

Hitler and the Armenian Question

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Propaganda is deliberate manipulation, by means of symbols (like words or images) of others thoughts. The propagandist tries to offset resistance to himself by presenting his thoughts as if they are rational or moral. The symbols are chosen in such a way that the reactors are expected to be influenced by their strong emotion-laden experiences. The propagandist tries to seize an emotional initiative and maintain an ascendancy that can create animosity.

The publicity of some Armenian circles strives to serve such a purpose. In various Armenian newspapers, periodicals and books there are frequent references to a supposedly Adolf Hitler statement. The notorious German dictator is presumed to have said the following on August 22, 1939: "I have given orders to my Death Units to exterminate without mercy or pity men, women and children belonging to the Polish-speaking race. It is only in this manner that we can acquire the vital territory which we need. After all, who remembers today the extermination of the Armenians?"

This "statement" appears (in more or less these words) in the leaflets handed out by a group of demonstrating young Armenians (see Annex 1), on the cover of book (Annex 2) (1) or in articles written by Armenian authors, (2) quoted by still others. (3)

Armenian propaganda greatly relies on the use of to disseminate biased opinions. For instance, there has also been the assestion that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, had "confessed Ottoman state responsibility for the Armenian genocide." The claim has already been proved (4) to be false and ill-intentioned.

In many human records there may be contradictions, and interpretations may be disputed by different parties. But a "statement", a single sentence attributed to a man; i.e., Hitler, whose opinions are now in utter disrespect, is a detestable piece of propaganda. It is ugly and loathsome to expect any gain from words, supposed to have been uttered by someone whose uniqueness in history has been to lead a great nation off to war, conquest and ruin. How can just ten words summarize a controversial phenomenon of the last century and the beginning of the present one? Hitler was the man who boasted that the Third Reich would endure for a thousand years. It is astonishing to witness some circles linking the "Armenian question" with the name of Hitler, who promised jobs for the workers, better business for the well-to-do, a big army for the militarists -and even a husband for every German girl (as he stated in a speech at the Lustgarten in Berlin) but brought quick dead failure and disaster.

Hitler had started as a failure. A lung ailment which he suffered later necessitated his dropping out of school for over a year. It was at this point that he subscribed to the Library of Adult Education in Linz and joined the Museum Society, whose books on German history and German mythology he borrowed. He could not enter as well the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts. William L. Shirer, in his brilliant history of Nazi Germany, describes the ideas acquired by such reading as "shallow and shabby, often grotesque and preposterous and poisoned by outlandish prejudices." He adds: "... They were to form part of the foundation for the Third Reich which this bookish vagrant was soon to build." (5) Hitler's basic ideas were thus formed in Vienna when he was a little over twenty; the little that he learned afterward altered nothing in his thinking. For instance, he was completely ignorant about economics, and he never bothered to learn anything about it. In *Mein Kampf*, nevertheless, he insists on expressing his thoughts on every conceivable subject from history to the movies or from culture to syphilis. To syphilis, for instance, he devotes ten pages, describing it as the most important problem of the country.

Likewise, Hitler was no historian, certainly no expert on Turkish-Armenian relations or on the "Armenian question". His views, if any, on the latter may be as "meritorious" as his opinions on democracy and republicanism or his convictions about the Jews. For years, he did not even concern himself much with foreign affairs. (6) His greatest concern was, first, to keep his own absolute control over the party, then over the German state and after that rearmament and economic expansion.

Neither was any of his aides or associates a master hand on the "Armenian question". One may even suggest that they were completely ignorant of it. Hitler was surrounded by the disreputable Streicher, the mediocre pseudo- "philosopher" Rosenberg, "Putzi" Hanfstaengl with a shallow mind, the ruthless Roehm who organized the first Nazi squads, the drunkard Eckert, the "free slanderer" Strasser, the colourless police officer Frick, the doggedly loyal Hess, the neurotic Goebbels, the former flying ace Goering, the terroristic Himmler and the intriguing Bormann. Such were the men around the Fuehrer- a misshapen mixing of misfits.

