

A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility, by Taner Akçam. New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt & Company, 2006. x + 376 pages. Notes to p.464. Index to p.483. \$ 30.00(hardback). ISBN 0-8050-7932-7

Taner Akçam peremptorily writes that the title of his book “A Shameful Act” is a quotation from a speech on Armenian genocide delivered by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk at a session of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey on 24 April 1920(pp.12-13, 335-336 and 348).The choice of title no doubt reflects the author’s desire to give indication of the contents of his work. Yet the above words were not actually used by the founder and the first president of the Turkish republic with regard to the Armenian relocations of 1915, but pronounced pertaining to the claims of the Allied powers on these events.¹This is a deliberately intriguing and provocative venture, whose essential thesis is revealed in its subtitle. His tone being polemical, from the outset Akçam is obviously at pains to stress that there is “evidence of intent and central planning on the part of the Ottoman authorities for the total or partial destruction of the Armenian people”(p.4). No doubt, *A Shameful Act* will raise much heated debate and controversy among both scholars and laymen.

Throughout Akçam’s target is what the dust jacket blurb dubs the producing of “an account of Ottoman culpability.” From the Armenian point of view, the author seeks to boldly rewrite the history of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish National Movement from the concluding of the Treaty of Berlin on 13 July 1878 to the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne on 24 July 1923. He chiefly deals with the Armenian displacements of 1915-1916, with particular focus on examining the role of Ottoman leadership in the ensuing human losses. After a relatively brief preface in which Akçam enumerates the issues he intends to pursue, the book is structured into an uncomfortable union of three parts, all being contentious. There is oddly no introduction neither a conclusion. The first three chapters (Part One) are devoted to the Armenian question before 1915 and discuss the Ottoman state and its non-Moslem populations, the era of the Committee of Union and Progress (the political body that practically held the power in the Ottoman Empire between 1908 and 1918) and Turkish nationalism. Part Two attempts to answer the perennial question of what led to the decision for relocations and tries to analyze the decision and its aftermath. The main emphasis in Part Three is laid upon the investigations and prosecution of the war criminals. The prose is often dry and overly abstract, perhaps understandably so given the subject.

Akçam contends that Armenian deaths are premeditated and so constitute genocide and bases his argument mostly on the actions of Ottoman courts-martial of 1919-1920, which convicted officials of the government of the Committee of Union and Progress of organizing massacres of Armenians(pp.371-373). However, he offers no trustworthy authentic evidence that either corroborates premeditation or proves the existence of a prearranged plan of extermination of Armenians. By all accounts, the majority reason for convening military tribunals was pressure from the Allied powers, which insisted on retributions for the Armenian killings. The Ottoman government of the day also hoped that by foisting blame on a few members of the Committee of Union and Progress, they might receive more lenient treatment at the Paris Peace Conference.

¹ Consult Nimet Arsan ,ed., *Atatürk’ün Söylev ve Demeçleri:1919-1938*(Atatürk’s Speeches and Statements: 1919-1938), Vol.4, (Ankara: Türk İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü, 1961) and *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Gizli Celse Zabıtları*(Minutes of the Secret Sessions of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey), Vol.1(24 April 1920-21 February 1921), (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, Second Edition, 1985).

The procedures of the trials were inadequate and the reliability of their findings were questionable. The tribunals lacked the basic requirements of due process. The right of cross-examination was not acknowledged. The judge weighed the probative value of all evidence submitted during the preparatory phase and during the trial, and he questioned the accused. At the 1919-1920 trials, the presiding officer acted more like a prosecutor than an impartial judge. Defense counsel was barred access to pretrial investigatory files and from accompanying their clients to pretrial interrogations. According to trial transcripts, although charges of mistreatment of Armenians were leveled, a majority of the charges and convictions were mainly political retribution, related not to crimes against civilians, but for mismanaging the war. Four members of the principal military tribunal were later arrested by the government on charges of contravening judicial procedure. When the British government considered holding trials of alleged Ottoman war criminals in Malta, it declined to use any evidence developed by the Ottoman courts-martial of 1919-1920.²

The author makes effusive acknowledgment in the text and in various endnotes of the help he received from Vahakn Dadrian, Peter Gleichmann and the Zoryan Institute for Contemporary Armenian Research and Documentation (see, for instance, p.465). Even without this explicit acknowledgment his debt to these various individuals and agencies is patent throughout much of his book and especially in the opinions he offers.

The impressive arsenal of references in Turkish, German and English used in this exhausted study does not allow Akçam to make any contribution to the understanding of the history of Ottoman-Armenian relations. Although endnotes demonstrate his access to these wide sources, Armenian sociologist Dadrian's publications are the principal source on which this inquiry is based. The author admits that Dadrian is his "mentor" and the latter "put at his disposal much material on the subject, which he [Dadrian] has collected for close to thirty years" (p.465). Despite the addition of Ottoman, German, Austrian and British sources, as well as relevant modern scholarship in various languages, a more in-depth textual analysis of Akçam's source materials is needed. These have to be probed deeper. It will be useful to make an explanation of how representative the sources are, and a discussion of the methods used in assessing and interpreting the information they contain.

This is not an objective or complete survey of the Armenian question. It is in fact highly selective in its choice of materials. Most glaringly, Tsarist and Soviet Russian archives which are open to use for the period under question (1878-1923) are not employed. It is now nearly sixteen years since the collapse of the Soviet Union allowed access to both Russian and non-Russian scholars to its files. The opportunity to do insightful work on the history of this country is at the moment greater than ever. Important original documents are available to foreign specialists in the Russian State Historical Military Archive at Moscow and State Historical Archive at St. Petersburg. The author should have looked at these records. If he had examined them, perhaps some of his analysis could have been more accurate. Indeed, most historians who have had access to the Russian archives have found their earlier hypotheses remarkably altered by the new evidence they have discovered. These central repositories provide historians unprecedented access to fresh materials that deepen our comprehension of the Armenian past.

² A sound analysis of the Ottoman courts-martial of 1919-1920 can be found in Ferudun Ata, *İşgal İstanbul'unda Tehcir Yargılamaları* (Prosecutions for Relocations in Occupied İstanbul) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2005). Ata's exemplary book should be translated quickly into English as a potential goad in debating this important historiographical question.

It is surprising that the author did not consult the rich and voluminous files available at the French archives in Paris, Vincennes and Nantes. He might easily have drawn on dozens of volumes of documents from them. These French records are extremely valuable: they contain extensive material on the events in the Near East before and after the First World War, which provide a broader perspective in assessing Turkish-Armenian relations. The author could have utilized them to supplement, complement, correct, and amplify his findings derived from other sources. One also wonders why he did not use published French materials. The extensive memoir literature of figures such as General Henri Gouraud, High Commissioner for Syria and the Lebanon and Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the Levant in 1919-1923, to mention only a sampling, has been totally neglected. Nor has the French newspaper and periodical literature been benefited. The attempt to use French books translated to other languages has been made but this seems to be little more than a token gesture. French policy has therefore to be inferred from other sources.

