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Eberhard Count Wolffskeel Von Reichenberg
Zeitoun, Mousa Dagħ, Ourfa:
Letters on the Armenian Genocide

[Second Edition]

Edited and introduced by
Hilmar Kaiser

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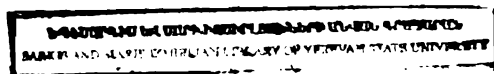
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Introduction

The Armenian Genocide is the principal social and economic watershed marking the end of the Ottoman social formation in Asia Minor and the emergence of modern Turkey. Within eighteen months, the Ottoman government eradicated the native Armenian population of the Empire, including the flourishing communities of Cilicia and the western provinces.¹ The destruction was thorough and by the summer of 1916 the largest concentrations of Armenians outside the death camps of the Syrian desert were Constantinople, Aleppo and the German-run construction sites of the Baghdad Railway Line. Virtually all Ottoman Armenian villages had been destroyed.²

The systematic extermination of such a large number of people depended on the coordination and planning of the Ottoman government. The Ottoman Ministries of the Interior and War directed and supervised the deportation and killing of the victims, as well as the confiscation of their properties. In areas away from the immediate theaters of war on the eastern front, the Ottoman Ministry of the Interior was the most important institution overseeing the execution of Armenians. Two departments were particularly involved in the anti-Armenian program: the Directorate for Public Security and the Directorate for the Settlement of Tribes and Immigrants.³ At the Directorate for Public Security, Talaat Bey, the Minister of the Interior, and Ali Münif Bey, his deputy, signed most orders that empowered provincial and local authorities to deport and destroy Armenian communities according to a pre-determined schedule. On April 24, 1915 Talaat Bey gave orders that marked the beginning of the extermination process. Immediately, the Ottoman political police began to hunt down Armenian community leaders in Constantinople and throughout the empire. A second order sealed the fate of those Armenians who were deported from Zeitoun to the province of Konia. Talaat instructed Djemal Pasha, the leading commander in Syria, that they must be sent to Deir Zor in the Syrian Desert.⁴ However,

the deportation of the majority of Armenians began only in June.⁵

By the end of May, the Ottoman government passed a formal decision of the cabinet on the deportation and published a so-called “provisional-law” for deportations. The law was designed to furnish a semblance of legality for the government’s continued break with Ottoman law.⁶

The cabinet’s decision contained provisions for the confiscation of Armenian property. Within two weeks of publishing the “provisional law” for deportations, the Ministry of the Interior passed detailed regulations for this purpose. The Directorate for the Settlement of Tribes and Immigrants coordinated the confiscation of the deportees’ property.⁷ Moreover, that department’s director, Şükrü Kaya, toured the western and Syrian provinces to personally supervise deportations on the spot.⁸ Thus, the Ottoman civil administration took a direct part in the execution of the Armenian Genocide.

The Ministry of Interior cooperated with the Ottoman Ministry of War in the formation of groups of irregulars who became known as the so-called “Special Organization.” In August 1914, shortly after the beginning of the war in Europe, Talaat Bey and Enver Pasha, the Ottoman Minister of War, had sent leading members of the ruling Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) to Trebizond and Erzeroum on the eastern borders of the empire. These envoys carried secret orders that gave them special powers and put them above the law. Their principal task was to recruit local Turkish, Georgian, and Kurdish volunteers into bands of irregular troops. These forces also included convicted criminals released from prisons for this purpose as well as Muslim outlaws who had been hiding in the mountains of the region. In areas close to the Iranian border, the CUP enlisted entire Kurdish tribes. One task of these bands was to raid villages on the Russian side of the border, although the Ottoman and Russian empires were not at war with each other. Besides destabilizing the Russian frontier, small groups began collecting information on the Russian army and preparing a general uprising behind the Russian lines. Within

the Ottoman borders, the irregulars units acted as counter-intelligence units. By early November 1914, with the actual Ottoman attack on Russia, these irregulars were integrated into the Ottoman military structure in the east.⁹

In 1915, the Ottoman authorities used such irregular troops, alongside regular army units, to ambush and massacre Armenian deportees. The use of irregulars became a standard practice to kill Armenians in areas where no regular army units were available for this task.¹⁰ The major massacre sites were generally located in remote districts, often close to rivers and deep gorges, and suited the killing and disposal of corpses. Although the Ottoman government tried to keep the atrocities a secret as well as it could, news of massacres soon reached the international media. On May 24, 1915, the British, French, and Russian authorities announced that they would hold Ottoman officials personally responsible for their involvement in these crimes against humanity.¹¹

The continued news coverage of massacres was partly due to the eyewitness accounts of European and American officials, travellers, and missionaries in the Ottoman Empire. However, some reports were speculative, especially as the Entente press was amenable to publicize accusations concerning a supposed German role in connection with massacres. Since the Ottoman Empire was allied with Germany, such charges did not surprise the German government. On the contrary, German diplomats had prepared suitable documentation to counter the anticipated criticism.¹²

