



The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire

A History of the 'Blue Book'

David Miller

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Introduction

The British Parliamentary 'Blue Book' on The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire (Misc 31 Cmnd 8325, HMSO 1916) is the largest single source of information on what happened to the Turkish Armenians in 1915-16. As such, it provides a focus of controversy between those who claim that it provides evidence of genocide, and those who maintain that because the Blue Book was wartime propaganda, its contents are not to be trusted. Ninety years after publication, the Blue Book is key to the question of whether the massacre and deportation of the Armenians was the result of a deliberate policy of extermination, or the unintended consequence of measures taken against the threat of foreign invasion and civil unrest.

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This year marks not only the ninetieth anniversary of the Armenian catastrophe, but the start of negotiations on Turkey's application to join the European Union. Not surprisingly, there has been a concerted campaign by the Armenians for the recognition of genocide, followed by an

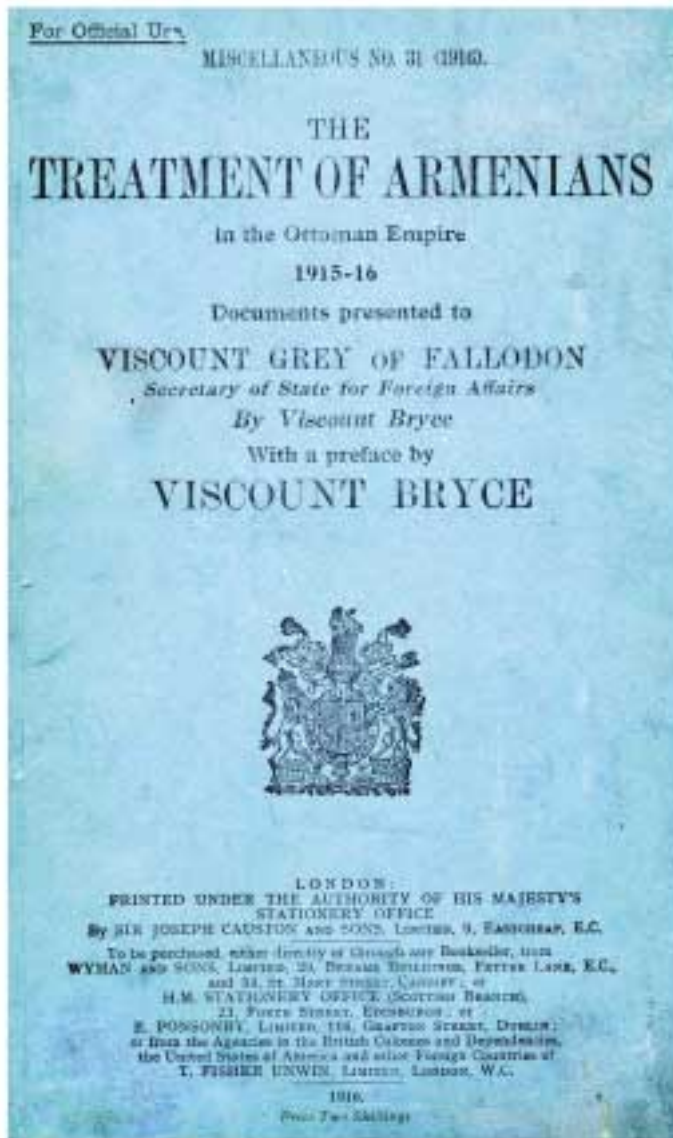
equally vigorous campaign of denial by Turkey. As part of this counter-campaign, the Turkish National Assembly sent a letter to the British Parliament in May 2005, asking them to repudiate the Blue Book as 'a propaganda tool and an unreliable account of the Ottoman Armenians' revolt and the Ottoman Government's subsequent response.' There follows a Turkish version of Blue Book history and their analysis of British motives for publishing the book.

Though some of the statements in the Turkish letter are highly questionable, the article below is not intended as a rebuttal or polemic. There are three reasons for this. Firstly, the article was written before the Turkish letter became available.¹ Secondly, the letter contains much that is irrelevant to the Blue Book itself; how to reply to it is Parliament's business. Thirdly, my article is not concerned with current British policy on the genocide, or with official attitudes towards the Blue Book. It is about how the Blue Book came to be written, what it is, who wrote it and the purposes, humanitarian and political, it was intended to serve. While not questioning either its historical validity, or its use as wartime propaganda, it makes no attempt to judge the political implications of the Blue Book today. This is left to readers of the Blue Book to assess for themselves.

