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Armenia Genocide, 1989-1990.

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RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER
PRESIDENT

UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 (212) 249-0100

February 13, 1990
18 Shevat 5750

Rev. Roger Minassian, Chairman
and
Allan Y. Jendian, Secretary
Life March Subcommittee
Armenian Community Council
of the San Joaquin Valley
P.O. Box 11844
Fresno, CA 93775

Dear Friends:

As you know, Rabbi Schindler is out-of-the-country and not due to return until the end of the month. Almost immediately on his return he will be off again for an extended trip to a number of UAHC congregations. Indeed, his travels make it impossible for him to participate in the Life March and events planned for March 4-6, 1990 in Washington, D.C.

I am sharing the various materials you provided on your plans with our Religious Action Center in Washington. They will be in a position to provide assistance to your community in making the March known to our constituency and in any other way possible. Rabbi David Saperstein will be your initial contact and he will determine just how and what the RAC can do to render aid in this major undertaking.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

Edith J. Miller
Assistant to the President

cc: Rabbi David Saperstein
Rabbi Kenneth I. Segel

*James DS
& gave him
Greg. as he
was here
2/13*

Armenian Community Council
of the San Joaquin Valley
P. O. Box 11644, Fresno, CA 93775 - 431-1287

Contact Persons:

Allan Y. Jendian Rev. Roger Minassian
Res (209) 431-1287 Off (209) 229-2915
Off (209) 487-5657 FAX (209) 229-6431

TO: RABBI ALEXANDER SCHINDLER
ATTN: M. SEGDITH MILLER

Attention

We of the Armenian Community Council of San Joaquin Valley appeal to our national religious and community leaders to provide national networking and leadership to a "Life March" to Washington, D.C. as described on the enclosed. Rev. Roger Minassian is the clergyman who asked Rabbi Kenneth T. Segal for Jewish support of the Genocide. Now that we have it, we and Rabbi Segal are looking for Armenian National Leaders to make arrangements for the march and coordinate our efforts with the Religious Action Center of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

Mr. Al Lehn, Director of National Affairs for Senator Robert Dole, has endorsed this Life March as vital to passage of SJ Res 212, the Armenian Genocide Resolution, as well as to provision of increased federal aid to Armenia. Our Fresno congressional offices have been contacted, including Congressmen Chip Pashayan, Gary Condit and Richard Lehman, and they are unanimous in their enthusiastic support and willingness to help. We are certain that other congressmen would be equally supportive.

We have waited for and recently have appealed to the Washington offices of the Armenian Assembly and Armenian National Committee for their leadership in a national event. They are supportive of such an event but, due to the present situation in Armenia, they are unable to direct this march.

Now is the time for our nation to stand up and be counted. This will be a great media and lobbying event to appeal to conscience and to seek morality and justice. We ask for a united effort in which God alone will receive the credit and our martyrs alone will be honored. The Fresno Armenian community and thousands of other Armenians are awaiting your reply.

Cordially,

Rev. Roger Minassian

Rev. Roger Minassian, Chairman
Life March Subcommittee

Allan Y. Jendian

Allan Y. Jendian, Secretary

*Both RABBI SEGDITH will
CALL YOU RE: THIS
ON TUESDAY
Rm*

Armenian Community Council
of the San Joaquin Valley
P. O. Box 11844, Fresno, CA - 431-1287

First Pres.	Rev. Bernard Guekquezian
Holy Trinity	Fr. Hrant Serabian
St. Gregory	Fr. Kevork Arakelian Seth Abajian
St. Mary	Fr. Artoon Sempadian Harry Kaloustian
St. Paul	Fr. Shahe Altounian John Stephens
Sts. Sahag-Mesrob	Fr. Datev Tatouljian
Assembly	Allan Y. Jendian
ANC	Richard Darmanian
AGBU	Bob Der Mugerdechian, Sr
Knights of Vartan	Steven Adams
Daughters of Vartan	Salpi Adams
Arm. Studies, CSUF	Barlow Der Mugerdechian
Arm. Students, CSUF	Jacqueline Sisljan
Arm. Comm. School	Assadour Assadourian
AACL (Citizens League)	Penny Miripian-Emerzian
ARF	Raffi Santikian
ARS	Pat Savoian
APAO (public affair)	Lucille Gahvejian
Calif Home	Jack Gahvejian
Hamaskayin	Varoujan Der Simonian
Homenetmen	Vrej Karamanlian
Vasbouragan	Shakeh Bazerkanian
Dikranagerd	Nubar Tokatlian
Radio Hour	Krikor Kohayan
Ex-Officio Western Diocese	Fr. Vartan Kasparian Vicar General
Ex-Officio Arm. Evang. Union	Rev. Harry Missirlian Acting Minister to Union

Tuesday 8 a.m. Prayer Breakfast for Congressmen and Teams
March 6

10 a.m. to 12 noon, 2 to 5 p.m. Lobbying

12:30 p.m. Prayer Vigil in front of the Turkish Embassy
"Love your enemies and pray for those who
persecute you."

Late afternoon - Return Travel Home for those who need
to leave

5:30 p.m. Capitol Reception for Supporters and Teams

Wednesday - Saturday - Follow-up
March 7 March 10

At its February 9, 1990 meeting, the Armenian Community Council of San Joaquin Valley decided to go to Washington and is now receiving enthusiastic support throughout the nation. We are seeking citizen lobbying team members from as many states as possible. If you meet the qualifications listed to be a full-time team member (Sunday through Tuesday), raising your own support, call Rev. Roger Minassian at (209)229-2915. The hotel cost for 3 nights in Washington will be \$160 (double-occupancy) or \$320 (single-occupancy), with 11% room taxes included. Team members will need to be at the same hotel. You are on your own for food, at many nearby restaurants. Remember that discount airfare reservations must be made 14 days in advance (February 16)! We need to be Armenians, to be decisive and to act quickly! Call me!

All East Coast Armenians and Churches are invited to worship on the West Steps of the Capitol at noon on March 4. Buses, planes, trains, whatever it takes, let's be there. See you in Washington. All groups for Sunday please inform Fr. Vertanes Kalayjian at (202)363-1923 by February 26 as to the number coming so he can plan for sufficient chairs at the Ecumenical Service.

Be sure to immediately contact your local Reformed Rabbi and thank him for his support of the Armenian Genocide Resolution. Then inform him of our march and its purposes and invite him to come to Washington as part of a team and offer to pay his way. Certainly in every congregation and organization there are many Armenians who love righteousness and their nation enough to give to this great effort. "If you can't go, you can help send someone!" To God be the glory.

