

**Germany  
and the  
Armenian Persecutions  
1914 - 1918**

by  
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From "Germany and the Ottoman  
Empire 1914 - 1918" Princeton  
University Press, 1968





## The Armenian Persecutions

AFTER THE successful struggle of the various Balkan peoples for independence during the preceding hundred years, the largest Christian national group left in the Ottoman empire in 1914 were the Armenians, most of whom lived in the eastern portions of Anatolia.<sup>1</sup> After submitting for centuries to legal discrimination, harassment, and misgovernment—which earned them the designation of the “loyal community” (*Millet-i Sadıka*) by their Turkish overlords—many Ottoman Armenians had become increasingly restive and nationalistic in the course of the 19th century. Since their requests for efficient and fair government, evenhanded justice, and local autonomy were repeatedly ignored by the Porte, and since the diplomatic efforts of the European powers on their behalf produced little more than paper reforms, some elements of the Armenian community turned to “nonlegal” and violent methods to throw off the Turkish yoke. After the 1860s a number of revolutionary societies and parties sprang up, and by the early nineties the radicalization of the Armenian revolutionary movement found outward expression in the emergence of the *Hunchakian* Party and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation or *Dashnaktsuthiun*. While the “Hunchaks” aimed for the creation of an independent Armenian state, the “Dashnaks” advocated radical political and social reforms within the framework of the Ottoman empire. Both groups hoped to attract energetic European support for the Armenian cause, but it was a hope that proved illusory.<sup>2</sup> When in the mid-1890s

<sup>1</sup> Counting Roman Catholics and Protestants as well as the Gregorian majority, there were an estimated 1.8 to 2.1 million Armenians in the Ottoman empire by 1914. For an excellent introduction to the history of the Armenian people see Hrant Pastermadjian, *Histoire de l'Arménie* (Paris, 1949).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. A. O. Sarkissian, *History of the Armenian Question to 1885*

Sultan Abdülhamid II responded to mounting Armenian agitation by ordering, or condoning, the massacre of thousands of Armenians in Constantinople and elsewhere in the empire, the European powers restricted themselves to largely ineffectual diplomatic protests and the protection of some Armenian conspirators.<sup>3</sup>

The overthrow of Abdülhamid's despotic regime and the formal resurrection of a constitutional form of government by the Young Turks in 1908 was initially greeted by many Ottoman Armenians as the dawn of a new era, but their hopes were quickly quashed. Though some Armenian groups were eager to collaborate with the new regime the Young Turks soon made it clear that they had no intention of granting the non-Turkish communities in the empire the political equality which they desired.<sup>4</sup> In 1909 thousands of Armenians were massacred by Moslem mobs in the so-called Cilician Vespers. Even though the central government in Constantinople was perhaps not directly involved in this new outrage, many Armenians did not trust the Young Turks thereafter.<sup>5</sup>

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(Urbana, Ill., 1938); Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1963); and Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876* (Princeton, 1963), and *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> On the shifting policies of the European powers on the "Armenian Question" in the latter half of the 19th century cf. Pasdermadjian, pp. 320-412, *passim*; William L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890-1902*, rev. edn. (New York, 1951), Chapters v, vii, x; and A.O. Sarkissian, "Concert Diplomacy and the Armenians, 1890-1897," in *Studies in Diplomatic History and Historiography in Honour of G. P. Gooch*, A. O. Sarkissian, ed. (London, 1961), pp. 48-75.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Pasdermadjian, pp. 438-41; Lewis, pp. 206-15; Ernest E. Ramsaur, Jr., *The Young Turks: Prelude to the Revolution of 1908* (Princeton, 1957), pp. 65-66, 70-75, 124-29; and Sarkis Atamian, *The Armenian Community* (New York, 1955), pp. 156-77.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. André Mandelstam, *Le sort de l'Empire Ottoman* (Paris, 1917), pp. 203-206; Simon Vratzian, *Armenia and the Armenian Question* (Boston, 1943), pp. 22-23; Atamian, pp. 174-75, 178, note 20; Lewis, p. 212.

During the next few years the Porte officially improved the legal status of the Armenians and extended to them all the duties and privileges of military service, but in many provinces the traditional forms of harassment and sporadic acts of violence (especially by the Kurds) against the Armenian population continued virtually as before. After prolonged negotiations the Porte in February 1914 agreed in a treaty with Russia to institute yet another round of "reforms" in the Armenian provinces, but the two European inspectors-general who were to watch over the implementation of these reforms had just arrived when World War I broke out, and before the year was over the Porte unceremoniously sent them home.<sup>6</sup>

Although the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople and various other spokesmen publicly announced at the beginning of the war that the Armenians in the Ottoman empire would loyally support the government, it seems fairly clear that many Ottoman Armenians disapproved of the Porte's interventionist course or actually hoped for an Entente victory over the Turks.<sup>7</sup> Contrary to the assertions of many writers there is also considerable evidence that some Armenians in the Ottoman empire engaged in subversion and espionage or deserted to the Russians.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, it must be emphasized that the large majority of Ottoman Armenians were in no way involved in

<sup>6</sup> Mandelstam, pp. 30, 33, 50, 206-48; Pasdermajian, pp. 440-44; Roderic H. Davison, "The Armenian Crisis, 1912-1914," *AHR*, 53 (1948), pp. 481-505; Lepsius, *Deutschland*, Nos. 9, 15.

<sup>7</sup> For widely differing appraisals of the attitude of the Ottoman Armenians toward the war and their own government, cf. Vratzian, pp. 25-27; Atamian, pp. 185-89; Pasdermajian, pp. 452, 456-60; Emin, pp. 214-15; Tunaya, p. 397; Bayur, III:3, 12-20 and *passim*; Altemur Kilic, *Turkey and the World* (Washington, D.C., 1959), pp. 17-18; William Yale, *The Near East* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1958), pp. 230-31; and Lenczowski, p. 48.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Lewis Einstein, *Inside Constantinople* (London, 1917), pp. 163-64; Morgenthau, pp. 294-95; Pomiankowski, p. 159; Lepsius, *Deutschland*, Nos. 11, 17-22, 24-26, 31.

any overtly disloyal activities, and the contention of many Turkish authors that the Armenian districts behind the Turkish front in Transcaucasia were teeming with sedition is obviously wrong. Several German officers who were stationed in that area during the opening months of the war agree in their accounts that until April 1915 the Armenian districts were essentially quiet.<sup>9</sup>

#### 1915: THE YEAR OF HORRORS

The eruption of street fighting between Turks and Armenians at Van and in some other places in April 1915 has been blamed by most Turkish and some Western historians on the alleged rebelliousness of the Armenian population—an interpretation that is at most a highly oversimplified version of what happened.<sup>10</sup> More important, even if it were true that there were some Armenian “provocations,” this hardly warranted the kind of “countermeasures” the Ottoman authorities instituted. In fact most of the available evidence points to the conclusion that a systematic decimation of the Armenian population in the eastern provinces had already been decided on by the *Ittihad ve Terakki* regime, and that the troubles in Van and elsewhere merely served as a convenient excuse for getting a program of mass deportations and large-scale extermination started.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Guse, pp. 27, 61-63, and *passim*; and the report of Gen. Posseldt, fortress commandant in Erzurum until April 1915, in Lepsius, *Deutschland*, No. 31. Cf. Bayur, III:3, 2-9, *passim*, for a representative sample of the Turkish point of view.

<sup>10</sup> See Viscount Bryce [and Arnold Toynbee], *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-16* (London, 1916), pp. 638-39 and *passim*; Johannes Lepsius, *Bericht über die Lage des Armenischen Volkes in der Türkei* (Potsdam, 1916), pp. 81-88, and *passim*; Lepsius, *Deutschland*, pp. xiii-xvi; Onnig Mekhitarian, “The Defense of Van,” *Armenian Review* (1948), I:1, 121-29; I:2, 131-43; I:3, 130-42; I:4, 133-42. Cf. Bayur, III:3, pp. 2-5.

<sup>11</sup> See Navasard Deyrmenjian, “An Important Turkish Document on the ‘Exterminate Armenians’ Plan,” *Armenian Review*, 14:3 (1961),



The gruesome details of the Armenian "deportations" of 1915 and the following years, during which probably more than a million men, women, and children perished, are well known and require little further elaboration.<sup>12</sup> Germany's role in this Armenian tragedy has, on the other hand, remained a subject of lively controversy and needs fresh examination.

Contrary to the assertions of several recent authors, the wartime persecution of the Ottoman Armenians was neither instigated nor welcomed by the German government.<sup>13</sup> However, there are certainly other grave charges which may be leveled against it, and for that matter, against the Austro-Hungarian government as well. The statesmen of both Central Powers and some of their representatives in Constantinople were guilty of extremely poor judgment, a considerable degree of moral callousness, and an altogether excessive concern with what was or seemed to be politically expedient. Despite mounting indications to the contrary they accepted far too long the spurious claims of the Porte that its anti-Armenian policies

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pp. 53-55; Haigaz K. Kazarian, "Minutes of Secret Meetings Organizing the Turkish Genocide of Armenians," *Armenian Review*, 18:3 (1965), pp. 18-40; and E.K. Sarkisian and R.G. Sahakian, *Vital Issues in Modern Armenian History. A Documented Exposé of Misrepresentations in Turkish Historiography* (Watertown, Mass., 1965), pp. 26-38. Cf. Bayur, III:3, 7-9, who rejects the thesis that the Porte's action against the Armenians was premeditated.

<sup>12</sup> Probably the best work of synthesis on this subject is Johannes Lepsius, *Der Todesgang des armenischen Volkes in der Türkei während des Weltkrieges*, 4th edn. (Potsdam, 1930), which is an expanded version of his wartime *Bericht über die Lage des Armenischen Volkes in der Türkei*, cited in note 10 above. According to Lepsius' postwar calculations approximately 1.1 million Armenians died. Lewis, p. 350, speaks of "a million and half," but this figure is probably too high. Cf. Pasdermadjian, p. 453.

<sup>13</sup> For accusations of this sort, see, for example, Emil Lengyel, *Turkey* (New York, 1940), pp. 195-206; Atamian, pp. 180-81; Gottlieb, pp. 109-10; and Lothar Rathmann, *Stossrichtung Nahost 1914-1918* (Berlin, 1963), pp. 138-40.

were necessitated by widespread sedition in the eastern provinces. More importantly, even after it became apparent that the Ottoman "security measures," including the ruthless evacuation of entire provinces, were part of a deliberate effort to decimate and disperse the Armenian population in Asia Minor, the German and Austro-Hungarian governments steadfastly refused to do anything drastic about the matter. While they abhorred and were acutely embarrassed by the brutal policies of the Turks and directed numerous admonitions and protests to the Porte, the statesmen in both Berlin and Vienna were much too concerned with keeping the Turks in the war to risk alienating the Porte by really strong pressures. But it should be added that there were numerous German and Austro-Hungarian officials, particularly diplomatic and consular, who did not condone such a policy of expediency and whose efforts to stop or mitigate the brutal measures against the Armenians were a great deal more emphatic than has hitherto been assumed.

WHILE RUMORS and reports about isolated "incidents" between Turks and Armenians in some of the eastern *vilayets* had trickled into Constantinople from the very beginning of the war, it was only in March 1915 that the deterioration of Turkish-Armenian relations became patently obvious to the German and Austro-Hungarian observers in Constantinople.<sup>14</sup> After receiving a welter of conflicting reports about growing "unrest" in some Armenian areas and about an armed clash between Armenian "deserters" and government forces at Zeitun, Ambassador Wangenheim during the first half of April directed several appeals to the Porte and to the Armenian Patriarch for calmness and "the preservation of good mutual relations."<sup>15</sup> At the same time, he remained in steady contact with

<sup>14</sup> See FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 36, Rössler to Wangenheim, 16 Oct 1914, J. No. 2,480; Wangenheim to Bethmann Hollweg, 29 Dec, No. 341; 2 Feb 1915, J. No. 269; 22 Feb, No. 95; 9 March, No. 140; and Lepsius, *Deutschland*, Nos. 14, 17-25.

<sup>15</sup> FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 36, Wangenheim to Bethmann Hollweg, 15

various Armenian organizations in Constantinople and listened to their complaints about Turkish provocations and misdeeds, but when they suggested that Germany assume officially the "protection" of the Armenian *millet* (community) and assign additional consular officials to the eastern *vilayets*, Wangenheim refused them. As he explained to Bethmann Hollweg on April 15 the Armenians' desire for formal German protection was certainly understandable, especially since the Entente powers were no longer around to provide support for them, but if Germany complied with the Armenian requests she would undoubtedly incur the resentment of the Porte:

The moment for such a move is all the less propitious in that the Porte has just now begun to wipe out the rights of protection which other foreign powers used to exercise over Turkish subjects. Moreover, it [the Porte] needs to consider the national feelings of the Turkish elements which have risen sharply because of the events in the past few years.

Wangenheim concluded that he could not recommend assigning additional German consuls to the eastern *vilayets*. To do so would probably not only strain Germany's relationship with the Porte but also "turn the authorities all the more against the Armenians and, thus, produce the very opposite" of what the Armenians themselves wanted.<sup>16</sup>

By the time this report reached Berlin (it was sent by diplomatic pouch and arrived on April 22), the first news about bloody Turkish-Armenian "clashes" at Van and the eruption of violence in certain other eastern areas were beginning to trickle into Constantinople.<sup>17</sup> On April 24 Wangenheim called

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April 1915, No. 228. This dispatch was included in the document collection, *Deutschland und Armenien*, published by Lepsius in 1919. It is now clear, however, that someone deleted important passages from this document and a number of others, and whenever necessary the original rather than Lepsius' reproduction will be cited in this chapter.

<sup>16</sup> Wangenheim to Bethmann Hollweg, No. 228, *loc.cit.*

<sup>17</sup> See FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 36, Wangenheim to FO, 24 April 1915, No. 966; Lepsius, *Deutschland*, No. 27.



in person on the Ottoman ministry of interior and was told in strict confidence that a regular uprising had occurred at and near Van and that countermeasures were making progress. When the ambassador expressed hope that the government forces would maintain discipline and avoid anything that might "look like Christian massacres," the spokesman at the ministry replied somewhat sheepishly that the garrison at Van consisted of poorly trained draftees and that "excesses" might not be entirely avoidable.<sup>18</sup>

After receiving a number of new reports about growing tensions and mob violence in some Armenian districts, Wangenheim on April 28 authorized the German vice-consul at Erzurum, Max Erwin von Scheubner-Richter, to intervene against "massacres" and other excesses which might occur in his area, but cautioned him not to create the impression "as though we want to exercise a right of protection over the Armenians or interfere with the activities of the authorities."<sup>19</sup>

In the meantime several hundred Armenians in Constantinople itself had been arrested, and most of the prisoners—among them numerous professional people, clergymen, and politicians—had almost immediately been carried off to the interior of Anatolia. Talât explained to the First Dragoman of the German embassy a few days later that the deportation of these people was primarily a security measure, though he admitted that the Porte was in any case no longer willing to tolerate the existence of separate political organizations among any of the religious communities. The minister also conceded that many of the Armenian deportees were undoubtedly not guilty of anything, but hastened to add that corrective action

<sup>18</sup> FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 36, Wangenheim to Bethmann Hollweg, 24 April 1915, No. 260.

<sup>19</sup> Lepsius, *Deutschland*, Nos. 31, 33, 34, 36. Scheubner-Richter, like so many other German officials in wartime Turkey, later became a prominent figure in German politics. In the early years of the Nazi movement he was one of Hitler's closest advisers and was killed at his side in the Munich Putsch of November 9, 1923.



would soon be taken and that foreign "intervention" would be unnecessary and unwelcome.<sup>20</sup>

Wangenheim obviously got the point for there is no evidence that he did anything about the deportations from the capital. His Austro-Hungarian colleague adopted an equally passive attitude. When the American ambassador, Mr. Morgenthau, suggested to him that he intercede for the deportees at the Porte, Pallavicini wired to Vienna that he had no intention whatever of making such a move. As he put it, the Porte was unlikely to accept his advice and would surely resent such interference in its own affairs.<sup>21</sup> Two days later, however, Pallavicini decided that the Armenian issue called for some action after all, for numerous German and Austrian consular reports about outright massacres in the provinces were beginning to come in.