Hitler is often quoted as having referred to the Armenians in the manner cited above while delivering a secret talk to members of his General Staff, just a week prior to his attack on Poland. I have added to the end of this booklet the original texts of the two Hitler speeches, delivered on August 22, 1939 (Annex 3). They are photocopies of the pages of the official texts, published in the certainly reliable Nuremberg documents. (7) Curiously enough, there is no reference in them to the Armenians. One may rightly assume that Hitler spoke to his generals on that day in German, which is his and their native tongue. The Nuremberg documents are the most authoritative, perhaps the only authentic sources. I am aware of a few English translations, (8) some of which carry an additional sentence that does not occur in the authorized German texts. One wonders whether who might have added it and for what purpose! In terms of "methodology", the use of a supposedly Hitler statement on the Armenians brings to mind several Nazi "craft", such as the Reichstag fire, exploited for a certain political end.

While the statement in question has appeared in hundreds of publications and has been quoted several times, none of the publishers have ever consulted the primary sources. Among the Armenian writers, Professor Richard G.Hovannisian refers to it basing his citation on the "Nuremberg trial transcripts". Professor Havannisian's citation appears U.S. Senator Carl Levin's speech on April 24, 1984. (For a photocopy of the Congressional Record, Senate, Proceedings and Debates of the 98th Congress, Second Session, Vol. 130, No.4, Tuesday, April 24, 1984, see Annex 4.) The British writer Christopher J.Walker also seems to accept that the quotation was "evidence produced in Nuremberg". (9) But whatever published so far on the so-called Hitler "statement" has been built not on original but on secondary sources at best. The truth is that the Nuremberg trials have never accepted that version of the Hitler speech with a reference to the Armenians as evidence. The documents approved by the Nuremberg prosecutors as the official minutes of the Hitler talk on August 22, 1939, were given the numbers of USA-29 (or later PS-798) and USA-30 (or later PS-1014). These documents also appear in Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, Vol. III, pp. 581-596, pp. 665-666 and in Documents on German Foreign Policy: 1918-1945, Series D. Vol. VII, pp. 200-206. The prosecution did not introduce a third document, initially numbered as USA-28, as evidence. But none of these versions contain the sentence in quotation" is false. They do, however, establish that Hitler has not made that "statement".

Even in its forged version, the "statement" does not refer, directly or indirectly, to the Jewish people. Even in the way it is quoted, the reference is to the Poles, instead. Hence, the

following allusion, like many others, of a publication by the World Council of Churches, is unfounded: "When Hitler began his pogroms he was warned that the nations of the world would not tolerate his actions and would not forgive or overlook the atrocities. To this warning he replied, who today remembers the Armenians." (10)

As a matter of fact, Hitler had probably made only one reference to the Armenians- in a talk delivered on December 12, 1942, (11) in which he described them as unreliable (unzuverlässig) and dangerous (gefährlich). Specification of this kind by someone like him ought to be taken as flattery. Likewise, Hitler's only reference to Turkey in his speech on August 22 1939, was in the following words: "After Kemal's (Atatürk) death, Turkey will be ruled by morons and halfidiots". In assessing subsequent events the reader will agree with me that Hitler's assertion actually suited himself and his Nazi entourage quite well. One can say, on the other hand, that Turkey's leadership during the Second World War was crowned with success. (12)

Whether the war was brought about by German aggression or caused by other's refusal to grant Germany her place, it should be common knowledge now that Hitler bore the greatest responsibility for acts of immeasurable evil. He regarded men as base matter for the strong hands of "power philosophers and artist tyrants" -to quote Nietzsche. Setting up concentration camps for political opponents, he effected complete uniformity (Gleichshaltung). All other parties were liquidated, all labour unions were outlawed, education was placed under control and all newspapers were either Nazified or closed down. Hitler stood for an anti-democratic, totalitarian and imperialistic policy. A dictator as he was, he led a nation off to war and conquest. But the Third Reich swiftly collapsed in the Spring of 1945. It is generally accepted now that the lesson of Hitler and Nazism is how far a society can fall once rationalism, moral restraints and constitutional government have been destroyed.

The Nuremberg trials were inevitable. There are works (13) which show what the basis was for the jurisdiction of the International Military Tribunal. It is clear that a group of leaders were tried for offences against international law and morality, against compacts and treaties, and against the peace of nations.

