

Armenians and 20th century genocide

Debates

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Abstract

During the 1800's – before the well-known genocide, planned in the twentieth century – there were massacres and persecution on Armenian villages. It is important to underline that many Christian Armenians lived in Ottoman Empire. At the beginning of 1800's they paid many taxes and felt themselves an important part of the Empire. Thus they would have liked to achieve more significant public roles, without losing their religion and cultural background. However, the Turkish leaders and population were against their aspirations. Moreover, Armenian communities were hard-working and relatively wealthy, thus both Catholics and Protestants (the Protestant Millet, an Evangelic Armenian Movement) hoped to steal their goods. There were International problems: the revolt of Bosnia Erzegovina and Serbia, the Russian ambition. At the same time, the Young Turks took power in Turkey and to be Muslim became a fundamental requisite: obviously this requirement turned into a problem for Armenians. European countries guaranteed a protection, but at the end there were only some petitions and motions. The Berlin Agreements were worthless. In 1864 the town of Sasun was destroyed, after three weeks of massacres. In 1895 there were some bloody repression in Constantinople, Trebizond, Akhisar. Followed the martyrdom of Zeythun, a mountain town of Cilicia: the Armenian revolutionary movement was in the infancy, unable to stop massacres. The few survivors were forced to convert. And the worst was is yet to come.

Introduction

Opinions vary on whether a direct link exists between the massacres of the Armenians, which took place in the 19th century, (leading up to the 20th century these massacres would occasionally be concentrated on one city, one region) and what today is known as the Armenian genocide during WWII, in the 20th century— an event which no longer focuses on a particular urban mass but nearly the totality of the Armenian population. This is a completely novel event, previously unthinkable, and according to certain interpretations it comes to a head precisely within a new Turkey, controlled by a “strong” power, a reformist impulse; or these are events that, according to other interpretations, are linked directly with the massacres to which Armenian communities were subjected at the end of the 19th century. This debate is, still today, ongoing.¹

¹ Cf. Maria I. Maciotti, *Persecuzioni degli armeni nel diciannovesimo secolo*, “La critica sociologica” XLV, n. 177, Spring 2011, pp. 69-92

And, furthermore, the way to label this desire for the annihilation of the Armenians is still under debate as well: it is genocide, according to many, according to the etymology of the word, from *genos*, race and from latin *caedes*, massacre. But even today Turkey denies that there was a desire for mass murder. Nor is there a consensus regarding the number of Armenians killed: just under a million, according to the American ambassador Henry Morgenthau.² But according to the Turkish reports these figures are much smaller. Over a million, according to others.

In the 20th century: Adana (1909) and its consequences.

In all of these complicated events one constant, according to scholars, stands out: the desperate situation of the Armenians, who were deported and exterminated during WWI. The few that managed to escape went into exile. Here we will see, in brief, the stages of the genocide.

Dadrian reminds us that, in April 1909, multiple massacres occurred at Adana, in one of the few zones that had escaped previous massacres. According to him, the tragedy might have been caused by the coinciding of a few factors: first, the joy of the Armenians after the victory of the Young Turks, since they believed the party would realize the hoped-for constitutional principles emphasized by the Ittihad.

But the fact that by this time the Armenians considered themselves equal to the Turks noticeably irritated the conservatives— the ones linked to the old regime. The prosperity of the region would account for the rest. The attack would occur in two phases, the first between the 1st and 14th of April: an attack realized with assistance from the authorities, who opened their arsenals to the Ottomans. The Armenians, who were armed and organized, managed to drive them off, also inflicting notable losses on their enemies. However, they accepted a ceasefire mediated by the English Consulate: then the second, more brutal massacre occurred. A million Armenians, who had in the meantime stored their weapons, were killed, burned alive, cut into pieces. Between the first and second phase (April 14-27) around 25,000 died.

The great European powers, whose boats were anchored at Mersin, the port of Adana, did not give orders to intervene: once more, European immobilism will constitute a permit for the following massacres.

In the meantime the Balkan question intensified. The nationalistic upheaval induced by the French revolution had arrived in the Balkans, incited by the European nations, until the outbreak of the war. In 1911 Italy succeeds in occupying Tripoli and proclaims the

² Cf. by H. MORGENTHAU, *Diario 1913-1916*, Guerini e Associati, Milano 2010 (*Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*). Guerini publishing house has established an imprint dedicated to the Armenian question and translated the 2003 book by Morgenthau, published by Wayne State University Press.

annexation of Libya (1912), establishing the base for a potential expansion in Africa.³ And things become even worse for Turkey during the Balkan wars of 1912-1913, that will have disastrous outcomes for Ottoman actuality, to the extent of placing their own integrity at risk.

Macedonia, populated by Greeks, Serbs, and Bulgarians, seems to be a major source of conflict at this time. Turkey seeks to repopulate it with Muslim immigrants, to drive out the Christians, and this leads to the reconciliation between the Serbs and the Bulgarians, who had been former enemies, fighting bitterly (1885): this alliance will become the nuclear basis for the Balkan League.⁴ It was the massacres committed by the Turks in Macedonia, in 1912 in Ishtib, to the east of Skopje before and then in Kocani, to the south-east of Skopje, as well as the Turkish intolerance of non-Muslim minorities, and the multiplication of demonstrations all over the Balkan countries that ultimately lead to war against Turkey, whose army suffered a series of unexpected, humiliating defeats and resulted in the end of the myth of Turkish invincibility. The Serbs and Greeks brought home victory after victory, while the Turks were forced to yield cities and territories. To retreat. The same thing happens in Thessaloniki (November 3, 1912).

An Onerous Accord, from diverse outcomes

In Turkey a military government takes over, with Enver Bey— already a militant under the Young Turk government— and the war resumes. But the outcomes are predominately negative for the Turks: Adrianople and Janine fall (March 6, 1913): May 1913 in London the previous decisions are confirmed, the tough conditions restricting the Ottomans. The upset is strong; the Empire will lose all its European territories with the exception of the hinterland of Istanbul.

Massimo Campanini writes that, paradoxically, this situation bolsters the Turkish military government as it ultimately weakens traditional structures of Ottoman power.⁵ Years follow, from 1913 to 1918, in which members of the military govern, such as Enver Bey, Gamal, and most importantly Tal'at (or Talaat), arguably the most capable among them. Ottomanism and modernization remain key words: but in the meantime a certain desire for independence in the Arabic territories still subject to the Empire, develops. And what is more: Campanini claims that the Turkish military government may have favored a weakening of the centripetal power of Islam, with an insistence on the secular aspects of political action and of the same symbolism of the effort at the national and state level.

³ Not without encountering difficulty and resistance from, in addition to the Ottoman Empire, the Fraternity of Sanusiyya, located on the so-called Green Mountain (Cyrenaica) but with seats also near Chad. For this see Federico Cresti, *Non desiderare la terra d'altri*, Carocci, Roma, 2011.

