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HALIFAX HERALD

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which included religious minorities, an opportunity for the three of the passage Turkish men

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Wholesale Massacre of Armenians

Among the Slain are Intimate Friends of the Turkish Minister of War. — Refugees Fly to the Hills.

LONDON, September 30. — Wholesale massacre of Armenians in the Caucasus. The Armenian people are being exterminated in the most systematic manner. The Turkish government is responsible for the massacre. The Armenian people are being exterminated in the most systematic manner. The Turkish government is responsible for the massacre.

THE SACKING OF VAN. — CURDS AND TURKS AGAIN KILL AND PLUNDER ARMENIANS. The horrors of Van. Disheartened and slain. Depicted the scene of the awful deaths of Jan. Fifteen. Told with vivid reality. Van is the city in which Miss Fraser, a brave woman, cut lives.

ARMENIA, Jan. 15. — A Turkish officer of government, enjoying free hospitality in the home of an Armenian village who had been plundered of his greater part of his possessions, was, on his people's return, massacred with his family.

Massacre Of Armenians By Turks

LONDON, August 20. — A dispatch from Paris says that the Turkish government is responsible for the massacre of Armenians.

Horrible Treatment of Armenians. — WASHINGTON, October 10. — A dispatch from Paris says that the Turkish government is responsible for the massacre of Armenians.

Appeal to America

As American committee Byron Miller was formed, to which such men as James

Dodge, former American former President William

Gibbons and others, to millions of dollars

has been carrying on permanent humanitarian

tal tasks. Millions of dollars in aid is

Horrors of Armenian Massacres

With the incident connecting the massacre of Armenians

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The Slaughter of Armenians

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Viscount Bryce On The Horrible Atrocities Of The Turks In

Their Wholesale Massacres Of The Armenian

LONDON, November 24. — Viscount Bryce tonight made public a letter to the Turkish government in which he said that the Turkish government is responsible for the massacre of Armenians.

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Heralding of the Armenian Genocide:
Reports in The Halifax Herald
1894 ~ 1922

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Armenian Cultural Association of the Atlantic Provinces
Halifax, Nova Scotia
2000

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Heralding of the Armenian Genocide: Reports in *The Halifax Herald*, 1894 - 1922

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Table of Contents

		Page
	Introduction	vii
	1894	1
1.	September 13	Americans Arrested in Turkey
2.	October 12	Detained by Turks
3.	October 18	Against Turkish Outrages
4.	November 20	Massacre of Armenians
5.	November 24	The Armenian Massacres
6.	November 28	The Armenian Outrages
7.	December 4	The Armenian Murders
8.	December 5	A Revolting Story
9.	December 7	The Armenian Massacre
10.	December 8	The Armenian Cruelties
11.	December 10	The Lying Turks
12.	December 12	The Armenian Enquiry
13.	December 13	The Armenian Question
14.	December 14	Those Armenian Outrages
15.	December 15	The Armenian Question
16.	December 19	The Armenian Outrages
17.	December 20	The Armenian Inquiry
18.	December 21	Bad State of Affairs
19.	December 24	Gift for Mr. Gladstone
20.	December 28	The Armenian Atrocities
21.	December 31	Gladstone's Righteous Indignation
	1895	21
22.	January 2	The Armenian Atrocities
23.	January 3	Armenians and Turks
24.	January 7	The Armenian Cruelties
25.	January 10	Turkey's Precautionary Measures
26.	January 12	The Armenian Horrors
27.	January 16	The Armenian Question
28.	February 6	The Armenian Massacres
29.	February 12	Affairs in Turkey
30.	February 19	The New Armenian Patriarch
31.	February 19	More Turkish Outrages
32.	February 23	Bribing the Armenians
33.	February 28	Horrible Massacres
34.	March 20	The Armenian Massacres
35.	March 29	The Armenian Massacres
36.	April 11	The Armenian Question
37.	April 23	The Armenian Outrages
38.	May 3	The Armenian Atrocities
39.	May 4	Armenian Reforms
40.	May 8	Turkish Misrule in Armenia
41.	May 25	The Armenian Massacres
42.	June 3	Armenian Reform Scheme
43.	June 6	The Armenian Proposals
44.	June 13	Turkish Atrocities
45.	July 16	The Armenian Negotiations
46.	August 1	Gladstone Will Speak
47.	August 3	The Stubborn Turk
48.	August 7	The Armenian Horrors
49.	August 7	Turkish Cruelty Continues