A further illustration of Akçam's selectivity in handling his material is the use of quotes from Americans. One American ambassador to İstanbul, Henry Morgenthau, is quoted a dozen of times (pp.105-106, 111, 120-121, 126-127, 142, 144-145, 155-156, 170 and 214), but another American ambassador, Rear Admiral Mark Bristol, is ignored except only on one minor occasion (p.374). While seen through an Armenian prism Morgenthau's role is exaggerated, the importance of Bristol goes unappreciated. Why? Because Bristol gave a balanced account and accused Armenians as well as Moslems of crimes. At this point it is worth drawing attention to the fact that Morgenthau leaned heavily upon Arshag Schmavonian, translator and legal advisor of the Embassy, for all kinds of work. The latter, a conscientious Armenian, accompanied the Ambassador in all meetings with Ottoman officials and also assisted him in the writing of his cables to Washington, D.C. Morgenthau was largely influenced by the opinions of his Armenian functionary, who did not always have the American point of view.³ Bristol, on the other hand, took his diplomatic duties seriously and acquitted himself admirably, thanks to his mastery of detail, his extraordinary gifts for analysis, and his fairness. This independent-minded admiral-diplomat had very definite ideas on Turkey and the settlement of Near Eastern questions.⁴

Bristol's role needs to be explored. He exerted influence on the outcome of the Armenian question and American policy in the Near East. His dispatches constituted an important source of information to American officials in Washington, D.C. They did provide a corrective to the flood of anti-Turkish propaganda put out by various interests in the United States and Europe.⁵

The author ignores the works which adopt a different view on the Armenian issues. Thus he overlooks the essence of Gwynne Dyer's critical bibliographical study of Turkish and Armenian works on the subject mainly because Dyer—a Britisher who has done extensive research on the last years of the Ottoman Empire and the early days of the Turkish republic—does not agree with the Armenian view on the “massacres.” Similarly he dismisses the

³ On Arshag Schmavonian's influence see especially United States National Archives and Records Administration (henceforth referred to as “USNA”), 867.00/1115. Report of Consul-General at London W.S. Hollis on political conditions in Syria, 2 February 1920. For more details, see Heath Lowry, *The Story Behind Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1990), pp.14-19, 25, 33, 38, 47 and 53-54.

⁴ John DeNovo, *American Interests and Policies in the Middle East 1900-1939* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963), pp.130-131.

⁵ Laurence Evans, *United States Policy and the Partition of Turkey 1914-1924* (Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins Press, 1965), pp.270-272 and Thomas Bryson, “Mark Lambert Bristol, U.S. Navy, Admiral-Diplomat: His Influence on the Armenian Mandate Question”, *The Armenian Review*, Vol.21, No.4-84 (Winter 1968), pp.6 and 11.

groundbreaking books of Justin McCarthy , Guenter Lewy, Heath Lowry and Robert Zeidner , eminent American authorities on the Armenian question and genocide studies; nor does he refer to Ferudun Ata's highly relevant *İşgal İstanbul'unda Tehcir Yargılamaları*.

Akçam's way of citing Ottoman archival material denies his readers even basic information such as whether a mentioned source was a letter, an internal report, or minutes from a meeting or, crucially, the date of its writing. To write, for instance, BA/DH/ŞFR., 51-215, 1333CA 20 means nothing (p.414 endnote 21). One can only assume that the author , in the interests of conserving space, had devised a system of referring to Ottoman documents by abbreviations and numbers, leaving it to the reader to determine the origin of any particular reference in his study by consulting the list of abbreviations. A document should be titled even if the original does not have its own title, as is the custom in giving references to Western sources. Documents are often cited and even quoted at length without properly evaluating their contents.

The author claims that the Ottoman archives is “not easily accessible for scholars.” This is not the case at all. Ottoman archival materials on Armenians are open to the scrutiny of scholars. Researchers are allowed unfettered access to them to make a proper assessment of the facts. Usually several hundred scholars, Turkish and foreign, are studying at the Ottoman archives in İstanbul at all times. The archives has a large staff of cataloguers, and it has made available a tremendous variety of all sorts of important documents, including the files of the Ministry of the Interior—and more is being made available every month. The materials concerning Armenians have all been microfilmed, with Xerox copies made available in bound volumes in the reading room. Meanwhile Turkish pleas for access to the archives of the Armenian nationalist organizations kept at the Zoryan Institute in Boston, the Armenian Patriarchate in İstanbul and the Catholicate in Echmiadzin have not been answered.⁶

Contrary to the dust jacket's claim, this book is not based on a broad and scrupulous investigation and is written for the most part with a strong preconception. The author frequently misrepresents and misquotes sources and fails to include important contextual information. He goes beyond the bounds of acceptable scholarship by manipulating the sources. These mutations, in what purport to be critical approaches, consist chiefly in distorting most reference to the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish National Movement. Such blatant tampering with source material strikes at the very heart of scholarly integrity. Consequently the bulk of the text is replete with wrong and unfair judgements and one-sided accounts. The following examples may suffice to caution readers against accepting Akçam's statements at face value.

Opposite to Akçam's assertion, Turkish nationalism did not have its roots in racism but in patriotism (pp.52-53). Turkish nationalism began to grow after the Balkan Wars in 1913 but this movement, instead of having anti-Armenian objectives, was in reality a political program of action to provide a basis for the Empire's survival. More importantly, the author's vague discussion of sociologist and educator Ziya Gökalp's theory and its pragmatic application of Turkish nationalism lacks all touch with reality. Akçam hints that Gökalp emphasizes race and blood and further maintains that the latter “laid the foundations for an expansionist version of Turkish nationalism” (p.53). Yet Gökalp sought only to exalt the Turkish nation and to encourage pride in Turkish culture. Turkish nation was to be based on a sharing of education and culture not on a racial or ethnic group. His notion of Turkishness did not involve any expansionist plans.

⁶ Yusuf Sarınoy, “Türk Arşivleri ve Ermeni Meselesi”(Turkish Archives and the Armenian Question), *Belleten* , Vol.9, No.257(April 2006), pp.289-310.

Turkish nationalism meant for him a cultural ideal and the basis of social solidarity.⁷ The author also indirectly implies that there was a connection between Gökalp's studies of the Armenians and "the Armenian deportations"(p.89). In fact, the Turkish intellectual had expressed his disapproval of the forced Armenian displacements during the deliberations of the central committee of the Committee of Union and Progress of which he was a member since 1909.