These accusations were understandable. Numerous German officers were serving in the Ottoman army, while others served in German uniform on the battlefields of the Dardanelles. Some of these officers held important positions in the Ottoman general staff, such as General Fritz Bronsart Von Schellendorf.¹³

The German government's position on the Armenian Genocide was ultimately defined in December 1915. Up to this date the German Foreign Office had observed a cautious attitude that might be described as an attempt to avoid any involvement in the crime. Being dissatisfied with the CUP's anti-Armenian policy

and concerned about continued accusations by the Entente, the leading diplomats at the Foreign Office suggested to Chancellor Theobald Von Bethmann Hollweg a change of policy. The Foreign Office proposed a German public disclaimer for any involvement in the Armenian Genocide. Bethmann Hollweg was, however, opposed to the project. He viewed the extermination of the Armenians as a minor concern compared to Germany's other problems and considered the fate of Armenians as a price that his government had to accept for keeping the Ottoman ally on its side in the war. His position was clear: "The suggested public condemnation of an ally during the present war would be a measure unlike any in history. Our sole object is to keep Turkey on our side until the end of the war, no matter if Armenians perish over that or not. In the face of a longer continuing war we will still need the Turks very much."¹⁴

Recently, a scholarly debate has evolved reassessing the involvement of German officers, diplomats, and businessmen in the Armenian Genocide. In 1968, the Canadian historian Ulrich Trumpener showed that the Ottoman government had succeeded to carefully limit the influence of German officers within the Ottoman army, and the Germans were allowed to exercise as much authority as it suited Ottoman rulers.¹⁵

The Austrian historian Artem Ohandjanian contradicted Trumpener's findings on the basis of Austro-Hungarian consular reports. He argued that German officers had not only suggested the persecution of Armenians but had also taken nearly all decisions for the destruction of Armenians.¹⁶ The Swiss historian Christoph Dinkel came to similar conclusions in his study of German officers serving with the Ottoman general staff and in the command of the Ottoman 3rd army. He wrote: "German officers proposed the deportations and also played a large role in ensuring that they were carried out against other German opposition."¹⁷

Vahakn Dadrian broadened the approach and reviewed not only the role of German officers, but also that of other Germans, such as diplomats during this period.¹⁸ He asserted that German diplomats (and to an extent also German businessmen) formed part of an Ottoman-German conspiracy against Armenians.¹⁹ His study has not, however, presented conclusive evidence to support his thesis. Indeed, he has been selective in the use of sources and at times misquoted material. In the case of German General Colmar Freiherr Von der Goltz, Dadrian has even cited an affidavit of Armenian survivors that implicated Von der Goltz in a massacre, though the massacre took place long after the officer's death.²⁰

The selective use of sources to sustain the hypothesis of an Ottoman-Turkish conspiracy can also be seen in another incident that concerned the Armenian community of Adana. In January 1915, the German Major Schwabe visited Adana and spoke with the Austro-Hungarian Vice-Consul Richard Stöckel. Stöckel was a German citizen and the local manager of the German-Levantine Cotton-Company. The German company was a major competitor of local Greek and Armenian cotton exporters and entertained close relations with an extensive network of local farmers and businessmen. Stöckel and another German resident at Tarsous complained to Schwabe that their Greek and Armenian competitors were openly blaming Germany for the war and the economic problems that the Ottoman economy was facing. Moreover, Greeks and Armenians suspected that despite the claims of friendship Germany, in reality, was trying to gain full control over the Ottoman Empire. Schwabe was furious. In a report to his German superiors in Constantinople he suggested that in order to stop such "highly treacherous" propaganda, a number of persons who were responsible for such rumors should be arrested as a warning to others. The head of the German military mission in Constantinople, General Otto Liman Von Sanders, forwarded the report (without adding his own comments) to the German ambassador Hans Von Wangenheim.²¹ On receipt of the report, Wangenheim sent a copy to the German consul at Adana, Dr.

Eugen Büge, with instructions to counter the accusations. Wangenheim added that Schwabe's suggestion was not welcomed as it would only augment anti-German feelings in the region.²² Clearly, there was no German-Ottoman conspiracy against Armenians and the German embassy followed its own political course. Moreover, the embassy itself countered the suggestions of the German officers who were willing to support drastic measures against Ottoman civilians. These officers had little knowledge of the complicated local conditions in the various districts they visited, and their command of local languages was practically non-existent. Thus, they depended to a large degree on the information furnished by others. The German embassy's reaction to Schwabe's proposal was not an isolated case but formed part of an established pattern of political dissention among German officers and diplomats in the Ottoman Empire.

