

Great Britain's Denial of the Genocide against the Armenians

The 1999 declaration, the "blue book" of 1916, and some implications

By Rupen Boyadjian*

This text is an extract from the chapter " 'Reconciliation' Without the Truth. Game Over for Turkish Denial of the Genocide against the Armenians", in: Danieli, Y. & Niyibizi, B. (Eds.) *Life After Death: Rebuilding Genocide Survivors' Lives: Challenges and Opportunities*. Proceedings of the Kigali Conference 25-30 November 2001, to be published in the USA 2004.

[...]

Absurdity Rules

To play a game, at least two players are needed. And when it comes to the Armenian genocide they can be found by the dozen among the governments and even parliaments of the "civilized world". Playing along with Turkey's denial still is the world's dominant approach. Only a few parliaments have formally recognized the crime, and with the exception of Cyprus, no government has.¹ While in many countries the question was never debated in parliament, there is a whole range of responses from others who have failed to address the crime by its true name. Usually statements consist of "regret" over the "(tragic) incidents",² some have certain elements of a denialist argument incorporated, as if trying to find some balance, or expressing neutrality.³

Only two governments have resorted to outright denial, Great Britain and Israel.⁴ What could be their motivation to do so? Is it the wish not to upset a military ally, and a developing trade partner that made these governments deny the systematic killing of over a million human beings – and consequently give support to Turkey's view that they were rightfully slaughtered? Does it have to do with a certain degree of ignorance or indifference? In the case of Israel, it was also explicitly said that the uniqueness of the Holocaust would be undermined.

From a strictly academic point of view, we are at what I would consider today's most interesting aspect of the genocide against the Armenians: its contemporary treatment, in politics and other fields. Through its unique absurdity, patterns of genocide related thinking and acting could be revealed in shining clarity. This case can be a jewel for those who are exploring the reasons why genocide – not to speak about other crimes against humanity and human rights abuses in general – is not more effectively, or at best selectively opposed at the beginning of the 21st century.

A key element in the current state of affairs is this genocide's relative absence in the media, as well as the relative powerlessness of Armenian organizations and individuals. Thus, the case can also serve as a sort of barometer for the intrinsic weight of human rights in politics: The less a case is covered by the media, and the less powerful the victim, the more powerfully entrenched the belief must be in the usefulness of the values politicians themselves are constantly airing in order to act accordingly. If the risk of important public criticism over a political stance is considered low, then statements are made and actions undertaken that may be diametrically opposed to what is the declared official policy.

It might be common place that the hope “to get away with it” is a deep-rooted human impulse, and certainly plays an important role when governments make statements on the Armenian genocide. It seems less known that such statements have implications. Or rather, these implications are so grotesque that they are a taboo, as much for opposition politicians, as for the academia and media. What follows when certain ideas are thoroughly thought to the end, is hardly ever a topic for public discussion. I will attempt here to outline the theoretical implications of the British position, and to discuss other problematic aspects from a victim group perspective.

Great Britain

In 1916, the British government ordered documents to be collected relating to the extermination of Armenians, and to be published as a “blue book”, entitled “The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-16”.⁵ What Viscount James Bryce with the help of historian Arnold Toynbee meticulously gathered from varied, mainly American official and missionary sources gave a detailed picture, which leaves no room for eluding to today’s term of “genocide”. Yet, in 1999 the British government stated the following: “[...] in the absence of unequivocal evidence to show that the Ottoman administration took a specific decision to eliminate the Armenians under their control at the time, British governments have not recognized the events of 1915 and 1916 as ‘genocide’.”⁶

Were we to consider the statement of 1999 “true”, this would imply that the blue book was a falsification. The Turkish denialists would be right in saying that Allied powers were making up tales of massacres as a means of war time propaganda, in order to demonize its enemy. They would also rightfully claim that the whole thing was a conspiracy of imperialist forces. The alleged barbarity would have been just a pretext for cutting up and occupying large parts of Asia Minor after the war.⁷ Thus, scores of British personalities like David Lloyd George or Winston Churchill who have both used the term “holocaust” to describe what was done to the Armenians,⁸ or who have otherwise spoken of a policy of extermination, would have been (finally, thanks to the glorious efforts of Tony Blair’s government, so to speak) unmasked as a bunch of liars and conspirators.⁹