50.	August 29	A Squeal from the Sultan	44
51.	September 13	Armenian Atrocities	44
52.	September 16	Reforms in Armenia	45
53.	October 3	More Armenian Riots	45
54.	October 4	Cartload of Corpses	46
55.	October 4	Armenian Themselves Responsible	48
56.	October 5	Little Sympathy for Constantinople Rioters	49
57.	October 5	The Constantinople Riots	50
58.	October 7	The Constantinople Riots	52
59.	October 10	Turkish-Armenian Conflict	53
60.	October 11	Sultan Rewards Softas	54
61.	October 11	Russia Against Britain	54
62.	October 12	Armenian Reforms Are Sure	55
63.	October 14	Armenia Still in a Turmoil	55
64.	October 16	They Blame the Armenians	55
65.	October 17	Reforms in Turkish Administration	56
66.	October 17	Those Armenians and Turks	56
67.	October 18	Unfortunate Armenians	56
68.	October 18	Armenians Again to Business	57
69.	October 19	The Armenian Reforms	57
70.	October 24	Attacks Upon Christians	58
71.	October 26	Armenian Reforms	59
72.	November 2	Missionaries Must Withdraw	59
73.	November 7	Another Massacre of Armenians	60
74.	November 9	Russia Threatens to Occupy Turkey	62
75.	November 13	French Fleet Also Sails for the Levant	63
76.	November 14	The Situation in the East	64
77.	November 15	Missionaries Guarded by Troops	65
78.	November 18	The Massacre at Trebizond	67
79.	November 18	No Turkish Policy Yet Agreed on	70
80.	November 19	Most Awful Event of Modern Times	72
81.	November 19	The Situation is Getting Worse	74
82.	November 20	"Exterminate the Christians"	76
83.	November 23	The Situation in Turkey	78
84.	November 25	A Grim Story From Constantinople	79
85.	November 26	Only Half the Truth Has Been Told	81
86.	November 29	Twenty Thousand Turkish Troops	83
87.	November 30	Embrace Islamism or the Sword	85
88.	November 30	A Land of Death and Desolation	86
89.	December 2	A Crime Without a Parallel	91
90.	December 2	More Horrible Atrocities	93
91.	December 3	Pardoned by the Sultan	93
92.	December 3	No Change in Constantinople	94
93.	December 5	The Situation in Turkey	96
94.	December 9	Affairs in Turkey	97
95.	December 12	Said Pasha Has too Many Secrets	98
96.	December 13	The Situation in Turkey	100
97.	December 14	Still the Slaughter of Christians Goes On	101
98.	December 14	The Armenian Crisis in Turkey	107
99.	December 16	Protestant Church Turned into a Stable	109
100.	December 16	Affairs in Turkey	110
101.	December 17	The Armenian Atrocities	110
102.	December 19	A Nova Scotia Girl in Turkey	111
103.	December 21	More Massacres Feared	114
104.	December 27	Zeitoun Captured by Turkish Troops	114
105.	December 30	Zeitoun Not Yet Captured by Turks	115
	1896		117
106.	January 3	100,000 Massacred in Armenia	119
107.	January 4	The Wily Turk and His "Orders"	122

