

Ethnic Cleansing in Anatolia, 1913-1922 by Dr. Taner Akcam, May 19,2007

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Just as with the Armenian Genocide itself, two factions have formed around different assessments of the Ottoman materials in the Prime Ministerial Archive in Istanbul. Those who argue that the events of 1915 were not intentionally planned destruction of the Armenian population, but unexpected consequences of the deportations due to the war, rely exclusively on the Ottoman documents in the Prime Ministerial Archive in order to support their claim. According to them these materials are infallible. This faction distrusts not only the American, British, German, and Austrian documents, but also the materials documented by the Military Tribunal proceedings in Istanbul as politically motivated distortions of the events. On the other hand, some critical Western scholars maintain that only the Western archives are reliable, since they believe some documents from the Prime Ministerial archives were produced in order to color events, and some other documents had already been purged, so the material from this archive is not a trustworthy source.

The common logic underlying both of these positions is that both sets of documents are mutually contradictory. I will argue that both extremes are missing the point. It is erroneous to assume that the Ottoman documents from the Prime Ministerial Archive were created solely in order to obscure the actions of the Ottoman government. In fact, Ottoman materials found in the Prime Ministerial Archives in Istanbul make clear the intent of Ottoman authorities and support and corroborate the narrative of the Armenian Genocide and ethnic cleansing of Anatolia as shown in the western Archival sources. In my talk, I will give you a general overview of what we can learn from the Prime Ministerial Archive. My argument is that Armenian deportation and killings were not an isolated act only against Armenians. They were carried out as part of a general plan which could be called “demographic policy” or “ethnic cleansing of Anatolia”, a policy of cleansing basically of the Christian population of Anatolia.

This policy was implemented as a general resettlement plan between 1913-1918 and continued against the Pontus Greek in the years of 1920 and 1924. The main goal of all this policy was to ensure the formation of a homogenous Anatolia, which can pave the

way for a nation state and to eliminate any dangerous elements that might hinder the realization of this plan. This plan had two primary components: One is towards the Muslim population of non-Turkish origin, such as Kurds, Arabs and migrants from Balkan; they were relocated and dispersed among the Turkish majority with the purpose of Assimilation. The other aspect is the removal of non-Muslim peoples from Anatolia, as a result of which 2 Million Armenians, Assyrians and Greeks (mainly the Christian population of Anatolia) were either expelled or massacred.

These policies which were put into force during the period 1913-1918 resulted in a complete change in the ethnic makeup of Anatolia.¹ The estimated 17.5 million people who lived in Anatolia at the time were so uprooted that at the end of this period, at least one-third of them had either been re-settled somewhere else, deported or annihilated.

POINT – I-

The available Ottoman documents shows that this plan was first implemented and began to be executed in the Aegean region against the Greeks with the beginning of 1913 and 1914 spring before the World War I. During the war years this policy was expanded to include the Assyrians, Chaldeans and Syrians, and especially the Armenians, which eventually became genocidal. Ethnic cleansing and destruction of Pontus Greek was the end point of this policy.

The loss incurred during the Balkan War was a major triggering point for this plan. After the war, the Ottomans lost 83% of their land holdings in Europe and 69% of their population in Europe. As a result, the Ottoman authorities were faced with a huge wave of Muslim immigrants from the Balkans. The Ottoman government then agreed to exchange populations with Greece and Bulgaria, especially those populations concentrated around the border.

The main goal of this policy implemented against the Greeks in 1913 and 1914 was, in their own words, “liquidating the concentrations of non-Turkish population that had

¹ The aim of this article is not to deal with the general population policy of that time. For this aspect of the problem see: Fuat Dündar,, *op. cit.*

accumulated at strategic points, and which were susceptible to negative foreign influences.”²

The first measures against the Greeks on the Aegean coast followed a two-track communication and operation system. On one hand, the Government had official population exchange agreements with Greece and Bulgaria, according to which Moslems and Christians should be exchanged and resettled in their respective villages. On the other hand, Special Organization, established within the Defense Ministry, carried out the illegal operations, which would include the “services which the ... government and public organizations could never hope to perform.”³

With the beginning of 1913, the Ottoman Government, in separate treaties with Bulgaria and Greece, agreed to the exchange of ethnic populations across national borders, first with Bulgaria than with Greece. However, the dozens of communiqés that appear in the records of the Ministry of Interior proves that the resettlement of Muslim immigrants was organized in a systematic way without waiting for the final agreements with the respective governments in the Balkans. *In a telegram sent from the office of IAMM to the Province of Aydin, for example, it is ordered that “even though we, upon the proposal of Venizelos, agreed to exchange the Greek population in the Province of Aydin with the Muslim population in Macedonia,” since it will take a long time to establish a commission which would deal with the details of the population exchange, it is advised to resettle the Muslims who have been arriving step by step in the Greek villages.*⁴

From this document it becomes clear that Greek villages had already been emptied and Muslims had been settled in a systematic way before the final agreements with respective governments. Especially in spring and summer of 1914 the Greek villages were attacked, plundered and the inhabitants were forced to leave their villages. In some regions there were also massacres.

