MATERIALS FOR THE STUDY OF THE WORK AND THOUGHT

OF ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE

by Germana Provitola and Teodoro Tagliaferri

(University of Naples Federico II)

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498) Mohamed Ali, Syud Hossain, Syed Sulaiman Nadir, Members of the Indian Khilafat Delegation, *«The Case of the Armenian»*, in «The Manchester Guardian», Monday, March 8, 1920, p. 4. Letter to the Editor. Dated London, March 4, 1920.

499) Arnold Toynbee, *Armenian Massacres. Fixing the Responsibility*, in «The Manchester Guardian», Friday, March 12, 1920, p. 6. Letter to the Editor. Dated London, March 9, 1920.

500) Mohamed Ali, Indian Caliphate Delegation, *The Armenian Massacres*, in «The Manchester Guardian», Tuesday, March 16, 1920, p. 12. Letter to the Editor. Dated London, March 14, 1920.

501) Arnold J. Toynbee, *The Indian Moslem Delegation*, in «The New Europe. A Weekly Review of Foreign Politics», XV, 185, 29 April 1920, pp. 56-61.

502) Introductory Note by The Editor, *ibid.*, p. 56.

503) Comment by The Editor, *ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

«THE CASE OF THE ARMENIANS»

by Mohamed Ali, Syud Hossain, Syed Sulaiman Nadir

(Members of the Indian Khilafat Delegation)

Sir,

Will you allow us, on behalf of the Mussulmans of India, to make a suggestion in your columns. It is, that an impartial commission of inquiry should proceed to investigate the whole question of responsibility, as between Moslems and Armenians, on the spot, even at this eleventh hour, and that representatives selected by the All-India Moslem League should form part of such a commission. This would satisfy the Mussulmans, who have been amazed that no investigation into these occurrences has yet been held. The only investigation of which they have heard has been that of the Armenian reports by professed partisans of the Armenians for a merely propagandist purpose. Since the Armistice a number of reports, categorical, and apparently well authenticated, of atrocities committed by Armenians have been published, showing that there is at least a case for the defence. It is not in accordance with the principles of English justice to pronounce a verdict on the case for the prosecution alone.

On the commission should be men acquainted with the laws of war and men acquainted with the peoples and languages of Anatolia. Special attention should be paid to the Russian intrigues with the Armenians and the Kurds which were engineered from Tiflis previous to the war, and to the events which took place in the vilayets of Van, Bitlis, and Erzeroum in February-March, 1915. The fact that no impartial international inquiry had been held into these matters since the Armistice with Turkey has caused a painful impression in India. That and the withholding of the report of the Inter-Allied Commission of Inquiry into the events which accompanied the Greek occupation of Smyrna make Indian Mussulmans regard the Turks as victims of injustice. Let them not think there is no justice for the Moslem at the

hands of Christian Powers. They cannot be expected to repose confidence in and accept the verdict of purely Christian investigators. That is why we suggest that a certain number of Indian Moslems should be included in a commission of inquiry into the Armenian question, so that they should see for themselves that all is open and above-board.

ARMENIAN MASSACRES
FIXING THE RESPONSABILITY

by Arnold Toynbee

Sir,

As the editor, under Lord Bryce's direction, of the Blue-book on the treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire published by the British Government in 1916, I welcome the suggestion made in your columns yesterday by members of the Indian Caliphate Delegation, «that an impartial commission of inquiry should proceed to investigate the whole question of responsibility, as between Moslems and Armenians, on the spot» – of course under conditions which would make possible a genuine and thorough inquiry – and that this commission should contain Indian Moslem members.

«The fact», they add, «that no impartial international inquiry has been held into these matters since the armistice with Turkey has caused a painful impression in India». Here we are on common ground, for the absence of such an inquiry has caused an impression at least as painful in England, and those of us in England and India whose views on this question seem at present irreconcilable would have everything to gain by a further inquiry into the truth.

