

REVIEW ARTICLE

Anatomy of a crime: the Turkish Historical Society's manipulation of archival documents

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Özdemir, Hikmet, Çiçek, Kemal, Turan, Ömer, Çalık, Ramazan and Halaçoğlu, Yusuf. *Ermeniler: Sürgün ve Göç (The Armenians: Expulsion and Migration)* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2004).

The Turkish Historical Society (Türk Tarih Kurumu, THS) recently published a “landmark” book, *Ermeniler: Sürgün ve Göç (The Armenians: Expulsion and Migration)* (Ankara, 2004), by Hikmet Özdemir, Kemal Çiçek, Ömer Turan, Ramazan Çalık and Yusuf Halaçoğlu. In the preface, historian Yusuf Halaçoğlu, the president of the THS, makes the following claim: “[T]he various documents which we have presented in the book, belonging to various countries, possess the quality of entirely refuting the claims put forward by the Armenians until today” (p vii).

In fact, the book presents no new evidence to refute “claims” of genocide. Rather, by disputing the Armenian population figures before and after the deportation, the authors contend that most of the Armenians survived, and therefore, no systematic massacre could have occurred. The authors, however, do concede “that in the course of the events which transpired during the First World War, the Armenians suffered a total of some 200,000 deaths” (p 106), but state that these deaths were not planned. The casualties are explained away through such well known arguments as rebellion, epidemics, and famine. For example: “The Armenian [terror] organizations officially entered into [armed] struggle with the Ottoman State, killing and being killed in the process”; “the *Tehcir*, or government-directed deportation of the Armenian population of Anatolia was the state’s lawful right to self-defense, and of course, ‘mistakes were made’”; because of “such causes as food shortages, the inability to control bandit gangs,

and the incapacity to deal with outbreaks of contagious diseases” the Armenians experienced “a period full of sorrow” (p 179).

The writers blame the Armenians for their own destruction:

The Armenian Deportations must not be conceived as a decision which was enacted against a community living in a vacuum within Ottoman society. On one hand, the Armenians themselves are not entirely innocent in the matter. And even so, what sort of legal measures would any other state adopt against a community that collaborates with the enemy and carries out a planned revolt during a period in which a life-and-death struggle was taking place in Gallipoli? In the end, it was the Armenians who lost. If they had won, they would have established another independent state like Greece, Serbia or Bulgaria. [But] this action on the part of the Armenians ultimately resulted in their expulsion from Anatolia. (p 179)

Even if we accept this thesis that the state can deliberately deport hundreds of thousands of its own citizens, knowing that many of them will perish, it amounts to nothing less than the legitimization of state-sanctioned mass killing. Although this kind of logic is evident throughout the book, my focus here is not to challenge their thesis *per se*. In scholarly terms, the authors are guilty of another type of crime, i.e. manipulations of historical documents in order to legitimize their position.

The book is composed of three sections. The first is a review of the literature on the Armenian population of the period. The second section repeats key population figures and other information on the deportations to Syria. The final section provides additional relevant figures, based on the reports of American missionaries as well as on Armenian sources.

In the first section, the authors spend 53 pages introducing and discussing various studies of population, figures which are well known but useful for the uninitiated reader. Since there are no precise numbers to be had about the Ottoman Armenian population, the authors provide an estimate which is itself an averaging of previous estimates. In their words, “we estimate that the ‘acceptable’ figure [for Ottoman Armenians before 1915] found in all of the studies of a scientific bent which have appeared is not less than 1.5 million. Unfortunately, this figure that we have given is neither precise nor definite” (p 52).

Unfortunately, the authors fail to realize the internal inconsistency of their argument. As is well known, with regard to Ottoman Armenian population statistics, there are two opposing points of view. On one hand, it has been argued that the Ottoman government, for political reasons, intentionally undercounted the Armenians. Conversely, it has been argued that Armenians intentionally inflated their numbers. The authors try to have it both ways, leveling criticism at the Ottoman statistics that gave the lower population figure of 1.23 million Armenians while at the same time acknowledging the Ottoman census number as the only reliable ones (p 49).

The same contradiction appears when Armenian sources are examined. On the issue of the Armenian sources—particularly church population registries—two well known and opposing arguments are frequently made. The first of these, commonly used by “the Turkish side,” in essence claims that the Armenians

deliberately inflated their numbers. The second argument, traditionally adopted by “the Armenian side,” claims that the Armenian community intentionally under-represented their population in order to reduce their communal tax obligation to the state. The authors actually employ both arguments, on one hand claiming the Armenians’ numbers to be “inconsistent” (*tutarsız*) and “intentionally exaggerated” (*kasıtlı olarak abartılmış*). (pp 22–24ff), yet elsewhere maintaining that “[Armenian] community leaders always tended to present their population as small[-er than it actually was], for the purpose of evading taxes” (p 9, 31). Without going into great detail, suffice it to say that such internal contradictions appear throughout the work.

Why a book critique?

Since the book in question offers no new evidence, documentation or interpretation for proof (or disproof) of a genocide but simply repeats the old arguments, and moreover is replete with such internal contradictions, what is to be gained by writing a review and critique? Three important reasons may be given. First, the Turkish press presented the book as a “ground-breaking work,” with completely new discoveries which would transform the field. Headlines such as “Allegations on Armenian genocide refuted with a scientific study” were common.¹ The book has thus been instrumentalized for political purposes and therefore deserves critical attention.

Secondly, the publication of such a book represents a turning point in the “official Turkish thesis.” A new precedent has been set with the extensive use of foreign archival sources, which until now had been dismissed as wartime propaganda.² The work in question likewise gives ample space to opinions of this sort. Throughout its pages, authors and publishers such as “Lepsius, Morgenthau, Bryce and Toynbee” are introduced as persons “who undertook the task of producing propaganda for their countries under the conditions of the day.” Their works are repeatedly referred to as having been “biased written reports and contrived propaganda materials, as was common during the war conditions of that era” (p 176; see also pp 67–69).

However, the uniqueness of the book is not its repetition of the old thesis but its insistence on something new: that the foreign archival materials support the “Official Turkish Thesis.” The authors carefully distinguish themselves from the above-mentioned people with regard to the type of foreign documents that have been used. According to the authors, Lepsius, Toynbee, Morgenthau, etc. prepared their books on the basis of “unsupported information about the massacres and on inconsistent news, reports and declarations,” whereas they themselves have conducted the present research on the basis of “official reports and correspondences that were submitted to responsible authorities (*ciddi makamlara*)” (p 177).

In a press conference, THS President Yusuf Halaçoğlu, a contributor to the present volume, proudly declared that the information derived from British,

American, Italian, French, German, Austrian and Russian archives scientifically refuted the claims of an Armenian genocide.³ The authors further state that only a small amount of the foreign archival material was used to support their thesis: even though they had enough material to write dozens of books on Turkish–Armenian relations, they limited themselves to revealing the reality behind the genocide allegations (pp vii–viii).

Considering that it is well known that the non-Turkish archival reports condemn the Ottoman government and its policies toward the Armenians, such a conclusion is remarkable. Historically, the evidence found in the archives of these countries is used as the basis for the argument that there was a systematic annihilation of the Ottoman Armenian population in 1915. For this reason, these materials have been published in significant quantities, mostly by researchers of Armenian origin, and mainly in order to prove the validity of the Genocide claim.⁴ If, then, the authors of this new work can assert, on the basis of their review of this very same archival material, that “the Armenians never encountered anything along the lines of a planned action to wipe them out” (p 177), such an assertion demands to be examined more thoroughly.

The last reason concerns the use of these archival materials. The content as well as the meaning of some of the German and American documents have been obviously distorted in order to conform with the thesis of the book. This distortion takes six different forms: (1) glaringly incorrect translations; (2) alteration of information, including numbers; (3) omission of words or sentences which would weaken or refute their claims; (4) summarizing or paraphrasing of certain documents for which complete, accurate, and literal translation was claimed; (5) summarizing and paraphrasing in such a way as to invert the ideas and opinions of the persons cited; and (6) selective quotation of diplomats whose statements, in their proper context, had the opposite import.

The work of the THS and its writers must be compared with a similar undertaking by the German Foreign Ministry and Johannes Lepsius⁵ in 1919. The German government, together with Lepsius, published much of the German diplomatic correspondence on the Armenian deportations after having altered many pages and removing culpatory passages in an attempt to exonerate Germany of all complicity in the genocide.⁶ Likewise, the THS and these five writers have distorted and misrepresented original foreign archival documents. It is critical that the English-speaking public and the academic community be aware of the lengths to which the Turkish State and “official state employees” will go to manipulate public opinion.