108.	January 6	Why Zeitoun Rebelled	123
109.	January 15	Notwithstanding the Turk	124
110.	January 31	A Turkish Fake Dispatch	127
111.	January 31	Unmentionable Turkish Atrocities	127
112.	April 13	Turkish Police	128
113.	April 17	The Unprincipled Turk Again	132
114.	June 29	Another Massacre	132
115.	August 7	Thousands are Starving	132
116.	August 20	The Sacking of Van	133
117.	August 28	Armenians' Turn Now	139
118.	August 31	Horrible Scenes in Constantinople	140
119.	September 1	The Turkish Situation	141
120.	September 1	Armenian Bomb Factory in Constantinople	142
121.	September 10	The Sultan Has Got to Go	143
122.	September 16	Danger of Meddling With Armenian Question	146
123.	September 17	The Sultan's Days are Numbered	147
124.	September 24	Six Thousand Slaughtered	147
125.	September 25	Gladstone and the Great Assassin	148
126.	September 30	Government Brakes on Armenian Agitation	150
127.	October 5	What Will be Done With Turkey?	151
128.	October 6	German Views of the Armenian Massacres	152
129.	October 8	Unfortunate Armenian	153
130.	October 12	Lord Rosebery on the Situation	155
131.	October 13	The Murder Map of Armenia	157
132.	October 23	Lord Rosebery Talks on Turkey	158
133.	November 4	France and the Armenians	160
134.	November 9	The Sultan's Profuse Promises of Reform	162
135.	November 28	More Armenian Butcheries	163
136.	November 28	WCTU Appeal on Behalf of Armenians	163
137.	December 8	The Armenians and Their Sufferings	164
138.	December 14	Turkey Makes a Protest	168
139.	December 15	Armenian Refugees	168
140.	December 19	Armenians in Halifax	169
141.	December 22	Miss Willard's Plea for Armenians	171
142.	December 23	The Sultan's Mock Clemency	173
1897			175
143.	January 7	Mr. Gladstone Spoke to an Armenian Deputation	177
144.	January 21	State of Unrest in Turkish Counties	177
145.	February 25	Down on Armenians	177
146.	March 24	Insurgents Will Pay it Slight Heed	178
147.	March 27	Armenians Slain by the Hundreds	179
148.	March 30	The Tokat Massacre	180
149.	July 13	Wholesale Massacre: Secret Exterminations	180
150.	August 20	Bomb Explosions Blamed on Armenians	181
151.	September 24	Gladstone on the Eastern Situation	181
1909			183
152.	April 17	Civil War is Likely in Turkish Empire	185
153.	April 19	One Thousand Persons Slain by Frenzied Adana Moslems	187
154.	April 20	A Cry for Help	189
155.	April 24	War of Moslems on the Armenians	190
156.	April 26	25,000 Killed in Massacres	191
157.	April 28	Particulars of the Five Days' Terrible Massacre of Armenians at Adana	192
158.	May 4	A Lady Missionary Writes of Experiences At Adana During Recent Massacres	194
159.	May 8	The Slaughter of Armenians	198

160.	May 10	The Turkish Government Carrying on Relief Work in Blood-stained Adana	200
161.	May 13	In Massacre Districts of Asiatic Turkey	201
162.	May 17	A Deliberately Planned Massacre	202
163.	June 2	Many Christians Were Massacred	203
	1915		205
164.	May 18	Six Thousand Armenians Massacred	207
165.	July 3	The Turkish Minister in Asiatic Turkey Is Murdered	207
166.	August 21	Massacre of Armenians By Turkey	208
167.	September 10	Turk Losses in the Dardanelles	208
168.	September 21	A Plea for America's Aid in Stopping the Awful Massacre of Armenians	209
169.	September 23	Armenians Rescued by the French	211
170.	September 27	Armenians are Being Exterminated	212
171.	September 27	The Terrible Exterminating Work of the Cruel Turk	213
172.	October 1	Wholesale Massacre of Armenians	214
173.	October 6	U.S. Gives Warning to Turkey	214
174.	October 9	Heartless and Gruesome Horrors Perpetrated by Turks	215
175.	October 22	One Million Armenians Reported Missing From Turkey	216
176.	October 23	The Armenians are Fighting for the Same Cause as the Allies	217
177.	October 27	Horrors of Armenians Massacres	221
178.	November 4	One Hundred Crimes an Hour by the Cruel Germans Back of the Unspeakable Turk	222
179.	November 11	The Frightful Outrages of the German-Turks On the Armenians	226
180.	November 27	Viscount Bryce on the Horrible Atrocities Of the Turks in Their Wholesale Massacres Of the Armenians	229
	1916		233
181.	February 21	U.S. Protests Against Atrocities	235
182.	March 15	Excruciatingly Tortured by the Turks	236
183.	August 9	Eat Grass, Locusts, and Human Bodies	238
184.	September 8	Turkish Offensive in Armenia Repulsed	239
185.	September 20	Exiled Armenians Must Move On	240
186.	September 22	American Red Cross in Turkey	240
187.	October 4	Horrible Treatment of Armenians	241
188.	November 6	Collector for Armenians Again in Trouble	242
	1917		243
189.	January 27	Turkish Expulsion Overdue More Than Hundred Years Ago	245
190.	February 22	One-Third of the Armenian Race Has Been Massacred by the Turks	248
191.	March 12	Choose Christ or Mohammed the Turk Orders	249
192.	June 1	War the Mother of New Nations: Armenia	250
193.	September 29	Turkish Grand Visier Thinks Peace is Approaching: Turkish Treatment of Armenians	259
194.	October 2	The Turkish Slaughter of Armenians	260
	1918		261
195.	May 21	A Turkish Offensive Along Caucasus Front	263
196.	June 6	Russians Won Big Battle	263

