

THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE AND WWI

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From 1915 until 1918, Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire endured a genocide that historians often overlook. The history of the Armenians, a people who occupied the land bordering the northern Mediterranean, Black, and Caspian Seas, can be traced as far back as the 9th century B.C. and is characterized by many instances of occupation by foreign peoples like the Mongols, Seljuks, Memlouks, Turcomans, and Turks. Predominantly Orthodox Christians, the Armenians found their relationship with the Turks (predominantly Muslim) to be especially subject to discord. Jewish and Orthodox Christian ‘millets,’ or religious communities, were formed in the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire during the early twentieth century. These millets, including the Armenian millet, were, by law, given a substantial amount of autonomy; however, much of the legislation ensuring their relative independence was ignored, and remained nothing more than a “paper promise.” This tendency to ignore the rights of the millets was exacerbated by a growing perception among the Turks that the thriving Armenian communities posed a threat to them. The onset of WWI further complicated Armenian-Turkish dynamics, since it provided an excuse for Turks (Turkey being a Central

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Power) to suspect, along with the Ottoman Armenians, Armenians living in neighboring Russia of conspiring with the Allies against them. When these and other factors converged during the years from 1915 to 1918, Armenians became the victims of a horrific genocide at the hands of the Ottoman Turks—a genocide characterized by wholesale stealing of their possessions, mass caravanned deportations, and the subsequent execution of many of the Ottoman Armenians.

According to the definition stated in a United Nations decree of 1948, genocide means,

...any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group as such: a) killing members of the group, b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group, e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

The events analyzed throughout the body of this paper clearly meet the criteria of genocide, according to this, the only internationally recognized definition of the crime. Thus, controversy should not center on the question of whether these killings were in fact genocide. Rather, it should study the question of the causes of this genocide, and even more importantly, how the world community reacted and interpreted these events as they transpired. The Ottoman Turks, enabled by the circumstances surrounding WWI, tried to eliminate the Armenians under the general pretext that Armenian nationalism threatened the Turkish Empire. Although most World Powers were conscious of the massacres, they failed to respond adequately because they were involved with the First World War and controlled by the politics of post-war policy making. This inadequate intervention against and confused interpretation of the genocide by Europe and the United States shaped Turkey's relationship with the worldwide community, even into the twenty-first century.

In dissecting the circumstances and causes of the genocide, it is important to analyze the history of Turkish-Armenian

relations—relations characterized by both cooperation and conflict. With approximately 2,076,000 Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire (in Eastern Anatolia or Asia Minor, also known as Historic Armenia because of the Armenian presence there for centuries before the Turkish invasion), it was inevitable that the Armenian citizens would influence Turkish government, economy, and law.¹ During the early days following the Turkish conquest of the Armenians (1453), the Turks treated Armenians fairly well as a religious community. Although the Armenians were referred to by the Islamic term, *dhimmi*—meaning a monotheistic, non-Muslim population living in a Muslim state, and that denoted inferiority—the Armenians’ condition within the Empire initially was quite stable.² They were called the *millet-i-Sadika*, “the loyal community,” and the Turks considered them less hostile than the Greeks or Slavs who also were living under Turkish rule at the time.³

In fact, the Armenians were an integral part of Turkish politics and, it is interesting to note that the Ottoman Foreign Minister until 1913 was, himself, Armenian.⁴ In the Ottoman Empire, an administrative council formed the primary governing body. The elected counselors of this body were representative of both Muslim and Christian communities. This representation depended on the population of these communities, and usually, there was equal representation of both Muslim and Christian citizenry. Turks almost always held *ex officio* jobs however; and thus, they were truly in the majority and in control, often as financial department heads and chief governors. Sometimes, though rarely, Armenians held positions with municipal duties, even mayor, but Armenian representation in this area seemed to be only “for show,” as municipal jobs entailed little political power. In 1896, the Congress of Berlin proposed reform by which Armenians would hold positions of more authority in the government. However this proposition was, for the most part, ignored by the Turkish governors.⁵

In the Empire’s commercial and financial realm, Armenians occupied positions that ranged from the fairly important to

the more mundane. Examples of their positions included: board committee member, tax collector, clerk, accountant, storekeeper and cashier. Although the Turks were wary of allowing Armenians into politics, they did trust them with money.⁶

As for the Empire's judicial system, Armenians along with Greeks often held the majority in the commercial courts. This was, perhaps, because these two groups conducted most of the trade at the time. In general, however, there were fewer Armenians in the judicial system than Turks, and Turks held the more influential posts, like the chairmanship of the judicial council. This imbalance of power often led to the denial of justice when Armenians brought their cases to court.⁷

The tension that was gradually building between Turks and Armenians escalated sharply in the years just prior to the genocide of 1915. In 1894, a series of massacres began in Istanbul (and elsewhere in Anatolia), foreshadowing the genocide to come. In one instance, Armenian peasants in Sassoun defended themselves against Muslim Kurds (pastoralists) and then faced troops of Sultan Abdulhamid II and the 4th Army Corps who massacred them while trying to quell the insurrection. This incident lasted for twenty-three days in the summer of 1894, murdering approximately 8,000 Armenians. As a result of the Sassoun massacres, European powers (Britain, France, and Russia) urged the Turkish government to appoint a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the massacre. The Commission, which existed from January 24 to July 21, 1895, was corrupt and biased—rewarding and honoring the perpetrators and demoting or firing protectors who might have held positions of influence. Realizing the ineffectiveness of the Inquiry Commission, Britain, France, and Russia made yet another attempt to assist the Armenians, by sending delegates to hear evidence in Sassoun. These delegates urged the Turkish government to implement changes proposed by the San Stephano and Berlin treaties of 1878, which, in essence, stated that the Turkish government should implement any reforms deemed necessary by the Armenian communities living within Turkey, one such reform being the establishment of a Christian administration in the Armenian communities.⁸

