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4. Crafting the nation state: planning, modernizing, civilizing

How did state and society in Diyarbekir change after the First World War? This chapter will address some of the societal changes that took place there under Young Turk rule. These were relatively autonomous processes of social change resulting from ongoing developments and historical events, as well as authoritarian top-down policies aimed at intentionally engineering social change. The chapter will focus on how the war created new and augmented old categories of social outsiders in Diyarbekir, characterizing it as the city of orphans, converts, whores, and bandits. The chapter will focus on these people in their social arrangements and portray how the Young Turk regime saw “modernization” as a panacea that would bring them to order by “civilizing” them into a “healthy population”. In the ideological universe of the regime, such a desirable society could only be forged by force. As a result, the city of Diyarbekir became the object of high-modernist utopias of spatial planning and urban redesign. The countryside of Diyarbekir was subjected to a forced “civilizing process”.

Diyarbekir: city of orphans, converts, whores, and bandits

The social and economic destruction of half a decade of Young Turk rule, including war and genocide, reverberated throughout time and space and left scars on social life across the region. Although the genocide had ended by 1918, the social problems were rampant. What used to be a fragile local balance of networks of economic and family ties had now been severely disrupted. Young Turk population policies, and the destruction of Diyarbekir’s Armenian and Syriac communities in particular, augmented certain categories of people seen as social outsiders in the local cultures of Eastern Turkey. The number of orphans, converts, prostitutes, and outlaws had greatly increased as an intended and unintended result of Young Turk policies. Their experiences offer a complex and valuable insight into the lasting impact of Young Turk population policy and mass violence.

Orphans

The genocide produced innumerable orphans across the empire. But rather than roaming the streets and begging for food or money, most orphans were taken by the CUP government. During and after the war the identity and future of Ottoman orphans became a battleground between relief organizations and missionaries on the one hand, and the Young Turk regime on the other. From the Young Turks’ nationalist perspective, children comprised a precious form

of national property and were to be instilled with nationalist ideas and given a purely Turkish identity. Non-Turkish orphans would be subjected to differential treatment: in addition to food and shelter, they would receive a transformation of cultural identity. The Young Turk regime proclaimed as one of its goals the ‘Turkification’ of ‘valuable’ Armenian children as their educational activists attempted to create a political culture in which children belonged to national communities, and in which the nation’s rights to educate children often trumped parental rights. Furthermore, the CUP’s treatment of Armenian orphans strongly suggests their policies were not a purely philanthropic endeavour but a constitutive element of the destruction process of the Ottoman Armenian community.⁶¹⁹

In anticipation of hard times to come, early in World War I the CUP assigned İAMM director Şükrü Kaya (1883-1959) the task of opening new orphanages. The existing Ottoman orphanage system, filled beyond capacity due to years of war, was unprepared for another large war and became even more overburdened. But the existing system was not only expanded to cope with the inevitability of children becoming orphaned in future warfare. When the general deportations of all Armenians were initiated from 23 May 1915 on, a second form of population politics compounded the persecution. That was the distribution of Armenian children into the Muslim population and state orphanages. As early as June 1915, Armenian children younger than 10 were ordered to be “collected” and placed in orphanages, some of which were yet to be established.⁶²⁰ On 10 July 1915, Talaat amplified this policy of absorption of Armenian children into the Muslim community by ordering “children to be given as adoptees to notables living in villages and towns where there are no Armenians.” Those who could not afford another child would be eligible to receive an allowance of 30 cents per month per child. Records were to be kept of which families had adopted the children.⁶²¹ Two days later, on 12 July 1915, Talaat issued a similar decree to all provinces: “Children of whom it is probable they will become parentless during the transportation of Armenians” were to be placed in government-run orphanages as soon as possible.⁶²² This formulation reveals a form of intent through the tight veil of secrecy surrounding the organization of the genocide. The CUP was apparently aware of the possibility that many children would become orphaned as a result of the policies they knew were likely to be

⁶¹⁹ For an overview see: Vahakn N. Dadrian, “Children as Victims of Genocide: The Armenian Case,” in: *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol.5, no.3 (2003), pp.421-7.

⁶²⁰ *BOA*, DH.ŞFR 54/150, Ministry of Education to provinces, 26 June 1915.

⁶²¹ The official document is reproduced in: Kâmuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası* (Ankara: Bilgi, 1988), p.287. There is evidence that later in the war, when the government was unable to produce even the 30 cents a year for the maintenance of the children, the Muslim foster parents no longer saw any reason to keep the children and sold, evicted, or even executed them. Interview conducted with Y.A. in Elazığ, July 2004.

⁶²² *BOA*, DH.ŞFR 54/41, Talaat to provinces, 12 July 1915.

organized in the near future. Put more strongly, this quote reveals that the destruction of Ottoman Armenians was not accidental but based on foreknowledge and therefore intentional. This way they acted in advance of the developments yet to happen.

When these policies towards Armenian orphans had been in process for almost a year, the same order was repeated, this time by raising the age of targeted children to 12 years and with the explicit clause that the children were to be “raised and assimilated” (*terbiye ve temsil*) according to Muslim traditions.⁶²³ Much like the deportations, these policies too were closely monitored in the coming years. From time to time, Talaat sent empire-wide requests for detailed data on how many orphans were living in each province, broken down by gender and ethnicity, never neglecting to ask how many of these had been placed into orphanages.⁶²⁴ The campaign was accompanied by cultural prohibition on a large scale: besides the burning of libraries and books,⁶²⁵ Talaat ordered the prohibition of the Armenian language for all communication, imposing Turkish in its stead, the prohibition of Armenian schools throughout the empire, and the prohibition of all Armenian newspapers with the exception of those in Istanbul.⁶²⁶ He also organized a *cordon sanitaire* around the many American and German schools so that Armenian children could no longer study there. The order read: “The homeland needs to be saved from organizations open to foreign influences”.⁶²⁷ By the end of the war, the Ottoman Armenian educational system was ruined. The targeting of children, the cultural persecution, and educational prohibitions were a coherent attack to purge the public space of difference, in particular Armenian culture.

In January 1916, a new orphanage with a capacity of 1000 beds was established in Diyarbakir city.⁶²⁸ The staff immediately began collecting Armenian orphans whose parents had been lost, killed, or deported the year before. When in the second week of March 1916, Danish missionary nurse Hansine Marcher travelled to Diyarbakir, most Armenian orphans had already been taken into the Diyarbakir orphanage. Some of these children were forced to work for a living. When Marcher walked into a café, she saw many Armenian boys working as waiters. She also noticed many Armenian girls living as maids, “not to say as slaves”, among Turkish families. All the orphans by that time spoke Turkish and had been given

⁶²³ BOA, DH.ŞFR 63/142, Talaat to provinces, 30 April 1916.

⁶²⁴ BOA, DH.ŞFR 78/204, Talaat to provinces, 25 July 1917.

⁶²⁵ See: Uğur Ümit Üngör, “When Persecution Bleeds into Mass Murder: The Processive Nature of Genocide,” in: *Genocide Studies and Prevention*, vol.1, no.2 (2006), pp.173-96, at pp.183-4.

⁶²⁶ BOA, DH.ŞFR 54/261, Talaat to provinces, 1 July 1915.

⁶²⁷ BOA, DH.ŞFR 55A/155, Ministry of Education to Mamuretül-Aziz, Sivas, and Diyarbakir, 9 September 1915.

⁶²⁸ İbrahim E. Atnur, *Türkiye’de Ermeni Kadınları ve Çocukları Meselesi, 1915-1923* (Ankara: Babil, 2005), pp.51, 54-5.

Turkish names.⁶²⁹ Around the same time, Armenian deportee Hagop Der-Garabedian was incarcerated in the central prison of Diyarbekir, and witnessed Christian orphans selling food:

Children aggregated in front of the prison gate daily to sell us bread, yogurt, and sweet cookies. Many of them spoke Armenian. From talking to them we found out that they were Assyrian and Armenian orphans trying to eke out a living selling whatever they could get their hands on.⁶³⁰

The orphanage system only functioned in the cities. In the vast countryside, the assimilation of orphans was subject to popular conduct as the children were dispersed into Muslim families.



Photo 16: Armenian orphans in the ruins of their parental house, 1916 (Library of Congress)

One of the most detailed accounts of an orphan's life in Diyarbekir is that of Heranush Gadarian (1905-2000) from the northern district of Palu. Her family was living in the village

⁶²⁹ Hansine Marcher, *Oplevelser Derovrefra* (Copenhagen: KMA, 1919), p.16.

⁶³⁰ Hagop S. Der-Garabedian, *Jail to Jail: Autobiography of a Survivor of the 1915 Armenian Genocide* (New York: iUniverse, 2004), p.34.

of Havav (Ekinözü) when in the spring of 1915 Dr. Reshid's militias raided the village, murdered the village chief in the village square, tied all the men together two by two, and took them away to the bridge over the Euphrates, where they were killed and thrown into the river. The ten-year old Heranush fled to a neighboring village with her mother and two sisters, but the militia soon swept through that village as well and took the women and children to the Armenian church in Palu, from where they were all deported southwards. The deportation gradually proved fatal for many of Heranush's family members, especially pregnant women, the elderly, and younger children. When the convoy arrived in Çermik, local Muslims convened to take away the remaining children. There was no consensus among the older women about this traumatic event: whereas some vehemently opposed parting from their offspring, others argued this was the only way for the children to survive. Heranush was taken by a Corporal Hüseyin, who took her home to his wife, and registered her in his identity card as 'Seher'. Her foster father Corporal Hüseyin treated her as her own child, insisting she call him "daddy", but his wife was not charmed by Heranush and saw her as a servant girl. From then on, Heranush lived with her new family, marrying a Muslim and bearing him several children. She never saw her family again.⁶³¹

In an age of mass politics and demography, nationalists everywhere were obsessed with the quantity and quality of the nation's children.⁶³² During the armistice (1918-1923), the fate of Armenian orphans, too, became a political battleground between Armenian community activists, Western relief agencies, and Young Turk social engineers. At the end of the war, there were still at least fifty Armenian orphans in the Diyarbekir orphanage.⁶³³ But according to statistics put forward by the Armenian patriarchate in 1921, the bulk of Armenian orphans and children were living in the countryside with their new Muslim families:⁶³⁴

Table 2: Armenian orphans in the Ottoman Empire, 1921

Der ez-Zor	3800
Resulayn	2000
Istanbul and surroundings	6000
İzmit, Bursa, Balıkesir	2000

⁶³¹ Heranush's grandchild Fethiye Çetin later located her Armenian relatives in the United States and wrote a family memoir. Fethiye Çetin, *Anneannem: anlatı* (Istanbul: Metis, 2004); for an English translation of this book see: *idem, My Grandmother: A Memoir* (London: Verso, 2008).

⁶³² Sarah Fishman, *The Battle for Children* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Tara Zahra, "Reclaiming Children for the Nation: Germanization, National Ascription, and Democracy in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1945," in: *Central European History*, vol.37, no.4 (2004), pp.501-43.

⁶³³ Atnur, *Türkiye'de Ermeni Kadınları ve Çocukları*, p.143

⁶³⁴ Hikmet Özdemir et al., *Ermeniler: Sürgün ve Göç* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2004), pp.120, 122-3.

İnebolu	1500
Eskişehir and Konya	3000
Kastamonu	500
Trabzon	2500
Sivas	3500
Kayseri	3500
Erzurum	3000
Diyarbakir and Mardin	25,000
Harput	3000
Bitlis and Van	3000
Total	63,000

Source: Özdemir, *Ermeniler*, pp.120, 122-3.

Some figures provided by the Armenian Patriarchate are shown in Table 2, but it is practically impossible to assess the accuracy of this table with any certainty. That the patriarchate may have inflated these numbers to accentuate Armenian victimization is likely, but not certain. Why the number of orphans for Diyarbakir province soars above the others is even more difficult to explain. Possible reasons are that survival rates of children were higher, that the practice of taking orphans into one's household was more widespread, or because there were more orphans, simply since Diyarbakir was a hub in the deportation apparatus.

There is contradictory evidence that the rehabilitation of Armenian children was abused by Armenian nationalists during the armistice period to take Muslim children into their custody as well. This followed the same nationalist logic, namely that children were blank, raw ethnic material that could be culturally transformed to the benefit of one's own nation. According to one newspaper report, 200 Muslim children, including many girls, were kept at the Armenian patriarchate and taught the Armenian language, religion, and culture.⁶³⁵ It is unclear whether all these children were Armenian orphans forcibly converted to Islam during the war or Turkish children. The scope of child kidnappings during the genocide suggests that the former theory is nearer to the truth: most of these children who were Muslims in 1918 had in fact been Armenian children three years before. Whereas most Muslim-Turkish nationalists adhered to the motto 'Once a Muslim, always a Muslim', most Armenian nationalists for their purposes asserted the opposite: 'Once an Armenian, always an Armenian'. For Armenian nationalists it did not matter whether the children had been

⁶³⁵ *İleri*, 27 May 1919.

converted and brought up as Turkish Muslims for years. Their Turkish counterparts, on the other hand, saw the children's identity change as an irreversible *fait accompli* that the Armenian community simply had to accept. And so, the wrangling over the children's 'real' ethnic identity and national membership continued.⁶³⁶

The few surviving Armenian, Syriac, and other Christians of Diyarbekir were destitute and traumatized after the 1918 Ottoman capitulation. Their land had been seized, their stores had been pillaged or demolished, their churches had been sacked, and their children had been kidnapped. The new government in Istanbul was hostile to the CUP and did not persecute the Armenians, and senators promised to bring justice to the "brutally massacred Armenians, the deported Arabs, the orphans and widows".⁶³⁷ The liberal press of the armistice exposed the crimes against women and children. The newspaper *New Istanbul* for example, published an article decrying CUP war crimes:

The Ittihad ve Terakki bandits, who have spilled blood by tyrannizing the Armenian people and engaging in embezzlement against them without accounting for the assets they pilfered, have even extended their reach to innocent orphan girls left here and there. So it is known that the 'vile hero' governor of Diyarbekir Reshid, who lives in Şişli, keeps six boys and one girl in his house.⁶³⁸

This moral outrage against Dr. Reshid's alleged child abuse pressured the new government to put their words into practice. It immediately allowed all deported Armenians to return to their homes and tried its best to remedy the past wrongs. Ahmet İzzet Paşa (1864-1937), ex-commander of the Second Army in Diyarbekir and now Minister of Interior, ordered all local authorities "to deliver Armenian orphans to Armenian community organizations".⁶³⁹ In the spring of 1919, the government ordered Armenian girls younger than 20 years and Armenian children delivered to their parents.⁶⁴⁰ Where organized community life was weak, relief was offered by the *American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief*, later renamed *Near East Relief*.⁶⁴¹ As in other cities of the country, an orphanage was set up in Diyarbekir, where

⁶³⁶ For an article that problematizes but largely decontextualizes the genocidal ramifications of CUP policy towards Armenians orphans see: Yavuz Selim Karakışla, "Savaş Yetimleri ve Kimsesiz Çocuklar: 'Ermeni' mi, 'Türk' mü?," in: *Toplumsal Tarih*, vol.XII, no.69 (1999), pp.46-55.

⁶³⁷ For excerpts of Senator Ahmet Rıza's speech in the Ottoman senate see: Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler*, p.199.

⁶³⁸ *Yeni İstanbul*, 9 November 1918.

⁶³⁹ *BOA*, DH.ŞFR 95/163, Ahmet İzzet to provinces, 18 January 1919.

⁶⁴⁰ Atnur, *Türkiye'de Ermeni Kadınları ve Çocukları*, p.136.

⁶⁴¹ *Near East Relief, Annual Report* (New York: Near East Relief Headquarters, 1920). The organization was later renamed *Near East Foundation*, see: <<http://www.neareast.org/>>.

Armenian and Syriac orphans were cared for.⁶⁴² At that point, only the cynics could surmise that within a year or two the Young Turks would regain strength and re-appear as the government, again disbanding non-Turkish orphanages and expelling their staff.

Meanwhile, the moderate armistice government also attempted to help the kidnapped girls and women who were held against their will in Muslim households. An Armenian survivor named Ohannes complained that his wife Populu (who had been converted to 'Fehmiye' in the genocide) was being held in the house of Butcher Halil in Nusaybin against her will. Ohannes accused Halil of having massacred his family and kidnapped his wife, demanding his wife return to him.⁶⁴³ An Armenian girl named Lucia Alyanakian had been living in the house of the Mardin notable Hacıgözüzâde, who had either saved her from death or forcibly married her as an additional wife. The Istanbul government discovered that her mother Zaruhi Tomasian was alive in Diyarbakir and ordered Lucia delivered to her mother.⁶⁴⁴ The Armenian patriarchate in Istanbul often complained, and lobbied the government to retrieve the orphans from the Muslim families, including individual children. For example, in February 1919 it complained that an Armenian girl named Verjin was living under her Muslim name Hayriye with a Mustafaoğlu Nasır in Mardin.⁶⁴⁵ Another girl was Alice Chekmian, who was discovered by Near East Relief workers in the household of Diyarbakir's court examiner. The girl was retrieved and taken to Aleppo, where she was reunited with her aunt.⁶⁴⁶ Many others were not.

Converts

The phenomenon of conversion dates back centuries in the Ottoman Empire. Ever since the Ottoman dynasty conquered large territories inhabited by non-Muslims, conversion was a highly complex issue involving at least as many economic, status-related, political, and personal considerations as strictly religious ones.⁶⁴⁷ For many converts it was more a way to attain status than an conscious decision based on religious conviction, in other words: more a means than an end. Especially compared to contemporary Russian and Spanish imperial policies of forced conversion, Ottoman policies of forced conversion seem temperate and

⁶⁴² Robert L. Daniel, *American Philanthropy in the Near East 1820-1960* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1922), p.169; Interview with Meryem Krikorian (aged ±75) from Satıköy village (Diyarbakir province), conducted in Amsterdam on 16 December 2004.

