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### **Review Essay: A Scrutiny of Akçam's Version of History and the Armenian Genocide**

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A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility  
TANER AKÇAM, translated from Turkish by PAUL BESSEMER, 2006  
New York: Metropolitan Books x þ 376 pp., notes to p. 464, index to p. 483, \$30.00  
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#### **Abstract**

The tragic fate of the Ottoman Armenians during World War I, the massacres that accompanied their forced migration, and the role of the Committee of Union and Progress—the ruling faction in the Ottoman government during World War I—constitute one of the murkiest chapters in the modern history of the Middle East. This article argues that those who have dealt with this complex subject have not always respected the limits set by scholarly ethics and have failed to use their sources scrupulously while engaging in distortions, deliberate quoting out of context and doctoring of data. At this point Taner Akçam's book, translated and distributed by the Zoryan Institute, deserves particular attention, and therefore it is essential to examine this work with a closer scrutiny by checking and comparing the original sources utilized by the author. The article will illustrate this point by a case study presenting the discrepancies between the texts preserved in the original sources and those presented by the author in his work.

### Introduction

This book, dealing with the Armenian Question, is a substantially revised English version of the author's earlier book, *İnsan Hakları ve Ermeni Sorunu*, published in 1999. The book is welcomed by many authors including Erik Jan Zürcher who, on its back cover, wrote that Taner Akçam's study is the "state of the art in this field". Elsewhere Stephen Feinstein described it as the "best book ever written on Armenian Genocide". Akçam, a sociologist often credited as the first Turkish scholar to acknowledge the "Armenian Genocide", contends that there is no doubt that the "scale of the operations would have been impossible without planning at the political center" (p. 7). The readers would have welcomed a bibliography (a surprising omission in a heavily referenced work), tables and perhaps more than one map. However, despite revisions, the trail of errors and inconsistencies still mar the book. Moreover the influence of Vahakn N. Dadrian's earlier findings and arguments is also visible throughout Akçam's study. The book tells us little that is new, and suffers from inadequate understanding and use of sources. The book is divided into three parts: part one discusses the Ottoman state and its non-Muslim subjects, and covers the era of the Committee of Union and Progress and discusses Turkish nationalism; part two deals with the events leading to the decision for executing genocide and its aftermath; part three is devoted to investigation and prosecution of the crimes committed during the catastrophic events of 1915–1916. Unfortunately the book lacks a comprehensive conclusion and suffers from poor organization and repetition.

### Presenting the Course of Events

In discussing the massacres of the 1890s, the author does not mention the provocations carried out by the Armenian revolutionary groups that were also an important factor in bringing about Muslim attacks on the Armenians. In the second chapter the author quotes a single instance of this kind for a different occasion (p. 63). His argument, however, is not a synthesis of the evidence presented. Instead of discussing how such incidents shaped the course of events, the author prefers to limit himself to pointing out how the Turkish historiography makes use of them. Akçam suggests that the Ottoman Special Organization (*Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*) (OSO) has been instrumental "in implementing the Armenian genocide" (p. 59); however, the documentary evidence does not support his claims.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, in discussing the structure and the assignments of the OSO, Akçam incorrectly attributes a statement to Cemal Kutay (pp. 96–97) that was in fact made by Esref Kuscubası.<sup>3</sup> In his discussion of the impact of the Muslim refugees, the author offers a simplistic and inaccurate assessment of the situation; for instance, we read that ". . . between 1878–1904 some 850,000 refugees were settled in predominantly Armenian areas alone" (p. 87). In fact, the research based on primary documents establishes that the great bulk of these refugees were settled in the "provinces other than Eastern Anatolia".<sup>4</sup> In addition, such western provinces as Aydın, Hudavendigâr (Bursa) and Edirne (Adrianople) where the refugees were settled in significant numbers can hardly be described as being predominantly Armenian. The author's discussion of the Ottomans' war aims and their entry into the war are also problematic, for these are presented in too oversimplified a framework to be accepted without an immense amount of equivocation. He maintains that the "Unionists devoted a great deal of effort toward entering the war" (p. 112). In fact, the Unionists

devoted their efforts towards securing an alliance with Germany, not entering the war. By means of the alliance, they hoped to put an end to the Empire's political isolation while at the same trying to postpone the entry into the war as much as possible before they finally succumbed to German pressure for armed action. As Mustafa Aksakal, the author of a scholarly study on the Ottoman entry into the war noted, "The Ottoman leaders hoped either to stay outside the war entirely or to enter it only in its final stages but they were equally concerned to preserve the alliance they had formed with Germany".<sup>5</sup> Akçam also asserts that by entering the war Unionists sought to pursue their "Pan-Turanist and Pan-Islamist objectives", and would also seek an opportunity to "regain lost territories, especially in the Balkans, and seek revenge in the Christian communities" (p. 112). He also lays considerable stress on the feelings of revenge, and concludes that "it was this kind of feeling that was used to justify the killing of Armenians" (p. 117).

### Reconciling Facts with Assumptions

One wonders how an administration, which not only reconciled and established an alliance with Bulgaria but even made territorial concessions to bring it into the war on its own side or which conducted negotiations with Greece to form a Balkan alliance<sup>6</sup>, was able to dream about seeking revenge in the Christian communities or regaining the lost territories in the Balkans. While there is no doubt that the disastrous results of the Balkan wars had left many people with bitter feelings and painful memories, it is doubtful that the Ottoman leadership was carried away by the simplistic and emotional ideals as Akçam suggests. As Feroz Ahmad pointed out, the Unionists started out "with the principal aim of guaranteeing the territorial integrity and maintaining sovereignty" and showed "little concern" toward such matters as Pan-Turanism, and "there was no question of regaining Macedonia which had already proved to be an unduly expensive adventure".<sup>7</sup> The author also discusses the role and the activity of convicts, released in 1914; he refers to sources that, according to him, mention that these prisoners were "actually trained in Istanbul for the purpose of carrying out the Armenian genocide" (p. 136). On the other hand, he claims it is very likely that the "key decisions concerning the massacre were made within the CUP in Istanbul during March 1915" (p. 152, and also p. 156). He provides no explanation, however, as to how the prisoners may be released and trained in 1914 for the purpose of carrying out the genocide when there was no such decision yet (to judge from Akçam's own date). This is, however, only one of the many contradictions and inconsistencies that the book contains. Akçam is also quite selective in his use of materials. He alleges, for instance, that "immediately after the [Sarıkamış] defeat, Enver conveyed his thanks to the Armenian Patriarchate for the sacrifice and heroism of the Armenian soldiers in the war" (p. 143) on the basis of such a highly partisan account as that of Pastor Johannes Lepsius alone, and tries to support this point by referring to German Consular reports concerning the self-sacrifice shown by the Armenians (pp. 143–144). Yet when discussing a different matter on page 197, we read that the German consuls "reported that during the Caucasian campaign, the Armenian soldiers in the Ottoman Army turned their guns on the Turks". It is, thus, quite unlikely that Enver should have ever made such a statement after a Caucasian campaign in which the Armenian soldiers did indeed turn their guns on the Turks. The author's inadequate understanding of Ottoman history also undermines the validity of his explanations. For instance, he claims there is "evidence that the [genocide] decision was made at the end of March, during