The plan to begin these reforms in October of 1895 led to violence. In September of that year, the *Hinchakist* Party of Armenian nationalists organized a procession in Constantinople to protest the inattentive government. Troops of the Sultan attacked the procession, and the violence spread to other places where pro-Armenian reforms were to occur. One of these places was the Ottoman Bank of Galata in Constantinople. The Armenian revolutionary party *Dashnaktsutiun* seized the bank, hoping to elicit European intervention; however, this only caused more massacres, leading to one in Constantinople that killed 6,000 Armenians. In response to this, English, French, and Russian delegates protested the massacres and heard testimony from the Armenians and troops.⁹ Because of this offer of European assistance and protection, the Turks accused the Armenians of being agents of these countries—an accusation that proved to be one of the leading excuses for the genocide in 1915.¹⁰

Sultan Abdulhamid II, with his Porte (regime) in Constantinople, initiated these massacres from 1894-96. His reasons for instigating the massacres were both political and administrative, and a religion which proclaimed Muslim superiority helped to legitimize them. Abdulhamid, a very conservative ruler, found it unsettling that when he came to power in 1876, Greece had just gained her independence from Turkey (1829); and the Treaty of San Stephano (1878) would make Romania, Serbia, Montenegro, and Bulgaria autonomous states. Abdulhamid realized that the European powers that had helped to bring about these major changes in government were now imposing military and economic pressure on the Ottoman Empire. He therefore feared the intervention of these European powers on behalf of the minorities (especially Armenians) in the Ottoman Empire.¹¹

The Armenians' geographical location further increased this tension and fear of European intervention. There were approximately 2,054,000 Armenians living in Russia (almost as many as lived in Turkey), and many lived very near the border between Turkey and Russia.¹² At the time of the massacres, the tension and suspicion of the Russian-Armenians grew because the

Russian Empire was growing at the same time the Ottoman Empire was shrinking, and Turks accused Armenians of not supporting the Ottoman Empire.¹³ The Ottoman/Russian relationship was strained in this way because the Russian Armenians had fought in the Russian Army against the Turks in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877 and 1878; and Armenian nationalist groups like the *Hnchakists* and *Dashnaktsutiuns* had their roots in Russia.¹⁴ Although these nationalist parties were fairly active in Turkey and Russia, they were not a legitimate threat to the Ottoman Empire, and they were not the primary impetus for the massacres.¹⁵ The Ottoman government, nevertheless, saw these nationalist parties as yet one more reason to feel hostility towards the Armenians. Foreshadowing the attitude that would prevail in 1915, Abdulhamid wrote (c. 1894) in a letter to British Ambassador Sir Philip Currie,

The Armenians, who, for their own purposes invent stories against the government, and finding that they receive encouragement from British officials, are emboldened to proceed to open acts of rebellion which the government is perfectly justified in suppressing by every means in its power.¹⁶

From a domestic perspective, Abdulhamid sought to put an end to the Tanzimat period of reform (1839-1876), which had undermined the traditional societal hierarchy and power distribution by attempting to grant minorities equality under the law. This period of reform began in 1839 with the *Hatt-ı-Sherif of Gulhane* (The Noble Rescript of the Rose Chamber),¹⁷ and was supported in 1856 by the imperial edict of the *Hatt-ı-Humayun*, which proposed more equality for the millets. Abdulhamid did not implement these reforms effectively, and he, in fact, sought to encourage their failure.¹⁸ Abdulhamid himself said,

I made a mistake when I wished to imitate my father, Abdulmecit, who sought to reform by persuasion and liberal institution...I understand now that it is only by force that one can move the people with whose protection God has entrusted me.¹⁹

Similarly, another theory about Abdulhamid's motives centered around his distaste for the idea that an Armenian "renaissance" had occurred in the late 1700s to early 1800s. During this time, there was a rise in literacy, education, culture, and

economic and political activities within the Armenian community, as cultural pride increased along with the Armenians' understanding of their role in the nation. The Armenians were quickly becoming a perceived threat to Turkish state unity and national pride, and added to Abdulhamid's feeling that he must restore tradition to the Empire and protect Muslim supremacy.²⁰

To understand the circumstances of the genocide of 1915—the culmination over time, of the earlier massacres—it is important to consider not only the massacres' causes but also their effects. Some historians have hypothesized that the massacre of 1894-1896 did not evolve into a full-fledged genocide at that time because of two factors: the influence of Islamic law that supported the traditional Ottoman millet system, and the ideology of Sultan Abdulhamid II, who was a reactionary conservative, but hardly the sort of revolutionary who would attempt to carry out such a crime. These massacres, though not considered to be part of the genocide itself, significantly affected Turkish-Armenian relations until 1915. After the massacres, for example, Turkish-Armenian relations on the surface seemed to stabilize in the sense that Armenians settled into their old roles in the governmental and societal bureaucracy; however, the general feeling between the Turks and Armenians had been significantly altered, and this would contribute to increased friction in the years to come.²¹

Perhaps reflective of this loss of harmony was the emergence of the “Young Turks” or *Ittihadists*, who comprised an *Anti-Hamidian* faction with centers in Paris, Salonika, Egypt and Tunis. The group's original objective was to force Sultan Abdulhamid II to restore Turkey's constitutional government; so in 1908, the “Young Turks,” with the help of the Committee for Union and Progress, led a bloodless coup and established the Young Turks, once a secret organization, as the ruling party in Constantinople. The leaders of the *Ittihadists* and Committee for Union and Progress (C.U.P.) were: Colonel Enver Pasha, Minister of War; Talaat Pasha, Minister of the Interior; Dr. Mehmed Bey, Executive Secretary; and Jemal Pasha, the Minister of the Navy and first military governor of Constantinople. These *Ittihadists* controlled

the Empire from 1908 until 1918.²² Some of their most fundamental accomplishments included establishing a new system of local (provincial) administration, modernizing Constantinople through public works, and expanding the accessibility of public education, especially by opening the University of Constantinople to women.²³

Although these accomplishments seemed positive, the ideology of the Young Turks was, in actuality, divisive, and this ruling body eventually organized the deportations and massacres of the genocide. The ideology of the Young Turks focused on the concept of *Turanism*. *Turanism* was a revival of Turkish pride through the celebration of victories, conquests, and accomplishments of their ancestors. During a time when Armenians were generally well-educated and hard-working, *Turanism* sought to dispel the common belief that the majority of Turkish peasantry was crude and uneducated.²⁴ However, after the Committee for Union and Progress (*Ittihadists*) secured a constitutional government, deposed Abdulhamid with a coup, and replaced him with his brother Mahomet V in April of 1909, there was a conflict over fundamental policy within the *Ittihadist*/C.U.P. party. The conflict centered on whether the Empire should be led in a direction of European libertarianism or xenophobic Pan-Turkism—a policy that was a confluence of nationalism and racism, defining Turks by criteria such as language and religion. Eventually, the C.U.P. chose to follow the policy of Pan-Turkism, which placed the Armenians in a precarious position, since they were not—and could never become Turkish, according to Pan-Turkism’s standards.²⁵ Zia Gokalp was a member of the Central Committee of the C.U.P. who was pivotal in the development of Pan-Turkism. Even his surname—“gok” meaning “eastern sky” and “alp” meaning “hero”—emphasized the Pan-Turkist ideology of increasing the expanse of the Empire.

