

“ON ARARAT ALONE, NO ARK CAN REST.” BEYOND MORGENTHAU: JEWS, SOCIAL DEMOCRATS, AND JEWISH SOCIAL DEMOCRATS: ALLIANCES AND SOLIDARITY DURING THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE EPOCH

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Of all the many elements that resound and confound as similar between the overwhelming record of historical oppression endured by the Armenians and the Jews, perhaps the most telling is the echo of silence in the wider world during their hour of greatest need. As is well known, the record of Ambassador Morgenthau is a telling counterpoint to the dismaying lack of voices raised at critical junctures. It is my intention here to profile in brief other cases of Jews, from Bernard Lazare of France to Israel Zangwill of England who voiced solidarity and even sought to forge alliance with Armenians. Particular attention will be paid to the German Social Democrats Eduard Bernstein and Hugo Haase, who seceded from their party during the war years, in part, so that they could speak out with their colleagues against the Armenian Genocide. I argue that what united these figures was their progressive inclination and embrace of a discourse of human rights which often entailed a critique of nationalism, specifically mainstream Zionism. The case of the Independent Social Democrats in Germany in particular forms an overlooked corrective to a historiography of German opposition to the Armenian Genocide that has largely focused on the voices of church activists. Before turning to these case studies that broke a silence all too pervasive on the events of the Caucasian Frontline of World War I, I would like to explore the variations and forms this silence takes.

Variations on a Theme of Silence

Jews and Armenians, as has been noted by numerous astute observers, share a myriad of cultural traits acquired through an anomalous and often tragic historical experience.¹ Claimed poetically as both people of dreams, long with imagination but without territory.² Diaspora peoples dispossessed of sovereignty, clinging to a religious tradition distinct from their environment, in the recent era world both emerged as mediators of modernity especially in the economy and the arts and appeared poised to enter even an unprecedented golden age of prosperity before being felled by genocide. Arguably, the one outstanding

1. The inverse is also true as prejudiced outsiders often viewed negatively these shared traits. Though this is largely a study on Jewish solidarity with persecuted Armenians the co-implication of Antiarminism with Antisemitism in Germany is an equally vital yet distinct field of research.

2. Peter Balakian, *Black Dog of Fate: A Memoir: An American Son Uncover his Armenian Past* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 133.

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weakness that proved to be their undoing was the lack of a tradition of political thought in recent history, as it could hardly otherwise be for peoples for whom sovereignty is at best a distant historical memory. Due to their aspirational cultural affiliations and their predicament as minorities, what Ernst Bloch called the “hope principle” defined their fragile state to an outsized extent. Such faith in the outside world, one is tempted to retrospectively refer to it as a “hope against hope,” was lodged largely and similarly in the Anglo-American democracies for the defense of rights and in the Russian states for sheer physical protection. As these powers at critical moments did not intervene, the unmitigated oppression and deadly attention they received from Turkish and German powers only magnified the silence of the great powers in their hour of greatest need.

The historical record is filled with not only easily accessible media reports but also official pronouncements of western governments condemning the actions that amounted to genocide. Indeed, the propensity and repetition in the pursuit and consumption of media reports throughout the war in the Allied press may even be termed a sort of voyeuristic silence. Such official declarations of sympathy or horror echoed from an early point in time from which concerted intervention may have decisively altered the course of events saving the lives of scores of potential victims. In the case of the Caucasian frontline, the Turkish authorities would impound embassy cables and negatives while imposing an interdiction on photography by anyone related to the Bagdad rail company and in the entire deportation area, i.e. the province of Ottoman Syria. Yet leaders would also boast of crimes ongoing to foreign officials in a manner unknown among the German perpetrators decades later. Such careful management of the image has left a scant photographic record that one may refer to as a kind of visual silence.

As official declarations as a rule did not have action as a consequence one may identify within such speech a kind of cynical silence that echoes through. Additionally, such expressions were rarely conveyed by officials with decision making power, or if they were, were never in the context of a decisive policy change. What one might call the great silence, the failure to act and intervene, continues to be vigorously contested among historians in the case of the Holocaust as a spate of new works about of Franklin D. Roosevelt have made clear. Setting aside rationalizations of logistical complication one may wonder if this kind of silence is a “pretend” silence as in “they know enough but prefer not to know more” which emanates out of a lack of investment in caring or in evaluating the importance of the matter. There is a more sinister variation, namely, that this may be a manipulative silence, a holding pattern designed to let the destruction take its course. Speculatively, one may claim that the Allies recognized the scope, aim and outcome of genocide, and saw it either as collateral damage for a new world order and their ultimate victory or in fact sought to manage the outcome in view of their own role in eventual reconstruction. An eyewitness in the Ottoman Empire, Heinrich Vierbücher, the German pacifist with a Social Democratic background, astutely summarized the careful and cunning reaction of German officials fully aware of the crimes as they unfolded. He referred to the upsetting mixture of “*Empörung und Verständnis*” what one might translated as indignant understanding, the latter modifying the former element as feigned to no small degree.³

3. Heinrich Vierbücher, *Armenien 1915: Die Abschlachtung eines Kulturvolkes durch die Turken* (Ham-

In his manuscript for a monograph on the Armenian Genocide, the East European Jewish jurist, Raphael Lemkin echoes consistently the theme of the western world as silent bystander. Beginning with earlier massacres, he writes:

The concert of Europe did nothing. It accepted the situation. The emperor of Germany went farther. He sent a special embassy to present to the sultan a portrait of his family as a token of his esteem.⁴

Lemkin here sounds not only his deep conviction in the crucial silence of the west, but also his belief in a German origin for the crime, a position he supports via citation of several German memoirs, a further factor of complication and debate with the historiography on the Genocide.

About the period of the wartime genocide, he records:

The war conditions afforded the Turks the opportunity they had long awaited to destroy the Christian Armenians and they believed that once this destruction was an accomplished fact their crime would be condoned, or at least overlooked, as was done in the case of the massacres of 1895-6, when the great powers did not even reprimand the sultan. Allied with Germany, who apparently fully approved of the Turkish plan the leaders felt they had nothing to fear from Europe at the end of the war, which they were convinced would be won by Germany.⁵

The suggestive silence at work here is filled in by the imagination of genocide. It is marked by the absence to create a credible alternative. As not just among perpetrators, but also the western powers and even the victims themselves could all too easily imagine the onset of genocide, this kind of weighty silence only serviced this process of accommodation.

Indeed, events preceding formal orders of deportation and mass killing clearly suggested and created the mental space wherein the next murderous phase could be anticipated. Here I am referring, as Lemkin described the spoliation and expropriations in service of the Caucasian frontline of the Turkish military. He used statement of a German eyewitness in Moush, who writes,

Every Turk was free to go to an Armenian shop and take out what he needed or thought he would like to have. Only a tenth perhaps was really for the war, the rest was pure robbery, which was carried to the front on the Caucasian frontier...⁶

burg-Bergedorf: Fackelreiter-Verlag, 1930), 35.

4. Raphael Lemkin, “Turkish Massacres of Armenians,” American Jewish Historical Archives, Center for Jewish History, New York, Raphael Lemkin Collection, box 8, folder 14.

5. Ibid, 19.

6. Lemkin, 57. On this also see, Moush- statement by a German eye-witness of occurrences at Moush; communicated by the American committee for Armenian and Syrian relief in Viscount Bryce and Arnold Toynbee, *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire: Documents Presented to Viscount Grey of Fallodon, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs by Viscount Bryce*, ed. Ara Sarafian (London: Gomidas Institute, 2005, originally 1916), 124-127.

And the image of the victims transporting their own wares to their assassins brings us to the last form of silence I would like to present before examining some critical instances of speech action.

The following is taken from among Lemkin’s own notes:

One day early we heard the procession of those doomed victims. Their misfortune was indescribable. They were in absolute silence—the young and old, even grandfathers advancing under such burdens as even their assess could hardly carry.⁷

This silence of the victims is the silence that echoes in response to the external silences of the bystander here elucidated. One might refer to it as the black hole center around which all other silences orbit. Stunned into this silence by an awareness of the greater silences that enabled their own, one may refer to this silence as both numbing and numbed, as if the victims can no longer bear the deafening silence that has brought them to their fate, as if they are already one stage removed from the sensory perceptions that make up the accepted norm of human experience.

At least some victims of this and later genocides were forced to submit to a regime of silence that rendered their death more total than that arguably reserved by natural law without human interference. For arguably, a person is not truly dead as long as their memory lives on in the psyche of their descendants or at least in the form of personal effects left on among a larger community. The eradication of whole inter-generational life worlds unique to genocide means that at least some of the victims, those without descendants or surviving relatives, or those whose meager possessions were destroyed or dispersed without a pursuable trail, experience a silence in death so total as to almost reverse a natural order instituted by human evolution. Due to the form of death suffered it is as if they never lived, creating a kind of black hole of life that hovers over and shadows the after world. This is what we may refer to as an epic silence, where there is no one left to remember and there are no signs that remark and remind humanity if they had ever existed.

This brings us to the final or meta-silence; the one that cannot respond because no human or other sensory faculties were evolved to adequately account for something so horrific that it overwhelms our capacity to process and relate. Genocide as the black hole of evolution reveals an unforeseen negation of life; the expression of that destruction similarly renders all expressive developed human capacity mute.