Background

The British official position on the pre-War Armenian massacres

The British Government was well-aware of the dangers faced by Armenians and other, smaller Christian minorities (Greeks, Syrian Orthodox and Catholics, Chaldean/Assyrian and Nestorian



communities) during the rule of Sultan Abdul Hamid (1876-1909) and the ascendancy of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP, or the 'Young Turks') in 1909. Reforms aimed at protecting them were never carried out, despite repeated urgings by Britain, France and Russia. Once the most favoured of the Ottoman minorities ('the loyal *millet*'), the Armenians came to be detested by their Turkish rulers, not only for their visible wealth, but for their political ambition, their revolutionary activity abroad and their talk of self-determination at home – all generated by continuing lack of reform. Following the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78, they were also suspected of harbouring pro-Russian sympathies. This led to a cycle

of repression which the Powers were unable to halt. The Hamidian massacres of 1894-96, which started in Sasun and spread to at least half a dozen other towns (200,000 killed), and the slaughter at Adana in April 1909 (25,000-30,000 dead),² were portents of what Armenians call 'the great crime' (*mets yeghern*).

After Lord Salisbury's failure to make any impression on Abdul Hamid, British policy was to avoid any active involvement in the Armenian Question. Ambassadors in Constantinople reported that it was a waste of time to remonstrate with the Porte on this subject.³ Some, like Sir Philip Currie (1894-98), believed that it was the aim of the Armenian revolutionaries 'to stir

disturbances, to get the Ottomans to react to violence, and then get the foreign powers to intervene.' They also warned that any attempt by Britain to intervene on their behalf, would spell disaster for the Armenians. Joint action with other Powers was also ruled out. Four months after the Adana holocaust, Sir G Lowther wrote to William Tyrell, Private Secretary to Sir Edward Grey:

From what I can see I think there would be little probability of getting the Powers to join in a declaration to the effect that any recurrence of massacres would mean intervention. Moreover it would be deeply resented here as they naturally with one voice exclaim that another massacre is quite out of the question. Washburn⁴ is quite right when he says that what is at bottom of the movement is 'Turkey for the Turks.' They want, however, the support of the Armenians, but they want to be the upper dog. If the Armenians accept that situation there will be peace. If not trouble will come again.⁵

In order to avert this, the Powers negotiated in 1912-14 a new Scheme of reforms, under which the Armenian-populated provinces of Anatolia (the six Eastern *vilayets*, plus Trebizond) would be administered by two European inspectors. They had barely arrived in their respective posts in the summer of 1914, when the First World War broke out and the Turkish government suspended the Scheme of reforms as a first step towards their own involvement in the conflict.

The war situation

Turkey entered the First World War in October 1914 by shelling the Russian Black Sea coast from Ottoman naval vessels under German command. An abortive Turkish invasion of Russian Transcaucasia ended with the defeat of Enver Pasha's Third Army Corps at Sarikamish in January 1915 and the capture of Erzerum by the Russian Fourth Division under General Yudenich in mid-February. The Russian Transcaucasian Army was composed largely of Armenian and Georgian troops, which fed Turkish fears that the

Ottoman Armenians stood ready as a 'fifth column' to assist the invaders.

Under mounting pressure for some months before the war (arrests, murders, looting, requisitioning of property, etc.), the Ottoman Armenians were now accused of organizing insurrections in a number of *vilayets* in Eastern Anatolia. Where these occurred, they were evidently in self-defence.⁶ Retribution was in any case disproportionate. Armenians were removed from all government positions and from the Ottoman army. Their leadership in Constantinople were arrested on 24 April 1915 and later killed off in groups. This marked the start of a protracted and methodical campaign of massacre and deportation throughout Anatolia, Asia Minor and Cilicia, and along the Black Sea coast. By the end of 1916, between 500,000 and a million Armenians had died. A further half million are estimated to have died between 1917 and the end of 1922.

The British Government's response

On 27 April 1915 the Russians alerted the Allies to what was going on and proposed a joint statement in response.⁷ Largely because of British hesitancy over the absence of 'sufficient trustworthy data' and the provocative effect it might have on the Turks, leading them to be still 'more vindictive' towards the Christians, a statement was not made until 27 May (by which time the Dardanelles campaign had got under way). It described the massacre of Armenians as 'fresh crimes committed by Turkey' and held all members of the Ottoman government and their agents personally responsible. (The earlier French and Russian version added 'against humanity and civilization' and the original Russian draft had 'against Christianity and civilization'. The British final version dropped 'Christianity' – due to a French reminder about Muslim susceptibilities – and eventually the entire phrase, because the British thought the French were going to drop it too.)⁸ It was against this background of having to heed Russian (and domestic) concerns without being able to do anything to help the Armenians that the Government grew receptive to the urgings of an elder statesman,

Viscount Bryce, who wished to see widespread publicity given to their suffering. His chiefly humanitarian motives eventually coincided with the Government's need to promote the war in neutral countries, especially America, and their plans for a post-war settlement in the Middle East.

Viscount Bryce, OM

James Bryce (1838-1922) was Regius Professor of Civil Law at Oxford (1887-1893), Liberal MP for Tower Hamlets and later South Aberdeen; and successively Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, President of the Board of Trade and Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs. He also served as Chief Secretary for Ireland and Ambassador to Washington (1907-1913). He retired from Party politics in 1913 and was ennobled the following year.