⁶⁴³ BOA, DH.EUM.AYŞ 27/10, Governor of Diyarbakir Faik Ali to Interior Ministry, 26 November 1919.

⁶⁴⁴ BOA, DH.ŞFR 92/209, Directorate for General Security to Diyarbakir, 15 June 1919.

⁶⁴⁵ BOA, DH.KMS 50-2/54, Ministry of Interior to Diyarbakir province, 8 July 1919.

⁶⁴⁶ BOA, DH.KMS 50-2/35, Ministry of Interior to Diyarbakir province, 23 June 1919.

⁶⁴⁷ Speros Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh Through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).

dependent on local and temporal conditions.⁶⁴⁸ There was no single unchanging Ottoman policy on conversion, but a fluctuating one, as one expert argued: “With the collapse or weakening of [...] centralized states or at times when they felt threatened by the real or potential power of Christians (either internally or externally) then the legal status and protection of the non-Muslims lapsed in some form or another.”⁶⁴⁹

During World War I, the CUP organized the forced conversion to Islam of countless numbers of Armenians and Syrians. One scholar characterizes four types of these conversions: ‘voluntary’⁶⁵⁰ conversions of individuals in the initial stages of the 1915 persecutions; selection of individual Armenians by individual Muslim hosts for absorption into Muslim households; distribution of Armenians to Muslim families by government agencies; and the use of government-sponsored orphanages as a direct means of assimilating Armenian children. As a consequence of this quadripartite policy, many Armenians were more or less forcibly converted to Islam.⁶⁵¹ Another aspect of this strategy was launched when, in the early winter of 1915, Talaat initiated a policy of forcibly marrying Armenian girls to Muslim men.⁶⁵² The categorical, violent, and gendered nature of the anti-Armenian persecutions notwithstanding, these strategies denote the absence of biologicistic-racist definitions of the target group. The conduct of the deportations, too, showed that the indelibility of Ottoman Armenian group identity could be tampered with and forged into another identity. One analyst provides a cultural explanation for this porousness: “Traditional society in the Middle East still looked upon women and children as chattel, persons lacking political personality and of transmutable ethnic identity. The cultural values of children and females could be erased or reprogrammed. Genetic continuity was a male proposition.”⁶⁵³

The CUP’s official directives disclose how the everyday conduct of the process of conversion was implemented. Through his orders, Talaat Pasha authorized the conversion of untold numbers of Armenians. Besides specific instructions steering local elites, Talaat

⁶⁴⁸ Selim Deringil, ““There Is No Compulsion in Religion”: On Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1839-1856,” in: *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol.42, no.3 (2000), pp.547-75.

⁶⁴⁹ Speros Vryonis, “The Experience of Christians under Seljuk and Ottoman Domination, Eleventh to Sixteenth Century,” in: Michael Gervers and Jibran Bikhazi (eds.), *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1990), pp.185-216.

⁶⁵⁰ ‘Voluntariness’ is a highly disputed concept in the history of conversion, as it seems that most converts that converted ‘voluntarily’ were always under a certain degree of pressure, although more often socially than administratively. Maria Todorova, “The Ottoman Legacy in the Balkans,” in: Carl Brown (ed.), *Imperial Legacy: The Ottoman Imprint on the Balkans and the Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p.45-77, at p.49.

⁶⁵¹ Ara Sarafian, “The Absorption of Armenian Women and Children into Muslim Households as a Structural Component of the Armenian Genocide,” in: Omer Bartov and Phyllis Mack (eds.), *In God’s Name; Genocide and Religion in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp.209-21.

⁶⁵² *BOA*, DH.ŞFR 59/150, Talaat to Niğde, 30 December 1915.

⁶⁵³ Rouben Adalian, “The Armenian Genocide,” in Samuel Totten, Parsons & Israel Charny (eds.), *Century of Genocide: Eyewitness Accounts and Critical Views* (New York: Garland, 1997), pp.41-64, at p.52.

released several national decrees defining the categorical scope of those to be persecuted and deported. In June 1915, he excluded the Armenian converts to Islam from deportation to the south.⁶⁵⁴ Most converts were not persecuted anymore and, provided they kept their silence, were allowed to continue living in their homes. A secretary close to Talaat noted in his memoirs that the CUP had established a committee on enforcing the mass conversion of Armenians. The committee convened in his house several times and discussed whether Armenians could even be given farmland if they converted, but this idea was quickly abandoned.⁶⁵⁵ The main reason for the policy shift was a new development: some Armenians used this window of opportunity outwardly to convert to Islam, but secretly continued to practise Christianity. When this news trickled back to the corridors of the Ministry of Interior, two weeks after his first directive authorizing conversions to Islam, Talaat reincorporated the converts into the deportation program (see Chapter 3). In other words, at times the CUP dictatorship found conversion to Islam not satisfactory or trustworthy enough. Therefore, to follow up on the previous persecutions, on 22 February 1916 Talaat issued an empire-wide decree to the Ottoman police to monitor closely converted Armenians with new identity cards.⁶⁵⁶ Well into 1918, he maintained his grip on converted Armenians and Syrians by having their names, manners of conversion, and lives after conversion registered.⁶⁵⁷

The Armenian response to the government's conversion policies was ambivalent. It ranged from fearful acquiescence to adamant resistance. Some Armenians were flexible at the prospect of changing their identity. Danish missionaries witnessed how desperate women deportees shouted to them in the street, "We want to become Muslims. We want to become Germans, whatever you want, just save us, they are about to take us to Kemagh and slit our throats."⁶⁵⁸ The young Armenian boy Henry Vartanian, whose father had been murdered, was offered shelter by a Turkish acquaintance, who demanded he renounce Christianity and convert to Islam in a ceremony attended by an imam. The young Henry testified the Islamic statement of faith "There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is his prophet", was ritually circumcized, and from then on went through life as Esad, son of Abdurrahman.⁶⁵⁹ But having to abandon one's identity was unacceptable and humiliating to many others. During the deportations Aurora Mardiganian was kidnapped by a Kurdish tribesman. The fact that she

⁶⁵⁴ *BOA*, DH.ŞFR 54/100, Talaat to provinces, 22 June 1915.

⁶⁵⁵ Falih Rıfki Atay, *Zeytinadağı* (Istanbul: Bateş, 1981), p.66.

⁶⁵⁶ *BOA*, DH.ŞFR 61/71, Talaat to provinces, 22 February 1916.

⁶⁵⁷ *BOA*, DH.ŞFR 86/45, Talaat to provinces, 3 April 1918; *BOA*, DH.ŞFR 87/259, Directorate for General Security to Elaziz province, 23 May 1918.

⁶⁵⁸ *PAAA*, R14087, Schuchardt to Auswärtiges Amt, 21 August 1915, appendix 1.

⁶⁵⁹ Donald E. Miller & Lorne Touryan-Miller, *Survivors: An Oral History of the Armenian Genocide* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p.146.

bore him two children was too embarrassing for her to narrate in detail in her memoirs, and she glossed over this period with great shame.⁶⁶⁰ The forced changing of names was humiliating and confusing as well. Khachador Pilibosian was a child survivor of the Armenian genocide, and was also kidnapped by a Kurd during the deportations and taken to live with him as a slave. In his memoirs he writes how he was absorbed into a Kurdish household and that the Kurds renamed him ‘Mustafa’. After the war he managed to escape to Aleppo and contact his father in America. Reaching America in 1920, he opened his own business in Massachusetts.⁶⁶¹ Other Armenians persevered in their faith even in the face of drawn guns and swords – the examples of the Diyarbekir priests described in the previous chapter being some of the most noteworthy examples. Kerop Bedoukian was a young deportee who passed through Diyarbekir province in the summer of 1915:

My mother was saying that we had an offer from the Mayor via my aunt, a teacher who had established six Turkish kindergartens, the first in the city. The offer was that my aunt and forty-two of her relatives could be saved from deportation if they turned Mohammedan. My father’s answer still rings in my ear as he said, while he fixed my belt: “You will go and die on one mountain and I will go and die on another but we shall not deny our Christ.” I still feel his goodbye kiss on both my cheeks. We parted. No-one shed any tears.⁶⁶²

An elderly Kurd from Ergani recalled that his father told him the story of an Armenian man who converted to Islam and was then sheltered and hidden in a stable by friendly villagers. When, after the bloodiest momentum of the summer of 1915, thinking the coast was clear, he reconverted to Christianity and practised his faith. The Kurdish villagers, distraught at this risky act, since helping Armenians was punishable by death, tracked him down and killed him.⁶⁶³

Contemporary Western observers, whether neutral, allied with, or hostile to the Ottoman Empire, quickly realized that this policy of forced conversion was one of the methods used to secure the disappearance of the Ottoman Armenians as a community. As with all other aspects of the genocide, the Germans in particular were very well informed about the nature of the forced conversions and assimilation campaign. In the summer of 1916, when the campaign was in full effect, the German Ambassador Paul Wolff Metternich (1853-1934) wrote to Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg (1856-1921),

⁶⁶⁰ Aurora Mardiganian, *The Auction of Souls* (London: Phoenix Press, 1934), p.185.

⁶⁶¹ Khachador Pilibosian, *They Called Me Mustafa: Memoir of an Immigrant* (Watertown, NY: Ohan Press, 1992).

⁶⁶² Kerop Bedoukian, *The Urchin: An Armenian’s Escape* (London: John Murray, 1978), p.8.

⁶⁶³ Interview conducted with M.Ş. in Diyarbekir city, August 2004.

One should not see in the forced Islamization of Armenians a measure prompted by religious fanaticism. Such feelings are unknown to the Young Turk powerholders... they hold true inasmuch as the leading motive is not religious fanaticism, for example like the forced conversion of Jews and Moors in Spain in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, but the purpose is to amalgamate the Armenians with the Mohammedan inhabitants of the empire.⁶⁶⁴

The ambassador had provided what seemed to be an accurate assessment of the motives underlying the conversion policies: the dilution of Armenian demography. Through this particular historical lens, the CUP's forced conversion campaign was a breach of traditional Ottoman population policies, despite continuities in patriarchal structures. The levels of coercion and threat of mass violence towards Ottoman Christians was unprecedented, and symbolized the shift from Ottoman imperial rule over a religious minority to a Young Turk nationalist one.

Much like the fate of the orphans, the fate of the converts too became a bone of contention during the armistice. Again, the liberal government led by Grand Vizier Ahmet İzzet Paşa had to reverse the damage done by CUP religious oppression. On 8 February 1919 he sent out the empire-wide order that "because of the fact that conversions of all Armenian men and women under 20 years of age are not acknowledged, their identity certificates immediately be corrected as Armenians." Those converts over twenty years of age were ordered to be left free "to return to their true religion" (*dîn-i aslilerine rücu*).⁶⁶⁵ All state officials were ordered to obey closely and follow these directives, but it seems that in practice the local genocide perpetrators, especially in Diyarbekir, were visibly too powerful for the terrified converts to step out from the anonymity of their hiding places in public and disclose themselves as Armenians. The British agent Keeling passed through Diyarbekir in 1919:

On the following day a number of Armenians called upon me, mostly in the Mussulman garb which they have adopted as a protective measure. Three hundred of them, survivors of the massacres and deportations of 1915, wished to return to their homes at Kharput, Sivas, and Erzerum. I advised them to wait until the spring, when the journey would be less arduous and the British government might be able to arrange for their protection, both en route and at their destinations. This hope was, unfortunately, never to be realised... More urgent than repatriation was

⁶⁶⁴ PAAA, R14092, Wolff-Metternich to Bethmann Hollweg, 10 July 1916: "[Ebenso] darf man in der zwangsweisen Islamisierung der Armenier zunächst keine von religiösem Fanatismus eingegebene Maßregel erblicken. Den jungtürkischen Gewalthabern dürften solche Gefühle fremd sein... sie treffen aber insofern zu, als das leitende Motiv nicht religiöser Fanatismus ist, wie z.B. bei der zwangsweisen Bekehrung der Juden und Mauren in Spanien im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert, sondern die Absicht, die Armenier mit den mohammedanischen Bewohnern des Reiches zu amalgamieren."

⁶⁶⁵ BOA, DH.ŞFR 96/100, Interior Ministry to provinces, 8 February 1919.

the release of the thousands of Armenian women and children living with Kurds, Turks, and Arabs. There was scarcely a girl over twelve who had not been a wife to some Moslem. A decree that Christians were free to leave Moslem houses had been received from Constantinople, but the officials were inactive, and the men with whom the refugees were living were not inclined to surrender them... Many children were separated from their mothers, and wives from their husbands, simply through ignorance of their whereabouts. Some of the children in Moslem hands were, indeed, unaware that they were of Christian parentage.⁶⁶⁶

After the fledgling Young Turk movement defeated the Armenian state in the east and the Greek invasion in the west, the converts kept a low profile, living either as so-called ‘crypto-Christians’ or fully silencing their Armenian identities and living as Muslims.⁶⁶⁷

Besides individual conversions, some families or villages had converted collectively. They converted to Islam to survive the genocidal persecution and often managed to live in Diyarbekir for several decades before migrating to Istanbul or Western Europe. The later life of these Christian families merits attention not only for the study of the genocide itself. The existence of these people has also been important for the post-war history and economy of Eastern Turkey: some converts stayed in their villages and ignored their Armenian past, whereas others lived as crypto-Christians. Openly living as an Armenian Christian was out of the question because in later years, practising Christianity in Diyarbekir province was made impossible by the dictatorship. The remaining three decades of Young Turk rule were very difficult times for the Diyarbekir Christians. On the night of 10 April 1929, the Armenian priest Yusuf Emirhanyan was murdered in his house in Diyarbekir city. When British diplomats inquired about the homicide, they characterized the Turkish government’s answer as “official hypocrisy”, because the government denied that the Diyarbekir police had taken part in the murder.⁶⁶⁸ Patriarch Terziyan protested about the murder in a letter to the League of Nations, claiming that two police agents had committed the assassination and asking the League to intervene in order “to achieve justice on behalf of the Christian victims” and “to ameliorate the conditions of the survivors of our nation in Anatolia.”⁶⁶⁹ The government then arrested Emirhanyan’s wife, tortured her in prison, and vowed not to release her “until she told everything she knew.” This sent shock waves through the remaining and heavily

⁶⁶⁶ E.H. Keeling, *Adventures in Turkey and Russia* (London: John Murray, 1924), pp.213, 225.

⁶⁶⁷ Maurus Reinkowski, “Hidden believers, hidden apostates: the phenomenon of crypto-Jews and crypto-Christians in the Middle East,” in: Dennis Washburn et al. (eds.), *Converting Cultures: Religion, Ideology of Transformations of Modernity* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp.409-33.

⁶⁶⁸ PRO, FO 371/13818/E5576, League of Nations to Istanbul Embassy, 29 October 1929, “Minutes by G.W. Rendel” (London), 31 October 1929.

⁶⁶⁹ PRO, FO 371/13818/E5576, League of Nations to Istanbul Embassy, 29 October 1929, “Petition. A son Excellence Monsieur le Président du Conseil de la Société des Nations”, Armenian Catholic Patriarchate of Cilicia (Beirut) to League of Nations, 2 June 1929.

traumatized tiny Armenian community of Diyarbekir.⁶⁷⁰ The converts too, suffered persecution. There is evidence that the regime had intimate knowledge of Armenian converts in the eastern provinces. In a sweeping decree, the Prime Minister's Office ordered, "from the perspective of order and security", all families who were known converts deported away from the border provinces, including Diyarbekir. At this point, the Young Turks' anti-Armenian sentiments acquired an essentialist, racialized character: Armenians were now seen as unchanging in their supposed disloyalty. In the Young Turk mind, even sincere conversion could not shake this conviction.⁶⁷¹

Armenians were not the only victims of persecution. The Syriac community was living under hardship as well. The Syriac Bishop of Diyarbekir barely escaped an attempt on his life at around the same time of the Emirhanian murder.⁶⁷² The trustee of the Syrian Orthodox Mother Mary Church in Diyarbekir city, Toma Huri Papasgil, wrote to the Prime Minister requesting directives for getting a new priest appointed. The Department of Religious Affairs was responsible for Muslim clerics, and in his letter he gauged the possibility of subjecting the Syrian Orthodox clergy to the same standards and rules to which the Muslim clergy were subject.⁶⁷³ But since the Syrian Orthodox were not an officially acknowledged minority, the government rejected his request. On 6 March 1932 the government wrote to the governor about the recent election of Ignatius Afram I Barsoum as Syrian Orthodox Patriarch. The order noted that the "government does not recognize an entity under the name of the Patriarch of the Syriacs" so the assignment of that post was not acknowledged.⁶⁷⁴

Those who also survived this phase of persecutions had fully suppressed their Armenian identity by then. The Armenian family K. from the south-eastern Şırnak district of Diyarbekir province converted to Islam for a while but reconverted to Christianity, partly as a result of the efforts of a Syriac priest roaming the Diyarbekir countryside in the 1960s in a search for Armenian converts.⁶⁷⁵ One woman from Diyarbekir recalled in an interview,

I always knew that my father's father was Armenian. We all knew, but we didn't talk about it. Everyone knew, and a lot of people used to say to my grandfather that he was Armenian by origin, but we didn't talk about it in our family. My

⁶⁷⁰ PRO, FO 424/272, p.116, no.68, Edmonds to Henderson, 21 May 1930, "Notes on a Tour to Diarbekir, Bitlis and Mush".