Akçam in several instances alleges that the Special Organization played a direct role in implementing the Armenian genocide (see, for example, p.59). Not so. The Special Organization, established in November 1913, was used for special military operations in the Caucasus, Egypt and Mesopotamia. It was also employed in dealing with Arab separation in Syria. The Special Organization played no role in the Armenian relocations. While the indictment of the 1919 court-martial linked the Special Organization to the Armenian killings, neither the trial's proceedings nor its verdict support the claim. Rather, defendants described the Special Organization's role in covert operations behind Russian lines. These trials were organized by the political enemies of the accused, and that, in any case, not everything said by the Prosecutor General is necessarily true. Therefore, a relationship between the Special Organization and the Armenian killings is nothing more than uncorroborated assertion.⁸

Akçam's weird interpretation of the events that took place in Maraş in January-February 1920 is wholly inaccurate. Although the evidence presented is thin, he claims that Turks carried out massacres against the Armenians in the area (pp. 300 and 309). This is invalid. It is the exact opposite of what happened. It was only when the Armenians attacked them that the Turks began to offer resistance in self-defense. Immediately Turkish quarters were bombarded by the French artillery. Several of these were burned, and Turks by hundreds perished as a result. The struggle continued in the streets, and the Turkish neighborhoods became exclusively the scenes of attacks by French and Armenian troops. The Ottoman authorities protested against the reports of Armenian massacres in Maraş and stated that the occupying power with their Armenian soldiers and by arming native Armenians committed outrages that caused the Turkish population to rise up against the occupation. The Ottoman government demanded of the Allies a mixed commission to make thorough investigation of the occurrences in Maraş. Resolutions asking the United States to send a commission to impartially investigate the Maraş incidents and conditions generally in Anatolia were passed unanimously on 6 March 1920 by the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies.

Charles Furlong, a United States military official recently returning from a trip to the Near East including Turkey, in a letter of 23 March 1920 to President Woodrow Wilson stated that while investigating conditions in İstanbul and vicinity and through the very heart of Asia Minor he saw or was cognizant of the following concerning the Armenian question. One heard much of Turkish massacre of Armenians, but little or nothing of the Armenian massacres' of Turks. There were Armenian troops in Cilicia, organized under the French, occupying Turkish territory where there was no need of such occupation. The Turkish population were helpless under their annoyance and the Turk could not place his hand on one of these Armenians without jeopardizing his safety or life, on account of thereby touching the French uniform. Furlong adds that the so-

⁷ On Ziya Gökalp see Uriel Heyd , *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism: The Life and Teachings of Ziya Gökalp* (London: Luzac , 1950); Robert Devereux, Preface to Ziya Gökalp , *The Principles of Turkism* , trans. Robert Devereux (Leiden: Brill , 1968) (originally published in Turkish in 1923) and Taha Parla , *The Social and Political Thought of Ziya Gökalp , 1876-1924* (Leiden: Brill, 1985).

⁸ Ata, *İşgal İstanbul'unda Tehcir Yargulamaları*, pp.193,199,201 and 204; Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey A Disputed Genocide* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2005), pp.82-88 and 221; Edward Erickson, "Armenian Massacres: New Records Undercut Old Blame", *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol.13, No.3(Summer 2006), pp.67-75.

called Maraş massacres have not been substantiated, in fact, in the minds of many who were familiar with the situation, there was a grave question whether it was not the Turk who suffered at the hands of the Armenian and French armed contingents which were occupying that city and vicinity.⁹

This frank and honest account is an interesting eye-witness confirmation of what many impartial historians have concluded from a study of documents. Furlong shows himself to be a shrewd and acute observer of the Turkish scene during those crucial times. He gives the nuanced treatment French policy in post-war Cilicia deserves.

When discussing the British decision-making leading to the release of 144 Turkish exiles detained in Malta for war crimes, Akçam's account is for the most part unsound. The author suggests that the Turks "used their British captives as leverage for its own people held on Malta. Ultimately, they succeeded in securing the prisoners' release"(p.301). But he gives no source for his statement. Indeed the prisoners were held in Malta for twenty-eight months while the British searched feverishly for evidence. If there were any credible witnesses or proof regarding the alleged Armenian massacres they should have been found then. However, nothing could be reached to support the charge that the Ottomans had planned a mass slaughter of the Armenians. The British had appointed an Armenian, Haigazn Kazarian, to conduct a thorough examination in the Ottoman archives, yet he was unable to discover documents to complicity in Armenian killings. The British High Commission at İstanbul was unable to forward any legal evidence to London. There was also nothing in the British state archives that corroborated the accusations of the Armenians. At the end of the investigations, the British Procurator-General determined that it was "improbable that the charges would be capable of proof in a court of law," and released all detainees. The British meticulously investigated United States State Department records and reports as well and nothing incriminating turned up that could withstand court scrutiny.

Referring to the Armenian events of 1915, Akçam says "it is difficult to speak of a single, consistent approach taken by the Turkish National Movement in regard to the Armenian genocide." He follows this up with the weak argument that "the main reason is that the National Movement approached the issue as a secondary aspect of what it called the National Pact—that is the creation of a Turkish state within the boundaries established by the armistice agreement in 1918" (p.303). This superficial and confused interpretation is not acceptable. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Since the proclamation of the National Pact by the congress held in Sivas on 4-11 September 1919, the Turkish National Movement had clearly rejected and condemned any attempt by any parliament and government to raise the Armenian genocide issue. It is to be noted that although the word Armenian did not figure in the National Pact, there were certain provisions which were designed to protect all non-Moslem minorities of Turkey. The Armenians naturally belonged to this group.¹⁰

The author is certainly not correct to argue that the Committees for the Defense of National Rights "never intended to fight against the Allied Powers"(p.319) and that they "had a

⁹ USNA , 867.01/34. Copy of Charles Furlong's letter of 23 March 1920 to President Woodrow Wilson. Department of State, 1 April 1920. During the First World War Charles Furlong was an observer with American and Allied forces in the Near East. In 1918 he was named a member of the American delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, and served as a military aide to President Wilson. Again in 1920 he traveled in the Near East.

