely on documents and testimony mentioned or read during the trial proceedings" (80). This is one of the most important arguments Lewy has advanced in questioning the validity of the proceedings of Istanbul's court-martial. Yet this argument is based on a mistake that should have been avoided. In fact, witnesses were dispensed with only in the trials of CUP leaders and the separately held trials of cabinet ministers, both of which had been subsumed into a conjoined verdict-rendition sitting. Witnesses for both prosecution and defense were allowed, and heard, in all other trial series.<sup>18</sup> In many cases, recourse to witnesses was used simply to prolong the trial. In some cases, witness testimony in favor of the defendant served as grounds to bring in a verdict of "not guilty."<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, some verdicts incorporated certain portions of witness testimony or contained statements attributed to witnesses. A careful reading of the available texts of the verdicts dealing with Trabzon and Yozgat, or of others published either in Turkish daily newspapers of the time or in the official gazette of the government (*Takvim-i Vekâyi*), will reveal plenty of quotations from witnesses.<sup>20</sup>

(5) "None of the testimony, written depositions, and documents put forth by the prosecution were subjected to cross examination by the defense, which makes it impossible to consider these materials conclusive proof" (82). Two separate problems arise here. The first relates to the question of whether or not the method of cross-examination was in use in the Ottoman legal system. Lewy considers the absence of this method a very important liability of the system, and, by extension, dismisses the validity of the verdicts of the Istanbul trials. This is a very strange argument indeed, for the issue is not unique to the Ottoman legal system but extends to European practices and, especially, the French legal system, on which the Ottoman system was based.

The Ottoman Penal Code, enacted in 1858, is a translation of the equivalent French code promulgated in 1810; likewise, the Ottoman Code of Criminal Procedure, enacted in 1879, is a translation of its 1808 French counterpart. It is curious to conclude that since, technically, there is no room for cross-examination, the resulting verdicts and the tribunals issuing them must be the products of a faulty system. Indeed, it is unnecessary and meaningless to make an issue of the existing technical differences between French and Anglo-Saxon legal systems, each of which has its own peculiar advantages and disadvantages.<sup>21</sup>

I consider Lewy's critique of the Ottoman system as lacking legal standards simply because it differs from the Anglo-Saxon system a deprecation of the French system and is a mistake that could have been avoided. Furthermore, although

technically not permitting cross-examination, the courts throughout the trials did allow considerable leeway to the defense. As a result, witnesses were bombarded with questions by defense counsel, who enjoyed sufficient latitude that, during various sittings, heated arguments developed between witnesses, their lawyers, the defendants, and their lawyers. The Yozgat and Trabzon trial series, as the first cases to be prosecuted, became the battleground for such arguments; the daily newspapers of the period echoed these debates, day in and day out, in detail.<sup>22</sup>

A second important point relates to Lewy's assertion that the defendants had no opportunity to inspect and verify the authenticity of the documentary evidence in the possession of the court. This, too, is a major fallacy, as such evidence and witness testimony were, in fact, offered to the defendants and their counsel for examination and response. Here, again, two examples illustrate the point. The first relates to Yozgat. During the ninth sitting of the trial series, on 22 February 1919, Colonel Şahabettin, interior commander of Kayseri's 15th Division, appearing as a defense witness, was caught by surprise; confronted with a batch of coded telegrams produced by the prosecution, he denied that they had originated from him. When the prosecutor asked whether he would like to examine them to be sure, the colonel instantly grasped the risky situation and, reversing himself, said, "No need for it. Certainly, you are correct"—acknowledging that, indeed, the telegrams had originated from him.<sup>23</sup> Şahabettin was subsequently taken into custody so that charges could be laid against him.<sup>24</sup>

The second example is drawn from the proceedings of what is called the Main Trial series, subsumed under which were the trials of CUP leaders and those of cabinet ministers. During the second sitting of this trial series, on 4 May 1919, a document introduced by Colonel Cevad, Istanbul's wartime military governor, was not only read out by Cevad himself but also read into the record through the dispensation of the chief judge, making both acts part of the court transcripts.<sup>25</sup> At the fourth sitting of the same trial series, on 8 May, he was shown a number of telegrams bearing his signature, which he verified.<sup>26</sup> The same Colonel Cevad, at the fifth sitting (12 May 1919), verified the authenticity of these telegrams and that of his own signature at the bottom of four separate telegrams; each of these was shown to him for confirmation, at which point he said, "Yes, this is my signature."<sup>27</sup> A similar procedure was applied to Midhat Şükrü, secretary general of the CUP, who was given an opportunity to inspect and verify the telegrams bearing his signature and who declared, "Yes, sir, that's right, I remember."<sup>28</sup>

(6) According to Lewy, during the trial proceedings "the defendants denied any connection between the Special Organization and the central committee of the CUP" (86). This statement is wrong, as is the assumption Lewy bases on it. During the fifth and sixth sittings of the courts-martial, a number of documents were read into the record that reveal the close links between the SO, the Central Committee of the CUP, the Ministry of War, local party outfits, and units of volunteers. As usual, the documents were shown to the defendants, who then confirmed having issued them. Subsequently, the defendants, who previously had denied any links between the CUP, the SO, and the Ministry of War, admitted to the existence of such links. At the sixth sitting, for example, Şükrü, admitting such a link between the SO and the CUP relative to recruiting men for the purpose of creating contingents of brigands (*çete*), is quoted as saying, "As the SO conveyed to us their need for a special type of people, we accordingly forwarded their request to our provincial clubs." The following set of declarations by other operatives is along the same lines. Atif: "We already designated

Midhat Şükrü as the middle man for these undertakings. He is handling the problem of communications and relaying to us the requisite items of information.” Talât: “Having been in touch with every institution, the CUP might have been likewise in communication with the SO. It is possible that the SO had made a request to the CUP saying, ‘Help us through your party, your organization.’ It is then natural that the CUP’s Central Committee, in response to requests, be they from the Ministry of War or, in its name, from the SO, hesitant to decline such requests, proceeded on the advice of some of the members of its organization to accommodate these requests, whether coming from the War Ministry, the SO, or the Interior Ministry.” Cevad: “From the contents of these telegrams, it is clear that [the link] did exist.”<sup>29</sup> Some of the defendants testified that these links were not “official” in nature. Ziya Gökalp’s response was that, “since there was a war, it was our duty to assist,”<sup>30</sup> and Midhat Şükrü stated, “It was in the service of the fatherland. Anybody can pitch in and assist.”<sup>31</sup>

(7) “There is no credible evidence to support . . . assertion[s] about Stange’s service as an SO commander” (84). This statement is also incorrect. There are three primary sources documenting the German Colonel Stange’s involvement in the SO. First, this involvement is attested by Yusuf Rıza, commander of the SO units headquartered in Trabzon and a cohort of Stange, who testified at the Istanbul courts-martial. In his testimony, after stating that he had worked closely with Stange, he declared that “we were handling our communications through the medium of Stange’s cipher.”<sup>32</sup> Similar testimony was given by a Turkish officer on duty in Stange’s regiment.<sup>33</sup> Second, Bahaeddin Şakir, a member of the CUP Central Committee and the operational chief of the SO, likewise confirmed Stange’s involvement in the activities of the SO. In a coded telegram he sent to the chiefs of SO units operating in the area of Trabzon, Şakir declared, “You, along with your troops, are subject to the authority of Stange,”<sup>34</sup> clearly confirming Stange’s involvement in the SO’s operations.

The third source on Stange’s involvement in the SO is a document from the archive of the General Staff’s Military History and Strategic Studies Institute, or ATASE (Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etüd Başkanlığı), in Ankara. An article titled “The Local Administration of the Special Organization in Trabzon Province,” uses an official Ottoman document from the ATASE archive, from which we learn that Stange was appointed chief of the SO units in Trabzon region in March 1915, replacing the above-mentioned Yusuf Rıza.<sup>35</sup>

## The Naim-Andonian Documents

Lewy maintains that the deportation and consequent extermination of the Armenians was not the result of a plan. In order to sustain this assertion, he disputes the validity of three sets of documents that support the opposite claim. The Naim-Andonian documents top this list (see note 4). These are documents published by Aram Andonian in French, English, and Armenian, which are purported to have been issued by Talât Pasha. Orel and Yuca declared them forgeries; Dadrian insists on their admissibility.<sup>36</sup>

The main problem here is that the originals of these documents are missing, and nobody seems to know where they may be. Pending the location of the originals, the doubts surrounding these documents will be impossible to dispel. However, to dismiss them entirely based on our limited information is as unsound as to accept them unquestioningly.

One question that Lewy leaves unanswered is of central importance, however. Should we find any other documents that support the Naim–Andonian documents, or are akin to them, could we then still maintain that their contents are false? Dadrian follows this path in his article on the subject, which he compared several documents with other sources, reaching similar conclusions.<sup>37</sup> This approach enables us to argue that, at the very least, some of the documents published by Andonian—and, perhaps most importantly, the material contained in these documents as a group—is irrefutable.