To these three reasons, we may perhaps add a fourth. I criticized this book in three separate weekly columns published in the Istanbul newspaper *Agos*, citing the intentional distortions committed by these writers.⁷ One of the authors, Professor Kemal Çiçek, responded with personal attacks in a lengthy open letter.⁸ He also makes several new assertions, the most important of which is the astounding information he unintentionally provides regarding the method that he and the other authors followed in distorting the documents in question, which I will discuss below.

Example A: report of July 25, 1915 from Bergfeld, the German Consul in Trebizond

One of the sources referred to by the authors attempting to prove there was no systematic and premeditated massacre of Armenians during the 1915 deportations is the letter written by Bergfeld, the German Consul in Trebizond, and dated July 25, 1915.⁹ In the authors' version of this letter, the consul expresses the opinion that there was no planned massacre. However, this document has significant errors in translation, and has also been intentionally mistranslated. In addition, descriptions contained within the document that would refute the authors' claims are simply removed from the translation.

Bergfeld's original German reads as follows:

Bald nach dem Abtransport der Armenier aus Trapezunt traten Gerüchte auf, dass ihre Hinmordung bereits begonnen habe . . . Die Erfahrung had gelehrt, dass die den Türken feindliche Phantasie in Trapezunt die unglaublichsten Blüten treibt. Die Gerüchte wurden daher seitens des Kaiserlichen Konsulats mit grosser Zurückhaltung aufgenommen. Sie verdichteten sich indessen zu derart bestimmten Behauptungen, dass ich mich im Interesse des deutschen und türkischen Ansehens für verpflichtet hielt, die Angaben auf ihre Wahrheit nachzuprüfen.

Soon after their deportation from Trebizond, rumors began to emerge that the massacre of the Armenians had already begun . . . The experience demonstrated that the anti-Turkish fantasies in Trebizond had borne the most incredible fruit. The rumors were received by the Imperial [German] Consulate with great reservation. They tended to concentrate around certain claims whose veracity I felt obligated to investigate for the sake of the reputations of both Germany and Turkey.

The authors of the new book translate this passage thus:

After their deportation from Trabzon, speculation began to circulate that the massacre of the Armenians had already begun . . . Hostile fantasies (*Düşman fantezisi*) emerged which lay the responsibility for the bloodshed in Trabzon upon the Turks. The speculations were investigated by the German Consulate within a profound silence. The task was taken on of confirming their veracity with a view toward the advantages of German and Turkish prestige, and the consular functionaries labored tirelessly over certain of these claims.¹⁰ (p 78)

But even more significant than the simple mistranslated words is the blatant distortion of the document's contents. The authors take the German sentence, "Ausserdem begegneten wir drei Arbeitern, welche uns berichteten, am Morgen mit der Absuchung des Flusses und der Beerdigung gefundener Leichen beauftragt worden zu sein" ("In addition this morning we encountered three workers who reported to us that they had been ordered to scour the river and bury the corpses they discovered"), and translate it simply as "In addition we encountered three workers who gave us information." In similar fashion, the original sentence ". . . ein Beweis, dass eine planmässige Beseitigung etwaiger Leichen bisher nicht erfolgt war" ("a proof that a planned disposal of any possible corpses had not yet happened") is translated as "*this is probable proof that there was no plan to dispose of the corpses.*"¹¹ It is obvious to the reader that Bergfeld's statement

“a plan for the disposition of the bodies had not yet been made” implies that sometime in the future a plan could be implemented. However, the authors translate the sentence as if Bergfeld had said that there was probable proof of no plan for disposing of bodies.

Now let’s look at the passage as a whole:

Wir haben dabei eine Leiche gefunden, welche etwa 7 Tage im Wasser gelegen hatte, ein Beweis dass eine planmässige Beseitigung etwaiger Leichen bisher nicht erfolgt war. Ausserdem begegneten wir drei Arbeitern, welche uns berichteten, am Morgen mit der Absuchung des Flusses und der Beerdigung gefundener Leichen beauftragt worden zu sein. Nach ihren glaubwürdig erscheinenden Angaben hatten sie bisher vier Leichen, darunter eine Frauenleiche, gefunden. Endlich wurde uns von Einwohnern berichtet, dass sie eine Leiche den Fluss hätten heruntertreiben sehen . . .

We also found a body that had been in the water for about seven days, proof that a planned disposal of any possible corpses had not yet happened. In addition, this morning we encountered three workers who reported to us that they had been ordered [to go out] and scour the river and inter the corpses that were discovered. According to their apparently credible account, they had already found four bodies, including one of a woman. Finally, it was reported to us by the inhabitants that they saw one body floating down the river.

This passage is translated in the new book as follows:

We found a corpse that was estimated to have been in the water for about seven days. This is probable proof that there was no plan to dispose of the corpses. In addition we encountered three workers who gave us information. They were engaged in the task of [going out] tomorrow and searching the river and interring the bodies that were found. Up to now four bodies, including one of a woman, had been found. [They] had received reliable information about these things. Finally, the locals reported to us that they had seen a body being thrown into the river.¹²

In his response to my comments, Professor Çiçek both defends these translation errors and indirectly admits that the translation may have been incorrect. On one hand, he claims that there were no distortions in it whatsoever, saying that “the German Consular report was included almost in its entirety by us in [our] work.” On the other hand, he acknowledges at one point, “even if we were to suppose that Akçam’s translation is more accurate . . .” hinting at the possibility that his own translation is wrong.¹³ It appears that for Professor Çiçek, the distortion of a translation is unimportant, the meaning remains unchanged regardless of the quality of the translation, and in any case it doesn’t really matter upon which translation one bases one’s claims, the document still won’t show that there was a planned massacre. To Professor Çiçek, my criticism of the adulterated translation is only a minor irritant. The real issue, in his words, is this: “It befits [only] Akçam to accept on the basis of these lines that a planned massacre was carried out.”¹⁴

But the issue here is not—nor was this the point of my first critical piece—whether or not a planned massacre can be proven by using the Bergfeld document as a starting point. Obviously, such a narrow approach based on one document couldn’t be given serious consideration. What does deserve serious attention here is the method used by Professor Çiçek in translating this document.

How was the document misrepresented?

In my critique, I claimed that the conscious alteration of a document for the purpose of making it support one's argument may be considered a crime against scholarship. In response, Professor Çiçek had the following to say:

In fact, the situation is not as simple as [Taner Akçam] has portrayed it and would like to see it. When evaluating the documents [contained in the book] its authors read every document to the extent that it was possible, along with other archival documents. Likewise, the German Consul's report has already been evaluated, along with the report of the American Consul, Oscar S. Heizer, who, together with [the German Consul], conducted an inquiry.¹⁵

The inquiry mentioned by Çiçek refers to a tour of the environs beyond Trebizond, made on July 17, 1915, and which is described in both the American and German reports. Upon Bergfeld's suggestion, and with the special permission of the Ottoman provincial governor (*vali*), the two consuls conducted a brief tour in order to investigate the veracity of the rumors then circulating about the killing of Armenians around Trebizond. Thus, Çiçek states that "Bergfeld's report of the event must be evaluated in conjunction with that of Heizer." Certainly, it is completely reasonable when translating a document into another language to consult another related document. It is all the more important, even obligatory, to consult other sources dealing with the events described in the document in question if one wishes to better understand the events and the document to be translated. But no matter how much one consults other documents, ultimately in translating one must remain as faithful as possible to the text of the document being translated.

But when he claims that "Heizer's report must also be taken into consideration," Professor Çiçek does not *have* in mind what is described above as checking of sources to support one's translation. Rather, he provides this information simply in order to explain how Heizer's document was used to alter the Bergfeld document. What the professor wants to say is that he finds it perfectly normal to consult other sources when translating a document and to make changes in the latter. This is precisely what has been done in regard to the Bergfeld report. The German document was changed after consulting the American report.

When explaining his method for falsely representing documents, the professor makes another important admission. He says that the "Bergfeld report" is in fact not the original document, but a version adulterated by Lepsius. I will treat this and his revealing admission below, but here it should be mentioned that when the Bergfeld document is cited in the book the authors provide no indication that the document is anything but the original. On the contrary, the report is presented as a crucial document that confirms the authors' central thesis.