¹⁰ The National Pact was the six-article brief document in which new Turkey's maximum and minimum demands were embodied. See translation from the Turkish as printed in the Minutes of the Proceedings of the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies of 17 February 1920 in Lord Kinross, *Atatürk The Rebirth of A Nation* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), pp.531-532.

positive attitude toward the British and French occupation forces”(p.320). These patriotic committees that came into being by mid-summer 1919 were dedicated to the defense of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Anatolia and eastern Thrace. Just to give an example, the occupation of the region of Cilicia by the French forces caused deep resentment among the local Committees for the Defense of National Rights and the opposition grew more among them as the French authorities moved out of the military sphere and began to interfere with local administration. During the whole 1920 French soldiers had to check the thrusts of the armed members of the committees who had mobilized the large part of the population of Cilicia that operated in detachments of 100 to 150 men. Experienced in methods of warfare still unfamiliar to the French, detachments of national forces easily outwitted them by the ambush of convoys bringing much-needed ammunition and supplies for their garrison, and by the interruption of their communications with French forces elsewhere. During the first two weeks of February 1920, the French suffered in the fighting at Maraş over 600 casualties and were forced to withdraw from the city. Turkish resistance in 1921 was much better organized and more formidable than that of the previous year. The occupation of Cilicia had cost France 5,000 lives.

There is no evidence presented, except a foreign press correspondent’s report, that enables Akçam to contend that the Turkish National Movement offered to “the Great Powers an overall mandate for the former Ottoman Empire”(p.319). The author is on much less solid evidentiary ground when arguing that the Sivas Congress “would agree to an American mandate if America itself would accept it” (pp.319-320). Although during the proceedings of the Congress there were long discussions on the question of accepting a foreign mandate, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and other members objected to any kind of it. The principal points in the program of the Turkish National Movement were all expressions of one fundamental motive—the desire to be on an equality with Western nations. From this insistence on equality Turkish leadership’s proposals led to the demand for recognition of Turkish independence and sovereignty in principle.

According to Akçam, “the minorities question did in fact cause the [Lausanne] conference to break down temporarily”(p.367). Here again the author gives no source. As a matter of fact, it was not the Greek or Armenian questions that disrupted the negotiations in the Lausanne Peace Conference on 4 February 1923 but the capitulations, i.e. extraterritorial juridical rights for foreigners.¹¹ Before his dispatch to Lausanne as the chief Turkish negotiator , İsmet İnönü was instructed at a meeting of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey as to exactly what was desired, wherein he might give way , and the points upon which he must be adamant. The matters upon which he was particularly determined were those which would give any outside power an ability to interfere with the actual government of the Turkish territories. He was particularly not to yield an inch on the suppression of the capitulations. The minorities question was largely settled before the rupture of the Conference. The Turco-Greek compulsory exchange of populations was already agreed by the signing of an accord on 30 January 1923 at Lausanne. Suggestions on the part of the Allied governments for an Armenian national home in Turkish territory had met with a categorical refusal from the Turkish plenipotentiaries, and were not pressed because the Allies had no power to insist on them. Not surprisingly, on 9 February 1923

¹¹ See *A Speech Delivered by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk 1927* (İstanbul : Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Turkey, 1963), p.599. Other evidence is in Joseph Grew, *Turbulent Era A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years 1904-1945*, Vol.1, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1952), p.551. Joseph Grew was a member of the United States delegation to the Lausanne Conference and served as ambassador to Turkey in 1927-1932. Moreover, examine Parliamentary Command Paper 1814. Treaty No. 1 (1923) Lausanne Conference on Near Eastern Affairs, 1922-1923. *Records of Proceedings and Draft Terms of Peace* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1923).

the Armenian delegations at Lausanne addressed a note to the Allied powers protesting against their abandonment of the proposal to create an Armenian national home.

A Shameful Act remains narrow conceptually and theoretically. The author rarely makes the real content of the historical debates he discusses sufficiently clear to the reader. Usually he stays at the level of slogans and catchwords. For instance, there is no serious discussion of what constitutes genocide, despite the large body of work in this field (p.9). Although Akçam says he uses the term genocide “in line with the United Nations definition adopted in 1948,” he avoids to include into his analysis the key words of “as such” mentioned in the initial clause or *chapeau* of Article 2 of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.¹² In the text it is literally stated that genocide means “acts committed with intent to destroy in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group, as such.”

The phrase “as such” requires that a government kills a person or a protected group for no further reason , or with no further intention at all, but its racial or religious identity. Armenians were not relocated qua Armenians in 1915 but for collaborating with the Allied powers to destroy the Ottoman Empire and attacking the civilian population. Under the 1948 convention a major issue is whether the complainant group is a protected group. The Convention does not protect political groups. The criterion is the primary nature of the group. In the Armenian case, the Dashnak and Hintchak armed bands and their civilian accomplices would have difficulty seeking the protection of the Convention, as their ethnic or religious identity fell secondary to their political nature.

Even more startling, however , is Akçam’s failure to make any reference at all to the prime element of “ intent to destroy.” The problem of the intention to destroy is found in the very process leading to the action. In order to determine the crime, a judge seeks always to prove the criminal intention. Did the murderer have the idea of murdering? Was it premeditated? Without such intent, there is no genocide. Practically all legal scholars accept intentionality as the defining characteristic of the notion of genocide. It is the crux of the matter and it is at the heart of the 1948 convention. At the time of ratification, the Secretary-General of the United Nations Trygve Lie emphasized that the Convention defines genocide as a crime of “specific intent”, fully evident, beyond any doubt. This means that genocide cannot be inferred from actions, but must be proven by direct evidence that the accused party intended to destroy the complainant group. Up to now no concrete and objective evidence of malicious intention in the Armenian case is manifest. Ottoman archives in İstanbul is replete with copies of government regulations and instructions proving the contrary.¹³

Akçam’s scorn for the determining factor of intent is accompanied by his inability to realize how the Ottoman government issued specific directives for the army to protect the Armenians against nomadic attacks and to provide them with sufficient food and other supplies to meet their needs during the transportation and after they were settled. Warnings were sent to the Ottoman military commanders to make certain that the local tribesmen did not use the situation to gain vengeance for the long years of Armenian violence. The Armenians were to be protected

¹² The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Resolution 260 III A, B, and C) was adopted unanimously by the United Nations General Assembly on 9 December 1948, effective 12 January 1951. Since then it is accepted as law by more than 130 countries. For complete text and accessions, see *Yearbook of the United Nations 1948-1949* (New York: Office of Public Information of the United Nations, 1949), pp.959-960.

¹³ For an in-depth conceptual analysis of the term intent to destroy with all its ramifications see, for example, William Schabas, *Genocide in International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.93-94 and 213-228.

and cared for until they returned to their homes after the war. A law established a special commission to record the properties of relocated Armenians and sell them at auction at fair prices, with the revenues being held in trust until their return. Turks wishing to occupy abandoned buildings could do so only as renters, with the revenues paid to the trust funds, and with the understanding that they would have to leave when the original owners returned. The relocated Armenians and their possessions were to be guarded by the army while in transit as well as in Syria and Mesopotamia, and the government would provide for their return once the crisis was over.