Gokalp’s Pan-Turkist theory was that Turkey should be comprised of only Turkish-speaking Muslims. No Greeks, Jews, or Armenians could be of that *nationality*; however, they *could* be Turkish citizens. Thus, the Armenians and other minorities faced the impossible task of trying to serve their nation with intense

patriotism (as Pan-Turkism and Gokalp required) while at the same time being denied full membership in the Turkish nation. The objectives of Pan-Turkism were to be accomplished in three stages: the first being to gain control over and exert intense Turkish influence over the minorities in the Empire; the second, to bring the Azerbaijanis (closely related to the Ottoman Turks but living in Russia and Persia) under the state's influence; and finally, to make Turkey the center for uniting all Turanian people in Asia.²⁶ Ironically, after the *Ittihadist* coup overthrew the administration of Abdulhamid, there was a brief interlude of peace between the various minorities in the Empire. Enver Pasha, himself a chief orchestrator of the genocide proclaimed at this time that, "Henceforth we are all brothers; there are no longer Bulgars, Greeks, Romanians, Jews, Moslems; under the same blue sky we glory in being Ottomans!"²⁷

However, this attitude soon was replaced by a series of recurring conflicts between the Armenians and their government. As time elapsed, the so-called "brotherhood" idea evolved further—to the point where the Armenians living in Turkey (not racially, religiously, or traditionally Turkish) were viewed not as "brothers" but as an obstacle in the path of uniting the Turkic groups in other nations with those in Turkey. Turkism, unlike Islamic Law, was extremely intolerant of non-Muslims; and additionally, Turkism segregated and identified members of society by race, rather than religion, thus comprehensively excluding minorities like the Armenians.

Finally, during this same period, Turkism affected the Armenian/Turkish commercial relationship. Leaders of the C.U.P. and the Pan-Turkist movement transferred their racism from the society to the economy, developing policies (specifically called *milli iktisat*, or "national economy") to create a homogeneous bourgeoisie, not "contaminated" by Armenian competition. Thus, Pan-Turkists not only attempted to retain the traditional hierarchy of society (keeping power in the hands of the Turks), but also used their ideology to justify *further* polarization of minority groups—preparing the nation to carry out genocide.²⁸

The genocide began in May of 1915 and lasted until the Armistice in 1918; however, politically, events turned sharply in the direction of the genocide as early as 1914. Turkey took a stance of “armed neutrality” with general mobilization for the First World War on August 3, 1914. By September 6, 1914, the Interior Ministry under Talaat Pasha warned army and civilian officials to keep Armenian leaders under close watch. He, along with the C.U.P.’s Minister of War, Enver Pasha, and Executive Secretary, Dr. Mehmed Bey, wrote on behalf of the C.U.P. to the governors, mayors, and Turkish town authorities, explaining the reason for suspicion of the Armenians. In this telegram, dated April 15, 1915, the C.U.P. expressed grave concern that the Armenians were conspiring with the Russians, British, and possibly even the United States, in order to inherit Turkish land if the Allied Powers were to win the War. This fear of Armenian allegiances, to neighboring Russia especially, increased the animosity between the Turks and the Armenians, and ultimately led to the Armenian deportations.²⁹ In the April 15th telegram, the leaders of the C.U.P. listed the following as excuses for the suspicion of the Armenians:

The Armenian voluntary forces serving in the enemy [Russian] armies; the existing Armenian parties in the interior of the country which have been organized to give a body blow to our Army; the unaccountable number of firearms and war material discovered and confiscated everywhere in the country.³⁰

In November 1914, Ottoman leaders obtained permission to confiscate anything belonging to Armenians that could be used by the army, and government provocations of Armenians ensued. On April 8, 1915, the deportation of the total population of Armenians began, and other regular troops massacred Armenian labor battalions. Soon after, on the 24th of April, the government arrested Armenians suspected of nationalist sentiment, without trials or convictions of actual crimes.³¹ In a letter (September 9, 1915) from Minister of the Interior, Talaat Pasha, urging the Government of Aleppo to expedite the deportations, Pasha offers insight into the Turkish mindset during this time:

All rights of Armenians to live and work on Turkish soil have been completely cancelled, and the government, having assumed all re-

sponsibility, has commanded that even babes in the cradle are not to be spared.³²

This mindset soon was reflected in legislation. On September 5, 1916, three important treaties were annulled by the Ottoman government, facilitating its ongoing deportation of the Armenians and seeking to ensure that the European Powers would not become involved: the *Paris Treaty* of 1856, the *London Declaration* of 1871, and the *Berlin Treaty* of 1878. Regarding the decision to annul these treaties, Ottoman foreign minister Halil Pasha said, “All of these international treaties had imposed ‘political shackles’ on the Ottoman State which the Porte intended to be rid of.”³³ This vivid statement makes clear the Turks’ belief that the Armenians and the European nations that supported the minorities within the Empire were an obstacle in the path of Ottoman greatness.

