NEW EVIDENCE OF GERMAN GUILT

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Jirair Tutunjian, Toronto, 12 June 2014

In a recently published book by the Yale University Press ("Nazis, Islamists, and the Making of the Modern Middle East) about Germany's alliance with Ottoman Turkey during the First World War, co-authors Barry Rubin & Wolfgang G, Schwanitz shed new light on Berlin's complicity in the Genocide of Armenians.

Rubin and Schwanitz say that the father of the German policy to recruit Muslims into the German side was Max von Oppenheim and call for Jihad against Christian Britain, France, and Russia. According to the two authors, he was as important to German strategy in the Middle East as Lawrence of Arabia was to Britain. In November 1914 von Oppenheim wrote a 136-page plan, "The Revolutionizing of the Islamic Territories of Our Enemies", to the Kaiser. "The plan was quickly approved and funded. The plan identified enemy not only the British, French, and Russians but also non-Muslim minorities, Christians and Jews who supported the Allies. This meant Germany's endorsement of a war against civilians and spreading religious hatred. Thus, German strategy would be intimately involved in the Ottoman's mass murder of Armenians," say Rubin and Schwanitz.

Here are more excerpts from the book:

"But the Kaiser was not trying to win over the empire's non-Muslim or dissident subjects. In 1898, the Ottoman Empire appeared a stronger horse than scattered Arab nationalist intellectuals, Jewish ideologues, and Armenian activists with no troops or money behind them. Thus, the Germans turned down Armenian requests for help against the Ottomans…Consequently, Armenians would turn toward Russia and both Zionists and Arab nationalists toward Great Britain for support."

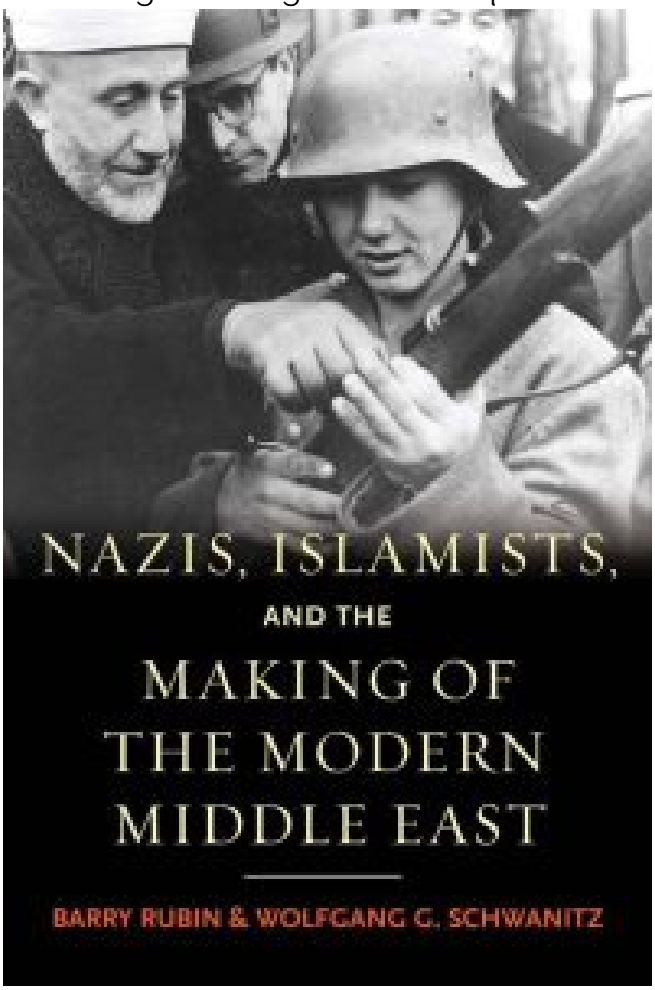
When the Kaiser visited (1898) Istanbul for the second time, bilingual (German and Turkish) postcards printed the Kaiser's pledge to be the "friend of the Ottoman sultan and the three-hundred million Muslims who revere him as their caliph. The postcard was produced two years after the Ottoman sultan and caliph Abdulhamid II had been condemned throughout Europe for massacres against his Armenian subjects that shocked all 'minorities of infidels.'"

"…Quickly, Enver (Pasha), who was simultaneously planning the deportation and massacre of Armenians, realized that the violence had to be focused against his and Germany's enemies."

"…But the most momentous immediate event arising from the German jihad strategy was the mass murder of Ottoman Armenians. Von Oppenheim either urged or supported Ottoman repression of the Armenians and Jews , as well as the execution of Arab nationalists, groups he saw as favoring the Allies. When German officials warned about massacres of Armenians, von Oppenheim told them to shut up."

"…Von Oppenheim's aide, Scheubner-Richter, sent three vivid reports to German Ambassador von Wangenheim on the cruelties against Armenians in the Lake Van region, Scheubner-Richter

reported rumors that deportations were being conducted according to German advice. Personally, he explained he didn't believe the story and tried to help ease the pressure on the Armenians, but von Wangenheim ignored his request for intervention. If the Germans had wanted to stop, or at least mitigate, Ottoman policy and behavior toward the Armenians they could easily have done so. For example, on October 8, 1915, von Oppenheim received a report that the Ottoman government's goal was the extermination of the Armenians. Only one week later, however, he was telling Berlin that the deportations were justified war measures because the Armenians were betraying the Ottomans by supporting their Russian enemy."



"Meanwhile, German consuls, bankers, and clerics in the empire were telling a different story from what von Oppenheim reported to Berlin. During the second half of 1915, they warned of how jihad rhetoric was inflaming Muslim hatred of Christians and determination to annihilate them; how the jihad was just a cover for systematic looting, killing, and terror toward Armenians; and they provided detailed accounts of mass deportations, killings, and concentration camps."

"These Germans said they often heard the slogan from Muslims that jihad should begin by killing local Christians. They also noted that Ottoman officers and officials frequently said that Germany wanted the Armenians killed. German bankers told how Armenian employees and customers were disappearing. The Ottoman government then informed them that it was seizing the Armenians' assets. The official explanation for German inaction was that Germany needed Turkey's help as an ally and so could say nothing."

"By early 1916 German officials in the Ottoman Empire had no doubt about what was happening. Even the Kaiser heard the news. The head of his military cabinet, Moriz von Lyncker, wrote in his diary on August 8, 1916: "Most terrible how the Turks rage against Christian Armenians, their subjects. Thousands—men, woman and children—are slaughtered; others were driven purposely to death by starvation. Our diplomats appear at this point powerless. But in fact the German government never made the slightest attempt to discourage the mass murders."

"Soon, the Armenians disappeared entirely from eastern Armenia. Enver told a visiting German that there was "No Armenian question anymore." He said that Armenians had killed between 125,000 and 150,000 Muslim Turks, and that the Turks had killed—the figures are hotly debated to this day—up to one and a half million Armenians."

"The mass murder of Ottoman Armenians was the largest organized massacre against a civilian minority since medieval and probably since ancient times. While it was carried out by the Ottomans, the German broadly inspired it, were well aware of it, and didn't interfere with it."

"…German policy looked down on Middle Eastern Christians, especially Armenians. Von Oppenheim said that they deserved their reputation 'as being cowards, and great at plotting and scheming.' This racial theme would continue under the Nazis…"