In view of the political significance which the question has . . . now assumed [he wired to Vienna on May 1], I believe I should at the earliest opportunity alert the Turkish statesmen in a friendly manner to the repercussions which an inhuman proceeding against Christians in Turkey might have on the general situation; for our enemies will be given a new pretext to move with all their might against Turkey.<sup>22</sup>

Evidently the "repercussions" really worried the ambassador, for he found an opportunity to buttonhole Talât the very same day. According to his subsequent report to the Ballhausplatz he pointed out that the repression of Armenian unrest should be handled carefully and that the "persecution of women and children" in particular should be avoided lest "the enemies of

<sup>20</sup> Lepsius, *Bericht*, pp. 187-94; FO, *Türkei* 183, Bd. 36, Wangenheim to Bethmann Hollweg, 30 April 1915, No. 267.

<sup>21</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1915 Supplement* (Washington, 1928), p. 981; AHFM, *Türkei, Berichte 1915*, Pallavicini to Burian, 29 April 1915, No. 32D/P.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, Pallavicini to AHFM, 1 May 1915, No. 347.

Turkey" be provided with a good propaganda issue. In his reply Talât admitted that several thousand people, "though not only Armenians," had perished in the provinces, but denied that any acts of violence against women and children had occurred. In conclusion the minister thanked the ambassador for his "warning" and assured him that the Porte would proceed only against "the guilty."<sup>23</sup>

During the next two weeks the Porte and the provincial authorities in the east made periodic disclosures of the evidence they had allegedly found concerning Armenian plots against the state. Since there was continued fighting between Armenians and government troops at Van and elsewhere, both Germans and Austro-Hungarians were only too willing to accept the theory that the Turks had an outright revolt on their hands. On the other hand, by the middle of May it became increasingly clear from the reports of the German consuls in the eastern provinces that the Turkish "pacification" program in many areas had become unjustifiably brutal.<sup>24</sup> On May 18 Scheubner-Richter wired from Erzurum that deportations in his area had caused "terrible" misery, with thousands of women and children camping outside the city without food, and that he wished to intervene with the Turkish military commander about these "senseless" expulsions. Wangenheim immediately authorized him to go ahead but apparently made no attempt to take up the matter at the Porte. Nor, for that matter, did Pallavicini see fit to intervene, as Morgenthau once again suggested to him.<sup>25</sup>

On May 24 the British, French, and Russian governments issued a joint public warning to the Porte that they regarded the recently begun persecutions and "mass murders" of Armenians in the Ottoman empire as a crime "against humanity

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, Pallavicini to AHFM, 2 May 1915, No. 352.

<sup>24</sup> Lepsius, *Deutschland*, Nos. 41, 43-53, 56-58.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, Nos. 59, 60; AHFM, *Türkei, Berichte 1915*, Pallavicini to Burian, 20 May 1915, No. 37C/P.

and civilization," for which they would hold "all members" of the Ottoman government as well as their culpable subordinates personally responsible.<sup>26</sup> On June 4 the Porte, after consultation with Wangenheim, replied with a sharply worded public declaration of its own. Far from having condoned or organized mass murders, the Porte declared, it had merely exercised its sovereign right of self-defense against a revolutionary movement, and the responsibility for everything that had happened in the Armenian districts had to be borne exclusively by the Entente powers themselves, because they had organized and directed the revolutionary movement in the first place.<sup>27</sup>

A few days before this declaration was issued to the press Enver informed Wangenheim that he intended to intensify the counterinsurgency program in a number of ways: closing many Armenian schools, suppressing the Armenian press, banning the use of the mails by Armenians, and transferring all "suspect families" from the present centers of insurrection to Mesopotamia. Enver also expressed the hope that Germany would not try to interfere. Wangenheim, still obsessed with the idea that there was a gigantic Armenian underground movement which threatened the very existence of Turkey, promptly forwarded Enver's plan to the Wilhelmstrasse with the suggestion that, though it entailed "certainly great hardship for the Armenian population," it should not be contested.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> The declaration originated in the Russian foreign office and was only reluctantly subscribed to by Sir Edward Grey. The French government saw to it that the originally proposed phrase, "crime against Christianity and civilization," was replaced by "crime against humanity and civilization," in order to spare the feelings of the Moslem population in the French colonies. See *Die Internationalen Beziehungen . . .*, ser. 2, vii:2, Nos. 609, 724, 740, 797, 799. The English text of the declaration is reprinted in *Foreign Relations U.S., 1915 Supplement*, p. 981.

<sup>27</sup> See FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 37, Wangenheim to Bethmann Hollweg, 5 June 1915, No. 349; and *Schulthess*, v. 56, 1,151-54.

<sup>28</sup> FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 37, Wangenheim to FO, 31 May 1915, No.

The Berlin foreign office, which had not shown very much interest in the Armenian troubles in the preceding weeks and was obviously quite content to let its man in Constantinople decide on the proper course of action, accepted Wangenheim's recommendation. Not so Dr. Johannes Lepsius, the president of the German-Armenian Society and of the "German Orient-Mission," who had good connections with some of the officials in the Wilhelmstrasse and was being given liberal access to the incoming dispatches on the Armenian situation. As soon as Lepsius learned of Enver's latest plan he decided that things had gone far enough and that he should go to Constantinople to look into the Armenian problem. His plan to "mediate" between the Turks and the Armenians was approved by the Berlin foreign office, but Wangenheim would not hear of it; as he explained to the Wilhelmstrasse on June 9 the anti-Armenian measures of the Porte were already fully underway, there was no chance that Lepsius could accomplish anything worthwhile, and his appearance in Constantinople would merely cause trouble for the embassy since the Porte did not want him to come.<sup>29</sup>

Despite this rebuff Lepsius refused to give up. With the support of the directors of the German-Armenian Society and the Orient-Mission, among them the well-known publicist Paul Rohrbach, he immediately renewed his request for a travel permit. On June 13 Zimmermann advised Wangenheim that

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1,268. On the background story see Bayur, III:3, 37-42, who claims that Talât was the driving force behind the new repressive measures.

<sup>29</sup> See FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 37, Zimmermann to Wangenheim, 6 June 1915, No. 1,106; Wangenheim to FO, 9 June, No. 1,338; Lepsius, *Deutschland*, p. 79, note 1; Lepsius, "Mein Besuch in Konstantinopel Juli/August 1915," *Der Orient*, 1:3 (1919), 21. On Lepsius' background and meritorious efforts on behalf of the Ottoman Armenians since the days of Sultan Abdülhamid, see Jean Naslian, *Les mémoires de Mgr. Jean Naslian, Evêque de Trebizonde, sur les événements politico-religieux en Proche-Orient de 1914 à 1928*, 2 vols. (Beirut, 1955), I, 463-64.



Lepsius' trip might be useful and that the embassy should overcome the Porte's objections.<sup>30</sup>

In the meantime a whole string of reports about massacres or brutal mistreatment of Armenians in various places had reached the German embassy from the consulates at Erzurum, Aleppo, and Mosul. On June 17 Wangenheim therefore felt constrained to warn Bethmann Hollweg that the ruthless mass deportations in the eastern provinces were obviously no longer based on "military considerations alone." Talât, he added, had admitted as much in a recent conversation with an embassy official, and the Armenian Patriarch was now firmly convinced that the Porte meant to exterminate the entire Armenian population. When this disturbing report reached the Wilhelmstrasse somebody there drew a black line along the margin of the key paragraph, but this apparently was all the action that was taken on the matter.<sup>31</sup>

With no reply, let alone a policy directive, coming from Berlin Wangenheim during the remainder of June seems to have done little more on the Armenian problem than to read the gruesome consular messages coming in from the eastern *vilayets* and to send back notes to the consuls that they could and/or should protest to the provincial authorities about outrages which had occurred in their regions. On one occasion, it is true, Wangenheim assured the consul at Erzurum that he would support the latter's protests to the provincial governor by parallel efforts at the Porte, but whether he actually followed through is doubtful. All we know for certain is that Wangen-

<sup>30</sup> FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 37, Lepsius to German embassy Constantinople, 11 June 1915; petition, dated 11 June 1915, by Lepsius, Rohrbach, and five other directors of the *Deutsche Orient-Mission* and the *Deutsch-Armenische Gesellschaft*; Zimmermann to Wangenheim, 13 June, No. 461. See also Lepsius, "Mein Besuch in Konstantinopel . . .," p. 22.

<sup>31</sup> See Lepsius, *Deutschland*, Nos. 73-76, 78-80; FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 37, Wangenheim to Bethmann Hollweg, 17 June 1915, No. 372.

heim applied for and got the Porte's formal approval for Lepsius to come to Constantinople, though Talât made it clear that the unwelcome visitor would not be allowed to venture into the provinces.<sup>32</sup>

Judging from the available evidence Wangenheim's Austro-Hungarian colleague did not get any policy directives on the Armenian question from his superiors either. All indications are that he too remained passive throughout the latter half of June. Finally, at the very end of the month, the two ambassadors got together and decided that without waiting for specific instructions from home they would have to do something about the reign of terror their common ally was unleashing in the Armenian districts. As Wangenheim later explained in a somewhat disjointed report to Bethmann Hollweg, the scope and nature of the deportation proceedings in the eastern provinces no longer left any doubt that the Porte was "actually" trying to "exterminate the Armenian race in the Turkish empire," and it was therefore essential for Germany to go on record that she disapproved of what the Turks were doing.<sup>33</sup>

Pallavicini made the first move. On July 1 he told Talât that the indiscriminate deportations of men, women, and children "seemed hardly justified," and that the whole anti-Armenian program was creating a very bad impression.<sup>34</sup> Wangenheim went one step further on July 4 by presenting the grand vizier

<sup>32</sup> See Lepsius, *Deutschland*, Nos. 84, 87-92, 94-100, 102, 103; FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 37, Wangenheim to FO, 24 June 1915, No. 1456. The passivity of the Wilhelmstrasse was interrupted twice by instructions from Zimmermann to the Constantinople embassy to prevent the execution of certain Dashnak leaders, but these were strictly limited cases of intervention which Lepsius had urged upon the foreign office. Lepsius, *Deutschland*, Nos. 82, 83, and 101.

<sup>33</sup> FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 37, Wangenheim to Bethmann Hollweg, 7 July 1915, No. 433. In an interview on June 26 with the Catholic-Armenian Patriarch of Cilicia, Wangenheim had promised to make an appeal to the Porte. Naslian, 1, 57-58, 503-504.

<sup>34</sup> AHFM, *Türkei, Berichte 1915*, Pallavicini to Burian, 1 July 1915, No. 51E/P.

with a diplomatically worded, but fairly straightforward, "memorandum" on the Armenian problem, copies of which he subsequently also sent to the Ottoman ministries of foreign affairs and interior. While the German government had no objections whatever, the memorandum read, to measures of repression which were "dictated by military reasons" and intended to enhance the internal security of the Ottoman empire, it could not ignore "the dangers" which were created by indiscriminate measures against, and mass deportations of, "the guilty and the innocent, particularly when these measures are accompanied by acts of violence, such as massacres and pillagings." Inasmuch as such incidents had not been prevented by "the local authorities," a very bad impression had been created abroad, particularly in the United States, and the German government felt duty-bound to notify the Porte that the whole matter might detrimentally affect their common interests, both now and the future. The German embassy, therefore, considered it a matter of urgency

that peremptory orders be issued to the provincial authorities so that they take effective action to protect the lives and property of the expatriated Armenians, both during their transportation and in their new homes.

It [the embassy] feels likewise that it would be prudent to suspend, for the time being, the execution of death sentences against Armenians which have already been or will be passed by the military courts in the capital or in the provinces, above all at Diyarbekir and Adana.

Finally, the embassy of Germany requests that the Ottoman government give due consideration to the manifold interests of German commerce and of the German welfare institutions in those provinces where the expulsion of Armenians is now being carried out. Since the precipitous departure of the latter entails serious damage to these interests, the embassy would be obliged if the Sublime Porte would, in certain cases, prolong the grace period accorded to de-

portees and permit those who belong to the personnel of the welfare institutions in question, as well as pupils, orphans, and other dependent persons, to stay in their former homes; except, of course, if they have been found culpable of acts which necessitate their removal.<sup>35</sup>

Neither this note nor Pallavicini's oral admonitions made the slightest impression on the Porte. On July 8 Pallavicini advised the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister, Stefan Count Burian, that, Talât's previous assurances notwithstanding, the brutal persecutions in the eastern provinces were going on as before. The ambassador concluded:

Unfortunately, the men in power here cannot be convinced of the incorrectness of their proceedings against the Armenians, and it is to be feared that more insistent admonitions to them will merely make the matter worse. Evidently, one is determined here to render the Armenian element, which has become so suspect here, harmless once and for all.<sup>36</sup>

With fresh reports of murder and rapine coming in from the German consulates in the east<sup>37</sup> Wangenheim delivered a new note to the Porte on July 12, in which he bluntly suggested that "measures be taken against" the vali of Diyarbekir, Dr. Reşid Bey, lest his murderous policies lead to the total extermination of the Christians in his area.<sup>38</sup> Once again, the Porte simply ignored the unwelcome advice, and on July 16 Wangenheim notified Bethmann Hollweg that inasmuch as further efforts to divert the Porte from its course were unlikely to produce any better results, "responsibility" for all the consequences of the

<sup>35</sup> FO, *Türkei* 183, Bd. 37, "Anlage zu Bericht No. 433." The text of the "Memorandum" can also be found in Lepsius, *Deutschland*, pp. 96-97.

<sup>36</sup> AHFM, *Türkei, Berichte* 1915, Pallavicini to Burian, 8 July 1915, No. 54C/P. Cf. Naslian, 1, 505.

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, Lepsius, *Deutschland*, Nos. 108-10, 116 *Anlage*.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 112. Reşid committed suicide after the war.



Armenian persecutions would have to be "left" to the Turks. There was of course a possibility, the ambassador added, that "our enemies" would later try to make the German government equally responsible for what was happening to the Armenians, but his own reports of the preceding months could then surely be used to demonstrate that the Reich had "always emphatically condemned" the excesses of the Turks.<sup>39</sup>

Shortly after dispatching these recommendations Wangenheim went on sick leave to Germany. (According to Pomiankowski's memoirs the ambassador by this time was very urgently in need of medical attention, for in addition to suffering from a serious heart defect and arteriosclerosis he had become afflicted with a "clearly pathological" form of "nervousness.")<sup>40</sup> Wangenheim's temporary replacement at the embassy, Prince zu Hohenlohe-Langenburg, arrived in Constantinople on July 20 and lost no time in "reopening" the Armenian question.

Hohenlohe's increasingly outspoken criticism of the Porte's Armenian policy and his "untiring" efforts to stop the mass killings in the provinces have been attested to by several people who were in Constantinople at that time.<sup>41</sup> How much his concern for the Armenians was shared by the leading men at the Wilhelmstrasse is however quite another question, for the messages which he received from Berlin were usually more concerned with the propagandistic damage the Turks were doing than with the suffering of their victims. In fact, there is considerable evidence that Wangenheim's suggestion of July 16 that Germany should abandon the futile exhortations to the Porte

<sup>39</sup> See *ibid.*, No. 114; and FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 37, Wangenheim to Bethmann Hollweg, 16 July 1915, No. 449.

<sup>40</sup> Pomiankowski, pp. 174-75. See also AHFM, *Türkei, Berichte 1915*, Pallavicini to Burian, 7 Aug 1915, No. 64D/P; and Morgenthau, p. 373.

