

# **Anatomy of Genocide Denial: Academics, Politicians, and the “Re-Making” of History**

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History, in Turkey, is a sensitive matter, to be “managed” by the state, with a say in how the average citizen may learn of it and think about it. Indeed, “Turkey is one of those rare countries where it is considered a good thing not to know one’s history, precisely because so much importance is ascribed to it,” says the renowned historian Şükrü Hanioglu. “History is so important to this society that unless you can take it and push it through a filter, stuff it full of clichés, perfect it and then make sure it fits seamlessly with the official ideology, it’s thought better to not know any of it at all.”<sup>1</sup> The historian, in this model, is a servant of the state, who “remakes” and “reshapes” history according to the orders of the state.<sup>2</sup>

Recent political developments, however, have had a seismic effect on the relationship among scholars, society, and the state. With the Council of Europe’s decision, last December 17, to open negotiations for Turkey’s accession to the European Union, Turkish history—and the right to define that history—is being contested as never before. Nowhere is this conflict sharper than in Turkish public discourse on the events around 1915, the Armenian Genocide. The Genocide has always been a sore point in Turkey, but

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<sup>1</sup>. Zaman newspaper, Jan. 21, 2005. The effect of such thinking on the Turkish intellectual climate, and the consequences for academic freedom, were apparent in the forced “postponement” of a Turkish scholars’ conference late in May, shortly after Justice Minister Cemil Cicek condemned the meeting as “a stab in the back of the Turkish nation” (“Ankara Condemns Dissident Conference on Armenian Genocide,” Agence France-Presse, May 24, 2005).

<sup>2</sup>. A recent example is the mistranslation and outright distortion of American and European archival documents to make them appear to support the Turkish official position that no genocide occurred. Hikmet Özdemir, Kemal Çiçek, Ömer Turan, Ramazan Çalık and Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *Ermeniler: Sürgün ve Göç* (“The Armenians: Expulsion and Migration”) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2004) and my critique, “Anatomy of a crime: the Turkish Historical Society’s manipulation of archival documents,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 7(2), (June 2005):, 255-277.

2005 is seeing a particular escalation of the conflict, as it marks the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of those events, and Armenians around the world have made an extra effort to commemorate them publicly. Moreover, several European countries, which have their own issues with Turkish membership in the EU, have used recognition of the Armenian Genocide as a tool to try to block Turkey's accession efforts.

As a result, and parallel to this public discussion, the Turkish state has gone on the offensive with its traditional policy of denying there was a genocide of the Armenians and launched an enormous public relations campaign in the spring of 2005. Regarding Turkish public opinion, the state is attempting to radicalize domestic audiences with a renewed and highly aggressive campaign against demands to recognize the event in 1915 as genocide; regarding international opinion, it is developing new strategies to get its position acknowledged.

One of these strategies was to launch a campaign against the "Blue Book" published by British Government during the First World War, titled *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-1916* and authored by historian A.J. Toynbee, They sought to discredit this much cited document as baseless and the product of anti-Turkish propaganda.<sup>3</sup> As a part of this strategy, the Turkish Parliament challenged the British Parliament to admit it was baseless.

The aim of the strategy seemed to be to keep the Turkish public busy with this central propaganda campaign, so that they could minimize the effect of the international campaign for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Ever since the beginning of March, a campaign was launched under the motto: "UK should apologize to Turkey about Armenian genocide claims." The matter has also been represented in the press with headlines like "Genocide [Claim Counter-]Attack" "England must apologize" has even been adopted as the slogan of a new diplomatic offensive by the Turkish government.<sup>4</sup> The Turkish press, for its part, headlines the issue as "Revenge After 90 Years" (*90 Yılın İntikamı*), "International Assault on the Blue Book" (*Mavi Kitapa Karşı Uluslararası Atak*), and "Just Try And Claim There Was A Genocide Now..." (*Soykırımın Hodri*

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<sup>3</sup>. James Bryce and Arnold Toynbee, *The Treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-1916: Documents presented to Viscount Grey of Folloden by Viscount Bryce*. Edited and with an introduction by Ara Sarafian [Uncensored Edition]. (Princeton, NJ: Gomidas 2000). The book was originally published in 1916.

<sup>4</sup>. [Murat Yetkin, "Soykırım İçin Atak", \*Radikal\*, 1 March, 2005.](#)

*Meydan*).<sup>5</sup> A chorus of columnists has claimed that the British apology to the Germans was a solid and important historical fact and stated that the time had come for Turkey to receive the same treatment.<sup>6</sup>

In this effort, the Turkish Government resorted to the help of an American historian, Justin McCarthy.<sup>7</sup> With his theoretical bolstering, in a five-page open letter of April 13, 2005 to the British Parliament, the Turkish Grand National Assembly (*Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi*, Turkish National Assembly) demanded that Great Britain apologize to Turkey for the “Blue Book” it commissioned during World War I. The letter, drafted by former ambassador and current Member of Parliament Sukru Elekdağ and signed by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and opposition leader Deniz Baykal, CHP (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi- Republican People’s Party*) emphasized the following six points:

- 1) Throughout the war, Britain conducted a broad propaganda campaign, which included the publication of a series of so-called “Blue Books” prepared by the Bryce Commission.<sup>8</sup> These books contain falsehoods based upon forged documents and baseless claims.
- 2) The historian A.J. Toynbee himself admitted that *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-1916*, the “Blue Book” he co-authored with Viscount Bryce, was written as anti-Turkish propaganda.<sup>9</sup> It necessarily follows that the information contained therein is false.

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<sup>5</sup> [Yeni Şafak, March 7, 2005](#); [Hürriyet, March 9, 2005](#); [Yeni Şafak, March 9, 2005](#), respectively.

<sup>6</sup> For but a small sampling of this chorus, see: [Oktay Ekşi, Hürriyet, 10 March, 2005](#); [Yılmaz Öztuna, Türkiye Gazetesi, March 23, 2005](#); [Tufan Türeç, Hürriyet, March 25, 2005](#).

<sup>7</sup> McCarthy is professor of history at the University of Louisville. His publications include *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821-1922* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1995) and *Muslims and Minorities: The Population of Ottoman Anatolia and the End of the Empire* (New York University Press, 1983). Before the letter was signed, Justin McCarthy was invited to give a speech in the Turkish Parliament. His arriving in Turkey, his visit to different politicians, and his speech in the Turkish Parliament were sensational and had headlines in the Turkish press. That this position was being supported by an American historian was always especially underlined. He gave a speech in Turkish Parliament on 24 March 2005 where Cabinet Members, the president of the parliament and other very important politicians were present.

<sup>8</sup> British historian, statesman, and diplomat James Bryce (1838-1922) served as ambassador to the United States from 1907 to 1913. During the First World War, he headed a British government commission which reported on enemy atrocities in a series of “Blue Books.”

<sup>9</sup> James Bryce and Arnold Toynbee, *The Treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-1916: Documents presented to Viscount Grey of Falloden by Viscount Bryce*. Edited and with an introduction by Ara Sarafian [Uncensored Edition]. (Princeton, NJ: Gomidas 2000). The book was originally published in 1916.

- 3) Many of the reports that were incorporated into Bryce and Toynbee's Blue Book are undocumented, while others are derived from American missionaries and Armenian activists, whose testimony cannot be accepted as objective due to their prejudice against the Turks.
- 4) Great Britain also spread propaganda against Germany during the war, falsely claiming, for instance, that the German army had massacred Belgian and French civilians.
- 5) Great Britain's propaganda campaign against Germany, like that against Turkey, included the publication of a Blue Book which was rife with groundless accusations.
- 6) On December 2, 1925, Great Britain recanted its false claims and apologized to Germany.

On the basis of this chain of logic, the Turkish National Assembly demanded that the Parliament and Government of Great Britain

inform to the [Turkish?] public that the British Parliament Blue Book Series, *Treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire 1915-1916* was a propaganda tool of the British War Propaganda Bureau (1914) at "Wellington House" and is an unreliable account of the Ottoman Armenians revolt and the Ottoman Government's subsequent response.<sup>10</sup>

The claim that I will make in this article is this: Not one of the arguments put forward in this letter is true, and it is a perfect example of how the Turkish State "remakes" history.

One may well ask how a handful of people could convince a large state and its most important institutions to endorse such a letter. Why is it that neither the Prime Minister nor its political leadership felt the need to verify its contents before signing it?<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>. The full text of the letter can be found online at:

[http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/baskan/mektup\\_mavikitap\\_tbmm.htm](http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/baskan/mektup_mavikitap_tbmm.htm) I quote from the English official version.

