

provinces, to their death in the Nazi camps. The Hungarians continued to dream of a 'Greater Hungary' until the military defeat at end of the war (and some of them perhaps keep imagining the restoration of Hungary in its pre-1918 borders even today).

Moving on to the second theme, Segal believes that a 'shared society' prevailed in Ruthenia until 1914: 'The brutal years of World War I that brought this period to a close offer important insights that can help us to understand the later acute crisis that culminated in social disintegration and destruction of Jewish life' (19). Modernity and the introduction of the imperialist Czech regime in late 1918 destroyed this peaceful co-existence: 'As nationalists, along with other modern currents, crept into Subcarpathian Rus' after World War I, their activities slowly soured relations between Carpatho-Ruthenes and Jews' (26). As a consequence there was little to no help provided by the Ruthenians to the Jews when the Hungarians unleashed genocidal violence after 1941. Various historians have recently suggested that the idealistic, largely Czech-propagated, vision of a benevolent Prague regime warrants revision. On the other hand, Segal's argument about imported violence and the destruction of the idealistic society from the outside requires more evidence. Segal largely overlooks possible religious sources of inter-community tensions in Subcarpathian Rus' before 1914 and the existence of religious anti-Judaism. Furthermore, even if there was no overt conflict, can we find examples of deep social contacts and interactions (for example, in the form of intermarriages)? Moreover, his later analysis of Ruthenian bystanders during the Holocaust, although offering a strong theoretical anchor, often does not deliver sufficient evidence from primary sources about the events in Ruthenia. The debated examples mostly deal with Hungarians' behaviour and far less with the responses among the Ruthenians. Lastly, Segal examines developments in the region over a long time period, but he remains relatively conservative to my taste. He could have extended the narrative beyond the 'year zero' of 1945. It is indeed the immediate aftermath that helps to shed light on the behaviour of 'bystanders' during the war.

Despite my minor criticisms, Segal has made a lasting contribution to the fields of Eastern European history, Holocaust studies and inter-ethnic relations in the twentieth century. Upper level undergraduates and others will benefit from his findings.

George N. Shirinian, ed., *Genocide in the Ottoman Empire: Armenians, Assyrians, and Greeks, 1913–1923*, Berghahn: Oxford, 2017; 444 pp., 8 illus.; 9781785334320, £49.00 (hbk)

Vahé Tachjian, *Daily Life in the Abyss: Genocide Diaries, 1915–1918*, Berghahn: Oxford, 2017; 220 pp., 15 illus., 1 map; 9781785334948, £78.00 (hbk)

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What is it that we still need to research and know about the Armenian genocide? Two new, very different books shed light on aspects of the genocide that have been

overlooked, and thereby manage to make a solid contribution to the scholarship on this subject.

From the 1970s on, the shorthand 'Armenian Genocide' became entrenched in academic studies and popular representations, as scholars came to use it without properly questioning the broader range of victims like Assyrians and Greeks, thereby potentially 'unremembering' their victimization. In recent years this trend has changed. Edited volumes by Tessa Hofmann (2010) and Matthias Bjørnlund (2011) have sketched, with precise empirical strokes, a more complex picture of Christian victimization in the Ottoman Empire during World War I. George Shirinian, Executive Director of the Zoryan Institute, the Toronto-based Armenian research, education and advocacy centre, has edited *Genocide in the Ottoman Empire* to critique and nuance conventional understandings of the 1915 destruction of the Ottoman Armenians.

The book contains three main sections: 'Contexts', 'Documentation and Eyewitness Accounts', and 'Legacies and Interpretations', with 14 chapters on a range of issues: case studies of Assyrians, testimony, Australian documents, American eyewitness accounts, a contemporary Greek journalist, the Smyrna holocaust, Raphael Lemkin's views, comparisons, and legal and social-psychological approaches. The analyses seem to converge on the position that we are dealing with a complex picture of Ottoman Christian victimization: in some provinces, all Christians were targeted from the outset; in other provinces, only Armenians were; again in others, a mosaic of persecution fluctuated throughout the First World War. Yes, the Armenians were singled out across the vast country for complete annihilation, and yes, although not necessarily planned by Istanbul, the mass murder of Assyrians quantitatively and qualitatively meets the criteria for genocide too, by any definition. The Ottoman Greeks vanished within a decade from Thrace, Anatolia and the Black Sea region; by any reasonable definition that fits within this historical moment of genocidal destruction. Like most genocides, the World War I Ottoman one was a multi-layered, chequered process of destruction with a broad range of victims.

One cannot do justice here to the entire edited volume, but one of the most original chapters is by Ellene Phufas, on the little-known Greek journalist Kostas Faltaitis. Faltaitis was a journalist embedded with the Greek army, and recorded testimonies of displaced survivors in his book *These are the Turks: First-Hand Survivor Accounts of the Massacres in Nicomedia* (1921). Especially his unpublished diary notes are a historical treasure trove, as they do not just document the Kemalist massacres of Greek villagers in great detail, but also decry the Greek government's handling of the whole crisis. His story reminds one of Vassili Grossman's, the Soviet-Jewish author who travelled with the Soviet army in World War II and recorded a plethora of atrocities committed by Nazis and Soviets.