<sup>41</sup> For example, Lepsius, *Deutschland*, p. xxxi; and AHFM, *Türkei, Berichte 1915*, Pallavicini to Burian, 29 Oct 1915, No. 91A-C/P.

and concentrate instead on preparing a defense against the charge of complicity had fallen on fertile ground in German government circles. As Zimmermann wired to Hohenlohe on August 4 there was a good chance that the Entente and "unfriendly" neutrals would try to pin part of the blame for the Armenian persecutions on Berlin, and since such allegations might cause domestic unrest in Germany, particularly in "church and missionary circles," a public "justification of our attitude" might become necessary. The Constantinople embassy should therefore start with the collection of documentary evidence regarding Germany's efforts to "avert an excessively harsh treatment of the Armenians," though Zimmermann thought it even more important to gather "proof" that a "widespread subversive movement" had existed among the Ottoman Armenians and that the Entente had instigated their "treasonable activities."<sup>42</sup>

In the meantime, Lepsius had finally arrived in Constantinople.<sup>43</sup> After collecting information there on the Armenian situation from various sources, including the American embassy, Lepsius eventually managed to be received by Enver himself. In a lengthy interview with the latter on August 10, Lepsius learned to his dismay that the Porte would not permit

<sup>42</sup> FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 37, Zimmermann to Hohenlohe, 4 Aug 1915, No. 590. The worry of the Wilhelmstrasse that it might come under fire from German "church and missionary circles" was no doubt triggered by a lengthy communication from Lepsius, in which he denounced the Porte's anti-Armenian measures as "thinly veiled Christian massacres." *Ibid.*, Lepsius to FO, 22 June 1915.

<sup>43</sup> It is clear that both Wangenheim and the Wilhelmstrasse tried to dissuade him from the trip in early July, but no action was taken to prevent his departure from Germany. (See *ibid.*, Wangenheim to FO, 2 July 1915, No. 1,523; Zimmermann to Wangenheim, 4 July, No. 1,276.) According to Lepsius' testimony he arrived in Constantinople on July 24, after stopping over in Switzerland, Bucharest, and Sofia, where he had lengthy strategy talks with Armenian circles. Lepsius, "Mein Besuch in Konstantinopel . . .," pp. 22-23.

him or any other foreigner to organize aid programs for the Armenian deportees, that the anti-Armenian proceedings would be continued, and that Enver himself had no intention of advocating a reversal of that policy. Moreover, Enver seems to have admitted that his colleagues at the Porte were out to "make an end of the Armenians now."<sup>44</sup>

Loaded with notes, affidavits, and excerpts from American consular reports, Lepsius shortly thereafter returned to Germany. From then on he spared neither time nor effort to drum up public opinion both in Germany and abroad against the inhuman policies of the Porte.

The unsatisfactory outcome of Lepsius' conversation with Enver seems to have strengthened Hohenlohe's resolve to express his disapproval of the Armenian persecutions in another formal note to the Porte. Like Wangenheim's note of the preceding month, Hohenlohe's "memorandum" to the Porte, which he personally delivered on August 11, had neither been suggested by, nor cleared with, the Wilhelmstrasse, and the ambassador was undoubtedly taking a risk in denouncing the Porte's Armenian policy as bluntly as he did. After pointing out in his note that the previous formal request by Wangenheim for the termination of massacres and other acts of violence had obviously been disregarded, and that the Porte had actually seen fit to broaden the geographic scope of the anti-Armenian measures, Hohenlohe informed the Turks that "by order of . . . [his] government" he had to "remonstrate once again *against these acts of horror* and to decline all responsibility for the consequences which might spring from them."<sup>45</sup>

Although both Talât and Halil, upon receipt of this note, assured the ambassador that the Porte would endeavor to curb

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Lepsius, *Deutschland*, No. 131; Lepsius, "Mein Besuch in Konstantinopel . . .," pp. 23-27; Jackh Papers, No. 22, Rohrbach to Jäckh, 21 Sept 1915.

<sup>45</sup> FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 38, "Memorandum; Pera, le 9 août 1915" (*italics added*); Hohenlohe to Bethmann Hollweg, 12 Aug 1915, No. 501.

the excesses of "subordinate authorities," Hohenlohe was not impressed. The next day he proposed to Bethmann Hollweg that his own efforts to stop the Armenian holocaust should be supported by suitable pressures on the Ottoman embassy in Berlin, and that an official disavowal of the Porte's policies in the German press might very well be in order.<sup>46</sup>

That Hohenlohe was in earnest about the whole matter is confirmed by a report which Pallavicini subsequently sent to Vienna,<sup>47</sup> but the men in the Wilhelmstrasse, far away from the scene of the Armenian horrors, caught little if any of Hohenlohe's sense of outrage. With new reports about the murderous policy of the Turks coming in almost daily, Zimmermann responded to Hohenlohe's dispatch on August 18 in a singularly mealy-mouthed fashion. As the under-state secretary put it, Hohenlohe should express Germany's hope and "conviction" that the continuing anti-Armenian excesses in the provinces ran counter to the Porte's "intentions and instructions." Zimmermann continued:

Our friends in the Turkish cabinet will surely understand that we have a lively interest in the energetic suppression of the excesses, all the more so since we have been accused of being the instigators.

The high sense of humaneness and culture which has characterized the Turkish conduct of the war in contrast to that of the enemy warrants the expectation that our ally will see to it that the same principles are applied also in the interior [of the Ottoman empire].

As for a recent suggestion by the German consul in Aleppo, Rössler, that Berlin ought to do something drastic about the mistreatment of the Armenians, Zimmermann concluded

<sup>46</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> AHFM, *Türkei, Berichte 1915*, Pallavicini to Burian, 13 Aug 1915, No. 66B/P. See also *Foreign Relations U.S., 1915 Supplement*, pp. 985-87, for Morgenthau's comments on Hohenlohe's efforts.



rather unctiously, the embassy should seek to "enlighten" the consul, that despite the reprehensible "machinations" of the Armenians, efforts on their behalf had already been made.<sup>48</sup>

Equipped with these worthless instructions Hohenlohe continued during the following weeks to direct admonitions and protests to the Porte, but the Turks paid little or no attention. While Talât, at the end of August, assured the ambassador that the anti-Armenian program was being terminated and subsequently even furnished copies of the requisite orders which the ministry of interior had sent out to the provincial authorities, reports from several German consuls soon indicated that in many areas the persecutions were continuing as before.<sup>49</sup> On September 11 Hohenlohe notified Berlin of this situation, but it was only a week and a half later that the Wilhelmstrasse responded—though this time, at least, Zimmermann did recommend that the ambassador admonish the Porte "in forceful fashion."<sup>50</sup>

While the Wilhelmstrasse was continuing to practice diplomatic restraint in regard to the Armenian problem,<sup>51</sup> Lepsius had meanwhile launched a massive campaign to acquaint clerical and journalistic circles in the Reich with the brutal conduct of the Turks. Needless to say, his blunt statements about the misdeeds of Germany's ally put the Berlin foreign office in a very awkward position, but surprisingly little was done by it or any other German government agency to keep Lepsius quiet.

<sup>48</sup> FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 38, Zimmermann to Hohenlohe, 18 Aug 1915, No. 1,547. For Rössler's dispatches of the preceding weeks see *ibid.*, Rössler to Bethmann Hollweg, 27 July 1915, K. No. 81; and Lepsius, *Deutschland*, Nos. 121, 125, 128, and 134.

<sup>49</sup> See *ibid.*, Nos. 133-34, 142, 145-48, 151-52, 157, 160-65; *Foreign Relations U.S., 1915 Supplement*, p. 987.

<sup>50</sup> FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 38, Hohenlohe to Bethmann Hollweg, 11 Sept 1915, No. 560; Lepsius, *Deutschland*, No. 174.

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, the memorandum by Rosenberg on a *démarche* he made on October 1 to the Ottoman embassy in Berlin, *ibid.*, No. 178.

On September 22 the German consul-general in Basel informed Bethmann Hollweg that a recent Swiss press campaign against the Porte's Armenian policy had probably been inspired by Lepsius during a visit to Switzerland, and that Lepsius had reportedly also mentioned there that the Wilhelmstrasse knew about, but could not do anything against, the conduct of the Turks.<sup>52</sup> While this was embarrassing enough for the directors of Germany's foreign policy, the stir Lepsius was making in the Reich itself proved even more of a problem. Inquiries came in from various sides as to what the Wilhelmstrasse was going to do about the Armenian problem, and the chairman of the German *Zeitungsverlag*, Dr. Faber, wanted to know how the newspapers should treat the story—a matter all the more urgent in that some clerical circles were pushing for a public airing of the events in Armenia.

Suppressing his personal feelings about the Ottoman government (which were anything but friendly),<sup>53</sup> Zimmermann on October 4 penned the following answer to Faber, using several arguments which were henceforth to become the stock-in-trade in official declarations and explanations of the Berlin government:

Without needing any prodding from church circles, the foreign office and the imperial representative agencies in Turkey have, of their own volition, already done all that was possible by diplomatic means to mitigate the sufferings of the Armenians. To bring about a break with Turkey on account of the Armenian question we did not and do not consider appropriate. For as regrettable as it is from the Christian standpoint that innocent people, too, must suffer under the Turkish measures, the Armenians are after all

<sup>52</sup> FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 38, Consul-General, Basel, to Bethmann Hollweg, 22 Sept 1915, J. Nr. 6,867. Cf. Lepsius, "Mein Besuch in Konstantinopel . . .," p. 31.

<sup>53</sup> See, Kanner Papers, II, 276-84, "Besuch bei Zimmermann, 4. Oktober. . . ."

less close to us than our own sons and brothers, whose sacrificial, bloody struggle in France and Russia is being indirectly aided by the military help of the Turks.

Zimmermann emphasized that the regrettable misfortunes which had befallen the Ottoman Armenians were really the fault of the revolutionary elements among them—and of their friends “in Petersburg”—for the “Armenian uprising” behind the Ottoman lines had caused understandable resentment among the Moslems in the empire—all the more so in that “more than 150,000” Moslems had perished “within a few days” as a result of the uprising.<sup>54</sup>

While the first part of Zimmermann's statement deserves at least credit for its frankness, there is little excuse for his reference to the 150,000 slain Moslems. The story of their deaths hinged on the Porte's contention that approximately that many Moslem residents of the *vilayet* of Van were unaccounted for since the Russian army had conquered the region in the spring of 1915. However, since the Turks had meanwhile offered at least three different versions as to what had happened in that *vilayet*,<sup>55</sup> Zimmermann should have known better than to present the massacre of the Moslem population as an established fact. In the following months Lepsius did his best to disprove the Turkish charges, but how effective he was is difficult to tell since many Germans who attended his lectures or read his brochures considered him excessively partisan in his treatment of Turkish-Armenian relations.

Lepsius' hard-hitting style and the resistance he encountered may be gleaned from a report by the censorship bureau of the

<sup>54</sup> FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 39, Zimmermann to Faber, 4 Oct 1915.

<sup>55</sup> At first, in late June 1915, the Porte had merely claimed that the fate of 150,000 Moslems left behind in the *vilayet* (province) of Van was unknown and that they were “exposed” to murder by Russians and Armenians. In early August Enver asserted that the “Armenians” had killed them all, and two months later the number of alleged Moslem victims was raised by the Ottoman embassy in Berlin to “no less than 180,000.”

OHL concerning a meeting with German newspaper executives which Lepsius arranged in Berlin early in October 1915. Lepsius opened the meeting with a lengthy speech in which he sharply denounced both what the Turks had done to the Armenians and the timidity with which the German government had so far reacted to the misconduct of its ally. By not forcing the Porte to stop its anti-Armenian policy, he asserted, Germany was not only allowing the ruination of its own "economic and cultural" influence in the Ottoman empire but was also exposing itself to propagandistic attacks from abroad which would be even more damaging than all that had been said about German conduct in Belgium. The fact of the matter was that, instead of making itself the "master of Turkey," as the British would have done under comparable circumstances, the German government, through its ineptitude, had actually become the "servant" of the Porte. This situation, Lepsius concluded, could be corrected once Germany had gained secure access to Constantinople via Serbia, and Berlin should then see to it that at least in the northern half of the Turkish empire Germany would have a controlling influence. The remainder of the empire would "undoubtedly" fall under British domination anyway.<sup>56</sup>

Lepsius' pronouncements were highly embarrassing to the Wilhelmstrasse (which had sent a representative to the meeting). Moreover, some of the newspaper executives, too, reacted unfavorably to Lepsius' speech. One Socialist editor, Max Grunwald, announced that he found Lepsius' arguments unconvincing: as Marx had taught, historical developments were following their own laws, and the application of European moral and political standards to the events in the

<sup>56</sup> Lepsius, "Mein Besuch in Konstantinopel . . .," p. 31; Jackh Papers, No. 22, OHL (Main Censorship Bureau of the War Press Department, Berlin) to Jäckh, 1 Nov 1915, No. 2,610 O.Z., "Auszug aus dem Vortrage des Dr. Lepsius vom 5.10.15 über die Lage der türkischen Armenier."



Ottoman empire was therefore quite inappropriate. When Lepsius thereupon conceded that the problem should perhaps be discussed primarily in terms of its political and economic implications, Director Bernhard of the Ullstein Publishing House eagerly agreed and announced he was, indeed, worried about the economic consequences of the Armenian persecutions. The Turks, he asserted, were completely without talent in technical and economic matters, and by eliminating the highly capable Armenian population element they were creating a situation which would adversely affect Germany's own interests. To complete this rather curious discussion, another SPD (Social Democrats) editor, Julius Kaliski, seconded Bernhard's charge that Lepsius had painted the Armenian situation in excessively black colors; moreover, Kaliski added, there was a good chance that the business talents of the Armenians might be adequately replaced by those of the Jews.<sup>57</sup>

The charge that Lepsius was exaggerating the miseries of the Armenians was promptly repeated the next day by a spokesman of the Berlin foreign office on the occasion of a press conference. After rattling off most of the arguments which had already been used by Zimmermann in his letter to Dr. Faber, the spokesman added that the moral responsibility for the Armenian troubles had to be borne by all three Entente powers. Although the Turkish "countermeasures" had indeed been "rough and cruel," he continued, it would be "most deplorable if our missionary associations and our press were to let themselves be used as battering rams in the Armenian question." While diplomatic efforts to ease the lot of the Ottoman Armenians had been made all along, the German government was not prepared to risk a rift, let alone a break, with the Porte by championing the cause of the Armenians too militantly. Should the Entente attempt to construe a case against Germany, the spokesman concluded, it would not get very far—for its own record was replete with immoral acts—and it was

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

therefore altogether preferable that the German press should abstain from any commentary on the Armenian question "for the time being."<sup>58</sup>

Privately the Wilhelmstrasse was becoming increasingly worried about the sharp criticism Germany was being subjected to abroad because of the Armenian persecutions. Charges that Berlin had instigated the Porte's anti-Armenian program, and that German officials had been directly involved in some of the Armenian massacres had been aired in various countries, particularly Britain. By October 8 Zimmermann decided that a simple German refutation would hardly be sufficient to convince the world that these accusations were untrue. He therefore wrote to Wangenheim who had meanwhile returned to his post in Constantinople, that it was high time for the Porte to declare publicly that the German representatives in the Ottoman empire had always exerted themselves on behalf of the Armenians.<sup>59</sup> Needless to say, the Turks found this request from Berlin most unpalatable, and despite repeated warnings by Wangenheim that Berlin would have to issue a declaration on this matter unilaterally if the Porte did not publish the desired refutation, Halil refused to oblige. After keeping Wangenheim waiting for over a week, the Ottoman foreign minister informed the embassy on October 21 that if Berlin really went ahead with a declaration of its own it should by all means cut out any references to the efforts it had made on behalf of the Armenians, for Turkish public opinion would react very unkindly to such news of "foreign" meddling in the internal affairs of the Ottoman empire.<sup>60</sup>

Faced with the choice of clearing Germany's name even if that aroused Turkish hostility or doing nothing, the Wilhelm-

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 39, Zimmermann to Wangenheim, 8 Oct 1915, No. 1,918.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, Wangenheim to FO, 15 Oct 1915, No. 2,354; 16 Oct, No. 2,378; 18 Oct, No. 2,399; 21 Oct, No. 2,424.

strasse did the predictable thing. As Zimmermann wired to the Constantinople embassy rather sheepishly, "In order to oblige Halil, we will for the time being refrain from issuing our own *démenti* and continue to wait for the Turkish *démenti*." Moreover, contrary to previous instructions, Wangenheim was ordered not to press any longer for a written affidavit from the American embassy concerning Germany's noninvolvement in the Armenian massacres. For, as Zimmermann put it, the more this whole issue was made the subject of public controversy the more the Turks would take out their resentments on the helpless Armenians.<sup>61</sup>

This reversal in the Wilhelmstrasse's attitude might be interpreted as a sign that it had a guilty conscience and was no longer sure of its own case, but all available evidence points to the conclusion that it was actually fear of probable Turkish reprisals, against both Germany and the Armenians themselves, which induced Berlin to abandon its efforts at public exculpation for the time being. Whether Berlin's fears were objectively justified is of course quite another matter. The point is that they definitely existed and that they received new nourishment by several reports the Wilhelmstrasse received at that time. Wangenheim had reported on October 15 that recent complaints by him about new massacres in Mesopotamia had

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, Zimmermann to Wangenheim, 21 Oct 1915, No. 2,016. In compliance with Berlin's instructions Wangenheim had previously approached Morgenthau and allegedly received unqualified oral assurances from the latter that he knew how Germany had tried "everything" to prevent the excesses against the Armenians and how the German consuls had "always and everywhere" exerted themselves for the Armenian population. See *ibid.*, Wangenheim to FO, 15 Oct, No. 2,359. Cf. the different version given by Morgenthau, p. 377.