The study of German private enterprises during the Armenian Genocide, a more recent development in the academic field, confirms these findings. The analysis of Deutsche Bank's policies and that of its Ottoman subsidiaries have revealed that the strategies of German diplomatic, military, and business circles were often heavily antagonistic. More often than not the different interests clashed and produced varying responses to the Ottoman government's extermination of Armenians.²³ Indeed, many recent assertions regarding German involvement in the Armenian Genocide owe more to contemporary Entente propaganda than a careful evaluation of the extant archival records.²⁴

The speculations regarding an aforementioned German-Ottoman conspiracy has been facilitated by the absence or unavailability of relevant source materials. The German military archives at Freiburg possess only limited information on the German war effort in World War I. The major part of German documentation from 1915 was lost during World War II.²⁵ On the other hand, the files of the Ottoman general staff seem to have been

preserved well. However, documents concerning the activities of Germans have been available so far mostly to Turkish state intellectuals and not to independent researchers of the Armenian Genocide.²⁶

For the time being, scholars working on the German military in the Ottoman Empire are forced to rely on miscellaneous sources like memoirs, diaries, private letters, fragments of correspondence, and files that have somehow survived. Thus, a systematic analysis of the performance of military units and particular missions is generally impossible. Thus, researchers often have to employ case studies, focusing on individual officers and their actions. One officer who has attracted such attention from historians was Eberhard Wolffskeel Von Reichenberg.

The Austrian historian Wolf-Dieter Bihl first demonstrated the significance of Wolffskeel for the history of the Armenian Genocide. Bihl used Wolffskeel's private correspondence with his wife and father. The information Bihl gathered threw new light on the persecution of Armenians in Northern Syria. It took, however, quite some time before Bihl's findings were appreciated by researchers specializing in the Armenian Genocide.²⁷

Wolffskeel was a Bavarian captain who fought in Europe on the Western Front before he was transferred to the Ottoman Empire. In 1915 he served in Syria as chief of staff under Fakhri Pasha, a commander of the 4th army, who was only second in command to Djemal Pasha. While Djemal Pasha concerned himself with the Ottoman campaigns in the Suez Canal area, Fakhri Pasha and Wolffskeel were charged with the coastal defenses of Syria and Cilicia, as well as the internal security of these areas.²⁸

In this capacity Wolffskeel played a decisive role in the operations of Ottoman army units against Armenians in the region. The officer gave orders for and participated in the destruction of three Armenian centers, where the victims resisted the Ottoman government. Already on his arrival in Syria in March 1915,

Wolffskeel displayed a sense of duty that showed his stern personality. On his first day in office, he signed six death sentences against Arab soldiers who had fled from combat.²⁹

In March 1915 clashes had occurred between a group of Armenian deserters and local Ottoman gendarmes in Zeitoun, a small town deep in the Taurus mountains. Wolffskeel immediately mobilized superior forces against the few deserters and Armenian mountain dwellers. The officer was eager to demonstrate his professional qualifications. His campaign ended, however, only with limited success. Wolffskeel blamed local Ottoman commanders and their premature action for the failure. While he came too late to participate in the fight, he carefully observed the Ottoman administration's persecution of local Armenians and witnessed the first deportation of an Ottoman Armenian community.³⁰ His letters demonstrate how differently the German consul at Aleppo, Walter Rössler, and Wolffskeel assessed the situation at Zeitoun. Wolffskeel did his best to prevent Rössler's initiative to avoid bloodshed and maintain peace in the area. At the German embassy, Wolffskeel's intervention met with success and Rössler's attempts were frustrated.³¹

Probably, Wolffskeel's involvement had another unpleasant consequence for Rössler. In September 1915, Entente newspapers published accusations against Rössler. The papers alleged that Rössler had played a leading part in the persecution of Armenians. The papers provided little precise information, but they referred to a German consul in Aintab, although there was no German consulate at that place. Rössler had stayed one night in Aintab on his return from Marash to Aleppo. There he had met Wolffskeel and his superior who stayed in the same hotel. This coincidence might have caused confusion about the roles Wolffskeel and Rössler had played in connection with the events at Zeitoun. Rössler was actually against German officers taking part in military operations against Ottoman Armenians as these were internal affairs of the country.³²

Wolffskeel's second campaign against Armenians was in August 1915, when Armenian villagers at Mousa Dagħ, a remote mountain district close to the Mediterranean coast, took to the hills in face of their pending deportation.³³ Once more Wolffskeel came too late to take part in the fighting, but this time he was less upset about it. It is likely that the Armenian deportations and massacres of the preceding months had had some impact on his keenness.