⁴ The alliance, in 1912, is between Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Montenegro, all united against Turkey.

⁵ M. CAMPANINI, *Storia del Medio Oriente* cit, p.32.

In the meantime further schisms open in the alliance between the European powers.

In fact, Russia watches the outcome of the war and the consequent changes that occur in the territories in question sympathetically,⁶ England declares that it would not oppose the changes determined by the military victories. The central forces are of the opposite opinion, and are particularly worried about the fact that with Durazzo Serbia would have an outlet onto the Adriatic, as this was considered unacceptable for Italy and Austria. Between June and July of 1913 a war breaks out in which Bulgaria confronts its old allies the Serbs and Greeks.

In this risky situation the Allied Powers find a point of accord in again requesting Turkey to back the reforms that were put forward and awaited for decades in vain by the Armenians: an agreement, from the 8th of February, 1914, sustained by the Turks, was herald of unfortunate events. Turkey indeed did not want to realize this reform. Already for a time the Armenians, who had always sought the path of dialogue, while remaining loyal to the empire, were seen by the Turks as dangerous internal enemies. The political shift in Russia, now in agreement with the requested reforms, the terms of the agreement, that required foreign general inspectors as guarantors for the reform, were causes for extreme exacerbation for Turkey, which was already humiliated and beaten in the Balkans, torn by internal struggles for power. The Armenians instead were heartened. Thinking that the days of massacre were over, that their desire to live in peace in Turkey, as equals, would be recognized and guaranteed. The human rights imposed will again be due to acts of great barbarity.

On the political front, the policy failed, overwhelmed by the conception of an multiethnic Ottoman empire with the Turks at the head, following a plan of rigid nationalism to be put into place through the structures of Ittihad party, mediating an infiltration and expansion in the western territories where the Armenian presence was still a problem: meaning, in Anatolia and western Turkey.

In 1913 the Association for the Promotion of the Turkish Forces was founded, which would oversee the training of the military, alongside the League of National Defense, whose official objectives were, in theory, the peace and well-being of the population. In reality, the alliance between the party and the military grew, resulting in a strong politicization of officials, the rise of the staunchest members of the Ittihad. The figure of the Minister of War, Enver, also a member of the party, takes a leading role, he too a member of the party, is also responsible for the revival of the paramilitary unit led by senior officers, the Special Organization, with the task of monitoring and neutralizing internal enemies: this will be the main protagonist in the Armenian genocide.

⁶ The Armistice, signed under the auspices of Great Britain, sees the division of the greater territories, as Greece occupies southern Macedonia and Crete, while Serbia claims control of Kosovo and northern Macedonia. Montenegro in turn occupies a part of Albania.

The Necessity for Internal Homogeneity and The Armenian Deportation

For a time the connection between Turkey and Germany, as has been noted, were reinforced: the alliance between these two nations is therefore not surprising, formalized the 2nd of August 1914, and followed by that of Austria. These are alliances that were utilized as shield against the internal operation with the goal of “rendering the ethnic structure of the Ottoman Empire homogenous”⁷, confident that the Allies would not intervene. Today this confidence is reflected in numerous testimonies regarding the orders by Emperor Wilhelm II to ignore the massacre of the Armenians, to deny it publicly. The German journalists are urged not to meddle in internal administrative affairs. To stay silent. Those foreigners are denied means to send articles on the subject home.⁸ The German ambassador Wangenheim, repeatedly requested by H. Morgenthau to try to stop the massacre of the Armenians, replied: “I will never do anything for the Armenians.”

The Imperial decree from 16th December 1914 cancels the accord of the 8th February, upon which the Armenians had founded so many hopes. Consequentially, the role of the European functionaries began to fail, that should have pursued the question of the pro-Armenian reform: functionaries that, moreover, had already seen their own functions diminished in various ways. On December 5th, 1916 the German ambassador had communicated that the Ottoman government considered the Treaty of Paris from 1856, the London Declaration of 1871, and The Berlin Treaty of 1878 null and void: moreover, the substance of the treaties themselves were already largely disregarded, without incurring any sanctions by the part of the European Powers.

Threatening letters were sent by the Young Turks to the Armenian press, to the Armenian Patriarchate: they foretell the annihilation of the Armenians. Intention that will become, very soon, operative. Officially, for national security reasons and following supposed treasons/betraysals on the part of the Armenians, the decision was reached to deport the Armenian population from the western and south-western provinces of the Empire.

The war is thus used as a pretense to populate Anatolia with Armenians: war frequently functions as a background with political desires of eliminating the supposed internal enemy.

The most attentive and recent studies on the subject have highlighted the responsibilities of the Central Committee of the Ittihad party, of the Minister of the

⁷ DADRIAN, 2003, 231.

⁸ Ibid, 232-234. Even Morgenthau insists, giving ample details, on the strong active German involvement, beginning with deportations. News of the individual massacres and of the deportations in progress in 1915 reaches him by various reports from American consulates in Turkey. These are detailed accounts, eyewitness testimonies of survivors, photographs, accounts given by missionaries and diplomats. (H. MORGENTHAU, *Diario 1913-1916* cit., Introduction by Roger Smith, pp. 27-28

Interior and the security services, together with that of the Ministry of War⁹, but there was also a broad, calculated campaign of information and propaganda in the press about the supposed crimes committed, or just planned, by the Armenians: accused of being siding with the enemy, wanting to rise up and, having murderous intentions regarding the officers of the party in power.¹⁰

The value of information and the importance of communication become therefore widely inclusive and accompanied by the circulation of “good,” “founded” motivations. Secret dossiers circulate that incite genocide.

In early August 1914, Turkey invokes the principle of “armed neutrality”, and proclaims general mobilization: which also involves the recruitment of many Armenians, starting with those between the ages of 20 and 45 years old. Beginning with those between 15 and 20, and then those between the ages of 45 and 60.

US Ambassador Morgenthau, one of the most attentive witnesses to the Armenian genocide, recounts an upsetting description of the way in which the Armenians were annihilated in this last age bracket, forced to carry heavy loads through difficult marches in the snow, hurried along by Turkish bayonets and whips. Few would reach their destination, where regardless they would soon be massacred.¹¹

Shortly after the general mobilization Turkey declares war, attacks Russian forces on the Black Sea, while continuing with their oppression of the Armenians: with some sporadic rebellion. This leads to April 24, 1915, when the Minister of the Interior gives orders to arrest all the Armenians suspected of fostering hostile feelings for Ittihad: arrests which are followed by killings, without any trial or conviction. Morgenthau writes:

In the early part of 1915, the Armenian soldiers in the Turkish army were reduced to a new status. Up to that time most of them had been combatants, but now they were all stripped of their arms and transformed into workmen. Instead of serving their country as artillerymen and cavalrymen, these former soldiers now discovered that they had been transformed into road laborers and pack animals. Army supplies of all kinds were loaded on their backs, and, stumbling under the burdens and driven by the whips and bayonets of the Turks, they were forced to drag their weary bodies into the mountains of the Caucasus. Sometimes they would have to plough their way, burdened in this fashion, almost waist high through snow. They had to spend practically all their time in the open, sleeping on the bare ground--whenever the ceaseless prodding of their taskmasters gave them an occasional opportunity to sleep. They were given only

⁹ The Minister Enver is obviously implicated but also the head of Department II (Military Informational Services) Seyfi.