So how did Lepsius corrupt the Bergfeld report? Professor Çiçek approaches this subject by producing a lengthy section of Heizer's aforementioned report:

On the 17th of July while out horseback riding with the German consul we came across *three Turks* digging a grave in the sand for a naked body, which we saw in the river near by. The corpse looked as though it had been in the water for 10 days or more. *The Turks* said they had

just buried four more bodies further up the river. *Another Turk* told us that a body had floated down the river and out into the sea a few moments before we arrived. (highlighted by Çiçek)¹⁶

Commenting on the passage, Çiçek states the following:

I want to draw attention to the lines which I have underlined above. First of all, the persons whom the consuls meet are “three Turks,” not “three workers” as Lepsius has wrongly written. Secondly, those who are burying the bodies are “Turks,” but there is not a single word that would indicate that they were “ordered” [to do this]. Thirdly, another *Turk* saw a body floating in the river and he reported, faithfully in all probability, what he had seen to the consuls.¹⁷

What is understood is that Çiçek believes that Lepsius altered two aspects of Bergfeld’s report, changing “persons” to “workers” and adding the expression “who were ordered” which was not found in the second (i.e. Heizer’s) report. Thus, when translating the Bergfeld report, Çiçek consulted the American Consul’s version of events, and had no compunction whatsoever against removing from his translation certain words and phrases—“who were ordered,” for instance—which did not appear in Heizer’s report. What’s more, the professor has accused me of remaining bound to a version of a text corrupted by Lepsius: “authors who cite those things written by Lepsius at face value, who do not see the passages he has crossed out (*üzerini çizdiği satırları*), this is . . . truly . . . ‘disgraceful’.”

Why have Çiçek and his friends not once informed the reader that the Bergfeld report, which they present in their book as an extremely important document, was intentionally altered by Lepsius? If they have removed the phrase “who were ordered” from their translation, why then did they choose not to replace the word “workers”? Why have they in any case used a document that they know to be corrupted as a supporting source for their thesis? These questions and many others could easily be used to enter into a simple polemic on the matter, but the main issue lies elsewhere.

After all of the information he has given us, it seems reasonable to ask why Prof. Çiçek felt it necessary to consult the Heizer report in order to understand what Lepsius had altered in the Bergfeld document. Why not simply compare Lepsius’ version with Bergfeld’s original text? All the arguments put forward about Lepsius tampering with the Bergfeld report are illusory. Lepsius never altered the Bergfeld document in question, and in fact, it is very likely that he was never even aware of the existence of such a document.

All told, in his compilation of documents relating to German–Turkish relations during wartime, Lepsius published 11 documents belonging to Bergfeld.¹⁸ Of these, three have been altered (Nr.: 12, 100, 109). The other documents contain editing of the language of the original documents, but these do not alter the meaning of the text in any way.¹⁹ There are other documents written by Bergfeld covering the years 1914–1918, but these were not published by Lepsius. Because he was actually given specific documents by the German Foreign Office for the simple purpose of publishing them, it is highly probable that Lepsius was unaware of any other specific documents that he had not received. The Bergfeld

document in question, the one dated July 25, 1915, is one of those documents not published by Lepsius. All of the documents given to Lepsius for publication were later returned to the German Foreign Ministry, which destroyed them.²⁰ Additionally, a collection exists of some 40,000 pages of Lepsius' material, which includes archival documents on microfilm, such as letters, journals, and pamphlets—but not a single example of a “doctored” document belonging to Bergfeld.²¹

Apparently Professor Çiçek is unaware that the document he used as the basis for his book was the original, not a document which Lepsius altered. Additionally, by consulting Heizer's report he indirectly admits to having removed from the document sections that did not please him.

Example B: the report by Max Erwin von Scheubner-Richter, dated August 5, 1915

In several instances, the authors insert their own ideas into the mouths of their sources. One example is Max Erwin von Scheubner-Richter, the German Vice-Consul at Erzerum. Scheubner-Richter penned some of the most accusatory documents exposing the systematic mistreatment of the Armenians by Ottoman authorities. Yet his testimony, as provided by Çiçek and company, has been made to bear false witness to the claim that the “deportations were carried out without incident.”

On pages 80–81, the authors include a lengthy translation of the Vice-Consul's report of August 5, 1915.²² However, they mistranslated certain passages, and some sections of the text were omitted, changing the intent of the original. Due to space limitations, only two examples are given here.

First example. At two different points, Scheubner-Richter mentions that Armenians living in the city of Erzurum were given 14 days to prepare for deportation. He writes: “At the beginning of June, the first group of Armenian notables were given a period of 14 days to leave Erzerum.”²³ Omitting the Vice-Consul's reference to “the first group of . . . notables,” Professor Çiçek and his colleagues render this statement in a general sense: “In June, the Armenians were expelled after a period of 14 days.”²⁴ Elsewhere in the report, Scheubner-Richter again states in regard to the Armenians of the city of Erzurum: “*Most of them* [my emphasis] were given a period of 14 days to prepare for the journey.”²⁵ The Turkish authors simply paraphrase this as follows: “on the other hand, it appears in this report that a 14-day period for the migration was accorded *in almost every location* [my emphasis]” (p 81). In short, Scheubner-Richter's report on “most of” the Armenians in the city of Erzurum has been stretched to cover the entire Armenian population in “almost every location [in Anatolia].”²⁶

Additionally, Çiçek and his colleagues claim that Scheubner-Richter reports the following: “permission was given to those being deported to take their possessions with them or to sell their possessions to other parties; to certain merchants and Armenians to deposit their properties and valuable possessions with the Ottoman Bank in order to keep them secure”²⁷ (p 81). Yet, when the original document is read, it is very clear that the Vice-Consul is speaking of a temporary measure,

one limited to the city of Erzerum and undertaken at the initiative of Scheubner-Richter himself, with the permission of Governor-General Tahsin. “Generally, however, the citizens of Erzerum were treated far better during their expulsion than those of other cities,” Scheubner-Richter writes. “As a consequence of the Vali’s concession and my efforts, they were granted the following alleviations . . .”²⁸

It is well known that in the rural areas of Erzurum, outside the city limits—to say nothing of the rest of Anatolia—the Armenians were deported within hours, not days, of notification.²⁹ As can be seen, the authors have altered Scheubner-Richter’s report on a single city and then used this altered document as the basis for generalization to the entire region of Anatolia.³⁰

Scheubner-Richter mentions another temporary privilege: “One of the further humane orders of the civil administration, that sick, single women and children were to remain in Erzerum, was revoked by order of the military authorities resp. at the instigation of the committee.” He writes: “While both the Vali and I were absent from Erzerum, these residence permits were suddenly taken away from the [Armenians] by the order of the Military High Command.” But Çiçek and company remove the passage regarding the two men’s absence from the city and instead translate the passage thus: “but this special permission was at one point revoked by the army command.” Additionally, from the same passage “They had to leave Erzerum within an extremely short period of time and many of them could not even take along the bare necessities for the journey” the authors delete the adverb intensifier “extremely” and remove the second sentence “and many of them . . .” in order to make the document fit their thesis. In its entirety the original passage reads: “While both the Vali and I were absent from Erzerum, these residence permits were suddenly taken away from them at the order of the army’s Supreme Command. They had to leave Erzerum within an extremely short period of time and many of them could not even take along the bare necessities for the journey”³¹ but it is given by Çiçek and his colleagues as only:

But this special permission was at one point revoked by the army command. These [persons] were forced to leave Erzerum within a very brief period.³² (p 80)

Second example. The authors repeatedly assert that the Vice-Consul’s report supports their thesis that the deportation happened smoothly without any major complications. Let us examine closely some of Scheubner-Richter’s descriptions:³³

At the beginning of May, the known incidents in Van led the government and the military to take drastic disciplinary action against the Armenians. All Armenians still in armed service were dismissed from the army and placed in labor battalions. The inhabitants of the plains of Erzerum and Passin, now made up solely of women, children and old men, were driven out of their villages and were to be forcibly taken to Mesopotamia. This measure, justified on the basis of military considerations, was carried out in an unnecessarily ruthless and cruel manner. On the way to Erzincan, the aforementioned persons were attacked, robbed and killed by Kurds and Turkish volunteers at Mamachatun, Sansar, the Euphrates Bridge and Pärâz. Between ten and twenty thousand persons were likely killed, but the government’s figures are in the range of three to four thousand.³⁴

Similarly, with the exception of but a few persons, the inhabitants of Erzincan were also robbed and killed and the women were abducted while passing through the Kemach Gorge during this same period. I have been informed by reliable sources that the gendarmes under the command of the Turkish military were involved here . . . [the report continues here with the adulterated passage already cited above.]