However, Wolffskeel did not hesitate to act decisively in September 1915, when news reached him of an Armenian rising in the town of Ourfa. According to the Ottoman deportation scheme, the Armenians of Ourfa were one of the last communities to be destroyed. Thus, their turn came rather late at the end of the summer. Wolffskeel viewed this desperate stand of a civilian population, barricading itself in their town and facing certain death, as a professional challenge. In fact, he did not simply perform what he might have understood as his duty, but demonstrated a special zeal in crushing the Armenian defenses with a barrage of artillery fire. It was effectively Wolffskeel who led the attack on the Armenian quarter.³⁴ After the fight, he expressed his cynicism when he commented on those killed and the survivors who were soon to perish in the desert south of the city.³⁵

Wolffskeel's role at Ourfa was somewhat exceptional, as he is the only German officer known to have served in Ottoman uniform and directly participated in the killing of Armenians. His letters give us unique insights into this officer's perceptions, hopes, and prejudices. Wolffskeel was a rabid antisemite. He hated the Jewish scholar Max Freiherr Von Oppenheim who toured the Ottoman Empire in the service of German propaganda and intelligence.³⁶ Wolffskeel's views on his Ottoman allies and his Armenian victims expressed his strong sense of superiority. However, such racist views regarding Armenians and other Ottomans were by no means unique. For instance, Enver Pasha's deputy, Bronsart Von Schellendorff, entertained similar ideas.³⁷ Moreover, by 1915, German racist thought had gained considerable influence within German scholarship and writing on

the Middle East and was used in German propaganda and other literature.³⁸

Today Wolffskeel's letters are kept among the Wolffskeel Papers at the German Military Archives in Freiburg. These private papers contain information on Wolffskeel's career during World War I in Europe, the Ottoman Empire, and the Caucasus in 1918. The present volume contains those letters that pertain to his involvement in the Armenian Genocide. They have been slightly and silently edited. In accordance with archival regulations all passages that concern the private life of Wolffskeel and his family have been left out. Moreover, some rather lengthy passages on the war in Europe are also not reproduced.

The publication is the result of the work and contributions of various people. Colin Benert has produced an English translation of the letters while preserving the language and style of Wolffskeel. Thus, readers will note the considerable difference between the material at hand and official German correspondence. The staff of the German Military Archives was kind enough to clarify three complicated paleographic problems. Dr. Aline Poensgen of the Solingen Municipal Archives made a number of important suggestions to improve the manuscript. I wish to thank them all. Ara Sarafian of the Gomidas Institute, a good friend and colleague, was instrumental in making this publication possible. The usual disclaimer that all shortcomings are mine naturally applies.

Hilmar Kaiser

Florence, September 2000

End Notes

- 1 On the size and location of Ottoman Armenian communities before World War I see: Raymond H. Kévorkian and Paul B. Paboudjian, *Les Arméniens dans l'empire ottoman à la veille du génocide* (Paris: Les Editions d'Art et d'Histoire, 1992).
- 2 The communities of Aleppo and Constantinople were partly deported. Most of the Armenian victims from these two communities belonged to clearly defined categories. The Ottoman government deported all migrants who had moved to these cities in the decades before World War I and had not succeeded in being officially registered as residents of these places. Moreover, adults and rich community members were particularly hunted down and disposed of. On Constantinople, see the memoirs of two chief perpetrators Mustafa Reşat Mimaroglu, *Gördüklerim ve Geçirdiklerim'den*, vol. 2 (Ankara: Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Ziraat Bankası Matbaası, 1946) p. 56; Rıza Öge, *Meşrutiyetten Cumhuriyete. Bir Polis Şefinin Gerçek Anıları* (n. p.: Günlük Ticaret Gazetesi Tesisleri, 1982). The Armenian underground succeeded, however, in saving some of the persecuted young adults. Arshavir Shiragian, *The Legacy. Memoirs of an Armenian Patriot*, translated by Sonia Shiragian and introduced by Leon Surmelian, (Boston, MA: Hairenik Press, 1976) pp. 1-18. On the Armenian resistance in Aleppo see John Minassian, *Many Hills Yet to Climb. Memoirs of an Armenian Deportee*, (Santa Barbara, CA: Jim Cook Publisher, 1986). On the Armenians working at the railway construction see: Hilmar Kaiser, "The Baghdad Railway and the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1916: A Case Study in German Resistance and Complicity" in Richard G. Hovannisian (ed.), *Remembrance and Denial: The Case of the Armenian Genocide* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), pp. 67-112.
- 3 The "Directorate for the Settlement of Tribes and Immigrant" was not a subdivision of the "Directorate for Public Security" as Dadrian believes. Vahakn N. Dadrian, "The Naim-Andonian Documents on the World War I Destruction of Ottoman Armenians: The Anatomy of a Genocide" in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 18 (1986) p. 332.
- 4 Türkiye Cumhuriyeti, Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeniler (1915 - 1920)*, (Ankara: Başbakanlık Basımevi, 1994) pp. 23-24 (doc. 7); Azmi Süslü, *Ermeniler ve 1915 Tehcir Olayı*, (Ankara: Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi Rektörlüğü, 1990) pp. 106-107.
- 5 Strangely enough, no precise comparative study on the deportations has yet been published. More than eighty years after their publication, the