¹⁰ The newspaper Sabah, later called Ariamart was the first to express this idea (December 13, 1918)

¹¹ Cf. H. MORGENTHAU *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*, New York, 1918; French trans.: *Mémoires de l'ambassadeur Morgenthau*, Parigi 1919. Cf. also the Guerini edition, cit.

scraps of food; if they fell sick they were left where they had dropped, their Turkish oppressors perhaps stopping long enough to rob them of all their possessions---even of their clothes. If any stragglers succeeded in reaching their destinations, they were not infrequently massacred. In many instances Armenian soldiers were disposed of in even more summary fashion, for it now became almost the general practice to shoot them in cold blood. In almost all cases the procedure was the same. Here and there squads of 50 or 100 men would be taken, bound together in groups of four, and then marched out to a secluded spot a short distance from the village. Suddenly the sound of rifle shots would fill the air, and the Turkish soldiers who had acted as the escort would sullenly return to camp. Those sent to bury the bodies would find them almost invariably stark naked, for, as usual, the Turks had stolen all their clothes.¹²

This is nothing however, writes the American ambassador, compared with what happens to the Armenians who are suspected of having hidden weapons, to not have returned them according to orders. In these cases torture was common. The churches in particular were subject to looting and to assaults on clergymen who, unless they confessed to hiding weapons, were armed and dragged through the streets where they were abandoned to an angry mob. The women were stripped naked and whipped, even if pregnant. The violence against women, writes the ambassador, was habitual. Morgenthau gives an account of the most common tortures, beginning with the whippings from the feet up, the application of scalding iron on the chest, the pulling out of eyelashes, or the use of leather straps with flaming spikes. And he adds that the Armenians learned to buy weapons from the Turks in order to return them so that they could avoid a painful and excruciating death.¹³

Then, the final stage: the deportation. May 26, 1915 the Minister of the Interior turns to the Grand Vizier, requesting a special law that would make deportation possible. It would be a Temporary Act of Deportation. This measure was signed May 29 by the Grand Vizier, considered by the government at the end of the month.¹⁴ Basically it allowed the deportation of groups of people suspected of treason, espionage, as well as the militaristic need of various types, all based on the “perception”¹⁵ on the part of the military authorities themselves in risky situation: therefore a very broad discretion could be used, which suspended any constitutional right. This would therefore result

¹² H. MORGENTHAU, *Diary* cit., pp.216-217. In the text the author gives specific examples of groups of around 2,000 people each, reduced to famine and extreme weakness and thus killed, despite promises and assurances from the officials on the matter. Those in charge of the killings were often Kurds.

¹³ A high officer in the Turkish army will later confirm the use of these and other forms of torture to Morgenthau, retaining that they were the best solutions, useful methods. The name that many of the biggest atrocities owe a debt is Cevdet Bey, *Vali* of Van, who invented a system in which horseshoes were nailed to the feet of Armenians.

¹⁴ In reality there does not seem to have been any formal promulgation of the law, even though later it would be appealed.

¹⁵ The word that is repeated, cited, and emphasized in DADRAN 2003 is *hissetmek*

in the deportation and extermination of most of the Armenian population.¹⁶ It should be noted that in this case deportation had as focal point the annihilation of the Armenians, not simply their displacement. As it happened with the Jews, a few years later. Today in fact it is recognized that deportation can be one of the strong factors in the desire for genocide, or, as others would have it, for mass extermination.

Additional laws deal with the property of those deported, with the stipulation regarding their potential sale at auction, places of conservation in the capital, etc.. In sum, according to the director of the Deutsche Bank, it was a law that authorized the confiscation and the prelude to the confiscation of the property of the Armenians on the part of the government.¹⁷ Only one single voice of opposition, that of Senator Riza who, often during 1915, took the counter position, reminding that the property of the Armenians cannot be considered with the same standards as abandoned property, since they were forced and obligated to leave them behind. He reasoned that the confiscation was not authorized by the Ottoman morals nor by law. In fact, around a million and a half people lost all of their possessions, in a situation in which this measure used to weaken every potential, residual resistance. Around 800,000 Armenians were killed outright, if we use Turkish sources. To these we must add those who were eliminated by the military, during the course of the war.

According to the clearest historians and according to Henry Morgenthau's Diary, the German responsibility is evident, starting with the suggestion itself of deportation as means of extermination.

The deportations imply the emptying of villages, along with the isolation and the concentration of the Armenians. Under the guise of general mobilization, the following, strictly interrelated genocide was facilitated. Brought about by the military and paramilitary organizations, following the wishes of the Ittihad.

The instrument was that of the Special Organization, which was given the funds, weapons, etc., with the goal of resolving the "Armenian question." Dadrian reminds us that those in charge were for the most part ex-detainees freed by a special order of the Ministries of the Interior and of Justice, which would organize ambushes of the convoys of those deported: when this Organization was discussed in parliament, it had already accomplished its goal.¹⁸

¹⁶ The *Temporary Act of Deportation* will be later repealed due to its unconstitutionality on November 4, 1918: but in the meantime it had led to the massacre of the Armenians.

¹⁷ Morgenthau remembers a meeting with Taalat in which he was asked to be given by American insurance companies the lists of the life policies with Armenian origins: by now the Armenians, being dead, had the government as their beneficiary, said Taalat.

¹⁸ DADRIA 2003, pp.267, On the Special Organization see also DADRAN 1993.

It was the press, at the end of the conflict, that exposed the responsibility of the Special Organization: firstly, the newspaper "Hadisat", then the newspaper of the opposition, "Sabah".

In the meantime nonetheless the theory of the Armenians transferal was used (officially it was referred to in these terms transferal) for the necessities of war: a thesis that is indeed very persuasive, with a kind of legitimacy. It mentions protection, the necessity of providing for their needs: instead it was more accurately a deportation without return. It is impossible, given the brevity of this paper, to follow the upsetting events step by step: but it should be clear, beyond any shadow of doubt, that the intentions of annihilation of the Armenian population are now emerging in the official sources, in addition to the witnesses, a project to be realized both during the difficult journey of crossing all of Anatolia, and in the secondary sites appropriately chosen for the elimination of the survivors, variously called "stations" or "concentration camps" (lager). The deportations proceed for the entire spring and summer of 1915.¹⁹

In general, these are sudden deportations that do not give enough time to escape or to prepare. Nonetheless, there were exceptions: in some cases the Armenians were allowed to liquidate their own property: to Turkish buyers, at unfair prices, since there was no other opportunity for the Armenians in the sale.