⁶⁷¹ BCA, 030.18.01.02/102.54.17, decree dated 8 July 1943.

⁶⁷² PRO, FO 371/13827/6149, Monck-Mason to Henderson, 10 December 1929.

⁶⁷³ BCA, 030.10/112.763.29, Toma Huri Papasgil to Prime Ministry, 30 April 1944.

⁶⁷⁴ DV, "Giden – Birinci Kanun Şubat 1932 Mart 1932 Nisan 1932," correspondence nr. DV-EUUM 4.B.2/535, file nr. 1/317, Interior Ministry in Ankara to First Inspectorate-General in Diyarbekir, 6 March 1932, quoted in: Soner Çağaptay, *Islam, Secularism and Nationalism in Modern Turkey: Who Is A Turk?* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p.130.

⁶⁷⁵ Interviews conducted with S. family in Amsterdam, 15-16 October 2005.

uncles are fanatic Muslims, there are religious officials – imams – among them, who don't want to talk about it.⁶⁷⁶

The fate of the notable Armenian family M. is a telling example of these strategies of 'doubling', a psychological vehicle that has allowed them to live with two fundamentally conflicting identities. During the genocide, the M. were spared upon conversion and saved. When they migrated from Diyarbekir to Amsterdam in the 1970s they reconverted to Christianity. Now, whenever they visit their remaining family members in Diyarbekir, their flights back and forth between the Netherlands and Turkey also represent shifts between Christianity and Islam. The women scarf up during the flight, the Muslim names are used instead of their Armenian ones, and they behave like Muslims in Diyarbekir.⁶⁷⁷ These families survived the Armenian genocide through a mainly coincidental combination of conversion and rescue.

Prostitutes

The genocide took the form of the patriarchal culture in which it was executed: much like other material possessions, the women (and children) were also considered to be property, and property was to be distributed:

Women have seldom participated directly in genocide, though this has begun to change in the twentieth century (e.g., in Nazi Germany and Cambodia); women have been victimized in ways different from men to a large extent (rape and enslavement); and the consequences of genocide (incorporation into the perpetrator's society; or ostracism of victims of rape, as in Bangladesh) have often been different as well. All these differences can be explained in terms of: (1) the specific biological attributes of women (sexuality, reproductive capacity, and maternity) that historically made them both vulnerable and valuable; and (2) the assumptions of patriarchal society that women are weak, dependent, and the sexual property of males, who may appropriate their bodies, labor, and reproductive power.⁶⁷⁸

Sexual relations in patriarchal Middle Eastern societies have historically articulated and reinforced social hierarchies and dominant and subordinate social positions: adult men at the top, with women, boys and girls lower, and prostitutes at the absolute bottom. In this tradition, ruling authorities often saw prostitution as a socially useful alternative to potential male

⁶⁷⁶ Liana Sayadyan, "A Wound That Wouldn't Heal," *Hetq Online: Investigative Journalists of Armenia*, available at: <<http://hetq.am/eng/society/0603-gender.html>>

⁶⁷⁷ Interview with D.E. (from Piran/Dicle district) conducted in Amsterdam, May 2005.

⁶⁷⁸ Roger W. Smith, "Women and Genocide: Notes on an Unwritten History," in: *Holocaust & Genocide Studies*, vol.8, no.3 (1994), pp.315-34, at p.316.

sexual violence and a welcome source of official or unofficial tax revenues. In the words of one expert, “institutional prostitution forms part of the secret equilibrium” of Middle Eastern societies, necessary to their social reproduction.⁶⁷⁹ This precarious sexual equilibrium was disturbed when, largely as a result of the World War I, prostitution came to boom in the Ottoman Empire. The growth of the number of widows, whose male family members had perished at the front or elsewhere, added to the trend that the Ottoman population had come to include more female-headed households and unaccompanied women. Many of these desperate women often saw no other choice than to resort to prostitution. Some were tricked or forced into it, but most had no other means of supporting their families. The impact of this process was most profound for the Armenian women who had survived the deportations.⁶⁸⁰

The war caused a moral lapse, if not collapse, for surviving Armenian women, many of whom were unable to sustain themselves and therefore ended up in prostitution.⁶⁸¹ Already during the war, the American consul in Aleppo Jesse Jackson reported that “according to reports from reliable sources the accompanying gendarmes are told that they may do as they wish with the women and girls.”⁶⁸² The Germans even knew individuals who had been organizing the forced prostitution of Armenian women.⁶⁸³ Yervant Odian (1869-1926), an Armenian intellectual deported from Istanbul to Der ez-Zor, encountered a prostitute and expressed his disapproval and disgust at her. But the woman responded, “Am I the only one to live this life? All the Armenian women deported... whose husbands are lost, massacred or dead, are reduced to the same situation. Either they went to a brothel or took a lover to stay alive. How did you want us to live in another way?” When Odian persisted lecturing her on the responsibilities of being an Armenian woman, the prostitute again responded, ““It is too late now... After three years of such a life, who is going to pay attention to me? ... I don’t dare now to go back to my place of origin... I would feel ashamed to look at the faces of my relatives and friends.”⁶⁸⁴ Women’s literary responses to this perceived moral catastrophe revolved around themes such as fears of assimilation and identity loss, intermarriage alienation, and psychological trauma, as well as occasional compassion for these desperate

⁶⁷⁹ Abdelwahab Bouhdiba, *Sexuality in Islam* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), p.193.

⁶⁸⁰ Matthias Bjørnlund, “‘A Fate Worse Than Dying’: Sexual Violence During the Armenian Genocide,” in: Dagmar Herzog (ed.), *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe’s Twentieth Century* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), pp.16-59.

⁶⁸¹ According to one account, in 1919 out of 140 prostitutes in Mosul, 100 were Armenian. Vahé Tachjian, “Gender, nationalism, exclusion: the reintegration process of female survivors of the Armenian genocide,” in: *Nations and Nationalism*, vol.15, no.1 (2009), pp.60-80, at p.71.

⁶⁸² Ara Sarafian (ed.), *United States Official Documents on the Armenian Genocide* (Watertown, MA: Armenian Review, 1993), vol.I, *The Lower Euphrates*, p.15.

⁶⁸³ Harry Stürmer, *Two War Years in Constantinople: Sketches of German and Young Turkish Ethics and Politics* (London: Gomidas Institute, 2004 [1917]), p.49.

⁶⁸⁴ Hervé Georgelin, “An Armenian Male Deportee’s Vision of Women: Yervant Odian’s Memoirs” (unpublished manuscript, 2008), pp.12-3, quoting: Aram Andonian, *En ces sombres jours* (Geneva: Mētis Presses, 2007 [1919]).

women.⁶⁸⁵ According to one historian, the proliferation of prostitution also affected children, as “there was rampant child prostitution and rape along Turkey’s railroads during this period. Children eight years old and even younger were prostituted in these regions.”⁶⁸⁶

In Diyarbekir, one of the most telling examples of prostitution of Armenian women was the case of Fahriye Yıldırım, Fexo for short. She was an Armenian girl from Diyarbekir who was saved from death in the genocide and absorbed into a Kurdish family, where she was continuously denigrated as a woman and a Christian. Because of this extremely low social status, being both an orphan and a girl and of Armenian descent, in order to sustain herself she saw no other option than to prostitute herself from a young age. In the late 1940s and 1950s she became a phenomenon in Diyarbekir when she eventually assumed control of the Diyarbekir brothel and employed other women there, many of whom were orphans like herself. The business thrived under the supervision of “Patron Fexo”, as she was nicknamed, and she amassed a small fortune with her brothel.⁶⁸⁷

Among Kurdish peasants and nomads, prostitution was practically unheard of until the war. As the British agent Noel wrote, “In Kurdish there is no word for a prostitute. In the Eastern districts she is euphemistically referred to as a Persian, in the North as a Russian, in the south as an Arab, and in the West as a Turk”.⁶⁸⁸ Among this population too, prostitution blossomed in the aftermath of the war, albeit less than in the Armenian case. An Ottoman army officer testified that out of dire helplessness, many Kurdish women saw no other option than “selling their bodies”.⁶⁸⁹ The Kurdish politician Memduh Selim Bey lamented after the war that many lonesome Kurdish women resorted to “alcoholism” (*müzkirat*) and had no choice but to engage in “prostitution” (*fuhşiyat*).⁶⁹⁰ Part of this strong moral rhetoric was to inflame the sentiments of a conservative population, but the fact remained that the ravages of the First World War directly imposed prostitution as a socially sensitive problem in the eastern provinces. According to Ottoman belief patterns, these women became ostracized the moment they engaged in prostitution. The problems they encountered as social outcasts then compounded their problems in the aftermath of mass violence.

⁶⁸⁵ Victoria Rowe, *A History of Armenian Women’s Writing: 1880-1921* (London: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2003), pp.187-8.

⁶⁸⁶ Hilmar Kaiser, “Children’s Fate During the Armenian Genocide,” lecture at Eaton Hall (Glendale, CA), 7 October 2004.

⁶⁸⁷ See the memoirs of a Kurdish intellectual who met her: Naci Kutlay, “Acı Gerçekler - 2,” in: *Özgür Politika*, 5 November 2003.

⁶⁸⁸ Edward Noel, “The Character of the Kurds as Illustrated by their Proverbs and Popular Sayings,” in: *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, vol.1 (1917-20), p.85.

⁶⁸⁹ Rafiq Hilmi, *Yaddasht* (Tehran: Mohammed-i Saqiz, 1987), pp.30-31.

⁶⁹⁰ Memduh Selimbegî, “Hewar! - İmdad!,” in: *Jîn*, 22 May 1919, p.5.

Bandits

For the purpose of warfare (and genocide), in 1914 the Young Turk regime armed dozens of loyal Kurdish tribes with pistols and rifles. By doing so, it also depacified large pockets of territory in the eastern provinces: many more men were now armed, many heavily. After the war this policy backfired when the tribesmen used their newly acquired weapons to turn to crime, that festered for decades in the countryside. Although rural crime by tribesmen and social bandits had existed in the eastern provinces for centuries, the depacification brought by war compounded this phenomenon. These bands became an increasing source of irritation for the same regime that had created them in the first place. The Young Turk party's creation had slipped from their control to become a liability and ultimately to threaten their authority in the region. The 1925 Sheikh Said conflict (dealt with in the next chapter) was partly fought by the Kurds with weapons distributed by the CUP regime in 1914. When Sheikh Said's army crumbled after the Kemalist victory in the summer of 1925, armed bands of guerrillas fled into Diyarbekir's rural periphery, whether the mountainous north-east or the desert south, and assailed government forces or robbed post-chaises to sustain themselves. Moreover, the spread of more weaponry among Kurdish tribesmen in the eastern provinces added fuel to the flames of tribal wars, that could now be fought with more intensity.

Eric Hobsbawm defines these 'social bandits' as "peasant outlaws whom the lord and state regard as criminals, but who remain within peasant society, and are considered by their people as heroes, as champions, avengers, fighters for justice, perhaps even leaders of liberation," adding that "banditry tended to become epidemic in times of pauperization and economic crisis".⁶⁹¹ These conditions were present in most of the eastern provinces in the late 1920s. A British observer who travelled through the Diyarbekir countryside in that period, obviously with many bodyguards, noticed that "arms are still abundant", that "brigandage is spasmodic", and that large parts of the eastern provinces were "still unsettled areas". From his conversations with local authorities he gained some insight into the depacified conditions of Diyarbekir's countryside: "It was interesting to hear some officers expressing sympathy with these Kurdish villagers, poor devils, who, they said, must live somehow. Years of war and disorder had ravaged the country, and too often the choice for them lay between brigandage and starvation."⁶⁹²

⁶⁹¹ Eric Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2000 [1969]), pp.20, 26.

⁶⁹² *PRO*, FO 424/271, p.28, no.10, Clerk to Henderson, 11 July 1929, "Notes from a Journey from Angora to Aleppo, Diarbekr, Malatia, Sivas and the Black Sea Coast, June 9-29, 1929".

Typically, those who turned to (social) banditry were disgruntled Kurdish chieftains or groups of desperadoes without tribal affiliation. For example, in the westernmost region of Diyarbekir province the Reshwan tribe wrought havoc. Zekeriya, one of their chieftains, would plunder and rob travellers and flee to Syria to evade justice.⁶⁹³ Others committed acts of banditry and fled to Iran or Russia, and due to these escapes outlawism was always a matter for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well. In the 1920s, it worked closely with the Interior Ministry to clamp down on the bandits.⁶⁹⁴ To assess the level of unlawful activities by these groups operating mostly in mountainous areas, it suffices to take a cursory glance at the weekly reports written by the gendarmerie on public security. The following list was compiled for the second week of June 1929:

- 1- One person was killed in Diyarbekir's Aşanasır village, the perpetrators are being pursued.
- 2- One person was killed in Diyarbekir's Akveren village, the perpetrators are being pursued.
- 3- On 9 June 1929 3 travellers were robbed by 7 armed men in the Silvan district, they are being pursued.
- 4- On 11 June 1929 2 travellers were robbed by 3 armed men between Diyarbekir and Karacadağ, they are being pursued.
- 5- One person was caught dead, three persons were caught alive while committing banditry in the Çapakçur district.
- 6- One person was killed in Diyarbekir's Akveren village, the perpetrators are being pursued.⁶⁹⁵

And the list went on: the next week another two travellers were mugged by three armed robbers, and another murder was committed in the Kulp district.⁶⁹⁶ For only two weeks in one province these reports did not reflect the typical characteristics of a pacified society with a functioning monopoly of violence in the hands of a central government.

The problem was at least as acute with tribal warfare. Although latent bellicosity historically often erupted in open warfare between Kurdish tribes, Young Turk population policies had exacerbated the conflicts rather than de-escalated them, as Ottoman religious officials or Kurdish shaikhs had often done. With the attack on the Kurds' religious infrastructure (see Chapter 5) the Young Turks eliminated a mitigating force between the many tribes. Conflicts could now escalate into years of bloody war instead of being discussed and reconciled by influential shaikhs. The Reshkotan and Etmanki tribes in the eastern

⁶⁹³ *BCA*, 030.18.01.01/16.78.2, Prime Ministerial decree, 12 December 1925.

⁶⁹⁴ *BCA*, 030.10/112.156.20, Foreign Ministry decree, 1 May 1925.

⁶⁹⁵ *BCA*, 030.10/127.914.24, Gendarmerie report, 15 June 1929.

⁶⁹⁶ *BCA*, 030.10/127.914.26, Gendarmerie report, 20 June 1929.

districts of Diyarbekir province, for example, freely fought their battles with little government intervention for the best part of the 1920s. The Mala Eliyê Unis tribe also fought off the government and hostile tribes for years.⁶⁹⁷ Some, though certainly not all, of these tribes had been armed in 1915 for warfare and genocide, and were now eliminated in a belated Young Turk turnaround. In any case, the violence made living conditions especially in the countryside of Diyarbekir very harsh.

In the aftermath of a decade of warfare, the social landscape in the eastern provinces saw a growth of social outsiders, trying to make a living on the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. When the decade of war was concluded with the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, and the new Turkey's borders were relatively consolidated for the time being, the Young Turk regime was determined to bring "order" into the Diyarbekir of paupers, orphans, converts, prostitutes, nomads, and bandits. The new Diyarbekir would be a sparkling beacon of "modernity" and "progress".

Diyarbekir: the high-modernist city

For the Young Turk elite, bringing order to society did not simply entail adherence to norms or strengthening of social cohesion. It constituted control over the population, but also over the landscape in general, including the cities. The First World War had occupied the CUP to the extent that certain aspects of social engineering, such as city planning, had become secondary to surviving the war. The end of general warfare in 1923 and in Diyarbekir in 1925 offered the Young Turks new possibilities for experimenting with their interpretation of 'modernity'. On 1 January 1928, the regime established the First General Inspectorate, centered in Diyarbekir, and appointed Dr. İbrahim Tali Öngören (1875-1952) as its first General Inspector.⁶⁹⁸ Such an administrative unit was to fill the power gap left by the revocation of martial law in 1925. The Inspectorate, partly modelled after the two general inspectorates of the 1914 Reform Plan, was to implement the general policy laid out by the regime in the expanded area under its jurisdiction. The correspondence between the Ministries in Ankara and the Inspectorate in Diyarbekir offers a unique insight into the local dynamics of 'modernization' and population policy, put into practice through ambitious top-down processes of city planning, infrastructural change, disarmament, population transfer (dealt

⁶⁹⁷ Salihê Kevirbirî, *Filîte Qûto: Serpêhatî, Dîrok, Sosyolojî* (Istanbul: Pêrî, 2001), pp.11-8, 59-75.

⁶⁹⁸ For a comprehensive overview of these see: Cemil Koçak, *Umûmî Müfettişlikler (1927-1952)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003).

with in Chapter 5), and forced assimilation (dealt with in Chapter 6).⁶⁹⁹ The Inspectorate now made Diyarbekir city the object of the Young Turks' transformative urban vision.