This silence after the fact is the one that has emerged in the post-Holocaust discourse that seeks to probe the limits of representation. Saul Friedländer, for instance, has been concerned with the gap between knowledge and comprehension offered as a plausible explanatory framework for the silence of the bystander during the Holocaust, this gap is arguably merely presumed, a heuristic device. By that I mean it reflects a desire to presume such a horror on all sides when confronting events so beyond normal limits, that silence is the only possible reaction, as there are no words that can grasp the transpired. For it is a matter of the historical record that there was greater media attention, public outcry and overall representation of

events in Armenia of the Caucasus Front of the First World War, then in Nazi-Occupied Europe of the Second.⁸ This is all the more startling as it occurred at a greater distance in time and geography, during an earlier age of the technology of media development, and impacted overall a smaller number, though not proportion, of people. This incongruity and the overall widely accepted belated recognition of events has forced scholars to consider the silence that emerges at the limits of representation. Though often considered as a phenomenon and concept that emerged as a belated recognition after decades of scholarly neglect, I know of no better formulation of this problem than that from the German pacifist Heinrich Vierbücher, who spent three years of the First World War in the Ottoman Empire as an interpreter for the German general Otto Liman von Sanders. This astute summary of the crisis of representation posed to the eyewitness deserves reproduction in full:

Es bleibt bei allen Deutungsversuchen, bei Einsetzung der Faktoren Mordlust, Raubgier, Religionshaß, Herrschsucht und Dummheit, noch so viel des Unbegreiflichen übrig, daß uns die Tragödie von 1915 als das blutigste und unheimlichste aller Rätsel der Geschichte erscheinen muß. In aller Ewigkeit bleibt hier der Schulweisheit ein Rest, der unerträglich ist.⁹

[So much remains inconceivable after all the attempts of interpretation, so that the tragedy of 1915 must appear as the most bloody and uncanny of all the riddles of history. An unbearable residue will remain for all times, which conventional wisdom will forever confront.]¹⁰

If genocide is indeed the ultimate riddle of history, then silence is its necessary herald and distinguishing feature while also serving as an indictment.

Jews and Social Democracy Converge: Those that Pierced the Silence

Present throughout these earlier remarks is the rather widely accepted contention of the historical parallel between the Armenians in the First World War and the Jews in the Second. Indeed by the time the configuration of circumstances necessary for the Holocaust existed, say around 1939, for at least informed observers, the link was obvious and active

8. This fact is well elucidated in Peter Balakian, *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America’s Response* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009), 17 and 282; yet the fact of widespread knowledge does not perforce give rise to sympathy and support as noted at the time by Israel Zangwill. A playwright and voracious consumer of all media reports was still at pains to maintain that contrasted with Belgium and even the Jews during the First World War, Armenians were left uniquely alone. “But Belgium had almost all the world for her friends, and the faith in restoration went before her exiles like a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Even the Jews of the Pale – torn and tossed between the alternate victors – found a helping hand, and begin to behold some faint gleam of Zion upon the political horizon. On Ararat alone no Ark can rest.” See Israel Zangwill, *The Voice of Jerusalem* (New York: Macmillan, 1921), 367.

9. Heinrich Vierbücher, *Armenien 1915: Die Abschachtung eines Kulturvolkes durch die Turken* (Hamburg-Bergedorf: Fackelreiter-Verlag, 1930), 60.

10. Translation into English by the author.

7. Lemkin, 61.

on a variety of levels. The legacy of Ambassador Morgenthau for instance, which I shall briefly revisit was forefront in his son, Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau’s mind as he sought with difficulty to convince his boss, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, in the difficult negotiations that led to the creation of the War Refugee Board in the latter stages of the Holocaust.¹¹ Such historical echoing as this would soon prove abundantly clear for the victims themselves, as the noted popularity of Werfel’s *Forty Days of Musa Dagh* in the ghettos attests. The case of parallelism, in the context of the onset and promulgation of the Holocaust, one may refer to as structural and historical. This needn’t have been and cannot assumed to have been, further informed by specific political values or by a conviction of the shared historical experience of Armenians and Jews. Here was an instance of historical haunting, a return of the repressed, of the especially feared heart of darkness of the modern nation state, genocide.

At the historical moment that is our focus beginning in the winter of 1914, the terrible awareness of affinity informed the actions of more than just Ambassador Morgenthau, who after all represented a neutral power, and whose Jewish sensibilities were further divided by concern for the fledgling communities in Ottoman Palestine. Much has been made of the role and involvement of Ambassador Morgenthau, whose personal concern for the plight of the Armenians is beyond question. One should be reminded at the outset, that he was representing a power elite that was self-consciously protestant and had barely begun to allow Jews into the ranks of the elite. Morgenthau also only reluctantly fulfilled because it had developed the distinct character of a “token” appointment for Jews, and that the focus of his efforts was relief and recovery rather than obstruction or intervention.¹² Furthermore he was by many accounts woefully underprepared for the challenge he faced, without prior knowledge or training in the region. While he had at one point proposed an evacuation plan for genocide survivors to California during the war, after his term ended, there is no evidence of further endeavor for US intervention against Turkey to halt the second phase of the genocide.¹³ Nevertheless from the start of his ambassadorship, he displayed a unique affinity for Armenians. While he apparently was concerned about the problems surrounding American missionary activities, and Ottoman policies of anti-Semitism in Palestine, the problem that preoccupied him the most was the Armenian Question.¹⁴ It would be the Ambassador’s grandson who would bring to the surface the implicit association that animated Morgenthau’s sense of mission:

The Armenian presence in both of these opposing empires (Ottoman and Russian) appeared to have many parallels with the Jewish presence, among the opposing nations of Eastern Europe. As alien minorities, essentially

11. Yair Auron, *The Banality of Indifference: Zionism and the Armenian Genocide* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2000), 8.

12. Regarding his hesitance in taking up the appointment see Henry Morgenthau Sr. *All in a Lifetime*, (Garden City: Doubleday, Paige & Co., 1922), *out of print*, 160, copy archived with the YIVO Institute, Center for Jewish History, New York.

13. Simon Payaslian, *US Policy toward the Armenian Question and the Armenian Genocide* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan), 2005, 85.

14. Balakian, *Burning Tigris*, 17.

powerless in themselves, both the Jews and the Armenians were always being accused of traitorous collaboration by the governments that ruled them.¹⁵

Morgenthau after all was preceded and succeeded in his position, by fellow German Reform Jews who only uneasily and gradually had found themselves wearily welcomed into the halls of power in Washington. Additionally, their cultural and religious sensibilities set them at a distance; one often marked by suspicion from the wider Jewish communities, especially by the newly politicized nationalists, known as Zionists. In the Jewish world as elsewhere, nationalism bred an uncompromising and often myopic outlook, focused on the singularity of their group and threatened by any force of possible conflicting comparison or distraction.

In the cases lesser-known than Morgenthau of Jewish outreach for the Armenian cause this emerges as a consistent theme, the tension between those inclined to nationalism and those to Social Democracy, which ultimately overrides simple Jewish solidarity as well as standard interpretations of how to respond to the political predicament of Jews in the modern world. It is historically significant that the primary nemesis of the founder of modern political Zionism, Theodor Herzl, was an activist on the board of the French journal *Pro Armenia*, Bernard Lazare. Lazare was committed to liberation and self-emancipation, goals though that he could not see appropriately fulfilled or pursued within the context of the Zionist movement. Hannah Arendt saw in Lazare one who consciously accepted pariah status in order to rebel against it, to become a champion of oppressed people as part and parcel of that which all the downtrodden must struggle.¹⁶ Lazare did not seek an exodus from the anti-Semites, but rather comrades-in-arms, among the oppressed groups, and implicit here is that he viewed the Armenians as chief amongst them.¹⁷ Unlike Herzl, he did not view anti-Semitism as peculiar or eternal; but rather symptomatic of the collapse of moral values under imperialism. This was chiefly in evidence by the shameful complicity of the great powers in pogroms against Jews and massacres among Armenians.¹⁸ A self-confessed anarchist, nominally involved with the socialist movement, Lazare found the miserable error, if not a founding stain, of the first Zionist Congress at Basel 1896, the letter of solidarity sent by Herzl to Abdul Hamid, known as the “red sultan.”¹⁹ So solidarity with the Armenians rather became the breaking point between Herzl and Lazare, the issue upon which the divergent conceptions of struggle were most manifest. Herzl’s shameless, and ultimately fruitless, pandering to the Sultan was symptomatic of a political method that sought to placate or even ally with the leaders of imperialism, and that put little stake in the mobilization of the downtrodden themselves.

15. Ibid, 18; on this see also, Some scholars have claimed Morgenthau to have been more animated by the struggles of Jews in the US, see Simon Payaslian, *US Policy*, 38.

16. Hannah Arendt, *The Jew as Pariah*, ed. Ron H. Feldman (New York: Grove Press, 1978), 108.

17. Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, ed. Jerome Kahn and Ron H. Feldman (New York: Random House, 2009), 340.