- analyses of Toynbee and Lepsius have not been outdated by more recent studies. *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-1916: Documents Presented to Viscount Grey of Fallodon by Viscount Bryce*. Preface by Viscount Bryce (London: Sir Joseph Causton & Sons, 1916 (Miscellaneous no. 31, 1916) pp. 645-648. The volume should be consulted together with Ara Sarafian, "The Archival Trail. Authentication of The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-16" in Richard G. Hovannisian (ed.), *Remembrance and Denial*, pp. 51-65. Recently, Sarafian has published a critical edition of the volume, James Bryce and Arnold Toynbee, *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-1916: Documents Presented to Viscount Grey of Fallodon by Viscount Bryce [Uncensored Edition]*, edited and introduced by Ara Sarafian (Princeton and London: Gomidas Institute, 2000); Johannes Lepsius (ed.), *Deutschland und Armenien 1914-1918. Sammlung Diplomatischer Aktenstücke* (Potsdam: Tempelverlag, 1919; reprint, Bremen: Donat & Temmen Verlag, 1986) pp. xxiii-xxvi.
- 6 *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeniler (1915-1920)*, pp. 30-32 (doc. 17); Şinasi Orel and Süreyya Yuca, *The Talât Pasha Telegrams. Historical Fact or Armenian Fiction?* (Nicosia: K. Rustem & Brother, 1986) pp. 116-117.
 - 7 On the confiscation of Armenian property see: Hilmar Kaiser, "Armenian Property, Ottoman Law, and Nationality Policies During the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1916," paper presented at the *International Workshop, Ethnic Conflict and the Founding of the Turkish Republic*, Rijksuniversiteit, Leiden, May 17, 2000 (forthcoming). It is important to note that the "provisional law" on so-called "abandoned" property was passed on September 26, 1915. Thus, the law is not identical with certain regulations passed on June 10, 1915 as Levon Marashlian erroneously claims. Levon Marashlian, "Finishing the Genocide. Cleansing Turkey of Armenian Survivors, 1920-1923" in Richard G. Hovannisian (ed.), *Remembrance and Denial*, pp. 114-116.
 - 8 See for instance: Talaat to Konya, Angora, Broussa, Adana, Aleppo provinces, Izmit, Eskishehir, Kütahya, Afion, Marash districts, Constantinople, Aug. 31, 1915 Emniyyet-i Umûmiyye Müdiriyyeti, Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, İstanbul, Dâhiliyye Nezâreti Şifre Kalemî 55/A-16.
 - 9 Arif Cemil, *I. Dünya Şavaşı'nda Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa* (İstanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1997) pp. 27-32, 55. Other groups of irregulars embarked on missions to India, Central Asia, and East Africa. See: Vahdet Keleşyılmaz, *Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa'nın Hindistan Misyonu (1914-1918)* (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 1999); Adil Hikmet Bey, *Asya'da Beş Türk* (İstanbul:

- Ötügen Neşriyat, 1998); Philip Hendrick Stoddard, *The Ottoman Government and the Arabs, 1911-1918: A Preliminary Study of the Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa*, (PhD dissertation, Princeton University 1963).
- 10 On the atrocities on the region of Erzerum see the comprehensive report of German Vice-consul Max Von Scheubner-Richter, Scheubner-Richter to Bethmann-Hollweg, Erzerum, Aug. 10, 1915 A 28584 Auswärtiges Amt, Bonn, Politisches Archiv (AA-PA), Türkei 183/39 J. No. 598. Taner Akçam's claim that regular army units did not participate in the massacres is based on a selective use of sources. Moreover, a key document is quoted out of context. Taner Akçam, *İnsan Hakları ve Ermeni Sorunu. İstihat ve Terakki'den Kurtuluş Savaşı'na* (Istanbul: İmge Kitabevi, 1999) pp. 282-285. For a discussion of the claim see, Hilmar Kaiser, "From Empire to Republic: The Continuities of Turkish Denial," paper presented at the conference *The Armenian Genocide and Historical Memory. Challenge of the Twenty-First Century*, University of California-Los Angeles, April 8, 2000 (forthcoming). For the memoirs of an Armenian deportee who had passed through the Euphrates valley see: Pailadzo Captanian, 1915. *Der Völkermord an den Armeniern. Eine Zeugin berichtet*. Translated and edited by Meliné Pehlivanian, (Leipzig: Gustav Kiepenheuer, 1993). For information on the massacres and concentration camps in the Syrian desert see: Raymond Kévorkian, "Le sort des déportés dans les camps de concentration de Syrie et de Mésopotamie" in *Revue d'histoire arménienne contemporaine*, 2 (1998) pp. 7-61; *idem*, "Témoignages sur les camps de concentration de Syrie et de Mésopotamie," *ibid.*, pp. 62-215; *idem*, "Autres témoignages sur les déportations et les camps de concentration de Syrie et de Mésopotamie (1915-1916)," *ibid.*, pp. 219-244.
 - 11 Arthur Beylerian (ed.), *Les grandes puissances, l'Empire ottoman et les Arméniens dans les archives françaises (1914-1918). Recueil de documents* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1983) (Série Documents, 34.), p. 29 (doc. 41).
 - 12 On German denial of the genocide see: Hilmar Kaiser, "Le génocide arménien: négation 'à l'allemande'" in *L'actualité du Génocide des Arméniens. Actes du colloque organisé par le Comité de Défense de la Cause Arménienne*, preface by Jack Lang, (Paris: Edipol, 1999) pp. 75-91.
 - 13 For a comprehensive study of the German military missions in the Ottoman Empire see: Jehuda L. Wallach, *Anatomie einer Militärhilfe. Die preußisch-deutschen Militärmissionen in der Türkei 1835-1919* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1976) (Schriftenreihe des Instituts für