The evidence in the Blue Book does not seem to have been used in any of the post-war trials and courts martial of those accused of crimes against the Armenians

Bryce's involvement with the Armenians dates from the 1870s when he travelled privately through Russian and Turkish Armenia and later wrote *Transcaucasia and Ararat* (1878). By the time of the Hamidian massacres, he seems to have become unofficially involved in the question of Armenian independence, regularly corresponding with the diaspora in France, Switzerland and Egypt, and maintaining these connections throughout his long Embassy in the United States. Having resigned from both Government service and Party politics, Bryce devoted much of his time in the House of Lords to publicizing the cause of the Ottoman Christians, notably in Macedonia. Following the Balkan settlement, he became pre-eminently concerned with the fate of the Armenians. Bryce was soon engaged on behalf of relief organizations, both British and Armenian.

He was also in close touch with American relief agencies and missionary societies who were best placed to know what was happening in Turkish Armenia.

In December 1914, Bryce had been asked by Asquith to lead a Government-appointed committee to report on alleged German outrages in Belgium and elsewhere. Bryce's report was published in thirty languages in May 1915. It has never been doubted that the civilian population was brutalized by German forces and that serious offences against combatants took place as described by eyewitnesses, all of whose testimonies were carefully vetted. But the committee's tendency to overstate their case and to dwell on the more lurid passages in the report, led to several attempts in the immediate post-war years to discredit the report as a whole.⁹

The Blue Book on the Treatment of the Armenians

Origins and motives for publishing
The Blue Book¹⁰ is a very different publication, in origin, in its scope and presentation. There is no evidence that it was commissioned by the Government in the same way as the German report was commissioned. Bryce's private papers throw little light on its genesis (though Toynbee is more revealing).¹¹ Bryce's papers do, however, reveal a back-channel correspondence with Sir Edward Grey and Lord Robert Cecil (Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office) concerning the Armenians.¹² Though their letters serve merely as covers for eyewitness reports of the massacres, it could be inferred that Bryce had had the idea of collating the evidence and was sending examples to the Foreign Office. Indeed, in his letter to Lord Grey at the beginning of the Blue Book, Bryce says that when enough material had come to hand (at the beginning of 1916),

it then struck me that, in the interest of historic truth, as well as with a view to the question that must arise when the war ends, it had become necessary to try to complete these accounts, and test them by further evidence, so as to compile a general narrative of the events and estimate their significance.

Neither Bryce, nor Grey in his corresponding letter to Bryce in the Blue Book, makes any suggestion that the Government had instigated it. Grey:

It is a terrible mass of evidence; but I feel that it ought to be published.

The Government's ambivalence may be explained as follows. On the one hand, they wanted the evidence of Turkish atrocities to be published – for political reasons, not necessarily and directly connected to the fate of the Armenians. These would have included the opportunity to impress on the American public the horrors of what was happening in a region where for a century America had maintained a large missionary and teaching presence. When they realized that this work had been virtually destroyed (along with many Armenians in American care and protection), they would, it was hoped, pressure their neutral, pro-German administration into joining the war (the US did not in fact do so until April 1917). Another factor, revealed by both Bryce and Grey, was the need to gain support for British plans for an eventual Middle East settlement, which at that time would have excluded Turkish rule from Armenia. On the other hand, British Government, as opposed to Parliamentary, ownership of a collection of documents might detract from their value, while implying a degree of responsibility for the situation itself. Bryce's presentation of the documents to the Foreign Secretary in the form of a Parliamentary Blue Book offered a way out of the dilemma. As a lawyer and historian, his credentials were impeccable, and as British Ambassador he had become very popular during his seven years in America.

Arnold J Toynbee

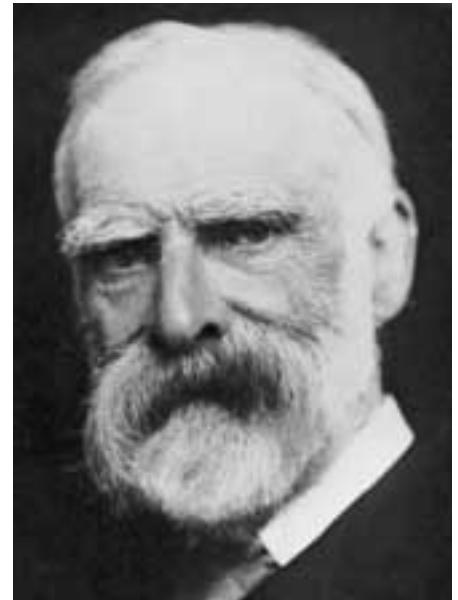
Arnold Joseph Toynbee (1889-1975) was an academic historian and the nephew of Arnold Toynbee, the political economist and social reformer. He began his teaching career at Oxford in 1912. Though he did not share Bryce's enthusiasm for Armenia, he was well versed in the Balkans and the Near East and had a particular expertise in Greek and Byzantine history. At the beginning



Arnold J Toynbee.

