

GÉRARD DÉDÉYAN

AGO DEMIRDJIAN

NABIL SALEH (+)

Pour mon collègue de l'université d'Athènes, Hervé Georgelin, éminent chercheur et traducteur pour tant de sujets qui m'intéressent, à commencer par Smyrne, mais aussi pour les populations non musulmanes de l'Empire ottoman, Juifs, Arméniens et autres chrétiens orientaux de notre temps, sujets abordés diulement, grâce à une précieuse pygmalion,

The Righteous and People of Conscience of the Armenian Genocide

en très amical hommage, et en souvenir des rencontres avec mon père, Charles Dédéyan, gardien, avec son frère Christian, de la mémoire de Smyrne,

Montpellier, le 4 mars 2024

Gérard Dédéyan

Preface by

YVES TERNON



HURST & COMPANY, LONDON

CONTENTS

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	xv
<i>Preface by Yves Ternon</i>	xvii
<i>Authors' Acknowledgements</i>	xxvii
Introduction	1
PRELUDE: THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	15
THE HAMIDIAN AND CILICIAN MASSACRES: SOME REMARKABLE INDIVIDUALS	17
1. THE HAMIDIAN MASSACRES	19
2. PIERRE QUILLARD (1864–1912)	21
<i>Poet and playwright who loved classical culture and sacrificed his work and career for the cause of the Armenians</i>	
3. BERNARD LAZARE (1865–1903)	29
<i>Armenian suffering as a mirror of Jewish persecution</i>	
4. JEAN JAURÈS (1859–1914)	39
<i>Prophet of human rights</i>	
5. ALPHONSE CILLIÈRE (1861–1946)	47
<i>Diplomat enamoured of Turkish culture and passionate about justice for the Armenians</i>	
6. ESSAD BEY	55
<i>Forerunner of the Muslim Righteous of 1915–16</i>	
7. ROSE LAMBERT (1878–1974)	61
<i>Compassionate evangelism</i>	
THE OTTOMAN RIGHTEOUS	65
8. THE MUSLIM RIGHTEOUS?	67
<i>Reflections on a denomination: Religion, compassion and social justice</i>	

CONTENTS

9. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS	75
<i>Senior Ottoman officials who refused to take part in the annihilation of the Armenians</i>	
10. HAMID BEY (D.1919)	79
<i>Vali of Diyarbekir</i>	
11. HÜSEYİN NESİMÎ BEY (1868–1915)	83
<i>Kaymakam of Lice, faithful to his religion</i>	
12. ALI SABİT ES-SÜVEYDİ	87
<i>Deputy kaymakam of Beşiri</i>	
13. HILMI BEY (D.1919)	89
<i>Mutasarrif of Mardin, faithful to his religion</i>	
14. ALI SUAD BEY	93
<i>The 'Armenian Patriarch'</i>	
15. FAİK ALİ OZANSOY (1876–1950)	97
<i>Poet and mutasarrif of Kütahya: for the sake of family honour</i>	
16. HASAN MAZHAR BEY	99
<i>Vali of Angora and president of the Mazhar Commission</i>	
17. MEHMET CELAL BEY (1863–1926)	105
<i>The 'Turkish Oskar Schindler'</i>	
18. MUSTAFA AGHA AZİZOĞLU (D.1921)	111
<i>Faithful friend of the German Bethesda Mission for the Blind</i>	
TRIBAL CLANS	115
19. THE CHARISMATIC ALEVIS OF DERSİM	117
20. THE KURDS	121
<i>A rare but valiant defence of the Armenians</i>	
21. THE ZAZAS	125
<i>Protectors of the Armenians</i>	
22. THE YAZİDİS OF JABAL SİNJAR	127
<i>A persecuted community who welcomed the Armenians</i>	
23. SHEİKH HAMU SHIRU	131
<i>An exemplary Yazidi protector of the Armenians</i>	
24. FAİZ EL-GHUSEİN	135
<i>The Great Arab Revolt and testimony on the genocide</i>	