- Deutsche Geschichte, Universität Tel Aviv, 1). Wallach touches, however, only shortly on the Armenian Genocide, see p. 207.
- 14 Metternich to Bethmann Hollweg, Pera, Dec. 7, 1915, A 36184 AA-PA Türkei 183/40 No. 711; Bethmann Hollweg, Berlin, Dec. 17, 1915 Ibid.; Metternich to AA, Pera, Dec. 18, 1915 A 36591 AA-PA Türkei 183/40 telegram, No. 2990.
 - 15 "During most of the war period, specifically until the spring of 1918, the majority of the Turkish leaders, and Enver in particular, were prepared to collaborate closely with the Reich in the military conduct of the war, but they vigorously and, on the whole, effectively resisted all German attempts to meddle in the internal affairs of the Ottoman empire." Ulrich Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 1914-1918* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1968; reprint: Delmar, N.Y.: Caravan Press, 1989), p. 370.
 - 16 Artem Ohandjanian, *Armenien. Der verschwiegene Völkermord*, (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1989) p. 221. Since the publication of his study, Ohandjanian has succeeded in making available the majority of relevant Austro-Hungarian Foreign Ministry documents on the Armenian Question and the Armenian Genocide. Artem Ohandjanian (ed.), *Österreich-Armenien. Facsimilesammlung diplomatischer Aktenstücke*, 12 vols. (Vienna, Ohandjanianverlag, 1995).
 - 17 Christoph Dinkel, "German Officers and the Armenian Genocide," in *Armenian Review* 44/1 (1991) p. 120.
 - 18 Vahakn N. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide. Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus* (Providence-Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1995); Vahakn N. Dadrian, *German Responsibility in the Armenian Genocide. A Review of the Historical Evidence of German Complicity*, foreword by Roger W. Smith (Watertown, MA: Blue Crane Books, 1996). For a discussion of Dadrian's findings see: Hilmar Kaiser, "Germany and the Armenian Genocide. A Review Essay," in *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies*, 8 (1995 [=1997]) pp. 127-142; Vahakn N. Dadrian, "Germany and the Armenian Genocide: A Response to Hilmar Kaiser," *ibid.* pp. 143-150; Hilmar Kaiser, "Germany and the Armenian Genocide, Part II: Reply to Vahakn N. Dadrian's Response," *ibid.* 9 (1996-1997 [1999]) pp. 135-140; Vahakn N. Dadrian, "Germany and the Armenian Genocide, Part II: Reply to Hilmar Kaiser," *Ibid.* pp. 141-148. It must be noted that in volume 9, p. 135 the text should read: "On the other hand, however, I object to his refutation of my criticism because his statements are contradicted by the extant archival evidence."

The original version had been altered without the author's consent and knowledge by the editor of the journal and constitutes a fake.

- 19 Dadrian on his approach: "It seeks to examine the conduct of certain high-ranking German officials suspected of having consorted with Turkish authorities at the peril of the Armenians, at the same time recognizing and applauding the collateral services of other and lesser German officials in helping to expose the crime in all its facets." ... "Foremost among these components are those expressions in the respective documents that are often furtive in texture and as such consist of hints that purposively are not elaborated, thereby suggesting a measure of concealment." Dadrian, *German Responsibility*, p. 5; see also pp. 90, 131-135.
- 20 Dadrian's claim that Von der Goltz had ordered the destruction of an Armenian village in the Midyat area is wrong. The village mentioned in the sources was not destroyed and moreover was not an Armenian village. His most recent assertion that a different village was afflicted does not withstand scholarly scrutiny. The village did not exist. Thus, Dadrian invented his reference in order to uphold an otherwise untenable claim. On the Armenian villages in the area see: Kévorkian and Paboudjian, *Les arméniens dans l'empire ottoman*, pp. 412-415. For a recent Turkish study on the affair based on Ottoman general staff files see İsrail Kurtcepe, "Birinci Dünya Savaşında Bir Süryani Ayaklanması," in OTAM 4 (1993), pp. 291-296. Kaiser, "Germany and the Armenian Genocide," Part I, pp. 133-136, Part II, p. 137. Note that the editor of the journal inserted without the author's knowledge and consent the name of Jakob Künzler in the text. Thus, an error was introduced. For Dadrian's statements see *ibid.*, Part I, pp. 146-147, Part II, pp. 144-145.
- 21 Schwabe to Militärmission, n. p., Feb. 2, 1915 enclosure to Liman Von Sanders to German Embassy, Constantinople, Feb. 11, 1915 J. No. 862 AA-PA Konstantinopel 168.
- 22 Wangenheim to Büge, Pera, Feb. 12, 1915 J. No. 862 AA-PA Konstantinopel 168.
- 23 Hilmar Kaiser, "The Railway and the Armenian Genocide."
- 24 The case of Paul Rohrbach might serve as a further example for the uncritical adaption of propaganda statements at the cost of ignoring the archival record and scholarly studies. Rohrbach was a prolific writer and perhaps the most influential German propagandist before World War I. During the war, Entente papers speculated about Rohrbach's involvement in the Armenian Genocide. It was believed that he had played an important role in developing the idea of a wholesale