An example is the work of Ahmet Emin Yalman. He provides a statement from Bahaeddin Şakir whose content is similar to that of a statement appearing in one of the documents published by Andonian.<sup>38</sup> A similar picture emerges from two coded telegrams in which Talât tells the army not to meddle in the matter of the Armenian deportations. We learn from these documents that Talât persuaded the Ministry of War to issue orders to local garrison commanders and to military not to interfere with the expulsions. A circular to this effect was sent to the military authorities in the provinces.<sup>39</sup> We have at least two different sources that verify the content of this document. At the seventh session of the Yozgat trial (11 February 1919), an army officer, Halil Recai, said that he had received orders from Enver Pasha, then minister of war, to the effect that the army was not to interfere in the deportation of Armenians. Recai repeated this statement during the trial's fourteenth session (26 March 1920).<sup>40</sup> At the sixteenth session of the Trabzon trial (5 May 1919), Avni Pasha, commander of the local garrison, claimed that he had received orders from the Ministry of War not to interfere with affairs of the provincial governor.<sup>41</sup>

There is another case of two documents possessing identical content. One is an order, bearing the number 801 and dated of 26 December 1915, attributed to Talât; the other is a document lodged in the Prime Minister's Archive, which orders "the removal and expulsion of the regular and temporary Baghdad Railway workers—except those who previously were already relocated."<sup>42</sup> By identifying the numbers 840 and 860 as belonging to documents published by Andonian whose contents are similar in part to numbered documents found in the Ottoman Archives, Hilmar Kaiser has made a similar comparison.<sup>43</sup>

Another issue is the viability of demonstrating the accuracy of some of the documents reproduced by Andonian based on Ottoman documents. The incident at Aleppo's Baron Hotel may provide an example in this regard. After maintaining that this hotel was a meeting place for Aleppo's high-ranking government officials, Andonian, referring to the owner of the hotel, says, "he was so generous in spending all his wealth on entertaining the people who might any day become the executioners of his nation, that he succeeded in gaining a great influence, which he used in trying to save his compatriots."<sup>44</sup> This is the reason why he suggests that one of the most important tasks of Şükrü Bey, director of the Office of Tribal and Refugee Settlement (IAMM) of the Ministry of the Interior<sup>45</sup> and, as such, responsible for the problems of deportation and destruction in this area was "that the nest should be cleared out."<sup>46</sup>

Two documents in the Prime Minister's Archive corroborate Andonian's assertions. Here the identity of the person who signed the document is as important as the document itself. Having been directly involved in the matter in question, Talât, in a coded telegram containing the same details as those provided by Andonian, requested that an investigation be launched into the officials upon which the Armenian hotelier was exerting influence and that the results of this



investigation be conveyed to him at once.<sup>47</sup> As a result of the investigation, Talât, through a coded telegram directed to Cemal Pasha, ordered the removal of the owner of that hotel from that area.<sup>48</sup> The Baron Hotel incident is important in another respect: this telegram tellingly demonstrates, contrary to Lewy's contention, Istanbul's close oversight over the developments in the various regions and Talât's direct intervention in several instances.

### The Proceedings of the Istanbul Courts-Martial

Lewy advances three main arguments as to why he cannot make use of the documents and related materials produced during the Istanbul courts-martial, which he devalues as "alleged" evidence and thus devoid of usefulness. In addition to arguing that the Ottoman legal system did not operate at the standard necessary to arrive at a judicious verdict, and that the authenticity of the documents used in the proceedings cannot be verified, since the originals are missing, and hence the documents are not reliable, he also claims that the tribunals were merely the product of "victory justice."

The same argument has been made about the Nuremberg trials, which have been labeled as a product of "victor's justice" or as a "high-class lynching party."<sup>49</sup> It is a fact, however, that not only the Istanbul and Nuremberg trials but all other similar courts set up in the wake of World War II, and even the International Criminal Tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, could be dismissed with the same rationale. Of course, one should not ignore the political character of all these bodies.

However, the following examples demonstrate that conditions with respect to both the prisons and the trials were quite lax. The same American and British sources that Lewy uses to invalidate the findings of the Istanbul courts-martial confirm that, to the contrary, the courts were favorably disposed toward the CUP.<sup>50</sup>

The judiciousness of the verdicts issued by these courts is not the subject matter of this essay. Its central objective is not the examination of the verdicts themselves but, rather, the reliability of the documents and of the testimony obtained both from defendants and from witnesses for the prosecution, as well as the validity of all these materials with respect to their documentation of certain historical events. Particularly at issue here are the following questions: Were the testimonies of the defendants and witnesses obtained as a result of torture? Were the accused in any way subjected to pressure before providing their testimony? Did the accused or the witnesses, in the course of the hearings or later in their memoirs, provide any revealing information?

From the Istanbul court-martial proceedings, three different sets of documents are available for study. One set consists of official documents belonging to various state departments and institutions, such as the CUP; another contains testimonies obtained from the accused and from potential witnesses during pre-trial interrogations; the third comprises transcripts of the testimonies provided by defendants and other witnesses during the trials. As far as the first group is concerned, there is strong evidence that the documents are originals. Following an inspection by competent ministerial officials as to their authenticity, each these documents was stamped with the formula "it conforms to the original" or "it is a true replica of the original."<sup>51</sup> Equally and perhaps more important is the fact that, as indicated above, not only were these documents shown to the defendants but the latter verified their authenticity.

Furthermore, it is known that all this evidence was obtained without resort to violence or torture and that it was provided by defendants, as well as witnesses, entirely voluntarily. The terms of oversight of defendants and prison conditions in the period between 1918 and 1921 were exceedingly lax. From the very beginning of their incarceration, suspects were held together at police headquarters and were able to communicate and map out common defense strategies. According to one of these suspects,

The uncovered balcony at the top floor of Police Directorate's prison quickly became a public gathering place...the inmates were offering each other home-made tasty meals...I was witnessing a phenomenon that involved the reckoning of the entire era.<sup>52</sup>

The conditions in Bekirağa prison, where the same defendants were also held, were not much different; there was no strict control of those entering and leaving the prison. A British report provides details about the living conditions of the 112 inmates there:

The arrangements which at present exist at Seraskerat prison are not considered sufficiently adequate to ensure the proper supervision or safeguard of the persons confined therein, owing to the laxity and lack of system of control prevailing there. The following points have been noted: a) All prisoners, of whom there are 112, are allowed to walk about the prison and mix freely together during the day. b) Visiting hours for friends of prisoners are supposed to be between 12:00–14:00 hours daily, but these hours are not kept to, and individuals may be seen going and coming from the prison throughout the day. c) Except for a casual glance at their passes, individuals are not subjected to any inspection on entering the prison, and large packets are often to be seen being carried in by individuals, stated to be food, but might be anything. d) Women are allowed in all times during the day, and are never inspected. e) Turkish soldiers who are detailed to look after the prisoners mix freely with them, moving in and out of the prison at will, and if susceptible to bribery it would be very easy for them to aid a prisoner's escape.<sup>53</sup>

In his memoirs, Foreign Minister Halil Mentеше relates how officials of the commission of inquiry attached to the courts-martial frequently came to the prison to debate with the inmates.<sup>54</sup>

Incredible as it may sound, many of the defendants were able to leave at any time they chose, returning to the prison after several days, and then, as they put it, only to avoid putting the prison director in an embarrassing situation.<sup>55</sup> The external visits and outings of those held in these prisons were reported in the daily newspapers.<sup>56</sup> In his memoirs, Yunus Nadi (himself a CUP man), who had prepared a plan for the escape of imprisoned CUP men, discloses that only two of the latter had agreed to escape, whereas the others had declined, expressing the belief that “we will soon be freed.”<sup>57</sup>

The court proceedings that began in February 1919 were open to the press and to spectators. Among the defendants, there was a very strong sense of solidarity. The defense of Kemal, the county supervisor (*kaymakam*) of Boğazlıyan, for example, was jointly prepared and written down by CUP men, his co-inmates.<sup>58</sup> All these points demonstrate that the evidence presented by defendants and by witnesses for the prosecution were not sought and obtained under conditions of duress or pressure but were solely their personally framed and freely offered testimonies.

Three types of sources are available for the complete or partial texts of these documents—discounting the reproduction of limited excerpts in some personal memoirs. These documents and testimonies are either completely or partially

reproduced in the court transcripts published in *Takvim-i Vekâyi*; it is also possible to get detailed data about them from the daily press. Furthermore, the copies of a significant proportion of these documents and related material are lodged in the archives of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

The important written testimony of Vehip Pasha, commander-in-chief of the Ottoman Turkish 3rd Army during World War I, which Lewy dismisses as “unreliable” and invalid, best portrays the situation. “In the absence of complete original documents,” Lewy writes, “we have to be content with selected quotations...but without the full text we lose the context of the quoted remarks” (80–81). He consequently sees no problem with describing this document as an “alleged” one (250) and thus dismissing its contents. Yet, like Dadrian, he quotes excerpts from this statement by General Vehip, parts of which appear in the key indictment as well as in the Harput verdict (the full text of which was read into the record at the 29 March 1919 sitting of the Trabzon trial series). Vehip’s testimony is available not only in the *Takvim-i Vekâyi* but also in the period’s press. Perhaps more important is a fact of which Lewy is apparently unaware: the entire text of Vehip Pasha’s testimony was published in the daily newspapers of the time.<sup>59</sup> The same document is available in the archives of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem.<sup>60</sup> The text of the Jerusalem copy is identical to that published in the Turkish newspaper *Vakit*, as is true of the excerpts quoted in the key indictment and in the verdict issued by the Turkish Military Tribunal. In other words, the authenticity of Vehip Pasha’s testimony can be determined and corroborated through different sources.

Similar corroboration can be established with respect to practically every other document by way of such sources as the *Takvim-i Vekâyi* and Turkish daily newspapers; in many cases, the archives of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem; and, in some cases, personal memoirs. The set of documents that Lewy rejects, calling them “alleged,” is the very set of documents whose existence and content are verifiable.

By his own reasoning, inasmuch as there is no definite proof that documents related to the deportations were destroyed, Lewy should have qualified his claims of their destruction as “alleged.” Lewy somehow seems persuaded, however, that the important documents were destroyed after all. This being the case, it is incumbent upon him to answer two questions: For what conceivable reasons have those responsible destroyed these documents? Is it reasonable to suppose that those responsible for destroying the documents were attempting to hide their guilt?