The Young Turks had either visited Western Europe, as military attachés, students, or exiles, or had lived there for a considerable period of time. There, they were impressed by imperial London, exciting Berlin, and modernist Paris – cities that were continuously under construction. Thus it was no coincidence that the Young Turks paid close attention to urban design. But even though they sought to emulate European culture and European schemes of urban (re)construction, according to one historian,

usually, the Kemalists have therefore been seen as imitators of the West, who took their cue from Paris and London. While catching up with the most advanced nations was certainly the avowed aim of the Kemalists, we should not lose sight of the fact that in concrete terms the way of life which came closest to their ideal and which they tried to imitate, was that of the bourgeoisie of the urban centres of the Balkans. The esplanades, parks, tea gardens, cinemas and villas they constructed in each and every Anatolian town in the thirties actually bore more resemblance to the modern sections of Salonika, Bucharest or Sofia than to French or British examples.⁷⁰⁰

In city planning too, the Young Turks seemed to have been children of the Balkans. But in Anatolia they were confronted with the 'Asiatic' and 'oriental' Ottoman cities, in the ideology of European modernity the very antithesis of 'modern' and 'civilized' city life.⁷⁰¹

The Young Turks' perception of the cities of the Ottoman Empire was a mixture of disillusion and shame with their "backwardness". As one Young Turk urban planner lamented, "The analysis of photos of our cities, taken from airplanes, has shown us how disorderly and haphazardly they are organized. The houses or the bird's eye view of cities instantly adumbrate the absence of any order in their layout."⁷⁰² Diyarbekir was even worse off from their perspective, even if it was simply for the fact the city was situated in the "backward East". The governorship described the city as follows:

Before the Republic, in the dark mentality of that era, the municipality of Diyarbekir was a medium of tyranny and domination in the hands of local parties.

⁶⁹⁹ Koçak, *Umûmî Müfettişlikler*, pp.81-2, 100-1.

⁷⁰⁰ Erik-Jan Zürcher, "The Young Turks - Children of the Borderlands?" in: *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, vol.9, no.1-2 (2003), pp.275-86.

⁷⁰¹ Christopher Houston, "Provocations of the Built Environment: Animating Cities in Turkey as Kemalists," in: *Political Geography*, vol.24, no.1 (2005), pp.101-19.

⁷⁰² Neşe Gurallar Yeşilkaya, *Halkevleri: İdeoloji ve Mimarlık* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1999), p.118. As James Scott argued about flight and planning: "It would be hard to exaggerate the importance of the airplane for modernist thought and planning. By offering a perspective that flattened the topography as if it were a canvas, flight encouraged new aspirations to synoptic vision, rational control, planning, and spatial order." Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, p.58.

The true meaning and objective of the municipality had been completely erased. The works that were carried out consisted of a set of parades that never met with the daily and sanitary necessities of the people. The streets swam in dirt, the drinking fountains ran with soiled water, there were no roads, there was no garbage collection, in short the city was completely in a medieval state.⁷⁰³

The local Young Turk elite in Diyarbakır, too, repeatedly returned to this contrast between the existing city, a centuries-old product of historical chance, and the city of the future, which would be consciously designed from start to finish following scientific principles. Architects supporting the regime's totalitarian style specified these general principles: "When we say national architecture, then arches, domes, mosques, and caravanserais should not recur."⁷⁰⁴ The Young Turk rejection of the Ottoman past was reflected most poignantly in the architectural policies: whereas the past consisted of round shapes and mosaics characteristic of Islamic architecture, the future had to be designed according to straight lines and unyielding, rigorous appearances. The catchwords were that cities were "cases", "envelopes", or "clothes" to the "societal body" (*içtimai bünye*), as one architect phrased it. It was the task of the Turkish architect to bring "order" into this body, much as a military officer would bring order to the minds and bodies of newly drafted soldiers. The same architect wrote, "Architecture was born out of life's necessity for order and harmony. If there is no order (*ordre*) we would be shaken by disorder (*désordre*)."⁷⁰⁵ According to him, the architect was a "regulator", a "sorter", and a "creator".⁷⁰⁵ Thus, urban planning was not only a matter of fashioning architectural esthetics, but also of crafting a suitable habitat for the nation itself.

The ideology of transforming the cities was informed by a modernist sensibility with totalitarian features. For the Young Turks, it was legitimate for them as the political elite to reshape fully the urban landscapes of Turkey. In his many speeches, Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya (1883-1959) diagnosed the status quo as he saw it:

Like all old cities in any country, our cities have great defects that pertain to their foundation and that are difficult to correct. These are the products of the old-time interpretation of city planning and architectural technique. Every old city is burdened with these deficiencies and difficulties. There is no practical remedy other than to resolve these shortcomings and difficulties within a specific plan and program according to the exact sciences. Besides this, gentlemen, while the science and art of city planning was born in the civilized world and cities became the object of special care, like all fields of national life and activity, our cities too suffered the neglect of the sultans' despotism and anarchy... There will be no

⁷⁰³ *Cumhuriyetin 15inci yılında Diyarbakır* (Diyarbakır: Diyarbakır Matbaası, 1938), p.96.

⁷⁰⁴ Yeşilkaya, *Halkevleri*, p.125.

⁷⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.118.

other serious obstacle other than time for the Turkish cities and the Turk to climb to the level of high civilization and ideals.⁷⁰⁶

Therefore, Kaya argued, the cities needed “civilization and sanitization”. The eastern provinces, and in particular Diyarbekir, again became the object of special care of Young Turk high-modernist social engineering. The Interior Minister stated with some pride that “in our eastern cities, like the western ones, activities for development have started. Those who remember the old condition of Diyarbekir will see the difference now with appreciation.”⁷⁰⁷ Kaya then went on to explain precisely how these urban changes were going to be realized:

Turkey is getting involved with city planning directly. For example: İzmir has a design. Manisa and Aydın have a design. The designs for Diyarbekir, Malatya, and Elaziz are being made. Other municipalities are applying to have their designs made... First of all we will make maps. Then we will make and implement the designs.⁷⁰⁸

Despite “unfavorable financial circumstances”, in a later speech Kaya foresaw a great future for the Turkish city as a result of the regime’s efforts for urban redesigning: “With the measures we will take, our cities will become civilized cities in the style that Atatürk wants. As with Turkey itself, he is the great architect and guardian of Turkey’s cities.”⁷⁰⁹ Kaya quickly communicated the high-modernist discourse to his subordinates. Young Turk urban planners foresaw the construction of “dignified and serious” buildings that would “represent state authority in every corner of the country” and “command respect and obedience” from the population. In the words of one architect supporting the regime: “It is the task of our building contractors to represent the New Turkish Modern Architecture of the Kemalist Revolution. A national and modern style bearing the stamp of the Kemalist regime will come into being.”⁷¹⁰

Diyarbekir was a textbook case of the Young Turks’ urban nightmare: within the city walls, the number of “modern” buildings could be counted on the fingers of one hand. Diyarbekir was and is the quintessential Middle Eastern walled citadel, not unlike Aleppo or Jerusalem. With the Inspectorate-General in absolute power, in the 1930s the regime took measures so the “scientific” city Diyarbekir would arise out of the ashes of the “dusty, dark,

⁷⁰⁶ Ekrem Ergüven (ed.), *Şükrü Kaya: Sözleri - Yazıları 1927-1937* (Istanbul: Cumhuriyet Matbaası, 1937), pp.38, 41.

⁷⁰⁷ Ergüven, *Şükrü Kaya*, p.112.

⁷⁰⁸ Ergüven, *Şükrü Kaya*, pp.118-9. For the two Young Turk maps planning Diyarbekir’s future see the Maps section.

⁷⁰⁹ Ergüven, *Şükrü Kaya*, p.201.

⁷¹⁰ Yeşilkaya, *Halkevleri*, p.123.

dangerous, noisy, disease-ridden, and rickety” Ottoman town. Everything that reminded the Young Turks of the latter needed to change radically. A booklet the governorship published in the 1930s gave an impression of how the new Diyarbekir would look:

The steps taken to draw out Diyarbekir city, compressed in a citadel with a circumference of 7 kilometres, and found a new city, are worthy of the constructive nature of the Republic... next to the city of Diyarbekir, between the Mountain Gate and the train station a modern city will be established, with all its daily needs. The entire area allotted for the new city will be taken over by the municipality; after the parts for the government buildings and the public space are distributed, the other parts will be sold to the people at a very cheap price and the blueprint will be launched. As the first implementation of the plan, within a year the First Inspectorate-General building, the First Inspectorate-General residence, the command headquarters residence, and a large garage were constructed in the area of the New City. These modern buildings, totalling a 276,061 Lira, founded the essence of the new city of Diyarbekir and have therefore beautified Diyarbekir’s urban appearance many times over.⁷¹¹

Besides these buildings, local authorities built a new cultural center, a hospital, a liquor factory, and a school for silkworm breeding. The idea was that “these newly constructed buildings will succeed in drawing the people of Diyarbekir, who have lived within city walls for centuries, outside the city walls”.⁷¹²

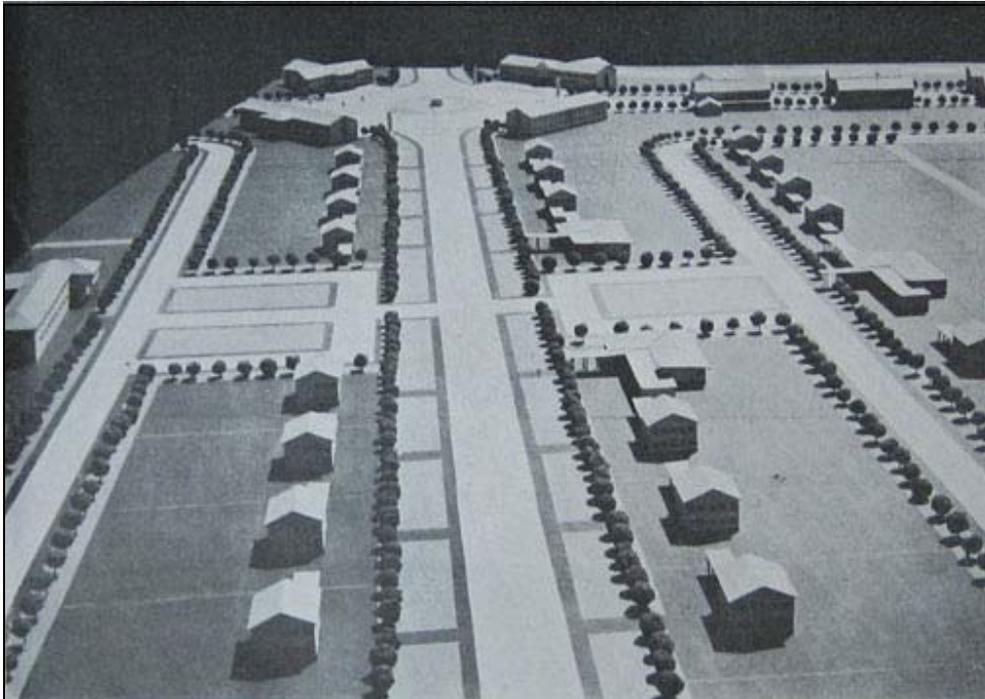


Photo 17: Model of the new city (Birinci Genel Müfettişlik, 1939)

⁷¹¹ *Cumhuriyetin 15inci yılında Diyarbakır* (Diyarbakır: Diyarbakır Matbaası, 1938), pp.25-7.

⁷¹² *Diyarbakire Bir Bakış* (Diyarbakır: Diyarbekir Basımevi, 1935), p.5.

From this process it became clear that the old city would continue existing within the walls, but simultaneously a new city would be erected outside. The logic behind this coexistence of two cities followed from the fact that only on paper did the new city not need a compromise with the existing urban landscape. But because Diyarbekir was a dense walled city, it was practically impossible to “modernize” it without razing the entire town and rebuilding it anew. As one commentator aptly described this deadlock: “Although more than one politician, dictator, and city planner have devised plans for the total recasting of an existing city, these dreams came at such cost, both financial and political, that they have rarely left the drawing boards.”⁷¹³ So, as the old city rambled on, the new one mushroomed.



Photo 18: The Inspectorate-General in Diyarbekir, c.1937 (Birinci Genel Müfettişlik, 1939)

The buildings and urban spaces in the new Diyarbekir exemplified how architecture could transmit an ideology. Many of these Young Turk era structures were huge and sterile, and even though centered around Turkish nationalism, the cool, clean lines of the modernist

⁷¹³ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, p.59.

architecture betray a direct inspiration from the authoritarian regimes of interwar Europe.⁷¹⁴ This Young Turk architectural style, too, demonstrated a contempt for all that is unplanned, organic, and vernacular. One can ascribe differing motivations to this dislike, explaining the totalitarian styles in terms of megalomania or mainstream modernism, or progressive ideals. Either way, the Young Turks developed their own brand of neoclassical architecture to symbolize the grand ambitions the regime held for the Turkish nation. Most of all, the new architecture represented the power it housed, such as the Inspectorate-General in Diyarbekir.

A good example of how destruction complemented and accompanied construction was the most radical operation the Young Turks ever performed on Diyarbekir city: the partial destruction of its city walls. Starting in 1927, discussions in city hall revolved around how the ‘modernization’ of Diyarbekir could be carried out. Mayor Gaffar Bey and governors Nizamettin Bey and Hasan Faiz Ergun reached agreement on the argument that the city walls impeded the free circulation of air in the inner city. This was hardly an accurate diagnosis of any real problem in Diyarbekir, but a pretext for levelling the hated old Ottoman city to make way for the new Turkish one. Another objective was to open up Diyarbekir’s circumvallation by carving out two large embrasures in the city walls on either side of the city for the purpose of traffic circulation and military control. During certain moments of transparency, regime propagandists clearly formulated their true intent regarding urban planning. An important publication by the Diyarbekir governorship stated that “Diyarbekir has been deprived of all types of innovations, locked in between the stone columns of the old city walls and the blinding captivity of Islamic mentality”.⁷¹⁵ Another propagandist justified the projected destruction of the city walls by a quintessentially modernist, anti-traditional appeal:

In reality, the city walls, works from before the emergence of Islam, have no other function than spoiling the air in the city, and there is nothing within the city walls apart from two poor excuses for churches that are now converted to mosques... one is the Greek church in the inner castle, and even if it was converted by Arabs into a mosque, it has no original value to be named a national work of art and is just an ordinary, crude building...⁷¹⁶

In early 1930, local Young Turk functionaries decided to put their theory into practice: with the help of the military they began dynamiting the walls, starting with the northern one, the Harput Gate (a.k.a. Mountain Gate). The work took some time, for the robust basalt did not

⁷¹⁴ Lawrence J. Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

⁷¹⁵ *Diyarbekire Bir Bakış* (Diyarbakır: Diyarbekir Basımevi, 1935), p.2.

⁷¹⁶ Bedri Günkut, *Diyarbekir Tarihi* (Diyarbakır: Diyarbekir Halkevi, 1937), p.156.

give in easily, but within days the age-old gate was no more, leaving a gaping hole 100 meters wide.⁷¹⁷ At that point, the “urban planning” did not escape the eye of Western observers. British officials did not fail to notice the demolition and reported, “A sad piece of vandalism is that the mayor has called in the army to dynamite two stretches of the old city walls near the north and south gates, ‘to let the air in’... the mayor is highly sensitive to any criticism on this score, and as he declares that he is only destroying portions ‘of no historical value’, it may be hoped the vandalism will not go further.”⁷¹⁸ But the destruction continued. Next was the southern Mardin Gate, which was dynamited but due to the sloped terrain could not be opened up as much as the Harput Gate.



Photo 19: The square in front of the Mountain Gate after demolition (Republican Archives)

The archaeologist Albert-Louis Gabriel (1883-1972), Professor of Archaeology in the late 1920s at the University of Istanbul, was touring Diyarbekir province in April and May 1932 for research.⁷¹⁹ When he arrived in the city, he witnessed the raw gap left by the razing of the Mountain Gate and saw that the authorities were preparing for the demolition of the Mardin Gate. Gabriel immediately tried to intervene, but to no avail. Only when he returned

⁷¹⁷ Beğenç, *Diyarbakır*, p.11.

⁷¹⁸ PRO, FO 424/272, p.116, no.68, Edmonds to Henderson, 21 May 1930, “Notes on a Tour to Diarbekir, Bitlis and Mush.”

⁷¹⁹ Pierre Pinon, “La vie et l’oeuvre d’Albert Gabriel,” in: *Albert Gabriel (1883-1972): Mimar, Arkeolog, Ressam, Gezgin* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2006), pp.47-61. Gabriel’s valuable work on the eastern provinces is precious if only for its scarcity and includes many photos of archaeological sites: Albert Gabriel, *Voyages archéologiques dans la Turquie orientale* (Paris: Institut français d’archéologie de Stamboul, 1940), two volumes.

to Ankara in June 1932 did he write a long report on Diyarbekir's city walls that ultimately managed to convince the local authorities that they were destroying one of Turkey's most precious historical monuments. The report, published 60 years later in book form,⁷²⁰ is as much a passionate appeal as a detached scholarly argument about the historical value of Diyarbekir's city walls. According to Gabriel, those walls bore "extraordinary importance", not only for the craft embedded in their structure and design, but also for their many medieval inscriptions. The walls, he argued, were therefore "exceptional assets". The professor also dismissed the arguments of poor air circulation and set forth several concrete proposals to improve health conditions in the city. He then sought to convince the regime that keeping the walls intact would save demolition costs, improve Turkey's international reputation, and added that Diyarbekir was endowed with an immense tourism potential. Gabriel then made a second trip to Diyarbekir between 12 October and 10 November 1932, and in a second report pleaded for the restoration of several crumbling towers.⁷²¹ Kemal Atatürk, always sensitive to Turkey's image in the West, upon receiving these complaints through the Ministry of Education, ordered the destruction to be discontinued.⁷²²

The Albert Gabriel incident was by no means the end of Young Turk city planning. The municipal authorities, having destroyed the city's northern and southern gates, now planned to widen the main road that connected the two gates in a north-south axis. This road was named after Atatürk and would be a European-style boulevard crossing the historic center and running straight through the ancient market. Because the old road was narrower, mayor Müftüzâde Şeref Uluğ ordered it to be widened and "the cemeteries around the Mountain Gate to be removed." Uluğ was implementing plans to connect the northern city of Elaziz to the southern city of Mardin through the heart of Diyarbekir city. This boulevard was supposed to be 25 to 30 metres in width, a plan that, due to Diyarbekir's density of buildings, turned out to be too ambitious to be executed. The boulevard was never realized, but the cemeteries were razed, including Diyarbekir's Armenian graveyard,⁷²³ and the Mountain Gate was transformed into a square with the largest Atatürk statue in the south-east.⁷²⁴ To symbolize the urban transformation, the name of the city was "Turkified" from *Diyarbekir* into *Diyarbakır*

⁷²⁰ Albert Gabriel, *Diyarbakır surları* (Diyarbakır: Diyarbakır Tanıtma, Kültür ve Yardımlaşma Vakfı, 1993), transl. Kaya Özsezgin.