TO: RABBI ALEXANDER SCHINDLER
ATTN: MS EDITH MILLER

Valley

THE FRESNO BEE Saturday, February 10, 1990

Armenian march planned

By JOHN G. TAYLOR
Bee staff writer

The San Joaquin Valley's Armenian community is attempting to hammer home the importance of the congressional genocide resolution and other issues by calling on Armenian and Jewish communities around the country to come together for a march on Washington.

The "Armenian Life March" will take place March 4-6 in Washington. The timing was chosen to coincide with a potential Senate filibuster against SJ 212, the genocide resolution, which has been opposed by the Bush administration. Turkey and some Democratic and Republican lawmakers.

Backers of the resolution say it would be approved if a vote were held. The measure would establish

April 24 as a national day of remembrance for the 1.5 million Armenians killed from 1915-23.

"This is an appeal to conscience and a seeking of morality and justice," said Alan Y. Jendian, council secretary. "Fresno is taking the leadership role, but we're going to start networking..."

The mobilization by the Armenian Community Council of the San Joaquin Valley came at a Thursday night meeting, following a mailing to about 20 Armenian communities nationwide requesting help.

Jendian said favorable reaction has come from Boston, New York, Detroit, Washington and Los Angeles. He added that it was too soon to determine how many people might undertake the trip.

A tentative schedule for events in Washington includes:

• March 4 — A noon ecumenical service on the Capitol steps. Jendian said the Armenian churches in Washington may cancel their Sunday services and ask their congregations to gather at the Capitol for worship.

• March 5 — Daylong lobbying at House and Senate offices and a silent candlelight vigil at 5 p.m. outside the White House. Jendian said the hope is to form 50 lobbying teams of four people each. He said he'd like each team to include an Armenian college student, an Armenian cleric, an Armenian layman who is a massacre survivor or community leader and a rabbi.

• March 6 — A prayer breakfast with lawmakers, more door-to-door lobbying and a vigil outside the Turkish embassy. Jendian said the theme of the vigil is "to lobby your

enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

A vigil and rally is scheduled Feb. 21 behind the Fresno County Courthouse.

Pulling together of local and national efforts faces two obstacles: time and money.

The national offices of two principal organizations — the Armenian National Committee and the Armenian Assembly of America — have expressed concern in the past over sending community delegations to Washington.

However, the lawmakers the Rev. Roger Minassian has talked with say "Come on ahead, we need you, it'll be a great event."

Minassian is pastor of Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church.

See March, Page B2

A GROUP OF ALL CHURCHES
AND 20 COMMUNITY
ORGANIZATIONS

March

Continued from Page B1

"It would be nice to have a sizable delegation," said Richard Darmatian, co-chairman of the community council and director of the Fresno chapter of the Armenian National Committee. "But anything we do will be effective. Anything we do will have an impact."

"We have something unique to offer," Minassian said. "We're not lobbyists. We're common citizens. We're Armenians and Jews, and we want to appeal to the consciences of lawmakers and the community."

Jendian estimated the cost of airfare, lodging and meals at \$750 per person. He said individuals are responsible for their own expenses, adding that a block of rooms has been secured at a hotel in Virginia.

Jendian, who is also chairman of the Fresno chapter of the Armenian Assembly of America, asked those who can't make the trip to donate money so others can.

He said contributions should be sent to the Armenian Community Council of the San Joaquin Valley, P.O. Box 11844, Fresno CA 93775. More information on the trip can be obtained from Minassian at 229-2915. Minassian and Jendian are co-chairmen of the march committee.

Rabbi Kenneth I. Segel has

agreed to serve as liaison to the Jewish community and enlist support from the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Segel and Temple Beth Israel secured passage of a resolution commemorating the genocide at a convention of the Reform Judaism organization last year in New Orleans. The group represents as many as 1.5 million Reform Jews in the United States and Canada.

Jendian said the "Armenian Life March" was so named "because our people went through a death march and because of the problems in Transcaucasia [Armenia, Azerbaijan]."

The Armenian Community Council of the San Joaquin Valley was formed recently to address the genocide, help cultural heritage to thrive and deal with other special needs.

WE HAVE BOOKED ONE
RIGHT NEXT TO THE
CAPITOL INSTEAD!
(THE ONE UAHG USES,
WE FIND

(209)

ARMENIAN LIFE MARCH TO WASHINGTON

March 3-6, 1990

"You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free"

- Purpose: 1. To encourage adoption of SJRes 212 The Armenian Genocide Resolution by the Congress and the President
2. To demonstrate our solidarity with the Armenian and Jewish victims of pogroms in the Transcaucasian Republics.
3. To request increased foreign aid and emergency assistance to Armenia

Schedule

Saturday Travel day
March 3

Sunday 12 noon Ecumenical Worship Service on Capitol Steps
March 4 Senators, Congressmen. All East Coast Armenian Churches to worship at Capitol. Synagogues Invited. National Council of Churches Reps.

3 p.m. Lobbying Team Building and Training

8 p.m. Rally and Prayer Service for Teams

Monday 9:30 a.m. to 12 noon, 1 to 4 p.m Lobbying
March 5

50 Teams: an Armenian Clergyman
a Jewish Rabbi
an Armenian Layperson (Survivor?)
an Armenian college student

Need: 18 Etchmiadzin Clergy
18 Antelias Clergy
9 Evangelical Clergy
5 Catholic Clergy

Requirements: 1. American citizen and registered voter

2. Articulate (English) and Informed

3. Able to pray aloud for each congressman, if desired

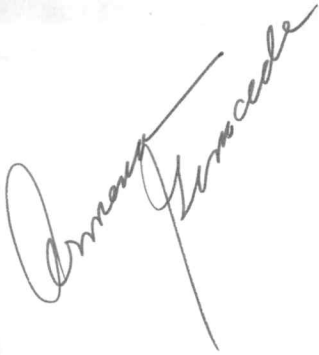
4. Each parish (agency) raise own support funds

5. Bring layperson and collegian from own parish, if appropriate

5 p.m. Candlelight Vigil in front of White House

8 p.m. Team Meeting

Rev. 3



February 9, 1990
14 Shevat 5750

Ms. Tina Hazarian
Apartment 4A
250 Fort Washington
New York, NY 10032

Dear Tina:

It was thoughtful of you to write and share your appreciation of the UAHC resolution on Armenian Genocide. I am delighted that our action means so much to you and your people.

I, too, hope that the day will soon come when all humankind will live together in peace and justice.

