

A Lecture on The Armenian Genocide

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Genocide, according to the definition of the 1948 [Genocide] Convention, involves the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group as such. Genocide may manifest itself in killing members of the group, causing serious bodily or mental harm to its members, deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Of these conditions, the policies applied in Nazi Germany to German and European Jewry, covered all of the above, with the exception of the forcible transfer of the children of the group. The two other peoples whose fate has been most frequently compared with that of European Jewry, are the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire and Republican Turkey, and Europe's Gypsy population, which were largely annihilated by the Nazis and their collaborators.

As the circumstances of the destruction of Europe's Gypsies during the Second World War bear many resemblances to the destruction of European Jewry, I will devote the rest of this lecture to a detailed analysis of the circumstances surrounding the elimination of the majority of Turkey's Armenian population. If an examination of what has been referred to as the 'Armenian genocide' is to prove conceptually and analytically useful, it would be worthwhile to have a theoretical framework in hand with which to begin to assimilate some of the material you are already familiar with, as well as that which we will deal with in the future.

Theoretical frameworks necessarily become refined and modified in the context of their confrontation with specific case-studies. As the comparative study of mass-man-made killings is in its infancy, the available frameworks are necessarily somewhat crude and unsatisfactory. The material which I handed out earlier includes two models. The first is taken from Ervin Staub's *The Roots of Evil*. Staub is a professor of Psychology, and has published work in the area of altruism, helping behavior, and aggression and motivation.

The second model has been advanced by Vahkan N Dadrian in an article in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Vol.5.,1990. Dadrian is a Professor of Sociology, and an internationally renowned expert on the Armenian genocide. I do not intend to discuss these models in detail due to constraints of time. There are certain similarities between the two, although, as you might expect, there are important distinctions as well, arising partly from the different disciplinary backgrounds of their formulators. If you compare the two models, it is apparent that both draw attention to certain structural conditions associated with genocide or mistreatment.

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Staub refers to difficult life conditions, in the economic, political, or social domain, whereas Dadrian refers to the heterogeneity of the social structure. Staub lists the cultural preconditions and progression in four genocides: Nazi Germany, Turkey, Argentina, and Cambodia. [In passing, I must dissent from inclusion of either the Argentinean or Cambodian cases under the rubric of genocide.] Dadrian is more concerned with the stages through which the genocidal process passes, whereas Staub focuses on origins.

Moreover, Staub is more concerned with the micro-personal level of analysis, accounting for mistreatment in terms of personal motives of the perpetrators. Dadrian, in contrast, focuses on the macro- societal facilitants. There are, however, some common factors shared by the two models: both emphasize, for instance, the social situation of the victims in the larger societal processes of social change and adaptation, and the facilitating circumstances of involvement of countries in large-scale wars at the time the mass killings took place. Both models are somewhat schematic and only rough guides to the genocidal process.

Nonetheless, you may find an incomplete outline map better than none at all. One important factor which requires close scrutiny in connection with all instances of mass killings is the nature of the relations which exist between the victim and perpetrator group. In this context what is important is the total configuration of these relations: economic, political, and social.

Moreover, it is the relations between groups which are important, not necessarily those between particular members of the groups. The events over the last two years in the former Yugoslavia illustrate the ease with which personal relationships can quite quickly become subordinated to group relations, and former neighbors and friends move from dining around the same table, to killing, pillaging, and raping one another.

The Armenians are an Indo-European people with a very ancient culture, who were first noted by historians toward the end of the 7th century BC. They gradually occupied the region which today is situated in Northeastern Turkey and the Republic of Armenia in the former USSR. The Armenian language is Indo-European, having some elements in common with other Caucasian languages, and displaying Greek influences, but being quite distinct from the language spoken by the Muslim Turks. Another characteristic which differentiated them from the surrounding population in the Turkish Ottoman Empire, was their religion.