of the War, he served in the Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office, transferring in 1915 to the War Propaganda Department (WPB) under Charles Masterman, a Liberal intellectual and reformer. The WPB produced the official history of the war, recruiting writers like Buchan and Conan Doyle, and artists such as CRW Nevinson and Stanley Spencer. In 1918, the WPB was transformed into the Ministry of Information under Lord Beaverbrook.¹³

While at the WPB, Toynbee produced a number of pamphlets under his own name and using his own publisher (Hodder and Stoughton). *Armenian Atrocities: The Murder of a Nation*, based on American evidence released in New York, was published with a foreword by Bryce at the end of 1915. Perhaps as a result of their collaboration, Bryce selected Toynbee as his amanuensis for the Blue Book in February 1916. Later, in 1917, he was to produce *The German Terror in France: An Historical Record and The Belgian Deportations* (with a statement by Bryce), again under his own name and using a commercial publisher. He was a delegate to the Peace conference in Paris in 1919. After the war, Toynbee returned to the academic world as Professor of Modern Greek and Byzantine History at London University, where he also lectured at the LSE. From 1915 to 1955 he was Director of Studies at Chatham House, setting up the Foreign Office Research Department



Viscount Bryce.

there during the Second World War. He wrote prolifically on international relations and a wide range of historical and philosophical subjects.

The force of the evidence is cumulative and its value cannot be estimated without reading the testimony as a whole

Fifty years on, Toynbee reflected in his memoirs¹⁴ on his work on the Blue Book. He claimed that Lord Bryce 'had agreed to a request from the Government' to collect documents about the deportations of Ottoman Armenians for publication in a Blue Book. The evidence suggests, however, that the decision to publish was not made by the Foreign Office until the work had been substantially completed.¹⁵ It seems, in any case, more likely that the Government had agreed to a request from Lord Bryce to provide publicity about the Armenians *after* it was established that their different interests in fact coincided. The Foreign Office evidently took some considerable time to make up their minds on publication and to decide on the most appropriate form.

Toynbee also belatedly evolved a theory about the Government's motives. This was the need to counteract German propaganda about atrocities committed by the Russians against the Jews in Polono-Lithuania in 1915. Jewish attention, the theory ran, could be diverted from the crimes of Britain's ally by the even worse crimes committed by Germany's ally against the Armenians. Though Toynbee himself dismissed this as nonsense (the Armenians were the least of Jewish concerns), he seems to have convinced himself that some sort of 'political spider's web' lay behind the Blue Book, and that if he and Bryce had been aware of it at the time, they would have declined the Government's request.¹⁶

Toynbee's memoirs also reveal something of his state of mind after working for months on end on one of the most appalling stories of the modern era. He became exercised by the question of 'how it could be possible for human beings to do what these perpetrators of genocide had done' and began looking at the CUP's motives for deporting the Armenians. He concluded that the deportations were deliberately conducted with a brutality that was calculated to take the maximum toll of lives en route.¹⁷

Compiling the Blue Book

Modus operandi

Toynbee began the process of collating and verifying material on 1 February 1916. He worked in the main office of the WPB at Wellington House in Buckingham Gate. Lord Bryce's flat at 3 Buckingham Gate was only five minutes' walk away, which enabled Toynbee to report to Bryce at regular intervals when he was in town, and to receive new material from him, although most of their exchanges were by formal correspondence.¹⁸

Toynbee seems to have worked long hours (officially 10:15 to 19:30) and without a break during the nine months it took him to complete the work (apparently with only one assistant, Heard, on loan from the Admiralty). By the time the bulk of the work was done, in June, Toynbee came under pressure from the WPB to get it to the printers (Sir Joseph Causton and Sons) and the first proofs were sent to the Foreign Office on

1 August. However, the Foreign Office delayed formal approval until 27 August. Thereafter, Bryce, now confident of Lord Grey's personal commitment, continued to ply Toynbee with new material for inclusion. The printers' galleys became overloaded and most of the type had to be reset, further delaying publication by two months. The final proofs emerged at the end of October and the Blue Book was laid before Parliament as a Command paper in early December.

The sources

Apart from that furnished by Bryce from the Armenian diaspora and his personal contacts in America, most of Toynbee's material came semi-officially via the United States. The main channel was the Reverend James Barton, Head of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, who had direct access to American consular reports from the interior of the Ottoman Empire. The State Department was evidently content for many of these reports of local eyewitness accounts to be published abroad, provided the source of information was concealed. The collection of documents released in October 1915 in fact formed the basis of Toynbee's *Armenian Atrocities*. He also obtained the co-operation of the Swiss publishers of *Quelques Documents sur le Sort des Arméniens, 1915*, as well as further material from its chief compiler, the lawyer Leopold Favre.