⁷²¹ Albert-Louis Gabriel, "Mardin ve Diyarbekir vilayetlerinde icra olunmuş arkeolojya seyahati hakkında rapor," in: *Türk Tarih, Arkeolojya ve Etnografya Dergisi*, vol.1 (1933), pp.134-49.

⁷²² Şevket Beysanoğlu, *Anıtları ve Kitâbeleri ile Diyarbakır Tarihi* (Ankara: Neyir, 2001), vol.3, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi*, pp.1035-7.

⁷²³ This was a symbolic process since the same man (Müftüzâde Şeref Uluğ) who had played an leading role in the destruction of the Diyarbekir Armenians now had also destroyed the last remnants that reminded the city of their existence.

⁷²⁴ Bedri Günkut, *Diyarbakır Tarihi* (Diyarbakır: Diyarbekir Halkevi, 1937), pp.150-1.

(see Chapter 7 for more discussion of this change). The “scientific” city of Diyarbakır would have streets laid out in straight lines intersecting at right angles, buildings of uniform design and size, the whole built according to a single, overarching plan. Especially after the 1925 Sheikh Said war, this geometric redesigning in urban settlement also served the purpose of military security: most of all, the redesigned Diyarbekir was to be made safe against popular insurrections. The destruction and levelling of the Mountain Gate greatly facilitated movement between barracks inside and outside the city walls, as tanks and police cars could now roll into Diyarbekir much more easily.

The destruction of Diyarbekir’s city walls was as much rooted in the medicalization of society as in modernist ideas of city planning. Administrative urban planning was a vector of the general policy of socially engineering a “healthy society”. Health care was another important component of the Young Turk brand of ethnic nationalism, as it was throughout interwar Europe.⁷²⁵ Through his comprehensive criticism of high modernism, the political scientist James Scott does however recognize the argument that doctors and public health engineers, “who did possess new knowledge that could save millions of lives,” were one of the positive aspects of high-modernist social engineering, even if they were “often thwarted by popular prejudices and entrenched political interests.”⁷²⁶ The Young Turk regime was no exception. During its rule it accorded much deference to the medical sciences, disseminating medical knowledge and distributing medicines among the working poor and the rural peasants. In terms of twenty-first-century standards, health conditions in Diyarbekir were indeed terrible, and curable illnesses quickly led to death as medicine was scarce and prioritized for the army.⁷²⁷ The corpses of the many who had died from persecution, starvation, and illness were rarely buried but thrown into wells and rivers, causing cholera, dysentery, trachoma, and typhoid epidemics. Since Armenian convoys were dying as a result of them, the Muslim population named these contagious diseases “the Armenian disease” in the aftermath of the Armenian genocide.⁷²⁸ These epidemics not only struck the persecuted population, but unpersecuted locals were often contaminated too. For example, at the height of the war, in September 1916, the death toll of the epidemic rose to 250 people every day,

⁷²⁵ Aristotle Kallis, “Racial Politics and Biomedical Totalitarianism in Interwar Europe,” in: Marius Turda & Paul J. Weindling (eds.), *Blood and Homeland: Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe, 1900-1940* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006), pp.389-416.

⁷²⁶ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, p.96.

⁷²⁷ Victor Schilling, *Kriegshygienische Erfahrungen in der Türkei (Cilicien, Nordsyrien)* (Leipzig: J.A. Barth, 1921).

⁷²⁸ Aware of the criminal nature of popular participation in the genocide, the widespread outbreak of epidemics was interpreted by Muslims as a “punishment of God” for the massacring. Interview with a Veli Dede (aged 90) of Holbiş village (Kâhta district, Adiyaman province), conducted on 22 July 1990 by a Hacı İbrahim, published in: Kemal Yalçın, *Seninle güler yüreğim* (Bochum: CIP, 2003), pp.371-76.

most of the victims being soldiers, gendarmes, and refugees. In the same month 4000 people perished of disease in Mardin, and in November, the body count numbered an additional 850.⁷²⁹ According to one observer, from March 1916 to September 1917 the total number of dead increased to 25,000, and another 2000 died from October 1917 to autumn 1918.⁷³⁰ Although health conditions should have been most appalling in the countryside, this was not always the case. Despite the fact that there were no hospitals or clinics in rural Diyarbekir, prescientific, traditional medicine and the accumulation of centuries of stochastic knowledge, passed on from generation to generation, managed to heal many ailments.

With the advent of the Turkish Republic and scientific statecraft all this was expected to change. According to the Municipality Law of 1930, the municipal authorities were responsible for “securing the health, security and comfort of the urban population.”⁷³¹ Health care was a priority now, but above all, none of the medical diagnoses were to remain without effect. In the regime’s social engineering schemes they bore concrete policy consequences. The Young Turk emissary Dr. Münir Soykam, who was sent to inspect urban health conditions in Diyarbekir, reported back to Ankara:

When we build our cities we need to keep this in mind. The streets should be wide, in the direction of the prevailing winds, here and there parks and squares need to be brought into being. We need to furnish these places with green trees so that our children can bask in the influence of lots of sunlight in open air. We need to build our streets so they don’t produce dust, remove dry brooms from houses and streets, stop spitting on the ground, cover our mouths with a handkerchief when we cough, construct factories that emit detrimental smoke away from residences, build a sufficient number of public toilets. The Republican Government has thought all this through and is preparing a plan for public facilities for every one of our towns and according to this plan is working towards the creation of healthy and esthetic cities, where our citizens and our new generation will have chances to live long in health and vivacity. In the end, civilization means health.⁷³²

This message needed to be communicated to the population. Soykam’s inspection report for Diyarbekir includes a lecture the doctor gave on 3 May 1941, reciting scientific mantras such as “Your health is your biggest asset!” or “Fit body in a fit mind!”. In his lecture, Soykam expounded on the history of the plague in medieval Europe and stressed that healthy living could prolong life by at least ten years. This concern for the health of citizens was rooted in

⁷²⁹ Rhétoré, *Les chrétiens aux bêtes!*, pp.352, 367-76.

⁷³⁰ Armalto, *Al-Qousara*, p.106.

⁷³¹ *Resmi Gazete*, no.1471, 14 April 1930.

⁷³² *BCA*, 490.01/996.850.1, Dr. Münir Soykam to RPP General Secretariat, 5 May 1941.

the Young Turk agenda underlying these policies: “if the average lifetime in a nation is twenty five years, only a few individuals of that nation can render service to the advancement of the nation and under these conditions eminent scholars and great personalities cannot be raised.” Soykam warned his audience “to guard against harmful substances that can poison us, such as tobacco, alcohol and drugs” and “to get free of sorrow and gloominess and increase our physical and mental strength with music.” He cautioned against “invisible microbes”, flies, and careless public urinating, admonishing the public regularly to wash their hands and maintain a “discipline of cleanliness”. He then continued his lecture by advising the crowd about air quality, invoking percentages of carbon dioxide levels, heat, humidity, and their effects on one’s lungs and blood pressure. Finally, he notified the Diyarbakir locals of the dangers of sun stroke, and summed up how one should live in conditions of dry, humid, hot, cold, and dusty air.⁷³³ While all these notions must have been known to the people through centuries of trial-and-error tradition and simple common sense, the arguments put forward by the Kemalist social engineers were “scientific” and therefore authoritative.

Spreading the word was accompanied by clear action. In the early 1930s, the Young Turk authorities of Diyarbakir built a large hospital in the city, the ‘Model Hospital’ (*Numûne Hastanesi*). It had a capacity of 200 beds, a special department for venereal diseases, a vaccination center, and a military hospital. It operated in tandem with the three pharmacies that existed in the inner city.⁷³⁴ The local newspaper *Diyarbakır* published advertisements for free health-care services in the city for the sick. The schedule was as follows: on Mondays the internist would work, on Tuesdays the dentist and ophthalmologist, on Wednesdays the gynaecologist, and on Thursdays to Saturdays various other internists.⁷³⁵ Like all of social life, for the Young Turks, health care too was perceived through the prism of nationalism. It was in the regime’s health-care policies that the fusion of ideologies of nationalism and Social Darwinism with ideas of hygiene and eugenics was established. The nation was to be healthy and clean, starting with the youngest. The regime boasted having “adopted the superior ideal of concerning oneself closely with the health of Turkish children” and noted that “our Republican administration always bears this national objective in mind.”⁷³⁶ The municipality also declared war on vermin, rodents, snakes, and especially the infamous Diyarbakir scorpions that afflicted much misery on the city dwellers every summer. Local authorities also engaged in bacteriology better to understand the agricultural problems in the region and

⁷³³ *Cumhuriyetin 15inci yılında Diyarbakır* (Diyarbakır: Diyarbakır Matbaası, 1938), pp.40-2.

⁷³⁴ Usman Eti, *Diyarbakır* (Diyarbakır: Diyarbakır Matbaası, 1937), p.43.

⁷³⁵ *Diyarbakır*, 2 May 1941.

⁷³⁶ *Cumhuriyetin 15inci yılında Diyarbakır*, p.67.

struggled against malaria, trachoma, and venereal diseases.⁷³⁷ Venereal diseases were seen as a product of unsafe sex with prostitutes, so the Diyarbakir prostitutes too, would have to be dealt with strictly and urgently. Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya gave several speeches denouncing prostitution as a practice that undermined the morals of the nation. These were met with enthusiasm by feminist authors who published thunderous articles in journals denouncing prostitution as a “despicable display of women and womanhood on commercial markets” and censuring pimps as “honor merchants”. “Getting rid of the brothels”, the articles would typically argue, was “a measure accepted by democracies and the system of civilized nations”. Most of all, prostitution was deemed unworthy of the “Turkish woman” and Şükrü Kaya was commended for his struggle against prostitution and the human trafficking of women.⁷³⁸ However, there is no evidence to suggest that the authorities succeeded in shutting down Patron Fexo’s brothel, perhaps because of its popularity among the Diyarbakir men.

The medical incursions were not limited to Diyarbakir city. The countryside, too, was tackled by doctors who visited villages and made house calls. Young idealistic doctors such as Dr. Bedri Noyan and Dr. Muharrem Hekimoğlu, for example, visited the villages of Diyarbakir plain and distributed quinine and other medicine. House calls were made on the sick to make sure they would take their medicaments.⁷³⁹ The modernization of rural Diyarbakir was a priority for the regime’s social engineers. The Interior Ministry had a questionnaire prepared, titled “General Research Questions About Villages”. The form revolved around questions regarding hygiene and was taken by officials to the countryside to function as a measuring instrument for the “modernity” of Turkey’s villages. Some of the questions were: “How are people buried?”, “Who is responsible for health matters, such as toilets?”, and “How is the water management in the village?”⁷⁴⁰

One of the chronic problems underlying many of the health troubles in Diyarbakir city was indeed water. The sewer system of Diyarbakir was an old but refined network of cisterns and drainages that regulated the aquatic infrastructure of the city. Water was tapped from springs and the Tigris, flowing east along the city, and directed into the city from the north, circulating in town, and leaving the city from the south through what the locals call “the forbidden stream” (*haram su*). This system functioned according to a certain logic: even if the water became polluted during epidemics, it affected the health of the cityfolk only temporarily

⁷³⁷ *Cumhuriyetin 15inci yılında Diyarbakır*, p.57 ff.

⁷³⁸ Sabiha Zekeriya, “Fuhuş ile mücadele ne demektir?” in: *Resimli Ay Mecmuası*, vol.11, no.47 (January 1928), pp.1-2.

⁷³⁹ *Diyarbakır*, 18 August 1943.

⁷⁴⁰ *Köyler Hakkında Umûmi Tedkik Sualleri* (Bursa: Vilayet Matbaası, 1925).

due to the swift circulation.⁷⁴¹ But for the Young Turks, a ‘scientific city’ needed ‘scientific infrastructure’, i.e. a tap water network with a massive infrastructure of piping, pumps, and water purification works. The availability of clean tap water was expected to bring major public health benefits. Thus, the First Inspectorate-General began constructing waterworks, starting in Diyarbakir city and branching out to other provincial centers and larger towns.⁷⁴² British officials noted that “the mayor, Dr. Guffur Bey, is enthusiastic for the welfare of his native town. As a doctor, he is particularly proud of having rendered the water supply healthy and abundant.”⁷⁴³ Before the Young Turk campaign, there was no metal piping involved in Diyarbakir’s water system, but the mayor equipped the system with modern metal pipes that were easier to inspect and clean.⁷⁴⁴ The waterworks tallied with the very *raison d’être* of the Inspectorate. European-style waterworks and a sewerage system were tokens of “civilization” and “modernity”.⁷⁴⁵

Again, the Young Turks governed against the grain by imposing their ideas on a population that did not always fully understand or appreciate them. The population perceived these health-care policies with mixed feelings: on the one hand they felt undermined in their conventional cultural traditions, while on the other hand they too saw the effectiveness of modern medicine. One good example of how the Young Turk biomedical vision intervened in the daily lives of the average people is methods of childbirth and rearing. The regime published their medical observations in the *Diyarbakir Journal of Medicine (Diyarbakir Tıb Mecmuası)* and imposed these research findings as absolute truths on the population. The regime believed it was waging war against the enemies of materialism, a war that was morally fully justified. The governorship defined these enemies as “those who rebel against science and materialism, lean on the Islamic resignation that Arabian dogmas inserted in us, and believe they can remedy every illness with prayers.”⁷⁴⁶ In certain respects, Young Turk propaganda about the campaign against “superstitions” contained more than a grain of truth. Gynaecologist Dr. Etem Seçkin of the Diyarbakir Model Hospital wrote articles in the local newspaper, discussing the supposed lack of hygiene, safety, and “method” in existing birth practices. With a denunciation that shows the imprint of an ethnically pro-natalist philosophy, he also condemned those women who practised self-abortion of unwanted children:

⁷⁴¹ İbrahim Halil, “Sıhhat Meseleleri: Şehrimizin Suları,” in: *Küçük Mecmua*, vol.8 (24 July 1922), pp.18-20.

⁷⁴² *BCA*, 030.10/69.455.16, First Inspector-General İbrahim Tali to Prime Minister İsmet İnönü, 19 January 1932.

⁷⁴³ *PRO*, FO 424/273, pp.6-21, no.61, Clerk to Henderson, 28 July 1931, “Report by Mr. Roberts and Mr. Ravensdale on a Tour in the Eastern Vilayets of Turkey.”

⁷⁴⁴ Bedri Günkut, *Diyarbakir Tarihi* (Diyarbakır: Diyarbakir Halkevi, 1937), p.26.

⁷⁴⁵ Basri Konyar, *Diyarbakir Tarihi* (Ankara: Ulus Basımevi, 1936), vol.3, p.265.

⁷⁴⁶ *Diyarbakire Bir Bakış* (Diyarbakır: Diyarbakir Basımevi, 1935), p.2.

Our newspaper is well informed about those who strangle their babies after giving birth, but these women will not go unpunished... ignorance and commitment to unfounded beliefs produces catastrophes. The nation does not expect murder from our women but reproduction and expansion of our race.⁷⁴⁷

The regime's medical policy intervened in how the population reared its own children. In the Diyarbekir countryside, women would coat their babies' buttocks with clay from the banks of the Tigris. This dry clay would soak up the urine and prevent the buttocks from becoming irritated by urine. The authorities prohibited this practice as "unscientific" and prescribed talcum powder and cotton diapers. The bulk of the women either never heeded this because of conservative obduracy or lack of money, or simply returned to their time-tested method of Tigris clay as soon as the inspectors left their village.⁷⁴⁸ Another example of this type of intervention regarded how mothers wrapped their babies. Traditionally, women in the region (and elsewhere) would wrap their babies tightly in cotton cloth to prevent them from flinching awake from a dream. This tradition of wrapping babies tightly in white cloth developed out of trial-and-error and was established local knowledge in the countryside. But when the modern medical research of the interbellum asserted that wrapping was detrimental to the child's health (a diagnosis now refuted), it prompted the Kemalists to take measures. Doctors, occasionally accompanied by gendarmes, roamed the countryside, inspecting whether people were wrapping their babies. In a sense, these interventions were not so much about the wrapping itself but came to stand as symbol for the regime's rigid understanding of "modernity". Might makes right, and their truth was not negotiable to coexist with "superstition". These policies, in a nutshell, epitomized totalitarian high-modernist thinking among political elites set out completely to re-engineer their societies, from urban design to baby urine.

A balance sheet of Young Turk urban policies presents a predictable sketch of truths and semi-truths mixed with euphoric rhetoric and propaganda. One journalist of the Young Turk newspaper *Ulus* accompanied İnönü in his two trips to Diyarbekir in 1932 and 1935, and hailed Diyarbekir as the textbook case of a "civilized" high-modernist city: "In Diyarbakır, there are nice cinemas, gathering places with broad salons, tastefully furnished shopwindows that reminds one of the markets of Ankara and Istanbul. Dress and appearance are civilized,

⁷⁴⁷ Etem Seçkin, "Çocuk Düşürme," in: *Diyarbakır*, 21 and 23 July 1943.