The Armenians were the first people to embrace Christianity as a nation, doing so in the 3rd century. The Armenian Church, however, pursued an independent course. In 506 at the Council of Dvin, the Armenian Church rejected the ruling of the Council of Chalcedon (451) that the Person of Christ consists of two natures and became Monophysite, a view that claimed that Christ had only 'one nature.' In the 7th century, the Georgian Church broke away from the Armenian, leaving the Armenians separated by faith from all those who surrounded them. [EB, Micropaedia, Vol.1/Armenia]

These differences, of religion and language, are important in accounting for some of the hostility and violence which the Armenians experienced over the centuries, particularly during the nineteenth and early twentieth. Esman defines communalism as "competitive group solidarities within the same political system based on ethnic, linguistic, racial or religious identities." [In Wyszomirski, p.431] Wyszomirski suggests that communal conflict during the last two centuries has arisen in four environments.

First, during the emergence of nation states in the West, including conflicts between the English and the Welsh and Scots, and those that arose in the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland and Canada. In these countries, the conflict was managed effectively and stable democratic governments resulted.

The second environment in which communal conflict emerges is that of post-colonial societies. In these societies, prior to independence competing communal elites played down their differences in the interest of winning freedom from the colonial powers. Once independence was achieved, the scarcity of resources to cope with conditions and aspirations rapidly led to the establishing of coalitions to ensure the maximum allocation of the existing resources to their own groups.

The consequence has been that elites of communally based groups "engaged in tactics of outbidding. This in turn has fostered extremist positions, the disappearance of brokerage institutions, and the breakdown of former management and regulatory procedures."(Wyszomirski) This characterizes the situation in such multi-communal societies as Lebanon, Sri Lanka, India, and Burundi.

The third environment in which communal conflicts have flourished over the last two centuries, has been that of former polyglot empires which have disintegrated. A contemporary example is the former USSR. There, the political authorities either kept in check, submerged, or endeavored to eliminate communal identities in the interests of the formation of an integrated national identity. The collapse of central communist rule was quickly superseded by the re-emergence of regional, ethnic, and religious identities.

The disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire during the nineteenth century produced similar results in terms of an intensification of communal conflicts. The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire during essentially the same timeframe led to burgeoning of communally based conflicts in the Balkans as well as in the eastern provinces of Turkey, the region where the Armenian population was concentrated.

The fourth environment is that of post-industrial states, where a quest for new forms of identity has in some instances given rise to communal conflicts and aspirations which until now had been managed effectively. The conflict between French and Anglo Canadians, and between Walloons and Flemings in Belgium are instances of this category of communal conflict. It is, however, probably necessary to add a fifth category to Wyszomirski's list. This would include patterns of communal conflicts arising from flows of economic migration. Such flows have resulted in communal conflicts in certain countries of Western Europe, notably Germany and France.

The burden of Wyszomirski's argument is that communal conflicts are likely to erupt when common identities do not exist between communities coexisting in proximity to each other, or within the same socio-political system, because of the presence of basic divisions between them on the basis of language, religion, or race.

It is necessary to stress the probabilistic element in all this. Such divisions may lead to the eruption of communal conflict, but under certain circumstances may not do so. Thus, although there are divisions between communities in Switzerland on the basis of both language and religion, this has not been manifested in communal violence.

Similarly, in Lebanon religious differences between Muslims and Christians were managed effectively until the eruption of the Lebanese civil war in the nineteen-seventies. The potential for communal conflict, however, is always present in social systems where significant divisions on the basis of race, language, or religion exist.

In her view "religion, language, and race, singly or in combination, form the core of communal identities and values. It is these elements of the communal identity which are 'non-compromisable'. As long as they retain political salience, they cannot be traded or bargained with." (434-435)

The Armenians were divided from the Turks of the Ottoman Empire by both language and religion. Although they resided relatively peaceably within the Ottoman system so long as the empire prospered, once the processes of disintegration accelerated, and the empire began to contract rapidly, something which gathered pace from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, Armenians increasingly became the targets of violent massacres.

