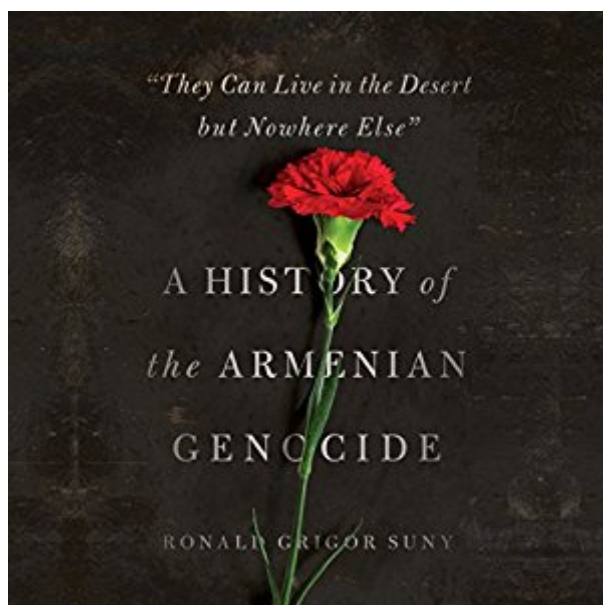


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They Can Live In The Desert But Nowhere Else: A History Of The Armenian Genocide



Synopsis

Starting in early 1915, the Ottoman Turks began deporting and killing hundreds of thousands of Armenians in the first major genocide of the 20th century. By the end of the First World War, the number of Armenians in what would become Turkey had been reduced by 90 percent - more than 1,000,000 people. A century later, the Armenian genocide remains controversial but relatively unknown, overshadowed by later slaughters and the chasm separating Turkish and Armenian versions of events. In this definitive narrative history, Ronald Suny cuts through nationalist myths, propaganda, and denial to provide an unmatched account of when, how, and why the atrocities of 1915-1916 were committed. As it lost territory during the war, the Ottoman Empire was becoming a more homogenous Turkic-Muslim state, but it still contained large non-Muslim communities, including the Christian Armenians. The Young Turk leaders of the empire believed that the Armenians were internal enemies secretly allied to Russia and plotting to win an independent state. Suny shows that the great majority of Armenians were in truth loyal subjects who wanted to remain in the empire. But the Young Turks, steeped in imperial anxiety and anti-Armenian bias, became convinced that the survival of the state depended on the elimination of the Armenians. Suny is the first to explore the psychological factors as well as the international and domestic events that helped lead to genocide. Drawing on archival documents and eyewitness accounts, this is an unforgettable chronicle of a cataclysm that set a tragic pattern for a century of genocide and crimes against humanity.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 15 hours and 35 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Audible Studios

Audible.com Release Date: June 30, 2015

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B00XNYZRZ8

Best Sellers Rank: #131 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > History > Middle East #179

in Books > History > Middle East > Turkey #1204 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Politics & Current Events

Customer Reviews

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the famous British Prime Minister William Gladstone depicted the Turks as a threat to Christianity and as a people whose principal quality was unbridled savagery. He called the Turks "the one great anti-human specimen of humanity. They left a broad line of blood wherever they went". Although this was a stereotype, Professor's Suny book demonstrates Gladstone's words word by word. This volume demonstrates, step by step, how the Armenian Holocaust happened. This he does in ten chapters, starting with a review of the history of the Armenians and then commencing with their lot in the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. In 1915, some 2 million of them were living in the Ottoman Empire, most of them peasants and townspeople in the six provinces of eastern Anatolia. Having lost many territories in the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), the Young Turks wanted a more homogenous empire. They were more than certain that the Armenians were conspiring with the Russians against the Ottoman Empire. In late 1914, massacres of Christians and Muslims occurred in the Caucasus and Persia, where Russian and Ottoman forces faced each other. Following the Ottoman loss in a major battle on the Caucasian front, the Young Turks attributed this to Armenian treachery and thus set in motion the Armenian Holocaust, which, according to Professor Suny- would end only in 1917. The result of the atrocities committed was in killing more than 1.5 million Armenians. Women, children and old men in town after town were marched through the valleys and mountains of eastern Anatolia. Missionaries, diplomats and foreign military officers witnessed the convoys, recorded what they saw, and sent reports home about the death marches and killing fields.

Professor Suny provides an outstanding presentation of the history and motivations behind the Armenian Genocide. Both Ottoman and Western archives confirm that the CUP deliberately implemented a deliberate policy of "ethnonoreligious homogenization" (ppxxvii) throughout Turkey, resulting in a 90% reduction of the Armenian population in Turkey by the end of WW I, and the first smoking gun is the quotation by Talat Pasha that appears on the cover: "They can live in the desert but nowhere else." Armenians were widely distributed throughout Turkey, though regional borders were designed to ensure that other than in small towns and villages that were largely homogenous, they were nowhere a majority. Yet within the Empire they were a separate people subject to their own religious hierarchy. Though thought of as a Muslim power, because the supreme leader, the Sultan, a Muslim, was considered to be God's Shadow on earth, up until the 1870s there were more Ottoman Christians and Jews than Muslims, primarily because of the Empire's holdings in the Balkans. Traditionally non-Muslims had unequal rights yet were

•Suny describes how this balance changed. One factor was the destruction of the Kurdish Emirate in Iraq, which added Kurdish tribes into the Empire. Another was the Crimean war which brought Circassian refugees from Russia into Turkey. Both groups, primarily nomadic, came into conflict with the more settled Armenians, and Istanbul encouraged their raids in order to purchase loyalty to the Porte, resulting in many Armenians fleeing to Russia. Next was the flood of Muslim refugees from the Balkans when that part of the Empire seceded. A fourth factor were the Tanzimat reforms of the 1850s and onwards, in part an attempt at modernization.

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