The Turks not only annulled legislation created with the involvement of the international community, but also created new domestic legislation that would help them achieve their objectives. On May 27, 1915, the Turkish government passed the Temporary Law of Deportation. This law made no specific reference to the Armenians, but gave army officials authorization to deport groups of people suspected of espionage, treason, or other similar crimes. The greatest problem with this law was its vagueness, giving army officials the right to deport people upon sensing *hissetmek*, “the offense.” On September 26, 1915, in the Temporary Law of Expropriation and Confiscation, the Turkish government claimed the right to confiscate the deportees’ goods and assets, using them as they saw fit, and the government also seized the authority to handle debts and credits of the deportees.³⁴

Many historians have asserted theories about the cause of the deportations and massacres. Most historians have found the Turks’ rationalization of their actions to be grounded in the idea that the Armenian community was strong enough to pose a threat to the *Ittihadist* government, especially through the military and the Russian-Armenian connection. When Turkey allied with the Central Powers, the Russian Armenians began to enlist in the Russian Army in order to fight against the Ottomans who had

killed many Armenians under Abdulhamid II. In fact, four corps of Turkish-Armenian forces joined the Russian-Armenians in the Russian Army.³⁵ In addition to this tension, with the complicating factor of WWI and a multitude of entangled alliances, the Turkish government feared that if Russia and the Allies won WWI, they would try to give power and land to the Armenians, on whose support the Russians could count.³⁶ In short, *Ittihadists* believed that the Armenians were determined to sabotage the Turkish Army. They accused the Armenians of enlisting in the Russian army as soon as WWI was declared, and of interfering with the Turkish Army's means of communication by inciting uprisings.³⁷

Some historians, however, dispute the idea that the Armenians' actions in WWI were the primary cause for the genocide. Many claim that the Turks wanted and planned to exterminate the Armenians long before mobilization for the war.³⁸ Also, many historians have theorized that the genocide was not merely a reaction to the abnormal stress of the World War, but rather an event that was being subtly planned over many years. This was supported by a letter found in the secret documents of the Director General of the Refugees (from himself to the Government of Aleppo, on an unknown date). The letter states:

... It was previously intended to exterminate the Armenian element which had for centuries wanted to destroy the firm foundation of our state and appeared to be a great peril to our government, but the exigencies of the times made it impossible...Now that all obstacles have been removed...do your best to obliterate the Armenian name from Turkey.³⁹

Winston Churchill, along with other world leaders, also held this belief in the planned nature of the genocide. Churchill said, "The opportunity presented itself for...clearing Turkish soil of a Christian race opposed to all Turkish ambitions and cherishing national ambitions that could be satisfied only at the expense of Turkey..."⁴⁰ Finally, Dr. Mehmed Bey, executive secretary of the C.U.P., in a speech given to the Central Committee of the C.U.P, supported this hypothesis when he said,

If we remain satisfied with the sort of local massacres which took place...if this purge is not general and final, it will lead to problems. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to eliminate the Armenian people in its entirety, so that there is no further Armenian on this earth and the very concept of Armenia is extinguished. We are now at war. We shall never have a more suitable opportunity than this. We need pay no attention to protests from the press or fear the intervention of the Powers...⁴¹

Nazim's statement reiterated that in WWI the Turks saw the perfect opportunity to carry out a plan of extermination that had been forming for years. With the War to distract the rest of the world, the Turks realized that if there were any possibility of their actions being overlooked, WWI was the best chance for this to happen. As Nazim stated, both the press and the governments would be forced to prioritize the crises that they handled. Nazim's statement reinforces the point that the genocide was not a random reaction to the stress of war. A statement issued by the Turkish War Office Department summarized the threat that the Ottoman Empire saw in the Armenians:

The Armenians are in league with the enemy. They will launch an uprising in Istanbul, kill off the *Ittihadist* leaders and will succeed in opening up the straits [to enable the Allied fleets to capture Istanbul].⁴²

The weekly propaganda magazine, *Harb Mecmnas* (War Magazine), which was edited by Colonel Seyfi (who headed Department II of the Turkish War Office), printed the above statement. The magazine had 15,000 or more subscribers who were exposed to this inflammatory writing.⁴³ This statement illustrates two important dimensions of the threat that the Turks felt from the Armenians: the fear of their association with Russia and the Allied Powers, and the fear that the Armenian nationalist factions would incite trouble within the state.

Supported by this rationale, the perpetrators of the genocide were able to carry out their crimes—crimes executed by the *Ittihadists*, the Brigands, the convicts, and the Gendarmes. The *Ittihadists* were in charge of the Special Organization, (the agency that orchestrated the deportation and massacre), and ex-officers often went on special missions for the *Ittihadist* government.

Brigands, also known as *Cetes*, worked in various capacities for the Special Organization; while convicts, most often from the Imperial Prisons, helped with the mass executions of the Armenians.⁴⁴

The Gendarmes held some of the most important positions in carrying out the genocide. The Gendarmes, or provincial police, led the deportations. There were only a few Gendarmes per thousand Armenians, so the question arises as to why there was no significant Armenian attempt to resist. Their relative passivity may be attributed to a combination of three factors: the Armenians thought that they were being “relocated” (not killed); those leading the deportations threatened that the women and children would be hurt if the refugees killed the Gendarmes; and finally, the Armenians often felt that they had nowhere to go for help because Gendarmes drove the caravans away from populated areas so that no Armenian could escape, and outsiders would be less likely to question what was going on.⁴⁵ One survivor spoke of the Gendarmes, saying,

[They] would come and give us a bad time...I saw them snatch goods and girls right from our horses or wagons... sometimes it would be the turn of a pregnant woman. They would look at each other and say ‘boy or girl’ and pierce her belly with a sword.⁴⁶

However, there were a few accounts of Gendarmes who brought water to the thirsty children, let the deportees buy food, and carried out their duty to escort the caravan without further harming the refugees.⁴⁷

The Gendarmes played an important role in the genocide, as the executions were linked to the deportations for which they were responsible. A particular characteristic of the Armenian genocide was the method of execution, which followed the deportation. Gendarmes escorted caravans of Armenians to the deserts of Syria and Mesopotamia. Essentially, these deportations were a subtle method of extermination. People took possessions with them, not understanding that they would ultimately die (either from exhaustion or mass execution). The poor brought food, clothing, and whatever else they could carry; the wealthy brought with them more valuable possessions and would try to hire carts

and mules to help them on the journey. The Gendarmes quickly took all their possessions from them. By the end of the journey, people had nothing and the thousands of dead bodies accumulating alongside the road created a serious health problem.⁴⁸ One survivor, describing the bodies by the roadside, said, “[the bodies were] all blown up, turned black, naked, covered with worms, [both] women and girls.”⁴⁹ Men and boys were usually, but not always, taken out of sight of the caravan in order to be killed; this was done in an effort to decrease the number of witnesses to the execution.⁵⁰ One survivor spoke of these executions, saying,