<sup>11</sup>. The wisdom of attacking the Blue Book was debated in the Turkish press before the letter was sent. See for example my articles in the Turkish daily *Birgun* and the Istanbul Armenian Newspaper *Agos*, March 11, 2005, and opposition leader Deniz Baykal's response as reported in the Turkish daily *Hurriyet*, May 15, 2005. At one of the Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP)'s (*Republican People's Party*) parliamentary group meetings, party leader Deniz Baykal declared, "we view with disgust (*ibretle*) the words of certain of our intellectuals, [who say] 'don't attack the Blue Book, [instead] be sorry.'" (*Hurriyet*, May 15, 2005).

Before critiquing the six claims above, I would like to make clear that their source is University of Louisville (Kentucky) Prof. Justin McCarthy. Indeed, sections of the Turkish National Assembly's letter were evidently copied word for word from McCarthy's works. Interviewed in the Turkish daily *Radikal*, Elekdag acknowledged not only McCarthy but also Selahattin [Salahi] Sonyel as direct sources for the letter.<sup>12</sup>

And now, let us take a closer look at each argument in turn.

### 1) An Overview of the “Blue Books”

Throughout the war, Great Britain, and indeed all the warring nations, published a great number of works for the purpose of propaganda. The logic of the situation, as argued by the historian Justin McCarthy and former ambassador Şükrü Elekdag, and which was in the end accepted by the Turkish National Assembly, is this: if a book was prepared for the purpose of propaganda, the information contained therein must be inaccurate. But does it follow that all information which is used for propaganda purposes is necessarily false?

The reason Elekdag and McCarthy establish such a direct symmetrical co-relation between propaganda and lies can only be explained because this is their understanding of propaganda. With regard to the Armenian Question, the Turkish state supposes that, since they themselves employ propaganda without regard for its accuracy, others must do the same.<sup>13</sup> If I give an example according to their logic: it is known that, in February, 1992, Armenian units in Nagorno-Karabagh massacred 600 Azeri civilians in the village of Hocalı.<sup>14</sup> And as we know, Azeris and Turkish State use this information for anti-

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<sup>12</sup>. Indeed, the Turkish daily *Radikal* [“Meclis'in 'soykırım' mektubu intihal mi?,” May 16, 2005] accused the TBMM (Turkish National Assembly) of plagiarism, citing several passages from the letter next to the corresponding texts in McCarthy. For comparison, see Justin McCarthy, “I. Dünya Savaşında İngiliz Propagandası ve Bryce Raporu,” *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Ermeni Sorunu* (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları 2001.), pp. 21-39; “British Propaganda and the Turks” (presented at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, January 19, 2001) at <http://www.ermenisorunu.gen.tr/english/articles/article1.html>

<sup>13</sup>. A good example of this kind of propaganda is the Turkish Historical Society's distortion of American and German documents.[3]

<sup>14</sup>. Journalist Thomas Goltz was the first to break the story of the Khojali massacre in the international press when his February 27, 1992 article appeared in the Washington Post; see also “Massacre by Armenians Being Reported” in *New York Times*, March 3, 1992, Tuesday, Section A; Page 3; Column 4.

Armenian propaganda purposes. Now, because they use this event for their propaganda purposes, are we compelled to discount it?<sup>15</sup>

Even so, it would be difficult indeed to demonstrate that all of the assertions made in Britain's Blue Books are "based on lies." On the contrary, the English behaved with a great meticulousness and conscientiousness when preparing these works, despite their indisputably propagandistic aims.

To underscore the inaccuracy of British wartime propaganda, the Turkish National Assembly's letter cites Michael Sanders and Philip M. Taylor's *British Propaganda during the First World War 1914-1918*. Ironically, these authors emphasize that from the beginning, British propaganda was guided by "accurate information and measured argument."<sup>16</sup> Thus the tone of the pamphlets was "generally cautious and academic, seeking to present a mass of evidently factual material without recourse to emotional overstatement." Moreover, the material circulated by Wellington House "was academic in tone, scholarly in approach."<sup>17</sup> The success of the British war propaganda is attributed to a government policy of relying on "measured arguments rather than emotional opinions."<sup>18</sup>

Regarding the Bryce-authored Blue Book on Germany relying on "unfounded and unsubstantiated information," as claimed in the Turkish National Assembly letter, Sanders and Taylor state that "its real historical significance lies in the fact that the Bryce Commission did not produce a dishonest or fraudulent report in the sense that it reached a conclusion which the evidence had shown to be untrue."<sup>19</sup>

In regard to the scientific value of the Blue Books as a whole, I would like to offer a story regarding the series that indirectly relates to the topic at hand. Great Britain published three separate Blue Books whose purpose was to spread negative propaganda about the German colonial administration in Namibia.<sup>20</sup> The first of these works,

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<sup>15</sup>. For an example of the use of this type of information for propaganda purposes, see <http://www.khojaly.org>; [www.khojaly.org.az](http://www.khojaly.org.az); [www.khojaly.s5.com](http://www.khojaly.s5.com); [www.khojaly.net](http://www.khojaly.net)

<sup>16</sup>. Michael Sanders & Philip Taylor, *British Propaganda During the First World War, 1914-1918* (London & Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 41, 142, 169.

<sup>17</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 142, 169

<sup>18</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 170.

<sup>19</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>20</sup>. This information was taken from the introduction written for a work that was a facsimile of the Blue Book originally published in 1918. Jeremy Silvester, Jan-Bart Gewald, "Footsteps and Tears: An Introduction to the Construction and Context of the 1918 'Blue Book,'" *Words Cannot Be Found, German*

published in 1916, dealt largely with the implementation of German colonial policy in Namibia and an assessment thereof.<sup>21</sup> The other two concern the massacre of the Herero people. The book which I would like to discuss is the one published in 1918, which consists largely of the accounts of 47 eyewitnesses to the events. The story of this Blue Book, which represents for social scientists today one of the most important sources for the events of 1904, is a fascinating one in its own right. Eight years after its publication, Great Britain withdrew the book from the market and burned all existing copies. In this way, the most important documentation of the 1904 genocide against the Herero, a work which was based on the direct testimony of survivors, was expunged from the public record.

Regional developments played a central role in the decision to destroy this Blue Book. At the time, Great Britain was interested in reaching some sort of understanding and accommodation with the majority white, German landowners in its newly acquired mandate territory. Thus, when the delegates of the German colonial settlers in Namibia arrived in the South African capital for negotiations with the British, they were promised that the Blue Book would no longer be cited and would be withdrawn from the market. Indeed, the very first order of business of the new, racist South African Parliament, which convened in 1926, was to order the commencement of the destruction of the Blue Book. Luckily, this important work has recently been rescued from oblivion and republished.<sup>22</sup> It should be mentioned that Germany itself published a “White Book” in response to the British Blue Book.<sup>23</sup> The two main arguments put forward in the German work were that: a) the Blue Book was based solely on the accounts of the natives and utterly disregarded

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*Colonial Rule in Namibia, An Annotated Reprint of the 1918 Blue Book* (Leiden-Boston: Koninklijke Brill, 2003), pp. xiii-xxxvii.

<sup>21</sup>. The title of the Blue Book was: Union of South Africa, *Papers relating to Certain Truths in German South West Africa* (London: HMSO), 1916.

<sup>22</sup>. After the appearance of this reprint, critics appeared claiming that the work was nothing more than “war propaganda” and should not be taken seriously. See Brigitte Lau, “Uncertain Certainties: The Herero-German War of 1904,” *Migabus*, no. 2 (April, 1989). For a critique of these claims, see: Tilmann Dederin, “The German-Herero War of 1904: Revisionism of Genocide or Imaginary Historiography?,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 19, no. 1 (1993).

<sup>23</sup>. As can be imagined, the German White Book was not simply a rebuttal of British accusations against Germany, but also made mention of the massacres committed by the British in their own colonies. It goes without mention that despite the clear differences between the various European colonial powers, there are also many points of similarity in the colonial politics of Great Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Germany. For all of them, their colonial administration was characterized to a greater or lesser extent by oppressive, unjust policies that frequently and severely violated the human rights of their colonial subjects.

the white settlers; and 2) the work only mentions crimes committed by the Germans, with no mention of actions by the Herero themselves. According to the White Book, “the natives are lying.”<sup>24</sup>

Thus, it is fair to state that the whites who established a racist regime in southern Africa played a central role in the destruction of this crucial source on the 1904 Herero genocide, or, in another sense, that racism formed the ideological background to the destruction of this source. What is most interesting here, however, is not the parallels between the racist ideas of the white population of southern Africa and the German complaints, but rather the close similarity between the complaints made by the German authorities in 1919 and those made today by Şükrü Elekdağ and his colleagues. Ultimately, all three of these parties are calling for us to disregard the testimonies of the victims of these events.

