

# THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE AND HENRY MORGENTHAU<sup>1</sup>

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**HENRY MORGENTHAU**  
The United States Ambassador  
to the Ottoman Empire from  
1913 to 1916<sup>2</sup>.

Humanity entered the 20<sup>th</sup> century with great achievements. The progress of science and technology was accompanied by the innovations in economy, in everyday life and in other spheres as well. Mankind reached the new level of development in the terms of civilization. The progress was evident also in the fields of education and culture<sup>3</sup>.

Armenia was still divided into two parts, between the Russian and Ottoman Empires. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the issue of the Armenian people's liberation became more urgent.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century was marked not only with huge progress and achievements of mankind but also with destruction, cultural and human losses caused by two World Wars.

The first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was particularly tragic for the Armenian people. The Genocide of the Armenian people in the Ottoman Empire and in Western Armenia at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the first greatest tragedy of mankind. The Armenian Genocide has a number of manifestations and is undeniable by a series of facts:

Turkish state planned policy in extermination of race.

The extermination of Armenians by all the levers of state apparatus (army, administrative and police powers), by Muslim - Turkish and Kurdish fanatic, retarded mob.

Deprivation of the Armenian people of its Motherland - the main purpose of the Genocide was to deprive Armenians of their ancient Homeland<sup>4</sup>.

Any means of extermination were acceptable for Turks; the slaughter was terrible and there are numerous testimonies of foreign missionaries, representatives of the diplomatic and military officials about it.

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<sup>1</sup> An updated edition of the article: The Armenian Genocide and Henry Morgenthau ([http://www.armeniansgenocide.am/images/menus/427/rektor\\_article.pdf](http://www.armeniansgenocide.am/images/menus/427/rektor_article.pdf)).

<sup>2</sup> All the photos are taken from "Ambassador Morgenthau's Story, by Henry Morgenthau, Garden City New York, Doubleday, Page & Company, 1918" Edition - <https://goo.gl/jQW3fi>

<sup>3</sup> The Armenian people also had significant achievements in the fields of science and culture.

<sup>4</sup> The perception of Homeland for Armenians was and is the whole of Armenia (Western Armenia and Eastern Armenia).

Turkish (Decrees of Talaat Pasha, Enver Pasha and others), allied countries' (Great Britain, France, Russia), German, Austrian, American State archive ratifications, etc. contain undeniable evidence about the Armenian Genocide.

The documentary testimonies by the foreigners that were engaged in diplomatic and missionary work in Turkey acquire a special significance.

Such valuable materials can be found in the famous testimonial work of Henry Morgenthau.

Henry Morgenthau (senior) was born on April 26, 1856 in Germany, then in 1865 his family moved to USA. In 1877 Morgenthau graduated from the Columbia University, faculty of Law. He was engaged in financial, diplomatic and public activities.

In 1899-1913 he was the head of big financial companies. In 1912-1916 he participated in the election campaign of U.S. president Woodrow Wilson and was the head of the Democratic Party's financial system<sup>5</sup>.

In 1913-1916 Henry Morgenthau was the U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, where he represented the interests of allied countries that were in war with Turkey. He was the defender of Christians in Turkey at that period and took compassion on them.

Henry Morgenthau condemned the Armenian Genocide committed by the government of the Ottoman Empire. "Ambassador Morgenthau explicitly described to the United States Department of State the policy of the Government of the Ottoman Empire as "a campaign of race extermination"<sup>6</sup>. Morgenthau's actions were supported by US Secretary of State Robert Lansing who on July 16, 1915 ordered: "The Department approves your procedure... to stop the Armenian persecution"<sup>7</sup>. The U.S. Ambassador Henry Morgenthau's testimonies are summarized in his publications<sup>8</sup>.

Before analyzing Morgenthau's Story, it should be noted that there are numerous documents in archive ratifications that describe the Ottoman policy of extermination of Armenians.