They asked all the men and boys to separate from the women. There were some teenage boys who were dressed like girls... they remained behind. But my father had to go... a group of armed men came from the other side of a hill and killed all the men right before our eyes. They killed them with bayonets at the end of their rifles, sticking them in their stomachs. Many of the women would not take it and they threw themselves into the River Euphrates, and they too died... I saw my father being killed.⁵¹

Over the course of the genocide, 250,000 Armenians escaped the Ottoman Empire, 1,000,000 Armenians died (one half of these being women and children), 200,000 were forced to become Muslim, and the Allies found the remaining Armenians in terrible condition.⁵²

Understanding the reaction of Turkey itself to the genocide is critical to an understanding of the international reaction to these events. Turkey officially held to the notion that what happened could not have been genocide because it was not centrally organized and carried out. Turkey also claimed that it was solely a reaction to the fact that Armenians were defecting to the Russian Army during WWI.⁵³ Documentary evidence found in Turkish records reflects this opinion. Turkish historians have written that the genocide was not intentional, and that it was beyond the control of the central government. Whereas the United States’ documents suggest that the massacres *were in fact centrally organized*, in most documents found in Turkey, there is little or no reference to government orders, even for deportation. Many historians have asserted that this lack of documentation is proof that a planned

genocide never happened; however, a more plausible explanation for this is that because the *Ittihadist* leaders did the planning secretly, they often kept the government uninformed of their discussions. Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, the late Dean of Turkish Historians, emphasized the fact that two or three leaders alone made the most important decisions about the genocide, and thus were able to maintain the secrecy of their plans and did not have to include their conferences in the official minutes of government meetings. Sensitive issues were not recorded, but decided verbally. This way there were very few records to prove the *Ittihadists*' guilt.⁵⁴ The Turks were not only reluctant to incriminate themselves, but also felt that their actions were well justified and thus they saw no need for punishment. In a telegram to the government of Aleppo, Talaat Pasha expressed this opinion, saying, "... since all crimes committed against [the Armenians] serve the purpose desired by the government, there shall be no legal proceedings for such acts."⁵⁵

Ironically, the Turk's fear of punishment was also evident in certain situations. When the Interior Minister at the time of the Armistice, Minister Ahmed Cemal, mentioned to the public that 80,000 Armenians had died, other Turks harshly criticized him. One historian, Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, denounced Cemal for giving Turkey's enemies reason and proof to attack the country, politically (or literally).⁵⁶ Finally, some Turks did not want to believe that their government could carry out such horrific crimes against the Armenians, and so they blamed the deportations and massacres on German influence. The Turkish government itself challenged this notion. The Government denied that Turkey could be so greatly influenced by Germany at a time when independence was nearly the administration's top priority.⁵⁷

Much responsibility lay on the World Powers for doing little or nothing to prevent the genocide, and thus enabling the crime. There were several instances of weak attempts at intervention; however, these attempts did little more than let the Turks know that the world knew what was transpiring—they never developed into effective action. In a letter written to President

Woodrow Wilson in 1919, Armin T. Wegner, a German writer and eyewitness to the genocide, attributed this passivity primarily to the struggles of WWI and the weakness they caused in Europe.⁵⁸ The War also provided an excuse to bring troops and military supplies—ostensibly for the War—into Turkey for use in the deportations and massacres. For example, some *Cetes* (Brigands) from Germany entered Armenia supposedly for defense purposes, but really helped to carry out the genocide.⁵⁹

The role of Germany in the Genocide was unique in comparison to the role of the rest of Europe and the United States. Although other powers of the Concert of Europe were shocked by the atrocities but failed to intervene, Germany not only failed to take action against the genocide, but it was also the country most involved with enabling the crime. German Emperor Wilhelm II supported the Abdulhamid regime diplomatically, even during the massacres. He sent a German Military Mission to Turkey in 1913 in order to use Germany's great military ability to rebuild the Ottoman army. In 1914, the Turko-German political and military alliance developed from this connection, and the Germans swore to provide the Turks with economic, political, and military assistance.⁶⁰ Therefore, there were many German military personnel in the Ottoman Empire for the Military Mission and Turko-German Alliance. These people, capable of trying to stop the extermination, were told explicitly not to do so because Germany felt that they must be loyal allies to Turkey to achieve their common goals of victory in the War and survival. In an April 15, 1915 report to Berlin, German Ambassador Hand Freiherr von Wangenheim said, "[by intervening in] a hopeless cause, we may jeopardize interests which are more important and crucial for us."⁶¹ While the plans that were so important to Germany included both long-term and short-term objectives, the immediate goal was to become and remain Turkey's ally in WWI—the more long-range goal was to acquire Turkish land, rich in oil, and use it to develop Germany's industry.⁶²

Germany not only adopted this attitude of non-intervention, but also helped the *Ittihadists* carry out the extermination.

They did so by establishing a surveillance bureau in the General Police Directorate at the capital to blacklist leaders of the Armenian community, and by encouraging Enver Pasha to expand and re-open the Special Organization for murder and provocation during wartime.⁶³ Despite the fact that the Germans were assisting in the genocide, an Armenian delegation asked Germany for help when the impediment of Russian forces was moved from Turkey's path in April of 1918. In a telegram, the delegation explained their desperate situation, saying,

Turkish forces have poured over our defenseless land using the retreat of Russian troops as their opportunity...responsibility for the fate of Armenia now rests in German hands... it is now Germany's duty to restrain the excesses of the Turkish troops.⁶⁴

In response, Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg cabled Enver saying,

Your Excellency will understand if I, as a Christian, intercede to prevent the starvation and death of 500,000 co-religionists. I urge Your Excellency in the interests of humanity to issue the order so that these unhappy people may be allowed to return to their homeland.⁶⁵

Perhaps as von Hindenburg had anticipated, Enver made a courteous reply, but ignored the protest and continued with the deportations.⁶⁶ Many German consuls in Turkey at the time approached the German government to intervene in the massacres; however, especially after the 1918 defeat, the German Foreign Office wanted to remain as uncontaminated by the genocide as possible, and it used propaganda to make the rest of the world believe that the consuls' reports were not accurate or that the Armenians were guilty of treason and deserved punishment.⁶⁷

