

THE COALESCENCE OF THE ROLES OF PARTY AND STATE IN THE ENACTMENT OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

VAHAKN N. DADRIAN

INTRODUCTION

The selection of this topic calls for a brief explanation, since it tends to deviate from a theme which seems to dominate the literature on genocide and the holocaust. That theme asserts that genocide, as a rule, is a state crime and that, therefore, the state as an institution is bound to be the author of any given genocide. This paper takes issue with this view by taking into account the realities of the World War I Armenian Genocide. It is maintained that the most signal feature of that genocide is the dynamics through which the functions of the state were allowed to fuse with the conspiratorial goals and plans of a monolithic, political party. Moreover, it is further argued that the fusion was initiated, directed and brought to fruition through resort by the party to coercive methods. The reference is, of course, to the Ottoman state apparatus, on the one hand, and to the Committee of Union and Progress, or Ittihadist party, on the other. The enactment of any genocide is an exercise of overwhelming lethal power. When a political party in its drive to compete with the state for the resources of power and succeeds in accumulating such a level of power that exceeds the level of the power of the state, then that party can overwhelm the state apparatus and subvert at will the functions of that state. The Armenian Genocide was largely the result of this pattern of development. Accordingly, this paper will have four parts through which the problem under review may be sketched in outline form.

I. The Rudiments of the Ittihadist Revolution in July 1908 : The First Stage.

When Ittihad, with hardly any bloodshed, successfully overthrew the Abdul Hamit regime in July 1908, it had neither an elaborate ideology to implement, nor experienced or competent leaders to take over the reins of the state. The main goal of the revolution was to end the tyranny of the existing regime for which purpose a band of military and civilian conspira-

tors, often described by their opponents as **Komitacis**, i.e. secretive and dangerous plotters, mobilized their resources, invoking the ideals of the French Revolution, namely, liberty, fraternity and equality. They mainly wanted to restore the Constitution of 1876, which Sultan Abdul Hamit had suspended in 1877 in connection with the Russo-Turkish war. Until January 1913, the Ittihad party's lever of power was in the legislative branch of the Ottoman government; its parliamentary fraction in the Chamber of Deputies was the main vehicle through which Ittihad in some ways influenced the direction of affairs of the Ottoman state — except in the July 1912 - January 1913 period when the party lost its hold on power and had to yield to the sway of a non-Ittihadist cabinet and subsequently to an anti-Ittihadist, i.e. Itilafist cabinet. In other words, up to January 1913 Ittihadist leaders were either unprepared, unwilling or unable to gain significant control of the Ottoman state apparatus through which to push the implementation of their emerging political designs, especially with respect to the escalating Turko-Armenian conflict.

II. The January 1913 Ittihadist Revolution : The Second and Final Stage.

The second stage of the revolution set in with a vengeance, first directed against the Itilafists, the opponents of Ittihad, and ultimately and mainly against the Armenians. By suppressing the former group the Ittihad managed to eliminate the main source of opposition to its **modus operandi** and its overt and covert designs. The targetting of the Armenians was a far more serious and consequential objective. A complex web of factors was responsible for the emergence of this lethal anti-Armenian stance, including a long history of a simmering Turko-Armenian conflict. That conflict became accentuated in the era of Sultan Abdul Hamit entailing a series of empire-wide massacres in the 1894-1896 period. But the factor which catalyzed the Young Turk Ittihadist resolve to radically solve the conflict with the Armenians was the successful drive of the leaders of the Armenian nation to resuscitate the dormant Armenian reforms issue by renewed appeals to the Great Powers of Europe. The Turks were particularly irked and even furious in two accounts. First, the Armenian agitation for reforms was synchronized with the onset of a period of Turkish trauma. Following the 1912 First Balkan War, during which Turkey suffered a series of spectacular military defeats at the hands of former subject nationalities, such as the Bulgarians, the Serbs and the Greeks. Turks lost substantial portions of their land and population in European Turkey. These debilitating blows had produced a level of anguish that bordered on despair. The Ittihadist leaders accused the Armenians of trying to take advantage of this moment of Turkish debacle and despair. The situation was particularly aggravated by the fact that the Russians, reversing the legacy of Lobanof, the architect of the Russian policy

totally supporting the anti-Armenian pogroms of the Abdul Hamit era, assumed a leading and forceful role in the new agitation for Armenian reforms. That agitation culminated in the signing of the February 8, 1914 international accord obliging Turkey to introduce Armenian reforms to be supervised by two European inspectors-general. The accord was a bitter pill to swallow for the Turks on three accounts.