18. Ibid

19. Yair Auron, *The Banality of Indifference*, 105.

A further major dissension from Herzl, this time from within the Zionist fold, took the shape of Israel Zangwill and his “Jewish Territorialist Organization.” A playwright who had coined the term “melting pot,” seceded from the movement over the focus on Palestine a destination he believed would inevitably instigate conditions of civil war. He thus set out in pursuit of fanciful destinations empty of current inhabitants including Cyrenaica, Uganda, and parts of Canada and Australia. Striking though is that this shift away occurred along with Zangwill’s anointing upon the Armenians a status he previously reserved for Jews in the wake of the World War I genocide. He dedicated the last pages of *Voice of Jerusalem* to the Armenians who, he wrote, had in the 1915 genocide earned “the crown of thorns” that had previously belonged to the Jews.²⁰ Such a proclamation emanated from a conviction in the “sisterhood” of Jews and Armenians central to the outlook of this progressive thinker. He viewed the two as the oldest surviving nationalities from the ancient world, who uniquely persisted either without a sovereign territory or outside one.²¹

Written during the War, Zangwill’s reflections on the crisis of Armenia stirred him to ever-greater urgency in his pursuit of a refuge for the Jews however far-flung. What he had witnessed even at a great distance had shocked him that in this most modern era the primitive instincts inside the human could return with a vengeance. He wrote of the “diabolism of human nature...that returns to that prehistoric animal nature through which the soul has slowly struggled.”²² He compiled these wartime writings into a book that took an explicitly Jewish theme, entitled *The Voice of Jerusalem*. This renders Zangwill’s dedicatory epilogue to Armenia all the more startling. Designed as if to make maximum impact on the reader, after numerous wide-ranging ruminations on the Jews he signs off with an almost monumental, quasi-religious laudation to the Armenians. Departing from the premise of the conjoined fate of Armenians and Jews, Zangwill’s rhetoric is that of a mental revision, upon which he brings the reader to experience the process for themselves. He also makes an important reference to the post-war failed attempt to establish an American mandate for Armenia in which many Jews were closely involved, including Morgenthau and Stephen S. Wise.²³ Yet for Zangwill, a progressive dissenter to the Zionist movement, one may interpret this epilogue further as an inoculation against provincialism, and perhaps as a reminder not only to uniquely focus on the plight of the Armenians as a kind of specifically Jewish mandate, but also not to simply focus exclusively on oneself. Unique in their isolation in their suffering, Zangwill’s words bear repeating in part:

...On Ararat alone no Ark can rest. For Armenia alone there is the cry without answer: “Watchman, what of the night?”

20. Meri-Jane Rochelson, *The Jews in the Public Arena: The Career of Israel Zangwill* (Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 2008), 210.

21. Israel Zangwill, *Principle of Nationalities. Conway Memorial Lecture, Delivered at South Place Institute, 8 March 1917* (New York: Macmillan, 1917), 42.

22. Israel Zangwill, *Voice of Jerusalem* (New York: Macmillan, 1921), 367.

23. Other leading American Jews were also active and prominently placed on the American Committee for the Independence of Armenia represented at the Versailles Peace Talks including Oscar Strauss and Samuel Gompers.

For Armenia alone there is no “Mandatory” – she cannot find protection even in the lion’s den or the eagle’s nest. There is neither oil nor gold no aught worth the cost of defending her. The nations, eager to mother more oleaginous or aurate territories, so eager that they will be at one another’s throats rather than forgo their loving labour, here vie with one another only in their solicitousness to offer the task to America.

Sister-nations – I have been accustomed to think – the Armenians and the Jews. Both hail from sister-lands of the cradle of civilization, both come trailing clouds of glory from the purpleal days of Persia and Babylon, both have borne the shock of the ancient and medieval empires and of the militant migrations of their races, and both hold to their original faith; for if the one was the first preacher of Jehovah, the other was the first nation to profess Jesus. And sisters, too, in sorrow, I thought: exiled, scattered, persecuted, massacred.

Sisters in sooth, ye not equal in suffering. Hitherto, through the long centuries, the crown of martyrdom has been pre-eminently Israel’s. And as, day by day during this war of ours, there came to me by dark letter or whisper the tale of her woes in the central war-zone, I said to myself: “Surely the cup is full: surely no people on earth has such a measure of gall and vinegar to drain.”

But I was mistaken. One people is suffering more. That people, whose ancient realm held the legendary Eden, has now for abiding place the pit of Hell. I bow before this higher majesty of sorrow. I take the crown of thorns from Israel’s head and I place it upon Armenia’s.²⁴

German (Jewish) Social Democrats, Russia, Armenia and the Changing Tide of War Support

The retraction of initial support of the First World War by a select inner circle of leading German Social Democrats was perhaps the most dramatic such shift among any belligerent nation in the course of the conflict. Not only was Germany the strongest power opposing the Entente, but her Social Democratic party was also the largest in Europe both the most successful and the most persecuted, having only exited official prohibition a scant two decades earlier. Also significant is that this occurred at a fairly early stage in the war and was motivated by long-standing humanitarian and anti-imperialist concerns prominent amongst which was that of the plight of the Armenians. The figures upon whom I focus never fully embraced the war but kept party solidarity at least until June of 1915 when they began to speak outside the party against the war. By the spring of 1916 a separate anti-war parliamentary faction had been formed which culminated in the formation of a political party of secession in 1917.

It is a matter of continued contention among historians whether the key breaking point in the outbreak of the conflict was the ascension by European Social Democracy,

24. Israel Zangwill, *Voice of Jerusalem*, (New York: Macmillan, 1921), 368.

arguably the largest organized political force in the continent that could have obstructed war, to nationalist aggression over international solidarity. The betrayal taken as most acute in historiography is indeed that of the German Social Democratic party, the largest and most organized of the many of its kind, as if it alone had the power to stop the fall into catastrophe. I would suggest that one could claim that the early support for the war by the Social Democratic parliamentary faction signaled not assent to imperialism and reconciliation with the German *Machtstaat*, but rather something more akin to a war of humanitarian intervention as it has become known more common in our own time. The empire of the tsars cut a diabolical profile as it was widely seen as the chief enemy of democracy and as a superannuated behemoth whose dogged autocracy and suppression of nationalities and minorities.

In its persecution of Jews, it had also distinguished itself, which of course brought it to the particular attention of leading Jewish Social Democrats. The Jewish issue was not simply one facet of the complex political situation of Tsarist Russia but was rather seen by these German Jewish Social Democrats as its essence and the key to its larger comprehension. In no other matter did the Regime so distance itself from the rest of Europe, as a one Raphael Seligmann formulated it, ‘the singularity of the Tsarist regime is reflected in no other social phenomenon in such a clear and incisive manner, than in this unhappy matter.’ Seligmann comes to the conclusion that the persecution of the Jews belongs to the essence of Tsarism, the logical lesson to be derived from such an equation in a time of war would have been quite self-evident for his readers.²⁵ As Eduard Bernstein would later often reflect that from the Jewish perspective when war appeared ineluctable, its main force should be against Tsarist Russia.²⁶

Yet with Bernstein, one may observe instead a striking transformation, initial support for party solidarity during the summer crisis of 1914, but as the spring of 1915 followed with the western, imperialist expansion of the conflict and the violation of Belgian neutrality, the war diverted from its Russian focus, and Bernstein and others joined the anti-war camp. Though preceded by exceptional anti-war colleagues such as Karl Liebknecht, within two years as the war still raged, a separatist peace party had coalesced. Though the focus here will not be primarily a narrative of political engagement but rather on political imagination, it may be helpful to keep this historical development in mind. It is further notable

25. Himself an emigrant from the Russian Empire, Seligmann (1875-1943) wrote for Social Democratic publishing in both German and Yiddish.

26. See Ludiger Heid (ed.), *Eduard Bernstein: “Ich bin der letzte, der dazu schweigt” Texte in jüdische Angelegenheiten* (Potsdam: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 2004). Eduard Bernstein (1850-1932), the son of a locomotive driver, a profession, he would later write which secured his family acceptance in a neighborhood in Berlin where no other Jews lived. Bernstein and his family were active members in the Reform congregation on Johannistrasse where services were held on Sunday. A personal protégé of Marx and Engels, Bernstein spent 12 years in exile during the period of prohibition of the Social Democratic party from 1878-1890, first in Switzerland, then in England. Unique perhaps in the entire history of the movement is the extent to which he never forsook his Jewish identity, Jewish concerns or the outreach to alliance with both the Bund in Eastern Europe, the Workmen’s Circle in North America and the Poale Zion/Hashomer Hatzair in Palestine. Bernstein would even often publish with the New York Yiddish Communist paper *Tsukunft* or the Poale Zion affiliated Jewish Socialist Union, materials in Yiddish that never saw the light of day in German.

that half of Jewish fraction members seceded to found this anti-war party, one third of which was made up of Jews.

What I seek to demonstrate here is that the plight of the Armenians had been a long-standing concern for German Social Democrats to which they were especially sensitive given Imperial Germany’s increasingly close relationship with the Ottoman Empire.²⁷ Furthermore, the opposition to the war took the form of a principled stance against imperialism, into which opposition to the Armenian Genocide fit in context as a symptom of Turkish expansionist aims on the Caucasian Front. Finally, special attention will be paid to the figures of Eduard Bernstein and Hugo Haase who deserve a special place in the genealogy of progressive Jewish thinkers, after Lazare and Zangwill, who dissenting from mainstream Zionism, crafted a special engagement with the Armenian cause. As with the generation of Herzl and Lazare before him, Bernstein was similarly reproached by the leading Zionist of his day, Chaim Weizmann (later 1st president of Israel) for what one might term as his position as an “Armenianist” rather than as a Zionist.

To Bernstein goes the distinction, among all the individuals mentioned here, that a relatively early date he published a book dedicated entirely to political intervention on behalf of Armenia. As it represented the work of the first German author who related to human rights, instead of a religious language of Christian solidarity on behalf of Armenians, one may also call this intervention “humanitarian.” Entitled *Die Leiden des Armenischen Volkes und die Pflichten Europas*, it derived from an admonitory address given at a Social Democratic assembly in Berlin on the 26th of June, 1902.²⁸ It should also be noted that at the same time Bernstein was contributing to “Droshak”, the organ of the political party Armenian Revolutionary Federation in France. Encapsulated here are the principles that will later emerge as central to advocacy on behalf of Armenians during the genocide and as the related basis for opposition to an imperialist war aims.

