

# PRELUDE TO GENOCIDE

1502

The Osmanlis/Ottomans (*followers of Osman, a Turkic tribal chief*), take control of the historical lands of Armenia.

1502-1827

Safavid rulers of Persia conquer Eastern Armenia.

1514-1517

Ottomans consolidate their rule in Western Armenia.

1580

Ottomans occupy the Khanate of Yerevan and Karabagh by defeating the Safavid Persians.

1600-1620

Shah Abbas defeats the Ottomans and recaptures the region of Tabriz and large parts of Eastern Armenia.

A peace treaty between the Ottomans and Safavids ascertains the partition of Armenia.

1827

Tsarist Russian forces complete their conquest of the Caucasus. Eastern Armenia falls under Russian rule.

1828

Russo-Turkish war. The Treaty of Turkmenchai further divides Armenians and their homeland into three spheres of control: Russian, Persian and Turkish.

1860-1862

Exorbitant taxes imposed on Armenians drive inhabitants of Zeytoun to civil disobedience. Ottoman troops are sent to subdue the population. Massacre of the Armenians spreads to the regions surrounding the city of Van and elsewhere.

Widespread reporting of the Armenian massacres prompts a joint resolution by the US Congress urging the US Government to take *political* action in addition to *providing humanitarian aid* to the victims of Turkish atrocities.

1875

Second wave of massacres in Zeytoun.

1876

Coronation of Sultan Abdul-Hamid.

1877

Under European pressure, Ottoman rulers inaugurate the first Turkish Parliament.

1878

Russian forces occupy most of the Western Armenian territories. The Treaty of San Stefano is negotiated between Russia and the Ottomans.

France and England force the Russians to renegotiate the terms of the San Stefano treaty leading to new terms stipulated in the Treaty of Berlin.

1880-1914

Loss of Ottoman control of the Balkans and dwindling income of the Empire further deteriorates the already dire conditions of Armenians. Resettlement of Ottoman-Muslims from the lost territories unto Armenian lands leads to increasing land usurpation and wide spread abuses.

1891

Sultan Hamid initiates the formation of the Hamidiye troops. Recruited from the ranks of Kurdish nomadic tribes, these regiments soon become instruments of terror used against Armenians.

1894-1896

Second massacres of Sassoun. Another series of massacres in the city of Van and its surrounding villages spreads to other parts of Turkish Armenia.

1895

Previously referred to as Ermenistan (*Armenia*) on Ottoman maps, Armenian lands under Ottoman rule are administratively restructured into six Vilayets.

1896

Massacre of Armenians living in Constantinople.

1904

Confiscation of private property and excessive taxation leads to a rebellion by Armenians in Sassoun. Regular army units and Hamidiye troops take part in the ensuing destruction of Armenian towns and villages.

1908

Young Turks overthrow the Sultan. Committee of Union and Progress takes control of the Empire.

1909

An effort to overthrow the Young Turk Regime and restore the Sultan is foiled in April. Within a few days, over 30,000 Armenians are massacred in Adana and other parts of Cilician Armenia.

1913

In January, Talaat and Enver assassinate the Minister of War, Nazim Pasha, and the Grand Vizier, Mahmud Shevket in June. With the elimination of the moderate and progressive wing of the Young Turk party, a Triumvirate, consisting of Enver Pasha, Talaat Bey and Jemal Pasha, assumes total control of the dwindling Empire.

Negotiation to transfer control of the Six Armenian Vilayets (*regions*) to European governors is initiated between the Young Turks and the European powers.

## The "Forgotten Genocide"

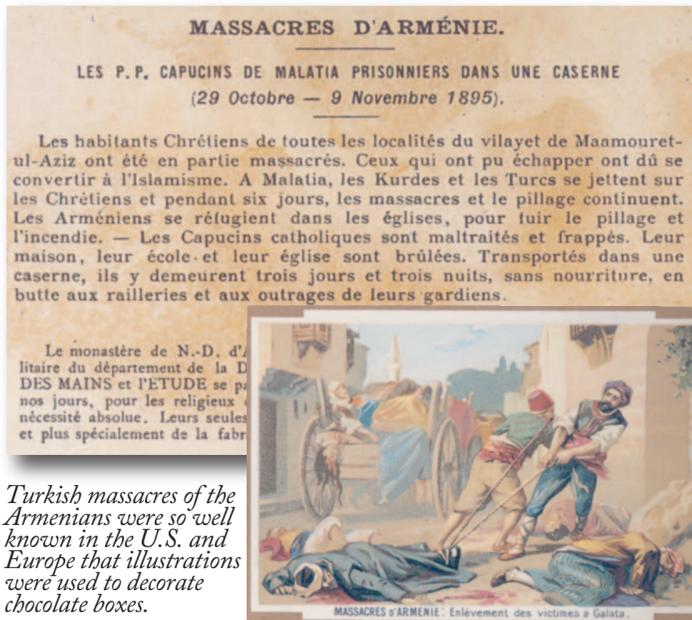
For years now, the identity, politics and culture of the Armenians dispersed around the world have been dominated by the efforts to re-convince the world of the truth of a single event -the Genocide of 1915. This monolithic vision is the result of an intransigent Turkish denial of the crime.

At present, there is no objective history of the Ottoman Empire related to the Genocide. Current Turkish academic discourse claims that the Ottoman administration and society were "*benevolent*" and "*tolerant*", in contradiction to historical fact.