Ralph Elliot Cook, "The United States and the Armenian Question, 1894-1924," unpub. ph.d. diss. (Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, 1957), p. 129, has pointed out that there are some discrepancies between what Morgenthau reported to the State Department at the time and the anti-German interpretation of the Armenian story in his published memoirs.

been rebuffed by Talât, and on October 26—shortly after Wangenheim's death—Neurath thought it advisable to warn Berlin that due to the sensitivity of the Turks to anything that smacked of interference in their domestic affairs even private German charity programs for the survivors of the Armenian deportations should be kept as small as possible.<sup>62</sup>

Thanks to the efforts of Lepsius, Rohrbach,<sup>63</sup> and other prominent figures in the German Orient-Mission and the German-Armenian Society, a large number of German Protestant pastors, university professors, and others with an active conscience had meanwhile been stirred into action. On October 15 about 50 of these Protestants, including several high-ranking church officials, addressed a formal petition to Bethmann Hollweg, in which they expressed their abhorrence of the "infamous" persecutions of the Armenians and called for prompt action by the German government to stop and reverse the policy of the Porte. In particular every conceivable effort should be made at once: (1) to prevent deportations in those areas (Constantinople, Smyrna, Aleppo, *et al.*) where the Armenian population had so far been spared; (2) to make sure the already deported Armenians were kept alive and safe from further atrocities; and (3) to make it possible for "Christians of other countries" to render aid and comfort to the suffering deportees. Moreover, the Berlin government should see to it at the end of the war that "the now forcibly Islamized Chris-

<sup>62</sup> See DZA, Reichskanzlei, *Kriegsakten* 22, Bd. 1, "G.A., Zur Besprechung mit Pastor Weber"; FO, *Türkei* 183, Bd. 39, Wangenheim to Bethmann Hollweg, 15 Oct 1915, No. 618; Neurath to same, 26 Oct, No. 634.

<sup>63</sup> Contrary to French press reports, approvingly repeated in Morgenthau's memoirs, p. 366, Rohrbach was not anti-Armenian but rather a passionate critic of the measures taken against them. He consistently denounced the failure of the German government to do more for the Armenians and in 1916 even talked of turning his back on the "fatherland" that had tolerated such crimes by its Turkish ally. See Jackh Papers, No. 22, Rohrbach to Jackh, 21 Sept 1915; No. 23, same to same, 15 Aug 1916.



tians shall be able to return to Christianity, and that necessary guarantees are provided for a henceforth peaceful and loyal evolution of the Christian minorities in Turkey and for the unhampered continuation of Christian, charitable and cultural work in the Orient."<sup>64</sup> Two weeks later Prelate Werthmann and two prominent figures of the Center Party, Matthias Erzberger and Karl Bachem, addressed a similar, though less strongly-worded, appeal to Bethmann Hollweg. Speaking on behalf of the "Mission Section of the Central Committee for the General Assemblies of the Catholics of Germany," they requested that the imperial government do everything "that can be done without endangering the military alliance relationship" to bring about an improvement in the situation of the Ottoman Armenians.<sup>65</sup>

Bethmann Hollweg responded to the two petitions on November 12, when he informed Director Schreiber of the *Deutsche Evangelische Missionshilfe* and Erzberger in identical messages that he would do "everything that is in my power" to solve the Armenian issue in accordance with the wishes communicated to him. Simultaneously the chancellor forwarded copies of the Protestant and Catholic petitions to the Constantinople embassy and instructed its *chargé*, Neurath, to continue with forceful appeals to the Porte on behalf of the Armenians and to make "particularly" sure that the Turkish measures of repression were not extended to yet some other Christian group in the empire.<sup>66</sup>

Bethmann Hollweg's belated instructions to Neurath were quite superfluous since the *chargé* had already bombarded the Porte with numerous admonitions and "warnings" against an extension of the anti-Armenian program. As Morgenthau later

<sup>64</sup> Lepsius, *Deutschland*, No. 197, *Anlage 1*.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, *Anlage 2*. On the background see Lepsius, "Mein Besuch in Konstantinopel . . .," pp. 30-31.

<sup>66</sup> See Lepsius, *Deutschland*, Nos. 198, 199; FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 39, Bethmann Hollweg to Neurath, 13 Nov 1915, No. 857.

recalled, Neurath's indignation over the Turkish atrocities was so great that "his language to Talât and Enver became almost undiplomatic." But this was nothing compared to the lectures the newly appointed German ambassador, Wolff-Metternich, delivered to the Turks when he arrived in Constantinople.<sup>67</sup> Equipped with specific instructions from State Secretary Jagow, Wolff-Metternich took up the Armenian question with the grand vizier and other members of the Porte and made it clear that he detested the violent manner in which the government and its underlings had behaved. As previously mentioned, the Turks never forgot or forgave him. If they had known what he reported to Berlin in the following weeks they probably would have insisted on his recall much sooner than they did.<sup>68</sup>

Some of the best information about the disdainful fashion in which Wolff-Metternich treated the Turks comes from the correspondence of Pallavicini, whose own efforts on behalf of the Armenians were much more "inoffensive" in form, as well as being very sporadic. In fact there are some indications that the Austro-Hungarian embassy made hardly a stir in the Armenian question during September and October; it was only after Pallavicini returned from a brief leave in Vienna that he resumed his carefully worded admonitions to the Porte. During the first two weeks of November he repeatedly talked to the grand vizier and Halil Bey about the "dangerous consequences" of the Porte's anti-Armenian policy and the determination of the Central Powers to let the Turks carry the full responsibility for what they were doing, but as he subsequently informed Burian there was little hope that his remarks would do much good. Although both Said Halim and Halil seemed

<sup>67</sup> See Lepsius, *Deutschland*, Nos. 191, 194, 201; Morgenthau, p. 372.

<sup>68</sup> See FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 39, Jagow to Wolff-Metternich, 12 Nov 1915, No. 855; Jackh Papers, No. 4, "Zur Lage am 20. Dezember 1915"; AHFM, *Türkei, Berichte 1915*, Pallavicini to Burian, 18 Dec 1915, No. 103A-E/P; *Türkei, Berichte 1916*, same to same, 7 Oct 1916, No. 76C/P. Cf. Pomiankowski, pp. 175-76.

impressed by his arguments, he explained, Talât and other *Ittihad ve Terakki* leaders were obviously trying to "solve" the Armenian question in their own way. Since many provincial *valis* and other regional officials were in the habit of taking their instructions from the Party Central Committee rather than from the cabinet, the termination of the anti-Armenian program would be difficult to secure.<sup>69</sup>

Since Scheubner-Richter in Erzurum and various other informants continued to report anti-Armenian outrages in the eastern provinces and, even worse, widespread rumors among the Turkish population that Germany was squarely behind the Porte in that matter, Jagow at the end of November urged Wolff-Metternich to admonish the Porte that it must set the record straight about Germany's involvement and handle the Armenian question in accordance with the "advice" that it had been given. Alerted by Lepsius that the Turks had actually resumed deporting Armenians from Constantinople itself, Zimmermann followed up a few days later with instructions that Wolff-Metternich should emphatically remonstrate about that matter, too.<sup>70</sup> On December 7 the ambassador replied that he had expressed Germany's opposition to the continuing anti-Armenian campaign repeatedly and "in extremely sharp language," but that neither Enver nor Halil had shown much inclination to discuss the issue. Since protests were obviously "useless," the ambassador continued, it might be advisable to initiate a press campaign in Germany against the Armenian persecutions. In particular, a semi-official announcement in the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, the traditional mouthpiece of the Berlin government, might now be in order, to the effect that the German government deplored the sufferings of the

<sup>69</sup> AHFM, *Türkei XLVII/3*, Pallavicini to AHFM, 1 Nov 1915, No. 830; 8 Nov, No. 842; same to Burian, 7 Nov, No. 93B/P. For indications of Pallavicini's basic inclination not to rock the boat on the Armenian issue, see also his dispatch to Burian, 10 Nov, No. 94B/P.

<sup>70</sup> Lepsius, *Deutschland*, Nos. 205, 206, 208.

Armenian people and was once again forced to "demand" that the Porte take corrective action to prevent further "deeply deplorable events." Undoubtedly, such a public chastisement would strain Germany's political relationship with the Turks, Wolff-Metternich concluded, but the risk of their deserting the alliance was not quite as great as Berlin might think; for it was extremely unlikely that the Entente powers, Britain in particular, would want to make a deal with the men who were presently running the Ottoman government.<sup>71</sup>

Both Jagow and Zimmermann thought Wolff-Metternich's proposal had some merit, but since the ambassador himself had requested that its implementation be postponed until Talât, "the soul of the Armenian persecutions," had returned from the provinces and been given a chance to react to the latest German steps, the project was shelved until then.<sup>72</sup>

Despite the obvious futility of his previous efforts Wolff-Metternich resumed his lectures to the Porte on December 9, this time choosing the grand vizier as the recipient of his strictures. Although, as the ambassador subsequently explained to Bethmann Hollweg, Said Halim was powerless to do anything about the Armenian persecutions, it was useful to supply the grand vizier with arguments he could then use on his colleagues. According to Wolff-Metternich there could be no doubt that Said Halim personally was opposed to what they were doing. Moreover there was some indication that Cemal Paşa, too, was ashamed of the atrocious treatment meted out to the Armenians and was actually making some headway in reversing the measures decreed by the central government.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>71</sup> FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 40, Wolff-Metternich to Bethmann Hollweg, 7 Dec 1915, No. 711.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, Wolff-Metternich to Bethmann Hollweg, 9 Dec 1915, No. 714. For conflicting information about Cemal's role in the anti-Armenian program cf. Lepsius, *Deutschland*, Nos. 24, 25, 34, 107, 120, 135, 150, 163, 193; Bryce and Toynebee, No. 143 and *passim*; Djemal, pp. 277-81; Bayur, III:3, 224 and *passim*.



About a week later Talât returned from his inspection tour to Constantinople. On December 18 Wolff-Metternich called on him for a "thorough" discussion of the Armenian situation. To the ambassador's surprise, the minister conceded that the anti-Armenian "security measures" of the preceding half year had hurt many innocent people, adding that the program had now run its course and that everything was being done to protect the deported families against further violence, hunger, and other misfortunes. Moreover, according to Talât, all provincial authorities had been instructed to publicize the fact that the German government had nothing to do with the anti-Armenian proceedings and that the Porte had assumed full responsibility for them. Although Wolff-Metternich was by no means fully convinced that the Porte had actually changed its course for good, he decided to accept Talât's assurances for the time being and to await further developments. As he wrote to the Wilhelmstrasse and Bethmann Hollweg, it was perhaps best to hold up the publication of the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* announcement, and to discontinue diplomatic steps for a while, especially since too-frequent protests would merely blunt their effectiveness.<sup>74</sup>

Wolff-Metternich's decision to give the Porte a chance to prove its good intentions was poorly rewarded, for exactly five days after Talât had made his soothing declarations the German embassy received a blistering note from the Porte—the first written communication concerning the Armenian issue ever received by the Germans. Referring to several official German steps of the preceding six months the Porte pointed out "first of all" that its policy towards the Armenians was a domestic issue and could therefore not be made the object of foreign diplomatic intervention except when foreign interests were directly affected. Inasmuch as the anti-Armenian measures had been and still were "dictated by military reasons and consti-

<sup>74</sup> FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd 40, Wolff-Metternich to FO, 18 Dec 1915, No. 2,990; same to Bethmann Hollweg, 18 Dec, No. 725.

tute a means of legitimate defense" against subversion, the Ottoman government could not accept any responsibility for the damage which had thereby been caused to German economic interests—all the more so in that the deportation of "suspect persons" had been properly regulated by a "provisional law." German representations in this matter, the note concluded, were therefore unacceptable.<sup>75</sup>

There are no indications in the German government files that the Wilhelmstrasse ever tried to reply to the note. On the contrary, the ill-concealed demand of the Porte that the Germans should mind their own business appears to have confirmed the view of Germany's policy-makers, from Bethmann Hollweg on down, that they were risking entirely too much by their pleas for the Armenians. During the following months the exhortations and admonitions from Berlin became increasingly sporadic and insipid in character. More important, the timidity and passivity displayed by Wolff-Metternich's superiors seems to have affected his outlook and behavior as well. During the remainder of his tenure at Constantinople his pro-Armenian efforts were to be significantly less vigorous.

#### 1916-17: THE POLICY OF EXPEDIENCY CONTINUES

By the beginning of 1916 the mass deportations of the Armenian population from the east-Anatolian *vilayets* to Mesopotamian and Syrian desert regions and internment camps had largely been completed. Already a very large number of Ottoman Armenians had perished as the result of mass executions, popular massacres, maltreatment en route, undernourishment, and disease, but even the survivors of the deportation

<sup>75</sup> Lepsius, *Deutschland*, No. 218 and *Anlage*. The law cited by the Porte was promulgated on May 27, 1915. See *ibid.*, No. 71, and Bayur, III:3, 45-49. On the losses suffered by German firms due to the deportation of their Armenian employees or the "disappearance" of Armenian debtors, see, for example, FO, *Türkei 134*, Bd. 34, Director Gutmann (*Dresdener Bank*) to Zimmermann, 9 Dec 1915.

program faced a bleak future. Contrary to repeated Turkish assurances, little if anything was being done to provide the deportees with adequate food, clothing, and shelter, or to protect them from physical violence. Moreover, in several regions, particularly where the "evacuation" of Armenians had not been carried out completely, direct or indirect pressures were instituted by the local and provincial authorities to obtain "conversions" to the Islamic faith.<sup>76</sup>

Wolff-Metternich made repeated attempts in January 1916 to register his dismay with the continuing persecutions at the Porte but accomplished very little. His complaints were either treated as being groundless or brushed off with empty assurances that the Porte would look into the matter. The Wilhelmstrasse, which was regularly informed of the continuing outrages, especially by Consul Rössler in Aleppo, did absolutely nothing, nor did it bother to send any instructions to the Constantinople embassy.<sup>77</sup> In fact it was only in the latter half of February that the Berlin foreign office was briefly stirred out of its ostrich-like pose. Faced with a formal inquiry from the recently organized Swiss *Hilfswerk 1915 für Armenien* whether it could count on Berlin's official assistance with charitable work among the Armenian deportees, Zimmermann wrote back on February 26 that the Wilhelmstrasse would "gladly" help, though only insofar as this was possible without offending the Turks.<sup>78</sup> Berlin's determination not to have any more unpleasantness with the Porte over the Armenian question was even more clearly manifested when the German embassy in Washington sent word that the United States government might soon direct another appeal to the Porte concerning the Armenian persecutions. Zimmermann immediately instructed Wolff-Metternich to warn the Porte of what was coming and to counsel a

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Lepsius, *Der Todesgang des armenischen Volkes*, *passim*; Naslian, I, 509 and *passim*.