In view of his own argument that the incriminating documents have been destroyed by the perpetrators and that we have no original documents to hand, that Lewy nevertheless proposes an explanation favoring those very perpetrators and completely supporting their exterminatory intent is beyond all logic and is difficult to comprehend.

## The Special Organization

Lewy claims that the Special Organization had nothing to do with operations relating to the deportations and mass murders in question. This is evident, he writes, because, apart from some relevant testimony embedded in the key indictment but consisting of mere assertions, there is no evidence or documentation of it whatsoever (84–85).

Here, however, Lewy gravely errs. Beyond the text of the key indictment, a very large number of documents and related pieces of material in the Prime Ministerial

Archive in Istanbul reveal the SO's active involvement in the Armenian deportations and massacres at issue here.

Let us start with the Istanbul trials to see how the defendants in these trials openly admitted the involvement of the SO.

Confronted with some of these highly incriminating documents, Yusuf Riza, a member of the CUP's Central Committee, conceded the principal roles of that committee and of the SO in perpetrating the crimes involved:

Regretfully we have now reached a point where it becomes evident that under the direct orders of the CUP's Central Committee, the Special Organization became instrumental for the commission of all the crimes. I myself am unable, Your Highness, to find and offer to you a satisfactory explanation.<sup>61</sup>

One reading of such documents occurred during the fifth session of the main trial series. Addressing defendant Riza, the chief judge declared, "It is clear from your testimony that among the contingents involved in the matter of deportations and massacres, there also were companies, that is, Special Organization troops." Riza's response was that there were two different types of Special Organizations. One of these consisted of SO units like his own, which operated outside Ottoman borders. On the other hand, local SO units directed by local governors (*valis*) and the CUP's responsible secretaries, did operate within Ottoman territory and thus became directly implicated in the handling of the deportations.<sup>62</sup>

This matter of the SO's direct complicity in crimes was bared especially by civilian bureaucrats, as well as military officers, testifying throughout the trial sessions; their testimonies were reproduced not only in the daily newspapers of the period but also in the texts of the respective verdicts. An example is the testimony of Tahsin, governor general of Erzurum. During the second session of the Harput trial series, on 2 August 1919, Tahsin testified that the SO, led by Bahaeddin Şakir, was directly involved in the handling of the deportations and that "the massacres against the deportee convoys were perpetrated by units subsumed under the name of the SO."<sup>63</sup> The text of the verdict rendered in this trial series includes numerous documents, and ample testimony from Turkish witnesses, attesting to the crimes committed by the SO.<sup>64</sup>

At the 5 April 1919 sitting of the Trabzon trial series, similar testimony was provided by Avni Pasha, who was commandant in the Trabzon province's Lazistan area during the deportations, and stated that "a band of brigands, known as Cemal Azmi's [the Trabzon governor general's] volunteers, and involved in deportations and massacres, were actually SO brigands."<sup>65</sup> Another piece of testimony linking the SO to the Armenian deportations was provided in the affidavit of Reşit Pasha, governor general of Kastamonu province, which was entered into the record on 27 October 1919, during the fifth session of the Responsible Secretaries trial series. In it the governor declared that he had been dismissed from his post through a discharge certificate signed by Bahaeddin Şakir with the title "Chief of the Special Organization." The reason given there was that, as *vali*, Reşit had failed to comply with the order to have the province's Armenians deported.<sup>66</sup> Likewise, at the seventh session of the same trial series on 12 November 1919, the witnesses testified that of the 180 Armenians who were deported to Çankırı from Istanbul, only some thirty survived; that the rest were murdered; and that Responsible Secretary Cemal Oğuz directed the SO brigands involved.<sup>67</sup> The verdict in the Bayburt trials reproduces many statements excerpted from the testimonies of Turkish witnesses attesting to the crimes committed by the SO. Adil, commander of Erzurum's gendarmerie regiment,

stated in his testimony, for example, that, following an investigation he himself conducted and based on written responses he received from the commander of Bayburt's gendarmerie, he had established that "the Armenians were massacred by the recruits of the SO."<sup>68</sup>

The Erzincan trial revealed that the crimes perpetrated in that region were the work of the SO operating in the area. Details about the ways and means of these crimes emerged in the course of the trial. The testimonies of Turkish prosecution witnesses, led by Riza, a staff lieutenant-colonel, played a decisive role in the administration of punishment at various levels against the defendants, including Abdullah Avni, who later, on 29 July 1920, was executed by hanging.<sup>69</sup> Described by the press as the trial covering the "CUP brigands' most important instrument of execution" and as the trial of café owner Necati from Crete, the proceedings that began on 19 July 1919 actually dealt with the brigands operating in the environs of Diyarbakir and Urfa. The accused, Necati, belonged to a group of brigands known as the brigands of Eşref of Diyarbakir. In his testimony the defendant stated, "Your Highness, Pasha. I didn't know our Detachment was identified as one of brigands. Our garments, our crowd, our everything was soldierly; we were soldiers indeed." During the proceedings several pieces of witness testimony and certain coded telegrams dealing with the crimes involved and with wrongful seizures were read into the record.<sup>70</sup> The list extends to several pages.

A second important aspect of Lewy's claim that there is no proof of the involvement of SO units stems from his lack of knowledge about the meaning of the terms "brigands," "irregulars," "chettes," and "volunteers." Lewy, while granting that such groups were involved in massacre operations and, accordingly, discussing them at some length, nevertheless maintains that he somehow was unable to pinpoint the individual identities of their members or the identities of those who organized them. This was the source of some frustration, since he could not precisely relate them to a particular organization and yet acknowledges them as the actual perpetrators, "no matter how recruited, directed, or composed" (228).

From the Istanbul trials we learn that "brigands," "irregulars," "chettes" (*çetes*), and "volunteers" are the official terms used to define and to describe SO units. It should be noted that, based on sufficient available data, we can identify three essential sources supplying the SO's manpower needs: the Kurdish tribes, refugees from the Caucasus and the Balkans (mainly Circassians), and convicts. Approximately twenty relevant documents were produced during the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh sessions of the main trial series.<sup>71</sup> It is natural, therefore, that when describing these brigands, several observers and those possessing a good memory affixed the words "Kurdish," "Circassian," or "convict."

It is astonishing indeed that Lewy failed to recognize the fact that these terms were typically used to describe the SO's brigand contingents (221–32). It may be useful to adduce here some facts demonstrating that all such designations as "chette" (*çete*), "volunteer," and "irregular" were used to depict the SO units and that the founders of SO themselves especially used these descriptive labels. At the fourth session of the main trial series on 8 May 1919, for example, the judge posed the following question: "What was meant by the term *çete* you have been using? Is it appropriate to designate as 'brigands' a detachment that is connected to the War Ministry and is part of the Army?" Colonel Cevad responded that "in the orders issued by the War Ministry," these kinds of different labels were used, adding that "some detachments were called volunteers, others were described as brigands."<sup>72</sup> Similarly, during the fifth trial

session, defendant Arif, another SO official, responded to the chief judge's question, "What was meant by the term *çete*?" by declaring, "Well, sometimes we called these units *çete*, and other times we referred to them as the volunteers detachment. Also, among us, we used the term Committee to describe the chiefs, the leaders, and the units they commanded."<sup>73</sup>

Indeed, throughout the trial proceedings, the telegrams and letters relating to the Ministry of War, the SO, and the CUP's Central Committee that were read into the record identified SO units, time and again, as "the *çetes*," that is, as brigands. For example, a telegram introduced during the fifth session and bearing the signature of SO leader Halil Pasha contained the order to "send off as soldiers some hundred men from among those who are eager to serve as brigands." During the same session was read an official communication, sent to the CUP Central Committee by Samsun's CUP Secretariat, containing the following statement: "A contingent of fifty-five brigands, under the command of Tufan Ağa from Artvin, has just been sent off via motorboat as a fifth group."<sup>74</sup> Testimony was heard during this session, and documents were read into the record, about SO troops who were portrayed as volunteers. A few illustrative examples may suffice.

At the fourth trial session on 8 May 1919, defendants Atif and Cevad, responding to questions dealing with the links established with the CUP in the course of creating the SO units, defined these units as "volunteer detachments" or as "an outfit of volunteers."<sup>75</sup> Cevad offered a similar explanation again at the fifth session when he described the SO units as "volunteer troops" and as "the company of volunteers," reading out the texts of some telegrams in order to prove this point.<sup>76</sup> Midhat Şükrü, in his testimony at the same session, admitted to having sent to CUP provincial secretaries a formal request that "they should help recruit volunteers for the SO and should otherwise render service to the fatherland." For his part, Ziya Gökalp testified that following the declaration of general mobilization, the Ministry of War launched the SO and accordingly set out to organize volunteer bands. Similar testimony can be found in official documents; for example (1) the use of the words "volunteer recruits" (*gönüllü efradı*) in an official Ministry of War document introduced during the fifth session and (2) an instruction that, "the people in question being just convicts, they should be sent off along with the battalion comprising similar type of people."<sup>77</sup>

Since Lewy is suspicious of documents issuing from the Military Tribunal, let us close this section with some documents from the Prime Ministerial Archives in Istanbul that also show the direct involvement of the SO in the deportation of Armenians. One such document is a coded telegram sent by the office of the commander of the Istanbul Military Police (*Merkez Kumandanlığı*), Lieutenant Colonel Cevdet, on 2 June 1915 through the Ministry of the Interior to the governor of Mamuretülaziz. In this telegram Cevdet asks the governor's opinion on sending SO troops against the Armenians in Dersim region, since many Armenians were escaping from the convoys through the cooperation and help of the Kurds.<sup>78</sup>

This archive also contains dozens of documents showing that the Ministry of the Interior was involved in organizing SO units in various provinces and that the terms "Special Organization" and "brigands" (*çete*), "volunteers," and so on are synonymous. For example, in a telegram sent on 26 November 1914 from the Ministry of the Interior to various provinces and provincial districts, we read the following: "We need people for purposes of brigandage in the Caucasus... Try to assemble as many Lazes and Circassians as possible, namely those who are most suitable for brigandage."<sup>79</sup> Similarly, another coded telegram sent by Talât, the interior minister, to Trabzon, uses

the terms “brigands” and “volunteers” to describe the SO units.<sup>80</sup> Among various telegrams with the same content, one deserves our special attention. This is a coded telegram, sent by Talât to the governor’s office of Mamuratül province, in which Talât informs the governor that the 3rd Army is “in charge of drafting volunteers from the tribes.”<sup>81</sup>

I assume that after looking into these documents, Lewy will revise his position regarding the Special Organization.