197.	October 4	Allenby's Victory Sounds the Death Knell Of Turk Empire	264
198.	November 1	Turkish Armistice	266
199.	November 27	Tutelage for Armenians and Jewish Populations Before the Independence	268
	1919		271
200.	January 2	France is to Rule Armenia and Syria	273
201.	January 3	100,000 Armenians Killed by Turks for Strategic Reasons	275
202.	January 4	The Gorilla at Bay	276
203.	January 21	To Rehabilitate and Restore Martyred Armenians and Syrians	281
204.	March 12	Here's Story of Armenia, Wants U.S. as Protector	282
205.	March 18	Starvation is Wiping Out Thousands in the Caucasus	288
206.	April 14	Armenians are Slain in Cairo by Riotous Mob	289
207.	April 18	Starving Women and Children are Turned Loose by the Turks	291
208.	April 18	Armenian Atrocities Described to Commercial Club by a Man Who was an Eyewitness of Some of Them	293
209.	May 19	Armenia, a Land as Old as History	295
210.	August 8	Political Chaos Will Face Caucasus	297
211.	August 20	The Armenians Calling For Assistance	298
212.	August 28	Sharp Criticism in the Supreme Council Of U.S. Interference in Turkey	299
213.	August 29	Half Million Armenians in Danger	300
214.	September 18	The Unspeakable Turk is at it Again	301
215.	November 17	Armenians are Living a Terrible Existence	302
	1920		303
216.	January 28	Republic of Armenia and United States	305
217.	February 18	Turkey Must Answer for Massacre of Armenians	305
218.	February 19	Turkey Endangers Herself by the Armenian Massacre	306
219.	February 24	Wants the Turks Driven From Europe	307
220.	February 28	The Burden of the Turkish Problem Would Be Too Much for the League of Nations Says Bonar Law	308
221.	March 2	Would Have the Turk Banished	309
222.	March 4	The Partition of Armenia ?	309
223.	March 9	France Sends Protection for Armenians	309
224.	March 22	The Kind of Justice Due to the Turk	310
225.	March 26	United States Wants Turks Expelled From Europe	311
226.	April 21	Can't Drive the Turk out of Europe	312
227.	May 31	Armenia's Boundaries	314
228.	July 2	Turkey Submits to Being Shorn of Possessions	314
229.	July 6	Refusal of Armenian Mandate by States Responsible	315
230.	November 13	Armenians Sustain a Bad Defeat at the Hands of Turks	319
231.	November 20	League Will Try to Save Oldest Republic: Moslems Again are Butchering Armenians	320
232.	November 27	Further Turkish Advance Will Be Cause For War	323
233.	December 1	Wilson is Armenian Mediator	324

234.	December 10	Peace Treaty is Signed by Armenia and Turkey	325
235.	December 29	Bolsheviki Rally for New Drive	326
	1921		327
236.	March 16	Former Turk Vizier Victim of Assassin	329
237	April 8	Turk Cruelties on Armenians and Asia Minor Greeks	329
	1922		331
238.	September 15	Massacres of Armenians Reported	333
239.	September 16	Turks Massacre Christians: Smyrna Totally Destroyed	335
240.	September 18	Smyrna: Vast Sepulchre of Human Ashes	338
241	September 21	Canada Turns Down Mandate For Armenia	340
242.	September 22	Canada's Reparations Claim Against Turks	341
243.	September 26	Turks Set Date for Massacre of Refugees	342
244.	October 3	Horrors of Smyrna are not yet Told, Says Eyewitness	343
245.	December 13	Ismet Delivers a Violent Harangue Against Armenians	344
246.	December 14	Ismet Pasha Excuses His Recent Break	347
247	December 27	Turks Still Truculent at Lausanne	351

INTRODUCTION

According to the earliest recorded history, Armenia first appeared during the ninth century before Christ as *Urartu*. Branching from the Thraco-Phrygian tribes of the Balkans, the Armenians, who called themselves *Hayq*, emerged as a distinguished people in Anatolia around the sixth century before Christ. It covered a large area to the east of Asia Minor, having access to the Black, Mediterranean and Caspian seas.