CONTENTS

25. TESTIMONY OF GENERAL JEAN-MICHEL BİLEMDJIAN	143
<i>The story of his father Ovhannes and his rescue by a Righteous Arab</i>	
26. ABDUL HALİM ÇELEBİ	147
<i>Compassion among the Sufi</i>	
FAMILIES	151
27. TESTIMONIES REVEALING A RESPECT FOR OR COMPROMISE WITH THE CONCEPT OF 'ADÂLA	153
28. THE SOMOUNDJIAN FAMILY	163
29. THE KAZARIAN AND SAKOYAN FAMILIES	167
30. THE DERDERIAN FAMILY	173
31. THE DAMLAMIAN FAMILY	177
THE WESTERN RIGHTEOUS	183
32. HUMANITARIANS	185
<i>Missionaries, members of religious orders, health workers</i>	
33. MONSIGNOR ANGELO MARIA DOLCI (1867–1939) AND POPE BENEDICT XV (1914–22)	187
<i>The 'Angel of the Armenians' and the 'Pope of Peace'</i>	
34. PAUL BERRON (1887–1970)	195
<i>'Action Chrétienne en Orient' (ACO)</i>	
35. CLARENCE USSHER (1870–1955)	201
<i>American doctor and missionary in Van</i>	
36. TACY ATKINSON (1870–1937)	207
HERBERT ATKINSON (D.1915)	
<i>The sacrifice of a life, the testimony of a journal</i>	
37. HENRY H. RIGGS (1875–1943)	211
<i>Evangelist missionary and witness to the genocide and acts of humanity</i>	
38. BERTHA MORLEY (1878–1973)	217
<i>Missionary and protector of Armenian girls</i>	
39. RAY TRAVIS (1899–1965)	221
<i>From the defence of Ayntab to the establishment of the Jbeil orphanage</i>	

CONTENTS

40. BEATRICE ROHNER (1876–1947)	223
<i>Swiss missionary who tried to negotiate with the Young Turks</i>	
41. JAKOB KÜNZLER (1871–1949) AND ELIZABETH KÜNZLER-BENDER	229
<i>'In the Land of Blood and Tears'</i>	
42. ANNA HEDVIG BÜLL (1887–1981)	237
<i>From Haapsalu to St Petersburg</i>	
43. MARIA JACOBSEN (1882–1960)	245
KAREN MARIE PETERSEN (1881–?)	
<i>A charitable and effective partnership</i>	
44. KAREN JEPPE (1876–1935)	255
<i>The 'Danish Mother of the Armenians'</i>	
45. BODIL KATHARINE BIØRN	263
<i>Healthcare pioneer and witness in words and images</i>	
46. JOHANNES LEPSIUS (1858–1926)	269
<i>'Guardian angel of the Armenian people'</i>	
47. ALEXANDRA TOLSTOY (1884–1979)	275
<i>Continuing the humanitarian legacy of Leo Tolstoy</i>	
48. AARON AARONSOHN (1876–1919)	279
ALEXANDER AARONSOHN (1888–1948)	
SARAH AARONSOHN (1890–1917)	
<i>A genuine empathy with the Armenians</i>	
DIPLOMATS	287
49. FERNAND ROQUE-FERRIER (1859–1909)	289
<i>Originator of the right of humanitarian intervention</i>	
50. GIACOMO GORRINI (1859–1950)	297
<i>A diplomatic mission to support the Armenians</i>	
51. HENRY MORGENTHAU (1856–1946)	301
<i>Denouncer of Turkey's 'crimes against humanity and civilization'</i>	
52. LESLIE A. DAVIS (1876–1960)	307
<i>American consul moved by compassion to overcome his preconceptions</i>	
53. OSCAR S. HEIZER (1869–1956)	315
<i>American consul general and witness to savagery and greed</i>	

CONTENTS

54. GERMANY: A SPECIAL CASE	323
<i>Germany and the Armenian Genocide</i>	
55. HARRY STUERMER	329
<i>Putting ethics before patriotism</i>	
56. WALTER RÖSSLER (1871–1929)	333
<i>German consul who went above and beyond the call of duty</i>	
57. ARMIN T. WEGNER (1886–1978)	341
<i>Righteous on behalf of the Armenians and the Jews</i>	
THE MILITARY	349
58. REAR ADMIRAL LOUIS-JOSEPH PIVET (1855–1924)	351
AND VICE ADMIRAL LOUIS DARTIGE	
DU FOURNET (1856–1940)	
<i>Two men of conscience</i>	
59. ABBÉ JULES CHAPERON (1877–1951)	361
<i>Army chaplain and pioneering humanitarian</i>	
JURISTS OF COMMITMENT	369
60. ANDRÉ MANDELSTAM (1869–1949)	371
<i>Russian Jewish lawyer who championed protection of the Armenians</i>	
61. RAPHAEL LEMKIN (1900–59)	377
<i>Jewish jurist who coined the concept of genocide</i>	
THE RIGHTEOUS AT A DISTANCE OF PLACE OR TIME	385
62. LEADING FIGURES IN NEAR EAST RELIEF	387
63. ANTONY KRAFFT-BONNARD (1869–1945)	391
<i>From humanitarian dedication to political commitment</i>	
64. JAMES BRYCE (1838–1922)	397
<i>'Proof in hand': the reality of genocide</i>	
65. ANATOLE FRANCE (1844–1924)	403
<i>The long struggle for human rights, the Armenian cause and peace</i>	
66. JACQUES DE MORGAN (1857–1924)	411
<i>A dream of Eurasia, a passion for Armenia</i>	

