



Christin Pschichholz (Ed.)

The First World War as a Caesura?

Demographic Concepts, Population Policy, and Genocide
in the Late Ottoman, Russian, and Habsburg Spheres

CHRISTIN PSCHICHHOLZ (Ed.)

The First World War as a Caesura?

Gewaltpolitik und Menschenrechte

Herausgegeben von
Rolf Hosfeld, Sönke Neitzel und Julius H. Schoeps

Redaktion
Olaf Glöckner und Roy Knocke

Band 3

The First World War as a Caesura?

Demographic Concepts, Population Policy, and Genocide
in the Late Ottoman, Russian, and Habsburg Spheres

Edited by

Christin Pschichholz



Duncker & Humblot · Berlin

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

Cover: Evacuated Civilians in Panowice, Eastern Galicia, Bukovina;
© 12. ITD. K.u.k. Kriegspressequartier, Lichtbildstelle – Wien,
12.08.1916, Kriegspressequartier Alben 1914 – 1918, WK1/ALB025/06717, ÖNB

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, translated, or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, without the expressed written consent of the publisher.

© 2020 Duncker & Humblot GmbH, Berlin

Typesetting: 3w+p GmbH, Rimpar

Printing: CPI buchbücher.de GmbH, Birkach

Printed in Germany

ISSN 2566-7696

ISBN 978-3-428-18146-9 (Print)

ISBN 978-3-428-58146-7 (E-Book)

Printed on no aging resistant (non-acid) paper
according to ISO 9706 ☺

Internet: <http://www.duncker-humblot.de>

Contents

<i>Christin Pschichholz</i>	
The First World War as a Caesura? Demographic Concepts, Population Policy, and Genocide in the Late Ottoman, Russian, and Habsburg Spheres	7
<i>Ronald Grigor Suny</i>	
Imperial Choices: Perceiving Threats and the Descent to Genocide	13
<i>Mark Levene</i>	
Deadly Geopolitics, Ethnic Mobilisations, and the Vulnerability of Peoples, 1914–18	33
<i>Arno Barth</i>	
The Securitization of Minorities as a Bedrock of Population Policy	49
<i>Hans-Lukas Kieser</i>	
Empire Overstretched Nation-state Enforced: The Young Turks Inaugurated the Europe of Extremes	65
<i>Oktay Özel</i>	
The Role of <i>Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa</i> (Special Organization) in the Armenian Genocide	81
<i>Hilmar Kaiser</i>	
Zor District During the Initial Months of the Armenian Genocide	109
<i>Hannes Leidinger</i>	
Systematization of Hatred. Dangers of Escalation and Genocidal Violence in Habsburg Warfare, 1914–1918	125
<i>Heiko Brendel</i>	
“Our land is small and it’s pressed on all sides. Not one of us can live here peacefully.” Population Policy in Montenegro from the Long Nineteenth Century to the End of the First World War	135
<i>Serhiy Choliy</i>	
War as a Model of Population Movement in the Modern World: The Galician Perspectives in the First World War	159
<i>Konrad Zieliński</i>	
The Jews and the Bolsheviks. The October Revolution and Escalation of Radical Anti-Semitism in the Polish Lands During the World War I and the First Years of Independent Poland	179
<i>Peter Holquist</i>	
The Soviet Policy of De-cossackization During the Russian Civil War (1919)	191

Bibliography 217
Contributors 245

The First World War as a Caesura?

Demographic Concepts, Population Policy, and Genocide in the Late Ottoman, Russian, and Habsburg Spheres

Introduction

By *Christin Pschichholz*

Was the First World War a caesura regarding demographic concepts, population policy, and genocide?¹ Given the millions of civilian casualties, the answer is immediate. The politics of ethnic violence attained new dimensions during the First World War. Not only were crimes committed against the ‘enemy’ population by foreign armies; violence initiated by state authorities directed towards sections of their own populations involved unprecedented dimensions of demographic engineering. The post-war period was thus left with the ideal of a purportedly homogenous nationalistic people.

Only with the advent of the Second World War could the First World War be identified as the great seminal catastrophe (*Urkatastrophe*). George F. Kennan’s term articulated the connection between the two world wars and has strongly influenced the search for possible continuities between them. Extensive research in recent years, however, has allowed scholars to grasp the significance of the First World War in its own right and to embed the years 1914–1918 in the history of violence in the twentieth century more profoundly than ever before. This also means that the conflict of 1914–1918 is no longer understood as a kind of trial run for genocide and radicalization of military violence in the 20th century. Moreover, research on conflict and violence has given much greater weight to the events of 1914–1918.² The various wars that took place shortly before the Great War already anticipated the ethnic conflicts and violence that occurred periodically throughout the twentieth century. Thus, forced as well as negotiated population shifts were administered and executed during the Balkan wars of 1912–13. The competition and alliances between the Great Powers, and the crisis in the Ottoman Empire, which emerged clearly during the Italo-Turkish War, confirmed to the Balkan states that national claims were militarily en-

¹ The present volume is the result of the conference “Demographic Concepts, Population Policy, Genocide – The First World War as a Caesura?” (September 29 and October 1, 2016). About thirty international experts gathered in Potsdam, Germany, in order to discuss demographic policies in the time period of World War I. The conference was jointly organized by the Lepsiushaus Potsdam and the University of Potsdam.