The Armenian nation, located on a strategic crossroads of the ancient and medieval worlds, was continually invaded by its neighbors. The Persians, Byzantines and then the Romans one time or another ruled Armenia. It knew great power during the reign of Tigranes (Dikran) the Great (95 – 55 B.C.), under whose rule the Armenian lands stretched from the Caspian Sea to the borders of Egypt, incorporating Syria, Cilicia, Lebanon and Palestine. However, lying between the Roman and Parthian Empires, Armenia became a constant battleground.

During the reign of King Tiridates (Trdat) III, who was converted to Christianity by St. Gregory the Illuminator, Armenia became the first Christian state around 301 A.D. Christianity became a common bond that produced a strong sense of national distinctiveness and consciousness especially after they were persecuted by foreign invaders because of their faith. Their sense of distinctiveness was further enhanced by the invention of the Armenian alphabet by Saint Mesrob early in the fifth century. In 451 A.D. another great leader, Vartan II Mamikonian, assembled the nobles and the

peasants around both beliefs of Christianity and nationalism and revolted against the Persians. Although he won a few battles, he and his aristocracy perished in the battlefield.

When the Persian Empire collapsed in the seventh century A.D., the Armenian provinces came under the control of the Arab Caliphates. By the tenth century, Armenian Dynasties flourished and then disappeared until 1071, when Seljuk Turks hoarded over Anatolia, adding Armenia to their domain.

A group of Armenian nobles established the Principality of Cilicia in southeast Asia, which remained independent for 200 years. In the meantime, the Seljuk Turks were overcome by the Mongols in Armenia Proper and the population was subjected to devastation and slaughter. By 1375, Cilicia was also incorporated into the Mamluk Empire. Never again was Armenia independent until the 20th century.

After the death of Tamerlane, Armenia was divided between the Persians and the Ottomans in 1405. In 1828, Persian Armenia was incorporated into the Russian Empire, which also annexed the provinces of Kars and Ardahan from Turkey in 1878.

As for Turkish Armenia, the Christian population suffered discrimination as second class citizens. They paid high taxes, including child levy, to keep their faith and culture. They were not even allowed to speak their own language. However, the Armenians excelled as merchants and artisans playing an important role in international commerce. As long as the Ottoman Empire flourished, the Armenians lived

in peace in spite of their second-class status.

By the late nineteenth century, as the Ottoman Empire began to crumble, the European powers began supporting the liberation struggles of the subject nationalities. Yet the Armenians, who were referred to as the "faithful community" by the Turks, did not revolt. Being dispersed throughout the Empire, they did not have any separatist ambitions. In return for their loyalty, the Armenian leaders simply asked for protection of their people and property from pillaging bands who were at times supported by government officials. During this time, the Armenians went through a cultural revival as they studied at European and American missionary schools, and later established their own schools and newspapers. In the meantime, government corruption and economic exploitation escalated, introducing the Armenian Question: what is to become of the Armenians?

The European powers forced the Sublime Porte [the government of the Ottoman Empire] to implement reforms to ease the plight of the Christian minorities in Asia Minor. Although Sultan Abdel Hamid II (1876 - 1909) drafted a constitution to ward off the Europeans, he suspended the constitution, thus elevating the grievances of the Christian minorities.

When the Russians came out as the victors in the Russo-Turkish war (1877 - 1878), the Armenian leaders appealed to them to include stipulations for the protection of the Armenians in the San Stefano Peace Treaty, which was signed in March 1878. However, no such conditions were added; instead the Russians agreed to withdraw their armies from the Armenian provinces upon the implementation of the reforms.

Nevertheless, this treaty was not met with favor by the British who saw their interests in the region being compromised. The British government demanded from the European congress to convene in Berlin in order to revise the Treaty. The Armenian delegation which was present in Berlin demanded the implementation of reforms by appointing a Christian governor in the Armenian provinces in addition to voting privileges and other improvements. Although the European diplomats were sympathetic towards the Armenians, they demanded the immediate withdrawal of the Russian army as Sultan Abdel Hamid had promised not only to implement the reforms but also to report to the Congress about the changes. In return for the services they granted the Sultan, the British assumed control over Austria-Hungary, Cyprus, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As the Russian army evacuated, many Armenian peasants departed with them to live in the Caucasus. The Armenians who remained in Ottoman Turkey remained hopeful that the necessary reforms would be introduced. They still did not seek independence.