The concrete preparation of these plans was made at the beginning of 1914. Especially the appointment of Enver Pasha to the Ministry of War, in January 1914 was an important

² Celal Bayar’s *Ben de Yazdim*, vol. 5 (Istanbul: Baha Matbaasi, 1967), p. 1573.

³ Cemal Kutay, “Türkiye Nereye Gidiyor?”, ..., *op. cit.*, p. 69. [34]

⁴ BA/DH/SFR., 37-1332-C25. Ciphered telegram by Interior Minister Talaat to the Province of Aydin, dated May 8 1330 (May 21, 1914)

turning point. The Ottoman army was reorganized; the Special Organization was also established—or at least reorganized—in this period. If we can believe the information provided by Eşref Kuşçubaşı, he had a conversation with Enver Paşa in the War Ministry on February 23, 1914.⁵ Painting a picture of collapse within the country, Enver claimed that the only way to escape further total collapse was to achieve a unity of the Turkish and Islamic worlds. As for the non-Muslims within the country, they had shown themselves not to be in favor of the further continuation of the state's existence. The salvation of the Ottoman State, then, was dependant on measures being taken against them.

The task of the Special Organization was to carry out “services which the visible government forces and public security organizations would certainly be unable to accomplish.” In the words of Eşref Kuşçubaşı, “the first task was to separate the *loyal* from the *traitors*.⁶ In the words of Kuşçubaşı Eşref, the non-Moslems were “an internal tumor,” whose “purging” was a “matter of national importance.”⁷ With his words, “the greatest danger lay in the Aegean region… For this reason, it was decided that the measures to be taken would be concentrated in Izmir. These measures were of three different aspects: a) general measures to be taken by the government; b) special measures taken by the military; c) measures taken by the CUP.⁸

World War had not yet broken out. The CUP government, which hesitated to fully implement its program against the non-Muslim minorities within the Empire due to their fear of external pressure from Europe, organized actions such as terror, repression and robbery by means of the Special Organization, and made sure that there was no connection to the government itself. Halil Menteşe, the member of CUP central committee and Minister of Justice of the time, who was cognizant of the plans, says in his memoirs that the intention in carrying out these measures was that “the Governors-General and other officials would not appear to be officially involved; the Committee of Union and Progress’ organization would run the affair.”⁹ Carrying out the plan so as to

⁵. Cemal Kutay, *Birinci Dünya Harbinde Teşkilat-i Mahsusa ve Heyber'de Türk Cengi* (İstanbul, 1962), p. 10.

⁶. Cemal Kutay, *Sohbetler*, no. 10: *Türkiye Nereye Gidiyor* (September, 1969), p. 69.

⁷ From the memoirs of Kuşçubaşı Eşref, an important member of the *Teşkilat-i Mahsusa* (Special Organization) who was in charge of running the “liquidation” operation to rid Anatolia of “not-Turcic” elements as described in Celal Bayar’s *Ben de Yazdım*, *Ibid.*, p. 1578.

⁸. Celal Bayar, [53], *op. cit.*, vol. V, p. 1574.

⁹. Halil Menteşe'nin Anıları, [74], *op. cit.*, p. 166.

appear that there had been no government decisions to that effect was made possible through the close control of high-level functionaries.

On the subject of eliminating the Christian presence from the Aegean region, the British historian Arnold Toynbee provides the following account:

The Turkish reprisals against the West Anatolian Greeks became general in the spring of 1914. Entire Greek communities were driven from their homes by terrorism, their houses and land and often their movable property were seized, and individuals were killed in the process.¹⁰

The American Ambassador to the Porte during the war years, Henry Morgenthau drew attention to the fact that the methods used during the Armenian massacres were similar to those used throughout this entire period.