### **A Marginal Note on the Subject of the Central Government**

In all his arguments, Lewy underscores a single thesis: “No authentic documentary evidence exists to prove the culpability of the central government of Turkey for the massacre of 1915–6. . . . it is safe to say that no such evidence exists for the events of 1915–6” (250). It is beyond the scope of this essay to tackle the subject of the policy of extermination the central government is said to have systematically pursued in targeting the Armenians. However, in the belief that it may prove instructive, some marginal notes, framed in the light of documents from the Prime Ministerial Archives, may be adduced here. Although this may appear at first to be only a technical matter, it must nevertheless be singled out as an important issue. Sufficient material and documents are available on the subject of the central government’s having been rendered inoperative and impotent in the matter of the wholesale destruction of the Armenians, whether with respect to its planning or to its implementation. The operations of deportation and destruction were largely carried out by the CUP, which had gained control over the affairs of the government. In other words, the basic question, within the framework of the present debate, is whether or not the mass deportations and mass murder in which the central government was involved were carried out beyond the knowledge and will of such persons as Talât, Enver, and Halil Menteşe, as members of the government, and of the CUP’s Central Committee, which exercised tight control over the government.

The available documents, together with Talât’s statement, cited above, that “the entire responsibility relative to the severity of the applied methods belongs to me,” starkly sum up the picture.<sup>82</sup> The events in question here did not take place within a few weeks or months but, rather, covered almost two years. Furthermore, it is impossible to confirm that the central government in Istanbul, during all this time, made any serious effort to end the pain and suffering of the Armenians. Lewy’s endeavor to account for this failure through the authorities’ “ineptness,” “misconception,” “bureaucratic fiasco,” or “lack of farsightedness” has no basis in fact. One could show a measure of understanding for such explanatory notions had there been any genuinely helpful efforts that, in the end, proved abortive or inadequate; in fact, however, the available evidence points in the opposite direction. Indeed, there is not an iota of evidence that any policy or plan existed to aid the relocation of the Armenians in the very areas that were announced as their ultimate destination of exile.

For example, thus far there not a single record has been found in the Ottoman Archives that the government even attempted to distribute land, seeds, houses, or money to the “relocated” Armenians, who had left all their belongings behind; nor is there any evidence that the land, houses, seeds, and tools were ever actually granted. By contrast, the cipher office of the Ministry of the Interior is filled with hundreds of documents dealing with the expropriation of the properties left behind. By the same token, there is not the slightest evidence of a policy or administrative initiative

pointing to an effort to remit to the Armenians the revenues resulting from the sale of their properties; yet the same archives contain hundreds of documents showing that these revenues were systematically used to meet the costs of other undertakings: to help finance the war, to create an Islamic bourgeoisie, to relocate Muslim refugees, and to cover the government's expenses resulting from the work of deportation.<sup>83</sup>

The real purpose of the investigative commissions sent to certain provincial regions in 1915–1916 was to check and control the plundering of Armenian properties and to ensure that the ensuing revenues would flow into Istanbul.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, it is common knowledge that throughout this period the offers of foreign countries to extend help to alleviate the plight of surviving Armenians were systematically turned down.<sup>85</sup> It is also known that investigations were launched and arrests made when organizations and individuals tried to extend help to the Armenians languishing in the deserts of Syria and Iraq. Some examples may be cited. When informed that the American embassy had undertaken such initiatives, the Ministry of War, on 12 January 1916, sent a communication to the Ministry of the Interior to the effect that, “through secret means,” it had learned that money and help were being given to the Armenians and that, “following a serious investigation, the results are to be reported back.”<sup>86</sup> On 30 January 1916, Talât dispatched to all provincial authorities a telegram stating that, the fact of delivery of monetary assistance to the Armenians having been ascertained, the matter “should be investigated in an earnest but secret way.”<sup>87</sup> In another order, sent on 6 February 1916, Talât demanded that the moneys the American missionaries were distributing be confiscated, asserting that they “will be distributed through the means of the government.”<sup>88</sup> In a telegram dated 13 February 1916, he relayed the order that “NO permit should be issued to untrustworthy foreigners or to American or non-Muslim Ottoman merchants wanting to travel to areas inhabited by Armenians.”<sup>89</sup> On 23 March 1916, upon learning that monetary and other kinds of help from German and American organizations were continuing, Talât reiterated that “the money delivered by American and German organizations” would have to be distributed by government agencies, demanding the cessation of the distribution in progress. A footnote in that document contains a request that after three days the order be transmitted to all regions.<sup>90</sup>

Another problem besetting the government was the presence among local officials of those who helped the Armenians or condoned such help from others. In an order sent to the regions on 3 April 1916, Talât, invoking one of Enver's orders, threatened severe punishment for these officials.<sup>91</sup> In a telegram dated 24 July 1916, Talât requested the arrest and return to Aleppo of two Armenians, traveling with documentation from the governorship of Aleppo, who had been observed secretly distributing money to the Armenians in Deir Zor in the heat of the summer.<sup>92</sup>

The preceding discussion is not intended to examine the central government's policy on relief work, but it nevertheless demonstrates that the government in question was not a weak entity unable to exercise control over the distant regions. On the contrary, what the evidence shows is a government so keen, and able, to maintain a tight grip that, in order to stop any help from reaching the Armenians, it intervened in the most minute details of such aid operations—even going to the trouble of tracking down two Armenians distributing money in Deir Zor so as to prevent any and all help for the doomed victims. Indeed, some Turkish officials, whom Cemal Pasha had authorized to help resettle the deported Armenians, disclosed in their personal memoirs that the aim of the deportations was not relocation but extermination.<sup>93</sup>



Moreover, the authorities, whom Lewy portrays as feeble and impotent, proceeded harshly against those local officials who really believed that the policy was a genuine plan to resettle the Armenian deportees; some of these officials, as a result, were liquidated in various ways, and others were dismissed from their posts. The murders of at least six such officials are known: the governor general of Basra; the county executives of Lice, Müntefak, Midyat, and Bafra; and the deputy county executive of Beşiri.<sup>94</sup> Approximately twenty local officials were relieved of their posts, and some of them openly stated in their oral and written testimonies at the Istanbul courts-martial, as well as in their memoirs, that they were dismissed because they did not want to get involved in the anti-Armenian exterminatory operations.<sup>95</sup>

Likewise, within the same period a policy of rewards was in place for those who excelled in the performance of their murderous task. The bestowing of such a prize upon Nusret, who in the summer of 1920 was tried, convicted, and executed on charges of having organized the extermination of the Armenians in and around Bayburt, is an example.<sup>96</sup> The case of Diyarbekir province is another example. Through the initiative of Reşit, the governor general, “some of the police and police chiefs of the province were promoted, received monetary rewards, and were decorated with medals.”<sup>97</sup> During the Armistice, the press published relevant news stories on the model of the region of Thrace, where such promotions took place.<sup>98</sup>

However, it is necessary to underscore the special importance attached to the case of Diyarbekir: the governor general there did not confine the exterminatory operations to the Armenians but extended them to all Christians. As a result especially of the pressures exerted by the German consul and the office of the German embassy, Talât ultimately sent, on 12 July 1915, a reminder to the Reşit, governor (*vali*) of Diyarbekir that “the extending to other Christians of the disciplinary measures that are being applied against the Armenians is not permitted,” thus requesting the termination of this practice.<sup>99</sup> As the news of the crimes being committed in Diyarbekir emerged, Talât felt impelled to send two separate telegraphic warnings, dated 22 July and 2 August 1915. In the latter, after informing *vali* Reşit of the continuing reports that “the brigands are pursuing and murdering the province’s Christians,” Talât admonished him with the warning that he would be held responsible “for every action and incident imputed to the bandits and brigands.”<sup>100</sup>

What is so remarkable, however, is that not even a perfunctory investigation was launched against Reşit. Even more significantly, the ceremonies rewarding the officials of Diyarbekir and its environs took place at the very same time. The glaring fact is that, Reşit was subsequently taken to task not for his murderous crimes but, rather, for personally appropriating the property and jewelry of his Armenian victims, which he had promised to deliver to the party and whose prompt surrender the state demanded. A telegram dated 6 October 1915 and addressed to Reşit reads,

According to information provided by deputies, you have demanded the return without damage of the moneys, jewelry, and other items taken from the Armenians, who in the course of deportation became afflicted, in order to surrender them to the Central Committee and for which purpose you took appropriate measures. It is requested that you indicate the extent of this kind of recovery initiative and the manner in which a record is being kept about it.<sup>101</sup>

The thing that interested Talât was not the fact that the Armenians were being assaulted but, rather, the fate of their valuables.