A totalitarian dictatorship, by its very nature, works in great secrecy. But hundreds of thousands of captured Nazi documents were assembled at Nuremberg as evidence in the trial of the major Nazi war criminals. These tons of records illuminated the events in the Third Reich: Hitler's accession to power, the Anschluss with Germany, the occupation of Czechoslovakia, the attacks on Poland, Scandinavia, the West, the Balkans and the Soviet Union, the horrors of the Nazi occupation and the extermination of the Jews and the democrats. One cannot find the oft-repeated "statement" in the celebrated Nuremberg documents.

Why, then, do the militant Armenians and their cooperators cling to the so-called "Hitler statement"? Because they want to set it into motion as a "connecting link" with the Jewish genocide (which was truly a genocide) and thus benefit from the influence of the Jewish community. Although a greater proportion of the Jews is not moved by this defamation campaign, some sections have indeed lent a listening ear.

One should pose, at this point, the following questions: What to the Jewish communities all over the world know about the Armenians, the Turkish and the Turkish-Armenian relations as well as Turkish-Jewish relations? And also what do they not know about them all?

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The Jews have been, no doubt, a persecuted minority. Several times throughout history, they were oppressed, abused, ill-treated, hounded, injured and exterminated. The militant Armenians are exerting every effort to make the Jews and other believe that they are also another persecuted minority. The Jews have so far heard twisted stories, misconstrued interpretations and grotesquely exaggerated views or at times outright falsifications. Those who cooperate with the militant Armenians apparently accept their version of the episode as complete truth. The Armenians play on certain Jewish sensitivities; the so-called "Hitler statement" is one. Some Jews take this to be true. Hence, the Armenians exploit it fully. The same Armenian circles try to create the impression that the Turkish persecuted not only the Armenians, but all the minorities, including the Jews. Quite a number of Jews also believe this to be true.

Undistorted truth, however, is otherwise. While the Turks stand out as a nation stretching a helping hand to the Jews in the most distressing periods of their history, pages of the Armenian annals, on the other hand, reveal serious inclinations of anti-semitism. The Armenian (and Greek) attacks on the Jewish people were prevented or curtailed, several times, by the firmness of the Turkish governments of the time. There are events, nevertheless, in which the Armenian extremists have been successful in spilling Jewish blood as well. The massacre of Jews in Erzurum and in Batum in 1913 illustrates the point. (14)

Anti-semitism extended in the Armenian circles during the rise of Nazism. A publication of the Armenian Information Service in New York, entitled Dashnak Collaboration with the Nazi Regime, purports to show that Armenian sympathies with racims have reached dangerous proportions. The following quotations from the August 19, 20 and 21 1936 issues of the (Armenian daily) Hairenik (See Annexes 5, 6, 7 and 8) expose something much more than prejudice and bigotry:

"Jews being the most fanatical nationalists and race-worshippers.... are compelled to create an atmosphere... of internationalism and world citizenship in order to preserve their race... As the British use battleships to occupy lands.... Jews use internationalism or communism as a weapon.... Sometimes it is difficult to eradicate these poisonous elements when they have struck deep root like a chronic disease. And when it become necessary for a people to eradicate them.... these attempts are regarded revolutionary. During a surgical operation, the flow of blood is a natural thing.... Under such conditions, dictatorships seem to have a role of saviour." (15)

The above statements are incredible in terms of their malevolence, hatred and cruelty. The description of the flow of blood as a "natural thing" and those accountable for such barbarity as "saviours" were not mere narratives. Not only did the Armenians attack the Jews of Bucharest in May 1935 and the Jews of Salonica in August of the same year, but also the volunteer Armenian troops under the wings of Hitler's Germany during the Second World War were used in rounding up Jews and other "undesirables" destined for the Nazi concentration camps. The same circles published a German-language magazine, which was fascist and anti-semitic, supporting Nazi doctrines in respect to the extermination of the "inferior" races. Since the Jews had more deadly enemies at the time, they might have missed that "junior partner" of the Nazi anti-semites.

Christopher J. Walker reminds us of this partnership, nevertheless, in the following words (for a photocopy, see Annex 9).