Nor is this all that Scheubner-Richter has to say. It is useful to cite further sections of his original report in order to get more of a sense of Richter's position, which is in total opposition to the authors' claims. Here again we see how Turkish historians, like the German Foreign Office itself, have selectively removed certain passages, whereas the original report states the following:³⁵

It is extremely unfortunate that, due to the military authority's acquiescent attitude toward the position of the Committee [of Union and Progress] and the unknown men behind it, the expulsion of the Armenians from the border areas—a measure which one might be able to justify on some or other military and political grounds, has turned into a campaign of revenge, destruction and robbery against the Armenians. Nor is this policy of extermination approved of by large sections of the Turkish population (especially the landowners), who still think reasonably. These circles, who have worked together with Armenians and have gotten along well with them, recognize the great economic and political danger in this new "system of solving the Armenian question." While traveling through the countryside, I have often been asked by large landowners who hosted me why the German government has induced the Turkish government to act in such a manner toward the Armenians. One of those persons who questioned me, a very respected and influential Bey, added that although Armenian massacres had taken place formerly, they were generally restricted to battles amongst the men, but that now, against the instructions in the Koran, thousands of innocent women and children were being murdered. This was not being done by enraged mobs, but systematically and by the order of the government, "the committee," as he added with emphasis. At this point it must be noted that the word is deliberately being spread here that the expulsion is taking place at the instigation of the German government.

In the hands of Lepsius, this passage (listed as Document No 129 in his book) is published without the italicized sections.³⁶ But, like Çiçek and his colleagues, Lepsius gives no indication whatsoever that the document has been altered or portions removed. Lepsius removed certain other passages that were perceived to implicate the Germans in these events. Thus Çiçek and his accomplices have behaved in the same manner as Lepsius and German Foreign Ministry officials, offering distortions and blatantly wrong translations of historical documents in an attempt to "doctor" them in accordance with their own designs.

Example C: the report by Walter Rössler, German Consul in Aleppo, dated December 20, 1915

The Turkish authors have also put words in the mouth of the German Consul in Aleppo, Walter Rössler, altogether misrepresenting his point of view. Here is a lengthy section from the Turkish authors (pp 105–106):

Throughout the course of the First World War approximately 500,000 Armenians were deported to areas, currently located in Syria and Iraq, which were not war zones at the

time. During this same period somewhere between 350,000 and 500,000 Armenians went, for a variety of reasons, from the regions of Eastern Anatolia and the Black Sea to the Caucasus. If we take into account that in the course of the events of World War I a total of around 200,000 Armenians lost their lives and that somewhere between 400,000–500,000 Armenians remained within the borders of the Ottoman Empire, and if we keep in mind that the total Armenian population within the empire at the outset of the war was around 1,5 million, then our figures would appear to provide a complete accounting. At the end of 1915, the *German Consul Rössler confirmed our above account* when he wrote “that nearly 500,000 Armenians were exempted from deportation, and 500,000 [others] were brought to Mesopotamia and Syria.” (my emphasis)

What is understood by reading the previous paragraph? The authors claim that Rössler shares their estimates and confirms their figures. Now let’s read Rössler’s own account:

The loss of human life is greater or less according to the region from which those who have been dispatched have come. In eastern Asia Minor [the loss] is by and large much greater than in the western [portion]. In the East countless convoys have been at least 75% decimated, unless the women and girls have been carried off to Muslim harems or, in the best cases, they have found refuge among Muslim families. Those who did arrive in Mesopotamia (for instance, Ras ul-Ain or Tel Abiad) were so exhausted that a great portion of them also subsequently succumbed. Under these circumstances, from the outset one would not venture to dispute the number of 800,000 Armenians killed that was published by the English side.³⁷

Rössler also supplies a passage taken from the *Frankfurter Zeitung* stating that

No one who is familiar with the circumstances in Turkey will believe this figure. If one accepts this figure [it would mean that] more than 30% of all of those Armenians living in Turkey—women and children included—would have been killed. That is entirely out of the question.³⁸

to which he responds, “Unfortunately, it is not out of the question. I have over the past months again and again reported on this most gruesome state of affairs and dreadful conditions which either brought about or accompanied the massacre. It is [therefore] reasonable to conclude that after such events the number of those who have perished must be extraordinarily high.”³⁹ Later on Rössler provides his own figures:

The total number of Armenians in Turkey, 2½ million . . . The number of those in all of Asia Minor [who have been] exempted from the deportation is ½ million at the very most . . . no more than ½ million have arrived in Syria and Mesopotamia . . . The mortality rate among those who have arrived in Syria and Mesopotamia is extraordinarily high and will remain so for quite some time, as a direct consequence of the deportation, whose end is still nowhere in sight. Under these circumstances, it would seem that the total number of 800,000 deaths, which is [given] by those circles who can be taken seriously and who may be better informed than others, is to be deemed as authentic, and it is not beyond the realm of possibility that the [actual] figure is much higher.⁴⁰

After reading these lines can anyone really claim that Rössler's account "confirms" that of Çiçek and company?

Example D: the report by Edward I. Nathan, US Consul in Mersin, September 11, 1915

In this report Nathan writes the following:

I have the honor to inform you that since the writing of my dispatch No. 478 dated 30 August, 1915 (sent to-day with other correspondence by special privilege of Governor General) thousands of additional Armenians from the North have arrived here and been transported to the Aleppo region.⁴¹

The authors translate this as "... since my dispatch no. 478 (30 August, 1915) hundreds of thousands of Armenians have arrived here and they are being sent [on] to Aleppo"⁴² (p 72).

There are two separate problems with their presentation of this document. The first is that, as is clear from their translation, the book's authors have not actually translated the document but have merely summarized it, removing certain sections in the process. Yet, they present their summary in the form of a direct quotation.

The second problem is even more serious and directly concerns the distortion of the original document. By doing so, the authors have presented the figure "thousands" as "hundreds of thousands" (*yüzbinlerce*). But there is a clear logic behind this alteration of the text: the authors wish to show that a large number—in fact, much larger than the document states—of Armenians reached their destinations safe and sound: the higher the number, the more credible their argument appears. And in order to bolster their case, they have shown no compunction about altering Nathan's figures.

Exhibit E: the report by Greg Young, US Consular Official in Damascus, September 20, 1915

The authors continue quoting from another document, dated September 20, 1915, which they claim to have been authored by Consul Nathan (pp 72–74). Çiçek and his colleagues use this document in order to show that the Armenian convoys dispatched to Syria reached their destination in good condition, and to show that the Ottoman government indeed was active in providing them material assistance. As is their wont with those sources which they claim support their arguments, the authors shower special praise upon the American Consul:

[Nathan] mentions the transport of Armenians and reports that he visited their camps in Syria. In providing information concerning this visit, Edward Nathan relates that, instead of simply placing the impressions (*duyumlar*) of some other consuls in his report, he personally went and visited the places in question (*olay mahallinde*) and gives an account of what he saw during these inspections . . . Nathan provides important information. (pp 72–73)

There are two major problems with this document. In the first place, Consul Nathan never wrote it. The author was Greg Young, an official at the United States Consulate in Damascus. Moreover, the reader will probably not be surprised to learn that, in the hands of Çiçek and company, the document has been altered in some places and incorrectly translated in others. The original report itself is extremely long, and the authors have themselves quoted a lengthy section thereof in their book. In their hands the document has been “doctored” by two different methods: first, through mistranslation and omission, in complete contradiction with the original meaning; second, through deliberate condensation of the document, including the surgical excision of key passages which do not support the authors’ thesis. Instead of a direct and complete quotation from a single, pristine documentary source, Çiçek *et al.* present to the unsuspecting reader a report that has been utterly corrupted, whose contents have been made to convey a meaning contrary to the original.

One example of this practice of mistranslation while summarizing is as follows. Young writes:

His Excellency also informed me—upon my statement that if the Government permitted I believed that I could secure funds from the American Red Cross to aid these people who undoubtedly would be very needy—that the Government would not permit of this and that the Government was doing everything possible, furnishing food, tents et cetera.⁴³

The authors have translated this paragraph as: “Upon my request the Governor announced that I would be able to receive/use the funds from the American Red Cross for assisting the Armenians.”⁴⁴ In condensing this entire paragraph to a single sentence, the authors have distorted Young’s meaning. According to the authors’ version, the Ottoman authorities are granting permission to use Red Cross funds to aid the refugees—exactly the opposite of what Young reports.

Numerous other, similar distortions are to be found throughout the authors’ translation. In another lengthy “quotation” from the original document, we can observe how sentences and paragraphs are amputated without the slightest indication that this is being done. (Note: the original passage is given in full; the sections removed by the authors are italicized.)

Numerous stories are current of hardship, want, suffering from hunger, forced marching when in no condition to walk, cruelty of guards, seizure of young women, giving away and selling of children that they might find homes et cetera et cetera, but I did not believe them and even now I’m sure that many of the worst stories that are circulating are much exaggerated. Still, there are some which I must credit.

One, is that of a woman who though six or seven months pregnant and naturally in no condition whatever to make the marches, was obliged to keep up with the procession until she dropped in her tracks and died. I have heard of several cases of young girls or boys being bought by people who wished to aid in some way and were importuned by parents to take their children as servants so they might have homes. It was stated to me also that some soldier guards, in order to urge them on, whipped those who struggled in the march from utter exhaustion or to get food or money from compassionate Christian inhabitants.

I have also heard of kindness extended by good Moslems who pitied these sufferers and I overheard a common Moslem soldier—and it is known that such have hardly enough money for themselves—say he had given two Medjidis to the Christian exiles.

Several times I went to the quarter through which the exiles were marched to see them with my own eyes. Never however could I time my visit with their passage.

Kahdem, on the outskirts of the city, is a large commons after passing through Damascus all the exiles are collected preparatory, it seems, to being dispersed to the various towns where they are finally to stay.

Some days ago I visited this place to get some idea of conditions. *It is a large open tract, practically devoid of grass and possessing but few trees. It was nearly covered with groups of ragged road-strained dejected wholly dispirited individuals. There were only a very few tents or shelters of any kind and these had the air of being more improvisations. At the outer fringe of people I was met by a policeman who conducted me to the man in charge of the encampment. I saw practically nothing and learned only what he told me. He was most courteous.*

If we take the section from “Still, there are some . . .” to the final sentence, we see that a lengthy five-paragraph section has been reduced down to several terse sentences. In this way, the authors have eliminated all mention of both the deportations and the miserable conditions surrounding them. Furthermore, by excluding the penultimate sentence, the authors leave the reader with the impression that the information recorded by Young is based upon his direct eyewitness account. Then, despite their presenting the quotation as one long, seamless passage, the authors throw together a number of paragraphs from which sentences have been selectively removed. Some examples: the sentence “In Osmania were quartered some 8,000 exiles” is translated and included, but the preceding passage “I learn[ed] that thousands of Armenians were passed by on the road. They were in the most horrible condition” is left out. Likewise, the following account of an Armenian witness is removed:

Upon approaching the low ground of concentration of exiles, the odor became sickening and noisome flies swarmed about him. Passing through the encampment he saw many people ill and bodies of others half in the water collected in pools on the low-lying ground. Some told him they were only waiting for death to free them.

The passage continues with the following sentence: “on the road from there to Aleppo, he passed thousands of exiles on the march and at a small town near Aleppo about 100,000 Armenians were encamped.” In similar fashion, numerous passages in which the massacres at Urfa are described are simply removed.

As advantageous and enlightening as it would be to reproduce here the authors’ entire corrupted text alongside the original text, space restrictions make that impossible. My purpose in presenting these sections in such a lengthy fashion is to show that Professor Çiçek and his fellow authors have altered the text with the intent of persuading the reader that those Armenians deported from Anatolia reached Syria without great loss of life and that they were kept in humane conditions. This attempt to exculpate the Ottoman government from any hint of

wrongdoing finds a direct parallel in the work of Lepsius and the German Foreign Ministry.

Two more examples: ignorance of a document's origin and another translation error

I would like to conclude with two further examples of errors. The first concerns a passage alleged to have been taken from Lepsius; the second represents another grave error in translation. A document from the book under review is cited as a report written by Consul Bergfeld on June 24–25, 1915. However, no archival classification number is provided, only the opaque “Lepsius, Armenien, s. 22” (p 79). In fact, no such document is to be found on page 22 of Lepsius’ [*Deutschland und*] *Armenien [1914–1918]* or on any other page in the work.

Although Lepsius’ work does contain another document of the same date,⁴⁵ it does not contain the information cited by the authors. I personally devoted many hours looking for the document from which the authors took their information before finally locating it. The corresponding text is from a completely different document, dated July 9, 1915, in Lepsius’ (unpublished) compendium.⁴⁶ But it gets more complicated: the passage cited by the authors is indeed found in an *original* document, but *not* in the version published by Lepsius, who deemed it expedient to remove the offending text. In short, the authors must have used an original document, but one with no connection to Lepsius and with a different date and number than the one provided. Incorrect citations are also found in footnotes 209 and 211. In these cases as well, a paragraph which Lepsius had removed from the document in question is attributed to Lepsius, each time with an accompanying incorrect date and page number. Evidently the authors did not sufficiently master the material they were using. Although the authors’ translation is also incorrect, space limitations prevent us from going into more detail.

My second example concerns a quotation the authors have taken from a report dated June 29, 1915 and attributed to Consul Bergfeld. The original reads: “*Ich teile die ansicht meiner sämtlichen Kollegen, daß der Transport der Frauen und Kinder unter den im Telegramm Nr. 5 geschildereten Verhältnissen an Massenmord grenzt.*” (“I share the opinion of all of my colleagues that the deportation of women and children under the conditions which are described in telegram no. 5 borders on mass murder.”) But when the authors translate it, it reads: “We are of the same opinion as our colleagues in regard to the fact that the deportation of women and children under the conditions I mentioned in my telegram of 27 June may be cause for a massacre.”⁴⁷

What is noteworthy is not simply that the authors have inserted the date “27 June.” Where Bergfeld characterized the deportation as an action “bordering on mass murder,” in the authors’ version it “may be a cause for a massacre.”

In the aforementioned “telegram no. 5,” Bergfeld writes, “About 3,000 persons are affected by the deportations just in the Vilayet of Trebizond. A mass transfer of this kind for hundreds of kilometers along routes lacking in accommodation and supplies, and where 300 kilometres of which must count as being completely

infested with typhus fever, would claim enormous numbers of victims, particularly among the women and children.”⁴⁸ Bergfeld does not say that “there might be a massacre” either during or after the deportation. His actual comments are stronger and more damning.

The report by American Consul Heizer, July 28, 1915

In his reply to my article in *Agos*, Professor Çiçek cites a report sent by Heizer, the American Consul in Trebizond, in an attempt to show that there was no systematic or planned massacre of Armenians. Çiçek’s treatment of this document is consistent with his logic throughout the book. He uses a section of the report in order to highlight two important subjects. The first concerns the six bodies seen by Consuls Heizer and Bergfeld on their brief tour. Professor Çiçek presents this figure, numerically and alphabetically, as the most important evidence showing that there no organized killings there: “The consuls found a total of six bodies while exploring,” he writes, “I want to reiterate [this] for Akçam: only 6 (six) bodies were found. I wonder if the state concocted a plan for the ‘elimination’ of the 4 bodies which had been buried? To accept that a planned massacre was committed on the basis of these lines suits Akçam to a tee.” In the author’s opinion, the fact that the three workers were entrusted with the task of burying the bodies is further support for his argument, because “it’s not possible for thousands of bodies to be buried by only three persons.”⁴⁹

The peculiarity here is not limited to the effort to explain an entire genocidal event by means of six bodies encountered by Heizer during an excursion to the environs around Trebizond (or accusing me of attempting to do the same, for that matter). The real oddity is that Heizer does report, in the very same document, on different events that *are* related to the massacre of the Armenians. One of these events is the drowning at sea of Armenians who were being sent by boat for resettlement at Samsun. Yet another event is the annihilation of 45 Armenians, women and children included, from the village of Tots, some two hours from Trebizond. In a separate document, Heizer recounts another such incident:

I have just been talking with a young man who has been performing his military service on the “inshaat tabouri” (construction regiment) working on the roads out toward Gumushane. He told me that fifteen days ago all the Armenians, about 180, were separated from the other workmen and marched off some distance from the camp and shot.⁵⁰

It is a problematic approach indeed that dismisses the incidents of killing and massacre merely reported in this document alone, or claims that no more than six deaths are likely to have resulted from them. One of Çiçek’s arguments is that “sensing” (*duyum*) must be differentiated from “observation” (*gözlem*). According to this logic, all information and reports regarding murders or dead bodies are to be discounted unless derived from direct observation by the consuls themselves. Never mind the fact that Heizer’s various reports make it abundantly clear that he himself saw more than six bodies;⁵¹ what is fascinating

here is Çiçek's contrived claim of the inadmissibility of any killings not directly witnessed by the consuls themselves.