The rulers of the Ottoman Empire had exiled the Armenians for legitimate reasons of war, in the midst of a dire national emergency, never wishing them to be killed, and attempted to alleviate their suffering. Of the masses of secret relocation directives seen to date, not one orders murder. Official circulars sent to the governors of the provinces from which Armenians were to be relocated made it clear that the relocation was not intended for the destruction of any individuals or groups, and the lives of the persons should be protected, that any Ottoman troops engaged in the murder, robbery or rape should be severely punished, and that guilty public officials should immediately be removed from office and court-martialed. Donald Quataert , a historian of the Ottoman Empire, reminds that these orders exist and can be examined and read; they are authentic materials and not forgeries or part of a hoax and are full of directives commanding the protection and care of the relocatees and their properties. Order after order speaks of the need to guard these relocatees and their property and assure their safety.¹⁴

There is no question that during relocations some of the Armenians were attacked by the local population or even irregular troops. However, these events must be assessed in the light of communal feuds, social conflicts developing along ethnic lines, the attacks of the Armenian bands and regular troops fighting under Russian command against the Moslem population of the Caucasus and eastern Anatolia. The Ottoman government allocated gendarmes for the protection of the Armenians during the relocations. However, their numbers were not sufficient since the Ottoman armies were fighting a life and death struggle for the country on five different fronts, thousands of kilometers away. Akçam has not made any mention of these problems in his descriptions and analysis.

Approximately four million Moslems in the Ottoman Empire died during and after the First World War, by far the largest in both proportion and total numbers of any other groups. These deaths were caused by military invasions, internal revolts, foreign blockades and disruption of agriculture and trade, which led to massacres, famine, plague, typhus and other diseases. Akçam rather disingenuously expresses little interest in the Turkish population losses of this era, however over-sensitive he is to the human destruction; the question of Turks being slaughtered by Armenians , for instance, goes unexamined and unexplained. The author, surprisingly, demonstrates almost no sympathy for the Turkish victims of the years 1914-1922. He is quite unconcerned by, and ignores, the suffering of Turks from the Russian-Armenian invasion of eastern Anatolia. If he had been equipped to study the Russian view concerning these very questions the outcome might have been more balanced than this one-dimensional study.

The Armenian murder of the innocent civilians of Erzincan, Bayburt, Tercan, Erzurum, and all the villages on the route of the Armenian retreat in 1918 must be taken into account. The Armenian molestations and massacres in Cilicia, deplored even by their French and British allies,

¹⁴ Donald Quataert , *The Ottoman Empire 1700-1922* (New York: Cambridge University Press, Second Edition , 2005) ,p.187.

must be judged. And the exile or death of the Turkish two-thirds of the Erivan province, the Armenian republic, during the war must be remembered. McCarthy comments: “To mention the sufferings of one group and avoid those of another gives a false picture of what was a human, not simply an ethnic, disaster.” Moreover he finds that “in the east [of Anatolia], the areas of Muslim deaths and Armenian deaths were almost perfectly correlated...In numbers, the Muslims lost many more persons than did the Armenians; in percentage of total population, less. The great mortality of both Muslims and Armenians does not fit into any theory that posits one group of murderers, another group murdered.”¹⁵ Accepting only violence against the Armenians, and disavowing any mention of the Turkish deaths, Akçam exhibits a flawed, stridently pro-Armenian vision of history. One should not set out to write “the Armenian genocide and the question of Turkish responsibility” without being willing to study the mutual killings.

The book decidedly falls short in its discussion of below issues. The conformity of Armenian displacements of 1915 with international law is only treated in passing. Akçam quotes the joint declaration issued by Russia, Britain and France on 24 May 1915 condemning the relocations and announcing that “they will hold personally responsible for these crimes all members of the Ottoman government and those of agents who are implicated in such massacres”(p.2) but he accords only one sentence to the Ottoman reply and his understanding is on the same scale. The author shows a faint glimmering appreciation of the Sublime Porte’s response of 4 June 1915 to the Allied declaration which stressed the right to national sovereignty and self-defense and stated that the Allied powers were to be held responsible for their organization and support for the Armenian rebels(p.214). Seriously lacking in Akçam’s account of the Ottoman counter-statement are the following critical points. Armenians in Van had revolted with Russian aid, while the Armenian inhabitants of Zeytun had refused to obey government orders and attacked Ottoman troops. Because of this the government resorted to military means. The Ottoman government had to take precautions and measures to assure public security. The Allied powers had no justification to speak in the name of humanity and civilization since they had been mistreating prisoners of war and other enemy subjects. The Sublime Porte let it be known that it would not permit interference by any foreign power with its Armenian policy.¹⁶

Although Akçam downplays the importance of legal considerations in the matter, the Ottoman position was well-founded in international law then in force in 1915. International law of the time conceded that the manner in which a State treated its own nationals in its sovereign territory was a matter exclusively within its own domestic jurisdiction. As a result, no other State had the right to complain about their treatment or to protest against it. To do so would constitute intervention in the domestic affairs of the other State, which was a violation of international law.¹⁷As the author himself grudgingly acknowledges, “the accusations against the Ottoman government concerned its own citizens, a situation not addressed by any international agreement”(p.223). Again in the words of the author, the Hague Convention of 1907 stipulated that “the only exception to the general principle of the binding force of the rules of warfare is in

¹⁵ Justin McCarthy, *Muslims and Minorities: The Population of Ottoman Anatolia at the End of the Empire* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1983),pp.137-138.

¹⁶ Esat Uras, *The Armenians in History and the Armenian Question* (İstanbul: Documentary Publications, 1988), pp.869-870.

¹⁷ Lawrence Oppenheim, ed., Ronald Roxburgh, *International Law: A Treatise*, Vol.1:Peace, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., Third Edition, 1920), pp.206-209 and 229. For a most recent treatment of the theme see Thomas Buergenthal, “International Law and the Holocaust”, in Michael Bazylar and Roger Alford, eds., *Holocaust Restitution Perspectives on the Litigation and Its Legacy* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2006), pp.18-21.

the case of reprisals, which constitute retaliation against a belligerent for illegitimate acts of warfare by the members of his armed forces or of his own nationals” and “this transforms the right of reprisal into a legal principle”(p.223).