² Förster, p. 19.

forceable. These developments had thus already transformed the international system before 1914.³ With its transformation of warfare due to dimension of industrialization, however, the First World War brought about decisive changes, not only on the Western Front in the emblematic form of trench warfare but also in the border regions of the multi-ethnic empires, especially in the phases of mobile warfare – and thus also among the very heterogeneous population in the border regions.⁴ During the First World War, the Habsburg military took action in the frontline areas of Galicia against its own Ukrainian population as well as in the Balkans against its own Serb populations, who found themselves suspected of disloyalty. In Russia, expulsions and deportations from different territories were aimed especially against the Jewish and Muslim sectors of the population, and, in the course of the war, against Poles and Ukrainians too. In the Ottoman Empire the Armenian genocide was embedded in an extensive population policy that affected both the *Rûm millet* (of Greek-Orthodox creed), the Arab, and the Kurdish population.

Scholarship on the First World War as well as on the politics of ethnicity and mass violence in the late Ottoman, Russian, and Habsburg empires has established two of the most exciting fields within both European and Middle Eastern history in recent memory.⁵ This anthology seeks to combine both of these fields. Although the magnitude of radical population policy during the First World War, with its precursors in the Balkan wars, in the post-war struggles in the Ottoman Empire, as well as in Russia appears obvious, surprisingly little has been undertaken to view it from a comparative perspective,⁶ although doing so could help to clear up many questions: If the First World War was a turning point, how can it be described? Did the war, which was perceived as a struggle for survival, turn regional conflicts into global ones, thus radicalizing them? Or did certain states exploit the state of war within a global conflagration to solve regional conflicts quickly and in a radical way? Were radical population policies observed and utilized to create a model for other countries' own population policies? In what way were military plans and domestic measures intertwined? To what degree did state authorities that undertook and organized population policies before the war still play a part during and after the war? And what factors distinguished the Ottoman Empire from other multi-ethnic empires such that the most radical population policy was implemented there, setting genocidal processes in motion?

In 1915, and in the wake of an unsuccessful offensive against Russia, the Central Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) organized the deportation of Armenians from the area of the Caucasus and Persian military fronts to the Syrian desert. Official

³ Geppert/Mulligan/Rose, p. 17.

⁴ Überegger, „Verbrannte Erde“, 241–278.

⁵ Campos; Chokobaeva; Provence; Dornik/Walleczek-Fritz/Wedrac; Gingeras; Kirmse; Robson; Reynolds.

⁶ Comparative aspects also showed in a wider time frame Barkey/Von Hagen; Barkey; Reynolds.

military reasons were cited: It was assumed that the Armenians were planning an uprising in order to support the Russian forces from behind the Turkish lines. The deportations were soon extended to all Armenians living in Asia Minor. More than a million would die during the years 1915–1917.⁷

The struggle for the adequate remembrance and recognition of the Armenian genocide still affects relations between numerous states even today. The Caucasus region, the closed border between Armenia and Turkey, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, as well as internal Turkish conflicts serve as examples in this regard. The complicated and tense (geo-) political situation in various conflict regions has prevented a frank and open discussion of a blatant atrocity as a case of genocide. Turkey, as the successor-state to the Ottoman Empire, has struggled to cope with the profound moral distress and the loss of authority arising from its association with a crime against humanity. Scarcely any other issue clarifies the significance of national narratives and the complexities involved in the mutual understanding of historical interpretation as much as the recognition of the genocide against the Armenian people: Contrasting interpretations of the event have become deeply rooted and have come to comprise a fundamental component of national identity. Over the last twenty years, however, the topic of the Armenian genocide has undergone a process of normalization in the intellectual debate, with positive results. Within this context, two aspects should be highlighted that have improved the research and academic discourse on the Armenian genocide. First, more differentiated empirical research has emerged from the academic community, yielding many new findings. Second, the research itself has become more international.⁸ The intensive studies on the Armenian genocide that have been conducted over recent years have mainly challenged older national narratives and paradigmatic reductions. The obsessive search for the “smoking gun” in the face of Turkish denialism continues to exist. At the same time, the younger generation of scholars in particular has broken with one-dimensional explanatory patterns.⁹ This new research has centered on empirical results in the context of social, economic, geo-political and demographic decision-making processes, and on understanding the Armenian genocide as a part of the wider CUP programme.¹⁰ By contrast, the focus of relevant academic works that have been written in the 1980s and 1990s was less on the contextualization than on the proof of intent, and thus on the justification of the term genocide. This focus culminated in a comparison with the Nazi crimes and, as in the case of Vahakn N. Dadrian, in an additional analogy between the Jewish population in the German Reich and the Armenian population in the Ottoman Empire.¹¹ Understandably, the comparison was intended to serve the necessary

⁷ The number of victims cited in the literature and the controversy regarding this see *Bijak/Lubman*, 26–43.

⁸ For recent trends see in detail: *Der Matossian; Pschichholz*, p. 15, 25–31.

⁹ Completely against the recent trend: *Morris/Dror Ze’evi*.

¹⁰ E.g. *Erol*, Macedonian Question; *Üngör*, Fresh Understandings; *Kaiser*, Armenian Property; *Üngör/Polatel*.

¹¹ *Dadrian*, *The Convergent*, p. 151-169.