the critical days of the Gallipoli Campaign" (p. 152), but the Gallipoli campaign began on 25 April 1915. Despite the firm insistence on March 1915 as the date of decision for the genocide, the author fails to provide any credible "evidence" substantiating this thesis. Enver's remark that the threat offered by the Armenians can be quelled by removing them "from the places where they lived and sending them to other places" is, according to Akçam, the evidence that there was a decision for genocide in March 1915. Akçam's tendentious mode of writing and selective use of sources become even more transparent when considering his use of trial proceedings. The proceedings that are recorded in various newspapers and journals do not always conform, and at times even contradict each other. For instance, the statement and the admission he attributes to Colonel Sahabettin (p. 200), which was supposedly made by Sahabettin at the eighth session of the Yozgat trial, is uncorroborated by two other newspaper versions<sup>8</sup> while contradicted by a third<sup>9</sup>, all of which also gave the proceedings of the same session. In the absence of original transcripts, it is difficult to determine with any accuracy which one of these reflects a truer picture. The more recent research, therefore, casts doubt on Akçam's finding as he failed to include the other relevant material.

### Interpreting Archival Documents

One may also feel uneasy with Akçam's treatment of Ottoman archival documents, since whenever the Ottoman documents seem to support his contentions he considers them genuine. On the other hand, when they contradict his views he consistently attempts to dismiss them as part of a conspiracy, even if they are in fact the same documents. The most striking example of this dualistic approach is given when Akçam relies on a "general circular from the Ministry of the Interior" (p. 204), a document he earlier dismissed as part of a "great deception" (p. 169) in relation to the exclusion of Protestants from the relocation. Similarly, after having initially regarded the former Grand Vizier Said Halim's statement about his non-involvement in the process of the Armenians' relocation as convincing (p. 156), the author subsequently expresses his doubts over its sincerity (pp. 263–265). Akçam's discussion of the estimates regarding the Armenian deaths also stands on shaky ground. He admits that the available "estimates are based on a political agenda" (p. 183). One would not expect to see that an author who can claim this should rely on a figure given by a government that has distinguished itself with its deep enmity towards the CUP. He upholds the figure of 800,000 killed Armenians, given by Interior Minister Cemal Bey, as true. In order to increase its credibility, he also claims this figure was the "result of the commission established" by Mustafa Arif Degmer but fails to adduce anything in support of this assertion. The same minister, Cemal Bey, in the same statement also declared that the CUP had annihilated four million Turks<sup>10</sup>, the very same CUP that according to Akçam was carrying out a policy of Turkification. Is it conceivable to maintain that these claims as well as figures were not based on a political agenda? The author's other claims in support of his numbers are also unconvincing or inaccurate. He relies on an ambiguous statement attributed to Mustafa Kemal in a second-hand source whilst ignoring a first-hand account in which Mustafa Kemal had rejected the figures offered by Minister Cemal as a slander (*iftira*).<sup>11</sup> While the book published by the Turkish Army's General Staff, *Buyuk Harp'te Turk Harbi* [Turkish War in the Great War], was not on the "issue of the World War I losses", its publication does not substantiate Akçam's claims either; after all, it was a translation of a book published in Paris in 1926 on the history of Ottoman participation in the World War by the

French author Maurice Larcher.<sup>12</sup> Yusuf Hikmet Bayur has never stated that the figure “800,000” should be considered accurate for the Armenian losses; indeed, in discussing the Armenian Question in the preceding part of his study, Bayur described Commandant M. Larcher’s account of events, which used the figure of 500,000 for the Armenian losses, as being quite exaggerated.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, in another work, Bayur has criticized Minister Cemal’s statement, characterizing it as the “ugliest indication” of the Damat Ferit government’s endless efforts at appeasing victorious allies.<sup>14</sup> The author does not provide adequate discussion on the course of relocations that differed depending on local circumstances as well as the attitude of local officials, and the few examples provided by Akçam are all carefully selected. While Akçam acknowledges Cemal Pasha’s efforts in favor of Armenians, he sheds little light on it.

### **Relying on “Key” Sources**

The key source of Akçam’s allegations is the findings of 1919–1920 court-martials (as well as the indictment of the main trial), which he upholds as true. But the legal procedures of these courts suffered from serious shortcomings, and the reliability of their findings was questionable.<sup>15</sup> The trials were conducted under the pressure of the victorious Allies and by the post-war Ottoman governments, eager to heap any blame on the CUP in order to forestall the dismemberment of the Empire and to receive more lenient treatment from the Allies.<sup>16</sup> Commenting on this attitude of the prosecution, the late Tarık Zafer Tunaya has remarked that the prosecutor was blaming the CUP (for everything) by “beginning from the story of Eve and Adam”,<sup>17</sup> while other scholars have also expressed their skepticism over their findings<sup>18</sup>—including M. E. Yapp who noted that the “1919 courts martial . . . cannot be taken entirely at face value because they were conducted by a government which was anxious to pin any blame on the CUP leaders”.<sup>19</sup> According to Akçam’s sources, the CUP leader Cemal Pasha “had indeed tried . . . to ease the situation for the Armenian deportees” (p. 186) and yet was actually sentenced to death by these courts. Falih Rifkî Atay, seemingly a valuable source for Akçam, relates how Atay had to bribe the members of these courts with an amount less than 500 Lira in order to save himself from execution, and how the decision for his execution was made even before he was tried.<sup>20</sup> Refik Halid Karay, a staunch opponent of both the Unionists and the nationalist movement in Ankara, and one who had a meeting with the judge and the members of the court over Atay’s case, confirms that the decision to execute Atay was already arranged even before a trial.<sup>21</sup> Akçam cannot bring himself to admit the injustices committed by these courts; he does not even discuss the changes introduced by the Damat Ferit government, which even banned the defendants from hiring a lawyer<sup>22</sup>—a process that constitutes the most basic right of a defendant in any system. Likewise he mentions the “irregularities involving Nusret’s death sentence” (p. 354) but does not elaborate on these irregularities. The author does not refrain from relying on questionable sources either. For instance, the alleged 1926 interview of Mustafa Kemal, on which he relies (pp. 345–346), was proven to be false years ago.<sup>23</sup>