In recent years, the accounts of the survivors have been published, translated and circulated: these tell of shootings for ones who couldn't keep the pace, of a strenuous march under the relentless sun. Of hunger and thirst. Of wounds on feet and legs. Of lice infesting these already extremely reduced people, no longer capable of defending themselves. Of frequent acts of violence and beatings by the part of the officers. Of rape and violence against women, impregnated by force: a fact that was reprised often in the following generation, and is present today, so much so that we use the term "ethnic rape". We have accounts of Armenian women forced to leave their children behind, who were no longer able to move. Exhausted, they were no longer able to carry them. Additionally, there are narratives that recall the cadavers of family members abandoned along the way, the suicides. The hangings of able-bodied men. The abandonment of others to farmers armed with sickles, hoes, saws. The Kurdish attacks, and those by bandits completed the job.

¹⁹ Only the cities of Constantinople, Izmir and Aleppo were spared.

But already the narration of Grigoris Balakian, one of the survivors, Armenian Golgotha which partially came out in 1922, recounted the most brutal methods of the Armenian genocide.²⁰

V.N. Dadrian stresses the responsibility of Wilhelm II's Germany in the Armenian extermination (denounced by many parties, including the Turks who wanted to avoid responsibility for the slaughter, explaining that it had been a German suggestion to internally reinforced borderlines), and the clear complicity of the army, acting under the category of "retaliation" with regards to the alleged acts of sabotage carried out by the Armenians. These will be subdivided into labor battalions, be watched attentively and subjected to "rigorous" measures.²¹ The outcome, whose consequence will be extermination, as well as, years later, the policy of making Jews harmless will lead to their genocide.

Even today we do not know the number of Armenians killed: the figures range between one million two hundred thousand and around a million and a half people, including men, women and children. Even today the debate continues on the motives behind this massacre: surely it must have included a kind of religious fanaticism. It is well known that when religious factors are involved in issues having to do with power, its management, and with money, the situation worsens and conflicts intensify, as has been shown in many of the subsequent conflicts that have afflicted Africa or the Middle East in the second half of the 20th century, and the beginnings of the 21st century. Religious fanaticism against Christians has certainly been one component, especially regarding the massacre of populations, of the mass killings by the Turks and Kurds. But ultimately, as many have noted, Turkey had many people who were not particularly religious. That were, on the contrary, declared atheists. Therefore, the final reason must have been a reason of the State. The welfare of the Armenians may have acted as a detonator.

The Concealment, the Exposure

The German and Turkish governments will try to conceal the events in every way possible, to draw the public attention away from what happened. And this, in spite of German diplomats who had repeatedly sent reports, sought information from the Foreign Ministry and the office of Chancellor in the hope of being able to stop the

²⁰ GRIGORIS BALAKIAN, *Armenian Golgotha. A Memoir of the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1918*, tr. into English, New York, Vintage books, a division of Random House, 2010. The original edition appeared in 1922, the second part in 1959. The author, born in 1876, lived in Ottoman Turkey and Germany, where he studied theology and engineering. He was considered, it is written in the introduction to the text, one of the cultural leaders and thus was arrested by the Turkish government on the night of April 24, 1915, and deported. He was one of the few survivors, was able to become Bishop and prelate of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Southern France. He died in Marseilles in 1934.

²¹ This was the result of an order of deportation by the general Bronsart, a document discovered by the British commissary, whose authenticity was never doubted even by the Turkish authors. Lepsius speaks of terror through the method of extermination.

carnage. Despite the strong, noted commitment that the ambassador Morenthau had towards the Armenians: a fact that was often discussed with Taalat.

In addition, Doctor Johannes Lepsius, having gone to Turkey and made contact with the Armenian Patriarchate, the US Embassy, and with important Turkish officials, manages to collect testimonies and evidence and write a "Secret Report" that will be sent to members of the Reichstag and to various public figures.²²

The German government will intervene, however, confiscating the copies directly from the deputies, while its author was subjected to heavy pressure even in Holland, where he had fled. The German ambassador intervened also with Lepsius, who was forced to promise not to do or say anything that would compromise the cause of the war. After which he was given the job of sorting the archives: a thing that he did, underlining the responsibility of Turkey (and probably minimizing that of Germany).

The debate on the role of Germany has not simmered down even over the period of a decades: Morgenthau is convinced, also based on the attitude of absolute refusal on the part of the German ambassador, that it had refused to intervene in support of the Armenians. Others preferred to overlook the matter or expressed varying opinions: unquestionably it is very difficult to find explicit documents for this issue.

Thus emerged in 1919 a collection of a good 444 documents and five annexes taken from diplomatic and military correspondence: the idea being to exculpate Germany and underline Turkish blame. This, as is now known, is an incomplete work, the documents that would have proved the co-responsibility on the part of the Germans having been edited, maybe even with economic consequences with such as possible compensation requests.²³

Furthermore, Armin T. Wegner, doctor of law, writer and poet, was able to give an eyewitness account of the Armenian tragedy in a Turkey dominated by the Young Turks: he shot hundreds of photos, documenting what was happening in the deportation camps. And he did more as well: he collected appeals and notations. He attempted to make the situation known in Germany and the US. He was forced to leave Turkey and in November 1916, asked to return to Germany. Since he was able to carry some photographic plates with him, he tried to raise awareness about the massacre of the Armenians through conferences and debates. And he publishes "The road of no return, A martyr in letters" with the news that he sent from the desert of Deir es Zor to friends and to his mother. In 1929 he writes the President of the United States Woodrow Wilson, declaring the extermination of the Armenians, called for the possibility of a new land for the survivors. But then Hitler rises to power and Wegner,

²² F. WERFEL opens the 5th chapter of his first book precisely with an interview between Enver Pasha and the pastor Johannes Lepsius, based on the established tradition in question.

²³ a precise analysis regarding the German documents can be found in V.N. DADRAN 2003, pp. 314 and following.

who denounces the anti-Semitic behavior of Nazism, is arrested by the Gestapo, tortured, and incarcerated.²⁴

Then two Austrian Consulates collect additional information; one, Ernst Kwiatkowski, from Trabzon, learns from German sources that the original suggestion of the transferal of the Armenians came from Germany; the other, Arthur Chevalier de Nadamlenzki, from Adrianople, confirms the same conclusion but with Turkish sources. This is manipulated information, to be handled with great caution. Not the only one, either, since in the meantime it came to light that a Turkish-German plan for the deportation to Mesopotamia of the Jews existed, from January 1914.²⁵ Consequences of the militarism that unites the two nations? Of the personal sympathies that Wilhelm II had for Enver Pasha? This is the potential subject of a long debate. Today it is not fully resolved.

