

RUM DEPORTATIONS: REHEARSAL FOR THE GENOCIDE


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By Kadir Akin, Turkey, August 2014

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Next year will be eventful since it's the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide implemented by the leadership of the Ittihat Terakki government of Turkey. It has been easy to say, for nearly 100 years, that it was the Ittihat Terakki government which mercilessly murdered more than one-million Anatolian Armenians on the road to exile. The genocidiars' accomplice and successor--the Turkish Republic--has always tried to push the Genocide into the dark labyrinth of history so as to avoid the accusation of being party to it.

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Turkish historian Taner Akçam's book "The Armenian Problem Has Been Solved" (2008) describes the Armenian Genocide based on historical archival documents. It starts with the words of Bogazliyan Müfti Abdullahzade who had given a written testimony in the court of Bogazliyan District's Governor Kemal: "Men were being arrested and sent into exile but to where? Nobody knew anything about it. At the end, we have heard they were being killed. After the men, women and children were exiled and murdered..." The mufti was executed in 1919 because of his participation in the Genocide.

These words, stated at the Bogazliyan Müfti Kemal court, are a summary of the many books which have been published in recent years and which tell the stories of many witnesses who survived the Genocide of Armenians.

In a recent issue of the Istanbul-based "Agos" newspaper there was a report which said that historian Ümit Kurt and journalist Alev Er had discovered a new document during their research at the Nubaryan Library in Paris. The report said: "The 11-page report, which was written by one of the most influential writers of that era--Zabel Yeseyan--and was presented to Bogos Nubar Pasha, the

representative of the Armenian Delegation at the Paris Conference, describes the terrifying acts that the Armenian women were exposed to." The "Agos" report created a huge reaction in social media as people were shaken by what they had read.

Confronting the Armenian Genocide

We will be hearing and reading many similar reports and testimonies in the upcoming months due to the 100th anniversary of the Genocide. The interesting thing is that even though it has been nearly 100 years since the Genocide, only a limited number of people are aware of the cruelty inflicted upon the Armenians. Obviously, the repressive and tyrannizing attitude of the Turkish Republic, its refusal to provide access to state archives of the era that show that genocide was committed, its continued control of the archives, its banning and withdrawing books which tell of the atrocities committed during the genocide as reported by eyewitnesses, is the major reason why relatively few people know about the Genocide. However, it is inevitable that Turkey will have to confront the Armenian Genocide.

By not opening the archives, by destroying the documents, by telling lies, by creating disinformation through fabricated documents and trying not to confront the reality is nothing but a continuation of the crimes Turkey committed a century ago.

The aim of the Genocide was to Turkify Anatolia, to "clean" from the state all Christians, following the Balkan War and the Sarikamish defeat.

The Genocide was managed and finalized to the smallest detail by daily encrypted telegraphs sent by Minister of Interior Minister Talaat Pasha. In "The Code of Modern Turkey" (2008) Fuat Dunder explains how Talaat carefully implemented the Genocide through decrypted telegraphs. (Much earlier, Vahakn N. Dadrian had published a number of books which had also proved the veracity of the Genocide.)

Talaat, who once worked as telegraph officer in Salonika, connected a telegraph device to his house and followed the Genocide day and night. Not only did he follow the exile of the Armenians to desert locales such as Der-zor, their slaying and the inventories of the victims' assets, but also the detailed plans for settling Balkan Muslim immigrants in Turkey so as to "Turkify" them.

Coastlines cleansed from Rums

While the systematic exile of Greeks, who predominantly lived in the coastal areas, started in 1911, their deportation peaked in the summer of 1913 and 1914. The Greek exile was related to a plan to make room for the Balkan Muslim immigrants. The deportation of the Greek population was undertaken with the coordinated efforts of the government (the Ittihat Terakki party had gained full power in 1913), the Teskilat-i Mahsusa (Enver's special intelligence force) and all political party members. It was a practice run for the Armenian Genocide.