### **A Litany of Errors**

For an author claiming to have mastered the subject, Akçam makes too many factual errors, which diminish the text’s reliability as a point of reference: The Ottoman Empire was not

considered the “Sick Man of Europe” since the 1830s; the term was coined by the Russian Tsar in 1844 (p. 27). Sasun was not a Cilician village; it was in Bitlis province (p. 41). Yusuf Kemal Tengirsenk was not the second foreign minister of the Turkish Republic, but the second foreign minister of the Ankara Government before the Republic was proclaimed (p. 46). The last name of the Russian foreign minister was not Sazanov but Sazonov (pp. 98–99, 213 and index). Kurt Ziemke was not a historian but a diplomat (p. 118). Huseyin Cahit Yalçın was not the editor of *Tanin* during the war; he left *Tanin* in January 1914 (p. 143). Alma Johansson was not a Swiss nurse but Swedish (p. 150). Pozanti is not some 30–40 km from Adana but about 70 km (p. 158). Kayseri, Niğde and Eskişehir were not provinces but sanjaks (subdivisions of provinces) (p. 177). Interior Minister Cemal Bey's statement was not made on 18 March 1919; it first appeared in an interview with Cemal Bey in *Le Moniteur Oriental* on 13 March 1919 (p. 183). The book published by the Turkish Army's General Staff was not on the issue of World War I losses (p. 183). Hovhannes Kachaznuni was not the first president of Armenia but the first prime minister (p. 198). The governor of Van was not Cevdet Pasa but Cevdet Bey (p. 201). The surname of the former Van deputy was not Avras but Arvas (pp. 201, 326 and index). The general circular from the Ministry of the Interior was not sent to all Ottoman provinces (p. 204). The Greeks did not invade Izmir on 16 May 1919 but on 15 May 1919 (pp. 279, 294). Friedrich Freiherr Kress von Kressenstein was not a general but a colonel (p. 325). Mustafa Kemal's statement was not made in a closed session of the parliament but in an open session (pp. 346, 348). Nusret Bey was not the prefect (kaymakam) of Urfa but the subgovernor (mutasarrıf) (p. 351). The above mistakes are not just aberrations but typify the whole book.

### Lost in Translation

The translation errors represent another problem. The word “ekseriyet”, for instance, does not mean minority but majority. Therefore, the last part of the quote presented on page 97 should not read “[a]reas . . . in which non-Turkish races and nations formed a minority” but should be “[a]reas . . . in which non-Turkish races and nations formed a majority”.<sup>24</sup> Basbakanlık does not mean Presidential but the Office of the Prime Minister (p. 417, n. 65). The translation problems are not confined to just minor ones; the book gives fundamentally different versions of events than its original Turkish. For instance, when discussing the role of Colonel Seyfi, the original Turkish version of the book provides the following information:

Following the armistice, on 13 December 1918, the daily *Sabah* declared that as the officer responsible for the political department in Ottoman Military Headquarters, in close coordination with Bahaettin Sakir, and in collaboration with the Special Organization, Colonel Seyfi was one of those who had planned the massacre of Armenians.<sup>25</sup>

As might be seen, according to the Turkish version of the book, it is the *Sabah* newspaper that is making the assertion in question. However, in the present English book, this event is suspiciously rendered as a confession by Colonel Seyfi rather than a declaration by *Sabah*

while no date is given for relevant issue of the daily Sabah:

After the 1918 armistice, the colonel [Seyfi] explained in the daily Sabah that, as the officer responsible for the political department in Ottoman military headquarters, in collaboration with the Special Organization and in close coordination with Unionist Bahaettin Sakir, he had been among those who had devised the plan for the murder of the Armenians. (p. 125)

One cannot know whether this is an intentional manipulation or an innocent (but inexcusable) translation error, or even who is to be blamed for it: the translator or Taner Akçam who had revised the English text. At any rate, Akçam bears the responsibility for having allowed such errors to enter the text, the existence of which further undermines the reliability of his book. Typographical errors and inconsistencies in spelling of names further mar the book. In addition, the reader whose knowledge of the existing literature is derived from this book is likely to think that Edward J. Erickson's painstaking study "The Defeat in Detail: The Ottoman Army in the Balkans 1912–1913" was released in 1972 (p. 392, n. 114) instead of 2003, or the seventh volume of the *Genocide and Holocaust Studies* journal was published in 1998 (p. 406, n. 78) instead of 1993.

### **Sources Distorted**

Even if one is to ignore the subjectivist attitude of the author, there are more serious problems with Akçam's work. In preparing his book, Akçam appears to have altered and distorted the contents of the sources he has utilized.<sup>26</sup> Some examples discussed below may reiterate this point.

#### *On the Figures Given by Esref Kuscubası and Celal Bayar*

In discussing the deportation of Christians in Western Anatolia, Taner Akçam —by referring to the autobiographical account of Esref Kuscubası (a prominent agent of the OSO)— writes that: "Kuscubası Esref claims that during the first months of the war alone the number of 'Greek-Armenians . . . deported totaled 1,350,000'" (p. 106). In the original source, however, the number given by Kuscubası is 1,150,000 and not 1,350,000 as incorrectly given by Akçam. Moreover Esref Kuscubası does not say they were "deported" but taken to the interior: . . . [I]t was plainly visible that if the Greek-Armenian population in the Aegean region, concentrated especially in the coastal areas, amounting to 1,150,000, had not been taken to the interior a short time before the outbreak of the war and during the first months of the war, then even the defense in Canakkale [Gallipoli] would not have been possible.<sup>27</sup>

In his note the author further claims that “Celal Bayar, who draws extensively from Kuscubası’s memoirs, gives separate figures for specific cities. The total number of these is the same as the figure above [i.e. 1,350,000]” (p. 403, n. 150). Yet the total of these is not 1,350,000 as the reader is told but 760,000, which is in fact close to onehalf of the figure above.<sup>28</sup> It should be further noted that, in the case of the latter figure, Kuscubası does not speak of any relocation but rather gives the figures for the population concentration in specific regions.

*On the Memoirs of A. Mil (Arif Cemil (Denker))*

In a section of his book dealing with the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Congress in Erzurum, Taner Akçam falsely puts forward claims that have no basis in the original account. He writes that:

In one document we read: “The necessary preparations have been made for those individuals . . . who have left Erzurum . . . Instructions for those things that are essential for our organization’s freedom of action should be given.”

The author of this document confirmed that Bahaettin Sakir had wanted “those people [mentioned in the telegram] apprehended on the way and liquidated” (p. 137). However in the original account, Arif Cemil (Denker) quotes a letter from Hilmi Bey, the CUP inspector for Erzurum, in which Hilmi Bey states that: . . . The necessary preparations have been made for those individuals on whose departures from Erzurum you have informed [us] with a cipher. I have made delivery to the persons required to get them [i.e. the individuals who departed from Erzurum] regardless of anything . . . I hope to inform you on this matter in about two days. The command post should give the necessary instructions for our organization’s freedom of action to the persons required.<sup>29</sup>

After quoting this, Arif Cemil (Denker) makes some comments on Hilmi Bey’s letter by stating that: Two points in Hilmi Bey’s letter deserve attention. One of them is the apprehension, more precisely the liquidation of the persons on their way, whose departures from Erzurum have been notified by Bahaettin Sakir<sup>30</sup>.

The original account, as might be seen, makes no mention of Bahaettin Sakir’s alleged demand for the liquidation of the persons in question and the only role attributed to Bahaettin

Sakir Bey is his notifying of the mentioned individuals' departures. It is difficult to understand how Akçam, based on the above source, concluded that "the author of this document confirmed that Bahaettin Sakir had wanted those people [mentioned in the telegram] . . . liquidated". Of minor importance is Akçam's misidentification of "the author of this document", since its author was Hilmi Bey while the one making the so-called confirmation on which Akçam relied was Arif Cemil.

### *More on the Memoirs of Arif Cemil (Denker)*

In attempting to describe the alleged genocide decision, which was supposedly made during March 1915, Taner Akçam again deliberately distorts his evidence in order to back up his contentions: . . . In addition to the question of the army command, fundamental changes in the Special Organization's activities were also under discussion. "The Armenians' anti-Turkish attitude and the help they gave the Russian army convinced [Bahaettin Sakir] that dealing with the enemy within was as necessary as the enemy without."