At the same time I must demur to the statement that «the only investigation which they [your correspondents] have heard has been that of the Armenian reports by professed partisans of the Armenians for a merely propagandist purpose». The British Blue-book was compiled by Lord Bryce and myself, without the collaboration of any other person connected with the British Government except the printers. The form it should take and the documents that should be included in it were decided by ourselves alone; and while it would. to Impertinent for me, as well as superfluous, to bear witness to Lord Bryce's impartiality in

weighing evidence of so serious a kind, I may say for myself that, far from being a partisan of the Armenians, before examining this evidence I had had no relations with them, though the effect of the evidence upon me has been to make me since then, an earnest advocate of their cause. I may had that the bulk of the documenta we published came from American eye-witnesses (people long resident in Turkey, acquainted with local conditions, and belonging to a country which had no ambitions in the Middle East and no political interest to serve by the blackening of the Turkish Government), while four or five of our documents were from German sources (see p. XXXVII of the Blue-book). Since then our conclusions have received remarkable confirmation from two widely different sources: (1) from the revelations of Mr. Morgenthau, American ambassador at Constantinople at the time the events recorded in the Blue-book occurred, in regard to confessions made to him by Talaat Enver and other members of the then Ottoman Government; and (2) from a German inquirer, Dr. Lepsius, a man thoroughly acquainted with Turkey and a citizen of a country which was one of Turkey's allies during the war. Dr. Lepsius has printed a mass of German and Turkish official documentary evidence in two books: (a) *Bericht über die Lage des armenischen Volkes in der Türkei* (*Account of the situation of the Armenian People in Turkey*), printed privately, at the author's peril, .by the Tempelverlag, Potsdam, in 1916; and (b) *Deutschland und Armenien, 1914-1918: Sammlung diplomatischer Aktenstücks* (*Germany and Armenia, 1914–1918: A Collection of Diplomatic documents*),a still fuller and more documented report, published as a results of researches by Dr. Lepsius in the archives of the Germann Foreign Office since the Revolution in Germany.

I do not think that this evidence can simply be dismissed as partisan or propagandist, but that is by the way, for I entirely agree with your correspondents that the more evidence we can get, and, above all, evidence on the spot, the better. The practical question is to secure conditions on the spot under which this evidence can he obtained. The one part of Turkey which the Allies (as I hold, greatly to their discredit) have omitted to occupy since the armistice is the part in which the events we are discussing are believed (on the present and, to my mind, conclusive evidence) to have occurred. But these districts are at this moment not even under the control of the Ottoman Government at Constantinople: they are in the hands of the Turkish Nationalist organisation established at Sivas, which is in armed conflict

with the Allies is Cilicia. Supposing that an impartial mixed Moslem-Christian Commission of Inquiry were brought together, are your correspondents sanguine that the present regime would give there a fair field? Would they be able, under this regime, to inquire into the circumstances of the large numbers of Armenian women and children reported to have been kidnapped into Turkish households, or to investigate the disposal of Armenian property which is reported to have passed into Turkish hands? I fear myself that an inquiry on the spot will only be possible when the political and military conditions there have been altered radically. But meanwhile there is evidence elsewhere which it is equally important for us to pursue. My own investigations have convinced me that the Armenian people in Turkey has been the victim of a public crime, but they have led me to a further conclusion which I should be interested to discuss with your correspondents, because it seems to me the one hopeful feature in an otherwise appalling situation. I do not believe, on the evidence before me, that the prime movers in the attempt which I believe was made in 1915 and the following years to exterminate the Armenians in Turkey were the *local* Turkish or other Moslem inhabitants of the Ottoman provinces in which the atrocities occurred. My belief (as I stated in the preliminary memorandum in the Blue-book) is that an elaborate scheme was worked out by Talaat and Enver in the Ministries of the Interior and of War at Constantinople, and that this scheme was carried out locally by the orders of the central Government, generally, it is true, with the criminal concurrence but rarely by the initiative and occasionally against the wishes of the local Moslem inhabitants, and in a few cases even against the wishes of the local Government officials. If Enver and Talaat are brought to trial, and Mr. Morgenthau (at the heed of a long string of American neutral, and German witnesses) is summoned to give evidence against them, I think we shall learn further facts that ought to help us to see this matter in the common light of the truth. But I should be glad of an opportunity to discuss personally with the members of the Indian Caliphate Delegation their very fair and helpful proposal.

THE ARMENIAN MASSACRES

by Mohamed Ali

(Indian Caliphate Delegation)

Sir,

The members of the Indian Caliphate Delegation have read with great interest Mr. Arnold Toynbee's letter in your issue of the 12th. Without entering here into any controversial matters arising out of his letter, may I say that my colleagues and I welcome Mr. Toynbee's suggestion of a personal discussion with him regarding what he is good enough to describe as our «very helpful proposal» for the appointment of an impartial Commission, on which Indian Moslems would be represented, and we are taking steps to bring about a meeting with him with a view to such a discussion.