"There remains the incontestable fact that relations between the Nazis and the Dashnags living in the occupied areas were close and active. On 30 December 1941 an Armenian battalion was created by a decision of the Wehrmacht, known as the Armenian 812th Battalion. It was commanded by Dro, and was made of a small number of committed recruits, and a larger number of Armenians from the prisoners of war taken by the Nazis in their sweep eastwards. Early on the total number was 8,000; this number later grew to 20,000. The 812th Battalion was operational in the Crimea and the North Caucasus.

"A year later, on 15 December 1942, an "Armenian National Council" was granted official recognition by Alfred Rosenberg, the German minister of the occupied areas. The Council's president was Professor Ardashes Abeghian, its vice-president Abraham Giulkhandanian, and it numbered among its members Nzhdeh and Vahan Papazian. From that date until the end of 1944 it published a weekly journal, Armenian, edited by Viken Shant (the son of Levon), who also broadcast on Radio Berlin." (16)

The Turks, on the other hand, have a noble tradition of offering their land and all the opportunities in it to the Jewish people. In the Ottoman Empire, each religious community established and maintained its own institutions. The Ottomans followed the traditional Islamic policy of tolerance toward the "people of the Book" (thimmi), that is, the Christians, Jews and others who accepted the same God. Many Ottoman citizens, formerly under Christian rule, found in Turkish sovereignty deliverance from oppression. The Ottomans recognized three such basic communities in addition to that of the Moslems. The largest was the Christian Orthodox, which included the Slavs plus those of Greek and Romanian heritage. The Jews were given the right to form their own community led by the Grand Rabbi (Hamam Basi). After having escaped from the Spanish inquisition (1492), they were allowed tremendous autonomy which improved their status markedly. The Jews settled in Istanbul, Salonica, Edirne, Bursa, Amasya, Tokat and other cities in the Ottoman Empire. Not all Jews are properly informed of this historical fact, nor of the similar helping hand of the Turks extended to groups of German democrats, including Jews, who were trying to escape the horrors of Hitler's Germany. The year of 1992, or the 500th anniversary of the expulsions from Spain may be a good occasion to remember the significance of the Ottoman offer of refuge.

The Ottoman state assured the religious and civil autonomy of all the non-Moslems. Thus was created the system of self-government of the Christians and Jews living with the Turks. Many Jews were further attracted to the Ottoman society as they were subjected to new waves of persecution. The unfettered freedom that they have enjoyed and the respected place that their leaders occupied in the state hierarchy may be seen in the publications authored by the Jews themselves. (17) It is important to know that the Ottoman Empire was probably the only country that has no black spot in the history of so many centuries of relations with the Jewish people. Anti-semitism never existed in Turkey. What is more, it was a haven when life elsewhere was hell for the Jew. This is how a prominent man of arts, of Jewish origin, describes a fact of crucial importance: The Ottoman territories "knew an unparalleled epoch of religious tolerance at the time." (18) This is the truth-totally and absolutely!

When I had summarized, in an article that appeared in a leading Swiss daily, (19) the Turkish views on the Armenian issue and included in them a reference to Ottoman respect for Jewish rights as well, a reader (Beatrice Favre) replied me in writing, four days later, apparently seeing no connection between the two issues. The Armenians feel free to play to Jewish sensitivities, but don't the Turks have the right to remind the third parties of some historical facts that shed light on Turkish attitudes towards the Jew? What an hypocrisy facts that shed

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light on Turkish attitudes towards the Jews? What an hypocrisy! My answer to the Swiss reader was sent to the same paper but was not published. It is through such methods that some Jews are made to support a community with many black spots in their history in connection with the Jewish people -and against a nation (the Turks) proud on account of a brilliant record set at times of unusual distress for the Jews.

The majority of the Jewish people also do not know that the Armenian religious community enjoyed similar autonomy, with no adverse event with the Turks until the revolutionary Armenian societies started campaigns of terror. It is also of great import to distinguish between the law-abiding Jewish citizens of Germany, who contributed their labour and genius to that country but were nevertheless subjected to a genocide, on the one hand, and the Armenians, having lived with the Turks in peace for centuries, opting for terrorism since the 1880's and joining the ranks of the invading enemies, as exemplified not only with Turkish, but also with Armenian documents, on the other hand. The Jews also do not know that when the Armenians formed their own government after the First World War, they exterminated the Turks living on territory then controlled by the Dashnak Government.

If the Jews had known the particulars of these historical facts, would any of them supported the Armenian "cause"?

Footnotes

1. The fact that the so-called Talat Pasha "order" that appears on top of the Hitler "statement" is fake has been dealt with in the following booklet: Türkkaya Ataöv, The Andonian "Documents", Attributed to Talat Pasha, Are Forgeries!... Ankara, Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi, 1984. Based on a recent (1983) research by the Turkish Historical Society, this booklet in English, French and German evaluates the Andonian "documents", hitherto attributed to Talat Pasha by Armenians and ill-informed Western writers and concludes that they are fake. These documents, first printed in 1920, had since been used as "proof" of deep Ottoman Government involvement in the 1915 events. Had these "documents" not been concerned with the Turkish and Armenians, no commentator would have even touched them.
2. For instance: George Adomian, "Armenia-No Room at the Inn". The Armenian Weekly, Boston, Vol. L-60-2568 (June 11, 1983), p.20.
3. For instance: Arman Arabian, "Time to Remember the 'Other', Los Angeles Times, April 22, 1979, part iv, p.5 quoted in Normal Ravitch, "The Armenian Catastrophe: of History, Murder and Sin", Encounter, London, Vol. LVII, No 6 (December 1981), p. 72 Also see: Türkkaya Ataöv, "The Armenian Question", Encounter London, Vol. LVIII, No.5 (May 1982), pp.91-94; Türkkaya Ataöv, "Hitler and the Armenians", ibid., Vol. LIX, No. 6,(December 1982), p.92.
4. Türkkaya Ataöv, A "Stetement" Wrongly Attributed to Mustafa Kemal, Ankara, Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi, 1984.
5. William L.Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, New York, Crest, 1060, p. 41.
6. A.J.P. Taylor, The Origins of the Second of the Second World War, Middlesex, Penguin, 1963, p. 101 .
7. Tribunal Militaire International, Proces des Grands Criminels de Guerre devant le Tribunal Militaire International: Nuremberg, 14 November 1945-1er October 1946, Vol. XXVI, pp. 338f and 5231.
8. For instance: The New York Times and The London Times, November 24, 1945, pp. 7 and 4 respectively.

9. Armenia: the Survival of a Nation, Letchworth, Hertfordshire, Garden City Press, 1980, p. 362.
10. World Council of Churches, Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, Armenian: the Continuing Tragedy, Geneva, 1984, p. 28.
11. Helmut Heiber, Lagebesprechungen im Führerhauptquartier: Protokollfragmente aus Hitlers militärischen Konferenzen: 1942-1945, München, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, n.d., p. 46.
12. For instance, see: Türkkaya Ataöv, Turkish Foreign Policy: 1939-1945, Ankara, Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi, 1963.
13. For instance: Robert K. Woetzel, The Nuremberg Trials in International Law with a Postlude on the Eichmann Case, London, Stevens, 1962.
14. Reference to the events in 1913 (and to those in 1935 below) are from the following source: Kerim C. Kevenk, "Defamation Campaign", (U.S.A., unpublished manuscript, pp. 2-3).
15. Quoted in to following Armenian source: James G. Mandalian, Who Are the Dashnags? Boston, Hairenik Press, 1944, pp. 13-14. Mandalian's book is written to be a reply to another Armenian author Avedis Deroonian's (alias John Roy Carlson) book entitled Undercover and his articles in the Propaganda Battlefront, both of which are now difficult to find even in the U.S. libraries. The quotation is originally from A. Deroonian, who apparently includes the Armenian Revolutionary Federation in his list of fascist organizations operating in the U.S.
16. Walker, op. Cit., p. 357.
17. Avram Galante, Histoire des Juifs d'Istanbul, Istanbul, t. I-II, 1941-1942; Avram Galante, Histoire des Juifs d'Anatolie, Istanbul, 1939.
18. Peter Ustinov, Dear Me, Middlesex, U.K., Penguin Books, 1977, p.22.