What was it about the Armenians that made them viable targets for sporadic outbursts of violence? In other words, what characteristics of the Armenians relative to the surrounding communities, made them suitable targets for victimization? In addition to the cleavages on linguistic and religious grounds, certain segments of the Armenian population were differentiated from the Turks by economic function, as well as cultural values, orientations and aspirations.

Like the Jews of the Ottoman Empire, the Armenians were organized in millets, which were headed by their indigenous leaders. Although this allowed them a degree of autonomy at the local level, they were barred from holding high government office. Certain Armenians, like the Jews, were heavily involved in finance and commerce, traveled extensively in the West, and were economically prosperous. This applied particularly to those who resided in the cities.

Armenians were resented by the Ottoman officials, precisely because their assistance in financing the activities of the state were needed. Most Armenians, however, were peasants. Even they, however, differed significantly from others tilling the land. As they tended to adopt western methods, they were more prosperous than their Turkish counterparts, and for this, resented. The "poverty-stricken Turkish peasants and nomadic Kurds regarded the relatively prosperous Armenian peasants as a "standing insult" and an inducement for plunder." (ibid, pp.450-451)

Their earlier adoption of Western education and values, their contact with the West, and their relative economic prosperity, all went towards inclining their leaders to a heightened sensitivity to their communal identity. As Wyszomirski summarizes the situation:

The status of the Armenian communities in the Ottoman Empire was precarious at best. Racially, linguistically, and religiously different from the Ottoman Turks, they occupied an economic elite position in society; they began to modernize earlier than the Turks; not only was there no common

value or identity between the two groups, but each had developed a brand of nationalism which excluded the other. Such a situation was so potentially explosive that even the smallest incident could result in violence." (p.451)

There are certain similarities, therefore, with the situation of the Jews in Western Europe during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, particularly with the Jews in Germany. They, too, were early modernizers, educationally and economically advanced, and important handmaidens in the emergence and growth of the state administrative and economic system. Another important similarity, was that they were dispersed in more than one nation state.

Armenians resided on both sides of the Turkish-Russian border. At the beginning of the First World War there were approximately 1,700,000 Armenians on the Russian side of the border, and some 2,100,000 million on the Turkish. Their loyalty to the state, therefore, as that of the Jews in Europe, could easily be brought into question by those who wanted to manipulate communal violence for political purposes. Parallels can also be drawn between both groups and Europe's Gypsy population.

Linguistically, ethnically, and culturally separated from sedentary populations, they were also mobile across state boundaries. There were few bonds of communal identity between them and the population groups amongst whom they moved or resided. In addition, they were perceived as socially and economically dangerous; a potential infestation to be kept at a distance.

Armenian villagers and peasants had for centuries been preyed upon by bands of Kurds, Circassians, Chaldeans, and others. These were largely raids of pillage, and the killings, although they occurred frequently, were a subordinate consideration to the main objective of economic expropriation. The marauding bands relied on being able to return and replenish their bounty subsequently. However, over the course of the nineteenth century the intensity of conflict in the Caucasus increased significantly with the expansion of the Russian empire southward.

The Russians enlarged their Armenian population following the Russo-Persian War of 1826-27 and the Russo-Turkish war of 1828-29. As the Armenians resided on both sides of the border with Russia, they increasingly came to be identified as enemies. As Reid notes: "What had really occurred was the dissolution of all bonds between Ottoman Muslims and Ottoman Christians as the result of the Russian war, and the declaration of "jihad." Ottoman Christians increasingly were identified as belonging to the "domain of war, the sphere of the enemy."(p.2056)

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century there occurred a development which was critically important in radically altering the basis of communal hostility towards the Armenian population of the Ottoman empire.

When widespread massacres followed the defeat of the Turks in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, leaders of the Armenian community appealed to the Russians to incorporate into the Treaty of San Stefano, 1878, provisions ensuring protection for the Armenian population. Under Article 16 the Sublime Porte undertook "to carry out into effect, without further delay, the improvements and reforms demanded by local requirements in the provinces inhabited by the Armenians, and to guarantee their security from Kurds and Circassians". (Hovannisian, p.14).