deportation of the Ottoman Armenians. Dadrian refers to these speculations. However, he does not mention that Rohrbach was an ardent opponent of the CUP's extermination of the Armenians. An explicit letter of Rohrbach concerning this issue is preserved in the German Foreign Office archives. It was first published immediately after World War I and has been repeatedly referred to in the literature on the topic. Dadrian, *German Responsibility*, pp. 114-115, 130; Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, p. 227; Uwe Feigel, *Das evangelische Deutschland und Armenien. Die Armenierhilfe deutscher evangelischer Christen seit dem Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts im Kontext der deutsch-türkischen Beziehungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), (Kirche und Konfession, Band 28) p. 220.

- 25 The activities of Austro-Hungarian units in the Ottoman Empire have been analyzed by Peter Jung, see: Peter Jung, *Der k.u.k. Wüstenkrieg. Österreich-Ungarn im Vorderen Orient 1915-1918* (Graz: Verlag Styria, 1992).
- 26 In recent years Turkish historians have published an increasing number of studies utilizing the archives of the Ottoman general staff. See for instance: Keleşyılmaz, *Teşkilât-ı Mahsûs'ın Hindistan Mısyonu*; İsrail Kurtcepe and Mustafa Balcıoğlu, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı Başlarında bir Türk-Alman Projesi*: Rauf Bey Müfrezî in OTAM 3 (1992) pp. 247-269; Veli Yılmaz, *İnci Dünya Harbinde Türk-Alman İttifakı ve Askeri Yardımlar* (Istanbul: Cem Ofset, 1993); Metin Ayışığı, *Mareşal Ahmet İzzet Paşa (Askeri ve Siyasî Hayatı)*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1997); İhsan Sakarya, *Belgelerle Ermeni Sorunu* (Ankara: Başbakanlık Basımevi, 1992). The Turkish General Staff's journal *Askeri Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi* publishes regularly documents of the Ottoman general staff in facsimile format. In volume 36 (1987), issue 86, a document concerning the Armenian Genocide (doc. 2058) has been published carrying the signature of the German officer Von Feldmann. Consequently, the allegation that at the end of World War I the German military had removed the Ottoman general staff's files should be treated with some reservation. See: Dadrian, "Germany and the Armenian Genocide," Part II, p. 147.
- 27 Wolfdieter Bihl, *Die Kaukasus-Politik der Mittelmächte. Teil 1, Ihre Basis in der Orient-Politik und ihre Aktionen 1914-1917*, (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1975) (Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für neuere Geschichte Österreichs, 61) pp. 177-178. Dadrian took over Bihl's results adding some further evidence from the German Foreign Office archives. Dadrian refers to Wolffskeel's letter when giving archival references for

his quotations. His quotations are, however, identical with those of Bihl. Moreover, Dadrian did not refer to important parts of Wolffskeel's information that were not included in Bihl's discussion. This is surprising as Dadrian intended to demonstrate the prominent role of Wolffskeel in the Armenian persecutions. Dadrian, *German Responsibility*, pp. 136-137.