Yet, there is a more immediate reason why I have cited the Blue Book of the Herero massacre. Its fate was the same as that of the Blue Book presented by Viscount Bryce—the one dealing with what the Turkish National Assembly letter claimed were “groundless and mendacious” claims of German atrocities in Belgium during World War I, which was also largely withdrawn from the market in 1926. The reason for its removal was that as a result of the agreement signed in Locarno in 1925, Great Britain had entered into a new relationship with Germany. I will discuss this issue in more detail below. For now, suffice it to say that the reason for its removal had nothing to do with the accuracy of its contents, as is claimed in the letter from the Turkish National Assembly.

## **2) In Toynbee’s Own View**

The second important point of the Turkish National Assembly letter is that historian Toynbee admitted that the book he co-authored with James Bryce on the treatment of the Armenians was a work of propaganda. According to this logic, if Toynbee claims that he wrote this work for the purpose of making propaganda, all of the information contained therein must be wrong and/or without any foundation in fact. Yet, although Toynbee indeed stated that the book was written for the purposes of propaganda, he also

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<sup>24</sup>. Silverster/Gewald, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

repeatedly emphasized that he never doubted the accuracy of the information he compiled for this Blue Book.

Toynbee stated the work's propagandistic intent in two of his publications. The first of these is a book also mentioned in the Turkish National Assembly letter. According to the author, he "was being employed by His Majesty's Government to compile all available documents on the recent treatment of the Armenians by the Turkish Government in a "Blue Book," which was duly published and distributed as war-propaganda."<sup>25</sup> In another work, *Acquaintances*, Toynbee states that:

At the time I was unaware of the politics that lay behind the move of H.M.G. [His Majesty's Government], and I believe Lord Bryce was as innocent as I was. Perhaps this was fortunate, for, if our eyes had been opened, I hardly think that either Lord Bryce or I would have been able to do the job that H.M.G. had assigned to us in the complete good faith in which we did, in fact, carry it out.<sup>26</sup>

In this second work, Toynbee explains the reasons that so much importance was given to propaganda centered on the Armenian massacres. The goal was to draw the attention of world public opinion—especially that of the United States—away from Poland, where Russia was facing the assault by the Germans and to divert the world's gaze from Russian atrocities against the Jews. The British decision was at least in part a response to actions by the Germans, who, while occupying most of Poland, exploited every opportunity to invite American journalists, an important number of whom were Jewish, to see the results of Russian atrocities with their own eyes.<sup>27</sup> Fearing a backlash against their ally, the British felt it imperative to distract America—including its Jewish community—away from Russian crimes and focus its attention on German war crimes in Belgium and Ottoman crimes—being carried out with German support—against the Armenians.<sup>28</sup>

What Şükrü Elekdağ—or more correctly, Justin McCarthy, from whom Elekdağ got his information—hid from the Turkish National Assembly is that Toynbee himself

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<sup>25</sup>. Arnold J. Toynbee, *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey* (Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1923), p. 50.

<sup>26</sup>. Arnold J. Toynbee, *Acquaintances*, (New York, Toronto, London: Oxford University Press) 1967. p. 149.

<sup>27</sup>. *Ibid.* pp. 149-150.

<sup>28</sup>. Sanders / Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

characterized the crimes committed against the Armenians, first as “extermination” and later (after the term was invented) as “genocide.”

In his book *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey*, for example, from which the Turkish National Assembly took much information, Toynbee speaks of “The attempt to exterminate the Armenians in 1915...hundreds of thousands of people were done to death and thousands turned into robbers and murderers by the administrative action of a few dozen criminals in control of the Ottoman Empire.”<sup>29</sup> Moreover, in many places in the book, Toynbee speaks not only about the massacres of 1915, but also about those of 1894-1896 and 1909 and repeatedly mentions the fact that the Armenians were massacred by the Turks.<sup>30</sup> He describes the events of 1915 as “terrible atrocities”<sup>31</sup> or “extermination,” and claimed that such crimes continued in the Caucasus and Çukurova Plain (in Cilicia) after 1919.<sup>32</sup>

In his book *Acquaintances*, Toynbee follows up his mention of the Blue Book as propaganda with similar assessments:

The dead—and the deportees had been dying in their thousands—could not be brought back to life, but we hoped (vain hope) that at least something might be done to ensure, for the survivors, that there should never be a repetition of the barbarities that had been the death of so many of their kinsmen.<sup>33</sup>

And later on in the same work:

The study of genocide set me moving along a road that led to my making friends with fellow-countrymen of the criminals by whom the genocide had been committed....In the genocide of the Armenians the criminals had been members of the Committee of Union and Progress.<sup>34</sup>

Elekdağ and Justin McCarthy, who both relay Toynbee’s claim of the Blue Book having been written for propagandistic purposes, somehow forgot to include those sections in which the author speaks of massacre and genocide. They don’t seem to have

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<sup>29</sup>. Arnold J. Toynbee, *The Western Question...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 265-266.

<sup>30</sup>. For example, ‘The Armenians had got themselves massacred by the Turks for helping the Allies without getting the Allies committed in return to doing anything for them.’ *Ibid.*, p. 49. Other examples can be found on 140, 143, 276-277, 280, 291, 342, 354.

<sup>31</sup>. ‘during the terrible atrocities...’, *Ibid.*, p. 191.

<sup>32</sup>. ‘Thus, the Turkish atrocities against the Armenians in the Caucasus and Cilicia after May 1919 had the same genesis as the war of extermination in other parts of Anatolia...’, *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup>. *Acquaintances*, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

<sup>34</sup>. *Ibid.*, pp. 240-241.

even noticed the following lines in this book, where Toynbee expresses his opinion of the Blue Book:

After the Blue Book had been published, I could not dismiss its content from my mind. I was not only haunted by the victims' sufferings and by the criminals' deeds; I was exercised by the question how it could be possible for human beings to do what those perpetrators of genocide had done.<sup>35</sup>

Toynbee would continue in a number of other works to refer to the actions against the Armenians as an extermination or genocide. In his second book of memoirs, *Experiences*, published in 1969, Toynbee mentions that he was old enough to remember both the atrocities committed against the Armenians during the Hamidian period as well as the campaign of extermination against them in 1915. In his words:

I am old enough to remember the horror at the massacre of Armenian Ottoman subjects in the Ottoman Empire in 1896 at the instigation of infamous Sultan 'Abd-al-Hamid II...The massacre of Armenian subjects in the Ottoman Empire in 1896...was amateur and ineffective compared with the largely successful attempt to exterminate [them] during the First World War in 1915...[This] genocide...was carried...under the cloak of legality by cold-blooded governmental action. These were not mass-murders committed spontaneously by mobs of private people.

One more example from his book *Mankind and Mother Earth*:

The atrociousness of the two great 20th century wars was aggravated by 'genocide.' In the First World War the Turks committed genocide against Armenians; in the Second World War the Germans committed genocide against the Jews.<sup>36</sup>

### **3 – The Accuracy and Origin of the Reports found in the Blue Book**

The opinion of the Blue Book in question that Şükrü Elekdağ and Justin McCarthy have both previously expressed numerous times in the Turkish press are found in near identical form in the Turkish National Assembly's letter. According to this view:

A document [belonging to] the War Propaganda Office that was recently found in the British Archives and that shows the true identity of those persons mentioned only with code names in the Blue Book reveal that of these 150 persons, 59 are missionaries, 52 are Armenian activists and seven are revolutionary Armenian

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<sup>35</sup>. *Ibid.* p. 240.

<sup>36</sup>. Arnold J. Toynbee, *Experiences*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 241, 341; A. Toynbee, *Mankind and Mother Earth: A Narrative History of the Earth*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 585. For these last two passages and for others showing Toynbee's attitude toward the Armenian massacres, see: V. N. Dadrian, *The Key Elements in the Turkish Denial of the Armenian Genocide: A Case Study of Distortion and Falsification* (Toronto and Cambridge, MA: Zoryan Institute) 1999, pp. 77-81.