The Turks employed the [same] methods against the Greeks that they had used against the Armenians. They took them into the Ottoman army, and [then] transferred them to the Labor Battalions...Thousands of these Greek soldiers died from cold, hunger and other deprivations, just like the Armenians...The Greeks were everywhere gathered into groups. Then, under the promised protection of the Turkish gendarmes, they were generally transported by foot to the inner regions [of Anatolia].¹¹

The ethnic cleansing of Greek population from the West coast stopped with the beginning of the World War I. There were two important reasons for this. One is Germany's demand the other the threat of Greek government.

POINT – II-

What is *not* being claimed is that the deportation or resettlement of the entire Anatolian population during 1913-1917 was the result of a preconceived comprehensive plan. The coded communications of the Ministry of the Interior of that period, in particular, point to forty-four different reasons for the movement in population. Among some of the many reasons are the following:

I-a) For the Greeks in the Aegean region and the Armenians in general, who were perceived as threats to the nation, forced deportation was taken as the main tactic of

¹⁰. Arnold Toynbee, *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey* (New York, 1970), p. 140.

¹¹. Henry Morgenthau, [72] *op. cit.*, p. 212.

choice. This took the form of threats, looting of businesses and homes, limited cases of murders, and forced deportation to Greece, while the Armenians were more often subjected to killings en route to settlements elsewhere, and being left for dead on the road, deserted in remote locations.

I- b) there developed a planned policy of re-settling the areas which had been emptied of Armenians with Moslems who had come from the Balkans and Caucasus regions at different times, and who were settled mainly in Western Anatolia.

II, a) Deportation of Greeks and some Nestorians and Assyrians on the coast regions were done on the basis of military objectives. As an example, one can look at the forced emigrations of Nestorians and Assyrians from the Van region at the end of 1914, while the same was utilized against the Greeks of Ayvalik and the Black Sea shore. The first deportations of Armenians that took place between February and April of 1915 from Çukurova region would fit into this category also.

II, b) Some Arab families and Kurdish tribes were deported for political reasons. The deportation of Arab families and important individuals from Syria by Cemal Pasha fit into this category. Or deportation of an important number of Kurdish tribes from Eastern Anatolia toward inside can be given as another example.

III) The settlement of Moslems especially Kurds who had escaped the war zones from Russian invasion into the regions in the interior was necessitated by the resettlement policies.

POINT-III

Before implementing this general new population policy, they created maps of every region showing the ethnic demographics of each area. During the Abdülhamit period, Muslims in the census were considered to be one group, regardless of their ethnicity, because of the Pan-Islamic policy. Even though no census was conducted during the period of İttihat ve Terakki, there were regular secret censuses that began to catalog Muslims according to their ethnic origins. We can infer from some Ottoman

documents that they had acquired maps of every region, which included ethnic demographics of the inhabitants before the First World War. For example, from a document dated February 1914, we see that they wanted to be informed of the results of censuses in Basra, Muş, Bitlis and Van. In another document, it is written that the priests and rabbis, and other officials were responsible for providing information on their communities' population fluctuation. If they did not fulfil their obligations, they were to be punished. (DH. SN. THR. 48, 75 ve 49, 39; ayrıca, Fuat Dündar, s. 85)

Before the resettlements, they not only created an ethnic map from every region, but also a social one, detailing the education, language, and economic situation of the different ethnic groups and the relationships between them. For example, in a telegram sent to Edirne, Erzurum, Adana, Ankara and other counties (vilayets) along with Icel, and Teke izmit Administrations (Mutasarriflik) "There is a need for the procurement of two logs in which the national identities of the population for each administrative unit from counties to villages is shown." (DH/SFR 54-A/51/1333.8)

In a telegram sent to Baghdad; information as to the number of Turks in the region, their numbers in comparison to Arabs and Kurds along with their languages, levels of education and financial status was requested.(DH/SFR 63/151/1334.C27). Or in a telegram sent to Sivas, information regarding Kurdish refugees arriving from the military zones was requested with specific inquiries into their numbers, the tribes they belonged to, their relations with Turks and the languages they spoke.(DH/SFR 62/187/1334.CA27)

Again, a coded telegram dated July 20, 1915, and sent to all provinces (vilayets) and local administrations (mutasarrifliks) demanding that a map showing the "national identities of populations" both "past and present" in all administrative units down to the village level be sent immediately (DH/SFR 54A, 51). There are dozens of similar documents requesting different information in every region. For purposes of providing a few examples: a follow-up telegram sent from the IAMM (Directorate of Tribal Residence and Immigration) to the Hudavendigar province (vilayet) "requesting the procurement and dispatch of a log of the names of villages set free in the Marmara coast along with the numbers of Greeks deported from them and the localities." (DH/SFR 56/73/1333.ZA.9) A telegram asking for "the numbers of Armenians remaining in

Zeytun and the numbers who have left and where they have been dispatched” from the Maras Administration. (DH/SFR 52-203-1333-C-18); a telegram sent by the Directorate of General Security (Emniyet-i Umumiye Muduruyet) to the Canakkale Administration asking whether the populations of the Karaburun or Yenikoy villages on the Black Sea coast are Greek or not. (DH/SFR 52/346/1333C.28); a follow up telegram from the DGS (Emniyet-i Umumiye Muduruyet) to the Adana and Syria provinces (Vilayets) demanding that a log of the numbers of Armenians within the county be sent by post. (DH/SFR, 71/76/1335.S.29).