1. It was masterminded by the Russians, the nemesis of the Turks;
2. It was more or less imposed on the Turks who had to acquiesce to European control in the handling of matters pertaining to the Armenians; and

3. The Ittihadists anticipated the eventual ascendancy of the Armenians as a powerful national entity — due to the reforms — and the subsequent rise of an autonomous Armenian unit in the east of Turkey.

These anticipatory sentiments found reflection in the explicit threats of widespread massacres against the Armenians converged by Djemal Pasha, one of the members of the Ittihadist triumvirate.

Consequently, the Ittihadists upon seizure of power in January 1913 embarked upon a two-pronged initiative to optimize their leverage of power in the Ottoman state system. First, they rearranged the structure of the party's Central Committee, the supreme ruling body of the party, by allowing the radical potentates of the party to take control of the direction of the affairs of the party, especially with respect to the design of a new policy towards the Armenians as a subject nationality. These three men were Ziya Gökalp, the ideological brain-trust, the guru, of the party, and the two politician-physicians, Drs. Nazim and Behaeddin Shakir. With this new alignment the party was radicalized in a specific way. Second, the Ittihad completely permeated the government. For the first time since the 1908 revolution it occupied virtually all ministry posts in the cabinet, including that of Grand Vizier. Two of the men who played a decisive role in the organization of the Armenian Genocide assumed the posts of the Ministers of War and Interior which they then used as instruments for that organization, namely, Enver and Talat respectively. In other words, the Ittihadists took full control of the executive branch of the government, in the process reshaping several of its agencies. One of the first acts in this respect was by War Minister Enver the dismissal or forced retirement of 1,100 officers of all ranks of the Ottoman army; as asserted by German General Liman von Sanders, many of these officers were either opponents of the Ittihad, or could not be trusted as partisans of the party. Thus, the ground was paved for the cultivation of a new breed of military, namely, Ittihadist officers. Within the National Security Office, there was created a special branch for the surveillance of Armenian leaders suspected of nationalism or anti-Turkish attitudes; separate files were compiled for them.

III. The Process of Genocidal Decision Making.

The enactment of the genocide is intimately connected with the occurrence of a corresponding decisionmaking which in the Armenian case extended over a period of time in terms of developmental stages. Significantly, the Turkish intervention in World War I was an act which was part of this process of decisionmaking and which was a strictly Ittihadist party act. It was not only aimed at recovering lost territories in the European as well as eastern Turkey, along with the objective of redeeming the pride and the glory of the vaunted Ottoman army, but it also aimed at solving the Armenian Question which with the signing of the February 8, 1914 Accord, had seriously aggravated Turko-Armenian relations. The war thus offered a valuable opportunity to settle scores with the Armenians. In an August 10, 1910 secret speech before the leaders of Ittihad who had gathered together in a pre-convention conclave to discuss the convention agenda, then Interior Minister Talat hinted that nationality conflicts of the Ottoman Empire defied a peaceful resolution and that resort to force, i.e. massacre, was an option. More important, Talat in the same speech made a revelation which has central significance for the main theme of this paper. He stated that in developing the Ittihadist party network in the provinces, «we should be careful not to divulge our party objectives to the regular functionaries, unaware in this respect». In other words, in 1910 the top leadership of the Ittihad was clearly harboring intentions to cultivate secret schemes apart from the normal functions of the Ottoman State. The final and definitive stage of the genocidal decisionmaking involved a top-level secret conference at which a blueprint for the extermination of the Armenian population of Turkey was worked out. Even though the documentary evidence about this conference is not specific about the time, from other circumstantial evidence it may be inferred that the conference took place in the Ottoman capital late February or early March 1915.

What is certain, and for the purposes of this paper critical, however, is the fact that the conference was attended by the top leaders of Ittihad party, namely, Talat, Drs. Nazim and Shakir, and security chieftains Janbolat and Bedri.