THE INDIAN MOSLEM DELEGATION

by Arnold J. Toynbee

[*Professor Toynbee, who, it will be remembered, edited the official collection of documents regarding the Armenian massacres (The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire: Preface by Viscount Bryce. Laid before Parliament, 1916), recently wrote to the «Manchester Guardian» endorsing the demand of the Indian Moslem delegation for a fresh investigation of the facts – not, of course, because he regarded the original inquiry as unconvincing, but because he wishes the fullest possible light upon the whole affair. This led to a discussion with the Delegates, the result of which we gladly publish at his request – The Editor*].

Having met Mr. Muhammad Ali and other members of the Indian Khalifate Delegation to discuss the evidence for the treatment of the Armenians in Turkey during the war, I wish to state the results from my point of view. To make sure that I am not misrepresenting, as well as disagreeing with, the views of the Indian Delegates, I have submitted my statement to them beforehand. They have suggested extensive alterations explaining and advocating their point of view, but after comparing these carefully with my original wording, I do not feel that I had done them injustice, and I am therefore publishing my statement with certain changes, leaving it to the Indian Delegation to state their own case over their own names.

I find we differ profoundly as to the nature of evidence. I have been convinced of the truth of the accusations against the Ottoman Government by studying the statements of a number of first-hand witnesses, independent of one another and with no motive that I can conceive for perverting the truth, whose evidence tallies exactly and builds up a detailed and consistent picture of what occurred. Mr. Muhammad All and his friends admitted quite

frankly that they had not studied this evidence seriously (I think Mr. Muhammad Ali said he had not looked at the British Blue Book till the evening before we met and had not had Dr. Lepsius' book in his hands at all). Before studying it, they propose to set it aside because the authors and editors of it were non-Moslems, and to institute an investigation *de novo*, and they declare that it will be rejected *a priori* for the same reason by the bulk of the Moslem community in India. I quite realise that it may have been impossible for Mr. Muhammad Ali to obtain the publications in question during his internment by the Government of India, but this does not apply to the Delegation as a whole or to their supporters; and, whatever the cause of their omission to study the evidence may be, it does not justify them in rejecting it *a priori*. A presumption of religious bias in a witness is not to Western minds a ground for disallowing his evidence without examining it on its merits.

I fear there is a difference of intellectual outlook here which cannot be got over. The documents in Dr. Lepsius's book, for example, consist largely of confidential despatches from the German Consuls in the area of the atrocities and deportations (*e.g.*, at Erzerum, Adana, Aleppo, Mosul) to the German Foreign Office at Berlin. These consuls give just the same account of what occurred as the American missionaries resident in the same localities, whose evidence we published in the British Blue Book. Again, they state their belief that the atrocities they are reporting were not reprisals for any rebellion or attempted rebellion on the Armenians' part, but were a cold-blooded effort to exterminate the Armenian nationality in Turkey. In other words, they suggest a hypothesis which is confirmed by the American Ambassador's accounts of confessions made to him by the then heads of the Ottoman Government, *e.g.*, Talaat and Enver (and Mr. Morgenthau, though not a Moslem, is also not a Christian, but a Jew by religion). I put it to Mr. Muhammad Ali that, if these German Consuls had any interest in perverting the truth, it would have been in favour of minimising the criminality of the Turks, which was so damaging morally to the cause of the Quadruple Alliance; but I also put the further point that, in writing confidential reports to their official superiors – reports never intended for publication, which would have remained buried in the Berlin archives perhaps for ever, but for the unforeseen event of the German Revolution – the consuls could have no motive whatever except to tell the truth as they saw it (and they were in an excellent position for seeing it correctly) for their superiors' information. But this

reasoning did not convince Mr. Muhammad Ali. He contended that, as the German Consuls were Christians, they might be biassed in giving evidence about Moslems, and that a misrepresentation of fact on the part of the consuls towards their Government through religious prejudice was just as likely as the suppression of the consuls' evidence by the Government for political expediency. Similarly, when I told him about Dr. Lepsius, how he had circulated his first book secretly in 1916, and how, after the book had been discovered and suppressed by the German censorship, Lepsius had had to go into exile in Holland till the Revolution came – Mr. Muhammad Ali gave less weight to this presumptive evidence of Lepsius's honesty than to his own presumption that any Christian would be biassed in giving evidence about any Moslem. Such a bias is theoretically conceivable, but there is not the slightest ground for suspecting it in Dr. Lepsius's case and it is surely unreasonable that when independent witnesses, with no personal or political motive for falsification, corroborate each other, their evidence should be disallowed because they are Christians and Jews deposing about events in which Moslems are concerned.