Toynbee's methodology

Toynbee did not incorporate wholesale the material supplied to him. He was meticulous in his approach, carefully examining each individual document before considering it for inclusion. Wherever possible, he wrote to the authors of the reports and even to the witnesses themselves in order to verify their testimony, in spite of the problems of confidentiality. Except for documents received while the Blue Book was going to press, none was accepted until it had been checked by cross-reference to the evidence of other, unrelated witnesses or authenticated by comparison with 'core' evidence (usually that originating with American, German or Turkish official sources). Toynbee aimed to be as

comprehensive and inclusive as possible. Yet he rejected several important testimonies on the grounds of even small discrepancies in dates or translation with those in other, matching documents. At the same time, he resisted Bryce's suggestion that British consular and other reports on refugees from Ottoman Armenia (Section V of the Blue Book) should be relegated to an Annex – in favour of what Bryce termed 'the important and striking'.

The Key to Persons and Places

The names of many victims and witnesses, as well as of places, were withheld from publication for fear of Turkish reprisals. The confidential thirty-seven-page *Key to Names of Persons and Places Withheld*, printed by Eyre and Spottiswode, has never been officially released and the original is still held in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Print Archive. The contents, however, no doubt derived from the MS drafts of the *Key* to be found in Bryce and Toynbee's papers, were 'collapsed' into Ara Sarafian's 2000 edition of the Blue Book,¹⁹ so that names missing in the original publication have now been restored to the text.²⁰

The contents of the Blue Book

The introductory section starts with an exchange of letters between Viscount Bryce and Viscount Grey (Foreign Secretary), a preface by Bryce, endorsements of the reliability of the documents by the historian, HAL Fisher (Vice Chancellor of Sheffield University), Gilbert Murray (Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford) and Moorfield Storey, former President of the American Bar Association.²¹ There follows a letter from Aleppo in October 1915 from members of the German Mission in Turkey to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Berlin, warning of the consequences of German complicity in the massacres and deportation of Armenians.²² Lastly, there is a seven-page memorandum by Toynbee on the Blue Book's methodology.

The Book contains 150 documents of eyewitness testimony, running to nearly 600 pages in all. They are grouped under the following geographical headings:

- I. General descriptions
- II. Vilayet of Van
- III. Vilayet of Bitlis
- IV. Azerbaijan and Hakkiari
- V. The refugees in the Caucasus
- VI. Vilayet of Erzeroum
- VII. Vilayet of Mamouret-ul-Aziz
- VIII. Vilayet of Trebizond, and Sandjak of Shabin Kara-Hissar
- IX. Sivas: the city and part of the Vilayet
- X. Sandjak of Kaisaria
- XI. The town of Marsovan
- XI. The City of Angora
- XIII. Thrace, Constantinople, Broussa and Ismil
- XIV. The Anatolian Railway
- XV. Cilicia (Vilayet of Adana and Sandjak of Marsh)
- XVI. Jibal Mousa
- XVII. The Towns of Ourfa and Aintab
- XVIII. Vilayet of Aleppo
- XIX. Vilayet of Damascus and Sandjak of Der-el-Zor
- XX. Documents received while going to press (and therefore treated as unauthenticated)

There follows a further seventy pages devoted to historical matters, ethnography, antecedents of the 1915 deportations, the procedure of deportations, various annexed press and other public statements, and an index of places referred to in the documents, plus a map insert.

Use of and reactions to the Blue Book

The Blue Book was printed in 35,000 copies, most of which were sent free to public figures, the press and other opinion formers, libraries and places of adult education. It was also sold, at two shillings a copy, by HMSO and Wymans. 3,000 copies were sent to the United States, 'for judicious distribution' among newspaper editors and publicists. It was also sold in the US in a commercial edition by Hodder and Stoughton. A French translation of a shorter version, comprising about eighty reports, was arranged by Boghos Nubar Pasha,²³ but the Blue Book does not seem to have appeared in other languages. It may have made little impact on public opinion already inured to stories of wartime atrocity (Toynbee seems to have been aware of this in providing a

'Guide to the reader', singling out forty-four of the most important documents).²⁴ The Ottoman Government responded in 1917 by publishing a 'White Book', an anonymous and un-sourced document, portraying the Armenians as a seditious minority, with posed photographs of armed groups.

The evidence in the Blue Book does not seem to have been used in any of the post-war trials and courts martial of those accused of crimes against the Armenians. This would in any case have been impractical, because of the legal difficulties of using material from American sources in Ottoman courts, as well as the continuing need to protect witnesses. The British military tribunals in Malta concerned crimes, including against the British, committed in the occupied territories post-war: it was left to the Ottoman authorities to pursue the architects and perpetrators of massacre and deportation during the war itself. The Blue Book appears to have had no further role, except in the perpetual tug of war between those who see it as evidence of genocide and those who dismiss it as 'wartime propaganda'. Several attempts have been made to reassess the value of the individual reports, but they have stood the test of time. The great majority, complete with signatures, can be seen in the US National Archives (State Department General Records) and the Library of Congress (The Papers of Henry Morgenthau Sr).²⁵ None has been refuted.