On July 24, 1915 the American consul of Kharberd Leslie Davis wrote to Ambassador H. Morgenthau, "It has been no secret that the plan was to destroy the Armenian race as a race, but the methods used have been more cold-blooded and

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<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.eleven.co.il/article/12839>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.congress.gov/bill/110th-congress/house-resolution/106/text>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Henry Morgenthau, *Secrets of the Bosphorus*, Constantinople, 1913-1916, London, 1918, 275p. (<http://www.seyfocenter.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Henry-Morgenthau-Secrets-of-the-Bosphorus-1918.pdf>); *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* by Henry Morgenthau, New York, 1919, 407p. ([http://www.raoulwallenberg.net/wp-content/files\\_mf/1439907848HenryMorgenthauAmbassador.pdf](http://www.raoulwallenberg.net/wp-content/files_mf/1439907848HenryMorgenthauAmbassador.pdf)). The Memoires of Henry Morgenthau's were translated and published in Armenian ("Ամերիկյան դեսպանի հուշերը և հայկական Եղեռնի գաղտնիքները, Երևան, 1990": "The American Ambassador's Memoires and the Secrets of the Armenian Genocide") and Russian ("Трагедия армянского народа. История посла Моргантау", Москва, 2009: "The Armenian People's Tragedy. The Ambassador Morgenthau's Story").

barbarous, if not more effective, than I had at first supposed... I do not believe there has ever been a massacre in the history of the world so general and thorough as that which is now being perpetrated in this region or that a more fiendish, diabolical scheme has ever been conceived by the mind of man... It would be that even if all the people had been allowed to perish on the road. As the greater part of them, however, have been actually murdered and as there is no doubt that this was done by order of the government, there can be no pretense that the measure is anything else but a general massacre”<sup>9</sup>. This document reveals the reality. Such documents are kept also in the archives of Austria, France, Germany, Great Britain, Russia, USA, Vatican, etc. They are particularly described in the Resolutions № 106 (January 30, 2007) and № 252 (September 22, 2010) of the United States House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs. The 8th point of the Resolutions records that “The United States National Archives and Record Administration holds extensive and thorough documentation on the Armenian Genocide, especially in its holdings under Record Group 59 of the United States Department of State, files 867.00 and 867.40, which are open and widely available to the public and interested institutions”<sup>10</sup>.

“Ambassador Morgenthau’s Story” describes memoirs of the U.S. Ambassador Henry Morgenthau about the Genocide, severe murders, torture and deportation of the Armenians. Moreover, Morgenthau mentions that it was only the small part of what the Armenian people underwent. In 29 chapters of the book the diplomat analyzed deeply the bloody events referring to the official sources and their analyses.

One of the main topics of the book refers to the Genocide committed by Young Turks and the role of German imperialism during World War I.

In his book, studying German-Turkish policy, Morgenthau reveals the intentions of the latter, shows the preparation process to the WW I, involvement of Turkey in war by German force, and reveals the nuances of their military-diplomatic policy.

In the 22nd Chapter of the book H. Morgenthau describes the retreat of the Navy of the Triple Entente countries from Dardanelles and the creation of the proper situation for the implementation of the Pan-Turkish program, the theoretical theses of which were the base of the governing party “Union and Progress”.

The 22nd Chapter of Morgenthau’s Story titled “The Turks reverts to the ancestral type” reveals the sources of Turkish conquests, the creation of huge Turkish Empire and the role it played in the bloody destiny of people of conquered countries. This is how Morgenthau describes the life and policy of Turks: “Essentially the Turk is a bully and a coward; he is brave as a lion when things are going his way, but cringing, abject, and nerveless when reverses are overwhelming him. And now that the fortunes of war

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<sup>9</sup> <http://freebooks.do.am>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.congress.gov/bill/110th-congress/house-resolution/106/text> <https://www.congress.gov/bill/111th-congress/house-resolution/252/text>

were apparently favouring the Empire, I began to see an entirely new Turk unfolding before my eyes”<sup>11</sup>.

Morgenthau is of opinion that Turk has only one genetic feature, that is the qualities in military affairs. “They had no alphabet and no art of writing; no books, no poets, no art, and no architecture; they built no cities”<sup>12</sup>. The author states that Turks treated the subject peoples as “dirt under their feet”<sup>13</sup>.