I maintain then, as before, that the evidence we already have before us is convincing, and I feel that the references to it were, of course unintentionally, misleading in a letter addressed by the Khalifate Delegation to the «Manchester Guardian» on 4 March. When they commented unfavourably on this evidence, I assumed that they had studied it and had considered it inconsistent with itself and with other known facts. I now find that they have not studied it or considered it on its merits at all, but set it aside *a priori* on account of the religion of its authors.

The fact that there is no Moslem evidence (*i.e.*, evidence of Turks or Kurds resident in the area concerned) in the British Government's and Dr. Lepsius's collection of documents is easily accounted for. Lepsius collected German official documents (sent from the spot to the Imperial archives at Berlin) as soon as these documents became accessible at Berlin after the German Revolution. We collected the statements of neutrals (mainly Americans) who were on the spot when the atrocities occurred, and who subsequently left Turkey, and to a lesser extent the statements of Armenian refugees and survivors. Neither we nor Lepsius could take Moslem evidence, because the local Moslems remained in the area, and the area itself has remained, from the beginning of the atrocities to the present moment, in the hands of

Turkish troops and officials – the troops and officials who have just been massacring Armenians in the Cilician highlands again, according to a number of independent reports of which I personally do not doubt the truth. If Moslem evidence is wanted, why has it not been published by the Ottoman Government, who have been in a far better position than any other party to prepare a fully documented statement of their case? As a matter of fact, the Ottoman Government did, before the Armistice, publish two official papers, or rather albums of photographs, on the subject. Mr. Muhammad Ali, I gather, has not studied these documents either. I have. They contain no statements by Moslem witnesses with regard to the treatment of the Armenians by the Ottoman Government[1]. They merely seek to prove that, before that Government did to the Armenians what it did, the Armenians had been guilty of widespread sedition and rebellion. Even were this true, it would be no justification for the subsequent actions to which the Ottoman Government tacitly plead guilty by putting in no evidence of their innocence when so much Moslem evidence, if it existed, was at their disposal. But, after comparing these Ottoman counter-accusations of previous (though not comparable) misconduct on the Armenians' part with the other published evidence on this particular point – above all, with the confidential reports of the German Consuls, discussing and rejecting the Turkish official *communiqués* in which these accusations against the Armenians were first made – I am personally persuaded that the Ottoman Government have failed to make their case. Dates prove that such of the alleged Armenian risings as are confirmed by the agreement of two or more independent witnesses (and there are not more than three or four such cases) were all posterior, not previous, to the beginning of the atrocities. They were acts, not of provocation, but of self-defence.

I do not, therefore, admit that any room for doubt is left by the existing evidence; but I am not in a position to contest the point made by the Khalifate Delegation, that the Indian Moslem community will not be convinced by evidence, however convincing on its merits, which happens to come from non-Moslem sources alone. I hope they are mistaken in this

[1] The only statements on this subject by a Turk that have yet appeared, so far as I know, are the *Memoirs of Naim Bey*, which constitute, if authentic (and the book contains facsimiles of Turkish official documents), one of the most damning charges against the Turkish Government.

belief, but, if they are not, it is a deplorable fact and no doubt a fact of grave political importance, and everything should be done to bring the evidence before Indian Moslems through channels against which they are not prejudiced. Now the Khalifate Delegation declare their firm conviction that a report, made after further investigation, by a mixed Moslem and non-Moslem Commission, consisting of men whose integrity and capacity is recognised by their co-religionists, would obtain credence in India. They declare further, very fairly, that they themselves are willing to abide by the findings of such a Commission; that they are anxious to clear the good name of Islam, and that if the charges against the Turkish Government and certain sections of the Turkish people are proved, they «will not dream of supporting that Government and those sections of the Turkish people».

After our interview, no less than before it, I welcome this proposal for a Commission of inquiry for two reasons: (1) I feel the great importance of an agreement between Englishmen and Indian Moslems as to the facts of this case, and I am so sure, personally, of those facts that I feel certain that any honourable Moslem serving on the proposed Commission would come to hold the same beliefs in regard to them as I hold now; (2) I am anxious to secure additional evidence as to the present circumstances of Armenian women and children and Armenian property in the area of the atrocities. Such evidence has been unobtainable hitherto, because the area has remained in the power of the Turks (the Turkish Parliament is reported recently to have passed a Bill nationalising the remainder of the property of the destroyed Armenians), but if the proposed Commission were able to conduct a proper investigation on the spot, this additional evidence would come to light, and much appalling misery and injustice might, I believe, be ended.