We do not know Reşit’s answer to Talât, but we know that Reşit was appointed governor of Ankara, which can be seen as a promotion. More interestingly,

his appropriation of goods and jewelry would later lead to his being subjected to an investigation and removed from the post of governor of Ankara: Reşit tried to buy a waterside mansion with the confiscated funds, and, upon hearing of this, Talât relieved him of his post. Prominent statesman and publicist Süleyman Nazım's succinct comment: "Terribly annoyed at this, Talât Pasha dismissed Reşit as a thief, while he adored him as murderer."<sup>102</sup>

### The Excessive Trust Accorded to Talât

Lewy takes too seriously Talât's gesture of rescinding some directives previously sent to the provinces in order to pacify the Germans—an act that was subsequently promptly cancelled. He treats as reliable, for example, the statement that, "as far as possible, Catholic and Protestant Armenians, who on the whole had not participated in revolutionary activities, would be allowed to return to their regular places of residence" (184–86, 206–8), which the German ambassador noted in his talks with Talât. By contrast, he dismisses as "slim" evidence my explanation of Talât's deceptive two-track system of communication (112).

Precisely for this reason, it may be useful to demonstrate here how, by dispatching a subsequent order, Talât cancelled and thus invalidated a series of earlier orders that he had framed for the sole purpose of satisfying the Germans. First of all, it should be emphasized that, when the deportations began, the outgoing orders stated very clearly that without exception, without regard to or distinction of religion, all Armenians were to be subject to deportation. For example, in the text of a telegram dated 20 June 1915 and sent to those provinces held to be of special importance, we read the following:

All Armenians dwelling in the province's towns and villages are, without exception, and together with their families, to be exiled to the province of Mosul and to the regions of Urfa and Deir Zor.<sup>103</sup>

Until the beginning of August, Talât was able to ward off pressure to exempt Catholic and Protestant Armenians from deportation. In the face of growing pressures, however, and in light of the fact that the bulk of these Catholic and Protestant Armenians had already been deported, Talât pretended to favor such requests, and issued orders accordingly. As far as can be determined, the first order, dated 4 August 1915, relates to the Catholic Armenians; it reads, "You are to refrain from deporting and exiling the remaining Catholics."<sup>104</sup> A similar order, issued on 15 August 1915, relates to the Protestants and reads, "You are to refrain from deporting those Protestant Armenians who hitherto have not been deported."<sup>105</sup> It is noteworthy that in both telegrams Talât uses the conditional phrase "do not deport (them) if they are still there," and, as will be shown below, these orders can by no means be interpreted to mean that those Armenians already exiled are to be allowed to return. It becomes clear, however, that these telegrams, sent by Talât in order to mitigate German pressure, quickly became superfluous, as he immediately dispatched another telegram enjoining his subordinates to resume the deportations as before, consistent with the pattern already established. On the same day that the first order was issued (4 August 1915), he ordered via telegram

The complete expulsion and dispatch of the Armenians of Adana city proper, Mersin and Sis proper, as well as the province's residual Armenians, all of whose deportations were hitherto deferred, to the designated areas.<sup>106</sup>

A similar telegram was dispatched the same day to Maraş, the region's other city.<sup>107</sup>

Apparently deeming these individual and separately sent telegrams inadequate, Talât then, on 11 August 1915, proceeded to dispatch to all these provinces a common telegram exhorting recipients that “the Armenian Catholics, just like the other Armenians, are to be sent away and banished. Proceed accordingly.”<sup>108</sup> In another and similar telegram, sent to Ankara on the same day, he requested that “Ankara province’s Catholic Armenians, just like the other Armenians, be deported and banished.”<sup>109</sup> In certain other situations involving telegrams sent to individual provinces, Talât, as reported above, went out of his way to declare that the cessation of deportation did not apply to Armenian Catholics and Protestants already deported. In a telegram sent on 14 August 1915 to the district of Izmit, for example, he forbade the return from exile of the Catholics and Protestants sent to Eskişehir from Izmit.<sup>110</sup> In another telegram, sent to Eskişehir on 30 August 1915, Talât’s order reads,

It is not permissible that those Catholic and Protestant Armenians, who were sent there from Izmit and other localities, be allowed to return. The order does not apply to those who have already returned.<sup>111</sup>

Here, in other words, we see Talât prohibiting the return of Catholics and Protestants to their original localities. The situation reached such a point that it could not escape the attention of the Germans, who began to exert pressure. As a result, Talât felt compelled to send, on 29 August 1915, another directive to the regions, requesting that the deportation of Catholic and Protestant Armenians cease; not satisfied with this, Talât personally went to the German embassy to exhibit these new orders. Trusting Talât’s word, the German authorities promptly notified their provincial consular offices by telephone of this order of cessation.<sup>112</sup>

In fact, the order excluding Catholics and Protestants from exile is but a repetition, in a roundabout, circuitous way, of previous ones. More important is the fact that the order emphasizes its applicability only “to those other Armenians who, unless they are not removed from their places and deported, are still there.”<sup>113</sup> In a further order sent to the regions on 2 September, Talât let it be known that the sense of his 29 August 1915 communication was that the deportation of the Catholics and Protestants must continue, even providing guidelines to local administrators as to how to ward off the pressures exerted by the Germans. As to those Catholic and Protestant Armenians still not deported, through a new directive Talât expressed that he wanted them “exiled together with their families.” This new directive advised his underlings on how to disclaim responsibility by providing the excuse that “the order to defer their deportation came after they were already deported.”<sup>114</sup> From his telegram dated 24 October 1915, we learn the dates and cipher numbers relative to all the preceding orders specifying that all Armenians, including the Catholics and Protestants, are to be deported: (1) 5 August 1915, with cipher no. 4917; (2) 22 August 1915, with cipher no. 2025; and (3) 2 September 1915, with cipher no. 5745. In a further telegram pursuant to this inexorable policy of wholesale deportation of the Armenian population, Talât demanded an explanation for the laxity of officials in Maraş :

Despite the fact that you were informed of the necessity of the deportation of the entire Armenian population of Maraş and their relocation in the designated localities, it is incomprehensible how in Maraş city proper there still are more than 2,000 aggressive Armenians, and more than 3,000 Protestant [Armenians].<sup>115</sup>

Not satisfied with dispatching these telegrams, Talât found it necessary to send inspectors to some regions. Adana is an important example, in that the German consul had shown special interest in the fate of the Armenian population there.

After reporting that Talât had sent Ali Münif to the area as an inspector, and that the latter had declared some of Talât's earlier telegraphic orders to be inoperative, the consul, on 10 September 1915, denounced "the 31 August 1915 assurance of Babiali as a big lie."<sup>116</sup> As the consul continued, "the authorities" proceeded on the basis of Talât's second set of instructions, as pursued by Ali Münif, and "the deportations are being carried out independent of the victims' religious confessions."<sup>117</sup> In his memoirs, Ali Münif indeed confesses that it was he who prepared the lists of the Armenians to be deported.<sup>118</sup>

As a matter of fact, in the month of September, the authorities indicated in a series of telegrams that there were no more Armenians to deport.<sup>119</sup> Another document may be cited here to show how Talât, through a second telegram that is recorded in the registers of the cipher office of the Ministry of the Interior, cancelled a preceding order and declared it invalid. In a telegram sent to Terfurdağ (Tekirdağ) district on 16 April 1914, Talât Pasha used precisely these words:

Disregard the contents of the letter of recommendation given yesterday to a delegation consisting of four to five people that the Patriarchate is going to dispatch for purposes of counseling. . . . The aforementioned people are to be kept under secret surveillance and, without making them aware of it. . . ., you will see to it that the various matters of concern to us will fail to be realized.<sup>120</sup>

This telegram is extremely important. Through it Talât not only asks that his letter of recommendation be disregarded but also demands that the expected delegation be kept under surveillance and that its aims be foiled. From the standpoint of Talât's frame of mind with respect to his dealings with representatives of foreign missions and with minorities, this document is of the utmost importance. In light of the Ottoman archival documents, we can easily understand why Talât, in Turkish sources, is depicted as "a liar." A few examples may be adduced here. "Noted Turkish historian and chronicler Danişmend described Talaat as a man whose special reputation as a liar. . . kept growing progressively (*bilhassa yalancılık şöhreti genişlemiştir*)."<sup>121</sup> The editor of the Turkish newspaper *Sabah* wrote that "Talaat lied like a machine."<sup>122</sup> Following Talât's escape from Istanbul, Süleyman Nazım, a famous writer, publicist, and governor of several provinces, described him as follows: "He, Talât, had no other talent than just being tricky."<sup>123</sup>

It should not be surprising, then, that even Talât's friends did not hesitate to refer to him as a liar. His closest friend, Hüseyin Cahit, remarked that Talât "would lie in both state and political matters."<sup>124</sup> According to Falih Rıfkı Atay, Talât's private secretary, Talât was a person "who did not view lies or cruelty as immoral." Atay relates that the issuance of a second coded telegram nullifying whatever order Talât had just sent by official telegram was an ordinary occurrence.<sup>125</sup> We learn from the memoirs of Henry Morgenthau and Halil Menteşe that Talât, a former telegrapher, had a special private telegraphic line run to his house from which he ran his communications.<sup>126</sup> Rescinding a previously sent order through a subsequent one was a method to which Ottoman authorities often resorted. Hans Von Seeckt, chief of general staff of the Ottoman Armed Forces, reported that the practice of implying that certain earlier official orders and secret decisions were to be disregarded was a common occurrence.<sup>127</sup> Furthermore, the memoirs of Captain Selahattin reveal that Enver, having dispatched some telegrams through official channels in order to placate the Germans, subsequently cancelled them through the use of a telegraphic contraption installed in his home.<sup>128</sup> In light of all this, we can see the fallacy of

fashioning a historical analysis based on a few dubious documents shrewdly framed by Talât and proffered to appease German diplomats.