Even worse, what can be found today in the British Royal archives must be considered falsifications, or rather documents that were made up in order to mislead the British and the world’s public about what was really going on. For example, document 65 of the “blue book” is a letter from American consul at Harpout, Leslie A. Davis, to the Secretary of State on August 10, 1915:

“The system that is being followed seems to be to have bands of Kurds awaiting them on the road, to kill the men especially, and, incidentally, some of the others. The entire movement seems to be the most thoroughly organized and effective massacre this country has ever seen. Not many men have been spared, however, to accompany those who are being sent into exile, for a more prompt and sure method has been used to dispose of them. Several thousand Armenian men have been arrested during the past few weeks. [...] The fate of all the others has been pretty well established by reliable reports of a similar occurrence on Wednesday, the 7th July. On the Monday many men were arrested, both at {Harpout} and {Mezré}, and put in prison. At daybreak on the Tuesday morning they were taken out and made to march towards an almost uninhabited mountain. There were about eight hundred in all, and they were roped together in groups of fourteen each. That afternoon they arrived in a small Kurdish village, where they were kept overnight [...] On the Wednesday morning they were taken to a valley a few hours distant, where they were all made to sit down. Then the gendarmes began shooting them, until they had

killed nearly all of them. Some who had not been killed by bullets were then disposed of with knives and bayonets [...] No charge of any kind had ever been made against any of these men. They were simply arrested and killed as part of the general plan to dispose of the Armenian race.”¹⁰

This would have been just a fake report while Davis must have written a second one, which would have accurately informed his government (and the British). We then have to assume that there is a second archive where Britain’s (and the U.S.’) true history is secretly hidden up to the present day. And, if a conspiracy of such a magnitude had actually taken place, and those responsible got away with it, wouldn’t it then be just natural that the same procedure was reproduced during WWII, for an even greater “hoax of the century” as one Holocaust denier has put it?¹¹ This is certainly not what the British government had intended to say when it made its declaration on the Armenian genocide. And we can safely assume that not for the fraction of a second did it cross the minds of those careless bureaucrats who have crafted the lousy statement that what they say could have terrible implications for their own history. Actually, logically must have terrible implications, were we to regard the British government of 1999 honest and rightful in its own “treatment of the Armenians”.

The declaration is full of other revealing details. Some are particularly noteworthy from a victim’s perspective (some are similar to those treated below [in the original text] in the cases of Israel and Germany). Underlying all of them is the assumption of almost total worthlessness of over a million Armenian victims, and several million Armenians living today. Right after the claim that there was no evidence for an Ottoman government decision, follows a passage saying that there are only a few other governments who have “attributed the name ‘genocide’ to these tragic events. In our opinion that is rightly so, because we do not believe it is the business of governments today to review events of over 80 years ago with a view to pronouncing on them.” It is to take the Armenians worldwide as total accomplished idiots to first take the most extreme position on the genocide that any non-Turkish government has ever taken, and then to (cynically) add, it would not be a government’s business to do so.

After repeating the same point two more times, Baroness Ramsay of Cartvale, representing the government’s view, asked: “And who would benefit from our taking such a position?” As if it was beyond imagination for government members that victims could be essentially interested to have a crime exposed, and the criminals named, or to have third parties help in the defense against continuing (verbal) attacks. Is it that the Armenian victims are so worthless, that the British government simply forgot they could have an interest? Or does it regard the Armenians a sub-human species that is unable to feel, like “real human beings” would, the same pain for their innocently killed, or the urge for compassion by others, or that they would want justice too?