With every good wish I am,

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

TINA HAZARIAN

APARTMENT 4A

250 FT. WASHINGTON AVENUE

NEW YORK, NY 10032

Rab

T

250 Fort Washington Ave.
NY NY 10032
Jan 25, 1990

Rabbi Alexander Schindler
President, U.A.H.C.
838 5th Avenue
NY NY 10021

Dear Rabbi Schindler,

I'm writing to Thank you
deeply and to Thank The U.A.H.C. for
passing The resolution on The Armenian
Genocide.

I just read of it in an
Armenian newspaper, Hye Sharzoon.

I am a first-generation
American-Armenian. My entire family
was effected by The Genocide.

I grew up in New York; all
my "best friends" were Jewish;

(over)

*no longer
and we
alone
ans
12/11*

News from
JEWISH COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL
OF SAN FRANCISCO, MARIN AND THE PENINSULA

Suite 301
121 Steuart Street
San Francisco, Ca 94105
(415) 957-1551

CONTACT: Myra Weiss

The Jewish Community Relations Council of San Francisco, the Peninsula and Marin and Sonoma Counties (JCRC), which represents over 60 synagogues and community organizations in the greater Bay Area, has unanimously adopted a resolution to support U.S. Senate Joint Resolution 212, which would designate April 24, 1990 a "National Day of Remembrance of the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1923."

The adoption of this Congressional legislation would memorialize the massacre of 1,000,000 Armenians by the Ottoman Army during World War I, prior to the establishment of the Republic of Turkey.

JCRC Chairman Ephraim Margolin stated in a letter to the Right Reverend Bishop Aris Shirvanian of the Armenian Apostolic Church of San Francisco: "Nearly all nations have been victimized during the course of history. Yet being singled out for genocide is a horror that, fortunately, has been visited upon very few peoples. We in the Jewish community realize that no bill nor even official recognition of the attempt at genocide can ever truly ease the pain of that period of our history. But, for the sake of those who died and for the sake of future generations, to forget would be the ultimate tragedy. We applaud the efforts of the Armenian community to educate those in this country about 'the forgotten genocide.' A bill such as Senate Joint Resolution 212 is an important step in the public education about the attempts at Armenian genocide."

The JCRC also wrote letters to both U.S. Senators from California, commending them for their support of the bill.

Armenia

*OK
05/11*

December 19, 1989
21 Kislev 5750

Mr. & Mrs. A. H. Berberian
5865 East Hamilton
Fresno, CA 93727

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Berberian:

It was gracious of you to write and share your appreciation of the UAHC Resolution on Armenian Genocide as well as my own comments on the subject.

I appreciate your thoughtfulness.

My warm good wishes at this holiday season. Have a wonderful New Year blessed with health and happiness.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler



Dec. 15, 1989

Dear Rabbi Schneider:

I wish to express my deepest feelings of gratitude on the stand you have taken on the Armenian Genocide. The interest and compassion you have shown has been a big help towards our cause.

I can't thank you enough from the bottom of my heart. May God bless you always and keeps you in perfect health.

Yours Sincerely

Arca Biberian

Armenia

December 19, 1989
21 Kislev 5750



±

Elizabeth Nahabedian
10465 East Conejo Avenue
Kingsburg, CA 93631

Dear Ms. Nahabedian:

I very much appreciate your gracious letter. It was thoughtful of you to write, and I was deeply touched by your comments.

At this holiday season, I express my warm good wishes to you and your dear ones for a very healthy and happy New Year.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Dec. 14. 1989

Honorable Rabbi Alexander Schindler
Our (Armenians') Beloved Brother

Excuse me if I will not be able to express
our (Armenians') gratitude to you and to
your congregation for your courageous stand
on behalf of our just and true cause. You see
I am the only survivor of my and my grand-
ma's family. How can I describe all the
torture we went through to all who have
not been through, just thinking about it
my whole body is shaking. That's why we
do not want to speak quite often, just ^{as} the
Israelites can't describe their feelings. You
see it means to be through again and
again. We get nightmares all over again.

Thank you very very much.
God bless you all

With much gratitude

Elizabeth Nahabedian

Jewish leaders fight Armenian genocide designation

By JON GREENE

WASHINGTON—Prominent Jewish lobbyists took the lead last week in fighting a Senate initiative to commemorate the Turkish massacre of Armenians in World War I as an act of genocide.

Despite their lobbying against the bill, the Senate Judiciary Committee approved the legislation 8-6 on Oct. 17.

Many Jews are concerned about the ramifications of the legislative battle on Israel's relations with Turkey. They are also concerned about accusations that Israel was involved in lobbying against the bill. The philosophical debate over whether the Armenian massacre, like the Holocaust, should be considered genocide has left even more questions for the Jewish community.

Some of the high profile lobbyists who worked against the bill on behalf of the Turkish government are leading figures in the Washington Jewish community: Morris Amitay, a former director of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC); Richard Perle, a former assistant secretary of defense; and Douglas Feith, a former assistant secretary of defense.

Turkey, which sent several of its leaders to Washington to combat the legislation.

The resolution, sponsored by Senate Minority leader Robert Dole (R-KS), has not yet been scheduled for a full Senate vote, perhaps because of uncertainty about its passage. Fifteen of the bill's co-sponsors have dropped off in the face of aggressive lobbying. Forty-seven senators have stayed on as co-sponsors.

For the measure to become law, it must also be approved by the House and signed by the president.

Israel Implicated

Israeli journalists reported this week that the Israeli government asked American Jewish organizations to fight the measure, which would designate April 24, 1990 "a national day of remembrance of the 75th anniversary of the Armenian genocide."

Israel is interested in improving relations with Turkey, which were downgraded in 1981 to the charge d'affaires level.

Israel is also mindful of Turkey's importance as an escape route for Jews fleeing Iran. And Turkey has a thriving Jewish community, which Israel wants to protect.

lobbying in some places," said one aide.

The Israeli newspaper *Hadashot* reported that Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesperson Moti Amichai had confirmed that there had been approaches made to influential American Jews on the matter.

Israeli officials, however, as well as American Jewish groups, insisted that they do not oppose the measure.

"Israel is very sensitive to the suffering of Armenians," said Amichai in a message delivered to the Washington embassy. "Israeli embassies are not going to interfere in this matter."

"I've had no communications with Israeli officials," said Seymour Reich, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. "The conference has not addressed the issue."

AIPAC, the American Jewish Committee, B'nai B'rith, the American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith announced they would remain on the sidelines of the conflict.

"The Jewish community has an enormous stake in the credibility of its position on the issue of genocide," said

unquestioned assumption that the Turks committed a genocide," Feith said.

The Jewish lobbyists for the Turkish cause were not alone in fighting the resolution.

President Bush made a 1988 campaign promise to support congressional action commemorating the Armenian victims of "attempted genocide." But Bush recalled Ambassador Morton Abramowitz from Turkey to help the administration lobby against the legislation last week.

"In light of the administration's very intense lobbying, [the campaign pledge] is very disappointing," said Armenian Assembly of America spokesperson Carole Long.

Judicious Decisions

During the Judiciary Committee debate on the resolution, Sen. Howard Metzenbaum (D-OH) offered an amendment that attempted to water down the political message.

The Metzenbaum initiative would have established a day of remembrance for the "tragic loss of life that occurred during War World I in the Ottoman Empire."

"It may not be what everybody wants. I think the Turks prefer that

"I myself concluded that I don't think it was genocide," the Jewish senator added. "Certainly there were something like 1.4 million Armenians who lost their lives and one has to feel a deep sense of sorrow and I think it's appropriate to have a day of remembrance for them. But I believe it goes too far to describe it as genocide."

Committee chairman Joseph Biden (D-DE) and Sen. Paul Simon (D-IL) took the lead against the Metzenbaum amendment, which was defeated in a 7-7 tie.

"I do not think this is acceptable," Simon said. "This amendment talks about the tragic loss of life. But that could have been an earthquake. We're dealing with something where people were massacred because of their national heritage and that's genocide," he added.

"I think the mere fact that we are having to debate whether or not there was a genocide is evidence of the fact why the Armenians feel so strongly about this," Biden said.

After the vote, Dole made a veiled reference to the lack of Jewish support on the bill.

"I want to express some disappointment that some Americans who have

L.I. Jewish World



ALLAN - AS BACKGROUND FOR YOU.
FRESNO SENT AMENDED RESOLUTION TO
DAVIDSON - WHICH COMMITTEE WILL
CONSIDER - THEY MAY COME
WITH NEW RESOLUTION + REQUISITE
SIGNATURES.

EDITORIAL

J. I. Jewish World

Morals, diplomacy and genocide in Armenia

The Israeli newspaper *Ma'ariv* has expressed its outrage over the fact that the Israeli government has been pushing the American Jewish community to lobby against a Congressional resolution commemorating the 75th anniversary of the massacre of Armenians by the Turks. We, too, find these reports extremely troubling. We hope that the denials coming from the Israeli government and American Jewish organizations (reported elsewhere in this issue) are true.

Ma'ariv writes: "These are reports that the reason for this [lobbying] is a promise given by the Turkish Government to Israel to improve relations, and perhaps to raise the level of relations to the limbo they are in now."

Someone in the Jewish community," the paper continues, "aided to wage this campaign... [someone who] does not want a petition for the Holocaust, and therefore is not interested in commemorating the Armenian holocaust."

In the eyes of the world, the Armenian sacrifice is no less important than the Jewish Holocaust. Those who very justifiably appeal to the conscience of the world not to forget or to replay the Jewish Holocaust cannot demand that the sacrifice of another nation be played down, for any reason whatsoever.

Perhaps if the world had not remained silent about the murder of the Armenians, it would have been more difficult to murder 6 million Jews a quarter of a century later.

Ma'ariv concludes, "The very dubious gain of an improvement in relations with Turkey cannot justify a step that is so immoral, unconscionable and impractical as Israeli or Jewish aid

to the Armenian atrocity and its victims."

At the beginning of this century, first the Ottomans and then the Turks were determined to prevent the Armenians from gaining their independence and reestablishing their ancient and much-conquered kingdom—a kingdom which, legend has it, was founded by one of Noah's descendants. In 1915, the Armenians mounted a resistance campaign against a Turkish policy of forced transfer. By 1921, the Armenians had lost somewhere close to 1.5 million people and the last vestiges of independence. Armenia, by treaty, was parceled out in pieces to Turkey, the Soviet Union and Iran.

Turkey's claim is that it is wrong to characterize what happened as genocide. Instead, the Turks argue that it was a civil war that resulted in massive numbers of dead on both sides.

Historians continue to debate the facts of what happened to the Armenians. There seems little doubt, however, that Turkey was intent on eliminating Armenia, a rebellious entity, from the Turkish landscape. Whether its motives were genocidal or territorial, the results were the same. There is no Armenia and the remnants of the Armenian people are scattered around the world.

In addition to the Senate resolution, it is also reported that Turkey is concerned about the U.S. Memorial Holocaust Museum being built in Washington. There are plans to include material in the museum's library involving genocidal attacks against people other than the Jews. At the very least, the museum is likely to include a famous question asked by Hitler when he was making a case for his "final solution": "Who remembers

It is time Turkey—a country that does much better than most of its neighbors in terms of respecting its minorities and the human rights of all of its citizens—stopped fighting a 75-year-old war. Turkey should express its sorrow for what happened, share in mourning the dead, and make peace, at last, with the Armenian people. Turkey could contribute greatly to the resolution of this issue by making all its archives available to historians, something that it may be prepared, at last, to do.

The members of the Jewish community who have taken Turkey's side in this sad battle contribute nothing to the process of healing that must take place between Turkey and the Armenian community. And they have done poor service to Jews everywhere. Turkey has a thousand times more to gain from good relations with its Jewish community and with Israel than the death of a Senate resolution or the deletion of a quote from a memorial library. But if we are so eager to trade our moral values for minor diplomatic gains, why should we expect anything more from Turkey?

Ben yachid (it's a boy!)

Editor Naomi Lippman has presided over something like 500 births at this newspaper. But there are babies and then there are babies, and at 9:25 Wednesday morning—exactly on deadline—Naomi gave birth to her third child, a boy. To Naomi, Jerry, Sarah Yael and Hannah Michal, we say mazel tov. To the Lippmans' new son, all of us at the *Jewish World* say,

MEMO

FROM

RABBI LENNARD R. THAL

To: Rabbi Schindler

Perhaps this is "a little much"
but the UAHCE is flying high
in Fresno!

Heritage 11-17-89

Armenians hail rabbi as a hero

By Herb Brin

Fresno (Special) — Rabbi Kenneth I. Segel, spiritual leader of Fresno's Beth Israel Congregation, returned home tired but elated from a convention of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations held last week in New Orleans.

But his happiness soared when a large group of Armenian residents of the city greeted him at the airport bearing flowers, smiles and not a few tears.

For the rabbi came home a hero not only to his temple, one of the oldest and most respected in the state, but to the huge Armenian population of Fresno, grateful for Rabbi Segel's singular effort at the rabbinic conclave to win approval for a resolution calling for a national day of remembrance of the Armenian genocide committed by Ottoman Turks in 1915.

During the Turkish killings, a million and a half Armenian people were slain, the first mass killing by a government in the enlightened 20th Century.

Ever since the tragic events, Armenian survivors of the genocide have asked the government of Turkey to acknowledge the killings.

Armenians, who constitute a large population in California (Gov. Deukmejian is an Armenian) have sought in vain for America to designate a national day of remembrance of the tragedy.

The Turkish government is resisting such a designation and has called on U.S. members of Congress not to approve the day of remembrance set for April 24, 1990. There are reports that pressure was made on Israel to lend its voice against such a resolution.

While rumors out of Jerusalem said that Israel had attempted to placate Turkey, one of the few Muslim states holding diplomatic ties to Israel, Israeli Foreign Ministry officials denied the rumors as "lies, made out of whole cloth."

Rabbi Segel arrived at the UAHC gathering armed with a resolution to be passed by the Reform rabbinic group to urge passage of a Senate joint resolution designating a national day of remembrance for the Armenian genocide.

He was joined by Rabbi Alexander Schindler, UAHC president, who told the conclave that Jews feel a deep sense of kinship with the Armenian people who suffered so bitterly in the tragedy.

Rabbi Segel spent many hours lobby-

Armenians hail rabbi as a hero

Continued from Page 1

ing for the Armenian resolution. It was supported, significantly, by Rabbi Alfred Gottschalk, a Holocaust Survivor and president of Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati.

"This resolution shows solidarity with those who suffered before our own people did," Rabbi Gottschalk said. "It declares that these crimes cannot be engaged in again."

Rabbi Segel, in an emotional tone, told HERITAGE: "The genocide happened. It is real. It must not be denied."

He said that Armenians were denied access to punishment for the perpetrators and recognition of their tragedy by the Turkish government as has been accorded to the Jews by Germany.

When the resolution passed by overwhelming voice vote, Rabbi Segel said: "Morality prevailed. I am proud to be a Reform Jew and a rabbi."

Then he added: "The real winners are self-respect and the Armenian community. The real losers are the tyrants and despots who shed blood, who suppress human rights and dignity."



For Release: IMMEDIATELY



Contact: Sam Eskenazi
Director of
Public Affairs
202/653-9219

-PHOTO CAPTION-

GOV. DEUKMEJIAN EXAMINES
NATIONAL HOLOCAUST MUSEUM MODEL

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- California Governor George Deukmejian (second from right), a member of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, examines a model of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum which, will be built near the heart of the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Council Chairman Harvey M. Meyerhoff points out the Museum's hexagonally shaped memorial hall. They are flanked by Set Momjian, a leader in the nation's Armenian community and a Council member since 1980, left, and Council Vice Chairman William J. Lowenberg. In a statement, the Council said, "The genocide of the Armenian citizens of the Ottoman Empire between 1915 and 1923 will have a place in the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and in its library. The fate of the Armenians should be included in any discussion of genocide in the Twentieth Century." Inclusion of the Armenian genocide was approved by the Council on August 4, 1983.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Council was established by Congress in 1980 to plan and build the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. and to encourage and sponsor observances of an annual, national, civic commemoration of the Holocaust known as the Days of Remembrance. The Council also engages in Holocaust education and research programs. It consists of 55 members of all faiths and backgrounds appointed by the President, plus five U.S. Senators and five members of the House of Representatives.

EXHIBIT B

References to Other Genocides In the Museum

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is mandated to tell the story of the Holocaust, the systematic, bureaucratic extermination of six million Jews as a central act of state during World War II, and of the millions of other victims of the Nazis.

The Museum's permanent exhibition will encompass the story of the Holocaust from 1933 - 1945. References to other genocides will be made only to the extent that they help illuminate or relate to the story of the Holocaust.

The Museum's library will include books on other atrocities and genocides and the learning center may contain references to such other events. While the Museum's temporary exhibitions will also focus on various elements of the Holocaust, in future years there could be temporary exhibitions on related subjects such as the Armenian tragedy of 1915-1923.

Sent to R. Segel by
Holocaust Museum

Letters to the editor

Letters to the editor
1626 E. St.
Fresno, CA 93786

Jews, Armenians: 'A remarkable thing has happened'

There are some lessons to learn, questions to think about, as a result of the passage of an "Armenian genocide resolution" by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations spearheaded by Rabbi Kenneth Segel of Fresno's Temple Beth Israel.

First, international minority groups, in this case the Armenians, are not always alone in their fight for correcting past injuries inflicted by larger states. American Jews have spoken out clearly in support of a strong stand on the question of Armenian Genocide, just when the Israeli government seemed to have bowed to official Turkish pressure to work against the current U.S. Senate Joint Resolution 212 on the genocide.

The major obstacle to get any group to involve itself in the problems of another is ignorance. This was clear from Rabbi Segel's report on the Fresno delegation's lobbying activities at the New Orleans convention of the UAHC: Most of the 4,000 or so delegates were just not familiar with the details of the Armenian genocide.

Second, the success of the five-member delegation from Fresno's Reform congregation in getting some 800 other delegations to accept a resolution, which at best was a matter of indifference, and at worst an annoyance, proves again that individuals are not powerless before large bodies. One man can make a difference, in this case Rabbi Segel, even on an international issue that is both morally and politically sensitive. Armenians, Jews, Americans, people should not despair or be discouraged when the odds are against them, even overwhelmingly.

Third, in order to act resolutely and unhesitatingly for a cause you

must have absolute faith in the right and justice of the cause. It is this total moral resoluteness that was the solid foundation on which Rabbi Segel anchored himself to demand with his Temple Beth Israel that Jews, survivors of the Holocaust, help Armenians in their struggle for recognition of their genocide. The rabbi said repeatedly before and after his victory that he was fighting for the rights of a non-Jewish group because it was the right thing to do.

Never once did Rabbi Segel suggest that there was anything Armenians need do or might do for Jews, whether in Fresno or Israel. There was never a suggestion of a *quid pro quo*, an exchange. Every time the rabbi referred to the reason for his and his congregation's action for the Armenians it was always because it was the moral thing to do. There was almost a global apology from his lips when more than once he said that Jews should have spoken out on the genocide long ago.

Fourth, morality has a place in our lives, even though we seem from time to time to forget that simply because we have seen that right does not often prevail in our materialistic society. The joy openly expressed by the 2,500 Jews present when the genocide resolution was unanimously adopted by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in New Orleans was possible because they understood that they had allowed moral justice to vanquish questions of political expediency.

Fifth, media are still a strong instrument of asserting moral right. The impressive coverage by The Bee of the genocide resolution through John Taylor, its correspondent in New Orleans, allowed all citizens of the San Joaquin Valley to properly understand the historical

importance of what the Jews of America, driven by the Fresno congregation, were doing.

Sixth, historical revisionism, the rewriting of history by governments to suit their own needs, can be blunted by dedicated individuals, organizations and the press. With the official recognition of the Armenian genocide by the largest religious group among the Jews of the United States, the Turkish state will have an infinitely more difficult time in its attempt to falsify what happened to the Armenians in 1915.

Finally, our world is truly interdependent. Actions of one group can help or harm those of another group. There is a renewal that takes place when peoples or nations that have kept a distance between themselves come together on an issue that is humanitarian. There is in fact a certain exhilaration in discovering the genuine love, friendship, and brotherhood that is pent up in all people waiting for an appropriate vehicle of release. This has been so overwhelmingly felt between Jews and Armenians in Fresno that more than once in these first two weeks of November it has led to tears of happiness.

A remarkable thing has happened in our community. As victims of the Holocaust, Jews have stepped back from their suffering to alleviate the sufferings of another group. Let us all try to emulate this example and look beyond our own problems to see how we can help bring justice to others.

DICKRAN KOUYMIJIAN,
Professor of Armenian Studies,
CSUF.
Fresno.



From the desk of
RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER

11/22/89

TO: Paul Berger, Esq.

Fate would have it that an incorrect Federal Express form was used and the letter done yesterday was never mailed to Kamhi. The enclosed is going out to him via Federal Express.

bec Cabb
DB
av.



RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 (212) 249-0100

November 22, 1989
24 Heshvan 5750

Mr. Jak V. Kamhi
The Quincentennial Foundation
2 Tasocagi Sokak 26-28
Mecidiyekoy, 80470, Istanbul
Turkey

Dear Mr. Kamhi:

Thank you for your thoughtful letter. I am sorry that we caused you pain and even possible harm. We really thought we had the issue under control - certainly we did on the Resolutions Committee level - but there were 4000 people at the convention itself and one of our congregations, located in a community with a substantial Armenian population, pressed the issue. It was then bolstered by a dramatic call coming from one of our guest speakers who departed from his established subject to press for the resolution. I speak now of Senator Carl Levin of Michigan.

It is unfortunate, of course, that this historical issue is now being politicized and the symbols of the past used to give fuel to present day political designs. It was certainly not our intention to serve such a purpose. That is scarcely a proper way to honor the dead or to memorialize the tragedies of the past.

I chanced to be with Senator Robert Dole just a few days ago. His concern about this issue is quite personal. It appears that when he was wounded in Italy during World War II, his life was saved by an Armenian doctor who has become his life-long friend. That is really his primary motivating force. The Bush Administration is opposed to the Bill and the whole issue now rests on the kind of language what will be worked out between the leader of the Republican Party and The White House.

Mr. Jak V. Kamhi
November 22, 1989
Page -2-

Finally, you can be sure that we are very sympathetic and understanding of the long friendship Turkey has had for our people. We hope to be able to participate in the 500th Anniversary celebration of the welcoming of our people into your land.

I hope we will have an opportunity to meet one day. With warm good wishes, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

cc: Paul Berger, Esq.

*Overnight
Sent 9/11*

November 20, 1989
23 Heshvan 5750

Mr. Jak. V. KamhiTh
The Quincentennial Foundation
2 Tasocagi Sokak 26-28
Mecidiyekoy, 80470 Istanbul
Turkey

Dear Mr. Kamhi:

Thank you for your thoughtful letter. I am sorry that we caused you pain and even possible harm. We really thought we had the issue under control - certainly we did on a Resolutions Committee level - but there were 4000 people at the convention itself and one of our congregations, located in a community with a substantial Armenian population, pressed the issue. It was then bolstered by a dramatic call coming from one of our guest speakers who departed from his established subject to press for the resolution. I speak now of Senator Carl Levin of Michigan..

I must tell you that I do not fully understand why the present Turkish government should take such violent objections to this memorial - your explanation to the contrary notwithstanding. Our resolution makes it crystal clear that we are not talking about today but about yesterday. In case you have not seen the resolution as it was passed, I attach a copy herewith.

I chanced to be with Senator Robert Dole just a few days ago. His concern about this issue is quite personal. It appears that when he was wounded in Italy during World War II, his life was saved by an Armenian doctor who has become his life-long friend. That is really his primary motivating force. The Bush Administration is opposed to the Bill and the whole issue now rests on the kind of language that will be worked out between the leader of the Republican Party in Congress and The White House. [What I am really trying to say is that in this particular league, the Jewish community really is only a minor player and not a major factor at all.]

Out.

*It is
unfortunate
that this
political
is pre-
politicized
14*

Mr. Jak. V. Kamhi
November 21, 1989
Page -2-

(Perhaps you ought to make this point when you talk to
the representative of the larger Turkish community.)

I hope that we will have an opportunity to meet one day.
With warm good wishes, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Encl.

cc: Paul Berger, Esq.

bcc: Allan B. Goldman, Esq.
Rabbi David Saperstein
Albert Vorspan

ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

of the

UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

November 2 - November 6, 1989 - New Orleans

THE 1915 GENOCIDE OF OVER ONE MILLION ARMENIANS

Background

The massacre of over 1.5 million Armenians beginning in 1915 by the Ottoman Turks and the subsequent exile of an additional 500,000 Armenians is one of the most shameful chapters of modern history.

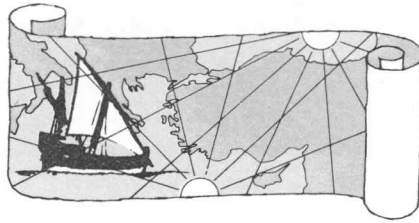
Elie Wiesel, a past U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council Chairman, said (April 30, 1981), "Before the planning of the final solution, Hitler asked, 'who remembers the Armenians?' He was right. No one remembered them; as no one remembered the Jews. Rejected by everyone, they felt expelled from history." The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Executive Council has unanimously agreed to include reference to the Armenian and other genocides to help illuminate or relate to the story of the Holocaust.

We recognize that the Turkey of today is vastly different from the Ottoman Empire of 1915. Our respect for modern Turkey's traditions of pluralism should not deter us from learning the lessons of past mistakes.

This genocide is one of those instances of mass destruction which has both preceded and followed the Holocaust to which the UAHC has drawn notice over the years, that their lessons might not be forgotten (among them Biafra and Cambodia).

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Union of American Hebrew Congregations resolves to:

1. Commend the Executive Committee of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum for its announced decision to include reference to the Armenian and other genocides to the extent that they help illuminate or relate to the story of the Holocaust.
2. Instruct the Reform Religious Action Center in Washington to encourage passage of SJ 212, a joint resolution now before the U.S. Congress designating April 24, 1990 as National Day of Remembrance of the 75th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1923.
3. Educate our congregants as to the facts and the lessons of these tragic chapters of modern history.



THE QUINCENTENNIAL FOUNDATION

Commemorating the 500th Anniversary of the Sephardic Jews in Turkey
(1492 - 1992)

15.11.1989

Rabbi Alexander Schindler
President, UAHC
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10021

Dear Rabbi Schindler,

I write to you at a time of great political crisis in Turkey caused by the current efforts lead by Senator Dole to pass an alledged Armenian Genocide resolution in the U.S. Senate. This serious problem has been greatly enlarged by the resolution just adopted by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UHAC). I write to you to tell you how this action is hostile and harmful to a country which has been a friend of our people for centuries - in a world where we have so often faced hostility ourselves.

First of all as to history. We, as a people, are very sensitive to other people's suffering. We deplore to death of people during the destructive wars, revolts and other tumultuous events during the fall of the Ottoman Empire. But not only Armenians were lost, but also the live of ten thousands of Turks. Eminent scholars around the world have found that it is not possible to conclude from the evidence that a Genocide took place or how and when this tragedy began in the first place. This is a highly controversial question in history and in fairness can only be resolved by historians.

Please see that enclosed open letter from a distinguished Israeli historian which discusses the realities of the Armenian Question.

Now a one sided view of history is being used by the Armenians as a political weapon against Modern Turkey, which by the words of the Armenians themselves point to the resolution as a first step towards their dream of appropriation of Turkish land. Your action supports this political goal and it has been taken without a fair examination of history. Your action, regardless of intent, also hurts Turkey. A country which has been a haven for our ancestors for centuries and which is to this day helping us and our people in a manner which is unique and important.

Will these consequences contribute to the goals and aspirations of our people, will they be viewed as fair or friendly by a people who will justly feel aggrieved ? The answer is clearly NO-

./..

THE
QUINCENTENNIAL
FOUNDATION
(1492-1992)

even while the causes and the nature of the tragedy in history remain unclear. This controversial chapter in history bears no resemblance to the well documented facts of the Holocaust.

The joining of these events has been a political device of the Armenians which your resolution improperly adopts.

Please reconsider what you have done and what you will do, for what you do has damaging consequences and remains unjust towards the only country with an overwhelming Islamic majority which is not hostile to Israel and to our brethren.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Jak. V. KAMHI'. The signature is stylized with a large initial 'J' and a long horizontal stroke.

Jak. V. KAMHI

THE "ARMENIAN QUESTION" - AN OPEN LETTER

The respected representatives of Western Governments, close allies of Turkey, should be aware that transforming the "Armenian Question" or the "Armenian Problem" into the "Armenian Cause", in other words, stressing the "mass slaughter" and the "mass deportation" themes by taking them out of their political contexts and ignoring the relevant historical background before and during World War 1, would come under strong criticism by unbiased historians.

This should not in any way be taken to suggest that the large-scale massacres of the Armenians in 1915 were in any way justified. They cannot be justified, just the same way as the deaths of hundreds of thousands of unarmed local Muslims (Kurds), including Ottoman Turks, at the hands of armed Armenians before and after the events of 1915 cannot be condoned.

The purpose of this letter is to provide the reader with an objective historical assessment of the status of the Armenian communities and the development of events within the borders of the Ottoman Empire, prior to April 24th, 1915. In a way, the "Armenian Problem" existed even before the Seljuks occupied Armenia capturing it from the Byzantines in 1071. In fact, the real problem the Armenians faced after they settled parts of eastern Anatolia as early as the sixth century B.C. was how to co-exist with the rather hostile local tribes described by Xenophon as the Carduchoi (most likely the ancestors of the Kurds). At the root of the problem was the fact that the better organized and stronger Armenians occupied the fertile plains and valleys and the Carduchoi were forced to retreat to the mountains. These two very different ethno-cultural groups managed to survive in this region sometimes maintaining good neighbourly relations, but very often and rather predictably at each other's throats usually due to external manipulation of the religious and cultural differences for the attainment of calculated political goals.

After the Seljuk invasion, some of the Armenians fled from the Turcomans to Cilicia where they took refuge in a steep mountainous terrain. In 1080 the Armenians in Cilicia established a kingdom under the Rupenid dynasty. This kingdom of Lesser Armenia had close contacts with the Crusaders and the Mongols. In other words, they came to realize that their survival as an independent kingdom depended on their ability and willingness to satisfy the demands of stronger powers in order to get protection. After more than 300 years of independence, this kingdom was destroyed by the Mamelukes of Egypt in 1393. The Armenians thus were once again deprived of an independent national homeland.

Strangely enough their fate improved considerably after the capture of Constantinople (Istanbul) by the Ottomans in 1453. Mehmet the Conqueror invited the Armenian bishop of Bursa to settle in the capital of the Empire and bestowed on him the rank of patriarch, a recognized officer of the imperial government, and the leader of all the Armenians living within the borders of the Empire. The Armenians thereby acquired, in addition to religious freedom, an important say in the management of their own affairs.

The patriarch was assisted by a council of clergy and was represented in each province by a bishop and his council. This practical self-government secured the Armenians a recognized position before the law, the free practice of their religion and national traditions, the rights to educate their children and manage their national and municipal affairs. This peaceful state of affairs which lasted 4 centuries also encouraged the growth of community life which eventually gave birth to a longing for a national life. The factions in the leadership of the clergy, however, was bound to weaken the clergy itself, who often used unwarranted methods for promotion to the detriment of their spiritual functions.

1863 was a turning point for the Armenian political aspirations and nationalistic movement: The constitution approved by the Ottoman Sultan gave the Armenians in Anatolia the status of a self-governing nation under the sovereignty of the Ottoman Sultan. All real power passed into the hands of lay and clerical councils elected by the people.

When Abdul-Hamid came to power in 1876 the condition of the Armenians in Anatolia (Turkey) and to some extent in Russia was much better than they had been for centuries. However, with the close of the Turkish-Russian war of 1878, British intervention gave rise to another episode in the "Armenian Question". Because of this war, Russia occupied another slice of Georgia and Armenia including the provinces of Batum, Kars, Ardahan, Erzurum and the upper Euphrates valley. When Great Britain threatened the Russians with a war unless they evacuated Erzurum (the Russians there posed a threat to the British commercial routes leading as far as India) the Russians agreed to withdraw their troops to a new line. Russia evacuated not only Erzurum, but also the provinces along the upper Euphrates valley. In return, the Ottomans promised the Russians that they would guarantee the security of the Christian inhabitants (Armenians) against the Kurds and the Circassians. Russia's aim during and after the war was to strengthen the national identity of the Armenians, thus separating the Christian element in the population to serve her own political interest of territorial control at the expense of the Ottoman State.

This Russian game foiled by the British in fact embroiled the Armenians and the Kurds re-kindling some of their past animosities. Following the Russian-British treaty of 1878, unrest in the provinces grew due to ethnic clashes between the Armenians and the Kurds. As a result some Armenian teachers formed a "revolutionary" society called "Hunchak" to rouse the self-consciousness of the people. Five years later, another society called "Daschnak" was formed in Tiflis in 1890. This second society was very active in providing military training to young Armenian males.

The Ottoman administration which had thus far considered the Armenians as the exemplary loyal nation decided to put a stop to the political agitations which weakened the position of the central government in the eastern provinces. Curtailing the political freedom granted since Mehmet II in 1453, caused even more unrest among the Armenians. But the fact remains that organized armed attacks by the local Muslims (Kurds) against the Armenians and reprisals by the Armenians did not really start before 1894.

The Ottoman State, by then the Sick Man of Europe, found itself unable to control the fast-deteriorating political situation in the eastern provinces. At this time, in 1895, the British with the lukewarm support of the French and the Russians forced the Ottoman Sultan to introduce widescale administrative reforms in the provinces populated by Armenians and Kurds. The young Armenians, including many teachers and intellectuals, arming themselves with Russian help, decided that this was the moment to recreate an independent state. In Van, Urfa, Zeitun and other cities with large Armenian communities, young Armenians took up arms against the local government and the Kurdish groups. The central government ordered the army to quell the rebellion at all cost. And the result was tens of thousands of deaths among the warring factions, most of them Armenians. A year later in 1896, the Ottoman administration and the Armenian Patriarch in Istanbul reconciliated and as a result of this reconciliation the Armenian political prisoners were freed. Moreover, the central government set up courts to try the persons responsible for some of the murders committed against the Armenians.

This renewed era of friendship between the Ottomans and the Armenian minority in Turkey lasted until World War I. The proclamation of the Turkish constitution in 1908 was well-received by the Armenians strengthening a new era of friendly co-existence. Despite the sporadic unrest in Adana, especially in 1909, the Young Turks produced noticeable improvement in the condition of the Armenian people. Political refugees returned home and recovered their properties. Military service in the Ottoman army and deputies in the National Chamber gave the Armenians an important share in the affairs of the Ottoman State.

When the Ottomans entered the war in 1914, the Armenian leaders assured them of their loyalty. However, the Armenians in Russia convinced of an imminent Russian victory in the war against the Ottomans, persuaded the Armenian organizations to help the Russian cause by attacking the flanks and the rear of the Turkish troops in the eastern front, cutting their supply lines, disturbing their communications and so on. It was only natural for the Russians to give armaments, training and other logistical support to those who wanted to help them in order to achieve their political aspirations. The Ottomans were losing on the eastern front, they were losing in Iraq, Syria and Palestine, they were fighting on the western front, therefore they decided that the only way they could neutralize the momentum-gathering Armenian threat from within was to transfer them en masse to isolated provinces where they would not pose a danger by joining forces with the advancing Russian army. The problem was that, the Ottoman army, weakened already and demoralized by the advancing Russian front (and it has to be taken into consideration that the Armenian soldiers in the Turkish army had already deserted, taking their arms with them), decided to arm the Kurdish groups to cope with the armed Armenians who resisted transfer. The result was total anarchy. The armed resistance of the Armenians in Van in April 1915, may have been heroic, but it was the prelude to uncontrolled violence that took the lives of more than 300,000 Armenians in June-July 1915 and the terrible reprisals of the Armenians against the Muslims after the Russians won the war in 1916.

The Armenian political leadership in Russia in fact gambled in 1915 by inciting their brethren in eastern Turkey to take a more active role in favour of the Russians at a time when the Ottomans were facing the total collapse of their eastern front. This same political leadership should have realized that the slightest failure in their plans would endanger the lives of innocent Armenians living in the midst of the Muslim communities (Kurds). The Russians armed them and convinced them that the time was ripe to achieve, in the face of the defeats suffered by the Ottomans, their supreme national goal; a totally independent state in a region heavily populated not only by Armenians but by Kurds as well.

One of the major errors committed by the Armenians was not to take into consideration the likely delays in the advance of the Russian troops. The Russians were relied upon to provide the necessary protection in the face of opposition both by the Ottomans and the local Muslim population who feared the Russians and the Armenian political aspirations.

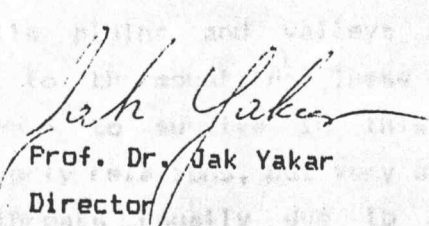
Furthermore, they did not foresee that, faced with imminent defeat at the hands of the Russians (assisted by local armed Armenians whose ranks included armed Armenian soldiers deserting the Ottoman army) the central government, not being able to dispatch more troops to quell the rebellion, would arm and train the local Muslims (Kurds) in their attempt to transfer the Armenian population to other provinces away from the eastern front.

Another fatal miscalculation of the Armenian leadership was to believe that the Russians would allow them to form an independent state. This did not materialize when the Russians finally defeated the Ottomans and conquered all the eastern provinces and allowed the Armenians in their ranks to commit, in the name of vengeance, terrible atrocities against the local Muslims and Ottoman Turks who died by the hundreds of thousands.

In my opinion, the large majority of the Armenians living within the borders of the Ottoman Empire were and intended to remain loyal to the state, but found themselves drawn into a dangerous adventure prepared by some of their leaders, rather extremist in their political stance. As a result, they paid a very heavy price for it in lost human lives. But to compare their fate to that suffered by culturally and politically assimilated European Jews during World War II is a gross misrepresentation of historical evidence for political purposes.

I certainly do not think that holding Turkey responsible for the events of 1915 would help achieve any reconciliation between the Turkish government and the Armenian political organizations established abroad.

The Ottoman Turks were by no means racists - Otherwise they would not have given the Armenians all their cultural and political rights, especially not during the centuries when they were the greatest power on the face of the earth. What happened to the Armenians in 1915 happened mainly because the Ottoman Empire was weak, the central government fragmented and total anarchy dominated in the eastern provinces. The political manipulation of the great powers wanting to take political and territorial advantage of this weakness at that time proved to be fatal for the Armenians. This point alone makes it quite clear that there is no comparison between the Holocaust and the fate suffered by the Armenians in 1915.


Prof. Dr. Jak Yakar
Director
Department of Archaeology
and Near Eastern Cultures
Tel Aviv University