These provisions were never carried out due to the intervention of the British government which ensured a renegotiation of the San Stefano Treaty. Under Article 61 of the Treaty of Berlin, which superseded the Treaty of San Stefano, the Sublime Porte merely agreed to implement the necessary reforms and to report back to the European powers. However, the reforms were never implemented.

Massacres by Kurds and Circassians continued, but the Ottoman authorities did nothing, and the Great Powers turned their attentions elsewhere. This, however, had been a portentous development. The Great Powers had sought to intervene in the domestic affairs of another country on behalf of one of its communal minorities. The Ottoman authorities, understandably in the context of the normal conduct of foreign affairs, resented this.

In 1895 the Great Powers demanded that the various Armenian provinces be amalgamated into one administrative unit, that political prisoners be released, etc. Although the Sultan, Abdul-Hamid, agreed to introduce reforms, on a lesser scale than those demanded, once again he failed to do so. Even as Abdul-Hamid seemed to acquiesce in the reform programme in October 1895, the Armenians in Trebizond were in the throes of massacre.

In the following months, systematic pogroms swept over every district of Turkish Armenia. The slaughter of between 100,000 and 200,000 Armenians, forced conversion of scores of villages, the looting and burning of hundreds of settlements, and the coerced flight into exile of thousands of Armenians became Abdul-Hamid's actual response to European meddling." (Hovannisian, p.17)

No doubt the similarities with the situation during the last two years in connection with the former Yugoslavia will not escape your attention.

The next important development was the assumption of power in Turkey in 1908 of the Committee of Union and Progress, usually referred to as the Young Turks, known also as the Ittihadists. A counter-coup staged by the conservatives in 1912 failed, and in the immediate aftermath widespread massacres of Armenians occurred throughout Cilicia, where some 20,000 were massacred.

The Young Turks' rise to power, suggests Melson, was brought about because the regime of Abdul-Hamid "was not able to deal with the pressure from the great powers, the challenges of modernization, and with the demands for self-determination of the minorities." The CUP, however, had limited success in introducing domestic reforms, and prior to the First World War, their military ineptitude resulted in the loss of nearly half the territory of the Ottoman Empire, (p.2043)

These reverses, and the strains of modernization effecting the empire, moved the leadership of the Young Turk's to embrace a pan-Turkic nationalism. As Melson notes: "By 1912, the Young Turk's had rejected not only the Ottomanism and Pan-Islam of their predecessors, they also turned against liberalism and pluralism and became convinced Turkish nationalists.

[They] became intent on creating a new empire stretching from the Caucasus all the way to central Asia that would be dominated by Turks and in which minorities would have only nominal rights."(2043) This change in the constituents of Ottoman/Turkic national identity had important

repercussions for their relations with the Armenians: "They ceased being perceived in religious terms as a millet and came to be viewed as a rival nationality occupying the same land claimed by Turks."

The Armenians, moreover, occupied a critical portion of territory in the path of their imperial aspirations. The fate of the Armenian population of Turkey was sealed with the decision of the government to enter the war on the side of Germany and Austria-Hungary. This meant that Turkey was fighting against its traditional enemy, Russia, with the Armenians straddling both sides of the border region. At exactly the time that war broke out, in August 1914, the Armenian Dashnak Party was holding its Eighth World Congress in Turkey, at Erzurum. It established a committee to make recommendations concerning Turkey's decision to enter the war. It recommended that Turkey remain neutral.