In the USA, the president had in the meantime been informed. "When the authorities gave orders to deport the Armenians," writes Morgenthau, "they were actually issuing a death sentence for an entire race": but the idea of a kind of internal civil war prevails in the United States. And to the present day the matter isn't resolved, to the point that, when in the beginning of March 2010 the House Foreign Affairs Committee in Washington expressed the opinion that, regarding the Armenians it was decidedly a genocide, the reaction for the Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan was to bring home his own ambassador, explaining that a fact of this kind put the process of normalization between Turkey and the United states at risk.²⁶

It's certain that the war has allowed Turkey to not give answers to the questions at hand. If and when it is obliged to, it invokes those rebellions and uprisings as supposed Armenian wrongs. In the Ottoman archives, the scholars say, still today documents can be found that attest to the legitimacy of the acts carried out against the Armenians. There was, they say, no criminal intent: so how can one even talk of genocide? But then it is assumed that a few attacks are verified: something that has never been officially accepted and recognized by Turkey. Though it has been documented by various American consulates in Turkey, by various Christian missionaries. The authors of *Survivors* remember the existence of the files of the US Department of State and among the many they dwell on the news of the consul J.B. Jackson, stationed at Aleppo, in Syria: who was able to witness de visu thousands of Armenian refugees

²⁴ After his release, between 1936 and 1937 he flees to Italy, to Positano. He dies in Italy on May 17, 1978. His photographic documentation was rediscovered in 1965 and in 1968 he was given the title of "Righteous" by Yad Vashem. In Yerevan, capital of Caucasian Armenia, one of the streets bears his name, and his ashes are entombed in a wall in honor of the Hill of Swallows (Dzidzrenagapert), where the monument to the Armenian genocide stands.

²⁵ The news is published, in the January issue of 1914, in the Russian periodical "Golos Moskoi"

²⁶ Already in 2007 there was an opinion of this nature, but President Bush had succeeded in blocking the debate and prevented a vote inside congress. Today US President Obama seems to have tried in vain to avoid public positions on the subject, counting on Turkey as a bridge to moderate Islam. But a vote of the House or the Senate that would confirm the matter at hand as genocide would evidently lead to this theory, given the Turkish reaction to the opinion of the Commission.

coming from the interior of Turkey, who recounted what was happening: materials that were passed then to the ambassador Morgenthau, along with many others. Here an epidemic of typhoid is mentioned, of the horrid living conditions of the survivors. They tell of a caravan assaulted by Kurds, who took everything: to the extent that the Armenians had to walk naked under the blazing sun, without bread or water.

On the other side of this matter, Donald E. Miller and Lorna Touryan Miller collect these stories, thanks to the British ex-ambassador James Bryce, from Arnold Toynbee: 149 reports, divided by region: thus the possibility of comparing among various narratives news regarding a single city, a specific village.

In 1915 the press published numerous articles, in the UK, the USA, Australia. In those years the fact of the Armenian genocide didn't seem to be in doubt.

Many years later, in 1973, the Rwandan Nicodème Ruhaskyaniko, in charge of research on genocide for the Commission for Human Rights, in conjunction with the UN Economic and Social Council, made a note of the Armenian genocide: he encountered, however, serious opposition from the part of the Turkish delegation. So much so that in the report presented to the commission on July, 4, 1978, every mention of the subject was dropped. Vanished.

A long period of follows serious conflict between Armenian political organizations on one side and Turkish negation on the other. Various acts of terrorism against Turkish diplomats result, but also the self-destruction of the groups of armed Armenians (1975-1983). In the courts, the Armenians often were declared guilty: but it called attention to their the memory of those wounded, and the immense wrongs that their entire population had been subjected to, within the space of just a few decades.

In 1974 the Permanent People's Tribunal declares that the slaughter of the Armenian population, through deportation and massacre, is to be counted as genocide. They added that the Young Turks government was responsible for it, and that they must recognize the reality of the situation. This was the first, important recognition of the subject. This would be followed by a report drafted by Benjamin Whitaker, commissioned by the same subcommittee: The Revised and Updated Report on the Question of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, in which, once again, it is mentioned as the Armenian genocide. However the Whitaker report, even though adopted by the sub-committee, was not distributed to the Committee on Human Rights, due to a few reservations noted on specific passages, including the passage on historical genocides: endless disputes followed among the Armenians, who argued that regardless there had been recognition by the part of the UN, and the Turks, who instead denied that it had been recognized, that the event had taken place.

The debate on the subject involved the European Parliament (1985-86). Only June 18, 1987 this body, though condemning acts of terrorism by certain Armenian groups (for the most part also condemned by the majority of Armenians), recognized that, yes, the matter qualified as genocide. The Section 2 reads as follows:

We retain that the tragic events that took place between 1915 and 1917 to the detriment of the Armenians residing in the Ottoman empire constitute a genocide to the requirements of the Convention for the Prevention and the Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted by the UN General Assembly December 9, 1948.²⁷

It is clear however that this is a conflict that dates back to the Ottoman Empire, and the current regime cannot be prosecuted nor therefore subject to claims. It is true, however, they add, that the refutation of the current government in recognizing the Armenian genocide might be an insurmountable obstacle for the consideration of an application of entry of Turkey into the European Community.²⁸

It doesn't end there. Yves Ternon remembers how, on May 19, 1985, in the USA, the newspapers "New York Times" and "Washington Post" published a two-page manifesto, addressed to the Chamber of Deputies, with more than 60 signatures from the assembly of Turkish-American associations. Among these signatures was the historian Bernard Lewis, professor of History of the Near East at Princeton University. The signatories protest against the decision of the Chamber of Deputies, which plans to make April 24 a day in remembrance of "man's inhumanity against man" and maintains that that charge of a genocide of Armenians is unacceptable. Moreover, they say, it is no longer possible to access the sources of all the interested parties: for example, the archives of the Ottoman Empire are not consultable. How can one speak of genocide?

And the matter continues. In fact, Professor Lewis, visiting Paris in 1994, in an interview with "Le Monde," states that he considers Turkey as a bulwark against Islam and speaks more than favorably about its entrance into the EU. To the journalist questioning him on the reason that the Turks continue to deny the Armenian genocide, he responds: "You mean to recognize the Armenian version of history?". He makes his opinion clear, one cannot speak of genocide because this would require a deliberate political stance, a decision to systematically destroy the Armenian nation. And instead, he believed that the intention was the deport the Armenians and not exterminate them.

This statement provoked shock and indignation among the French intellectuals. Thirty of these wrote a petition and reminded him that nothing justified the fact that a scholar of his level would vouch for the falsehoods of "yesterday's criminals." They

²⁷ Reported in Y. TERNON, trans. cit., pp. 342-343

²⁸ At present writing, 2011, this is still an unresolved question, which carries a great deal of weight regarding the inclusion or exclusion of Turkey within Europe.

clarify that though it is dangerous to abuse the term, it is essential to recognize it where it is undeniable. Lewis responds again, in "Le Monde" on January 1, 1994, offering his interpretation. Here he speaks of the partial nature of the deportation of the Armenians, and seeks to validate the hypothesis of a supposed Armenian treason, and concludes that there is no certain proof of the existence of a plan on the part of the Ottoman government with the goal of exterminating the Armenians.