Akçam refers to but dismisses lightly one essential hard fact, namely the unique *millet* system for the non-Moslem minorities of the Ottoman Empire(pp.23-24 and 28-31). Following the conquest of İstanbul in 1453, Sultan Mehmet II, organized his non-Moslem subjects into *millets* or separate religious communities under their own ecclesiastical chiefs to whom he gave absolute authority in civil and religious matters, and in criminal offenses that did not come under the Moslem law. The Armenian *millet*, with its own ecclesiastico-civil leader and internal administration, had complete charge of its own affairs. The patriarch enjoyed jurisdiction over his community’s spiritual administration and officials, public instruction, and charitable and religious institutions, and the civil status of his coreligionists. The patriarch and his ecclesiastical subordinates had the authority to inflict both ecclesiastical and civil penalties on his people; matters of litigation were brought before his court, whether such were civil or criminal; and he maintained a small police force and his own jail at the capital. He could imprison or exile clergy at will, and though the consent of the government was necessary to imprison or exile laymen, such approval was generally easily obtained.¹⁸

As the American author Alexander Powell rightly points out, this *imperium in imperio* or practical self-government secured to the Armenians the right to manage their own affairs. It was a remarkable concession for an all-powerful Moslem ruler to make to a non-Moslem minority, the more so as throughout Europe religious intolerance was the order of the day. The *millet* system also encouraged a community life, which eventually gave birth to an intense longing for a national life.¹⁹ The ‘Armenian question’ was unknown in the Ottoman Empire about the middle of the nineteenth century. For hundreds of years the Ottomans ruled Armenians with justice and equity, allowed them to form an Armenian nation headed by the Armenian patriarch. The Armenians had self-government, and were given additional autonomy under the Armenian constitution of 1863; they had their own national assembly.²⁰ In the words of the Armenian scholar Avedis Sanjian, “the new organization and administration of the Armenian *millet* was a liberal, democratic, and representative system of government, resting on universal suffrage for the election of the legislative and executive bodies. The constitution was based on the principle of the sovereignty of the people.”²¹ Hence it is no surprising Gerard Libaridian recognizes that there were large segments of the Armenian population who thought the Ottoman system was preferable to the Russian, since the Ottomans had allowed a *millet* structure to develop, had given more privileges to the Church and had not tried to assimilate the Armenians.²²

Despite Akçam’s omission, always considered the most faithful Christian subjects of the Empire, Armenians were called *milleti sadıka* (loyal community) by the government in İstanbul.

¹⁸ Avedis Sanjian, *The Armenian Communities in Syria under Ottoman Dominion* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1965), pp.30-31. Professor Avedis Sanjian was born in Maraş in about 1918, left with his father in 1921, going first to Aleppo, then Jerusalem, where he grew up, later to Beirut. At the time of the publication of the book he was teaching Armenian language and literature at Harvard University.

¹⁹ Alexander Powell, *The Struggle for Power in Moslem Asia* (New York and London: The Century Co., 1923), pp.118-119.

²⁰ This competent analysis is developed in Emil Lengyel, *Turkey* (New York: H. Wolff, 1942), p.187.

²¹ Sanjian, *The Armenian Communities in Syria under Ottoman Dominion*, pp.40-43.

²² Gerard Libaridian, “The Ultimate Repression: The Genocide of the Armenians 1915-1917”, in Isidor Wallimann and Michael Dobkowski, eds., *Genocide and the Modern Age Etiology and Case Studies of Mass Death* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), pp.230-231 fn.20.

The author glosses over the fact that when the Ottoman Empire entered upon a course of modernization, the first Christians to enjoy the benefit of the new regime of equality were the Armenians. The first Christian Ministers and high dignitaries of the Sublime Porte were Armenians. During the times of Reşit, Fuat and Ali Paşas, the chancery of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was almost continuously confided to Armenians; so was almost all the diplomatic correspondence. When, after the Crimean War of 1853-1856, Ottoman statesmen started to work for a constitutional system (about 1860), they granted to the Armenian church and community a regime based on a fundamental law which was intended as an experiment in constitutions and was to form a model for later use. Among those who worked in subsequent years with Mithat Paşa at the establishment and working of the Ottoman constitution of 1876, a large number were Armenian dignitaries. Among them Odian Effendi particularly distinguished himself. The Ottoman Empire continued to have Armenians as Ministers. The Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1912-1913, Gabriel Noradounghian, was an Armenian.²³

By any standard, Akçam has failed to discuss the Adana incidents of 1909 deeply. The main problem with his account of events is that he does not even begin to explain the complexity of the local issues concerned. For instance, the author argues casually that “the director of Tarsus American College had been told by Turkish officers that they had received orders to kill the Armenians”(p.70). If missionary-educator Thomas Christie, president of St. Paul’s Institute at Tarsus, is to be believed, he had also made other more sensible remarks on the question. Christie, in a letter he sent to the American Consul-General at Beirut, indicated the following points on the cause of the disturbances in the province. He emphasized that it was a cause of great regret that many religious and secular leaders among the Armenians of the Gregorian church pursued a policy in contradistinction to the new constitutional movement. They refused to cooperate with the Ottomans of the party of reform. They preached in their secret societies and often from their pulpits, their dreams of Armenian political independence and the necessity of arming themselves to secure this independence. The hot headed Gregorian Armenian Bishop of Adana, Musheg Seropian, went all over his diocese proclaiming these doctrines; another man who was very active in this direction, was Karabet Geukderelian of Adana, who had lain in prison for twelve years. The American Protestant missionary also underlined another danger stemmed from the purchase of arms and ammunition by Armenians. During the old administration the sale of arms had been forbidden, but now the prohibition was withdrawn; even in missionary schools one had difficulty in keeping revolvers, daggers, etc. out of the hands of Armenian students.²⁴

Estimates of those killed during the relocations get short shrift despite its central importance in the book (p.183). Akçam’s number at 800,000 regarding Armenian death is inflated (p.202). According to the last census taken by the Ottoman Directorate for the Administration of Population Records of the Ministry of the Interior before the outbreak of the First World War, namely on 14 March 1914, 1,295,000 Armenians lived in the country.²⁵

²³ Sommerville Story, ed., *The Memoirs of Ismail Kemal Bey* (London: Constable and Company Ltd, 1920), p.254.

²⁴ USNA RG 84 Records of Foreign Service Posts, Diplomatic Posts Istanbul, Vol.216, From Consulates 1 January 1909-30 June 1909, Bie Ravndal (Beirut) to John Leishman (Istanbul), 11 May 1909. Enclosure: Copy of letter of 6 May 1909 from Thomas Christie.