POINT- IV

As part of this measure, the government created a new regulation (nizannname) in May 1913 concerning this resettlement and asked the Interior Ministry to implement it. At the end of the same year, they established the Department of Immigration within the Interior Ministry.

One important aspect of the regulation of 1913 was the renaming of Christian villages which had been resettled by Muslims. After the expulsion of Armenians, they accelerated this renaming process, particularly during the summer of 1915. These measures were carried out mostly by the provincial administrative commissions and were not well organized. In order to stabilize this process, Enver Pasa, the Minister of Defense, issued instructions on January 15, 1916. These instructions restated the previous decision to rename towns, villages, mountains, rivers, etc... that had non-Muslim names, and pointed out that the time was auspicious for the implementation of such a plan. The telegram also emphasized that this renaming process should be completed as soon as possible. (After notifying them of the decision to “change all names of counties, towns, villages, mountains, rivers...which are in non-Islamic languages into Turkish” and to take advantage of the current conducive climate by “taking immediate action.” Dahiliye Nezareti Idare-i Umumiye Dahiliye Evraki-DH/IUM; 48/17) This process, however, created enormous problems during the war, as not everyone was yet familiar with the new names. A second decree in June of 1916 postponed the renaming process until the end of the war. (Dahiliye Nezareti Hukuk Müşavirliği Kalemi; DH/HMS, 30/132

POINT V-

The resettlement of Muslims began immediately after the expulsion of the Christians for the purpose to repopulate the villages vacated by Christians. We can infer from the documents that the time between vacating and resettlement was not more than one week in some regions. This shows that there was a great deal of preparation beforehand.

a) For example, in a telegram dated May 4, 1331 (May 18, 1915), there was a reference to a previous telegram dated May 2, 1331 (May 16, 1915) about expelling the Armenians from their homes. It is also written that a person was to be appointed to conduct the resettlement of Muslims in these villages.

b) Another telegram was sent to Erzurum on May 4, 1331, (May 18, 1915) inquiring as to the number of immigrants in the province, as well as to the resources the province would need to feed and settle them.

POINT- VI

The main goal of the resettlement policy of different Muslim ethnic groups was their Turkification. This is clearly detailed in the Ottoman documents. In order to achieve this end, Muslim groups were separated from their religious leaders and were settled in different areas. Not only were the leaders placed away from their group, but the group itself was dispersed throughout Anatolia. Before relocating the Muslim groups, the government demanded concrete information about the structure of the tribes, their languages, and their relation with the Turks.

For example, in a telegram sent by Talat Pasa dated January 26, 1916, after informing them that the government had decided to relocate the Kurds from Eastern to Western Anatolia, he requested detailed information from governors about the number of Kurdish villages, their population, their language and culture, as well as their relations to the Turks. (DH/SFR 62/188)

In another telegram dated May 2, 1916, sent to Diyarbakır, they describe the intention of the resettlement policy of the Kurds. The main intention was to make the Kurds forget their ethnic and cultural identity. Thus, they should not be resettled in areas that would allow them to keep their national identity. It is clearly written that in order to stop the Kurds from maintaining their tribal lifestyles, their leaders should be relocated to areas away from their people. (DH/SFR 63/172) In another document, dated May 4, 1916, it is written that the Kurds should abandon their language and cultural habits. (DH/SFR 63/187)

The term ‘assimilation’ is also clearly used with regard to other Muslim groups. For example, a ciphered telegram dated January 26, 1915(?) (26 Kanunuevvel 1331) by Talat Pasa describes the government’s reasons for relocating the Arabs from Algeria and Tunisia to the Diyarbakır region. He asserts that it will be the best region for them to be successfully assimilated. (DH/SFR 60/9)