In the international community, a great deal of information reached the Allies via refugees and travelers.⁶⁸ On May 24, 1915, England, France, and Russia made a press statement: "The Allied Governments announce publicly to the Sublime Porte that they will hold all the members of the Ottoman government, as well as such of their agents as are implicated, personally responsible for such massacres."⁶⁹ This statement seemed to propose international involvement that might have stopped the genocide, yet during the genocide, strong action was never taken to support

these words. In the case of the United States, the American Ambassador to Constantinople, Henry Morgenthau, tried and failed many times to persuade Talaat Pasha to stop the deportations. He and the other United States consulates in Turkey were quite aware of and concerned about the events that were taking place. A letter from a United States consulate in Aleppo to Morgenthau reflected this concern, saying,

If we believed that these men, women, and children were guilty of treasonable conduct, we would be the first to acquiesce in righteous punishment. Believing that the number of those worthy of punishment is exceedingly limited, we cannot but view the situation with the greatest concern.⁷⁰

If the United States consulate was able to so confidently refute the Turks' accusations that the Armenians deserved deportation as punishment for treason, the burden of intervention lay even more substantially on the Americans' shoulders. Despite this, only 0.9% of "rescuers" during the genocide were determined to be Americans, according to statistics collected in the UCLA Armenian Oral History Project.⁷¹ This "greatest concern," as referred to by Morgenthau, seemed to be the limited extent to which America and the world community, distracted by WWI, chose to involve themselves with the Armenian genocide, thus enabling the continued deportations and massacres.

Some historians have asserted that the Armenian Genocide was significant because it raised the question of whether international law was strong enough to prevent future genocides. At the time of the Armenian genocide and WWI, international law was not effective in *preventing* the crime, though it did attempt to bring justice to the situation after 1918, when both Turkey and England made efforts to convict the genocide's perpetrators. After WWII and the Holocaust, the Nuremberg Trials expanded upon the idea of bringing the perpetrators of genocide to justice; however, again, international law had not been strengthened enough from the experience in Armenia to actually prevent the crime. Following the Armenian genocide, the Turks themselves set up the Extraordinary Courts Martial in 1919 to show that they could punish their own criminals.⁷²

Postwar Turkish authorities organized these Courts Martial for the trial of *Ittihadist* leaders and cabinet members and their criminal offenses against Armenians. The Turkish authorities formed three Courts: one for investigating the deportations and massacres, one for trying economic crimes, and one for the prosecution of more military personnel. The first catalyst for the formation of these Courts was the flight of seven *Ittihadist* leaders on November 1, 1918, forty-eight hours after the signing of Armistice. The leaders who fled Constantinople were: Mehmed Talaat, Ismail Enver, Ahmed Cemal, Doctors Mehmed Nazim and Behaeddin Sakir, and police/security chiefs Bedri and Huseyin Azmi. A second impetus for the formation of the Courts Martial by the Turkish officials was the knowledge that the Allies would want to punish not only the perpetrators but also those within the Ottoman state who had made Turkey go to war on the side of Germany and Austria. If there was no attempt for justice, the peace terms would be stiff, and the nationalists' hopes for forming a Turkish Republic would be thwarted.⁷³

The Allied Powers, led by the British, set up the High Commissions in Constantinople to gather testimony and documentation for future prosecution. Questions were asked not only about the Turks' compliance with Armistice terms, but also about their unworthy conduct during the war (involving both the Armenians and the British).⁷⁴ These High Commissions would have helped bring justice to the situation. However, the issue of British prisoners of war was very delicate and eventually brought the noble pursuit of the Commissions to an impasse. Most of the British population wanted to release 150 Turks at Malta (most were perpetrators) in exchange for their own men who were being held as prisoners. When this exchange was made, the British lost the ability to take legal action and so the collected materials were inaccessible until recently when statutes of limitations expired.⁷⁵ Thus, the only means of bringing the perpetrators to justice was the Courts Martial trials in Turkey.

These trials began on April 28 of 1919, under the presiding judge, Major General Mustafa Nazim. Several articles of their

constitution made it difficult to decide both whether to hold the trials and where to hold them. The ministers on trial wanted to be heard by the High Court, where they would claim an “act of state” defense; if the courts refused to grant this, the ministers wanted to have the trials held in the regular criminal courts. They felt that they would have the best chance for the least punishment in either of these two scenarios. The prosecution, however, claimed that the ministers were guilty of common law crimes, and so they should go to the Courts Martial to be tried as conspirator *Ittihadists*. Civil and judicial laws, suspended because the *Ittihadists* had seized the government in 1909 and enforced martial law, supported the prosecution’s position. Technically, the siege was still going on and thus the state was under the control of martial law. When martial law was enforced, the Courts Martial heard *all* trials; thus, the imperial rescript formed the Courts Martial on December 6, 1918.⁷⁶

The defense strategy was to declare that there had been no Armenian massacres. The Military Tribunal in Turkey countered this fallacious statement with surprise evidence with signatures to incriminate the leaders on trial (i.e., statements and confessions from pre-trial interrogations). Throughout the trial, *Ittihadist* sympathizers attempted to obstruct justice in various ways. Perhaps most damaging was the withholding of important documents needed by the prosecution, confusing their communication, and stalling in carrying out the court orders. Police officers who were *Ittihadist* sympathizers obstructed justice by imposing very light security on the War Ministry prisoners held in Bekiraga. The prisoners were allowed to communicate with each other and sometimes outsiders (i.e. the defendants) on a regular basis. Thus, the defense not only gained an unfair advantage in many circumstances (because the criminals could discuss defense strategy and receive assistance from sympathizers), but many *Ittihadist* prisoners were able to escape, and did. One British Foreign Office Report determined that the number of escapees exceeded eighty.