At this point the Armenian associations of France mobilize: a civil action is brought against the historian, from Article 1382 in the Civil Code, which declares that anyone who has caused damage is obliged to provide compensation for it. The request for compensation included a serious attack on the memory of the survivors and their families, but also on the respect and the compassion due them.

The court of appeals of Paris charged Professor Lewis a fine of 10,000 francs to the Armenian association of France, and 4,000 to LICRA, in addition to the court fees. The verdict, beyond that of the fines, has an unquestionable moral value as it connects the theme of free speech of the historian to those duties and responsibilities of scholars in general: Lewis is contradicted, in his interpretation, by important documents such as the Whitaker Report, the conclusions of the permanent tribunal of the people, the resolution of the European Parliament. On the other hand, he doesn't have documents capable of contesting these, though having sustained that no "serious proof" existed of the Armenian Genocide. He is thus lacking "in his duties to objectivity and prudence by expressing himself in a categorical way on such a delicate matter."²⁹

According to Y. Ternon, the denial of the Armenian genocide is destined to fail, with time, the more so as since the 1970s various non-Armenian scholars³⁰ are interested, from various standpoints, about the subject, gradually discovering different sources. Historians, legal scholars, and sociologists have initiated a comparative reflection with the Shoah, maintaining that in its time it was a prototype of genocide. Emerging from this is the conviction that the Armenian genocide was not only the first genocide of the 20th century with close interest in the European area,³¹ but it was also a kind of template for the proceeding mass exterminations. Except for the intentional genocide of Nazism³², which utilized a rational program (via the use of trains, that were scheduled,

²⁹ Verdict of June 21, 1995, court of appeals, Paris, First Chamber, First Session.

³⁰ For example Donald E. Miller, author with his wife of the text "*Survivors*." Certainly he was encouraged towards a research on the Armenian people, the examination of the documentation present on the subject in the UK, and had interests in the culture and the religion, the historical events which affected his family, his wife's people. Starting from this, as an attentive scholar, he evaluates archival materials first hand: he then passes to the interviews of the survivors: already interested in the "Oral History", he recalls the writing of Studs Terkel on the subject. But he did not know yet of either specialized magazines nor the existence of the Oral History Association. In this sense, his research on the Armenians opens up new cultural horizons. The book will be read and translated. It will call attention to many about this tragedy that has been concealed, denied.

³¹ Indeed some historians would recall the previous intentional genocide in the territory of what is currently Namibia by the Germans against the Herero people.

³² But it should be noted that deportation, already used for the Armenians, was taken up again, still with the intent of genocide, in the case of the Jews and the nomads in the years of the Third Reich, before the use of concentration camps.

conveyed, made to arrive and depart on time) and the specific equipment (at least in the second stage) the other, successive genocides of the 20th century do indeed recall that of the Armenians, for their use of not particularly sophisticated weapons, for the propaganda and the climate that then led to the active destruction of those who came to be viewed as enemies. In this sense from many parts they are people who see the genocide that almost eliminated the Armenians as a prototype of those that would come after.

So everything is resolved then? Not exactly, since the newspapers report, on November 11, 2000, that following the acknowledgement on the part of the Pope John Paul II of the Armenian genocide, that Turkish-Vatican relations have been compromised.³³ The Pope made the following statement:

In the 20th century was marked by an extreme violence. The Armenian genocide, at the beginning of the century, marked a prologue to the horrors that would follow. Two World Wars, and innumerable regional conflicts and campaigns of extermination deliberately organized have taken the lives of millions of faithful.

These are words that provoke vivid protests on the part of the Turks: it is the first time that the Vatican would celebrate a mass in honor of "Armenian martyrs"; in which a public document uses the expression "Armenian genocide". Turkey continues to oppose the public declarations of this kind. It recently managed to block a motion of this tenor from the US Congress. It speaks, if it must, of around 300,000 victims, restricting the figures given by the Armenians. The French acknowledgement was not well tolerated, and Turkey opened a legal dispute also with Italy, where a debate had been initiated on the matter in Parliament.³⁴

Without giving space here to the many moments of refusal, on the part of Turkey, of the acknowledgement of this massacre, I would however like to at least call attention to a fact, which occurred March 18, 2006, when in Berlin 2,000 Turkish nationalists paraded in the streets asking the German Parliament to retract the resolution with which Germany had established the Armenian genocide (acknowledgement of 2005). The protest was promoted by the "Berlin Talaat Pasha Movement", which is part of the Turkish workers party, the *Ishi Partisi*. The speakers stressed the distance from the other associations and parties, but also recalled some of the slogans yelled in the

³³ Taken from a correspondence between the Pope and Karenin II, Catholicos of the Armenian church.

³⁴ The member of the League, Giancarlo Polverini asks that the question be addressed at the European Summit at its next meeting in Nice; Sandra Fei of the *Alleanza Nazionale* and Marco Pezzoli, of the *Democristiani di Sinistra*, announce a re-examination of the events on the part of the historians, it is proposed as mediation to attempt to reach a normalization between the Armenians and the Turks.

streets, such as “Anything for the homeland” or “What we did was in defense of our country”.³⁵

In spite of everything there still exists today a strong resistance to recognizing a genocide that has been unfortunately a historically proven fact.³⁶

In addition the desire emerges on the part of the Republic of Armenia the September 23, 1991, to break their isolation in such a way that in the beginnings of 2010 they established a reconciliation with Turkey³⁷. It remains to be seen whether the patrimony of denied memories will allow a new, more harmonious equilibrium or not. Although it is true that the situation of the Armenians in Armenia is different than those of the Armenians in exile, maybe the former are more determined to preserve this patrimony of memories, to transmit and communicate them, without actually living processes of isolation, but instead managing, at least at the level of new generations, to live more fully in their adopted homeland.

Not just a Matter of Naming.

The problem of naming however still needs to be clarified. Because even if on the Turkish side the genocide is denied, it is also true that today there are debates about whether it is possible to call massacres, like what happened to the Armenian people during the first World War and then the Jews, in addition to many other Europeans, and among them Gypsies, during the Third Reich, “genocide”.

I refer in particular to an extensive, documented interesting study by Daniel J. Goldhagen, *Worse Than War*, which was published in Italy with the title *Peggio della guerra. Lo sterminio di massa nella storia dell’umanità*³⁸ in which the scholar proposes

³⁵ Among the organizers, Vural Savas, the same that promoted the banned pro- Kurd party HADEP: in his view, in recognizing the genocide Germany had provoked divisions in the Turkish community in Europe, had brought an image of a bloody, violent Turkey, thus blocking the entry of many immigrants. The Turkish government did not provide explicit support of the protest but it did not either take a clear distance from an occasion intended to sanctify Mehmet Talaat Pasha, who as the leader of the Young Turks was one of the principal directors of the genocide and escaped a death sentence by moving to Berlin in 1918. The International Red Cross then gave him a new identity and passport, with which he traveled through Europe promoting the ideas of Atatürk. He was then recognized and killed by Soromon Tehlirhan, a young Armenian who lost his family in the massacre, who was then absolved as he was declared mentally unstable. According to the interpretation of some historians, to avoid that there be too much international attention drawn to the armenian tragedy. Cf. di LEA NOCERA, *Giovani turchi sfilano a Berlino. Manifestazione in Germania in onore di Talaat Pascià, massacratore di armeni*, «Il Manifesto», 24 March 2006.