Certainly, different standards of admissibility apply to rumors and hearsay, as opposed to eyewitness testimony. Indeed, the consuls themselves paid special attention to this point when sending off their reports. In Heizer's dispatches—including one of those mentioned above—one encounters numerous expressions to the effect: "it is difficult to verify all the stories circulated and I have confined myself to those I believe to be correct."⁵² Additionally, many of the consular reports contain accounts of killings given by survivors. Finally, there are the testimonies of those who personally witnessed such actions, such as the American Consul in Harput, Leslie A. Davis.⁵³

The second point concerns certain exemptions that were made at the outset regarding the Armenians to be sent away from the Trebizond region. In these cases, Consul Bergfeld played a crucial role in obtaining such exemptions. For example, in one of his reports, Bergfeld writes:

I ... have ... approached the local Vali in an effort to mitigate the expulsion order. He showed willingness ... and made considerable concessions. So for the time being, the following were exempted from deportation: all children under 10 years of age, widows and orphans, as well as female persons who are currently without male protection, which also included the families of those in the armed forces, the sick and expectant mothers as well as the Catholic Armenians. The sick and the pregnant women were also allowed to stay in their homes and to keep a female member of the family with them to look after them. Children were accommodated with friends. Finally, the deportees were also allowed to sell valuables and household goods after acquiring permission from the Director of Police.⁵⁴

On the basis of these consular reports, Professor Çiçek makes the following claim:

It states in the consular reports that children, the aged, the sick, women and orphans were distributed among the hospitals, orphanages and Muslim houses, and [only] later were a section of them sent off by foot. Why would the state that is planning to carry out a "genocide" be so discriminating and compassionate? Why would [entire] categories for exemption [from the deportation] be determined?⁵⁵

This is a grave distortion of the evidence. All of the aforementioned consular dispatches report that these exemption measures were revoked almost immediately. In the report cited above, Bergfeld continues, "Unfortunately, on the third day, apparently upon instructions from Constantinople, all the exceptions made so far, except for the permission for children to remain, were revoked."⁵⁶ It is clear that Çiçek and his colleagues have withheld embarrassing sections of the very document on which their case rests. Moreover, despite knowing that all of these exemption measures were implemented only at the local level and against the desired policy of the central government, they mislead the reader by giving the impression that they were actually initiated by the central regime. In fact, the Union and Progress leaders were displeased with the governor's decision and, as Bergfeld states, an order was almost immediately sent from the capital demanding its cancellation. The moving force behind the order to eliminate

these exemptions was *Yenibahçeli* Nail, the Unionists' unofficial "Responsible Secretary" for Trebizond.⁵⁷

There is also abundant information about the fate of those children who were exempted from the deportation and thus not sent into exile. They were collected from the places to which they had been assigned and the majority of them were then killed, either by means of poison at the hospital or by being drowned at sea. In addition to the various consular reports of these incidents, the incidents of drownings were also brought up in the post-war trial (1919) against those accused of crimes during the Trebizond deportations. During the 10th and 15th–17th sessions of the trial (April 12, May 1–5, respectively) the former provincial governor, local merchants and soldiers—all Turks—testified about the killing of those children and ill persons left behind from the deportations.⁵⁸

Conclusion

The book that has been the focus of our discussion contains numerous intentional distortions of data—tactics which are very difficult to reconcile with the idea of academic honesty. Here is a final example. The authors repeatedly mention the fact that about 250,000 Armenians fought in the Russian army during the First World War (pp 58–59, 66), but nowhere is it mentioned that some 200,000 of these were Russian subjects, and that they were to be found largely on the Austro-German Front. Instead, the manner in which this information is presented gives the reader the impression that the Ottomans were facing, among others, a quarter of a million Armenian soldiers. This wrong impression that the authors have created appears to be intentional and done for ideological reasons.⁵⁹

The belief that the research before us is unbiased and accurately presented—in short, academically honest—and not based upon the intentional distortion of sources is an indispensable precondition for scholarly inquiry and debate. Conversely, suspicion within the academic community as to whether or not sources have been honestly and accurately presented is something that can poison the entire scientific milieu. In light of the numerous deliberate alterations of data we have presented here, one can fairly assert—and using the most polite expression possible—that the Turkish Historical Society and its authors have violated the "sense of trust" that is the necessary basis for relations among scholars. By systematically "doctoring" the data of many of the documents they used, the authors of *Ermeniler: Sürgün ve Göç* have violated the rule of academic honesty and in the process have completely obliterated their own credibility and that of the Turkish Historical Society.

Until now, the "official Turkish version" of the deportations and related events has generally viewed foreign archival material as one-sided and propagandistic, and therefore as an unreliable source for writing history. Consequently, the material found in the Ottoman archives has been used to the exclusion of foreign sources. In *Ermeniler: Sürgün ve Göç*, the Turkish Historical Society has adopted a new approach. Foreign archival documents have now been incorporated into the "Turkish version," but in a corrupted and bowdlerized form.

By these new methods the THS and those working on its behalf have simply decided to take up the legacy of the German government and Johannes Lepsius. In 1919, while the peace talks were proceeding in Paris, these two parties collaborated in tampering with and intentionally distorting German documents in order to exculpate the German Reich from any responsibility for the Armenian genocide. Now, the THS and its authors have taken to distorting and altering foreign archival documents in order to bring them in line with the policies of the Turkish regime and its official version of late Ottoman history. *Ermeniler Sürgün ve Göç* is an intellectual crime, not only against the Turkish academic community, but also against the international community of scholars.

Notes

- 1 Headline in *Anatolia Press*, May 6, 2004.
- 2 For such claims in regard to the British documents, see: Ara Sarafian, in his introduction to James Bryce and Arnold Toynbee, *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915–1916. Documents Presented to Viscount Grey of Falloden by Viscount Bruce* (Princeton: Gomidas Institute, 2000), pp vii–x. For the American documentation, see: Heath Lowry, *The Story Behind Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* (Istanbul: Isis, 1991).
- 3 http://www.turkishdailynews.com/old_editions/05_28_03/for.htm.
- 4 For German documents, see: <http://www.armenocide.net>; for Austrian documents, see: Artem Ohandjanian, *Österreich-Armenien 1872–1936. Faksimilesammlung diplomatischer Aktenstücke*, 12 vols (Vienna: Ohandjanian Verlag, 1995). American documents can be found in *The Armenian Genocide in the U.S. Archives, 1915–1918* (microfilm) along with the printed guide: Rouben Paul Adalian, ed., compiler, *Guide to the Armenian Genocide in the U.S. Archives, 1915–1918* (Alexandria, VA: Chadwyck–Healey, 1991); also, Ara Sarafian, compiler and introduction, *United States Official Records on the Armenian Genocide, 1915–1917* (Princeton: Gomidas Institute, 2004). In addition to the documents themselves, numerous works have been written on the basis of these archival collections. But one recent example is V. N. Dadrian, “The Armenian question and the wartime fate of the Armenians as documented by officials of the Ottoman Empire’s World War I allies: Germany and Austria-Hungary,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol XXXIV, 2002, pp 59–85.
- 5 Dr Johannes Lepsius was a well known German theologian and philanthropist, as well as the head of the “German-Armenian Society” and of the “German Orient-Mission” during the First World War. His manuscript documenting the course of the Ottomans’ Armenian persecutions, “Report on the situation of the Armenian nation in Turkey” (in German), caused a serious rift between the two allies when it appeared in 1916. He would later publish numerous other, fuller histories of the events which included ample documentation. Despite later evidence that he, in collaboration with the German government, “doctored” many of the incriminating documents to exonerate Germany from some of the worse crimes, his work remains a fundamental if incomplete source for researchers of the period.
- 6 These textual distortions and corruptions of German documents can be viewed in English at <http://www.armenocide.net>. Additionally, see the article on this site by Wolfgang Gust, “Magical squares, Johannes Lepsius, Germany and Armenia” for information on the background to these alterations.
- 7 Taner Akçam, *Bir Kitap I–II–III*, *Agos*, 9, 16, 23 Temmuz, 2004, p 2.
- 8 Kemal Çiçek, “Taner Akçam’a cevap,” *Agos*, 3 Eylül, 2004, p 9. For instance, I am referred to as “an ugly, aggressive person [given over to] panic attacks,” as a writer who is “unaware of the methodology of history, and who, for this reason, does not possess the sufficient capacity or objectivity to be able to read and interpret this [information].” “An alleged historian . . . like Akçam”; “ignorantly, and put[s his] signature on inconsistencies that would qualify him for the role of ‘village idiot’ that he has already been given in certain circles”; “one of those who has not read history”; “[one who] has overstepped his limits as an amateur historian”; “I promise to give him a free course in Ottoman so that he will be able to read the archival documents.”
- 9 PA-AA/R14087/MF7124/28–30; BoKon/170/MF7251/66–70.
- 10 Ermenilerin Trabzon’dan tehcir edilmesinden sonra, onların idamlarının başladığı . . . spekülasyonu dolaşmaya başladı. Düşman fantezisinin Türklere, Trabzon’da akan kanın sorumluluğunu yüklediği ortaya çıkmaktadır. Spekülasyonlar, Alman konsolosluğu tarafından derin bir sessizlik içerisinde araştırıldı. Onların