POINT-VII

The documents explicitly show that the government ordered the regional authorities to ensure that any relocated groups not exceed five or ten percent of the original population. Some scholars, such as myself, learned of the five or ten percent policy from the documents relating to Armenians, but we originally dismissed them as cover-up attempts. Now, however, new documents from the Ottoman archives indicate that this was not a cover-up, but rather a calculated policy applied not only to Armenians, but Arabs, Kurds, Albanians, Bosnians, and others. Here are some examples from a telegram sent to various regions demanding that the Kurds be separated from their religious leaders and sheiks and that they be settled in Anatolia in numbers not exceeding five percent of the indigenous population. (DH/SFR 63/188/1334.B.1) In a telegram sent by Talat Pasa to Ankara dated October 1, 1915, he writes that the Albanians and Bosnians should be dispersed among the Turkish population without exceeding ten percent of the native population. (DH/SFR 56/290)

In some other telegrams, they also say that in regions where Armenians did not constitute more than five or ten percent of the population, no relocation was necessary.

(DH/SFR 55/59/1333.L.6) In each region, the government kept continual track of population percentages, constantly asking the numbers both of expelled groups and remaining relocated groups in a particular place. For example, in a telegram to Canik province, they asked how many Greeks had been moved out of the province, where they had been sent, and how many remained. (DH/SFR 72/83/1335.RA.30)

In regions where the Armenians were deported to they should not be more than 10% of the population in that location. Now we can understand the rationale behind the second wave of massacres in the summer of 1916 in the Iraqi and Syrian deserts. It becomes clear from these documents that the Armenians exceeded ten percent of the population in those areas. In a telegram sent to the Syrian and Iraqi provinces, it is clearly stated that the Armenian population there should never exceed ten percent. (DH/SFR 54/308/1333. §22) For example, in the region of Zor, the Armenian population exceeded 10%, and the Interior Ministry sent telegrams to the governors of Adana, Erzurum, Bitlis, and Aleppo, saying that the percentage of Armenians in Zor had passed ten percent, and that it was not suitable to send more Armenians there. (DH/SFR 54/413/§.29)

I would like to point out two important consequences which can be derived from the abovementioned information. First, if the assertion is correct that the Armenians should not be more than %10 of the indigenous population, what was done with the Armenians in Syria and Iraq who were over the %10 limit? According to the Ottoman statistics the number of deported Armenians was around one million, a number that would far exceed %10 percent of the indigenous population. The Ottoman documents themselves speak against the Ottoman thesis, because of the differences in their accounts. If one adheres to the the Turkish thesis, the only way to explain the variation in numbers is that the Armenians simply evaporated. The second consequence is that according to Ottoman documents, the resettlement of roughly one million Muslims into the vacated Armenian and Greek villages was largely successful, and occurred without great losses. The official Turkish thesis claims that the Armenian losses were largely due to the dangerous conditions of war. However, despite the asserted hazards of living in the Armenian villages, the Muslims were resettled in them without great trouble.

POINT VIII

The documents prove without a doubt that the Armenians were treated totally different from other ethnic groups, which suggests a genocidal intention on the part of the ruling party.

a) Despite the “cleansing” of the archives, there are some documents which clearly demonstrate the party’s goal to eliminate the Armenians. Talat Pasha’s telegram to Diyarbakir date June 29, 1915 is well known. In this telegram, after reporting that the estimated number of Christians massacred in Diyarbakir exceeded two thousand. Talat then warns the governor that “The political and disciplinary measures adopted against the Armenians are absolutely not to be extended to other Christians.” Furthermore, he says that “You are ordered to put an immediate end to these acts, lest they threaten the lives of the other Christians.” From this document, it is clear that the government is only opposed to the killing of “other Christians,” but has no qualms with killing Armenians. I have three other documents from the Ottoman archives which expose a similar intent.

First, a telegram from the Interior Ministry to the governor of Ankara requesting information as to whether the Armenians who were being deported were still alive. 12 Kanunusani 1331 (DH/SFR 133160/288/1334.R.5.)

The second is a telegram sent on June 15, 1915 to the governor of Erzerum by Talat, the Minister of the Interior. According to that telegram, the lives of the deported Armenians were to be protected if possible. Armenians who try to escape or resist the guards should be killed, but the local people should never become involved in this. Such things which would create a bad image abroad should be avoided.) (DH/SFR 54/10)

The third telegram is from the Interior Ministry to the governors of Mamuret ul Aziz, Erzurum, Diarbekir and Bitlis ordering them to stop rumors regarding the annihilation of Kurds after Armenians in the Dersim region. The governors were then asked to take preventive measures against such rumors. (DH/SFR 54-A/128/1333.N.13)

b) There are other documents in the Ottoman archives that clearly illustrate the Ottoman government’s planned genocide of the Armenians. According to the United Nations’ Convention on Genocide, forcibly transferring children of one group to another is an important element of genocide. We have documents in hand that show children

being taken away from the Armenians and handed out to Muslim families and orphanages. The girls were also forcibly married to Muslim men. Some examples of this are as follows:

A telegram sent from the Interior Ministry to different provinces and districts ordered that people with no living relatives or protection should be dispersed among the villages and towns in which there were no foreign or Armenian populations; young girls and widows were to be married, and the children to be placed in orphanages. (DH/SFR 63/142/1334.C.26)

Another telegram was sent from the Interior Ministry to the Niğde province about supplying food to those without living relatives and the placement of children either in orphanages or in Muslim villages. In both instances, they were obliged to raise them according to Muslim tradition and ensure that young girls and widows be married to Muslim men. (DH/SFR 59/150/1334.S.21)

A third telegram clearly shows that Armenian families were being torn apart. The men were being deported, and the women and children were being split up and dispersed among the villages and towns in which there were no foreigners or Armenians. (DH/SFR 63/60/1334.C.16)

The Ottoman archives are full of such correspondences, all of which clearly demonstrate that families were being torn apart intentionally, that children were being taken away, and that the girls were being forcibly married to Muslims. According to the UN's definition, two aspects of genocide can be described as: "deliberately inflicting on a group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part"; and "forcibly transferring children of the group to another group." In light of this definition, how else could we interpret the documents above, other than as a genocide?

c) The Ottoman archives are full of documents that show that the conversion of Armenians to Islam was not a sufficient reason to allow them to remain in their homes. As we know from other sources, in the beginning of the deportation procedures, some Armenians converted as a way of escaping deportation, but after the number of converts became quite large, the government decided to ignore religion as a criterion. Many telegrams then gave orders to deport the converted Armenians as well. This decision can

be explained partly by the 5 or 10 percent regulation. Although I could provide dozens of examples here, I will simply give two. Some of these documents were also published by the official Turkish authorities.

1. A telegram from the General Police Dept. in the Interior Ministry to certain provinces notes that some of the deported Armenians had changed their religion in order to stay in their hometown, and they should not be trusted. (DH/SFR 54/254/1333.Ş.18)
2. The conversion of the Armenians in Ereğli due to political reasons is not acceptable. (DH/SFR 61/252/1334.CA.4.)

d) A common myth of the conflict is that there were no Armenians deported from Istanbul and Izmir. The Ottoman archives prove that this is a myth; there were indeed some Armenians deported from both regions. This information coincides with information found in British and German archives. I'd like to give some examples:

1. In a telegram from the General Police Dept. of the Interior Ministry order the district of Karahisar-i Sahip to send the Armenians deported from Izmir to Mosul through Diarbekir. (DH/SFR 58/247/1334.M.30)
2. Another telegram to the Adana province states that deported Armenians from Izmir who were members of illegal organizations (komitadji) were en route to Adana and should be deported to Zor through Maraş. (DH/SFR 69/261/1335.M.17)
3. A telegram to the Aydin province was sent which stated that train cars were ordered to be sent to Konya for the deportation of Armenians from Izmir. Aydin should keep track of the deportations, and if not enough cars were available they should demand more from the fifth army. (DH/SFR 72/68/1335.RA.28)
4. A telegram sent to different provinces ordered that the Armenians who were being displaced from Istanbul should be resettled in Zor. (DH/SFR 65/95/1334.Ş.24)
5. Another telegram concerns the military police who were being courtmarshalled for taking bribes to free Armenians that were being deported from Istanbul to Zor. (DH/SFR 66/43/1334.N.19)

6. Yet another telegram states that Armenians originally from İzmit and currently living in Istanbul should be deported. (54-A/ 343/1333.N.28)

e) One of the most important claims of the Turkish position is that the Armenian properties (homes, lands, and businesses) left behind were sold by committees of the central government, and the funds from the sales were given to the Armenians in their new homes.

Indeed Ottoman authorities issued different laws and some regulations in this regard. The most important ones were issued on May, June and September 1915.

In a nutshell, these laws and regulations mandated that a special commission be established, Armenian properties be registered in a special ledger and some of these properties should be sold by auction. Crops and livestock should be treated the same way. Field should be harvested and sold off with the proceeds from the sale to be recorded in the ledger. The proceeds of the sale should be given back to the owners when they arrived at their new places of settlement. And, “[Armenians] shall be given properties and land in proportion to their previous financial and economic means. The needy shall receive new houses built by the state, the farmers shall be given seed, should there be a need the artisans shall be provided with tools and implements. Their belongings and possessions they have left behind shall be returned to the owners.”