Having assembled evidence of Armenian gang activity in the region, Sakir now tried to persuade his friends in Istanbul that it was time to get rid of this threat. It is very likely that the key decisions concerning the massacre were made within the CUP in Istanbul during March 1915. "In these discussions a decision was made that Bahaettin Sakir Bey would resign from his duties pertaining to the country's foreign enemies and concentrate solely on its internal enemies."

Sakir was put in charge of dealing with "the Armenians inside . . . These discussions concluded with the formulation of the Deportation Law. When Bahaettin Sakir Bey returned to the Caucasian front a short time later the new arrangements had been completely determined". (pp. 151–152) As his source for the sentences and phrases given within quotation marks in the above quote, Akçam again cites the memoirs of Arif Cemil (Denker), who served with the OSO during the War. However, this episode described by Akçam appears fundamentally different in the original source—which reads as follows: In Istanbul now, Dr. Bahaettin Sakir Bey has decided to concentrate on the country's internal enemies by abandoning the Special Organization's affairs related to foreign enemies. This was because Dr. Bahaettin Sakir Bey has witnessed many facts during the period of four-five months he has spent in Erzurum and at different points of the Caucasian front. The attitude the Armenians have taken against Turkey and the assistance they provided to the Russian army have convinced him [Bahaettin Sakir] that it was necessary to fear the internal enemies as much as the external ones. The Armenians inside through formation of bands were threatening the rear of our army and were trying to cut our lines of retreat.<sup>31</sup> [ . . . ] In Istanbul Dr. Bahaettin Sakir Bey was busy with discussing the

precautions to be taken to save the army from a grave danger by placing these [documents] to the attention of the CUP's Central Committee. These discussions finally resulted in the formulation of Relocation Law. When Dr. Bahaettin Sakir Bey returned to the Caucasian front after a while, the new situation had completely come into existence. But again we will pass on without touching these matters. Because the issue of the Armenians' relocation was completely out of the O.S.O.'s scope.<sup>32</sup> [Emphasis added]

There are several problems about the way in which the author has made use of the passage given in the original account:

1. The phrase signifying that it was necessary to "fear internal enemies" is altered into a different one that reads "dealing with the enemy within" by Akçam.

2. Akçam quotes the source as saying "in these discussions a decision was made that Bahaettin Sakir Bey would resign from his duties . . .", whereas in the original source it is Bahaettin Sakir himself deciding to focus on internal enemies, and there is no mention of a discussion where the alleged decision for Bahaettin Sakir's focusing on the internal enemies was taken. Thus the phrase that reads "in these discussions a decision was made that Bahaettin Sakir Bey would resign from his duties . . ." has no basis in the original source and was evidently doctored in an effort to give the impression of an official policy targeting the Armenians.

3. Similarly the statement that Bahaettin Sakir Bey was put in charge of dealing with "the Armenians inside" has no basis in the original source and the text is completely quoted out of context. The only reference to the "Armenians inside" is made in connection with their formation of bands and the threat they posed to the army. And there is simply no entry suggesting that Dr. Bahaettin Sakir Bey was put in charge of (or instructed for) anything.

4. Although Akçam quotes the source as saying "new arrangements were completely determined", the original account contains nothing regarding "new arrangements"; rather, it states that a new situation had emerged. This manipulation, too, gives the impression of a policy targeting Armenians for which "new arrangements" were determined even though such is not the case in the original source. Moreover, it is of the utmost significance that in Akçam's version a revealing section of the very document on which his case rests is missing. At the end was Arif Cemil's statement that "the issue of the Armenians' relocation was completely out of the O.S.O.'s scope".

### *On Esref Kuscubası's Statement*

In discussing the implementation of the relocation and the massacres, the author contends that many members of the government were unaware of the genocidal policy that was secretly carried out by the party under the veil of a deportation decree. Like Dadrian,<sup>33</sup> Akçam refers to the interviews made with Esref Kuscubası to support this point:

As Esref Kuscubası put it, the government was never informed of the meetings and plans related to the deportations and massacres. (pp. 156–157) In the original account, after briefly talking about the activities of the OSO, Esref Kuscubası does indeed state that, “As these [activities] were seriously kept ‘secret’, they were even unknown to the members of the cabinet”. However, there are several problems with Akçam’s utilization and interpretation of the autobiographical account of Esref Kuscubası. First of all, in the original account there is no mention of any meeting regarding the Armenian relocation or massacres, nor is there any mention of the Armenians. Second, and more importantly, following the above sentence Kuscubası relates that Talat Pasha too was among those cabinet members who were not informed of the activities of the OSO and had even complained about this matter: As these [activities] were seriously kept “secret”, they were even unknown to the members of the cabinet. In fact, I remember very well that one day Talat Pasha in a half serious and half joking manner had asked me: “Esref Beyefendi, is there any news about the government’s organization that you could share with us?” And he quietly whispered this in my ears lest others not hear. What were these activities that were regarded as so secret even to cause a person [Talat] who was, then, the Minister of the Interior and considered as the natural leader of the political party in power, to make it a matter of complaint in such a manner?<sup>34</sup>

In view of this information, Akçam’s utilization and interpretation of Kuscubası’s statement and his efforts to establish a link between it and the massacres becomes highly problematic. Indeed if one is to accept Akçam’s false paraphrasing, then Akçam’s whole theory of “a genocidal policy under the supervision of Talat” collapses since Talat Pasha, the person whom he credits with being the overall coordinator of massacres and deportations, is actually not informed on something that he allegedly supervises. It is clear that the author Akçam deliberately ignores the context and misleads his readers. The intention of such a manipulation is to lead readers into what is, after all, a pre-arranged conclusion, at the expense of historic truth.

### *On Ahmet Refik*

In discussing the participation of gangs in perpetrating the massacres, Taner Akçam writes

that:

Ahmet Refik testified that the perpetrators of the massacres at Pozanti, some thirty to forty kilometers from Adana, were “reorganized by gangs sent to the Caucasus”. (p. 158)

To begin with, it should be noted that Ahmet Refik did not testify, but wrote a book. More importantly, in the book Ahmet Refik did not use the word massacre; rather, there is a single sentence referring to the assaults carried out by gangs without indicating whether they resulted in massacres or not: The [place] which the Armenians were most particularly afraid of was Pozanti. There [in Pozanti], the attack of gangs was making their hearts tremble [in fear]. Which gangs were these? These were the gangs sent to the Caucasus in the name of Turanian policy [and] the union of Islam by the Unionist government.<sup>35</sup>

It seems that the author feels no discomfort in substituting such words as “attack” and “massacre” and allowing his readers to make incorrect assumptions.