²⁵ Tableaux Indiquant le Nombre de Divers Eléments de la Population dans l’Empire Ottoman au 1er Mars 1330 (İstanbul: Imprimerie Osmanié, 1919). Particular mention should be made that the statistics of the Ottoman census, although by no means perfect, they are by far the most comprehensive and reliable source available concerning the population of the empire during the last half-century of its existence. The official Ottoman censuses supply useful data because their margin of error is far less than the figures given by observers, travelers and biased informants. The statistics for 1914 were of special importance as they showed the situation before various national groups such as the Armenians began to use distorted figures to back political claims which arose after the First World War. For

Documents of the Directorate for Public Security and the Directorate for the Settlement of Tribes and Immigrants of the same Ministry indicate that 702,900 of these were subject to relocations in 1915-1916, and very large numbers of the displaced persons survived. George Montgomery, director of Armenia-America Society and a Protestant missionary who is highly critical of Armenian displacements, in a report he drafted in 1919 demonstrates that 1,104,000 Ottoman Armenians remained after the war.²⁶ At the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, the Commission on the Responsibility of the Authors of War and on Enforcement of Penalties unanimously concluded that more than 200,000 Armenians in the Ottoman Empire lost their lives during the First World War.²⁷ Given the pertinence of its references compared to others, the Commission's figure seems the most accurate one. Professor Stanford Shaw, who examined the demographic evidence, concurs that about 200,000 Armenians must have died from all causes in the period.²⁸

Little light is shed in the book on the endeavors of Cemal Paşa , commander of the Fourth Army in Sinai, Palestine, and Syria and governor-general of Syria and western Arabia in 1914-1917, in providing assistance to Armenians (p.186). Most profoundly, he saved thousands of lives by diverting Armenian relocatees to southern Syria and the Lebanon where there were no killings. He also ordered an effective relief, as a result of which the vast majority of the relocatees survived.²⁹ As yet no erudite biography of this Ottoman statesman is written. He deserves one. It should attempt to portray the man and place his career in perspective against the historic unfolding of the events in which he took part.

Beginning of “an open debate about the Armenian uprisings” is urged by the author (p.196). Indeed a vibrant and enduring debate has been going on in Turkey on this question in recent decades, involving academics and celebrities. The Armenian issue prominently features in Turkish media. Top newspapers and journals run series of pro and con interviews and publish in-depth reports and editorials on the subject. Interestingly enough, Akçam has also been writing for years numbers of feature articles appearing regularly in Turkish dailies and weeklies such as *Radikal* and *Agos*.

additional information on Ottoman censuses see Stanford Shaw, “The Ottoman Census System and Population, 1831-1914”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol.9, No.3 (August 1978), pp.325-338 and Meir Zamir, “Population Statistics of the Ottoman Empire in 1914 and 1919”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.17, No.1(January 1981), pp.85-106.

²⁶ George Montgomery Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Box 21, Armenia-America Society January-February 1920, Copy of report titled “The Non-Arab Portion of the Ottoman Empire”, 1919. George Montgomery's appointment as an assistant to the King-Crane Commission on Syria and Palestine in 1919 provides substantial weight to his stature as an authority on the subject of ethnic populations in the Near East during the late Ottoman period.

²⁷ James Brown Scott Papers, Georgetown University Library Special Collections Division, Box 28, Report Presented to the Preliminary Peace Conference by the Commission on the Responsibility of the Authors of the War and on Enforcement of Penalties, 29 March 1919, p.19. This Commission was chaired by the United States Secretary of State Robert Lansing and based its findings on Armenian deaths upon the memorandum of the Armenian Patriarchate of İstanbul addressed to the Ambassadors of Britain and France, Armenian memorandum addressed to the Paris Peace Conference, report of the American Near East Relief Committee, Viscount Bryce's work *The Treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire*, various documents in the possession of the British government, professor Martin Niepage's report and notes of a German traveler in Turkey during 1915(published by the Swiss Committee for the Relief of the Armenians).

²⁸ Stanford Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, Vol.2: *Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1801-1975*, (London:Cambridge University Press, 1977), p.316.

²⁹ Ahmet Refik Altınay, *Kafkas Yollarında İki Komite, İki Kıtıl* (Two Committees, Two Massacres in the Paths of Caucasus), (Ankara: Kebikeç, 1994),p.39; USNA Inquiry Documents: Special Reports and Studies 1917-1919, Document 819, The Exiling of the Armenians of the Adana District, Elizabeth Webb.

Turkish television stations, including state-run broadcasters, devote several programs to the matter inviting historians and intellectuals with different points of view to round table discussions. An Institute for Armenian Research is established in Ankara in February 2001 and its efforts are channeled through a new specialized, bilingual quarterly. The Institute aims to promote the examining of the Armenian themes through research, analysis, publication, and public fora. It also collects data and archival material, and makes its resources open to the public. It expressed readiness to establish contacts with Armenian historians and institutions.

Lately research on Armenians in the Ottoman Empire is experiencing a marked upswing in Turkey. Armenian studies has grown into an important field by the renewed vigor and quality of annual international conferences on the topic. Increasing numbers of scholars conduct inquiries on various distinct aspects of the Armenian saga and the role of the great powers, especially Russia, Britain and France in it. They hold public discussions about the issue, avoiding emotional language and analyzing events year by year at many gatherings. And Akçam himself personally took part in a major academic conference held on “Ottoman Armenians During the Decline of the Empire: Issues of Scientific Responsibility and Democracy” in the Bilgi University at İstanbul on 24-25 September 2005 and delivered a paper on the state of Ottoman archives. A number of Armenian and foreign scholars who had published works describing the relocations of 1915 as genocide also participated in the meeting. Conference contributions will reportedly appear in print and become accessible to the public at large.

Akçam’s discussion of Armenian migration into Cilicia in 1919 does not rest on solid ground (p.340). His assumption that Armenians throughout Anatolia began to migrate southward into the region due solely to unsafety is unsubstantiated. It is indeed true that as attacks on Turks increased, Armenians were migrating to Cilicia in great numbers. Most were from various parts of Anatolia who had earlier either fled or been relocated by the Ottoman government. French and British authorities aided the migration. Thousands of Armenians were sent to Mersin by ships, and many arrived in Cilicia by land in carts, trucks and trains. Armenians from other areas of Anatolia, where they had remained throughout the war, went to Cilicia with the aim of establishing an independent state. Armenians attached great importance to the possession of Cilicia. Armenian notables and intellectuals waged a war of numbers through reports they wrote to convince the French public and statesmen that Armenians represented the majority in Cilicia, and thus rightly reserved political sovereignty over the region. However, almost all statistics showed Turks to command clear numerical majority, and they had no intention of relinquishing territory to either the French occupiers or their Armenian dependents.

It is not possible to agree with Akçam’s assertion that “the perpetrators of the Armenian killings” were not brought “to justice to this day” (p.376). For during First World War years quite a number of Ottoman officials belonging to the judiciary, army, gendarmerie, fiscal and other civil administrations, were handed over to the military courts on charges of abuse of power in the exercise of their functions. Trials were ordered and altogether some 1,376 guilty persons from among the military and civic functionaries and the gendarmerie were condemned to penalties varying from a month in prison to capital punishment for outrages and illegal behaviour during the transfer of Armenians from one locality to another. But these trials also failed to substantiate the charges of genocide.