After the Armenian Question gained an international interest, their plight increased. With the support of the Turkish government, Kurdish marauders devastated the eastern provinces pillaging, murdering and kidnaping the Armenians. All the European diplomats could do was dispatch to their governments descriptions of the horrific acts which the Armenians suffered. However, the European governments had long forgotten the Armenian Question. As a result, a number of Armenians began resisting the oppressive rule.

In the 1880s, local self-defense groups were organized, which later merged as secret political organizations. However, all they pursued were cultural freedom and autonomy. In retaliation, the Armenians of Sassoun refused to pay "protection taxes" which were extorted by the Kurdish tribes. As a result, the Kurds appealed to the Sublime Porte to help them subdue the population of Sassoun whom they accused of insurrection. Regular Turkish army and irregular Kurdish hordes plundered Sassoun and thousands of Armenians were massacred without regard to age or sex (see p.p. 5, 9 & 12). As Christian missionaries working in the Armenian provinces raised their voices, Europe was redrawn into the Armenian Question. Russia, Britain and France established a commission of inquiry and concluded that the brutality perpetrated by the Turks could not be justified since there was no rebellion. The three powers submitted to the Porte an outline for reforms whereby the Armenian provinces were to come under one administration, and the political prisoners were to be released. Again, Sultan Abdel Hamid II agreed to far less reforms than those proposed by the Russians, British and French diplomats (see pp 33 - 60).

Regardless of the agreement for reforms in 1895, Sultan Abdel Hamid's answer to the European intervention in Turkish rule was the following: the massacre in the Trebizond district (see p. 67), the pillaging of every district of Turkish Armenia, the extermination of about 200,000 Armenians, the coerced exile of countless of Armenians, the forcing of Christians to convert to Islam in order to keep their lives (see p. 85), the burning of hundreds of settlements, and the continuation of massacres in the districts

of Zeitoun and Van in 1896 (see pages 114-123 and 133).

Turkey then saw a rise in opposition by its own people. In 1908 the Young Turks emerged and confronted the Ottoman government demanding the restoration of the constitution that had been suspended since 1877. Sultan Abdel Hamid agreed to their demands raising hopes for both the Christians and Moslems in the Ottoman Empire to live together peacefully.

However, tragedy was around the corner for the Armenians as the Young Turks transformed their ideologies from liberalism to extreme fanaticism. Wanting to create a new order in Turkey, the Young Turks decided to eliminate the Armenian Question by annihilating the Armenian population. As Europe took advantage of the weakness of Turkey by annexing Bosnia-Herzegovina, Crete, Austria-Hungary and Lybia, the conservative Turks tried to restore Sultan Abdel Hamid to the Porte with no success. During these disturbances, the Armenian villages in Cilicia, such as Adana, were plundered and some 20,000 Armenians were massacred in 1909 (see p.p. 187-198).

By 1912, some Young Turk Party members were captivated by the concept of Turkish nationalism, and they conceived a new Turkish state that did not include the minorities. A year later, the ultranationalistic faction of the Young Turks seized power. In the meantime, the Armenians, having ridden themselves of the old conservative regime of Abdel Hamid, cooperated with the Young Turks and established their own political parties.

After the Balkan war of 1912-1913, Europe again started showing interest in the Armenian Question. They even reached a settlement whereby the Armenian provinces of Bitlis, Diarbekir, Erzurum, Kharput, Sivas, Van and Trebizond would become an autonomous state under the administration of the European powers. However, with the outbreak of the first World War in 1914, the implementation of these settlements was put to a halt. The Armenians pleaded neutrality to avoid any further suffering should Turkey enter the conflict on the side of Germany because there would inevitably be another Russo-Turkish war. However, Enver Pasha and Talaat Pasha secretly signed an alliance with Germany in August 1914 and conceived a plan to create a new order in Turkey. When Enver Pasha lost his bid to break through to Baku and thus control Transcaucasia and Central Asia, in addition to the Turkish losses on the Constantinople frontier, Young Turk

extremists accused the Armenians of treachery and demanded the resolution of the Armenian Question once and for all.

On the eve of April 24, 1915, a great number of Armenian political, intellectual, and religious leaders in Constantinople were arrested, sent to Anatolia and executed. A month later, Talaat Pasha, the minister of internal affairs, ordered the deportation of the Armenian population to the Syrian desert claiming that they were untrustworthy and rebellious. During these deportations, the males were separated from the deportation caravans and annihilated by the Turkish regulars and nomadic groups under the direction of the Young Turk government. Women and children were driven out to the desert, often dehumanized by rape and abuse. It was reported that many women took their own and their children's lives by throwing themselves into rivers rather than suffer at the hands of the marauding Turks. Thus the Armenian people, who had lived in their homeland for more than three thousand years, were exterminated. Those who survived the deportations scattered throughout Transcaucasia and the Middle East, most dying of epidemic, exposure or starvation.