For Bernstein the persecution of the Armenians was part of a larger system of domination inherent in the European imperial political system and part of the search for a minimum in democratic rights for all that said system had not yet truly fulfilled. He was further inspired to his words by confronting the silence he observed during the already unprecedented massacres of Armenians under the Sultan. Notably characterized as a *stoische Gleichgültigkeit* (stoic indifference) pronounced even in “democratic” circles, he referred to it as *beschämend* (shameful). Dismayed not only by the events themselves, but also the lack up to that point of protest from his own Social Democratic circles.²⁹ As a decisive counterpoint to this, Bernstein figured this breaking of the silence with such a volume as to echo in the

27. For examples of the large literature on this subject see Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). For an earlier publication one may consult Ulrich Truppener’s *Germany and the Armenian Persecutions* (Beirut: Hamaskaine Press, 1968). An important thesis of the same period is Wilhelm van Kampen’s “Studien zur deutschen Türkeipolitik in der Zeit Wilhelms II” (PhD diss., Christian-Albrechts-Universität, Kiel, 1968).

28. Eduard Bernstein, *Die Leiden Des armenischen Volkes und die Pflichten Europas*, (Berlin: Dr. John Edelman Verlag), 1902.

29. „als ich mich in jenen Tagen darüber entrüstete, daß unsererseits kein Wort des Protestes geäußert wurde,“. [As I was incensed that no word of protest was spoken in those days from our side], 29.

highest halls of the powers responsible.³⁰

And even at this early stage, Bernstein was well aware at what confront concerned observes, nothing less than the life and death of a people ("es handelt sich in der That hier um Leben und Sterben eines Volkes"). Historical conscious, he declares that such a process does signify a rupture with previous examples regardless of how far back one might probe.³¹ He further recognized their vexed state of dependency and hope oriented to the western powers. Against such persecution prophetically seen as genocidal ("...gegen Verfolgungen, die auf weiter nichts abzielen als das armenische Volk als Nation ganz und gar vom Erdboden verschwinden zu machen") ("...against persecution, that aims at nothing less than causing the disappearance of the Armenian people as a nation as a whole from the face of the earth"), Bernstein claims they have no other hope than that which could come from Europe ("...die verfolgten, bedrückten und unterdrückten Armenier haben keine andere Hoffnung als die auf die Hilfe, die ihnen von Europa wird..." ("...the persecuted, repressed and suppressed Armenians have no hope other than help that comes to them from Europe...")³² Interesting to note that in this context Bernstein refers to the Europeans as *Vorkämpfern* (pioneering champions), indicating that he views the struggle of Armenians to be part of a chain of emancipation struggles across Europe and across historical epochs in succession, of the Third Estate in France, the serfs in Russia and of course the Jews.³³ As a result Bernstein lays down a principle for intervention given such a humanitarian crisis that overrides any purported sacrosanct nature of state sovereignty. This in turn is due to the assertion that when a government is unable to assure the life and property of any of its citizens, it essentially forfeits its legal claim to both the law and custom attached to such title:

*was aber ist der erste sittliche Rechtstitel, den eine Regierung überhaupt hat und haben muss? Es ist der, dass sie den Willen und die Fähigkeit hat, die Staatsangehörigen in Bezug auf Leben und Eigentum gegen Gewaltthätigkeiten sicher zu stellen*³⁴

what then is the first moral legal title possessed at all by and required for any

30. "...erheben wir heute doch unsere Stimme zum flammenden Protest und rufen es so laut, dass diese Stimme gehört wird in Yildiz Kiosk und den möglich stärksten Nachhall findet im deutschen Reichskanzleramt," [Today we nevertheless raise our voice of flaming protest and shout it so loud, that this voice will be heard in the Yildiz Kiosk and will find the greatest possible reverberation in the German Imperial Chancellery], 40.

31. "ein solches Beispiel von Wildheit gegen ein ganzes Volk kennt die Geschichte nicht, soweit wir auch in ihren Annalen zurückblättern mögen," [History knows no such example of savagery against an entire people, no matter how far we may gaze back in its annals] 28.

32. Eduard Bernstein, *Die Leiden Des armenischen Volkes*, 6.

33. "da jedoch die Herrschenden nicht der Verpflichtung gemäß handeln, so blickt das armenische Volk auf seine Vorkämpfer, die Völker Europas, in der Hoffnung dass diese ihre Stimme erheben und die Regierungen veranlassen werden, endlich doch einzuschreiten und dem Sultan einen energischen Willen zu zeigen...(emphasis mine)" [that their rulers however do not act according to their obligations, so the Armenian people must turn to its champions, the people of Europe, in the hope that they may raise their voices and that governments will finally yet be induced to intervene and to demonstrate an energetic will to the Sultan...], 32.

34. Eduard Bernstein, *Die Leiden Des armenischen Volkes*, 24.

government? It is that she has the will and capacity to arrange for the security of all nationals with reference to life and property against violent actions.

Put into practice this would mean not only sanctions against Turkey, but also crucially a boycott of those who might boycott such initiatives ("...es braucht nur seine bisherige Opposition gegen alle von anderen Ländern ausgehenden Vorschläge Einwirkung auf die Türkei zu gunsten Armeniens aufzugeben, und der Widerstand des Sultans ist gebrochen.") ("...this requires forfeiting all previous opposition to recommendations that come from other countries that seek to influence Turkey on behalf of Armenia, which will break the resistance of the Sultan...")

Motivating Bernstein here are the principles of Social Democracy, which he clearly lays out via a fundamental humanistic principle that while it has taken different guises, from the Bible to the French Revolution, remains the same. This idea, that oppression of even one element of society is an act of repressive aggression against society as a whole, and society here conceived of in the international, human sense, was one guarded and proclaimed with unique vigor by that certain set of Social Democrats, those who ultimately felt compelled to secede and establish their own party during wartime.^{35,36} Such conviction would seem to naturally predispose Social Democrats to solidarity and engagement with the plight of Armenia. Yet as Bernstein is clear to point out, this would be a case of wishful thinking, as we shall see, only a self-selecting set of Social Democratic dissenters made their mark on the issue. Bernstein was perhaps further aided along, and so far along than most, by the special affinity out of the uncanny structural resemblance between Armenian and Jewish social formation. He was careful to point out the high degree of cultural development that distinguished them from their environment:

*und zwar eines Volkes, das ehemals seine relativ hohe Culturstufe erlangt hatte und noch heute in seinen dem Druck der türkischen Misswirtschaft weniger ausgesetzten Elementen eine bemerkenswerte geistige Regsamkeit an der Tag legt.*³⁷

namely a people, which had formerly acquired its relatively high stage of culture and still today displays remarkable mental agility despite in elements less exposed to the pressure of Turkish mismanagement.

Though excluded from military and higher positions that represent the state due to their non-identity with the religion of state, such exclusion could not quiet their mental energy and activity. That such an outlet would be created and found in the innovation and expand-

35. "...es ist Unterdrückung gegen den ganzen Gesellschaftskörper wenn auch nur ein einziges seiner Glieder unterdrückt wird..." [...it is repressive against the entire body of society when even only a single of its members is repressed...], See Eduard Bernstein, *Die Leiden des armenischen Volkes*, 40.

36. The subject of pre-war Reformist Social Democratic ideology is vast and lies largely outside the purview of this investigation. One may consult Manfred Steger's *The Quest for Evolutionary Socialism: Eduard Bernstein and Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), or for an earlier classic, Peter Gay's *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bernstein's Challenge to Marx* (New York: Octagon, 1983).

37. Eduard Bernstein, *Die Leiden des armenischen Volkes*, 6.

ing horizon of the free marketplace was for Bernstein, a rule for all such peoples he draws a direct reference to the Quakers in England, looming large is the obvious case of the Jews.³⁸

It may seem odd that a Social Democrat grounded in Marxist theory would extol the creative and liberating aspects of the marketplace, but even or especially in his engagement for Armenia, one may discern the “revisionism” with which Bernstein’s name will remain forever attached. Bernstein essentially held that an orderly and equitable expansion of capitalism would provide for a developed democracy, which would in turn prove to provide the means for a socialism fully embraced by the bourgeois parliamentary system. The move to socialism in Bernstein is based on the ethical prerogative that emerges out of Kantian subjectivism, rather than the historical necessity of the movement of the world spirit as Marx applied Hegel inverted via materialism.³⁹ The desire here for universal emancipation was not conflict oriented or even catastrophic (Bernstein himself notably rejected the term “revisionism,” and instead preferred “reformism”) among the grounds for which Bernstein disavowed the theory of the impoverishment of the proletariat and the pending self-catastrophe of capitalism.⁴⁰

Predicated behind this shift is that Bernstein could see benevolent, innovative aspects of the bourgeoisie, and the risk and potential for the downtrodden to result and resort in the most bestial of behaviors. Fundamental to Bernstein’s “reform” of Marx was the conviction in the capacity for self-enlightenment among the bourgeoisie who could be moved to progress to a social democracy out of their own volition. The shadow side to that highly speculative potential development is that certain forms of class conflict, such as that seen by Bernstein among Armenians and Kurds for instance could turn genocidal. Stated otherwise genocide here is an unintended corollary of modern class society, a kind of perversion of class conflict. It was after all Bernstein’s predecessor as a leader party theoretician, August Bebel, who famously referred to anti-Semitism, and here he undoubtedly meant the organized, political movement led by educated elites as the “socialism of fools.” While it would be an ambitious speculation to link Bernstein’s revisionism to his witnessing on behalf of the Armenians, it would be historically challenging to find any other case that would appear to justify his shift in postulates. Additionally, the account and importance laid on “culture” by Bernstein and later Vierbücher during the genocide reflects the shift in emphasis distinctive of reformist social democracy. The distinctive emphasis on culture has not been lost on

historians, some of whom, such as Donna Harsch, Andrew Bonnell and Vernon Lidtke have seen German Social Democracy as either an alternate cultural world or even an essentially culturalist enterprise. Endeavoring to create an alternative social sphere for what functioned like a persecuted caste minority, party initiatives focused as much on expanding the cultural franchise for members as for improving work conditions. Banned for twelve years while their myriad of institutions were mercilessly repressed, there is indeed some justification at viewing the Social Democrats as a kind of dispossessed and afflicted minority. Indeed, upon his famous state visit to the Ottoman Empire, the Kaiser Wilhelm II was perceived by critical onlookers to have analogized the Sultans treatment of the Armenians with how he would like to have dealt with the Social Democrats.⁴¹

Efforts like the *Volksbühnebewegung* (movement for a theater of the people) sought to modernize and broaden the appeal of classical canon of works so as to provide care for the intellectual and even spiritual dimensions of life. Especially the Revisionist tendency identified with Bernstein was specifically invested in upholding the human treasure of accumulated cultural works and never endeavored, unlike later political developments to limit culture to either only the modernist or socialist realist.