The British statement closes (again cynically) “We are not suggesting that we or they should deny the past or fail to learn its lessons”, goes on to say that Armenia and Turkey should “resolve between themselves the issues which divide them. But we could not play the role of supportive friend to both countries were we to take an essentially political position on an issue so sensitive for both.”¹² What is openly said here is that Britain regards genocide a political matter. But only recognizing genocide would be to take a “political stance”. As if denying it does not mean to take a stance, be it political or other. The closing sentence of the declaration reads as if to provide living proof for Victor Hugo’s dictum “if a man is killed in Paris, it is a murder; the throats of fifty thousand people are cut in the East, and it is a question.”¹³ The convention is applied if it politically suits (and suddenly the matter becomes a legal affair), and it isn’t if “the events” are “politically sensitive”.

The government spokesperson did try to argue that it was doubtful whether “the terms of that convention” could be applied retroactively, trying to find a technical excuse which is completely missing the point. In fact, it is contrary to the preamble to the convention which states: “[...] Recognizing that at all periods of history genocide has inflicted great losses on humanity [...]”.¹⁴ The British government suggests that anything before 1951 when the convention entered into force, could not be termed genocide.¹⁵

Britain’s position is in opposition to at least two more principles laid out in the preamble: “[...] genocide is a crime under international law, contrary to the spirit and aims of the United Nations and condemned by the civilized world; [...] and; Being convinced that, in order to liberate mankind from such an odious scourge, international co-operation is required [...]”. The Baroness of Cartvale makes believe that the right thing to do is not to name and condemn the crime while the convention to which her country adheres, says genocide is against the spirit and aim of the United Nations and its condemnation the shared view of the “civilized world”. Britain does as if genocide was an issue by which it was not concerned, but that it would be best to provide “the space” for Turkey and Armenia to “resolve between themselves the issues which divide them”, while the supporters of the convention at the time were wise enough to see that genocide is a “scourge” which can only be overcome by international co-operation.

The situation here, for the British or any government which treats the recognition and/or condemnation of the Armenian genocide, is that today (not over 80 years ago) there is a government in this world which propagates the extermination of a minority to be a possible, profitable and even a necessary option. There is a government, which fiercely denies historical facts and tries to influence independent research and publications in the rest of the world. There is a government, which continues to attack members of the same minority its predecessors have effectively exterminated on its territory. Should another government which claims to be a member of the “civilized world” or even an important pillar to it, today (not over 80 years ago) oppose such a view as not helpful at all to the spirit and aim of a peaceful co-existence of nations? Should it give moral support to the victims and their heirs, and signal that a policy of genocide, as well as its justification and propagation will never be tolerated? Should it strengthen the editors and researchers in their own country not to succumb to the pressures of Turkey’s state agents, who want a crime to be denied, or the topic to be dropped or statements to be watered down – agents who are pressing scientists, publishers and educators to work for the clouding rather than the illumination of a topic?¹⁶

Any western government would answer these rhetorical questions with a rhetorical “of course it should”, and any government would claim, “of course we are working to that end”. But the British government doesn’t. It proves that some representatives of a democratic country even do not shy away from denying the character of an extermination it is well aware of – and thus taking the side of, internationally supporting, confirming in its stubbornly denialist position the heir of a state which has killed over a million of its citizens.

Were it not for the marginality of the topic and the victims, commentators would ridicule such government spokespersons as similar to Saddam Hussein’s “comical Ali” minister of information, who delighted the world public opinion in 2003 with his stubborn denial of the battle-ground-realities, when U.S. led forces entered Irak. But here, “noble Lords” are routinely expressing their respect for each other at the beginning of every intervention, and do not put the finger on the contradictory, ignoble, humiliating and cynical character of their government’s statement. The topic and the victims are just not important enough.

One of the most dreadful points of Britain's statement is that Turkey and Armenia should "resolve between themselves the issues which divide them". Psychologically spoken, it is a re-enactment of the original situation. There is powerful Turkey, which stubbornly and coldly pursues its aim of making an alleged Armenian problem disappear. There is powerless and impoverished Armenia. And there is Great Britain (and most of the rest of the world) which does not intervene on behalf of the Armenians and acts as if it had absolutely nothing to do with what is going on "between Turkey and Armenia".