News of the genocide and deportations evoked sympathy from the Allied Powers who declared that they held the Turkish government responsible for the wholesale massacres perpetrated against the Armenians. The Allied Powers were insistent that Turkey would be punished, and that the Armenian provinces would not be restored to that nation. In the United States, a nationwide rally to assist the Armenians was launched and managed to help the survivors until 1917 when all diplomatic relations between the United States and Turkey were broken. At the beginning of 1919, the Paris Peace Conference declared that because of the mistreatment of the subject people and the massacres of the Armenians by the Turks, the Allied powers would sever Arabia, Armenia, Mesopotamia, Palestine and Syria from the Turkish Empire. During the short period immediately after the end of the war, the latest Turkish government acquiesced that its predecessor had committed mass murders against not only the Christians but also the Moslem population of the Empire. Although death sentences were issued in absentia to Enver Pasha, Jemal Pasha and Talaat Pasha, other numerous officials who had participated in the ethnic cleansing had not been tried.

Meanwhile, some Young Turk leaders offered to help Russia by inciting the Moslems of the Central Asian republics against Britain. In

return for this secret agreement, Russia sent shipments of gold to assist the Turks in Anatolia. As a result, the Allies began withdrawing from Armenian matters on the account that the formation of a Greater Armenian Republic would be impossible if the United States did not participate. They diminished the planned map of Greater Armenia uniting the Russian Armenian republic to the provinces of Erzurum, Van and Bitlis with Trebizond as an outlet to the sea.

In August 1920, the Treaty of Sevres which recognized the independence of the Armenian republic, was signed by the Turkish government officials. The Treaty also stipulated that the Turkish government would (1) extradite any persons who were guilty of war crimes, (2) revoke the law that designated the Turkish state the sole beneficiary of all abandoned Armenian properties, (3) assist in the recovery of Armenian women and children who had been placed in Turkish households, and (4) help in the search for kidnaped and lost persons. In addition, all religious conversions from the beginning of the war were to be revoked.

Signing a treaty and implementing it were two different stories. Although the Allied Powers knew that the Armenians, who had suffered from genocide in addition to the destruction of their social and political infrastructure, needed support to restore their lands and rehabilitate the survivors, no nation was prepared to help morally or materialistically. Britain and France hoped the United States would assume the mandate over Armenia so that they could turn their attention towards the Arab states where they believed they would gain more. As the victorious powers rivaled over the spoils of the war, the implementation of the Sevres Treaty was delayed. In the meantime, a new nationalist movement emerged in Turkey directed by Mustapha Kemal, aiming towards the unification of the Turkish provinces. To show their seriousness, the Nationalist Turks attacked and killed the French troops at Marash at the beginning of 1920, and drove out the Armenians who had returned to their homes under the protection of the French and the British. Furthermore, to break the Treaty and eliminate the "menace" of an independent nation for the Armenians, Kemal ordered the Turkish army to advance into the existing Armenian republic in the Caucasus as the Allies watched with distress and forced the Armenians to annul the terms of the Treaty of Sevres and renounce all claims of the provinces in both Turkish and Russian Armenia. Thus Turkey, which was supposedly defeated in the World War, expanded further.

By 1921, all of Turkish Armenia and part of Russian Armenia had been lost. Those Armenian refugees who had returned to their homelands in Cilicia had to leave again, this time permanently; those living in Constantinople were eliminated by 1922 after Smyrna was burnt (see p.p. 342-343).

Mustapha Kamal sent emissaries to Europe seeking peace with the Allies and was able to amend the Treaty of Sevres. As the Allied Powers sought better relations with Kamal, they engaged in the selling of arms to Turkey. What Kamal gained was the following: in the Lausanne Treaty (1923), there was no mention of *Armenia* or *Armenian*, thus ignoring the mere existence of a people. To add to the injustice done to the Armenians, the new boundaries of Turkey that annexed the Armenian provinces in the east and those in Southeast Asia were recognized by the Allies. The Armenian Question was thereby abolished; its resolution was the Genocide.

by Katia Minas Peltekian

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