The CUP sent an emissary to the Congress to discuss a proposal with the leaders of the Dashnak Party. He recommended that the Dashnak Party, in the event of war with Russia, should foment subversion among Russia's Armenian population. The Armenian negotiators "rejected the proposal, reaffirmed their Party's vow of neutrality and guaranteed Armenian loyalty in the event that the conflagration should reach Turkey. These offers by the CUP were later renewed to Armenian deputies in the provinces. But each time, Dashnak Party political leaders declined the offer." (Ternon, p.97)

The CUP emissary pointed out that the Russians had made a similar proposal to their compatriots over the border, and that this had been accepted. It was also claimed by the Ittihad that Russia had promised to hand over conquered Armenian Turkish territory to an independent state: "In this Turkish version of events, it was claimed that the Dashnak committee had decided to remain in the shadows until war was declared. If war broke out, they would incite the Armenians to revolt against the Ottoman armies as soon as the Russians crossed the border."

(Ternon, p.97) Although there was no truth to these allegations, certain developments made it appear a plausible account. In any event, it constituted an adequate justification for the action taken against the Armenians in the eyes of the Turkish leadership, members of the CUP, and many other Turks.

The Turkish campaign against the Russians in the latter part of 1914, and the early months of 1915, proved disastrous. Enver Pasha, Minister of War, "sacrificed an entire army to his militarily unsound obsession to break through to Baku and the Caspian Sea in the dead of winter". (Hovannisian, p.19)

In order to achieve this objective he sought to surround the town of Sarikamish in order to cut the Kars-Sarikamish railway. As Ternon notes, one of the units arraigned against him was the Armenian 4th Legion. His army was repulsed with a loss of 90,000 men killed and 12,000 captured, largely due to inadequate logistical preparation for the harsh winters of the Armenian plateau.(p.100) The Russian Armenians had organized a Volunteer Corps of Armenians, as they had done during the wars with Turkey in 1827 and 1877.

Many of those who volunteered had been former Ottoman subjects who had fled from previous massacres. Consequently, "It cannot...be denied that in the first few months of the war the majority of the Russian Armenians were driven by strong anti-Turkish feeling which found its

expression in the formation of these volunteer corps." (ibid, p.98) Given that the Russians were fighting with the assistance of Russian Armenians, some of whom had formerly been citizens of the Ottoman empire, it was not difficult for the authorities and the CUP to convince others that Turkish Armenians constituted an active Fifth Column, and that they were providing information to enemies of the state.

In addition, there is little doubt that even though the overwhelming majority of Turkish Armenians did not actively support the Russians, they hoped for a Russian victory. They knew that their conditions would be better under Russian rule, than under that of the Turks. The Turkish administration considered that proof of this was provided by the events which took place at Van during April and May 1915. Between April 15th and 18th, Turkish troops sacked some 80 Armenian villages, massacring their inhabitants.

The Turkish troops were preparing to do the same to the Armenian population of Van, some 30,000 out of a total population of 50,000. These Armenians, however, prepared themselves for defense. They were shelled by Turkish artillery for a month. The Armenian volunteer corps fighting with the Russians persuaded the Russian officer to relieve the Van Armenians under siege, and they crossed the border on May 4th. By the 16th, the Turkish troops were withdrawing. In July, however, the Turks launched a counter-offensive and the Russians retreated.

The Russian army ordered the Armenians to flee. Some 150,000 left for Transcaucasia, many dying on route from starvation and the predations of Kurdish bands. The most important immediate consequence of this was that a major area of Armenian concentration was emptied of its inhabitants. Although this was perceived as advantageous by the Turkish administration, at least a large proportion of the Armenian population of that region survived the war.

A more important and far-reaching consequence of what the Turks referred to as the Van 'revolt,' was that at this juncture the leadership in Constantinople made the decision to exterminate the Armenian population of Turkey. I noted earlier that for various reasons relations between the Turkish and Armenian communities over the latter half of the nineteenth century had been characterized by outbreaks of violence and large-scale massacres. Many hundreds of thousands of Armenians were slaughtered during the nineteenth century.