And as if this was not enough, Armenians have to remain quiet, and should not protest such a nauseating stance of the British government, because they are depending so much upon the "excellent relations" the spokesperson claims Britain is entertaining, both with Turkey and Armenia. Protesting against, and exposing the British view, could result in British counter-measures: side-kicks in international Organizations, the cutting back of aid, "freezing relations", or some of the many more counter-measures diplomacy has in store. What a formidable triumph of Turkish denialism, to see their former subjects helplessly at the mercy of the world's powerful.

Of course there are differences between then and now, the nature of which send a shiver down the spine of every Armenian. While in 1915 and beyond, Britain and its allies have protested, threatened the Ottoman government, exposed and named the crime, today it denies the genocide, and supports Turkey's position. For Armenians this is clearly a regression, not a progression of human rights. It is as if the Holocaust and other genocides had not been perpetrated since, as if the many human rights treaties had never entered into force, as if those who claim there is no way that humankind learn from history were absolutely right.

Or worse, what the genocide convention did change in the world is that now governments feel compelled to deny the genocidal character of certain exterminations, because they think they would be driven to counter-act such policies when appropriately exposing and naming them. Countering genocidal policy would then be something which they do not regard as helpful, or "in the national interest". Denying genocide would be a means within a larger policy which aims at maximizing freedom of action in pursuit of the "national interest", a policy which aims at the defense of a world-order as it was in the 19th century, when nations "competed" with only minimal restrictions (and Britain was the world's greatest power).

[...]

* © 2004 by Rupen Boyadjian. Publication of this text (in full or parts) only with the explicit consent of the author (asa@armenian.ch).

R. Boyadjian has edited with ArbeitsKreis Armenien, "Völkermord und Verdrängung. Der Genozid an den Armeniern – die Schweiz und die Shoah", Zurich: Chronos Verlag 1998. He is one of four co-editors of „Enteignet. Vertrieben. Ermordet. Beiträge zur Genozidforschung" to be published in Zurich with Chronos in 2004. He was a member of the board of Association Switzerland – Armenia (1995-2001), and still heads its group for legal issues in regard to genocide denial.

¹ The most complete list of international recognition can be found on the homepage of the Armenian National Institute (ANI) in Washington, D.C.: <http://www.armenian-genocide.org/affirmation/index.htm>. The fact that it is mostly those states which have other conflicting issues with Turkey, who recognize the genocide, like Greece, Cyprus and Russia does not make things better. Belgium probably did it after the Rwandan genocide, which it felt bad for, France most likely because of public pressure and retaliation for a deal on military helicopters: Turkey chose the product of a U.S. company instead of the German-French "Eurocopter". Public pressure consisted rather of continued media-presence as well as long-term efforts by the Armenian community than of election-considerations (get "Armenian" votes) invoked by deniers. Italy, the Vatican and Sweden made the step

because of a long-term involvement by the Armenian community, and eventually genuine human rights concerns.

The Swedish parliament did pass a curious statement on March 21/22, 2002 on the genocide against the Assyrians. It was not recognized, and the text ended up casting doubt on the previous recognition of the genocide against the Armenians. Sweden can not be counted among recognizing countries now – under great applause of Turkish denialists, see homepage of “Tête de Turc”, “La Suède admet s’être trompée en reconnaissant le prétendu ‘génocide’ arménien !...” at: <http://www.tetedeturc.com/Armenien/default-armen.htm>.