The final opinion of the Courts Martial was that the massacres were committed with the knowledge and help of the

Central Government and were not merely a reaction to events at that time or at a specific place. The Court found that the genocide was not even necessarily dependent on war conditions, because even cities seventy-two miles inland (Bolu, for example) were targets of deportation and massacre.⁷⁷ The Courts declared the deportations to be a means of concealing execution—not merely of relocation. The purpose of the massacres, as determined by the Courts Martial, was to destroy “the victim population.”⁷⁸ The Courts disputed the claims of Armenian insurgency and civil war, as there was no mutual slaughter. The killings were found to be premeditated and punishable by death according to Article 170 of the Ottoman Penal Code.⁷⁹ Thus, Talaat, Enver, Cemal, and Nazim were convicted and sentenced to death *in absentia*. Richard Webb, Rear Admiral and British Acting High Commissioner at Istanbul, pointed out yet another potential injustice in the seemingly positive search for justice: “It is interesting to see...the manner in which the sentences have been apportioned among the absent and the present so as to effect a minimum of real bloodshed.”⁸⁰ Webb’s comment referred to the fact that *only three Ittihadists* who were actually present at the trial were hanged in Istanbul. Turkey and the international community were not only weak in their attempts to intervene in the genocide, but they were also somewhat half-hearted in their implementation of justice following the British High Commissions and the Courts Martial.

In addition, the international community—specifically the United States and England—did not follow through in the pursuit of justice and defense of the Armenians during the peace conferences that followed the conclusion of WWI. In both England and America, leaders seemed to support the proposal of creating a homeland for the Armenians that was independent from Turkish control. However, Europe and the United States were not committed strongly enough to the Armenian cause to bring this about through the Treaty of Sevres (1920), which provided for an Armenian Republic. The Allies were manipulated by Turkish nationalists who repudiated the actions of the perpetrators in order to form a Turkish Republic themselves, and also to fend off Greece and England who were both vying for Turkish territory.

Furthermore, the formation of the Republic of Turkey was a substantial setback for the Armenian pursuit of justice, because with the formation of this Republic, the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), which made no reference to an Armenian homeland or republic, replaced the Treaty of Sevres. In the Treaty of Sevres, the Allies came the closest to dealing with the Armenian genocide in a way that would be positive for the future; however, the nations were not resolute enough in their decision or committed wholeheartedly enough to the Armenian cause to follow through on this agreement.⁸¹

A second attempt to provide a homeland for Armenians was made in the General Assembly of the League of Nations on September 21, 1921. The Assembly proposed the following:

Resolved that the Assembly invites the Council, at once, to press upon the Supreme Council (Allied) the necessity of making provisions in the Treaty, safeguarding the future of Armenia, and, further, insuring for the Armenians a National Home, wholly independent of Turkish rule.⁸²

And, one year later, in September of 1922, a unanimous resolution made in the League of Nations stated the following:

The Assembly takes notice of the resolutions of the Council pertaining to Armenia and expresses the desire that in the negotiations of a peace treaty with Turkey, one should not lose sight of the need to establish a National Home for the Armenians.⁸³

Despite these seemingly appropriate and positive exhortations, the United States, in particular, did not allow the Armenian situation to remain a priority in the peace conferences. According to American Ambassador James W. Gerard, the United States, through its procrastination in determining the fate of Armenia, allowed the Turks to continue taking advantage of the Armenian population.⁸⁴ Contributing to the procrastination was the transfer of power from President Woodrow Wilson to President Warren G. Harding and a desire to acquire the rich oil reserves in Turkey. If our diplomats offended the Turkish leaders or broke off relations with the country, access to these resources would be, without a doubt, denied. Ambassador Gerard wrote to President Harding

on November 8, 1922 regarding the United States' "betrayal" of the Armenian cause:

Our government not only failed to make any honest effort to fulfill our commitments to Armenia...But its platonic and perfunctory expressions of interest, formally declared to be 'unofficial' only, quite naturally encouraged the Turks to persist in their intransigent attitude, and thus allowed the Allies to escape from their own responsibility. The Administration was insistent in its demand for opportunities in the oil fields of Mosul for a few privileged syndicates...But it failed to speak earnestly for the rights of outraged humanity on the ground that 'America did not declare war on Turkey.'⁸⁵

Thus, the United States, along with many other world powers, paid little more than 'lip service' to the atrocity of the Armenian genocide, allowing its own interests to prevail over the interests of not only the Armenians, but in essence, all humanity.

Even now, with the advent of the twenty-first century, the world-community seems unsure of how to react to and interpret the Armenian Genocide. Much of the controversy might have been avoided if the events of 1915-1918 had been dealt with in a constructive manner in the years immediately following WWI. Instead, because of an irresolute international community, nations are still wrestling with the decision of whether to officially recognize the genocide, and Turkey itself is wary of acknowledging the crime for fear of sacrificing its standing in the international community. Similarly, the United States continues to abandon its moral responsibility of officially acknowledging the crime in favor of protecting the status quo of political and economic relations with Turkey. In October of 2000, for example, when a United States Republican congressman, James Rogan, suggested a congressional resolution condemning the Armenian Genocide, the Turkish government threatened the United States with the possibility of closing NATO bases, interfering with the Turkish oil reserves, and developing an alliance with nations in the Middle East. These threats proved just as potent for pushing the genocide aside as similar ones were almost a century ago, bringing even President Bill Clinton to the side of those in opposition to the resolution.⁸⁶

The Armenian Genocide (1915-1918) is evidence that when forced to handle competing crises, even a powerful international community may fail to strongly oppose a crime against humanity, like genocide. With the competing crisis of WWI, nations like Germany found challenging the Turks to be a threat to their own fate in the war. They also realized the benefits associated with allowing the genocide to go unpunished. Even the United States, whose role in the Great War is one viewed in a far more positive light than that of Germany, allowed the genocide to lose the priority that it, as a crime against humanity, deserved. Because of this negligence and irresponsibility by the other nations of the world, the Armenian Genocide faded from public concern and even public knowledge. Almost a century after the event occurred, countries like England only now are making formal statements confirming that the genocide indeed did occur, and other nations like the United States are still struggling with how to interpret, acknowledge and respond to the event. The lack of respect for human life shown by the Turks who were perpetrators of the genocide was clearly despicable and a danger to humanity—but the corresponding evil is the neglect shown by the rest of the world through its passivity. This ‘bystander’ attitude allows crimes like the Armenian genocide to be committed again and again in history. Adolf Hitler, who orchestrated the WWII Holocaust, emphasized this history when, in 1939, he said: “Who, after all speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians? The world believes in success only.”⁸⁷ The reaction of the world powers to the Armenian Genocide underscores the idea that merely speaking out against or acknowledging such an atrocity in no way compensates for a failure to take action against it. If sufficient action had been taken against the Ottoman Turks, perhaps the world would indeed speak today of the genocide that they committed, and would not have needed the Holocaust with its 12 million killed (6 million Jews and 6 million others) to rivet international attention on the crime of genocide.