³⁶ Volume n. 31 of *l’Enciclopedia di «la Repubblica», l’Atlante storico*, in the summary charts relative to 1915 and 1916 does not mention the Armenian genocide. Notes on the subject are only present in vol. 2, in which news is given about Armenia as a historic region of western Asia, divided today between Turkey, Armenia, and Iran, in addition to Armenia as a federated republic of the USSR and then made independent. A great deal of space is given to the language and culture of the Armenians.

³⁷ Between 1918 and 1920 the Armenian Republic survives, welcoming the Armenian refugees who managed to flee from Turkey, in addition to the Armenians who for many generations were in Russia. But in 1920 the small republic becomes officially absorbed by Russia. It will struggle for decades to maintain, pass down, and communicate its own culture, and its own history. Up until the declaration of independence: a fragile independence, which is defended in all ways, probably also through treaties, reconciliations with present-day Turkey.

³⁸ D. J. GOLDHAGEN, *Peggio della guerra. Lo sterminio di massa nella storia dell’umanità*, Milano, Mondadori, 2010 (*Worse Than War*, 2009)

to abandon the term “genocide” in favor of the word “elimination”. According to him, our way of indicating mass extermination is not appropriate. Both because it is difficult to distinguish between definition, explanation and moral evaluation, and because this final point, too often, takes precedent over scientific analysis.

We do not interrogate the causes sufficiently, the circumstances that eventually make a mass extermination possible. According to him it would be more opportune to speak of “eliminationism”: a fact that has always been present in the history of humanity, even if it has taken up a large space in the 20th century, all over the world. Eliminationism, writes Goldhagen, is a broader concept than genocide, and less vague; it includes and assumes various elements. These can be utilized singularly or simultaneously. Though some of these elements can coexist at different stages, in the same design as elimination, the author proposes: firstly, there exists a desire with the goal of:

1. “transformation”, of the group, of the reality of the considered enemy. This is an intent that is based upon the destruction of a political, social or cultural identity that defines that group. One example adopted by the scholar is that of the attempts on the part of the Turks to eliminate the written and spoken Kurdish language. And often, the characteristics that need to be changed also include religious ones (regarding the matter at hand, at least for the early killings, this includes the hatred of the Christian Armenians.)

2. A second factor defined is that of “repression”. In this case the hated people are kept within the territory, with the attempt however to dominate them with violence: one extreme example might be that of apartheid in South Africa; in the case of the Armenians in Turkey, this would be present in the persecutions and in the violence that certain Armenian citizens were subjected to in the 19th century.

3. The third element is that of “expulsion”, also known as deportation. One motive present for centuries in the history of humanity, writes the scholar, so much so that it is easy for him to cite the examples: the repeated expulsions from Spain of the Muslim minorities³⁹, the deportations of the Irish by the British to North America and the West Indies⁴⁰, and the expulsions over the centuries of the Roma people, banned from England and France.⁴¹

In this case, however, I do not believe that the fact of the Armenian deportation or of the deportations of various European countries to the camps of the Third Reich can be completely assimilated with the previous examples: in these cases deportation was a

³⁹ In 1502 but again in 1609 and 1614.

⁴⁰ It is estimated that the numbers affected around 100,000 Irish; during the period between 1641 and 1652.

⁴¹ Currently there's a discussion of the genocide of the Roma people, regarding their continued oppression and deportations which they have endured, also in Italy.

means that in itself brought about the annihilation of the supposed enemy. During the trip itself and then the final half.

This might bring to mind the first phase of the expulsion of the Jews from Germany, with deferred consequences at the border: but the deportation, in the following years, was linked more closely, it seems to me, to a decided policy of physical and psychological annihilation of the people in question. This is something more an expulsion, while painful, as indeed there have been many over the course of history: in certain cases, expulsions have given life to a new, richer culture, to additional things not always negative.

4. The fourth point regarding the “prevention of reproduction”, “...an act of elimination is a long temporal horizon, which thinks of future generations”⁴² it is accompanied, usually, with others. This includes the sterilization of men and the rape of women: techniques that are still today in use; we know that these methods were widely used in the Balkans and elsewhere, under the label of “ethnic rape”. In the case of the Armenians, certainly there were rapes of women. Regarding men, it perhaps seemed quicker and more opportune to hurry them to their death, from the very beginning of the deportation. Finally, the last of the methods,

5. Extermination, the premise and promise of a “final solution”. An instrument, according to Goldhagen, that is widely used across time.

All five of these instruments are, in his analysis, the consequence of eliminationistic convictions. Not to be confused with the pre-existing causes, which are not always, he states, adequately studied. Is genocide a thing to itself? If you use the larger concept of mass murder, writes the scholar, wouldn't we instead talk about a continuum of escalating violence? The final goal is still, in this view, an eliminationistic solution. If anything it is made more feasible by the contemporary world:

The enemy is a group of identifiable persons, marked by skin color, ethnicity, religion, social class or political views. The solution to neutralize this enemy must be in some way “final”. From here begins eliminationism. Eliminationist policy has found sustenance in notably different ideologies, from communism to Nazism to imperialism.... Many roads lead to Eliminationism.⁴³

There's more. The scholar raises questions about the concept of genocide, and about the imprecision of the definition itself. He questions which form of murder can be defined as genocide: must it be total? If not, what percentage of dead will qualify? And if the cultural and social identity of a group is important, does this mean mass murder, or could it also be referred to as a genocide? The questions could go on.

⁴² D.J. Goldhagen, tr. cit.p 21

⁴³ Ibid, p. 29

According to him, in the present day it is not possible to give precise and appropriate definitions to genocide. To this imperfect definition he adds a forced separation from similar phenomena, where he believes there exist a continuum, as he says, between genocide, more numerically limited forms of elimination.

In particular he launches a series of critiques against those who consider the Shoah to be the “prototype” of genocide, as its archetype. And those who link the Shoah to the use of machines, whereas in Rwanda, for example, machetes were sufficient.

I think we can agree on the fact that the Shoah can be placed in a wider context of hostility and eliminationalistic tendencies of the Germans against the Jews.⁴⁴ But this “culmination of an eliminationalistic assault” has definitely a very different reflection, it has long upset entire populations, to the present day it carries a weight still that is very different from those unfortunate ones that came before.⁴⁵ It was accomplished, certainly by degrees, through various phases and attempts. The mechanism of the trains departing, the disembarking in the camps, the sorting, the cremation ovens were not established all at the same time. Though how is it possible not to see these intentional, programmed, killings, accomplished through a variety of ways, as an atrocious thing, unto itself?