When the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 finalized the geographical boundaries of the Republic of Turkey, Kemal Ataturk, first leader of Turkey, embarked on the creation of a new identity for the Turks. A Turkish historical "*research*" committee was founded, and in 1932 *Turk Tarih Tezi* (*Turkish Historical Thesis*) was officially endorsed and turned into an official state dogma. It claims that the history of the Turkish Nation is not limited to Ottoman history, but asserts that Turks were the founders of the civilizations of Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Egypt and the Aegean, as well. Turkish scholars claim that even Homer was a Turk.

While the Tarih Tezi was approved by Ataturk, one of the first admirers in the West was an academic by the name of Bernard Lewis. In an introductory article of the English language edition, Mr. Lewis, with bizarre logic, wrote: "**It would be a great error to deride this [Turk Tarih Tezi] as the whims of an autocrat. Ataturk was too great of a man to organize an elaborate campaign of this sort out of mere caprice, or out of desire for national self-glorification. One of the reasons for the campaign was to provide some comfort for Turkish national self-respect, which has been sadly undermined during the last century or two.**"

In this context, the continued Turkish denial becomes explicable, if not acceptable.



Turkish massacres of the Armenians were so well known in the U.S. and Europe that illustrations were used to decorate chocolate boxes.

## The New York Times

September 10, 1895

### ANOTHER ARMENIAN HOLOCAUST

Five Villages Burned, Five Thousand Persons Made Homeless, and Anti-Christians Organized

London, Sept. 9.- The daily news will tomorrow publish a dispatch from Kars, stating that fresh outrages have been perpetrated in the Erzinzian district.

A band of brigands attacked a company of Turkish gendarmes on Aug. 12, killing a Sergeant. Therefore, the Turkish authorities, without making any inquiry, decided that the assailants were Armenian revolutionaries from Kemakh, who intended to release exalted Armenians who are still in prison at Kars.

A force of 1,000 Turkish troops was sent to Kemakh, and five villages were pillaged. Five thousand persons were rendered homeless. Men, women, and children were tortured. Four monasteries were sacked.

It is reported that the Turkish minor officials have formed an anti-Christian society to slaughter Christians if the Porte accepts the scheme of reforms the powers insist upon.

## From San Stefano to Berlin

While acknowledging the brutal policies of the Ottomans towards the Armenian population and the necessity of implementing radical reforms, article 16 of the Treaty of San Stefano provided for Russian troops to remain in the Armenian provinces until the Turkish government carried out reforms and stopped the activities of the Kurds and Circassians who were terrorizing the Armenians.

In exchange for the control of Cyprus by the British, and occupation of Tunis by the French, both under Ottoman rule, the French and the British promised to "protect" Turkey against the Russians. Paragraph 61 of the Treaty of Berlin called for the removal of Russian troops from Western Armenia and substituted the need for reforms by a collective European "*responsibility.*"

Immediately afterwards, Sultan Abdul Hamid ordered a new round of massacres.

## The Riots in Constantinople

"...Amid the crowd in the streets which had quickly collected were seen groups of Musulmans and Kurds, all armed with bludgeons, iron staves, or clubs, and acting under the direction of men in turbans, who were evidently Softas. These gangs chiefly sought out Armenians, but often struck down passers-by indiscriminately. The scene soon resembled that of the carnage of September. In all quarters of the city Armenians were brutally murdered."

## The Graphic,

British Weekly Magazine, September 12, 1896.

## The Ottoman Empire: Myths & Realities

Ottoman society at its inception was an amalgamation of Tatar, Mongol and Seljuk tribes that originated in Central Asia and settled in Asia Minor between the 11th and 12th centuries. Through military conquest, they subjugated the indigenous population comprised of Armenians, Greeks, Kurds, Assyrians and Arabs. By 1452, the Byzantine center, Constantinople, fell to the invaders, who later came to be known as the Ottomans.

While other Empires promulgated their own administrative, cultural and religious values among their subjugated peoples, the Ottomans borrowed from their subjects. After flirting with Christianity, they adopted their own version of Islam.

Unique to Turkish Islam is use of the term *Gavour* (Infidel). Eventually, this designation served as the paradigm upon which an empire was governed. A *Gavour* was a non-Muslim who was forbidden to ride a horse, possess a weapon or wear the color green. In courts, the testimony of a *Gavour* was inadmissible. Another obligation of a *Gavour* was the handing over of a very young son to the authorities to be ultimately Islamized and raised to "defend" the empire.

European captives of Ottoman armies as shown in an early 17th century engraving.



## Ottoman Taxation System

In the empire, taxation was negotiated between the Sultan's designated treasurer and private financiers. At the conclusion of the negotiations, the financiers paid the Sultan and, in return, negotiated with a host of subcontractors. Since most civil servants and Army officers received only symbolic pay (if any) from the government, they became the enforcers of a "Taxation System" that was in reality blackmail and extortion. Armenian towns and villages had often to deal with three or more separate "tax collectors" simultaneously.



## The Adana Massacres of 1909

On April 13, 1909, the province of Adana, governed by a corrupt and fanatical *Vali*, was the scene of terrible massacres resulting in the death of over thirty thousand Armenians, as well as the destruction of their economic base. No one was punished for these crimes.

"Space will not permit me to write in detail of the many who were crucified, thrown into the river, killed with swords and axes, burned by the thousands in the churches or in their homes, and of the many who were tortured and killed in such hideous and awful ways that dare not be repeated, but it is estimated that in the vilayet of Adana between twenty and thirty thousand were slain and months later the plain was strewn with their bones."

Rose Lambert, American Missionary Hadjin, and the Armenian Massacres.