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**RUBEN SAFRASTYAN. OTTOMAN EMPIRE:
THE GENESIS OF THE PROGRAM OF GENOCIDE
(1876–1920), Yerevan, Zangak–97, 2011, 175 p.**

Ruben Safrastyan's monograph is an essential research work in the studies of the genocidal nature of the Ottoman Empire, particularly, the Hamidian, the Young Turk and the Kemalist programs of genocide against the Armenian people and the criticism of the Turkish official historiography, which following the genocide denial policy of the Turkish government falsifies the history of the Armenian Genocide. The opening sentence of the book states: "Genocide is not only a historical phenomenon or a scientific abstraction, but a severe reality of our days, a gravest crime against humanity... the Ottoman Empire was the first state in the history of mankind to prepare and perpetrate a large-scale genocide" (p. 7). Armenian and foreign researchers have published many monographs and research articles on the Armenian Genocide. Alongside with their works the author widely used collections of archival documents published in different countries.

R. Safrastyan, condemning the genocide perpetrators and their supporters, noted: "Genocide is the gravest crime, and those who prepare and commit it are criminals, who try in every way to deny or conceal the fact of the crime" (p. 8). The falsification and distortion, particularly of the history and geography of the greater part of Armenia [Western Armenia, Cilician Armenia and Armenian (Northern) Mesopotamia] and consequently of the whole of Armenia is put into the service of the denial of the Armenian Genocide¹ on the level of the Turkish state ideology. Con-

¹ Gregory H. Stanton wrote: "Denial, the final stage of genocide is best overcome by public trials and truth commissions, followed by years of education about the facts of the genocide, particularly for the children of the group or nation that committed the crime. The black hole of forgetting is the negative force that results in future genocides..." [The 8 Stages of Genocide by Gregory H. Stanton (the James Farmer Professor of Human Rights, The University of Mary Washington, Fredericksburg, Virginia; President, Genocide Watch; Chairman, The International Campaign to End Genocide; Vice President, International Association of Genocide Scholars). This article was originally written in 1996 and was presented as the first Working Paper (GS 01) of the Yale Program in Genocide Studies in 1998 <http://www.genocidewatch.org/images/8StagesBriefingpaper.pdf>]. Dadrian Vahakn, 1999 et al. There is a substantial academic literature on the baseless denial of the Armenian Genocide (<http://www>.

trary to the truth and historic justice, Turkey spends millions to cover up the Armenian Genocide².

In analytical introduction about the formation of the genocide's concept (in research works of H. Fein, J. N. Porter, V. N. Dadrian and others, based on the term *genocide* coined by Raphael Lemkin³), the author concentrated on the theoretical substantiation of the problem by I. L. Horowitz⁴, who put into scientific circulation the concepts *genocidal state* and *genocidal society* (p. 24). Presenting "the concept of proto-genocide", the author defines the time starting from 1876 as the period preceding the implementation of a large-scale genocide (p. 31).

R. Safrastyan noted in particular that "the grounds for the legal notion of genocide as the gravest international crime against humanity, and for the personal responsibility of its organizers, were laid in May, 1915, in the official declaration of the governments of Great Britain, Russia and France". The author noted that in the mentioned "official document, the subject at issue was the massacre of the Armenian people in Armenia proper" (p. 21). Thus, the author drew attention to the fact that the Armenian Genocide took place in the Armenians' Homeland. As a result of the genocide the Armenian Homeland's western part has been divested of its indigenous Armenian population. The Armenian demand for the restoration of historical justice and the return of native lands – Western Armenia and Cilicia (occupied by Turkey) is in the basis of the Armenian Genocide reparations and restitutions⁵.