<sup>77</sup> See Lepsius, *Deutschland*, Nos. 225-37.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, Nos. 239, 244.

conciliatory Turkish reply to the American note, but the ambassador himself was not to make any "remonstrances" of his own.<sup>79</sup>

Perhaps this admonition to Wolff-Metternich was not really needed. His correspondence of this time gives the distinct impression that his efforts to influence the Turks were becoming more and more perfunctory. One of his letters, addressed to Bethmann Hollweg, makes one wonder whether he had not become an outright convert to the Wilhelmstrasse's long-standing policy of caution and expediency. Recently, he wrote to the chancellor on February 14, Halil had intimated to him that Germany's failure to confer a decoration on Talât was viewed as a snub in some circles, especially since some Turks of lesser status had long since been so honored. In view of Talât's prominent role in the initiation of the "Armenian expulsions," the ambassador continued, he and his predecessors had hitherto thought it inadvisable to recommend any public honors for the minister, for they might have been interpreted as a sign that Germany approved of the Porte's Armenian policy. Now, however, such considerations "no longer" applied. On the contrary, since Talât was "the most influential minister" at the Porte, a "convinced supporter" of the alliance, and, together with Enver and Halil, particularly instrumental in keeping the Ententeophile elements in the *Ittihad ve Terakki* Party at bay, the conferral of the (Prussian) Red Eagle Order First Class would be very much in order. It appears that Wolff-Metternich's superiors in Berlin, for once, had genuine scruples. It was only in 1917, after Talât had become the official head of the Ottoman cabinet, that the Kaiser deemed it politically necessary to grant him a German decoration.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>79</sup> See FO, *Türkei* 183, Bd. 41, Zimmermann to Wolff-Metternich, 23 Feb 1915, No. 268; *Foreign Relations U.S., 1916 Supplement* (Washington, 1929), pp. 847-48.

<sup>80</sup> FO, *Türkei* 159 Nr. 2, Bd. 14, Wolff-Metternich to Bethmann Hollweg, 14 Feb 1916, No. 67; Bd. 16, Kühlmann to FO, 22 March 1917, No. 379.



After procrastinating for almost six months the Porte finally issued in early March 1916 an official denial that Germany had "suggested" or otherwise been involved in the proceedings against the Ottoman Armenians. In a lengthy declaration entitled *Vérité sur le mouvement révolutionnaire arménien et les mesures gouvernementales*, the Porte emphasized that it had "naturally" permitted no foreign "interference, in whatever form, in its internal affairs," and that this rule applied to its "friends and allies" as much as to any other foreign government.<sup>81</sup>

While the Wilhelmstrasse was no doubt pleased, some pro-Armenian groups in Germany and in Austria-Hungary immediately took exception to the Porte's claim that its domestic policies were its own business. On March 3 Erzberger, who had tried during a recent visit in Constantinople to dissuade both Enver and Talât from the continuation of their anti-Armenian policy, sent a memorandum to the Wilhelmstrasse, in which he listed a number of minimal demands which Berlin should "at once" press upon the Turks. Aside from the restoration of the religious institutions and privileges of the Armenians, Erzberger called for effective material assistance to the deportees, their "gradual" repatriation and "resettlement" in Asia Minor under the auspices of the Order of Maltese Knights, the suspension of the Porte's liquidation law inasmuch as it applied to Armenian property, and various other steps designed to normalize the situation of the Armenians in general and of the Roman Catholics among them in particular.<sup>82</sup>

Shortly after Erzberger had sent off his appeal to the Wilhelmstrasse, the archbishops of Prague and Vienna, Leon von

<sup>81</sup> See Lepsius, *Deutschland*, No. 245.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 246. On Erzberger's efforts in Constantinople during the preceding month cf. *ibid.*, No. 238 and *Anlage*; his memoirs, *Erlebnisse im Weltkrieg* (Berlin, 1920), Chapter VI; and Epstein, pp. 141-42.

Skrbensky-Hrišič and F. G. Piffl, directed a similar note to the Ballhausplatz. Speaking "in the name of the entire Austrian episcopate," the two cardinals called for energetic efforts by the governments of both Central Powers to end the "horrible" situation in which "the Christian Armenians of Turkey, or rather the still surviving remnants of this nation," found themselves. To make sure that the Porte changed its policy, a mixed commission, with Turkish, Austro-Hungarian, and German members, should be established immediately to "watch over" the resettlement and adequate provisioning of the Armenian people and over the restoration of their "religious liberty." Moreover, the Porte should be reminded forcefully that it owed a change of policy not only to humanity but also to the Christian powers which happened to be its allies.<sup>83</sup>

Neither the Wilhelmstrasse nor the Ballhausplatz deemed it advisable to do anything with these unwelcome recommendations. The headaches of Germany's statesmen were further increased when both the Swiss *Hilfswerk* and a phalanx of German organizations—the *Orientmission*, *Das Notwendige Liebeswerk*, and the German-Armenian Society—moved in on the Wilhelmstrasse with concrete proposals for the launching of aid and assistance programs among the Armenian deportees. While the Swiss promoters were willing to channel their aid through Consul Rössler and other German officials already stationed in Syria and Mesopotamia, the German groups proposed the dispatch of a regular expedition to the Ottoman empire.<sup>84</sup>

The Wilhelmstrasse, knowing full well that the Turks would react rather unfavorably to the appearance of such an "expedition," held on to the proposal for several weeks before forwarding it to Constantinople. As for the plan of the Swiss *Hilfswerk*, it was duly transmitted to Consul Rössler (and warmly

<sup>83</sup> AHFM, *Türkei* XLVII/4, Cardinal von Skrbensky-Hrišič and Cardinal Piffl to AHFM, March 1916.

<sup>84</sup> See Lepsius, *Deutschland*, Nos. 249, 251.

approved by him), but his sanguine attitude was not shared by Wolff-Metternich. As he informed Bethmann Hollweg on March 21, the Turks had recently started with new anti-Armenian measures in various parts of the empire, and although he had already expressed his dismay at the Porte it was too early to tell how much good that would do.<sup>85</sup> Six days later the ambassador advised Berlin that the Swiss aid program had very little chance of success; for "despite all assurances to the contrary it looks more and more . . . as though the Porte is now getting ready to do away with the remaining deportees as well. . . ."<sup>86</sup>

Although his suspicions were amply confirmed in the following weeks by reports of wholesale massacres and new "Islamization" and deportation proceedings in various places, both the Wilhelmstrasse and the Ballhausplatz remained silent. It would appear that the Porte sensed the timid attitude in German and Austro-Hungarian government circles, for when the aid project of the German *Orientmission* and the other German organizations was finally brought to its attention in late April, it bluntly refused to assent to it. As Wolff-Metternich explained to Berlin on April 28, the Turks took the position that they could not permit any outside assistance programs for the Armenians, in whatever shape or form, since otherwise the "hopes" of the Armenians for help from abroad would once again increase.<sup>87</sup>

Despite periodic reports from Wolff-Metternich, Rössler, and other observers about continuing anti-Armenian outrages,<sup>88</sup> Berlin remained virtually silent throughout the following four months. With no specific instructions to go by, Wolff-Metter-

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 253.

<sup>86</sup> FO, *Türkei* 183, Bd. 41, Wolff-Metternich to Bethmann Hollweg, 27 March 1916, No. 131. See also Bd. 42, same to same, 29 March, No. 139.

<sup>87</sup> See Lepsius, *Deutschland*, Nos. 257, 259-61.

<sup>88</sup> See *ibid.*, Nos. 265, 267, 270, 275, 279-81, 283-84, 289-91, 293, 296-98.

nich sent periodic admonitions to the Porte, which, of course, made no impression. Nor did the OHL have any more luck when it expressed its dismay over the deportation of Armenian work crews from the Bagdad railroad line—a Turkish measure which had caused nothing less than the complete stoppage of all construction work on the unfinished sections both in the Amanus and the Taurus regions.<sup>89</sup>

Although Wolff-Metternich sent Bethmann Hollweg explicit warning that “the Armenian persecutions in the eastern provinces” had entered their “final phase,” he received no reply or new instructions from Berlin.<sup>90</sup> In Vienna, too, dead silence prevailed. When the Ballhausplatz received word from the Ottoman embassy that some clerical circles in the Hungarian Diet were reportedly planning to raise the Armenian issue on the floor of the House, and that the Primate of Hungary, Cardinal Janos Csernoch, was behind the project, Burian hastily wrote to Premier Tisza to remind him that “such an interpellation at the present time would be extremely inopportune.”<sup>91</sup> Burian need not have worried, for Cardinal Csernoch promptly denied that he had ever thought of sponsoring such a move. He explained to Tisza that he was “incapable” of such “tactlessness,” and the Ottoman embassy should be assured that “I sincerely wish to promote the good Hungarian-Turkish relationship and hope that the Turkish government persecutes none of its subjects on account of their religion, but protects them against fanaticism.”<sup>92</sup>

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, Nos. 264, 268-69, 272-73, 276-78, 282, 285-86. On the vitally needed construction work on the Bagdad line see Chapter IX.

<sup>90</sup> FO, *Türkei* 183, Bd. 43, Wolff-Metternich to Bethmann Hollweg, 10 July 1916, No. 368. The major parts of this dispatch were subsequently brought to the attention of numerous German embassies abroad and also forwarded to the Prussian legations in Munich, Dresden, etc.

<sup>91</sup> AHFM, *Türkei* XLVII/4, Burian to Tisza, 28 June 1916, No. 3144.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, Csernoch to Tisza, 7 July 1916; Tisza to Burian, 9 July.



In the meantime, Lepsius had completed work on a lengthy exposé of the background, course, and results of the Armenian persecutions. Printed as a manuscript, and designated as "strictly confidential" on the title page, *Bericht über die Lage des Armenischen Volkes in der Türkei* was distributed during the summer of 1916 to thousands of people in Germany, and it was only after 20,000 copies had been turned out by the Protestant *Tempelverlag* in Potsdam that the Turks found out about Lepsius' treatise. On September 9 the Wilhelmstrasse received a formal request from Ambassador Hakki to put a stop to Lepsius' "hostile agitation" and to prevent the further dissemination of his "most infamous" booklet. Apparently as a result, the German censorship authorities formally prohibited the printing and distribution of any further copies of the *Bericht*.<sup>93</sup>

Wilhelmstrasse compliance with the Ottoman embassy's request was understandable, for Lepsius' booklet contained a detailed and devastating account of what had happened to the Ottoman Armenians since the beginning of the war. Moreover, despite an explicit warning in the preface that the revelations in the *Bericht* must not be used for political propaganda purposes, the preface alone contained enough political dynamite to blow the whole German-Ottoman alliance to pieces—

The oldest nation in Christendom [Lepsius informed his readers], as far as it lives under Turkish rule, is threatened by annihilation. Six-sevenths of the Armenian people have been robbed of their possessions, been expelled from house and home, and—except for those who converted to Islam—been killed or sent into the desert. Only one-seventh of the people have been exempted from deportation. . . . [Moreover], the Syrian Nestorians and, partially, the Greek Christians, too, have been plagued by persecution.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Lepsius, *Bericht*; "Mein Besuch in Konstantinopel," pp. 31-32; FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 44, Hakki to Jagow, n.d.

<sup>94</sup> Lepsius, *Bericht*, pp. v-vi.

These facts, Lepsius continued, were known to the German government, which had done "what it could" to stem the tide of disaster. The purpose of his *Bericht*, he said, was simply to promote an "extensive" aid program for the surviving Armenians, a program which had the full support of the Berlin government according to its own pronouncements—

Among all the Christian nations it is primarily up to us Germans to perform Samaritan services for the unfortunate [Armenians]. We were not able to prevent the annihilation of half of the nation. Our conscience demands the rescue of the other half. Hitherto nothing could be done for those in need. Now something must be done.

We ask for bread for starving women and children, for aid to the sick and dying. A people of widows and orphans stretch out their arms to the German people as the only one which is able to help them. To other Christian nations, which would be willing to help, the road to the unfortunate [Armenians] is barred.

We ask not only for temporary but for permanent help. . . . We know how much the strength of all those who remained at home is taxed in meeting the most immediate requirements which are raised by the struggle for the fatherland. But this, too, involves a moral duty [*Ehrenpflicht*] for our people, and [we must give] proof that in our quest [*Willen*] for self-preservation and victory we cannot deny the dictates of humaneness and of the Christian conscience.<sup>95</sup>

Among the Germans whose "Christian conscience" was very acutely pricked by Lepsius' efforts was the Grand Duchess Luise of Baden, who promptly wrote to Bethmann Hollweg inquiring what was being done about the Armenian horrors. The chancellor replied on September 9 in a confidential letter to the Prussian representative at the Badensian Court, instructing him to point out to the grand duchess that the whole Ar-

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. vi-viii.

menian issue was an extremely delicate matter. As Bethmann Hollweg explained,

During the relocation of the Armenians, which as such was probably necessary, horrible things have certainly happened, and our continuous and emphatic steps at the Porte have had only slight success. A discussion of this topic, however, could only do harm at the present moment. The already existing ill-humor against us in certain circles of Turkey—whose alliance is especially now of particular value to us—would increase still further, while the Armenians themselves would not be helped at all. On the contrary, a public discussion of the question would almost certainly incite the Moslems to new persecutions, against which we would be well-nigh powerless.<sup>96</sup>

Embarrassed by the noise Lepsius was making, the Wilhelmstrasse initiated steps in late September to have all his foreign travel permits revoked. As it turned out, the decision to keep Lepsius in Germany was made too late, for a full two weeks earlier he had legally crossed the Dutch border and taken up residence in Holland.<sup>97</sup>

Lepsius' associates in the German *Orient-Mission* and the German-Armenian Society seem initially to have been determined to follow up the *Bericht* with further pamphlets and newsletters on the plight of the Armenians, but thanks to the persuasive arguments of Ernst Jäckh they abandoned that plan. In an emotional meeting on September 15 Jäckh persuaded Rohrbach and two other leading figures of the German-Armenian Society (Pastor Stier and Dr. James Greenfield) that continued propaganda for the Armenians would do them more harm than good, and that the lot of the deportees could be im-

<sup>96</sup> DZA, Reichskanzlei, *Kriegsakten* 22, Bd. 1, Bethmann Hollweg to Eisendecker, 9 Sept 1916.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. FO, *Türkei* 183, Bd. 45, Zimmermann to Adm. von Holtzendorff, 6 Nov 1916; Lepsius, *Deutschland*, p. v.



proved much more effectively by diplomatic representations and aid programs on the part of the German government. The following day Rohrbach, Stier, and Greenfield notified Jäckh that they were willing to suspend their propagandistic efforts if everything possible was done by Berlin to help the Armenians. They added that an appeal to Lepsius and everyone else to remain silent henceforth would, however, have little chance of success unless all inculcating stories about the Ottoman Armenians disappeared from the German press and those who blamed the Armenians for their own troubles kept quiet as well.<sup>98</sup>

It is not entirely clear whether Jackh brought this *quid pro quo* arrangement to the attention of the Wilhelmstrasse, but it was probably more than coincidence that only a week or so later Zimmermann delivered his sharpest statement on the Armenian question. Using the presence of Halil Bey in Berlin, he told the Ottoman foreign minister to his face that while some of the deportations in the past might conceivably have been justified in terms of the then prevailing military situation, the currently "planned measures against women and children, who constitute the sad remnants of the Armenian people, could in no way be justified or excused."<sup>99</sup>

As previously mentioned, the Porte had meanwhile succeeded in obtaining Wolff-Metternich's recall. During the next six weeks the representation of German interests in Constantinople was left in the hands of Legation Counsellor von Rado-

<sup>98</sup> See Jäckh Papers, No. 23, Jäckh to Lepsius, 11 Sept 1916; Rohrbach to Jäckh, 16 Sept; Frau Lepsius to Jäckh, 22 Sept. On Jäckh's rather ambiguous role in the whole Armenian tragedy cf. his own statements in *Rising Crescent*, pp. 42-47 and *passim*; and in his memoirs, *Der Goldene Pflug* (Stuttgart, 1954), pp. 232-33 and *passim*.