In his evaluation of the Ottoman war position , Akçam at times is also contradictory. For instance, he is surely right when he unexpectedly says that “the decision to deport the Armenians from these regions [Cilician coastal areas] was strongly influenced by information that the British were making preparations to land at İskenderun” and “it is highly probable that the Unionists, who feared Armenian assistance to British during a possible landing , decided to evacuate the area as a precautionary measure”(p.146).If so, Ottoman policy of removing the Armenians from militarily sensitive zones to the inner parts of the country must be seen as a justified measure of self-defense not genocidal action. It is to be recalled that İskenderun had great strategic importance from both a naval and military standpoint. It was a nodal point in the Ottoman railway system, connecting Anatolia with Arab Asia, and the loss of this vital port-cum-railhead together with a thrust toward Aleppo, would have a disastrous effect on the Ottoman war effort in general, and on the movement of troops and supplies in particular.

In addition to problems of substance and method, the book is marred by numerous other flagrant deficiencies. The text is littered with factual mistakes, a circumstance that does not inspire much confidence in a book that claims to be fundamentally concerned with the historical truth. Ottoman Empire was not considered as the “Sick Man of Europe” since the 1830s but since 1844 (p.27).This attribution was first used by the Russian Tsar Nicholas I during a talk with Sir Hamilton Seymour, the British ambassador at St. Petersburg , in 1844. It was a diagnosis which, at that time , was somewhat in error. For as a matter of fact the Empire was then on the way to recovery its ancient ailments. Sasun is not in Cilicia but in eastern Anatolia (p.41). Yusuf Kemal Tengirşenk was not the second foreign minister of the Turkish republic but the second foreign minister of the government of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in 1921-1922—before the proclamation of the republic on 29 October 1923 (p.46). Surname of the Russian foreign minister in 1911-1917 was Sazonov not Sazanov (pp.98-99 and 213). Bahaettin Şakir had never been the head of the Special Organization (p.149). The only public position he held was membership on the central committee of the Committee of Union and Progress in 1912-1918. Pozantı is not thirty to forty kilometers to Adana but about seventy kilometers (p.158). On 31 August 1915 Ali Münif Bey was not an inspector but the Undersecretary of the Ministry of the Interior (p.169). An Ottoman province called İçel did not exist in 1915 (p.193). Hovhannes Kachaznuni was not the first president but the first prime minister of independent Armenia (p.198). The governor of the province of Van in February 1915 was not called Cevdet Paşa but Cevdet Bey (p.201). İskenderun is internationally familiar in an earlier version as Alexandretta not Alexandria (p.209). Ottoman Empire had no colonies but provinces attached to the metropolis (p.227). İzmir was not occupied by the Greeks on 16 May 1919 but on 15 May 1919 (pp.279 and 294). Hüsametdin Ertürk did not direct the activities of a new Special Organization in the armistice period in Ankara but in İstanbul (p.316). In 1918 the German army officer Baron Friedrich Freiherr Kress von Kressenstein was not general but colonel (p.325). Colonel İsmet was not serving as advisor to the Ministry of War in May 1919 but was Undersecretary of the Ministry (p.420 endnote 140). And so on.

The book has some translation problems. For instance, *Başbakanlık* in Turkish means Prime Minister’s Office, not Presidential (p.471 endnote 65). There are inconsistencies in the spelling of Turkish names and surnames, such as two variations of Kazım—Kazim and Bıyıklioğlu—Bıyikoğlu sometimes even on the same page (p.426). Typographical errors abound. This reviewer detected more than ten dozens of them. The author has not always been careful in writing. To give but three examples: the middle name of the Turkish diplomat Söylemezoğlu is not Kemal but Kemali (p.117), the Turkish title of the memoirs of Damar Arıkoğlu is not

Hatıralarım but *Hatıratım* (p.451 endnote 92) and the first name of the Turkish historian Öztoprak is not İsmet but İzzet (p.463 endnote 1).

The book contains no tables or charts, even on matters central to the study's focus. It also has no illustrations, no chronologies, no glossary of names and terms, no bibliography, and no appendices. The index includes a comprehensive listing of the individuals and places named in the text, but the subject headings are few, overly broad, and give incomplete page references. The index and the text refer to a British representative identified only as "Frew": most readers are unlikely to know that the reference is to Anglican missionary Robert Frew— British intelligence official and a leading member of the Friends of England Society in İstanbul under the Allied occupation (p.312). In the absence of a bibliography, the index fails in rarely providing guidance to authors, past and present, in the endnotes totaling 1819 in number. The endnotes are not an adequate substitute. The book is supplied with only one sketch map, which is not detailed. Interested readers will want to keep a good map of the Ottoman Empire handy.

For a work of history, *A Shameful Act* is singularly lacking in historical perspective and judgement. The author makes no real attempt to set events in the Ottoman Empire, not all of which occurred in isolation from the outside world, in their historical context. Doubts regarding Akçam's qualities as a historian is raised on several instances. Bad history, as the book under review demonstrates only too well, often calls for the bending of facts, or even their suppression.

Akçam's central thesis and accompanying facts are unconvincing. What happened back in 1915 was a tragedy but by no means a genocide. It was wartime and both sides suffered great losses, sorrow and pain. No program of genocide was ever proposed, planned, or carried out by the Ottoman government. No empirical evidence to document these claims has ever been uncovered in any archives. To the contrary the relocation orders demonstrate that no policy of genocide existed, the Ottoman government did all it could to prevent killings and to settle the Armenians away from the war zones. The author takes his conclusions ready-made from others, instead of forming them himself from the sources he used. It is the historian's task to examine motives, causes and consequences without rancor or partisan loyalty; this Akçam does not do. It may be that he finds difficulty in correlating evidence, or even of interpreting a piece of evidence correctly.

The author's analysis throughout is shallow. Nearly all the propositions advanced are questionable and erroneous. He fails to enlighten the reader. Although the book is packed with relentless detail, most of them are not reliable. Akçam's case for the premeditated killing of Armenians remains unproven and more research on the subject is needed.

There is a treasure trove of documents attesting to the actual conditions in the Ottoman Empire before, during and after the First World War located in the archives at İstanbul. Some of them have already been examined and a few have been published. More should be published to give a true picture of what really happened. It is especially valuable to learn as much as possible about the Armenian question from primary documents, instead of from second hand, and sometimes distorted, sources. Further investigation of Ottoman records will prove worthwhile. Every corner of these should be combed through and previously inaccessible materials must be unearthed. Pertinent statistics should be found to show exactly how many Armenians were relocated, and from where; where they were sent; how many actually were settled in the relocation camps; how many fled overland; how many died as the result of local population's

attacks and the difficulties of the relocations; and how many returned to their homes after the war.