This valorization of culture even including embrace of the classical and the religious is highly evident in Heinrich Vierbücher’s account of the genocide itself. His application of the specifically German idealist category of “*Kultur*” refracted through a Social Democratic lens structures both his narrative and concerns and serves to underlie his explanatory framework as well. The juxtaposition could not be more stark, the Turks are not a “*kulturvolk*,” as is explained in the middle of the narrative, while the Armenians are presented as such from the outset, as is made clear from the subtitle,

“*Abschlachtung eines Kulturvolkes*” (“...slaughter of a cultured people.”)^{42, 43} Absent a precise English equivalent for the German concept of *Kultur*, one may summarize it as the achievement of cultural and intellectual uplift of a community based on the internal growth, ardour and effort of its individual members. Declared essentially “warriors and imitators,” who gave rise to the most “warlike state on earth,” for Vierbücher, Turks never produced a literature, a high language or science, while their grandest architecture was all taken from the Christians.⁴⁴ The contrast was immediately available for the ready and unmistakable; Armenians were unwarlike, distinguished by love of family and children, who produced the best doctors and teachers, and whose development of craft and trade made an ideal bridge to European progress in the region.⁴⁵

38. “...*ähnliches hat sich ja bei fast allen Nationen gezeigt, die geistig rege sind und in ihrer Heimat politisch Staatsangehörige zweiter Classe waren*” [...such may also be found among almost all nations that are mentally acute and find themselves second class citizens in their homelands], “.....*die Gegner der Staatskirche konnten also keinen höheren akademischen Beruf ergreifen, kein Staatsamt annehmen, keine Militärs werden*” [...opponents of the state church could not take up any higher academic career, join the military or assume any position in the military]. “Was blieb ihnen übrig ...*Volkselemente, die sonst unterdrückt wurden, aber an sich geistig regsam waren, mussten sich irgendwie bethätigen, und da fiel naturgemäß der Handel in ihre Hände...*” [what remained left for them, who were otherwise repressed but remained mentally acute and who needed to somehow remain active and there naturally trade fell into their hands..], see Eduard Bernstein, *Die Leiden des armenischen Volkes*, 20. 39. *Ibid*, 19.

40. Eduard Bernstein, *der Denker und Kämpfer: Zu seinem 75. Geburtstag*, in *Vorwärts*, 06 January, 1925. Vol. 42, Nr. 8 (Morning-Issue Nr. A 5), S.1

41. See Florentine Fritzen quote on Heinrich Vierbücher’s *Armenien 1915*. Donat Verlag, 2005. Wilhelm II., heißt es etwa, dieser „Handelsreisende der deutschen Imperialisten“, hätte es „seinem Freund“ Sultan Abdul Hamid gern nachgetan und seine unliebsamen Höflinge einfach geköpft: „Wie wäre es den Sozialdemokraten ergangen, wenn Wilhelm gekonnt hätte, wie er wollte!“ (Cf. <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/politik/die-schande-der-gestrigen-1307530.html>)

42. Heinrich Vierbücher, *Armenien 1915*, 30.

43. There is indeed evidence to discuss such inflated “culturalism,” as itself filled with prejudicial misconceptions, though such a pursuit lies outside of the limitations of the current investigation.

44. *Ibid*, 31.

45. *Ibid*, 34.

Though perhaps not as pointed, Bernstein clearly shares the general direction of the conviction of Vierbücher as to the cultural and structural differences between Armenians and Turks. The two had actually worked together at the 1902 Congress of Friends of Armenia, where Bernstein had been elected to represent Germany. Along the lines of the Bernstein’s already discussed publication from the same period, the congress worked under the assumption that without practical steps for European intervention, extermination loomed clear on the horizon.⁴⁶ It is moreover significant that as a non-Jew, Vierbücher consented to the notion of Armenians not only as a clearly exceptional and distinct people, but also as a force for progress with positive international implications. Just some year earlier, before the Brussels Congress they would both attend, Bernstein engaged in a very public debate with the English Socialist Ernest Bax over precisely the merits of any particular ethno-nationalist group in taking too great a lead in terms of material and cultural progress.

Notably concerned with increasing domination worldwide by Anglo-Saxons, Bax analogized this to the vaguely similar case of Jews in Europe. Without distinguishing between dispossessed and persecuted minorities, Bax in principle objected to the structure of political support accorded Bernstein and other Social Democrats to the Armenians. Arguably informed by a certain degree of anti-Semitism, Bax essentially reduced Bernstein’s advocacy on behalf of Armenia to his Jewishness.⁴⁷ Such an intra-party dispute nevertheless reveals an important difference about a question of both political theory and strategy. It also helps to further qualify and complicate the Jewish and/or Social Democratic affinity for Armenia. Naturally including but beyond humanitarian concerns, or the need to reinforce and maintain status quo rule of law and a state’s obligation to its citizens, thinkers such as Bernstein and Vierbücher believed that as Armenians were more advanced than the other ethnic groups among which they lived, it would serve progress if they gained the ascendancy in the area they populated.⁴⁸

Bernstein clearly understood that the intrusions of the forces of modernity and progress could severely undermine if not threaten Armenians if their position was not defended. While recognizing, pre-existing violent enmity, surrounding tribes, slowly brought under the spell of the world financial system, have now added a deadly layer of extortionism to their violence.⁴⁹ It was this new combination of forces, as analyzed with the philosophical tools of Reform Marxism Bernstein had pioneered, that enabled him to see the contours of genocide from such an early date.

The Years of War and Genocide

In writings produced just before the start of the war, Bernstein keenly observed a set of conditions that could be seen as setting the stage for genocide. In an article from August 1913, he describes the supposed Turkish “reform commission” that while allegedly dedicated to

improving conditions for Armenians clearly had its own agenda.⁵⁰ Instead of promises to defend or arm Armenians, then left defenseless from marauding Kurds, arms would distributed entirely to the Kurds and confiscate weapons obtained via other means. He did take notice of a slight and cynical change from the days of the Sultan where instead of being threatened directly with massacre, defensive protection would be withdrawn. Bernstein also marked a threatening new development with the worst of criminals let out of jail to serve under newly promoted Kurdish tribal chieftains. Befitting, the long-standing and aforementioned Social Democratic mistrust of Russia, (which had slightly different bases than the wider traditional, mainstream German distrust of Russia) Bernstein’s suspicions of Russian designs raises the level of tension in his account.⁵¹ He does not hide his intimation that Russia, despite its pleas to the contrary, may simply be interested in the annexation of Armenian land.

In a speech on the floor of the German parliament in April of that year, Bernstein shared similar concerns in a direct political address on the national stage. He took the task the rhetorical position in defense of the integrity of Armenian territory, yet noted as those words rang hollow without any supporting action.⁵² With words of outright pleading, Bernstein calls finally for a settlement in the question of Armenia. Turkey, he notes as never fulfilled its obligations in this regard, for after all aspirations of a population that could not be more modest. Neither separation from Turkey, nor even provincial autonomy; rather simply safety and security, with self-representation in administration would be required.⁵³ Bernstein singles out Russia and Germany for responsibility, but in particular it was Germany that supported Abdul Hamid’s resistance to the west during the previous of massacre. For Bernstein therefore Imperial Germany, “loaded onto herself guilt for further massacre.”⁵⁴ Persecutions produced countless victims over the centuries all in the name of benefit of Turkey. All of this Bernstein argues did no service in anyway to Turkey other than providing for indulgence of the most basic instincts. Fully conscious of the special nature of the friendship of Germany and Turkey, Bernstein remained convinced that Turkey would follow the lead of its Central European ally should it provide such direction.

The sense of urgency in his remarks, reveal an acute awareness of the extreme vulnerability confronting Armenians. This is especially insightful considering the progressive

50. Armenische Wirren, *Vorwärts*, August 1, 1913, as found in Eduard Bernstein Collection, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, See 42.G354.

51. A generation earlier, submissions by Rosa Luxemburg on the massacres under Sultan Abdülhamit II for the *Vorwärts*, had been deflected by Karl Liebknecht’s father Wilhelm, on the grounds that they ran the “danger of unintentionally serving the interests of the bulwark of European absolutism,” See Margaret Anderson, “‘Down in Turkey Far Away’: Human Rights, the Armenian Massacres, and Orientalism in Wilhelmine Germany,” *The Journal of Modern History*, 79, No. 1, (March 2007): 86.

52. 139 *Sitzung*, 14 April, 1913, 4735, (Cf. http://www.reichstagsprotokolle.de/en_Blatt_k13_bsb00003385_00283.html).