<sup>99</sup> FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 44, Memorandum by Zimmermann, 25 Sept 1916. Regarding a similarly outspoken critique of the Porte's policies which Jagow presented to the budget committee of the Reichstag four days later, see *ibid.*, Rosenberg to Zimmermann, 27 Sept ("Aufzeichnung über die Armenierfrage . . . für den Reichstag"); Lepsius, *Deutschland*, No. 300.



witz. As *chargé*, Radowitz apparently did not think it advisable to get too deeply involved in the potentially explosive Armenian business and restricted himself to forwarding periodic reports on the subject to his superiors in Berlin.<sup>100</sup> The only ray of light in this somber spectacle of German passivity was provided by Liman von Sanders, who intervened energetically against the initiation of Armenian deportations in Smyrna. Using his authority as Fifth Army commander (some of his troops were garrisoned in Smyrna), Liman informed the *vali* of the province on November 10 that the mass movement of Armenians interfered with military security requirements, and that he would use troops to stop the police if it continued with the roundup of Armenians. When the *vali* notified Liman that the deportations were being carried out at the behest of the central government, the general reiterated his veto and suggested that the *vali* get himself some new instructions from Constantinople.<sup>101</sup>

At the Wilhelmstrasse Liman's unorthodox intervention in the "domestic affairs" of the Ottoman ally was welcomed, and Radowitz received instructions to back up the general by appropriate steps at the Porte. There are some indications, however, that the leading men at the Wilhelmstrasse did not really have much hope that the Turks would actually abandon their original project, for on November 15 Jagow sent an inquiry to the Constantinople embassy whether it might not be possible to send the Smyrna Armenians to Germany. Kühlmann, who had meanwhile arrived in Constantinople to take over the embassy, wired back two days later that the diversion of Armenian deportees to Germany could hardly be suggested to the Porte without arousing fresh "suspicions" among the Turks,

<sup>100</sup> See *ibid.*, Nos. 301-304.

<sup>101</sup> FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 45, Radowitz to Bethmann Hollweg, 13 Nov 1916, No. 703; Liman to Embassy Constantinople, 17 Nov, B. Nr. 1950 geh.

and that he would try his best to stabilize the situation in Smyrna. Whether he actually took up the matter at the Porte is doubtful, but a diplomatic move was for once not needed, since the Smyrna deportations were shortly thereafter officially cancelled.<sup>102</sup>

Faced with renewed appeals from the United States government and German clerical circles for forceful steps, the Wilhelmstrasse instructed the Constantinople embassy on November 14 and again on Christmas Day 1916 to point out to the Porte that a relaxation of its anti-Armenian policy was overdue.<sup>103</sup> On January 4, 1917 Legation Counsellor Göppert thereupon presented a note to Halil which once again expressed the regret and disapproval of the German government with regard to the continuing "acts of violence" and the forcible conversion of Armenians "in the provinces." In the ensuing conversation the Ottoman foreign minister agreed to work for the immediate cessation of forcible conversions but declared it impossible and impracticable to undo what had already been done in that sphere as this would probably entail "new deportations." Once the war was over, he consoled Göppert, the involuntary converts would certainly have an opportunity to return to the Christian faith, just as had happened after the persecutions in the time of Abdülhamid II.<sup>104</sup>

Although Talât's leading role in the Armenian persecutions of the preceding years was patently obvious to anyone who

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, Zimmermann to Radowitz, 14 Nov 1916, No. 1,226; Jagow to Kühlmann, 15 Nov, No. 1,301; Kühlmann to Bethmann Hollweg, 17 Nov, No. 710; same to FO, 17 Nov, No. 1,209; Lepsius, *Deutschland*, No. 308.

<sup>103</sup> FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 45, Zimmermann to Kühlmann, 14 Nov 1916, No. 1,226; *Missionsdirektor* Karl Axenfeld to Bethmann Hollweg, 16 Nov; Kühlmann to Bethmann Hollweg, 25 Nov, No. 723; Zimmermann to Göppert, 25 Dec, No. 1,410.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, Bd. 46, Göppert to FO, 5 Jan 1917, No. 17; Lepsius, *Deutschland*, No. 311. (Kühlmann was on leave at this time.)

knew what was going on at the Porte, his elevation to the grand vizier's post on February 4, 1917 was at first greeted by Kühlmann as an event which might produce a drastic improvement for the Ottoman Armenians. His rather naïve reaction was mainly based on Talât's opening speech in Parliament on February 15, during which he had announced his cabinet's intention to provide "every Osmanli" with all the rights which "the Constitution grants to him and thus to secure the rule of law in the country." To heighten Kühlmann's euphoria Talât assured him on February 24 in a personal interview that he "intended to steer a new course in all questions" pertaining to the non-Turkish nationalities, and that he had already informed the leaders of the Armenian churches that the war-related measures of the past two years would be reversed.<sup>105</sup>

As so often before, the assurances of the Porte proved worthless. Although in most *vilayets* there were no further deportations, very little was changed in the policy of purposeful neglect of the destitute masses of deportees. Moreover, in several areas efforts at the forcible Islamization of Armenians continued much as before.<sup>106</sup>

The plight of the surviving Armenian deportees in Mesopotamia and Syria can be gleaned from a series of surveys which the German consulates in Aleppo, Beirut, Damascus, and Mosul undertook during the spring of 1917. In the Aleppo area Consul Rössler found about 45,000 deportees, 35,000 of whom were in "extreme need, many close to starvation." In the Beirut district the situation was less critical, though there was a large incidence of "conversions" to Islam. The consulate in Damascus estimated that approximately 30,000 Armenians in its sphere of authority were still alive, most of them being in a "deplorable condition." The number of Armenian deportees in the Mosul area, according to Consul Wustrow, amounted to about

<sup>105</sup> Lepsius, *Deutschland*, Nos. 317, 318. The text of Talât's speech is reproduced in *Schulthess*, v. 58:2, 815-16.

<sup>106</sup> Lepsius, *Deutschland*, p. xlv.



8,000, "mainly women and children." He understood, moreover, that many additional women and girls were living in "semi-slavery" among some of the desert and mountain tribes.<sup>107</sup>

Although most of the German consulates in the eastern provinces were by this time actively involved in various privately financed charity programs—with the money coming from German, Swiss, American, and other sources—these efforts to keep the Armenian deportees alive were only partially successful. There were numerous cases of passive or active resistance by the local or provincial officials, though in some areas the Ottoman authorities cooperated rather well and allowed the distribution of food and other aid measures.<sup>108</sup>

In August 1917 the military governor of the Syrian provinces, Navy Minister Cemal Paşa, came to Berlin on the invitation of the German government. Since Cemal was increasingly being suspected by Enver and other key figures at the Porte of spinning intrigues against them, the visit was at least partially arranged to remove him temporarily from the Ottoman capital (where he had appeared in defiance of Enver's and Talât's wishes). While staying in Berlin, Cemal received some of the directors of the German *Evangelische Missionshilfe*, who appealed to him for support of their charitable work among the Armenians. Cemal readily promised to help within his sphere of authority—Syria—and assured them that he would also attempt to exert a positive influence in other regions. There is reason to believe that Cemal's offer was sincere, but since he gave up his Syrian command a few months later, the agreement bore very little fruit.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>107</sup> See *ibid.*, Nos. 329-33.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, Nos. 315, 325-27, 336-44, 346-51, 357-59, 361; and Vahe E. Sarafian, "World War I American Relief for the Armenians," *Armenian Review*, x:2 (June 1957), 121-36; x:3 (Sept 1957), 133-45, and *passim*.

<sup>109</sup> FO, *Türkei 159 Nr. 2*, Bd. 17, Lersner to FO, 18 Aug 1917, No.



With the disintegration of the Russian Caucasian Army in the autumn of 1917 and the Bolshevik request for a ceasefire agreement, the vexing "Armenian Question" assumed a new dimension; for hundreds of thousands of Armenians, including numerous refugees from the Ottoman empire, were sitting behind the crumbling Russian front.

Shortly before the conclusion of the Brest-Litovsk Armistice Talât "confidentially" informed Berlin that the Porte intended to grant a general amnesty and financial assistance to the Armenians "if it came to a separate peace with Russia." Although this was certainly good news, there were some circles in the Reich who were thoroughly disinclined to believe in any basic change of Turkish policy. On December 31 Reichstag deputy Reinhard Mumm of the *Deutsche Fraktion*, formally appealed to the Wilhelmstrasse to make sure that the Armenians in areas to be evacuated by the Russians would not be victimized by the Turks. Once the Ottoman army moved into those areas, he proposed, German officers and consular officials should probably go right along with them and thus keep an eye on the Turks. A week later, Rohrbach and other officers of the German-Armenian Society approached the new chancellor, Georg Count von Hertling, with an even more far-reaching proposal. They requested adequate German protection of the Armenians in the erstwhile Russian areas as well as positive German support for the establishment of Armenian autonomy. Since the Turks were pursuing a program of Pan-Islamism,

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1,232; Waldburg to FO, 24 Aug, No. 1,017; Lepsius, *Deutschland*, No. 360. Regarding Cemal's previous efforts to soften the anti-Armenian measures in his sphere of authority, cf. above, note 73; and Sarafian, "World War I American Relief," x:2, 126 and *passim*. There is disappointingly little information on this question in Avedis K. Sanjian's recent *The Armenian Communities in Syria under Ottoman Dominion* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965).

they emphasized, it was essential for Germany to manifest its Christian solidarity with the Armenians.<sup>110</sup>

The situation in Transcaucasia in the weeks following the Brest-Litovsk Armistice was highly unstable; there were numerous clashes between armed Armenian bands and the Moslem populace in some districts. At the beginning of February 1918 the Ottoman news agency *Milli-Agence* issued a lengthy statement on the alleged atrocities the Armenians had committed in the areas behind the armistice line. At the behest of some of the pro-Armenian organizations in Germany, which suspected that the agency report was to serve as a pretext for a new wave of Turkish "countermeasures," the Wilhelmstrasse instructed Bernstorff on February 8 to warn the Porte emphatically against a revival of indiscriminate persecution. Once they marched back into the Russian-held part of the empire, Undersecretary Hilmar von dem Bussche said, the Turks must maintain "strictest discipline, refrain from all reprisal measures," and institute judicial proceedings solely against those Armenians who had actually "participated in crimes against the Moslem population." Bernstorff replied with a number of reassuring messages, pointing out that Gen. von Seeckt was keeping an eye on Enver and that Halil had assured him that the Ottoman troops were under strict orders not to engage in reprisals.<sup>111</sup>

On February 14, two days after Ottoman army units had begun crossing the Transcaucasian demarcation line, the Wilhelmstrasse forwarded to Bernstorff a petition from the German *Evangelische Missions-Ausschuss* which called for forceful steps to prevent renewed Turkish outrages against the Armenians. Two weeks later Bussche himself instructed Bern-

<sup>110</sup> FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 49, Bernstorff to FO, 11 Dec 1917, No. 1,617; Mumm to FO, 31 Dec; Rohrbach, Stier and Rade to Hertling, 6 Jan 1918.

<sup>111</sup> See above, pp. 171-73; and FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 49, Bussche to Bernstorff, 8 Feb 1918, No. 194; Bernstorff to FO, 10 Feb, No. 194; 11 Feb, No. 202.

storff to impress on Talât, Enver, and other Turkish leaders that it was definitely in their own interest to demonstrate to all the world that the Ottoman government meant to give "equal, mild, and just treatment" to all the people in the provinces which were now being reoccupied. Bussche thought a good start would be for the Porte to grant a general amnesty to the Armenians, including those who had hitherto borne arms.

Quite aside from the fact that further, and possibly heavy, fighting could thus be avoided, [an amnesty] constitutes the only viable point of departure for converting the Armenians—who are an indispensable and valuable population element of those provinces—once again into loyal subjects of Turkey. . . . It would also be desirable to take into consideration the repatriation of those Armenians who had been deported to the interior of the empire.

Bernstorff immediately wired back that he had been pushing that kind of program "for months," albeit so far without much success. However, it appeared that the Porte was gradually becoming more responsive, for Talât had just promised again that an amnesty would soon be proclaimed.<sup>112</sup>

Although little reliable information about conditions in the reoccupied Ottoman provinces had reached the outside world, the Vatican decided at the beginning of March to direct formal appeals to both the Reich government and the Porte on behalf of the Armenians in Transcaucasia. Four days after Pacelli had presented such an appeal to the Wilhelmstrasse, Monsignore Dolci, the papal representative in Constantinople, advised Bernstorff that he was about to deliver a similar note to the Porte. The ambassador immediately wired to Bucharest (where both Kühlmann and Talât were staying in connection with the Rumanian peace negotiations) and urged that the

<sup>112</sup> See Lepsius, *Deutschland*, Nos. 370-71; FO, *Wk* 15, Bd. 27, Bussche to Bernstorff, 2 March 1918, No. 322; Bernstorff to FO, 3 March, No. 300.



often promised Turkish amnesty decree or some other reassuring proclamation be issued forthwith. Talât refused to be "rushed" but finally assured Kühlmann that on his return to Constantinople he would definitely act on the matter.

In Germany, Chancellor Hertling had meanwhile drafted a fairly evasive reply to the appeal from the Vatican. He pointed out that Germany was as always intent on preventing Turco-Armenian troubles, but added that the existence of armed Armenian bands in Transcaucasia and their outrages against the Moslem population made it very difficult to keep the situation under control. Indeed, if the Vatican really wanted to help it should persuade the Entente governments to stop their agitation among the Armenians.<sup>113</sup>

On March 18, shortly after the Congress of Soviets in Moscow had formally ratified the Brest-Litovsk Peace, the German Reichstag began its discussion of the treaty. While the parties of the Right and the Center were openly jubilant at having achieved peace in the east on their own terms, the Majority Socialists and, more vociferously, the Independent Socialists (USPD) severely criticized the settlement. On March 19, in a scathing attack on the *Vergewaltigungsfrieden* that had been imposed on the Bolsheviki, the USPD deputy, Georg Ledebour, took issue with the de facto surrender of the Kars, Ardahan, and Batum districts to the Turks. Ethnographically, he emphasized, the Turks had no claim to these areas, and once they marched in they were likely to exterminate the "Armenian and Georgian population" there just as they had "nearly exterminated" the Armenians in Anatolia during the previous years. To prevent new massacres Berlin and Vienna should veto Ottoman occupation of the three districts and if necessary arrange for the protection of the native population by neutral troop contingents, such as from Sweden or Switzerland. Since there was some doubt whether the Reich government had the necessary determination to prevent renewed Armenian mas-

<sup>113</sup> FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 50, Bernstorff to FO, 13 March 1918, No. 350; Hertling to Pacelli, 14 March; Lepsius, *Deutschland*, No. 378.



sacres, Ledebour concluded, it was now up to the Reichstag to see to it that appropriate steps for "the protection of these threatened peoples" were taken.<sup>114</sup>

Possibly in response to this challenge, the staff of the Wilhelmstrasse drew up a lengthy memorandum on the Armenian question, which Bussche used in his talks with Reichstag leaders during the following days. In defining the standpoint of the foreign office, the memorandum noted (1) that everything possible had been done to prevent the renewal of Armenian persecutions; (2) that the Porte itself had repeatedly indicated its benign intentions; and (3) that the restoration of peace and order in the Armenian areas would ultimately depend on the willingness of the Armenians themselves to abandon "their striving for independence and to respond to the Turks' offer of reconciliation." Indeed, Berlin's official efforts to prevent any untoward developments in Transcaucasia could best be helped "if the German Armenophiles were to use their influence to warn the Armenians against useless resistance—which would be tantamount to suicide—and to induce them instead to negotiate with the Turks about their submission."<sup>115</sup>

While this official policy statement appears to have influenced a slight majority of the Reichstag's Main Committee in its ultimate decision not to demand the exclusion of Ottoman troops from the Kars, Ardahan, and Batum districts, the mood in the Finance Committee was considerably more pessimistic. According to the notes made by one of its members, Hans P. Hanssen, several of his colleagues manifested deep concern over the possibility of renewed Turkish outrages, while Gustav Stresemann expressed cautious hope that the Porte had changed its ways. The only speaker who tried to defend the Turks, according to Hanssen, was the *Mittleuropa* proponent Friedrich Naumann.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>114</sup> *Verhandlungen des Reichstags*, vol. 311, pp. 4483-84.