Tashnak leaders. As for the code names of the remaining 32, these all belong to made-up individuals or are the result of a separate place being given to the same person twice, each time with a different code name.<sup>37</sup>

It should be recalled that the utterances mentioned above are but the latest phase in the campaign being led by Şükrü Elekdağ regarding the Blue Book. Before this, Elekdağ had claimed that the sources of the documents found in the book were not clear or that the documents themselves were unsubstantiated or simply wrong. In an interview with *Turkish Daily News* two years earlier he claimed that “the Blue Book was prepared on the basis of unsubstantiated and false documents.”<sup>38</sup> On the basis of his claims, on March 8, 2005, the Turkish daily *Milliyet* reiterated the same assertion, stating that “the [Blue] Book was a deception built upon fabrications and half-fabrications or partisan reports and assessments, just like all the barbaric British propaganda activities throughout the war.” There were a slew of other reports in this direction in the Turkish press throughout March and April.<sup>39</sup>

At present, Elekdağ would appear to have accepted the truth that the source of these documents is well-known, after all. Indeed, the real problem seems not to be the unknown origin of the reports, but rather the ethnic identity of the persons giving them. It goes without saying that the information listed above was also taken from the aforementioned speeches and articles by Justin McCarthy.

At this point we should shed a little light on the following questions:

a) *What then is the source of the documents contained within Toynbee’s Blue Book?* The ‘Toynbee Papers,’ which are today housed in the Public Records Office in Kew, are replete with information on how the Blue Book was selected and organized.<sup>40</sup> Among these papers are the original copy of the selection and arrangement made by Arnold Toynbee himself, the author’s daily correspondence requesting information from

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<sup>37</sup>. The Turkish National Assembly letter, p. 3

[http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/baskan/mektup\\_mavikitap\\_tbmm.htm](http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/baskan/mektup_mavikitap_tbmm.htm)

<sup>38</sup>. Ayla Ganioglu’s interview with Şükrü Elekdağ, *Turkish Daily News*, April 27, 2003.

<sup>39</sup>. For some of these reports, see: <http://www.hyetert.com/anasayfa.asp> Upon the dissemination of the claims that the information in the Blue Book was unfounded and unsubstantiated and that the origins of the information were not clear, the Turkish-Armenian newspaper *Agos* ran a lengthy interview with Ara Sarafian, who published a reprint of the Blue Book in 2000. *Agos*, March 11, 2005, no. 467. For a similar interview with Sarafian conducted by the BBC’s Turkish News Service, see [http://www.bbc.co.uk/turkish/europe/story/2005/03/050310\\_blue\\_book\\_interviews.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/turkish/europe/story/2005/03/050310_blue_book_interviews.shtml)

<sup>40</sup>. F.O. 96/205-11 (Toynbee Papers, six boxes) Public Records Office, Kew.

various means and sources, and a detailed inventory of the pamphlets and newspaper clippings to which Toynbee referred. In short, the Toynbee Papers make clear the source of every entry and the criteria for their inclusion in the final draft.

The majority of the documentation employed by Toynbee was American in origin. Because the great part of the reports he employed came from the U.S. State Department, they can still be found today in the National Archives in Washington D.C. Among these are Record Group 59, The General Records of the Department of State: Internal Affairs of Turkey 1910-1929 (National Archives, Washington D.C.) and the Papers of Henry Morgenthau Sr., (Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.). Both of these collections have been transferred to microfilm and are currently open for use by researchers. Moreover, these documents also exist in the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, or ABCFM, located in the Houghton Library at Harvard University.<sup>41</sup>

Among these reports are 41 documents from the U.S. Department of State, 15 written by various American consuls in the Ottoman Empire, 10 by American missionaries, and eight by foreign nationals (of whom four are Germans). On the basis of another calculation, of the Blue Book's 150 numbered documents, 102 were by citizens of either "neutral or warring countries." The remaining documents rely on the testimonies of surviving witnesses of the deportations. In the introduction he wrote to the Blue Book, Toynbee put the number of documented testimonies whose owners' names he had been unable to determine at 22. The recent corrected and uncensored edition by Ara Sarafian was able to verify and provide the names of most of the persons in question.

In short, the figures in the Turkish National Assembly letter attributable to Justin McCarthy are wrong. His assertions that "the names of only a very few of the missionaries whose writings were used in the reports are known to us"<sup>42</sup> are entirely the product of his imagination. Furthermore, the classifying of those Armenians who survived the deportations as "Armenian activists," as McCarthy and by extension the Turkish National Assembly letter have done, is also unfounded. The claim that "32 of the code names [in the documents]...belong to completely fictitious persons" is simply not

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<sup>41</sup>. For all of this and subsequent information regarding the Blue Book, taken from the introduction of *The Treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-1916*, *op. cit.* pp. vii-xvi

<sup>42</sup>. Justin McCarthy, "I. Dünya Savaşında İngiliz Propagandası...", *loc. cit.*, pp. 33-34.

true. And finally, the assertion that certain documents need be considered incorrect or unreliable simply on the basis of the fact that their authors are missionaries or of Armenian origin is one fraught with danger, and one that comes very close to out-and-out racism.

b) The description contained in the Turkish National Assembly letter of “a document of the War Propaganda Office, which had only recently been discovered in the British archives and which shows the true identities of the code names [found] in the Blue Book” is very significant. Originally made by Justin McCarthy, it asserts that the true information regarding many persons and places found in the Blue Book was unknown until discovered and revealed by McCarthy. In the latter’s own words: “Years ago I discovered in the Public Record Office a small pamphlet that had been printed with the intent of private circulation within the Foreign Ministry building. The pamphlet contained the names of all the authors who had been included in the [Blue] book.”<sup>43</sup> In another place, he claims that “while other propaganda papers were destroyed, these documents remained untouched. As a result of chance, these documents were found among [other] documents having no connection to the subject at hand.”<sup>44</sup>

It is clear that McCarthy’s description of his “profound discovery” was convincing enough for Şükrü Elekdağ.<sup>45</sup> In his previously mentioned 2003 interview in Turkish Daily News, Elekdağ reiterated McCarthy’s claim that “American historian and professor Justin McCarthy found an incredible document in the British archives a short while ago....When the war ended the British government had all documents burned and destroyed. However, the document found by McCarthy survived and was left in an archive box where nobody got hold of it.”<sup>46</sup> According to McCarthy, “British citizens have never been made aware of the truth about the authenticity of the report’s sources.”<sup>47</sup>

In fact, the *Key to the Names of Persons and Places Withheld from Publication in the Original Edition of “The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-16”* was produced and printed in 1916 as a supplement to the Blue Book itself and was distributed on both sides of the Atlantic. Copies of this pamphlet are available in various

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<sup>43</sup>. Justin McCarthy, ‘British Propaganda and the Turks...,’ *loc. cit.*

<sup>44</sup>. Justin McCarthy, ‘I. Dünya Savaşında İngiliz Propagandası...,’ *loc. cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>45</sup> The phrase is Elekdağ’s. See below.

<sup>46</sup>. Ayla Ganioglu’s interview with Şükrü Elekdağ, *Turkish Daily News*, *loc. cit.*

<sup>47</sup>. Justin McCarthy, ‘I. Dünya Savaşında İngiliz Propagandası...,’ *loc. cit.*, p. 34.

archives around the world, among others, in the aforementioned Record Group 59 in the National Archives, as well as at a number of American universities (Michigan, UCLA, Columbia, etc.) in microfilm format.<sup>48</sup> What's more, the information contained therein has in recent years been included in new printings of the book itself, such as the 1988 edition in Beirut by G. Doniguian and Sons.<sup>49</sup>

#### **4 – Germany's Crimes in Belgium: A Groundless and False Claim?**

One of the central points of the Turkish National Assembly letter is the claim that the British propaganda regarding the war crimes and atrocities committed by the Germans in Belgium during World War I is ultimately unfounded. We can even go so far as to say that the Turkish parliament's request for an apology from Great Britain is based on this assertion. The letter reads as follows:

As you are probably aware, during World War I ... the British War Propaganda Bureau (1914), later the Department of Information (1916) and later the Ministry of Information (1918), all referred to as the "Wellington House," planned and executed a public disinformation campaign aimed against Germany and the Ottoman Empire to ensure support for the war among the citizens of the Allied states, particularly America, and to bring about the participation of American in the war. "Wellington House" produced two significant reports, one regarding "German Atrocities" and the other "Turkish atrocities"... On December 2, 1925, Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Sir Austin Chamberlain appearing before the House of Lords, declared the Bryce "German Atrocities" report to be factually baseless war propaganda. However, no retraction followed with respect to Bryce's Blue Book [*The Treatment of Armenians...*], although it suffered from the same defects. Arnold Toynbee himself admitted that the Blue Book was indeed "war propaganda."<sup>50</sup>