Investigating the problem on a wide basis the author pointed out the hostile Ottoman policy towards the Christian nations whose native countries had been occupied by the nomadic Turks. Thus, the Ottoman rulers had tried to preserve the captured lands within their expansionist state by all means. They carried out oppressive policies against the national-liberation movements of the Christian nations, thus, as noted by the author, the basic means of subordination was the brutal armed force, which "stemmed from the very nature of the Ottoman military-feudal autocratic state order... Such were the conditions in the late 18th century, when some representatives of the Ottoman bureaucratic elite began to realize that prevention of Christian rebellions would be more effective than their suppression by force of arms" (p. 32). Along with undertaking some reforms, the Ottoman Empire, because of its predatory character, continued its oppressive policy. The analysis of the period of Tanzimat (from the 30s of the 19th c. to 1876) brought the author to the following conclusions: (a) the ultimate goal of the Turkish high-ranking political figures of the period "was to preserve and consolidate the dominating position of Turks in the future "reformed" empire" (p. 40); (b) "during the years of Tanzimat, the policy of the Sublime Porte on national issues...was characterized by intensification of conservative, antinational, oppressive tendencies". Thus, the author revised

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² D. Holthouse, 2008, 130.

³ Raphael Lemkin, 1982, 330.

⁴ I. L. Horowitz, 1997.

⁵ Harut Sassounian, 2013; Henry Theriault, 2010. A.de Zayas noted: "The Turkish State remains liable for the crimes committed by the Ottoman Empire... the obligation of the genocidal State to make reparation, does not lapse with time" (Alfred de Zayas, , 2010, 12, 41).

“the general assessment of the Tanzimat period in Western and Turkish historiography, as well as the widespread opinion that the Turkish authorities pursued the policy of “liberalization” towards the subject nations”. The author noted that the Tanzimat “paved the way for the proto-genocidal situation” (p. 50).

In the course of time along with administrative-political pressure and punitive measures the Ottoman state carried on repressive policies in the conquered countries using also the religious factor. The Christians and other non-Muslims deprived of rights to engage in public life were included in the millet system by the Ottoman rulers (pp. 43–44). The millet system was under strict control by the despotic state. Religious discrimination culminated in the period of Tanzimat. As noted by the author, “the oppositional Constitutional movement stemmed from the secret group of the “New Ottomans”⁶, whose attitude towards the Christian peoples and their national-liberation movement was marked by extreme hostility and intolerance”. The repressive aspect of their “teaching” was reflected in the Constitution (e.g. according to Article 16 all the schools in the empire, including those of the Christians, were placed under the direct surveillance by the state) (pp. 51–63).

While analyzing the prerequisites for forming the proto-genocidal situation at the origin of the Ottoman state, R. Safrastyan, taking into account Paul Wittek’s theory (“the ideological unity, based on the militant interpretation of Islam, was prioritized as the principal state-forming factor”⁷), noted: “Its existence for the most part depended on armed robbery, while its state ideology was jihad – both internal and external” (pp. 72–73).

The genocidal nature of the Ottoman Empire was stipulated by its nomadic predatory Turkic origin. As noted A. Toynbee, “eponym, ‘Osmān, was the son of a certain Ertoghrul who had led into Anatolia (Asia Minor – E. D.) a nameless band of Turkish refugees: an insignificant fragment of the human wreckage... “⁸. Alan Palmer noted on this subject: “Originally the Turks were nomadic horsemen from Central Asia... A monastic scribe in Crete wrote about the capture of Constantinople (1453) by the Turks: “There has never been and will never be a more dreadful happening”⁹. Considering the predatory nature of the Ottoman Empire, its genocidal policies could be observed from earlier times. For example, in 1725 the invading Turkish troops were utterly defeated by the Armenian forces in Artsakh. Two Turkish pashas were killed and the third one was taken prisoner. During interrogation the captive Turkish pasha said that the Ottoman rulers, considering Armenia and the Armenian people to be a hurdle to the Turkish expansion toward the Caspian Sea and beyond, planned to annihilate the Armenian population¹⁰. The Turkish defeat in Artsakh was the Armenians’ resolute response to Pan-Turanic aggressive ambitions.

R. Safrastyan noted that the medieval Ottoman rulers widely applied the policy of forcible deportation of peoples, changing the ethnic and confessional composition of differing regions, “thus, the policy of genocide in the Ottoman Empire had

⁶ Founded in Constantinople in 1865.

⁷ P. Wittek, 1938.

⁸ Arnold J. Toynbee, 1955, 151.