The concepts of “liberty”, “equality”, “constitutionalism” were replaced by “Pan-Turkism” after the revolution of Young Turks in the Ottoman Empire<sup>14</sup>.



Western and Eastern Armenia at the beginning of the 20th century

Morgenthau writes: “Bordering on Russia, there were six provinces in which the Armenians formed the largest element in the population... From the time of Herodotus this portion of Asia has borne the name of Armenia. The Armenians inhabited this

<sup>11</sup> Ambassador Morgenthau’s Story, pp. 275-276.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. pp. 277-278.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 285.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp. 284-285.

territory three thousand years ago". Morgenthau assures that Armenia (which was under the dictatorship of the Turks) was the tortured Homeland of the Armenians and the proofs of it were the cuneiform inscriptions of the largest Armenian city of Van. The ambassador assures that in the eastern part of the Ottoman Empire, the Armenians were the most civilized nation who adopted Christianity as a state religion in the fourth century; therefore Armenian Christian church was the most ancient one in existence<sup>15</sup>. Morgenthau emphasizes the fact, that the Armenians have regarded themselves as Europeans, they speak an Indo-European language, their racial origin is believed by scholars to be Aryan<sup>16</sup>.



**A characteristic view of Armenia**

According to Morgenthau, Abdul-Hamid decided to “cleanse” the country from Armenians in order to “get rid” of the Armenian Question. The Ambassador testifies that Turkish policy of extermination of the Armenians was planned by the Turkish state. “The physical destruction of 2,000,000 men, women, and children by massacres, organized and directed by the state, seemed to be the one sure way of forestalling the further disruption of the Turkish Empire”<sup>17</sup>.

Morgenthau writes, that “for nearly thirty years Turkey gave the world an illustration of government by massacre... in 1895-96 nearly 200.000 Armenians” became the victims of Abdul Hamid's slaughter policy<sup>18</sup>. Morgenthau mentions that through all those years the existence of the Armenians was a nightmare. Their property

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 287.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 288.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 289.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. In reality, during those years over 300.000 Armenians were slaughtered in the Ottoman Empire.

was stolen, their women and young girls were kidnapped and forced to live in Turkish harems. Other sides of Turkish slaughter policy were revealed in the book as well.

In the last part of the 22nd Chapter the author speaks about the role of German policy in these events, the policy, which supported the Turks to make Armenia “their homeland”. Abdul Hamid’s Armenian massacres were succeeded by new persecutions against Armenians. Being on the threshold of European war (here Morgenthau means World War I) almost every day the Armenians were persecuted.

Just a few months after revolution the Young Turks continued to implement ideas of Abdul Hamid and more cruel massacres were held in Adana (1909), where more than 35.000 people were murdered<sup>19</sup>.

In 1890-s the Turkish government was supported by Imperial Germany. In 1898 Emperor Wilhelm II arrived in Constantinople and encouraged Hamidian slaughter policy. World War I gave an opportunity “to make Turkey exclusively the country of the Turks”<sup>20</sup>.



**Fishing village on Lake Van. In this district about 55,000 Armenians were massacred.**

Ambassador Morgenthau sent many messages to his state and presented the horrific atrocities during the “campaign of race extermination” against Armenians<sup>21</sup>.

Here is one of them.

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<sup>19</sup> Ambassador Morgenthau's Story, p. 290.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 292.

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.congress.gov/bill/110th-congress/house-resolution/106/text>



Secretary of State,  
Washington.

858, July 16, 1 p m.

~~Confidential.~~ Have you received my  
841? / Deportation of and excesses against  
peaceful Armenians is increasing and from har-  
rowing reports of eye witnesses it appears that  
a campaign of race extermination is in progress  
under a pretext of reprisal against rebellion.

Protests as well as threats are un-  
availing and probably incite the Ottoman govern-  
ment to more drastic measures as they are deter-  
mined to disclaim responsibility for their  
absolute disregard of capitulations and I be-  
lieve nothing short of actual force which obvi-  
ously United States are not in a position to  
exert would adequately meet the situation.) Sug-  
gest you inform belligerent nations and mission  
boards of this.