At the same time, convinced as I am already as to the facts on the existing evidence, I personally should only approve this proposal for a joint Commission on certain conditions, however great I may feel its political utility to be. These conditions are (1) that the peace settlement should not be postponed on account of the proposed inquiry, and (2) that while the Commission was conducting investigations in the area where the atrocities are reported to have occurred, that area should not be under the military or political control of any interested government.

To Mr. Muhammad Ali and his friends, who set aside all the existing evidence on account of the religion of its authors, my first condition seemed, no doubt, like prejudging the case. But, to my mind, this evidence is incontrovertible and is amply sufficient for the purposes of the settlement on its territorial side; and though, for securing the utmost possible restitution of persons and property, additional evidence from the territories left by the settlement under Turkish sovereignty will certainly be needed in due course, I cannot support any proposal which would involve further procrastination in making peace. A better understanding between Englishmen and Indian Moslems on the facts and rights of the Turkish question is very desirable, I agree, but it is not an object to which the inhabitants of Turkey should be sacrificed, or for the sake of which their sufferings should be prolonged.

With regard to my second condition, I do not ask for a British, French, Italian or Armenian military occupation to be substituted for that of the Ottoman Government at Constantinople or of the Turkish Nationalist government at Sivas in the area where the Commission would be conducting its investigations. I consider all these parties as more or less interested but I suggest that the United States, having made it clear that they will not undertake a mandate, should be asked instead to take over this area during the investigation, as being, to my mind, an incontestably impartial and disinterested Power with a record of humanitarian work in Turkey among Ottoman subjects of all religions.

The Khalifate Delegation, however, regard America as unsuitable, because there is a body of public opinion in America hostile to the Turks – an opinion which they attribute not to a considered view of the Turks conduct, but to prejudice created by missionary interests actuated by religious bias. I found, in fact, that the Delegation contemplated the investigation being carried out while the military and political control remained in Turkish hands!

We disagree, then, as to the conditions under which further investigation should be made, and the root of our disagreement is that difference of view as to the nature of evidence which I mentioned at the beginning and which came out again and again during our discussion. The Khalifate Delegation presume that, in any case where Moslems and non-Moslems are concerned, non-Moslem evidence may be vitiated by a possible anti-Moslem bias, and they consider this a sufficient reason for setting aside such evidence without

examining and comparing the statements on their merits and without considering any motives, other than this presumed religious bias, which may have actuated the witnesses. In other words, they regard religious bias against Moslems as a ruling passion of non-Moslems – a passion stronger than veracity, humanitarianism, or even (in the case of the German Consuls) than political self-interest. Now, this is simply another way of saying that the Khalifate Delegation are themselves biassed against non-Moslem evidence. Their presumption is double edged; it has surely affected their own judgment and has led them into what strikes me as a grotesquely false estimate of non-Moslem psychology. But it does worse than that. It erects a barrier of religious bias –presumed by Moslems in non-Moslems because existing in themselves – which almost destroys the possibility of any common ground being reached by people of two different religions in investigating questions of fact in which co-religionists of each happen to be concerned,

[The attitude of the Delegation in ignoring or rejecting all existing evidence and in accepting continued occupation of the area of the massacres by those who organised them as a possible basis for fresh investigation, is in our view so preposterous as to put the Delegation completely out of court. Their further insistence upon the integrity of the Ottoman Empire as a condition to peace among the Moslems of India, is nothing more nor less than blackmail. By demanding what they must be well aware to be physically impossible, they seem to be deliberately constructing their whole case in such a way as to make trouble inevitable, whatever decisions may be reached regarding the Middle East.

Their attempt to place the fate of Turkey upon a religious basis cannot be challenged too often and too openly. The Turkish problem is essentially political, and must be settled for European, not for Indian, reasons. It is a distortion of history and a gross insult to Islam, to identify it with the bloody tyranny of the Turks, and it is obviously impossible to replace the Arabs under their heel, or to restore to the Sultan the Holy Places of Mecca, Jerusalem and Bagdad. The Indian Moslems ought surely to realise that the clique which for the past ten years has maintained the Sultan in the nominal office of Khalif believes in Islam as little as in Christianity, and is compounded of Jacobins, Jews, freemasons and intellectual *déclassés*: and that the Sheik-ul-Islam, for whose religious authority they profess respect, is simply an

ordinary politician who, as Minister of Justice, changes with every change in the Turkish Cabinet – The Editor].