¹ G.S. Graber, Caravans to Oblivion: The Armenian Genocide 1915 (New York: Wiley, 1996) pp. 2 and 58

² Richard G. Hovannisian, ed., The Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, Ethics (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992) p. 55

³ Mesrob K. Krikorian, Armenians in the Service of the Ottoman Empire 1860-1908 (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1977) pp. 107-108

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 102-103

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 104

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 103-104

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6

⁹ Robert Melson, Revolution and Genocide: On the Origins of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) pp. 44-47

¹⁰ Krikorian, pp. 108

¹¹ Melson, pp. 56-57

¹² Graber, p. 58

¹³ Melson, pp. 53-54

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 58

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 59

¹⁷ Hovannisian, p. 56

¹⁸ Melson, pp. 53-57

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 57

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 69

²² Edward Alexander, A Crime of Vengeance: The Armenian Struggle for Justice (New York: The Free Press: A Division of Macmillan, Inc., 1991) pp. 97-98

see also: Dickran H. Boyajian, Armenia: The Case for the Forgotten Genocide (Westwood: Educational Book Crafters, 1972) pp. 45-46; and Melson, p. 142

²³ Graber, p. 49

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 93-97

²⁵ Boyajian, p. 47

²⁶ Christopher J. Walker, Armenia: The Survival of a Nation (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990) pp. 189-190

²⁷ Graber, p. 45

²⁸ Hovannisian, pp. 70-73

²⁹ Boyajian, p. 318

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 319

³¹ Vahakn N. Dadrian, "A Review of the Main Features of the Genocide," Journal of Political and Military Sociology 22, no. 1 (Summer 1994) p. 7

see also: Melson, pp. 143-144

³² Boyajian, p. 321

³³ Dadrian, "Review," p. 4

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 7-8

³⁵ Graber, pp. 61-62

³⁶ Boyajian, p. 5

³⁷ Ibid., p. 127

³⁸ Ibid., p. 128

³⁹ Ibid., p. 317

⁴⁰ Dadrian, "Review," p. 6

⁴¹ Graber, p. 87

⁴² Dadrian, "Review," p. 6

⁴³ Ibid., p. 6

⁴⁴ Vahakn N. Dadrian, "The Documentation of the World War I Armenian Massacres in the Proceedings of the Turkish Military Tribunal," Journal of Political and Military Sociology 22, no. 1 (Summer 1994) p. 107

⁴⁵ Donald E. Miller and Lorna Touryan, Survivors: An Oral History of the Armenian Genocide (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) p. 88

⁴⁶ Miller, p. 88

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 89-90

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 78-83

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 83

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 81

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 80

⁵² Graber, p. 140

⁵³ Ibid. p. 6

⁵⁴ Dadrian, "Documentation," pp. 97-99

⁵⁵ Boyajian, p. 322

⁵⁶ Dadrian, "Documentation," p. 99

⁵⁷ Boyajian, p. 108

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 351-352

⁵⁹ Dadrian, "Documentation," p. 106

⁶⁰ Dadrian, "Review," p. 2

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 2-3

⁶² Alexander, p. 197

⁶³ Dadrian, "Review," pp. 2-3

⁶⁴ Graber, pp. 145-146

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 146

- ⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 146
- ⁶⁷ Hovannisian, p. 68
- ⁶⁸ Graber, p. 115
- ⁶⁹ Dadrian, "Review," p. 5
- ⁷⁰ Graber, pp. 113-114
- ⁷¹ Hovannisian, p. 203
- ⁷² Dadrian, "Documentation," pp. 100-102
- ⁷³ Ibid., pp. 100-102
- ⁷⁴ Graber, pp. 157-160
- ⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 162-163
- ⁷⁶ Dadrian, "Documentation," pp. 104-105
- ⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 103-107
- ⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 115
- ⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 109
- ⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 110-115
- ⁸¹ Mark Mazower, "The G-Word," London Review of Books 23, no. 3 (8 February 2001) p. 7, available online: <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v23/n03/mazo2303.htm>
- ⁸² Boyajian, pp. 256, 257
- ⁸³ Ibid., p. 257
- ⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 277-278
- ⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 280
- ⁸⁶ Mazower, p. 1
- ⁸⁷ Boyajian, page opposite page 1

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Erik Linstrum, 20 December 2001
Author of an Essay on a Debate over Slavery
Spring 2001 Issue of *The Concord Review* (11/3)
Princeton University, Class of 2006

Will Fitzhugh, Editor
The Concord Review
730 Boston Post Road, Suite 24
Sudbury, MA 01776

Dear Mr. Fitzhugh,

Thank you, quite belatedly, for publishing my essay on the slavery debate in Connecticut in the Spring 2001 issue. It is gratifying to know that my work has reached a wider audience, and I, my family, and my teachers all appreciate the opportunity provided by *The Concord Review*.

I am writing, also, to let you know that I will be attending Princeton University beginning in the fall of 2002. I am not required to declare a major until the end of my sophomore year, but rest assured that history is my top choice at the moment. (Political science is the other major contender.) I suspect that the reprint of my *Concord Review* essay went a long way toward distinguishing my application from many others which the admissions office must evaluate each year.

I will always be grateful to the teacher at my high school who alerted me to *The Concord Review*, and not just because the publication of my essay was a great boon to my college application. As a student of history above all else, I have often been disappointed by the lack of opportunities for engaging my passion at an interscholastic level. Although independent studies and Advanced Placement courses allow me to sharpen my historical acumen within my school, there is no substitute for exchanging ideas and research with the most sophisticated students of history from high schools across the nation. *The Concord Review*, of course, provides such a forum, and—by providing a rare outlet for the intellectual energy and passion of history students—can only encourage an appreciation of scholarly research at the high school level. Again, thank you for publishing my work. Enjoy the upcoming holiday.

Sincerely,
Erik Linstrum, Class of 2002
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