Conclusions

The Blue Book arose from a coincidence of humanitarian and political interests in publicizing strong evidence that the existence of an entire nation was under threat by an enemy power. Unlike most forms of propaganda, it does not seek to interpret or select the events it records, only to display them as they occurred, and over as wide a field as possible. The Blue Book speaks for itself. The force of the evidence is cumulative and its value cannot be estimated without reading the testimony as a whole. The fact that it was used as propaganda does not invalidate this evidence.²⁶ The unique character of the Blue Book also reflects the fact that those responsible for

producing it had somewhat differing agendas (Bryce the statesman and publicist and Toynbee the professional historian). But neither has ever been accused of intellectual or moral dishonesty. The Blue Book is not disinformation. It has been caught up in what Bryce called 'the propaganda of repudiation', as those who believe that it provides evidence of genocide are challenged by those who dismiss it as invention. Nonetheless, the Blue Book remains the largest single source of scholarly information on the massacres and deportation of Armenians in 1915-16, and thus essential reading for those wishing to assess whether what happened was the result of deliberate policy or not.²⁷ ■

NOTES

1. *A copy of the Turkish Parliament's letter has been deposited with the Libraries of the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Among its curiosities is an attack on John Buchan as the alleged master-mind behind the Blue Book and citing The Thirty-Nine Steps and Greenmantle as evidence of his 'anti-semitism' and 'racism'. Buchan was in fact serving in France in 1916-17 and did not become Director of Information (and subsequently Director of Intelligence in Beaverbrook's Ministry) until the last year of the war.*
2. *The estimates are those of Major Charles Doughty-Wylie, British Vice-Consul at Mersina, who witnessed the sequence of events in Adana over four days and, with a detachment of Turkish soldiers, tried to intervene. He was awarded the Victoria Cross at Gallipoli in 1915.*
3. *The Foreign Office appears not to have been embarrassed by this advice. When a Russian Armenian delegation visiting London in August 1903 told the Foreign Secretary that those officials of the Porte to whom British ambassadors complained about the treatment of the Armenians, were the very ones who meted it out, Lord Lansdowne merely replied, 'I know'. (Bodleian Library [Oxford], papers of James Bryce, 200/158).*
4. *Dr George Washburn (born 1833), an American, was President of Roberts College in Constantinople, had lived there for fifty years and was the doyen of local pundits. (Bryce Mss, 200/142).*
5. *Some of Lowther's predecessors claimed that things were not so bad for the Armenians. As an example of Ottoman enlightenment, Sir N O'Connor sent under cover of a despatch to the Foreign Office dated March 1901 an advertisement for an Evangelical Armenian orphanage in Philippopolis (Plovdiv), with photos of solemn-faced, well-fed children, with their teachers. Others, like Sir P Currie, got the rough edge of the Armenians' tongue. GH Papazian writing to Bryce from Alexandria recalled that when the Ambassador made representations on*

behalf of a British businessman, AW Sellar, who had lost his house and work premises in anti-Armenian riots, 'his request was treated with contemptuous silence by the Porte'. (Papazian went on to describe Currie's position by the Turkish expression, 'chifhuldan daha chifut' – i.e., 'more abject and cringing than any Jew'). (Bryce Mss, 201/118).

6. The question of Armenian insurrection in the Eastern vilayets is a vexed one, but is now being promoted (e.g., in the Turkish Parliament's letter) as part of a 'stab in the back' theory of events in Van and elsewhere. It is claimed that the Armenians invited reprisals by massacring their Turkish neighbours and conniving with the Russians. The Turkish version of events now equates Armenian and Moslem suffering under the pressures of war. In his novel *Snow* (2002), Orhan Pamuk describes a section of a museum in Kars commemorating the Armenian massacre in the city: 'Naturally...some tourists came expecting to learn of a Turkish massacre of Armenians, so it was always a jolt for them to discover that in this museum the story was the other way around' (Faber and Faber paperback edition, p.32).

It is important to keep the 'story' in perspective. While Turkish writers have spoken of a 'revolutionary plot' to seize power, others have described the Armenians' five-week battle with the Turks as legitimate self-defence against the terrorism directed by the government's representative, Djvedet (see Christopher Walker, *Armenia: The Survival of a Nation*, Routledge, revised second edition, 1990, pp.205-209). It has also been suggested that the Armenians were meant to pay for Enver's defeat at Sarikamish (despite his personal exoneration of the Armenian troops under his command) and for Djvedet's failure to retake Tabriz from the Russians in Persian Azerbaijan. And pay they undoubtedly did – whether as scapegoats for the Turkish military leaders, or because they were looking to Russian forces to liberate them from persecution, as they ultimately did at Van.