The claims made here—that the Bryce Report (which I will deal with in point five, below) is a fake and that Great Britain apologized to Germany (point six, below) — were originally made by McCarthy. The logical implication of these claims is that, if the British lied about Germany, then they also lied about Turkey, and, because they have since apologized to Germany for these distortions and calumny, it is high time that they do the same in regard to Turkey. For the record, let's quote McCarthy's exact words:

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<sup>48</sup>. Ara Sarafian, *op.cit.*, introduction, p. x,

<sup>49</sup>. *Ibid*, p. x., footnote 13

<sup>50</sup>. Turkish National Assembly letter, p. 1. [http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/baskan/mektup\\_mavikitap\\_tbmm.htm](http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/baskan/mektup_mavikitap_tbmm.htm)

If [the British] lied in their German report, how possible is it that they didn't lie in the things they wrote about the Turks... If those who prepared the British propaganda did this to the Germans, then they conducted the same [policy] toward the Turks, but today this doesn't draw anyone's attention. The propaganda made against the Germans was later repudiated, but the smear job carried out against the Turks remains unrepeated (*ancak Türklere atılan çamur bugün hala sürmektedir*).<sup>51</sup>

McCarthy also claims that “the propaganda made against the Turks was never refuted”<sup>52</sup> and “the reason that no one has researched the topic and uncovered the lies told of the Turks is that no one cared. They were just Turks.”<sup>53</sup> And what is McCarthy's conclusion from all this? That “the Bryce Report written for the Ottoman Armenians should be thrown in the same waste basket as the Bryce Report written against the Germans.”<sup>54</sup>

There are three questions that need be answered here: 1) Did the Germans really commit war crimes and atrocities in Belgium (and, to a lesser extent, France) in 1914? 2) If the answer is yes, the reports of German atrocities are accurate, how is it that Justin McCarthy and Şükrü Elekdağ (we should also add to the list Salahi Sonyel<sup>55</sup> and Andrew Mango<sup>56</sup>) could commit such a glaring error? And finally, 3) Is the Bryce Report on Germans really full of baseless accusations and unsubstantiated claims? The third and last of these questions will actually be taken up in the following section (point 5), but for now, let's answer the first two questions.

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<sup>51</sup>. Justin McCarthy, “I. Dünya Savaşında İngiliz Propagandası...,” *loc. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>52</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>53</sup>. Justin McCarthy, *British Propaganda and the Turks...*, *op. cit.*

<sup>54</sup>. Justin McCarthy, “I. Dünya Savaşında İngiliz Propagandası...,” p. 37.

<sup>55</sup>. Some examples of Sonyel's writings in which he claims that the accusations against the Germans are actually just inaccurate propaganda are “The Negative Factor In Turco-Armenian Relations,” *Perceptions, Journal of International Affairs* 4, no. 2 (June-August 1999), [available online at: <http://www.tallarmeniantale.com/blue-book.htm#brit>]; Salahi Sonyel, “The Great War and the Tragedy of Anatolia: Turks and Armenians in the Maelstrom of Major Powers, War-time disinformation and The Blue Book,” <http://www.tallarmeniantale.com/blue-book.htm#brit>. Sonyel's other works include *The Great War and the tragedy of Anatolia : Turks and Armenians in the maelstrom of major powers* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society Printing House, 2000) and *The Ottoman Armenians: Victims of Great Power Diplomacy* (London: Rustem & Brother, 1997).

<sup>56</sup>. Mango is the author of *Atatürk* (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 2000) and other works on Turkey. In a number of talks and interviews, Andrew Mango has reiterated the claim that the accusations made against Germany during WWI were ultimately unfounded propaganda. See my discussion of point 6 for a fuller discussion of his works.

The answer to the first question is quite simple: Yes, especially in their opening offensive in 1914, the Germans behaved brutally in Belgium and France, even committing war crimes and atrocities. The most comprehensive work on this subject is the recent book by John Horne and Alan Kramer.<sup>57</sup> As a result of years of work in the German, French, British, and Belgian archives, the authors concluded that in the first months of the war the German military committed some 512 major atrocities against the civilian population. The number of Belgian and French unarmed civilians intentionally killed in these actions was as high as 6,427. Additionally, thousands of buildings (around 20,000 is the conservative estimate) were intentionally razed or destroyed, an indeterminate number of cases of rape and using civilians as human shields during combat occurred, and tens of thousands (approximately 25,000) of persons were deported or forcibly removed to Germany, where they were sent to some 31 different concentration camps.<sup>58</sup>

As I shall discuss in greater detail below, although a good number of scholars have approached the Bryce Report/Blue Book against the Germans with hesitation, the great majority have ultimately concluded that the terror and crimes committed by the Germans in Belgium are an established fact. More significantly, they stress that the “terror” and “crimes” of the Germans—the numbers of which they put “in the thousands”—are not only the result of “excesses” on the part of the soldiers, but rather the product of “high policy.”<sup>59</sup>

But if the available evidence is painfully clear, why do Elekdağ and his followers continue to assert that accusations against Germany are false? What is it that allows these authors to speak with such assurance? The reason is actually very simple: This conviction that the claims against Germany are all patently false bits of British propaganda has been around until the early 1980s. The claims of McCarthy, Elekdağ and the others are consistent with this generally accepted account, as well as with older sources. Evidently, McCarthy, Sonyel, and Mango seem to be unaware of works written on the subject

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<sup>57</sup>. John Horne & Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2001).

<sup>58</sup>. *Ibid.*, pp. 71-77.

<sup>59</sup>. For example: Trevor Wilson, “Lord Bryce’s Investigation into Alleged German Atrocities in Belgium, 1914-1915,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 14 (1979), p. 380; James Morgen Read, *Atrocity Propaganda 1914-1919* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), 82-83.

since the mid-1980s, and of information generally well known in the world of academia who concern themselves with the subject.<sup>60</sup>

We may now account for the popular belief that claims of German war crimes and atrocities are all fabricated. Three main factors aided in this development. The first—and for the understanding of the current reactions in Turkey, the most crucial—is the prevailing German political, emotional and intellectual climate of the 1920s and 1930s. For several reasons, the belief took firm root in Germany after the war that the Western powers had maligned Germany’s reputation with their accusations of war crimes. Many Germans felt affronted by the accusations of “German atrocities” and especially by the humiliating stipulations of the Versailles Treaty. The demand to “avenge the insults to German honor” became a frequent theme among the country’s nationalists and its military. To stop the seemingly endless propaganda campaign being directed at Germany from abroad, they argued, the official state archives needed to be opened and official, state-sponsored works on the history of the war needed to be commissioned.<sup>61</sup>

In Germany, however, the denial policy did not limit itself of any German wrongdoing during their wartime occupation of Belgium; it further claimed that Belgian and French civilians had taken up arms against the occupying German forces. It was often said that because armed popular resistance to occupation violated international law, Germany had responded in a lawful manner, in accordance with its military need. This argument apparently persuaded most Germans that a legitimate military action had been distorted by their national enemies and transformed into propaganda about German brutality.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>. See, for example, Salahi Sonyel, “The Great War and the Tragedy of Anatolia...,” *loc. cit.*, where the author claims, on the basis of two sources, that the propaganda directed against the Germans during the First World War consists of either fabrications or forgeries. The sources are: Arthur Ponsonby, *Falsehood in War-Time* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1928), and James Morgen Read, *ibid.*

<sup>61</sup>. The similarities between the mood in Germany in the 1920s in regard to the war crime accusations and the current mood in Turkey on the same issue are indeed striking. But what is interesting is that the Social Democrats worked hardest to oppose the rising wave of nationalism in Germany in that period, whereas in Turkey, the Republican People’s Party, (CHP- *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*)—a party traditionally representing this political tendency—leads the nationalist trend. For more on the postwar German climate, see Horne & Kramer, *op. cit.*, pp. 366-418.

<sup>62</sup>. Some of the most important documents reflecting this widespread conviction were the reports published in 1927 by a German parliamentary commission established to conduct an inquiry into ‘war crimes.’ One of these reports was devoted to the “Belgian Popular Uprising.” For more detailed information, see Ulrich Heinemann, *Die Verdrängte Niederlage* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), pp. 192-204.