### *On Huseyin and Abidin Nesimi*

According to Akçam, in some cases the government officials who resisted obeying orders of annihilation were killed, and a kaymakam's son had confirmed this point: In several cases, uncooperative officials were actually murdered. Huseyin Nesimi, the prefect of Lice, refused to obey the verbal order and asked for a written copy. He was fired, called to Diyarbakir, and murdered on the way. Abidin Nesimi, the prefect's son, wrote that the liquidation of government officials was ordered by Mehmet Resit, the governor of Diyarbakir, among others. The murdered include “Ferit, the governor-general of Basra, Bedri Nuri, the lieutenant-governor of Muntefak, . . . Sabit, the deputy prefect of Besiri, I'smail Mestan a journalist.” The reason for these murders was clear: “The administrative cadre that opposed the massacre had to be liquidated . . .”. (pp. 166–167)

Unfortunately it is not Abidin Nesimi but Taner Akçam who wrote that the government officials in question were liquidated on the orders of Mehmet Resit. What Abidin Nesimi had said<sup>36</sup> was that during Resit's governorship some murders with unknown perpetrators had taken place: . . . When Dr. Resit was in Iraq and later during his governorship of Diyarbakir, many murders with unknown perpetrators took place. Most important among them, were those of Ferit, the

governor of Basra, Bedri Nuri, the sub-governor of Muntefak, my father Huseyin Nesimi, the prefect of Lice, and Sabit, the deputy prefect of Besiri and the journalist Ismail Mestan . . . It was impossible to carry out the relocation of Armenians with the gendarme units composed of Circassians and the members of the tribes of Bedirhani, Milli, Karakecili who were the Kurdish militia. For this group was a cadre of pillage and plunder. Therefore, this group could not carry out the relocation and turned it into a massacre. [And] the liquidation of the [administrative] cadre which would oppose the pillage and plunder was inevitable.<sup>37</sup>

As regards to the complicity of Mehmet Resit<sup>38</sup> in relation to the murder of his father, Abidin Nesimi wrote the following: Did Dr. Resit give any orders for the murder of my father? Or did this event occur without his knowledge? We can find the answers of these questions in Resit's memoirs. . . . In these [memoirs], Dr. Resit writes that he was extremely respectful towards my father and that my father had possessed the quality of rendering great services to the nation and that it was impossible for him to give orders for the murder of my father. Quite naturally I cannot be expected to have sympathies for Dr. Resit as my father was killed by a mobile gendarme regiment that was recalled by this name. I have made researches on Dr. Resit. I have inquired about Dr. Resit from his friends who had been in exile in Tripoli where he was also in exile and from other persons, especially from the governor of Tripoli, Giritli Celal Bey. Both the deceased Cami Baykurt and Celal Bey had given testimony in his favor. I am of the opinion that Dr. Resit was a well-intentioned, yet narrow-minded person.<sup>39</sup>

There are two significant problems with the way in which this account has been utilized:

1. Akçam has altered the sentence that reads "the liquidation of the [administrative] cadre which would oppose the 'pillage and plunder' was inevitable" into a different sentence that states "the administrative cadre that opposed the 'massacre' had to be liquidated . . .", which is yet another example demonstrating how freely the author is altering words and replacing them with his own insertions. As was the case in the Ahmet Refik instance, the author substituted the words "pillage and plunder" with his own word "massacre".

2. Abidin Nesimi nowhere writes that the liquidation of the mentioned individuals and his father was done on the orders of Mehmet Resit. To the contrary, Abidin Nesimi points to a source giving the answer to this question and the source in question indicates something entirely contrary to Akçam's allegation. Once again, Akçam has attributed a false opinion to a source that does not support his claims.

### The Alleged Dual Mechanism

Akçam also makes some comments on the character of Talat Pasha, the Ottoman Interior Minister (pp. 169–170), which are intended to establish his argument that Talat's telegrams ordering the protection of Armenians were merely written for silencing foreign ambassadors and that these orders were subsequently cancelled by a coded cable, a process he termed as a dual mechanism.<sup>40</sup>

While Akçam attempts to explain those telegrams shown to the foreign ambassadors in the light of this argument, he is unable to explain numerous confidential and ciphered telegrams, not intended for public consumption, which contain similar instructions. And in order to explain away such inconveniences, the author's theory is constructed upon selective use of sources and the manipulation of his sources. According to Akçam, Falih Rifki Atay said that "sending an order only to cancel it shortly afterward by coded cable was business as usual for Talat" (p. 170). In this case the author displays another example of his going beyond the source he refers to, and adding interpretations that are not contained in the original source. The original account of this episode, related by Atay, while not suggesting in any way that this is a "business as usual for Talat", makes no reference either to an "order" sent earlier: One day, he [Talat] again called out for me from the office. There was an applicant [man] next to him. He said: "Write a letter to the Mutasarrıf [sub-governor] of Izmit and recommend them to definitely do the work of this Gentleman". I wrote and brought [the letter]. He signed it. The (poor) man took the letter and left by giving his thanks. A little later, they had told me that the minister [Talat] wanted to see me. I went [to see him]. He said: "write a ciphered telegram to the Mutasarrıf of Izmit and inform him that the letter I sent has no importance".<sup>41</sup>

This is not quite the sort of evidence to substantiate such bold claims, and the readers might want to see more convincing evidence in order to accept the high-profile claims Akçam has advanced about Talat with respect to the relocation of Armenians. In his enthusiasm to prove his theory of dual mechanism, Akçam further claims that:

On 18 September 1915 cables sent from Kayseri, Eskişehir, Niğde, Diyarbakır, report that all the Armenians had been deported from these provinces and that none remained. (p. 177) However, this is not at all the case in the documents to which Akçam refers. The telegram sent from Eskişehir states that "the number of Armenians who were required to be dispatched amounted to 7000" and that all (7000) of these Armenians were dispatched<sup>42</sup>, which does not mean that no Armenians remained and that all were deported from Eskişehir.<sup>43</sup>

In the case of Kayseri, the telegram mentions the presence of 4911 Armenians, consisting of the soldiers' families and, to a lesser extent, of Catholics and Protestants, who were left within

the sanjak of Kayseri.<sup>44</sup> It is again difficult to understand how any scrupulous author can claim that no Armenians were left in the mentioned places. In conclusion, Akçam misrepresents his sources and the documents that he relies on do not substantiate his thesis. Thus the author's case on the alleged dual mechanism remains poorly documented and unconvincing. Akçam also creates misleading impressions on the reader by juxtaposing disparate events. For instance, he quotes from a report that mentions an official named Huseyin Kazım Bey who is said to be a good person trying to help and feed the Armenians, but faces difficulties from authorities and he fears the extermination of Armenians. Immediately after quoting this document, Akçam writes: "Huseyin Kazım . . . later wrote in his memoirs that 200,000 people were sacrificed to the evil designs of Government, in Lebanon alone" (p. 186). Yet Huseyin Kazım's statement had nothing to do with Ottoman Armenians. Still less it had anything to do with a central government policy. Huseyin Kazım uses the statement above in describing the corruption of the provincial authorities that was rampant during the war:

There was a disgrace of silk corruption that no one can describe properly. The bales of silks, each of which amounted to 600 Lira (gold) in Germany and Switzerland, has been bought at 300 Lira from their owners by [exerting] all kinds of threats, pressures, swearwords and insults . . . To benefit from the misery of the people, to be full through the hunger of the poor, and to find life through their death has become a custom in the country. And those who first broke this ground had been the high officials of the Government. Then, it was seen that thousands of innocent men, women and children died everywhere in the most terrible manner. In the unfortunate Lebanon alone, the number of those poor who fell victim to the evil designs of the government reaches to 150–200 thousand.<sup>45</sup>

By combining two totally unrelated events out of sequence, Akçam changes the meaning of the original account, and misleads his readers. It is also important to note that the number "150–200 thousand" in Huseyin Kazım's account has become simply "200,000" in Akçam's text.