The book in general recognizes the real differences between the three cases, and distinguishes between, for example, Pontic Greeks and the western Anatolian Greek population. In Greece, Pontic communities have long struggled to have their experiences fully acknowledged. The aftermath of the Ottoman

*Urkatastrophe* also diverged: whereas the Greek nation state blossomed and joined NATO and the EU, Assyrians did not enjoy the protection of statehood, and Armenians had to wait until the collapse of the Soviet Union. For the genocide itself, a key conclusion would be that many historical sources including interviews with Assyrian survivors suggest that genocidal intent among the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) elite was strongest towards the Armenians.

It is entirely legitimate to focus on the mass violence against Ottoman Christians in the period 1914–1924. But the book seems to bracket off the violence against Christians and inadvertently disregard the violence against non-Turkish Muslims as well as against Yazidis. Then again, one can broaden the periodization to include the decades of Kemalist massacres of Kurds, including in Koçgiri (1921), Diyarbakir (1925), Sassoun, Ararat (1930) and Dersim (1938). Then again, none of the violence discussed in this book can be properly understood without taking into account the expulsion and destruction of Muslims in the Balkans during the twin wars of 1912–1913, the harsh Armenian/Russian occupation regime against Kurds in the East, and the Greek massacres of Turks during their military occupation of Western Anatolia. This is not to fudge the issue, find false equivalence, or divert attention, but to trace causalities, find contexts, and study consequences. All of this, at the end of the day, is part and parcel of the violent collapse of the Ottoman Empire in that disastrous decade.

It would be an ironic statement to make that Syria once was a country that took in refugees. During the 1915 Armenian genocide, hundreds of thousands of Ottoman Armenians were poured into Syria and ended up in cities like Hama, Damascus, Salamiyya, and others. They marched, died and survived in the deserts, cities and towns of Syria, and later formed the backbone of the Armenian communities of the Levant, including especially Aleppo and Beirut. In the past decade, many memoirs and diaries have been published that have shed light on those deportees' experiences, but what was sorely needed was a thorough study of the genre of genocide diary. How did people survive under the direst of circumstances? The lives of these deportees (the word 'refugee' does not really capture their personal and collective experiences) are a topic of concern to World War I historians and experts of the late Ottoman Empire, as well as specialists of genocide.

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Vahé Tachjian has written a thoughtful, nuanced and powerful study of survival centring on the lives two Armenian diarists from the period: the priest Der Nerses Tavukjian and Krikor Boghorian, both from Aintab (present-day Gaziantep). Their diaries are by no means unique among the plethora of materials contemporary Armenian survivors have written, but they are particularly devastating in their emotional honesty as the authors experienced and survived genocide. Tavukjian was a solemn, pious older man, whose belief in God was shaken by his cumulative

experience, for example when he buried 8000 dead Armenians in Hama. His diaries offer an excellent insight into how the most eloquent of men could be dumbstruck by the endless brutality of the genocide. Boghorian was a multi-talented teenage bookworm when the genocide uprooted his family, which set out on the deportation caravan with their valuables, including a cart full of their books – an act of astounding naiveté.

Tavukjian and Boghorian experience clear moments of disenchantment, even despondency, for example when Tavukjian writes in his diary on 9 October 1916: ‘Can it be that the sons and daughters of the Armenian Church, after worshipping Christ for fifteen hundred years, are destined to perish in Arabia’s depths? Enough’ (23). Boghorian desperately tries to keep up a modicum of normality, but he too is deeply shaken by his experiences, especially when his father is taken away. The main themes in the diaries are fear, agony, epidemics, food shortages, poverty, deaths of loved ones, and the moral decline that Armenians experienced towards the end of the war: sexual relations became less regulated, conversions to Islam (temporary or not) became more common. These painful parts of the survival narrative are generally silenced or airbrushed in post-war renditions of the genocide, which were often crafted as a moral dichotomy of heroes versus martyrs.

Tachjian, knee-deep in monkish work on the genre of the Armenian genocide diary, develops a fine-grained analysis and argues that Armenians’ survival strategies ranged from intra-community mutual assistance to intra-family mutual assistance. The former relates to how Armenian compatriots from one region (e.g. Erzerum) would stick together and pass around privilege, at the expense of other Armenians. The latter refers to the increasing importance of kinship throughout the genocide. Indeed, one of the key issues was the persistent attempt to keep families together, in the face of ruthless government policies to divide Armenian families horizontally (by separating husbands from wives) and vertically (by separating parents from children). Tachjian has a sharp eye for detail, and *Daily Life in the Abyss* offers microhistory at its best. The book contains crucial ethnographic details about the social history of Syria in World War 1, including, for example, on the Ismaili community of Salamiyya and the fate of its young army defectors.

There are a couple of important takeaways from these diaries. First and foremost, to what extent were these witnesses aware of the scale of the genocide? How did they situate themselves in the greater catastrophe, and situate that catastrophe in the world? The diaries strongly suggest that Bogharian became keenly aware of the intentional mass destruction of Armenians, and Tavukjian observes that whereas all Armenians suffer, those from Eastern Anatolia (the ‘Armenian plateau’) are much worse off than his fellow countrymen from Cilicia. And both of them hear of the massacres in the eastern town of Der ez-Zor, the place name itself a synonym for the extermination of Armenians. Their diaries ultimately converge on one and the same conclusion as the most important thing: staying alive.