- doğruluğunu ortaya çıkarmak Alman ve Türk prestijinin menfaatleri açısından vazife kabul edildi ve koso-
losluk görevlileri belirli iddialar üzerinde yoğunlaştılar.
- 11 Bu muhtemel cesetlerin planlı olarak yok edilmediğinin bir delili.
- 12 Turkish section not given above: Ertesi günü ırmağın aranması ve bulunan cesetlerin defin işlemleriyle uğra-
şıldı. Şimdiye kadar aralarında bir bayanın da yer aldığı toplam dört ceset bulundu. Bunlarla ilgili güvenilir
bilgilere ulaşıldı. Son olarak yerliler bize, bir cesedin ırmağa atıldığını gördüklerini bildirdiler.
- 13 Alman Konsolusunun raporu tarafımızdan esere neredeyse tamamen alınmıştır./Akçam'ın çevirisini daha
doğrusu Kabul ettiğimiz takdirde bile . . .
- 14 Bu satırlara dayanarak plânlı katliam yapıldığını kabul etmek ancak Akçam'a yakışmaktadır.
- 15 Çiçek, "Taner Akçam'a cevap," p 9.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Johannes Lepsius, ed., *Deutschland und Armenien, 1914–1918. Sammlung Diplomatischer Aktenstücke*
(Potsdam: Der Tempel Verlag, 1919). The documents in question are numbers 8, 12, 94, 97, 100, 102,
105, 109, 155, 156, 162.
- 19 Both the originals and the versions published by Lepsius may be viewed on the aforementioned site <http://www.armenocide.net>.
- 20 Wolfgang Gust, "Magical square."
- 21 Hermann Goltz and Axel Meissner, compilers, *Deutschland, Armenien und die Türkei 1895–1915. Doku-
mente und Zeitschriften aus dem Dr. Johannes Lepsius Archiv an der Martin-Luther Universität Halle
Wittenberg* (Munich: K. G. Saur, 1999).
- 22 PA-AA/R14088/MF7129/23–50. Scheubner's report, along with its appendices, is quite long, more than 12
pages, and it would have been better to translate the entire document to see the scope of the distortion.
- 23 "Zu Beginn des Juni wurde aus Erserum die erste Gruppe der armenischen Notabeln ausgewiesen mit einer
Frist von 14 Tagen."
- 24 "Haziran'da Ermeniler 14 gün ara ile göç ettirildi."
- 25 "Die meisten erhielten eine Frist von 14 Tagen zu Reisevorbereitungen."
- 26 "Öt yandan bu raporda görülmektedir ki, hemen her yerde göç için 14 günlük bir süre tanınmıştır."
- 27 tehcir edilenlere eşyalarını yanlarına alma ve satma, bazı tüccar ve Ermenilere, malları ve değerli eşyalarını
emniyete almak için Osmanlı Bankasına teslim etme izni verilmiştir.
- 28 Here is the full passage in German: "Im allgemeinen sind die Bewohner Erserums jedoch bei ihrer Aussie-
delung weit besser behandelt worden als die anderer Städte Dem Entgegenkommen des Wali und meinen
Bemühungen zufolge wurden ihnen folgende Erleichterungen gewährt: 1) Die meisten erhielten eine Frist
von 14 Tagen zu Reisevorbereitungen. 2) Es wurde ihnen gestattet, ihre Sachen mitzunehmen oder zu ver-
kaufen. 3) Ein Teil der Kaufleute und Notabeln hatte die Möglichkeit, ihre Waren, Sachen und Kostbarkeiten
der Ottomanbank zur Aufbewahrung in der armenischen Kirche zu geben."
- 29 For one example of this, in this case, the evacuation of the environs around Erzurum, see the report by the
German Colonel Stange dated August 23, 1915. PA-AA/Botschaft Konstantinopel/Bd. 170/MF7254/27–35.
- 30 For a discussion of the deportations from Erzurum and its environs, as well as the fate of the deportees, see:
Hilmar Kaiser, "'A scene from the inferno': the Armenians of Erzurum and the genocide 1915–1916," in
Hans Lukas-Kieser and Dominik J. Schaller, eds, *The Armenian Genocide and the Shoah* (Zürich: Chronos
Verlag, 2002), pp 129–187.
- 31 "Während meiner und des Walis Abwesenheit von Erserum wurden ihnen diese Aufenthaltsscheine auf
Befehl des Armee-Oberkommandierenden plötzlich entzogen. Sie mussten Erserum in kürzester Zeit verlas-
sen und viele von ihnen konnten sich nicht einmal mit dem Notwendigsten für die Reise versehen."
- 32 "Ama bu özel izin, bir anda ordu komutanlığınca iptal edildi. Onlar kısa süre içerisinde Erzurumu terk etmek
zorunda kaldılar."
- 33 "Zu Beginn des Mai führten die bekannten Vorgänge von Wan dazu, dass die Regierung und die Militärbe-
hörden zu scharfen Massregeln gegen die Armenier griffen. Alle noch mit der Waffe dienenden Armenier
wurden aus dem Heere entfernt und in Arbeiter-Bataillone gesteckt. Die Bewohner der Erserum und der
Passin Ebene, die nur noch aus Frauen, Kindern und alten Männern bestand, wurden aus ihren Dörfern
vertrieben und sollten zwangsweise nach Mesopotamien gebracht werden. Diese mit militärischen Rück-
sichten begründete Massnahme wurde mit unnötig rücksichtsloser und grausamer Weise durchgeführt.
Auf dem Wege nach Ersindjan wurden die Betroffenen bei Mamschatun, Sansar, Euphrat Brücke und
Päräz von Kurden und türkischen Freiwilligen überfallen, beraubt und getötet. Die Zahl der Umgekommen-
en dürfte zwischen 10—20000 betragen, nach Angabe der Regierung nur 3 bis 4000. In derselben Zeit
wurden die Bewohner der Ersindjaner Ebene bei ihrem Durchzug durch die Schlucht von Kemach gleich-
falls bis auf wenige beraubt und getötet, die Frauen entführt. Hierbei soll, wie mir glaubwürdig mitgeteilt
wurde, türkisches Militär bezw. Gendarmen beteiligt gewesen sein."

- 34 These last two sentences are produced by the authors on the following pages as an example that “the government was not always successful in matters of security” (*hükümetin güvenlik konusunda her zaman başarılı olmadığı*, p 83). If the authors had read other reports from this region, Scheubner-Richter’s report of July 9, 1915 (PA-AA/Botschaft-Konstantinopel/169/MF7249/93–95), for instance, they would have known that these events were orchestrated by the Union and Progress Party and the Erzurum Police Commissioner, but this is a separate issue.
- 35 Es ist tief bedauerlich, dass infolge der von der Militärbehörde geduldeten Haltung des Komitees und seiner dunklen Hintermänner die militärisch und politisch in mancher Hinsicht vielleicht zu begründende Massnahme der Aussiedelung der Armenier aus den Grenzgebieten in einen Rache-, Vernichtungs- und Raubfeldzug gegen sie umgewandelt wurde. Von vernünftig denkenden weiten Kreisen der türkischen Bevölkerung, besonders von den Grundbesitzern, wird diese Ausrottungspolitik auch nicht gebilligt. Diese Kreise, die mit den Armeniern zusammengearbeitet haben und gut mit ihnen ausgekommen sind, erkennen die grosse wirtschaftliche und politische Gefahr dieses neuen “Systems der Lösung der Armenier-Frage.” Ich bin auch mehrfach bei meinen Fahrten durch das Land von Grossgrundbesitzern, deren Gast ich war, gefragt worden, warum denn die deutsche Regierung die türkische zu einem solchen Vorgehen gegen die Armenier veranlasst habe. Einer der Fragesteller, ein sehr angesehener und einflussreicher Bey, fügte hinzu, es habe wohl früher Armenier-Massaker gegeben, aber diese hätten sich meist auf Kämpfe der Männer beschränkt, jetzt morde man entgegen den Vorschriften des Korans zu Tausenden unschuldige Frauen und Kinder. Dieses geschehe nicht etwa von in Erregung geratenen Volksmengen, sondern systematisch und auf Befehl der Regierung—“des Komitees,” wie er mit Betonung hinzufügte.
- 36 J. Lepsius, *Deutschland und Armenien* . . . , pp 116–129.
- 37 PA-AA/R14089/MF7136/98–7137/11. “Je nach den Gegenden, aus denen die Verschickten kommen, ist der Verlust an Menschenleben grosser oder geringer gewesen. Im östlichen Kleinasien im grossen und ganzen sehr viel grosser als im westlichen. Im Osten warden von zahlreichen Zügen 75% umgekommen sein, soweit nicht Frauen und Mädchen in muhammedanische Harems verschleppt worden sind oder in günstigeren Fällen in muhammedanischen Familien Schutz gefunden haben. Die in Mesopotamien (z.B. Ras ul Ain oder Tell Abiad) angekommen Reste waren derart erschöpft, dass ein sehr grosser Teil von ihnen auch noch erlegen ist. Unter diesen Umständen erscheint es gewagt, die von englischer Seite veröffentlichte Zahl von 800,000 getöteten Armenier als von vornherein unmöglich zu bekämpfen.”
- 38 “Niemand wird an diese Zahl glauben, der die Verhältnisse in der Türkei kennt. Mit dieser Zahl wären über 30% aller in der Türkei lebenden Armenier einschliesslich Frauen und Kinder getötet. Das ist ganz ausgeschlossen.”
- 39 “. . . leider is es nicht ausgeschlossen. Über die Vorkommnisse und Zustände der grauenhaftesten Art, die die Vernichtung herbeigeführt oder begleitet haben, habe ich in den letzten Monaten wieder und immer wieder berichtet. Der Schluss ist zulässig, dass nach solchen Vorkommnissen die Zahl der Umgekommenen ausserordentlich hoch sein muss.”
- 40 “Gesamtzahl der Armenier in der Türkei 2½ Millionen . . . Im gesamten Kleinasien ist hoch gerechnet ½ Million von der Verschickung verschont gelieben . . . in Syrien und Mesopotamien ist hoch gerechnet eine halbe Million angekommen . . . Die Sterblichkeit unter den in Syrien und Mesopotamien angekommenen ist ausserordentlich hoch und wird noch lange als unmittelbare Folge der Verschickung, deren Ende noch keineswegs herbeigekommen ist, hoch bleiben. Unter diesen Umständen wird, so ergibt sich, eine Gasamtzahl von 800,000 Umgekommenen von Ernst zu nehmenden Kreisen, die besser unterrichtet sein können, als andere, für wahrscheinlich erachtet, ja es gilt sogar für möglich, dass die Zahl noch höher ist.”
- 41 Ara Sarafian, *United States Official Records* . . . , p 270.
- 42 “478 numaralı gönderimden beri (30 Ağustos 1915) yüz binlerce Ermeni daha buraya ulaştı ve Halep’e sevk ediliyor.”
- 43 Ibid, p 296.
- 44 “Vali isteğim üzerine Amerikan Kızıl Haç’ından Ermenilere yardım için fon alabileceğimi bildirdi.”
- 45 Document no 94, Lepsius, *Deutschland und Armenien*, ibid, p 89.
- 46 Document no 109, ibid, pp 99–101.
- 47 “27 Haziran tarihli telgrafımda bahsettiğim şartlarda kadın ve çocukların tehirc edilmesinin olası bir katliama neden olabileceği konusunda bütün meslektaşlarımla aynı görüşteyiz,” p 76.
- 48 PA-AA Botschaft Konstantinopel/Bd. 169/MF7248/73–75. “Von der Deportation werden allein im Vilajet Trapezunt rund dreißigtausend Personen betroffen. Ein derartiger Massentransport hunderte von Kilometern weit auf Wege, wo es an Unterkommen und Verpflegung mangelt und die 300 Kilometer weit als durch Flecktyphus völlig verseucht gelten müssen, würden besonders unter den Frauen und Kindern ungeheure Opfer fordern . . .”
- 49 *Agos*, 3 Eylül, 2004.
- 50 Sarafian, *United States Official Records* . . . , p 181.

- 51 See, for instance, his report of April 11, 1919, where he says, "I myself saw where 16 bodies were washed ashore and buried by a Greek woman near the Italian Monastery." Ibid, p 687.
- 52 Ibid, p 181.
- 53 Leslie A. Davis, *The Slaughterhouse Province. An American Diplomat's Report on the Armenian Genocide, 1915–1917*, Susan K. Blair, ed. (New Rochelle, NY: Artistide D. Caratazas, 1989). See, for instance, the reports sent from Harput which cite the thousands of bodies around Gölcük Lake that Davis claims to have seen with his own eyes.
- 54 DE/PA-AA/R14086, Report by Consul Bergfeld, Trebizond, dated July 9, 1915. See also Heizer's report of July 3, 1915 and others for more on the aforementioned exemptions. In Sarafian, *United States Official Records . . .*, pp 687–688. "Ich habe . . . mich gleichzeitig bemüht bei dem hiesigen Vali eine Milderung der Ausweisung zu erreichen. Er zeigte meinen in freundschaftlicher Form gehaltenen Vorstellungen ein williges Gehör und weitestens Entgegenkommen. So wurden von der Deportierung zunächst ausgenommen: Alle Kinder unter 10 Jahren, Witwen und Waisen, sowie alle weiblichen Personen, welche zur Zeit ohne männlichen Schutz sind, worunter auch die Familien der unter den Waffen Stehenden fielen, Kranke und Schwangere, sowie die katholischen Armenier. Den Kranken und Schwangeren wurde überdies erlaubt, in ihrer Wohnung zu bleiben und eine weibliche Familienangehörige zu ihrer Pflege bei sich zu behalten, Kinder konnten bei Bekannten untergebracht werden. Schliesslich wurde den Ausgewiesenen auch gestattet Wertgegenstände, sowie ihren Hausrat nach einer Einholung einer Genehmigung des Polizeidirektors zu verkaufen."
- 55 *Konsolos raporlarında çocuk, yaşlı, hasta, kadın ve yetimlerin hastane, yetimhane ve müslüman evlerine dağıtıldığı ve daha sonra bir kısmının peyderpey sevk edildiği yer almaktadır.* "Soykırım" yapmayı plânlayan devlet neden bu kadar seçici ve müşfik olsun? Neden muaf kategoriler belirlensin?
- 56 "Bedauerlicherweise wurden am dritten Tage, anscheinend auf Weisungen aus Konstantinopel, alle hier erreichten Ausnahmen, abgesehen von der Erlaubnis des Bleibens für die Kinder, wieder aufgehoben."
- 57 Nail had begun as a Unionist *fedâî*, active in both the 1909 *Hareket Ordusu* and the Committee's notorious "Special Organization" (*Teşkilâtı Mahsusa*). He was appointed responsible secretary (*kâtib-i mesul*) for Trebizond during WWI, where he played a role in both the deportations and massacres, as well as leading a unit of the Special Organization. He had no official position (post) ex-officio function when he had Vali's decision reversed. As the war was winding down, he was sent to Batum in 1918 to begin national resistance, and played a role in Turkish War of Independence. As a result of his alleged role in the conspiracy (*İzmir Suikastı*) against Mustafa Kemal, he was arrested, tried and hanged by the Ankara Independence Tribunal (*İstiklal Mahkemesi*) in 1926. For more on his special role in the events in Trebizond, see Heinzer's reports, especially that of April 11, 1915, in Sarafian, *United States Official Records . . .*, p 687.
- 58 For more detailed information about the deportations and killings conducted in the Trebizond region, see: V. N. Dadrian, "The Armenian genocide: an interpretation," in Jay Winter, ed., *America and the Armenian Genocide of 1915* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp 52–103 and Kevork Y. Suakjian, "Genocide in Trabizond: a case study of Armeno-Turkish relations during the First World War," unpublished dissertation, University of Nebraska (Lincoln), 1981, pp 107–152.
- 59 In his reply to my pieces in *Agos*, Professor Çiçek takes issue with my first critical article, stating that "[t]hose who read Akçam's critique might well suppose that those Armenians who are Russian subjects were to establish one state, while those belonging to the Ottoman realm were to establish another state . . . Akçam's critique make no sense, because the Armenians [of both Russian and Ottomans] acted together for the purpose of establishing an independent Armenian state (*bağımsız Ermenistan*)." According to his logic, it is not worthwhile to mention that Armenian citizens of Russia were not fighting against the Ottoman Empire because there is no difference between one group of Armenians and another. This shows his ideological and partisan approach to the problem.