**(6-27) War and Genocide**

Memoir of the Armenian Genocide (1915-1918)

Source: Grigoris Balakian, *Armenian Golgotha*, NY: Vintage, 2009

Background: Between 1915 and 1918 over one million ethnic Armenians living in modern day Turkey were murdered or marched into the desert to die of exposure, thirst, or starvation by the Turkish military, police, and militias. In 1922, an Armenian priest named Father Grigoris Balakian published an account of his deportation from the city of Constantinople, now known as Istanbul, with 250 other Armenian intellectual and political leaders. In the edited excerpt included here, Father Balakian reports on conversations with a police captain named Shukri in charge of escorting the prisoners. He titled the chapter “The Confessions of a Slayer Captain” (139-150). Read excerpts A – E and answer questions 1 – 4.

Questions

1. Who was the author of this memoir?

2. According to the Turkish officer, how many Armenians were killed in this district?

3. How were the people murdered?

4. In your opinion, based on this evidence should the treatment of Armenians in Turkey be considered genocide? Explain.

A. “Now it’s not secret anymore; about 86,000 Armenians were massacred. We too were surprised, because government didn’t know that there was such a great Armenian population in the province of Ankara. However this includes a few thousand other Armenians from surrounding provinces who were deported on these roads. They were put on this road so that we could cleanse them.”

B. “After we had massacred all the males of the city of Yozgat – about eight thousand to nine thousand of them in the valleys near these sites, it was the women’s turn . . . Every woman, girl, and boy was searched down to their underwear. We collected all the gold, silver, diamond jewelry, and other valuables, as well as the gold pieces sewn into the hems of their clothes.”

C. “After stripping them all of their possessions and leaving them only what they were wearing, we made them all turn back on foot to the broad promontory [overlook] located near the city of Yozgat . . . Ten or twelve thousand Muslims were waiting there . . . The government order was clear: all were to be massacred, and nobody was to be spared.”

D. “I had the police soldiers announce to the people that whoever wished to select a virgin girl or young bride could do so immediately . . . Thus about two hundred-fifty girls and young brides were selected by the people and the police soldiers.”

E. “It’s wartime, and bullets are expensive. So people grabbed whatever they could from their villages – axes, hatchets, scythes, sickles, clubs, hoes, pickaxes, shovels – and they did the killing accordingly . . . The Sheikh had issued a *fatwa* [order] to annihilate the Armenians as traitors to our state . . . I, as a military officer, carried out the order of my king.”

# Events in Europe: A Chronology

1933: Hitler seizes control of Germany

1934: Italy invades Ethiopia

1935: German Jews lose political rights

1936: Germany reoccupies the Rhineland/violates WWI treaty

Civil War in Spain

Germany and Italy sign Berlin-Rome Axis

1938: Germany occupies Austria and part of Czechoslovakia

Great Britain and France back down at Munich

German Jews attacked by Nazis

1939: Italy invades Albania

Germany and Russia agree not to fight

Germany invades Czechoslovakia and Poland

Great Britain and France declare war on Germany

Japan joins German-Italians alliance

1940: Germany defeats France

1941: Germany attacks the Soviet Union

# Events in Asia: A Chronology

1931: Japan occupies Manchuria

1937: Japan invades China

Japan “accidentally” attacks U.S. ships

1940: Japan allies with Germany and Italy

1941: Japan seizes South East Asia

Japan attacks the Philippines and Hawaii

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill (1941-1944): “I have always said that if Great Britain were defeated in war I hoped we should find a Hitler to lead us back to our rightful position among the nations . . . He (Hitler) embodied the revolt of Germany against the hard fortunes of war . . . Adolf Hitler is Fuehrer because he exemplifies and enshrines the will of Germany . . . I will not pretend that if I had to choose between Communism and Nazism, I would choose Communism.”

**Three Views on the Emergence of a Cold War after World War II**

Questions

1. With which view do you tend to agree the most? Why?

2. What valid points are made in the other arguments? Explain.

Nikolai Novikov (Soviet ambassador to Washington) [September 1946]: The countries of Europe and Asia are experiencing a colossal need for consumer goods, industrial and transportation equipment etc. Such a situation provides American monopolistic capital with prospects for enormous shipments of goods and the importation of capital into these countries--a circumstance which would permit it to infiltrate their national economies. Such a development would mean a serious strengthening of the economic position of the US in the whole world and would be a stage on the road to world domination by the US.

Harry Truman, “Truman Doctrine” (March 12, 1947): To ensure the peaceful development of nations, free from coercion, the United States has taken a leading part in establishing the United Nations....We shall not realize our objectives, however, unless we are willing to help free people to maintain their free institutions and their national integrity against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them totalitarian regimes... I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free people who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures. It is necessary only to glance at a map to realize that the survival and integrity of the Greek nation are of grave importance in a much wider situation....It would be an unspeakable tragedy if these countries [i.e. Greece and Turkey], which have struggled so long against overwhelming odds, should lose that victory for which they have sacrificed so much..... The seeds of totalitarian regimes are nurtured by misery and want. They spread and grow in the evil soil of poverty and strife. They reach their full growth when the hope of a people for a better life has died. We must keep that hope alive. The free peoples of the world look to us for support in maintaining their freedoms.

George Kennan, “The Doctrine of Containment” (July 1947): It is clear that the main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of a long-term, patient, but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies. Soviet pressure against the free institutions of the Western world is something that can be contained by the adroit and vigilant application of counter-force at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points.