⁷⁴⁸ Sıdıka Avar, *Dağ Çiçeklerim (Anılar)* (Ankara: Öğretmen, 1986), pp.372-3. Interview conducted with A.T., in Diyarbekir city, July 2004.

not savage like in some places very close to our southern borders.”⁷⁴⁹ Regarding health care too, the results were believed to have been generally excellent. The governorship wrote: “Eternal contagious diseases of Diyarbekir such as malaria, typhoid, trachoma have decreased by 80%, so the new generation can be raised with a firmness that can give us confidence.”⁷⁵⁰ Other regime propagandists wrote, “Until very recently, the East meant exile, deprivation, scarcity, and neglect. Is everything rosy now? No! But, for a few years now developing the eastern provinces, putting them in a prosperous state, has been dealt with like a mission. It is not at all possible to compare Diyarbekir with the other provinces.”⁷⁵¹

In the Young Turk mind, the contrast they saw between east and west was becoming more and more indistinct: “Diyarbakır, considering its historical panorama and its present modernity is in a developed state and can be compared to many Western Anatolian cities. Within the city walls, the buildings are made higher. Outside the city walls, there is a sort of ‘New City’.”⁷⁵² This jubilation was an overhasty conclusion. The new city may have boasted shiny buildings interconnected by tree-lined boulevards at right angles, and bureaucrats and technocrats may have lived their own lives close to work in newly erected apartments. But by the end of Young Turk rule, there were still two cities: *Diyarbekir*, the old Ottoman walled city representing the past, and *Diyarbakır*, the new Turkish city representing the future. Ottoman Diyarbekir had not fully been transformed into Turkish Diyarbakır, but had gained a Siamese twin, coexisting in an uneasy symbiosis. This hardly bothered Young Turk city planners, who, aware of Mussolini’s utopias of urban design, ultimately boasted, “The Turkish nation has accomplished a revolution much higher and larger than the so-called revolution by the Fascist Roman regime movement.”⁷⁵³ But the population never mustered much sympathy for the Young Turk urban “revolution”. Well after the end of Young Turk rule, perhaps up to this day, their legacy of destructive total planning sparked bitter dispute among townsmen and administrators in Diyarbekir city.

⁷⁴⁹ Cahit Beğenç, *Diyarbakır ve Raman* (Ankara: Ulus, 1949), p.7.

⁷⁵⁰ *Diyarbakıre Bir Bakış* (Diyarbakır: Diyarbekir Basımevi, 1935), p.2.

⁷⁵¹ Beğenç, *Diyarbakır*, p.19.

⁷⁵² *Ibid.*, p.19.

⁷⁵³ Yeşilkaya, *Halkevleri*, p.124.



Photo 20: A bird's eye view of the old and the new Diyarbakir, 1930s (Republican Archives)

Civilizing the countryside

While Diyarbakir city became the object of high-modernist city planning, the countryside too was planned to be subjected to a 'civilizing process'. The postwar chaos and statelessness in the countryside had to be overcome to lay the foundations for a sustained pacification of the region. The regime's attempts to "modernize" the countryside's infrastructure were thwarted by the virtual absence of a state monopoly of violence in certain parts of Eastern Turkey. The authorities, national and local, felt frustrated by the weak grasp they had on the monopoly of violence in many rural and mountainous areas. Many armed groups roamed the countryside, which made travel through the region dangerous during daytime and simply heroic at night. The government therefore initiated a strict policy of disarmament and pacification and mandated the Inspectorate-General in Diyarbakir city to execute this policy. Again, the lines of influence and command would exclusively run from the center to the periphery as the provincial authorities in Diyarbakir were to dominate and colonize the hinterland. The

pacification campaign was a case of the pendulum that swung back: whereas the first Young Turk regime had depacified the eastern provinces by arming tens of thousands of people on the eve of the First World War, the second Young Turk regime inherited the task of repacifying the region by disarming everyone.

The Young Turk disarmament campaign illustrates pacification and the state's claim on and seizure of the monopoly of violence as a key component of state formation. The disarmament campaign was a continuous process, perhaps a 'long war' that was accelerated by the 1925 Sheikh Said conflict (see next chapter). On 13 June 1925 Army Headquarters issued the following general decree: "The first objective by the government, which is determined to make radical reforms in the East, is to collect the weapons in possession of the population. Even if it is a gradual process, this job can certainly not be neglected."⁷⁵⁴ A month later, an additional decree ordered that, specifically, ethnic Kurds were to be fully disarmed, since "they smuggled guns across the national borders."⁷⁵⁵ For the more pronounced and elaborate policies, again Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya was summoned. In one of his speeches in parliament, Kaya retrospected the development by firmly establishing that "our forces, who have crushed and annihilated the rebels and bandits in the east and certain provinces yesterday, are today the agents of safety, security, and peace". He continued to explain that "like all our other measures, this is an public expression of force. Whatever it costs for the strength of the Turkish state, it will render dominant the rule of law in our eastern provinces; our force suffices to render dominant the law."⁷⁵⁶ The Interior Minister later wrote to the Prime Minister that the best way "to take measures that will quickly get rid of incidents of banditry" was to "regionally collect weapons".⁷⁵⁷ The disarmament campaign was no secret to the outside world. In November 1930 Aras remarked in Geneva that "the policy of the Turkish government towards the Kurdish question consists for the moment of a military occupation to guarantee order, and the complete and absolute disarmament of the population."⁷⁵⁸

In Diyarbakir, the Inspector-General was nothing short of almighty in his jurisdiction. He had the authority to hire, fire, and summon all civil, gendarme, police, and army forces under his command. At this point of state formation, there was little functional differentiation as functions which later became separated and are nowadays regarded as incompatible were

⁷⁵⁴ *Genelkurmay Belgelerinde Kürt İsyanları*, p.197.

⁷⁵⁵ *BCA*, 030.18.01.01/14.48.5, Prime Ministerial decree, 29 July 1925.

⁷⁵⁶ Ergüven, *Şükrü Kaya*, pp.7-8.

⁷⁵⁷ Koçak, *Umûmi Müfettişlikler*, p.100.

⁷⁵⁸ *PRO*, FO 371/14578/E?, Drummond (Geneva) to Cadogan (London), 18 November 1930, "Note sur un Entretien avec S.E. Tewfik Rouschdy Bey".

united in one office, even a single person. The Inspectorate-General represented administration, jurisdiction, regulation, enforcement, and arbitration. At the establishment of the Inspectorate, the responsible officials repeatedly recognized that “the real reason for the establishment [of the Inspectorate-General] was maintaining security and order”.⁷⁵⁹ The Inspector himself frequently reported to Ankara on matters of public order, saliently not to the Interior Ministry but directly to the Prime Minister’s Office. Before 1932, disarmament was an incidental rather than systematic affair. Gendarmes would raid a village or town, such as Mazıdağı in the night of 8 to 9 October 1931, yielding 700 rifles and 200 draft dodgers.⁷⁶⁰ The campaign entered a new phase in April 1932, when a Five-Year Program for Security and Disarmament in the First Inspectorate-General region was launched. According to a memorandum written by Şükrü Kaya, “the program aims to discipline the eastern region” by “collecting arms that are the prime factor of unrest”.⁷⁶¹ The Interior Minister would collaborate with the army, and funds were requested for a large military operation aimed at disarming the entire province of Diyarbekir.⁷⁶² The army was heavily involved in the campaign. In several decrees, the Seventh Army Corps was summoned for the disarmament of all of Diyarbekir and Mardin provinces because of the expectation that the operations would bear “the character of combat and skirmishes”.⁷⁶³

The army, Interior Ministry and Inspectorate-General joined forces and allocated 15,000 Lira for the campaign. By the summer of 1932, Inspector-General İbrahim Tali could already report to his superiors that 4050 weapons had been confiscated to date. Tali specified that “90% of these are first-class weapons of war” and that they were gathered from both sedentary and nomadic tribes, such as the Karakeçi tribe in western Diyarbekir. He promised to extend the campaign on a west-to-east axis towards the more discordant mountains of Sason and valley of Xerzan. According to Tali, this was an essential part of the process in itself but was also necessary to track down those who had fled the operations. Villagers often gave their best horses to these fugitives, who were followed by mobile units following hard on their heels.⁷⁶⁴ By September 1932, the Interior Ministry declared that the disarmament of the towns of Derik, Viranşehir, and Siverek, and the direct vicinity of Diyarbekir city had been completed within two months. Any leftover arms would be pursued by small mobile

⁷⁵⁹ Koçak, *Umûmi Müfettişlikler*, p.79.

⁷⁶⁰ *BCA*, 030.10/35.359.8, Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya to Prime Minister İsmet İnönü, 24 November 1931.

⁷⁶¹ *BCA*, 030.10/54.359.5, Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya to Prime Minister İsmet İnönü, 30 April 1932.

⁷⁶² *BCA*, 030.10/54.359.5, Chief of Staff Fevzi Çakmak to Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya, 14 April 1932.

⁷⁶³ *BCA*, 030.18.01.02/37.41.11, Cabinet decree, 13 May 1933.

⁷⁶⁴ *BCA*, 030.10/54.359.11, Inspector-General İbrahim Tali to Prime Minister İsmet İnönü, 20 August 1932.

gendarme units. The total yield was one machine gun and 5707 rifles on 6 September,⁷⁶⁵ and on 17 September 5975 and counting.⁷⁶⁶ İbrahim Tali wrote a more detailed report, announcing the eastward expansion of the disarmament campaign. The 1st and 18th Regiments of the Seventh Army Corps' Second Division would launch the operation on Mutki and Sason on 8 September 1932 in tandem with the 10th Mobile Gendarme Battalion. All villages would be raided and all unconcealed and hidden arms would be confiscated. Particular attention was given to the areas under tribal domination, such as the Raman, Reşkotan, Şixolî, Sînikan tribes in the Xerzan region.⁷⁶⁷

The pacification of the countryside was a risky but effective process in the easily controlled valleys. For Young Turk officials it was a pleasure to report these successes. Şükrü Kaya accounted for the numbers with great precision. For the village of Sam, for example, he reported the number of confiscations every few days:

28 September	125 rifles, 363 cartridges ⁷⁶⁸
4 October	171 rifles, 514 cartridges ⁷⁶⁹
9 October	178 rifles, 514 cartridges ⁷⁷⁰
11 October	299 rifles, 770 cartridges ⁷⁷¹

In eastern Diyarbekir, those who fled with a rifle or opened fire on soldiers were punished severely: 12 people had been killed and 10 houses were burnt. In the reports one can read that the disarmament policies pressured the population to the degree that it opened windows of opportunity for settling old and new scores. Kaya expressed satisfaction at the fact that villagers and competing tribes had informed on each other, betraying each other's weapon depots.⁷⁷² This development suggests that Young Turk coercion and violence was fostering a culture of denunciations and informers and weakening trust and social cohesion in the eastern provinces.

By the autumn of 1932, the campaign was gradually expanding to troublesome eastern Diyarbekir. The army and gendarmerie forayed into the countryside with a broad mandate, producing high levels of violence against combatants and non-combatants. Prime Minister İnönü closely followed the campaign at that point, requesting to be kept frequently informed

⁷⁶⁵ *BCA*, 030.10/54.359.14, Interior Ministry to Prime Ministry, 6 September 1932.

⁷⁶⁶ *BCA*, 030.10/54.359.14, Inspector-General İbrahim Tali to Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya, 17 September 1932.

⁷⁶⁷ *BCA*, 030.10/54.359.14, Inspector-General İbrahim Tali to Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya, 10 September 1932.

⁷⁶⁸ *BCA*, 030.10/54.359.14, Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya to Prime Minister İsmet İnönü, 28 September 1932.

⁷⁶⁹ *BCA*, 030.10/54.359.14, Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya to Prime Minister İsmet İnönü, 4 October 1932.

⁷⁷⁰ *BCA*, 030.10/54.359.14, Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya to Prime Minister İsmet İnönü, 9 October 1932.

⁷⁷¹ *BCA*, 030.10/54.359.14, Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya to Prime Minister İsmet İnönü, 11 October 1932.

⁷⁷² *BCA*, 030.10/54.359.14, Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya to Prime Minister İsmet İnönü, 9 October 1932.

on its progress.⁷⁷³ Tali immediately reported back that the operation had reached eastern Diyarbekir at Mutki on 8 September 1932, Sason in early October, and Beşiri and Xerzan on 27 October 1932. At that point, 1633 weapons and 2175 cartridges had been confiscated in these regions by the Seventh Army Corps. Anyone who had sheltered “bands” was arrested, several “robbers” and “gangs” were annihilated, and “other bandits were captured dead”. Some of the district towns had now been “brought into a condition permitting all kinds of discipline resulting from state influence and the strength and justice of the Republican regime has manifested itself among the people.” Tali also had more than 400 Kurds deported from the region to Thrace for “opposing government orders”.⁷⁷⁴

The campaign yielded an unprecedented number of weapons in eastern Diyarbekir. On 15 November 1932, only two weeks after the campaign had reached the Xerzan area, Şükrü Kaya reported to İsmet İnönü that a total of 2335 rifles, 2175 cartridges, 68 pistols, 5 machine guns, and 26 bombs had been confiscated.⁷⁷⁵ Officials were shocked at this huge haul, which proved that certain Kurdish tribes were armed to the teeth and could operate like small armies. Therefore, Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya proposed a policy of pre-emptive personal search. On 29 December 1932, he wrote to İnönü: “In order to prevent murder, wounding, and larceny in many places, suspicious and recidivist persons without an occupation and a particular residence need to be searched in places where they gather.” Kaya added a table, broken down by region (West, Central, and East), summing up all weapons confiscated in the entire country in the past six months, i.e. July-December 1932. The figures are much more complete for the Western and Central Anatolian regions than for the East, with its inaccessible corners – such as Dersim, Sason, or Hakkari, all unregistered in the list. According to the table, the arms collected in the First Inspectorate-General region alone amounted to more than all of the rest of Turkey combined.⁷⁷⁶ And the disarming continued. In 1934, the campaign spread northwards in two phases: 1400 weapons were confiscated in the first phase, 3055 in the second. According to a report written by Inspector-General Hilmi Ergeneli, most of these weapons had been in the hands of Kurdish tribes, such as the Zirkî in northern Diyarbekir. Gendarmes sufficed for combing most of the valleys, although for the mountainous areas the army had to be deployed. In the year 1934, a total of 5326 weapons were gathered.⁷⁷⁷ By the early winter of 1932, Tali wrote to İnönü and declared the disarmament operation “a veritable

⁷⁷³ *BCA*, 030.10/54.359.14, Prime Minister İsmet İnönü to Inspector-General İbrahim Tali, 13 November 1932.

⁷⁷⁴ *BCA*, 030.10/54.359.14, Inspector-General İbrahim Tali to Prime Minister İsmet İnönü, 16 November 1932.

⁷⁷⁵ *BCA*, 030.10/54.359.14, Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya to Prime Minister İsmet İnönü, 15 November 1932.

⁷⁷⁶ *BCA*, 030.10/54.360.1, Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya to Prime Minister İsmet İnönü, 29 December 1932.

⁷⁷⁷ The report is quoted in: Hüseyin Koca, *Yakın Tarihten Günümüze Hükümetlerin Doğu-Güneydoğu Anadolu Politikaları: Umumi Müfettişliklerden Olağanüstü Hal Bölge Valiliğine* (Konya: Mikro, 1998), pp.387-8.

success” and predicted that it would be brought to a successful conclusion within two years, “mainly due to the interest shown by your Excellency”.⁷⁷⁸ But new developments would prove he had cheered too soon.

As effortless as the disarmament campaign seemed on paper, problems soon arose in its practical implementation. In one of his reports, Inspector-General İbrahim Tali complained that gendarmes who were stationed in Diyarbekir province for more than three years “had given up hope of being transferred, were exhausted and burned out from working six to seven years in severe conditions” and therefore “did not embrace their duties with the necessary seriousness.” Tali continued to explain that “a part of them got married to local girls and instrumentalized their official capacity for the sake of family and tribal interests, causing the occurrence of important incidents.” Tali requested that from then on, gendarmes should not stay more than three years in the region.⁷⁷⁹ Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya, too, noted in one of his reports that many lower-ranking bureaucrats such as guards and village headmen “were distantly or closely related to a lord or a tribal chieftain.” These primordial bonds were risky and detrimental to government rule, and therefore he argued that locals (i.e. Kurds) had to be pre-emptively barred from the state bureaucracy.⁷⁸⁰ This was another potential pitfall of imposed state formation: for many families at the local level, the state could become an object of ambition and contestation for the sake of political influence. Such a constellation of national and local powerholders could tarnish the independence and autonomy of local government.

Another problem was smuggling: no matter how many weapons the Young Turk regime continued to confiscate on their side of the border, due to the absence of a patrolled boundary with designated crossing points to restrict or limit the movement of people (and weapons) into or out of the country, Kurds could easily cross into Syria, buy weapons and return to Diyarbekir. When the Interior Ministry found out smuggling was practised on a massive scale and caused the relative inefficacy of the disarmament campaign, Şükrü Kaya furiously reported to the Prime Minister’s Office that pacification needed to be accelerated, accusing the French authorities in Syria of allowing and even supporting armed “bands” (*çeteler*). Kaya did not just point out the problem, he also diagnosed what he saw as the underlying reasons: “the unity of language, character, and feeling of the people on either side of the Syrian border.” He obviously meant that the Turkish-Syrian border cut through areas

⁷⁷⁸ *BCA*, 030.10/54.359.14, Inspector-General İbrahim Tali Öngören to Prime Minister İsmet İnönü, 29 November 1932.

⁷⁷⁹ *BCA*, 030.10/69.454.36, Inspector-General İbrahim Tali Öngören to Prime Minister İsmet İnönü, 4 January 1930.

⁷⁸⁰ *BCA*, 030.10/128.923.9, Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya to Prime Ministry, 15 March 1937.

where large extended families and tribes were living, so that smuggling and mutual support in times of stress became more or less inevitable. Kaya then identified some of the elites involved with these smuggling networks.⁷⁸¹ In an indirect way, such a conception of loyalty to the government came close to the equation of ethnicity with loyalty: Kurds living in the border regions were not to be trusted for state offices. The disarmament also elicited various forms of subtle resistance: besides fear of the government, the campaign was also a breach of the rural culture of bearing arms as a sign of masculinity. Rural culture in Diyarbakir was defined by a patriarchal martial ethos, and as such shaped the attitudes of boys socialized in that culture. A man was supposed to be able to wield a dagger, swing a club, and handle a gun. The disarmament campaign was therefore a direct blow to Kurdish masculine identity.⁷⁸² Then again, the village tradition of hunting pheasants for sport and food came to a halt with the disarmament campaign. If “panem et circenses” had been Caesar’s political formula for keeping the population content, by disarming the eastern countryside the Young Turks had taken both sources of contentment away. Although important issues such as nepotism, smuggling, and tradition disturbed and ultimately delayed the pacification campaign, truly critical problems would arise when marginalized groups began resisting the disarmament policies with violence.

The Young Turk conquest of Ottoman political culture since the 1913 *coup d'état* had marginalized scores of dissenting politicians and leaders, a diverse group of people that was excluded from participation in the political spectrum, such as in parliament or local power circles. Some of these frustrated men and women left Turkey voluntarily, some were expelled (such as “the 150s”),⁷⁸³ while others stayed put and lived their lives in the country. Among these were many disgruntled Kurdish tribesmen, who considered the Young Turk regime oppressive and therefore illegitimate, and were convinced they could resist it only with violence. In its turn, the regime too responded with violence. In Young Turk jargon these people were systematically dehumanized⁷⁸⁴ as “bandits” (*şaki*), “villains” (*câni*), “thugs”

⁷⁸¹ *BCA*, 030.10/128.923.9, Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya to Prime Ministry, 15 March 1937. Koca, *Yakın*, p.388 ff.

⁷⁸² Mustafa Kemal Mirzeler, “The Formation of Male Identity and the Roots of Violence against Women: The Case of Kurdish Songs, Stories and Storytellers,” in: *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol.20, no.2 (2000), pp.261-69.

⁷⁸³ At the Conference of Lausanne (November 1922 - July 1923), the Young Turk elite presented a list of 600 names of people who were to be declared *persona non grata*. By the time this measure was put into effect by the Grand National Assembly on 23 April 1924, the list was reduced to 150 of the most ardent oppositionists. The list had the purpose of eliminating any (liberal, conservative, religious, ethnic) opposition against Young Turk hegemony from the country. İlhami Soysal, *Yüzellilikler* (Istanbul: Gür, 1985).

⁷⁸⁴ According to one expert, during wars, “the term is usually sought out by insurgents in search of legitimacy, and denied by incumbents who label their opponents “bad guys”, bandits, criminals, subversives, or terrorists – and describe the war as banditry, terrorism, delinquent subversion, and other cognate terms.” Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.17. During their occupation of the Soviet Union, the Nazis used similar language: the term “partisan” was to be replaced by “bandit”, they argued, “for psychological reasons”. Accordingly, antipartisan operations were to be called “antibandit warfare” and areas of suspected partisan presence were referred to as

(*haydut*), or “bands” (*çete*), to be dealt with only through “destruction” (*imha*). For example, in 1932, when Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya evaluated the clashes in parliament, he mentioned that “Blind Şemo of the Sait Aziz band, Deli Fettah of the Diyarbekir band, Zazo, Hüseyin, Somaki İsmail and many others... 67 of these have been destroyed this year. There are still two bands that have not been destroyed yet. After they have been destroyed, the issue of public security in the east will have assumed a normal condition.”⁷⁸⁵ These Kurds were not the only ones excluded from political decision-making processes. Many people, who, under different conditions, would not necessarily coalesce, came together to oppose their common enemy, the Young Turk regime. This way, Armenian and Syriac survivors from Diyarbekir province and Kurdish tribal elites became rather unlikely bedfellows throughout the Young Turk era. Kurds from the large village of Awina, for example, had been resisting the Young Turk regime since 1913 and more specifically since World War I. They rescued and sheltered Armenians simply because such acts would put them in a state of confrontation with the regime.⁷⁸⁶ The resistance by this type of nonconformist outlaws erupted from time to time in skirmishes and armed robberies.

On 15 March 1937, at 10:30 in the morning fourteen men on horseback robbed a post chaise carrying a group of travelers and shot two of them near the village of Karaköprü, just outside Diyarbekir city on the road to Mardin. The perpetrators were led by the Kurdish activist Cemilpaşazâde Mehmet, while the victims included Diyarbekir’s public prosecutor, two gendarme officers, one gendarme, and a doctor. The robbers took off with all their belongings and the contents of the post carriage and disappeared without a trace. When the news reached Ankara, it shook the Interior Ministry. The furious Şükrü Kaya gave a thunderous speech explaining the significance of the incident: “The reason why special importance needs to be assigned to the Karaköprü robbery is that the band could approach Diyarbekir as close as 15 kilometres, commit the robbery on a busy main road for the duration of seven hours with nobody hearing or seeing it, and return on the same road they arrived from, without getting caught.” The hold-up was a humiliation for the regime, because the authors of the event proved they could provoke the regime on their own turf and demonstrate its relative powerlessness. But the audacious event was also a jeer at the disarmament campaign, an act of resistance and contempt. For Interior Minister Kaya it was a double

areas “contaminated with bandit groups”. Hannes Heer, “The Logic of the War of Extermination: The Wehrmacht and the Anti-Partisan War,” in: Hannes Heer & Klaus Naumann (eds.), *War of Extermination: The German Military in World War II, 1941-1944* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000), pp.92-126, at p.113.

⁷⁸⁵ Ergüven, *Şükrü Kaya*, p.111.

⁷⁸⁶ See the family memoir written by a grandson of one of the Awina chieftains: Ramazan Ergin, *Awina ya da Kanın Gizli Tarihi: Reşo Kuri* (Istanbul: Do, 2007).

humiliation after the many euphoric reports he had written about the successes of disarmament and its positive effect on public order and security.⁷⁸⁷ The countermeasures, more militarization and more reinforcement of mobile gendarme units, were therefore the harsher. Kaya proposed to set up a special gendarmerie unit with expanded, nearly unlimited jurisdiction and authority to be mobile and use violence, the equivalent of a modern paramilitary unit. He urged closer collaboration between the army and the Inspectorate, and intended to establish a triangle from Derik to Diyarbekir to Viranşehir, a large batch of territory (about 70 x 90 km²) sealed off and securitized to prevent these types of events from recurring. Moreover, he suggested involving the population with the government's policies, for such collaboration would increase policy effectivity.⁷⁸⁸ The closer collaboration with the army was immediately effectuated and Chief of Staff Fevzi Çakmak (1876-1950) held a meeting with the Inspectorate-General in Diyarbekir. Çakmak's report to the Prime Minister's Office saw at least two policy shifts: first, besides the outlaws themselves, those who sheltered them would also be treated as outlaws, and second, those who resisted the security forces even non-violently would be "annihilated".⁷⁸⁹ And another wave of violence engulfed the countryside.



Photo 21: Chief of Staff Fevzi Çakmak (center) inspecting the army in Diyarbekir (Birinci Genel Müfettişlik, 1939)

⁷⁸⁷ By the summer of 1937, the Inspector-General reported a clear improvement in the pacification process: "In matters of public security there is a clear improvement compared to previous years; both the number of incidents and their severity have declined." Such an account of the pacification campaign in the wake of the Karaköprü incident was either a misrepresentation of the truth (typical of how many Young Turk officials corresponded to impress and satisfy their superiors) or a trivialization of the Karaköprü robbery. *BCA*, 030.10/70.461.1, Inspector-General Abidin Özmen to Prime Ministry, 24 August 1937.

⁷⁸⁸ *BCA*, 030.10/128.923.9, Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya to Prime Ministry, 15 March 1937.

⁷⁸⁹ *BCA*, 030.10/54.360.14, Chief of Staff Fevzi Çakmak to Prime Ministry, 3 September 1938.

How did society respond to these policies? These bland state reports do not always capture the societal changes that were taking place in the East's countryside in the interwar period. Due to the lack of written sources and memoirs by ordinary locals, one has to turn to oral tradition for descriptions of how the "pacification" was experienced by the population. The disarmament campaign brought about profound changes in Diyarbekir and is richly and colorfully documented in the social memory of the rural population. These vivid narratives have been part of the oral tradition of Diyarbekir for decades. Three particularly telling folk tales about the pacification process are circulated by word of mouth among the common villagers even today – information that cannot be found in archives and official sources. They demonstrate the subtle ways of popular resistance to state formation in the eastern provinces, as well as the social function of anecdotes, humor and lore in dictatorial societies.

The story of the Diyarbekir villager who was arrested for a murder he never committed clarifies how the existing culture of martialism was subjected to heavy government pressure and outlawed. A villager was travelling on horseback to another village when he saw a dead man laying by the roadside. The man stopped, stared at the corpse, looked around and galloped to the next village. On arrival, he stalled his horse at the inn and walked in for a cup of tea. The locals were seated, drinking tea, smoking tobacco, playing backgammon, and telling each other anecdotes, often steeped in bravado. To attract attention and admiration from his peers, in a pretence of courage the man bragged he had just killed someone who had disrespected him, challenging disbelievers to walk up the road and see for themselves. But his exercise in fanfare backfired as someone at the inn called the gendarmerie, who arrested and incarcerated the man. Since he had already 'confessed' to dozens of 'witnesses' at the inn he was responsible for the killing, the unlucky man was sentenced to a heavy prison sentence.⁷⁹⁰ The story served as a warning to others that the exercise of private violence was something of the past.

A second anecdote is about a gendarme battalion that raided a village in the countryside of Lice, notorious for smuggling arms from and to Syria. The commander had the village searched from end to end, but was never able to find anything. He then decided to set up camp in the village to monitor closely the influx and outflux of people. Despite close surveillance, his troops never saw any weapons being transported or noticed anything suspicious in the village. He just found it rather awkward that disproportionately many people were dying in the small village – on some days he witnessed two or three funerals. After some

⁷⁹⁰ Interview conducted with Kenan Y. in Berlin, 14 January 2005.

time, he still received reports from army headquarters in Diyarbekir that during nighttime smuggling operations, men from the village had been arrested at the Syrian border with loads of weapons. It took the commander quite some time to figure out that the coffins carried during the many funerals contained not dead relatives but weapons. The villagers smuggled the weapons in the coffins from Syria into the village and stored them in the cemetery.⁷⁹¹

The story of a young notorious Diyarbekir recidivist who had the dubious reputation of always being arrested for criminal possession of a weapon is a widespread anecdote of popular resistance against this aspect of state formation. In the period of mass searches, one day the man was strolling down the main street in Diyarbekir city when a police officer wanted to search him for concealed weapons. “Officer, I am absolutely clean I’m telling you!” the roughneck stated firmly. “No, you’re always up to something,” replied the officer, “I will have to frisk you.” The thug now begged him emphatically: “But really officer I swear I am unarmed, I haven’t touched a weapon in years!” But the inexorable policeman searched him, found a huge dagger tucked into his vest, and smirked, “You had nothing, you said?” whereupon the thug answered: “What, we can’t peel apples anymore?”⁷⁹²

Whether these stories are authentic testimonies, urban myths, or simply ironic cautionary tales is of secondary relevance. The very existence of multitudes of anecdotes such as these signify the social process of ongoing pacification and societal reaction. These anecdotes also had social functions. According to one scholar, political humor,

with its comic permissiveness toward taboo violations... can be resorted to as disguised aggression against moral and religious pretensions in politics. Moreover, comic blasphemy often makes the assumed moral superiority of some political pretender the target for ridicule. Thereby, impiety becomes allied with the leveling urge of the people and their repressed aggressions against all authority.⁷⁹³

These examples from the oral tradition also illustrate how processes of state formation were changing popular attitudes towards private violence. That this attitudinal change was being generated by a dictatorship that was massively deploying high levels of violence itself was the “paradox of pacification”.⁷⁹⁴

⁷⁹¹ Interview conducted with Amed Tigrîs in Stockholm, 12 May 2005.

⁷⁹² Interview conducted with Y.T. in Diyarbekir, 2 July 2005.

⁷⁹³ Charles E. Schutz, *Political Humor: From Aristophanes to Sam Ervin* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1977), pp.43-44, quoted in: Robert W. Thurston, “Social Dimensions of Stalinist Rule: Humor and Terror in the USSR, 1935-1941,” in: *Journal of Social History*, vol.24, no.3 (1991), pp.541-62.

⁷⁹⁴ Johan Goudsblom, “De monopolisering van georganiseerd geweld,” in: *Sociologische Gids*, vol.48, no.4 (2001), pp.343-59.

Discussion

This chapter has addressed what can happen in a society after a genocidal process deeply disrupts the existing social arrangements. In the aftermath of the First World War, Diyarbekir became known in the Ottoman Empire as a city of orphans, converts, prostitutes, and bandits. These people had one crucial characteristic in common: they were all products or by-products of Young Turk persecution. The destruction of the Armenians produced orphans, converts, and prostitutes on the victim side, whereas many of the “bandits” were those militiamen and chieftains who had been armed by the CUP for the sake of perpetration.

A hitherto ignored or airbrushed aspect of the genocide was the world of these inhabitants of the urban demimonde, the habitually unemployed, the excommunicated, the petty criminals, the social bandits, the pimps and prostitutes at or beyond the margins of ‘respectable’ society. Within this pre-existing social environment lived classes of Kurds, Armenians, Turks, and Syrians whose contact with the authorities had already been minimal, and who therefore could offer those persecuted forms of protection in terms of the cover of the underworld they inhabited. Their aversion to authority and the state not only rendered them relatively unsusceptible to nationalist propaganda, but also allowed some degree of anonymity for Armenians and permitted a greater degree of association with them. That this social constellation produced ‘rescue’ from Young Turk persecution was a largely coincidental response of ordinary criminal strategies merely adapted to a changed set of circumstances.

In an essay titled “Stolen Children”, Gitta Sereny summarizes her work as a United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration official in the US occupation zone of Germany after 1945. She was assigned to retrieve children who had been abducted from occupied countries to Nazi Germany for the purpose of “Germanization”.⁷⁹⁵ In the essay she provides examples of children who were kidnapped at an age too young to remember their biological parents, and at the end of the war, when they had bonded with their new, German parents, were torn away to be returned to the biological ones. Sereny asks the question: “How could anyone think of ordering that children who had twice suffered the trauma of losing parents, home, and language, should, like so many packages, be transported overseas and dropped into yet other new and entirely strange environments?”, and finally answers it

⁷⁹⁵ See e.g.: Isabel Heinemann, “‘Until the Last Drop of Good Blood’: The Kidnapping of ‘Racially Valuable’ Children and Nazi Racial Policy in Occupied Eastern Europe,” in: A. Dirk Moses (ed.), *Genocide and Settler Society: Frontier Violence and Stolen Indigenous Children in Australian History* (New York, NY: Berghahn, 2004), pp.244-66.

herself: “I have not solved the question of what was the best solution for these children – and I don’t think that anyone can”.⁷⁹⁶ Some of the most of useful studies that tie in with Nazi practices of forced assimilation have been written by Australian scholars, obviously about the Aboriginal “stolen generations”.⁷⁹⁷ Many of them emphasize the problematic nature of approaching this thorny phenomenon. Analyses of these processes quickly turn politically prescriptive, devoted to the question of whether and how it was genocide, what to do with the children, or engaging in debates on which identity their ‘real’ one is. The discussions are often also normative, with at one essentialist end the assumption of a fixed nationhood, and at the other extreme the assumption of absolute fluidity and changeability of identity. Problematizing and psychologizing how these people, including the biological parents, experienced such a process of displacement and estrangement should gain precedence over identity politics in these debates.

During World War I, mass murder, deportation, and forced assimilation were three faces of the same destruction process organized by the Young Turk regime. All of these three vectors of violence pointed towards one objective: the demographic disappearance of the Ottoman Armenian community, especially from the Ottoman heartland and the eastern provinces. Whereas Armenian men were massacred, Armenian women were deported and absorbed into Muslim households.⁷⁹⁸ Armenian children became specific objects of population policy as well. Those children who did not remember their biological parents became Turks and, given that they were not confronted with their past by outsiders, lived as Turkish Muslims ever after. But after a certain cut-off point such an identity change was no longer possible, and therefore many orphans who were kidnapped “too late” ended up in deep crisis with no prospect of therapy or return, and as a result, most of them languished in suffering. The troubling legacy of being an Armenian orphan suggests that aggressively assimilationist policies of integrating minority groups is most likely to fail, for two reasons. First, the failure was due not to resistance to the culture or language itself, but to resistance

⁷⁹⁶ Gitta Sereny, *The German Trauma: Experiences and Reflections, 1938-2000* (London: Allen Lane, 2000), pp.25-52.