The head of the institution coordinating the Armenian Genocide ("Iskan-i Asair and Muhacirin

Müdûriyeti" in Turkish) was Sükrü Kaya. He had previously been in charge of the Turkish-Greek population exchange.

The exile of Armenians and Greeks, which was launched to get rid of "internal enemies" and to make the coastline safer prior to the First World War, was justified through the exaggeration and manipulation of the difficulties that impelled Muslim communities to migrate from Greece and Bulgaria due to Balkan War. Greek villages were besieged because of rumors that Greeks were providing information to enemy submarines. They were arrested, murdered, and their houses, lands and possessions confiscated. One can see numerous documents about these acts in the reports of the Istanbul Greek Orthodox Patriarchate.

Henry Morgenthau, the American ambassador to the Ottoman Empire (1913 to 1918), wrote: "Turks have used the same method upon Rums that they have used upon Armenians. They took them to the Ottoman Army, they transferred them to worker troops...Thousands of those Greek soldiers have died because of hunger and other ordeals, just as Armenians. The Greek were gathered everywhere in groups. They have been moved generally by walk to inner areas under the supposed protection of the Turkish gendarme."

İttihat Terakki implemented the deportation of Greeks in several steps. First they exiled the Greeks from the coastline to the hinterland. They also made sure that in the new areas the Greek population would not exceed 10%. (The same proportion was applied during the Armenian Genocide). The Greek population was not left in peace where it had been forcibly settled. At the end, the whole Christian community, the so-called "foreign tumor", was eradicated from Anatolia.

When exiling the Greek-speaking immigrants of Crete and the Balkans, the Teskilat-i Mahsusa propaganda alleged that the Greeks were leaving voluntarily to "return" to Greece. It is obvious that the deportation, which primarily started for "security" reasons, served to "Turkify" the capital, just as the soon-to-be-implemented Armenian Genocide.

Encrypted Telegraphs

The Istanbul Greek Orthodox Patriarchate's and Greece's protests to European countries and also Greece's announcement that it will consider the massacre *casus belli*, have created the perception that the deportation was not performed by the government but by "immigrant gangs". Those gangs, which were under supervision of Teskilat-i Mahsusa, have also been exposed through investigation.

Even though the mentors of İttihat Terakki for Turkifying of Anatolia were German experts and military officers, the biggest opposition to the deportation of Greeks came from Germany because the latter's hope that Greece would be on Germany's side in the imminent war.

According to various sources, nearly 1.2 million Greeks were deported from the Aegean, Thrace and the Black Sea regions. The deportation of the Greeks, which started in 1913, continued into 1924 with the massive population exchange. In "The Cruelty against Rums" (Pencere Publications in 2013),

Alexander Papadopoulos documents the encrypted telegraphs as proof of the Greek Deportation.

The deportation of the Greeks, started by Ittihat Terakki, was continued by the Turkish Republic. With the wealth tax in 1942, and the September incidents in Istanbul in 1955 (in which the role of the Turkish National Intelligence was exposed) resulted in the deportation of more than 12,000 Greeks by a decree signed by Prime Minister Ismet İnönü. The same hostile policy continued with the 1974 invasion of Cyprus under the pretense of "peace operation". It was the last act to empty the remaining Greeks from the land.

I still remember the words of my Greek friend who had to sell his father's wood and coal storage, in the Istanbul neighborhood of Kurtulus (Tatavla), at a very low price to a man from Erzincan before leaving for Athens in 1965. He said: *"Your people have done to us what the Germans did to the Jews. The young people from National Student Organization were waiting in front of my father's shop and warning customers 'Are you aware that you are doing business with a Greek?'"*

Nowadays, the number of the Greeks living in this land is said to be around 2,500. If after all the inhumane acts against the Greeks and the Armenians, yesterday's Prime Minister and today's President can say: "They have even called me--with all my apologies to use this word--Armenian", it means the Rum Deportation and the Armenian Genocide are still going on.