53. “*Ihre Forderungen sind so bescheiden wie nur möglich, und trotzdem sind sie nicht verwirklicht worden*”, [Their demands are as modest as can possibly be and yet they still were not fulfilled/realized], *Ibid*

54. “*...die Schuld an den weiteren Metzereien auf sich geladen*,” [...having taken upon themselves the guilt for future massacres], *Ibid*

46. *Ibid*, 90.

47. Lars Fischer, *The Socialist Response to Antisemitism in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 182.

48. *Ibid*

49. Lars Fischer, *The Socialist Response*, 183.

direction many projected onto the Young Turk regime change, with its initial promises of greater equality and integration. In a revealing article appearing the *Vorwärts* just as the war got underway, a Jewish Social Democratic leader, Paul Singer, broadly sketch the theaters of military activity for the Turkish partner of the Central Powers. Early military losses deprived Austria and Turkey of both a border and a sphere of joint engagement with the Russian Empire. Thus it was entirely obvious which territory would bear the brunt of the fighting: Armenia.⁵⁵ After a detailed climatic and topographic profile, with a population characterized naturally as predominantly Christian Armenian, referred to as “*lange unterdrückt und mißhandelt*.” (“long suppressed and mistreated”)⁵⁶ Mention is made of the great diversity of the surrounding area, but Armenians are again held out to distinct in that they are both a “*körperlich, physisch und sprachlich ein in sich geschlossenes Volk*,” (“bodily, physically and linguistically a people closed in themselves”) but also, very possibly, the remnants of the aboriginal population of Asia Minor.⁵⁷ Mostly town-dwellers and traders they are contrasted with the Kurds, who bring to bear an enmity against the Armenians so severe, it is characterized as a *grimmigen Hass* (ferocious hatred). They are further described as beholden to antiquated customs, a war-like nature, and apparently a social context where the most developed handicraft was thievery. While it was perfectly clear that Armenia would be chief theater of war between Turkey and Russia, this should not suggest that there was a clear strategy in the sense of obvious war aims. In fact, the author, after noting the complications of the topography and demography, notes that the area is distinguished by the lack of clear military necessities or objectives. In the context of prior awareness of the persecution of Armenians, the genocide of 1915 simply could not be linked to any military context or strategic exigency, its character rather took the new form of political murder based on ultra-nationalist, quasi-racial designs for population engineering.

Just months later, these predictions for the placement of the Russian-Turkish front line were fulfilled. By just the third month of the war, historic Armenia was in a more severely deadly, though not necessarily historically new position of being torn in two by much larger powers. In a “Vorwärts” article entitled *Armenien im Weltkrieg*, the anonymous author describes the outbreak of hostilities on the border of the Caucasus inside Turkish-Armenia. The early gains of Turkish troops allowed them to push the front line to the southwest territory of the Trans-Caucasus, described as Russian-Armenia. This article serves to provide the reader with a synopsis of over a century of events that have impacted Armenia as a corollary to the Russian-Turkish rivalry. Reform prescriptions designed to safe guard Armenia are described as being “left on the paper,” while England and Russia are called “indifferent bystanders” (*gleichgültige Zuschauer*) to what is referred to as a *Vernichtungsfeldzug gegen ein ganzes Volk* (“campaign of extermination against an entire people”).⁵⁸ This is accompanied by a campaign of expropriation designed to enrich their Kurdish neighbors and plunge the 2.5 million Armenians of Turkey into a state of economic

immiseration and pauperization. The periodic massacres with victims in the hundreds of thousands are described at having no echo in “Christian,” Europe worth the name (*ohne im “christlichen” Europa einen nennenswerten Widerhall zu wecken*). Yet consistent with German Social Democratic sensibilities is a pronounced suspicion of Russia’s attempt to self-stylize as a “liberator” for the Armenians, the author noting that Russia had in the past persecuted its own Armenian population. The article ends on with an ominous tone noting that the prior sense of balance between English and Russian interests that had kept stability for decades had eroded. Partially due to new advances in British imperialism, notably in Cyprus and Egypt, the intervention of what is referred to as German *Hochfinanz mit ihrer Bahnpolitik* (High finance with its railway politics), threatened to entirely change the outlook of the world powers on this region. Recognizing the imperial aspirations of their own government, even if limited at first to economic weapons with political motives, implies that Turkey was now on the receiving end of a level of endorsement and sponsorship as never before from a European power via the new German alliance.

In an article appearing less than a month later attempted to draw out the consequences of a Turkish intervention in all its aspects. Written by an unaccredited London correspondent of the *Vorwärts*, the author begins that though such intervention hasn’t had a demonstrable influence it is beyond doubt that it signifies a massive expansion of the foundation for the liquidation ushered in by a world war.⁵⁹ Prescient that such an unprecedented conflict would inevitably lead to rupture and upheaval in the world order, it is especially notable that such insight is coupled with the expansion of the war brought about by Turkey. While not directly linked to perceiving the contours of genocide, it does provide glimpse into a political imagination attuned to such a potential. The author goes on to trace six different military theaters directly implicated in a Turkish intervention. Given prior documented concern regarding Armenians, it is no surprise that Armenia and Asia Minor are naturally the subject of a distinct section. Providing a corrective to the instinct to see Russia as an aggressive power, the author states distinctly that Russia is not interested in any war of conquest, but merely wants to keep Turkish troops engaged there. This is significant in that it clarifies that Turkey is in no sense facing an existential threat in this crucial territory and concludes with a claim that the Allies perceive the conflict with Turkey to be a “defensive war,” against an opponent trying to rapidly achieve the decisive in Asia Minor. To summarize coverage of the region in the *Vorwärts*, the attentive reader would have formed a picture of the Armenian Highland as one without decisive strategic value, would have inevitably formed the main theater of conflict between Turkey and the Allies and where no evidence would have suggested the cessation of the exterminatory process already long known of the Turkish state against the Armenian minority.

The issue of the alleged “defensive” nature of the war would prove to be the basis for a split in the German Social Democratic party, and ultimately the formation of an entirely new, “independent” Social Democratic Party, decisively anti-war and deeply concerned

55. Singer H., “Der Türkisch-Russische Kriegsschauplatz,” in *Vorwärts*, Nr. 221, 4 November 1914, 7.

56. Ibid

57. Ibid

58. “Armenien im Weltkrieg,” *Vorwärts*, November 20, 1914, Vol. 31. Nr. 317, 1.

59. “Die Türkei und die Entente-Mächte,” in *Vorwärts*, December 3, 1914, Vol. 31, Nr. 330, 3. See, “...abgesehen davon, daß er die nach dem Kriege stutzufindende Liquidation auf eine ganz gewaltig erweiterte Grundlage stellen muss.” [...leaving aside that the liquidation which will follow the war must be placed on a wholly formidably extended foundation].

about the plight of the Armenians. Fittingly appearing on the 1st of January 1915, Eduard Bernstein sought to reassess the logic that had led to Social Democratic consent to the war. Though predating the actual split by several months, it is clear for Bernstein that whatever logic had led to war was heavily flawed. The distinction between aggressive and defensive war had been adopted as a sort of “road map,” by European Social Democratic parties in their deliberations on consent for war. With the clarity of hindsight, Bernstein implies that we should have listened to the warnings that in praxis deciphering this difference is enormously challenging. After all, powers on all sides claimed to be fighting in defense. That this distinction proved spurious precipitated what was perhaps the chief calamity and perhaps first social casualty of the war, the collapse of moral values. Bernstein claimed that left in the lurch, was the capacity for the most simple of humans to judge their neighbor.⁶⁰ The faulty logic at work in the rush to war was then followed by a general phenomenon of the abdication of responsibility and the continual shifting of the blame. In response, Bernstein offered a clarion call to conscience, “*das Gefühl für eine hohe Verantwortung darf uns gerade bei so folgenschweren Ereignissen nie verlassen*” (“that the feeling for a high responsibility should never leave us, especially in the face of such momentous events”). It was indeed such a sense of increased responsibility, which would lead Bernstein and his colleagues, Liebknecht, Lebedour, Haase and others to turn against their own government and the war it launched and to speak out on behalf of Armenians.

The principled stance of a few, self-selecting German Social Democrats out of leadership circles should not suggest that anti-Armenian propaganda did not find its way into the organs of the party. In fact one may claim that it is precisely because of such distortions and silences that aggravated their secession from the party line.⁶¹ Indeed, the first major coverage devoted to the deportation of the Armenians in late July is framed not as a direct reportage of events but rather as a counter to reports surfacing in the media of opposing and neutral countries. The silence enforced by both the German and Turkish governments on the genocidal events beginning already in February of that year may rightly be called the silence of the graveyard. It is crucial to note though that even such distorted coverage did attest to proof of the presence of a long prepared and agreed upon plan to take unprecedented action against the Armenian population.⁶² Also clear from the citations within this report is that the principles sources of information were only official reports from either the German or the Turkish military command.