AMERICAN AMBASSADOR,  
Constantinople

THIRD  
JUL 20 1915  
SECRETARY

9/16  
JAN 17 1916

In the 23<sup>rd</sup> Chapter (titled "The Revolution" at Van) of the book, Morgenthau represents the extermination of Armenians in Van province by Turkish army after the retreat of Russian troops.

The populations of Armenian villages of Van were subjected to horrible massacre. Armenian beautiful women were kidnapped by Turkish villains. Four days Armenian villages were subjected to massacre and plunder.



**Refugees at Van crowding around a public oven, hoping to get bread. These people were torn from their homes almost without warning, and started toward the desert. Thousands of children and women as well as men died.**

This is how Morgenthau represents the murder of Armenian young people: “On April 15<sup>th</sup>, about 500 young Armenian men of Akantz were mustered to hear an order of the Sultan; at sunset they were marched outside the town and every man shot in cold blood. This procedure was repeated in about eighty Armenian villages in the district north of Lake Van, and in three days 24,000 Armenians were murdered in this atrocious fashion”<sup>22</sup>.

In the Story actions of extermination of the Armenians in Van by Djevdet Bey’s are introduced in details. The author admires self-defense of the Armenians, their heroism, the entrance of Russian troops into Van after 5 weeks of fighting and the flight of Turks<sup>23</sup>.

The testimony of American medical missionary, doctor Ussher is horrific: “When the Russians began to collect the bodies of Armenians who had been murdered in the province, with the result that 55,000 bodies were burned”<sup>24</sup>.

Ambassador Morgenthau’s description of the villainy against Armenians in the 24th Chapter of his memoirs is thrilling.

While describing in details the policy of the Ottoman Empire concerning Christians, he notes that Armenian young conscripts were disarmed and were used as manpower. They were taken out of the city 50-100 people in each group and were slaughtered in deserts. Morgenthau’s memories of Armenian’s slaughter are numerous; the author

<sup>22</sup> Ambassador Morgenthau’s Story, p.297.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 299.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.



describes some of them. He writes about the Vali (governor) of Van, Djevdet Bey, who got preeminent infamy as the “horseshoer of Bashkale” for nailing horseshoes to the feet of Armenian victims<sup>25</sup>.



**Dead bodies of the slaughtered Armenians on the way of deportation**

Morgenthau mentions that the Central government of the Ottoman Empire “announced its intention of gathering the two million or more Armenians living in the several sections of the empire and transporting them to this desolate and inhospitable region (the Syrian desert and Mesopotamian valley)... As a matter of fact, the Turks never had the slightest idea of reestablishing the Armenians in this new country. The real purpose of the deportation was robbery and destruction; it really represented a new method of massacre. When the Turkish authorities gave their orders for these deportations, they were merely giving the death warrant to a whole race”<sup>26</sup>. Morgenthau describes and interprets this “new method of massacre of a whole race. “Many pages of the book describe in details horrific scenes of the deportation of the Armenians: “Village after village and town after town was evacuated of its Armenian population, under the distressing circumstances already detailed. In these six months about 1,200,000 people started on this journey to the Syrian desert”<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> [http://www.armenian-genocide.org/statement\\_morgenthau.html](http://www.armenian-genocide.org/statement_morgenthau.html)

<sup>26</sup> Ambassador Morgenthau's Story, pp. 308-309.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 314.



**A relic of the Armenian massacres at Erznka (Erzingan)**

The real intentions of the Turkish government are shown and condemned in the following lines of Morgenthau's Story: "It is absurd for the Turkish Government to assert that it ever seriously intended to "deport the Armenians to new homes"; the treatment which was given the convoys clearly shows that extermination was the real purpose of Enver and Talaat"<sup>28</sup>.

In the 25<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> chapters of his book Morgenthau represents in details the villainous genocidal policy of Talaat and Enver against the Armenians.

Henri Morgenthau's testimonies are undeniable proofs of the Armenian Genocide and confirm the fact of the planned slaughter by the Turkish government.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 318.