### **Conclusion**

The examples displayed in this study cast doubt on Taner Akçam's approach as being impartial and scholarly. To the contrary, such manipulations point to an extremely partisan attitude, dominated by preconceived ideas that in turn have led the author to manipulate the sources he has utilized in service of his pre-arranged conclusions. Akçam's work suffers from a lack of honesty with which he has evidently approached his subject, and the implications of his intentional manipulations shed considerable light on the credibility that could be attached to his work. As Akçam himself stated elsewhere, "suspicion within the academic community as to whether or not sources have been honestly and accurately presented is something that can poison the entire scientific milieu".<sup>46</sup>

Within this framework, Taner Akçam's dishonesty—which manifests itself in the form of numerous deliberate alterations and distortions, misleading quotations and doctoring of data—casts doubt on the accuracy of his claims as well as his conclusions. Accordingly, serious readers and researchers alike should approach Akçam's work and claims with a great caution. This tainted volume can neither be considered "the state of the art in this field", as Erik Jan Zürcher has written, nor the "best book ever written on Armenian Genocide", as Stephen Feinstein claims, but as an example of poor editing, badly supported conclusions and, most importantly, of unethical and partisan scholarship that calls for further, more balanced and thorough research.

### NOTES

1. Taner Akçam, *İnsan Hakları ve Ermeni Sorunu, İttihat ve Terakki'den Kurtuluş Savaşı'na* [Human Rights and the Armenian Question, from the [Committee of] Union and Progress to Liberation War], Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 1999.

2. Edward J. Erickson, "Re-examining History: Armenian Massacres: New Records Undercut Old Blame", *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 3, Summer 2006, pp. 67–75; and Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey: A Disputed Genocide*, Salt Lake City, UT: The University of Utah Press, 2005, pp. 82–88.

3. Cemal Kutay, *Birinci Dünya Harbinde Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa Ve Hayber'de Türk Cengi* [The [Ottoman] Special Organization in the WWI and the Turkish Battle in Khayber], İstanbul: Tarih Yayınları, 1962, pp. 17–18.

4. Nedim İpek, *Rumeli'den Anadolu'ya Türk Göçleri (1877–1890)* [The Turkish Migrations from Balkans to Anatolia (1877–1890)], Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1994, p. 207.

5. Mustafa Aksakal, "Defending the Nation, The German-Ottoman Alliance of 1914 and the Ottoman Decision for War", Unpublished PhD thesis, Princeton University, NJ, 2003, p. 150.

6. Ibid, p. 139.

7. Feroz Ahmad, "Review of Germany and The Ottoman Empire 1914–1918, by Ulrich Trumpener", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1970, pp. 104–105. Also see Michael A. Reynolds, "The Ottoman–Russian Struggle for Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus 1908–1918: Identity, Ideology and the Geopolitics of World Order", Unpublished PhD thesis, Princeton University, NJ, 2003.

8. Nejdet Bilgi, *Yozgat Ermeni Tehciri Davası [The Trial for the Yozgat Armenian Relocation]*, İstanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 2006, pp. 205–208, "Vakit Versiyonu" ["The Daily Vakit Version"] and pp. 208–211, "Yeni Gazete Versiyonu" ["The Daily Yeni Gazete Version"].

9. Ibid, pp. 202–205, "Memleket Versiyonu" ["The Daily Memleket Version"].

10. Sina Akşin, *İstanbul Hükümetleri ve Milli Mücadele [The İstanbul Governments and the National Struggle]*, Vol. 1, İstanbul: İşbankası Yayınları, 2004, p. 204; and Ferudun Ata, *İşgal İstanbul'unda Tehcir Yargılamaları [The Relocation Trials in Occupied İstanbul]*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2005, pp. 141–142.

11. İrade-i Milliye, 2 October 1919, quoted in Hulki Cevizoğlu, *İşgal ve Direniş, 1919 ve Bugün [The Occupation and Resistance, 1919 and Today]*, İstanbul: Ceviz Kabuğu Yayınları, 2007, p. 25.

12. Maurice Larcher, *La Guerre Turque dans la Guerre Mondiale [Turkish War in the Great War]*, Paris: Etienne Chiron; Berger-Levrault, 1926, p. 602: "L'anatolie avait en outre perdu 500,000 mussulmans des vilayets orientaux, victimes ou fugitifs de la guerre; 800,000 Armeniens et 200,000 Grecs, victimes de deportations ou de 'ce'de's dans les battalions de travailleurs" ["Anatolia had also lost 500,000 Muslims from the eastern provinces as victims or fugitives of the war; 800,000 Armenians and 200,000 Greeks as victims of the deportations or those who died in the labor battalions"].

13. Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, *Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi [The History of the Turkish Revolution]*, Vol. 3,

Part 3, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1983, pp. 8–9.

14. Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, Atatürk Hayatı ve Eseri [Atatürk, His Life and Work], Vol. 1, Ankara: AKDHYK Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 1990, p. 182.

15. Lewy, The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey, op. cit., pp. 73–82; Ata, İşgal İstanbul'unda Tehcir Yargılamaları [The Relocation Trials in Occupied İstanbul], op. cit.; Falih Rifki Atay, Çankaya: Atatürk'ün Doğumundan Ölümüne Kadar [Çankaya, From Atatürk's Birth Till His Death], İstanbul: Bates, 1998, pp. 218–230.

16. Hüsamettin Ertürk, İki Devrin Perde Arkası [Behind the Curtain of Two Eras], İstanbul: Hilmi Kitapevi, 1957, pp. 370–373.

17. Tarık Zafer Tunaya, Türkiye'de Siyasi Partiler [Political Parties in Turkey], Vol. 3, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000, p. 674.

18. Andrew Mango, "Minorities and Majorities", Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. 23, No. 4, 1987, p. 519.

19. M. E. Yapp, "Review of The History of the Armenian Genocide, by V.N. Dadrian", Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. 32, No. 4, 1996, p. 397.

20. Atay, Çankaya [Çankaya], op. cit., pp. 219, 223–224.

21. Refik Halid Karay, Minelbab İlelmihrab [From Gate to Mihrab], İstanbul: İnkılâp-Aka Kitabevleri, 1964, pp. 195–196.

22. Ata, İşgal İstanbul'unda Tehcir Yargılamaları [The Relocation Trials in Occupied İstanbul],

op. cit., pp. 258–259; Bayram Akça, “1915 Ermeni Tehciri ve Urfa Mutasarrıfı Nusret Bey’in İdamı” [“The 1915 Armenian Relocation and the Execution of Nusret Bey, the Sub-Governor of Urfa”], *Ermeni Araştırmaları 1. Türkiye Kongresi Bildirileri* [Papers of the 1st Turkey Congress of Armenian Studies], Vol. 2, Ankara: ASAM, 2003, p. 28; and Bayram Akça, “Mondros Mütarekesi’nden Sonra Ermeni Tehciri Nedeniyle Kurulan Divan-ı Harp Mahkemelerinde (Nemrut) Mustafa Paşa’nın Rolü” [“The Role of (Nemrut) Mustafa Pasha in the Court-martials Set Up for the Armenian Relocation After the Armistice of Mudros”], *Ermeni Araştırmaları 2. Türkiye Kongresi Bildirileri* [Papers of the 2nd Turkey Congress of Armenian Studies], Vol. 1, Ankara: ASAM, 2007, p. 608.