## Conclusion

In his preface, Lewy states, “Unlike most of those who have written on the subject of the Armenian massacres and who are partisans of one side or the other, I have no special ax to grind” (x). He claims, further, that his “aim has been to deal with this emotion-laden subject without political preconceptions” (x). Because his premises, assessments, and conclusions are based on an incomplete study of the material, and because he is not in command of the subject matter, we can expect, if we take him at his word, that he is ready to revise his position. To make mistakes is normal in our profession, and to admit one’s mistakes is a virtue.

## Notes

1. Excerpt from a long interview with Mehmet Talât, conducted in 1918 by Muhittin Birge, who had succeeded Hüseyin Cahit as editor of CUP’s semi-official organ, *Tanin*, and published as part of Birgen’s memoirs: “Muhittin Birgen’in Anıları,” *Son Posta*, 20 October 1936. Unless otherwise noted, all translations into English are my own.
2. Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey: A Disputed Genocide* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2004). Subsequent references appear parenthetically in the text.
3. Tessa Hofmann, “Serielle Genozidrevision: Buchbesprechung von E. Jäckel,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine faz.net*, 23 March 2006, <http://www.faz.net/s/RubCB85F279145C457C8259D20FF00682A9/Doc~E3E0055D9443C4696B61E5FE37258ABBE~ATpl~Ecommon~Skomlist.html> (accessed 8 January 2008). The original reads, “Im Sommer 2000 äußerte auf meinem Sofa ein Rentner befremdliche Absichten: Er wolle, so der emeritierte US-Politologe Guenter Lewy, die “armenischen Massaker” einer ähnlichen Revision unterziehen, wie er das zuvor mit den Sinti und Roma getan habe. Dabei hätte sich gezeigt, dass deren Schicksal im Zweiten Weltkrieg zwar tragisch verlaufen sei, doch keinen “richtigen” Völkermord darstelle, weil zentrale staatliche Vorsätzlichkeit und Absicht nicht nachweisbar gewesen seien.”
4. Aram Andonian, *The Memoirs of Naim Bey: Turkish Official Documents Relating to the Deportations and Massacres of Armenians* (Newton Square, PA: Armenian Historical Research Association, 1965).
5. Şinasi Orel and Süreyya Yuca, *The Talat Pasha “Telegrams”: Historical Fact or Armenian Fiction?* (Nicosia: K. Rustem and Brother, 1986).
6. Given their numbers, it is impossible to provide here a list of all these works and memoirs. However, mentioning the names of a few individuals who have produced detailed works on this subject may suffice: Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, Şükrü Hanioglu, Şerif Mardin, Tarık Zafer Tunaya, Sina Akşin, Feroz Ahmad, Y.A. Petrosyan, Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, and Ahmed Bedevi Kuran. It is indeed impossible to find a single document or piece of evidence in the relevant and detailed writings of such prominent İttihadist authors as Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, Celal Bayar, Halil Menteşe, and Kazım Karabekir, or in the memoirs of CUP insiders such as Mustafa Ragıp Esatlı, Hüsametdin Ertürk, and Galip Vardar ve Arif Cemil, that might corroborate Lewy’s claim that within the CUP, or in the relationship between government and local power wielders, there was any conflict along the center–region axis. It is useful to add here that there is plenty of material in these sources, especially in the memoirs, on the subject of internal conflict within the central body of CUP, involving, for example, rivalries between Talât and Enver; between these two, on the one hand, and Cemal, on the other hand; and between the civil and military wings of the party. I must especially emphasize the fact that most of these sources are in Turkish.

7. *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeniler (1915–1920)* [*Armenians in Ottoman Documents, 1915–1920*] (Ankara: Başbakanlık Basımevi, 1995).
8. Nejdet Bilgi, *Ermeni Tehciri ve Boğazlayan Kaymakamı Mehmed Kemal Bey'in Yargılanması* (Ankara: Köksav Yayınları, 1999).
9. Three such sources are Taner Akçam, *İnsan Hakları ve Ermeni Sorunu, İttihat ve Terakki'den Kurtuluş Savaşına* (Ankara: İmge Yayınları, 1999); Fuat Dündar, *İttihat ve Terakki'nin Müslümanları İskan Politikası (1913–1918)* (İstanbul: İletişim 2001); Fuat Dündar, "İttihat ve Terakki'nin Etnisite Araştırmaları," *Toplumsal Tarih* 16, no. 91 (2001): 43–51.
10. Although his general views on Gökalg are such as to reach beyond the confines of this study, I concur with Lewy's criticism of those who accuse Gökalg of racism.
11. One such work is Nejat Birdoğan (ed.), *İttihat ve Terakki'nin Alevilik Bektaşılık Araştırması*, Baha Sait Bey, (İstanbul: Berfin yayınları, 1995). For Fuat Dündar's work see footnote 9.
12. The ASAM is a semi-official state institution in Ankara. Under the auspices of ASAM, the Institute of Armenian Studies was established in 2001 and was renamed the Institute for the Study of Crimes Against Humanity in 2001. It is the leading proponent of the Turkish state's official denial policy. On 24–26 November 2005, Lewy was honored with ASAM's High Award for Combating Crimes Against Humanity. For more details see the home pages of these organizations at <http://www.avsam.org/> and <http://www.eraren.org/> respectively.
13. "The issue of premeditation should not be confused with the requirement of proof of a plan as part of the circumstances of the crime." William A. Schabas, *Genocide in International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 225–26.
14. For a debate on this topic between V.N. Dadrian and R.G. Suny, see *Armenian Forum* 2 (Summer 1998). For my views on the danger of speculation inherent in the arguments suggesting premeditation, see my general appraisal and critique of the viewpoints advanced by Dadrian: "Taner Akçam, Vahakn N. Dadrian: Ermeni Soykırımında Kurumsal Roller" [The Role of Institutions in the Armenian Genocide], *Virgöl* 76 (2004): 27–36.
15. Guenter Lewy, "Revisiting the Armenian Genocide," *Middle East Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (Fall 2005), <http://www.meforum.org/article/748> (accessed 23 January 2008).
16. Ibid.
17. Responding to Dadrian's criticism, Lewy stated, "I welcome Mr. Dadrian's close reading of my article, which indeed caught a few minor factual errors." These errors were indeed corrected in the text of the book, as follows: "All of the proceedings took place in Constantinople"; "Yozgat (province of Ankara)"; "Seven key figures, who had fled (including Talaat, Enver and Djemal) were tried in absentia" (75–76). For Dadrian's criticism and Lewy's response see Correspondence: "Revisiting the Armenian Genocide," *Middle East Quarterly* 13, no. 1 (2006), <http://www.meforum.org/article/895> (accessed 9 January 2008); "Vahakn Dadrian Responds to Guenther Lewy," *Dhimmi Watch*, 18 October 2005, <http://www.jihadwatch.org/dhimmiwatch/archives/008594.php> (accessed 9 January 2008).
18. I have been able to ascertain sixty-two cases of pre-trial hearings. Eight of these were dismissed as "unnecessary" at the stage of initiating trial proceedings. In thirty-four of the remaining fifty-five cases, the defendants received various sentences; in the other twenty, verdicts of "not guilty" were issued. For details on this subject see Taner Akçam and Vahakn Dadrian, *The Proceedings and the Verdicts of the Turkish Military Tribunal Investigating the Armenian Genocide* (forthcoming in Turkish and English).
19. For example, in the trials of Mehmed Ali and Refik Salih, former key officials in Dolapdere, on the charge of deporting Armenians from Dolapdere and its environs and selling their goods and possessions. *İkdam*, 31 March 1921.
20. Some examples may be adduced here. The formula used in the verdict of the Trabzon trial was "the credibility of the testimony of the witnesses heard." *Takvim-i Vekâyi*, no. 3616,