The reality and severity of censorship applied to Social Democratic party outlets is attested to in the fact that within the first full year of the war that coincided with the prin-

cipal starting events of the Armenian Genocide, the main party newspaper, *Vorwärts* was forced to cease publication on three separate occasions. Whenever news coverage did surface about events behind and around the Caucasian Front they arrived in Berlin via a most circuitous route. For instance, a report on the 5th of October with a by-line out of Paris cites information arriving from the “*Agence Havas*” press bureau out of New York. This notice further betrays some uncertainty as to whether or not the American President Wilson had tried via German authorities to put a stop to the killings, as well as to raise the attention of other nations to this issue. Quoted as certainty is the attempt of the American Ambassador in Constantinople, not mentioned by name, to generate a fund that would enable the transport of fleeing Armenians to America.⁶³ A follow-up notice of the 8th of October, once again from a neutral city, Den Haag, and a foreign press bureau, Reuters, refers to uncertainty in the English House of Lords about the precise number of Armenian victims. Though confirming that in certain districts the population was completely annihilated the number of victims, by that point, 800,000 is supported by some Lords apparently, more than others.⁶⁴ Even such a brief notice is not without a rather forced attempt to deflect guilt away from Germany. It should be noted that this was the first full parliamentary revelation of the ongoing genocide in any nation party to the war.⁶⁵

The accumulation of such notices did lead the *Vorwärts* to issue a kind of editorial message to clarify an official position for Social Democracy. Appearing on the 10th of October, the piece begins with a kind of surrender to the power of the censor, “*der uns gesetzten Schranken bewußt nehmen wir selbst zu der Sache nicht Stellung.*” (“conscious of the restrictions set upon us, we do not take an position on the matter.”)⁶⁶ It is possible to imagine that based on the publication record, any direct opposition to the Armenian Genocide would have meant further shutdown of the newspaper. It may be helpful to note that the most complete and effective campaign against the genocide by a German, that undertaken by Johannes Lepsius, president of the German-Armenian society, resulted in his politically charged displacement from the country to Holland accompanied by an interdiction of travel.⁶⁷ At least what the record of the *Vorwärts* for the remainder of the war does reveal is that those party members who did openly speak out were no longer welcome to do so in the *Vorwärts*. Bernstein, in particular, who during some weeks had an article almost every week in the publication, disappears entirely from its pages. The editorial board did attempt though to take some issue with the principle of non-intervention espoused by the German government. This piece is devoted largely to a critique of the positions put forward in both mainstream liberal and conservative nationalist newspapers. A significant portion of German society and politics that, did also speak out on the Armenian Genocide, namely Christian activists, especially those represented the evangelical missionary movement.⁶⁸

63. “Amerika und die Armenier,” *Vorwärts*, October 6, 1915. Vol. 32, Nr. 276, p. 3.

64. Armenierdebatte im englischen Oberhause, October 8, 1915. Vol. 32, Nr. 278, p. 3.

65. Christopher Walker, *Armenia: The Survival of a Nation* (London: Croon Helm, 1980), 183.

66. “Grundsatz der Nichteinmischung,” *Vorwärts*, October 10, 1915. Vol. 32, Nr. 280, p. 3.

67. *Ibid*, 236.

68. Less known to the historical record, there was some vital Catholic opposition as well, especially from the Archbishop of Cologne and the Catholic Zentrum Reichstag parlamentaria Matthias Erzberger who

60. *Vorwärts*, “Grundsätze der Social Demokratie und der Weltkrieg” Jan. 1, 1915. Vol.32, Nr. 1, p. 5.

61. Widespread, mainstream party positions on the Armenians is extremely difficult, aggravated by the fact that the question of whether or not Armenians counted as a “Geschichtsnation,” (historical nation) (though they were clearly counted in the ranks of a Kulturnation) was left rather open. This would further require investigation of the long-standing ideological problematic of nationalism within Marxist theory, cf. K. Marx: *Manuskripte über die polnische Frage (1863-1864)*, Hrsg. U. iengel. Von W. Conze und D. Hertz-Eichenrode. S’Gravenhage 1961.

62. “...das Vorhandensein eines seit langem vorbereiteten und beschlossenen Planes..,” [...the presence of a plan that had been long before prepared and agreed upon...] *Vorwärts*, July 17, 1915, Vol. 32, Nr. 195., S. 3 “Die Armenier gegen die Türkei.”

With disapproval the article cites the caustic and insulting remarks reserved for such activists referred to as “*sittliche Verzweiflung professoraler Armenierseelenfreunde*” (“the moral desperation of professorial soul mates of Armenians”).⁶⁹ The article concludes on relying on the old fall-back of German Social Democracy that allowed their accession to war to begin with, the Russophobic position that many maintained throughout the war. The writers applied the simplistic formula that Western powers, specifically France should intervene and condemn the atrocities of Russian forces on the European Eastern Front.

Clearly burdened by a newly aggravated nationalism, official Social Democracy could publicize and follow unfolding news of the genocide based on an incontestably, premeditated plan, but reprehensibly also sought ways to deflect German guilt. It is with justifiable consternation that from their own official pronouncements the one act they could not tolerate were German political voices that sought to justify Turkish actions. For those that would soon leave the party, naturally, this did not go nearly far enough. And for any vocal protest against the Genocide to again appear in the pages of the Social Democracy party paper, it would have to come as a result of objective reporting from without and from a purportedly neutral political context. Therefore as we shall see, these efforts of dissenting socialists mostly occurred from the floor of the German parliament.

Karl Liebknecht, though seen later as the spiritual father of the German Communist party, was for most of his life a Social Democrat. Famously, he was the first member of Parliament to vote against war credits. What is less known is that he was also the first to speak out against the Armenian Genocide, at a time when the division of the party appeared all but inevitable. On the 11th of January 1916, Liebknecht posed a question to the Chancellor (using the parliamentary conceit of a *Kleine Anfrage*, which compelled the executive to respond to critical questions) inquiring into his awareness of the massacres perpetrated by Germany’s ally. Even at this early date, he presciently saw this as what he described as a sin now placed upon Germany.⁷⁰ His accompanying question concerned whatever direct actions to take to prevent repetition and restore human rights to the Armenian population in Turkey. In what appeared to be an interruption the response was clearly a pre-packaged government response that parroted Turkish propaganda about Armenian demonstrations that minimized the extent of the deportations while also refusing to objectively characterize this by now well-known Turkish campaign. Referencing, Dr. Lepsius, Liebknecht then referred to the “extermination of Turkish Armenians,” and that Germany was already seen as responsible by much of the Christian population in Turkey.⁷¹ As Liebknecht clearly attempted to complete his intervention with an accurate representation of events, he was

even travelled repeatedly to Constantinople on behalf of the Armenian cause.

69 “Der Grundsatz der Nichteinmischung,” *Vorwärts*, October 10, 1915. Vol. 32, Nr. 280, p. 3.

70 As discussed in Viscount Bryce and Arnold Toynbee, *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire: Documents Presented to Viscount Grey of Fallodon, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs by Viscount Bryce*, ed. Ara Sarafian (London: Gomidas Institute, 2005, originally 1916), p. xxvii.

71. Comprehensive explanation of this reference would demand a more extensive explanation of German press and censorship policies: Lepsius’ speech at the German Press Association (“Deutsche Pressevereinigung”) of 5 October 1915 which resulted in stricter censorship against the coverage of Armenian issues, despite the fact that the speech was merely a semi-public event.

this time not only interrupted, but literally shouted down through loud calls of “stop.” Continuing over the disruptive noises, Liebknecht affirms he had not originally completed his entire statement and that the President of the Parliament was simply succumbing to the shouts of the house in what was clearly an attempt to silence Liebknecht’s valiant efforts. The Reichstag President then refuses to tolerate any attempts to critique his leadership, while Liebknecht then characterizes this president’s handling of parliamentary procedure as the equivalent of a “rape.” Liebknecht made mention in his questioning of politically motivated mail seizures, though at the time, he could not have known that much worse, such as imprisonment, was in store. For his prescience, principle and bravery, Liebknecht would soon be arrested and sentenced to four years in prison.

Fourteen Social Democratic parliamentary fraction members had already voted against the war credits by the time of the first months of 1915 that also coincided with the start of the Armenian Genocide. The rest of their colleagues had continued to opt for the so-called *Burgfrieden*, or political truce announced by the Kaiser at the start of the conflict. As positions hardened they further endorsed the so-called *Durchhalten* strategy of staying the course precisely as it appeared clear the war would have no speedy outcome. As a result cooperation steadily diminished within the parliamentary working group as the anti-war faction had risen to 44 by December of 1915. A formal split had in fact already been a foregone conclusion by the 21st of December as the group declared itself no longer content to be represented by the vote of the fraction and wanted the multiple reasons for their anti-war position to receive a hearing in Parliament denied them by the majority of their party. In fact, especially the 20 directly elected members of Parliament from the anti-war fraction were subject to increasingly frontal and denunciatory attacks by the colleagues in party fora. As they were required to adhere to party discipline they had no access to the press and certainly not to the larger public due to reigning censorship enforced by the government. Perhaps paradoxically as they had no other outlet upon which to develop their position or make an accounting with the reproaches received from fellow party members, the parliament tribune itself remained the only place where at least temporarily free speech could be provided for.⁷²

Clearly no other choice remained but to secede from the party. And when the split did come, it was not the subject of prior discussion, but rather was presented as a *fait accompli* on the day of its announcement by anti-war leader, Hugo Haase, a German Jew who had been the only practicing lawyer to adhere to Social Democracy in all of the territory of East Prussia. When the group, who anointed themselves the “independent” Social Democrats released a statement for the reasoning, they rebuffed the reproach of disloyalty and declared it was they and not the rest of the party that was acting in the true spirit of the Social Democratic party.