⁹ Alan Palmer, 1992, 1–2.

¹⁰ ЭЗОВ Г.А., 1898, 422.

deep historical roots, both in form and in content” (p. 80). In the course of time the religious bigotry of Muslim Turks was widely employed by the Ottomans against the Christian population in subjugated countries. As an example of the growing Muslim bigotry against the indigenous Armenians in Western Armenia, the author made a reference from the “Mshak” newspaper of 1872, quoting the facts of barbaric behavior of the Turks against Armenians in Van. The militant, or *ğazi* version of the “New Ottoman” movement is considered by the author “as a basis for the first genocidal program in the Ottoman Empire” (p. 91).

The author has done a comparative analysis of the Turkish genocidal programs (1876–1920) on the basis of multilingual sources and references. The author noted that the first program was adopted in May 1876 and aimed at the Bulgarians. Meanwhile, in the last months of the same year “the Turkish authorities were also planning a large-scale massacre against the Armenian population... The danger of the impending massacre of the Armenians was quite real” (pp. 107–113). The first anti-Armenian program of genocidal nature, as noted by the author, was launched when the Armenian Question was made an issue of international concern at the Conference of Berlin (1878). In the mid-90s of the 19th century more than 300 thousand Armenians were slaughtered. R. Safrastyan pointed out to the fact that “the authors of the first phase of the Armenian Genocide employed the social-political doctrine of Pan-Islamism and ... Pan-Turkism..., which in the days of the Young Turk rule grew into state ideology... It designed brutal carnages of Armenians” (p. 116–117). Comparing the first anti-Bulgarian and anti-Armenian programs the author wrote: “We may assert that, over the past two decades, the Turkish state machinery had become more skillful in organizing mass slaughters of peaceful people” (p. 118). On the basis of certain documents the author has done an examination of the state program of genocide during the Young Turk rule: (1) “The record of the resolutions passed at the secret meetings of leading figures of Ottoman Empire, presided by Talât during WWI. The document is known as “10 Commandments” (between December 1914 – January 1915)”¹¹. (2) The final decision about mass killings of Armenians adopted by the Young Turk Central Committee confirmed by the letter from the Central Committee of the Young Turk party to the responsible representative of the Central Committee in the vilayet of Adana Kemal, written in February 1915, where it is said that “a decision had already been made to ruthlessly extirpate all Armenians and that requisite orders from the government would be shortly sent to governor-generals and army commanders”. (3) The May 24, 1915 Declaration (“... a new crime of Turkey against humanity and civilization...”¹²) by the governments of France, Great Britain and Russia (pp. 119–124).

R. Safrastyan noted that a special investigation of the ill-fated “Law on Deportation” “enabled us to find out the source of the “tradition” of falsification, adopted by the contemporary Turkish historians. It started back “in 1916, at the time when the Armenian Genocide was still in progress. The Ottoman government, seeking to

¹¹ Dadrian V., 1993, p. 174–175.

¹² The Entente Declaration is the first international recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide committed by Turkey.

mislead the world community and avoid the potential responsibility, published a massive reference book”, first in Turkish, then in the European languages, in which reality was impertinently falsified (pp. 130–132).

On the basis of analysis of the above-mentioned documents the author concluded that they were “a program for committing Armenian Genocide – a program, adopted by the Ottoman government and ratified by the sultan”, thus appearing to be a law (p. 133). “The “New Ottomans”, the Young Turks, the Kemalists right after coming into power, undertook drafting programs of genocidal nature”. Ascertaining the continuity in genocidal nature of the Turkish state the author concludes that in the Ottoman Empire, setting up and carrying out “the crime of genocide constituted a significant segment of the functions of the state power. Certain elements of such *modus operandi* passed via the Kemalists to republican Turkey” (p. 148).

Ruben Safrastyan’s monograph “Ottoman Empire: The Genesis of The Program of Genocide (1876–1920)” presents a carefully documented research on the genocidal nature of the Turkish state of the Ottoman, the Young-Turk and the Kemalist periods and the ongoing genocide denial policies by the Turkish government.

The monograph is a substantial contribution to the studies of the Armenian Genocide.

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