All these regulations show clearly that the Armenians were to be compensated for the properties and goods which they left behind.

It is because of these clearly stated principles that we have a strong argument for the genocidal intent of the Ottoman government. While there are official documents in existence which outline how the property of the Armenians was going to be used, not one single document shows that any Armenian actually received compensation for their lost property. There is not a single piece of evidence that a parcel of land was given to someone when they arrived at their destination, nor that any goods were turned over to them, nor that any Armenian was ever compensated. If the intent had been, as stated, to have the Armenians resettled elsewhere, there would have been proof of it in the archival documentation. There have been hundreds of Ottoman documents made available, but not

a single one to prove the official Turkish position that the Armenians were compensated for their financial losses.

On the contrary, we have examples of documents that clearly illustrate the systematic ways in which this money and property were put to other uses. We can see from the documents that there were five chief ways of using the resources. First, they were distributed among the Muslims in the region to create a Muslim *bourgeoisie*. For example, a telegram sent to various regions stipulates that the moveable property of Armenians was to be given to businesses in order to increase the number of Islamic organizations in the area, and financial stocks available to artisans and farmers were to be produced to stimulate trade among Muslims.¹² In another telegram sent by the Interior Ministry to various provinces, it was suggested that Armenian shops and factories should not sit idle; instead, they should be rented to Muslim businesses at a low rate.¹³

Second, properties were given to Muslim immigrants who resettled in Armenian villages. According to these telegrams immigrants should receive preference in receiving empty homes¹⁴ and they should not be charged for the distributed clothes etc.¹⁵ Third, they were used to cover military expenses during the war. In various telegrams we see orders to have all of the income realized from the sale of crops from Armenian fields sent to the military, or for lists to be made of Armenian properties so that they might be put to use by the military.¹⁶ Fourth, Armenian property was even used to fund their deportation. For example, a telegram was sent to Aleppo about the money from Eskisehir and the revenue from the vacated properties in Aleppo. It stated that this money should be used for the transportation and feeding of the Armenians.¹⁷ Fifth, some of the buildings in better condition were used for governmental purposes, such as prisons.¹⁸

These documents reveal why the governing powers frequently sent delegates to the provinces to investigate the pillaging of Armenian properties by local administrators.

¹² DH/Sfr 59/239/1334.S.29; For similar telegrams see: DH/SFR 60/129/1334.RA.20; DH/SFR 0/277/1334.R.3.

¹³ DH/SFR 64/39/1334.B.13

¹⁴ DH/SFR 65/37/1334.s. 17

¹⁵ DH/SFR 61/247/1334.R.28 and for a similar telegram DH/SFR 63/261/1334.B.7

¹⁶ DH/SFR 54/382/S.27;DH/SFR 55-A/143/1333.L.28; DH/SFR 67/106/1334.L.27

¹⁷ DH/SFR 57/348/1333.Z.30 for similar telegrams see DH/SFR 57/349 and 57/350

¹⁸ An example of this is a telegram sent to various provinces requesting information about which abandoned properties could be used as prisons and asking if the properties needed renovation. DH/SFR 64/18/1334.b.11

The government wanted Armenian properties identified in pursuit of their own political ends and for this reason had no tolerance for private pillaging which took place. What you have here is a very real official pillage. When the German consulate labeled the laws which followed the bill of Sept. 26, 1915, as the “legalization of pillaging”, they weren’t too far from the truth.¹⁹ Even during the genocide, the ex Unionist Ahmet Riza, when speaking before the Senate Assembly, referred to the pillaging which took place as a result of this law.²⁰

Let me finish my speech with a quotation from Çerkez Hasan an Ottoman officer was appointed for the “resettlement” of the Armenians. After personally witnessed the killings in the region he resigned and wrote that: “Stop talking of deportation...; say instead that this was a decision to exterminate the Armenian nation and there will no longer be any need for arguments”.

Thank you for listening.

¹⁹ Kaiser, Hilmar, Armenian Property... op. cit. P. 12.

²⁰ M.A.Z.C., vol. I, Session III, Assembly Year 2, op.cit. pp. 134.