The circumstances of the First World War, which resulted in Armenians on either side of the Russian-Turkish border fighting in opposing armies, coupled with the enmity felt by the Turks to the Armenians, and the sympathies of the Armenians for the Russians, created conditions which enabled a genocidal thought to be translated into a genocidal policy. The genocidal thought had been part of the collective representations of leading Turks for some time. In the 1870s Abdul-Hamid had said:

The sensible thing to do is to destroy and eliminate any and all elements which may some day give rise to the same danger, afford the opportunity for foreign intervention and serve as its tool....Thus, we must eliminate, leave behind no traces of that Armenian nation". Wyszomirski, p. 452).

Now this idea was translated into policy. The war provided a context which enabled a policy, which it would have been difficult to pursue to its limits in peacetime, to be followed through.

Armed conflicts provide circumstances, as Melson notes, which facilitate the formulation and implementation of the decision to commit genocide.

First, wars aggravate feelings of threat and vulnerability. Secondly, during wars leaders, officials, and administrators need be less concerned about the attitudes of their citizens at home; they are frequently given much greater license, on the pretext of national emergency, to dispense with established freedoms and rights. Also, the opinions of the leaders and publics of other states recede in significance. Finally, Melson notes, "wartime conditions may close off other policy options, leaving genocide as a strong choice for an already radicalized regime." (p.2045)

There is no doubt that the authorities made a deliberate decision to exterminate the Armenians, that they transmitted this decision to the relevant officials — political [the party], administrative, and military. Those who were not keen to comply were removed from their post. This was the fate of the Governors-General of Kastamuni and Ankara. (Libaridian, p.52) Similar policies were pursued in most areas of Armenian concentration over vast territorial tracts.

As a preliminary to wide-scale massacre, it was necessary to disarm the Armenian population of Turkey. Some 300,000 were serving in the army. From the middle of March onward most of the Armenian soldiers were disarmed. First, they were used by the Turks as porters and placed in other menial jobs. Then, as Hofmann notes, "they were taken in groups of 80 to 100 and shot, beaten to death or killed in some other way by soldiers or police, acting under orders from their officers. Subsequently, in many towns and villages, men not liable for military service and aged between 16 and 70 were rounded up, supposedly for conscription, and were then shot without any form of trial, or else were literally worked to death in the sappers units." (p.72)

A secret committee was established with a view to organizing what was passed off as the deportation of the Armenian population from the war zone and adjacent areas. Most of the organizational work was conducted via the party apparatus. Initially, leading Armenians: intellectuals, lawyers, doctors, were ordered to report to the police. They were then jailed, and later executed. Then, after the young men in the military, and the leadership cadres of the Armenian people had been dealt with, the major phase of the campaign was undertaken.

Deportation notices were posted and the local Armenian community was assembled, and marched from the towns and villages towards Aleppo, still then a Turkish city, from where they were to be dispersed to resettlement areas. The two main areas chosen were southwards to Syria, and east towards the deserts of Mesopotamia.

Most of the deportees never arrived at their destinations. They were subjected to incredible atrocities by the soldiers who accompanied them, and marauding bands of Kurds and Chetes. In many villages the inhabitants were simply massacred, without the formalities of the lengthy deportation marches.

In other cases the "convoys were wiped out as soon as they were outside the town. Others continued, decimated by repeated attacks." (Ternon, p.107) The local population, roused to action by the call to jihad, carried out the killings.

In the regions which were inhabited by Kurds, "nomadic groups attacked and looted convoys, carrying off women and children. The most sinister role was played by the bands of Chetes, who sometimes massacred entire convoys." (ibid.)

The atrocities committed were numerous and barbarous. The bands of Kurds and Chetes, had, along with other various groups of Turkish irregulars, been waging a form of total war throughout the nineteenth century in the Caucasian border regions.