Goldhagen continues clarifying how the concept of murder relates to a mass murder: but this, he reaffirms, would include only massacres of hundreds or millions of individuals, while others slaughters of a vaster scale exist, even if smaller when compared with the bigger massacres. Mostly he questions the assumption of “intentionality” as criterion to establish whether a genocide has occurred. It would be wrong, he believes, to use terms such as “intention” and “deliberate”. He makes the example of other eliminationistic outcomes: those such as the expulsion of the Bosnians and the Kosovans at the hands of the Serbs, the incarceration of the Koreans in concentration camps by North Korea. He writes, further, of the forced conversions by the communists under the Indonesian government after mass murders. He recalls the enslavement of millions of Europeans under Nazism. And he argues: famine has also been used deliberately as method of mass extinction, as soon as any government fails to intervene with donations for survival and has let certain minorities die of hunger and of thirst. It is difficult, in fact, in many cases, to distinguish, draw defined lines of demarcation. But shouldn't we then talk more generally about the eliminationistic desire?

⁴⁴ Indeed, as has already been amply demonstrated, that in many parts of Europe there were strong intolerances and racist sentiments against the Jews.

⁴⁵ Moreover it should be recalled that along with the Jews political opponents, believers of different faiths, among which the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Sufis, handicapped people and homosexuals and the Roma were murdered or brought to the brink of death: while the term Shoah is specific only to the Jewish community.

Here is how he addresses the Armenian massacre:

Their destination was the desert where they perished in colossal numbers, and at the end of the marching, the Turks slaughtered perhaps 200,000 of those still alive. The Turks eliminated almost all of the 2 million Armenians living in Turkey, exterminating 1.2 million, expelling most of the rest. Employing a wide range of eliminationist policies, they also converted, forced into slavery, or kidnapped and raised as Turks between 100,000 and 200,000 Armenian women and children.⁸ The Turks left Armenians in Constantinople, today's Istanbul, alive because eliminating them was unnecessary for solving the problem as the Turks understood it, and extending their eliminationist project to their capital city would have further exposed their predations to the world. With the Bolshevik Revolution and the Russian armies' collapse, the Turks extended the annihilationist campaign to Transcaucasia, known as Russian Armenia, which they occupied in 1918, and where 300,000 Armenians had fled. They killed perhaps 200,000.⁴⁶

Here we are not confronted with the desire to deny the massacre but with a question of denomination. It is well noted elsewhere that words and their use are not impartial. It is not the same thing to talk about genocide or of the eliminationist desire, with everything that it deals with, though certainly they are concepts that are near to each other: it would not be genocide without eliminationistic desire. It is not by chance that on December 9, 1948 genocide was subject of a multilateral convention, adopted by the United Nations: it is worth mentioning a day before the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights.

A little later, the Fourth Geneva Convention on the Protection of Civilians in Times of War (August 12 1949) also considers the topic of genocide, in Art. 32, where it prohibits acts that may cause "physical suffering" and "the extermination of protected persons."

Resolution n.96-I of December 11 1946, (shortly after the end of WWII and the return, wherever possible, of the survivors found in concentration camps in Germany and Poland⁴⁷) by the Assembly General of the United Nations invited the Economic and Social Council to draft a proposal for a convention on the crime of genocide, defined as "the denial of the right to existence of entire groups of human beings" in addition to "a crime under international law against the spirit and purposes of the United Nations and condemned by the civilized world". The convention passed without a single abstention, which came into force January 12, 1951, and gives rather analytical explanations regarding prohibited acts, which range from voluntary murder of

⁴⁶ Cf. from D.J. Goldhagen, *Peggio della Guerra*, tr. cit., p 42

⁴⁷ On the thorny issue of the resettlement of displaced persons, see Silvia Salvatici's *Profughi Europei nel secondo dopoguerra*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2010, the result of an attentive, thorough research: previously published in ed. GUIDO CRAINZ, RAOUL PUPO, SILVIA SALVATICI, *Naufraghi della pace. Il 1945, i profughi e le memorie divise dell'Europa*, Roma, Donzelli editore, 2008

“members of a group” (for which also a limited number of murders could be sufficient, at minimum one murder if the action took part of a larger context, within a project of mass murder), to causing grievous wrongs to the physical and psychological wholeness of members of a group: psychological wholeness, which means that the administration of drugs and narcotic substances should be excluded. But the Convention also includes the “deliberate” subjection (the word itself is there, deliberate), of a group to certain life conditions with the intent of causing physical destruction, either full or partial: the element of intentionality, of willfulness, of premeditation is here, in fact, underlined forcefully. But it should be also said that it is very present in the slaughters that the Armenians underwent, in as much as the victims under Nazism.

Additionally, the Convention addresses measures that aim to block births within a certain group: therefore impediments to marriage are forbidden, along with the forced separation of sexes (utilized both with the Armenians as under Nazism, in the camps), forced abortion, obligatory sterilization: in that it impedes future growth of the population. Furthermore, the Convention forbids the forcible transfer of children from one group to another: something that happened with the Armenians, and not them alone. There is the condemnation, in this case, of the common attempt to make the youngest of the population forget their identity and sense of belonging to their own group. It should also be noted that, in the convention, not only the physical executors of these crimes will be punished, but also the political leaders that have instigated or merely permitted these crimes.

The convention, being by nature programmatic, requested of the states to make this obligatory and to distinguish and adopt appropriate legal procedures.

Returning to Daniel J. Goldwater’s argument in *Worse than War*, to me it seems that the broadness of facts that can be placed under the jurisdiction of genocide are rather broad and may indeed encounter, as he says, the possibility of more factors that should be kept in consideration while analyzing such issues. Repression, expulsion, extermination and prevention of reproduction are taken into account. This includes large groups but also one single persecuted or murdered individual, as they represent a group: the quantitative concerns (what percentage?) do not strike me as playing a role here.

There is maybe a point, first in Goldhagen’s list that was not detailed very explicitly in the convention, and that is the one of “transformation”. But this is actually very present, where one speaks of a prosecutable crime in which one seeks to make people forget—young people, above all—the sense of their own belonging.

It seems to me, therefore, that the concept of genocide, such as has been shown in the Convention, is broad and capable of providing food for thought and research

and significance that move precisely in the direction of highlighting the desire of annihilation of certain groups.

I certainly agree with what the scholar writes regarding diversity, in addition to that of affinities between one genocide and another. This genocide of the Armenians had precisely its own characteristics, and did not make use of modern technology. It happened in the environment of a state in which the Armenians were a minority, already persecuted for decades, which exploded with violence during the war. There were attempts to deny the memory, the existence. But Turkey has never denied singular eliminationistic acts against particular Armenian cities, in certain historical moments. The total rejection has rather been in accepting the Armenian "genocide" as such. I do not believe that this fact is without meaning.