- 6 August 1919; verdict dated 22 May 1919. That used in the case of the text of the Yozgat verdict was “the persuasive character of the testimony of the witness heard.” *Takvim-i Vekâyi*, no. 3617, 7 August 1919; verdict dated 8 April 1919. The text in the verdict on the *Katib-i Mesuller* [responsible secretaries] contains these statements: “we heard the testimony of the defense witness that we had requested”; “in this connection we heard the sworn testimony of the witnesses and the statement of the victim.” *Takvim-i Vekâyi*, no. 3772, 10 February 1920; verdict dated 8 January 1920. The text of the Bayburt verdict reads, “testimony delivered face to face” and “testimony, on the instance of the Court Martial, was delivered face to face.” *Tercüman Hakikat*, 5 August 1920.
21. For some details see Richard Frase, “Comparative Criminal Justice as a Guide to American Law Reform: How Do the French Do It, How Can We Find Out, and Why Should We Care?” *California Law Review* 78 (1990): 669–74. Dadrian also touches on this subject in his response to Lewy.
  22. During the third session of the Yozgat trial series, which began on 5 February 1919, such an argumentative exchange took place between “private prosecuting attorney” Levon Remzi and defendant Kemal; disputes between prosecutor Sami and Artin, a witness, on the contradictions between the current and previous testimonies of the latter are another example of the same phenomenon.
  23. *Yeni Gazet, Alemdar*, 23 February 1919.
  24. The case of Şahabettin, who was taken into custody and held in prison until 22 October 1919, was dismissed in March 1920 without any act of investigation. The contemporary newspapers that relayed this news described it as “disturbing.” *Alemdar*, 22 October 1919; *Alemdar*, 26 March 1920; *Ati*, 26 March 1920; *İkdam*, 21 October 1920.
  25. *Takvim-i Vekâyi*, no. 3543, 8 May 1919, transcript of second trial session, 4 May 1919.
  26. *Takvim-i Vekâyi*, no. 3549, 15 May 1919, transcript of fourth trial session, 8 May 1919.
  27. *Takvim-i Vekâyi*, no. 3554, 21 May 1919, transcript of fifth trial session, 12 May 1919.
  28. Ibid.
  29. *Takvim-i Vekâyi*, no. 3557, 25 May 1919, transcript of sixth trial session, 14 May 1919.
  30. Ibid.
  31. Ibid.
  32. *Takvim-i Vekâyi*, no. 3549.
  33. Altay Yigit, *Doğu Karadeniz Muharebeleri [The Battles in the Eastern Black Sea Regions]*, vol. 1 (Trabzon: İstikbal Publishing House, 1950), 80–85. This item of information is supplied by Dadrian in his response to Lewy.
  34. A Mil, “Umumi Harpte Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa,” *Tefrika* no. 94, *Vakit*, 6 February 1934.
  35. Sadık Sarısamam, “Trabzon Mıntıkası Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa Heyet-i İdaresinin Faaliyetleri ve Gürcü Lejyonu,” *XIII. Türk Tarih Kongresi* (Ankara, 4–8 October 1999), 513. The author gives us the following archival record number for his source: K: 249, D: 505/1036, f: 21–58.
  36. Vahakn N. Dadrian, “The Naim–Andonian Documents on the World War I Destruction of Ottoman Armenians: The Anatomy of a Genocide,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 18 (1986): 311–60.
  37. Ibid.
  38. Ahmet Emin Yalman, *Yakın Tarihte Gördüklerim ve Geçirdiklerim* (İstanbul: Rey Yayınları, 1970), 332; Andonian, *Memoirs of Naim Bey*, 49–52. For a comparison of the statements see Taner Akçam, *İnsan Hakları*, 226–27.
  39. Talât Pasha’s cables dated 3 March 1915 and 20 February 1916 appear in Andonian, *Memoirs of Naim Bey*, 16, 57.
  40. *Alemdar*, 27 March 1919.
  41. *Renaissance*, 6 May 1919; *Hadisat*, 7 May 1919.
  42. Cipher dated 14 February 1916, signed by Talât, Public Security Office (Ministry of the Interior) to the authorities of Aleppo and Adana provinces.

43. Hilmar Kaiser, "The Baghdad Railway and the Armenian Genocide, 1915–1916," *Remembrance and Denial. The Case of the Armenian Genocide*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian, 67–112 (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999), 108 n78.
44. Andonian, *Memoirs of Naim Bey*, 10.
45. The IAMM was established at the beginning of 1913 within the Ministry of the Interior and was transformed by new legislation on 14 March 1916. The new office had expanded authority, comprising many sub-offices, and would grow in power and influence as the years wore on. This new office was called the Directorate of Tribes and Immigrants (Aşair ve Muhacirin Müdüriyet Umumiyesi, or AMMU).
46. Andonian, *Memoirs of Naim Bey*, 11.
47. BOA/DH/ŞFR, 66/56, coded telegram, Interior Minister Talât to the authorities of Aleppo province, 22 July 1916. The text of this telegram is as follows:

From a reliable source we have been apprised of the following facts: An alien Armenian by the name of Baron, and manager of the hotel bearing the same name, is using his hotel more as a gambling venue than a guest house. He is not only providing the means to accommodate high-ranking local and regional officials in terms of their needs for pleasure but offering them ample loans against the debts these people are incurring as a result of their gambling. Owing to these acts, he has not only been able to attain an elevated position for some time now but additionally is said to have succeeded in obtaining favorable treatment by penetrating through a variety of means the inner circle of certain provincial officials. According to other sources of information, it has been confirmed that this person had been exploiting the influence he possesses in the province in connection with the matter of deportations. You are to supply comprehensive data relative to his general standing in the province, the identity of the officials protecting him, and your opinion and judgment on the whole matter.
48. BOA/DH/ŞFR, 66/192, coded telegram, Interior Minister Talât to 6th Army Commander-in-Chief Cemal Pasha, 10 August 1916. The text of this telegram reads as follows:

It is reported that an alien Armenian by the name of Baron is using his hotel more as a venue for gambling, as well as a whorehouse, than as a guesthouse. His way of obtaining fame is said to be infiltration with respect to people with high positions and domination with respect to officials with lower ranks. Being a fanatic Armenian, he will not miss any opportunity to help Armenians. Even though he undoubtedly was aware of the initiative of an insurrection in Aleppo, the investigation nevertheless failed to reveal any clue in this respect; this is based on reliable information. Accordingly, your esteemed thoughts about the relocation of the above-mentioned person will be appreciated.
49. Harlan Fiske Stone, then Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court, used the latter phrase to describe the Nuremberg trials. See Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 30.
50. For relevant details see Vahakn N. Dadrian, "The Armenian Genocide: An Interpretation," in *America and the Armenian Genocide of 1915*, ed. Jay Winter, 52–102 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 54–56.
51. For details on this point see V.N. Dadrian, Introduction, in *The Protocols of the Istanbul Military Tribunals . . .*, by Taner Akçam and Vahakn N. Dadrian (forthcoming).
52. Yalman, *Yakın Tarihte*, 341.
53. FO 371/4174, no. 149, 28 June 1919.
54. Menteşe even mentions that, following these debates, some of these officials proceeded to tender their resignation. Halil Menteşe, *Osmanlı Mebusan Meclisi Reisi Halil Menteşe'nin Anıları* (İstanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları, 1986), 237–38.
55. Celal Bayar, *Ben de Yazdım*, vol. 5 (İstanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1967), 1529. Dr. Mehmet Reşit, former governor general of Diyarbakir province, was among these who could leave



- whenever they chose. His escape in January 1919 was, in fact, a failure to return to prison after such a departure. Nejdet Bilgi, *Dr. Mehmed Reşit Şahingiray Hayatı ve Hatıraları* (Izmir: Akademi Kitabevi, 1997), 133–34.
56. *Renaissance*, 13 May 1919.
  57. Yunus Nadi, *Kurtuluş Savaşı Anıları* (Istanbul: Çağdaş Yayınları, 1978), 64. For more details on this aspect of the problem see Taner Akçam, *A Shameful Act: Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006), ch. 3.
  58. Menteşe, *Osmanlı Mebusan*, 238; Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, *Siyasal Anılar* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları), 260.
  59. See *Vakit*, 31 March 1919.
  60. Archives of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, Series 7, File H, nos. 171–182. I obtained a copy of this document from V.N. Dadrian, and I take this opportunity to thank him for sharing it with me.
  61. *Takvim-i Vekâyi*, no. 3561, 29 May 1919, transcript of seventh trial session, 17 May 1919.
  62. *Takvim-i Vekâyi*, no. 3554, 21 May 1919, transcript of fifth trial session, 14 May 1919. With a view to exonerating himself, Yusuf Rıza testified that there were two different and separate kinds of SOs: contingents under the control of local governors and responsible secretaries and those under the jurisdiction and control of the Ministry of War.
  63. *Yeni Gazete*, 3 August 1919.
  64. *Takvim-i Vekâyi*, no. 3771, 9 February 1920. The Harput verdict was issued on 13 January 1920.
  65. *Alemdar*, 6 April 1919.
  66. *Atı*, 28 October 1919; *Alemdar*, 28 October 1919. While the daily newspapers reproduced the full text of this statement, the verdict in the responsible secretaries' trials and the proceedings of the main trials highlighted parts of it.
  67. *Tercümanı Hakikat*, 3 August 1919.
  68. *Tercümanı Hakikat*, 5 August 1920; *Vakit*, 6 August 1920.
  69. *Vakit*, 29 July 1920.
  70. *Atı*, 27 October 1919; *Alemdar*, 27 October 1919.
  71. For details on the subject of the SO, see Taner Akçam, *İnsan Hakları*, 169–77, 231–39.
  72. *Takvim-i Vekâyi*, no. 3549, 15 May 1919, transcript of fourth trial session, 8 May 1919.
  73. *Takvim-i Vekâyi*, no. 3554, 21 May 1919, transcript of fifth trial session, 14 May 1919.
  74. *Ibid.*
  75. *Takvim-i Vekâyi*, no. 3549.
  76. *Takvim-i Vekâyi*, no. 3554.
  77. *Ibid.*
  78. BOA/DH/ŞFR, 53/222, coded telegram, Office of the Commander of Istanbul Military Police to the province of Mamuretülaziz, 2 June 1915.
  79. BOA/DH/ŞFR, 47/96-1, coded telegram, Ministry of the Interior to the provinces of Edirne, Hüdavendigâr, and Ankara and the independent districts of Bolu, İzmit, Çatalca, Kaleyi sultaniye, and Karesi, 26 November 1914. Cited in Dündar, *İttihat ve Terakki'nin*, 157.
  80. BOA/DH/ŞFR, 48/155, coded telegram, Interior Minister Talât to the province of Trabzon, 26 November 1914.
  81. BOA/DH/ŞFR, 49/263, coded telegram, Interior Minister Talât to the province of Mamuretülaziz, 13 February 1915.
  82. Quoted in Birgen, "Muhittin Birgen'in Anıları."
  83. For more information on this topic see Akçam, *Shameful Act*, 184–93; Taner Akçam, "Deportation and Massacres in the Cipher Telegrams of the Interior Ministry in the Prime Ministerial Archive (Başbakanlık Arşivi)," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 1 (2006): 305–25.
  84. For details see Taner Akçam, "The Ottoman Documents and the Genocidal Policies of the Committee for Union and Progress (İttihat ve Terakki) toward the Armenians in 1915," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 1 (2006): 127–48.