In *Mein Kampf* Hitler devotes a special chapter to wartime propaganda as an area in which the British scored a complete victory over Germany.<sup>63</sup> Yet, once the Nazis came to power in 1933, it was claimed that a systematic smear campaign against Germany had been masterminded not by the British War Office, but rather world Jewry.<sup>64</sup>

There was another reason why Germans came to disbelieve in reports of German wartime brutality. The strong pacifist current that briefly rose within Europe and America—and in Great Britain in particular—discounted every allegation that might have justified the war. Antiwar opinion leaders argued that Britain’s anti-German propaganda had been overblown in order to facilitate Britain’s entry into the war, as well as to distract attention from Britain’s own war crimes. Until the 1980s it could be argued in Europe and in the USA that “German atrocities were really the product not of German brutality but of Allied propaganda.”<sup>65</sup>

This resulted in a curious alliance of sorts between German nationalists—and Nazis, first and foremost—and liberal Western pacifists. Tellingly, in 1940, German Propaganda Minister Goebbels wrote in his daily journal that every accusation of barbarism committed by the Nazis could easily be rebuffed with claims that they were merely “hostile propaganda.”<sup>66</sup> In this vein, Ponsonby’s *Falsehood in War-Time* (1928), of which the trio of Justin McCarthy, Şükrü Elekdağ and Salahî Sonyel have made ample use, has been considered a classic in this field, and the claim that some of the things it says may well be wrong is an idea that remains unheard and unvoiced in public opinion in Europe and the USA.

The overarching shadow of the Jewish Holocaust provides a possible third reason for the persistence of skepticism about anti-German propaganda from the First World War. The memory of earlier atrocities has simply paled in comparison to the Nazi horrors, and nowhere—least of all in Germany—does the issue receive any serious attention these days.

For these and other reasons that we do not have space to expound upon here, the myth of falsified and manufactured accusations of German war crimes during WWI has

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<sup>63</sup>. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP), 1940, pp. 193-205.

<sup>64</sup>. Viktor Klemperer, *LTI. Notizbuch eines Philologen* (Leipzig, 1996) [16<sup>th</sup> edition, copyright 1957], p. 44 (entry for 27 March, 1933). Cited in Horne & Kramer, *op. cit.*, p. 401.

<sup>65</sup>. Horne & Kramer, *ibid.*, p. 367. See pp. 367-375 for more detailed information on this movement.

<sup>66</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 402.

taken root among Germans and others.<sup>67</sup> The first doubts about the accuracy of this belief emerged in the 1950s, through the collaborative efforts of German and Belgian historians. A series of studies followed in the mid-1980s.<sup>68</sup> Since the beginning of the decade, the subject has become more widely known in the world of academia. It appears that Elekdag and McCarthy have found it convenient to ignore the current state of research.

### **5 – The Bryce Report on German Atrocities: Is it based on forged or inaccurate documents?**

In two other places, apart from the lengthy passage quoted above, the Turkish National Assembly letter repeats the assertion that the Bryce Report is based on fabricated or unsubstantiated information.<sup>69</sup> This raises the following question: Even if the tales of German war crimes are true, can it still not be possible that the accounts found in the Bryce Report are fabricated or inaccurate?

Bryce’s report, although intended to publicize German military atrocities against Belgian and French civilians, was based in part on publications of the Belgian and French governments. When this material found its way into the British press, the resulting public outcry spurred the British government to commission its own report, which included the accounts of some 1,200 Belgian refugees then in England.<sup>70</sup>

The French, Belgian and British commissions collaborated closely throughout their labors, using “comparable evidence drawn from civilian refugees and Allied and German soldiers. The information contained in these documents is so important and its sources so clear that it is simply impossible to speak of a pamphlet having been prepared on the basis of “unknown and fabricated sources” as McCarthy has claimed.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>. John Horne, “German Atrocities, 1914: Fact, Fantasy or Fabrication?” *History Today*, vol. 52, issue 4 (April 2002): 1-33 The article also contains a brief summary of how this story came about.

<sup>68</sup>. Horne & Kramer, *op. cit.*, p. 3. For a list of the works on the subject that have appeared since the 1980s, see p. 452, footnotes 5-11.

<sup>69</sup>. Turkish National Assembly letter, [http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/baskan/mektup\\_mavikitap\\_tbmm.htm](http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/baskan/mektup_mavikitap_tbmm.htm) “...of the report of ‘German Atrocities’ bearing Bryce’s signature and which England has officially declared as untrue...”(p. 3), and “...In the manner in which the Government of Great Britain has done for Bryce’s fabricated ‘German Atrocities’ report...” (p. 4).

<sup>70</sup>. Some 500 of these accounts were later published separately in a supplementary pamphlet. See: J. M. Read, *Atrocity Propaganda...*, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

<sup>71</sup>. <http://www.ermenisorunu.gen.tr/english/articles/article1.html>.

The Bryce Report was first published in May, 1915.<sup>72</sup> This date, as I shall make clear in point 6 below, is significant from the viewpoint of showing that Great Britain did not and could not have apologized for the Bryce Report.

As mentioned previously, the Bryce Report on “German Atrocities” was long viewed with skepticism on account of the general pacifist climate that prevailed in much of Europe and America after the war.<sup>73</sup> But it should be stressed that this initial skeptical reception is not the origin of the nonsensical claims of false and fabricated sources found in the Turkish National Assembly letter. Earlier critics complained that sufficient inquiries had not been conducted, that the witnesses were not made to sign a sworn statement when their testimonies were taken, that the testimonies themselves were not recorded by the committee that was to publish them but rather by a different team, and that no crimes against women and children had been recorded in the sources deemed most reliable, the diaries of German soldiers.<sup>74</sup>

Trevor Wilson, author of the most extensive work on this Bryce Report, comments on its reliability: “The Bryce Commission did not produce a dishonest or fraudulent report in the sense that it reached a conclusion which the evidence had shown to be untrue. What it did do was to avoid verifying the evidence.”<sup>75</sup> More recent studies have shown that the Bryce Report was far from thorough in detailing all of the war crimes committed by the Germans. Although its casualty figures were occasionally overstated, its numbers were in general well below the actual figures; furthermore, the report concentrated on events in certain regions while neglecting others. Instances of

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<sup>72</sup>. The so-called ‘Bryce Report’ consisted of two separate publications, one of which was a supplement: 1) *Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages appointed by His Britannic Majesty’s Government and presided over by the Right Hon. Viscount Bryce O.M.*, Cd. 7894 (London) 1915, and 2) *Appendix: Evidence and Documents laid before the Committee on Alleged German Outrages*, Cd. 7895 (London:) 1915. The entire text of the Bryce Report can be found at: [http://www.gwpda.org/wwi-www/BryceReport/bryce\\_r.html](http://www.gwpda.org/wwi-www/BryceReport/bryce_r.html)

<sup>73</sup>. For a fuller discussion of this skepticism and the reasons therefore, see: Horne & Kramer, *German Atrocities...*, *op. cit.* 367-375; Trevor Wilson, *The Myriad Faces of War: Britain and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986) (esp. chapter 17); Gary S. Messinger, *British Propaganda and the State in the First World War* (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1992), 70-84.

<sup>74</sup>. Trevor Wilson, “Lord Bryce’s Investigation into Alleged German Atrocities in Belgium, 1914-5”, *ibid.*, pp. 372-373.

<sup>75</sup>. Trevor Wilson, “Lord Bryce’s Investigation...”, *loc. cit.*, p. 378. Wilson’s assessment of the Bryce Commission is also quoted in Sanders & Taylor, *British Propaganda During the First World War...*, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

rape, for instance, were greatly neglected, not only by the Bryce Report, but by all of the reports.<sup>76</sup>

In short, the Bryce Report is not, as its present detractors claim, rife with lies and nonsense. On the contrary, the report “underestimated the death and destruction caused by the invaders.”<sup>77</sup> Even though the commission found some of the more fantastic stories and accounts of the witnesses’ testimony unbelievable, the document points to the uncertainty of some allegations by using words such as “supposedly” or “allegedly.”<sup>78</sup> Nor was the Bryce Report later discarded for having been packed with lies and forgeries, regardless of what Justin McCarthy may claim. The fate of this report, in fact, is similar to that of the other Blue Book on the Herero massacres in German Southwest Africa.