² See for example Canadian House of Commons resolution of April 23, 1996, “on the occasion of the 81st anniversary of the Armenian tragedy which claimed some 1.5 million lives”, http://www.armenian-genocide.org/Affirmation.149/current_category.7/affirmation_detail.html

³ Answering an “Interpellation” (question) of Angeline Fankhauser, member of the “Nationalrat”, lower chamber of the Swiss parliament, the “Federal Council”, Swiss government, in 1995 set the position it still maintained in 2003 [translation R.B.]: “The Federal Council condemns the tragic incidents which – after mass-deportations and mass-killings during uprisings and wars at the end of the Ottoman reign, 1894 to 1922, especially in the year 1915 – caused the death of an extremely high number of Armenians (according to sources between 800’000 and 1.5 Million).” See on the homepage of Association Switzerland – Armenia: <http://www.armenian.ch/%7Egsga/Pages/Genocide/inter.htm>

The denialist point of the uprisings and war(s) is integrated. Eventhough at first glance, the statement seems to be in favour of the victims, deniers could still claim that the “tragic incidents” (a term used by Turkish diplomacy until its gradual replacement by “so-called genocide” during the 1980’s) were the result of civil war(s), where the stronger party crushed the weaker... and they would have earned it because – and the Swiss government apparently gives credit to this – they organized uprisings. Thus, the condemnation of the “tragic incidents” could as well be directed at the Armenians who should not have „conspired“.

Against the opposition by the Federal Council, the Swiss parliament has recognized the genocide on December 16, 2003 with a vote of 107 to 67 and 11 abstentions when it passed the “Postulat Vaudroz” (presented by Dominique de Buman). See text of the postulat on the homepage of the Swiss parliament: http://www.parlament.ch/afs/data/f/gesch/2002/f_gesch_20023069.htm

And the debate:

<http://www.parlament.ch/ab/frameset/f/n/4701/95679/f%5Fn%5F4701%5F95679%5F95803.htm>

⁴ Turkish denialist internet sites happily and proudly cite them. See for instance: <http://www.tetedeturc.com>; On Britain’s historical role in the “Armenian question” and the reaction to the genocide see: Akaby Nassibian, *Britain and the Armenian Question 1915-1923*, N.Y.: St. Martin’s Press 1984; Arman J. Kirakossian, *British Diplomacy and the Armenian Question from the 1830s to 1914*, Princeton and London: Gomidas Institute 2003; Ara Sarafian (ed.), *British Parliamentary Debates on the Armenian Genocide 1915-1918*, Princeton and London: Gomidas Institute 2003, with a foreword by Eric Aveybury; Ara Sarafian (ed.), Duke of Argyll, *Our Responsibilities for Turkey. Facts and Memories of Forty Years*, London: Sterndale Classics 2003 (originally published in 1896);

For a detailed account on Israel’s treatment of the Armenian genocide and other genocides and crimes against humanity see: Yair Auron, *The Banality of Denial. Israel and the Armenian Genocide*, New Brunswick N.J., Transaction Publishers 2003; and a historical study on Jewish and Zionist reactions by the same author, *Banality of Indifference: Zionism and the Armenian Genocide*, New Brunswick N.J., Transaction Publishers 2000; More on reactions of Jewish individuals, in: Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine (ed.), *Revue d’histoire de la Shoah. Le monde juif*, No. 177-178, janvier-août 2003, Ailleurs, hier, autrement: connaissance et reconnaissance du génocide des Arméniens, Paris 2003.

⁵ Ara Sarafian (Ed.) James Bryce and Arnold Toynbee, *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-16: Documents Presented to Viscount Grey of Falloden by Viscount Bryce*, Gomidas Institute, Reading 2000 (first published in London, His Majesty’s Stationery Office, Joseph Causton and Sons Ltd, 1916). Also available on the internet: <http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/1915/bryce/a00tc.htm>

⁶ His Majesty’s stationery office (ed.), *Lords Hansard*, 14. April 1999, “Armenian Massacre, 1915”, column 809-830, question by Baroness Cox to the government (columns 809-813), answer by Baroness Ramsay of Cartvale, (columns 826-830), here column 826, at: http://www.publications.parliament.uk/cgi-bin/ukparl_hl?DB=ukparl&STEMMER=en&WORDS=armenian+massacr+1999+&COLOUR=Red&STYLE=s&URL=/pa/ld199899/ldhansrd/vo990414/text/90414-08.htm#90414-08_spnw0.