<sup>115</sup> FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 50, "Aufzeichnung," 19 March 1918.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. *Verhandlungen des Reichstags*, vol. 311, pp. 4,565-66; Hanssen, pp. 269-71.

When the Reichstag resumed debate in plenary session on March 22 the USPD once again lashed out against the Transcaucasian clause of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. Hugo Haase reminded the house of the mass slaughter the Turks had perpetrated in the preceding years and emphasized anew that the USPD would never accept the responsibility for "playing areas with an Armenian population into the hands" of the Porte. After Stresemann had argued in rebuttal that the troubles of the Ottoman Armenians had been caused largely by their own "conduct . . . in the border districts during the first months of this world war," and that Germany did not have the means or the right to force its will on the Ottoman ally, Haase reiterated his contention that the Reich must not "deliver new groups of Armenians" to the Turks, especially not by means of a "policy of annexations." His protest was forcefully supported by Ledebour, who declared that the "shame" of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty was nowhere more evident than in the clauses concerning Transcaucasia.

As the USPD had suspected all along, its protests were disregarded. After the official spokesman of the Main Committee had assured the House that the government possessed firm pledges from the Porte concerning the prevention of new anti-Armenian outrages, the debate moved to other parts of the treaty. In the final vote on the ratification of the Brest-Litovsk settlement only the USPD cast a negative vote, while the Majority Socialists abstained.<sup>117</sup>

While domestic opposition to the surrender of the Kars, Ardahan, and Batum districts had thus been overcome quite easily, the Wilhelmstrasse redoubled its efforts to keep the Turks on the straight and narrow. On March 24 Bussche reminded Bernstorff that he should do everything possible to stop the continuing campaign in the Ottoman press against

<sup>117</sup> *Verhandlungen des Reichstags*, vol. 311, pp. 4543, 4545, 4553-54, 4560-71, and *passim*; Wheeler-Bennett, pp. 304-308; Fischer, *Weltmacht*, pp. 662-65.

the Armenians of Transcaucasia. On April 3 he followed up with instructions to the ambassador that he should keep pressure on the Porte and make sure that the commanders of the advancing Ottoman troops in Transcaucasia were "again forcefully reminded" to maintain strict discipline and to accord "mild treatment to the peaceful population."<sup>118</sup>

Though the Wilhelmstrasse was by now certainly doing everything it could do diplomatically to remind the Turks of **their** obligations, some circles in Germany were obviously not **convinced** of the efficacy of such measures. On April 2 the Archbishop of Cologne, Felix Cardinal von Hartmann, sent a personal exhortation to Hertling to protect the Armenians in Transcaucasia and to assign a German officer to that area for purposes of supervision. The chancellor replied on April 13 that the Porte had already pledged itself to pursue a reasonable policy, but that it would be rather difficult to prevent all untoward incidents in view of the old animosities which existed between the various ethnic groups in Transcaucasia.<sup>119</sup>

No sooner had Hertling dispatched this rather pessimistic reply than Berlin received two radio messages from Soviet Foreign Commissar G. V. Chicherin and the "Armenian National Council" in Moscow accusing the Ottoman Caucasus Army of murderous outrages and demanding prompt German intervention. The Wilhelmstrasse ordered Bernstorff to check the Bolshevik charges and protest to the Porte if they proved to be accurate.

We must insist [Bussche wired] that Turkey shall treat the Christian population with fairness and respect their rights in every way. We are also entitled to be kept informed by the Turks about all developments in the areas in question. Your Excellency should speak in this sense to the grand vizier and

<sup>118</sup> FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 50, Bussche to Bernstorff, 24 March 1918, No. 430; 3 April, No. 482.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, Archbishop Hartmann to Hertling, 2 April 1918; Hertling to Hartmann, 13 April.

the minister of foreign affairs and remind Talât of his promise that an amnesty for the Armenians would be decreed soon after his return from Bucharest.<sup>120</sup>

Bernstorff replied within 24 hours that he "believed" the charges by Moscow to be false, and noted that Seeckt and several other German officials were presently en route to Transcaucasia with Enver. The Wilhelmstrasse, suspecting the worst, had meanwhile also contacted the OHL and requested the dispatch of some "influential" German officers to Transcaucasia to keep an eye on the Ottoman troop commanders there. The OHL sympathized with this proposal but later changed its mind when Seeckt made it clear that Gen. Vehib was highly unlikely to tolerate any German snooping in his area of command.<sup>121</sup>

More encouraging news came from Bernstorff on April 25. He reported Talât's assurance to him that an "amnesty for peaceful Armenians plus financial grants and permission for [their] return home" would soon be announced, and that Berlin could publicize these plans if it wished. Upon Bussche's request for more details the ambassador explained that the proposed amnesty would apply only to those Armenians who were already effectively under Ottoman control; to bring back the others, according to Talât, would be too "dangerous." As for the intended financial assistance to Armenian "returnees," the Porte meant to compensate those who had "lost their possessions."<sup>122</sup>

Once again the declarations by the Porte proved to be meaningless. Although there were some instances of official "mag-

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, Chicherin and Karachan to FO, 13 April 1918; *ibid.*, Bd. 51, Bussche to Bernstorff, 15 April, No. 561; Lepsius, *Deutschland*, No. 382; Kadichev, p. 57.

<sup>121</sup> See FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 51, Bernstorff to FO, 15 April 1918, No. 527; 16 April, No. 535; Bussche to Lersner, 16 April, No. 690; Berckheim to FO, 7 May; Seeckt, pp. 25-26.

<sup>122</sup> Lepsius, *Deutschland*, Nos. 384-86.



nanimity," as exemplified by the release of captured Armenian soldiers in Batum, the promised resettlement of the Armenian deportees in their old homes never materialized; nor was there any noticeable improvement in the treatment and care of most of the deportees. Moreover, rumors and unconfirmed reports about Turkish brutality in some of the newly occupied areas continued to reach Berlin.<sup>123</sup>

Confronted with the swift disintegration of the Transcaucasian federative state, Kühlmann instructed Bernstorff on May 26 to remind the Porte that Germany was opposed to any further Ottoman advances into Transcaucasia and expected, in any case, proper treatment of the Armenians in all "Turkish-occupied territories." A few days later the state secretary inquired in Constantinople what was holding up the promised amnesty; since Berlin had already announced the impending Turkish step, it was high time for the Porte to act. Talât, predictably, did not respond.<sup>124</sup>

In the meantime the newly created Armenian Republic had opened an office of ill-defined diplomatic status in Berlin. Headed by Dr. H. Ohandjanian, this "Delegation of the Armenian Republic" initiated a lively correspondence with the Wilhelmstrasse concerning the protection of the new state by the Reich and succeeded in securing numerous interviews with Kühlmann's staff. On June 15 and again on July 2 the Delegation presented lengthy memoranda to the Wilhelmstrasse concerning the pressing need for German intervention in Transcaucasia. According to the note of July 2 an estimated 600,000 Armenians from the formerly Russian parts of Transcaucasia, as well as innumerable refugees of Ottoman citizenship, had crowded into the Armenian Republic in their flight from the advancing Turks. To prevent general economic chaos, famine, and epidemics, it was essential to get all these refugees

<sup>123</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, Nos. 391, 393, 395; FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 51, Bernstorff to FO, 2 May 1918, No. 632.

<sup>124</sup> Lepsius, *Deutschland*, Nos. 396-97.

back to their original homes, but this could be accomplished only if the Turks withdrew to the frontiers fixed at Brest-Litovsk. German pressure on the Turks would thus be highly welcome.<sup>125</sup>

On July 10 Gen. Kress in Tiflis supported the case of the Armenian government, especially since he had just received a reliable first-hand account of the critical situation in Armenia from the Bishop of Yerevan, Mesrop. There could be no doubt, Kress informed the Wilhelmstrasse, that the Turks intended "to starve the entire Armenian nation by sealing it off completely." All his efforts to secure the readmission of Armenian refugees into Turkish-occupied territory had been in vain, and "massive pressure by the Central Powers" on the Porte was therefore "an urgent commandment of humanity and policy." The next day Kress wrote directly to Chancellor Hertling, urging him to use every available means to force the Porte into a change of policy and to secure the following concessions:

that [the Ottoman government] withdraws its troops from Armenia forthwith; allows the fugitive Armenians to return to their homeland; makes sure that the Armenians can bring in their harvest without hindrance or threat to their life and property; and that the Armenians who have been pressed into labor services shall be released to their homeland at once.<sup>126</sup>

By the time these messages from Tiflis reached Berlin several representatives of the Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani governments had journeyed to Constantinople for a conference called by the Porte. While the Turks had initially indicated that they wished to discuss, and possibly to revise, the Batum peace treaties of June 4, the assembled delegations from Tiflis, Yerevan, and Elizavetpol soon found out that the Porte was

<sup>125</sup> See FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 52, Ohandjanian to FO, 2 July 1918.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, Bd. 53, Kress to FO, 10 July 1918; same to Hertling, 11 July.

actually in no hurry to deal with them.<sup>127</sup> While the Georgian government, under the protection of German troops, could well afford to wait, the isolated Armenian government in Yerevan was highly disturbed by the procrastinating tactics of the Turks. In response to its appeals for German support and the previously mentioned reports from Gen. Kress, the OHL proposed to the Wilhelmstrasse on July 15 that continued efforts should be made to secure some political stability in Transcaucasia. In particular it would be desirable to define "to some extent" the general relationship between the Central Powers bloc and the Armenian and Azerbaijani republics, whose status was as yet rather nebulous. Simultaneously Ludendorff announced the OHL's desire to concentrate henceforth solely on the "military aspects" of the Transcaucasian problem, while the Wilhelmstrasse should handle all pertinent political questions. As for the protection of the Armenian Republic against possible Turkish violence, Ludendorff thought it advisable to leave that job to the Dual Monarchy. Just as the Reich had done in Georgia, Austria-Hungary should send some battalions and batteries to the Armenian Republic to shield the population there against "Turco-Tartarian massacres." In addition the OHL found it desirable that the Armenian armed forces themselves be organized into an effective fighting instrument.<sup>128</sup>

While Ludendorff was inclined to leave the defense of Armenia to the Austrians and the Armenians themselves, the Berlin foreign office continued to investigate the feasibility of moving German troops to Yerevan as well. One problem, of course, was the likelihood of new complications with the Soviet government, though some officials at the Wilhelmstrasse were hopeful that Moscow would accept the presence of German soldiers in Armenia if it was made clear that they had the purely

<sup>127</sup> Cf. Kazemzadeh, p. 152; Pomiankowski, pp. 366-67; Avalishvili, pp. 87-88.

<sup>128</sup> Lepsius, *Deutschland*, Nos. 409-10. See also Nos. 407-408.

humanitarian task of "saving the remnants of the Armenian people." The deliberations on this subject were still in progress when Bernstorff sent word that the Armenian government delegates in Constantinople had approached him with the request for the dispatch of "Austrian or German police troops" to the Armenian Republic. A week later, the ambassador sent a follow-up message in which he noted that the Armenian calls for German or Austrian troops were becoming more and more insistent.<sup>129</sup>

From Tiflis Gen. Kress meanwhile bombarded the Wilhelmstrasse with urgent requests to do something about the repatriation of the destitute Armenian refugees, that is, to force the Porte into letting them move back to their original homes. On July 27 State Secretary Hintze therefore instructed Bernstorff to make "forceful representations" to the Porte. Two days later Field Marshal Hindenburg backed up Hintze's demand in a personal message to Enver. Half a million of his fellow Christians in Armenia, Hindenburg noted, were facing certain death by starvation unless the Ottoman authorities permitted them to return to their homes; "now that you have been informed of the situation among the Armenians by me, I am confident that Your Excellency shall not hesitate for a moment to give the strictest orders [permitting repatriation] and to supervise their implementation."<sup>130</sup>

The following day Bernstorff advised Berlin that the Porte had finally seen fit to clarify its stand on the Transcaucasian issues and was now willing—despite Enver's objections—to permit a selective repatriation of Armenian refugees. As for the border revisions desired by both Georgia and Armenia, the Porte had so far manifested a "completely intransigent" attitude, and further diplomatic pressures were obviously useless.

<sup>129</sup> See *ibid.*, No. 414; FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 53, Bernstorff to FO, 18 July 1918, No. 1,158; 25 July, no No.

<sup>130</sup> Lepsius, *Deutschland*, Nos. 417, 419.



If Germany did not wish to accept the existing situation, Bernstorff concluded, there was only one possible remedy, namely to "send more [German] troops to Armenia and Georgia."<sup>131</sup>

Concurrent with Bernstorff's dispatch, the Wilhelmstrasse received a formal note from the Armenian Delegation in Berlin, officially requesting German military help once again. With the Turks constantly moving into Armenian territory, the note emphasized, there was mounting misery among the refugees. The only solution was the "immediate evacuation of our territory by the Turks and the dispatch of German troops," whose task it would be to protect the population against the Turks and "organize and supervise the return of the refugees to their homes."<sup>132</sup>

As already noted, the OHL was unwilling to move German troops into Armenia—and that more or less settled the matter. On the other hand, Hindenburg and Ludendorff had already made it clear that they favored the prompt repatriation of Armenian refugees and that they expected Enver to act accordingly. They soon found out that the vice-generalissimo was in no mood to oblige them.

In a lengthy reply to Hindenburg's appeal Enver pointed out that large-scale repatriation measures were not possible since otherwise new turmoil in the rear areas of the Ottoman army would develop. Only in those places where there had been no previous "fighting between Moslems and Armenians" could one expect peace and order after the return of the refugees; elsewhere new bloodshed would surely materialize and force the Ottoman army to divert its forces for pacification tasks. The result would be the forced cessation of all military operations; "our war effort would be paralyzed," something the OHL surely did not want. As for the Armenians in Baku, Enver concluded sarcastically, he was glad to oblige Germany and to have them moved to the territory of the Armenian Re-

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 418.