IV. The Organization of the Genocide.

In order to insure and maximize success in the enterprise, the architects of the Armenian Genocide felt that they had to rely on the party organization, and more specifically on the conspirational, secret features of that organization. These features were fully integrated in the Special Organization, the so called **Teshkilat-i Mahsusa**, which in the truest sense of the word was a creation and instrument of the Ittihad party. In establishing that outfit the two archleaders of the party, War Minister Enver and Interior Minis-

ter Talat, composed their differences and combined their resources. The key indictment of the Turkish Military Tribunal investigating the genocidal massacres against the Armenians, and several of its verdicts dealing with these massacres repeatedly refer to that organization as the principal agent in the organization and execution of these measures, at the same time verifying the fact that it was formed by the highest strata of the Ittihad party leadership. These leaders relied mostly on trusted young military officers who were entirely identified with Ittihadist goals and ambitions and as such could be described as Ittihadist officers. Some of them led the killer bands which were conducting the operations involving a variety of mass murder. Others were engaged in staff work handling matters of logistics and planning. The more trusted and competent ones were involved in the supervision and control of the series of mass murders in those provinces of Turkey which contained the largest concentrations of Ottoman Armenians.

In order to render such control as complete as possible, the Ittihad created three types of supervising functionaries vested with enormous power, including the power to veto the decisions of regular provincial governors-general. In order to conceal or deflect from this investiture of extraordinary power, the party leaders assigned to these provincial party commissars titles that sounded harmless or innocuous. On the highest levels were Inspectors (**Mufettish**) of entire regions, next came the Delegates (**Murahhas**) of provinces; the most active ones were the local Responsible Secretaries (**Katib-i mesul**). These commissars were not only superimposed upon the civil administration of the Ottoman state, but were entrusted also with the task of carrying out the covert designs of the party as a matter of first priority. Their commitments were preordained by the dictates of the party ideology and their obligations were directed not to the Ottoman government but primarily, if not exclusively, to the leaders of the party.

These are in brief the conditions and processes through which the Ittihad party and the agencies of the Ottoman State coalesced to forge the mammoth engine of destruction in the clutches of which the Armenian population of Turkey was largely wiped out.

ԿՈՒՍԱԿՑՈՒԹԵԱՆ ԵՒ ՊԵՏՈՒԹԵԱՆ
ԴԵՐԵՐՈՒՆ ՆՈՅՆԱՑՈՒՄԸ
ՀԱՅԿԱԿԱՆ ՑԵՂԱՍՊԱՆՈՒԹԵԱՆ ՄԷՋ

(ԱՄՓՈՓՈՒՄ)

ՎԱՀԱԳՆ Ն. ՏԱՏՐԵԱՆ

Հաստատել էտք բէ երբ երկիրէ մը ներս կուսակցութիւն մը կը տիրանայ այդքա՛ն ուժի որ մրցակցաբար կը գերազանցէ իշխանութեան ունեցածը եւ առ այդ ծնունդ կու տայ կամայականութեան եւ բռնատիրութեան՝ Տատրեան կ'եզրակացնէ բէ Հայկական Ցեղասպանութիւնը արդիւնքն էր այսպիսի ուժի մը եւ անկէ յառաջացած կամայականութեան:

Գործադրել կարենալու համար Հայկական Ցեղասպանութիւնը՝ յօդուածին հեղինակը կը գտնէ, որ. —

Համիտեան իշխանութեան եւ վարչակարգին տապալումէն ետք 1908ին՝ Երիտասարդ-Թուրք Կուսակցութիւնը պահեց իշխանութիւնն իր ձեռքերուն մէջ, սակայն չորս տարին բաւ եղաւ որ կորսնցնէր զայն 1912-1913-ի Պալքանեան Պատերազմին պատճառով: Այս շրջանին իբրիհատականները կա՛մ անպատրաստ էին եւ անփորձ, կամ ալ անկարող՝ վարելու համար իշխանութիւնը եւ ի գործ դնելու իրենց գաղտնի ծրագիրները հայ-թրքական յարաբերութիւններու գծով:

Պալքանեան երկրորդ պատերազմէն ետք՝ յաղթական թըրքութիւնը ձեռք առաւ կազմակերպումը ամէն ինչի: Այժմ որպէս տէրը կացութեան՝ իբրիհատականները նախ թրքացուցին կուսակցութիւնը ցեղամոլ թրքականութեան եւ թուրանականութեան ո՛չմիայն գաղափարաբանութեամբ՝ այլ մանաւանդ ղեկավարութեամբ. ապա տիրացան պետական հիմնական նախարարութիւններուն եւ պաշտօններուն՝ լուծարքի ենթարկելով մնացեալները եւ յետոյ, որպէս անվստահելի, լուծարքի ենթարկուեցան մեծ ու փոքր 1100 սպաներ եւ փոխարինուեցան երիտասարդ-թուրք նորեկուկներով: Նոր չէր թրքացումի եւ իբրիհատականացումի սա շարժումը կայսրութենէն ներս: 1910-ի Երիտասարդ-Թուրք Կուսակցութեան հերթական համագումարին, որուն մասնակցեք էին լո՛կ կատաղի մեծամեծները կուսակցութեան, այսինքն՝ Թալէաթը, բժիշկներ Նազըմը եւ Պեհաէտտին Շաքիրը, Կուսակցութեան Կեդրոնական

Մարմինը եւ ապահովութեան պատասխանատու շանպոլաթն ու Պետրին՝ Թալէաթն արդէն սեղան էր բերեր իր ծրագիրը Կայսրութեան թրքացումին, եւ առ այդ՝ ջարդերուն, որովհետեւ հայկական ինքնավարութիւն մը որպէս հետեւանք Հայկական Բարենորոգումներու՝ պիտի նշանակէր ծնունդը հայկական պետութեան մը եւ կորուստը թրքական հողերուն: Իսկ Պալքանեան Պատերազմէն ետք Հայկական Բարենորոգումներու հարցը իր գագաթնակէտին հասցուց թուրքին հակահայ գրգռութիւնը 8 Փետրուար 1914-ի ստորագրութեամբը բարենորոգումներու պարտադրուած ծրագրի մը:

Հայկական Տասնհինգի իրագործումին համար անհրաժեշտ ուժը կազմակերպուեցաւ 1913-էն ետք եւ ստացաւ *Թեշքիլաթը Մախսուսէ* (Մասնաւոր Կազմակերպութիւն) անունը: Անիկա ուղղակի ենթակայ մնաց ներքին եւ զինուորական զոյգ նախարարութիւններուն եւ Կուսակցութեան Կեդրոնական Մարմինի հրահանգներուն: Կազմակերպութեան գլուխը կեցաւ Պեհաէտօին Շաֆիը իրեն կապուած ու ենթակայ խումբով մը Կուսակցութեան գաղափարաբանութեան հետ նոյնացած երիտասարդ սպաներու: Այս կազմակերպութիւնն ունէր խիստ կերպով կեդրոնացած դրութիւն մը, ուր կային քննիչներ (*Մուհեթթիչ*), պատուիրակներ (*ՄուրաՀՀաս*) եւ պատասխանատու քարտուղարներ (*քիաթիպի մեսուլ*)՝ բոլորն ալ ենթակայ Շաֆիին եւ անոր միջոցով՝ Թալէաթին եւ Էնվէրին: Այս բոլորը ո՛չ միայն գերիվեր էին քաղաքային իշխանութիւններէն՝ այլ մասնաւոր ունէին պարտականութիւնը իրենց վստահուած առաքելութեան իրագործումին: Առ այդ՝ անոնք իրենց հրահանգները կը ստանային լո՛կ ներքին եւ զինուորական նախարարութիւններէն (նախարարներէն) եւ Մասնաւոր Կազմակերպութեան պատասխանատուէն:

«Կարն կերպով ասած»՝ եզրակացուց Տատրեանն իր վերլուծումի աւարտին, «ասո՛նք էին այն պայմաններն ու գործընթացը՝ որոնց միջոցով նոյնացան Իթթիհատական Կուսակցութիւնը եւ մարմինները Օսմանեան Պետութեան՝ կոանելու համար քանդումի մամոթային այն մեքենան, որուն նանկերուն մէջ մեծաւ մասամբ քնաջնջուեցաւ Թուրքիոյ հայութիւնը»:

