

**JOHANNES LEPSIUS: THE FIRST HISTORIAN OF THE
ARMENIAN GENOCIDE AND HIS HUMANITARIAN ENGAGEMENT**

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It was late in the day of 31 July 1915 when Henry Morgenthau, American Ambassador to Istanbul, sent a cable to the State Department at Washington. “Doctor Lepsius, President of German Orient Mission which maintains six Armenian orphan asylums in Turkey, has information from reliable source that Armenians, mostly women and children, deported from the Erzerum district, have been massacred near Kemakh between Erzinghan and Harput”¹. Johannes Lepsius had arrived at the Ottoman capital on 24 July. The events of his journey are narrated by Franz Werfel in his novel *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*. It was wartime, and the journey had been prompted by disconcerting news regarding the fate of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, a German ally.

What Morgenthau references, a disturbing account of great massacres taking place in Kemakh Canyon at the upper Euphrates, was among the first batch of horrific news given to Lepsius by eye witnesses Thora von Wedel and Eva Elvers. These two Nurses had showed up at the German Embassy on 21 July to deliver to Consul General Johann Heinrich Mordtmann a report of what they had seen. Their descriptions were independently corroborated by Austrian zoologist and mountaineer Victor Pietschmann². Mordtmann, who had been born in Istanbul and who was the true expert on Oriental matters at the Embassy, was in all likelihood less surprised by this news than was Morgenthau. The country was riddled with German Consulates, mission stations, hospitals, schools, as well as employees of the Baghdad Railway and businessmen. Their reports of what they had witnessed in the heartland in spring of 1915 had already been received by the Embassy.

No later than 6 June, Ottoman Minister of the Interior Mehmed Talaat had openly expressed towards Mordtmann his government’s intention to use the World War for its own political gain. “Without diplomatic interference from abroad”, it would be easy to “thoroughly clean house concerning enemies within – domestic Christians of any confession”³. Based on precise information contained in reports he had received from all parts of the country, Ambassador Hans von Wangenheim cabled Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg on 7 July, that there could be no doubt about “the

¹ Morgenthau to Secretary of State, 31 July 1915. <http://www.armenian-genocide.org/us-7-31-15>.

² Note Mordtmann, 21 July 1915. Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts (subsequently: PA-AA) BoKon/169.

³ Note Mordtmann. Rößler to Botschaft Konstantinopel, 6 June 1915. PA-AA/BoKon/169.

government's actual intention to eradicate the Armenian race from the Turkish Empire"¹. He couldn't have made a more definite statement. The deportations and massacres of increasing intensity that could be observed in the Anatolian provinces since the spring served the express purpose of systematically handing an ethnic group – the Ottoman Armenians – over to destruction. Wangenheim's words prove that the German government was aware of this at least by early July 1915. Had one asked – in Lepsius's words – the *quaestio juris* after thus answering the *quaestio facti*², in this view, one were doubtless compelled to speak of a "genocide"³.

It was on this particular day, 7 July, when Morgenthau conversed about the Armenian question with Austro-Hungarian Ambassador Pallavicini. We can see from his diary entry that he did not nearly have as comprehensive and clear a picture of the full scope of the issue as did Wangenheim. The diary talks of excess, yet it does not make mention of any systematic policy of extermination. Instead, its main focus is on the deportation of 280.000 Jews from Baltic Courland by the Russian army. Moreover, the diarist commiserates British attempts at an intervention at Petrograd and their sobering result: the Tsardom's declaration that it would not tolerate any external interference with its domestic affairs⁴.

Civilians had been targets of warfare from the outset of this war. It had started in August 1914 with the so-called Belgian atrocities – which in fact were also French atrocities – when a sum total of 6.427 civilians fell victim to the German paranoia of alleged ambushes by so-called franc-tireurs⁵. Later, plans were devised by German officials to permanently remove the Polish border population by force in order to implement a "racial military border" against the Russians⁶; even though those were never put into action. In the beginning of 1916, 143.000 Serbs lost their lives during death marches orchestrated by Habsburg and Bulgarian military personnel⁷. In Russia, the following fell victim to a military policy of deportation within the first three years of the war: six million civilians, among them hundreds of thousands of Jews, German minorities, inhabitants of the Baltic territories, Roma, and Muslims from the Caucasus and Central Asia. They were universally deemed potential enemies within and "unreliable" as sections of the populace⁸. There were also plans for a permanent Russification of the border regions⁹.

¹ Wangenheim to Bethmann-Hollweg, 7 July 1915. PA-AA R 14086.

² **Lepsius J.**, *Armenien und Europa. Eine Anklageschrift wider die christlichen Großmächte und ein Aufruf an das christliche Deutschland*, Berlin, 1896, S. 10.

³ **Lepsius J.**, *Mein Besuch in Konstantinopel Juli/Aug. 1915*. *Der Orient*, Vol. 1919, n° 1/3, S. 14.

⁴ *United States Diplomacy on the Bosphorus. The Diaries of Ambassador Morgenthau 1913-1916*, 7 July 1915, London, 2004, p. 271.

⁵ **Horne J.** and **Kramer A.**, *German Atrocities, 1914. A History of Denial*, New Haven and London, 2001, p. 74.

⁶ **Mommsen W.J.**, *Der "polnische Grenzstreifen". Anfänge der "völkischen Flurbereinigung" und der Umsiedlungspolitik*, in: *idem: Der Erste Weltkrieg. Anfang vom Ende des bürgerlichen Zeitalters*, Frankfurt am Main, 2004, S. 118-136.

⁷ **Roshwald A.**, *Ethnic Nationalism and the Fall of Empires. Central Europe, Russia and the Middle East, 1914-1923*. London, and New York, 2001, p. 126.

⁸ **Gatrell P.**, *A Whole Empire Walking. Refugees in Russia During World War I*, Bloomington, 2005, p. 3.

⁹ **Schwartz M.**, *Ethnische "Säuberungen" in der Moderne. Globale Wechselwirkungen nationalistischer und rassistischer Gewaltpolitik im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Munich, 2013, S. 131f.

However, there was a very specific difference between these and Talaat's announcement to Mordtmann: no one had any intentions of thoroughly cleaning house concerning certain ethnicities because nobody aimed to destroy the Russian multinational Empire in this war¹. Hence, Talaat announced way more than a deportation caused by the necessities of war. His was the announcement of a new, and essentially Turkish post-war order not achievable merely through deportations of domestic enemies but only by dispersing them completely, and thereby eliminating their influence once and for all. There had never been an announcement quite like this before. In contrast to the Russian deportation policy, which was ruthless and inhumane in its own right, Talaat's vision encompassed an outright apocalyptic aspect. This contrast, however, is highly significant for an understanding of the events². Wangenheim and the German government were aware of this by no later than the beginning of July.

There is ample evidence suggesting that it was in fact Johannes Lepsius who informed Morgenthau of the magnitude of the events. Days before their meeting, the latter was still convinced that great massacres did not occur as part of the deportations and that deadly force had only been used in skirmishes with Armenians putting up armed resistance³. Yet, Morgenthau had for some time harbored suspicions of the ultimate goal being "race extermination"⁴. When Lepsius first came to see him at the American Embassy on 31 July 1915 at 3 p. m.⁵, these suspicions grew firmer⁶.

According to Lepsius's report quoted in Morgenthau's cable to the State Department, the following had taken place on the upper Euphrates in late spring. On 10 June, a convoy of deported Armenians approached the bottleneck near Kemakh Canyon, where they came under crossfire. "Ahead, Kurds blocked the way, behind were militia troops" in the words of Thora von Wedel who had gotten all the details from Turkish soldiers. "At first, they were looted, then brutally slaughtered, and finally their bodies were thrown into the river"⁷. The carnage lasted a total of three days. Finally, on the fourth day, the 86th cavalry brigade arrived, supposedly to put a stop to the murdering. In truth, though, they had come to surround the Armenian

¹ All the differences notwithstanding, there are also certain similarities to be made out: "Up to a point", as Donald Bloxham and Dirk A. Moses observe, "CUP population policy mirrored that of the Tsars. After a series of localized "pacification" measures in their shared border regions from the outset of the war, and incursions into enemy territory, each regime radicalized its policies in spring 1915, as the war situation became critical". **Bloxham D.** and **Moses D. A.**, *Genocide and ethnic cleansing*, in: **Bloxham D.** and **Gerwarth R.** (Ed.), *Political Violence in Twentieth Century Europe*, Cambridge, New York, 2011, p. 97.

² "Mit der praktisch vollständigen Zerstörung einer "nationsfremden" Ethnie wurde in der Geschichte erstmalig ein radikal sozialdarwinistisch-nationalistisches Gedankengut realisiert". **Kieser H. L.**, *Der verpasste Friede*, Zurich, 2000, S. 16.

³ United States Diplomacy on the Bosphorus. The Diaries of Ambassador Morgenthau, 26 July 1915, p. 286.

⁴ Morgenthau to Secretary of State, 16 July 1915. <http://www.armenian-genocide.org/us-7-16-15>.

⁵ United States Diplomacy on the Bosphorus. The Diaries of Ambassador Morgenthau, 31 July 1915, p. 291.

⁶ It seems almost inconceivable, as Margaret Anderson observed about Morgenthau, "that a man whose Armenian translator accompanied him everywhere, every hour of the working day as well as most evenings", should have taken this long to understand what was happening. **Anderson M. L.**, *Helden in Zeiten eines Völkermords?* Armin T. Wegner, Ernst Jäckh, Henry Morgenthau, in: **Hosfeld R.** (Ed.), *Johannes Lepsius – Eine deutsche Ausnahme*. Göttingen, 2013, S. 154 .

⁷ Valentini to Bethmann-Hollweg, 10 September 1915, Appendix 2. PA-AA R 14093.

women and children who were stuck in the canyon. On order, they were all gunned down. It had been commanded thus, recalled a Turkish soldier who was present.

The army's gruesome slaughter of 13 June raged on for four hours, from 11 a. m. to 3 p. m.¹. The operation had apparently been well prepared. Thora von Wedel: "They had brought ox carts in order to dump the corpses into the river and to cover their deed's tracks. After the butchery, manhunts were held for several days in the cornfields of Erzincan, shooting those who had escaped to look for shelter there"². In total, between twenty and twenty five thousand people fell prey to the eliminatory orgy perpetrated by military, police, special forces, and irregular gangs only between 10 and 14 June 1915 in Kemakh Canyon³. Evidently, the deportations of the upper Euphrates valley were regularly accompanied by massacres, and, as Lepsius uncovered, the same occurred in other parts of Eastern Anatolia. This was clearly no matter of a military preemptive strategy but rather the work of a political will to eliminate⁴.

Morgenthau relates that Lepsius was planning to inform the International Red Cross of these goings-on (which he actually did after his return, through semi-legal publications in Switzerland). Moreover, he was determined to try to persuade his own government to put a halt to this crime against humanity perpetrated by a wartime ally – as we know, he failed. But first and foremost, he wanted to gather as much information as possible about the extent and characteristics of this catastrophe. Morgenthau requested permission in Washington to allow Lepsius access to the American consular documents⁵. Whether this was officially granted him is unknown⁶. Morgenthau did in fact show several reports to Lepsius, whom he deemed to be a "high-minded Christian gentleman"⁷, and allowed him to make verbatim excerpts. "His feelings were aroused chiefly against his own government", Morgenthau records in his memoirs in view of those hours spent together at the American Embassy. "He expressed to me the humiliation which he felt as a German, that the Turks should set about to exterminate their Christian subjects, while Germany, which called itself a Christian country, was making no endeavours to prevent it"⁸.

In the beginning of August 1915, Lepsius wrote from Istanbul to his wife Alice at Potsdam: "Unspeakable things have happened and are happening still. The goal is perfect extermination – executed under the veil of martial law. There is nothing else to be said"⁹. Lepsius, 57 years old at the time, was received for an audience with War Minister Enver Pasha on 10 August 1915 after a recommendation by Auswärtiges Amt (the German State Department) and the German Embassy. This was precisely when

¹ Thora von Wedel-Jarlsberg to Neurath, 28 July 1915. PA-AA/BoKon/170.

² Valentini to Bethmann-Hollweg, 10 September 1915, Appendix 2. PA-AA R 14093.

³ **Lepsius J.**, *Deutschland und Armenien*, Potsdam, 1919, Einleitung, S. XXIV.

⁴ "The Armenian fate was composed of the two elements: ethnic cleansing, or forced collective displacement, and direct physical annihilation. Only because of the presence of both elements is the epithet genocide applicable". **Bloxham D.**, *The Great Game of Genocide. Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians*. Oxford, New York, 2005, p. 69.

⁵ Morgenthau to Secretary of State, 31 July 1915. <http://www.armenian-genocide.org/us-7-31-15>.

⁶ Lepsius claims to have been denied access. *Mein Besuch in Konstantinopel*, S. 6.

⁷ *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*, New York, 1918, p. 343.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 344.

⁹ Lepsius to Alice Lepsius, beginning of August 1915, Lepsius-Archiv Potsdam (subsequently: LAP) 118-1320.

the siege at Musa Dagh was unfolding, where some 5.000 Armenians had sought refuge on the escape from their persecutors, the fateful days that are recounted in Franz Werfel's novel. The meeting was by no means a matter of course. Its background, too, remains unclear to this day and will in all likelihood never be fully uncovered. Certainly, the Reich's government at that point took a strong interest in exercising a mitigating influence on its Turkish ally¹. The German Embassy at Istanbul, however, doubted it could ever end successfully². Enver, in turn, had a vested interest in a certain amount of German backing³. At least until the increasing success in defending the strategically important Dardanelles and the resulting growth in Turkish confidence would have completely dispelled any qualms.

Lepsius produced a protocol of this conversation at the War Ministry which is extensively quoted by Werfel: "Ich übernehme die Verantwortung für alles", said 33-year-old Enver in perfect German, which translates to "I take full responsibility for everything". This was his reply to Lepsius's queries regarding domestic goings-on. It was followed by a lengthy lecture on the military necessities that had rendered a wartime offense against the revolutionary elements of the Empire a duty. "I for one do not believe in an Armenian conspiracy", was Lepsius's answer and he asked whether there was any solid evidence pointing to its existence. At that point, Enver donned a smile of superiority and responded: "That is obsolete, we originate from the Revolution ourselves and we know how it is done." On another occasion he said almost exactly the same to Morgenthau⁴. With almost evangelistic zeal, he added: "We can handle our internal enemies. You in Germany cannot. In this we are stronger than you"⁵. For the time being, thoughts like this were foreign to German politics. Yet, not much later, they were the reason why Adolf Hitler admired Enver as an example to follow, whom – among others, particularly Mussolini – he referenced in his trial before the Munich People's Court in 1924. According to Hitler, Enver managed to build up a whole new nation, successfully detoxifying the multicultural Gomorrah that was Constantinople⁶. This unveiled a deep congruency of fundamental imaginations of purification. Hitler's "awaking" Germany welcomed the radically nationalist Young Turks as a congenial example.

Lepsius was not the only one who needed some time to realize the full extent of the Ottoman Empire's Armenian policy during World War I. Nobody was expecting a repetition of the great Armenian massacres of 1894-1896 that had taken about three hundred thousand people, and much less an escalation beyond that precedent. Yet, the disquieting news increased. During the first months of the war, it was a reasonable supposition that these were locally restricted measures. The deadly consequences of the allegedly war-related deportations in particular became apparent only gradually. Still, the Ottoman government's involvement in the process of giving their Christian

¹ Wangenheim to Scheubner-Richter, 21 June 1915. PA-AA/BoKon/169.

² Wangenheim to AA, 9 June 1915. PA-AA R 14086.

³ Wangenheim to AA, 31 May 1915. PA-AA R 14086.

⁴ Ambassador Morgenthau's Story. p. 347.

⁵ Lepsius J., Mein Besuch in Konstantinopel, S. 8.

⁶ Gordon H. J. (Ed.), The Hitler Trial before the People's Court in Munich, Vol. 1, Arlington, 1976, p. 180.

populace “over to extinction”¹ was a fact of which Lepsius was fully aware, even before he left Potsdam for the Orient.

When planning his journey in June 1915, he had originally hoped to present the Ottoman leadership with a proposition which was worked out in cooperation with *Auswärtiges Amt*² and the Central Committee of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation *Dashnaktzuyun*³, namely that the Russian Armenians would “separate their cause from Russia’s”⁴ in exchange for a waiver of further deportations. *Auswärtiges Amt* lent its support to this desperate attempt to mediate mainly because there were concerns about the Armenians being forced to join the Entente camp by Turkish repression and revolutionary activists possibly destabilizing the country through assassinations and attempted coups⁵. Humanitarian considerations played no part in this. Lepsius, however, was hoping to achieve something, given such political backing. This was particularly so because *Auswärtiges Amt*, represented by Undersecretary Zimmermann, had in November 1914 given a written warrant to the German-Armenian Society to pursue a responsible policy in regard to the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire, even during the war⁶. It looks as though Zimmermann still felt bound by this in June 1915 when he wrote to Wangenheim concerning Lepsius’s planned journey, insisting that the Armenian cause should by no means be sacrificed on the altar of political constellations⁷. Of course, this is exactly what was cold-bloodedly done shortly thereafter. As Margaret Anderson has accentuated, Lepsius’s endeavour was a fairly risky mission in a hopeless situation⁸. But above all, he was too late⁹. As Wangenheim reported to Wilhelmstraße, a short time before Lepsius left: “The Turkish government [was] thoroughly determined to follow through with these measures and it [had] lately even intensified them”, unaffected by its allies’ objections¹⁰.

On his way to the Orient, Lepsius had gathered information, mainly through his Armenian connections at Basel, Geneva, Bucharest, and Sofia. The decisive part in this was played by Liparit Nazariantz of the German-Armenian Society, travelling with a German passport under the name of D^r Liparit, and the *Dashnaktzuyun* network¹¹. The *Dashnaks* even granted him access to their secret party correspondences at Sofia which was why he stayed on longer than originally planned¹². By the time of his arrival at Constantinople he had thus already gained a clear picture of what was going

¹ Lepsius to AA, 22 June 1915. PA-AA R 14086.

² “Dr. Lepsius wishes to go there not in order to exert pressure on Porte, but rather to bring Armenians to terms”. Zimmermann to Wangenheim, 6 June 1915. PA-AA R 14086. Of course, this is a diplomatically streamlined version of Lepsius’s intentions, but Zimmermann himself may have believed it.

³ Lepsius to Rosenberg, 11 June 1915. Appendix 1. PA-AA R 14086.

⁴ Lepsius to Rosenberg, 22 June 1915. PA-AA R 14086.

⁵ Lepsius to AA, 22 June 1915. PA-AA R 14086.

⁶ **Stier E.**, *Geschäftsbericht der Deutsch-Armenischen Gesellschaft*, 21 May 1919. PA-AA R 14106.

⁷ Zimmermann to Wangenheim, 13 June 1915. PA-AA R 14086.

⁸ *Germany and the Armenian Genocide. An Interview with Margaret Lavinia Anderson by Khatchig Mouradian*, ZNet, November 14, 2006.

⁹ Wangenheim to AA, 9 June 1915. PA-AA R 14287.

¹⁰ Wangenheim to AA, 2 July 1915. PA-AA R 14086.

¹¹ **Hayruni A.**, *Johannes Lepsius’ armenische Verbindungen*, in: **Hosfeld R.** (Hg.), *Johannes Lepsius – Eine deutsche Ausnahme*, Göttingen, 2013, S. 215ff.

¹² **Lepsius J.**, *Bericht über die Lage des armenischen Volkes*, Potsdam, 1916, S. 181ff.

on, and it pointed to “an organized elimination of the domestic Armenian populace”¹. The information he then received from the German Embassy, the Armenian Patriarchy and other Armenian contacts, German observers of the events in the heartland, representatives of the American *Bible House*, as well as American Ambassador Morgenthau only corroborated what he had discovered before. Johann Heinrich Mordtmann supplied extensive oral briefings which Lepsius appreciated as especially instructive².

Lepsius was not sojourning to Istanbul for the first time. What especially caught his eye was how the once cosmopolitan metropolis was becoming “increasingly Turkish”. He noted that every non-Turkish billboard and company sign had disappeared and that even street names were now exclusively in Turkish³. These observations were nothing less than the visible image of a process of a cultural-ideological homogenization towards Turkization that was accompanying the elimination of the Armenians. “One fatherland, one education, one language. All of Turkey was supposed to become Turkish”, as he had critically remarked earlier⁴. A programme like this could only result in violence.

Lepsius decided not to remain silent. This was in stark contrast to the considerable amount of people in the Reich who knew exactly what was going on in Turkey, yet did not speak up in order to preserve the *raison d'état*. Even the majority of the German clergy adhered to this practice almost unconditionally. “Nationalized Christianity’s conscience is easily swayed in such conflicts of interest to subordinate that which is imperative on grounds of humanity to that which is politically opportune”⁵. Johannes Lepsius, who wrote these words, did not succumb. He wanted to take a stand.

After his return, his journal *Der Christliche Orient* (“The Christian Orient”) published a “cry for help”. At present, it was impossible to speak openly on the current situation in Turkey. Yet, “the tasks we are facing in response to even just the pinnacle of the screaming needs are nonetheless ten times greater than what was needed after the great massacres of Abdul Hamid”⁶. The reference to the massacres of the late 19th century could hardly be misconstrued. It was at a Berlin press conference on 5 October 1915 when Lepsius made himself even clearer. There, he actually accused the German government of having become a slave to the Ottoman leadership instead of duly ruling as its master. In the beginning of the war, Lepsius had subscribed to the illusion that the German-Turkish alliance would by necessity bring about a certain hegemonial Europeanization of Turkey at the hands of Germany as well as establish order in its judicial system. These Lepsius had considered positive effects⁷. Such pipe-dreams were now shattered, as it became apparent that Turkey was following its own agenda in this war. In case of conflict, it could very well be directed

¹ Lepsius J., *Mein Besuch in Konstantinopel*, S. 3.

² *Ibid.*, p. 4f. Only two days later, on 7 October 1915, total censorship was declared on the Armenian question.

³ Lepsius J., *Mein Besuch in Konstantinopel*, S. 10.

⁴ Lepsius J., *Die armenischen Reformen*. *Der Christliche Orient*, Vol. 14 (1913), S. 215.

⁵ Lepsius to August Winkler, 26 March 1916. LAP 7183.

⁶ *Hilferuf!* *Der Christliche Orient*, Vol. 16 (1915), S. 73.

⁷ “Memel and Basra are the endpoints of the European Limes towards Asia”. Lepsius J., *Unsere Waffenbrüderschaft mit der Türkei*. *Der Christliche Orient*, Vol. 16 (1915), S. 17.

against Germany whose government had to submit due to military dilemmas. Johannes Lepsius, although a German patriot, turned from his previous convictions and instead adopted the stance of denouncing his own government in the face of the great crime against humanity. The Reich's Oriental opportunism was steeped in a German spirit of cultural relativism Lepsius had never shared. "The butcher receives my antipathy a priori", as he had already written in an 1897 issue of Maximilian Harden's journal *Zukunft*, "the victim gets my sympathy, however else I may countenance his value in other respects". The Moral Law, whether it be based on a Humanist or Christian foundation, he took to be universal. It could never be that the national interest be turned into the measuring rod of moral thought, judgment, and doing¹.

Back from his journey to Istanbul, Lepsius gave lectures in Switzerland and he anonymously published articles about the Armenian genocide in the Swiss newspaper *Basler Nachrichten*, a paper that was accessible in the Reich. At Basel, he also functioned as an agitator, as covered by the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*² and furthermore reported to Berlin by Consul Wunderlich. His activities were also felt in Germany. Military intelligence had him under surveillance. In his devastation he went as far as publicly demanding German military control of the northern Ottoman Empire. He even suggested surrendering the Ottoman Arabic territories to the British³. The German government reacted in a fairly moderate manner considering the scope of this provocation. A course of deliberate disinformation was taken, complemented by a warning against inadvertently being used as a battering ram for the Armenian question⁴. On 11 January 1916, a query from Social Democratic MP Karl Liebknecht confronted the Reichstag (the German parliament) with Lepsius's assessment of "an outright extinction of the Turkish Armenians"⁵. "Lepsius's very name", as Margaret Anderson observed, regarding the context of these events, "had become a *synecdoche* for embarrassing information"⁶. Documents, originating from Lepsius's material gathered during his Turkish journey, have doubtless found their way into James Bryce's and Arnold Toynbee's 1916 British Bluebook *The Treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-1916*. How this was possible is still unclear. In turn Lepsius learned certain details from British sources, for instance concerning the developments at the Musa Dagh. These he published in 1916, taking some literary liberties, in his journal *Der Christliche Orient*⁷. International contacts and attempts to exert influence on policies were, despite the war, still intact.

¹ Lepsius J., Antwort auf Hans Barth. *Zukunft* 18 (1897), S. 478.

² Wunderlich to Bethmann-Hollweg, 22 September 1915. PA-AA R 14087.

³ Jackh Papers, n° 22, OHL (Zensurbüro) to Ernst Jäckh, 1 November 1915, n° 2.610 O.Z. Trumpener U., *Germany and the Ottoman Empire 1914-1918*, Princeton, 1968, p. 223. Not unlikely Lepsius was informed about Boghos Nubar's negotiations with the British military command in Egypt concerning an invasion in the gulf of Iskenderun. (An unrealized plan that had the support of the Dashnaktsuyun at Sofia with whom Lepsius had close ties). Bloxham D., *The Great Game of Genocide*, p. 80.

⁴ Trumpener U., op. cit., p. 224.

⁵ Anfrage des Reichstagsabgeordneten Karl Liebknecht in der 26. Sitzung des Reichstags, 11 January 1916. PA-AA R 14089.

⁶ Anderson M. L., Who Still Talked about the Extermination of the Armenians? German Talk and German Silences, in: Suny R. G., Göcek F. M. and Naimark N. M., *A Question of Genocide. Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, Oxford, New York, 2011, p. 213.

⁷ Lepsius J., *Das rettende Kreuz. Der Christliche Orient*, vol. 17 (1916). H. I/III, S. 12-19.

In summer of 1916, Lepsius published his report *Die Lage des armenischen Volkes in der Türkei* (“The Situation of the Armenian People in Turkey”) spanning over three hundred pages. It contained precise chronological representations as well as meticulous statistics, both of which, even today, serve as the basis for research as well as thorough analysis of causes. Despite the looming military censorship, he personally managed to have over 20.000 copies printed secretly and distributed all over the Reich. The pamphlet was banned by military censorship on 7 August 1916. The German Turkophile Ernst Jäckh working at Auswärtiges Amt issued him a warning pertaining to his “propaganda lectures and leaflets”¹ and prompted the Ministerial passport office to bar Lepsius from entering Switzerland for further talks². However, he had already left Germany by mid-July to take residence in neutral Holland where it was possible for an anonymous Dutch translation of his *Bericht* to be published. By 1916 and still at Potsdam, a clandestinely copied French translation of the *Bericht* had been available under the title *Rapport sur la situation du peuple arménien en Turquie. Par le D^r Johannes Lepsius, Président de la Deutsche Orient-Mission et de la Société Germano-Arménienne*³. It was released as a book, extended by a preface, in 1918 at Paris.

The *Bericht* is an astonishing opus. First and foremost, it is a testimony of extraordinary courage. During this time, as the so-called national Burgfrieden (“home peace”) of the World War was kept, censorship turned any public utterance about war crimes into a potentially dangerous affair, be they of German origin or committed by Her allies. By the same token, the *Bericht* marks the beginning of a serious historiography of genocide, by writing contemporary history in the very midst of dramatic events. Lepsius was not only a Theologian whose upbringing, environment and wealth of experience had equipped him with a diverse historico-educational backdrop and a charismatic public persona. He was an academically trained Mathematician, held a doctorate in Philosophy, and commanded the ability to think systematically and conceptually.

Methodologically, Lepsius’s *Bericht* is similar to his 1896 piece *Armenien und Europa* which was subsequently translated into several languages. The earlier publication had been penned during the era of the great Armenian massacres under sultan Abdul Hamid II making Lepsius a man of note in Europe. “We are therefore entering the realm of facts first”, as he had written then, “and we will not engage with the quaestio juris until our readers have been enabled to come to a conclusion about the quaestio facti”⁴. He discovered behind the brutal excesses of seeming mass rage an operation that was well-organized by the Sultan’s palace. By its own inner rationale, this was “a purely political occurrence, to put it more precisely: an administrative measure”⁵. The violent demographic policy was intended to effectively minimize the influence of Christian minorities in Eastern Anatolia and thereby to stop the

¹ Jäckh to Lepsius, 11 September 1916. LAP 13321(2).

² Jäckh to Zimmermann, 31 Juli 1916. PA-AA R 14092.

³ The Mekhitarist library at Vienna is said by Axel Meißner to have a copy of this French translation in its possession. See **Meißner A.**, Martin Rades “Christliche Welt” und Armenien. Bausteine für eine internationale Ethik des Protestantismus, Berlin, 2010, S. 231 ff.

⁴ **Lepsius J.**, Armenien und Europa. Eine Anklageschrift wider die christlichen Großmächte und ein Aufruf an das christliche Deutschland, Berlin, 1896, S. 10.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. Phrased timely in the manner of Emile Zola's famous *J'accuse*¹, Lepsius's work of indictment was one of the great milestones of political morals as it was growing ever more popular in late nineteenth century Europe². In the words of a recent study, *Armenien und Europa* was, without a doubt "one of the most influential books on the Armenian massacres"³.

Since then, Lepsius had repeatedly devoted his attention to developments relating to the Armenian question in the Ottoman Empire, particularly through articles in his journal *Der Christliche Orient*. Hope had been rising after the constitutional revolution of 1908, which involved the Armenian Revolutionary Federation as the Young Turks' ally; yet only one year later the Armenian pogroms of the Adana region left more than twenty thousand dead. The devastating Balkan Wars followed. The Ottoman Empire lost almost all of its European territories. But, most importantly, these panned out as ethnic campaigns, running up death tolls in the hundreds of thousands among all ethnicities and religions affected. Entire regions were destroyed, bringing about massive flows of refugees. A culture of uncontrolled violence directed against civilians flourished during these conflicts – Bulgarians against Greeks and vice versa, Serbs against Albanians and vice versa, Christians against Muslims and vice versa – and it became accepted as an instrument of policy⁴. One ought to tackle the issue of reform in Anatolia now, noted Lev Trotski, accredited as a journalist and Bulgarian correspondent of a Kiev newspaper during the First Balkan War, or witness "unavoidably ensuing turmoil in Asia Minor later". However, in light of Turkey being incapable of setting any reform in motion, he deemed European intervention a necessity⁵. The first one-party dictatorship in modern history was in fact established through a coup d'état staged by the Young Turk Committee for Unity and Progress in 1913⁶. The direct consequences of this were a militarization and ideological Turkization of public life.

"Conditions in Armenia remained equally unbearable under the Young Turks' governance as they long had been under Sultan Abdul Hamid's reign", as Lepsius wrote during this time⁷. The interior warfare against the Armenian people had never stopped⁸. What he imagined as the solution was something "akin to European regiment", hence a guarantee for the rule of law and the security it brings. Austria-Hungary was practicing this fairly successfully with its multiracial populace in

¹ **Kieser H.-L.**, Zion-Armenien-Deutschland. Johannes Lepsius und die "protestantische Internationale" in der spätosmanischen Welt. www.lepsiushaus-potsdam.de; Publikationen.

² **Bösch F.**, "Kampagnen gegen Massenmorde". Das Aufkommen der Moralpolitik im ausgehenden 19. Jahrhundert. Johannes Lepsius im internationalen Kontext. Lecture at Lepsiushaus Potsdam on 24 January 2014.

³ **Rodogno D.**, *Against Massacre: Humanitarian Intervention in the Ottoman Empire, 1815-1914. The Emergence of a European Concept and International Practice*, Princeton, 2012, p. 206.

⁴ **Kennan G. F.**, *The Balkan Crisis: 1913 and 1993*, in: *The Others Balkan Wars. A 1913 Carnegie Endowment Inquiry in Retrospect with a New Introduction and Reflections on the Present Conflict* by George F. Kennan, Washington, 1993, p. 10.

⁵ **Trotski L.**, *Die Balkankriege 1912-13*, Essen, 1995, S. 277.

⁶ "The Young Turk Revolution resulted in the gradual emergence of a radically new type of regime that was to become frighteningly familiar in the twentieth century: one-party rule". **Hanioglu M. S.**, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, Princeton and Oxford, 2008, p. 151.

⁷ **Lepsius J.**, *Die Zukunft der Türkei*. *Der Christliche Orient*, vol. 14 (1913), S. 78.

⁸ **Lepsius J.**, *Die armenischen Reformen*. *Der Christliche Orient*, vol. 14 (1913), S. 177.

Bosnia-Herzegovina¹. Eastern Anatolia, however, was a far cry from this scenario. Johannes Lepsius had excellent political connections by pedigree, as he was the son of Germany's most respected Egyptologist. He played a vital part as consultant to Auswärtiges Amt during 1913 international negotiations concerning reform in the Armenian settlement territories. The ensuing reform plan entailed the creation of two provinces in areas with a high percentage of Armenians, allotting them special protection. European Inspectors-General were supposed to enforce this reform plan. Young Turk leadership, however, considered the reform an unacceptable challenge to its sovereignty, especially since it had only materialized due to international pressure. Radical party newspaper *Taswiri Efkiar* commented on the signing of these contracts, claiming the Armenians had "challenged the government and infringed upon its basic rights"². Lepsius observed that, upon the Ottoman Empire's entry into the war, when all international contracts were terminated, the Armenians were, on account of the reform question, portrayed as a "nation of traitors"³. This was not boding well and it was one of the reasons for the cumulatively exacerbating anti-Armenian propaganda and persecution⁴.

Initial deportations occurred in spring of 1915 and the course they took can be gathered from Lepsius's *Bericht* in great detail, at least with respect to the events of 1915. In this book, penned at his house in Potsdam's Große Weinmeisterstraße (which is today as the Potsdam Lepsius House a center for genocide studies), he begins yet again with a methodically precise treatment of the *quaestio facti*. Three sequential deportations took place in 1915 in three different regions. These are the events depicted in the book's opening passages. Starting at the end of May, an increasingly radical approach was noticeable⁵, connected to the Erzurum activities of Bahaeddin Shakir, leading Young Turk Committee member and Commanding Officer of the party-bound special forces *Teskilat-i-Mahsusa*, whom Turkish Historian Serif Mardin has dubbed the Committee's "Stalin"^{6,7}. Bahaeddin Shakir and his special units were vital in the execution of the genocidal massacre programme. That Lepsius was able to recognize their role this early on is remarkable. His insight was most likely based on the information he had gleaned from the Sofia circle of Dashnaks. The subject did not even reappear until 1996 when recent research dealt with it in depth⁸. Among the sources Lepsius used for the *Bericht* were, among others, the accounts of Thora von Wedel and Eva Elvers which he had mentioned to Morgenthau. In addition to these, he relied on countless reports by the American Consulate and oral information passed by Mordtmann. The *Bericht* conveys a comprehensive overall impression, even by

¹ Lepsius J., Bericht über die Lage des armenischen Volkes in der Türkei, Potsdam, 1916, S. 157.

² Wangenheim to Bethmann-Hollweg, 27 November 1913. PA-AA R 14082.

³ Lepsius J., Bericht, S. 228f.

⁴ Bloxham D., The Great Game of Genocide, p. 64ff.

⁵ The escalation from the first measures to genocide, explains Michael Mann, happened a lot faster than Hitler's subsequent attack on the Jews. Mann M., The Dark Side of Democracy. Explaining Ethnic Cleansing, Cambridge, 2005, p. 152.

⁶ Hanioglu M. S., Preparation for a Revolution. The Young Turks, 1902-1908, Oxford, 2001, p. 140.

⁷ Lepsius J., Bericht, S., p. 43.

⁸ Akçam T., Armenien und der Völkermord. Die Istanbul Prozesse und die türkische Nationalbewegung, Hamburg 1996. More details in: Akçam T., From Empire to Republic. Turkish Nationalism and the Armenian Genocide, London, New York, 2004, p. 158-179.

today's standards of research. "The device of deportation most often turned into systematic elimination within the blink of an eye"¹, resulting in "an expropriation of enormous proportions, victimizing one and a half million citizens"², even though a remnant of the deported survived.

None of this was to be explained as a result of excesses or spontaneous criminal acts. What happened was, in Lepsius's own words, a political-administrative measure³, albeit occurring beyond the purview of the rule of law⁴. "The only explanation by which the acts of the authorities do not appear to be utterly random", as the *Bericht* explains "is found in the assumption that what was executed here with cold precision and utter calculation was an interior political programme of eliminating the Armenian element of the populace"⁵. The ultimate objective was a violent Turkization of Anatolia, increasingly considered to be the core land of the Ottoman Empire. Recent research on Ottoman sources confirmed this assessment. Cases in point are Fuat Dündar's groundbreaking study on the role of statistics in regard to the Armenian question as well as the latest book by US-based Turkish historian Taner Akçam on genocide and ethnic "cleansing"⁶. Most contemporaries, as Michael Mann has pointed out, had their eyes focused on the barbaric methods of the genocide which they deemed to be signs of cultural backwardness. As a result, they were unable to understand its essentially modern demographico-political objectives⁷. Yet, Lepsius had a firm grasp on the gist of things.

However, he had his difficulties in developing a thorough understanding the political system of Istanbul – as did every other European of his time. It was after all, as observed in Mehmet Sükrü Hanioglu's history of the late Ottoman Empire, something to which Middle and Eastern Europe would only be introduced in the 1920's: an ideologically motivated one-party dictatorship with a propensity towards absolute control exerted on the state and its apparatus by one party alone⁸.

Here is how Lepsius phrased it. The Young Turk Committee had established a "strict party reign" nationwide, thereby exercising true power as a "parallel government" and thus enforcing conformity within the Empire⁹ pertaining to the political-ideological principles of "Turkish nationalism and the panislamic idea"¹⁰. This was an almost perfect description of the power structures underlying "new" Turkey, as the country was truly governed by an uncontrollable "deep state". Even so, he failed to develop a complete understanding of the inner workings of this fatal

¹ Lepsius J., Bericht, p. 133.

² Lepsius J., Bericht, p. 152.

³ Lepsius J., Bericht, p. 158.

⁴ Lepsius J., Bericht, p. 191.

⁵ Lepsius J., Bericht, p. 217.

⁶ Dündar F., Crime of Numbers. The Role of Statistics in the Armenian Question (1878-1918). New Brunswick 2010, and Taner Akçam: The Young Turks Crime against Humanity. The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire, Princeton, Oxford, 2012.

⁷ Mann M., op. cit., p. 175.

⁸ Hanioglu M. S., A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire, p. 151.

⁹ Ungör U. Ü., Center and Periphery in the Armenian Genocide: The Case of Diyarbakir Province, in: Kieser H.-L., Elmar P. (Ed.), Der Völkermord an den Armeniern, die Türkei und Europa, Zurich, 2006, S. 73.

¹⁰ Lepsius J., Bericht, S. 217-219.

innovation. The ideas of uprising modernity¹ from which it had originated were imported from European intellectual as well as military circles. The Young Turks had appropriated them by way of the traditions of South Eastern European gang culture. Given this mix, a cultish way of violently solving problems was inevitable².

The second edition of the 300 page *Bericht über die Lage des armenischen Volkes in der Türkei* was published after the war under the new title *Der Todesgang des armenischen Volkes* (“The Death March of the Armenian People”)³. There were no changes to the main text, only a preface was added. In light of its history, this was astonishing. In July of 1919, the book was reviewed by the *New York Tribune* under the heading *Another Chapter in Germany’s Confession of Turkish Guilt*. Americans in all likelihood did not expect the following: “No more powerful indictment of Turkey’s crimes in Armenia appeared during the war than that presented by a German writer, Dr. Johannes Lepsius, chairman of the German Orient Mission and the German-Armenian Society. Dr. Lepsius has investigated the Armenian persecutions on the spot and incorporated his findings in a report entitled *Die Lage des Armenischen Volkes in der Türkei*, published secretly at Potsdam in 1916”⁴. As late as 1968, Ulrich Trumpe-ner’s seminal *Germany and the Ottoman Empire* referred to Lepsius’s *Bericht* as “the best work of synthesis on this subject”⁵. In-depth research on the Armenian genocide, as it gained traction in the 1980’s and 1990’s, managed to add several details and new insights to Lepsius’s *Bericht*, albeit leaving Trumpe-ners basic assessment unchanged.

A plethora of detailed local eye witness accounts were published in Lepsius’s journal *Der Orient* after the war, covering the persecution and extermination of the Armenians, complete with remarkable internal observations by Druze and former Ottoman official Faiz El-Ghusein⁶. *Der Orient* also commented on post-war develop-ments, particularly the early Kemalists’ campaigns against the young Armenian Republic. A collection of diplomatic documents from Auswärtiges Amt, compiled and commented by Lepsius, was published in 1919 under the title *Deutschland und Armenien*. Secretary Wilhelm Heinrich Solf⁷ had a reputation for withholding files arbitrarily from applicants (the Independent Social Democrat Karl Kautsky is a case in point)⁸. To what extent Lepsius was subjected to this treatment, particularly in cases incriminating German military and political officials, is unclear, but it seems fairly likely. Nonetheless, *Deutschland und Armenien* was the very first systematic documentation of diplomatic sources concerning the Armenian genocide. It was revelatory and helped to clarify vital questions about the sequence of events of the

¹ On the effectiveness and significance of practices, rituals, and moral concepts of South Eastern European gang culture, cf. **Hanioglu M. S.**, *Preparation for a Revolution, passim*.

² **Üngör U. Ü.**, *The Making of Modern Turkey. Nation and State in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-1950*, Oxford, 2011, p. 8ff.

³ **Lepsius J.**, *Der Todesgang des Armenischen Volkes. Bericht über das Schicksal des Armenischen Volkes in der Türkei während des Weltkrieges*, Potsdam, 1919.

⁴ “Another Chapter in Germany’s Confession of Turkish Guilt”, *New York, Tribune*. PA-AA, 27.7.1919, R 14106.

⁵ **Trumpe-ner U.**, op. cit., p. 204.

⁶ **Faiz El-Ghusein**, *Armenisches Märtyrertum*, *Der Orient*, Vol. 1921, n° 3.

⁷ **Lepsius J.**, *Deutschland und Armenien 1914-1918*, Vorwort, S. V.

⁸ **Hosfeld R., Pölking H.**, *Die Deutschen 1918 bis 1945. Leben zwischen Revolution und Katastrophe*, Munich, Zurich, 2006, S. 35.

genocide and its background. These documents are to this day a reliable testimony by which to assess what happened.

The book even played a role in the trial of Talaat Pascha's assassin. Talaat, who as Ottoman Minister of the Interior and later as Grand Vizier had been the mastermind behind the Armenian persecution, was murdered by the Armenian student Soghomon T'ehlerean at Berlin in spring of 1921. Based on a rather makeshift argument, the perpetrator was acquitted on grounds of temporary insanity at the time of the crime. In truth, though, the jurors had wanted to free him on account of the victim's heinous crimes.

Johannes Lepsius's most concise claim about the Armenian genocide originates from this trial, during which he served as court-appointed expert. Based on "German and Turkish documents", he drew the conclusion "that the general deportation had been decided by the Young Turk Committee" and executed with the help of its organization, whose leading figure was Talaat. The aim was to destroy everything that was not considered purely Turkish in a racial sense, as he explained during questioning by the defense¹. He was aware of the right-wing nationalist modernity and systematicity of this genocide, as can be seen from his explicit reference to the Pan-German movement² whose radical-antisemitic wing was garnering attention at the time by engaging in political murders.

According to the *New York Times*, it was his expertise on which the Berlin Court based its conclusion that it had been the leaders of the Turkish government during World War I that had been "solely responsible for turning the deportations into a blood bath"³. Lepsius had obtained material from the 1919-1921 Istanbul trials of war criminals⁴. These documents confirmed the analytical conclusions at which he had originally arrived in his 1919 collection of diplomatic documents *Deutschland und Armenien* as well as in *Bericht über die Lage des armenischen Volkes in der Türkei*, penned under the régime of military censorship in 1915/1916.

According to this evidence, it was now beyond a doubt that the Turkish government had pursued a policy of extermination against the Armenians and that German leadership had been well informed about those matters. Most importantly, though, the full scope and every detail of what Lepsius had uncovered during the war – mainly through clandestine investigative research – was now proven to be true.

The Armenian genocide was the well-organised project of the Young Turk party's radical-nationalist wing. Motivated by the exceptional circumstances of the World War, their intention was to rid the country of an ethnically defined "enemy within". In

¹ **Wegner A. T.** (Ed.), *Der Prozess Talaat Pascha*. Stenographischer Bericht, Berlin, 1921, S. 56, S. 60f.

² *Ibid.*, p. 61.

³ **Montgomery G. R.**, *Why Talaat's Assassin was Acquitted*, in: *New York Times Current History*, July 1921. In his expert opinion, Lepsius presented openly available publications from the Ottoman *Journal Officiel* about the Istanbul court-martials. He had originally intended to include Talaat Pascha's extermination depeches that had recently been published at Paris by Armenian Aram Andonian and the title *Documents officiels concernant les massacres arméniens*. The authenticity of these documents, however, has been strongly contested by historians for a long time. They did not in fact play any part in the trial. See: **Hosfeld R.**, *Operation Nemesis. Die Türkei, Deutschland und der Völkermord an den Armeniern*, Cologne, 2005, p. 26 ff.

⁴ **Akçam T.**, *Armenien und der Völkermord*, as well as **Dadrian V. N. & Akçam T.**, *Judgement at Istanbul. The Armenian Genocide Trials*, New York, Oxford, 2011.

this respect, it set a dangerously modern precedent¹, paving the way for “artificial Migration Periods” in European politics². Johannes Lepsius the Theologian thought thoroughly along the lines of the political Historian’s secular discourse. Shortly after his death, George Peabody Gooch, editor of the *Contemporary Review* who later authored a remarkable monograph on Frederick the Great, christened Lepsius a “well-known Armenophile” of substantial powers of judgment³. Of course, Lepsius was first and foremost a Theologian. To him, though, Theology was less suited for analysing the world and more for providing a foundation of its ethical assessment and pacification.

Ռոլֆ Հուֆելդ – Յոհաննես Լեփսիուս. Հայոց ցեղասպանության առաջին պատմաբանը և նրա մարդասիրական գործունեությունը

Առաջին աշխարհամարտի տարիներին, անկախ այն բանից, թե որտեղ էր հիշատակվում կայսերական Գերմանիայի կառավարությանը միշտ վրդովմունք պատճառող Յոհաննես Լեփսիուսի անունը՝ Ռայխստագում թե շրջանառվող տեղեկություններում, այն առնչվում էր միայն Օսմանյան պետությունում ցեղասպանության ենթարկվող հայերին: Լեփսիուսը՝ իբրև մի մարդ, ում համար քաղաքականության ասպարեզում բարոյական չափանիշները ավելի կարևոր էին, քան ազգային շահերը, գերմանացիների մեջ բացառություն էր: Սկզբնական շրջանում նա հույս էր տածում, որ Գերմանիան կունենա Թուրքիայում իրավական պետություն ձևավորելուն նպաստող դերակատարում: Առնվազն 1915 թ. ամռանը, սակայն, նրա համար պարզ դարձավ, որ հակառակ գործընթաց է տեղի ունենում: 1916 թ., չնայած սպառնալից հետևանքներով հղի ռազմական գրաքննությանը, նա գաղտնի հրատարակեց և հասարակական շրջաններին առաքեց 300 էջից բաղկացած՝ «Թուրքիայում հայ ժողովրդի վիճակի մասին տեղեկագիրը» խորագրով իր աշխատությունը, ինչը քաղաքացիական արիության բացառիկ օրինակ էր: Առ այսօր զարմանք ու հիացմունք են պատճառում Լեփսիուսի օգտագործած մեծաթիվ սկզբնաղբյուրները, ինչպես նաև թուրքերի դիտավորություններին առնչվող նրա դիպուկ և հստակ վերլուծությունները: Կանադացի պատմաբան Ուլրիխ Տրումպեները դեռևս 1968 թ. այդ գիրքն անվանել է պատմագրական տեղեկությունների՝ Հայոց ցեղասպանությանը վերաբերող լավագույն համադրություն: Լեփսիուսի տեղեկագիրը բացառում է օսմանյան իշխանությունների կողմից հայ ժողովրդի տեղահանության «միջոցառումը»՝ որպես ոչ կանխամտածված գործողություն որակելու հանգամանքը: Ինչպես պարզաբանվում է, խոսքը վերաբերում էր ներքաղաքական մի ծրագրի, որում սառնասրտորեն ու սթափ հաշվրկով նախատեսվում էին հետևողականորեն իրականացնել հայ ժողովրդի ոչնչացումը և որպես վերջնական նպատակ օսմանյան հայրենիք հորջորջվող տարածքների վերջնական թրքացումը:

¹ Lepsius to Weckeser, 2 December 1922. LAP 141-1555 (1).

² **Lepsius J.**, Der umgekehrte Kreuzzug. Der Orient, Vol. 1922, n° 8/12, S. 101.

³ **Gooch G. P.**, Recent Revelations of European Diplomacy, London, 1927, p. 130.

Рольф Хосфельд – Йоганнес Лепсиус. Первый историк Геноцида армян и его гуманитарная деятельность

В годы Первой мировой войны, независимо от того, где бы не упоминалось имя Йоганнеса Лепсиуса, вечно вызывающее гнев правительства Германии – в Рейхстаге или новостях, оно всегда ассоциировалось с армянами, подвергаемыми геноциду в Османской империи. Как человек, для которого моральные критерии в сфере политики важнее, чем национальные интересы, он был исключением среди немцев. В начальный период он надеялся, что Германия будет играть роль, поощряющую формирование правового государства в Турции. Однако летом 1915 г., для него стало ясно, что идет обратный процесс. В 1916 г., несмотря на угрозы военной цензуры, он тайно опубликовал и выслал общественным кругам свой 300-страничный труд, озаглавленный «Справочник о положении армянского народа в Турции», явившийся необычайным примером гражданского мужества. До сих пор вызывают удивления многочисленные источники, использованные Лепсиусом, а также его безошибочные и четкие замечания. Канадский историк Улрих Трумпенер еще в 1968 году назвал эту книгу лучшим сборником историографических материалов, касающихся Геноцида армян. Труд Лепсиуса исключает квалификацию «мероприятия» по депортации армянского народа османскими властями как непреднамеренное действие. Как разъясняется, речь идет о внутривластной программе, предусматривающей последовательное хладнокровное и рациональное уничтожения армянского народа, что в свою очередь преследовало окончательную цель насильно тюркизировать территории, называемые османской родиной.