<sup>132</sup> FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 53, Ohandjanian to FO, 29 July 1918.

public, for it would thus be all the easier for the Turks to come to an understanding with the remaining Russian elements in the oil city.<sup>188</sup>

While the OHL and the Wilhelmstrasse thus found themselves once again rebuffed, Gen. Kress and his Austro-Hungarian counterpart in Tiflis, Baron von Franckenstein, had meanwhile taken matters into their own hands and staged a personal appearance in the capital of the floundering Armenian Republic. After traveling by train through "Turkish-occupied territory without serious molestation," they arrived at Yerevan on July 30 and spent the next 24 hours in a hectic round of conferences and banquets with the political and ecclesiastic leaders of the republic. While Kress's subsequent reports to Berlin made it clear that his sympathies for the Armenians were reinforced by what he saw and heard, he did not consider it politic to remain in Yerevan for the opening of the Armenian Parliament. As he explained to Hertling after his return to Tiflis, his personal appearance at that solemn act would have aroused false hopes among the Armenians concerning the help they might get from Germany—and, after all, he himself did not even know what Berlin's "Armenian policy" was all about. One thing was certain, though, he continued, and that was the imminence of mass starvation in Armenia unless the Central Powers intervened and forced the Turks to relax their stranglehold. Moreover, it was indispensable to ship grain from the Central Powers' stores to Armenia, preferably, according to Kress, from stocks earmarked for the Turks, for the latter had caused all the trouble in the first place by preventing the Armenians from bringing in their harvest:

The question as to what must be done in order to make Armenia a viable state and to enable it to lead an independent existence in affiliation [*unter Anlehnung*] with one of the Central Powers I should answer as follows: that Armenia

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, Bernstorff to FO [Enver to Hindenburg], 3 Aug 1918, No. 1,255.

must get the borders of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty and that the border revisions desired by the Turks shall not be granted. Exactly these border revisions would deprive Armenia of its best border areas. If these areas are surrendered to the Turks, their production will drop immediately because of the economic inefficiency of the Turks and will thus be lost for the German market.<sup>134</sup>

While Kress was doing his best to direct Berlin's attention to the plight of the Armenian Republic, using economic arguments for good measure, representatives of the Yerevan government continued to bombard both Berlin and Vienna with requests for military assistance and—more importantly—for diplomatic recognition of Armenia's sovereignty. On August 10 Burian notified the Wilhelmstrasse that he was inclined to assign a diplomatic representative to Yerevan and thought Germany should do likewise. In line with previous decisions the Wilhelmstrasse politely refused. According to an internal office memorandum drawn up for Hintze's guidance, compliance with Vienna's proposal would entail new unpleasantness with the Porte and problems with Moscow, since Germany had committed herself by the Brest-Litovsk Treaty not to support separatist tendencies in the formerly Russian Empire. However, if Vienna sent both military aid and a diplomatic representative to Yerevan, Germany should certainly not object. Hintze agreed with this reasoning and Vienna was notified accordingly.<sup>135</sup>

Although it turned a deaf ear to Armenia's requests for diplomatic recognition, the Wilhelmstrasse continued to search for ways in which the physical plight of the Armenians could be alleviated. Aside from encouraging the Austrians to

<sup>134</sup> See *ibid.*, Bd. 54, Kress to Hertling, 4 Aug 1918; same to same, 5 Aug; Franckenstein to Burian, 4 Aug.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, Bd. 53, Ohandjanian to FO, 5 Aug 1918; Burian to Hohenlohe, 9 Aug; Memorandum by Göppert (?) to Hintze, 11 Aug; Bd. 54, note by same, 20 Aug; Pomiankowski, pp. 369-70.



dispatch some of their own troops to Yerevan, Berlin suggested to Kress on August 14 that the population pressure in the Armenian Republic might be reduced by channeling the refugees there "toward the north," into Georgia. Six days later Hintze sent an inquiry to Kress whether the transshipment of grain for Armenia through Georgia would be politically feasible in view of the fact that "we can supply the Georgians themselves only with an amount smaller than originally promised."<sup>136</sup>

Confronted with new demands by Kress that Berlin do something about the stranglehold the Turks had forged around Armenia, Hintze instructed Bernstorff on August 22 to appeal once again to the Porte for a change of policy. According to all available evidence, Hintze noted, the Ottoman military authorities in Transcaucasia were purposely sabotaging the official program of selective repatriation, and Bernstorff should therefore press for corrective action. Moreover, "You should ask the Turkish government . . . to consider once more whether there are not weighty reasons for opening the entire area up to the Brest borderline for repatriation [of the Armenians]." That Hintze did not really expect any tangible results from this new diplomatic effort can be gathered from a note he subsequently sent to Kress, advising him that the prevailing political and military situation was hardly auspicious for securing concessions from the Porte.<sup>137</sup>

On August 28, one day after the signing of the Russo-German Supplementary Treaties, Bernstorff advised Berlin that the Armenian delegation in Constantinople regarded the imminent recognition of Georgia's independence by Germany

<sup>136</sup> Lepsius, *Deutschland*, Nos. 428-30. See also FO, *Türkei* 183, Bd. 54, Axenfeld to FO, 16 Aug 1918, in which the dispatch of 300 carloads of wheat to Yerevan was proposed.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, Kress to FO and OHL, 10 Aug 1918, No. 46; Hintze to Bernstorff, 22 Aug, No. 1,345; Lepsius, *Deutschland*, No. 433. See also FO, *Russland* 97a, Bd. 23, Bernstorff to Hertling, 24 Aug, No. 216, regarding a futile appeal by Seeckt to Enver to permit the partial repatriation of Armenian refugees.



as a catastrophic blow to their own country, since it would thereby be totally isolated from Russia and become an easy prey for the Turks. In view of this mortal danger and the Porte's persistent refusal to commit itself on Armenia's future status, the Armenian delegation in Constantinople now was seriously interested in close affiliation of their country with Georgia. The crucial question was whether the Georgians themselves would agree to such a merger.<sup>138</sup>

It appears that Bernstorff sympathized with this Armenian project, but his superiors in Berlin were rather less impressed. As Hintze reminded the ambassador, neither a diplomatic recognition of Armenia nor assistance with a Georgian-Armenian merger were compatible with Germany's treaty obligations toward the Soviet government, quite aside from the fact that Talât, because of the recent Russo-German treaty, was furious enough already.<sup>139</sup>

Meanwhile Gen. Kress and his Austro-Hungarian colleague in Tiflis, Franckenstein, had traveled once again to Yerevan, this time in company with Enver's uncle, Gen. Halil Paşa, who had meanwhile replaced Vehib Paşa as commander of "Army Group East." The ostensible purpose of Halil's visit to the Armenian capital was a courtesy call, but Kress did his best to use that occasion for "enlightening" the Ottoman general about the true situation in Armenia. In particular, Kress noted in his report to Berlin, he had tried to demonstrate to Halil that the Armenians posed no real threat to the Ottoman army at all and that a more liberal policy in regard to their repatriation was entirely feasible. Unfortunately, Kress continued, the apparent headway he had made with Halil was liable to go for naught: "The Turkish troops in the Caucasus, from the army commanders on down to the last lieutenant . . . have been

<sup>138</sup> FO, *Türkei* 183, Bd. 54, Bernstorff to FO, 28 Aug 1918, No. 1,397.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, Hintze to Bernstorff, 2 Sept 1918, No. 1,432. Cf. above, p. 193.

so much stirred up against both Armenians and Germans by that wild beast [*Bestie*] Vehib Pasha that it will likely take a long time before Halil Pasha, who is far more reasonable, will succeed in enforcing his will." According to Kress, virtually every Turkish general under Halil's command was more or less opposed to his policy of moderation, and one—Şevki Paşa—had already protested against the alleged revival of German influence in the sphere of Halil's Army Group. To complicate the situation, Kress noted, a steady stream of false reports about Armenian "misdeeds" and gang warfare had been sent by these generals to Constantinople, and it was painfully obvious that Gen. Seeckt had been duped all along about what was going on in Transcaucasia. His apparent agreement with Enver that it would be too dangerous to permit large masses of Armenians to resettle behind the Ottoman lines was based on false premises; for these masses consisted almost entirely of old men and women and children: "The Turks and Tartars have seen to it with thoroughness that hardly any men capable of bearing arms are left for repatriation." As for the nefarious activities of one Armenian guerrilla band, led by Gen. Antranik, whose existence was indeed not just a figment of Turkish imagination, the Yerevan Government had nothing to do with it and had actually offered its help in the suppression of that band.<sup>140</sup>

Perhaps as a result of Kress's pleas Halil Paşa released several hundred Armenian soldiers from captivity during the following weeks, most of them being sent to Yerevan. This positive gesture was atypical, for in mid-September the Germans were confronted with a new wave of anti-Armenian violence during and after the capture of Baku by Nuri's Army of Islam. Although Turkish regular troops were probably not directly

<sup>140</sup> FO, *Türkei 183*, Bd. 54, Kress to Hertling, 3 Sept 1918; Waldburg to FO, 15 Sept, No. 1,516. On the guerrilla activities of Antranik's band see Allen and Muratoff, pp. 461, 472-75, and *passim*; Pasdermajian, pp. 462-66, and *passim*.

involved in the slaughter of several thousand Baku Armenians, Nuri and other Ottoman officers did very little to stop the local Moslem populace and Azerbaijani soldiers. Efforts by Gen. Halil's German chief-of-staff, Lt. Col. Paraquin, to restore order in the city were largely futile and eventually led to a heated argument between him and Nuri. Two days later Halil abruptly relieved Paraquin of his post and sent him back to Constantinople.<sup>141</sup>

Alerted by Paraquin about the turmoil in Baku and the precarious situation in which even German nationals there found themselves, Gen. Kress promptly addressed protests to the Ottoman and Azerbaijani diplomatic representatives in Tiflis and to Nuri himself. In a telegram to the latter, Kress demanded, moreover, that the transfer of a German battalion to Baku be permitted at once, so that it could "safeguard" the lives and property of all German nationals. Nuri replied five days later that the allegations of rampant disorder and bloodshed in Baku were largely without foundation, and that the dispatch of German troops would, therefore, be pointless.<sup>142</sup>

As a result of Nuri's opposition no German troops ever got to Baku. The Turks themselves pulled out of that city and all other Transcaucasian areas in the weeks following the conclusion of the Mudros Armistice, the evacuation being largely completed by the beginning of December. On November 17 British forces occupied Baku and in December spread over other parts of the Transcaucasian region.<sup>143</sup>

As soon as the Ottoman intruders had left, the Dashnak government in Yerevan raised territorial claims against both Georgia and Azerbaijan.<sup>144</sup> More importantly, in the winter of 1918-19 Armenian troops followed the retreating Turks and with Britain's approval occupied some parts of Eastern Ana-

<sup>141</sup> See Lepsius, *Deutschland*; Nos. 436, 442 (*Anlage 1*).

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, *Anlagen 2-6*; FO, *Russland 97a*, Bd. 26, Kress to FO, 26 Sept 1918.

<sup>143</sup> Kazemzadeh, pp. 163-73; Kheifets, pp. 74-75, 81.

<sup>144</sup> Kazemzadeh, pp. 174-83; Pipes, p. 210.



tolia. In May 1919 the Yerevan government formally proclaimed the inclusion of several provinces of the prewar Ottoman empire in a "United Armenia," but despite some Allied sympathies with the Armenian cause this triumph over the hated Turks was to be short-lived.<sup>145</sup> When the British withdrew from Transcaucasia in the spring and early summer of 1920, the Armenian Republic was left in dangerous isolation, facing the revolutionary expansionism of the Russian Bolsheviks on one side and the irredentist pressures of Mustafa Kemal's Turkish nationalists on the other.<sup>146</sup> In September 1920 the Kemalists marched into Armenia and within six weeks forced the Yerevan government to give up most of the territory it had annexed since late 1918. Simultaneously, Red Army troops moved into the eastern portions of the Armenian state and engineered its conversion into a Soviet Socialist Republic.<sup>147</sup>

Having jointly crushed the cause of Armenian national independence, the Soviets and Kemalists subsequently worked out a delineation of their respective spheres of influence in Transcaucasia. In March 1921 they concluded the Treaty of Moscow, by which Turkey's northeastern frontier was moved up to or even beyond the 1877 line except in the northern section of the Batum District.<sup>148</sup> With roughly 25,000 square

<sup>145</sup> Kazemzadeh, pp. 213-15; Pipes, p. 210. Text of the May 28, 1919 proclamation by the Armenian government in Poidebard, "Chronique: Le Transcaucase et la République d'Arménie," IV:1, 57-58.

<sup>146</sup> On the hesitant policies in 1919-20 of the Western powers regarding the Armenian question cf. Pasdermajian, pp. 469-74; Kazemzadeh, pp. 253-65; Ziemke, pp. 80-123, and *passim*; Howard, pp. 217-49, and *passim*. See also Howard's recent study *The King-Crane Commission* (Beirut, 1963), and *passim*.

<sup>147</sup> Pasdermajian, pp. 474-77; Kazemzadeh, pp. 286-93; Pipes, pp. 229-34. Cf. Kheifets, pp. 130-71, and *passim*. Text of the Turco-Armenian peace treaty of 2 December 1920 in Poidebard, "Chronique," IV:1, 70-72.

<sup>148</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 72-77, for the text of the Turco-Soviet treaty, which was signed on March 16.



kilometers of erstwhile Tsarist territory formally handed over to them, the Kemalists in effect acquired title to more Transcaucasian, and particularly Armenian, land than the *Ittihad ve Terakki* regime had gained for Turkey by the dictated Peace of Brest-Litovsk three years earlier. The Russo-Turkish border settlement of 1921 has remained intact to this day. Armenian efforts to undo this renewed partition of their traditional homeland have been and are likely to remain futile.

A REVIEW of the Armenian tragedy during World War I suggests the following conclusions. First, the decimation of the Ottoman Armenian population between 1915 and 1918 through physical violence, hunger, and disease was not the unfortunate by-product of an otherwise legitimate security program but the result of a deliberate effort by the *Ittihad ve Terakki* regime to rid the Anatolian heartland of a politically troublesome ethnic group. While there were undoubtedly some districts behind the Transcaucasian front where deportations and other precautionary measures were militarily justified, the sweeping geographic scope of the Porte's anti-Armenian program and its indiscriminate application to men, women, and children alike suggest that this was a politically inspired attempt to achieve a kind of "final solution" of the Armenian question in Anatolia. Although this interpretation is still being contested by most Turkish historians, at least some of them have acknowledged that the wartime "deportations" were accompanied by extraordinary savagery.<sup>149</sup>

Secondly, it is clear that the German government neither instigated nor approved of the Armenian persecutions in the Ottoman empire, though it had no objections to orderly and militarily necessary evacuation proceedings as such. Moreover, for reasons of political expediency, the statesmen in Berlin (and Vienna as well) steadfastly refused to go beyond admonitions and diplomatic protests to divert the Porte from its brutal

<sup>149</sup> Cf. Kilic, pp. 17-18; Bayur, III:3, 6.

policy. Indeed, without the constant prodding by some German officials in the Ottoman empire and by private individuals like Lepsius, Berlin's efforts to secure the termination of the Armenian persecutions would probably have been even more timid. Whether more energetic protests would have induced the Turks to halt their anti-Armenian program is quite doubtful. Contrary to what has sometimes been claimed, direct protection of the Armenians was completely beyond Germany's capacity. At the height of the massacres, in 1915, there were practically no German troops in the Ottoman empire, and most of the individual German officers who were stationed in the eastern provinces had no command functions whatever.<sup>150</sup>

The decision of Germany's and Austria-Hungary's leaders not to risk a break with the Porte on account of the Armenians must of course be seen and judged in context. The massacres occurred in the midst of war. Continued Ottoman participation in it was deemed essential by both Central Powers. Modern history records no instance where humanitarian considerations induced a belligerent country to dispense with the active support of its ally on account of the latter's domestic misdeeds.

In evaluating the conduct of Berlin and Vienna it should finally be noted that the statesmen in most other countries were similarly reluctant to take drastic action in the Armenian issue. In the United States President Wilson authorized diplomatic and charitable efforts on behalf of the Ottoman Armenians but was never persuaded to include the *Ittihad ve Terakki* regime among America's declared enemies. In fact, if the Porte had not

<sup>150</sup> At the time of the mass deportations the Ottoman Third ("Caucasus") Army was commanded by Gen. M. Kâmil Paşa, who was succeeded by Gen. Vehib Paşa in March 1916. The Second Army, moved to eastern Anatolia in the spring of 1916, was until March 1917 under the command of Gen. Izzet Paşa. German officers in these two armies were mostly engaged in technical and staff functions; the most responsible position being held by a field grade officer, Maj. Guse, as chief-of-staff at Third Army HQ.

taken the initiative (under German pressure) and severed relations with the United States in April 1917, the Wilson administration would probably have continued normal diplomatic intercourse with the Ottoman government right to the end of the war.<sup>151</sup>

<sup>151</sup> On the Wilson administration's reserve on the whole Armenian issue cf. Robert L. Daniel, "The Armenian Question and American-Turkish Relations, 1914-1927," *MVHR*, 46 (1959-60), pp. 252-59; and John A. DeNovo, *American Interests and Policies in the Middle East, 1900-1939* (Minneapolis, 1963), pp. 98-109.





Published by HAMASKAÏNE  
Armenian Cultural Association

HAMASKAÏNE Press  
10, Hussein Beyhum street  
Beirut — Lebanon

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PRINTED IN LEBANON