⁷⁹⁷ Robert van Krieken, “The Barbarism of Civilization: Cultural Genocide and the ‘Stolen Generations’”, in: *British Journal of Sociology*, vol.50, no.2 (1999), pp.297-315; Id., “Rethinking Cultural Genocide: Indigenous Child Removal and Settler-colonial State-formation,” in: *Oceania*, vol.75, no.2 (2004), pp.125-51; Id., “The ‘Stolen Generations’: On the Removal of Australian Indigenous Children from their Families and its Implications for the Sociology of Childhood,” in: *Childhood*, vol.6, no.3 (1999), pp.297-311; Peter Read, *The Stolen Generations: The Removal of Aboriginal Children in New South Wales 1883 to 1969* (Sydney: Department of Aboriginal Affairs, New South Wales, 1981); Colin Tatz, *With Intent to Destroy: Reflecting on Genocide* (London: Verso, 2003), pp.88-94; Simone Gigliotti, “Unspeakable Pasts as Limit Events: The Holocaust, Genocide, and the Stolen Generations,” in: *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol.49, no.2 (2003), pp.164-81; Anne MacGillivray, “Therapies of Freedom: The Colonization of Aboriginal Childhood,” in: Anne MacGillivray (ed.), *Governing Childhood* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1997), pp.135-99.

⁷⁹⁸ Eliz Sanasarian, “Gender Distinction in the Genocidal Process: A Preliminary Study of the Armenian Case”, in: *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol.4, no.4 (1989), pp.449-61.

against the aggressive and violent methods. Second, after a certain age, the possibility of completely abandoning the cultural identity one was born into and of socialization into a new one becomes relatively limited.

To many Armenians the genocide came as yet another Ottoman pogrom. Little did they know about the true nature of the genocidal deportations once they were launched. But contrary to ultra-ethnic genocides, such as the Nazi or Rwandan ones, there were limited but real possibilities of ‘behavioral escape’ in the Armenian genocide – conversion being the main one. Escaping or being rescued was closely related to conversion, even though without help (from Muslims) those chances were still very slim. Many Armenian survivors migrated to Europe and North America. Although the first generations were often depressed and haunted by their past, many rebuilt their lives quite successfully in the New World. Those who remained behind in what the American immigrants called “the Old Country” were generally the converts. Resistance against conversion to the religion of the despised Other may have been typical and characteristic of the era and the region, but in the face of violence, even the most devout could reconsider their principles. No matter how fluid, hybrid, and entwined identities were in the peasant society that Eastern Turkey was (and is), a certain form of sectarian religious identity persisted, especially among nationalists and the more pious people. These subjective experiences of conversion to Islam clash with objective observations of it. Even though most deportees experienced conversion as a breach of moral and social codes as well as an infraction of their religious identity, the fact remained that their chances of survival were at their highest if they converted to Islam and lived inconspicuously, whether under Muslim domination or not. The Young Turks’ changing attitude towards the converts demonstrates that conversion did not obviate their suspicion. Rightly so perhaps, since it did not seem to warrant the converts’ loyalty to the government. Paradoxically, even though the CUP imposed forced conversion upon many Christians (Armenians and Syrians), it lacked the perceptiveness to take into consideration that, presumably because it only added to notions of secrecy and mythification, “forced conversion usually entails a stronger rejection and distrust of the convert group by the dominant society”.⁷⁹⁹ Consequently, one can see highly traumatic identities in the afterlife of converts, often expressing above-average piety to compensate for and mask the obvious lack of Islamic ‘pedigree’.⁸⁰⁰

⁷⁹⁹ Mercedes Garcia Arenal, “Conversion to Islam in the Mediterranean-Muslim World,” in: Randi Deguilhem (ed.), *Individual and Society in the Mediterranean-Muslim World: Issues and Sources* (Paris: European Science Foundation, 1998), p.15.

⁸⁰⁰ The story of Behçet Cantürk (1950-1994), one of Diyarbakir’s most notorious mafia bosses who was ultimately assassinated, is also the story of his mother Hatun Demirciyan, an Armenian woman from the northern Lice district. It is very

The case of Fethiye Çetin, a lawyer from a Muslim family in North Diyarbakir, is instructive. The memoir she wrote disclosed her Armenian grandmother's roots and offered a textbook example of conversion, rescue, and survival during the genocide. Çetin notes that her grandmother was saved because she accepted conversion. Muslim villagers were only interested in sheltering Armenian children who either had already converted, or were willing to convert.⁸⁰¹ In a later interview Çetin noted she lives in the twilight zone between Turkishness, Kurdishness, and Armenianness, in the margins of ethnicity and nationality. She also remembered that after having found out about her roots, she now understood why her grandmother used to bake a special sweet bread during spring with other women outside the family: they were female genocide survivors, celebrating Easter.⁸⁰² The converts were often supported in their solidarity: after the 1915 genocide it was common for Kurdish chieftains to invest effort in locating and finding Armenian converts, in the hope they could find spouses among each other and continue their custom of endogamy. For Kurds and Armenians alike, this represented the established tradition and securities of the *ancien régime*.

After the publication of Çetin's book in 2004, the fate of converts or so-called "crypto-Armenians" in Turkey became politicized even further. Both Armenian and Turkish nationalists compete for the loyalty of this group of people, that finds itself besieged by identity politics.⁸⁰³ Whereas the former wish to 'wake them up' from Islam and urge them to reclaim their dormant Armenian identity, the latter have intransigently declared that if they wish to 'return' to their Armenian roots, they are no longer welcome in Turkey.⁸⁰⁴ Ostensibly, 30,000 to 40,000 crypto-Armenians currently live in Turkey (around a thousand families in Diyarbakir province), with varying degrees of awareness of and interest in their past.⁸⁰⁵ Although most of them fear that exposure to society would make them vulnerable to nationalist pressures and threats, the internet has provided a convenient and most of all anonymous platform for assembling information and reaching out to family members abroad. On the website www.hyetert.com for example, aimed at the Armenian community of Istanbul, one can frequently observe messages like the following:

well possible that Cantürk supported the PKK and ASALA out of rebellion against a state which he perceived was the victimizer of his maternal family. Soner Yalçın, *Behçet Cantürk'ün Anıları* (Ankara: Öteki, 1996).

⁸⁰¹ Fethiye Çetin, *Anneannem* (Istanbul: Metis, 2004).

⁸⁰² Interview with Fethiye Çetin, published on: <http://www.frederike.nl/cgi-bin/scripts/db.cgi?&ID=403&ww=1&view_records=1>

⁸⁰³ Dorian Jones, "Armenian Quest for Lost Orphans," *BBC World Service*, 1 August 2005; "Ma grand-mère turque était arménienne," in: *Le Monde*, 26 February 2007.

⁸⁰⁴ The crypto-Armenians have even been openly threatened by the Turkish Historical Society, the Young Turk official organ for the production of nationalist historical narratives. The director of the Turkish Historical Society, Yusuf Halaçoğlu, went as far as implicitly threatening he had in his possession a "list" of names, "house by house", of crypto-Armenians living in Turkey, claiming he would not hesitate to "make it public". *Radikal*, 22 August 2007; *Zaman*, 25 August 2007.

⁸⁰⁵ *Milli Gazete*, 28 December 2005.

First of all I would like to convey you my greetings and respect. I have a request for you. Nigar Metin, born 1894, mother's name Hilito, father's name Casper, registered to Hizan district in Bitlis province is my grandmother. I just found these records. With your help I would like to reach my family members.

Haydar Y., 1 November 2005

I live in Mut district in Mersin province. My grandmother is also here. Her mother is an Armenian from Kayseri. Her name is Sofia and it is known she moved to Istanbul. Where can I find information about her?

Ulaş Ş., 3 October 2005

I am descended from our fellow Armenian citizens who used to live in the Niksar Cedid neighborhood in Tokat between 1900 and 1915 and have migrated elsewhere. My grandmother's name was Oski, her father's Mevzik, and her mother's Anna. My grandmother were 4 siblings. We don't know her sister's name. Her brothers were named Karapet and Murat. Unfortunately we don't know their last name. We know they were involved in trade and they owned a store with a depot. I would like to request anyone who is related to the above persons, or knows them, or has information to please write me an e-mail and contact me.

Nihat S.E., 15 February 2005 ⁸⁰⁶

Although generations have passed since the genocide, traumatic family memories seem to persist and apparently many of these people feel the need for filling in the gaps in their self-narrative.⁸⁰⁷ The most common interpretations of the forced assimilation of Armenian orphans, forced marriages of Armenian women, and forced conversion of Armenians in general have been Armenian-nationalist ones. The conversions and assimilations are seen as loss of identity and absorption into the Other's identity. But sociologically, they were constituent aspects of the genocide, aimed at the destruction of the most basic social ties of the victim group: family ties. They were also survival mechanisms: if one had to pretend to be a Muslim in exchange for one's life, the choice may not always have been unanimous, but was definitely made by many.

⁸⁰⁶ Erhan Başyurt, *Ermeni Evlatlıklar: Saklı Kalmış Hayatlar* (Istanbul: KaraKutu, 2006), pp.30-1.

⁸⁰⁷ Habermas argued that people "can develop personal identities only if they recognize that the sequences of their actions form narratively presentable life histories; they can develop social identities only if they recognize that they maintain their membership in social groups by way of participating in interactions, and thus that they are caught up in the narratively presentable histories of collectivities." Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), vol.2, *Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, p.136.

The Young Turk dictatorship wanted to bring “order” into the Diyarbekir world of orphans, converts, prostitutes, and bandits. The regime saw itself as a master gardener, bringing structure into the garden of society by organizing the diversity of plants and weeding out the “undesirables”. The regime was deeply influenced by a high-modernist philosophy, according to which the reorganization of space and population was a necessary passage to “modernity” and “civilization”. In their utopian ideology they were not alone. As one expert wrote, “civic leaders built to overcome collective inferiority complexes... in Europe, culminating in the 1930s, totalitarian dictators sought to impose megalomaniac visions of glory on their capitals.”⁸⁰⁸ This was an era in which Hitler planned a new Berlin dominated by a domed building so vast it would have had its own internal weather system (complete with clouds and rain), Stalin prophesied that his new, spartan Moscow would become a “scientific metropolis” radiating socialist realism, and Mussolini assaulted the very fabric of Rome, tearing down large parts of the medieval city to highlight ancient imperial Rome. At the same time, the Young Turk dictatorship was involved in similar projects to craft Turkey’s urban geography. The ‘restructuring’ of Diyarbekir city was but one, albeit instructive example of how architectural projects can be a way of analyzing the values and aspirations of the regime, paraphrased by James Scott as follows: “Technocracy, in this instance, is the belief that the human problem of urban design has a unique solution, which an expert can discover and execute. Deciding such technical matters by politics and bargaining would lead to the wrong solution. As there is a single, true answer to the problem of planning the modern city, no compromises are possible.”⁸⁰⁹

Truth is a key concept in this context. Like all high-modernist social engineers, the Young Turks demanded power in the name of their truths. The more utopian their high modernism, the more thoroughgoing their implied critique of the existing society. The relationship between ideology and power is symbiotic in the case of totalitarian urban planning: grand schemes such as the total reorganization of an entire city were only possible under a regime that would never be held accountable to the electorate. Diyarbekir’s cityfolk were never asked for their opinion before the restructuring, and were hardly allowed to provide any feedback afterwards. But the urban reorganization of Diyarbekir was not only a product of totalitarian power, but also of a nationalist and exclusivist nature. Urban planning could be compounded and complicated if the city ‘under construction’ was populated by

⁸⁰⁸ Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p.189.

⁸⁰⁹ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, p.113.

ethnic Others. Nazi urban planning for Warsaw foresaw the “Germanization” of urban space as much as the streamlining of the Polish capital according to the Nazi conception of esthetics.⁸¹⁰ Hence, destruction was a symbolic act that would wipe out the visibility of the Other.⁸¹¹ It is even possible to interpret the urban policies as memory politics: the historical imagination of the regime determined which aspects of a city’s history would be accentuated and which aspects silenced (see Chapter 7 on Memory). For the Young Turks, the urban landscape in Diyarbekir symbolized too much Ottoman, Kurdish, Armenian, and Syriac culture, and therefore needed to be radically and violently “Turkified”. This required both deskwork and dynamite.

Urban sociologists have argued that formal public institutions of order function successfully only when they are undergirded by a rich, informal public life. An urban space where the police are the sole agents of public order is a very dangerous city. “The grave shortcoming of a planned city”, writes James Scott, “is that it not only fails to respect the autonomous purposes and subjectivity of those who live in it but also fails to allow sufficiently for the contingency of the interaction between its inhabitants and what it produces”.⁸¹² The incredibly lively streetlife of Diyarbekir is the resultant, the vector sum, of its labyrinth of streets, archipelago of cafes, various mosques and churches, and vivacious bazaar. The ‘informal order’ arising from this urban culture was targeted by Young Turk social engineers and this was precisely what turned the Diyarbekirites away from the new city. The most common complaints were and are that the new city “has no soul”, “lacks ambiance”, “is bereft of history”, and simply that it has nothing that represents Diyarbekir. What happened then, from the 1950s on, was that the new city began acquiring the characteristics of the old inner city. As people began inhabiting the new apartment blocks, they recreated Diyarbekir’s urban lifestyle in these suburbs. Through this strange reversal of historical expectation, again, Young Turk policy had backfired and created the adverse result of what it had aimed to do. Instead of reforming the inner city, the new city was becoming more “inner”. Like all enemies of tradition, the Young Turks forgot that some things never change – not least the truth that futures can often only be built on a human scale. The destruction of Diyarbekir’s city walls as a form of urban planning merits attention for another

⁸¹⁰ Barbara Klain, “Warschau 1939-1945: Vernichtung durch Planung,” in: Mechtild Rössler & Sabine Schleiermacher (eds.), *Der ‘Generalplan Ost’: Hauptlinien der nationalsozialistischen Planungs- und Vernichtungspolitik* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993), pp.294-327.

⁸¹¹ Joachim Wolschke-Bulmann, “Violence as the Basis of National Socialist Landscape Planning in the ‘Annexed Eastern Areas’,” in: Franz-Josef Brüggemeier, Mark Cioc & Thomas Zeller (eds.), *How Green Were The Nazis?: Nature, Environment, and Nation in the Third Reich* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), pp.243-56.

⁸¹² Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, p.144.

point.⁸¹³ Already at this time one could discern how the Young Turks, in their haste to catch up with European “civilization”, again began “lagging behind” Europe: by the time Turkish intellectuals had discovered broad-brush high modernism and urban planning as the pinnacle of “Western civilization”, many West European intellectuals were already moving on to embrace preservationism as a form of dealing with ancient cities. Thus, these policies were also a function of evolving interpretations of aesthetics: what was considered “beautiful” or “elegant” in the fascist interbellum was subject to change.⁸¹⁴ In the late twentieth century, the tide could turn and these norms could change again. Now, walled cities are often hailed as valuable historical heritage, and in February 2000 Diyarbakir was placed on UNESCO’s ‘Tentative List’ for its citadel and city walls.⁸¹⁵

One can advance the argument that the high-modernist city and countryside policies were palliatives against the unintended outcomes of prior Young Turk population politics. The necessity of building a new, prolific city resulted for a large part from the destruction of the middle class, Christians who had been massacred in 1915. The necessity of pacifying the countryside too, resulted from the CUP’s arming of loyal Kurdish tribes in 1914-15. In other words, the Young Turks were chasing the consequences of their own population policies, of which at the time they had not, could not have, or had not wanted to foresee the consequences.⁸¹⁶ Most of all, by claiming the sole right to organize society, they “switched off” civil society, or put more precisely, they caused civil society to stop operating at its previous pace. The Young Turk revolution confused the townsmen about which cultural, urban, and religious practices, forms, and ideas were allowed and which ones were not. As a result, in the expectation that “the government will take care of everything”, people often reclined in passivity and lethargy.

One important aspect of spatial planning was the naturalization of the ‘geo-body’ of the Turkish nation state: the rectangular shape of the state relocated Diyarbakir province,

⁸¹³ The imitation of France is striking: “Some towns, like Orléans, cleared new streets in the center itself, as Paris was doing; in most the surrounding walls were torn down and replaced by broad boulevards to “give the city air” and free it from the constrictions of a hemmed-in past, conservatism, and narrowness of spirit as well as physical space. There was no voice of consequence that did not welcome the destruction of dark twisting lanes to let in air and light; the razing of ramparts to make way for “magnificent promenades”; the leveling of damp, ramshackle, unhealthy buildings to permit the building of “elegant new ones”, better for health and comfort. The “strangled” towns, once stifled by their parapets, advanced to freedom, progress, and civic beauty.” Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France 1870-1914* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1979), p.234.

⁸¹⁴ For a discussion of this phenomenon see: Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini’s Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

⁸¹⁵ See <<http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/1402/>>

⁸¹⁶ This is where methodological Kemalism clashes with good historiography. Restricting the historian’s gaze to the post-1923 era cannot help us to understand why so many people bore arms in that particular period of time.

formerly a center of economic, political, and cultural activity, to a nation state's periphery. Territoriality and ethnicity were two closely related phenomena in the Young Turk mind and needed to be prioritized in Young Turk population policies and ethnic homogenization. Spatial planning therefore was not only an aspect of "modernity" but, in the Young Turks' words, had to "dismember Kurdish territorial unity" (*Kürt arazi vahdetini parçalamak*).⁸¹⁷ The deportation of Kurds away from the eastern provinces and settlement of Turks into the eastern provinces was a prime component of these policies.

⁸¹⁷ Faik Bulut, *Kürt Sorununa Çözüm Arayışları* (Istanbul: Ozan, 1998), pp.185-9.