7. The National Archives, Kew, FO 371/2488/58387.
8. TNA, FO 371/2488/63095.
9. In the immediate aftermath of war, there is a tendency by victors to downplay alleged atrocities by the vanquished. This happened not only after World War I in respect of the Germans and Turks, but in the early period after World War II in respect of the Germans and Japanese. In 1925, Austen Chamberlain is said to have dismissed Bryce's German atrocity report as baseless propaganda, but this was the year of the Locarno agreements and Germany's accession to the League of Nations, of which Chamberlain had been the chief architect.
10. The 'Blue Books' were a series of Parliamentary and Foreign Office printed documents published in blue covers and covering a wide variety of subjects under political or social investigation. There were, for instance, Blue Books on the employment of women and children in agriculture (1843) and on documents concerning German-Polish relations and the outbreak of hostilities between Britain and Germany (1939). The 1916 Parliamentary Blue Book provided the Foreign Office with a convenient vehicle for publishing Bryce and

Toynbee's work, without the Foreign Office being formally responsible for its contents. Its status as a Command Paper was also convenient, since presentation to Parliament was not required by statute.

11. Toynbee wrote to Bryce on 11 May 1916, three months after he started work: 'If you were to send these documents with an introductory note to Sir Edward Grey and say they have been prepared under your supervision, that they are trustworthy, then your letter would be published by the Foreign Office as an official document, and the documents would constitute an appendix to your letter. The problem of publication would thus be solved. While giving the book an official character, it would free the Foreign Secretary from the obligation to take upon himself the probing of the accuracy of every matter mentioned in these documents.' (TNA, Toynbee Archive, FO 96/205).

This was only half way to the Blue Book solution and shows the considerable difficulties Bryce was having with the FO over getting his material published. In January 1916, Sir Robert Cecil had been adamant that 'we could scarcely ask leave to publish' and even asked Bryce, 'could not your sources commit an indiscretion?' (Bryce Mss 204/172).

Yet despite its wariness, the Foreign Office was always keen to publish for political reasons, if it could find a way of doing so. Under pressure from Bryce, it was losing its earlier scepticism about the evidence. On 2 September 1915, Edward Palmer had minuted on a letter from Bryce to Asquith: 'There is no doubt, I fear, about the facts.' A week later, Harold Nicolson added: 'We know that this account of the persecution of Armenians is not as exaggerated as it first appears' – to which Lord Cecil further added: 'This should be published – for U.S.' (FO 371/2488/51009).

12. Bryce Mss 203/192.
13. The blacker arts of propaganda against enemy countries were practised by a more shadowy group under Lord Northcliffe.
14. Acquaintances (OUP, 1967).
15. The decision was first revealed by Charles Masterman in a letter to Bryce on 14 June 1916:

'I have read through the whole of the proposed Blue Book on Armenia, telling one of the most appalling stories I should think since the beginning of civilisation. I am very anxious that it should be published as soon as possible for general reasons connected with the influencing of public opinion, especially in regard to any ultimate settlement in the near East, and am continually urging Toynbee to fresh efforts to get the book through the press. I have just communicated with the Foreign Office and there seems no doubt that they will be glad to publish it as a Blue Book. I am sending your draft letter up to the Foreign Office today, and hope Sir Edward Grey will be able to write a reply to stand at the beginning of the work. We shall then try and get it the widest possible circulation...

'The strength of the book is, of course, the evidence from American and other missionaries, which contain some of the most sensational

evidence of massacres and outrage, to which the evidence of Armenians is supplementary – such evidence alone would probably not be universally accepted.' (Bryce Mss, 202/132)

However, Bryce's worries about the Foreign Office's commitment were not dispelled until Lord Grey wrote to him officially in the third week of August (TNA, Toynbee Archive, FO 96/201). This appears to be the letter which forms part of the introduction to the Blue Book. Even then, the shadow of a doubt remained. He wrote to Toynbee on 27 August: 'Grey's letter has now reached me. In case it has not also been sent to you I have transcribed it overleaf. Though it does not say that the F.O. will publish it, I suppose we may assume that this is meant: as the promise was made to Wellington House, long before we began.' (Toynbee Archive, FO 96/218)

16. Acquaintances pp 149-153.
17. 'This was the C.U.P.'s crime; and my study of it left an impression on my mind that was not effaced by the still more cold-blooded genocide, on a far larger scale, that was committed during the Second World War by the Nazi.

Any great crime...raises a question that transcends national limits; the question goes to the heart of human nature itself. My study of the genocide that had been committed in Turkey in 1915 brought home to me the reality of Original Sin.'

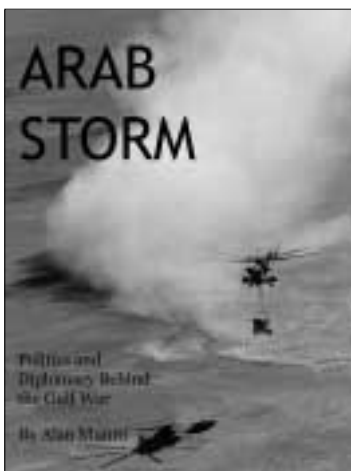
From this, Toynbee went on to describe his efforts to come to terms with his experience by finding the good in the Turkish people, by studying their language and history and befriending them as individuals. In this way, Toynbee seems to have achieved a rapprochement not only with Turkish academics, but with the politicians of the new Republic, including Atatürk himself. This is sometimes adduced as evidence that Toynbee felt the Blue Book had left a shadow on his academic reputation and that his cultivation of the Turks was a form of professional expiation. However, he never cast doubts on the moral and intellectual integrity of his work. His post-war attitude to the Turks was based more on the need to exorcise the memory of the Blue Book, rather than to make amends for it. (Ibid. pp 240-251).