23. Türkkaya Ataöv, *Another Falsification: Statement (1926) Wrongly Attributed to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk*, Ankara: Sistem Ofset, 1988. For Mustafa Kemal’s views on the Armenian Question, see İsmet Görgülü, *Atatürk’ten Ermeni Sorunu* [The Armenian Question from Atatürk], Ankara: Bilgi, 2002.

24. Kutay, *Birinci Dünya Harbinde Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* [The [Ottoman] Special Organization in the WWI], op. cit., p. 18: “Türklerden gayrı ırk ve milletlerin ekseriyeti teşkil ettikleri yerlerde . . .”.

25. Akçam, *İnsan Hakları ve Ermeni Sorunu* [Human Rights and the Armenian Question], op. cit., p. 213: “Mütareke sonrası, Sabah gazetesi 13 Aralık 1918’de Albay Seyfi’nin, Osmanlı Karargahındaki Siyasi Şube’nin sorumlusu olarak, Bahaettin Şakir ile yakın işbirliği içinde, Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa eliyle Ermenilerin katledilmesini planlayanlardan olduğunu açıkladı”.

26. Since the book under review is the English translation of another book, one might wonder whether it is the translator who is to be blamed for the manipulations and the discrepancies with original sources. However, the readers should be aware that the inaccuracies presented in this study are also present in the original Turkish version of Taner Akçam’s study.

27. Kutay, *Birinci Dünya Harbinde Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* [The [Ottoman] Special Organization in the WWI], op. cit., p. 60: “. . . Ege mıntıkasında ve bilhassa sahillerde yuvalanmış, ve kümelenmiş, olan 1.150.000 Rum-Ermeni nüfus, daha harbin başlamasından kısa zaman evvel ve harbin ilk aylarında içeri alınmamış olsa idi, Çanakkale müdafaasının bile mümkün olamayacağı gün gibi aşikar idi”.

28. The population figures given by Eşref Kuşçubaşı are as follows: “120,000 in the region of Ayvalik gulf; 90,000 in the Çanakkale region (including the town itself); 190,000 in the capital of İzmir; 130,000 in the region from Urla peninsula and southeast İzmir to Çeşme; 80,000 in the environs of Aydın; 150,000 in the environs of Akhisar, and Manisa, Alaşehir, Uşak and its environs”. Apart from this, Kuşçubaşı also gives figures for the Aegean islands of Mtylene, Chios and Samos. However the Ottoman Empire had lost these islands in 1912–1913, therefore any Ottoman controlled population movement on these islands would be out of question. See Celal Bayar, *Ben de Yazdım: Milli Mücadeleye Giriş [I Too Have Written: Joining the National Struggle]*, Vol. 5, İstanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1967, p. 1576.

29. A. Mil, “Umumi Harpte Teşkilatı Mahsusa” [“The [Ottoman] Special Organization in the Great War”], *Vakit*, No. 13, November 15, 1933, p. 5: “Erzurumdan çıktıklarını şifre ile bildirdiğiniz eşhas için tertibatı lazıme alınmıştır. Herçibadabat onları elde edebilmek için icap edenlere teslimat verdim . . . Bu husus hakkında bir iki güne kadar haber vereceğimi ümit ediyorum. Kumandanlık teşkilatımızın serbestii hareketi hakkında icap edenlere talimatı lazıme vermelidir”. Arif Cemil, *Birinci Dünya Savaşında Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa [The [Ottoman] Special Organization in WWI]*, İstanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1997, pp. 45–46. A. Mil is the pseudonym for Arif Cemil (Denker). His memoirs were first published pseudonymously in the *Daily Vakit* in 1933–1934. In 1997 these memoirs were republished by Arba Yayınları in the form of a book under the real name of its author, Arif Cemil (Denker). For readers' convenience, both items are cited in this review.

30. *Ibid*, No. 14, November 16, 1933, p. 5: “Hilmi Bey'in mektubunda iki noktai nazarı dikkati celbeder. Bunlardan birisi Erzurumdan hareketleri Bahaettin Şakir Bey tarafından bildirilen bazı eşhasın yolda yakalanmaları, daha doğrusu imha edilmeleri . . .” Arif Cemil, *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa [The [Ottoman] Special Organization]*, op. cit., p. 46.

31. *Ibid*, No. 98, February 10, 1934, p. 5: “Doktor Bahattin Şakir bey İstanbul'da artık teşkilatı mahsusanın harici düşmanlara taalluk eden işlerinden sarfınazar ederek memleketin dahili düşmanlarıyla meşgul olma kararı vermişti. Çünkü Doktor Bahaettin Şakir bey Erzurumda ve Kafkas cephesinin diğer noktalarında geçirdiği dört beş ay zarfında pek çok hakikatlere şahit olmuştu. Ermenilerin Türkiye'ye karşı takındıkları tavır ve Rus ordusuna ettikleri yardım kendisinde harici düşman kadar dahili düşmandan da korkmak lazım geldiği kanaatini hasıl etmişti. Dahildeki Ermeniler çete teşkiliyle ordumuzun arkasını tehdit ve hattı ric'atını kesmeye çalışıyorlardı”. Arif Cemil, *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa [The [Ottoman] Special Organization]*, op. cit., p. 240.

32. *Ibid*, No. 100, February 12, 1934, p. 5: “. . . Doktor Bahaettin Şakir bey bunları İstanbul'da

İttihat ve terakki merkezi umumisinin dikkati nazarına koyarak orduyu büyük bir tehlikeden kurtarmak için alınacak tedbirleri müzakere ile meşgul bulunuyordu. Bu müzakereler nihayet tehcir kanunun neşri ile neticelenmişti. Doktor Bahaettin Şakir bey bir müddet sonra Kafkas cephesine avdet ettiği zaman yeni vaziyet tamamiyle taayyün etmiş bulunuyordu. Fakat gene bu noktalara temas edemedi. Çünkü Ermenilerin tehciri meselesi teşkilatı mahsusa mevzuunun büsbütün haricinde kalmaktadır". Arif Cemil, Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa [The [Ottoman] Special Organization], op. cit., pp. 245–246.

33. Vahakn N. Dadrian, "Ottoman Archives and Denial of the Armenian Genocide", in *The Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, Ethics*, ed. Richard Hovannisian, London: MacMillan, 1992, pp. 300–301. 34. Kutay, *Birinci Dünya Harbinde Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa [The [Ottoman] Special Organization in the WWI]*, op. cit., p. 18: "Bunlar gerçekten „gizli.. tutulduğu için kabine azasının bile meçhulü idiler. Hatta çok iyi hatırlarım. Bir gün Talat Paşa, yarı şaka yarı ciddi: '—Eşref Beyefendi . . . Sizin hükümet teşkilatından bize anlatabileceğiniz haberler yok mu?' demişti. Bunu da, diğerlerinin duymaması için yavaşça kulağıma söylemişti. O tarihte Dâhiliye Nazırı ve iktidarda olan siyasi Fırka'nın tabii reisi sayılan bir zatın dahi, böylecesine sitem mevzuu yapacak kadar mahrem addedilen çalışmaları nelerdi?"