Two reasons for this can be discerned. The first is that the 1925 Locarno Agreement resolved many outstanding issues between Germany, France and Belgium. In the following year Germany was accepted into the League of Nations. As a result, anti-German propaganda was no longer considered appropriate for this new era of relations, which was to be characterized by Germany’s rehabilitation. For the Entente powers, Locarno signified a “closing of the door” on the war period through, among other things, a sort of selective amnesia. Desiring improved relations with Germany, the government of Belgium encouraged this voluntary forgetfulness on the subject of German war crimes.<sup>79</sup> The second reason, as explained above, is the growing skepticism with which British propaganda—and the Bryce Report, in particular—was viewed as a result of the wave of pacifism in the West during the 1920s.

## **6 – So did Great Britain apologize for the Bryce Report?**

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<sup>76</sup>. For a discussion of the instances of rape and other cases of violence directed at women, see: Horne & Kramer, *German Atrocities...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 196-204.

<sup>77</sup>. A detailed assessment of the report can be found in *ibid.*, pp. 232-237.

<sup>78</sup>. To give but one example from the report: “A third form of mutilation, the cutting of one or both hands, is frequently said to have taken place. In some cases where this form of mutilation is *alleged* [my emphasis] to have occurred...” [http://www.gwpda.org/wwi-www/BryceReport/bryce\\_r.html](http://www.gwpda.org/wwi-www/BryceReport/bryce_r.html). For a critique of the report’s failure to sufficiently take up actions directed at women and children, see: Horne & Kramer, *ibid.*, pp. 233-235. Some passages from the internal correspondence between different members of the committee can be found in Trevor Wilson, “Lord Bryce’s Investigation...,” *loc. cit.*, pp. 374-375. According to these, certain commission members also expressed the opinion that the testimonies of some witnesses needed to be investigated in greater detail and that this was not being done.

<sup>79</sup>. Horne & Kramer, *German Atrocities...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 381-382.

The claim that Great Britain has disavowed the Bryce Report is repeated at least three times in the Turkish National Assembly letter, and a date for this admission is even provided:

On December 2, 1925, Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Sir Austen Chamberlain appearing before the House of Lords, declared the Bryce “German Atrocities” report to be factually baseless war propaganda.<sup>80</sup>

By taking this “fact” as its starting point, the Turkish National Assembly letter demands an admission that the Blue Book regarding the Armenians also be proclaimed to rest on false and unsubstantiated information.

Salahî Sonyel was apparently the first researcher to have “discovered” Great Britain’s great “confession” regarding German atrocities. McCarthy then followed Sonyel’s lead, and he, in turn, was followed by Andrew Mango. Interviewed by the BBC’s Turkish service at the time that the Blue Book issue was starting to be hotly debated in Turkey, Mango declared: “Two books were actually published. The first of these concerned itself with German atrocities. The second one was about the atrocities against Armenians. Both books were published with propagandistic intent during war time. It was later officially admitted that the one concerning the Germans was thoroughly a work of propaganda.”<sup>81</sup>

In 2003 Şükrü Elekdağ presented British Foreign Secretary Chamberlain’s aforementioned speech (2 December 1925) to the Turkish public as if England had indeed apologized.<sup>82</sup> It is difficult to know whether these events should be viewed as a drama or as a comedy. The fact is that Great Britain has never officially declared the

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<sup>80</sup>. Turkish National Assembly letter, p. 1, [http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/baskan/mektup\\_mavikitap\\_tbmm.htm](http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/baskan/mektup_mavikitap_tbmm.htm)

<sup>81</sup>. Andrew Mango, who seems to be unaware how many times the Blue Book was published, has repeatedly claimed in interviews that the two Blue Books were propagandistic works and based on false information. (e.g., “Mavi Kitap Tek Taraflı [Blue Book is one sided] *Milliyet*, 14 March, 2005). Likewise, CHP (*Republican People’s Party*) head Deniz Baykal has showered praise on Mango for his statements, saying that he has submitted an important opinion to prove that the Blue Book is a document of propaganda. (*Hürriyet*, 15 March, 2005). For the aforementioned interviews with Mango, see: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/turkish/europe/story/2005/03/150310\\_blue\\_book\\_interviews.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/turkish/europe/story/2005/03/150310_blue_book_interviews.shtml)

<sup>82</sup>. “UK should apologize to Turkey about Armenian genocide claims,” *Turkish Daily News*, 27 April, 2003. Elekdağ gave the date of the speech as 1936 in that interview: “When after the war it was revealed that these were lies the British parliament accepted the truth in a statement they made in 1936 and apologized to Germany. The Turkish Parliament should put forward this case and follow up the issue regarding the baselessness of the Blue Book published with the approval of the British parliament and its declaration. Our government should make official demands to Britain regarding the issue. A statement by the British parliament or the government making a statement on the issue will be a development to refute claims of Armenian genocide.

Bryce Report to be forged or false, nor has Britain ever apologized to Germany for the same. These claims are nothing more than the shared fantasy of Justin McCarthy, Şükrü Elekdağ, Andrew Mango and others. There was no connection whatsoever between the Bryce Report and the Foreign Secretary's December 2, 1925, address to Parliament; nor in the related session was the matter of an apology discussed or even mentioned. That session concerned an entirely different subject (namely, rumors of a German "Cadaver Factory" during WWI), and the secretary's speech did not contain a single word about the Bryce Report.

But before recounting the story, let us examine the actual text of the Foreign Secretary's speech during the session. During the discussion of the source of the "Cadaver Factory" report, Sir Austin Chamberlain took up the topic in the hope of bringing more openness to the debate, which had been underway since the previous month:

My right honorable Friend the Secretary of State for War told the House last week how the story reached His Majesty's Government in 1917. The Chancellor of the German Reich has authorized me to say, on the authority of the German Government that there was never any foundation for it. I need scarcely add that, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, I accept this denial, and I trust that this false report will not again be revived.<sup>83</sup>

Behold: here is the "British apology" for the Bryce Report on "German Atrocities" that Elekdağ and McCarthy have made such a fuss about, and over which they have proceeded to bring Turkey to its feet and convinced the Turkish National Assembly to pen its letter demanding an apology from Great Britain.

Now, let us look more closely at the so-called "Cadaver Factory" story that was the subject of Sir Austin Chamberlain's speech, which was entirely unrelated to the Blue Book on German Atrocities. Throughout the period of the First World War, wild rumors and exaggerated tales constantly circulated and often appeared in the daily papers. One of these stories, which appeared for the first time in an April 1917 edition of the Berlin daily *Lokalanzeiger*, had to do with reports of a cadaver factory.

Here I would like to make a few quick notes about this story as it concerns Elekdağ, McCarthy, and Mango. First, it should be recalled that this event occurred in

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<sup>83</sup>. HANSARD (Parliamentary Debates: Official Report), 5<sup>th</sup> Session, vol. 188, 2 December 1925 (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1925), 2233.

April 1917, some two years after the first appearance of Bryce's report that these three persons claim the British government has since admitted to be false. Second, this story cannot in any way be said to have been fabricated by the British: the first mention of it came in a German newspaper during wartime. As for the actual report itself, it mentioned the existence of a factory that had been established in order to transform cadavers into supplies needed for the war, such as oil, soap, etc. One month later, similar reports were published in expatriate Belgian papers in France and the Netherlands, as well as in the *London Times*.

During the same month, Lord Robert Cecil, Minister of Blockade, declared on behalf of the Government: "in view of other actions taken by the German military authorities, there is nothing incredible in the present charge against them." Aware that nothing could have appeared in the British newspapers without the approval of the Government Press Bureau, he added, "His Majesty's Government have allowed the circulation of the facts as they appeared through the usual channels."<sup>84</sup> As things turned out, the story came to occupy the British press for an entire month, running in parallel with a debate over terminology that arose when the German *Kadaver* was said to refer only to dead animals, not humans. *The Times* actually included in their articles the views of German authorities on the subject.<sup>85</sup>

The subject resurfaced in the press in October 1925. During the following month, the British Parliament proposed that an inquiry into the matter be conducted; the question was debated in both the press and the government.<sup>86</sup> This debate raised questions as to the source of the original 1917 report and whether or not the War Office had used it with propagandistic intent. Former Prime Minister Lloyd George called the cadaver factory story "perfectly ridiculous" and stated that "The Government knew it could not be true, and it had never been used officially by the Propaganda Department."<sup>87</sup> However, after

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<sup>84</sup>. "Kadaver" *The Nation*, vol. XXXVIII, no. 5 (31 October, 1925), 171-172.