⁷ Ara Sarafian describes some of the denialist’s arguments in his introduction to the reprinted blue book (cf. note 5), vii-xvi, based on his earlier article “The Archival Trail. Authentication of *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-16*”, in: Richard G. Hovannisian (ed.), *Remembrance and Denial. The Case of the Armenian Genocide*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit 1998. In fact “controversy” already set in with the

act itself. Bryce dedicated a whole section to refute justification of the extermination: “No provocation or misdemeanour on the part of individual Armenians could justify such a crime against the whole race. But it might be explained and palliated if the Armenians, or some of them, were originally in the wrong; and therefore the Ottoman Government and its German apologists have concentrated their efforts on proving that this was the case. There are three main Turkish contentions, none of which will bear examination” (Treatment, cf. note 5, “V. The Deportations of 1915: Antecedents.”, p. 626). Note that the argument at that time was not whether the Ottoman government had issued orders to get rid of the Armenians. It was all too obvious (see also note 9). On historical development of denial: Richard Hovannisian, *The Armenian Genocide and Patterns of Denial*, in: *ibid.* (ed.), *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective*, New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction publishers 1986, pp. 111-133.

⁸ Churchill described an episode of extermination as “one administrative holocaust” in: *ibid.*, *The World Crisis*, vol. 5, New York, 1927, p. 157 (cited after: Hans-Lukas Kieser, “Die Armenierverfolgungen in der spätoosmanischen Türkei. Neue Quellen und Literatur zu einem unbewältigten Thema“, in: *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte*, vol. 51, no. 1, Schwabe, Basel 2001, pp. 97-105, note 1). Lloyd George wrote of Britain’s partial responsibility for “the holocausts of 1915” in his memoirs according to Lord Avebury in: *His Majesty’s stationery office* (ed.), *Lords Hansard*, 14. April 1999 (cf. note 6), column 821.

⁹ The British government attempts to reconcile the two contradictory statements though. On the one hand it praises its predecessors for having “condemned the massacres of 1915-16 at the time”, but on the other hand there would be no evidence for the Ottoman government’s “decision to eliminate the Armenians”. The latter is a thorough reinterpretation of events.

On May 24, 1915 already, Britain along with its allies had issued a declaration condemning “the connivance and often assistance of Ottoman authorities” in the massacres. “In view of these new crimes of Turkey against humanity and civilization [...] will hold personally responsible [...] all members of the Ottoman government and those of their agents who are implicated in such massacres”. For the first time in history the concept of “crimes against humanity” was used, and for the first time certain governments had threatened to hold personally responsible representatives of a foreign government for crimes against their own subjects (for the declaration: Vahakn N. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide. Ethnic conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus*, Third Revised Edition, Berghahn Books, Providence/Oxford 1997 (first published 1995), pp. 216-217; On “crimes against humanity” and the Armenian genocide: Sévane Garibian, *Génocide Arménien et conceptualisation du crime contre l’humanité. De l’intervention pour cause d’humanité à l’intervention pour violation des lois de l’humanité*, in: *Revue d’histoire de la Shoah*, cf. note 4, pp. 274-294).

In his seven-page introduction to the officially sanctioned “blue book” of 1916, Bryce no less than ten times either alluded to “[...] the general scheme drawn out by the Young Turk leaders at Constantinople” or “Turkish policy” (Treatment, cf. note 5, p. 23) or directly addressed the topic, for example on page 21: “As there is every reason to believe – and indeed it is hardly denied – that the massacres and deportations were carried out under general orders proceeding from Constantinople, [...]” or on page 24-25: “The main facts are established by the confessions of the criminals themselves. What the evidence presented here does is to show in detail how these things were effected, [...] The disproof of the palliations which the Turks have put forward is as complete as the proof of the atrocities themselves.”

Finally, it was mainly the British government, which pressed for tribunals for those who had committed the extermination of the Armenians. The Turkish military tribunals of 1919/20 clearly established that orders emanated from the Young Turk party leaders who were in power then (*Journal of Political and Military Sociology. The Armenian Genocide in Official Turkish Records. Collected essays by Vahakn N. Dadrian*, Vol. 22, No. 1, summer 1994, Reprinted with corrections, Spring 1995, pp. 87-89; In dept: Taner Akçam, *Armenien und der Völkermord. Die Istanbul Prozesse und die türkische Nationalbewegung*, Hamburg 1996).