CONTENTS

67. AHMET REFIK ALTINAY (1881–1937)	415
<i>A passion for history and historic truth</i>	
68. FRANZ WERFEL (1890–1945)	419
<i>From Armenian resistance on Musa Dagh to Jewish resistance in the ghettos</i>	
69. FRIDTJOF NANSEN (1861–1930)	425
<i>Polymath who devoted his exceptional talents to aiding survivors of the genocide expelled by Turkey and all stateless peoples</i>	
EPILOGUE: THE RIGHTEOUS, AVENGERS AND BRINGERS OF JUSTICE	435
70. THE TRIALS OF THE YOUNG TURKS	437
71. SOGHOMON TEHLIRIAN (1896–1960)	439
<i>Avenger of the Armenians</i>	
CONCLUSION	451
<i>Index</i>	459

HASAN MAZHAR BEY

Vali of Angora and president of the Mazhar Commission

When Hasan Mazhar Bey, governor of Angora (Ankara) from 18 June 1914, received the order to deport the Armenians, he initially pretended not to understand it. He was well aware, in fact, that the true goal of the deportations was to exterminate the Armenians, but he did not believe that the Armenian population were disloyal to their country. Furthermore, he knew that they made an essential contribution to the region's economy, and that they took little interest in questions of politics and lived in harmony with the other communities in the province. It was a view that was shared by the local chief of police. According to Vahakn Dadrian, Hasan Mazhar drew up a declaration affirming that the Armenian population was not disloyal, had it signed by prominent local Turks and sent it to Talaat Pasha, minister of the interior. In July 1915, after the secretary of the CUP in Angora had tried and failed to influence him, the central committee of the Young Turks sent Atif Bey, who was prominent in the Special Organization, to the city. When Atif Bey tried to bring Hasan Mazhar Bey to heel, the governor responded: 'I am not a thug without scruples; I am the *vali*. I am unable to do this. You will have to take my place and do it yourself.'

At first, the Young Turks proposed to Hasan Mazhar that he should return to Aleppo, where he had already served, and exchange his post with Celal Bey. The unspoken aim of this manoeuvre involving two high-ranking officials who were both refusing to obey orders was to take advantage of the period when they would be travelling to their new posts to carry out the plan to exterminate the

Armenians. Hasan Mazhar saw through this subterfuge and refused to leave Angora for Aleppo, even when Talaat Pasha sent him a personal telegram insisting on it. He and his chief of police were dismissed from their posts immediately, on 8 July 1915. Hazan Mazhar was replaced by the notoriously cruel and ruthless Atif Bey, who lost no time in carrying out the plan to exterminate the Armenians, starting with the community's elite. A non-Armenian traveller who was passing through Angora at this time testified:

The *vali* of Angora, a man of true courage, refused to carry out his orders from Constantinople to deport the Armenians of Angora; the commander of military forces and the chief of police were in agreement with him and gave him their support. The prominent Turks in Angora, including the religious leaders, were all of the same opinion. They all knew that the Christians in the city were loyal and useful subjects of the empire. The Armenians here were mostly Catholic and loyal to the Turkish government. They had no sympathy with nationalist aspirations. ... There were also between 200 and 400 families belonging to the national Gregorian church. ... Armenian homes and shops were searched during the month of July 1915, and no weapons or compromising documents were found. But the central authorities in Constantinople had decreed that they should be exterminated, and since the *vali* refused to obey, both he and the chief of police were dismissed from their posts. Their successors made themselves the instruments of the government in carrying out its orders, and they succeeded in deporting all the Armenians from Angora.

Once the *vali* had been relieved of his duties, the genocide proceeded in the same way as in the other provinces of eastern Anatolia, and the majority of the 72,000 Armenians of the *sanjak* of Angora were massacred.

The reign of the Young Turks came to an end on 7 October 1918 with the resignation of the second war government, led by Talaat Pasha since February 1917. With German assistance, Ahmed Izzet Pasha, appointed grand vizier by Sultan Mehmet VI, shielded the flight of the triumvirate of Talaat, Enver and Cemal, along with four of the other chief architects of the Armenian genocide, to Berlin. The triumvirate was then replaced with a cabinet under Tewfik

Pasha. It was this new cabinet—with the support of a public and media who were motivated less by the horror of the crimes committed (the scale of which was now emerging) than the political consequences that might ensue—that set up a parliamentary commission to investigate. At the request of the Council of State, meanwhile, the sultan established a commission of inquiry by special decree—and entrusted it to the former governor of Angora.