Yet by the time the split was effectuated the primary phase of the Armenian Genocide had already taken its course. It was though with the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk that they would make a heroic stand on behalf of Armenia, one strikingly overlooked in the historical literature on the subject, as the relevant primary sources and archival documents have remained

72. “Eine eigene Fraktion der Sozialdemokratischen Minderheit,” *Vorwärts*, March 26, 1916, Nr. 84, Vol. 33 p. 1.

overlooked. Capitulation of the Russian side not only allowed for a renewed Caucasus campaign in the east, but provided for the secession of Russian protected territories of Turkish Armenia to the Turkish state and thereby exposing populations hitherto sheltered from the genocidal program of the CUP. Not only were these territories of Ardahan, Kars and Batum now explicitly barred from any Russian interference including protection, but they were forced to enter into negotiations with Turkish authorities. Haase's primary colleague in the leadership of the "independent" Social Democrats, Georg Ledebour, a post-Christian staunch German secularist was even more pointed in his criticism of his former colleagues when he finally had the chance to bring criticism to bear on what he referred to as the "Armenian Question."⁷³ Referring to their continued war support, he stated:

Wie Sozialisten in irgend einer Form einer solchen Regierung noch Unterstützung angedeihen lassen können, ist mir allerdings vollkommen unerklärlich⁷⁴

It is entirely inexplicable to me how socialists could bestow support in any form to such a government.⁷⁵

Ledebour declares himself most stupefied by the provisions regarding Armenia, where according to the "meaning" of the Brest Litovsk treaty it is essentially allowing Turkey to devour remaining Armenia. Clarifying the ethnographic make-up of the area, Ledebour asserts Turkey has no right to such areas and that furthermore any historically based claims are also to be considered invalid. Worst of all declares Ledebour:

Aber, meine Herren, das allerschlimmste ist folgendes. Die armenische und georgische Bevölkerung dieser Gebiete sieht der Gefahr der Ausrottung entgegen, wenn die Türken einmarschieren.⁷⁶

But gentlemen, the very worst is the following. The Armenian and Georgian population of these areas face the danger of extermination if the Turks march in.

Cries of "very true" erupted in the plenary hall from the ranks of the "independent" Social Democrats. Ledebour then reminds his listeners that in Anatolia the Armenian population has already been exterminated by Turkish troops, and, he emphasizes, German allies. Recognizing that Armenians have called upon certain Christian political parties already, and though he somewhat mocks their pride in their Christianity and doubts their commitment, he delivers a clarion call for intervention and seeks out conjoined action with such Christian parties. Given the Jewish identity of many of his party colleagues and their roles as Social Democratic leaders, including their leader Haase, one can hardly imagine them taking the same verbal liberties afforded to Ledebour.

73. Ledebour was perhaps using the term in the context of its origin in the Berlin Treaty (1878) and the project of administrative autonomy in the "Armenian Provinces" of the Ottoman Empire.

74. Reichstag, 143 Sitzung, March 19, 1918, 4483.

75. Author's note: the support in question is that of the German government for the Ottoman government.

76. Ibid

Ich erwartete, meine Herren, daß Sie von der deutschen Regierung verlangen würden, sie solle einschreiten, damit unter keinen Umständen die Möglichkeit für solche Metzeleien, wie sie im eigentlichen türkischen Armenien stattgefunden haben, jetzt auch in diesen russisch-armenisch-georgischen Gebieten geschaffen wird. Aber keiner von Ihnen hat einen Ton darüber gesagt.⁷⁷

I expect gentleman that you would demand that the German government intervene and that therefore under no conditions would the possibilities be created for massacres in the Russian-Armenian-Georgian territories as have occurred in actual Armenia within Turkish territory. But none of you has ever uttered a word about this.

Speaking for his colleagues, Ledebour literally states they are raising their voice against any continued massacres of Armenians made possible through the shared guilt of the Germans. To buttress his claim of the mendacity of Turkish authorities Ledebour cites the early support of the Young Turks in the Turkish Revolution by Armenian parties, and the Young Turks themselves that vocally recognized this before turning on them with unimaginable brutality. Ledebour's specific policy recommendation, beyond that of the absolute exigency to deny Turkish invasion is the use of soldiers from neutral nations to protect these civilian populations. Furthermore he believes that these territories should be aided in their apparent desire to join the then recently developing Caucasian Democratic Federal Republic announced in Tiflis under the leadership of the Social Democrat Nikolos Chkheidze.

Some days later in summation of the views of his party on the treaty, Ledebour introduces what is perhaps the strongest term available in German, *Schande*, which can suggest something more than shame or disgrace. Aware of its strength, and therefore introduced rhetorically it is precisely the article that effects Armenia that makes the treaty a *Schande* for Germany.⁷⁸ Immediately unleashing disturbance in the plenary hall, the Vice-President Dr. Paasche, responds that such a claim cannot be tolerated, and calls for censure. In a response that can be seen as an encapsulation of the vocal efforts of these Social Democratic war dissenters and activists for Armenia, Ledebour replies, that it is precisely because this article could very well lead to the extermination of the Christian population, and therefore, "it is our conviction that there is no word strong enough, to condemn such an action."⁷⁹

Haase in his address some days later calls Turkish claims on Batum, Kars and Ardahan as one of the direst elements of this treaty. They are further in clear violation of the principle of self-determination by the inhabitants who are threatened by outright conquest. Haase states that it was obvious that none of the peoples in question, including those other than Armenians would consent to renewed Turkish rule. This treaty element is even more tragic, adds Haase, when one considers how much of historic Armenia has already been lost to Turkey. Haase then reminds the audience of the "cry of help," that came via specifically

77. Ibid

78. 145 Sitzung, Friday, March 22, 1918, 4561.

79. Ibid, translation my own.

German voices, not from neutral countries and he references Dr. Lepsius and Dr. Niepage.⁸⁰ Haase actually reads a lengthy passage into the parliamentary record of Lepsius where he is continually cheered on by supporting cries from his party. He even cites liberal voices in Turkey to the effect that there is support to finally topple this regime and he ends his remarks with a powerful summarizing question:

*Und da sollen wir es verantworten, daß man den Türken Gebiete mit armenischer Bevölkerung in die Hände spielt? Nie und nimmer werden wir die Verantwortung für einen solchen Schritt übernehmen.*⁸¹

And we should be responsible that one delivers over Turkish territories with Armenian population? Never but never would we take responsibility for such a step.

Some months later during a parliamentary dispute with conservative colleagues who claimed Turkey was awarded the territories in question, Haase formulated what he called the “Caucasian question,” as whether or not the Armenians would be relinquished entirely over to extermination.⁸² Haase reminds his listeners of the documentation they were presented about the genocide, and the “cry for help” that anyone who had heard could not forget for the rest of their lives.⁸³ He refers to the 300,000 survivors who have escaped to the Caucasus to find shelter among the remainders of their people. He lists 200,000 under direct Turkish threat and recounts how Kurds lead by Aga Abdulla in the direction of Ardahan have already reached some and continued the killings. Listing the thousands already killed there, Haase states that no Armenian can count on any sort of protection if found under the power of the Turks.⁸⁴ If Christian solidarity did not suffice to prevent the award of these territories to the Turks then Haase calls upon the principle of humanity and for a complete Turkish withdrawal, accompanied by cries of support from his party fraction colleagues.

It is important to note that these “independent” German Social Democratic voices for humanitarian assistance for refugees and opposition to genocide emerged out of extremely well-known individuals in the highest leadership echelons. Bernstein, a protégé of Engels, helped start the party newspaper and as its leading innovative theoretician was perhaps the only German Social Democrat of international renown. Hugo Haase, similarly, was elected party co-chairman in 1913 after the death of August Bebel, along with later Weimar Chancellor Friedrich Ebert. After the anti-war secession he also became the leader of the new party, and continued his leadership role until his assassination in 1919. Their principled insurrection was a stance on behalf of humanity without great precedence or repetition in similar contexts. Entirely against expedience and arguably their own political career

interests against the apex of terror in the First World War, I would frame these overlooked efforts within a genealogy of leading Jewish figures with progressive tendencies, including Lazare and Zangwill, who beyond the well-known example of Morgenthau, placed principle over ethnic and religious solidarity and made the plight of the Armenian people their own.

Jews and Germans became primary witnesses to the Armenian Genocide in ways unlike few others. Though this is well known in regard to certain figures, such as Morgenthau or Lepsius, the extent of this fact remains underappreciated. Yet even these significant voices are overwhelmed by a larger silence, a meditation on which this article begins. I then established a genealogy of Jewish witness that goes “beyond Morgenthau”, with figures such as Zangwill and Lazare who were also united by a critique of mainstream Zionism. To finally achieve emancipation and Jewish liberation, these voices sought a horizontal alliance with those similarly downtrodden, those lightning rods for the failures and fissures of the modern world-system, like the Armenians, rather than a vertical alliance with the powers of Imperialism.

This Jewish genealogy of witness converges with a German history of witness and at times is one and the same, which is to say, German-Jewish. German voices against the Genocide have been disproportionately construed as emanating out of the liberal, missionizing wing of Protestant activists, I demonstrate the significant role played by leading German Social Democrats, many of whom Jews, in piercing the silence and complicity around the Genocide. These Independent Social Democrats, such as Haase and Bernstein, also maintained Jewish concern but fused it with a critique of nationalism, remaining conscious of unique German responsibility and Jewish responsibility for the unprecedented crimes befalling an exceptional minority like the Armenians. What ultimately emerges out of the record of these overlooked voices of human rights centered advocacy from Jewish and German sources are the fledging stages of a new discourse of human rights and a new ethic of political culpability along with a horizontal perspective on world affairs that places priority on a counter-hegemonic alliance of the marginal and oppressed.

80. Martin Niepage worked as a teacher in a German school at Aleppo etc. He was interrogated by German authorities on the English war edition of Niepage's report, the author explained that he had acted under the influence of J. Lepsius – putting the blame on the known Armenophile.

81. 145 Sitzung, March 22, 1918, 4543.

82. 180 Sitzung, June 25, 1918, 5664.

83. This note of documentation may refer to the publication of “Germany and Armenia” (1919) released by the publishing house – Tempelverlag – of J. Lepsius.

84. Ibid.