<sup>85</sup>. For one such expert arguing that the word *Kadaver* is, in fact, *not* employed for human bodies, see *The Times*, April 23, 1917

<sup>86</sup>. The debate was restarted when the *New York Times* reported on a speech given by a General Charteris in New York the previous day. The report stated that the general had claimed that the cadaver factory story had been intentionally fabricated by the British. See, *New York Times*, October 20 & 23, 1925. Great Britain was said to be 'shocked' by the report and the issue was then debated in the press for days. For an account of how and why the 'cadaver factory' legend erupted again in 1925, see *The Nation*, pp. 171-172

<sup>87</sup>. "Kadaver" in *The Nation*, 171.

the very first declarations were made in Parliament on behalf of the British Government, it became clear that the Government had not prevented them from appearing in the press, the implication being that they had, in fact, been used indirectly as propaganda. The debate concluded with the aforementioned statements by Foreign Secretary Chamberlain.<sup>88</sup> The newspapers then reported this in the manner of “Chamberlain accepts [German Prime Minister] Luther’s denial.”<sup>89</sup>

The legend of the cadaver factory was broadly employed by the liberal-pacifist movement in its 1920s campaign to discredit Great Britain’s wartime propaganda efforts. In *Falsehood in War-Time*, Arthur Ponsonby devotes a whole chapter to the subject and, taking this event as a starting point, argues that every accusation made against the Germans during the war was the product of similar propaganda efforts.<sup>90</sup> We should not be surprised to learn that the information found in Ponsonby’s book has been identically reproduced, first in the work of Salahî Sonyel, and later in the Turkish National Assembly letter.<sup>91</sup> Justin McCarthy has also offered this source as proof of the false nature of all British wartime propaganda.<sup>92</sup>

I would like to conclude my discussion of this subject with three separate statements:

- 1) All of the information regarding the cadaver factory story has already been adequately summarized in Michael Sanders and Philip M. Taylor’s *British Propaganda During the First World War, 1914-1918*, (pages:146-148). In their summary the authors didn’t mixed up the Cadaver factory story with Bryce Blue book and it was very clear in their description that Cadaver factory story is unconnected in any way to the “German Atrocities” Blue Book. However, Sonyel and McCarthy did mix both stories, even though they frequently used this source.
- 2) There are two more pieces of information about Arthur Ponsonby that are worth mentioning. The first is that his aforementioned book is frequently reprinted and

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<sup>88</sup>. For the entire discussions in November and December sessions see: HANSARD, 5<sup>th</sup> Session, vol. 188, *op. cit.*, pp. 11423; 2024-2025 and 2232-2233 (November 24; December 1 & 2, 1925).

<sup>89</sup>. “Chamberlain in Commons Accepts Luther’s Denial,” *The New York Times*, 3 December, 1925.

<sup>90</sup>. Arthur Ponsonby, *Falsehood in War-Time*, *op. cit.*, Chapter 17 (pp. 102-114). It should be mentioned that the author at least knew well enough not to confuse the cadaver factory story with those recorded in the Blue Book by Viscount Bryce.

<sup>91</sup>. Salahî Sonyel, “The Negative Factor In Turco-Armenian Relations,” *loc. cit.*, [note 44]

<sup>92</sup>. Justin McCarthy, “I. Dünya Savaşında İngiliz Propagandası...,” *loc. cit.*, p. 31, note 23.

distributed by so-called Holocaust revisionist groups in the United States that deny that the systematic murder of Jews during World War II actually happened.<sup>93</sup> Their logic in advocating Ponsonby's position is very simple: If the latter's claims regarding anti-German propaganda during the First World War are correct and the claims of German atrocities were indeed fabricated, then it follows, in their minds at least, perhaps that all of the claims surrounding the Holocaust are likewise false.

The second piece of information is one that should cause great distress to Justin McCarthy, Şükrü Elekdağ, and Salahî Sonyel. In their eagerness to refute claims that Ottoman Armenians were massacred during World War I, both McCarthy and Sonyel have enlisted Ponsonby's book without seeing—or by intentionally overlooking—the author's own statements regarding the Armenian question.

Ponsonby explains that, from Germany's point of view, “[t]he Turks were embarrassing allies” because “the massacres of Armenians had to be concealed.” Indeed, “attempts were made in some papers to defend them.” Some German news organizations even labored to show that the massacres had been justified.<sup>94</sup> In other words, a book which is often cited by my fellow-countrymen as proof that anti-Turkish allegations of an intentional massacre of Armenians are simply fabrications actually states that such crimes were committed.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> [http://www.noontidepress.com/catalog/advanced\\_search\\_result.php?keywords=Ponsonby&osCsid=41924b2bd65494141c8d828a242bb1e0&search\\_in\\_description=1](http://www.noontidepress.com/catalog/advanced_search_result.php?keywords=Ponsonby&osCsid=41924b2bd65494141c8d828a242bb1e0&search_in_description=1)

<sup>94</sup> Arthur Ponsonby, *Falsehood in War-Time*, *op. cit.*, p. 168. Another detail about the author worth considering is this: After his work on the events in Armenia was published in 1916, the Dr. Johannes Lepsius, the founder of the German Orient Mission, settled in the Netherlands. Although the report was circulated that Lepsius had actually fled Germany because he feared arrest by the country's authorities, in fact the real reason that he went there was to conduct espionage on behalf of these very same powers. Among his various duties, Lepsius, who was attached to the German General Staff's Psychological Warfare Office, was ordered to comb the British and Dutch presses for anything that might be considered a signal of a desire for peace, and to establish ties with the British peace party and other pacifist groups. The authorities concluded that Lepsius, whose opposition to the German state was well-known, would be able to influence and perhaps strengthen the opponents of the British government. For more on Lepsius and his activities in the Netherlands, see: Wolfgang Gust, “Magisches Viereck Johannes Lepsius, Deutschland und Armenien,” [www.armenocide.net](http://www.armenocide.net). In a private letter to German Reichskanzler Bethmann-Hollweg dated May 18, 1917, Lepsius writes that, if requested, he would work to prevent any present and future propaganda campaigns against Germany by contacting his acquaintances, such as Ponsonby. DE/PA-AA/R14906. (The full text of this letter can be viewed at [www.armenocide.net](http://www.armenocide.net)). Ponsonby also played a role in Lepsius' special efforts to portray the accusations being made about Germany's war time actions as simple war propaganda. This is a subject that deserves further investigation.

<sup>95</sup> As I mentioned above [footnote 6] the Turkish Historical Society uses the same tactic of misrepresenting foreign sources in order to bolster the official denial policy.

The conclusion: the British government has never declared the Bryce Report to be “groundless and false.” Furthermore, no British government has ever apologized to Germany for the report. No historian of this subject has ever come across a single piece of evidence for such an interpretation. Justin McCarthy and Şükrü Elekdağ have thus exploited the Turkish National Assembly in a most scandalous fashion.

Throughout the 1920s and beyond, the Nazis conducted well orchestrated propaganda campaigns, tirelessly countering charges of German atrocities in Belgium with claims that “the German nation has been humiliated,” “German honor has been violated,” “all accusations against us are but lies and propaganda” and that, in regard to its actions in Belgium, Germany had simply “exercised its legitimate right of defense.” If the CHP (*Republican People’s Party*) is embarking on a similar pathway, that is cause for serious concern.

Yet the CHP’s historic counterpart, the German Social Democratic Party, along with the Belgians and many others, found the complaints against German behavior justified, and the claims of WWI war crimes “serious” and “undeniable.” Moreover, the German Social Democratic Party even stated that on account of these crimes, Germany owed a moral debt to Belgium.<sup>96</sup> Which path will Turkey choose?

Again according to Hanioglu, “the end result,” how history is understood in Turkey, is that “a historian isn’t someone who understands past reality and tries to present it in new ways. In this kind of society the historian is a servant who knows how to press the past through the filter of perfection and present it for the service of the state ideology.”<sup>97</sup> It is the task of historian to “remake,” “reshape” the history according to the political demand of the authority. That is what is happening here.

It is a common practice in our century that scholars help their governments with the knowledge they have in order to shape government policy. But the basic precondition is that the scientist provides facts that politicians normally do not have. If you change the nature of this relationship, that is, if the historians distort and change the historical facts according to the political need expressed by the government, this is a clear breach of academic honesty and academic integrity.

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<sup>96</sup>. Horne & Kramer, *German Atrocities...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 391-2; 395.

<sup>97</sup> Zaman newspaper, Jan. 21, 2005.