In the aftermath of defeat, Turkey was forced to name those responsible for the Armenian genocide or else risk the Turkish people as a whole being accused of the crime. While most of the population had done nothing to stop the massacres and looting or had actively taken part in them, and relatively few people had actually helped the Armenians, men of integrity among state officials were even rarer. Hasan Mazhar's record was unsullied, however, and so he was appointed to head the commission of inquiry that was to bear his name—the Mazhar Commission. Set up by imperial decree on 21 November 1918 within the Office of General Security, the commission's brief was to gather testimonies and documents that would establish the extent of the guilt of the government officials involved in the massacre of the Armenians. It also set out to establish who was responsible, so that the new Turkish government could not be held accountable for crimes committed by the CUP during the war. Chairing the commission was not without risk for Mazhar, since most Turks looked askance at this 'clean hands' operation, and in any case were at a loss to see anything reprehensible in the fate that had befallen the Armenians. The commission was granted some latitude in its actions, and Hasan Mazhar was thus able to circulate a request to every prefect and sub-prefect for documents pertaining to the orders received. Witnesses were also questioned, and within three months the commission had built up 150 dossiers, which were referred to courts martial. For a period of eighteen months, the massacres of the Armenians were freely discussed in the Turkish press. There was no question at this point of denying the crimes, but rather of settling scores as everyone scrambled to put themselves in the clear, claiming that they were only obeying orders. Nonetheless, the crime was recognized and acknowledged, as noted by Ali Kemal Bey, editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Sabah*, on 28 January 1919: 'Four or five years ago, a

crime unique in history, a crime to make the world tremble, was committed in our land.'

The trial of the CUP leaders in Constantinople ended with Talaat Pasha, Enver Pasha, Cemal Pasha and Mehmed Nazim being sentenced to death in absentia. The courts martial held in other regions of the Ottoman Empire resulted in similar verdicts, often in absentia, as the criminals had fled, frequently with the help of the German government. In 1920, with the rise of Kemalism, the courts martial were suspended indefinitely. When Mustafa Kemal came to power, Hasan Mazhar was accused of treason and forced to flee the country. Intending to make a radical break with the past, the Turkish Republic reinvented the nation's history, notably through the lens of the Turkish Historical Society founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The Armenian genocide and the commissions of inquiry and the trials that ensued were thus erased from the national memory. Insidiously, denial of the Armenian genocide became an intrinsic part of Turkish national identity.

All this notwithstanding, the documentation that Hasan Mazhar had managed to assemble forms an overwhelming body of evidence that is invaluable for informing our understanding of how the Armenian genocide unfolded and identifying those responsible.

The creation of the Mazhar Commission, reporting to the Ministry of the Interior, was not dictated by ethical considerations. This product of the Ottoman judicial system was imposed on the Allies by the government in Constantinople, which was anxious to present itself in the best possible light at the Paris Peace Conference, held from January 1919 to August 1920. This they would achieve by laying all responsibility for the genocide at the door of the central committee of the CUP and its network of 'secretaries in charge' and by absolving civilian and military personnel who had been party to the crime against their will. But the proceedings of the main trial, held in Constantinople, produced such a wealth of evidence that the reality of this deliberate policy of mass extermination, meticulously planned by a central power (and later defined by the Polish jurist Raphael Lemkin as 'genocide'), now seemed irrefutable. This is why successive Turkish governments have endeavoured to ensure the disappearance of most of the evidence used at this trial.

Hasan Mazhar Bey stands out among the Righteous for two reasons: first, he was a high-ranking official who refused to obey CUP

orders, at the expense of his own career; and second, he put together an extensive body of evidence and eyewitness accounts of the crime, which resulted in the conviction of many of its perpetrators.

Sources and further reading

Sources

Chaliand, Gérard and Yves Ternon, *The Armenians: From Genocide to Resistance*, trans. Tony Berrett, London: Zed Books, 1983, pp. 121–34.

Kévorkian, Raymond H. and Yves Ternon, *Mémorial du génocide des Arméniens*, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2014, pp. 469–95.

Ternon, *Enquête sur la négation d'un génocide*, pp. 117–24.

Studies

Dadrian, Vahakn, *The History of the Armenian Genocide*, New York: Berghahn Books, 1995, pp. 502–46.

Gerçek, 'Turkish Rescuers'.

Nichanian, Mikaël, 'Le procès des responsables du génocide arménien à Constantinople (1919–1920)', in Conseil scientifique international pour l'étude du génocide des Arméniens, *Le génocide des Arméniens*, Paris: Armand Colin, 2015, pp. 166–77.

Safrastyan, Ruben, 'Mustafa Kemal in Constantinople', in *The Struggle of Mustafa Kemal against the Republic of Armenia (1919–1921)* [in Armenian], Yerevan: Tir Publishing House, 2019, pp. 12–34.

Ternon, Yves, *The Armenians: History of a Genocide*, New York: Caravan Books, 2004, pp. 278–9, 329–33; Ternon, *Empire ottoman: Le déclin, la chute, l'effacement*, Paris: Le Félin Poche, Éditions Michel de Maule, 2005, pp. 342–9; Ternon, *Enquête sur la négation d'un génocide*, pp. 35–48.