18. This reflected the relationship between an elder statesman of 77 and an aspiring academic of 26, though it seems to have warmed a little after Toynbee married the daughter of Gilbert Murray, Professor of Greek at Oxford, who was involved with the WPB and provided an endorsement of the Blue Book.
19. *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire 1915-1916*. Uncensored edition edited and with an introduction by Ara Sarafian, Gomidas Institute, Princeton and London, 2005. Sarafian, a British archival historian, verified and re-authenticated many of the primary sources in the Library of Congress and the State Department Archives. His examination shows documentation of a very high order. For 'core' State Department materials on the treatment of Armenians between 1915-17, including reports not released at that time, see Ara Sarafian (comp., ed. and intro.), *United States Official Records on the Armenian Genocide, 1915-17*, (Gomidas Institute, Princeton and London, 2004).
20. Among the names referred to is that of Max von Scheubner-Richter, who in 1915-16 was Vice-

- Consul in Erzerum and Bitlis. He was killed at Hitler's side following the Munich Beerhall putsch in November 1923. Scheubner-Richters was one of those German officials in Turkey who opposed the Armenian massacres and protested about them to Constantinople and Berlin. (German complicity, which would have been an obvious British propaganda target, did not attract the attention of Bryce and Toynbee).
21. It is worth noting that the former Attorney-General, Sir J Simon (later Foreign Secretary from 1931-35), having initially agreed to give a Legal Opinion on the evidence of the Blue Book, eventually declined to do so, pleading lack of time. He wrote to Toynbee on 11 August 1916: 'The documents are obviously of great historical value and interest, and they are all the better because they are not directed narrowly to the special point of Turkish and German complicity. But on reflection my own judgment is that the effect of this body of material will not be heightened by what would inevitably be a perfunctory pronouncement on my part; the thing speaks for itself, and it seems to me that it speaks much more effectively if it is left to speak for itself, with such analysis and synopsis as you may prefix' (Toynbee Archive, FO 96/155).
22. The German Parliament is to consider a resolution which calls on Turkey to recognize the genocide and which admits to German co-responsibility as Turkey's ally in the war (The Independent 25 April 2005).
23. Boghos Nubar Pasha (1851-1930), son of the eponymous Egyptian Prime Minister, was the chief interlocutor of the British Government on the future of Armenia and leader of the Armenian Delegation at the Paris Peace Conference. He also corresponded with Lord Bryce on individual humanitarian cases.
24. In a speech to the House of Lords on 11 March 1920, Bryce warned about renewed massacres in Cilicia by demobilized but well-armed Turkish troops (under the eye of French occupation forces) and the dangers of British inaction. He complained: 'Those massacres of 1915 seem to have been almost forgotten by the people of this country, and yet there is no doubt whatever about them. There is no more doubt about them than there is about the Battle of the Marne. If your Lordships will refer to a Blue book published by the Foreign Office in 1916 you will find a full account, based upon all the evidence that was then available, of the way in which these massacres were perpetrated. That Blue-book has been confirmed by a great deal of subsequent evidence.' (Bryce goes on to refer to German official sources and the diaries of Henry Morgenthau, American Ambassador in Constantinople from 1915-17). (Hansard, Division No 1300, p 402).
25. Ambassador Morgenthau was an outspoken defender of the Armenians and did whatever he could to help them. He may have assisted US-British co-operation over the Blue Book. Morgenthau's special assistant, George Redington Montgomery, was interviewed by Bryce at 3 Buckingham Gate in March 1916.
26. Other sources include British military ones in the immediate post-war period. Relief and Control Officers who toured Asia Minor, Eastern Anatolia and the Black Sea coast in the autumn of 1919 found still fresh evidence of the wholesale massacre of Armenians. In Angora, one officer (Lieutenant FWP Slade RNVR) was shown an emvale metruke ('abandoned property') dump, which he described as 'about the size of the Embassy ball room, with two floors and crammed with unsold seized property, among which was a trunk full of watches and a bag of wedding rings stripped from the people by the gendarmes, on the fields before they were massacred.' (FO 371/1485/96955).
27. There were no doubts about this in British Ministers' minds at the time. Lord Robert Cecil, Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, told the House: 'This is a premeditative crime determined on long ago...It was a long-considered, deliberate policy to destroy and wipe out of existence the Armenians in Turkey. It was systematically carried out. It was ordered from above' (Hansard vol.LXXV, 16 November 1915). The argument about whether the 1915 massacres were the continuing instrument of Ottoman policy towards the Armenians or a panic reaction to external events seems to have entered British official thinking only some forty years later.

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