We have examples of documents that clearly illustrate the systematic ways in which this money and property were put to use. We can see from the documents that there were five chief ways of using the resources: First, they were distributed among the Muslims in the region to create a Muslim bourgeoisie. Second, they were given to Muslim immigrants who resettled in Armenian villages. Third, they were used to cover military expenses during war, and fourth, to fund the Armenian deportation. Fifth, some of the sound buildings were used for government purposes, such as prisons. Another interesting point which can be derived from the documents is that the resettled Muslims were given special privileges. Some documents show that Armenian properties originally given to Muslims already present in the area were turned over to immigrants when they arrived.

a) Documents regarding the properties being distributed among Muslims:

1. A telegram sent to various regions stipulates that the portable properties of Armenians were to be given to businesses in order to increase the number of Islamic organizations in the area, and financial stocks available to artisans and farmers were to be produced to stimulate trade among Muslims. Other measures were also taken for this purpose. (DH/SFR 59/239/1334.S.29)
2. A telegram was sent to the Trabzon Liquidation Committee about facilitating the transition of trade organizations to Muslims. The telegram also stated that goods from abandoned Armenian stores were to be sold to honorable and young people on credit. (DH/SFR 60/129/1334.RA.20)
3. A telegram was sent to a Liquidation Committee by the Interior Ministry concerning the regulations for the distribution of the remaining Armenian artisan and trade organizations to Muslims. (DH/SFR 0/277/1334.R.3)
4. Another telegram was sent by the Interior Ministry in various provinces to the effect that businesses, stores, and factories should not sit idle; instead, they should be rented to Muslim businesses at a low rate. (DH/SFR 64/39/1334.B.13)

b) Documents regarding property being given to Muslim immigrants:

1. A telegram was sent to various provinces stating that immigrants should receive preference in receiving empty homes. (DH/SFR 65/37/1334.§.17)
2. A telegram was sent to Trabzon stating that clothes should be allotted to the immigrants from abandoned stores. (DH/SFR 61/247/1334.R.28)
3. A telegram was sent to various regions stating that immigrants from the war zones should be resettled in abandoned homes and given food and clothing. (DH/SFR 63/261/1334.B.7)

c) Documents regarding Armenian properties used to cover military expenses:

1. A telegram was sent to Urfa stating that vacated Armenian farms should be sown and then handed over to the military. (DH/SFR 54/382/.§.27)
2. A telegram was sent from the Ministry of Defense to Kutahya stating that they should send them a list of all the remaining Armenian goods and their worth, which would be used for the military. (DH/SFR 55-A/143/1333.L.28)
3. A telegram was sent to the Kala-i Sultaniyiye province stating that the value of grapes from abandoned vineyards should be evaluated and the money given to the military. (DH/SFR 67/106/1334.L.27)
4. A telegram was sent to various Liquidation Committees stating that the grapes and figs from abandoned Greek properties should be given to the military. (DH/SFR 68/178/1334.Z.6)

d) Documents regarding the income from selling Armenian property being used to fund the Armenian deportation:

1. A telegram was sent to Aleppo about the use of some money from animals which had been sold to cover the transportation and feeding costs of Armenians. (DH/SFR 57/342/1333.Z.30)
2. A telegram was sent to Sukru Bey in Aleppo about the money from Eskisehir and the revenue from the vacated properties in Aleppo. The telegram stated that this money should be used for the transportation and feeding of the Armenians. (DH/SFR 57/348/1333.Z.30)

e) Document regarding the buildings being used as prisons:

1. A telegram was sent to various provinces requesting information about which abandoned properties could be used as prisons and asking if the properties needed renovation. (DH/SFR 64/18/1334.b.11)

g) Another important point of the official Turkish thesis is that the state employees who mistreated the Armenians were court-marshalled. According to this claim, the number of tried officials is around 3,700, some of which were hanged. Up to now, there has not been a single Ottoman archival document showing that state officials who had mistreated Armenians were hanged. We do have, however, a sample of documents that show that there were investigations against officials, not for mistreating the Armenians, but for misusing the Armenian properties. The main point of inquiry was whether officials embezzled money from the sold property and whether they took bribes from Armenians.

1. (DH/SFR 55/255/1333.L.15) The first document is a telegram about the investigation of the plundering of Armenian properties by military police officers and state officials in Malatya and Akçadağ.
2. A telegram was sent to Inspector Muhtar Bey asking him to go to Izmit and investigate charges of embezzlement during the auctions of Armenian properties. (DH/SFR 55/344/1333.L.20)
3. A telegram was sent to Diyarbakir for the establishment of a commission which would investigate the negligence of the officials and their mistreatment of the deportees. (DH/SFR 56/179/1333.ZA.17)
4. A telegram was sent to Konya about the investigation of an individual who gave false papers to Armenians ensuring their safe passage to Istanbul. (DH/SFR 66/167/1334.L.8)