85. There is much material, especially in German and American archives, on the subject of such relief efforts. What follows is a limited list of works based on this material: Suzanne Elizabeth Moranian, "The American Missionaries and the Armenian Question: 1915–1927" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1994); James L. Barton, comp., "*Turkish Atrocities*": *Statements of American Missionaries on the Destruction of Christian Communities in Ottoman Turkey 1915–1917* (Ann Arbor: Gomidas Institute, 1998); Rouben Paul Adalian, "American Diplomatic Correspondence," in *America and the Armenian Genocide of 1915*, ed. Jay Winter, 146–84 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Suzanne Elizabeth Moranian, "The Armenian Genocide and the American Missionary Relief Effort," in *America and the Armenian Genocide of 1915*, ed. Jay Winter, 185–213 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Peter Balakian, *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 232–69.
86. Telegram, Ministry of War to Ministry of the Interior, 21 January 1916, cited in *Askerî Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi* 83 (1983), doc. no. 1923, 161. For an English translation of this document see *Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, vol. 2 (N.p.: Prime Ministry Directorate General of Press and Information, n.d.), doc. no. 1923 (119), 107. For more details on this topic see Hilmar Kaiser, with Luther Eskijian and Nancy Eskijian, *At the Crossroads of Der Zor: Death, Survival, and Humanitarian Resistance in Aleppo, 1915–1917* (Princeton, NJ: Gomidas Institute, 2002), 57–61.
87. Şinasi Orel and Süreyya Yuca, *Ermenilerce Talat Paşa'ya Atfedilen Telgrafların Gerçek Yüzü* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1983), 273–74. The English edition of this work is cited in note 5 above.
88. BOA/DH/ŞFR, 60/281, telegram, Public Security Office (Ministry of the Interior) to the provinces of Aleppo and Mamuretülaziz, 6 February 1916. Also see Kaiser, *At the Crossroads*, 60.
89. BOA/DH/ŞFR, 61/32, telegram, Public Security Office (Ministry of the Interior) to the provinces of Aleppo, Adana, Mosul, and Diyarbekir and the districts of Urfa and Deir Zor, 13 February 1916.
90. BOA/DH/ŞFR, 62/90, telegram, Public Security Office (Ministry of the Interior) to the provinces of Edirne, Adana, Aleppo, and others and the districts of Bolu, Deir Zor, and Karasi, 23 March 1916.
91. BOA/DH/ŞFR, 62/210, 3 April 1916. This document is cited in Kaiser, *At the Crossroads*, 60.
92. BOA/DH/ŞFR, 54-A/71, telegram, Public Security Office (Ministry of the Interior) to the province of Aleppo, 22 July 1916; BOA/DH/ŞFR, 54-A/91, telegram, Public Security Office (Ministry of the Interior) to the district of Deir Zor, 24 July 1916.
93. The following three works clearly delineate this cardinal fact: Aleppo *vali* Celal's memoirs, serialized in *Vakit*, 23–26 December 1918; the memoirs of Hasan Amca, who was on duty in that part of Syria, in *Alemdar*, 19–28 June 1919; and Hüseyin Kâzım Kadri (Şeyh Muhsini Fani), *Türkiye'nin Çöküşü* (Istanbul: Hikmet Neşriyat, 1992), 255.
94. The information about the county executive of Bafra was supplied by Justice Ministry Inspector Kenan during the 10 May 1919 session of the Trabzon trial series. For more information on the others see Akçam, *Shameful Act*, ch. 2.
95. For details about such dismissals of officials see Akçam, *ibid.*
96. Information about the rewards bestowed on Nusret was provided by a Turkish witness who testified at Nusret's trial. See *Tercümanı Hakikat*, 5 August 1919, where the text of the Bayburt verdict is reproduced.
97. The text of the relevant cipher reads, "Having proven helpful in the arrest of the leaders and members of the Armenian Committee in Diyarbekir, some policemen and police chiefs were, in appreciation, rewarded with promotion, monetary awards, and medals." BOA/DH/ŞFR/2042/67/31, 27 July 1915.
98. *Alemdar*, 21 January 1919, provides details about this kind of promotion in Thrace.
99. For the initiatives undertaken by German officials see Akçam, *İnsan Hakları*, 25–27; for Talât's cipher see *Osmanlı Belgelerinde*, doc. no. 71, 69. Perhaps equally important as the document itself is the fact that it is not registered in the catalog of the Prime Ministerial

- Archives. The document's catalog number is 54/406; in the catalog itself, however, the sequential numbering jumps from 545/405 to 54/407, thus skipping the identification of this particular document. Had the document not appeared in the *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeniler*, no one would be aware of its existence. Whether this document was deliberately omitted from the archive catalog remains a matter of serious concern.
100. BOA/DH/ŞFR, /54-A/248, telegram, Public Security Office to the provincial authorities of Diyarbekir, 2 August 1915.
  101. BOA/DH/ŞFR, /56/315, telegram marked "for your eyes only," Public Security Office (Ministry of the Interior) to Diyarbekir province, 6 October 1915.
  102. *Hadisat*, 8 February 1919.
  103. BOA/DH/ŞFR, 54/87, telegram, Public Security Office (Ministry of the Interior) to the provinces of Trabzon, Mamretül-Aziz, Sivas, and Diyarbekir and the district of Canik, 20 June 1915.
  104. BOA/DH/ŞFR, 54-A/252, telegram, Interior Minister Talât to the provinces of Erzurum, Adana, Ankara, Bitlis, Aleppo, Diyarbekir, Sivas, Trabzon, Mamüretül-Aziz, and Van and the districts of Urfa, Canik, and Maraş, 4 August 1915.
  105. BOA/DH/ŞFR, 54/20, telegram, Interior Minister Talât to the provinces of Erzurum, Adana, Ankara, Bitlis, Aleppo, Hüdavendigar, Diyarbekir, Sivas, Trabzon, Konya, Mamüretül-Aziz, and Van; the independent districts of Urfa, Izmit, Canik, Karesi, and Karahisari Sahib; and the districts of Maraş, Niğde, and Eskişehir, 15 August 1915.
  106. BOA/DH/ŞFR, 54-A/271, telegram, Talât to Ismail Hakkı, governor of Adana, 4 August 1915.
  107. BOA/DH/ŞFR, 54-A/272, telegram, Talât to Maraş district, 4 August 1915.
  108. BOA/DH/ŞFR, 54-A/384, telegram, Talât to the provinces of Aleppo and Adana and the chairs of Adana, Aleppo, and Maraş Commissions, 11 August 1915.
  109. BOA/DH/ŞFR, telegram, Interior Minister Talât to Ankara province, 11 August 1915.
  110. BOA/DH/ŞFR, /55-A/55. telegram, Public Security Office (Ministry of the Interior) to the district of Izmit, 14 August 1915.
  111. BOA/DH/ŞFR, /55/321, telegram, Public Security Office (Ministry of the Interior) to the district of Eskişehir, 30 August 1915.
  112. DE/PA-AA/BoKons/170, memorandum, Göppert, German Embassy in Istanbul, 31 August 1915.
  113. BOA/DH/ŞFR, 55/292, telegram, Public Security Office (Ministry of the Interior) to the provinces of Hüdavendigar, Ankara, Konya, Aleppo, Adana, Diyarbekir, Sivas, Erzurum, and Mamüretül-Aziz and the districts of Izmit, Maraş, Deir Zor, Kütahya, Karesi, Niğde, and Kayseri, 29 August 1915.
  114. BOA/DH/ŞFR, 55-A/23, telegram, Interior Minister Talât to Adana province, 2 September 1915.
  115. BOA/DH/ŞFR, 57/96, telegram, Public Security Office (Ministry of the Interior) to the district of Maraş, 24 October 1915.
  116. This explanation made on 31 August 1915 is the one that Talât had provided by going directly to the German embassy. It is important in the sense that it demonstrates how useless Talât's circular to the regions on 29 August had been rendered.
  117. PA/AA/BoKons/170, telegram, Büge, German consul in Adana, to German embassy in Istanbul, 10 September 1915.
  118. Taha Toros, ed., "Eski Nafia Nazırı Ali Münif Yegane'nin Hatırları, İstibdattan Cumhuriyet'e," *Akşam Gazetesi*, 26 October–21 December 1955, part 47.
  119. As examples may be mentioned here the telegrams sent from Diyarbekir on 5 September 1915; from Izmit and Eskişehir on 17 September 1915; and from Niğde on 18 September 1915. All these telegrams appear in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeniler*, 94–97.
  120. BOA/DH/ŞFR, 40/17, telegram, Talât to Tekfurdağ district, 16 April 1920.
  121. İsmail Hami Danişmend, *İzahlı Osmanlı Tarihi Kronolojisi* (Istanbul: Türkiye Yayınevi, 1961), 448. This and the following two examples are taken from V.N. Dadrian,

- "The Armenian Genocide and the Pitfalls of a 'Balanced' Analysis," *Armenian Forum* 1, no. 2 (1998): 73–130, 125.
122. *Sabah*, 15 May 1915.
123. *Hadisat*, 5 November 1918. The original reads "... hileden başka meziyeti olmayan Talaat."
124. Yalçın, *Siyasal Anılar*, 148.
125. Falih Rıfki Atay, *Zeytindağı* (Istanbul: Bateş A.Ş. 1981), 24–25.
126. Menteşe, *Osmanlı Mebusan*, 216; Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1918), 143–44.
127. Cited in V.N. Dadrian, "Documentation of the Armenien Genocide in German and Austrian Sources," in *Genocide: A Critical Bibliographic Review*, vol. 2, ed. Israel W. Charny, 86–138 (New York: Facts on File, 1991), 109–10.
128. İlhan Selçuk, *Yüzbaşı Selhattin'in Romanı*, vol. 1 (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1993), 292.