The Ottoman army found it cheaper to provide these bands with weapons to patrol the frontier regions, and grant them carte blanche to forage, than to provide regular military units for that purpose. A form of anarchic warfare prevailed in the areas which were inhabited by some of the Armenian population. As Reid notes,

...soldiers were encouraged to commit even more terrible deeds, because corrupt generals refused to issue supplies, so that they could sell them back to the government for profit. This corruption, plus the government's intention to economize, created the circumstances that encouraged plundering and eventually murder. (p.2053)

Whilst the circumstances I outlined earlier translated the genocidal thought into a planned genocide, its implementation was facilitated by the character of the Turkish troops, particularly that of the irregular fighting bands in the Eastern region. Reid concludes that the "cause of all the atrocities and finally the genocide of 1915-18, was the aggressive personality molded by the experience of the perpetual offensive raid."

These troops developed an ideology and sentiment of total hatred towards the Christian inhabitants of the area. Their aggressiveness, their total disregard of any norms of civilized behavior, of any notions of morality, and their failure to draw a line between the permissible and impermissible regarding this outgroup, is not dissimilar from the conditions which existed during the American civil war in the border regions of Kansas, Texas and Missouri.

The conditions in both areas spawned a similar type of warrior-character. As Richard Brownlee noted in his *Gray Ghosts of the Confederacy*, in these border areas there emerged gangs of irregulars:

Led by desperate men such as William C Quantrill, Bill Anderson, George Todd...the guerrillas, most of them only boys, fought a total war. West of the Mississippi they plunged a fairly stable, congenial, and conservative society into intense partisan conflict that was felt by every man, woman and child. This was not a war of great armies and captains, this was bloody local insurrection, a war between friends and neighbors... Here organized bands of men killed each other and the civil population . (pp.3-4)

So was it, too, in the border areas of the Caucasus. The only major difference being that in this region there was a complete absence of restraints. At least during the American Civil War the marauding bands of guerrillas generally left the women and children alone. Describing a raid by a Kurdish chieftain in 1877-78, Reid notes that:

At every Christian village along the way...[the] band committed atrocities. ... The Kurds raped women and children trapped in the church of Avgugli. Women were raped at Latwanz and Shahbaghi. ...At one place, the new bride of a priest was raped repeatedly by the raiders, while her husband, the priest watched her torment. The priest saw her die before his eyes, and then he himself was killed after being mutilated terribly." (pp.2055-56)

This pattern was repeated in the 1915-18 massacres. Women were repeatedly raped. Some were carried off into slavery. Hofmann notes that the treatment of pregnant women with newborn babies was particularly pitiless. This seems to be a characteristic of many situations of mass killing, including the Holocaust, the Vietnam War, the killings of communists in Indonesia in the 1960s, and elsewhere. Anyone could attack the Armenians en route with impunity.

A German who witnessed events at Aleppo,

“reported corpses of violated women, lying about naked in heaps on the railway embankment at Tell-Abiad and Ras-el-Ain. Many of them had clubs pushed up their anus. Another [German]...had seen Turks tie Armenian men together, fire several volleys of small shot into the human mass with fowling pieces and go off laughing while their victims perished in frightful convulsions. Other men had their hands tied behind their backs and were rolled down steep cliffs. Women were standing below and they slashed at those who had rolled down with knives until they were dead. The German consul from Mosul related that...in many places on the road from Mosul to Aleppo, he had seen children's hands lying about hacked off in such numbers that one could have paved the road with them. At the German hospital at Urfa there was a little girl who had had both her hands hacked off”.(Hofmann, pp.77-78)

Other groups were herded into caves, having been soaked in petrol. This was then ignited. Children there today still search in these caves, hoping to find gold, either wedding rings or teeth. (Ternon, p.119) These witnesses spared their readers and listeners details of the worst atrocities.

The deportees were sent to areas where there were few places of settlement, and where the land could not possibly sustain the numbers dispatched there. It was expected that most of them would die. A League of Assistance report described their plight:

The suffering of these poor people, most of whom are ill because of lack of food and ill-treatment, can hardly be conveyed in mere words. ...The living leapt into a mass grave, begging to be buried too and thus be spared such terrible suffering. ...At the same time people suffer the most brutal ill-treatment at the hands of the Turkish gendarmes who have no compunction about extorting from their unfortunate victims anything which is of any value in their eyes. (Hofmann, p.79)

In many of the camps, the inmates were systematically slaughtered. The German Consul in Aleppo reported that at the Ras-ul-ain concentration camp about 300 to 500 persons were taken 10 km from the camp and slain. The bodies were then thrown into the river.