If the British government of 1999 finds itself fit to claim there was no evidence for an Ottoman government decision, then we are compelled to conclude that it has information which would render nil what all those who have their senses together had so far believed to be more than sufficient proof for a planned and centrally commanded extermination. At the same time it follows that previous British governments have wrongfully claimed there was evidence, and have acted as if there was; but this would merely have been a farce, a conspiracy.

¹⁰ *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire*, cf. note 5, pp. 291-292. See also: Leslie A. Davis, *The Slaughterhouse Province. An American Diplomat’s Report on the Armenian Genocide. 1915-17*, Susan K. Blair (ed.), Aristide D. Caratzas, New Rochelle 1989.

Let us imagine, as a theoretical exercise, today’s British government would dismiss Davis’ assessment that there was a “plan to dispose of the Armenian race” as the view of an isolated, naïve American diplomat. Of course this would be impossible to do because it was one of the stated intentions of the “blue book”-editors to collect sources from many isolated places in order to give the full picture and show the centrally organized character through the similarity of the reports. They were also putting particular stress on the fact that the material was not from the British government but from neutral sources – the U.S. were neutral then – and allies of Turkey, which

was increasing the credibility of the British government's publication, and surely an effort to prevent the charge of war time propaganda (see, pp. 19-20 of the "blue book").

Assuming Consul Davis' assessment was devalued anyway, then how could it be explained that several thousand Armenian men from Harpout were arrested, put into prison, were dispatched by several hundreds at night, and then killed by the gendarmes? Assuming that the Ottoman government had not given orders to do so, we would have to imagine an independent act of the local authorities, against the will of the central government. Since there were similar reports from other provinces, we'd have to imagine a general act of insubordination throughout the Ottoman Empire. Thousands of gendarmes and other government agents would have acted according to their own preferences for weeks, diverting their manpower to eliminate and antagonize certain citizens of the Empire, in the midst of an ongoing war effort. If this was the case, then why aren't we reading anything about it in the state sponsored Turkish historiography?

¹¹ Allusion is made to Holocaust denier Arthur R. Butz's book *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*, Torrance, CA: Institute for Historical Review, 1976.

¹² His Majesty's stationery office (ed.), *Lords Hansard*, cf. note 6, columns 827 for the "who would benefit", and 830 for "political position".

¹³ Quoted in Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide*, cf. note 9, p. xviii.

¹⁴ Text of the U.N. „Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide“: http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/p_genoci.htm.

¹⁵ His Majesty's stationery office (ed.), *Lords Hansard*, cf. note 6, column 827 for "1951"; on the applicability of the term "genocide" for "events" before 1951 see International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), *The Applicability of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide to Events which occurred During the Early Twentieth Century. Legal Analysis Prepared for the International Center for Transitional Justice*, New York 2003, at: http://www.armenian-genocide.org/Affirmation.244/current_category.5/affirmation_detail.html;

See also: European Armenian Federation for Justice & Democracy (EAFJD) (ed.), Alfred de Zayas, *Memorandum on the Genocide against the Armenians 1915-1923 and the Application of the 1948 Genocide Convention*, at: http://www16.brinkster.com/eafjd/en/bulletins/dezayas_report.pdf.

While both maintain that the term should be applied to "the events", the authors of the ICTJ study say that the genocide convention (as a legal instrument) can only be applied for events after January 12, 1951 (when the convention entered into force, according to its article 13: on the ninetieth day following the date of deposit of the twentieth instrument of ratification), and de Zayas holds that "the Convention is declaratory of a pre-existing internationally wrongful act giving rise to both State responsibility and individual penal liability" (p. 1).

¹⁶ Vartkes S. Dolabjian, "The Armenian Genocide as portrayed in the Encyclopaedia Britannica", in: *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 5 no. 1, March 2003, pp. 103-115.