- 28 Wolffskeel Von Reichenberg was born on September 17, 1875 in Uttingen. He married Sofie-Henriette Von Berger on October 1, 1910. He died on December 26, 1954 in Würzburg. See: Bihl, *Kaukasus-Politik der Mittelmächte*, p. 263 note 150.
- 29 Wangenheim to Bethmann Hollweg, Pera, March 23, 1915 A 11310 AA-PA Der Weltkrieg 104.
- 30 For a comprehensive report on Zeitoun see: Rössler to Wangenheim, Aleppo, April 12, 1915 J. No. 2464 AA-PA Konstantinopel 168.
- 31 Wolffskeel's graphic account of his own initiative is confirmed by the embassy's documentation. Wangenheim to Rössler, Pera, March 26, 1915 J. No. ad 1860 AA-PA Konstantinopel 168 telegram; Wangenheim to Bethmann Hollweg, Pera, March 26, 1915 A 11682 AA-PA Türkei 183/36; Padel to Embassy, Damascus, March 30, 1915 J. No. 1959 AA-PA Konstantinopel 168; Wangenheim to Rössler, Pera, March 30, 1915 J. No. ad 1959 *ibid.*; Wangenheim to Padel, Pera, March 26, 1915 *Ibid.*
- 32 Rössler to Wangenheim, Aleppo, Oct. 25, 1915 No. 2351 enclosure to Neurath to Bethmann Hollweg, Pera, Nov. 9, 1915 A 33294 AA-PA Türkei 183/39 No. 661.
- 33 Currently Vahram Schemmassian prepares a scholarly study of the defense at Mousa Dagħ.
- 34 Thus, the information of U.S. Consul at Aleppo, Jesse Jackson, that Wolffskeel was the commander of the artillery is correct but incomplete. See: Jackson to Secretary of State, Washington, D.C., March 4, 1918 U.S. National Archives, Record Group 59, 867.4016/373 published in Ara Sarafian (compiler), *United States Official Records on the Armenian Genocide 1915-1917*, (Princeton and London: Gomidas Institute, 2004) p. 589.
- 35 Consul Rössler's report on the fighting at Ourfa is based on information supplied by Wolffskeel. Rössler to Bethmann Hollweg, Aleppo, Nov. 8, 1915 A 35045 AA-PA Türkei 183/40 No. 2511. Currently Carlos Bedrossian is preparing a scholarly study on the defense of Ourfa.
- 36 "Now my friend Mose Oppenheim will turn up here again soon - someone who really gets on your nerves, as I wrote you already from Aleppo. He imposes himself as much as he can on everyone, tries to get

everything worth knowing from them in order then to write reports on what he's learned. You know already that I am able to keep silent now and then. He probably wants to set up dispatch centers here." Eberhard Count Wolffskeel Von Reichenberg to Sofie-Henriette Countess Wolffskeel Von Reichenberg, [Damascus], July 16, 1915; "Terribly many speeches, one by Oppenheim among them, under whose deferral of action-taking we Germans squirmed—an awful Jew." Damascus, Aug. 6, 1915 Bundesarchiv, Militärarchiv, Freiburg, NL 138/5. Often, Oppenheim's reports were little more than a repetition of Ottoman propaganda or simple hearsay. For instance, he uncritically accepted the allegation that the Armenian defenders in Ourfa had used Russian machine guns. Referring to this allegation, Oppenheim asserted that the Armenians had received weapons from the Entente. Moreover, he believed that the defense had been a part of a larger scheme. Vice-Consul Hoffmann, however, learned from Wolffskeel that the whole story was wrong. Thus, in his final report to the German embassy Oppenheim took over Wolffskeel's version. Hoffmann to Embassy, Alexandretta, Nov. 8, 1915 J. No. 6284 AA-PA Konstantinopel 172 No. 944; Metternich to Bethmann Hollweg, Pera, Nov. 29, 1915 A 35268 AA-PA Türkei 183/40 No. 701.

37 Dinkel, "German Officers," p. 103.

38 Hilmar Kaiser, *Imperialism, Racism, and Development Theories: The Construction of a Dominant Paradigm on Ottoman Armenians* (Ann Arbor, MI: Gomidas Institute Books, 1997) pp. 21-32.

An Introduction to the Second Edition

Since the publication of the first edition, I have been able to obtain additional information relevant to Wolffskeel's role during the Armenian Genocide. This information confirmed and reinforced the earlier findings. I decided to add this material in the form of a new introduction to the second edition, while leaving the original introduction unaltered. Readers familiar with the first edition will welcome this arrangement as it allows for an easy identification of the added data.

The debate on Wolffskeel's role during the Armenian Genocide has continued since the first edition of this short study appeared.¹ In a recent publication, Donald Bloxham offered, as he saw it, a "re-assessment" of the debate on the German role during the Armenian Genocide.² Concerning Wolffskeel's role, Bloxham questioned the findings of this study, namely, that the officer had been involved in the Armenian Genocide as such. Instead, Bloxham asserted that the officer had been convinced of being merely performing his duty. According to Bloxham, the officer's rationale for his participation in the attack was as follows: "While his actions contributed to the death of Armenians who had been targeted by the Turks simply because of their ethnic identity, the specific context of his involvement was the quelling of an interior revolt which posed security questions for the region."³ Having quoted at length from the letters published in this volume, the author concluded that "though the distinction between acts of "military necessity" and the murder process is specious from the victims' point of view, it was important in providing a framework for German military involvement."⁴ Despite making such far reaching statements, Bloxham did not offer new evidence to sustain his conclusions.

A number of questions arise from Bloxham's claims. First of all, I had already emphasized Wolffskeel's "sense of duty that showed his stern personality."⁵ In regard to his actions at Ourfa, however, I had argued that the officer "did not simply perform what he