Thus ended the Armenian problem in Turkey. In the course of the First World War two thirds of Turkey's 2,100,000 Armenians were killed. Of the remainder, many were exiled, and the rest lived in fear. Although the victorious allies had pledged to try the Turkish leaders responsible, little was done in comparison with the scale of the atrocities that had been encouraged and permitted.

Some sixty-odd high-ranking officials were prosecuted before a military tribunal established by the Turkish government. Kemal-Bey, who had been a provincial governor, was sentenced to death and publicly hanged in Constantinople. Four of the leaders of the war-time government were sentenced to death in absentia. They had fled to either Russia or Germany. (New York Review of Books, October 7, 1993/Istvan Deak)

A connection between the Armenian massacres of the First World War, and the policies pursued in the Second, has been alluded to by some scholars. The Armenian Genocide demonstrated that it was not difficult to implement such policies in time of war, and that the long-term repercussions were manageable.

According to the Archives of the Nuremberg Proceedings, Hitler, at a meeting of SS units at Obersalzberg, on August 22, 1939, at which he instructed them "to kill, without pity, men, women and children" in their march against Poland, commented that such activities would have no long term repercussions. "Who", he said, "remembers now the massacres of the Armenians?" (Staub, p.187, and 309).

I have looked in some detail at the circumstances associated with the Armenian massacre, and have endeavored to do so through the analytic lenses provided by a number of authorities. In passing I noted certain similarities to the Holocaust, and, following the excellent analysis provided by Wyszomirski, I commented on certain factors which contribute significantly to the gestation and activation of communal conflicts.

From the analysis provided a number of conclusions can be drawn. First, these incidents appear to be a by-product of a long process of gestation—in the case of both the Armenians and the Jews, over many centuries. This also applies to the instance of Europe's Gypsy population which, throughout its contact with the sedentary population, has been subjected to persecution and massacre.

Secondly, the absence of unifying bonds of common identity or interest between groups, whether focused on nationality, culture, religion, race, economic pursuits, or language, or the continued importance of distinctive communal identities, constitute potential fault lines across which violent conflicts may erupt.

The disintegration of the former Yugoslavia into separate political entities based on mystical notions of 'Croatism,' or 'Serbism,' as well as the re-emergence of communal identities in the former USSR, illustrate the rapidity and ease with which conflicts can be instigated across such potential fault lines.

Both illustrate the ease with which what appeared to be relatively stable *modus vivendi* can be easily shattered. Thirdly, the Armenian case illustrates that it is the relations between persons as representatives of groups which are important in the context of the eruption of group conflicts.

Armenian and Turkish peasants developed workable and amicable relations over the centuries in the areas where they lived together, in much the same way as many Armenians, Jews and Turks developed social and commercial relations in the cities and towns. These, however, are relatively easily rendered asunder under the pressure of group conflicts manipulated by leadership elites.

This was vividly illustrated in the case of the former Yugoslavia, where people have been virtually 'forced' into adopting a communal identity they had not previously considered relevant to their life circumstances or interests. (cf. Slavenka Drakulic/ *Balkan Express: Fragments from the Other Side of War*. Hutchinson, London, 1992).

In virtually all communal conflicts it is the manipulation of situations by elites, which sows the seeds which bear the fruit of violence and massacre. Anti-Semitic pogroms in Russia during the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth, Muslim-Hindu conflicts in India throughout this century, the conflict between Sinhalese and Tamil in Sri Lanka, or that between the ANC and Inkatha in South Africa, all attest to the central place of elites in manipulating situations so as to produce communal conflicts. Violence does not erupt suddenly from a groundswell of popular emotions.

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