35. Ahmet Refik, *İki Komite İki Kıtıl [Two Committees, Two Massacres]*, Ankara: Kebikeç Yayınları, 1994, pp. 38–39: "Ermenilerin en ziyade korktukları Pozantı idi. Orada, çetelerin hücumu kalblerini titretiyordu. Bunlar hangi çetelerdi? İttihat hükümetinin Turan siyaseti, İslam ittihadı namına Kafkasya'ya gönderdiği çetelerdi". 36. In his memoirs, Abidin Nesimi also discusses the Armenian question —and his overall opinion is that the central committee of CUP wanted an orderly relocation of Armenians and did not want to harm the innocent Armenians, but the Kurdish militia forces seized this moment as an opportunity for plunder and massacre, and the CUP partly overlooked this situation but also attempted to punish the guilty. Given the sharp difference of this interpretation to the narrative of Akçam, the omission of these details also leaves the reader with quite an unbalanced opinion as regards the murder of the officials mentioned as well as Abidin Nesimi's opinion on this issue. See Abidin Nesimi, *Yılların İçinden [During the Years]*, İstanbul: Gözlem, 1977, pp. 41–45.

37. Ibid, pp. 39–40: "Dr. Reşit Irakta bulunduğu dönemde ve daha sonra Diyarbakır valiliği sırasında faili bulunamayan birçok cinayetler olmuştur. Bunların içinde en önemlileri Basra Valisi Ferit'in, Müntefek mutasarrıfı Bedi Nuri'nin, Lice kaymakamı babam Hüseyin Nesimi'nin, Beşiri kaymakam vekili Sabit'in, gazeteci İsmail Mestan'ın vb. öldürülmeleridir . . . Bu Çerkez jandarma ekibi ve milis Kürtler olan Bedirhani, Milli ve Karakeçili aşiretleri mensuplarıyla Ermeni tehcirinin gerçekleştirilmesi imkânsızdı. Çünkü bu kadro yağma ve talan kadrosudur. Bu yüzden bu kadro tehciri yapamamış, ve onu katliama dönüştürmüştür. Yağma ve talanı gerçekleştirmeye muhalefet edecek kadronun da tasfiyesi kaçınılmazdı".

38. This article primarily aims to focus on the manner in which Akçam has utilized his sources. Therefore the role and the responsibility of Dr. Reşit is beyond the scope of this study. On this matter, see Mithad Şükrü Bleda, *İmparatorluğun Çöküşü* [The Fall of the [Ottoman] Empire], İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1979, pp. 56–59.

39. Abidin Nesimi, *Yılların İçinden* [During the Years], op. cit., pp. 45–46: “Babamın öldürülmesi olayında Dr. Reşit’in bir emri var mıdır? Yoksa bu olay onun bilgisi dışında mı olmuştur? Bu soruların cevabını Dr. Reşit’in ‘Müdafaaname’ sinden öğrenebiliriz . . . Bu ‘Müdafaaname’ sinde Dr. Reşit, babama karşı son derece hürmetkar olduğunu, vücudunun millete büyük faydalar bırakacağı nitelikte olduğunu, onun öldürülmesine emir vermesinin imkansız olduğunu yazmıştır. Pek doğaldır ki, babamın bu adla anılan seyyar jandarma müfrezesince öldürüldüğü için Dr. Reşit’e karşı sempati olamaz. Dr. Reşit üzerine araştırmalar yaptım. Dr. Reşit’i sürgün bulunduğu Trablusgarb’daki sürgün arkadaşlarından ve diğer kişilerden, özellikle Trablusgarb valisi Giritli Celal Bey den soruşturdum. Rahmetli Cami Baykurt da, Celal Bey de onun lehinde şahadette bulunmuşlardır. Dr. Reşit’in iyi niyetli fakat dar görüşlü birisi olduğu kanısındayım”.

40. Guenter Lewy also characterizes the evidence presented by Taner Akçam for his allegation of dual mechanism as “slim”; see Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey*, op. cit., p. 112.

41. Falih Rıfkı Atay, *Zeytindağı* [The Olive Mountain], İstanbul: Bateş, 1981, pp. 24–25: “Bir gün yine kalemden çağırtmıştı. Yanında bir müracaatçı vardı: ‘İzmit mutasarrıfına bir mektup yazınız, Beyfendinin işini mutlaka yapmasını tavsiye ediniz’, demişti. Yazıp götürdüm. İmzaladı, adamcağız mektubu aldı ve teşekkür ederek gitti. Biraz sonra nazırın yine beni istediğini söylediler. Gittim: —İzmit mutasarrıfına bir şifre yaz. Gönderdiğim mektubun bir ehemmiyeti yoktur, diye bildir, dedi”.

42. *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeniler (1915–1920)* [Armenians in Ottoman Documents 1915–1920], Ankara: Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü , 1995, p. 96, Document 111: “Liva<sup>^</sup> dâhilindeki Ermenilerden ihrâcı îcâb edenler yedi bin râddesinde olup kâffesinin sevk edilmiş, olduğu arz olunur”.

43. The official Ottoman statistics cite the Armenian population of Eskişehir as 8807, while

according to the figures adopted by the British it was 10,000; for the comparative figures, see Meir Zamir, "Population statistics of the Ottoman empire in 1914 and 1919", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1981, pp. 100, 104.

44. Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeniler (1915–1920) [Armenians in Ottoman Documents 1915–1920], op. cit., p. 94, Document 109: ". . . dâhil-i livâda kalan dört bin dokuz yüz on bir neferi asker â'ilesi ve cüz'î mikdârı Protestan ve Katolik bakâyâsı olmakla dahi yüzde beş nisbetinde köylere tevzî' kılınmakta olduğu ma'rûzdur".

45. Hüseyin Kazım Kadri, *Türkiye'nin Çöküşü* [The Fall of Turkey], İstanbul: Hikmet 1992, pp. 204–205: "Bir ipek yolsuzluğu rezaleti vardı ki bunu hakkıyla tasvire kimse muvaffak olamaz. Almanya'da ve İsviçre'de altın para ile 600 yüz lira tutan her bir balya ipek sahiplerinin elinden bin bir türlü tehditler, tazyikler, küfür ve hakaretler ile 300 kâğıda alındı . . . Halkın sefaletinden yararlanmak, fukaranın açlığıyla doymak, ölümüyle hayat bulmak, memlekette alışkanlık halini aldı. Ve bu çığırını açan hükümetin büyük memurları oldu. O zaman her tarafta binlerce günahsız adamların, kadınların ve çocukların en feci halde düşüp öldükleri görüldü. Yalnız şu bedbaht Lübnan'da hükümetin suikastına kurban giden zavallıların sayısı 150–200 bine çıkar".

46. Taner Akçam, "Anatomy of a Crime: The Turkish Historical Society's Manipulation of Archival Documents", *Journal of Genocide Research*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2005, p. 273.